

MEDIEVAL HISTORICAL SOURCES OF THE EAST AND WEST

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Notes F. A. Ossendovsky as a source on the history of Mongolia

Ferdinand Anthony (Anthony Ferdinand, Anton Martynovich) Ossendowski (1876–1945) - famous Polish writer, chemist, geologist, traveler and adventurer. He was born in the Russian Empire, where he received the education of a chemist, traveled and became interested in literary work. In 1901 he taught at the Tomsk University. Later he worked in Harbin, traveled to the Far East, took part in the revolutionary movement, even went to prison. After the October Revolution of 1917, he lived in Omsk, where he became head of the informing department under A. V. Kolchak. After the defeat of Kolchak decided to get through Tuva and Mongolia to China. Once in Mongolia, Professor Ossendovsky found himself in the thick of the events of the national liberation movement and the civil war of 1921. Here he became acquainted with the Mongolian lamas and princes, commanders of white troops, he even gained confidence in Baron R. F. von Ungern-Sternberg, who freed Autonomous Mongolia from the Chinese invaders. Professor managed to get out of Mongolia and through Manchuria and Japan to get to the United States.

He described his observations and adventures in Mongolia in the fascinating book “Beasts, People and Gods”, which was first published in New York [Ossendowski, 1923]. The book immediately became a sensation: the audience, warmed up with fragmentary information from newspapers, received an exciting bestseller. In subsequent years, dozens of its publications in many languages with a circulation of hundreds of thousands of copies were published.

The Russian translation was one of the first (Ossendovsky, 1925), but in the USSR the book remained little-known. We note an anonymous review in the magazine “The Economy of Mongolia” [The Economy of Mongolia, 1928, p. 90] with a characteristic conclusion: the author "... knows the tastes of the modern bourgeois, and he fully responds to these tastes, fitting the book with the appropriate fiction with mystical coloring." After the appearance of the novel “Lenin is the god of the godless”, Ossendovsky’s books were in the special stores for a long time. Only recently, after the release of the new translation [Ossendovsky, 1994, 2005], the author gained fame in his homeland.

The book “Beasts, People and Gods” caused a contradictory reaction immediately after its release. Some saw it as a true description of events [Mikhailovsky, 2005, p. 301–463] and penetration into the mystical world of Asia [Roerich, 2001, p. 26–37; Guenon, 1993, p. 97–133], others - falsification and deception. The latter was supported by the fact that, before the revolution, Ossendovsky was engaged in manufacturing compromising fakes, extorting money from large firms [Shishkin, 2005, p. 5-22]. The famous traveler S. Hedin, as well as the anthropologist and ethnographer J. Montandon, accused Ossendovsky of geographical and ethnographic inaccuracies [Mikhailovsky, 2005, p. 301-463]. Hedin, having read the German translation of the book [Ossendowski, 1924], even wrote a special work “Ossendovsky and Truth” [Hedin, 1925], to which Ossendovsky answered with a separate publication. Indications of fiction distortion of facts and chronology also appeared later - including from those with whom Ossendovsky met in Mongolia [Golubev, 1926; S. E. Khitun and M. G. Tornovsky - see: Kuzmin, 2004 (1), (2)].

But the book of Ossendovsky is often considered as one of the main sources for the activities of Baron Ungern and the Mongolian history of 1921. Not only historians, but also theosophists and occultists turned to it [Guenon, 1993, p. 97–133], including from the Tule society associated [98] with Nazism [Berzin, 2003], it was used to incite inter-religious hatred of Orthodox and Buddhists [Kuraev, 1997].

How reasonable is all this? What is true in the book of Ossendovsky and what is not? Documents and materials on the history of Mongolia in 1921, previously published [Kuzmin, 2004 (1), (2)], as well as archival materials of the AUPRF, GARF, RGVA (Moscow) and Hoover Institution (Stanford, USA). There is also published by V. Mikhalovsky [Michalovsky, 2005, p. 301–463] Ossendovsky handwritten report with a brief description of events and dates (hereinafter: "Report"). Finally, these are the unpublished manuscripts of Ossendowski from the Museum of Literature (Warsaw) in Polish with fragments in Russian and English: Notatnik: Muzeum Literatury, Warszawa, No. 4210 (hereinafter "Notatnik") and Raport FA Ossendowskiego o sytuacji politycznej w Mongolii w okresie III – IV 1921. Muzeum Literatury, Warszawa, No. 4211 (hereinafter - "Raport").

