

NORTH-EAST ASIAN STUDIES



David Sneath

Mongolia Remade

Post-socialist National Culture,
Political Economy, and Cosmopolitics

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Mongolia Remade

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*Post-socialist National Culture, Political Economy,
and Cosmopolitics*

David Sneath

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1 Introduction

Part I The Making and Remaking of Mongolia

In the course of the twentieth century Mongolia underwent two episodes of revolutionary change that marked the transition between three radically different social orders. The 1920s and 1930s saw the overthrow of a Buddhist aristocracy and the construction of a Soviet-style modernist nation-state, and the 1990s witnessed the collapse of state socialism and the introduction of a 'neoliberal' market economy and parliamentary system. These transformations have made and remade Mongolia as we know it today. The articles collected in this volume¹ are diverse, but all of them are concerned with the historical processes that have produced contemporary Mongolia. Three of these transformations are particularly striking: (a) the construction of national culture, (b) the transformation of political economy, and (c) the re-introduction of cosmological politics.

Tracing the first of these strands entails an examination of the historical processes by which the Mongolian nation-state was constructed, and distinctive national and ethnic identities produced from the aristocratic and imperial orders of the past. This theme is touched on in this introduction and explored in Chapter 2, which charts the history of the term *Mongol*, and the ways in which it was applied to persons and territories before it became the ethnonational category that it is today. Dominant conceptions of Mongolian identity reflect the influence of national populist thought, in which tribes and peoples were proto-national units, defined by common culture. This is, however, a poor guide to understanding pre-revolutionary Mongolia, which is better thought of in terms of what Anderson ([1983] 1991) terms the 'dynastic realm' – in which political society is a product of rulership. Since the earliest historical times, Mongolia has been subject to aristocratic and imperial projects of governance. The aristocratic orders of the past were often decentralized, but nevertheless operated in ways that resembled the state more than they did evolutionist models of kin-organized 'tribal society.' This leads on to an examination of the processes by which Mongolian ethnicity and national culture were constructed in the twentieth century.

This theme also stands as a backdrop for Chapter 3, which describes a central feature of Mongolian national culture – the distinction between the

¹ All the chapters of this work, except for the introduction and conclusion, have been previously published in journals or edited volumes.

urban (*khotyn*) with its associations of modernity and the rural (*khödööni*), seen as a touchstone of tradition. It begins by tracing the history of relations between elements of Mongolian culture that have been oriented towards political and ritual centres on the one hand, and those oriented towards rural pastoralism on the other. Although these interlinked constellations have undergone a series of transformations, they remained central themes in both rural and urban society and continue to frame relations between the two. The chapter describes the historical growth of urban lifestyles from pre-revolutionary times to the state socialist and post-socialist eras, exploring the social effects of recent processes of de-urbanization and re-urbanization in Mongolia's 'age of the market.' This treatment also introduces the second overarching theme, the transformations of Mongolia's political economy, which created processes of urbanization in the state socialist era and flows of people out of, and into, urban centres and the peri-urban periphery since the collapse of the centrally planned economy.

This theme is developed further in Chapter 4, which deals with the effects of these transformations on 'nomadic' or mobile pastoralism and the changing regimes for the ownership of land, in particular, the controversy surrounding proposals to introduce the private ownership of land in the 'age of the market' (*zakh zeeliin üye*) as Mongolians call the post-socialist era. It begins by describing historical forms of mobile pastoralism and the system of rights to land that made them possible, both in the pre-revolutionary and the state socialist collective eras. These systems organized both labour and access to land in such a way as to support large-scale pastoral operations that included long-distance movement and specialist herding. Post-socialist privatization of livestock and other assets transformed Mongolian pastoralism, dissolving the support systems for complex large-scale operations and creating an atomized livestock-rearing sector in which rich and poor rapidly emerged, and herding households became vulnerable to extreme weather such as winter disaster (*zud*) that have robbed tens of thousands of pastoralists of their livelihoods.

The third overarching theme emerges in Chapter 5, which describes the way in which notions of nation and tradition are engaged in projects of popular mobilization and invoked in public ritual. It explores the ways in which Mongolians reconstruct tradition, assert collective identity and deploy concepts of belonging. In the twentieth century the socialist state constructed a single national 'people' (*ündesten, ard tümen*) and, following the Soviet model, represented the past in terms of tradition (*ulamjäl*). Since the collapse of state socialism and the introduction of multiparty parliamentary politics, notions of both tradition and collective identity have

become potential resources, particularly for politicians, to mobilize public support. This can be seen in the 'traditional' rites held at sacred mountains by Mongolia's President, as Head of State, and the ceremonies conducted at other ritual cairns (*ovoo*) by ordinary citizens that dramatize the links between persons and the landscape. This chapter also introduces the importance of notions of 'homeland' (*nutag*) in contemporary Mongolian culture, reflecting both the ideological logic of nationalism and the importance of local social networks.

Political economy and its transformation are returned to in Chapter 6, which deals with the impact on pastoralists of the expansion of banking credit and widespread indebtedness. In Mongolia's age of the market, international finance and development agencies have advocated credit schemes for pastoralists faced with uneven annual income. However, rather than boosting incomes the servicing of debt has become a central burden for an increasing number of Mongolian households. The banks demand for collateral has meant that access to grazing land has come to be mortgaged against loans in ways that are entirely new to Mongolia. Such processes of collateralization has expanded the sphere of monetized relations and made pastoralists dependent not only on climatic variation but also upon increasingly global markets for credit and the prices of the commodities they produce and consume. This new regime of debt has interesting historical parallels with the Qing-era barter trade that impoverished pre-revolutionary Mongolia.

The cosmological aspects of contemporary public culture are explored in more depth in the following chapter by examining two apparently contrasting cases: the ancient practice of scapulimancy (divining by means of animal shoulder blades), and the modernist commitment to progress exemplified by the introduction of electric light in rural Mongolia. Scapula and other divinatory items can be approached as 'metonymic fields' – bounded technical practices from which wider meanings are read. The Soviet-era electrification programme was designed to create the sorts of imaginative perceptions that the modernist state advocated. However, I argue that Mongolia cannot be described in terms of a successful modernist 'colonization' of the social imaginary, since this metaphor implies a bounded space being filled with particular ideologies. Rather than displace each other, narrative genres such as modernism and the metonymic fields used in divination have coexisted and interacted in new ways.

The historical roots of public ritual, and the cosmology it reflects, are examined in Chapter 8, which deals with the ceremonial sites used for the worship of the spirits of sacred mountains and other local deities. Both

the ritual cairns (*ovoo*) and the spiritual masters of the land that they are dedicated to bear interesting comparison with the knowledge and practices surrounding mountain deities in Tibet. Based on an original translation of the earliest known seventeenth-century Mongolian text that describes these ritual sites, this chapter explores the ways in which these early rites reflected the ordering of space in Mongolia and Tibet, and the historical processes by which these rituals were popularized.

