

Faszikeln des *Iledkel šastir* handelt es sich um Heft 8 (Sayin noyan ayima der Qalq-a) und Heft 1 (Qorcin) der mongolischen Ausgabe von 1859.<sup>66</sup> Des Weiteren besitzt die Sammlung diverse Eingaben verschiedener Banner an einzelne Ministerien aus der Regierungszeit des 8. rje btsun dam pa Qutuytu. Das letztgenannte Aktenmaterial bedarf des genaueren Studiums, verspricht es doch Auskünfte über die Verhältnisse in der äusseren Mongolei in den ersten Jahrzehnten des 20. Jahrhunderts.

Mit diesem Hinweis auf die offiziellen Dokumente in der Sammlung Ernst, die einen direkten Bezug zur Forschung der mit diesem Beitrag zu ehrenden Jubilarin herstellt, möchte ich meine kurze Beschreibung abschliessen. In meinem kurzen Beitrag konnte ich nur einige Schlaglichter auf diese bedeutende Schweizer Sammlung werfen. Es bleibt zum Schluss zweierlei anzumerken: Zum einen handelt es sich bei der Sammlung Ernst um eine immer noch wachsende Sammlung, zum anderen aber versteht der Sammler, Herr Prof. Dr. Richard Ernst, seine Sammlertätigkeit nicht nur als Dienst an der Forschung, sondern auch als Aufgabe, das kulturelle Erbe der Mongolen zu bewahren.

<sup>66</sup> Chinesische Doppelblattheft, Format: 22 x 33 cm, gelbe Papierumschläge.

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### Mongol nationalism, Chinese colonialism and Japanese imperialism in Inner Mongolia, 1936-1945

**Abstract:** Between 1936 and 1945 Inner Mongol nationalists established a series of semi-autonomous Mongol governments in Inner Mongolia with Japanese assistance. Although these governments have often been dismissed as puppets of the Japanese, they were manifestations of an Inner Mongol movement for self-determination which emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The goal of this movement shifted between the ideals of a greater Mongol state, far-reaching autonomy within China and separate independence for Inner Mongolia, depending on the changing strategic circumstances. The Inner Mongol governments represented a compromise between Japanese imperial interests and Mongol nationalist aims, forged in the context of Chinese ambivalence towards separate Mongol identity.

In October 1933, Prince Demchugdongrob (Prince De) of West Ujimchin summoned the Mongol princes of Inner Mongolia to a conference at Batuhagalga (Bathaalg, Bailingmiao) to decide the future of Inner Mongolia.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Outer Mongolia had seized the opportunity to declare independence in 1911 at the time of the fall of Qing dynasty, Inner Mongolia had remained uneasily within the new Chinese Republic. Successive Chinese leaders had promised the Inner Mongols respect and self-rule, but for the most part actual Chinese policy had disappointed the Mongols. More and more land in the Mongol regions came under Chinese agriculture and Chinese administrative practice was becoming the norm. Until the early 1930s, there was little that the Inner Mongols could do to resist this growing Chinese encroachment on their lands. The Mongolian People's Republic to the north was hardly an attractive alternative. There a nominally independent Stalinist regime was engaged in

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Inner Mongolia' refers to the Mongol territory south of the Gobi desert and 'Outer Mongolia' refers to the Mongol lands north of the Gobi desert. These terms originated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Manchu court supervised affairs in Outer Mongolia less closely than in Inner Mongolia.

brutally suppressing Mongol traditions, purging nationalist bureaucrats and herding lamas into forced labour camps.

At the time when Prince De called the Batuhagalga meeting, however, a new force had appeared on the horizon to offer ambiguous hope to Inner Mongol nationalists. The Japanese Kwantung Army had occupied Manchuria and the eastern part of Inner Mongolia and had established a new state there under the name Manchukuo. Although the territory within the new state consumed much Japanese energy as they sought to find a workable political format and to marshal the state's resources for the Imperial economy, Japan clearly had ambitions beyond the borders of Manchukuo. The strategy of Prince De and other leaders in Inner Mongolia was to recruit these ambitions and the anti-Japanese feeling of the Chinese Nationalist Government to achieve a high level of autonomy within the Chinese state frame. The Mongol conference at Batuhagalga was the first official negotiation with the Chinese central government and laid the cornerstone of Inner Mongol autonomy and independence movements in the 1930s and 1940s. The Chinese Government, however, neither wanted to give a genuine autonomy to the Mongols, nor was prepared to defend Inner Mongolia and North China from the encroaching Japanese advance. Prince De and his followers then turned to the Japanese to achieve the independence that had slipped from their grasp in 1911.

The Mongol Military Government was established by Prince De in 1936 with Japanese army assistance. In 1937, this government became the basis for the Mongol Allied Leagues Autonomous Government (*Monggol chigolanuud holbogalagsan öbertegen jasahu oron*). About two years later, this regime, along with two other governments set up by the Japanese army in northern China, formed the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government (*Monggol holbogalagsan öbertegen jasahu oron, Menggu lianhe zizhi zhengfu* or *Mōko rengō jichi seifu*). After a long and painstaking campaign to convince the Japanese authorities of the desirability of Mongol independence, Prince De achieved partial success. In 1941, in the wake of the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government became the 'Mongol Autonomous State' (*Monggol öbertegen jasahu ulus, Menggu duliguo* or *Mōko hō*). When the War ended in 1945, however, this state disintegrated.

