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# National Party and Local Politics in Ordos, Inner Mongolia (1926-1935)

## **Disciplines**

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## **Comments**

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NATIONAL PARTY AND  
LOCAL POLITICS IN ORDOS,  
INNER MONGOLIA (1926–1935)

At the beginning of spring 1929, a lama was cremated in Üüshin banner, on the Ordos plateau. After the fire burned out the attendants gathered the remnants of his bones and, mixing these sacred relics with earth, interred them in a small pagoda designed to hold the remnants of holy men.\* An unriden horse was released on the steppe for the liberation of the lama's soul, while the living monks held services in the temple. Afterwards the monks were served tea and fed a meal at the expense of the banner government; to sponsor such an event was to earn merit for the whole community (Buyan et al. 1982: 396). Such state sponsored funerals for clerics took place often in Mongolia, but what made this funeral different from others was that the deceased had been not only a lama, but also the real ruler of his banner for the last two and one-half years of his life, and that he had ruled the banner not in the name of the Mongols' Yellow Church, but in the name of his "Red Party" (*ula'an nam*), the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party.

The lama, named Öljeijirgal, had been active in the politics of his banner since almost 1900 and had played a leading role in the organization of "circles" (*duguilang*), which eventually became an alternate focus of power within the banner. The duguilang circles were so called from their custom of sitting in a circle when they met, usually at a Buddhist temple or sacrificial cairn (*obo'a*). When signing their names they also signed them in a circle. By doing so no leader could

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be singled out for punishment by the authorities. Although they started out as assemblies to petition the ruling nobles, especially after 1900, the duguilangs began to arm themselves and from that time until about 1915 in effect controlled most of the banner's military forces. By this time the pretence of being leaderless circles was no longer necessary, as the leaders relied on armed force to defend themselves, but the name persisted as did the custom of meeting in circles at cairns and temples.

Aided by Chinese troops, the ruling grand duke of the Üüshin banner, Tegüs-Amugulang, finally suppressed the duguilangs in 1921 and imprisoned Öljeijirgal. He later escaped and fled to Beijing, whence he returned five years later, not with an army at his back, but with a party. With the aid of this "Red Party", Öljeijirgal seized control of the banner and revived the old duguilang organs under new auspices. Despite what appeared to be striking initial successes, however, fitting the local duguilang circles, which had never looked beyond their own region, together with a party which aspired to mobilize all of Inner Mongolia proved to be difficult. The difficulties increased when the party center itself, whose creation was largely a result of the Nationalist alliance with the Soviet Union (and its satellite Outer Mongolia) in the years 1923–1927, split between pro- and anti-Soviet factions. In the end, the duguilang government merged so closely with local society, that its final abolition by the Suiyuan provincial government in 1935 was an anti-climax.

The Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was a party for all Inner Mongols and aspired to lead local organizations beyond their limited horizons, to modernize Inner Mongolia, and to educate the Mongolian children in secular, not religious schools. That in the end it became identified with the local society it hoped to transcend raises many questions about the relations between a party that aimed to reform a whole nation and its powers of social and military mobilization which grew out of regional society.

### The Formation of the PRPIM

This "Red Party" began as the first vehicle of common political activity by the Mongols of Inner Mongolia since the seventeenth century. Having lost their independence to the Manchus in stages from

1636 on, the Mongols were divided into banners ruled by a hereditary nobility that had no power above them but the Beijing Court of Dependencies (*lifan yuan*). In the late seventeenth century the Manchus encouraged adjacent banners to organize themselves into Leagues; the ruling nobles of the banners would choose the League head and his deputy, subject to the approval of the Manchu Qing authorities. At the same time, Governors General in Suiyuan, Chengde, Uliyasutai, Xining, and elsewhere, acquired regional power, standing between the leagues and banners, and their theoretical supervisor, the Court of Dependencies in Beijing.

During the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the leagues, which corresponded well to the native cultural areas of the Mongols, continued to grow apart and develop distinctive literate and folk cultures. In East Mongolia, the Mongols of Josotu, were influenced by the Confucian critique of Buddhism which had, by the time of the Russo-Japanese war, become the scene of a movement of modernization that took inspiration from the reforms of Meiji Japan (Nacinbatu 1987). The four leagues of Khalkha in Outer Mongolia came under the most profound Tibetan influence and, to a unique degree, identified their nationhood with their great reincarnate lama, the Jibdzündamba Khutugtu. The people of Ordos, south of the great bend of the Yellow River, took the name of their league from the bier of Chinggis Khan, which was fixed there, paid great respect to the powerful ancestors of the Mongolian nation, along with the Buddhist church.

Everywhere, except among the literate elite of East Mongolia and among the Daurs of the Northeast, however, the Yellow Church (*shira shashin*) played a crucial role. Practiced by monks of the Dgelugs-pa order of Buddhism also dominant in Tibet, the Buddhist religion supplied an alternate locus of power and advancement to the secular nobility, and at least potentially an alternative locus of political action. Only the Khalkha Mongols, however, took advantage of this potentiality; in November 1911, as the Qing was busy coping with rebellions in central China, the secular and clerical elite of the Khalkhas, encouraged by St. Petersburg, implemented a plan that had been discussed intermittently since 1900, and declared Khalkha Mongolia an independent state. The new emperor was not one of the nobles, descendants of Chinggis Khan, but rather the incarnate lama, the eighth Jibdzündamba Khutugtu (r. 1874–1924), around whose

lineage as we noted, the Khalkhas had concentrated their feeling of separateness since its appearance in the seventeenth century.

The new state eventually foundered in the conflict between the secular and the clerical elite, and by 1919, Chinese troops had reoccupied the capital Khüriye. In response, members of the Lower House of the advisory parliament of Mongolia created the first political party in Mongolian history, the Mongolian People's Party, which proceeded to seek aid from Soviet Russia to re-establish Mongolian independence (Ewing 1980). When the Chinese government also abolished autonomy in the Khölön Buir region, along the Chinese Eastern Railway, another party, the Khölön Buir Youth Party also sprang up, and like the People's Party, it too sought aid from Soviet Russia. Both of these parties, however, were local organizations, intended not to mobilize the whole Mongolian nation, but only the citizens of the defunct autonomous governments of Outer Mongolia and Khölön Buir.

In Outer Mongolia, the Red Army did intervene, but only after, and because, the Chinese soldiers had been driven out by a White Russian army. The re-establishment of an independent Mongolia, this time as a constitutional monarchy, with real power not in the hands of the Jibdzündamba Khutugtu, but rather in the hands of the People's Party, however, exercised little immediate influence on Inner Mongolia. Several Inner Mongols from Urad and Bargu (including members of the Youth Party) banners on the border of Outer Mongolia did go to the capital Neislel Khüriye (Russian "Urga") to join in the building of the new state. Significantly, party construction was still tied to a particular political organization, not a nation; neither the Khalkhas nor their Inner Mongolian acolytes made any attempt to extend the People's Party to Inner Mongolia. Rather those Inner Mongolians who wished to join it had to travel to Neislel Khüriye.

