

# Socialist and Post-Socialist Mongolia

Nation, Identity, and Culture

Edited by Simon Wickhamsmith  
and Phillip P. Marzluf

First published in 2021

ISBN: 978-0-367-35057-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-35059-8 (ebk)

## 2 Khural Democracy

Imperial Transformations and the  
Making of the First Mongolian  
Constitution, 1911–1924

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and Irina Sodnomova*

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This OA chapter is funded by Universität Heidelberg, Historisches Seminar, Grabengasse 3–5, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany



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### Imperial transformations and the making of the first Mongolian constitution, 1911–1924

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#### Introduction

On November 26, 1924, the First Great Khural of Mongolia adopted the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) (*Bügd Nairamdakh Mongol Ard Ulsyn Ündsen khuuli* or *bügüde nairamdukhū mongghol arad ulus-un ündüsün khauli*), one of the earliest constitutions in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Its preamble appealed to the legitimacy of the deceased Bogd Khan but declared that from now on there would be no one-man rule and that all supreme state power would belong to the State Great Khural (*Ulsyn Ikh Khural* or *ulus-un yeke khural*) and the government elected by it (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009, 2). The word *khural* could be translated as “assembly,” “parliament,” and “congress.” The text, which in its Russian version used the word *khuraldan* (*khuraldaan*, also “assembly” or “congress”) and called the body the Great People's Khuraldan<sup>2</sup> (Vaksberg 1925, 40), made the State Great Khural similar to the Congress of Soviets in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR), as outlined in its 1918 Constitution, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), as stated in its 1924 Constitution. Between the MPR State Great Khurals and the USSR Congresses of Soviets, the Small Khural and the Central Executive Committee were vested with supreme authority. These bodies, however, were also nonpermanent, and supreme authority belonged to their presidiums of a few people, although in the MPR's case it was exercised jointly with the Cabinet (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009, 8; Rossiiskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Federativnaia Sovetskaia Respublika 1918; Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 1924; Vaksberg 1925).

Valentin Aleksandrovich Riazanovskii, a Russian law scholar who was then based in the USA, viewed the adoption of the 1924 MPR Constitution as a step in the evolution of Mongolian law and as the first document of the country's modern law (Riasanovsky 1948, 177). More recently, Christopher Atwood stressed the introduction of regular elections in the MPR as a major feature that made it different from and, arguably, more modern than the Japanese-dominated regime in Inner Mongolia, which still had to rely on princely authority. The extremely violent anti-religious and economic aspects of the Soviet version of modernity in the MPR (Atwood 2010, 390–91), however, challenge the optimistic view on the institutional developments of the MPR's first decades.

Whereas the introduction of elections may be seen as a step towards broader liberty, the 1924 MPR Constitution, which was written by the Russian jurist Petr Vasil'evich Vsesviatskii (1884–1938) and approved by a committee including the Buryads (Buryad-Mongols) Elbeg-Dorji Rinchino (1888–1938) and Tsebeen Jamtsarano (1880–1942), the Kazakh Turar Ryskulov (1894–1938), and the Khalkha Balingiin Tserendorj (1868–1928) (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2), corresponded to the nonprogressive Soviet sham and nominal constitutionalism (Medushevsky 2006). The 1924 MPR Constitution was a sham constitution, just like its 1918 or 1924 Soviet counterparts, because the rare and short assemblies only had sanctioning authority without time for proper deliberation and legislation. Over the 1920s and the 1930s, the regimes in the MPR and the RSFSR (USSR) also proved nominally constitutional, because it was the extraconstitutional party authorities that steered the government. The constitutions had little to no effect on the party policies and in fact may have facilitated them by providing the easily steerable small, ostensibly representative bodies. In this respect, *khural* “democracy” can be seen as a vernacular version of Soviet “democracy,” in which neither *khural* nor *soviets* (councils) had any significant authority.

While few would disagree that the MPR was a Soviet satellite state, or perhaps even a “prototype” for modern satellite states (Lattimore 1956, 39), the predominance of socialist ideology and the inclusion of Mongolia into the informal Soviet empire (with the USSR being the formal one) was certainly not the only possible scenario envisioned by indigenous Mongolian and Soviet politicians before and during the adoption of the 1924 Constitution. This chapter suggests analyzing its



*Figure 2.1* Delegates and guests of the First Great Khural, Niislel Khüree (Ulaanbaatar), November 1924.

Source: Genkin and Ryskulov (1925, iv, 8).



*Figure 2.2* Delegates and guests of the First Great Khural, Niislel Khüree (Ulaanbaatar), November 1924, close-up. Left to right: Bazar Baradiin, Mikhei Erbanov, Turar Ryskulov, Elbeg-Dorji Rinchino, Balingiin Tserendorj, Agvan Dorjiev.

Source: Genkin and Ryskulov (1925, iv, 8).

genesis within the context of the global imperial crisis of the 1900s and 1910s and, more specifically, of the Russian/Soviet and Qing/Chinese imperial transformations. Such an approach makes the analysis different from the nation-centric narratives of Mongolian, Chinese, and Russian histories by going beyond the discussion of external influences and foreign policy of disjointed countries (Baabar 2005; Kotkin and Elleman 2015; Rupen 1964). Instead, it stresses the role of the entangled historical phenomena, the intersections of the imperial and postimperial regimes, and the heterogeneity of Mongolian and Soviet political discourses.

In the 1900s and 1910s, both the Russian/Soviet and Qing/Chinese imperial polities – consisting of overlapping composite social spaces (Gerasimov et al. 2009) – underwent imperial revolutions, in which previously marginalized groups sought to reshape the existing power asymmetries. In both cases, the attempted reconfiguration of the imperial spaces through parliamentarism, featuring ethno-national representation, failed. At the same time, the polities coming out of the transformations – the USSR and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) – institutionalized minority nations through autonomy, but just like in the case of constitutionalism, federalism (in the Soviet case) and autonomism (in both cases) proved sham and nominal (Bandeira 2020; Brophy 2012; Gerasimov 2017; Heberer 1989, 17; Sablin and Semyonov 2018; Semyonov 2009). Some Mongolic-speaking groups remained part of the two transformed imperial polities, but the MPR’s formally independent status, affirmed by the 1924 Constitution, was recognized by both the USSR and the PRC in the 1940s, which certainly made the document influential in the long-term perspective despite its sham and nominal aspects, especially since there were plans to include Outer Mongolia into either the USSR or a possible Chinese federation (Luzianin 2003, 155–56).

If discussed from the standpoint of the imperial transformations, paying attention to both the larger changes in the former Russian and Qing empires and the

localized agency in Mongolia, the 1924 MPR Constitution was a transimperial document. It was a product of the Russian and Qing imperial transformations, which were manifested in the agency of both indigenous and external actors, in the intersections between languages and discourses, and in the institutional entanglements. Yet the role of the Russian imperial transformation proved more significant. Mongolia became entangled in the Russian imperial revolution through Buryad agency, imperial policies, and the introduction of governmental institutions from the Russian context, although under Mongolian names. The MPR, as constituted in 1924, proved a product of the Soviet imperialism of “free nations” and one of the earliest building blocks in the informal Soviet empire that did not claim formal sovereignty over its dependencies but demanded structural adjustments, similar to the informal Japanese and American empires of the twentieth century (Duara 2007). Although the concept of *khural* was brought into modern political discourse by indigenous politicians, the 1924 Constitution made it into a major element of the Soviet structure in the making.

At the same time, *khural* as a Soviet-like congress was not an external institution for the Buryad makers of the 1924 Constitution. Congresses, accompanied by permanent *de jure* executive but *de facto* omnipotent committees, can be traced to the Russian *zemstvo* (“local” or “rural”) self-government that featured short assemblies (*sobranie*) once a year and standing executive administrations (*uprava*) (Emmons and Vucinich 1982). Congresses that assembled for religious, national, and professional self-government and the committees they elected, including the congresses of soviets of workers’, soldiers’, and peasants’ deputies and the executive committees, became the prime form of political self-organization during the Russian Revolution of 1917. A version of such institutions, the All-Buryad Congresses and the standing Buryad-Mongol National Committee (Burnatskom), was the government of the Buryad-Mongol Autonomy (1917–1919), while Rinchino and Jamtsarano rose to political prominence as chairmen of the Burnatskom. Even though Jamtsarano offered an alternative constitution draft, which would make *khural* a more potent parliament, the congress-like institution, introduced by the 1924 Constitution, was certainly not new to his political experience, and the standing committee can be seen as an analogy to the Burnatskom. *Khural* as a politically powerless institution was also not new to the Mongolian context, since in 1914–1919 there was the bicameral State Khural, an appointed consultative assembly, in the Outer Mongolian Autonomy (1911/1915–1919).