These successive governments and the Mongols who participated in them have been seen by many observers as puppet regimes and puppets respectively. Viewed in the light of the long Inner Mongol struggle for self-determination, however, the term 'puppet' is impossible to sustain. The Inner Mongol autonomy movement which led to the Inner Mongol independence movement with Japanese aid represented a plausible if ultimately failed path toward national self-determination. Mongol collaboration with Japan was a proactive and deliberate strategic choice, made with the aim of promoting Mongol

interests in otherwise unpromising circumstances. The story of the Inner Mongolian governments is one of Mongols endeavouring to shape Japanese plans in the interests of a future independence. Caught between the Chinese and the Japanese, with the Soviet Union looming in the distance, the Mongols of Inner Mongolia made diverse choices based on judgements concerning the political conditions of the time. Although in the end Mongol aspirations were disappointed, examining this history both illuminates alternative outcomes and sheds light on the subsequent history of Mongols in the PRC.

In restoring agency to the Mongols, there is no implication that Japanese policies were primarily intended to assist Mongol aspirations. On the contrary, Japanese policies in the region were a tangle of calculated self interest and ill-considered improvisation. Japanese plans, like those of other colonial powers, were always subject to strategic calculations. It is a mistake, however, to treat Japanese intentions as the sole determinant of relations between Mongols and Japanese in the Mongol lands.

### The Puppet Question

The modern term 'puppet state' came into common usage in reference to Manchukuo, set up by the Japanese Kwantung Army in 1932. Post-war Chinese historians (Lu 1970, Ding 2007, Yu 2005) have also labelled the governments of central Inner Mongolia under Prince De as 'puppet' governments (*kuilei zhengquan*) or 'false' or 'illegal' regimes (*wei zhengquan*), thus analogous to Manchukuo. Similar terms have been applied to the Wang Jingwei regime in China and other regimes sponsored by the Japanese army in Asia. From the start, the term 'puppet' was a derogatory one. It presumed that the puppet regime was illegally created, had no independence of its creator, and thus had no legitimacy. The audience for this deception might be the outside world – deceived into thinking that the puppet was actually a state which properly pursued its own interests in world affairs, rather than simply following the will of a master state – or it might be the people ruled by that state, who were deceived into thinking that they had independence when in fact the state that ruled them was controlled by outsiders. This judgement implied that the puppet state did not rule on behalf of its own people. In short it was a thoroughly negative term, used by enemies to denigrate those who were labelled 'puppets' and 'puppet masters'.

By focusing on the degree of external control, the term 'puppet' directs attention away from the motives and strategies of the local people who took part in such states. The successive Mongol governments in Inner Mongolia had indeed relatively little real independence, but they nonetheless represented a calculated step by Mongol nationalists towards what they hoped would be national independence. The term 'puppet' implies that the 'puppet master' was

in control and that the 'puppet' had no free will at all. In the Mongol case, the so-called 'puppets' frequently used the 'puppet master' to secure their own ends.

The term 'puppet' has become entangled with the issue of collaboration. In all the countries occupied by Axis forces during the Second World War, the post-war issue of how to treat those who had worked for and with the occupation regimes was bitter and contested. On the one hand, there were calls to brand as traitors and to punish those who worked with the occupiers. On the other hand, there were arguments that those who had collaborated should be recognized as having done their best for society under difficult and dangerous circumstances. They had sometimes shielded people from the harshest impact of foreign rule and had thwarted the will of the occupiers in countless subtle ways. The choice between these two approaches had as much to do with post-war political conflicts as with the circumstances of collaboration. Where the new authorities wanted to emphasise national reconciliation, as in the Philippines, the issue of collaboration was largely set aside (McCoy 1980). Elsewhere, as in China, accusations of collaboration could result in criticism, jail sentences and disqualification both of individuals and political groups from political participation. In this context, the term 'puppet' often became a synonym for collaborator and traitor.

The collaboration issue was at its most bitter in occupied nations where working with a foreign occupier was hard to distinguish from treason. The issue took a different form in the case of anti-colonial nationalist movements. Across much of its Asian empire, Japan had raised the banner of national liberation for subject peoples. Nationalists in Indonesia and Burma who worked with the Japanese could argue that they had used the Japanese as a means to combat European colonialism. They could also argue that the colonial powers had forfeited their right to rule by failing to defend their colonies against the Japanese. For leaders such as Sukarno and Aung San, collaboration with the Japanese carried no burden of possible treason but rather was a means to achieve the goal of national independence (Trager 1966:63-67; Gotō 1989: 13-14; 277-88). The Dutch in Indonesia bitterly accused Sukarno of treason and described the Indonesian Republic which he founded as 'Made in Japan', but for most Indonesians Sukarno emerged as the father of the nation and the principal leader in securing independence (Legge 1973:149-181).