The organization of the first Mongolian party not connected with a particular governmental structure came in 1924, under the influence of the Mongolian People's Party, but even more of the Chinese Nationalists (in Mongolian, the party was named the Inner Mongolian People's Party; in Chinese, the Inner Mongolian Nationalist Party). From the beginning the party represented the coalition of several local movements each of which had members, for various reasons, living in Beijing (Atwood 1990). In the leading position was a group of

East Mongolian, and more particularly Kharacin intellectuals who had come to dominate the Mongolian educational apparatus set up in Beijing around the Mongolian and Tibetan school. Led by Serengdongrub (a.k.a. Bai Yunti, 1894–1980), most of the members of this faction had already joined the KMT. Another clique consisted of the old Youth Party from Khölön Buir. Most of its active members had followed Buyangerel (a.k.a. Fumingtai, b. 1894) to Khalkha after a crackdown by the Heilongjiang military, but one leader, Merse (a.k.a. Guo Daofu, 1894–1931?), had gone to Beijing, where he committed his old party to join the new one. The third faction, and the one most relevant to our purposes, was the duguilang activists who had arrived in Beijing as fugitives. The leading one, Bandid Gegeen Wangdannima (1872–1926), was an incarnate lama, who – after extensive activity in Northern Ordos against land colonization by Chinese, princely abuse of power, and in favor of the new Outer Mongolian state – had been captured in 1913 and sentenced to death by the Governor General of Suiyuan. The Chinese President, Yuan Shikai, however, feared the effect of the execution of one who was not only a popular leader, but also an incarnate lama, and the uncle of the head of Yekhe Juu League, might have on the Chinese government's reputation in Mongolia. Yuan pardoned the cleric and even arranged a sinecure for him as an advisor to the Prime Minister on Mongolian affairs, but all on the condition that he not leave Beijing (Baoyintu 1986: 40–41). In 1921, he was joined by the lama mentioned above, Öljeijirgal (1866–1929), who was also known as Shine-lama, or “New Lama”. For their part, Shinelama and Wangdannima committed the duguilang movement to the support of the new party in 1924.

Under the Inner Mongols' situation of prolonged disunity, a party, something that united people from different banners and leagues for political action, was an unprecedented form of organization. The Inner Mongolian People's Party, the first party in Inner Mongolia, united people from many different banners, who had in common only the fact that they were living in Beijing and were dissatisfied with the state of Inner Mongolia. However, the fact that the founders of the party were living in Beijing did not necessarily mean they had cut off ties from their local societies; indeed it was their presumed ability to mobilize support in their homelands that made the party more than a clique of expatriates. At the same time, by being in Beijing, the activ-

ists (especially those who were fugitives, such as Wangdannima, Öljeijirgal, and Merse), could not keep up regular ties with their own region, due to the very poor state of communications in Mongolian regions. When the party's central executive committee went to Ordos in summer of 1926, for example, it lost all contact with external political events and returned to Baotou two months later, unaware of the start of the Nationalists' Northern Expedition, or the return of their patron Feng Yuxiang from the Soviet Union (Nozu 1986: 137). What enabled these out of touch expatriates to commit – reliably as it turned out – their hometown organization to the new party was not only their high reputation in these movements, but also their thorough immersion in the culture of that hometown which meant that their instincts and responses did not appreciably diverge from those of their hometown constituency.

The new party did attempt to homogenize the ideology, if not of its leaders, such as Serengdongrub, or Wangdannima, then of the youth attracted to its cause. The leadership selected four Mongols to join the first class at the Nationalists' Huangpu Military Academy; all of them hailed from East Mongolia. At the same time, they sent three Mongols to the new Khalkha Mongolian state; of these, at least two, Öljeijirgal, who had been recommended to the leadership by Wangdannima, and Rabdan, the son of a ruling duke, were Ordos Mongols. On the way, Öljeijirgal, who was more than fifty at the time, secretly returned to his Üüshin banner and picked up sixteen younger duguilang activists, including his son Gungga, to study with him (Buyan et al. 1982: 249–253; Nozu 1986: 118). One year of modern education, though, that only capped off an entire childhood in a still pre-modern society, could not bring about a fundamental change in the students' world view, a fact that became clear later on.

During 1925, the party took a decisive movement leftwards. This move had its source both in Mongolian and in Chinese politics. After the last Jibdzündamba Khutugtu died in May 1924, the Mongolian People's Party moved steadily leftwards and, by the end of 1924, had abolished the monarchy and established the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR). The party was renamed the Mongolian People's *Revolutionary* Party (MPRP), and the capital's name changed from Neis-lel Khüriye ("Capital Court") to Ulaanbaatar Khota ("City of the Red Hero"). The Inner Mongolian party followed their northern brethren's lead and renamed their party the People's Revolutionary



Party of Inner Mongolia (PRPIM – in Chinese, the Inner Mongolian National Revolutionary Party). Meanwhile, after Feng Yuxiang, who dominated western and central Inner Mongolia, moved to accept Soviet and Outer Mongolian aid, a three party alliance of the Nationalists, the Chinese Communists, and the People's Revolutionary Party of Inner Mongolia began to organize local party branches in Inner Mongolia (Sheridan 1966: 163–176; Du and Wurijitu n. d.: 187). Militarily these branches received aid through the Feng's Guominjun or "National Army", and indirectly through the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic (Buyan et al. 1982: 251–252, 286; Nozu 1986: 147–149). The cooperation with the Communists brought a large group of Mongolian Communists, who were mostly from the Tümed Mongols, the most sinicized Mongols of all, but who also included some from East Mongolia. Under the guidance of Li Dazhao this group tried to absorb the Inner Mongolian Party and put it under the leadership of the Chinese Communists but lacking Soviet and Mongolian support, these efforts were unsuccessful (Du and Wurijitu n. d.: 187; Nozu 1986: 152).

On October 10 1925, the party convened its first congress at Zhangjiakou, the headquarters of Feng's military command (Atwood 1990: 103–134). The congress displayed an impressive degree of unity, considering the diversity of both the party itself and its sponsors. The East Mongols, who were close to the KMT, dominated the presidium of the Central Committee, but two members of the Youth party also were elected. Öljeijirgal and Wangdannima were chosen for the twenty-one man Central Committee, but not for the seven man presidium. Serengdongrub was elected chairman. The program adopted at the Congress may be summarized by its six-point over-all program, passed on October 14:

- 1) Fully implement autonomy and self-determination for Inner Mongolia.
- 2) Establish democratic rule.
- 3) Destroy Chinese warlord rule.
- 4) Abolish the feudal system.
- 5) Oppose the invasion and oppression of Inner Mongolia.
- 6) Purge the traitorous Mongolian princes and dukes (Nozu 1986: 121–122).

As can be seen, the demands at this time contained nothing that

contravened the spirit of the alliance between the Nationalists and the Soviet Union (along with the MPR). In its more detailed program, the party envisioned establishing an autonomous government for all of Inner Mongolia (meaning roughly the modern-day Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, plus the northern part of Qinghai province, which also had a significant Mongolian population), with its own army and an elected head. The banner princes and the Chinese governors-general would have only limited power, but the former office would still be hereditary (Nozu 1986: 121). Strikingly, in view of this emphasis on creating a single government of Inner Mongolia, the Soviet documents on the party often refer to the party as the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary *Government*, not Party (Nozu 1986: 147).