In the following, the chapter discusses the concept of *khural*, the history of assemblies in the Mongolic-speaking contexts at the time of the imperial transformations, and the development of the Mongolian constitution (as a concept rather than the 1924 text) with special attention to actors, discourses, and institutions. The main sources include the published and unpublished documents pertaining to Mongolian political history, such as the draft and alternative versions of the 1924 Constitution, legal acts of the Bogd Khan’s government, international treaties, the minutes of the First Great Khural of Mongolia, and supplementary documents. The chapter also benefits from extensive research literature in Mongolian, Russian, and English.

## **Discursive and historical contexts**

Diverse Mongolic-speaking populations had been incorporated into the Romanov and Qing empires over the seventeenth century, with the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) formally establishing the international boundary between the two empires in Inner Asia.<sup>3</sup> The Oirads (Kalmyks) and Buryad-Mongols became the largest Mongolic-speaking groups in the Russian Empire, while Khalkhas, Barguts, Khorchins, Chakhars, and other groups remained part of Mongolia and other divisions of the Qing Empire. Although the different Mongolic-speaking groups were integrated into the two different imperial governance structures, they retained considerable degrees of self-government in administrative, economic, and religious terms. The interactions between different Mongolic-speaking groups continued until the twentieth century, despite the distances between them and their belonging to different imperial formations, and were stimulated by the spread of Tibetan Buddhism, predominantly of the Gelug Tradition, across most of them.

The Qing administration established the division of Mongolia into the Outer and Inner parts. In the 1630s, the Qing established the separate Mongolian banners (*appanages*), and in 1691 further banners were established for the Khalkhas. The banners consolidated the boundaries between the Mongolian and Han Chinese populations, as the populations were not allowed to leave them. Already by the early eighteenth century, however, Han Chinese settlement began in Inner Mongolia, gradually accelerating over the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Like Tibet and Xinjiang, Inner and Outer Mongolia were administered by the Lifan Yuan and governed by *ambans* (viceroys). The Mongolian nobility became integrated in the Qing structures. Outer Mongolia, however, retained broader administrative autonomy compared to Inner Mongolia and Hulunbuir (Barga), which belonged to Manchuria in administrative terms. Furthermore, Outer Mongolia had considerable religious autonomy from both Beijing and Lhasa, with the recognition of the *Jebsundamba Khutuktu* reincarnates as spiritual leaders of the Khalkhas since the seventeenth century. During the New Policies (1901–1912), the Qing government started full-scale Han Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia, which contributed to the rise of insurgencies there (Atwood 2004, 30–32, 93–94, 267).

In the Russian Empire, the Buryads in the Baikal region and the Kalmyks in European Russia were divided by thousands of kilometers and belonged to different administrative divisions (also in religious terms). Western and Eastern Buryads were further divided in administrative terms between the Irkutsk and Transbaikalian provinces, and, since 1822, subdivided into self-governing units of the *Steppe Dumas* (councils). Although the imperial government had recognized the elected *Pandito Khambo Lamas* as the leaders of the Eastern Siberian Buddhists since the 1760s, official regulations limited the spread of Buddhism to the west of Baikal and within Transbaikalia. At the same time, the regulations consolidated the religious autonomy of Buryad Buddhism under the non-reincarnate *Khambo Lamas* independent from Lhasa. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian government engaged in Russification and Christianization



efforts and, since the late nineteenth century, started mass peasant settlement of Siberia, including the Baikal region. In the 1890s and 1900s, the Steppe Duma self-government was abolished, while the new land regulations, adopted during the same period, pushed the Buryads into a marginalized position, with their lands being seized for settlement (Sablin 2016, 23–4, 49).

The contextualized development of different Mongolian languages and dialects under the different imperial regimes and in distant parts of Eurasia contributed to the diversification of terminology pertaining to assemblies. The word *khural* has been used as a general term for gatherings and appeared in the earliest extant texts, such as the *Secret History of Mongols* (Rachewiltz 1972, 300), and continued to be used for religious ceremonies as well (Sneath and Kaplonski 2010, 1:676). Other terms such as *chuulgan*, *tsuglaan*, *tsuglaar*, *zövlöl*, *zövlögöön*, *eye*, *khuiiv*, *duguilan*, *sugundui*, *khuraldaan*, *khuraldai*, *khurilta*, *düme*, and *sanal* also appeared in written documents. The word *chuulgan* had been used in the Great (Oirad-Mongol) Codex of 1640 (Munkh-Erdene 2010) and then throughout Qing and Russian imperial contexts up to the early twentieth century. The word *khuraldaan* was used in the 1727 Treaty of Kyakhta, which consolidated the Russian–Qing boundary and provided more detailed transboundary regulations (Amarsanaa et al. 2010, 207). In the Eastern Buryad context, along with *suglaan* (used across Siberia), another Mongolic word was used in the Steppe Duma context, namely *shuulgan* < \**cighulghan* (“assembly,” “forum,” or “sejm”).<sup>4</sup> The word *düme* was also used for the Steppe Dumas (Badagarov 2017, 8).

In the late nineteenth century, the Russian and Qing imperial contexts became increasingly entangled. This owed to the reorientation of Russia’s expansion to Central, Inner, and East Asia after its defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856). The expansion into the Qing territory became especially intense immediately after the war, culminating in the annexation of Outer Manchuria during the Amur Acquisition of 1858–1860, and then again with the railway construction and the Manchurian concessions in the late nineteenth century. Russian expansion in Mongolia was not as extensive as that in Manchuria. The Russian Consulate in Khüree (Ikh Khüree, Niislel Khüree, Urga, Ulaanbaatar since 1924) and a postal network, used by Russian merchants, were established in the 1860s. In the 1890s, however, the expansion effort intensified, with the first ideas of incorporating Mongolia into Russia being voiced at the court by the Buryad Petr Aleksandrovich Badmaev. About the same time, the Russian government also established relations with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama through the Buryad monk Agvan Dorjiev. The ideas of economic expansion and the utilization of religious connections were accompanied by the increasing research of Mongolia by the imperial scholars, who at the turn of the twentieth century started working with several Buryad informants and recent graduates of Russian universities. Jamtsarano and other Buryad scholars conducted extensive fieldwork and taught Mongolian language, contributing to Mongolia becoming a major focus of the imperial Asian Studies (Andreev 2004; Sablin 2016, 56–8; Tolz 2011).

The abolition of the Steppe Dumas, Russification, Christianization, and Russian settler colonialism contributed to Buryad political activism during the First

Russian Revolution (1905–1907). Buryad intellectuals, clan elites, and religious figures participated in congresses, sent deputations, and submitted petitions to the imperial authorities. Jamtsarano was among those who petitioned for religious freedom and education in Buryad. Although no indigenous self-government was reestablished, the petitions bore some fruit, such as broader religious freedom in the Russian Empire since 1905 and the inclusion of a representative of the indigenous peoples of Transbaikalia into the second convocation of the new Russian parliament (the State Duma) in 1907 (Kuras 2011; Montgomery 2011). Some Buryads went beyond petitions. According to Rinchino, he participated in illegal activities of the Social Democrats under Boris Zakharovich Shumiatskii (1886–1938) (Rinchino 1994, 10).

