THE GROWTH OF ETHNIC IDENTITY
AMONG THE WESTERN MONGOLS

by
Barbara Bowles

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SIGNED: Barbara Jones

APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

BERNARD S. SILBERMAN
Associate Professor of Oriental Studies

5-8-63
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. In the first instance, it serves as an introduction to the history of the Dzungarian Mongols of northern Chinese Turkestan and the Astrakhan Kalmuks of the lower Volga region of Russia. These two groups represent two parts of a transhumant pastoral group, the Western Mongols.

In the second instance, this paper constitutes an experimental application of the ethnohistorical method in providing new perspectives in social research. Histories of the Chinese province of Sinkiang, or Chinese Turkestan, have lacked a structured approach to problems of social forces. This is particularly true in histories of northern Sinkiang, known popularly as Dzungaria. Historical accounts of Dzungaria have emphasized Chinese diplomatic maneuvers and policies and de-emphasized the social conditions in Sinkiang which produced these policies. As a result, the student is presented with only half the story, the Chinese and Manchu side.

Histories of southern Russia have mentioned the existence of Western Mongols, and have even indicated the extent to which the existence of this nomadic group helped Russian expansion. Here again, however, accounts of Russian policies overshadow the human element in history. There has been no consistent effort to examine the nature of the linkage between the Western Mongols of Russia and the Western Mongols of Dzungaria. Again there is a tendency to present only half the story, the
Russian point of view.

In this paper, an attempt is made to discuss the historical developments which led to the split between the Western Mongols of Dzungaria and those of the lower Volga region in Russia. Fulfilling certain environmental conditions in choice of living areas was an important consequence of the Mongol way of life, thus it is understandable that the Western Mongols should be found in these two areas. The adjustment of the Western Mongols to encroaching sedentary peoples involved quite different reactions among the Western Mongols of Russia (the Kalmuks of Astrakhan) in contact with Russians, to those among the Western Mongols of Dzungaria (the Dzungarian Mongols) in contact with the Chinese. This paper seeks to determine answers for differing Mongol reactions to Russians and Chinese. It is not enough to note that Chinese and Russian cultures differ. Far more important to note is that reaction to Russian culture was fairly uniform, within a certain range of behavior, as Russians gradually expanded first into the lower Volga region, then later eastward to Siberia and the borders of Dzungaria. In addition, Western Mongol reactions to Chinese culture seem to have been fairly uniform, with an established pattern of interactions between Chinese and Dzungarian Mongols. The results of this study seem to indicate that in adjusting to Russian culture, it was necessary for the Western Mongols to develop expressions of ethnic identity, along Western lines of thought, and further, this resulted in renewed ties of social solidarity among the Western Mongols, as people with a unique set of traditions and customs. This result had not been achieved over
centuries of Western Mongol contact with the Chinese, both before the
group split into two halves, one part remaining in Dzungaria and one
part going to Astrakhan, and later when only the Dzungarian Mongols were
in contact with the Chinese.

In the first chapter of this paper, the established pattern of
interaction between Western Mongols and Chinese is presented. In an
attempt to isolate the major factors which produced the Western Mongol
reaction to Russians in specific contact situations, the author has
selected four test cases, each involving the Russians and the Western
Mongols in a different contact environment, over a time-span of thirty
years (1900-1930). Each of the test cases has been presented in chrono­
logical order and analyzed for differences in the contact situation and
in the range of reaction to Russians. Taken together, the test cases
constitute a fairly complete summary of the history of the Western
Mongols in the same time span. In these test cases it has been possible,
through a knowledge of prior social conditions and contemporary pressures
on the Mongols, to discuss emotional responses, not just events. Rather
than simply noting the results of social conditions, it has been possible
to follow the various courses of action open to the Western Mongols in
acculturation to the Russian way of life.

The method of approach to the study of reactions and interactions
between the Western Mongols and Russians or Chinese might be subsumed
under the heading "acculturation research", employing the techniques of
ethnohistory. The ethnohistorical method involves "... a welding of
ethnographic and historical methods[1] which combines the value of historical documents as a source of data with eyewitness reports, within the conceptual framework of an ethnographic report.

In the final chapters of this paper, an attempt is made to view in cross-cultural perspective the growth of Western Mongol ethnic identity and their acculturation to the Russian way of life. The conclusions which were drawn from comparisons of Western Mongol reactions to Western civilization with reactions of other groups to Western civilization must by their nature be hypothetical. It is hoped that with further study some more valid conclusions can be drawn as one more step in our understanding of man as a social and cultural being.

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CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL POSITION OF THE WESTERN MONGOLS

The great Mongolian military federation, which originated under the leadership of Genghis Khan and spread gradually from the steppes of Mongolia through Central Asia and as far west as Poland and Hungary, finally succeeded in 1279 in conquering China, under the leadership of Kubilai Khan. It is impossible to understand the history either of the Mongol dynasty in China, the Yuan, or the developments which both preceded and succeeded the Yuan dynasty without an understanding of the basis for Mongol military federations. The Mongol military federation first formed under Genghis Khan was not a whole-hearted effort by peoples of one society to assert their superior numbers and culture over other groups. Rather, it was a construct of many different tribal groupings, who saw more advantage in a united effort for spoils of war than in individual attempts to gain power and spoils of war. The entire network of individual loyalties in this complex group was held together through subordination to one leader, Genghis Khan. With the death of Genghis inter-group rivalries asserted themselves, and splinter groups began to break off from the Chingizide federation.

After the death of Kubilai Khan, in 1294, the Yuan dynasty gradually disintegrated. By 1368, the Chinese under the first of the Ming dynasty emperors succeeded in driving the Mongols out of Peking. The
Mongols, demoralized and decentralized, retreated onto the steppes north and west of China, quarreling among themselves and presenting no united front to the Ming Armies. Of the numerous clans and fragmented lineages which had composed the Mongol military federation, those groups which composed the right and central wings of Chingis' banner organization were controlled by members of Chingis' clan. The left wing, not under the direct control of the Chingizide clan, gradually asserted itself as a separate unit, and established a great deal of autonomy in its dealings with other groups. The right and central wings covered the area of what is today Outer Mongolia, Western Manchuria, and Inner Mongolia. The left wing covered the area of what is today northern Sinkiang, parts of adjacent Soviet territory in Kazakstan and southern Siberia, and Khobdo province in Western Outer Mongolia. This area is popularly known as Dzungaria in Western literature, from the Mongol words gun, meaning left, and gare, meaning hand.

Certain generalizations of a simplified nature will serve to illustrate the type of geographical boundaries which have made Dzungaria a separate unit, apart from Chinese, Eastern Mongol (Khalkha Mongol) and Inner Mongolian settlements, and from the oasis settlements of Turkic peoples to the south. Dzungaria is a basin, formed by the Altai mountain chain to the north and east, and by the Tien Shan mountains and the salt flats of Kazakstan to the south and west. The richest pasture lands of Dzungaria are located on the northern slopes of the Tien Shan mountains.

and along the southern slopes of the Altai, with scattered oases located in the central, semi-arid steppelands of the Dzungarian basin.

The oases of Dzungaria differ from the oases to the south of the Tien Shan mountains in that dry steppe and not desert separates the oases. In consequence, the oases of Dzungaria could never be controlled by agricultural populations as well as those in southern Sinkiang, for adequate pasturage was always available for the Mongols near their oases in Dzungaria and they could maintain military forces and sufficient horses to repulse agriculturalists. This was impossible in the south, and may well be one of the major reasons Mongols could never hold the oases of southern Sinkiang, although they could, and did, raid them often. It is significant that the steppes of Dzungaria are well suited to Mongol military maneuvers. In the thirteenth century, Dzungaria acted as a funnel through which hordes of horsemen poured out across the Kazak steppes on their way to conquer Russia. In peacetime, large military federations which could force a blending of all Mongol groups collapsed, and the Mongols of Dzungaria were able to hold their territory, delimited by natural boundaries, against the attacks of other groups.

The geographical isolation of the Mongols of Dzungaria from other Mongol groups, and from Chinese and Turkic groups as well, gives some explanation for their religious and social traditionalism, and the fact they speak a distinct dialect of Mongol, which immediately sets them apart from other Mongol groups. This dialect is known today as Kalmuk, or Western Mongol. Kalmuk and Khalkha (or Eastern Mongol) are mutually intelligible, but distinct enough to indicate considerable cleavage.
between the two groups.

After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the quarreling Mongols who retreated to the steppes of Outer and Inner Mongolia and Dzungaria gradually formed into two groups. Uspenski has referred to the split between the Outer and Inner Mongols on one hand and the Dzungarian Mongols on the other as "...a struggle between the sinicized Mongols... and the old steppe party..."\(^3\) The Western Mongols of Dzungaria represented the "old steppe party" and evidently opposed any innovations in steppe life as a result of Chinese influence.

Sometime around the beginning of the fifteenth century, according to Chinese sources, the Mongols of Dzungaria united in a confederacy known as the Uriad, or Oirat.\(^4\) The federation was modeled after Chingis' example, and all tribes were ultimately subordinated to the leadership of one man. Leadership vascillated from tribe to tribe over time, as wealth and military ability waxed and waned in the individual tribes. Requisites for leadership included noble status inherited patrilineally from Chingizide times, personal wealth, and the military ability of each tribe. The specific tribes under the command of the Dzungarian Mongol

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\(^4\)D. Pokotilov (1947), p. 25.
Khan were the Durbet, Khoshot, Torgut, and Olot (or Olet).\(^5\)

The struggle between the Oirats and the Eastern Mongols seems to have generated from a desire on the part of the Oirats to gain spoils of raiding sedentary populations for themselves, rather than presenting them to the hereditary Yuan dynasty leaders in Eastern Mongolia and receiving in return only a portion of the spoils. Assertions that the Oirats were representative of the "old steppe party" or that the members of Chingis' clan then in control of Eastern Mongolia had no claim to their loyalty etc., all seem to have been foci around the problem of ultimate succession to the raiding rights of the Yuan nobles. The characterization of Mongol military federations as constructs for the maintenance of a "spoils system" has been described at length by several authorities in the field of Mongol History.\(^6\)

With a northern and western frontier that stretched thousands of miles across lands often marginal to arable areas, making troop maintenance difficult, the Chinese were placed in an extremely disadvantageous position when confronted by the mobile Mongols. Placed on the defensive, the Chinese of the Ming dynasty were unable to control the Mongols militarily. Court politics constantly interfered with the maintenance of an adequate border defense system. Commanders of the outlying border


garrisons were often court appointees, untrained and inefficient. In consequence, the troops which were garrisoned in border stations were ill-equipped, poorly trained, and often maintained on half-rations. The independence of the garrison commanders resulted further in a lack of coordination in the defense system.  

The attraction of raiding for Mongols lay in the satisfaction (without payment) of necessities such as grain, brick tea, and cloth and luxury items. Perceiving this, the Imperial court at Peking sought to circumvent the Mongolian practice of raiding by meeting the Mongols' needs without a loss in Imperial dignity. An answer for this delicate problem was found in the flexible Imperial tribute system, which regulated all Chinese diplomatic relationships. By declaring their submission to the Chinese Emperor, the Mongols received a jade seal and a title appropriate to their rank in Mongol society. The key to the maintenance of peace by the Chinese under this system lay in the presentation to a Mongol leader or his representative of a sum of money and cloth, along with a title and seal. This additional gift was ostensibly an indication of Imperial largesse, and greatly exceeded the value of tribute to the Imperial court which the Mongols brought with them. (The presentation of tribute to the Imperial court in Peking signified the Mongols' acceptance of the Emperor's mandate to rule over them). Unlike regulation of diplomatic affairs with other groups, where the tribute system involved trade agreements, the tribute system as it applied to relations with the Mongols was an absolute necessity for the Chinese in

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maintenance of peace in the Ming Empire. The ritual of submission to the Chinese Emperor was merely a face-saving formality through which powerful Mongol leaders were presented with Imperial gifts, as an alternative to raiding.

The Ming tribute system provided some relief for China from constant raiding by the Mongols. Mongol acceptance of the tributary relationship could be broken off at any time, however. Vassalage or independence simply involved a choice between taking chances in an independent raiding system or receiving a steady income by sending yearly tribute to the Ming Emperor. This system could not have been very satisfactory for the Ming, for the Mongols early adopted the tactic of sending many envoys to the Imperial court, each asking for tributary relations on the part of their leader.

The only alternative to the tribute system offered by the Ming was the establishment of "horse-markets" on their northern borders, where the Chinese government purchased horses from the Mongols in exchange for grain, brick tea and luxuries. Here again the situation was disadvantageous for the Chinese, since they bought the Mongols' horses at a "... definite, previously determined price; moreover, the price was fixed extremely high, two or even three times above the actual cost of horses." In attempting an explanation for Chinese policy

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9 D. Pokotilov (1947), p. 46 cites one example of this practice.
10 Ibid., p. 76.
in establishing "horse-markets", Pokotilov notes that the Peking government was prompted by practical considerations, i.e. if the Chinese bought up as many horses as possible from the Mongols, they would reduce the number of Mongol cavalry hordes who devastated Chinese towns. In addition they would avoid the danger of large Mongol embassies to Peking which entailed the utmost security precautions, and would add to their own cavalry corps.

Mongol raids into China, though usually concentrated on border towns, actually reached Peking many times during the Ming dynasty. Chihli, Shensi and Shansi were common targets for extended Mongol raids, both Eastern Mongol raids and raids by the Oirat federation. In one of the most successful Western Mongol attacks, in 1450, the sixth Emperor of the Ming dynasty was captured by the Oirat, under the leadership of Esen of the Olot tribe.11

After the death of Esen, the Oirat federation seems to have disintegrated into splinter groups, as was often the case in the history of Mongol military federations. The Oirat federation became involved in internal struggles for power which occupied them for nearly a century.12 For the time being they ceased to be a major force in the complex politics of Central Asia.

In the sixteen hundreds, the Dzungarian federation again assumed a major role in the politics of Central Asia and China. As the Manchus

12H. H. Heworth (1876), pp. 497-512.
began to consolidate their power and move out of Manchuria onto the plains of North China, the Uriad federation united under Baatur Khan of the Durbet tribe. Under Baatur Khan they not only made inroads into southern Sinkiang and western Kansu, but succeeded in successfully raiding into Khalkha Mongol territory to their east. The Dzungarian Mongols refused to ally themselves with the right and central wings of the Chingizide Empire in the Mongol-Manchu alliance which later resulted in the establishment of the Manchu Empire. The Mongols of what is today Inner Mongolia, who constituted the south central and eastern portions of the Central wing in Chingis\textsuperscript{*} organization preferred "... to accept the position of subordinate allies, entitled to some of the benefits of conquest, than to challenge the Manchus in direct control of China."\textsuperscript{13}

Under Baatur Khan, the Western Mongols came into increasing contact with the vanguard of Russian expansion. In the 1630's and 1640's, Imperial Russia was making plans to seize the rich gold-bearing lands of Turkestan, bordering on Dzungarian territory. Howorth recounts in some detail the fluctuations of Western Mongol-Russian relations, but on the whole the Western Mongols courted Russian friendship. Howorth notes that this was simply a matter of expediency on the part of the Mongols, for they were carrying on active campaigns on two flanks of their territory and could not afford to fight the Russians on their northern and western flanks. In courting friendship with the Russians, Baatur Khan asked for and received such varied presents as "... two carpenters, two smiths, two gun smiths, twenty swine, five boars, five

\textsuperscript{13} Lattimore (1940), p. 86.
game cocks . . . and a bell." This indicated to Howorth " . . . how bucolic and agricultural the nomad chief had become", yet to this author Baatur Khan's actions reveal an intelligent appraisal of what Russian friendship could mean to the Western Mongols. Efficient armaments were badly needed by the Western Mongols in their campaigns against the Mongol-Manchu allied forces. Here, the Western Mongols held a decided advantage and it was probably due to their shrewd appraisal and appreciation of western military armaments that they were able to hold Dzungaria against the combined Khalkha Mongol and Manchu forces for as long as they did.

Galdan Khan and the Golden Age of the Western Mongol Empire

Galdan, a second son of Baatur Khan, assumed leadership of the Western Mongols in the 1660's. His succession to the title of Khan reveals a startling departure from traditional lines of succession among the Western Mongols, and to a considerable degree reveals the all-pervading influence of a new factor in Mongolian politics, Lamaism. Galdan had been pledged when a young child to the service of the "Grand Lama" of Tibet, and was an ordained Lama at the time of his succession. Howorth states that Lamaism was actively introduced among the Western Mongols in the middle sixteen-hundreds. Apart from considerations of cultural influence from Tibet (see Appendix A) the possibilities for a combination of state and church in the person of a Khan presented a

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method of overcoming factionalism among the Western Mongol tribes. As a Khan in the temporal sense only, Galdan would have had to defend his succession against other tribal leaders who had an equally justified claim to succession by degrees of removal from Galdan's father, Baatur Khan. The succession should have been to Baatur's first son, Senghe, and in default of this, it should have passed to the next person who was an eldest son in the closest relationship to Baatur Khan, perhaps his eldest nephew. Evidence points to the fact that Galdan, with the benevolent approval of his superiors at the lamasery in Tibet, murdered Senghe before the latter had had a chance to consolidate his power and influence over his father's vassals. In the normal pattern, Galdan would never have succeeded to the title of Khan, as a second son. Galdan, as a lama, provided perhaps the most successful alternate to the traditional line of succession, and he prevented by his actions the dissolution of his father's holdings as the common result of inter-tribal disagreements in problems of succession.

Under Galdan, the Western Mongols were able to increase their control over Dzungaria and the neighboring pasturelands to the east and south of Dzungaria. Galdan's goal was the establishment of a great Dzungarian Empire, the Girat Khanate or Girat Empire, embracing the area between the Altai mountains and southern Tibet, and including northern Chinese Turkestan and part of what is today Outer Mongolia.

