

**Mongolian Historical Writing  
from 1200 to 1700**

Center for East Asian Studies  
Western Washington University

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Mongolian Historical Writing  
from 1200 to 1700  
by Bira Shagdaryn  
translated by John R. Krueger

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**SHAGDARYN BIRA**

**Mongolian Historical Writing**  
**from 1200 to 1700**

Translated from the original Russian  
by John R. Krueger  
and revised and updated by the author

SECOND EDITION



**Center for East Asian Studies**  
**Western Washington University**

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## EDITORIAL REMARKS BY THE TRANSLATOR

### TRANSCRIPTIONS

The author prefers a style of transcription closer to the customary Western forms as used for names, titles, authors, ranks, etc., as opposed to a "sound-alike" style; hence we write Lubsangdanjin, not Luvsandanzan; *Šira tuyuji*, not Shara tuuji; *Altan tobči*, not Altan tobchi; and so on for many others. Similarly, the *Mongyol-un niyuča tobčijan* is commonly called *The Secret History* in English.

### TRANSLATIONS

When citing certain translations of works, it was natural for Dr. Bira to use sources in Russian known and accessible to his audience, e.g., Kozin's translation of the *Secret History*; or Malov's translation of the Old Turkic monuments. For Western readers, it will be far more useful to cite similar parallel translations available in English. In hope of making these references useful to both types of users, in some cases we give two citations, e.g., one to Kozin for Russian-oriented readers, and one to Cleaves or de Rachewiltz for English-oriented users.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The original edition had 301 bibliographical entries. Naturally, since 1972 many important new works have appeared, some of which are more suitable to be cited now. Hence, we have added new entries for items 292-335, for completeness' sake. The original entries were organized by source language, as is customary in Russian books; but the additions are in no particular order, as the numbers were assigned as each new work was cited. However, there are not very many of them.

### THE NEW EDITION

Dr. Bira had no intention to completely re-write his earlier book: that would be a very great task requiring much time. Our present goal was to revise, correct, update and supplement the first edition to bring it closer to the requirements of today. I first gave the author my basic translation into English; this he corrected, expanded, cut and revised.

Because there exist references to the first edition in works which quoted it, we thought it wise to include the page numbers of the original in brackets, as follows:

[165]

This may prove helpful to some users wishing to check a reference. These bracketed bold-face numbers are always leftmost on their own line, but not indented. Because of additions and removals made by the author, those original page numbers at times are out of sequence.

## QUOTATIONS AND CONSISTENCY

Within an actual quotation, we must of course use the transcription of the original author, hence "Qubilai" for Khubilai, "Genghis" for Chinggis, and so on. Despite striving always to be consistent, e.g., Alan-Goa, Alan-Go'a, Alan-Qoa, and to quote accurately, we may have overlooked a few cases.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We first must thank Dr. Igor de Rachewiltz, who prepared for our use improved citations of his *Secret History* translation as first appearing in the *Papers on Far Eastern History* (see entry 302 in the Bibliography), as drawn from the manuscript of his improved and final edition of the *Secret History*.

Locally I have to thank my co-workers: first, Robert G. Service, who read aloud the entire text to me, while we checked for omissions, choice of the right word, and searched out references. I also had the help of Dr. Michael Walter, librarian at Indiana University for the Tibetan collection, who verified my Sanskrit and Tibetan forms.

The text was personally prepared by me on an 80286 generic IBM-compatible PC, under DOS level 3.0 and WordPerfect 5.1, using Courier 10-point typeface, also Times Roman 12-point, and an HP desk-jet 500 printer. This was furnished by diskette to Dr. Bira, whose staff added in a few small portions, as passages in Tibetan transcription. They were also responsible for preparing the entire Bibliography, to spare me the effort of re-typing it. Transforming my WordPerfect files into Word 2000 was likewise carried out by Dr. Bira's excellent staff. Final editing of the Word files and preparation of the index was accomplished by our estimable editors at Western Washington University's Center for East Asian Studies, Professors Henry Schwarz, Wayne Richter and Edward Kaplan.