The Buryad representation in the Second State Duma proved brief, as it was dissolved in 1907. Yet it contributed to the integration of Buryad intellectuals into the wider imperial debates. Similar to many other minority politicians, Bato-Dalai Ochirov, the Buryad deputy, joined the liberal opposition of the Constitutional Democratic Party. The representatives of the imperial peripheries who assembled in the First and Second State Duma discussed their similar grievances, revolving around Russification and underrepresentation in governance, and many of them agreed that the asymmetric empire had to be reorganized into a federation or include national and regional autonomies. Even though the restrictive election law of 1907 eliminated special representation for the Transbaikalia's indigenous population, Buryad intellectuals continued to be part of the debates on decentralization. The State Duma deputies and other regional intellectuals from Siberia held discussions in the Siberian caucus and Siberian Regionalist publications, with Jamtsarano and Mikhail Nikolaevich Bogdanov (1878–1919), a Western Buryad, polemicizing on the future of Buryad self-organization. Jamtsarano welcomed many Western ideas, such as socialism, but suggested relying on indigenous culture (language and religion), while Bogdanov supported complete Westernization. Jamtsarano, Dorjiev, and Ochirov also advocated Buddhist reformism, while the former two also launched a Buryad-Mongol publishing house in Saint Petersburg in 1910. Furthermore, a Buddhist temple opened in the imperial capital in 1915, thanks to Dorjiev's effort (Andreev 2004; Bazarov 2011, 3:17–22; Sablin and Semyonov 2018).

The First Russian Revolution was partly triggered by the failure of the Manchurian expansion, the defeat in the Russo–Japanese War (1904–1905). The revolution itself was closely observed in the Qing Empire. The Qing government started its own modernization reforms in the New Policies, following its failure in the war with Japan (1894–1895) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901). The New Policies featured the establishment of the Consultative Assembly in 1907 and the adoption of the Constitutional Outline in 1908 (Bandeira 2017; Kurzman 2008).

The New Policies also affected the imperial borderlands. Inner Mongolia and Manchuria were opened to Han Chinese colonization in 1902 and 1906, respectively. Despite the small scale of Russian activities in Outer Mongolia, the Qing authorities viewed them as threatening and called for turning the empire's peripheries into “shields” against foreign expansion. Furthermore, colonization was also



supposed to mitigate the overpopulation of some of the inner provinces. Both the empire's defense and the overpopulation in parts of the European Russia were used in the Russian justification of settler colonialism in Asia. Just as the Russian elites favored Russification, the Qing authorities stressed the need for Sinicization of the Mongols in order to consolidate the empire through cultural unity. Although the settler colonization of Outer Mongolia proceeded very slowly, the reforms, funded by the regional population, began there in 1907, and the military presence increased significantly. The Qing reform plans agitated the Khalkha princes, who petitioned Beijing against colonization in 1907. In 1910, regional elites appealed to the ambans in Khüree and Uliastai against the increased taxation. The violent conduct of the Chinese troops aggravated the situation, and some members of the elites became proponents of independence (Atwood 2004, 303; Morrison 2017; Sneath and Kaplonski 2010, 1:841–44; Tatsuo 1999, 70; Tsukase 2017).

### **The entangled imperial transformations, 1911–1919**

The Russian and Qing empires did not survive the global imperial crisis of the 1900s–1910s, with Mongolic-speaking elites, intellectuals, and activists engaging in the simultaneous and entangled imperial transformations. Autonomy claims and independence claims had similar causes and were rooted first and foremost in the Russian and Han Chinese settler colonialism. The Russian involvement in the Mongolian affairs made the two imperial spaces interconnected, with Buryad intellectuals becoming important actors in the Khalkha events in the early 1910s, and the revolution in Mongolia itself turning from anti-imperial (aiming at independence) into an imperial one (resulting in formal autonomy within China and practical dependency on Russia). The intermediate results of the imperial revolutions were different, bringing about a theocratic regime in Outer Mongolia in 1911–1919 and republican regimes in the Buryad-Mongol polities in 1917–1919.

In 1911, members of lay and Buddhist elites held gatherings in order to work out a response to the New Policies. The effort, headed by Prince Mijiddorjiin Khanddorj (1869–1915), Da Lama Tserenchimed (1869–1914), and Prince Tögs-Ochiryn Namnansüren (1878–1919), resulted in a Mongolian delegation to the Russian Tsar with an appeal for support. Nobles and religious figures established the Provisional Administration of Khalkha in November 1911. On December 1, 1911, after the return of the delegation from Russia and the outbreak of the Xinhai Revolution, it proclaimed Mongolia's independence from the Qing Dynasty. On December 29, 1911, the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu was enthroned as the new Holy Emperor (Bogd Khan). Makoto Tachibana (2014) demonstrated that the declaration of independence was not supported by all Mongolian nobles. The new government of the Republic of China proclaimed the slogan of the “Five Races under One Union,” envisioning representation of the non-Han Chinese population in the new government, but Mongolia and Tibet continued along the independence path, recognizing each other in 1913. The Russian government recognized the “autonomous order” of whole Mongolia in the Russian text of the 1912 Russian–Mongolian Agreement and promised to help against Chinese troops’

deployment or colonization. As noted by Sergei Kuz'min, the Mongolian version of the 1912 Agreement used the word meaning “independence,” which was also used in the 1913 Mongolian–Tibetan Treaty, while the Russian text intentionally avoided such phrasing. In 1912–1913, rebellions broke out in Inner Mongolia in coordination with the Bogd Khan’s government, but they were suppressed. Furthermore, in 1912–1913, several gatherings of Inner Mongolian nobles supported the Republic of China and disapproved of the 1912 Russian–Mongolian Treaty. Although their decisions may have been forced by the Chinese, Russian diplomats noted in 1912 that the Da Lama and Namnansüren supposedly hesitated about Russian support and were open to reestablishing relations with China. This means that there was no single image of the Mongolian future even at the very top level of the elites. The political community of the Mongols could be institutionalized not only through independence but also through the reconfiguration of existing imperial relations (with Beijing) or even the establishment of new ones (with Saint Petersburg) (“Agreement between Russia and Mongolia” n.d.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1914, 4–5, 10; see also Atwood 2004, 94, 470; Brophy 2012; Dudin 2013, 157–60; Kuz'min 2015, 83–84; Sneath and Kaplonski 2010, 1:851–52; Tachibana 2014, 72–74, 80–81; Tatsuo 1999, 71).

In late 1913, the Russian government signed a joined declaration with the Chinese government, recognizing only Outer Mongolia’s autonomy (self-government and economic autonomy) under the suzerainty of China. The 1915 Tripartite Agreement of Russia, China, and Outer Mongolia, reached in Kyakhta, reaffirmed this status, with the Chinese President officially “granting” the Bogd Khan his title. Symbolically, it was a performance of a new Chinese empire, with the one-sided bestowal of the title instead of a mutual recognition (“Russian – Chinese declaration” n.d.; “Tripartite Agreement of Russia, China, and Mongolia” n.d.).

While Mongolia’s international status was still unresolved, the Bogd Khan’s government engaged in state building. In 1912, the Bogd Khan ordered the creation of the Council of Ministers. In 1914, he established a bicameral consultative assembly – the State Khural (*ulus-un khural*) or the State Upper and Lower Khurals (*ulus-un degedü dooradu khural*). The idea, initially advocated by the Da Lama, was brought to the Bogd Khan’s attention by Namnansüren and others (Javzandulam and Delgermaa 2003, 1:17, 27). According to Bayarsaikhan Batsukh (2014, 78), the Da Lama got the idea from Henry Wheaton’s *Elements of International Law* (1855), which had been originally published in 1836 and translated into Mongolian from the 1864 Chinese translation. According to Ivan Iakovlevich Korostovets, the Russian Consul in Khüree, Mongols also used the Chinese translation of Johann Caspar Bluntschli’s *Das moderne Völkerrecht der zivilisierten Staaten, als Rechtsbuch dargestellt* (*The Modern International Law of the Civilized States, Represented as a Legal Code*) (1868). The Mongolian translation of *Elements of International Law* followed the Chinese translation. All diverse terms for parliaments, assemblies, and congresses were translated into Chinese as 会 *hui* (“meeting” or “to meet”) and, accordingly, into Mongolian as *khural* (Amarsanaa, Bayarsaikhan, and Tachibana 2006, 22–23; Svarverud 2007, 48, 88–93).