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15 Ho. H. Howorth (1876), p. 622.
170. Lattimore (1940), p. 87, based on Courant, L'Asie centrale aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siecles: empire Kalmouk ou empire Mantchou?
It must be noted here that this aim did not originate with Galdan Khan. Baatur Khan had the same goal in mind when he concluded a pact with forty-four tribes from Dzungaria and neighboring areas in Khalkha Mongolia. Haslund notes that two important migrations from Dzungaria took place immediately after this pact had been ratified. Members of the Khoshot tribe moved south to consolidate Dzungarian claims over Tibet, and the Torgut tribe began a westward migration which eventually resulted in their settlement on the banks of the lower Volga, in what is today the Astrakhan Soviet Socialist Republic. A separate section has been devoted to the history and cultural position of the Astrakhan Mongols, known to the Russians as Kalmuks (see pp. 16-24).

Under Galdan, the Dzungarians continued to raid Chinese towns and oasis garrisons, although there was no way they could consolidate their conquests without setting up sufficient garrison stations of their own men in all the towns they raided. Their mobility would have been checked by this maneuver, for there was inadequate pasturage for horses in the oasis areas to the south and east of Dzungaria. Furthermore, the Dzungarians would have been heavily outnumbered by Chinese armies had they attempted to fight the Chinese on Chinese terms, with stationary garrisons defended by infantry troops, spread out over many thousands of miles. In short, the tactical factor which enabled them to gain a certain amount of control over the southern oases, their mobility, also prevented the maintenance of their conquests.

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18 Haslund (1935), pp. 204-205.
In the late sixteen-hundreds and early seventeen-hundreds, the Dzungarians made several magnificent forays into Tibet. Shortly after the ratification of the 1640 treaty, and the departure of the Khoshoto tribe to take up the outposts of southern expansion in the Oirat Empire, the Dzungarians in response to an appeal by the head of the Yellow (Gelupa) sect of Lamaism moved into Tibet and succeeded in establishing him as spiritual and temporal ruler of Tibet, with the Mongolian title of Dalai Lama. From this time, the office of Dalai Lama to a certain extent became associated with the cause of the Dzungarians, although no individual Dalai Lama supported the cause of Dzungarian rule of Tibet, and active interest in the Dzungarian cause depended on the inclinations of each individual Dalai Lama. The Chinese, under the Manchus, were actively interested in preventing any true coalition of Western Mongol interests with the office of Dalai Lama, and to this end they began a series of campaigns resulting in a moderately effective chain of garrison stations stretching across southern Sinkiang, between Dzungaria and Tibet. Here again, it must be noted that the seat of governmental control in Tibet was fixed in a permanently located monastery area. The Dalai Lama could give only spiritual, not material encouragement to the cause of the Dzungarians in their quest for Empire, for he could not withstand a Manchu attack on Lhasa.

By the late 1750's, the Dzungarians were exhausted by their

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20 O. Lattimore (1940), pp. 216, 237.
efforts to create and maintain the Cirat Empire, and were scattered and
disunited. Galdan's successor, Tsewang Raptan, had been defeated by the
Chinese-Manchu armies with the help of a prominent Dzungarian general,
Amursana. Amursana, with the blessing of the Ch'ien Lung Emperor of
China moved to gain control over the remnants of Dzungaria.

Amursana succeeded in welding the Dzungarians into a compact and
cohesive unit, notwithstanding Chinese opposition to his moves. While
swearing constant and undying allegiance to the Manchu Emperor in Peking,
Amursana quietly gathered the strength of the Western Mongolian forces.
In 1757, Amursana had sufficiently strengthened his forces so that he
attacked the Chinese settlements and military forces loyal to the Manchu
government which he had allowed into Dzungaria. Unfortunately for him,
and for the cause of the Western Mongols, he acted too soon. Once actual
war had commenced, his troops squabbled and split, leaving Amursana with
a remnant of his former army. The Chinese were not slow to take action.
They chased Amursana into Kazak country and eventually into Siberia,
where he received asylum from Russia and finally died. 21

After the defeat of Amursana's forces, the Chinese systematically
slaughtered the major portion of Dzungarian fighting strength as well as
a great portion of the civilian population. At least one source 22 places
the losses of the Western Mongols, between the defeat of Galdan and the
flight of Amursana, at 600,000 - nine-tenths of the Dzungarian population

of Western Mongols. Valikhanov wrote in Michell's *Russians in Central Asia* that the valley of the Ili river, in the heart of Dzungaria, was converted to a Chinese penal colony and that:

For the protection of the country Manchu soldiers of the green banner were also transferred thither, and colonies of Sibos and Solons and Daurers were established in the Ili district. Seven thousand Mussulman families were forcibly converted into agriculturalists, and the remnant of the extirpated Sungarians (Dzungarians) were allotted a certain extent of country to roam in.

Little is available on the fate of those few remaining Dzungarians who were allowed to remain in Dzungaria. Hints from a few sources indicate that most of this group retreated to the mountains of the Altai region and the Tien Shan range. Haslund quoted a young Mongol chieftain from the Altai region, remarking that this chieftain was a descendant of the commander of an Oirat outpost left stranded in 1757.

The Kalmuks of the Lower Volga

When Baatur Khan concluded the treaty of the "forty and four" mentioned above, two groups split off from the main body of Dzungarians. One of these groups, composed of the greater portion of the Torgut tribe, along with some of the members of the Durbet and Khoshot tribes, left the steppes of Dzungaria and migrated over a period of years to the Caspian steppes of the Volga region in Russia. Here they were granted asylum by

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24 Ibid., p. 662.

the Russians on the condition that they act as a buffer between the Russians and the Kirgiz-Kazak tribes to the south of the Volga, who had been a growing menace to the Russian colonists in the Ukraine since the religious wars of the crusades. In return for this service, the Torguts received land for grazing and ample arms for their military force.26

It must be noted here that the Torguts, and associated Durbets and Khoshotes, were moving into the Caspian steppe region as a well-organized nomadic band, at a time when Russia was in the process of expanding her frontiers to the south, but had not yet realized the colonization of the steppe region. The Russian position was perhaps analogous to China's position in the frontier regions of China to the north and west. Russia, like China, knew the practical advantages of friendly buffer tribes between her settled agriculturalists and mobile, raiding, nomadic tribes. It was quite logical that Western Mongols, as a well-organized unit on the same mobile footing as the Kazaks and Kirgiz, should be the force most capable to deal with the Kazaks-Kirgiz.

To a certain extent, the social organization of the Torguts underwent a change during this period, primarily as a consequence of their new position as a buffer tribe, in the pay of an agricultural power, rather than a free, raiding group preying on an agricultural power. In the past, the young men of the tribe fought only tribal wars and settled only tribal disputes. In consequence, they were in residence with the tribe most of the time and were an integral factor in the tightly-knit tribal

organizations. Their goals and ideals centered around the goals and ideals of the tribe as a whole.

In their new position as a buffer tribe with a primarily military obligation to the Russians, more and more of the young men found it equally easy to gain a position of importance in the new military organization. Before their settlement in the Caspian steppes, the young men of the tribe had as their main goal the maintenance of the well-being of the tribe, and included in this was the maintenance of the tribal herds. As nomads, they were easily converted into a compact mobile fighting force should the occasion arise. Every nomad knew the constant danger of stock raiding from hostile tribes. Ekvall illustrates this clearly in his description of the organization of Tibetan nomads. He notes that they are constantly on a war footing. Their military preparedness and training are a consequence of their way of life, for dangers to their flocks either through predatory animals or predatory humans are constant. The nomad herder must be prepared to mount and chase his flocks without a moment's hesitation. Each herder knows the capabilities and faults of his fellows through long experience, and does not have to be trained to follow the commands of a leader. 27

In the new military system, the Western Mongol could not orient his military expeditions around the maintenance of the tribal herds, nor could he organize raiding expeditions into Russian territory to acquire luxury items he had no money for. As a mercenary in the pay of the

Russians, the Western Mongol had to make more abstract rationales for his actions. As a mercenary, he could not always fulfill his obligations to the tribe if he were to fulfill his obligations to the Russian crown. In short, the Western Mongol's major fighting strength was organized into a crack cavalry corps, which the Russians gradually relied on more and more to augment their own troops in fighting battles outside the Caspian steppe sphere. The young men of the tribe could no longer assume their former role in the maintenance of the tribe's well-being and the execution of their duties fell to the women of the tribe and the older men who were unable to participate in long military campaigns. As might be expected, the Kazak-Kirgiz took advantage of every opportunity which came their way to raid the Mongol flocks. Famine and privation became a constant menace.

Although the Russians relied heavily on the Torgut cavalry in the seventeen-hundreds, and honored the Torguts with many battle decorations, they did not make any provisions to keep Russian colonists out of the Torgut steppe region. Despite numerous pacts with the Russians (including one with Peter the Great in 1722, one in 1735 with the Governor of Astrakhan, and one in 1742 with the Empress Elizabeth) Russian colonists, made up mostly of Don Cossaks and German immigrants, moved onto the Caspian steppes.

The Torguts reacted with violence to the settling of their lands,

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28 Ho. H. Howorth (1876), p. 575.

29 Ibid., pp. 573-575.
but the pressure of colonization from the north and Kazak-Kirgiz raiders from the south put them under an increasing strain.

Up to the 1750's, it was the official Russian policy to discourage colonization of Torgut lands, but in 1758, with the death of one of the most able Torgut Khans, the Torguts were forced to turn over the title of Khan to a seventeen year old youth. The Empress Elizabeth of Russia "set herself systematically to alter . . ." the mobility of the horde, by constructing a series of fortresses manned by Cossaks which ringed Torgut territory and cut them off from trade routes to Dzungaria and pilgrimage routes to Tibet, besides restricting them to particular pasture lands. This amounted to an official recognition of colonists' claims to the steppe lands.

When the young Khan was confirmed in his office by the Empress Elizabeth, she noted that there were rival claimants to the title of Khan, and suggested to the young Khan that he allow these other men to help him in governing the horde. Accordingly, the young and inexperienced Khan agreed to share his power with a council of ministers formed of the tribal leaders. In time his position as head of the council became merely honorary, and he was "... gradually being reduced to a nonentity." 30

The combination of all these factors - religious, political, and economic - made a decision either to fight to the last against Russian colonists or retreat before them a crucial problem. Haslund notes that the decreasing status of the Khan combined with the growing power of the

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30 H. H. Howorth (1876), p. 573; H. Haslund (1935), pp. 210-211.
fortresses which tied them to a specific territory "caused great disquiet in the horde and the terrible suspicion arose among the Torguts that the Russians were trying to make house-dwellers of them . . . . ." 31

It must be noted here that while Empress Elizabeth and her successor, Empress Catherine, were formulating a new policy for dealing with the Torguts, the Dzungarian tribes in the Sinkiang homelands of the Torguts were being systematically hunted down and slaughtered by Chinese armies under the Manchu Emperors. Refugees from the wars in Dzungaria found their way across the steppes to the Torguts in Russia. From the refugees, the Torguts were able to maintain accurate intelligence on the military situation in Dzungaria. 32

The Ch'ien-Lung Emperor was well aware of the situation in the Caspian steppe area through intelligence from Tibet and occasional traders who had been to the Astrakhan area. In 1714, Ch'ien-Lung offered the Torguts the "... best grasslands of Dzungaria, together with great riches, if they would return to the land of their fathers and aid the Manchus in the conquest of the Oret (or Olot) Mongols living there." 33 The Torguts refused Ch'ien-Lung's request in 1714, for they were sympathetic to the cause of the Dzungarian federation, and at that time they were on equal if not superior terms with the Russians on the Caspian steppes.

31H. Haslund (1935), p. 211.
By 1760, the situation in both the Caspian steppe region and in Dzungaria had changed. The last desperate stand of the Dzungarian Mongol tribes took place in 1757. The wholesale slaughter which accompanied their defeat in the same year deprived the Dzungarians of any further opportunity to attempt the formation of an Oirat Khanate. The Dzungarian pastures were forcibly resettled by relocated Manchurian Solons and to a certain extent by other groups, yet despite the slaughter of Dzungarians, the Manchus had not established firm control over Dzungaria. They could neither garrison sufficient soldiers on the Dzungarian steppes nor command the loyalty of the forcibly relocated colonists.

During the 1760's, the Torguts made quiet inquiries through Tibet to the Manchu Emperor, and asked permission to accept his offer of 1714, to return to the Dzungarian steppes. At the same time, they sent a petition to the Dalai Lama, asking him to ascertain an auspicious time for their departure from the Caspian area. Both replies were favorable. The Dalai Lama suggested they leave between the year of the Tiger (1770) and the year of the Hare (1771) that their flight might have "... the strength of the Tiger and the swiftness of the Hare." 34

The exodus of the Torguts took place on the fifth of January, 1771. The Russians evidently were unprepared, for despite their suspicions of unrest in the Caspian steppes, the Torguts had successfully allayed the Russians' fears and had concealed their plans for departure.

In the Russian battle against the Turks in 1768-1769, the Khan of the
Torguts sent thirty thousand picked warriors to fight on the Russian side.
As late as 1770, the Russians jeered at the Torgut Khan, describing him
as "... merely a bear on a chain who could not go where he desired but
only where he was driven."  

The trek of the Torguts from the Caspian steppes to the Dzungar-
ian steppes lasted seven months. On the way, numerous attacks by
Kazak-Kirgiz tribes and Russian Cossacks decimated the herds of sheep
and cattle they drove with them. Estimates vary greatly between the
Russian and Chinese accounts of the emigrants, but Howorth estimates
that 70,000 tent families took part in the trek, basing his figures on
Pallas' estimate. Of these 70,000 tent families, who represented
roughly 420,000 people, roughly 300,000 arrived in the valley of the
Ili River in 1771 (based on Chinese sources).  

The Ch'ien-Lung Emperor provided food, clothing and pastures
for the Torguts. Their pastures were located in the Ili River valley,
north of Khararshar, east of Tarbagatai, and east of Kulja. Howorth
mentions that some settled in the Altai region, where by Haslund's
account other Western Mongols, remnants of Dzungarian expansion, had
settled in the past.

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35 H. H. Howorth (1876), p. 575, quoting Mme. De Hell's Travels,
p. 574.
92-93.
There is little information on the Torgut Mongols who emigrated to Dzungaria from the Caspian steppe beyond mention of their settlement in Dzungaria. There is no information available to me for the years between their arrival in Dzungaria and the year 1873, when the English traveller, Ney Elias, reported on his impressions of Western Mongolia. In 1876, the Russian explorer Prejvalsky reported that 10,000 Torguts of Yuldus, north of Kharashar, had migrated from their pastures during the Mohammedan rebellion against China, led by Yakub Beg. There are indications in the literature that the Western Mongols of Dzungaria, including the newly arrived Torgut Tribe, were hardly "reliable allies" of the Manchus in their struggles against the Mohammedans. The Western Mongols had reverted to their former anti-Chinese position, and the Manchus could do nothing about it, faced as they were with a far more dangerous rebellion led by the Mohammedans.

There is considerable information, on the other hand, on the 15,000 or so Kalmuks who remained on the Caspian steppes for one reason or another. Some sub-tribes elected to remain in Russia rather than attempt the arduous journey through hostile steppes to Dzungaria. Others were driven back by battalions of Russian Cossacks, dispatched by Empress Catherine to keep the Torguts from leaving the Caspian steppes.

41 H. Haslund (1935), p. 216; O. Lattimore (1930) High Tartary (Boston: Little Brown and Company), p. 185, quoting Prejvalsky (1876), "From Kulja Across the Tian Shan to Lob-Nor".
Whereas the majority of the Torgut tribe left the Volga region, it appears that a tribal split kept the Durbet Mongols from following the Torgut Khan into Dzungaria. Madame De Hell reported in the 1860's that the territory of the Kalmuks of the Volga was considerably reduced by the departure of the Torguts, and that in her time they occupied "... but a small extent of country on the left bank of the Volga, just east of Astrakhan down the shores of the Caspian sea to the Kuma River and westward to the sources of the Don River" (about 38.61 square miles by my calculation, if De Hell's calculation of 10,297,587 hectares is correct). She noted that at that time, the Kalmuks were divided into two classes, "... those belonging respectively to the princes and to the Crown (Russian subjects)." The acreage figures are deceptive, for despite the fact that each Kalmuk tent would control approximately 1,235 acres of land, the land they held consisted of "... the most barren salt steppes by the Volga." Zwick visited the steppes of the Kalmuks by the Volga in 1823, as a missionary of the Russian Bible Society (he was unsuccessful in his attempts to convert the Kalmuks from Lamaism) and reported that the Durbet tribe constituted four-fifths of the Kalmuk population.

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45 H. H. Howorth (1876), p. 670; quoting Zwick (1823), pp. 41-44.
Fig. 2. Topographic map of the Lower Volga region.
Despite the great services rendered them by the Kalmuk cavalry detachments in defending Russia's war with Turkey in 1769 and 1770, the Kalmuks were never really trusted nor accepted as reliable allies by the Russians. After a good portion of the Kalmuk horde left the Caspian steppes in 1771 and migrated to Dzungaria in Sinkiang province of China, the religious, economic and social position of these Kalmuks, or Western Mongols, who remained in the Caspian area suffered even more under the governmental policies of Imperial Russia.