May I also say that the author's good knowledge of English, that allows him to be able both to write directly and to be sensitive to usage, has been most helpful in securing adherence to his intent and meaning. It was an enjoyable and useful co-operation for both of us.

John R. Krueger  
Translator and editor  
Spring 1996 to Spring 2001



## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The present volume represents the first part of an investigation the author intends to make of contemporary Mongolian historiography from its sources to the victory of the People's Revolution of 1921. Bearing in mind that to execute the entire work will inevitably demand a considerable amount of time, the author has decided to publish the present volume as the first part of the entire investigation.

From the time that Russian scholars began the study of Mongolian sources, about a century and a half has gone past (see Bibliography (entries 107, 51, 62 and 55). During this time, through the efforts of Mongolists of different countries much work has been performed in collecting, publishing and studying the monuments of Mongolian historical literature.

In the last half-century the interest of those investigating Mongolian historical works has particularly increased when chronicles were published in both serial editions as well as individually. In 1951, the *Scripta Mongolica* series published by the Harvard-Yenching Institute (USA) began. Its issues, published by photoreproduction, included such major manuscripts as the *Altan Tobči* [The Golden Summary] (entry 73) of Lubsangdanjin (from an original first published in the MPR in 1937), the *Erdeni-yin Tobči* [The Jeweled Summary] by Sayang Sečen, in three manuscript copies (entry 74), the *Bolor Erike* [The Crystal Chaplet] by Rashipuntsug and others (entry 75). These publications also contained valuable introductory articles written by well-known Mongolists. In particular, the introduction by Father A. Mostaert to the issuance of the *Erdeni-yin tobči* by Sayang Sečen presents independent research containing not only a brilliant textual

[4]

analysis of the various copies of this chronicle, but also valuable historiographic observations.

Beginning in 1954 in Wiesbaden, Germany, there was published a monograph series under the general title of the *Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen*, which from 1959 on became known as the *Asiatische Forschungen*. In these series were published the following chronicles: the *Altan Tobči* by an anonymous author (entry 72), the *History of the Mongolian Borjigid Clan* (entry 88) the *Čayan Teüke* (The White History of the Doctrine Possessing the Ten Virtues), *The History of Chinggis Khan* (or *The Feast of Youth*), The *Šira tuyuji* [The Great Yellow History] and an anonymous Chahar chronicle, the latter two chronicles published as supplements in the book by Walther Heissig (entry 233) and others.

Yet another series began in 1958 in Copenhagen, *Die Mongolischen Historischen Handschriften*, edited by Walther Heissig and appearing as one divi-

sion of the *Monumenta Linguarum Asiae Maioris*, founded by the Danish Orientalist K. Grønbech. This series published a number of chronicles, in particular the *Altan Kürdün* [The Golden Wheel] (see entry 86).

In 1960, the series *Monumenta Historica* was created in Mongolia, and warmly greeted by the learned world. In succeeding years this series published several volumes of the texts of a number of chronicles and historical documents (entry 39). Among the latest publications one should mention the photo-facsimile edition of the *Altan Tobči* text by Lubsangdanjin (entry 302).

It would be impossible not to mention likewise publications and investigations of Mongolian historical compositions carried out in different countries of the world, such as Russia, China, Germany, Japan, the USA, Hungary and others. A collated text of the *Šira Tujuji* chronicle was edited by N. P. Shastina on the basis of three copies, with indication of variant readings, a translation into Russian (see entry 70 and notes). L. S. Puchkovskii published the chronicle by Gombojab, *Tangya-yin urusqal* [The History of the Golden Clan of the Ruler Chinggis]. This composition, also titled *The Flowing of the Ganges* (entry 52), is accompanied by an index of names and ethnonyms. In 1970 P. B. Baldanzhapov's translation of the *Altan Tobči* came out in three parts: investigation, translation and commentaries; supplements (a facsimile of MS A; variant readings, bibliography, an index of names, ethnonyms and toponyms) (entry 47). A significant event likewise was a work by N. P. Shastina containing a translation of and commentary on one of the best chronicles of the 17th century, the *Altan Tobči* by Lubsangdanjin (entry 71).