"Notatnik" contains brief pencil sketches of the main places and travel events with later inserts (notes from 1924 on travels in Asia, the USA and other countries). It was acquired by the museum in 1992 from a certain I. Bleshinskaia. V. Mikhalovsky considers it a diary of Ossendovsky. Indeed, "Notatnik" looks like a diary: it is written in pencil and ink of different colors, it can be seen that at different times. First, there are notes on the population of Uryankhaya (now Tuva), gold mines, prices for sable skins, etc., a list of uprisings against the Soviets from 1917 to 1921, distances between travel points. After Mongolia, there are notes in English (apparently, for American newspapers), then - the number of people in the white troops. Apparently, the author made sketches on the way from memory, without dates, but in chronological order. In some places it is broken, later inserts are possible. There are notes about the export and import from Mongolia, about the cost of delivering letters from Shanghai to Mongolia, about plans for future books, plays and films (about Kolchak, Siberia, Mongolia). On with. 12 gives brief information about the death of Ungern (from newspapers?), The reason for which Ossendovsky sees that Japan did not support the Baron's campaign in Siberia, but instead began negotiations with the Far Eastern Republic (FER).

In the book "Beasts, People and Gods" and in the "Report" Ossendovsky says that he asked Ungern to allow him to describe what he saw and heard. In response, the baron wrote in a notebook with travel notes: "Only after my death. Baron Ungern. But in "Notatnik" there is no such record.

"Raport" is more detailed. It is written in an analytical manner, contains a number of hitherto unknown data - in particular, the text of the agreement on the conditions for leaving the Chinese from the Mongolian city of Ulyasuty. Translated into Russian, for the first time we publish fragments of that part of "Notatnik" and "Raport", which concerns Mongolia.

Their publications presuppose the consideration of the book "Beasts, People and Gods" [Ossendovsky, 1925, 1994, 2005], in which we would like to dwell only on what does not stand the test. In the Russian translations of the book, many names and names are distorted: Domoirov (must be Domozhirov), Vandals (= Vandanov), Sepaylov (= Sipailo), Jam Bolon (= Zhambolon), Yakhantsi (= Dzhalkhantsza-Khutuhta), Yassaktu-khan (= Jasaktu -han), Paspas (= Pagba), Cheghen (= gegen), Hung Boldon (= Baldan-gun), Huntu (= Khentei), etc.

The book "Beasts, People and Gods" is divided into 49 chapters, combined in five parts.

Part 1 "The game with death" is mainly devoted to how the author made his way from Krasnoyarsk to Mongolia. Description of Siberia as a whole is realistic, but individual events (mostly adventures) cannot be verified. The road is described only in general terms, fictionalized and with adventures. The geographical names and the route are consistent with the well-known map [Przhevalsky, 1888], and the description of the area fits well with what is contained in previously published books [Przhevalsky, 1875, 1883, 1888; Hedin, 1899]. The rest can be attributed to the stories of the Mongols and the literary talent of the author.

Description of the clashes with the Tibetans, who opened the "hurricane fire", with great casualties on both sides - the fighter, and not real events. It is known that in clashes with small expeditions that had a rifle [Przhevalsky, 1888; Kozlov, 1947], the Tibetans, after several shots from the match guns, suffered losses and retreated.

Ossendovsky's negotiations through the Kalmyk translator with the Tibetans, who told him that they consider the Bolsheviks to be the liberators of the Asian people from the white race, are extremely doubtful at a time when the Mongols almost did not know who the Bolsheviks were! The same applies [99] to the ring, a kind of pass to Tibet, which Ossendovsky allegedly gave the Mongolian lama Narabanchi-Khutuhta.

