

launch a campaign against the Bulgars, Turks in the region of Kazan on the middle Volga River, and to complete the conquest of the outlying Western Xia territories. By 1229 Batu Khan, grandson of Chinggis, had defeated most of the Bulgar outposts, and in 1231 Ogedei sent an expedition to conquer the Korean Peninsula.

That same year, Ogedei decided to destroy Jin. He formed an alliance with the Song, then sent Tului southward with a large army into Jin territory. In 1232 in the middle of the campaign, Tului died, and Subetei took command. He continued on to besiege Kaifeng, the Jin capital. Despite the defenders' skillful use of explosives, the city fell to the Mongols after a year's siege. Subetei then completed the conquest of the Jin empire, driving many of the Jurchen back into their original homeland, but absorbing others into the Mongol army for the further conquest of China. Ogedei refused to divide the conquered region with the Song, which in 1234 attempted to seize part of the former Jin empire. This was the signal for another war, which lasted forty-five years.

Ogedei committed the Mongols, whose total population could not have exceeded 1 million, to an offensive war against the most populous nation on earth, while other Mongol armies were invading Iran, Anatolia, Syria, and the steppes of western Siberia and Russia. By this time, ethnic Mongols were a minority of the Mongol armies. The remainder were Turks, Tatars, Tangut, Cumans, Bulgars, and other Inner Asian peoples. Nonetheless, the confidence with which the Mongol armies embarked on these far-flung wars was almost as remarkable as the invariable success of their operations.

In compliance with the wishes of Chinggis, as expressed presumably in his legal code, the *yasaq* (see Glossary), his vast empire had been apportioned among his sons (only three survived; the eldest, Jochi, had died in 1227), and his sons' descendants, subject to the overall authority of the khan at Karakorum, which was rebuilt in 1235 by Ogedei. Jochi's son, Batu, ruled the region to the north and the west of Lake Balkash. Chagadai, the second son of Chinggis, was given the southwestern region that includes modern Afghanistan, Turkestan (now in the Soviet Union), and central Siberia. He and his successors were known as the khans of the Chagadai Mongols. By implication, this realm extended indefinitely to the southwest, as Batu's did to the northwest. Ogedei and his progeny were awarded China and the other lands of East Asia. Tului, the youngest of the four principal heirs, was to have central Mongolia, the homeland, in accordance with Mongol custom. He and his descendants, however, were to share Mongolia's precious fighting manpower with the other three khanates.

The *kuriltai* of 1235 authorized at least two more major offensive operations: one against Tibet, the other in Eastern Europe. The Tibetan expedition was led by Godan, son of Ogedei, and the conquest was completed in 1239.

### **Subetei and the European Expedition**

The European expedition was to be a major Mongol effort, comparable in scope to the war against China. It was to become a catastrophe of monumental proportions for medieval East Europeans, who were confronted with devastating wars and serious social disruption. Nominal command was to be exercised by Batu, because this was the part of the world he had inherited from Chinggis. The actual commander was the aging, but still brilliant, Subetei. He was probably the most gifted of all Mongol generals, after Chinggis himself, and he had been one of the commanders of the momentous reconnaissance that had swept through southern Russia fifteen years earlier.

The Bulgars were defeated in 1236, and in December 1237 Subetei and Batu led an army of 600,000 across the frozen Volga River. The Mongols spread destruction and death through Russia. Moscow, Vladimir, and other northern Russian principalities were destroyed before summer 1238. Subetei then turned south to the steppe region around the Don, to allow his army to rest, to regain strength, and to prepare for new advances. Apparently his timetable was delayed for a year by a dispute between Batu and other royal princes commanding various hordes (see Glossary). Nonetheless, this additional time gave Subetei an opportunity to accumulate still further information about central and western Europe from his spies.

In November 1240, after the rivers and marshes of what, in modern times, is the Ukraine had frozen enough to take the weight of cavalry, the Mongol army crossed the Dnieper River. On December 6, it conquered Kiev, the seat of the grand prince and the Metropolitan See of Rus'. Subetei continued westward, his army advancing, typically, on a broad front in three major columns.

To the north was the horde of Kaidu Khan, three *tumen* strong, protecting the right flank of the main body. Kaidu swept through Lithuania and Poland; on March 18 he destroyed the Polish army at Cracow. He detached a *tumen* to raid along the Baltic coast and with the remainder headed westward into Silesia. On April 9, 1241, at Liegnitz (Legnica, in Poland), the more disciplined Mongol army decisively defeated a numerically superior combined European army in a bitterly contested battle.

Meanwhile, a horde of three *tumen* under Kadan, another son of Ogedei, protected the southern flank and advanced through Transylvania, into the Danube Valley, and into Hungary. In mid-April Kadan and Kaidu joined the main body—under Batu—in central Hungary.

Batu led the central force across the Carpathian Mountains in early April 1241, lured the army of King Bela IV of Hungary into battle at the Sajo River on April 11, and annihilated it. The Mongols then seized Pest, and they spent the rest of the year consolidating their control of Hungary east of the Danube River.

Late in 1241, the Mongols were ready to move again. In December the army crossed the frozen Danube. Scouting parties raided into northern Italy toward Venice and Treviso, and up the Danube toward Vienna. But suddenly the advance halted. Word had come, by way of the incredibly swift Mongol messenger service, that Ogedei had died on December 11.

The *yasaq* explicitly provided that after the death of the ruler all offspring of the house of Chinggis Khan, wherever they might be, must return to Mongolia to take part in the election of the new khan. From the outskirts of Vienna and Venice, the *tumen* countermarched, never to reappear. They moved through Dalmatia and Serbia, then eastward where they virtually destroyed the kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria before crossing the lower Danube. They evacuated Hungary for lack of sufficient pasture and moved into the southern Russian steppes. Advances into India also ceased.

### Reign of Kuyuk

It was not until the summer of 1246 that a *kuriltai* assembled at Karakorum to select a successor to Ogedei. This was mainly because of political maneuvering by Batu and other royal princes who had hopes of being elected. While deliberately stalling in Bulghar in 1241, Batu founded Sarai (near modern Leninsk, Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic) on the lower Volga River, as the capital of his Khanate of Kipchak, best known to history as the Golden Horde (see Glossary; The Golden Horde, this ch.).

Between 1242 and 1246, Ogedei's widow, Teregene, held power as regent in preparation for the selection of her son, Kuyuk, as the new khan. Present during the *kuriltai* was the Franciscan friar, John of Plano Carpini, a papal envoy sent to ascertain the intentions of the Mongols. He recognized that the Mongols planned the conquest of Europe, and he belatedly urged Europe's monarchs to adopt Mongol strategy and tactics to oppose the coming onslaught.

Kuyuk apparently was torn between completing the conquest of China and continuing the conquest of Europe. The latter project was complicated, however, by Kuyuk's continuing rivalry with Batu. Just as civil war seemed imminent in 1249, Kuyuk died.

### **Mengke and the War in China**

Except for the descendants of Ogedei and Chagadai, most of the royal princes thought that Batu should be elected khan. By this time, however, Batu had decided that he preferred the steppes of the Volga to the steppes of Mongolia. He declined the offer and nominated Mengke, the eldest son of Tului (who had died in 1233), unquestionably one of the most gifted descendants of Chinggis. Mengke's nomination was confirmed by a *kuriltai* in 1251. He executed several of Ogedei's sons who had opposed his election and quickly restored to Mongol rule the vigor that had been lacking since the death of Chinggis.

Taking seriously the legacy of world conquest, Mengke decided to place primary emphasis on completing the conquest of Asia, particularly China; Europe was to be dealt with later. Because the Song had had the benefit of a lull of nearly ten years in which to recover and to reorganize, conquering Asia had become more difficult than it would have been earlier. Mengke himself took command, but he also placed great responsibility on his younger brother, Khubilai. Another brother, Hulegu, was sent to Iran to renew the expansion of Mongol control in Southwest Asia. Mengke encouraged Batu to raid Central Europe, but did not send him additional resources. Thus, although Batu's armies raided deep into Poland, Lithuania, and Estonia, and again overran Serbia and Bulgaria, these campaigns were not so important as the ones being undertaken in Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia.

Mengke also made some major administrative changes in the khanates established by the will of Chinggis. He disinherited the surviving sons of Ogedei, arranging that he and Khubilai would inherit the lands of East Asia. He also placed a limit on the domains of the successors of Chagadai; these were to end along the Oxus River and the Hindu Kush, instead of extending indefinitely to the southwest. Southwest Asia was to be the inheritance of Mengke's brother, Hulegu, the first of the Ilkhans ("subservient khans") or Mongol rulers of Iran (see *The Ilkhans*, this ch.).

Mengke prosecuted the war in China with intensity and skill. His principal assistant was Khubilai, who was appointed viceroy in China. In 1252 and 1253, Khubilai conquered Nanchao (modern Yunnan). Tonkin (as northern Vietnam was known) then was

invaded and pacified. The conquest ended with the fall of Hanoi in 1257.

Song resistance in southern China was based upon determined defense of its well-fortified, well-provisioned cities. The Chinese empire began to crumble, however, under the impact of a series of brilliant campaigns, personally directed by Mengke between 1257 and 1259. His sudden death from dysentery in August 1259, however, caused another lull in the war with China and put a stop to advances in West Asia.