The Bogd Khan's decree on the establishment of the State Khural referred to the experience of the "powerful, rich, and cultured" states of the world, which had general assemblies of representatives, and stressed the need for deliberation and taking into account different opinions when resolving challenging and important issues. According to the decree, the assembly was to help defend the Mongolians from the "foreign enemy," improve administration and economy, make peace with foreign countries, and resolve internal conflicts. The Upper Khural was supposed to discuss the most important political issues, and the Lower Khural was intended for all others. The Upper Khural was to include the highest lay and Buddhist officials from Khalkha, Hulunbuir, and parts of Inner Mongolia, which corresponded to the continued effort to unite the whole of Mongolia. The Lower Khural was to consist of bureaucrats, including representatives of the four Khalkha *aimags* ("provinces") and of the Chinese ambans, which meant that the relations with the Chinese Republic had remained unresolved (Javzandulam and Delgermaa 2003, 1:23–25).

The fact that both chambers were appointed, while all decisions were to be approved by the Bogd Khan, led Pavel Dudin to conclude that the regime remained an absolute theocratic monarchy (2013, 158). Kuz'min, however, stressed the importance of the new institution, even though the decision-making process was slow and halted reforms. The Upper Khural, chaired by Prime Minister Namnansüren until his death in 1919, and the Lower Khural resolved a broad array of different issues pertaining to defense, trade, finances, economy, education, and religion. The two chambers also discussed such crucial matters as the desires of Inner Mongolian elites to join the Mongolian state, the Tripartite Conference in Kyakhta (1914–1915), and possible Japanese assistance (Kuz'min 2017, 273–74).

The 1915 Tripartite Agreement resulted in Outer Mongolia's entanglement in two imperial formations – the Russian Empire, which apart from sending advisors gained special economic rights, and the Republic of China. This contributed to the rise of new transboundary leaders, such as Tserendorj, who became deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1913 and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1915. His participation in Prime Minister Namnansüren's mission to Saint Petersburg in 1913–1914 and in the Kyakhta Conference in 1914–1915 made him into a key Khalkha intermediary between the Bogd Khan's government and the Russian authorities (Atwood 2004, 549–50). Buryad intermediaries, who came to Khüree as advisors, teachers, workers, and participants in expeditions, also became quite influential in regional politics. Jamtsarano simultaneously was an advisor to the Russian Consul and to the Bogd Khan's government (on educational matters) in 1911. Jamtsarano's latter position and his involvement in oral and written diplomatic communication resulted in extensive cooperation with Namnansüren and Khanddorj, the Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1913 (Ulymzhiev and Tsetsegma 1999, 35–39, 50–51).

For Jamtsarano and other Buryad intellectuals, Outer Mongolia became the site of the larger Mongolian nation building. Apart from translating numerous texts into Mongolian, Jamtsarano launched the publication of the first Mongolian periodical *Shine Toli* (*New Mirror*) in 1913. Although Jamtsarano authored or

translated most of the texts in *Shine Toli* and edited a further newspaper, *Niisrel Khüreenii Sonin Bichig* (*Newspaper of the Capital*), in 1915–1917, Khalkha intellectuals, such as D. Bodoó (1895–1922), joined his publication efforts. Jamtsarano’s *Shine Toli* publications about countries of the world contained information on their political structures.<sup>5</sup> Jamtsarano’s articles on nature, society, and Buddhism in *Shine Toli* supposedly alienated the religious elites, resulting in the closure of the newspaper in 1914. Furthermore, Jamtsarano did not conceal his socialist preferences and included the works of Friedrich Engels, Ferdinand Lassalle, and other radical thinkers in the list of those due to be translated into Mongolian (Ulymzhiev and Tsetsegma 1999, 41–44).

In his *Ulus-un erke* (“Power of the State”), Jamtsarano presented a comparative study of political systems.<sup>6</sup> He paid special attention to parliaments, their structures, and elections, as well as the relations between central and local authorities in most states, dominions (such as Australia and New Zealand), and parts of states (such as Finland or the states of the German Empire) with constitutions, probably using one of the two available collections in Russian (Gessen and Nol’de 1905, 1907; *Collected Constitutional Acts* 1905–1906). Jamtsarano used the word *khural* for parliaments. He interpreted their emergence from a progressive standpoint, explaining that the authorities had to adapt to changing times and gather representatives to establish khurals “to discuss problems, benefits, interests, income and expenditure, and many other matters” of the respective countries, as well as “to make laws to foster and rule the people.” He continued, “Thus established, State Khurals proved to be beneficial in many respects, therefore making the state more powerful. [People] definitely understood that and nowadays most of sixty big and small countries have state *khurals*” (Jamtsarano 1914, 3).

Jamtsarano used different words and phrases to discuss parliamentary sessions. On one instance, he used a verbal (participial) phrase *cuglan kelelcekü* consisting of two verbs, *cuglakhu* (“to gather” or “to assemble”) and *kelelcekü* (“to discuss” or “to debate”). *Cuglakhu* can be found as a root in *cuglaghan* (“gathering,” “meeting, or “session”), formed by the suffix *-ghan* which is also found in *khuraldughan*, another word used for parliamentary sessions. *Khuraldughan* has the same root with *khural*, namely the verb *khura-* (“to gather”) and the reciprocal suffix *-ldu* (“to each other or together”). Using *cuglaghan* and *khuraldughan*, Jamtsarano meant “gathering.” Generally, the distinction between *khural* and *khuraldaan* in Jamtsarano’s text was quite straightforward: *khural* meant a parliament-like body and *khuraldaan* was used only for temporary gatherings and sessions, although *khural* technically could mean any meeting or gathering (Jamtsarano 1914, 26–28). Jamtsarano also discussed the duration of sessions in pragmatic terms:

During law making the sessions [*cughlan kelelcekü*] do not go on uninterrupted. Generally, the sessions have a break after about four, five, six, [or] seven months, and [members] go to their lands or go to take a rest to a place they like and re-assemble [*khuraldun kelelceged*] on the order. It can be observed that within one year there may be even two assemblies [or sessions]

and break-ups. If the state matters are not too many and can easily be discussed and resolved, the duration of a session [*cuglaghan*] is not long. If the state matters are important and complex, then the duration of an assembly has inevitably to be longer.

(1914, 26–27)

Together with other Buryads who were involved in Mongolian politics, Jamts-arano quickly returned to the Russian political stage when the Romanov Empire collapsed in February – March 1917. The Buryad (Mongol-Buryad) Congress, which was held in Chita on April 23–25, 1917, adopted Bogdanov's project of the autonomy of all Buryads. The stance of the Buryad activists was different from their Khalkha counterparts, as they engaged in an imperial (rather than an anti-imperial) revolution seeking to reconfigure the shared social space rather than gain sovereignty (Gerasimov 2017). Autonomy-building followed the moderate socialist and liberal mainstream of the early revolution and stressed the need to create a representative assembly – the Buryad National (State) Duma (*Buryad ulusun chuulgan* or *Buriyad ulus-un cighulghan*).<sup>7</sup> The masterminds of the 1917 autonomy, including Rinchino, disconnected from the concept of the clan-based executive Steppe Dumas and sought to establish a Buryad parliament to be named in Russian like the Russian State Duma and the projected Siberian Regional Duma, in which the Buryads were also anticipating to be represented. The universally elected Buryad National Duma was to become a modern parliament with supreme competence within the autonomy, while the institutionalization of the Buryad nation was to be finished by the convocation of the Buryad National Constituent Assembly. The adopted project was also to be approved by the anticipated All-Russian Constituent Assembly, also to be universally elected (Sablin 2016, 68–74).

