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Religion and Revolution in Mongolia

A REVIEW ARTICLE

BY OWEN LATTIMORE

Khalkhyn Tüükh (History of Khalkha). By SH. NATSAGDORJ. Ulan Bator, Academy of Sciences, 1963.

Istoriya Djungarskogo Khanstva (1635-1758) (History of the Jungarian Khanate, 1635-1758). By I. YA. ZLATKIN. Moscow, 'Science' Publishers, 1964.

Shashin ba Lam naryn Asuudald (On the Question of Religion and the Lamas). By J. SAMBUU. Ulan Bator, State Publishers, 1961.

Khuu'sgalyn Ömnökh Ikh Khüree (The Great Enclosure Before the Revolution). By S. PÜREVJAV. Ulan Bator, State Publishers, 1961.

Övgön Jambalyn Yaria (The Discourse of Old Jambal). By Ts. DAMDINSÜREN. Ulan Bator, Higher Education Section of the Academy of Sciences, 1959.

Ikh Shav' (The Great Shav'). By D. TSEDEV. Ulan Bator, Academy of Sciences, 1964.

BNMAU-d Süm Khiid, Lam naryn Asuudlyg Shiidverlesen n'. (How the Question of Temples, Monasteries, and the Lamas was settled in the Mongolian People's Republic). By S. PÜREVJAV and D. DASHJAMTS. Ulan Bator, State Publishers, 1965.

EVEN Tibet can hardly have been more densely saturated than Mongolia was with Lama Buddhism. Institutionally this religion, like one of its own many-headed, thousand-armed deities, had a head to dominate every human thought and a hand to control every human action. Yet Lamaism, often described as something more like a total 'way of life' than a creed and a set of observances, was almost completely destroyed in Mongolia in the twenty years from 1921 to 1940, and may be expected to disappear even more quickly in Tibet—partly by state appropriation of its sources of revenue, and partly by just withering away. How did it happen? Until recently there was no answer, unless one resorted to clichés about the ruthlessness of atheistic communism. European scholarship had been more concerned with doctrine, mysticism, and iconography than with the crass details of the money needed to build and maintain monasteries.

Recently, however, publications of the highest value have begun to appear in Mongolia itself. The rich documentation of these studies is due to a curious conjuncture. The Mongols are conventionally described as pastoral nomads, but from the sixteenth century on, first the eastern, then the southern, then the northern, and finally the western Mongols were incorporated into the Manchu Empire. The Manchus, taking enthusiastically to Chinese bureaucracy, demanded reports and statistics. They also, to weaken the Mongols, kept them in a stew of litigation, with appeals which led to investigations and more reports. The result is that in spite of war and revolution there is in Mongolia quite an amazing store of archives—ecclesiastical and princely, national and regional. From this material the Mongols are now publishing accounts which make it clear how the whole system worked. They have had help of an interesting kind. For instance, the high Lama Gombodoo, who died in 1965 when he must have been well over 70, had spent his whole life on the establishment rather than the ecclesiastical side of the church, progressing through all the administrative levels. He early accepted the revolutionary régime and worked with its scholars. Many footnotes refer to memoranda by him and notes of conversations with him. Without such help it would have taken much longer for a new, irreligious generation, unfamiliar with the back alleys of intrigue within the church, to work out the details of the story.

From the beginning, the story is highly political. The emperors of the Mongol (Yuan) dynasty patronized Tibetan Buddhism, as they did other religions, but some writers have exaggerated the importance of this patronage. There were temples dedicated to past Mongol emperors presided over by Tibetan lamas, but the burial ceremonies of a newly-dead emperor remained to the last 'barbaric'; they were conducted by traditional shamans—and in spite of the later ascendancy of Lamaism, the shrine of Chingis Khan in the Ordos was forbidden ground for priests.