## **Khubilai Khan and the Yuan Dynasty, 1261–1368**

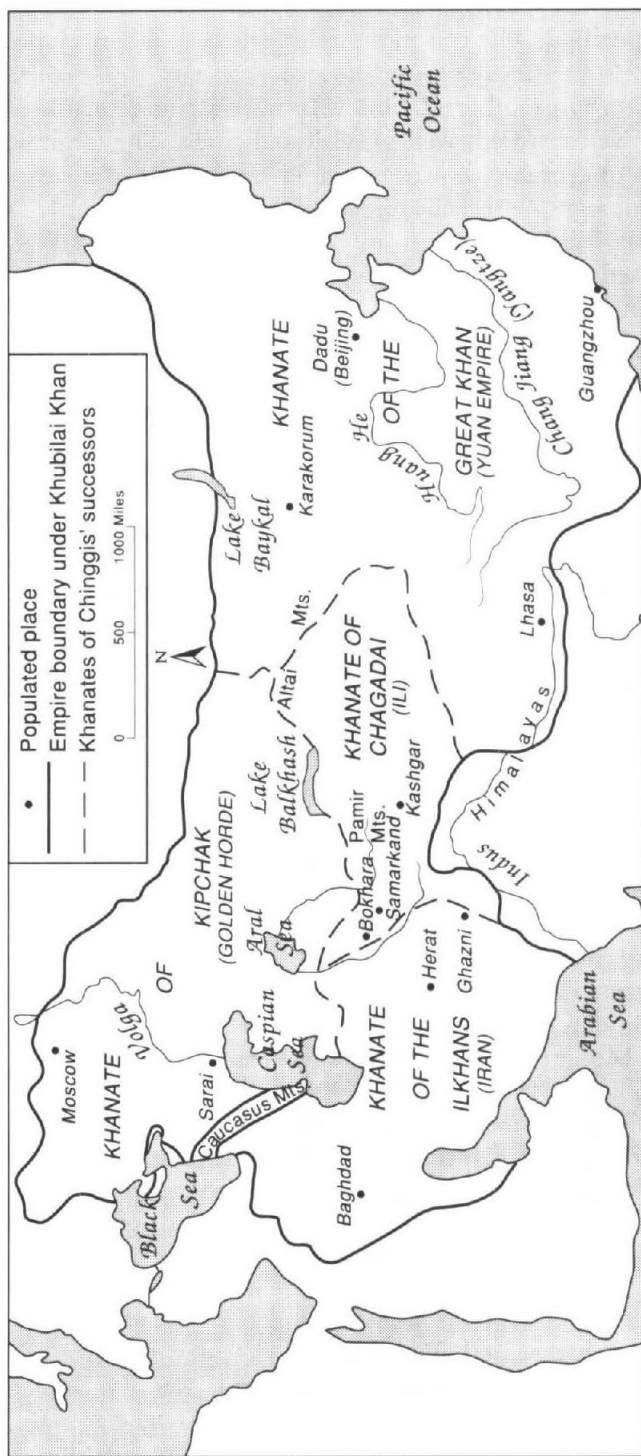
### **A New Khan**

The overwhelming choice of the *kuriltai* as Mengke's successor was his equally brilliant brother, Khubilai. Khubilai's selection was opposed violently, however, by his younger brother, Arik-Buka. This opposition precipitated a civil war won by Khubilai in 1261. For the next few years, the new khan devoted his attention to administrative reforms of his vast empire (see fig. 3). A major development was Khubilai's establishment in 1260 of a winter capital at what is now Beijing but was then called Dadu ("great capital," also called Khanbalik—Marco Polo's Cambaluc) which shifted the political center of the Mongol empire south into China and increased Chinese influence. Khubilai maintained a summer residence north of the Great Wall at Shangdu (the Xanadu of Coleridge).

In 1268 Khubilai was able to turn his full attention to the war in China. A series of campaigns, distinguished by the skill of Bayan (grandson of Subetei), culminated in 1276 in the capture of Hangzhou, the Song capital. It took three more years to subdue the outlying provinces. The last action of the war—a naval battle in Guangzhou Bay, in which the remnants of the Song fleet were destroyed by a Mongol fleet made up of defectors from the Song navy—took place in 1279.

Khubilai did not share Mengke's fierce desire to conquer the world. He had warred against China with determination, but apparently he realized that there was a limit to the Mongol capabilities for consolidating and for controlling conquered territory. It is likely that he recognized that this limit was being approached because of an event that occurred during the interregnum between Mengke's death and his own accession.

Hulegu, who had seized Baghdad and defeated the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258 and conquered Mesopotamia and Syria, had returned to Mongolia upon receiving news of Mengke's death. While he was gone, his forces were defeated by a larger, Mamluk,



Source: Based on information from John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston, 1978, 172-73; and Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1985, vi, xii.

Figure 3. *The Mongol Empire, ca. A.D. 1280*

army at the Battle of Ain Jalut in Palestine in 1260. This was the first significant Mongol defeat in seventy years. The Mamluks had been led by a Turk named Baibars, a former Mongol warrior who used Mongol tactics.

Neither Khubilai nor Hulegu made a serious effort to avenge the defeat of Ain Jalut. Both devoted their attention primarily to consolidating their conquests, to suppressing dissidence, and to reestablishing law and order. Like their uncle, Batu, and his Golden Horde successors, they limited their offensive moves to occasional raids or to attacks with limited objectives in unconquered neighboring regions. After the failure of two invasion attempts against Japan in 1274 and 1281, Khubilai also gave up his goal of expansion to the east. In January 1293, Khubilai invaded Java and defeated the local ruler, only to be driven off the island by a Javanese ally who turned against him.

After the Song Dynasty had been destroyed, in 1279 Khubilai declared himself emperor of a united China with its capital at Dadu, and he established the Yuan (“first,” “beginning”) Dynasty (1279–1368). Khubilai, who took the Chinese-style reign title Zhiyuan (“the greatest of the Yuan”), proved himself to be one of the most able rulers of imperial China.

### **The Yuan Dynasty**

A rich cultural diversity evolved in China during the Yuan Dynasty, as it had in other periods of foreign dynastic rule. Major achievements included the development of drama and the novel and the increased use of the written vernacular. The Yuan was involved in a fair amount of cultural exchange because of its extensive West Asian and European contacts. The introduction of foreign musical instruments enriched the Chinese performing arts. The conversion to Islam of growing numbers of people in northwestern and southwestern China dates from this period. Nestorian Christianity and Roman Catholicism also enjoyed a period of toleration. Lamaism flourished, although native Daoism endured Mongol persecutions. Chinese governmental practices and examinations were reinstated by the Mongols in the hope of maintaining order within society. Advances were realized in the fields of travel literature, cartography, geography, and scientific education. Certain key Chinese innovations—such as printing techniques, porcelain playing cards, and medical literature—were introduced in Europe, while European skills, such as the production of thin glass and cloisonné, became popular in China.

The Mongols undertook extensive public works. Land and water communications were reorganized and improved. To provide

against possible famines, new granaries were ordered to be built throughout the empire. Dadu was rebuilt with new palace grounds that included artificial lakes, hills, and parks, and the capital became the terminus of the Grand Canal, which was completely renovated. These commercially oriented improvements encouraged overland as well as maritime commerce throughout Asia and facilitated the first direct Chinese contacts with Europe. Chinese and Mongol travelers to the West were able to provide assistance in such areas as hydraulic engineering, and they brought back to China new scientific discoveries, agricultural crops, methods of food preparation, and architectural innovations.

Early records of travel by Westerners to East Asia date from this time. Much that the Western world of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries knew about the Mongols and Asia was the result of the famous missions of a Venetian trading family. The first mission was by two brothers, Niccolò and Maffeo Polo, from 1260 to 1268. Another started in 1271, when they were joined by Niccolò's son, Marco. Marco Polo, who remained in Asia until 1295, was trusted by Khubilai Khan and undertook a number of diplomatic missions and administrative assignments for him throughout the empire. The account of his travels, *Il milione* (or, *The Million*, known in English as the *Travels of Marco Polo*), appeared about the year 1299 and astounded the people of Europe, who knew little of the highly developed culture of East Asia. The works of John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck also provided early descriptions of the Mongols to the West.

The Mongols sought, but failed, to govern China through its traditional institutions. At the outset, they discriminated against the Chinese socially and politically, monopolized the most important central and regional government posts, and developed an unprecedented and complex six-tier local-government administration. Mongols also preferred employing non-Chinese from other parts of the Mongol domain—Inner Asia, the Middle East, and even Europe—in those positions for which no Mongol could be found. Chinese, in turn, were more often employed in non-Chinese regions of the empire.

In time, Khubilai's successors became sinicized, and they then lost all influence on other Mongol lands across Asia. Gradually, they lost influence in China as well. The reigns of the later Yuan emperors were short and were marked by intrigues and rivalries. Uninterested in administration, they were separated from both their Mongolian army and their Chinese subjects. China was torn by dissension and unrest; bandits ranged the country without interference from the weakening Yuan armies.



The last of the nine successors of Khubilai was expelled from Dadu in 1368 by Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and died in Karakorum in 1370. Although Zhu, who adopted Mongol military methods, drove the Mongols out of China, he did not destroy their power. A later Chinese army invaded Mongolia in 1380. In 1388 a decisive victory was won; about 70,000 Mongols were taken prisoner, and Karakorum was annihilated.

### **The Ilkhans**

The Mongol defeat at Ain Jalut in 1260 led directly to the first important war between grandsons of Chinggis. The Mamluk leader, Baibars, made an alliance with Berke Khan, Batu's brother and successor. Berke had converted to Islam, and he thus was sympathetic to the Mamluk for religious reasons, as well as because he was jealous of his nephew, Hulegu. When Hulegu sent an army to Syria to punish Baibars, he was attacked suddenly by Berke. Hulegu had to turn his army back to the Caucasus to meet this threat, and he made repeated attempts to ally himself with the kings of France and England and with the Pope in order to crush the Mamluks in Palestine. Berke withdrew, however, when Khubilai sent 30,000 troops to aid the Ilkhans.