As if in a last-ditch effort to regain at least a fragment of their former glory, several detachments of young Kalmuk warriors joined the ranks of Pugachev's Don Cossacks in 1773 in a desperate rebellion against the conditions of eighteenth century serfdom. Pugachev's rebellion failed, and Catharine II dealt harshly with her Kalmuk prisoners. It must have seemed to Russian eyes that their suspicions of the Kalmuks had been proven, yet they did not implicate nor punish the entire Kalmuk population for the actions of the young Kalmuks under Pugachev. When Napoleon threatened Russia in the early 1800's, Kalmuk

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detachments of cavalry were among the vanguard of Russia's troops, harassing and dogging the trail of the French soldiers. When Paris fell in 1812, Kalmuk cavalry detachments were among the first Russian troops to enter the city. It was clearly evident that Russia still relied on Kalmuk support in her wars.²

In 1798 and again in the 1830's, severely cold winters killed most of the Kalmuk livestock. As a result, many Kalmuks had to leave their steppe pastures and find work in the fisheries of the Caspian coast or as herdsmen in the Ukraine. Many of the Kalmuks who remained on the steppes began a gradual transition from transhumant pastoralism to include the cultivation of grains and flax. The groups most affected by this shift in economy were the Khoshots in the rich, well-watered pasture lands of the upper Volga delta and the Durbets who occupied the high western steppes on the borders of Don Cossak land. The remnants of the Torguts who had not followed their tribe into Dzungaria continued to herd on the dry, salty, semi-desert regions between the Volga and the western steppes (see Fig. 2).³

Coincident with the shift to a mixed economy including herding for pay, agriculture, and wage-work in the fisheries came a transition in the 1840's from mobile, felt tent-temples to permanent monasteries. The fixed location of these new monasteries indicated that the Kalmuks had made a mental shift away from free-wandering nomadism to the idea of a settled, permanently located community. They could no longer hold

²F. Adelman (1961), p19 et seq.
³Ibid., pp. 20-29.
Fig. 3. Distribution of the Astrakhan Kalmuks.
services and festivals on the march, wherever they happened to be herding at the moment, but had to return or remain in an area with a permanent monastery. New Prayer rituals were incorporated into the services held in the new monasteries, including prayers for those who left the community to find wage-work in the fisheries and prayers before the construction of new houses, which began to replace *yurts*, or felt-tents, as a dwelling.

In the 1860's, the Russian government made an attempt to introduce formal education through state schools among the Kalmuks. At first the only Kalmuks who would attend the state schools were orphans, left homeless by famines brought on by losses in livestock, which plagued the Kalmuks increasingly. Gradually, however, the benefits of formal education were realized by the Kalmuks, and its final acceptance among the Kalmuks resulted in a new orientation toward Russian values. In Adelman's words:

> Its acceptance among the Kalmuks resulted in the formation of a native intelligentsia, loyal to the Russian monarchy, possessed of Russian values and bent on introducing the best of Russian culture to the basic Kalmyk population. The membership of this stratum became an elite . . . they served along with the Kalmyk hereditary nobility as a formal laison between Kalmyks and Russians.\(^5\)

While a portion of the Kalmuk horde could take advantage of the new opportunities opened to them by the establishment of state schools for Kalmuks, the majority of the tribe was severely impoverished by the actions of the same Russian administration which created the school

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\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 32-33.
system. In the 1860's further fuel was added to the flame of resentment of the majority of the tribe against the Russians when official decrees increased the pressure of Russian colonization in Kalmuk lands. By Imperial decree, no Kalmuks were allowed to approach Russian settlements with their herds beyond a limit fixed first at six miles (ten versts) and then increased to twelve miles (twenty versts). This meant that the best grazing lands of the Kalmuks, in the Volga region near Astrakhan, and along the shores of the Caspian sea, belonged to Russian colonists since Russian settlements dominated these regions. Every year the Kalmuks were further impoverished through loss of lands and losses in herds brought on by grazing in inferior pastures.

As might be expected, conditions in the 1860's generated two opposite reactions to Russians and Russian culture by the Kalmuks. One faction was represented mainly by the growing Russian-educated intellectual elite, composed mainly of orphans in the beginning and supplemented by those of the hereditary nobility who saw more personal opportunity in friendliness towards the Russians than in hostility. Included among the noble faction were many men who had been educated in Russian military academies and "gymnasia". Some held high-ranking posts in the Imperial cavalry corps and some were pages at the Imperial court.

Among those who reacted against the Russians and Russian culture were, understandably, many lamas who saw in Russian culture the end of the Lamaistic religion of the Kalmuks. At least one source states that

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6Ibid, p. 83.
Lamas played an important role in the mass migration of Torguts from the Caspian area in 1771, so that we may presume that lamas were from that time one of the most outspoken groups against Russian innovations among the Kalmuks. As might be expected, lamas resisted Russian Orthodox missionary attempts to introduce Christianity among the Kalmuks. Zwick, who visited several Kalmuk encampments in 1823, met with a quiet but firm refusal to requests that missionaries be allowed to proselytize among the Mongols. In 1856, Spottiswoode visited a Kalmuk temple in the Astrakhan area and noted that Lamaism was still the only religion of the Kalmuks who lived beyond the Russian pale. At that time, in answer to a request by Spottiswoode's companion that the lamas change their religion to Christianity, the lamas asked him whether the English supported the nation of the Turks, and respected their religion. Spottiswoode's companion could not deny that the English did respect the Turks and their religion, to which the lamas then replied, "... suppose then a Mullah were to come and tell your archbishop to change his religion for the Moslem, and that he would find it the better of the two, what should you think of him?" Spottiswoode's companion replied, "We should think he was mad, or had tasted of the beverage forbidden by his prophet, or that he was a fool." To this, the Kalmuks made no reply, but their point was well taken by Spottiswoode.  

By implication in the reference which has just been cited, the Kalmuks, or at least the Kalmuk lamas, conceived of the Kalmuks as members of a community that did not desire to adopt outside religions, even if they were accepted by the English. 

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8H. H. Hovorth (1876), p. 574, quoting Pallas, 1776.
of a nation, albeit a nation which was under the control of Russia. It is of the utmost importance to stress again that the nucleus of the anti-Russian faction among the Kalmuks was to be found among the lamas.

The vehicles for the lamas' anti-Russian movement were to be found in their temple schools, in their vigorous support of the Kalmuk written language, and in their support of an academic-monastery system, introduced from Tibet.

As more and more Kalmuks began to attend state schools under Russian tutelage, the Kalmuk lamas counterattacked by introducing formal schooling in their newly established permanent monasteries. In addition to schooling their charges in the fundamentals of the Lamaist religion, they vigorously promoted a program of educating Kalmuks in the Kalmuk written language. Previously, it was not necessary for anyone but a few lamas and perhaps some of the hereditary nobility to learn written Kalmuk, since there was no need for literacy among the bulk of the Kalmuk herding population. As competition in the form of the written Russian script presented alternate loyalties among the Kalmuks, the lamas sought for traditional Kalmuk loyalties in both the secular and religious body of literature which had been compiled in the days of Oirat supremacy (early 1700's). This literature had filtered over to Russia with refugee Western Mongols in the later decades of the 1700's.

The Western Mongolian, or Kalmuk, script was by tradition invented by a lama named Zaya Pandit, in 1648. Although a written script for Mongolian had existed from Chingizide times, this classical Mongolian script contained no way to render members of several contrasting pairs of
sounds. The new script was phonemic, thus resolving the difficulties of the older classical script. Under the Qirat Khanate in Dzungaria, the oral traditions, epic poems, and laws of the Western Mongols were transcribed and housed in special libraries. The new intellectual movement spread to the Caspian steppe area in the 1700's when refugee groups brought with them some of the more important books from the Dzungarian libraries. The majority of the books written in the Zaya Pandit script were probably composed by lamas, even though they might be on secular subjects, such as a tribal history. Haslund found that the Toregut Barejro, the "Origin of the Torguts", was written in the Zaya Pandit script and composed by a lama. He noted that "... this work, like many other ancient Torgut manuscripts was held by the tribe in an almost religious veneration, and only a chosen few had access to the pavilion in which it was kept" in Sinkiang. The Kalmuk lamas of the Astrakhan region made this literature available, through reprinting their most important books, to the Kalmuk population as a whole.

It must be stressed that the lamas, by introducing a concept of literacy in the Kalmuk language, neither confined their pupils to the upper strata of society nor did they confine their coverage of reading material to sacred books. While the lamas mostly confined their researches to sacred materials, they actively encouraged the intellectual laity, especially those of the nobility who were educated in the Kalmuk script, to develop secular literature in the Zaya Pandit script. In a

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10 T. Adelman (1961), p. 44.
conscientious attempt to maintain the Western Mongol and Kalmuk script as an alternative to the Russian script, the Kalmuks "... identified Kalmuk national culture with the Zaya Pandit tradition and as the salient component of Kalmuk identification and dignity they espoused the development of a national literature in a national language."  

The introduction of the "academic-monastery" system of Tibet took place in the 1880's among the Kalmuks. Whatever may have been the original reason for the introduction of the academic-monastery system, its effect was to establish close bonds of intellectual communion with the established academic world of Tibet and Central Asia. A new status system was introduced by this action on the part of the Kalmuk lamas, with advancement dependent only on the ability of a monk to achieve greater learning and recognition than his fellows. The highest levels of education were to be attained only by studying at one of the three most famous monasteries in Tibet, where the system was developed. If a candidate could pass examinations by members of the clerical staff of one of these "Universities" after training, he would be granted a title appropriate to his level of achievement. For the lower academic ranks, training in Tibet was unnecessary. The Kalmuks could establish a lower degree program independent of Tibet in their own monasteries.

Contact by the Kalmuks with Tibet had been sporadic since the migration of the major portion of the horde to Dzungaria in 1771. At

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least one source has stated that the trade between Tibet and Russia was carried on by Kalmuk traders in the 1770's, and Ney Elias states that Kalmuks and Russians carried on trade in Western Mongolia and other parts of Central Asia in 1870. This trade very likely offered a line of communication between the Kalmuk lamas and those of Tibet. In the late 1890's, Pozdneev reported that there was considerable contact between Mongolia and Russia through pilgrimages undertaken by wealthy Kalmuk nobles. The risk of travel through Kazakhstan was increased during this time as a result of Russian expansion, and pilgrimages probably went by the northern route from Russia through Mongolia and down through Sinkiang to Tibet. Unfortunately, we have no confirmation of this in travelogues of this period, but as will be seen in the case study of Dambijaltsan, the Kalmuks of the Astrakhan region were well aware of the location in Central Asia of the Dzungarian Mongols who had left the Astrakhan region in 1771.

Although Kalmuk lamas introduced the academic-monastery system of Tibet in the Astrakhan region and established close intellectual ties by their action with Central Asia, their academic degrees were not recognized by the Russians as comparable to a Russian University degree. Paradoxically, this attempt by the Kalmuks to meet the intellectual

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16N. Elias (1873), pp. 128-129.

challenge of Russian education succeeded only in turning Tibetan-educated Kalmuks toward Central Asia, where their degrees were recognized and respected.

By the 1890's, the economic, social and intellectual position of the Kalmuks in the Caspian area was hardly improved from the 1860's despite the vigorous efforts by Kalmuk lamas to better the lot of their people. In 1891, the Danish explorer, Hans S. Kaarsberg, wrote:

The race is looked down upon, but if the Kalmuks had not in past times helped the Russians the latter would hardly be what they now are in the Caucasus. The Kalmuks are Russian subjects judged according to Russian law and are compelled to do military service in the Tsar's army... the horse was once the Kalmuk's wealth, but that time is now past... In past days a well-to-do Kalmuk owned a hundred horses, a rich one a thousand. One Kalmuk owned three thousand horses sixteen years ago; now he has none at all...18

During the wars of the Russian Revolution, the majority of Kalmuks fought for the Tsarist regime against the Menshevik and Bolshevik forces. Inter-clan and inter-tribal rivalry flourished during the inter-war period, and banditry was rife on the Kalmuk steppes.19 The logical supporters of the Tsarist Regime, the Kalmuk nobility and the Russian-educated intelligentsia, were punished in 1929, when they were ordered transferred "... beyond the borders of Kalmuckia" and their property was confiscated.20 On what has been termed "... the positive side of Soviet policy in Kalmuckia" it must be noted that a Kalmuk Autonomous

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19 W. Kolarz (1952), p. 84.
20 Ibid.
Province was created in 1920. This province became the Kalmuk Autonomous Socialist Republic in 1933. In 1927, a capital city was built on the Sal River and given the name Elista. Kolarz notes that "... by the outbreak of the Second World War, Elista had 12,000 inhabitants. It was officially described as a 'clean, neat, elegant little town of concrete, metal and glass'."  

During the interim period between the first and second World Wars, literacy in Kalmuk territory increased from 4 to 90%, but there is no indication whether this literacy was entirely in Russian. Indeed, the Zaya Pandit movement came into direct conflict with Soviet ideology in the 1930s. The great national epic poem Dzhangar or Jangar, which had been printed by the Kalmuks as part of the Zaya Pandit movement, was found to be "... imbued with religious and reactionary content" and the Kalmuks were urged to "... purge it carefully of the harmful influences of the age and the tendencies of the ruling class ..." With a typically Western Mongol and Lamaist Buddhist bent of mind, the Kalmuks insisted that the two heroes of Dzhangar found their reincarnation in Stalin.

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24 Ibid., p. 86, quoting from Revolutsiya i Natsionalnosti, No. 52 (June 1934).
During the second World War, the German army occupied the Astrakhan area, including the Kalmuk Republic. The conduct of the Kalmuks during the period of German occupation was evidently not to the satisfaction of the Soviet authorities, although there was no official proclamation of dissatisfaction with the Kalmuks. In the years after the liberation of southern Russia from the Germans, from 1943 to 1945, an informal program of liquidation was carried out by the Soviets. The Kalmuk Autonomous Socialist Republic was incorporated into the province of Astrakhan, and the Kalmuks cease to be heard of in Soviet publications. 26

26 W. Kolarz (1952), p. 86.
Fig. 4. Distribution of the Dzungarian Mongols and the Telengit.
In the 1860's, Imperial Russia concluded an agreement with China which gave Russia sovereignty over the Altai mountain area in southern Siberia. Among the groups affected by this agreement were the Telengit, a hunting and herding people who spoke a Turkic language but had strong cultural ties with the Western Mongol groups of Sinkiang, to the south of them. Indeed, earlier writings refer to the Telengit as Kalmuks.  

Many Altaians were descendants of refugee Dzungarian Mongols who fled to the mountains after their disastrous defeat in 1757. Though the Telengit were a Turkic-speaking people, it seems likely that intermarriage with the Western Mongols had occurred, giving the Telengit a closer identification with Western Mongol ethnic identity.

The Telengit lived along the Chuya (Chui) River valley, and for that reason received the brunt of Russian colonization in the Altai (see Fig. 1). The Chuya River valley was the main avenue for travel between Western Mongolia and southern Siberia, as mountain passes were low and travel relatively easy through the Altai mountains near the Chuya. In the 1870's, settlers along the Chuya were mostly traders, who lived in log cabins and carried on their business during the summer but left for

\[1\text{N. Elias (1873), p. 138.}\]
larger Siberian settlements in the winter. By 1900 more and more colonists began to settle permanently on the Chuya. The Telengit suffered considerably through the loss of their lands to incoming settlers, both through outright seizure and through legal proceedings. Russian Orthodox missions began active proselytization in the Altai area, and it was "... those Altaians who resisted conversion who suffered losses." Missions of the Russian Orthodox Church had been active in the area for some time, so those who resisted conversion were well aware of the religious and cultural differences of opinion they held with the Russians.

There was generally bad feeling on the part of more traditional Telengit toward those who had become converted to the "heretical" Russian Orthodox Church. The Telengit had been shamanist prior to the coming of the Russians, and were organized into loosely knit, territorially oriented patrilineages. They do not appear to have actively resisted the Russians in the early years of Russian colonization, from 1866 to the early 1900's. In 1870, Elias noted that they were "... being rapidly impoverished and improved away by contact with civilization ... still universally liked for their simplicity, hospitality, and honesty." As an indication of the difficulty a researcher has in locating statements which give accurate, precise descriptions of a religious or political nature from early travelogues, the following quote from Elias manuscript is illustrative: "...
At approximately the same time the Russian missionaries were beginning a really concerted effort to bring the Telengit within the Russian Orthodox Church, the Telengit were receiving delegations of Lamaist monks from Western Mongolia. The most important function of the latter missions seems to have been in their political, rather than religious, character. In the 1880's, lamas from Western Mongolia "... sought to unify the Altai Turks and re-establish the kingdom of the Oirot Khan." The re-establishment of the "Oirot" (or Cirat) Khanate referred to the Uriad or confederation of Torguts, Khoshots, Olots and Durbets in Dzungaria during the fifteenth century.

At the height of its power, the Dzungarian federation had controlled the Chuya River valley, along with most of the rest of the Altai area. When the Uriad collapsed, the Altai mountains were one of the major refuge areas toward which the Dzungarians fled. When the Torguts completed their trek from Astrakhan in 1771, the Ch’ien Lung Emperor allotted some of them pasturage in the Altai region. It was quite logical that the Western Mongols would seek to regain control over the Altai whenever any opportunity came their way. If they could control the Chuya River valley, they would have control over most of the trade passing between Russia and Western Mongolia, including the Chinese provinces of Kansu and the Outer Mongolian province of Khobdo. Then too, the Chuya

River valley was of great value in a military sense, for whoever controlled the valley controlled the main access route into Western Mongolia, or conversely into southern Siberia. The Western Mongols could effectively block a coalition between Russia and China in northern Sinkiang, by holding the only practicable northern access. It would have been difficult for Russia to send troops across Kazakhstan, for that entire area was ineffectively controlled by Russia at the time.

The Russian authorities were well aware of the significance of any move by the Western Mongols to re-establish the sovereignty of the Uriad federation in the Altai area. Krader states that the Telengit numbered 20,273 in 1897, enough to cause the authorities considerable difficulty should any popular move toward insurrection gain favor among the Telengit. The test of Russian power and authority came in 1900, when an avalanche toppled a major mountain peak in the vicinity of the Chuya. The Telengit interpreted this as a sign of the imminent return through reincarnation of one of their major culture heroes, Prince Shunni. On his deathbed, Prince Shunni had promised to return to the Telengit if they were not happy under Russian rule. Such promises are not uncommon among the Mongols, who feel their soul will respond to requests by re-establishing itself in a new body and fulfilling the desires of the worshippers.

Shortly after the avalanche, a visiting Western Mongol lama announced that he was the returning "Oirot Khan", implying that he would lead the Telengit out of Russian territory, away from the intolerable

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pressures of Russian colonization and missionizing. The Russian authorities reacted promptly, capturing the lama and deporting him from the Chuya River valley, before he had time to organize the Telengit. It was obvious to the Telengit that any move they might make to leave Russian territory would be resisted by the Russians and that Russian power was sufficient to prevent this happening if the authorities should hear of their plans.