Siberian Regionalism, the idea that Siberia was distinct from the rest of Russia in economic and cultural terms and needed regional autonomy, probably contributed to the use of the word *duma* when discussing the Buryad parliament in Russian. The concept of *zemstvo* self-government, which had become universally elected in the summer of 1917 yet still relied on rare assemblies and potent administrations, and the practices of the revolutionary self-government, which featured short congresses and potent committees between them, also played an important role in the building of the Buryad-Mongol Autonomy. A committee, the Burnatskom, was supposed to govern the autonomy between the sessions of the Buryad National Duma, and the April 1917 congress created the provisional Burnatskom chaired by Rinchino. The Buryad Autonomy was not recognized by regional revolutionary authorities or the Provisional Government and hence not finalized in 1917, and its governance continued to follow the congress model. In October 1917, the Third Buryad Congress formalized the system adopting the *Statute on the Provisional Bodies for Governing National Cultural Matters of the Buryad-Mongols and the Tunguses of the Transbaikalian Region and the Irkutsk Province*. The document, to be used until the convocation of the Buryad parliament, established another body, the National Council, in addition to the congresses

and the potent committee (Burnatskom). The National Council consisted of *aimag* (district) representatives and was gathered when a congress could not be assembled. The Statute did not offer a clear division of authority between the three bodies, but since it was the Burnatskom which had full authority between the congresses and shaped the latter's agenda, it became the *de facto* most potent body (Sablin 2016, 71, 74–75, 77–79).

Bogdanov was elected one of the two Buryad deputies to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, but the Bolshevik-led Soviet government in Petrograd, established through the coup of October 25–26, 1917, disbanded it on January 6, 1918, after just one session the day before. Over 1918, which saw the first Soviet government in the Baikal region, the Allied Intervention (dominated by the Americans and the Japanese in Transbaikalia), and the establishment of anti-Bolshevik regimes, the Burnatskom under the leadership of Bogdanov, Jamtsarano, and Rinchino managed to survive. Furthermore, it managed to get recognition of Buryad self-government (although in an outwardly “Sovietized” form) in Transbaikalia from the Soviet authorities in July 1918, shortly before their fall. The warlord regime of the Cossack Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov (1890–1946), himself half Buryad, also recognized the Buryad committee, which was renamed the People's Duma of the Buryad-Mongols of Eastern Siberia (but remained a committee reminiscent of the imperial Steppe Dumas) and headed by Dashi Sampilon (Sablin 2016, 84, 103–9, 117).

The collapse of the Russian postimperial state in the Russian Civil War brought about the proclamation of several independent states. In the context of the global imperial crisis, many national independence projects became part the so-called “Wilsonian Moment” (Manela 2007). Rinchino and some of the Buryad-Mongol politicians designed a plan of a united Mongolia state, to include Buryad-Mongolia, Outer and Inner Mongolia, and Hulunbuir. Backed by Semenov and hoping for Japanese support and protectorate, Rinchino and several other representatives of the Buryad-Mongols, Hulunbuir, and Inner Mongolian groups gathered in Chita for a constituent congress of the new state, declaring its formation on February 25, 1919. The future state, to be ruled by a president or a monarch, was designed as a federation of four constituent *aimags*, Buryad-Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, and Hulunbuir. The Inner Mongolian lama, Neise Gegeen (Nichi Toin Bogd Mendbaiar), headed the provisional government seated at the Dauria station. Jamtsarano was elected Minister of Foreign Affairs in his absence, but neither attended nor wrote to the congress. Bogdanov attended some of the meetings but did not get involved. The project, however, gained neither international nor the Bogd Khan's support, and the Dauria government considered subduing Outer Mongolia by force (Sablin 2016, 115–40).

The collapse of the Russian Empire and especially the formation of the Dauria government prompted the Khalkha elites to reconsider the status of Outer Mongolia. In August 1919, a congress of noblemen supported the decision of the Bogd Khan's government not to participate in the Dauria government. In the same month, a group of nobles appealed for Chinese protection, even though the State Khural discussed the issue of autonomy in July 1919 and resolved that Mongolia



was an independent country (see also Lonjid 2000). The August debates in the State Khural revealed that there was a faction of nobles who sought to reform the government of Mongolia, in which China was seen as an ally. One of their reasons was the overextension of the Great Shabi, the religious polity within Outer Mongolia. Chen Yi, the Chinese High Commissioner who had brought additional troops into Outer Mongolia under the pretext of the Russian Civil War, and lay Khalkha officials drafted a reform plan in the fall of 1919. It prohibited Han Chinese colonization and conversion of Mongolia into a province and put the nobility in charge under the direct control of the Chinese High Commissioner. Despite the Bogd Khan's protest, on October 28, 1919, the Chinese National Assembly approved Chen's plan. General Xu Shuzheng, who arrived with more troops, however, rejected Chen's moderate approach. Xu advocated colonization and modernization of Outer Mongolia, dismissing its autonomy. In November 1919, the Upper Khural supported the revocation of autonomy but the Lower Khural rejected it. On November 17, after Xu's threats to arrest the Bogd Khan, Tserendorj and other members of his government signed the petition to revoke autonomy. Although the Bogd Khan refused to sign the petition, it was sent to Beijing where the Chinese President approved it and annulled the 1915 Kyakhta Agreement. On December 1, 1919, Xu officially became the supreme authority in Mongolia (Atwood 2004, 470, 550; Kuz'min 2017, 210–15).

### **The soviet new imperialism, 1920–1921**

Both Buryad and Khalkha actors attempted to use the Bolshevik expansionism, their attempts to ensure control over the former Russian Empire and export the revolution to Asia, for the benefit of the Mongolic-speaking groups. Indeed, the cooperation of Rinchino in establishing communication with the Khalkhas contributed to the Bolshevik decision to establish Buryad-Mongol and Kalmyk autonomies, while Dorjiev contributed to their more benevolent stance on Buddhism. The cooperation of S. Danzan (1885–1924), Bodoo, and other Khalkha intellectuals and activists with the Bolsheviks helped them establish a new regime in Outer Mongolia, cut its dependency on China, and engage in a program of modernization. Given that the Bolshevik leadership paid little attention to Outer Mongolia before, it was the indigenous actors who gave the nascent Soviet imperial project its geographic focus and provided it with concrete meanings. The Mongolic-speaking populations of the former Russian and Qing Empires were treated as a single political community, and this community was the first successfully “liberated” nation (or a group of three Mongolic nations) in the context of socialist decolonization.

In late 1919, after the failure of the Dauria project, Rinchino suggested that Soviet Russia ought to continue the policy of the Tsarist government in Mongolia. In the spring of 1920, he reformulated his ideas, promoting the idea of exporting the revolution to Asia through the linguistically and culturally kindred trans-boundary groups (Sablin 2019). In the meantime, those Khalkhas who opposed the revocation of autonomy merged into the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) under

the leadership of Bodoov and Danzan in 1920. In the summer of 1920, the new organization put together a delegation to Soviet Russia, which apart from Bodoov and Danzan, included Kh. Choibalsan (1895–1952), D. Sükhbaatar (1893–1923), and other activists. Rinchino and Shumiatskii, then one of the leaders of the nascent Far Eastern Republic (FER), met the delegation in Transbaikalia. Rinchino accompanied the delegation to Irkutsk and, after it split due to disagreements, the remaining negotiators to Omsk and Moscow (Sablin 2016, 158).

The Irkutsk talks in August 1920 focused on the status of Mongolia and discussed its future constitution. The members of the delegation declared that the MPP desired to establish contact with the revolutionary groups in China and requested funding from the Bolsheviks. The delegation claimed that the party sought to destroy “the feudal-theocratic order in Mongolia” and to establish “a democratic regime” and hoped that the Bolsheviks would help to work out a constitution. The delegation declared that the autonomy did not correspond to the desires of the Mongolian people, suggesting that Mongolia ought to have independent foreign policy and deny the Chinese any extraterritorial rights, which was to be reflected in the future constitution. Danzan expressed the MPP’s plan to unify all Mongolia (Inner, Western, Outer, and Hulunbuir) into one state. At the same time, Danzan maintained that the MPP considered such a unified state to be connected to China in the form of “federation or autonomy.” Mongolia’s possible participation in the Chinese federation deviated from the Bogd Gegeen’s letter to the Soviet government, which supported complete independence, but Danzan dismissed it as the position of the nobility. In a detailed summary of the talks, the Irkutsk Bolsheviks also stressed the desire of the MPP to proclaim Jebsundamba Khutuktu a “constitutional monarch,” eliminate the hereditary rights of the nobles, and spread European culture, but noted that the planned struggle against the nobles was not shared by all members of the delegation. The delegation was also cautious about the Soviet assistance, opting against their direct military involvement (Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:42–43, 46; Luzianin 2003, 105–6).