This chain of events marked the end of the Mongol expansion in Southwest Asia. Although Hulegu's successors did not exhibit the austere martial qualities of their forebears, they did bring a partial and brief economic revival to Iran. An increase in commerce and the expansion of trade routes brought a measure of cross culturization between Iran and China. The Mongol rulers devoted themselves to a more genteel life and let their provinces be governed by Turkish viziers. Finally these viziers seized control, and the Ilkhan khanate ended with the death of Abu Said in 1335.

### **The Golden Horde**

The Golden Horde of Batu had more time and more room for expansion of its territories than any other Mongol khanate. The Mongols maintained sovereignty over eastern Russia from 1240 to 1480, and they controlled the upper Volga area, the territories of the former Volga Bulghar state, Siberia, the northern Caucasus, Bulgaria (for a time), the Crimea, and Khwarizm. By applying the principle of indirect rule, the Golden Horde Mongols were able to preserve the Mongol ruling class and the local dynasties for more than 200 years. The influence that the Golden Horde Mongols came to have over medieval Russia and other areas was immense and lasting. They played a role in unifying the future Russian

state, provided new political institutions, influenced imperial visions, and, through indirect rule, facilitated the appearance of a Muscovite autocracy.

The Golden Horde capital at Sarai became a prosperous center of commerce. Here, as in China, Mongol rule meant free trade, the exchange of goods between the East and the West, and also broad religious toleration.

In the mid-thirteenth century, the Golden Horde was administratively and militarily an integral part of the Mongol empire with its capital at Karakorum. By the early fourteenth century, however, this allegiance had become largely symbolic and ceremonial. Although certain Mongol administrative forms—such as census and postal systems—were maintained, other customs were not. The Golden Horde embraced Islam as its state religion and, with it, adopted new and more complex administrative forms to replace those of the old regime that had been devised for conquest. Even though most Mongols remained steppe nomads, new cities were founded, and a permanent urbanized bureaucracy and social structure took shape at Sarai. The Golden Horde allied itself with the Mamluks and negotiated with the Byzantines to combat the Ilkhans in a struggle to control Azerbaijan. Rather than isolating Russia, the Mongol presence and extensive diplomatic system brought envoys to Sarai from central and southern Europe, the Pope, Southwest Asia, Egypt, Iran, Inner Asia, China, and Mongolia.

The Mongols' vast contacts opened Russia to new influences, both Eastern and Western. The reason the Mongols did not occupy Russia itself, but left its administration to local princes, was not inability to administer a society that was both urban and agrarian, or Russian resistance. Rather, some historians believe that Russia had little to offer the Mongols in terms of produce or trade routes, and even tax revenues were insignificant compared with the wealth of the southern realms under their control. The inability of cavalry to operate in forests and swamps—a factor that limited the northward advance of the Mongols and largely determined the northern frontier of their empire—was undoubtedly a distinct disincentive as well.

In time the Golden Horde Mongols and the Mongol Tatars, although still nomads, lost their original identities and—as happened to Mongols in China and Iran—became largely synonymous with the local Turkic peoples, the Kipchak. Arabic and Tatar replaced Mongol as the official language of the Golden Horde, and increasing political fragmentation occurred. The power of the Golden Horde khans slowly declined, particularly as a powerful new state rose in central Russia.



*Elephants carrying Khubilai Khan's command post in battle  
Courtesy Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress*

## **The Mongol Decline**

Contributing to the eventual Mongol decline in Eurasia was a bitter war with Timur, also known as Timur Lenk (or Timur the Lame, from which Tamerlane is derived). He was a man of aristocratic Transoxianian birth who falsely claimed descent from Chinggis. Timur reunited Turkestan and the lands of the Ilkhans; in 1391 he invaded the Eurasian steppes and defeated the Golden Horde. He ravaged the Caucasus and southern Russia in 1395. Timur's empire disintegrated, however, soon after his death in 1405.

The effects of Timur's victory, as well as those of devastating drought and plague, were both economic and political. The Golden Horde's central base had been destroyed, and trade routes were moved south of the Caspian Sea. Political struggles led to the split of the Golden Horde into three separate khanates: Astrakhan, Kazan, and the Crimea. Astrakhan—the Golden Horde itself—was destroyed in 1502 by an alliance of Crimean Tatars and Muscovites. The last reigning descendant of Chinggis, Shahin Girai, khan of the Crimea, was deposed by the Russians in 1783.

The Mongols' influence and their intermarriage with the Russian aristocracy had a lasting effect on Russia. Despite the destruction caused by their invasion, the Mongols made valuable contributions to administrative practices. Through their presence, which in some ways checked the influence of European Renaissance ideas in Russia, they helped reemphasize traditional ways. This Mongol—or Tatar as it became known—heritage has much to do with Russia's distinctiveness from the other nations of Europe.

There were a number of reasons for the relatively rapid decline of the Mongols as an influential power. One important factor was their failure to acculturate their subjects to Mongol social traditions. Another was the fundamental contradiction of a feudal, essentially nomadic, society's attempting to perpetuate a stable, centrally administered empire. The sheer size of the empire was reason enough for the Mongol collapse. It was too large for one person to administer, as Chinggis had realized, yet adequate coordination was impossible among the ruling elements after the split into khanates. Possibly the most important single reason was the disproportionately small number of Mongol conquerors compared with the masses of subject peoples.

The change in Mongol cultural patterns that did occur inevitably exacerbated natural divisions in the empire. As different areas adopted different foreign religions, Mongol cohesiveness dissolved. The nomadic Mongols had been able to conquer the Eurasian land

mass through a combination of organizational ability, military skill, and fierce warlike prowess, but they fell prey to alien cultures, to the disparity between their way of life and the needs of empire, and to the size of their domain, which proved too large to hold together. The Mongols declined when their sheer momentum could no longer sustain them.

## **Mongolia in Transition, 1368–1911**

### **Return to Nomadic Patterns**

The end of the Yuan was the second turning point in Mongol history. The retreat of more than 60,000 Mongols into the Mongolian heartland brought radical changes to the quasi-feudalistic system. In the early fifteenth century, the Mongols split into two groups, the Oirad in the Altai region and the eastern group that later came to be known as the Khalkha (see Glossary) in the area north of the Gobi. A lengthy civil war (1400–54) precipitated still more changes in the old social and political institutions. By the middle of the fifteenth century, the Oirad had emerged as the predominant force, and, under the leadership of Esen Khan, they united much of Mongolia and then continued their war against China. Esen was so successful against China that, in 1449, he defeated and captured the Ming emperor. After Esen was killed in battle four years later, however, the brief resurgence of Mongolia came to an abrupt halt, and the tribes returned to their traditional disunity.

After nearly two more decades of Oirad-Khalkha conflict, another Oirad chieftain, Dayan Khan, assumed central leadership in 1466 and reunited most of Mongolia. By the end of the fifteenth century, he had restored peace and had established a new confederation comprising a vast region of north-central Asia, between the Ural Mountains and Lake Baykal. He then extended his control eastward to include the remainder of Khalkha Mongolia. The Oirad were surrounded by the Turkic descendants of the Chagadai Mongols who occupied the lowlands to the east and west, in the three independent khanates of Yarkand (modern Xinjiang south of the Tian Shan Mountains), Ferghana, and Khwarizm. Early in the sixteenth century, these three khanates were overwhelmed, however, by the Uzbeks (see Glossary), who earlier had broken loose from Mongol authority. The Uzbeks consolidated their control over Bukhara (Bokhara), Samarkand, Khwarizm, and Herat. During Dayan Khan's rule, quasi-feudalistic administration was reestablished, and tribes became more settled, with more specified grazing areas. What little government existed was exercised by noble

descendants of Chinggis (including Dayan), but it met with great resistance.

After the death of Dayan in 1543, the Oirad and the Khalkha disintegrated once more into insignificant and quarrelsome tribal groupings. The Torgut subclan of the Oirad was now perhaps the most vital of the Mongol peoples. The Torgut raided frequently across the Urals into the Volga Valley, which had been conquered by the new Muscovite empire. Farther east the Khalkha roamed the region north and south of the Gobi; the Ordos Mongols and the Chahar Mongols became loosely grouped in a confederation holding most of Southern Mongolia. The boundaries of territories ruled by the Uzbeks remained relatively stable.

Throughout this period of discord among the Mongols, they nonetheless shared a continuing hostility to the Ming. The struggle was maintained principally by the Khalkha. Although the title had become almost meaningless, the line of the khans had continued in the Chahar tribe, the leader of which became the rallying point for the conflict against China.

The war with China was renewed with considerable energy after Altan Khan (1507-83) of the Tumed clan united the Khalkha. Although he was not so prominent in history as his predecessor, Dayan, or his successor, Galdan Khan (1632-97), Altan was probably the greatest of the Mongol princes in the centuries following the collapse of the Yuan. By 1552 he had defeated the Oirad and had reunited most of Mongolia. It soon became obvious to Altan that there was nothing to be gained by continuing the war with the Ming; the empire of Chinggis never could be restored. Accordingly, he concluded a treaty with the Ming emperor in 1571, ending a struggle that had lasted more than three centuries.

In the remaining eleven years of his life, Altan aggressively pushed Mongol power to the south and the southwest, and he raided Tibet extensively. Altan, in turn, was coopted by a Buddhist revival in Tibet, and he became a fervent convert. In 1586 the first lamaist monastery was established in Mongolia, and Buddhism—specifically, Lamaism—became the state religion.