It is noteworthy that in "Notatnik" it is written: "Yenisei – Tibet", without mentioning Mongolia. There are no Tibetan words in "Notatnik", whereas there are many details about staying in Mongolia. It is worth noting that Ossendovsky did not even mention an attempt to penetrate Tibet, telling N. M. Ribot in detail (**Doctor of the Asian Equestrian Division, who left a memoir**) about his adventures [Kuzmin, 2004 (1), p. 495]. A. V. Burdukov (**Merchant, who lived in Mongolia for about 30 years**) [Burdukov, 1969] recalled that a professor arrived in Ulyasutai from Tuva and not from Tibet.

It remains to conclude that Ossendovsky's widely known campaign in Tibet is a fiction.

Part 2 "In the Land of the Demons" is devoted to the author's stay in Western Mongolia. Here are described in detail the collisions in Ulyasutai related to the arrival of white troops, the departure of the Chinese, the struggle for power, etc. In "Notatnik" and "Raport" there is valuable information missing in the book "Beasts, People and Gods"

On the whole, the description of the events in the book corresponds to other sources [Noskov, 1930; Burdukov, 1969; Serebrennikov, 2003; Kuzmin, 2004 (1)]. Ossendowski takes on the role of a peacemaker everywhere. But eyewitnesses recalled that he was making intrigues, quarreling white leaders in Ulyasutai [Noskov, 1930], thanks to which he became an advisor to M. M. Mikhailov [Burdukov, 1969].

Ossendovsky's descriptions of Mongolian nature are quite realistic, but there are also "hunting stories": skating a lark on a jerboa, eagle tricks, huge herds of kulans and wild horses, etc.

Some information does not pass the test. First of all, the author's meetings with Tushegun Lama (Jamalama). They are described in the book in the most general terms. The described events are not confirmed by other sources: eyewitnesses, in particular A. V. Burdukov [Burdukov, 1969], who knew Ja-Lama well, do not report anything like this. Apparently, Ossendovsky brought other people's stories in embellished form.

Part 3 "The booming heart of Asia" is dedicated to the interaction of Ossendovsky with Baron Ungern, his stay in Dzain-Shabi (now Tsetserleg) and Uрге. Comparison with other materials suggests that Ossendovsky's information about Ungern is reliable. Baron Ungern attached crucial importance to his first impression of a man. By Ossendovsky, he undoubtedly imbued with confidence. For example, in a letter dated May 20, 1921 to his agent in China, C. Gregory, he stated: "Believe in all this professor" [*AVPRF*, t. 0111, op. 2, p. 104, d. 47, l. 91–91ob.]. Heated the mystical mood in Ungern [Pershin, 1999], Ossendovsky strengthened this trust. The trust relationship made the author to be accurate. Comparison with other memoirs and documents [Kuzmin, 2004 (1), (2)] shows that Ossendovsky correctly conveyed the public and religious views of Ungern. The Ungern plan for the creation of a pan-Asian empire is very precisely described - undoubtedly, according to the stories of the Baron himself: at that time there were no publications on this topic.

Accurately describes Ossendovsky and Uрга of that time. According to "Raport", he spent nine days in it. And the meeting in Dzain-Shabi with a young *gegen* (**One of the highest ranks in the Buddhist hierarchy**), who was dressed in the tunic of a Russian officer and fought with his confidants on the side of Kazagrandi, agrees with Blokhin's memories of Dzain-gegen [*GARF*, f. 5881, op. 2, d. 252].

Ossendovsky describes two white battles with the Chinese in the valley of the r. Tola. There he saw many corpses with traces of saber strikes, wagons, ammunition, etc. His information about the death of about 1500 Chinese and the capture of another 4000 is confirmed by archival data [*PTBA*, f. 39454, op. 1, d. 9, l. 27–28; Kuzmin, 2004 (2); Belov, 2003]. These two battles with the Chinese troops, driven out of Uрга by Baron Ungern and D. Sukhe-Bator from Maymachen, occurred in March 1921 in the area of the modern village of Hadaasan and Ulan-Had *Somon* Lun Range of the Central *Aimag* of Mongolia. Ossendovsky drove there about two months after the fighting.