Inner Mongolia's succession of 'puppet' regimes had an ambiguous place in this question because of the ambiguous position of the Mongols in the Chinese state. For Mongol nationalists, the Mongols were subjected to Chinese rule much as the Indonesians or Burmese suffered under Western colonial rule. The independence of Outer Mongolia in this view represented the first step in dismantling imperial rule in Asia. For many Chinese nationalists, by contrast,

the Chinese Republic founded in 1911 was not an empire but a community of peoples, including the Chinese and the Mongols, united by their aspiration for modernity and prosperity. From this Chinese nationalist point of view, Mongol nationalism was both a reactionary force of aristocrats and other old elites trying to hold back social progress and a tool used by outside powers to divide and conquer China. Even after Japan had been defeated and the issue of collaboration with the Japanese was in the past, the historical record of association with the enemy became a powerful political tool, used to discredit presumed opponents of Chinese unity (Brook 2005).

This approach has been characteristic not just of political pronouncements by Chinese authorities since 1949 but also of most Chinese scholarship on the topic. Lu Minghui's work *De Wang Menggu zizhi shimo* (1980), for instance, argues that De Wang and his followers were systematically manipulated by Japanese imperialism 'under the name of high level autonomy' and committed the 'crime of traitors'. Eyewitness accounts of events in Inner Mongolia which have been published in China routinely make the almost ritual statement that the governments led by De were 'puppet' regimes or that De and his followers were 'collaborators' or 'traitors' (Qi 1966; Li 1985). Even Prince De's autobiography was edited within the frame of self-criticism of his 'collaboration' with the Japanese and of his 'creation of a puppet regime', although in the original text he himself strongly denies that he was a 'puppet'.<sup>2</sup>

The stark 'puppet' state accusation thrives on meagre information and sweeping judgments. Fortunately, in recent years a number of works have appeared which offer a basis for a more careful consideration of the issue. Jagchid (1999) offers a personal memoir which highlights the complex political situations which De Wang had to face. Narangoa (1998) demonstrates both the constraints within which the Japanese had to work and the initiatives of Mongols to make the most of opportunities presented by the Japanese presence. Mori focuses on Prince De's nationalist aspirations. He points out that Chiang Kai-shek did not accuse Prince De of being a 'puppet' because rather understood that Prince De was a Mongol nationalist and that he was not simply manipulated by the Japanese (Mori 2000: 29-30).

In short, there are two reasons to re-examine the 'puppet' state issue in the context of Japan's intervention in Northeast Asia in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. First, the term obscures the context of long term Inner Mongol nationalist aspirations. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Inner Mongols cherished

<sup>2</sup> *Demuchugedongluofu zishu* [Demchugdongrob's Self Account] (1984) was originally published bit by bit between 1966 and 1982 in the series of *Nei Menggu wenshi ziliao*. For a more detailed history of this publication, see Mori (2000). Mori also translated the autobiography into Japanese and annotated it as *Toku-ō Jiden* (1994).

various visions for the future of their region: as an independent state, as part of a larger state united with the Mongolian People's Republic and as an ethnically defined autonomous component of a multi-ethnic Greater China (Narangoa 2007). By recognizing the complexity of Inner Mongol nationalist aspiration, we place the decision to seek Japanese assistance in context. Second, the term 'puppet' implies that power was entirely on the side of the Japanese. Although power relations between the Japanese and their various subordinates, including the Mongols, were clearly unequal, they were not so unequal that the Japanese called all the shots. The 'puppet' state format not only represented a compromise by the ruling power with local political realities, but also offered important opportunities to local political forces to pursue their own interests, sometimes in direct conflict with the interests of the ruling power. On closer examination, 'puppets' are seldom as subordinate as they first appear.

In brief, this article shows that successive Mongol governments established under Japanese sponsorship in the 1930s and 1940s represented a plausible if ultimately failed path toward national self-determination, one that casts significant light on the conditions of Mongols within the contemporary PRC. Mongol collaboration with Japan was a proactive and deliberate strategic choice, made with the aim of promoting Mongol interests in otherwise unpromising circumstances. The story of the Inner Mongolian governments is one of Mongols endeavouring to shape Japanese plans in the interests of a future independence. Caught between the Chinese and the Japanese, with the Soviet Union looming in the distance, the Mongols of Inner Mongolia made diverse choices based on judgements concerning the political conditions of the time. If in the end Mongol aspirations were disappointed, examining this history both illuminates alternative outcomes and sheds light on the subsequent history of Mongols in the PRC.

Before Prince De's attempt to build an independent Inner Mongol state, there were at least two other initiatives which were important for the history of Inner Mongolia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first involved joining Outer Mongolia, which declared independence in 1911, and creating an all-Mongol unified Mongol state. The second was to seek autonomy within the Chinese Nationalist framework. Although both attempts failed, they laid the ground for the independence movement headed by Prince De.

