

Political Organizations in the Seventeenth-Century North Asia*

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The seventeenth century was an era of great changes for history of East Asia. The Manchus, whose dynasty, Ch'ing, originated in Northeast Asia, and the Russians, who advanced from Europe eastward over the Ural Mountains, came into contact in the Far East. The two powers with clearly-defined borders, a type that had never before existed in North Asia, divided up what had been a world of nomadic peoples and integrated parts of it into their respective territories. Thus it was the last century in which the Mongols were able to live following their own traditional customs of nomadic life without political control from outside.

Numerous falsehoods are found in widely-accepted views of the seventeenth-century Mongolian history. They have been conceived by projecting the state of the Mongols in the eighteenth century and later, when they had to live in the territories of the Ch'ing and the Russian Empires, back to the seventeenth-century history. On the other hand, history of Mongolia or North Asia from the fall of the Yüan Empire in the second half of the fourteenth century up to the seventeenth has largely been neglected as a dark period with almost no historical records. There is, however, a continuous and consistent stream flowing through history of Mongolia from the late fourteenth up to the seventeenth century, and the seventeenth century is the only, and last, period in long history of North Asia in which the nomadic peoples most clearly reveal to us their own views of history and political organizations.

One of the major factors that make the seventeenth century such a period is that the Mongols began to write down their own history only then. The fact that many Mongol chronicles were composed almost all at once in the second half of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth means that the Mongols were then feeling their own, traditional world fading away. These chronicles are what give us access to the Mongols' own views of the world and history. Only by utilizing them can we bring to light history of the Northern Yüan that lasted for nearly three-hundred years after the fall of the Yüan Empire.¹⁾

* A paper read at the 31st International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1983.

1) Miyawaki 1983.

A second factor that makes the seventeenth century an important period for the study of Mongolian history is that there appeared a large number of historical records written in many different languages of foreign peoples who came into contact with diverse sections of the Mongols who were severally confronted by an era of great changes. Not only Chinese, but also Manchu, Russian and Tibetan sources, each viewing the Mongols from a different angle, were produced in abundance in the seventeenth century. They throw light on the traditional lifestyle of the Mongols before they were integrated into the two empires.

Sources compiled later than the eighteenth century when the most Mongols were already under the Ch'ing rule, such as *Ch'in Ting Hsi Yü T'ung Wen Chih*, *Ch'in Ting Wai Fan Meng-ku Hui Pu Wang Kung Piao Chuan*, *Huang Chao Fan Pu Yao Lüeh* and *Meng-ku Yu Mu Chi*, only report on the nomadic life of the Mongols who already lived within the borders of minutely-defined territories under the control of hereditary lords.²⁾ The same holds true for the field surveys undertaken even later.

To find out what traditional political structures of the nomadic society were really like before changes took place, we have to make use of the abundant seventeenth-century historical sources in a straightforward manner without falling back on false, fixed ideas derived from later times.

We shall quote some important examples of what are wrong with accepted views of the seventeenth-century Mongolian history.

Conventional views have it that in the seventeenth century the Qalqa Mongols of Outer Mongolia were divided into three Khanates, of *Ĵasaγtu Qaγan* in the west, *Tüsiyetü Qaγan* in the middle, and *Čečen Qaγan* in the east, over all of which *Rje-btsun-dam-pa Qutuγtu*, a high priest of the *Dge-lugs-pa* Sect, reigned supreme. Further it is said that, when *Galdan* of the *Ĵün Tar*, their western neighbors, invaded the land of the Qalqa in 1688, a great assembly of the Qalqa lords was held at which it was debated whether they should go over to the Russians or to the Manchus; the grand lama argued that, while the Russians were not believers of Buddhism and have different customs, the Manchu emperors were in respect of Buddhism, and thus the Mongols had better go over to the Manchus; such was the manner in which the Qalqa Mongols decided to seek protection of the Ch'ing Empire.³⁾

The above are, however, completely untrue. Division of the Qalqa into three Khanates was made only after the Qalqa lords had sworn allegiance to Emperor K'ang-hsi at *Doloγan Naγur* in Inner Mongolia in 1691. In the seventeenth century Qalqa there were many lords whose ancestry went back to

2) *Ibid.*, pp. 156-159.