In the Inner Mongolian region of China, publishing activities and studies of the monuments of Mongolian historical literature have made considerable progress since the mid 1970s. A series was set up, the *Mongyol tulyur bičig-ün čubural* [Mongolian Source Materials], in which historical works occupy a prominent place. The series was initially published by the Commission for Editing Mongolian Source Materials and later by a commission for publishing and editing old source materials for the national minority of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Since that time, many sources of Mongolian historical writing have been made available to researchers, and most of the publications are accompanied by valuable introductions, and in most cases, contain thorough analyses and comments in the field of textual criticism and historiography. To mention only some of the chronicles which belong to the period of our research, I must name the three-volume work by Bayar on the *Secret History* (entry 303); the *Arban buyantu nom-un Čayan Teüke* [The White History], edited by Liu Jingsuo (entry 317); the edition of Lubsangdanjin's *Altan Tobči* by Čoyiji (entry 322); the *Erdeni-yin Tobči* of Saγang Sečen by C. Nasunbaljur, re-editing the Ulaanbaatar publication (entry 44); the *Asarayči neretü-yin teüke*, in a revised edition of Kh. Perlee's publication (entry 44); and others.

[5]

In the field of publishing and study of monuments of Mongolian historical literature, the Hungarian Mongolists are working successfully; an example of this



is the work of Louis Ligeti on the *Niyūča tobčiyān* (the *Secret History [of the Mongols]*), a translation by him from Old Mongolian into Hungarian, and publication of the Mongolian text in a new transcription (entry 92).

The Japanese scholars Takeshirō Kobayashi (entries 242, 243), Shhgeo Ozawa (entries 259, 304, 332) and others have likewise occupied themselves with editing and investigating the *Secret History* and the *Altan Tobči*. In 1987 Tetsuo Morikawa published his book, *A Study of the Biography of Altan Khan* (entry 334), and in 1998 Junichi Yoshida and others published their Japanese translation of the *History of Altan Khan* (entry 335).

The first really serious textual investigation dealing in a general way with Mongolian historical monuments was the well-known book of Ts. Zhamtsarano, *Mongolian Chronicles of the Seventeenth Century*, which essentially marked the beginning of their scientific analysis (entry 150 ; English translation entry 292).

The rich heritage of Mongolian historiographical creation is attracting ever-growing interest by the world scholarly community. However, this is primarily expressed in description and cataloguing, in the best instance in philological and textual investigations of published monuments. As for what is genuinely historiographic in their study, this began only recently, no earlier than the 1950's and 1960's.

In 1953 the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences published L. S. Puchkovskii's article, "Mongolian feudal historiography of the 13th-17th centuries" (entry 186), the first really successful attempt at a historiographic survey of Mongolian historical literature. The author directed attention to the importance of studying Mongolian historical works from the methodological positions of contemporary historiography. In 1959 Kh. Perlee published a small book in Mongolia, *On the Question of pre-Revolutionary Mongolian Historiography* (entry 123), which contained a brief sketch of the history of Mongolian historical knowledge.

A fundamental study in the field of Mongolian historiography was Walther Heissig's book, *Die Familien - und Kirchengeschichtsschreibung der Mongolen* (entry 233). In this work, especially in the first part, the main attention is directed at analyzing the content of the works studied, at establishing sources used by the chroniclers, and at clarifying the biographies of historians. As regards the second part,

[6]

its scientific content is weaker than the first; it is limited to the introduction to publication of four Mongolian chronicles of the 19th century in facsimile, as appendices.

In 1960 the author of the present book wrote a small work in Russian, *Mongolian Historical Literature of the XVII-XIX centuries in Tibetan* (entry 133, English translation, 217). It draws attention to Tibetan-language historical literature about the Mongols, written by Mongols themselves. Another work of ours was an attempt at historiographic study of one of the greatest historic compositions—the so-called *Golden Book* by Damdin (entry 134). In 1966 we published

an article in the *Bulletin (Medee)* of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences devoted to the study of the Mongolian historiographic legacy (entry 112).

