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Japan and its Influence towards Panmongolism and Panbuddhism

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The process of origin, development and transformation of Buddhism, which has been paradoxically proving itself in a variety of forms and functions in different regions of Asia, on the one hand, demonstrates phenomenology of this religion, on the other its historicity. In political and social aspects Buddhism always possessed the integral function for the South Asia and Ceylon, South-Eastern Asia, Tibet and Central Asia, Far East.

From the very outset Buddhism was spread as a dominant cultural category by higher authorities and privileged levels, supporting their particular interests. It helped to restructure traditional political institutes and contributed to forming one single ruling system.

In this connection it is necessary to mention the particular success of Buddhism at court of Japan at the first stages of its dissemination. For instance, in 765 the Empress Shiotoku proclaimed the intention to serve the three jewels, symbolizing the state structure of Japan. Buddhism provided ruling elite with facilities for establishing the original model of the state-doctrinaire and maintaining the public order. The religion often appeared in the form of social regulator and supported ideologically colored oppositions to official policy.

The same integral role of Buddhism one could find in the history of the nomadic societies of Central Asia. In Mongolia, which had gained the Tibetan experience of religious-political struggle of the main sects and influential clans, the Bodisatva's definition of the Khan's status in 1578 helped to consolidate the separate and crushed tribes. That was the way the temporal authorities were granting themselves divine attributes.

However, by the middle of the XIXth century the traditional religious-political institutes were getting transformed due to gradual and uneven penetration of Western capital in the East accompanied by acquaintance with the new spiritual world, ideologies, political culture and sometimes military invasions. Those changes led the peoples of Asia to rather contradictory results. Asian societies incorporated into the international world capitalist system showed the whole range of reactions to the western models of development, political traditions and culture from assumption of the foreign priorities to the complete denial of them.

The beginning of the XXth century in the East The Age of Asian Waking Up was marked by appearance of various conceptions of national development, emergence of panasiatism and reformism as a significant factor in international relations. In different regions of the East the most active personalities were standing out from the thin level of educated according to the Western standards people. Suffering from the crises of identity they turned out to become the authors of nationalistic conceptions and ideas of Asian development.

Asian nationalism needed some bright and at the same time simple ideas, also connected with mythological, mystic consciousness. Very often this occurred to be an appellation to the great past, the golden era and, undoubtedly, religions, which had taken the deepest roots in societies of Asia.

The Japanese example demonstrates very clearly the appellation towards Buddhism for proving the unique and selected role of the nation. It looks like facing inadmissible and unusual for Buddhism aggressive feature. According to the doctrine of Tanaka Tigaku (1861-1939), the Buddhist-layman, who considered himself to be a follower of Nichiren, the Buddhist teaching had appeared in Japan to combine the way of this religion with the fortune of Japanese nation and to turn the rest of the world into a vast Buddhist country. It seemed easy and natural to find an excuse for militarization of Japan in the 30s and its invasion in Asia as a spread of its influence for the sake of all living beings.

Such a militant Buddhism one can see only in Baron's Ungern conception of the Buddhist State of Central Asian and Tibetan nomads.

At the beginning of the 20-s Baron R.F. Ungern-Shternberg, about whom the soviet historiography proposed the image of an odious figure in the White movement (separated from Semenov's detachment in 1920 and formed his own, invaded in Mongolia, managed to conquest the capital – Urga from the second attempt but left the city very soon and was defeated by the units of the Red Army), actually was one of the inspirers of panasiatism and the idea of unity of the yellow race against the West.

Ungern followed the Japanese imperialist ideologists in many items of his program of establishing Central Asian State, creating invincible yellow army and subsequently starting campaign against Europe with the high goal to liquidate the evil of western civilization.

The real career flight up of Ungern began with his cooperation with the man, closed to him by spirits, – ataman Semenov, who had formed and had been maintaining his detachment on Japanese money. Semenov in his turn was maturing the sacramental plans, whispered to him by Tokyo: in Russia's interests to establish a special state, which would incorporate frontier territories of Inner Mongolia, Barga, Halha and southern part of Buryatia. Obviously the creation of such a state first of all would be for Japan's benefit.