More particularly though, although both parties to the alliance had their own ideologies (the Three People's Principle in one case, and Marxism-Leninism in the other), the PRPIM members had agreed to leave the matter of world view undetermined, even in its manifesto. The documents of the Congress referred neither to any "-ism", nor to any particular texts, such as Sun Yat-sen's lectures on the Three People's Principles or the works of Lenin, that explained how the party's practical actions were grounded in its understanding of the course of world or even only Mongolian history. Neither the Marxism of the Comintern, nor Lenin's doctrine of "non-capitalist development" that became the MPRP's officially approved way of applying Marxism to the Mongolian situation, nor the Three People's Principles of the Nationalists received any mention whatsoever. The delegates also dispensed with any lengthy description of the world situation, such as had been customary in the programs and manifestos of the Mongolian People's (Revolutionary) Party from its First Congress (Ewing 1980: 234). Thus by their silence, the delegates made it clear that the PRPIM was a practical organization, dedicated to the creation of certain political and economic forms of organization in Inner Mongolia, but that it did not offer any authoritative explanation of *why*, for example, the nobility was corrupt, or *why* imperialists were encroaching on Inner Mongolia; members had only to believe it was so, whatever their private reasons might be. Thus it is no surprise that the party saw itself as an inclusive organization, bringing in any one who believed in the party program, rather than an exclusive Leninist vanguard.

In practice, the party placed the greatest importance on establishing its own armed force. To get the aid of Feng Yuxiang, the leaders agreed to put their force under the command of the Guominjun, alongside two units of Chinese from Inner Mongolia, which would be controlled by the Communists through a front organization (Nozu 1986: 147–148). They also pledged to participate in Feng's offensive against Zhang Zuolin, for which they would have to wait until November 22, 1925, when Zhang's lieutenant Guo Songling would, according to plan, betray his master and go over to the Guominjun. The other party leaders stayed in Zhangjiakou after the October Congress, while Buyangerel, the former Youth Party member who had fled to Khalkha in 1921 and was now on the presidium of the PRPIM, went to Ulaanbaatar to arrange a shipment of rifles. When Guo rebelled as planned, Murungga (a.k.a. Yue Jingtao, 1880/1885–c. 1940) and other Central Committee members moved to Kheshigten banner, in the westernmost part of the Juu Uda league, itself on the western limit of Zhang Zuolin's control. There, where Murungga's father was the *de facto* ruler of the banner, the party set up a military academy and, starting with the Kheshigten banner's militia, began collecting and training a military force; the force grew to about six hundred poorly armed Mongolian cavalymen in the first week or so.

The method of participation of the PRPIM in this offensive showed clearly what was to be the favored method of the party's mobilization. The party preferred to bring over as units the local military forces and only worry about their ideological level later. Fast growth in quantity took precedence over improving the quality of forces, both in terms of ability to fight and in terms of ideological commitment. Moreover, party leaders had to be assigned work not by their special expertise, but by their native areas. The Comintern agent assigned to the party, Aleksandr Ivanovich Ochirov, felt that Murungga, son of an official in Kheshigten banner and standing member of the Central Committee, was a diligent party worker, but not as good a military leader as Sainbayar (a.k.a. Bao Yueqing, 1896–1939) from Khorchin. Even so, since the attack on Zhang Zuolin was based in Kheshigten banner, Murungga had to lead the party's battalion, while Sainbayar was sent to do underground party work in Khorchin, which was occupied by Zhang's troops (Nozu 1986: 151–152).

As later proved usual for the party, initial success in the campaign was swift but lasting results few. The six hundred cavalry troops recruited in the Kheshigten base received about three hundred rifles from the Mongolian People's Republic on November 16, and after about a week of training, set out against 1,500 of Zhang's local garrison troops, who were of mixed Chinese and Mongolian origin. Within a month most of these troops had surrendered to the PRPIM's forces, or fled, and the surrendered troops along with new recruits from the local militias, brought the party's military force up to about 3,000. Also in taking three counties, Jingpeng, Linxi, and Wudan, they had seized seven artillery pieces. Social measures were limited to the torture and execution of several Chinese officials who had been involved in land colonization projects sponsored by the government (Nozu 1986: 148–149; Odkhonbilig 1981: 346–349).

These successes, however, left no permanent mark. Only twenty party members had been assigned to officer the brigade and Ochirov noted in his report: "Political work is very weak, the reason being that there is no organization of political workers. Printed material is extremely rare. The party central committee should urgently send some pamphlets" (Nozu 1986: 150). When Zhang Zuolin defeated Guo Songling and Feng's army retreated first to Beijing and then to Nankou, the force built up in Inner Mongolia disintegrated as fast as it came together. By January 1926, the PRPIM brigade headquarters had retreated west from Kheshigten to Dolonna'ur; of the forty students who had been enrolled in the party's military academy, only four showed up in the new location (Nozu 1986: 129). Since the party had relied almost totally on military success, military failure meant it left no underground organization or ideological influence whatsoever. By August the party had followed the Guominjun's retreat to Baotou, the largest city in Western Inner Mongolia. Here, just north of Ordos, the party began anew the process of building a local base that could be the nucleus of a government. The failure in East Mongolia weakened the influence of the Nationalist faction and strengthened that of the Communists, but most importantly the decision to make Ordos the new center of activity meant that Wangdannima, Öljeijirgal, and the duguilang leaders would begin to play a major role.

### The PRPIM and the Ordos Duguilang Movement

Organizing the duguilang movement had begun shortly after the debacle in East Mongolia. Öljeijirgal and Wangdannima had been sent back to Ordos to begin organization early in 1926, and in February 1926, Öljeijirgal had organized seven party cells (*e'ür*, literally "nests") at a grand meeting of 2,000 duguilang members at Gala'utu Temple. But as the representatives of these cells met again at the temple in March to elect a banner party committee, the grand duke of Üüshin, Tegüs-Amugulang, sent another duguilang army, that he had co-opted, to arrest them. Öljeijirgal escaped back to Baotou, and he and Wangdannima asked duguilang organizations that they had connections with to send young men to be trained in Baotou (Buyan et al. 1982: 275–282; Altan–Orgil 1989: 533–534). That summer, as the Central Committee arrived at Baotou as well, the People's Revolutionary Army of Inner Mongolia (PRAIM) was officially established; as Ordos was Wangdannima's territory, he became the commander-in-chief.

In late August 1926, although Wangdannima had died in the meantime, the army was strong enough to march out and bully the recalcitrant banner chiefs into allowing the PRPIM to freely arm and organize. A fair number of those trained in Kheshigten had eventually made their way west to Baotou, where they were combined with the recruits from Ordos. Receiving a new batch of several hundred repeating rifles and even a few machine-guns from the Mongolian People's Republic, as well as training from experienced Red Army and Guominjun officers, the new force, small though it was, represented a qualitative leap in military strength in the largely disarmed Ordos region. Aside from the Ordos forces, East Mongols who had studied in Ulaanbaatar or at the academy in Kheshigten accompanied the expedition as a twenty-five man political department; this presumably aided discipline and political awareness, although its results seem to have been mixed. In Üüshin, Otog, and Khanggin banners previously stubborn nobles became suddenly pliable as a far larger and better equipped army than any banner head had ever commanded marched through their territories. In Üüshin, Sainbayar, the CEC's special representative brokered a trilateral agreement between the PRPIM party center, the duguilangs (represented by Öljeijirgal) and Grand Duke Tegüs-Amugulang.