A contribution to the study of Mongolian historiography is I. Ya. Zlatkin's *Obzor istoriografii Mongolii* [A Sketch of Mongolian Historiography], published in the *Soviet Historical Encyclopaedia* (vol. IX). It reviews the basic stages of development of Mongolian historical knowledge from ancient times down to our days (entry 154, pp. 611-617).

In 1979, that is, one year after the first edition of our book in Russian, the Inner Mongolian scholar Liu Jingsuo published his book *Mongolian Historiography in the 13th to 17th centuries* (entry 305). This work presents an excellent summary of the contents of several important historical monuments of the Mongols, such as the *Monggol-un niyuča tobčiyan* [The Secret History of the Mongols], the *Altan qayan-u tuyuji* [The History of Altan Khan], the *Qad-un ündüsün quriyangyui Altan Tobči*, the *Altan Tobči* by Lubsangdanjin, the *Šira tuyuji*, and the *Erdeni-yin Tobči*. It should also be stated that during the last few years Inner Mongolian scholars have made good progress in studying and publishing interesting monuments of Mongolian historical literature. To give an example, I will mention the *History of Altan Khan*, which is known under several different Mongolian titles (*Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur*; *Erdeni toli neretü quriyangyui čadig*; *Čakravard Altan qayan-u tuyuji*). This work was published for the first time by Jurungya in 1984<sup>1</sup> (entry 306). Up to this time this extremely interesting book had been inaccessible to researchers, although some scholars one way or another had mentioned it in their writings.

It is difficult to say exactly when and by whom the book was written, because there are no certain data in its colophon. Nevertheless, the first editor, Jurungya, and other scholars have shown through analyzing the colophon that the book may have been written about 1607. As Jurungya and Kesigtoyaqu have demonstrated, the original version of the book was written by Uran Tangyariy Tayun Kiya Saramai or Samani,<sup>2</sup> and it was edited and enlarged by an anonymous author who preferred not to mention his own name in the colophon, but

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<sup>1</sup> Jurungya, foreword to *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orosiba* (*Ündüsün-ü keblel-ün qoriya*, 1984), p. 3

Quite recently the work was translated into Japanese and published: *Altan qayan-u tuyuji*, A Biography of a Mongolian King of the 16th century, facsimile text and Japanese translation with notes by Yoshida Jun'ichi, Kesigtoyaqu, Yanagisawa Akira, Ishihama Yumiko, Inoue Osamu, Nagai Takumi, Oka Hiroki; Kazama-shobo, Tokyo, (The original title is in Japanese. entry 335). Kesigtoyaqu, *Monggol-un erten-ü udqa jokiyal-un sudulul* [Studies in Old Mongolian Literature]. *Öbör Mongol-un soyol-un keblel-ün qoriyā*, 1988, pp. 113-114.

<sup>2</sup> Jurungya (entry 306), pp. 4-5 of foreword; Kesigtoyaqu (entry 309), pp. 112-113.



wrote that he used the work of his predecessor.<sup>3</sup> I have nothing to add to what my distinguished colleagues have written about the authorship of the book, except for one small detail. I must say that the author's name in the original, as distorted in the Mongolian sources, has not been corrected by any of those scholars. In reality, the correct way to spell the name *Saramai* or *Saramani* must be *Śrīman'* or *'Śarīman'*, which originates from Sanskrit *Śrīman* or *Sarīman*, deriving from Sanskrit *Srīman*, meaning glorious, one possessed of glory. This name is mostly known among the Mongols in its Tibetan equivalent, *dPal-lDan* (Mongolian *Baldan*).

Had this *History of Altan Khan* been available to me at that time, I could have included it in the paragraph about the origins of Buddhist religious historiography in Mongolia in the second half of the 16th century and the early 17th century (Part Two, Chapter One). Due to the shortness of time, what I can do at present is to refer my esteemed readers to these works of my predecessors, especially that of the just-mentioned scholars.