It is known that even in 1918 in Hailar being attached to ataman Semenov Ungern had an opportunity to get to know the Japanese officers, among whom there was a professional spy captain Nagaomi. Baron's views on the processes in Asia, his great interest in Buddhism, popularity, charisma, character by any means made him a potential ally of the Japanese in their strategies in Mongolia and Siberia. In 1920 approximately 50–70 Japanese soldiers and officers were attached to Ungern's staff.

In any case it is clear that there was a direct or indirect influence of Japanese panasiatism and the policy of Tokyo upon Ungern's conception of panmongolism and his activities in Mongolia.

In 1917 the idol of the Japanese youth – the Minister of Defense Ugaki Kazushige proclaimed that Japan would do everything possible against European and American despotic capitalism and the wave of Russian bolshevism rolling to the East .

Ungern's conception also had both anticapitalist and anticommunist items. Baron professed the idea of rebirth of the golden era of world monarchies with fire and sword of Mongolian and Tibetan nomadic armies as the last stronghold of order and justice in the struggle against the western vices and particularly the worst of them – communism.

In that way Japan and Ungern had common enemies and allies. The followers of the Tanaka Strong policy considered the neighboring Asiatic peoples to be some sort of alive resource, which could be and must be used for the benefit of Japan. Ungern found the original impulse for the rebirth of traditional monarchies all over the world in Central Asian nomads as well. In this item his point of view exactly corresponded to the Tokyo policy of restoration of the overthrown Chin dynasty in China. Ungern expected to drive Chinese away from Mongolia, to restore Chin Impair. In perspective he was planning a crusade to communist Russia and then to Europe. This was estimated in the 5th item of his practical measures' program: In alliance with Japan a campaign of united forces of yellow race against Russia and then – the West for the goal of restoration of monarchies all over the world¹. Baron was dreaming of the new Chingis-khan era. He thought of the East as a powder-magazine², which is ready to blow up from the first spark of his. The Wild Asian Division, formed by him, consisted of Buryats, Mongols and Tibetans.

Panasiatism by Ungern and his Japanese sponsors corresponded to many customs of Central Asian nomads: appellation towards the great past Chingis-khan's times, Buddhism, which had been playing indispensable role in the nomadic societies. As the ideologies of Japanese imperialism, declaring the idea of their national exclusiveness and the necessity of triumphant establishing its rule by means of military expansion, baron concluded a myth of his powerful greatness and heroism from the first statement and moral excuse for his well-known cruelty from the second.

Firstly Ungern managed to win the Mongol princes' confidence rather easily, found the necessary ideological frame for his short-term task – conquest of Urga. At the beginning of 1920 baron was staying on Mongolian border and sending advantageous and flattering suggestions to Bogdo-Gegen. In them he expressed a strong wish to take part in restoration of the Mongol Autonomy, to provide Mongolian soldiers with

weapons and to go over to Khutukta with the army consisted of the nation of former Chingis-khan's citizens³⁾. Ungern realized the first point brilliantly: conquest of Urga was the top of his victories. Some time after them there was inescapable decline, which finally led baron to the collapse.

Ungern not just identified religion with the monarchist regime, not simply used the church institute as a constructive measure in the struggle against socialist propaganda, but, following the Japanese, created conception of warlike Northern Buddhism, justifying expansion and bloodshed. The aggressive, ruthless and purposeful Ungern's nature was likely to be close to the Japanese Samurai spirits and to impress the Mongols. They took him as a reincarnation of Mahagala (the angry god of Northern Buddhism, keeper of the faith, winning evil spirits) and Chzhamsaran (the god of war and horses). In general, bellicosity, severity of Mahayana Buddhism, its rude tantrum practices must have impressed the Japanese. I think that the reasons for it were not just political, but spiritual as well: there has been a certain connection between two Buddhist cultures, the tendency to self-knowledge.

Being fond of mystics Ungern divided people into two categories: those who were consecrated into his teaching, able to understand it, possessed the right to listen to the revelations and the rest ignorant majority – people, who's lives cost nothing. Sponsored by the Japanese he didn't know another methods of providing himself with means except loot and plunder. That's why speculations about what to do with the conquered property and how to distribute it correctly and profitably seemed to baron rather petty and undeserving his attention. In contrast to the Japanese he had neither a clear program of actions nor really anything to begin with.