For several years the Telengit seem to have adjusted themselves to the inevitability of Russian rule, Russian colonization, and Russian missionaries. In May 1904, however, a Telengit named Chot Chelpan had a vision. In his vision a rider dressed in white and riding a white horse proclaimed the return to earth of the "Ghot Khan", who had come at the request of the Telengit to re-establish the Kingdom of the Ghot (or Uriad) Khanate. Behind this rider appeared two other riders, who interpreted the words of the rider in white to Chot, for the first horseman spoke "a language unknown to Chot". The rider announced, "I was and will be forever and ever. I am the Chief of the Ghotans, which I proclaim to you, for the time is near. Thou, Chot, art a sinful man, but thy daughter is innocent. Through her I shall announce to Altaians my commandments." 7

According to informant sources of the events which followed, shortly after Chot Chelpan's vision, his daughter who had been herding her flocks on the steppe also had a vision. In Chot's daughter's vision

two maidens appeared to her and told her they would appear that night to her in her yurt. They indicated that she should tell her family to leave the yurt. Although the girl did not tell her family to leave the yurt, evidently they felt "a great impulse" to leave and did so. Immediately "... twin rainbows appeared and behind them the heavenly maidens." The maidens told Chot Chelpan's daughter to pray to her household gods, but this she was unable to do, for females can perform only certain religious rites in this area, and these only in conjunction with the participation of their elders and the males of the tent-family. When she refused, the maidens caused the household idols to tumble into the fire. Presumably, the maidens then told her the commandments of a new religion.

Chot's neighbors apparently commented on what they took to be the insanity of his daughter, upon hearing about the strange visions she had had. At this, the heavenly maidens reappeared and told the people they would "... all be punished if they did not believe the sign." The maidens also foretold the imminent establishment of a new Khanate.

Chelpan preached the new religion in a secluded place, far from the Russian settlements and unknown to the converted Telengit. He had by this time created a prayer, "Thou my Burkhan dwelling on high, thou my Oirot descending below, deliver me from the Russians, preserve me

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9L. Krader, Ibid.; for possible significance of idol-burning, see Appendix A, page 118.
10Ibid.
from their bullets. 11

The commandments of the new politico-religious movement led by Chot Chelpan are important in a discussion of the movement, termed "Burkhanism" by the Russians after the Mongol term for deity. Chot Chelpan proclaimed a list of commandments — probably patterned after the idea of commandments in the Russian Orthodox Church. His prayers are definitely reminiscent of Christian prayers, and may also be traced to the same origin.

Chelpan's commandments stressed that the Telengit had to give up smoking tobacco: "Do not smoke Tobacco, but if you cannot control the habit, then let the tobacco be mixed with two parts of birch bark." Krader attributes the importance of a proscription on tobacco to the fact that many Telengit, and other Central Asians for that matter, went heavily in debt to Russian and Chinese to buy tobacco. Anti-Russian feeling is thus imparted by this commandment. 12

The second commandment of the new religion was an order to kill all cats: "Kill all cats and henceforth never permit them in your yurts." This is a rather strange order. Krader notes that killing is contrary to Buddhist teaching and therefore this is not due to Lamaist influence. Perhaps this commandment was anti-Russian in that cats were common Russian household pets and were seldom ever seen in Telengit encampments. 13

11 Ibid., pp. 287-288.
12 Ibid., pp. 285, 287.
The Telengit were exhorted not to chop down living trees, not to swallow the blood of animals and to incline their heads toward "... the northern white mountain (although) the time has come when the white mountain is no longer your lord." These proclamations were all shamanist in origin, according to Krader. Animals had to be slaughtered in a certain way, so that none of their blood flowed onto the ground; trees were worshipped as were other outstanding features of the natural landscape, such as mountains. The particular mountain mentioned might well have been the mountain associated with the return of Prince Shunni, and this statement would indicate that his bodily presence was expected momentarily among the Telengit.

Ritualistic practices were urged upon the Altaians. They were asked to sprinkle milk upwards and in all four directions in the morning and to set up four birch censers and four small birches within their yurts. Heather or juniper was to be burned in the censers. On small birch trees, ribbons of five colors were to be hung, to denote the five "chief peoples and the five chief religions." Krader interprets the five chief peoples of the world to be the Altaians, the Mongols, the Chinese, the Russians, and the Kazaks. This is open to some doubt. A common and very ancient Chinese saying refers to the "five races in one family", the Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Moslems and Tibetans. It

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14 Ibid., p. 286.
15 Ibid., pp. 287-288.
16 Ibid., p. 288.
is possible that this is simply a common phrase, but if the latter interpretation is valid, the orientation would be to the south rather than to the north and northwest. The five major religions might well be Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism, Mohammedanism, and Lamaism.

Among the other commandments were definite anti-shamanist statements, for example, "Burn the drums of the shamans because they are not from god, but from Erlik." Krader notes the dualism in this phrase, perhaps traceable to the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Altai, where Erlik is equated by converts with the devil, although Erlik was conceived of originally as a figure more feared for its activities as the deity of death, and not therefore morally evil. The convenient parallel Altaian converts had made between Erlik and Satan was used by Chot Chelpan as an integral part of one of his commandments. This might serve as an indication of the extent to which Telengit religious concepts had metamorphosed through contact with the Russians.

The anti-Russian import of several of the commandments is worthy of attention. The Telengit were warned not to become friendly with Russians, not to eat from the same pot with Christians (including converted Telengit), and to rid themselves of all Russian money. The money was to be spent on powder, shot, and other purchases. Those who hoarded money were to share the fate of the Russians. The use of confiscated

18 L. Krader (1956), pp. 286-287.
Russian currency to purchase powder and shot is the only indication the Telengit were aware they might have to fight for their liberty.

The fate of the Russians was expounded in a statement which is outstanding in its mystic, passive orientation. According to informants, Chot Chelpan declared, "Once we were all under the Oirots. Now we will be at one with them. We will look on the Russians as on our enemies. Soon their end will come; the land will not accept them, the earth will open and they will be cast under the earth." 20

The Russians, as might be expected from the force of the above statements, decided to rid themselves of Chot Chelpan's fiery oratory. They moved to arrest Chot, his wife, and daughter. When they arrived at his yurt, however, "... they found over 3,000 natives facing east in prayer, but Chot was gone." 21 Later Chot was betrayed by a Telengit in Russian service and was brought to trial in St. Petersburg in 1906. Krader reports that no documents of this trial survive, but "... it is generally believed that Chot was at liberty toward the end of 1906." 22

Some of Chot Chelpan's disciples, called varliki after the Mongolian term for an edict of the Chingizide Emperors, escaped to Mongolia, presumably to Khobdo province. There they founded a school of Burkhanism. Anokhin reported in 1927 that there were many changes in the personal habits of the Chuya River Telengit as a result of the

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20 Ibid., p. 286.
21 Ibid., p. 289.
22 Ibid., quoting from Bakai (1926), pp. 123-124.
Burkhanist movement. Many Telengit gave up tobacco and drank only fermented mare's milk in place of Russian vodka.  

Walter Kolarz noted that the development of Burkhanism presented the Soviets with a difficult problem. In the first place, it was difficult to condemn Burkhanism, for it was "a national liberation movement directed against 'colonial robbery, Christendom, and the Altai Church Mission', and as such was under severe attack from Tsarist authorities. This dilemma was solved when, during the 1930's, "popular imagination identified Oirat Khan with 'Yepon Khan' the Japanese Emperor." From that time, Soviet authorities charged the Burkhanists with "attempting to sever cultural and economic ties with the Russians, and to exchange them for a Japanese protectorate."  

Russian sources report that Russian authorities blamed the development of Burkhanism on Japanese agents in the Altai. It seems unlikely that Japanese agents would be able to move in this area undetected. This movement cannot be attributed to Japanese agents, rather it must be considered a reaction to the extreme pressures of Russian colonization in Telengit lands, perhaps with suggestive aid from Western Mongol patriots.  

The Growth of Secular Oirat Nationalism in the Altai  

After the Russian February Revolution of 1917, many groups  

actively opposed Bolshevik supremacy with most of this activity centered in the Volga region of southern Russia and in the vast area of Siberia.

One consequence of the political turmoil of the years between 1917 and 1920, when the Bolsheviks were struggling to maintain power in Russia was a rapid upsurge of separatist movements by minority groups in the areas least controlled by Bolsheviks. The Telengit and other Altaians near the Chuya River valley joined the trend towards separatism in February, 1918, under the leadership of B. I. Anuchin.

Anuchin called for the formation of a "Greater Oirotia", speaking before a " Constituent Congress of the High Altai", of about one hundred delegates. Among the ambitious schemes set forth in this conference was that negotiations with China, Russia, and Outer Mongolia would permit the formation of a new state in Central Asia. As Kolarz reports, "... China was to part with Dzungaria, ... Mongolia was expected to abandon the 'Mongol Altai', and Russia was to lose a considerable portion of her Altai region."  

Although the Altaians' schemes for separatism in 1918 were considerably more sophisticated than the Burkhanist movement of 1904, the fact still remained that they were not powerful enough to implement their schemes alone. Almost immediately, they joined forces with Admiral Kolchak and fought with loyalist "white" forces against the Soviet "Red" Army in Siberia. This action on the part of the Oirat nationalists seems

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27 Ibid., p. 174.
almost incomprehensible at first (considering the anti-Tsarist Burkhanist movement); yet, the Altaians were aware that they needed support from more powerful forces in the establishment of a "Greater Giorxia"—this would mean (in the political arena of Siberia in 1918), that they would have to throw in their lot either with the Soviets or with the White loyalist forces. That they should have chosen to link their forces with Kolchak might be explained by two reasons. One reason was the strength of Kolchak's position in Siberia in 1918 (he was in command of a sizeable army and was meeting at that time little Bolshevik opposition). In addition, Allied support of Kolchak might have had something to do with the Altaians' choice. The Allies also supported forces in the northern Caucasus mountains, an area of strong Kalmuk concentration.\(^28\) It is reasonable to postulate, with this background knowledge, that Astrakhan Kalmuks might have had a role in the decision by Altaians to support Kolchak.\(^29\)

By 1920, Admiral Kolchak's forces had been defeated by the Bolsheviks. Kolarz reports that "Soviet power was established in the High Altai, and in February, 1920, the first Communist Party and Komsomol organizations were set up . . . ."\(^30\) Soviet policy in the Altai closely paralleled that in the Astrakhan region of "Kalmuckia". The Soviet government "... proclaimed an amnesty in favour of the 'citizen-
natives of the High Altai, who had originally sided with the counter-revolution, but who had since then repented of their attitude. In 1922, and 'Oirot Autonomous Province' was created, with prominent Altaian leaders in the new administration. By the middle thirties, however, the situation changed:

Official Soviet sources asserted then that Oirot nationalists had exploited the situation of Oirotia as a border territory for their aims. This meant that they had been in contact with 'counter-revolutionary elements' of the Chinese Province of Sinkiang. At the same time, it was alleged that a 'counter-revolutionary nationalist group' had penetrated deep into the village councils and also into the provincial administrative machinery. In connection with the liquidation of the 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy', the entire leadership of the Communist Party of Oirotia was dismissed for 'lack of vigilance', and for not fighting 'local nationalism'. It is a fair assumption that Oirot nationalism with all its peculiarities, like the cult of Oirot Khan, survived not only the purges, but even the Second World War. Otherwise, the Soviet Government would hardly have taken the trouble to ban the 'provocative' term 'Oirot' in 1948.

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31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 175.
CHAPTER IV

THE CULT OF DAMBIIJALTSAN - TEST CASE #3

One of the most remarkable personalities to dominate early twentieth century Central Asian history was Dambijaltsan, a warrior-priest who captured the imagination of thousands of Western Mongols during the comparatively short time of his career as the reincarnation of Amursana, a great Western Mongol warrior-patriot of the eighteenth century (see above pp. 18-19).

There are many accounts of the Ja Lama, or false lama, as he is commonly referred to by Mongols. I have attempted to synthesize the most coherent of the reports of Ja Lama to be found in Western books about Mongolia. These accounts all have a certain flavor of the unbelievable and impracticable, but the reader must be cautioned that accounts of religious movements gathered from native informants often exhibit a considerable amount of distortion.

In the vast steppelands of Inner Asia, information acquired through personal inter-relationships provides knowledge of the world external to one locality. Nomad populations depend on news carried by travellers for their whole understanding of events outside their ken. A Mongol thinks nothing of jumping on his horse either to intercept a traveller and ask for news or to make his way to the nearest encampment of Mongols and pass the time of day with them. The loneliness and isolation of nomad encampments gives rise to several phenomena which bear on our discussion of Dambijaltsan.
The Mongol evidently enjoys adding to his meager store of information about the world external to his neighborhood. He therefore glosses what scraps of information he has with tidbits of information which seem to "fit in" with a story, thus ultimately creating a much more fascinating story for his listeners. As a consequence of this tendency, statements about the development of Dambijaltsan's cult, even though gathered by an ethnologist or traveller from quite relatively dependable informants, will often have a colorful dash to them which is unlikely to have existed in the original situation. Furthermore, the more colorful the personality in the original situation, the more unbelievably colorful will be the tale circulated like wildfire from tent to tent and district to district by the Mongols.

The accounts of Dambijaltsan, or the Ja Lama, from which I have drawn information are all written by travellers in Mongolia during the early decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, none of the travellers had had ethnographic training, but they collated eyewitness reports and stories about Ja Lama to form a fairly coherent picture of the man and his activities.

In the early 1890's, a strange figure appeared among the Mongols of the Kokonor region of Tibet and moved about among the Western Mongols from Tibet through Dzungaria. This man, originally a Kalmuk Mongol from the Astrakhan region of the Lower Volga, styled himself as first the grandson and then the reincarnation of Amursana. Dambijaltsan, as he called himself, preached liberation from the rule of the Chinese in Sinkiang, yet he was not pro-Russian. He was what one might term a
Western Mongol patriot.

The personal history of Dambijaltsan is most interesting in the light of the development in Western Mongol patriotism with which he was connected in later years. As an Astrakhan Kalmuk Mongol he was a member of one of the remnant groups of Derbet Mongols who remained in Russia after the 1771 migration of Torguts from Russian territory. As a Russian Kalmuk he was accustomed to Russian ways, and certainly must have been fairly familiar with the Russian cultural context. In contrast to this, and indicative of the familiarity and close contact the Volga Kalmuk Mongols had maintained over the years with the Western Mongols of Dzungaria, he knew a great deal about the various beliefs, customs, and legends of the Western Mongols. Early in his career, he claimed to be a reincarnation of Amursana, an important personage in Western Mongol history. The extent of his influence is the subject of this discussion.

Born in the Astrakhan tribe of Baga Durbet, his real name was Palden (thus neither an assumed name nor a temple name). In his early boyhood, he was sent from Baga Durbet to the monastery of Dolon-nor in Eastern Mongolia, near the Barge region of Manchuria, where he began studying to be a lama. This great monastery near the Chinese border assumed major importance at a later date in the history of Eastern Mongolia, for it was the seat of several major intrigues by Japanese-inspired Mongol patriots working for a Pan-Mongol state during the second World War. The temple-schools which were set up in the Astrakhan

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region in the 1860's and after may not have been functioning when
Dambijaltsan was a young boy (he must have been born in the early 1860's
if he were in his sixties in 1924).

After receiving his early training as a novice in Dolon-nor,
Dambijaltsan went to Tibet and enrolled himself in the monastery of
Dre-Pung (a'bras-spuns). Dre-Pung was one of the three major academic
monasteries in Lhasa, and had played a major role in supporting the
Dzungarian invasion of Lhasa in 1717. Of interest here is Adelman's
comment that Dre-Pung monastery was one of the major centers to which
Astrakhan Kalmuks came for training in higher degrees.

That Dambijaltsan enrolled in the College of Thaumaturgy (Occult
Magic) is certain, but the actual nature of his other activities during
this time is not known. Roerich states that it was probable that during
this time, Dambijaltsan undertook pilgrimages to the major shrines of
India and gained a fair knowledge of other major centers of Central
Asian Buddhism.

Roerich noted that during his stay at Lhasa "... he manifested
an ambitious, impetuous, and cruel character ... it is generally said
that he killed his roommate in the monastery because of a dispute, and had
to flee from Lhasa in order to escape from the stern monastic law."
Evidently he did not, therefore, receive an actual degree in Thaumaturgy, but this fact does not seem to have deterred him from claiming occult powers. Statements from Western sources confirm the statement by Roerich that "Mongols generally affirm that he had a tremendous will power and could easily hypnotize people." 6

The time was ripe in 1890 in Western Mongolia for just such a personality. The Western Mongols were in no wise content with their position, vis-à-vis China. Moreover, China was in no position to maintain order in Dzungaria, for the Manchu Imperial government was weak and degenerate.

In his book, Mongolia and the Mongols, the Russian explorer, Pozdneev, published an account of "... a great Lama who appeared in Mongolia in the autumn of 1890." This lama "... wore a fur cap surmounted by a golden vajra (sanskritic for the Tibetan dorje, a Lamaistic sceptre) and freely distributed gold and golden coins to poor people." 7

At this point in his career, Dambijaltsan (as he was identified by Pozdneev and his informant Mongols) claimed to be Temursana, the grandson of Amursana. How he acquired the gold and gold coins is a mystery. Lattimore notes the ease with which any man of forceful personality could win the support of the Mongols for the cause of Western Mongol independence. When Mongols were questioned by Pozdneev about how a man who died in the

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1700's (Amursana) could have a living grandson of thirty or so, they replied "... with the irrefutable argument that this man wore a gold ornament of a particular kind on the peak of his conical hat." Since the penalties for wearing the ornament, which signified a princely rank to the Mongols, were most severe under Chinese-Manchu law, he must have been what he said he was. There is no discrepancy in accounts of Dambijaltsan's alias at this time, for Roerich states that Dambijaltsan told Mongols he was "Ten-pei Jaltsan" son of Temursana, who was in his turn son of the famous Amursana.