The eventual organization in Ordos bore a close resemblance to the old duguilang organizations. The larger banners were divided into regions each controlled by one duguilang militia. The duguilangs thus seem to have been groups of interested locals who assembled and volunteered to perform military and political tasks that, it was felt, the banner government was not performing. In Üüshin, twelve duguilangs ruled the banner until 1921, when the then new grand duke, Tegüs-Amugulang, crushed the movement and imprisoned Öljeijirgal with the aid of troops of a county commander in nearby Shaanxi province. In Otog, eight duguilangs had appeared by 1905, and disputes between them eventually caused the intervention of the league government (Liu 1984: 167–168; Buyan et al. 1982: 257–260). In Üüshin, however, the duguilangs had elected representatives to assemble at Gala'utu Temple as a *Gonghui* (Mong. *olan-u jöblel*, although Mongolian documents often use the Chinese term as well), or “public council” that decided major issues (Altan-Orgil 1989: 538–539).

When the duguilangs were revived by the party, the latter's organization by cells fell into this same pattern. The original seven cells were expanded to seventeen, and the Public Council was in name revived in the form of trilateral conferences between the old banner officials, the party representatives from each cell, and the army. The resolutions of these conferences, though, were addressed directly to the party cells. The party cells, thus, were not the hidden backbone of other public organizations; rather, they were the basic organs of administration, a group of interested supporters of the new regime who shouldered administrative tasks on its behalf in a given region. Thus, the cells were assigned specific numbers of students to supply to the new schools, specific numbers of trees to plant in sandy areas, and contributions to the military (Altan-Orgil 1989: 528–531). In a telling mistake, one party document stated that after Öljeijirgal's assassination, the party cells were increased from twelve to nineteen (Altan-Orgil 1989: 540), when actually, as elsewhere stated, the number at Öljeijirgal's death was seventeen (Altan-Orgil 1989: 535); clearly the author had confused the seventeen party cells with the old twelve duguilangs of Üüshin.

Real power in Üüshin lay more in the hands of the army than of the party. Öljeijirgal never held the position of chairman of the party committee which went to Tümenjirgal, or secretary general which

went to Sodnamdongrub (b. 1875); instead he was commander (*tuanzhang*) of the PRAIM's twelfth regiment (*tuan*), which was the formal name of the Üüshin army (Buyan et al. 1982: 276; Altan-Orgil 1989: 534). After one of the Üüshin soldiers, allegedly conspiring with the nearby Chinese county commander Jing Yuexiu, shot Öljeijirgal in his sleep on Lunar New Year's Day 1929, neither of the party leaders succeeded him, but Mönkghe-Öljei, the deputy commander or *tuanfu* of Öljeijirgal's Twelfth Regiment (Buyan et al. 1982: 321–322, 401). Eventually Mönkghe-Öljei elevated himself to chairman of the Public Council and promoted his deputy Kheshigdalai to commander of the army; the old party chiefs Tümenjirgal and Sodnamdongrub were replaced by Arbinbayar, a former military commander (Buyan et al. 1982: 417).

This army differed from other local forces by being much larger as well as better armed; late in 1926, the party center had provided them with more than a hundred “pearl-string” (*lianzhu*), or repeating rifles, and once having been armed they were able to capture more weapons from their enemies. Before the arrival of Öljeijirgal, the total banner army was less than thirty men. After the arrival of the PRAIM and the signing of the trilateral agreement in summer 1926, the party leaders left behind with Öljeijirgal one political commissar, Lhunrub, Wangdannima's former secretary, and Jirgal from Kheshigten banner, as the staff officer (Buyan et al. 1982: 348). These two “foreigners”, along with the volunteers who had been trained in Baotou in spring-summer 1926, constituted the core of the new army. With recruitment in Üüshin banner, this core soon expanded to more than one hundred, and later reached a peak at almost one hundred fifty (Odkhonbilig 1981: 353; Altan-Orgil 1989: 543, 549). The volunteer nature of this force marked a large difference from the regular banner armies which were filled as a state obligation on a rotating basis. The volunteer army was seen as very threatening by the old banner elite; it was thought to be more likely to intervene in political issues than a randomly picked, draft force. Thus, after old party organizations were abolished by the Suiyuan governors office in 1935, and the old institutions revived, special attention was paid to making sure the militia would not accept volunteers and that the army would not involve itself in quarrels (Altan-Orgil 1989: 552–553).

Another feature of the military organization that diverged from

orthodox practice was the recruitment of lamas; the commander of the army, Öljeijirgal, was himself a lama. Moreover, the new regulations specifically provided that those lamas who were not living in monasteries and not celibate (usually the sizeable majority in Mongolia) would be drafted as army doctors (Altan-Orgil 1989: 530). The league head demonstrated against allowing lamas to bear arms, and the new regulations issued in 1935 specifically forbade it (Altan-Orgil 1989: 522, 553).

Ideologically the party had to deal with the ambivalence of the Mongolian people to any idea or institution associated with the Republican revolution of 1911. Educated writers, especially when appealing to Chinese authorities, tried to win them over by a wealth of Confucian allusions which overtly suggested that a true Republican government would fulfill the old promise of Yao and Shun, but also implied that the writers viewed the republic as an essentially Chinese form of government. One petition from a *duguilang* group in 1921, pleads in its preface: "According to the heavenly rule of the early Yao and Shun . . . bring the situation back into harmony with the all embracing rules of the Three Bonds and the Five Constant Virtues . . ." (Serruys 1978: 14). No *duguilang* document from the Qing has such heavy Confucian imagery, not even those written five or ten years earlier. A common argument compared the convoking of a parliament to the gathering of scholars that marked a just reign; thus one Ordos poet writing around 1915 wrote:

All of them, Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, Muslim, and Tibetan  
Are clearly the five large races of this time.

The Monarchy will disintegrate and a party assembly be called  
So that a people's rule that respects the learned may be founded  
(Sainjirgal and Sharaldai 1984: 113, cf. 8).

By the same token, others attacked the system of hereditary nobility in the name of these Confucian-Republican principles:

We beg General Hsü to consider that the ruling princes of the banners not only were not educated to rule the nation, but, because of their hereditary position, unjustly oppress the loyal common people who lead an ordinary life. The ruling princes levy illegal taxes, break with virtue and ignore righteousness. They alienate the scholars, and associate with the flatterers. They forget the three principles and the five constant virtues. They think only of pleas-



ure. This does not suit present needs. It would be a good idea to abolish the hereditary ruling princes, to dismiss the uneducated and stupid ruling princes and to hold elections as do other nations in the world (Onon 1976: 158–159).

Those friendly to the hereditary principle warned that under the Republic the nobles would have to be extra careful if they hoped to keep their thrones.

In the Mongolian banners and leagues of the many outer provinces,  
The decrees of the sovereign dukes and lords are held as highest.  
Consider the revolution and the present day so hostile to this principle  
And deign to help all the Mongolian lineage (Sainjirgal and Sharaldai 1984: 114).

The people, though, held an aversion to the whole idea of a republic regardless of its Confucian or anti-Confucian message. In popular terms this aversion settled on a few concepts that aroused disgust. *Gaming*, the Mongolian pronunciation of Chinese *geming*, “revolution”, as well as its Mongolian calque translation, *boshug-i khalakhu* meaning “changing the mandate”, had become more or less synonymous with bandit, while *irgen ulus*, the approved Mongolian translation of *minguo*, or “republic” suffered from also meaning “Chinese country” (*irgen* in Mongolian meant both “subject” and “Chinese”). The idea of a republic had become associated very strongly with the idea of Chinese ethnicity; for most of the rural Mongols, this meant it was basically unacceptable.