3) *Meng-ku Yu Mu Chi*, chap. 7, fols. 5a-b, 6a.

Geresenje, the youngest son of Batu Möngke Dayan Qaγan, a Chingisid, and they belonged either to the Right Wing headed by Jasaγtu Qaγan or to the Left Wing headed by Tüsiyetü Qaγan. A lord was in possession of his own subjects (*ulus*) but not of the land. There existed no borders for pastures in the Qalqa.⁴⁾

It is true that, as Vladimirtsov says, the Qalqa are sometimes called the Seven *Qosiyun* or the Seven *Otoγ*, but this again hardly reflects historical reality. Of the seven sons of Geresenje who inherited portions of the Qalqa after his death, one died early without leaving descendants. Thus divided among the six surviving brothers, the Qalqa saw only two lines flourish, of Asiqai, the eldest, whose descendants headed the Right Wing Qalqa, and of Noγonoqu, the third, whose descendants headed the Left Wing. The appellation "Seven *Qosiyun* Qalqa" is only intended to make a distinction from the Five *Qosiyun* Qalqa of Inner Mongolia.⁵⁾

The First Rje-btsun-dam-pa Qutuγtu was born the third son of Gombo Tüsiyetü Qaγan, then the head of the Left Wing. Later biographies make him receive this title from the Fifth Dalai Lama while visiting Tibet from 1649 to 1651. Actually he appears with this title already in 1647 in the *Ch'ing Veritable Records*. Not only that, but he seems not to have been of the Dge-lugs-pa Sect at first. It was only after the Qalqa Mongols had become vassals to the Ch'ing emperors that Rje-btsun-dam-pa became a Dge-lugs-pa high priest reigning supreme over all his tribesmen. It was a result of the Ch'ing policy for governing the Qalqa.⁶⁾

Before the Qalqa came under the Ch'ing rule, Rje-btsun-dam-pa was nothing more than an authority over the Left Wing put up by Gombo Tüsiyetü Qaγan in his rivalry with the Right Wing. Moreover, we learn from Russian sources that Gombo's son and heir Čaγun Dorji Tüsiyetü Qaγan was always pro-Manchu, positioned as he was between Russia and the Ch'ing.⁷⁾ It was only the army of the Left Wing Qalqa who fought the invading troops of Galdan in 1688, when there was no time for convening a great assembly of lords. Routed by Galdan's army, the Left Wing Qalqa had to take refuge in Inner Mongolia under the Ch'ing protection, and later three Khanates were reconstituted from those refugees whose majority belonged to the Left Wing. Thereafter pasture borders were minutely delineated in the Qalqa land, and little remained to remind us of the pre-seventeenth-century nomadic life.⁸⁾

4) Miyawaki 1979, pp. 109-115.

5) Vladimirtsov, p. 133; Miyawaki 1979, p. 114; Miyawaki 1983, pp. 166-170.

6) Miyawaki 1979, pp. 116-119.

7) Shastina, pp. 108-124; Miyawaki 1979, pp. 120-123, 128.

8) Miyawaki 1979, pp. 123-131.

What became of the Right Wing Qalqa? The answer is to be found in the relations between them and the Oyirad. Commonly held views of Oyirad history, too, are full of falsehoods. The Oyirad, or Kalmyks, are also called the Western Mongols, as their language being a dialect of Mongolian. In what, then, are they different from the Mongols, so commonly called, of Inner and Outer Mongolias, or the Eastern Mongols? No clear answer has been given so far to this question.

Oyirad history has been studied by Pallas, Howorth and Baddeley formerly, and by Zlatkin in more recent times. As they based their studies chiefly on Russian sources of the seventeenth century and later, viewing Oyirad history in relation to Siberia only, they have committed a considerable number of mistakes.⁹⁾

Pallas said that Xara Xula of the *ǰün Ğar* was the leader chiefly responsible for liberating the Oyirad tribes from their old obligation of obedience to the Mongols, and that his eldest son, Bātur Xong Tayiži, was an independent chief of great stature as early as 1616.¹⁰⁾ Howorth and Baddeley questioned this and thought that Xara Xula and Bātur Xong Tayiži were one and the same person.¹¹⁾ Zlatkin corrected them, pointing out that Bogatyr' Talai Taisha, the foremost Kalmyk chief in 1616, was not Bātur Xong Tayiži but Dalai Tayiši of the Dörbed.¹²⁾