### **Caught Between the Russians and the Manchus**

By the early seventeenth century, the power of the khan was greatly weakened, and the pattern of decentralized rule reemerged. Small tribes within each *tumen* became petty realms ruled over by individual princes. Division of inheritances further weakened the overall power structure, and *tumen* subdivisions (battalions, referred to in later Mongol history as banners—see Glossary—or *koshuus* in Mongol) were widely dispersed and therefore fragmented. At

the same time that Mongol rule was disintegrating, tsarist Russia in the west and the Manchus in the east were expanding steadily. The Mongol and the Turkic peoples, traditionally conquerors, could now be conquered themselves not because their warlike proclivities had decreased, but because the art of war had progressed beyond the capacity of essentially nomadic peoples. Their economic resources would not permit the production or the purchase of muskets and cannon, against which their cavalry could not stand.

A new process of conquest began when most of what is now north-eastern China was consolidated by the Manchus. Essentially nomadic in origin, the Manchus were descended from the Jurchen, who earlier had established the Jin empire. Early in the seventeenth century, under their leader Nurhaci, the Manchus began to press into southern Mongolia.

The westward movement of the Manchu soon involved them in a struggle with the last of the great khans, Ligdan Khan of the Chahar Mongols. Ligdan had been attempting to reestablish Chahar predominance among the Khalkha, particularly among those tribes inhabiting the region south of the Gobi. These efforts alarmed his neighbors, who called upon Nurhaci for assistance. For several years, it appeared that the Manchu conqueror had met his match because Ligdan possessed some of the military prowess of his ancestors. Although he could not prevent the Manchus from gaining control of the territory of the neighboring Ordos Mongols, Ligdan beat back Manchu efforts to move farther west. After his death in 1634, however, Mongol resistance to the Manchus collapsed in southern Mongolia. This is the period of the Mongolian national hero, Tsogto Taji, who is said to have been the only northern Mongol aristocrat to have led his subjects against the Manchus in defense of the southern Mongols.

Meanwhile, many of the Torgut, the westernmost of the Oirad Mongols, began to migrate westward in approximately 1620. Possibly the movement was a reaction to the growing dominance of the Dzungar Mongols, an Oirad subclan and neighbors of the Torgut to the south. In any event, the Torgut fought their way through Kirghiz and Kazakh territory, to cross the Embe River. Becoming better known as the Kalmyk tribe, they subsequently settled in the Trans-Volga steppe and raided Russian settlements on both sides of the river. Finally submitting to Russia in 1646, they maintained autonomy under their own khan. They became an excellent source of light cavalry for the Russians, who later used them in campaigns against the Crimean Tatars and in Inner Asia.

The Mongol interest in Tibet that had been aroused in Altan's campaigns seems to have been transmitted to the Dzungar. They

inhabited a region east of Lake Balkash that extended eastward into northern Xinjiang. They carried out a number of campaigns into Tibet, and by 1636 they had established a virtual protectorate over the region. Because of the generally high quality of their leadership at this time, the Dzungar dominated Mongolia for much of the seventeenth century.

Farther east, the religious revival begun by Altan had continued unabated, and it was perhaps the greatest single influence on Mongol life and culture during the seventeenth and succeeding centuries. In 1635 the khan of the Tushetu tribe proclaimed that his son was the reincarnation of an ancient and respected scholar, who had achieved such a state of virtue that he had become known as a buddha. Thus the young Tushetu prince was named the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu or Living Buddha, becoming the highest ecclesiastical figure in Mongolia. This was the beginning of a line of theocratic leaders that was to continue unbroken for nearly three centuries. The successors of the first Jebtsundamba Khutuktu were also believed to be reincarnations, and all were found among the Tushetu.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Russian exploration and annexation had become very worrisome to the Mongols and the Turks to the southwest. In response to this pressure, in 1672 Ayuka Khan of the Torgut Mongols raided through western Siberia, across the Urals and the Volga, and into Russia. He then made peace with the Russians on terms that enabled him to continue to control his lands in relative tranquility for the remainder of the century.

Later in the seventeenth century, a new effort toward Mongol unity was attempted by Galdan Khan of the Dzungar. He conquered most of Kashgar, Yarkand, and Khotan (Hotan) from the Kirghiz, and he expanded into Kazakh territory. In about 1682, intending to conquer the Khalkha, he turned eastward. In 1688 the hard-pressed Khalkha appealed to the Manchus for aid. The Manchus were more than pleased to respond, and a Chinese-Manchu army marched to help. A development that further integrated the Mongols into the Manchu apparatus was the Manchus' adoption of the Mongol banner system, which combined administrative and military functions.

By this time, the Manchus had conquered all of China and had established the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) with its capital in Beijing. They had become concerned over the steady Russian expansion eastward that, up to this time, had remained far to the north. The Russians had carefully avoided the still-formidable Torgut, who inhabited the region that now comprises central Siberia. In



*Seventeenth-century  
incense burner  
Courtesy Prints and  
Photographs Division,  
Library of Congress*



this way, the Russians had reached the Amur Valley and the Pacific Ocean by mid-century. In the period between 1641 and 1652, the Russians gradually conquered the Buryat Mongols, thereby gaining control of the region around Lake Baykal. The Manchus observed with considerable apprehension Russia's growing pressure on the Turkic peoples and the Mongols of Inner Asia. As early as 1653, there were clashes between Manchus and Russians in the Amur Valley. In 1660 the Manchus ejected the Russians from the Amur region, only to see them reappear when the Manchus became occupied with internal troubles in southern China.

In 1683 a second Manchu military expedition began systematic operations to eject the Russians, and in 1685 it seized the Russian stronghold at Albazin. But later that year, when the Manchus withdrew, the Russians reconstructed the fortifications. The Manchus began to prepare for a more extensive war. It was at this time that the Khalkha appealed to the Manchus for aid. The Manchus promptly responded, seeing an opportunity to gain control of Mongolia as a base for possible war with Russia.

This move was probably understood by the Russians. They were conducting a campaign in Europe, and they decided that the dispute with China must be settled peacefully. This led to the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, in which the Russians agreed to abandon Albazin and the area north of the Amur River. The

terms of that treaty were supplemented in 1727 by the Treaty of Kyakhta, which further delineated the Sino-Russian border.

### **The End of Independence**

Meanwhile, the Manchus had sent a large army into northern Mongolia to confront Galdan in an effort to preempt any attempts at establishing a new Mongol empire. The employment of artillery had a decisive effect, and the Dzungars were routed. In May 1691, Qing emperor Kangxi called a *kuriltai* of principal Khalkha chiefs at Dolonnur. Those present acknowledged Manchu overlordship in return for protection against the Dzungars. It had become apparent by this time that, although there were strong ties between the Qing court and local Mongol rulers, the relations among individual Mongol leaders were weak. The head of each banner was a vassal of the Qing emperor and was beholden to the Chinese treasury for a pension. Mongols not only pledged personal loyalty to the emperor, but they also became inseparable from their banner and could not serve in any capacity in another banner. Membership was hereditary; class structure was rigid; and the whole feudal-like system helped the Manchus isolate and control the Mongols. The banners, in effect, became petty fiefdoms.

By this time, the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu had fled to escape Galdan's renewed advances. After five years of continued raiding by the Dzungars into central Mongolia, Kangxi led 80,000 troops into Mongolia and in 1696 crushed Galdan near Jao Modo (south of present-day Ulaanbaatar). Galdan retreated, and he died the next year. This ended the influence of the Dzungars in most of Mongolia, although they retained control of the western regions and of parts of Xinjiang and Tibet.

Despite the defeat at Jao Modo, twenty years later the Dzungars again were embroiled in war with the Qing. In 1718 Galdan's nephew and heir, Tsewang Rabdan, invaded Tibet to settle a prolonged dispute over the successor to the Dalai Lama. His troops seized Lhasa, imprisoned the Dalai Lama, and ambushed a Manchu relief force. Kangxi retaliated in 1720; two Chinese armies defeated the Dzungars and drove them from Tibet. This was the first war in which Mongol forces made extensive use of musketry; they were not very effective, however, against the larger, better-armed and better-equipped Qing forces. After the death of the Dalai Lama, a new Dalai Lama was installed by Kangxi, and a Manchu garrison was left in Lhasa. Meanwhile, another Chinese army invaded Dzungar territory to capture Ürümqi and Turpan. Additional Chinese punitive expeditions eventually defeated the Dzungars in

1732 and virtually ended Mongolian independence for nearly two centuries.

The Russian and the Chinese empires continued their expansions into Inner Asia during the eighteenth century. They found it expedient to delimit the borders between the respective areas of ancient Mongolia that they had conquered in the seventeenth century. This was done by the Treaty of Kyakhta in 1727, which established the border between the portions of Mongolia controlled by China and those controlled by Russia.

In the period 1755 to 1757, serious revolts against Chinese rule broke out among the Dzungar in Xinjiang. These were suppressed promptly, and Chinese control over western Mongolia and Oirad territory was strengthened. In 1771 the Chinese government persuaded part of the Kalmyk tribe to return from Russia to repopulate the devastated region.

During the 1750s, as a result of Manchu administrative policies, the first distinction was made between northern and southern Mongolia. The southern provinces—Suiyuan, Chahar (or Qahar), and Jehol (or Rehol), known as Inner Mongolia—were virtually absorbed into China. The remainder of the region—the northern provinces, which became known as Outer Mongolia—was considered an “outside subordinate” by the Manchus, and it was largely ignored. After another 100 years, however, China again became alarmed by Russia’s expansionist policy and colonial development in the regions north and west of Outer Mongolia. Increased Chinese activity in Outer Mongolia resulted in some economic and social improvements, but it also revealed to the Mongolians the possibilities of playing off the two great empires against each other. Chinese merchants and moneylenders had become ubiquitous, and the extent of Mongol debt had become enormous, by the early nineteenth century. The debt situation, combined with growing resentment over Chinese encroachment, gave impetus to Mongol nationalism by the beginning of the twentieth century.