Contemporary versions of *ovoo* ritual are explored in Chapter 9, which presents the notion of ‘cosmopolitics’ – a term that, following De La Cadena (2010), I use to indicate the engagement of spiritual entities in the political arena. This chapter returns us to the first theme, the construction of the Mongolian nation, revealing the ways in which the heritage of Buddhist cosmology has been used as a resource for the on-going construction of national culture, enshrined in state rituals and redesigned to match the needs of a new political culture. It looks again, in greater depth, at the Mongolian state ceremonies for sacred mountains conducted by the President as an example of the reinvention of an institution originally produced by the wider civilization of the Buddhist ecumene that encompassed both Mongolia and Tibet. Here we see elements drawn from that civilization reinvented as specifically national phenomena. Such rituals, I argue, can be seen as cosmopolitical since they engage with nonhumans as actors within a public politics of representation. Furthermore, the contemporary reinvention of these practices has generated a space for a very different, but also cosmopolitical, register for conceiving of relations between human persons and the landscape, used by shamans and others who ritually engage with the spirits of the landscape.

The final chapter reflects upon the distinctive political economy that emerged since the collapse of the state socialist system, the emergence of rich and poor, and the rise of a super-rich elite with close ties to the political establishment. This ‘oligarchic capitalism’ has seen wealth sucked up, rather than trickle down, and has begun to resemble what Thomas Piketty terms ‘patrimonial capitalism’ in which inherited wealth dominates the economy. This chapter also picks up the themes explored throughout the volume by showing how the social conditions created by the new constellations of wealth and power provide the context for both contemporary notions of national identity, and the re-appropriation of historical religious and ritual practice that gave rise to new forms of cosmopolitical practice.

The remainder of this introduction is divided into three parts, in roughly chronological order. Part II gives a very general introduction to the cultural and historical diversity of the country for those unfamiliar with Mongolia.

Part III provides the historical backdrop for the first of great transformations Mongolia experienced in the twentieth century, briefly describing the collapse of Qing control and the short-lived autonomous regime of the Bogd Khan or 'Living Buddha' (1911-1924). The last part describes the remaking of Outer Mongolia in the Soviet image during the establishment and development of the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) (1924-1992).

Part II Masters of the Steppe: Peoples of Mongolia

For more than 2,000 years, the Mongolian steppe has been home to an array of peoples and empires. Since the first millennium BCE, if not before, societies with pastoral nomadic lifestyles populated the belt of steppe lands that stretches across Eurasia from the Black Sea to the Manchurian forests (Allard and Erdenebaatar 2005, Levine 1999). These peoples lived in dwellings made of felt and wood that could be moved easily, herded livestock on horseback and travelled from one seasonal pasture to the next. With these strategies, pastoral peoples were able to master the climatic and geographical challenges of the rolling grasslands of Central and Inner Asia. Their mobile lifestyle and equestrian skills also made these mobile pastoralists formidable warriors, well able to exploit military opportunities in neighbouring lands.

Chinese sources describe the powerful Xiongnu empire that ruled what is now Mongolia from the third century BCE (see Honeychurch, Fitzhugh and Amartuvshin 2013). To counter the threat of this northern neighbour the Chinese Qin emperor Shi Huang (r. 221-210 BCE) linked smaller existing fortifications into a huge chain of walls that snaked across much of northern China. For centuries, the Great Wall marked the division between the domains of the Chinese emperors and the lords of the steppe (Di Cosmo 2002, Jagchid and Symons 1989). On either side of this charged frontier emerged some of the most expansive empires ever known.

Religion and Civil Organization

Far from being a timeless land of ancient, unchanged traditions, Mongolia has a tumultuous history of sweeping change. New regimes and religions have transformed political, economic, and ideological life. One of the most important developments was religious conversion. In the thirteenth century Chinggis Khan and his immediate successors sponsored the established polytheistic shamanic religion while tolerating other faiths, but since the

days of Khublai Khan, Tibetan Buddhism became increasingly important at the courts of Mongol rulers. By the end of the sixteenth century, Buddhism was the dominant religion of the region. Some elements of the pre-Buddhist shamanic religion, including the worship of local deities, may have lived on under Buddhist auspices (see Chapter 8) and some practices appear to have survived periods of active suppression (see Buyandelger 2013). But from the sixteenth century, Buddhist rulers began to effectively suppress the old faith as a public religion, persecuting shamans and burning their ritual objects. Explicitly non-Buddhist shamanic practices were retained in the northern and eastern fringes of the Mongolian world, among groups such as the Buryats and Daur (Humphrey 1996).

The Buddhist era introduced monasteries throughout Mongolia. These became prominent ritual, economic, and political centres, and throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they became the hubs of small settlements. Great complexes were built in such places as Urga and Erdenee Zuu – where Ögödei's imperial capital, Khara Khorum, had once stood. The Buddhist establishment also managed the ritual aspects of relations with the environment. The local spiritual masters of the land (*gazryn ezed*) were honoured in annual ceremonies held at ritual cairns (*ovoo*) (see Heissig 1980). The district officials might control access to pasture land, but these rites demonstrated that, in some sense, the true owners of the land were spiritual ones, the local deities attributed with the control of environmental conditions (Erdenetuya 2002). These ceremonies and attendant local games (*naadam*) have been revived throughout much of the country in recent decades.

Mobile pastoralism has long required flexible access to grazing land. District authorities (lordly, monastic, or collective) historically have tended to control large tracts of territory within which pastoral families have been allocated complimentary seasonal pastures. This local control of land has allowed for movement and reallocation of pasture in harsh environmental conditions such as drought and the winter freezes known as *zud*. Such flexibility is difficult to achieve within systems of ownership based on the rigid and permanent private ownership of land, and until relatively recently, grazing land in Mongolia was not generally owned in this manner. Ceremonial practice, then, can be seen to reflect the notion of spiritual authority over the land, which makes human claims custodial rather than absolute.

Some areas in Mongolia are suitable for agriculture, but most of this vast land is best used for grazing livestock. Around a third of Mongolia's population now relies upon their domestic animals to make a living. Many,

but not all, of these pastoralists are still mobile, moving to different seasonal pastures as part of an annual cycle. Since long before the time of Chinggis Khan pastoralists have kept what Mongols today describe as the *tavan khoshuu mal*, the 'five types of livestock': horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and, in the drier regions, camels. In the higher northern regions they also keep yaks, sometimes cross-breeding them with Mongol cattle. But above all, Mongolia remains a land of horses. There are about as many horses as people living in Mongolia – some three million. No other animal is more valued, and top racehorses sell for thousands of dollars. Until the development of firearms, horses were a key military resource, providing the deadly mobility for which Mongol armies became famous.

Steppe 'nomadism' should not be thought of as an aimless, wandering subsistence activity. Mongolian mobile pastoralists know very well which seasonal pastures they will use in winter, spring, summer, and autumn. These generally form an established annual cycle, although pastoralists may adapt their pattern in response to changing economic, social, and environmental circumstances. Pastoralism need not be a small-scale activity, limited to one or two households. Large-scale, coordinated, mobile herding systems can involve hundreds of households, thousands of animals, and have ancient roots.

From the seventeenth century until the twentieth, Mongolia was divided into administrative districts called *khoshuu* (banners) ruled by a hereditary lord or a Buddhist monastery. Mongol commoners were tied to a district and were required to provide taxes and labour to their noble or ecclesiastical masters. Buddhist monasteries, the nobility, and the imperial administration owned large numbers of livestock, which were herded for them by subjects or servants who received a share of the animal produce. Most commoners also owned their own livestock, and some could be rich, but they were still required to render service to local princely or monastic authorities as part of their political units (Natsagdorj 1978, Boldbaatar and Sneath 2006).