Ossendovsky called on a radio station with Ungern and wrote that Baron had received many telegrams and dispatches from his agents from Chita, Irkutsk, Harbin and Vladivostok. It should be noted that the baron did not have intelligence, agents sent reports only from China. In the book there are many stories of Ungern, his Cossacks and others. There are inaccuracies in their transmission - rather **[100]** just because the author expounded them from memory. The story of Ungern about his life and ancestors in the presentation Ossendovsky corresponds to other sources. In part, it is based on ancestral legends - for example, about a pirate from about. Dago As L. A. Yuzefovich found out [Yuzefovich, 1993], the historical O. -R. -L. von

Ungern-Sternberg was not a pirate, but only fished from wrecked ships. Further, R. F. Ungern could not say that he left the naval service during the Russian-Japanese war in order to pacify the Trans-Baikal Cossacks. In fact, he went to war as a volunteer from the Marine Corps, later graduated from the Pavlovsk Military School (1908) and was enlisted in the Trans-Baikal Cossack Army. According to the story of the Cossack, Ungern traveled with another Cossack to Urga for reconnaissance, and on the way back he killed the *Tashur* (Mongolian whip) Chinese officer and two soldiers. A more common version is that he traveled alone and beat the Chinese soldier in Turgur in Urga. Bogd-gegen (the theocratic head of Mongolia), arrested by the Chinese, was not kidnapped by Ungern with 50 Cossacks, but by a special detachment of Tibetans, Mongols and Russians sent by Baron. Ossendovsky calls *Chakhars* (**Mongolian people**) in places . This is a fairly common confusion in the memoirs of whites.

Of all the authors, only Ossendovsky writes that Zhambolon is the Grand Duke of Buryatia, a descendant of the Buryat rulers, who was overthrown from the throne for trying to declare independence and became a shepherd. Apparently, the assignment of the title of hereditary Grand Duke - *Chin-Wang* [*AVPFR* , f. 0111, op. 2, p. 104, d. 47, l. 67–68ob.], the Pan-Mongol movement in Buryatia and the author's perplexity as a former shepherd could have been a prince.

It is noteworthy that Ossendovsky only in one place (the very end of Chapter 39) quotes the well-known Ungernovsky order No. 15 on the attack on Siberia and casually notes that this document is evidence of the tragedy. The excerpt in the book does not correspond to the original, although Ossendovsky was one of its compilers [publication of the order see: Noskov, 1930, p. 69–75; Kuzmin, 2004 (1) p. 169-173; Kuzmin (2), photo table]. Eyewitnesses knew well about the authorship of Ossendovsky [Noskov, 1930; *RGVA* , f. 16, op. 3, d. 222, l. 123–124 ; *GARF* , f. 9427, op. 392, l. 47–60].

Part 4 “Living Buddha” is dedicated to the Bogd Gegen VIII Dzhebtzundamba-Khutuhthe. She seems to be continuing chapter 38 of part 3 on a joint visit to the Mongolian ruler with Ungern.

Part 4 is based on information from the literature (A. M. Pozdneev, P. K. Kozlov, and others), the stories of Mongolians and, in part, the observations of the author. Information known from other sources is presented quite accurately. This is data on the history of Buddhism, the search for reincarnates of high lamas, the biography and power of Bogd Gegen, etc. (**Many of the information about Bogd gegen VIII, widely known from Russian literature, are not true. Their consideration is beyond the scope of this article.**).

Ossendovsky heard stories about the life of Bogdo, divine services, divination, the administrative system and so on. Obviously, he saw the interior of the palace, collected foreign wonders, gifts and valuables, a library of Buddhist manuscripts. All this is described in great detail, some information is clearly taken not from the literature. They are not sensational, therefore they are hardly invented.