Japanese panasiatism was always pragmatic. By maintaining the White movement in Siberia and supporting development and dissemination of panmongolism, Japan was preparing the background for conquering Mongolia the buffer zone in the Far Eastern conflict. To take it under its firm control meant to win good chances for the further expansion in the Soviet Far East. Foreseeing a serious threat of Red Army's invasion in Mongolia, the Japanese might have expected to help Zhan Czin to conquest Halha by means of Ungern. Thinking that baron

could save it from the Russians in the North they strongly pushed him to make expeditions into Mongolia in 1921. Captain Suzuki, the commander of the Japanese sotnia in the Asiatic division, not just occasionally became a person empowered to act for Ungern. However, he fell into disgrace very soon. Generally the Japanese obviously miscalculated in their counting on Ungern, who didn't become a puppet for Tokyo. The Japanese failed to control the events in Outer Mongolia in 1921. It happened to turn round another way quite opposite to their preliminary plan: after pushing the Chinese out from Mongolia Ungern somehow cleaned the field for actions of the common enemy Russian Bolsheviks.

Bolsheviks tried to explode superfluous illusions of Japan, concerning Outer Mongolia. Geopolitical strategy of Soviet Russia in Central Asia was substantiated and worked out quite enough. Mongolia in this context occurred to be the very important and in some time the most successful, even model field. People's (socialist) Mongolia, being entirely under the vigilant Soviet control, became not just the factor of safety along the Far Eastern border, but somehow a demonstrative victory over America, Germany and Japan in this region and a trump-card in the relations with China. From 1921 a consistent process of making Outer Mongolia a satellite of the Soviet Russia began. Certainly it had been developing not smoothly and with a changeable success, but rather persistently and not without an initiative of the new Mongolian elite. The former theocratic elite was trying hard to get its positions back and needed an ally as Japan badly.

Japan didn't considered the Mongols to be competitive in the struggle for hegemony in Asia, tried to maintain their national feelings and direct them against Western domination and red colonialism in particular. The ideal instruments for spreading anticommunist propaganda and tendencies for Japanese sake in Mongolia were the high lamas' circles. As it was mentioned above, the interest was mutual because lamas really had something to loose: they owned about 1/3 of national property and also enjoyed the tremendous political authority and undivided cultural influence upon the population. The last was the prerogative that increased their importance as an ally for the Japanese.

Buddhism as a unique cultural and ideological base was the reason for the mutually advantageous but nonequivalent for the both sides alliance.

The Japanese imperialism in Asia traditionally faced the inescapable dilemma: on the one hand, the necessity of unity with the other countries of the East in opposition to the West, on the other, tendency to control the neighbors, sacrificing their national interests. At any rate Tokyo did not care for the Mongolian independence. Oppositely, skillfully using the internal structural weakness of lamaistic institute by encouraging intrigues and suggesting a fundamental panbuddhist idea of all Mongol tribes' unity at the same time, Japan was planning a progressive penetration into the Northern China, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Eastern Turkestan and Tibet. The Mongols couldn't help understanding it and, naturally, didn't entirely trust the Japanese agents.

Generally, the Mongols had some sort of illusion. The origin of it I see in a unique nomadic mentality. They could have thought that it was possible for them to use the USSR, Japan for the sake of their nation, to toy with the contradictions of western states. Those theories began to play especially active role in 1927, during the period of comparative Comintern's weakening and Japanese agents' activation in Mongolia. The last was also a consequent of the solution of the Eastern Conference held in Tokyo in summer 1927 to solve the problem of Manchuria and Mongolia by military actions.

In 1927-1928 the idea of self-dependent development, without any foreign assistance was flourishing in Mongolia and strengthened the so-called the right-wing deviation the former theocratic elite and nationalistic elements. In Party journals they published articles about the USSR's colonialist aims, the necessity to establish friendly relations with capitalist countries, represented the theory of toying with the contradictions between the USSR and the capitalist community.

Nevertheless, it was not so easy to get rid of the elder comrades the Soviet Union, Comintern and, which is the most important, - the new Mongolian cadres prepared by them. There was a forced policy: army supported the left-wing the fact that pushed the Mongols into the firm Comintern's arms again. The Comintern logic about a connection between the Japanese militarism and panmongolist trends inside the Party was peremptory. The communist campaign for abolishing

illiteracy in the questions of international situation and the war threat was also understandable: the right-wing flight up expressed itself in the anti-Comintern and anti-Soviet policy.