During the period of Chinese dominance, Mongolia not only experienced a century of peace, but it became an increasingly theocratic society. Buddhism relatively early had absorbed shamanism, and the result was a unique local religion (see Religion, ch. 2). By the mid-nineteenth century, however, turmoil in China, caused by internal rebellion and by pressures from the West, resulted in a breakdown of the increasingly expensive administrative apparatus in Outer Mongolia. Mounting debts and higher taxes, which led to a growing impoverishment of Outer Mongolia, gradually rekindled traditional Mongol dissatisfaction with the Manchu overlord. Rioting, Mongol troop mutinies, and other anti-Chinese

incidents occurred with increasing regularity in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Outside help was sought from Russia in 1900, when a mission—which failed—was sent to St. Petersburg. Thereafter, reform-minded Chinese leaders abolished many old social and political proscriptions, and, despite Mongol resentment of the idea and of continued Chinese repression, preparations were being made for constitutional government when revolution broke out in China.

## **Modern Mongolia, 1911–84**

### **Period of Autonomy, 1911–21**

With the end of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, revolutionary ferment also emerged in Mongolia. As early as July 1911, participants in an anti-Chinese meeting in Yihe Huree (see Glossary) had petitioned the Russian government—which long had sought the independence of Outer Mongolia—for help against China. On December 1, 1911, Outer Mongolia in effect proclaimed its independence on the basis that its allegiance had been to the Manchus, not to China. On December 28, the eighth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu became Bogdo Khan (holy ruler) of an autonomous theocratic government; a 20,000-troop army was created; and Russian officers appeared in Yihe Huree (renamed Niyslel—capital—Huree, or Urga) to equip, to organize, and to train the army. The new Chinese government refused to recognize Mongolian independence, but it was too preoccupied with internal discord to enforce its sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Russia was moving rapidly to take advantage of the situation. On November 3 and December 19, 1912, respectively, Mongolian-Russian and Mongolian-Tibetan agreements were signed in Niyslel Huree. The latter agreement granted mutual recognition of independence; the former only affirmed Mongolia's autonomy from China. The Russian agreement and a protocol to it created a tsarist protectorate over Outer Mongolia. The Japanese, too, sought, unsuccessfully, to influence the independence movement in 1911 and 1912 with contributions of arms and money. Following the mobilization of a Mongol army to liberate Inner Mongolia, several other agreements affecting Mongolia were reached. In a November 5, 1913, agreement, Russia recognized Chinese suzerainty over Mongolia, and China recognized Outer Mongolia's right to self-rule and to the control of its own commerce and industry. China also agreed not to send troops into Mongolia. On May 25, 1915, a second, tripartite agreement (among China, Mongolia, and Russia), the Treaty of Kyakhta, formalized

Mongolian autonomy. Russia's involvement in World War I, however, reduced the attention that the tsar's government could pay to Mongolia. This neglect, which occurred at the same time as new monarchical machinations in China, rekindled Japanese interest in, and aid to, anti-Chinese forces in Mongolia and neighboring Manchuria.

After revolution broke out in Russia in November 1917, Japan moved to aid anti-Bolshevik forces in Mongolia, and a Japanese-fostered pan-Mongol movement was established under the influence of the Buryat Mongols. A pan-Mongolia conference was held in February and March 1919 in Chita, Siberia. The participants decided to establish a Mongol state, comprising Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Buryatia (present-day Buryatskaya Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) and to send letters to the Versailles Peace Conference that ended World War I. Despite formation of a small provisional government—in which Outer Mongolia refused to participate—and promises of Japanese aid, the movement failed in the face of renewed Chinese efforts to regain control over all of Mongolia. In October 1919, a Chinese warlord army, emboldened by the demise of the tsarist regime, occupied Niyslel Huree and received an acknowledgment of Chinese sovereignty from the Bogdo Khan government. The Mongol army was disarmed and disbanded.

Soon, however, the effects of the upheaval in Russia began to reach Mongolia. In October 1920, Russian White Guard troops under Baron Roman Nicolaus von Ungern-Sternberg invaded from Siberia. In February 1921, after a fierce battle, von Ungern-Sternberg drove the Chinese out of Niyslel Huree and occupied the city. At first the White Guards were hailed as liberators by Mongolian monarchists, but in the next several months von Ungern-Sternberg's reign of terror and destruction aroused popular opposition.

The threatening actions of Chinese, Japanese, and White Russian forces greatly stimulated Mongolian nationalism during this time. Two secret revolutionary circles emerged in Niyslel Huree in 1919, the military-oriented Dzuun (East) Huree Group, under Damdiny Sukhe Bator and Horloogiyn Dandzan, and the civilian-oriented Consul's Group, headed by Horloyn Choybalsan and Dogsomyn Bodoo. The Communist International (see Glossary), also called the Comintern, which was headquartered in Moscow, advised the two groups to merge in order to present a united front to the Chinese and the White Russian occupation forces. The merger was accomplished at a conference in Irkutsk in March 1920, with the formation of the Mongolian People's Party under the

leadership of Sukhe Bator. The Jebtsundamba Khutuktu gave his encouragement and support to the revolutionary leaders, and in his name they appealed to Moscow for more assistance.

The Japanese were pressing ahead with efforts to take advantage of the chaos caused by the Russian civil war. A large Japanese force, nominally part of an anti-Bolshevik Allied Expeditionary Force intervening in eastern Siberia, had taken over much of the Trans-Siberian Railway between Vladivostok and Lake Baykal. Japanese funds were provided to von Ungern-Sternberg and other White Russian elements, in order to prevent the Soviet government from establishing control in eastern Siberia and from obtaining too much influence in Mongolia. The Japanese efforts were thwarted to a large degree, however, by the neutralist attitude of United States elements of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and Soviet forces gradually established control over Siberia.

The improved Soviet position in Siberia enabled Moscow to respond to the appeals of the Mongolian nationalists. Earlier, in the 1918 to 1919 period, Moscow had renounced all agreements regarding Mongolia that had been reached with Japan and China. The First Party Congress of the newly formed Mongolian People's Party, was held at Kyakhta (in Siberia, near the Mongolian border) on March 1 to 3, 1921. On March 13, the new party Central Committee formed the Mongolian People's Provisional Government, and, after Sukhe Bator's Mongolian Partisan Army (established in February 1921) captured the Mongolian city of Khiagt (across the border from Kyakhta), a new capital was established. A Mongolian-Soviet military force also had been formed, and by early July it had driven von Ungern-Sternberg's forces out of Niyslel Huree and had occupied the city. On July 11—the date recognized as Mongolia's national day—the Bogdo Khan government was replaced by a new People's Government of Mongolia, a limited monarchy nominally headed by the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu under the title of khan. Bodoog was named premier and foreign minister; Sukhe Bator continued as commander in chief and became minister of war, with Choybalsan as his deputy. The government was bolstered by Soviet troops, who virtually occupied the country (see *Historical Traditions*, ch. 5).

### **Revolutionary Transformation, 1921–24**

Fighting against the White Russians culminated in the capture of von Ungern-Sternberg in August 1921; the rest of his forces were defeated by January 1922. On September 14, 1921, the independence of Mongolia was proclaimed, and on October 26 a legislative assembly, the National Provisional Little Hural, opened. The



*The Bogdo Khan's palace, now a museum, Ulaanbaatar  
Courtesy Allen H. Kassof*

formalization of Mongolian-Soviet relations then was accelerated. On November 5, 1921, a bilateral Agreement on Mutual Recognition and Friendly Relations was signed in Moscow. It recognized the People's Government of Mongolia, and it facilitated the exchange of diplomatic representatives. Furthermore, it provided for the self-determination of Tannu Tuva (see Glossary), a region in northwestern Mongolia that had been a Russian protectorate between 1914 and 1917.

At this juncture, discord emerged among the Mongolian factions. When supporters of the Bogdo Khan regime expressed displeasure with the limits placed on the monarchy, the Mongolian People's Party levied further restrictions on it, while giving more power to the party-controlled government. At the same time, some members of the new regime were concerned about Mongolia's close relationship with the Soviet Union. Even Premier Bodoosought to distance himself from Soviet influence. In August 1922, however, he and forty others were arrested and charged with "counterrevolutionary activities" and with wanting to restore an unlimited monarchy. Bodoos and fourteen others were executed. When the Second Party Congress of the Mongolian People's Party was held in July 1923, Mongolian-Soviet solidarity was reiterated amid calls, for

the first time, in favor of purging “oppressor class elements” from the party.

At this critical stage, several key leadership changes occurred that caused momentous political developments. On February 22, 1923, thirty-year-old revolutionary hero Sukhe Bator died of illness (although Choybalsan later claimed he had been poisoned), leaving the way clear for Choybalsan’s eventual accession. Next, the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu died on May 20, 1924, and the People’s Government, which had resolved to form a republic, forbade the traditional search for the reincarnation of the defunct ruler. This move eliminated the theocratic symbol of Mongolia. At the same time, a new Soviet treaty with China on May 31, 1924 (which provided for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia), set the stage for the final step in the nominal independence of Mongolia.

The Third Party Congress of the Mongolian People’s Party met in Niyslel Huree from August 4 to 24, 1924, but it quickly became embroiled in a debate led by party chairman Dandzan, who, like Bodoo, hoped to reduce Soviet influence. The congress culminated in the arrest and execution of the “capitalist” Dandzan. Among the achievements of the congress was purging the party of “useless elements” and renaming it the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party. On November 25, 1924, with the adoption of a Soviet-style state constitution by the First National Great Hural, the new national assembly, the Mongolian People’s Republic was formally established. The National Little Hural, the standing body when the National Great Hural was not in session, was elected; it, in turn, elected a cabinet with Balingiyn Tserendorj as premier and Choybalsan as commander in chief of the army. At the same time, Niyslel Huree was renamed Ulaanbaatar (literally, Red Hero).