When the Yuan dynasty fell and the Ming dynasty was founded in 1368, the Chinese pursued the Mongols almost all the way to Siberia and defeated them in their own homeland; but for most of its existence the Ming dynasty was much less powerful in Mongolia, Central Asia, and Tibet than other great Chinese dynasties. Within less than a hundred years, in fact, a Ming emperor was carried off by the Mongols and held prisoner for some years. Now Tsongkaba (1357-1419), who initiated the great reform of Tibetan Buddhism marked by the founding of the Yellow Sect, was a contemporary of the early Ming, and in view of what will be said later it is probably significant that this reform was

carried out at a time when the Chinese frontier position was weak: imperial patronage had lapsed, and imperial largesse had dried up, so the Tibetan church had to do something about looking after itself. There are indications (though one would like to have more detail before speaking with assurance), that what really made Tsongkaba's reform a success was not so much doctrinal innovation as the institutionalizing of the corporate ownership of property by monasteries, and the private ownership of property by individual lamas—a big leap beyond the original Buddhist concept of the priest as mendicant.

The story of modern Buddhism in Mongolia really begins, however, in the latter half of the sixteenth century. All contemporary Mongol historians agree that by this time Mongolia and the Mongols were in a very bad way. After the fall of the Yuan dynasty there was bad blood between northern and southern ('Outer' and 'Inner') Mongolia. The northerners blamed the southerners for having become so soft in China that they had lost their empire; moreover, many of the southerners had taken service under the Chinese. There are a number of valuable monographic studies of this phenomenon by Father Henry Serruys. The Mongols call this the period of the 'Little Khans', as distinguished from the great emperors. There was no longer a centralized feudalism, with a powerful ruler to lay down the law to subordinates; there was instead a relapse toward tribalism. Prince fought prince, trying to gather together a larger following, but none could permanently occupy a large territory long enough to institute orderly trade with China and so build up a real state. The result was poverty and chaos.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, however, a change was coming about. Within China itself the Ming dynasty was weakening, and revolts were breaking out; but China was still too solid to be conquered by warriors with only a tribal organization and a pastoral economy. If China was to be conquered from outside the Great Wall, the invaders would have to be people who already had a rural base to provide them with storable cereal foods, and urban centres in which settled artisans, working steadily, could provide arms and other needs in larger quantities, and at a more predictable rate of delivery, than the mobile smiths and other artisans of a pastoral society, working intermittently.

These considerations were well understood outside the Great Wall. (It is a mistake to suppose that barbarians only begin to understand civilization after they have won their way into it by conquest; on the contrary, it is the barbarian who first catches on to what is going on inside civilization who has the best chance of mounting an invasion

that goes beyond raiding and leads to conquest.) It was under these conditions that a regrouping of forces outside the Great Wall began in the late sixteenth century.

It is a weakness of the Mongol historians that they lay the emphasis in this regrouping on the Mongols at the western end of Inner Mongolia. In this they are influenced by their primary interest in the Mongol factors in the history of Mongolia. The primary regroupment, however, was at the eastern end of the Great Wall, in Manchuria. Here Nurhachi (1559-1626), the founder of the Manchu or Ch'ing dynasty, which did not win the throne in Peking until 1644, put together what was to become the successful new frontier combination. It included Manchus who were already under strong Chinese cultural influence and ready to take over Chinese modes of government, and other, more 'tribal' Manchus who were excellent military material. Nurhachi's main economic strength, however, was based on the Chinese of southern Manchuria, who outnumbered his Manchus from the beginning and who provided him with grain and the artisan production of their cities, and also furnished a military contingent—the 'Chinese Bannermen'.

From about 1590 Nurhachi began to add to this combination some of the easternmost Mongols, whose chiefs had at first resisted him as a rival but now increasingly accepted Manchu overlordship, the reward (for their aristocracy) being attachment to the fringe of the Manchu *élite*, with the frequent granting of imperial princesses as wives for the more important chiefs. It is probably this Mongol connexion that explains the early Manchu interest in Lama Buddhism; but the Manchus, with their already strong Chinese base, did not need Tibetan Buddhism in the same way that the Mongols did, and therefore their interest was not in adopting this religion for themselves, but in patronizing it and using it as a political instrument in Mongolia and Tibet, as will be seen.