Zlatkin, however, stressed only the role of the *ǰün Ğar* who had had strong ties with Russia since the early seventeenth century, and argued that Xara Xula had been even more powerful than Dalai Tayiši of the Dörbed, and, moreover, that in 1635, the year in which Bātur Xong Tayiži took over his father's position, an Oyirad nation-state "*ǰün Ğar Khanate (Dzhungarskoe Khanstvo)*" came into existence.¹²⁾ This view has been widely accepted as a securely-established theory concerning Oyirad history of the seventeenth century. Yet it is totally contrary to historical facts.

It was only in 1676 when Galdan, chief of the *ǰün Ğar* tribe, took prisoner his grandfather-in-law, Očirtu Čečen Xān of the Qošūd, that the *ǰün Ğar* overthrew the Qošūd supremacy. The *ǰün Ğar* Khanate can be said to have been truly established only when Galdan received the title of Bošoqtu Xān from the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1678. Previously the Oyirad Khanship had resided in the Qošūd tribe, and Bātur Xong Tayiži of the *ǰün Ğar* had been no more than a viceroy as his title indicated.¹³⁾

Pallas, Howorth, Baddeley and Zlatkin all deluded themselves into pic-

9) Miyawaki 1980, pp. 142-144; Miyawaki 1981.

10) Pallas, I., pp. 36-39.

11) Howorth, Vol. I, pp. 613-614, 680; Baddeley, Vol. II, pp. 31-45, Table G.

12) Zlatkin, pp. 133-137, 162-206.

13) Miyawaki 1981; Miyawaki 1984.

turing a “*Ĵün Ĵar Khanate*” as existing as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, as they had projected back in time its image from the time when it played a major role in the Dzungarian steppes, to which it gave its name, in the eighteenth century, and reconstructed history with their attention focused only on its ancestors.

Oyirad history previous to the seventeenth century is part of Mongolian history in a broader sense, and it should always be considered in relation to the Eastern Mongols. Also one of the biggest cause of the changes in the Oyirad political structures that took place in that century was their relation with Tibet, a land to which they began to look for spiritual support since the early part of the same century.¹⁴⁾

Mongol and Oyirad chronicles composed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries call the Oyirad “the Four (*dörben*) Oyirad.” This may be interpreted to indicate that the people was a federation consisting of four tribes. The big question, however, is in what time they consisted of four tribes. For there are more than four Oyirad tribes mentioned in Russian documents and Mongol-Oyirad sources of the seventeenth century and later, such as the *Qoşūd*, the *Dörbed*, the *Ĵün Ĵar*, the *Turġūd*, the *Qoyid*, the *Bātud*, etc.¹⁵⁾

Okada concluded, after comparing and analyzing various historical sources, that the groups comprising the Oyirad went back in their lineage to four tribes at the time of the Mongol Empire, namely the old Oyirad, the *Barġud*, the *Naiman* and the *Kereyid*.¹⁶⁾ Further, he traced back ancestry of the Eastern Mongol groups, the Mongols in a narrower sense, and found out that they were all former vassals to the *Yüan* Dynasty, having close relations with the house of *Qubilai*.¹⁷⁾ These findings bring to light the following historical circumstances.

Toquz Temür Qaġan, the last of the *Qubilaid*s who had retired to Mongolia after the fall of the *Yüan* Empire, was murdered in 1388 by the army of *Yesüder*, a descendant of *Ariġ Buġa* supported by the Oyirad. This incident was the start of the three-hundred-year-long rivalry between the Mongols in the narrower sense, who were former vassals of the *Yüan* Dynasty, and the Oyirad. Ultimately it all goes back to the rivalry between two *Toluid* brothers, *Qubilai* and *Ariġ Buġa*, that divided the Mongol Empire from 1260 to 1264 and eventually led to the former’s establishment of the *Yüan* Dynasty. The battles between the two self-proclaimed *Khans* ended in victory for *Qubilai* who had the wealth of China and the elite corps of the Mongol army under his control. Yet the great tribes of Northwestern Mongolia, the old Oyirad, the *Barġud*, the

14) Miyawaki 1983.