These divergent opinions on Mongolia’s future once again pointed to the dynamics and heterogeneity of the Mongolian political discourse in the context of the imperial transformations. Rinchino adapted his initial project of continued Russian imperialism to the Soviet slogans of World Revolution, coproducing thereby the new Soviet imperial discourse. Danzan also sought to institutionalize an internally diverse Mongolian nation, but viewed it as part of the transformed Qing – Chinese polity.

The talks continued in Moscow. On October 14, 1920, the Bolshevik Political Bureau adopted a resolution, which connected the creation of autonomies for the Buryad-Mongols and the Kalmyks to exporting the revolution to Mongolia, after Rinchino raised the issue. Rinchino also suggested to unify Buryad-Mongolia with the rest of Mongolia and, possibly, China. Iakov Davidovich Ianson (1886–1938), in charge of the Bolshevik’s regional policy, and Deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Lev Mikhailovich Karakhan (1889–1937) supported him. Ianson and Karakhan suggested giving Buryad-Mongolia the right to secede from Soviet Russia and to join Mongolia as an autonomous unit, possibly joining

the Chinese federation in the future in order to deepen the revolution in China, but the People's Commissariat of Nationalities rejected the plan. The idea of the Chinese federation, however, emerged again in the program of the MPP, adopted at its formal constituent congress in Kyakhta in early March 1921. The program, whose authors included Rinchino and Jamsarano, reaffirmed the desire of the MPP to unite all Mongolic peoples into one state. Projecting the federalist discourse of the Russian imperial revolution to China, the program pointed to the diversity of the peoples of China and suggested dividing it into several independent states – Southern China, Northern China, Sichuan, Tibet, Turkestan, Manchuria, and Mongolia – which could then be connected by a treaty of mutual assistance. The whole polity was hence supposed to become a treaty-based (federative) state capable of fending off foreign imperialists. The proclamation of the MPP to the Chinese people and revolutionary organizations, also adopted in March 1921, reaffirmed the idea of the federation (Luzianin 2003, 107–8; Sablin 2016, 160–65; Sablin and Semyonov 2018).

Shumiatskii, who headed the new Far Eastern Secretariat of the Communist International (Comintern), and Ivan Nikitich Smirnov (1881–1936), the leader of the Siberian Bolshevik organization, suggested making the planned Mongolian state a federation and a “toiling people’s republic” later in March 1921. Its central authorities were to be in charge of military, economic, and foreign affairs and to include federal “*sejm*-like” (“parliamentary”) bodies. The “Great Liberation Congress” of all “*somons*” (*sums*) of Outer and Inner Mongolia was to adopt the constitution. The government – the Council of Administration of United Mongolia – was to consist of five people, including one from Tannu-Tuva (to be part of Mongolia). Shumiatskii and Smirnov did not specify the relations between the government and the “parliamentary” bodies, but the design was very similar to that of the FER. The FER was controlled by a collective “president,” which was sanctioned by a congress, and hence continued both the *zemstvo* and revolutionary practices. Shumiatskii and Smirnov did not mention the Chinese federation but also did not view formal Soviet recognition of Mongolia as necessary. This owed to the new conditions in Outer Mongolia, where the forces of the anti-Bolshevik warlord Roman Fedorovich von Ungern-Sternberg (1886–1921) defeated the Chinese troops in the first half of 1921, and Shumiatskii and Smirnov connected the new Mongolian policy to the goal of defeating Ungern (Kuz'min 2004, 113–14; for the discussion of the Far Eastern Republic, see Sablin 2018).

The Mongolian People's Government of seven people, which was formed by the MPP on March 13, 1921, also dropped the slogan of the Chinese federation. It was supposed to liberate the country from both the Chinese and the Russian anti-Bolsheviks, to establish friendly relations with neighboring countries, and to convene the “Great Khural of popular representatives of Mongolia” for electing a permanent government and adopting the fundamental laws. In its proclamation to the Mongolians (*arads* [“herders” or “peasants”], lamas, and nobles), the Mongolian People's Government stressed that the “Great Khural” was supposed to elect the government of the “independent Mongolian state,” discuss the most important state issues, and adopt necessary laws. Tracing its own legitimacy to having been

elected by the “honorable and wise people” of the country, the Mongolian People’s Government declared that its authority was that of “the Mongolian people” (Kuz’min 2004, 154–55).

In the summer of 1921, regular Soviet troops and the forces of the MPP proceeded to Khüree under the pretext of defeating Ungern’s forces, which had crossed to Siberia but were soon thwarted back to Mongolia. On July 6, Khüree was taken, and on July 11, 1921, the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu was enthroned as a “constitutional monarch” (Atwood 2004, 471–73). The Mongolian People’s Government convened the Provisional State Khural as a consultative body in October 1921. The assembly included ministers and their deputies, as well as representatives of *arads*, nobles, and lamas. On November 1, 1921, the Bogd Khan was forced to sign the Solemn Treaty (Oath Agreement, *Tangargiin geree*) with the new government. The Solemn Treaty may be seen as a proto-constitution, as it reaffirmed his unlimited religious authority but gave him only consultative rights in legislation and the right to suspensive veto on a limited number of laws, formally making him a constitutional monarch. Shumiatskii was among those who advocated constitutional monarchy with the authority of the “bourgeois-democratic forces” and cautioned against making the political and economic systems of Mongolia similar to Soviet Russia. The same year the Bogd Khan nevertheless wrote to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama that the Soviets, having destroyed their temples and books, had reached Mongolia and, with the assistance of the MPP, deposed him from the throne (Dudin 2013, 160–61; Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:79).

While Jamtsarano and Rinchino left for Mongolia, other Buryad intellectuals, including Gombozhab Tsybikov (1873–1930), participated in the making of the Constitution of the FER as members of the Constituent Assembly of the Far East. The Constitution of the FER, adopted in April 1921, included a provision on the Buryad-Mongol Autonomous Region. Both the FER and the autonomous region had parliaments – people’s assemblies – but in both cases parliamentarism was of the sham kind. Although all elections in the FER were direct and universal, the sessions of the FER parliament were short and took place twice a year, while between them the provisional legislative authority belonged to the Government (“collective president”). This made the FER reminiscent of both the *zemstvo* and revolutionary practices and the Duma regime in the Russian Empire in 1906–1917. In the late Russian Empire, the Cabinet could issue provisional legislation between the sessions of the Duma, but the latter had proper sessions, which despite the limited competence and restricted elections made it in some aspects more of a parliament than the FER People’s Assembly. Another Buryad-Mongol (Mongol-Buryad) Autonomous Region was established in the RSFSR in 1922 and had an extraordinary system of government by a revolutionary committee, which was subordinate only to higher authorities of Siberia and the whole RSFSR. The two Buryad-Mongol autonomies hence exemplified two distinct types of Bolshevik-dominated regimes, the one in the RSFSR was part of the formal empire, while the one in the FER was part of the first “people’s republics” in informal Soviet dependency (Far Eastern Republic 1921; Sablin 2018).

## The constitution and the Khural, 1922–1924

The arrival of Soviet troops and Rinchino's political leadership in 1921 did not immediately undermine Khalkha agency, yet over the following years the power asymmetries between the Soviet envoys and the Khalkhas became evident and manifested *inter alia* in the first political purges in 1922 and 1924 and the adoption of the Soviet-like Constitution in 1924, which was written by external actors and enforced by the mediators. The process of its adoption demonstrated that the Bolshevik assistance demanded structural adjustments.