In the meantime, but too late to forestall the rise of the Manchus, the Mongols of Inner Mongolia (of course the distinction between 'Inner' and 'Outer' did not yet exist; that was to be a result of the Manchu conquest), had also begun to experiment with the creation of frontier states of mixed economic structure and cultural character. The two important names are Altan Khan of the Tumeds, closely associated with the Mongols of the Ordos, in the great loop of the Yellow River, and to the east of him and a little later in time Legdan Khan of the Chahar Mongols.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Mongols rewrote

history to put everything neatly in line with religious interpretations, and so the received account stressed the visit of the third Dalai Lama to Altan Khan, accompanied by miracles and followed by a flurry of monastery-building. The conversion of the sovereign was tantamount to the conversion of the people. It is not hard, however, to make out what was really going on.

For decades, Altan Khan had been harrying China. By the 1570s, however, there was a new possibility in sight: to found a state strong enough to coexist with China. Such a state would admit the formality of calling itself the vassal of Peking, but at the same time would itself be the overlord of part of North-west China and Tibet. It would link these two functions together militarily by drawing on its reserve of Mongol cavalrymen and economically by forcing China to accept regulated trade—even if what we would today call the balance of payments was unfavourable to China—as better than destructive raids. For this he needed a market city with artisan production and enough cultivation around it to make it independent of Chinese food supplies, and he needed a method of adjusting, to such a fixed centre, the administration of his pastoral subjects and nomad warriors. He also needed a claim to moral superiority over other Mongol warriors who were merely fighting each other for precedence among those who claimed descent from Chingis Khan.

A city too overwhelmingly Chinese and an administration smothered by Chinese bureaucrats would not do. The monastery-building, account-keeping, establishment-minded Tibetans were the answer to his problem. It was an answer that suited the Tibetan religious hierarchy which had evolved out of the reforms of Tsongkaba, the claimant head of which was henceforth to be known as Dalai Lama—a title conferred by the Mongols. To enforce his claim to primacy in the church, the Dalai Lama needed a secular patron—and a non-Tibetan patron was in many ways preferable. (From this time on, no Dalai Lama was ever confirmed in his post on the basis of purely Tibetan claims: it was always arranged with due allowance made for involvement first in Mongol and later in Manchu-Chinese politics.)

The weakened Ming dynasty had to accept the situation, which was glossed over by granting to the new city the name of Kueihua, 'Return (or Submission) to Civilization', and to the old warrior who had pushed his raids to within sight of the walls of Peking the style of Shun-i Wang, 'Obedient and Loyal Prince'. In the light of such expressions it is clear that Western scholars have been misled by the fact that the Chinese also made the best of having to accept a frontier state with a barbarous,

Tibetan, non-Confucian bias by referring to Lamaism as a religious blessing which had converted the brutish Mongols into lovers of peace. The fact is that from this time on (as in other cultures), no wars were more savage and merciless than those in which there was a religious rivalry entering into the quarrel.

The story of Legdan Khan at the beginning of the seventeenth century is a variant on the same theme: he was a patron of religion, he fought other Mongols, he fought the Chinese, on whom he tried to force trade on terms that would have amounted to paying him a tribute, and he fought the Manchus, but was too late to forestall their seizure of power. They defeated him, and he died while fleeing westward, toward Tibet.

Here the centre of interest shifts to Khalkha, or Outer Mongolia. Abdai or Abtai Khan, the most powerful of the Khalkha princes, had joined in the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Altan Khan in 1576, and had been granted by the Dalai the style of Tushetu Khan (in full, in the modern spelling, Ochirbat Tüsheet Khan). Returning to Mongolia, he built the great monastery of Erdene Zuu (which is now, under government subsidy, once more an active monastery). Abdai's grandson had a son, born in 1635, who was 'revealed' (to use the Mongol term) as a reincarnation or 'Living Buddha' in 1639. This revelation was confirmed by the then Dalai Lama, who conferred on him the style of Jebtsundamba (Javzandamba), but he is usually referred to not as the 'first Javzandamba' but as Öndör Gegeen, 'the Lofty Enlightened'.