As the Mongols, unlike the Chinese, had not cut off their queues, this also served as a symbol to focus popular feeling on the republic as foreign. In 1926, one opponent of Öljeijirgal’s duguilang regime cut off his queue to express his loyalty to the Chinese warlord Jing Yuexiu in Yulin, just south of Üüshin. On returning to the banner, the locals mocked him in song:

The five ministers, and ten colonels  
Have lived in vain it seems [i.e. the regular banner offices have  
been superseded]  
Tumi Dandar, holding fifty soldiers  
Has gone quite bald it seems

...

Even though the morals of  
 The soldiers of the Zhonghua Minguo spread,  
 Are not the six rulers and the seven banners [of Ordos]  
 All caught up in a trap?

As the unprincipled flatterers  
 Become ever more,  
 Do they not harass  
 Us righteous many folk? (Buyan et al. 1982: 327–328).

Note that the name of the Republic of China is given in Chinese (*zhonghua minguo*); this clearly expressed the perceived ethnic identity of republican institutions.

The problem for the Mongolian revolutionaries was that what they supported looked essentially like the *gamings'* own program. Even by the fall of 1921, some hot-heads in the Revolutionary (*boshug-i khalakhu*) Youth League had created a great furor by cutting off queues and banning women's head ornaments (Lhamsüren 1984: 93–94; Onon 1976: 185). These measures were hastily revoked, and the Mongolian People's Party tried to solve at least some of the semantic issues. They began to translate "revolution" as *khubiskhal*, a word which actually suggested "metamorphosis", and "republic" by *bügiide nairamdakhu ulus*, a calque translation of Chinese *gongheguo*, an alternate term for Republic. But even thus renamed, the Mongols in Ordos retained a lingering distrust of republican institutions and ideas. Further distrust focused on the anti-religious policy of the Comintern sponsors of the party. At the first Ordos party branch congress, one delegate asked: "They say that the Outer Mongols under the Communist rule have abolished religion. Is this true?" (Nozu 1986: 137). No answer to this question is recorded although the Central Committee representatives surely denied it (at the time it was not true, although by the 1930s it would be). Although the PRPIM propaganda did not make much of it, their red star and red flag symbolized republican goals: "Let us cover the whole orb of the world/ with our red republican (*bügiide nairamdakhu*) flag" ran the lyrics to one party song, sung to the tune of the "Internationale" (Edünkhesig, et al. 1981: 387). But if they avoided these touchy cultural issues, then they left the party with very little that, on a local level, distinguished it from simple *duguilang* movements.

Even those sixteen Ordos men, who went with Öljeijirgal to Ulaanbaatar in 1924, showed little interest in abstract ideological disputes. The behavior of the duguilang leaders in ideological disputes within the party's Central Committee was almost entirely passive. As the party was being torn apart by the split between the pro-Soviet and the pro-Nationalist factions, the Ordos leaders, as the representatives of the major grass-roots movement, were often called upon to give their support to one or the other line. Mōngkhe-Öljei, Öljeijirgal's leading lieutenant, Jamiyangshirab (a.k.a. Zhang Wenxian, 1897–1946), another incarnate lama and the duguilang leader of Otog banner, Rabdan (a.k.a. Qi Zijun, 1901–1932), the son of the duke of Je'üingar banner and chairman of the PRPIM's Ordos committee, and other duguilang activists first participated in an emergency conference in Feng's new headquarters, Ningxia. Serengdongrub, the leading pro-Nationalist and chairman of the Central Committee, called the conference in July 1927, largely to suspend his enemy Merse and to pass rules that would prevent the Comintern from packing the forthcoming expanded emergency conference in Ulaanbaatar, scheduled for one month later. The Ordos representatives passed the required motions and Serengdongrub demanded what he thought were his obedient tools follow him to that conference. While there, however, they were captured by the Comintern representative Amugayev, who got an almost entirely new left-wing Central Committee elected – Mōngkhe-Öljei even ended up replacing Serengdongrub as the new chairman of the Central Committee! Serengdongrub escaped to Inner Mongolia and managed to keep control of the army and organs of the party in Ningxia. The chairman Mōngkhe-Öljei, Jamiyangshirab, and the other Ordos delegates, their usefulness to the Comintern over, spent the next few months sitting in their hotel, reading the works of Marx and Lenin (Liu 1984: 169–170).

Nor did this study have any markedly positive effect on their political vigor. By winter, they requested to return home and were allowed to do so, apparently only after surrendering their new dignities as Central Committee members. They apparently travelled straight to Ningxia where Serengdongrub's East Mongolian supporters promptly threw them in jail. The duguilang leaders only escaped thanks to the intervention of their Ordos compatriot, Rabdan, who had been neutral in the Nationalist-Comintern dispute but had very good personal connections with Feng Yuxiang. Upon returning, Ja-

miyangshirab quickly re-established his position as the de facto ruler of Otog banner, but held a lasting grudge against anyone associated with the PRPIM, regardless of faction. Mōngkhe-Öljei returned to Ordos, and there is no indication that Öljeijirgal viewed his less than heroic venture into national party politics as any disqualification for local leadership; he stayed on as second in command, and after Öljeijirgal's assassination took over the leadership of Üüshin banner.

Öljeijirgal himself, who in modern Inner Mongolian sources, is always portrayed as a staunch supporter of the leftist line, saw no harm in compromising with the Nationalists. In 1928, Mandaltu (a.k.a. Li Danshan: 1892–1945), from East Mongolia and a pro-Nationalist, appeared in Üüshin with the force directly under Serengdongrub's anti-Comintern party center, informed the Üüshin army that they could no longer do whatever they wanted, but had to take orders from the Nationalists. As a token of this submission the soldiers would have to replace the five-pointed red star on their shoulders with the Nationalists' white sun on blue sky. Öljeijirgal and his duguilang supporters had no intention of following this advice, but their reasoning showed that they also had no wish to take a national, ideological stand. One, Saishingga, reacted angrily to Mandaltu's demand: "We've done more than enough work. With so many men and horses, how can we listen to him tell us we can't run our own affairs and have to submit to the Guomindang? This is impossible!" Öljeijirgal made no open resistance but privately calmed his subordinates: "We mustn't surrender to the Guomindang. Let them go their way, we'll go ours" (Buyan et al. 1982: 365–367). A 1930 letter from Üüshin summarizing the party branch's history painted the struggle as one of right versus left, but this very document was written in an effort to persuade the left-wing Central Committee in Ulaanbaatar to give aid (Altan-Orgil 1989: 535). At the time, the Üüshin men, angry or not, viewed the demand to take on the Nationalist colors not as an ideological abomination, but as a threat to their local autonomy. Eventually Öljeijirgal proposed a compromise; those who wished to change their shoulder ornaments could, those who didn't need not change them. As for himself, he said, he had always worn a Mongolian robe with no emblems at all, so there was no point in putting one on now. The red star and the white sun co-existed nervously in Üüshin, until Mandaltu's army received orders from Serengdongrub to bring Öljeijirgal back to Ningxia by any means possible. In the attempt to

carry this out, the two armies clashed, and the pro-KMT army fled back to Ningxia in defeat.