However, a winner under the circumstances of strict competition must have mastered not only the methods of threats but bribery as well: the support of wide sections of the population was necessary for it. As the lamaism determined the way of life of the people, the attitude to the religion became the crucial point in the strategies of Japan and the Soviet Union in Mongolia.

The representatives of Comintern – the organization that essentially had been doing the whole rough work of forming the new political elite in Outer Mongolia, realized that nomadic Buddhism was a wide tradition and they needed to overcome it, which coursed some time to infiltrate the population as the new and the old. Then it was impossible not to use the lamas' experience in administration because they really possessed a real knowledge of the country and special skills in solving local conflicts, which had always been the weakest point of Comintern instructors. As a result lamas took the key positions in the new revolutionary government (the first Prime Minister was Bodo, a lama by origin, the second Zhalhanz-khutukhta, one of the highest spiritual leaders) and were the members of the CC PRP. Nevertheless, such a policy existed only at the first stages of establishing the Soviet control over Mongolia in 1921–1924. Later, by 1927 the necessity of eliminating the very bases of lamaist institute – economic prosperity of the monasteries and their cultural influence – became obvious. Against this background Japan's encouraging the Mongol Buddhism and lamas looked especially effective.

Before the VIIth Party Congress (1928) several members of the Mongol CC even were carrying on negotiations with the Japanese. The Comintern EC considered the CC resolution on granting the Japanese consular in Manchuria Tanaka a visit to the MPR to be a big mistake. There seemed to be a threat of Japan's success in toying with nationalistic interests not only of Inner, but Outer Mongolia as well⁴⁾. In spring 1928 several Soviet instructors returned from Mongolia, reporting about the possibility of counter revolutionary upheaval⁵⁾. The Ministry of Justice in Urga was considering legislation according to the Japanese

model. Otherwise, there was a tendency of separating from Soviet Russia against the background of the evident protection granted the Japanese by several members of the central administration.

In connection with Japan's strengthening in 1926-1927 and its aggressive plans in the Far East, mainly realized in patronizing panasiatic movements and panmongolism in particular, lamas, feeling the press of the new political elite, became more active in supporting the right-wing.

The right-wing flight up in the MPR against the Gomindan's scarifying revolutionary course in 1927 aroused the suspicions that the Chinese history could become an example to Mongolia. The Comintern representatives were also worrying: What would happen if lamas establish contacts with Chinese militaristic groups, Chzhan-Czolin and ruling behind their back Japanese imperialists?⁶⁾ Called by Japan the Buddhist Council in Peking with the participation of Panchen Bogdo was not very optimistic for communists also.

Generally, the years 1927-1928 in Outer Mongolia were the top of panmongolist activities. The conception of panmongolism, being used as a weapon by the Japanese agents in Inner and Outer Mongolia, contained the threatening for the USSR points and statements. It was dangerous by the very essence of it the idea of the Mongol tribes' unity on the bases of one single Buddhist culture. The Mongols, tired of the demands of the Soviet Union and its departments People's Commissariat of International Affairs and Comintern, could have taken that idea as the salutary opportunity to restore the national-religious Autonomy of 1911. The Japanese understood it perfectly. In this period the special articles on Mongolia appeared in the Japanese press.

In contrast to Japanese panmongolism the Soviet departments instructed their representatives to stick to the Lenin's principle of unqualified national self-determination (in practice it occurred to be advantageous for the USSR, as far as the Japanese panasiatism first of all was for Tokyo's sake) and to raise the question of perspective unity of the Mongols on the bases of revolutionary power in future, at the same time preventing them from the risky agitation for uniting now. If any general national idea really existed among the Mongols it certainly had panmongolist and panbuddhist features. Accordingly, the uniting of the Mongols could have happened only on this fundament, what seemed too

dangerous to Moscow. Encouraged and granted by Tokyo such a national idea would have benefit for the Japanese interests and course a real threat to the USSR along the Far Eastern border.

Despite the tendencies of Japanophilism, hearsay of the USSR colonialist goals and so on, the successful alliance of Japan and lamas of Outer Mongolia didn't happen because the new social forces were manifesting persistently. The new elite very much depended on the Soviet support in general and Comintern instructions in particular.