Pastoral systems could also be highly sophisticated. Specialist herders and their families moved large herds of livestock to selected seasonal pastures in an annual cycle. Banner officials regulated pasture allocation. Some movement systems could entail herd shifts of 150 to 200 km between summer and winter pastures (Simukov 1936, Sneath 1999b). Because different animals have different grazing habits, species were segregated. Sheep crop pasture so close that horses and cattle cannot get at what is left, so efficient use of land required the coordinated movement of livestock. This 'feudal' system was largely abolished in the early years of the Soviet-style Mongolian People's Republic, and, in the 1950s, pastoralists were organized into large

collective and state farms. Although these collectives represented a radical break from the past, in some respects they resembled the large monastic and noble estates. As had their predecessors, they controlled access to grazing land and required herders to provide quotas of produce as part of a district-wide operation. They also supported seasonal movement and supplied hay using central motor pools. The collectives were disbanded in the early 1990s, using various formulas to divide livestock and other assets among local members. This has allowed some herders to become wealthy, but others now own barely enough animals to make a living, and many pastoral households have struggled to do without collective fodder supplies and motor support in the face of harsh weather conditions (Bruun and Odgaard 1996, Sneath 2002).

Mongolian Ethnicity

The modern state of Mongolia has a number of officially recognized ethnic groups. More than 80% of Mongolians are registered as Khalkha – a term originally applied to a large administrative unit created by the fifteenth-century ruler Dayan Khan and subsequently applied to the wide territories ruled by his descendants, in the twentieth century it came to be seen as a national or ethnic category. In the western part of the country there are some 100,000 Kazakhs, whose Turkic Muslim ancestors had moved into the region in the nineteenth century, in part to avoid Tsarist Russian rule. The incorporation of subjects of the former Oirad realms in western Mongolia, after their defeat by the Qing emperor of China in the eighteenth century, left a number of named groups that later became officially registered as ethnic minorities (*yastan*), mostly in the Mongolian west.

Administrative divisions introduced by the Manchu rulers of China and Mongolia created distinctions that served as the raw material for the ethnographic mapping of Mongolia in the Soviet era. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Qing emperor Kangxi (r. 1662-1722) established a unit to raise imperial horse and camel herds in the Dariganga region in what is now western Mongolia. The people of this region were registered as an ethnic group (*yastan*) in the Mongolian People's Republic, and in the 2000 census they appear as a minority ethnicity with a population of 32,000. In the north, next to the huge freshwater Lake Khövsgöl, the great monastic estate of the Jebtsundamba Khutagt, the senior reincarnate lama of the Buddhist establishment, gave rise to another census category that came to be registered as an ethnic group. As part of the Jebtsundamba Khutagt's religious establishment the subjects were exempt from state taxes

and described as the ‘exempt ones,’ or Darkhad (Atwood 2004: 132). The Soviet-style minority nationalities policies of the MPR led to the Darkhad being registered as another ‘ethnic group’ and by the time of the 2000 census their population was a little under 20,000. Khövsgöl province is also home to some Tuvan-speaking people, such as the Dukha (Tsaatan), famous for herding reindeer. In the early twentieth century, many Buryats crossed the border into Mongolia to escape the turmoil of the Russian revolution. By the early twenty-first century some 40,000 Buryats were registered as citizens of Mongolia, living mostly in the northern provinces of Selenge, Khentii, and Dornod (Dashbadrakh 2006: 135).

Today, many aspects of Mongolian culture remain important in Inner Mongolia, now one of the autonomous regions of the People’s Republic of China. Mongolian is an official language, alongside Chinese, and the head of the local government is routinely Mongolian. There are over four million people of Mongolian nationality in the region – many more than in the independent state of Mongolia. However, the region was subject to Chinese settlement throughout the twentieth century, and today around 80% of the population of Inner Mongolia are Han Chinese (Bulag 2002).

Farther abroad, people tracing Mongolian descent are also found far to the west. On the Russian shores of the Caspian Sea lies the semi-autonomous Republic of Kalmykia, the successor state of the westernmost outpost of a seventeenth-century expansion by the Oirad Mongols. In exchange for guarding Russia’s frontier, the tsar granted them a small khanate south of the Volga River. The republic has a rich Oirad-Mongol heritage – it is the only Buddhist nation in Europe – although only about half of the republic’s population of 300,000 people are Kalmyk, and many of these no longer speak their historic dialect of Mongolian. Having experienced a turbulent and brutal history within the Soviet Union, diaspora communities of Kalmyks can be found elsewhere in Europe, including Serbia and France, and on the east coast of the United States. The Kalmyk community in New Jersey holds annual festivals to celebrate their Mongolian heritage.

Mongolia is also a land of settlements – most of them tiny, widely dispersed villages, isolated in the endless grassy sea of the steppe. There are larger urban centres such as Darkhan and Erdenet, but a single city dominates national consciousness: the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The city started life in the seventeenth century as a great encampment around the Jebtsundamba Khutagt, the head of the Buddhist church. At first it remained mobile, a city of tents that moved every few years. Only around 1778 did it settle in its present location in east-central Mongolia. It was first known as Ikh Khüree (Great Monastery) and later called Urga by Europeans (probably from *örgöö*,

the Mongol term for a palace yurt). By the end of the nineteenth century, a hundred monasteries and temples of various sizes were located in the vicinity of Urga, with a total population of around 20,000 monks. In the Soviet era, the capital was renamed Ulaanbaatar (Red Hero). The city took on an unmistakably Soviet look, especially in its architecture, and grew at an amazing speed. In 1935, the population of Urga was 10,400. Fifty years later it was 50 times larger, growing to more than half a million people. Since then, the population has doubled again to over one million (Gilberg and Svantesson 1996, Campi 2006).

Mongolia now has a standard language derived from the Khalkha dialects of the past, and a widely shared sense of national culture that recognizes distinct minorities such as the Kazakh, Buryat, and Dukha. Nevertheless, within the Khalkha majority category are remnants of many distinctive local traditions, linguistic dialects, beliefs customs, and techniques of managing livestock. Even greater diversity exists if one includes the peoples of Inner Mongolia, which have been subject to the changing policies of the Chinese state. Yet, throughout 'greater Mongolia' one finds common threads that are the legacy of a long history of mobile pastoral steppe life, with roots stretching back for more than two millennia. While keeping step with the increasingly urban, industrialized world, Mongolia's peoples continue to find countless ways to express their unique history, culture, and way of life.

Part III The Ending of the Old Order

From the earliest historical period, the Xiongnu empire of the second century BCE, until the twentieth century, the lands of Mongolia were ruled by aristocrats. The enormous thirteenth-century empire founded by Chinggis Khan not only associated the region with the name Mongol (*Monggol*) but also installed an aristocracy dominated by the descendants of Chinggis Khan's royal house, the Borjigin lineage. After the break-up of the empire and the overthrow of the Mongol Yüan dynasty in China in the fourteenth century, Chinggisid aristocrats continued to rule the region of present-day Mongolia. In the fifteenth century, however, Chinggisid control of Mongolia was challenged by the growing power of the Oirad Mongols in the west, whose rulers had held senior office in the Mongol empire but were not themselves recognized descendants of Chinggis Khan. By the seventeenth century Oirad pressure was so great that the remaining Chinggisid rulers swore fealty to the rising power in the east – the Manchu Qing dynasty. The Manchu not only defeated the Ming dynasty to rule China, but went

on to crush the Oirads. The Mongolian aristocracy became, in effect, junior partners in the imperial project of the Qing; the Mongol and Manchu nobility intermarried and Mongol aristocrats enjoyed high status, particularly in the area of military appointments.