To the Mongols who gathered to hear him on his journey from Kokonor in Tibet to Khobdo and Urga in Outer Mongolia, Dambijaltsan preached the cause of Mongolian independence from Chinese rule. His activities were most disturbing to the Chinese authorities, and according to Roerich, they approached the Russian consul in Urga and requested that the Russians arrest Dambijaltsan, as a Russian subject, on his arrival in Urga, and deport him to Russia. It seems more probable that the Chinese arrested Dambijaltsan and turned him over to the Russian consul for deportation. Since he was a Russian subject, this would have been the proper procedure according to extraterritorial practice. The Russians complied with this request and Dambijaltsan was sent to Kiakhta as a deportee. He was confined in the Kiakhta region for about a year, but


was then freed. In 1891, his presence was reported in southern Mongolia, where he was arrested by Chinese authorities. Dambijaltsan this time had a passport "... in the name of the Astrakhan Kalmuk, Ten-pei Jal-tsen." At this stage in his career, Dambijaltsan was in the possession of two white (albino) camels. White camels have always had a sacred significance to the Mongols, comparable to the sacredness of the white horse, and suitable only for the conveyance of exalted nobles and high dignitaries of the Lama Church. In the days of the Chingizide Empire, the chief shaman alone had the right to ride a white horse.

In 1891, the colorful career of Dambijaltsan was again interrupted, for the Mongols of Sinkiang and Western Outer Mongolia had gathered along his travel-route and his cause was being espoused by a dangerously large number of Western Mongols. Accordingly, he was arrested a second time and deported to Kiakhta. For a period of some ten years, Dambijaltsan seems to have fallen on hard times. He was reported as travelling to the Tsaidam (in Western Inner Mongolia) with one attendant and two pack-ponies, and had evidently learned his lesson from two deportations. Dambijaltsan was biding his time while building up a quiet reputation among the Western Mongols. It is unfortunate that we have no exact information on his whereabouts during this period for he may well have been the "visiting Mongolian lama" who took

12 Ibid., p. 226.
13 Ibid.
advantage of the avalanche in the Chuya River region to announce the "coming of the Oirat Khan" to the Telengit.

The next mention of Dambijaltsan in Western sources is in late 1900. He was then in the employ of the Russian explorer, P. K. Koslov, on an expedition to the Kham Province of Tibet. In Koslov's employ, he was known as the Lama She-rap. The expedition was stopped by Tibetan border-guards before it could actually enter Tibet, and "She-rap" was delegated to present the case of the expedition in Lhasa. Dambijaltsan never rejoined the expedition, but accounts of his activities in Lhasa have been reported by the Dilowa Hutuktu (a Living Buddha, former head of the Narabanchi Monastery in Khojbo province and an informant for Owen Lattimore). The Dilowa Hutuktu reports that during this time, Dambijaltsan was a "successful 'gold-brick' confidence man", who deposited large boxes of "treasure" with a Tibetan monastery and then proceeded to trade on credit, as was the custom among pilgrims to Tibet. After the departure of Dambijaltsan from Lhasa, the boxes were opened and proved to contain only stones.

From Lhasa, Dambijaltsan journeyed to Kharashar in central Sinkiang, where (in 1900) he resumed the role he had been forced to discard earlier. This time as the reincarnation of Amursana, he fired the Mongols of the Tien Shan area with vivid statements about the renaissance of the Western Mongols and the Oirat Empire. According to

14 Ibid.

statements by a Russian merchant in Kharashar, Dambijaltsan's appearance was considerably changed from the 1890's. Now he was clean-shaven, whereas formerly he had worn a beard. Furthermore, he wore military uniform under the yellow coat of a lama. He combined in his dress both his roles, lama and warrior. Ossendowski writes that he wore "... a wonderful gown of silk, yellow as beaten gold and girt with a brilliant sash. His cleanly shaven face, short hair, red coral rosary on the left hand and his yellow garment proved clearly that before us stood some high Lama priest — with a big Colt under his blue sash!" 17

It is significant that Dambijaltsan chose the territory of the Kharashar Mongols for his re-appearance as the lama-warrior fighting for the renascence of a Western Mongol Empire. The Kharashar Mongols were descendants of the head tribe of Torguts who migrated from the Astrakhan region of Russia in 1771. Their chief was Khan over all the Daungarian Mongols, by order of the Ch'ien Lung Emperor. The Khan of the Torguts was more interested in maintaining close relations with the Chinese than in awakening any feelings of Western Mongol independence. 18 China was fast losing any semblance of control over northern Sinkiang, however, and only the slightest spark was necessary to arouse enthusiasm for the cause of Western Mongol independence among the younger generation of Torguts. Because the Khan of the Torguts would not tolerate anti-Chinese

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17 T. Ossendowski (1922), p. 113.
feelings among his men, recruitment was necessarily scattered. The
organization of recruits in Dambijaltsan's forces differed from the
Chingizide pattern in that no kinship obligations through loyalty
patterns to the Khan were involved. Recruitment was individual, and
recruits were inclined to be composed of young men who felt loyalty to
the ideal of an independent Western Mongolia rather than hereditary
loyalty to their Khan.

These were the vigorous people whom Dambijaltsan aroused and
welded together in a compact unit. By 1910, he had recruited a strong
fighting force. Cases of hysteria and hallucinations were common among
his men. Reports of visions of their ancestors sitting in heavenly tents
surrounded by heavenly flocks and pastures added fuel to the fire. 
Dambijaltsan had acquired the added distinction of being invulnerable
to bullets.

In the spring of 1912, Dambijaltsan attacked the Chinese with
his horde of armed men (described by Mongols as a horde). Indeed, they
deserve the Chingizide title of horde, for although they were composed
of individuals drawn at random from many encampments, they were organized
in the Chingizide manner into banners, and they carried flags of identi-
fication with traditional Western Mongol symbols inscribed on them.

The general headquarters of the Chinese in Western Mongolia was

19 F. Ossendowski (1922), pp. 119-120.
20 O. Lattimore, Desert Road to Turkestan (Boston: Little, Brown
the garrison-town of Khobdo, where they had about 10,000 soldiers and officers. This town was the focus of attention for all Mongols who had patriotic notions about ridding Mongolia of the Chinese. To this town, Dambijaltsan directed the force of his attention and military strength. After repeated attacks from Dambijaltsan's horde, the town of Khobdo surrendered. (As we shall see, this does not necessarily mean the Chinese soldiers, in an inner fortress, also surrendered). One source states that "... then was re-enacted the long forgotten picture of Tartar hordes destroying European towns. Hun Baldon (one of Dambijaltsan's generals) carried over him a triangle of lances with brilliant red streamers, a sign that he gave up the town to the soldiers for three days."22 Other traditions from the days of Genghis Khan were also enacted. Dambijaltsan slaughtered some ten Chinese and Mohammedan traders by a secret ritual wherein their breasts were cut open and their hearts torn out. The blood from these human sacrifices was afterwards sprinkled over the war banners and troops to impart strength and invulnerability. The skins of the victims were flayed from their bodies and used as decoration in Dambijaltsan's tent.23

Considering the strength of the Chinese garrison in Khobdo, and the fact that Dambijaltsan did not have official sanction for his raid from the Torgut Khan (and therefore neither the superior armaments nor the trained excellence of the Khan's own cavalry corps) it is obvious that factors other than military strength in numbers and superior armaments came into play in the battle of Khobdo. Dambijaltsan's

22F. Osseendowski (1922), p. 121.

Mongolian horde, with their Chingizide banners and crusading zeal, must have made a terrific psychological impression on the Chinese garrison. In the light of previous sieges of Khobdo, it seems quite possible to hypothesize that Dambijalsan could have taken Khobdo with even a handful of men.

New Elias' report of the siege of Khobdo by a handful of Mohammedans during the rebellion led by Yakub Beg in 1873 serves as an illustration of the Chinese soldier's attitude toward an armed uprising in Central Asia, or in Elias' terms, "... as a specimen of Chinese warfare in Central Asia." Khobdo was defended by two thousand warriors including Chinese and Amur Tartar (Manchurian) infantrymen and cavalrymen. The Mohammedan Tungan horde was composed of 300 persons at the outside, "... and of this number a large proportion were women and children and poverty-stricken Mongols, who had joined as guides or camel-drivers, probably in consideration of their lives being spared." Elias' account of the battle reads:

"Early in the day (18th November) they crossed the pass to the south-east of the city and advanced on the town, driving with them about a thousand loose camels to serve either as cover or to make their force appear more formidable in the eyes of the Chinese; they were all mounted on camels with the exception of a few of the chiefs, who rode ponies, and were all armed with spears or bows and arrows except about twenty, who had Chinese or Russian matchlocks. The infantry formed the front of the defending force and commenced the action by firing a random volley at the advancing Tunganis long before they had come within range and then retired precipitately on a joss-house, standing at the head of the main street of

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24 N. Elias (1873), p. 135.
25 Ibid.
the main street of the town, round which a ditch and abatis had been prepared the day before. As the infantry fell back the Tartar cavalry was sent to charge, but after riding a short distance towards the enemy wheeled across his front, yelling at the top of their voices, and then 'continuing the wheel' which carried them straight into the fortress, left it to the Chinese to finish the engagement. The latter made a short stand in the joss-house, but after a few minutes of fighting appear to have become panic-stricken and to have made a rush for the city, which they only gained after losing about 150 of their number. Thus the Mohamedans were entirely masters of the open town, but having no guns were unable to touch the fortress; they devoted all that afternoon and part of the next day to a systematic looting of all the houses and shops and the next evening deliberately set to work to burn the place, women and children, riding about from house to house placing bundles of firewood and applying lighted sticks while the soldiers on the city wall looked on. On the 20th, the town being full in blaze, the successful Tunganis took their departure through the same pass they had crossed on their arrival not having lost, my informant declares, a single man in killed though some may have been wounded.26

Assuming the battle of Khobdo in 1912 followed along the same lines of development as the battle of Khobdo in 1873, with the garrison soldiers retreating to their fortress within the city and leaving the rest of Khobdo to Dambijaltsan’s horde, it is reasonable and possible to suspect that actual losses in troops by the Chinese would have been low, but that the townspeople would have suffered considerably. Dambijaltsan’s sacrificial slayings were of merchants, not generals or officers of the Chinese garrison.

The Chinese were greatly alarmed at the success of Dambijaltsan in sacking Khobdo. They sent additional reinforcements to Khobdo, but by the time the reinforcements arrived, several Mongol princes in the...

26 Ibid., pp. 135-136.
western provinces of Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia had joined with Dambijaltsan. The combined forces of Dambijaltsan and the Mongol princes were sufficient to repulse the Chinese. Following this, the Living Buddha of Urga, the de facto head of the Khalkha or Outer Mongolian government, granted him the title of Tushe-Gun (a minor Living Buddha) and assigned him the province of Khobdo as reward for his exploits. This was, of course, simply a recognition of the situation in Khobdo, for the Khalkha Mongols were not delighted with the spectacular rise to power of the Kalmuk or Western Mongols, and instead feared the further advance of Dambijaltsan and his horde.

Dambijaltsan at this point established a new town in the province, to serve as a model example of what a "new" Mongolia under his leadership could be. He introduced a number of innovations at the same time, including agriculture, permanent houses, schools, and a model monastery. The monastery was run along the strictest of disciplinary lines. Dambijaltsan declared he wanted "... few lamas, but good ones" and accordingly limited the number of lamas within his territory.

Dambijaltsan continued to rule Khobdo more by terror than by agreement with the nomads of the area. The success of his original plans had been so dramatic that he now dared assume an innovating role. Everyone was convinced of his supernatural powers, thus few dared go against his orders. Rumors about the torture of those who did not obey

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28 Ibid.
his commands were rampant. Even those outside the immediate supervision of Dambijaltsan slavishly carried out his demands. Ossendowski gives us some idea of the strength of this feeling:

Everyone who disobeyed his orders perished. Such a one never knew the day or the hour when, in his yurt or beside his galloping horse on the plains, the strange and powerful friend of the Dalai Lama would appear. The stroke of a knife, a bullet, or strong fingers strangling the neck like a vise accomplished the justice of the plans of this miracle worker.29

This statement is probably somewhat exaggerated from the point of view of the more rational of Dambijaltsan's followers, yet it might serve to illustrate the feelings of the more committed members of the horde. Dambijaltsan claimed to be a friend of the Dalai Lama but actually Tibetans played a very minor role. The role of the Dalai Lama himself was probably limited to a sanction of Dambijaltsan's activities against the Chinese.

Tales of the cruelty of the Ja Lama began to reach the ears of Russian authorities in St. Petersburg (probably through Chinese channels). In February of 1914, a detachment of Siberian Cossaks was ordered to Khobdo and told to bring Dambijaltsan out of his domain in order that he might stand trial for his cruelties. Russian justice must have seemed perverted to the Chinese, and they probably suspected that Russia supported unrest in Outer Mongolia, for Dambijaltsan was not executed. He was imprisoned in the Tomsk region for a year and then exiled to Yakutia. From Yakutia he was transferred to the Astrakhan region where he remained

until 1918. The Revolution in Russia in 1918 freed Dambijaltsan, and he began at once to attempt to recoup his forces and re-establish his power in Dzungaria and Khobdo. One of the hereditary princes of the Torgut tribe came under his influence at this time and from the account he gave Haslund of his service with Dambijaltsan, we have some idea of the activities of the Ja Lama from 1918 to his death in 1925.

In 1919, Soviet armies succeeded in driving many of the Tsarist loyalist forces into Siberia and were meeting with some success in their attempts to defeat the Tsarists. Many of the loyalists, known to Westerners as Whites, streamed into Mongolia through the Chuya River valley or the present province of Tannu Tuva. General Ungern-Sternberg of the loyalist forces gathered together as many of the fugitive soldiers as he could, and with the help of some Buriat Mongols and Dambijaltsan's forces, took the city of Urga. Ungern-Sternberg placed the Living Buddha of Urga upon the throne of Mongolia and established a short-lived regime of terror in Mongolia. By 1921, his government had fallen through the intervention of the Red Army in Mongolia. The Soviet-inspired government of Urga now determined to rid itself of the power of Dambijaltsan.

In 1924, General Baldan Dorge was allotted six hundred men by the Urga government and told to proceed to the mountains of Ma-tsun Shan in southern Khobdo, where Dambijaltsan had built a fortress commanding all

30 G. N. Roerich (1931), pp. 228-229.
the northern caravan routes leading to Sinkiang from China. Dambijaltsan's garrison consisted of some five-hundred men at this time, with sufficient arms and supplies to stand a long siege. It was no easy task for Baldan to accomplish his mission, for he had been told to break the hold of Dambijaltsan on Western Mongolia once and for all, by killing him. Baldan decided the simplest way of accomplishing his mission would be by ruse. He pretended to be a travelling monk who had suddenly been taken ill, and accordingly asked for shelter. Later in the same day he asked for Dambijaltsan's blessing, and said he was dying. Dambijaltsan (who thought nothing of blessing pilgrims and giving religious admonitions while his men massacred pilgrims elsewhere) complied with the request of the "dying" lama. Baldan Dorge at once drew a revolver from the folds of his robes and shot Dambijaltsan. Severing the head of the Ja Lama from his body, Baldan Dorge gave a signal to his troops, hidden in the mountains. It was an easy task to control Dambijaltsan's warriors, for they were not armed. Dambijaltsan had not trusted his men enough to supply them with arms outside of an emergency or a regular maneuver. All the arms for the garrison were in Dambijaltsan's tent, which Baldan Dorge was able to hold. The severed head was taken in a bottle of formalin to Urga, where it was circulated as a curiosity, and where Roerich saw it. Dambijaltsan was about sixty when he was finally killed by the Urga authorities.

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In a span of some twenty years Dambijaltsan led first a movement

designed to re-establish the Oirat Khanate of the fifteenth century. Then, fired with his success, he created a new "empire" of his own in Khobdo and ruled as an absolute dictator. The story of his career shows how one man, endowed with the proper personality as a leader could create a fanatic crusade and then turn it to his own uses in Western Mongolia during the first decades of the twentieth century.
Manchu control over the area which is today called Sinkiang was both practical and expedient from the time Manchu and Khalkha armies crushed the Dzungarian federation in 1757. Garrisons of Manchu soldiers were sent to maintain outposts in strategic oasis areas in Dzungaria, and groups of people from areas loyal to the Manchu cause were taken from their homes in Manchuria and re-settled in strategic locations on the recently depopulated Dzungarian steppes.

The body of Torgut emigrees who left the Caspian steppes and moved to Dzungaria were favorably received by the Ch'ien Lung Emperor and accorded Imperial titles and pastures under Manchu patronage. The Torguts pledged themselves to the Manchus and in return were allowed to maintain their old tribal organization, although it is obvious from the distribution of Torgut settlements (see Fig. 3) that the Manchus avoided the concentration of Torgut power in one geographical area.¹

The settlement of Torgut groups in widely separated pasturelands with intervening tribes who were hostile to the Torguts, meant that any

renascence of tribal strength could be easily prevented by the Manchus. Rather than adjust to their new status as scattered groups with no single territory theirs by right of settlement, the Western Mongols tended more and more to concentrate their loyalties in the person of the Torgut Khan. Without the Khan, it is highly likely that the Torguts, Derbets, Khoshots and the few remaining Olots would have adjusted to their positions as minority groups in Sinkiang and the Altai. By remaining in constant touch with the Khan's encampment near Kharashar, on the other hand, they could maintain a sense of participation in a larger whole of which their individual encampments were but a part.

In the 1870's, a change in Manchu policy towards the Torguts was necessitated by the expansion into the Dzungarian steppes of Muslim anti-Chinese nationalism, which had its inception in the oases areas of the Taklamakan Desert in southern Sinkiang. The Mohammedan movement gained a great deal of sympathy among the Tung-kan population of Dzungaria and the Chinese had a great deal of trouble keeping the oases towns of Dzungaria under Chinese control. The Tung-kans were Muslims of Chinese origin, yet despite their ties with China they saw more future in being loyal to Islam than to the Chinese cause in Central Asia. The Torguts were asked to join the Chinese forces in Sinkiang in fighting the Tung-kans. Although Ney Elias gives the impression that the Torguts could hardly have been reliable allies of the Manchus, they did come to the assistance of the Chinese.