This new political elite was the main initiator of the left campaign of expropriation of monastic property in 1930–1932. The result of this forced action was led by lamas' uprisings of the nomadic population in summer 1932. The scope of this movement made communists to call for extraordinary plenary session of the CC MPRP, stop the campaign, naming its method left extremes. The Party members and Comintern representatives were afraid of Japan's using the internal conflicts and lamas' revolts in Outer Mongolia, leading counter revolutionary movements and strengthening its influence. The secrete service in Inner Mongolia reported that the monasteries lived an active political life there and were eager to escape to Tibet⁷. The alliance of lamas of both Inner and Outer Mongolia looked dangerous for Red Russia.

In Moscow they were afraid of consolidation of high lamas, trying to save their income from the expropriation. Comintern had special worries about conducting the left campaign along the Chinese border. Actually, the unity of lamas didn't follow, but waves of discontent were rolling all over the country. The Comintern instructors mentioned carefully that there were a number of districts (hoshun), where counter revolutionary lamas managed to prepare actions against the revolutionary authority and to inspire significant sections of population⁸.

It was typical that after 1932 the number of lamas only increased in Outer Mongolia. High lamas continued building new temples, collecting taxes from the nomads, putting corporal punishments into practice and getting their titles back. So, they were breaking the rules of the new system⁹. It was extremely difficult to struggle against those trends under the circumstances of breaking out revolts. By the beginning of 1937 the number of lamas was estimated around 87 774 (the whole population of the country 705054)¹⁰.

By the 30s The Mongolian Republic was too shaky. The Mongols began thinking of the possible alliance not only with Japan but also with Chinese and Germans and so on.

The neutralization of the uprisings by the Soviet Union and its keeping power for the new political elite made the Mongols moderate their ambitions and recognize that the USSR was the only force that could help them^{[11\)](#)}. However, the thought with whom and how would be better remained in their heads^{[12\)](#)}.

In 1932–1936 the structure the USSR MPR Manchukuo China was forming^{[13\)](#)}. Solving the Japanese Soviet conflicts under consideration of the axis Rome–Berlin–Tokyo and the aggressive panasiatic Japan's strategy must have happened and did happened in the form of military conflict. Despite of all Japanese attempts to use the right and left mistakes of MPRP, to win the most important Party departments, government, administration and military apparatus^{[14\)](#)}, the USSR firmly adhered to forming the military–political axis Moscow Ulan–Bator and was maintaining MPRP according to the Soviet model. That provided the Soviet strategy with the victory not only at Khalhin–Gol in 1939 but at the final establishing the social course of development in Mongolia.

However, Inner Mongolia did not share that fate. It became a victim in the play among the Soviet Union, Japan and China.

Great spreading of panbuddhist tendencies marked the end of 30s in Inner Mongolia. It was possible partly because of Russian's faults in this region. According to Comintern documents the soviet representatives were slowing down the work there^{[15\)](#)}. Comintern characterized the role of the People's Party of Inner Mongolia as just a part of Chinese national–revolutionary movement, led by Gomindan and CCP. The weakness of the Party was a result of such an attitude. Nevertheless, the Japanese activities in the Far East made Comintern to think of a certain correlation between the parties of Outer and Inner Mongolia. The fear of the possible difficulties in the relations with China stopped Moscow: Comintern as an international organization could not afford to be led by the limited national interests^{[16\)](#)}.

However, the Japanese tried to satisfy those interests in 1937 in the Northern China and Inner Mongolia as they could. They established a separate Mongolian area in Kalgan Meng Chiang. The Japanese were

the champions in spreading propaganda for Buddhist Renaissance, active national church and the holy war against communism. They were also very fond of the idea of searching for the ninth reincarnation of Jebtsun Damba Khutukta in Inner Mongolia. In 1939 the high lamas even went to Lhasa with the Japanese to ask Dalai Lama for the consent.

The same activities of the Japanese one can find in Buryatia. The Buddhist reformist, Japanese agent that was the political sin of which communists were accusing Buryat intellectuals.

The Japanese were thinking in their long-term intentions to purge lamaism from shamanic elements and nomadic specifics and finally to harmonize it with Japanese Buddhism. That object remained unreachable: the nomadic Mongols and settled Japanese shared essentially different cultures.

The Japanese encouraged and granted Mongolian national movements and Buddhism for both political and spiritual reasons. However, the consequences of their pragmatic and aggressive tendencies, the defeat in the Second World War made Japan reconsider the role it has been playing on the historical arena. Nevertheless, panmongolist ideas have transformed in various forms and have been existing up to now.