#### A Greater Mongol state

In December 1911, with the Qing Dynasty collapsing in the face of the Chinese Revolution, the Bogd Khan, spiritual leader of Mongolian Buddhism, declared the independence of Mongolia. The Khan described independence as a natural consequence of the collapse of the Qing: Mongols, Chinese, Tibetans and others

had been ruled as separate domains within the Qing empire, and with the departure of the Qing had come the time for these peoples to go their separate ways. Although the Chinese Republic was yet to be created, the Bogd Khan's declaration also reflected widespread disquiet amongst Mongols about their association with China. Whereas in the early Qing period, the Mongols had had privileged status within the empire, and their lands had been ruled separately from China Proper, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mongol privilege had been eroded and southern and eastern Mongol lands had experienced extensive Chinese settlement. One aim of the independence declaration was to draw an international border between Mongols and Chinese which would put an end to loss of Mongol traditional lands.

Just where the border should run was not clear in the Bogd Khan's declaration. Mongols traditionally regarded Mongolia as extending south to the Great Wall, but by 1911 significant areas north of the Wall already had a Chinese majority. The Bogd Khan's authority was mainly in the area of north of the Gobi, but he called for an independent Greater Mongolia, including Inner Mongolia. Both aristocrats and commoners in Inner Mongolia responded enthusiastically to the formation of an independent Mongol state because they had felt the brunt of the Qing policy of allowing Chinese migrants to settle on Mongol lands and the installation of Chinese provincial governments. Thirty-eight out of forty-nine banners in Inner Mongolia initially declared for the Greater Mongol state. Some princes even moved with all their followers from Inner Mongolia to Urga, the new Mongol capital. The entire Hülünbuir Region of Inner Mongolia declared for independence and joined Outer Mongolia (Futaki 1997).

Many of the princes and officials of Inner Mongolia who joined the Bogd Khan were promoted to ministerial positions and high ranking military posts in the newly independent Mongol government (Lu 1965; Zhou 2007) and they hoped to include Inner Mongolia in the new state. In January 1913, the Bogd Khan sent an army to take control of Inner Mongolia. The attack was initially successful in recovering some parts of Inner Mongolia along the Outer Mongolian border, but soon the army suffered a setback due to a shortage of weapons. At this point, moreover, Mongolian national aspirations became hostage to great power politics. The Russians agreed to Chinese suzerainty over an autonomous Outer Mongolia while the Chinese government led by Yuan Shikai acknowledged Russia's economic interests there. Inner Mongolia was left entirely in the Chinese sphere and Outer Mongolian troops had to withdraw from Inner Mongolia (Nakami 1999:137-152). This arrangement was confirmed in the Kyakhta Tripartite Agreement, signed between Russia, the Republic of China and Mongolia in 1915.

Inner Mongols had argued at the Kyakhta negotiations for including Inner Mongolia in the autonomous area and they were bitterly disappointed by the

Bogd Khan Government's decision to accept the Chinese and Russian demands. They faced the dilemma of whether to give up their vision of independent 'Greater Mongolia' and return to Inner Mongolia within the Chinese Republican framework, or abandon their home - Inner Mongolia—and remain in Outer Mongolia. Based on the discussion at the Kyakhta conference, the Chinese government promised to grant amnesty to all Inner Mongols in the Bogd Khan government and to restore all their rights and titles upon return to their homes. Some of those who returned found the Chinese promises were not kept: they were attacked when they crossed the border, and they found their properties and animals had been confiscated.

The idea of building a Greater Mongol state emerged again at the end of the First World War, when Mongol and Buriyat representatives announced a Greater Mongol Provisional Government in Chita in Siberia. They foreshadowed a democratic republic encompassing Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, Buriyatia, and West Mongolia (the Oirat Mongols, today part of Xinjiang). Once again, the Greater Mongolia idea foundered in the face of lack of interest from the great powers (Futaki 1997:41-50).

#### Autonomy within the Chinese Republican Framework

In 1912, a second path to Mongol self-determination seemed to open with the founding of the Chinese Republic. At this time, the Republic was not simply a manifestation of unified Han Chinese nationalism, but rather a potential vehicle for a vast range of aspirations amongst the peoples of the former Qing empire. For some Inner Mongols, the most appealing path to self-determination seemed to be through autonomous status within the Chinese Republic. Several different considerations were at work. For some Inner Mongols, the alternative of joining Outer Mongolia was not immediately attractive if it meant becoming subjects of the Bogd Khan far away in Urga (now Ulaanbaatar); they felt a continuing loyalty to the government in Beijing even though it was no longer in Qing hands. Seeking to build support for the new Chinese Republic amongst the Mongols, moreover, President Yuan Shikai, promised the aristocrats their traditional rights to land and title. He also wooed the princes with the award of higher official and aristocratic titles (Jagchid 1999:67). Those who still did not want to join the Republic faced military suppression. The Republic, however, was also attractive to progressive-minded Mongols, who saw in it the best chance for social change. Outer Mongolia was associated with the power of the Mongol aristocracy, whereas the Chinese revolution held out the promise of democracy and social progress. Both conservative princes and more progressive intellectuals could see good reason to cast their lot with the Chinese Republic rather than with Outer Mongolia.