2N. Elias (1873), pp. 126-127.
It had not been the policy of the Chinese to allow arms among the tribes under their control. The Tung-kan rebellion changed this policy and the Torguts from that time assumed a different position in Dzungaria. They became allies of the Chinese in Sinkiang upon whom the Manchus must rely in emergency. It was fairly easy for the Torguts to adopt this position, for it was similar to the one they had under the Russians in the Caspian area. In Dzungaria, however, their battles with the Muslim Tung-kans and the Kirgiz became increasingly a matter of importance for the maintenance of their pasturlands and thus to a certain extent their own interests and the interests of the Manchus coincided.

Imperial Russia, extended her colonial holdings into Turkestan in the 1860's. In the wake of direct conquest came Russian settlers and the Muslim nomads of the Kazak and Kirgiz steppes were placed in an analogous position to that of the Torguts on the Caspian steppe one hundred years earlier. The reaction of the Kazaks and Kirgiz was similar to that of the Torguts, and in 1916, the first waves of Kazak and Kirgiz migrations hit Sinkiang. To deal with the growing Muslim population in Dzungaria, the Chinese had no recourse but to allow the Torguts to continue as allies in their control of Dzungaria, for in 1916, the death of Yuan Shih-k'ai left China in the throes of civil war, and unable to maintain sufficient troops in the far-flung reaches of her northwestern territories.

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4 O. Lattimore (1940), p. 192.
Four years after the death of Yuan Shih-k'ai, in 1920, the Khan of the Torguts died, leaving a young son who was not able to assume authority over the tribe. The Khan's brother, Toin Lama, was recalled from his ecclesiastical post in Tibet, and asked to assume the Regency for the young Khan. At this point the orientation of the Torguts toward the Chinese, favorable until Toin Lama took power, underwent a radical change.

Born in 1884, Toin Lama was 36 at the time his brother died. He had spent his boyhood in Tibet in theological studies, as the fifth reincarnation of Seng Chen Doryechan, the Tiger divinity. In consequence of his position as a lama, he had traveled widely throughout Tibet, southern Sinkiang, and Dzungaria. In 1904, he had seen the British Younghusband expedition in Lhasa and greatly admired the dignified behavior of the expedition. Without a doubt, some of his ideas concerning the government of nations outside his direct experience was provided by letters from a Torgut princess, born in Peking, who was studying in Paris at the time of his ascendancy to the Regency. Toin Lama of course would have been acquainted with the political situation in Russia with regard to non-Russian nationalities in the Caspian and Kirgiz steppes, for he must often have spoken with Kalmuks enroute to the monastery towns of Tibet with trade-goods from Russia.

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5Haslund (1935), pp. 254-256.
6Ibid., p. 254.
7Ibid., p. 253.
8Cammann (1951), pp. 57-58, notes that the trade between Tibet and Russia was carried on chiefly by the Kalmuks in the 1870's.
As Regent, Toin Lama began a series of innovations that were designed to improve the health and prosperity of the Torguts. Here again he was helped by the particular political situation at that time in Central Asia. The counter-revolution in Russia, at its peak in 1918, was nearly over. Fugitives of the Tsarist "White" armies of Kolchak, Deniken and Wrangel fled before the Soviet armies. One of the safest avenues for their escape was through Siberia, for the Bolsheviks were not as numerous nor as powerful in Siberia as they were in European Russia. The most widely used avenues of escape from Siberia were through the valleys either of the Chuya River north of Chuguchak or through Tannu Tuva, north of Outer Mongolia. Toin Lama wisely weighed the various opportunities open to him in taking advantage of this new situation. He offered the White soldiers safe passage through his territory and food in exchange for what arms, ammunition and money they had with them. In addition, he bought many "magnificent thoroughbred stallions" from the Russians, and used them in breeding horses trained as amblers (who would carry a rider with a minimum of jolting) much in demand in China at that time. With improved armaments, the Torgut cavalry became "the best armed in Central Asia."  

Among the refugees from Bolshevism who came through the Chuya River valley or through Tannu Tuva and across the Altai mountains into Dzungaria were many Mongols who had fought in the counter-revolution against the Soviets. An Astrakhan Kalmuk surgeon, trained in Russia, 

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established a hospital at Toin Lama's request and proceeded to carry on "a vigorous campaign against syphilis and other sterilizing diseases" which until that time had taken a heavy toll of the Torgut population. As a result of his efforts more and more children were added to the Torgut population. Haslund notes that "... the people ascribed this to their leader's divine qualities (as a lama) but my enlightened friends understood that it depended more upon Toin Lama's human wisdom than upon his thaumaturgic powers."\(^{10}\)

Until 1920, no permanent buildings with the exception of a very few monasteries existed among the Torguts. For centuries, permanent buildings were forbidden by law on the steppes of Dzungaria and Mongolia, with the exception of monasteries "... for these form the dwellings of gods and their servants the lamas and for such human considerations do not come into question."\(^{11}\) Mobile, felt-tent temples of the type that Zwick noted in the Kalmuk steppes in 1823 were more common among the Western Mongols. Haslund says of tent-temples that "the old nomad tradition that even the gold should be lodged in tents as mobile and free as the wandering of the herds is still alive among the Torguts," and that this might be because, "... when their kin on the home steppes were receiving their most vigorous religious impulse from Tibet, the tribe was living beyond the frontier of distant Russia."\(^{13}\)

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\(^{10}\)Ibid.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 285.

\(^{12}\)Zwick (1823), pp. 41-44.

\(^{13}\)H. Haslund (1935), pp. 285-286.
In his capacity both as temporal leader of the Western Mongols and as the reincarnation of a deity, Toin Lama had done much to change the status of the Torgut tribe. Haslund notes that "... in his capacity of hutuktu (living god) he was able to override human ordinances, and since the Torguts had learnt that the Regent's actions brought blessing in their train, it aroused neither opposition nor apprehension when he founded the town of Oreget and ordained that his officials and attendants should in the winter inhabit those buildings of wood, stone and brick."14

Haslund visited the capital city of the Torguts, Oreget, and was struck by the "un-Asiatic" aspect both of its cleanliness and its orderliness. Whitewashed buildings in Tibetan and Western style lined the straight streets in the inner compound of the city, while between the inner wall and the fortified outer wall of the city stood long, low barracks. Haslund noted the colorful display of military prowess in Oreget, for the streets "swarmed with soldiers and horses". He wrote that "... the soldiers wore brown Cossak uniforms, Russian riding boots and tall black or white fur caps. Some of them were busy cleaning rifles of relatively modern manufacture and others were demonstrating cavalry sword play with barbarically antiquated but brightly polished Cossak sabres."15 Roerich visited Oreget in the late twenties and described it in much the same way as Haslund. He noted that "... the Regent's palace was built in European style, and a number of other buildings in

14 Ibid., p. 285.
15 Ibid., p. 229.
semi-European architecture indicated his progressive attitude.¹⁶

The Torguts were by no means completely adjusted to living in a town, with all the Western and Chinese accompaniments of such a way of life. In the summer, they left the town with a skeleton garrison of troops and set up camp in the highland pastures, a way of life evidently far more agreeable to them. Haslund has noted that the Torguts took their tent-temples with them on their summer trek, thus ensuring their independence from stabilized, permanent buildings.¹⁷ The influences of agriculture and permanent trading centers which Miller has noted for Inner Mongolia, as a result of permanent monastery buildings were not as apparent in Torgut areas. When he assumed the Regency, Toin Lama made a point of expelling all Chinese craftsmen who had made a living by painting, sculpting and silver-work of a religious nature. In their place, he trained Mongol painters, sculptors and silver-smiths.¹⁸

Probably as a result of the civil war in China, which meant that the Chinese in Sinkiang were unable to really enforce their power over non-Chinese in the steppe areas of northern Sinkiang, Toin Lama began to back away from the traditional agreements with China which had determined Torgut policy in times of war between the Manchus and other groups in Sinkiang. In 1924, another Tung-kan revolt emperiled the Chinese

garrisons in Dzungaria. When the Chinese governor-general gave orders for the mobilization of the Torgut cavalry and camel transport, Toin Lama flatly refused the request of the Chinese for assistance. Later, in 1925, when the "Christian" General, Feng Yu-hsiang advanced from Kansu in an attempt to take Sinkiang, Toin Lama again refused to muster troops for the Chinese cause. At that time he declared that "...his soldiers should not shed their own blood in other's wars, but only for their own interests."

The Chinese governor-general made repeated attempts to curb the growing power of the Torguts in Dzungaria, but to no avail. Finally recognizing that he could not avoid recognition of the new position of the Torguts, as allies on equal if not superior terms to the Chinese, the governor-general appointed Toin Lama a Chinese Marshall, and "...the Supreme Defender of the eastern front." It was a hard decision for the Chinese to make. They had planned to "deprive the Regent of his power and transfer the signet of the Torgut Khanate to Bichigen Khan (Toin Lama's nephew) who was still a minor and who was then to govern the Torguts under the tutelage of a Chinese advisor." To this end, the Chinese invited Toin Lama to a meeting in Urumchi, but Toin Lama came, "...surrounded by such a pomp and magnificence and with

20Ibid., p. 243.
21Ibid.
22Ibid., p. 244.
23Ibid.
so numerous an escort of stern and purposeful nomad warriors that his arrival was like the triumphal entry of a conqueror." The Chinese governor-general bowed to the inevitable, but resented the new power of the "Torguts' strong man" as he referred to Toin Lama.

In the wake of the Torguts' meteoric rise as a military power in Central Asia came a rising interest among the Torguts of establishing themselves as a nation, albeit a small nation, yet independent of China and the Soviets. They looked upon themselves as saviors of the nomad way of life. In Toin Lama's own words, as reported by Haslund:

We nomads have no need of the self-interested guardianship of alien powers. We have tolerated it for generations, and the consequence has been the decimation of our people and the corruption of our traditions and our way of life. . . . Our greatest danger lies in the transplantation to the steppes of the ways of life of neighboring nations, for these effeminize our people. . . . the past has taught us that only by the rattle of arms and savagery can we prevent the ploughman from violating the freedom of the steppe and the trader from contaminating our manners. . . . In our Lamaistic world I am the incarnation of a deity, but my body was born to a mission that concerns the world. My mission is to gather together the people of the steppes and to uphold our forefather's way of life which is the salvation of the nomads. . . .

Although the preceding quotation embodies many of the ideals of other attempts by the Western Mongols to maintain their nomadic way of life, the difference in organization of Toin Lama's independence movement and the other movements which are discussed in this paper lies perhaps in his intelligent appraisal of his own position as spiritual and temporal leader of the Torguts, combined with a fortunate conjunction of

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24 Ibid.
26 Ibid., pp. 249-250.
circumstances which enabled him to realize his ambition. His skillful implementation of the talents of Mongols fleeing from the Bolshevik armies in the early 1920’s was a result of a careful appraisal of what the Torguts had to gain from the West. In Toin Lama's own words, as reported by Haslund:

You wonder that I should seek after western knowledge. I do so because I must needs strengthen my people for self-defense with the West’s own weapons, and I desire knowledge of the development of the white races so that I may avail myself of such of the results as are fitted for us and reject the others.  

Toin Lama's independence movement was rapidly espoused by other Mongol leaders, including Inner Mongol leaders, and high lamas and chieftans who were expelled from Outer Mongolia in 1926 by the communist government at Urga. In 1931, when the Japanese took over Manchuria, they asked Henry Pu Yi, the last Manchu Emperor (who had been deposed by the Chinese in 1911 when a child) to sit on the throne of their newly created Manchurian state, Manchukuo. The Japanese vigorously espoused the cause of Mongolian independence from both China and Russia for easily understandable reasons. With an "independent" Mongolia under Japanese patronage, stretching from Manchuria across Inner Mongolia to include the Western Mongols, the Japanese would control a vital stretch of territory. With bases dotted throughout this region, the Japanese could harass both Russia and China. It is interesting to note that the Japanese were well aware of Toin Lama and of his growing power in Dzungaria. In 1931, while Haslund was in Tientsin, two Mongolians approached him and asked

27Ibid., p. 249.
leave to conduct him to their master, to "talk about Mongolia". The next day, Haslund was "... fetched in a closed car which drove to the Japanese concession of Tientsin, and the man in whose presence I was soon standing was Hsuan Tung, the last Emperor of China, who had sought refuge there under the name of P'u Yi." The young P'u Yi urged Haslund to "... join the nomad's independence movement and go in his name to Toin Lama on a weighty mission." Haslund declined the offer, but noted the significance of P'u Yi's maneuver.

Perhaps because they received word of a possible coordination in efforts between Toin Lama and the Japanese-led Mongolian independence movement in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, or perhaps because the Chinese were finding it increasingly difficult to hold the Torguts in check, Toin Lama and his most powerful chiefs were killed by order of the Chinese governor-general in 1932. The governor-general had asked for a conference with Toin Lama to enlist his aid in putting down a revolt against the Chinese provincial government which had arisen among the Muslim population in Sinkiang. When the Torguts arrived, they were treated to a banquet, but, while they drank tea and prepared to discuss the Muslim situation, the governor's servants shot the entire delegation.

Haslund wrote in 1935 that he had news that the Torguts drove out the Chinese governor-general and then retired to the mountains "... completely indifferent to Central asia's political future." It must be

28 Ibid., pp. 251-252.
29 Ibid., p. 326.
noted, however, that Sven Hedin reported regiments of Torgut cavalry fighting with both Red army troops and former Tsarist troops who had become mercenaries in the pay of the Chinese against the Muslim Tungan rebellion led by "General M" in 1936. Information on the Torguts ceases abruptly with this last statement. It is impossible to state the real reaction of the Torguts to the massacre of their leaders by the Chinese governor-general. The most likely answer is that someone, perhaps the young Khan, who would by then have been twenty-two years old, received the apologies of the Chinese for their heinous crime, and assumed Toin Lama's weighty mission while biding his time awaiting an opportunity to resume active resistance to the Chinese. Travellers in Sinkiang during the late forty's do not mention Torguts in any of their writings and the author must conclude with the situation in 1936.

Western Mongolian orientations toward China, which began when Kansu was the focus of raiding attempts in the fifteenth century, were reinforced during the days of the Manchu Empire when the northern and western borders of Dzungaria were closed by Imperial order against Russian expansion. Dzungaria became a back-water of Chinese cultural influences but China was the main orientation of the Dzungarians. After the Russian Revolution, this orientation changed with the influx of fleeing Tsarist soldiers followed by Soviet forces. Sinkiang's government managed to keep Soviet troops out of Dzungaria, but trade concessions were made.

It is necessary to stress that the Chinese governor-general of  

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Sinkiang continued to govern Sinkiang after the Revolution of 1911 although after 1917 China was plunged into the throes of civil war and revolution. At the same time that he made trade concessions to the Russians, he encouraged Chinese to come to Sinkiang and ensure its continuance as a Chinese province. The Chinese came as settling colonists, not as traders, a factor which only added to the resentment of the Mongols. The Western Mongols could sympathize with the Astrakhan Kalmuks and perceive that their situation in Russia was primarily due to Russian colonization, as was also the case among the Telengit. The Russians in Dzungaria who came as traders, however, were not a force who would colonize Mongol pasturelands, and this may be one factor in Western Mongol orientation toward Russian culture.

In examining the situation of the Torguts and other Western Mongols in Dzungaria, it is obvious that their main goal as a group was to prevent colonization of their pasturelands. Their anti-Chinese orientation was confined to a violent rejection of Chinese who had colonized Dzungarian lands but they were not against the Chinese administration, who guaranteed the continuance of Sinkiang as a Chinese province, and not a Russian satelilte. The Chinese governor-general could not resist Russian pressure for a trade relationship with the Soviet Union, but he was most cautious in his diplomatic relations with Russia. The Torguts helped the Chinese in maintaining peace and order in Sinkiang when it seemed wise to do so. Toi Lama knew that if Sinkiang, a loosely amalgamated blend of potentially hostile groups, were to become involved in civil war the precarious position of the
governor-general would become untenable. It was impossible for Toin Lama to assume the seat of government, indeed he could no longer proclaim the ideals of a nomad state if he were to do so. If Sinkiang were torn by civil war, the Russian Soviet Army would intervene, and there would be no force sufficient to repulse their advance. An influx of Russian colonists would move in the wake of the Soviet Army, and Toin Lama’s dreams of a nomad state would never be realized. The course of the Torguts in supporting the government of the governor-general was logical if it is viewed in this light.
CHAPTER VI

THE GROWTH OF WESTERN MONGOL ETHNIC IDENTITY

The preceding chapters of this paper have documented the gradual growth of a new political integration among the Western Mongols. The growth of Western Mongol ethnic identity is the story of a series of major efforts by a politically disunified people possessed of a common culture and common traditions to develop and utilize the substance of their common traditions as a means of preserving themselves as a distinct people, apart from the peoples which surrounded them. The fact that two of the three major groupings of Western Mongols were adjusting to a new position as a minority group under Russian domination served as the genesis for the move toward a new political integration. The end result of the numerous efforts made by these two groups was the establishment of a Western Mongol nation in northern Sinkiang, a political grouping which tried to organize the Western Mongols of all three groups into a strong enough unit to resist cultural and political domination by agricultural peoples.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the traditional military organization (the Oirat Khanate), which in the past had enabled the Western Mongols to think of themselves as one people, had broken down. The Kalmuks of the Astrakhan region of lower Russia, the Telengit of the Altai mountains, and the Dzungarian Mongols of northern Sinkiang retained
only a vague tradition of once having been a powerful nomadic grouping in control of a vast empire in Central Asia. Time and the steady encroachment of sedentary peoples on their pasturelands had transformed them into subjects of the agricultural peoples (Russians and Chinese) doomed, it appeared, to gradual absorption into sedentary culture in an inferior status.

The need for a political organization which would unite them as a people was not felt by all three groups at the same time. Each of the three groups realized the necessity for a new political integration at different times and for different reasons. As a consequence, the development of political forms and symbols through which their common identification as one people could be expressed was uneven.

The major problem faced by the leaders of the movements discussed was that in order to unify the Western Mongols in a sufficiently large grouping to resist encroaching agricultural peoples, they had to create identification systems which would transcend the allegiances of any one local grouping. Thus, through an examination of the symbols chosen by each leader, we are able to isolate the elements of common tradition most appealing to each of the three groups under discussion and are able to trace the development of more and more effective and inclusive systems of identification.