But much needs to be attributed to fantasy. First of all, these are the repeated meetings and conversations of the Bogd Gegen with Ossendovsky. Even Russian diplomats in Urga found it extremely difficult to get an audience with the Bogd Gegen [Belov, 2003, p. 13], Ungern himself met with him only three times [*WGVA* , l. 123–124], and the third time before going to get a blessing [Golubev, 1926]. Perhaps then he came with Ossendovsky. Obviously, Ossendovsky was not allowed for an audience.

In general, the knowledge of Buddhism by Ossendovsky is rather superficial, rather resembling the theosophical idea of Buddhism.

Part 5 “The Secret of the Secrets: the King of Peace” is intended to substantiate the physical existence of the mysterious country Agharti and the Master of the World. From the stories in the book that Ossendovsky specifically collected, it is clear that they are based on the Buddhist concept of Shambhala. It is usually treated as a “hidden” area located north of India. The most educated lamas consider Shambhala to be an inner reality that opens in the process of self-improvement. During the national liberation struggle with China and civil [101] War in Mongolia prophecy and spiritual practices associated with the last war with the forces of evil Buddhists - Shambalinskoy war - were widely circulated and used for political purposes. One of these prophecies has been preserved in the archives of the Ungern Asian Equestrian Division [*RGVA* , f. 39454, op. 1, d. 9, l. 100–101]. A similar prophecy leads and Ossendovsky in ch. 49 from the words of Narabanchi-Khutukhti - but in the name of the Lord of the World. In the theosophical version, Shambala is transferred from the spiritual to the physical sphere as a country from which the mahatmas rule humanity (Berzin, 2003), and Ossendovsky first gave the “evidence” of this.

We can agree with S. Gedin [Hedin, 1925] that the ideas of Agharti and Tsar of the World Ossendowski were taken from a brochure by J. A. Saint-Yves d'Alveidre [rus. per. : Saint-Yves d'Alveidre, 1915; Saint-Yves d'Alveidre, Guenon, 2005]. Interestingly, these ideas have something in common with the Russian legend about Belovodye, described in “Walking Zosima to the Brahmins”, with which Ossendovsky was apparently not familiar with [Stefanov, 1993, p. 92–96].

V. Mikhalovsky [Mikhalovsky, 2005, p. 301–463] suggests that the American journalist L. S. Payne, who worked on the manuscript of the book, could contribute materials from the d'Alveidre brochure. One cannot agree with this. In the manuscripts “Notatnik” and the report, published by Michalowski, also says about Agharti and the King of Peace. Ossendovsky himself wrote this. The stories about Buddhist cosmology, miracles, Shambhala, its rulers (Kulik-emperors), the phenomena of enlightened beings, etc., he interpreted in a key understandable to the European. For example, if in the Tibetan narration about Shambhala, its ruler and the coming Shambalin war [for example, Przhevalsky, 1875] to substitute the words “Agharti” and “King of the World”, it will become the same as Ossendovsky. Finally, neither the foreign explorers of Mongolia, nor the Mongols themselves said anything about Agharti and the Tsar of the World [Volkov, 2003].

Ossendovsky is the only memoirist who wrote that Ungern was looking for Agharti. For this, Prince Puntsag was allegedly sent to Tibet twice, but he did not return ... Isn't that Prince Puntsag from Van Hure, who was executed by order of the baron for discontent [Alioshin, 1941; *Hoover* , DK254 / U7G662]? Ungern probably sent people to Tibet, but not in search of Agharti, but for contacts with the Dalai Lama for political and religious purposes [Kuzmin, 2004 (1)].

Briefly consider the chronology of the book "Beasts, people and gods." The sequence of events (except for visiting Tibet) corresponds to the facts. But the dates are inaccurate. Ossendovsky writes that he left Krasnoyarsk at the beginning of 1920. It is clear from what follows that somewhere in the spring of 1920 he came to Western Mongolia, went to Tibet two weeks later, and after 48 days returned and stayed at the Narabanchi monastery. There he spent two weeks (ch. 16) or several days (ch. 17). It turns out the summer of 1920. According to Ossendovsky, he spent six months in Mongolia, and left the country in May 1921. Hence, he was there from about November to December, and not from the summer of 1920. This corresponds to the correct dating of the Ossendovsky events in Ulyasutai, trips to Dzain-shabi and Van-hure (winter – spring 1921 - see dates in “Raport”). A. V. Burdukov [Burdukov, 1969] recalled