My general impression is that the book, alongside the works of Qutuγtai Se-čen qung tayiji, Guosi Čorji and others, could serve as good testimony to the formation of a new kind of historical writing among the Mongols, as a result of the Mongols being converted to Lamaism. The *History of Altan Khan* obviously reflected the newly penetrating Buddhist ideology and aspirations; to be more concrete, it was composed on the basis of the so-called Two Principles, the power of religion and the power of the Khan. The first part of the book is devoted to political and military deeds, that is, to the secular deeds of the Khan, whereas the second part of the book contains his religious deeds. The history of the latter prevails over the former, occupying more than half of the book.

It is the second part of the book which reminds one more of the *namtar* genre of Buddhist literature, rather than the history of the Khan. It is obvious that the author did his best to exalt Altan Khan as a *nom-un qaγan* or Dhārmarāja (King of the Law), or a Bodisadv Altan qaγan (Altan Khan the *bodhisattva*), or *Tengri-yin köbegün Altan qaγan* (Altan Khan the Devaputra), and so on. All these high-flown titles and ideas of the khan's power and religion may well have been borrowed from precepts of the *Altan Gerel* (the *Suvarvaprabhāsottama*), which had been published, by decree of Altan Khan, in block-print form, in 1584<sup>4</sup>.

This practically exhausts a general view of works on the question of Mongolian historiography during the nearly 200 years that world Mongolian studies have existed. From this survey it emerges that the "virgin lands" of Mongolian historiography remain far from cultivated, which also obviously explains the erroneous assertions about Mongolian historiographic activity sometimes found in the literature. Thus, for example, the well-known book by J. W. Thompson, *A History*

<sup>3</sup> Jurungya, *Erdeni tunumal*, p. 181.

<sup>4</sup> Sh. Bira, "The Worship of Suvarnaprabhasottama," *Bulletin of the IAMS* 14-15 (1994-1995), pp. 6-7.



of *Historical Writing*, says: "The Mongols themselves did not begin the narration of the great deeds of Jinghiz Khan, and his sons and grandsons, until long after the events. . . . The sole history of the Mongols written in the Mongol language which has survived is that of Sanang Setsen. . . . The original was discovered in Tibet in 1820 (?! Sh. B.). This book, supplemented by some information gleaned from Chinese annals, is the sum total of our knowledge of the history of the Mongols" (entry 283, p.354). The erroneous nature of such utterances is self-evident.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London undertook effectual measures to study the historiography of Asian peoples (India, Pakistan, Ceylon, China, Japan) and the Middle

[7]

East, and issued a number of works under the general title *Historical Writing on the Peoples of Asia*. However, in this entire series no place was found for Mongolian historiography (if we do not count an article by Owen Lattimore, "The Social History of Mongol Nomadism," which really does not have a direct connection to historiography (entry 248, pp. 328-343).

Thus one may boldly state that Mongolian historiography remains unknown to the world scholarly community, with the exception of a narrow circle of specialist-Mongolists. As early as 1960, speaking in debate on the paper by the English historian M. Butterfield in the section for methods and general problems at the XI International Congress of Historical Sciences in Stockholm, we observed that world historiography cannot limit itself solely to Western historiography; it must include within itself the rich historiography of the Orient, as well as Mongolian. And at the following XII International Congress of Historical Sciences (Vienna, 1965), one of the sessions of the section for methodology and contemporary history was devoted entirely to judgment of our report on the topic "Mongolian Historiography" (entry 215, pp. 49-56). The paper evoked great interest, as witness of which are the speeches of delegates and echoes in print (entry 216, pp. 577-586).

The author's tasks in this book are quite vast, both in the sense of the chronological frame of the study, as well as in the scope of the material under study. An analysis of Mongolian historiography brings forth a host of new, rather complex and as yet little-studied problems, the burden for the solution of which is scarcely to be placed on the shoulders of a single person.