The first group of Western Mongols to feel the need to identify themselves as a distinct socio-cultural grouping were the Astrakhan Kalmuks. Faced with an increase in Russian colonization of their grazing lands, in the 1830's, the Kalmuks had been forced to enter the Russian
wage economy. Repeated famines further increased the possibility that they might have to give up their herding life entirely, and find a place for themselves in the Russian economic system, presumably as servants in the lowest status positions in Russian society. Many of their number made the decision to enter Russian society, yet those of the Kalmuks who were not of noble status or could not dedicate themselves to a career in the Russian cavalry service (because they felt greater loyalty to their herds and the welfare of their kinfolk) saw no gain for themselves as members of the Russian society. Within the short time span of one hundred years, the majority of the Kalmuks had sunk to a subordinate position vis-a-vis the Russians and were faced with the dubiously profitable advantage of entering Russian society as menial servants.

Of the numerous symbols with which the Astrakhan Kalmuks might have chosen to identify themselves, it is most interesting that they did not choose to emphasize the possible extinction of their economy as a herding people. In addition, they did not seek to identify themselves as descendants of the Oirats, as did the other Western Mongols. Perhaps the split between the Astrakhan Kalmuks and the Dzungarian Mongols who migrated to Sinkiang in 1771 was a result of factionalism centered around identification with the Oirat Khanate.

The vehicles for expression of Astrakhan Kalmuk ethnic identity centered around the creation of temple schools, the development of a body of religious and secular literature in the Western Mongol written language, and the renewal of ties with Lamaism through the introduction of an academic-monastery system. Broadly speaking, this would seem to indicate
that the most effective unifying force for the Astrakhan Kalmuks was their religion. The fact that they were Lamaist-Buddhist, surrounded by Russian Orthodox Christians and by Mohammedans was important to them, even more important than the fact that they were descendants of the Oirats or that they were nomadic herders. The activity of Russian missions among the Kalmuks and the establishment of State Schools among them seem to have been the stimuli for this reaction.

Aspects of the academic and religious orientation of the Astrakhan Kalmuks seem to have been picked up by some of the other Western Mongol groups and utilized as part of a larger context in the formation of new identification systems. What the Kalmuks had done in seeking to give themselves status as a distinct socio-cultural grouping under Russia, was to match the intellectual capability of Western Mongol religion against the intellectual capability of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Western Mongol literary tradition against Russian literary tradition. What they had not done was to promote a movement which entailed active militant rejection of Russian domination. The Astrakhan Kalmuk academic movement continued throughout the time period under discussion in this paper, with the Kalmuks making no move to establish themselves as a separate independent nation in south Russia.

Chronologically, the next movement which developed among the Western Mongols was Burkhanism which was developed among the Altaian Telengit. The Altaian Telengit followed a radically different course of action from that of the Astrakhan Kalmuks in their attempts to give themselves status as a distinct socio-cultural grouping. In 1904, the Telengit
were faced with intensive Russian colonization and active Russian Orthodox proselytizing, just as the Kalmuks had been. They did not identify, however, with the intellectual traditions which had served to unite the Kalmuks. The reason for this might be found in the fact that the Telengit had only recently been converted to Lamaism. They apparently did not have sufficiently well educated lamas among them to provide an impetus for this development, and contact with the Astrakhan Kalmuks was apparently limited. The Telengit promoted a mystic cult based on revelation. The major symbolic focus for Burkhanism was the expected reincarnation of the "Oirat Khan" who would appear among them, re-create the Oirat Khanate, and deliver them from domination by the Russians.

With the development of Burkhanism in the Altai a new element enters into the growth of Western Mongol ethnic identity. The Telengit, in identifying with the Oirat Khanate (which was at its height in the 1750's), indicated that they did not feel themselves numerous enough to carry through alone a program which would meet the challenge of Russian culture. They identified with a larger societal grouping, and in their thinking, they transformed the Oirat Khanate into a stabilized structure, enduring through time with an established power system and a code of loyalties connecting them with the Dzungarian Mongols.

The original Oirat Khanate was not organized as a tightly knit bureaucracy, with a group ideal of loyalty to a stabilized power structure. The factors of new leadership, new raiding goals, new and more powerful configurations of clan and tribal loyalties which grew up within the Oirat Khanate as quickly as one group succeeded in gaining a dominant
position, all overrode the possibility of stability within the original Oirat Khanate. Indeed, there is no indication that the Western Mongols from 1640 to 1750, conceived of their confederation as enduring through time, with structured philosophies and ideal relating to their way of life, their religion and their form of government. The main orientation of the original Oirat Khanate was toward acquisition of luxuries possessed by Chinese and Muslim agriculturalists, as well as the establishment of tribute ties through which they would receive flour, tea, and other staples from agriculturalists.

The Telengit identified their past with that of the Oirat Khanate - the first indication of a later impulse which was to capture the loyalties of the scattered Western Mongols. With this development came the first indication of a new conception of the Oirat Khanate. Whereas the older Oirat Khanate was a confederation of tribes who were more interested in cooperation for spoils than in prestige for the Khanate, the Telengit saw the Oirat Khanate in a new light. It became, in their eyes, an idealized representation of what the Western Mongol Khanate had been and what it again could be. This concept was further elaborated by Dambijaltsan, in later Altaian attempts to re-create the Oirat Khanate, and finally by Toin Lama. In the Altai, Burkhanism failed for it was too vulnerable to Russian attack and too mystically oriented for the practical minded.

The movement led by Dambijaltsan, although originally commenced in 1890, did not appear in its final form until 1912. While the outward appearance of Dambijaltsan's movement was Chingizide-like in organization
- in the banners and other battle insignia, and in the magico-religious sacrifices which were performed by Dambijaltsan - it differed from that of Chingis' organization in several significant particulars. In the first place, Dambijaltsan had a specific symbolic objective in organizing this movement, the sacking of the Chinese city of Khobdo. Khobdo was picked because it symbolized Chinese control over Western Mongolia. His personal resentment against Chinese control over Mongolia is problematic, for he could not have had much contact with Chinese until his novitiate in the Dolon Nor Monastery. Dambijaltsan's reasons for sacking Khobdo must be explained in terms of appeal for his followers, not in terms of his reactions as a member of Dzungarian society (since he was an Astrakhan Kalmuk).

Dambijaltsan's position as a lama, and his use of this status differed radically from the role of Astrakahn lamas in the Zaya Pandit movement. As a lama, he used his academic training to place himself above the Dzungarian Mongols, where in Astrakhan the Astrakhan Kalmuk lamas had attempted to raise the level of scholarship of the Kalmuks as a whole.

Although the basis for Burkhanism was in supernatural interference, to secure the happiness of the Telengit, Chot Chelpan had acted only as an intermediary through which pronouncements were made to the Altaians. In contrast with Burkhanism, where a leader was expected but had not appeared in person among the Telengit, Dambijaltsan introduced himself as an expected leader and as such exercised a right to invoke direct supernatural sanctions. In his role as Amursana, Dambijaltsan presented
the Western Mongols of Dzungaria with a living symbol around which they could unite. Before he could consolidate his power, however, he was deported to Russia, and by the time he had returned Toin Lama's independence movement had captured the imagination and allegiance of the Western Mongols.

The "Constituent Congress of the High Altai" which was held in 1918 in the Altai might best be explained as a further exercise in the power of magical intervention by the Altaians. The demands which the Altaians prepared to make through diplomatic channels and delegations to Russia, China and Mongolia were lacking in military backing. They probably were aware of Western diplomatic procedures by 1918, and hoped to utilize what seemed to them a most successful procedure. Western diplomatic procedure is implicitly supported by force, but this would not be apparent to one who was not familiar with the mechanisms of Western diplomacy. Here again the symbol of the Oirat Khanate is most important, despite the ineffectiveness of the means used by the Altaians in approaching their goal.

The symbols around which the Western Mongols united under Toin Lama in the 1920's and the 1930's included the office of Khan (which as regent he directed) of the Torguts (and through this the legal heir to the office of Khan of the Oirats), the jade seal and banners which signified his position, and his status as a recognized reincarnation of a deity. Dambijaltsan had proclaimed himself as the reincarnation of Amursana, but Toin Lama had been declared a reincarnation through proclamation by higher authorities in Tibet, not by his own proclamation.
Under Toin Lama's leadership, the Western Mongols conceived of Dzungaria as a nation, but not a nation designed for Dzungarian Mongols alone. The new nation advanced "citizenship" to those Astrakhan Kalmuks and Altaians who migrated to Dzungaria and their particular talents were welcomed. The movement profited from the experiences of the Astrakhan Kalmuks and the Altaians in achieving for a time a stable political integration of the Western Mongols. The Western Mongols were defined as a people, with the right to fight only their own battles, run their own government, and support and advance their own past. This goal was achieved through a willingness to rationally analyze the position of the Western Mongols in Dzungaria, and to seek answers to the problems confronting them through enlisting the aid of those who had faced the same problems previously. Toin Lama's Western Mongol nation was unique in that it stressed the occupation of nomadism. As a nation of nomadic herders, aware of the results of encroaching sedentarism, the Western Mongols could organize to prevent colonization of their lands. The new Western Mongol nation, under Toin Lama's leadership was to be no loosely amalgamated confederation of peoples for the protection of flocks and raiding neighboring territory, but a responsible state with modern medical care, an efficient and modern army, and a uniform basis for intra-community ties.

Toin Lama combined in his independence movement his status as a lama and the reincarnation of a deity, the training and scholarship of the Astrakhan Kalmuks, and an enlightened appreciation of the military and scientific bases needed for the successful maintenance of a nation.
It is significant that the Chinese were only able to combat this successful organization by murdering the cream of Western Mongol leadership.
CHAPTER VII

COMPARISON OF KALMUK AND PONDO

REACTIONS TO EUROPEAN CONTACT

Monica Hunter Wilson's description of the reactions of the Pondo, a Bantu people in South Africa, to the influx of European colonists and industrialists seems comparable to the contact situation and reactions of the Kalmuks in Lower Russia. The Pondo were cattle raisers and semi-sedentary agriculturalists, not living in villages but in household groups, which were scattered through the country. The basic units of Pondo society, the household groups, were tied to one another through strong clan ties, economic cooperation, and recognition of the authority of a headman. In his turn the headman was responsible to a "district chief" and the "district chief" responsible to a "paramount chief". Cattle raiding was common, and the Pondo organized themselves into "armies" who would retaliate against raids. If a "district chief" were located far from a "paramount chief", oftentimes he would be able to acquire more military power than other "district chiefs." This way "... the powerful district chief merged into the independent ally, and the tribe was no closely knit unit, but an affiliation of districts recognizing one paramount." If we substitute the names of the four allied


\[2\] Ibid., p. 379.
Western Mongol tribes for the term district, we see that the Western Mongols and the Kalmuks were organized in a very similar fashion to the Pondo, despite the agricultural factor in Pondo culture.

The contact situation in Pondoland was similar to that in lower Russia. First came the traders, then the missionaries and colonists. The Pondo acted as allies of the British in the British struggles with the Xhosa, another Bantu tribe. Here again, we find that the Pondo adjusted themselves to the British in a similar way to the adjustment the Kalmuks made to Russians.

Monica Hunter Wilson made a special point of studying different areas of Pondoland, subjected to more or less "pressure" from colonists and industrial areas. She found that there was a definite correlation between the degree of colonization and the degree of change in Pondo culture.\(^3\) The Pondo were located in a remote geographical position. When European colonists first moved into South Africa they were met with firm resistance and a series of "Kaffir Wars" but the Pondo seem to have been unaffected by the Kaffir Wars, due to their geographical position, remote from the area of conflict. In 1894, the Pondo lands were annexed to the Cape Province, and some of the land was set aside as a reserve area for Pondo only. In effect, the policy of setting aside a certain territory as a reserve approximated the situation in Russia, when Catharine II ordered a ring of Cossak fortresses constructed to mark off a specific territory for the Kalmuks.

\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 548-549.
The sequence of reaction to Europeans in Pondoland and to Russians in Astrakhan is similar. In addition, the policies of the Cape Government towards the Pondo on the reserves and the policies of the Russian Imperial Government toward the Kalmuks in Astrakhan are also similar.

Just as Imperial Russia introduced state schools into Kalmuk "reserves", the Cape Government introduced schools into Pondoland. Interestingly enough, the Pondo also had their own schools, termed "Circumcision Schools" by Wilson. These schools both reinforced the old tribal ways, and served as a counter to the European schools. Many Pondo did not attend the state schools, just as many Kalmuk did not, because their labor was needed at home.

In lower Russia, the Kalmuks were divided into two sections or factions, one of which favored the introduction of European ways and one which did not favor their introduction. In Pondoland, one faction favored European ways and one "abhorred" them. In Wilson's words:

One section abhor the new ways, another wish to be as like the dominating European as possible and favour European education, language, dress, etc. A Pondo believes that by becoming like a European he will acquire power like a European and the fact that the most Europeanized usually get the best paid jobs ... fosters this belief.5

Those Pondo who did attend school received instruction in their own language contrary to the situation in Russia. Wilson notes that "... most leaders have been to school and tribal histories and praises of the chiefs are among the earliest publications of Bantu authors."6

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4 Ibid., pp. 174-179.
5 Ibid., p. 9.
6 Ibid., p. 179.
Here, at first glance, it would appear that a major difference existed between the Kalmuk situation and the Pondo situation in that the Kalmuks already had a written language, and already had tribal histories transcribed in Kalmuk. It must be remembered that the majority of Kalmuk on the Astrakhan "reserves" were illiterate before the lamas introduced the "Zaya Pandit" movement. Tales were still largely handed down orally, and the Kalmuks only began to identify with their tribal histories personally after the histories were popularized and the people learned to read. The difference lies rather in the fact that the Pondo were taught written Pondo by the British, and the Kalmuks were taught by their own people, in their own schools. This might explain why Kalmuk written language seems to have been a much more focal factor in Kalmuk ethnic identity than the Pondo written language had in Pondo ethnic identity. Though both groups publicized their own histories, written in their own languages, the Kalmuk reacted more strongly to the Zaya Pandit movement. The overall reaction of the Pondo to schools seems similar to that of the Kalmuk. Schools provided an elite for the Pondo, an elite who could be assured of better-paying jobs in the British Civil Service.

Mission stations were established in Pondoland, and some converts were made to Christianity - more so in more heavily colonized areas than out on the reserves. The reaction of the rest of the Pondo to Christianity was to establish "separatist African Churches". A Christian convert could not perform in the rituals of social solidarity which initiated strong kin ties among the Pondo. Though the Pondo lacked an orientation to an African church which would meet most of the same needs in ritual
and organization the Christian church met, they learned the basics of
church function and then established an African church of their own.
The Kalmuks already had a well-organized church of their own, linked
to the ecclesiastical organization of Lamaism in Tibet. There does not
seem to be a similar orientation toward an academic justification of
the African church among the Pondo. It may be that Wilson did not
record this material, or it may be that there was no need to justify
the African church academically in comparison with Christianity. This
again might be due to differences between the Russian Orthodox Church
and the Anglican and other Protestant sects which missionized in Pondoland. It is interesting to note that Wilson said "... there are still
spheres in which the Bantu feels that scientific knowledge alone cannot
secure his end ... in these he continues to use magic." The Kalmuks
must have felt the same way, for magic was one of the main interests of
the Lama church.

Wilson noted a "... growing sense of nationalism aroused by
antagonism to Europeans, expressing itself in separatist African churches
... and intertribal political organizations such as the 'African
National Congress'. This nationalistic spirit tends to submerge local
and tribal differences." I would prefer to call Pondo "nationalism" a
movement toward ethnic identity and unity, traceable to the same causes
as Kalmuk or Western Mongol ethnic identity. The introduction of

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7 Ibid., p. 348.
8 Ibid., p. 347.
schooling, which brought about an increase in communication between native and European, and made European ideas accessible to the native, the pressure of missionization which brought about a justification of native religious beliefs, or at least a re-affirmation of their faith in a pre-contact religion -- both seem to be a direct result of attitudes toward each other established by the Europeans and natives in a contact situation. There is a tendency to accept and justify the introduction of European education, but only insofar as it serves the ends of the ethnic group. The indication that contact with a Western nation brings about a series of institutions and symbols modeled along Western lines or expressed in Western terms serving to promote a feeling of ethnic identity and unity needs to be tested in other cases involving groups of similar socio-cultural integration in a contact situation with Westerners.
CHAPTER VIII

THE CONTACT SITUATION IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The particular inter-group reactions discussed in this paper resulted from contact between societies with different cultural traditions. Western Mongol reactions to Russian culture are comparable to the range of inter-group reactions to cultural contact often discussed by anthropologists in acculturation papers where intensive contact between a Western and a non-Western society is involved. In final analysis, no other constants but the indefinable — human nature — can be isolated from any of these studies.

Whereas the studies in this paper are similar in most respects to other studies of cultural contact by anthropologists, to be sure, they differ. There are certain significant differences in the history of Western Mongol-Russian contact which do not occur in the histories of other groups studied by anthropologists. Most of the latter societies were initially contacted by Westerners within the past few centuries. Initial contact between Western Mongols and Russians occurred many centuries before the time of the test-cases presented in this paper. Furthermore, the Russians had in the past been conquered by the Mongols. This has undoubtedly been responsible for shaping or tempering Russian and Western Mongol attitudes in periods of intensified contact.

When two societies come into contact, processes of social and
cultural integration result from their interaction. Although social and cultural integration occurred as Western Mongols and Russians adjusted to one another, the focus of the present study is also on the processes of social and cultural distinction, or differentiation, which resulted from intense contact between the two societies.

In the contact situation, members of each society become more and more aware of themselves in the context of the unique traditions and capabilities of their own cultures. Each man is faced with a growing awareness of himself as a member of one society and a participant in a culture different from that of the other society. Many of the strongest inter-group emotions arise because of definite distinctions made by one group or the other in a contact situation.