### **Consolidation of the Mongolian People’s Republic, 1925–28**

Soviet troops ostensibly were withdrawn in March 1925 (although some historians have debated whether all actually departed). Despite the treaty—between the Soviet Union and China—that acknowledged Outer Mongolia as an autonomous, but integral, part of China, the Soviet Union explicitly recognized Mongolia’s independence of China in internal affairs and its ability to pursue an independent foreign policy. While continuing its cautious relationship with Beijing, Moscow made it clear that it would permit no Chinese encroachment on Mongolia. Mongolia’s general foreign policy line was based on strong ties with the Soviet Union, “the reliable pillar of [Mongolia’s] independence and prosperity” according to the party line.



Under Moscow's guidance, the leftist leaders of Mongolia began to strengthen their still-weak position. The Mongolian communists, with Comintern help, gradually undermined the rightist elements in the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and attacked the power of the two great institutions that had dominated Mongolia for centuries: first the nobles; then, the abbots (whose monastic followers comprised at least one-third of the adult males). In this period of cautious consolidation, the party abolished the aristocracy's feudal privileges, a reform which had the initial effect of influencing wealthy nobles to embark on capitalist ventures, such as investing in the new cooperatives. Gradually, however, the revolutionaries built a state-guided economy supported by Mongolian cooperatives and by Soviet trade.

Moscow's economic hold on Mongolia tightened as exports to the Soviet Union rose rapidly from about 14 percent of Mongolia's total production (chiefly livestock and animal products), in 1923 to 1924, to 85 percent, in 1928 to 1929. By 1929 Mongolia's imports lagged far behind its exports. Aside from the provision of technical and political advisers, Soviet trade policy did not yet provide for economic development aid to newer socialist countries as had been envisioned by Lenin in 1920.

Other areas of the economy showed more progress. The Mongolian National Bank, established in 1924 as a joint Mongolian-Soviet company, issued the tugrik, the new national currency, as part of monetary reform. The cooperative movement, directed by the Mongolian Building Cooperative, began to show impressive results. A standardized tax system was instituted, and other administrative reforms slowly took hold. The army, equipped and trained by the Soviets, was steadily growing and improving (see *The Mongolian Army, 1921-68*, ch. 5). The government refrained from a direct attack on the venerated religious establishment, but some higher-level monks were imprisoned and executed.

Although the Mongolian communists had not yet overthrown the conservatives in the government and the economic sectors during this period, they had gained progressively in strength as evidenced by the changes they had made in society (see *Society*, ch. 2). Slowly, the young Soviet-taught Mongols were taking over the political, the military, and the economic apparatus. Many nobles retained their wealth, however, and the number of monastics actually increased between 1925 and 1928. Nearly 90 percent of all trade was controlled by Chinese firms in Mongolia. The Fourth Party Congress (September 1925), the Fifth Party Congress (September 1926), and the Sixth Party Congress (September 1927) had

witnessed policy struggles between leftist and rightist elements that presaged the victory of the left.

### **Purges of the Opposition, 1928–32**

A decisive clash between leftists and rightists occurred at the Seventh Party Congress from late October to December 10, 1928. After forty-eight days of debate, party chairman Tseren-Ochiryn Dambadorj was exiled to Moscow, and other rightist members were expelled as the left seized control of the party and the government. With their power now secure at the top and with party opinion united on major policy goals, the leftists accelerated their programs.

Strong Soviet backing was assured by Josef Stalin, who in the meantime had triumphed over his political foes in Moscow. In addition, after 1927 Soviet caution toward China no longer was necessary; Stalin was no longer constrained by his relationship with Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang (Kuomintang in Wade-Giles romanization), or Chinese Nationalist Party, which had broken with the Chinese Communist Party and had consolidated its rule over eastern China from Nanjing. Both domestic and international changes had freed Mongolian leftists for radical changes.

Policies confirming the party line of developing the country along noncapitalist lines were ratified by the Fifth National Great Hural in December 1928. As conservative officials were eliminated from the government, Choybalsan was chosen as head of the National Little Hural. The leftist leaders called for the immediate confiscation of feudal property, the development of a five-year plan, the collectivization of stockbreeders, the ouster of Chinese traders, and the implementation of the Soviet trade monopoly. These extreme measures followed standard Soviet economic policy. In less-sophisticated Mongolia, however, the economic situation seemed to defy such planning. The basically nomadic society was largely illiterate, and there was no industrial proletariat; the aristocracy and the religious establishment held a large share of the country's wealth; popular obedience to traditional authorities continued to be widespread; the party lacked grass-roots support; and the government had little organization or experience. Nevertheless, the party was receptive to Moscow's directives; and the Mongolian revolutionaries made mistakes similar to those of the Soviets through an excess of zeal, intolerance, and inexperience.

The first harsh repression of opposition came in 1929. Under the direction of Choybalsan, more than 600 feudal estates (herds and fixed property) were confiscated and were given to members of the laity and to monks who left their monasteries. In 1931 and 1932, the property of more than 800 religious and secular leaders

was seized, and more than 700 heads of households were killed or imprisoned. The antireligious campaign was three-pronged: ordinary monks were forced to leave the monasteries and enter the army or the economy; monks of middle status were put in prison camps; and those of highest rank were killed. Collectivization followed expropriation, and by 1931 more than one-third of the stock-raising households had been forcibly communized.

The brutal collectivization of herdsmen was rapid, and it caused bloody uprisings. Although the Eighth Party Congress from February to April 1930 had recognized that the country was unprepared for total socialization, the party reaction to opposition was to re-enforce its measures nevertheless. The massive shift from private property to collectivization and communization was accelerated. The party then attacked the entire monastic class, the nobility, the nomads, and the nationalists, while purging its own ranks. The government imposed high and indiscriminate taxes, confiscated private property, banned private industry, forced craft workers to join mutual aid cooperatives, and nationalized foreign and domestic trade and transportation.

Extremism produced near-disaster. The power of the monks and the feudal nobles finally was broken, Chinese traders and other foreign capitalists were ousted, and still greater dependence on Soviet aid was required (see *The Suppression of Buddhism*, ch. 2). The mechanical imposition of communes on an unprepared nomadic sheep-herding and cattle-herding society, however, resulted in the slaughter of 7 million animals in three years by angry and frightened herders. Mongolia's economy, which rested entirely on animal husbandry, was severely affected. The failure of communes, the hasty destruction of private trade, and inadequate Soviet supplies contributed to spreading famine. By 1931 to 1932, thousands were suffering severe food shortages, which, together with the people's reaction to terror, had brought the nation to the verge of civil war. Finally the government was forced to call in troops and tanks; with Soviet assistance, it suppressed the spreading anticommunist rebellion in western Mongolia.

In May 1932, a month after anticommunist uprisings in western Mongolia, the Comintern and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union directed the Mongolian party to end its extremism. The next month, the party Central Committee rejected its prior policy as "leftist deviation" and expelled several top leaders as "left-wing adventurers." Choybalsan announced that "the overall development of our country has not yet entered the stage of socialism, and also it is wrong to copy Soviet experience in every single thing." The entire socioeconomic pattern was swiftly changed. The

collective farm experiment was dropped, worker cooperatives were abandoned, the cattle tax was reduced, and herders and peasants again were allowed to hold private property. Foreign trade, still channeled exclusively to the Soviet Union, continued to be controlled by the state, however. Under continuing Soviet protection and domination, Mongolia now settled down to a period of gradual social change.

An underlying reason for Moscow's reversal of the course of Mongolian socialism had been the growing Japanese threat. The September 18, 1931, Mukden incident had opened the way for Japan to establish Manchukuo (Japanese-controlled Manchuria). Mongolians were not alone in the fear that Japan might try to establish a Japanese-controlled Mongolian monarchy, Mengkukuo.

### **Economic Gradualism and National Defense, 1932-45**

#### *The New Turn Policy, 1932-40*

The new policy of socioeconomic gradualism—the New Turn Policy—continued until the mid-1940s, when Mongolian socialism entered its modern stage of collectivization and economic growth. The Ninth Party Congress in September and October 1934 pronounced the New Turn a success, but it became obvious that this gradualism actually had been determined by the basic Soviet need to maintain Mongolia as a stable buffer state against either Japanese or Chinese expansion. At the beginning of this period, the Soviets did not want to enlarge Mongolia's small-scale industries because this might provide a further incentive for Japanese invasion. Instead, Mongolia's raw materials were used to strengthen the Soviet Union, while Soviet Red Army units and a large cavalry-oriented Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army were deployed to defend Mongolia against attack.

On November 27, 1934, a Mongolian-Soviet "gentlemen's agreement" was reached that provided for mutual assistance in the face of Japanese advances in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. In January 1935, Soviet troops reentered Mongolia as Japanese forces began to probe the Mongolian-Manchurian border. On March 12, 1936, the 1934 agreement was upgraded when the ten-year Mongolian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship—which included a mutual defense protocol—was signed. The pact did not mention Chinese sovereignty over Mongolia, and Moscow ignored Chinese protests.

In addition to concluding defense treaties with the Soviet Union, Mongolia concentrated on building its army with Soviet guidance



*Monument to Sukhe Bator, Ulaanbaatar  
Courtesy Allen H. Kassof*

and military aid. In 1936 military expenditures were doubled, and by 1938 more than half of Mongolia's budget was for defense. The government built paved roads, extended railroads, and established military air bases and communication lines, all with Soviet aid. Military equipment and training also were supplied by the Soviet Union. It is estimated that during World War II the Mongolian Army numbered between 80,000 and 100,000 troops, a huge percentage of the total population of 900,000.