The basic sociopolitical unit during the Qing period was the *khoshuu* (conventionally translated as ‘banners’ to reflect the literal meaning of the equivalent Manchu term), the hereditary domain of the *zasag noyon* (ruling lord), who managed the territory with the assistance of a series of officials, and held judiciary authority over his subjects. The commoners were tied to their *khoshuu* districts and required to render corvée service to local authorities. They can be divided into four categories: (a) personal servants of nobles and officials (*khamjlaga* or *khar'yat*); (b) the imperial subjects owing legal obligations to their lord (*albat*, *sumyn ard*, or just *ard*); (c) ecclesiastical subjects (*shav'nar* – described by Bawden (1968: 106) as ‘church serfs’); and (d) slaves (*bo'ol*). This last category appears to have been numerically quite small, but in theory both nobles and commoners might own slaves.² In addition there were the independent estates of the various senior reincarnate lamas (*khutagts*), the most senior being the Jebtsundamba Khutagt. These were separate from, but comparable to, the *khoshuu* (banners), with their own defined territories and with the advantage of having their subjects exempt from military registration. This system was termed ‘nomadic feudalism’ by the Russian scholar Boris Vladimirtsov (1934). This terminology became unpopular among some later scholars, but the parallels between European feudalism and Qing-era Mongolia were striking, as Owen Lattimore (1976: 3) notes: ‘[T]here are those who hesitate to call the Mongolian social order “feudal”, but I do not see how the term can be avoided: aristocratic rank was hereditary and identified with territorial fiefs, and serfdom was also hereditary and territorially identified.’³

For administrative purposes, the Qing divided Mongolia into two parts: Inner Mongolia was the region close enough to the seat of government to be administered directly by the Qing court in Beijing, whilst the more distant Outer Mongolia was ruled indirectly, via the military governors in the urban centres of Urga, Uliasutai and Khobdo (Khovd). The Manchu and Mongol aristocracy were also enthusiastic sponsors of monastic Buddhism, and the church expanded steadily, building temples and monasteries, and

2 Legal documents from the eighteenth century bare testimony to both the suffering of slaves and a certain, if very limited, concern for them by the Qing authorities (see Bawden 1968: 139-140).

3 For further discussion, see Sneath 2007: 124-131.

amassing herds, lands and subjects bequeathed by devout nobles. By the late nineteenth century, however, the Qing dynasty was facing a series of challenges that began to overwhelm it. The European colonial powers, and later Japan, defeated and humiliated the empire, imposing unequal treaties that helped provoke popular rebellions and a widening crisis of imperial authority.

As the power of the Qing weakened, Outer Mongolia became increasingly restive. By late nineteenth century Chinese economic dominance had generated widespread discontent with Manchu rule. The increasingly impoverished population struggled to pay tax arrears and the interest owed on debts to Chinese merchants. Leading aristocrats, such as the Sain Noyan Khan, who later played a central role in the independence movement, themselves owed large sums to Chinese merchants. Another pressure was the acceleration of Chinese colonization since the mid-nineteenth century. This had largely affected Inner Mongolia, where the loss of Mongolian pastureland precipitated a number of Mongolian uprisings, such as the Töküm insurrection of 1899-1901. Disaffected Inner Mongolian nobles moved into Outer Mongolia and this fuelled anti-Chinese sentiment. One of these, Togtokh Taiji (Prince Togtokh), took to plundering Chinese shops. In the early twentieth century the Qing had begun to prepare for large-scale Chinese colonization in Outer Mongolia, further heightening tension.

But the slow disintegration of the Qing loosened what control the Manchu government had upon distant dominions such as Outer Mongolia. In 1900 there was a mutiny of Mongol troops in Uliastai, who plundered the Chinese shops there and returned to their homes. Urga saw a number of riots in which mobs of Mongol lamas and residents looted Chinese shops and offices, and in 1910 the newly arrived Manchu senior official (*amban*) was apparently pelted with stones.

In retrospect the Mongolian 'independence movement' that emerged at this time reflected both the political and financial interests of the elite and a popular anti-Chinese sentiment among the commoners. But such popular discontent was nothing new, and the crucial factor was the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, which allowed those nobles advocating independence to gain the support of the revered head of the Buddhist establishment, the Jebtsundamba Khutagt. A provisional government was established in Urga and a small army mobilized, ostensibly in loyal support of the Qing dynasty, but actually to defend the newly independent state. In late 1911 the princes enthroned the Khutagt as the Bogd Khan (Holy Khan) of Mongolia, with the title 'Exalted by All' (Olnoo Örgögsön). The new government included five ministries (increasing later to nine) and a bicameral advisory body – the

Upper and Lower State Khural (Assembly) (Boldbaatar and Lündeejantsan 1997: 177-179). The Bogd Jebtsundamba announced in a pastoral letter that the time had come for all Mongols to unite and establish themselves as a separate state (*ulus*). The new government simply declared itself independent, and the internal political turmoil of China precluded any effective opposition from Peking.

The Buddhist establishment was by far the most powerful and authoritative institution in Outer Mongolia. It owned around a third of national wealth and included a huge proportion of the male population. Just under 45% of the 237,000 registered household heads were lamas in 1918, while nobles accounted for less than 6%, their *khamjilga* (personal servants) 17%, *albat* (commoners) 26%, and 7% were paupers (Namjim 2000b: 27 (Vol.1), Otgonjargal 2003: 15). The Jebtsundamba Khutagt was the only plausible candidate for head of state. Although born to a Tibetan family, he was the recognized reincarnation of the First Bogd Jebtsundamba (the Öndör Gegeen), who was himself a descendant of Chinggis Khan. He was also the richest individual in Outer Mongolia, and had the greatest number of dependants – more than 55,000 rising to nearly 90,000 during his reign – and an annual income of 900,000 taels (about 34,000 kg) of silver (Boldbaatar and Lündeejantsan 1997: 176-177).

The Bogd Khan left the basic administrative system unchanged. The 118 *khoshuu* 'banner' administrative-military units and 56 ecclesiastical estates of the Qing period remained much the same.⁴ There was little economic change, too, and although Chinese shops had been early targets of the rioting, they continued to operate throughout this period, and Mongols continued to try and service the debt, which in some banners exceeded the total capital value of all the property in the district (Bawden 1968: 203).

However, in 1912 the Bogd Jebtsundamba only really controlled the two eastern provinces of Setsen Khan and Tushetu Khan, and Manchu officials still administered the western provinces (*aimags*) from Khobdo and Uliastai. In Uliastai the Manchu officials were bloodlessly expelled by their Mongol counterparts, but in Khovd they organized a determined defence and called on Chinese reinforcements from Xingjang. The Bogd Khan ordered an attack, and Mongol forces stormed Khovd in 1912. The diverse assortment of nobles and lamas that led this attack reveals something of the multifarious nature of the 'independence movement' of the time. They included Magsarjav, military commander of Sain Noyon Khan *aimag*, Damdinsüren, an Inner

4 There was, however, some renaming and relocation of the provincial (*aimag*) assemblies (*chuulgan*), including banners of a given territory. See Shirendev and Natsagdorj 1968: 6-11.