It must be stressed here that processes of social and cultural integration are parallel to the process of social and cultural distinction, or differentiation. The ambivalence which results from the parallel processes of social and cultural integration and social and cultural distinction produces a crisis situation for the culture most affected by changes in its original social and cultural systems. There are often changes in the economy, religion or social organization of a group, as a result of contact with another society, yet adequate means must be devised to fit the new changes into the context of their culture and society.

Whatever one may choose to call the reaction of a society's members to an awareness that they face a crisis situation socially and

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culturally, some of the reactions of societies in such a crisis are more violent than others. Some are mystically oriented, some militarily oriented, and some politically oriented in the Western sense.

Anthropologists have isolated many "types" of reaction to a social and cultural crisis in native societies contacted by Westerners. In these reactions, there is a distinct effort on the part of the native society to "revive or perpetuate selected aspects of (their) culture . . . ." Yet to the extent the culture of the native society has changed as a result of contact with a Western society, the natives may choose to call certain traditions "their own" whether or not the traditions had been developed as a result of contact. The process of creating a new framework for traditions, to integrate and maintain native society, has been aptly described as a "creative effort aimed at achieving a new life-meaning and realization of self."  

Political movements which incorporate new traditions are not necessarily reactions to change, but reactions to dominance or potential dominance of another culture. When Western societies have contacted poorly armed and inefficiently organized non-Western societies, they have commonly established themselves in a politically dominant position. A dominant society is often able to control the political, economic and even moral behavior of the subordinated non-Western society. This type of

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action has been referred to as "directed change". On the other hand, there may be contact between a Western society and a non-Western society where the Western society is unable to dominate and control the political, economic or moral behavior of the non-Western society. It does not appear, however, that the effective influence of the interests, sanctions and values of each culture is confined to each society. On the contrary, the interests, sanctions and values of the Western society may be very influential in bringing about change in the non-Western society, if it feels it is in potential danger of domination. Where one society is subordinated or faces political subordination by another, it may seek to avoid or reject subordination by adopting tactics recognized by the members of the society as benefiting their group. Further, these tactics may be learned, either through observation or formal education from the potentially dominant group, but they are implemented through native directed change programs.

There seems to be at least one factor governing the success of any creative attempt by a non-Western society to either avoid or rebel against domination by a Western society. The extent of understanding the non-Western society has of Western behavior, an understanding which comes only with education by Westerners, is most important. Without this essential, the native cannot plan a rational and effective mode of action to meet the challenge of Western domination. A native can observe the behavior of Westerners, but he cannot necessarily understand this.

The major task of the anthropologist in seeking to understand the process of social and cultural distinction, or differentiation, as a result of contact between two different cultural traditions is to provide an adequate framework for comparisons of studies. Once this is accomplished, we can begin to isolate the causal factors in producing any particular type of reaction to contact. The bulk of material available to the anthropologists on such problems involves contact between Western and non-Western societies, but studies of contact between two non-Western societies would seem to be of equal value.

The first step in isolating the processes of social and cultural distinction would be to make "synchronic" studies of contact between a particular Western society and a particular non-Western society, manifesting one type of contact situation (i.e., fur-trapping and trading, forced plantation labor, etc.). Such studies would illustrate the particular problems each society faced in the contact situation, and the reactions of each group in adjusting to one another.

The next step would be to make a study of a range of reactions by the same non-Western society to a range of contact relationships established over time under different contact conditions or in different areas with the Western society. Such studies might be termed "diachronic." The study of Western Mongol reactions to Russians in the lower Volga region of Russia, the Altai mountains, and northern Sinkiang is a "diachronic" study of a range of reactions by Western Mongols to Russians. As the detail and completeness of reports on reactions of a particular
non-Western society to a Western society varies, the completeness in range of reaction and type of contact will naturally vary, but such material as is available should be included.

The third step in isolation of the processes of social and cultural differentiation would involve comparisons of two "synchronic" studies, each involving the contact of different Western and non-Western cultures; each involving the contact of one Western culture with a different non-Western culture; or vice-versa. With this approach, we could test the validity of considering all Western cultures as essentially similar in the type of contacts initiated, their reactions to non-Western cultures, and any apparent uniformity in non-Western societies' reactions to Western cultures. In addition, we would have some idea of necessary connection between types of contact and types of reaction. I have presented an experimental application of this approach in Chapter VII, utilizing material from Chapter II of this paper, on the Kalmuks of the lower Volga, and material taken from Monica Hunter Wilson's study of reactions to European settlement by the Pondo of South Africa.

The fourth step involves comparisons of two "diachronic" studies. For example, one might trace the developmental tendency in non-Western societies in contact with Western societies toward more orthodox (Western) political organization from "movements in which the imminence of a radical and supernatural change in the social order is prophesied or or expected" (such as Burkhanism). Worsley has presented such a study

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in his article "Millenarian Movements in Melanesia," but unfortunately the descriptive data contained in this article are far too sketchy to allow comparison, for example, with the trend towards more orthodox political organization in the body of material presented in this paper on the development of Western Mongol political organization.

It would seem to this author that only through an approach such as is outlined above can the anthropologist begin to isolate the processes which came into operation as a result of contact between societies with different cultural traditions.
APPENDIX A

LAMAISM IN MONGORIA: A SOURCE OF CHANGE

Lamaism was first introduced into Mongolia under the tutelage of Genghis Khan. Genghis' reason was undoubtedly political, for he knew the Mongols needed a unifying force to cement the various Mongol groups together beyond the military force he commanded. If the Mongols adopted the major religions of China, they would open the way toward a complete acceptance of the Chinese way of life, since religious practices to a certain extent reflect the past traditions and present way of life of a people. The peculiar nature of a syncretistic religion such as Lamaism was just what he needed. The Mongols were shamanistic and pastoral, as were the Tibetans prior to the spread of Lamaism. Lamaism in Tibet represented a syncretism of the ancient Tibetan Bon-po shamanism and Buddhism, introduced from northern India.

After the fall of the Chingizide Empire, when the Mongols retreated onto their steppes in Outer and Western Mongolia, many groups among the Mongols revived shamanistic practices in contact with groups who had not been converted. The lamas tried unsuccessfully to maintain their religion in far western Mongolia and in the northern reaches of Outer Mongolia but failed.

Part of the difficulty of the lamas in maintaining missions in Western Mongolia was a direct outgrowth of the policy of the Manchu
government in China. Fearing the force of united church and state which had been so instrumental in welding the Western Mongolian groups together in the past, the Ch'ien Lung Emperor cut off all direct communications between Dzungaria and Tibet. It was always possible for a few Western Mongols to get through southern Sinkiang and make their way to Lhasa, but the Western Mongols as a whole were left to develop their own particular manifestation of Buddhism, one which contained a higher content of shamanism than the Buddhist Lamaism of other Mongol areas, such as the Inner Mongolian areas. It was not until the nineteenth century that open contact between Tibetan Lamas and Dzungarians could be effected.

In 1953, Walther Heissig published an article in the journal *Anthropos* which sheds a great deal of light on the complex syncretism of Lamaism and shamanism with which we are dealing when we discuss Lamaism in northern and western Mongolia. Heissig reported that "Mongol shamanism presents itself basically as preventative and therapeutical witchcraft." The protection of man and his herds against sickness and evil forces "... appears as the primary function of shamanism." Ancestor spirits played an important role in shamanistic beliefs among the Mongols, with the ordained shaman acting as an intermediary and invoking the spirits to protect the lives and property of a family. These fundamental functions of shamanism were to serve the Lamaists when they began missionary efforts among the Mongols.

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Although Heissig's sources deal primarily with the pattern of Buddhist missionary approach in northeastern Mongolia, the similarity of shamanism and the introduction of Lamaism among all the Mongols has been shown to be fundamentally the same.  

In shamanistic chronicles such as that from the Tsakhar region of northeastern Mongolia, shamanism is shown as developing out of the worship of clan ancestors. Heissig notes that "... all the powers and forces represented in shamanism whether positive or negative, protective or harmful, were thought to be the souls of former living beings, originally only those of the shamans ..." Thus, "... in pure shamanism the ghosts and spirits of the dead remained in this world at their burial sites. These sites developed into haunted places, being tabu to others because of fear, but not to the shamans, who have power over these ghosts and spirits."

The common abilities and privileges of the shamans throughout Mongolia seem to have been the ability to defeat the evil spirits of illness, the power to foretell the future, power over natural forces such as rain, and the like. Shamans were privileged to ride on white stallions, and there seems to be a definite connection between white

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6Ibid., p. 508.
7Ibid., p. 510.
The creed of Lamaism used magic as its major base in missionizing, for "... magic alone was regarded as evidence for the power of the newly propagated creed." In the record of his travels, at the time of Kubilai Khan's rule in China, Marco Polo noted that credence in a religion rested in its control over magical properties. The same phenomenon was noted by earlier travelers such as William of Ruburk and Carpini. In the Secret History of the Mongols (the Altan Tobci) compiled in the fifteenth century, reference is made to the wonderful magical feats performed by lamas in the entourage of the Emperor, Genghis Khan. In the earliest tests of their power, the lamas were in direct competition with the court shamans, and all accounts state they bested them in this struggle. Magic continued to be a mark of distinction for the Lamaistic creed up through the first half of the twentieth century.

Another key to the advancement of the Lamaist faith over the shamans is probably to be found in the fact that many of the lamas who were sent as missionaries to Mongolia were actually trained in the rudiments of herbal medicine, and had effective remedies for many illnesses. To supplement their remedies, they employed a psycho-therapeutical "bedside manner" such as has been proven most effective in convalescent care in Western medicine.

The shamans, as might be expected, were capable of turning the

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 513.
new medical knowledge of the lamas to their own good. Heissig notes that in northeastern Mongolia, shamanistic prayers of recent times invoke the gods "... of a new pantheon, acquired under the influence of lamaism." In their prayers, they ask for the same preventative and therapeutical "medical help" for which the older shamanistic deities were invoked.

The lama missionaries did not rely on the effectiveness of their medical knowledge or their knowledge of slight-of-hand and hypnosis to be their only bid for religious supremacy in Mongolia. Through conversions of the nobility, they gained "official" sanction for Lamaism, and with this came edicts from the nobility, on the insistence of the lamas, for the banning of shamanistic practices. Then followed, as Heissig has reported, "... a subtle policy of substituting new lamaist prayers in the place of the old shamanistic invocations, incantations, consecrations, ban-formulas, benedictions, etc." The spells and prayers in use by the Mongol converts to Lamaism included references to the same needs of the Mongols as the shamans had formerly prayed for, such as protection against demons, destruction of evil, protection and multiplication of livestock, etc. Not only were the new lamaist prayers and spells substitutions for the former shamanistic prayers, but they were constructed along the same patterns. The example which

10 Ibid., p. 507.
11 Ibid., p. 515.
12 Ibid.
Heissig gives includes references to fanning the body in order to cause bilious attacks (jaundice) to disappear. The function of the fan is identical with the function of the whip or stick used by shamans to drive away jaundice.

A purge of shamanistic deities was carried out with extreme rigidity by the lama missionaries. Rituals under attack included hunt-songs, and indicative of the thoroughness with which this purge was carried out, we find Heissig noting that hunt-songs are still in use, but addressed to no particular deity.

From an account by Neyici Toyin, the lama missionary from whose biography Heissig drew most of his statements about the Lamaist suppression of shamanism, Heissig extrapolated four methods used by Lamaist missionaries in propagating Lamaism. The first and second of these methods, display of magical power and greater medical proficiency, have been mentioned above. The third method, influencing the nobility, has also been mentioned above, but Heissig notes that this included influencing nobility to interfere with the old religion by economic encouragement of conversion. Wealth in the form of a few coins apiece was distributed to those who could properly recite certain of the Lamaist incantations. Inherent in this was the fourth method by which the lamas secured converts. Popularization of rituals was a radical innovation, for in the shamanist religion, only properly ordained shamans dared exercise the

\[13\text{Ibid.}\]
\[14\text{Ibid.}\]
power of certain incantations. Even in Tibet only ordained monks could incant or recite from religious tracts. In the newly missionized areas of Mongolia, lay-folk were encouraged to learn some of the Lamaist scriptures, contrary to common practice in Tibet. Heissig notes that this had a far-reaching effect on the introduction of the new religion, for this was the first time "... each layman could join in beseeching the god to bestow his magic power." In conjunction with the economic temptations for conversion and the attraction of learning some scriptures for their own use, the Mongols had to give up their household gods (ongghot). The lamas organized a large-scale program of destruction of these household gods, collecting them and burning them in large heaps. Heissig quotes extensively from Mongolian sources showing the drastic innovations brought by the lamas and the systematic iconoclastic purge directed against household gods they carried on.

Lamaism wrought many changes in the social and cultural environment of the Mongols. As Miller has noted, Tibetan and Chinese architectural forms introduced in the monasteries indicated the "two major external changes of orientation" in Mongolia. The establishment of monasteries had the immediate effect of localizing a portion of the population in a fixed and sedentary location. Lattimore feels that the very stabilization of a portion of the population in a monastical system meant that the Mongols were able to effect a transition from a completely nomadic way of life to a combination of nomadic and sedentary life, and

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15 Ibid., p. 530.
at the same time cope with the problem of effectively meeting the challenge of a sedentary agricultural society - that of China. Permanent monasteries had land donated them by nobles who sought to acquire merit by such acts. In time, the monasteries served as a permanent trade center. Traders in Mongolia could not always count on finding the mobile nomadic Mongols in the same location, year after year, but they could count on finding monasteries in the same location. For this reason, monasteries became important in the control of trade. Accounts of travellers in Mongolia almost invariably include references to the trade fairs which were held in conjunction with temple festivities. A not inconsiderable amount of the trade goods went to the monasteries as donations of cloth, staples and luxury goods. The nomadic population in the areas near a monastery often conducted all their trade by barter during these trade fairs. The monasteries were especially influential in areas where Chinese settlements were few, which included most of the territory beyond the great wall which separated Inner Mongolia from Outer and Western Mongolia. It is important to note that the Lamaist monasteries often accumulated considerable wealth through contributions of land and herds. Thus, "with its treasuries and temples, land and stores, the large monastery was less subject to impoverishment by natural disaster." Lattimore has noted that "the church's corporative, impersonal

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20. Ibid.
title to property achieved a higher degree of integration between mobile pastoral property and fixed landed property than the society of the time could manage in any other way.\textsuperscript{21}

Lamaism introduced new factors into the social organization of the Mongols. Prior to the introduction of Lamaism, mobility of status and social prestige was almost entirely dependent on a person's status at birth within Mongolian society. With the introduction of monasteries, a new status system was introduced, dependent only on the ability of a monk to achieve greater learning and recognition than his fellows. A lama started studying the scriptures and related religious and medical tracts from the time he entered the monastery as a novice. As he completed several years of schooling he joined the teaching staff of the monastery for the lower academic ranks through which he had passed, while continuing his studies on a higher level. Once he had passed all the ranks offered at his particular monastery, he had to go to Tibet for further study from qualified teachers. The highest levels of education and the highest academic degrees were to be attained only by studying at one of three famous monasteries in Tibet. If a candidate could pass examinations by members of the clerical staff of one of these "universities" after sufficient preparation, he would be granted a title appropriate to his level of achievement.\textsuperscript{22}

It must be stressed that where communications with Tibet were cut

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21}O. Lattimore (1940), p. 85.
\item \textsuperscript{22}R. J. Miller (1959), pp. 126-127.
\end{itemize}
off, or at least greatly hampered by Manchu policy, as in the case of Western Mongolia, conditions for a very definite Tibetan orientation, such as are found throughout Inner Mongolia and most of Outer Mongolia, would have been minimal. In most of Mongolia the position Tibet held in the socio-cultural orientations of the Mongols was considerable. This has been aptly illustrated by Miller in a quote from a Buriat Mongol (southern Siberia) source. The Buriat remarked on the feelings of fellow-pilgrims when he said "... they naturally did not fail to express the pious wish that fate might allow them to view it (Lhasa) a few more times in this life, and if not in this life in a future one. And indeed, the sacred books promise very alluring benefits to him who has had the good fortune to worship the two images of the Buddha and the two bogdo (the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama)." 23

As contrasted with most of Inner Mongolia and much of Outer Mongolia, there were very few monasteries in Western Mongolia. The need for a stable monastery and the attendant features of an intermediary relationship which could handle both sedentarism and nomadism were absent in Western Mongolia, which was located far from the Chinese homelands of traders from China. Coupled with the inhospitable nature of dry steppe-lands, lands which separated Western Mongolia from the rest of Mongolia, were the risks involved in caravan trade over so great an area.

Despite the isolation of Western Mongolia from Tibet, and therefore from the center of academic learning for Lamaism, lamas began

to proselytize in Western Mongolia working from bases in Inner and Outer Mongolia. In Western Mongolia as well as in Inner and Outer Mongolia, the lama enjoyed a position of prestige far superior to that of any layman. Throughout Mongolia the lama was protected by law, a practice which began during the days of the Chingizide Empire and continued by virtue of its codification then, down to the twentieth century. The Western Mongol book of law, the Tsachin Bichik "protects the clergy . . . by punishing crimes committed against them more severely than the same crimes committed against men of the people."24 Other Mongol books testify to the legal and supernatural position the lamas held:

... Any offense to a lama annihilates the merit acquired by a thousand generations. Whosoever shows any contempt for the holiness of lamas, is punished by accidents, sickness, etc. If anyone turns into ridicule the precepts of the lama, he is punished by impediment in his speech, giddiness, etc. Ridiculing the soul of the lama leads to possession by the devil, loss of reason and memory and banishment into the place of eternal torment . . . .25

It is significant that lamas played such an important role in introducing changes in the religious and social systems of Mongolia. They continued to occupy a superior position in Mongol society partly through their control of the educational system. The counselors, secretaries and accountants of the nobility were often drawn from the ranks of lamas resident nearby.26 It is important to note that lamas invariably play an important role in Mongol independence movements,

25Timkowski (1827), quoting the Mongol work Tsagun Kurdun-u Undusun tendaris.
against powers who dominated them politically after the fall of the Chingizide Empire. Although they were often drawn from the ranks of the herding population, by virtue of the superior position they held in Mongol society, as educated men, they became both the most articulate and the most ardent supporters of the system which supported them.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