Security concerns and a more conservative economic approach prevented major advances in stock raising and other internal development during this period. A few small Mongolian-Soviet enterprises were initiated to support the war economy. The abandonment of agricultural communes and the return to private enterprise signaled a trend toward gradualism. Voluntary producers' cooperatives were encouraged, but they remained small until the 1950s (see *Peacetime Development, 1946-52*, this ch.). Only a few state farms were started. Apart from some veterinary and credit assistance, the government made few efforts to support the nomads, and by 1941 herds had reached the highest recorded growth in Mongolian history. Consumer cooperatives continued to expand, and the state controlled the rest of internal trade.

The policy of gradualism was particularly ineffective in education. In 1941 an estimated 90 percent of the people were illiterate. In 1942 the country's first university—Choybalsan University, later renamed Mongolian State University—was established in Ulaanbaatar, but the spread of general education had to await the late 1940s and the 1950s. The first large-scale literacy program did not begin until 1947 (see Education, ch. 2).

Despite the government's official policy of not overtly persecuting religious beliefs, its antireligious campaign continued slowly but relentlessly. Emphasis was placed on ideological and economic persuasion, which curtailed monastic growth and induced monks of lower rank to return to secular life. Government representatives were attached to monasteries to monitor their activities, construction of new monasteries was forbidden by law, the enrollment of minors was disallowed, and monks became eligible for military service. Many monasteries were destroyed; others were converted to secular use. Methods of suppression became especially bloody in the second half of the 1930s. In 1935 abbots and monks of higher rank were tried publicly; in 1937 and 1938, about 2,000 of them were executed. Thousands of others were arrested and jailed. The financially shattered monasteries gradually were closed in the period 1938 to 1939.

The campaign against the Buddhists was largely successful. Within two decades, the resident monastic population was reduced from about 15,000 to approximately 200 monks. A handful of small monasteries and one large institution were all that were left physically of what had been, at the century's start, the best organized and most intellectual force in Mongolian life.

There also were renewed purges in the inner party ranks in 1937 to 1939. Minor rebellions continued to plague the government, and uncooperative political leaders increasingly were accused of aiding the opposition or the Japanese. One after the other, many top party and government officials fell from power and were executed or were imprisoned. By 1939 Choybalsan had emerged as the premier, the minister of war, and the undisputed leader of Mongolia. It later was acknowledged, in 1956 and in 1962, that Choybalsan had "committed serious errors" and had established a "personality cult" during this period (see Socialist Construction under Tsendenbal, 1952-84, this ch.).

In March and April 1940, the Tenth Party Congress met. Although it confirmed Yumjaagiyn Tsendenbal as general secretary, Choybalsan continued to be the predominant force in the party. The ensuing Eighth National Great Hural adopted a new state constitution, which, however, made no basic alterations in the 1924

constitution. Although it emphasized the new Mongolian authority structure, the bypassing of capitalism, and the necessity of overall state planning, the 1940 constitution did not change the policy of gradualism. Private ownership, especially of livestock, was allowed until the turn to total communization began in late 1947.

### *National Defense, 1940–45*

As political and religious purges finally drew to a close, the international situation worsened. Fighting had broken out, in May 1939, with Japanese forces based in Manchukuo. That summer a Japanese army invaded eastern Mongolia. Soviet General Georgi Zhukov commanded the Soviet-Mongolian army that met this invasion. Between May and September 1939, there was large-scale ground and aerial fighting along the Khalkhyn Gol, a river in north-eastern Mongolia. The Mongolian troops and their Soviet allies severely defeated the Japanese, who may have sustained as many as 80,000 casualties compared with 11,130 on the Mongolian-Soviet side. Hostilities ended on September 16, 1939. The Soviet Union and Japan signed a truce, and a commission was set up to define the Mongolian-Manchurian border. Although Japan did not invade again, it did mass large military forces along the Mongolian and the Soviet borders in the course of the war, while continuing its southward drive into China.

The Soviet position in Mongolia was now fully consolidated. Throughout World War II, Choybalsan followed Moscow's directives, and Mongolia supported the Soviet Union with livestock, raw materials, money, food, and military clothing. The Mongolian army was maintained intact throughout the war; it served as an important buffer force in the Soviet Far East defense system, but it did not actually join the Red Army. Moreover, the Soviets, on the occasion of the April 13, 1941, Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, obtained a commitment from Japan to respect Mongolia's territorial integrity.

Modernizing the army and keeping it at peak mobilization was a heavy drain on the nation's undeveloped economy and small population. Even so, the party leaders pressed on with what limited social progress they could manage in a wartime situation. As more teachers became trained, literacy began to accelerate, and government efforts to assist the herdsmen in sheltering, feeding, and caring for their livestock continued. Stock raising bore the major war burden, however, and with large Soviet requisitions to fill, herd totals fell sharply during the war.

Mongolia's wartime neutrality ended in the closing days of World War II. On August 10, 1945, two days after the Soviet Union had

declared war on Japan, Mongolia also declared war on Japan. The Mongolian army, some 80,000 strong, joined Soviet troops in invading Inner Mongolia and Manchuria. On August 14, 1945, in the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, China agreed to recognize the independence of Mongolia within its "existing boundary," provided that a plebiscite confirmed the Mongolian people's desire for independence. Mongolia obliged, and in an October 20 referendum, 100 percent of the electorate voted for independence from China. On January 5, 1946, China recognized Mongolian independence and, on February 14, agreed to exchange diplomatic representatives. None, however, were exchanged. The ensuing Chinese civil war and the victory of the Chinese communists over the Guomindang government in 1949 led instead to Ulaanbaatar's recognition of the new People's Republic of China.

### *Peacetime Development, 1946-52*

On February 27, 1946, Mongolia and the Soviet Union signed the ten-year renewable Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance and the first Agreement on Economic and Cultural Cooperation. With the war over and Chinese and Japanese threat eliminated from Mongolia, the way for renewed assertion of Soviet influence in Mongolia was clear. Mongolia was a strong defense buffer, a trading partner, and a dependable ally in international conferences for the Soviet Union. A further indication of close ties was Mongolia's adoption in February 1946 of the Cyrillic alphabet for use in schools and military units (see Ethnic and Linguistic Groups, ch. 2).

Secure in its relations with Moscow, Ulaanbaatar expanded its other international ties. Diplomatic relations were established with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the new communist governments in Eastern Europe. Mongolian participation in communist-sponsored conferences and international organizations increased; Mongolia applied for membership in the United Nations, but representatives from Ulaanbaatar were not seated until 1961 (see Socialist Construction under Tsedenbal, 1952-84, this ch.). Mongolia was among the first countries to recognize the new People's Republic of China in October 1949.

In its shift to postwar development, the party and the government reduced defense expenditures and shifted personnel from military to civilian enterprises. Rationing was curtailed, and prices for some manufactured items and foodstuffs were reduced. Attention was given to redeveloping the livestock and the agrarian sectors at the same time that modern mining, industrial, transportation, and communications sectors were being established. Initiatives also



were taken in raising education and health levels and in improving the general well-being of the people. The First Five-Year Plan (1948–52), presented at the Eleventh Party Congress in December 1947, was important in carrying out postwar construction (see *Socialist Framework of the Economy*, ch. 3). The first session of the national hural held since 1940, was convened in February 1949 as the Ninth National Great Hural.

### **Socialist Construction under Tsedenbal, 1952–84**

Choybalsan died on January 26, 1952, and a major era in modern Mongolian history came to an end. He was succeeded as government leader by Tsedenbal who continued to be party general secretary as well.

Economic developments and extensive purges of party and government personnel marked the transition. In March 1953, a party Central Committee plenum was convened to review the results of the First Plan, and in November 1954, the Twelfth Party Congress belatedly approved guidelines for the Second Five-Year Plan (1953–57). A continuing major economic target included in the plan was the development of the livestock sector, and a 72 percent increase in grain production over 1952 levels was envisioned. Special attention also was paid to expanding electrification and international economic cooperation. Also at the Twelfth Congress, Dashiyn Damba was elected general secretary, replacing Tsedenbal as party leader.

In 1956 the party Central Committee condemned the “personality cult” of Choybalsan, specifically pointing out the excesses of the 1937 to 1939 period. Claiming success for the Second Plan, the Thirteenth Party Congress, March 17 to 22, 1958, adopted a special Three-Year Plan (1958–60), aimed at raising Mongolia from a livestock economy to an agricultural-industrial economy, all with Soviet aid. New emphasis was placed on stepping up industrial capacities—particularly in the coal mining, electric power, and construction sectors—and on increasing output of petroleum industry products, minerals, and nonferrous ores (see *Industry*, ch. 3). Damba was reelected at the Thirteenth Congress, only to be dismissed for ideological reasons and replaced by Tsedenbal several months later. On July 6, 1960, the government adopted the national Constitution that continued to be in force in 1989 (see *Constitutional Framework*, ch. 4). In January 1962, Choybalsan’s “personality cult” again was attacked by the party Central Committee.

Foreign inputs and expansion of international contacts were important to Mongolia’s development plans in the 1950s. A result

of the close alliance of China and the Soviet Union during this period was Sino-Soviet cooperation in developing Mongolia. In 1952 a ten-year Sino-Mongolian Agreement on Economic and Cultural Cooperation marked an important step in developing relations between the two long-estranged nations. China helped build railroad lines, gave ruble aid and loans for construction projects, and even sent large contingents of laborers in the mid-1950s. Ulaanbaatar also subscribed to the anticolonial stance of the 1955 Bandung Conference and adopted the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (see Glossary; see also Foreign Policy, ch. 4). Relations were developed with countries beyond the communist bloc—for example, India, Burma, Cambodia, nations in Africa and the Middle East, and, later, Cuba.