He lived to the age of 89, dying in Peking, where he had gone to attend the funeral of his friend and patron the K'ang Hsi Emperor, in 1723. Thus his life more than spanned the great K'ang Hsi reign (1662-1722) in which the Manchus extended their conquests from Inner to Outer Mongolia and got ready for the final struggle to subjugate Tibet and the western Mongols in what is now Sinkiang. His successor was again from the Tüsheet Khan line—his own grand-nephew. Most conveniently for the Manchus, moreover, his father had been brought up in Peking and his senior wife was the daughter of a Manchu prince. The mother of the new Javzandamba, however, was a secondary wife, a Mongol. (For details, see the chapter on the successive Javzandamba incarnations in A. M. Pozdneev, *Mongolia and the Mongols* (St Petersburg, 1896), in Russian.)

In spite of his Manchu connexions, this second incarnation wavered in his loyalty and at one time thought of offering his allegiance to the Russians. He died in 1757, officially of smallpox, but possibly poisoned

by the Manchus when they had finally triumphed over the western Mongols (Oirad, Eleuth or Ööld, Jüüingar, etc.) and suppressed the last rising against them of the western Khalkha ('Outer Mongolian') leaders. The Manchus were then strong enough to take the step that settled the affairs of Outer Mongolia until the Revolution of 1911. They decreed that henceforth the reincarnations of the Javzandamba were to be discovered only in Tibet; moreover, no sons or nephews of ruling princes in Mongolia were to be discovered to be greater or lesser reincarnations.¹

Even this very condensed summary reveals a pattern of flux and reflux. The Mongol dynasty falls, and the Chinese Ming dynasty succeeds. Immediately, the frontier peoples begin to regroup. Some take service as frontier auxiliaries of the new dynasty,² and in Tibet religion begins to be used as a means of constructing a wider unity than can be achieved by princelings.³

In the next phase, we see the Manchus getting the best of the Mongols in a new kind of regroupment, using a combination of 'barbarian' and Chinese power to create an empire extending over all China, Mongolia, and Tibet. In the final phase we find the Manchus employing the institutions of Lamaism, with which the Tibetans and Mongols had experimented, hoping to create larger-than-tribal units or states, for exactly the opposite purpose—to prevent unity. They did this with great skill. In Tibet the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were balanced against each other. In Mongolia, the rule against aristocrats being 'discovered' to be Living Buddhas resulted in a dual feudalism, one religious and one secular.

For the history of the Manchu conquest and rule of Mongolia Academician Natsagdorj's *History of Khalkha* stands out alone in the world of scholarship. It has long been known that there are discrepancies in the more or less 'standard' histories or chronicles that were written in Mongolia in Manchu times. This is not surprising, as the attitude toward history in those times was not objective; chroniclers wrote their versions to please their patrons. By comparison of imperial decrees and orders, copies of reports by imperial officers, national,

¹ The documents are to be found in the *Ta Ch'ing Hui Tien*, the 'Regulations' of the Manchu dynasty.

² For some interesting details see, in addition to Serruys, Father Louis M. J. Schram, 'The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Frontier', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia), N.S., 44, 1 (1954).

³ The Tibetan story cannot even be summarized here, owing to lack of space; but for the decisive period, when the Manchus took charge of the Dalai Lama system, see L. Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early 18th Century* (Leiden, 1950).

regional, ecclesiastical and family archives, Natsagdorj has been able to clear up many obscurities and add an enormous amount of valuable detail. It is to the credit of his pioneer work that he frankly points out gaps that he has not been able to bridge. There is one major exercise, it may be suggested, that ought to be carried out as soon as possible: a comparison between documents as printed in the imperial records in Peking and versions of the same documents as actually received and preserved in Mongolia.

Although it has nothing to do with religion and revolution in later times I have also listed here Zlatkin's *History of the Jungarian Khanate, 1635-1758* because it supplements Natsagdorj and adds a great deal to the Marxist description and analysis of the economic factor. Zlatkin's work sustains the thesis that the great issue of the age was more than a contest between 'civilization' with an agrarian base and 'barbarism' with a nomadic pastoral base. The Jungars tried stubbornly to create for themselves a mixed economic base, using the oases and towns of Turkistan, inhabited by the people for whom the mediaeval name of Uighur has now been revived, and also developing, wherever they could, permanent cultivation by Mongols. They failed because the mixed economy which the Manchus could develop in the regions near the Great Wall could sustain greater efforts over a longer period.