Under the new Republic, however, the flood of Chinese migrants into Mongol lands continued and additional Chinese administrations were established to rule these migrants. After Yuan Shikai's death in 1916, Chinese warlords, notably Zhang Zuolin in the northeast, seized Mongol lands and turned them over to cultivation by Chinese farmers in order to assure supplies and revenue for their war efforts. Mongols protested, demanding that the Beijing government stop Chinese immigration into and cultivation of Mongol lands. The government ordered that Chinese cultivation in Mongol territory cease. But the warlords ignored Beijing's order and the migration continued.

In 1928 the Guomindang established a new national government in Nanjing at the conclusion of the Northern Expedition. Mongols had high hopes that the new government would protect their rights. They were encouraged by the 1924 manifesto of Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Guomindang, entitled *Outline of Nation Building*, in which read: 'Regarding the weak and minority nationalities, the government should foster them and make it possible for them to carry out self-determination and self-rule'. Mongols noted many contradictions in Sun Yat-sen's idea concerning the nationalities within the Chinese republic and they disliked being called 'weak and minority nationalities,' but they welcomed the prospect of 'self-determination and self-rule'. In fact, however, the Nationalist Government had no policy of protecting Mongol interests in Inner Mongolia. It continued to create new administrative offices along the Mongol border while working towards the full integration of the Mongols into the new state. In 1928, the Guomindang upgraded the Chinese Special Regions into Provinces and put all the Mongol leagues and banners under the Chinese provincial administration. The Mongol areas in Inner Mongolia were subsumed into Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Rehe, Chahar, Suiyuan, Ningxia and Qinghai provinces. The leagues which used to be the highest level of Mongol administration lost their authority to represent their areas directly to the central government (Wulanshaobu 1987).

The Mongols attempted to negotiate with the Guomindang. A petition by Mongol princes and intellectuals called for the autonomy of Mongol lands within the Republic of China and for a cessation of Chinese settlement and administration. A delegation of representatives of all banners and leagues was sent to Nanjing to negotiate. The Guomindang did not give a satisfactory answer. Instead the government offered to set up a Bureau of Mongol Banner and League Representatives to discuss regulations and laws concerning Mongols. Responding to strong Mongol demand, the Guomindang convened a Mongol conference in Nanjing in 1930 to discuss Mongol concerns. The conference issued a draft of an Organizational Law of Mongol Leagues, Tribes and Banners (*Mengqi zuzhi fa*) which was officially promulgated by the National Government later in 1930. The organizational law proclaimed not

only that the existence and institutions of Mongol leagues and banners would be protected, but also that they would maintain their local self-rule and that the Mongol leagues would stand directly under the jurisdiction of central government, separate from the Chinese provincial administration. The *jasag* system (princely ruling system) would be retained, but the hereditary system was to be abolished and all people in Mongol territory would be equal. This law was drafted with the active participation of Mongol representatives in Nanjing. But it was only partially accepted by the Mongols. While young intellectuals welcomed this law, the conservative Mongol princes including Prince De were against it because it rejected the privileges of the Mongol nobility rights, especially the hereditary system (Jagchid 1999:44-45). Moreover, because the Chinese warlords who controlled the Chinese provinces ignored the Guomintang's rules, it was difficult to implement this law.

In July 1933, Prince De took up the challenge of negotiating again with the Guomintang. With the consent of all ruling princes and banner heads, Prince De issued an open telegram in Batuhagalga announcing the Mongol demand for a higher level autonomy and calling for a congress of all Mongol nobility and other leaders in Batuhagalga to discuss Inner Mongolia's future. The conference was held in October in 1933 and claimed Inner Mongolia's right to self-determination and the right to set up a unified Inner Mongol Autonomous Government. The 'high level' autonomy (*gaodu zizhi*) they requested was meant to encompass control over all matters except international relations and defence.

The Mongol claim for high level autonomy in this historical time reflected the perceived weakness of the Guomintang government in relation to Japan. The Mongol leaders hoped that their bargaining position would be stronger and that they would be able to achieve genuine autonomy within the Chinese Republic. The conference in Batuhagalga was conducted in an atmosphere of anxiety about the future of Inner Mongolia as made clear in the open telegram sent by the conference to the Guomintang government:

Within the past ten years, Outer Mongolia has been stripped away by Soviet Russia, and the Jerim League and Hulunbuir have been annexed by Japan. The Josotu, and Juu-uda Leagues have also recently been swallowed up [by Japan]. Western Inner Mongolia is currently being drawn into these calamities, and northern China is already badly shaken. Our very existence as a people hangs by a thread, and the entire nation is burning with anxiety (Jagchid 1999:77).

The conference then put to the Guomintang the proposition that granting high level autonomy would be the most effective way of winning Mongol support for the beleaguered Chinese Republic.

In this way, it will be possible for the Mongols to support the central government in making the [entire] country prosperous and well governed. It will also satisfy every Mongol heart that fervently hopes for effective government. This will bring about the peaceful coexistence of the five nationalities and help them to merge with one another into one great whole, rescue the nation from destruction, and fortify the frontier territory. This will indeed be good fortune for the Mongols and the entire nation.

The Guomintang, however, feared that the autonomy proposed by the Batuhagalga conference was a prelude to full separatism and they suspected that the approach might have been initiated by the Japanese behind the scenes. The Guomintang sent two representatives, Huang Shaohong and Zhao Pilian, to Bathagalga to talk to the Mongol leaders.