The main cultural issue on which the revolutionaries had to prevaricate in the face of overwhelming opposition was religion. As we have seen above, the association with the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic made many Mongols instinctively suspect an anti-religious bias in the party. The CEC, dominated by Nationalist East Mongols, adopted a policy by which "both the yellow (clerical) and black (lay) feudalists" (*khara shira ilgal ügei*) could join, if they sincerely supported the aims of the party. In their popular propaganda, the party not only did not criticize Buddhism, but actively advocated it. Party songs followed the call to raise the red flag, with a parallel one to raise the yellow flag (Edükheshig, et al. 1981: 384). One song issued by the CEC even suggested that it was this people's party which would finally bring the Daur and Solon Ewenkis into the faith. Many Mongols viewed these groups as not quite Mongolian, because they had never adopted Buddhism. The party could establish the intra-Mongolian unity necessary to victory by bringing them into the church (Edükheshig, et al. 1981: 384–385; Jagchid and Hyer 1979: 141–142). After the break-up of the party, Merse, himself a Daur, and probably not a believer, felt that as the unity of Khalkha had come from the common devotion to the Jibdzündamba Khutugtu, so Inner Mongolian leaders could use the Panchen Lama as a focus of Inner Mongolian unity (Taobuxin 1984: 7–8).

In this context, it may not seem strange that Öljeijirgal's marching song began with the following two stanzas:

Let us raise the red flag high  
 And make the great nation flourish.  
 Let us reduce to ashes  
 The rebellious thieving enemy.

Let us raise the yellow flag high  
 And make the church's strength flourish  
 Lay (*khara*) and clerical (*shira*) together,  
 Let us crush the anarchic enemy (Altan-Orgil 1989: 516–517).

In fact, this song had been first composed in 1921 during the Outer Mongolian revolution, where gaining the support of the clergy, especially of the Jibdzündamba Khutugtu, was crucial. Such sentiments,

though, meant one thing when expressed by East Mongols or Dairs, whose intellectual leadership was raised in a climate of academic anti-clericalism, and quite another when being propounded by Ordos leaders who were themselves lamas. For them this was by no means a pose adopted to calm the suspicious herdsmen, but a sincere belief.

Moreover, the evolution of the duguilang movement previous to the coming of the PRPIM had revealed a particularly sharp tension, not between the nobles and the high lamas on the one hand (“the black and yellow feudalists” in the contemporary leftish jargon) and the people on the other, but between the nobles and the high lamas themselves. The Comintern representative, Ochirov, viewed this conflict as the consequence of land colonization from 1900 on: Chinese colonization made the nobles wealthy because many of them continued to hold bottom soil rights, upon which they collected rents, but impoverished the monks, because the monastic treasuries were mostly held as herds, which colonization hurt. Moreover, as the Mongols were driven out, the lamas lost the income that they used to get from performing services for the local population (Nozu 1986: 135). This analysis may be to some extent correct, although even in areas and times when colonization was not an issue, disputes between ruling nobles and lamas often broke out over other matters. In Khanggin banner, for example, the grand duke Altan-Ochir had been selected as an incarnate lama in his youth. His father had demanded that this his only son be allowed to grow up outside the monastery and succeed him as prince. When the young incarnate grand duke reached the throne, he delighted in wearing clerical robes and performing Buddhist services. Eventually, he had a great temple built near his residence and forced the lamas of the banner to perform services there in rotation, under his direction. In 1921, the lamas of Shira Juu revolted and, led by the monks, appealed to the League head, who rendered the following decision to the grand duke: “Not only may you continue as ruler of the banner, you may control Beile-yin Juu [the new temple] all by yourself, but you may not interfere in any other temple’s affairs” (Buyan, et al. 1982: 261–266). Other examples of rulers defeated in their attempts to centralize religious power in their own hands can be found in Khalkha (see Onon 1976: 5–7); the theocratic government of Outer Mongolia fell largely because of the nobility’s resentment against clerical control.

In this situation of polarization, the party center in Baotou usually

ended up as a captive of local interests, supplying weapons to, and dispatching its central army for the support of whichever local element it saw as most sympathetic. Calling to raise the yellow flag high amounted to standing on the clergy's side in issues which, while entirely peripheral to the party's stated concerns, were very important to the politically active segment of the Ordos people. In Khanggin banner mentioned above, the duguilang movement of monks remained in existence after its victory and in 1926 allied with the PRPIM. Thus the PRPIM organization in Khanggin ended up largely restricted to Shira Juu monastery. The grand duke Altan-Ochir temporized, but in the meanwhile a lay duguilang movement had sprung up over the banner government's imposition of a new fee on the collection of salt from one of the banner's salt lakes, and the grand duke's refusal to consult with the local officials. Seeing an opportunity, Altan-Ochir revoked the new fee, promised to be less autocratic in the future, and designated the lay duguilang group as a "peace preservation militia" (*baoweituan*). Although this lay duguilang movement had made contact with the monastic duguilang and the IMPRP, in the end it backed the grand duke and in spring 1927, he used its militia to arrest the lamas and crush the PRPIM cells in his banner (Buyan et al. 1982: 299–312).

In Je'ingar banner, however, the party ended up in opposition to the clerical power. Rabdan, one of the younger sons of the ruling duke, had joined Feng Yuxiang's army in 1924, studied in Ulaanbaatar, and attended the first congress of the PRPIM. When he returned to his banner in summer 1926, he immediately began to implement modernizing reforms by decree. The rights of the hereditary gentry (*taiji*) were abolished; the bottom soil rights of the banner government over the Chinese peasants, along with the rights of the banner government to rent further land, were abolished. Most shockingly though, he established secular schools, burned the sutras he had studied in school to illustrate the impotence of blind faith, and cut off the Mongols' queues. The latter measure especially enraged the banner subjects who complained: "If you cut off our queues, we'll be the most ugly, ridiculous things, neither male nor female, neither clerical nor lay" (Buyan et al. 1982: 294–295). Rabdan's father, who feared that new schools were just a way station on the route to abolition of hereditary privilege, steered him rather into an expedition to settle a territorial dispute with a neighboring Shanxi county. Unfortunately

Yan Xishan, the Shanxi warlord, saw this attack as an opportunity to expand in Suiyuan at the expense of Feng's army and occupied all of Je'ingar, while Rabdan, with no support at home had, to flee to Ningxia, where Feng's new headquarters had been set up in winter 1926. As the Mongolian People's Party found in 1921, the cultural issues, whose solution formed a constant temptation to the impatient revolutionary, were also the most perilous.

On the issue of local separatism, the party center did try to impose its own view on the local populations. Songs issued from the party center stressed unity of all the Mongols above all. "Strengthening connections between leagues and banners" was a constant theme, and "The Song of All Inner Mongolia" emphasized how only the People's Party's red flag could, by making the weak Josotu strong, the backward Qinghai advanced, unite all the Inner Mongols (Edünkheshig et al. 1981: 385–388). But they had much resistance to work against, a lot of it inspired by the fact that the Central Committee did not fairly represent the Mongols as a whole. Of the seven members of the standing committee, five were East Mongols, one a Daur, and the other a Bargu. Much tension arose from the condescending attitude of the East Mongols towards the Ordos herdsmen (Nozu 1986: 141). This dominance of East Mongols and especially the three Kharachin banners in Inner Mongolia-wide organizations continued into the forties (indeed it still creates resentment today) and gave rise to many stories expressing the resentment of the other Mongols. In one, a Mongol decides to commit suicide because all the best positions are occupied by Kharachins, and throws himself into a well. There he discovers another Mongol has already jumped in and laid claim to the well – he too is a Kharachin (Jagchid and Hyer 1979: 141). The political department of the force that entered Ordos in 1926 was referred to as the "Central Committee's Kharachin army" (Buyan et al 1982: 301). Thus, the party center's pleas for Mongolian unity often fell on deaf ears; they sounded too self-interested to be plausible.