Soviet troops were withdrawn in 1956, increasing Mongolia's control over its own internal affairs. There were residual fears of a renewed Chinese ascendancy, however, despite Mongolia's signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance with China on May 31, 1960, and the improved state of bilateral affairs. Memories of Chinese claims to "lost territories"—a theme, in Chinese foreign policy toward Mongolia, raised by Sun Yat-sen in 1912; reiterated by Chiang Kai-shek in the 1920s and by Mao Zedong in the 1930s; and, although rebuffed, raised at the 1945 Yalta Conference, when Chiang asserted China's claim to suzerainty based on the 1924 treaty with the Soviet Union—were strong in Mongolian consciousness.

Soon after the July 1961 Fourteenth Party Congress, Mongolia had garnered enough support from communist countries and from the Third World to be admitted to the United Nations in October 1961. The following June, Mongolia joined the Soviet-sponsored Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon—see Glossary).

Mongolian-Soviet ties continued to be close during the 1960s; additional aid was granted to Mongolia, and repayment deadlines were extended. In October 1965, a new three-year Agreement on Economic and Cultural Cooperation was signed. A twenty-year Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which replaced the 1946 treaty, was the culmination of a state visit to Ulaanbaatar by the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, in January 1966. Soon after the signing of the friendship treaty, which included a defense clause, there was a buildup in Mongolia of Soviet troops and military infrastructure (including bases, roads, airfields, sheltered fighter aircraft sites, radar detection networks, communication lines, and missile sites). Mongolia, more than ever, had become a front line of Soviet defense against China. As part of

its alliance with the Soviet Union, Mongolia signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963.

As relations with Moscow grew still closer, there was a corresponding coolness in those with Beijing. Although a difficult bilateral question was resolved with China in December 1962, when a border demarcation agreement was reached, by 1966 serious Mongolian-Chinese differences had surfaced. Chinese aid was stopped; trade decreased to low levels; relations cooled. The Chinese were angry over Ulaanbaatar's siding with Moscow in the Sino-Soviet rift; Mongolia, observing the excesses of China's Cultural Revolution, was concerned anew over China's designs on its sovereignty.

After the Fifteenth Party Congress had approved new economic plans in June 1966, Mongolia continued to try to transform its nomadic economy into ranch-style livestock herding and to expand its industrial sector. The economy, however, continued to have severe problems. For example, poor weather plagued the country; in 1967, blizzards caused a US\$37 million loss in livestock alone. Severe winters were followed by drought and by plummeting harvests and exports. Planned increases in agricultural and industrial production did not materialize, and the lack of raw materials continued to hamper even light industry. Some of the blame was placed on the pullout of Chinese economic and technical assistance and the end of trade with China in consumer goods. It was admitted, however, that the economy envisioned in the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1966-70) had "not developed as rapidly as those of fraternal socialist states," and, indeed, achievements fell notably short of goals.

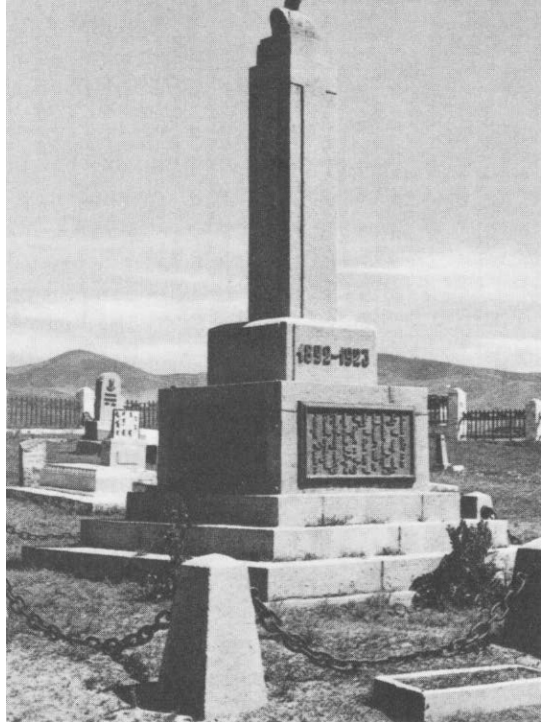
Large infusions of Soviet and Comecon aid eventually had salutary effects in the early 1970s. High-level state visits were exchanged in the 1969 to 1971 period, with the result that Moscow agreed to underwrite the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1971-75). Soviet economic difficulties in the early 1970s, however, had repercussions for Mongolia. The Soviet Union started insisting that trade quotas be honored, a move that caused economic disruption just as Mongolia was recovering from the economic distress of the late 1960s. Nevertheless, some economic progress was achieved between 1971 and 1974, a period during which gross industrial production rose by nearly 45 percent. Severe winters continued to hurt the anticipated growth of livestock herds. By the mid-1970s, direct business and other cooperative links had been established between corresponding Mongolian and Soviet ministries, departments, research institutes, and industries, and cooperative ties also had been established between neighboring Mongolian *aymags* (see Glossary) and Soviet *oblasts*.

More than 100,000 Soviet troops were garrisoned in Mongolia in the early 1970s. Ulaanbaatar's anti-Chinese criticism intensified during this period, ostensibly because of increased numbers of Chinese military exercises along the frontier and alleged anti-Mongolian subversive activities. Mongolia received assurances that Soviet troops would remain; Brezhnev himself, when in Ulaanbaatar, said that Beijing's demand for withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia, as a precondition for the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations, was "absolutely unacceptable."

After a decade of steady growth in party membership, a dramatic change occurred in the composition of those attending the Sixteenth Party Congress in July 1971. Although membership on the Political Bureau, the Central Committee, and the Secretariat remained stable, 82 percent of the delegates were new. As the decade continued, changes at the top began to emerge. In June 1974, Tsedenbal, while retaining his position as general secretary of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, resigned as chairman of the Council of Ministers—the premiership—to become chairman of the People's Great Hural, the de facto president of Mongolia. The former rector of the Mongolian State University, Jambyn Batmonh, in a move presaging the succession a decade later, was appointed premier; he also was elevated to the party Political Bureau. After these changes, the party leadership was more stable. The closeness of Mongolian-Soviet relations was manifested by meetings in October 1976 in Moscow among Tsedenbal, Batmonh, and three other party Political Bureau members and the Soviet Communist Party general secretary Leonid Brezhnev; the president, Nikolai Podgorny; and the premier, Alexei Kosygin. While the talks were described as "fraternal," they also were characterized as "frank," probably because of increased Mongolian demands for economic aid. Soviet aid was forthcoming for the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1976–80), primarily in support of agriculture, mining, fuel, power, food, and light industries. Mongolian relations with Beijing—following Moscow's lead—were less hostile in the years after the 1976 death of Mao, but fears of China's "predatory aspirations" still lingered in Ulaanbaatar. In 1980 Chinese nationals were expelled from Mongolia on charges ranging from gambling and drug use to public disorder and espionage.

Severe weather in the winter of 1976 to 1977 caused some of the worst damage to animal husbandry in a decade. Heavy snowfalls, severe frosts, disease, starvation, and mismanagement combined to create a perilous economic situation. Recovery was slow, and livestock targets were overestimated continually throughout the rest of the 1970s. Developments in other economic sectors, such

*Former burial site of Sukhe  
Bator, Altan Olgii Mountain  
Courtesy Institute of  
Party History, Ulaanbaatar*



as mining and irrigated farming, saw some improvement during the period, however.

The 1980s began with some improvements in the economy, but also with a number of top party and state leadership changes, culminating in the end of Tsedenbal's rule. While Tsedenbal was in Moscow in August 1984, special sessions of the party and the People's Great Hural were held to announce his retirement. Batmonh replaced the reportedly ailing party head, amid tributes to Tsedenbal's forty-four-year career as an "outstanding leader" and "very close friend." In December 1984, Batmonh also was elevated to the chairmanship of the Presidium of the People's Great Hural, and Vice Premier Dumaagiyn Sodnom became premier as Mongolia embarked on historic reforms (see *The Political Process*, ch. 4).

\* \* \*

A number of scholarly sources provide the basic framework for studying Mongolian history. René Grousset's *The Empire of the Steppes* provides a detailed historical analysis of Mongolian history from the Scythian period to the annexation of Mongolia by the Manchus. David Morgan's *The Mongols* provides a succinct account of the high point of Mongol history in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. A more general treatment of Mongol history in the context of general Asian history is in *East Asia: Tradition and*

## *Mongolia: A Country Study*

*Transformation* by John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig. Key sources for those studying Mongolian history are two translated works under the same title, *History of the Mongolian People's Republic*—a condensed Soviet translation of a larger Russian/Mongolian edition by Soviet and Mongolian academicians, which covers the history of Mongolia from the stone age to 1971—and an American translation and annotation of volume three of an original Mongolian work written by Mongolian scholars, which covers the years 1921 to 1966. A detailed documentary history of Mongolia's independence movement is Urgunge Onon and Derrick Pritchatt's *Asia's First Modern Revolution*. Several works by Denis Sinor and Sechin Jagchid also are important contributions. *Mongolia's Culture and Society*, by Jagchid and Paul Hyer, provides excellent background on the historical development of Mongolia. A seminal work on the modern period, which includes an extensive chronology and bibliography, is Robert A. Rupen's *Mongols of the Twentieth Century*. *The Minorities of Northern China* by Henry G. Schwarz and *Russia and the Golden Horde* by Charles J. Halperin provide useful information on Mongol integration into neighboring cultures. For those interested in original source material, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, translated by Francis Woodman Cleaves, should be consulted. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)