The negotiations went on for a week and were deadlocked several times: while the two government officials tried to persuade the Mongols that Mongol autonomy was not viable, the Mongols insisted that it was necessary and it was consistent with the government's *Outline of the Nation Building*; while the Mongols wanted a high level autonomy, the government representatives said that only a limited self-rule under the Chinese provinces was allowed, but not self-determination; the Mongols insisted of abolishing the Chinese provincial and district administration in Mongol lands, whereas the government officials warned that there were more Chinese than the Mongols in the Mongol lands and said that they therefore could not abolish the Chinese provinces. They also said that the Chinese provinces were more useful for the national defence rather than a Mongol autonomous government, thus rejecting one of the central claims of the conference.

In the end, both side agreed upon eleven principles of Mongol autonomy, including the creation of two or more autonomous Mongol regions directly under the central government, maintaining the leagues and banners, allocation of tax revenue from Mongol lands to the Mongol regions and recognition of all existing rights of Mongols. Some of the Mongol leaders, including Prince De, was disappointed that the agreement did not come to establishing a unified autonomous government, but agreed with the new draft as a step in the right direction. The Mongols were, however, shocked when the central government released a distorted version of the eleven articles. Apparently, the Chinese representatives, Huang and Zhao, who had carried out the negotiation with the Mongols in Batuhagalga had subsequently discussed

the principles with the local Chinese provincial governors and had totally reworked them in favor of the Chinese provinces. Mongol rights were reduced to minimum. These eleven articles were then passed by the Central Political Committee of the Guomindang on 16 January 1934. When the revised text became public, the Mongols became desperate. Mongols in Nanjing immediately protested and went into the streets to demonstrate. In a press conference they explained that they could not accept the distorted resolution and it was a shame on the National government to have officials who were not trustworthy.

Alarmed by the scale of the protest, the Guomindang reversed its position and accepted most of the original Mongol demands except that they replaced the term 'autonomy' with 'local autonomy'. Thus, eight 'Principles of Mongol Local Autonomy' were passed at the Central Political Committee meeting of the Guomindang in February 1934. Even though the Mongols were not able to achieve the high level autonomy they had claimed, they were enthusiastic about setting up a Mongol Local Autonomous Political Council (known generally as the Mongol Political Council) which would stand directly under the central government, bypassing the Chinese provinces and having responsibility for all Mongol affairs in Inner Mongolia.

Batuhagalga, meanwhile, had become the center of Inner Mongol political life. Not only the princes, but also young Mongol intellectuals had gathered there to plan and participate in developing Inner Mongolia's future. As soon as news reached Batuhagalga about the new 'Principles of Mongol Local Autonomy', Mongols there began setting up the Mongol Political Council, which was formally installed on 23 April 1934, with Prince Yondonwangchug as head and Prince De as Secretary General. He Yingqing, the Chinese minister of the military affairs of the Guomindang government, was appointed as the superintendent of the Council with the task of assisting or mediating if there were problems between the Council and the Chinese provinces. The territory under the formal jurisdiction of the Mongol Political Council covered Shilingool, Yekejuu, Ulanhab, Chahar tribes, the two special banners of Alashan and Ejine, as well as the twenty-nine banners of Kōkōnuur (Qinghai). The Council had branch offices both in Beiping and in Nanjing. It quickly took on the characteristic of a government, with two Departments of the Secretariat and Consultation, four bureaus of Civil Affairs, Peace Preservation, Industrial Affairs and Education, as well as a Financial Commission. The council set up a proto-army, the Peace Preservation Force, consisting of Mongol cavalry recruited from the banners. The council developed plans for health, education, culture, trade and transport. Most of the plans, however, could not be carried out because of shortage of revenue. Although the 'Principles of Mongol Local Autonomy' allocated a share of the land and opium taxes to the

Mongol Political Council, the Chinese provincial governors of Chahaer and Suiyuan ignored the central government regulation and retained most of the revenue.

The 'Principles of Mongol Local Autonomy' thus went the way of all previous Chinese government promises to the Inner Mongols. Partly from inability to control local Chinese authorities, partly from fear that any concession to the Mongols would be a step toward Mongol separatism, successive Chinese governments consistently reneged on promises to the Inner Mongols that might have gone some way towards satisfying the Mongol desire for self-determination.

In this atmosphere of disillusionment, two further events took place to alienate the Mongols from the Chinese Republic. First, in September 1934 Guomindang military police acting under the orders of Chiang Kaishek assassinated the Mongol Han Fenglin, the head of Peace Preservation Corps of the Mongol Political Council. The Guomindang evidently suspected Han of being in contact with the Japanese, but his assassination was shock to the Mongol leaders who now concluded that the Guomindang had no intention of acting in good faith towards the Mongols. Second, in 1935, it emerged that the Guomindang authorities had adopted a strategic plan not to defend Inner Mongolia and the Chinese northwest if the Japanese army were to expand westwards. Just as later the apparent unwillingness of the French and Dutch to defend their Southeast Asian colonies against the Japanese allowed local nationalists to argue that the colonial powers had abandoned their fundamental responsibility to defend their subjects against outside invaders, the Guomindang's decision signalled to the Inner Mongols that they were on their own in the coming conflict.