Zlatkin's work is especially valuable because of his use of Siberian archives. He makes a good case for the view that the frontier between Tsarist and Manchu rule in Central Asia was eventually stabilized where it still lies, with most of the Kazakhs and some of the Mongols still on the Russian side, as a function of the differences between the Chinese economy and the Russian economy in their ability to 'reach out', so to speak, and attach to themselves the economy of pastoral nomads. The Chinese economy was always more closed and self-sufficient; there was a tendency to regard foreign trade as a leaking-away of the resources of civilization. It was therefore something to be granted to non-Chinese for diplomatic or strategic reasons, not to be promoted for economic advantage. The Russian, and especially the Siberian economy was more open, and welcomed diversification of its own resources by trade with, and even by fusion with, pastoral nomads. This is a book to be borne in mind by those who are interested in the formation of the frontier between Manchu Empire and Tsarist Empire in Central Asia, and in today's Chinese interpretation that even Manchu imperialism had a civilizing mission, in that it brought barbarians within the larger Chinese 'family of nations', versus the Russian view that Tsarist expansion, while imperialistic, also put an

end to Central Asian stagnation, opened up the possibilities of historically more 'progressive' development, and was accordingly welcomed by many elements among the Central Asian peoples.

J. Sambuu's *On the Question of Religion and the Lamas* links up general history with the Autonomous period (1911-21) and the revolutionary period that followed it. Mr Sambuu is a noteworthy man: a herdsman of the Gobi region who has for some years been the equivalent of President in a communist country—the head of the formal government, rather than the Communist Party. He is the author of a previous book, *Advice to Herdsmen* (1956), which tells us more about Mongol herding practices than any other book that has ever been written—which cattle to place on which pasture, according to the regions of Mongolia, the seasons, the different kinds of livestock, and their age—young, mature, pregnant, barren, and so on. He writes the vernacular in a pithy, earthy style. He is perhaps the equivalent of the militant, radical, atheistic, working-man leadership that has become rather rare in the West, where nowadays non-affiliation to a religion is more likely to be a sign of indifference than of militancy.

After describing the introduction and early growth of Lamaism in Mongolia and its links with Manchu rule, Mr Sambuu piles on the figures to show its increasingly rapid degeneration and corruption in the Autonomous period, when the Javzandamba Kutukhtu (Khutagt) was both the Primate of the Church and the Head of State (Khagan or Khaan). This eighth Reincarnation was a Tibetan, born in 1870, the son of a sort of major-domo of the Dalai Lama, and for most of the time until his death in 1924 he was the most important figure in Mongolia. As early as 1892 Pozdneev describes his expression of childish wilfulness and mentions such escapades as burning the hair and beard off an old retainer with kerosene. He was a heavy drinker, had a great lust for women, and it was probably because of syphilis that he went blind, about 1915. He was also a skilful political manœuvrer; but he was manœuvring on a downhill road, and the nearer the end, the greater the acceleration. The last years were a demonstration of the kind of hypnosis which, as later in the last years of Chiang Kai-shek and now in South Vietnam, seems to compel a doomed régime to try to cling to power by doing exactly those things that hasten the doom.

Pozdneev (and most later travellers) point to the 'superstition' with which the people were bemused to explain the hold that a corrupt religion had over them; that strange, mediaeval condition in which all men know about the shameful life of the holiest figure that floats above

their own lives, but are unshaken in their reverence for his holiness—not because of what he is, but because of what, institutionally, he represents. What he is, is gossip—often salaciously enjoyed by the clergy as well as the laity; what he represents, is faith.

Here we may turn to *The Discourse of Old Jambal*, who gives a running account of the Javzandamba's lady friends, and some of his male favourites. Old Jambal was a 77-year-old lama (born 1882) who had spent his life in fetch-and-carry jobs in the temples and monasteries of Urga, meanwhile tucking everything that he had seen and heard into his memory. His reminiscences were taken down by Academician Damdinsüren, who is Mongolia's leading historian of literature and a tireless advocate of the value of folk tradition as historical material. It is noteworthy that Old Jambal, in spite of all he remembered of scandal and cruelty, remained religious; this gives us an important insight into the 'folk' element in Mongolia's obscurantist Buddhism.