Subsequent dating looks like this. According to the book “Beasts, People and Gods”, Ungern received a correct prediction about death in Urga in 130 days, the next day he went on a campaign, Ossendovsky left at the same time and arrived at the CER after 12 days. He spoke with the Baron for nine days immediately after arriving in Urga. In Urga, they left at the same time from Van Hure. The dates of stay of Ungern and Ossendovsky in Van Hure and Urga vary by source. An eyewitness N. M. Ribot [Kuzmin, 2004 (1), p. 496] dates are wrong, but Easter in 1921 is mentioned, from which the rest can be calculated from the number of days. Easter 1921 falls on May 1st. st. Then Ossendovsky arrived in Van Hure on April 29, General Rezhukhin on April 30, Ungern - on May 2, and on the same day he met Ossendovsky. Arriving in Van Hure on April 29 is realistic: by “Raport”, On April 23, Ossendovsky was still in Dzain-Shabi. He left for Urga on May 3rd. Ungern spoke out of Urga on 21 May. If they communicated with Ossendovsky for nine days (**MG Tornovsky in his memoirs indicates about a week [Kuzmin, 2004 (2)].**), the latter was in Urga from 12 to 21 May. So, the journey from Van Hure to Urga, 300 km on a camel, took 10 days, which is quite possible. Ungern fired from Urga on May 21, was shot on September 15. It turns out that the prediction was May 9; error - 11 days (approx. 8%). Thus, Ossendovsky's chronology **[102]** from Ulyasuty to departure from Mongolia is correct - at least, more accurately than in most other memoirs.

Justifying to critics, Ossendovsky said that his book “Beasts, People and Gods” was romantic stories for the general public, and he could have just as well finished it with the words: “Suddenly opened his eyes and realized that he had fallen asleep at his desk” Mikhalovsky, 2005, p. 384]. Its content is generally consistent with the report, “Notatnik” and “Raport”. But the mystic with whom the book is saturated cannot be considered a deception for the sake of sensation. Examples of successful predictions of llamas in 1921 are not only Ossendovsky [see Kuzmin, 2004 (1), (2)]. Describing his own experience, the author tried to give him a rational explanation. Usually, he referred to other people's stories.

It makes no sense to look for Ossendovsky's secret mission in Mongolia and China. Everything can be explained more simply. Once in Western Mongolia, he learned about the war and decided not to go to Manchuria (to the east), but to Tibet (to the south). But he refused this plan because of his difficulty. Instead, Tibet had to make his way to Manchuria. To avoid dangers, Ossendovsky successfully intrigued and safely drove east almost to Urga. Here he was able to enter into such confidence in Ungern that he gave him money and provided a comfortable departure. Many write about some secret order, but all assumptions remain speculation. Perhaps Ossendovsky brought to Harbin an important correspondence for Ataman G. M. Semenov and two pounds of gold in bullion [*Shanghai Life*]. Judging by further events, the main thing that Ungern wanted from him is an objective description of the Mongolian epic in the West.

Thus, Ossendovsky's book "Beasts, People and Gods" contains mostly reliable information about the author's communication with Baron Ungern and about events in western and central Mongolia. It can be considered an important source on these issues. The dates from the author's arrival in Ulyasutai before leaving Mongolia are generally correct. Causes of inaccuracies - sensational and mysticism presentation, a description of events from memory. Part of the descriptions of adventures and fights with enemies can not be verified. Information about Bogd Gegen and Buddhism is based on literature, other people's stories and personal observations. There is a big distortion here. Ossendovsky's journey to Tibet and his personal conversations with the Mongolian monarch should be considered fiction. As for Agharti and the King of the World, this is a theosophical treatment of religious stories, **The archival materials used in this article were kindly provided by J. Mazgaisk and J. Odrovonzh-Penyonzhek from Warsaw. We sincerely thank them for it.**).

(translated by S. L. Kuzmina and L. Yu. Reita)

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