Mongolian nobleman from Barga who had come to swear fealty to the Bogd Khan, the Jalkhantsa Khutagt, one of the most senior incarnate lamas of western Mongolia, Duke Khaisan from Kharchin in Inner Mongolia, Togtokh Taiji, the Inner Mongolian rebel prince turned freebooter, and the lama Dambijantsan, a charismatic Kalmyk adventurer from the Volga who claimed to be a reincarnation of the famous eighteenth-century anti-Manchu Oirad prince, Amursana. This colourful character is said to have sacrificed the living hearts of Chinese captives to the war banners of the Mongol commanders, and became the de facto ruler of Khovd and much of western Mongolia until arrested by Russian forces in 1914.

The young Mongolian state looked to its northern neighbour for support. Even before finally declaring independence in late 1911, the nascent Outer Mongolian government began to appeal to the Russians for military and financial aid and met with a cautious but positive response. Russia recognized the new state in 1912 and provided military instructors, and a 100,000-rouble loan (Boldbaatar and Lündeejantsan 1997: 185). The same year the Russians signed a secret treaty with the Japanese, which divided Mongolia into two spheres of influence; Outer Mongolia was allocated to the Russians, Inner Mongolia to the Japanese (Rossabi 1975: 238). Russian policy became committed to the division of Mongolia.

At first, however, the Bogd Khan government hoped to incorporate much of Inner Mongolia into the new state. In 1912 the Barga Mongols of the Khulun Buir region of eastern Inner Mongolia revolted, capturing the city of Khailar and declaring allegiance to Urga. Indeed, 35 of the 49 banners of Inner Mongolia declared for the Bogd Khan. Later that year Yuan Shikai, President of the newly proclaimed Republic of China, attempted to re-impose control of Inner Mongolia by force, and fighting broke out between Chinese troops and soldiers of the Bogd Khan who moved to support the Inner Mongolians. The Russians, however, would not support the bid for unification, and Urga found that alone it was in too weak a position to provide much more than moral support for the Inner Mongolian independence movement. Fighting continued throughout 1913 but Chinese Republican forces retained control of much of Inner Mongolia, although the unrest continued and Khulun Buir remained autonomous until 1920 (Atwood 2002: 34-36).

China did not relinquish its claim to Outer Mongolia. A three-power conference between Russia, China and Bogd Khan Mongolia was held in Khiakta in 1914-1915. The resultant Treaty of Khiakta only gave Outer Mongolia the quasi-independent status of 'autonomy under Chinese suzerainty.' On the ground, however, the Russians were beginning to establish themselves in Urga, building a military academy, several schools, a small power station and

opening the first coal mines. When the 1917 Russian Revolution led to the collapse of Tsarist rule, China seemed to have an opportunity to reassert its control in the region. The Mongolian elite, nervous of the Russian Bolsheviks, began to look again towards China for political support. In 1919 General Xu Shuzheng arrived in Urga with a large army and took control. His rule came to be bitterly resented by the Mongolian elite, who were somewhat relieved when in 1920 a coup in Beijing forced Xu to retreat to China, leaving Urga in the hands of the more moderate Chinese commissioner, Chen Yi.

Chinese occupation acted as a catalyst for new political activity and in 1918-1919 a number of independence-minded groups formed, such as the Capital group founded by Danzan, a Finance Ministry official, and the Consular Hill group led by the lama Bodo. Among these activists were Sukhebaatar and Choibalsan, who would later become the much celebrated leaders of the revolutionary movement. Both men had some contact with Russians. Choibalsan had been educated in Irkutsk and Sukhebaatar had spent seven years in the army, which had been trained by Russian instructors. In 1919 Danzan and others, whose politics were more nationalist than revolutionary, approached the White Russians for help against the Chinese, but without apparent success (Futaki 2000: 41). In 1920 I.A. Sorokovikov, an agent of Comintern (the Communist International), was sent to Urga to promote revolution and made contact with Danzan, Bodo, Choibalsan and the others. The result was that the Capital and Consular groups united to form the tiny Mongolian People's Party (MPP), apparently committed to some sort of democratic government based on people's power, and sent delegates to ask the Soviets for help. The response was circumspect and the Mongol delegation was told to obtain a letter from the Bogd Khan requesting Soviet assistance.

The Urga government had become desperate enough to consider this, despite the trepidation with which the lay and ecclesiastical nobility initially regarded the Bolsheviks, and a number of leading figures maintained good relations with the pro-Soviet activists. These included General Magsarjav and the Jalkhantsa Khutagt, who had stormed Khovd, and the senior ecclesiastical official, Grand Lama Puntsagdorji. A cautious letter from the Bogd Khan to the Soviets was duly written, asking for discussions on how Outer Mongolian autonomy might be peacefully restored. Sukhebaatar smuggled the letter to Russia and Danzan led a delegation of revolutionary Mongols to Moscow to present their case.

Matters came to a head when the Russian civil war spilled over into Outer Mongolia. In late 1920 a White Russian force commanded by Baron Ungern-Sternberg entered Mongolia and approached the capital. The Chinese

were still unpopular, and the Baron managed to eventually capture the city and expel the Chinese, with some Mongol support, restoring the Bogd Khan to the throne. But the brutally eccentric and anti-Semitic Ungern-Sternberg promptly set about looting Chinese shops and massacring Jews and other foreigners he considered suspect.

The prospect of Outer Mongolia becoming a base for their White Russian enemies seems to have finally spurred the Soviets into action. They sponsored a small force of Mongol partisans led by Sukhebaatar and Choibalsan, who in March 1921 managed, with the help of Soviet artillery, to capture the Mongolian border post near Khatka from the Chinese garrison still occupying it. The revolutionaries invited Soviet troops to support them, and by July a joint Soviet-Mongolian force had ousted the 'mad baron' and occupied Urga. A constitutional monarchy was proclaimed, with the Bogd Khan as head of state with very limited powers. High offices were divided between the People's Party leaders and sympathetic establishment figures. The lama Bodo, one of the original MPP revolutionaries, was made Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sukhebaatar was appointed Minister of War, and the Bogd Khan's advisor, Grand Lama Puntsagdorj, became Minister of Internal Affairs.

Mongolian historians such as Otgonjargal (2003: 78) have suggested that the primary aim of the 1921 'revolution' was to establish a bourgeois republican or democratic government, and certainly at this stage neither the new Mongol leadership nor its Russian backers were committed to immediate Soviet-style revolution. Shumyatskiy, the senior official in the Soviet Far East, wrote to Lenin that year to say 'our advice is not to touch the Khutagt [...] and not to shape Mongolia according to the Soviet model' (Morozova 2002: 43). Many figures in government were rather conservative, Minister of Justice Magsar, for example, had served since the Qing period. Danzan, the new Minister of Finance, had significant business interests, and was later labelled a capitalist (Otgonjargal 2003: 54).