'Superstition', however, is not an absolute; it is part of a nexus which includes economic and social as well as ecclesiastical institutions. For this nexus, Pürevjav has given us, in *The Great Enclosure before the Revolution*, the most detailed account yet available of the material underpinnings of Lamaism in either Mongolia, or, as far as I know, Tibet; though a valuable pioneer account is to be found in H. H. Vreeland's *Mongol Community and Kinship Structure* (New Haven, 1954), taken down from the description, by the late Dilowa Hutukhtu (Dilev Khutagt, or Dilev Gegeen), of his own monastery in western Khalkha. In this account the 'Great Enclosure' (*khüree*, a term that can be used for a monastery, a barracks, a corral, etc.) refers to Urga, the old name of Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia; and 'Urga', in turn, is a Russian corruption from *örgöö*, the honorific word for the 'residence', or 'household', of a high personage.

Because of the long life of the first Javzandamba Khutagt and the fact that he represented, among the Khalkha aristocrats, the policy of yielding to the Manchus and allying with them against the western Mongols, the arrangements made in his lifetime set a standard that lasted for nearly 300 years. The first 'permanent' buildings at Urga were not permanent; begun in 1654, they were destroyed in the wars against the Jungars, and there seems to have been no rebuilding until 1706. For a good half-century, therefore, the maintenance of the Javzandamba's establishment had to be nomadically organized. The lamas under his personal jurisdiction were divided into seven *aimag*—the Mongol word for 'tribe'. (Ultimately there were 30 *aimag*.) The names of the first three of these indicate economic functions: one was

concerned with the finances of the establishment as a whole, one with the supply of food, and one with the Javzandamba's personal finances.

The system soon proliferated. A few key terms indicate its intricacy. The *jas* (from the Tibetan word for 'treasury') was the collective property of a unit—a monastery or a sub-unit within the monastery, such as one of its temples, or its school of philosophy. The *sang* (from the Chinese word for 'treasury') was the property of an individual—the Javzandamba himself, or any other Living Buddha. The *shabi* (modern spelling *shav*'; pl. *shav'nar*; from the Sanscrit) was a 'disciple'. Apart from its religious use, this term was applied to the lay serfs of a Living Buddha or a monastery. In the early decades, when the Javzandamba frequently moved his headquarters, pious princes presented him with serfs from among their own subjects, and these retained the right, which lasted as long as the system itself lasted, of pasturing within the territory of their original prince, though they no longer owed him taxes or feudal services. They were administered by a special office under the Javzandamba, the office of the 'Great Shav', described by Tsedev. (Of monasteries other than the Javzandamba's own, some were supported by the 'banner'—the territory and subjects of a prince—others had their own 'shabi territory' and were supported by their own 'disciples'.)

Originally, the principal property of all these units was livestock; later, they engaged in all sorts of activities, including money-lending, transportation, the letting out of land for agriculture, and investment in Chinese trading firms. The livestock were 'put out' for herding on terms analogous to 'share-cropping' tenantry in agriculture: the herdsman engaged himself to guarantee an estimated percentage increase in the herd under his care, to make good losses by death, straying, or theft, and to provide agreed quantities of by-products like milk, butter, fermented mare's milk, dried dung (for fuel), and wool—often in the form of felt, for the making of which he supplied the labour. Sometimes the herdsman received a small payment in cash or livestock, and sometimes he had the right to make a little money by using the animals under his care for transportation.

Given the existence of a large number of *aimag*, *jas* and *sang*, each with its priestly managerial bureaucracy and opportunities for perquisites, given the almost total illiteracy of the ordinary herdsmen, and given the right of priests to own private property, it is not surprising that the system became corrupt, with wide contrasts of wealth and luxury, poverty and exploitation. When the communists finally set to

work to destroy the system, their division of the priesthood into 'rich', 'middle', and 'poor' was not mere Marxist pedantry. What they did was to exploit class conflicts that did in fact exist.