After the annexation of the FER to the RSFSR in November 1922 and the formation of the USSR in December 1922, the two regions were merged (with significantly reshaped borders) into the Buryad-Mongol Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (BMASSR) in 1923. The BMASSR had a standard system of Soviet government, which featured rare (once every two – three years) Congresses of Soviets elected in nonuniversal, unequal, and indirect elections. Between the congresses, there was a standing legislature – the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) – which also assembled rarely (two to three times a year). The supreme authority belonged to the permanent Presidium of the TsIK between the session of the standing and larger legislatures. In practice, however, the BMASSR was governed by the republican party organization. The system of TsIK Presidiums – which in practice were standing legislatures above two levels of nonpermanent legislatures – was not part of the 1918 RSFSR Constitution but was included in the 1924 USSR Constitution (Bazarov 2011, 3:65; Rossiiskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Federativnaia Sovetskaia Respublika 1918; Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 1924).

The Solemn Treaty was supposed to become part of the future constitution (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2004, vii), which was discussed by members of the government and invited experts. Jamtsarano joined the drafting commission in 1922 (Ulymzhiev and Tsetsegma 1999, 61). Jamtsarano's own early draft consisted of seven chapters and 24 articles. Article 1 reaffirmed Mongolia as a democratic constitutional monarchy and introduced a parliament, which was called the "Upper Great Khural of the Mongolian State" (*mongghol ulus-un degedü yeke khural*) or simply the State Khural, demonstrating that Jamtsarano experimented with terminology. He also used the term *khuraldaan* (*khuraldughan*) twice, but it is not clear if *khuraldaan* was used for a permanent or temporary gathering. The Great Khural had the right to appoint and resign the government (it is not clear if Jamtsarano meant the cabinet or a "collective president"). At the same time, Jamtsarano's draft included aspects of the executive rule, which were embedded in the systems of *zemstvo*, the Duma monarchy, the Soviet government, the Buryad-Mongol Autonomy, and the FER, because between the sessions of the Great Khural, the government had the supreme authority. Jamtsarano did not specify its exact competence between the sessions of the parliament or the sessions' duration and frequency, but the executive rule manifested in the joint right of the State Khural and the government to make amendments to the constitution. A further connection to the Russian discourse can be seen in the introduction of

regional autonomy intended for Tuva.<sup>8</sup> The drafting commission, however, was dissolved, officially due to its inability to finish the work, and the task passed to the legislative department of the Mongolian People's Government (Amarsanaa, Bayarsaikhan, and Shazhinbat 2009, 2).

The development of a constitutional monarchy was interrupted by the death of the Bogd Khan on May 20, 1924. Soon thereafter, Mongolia plunged into a political crisis after Karakhan signed the Sino-Soviet Agreement on May 31, 1924, in which the USSR recognized Mongolia as part of China ("Agreement on General Principles for the Settlement of the Questions between the Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" 1925). The treaty became a major threat to Mongolia's independence, and the possible break with the USSR aggravated the struggle within the MPP. Danzan, who advocated cooperation with Chinese business and, according to Rinchino, gained the support of Tserendorj and other Khalkha politicians, ultimately lost to Rinchino and was executed without trial in August 1924 (Atwood 2004, 129–30; Rinchino 1998, 99). Despite the formal recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Mongolia, the Soviet government strengthened the asymmetry in its relations to the Mongolian People's Government. It kept the troops as "volunteers" and sent new advisors. Vsesviatskii, the Soviet legal advisor who had been invited "to speed up the work" on the constitution before Bogd Khan's death and arrived shortly after it, wrote the new draft constitution (Sanjdorj 1974, 136). Rinchino then translated it into Mongolian. A new commission, chaired by Tserendorj and featuring Rinchino, Jamtsarano, and Ryskulov (the new Comintern envoy who arrived in October 1924) discussed and amended it (Atwood 2004, 119; Kuz'min 2017, 338). This became a turning point for Khalkha agency in the process of Mongolian state-building. The most influential actors involved in the process of drafting the constitution were external to Outer Mongolia and in direct service of the Comintern. This, however, did not mean the end of debates, since there was no unity among the Comintern functionaries.

Ryskulov outlined his view on the main disagreements within the commission in his reports to the Comintern. Ryskulov viewed Jamtsarano as an ally of Tserendorj and claimed that after Jamtsarano's failed to get his "bourgeois, liberal" draft approved, Jamtsarano started to question Mongolia's very need for a written constitution. After a confrontation with Ryskulov, Jamtsarano did not raise the issue again but also did not participate in the meeting of the commission that adopted Vsesviatskii's final draft<sup>9</sup> with amendments. According to Ryskulov, the constitution of the USSR and the FER were the main sources for the draft. The system of government was copied from that in the USSR. The Great Khural (Khuraldan) corresponded to the USSR Congress of Soviets, while the Small Khural corresponded to the TsIK. Similar to the USSR Constitution, the Presidium of the Small Khural (corresponding to the Presidium of the USSR TsIK) was made the permanent supreme body between the sessions of the Great and Small Khurals. The Cabinet was accompanied by an economic council, as in the Soviet government. Similarly, the Small Khural elected the Cabinet and its own Presidium, just like the Soviet TsIK. Like in the USSR, the rights in the MPR were reserved for



the “real people” (*jingkini arad tümen*, “real arad masses”). Only those men and women over the age of 18 who used their own labor to earn a living and the soldiers had the right to vote and be elected, while traders (who did not work themselves or received interest payments), lamas permanently living in monasteries, and former nobles (noble rights were limited but giving up titles was voluntary before the First Khural) were excluded. Only citizens were eligible to participate in the elections. Ryskulov claimed that Rinchino opposed mentioning the separation of church from state, but Tserendorj supported the provision which made it into the constitution. Church, however, was not separated from school. Ryskulov also maintained that Rinchino suggested keeping three-year terms for the government bodies, but the draft kept the proposed one-year terms (Atwood 2004, 119; Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:120, 130–31, 141; Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 1924; Vaksberg 1925).

The First Great Khural of 77 delegates assembled in Niislel Khüree (which was renamed Ulaanbaatar during its session) on November 8–28, 1924. In his introduction to its minutes, first published in Russian and only appearing in a more complete form in Mongolian (Dash 1984), Ryskulov called the Khural the first “People’s Assembly” (similar to its name in the Russian text) and claimed that it was representative of all parts of Outer Mongolia. He also pointed to the debates at the congress which became more open with its progression. Formally, the delegates represented the four aimags of Outer Mongolia, the Great Shabi, the Dörbet Oirads and the Kazakhs of Kobdo, the Buryads who were naturalized in Mongolia, and the army. It is, however, not clear how the body was formed. It was delegated by localities rather than elected directly, but the localities were still in the process of forming collegial authorities. Some decisions proved that despite the attempts of Ryskulov and other Soviet representatives to influence the debates, the First Great Khural was either not under full control of the Soviet representatives, or, perhaps, the latter had left some space for compromise. One of the First Great Khural’s key decisions was to keep the Great Shabi with the rights of an aimag and only to eliminate religious taxes and privileges, gradually integrating the members of the Great Shabi into citizenry. Mongolia also adopted the European calendar for days and months but kept counting the years from 1911, making 1925 year 15 of the Mongolian State (rather than of the Bogd Khan’s first enthronement). On other matters, however, the position of the Soviet representatives prevailed. The issue of the search for the new incarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu was raised but dismissed. Khüree was renamed despite Tserendorj’s opposition (Genkin and Ryskulov 1925, vi–vii, xi–xii, xiv, 1, 254, 259–60, 263–66).