The rate of reform in the constitutional monarchy was at first rather slow. Although noble ranks, salaries, tax exemptions, *khamjalga* servants and rights to extract corvée service were all technically abolished in 1921-1922, there was no effective enforcement and in practice rather little changed in the country as a whole. A few banner princes were dismissed, to be replaced by other nobles, and in 1922 commoners were permitted to hold the post of *tuslagch* – the administrative assistant to the banner prince. But the Manchu law code remained in place until around 1925, and basic rural administrative structure changed rather little. The smallest unit was a group of nominally ten households – the *aravt*. Several of these were contained within a unit

named the *bag*, which, notionally at least, contained around 50 households. Three or so *bags* made up the *sum* (meaning ‘arrow’), which was supposed to include about 150 households. The *khoshuu* (banners) contained several *sums* with anything from a few hundred to a few thousand inhabitants, and were grouped into the larger province-like territories termed *aimag*.

But splits began to appear in the new leadership. In 1922 Bodoov, the first Prime Minister, and Grand Lama Puntsagdorji were charged with plotting to seize power with the help of the Inner Mongolian freebooter Togtokh Taiji among others, and executed. During the years of constitutional monarchy the MPP began to build itself into a genuine political force. In 1921 the party only had 220 members, but by 1925 had grown to over 4,000, of whom over 700 were nobles or lamas (Otgonjargal 2003: 32). Comintern retained its influence and Buryat and Kalmyk Soviet citizens were particularly prominent in party posts. When the Jebtsundamba Khutagt died of illness in May 1924 the party was eager to take firmer control of the state and a few weeks later the Mongolian People’s Republic was proclaimed.

Part IV Making Mongolia Modern

From the outset the Mongolian People’s Republic was a modernist project, looking to the USSR for inspiration. Its constitution, adopted in November 1924, was based on a Russian draft, following the Soviet model and introduced a form of popular democracy – not, to be sure, the ‘bourgeois’ multiparty type, but the Leninist variety of one-party state rule based on an exclusive notion of ‘the people.’ The Mongolian term chosen as equivalent to the Russian notion (*narod*) was *ard*, a term that primarily meant commoners and excluded princes and senior churchmen (Nordby 1988: 82). Theoretically, then, the people’s democracy was the rule of the commoners, but since such a broad category was little more than an abstraction with no political voice of its own, in practice it amounted to the rule of the party that claimed to represent their interests. To mark the advent of the new order the capital’s name was changed from Niislel Khüree (Urga) to the more revolutionary-sounding Ulaanbaatar, meaning ‘Red Hero.’

In terms of classical Marxist theory, Mongolia represented something of an anomaly. The evolutionary sequence proposed by Marx and Engels placed Mongolia at the feudal stage. Since socialism, with its dictatorship of the proletariat, was supposed to emerge from the capitalist stage, it might seem that Mongolia was not yet ready for socialism. However, in 1920 Lenin had argued that with Soviet help ‘backward countries’ could

develop towards communism (Stolpe 2008: 246). As the first satellite state of the USSR, Mongolia became the test bed for this Leninist project of 'bypassing capitalism' – advancing from feudalism to socialism in one bound.

The third congress of the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) held in August 1924 began to lay the basis for policy to remake Mongolia as an egalitarian, socialist, and scientifically educated society. It was also the setting for the dramatic clash between the commercially minded Danzan, the Congress chairman, and the Buryat revolutionary Rinchino. Eventually, Danzan was charged with plotting a coup and executed. However, despite the success of Rinchino's radicals within the MPP and the purging of some 'rightists,' the Prime Minister, Tserendorj, leaned politically to the right and state policy remained anything but revolutionary. This was the era of the New Economic Policy in the USSR, which permitted a limited amount of market activity, and in Mongolia there was no real attempt to transform the economy. Commerce continued to be dominated by Chinese, British, American and German companies (Atwood 2003: 71), and trade with the USSR accounted for less than 15% of the country's imports and exports (Otgonjargal 2003: 72).

The church and party continued to work in an uneasy alliance. Technically the country's highest legislative body was the State Great Khural (Assembly), which included representatives of both. Although there was some anti-communist activity among lamas, and a monastic-led insurrection in Ulaangom in 1925 that had to be put down by force, the MPP still considered the Buddhist establishment too powerful to be challenged directly, and left it largely in place. However, both sides engaged in a low-intensity war of propaganda, with the MPP seeking to turn the ordinary lamas against the senior ecclesiastical dignitaries and monasteries circulating anti-communist texts. The enormous wealth of the Jebtsundamba Khutagt was divided with two-thirds going to the state and one-third back to the monasteries, and the party delayed the discovery of the ninth reincarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutagt until it became irrelevant.

In 1928 the situation changed abruptly. In the USSR Stalin had defeated Bukharin, Rykov and the Rightists, and embarked on a huge collectivization drive. The Comintern sent a team led by Schmeral, a Czech activist, to set the MPP on a similar course. The Seventh Party Congress obediently purged itself of Rightists once more, and launched a raft of radical policies. The aristocracy was, for the first time, really targeted and the large herds belonging to more than a thousand noble households were confiscated and distributed to poor herders or ad hoc cooperatives.

However, the Buddhist establishment was larger and better organized than the nobility and a much more formidable opponent for the party. The huge monastic livestock holdings, administered in units named *jas*, contained more than three million livestock, and were vital to the national economy and the livelihoods of tens of thousands of ecclesiastical dependants. Confiscation, then, was not a viable option; instead the *jas* became subject to progressive taxation linked to their size, and regulations were introduced to force monasteries to lease more livestock out under *süreg tavikh* (herd placement) arrangements whereby the herders of monastic livestock were granted a more generous share of the livestock products. Steps were taken to reduce the numbers of lamas. A tax was levied on lamas of military age, and those who chose to leave the clergy were entitled to take livestock from the *jas* funds and exempted from military service for three years.

But the collectivization policies of the Seventh and Eighth Party Congresses turned out, in retrospect, to be hopelessly unrealistic and doctrinaire. The party sucked in thousands of inexperienced new members, many of them illiterate poor herders, who struggled to make sense of the revolutionary policies. The 400 rural collectives that were hastily established with confiscated livestock were entirely alien to local pastoralists, and generally lacked anyone able to manage them properly. The results were disastrous for the rural economy, which lost some seven million head of livestock – a third of the national total – as a result of mismanagement or because owners slaughtered their animals rather than see them collectivized (Bawden 1968: 311).

Private firms, particularly transport and retail enterprises, were nationalized. But the state retail and transportation systems were entirely incapable of filling the vacuum, and the result was a national shortage of goods. Non-Soviet economic enterprises were all but eliminated and by 1930 the USSR accounted for 90% of Mongolia's exports and 75% of its imports. The attack on the monasteries was stepped up in 1930, tax rates on *jas* funds reached prohibitive levels and in some areas religious images were destroyed and ecclesiastical property forcibly redistributed.

The rush towards secular socialism was a near-fatal blunder for the MPR regime and the backlash brought Mongolia to the verge of civil war. Armed revolts broke out throughout the country, largely organized by the monastic and lay nobility, and thousands were killed (Morozova 2002: 66). Some rebels looked for outside help and made contact with the Japanese and the Pancham Lama in China, and the revolts were only put down with the help of the Soviet army. Thousands of households fled the turmoil, and

as much as 10% of the population may have migrated to Inner Mongolia at this time (Bulag 1998: 14).