In short, although the Inner Mongols had enthusiastically tried to achieve autonomy within the Chinese Republican frame, by the mid-1930s it became clear that the Chinese government hardly anything to offer to the Mongols.

#### Independence with Japanese Assistance

As the Mongol negotiations with the Guomindang for genuine autonomy repeatedly deadlocked, another path towards self-determination opened up. In 1931, the Japanese Kwantung Army occupied Manchuria and established a new state which they called Manchukuo. The new state was clear evidence that the Japanese were prepared to make dramatic changes in the international borders of Northeast Asia. The example of Manchukuo, created with only meagre support from the Chinese majority in Manchuria, raised the obvious possibility that the Japanese might also support an independent Inner Mongol state which would clearly have much wider support amongst the Inner Mongols. Japan, too, appealed to some of the same instincts amongst Inner

Mongols that had previously attracted them to China. Japan was a modern and scientifically advanced power which seemed to have developed a strategy for modernization and social progress that other Asian societies could emulate. The Japanese themselves encouraged ideas along these lines.

Manchukuo itself incorporated significant areas of Inner Mongolia and the new state's treatment of the Mongol population gave ambiguous support to Inner Mongol hopes. The Mongols of western Manchukuo were divided into four sub-provinces which stood under the Hingan Bureau that was to administer the Mongol matters. The formal status of the Mongols in Manchukuo bore a close resemblance to the arrangements that the Inner Mongols were making with the Guomindang at about the same time. In Manchukuo, however, the implementation was much closer to the letter of the regulations than in China.

Although the Mongol leaders, especially Prince De, hoped to obtain high level autonomy from the Chinese central government, they were open to other possibilities, including Japanese assistance. While preparing their negotiations with the Chinese government's representative at Batuhagalga, they sent representatives to a meeting organized by Colonel Matsumuro Kōryō in Dolonnuur in October 1933. They did not want to involve the Japanese while they negotiating with the Chinese, but they wanted to know what the Japanese were planning for the Mongol regions. They allowed the Japanese Good-Neighbourhood Association (Zenrinkyōkai) to build schools and medical institutions. Prince De sent a few students to Japanese to study with the assistance of the Zenrinkyōkai. In 1934, Morishima Fusao, a Japanese agent stationed in Abaga visited Batuhagalga and met Prince De told him that the Japanese Kwantung Army was willing to provide two thousand guns to the Mongols free of charge (Domuchokudongropu 1994:93-94).

From the late 1934, when the assassination of Han Fenglin by the Guomindang military police became public, Prince De developed a more active, but still secret, relationship with the Japanese. He realized that the Guomindang did not want to recognize the Mongols as a nation (*minzu*), but rather just as a tribe (*congzu*). In late 1934, he secretly sent Bao Guiting, an officer of the Peace Preservation Force, to Manchukuo to recruit Mongol soldiers and to buy horses from the Mongol banners. With the help of Li Shouxin, a Mongol commandant of the Manchukuo army and Ueyama, the head of Japanese military intelligence in Dolonnuur, Bao was able to establish a battalion under Li Shouxin and trained them there secretly. Apart from Bao Guiting, Prince De also sent other officers to contribute to the military training of these newly recruited soldiers. High ranking officers of the Kwantung army visited Prince De, promising help in building a Mongol state. These words were very

appealing to Prince De and his intention to collaborate with the Japanese became firmer (Domuchokudongropu 1994, pp. 97-98).

The Japanese steadily intensified their approach to Prince De. In July 1935, the Kwantung Army presented him with a six seater air plane. Upon repeated invitation by Itagaki Seishirō, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army, Prince De agreed to meet him in September 1935. Prince De and Prince Sodnamrabdan were expecting to talk with Itagaki about the establishment of a unified Mongol state incorporating east and west Inner Mongolia. When Prince De started topic by thanking the Japanese for their promise of assistance and saying: 'we hope that east and west Mongolia will be unified to achieve Mongol independence and a new state.' Itagaki's answer was 'Japan would like to help with Mongol independence and state foundation, but the eastern banners and leagues are now part of Manchukuo territory and Manchukuo is an independent state, thus I do not have the authority to answer [the question of east and west unification]. But to assist your preparation of state foundation, first, we will send three advisors.' Prince Sodnamrabdan was not pleased with Itagaki's offer of sending advisors. He snapped Itagaki and asked 'wouldn't that [Mongol state] be then a second Manchukuo?' (Domuchokudongropu 1994:105-06).

In November 1935, Prince De visited Manchukuo on the invitation of the Kwantung Army. Apart from meeting Emperor Pu Yi, he met senior Japanese officers to discuss the Inner Mongol issue. In their discussion, Prince De expressed his reservation about Manchukuo's policy towards the Mongol banners and leagues in Manchukuo and said: 'I would like Japan first to support the phase of Inner Mongolian independence, and then assist in achieving the foundation of Mongol state.' Itagaki agreed to help with the independence of Inner Mongolia and presented him 500,000 yen and 5,000 guns (Domuchokudongropu 1994:108).