The party center was aware of the tendency towards localism in the organization, but having armed the *duguilangs*, it could do nothing to control them without risking an armed clash. One report to the Central Committee in spring 1927, detailed how *Öljeijirgal* solely occupied himself with local affairs and did not pay great attention to connections with other banners, even at a time when the initially promising state of affairs in Otog, Khanggin, Jiyün Wang, and other



bordering banners was being reversed. Blinded by the love of power and ruling his banner dictatorially, he had no desire to dissipate his forces by intervening to help the revolution, the report said (Buyan et al. 1982: 354–355). In the summer of 1927, Serengdongrub invited Öljeijirgal to his emergency conference in Ningxia, but, as we have seen, Öljeijirgal sent his deputy Mönkhe-Öljei and others, rather than go himself; having returned to his banner in fall 1926, Öljeijirgal never again left Üüshin. Serengdongrub had no way to force Öljeijirgal to attend.

Even within Ordos, disputes between banners occurred frequently, and, in the prevailing land shortage stemming from Chinese colonization, centered on tracts of disputed territory, as well as refugees from one banner to the next. In 1906–1907, Wangdannima, for example, earned the hatred of the Üüshin duguilang movements for encouraging the prince of Jiyün Wang, over whom the lama had great influence, to seize a tract of disputed territory and settle it with refugees from Wangdannima's own banner, which had been hard hit by colonization (Serruys 1977: 497, 502–503). Similarly, Üüshin and Otog banner had a long standing land dispute that often heated up during times of popular agitation (Serruys 1977: 492, Serruys 1978: 2–3). Many refugees from Jasag banner crowded in Üüshin and, presumably due to the hostility of the native-born duguilang activists, eventually formed a large part of the army that the warlord Jing Yuexiu used to raid Üüshin banner (Serruys 1977: 486; Buyan et al. 1982: 338).

Although the party held several special conferences for work in Ordos and neighboring leagues, they rarely if ever dealt with specific action in the various leagues. Instead, they usually ended up as vehicles for the pursuit of one or another national program. Thus the first PRPIM sponsored conference of duguilangs in Ordos (summer, 1926) served to introduce them to the PRPIM and its policy; the second in July 1927, mostly served, as noted above, to criticize Merse and to try to prevent the Comintern from packing the Expanded Conference planned for August of that year. The last, held in March 1930, was called by the Comintern to announce its new pan-Mongolist line, that advocated not autonomy, as before, but complete independence for Inner Mongolia. Thus, the party organization never became a vehicle for the resolution of long-standing local feuds; instead, the local party branches were captured by them.

### The Decline of the Üüshin Party

Under these conditions the Üüshin party organization began to normalize its position with regard to the larger political society. Öljeijirgal began this process after his clash with the central Committee's army. Since the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army was soon after disarmed and reconstituted as part of Feng Yuxiang's Guominjun, it became somewhat anachronistic to continue calling the Üüshin army the twelfth regiment of the PRAIM. More importantly, to continue holding the flag of an organization which had once aspired to be national in scope, but which had now been dissolved, was a standing invitation for outside powers to intervene and rectify the anomalous situation.

In fall 1928, Öljeijirgal took the opportunity of a party conference to rename his army the "Army of Üüshin Banner" (Buyan et al. 1982: 376–377). Whereas national connections for a rebellious banner were highly advantageous in a time when revolution was everywhere and being materially supported with arms, they were very dangerous when the new Nationalist government was proclaiming law and order. At the same time he renamed the party "cells" as "villages" (*gaca'a*). The party described this change as going secret, but the sort of secrecy implied was different from that used in underground party work. What became secret was not the existence of the cells themselves – after all they did most of the administrative work of the banner – but that these local administrative organs were actually cells of a party that claimed national significance. Once again since the revolutionary organs already functioned much like the traditional duguilang organizations, simply renaming them did make them look, at least from a distance, like fairly unthreatening local militia.

Further normalization took place after Öljeijirgal's death. In spring 1929, Möngkhe-Öljei gave his Üüshin army a pompous Chinese title "The Pacification and Garrison Cavalry of Üüshin Banner" (*Wushen qi xunfang qibing*) and, more significantly, informed the league head of this move, thus implicitly recognizing its authority (Buyan, et al. 1982: 410–402). He also brought to an end the long standing guerilla war that had droned on between the Üüshin banner and the Chinese warlord in Yulin, Jing Yuexiu since the winter of 1926–1927. Although the Üüshin forces were generally victorious and able to keep Jing's raiding parties out of the heart of Üüshin, the

hostilities had interrupted trade between the two areas causing hardship to Mongol and Chinese border traders. Thus, with the latter acting as an intermediary, an agreement was signed that enabled the two sides to resume the mutually necessary trade.

The main obstacle to normalization, though, lay in the fact that the prince had at the beginning of the hostilities fled from house arrest to Yulin, in Shaanxi. Until Üüshin had a ruling noble, it was not a normal banner; it would still be seen as being in the hands of a rebellious illegal gang. Now with his previous supporter, the little warlord Jing, making peace, Grand Duke Tegüs-Amugulang had to travel, along with an armed escort of more than thirty men, to the head of the league, then the prince of Jasag banner, to plead his case. Mönkghe-Öljei sent a delegation of men led by the political commissar of the Üüshin army Lhunrub to persuade or compel him to return. Only the latter course proved feasible, and the revolutionaries kidnapped the prince and most of his escort, butchering the latter on the way back to the banner. Thus in fall 1929, when commissioners from the Suiyuan provincial government came to investigate, they concluded that in this banner, as in many others, the prince was not competent to rule and the best step was simply to legitimize the existing militia heads. The same policy was followed in Otog with the ex-IMPRP member the incarnate lama Jamiyangshirab; although he had broken with the PRPIM, he kept the rifles and established a twenty year rule over Otog banner. The Suiyuan provincial government had no alternative but to declare that the princes were so lazy, immoral and generally unfit to rule that they needed official assistants. It, thus, bestowed on both Jamiyangshirab and Mönkghe-Öljei the title "Assistant Director for Banner Affairs" and hereafter dealt with them instead of their figurehead princes (Buyan et al. 1982, 405–412; Liu 1984: 171–172).