In studying Mongolian historiography, we proceed from the methodological principles of modern historiographic science, seeing in it an independent discipline, which studies the process of development of the historical knowledge of peoples. We have striven to investigate the history of Mongolian historical knowledge, the history of political, philosophical and religious ideas, the methods of historical research and the interpretation of sources in the works of Mongolian historians. Our task has concluded not merely in ascertaining this or

[8]

that phenomenon, but in explaining it, taking into account the concrete social-economic conditions of the nomadic society of the Mongols. We endeavored likewise to display the national individuality of Mongolian historiography, imparting those ideological-political trends which expressed the national aspirations and interests of the Mongols.

In our view, the history of Mongolian historiography may be divided into the following four basic periods:

1. Historical knowledge in ancient times and in the period of the Mongol Empire (to the end of the 14th century).
2. The post-Imperial period (15th-17th centuries).
3. The period of Manchu supremacy (18th century-early 20th century).
4. The rise and development of modern historiography (1920 to the 1990's).

The present work embraces merely the first two of these periods: from ancient times to the end of the 17th century.

The history of Mongolian historiography has its own specific peculiarities. It arose in a typical nomadic milieu, developing and enriching the centuries-old historiographic traditions of nomadic tribes and peoples, who had of yore settled the expansive steppes of Mongolia.

It is impossible to resolve the problem of sources of Mongolian historical knowledge by assuming a break from traditions inherited by them from the proto-Mongolian and Turkic-speaking inhabitants of Mongolia, inasmuch as it is proven that the advances in historical knowledge of nomadic peoples, equally as in other spheres of cultural life, did not vanish without a trace, but were transferred from one to the other, conditioning in the final account their rebirth and development of written history among the Mongols.

There are not a few common themes in the legends and traditional tales of Turkic and Mongolian peoples, in their views of their own origin from totemic ancestors, in their shamanic views of the external world and of history, of the Khans' power, and likewise in the means of stating historical events. The Cult of *Köke tengri* (Blue Heaven) held a central position in the historical-political views of both Turks and Mongols. A sizeable attainment of the nomadic

[9]  
peoples was working out the twelve-year animal-cycle chronology, which lay at the basis of their reckoning of historic time.

The historical-political concepts of the khagan's power among the early Mongols undoubtedly arose on the basis of traditions of many centuries, going back to the time of the Hsiung-nu. The system of state offices among the Mongols in the 13th century was essentially created on ancient models. It is interesting that these offices, fixed in Chinese script in the T'opa language, fully coincide with those we encounter in the *Secret History* and particularly in the *Čayan teüke* (The White History).

The historical knowledge of nomadic peoples in the aggregate may be called "nomadic historiography." The tribes and peoples who inhabited Mongolia at



various times made their contribution to its creation. The appearance among the Mongols in the 13th century of written history could be regarded as a most mighty attainment and a garland of "nomadic historiography." A graphic witness to this is the first-born work of Mongolian historiography, the *Secret History*, a singularity of which is its close link with Mongolian oral creation.

After the appearance of writing, Mongolian historiography developed under complex conditions of wars of conquest and the formation of empire by the Chinggisids (heirs of Chinggis). Despite the fact that during the rule of the Yüan dynasty intensive work on establishing a written history was conducted, very few historical works survive from those times. We have attempted to conduct an analysis of this period of Mongolian historiography not only on the basis of the few monuments which survived, but also through the medium of reconstructing Mongolian historical knowledge with the aid of Chinese and Persian sources: the *Yüan shih* (History of the Yüan [Dynasty]), the *Tārīkh-i-Jahāngushā* or *History of the World Conqueror* by Juvayni,

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*Jāmi'at Tawārīkh*, or Complete Collection of Histories, by Rashīd al-Dīn.

In the Empire period Mongolian historiography came into contact with three developed historiographic traditions: the Buddhist, the Chinese and the Islamic, but this circumstance did not exert any substantial influence on the further development of historical knowledge in Mongolia. With the fall of the Empire, Mongolian ties with Chinese and Iranian historiography were broken. In connection with this, a number of valuable old Mongolian historiographic monuments taken by Mongolian conquerors into foreign lands, or created there, always turned out to get lost in a foreign ethnocultural milieu.