This is the story told by Pürevjav and Dashjamts in *How the Question of Temples, Monasteries, and the Lamas was Settled*. In 1921, when the communist-led but not yet communist-dominated revolution began, it is estimated that Mongolia had a population of about 540,000. (It is now a little over one million.) In addition, there were perhaps 100,000 Chinese and 5,000 Russians. Most of the Chinese left during the 1920s, and there has been no significant increase in the number of Russians. Incomplete figures suggest that over 40 per cent of the male population were lamas. Mongolia's livestock numbered then perhaps 15 million, of which about three million belonged to monasteries. As church-owned property could not be taxed by the state, the real income from it was much higher than on the property of laymen. As late as 1936, there were still 767 monasteries and nearly 100,000 lamas.

The first step taken against the church was to limit the Javzandamba to the status of a 'constitutional' monarch, which really made him only a figure-head, since he could not even veto legislation. After his death in 1924 a new 'reincarnation' was not allowed. Against the church as a whole, the first important steps were to extend taxation to church property and revenue, and to put people of 'shabi' status under the same system of administration as everybody else.

Mongol writers distinguish three important periods after 1924: a Right Deviation, 1926–28, a Left Deviation, 1929–32, and a New Turn, which began in 1932 and led to the almost total liquidation of the monastic organization of the church in 1939. One might expect that a Left extremism would immediately follow a communist-led revolution; but on the contrary, the co-operatives which had been started after 1921 were largely taken over by relatively rich people (not surprisingly, since more of them were literate), and many of them were on good terms with the Chinese traders who had formerly operated, to all intents and purposes, as Mongolia's 'middle class'. The number of lamas began actually to increase. The Rightists, because of their better education and greater worldly knowledge, were strongest in the central government bureaucracy; the Left, basing itself on the poorer co-operative members and the poor generally, was known as the 'Rural Opposition'.

The showdown between Right and Left was a close thing; it took twenty-five days of debate within the Party—a Party which had begun with a United Front kind of nationalism, and was to become, after a

number of stages of internal evolution, a full-fledged Communist Party, though it still calls itself the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. Instead of going into action at once against its most dangerous and best-organized enemy, the church, the Left when it triumphed moved first to deprive it of allies, by expropriating a large part of the property of aristocrats and wealthy people. To this was added, in 1931-32, the expropriation of 205 potentates of the church; but the Left went too far and too fast. One of the optimistic assumptions seems to have been that a *jas*, with its personnel and property, could easily be converted into a co-operative, and lamas, instead of being persuaded and tempted to join co-operatives, were put under pressure to do so. The elementary Marxist tactic of distinguishing between rich and poor lamas was neglected.

The result was disastrous. Almost a third (seven million) of all the cattle in the country were lost—slaughtered by owners who did not want to surrender them, or lost by bad handling. There were uprisings, some of them centred on monasteries that had hidden supplies of arms, that reached what was officially admitted to be 'the scale of civil war'. Soviet forces had to be called in; but the Mongol revolutionaries did not have the strength to bulldoze the opposition as Stalin had done in his first collectivization. There had to be a retreat, and this, like the Rural Opposition that had led the Left to power, was organized by Choibalsang, who in many respects was the Mongol Stalin. The retreat was called the New Turn; it was a shift to persuasion and to better organization of the co-operatives. Special attention was paid to winning over those 'middle' lamas who had managerial experience in the administration of *jas*. Other measures included enforcement of the rule that boys must not be placed in monasteries before they had completed school.

In the meantime, the revolutionaries were beginning to benefit from a growing national sense of urgency: the danger of an attack by Japan, already strongly established in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. The attack came in 1939: Soviet troops came in to help the Mongols throw it back; there were no risings to welcome the Japanese (on the contrary, many Inner Mongolian troops in Japanese service deserted to the Mongol side), and on the wave of relief, and the feeling that the country was patriotic and supported its government, it was possible to expropriate practically all the monasteries and return almost all the lamas to secular life.

In its main outlines, the story has been known for a long time. The principal value of this new contribution is its mass of detail, quoted

from official and Party documents, and its demonstration of the almost incredible rapidity with which an apparently monolithic social-religious-economic structure can be shattered once it is realized that it is not a monolith at all, and once the agents of political change have accurately taken the measure of all the interacting factors.