15) *Ibid.*, pp. 162–164, 170–183.

16) Okada 1974.

17) Okada 1975.

Naiman and the Kereyid, do not seem to have been in submission to the Yüan Dynasty as long as it lasted. They formed a federation of four tribes in opposition to the groups loyal to the Yüan, the Mongols in the narrower sense, who sought refuge in Mongolia after the fall of their dynasty in China.¹⁸⁾

The newly-formed Four Oyrad saw the peak of their power at the time of their leaders, Toγon and his son Esen, when the Qoşūd, an Eastern Mongol tribe, too joined them. After the violent death of Esen in 1454, the Oyrad power declined, but still the most of the territory of the present-day Mongolian People's Republic was inhabited by Oyrad tribesmen. At that time the Mongols occupied only the land east of the Kentei Mountains and the present-day Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region of China. It was only after Altan Qaγan of the Tümed, a grandson of Batu Möngke Dayan Qaγan the unifier of the Mongols, had successfully campaigned against the Oyrad in the mid-sixteenth century that the Qalqa, a section of the Mongols, established themselves where they are now.¹⁹⁾

The Oyrad tribes, whose pastures had once extended from Qara Qorum to the Altai Mountains, kept retreating northwestward under continued Mongol attacks until they reached the middle reaches of the Irtysh in the early seventeenth century. The last to head Mongol campaigns against the Oyrad were Layiqur Qaγan, the founder of the Ĵasaγtu Khanate of the Right Wing Qalqa, and his cousin Ubasi Qong Tayiji, known to the Russians as Altyn Tsar'. Finally in 1623 the joint forces of the Four Oyrad attacked and killed Ubasi Qong Tayiji, thus liberating themselves from Mongol domination.²⁰⁾

The Oyrad, who had hitherto accepted Ubasi Qong Tayiji, a Mongol, as their Khan then began electing their own Khans from among themselves. The first thus elected was Bayibaγas Xān of the Qoşūd. He was soon murdered by Čökür, his half brother through mother, in a dispute over inheritance, and succeeded by Törö Bayixu Güüşi Xān, his full brother who married his widow. Güüşi Xān appointed his viceroy Xotoγočin of the Ĵün Γar, whom he conferred the title of Batur Xong Tayiži and gave his daughter for wife, and moved to Kokonor and Tibet to defend the Dge-lugs-pa faith at an invitation from the Fifth Dalai Lama. In his absence Batur Xong Tayiži enjoyed a great power in Dzungaria, but his son and heir Sengge was neither a Khan nor a Xong Tayiži, and the Oyrad Khanship was inherited by Očirtu Čečen Xān, a son of Bayibaγas, of the Qoşūd.²¹⁾ Such is the true picture of Oyrad history up to the seventeenth century.

Neither in the Qalqa nor in the Oyrad of the seventeenth century existed

18) Miyawaki 1983, pp. 154–156, 159–166.

19) *Ibid.*, pp. 166–170.

20) *Ibid.*, pp. 170–186.

21) Miyawaki 1984, pp. 110–112.

a "nation-state" in the modern sense. They still lived following the customs of their ancestors. In 1640 the Qalqa and the Oyirad gave up their traditional enmity to form an alliance in the face of the growing threat from the Ch'ing Empire, and jointly promulgated a *Mongol-Oyirad Code*. The existence of a unified code does not necessarily presuppose that of a unified nation. The Code was in the tradition of Mongol laws since the Yasa of Chingis Khan in that it was applicable only to cases involving more than one of the member groups of the alliance. The Code notwithstanding, a chief had a full possession of his subjects, and cases arising within a group were left to be disposed of by the group itself.²²⁾

Such picture of the Mongol life changed as the lords became bearers of hereditary titles to be bestowed by the Ch'ing emperors, and those who did not became personal vassals of the Russian Tsars. Thus the seventeenth century was an era of great changes for the Mongols. We have to reexamine Mongolian history of the seventeenth century taking fully into consideration such historical circumstances. We hope that the present paper will serve that purpose even to a small extent.

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22) Shimada, pp. 23-27; Miyawaki 1984, pp. 96-108.

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