A new period in the development of Mongolian historiography began with the fall of the Mongolian Yüan dynasty (1368). The country's disintegration which followed upon this and a spate of internecine wars are naturally likewise reflected in the historiography; however the writing of history continued to occur even in the "Dark Period" of Mongolian history, i.e., in the 15th-16th centuries. We know that later Mongolian chronicles, especially of the 17th century, contain no small amount of data borrowed from written sources of the 15th-16th centuries; this bears witness to the uninterrupted continuity of Mongolian chronicle-writing. Some Persian and Chinese sources of the 15th-16th centuries state that the basic form of historiographic activity of the Mongols in the period of time being examined was compiling genealogical lists in the families of *tayijis* (the princely descendants, the Chinggisids).

From the second half of the 16th century there is a perceptible activization of historiographic work: on the one hand, the Mongols drew into closer contact with the Indo-Tibetan religious-historical school, and on the other, old Mongolian historical-political traditions were revived and acquired further development. From the end of the 16th and in the course of the 17th century there were being built up and finally fused the bases of a new historiography, which was widely developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, and which Prof. Walther. Heissig calls *Familien-*

*und Kirchengeschichtsschreibung der Mongolen* [Genealogical and church historiography of the Mongols].

Mongolian historiography, despite foreign domination, was not transformed into an appendage to Manchu-Chinese official historiography. On

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the contrary, it drew closer than ever before to another branch of Oriental historiography—the Buddhist.

Buddhism, like Christianity, created its own historiography in the countries where it became the dominant religion (Ceylon, Nepal, China, Tibet, Mongolia, Buriatia and others). For this reason we may speak about a Buddhist historiography common to those countries, one which, having arisen in ancient India, was further developed in a number of Asian countries.

The general features of Buddhist historiography are conditioned by a unity of world-view and a methodology of historical notions.

Presentations of history amongst the Buddhists were closely linked with their theological-philosophical doctrine about non-reality, and the brief span of worldly life. In their opinion, both historical activity and the historical process are as ephemeral as life itself. From this point of view, history as such would have no meaning if it did not serve the goals of the doctrine concerning ethics, about the ways of attaining Nirvana—the final goal of human life. In other words, history ought to become a proponent of Buddhist morality and a handmaiden of Buddhist theology. It should not be surprising that many utterances of the famed Aśoka about sovereigns observing the laws of *dhārma* have an astounding similarity with the propositions of *dhārma* (the doctrine of religion, the doctrine of the ruler's power), which far later were promulgated by the Tibetan rulers and the Mongolian khans.

The general nature of Buddhist historiography is likewise expressed in a unified scheme for writing history and in the cosmological concepts of the origin of the universe, biographies of the Buddha, of the ancient, mostly mythological, Indian kings and so on. In this regard the Ceylonese chronicle *Mahāvamsa* [The Great Chronicle], the Tibetan *Debter sngon-po* [The Blue Annals], and the Mongolian *Erdeni-yin tobči* scarcely differ from one another. As concerns history, they are obliged to direct it to its mythological origins amidst the kings of the Buddhist world of Mahāsammata. Thus the Buddhists tried to derive the genealogy of their kings from a single common origin, which appeared in the homeland of their faith, India.

Despite indisputable Buddhist influence, the historiographic creativity of the Mongols did not lead to

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a blind subservience to Buddhist historiography. The Lamaist variety of Buddhism, though it was widely disseminated in Mongolia, clashed there with local historiographic tradition which Buddhism was not able to reduce to naught, nor by the same token open a way to unlimited domination by church historiography, as took place in Tibet. Characteristically, under the conditions of Manchu rule,



Mongolian interest in their historical past not only did not drop off, but actually rose considerably, which may be regarded as a reaction to foreign intrusion. During this period there was reborn an old Mongolian historical tradition, which may be termed the tradition of the *Secret History*. It would be no exaggeration to state that it was precisely under the conditions imposed by the foreign yoke that written history again became an important factor in the national memory about the historical past of the country. It is no coincidence that Lubsangdanjin expresses his wish that "the great people continue to read" his history (entry 41, p. 192), and the anonymous author of the *Šira tuyuji*, at the very beginning of his work proffers his famous utterance, "If the average man does not know his origin, that is like an ape, bewildered in the forest; if he knows not his tribe, that is like a dragon made of turquoise; if he reads not the writings relating the genealogy of his ancestors, that is like an abandoned child" (entry 70, p. 15 of the translation, p. 125 of the original).