By 1932 it was clear that the revolutionary crusade had been a costly mistake. As Comintern agents themselves noted, at that time 'lamas remained the cultural leaders of the Mongolian population' (Morozova 2002: 37) and the MPR regime was not yet strong enough to defy them. The USSR did not want instability in its new satellite state and the MPP was allowed to change course completely. The rightist Genden became Prime Minister and the 1929-1932 policies were condemned as 'leftist deviation.' The party launched the New Turn Policy designed to reverse the most disastrous of the earlier mistakes. Most of the collectives were disbanded and livestock distributed between poor households, private pastoralism was permitted and encouraged with loans and grants. Attacks on monasteries and their remaining property was forbidden, and those lamas forcibly secularized were allowed to re-join the clergy. The number of lamas rose to 115,000 in 1934, 10,000 more than there had been in 1918 (Morozova 2002: 37, Otgonjargal 2003: 15). The *jas* funds, although much depleted, were subject to monastic management once more and allowed to grow. Some emigrants were persuaded to return with promises of pardons and good conditions. The rapid expansion of the party was now reversed and membership, which had swelled to 44,000 in 1932, was shrunk back to just 8,000. Other policies, however, were not reversed. Rural administration had seen a number of changes, mostly in the direction of generating units that might be better able to fulfil their state obligations. In 1927 the *bag* units had been abolished, and in 1929 the *aravt* ten-household units replaced by *khodin* units of 20, and the *sums* doubled to include 300 households. The party had found the old *aimag* and *khoshuu*-level administrations impeded their policies, and abolished the *khoshuu* in 1931, reorganizing the old system of 5 *aimags* with 513 *sums* into 13 *aimags* with 311 *sums*.

The rightist phase of the party was, however, short-lived. From their base in Manchuguo, the Japanese were extending their influence into Mongolian territory. In 1934 they armed anti-Chinese Mongolians in Chakhar, Inner Mongolia, and the following year Japanese troops clashed with those of the MPR near Lake Buir in the north-east. There was widespread speculation that the Japanese would make a bid for control of Outer Mongolia. The Soviets were unhappy with the independent-minded Genden, who tried to subordinate the party to the government, resisted Russian influence, and quarrelled with Stalin, and so they looked for a more dependable Mongolian leader to resist Japanese expansion. In 1936 Gendan was accused of plotting with the Japanese and ousted by a pro-Soviet faction led by Choibalsan, the

Deputy Prime Minister. Genden was sent to the USSR for 'medical treatment,' where he was arrested and shot in 1937.

Choibalsan, however, made good use of his backing by Moscow. Over the next few years he used the Soviet-trained security services and accusations of treachery and Japanese collaboration to eliminate all his political rivals. He became Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of War, Commander-in-Chief, and in 1939 Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

These were the years of the Great Purges in the USSR, and Choibalsan earned his later tag as the 'Mongolian Stalin' by decimating the party, army, government and clergy using orchestrated show trials and extra-judicial executions. A 'special sovereign commission' was established to judge political crimes and in 1937-1939 sentenced around 30,000 people to death, approximately 4% of the entire population (Otgonjargal 2003: 74). The numbers of Soviet troops in Mongolia increased, and with their support the long-deferred showdown with the monastic establishment could begin. This time the attack was waged more skilfully. Senior lamas were charged with treason and show trials began in 1936. A sustained anti-Buddhist propaganda campaign was launched, supported by the establishment of new medical centres and secular schools to tempt people away from the monasteries, which were closed one by one on some pretext or other. The lower lamas were secularized using a combination of coercion and economic inducements, such as grants of livestock. Thousands of the higher-ranking lamas were shot. By 1939 the monasteries had been virtually wiped out.

The pastoral sector, which still dominated the economy, had revived since the fiasco of the first collectivization campaigns, and the national herd stood at about 25 million animals. The various redistribution campaigns had resulted in a less unequal ownership pattern. In 1927 over 60% of herding households owned fewer than 20 *bod* ('large animal' units) of livestock (equal to one horse or cow, seven sheep, ten goats or two-thirds of a camel). By 1939 this proportion had shrunk to 40% and those in the middling wealth bracket of 20-100 *bod* had grown to 55% (Bawden 1968: 396). This time there was no attempt to collectivize herds and the rural economy seems to have absorbed the final demise of the monastic *jas* funds without too much disruption.

From the late 1930s the political situation stabilized as the dictatorship of Choibalsan hardened into a 'cult of personality' along Stalinist lines. Sukhebaatar, who had died of illness in 1923, was elevated to revolutionary sainthood, to fill the role of a Mongolian Lenin. The party, which had been renamed the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, became increasingly obedient to the leadership, and less and less a forum for inter-factional struggle. Choibalsan was concerned with preparations for war with Japan,

and military expenditure peaked at over 50% of state spending in 1938 (Bawden 1968: 378). In August 1939 the Japanese invaded Mongolia's eastern borders, where they were defeated at the Battle of Khalkhyn Gol by Soviet and Mongolian troops under Zhukov.

Educational and cultural reforms, guided by Soviet advisors, pressed ahead. From 1941 the Cyrillic script was introduced for written Mongolian, and the classical script phased out. There had been some small but significant investment in the 1930s, mostly funded by Russia. A wool mill and leather factory were built, and five coal mines opened. In 1930 there were 300 workers employed in industry in Mongolia, and a single hospital; by 1940 there were 140,000 industrial workers and ten hospitals (Namjim 2000a: 52, 473 (Vol. 1)). There were also about 200 schools of various sorts in operation, and five newspapers with a circulation of 62,000 (Bawden 1968: 380). But as the USSR became locked into total war with Nazi Germany it could no longer invest in Mongolia, the pace of change slowed. Instead, Mongolia began to support the Soviet war effort by supplying large quantities of livestock produce, particularly horses, meat and wool, some of this as donations. In 1941 the compulsory delivery quotas of the *ulaan tölöblөгөө* (red plan) were introduced and herding households had to supply livestock products to the state. Imports shrank to next to nothing by 1943, food was rationed and consumer goods were in short supply.

Victory against Germany in 1945 allowed the Soviets to turn their attentions to the Japanese. The Mongolian army took part in the Soviet offensive that rolled the Japanese forces back in Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia. One of the rewards for Mongolia was a large number of Japanese prisoners of war, who were put to work constructing railways and buildings in Ulaanbaatar. The Yalta Conference between Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt established the spheres of influence of the superpowers, and Outer Mongolia was placed within the Soviet sphere (Jagchid 1979: 235). The Guomindang Chinese government formally recognized the independence of the MPR in January 1946, and this was later confirmed by the People's Republic of China.

Choibalsan died in 1952, to be succeeded by the party General Secretary Tsedenbal, a Russophile from western Mongolia. The political climate again reflected that of the USSR and in the mid-1950s Khrushchev's critique of Stalin allowed Tsedenbal to condemn Choibalsan's 'cult of personality,' although he continued to keep the party in line by purging any serious rivals. Soviet troops were withdrawn and relations with China were good, so that both its neighbours supplied Mongolia with aid and investment.

The state now set about the collectivization of rural society once again, but this time it was far better prepared. A few 'producers associations' had been established in the 1940s, but the bulk of the pastoral sector was composed of private households, mostly managing herds of from a few dozen to a few hundred livestock in size. This seemed far from ideal, both ideologically as a vestige of non-socialized property relations, and economically as an inefficient sector of smallholders lacking economies of scale or technical support.