Although there were dissenting voices, Rinchino, Ryskulov and, to a lesser extent, Tserendorj and other Khalkha members of the government steered and dominated the debates. The draft constitution was essentially adopted as it was. There were nevertheless questions on the relations between the Great and Small Khurals and demands to give the Great Khural the right to elect the Cabinet. Rinchino and then Ryskulov had to defend the right of the Small Khural to appoint the Cabinet. The former presented it as the “people’s control” over the

Cabinet between the sessions of the Great Khural, while the latter pointed to the one-year terms as a guarantee for the connection between the government and the people. Tserendorj also had to specify that the Small Khural would be elected proportionally to the parts of Mongolia, but such provision did not become part of the constitution. Rinchino had to defend the elimination of private property on land, forests, and other natural resources and the separation of church from state, but these provisions were adopted as well. The joint competence of the Presidium of the Small Khural and the Cabinet, which made the system different from that in the USSR, was also criticized as violating the responsibility of the Cabinet before the Small Khural, but this provision also passed. The Constitution did not specify the State Great Khural elections procedure, and the elections were indirect. The First Great Khural resolved that the next Great Khural was to have no fewer than 95 representatives, delegated proportionally to the population. This minimum number, however, did not make it into the Constitution, while the exact one was to be decided after a population census. Despite the electoral restrictions, the Small Khural of 30 people included six former nobles (two of them princes) and one lama, as well as the Buryad Bolshevik Matvei Innokent'evich Amagaev (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009, 8, 10–13; Atwood 2004, 119; Genkin and Ryskulov 1925, 249–52, 255–58, 260, 274–76; Vaksberg 1925).

As envisioned by Ryskulov, the First Great Khural proved to be a sanctioning congress rather than a deliberative constituent parliament. At the same time, it proved to be especially important for Mongolia's formal independence. The First Great Khural and the Constitution ignored the 1924 Sino-Soviet Agreement. Although the First Great Khural called for friendly relations with the Chinese toilers, it declared its support for the freedom of the Mongolian "tribes" and tasked the government with considering the issue of Tannu-Tuva, albeit based on the desires of the Tuvans. The Constitution also nullified all prerevolutionary treaties of Mongolia. At the same time, the Constitution entailed hints of the emerging informal Soviet superstructure. The MPR was to align its foreign policy with the interests of the oppressed peoples and the toilers of the world, although the Comintern was not mentioned in the Constitution. The matter of the MPP's (and hence the MPR's) subordination to the Comintern had been debated before the First Great Khural, with Ryskulov insisting on it, while at the First Great Khural, Rinchino stressed that the statehood of Mongolia was "a child of the Comintern" (Vaksberg 1925, 42, 44; see also Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:120, 130; Luzianin 2003, 137–40; Rinchino 1998, 89).

The position of the non-Khalkha actors on the future of Mongolia fluctuated. In 1924, shortly before the First Great Khural, Rinchino stated that he expected Mongolia to become part of the USSR. In the summer of 1925, he called himself a Pan-Mongolist, while in late 1925 (after both he and Ryskulov had been recalled from the MPR following the fallout of their struggle), he reaffirmed the role of the MPR as a springboard for exporting the revolution to Asia and again sketched the future federative republic of the peoples of China. The Comintern itself opted for a more moderate policy towards Mongolia in 1925. Amagaev,

reporting to the Comintern in 1927, stressed that the MPR represented “a unique type of state between bourgeois parliamentarism and the Soviet system, however with larger approximation to the latter” (Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:177; see also Luzianin 2003, 155–56; Rinchino 1998, 103–4). In the following decades, the MPR became a model for Soviet dependencies in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, which were dubbed people’s republics and did not have bodies called “soviets,” but at the same time reproduced the same system of sham and nominal parliamentarism, constitutionalism, and (in some cases) federalism.

As for Mongolia itself, the system of extra-parliamentary rule by the MPP, which was renamed the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party soon after the proclamation of the MPR, was certainly enabled by the sham aspects of the 1924 Constitution. At the same time, the most radical policies did not come into place before 1929. In 1926, the Third State Great Khural even discussed the possible search for the next Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, but deflected the issue citing the lack of proper Buddhist authority to conduct it. In 1928, Dorjiev again suggested to commence with the search in order to demonstrate that there was no pressure on religion in the MPR but to no avail (Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:364; Lattimore 1962, 106–7).

## Conclusion

The 1924 Constitution established a Soviet-like political system, and the State Great Khural did not become a real parliament since it was not representative of the whole population. The system of representation remained indirect. The State Great Khural also did not have proper session duration for deliberation. It did not have direct control over the government, and in practice it did not have any sovereignty within the system. The role of the government was performed by the MPP and in wider international terms by the Bolshevik Party (Ihalainen, Ilie, and Palonen 2016). The *de jure* system was not a complete novelty either in Soviet Russia and the USSR or among the Buryad intellectuals, since it reflected the widespread system of non-Bolshevik revolutionary self-government in the former Russian Empire, appealed to the latter’s local and central government practices, and even made it into Jamtsarano’s draft constitution.

The polysemic character of the term *khural* allowed it to survive the political changes in Mongolia of the twentieth century. The same word was used for the consultative body under Bogd Khan, for the constituent and regular “parliaments” of the MPR, and, since 1990, for the potent parliaments of Mongolia. The national connotations of the term *khural* were reinforced by its connection to Chinggis Khan’s time. The role of national mythology contributed to a fierce debate in political science on Mongolian political culture and transformations (March 2003; Sabloff 2002). In the context of this chapter, however, the conceptual connections between Mongolia and post-Soviet Russia are especially interesting. In the early 1990s, the reconfigured Buryad, Kalmyk, and Tuvan Republics of the Russian Federation adopted the term *khural* for their new parliaments. In the case of Buryad and Kalmyk post-Soviet nation-building, this

meant that the shared Mongolian past became especially relevant, like in Mongolia itself. It was also the ancient past of Chinggis Khan, since the word *khural* had not been used for indigenous assemblies in the Kalmyk and Buryad nation-building before. In the case of Tuva, the use of the term marked a return to the discourse of the Tuvan People's Republic, which had Great and Small Khurals until its annexation to the USSR in 1944, and hence stressed the historical sovereignty of the republic.

## Acknowledgments

The research for this chapter was done as part of the project “ENTPAR: Entangled Parliamentarisms: Constitutional Practices in Russia, Ukraine, China and Mongolia, 1905–2005,” which received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement No. 755504). The authors would like to personally thank Dr. Enkhbaatar Samdan, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schamoni, Dr. Bayarsaikhan Batsukh, Dr. Huhbaatar, Dr. Butit Zhalsanova, Dr. Larisa Chimitdorzhieva, Dr. Urangua Jamsran, Gansukh Chuluunbat, Delgermaa Boldbaatar, Munkhbat Yondorinchen, Chuluu, and Uiles.

## Notes

- 1 The Meiji Constitution was adopted in Japan in 1889. In 1899, the Malolos Constitution was adopted in the first Philippine Republic (1899–1901).
- 2 The word *ulsyn* may be translated as both “state” and “people's.” By 1924, the State (rather than People's) Khural had already been an established term in Outer Mongolia. Furthermore, the 1960 MPR Constitution renamed the body the People's Great Khural (*Ardyn Ikh Khural*) to make the distinction explicit (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009).
- 3 The Khalkha khans, however, recognized the Qing rule only in 1691.
- 4 GARB (State Archive of the Republic of Buryatia), f. 129, op. 1, d. 3285, l. 21, 24 (Meeting of lamas on founding a boarding school).
- 5 Russia, England, France, Germany (*Shine Toli*, no. 2, 1913, pp. 22–40); Italy, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Holland (*Shine Toli*, no. 3, 1913, pp. 23–39); and Japan (*Shine Toli*, no. 4, 1913, pp. 54–58).
- 6 There is no date of publication on the book, but it was likely written in 1913–1914. The book states that it was written on the order of Namnansüren and continued the logic of publications in *Shine Toli*.
- 7 GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), f. 1701, op. 1, d. 16, l. 18 (Minutes of the Buryat Congress, Chita, April 24, 1917).
- 8 National Central Archives of Mongolia (MYTA), f. 31, op. 1, d. 10 (Jamtsarano's Draft Constitution). The Siberian Bolsheviks continued to envision a multilevel polity in place of the Qing Empire, in which Tannu-Tuva would be an autonomous part of Mongolia, while Mongolia would be part of the Chinese federation and the Soviet government would continue to refer to Mongolia as “autonomous.” The Tuvan elites and local Bolsheviks, however, declared the Tannu-Tuva's independence on August 14, 1921, much to the distress of Shumiatskii (Atwood 2004, 471–73; Luzianin 2003, 113–15; Mollerov 2005).
- 9 Ryskulov claimed that he had cowritten the text with Vsesviatskii, but there is no other evidence to back that claim.

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