At the root of the juncture of Buddhist and surviving Mongolian traditions in Mongolian historiography there lay new views. Attempts were made to periodize history in general and the history of Mongolia in particular, and the old Mongolian ideas about the Khan and his power were changed. Just at this time the historical-political concept of supreme power was devised, at the root of which lay on the one hand the old Mongolian tradition of the Khan's power, and on the other, the Buddhist doctrine of the Law of Dharma. This concept reflected a tendency towards a close union of Throne and Altar. Let us cite two illustrations. At the end of the 16th century, Altan Khan, who had proclaimed Lamaism as the official religion, presented himself as the "King of the Dharma" and the Third Dalai Lama as the head of the religion. A second example, from the history of the Mongolian theocratic monarch of 1911-1919: the Bogdo Khan was

[13] proclaimed the "Bogdo Khan, exalted by many, holding united [the reins] guiding Religion and State." Consequently the aristocratic-clerical elite, striving for a rebirth of Mongolian statehood in the form of an absolute Buddhist monarchy, was actually guided by the doctrine of the Two Principles.

In accord with the ideas of Buddhist historiography, the Mongolian historians strove to periodize world history into the three Buddhist monarchies (India, Tibet, Mongolia), in a fashion similar to the way the proponents of medieval Christian-feudal historiography devised a scheme to periodize world history by the four monarchies (Assyro-Babylonian, Medeo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman). In an attempt to link Mongolian history with the history of the Buddhist world, primarily with the homeland of Buddhism, India, the Mongolian chroniclers advanced a theory of the "migration" of the above-mentioned Two Principles, very reminiscent of the medieval European idea of the "transference" of empire. According to this theory, the first Buddhist monarchy founded by King Mahāsammata, did not perish, but continued to exist uninterruptedly, migrating from one country to another.



The Mongolian chronicle-writers advanced a more specific periodization for the history of Mongolia itself:

1. The first period was from ancient times to the fall of the Yüan dynasty in China, a time of growth for state and religion;
2. The second was the internecine struggle between the scions of the Golden Clan of the Chinggisids, a time of decline in state and religion;
3. The third, from the end of the 16th century, saw the re-birth of both State and Religion.

On the basis of this periodization of Mongolian history, a unified scheme for writing the history of Mongolia was established.

Mongolian historiography proceeded along a meandering path of ups and downs. But it kept unchanged its aristocratic-elitist character, its allegiance to the interests of the steppe aristocracy who were operating in feudal-like fashion, and to the interests of State and Church.

Mongolian historiography occupies a visible place in the history of Oriental historical writing. Regarding the need to study it, the Academician N. I. Konrad wrote, "In the countries of the Orient there existed not only a very rich historiography, but also a historiology, a science about history. Both the facts of history and the historical process were perceived as an aspect of fixed conceptions. . . . It is impossible to accept such conceptions unreservedly, but it is necessary to understand what they mean, because they have also created such a relation to the actual historical process" (entry 160, p. 27).

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The present book was written in 1972 (now thirty years ago), when it was not so easy for the author to have access to the publications and works of foreign scholars working on the same subject in various countries of the world, particularly in China and Japan. On the other hand, since that time Mongolian studies have advanced considerably, and had I time and opportunity, I could have re-written many more pages of my book.

When I found out that Professor Krueger of Indiana University was translating my book into English, and he kindly sent his manuscript to me to look through, I decided that the minimum I could do was to make those changes and additions which I found inevitable. This is something I unfortunately had no chance to do when my book was translated into Chinese and published in the Chinese People's Republic in 1988, because I was not informed about this.

I would like to thank Professor J. Krueger, the eminent Mongolist, for his excellent translation of my book, and for his kindness in giving me the chance to revise my book, at least to some extent, after so many years had passed.

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