The collectivization campaign proper began in 1953, when the structure of the new 'rural economy collectives' (*khödöö aj akhuin negdel*) were finalized and a series of measures imposed to make pastoralists join them. Taxes and the state delivery quotas were pushed up and up for wealthy private herders, while the *negdels* received the best pastures and heavy investment – winter sheds, veterinary support, and transportation. By 1959 almost all pastoral households had joined them, many reluctantly. However, there were benefits; households could retain livestock for their domestic needs, 50 head of livestock per household and 75 in Gobi regions, which was as many as the poorer families had to begin with. Members were paid a wage for the days they worked for the collective per year (typically around 150), and payment for this work quickly overtook personal livestock as the principle source of income. Further investment in the collectives in the 1960s and 1970s led to mechanized hay production, motor transport, mobile shops and other benefits. The total number of livestock fell slightly and stabilized at 20-24 million for the next three decades, but productivity did significantly increase (Namjim 2000b: 363-365 (Vol. 1)) and livestock produce fed the growing urban populations and the new industrial sector that by 1960 had overtaken agriculture as a source of national wealth (Namjim 2000b: 604 (Vol. 2)). Large-scale mechanized wheat farms were also established, and by the 1960s grain production could satisfy domestic consumption.

The collectives (*negdels*) were amalgamated until, by the 1960s, most of the 300-odd *sum* rural districts supported a single collective, except for those that had state farms (*sangin aj akhui*) instead, principally the districts that carried out large-scale crop raising or specialized livestock production. A central settlement of a few hundred households was developed in each *sum* and the several hundred pastoral households were organized into production brigades that moved to different seasonal pastures in an annual cycle as instructed by the *negdel* managers. State policy reflected a Leninist commitment to the integration of urban and rural life. The *negdel* collectives and *sum* local governments became vehicles for bringing elements of urban lifestyles to pastoralists. *Sum* centres had a boarding school, medical

clinic, post office, collective headquarters, motor pool, police station, local government offices, and a *soyolyn ordon* (cultural palace), which hosted visiting entertainers, talks and films.

As salaried members of collectives or state farms pastoralists became, by any standards, much more wealthy than all but the richest pre-revolutionary commoners. But they were also subject to state control and programmes of improvement on an unprecedented scale. Households were subject to a series of vigorous 'cultural campaigns' (*soyolyn dovtolgoon*) to remake practices in the home in line with modernist concepts of hygiene and cleanliness (Stolpe 2008). The possession and use of items such as soap, towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste, washbasins and white cotton sheets were installed in Mongolian homes and subject to an inspection regime of spot-checks and penalties. The home was reshaped in this era, with novel items installed within and alongside old forms, and householders held to new standards of modernist respectability.

The Sino-Soviet split of the late 1960s led to the return of Soviet troops, their numbers rising to over 100,000 by the early 1970s. Mongolia now became entirely dependent on the USSR and Comecon for large-scale investment in urban centres, public services and industry, but was not disappointed. Construction accelerated and in the 1970s and 1980s national income grew of an average annual rate of about 5-6% (Namjim 2000a: 31). A comprehensive medical and educational system was put in place, major mining and industrial facilities built, such as the copper and molybdenum mine in Erdenet, and the pace of urbanization was rapid. In the 1920s only a few per cent of the population lived in towns, but by 1986, 54% of the population was urban.

The Gorbachev era of the USSR ushered in a new era of change. In 1984 the veteran Tsendenbal was replaced as President by the reform-minded Batmönkh, who launched his own variants of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. As in Russia, however, this led to demands for fundamental political change. In 1989, at a meeting of the party's youth wing, the Mongolian Democratic Union (Mongolyn Ardchilsan Kholboo) was founded, which aimed to democratize and reform the system by calling for multiparty elections and a re-examination of the past. The following year the Mongolian Democratic Party was formed and ten activists went on hunger strike. The result was extraordinary. Barely a week later the entire Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) leadership resigned and in July the first multiparty elections were held. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the MPRP won easily, taking 357 of the 430 parliamentary seats in the Great Khural and 31 of 50 seats in the Small Khural, while the remaining places were shared between the five opposition parties.

In 1992 a new constitution was adopted and the words 'People's Republic' were dropped from name of the state, which became simply Mongol Uls (Mongolia). The Great and Small Khurals merged to form a single 76-seat parliamentary body – the Great State Khural. In the elections that followed the MPRP won 71 seats, but Ochirbat, elected as President in 1990, left the MPRP and won as the presidential candidate for the opposition parties, providing some sort of political balance.

The collapse of the USSR and Comecon had a devastating effect on Mongolia's economy. Soviet aid, which has been estimated as amounting to 37% of Mongolia's GDP, was reduced in 1989 and stopped altogether in 1991 (United Nations Systems in Mongolia 1999: 6). Mongolian trade halved, exports falling from US\$832 million in 1989 to US\$370 million in 1991. The shock was mitigated somewhat when Western nations, Japan, and international financial institutions stepped in to provide aid equivalent to about 15% of GDP in 1991 and 1992.

Following Russia's lead, Mongolia embarked on a crash course of privatization. Economic disruption led to the closure of state enterprises, a collapse in living standards, declining public services and rising levels of unemployment. Real wages halved between 1990 and 1992, and declined by a further third in 1993. A small wealthy strata emerged but income-poverty increased from almost zero in 1989 to 27% in 1994. Real expenditure on health services decreased by 43% from 1990 to 1992, and the education budget was cut by 56% (World Bank 1994: 19-41, Griffin 1995: 31-33, Robinson 1995: 4).

The *negdel* collectives were dissolved in 1991-1993 and the livestock and other assets divided between the members as private property. Although pastoralists gained livestock, the dissolution of the old system meant the loss of the guaranteed income, motorized support for pastoral movement and deliveries of winter fodder that the *negdels* had supplied. This dramatically altered the nature of the pastoral sector, breaking up the concentrated herd ownership, large-scale movement systems and specialist support operations the collectives had organized. It also trebled the number of workers directly reliant on pastoralism for their livelihood from 135,000 in 1989 (less than 18% of the national work force) to nearly 400,000 in 1996 (nearly 50% of the working population). Livestock numbers rose as pastoralists hoarded livestock to try and improve their food security. From 1990 to 1996 the national herd increased from 26 to 29 million head. However, the efficiency of pastoralism declined; the survival rates of offspring fell by 5-10%, and livestock totals were only able to rise because levels of marketing and consumption had fallen (National Statistical Office of Mongolia 1999: 95, 45, 92, Statistical Office of Mongolia 1993: 6). The price of staple foods rose quickly as the

grain harvest dropped from 718,000 tons in 1990 to less than 240,000 in 1996. As most of the Soviet-era industries collapsed, the wider economy became heavily dependent on a handful of export commodities – copper, gold, and cashmere. In the mid-1990s, for example, the copper and molybdenum mine in Erdenet accounted for 60% of the country's exports alone (Bruun and Odgaard 1996: 25).

Like the first, Mongolia's second ('democratic') revolution was about far more than political representation. It brought about the transformation of the nation's political economy and the introduction of new models for modernist development – in this case those of Euro-American capitalism. This transformation was, in many ways, a rolling process that unfolded throughout the 1990s and, to some extent, is still underway as the new private and corporate forms of ownership mature and shape the wider economic and political environment. The work collected in this volume attempts to shed light on some of the diverse aspects of the historical processes by which the New Mongolia has been constructed amid the ruins of the Old.