The normalization of the banner was complete; the one-time revolutionaries had become simply another local militia needing to be given recognition by the provincial government. Just at this time, however, the party also revived its ties with the new left-wing Central Committee in Ulaanbaatar set up by the Comintern after the Emergency Conference of August, 1927. When Öljeijirgal was assassinated, Mönkghe-Öljei informed Ulaanbaatar of this setback, as well as the changing of cells into "villages". In fall 1929, the party center in Ulaanbaatar followed the more aggressive line of the Comintern in-

ternationally and sent secret representatives to Üüshin to explain that Inner Mongolia should now demand independence. The encroachments of the Northeast Chinese warlord, Zhang Xueliang, on Soviet rights over the Chinese Eastern Railway, provoked the Soviet Union into encouraging any form of uprising and riots against the Nanjing government (Lee 1983: 95–126). In Inner Mongolia this meant supporting immediate rebellion and secession from the “Chinese imperialists” (Odkhonbilig 1981: 379; Edünkhesig et al. 1981: 343–371). The new line did not impede the process of reintegrating Üüshin into the league and provincial framework, and as an unexpected byproduct, perhaps, Üüshin became a safer area for party work. The next and last party conference of the PRPIM held in Inner Mongolia on March 17, 1930, opened in this not openly rebellious, but in effect self-policing banner (Buyan et al. 1982: 413–416; Altan-Orgil 1989: 136–137).

The most likely reason why the Üüshin government was eager to expand relations with the Comintern simultaneously with the existing government of Suiyuan was military and economic necessity. The reintegration with the surrounding administrations had helped the economic situation, although as a letter sent in March 1930, to the Central Committee confessed, even with the bottom rent, and “grass tax” on Chinese farms and herds, and lacking any special natural resources, the revenues always fell short of expenditures (Altan-Orgil 1989: 542–543). The real shortage lay in guns, of which the four companies had no more than twelve to twenty each, down from a maximum total of one hundred forty. The letter concluded with a plea for guns and ammunition and hinted that Üüshin could serve as a base for helping the revolution along in other banners (Altan-Orgil 1989: 549–550). Thus, the desire to maintain ties with the party center, at a time when the banner leadership had already largely transformed itself into a local militia organization, seems to have stemmed from the need to obtain weapons for what was, in its area, an unusually large military establishment.

The aggressive line of the Comintern lasted for about two years. Following the utter failure of anti-Nationalist uprisings in Northeast China, of the “Li Lisan line” in southern China, and the inability of the Inner Mongolian party to foment any significant uprisings at all, the remaining PRPIM organizations in western Inner Mongolia were pushed to merge with the Chinese Communist party in Septem-

ber 1931 (Du and Wurijitu, n. d.: 208–210). Just about this time, however, the Üüshin party cells were losing touch with the Comintern. Previously, contact between Üüshin and Ulaanbaatar had been through underground Tümed Mongolian cells, which in turn connected with Üüshin via Rabdan, the Je'üingar ruler's son, who had returned to his home banner in 1928. When Rabdan was murdered in a personal quarrel in early 1932, Üüshin banner's weakening ties with the conspiratorial network of revolutionary parties were finally cut.

The final end of the Public Council government in Üüshin happened through an appropriately confused set of local and ideological factors. There seems to have been a power conflict in March 1930, which eventually ousted Sodnamdongrub from the party secretaryship, which he had held since February 1926; some sources suggest it sprang from Sodnamdongrub's disagreement with Mönkhe-Öljei's insufficiently pure revolutionary policies (Odkhonbilig 1981: 404–405). Be that as it may, Mönkhe-Öljei remained in control of Üüshin until 1935. In that year Galzangrulmawangjiljamsu, prince of Otog banner, became the head of the league, which meant that in effect Jamiyangshirab, his "Assistant Director of Banner Affairs", became the pre-eminent Mongol in Ordos. Apparently, both to settle to his satisfaction Otog banner's long-standing territorial conflict with Üüshin and to satisfy his own hatred of the PRPIM, Jamiyangshirab had Prince Ga (as his name was abbreviated) petition Suiyuan province for an investigation of the irregularities in Üüshin banner. This time there was to be no escape for the Public Council government; the ensuing report connected the whole organization – villages, council, and militia – to the "Red Party", abolished them all, revived all the old powers of the prince, and after sending Mönkhe-Öljei to worship at Chinggis Khan's bier in Jasag banner, stripped him of all his posts (Buyan et al. 1982: 418–421). He along with two old company heads moved to Khanggin banner; when the company heads returned to their hometowns, they escaped detection for a year but were eventually caught and executed by the agents of the Grand Duke Tegüs-Amugulang. Mönkhe-Öljei took warning and never returned home again.

Like many parties, such as the Communist Party of China or the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party in Northern Mongolia, the PRPIM began as the amalgamation of several small groups, which continued as factions within the party. Such cliquism was especially

persistent in Inner Mongolia, where it took its basis from territorial and cultural divisions within Inner Mongolia. At the same time, these regions had closer economic ties with the neighboring Chinese regions than with each other. The only common center of Inner Mongolian intellectual and political life was Beijing. Cities like Baotou or Zhangjiakou could serve only as temporary centers – lacking any major religious, educational, or governmental institutions their permanent ties were only local, with almost exclusively mercantile. Yet the same could be said of the Chinese Communist base areas during the period of the Soviet Republic (1931–1936). Here, too, the party was territorially dispersed into small cells, based in border regions which economically had closer ties with their Nationalist-controlled respective regional centers than with each other. Likewise, the cradle and long-term center of the party, Shanghai, was the enemy's stronghold as well. Why then were the cells and activists of the PRPIM eventually absorbed into local organizations they had helped to create, while the Communists were not?

It is here that the funeral of Öljeijirgal, described at the beginning of this paper, takes on a greater significance. The PRPIM was not an ideological party. Such aims as it had – destroying the warlords, driving imperialism out of Inner Mongolia, implementing autonomy and self-determination – related not to an eschatological world-view but to the creation of an unified national organization. Believing in the desirability of these policies did not result in any alienation from local society or in holding any particular position on disputes within that society. Nor did it necessarily result in any understanding or interest in world-wide events – the one published discussion by Öljeijirgal of Japanese aggression in Inner Mongolia is of breath-taking naïveté (Edünkheshig, et al. 1981: 285). The Buddhist world-view of Öljeijirgal and the party members he recruited, was, despite a year of study in Ulaanbaatar, little different from that of the more conscious and articulate members of the local Üüshin banner society he had left. For the Communists to participate in a religious ceremony, or a secret society, was an act of insincerity, putting on the guise of a member of local society, when in fact one was not. But for many of the Mongols in PRPIM, their brief training could not make them strangers to the village to which they would return, and to its world-view. They might well be willing to try to follow directives from the party center, and, indeed, in documents as late as 1930, the Üüshin

party committee was begging the Central Committee in Ulaanbaatar for some guidance. Deprived of it, they were unable on their own to follow a revolutionary policy.

The PRPIM's goals were primarily political: social and cultural revolution did not play a part. Moreover the leaders displayed a persistent opportunism that prompted them to seek alliances with local forces, a policy that led to rapid expansion of the party ranks at the cost of discipline and uniformity. But without a gap of ideology between the activists and the society in which they moved, it seems unlikely that any policy could have, in the long run, avoided this inability to keep the party and society distinct. Strikingly, where a revolutionary transformation of Mongolian society did succeed, it did so by following a great expansion in modern education that made of the gap between the traditional and the modern a chasm. In the Mongolian People's Republic, the military victory of 1921 did not produce a social revolution until the 1930s, when the secular-educated generation came of age, while the social revolution in eastern Inner Mongolia in 1945–1947 followed the great expansion of modern education that began with Japanese rule in 1931.

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