In January 1936, the Japanese option became more attractive to Prince De when the Chinese Central government ordered the Mongol Political Council to be reorganized. The Council was now divided into two new councils: the Suiyuan Mongol Political Council covered the Mongols in Ordos, Ningxia and Qinghai while the Chahaer Mongol Political Council had responsibility for Mongols in Chahaer, Shilingool and Ulanabai. Prince De and other Mongol leaders recognized the division as a defeat for Inner Mongol unity and it confirmed his conclusion that the Japanese offered the best way forward. Nonetheless, he did not want to abandon all links with the Chinese government, and he therefore accepted the post of deputy head of the new Chahaer Mongol Political Council.

Inner Mongol political opinion was profoundly ambivalent about the Japanese. On the one hand, Prince De and other modern minded aristocrats saw them as

the best available ally in the struggle for Inner Mongol self-determination. Some progressive intellectuals saw them still more positively as a potential force for social progress in Mongol society. Other Inner Mongols, both conservative and progressive, saw them as a danger, a foreign imperialist power bent on colonizing the Mongols. They looked at the Japanese treatment of the Mongols in Manchukuo and saw no prospect that it would lead to greater self-determination. Hence Prince Sondnamrabdan's cynical comment that a Japanese-sponsored Mongol state could be 'a second Manchukuo.' Whereas the Guomindang assassination of Han Fenglin sharpened anti-Chinese feeling amongst the Inner Mongols, the Japanese assassination of Nimaodsor, a Chahar Mongol leader, strengthened anti-Japanese feeling. Thus, when in early 1936 Prince De set up a 'General Headquarters of the Mongolian Army' in Sünid with Japanese army assistance, he faced strong resistance among the Mongol banners and leaders. One battalion of his Peace Preservation Force even rebelled against him and joined the Chinese warlord Fu Zuoyi in Suiyuan.

Concerned that the Mongol cause was fragmenting, Mongol leaders convened a conference in Ujimchin in April 1936 and decided that the time had come to move forward on the issue of self-determination. As a first step, they agreed to establish a military government which they intended would take control of all the traditional Mongol lands of Inner Mongolia, except those in Manchukuo (Wu 1986:103-105). When the 'Mongol Military Government' was established a month later in Jabsar (Dehua), with Prince Yondonwangchug as Chairman and Prince De as President and supreme commander of the army, it actually only controlled a much smaller territory adjacent to Manchukuo, principally the Chahar, Ulanhab and Shilingool leagues.

The Mongol military government focused on building up its military forces and external security. The army consisted of newly recruited volunteers from eastern Inner Mongolia, conscripts from the Chahar and Shilingool Leagues and troops of the Mongol general Li Shouxin, who had previously served in Manchukuo. Altogether two armies plus nine divisions and two artillery companies were established (Domuchokudongropu 1994:125-127; Matsuzaki 1983). It also made great plans in telecommunications and transport infrastructure. The government set up the Mongolian Highways Bureau to improve the road network. New roads were built between major towns and league and banner centres, and trucks and buses were purchased. The government introduced an official calendar based on the number of years since Temujin had taken the name Chinggis Khan in 1206; thus the year 1936 became 731. It also created a new national flag with a canton of three stripes, red, yellow and white, against a field of blue.

Despite this intense state-building activity, the Mongol Military Government shared its territory with the Chahaer Mongol Political Council. Prince De was

president of the former and deputy chair (later chair) of the latter. Many other Mongol leaders also held positions in the two institutions. Two different governments thus functioned in central Inner Mongolia, sharing personnel and both claiming to represent the Mongols and to administer Mongol affairs. The Chahaer Mongol Political Council assured the Chinese government that the Mongols would still be part of the Chinese Republican enterprise if their right of self-determination were respected, whereas the Mongol Military Government assured the Japanese that Mongols would be part of the Japanese endeavour if the Japanese gave serious support to Mongol independence.

In November 1936, six months after the foundation of the Military Government, Prince De still presented himself as a loyal citizen of the Chinese Republic. He sent a telegram to Fu Zuoyi, the governor of Suiyuan and criticising him for not following Nanjing's instructions, for monopolizing the opium tax and for splitting the Mongol Political Council (Ding 1937:89-99). Chiang Kaishek reminded Prince De that he was head only of the Chahaer Mongol Political Council and that he had no authority to interfere Suiyuan Mongol matters. He urged Prince De not to initiate military conflicts with Suiyuan and to await the central government's solution. In other words, Prince De continued to engage in public diplomacy that implied he saw Inner Mongolia as part of the Chinese Republic.

The relationship of the Mongol Military Government with the Japanese was similarly ambiguous. The Mongol leaders in Shilingool and Ulanhab were openly hostile to the Japanese and limited the Japanese presence in their lands. The Military Government wanted to consolidate itself in central Inner Mongolia but was short of the revenue needed for its ambitious state-building program. The Japanese, however, wanted to recruit the new Mongol army for military operations to the west and warned Prince De that the only additional source of funds he could hope for would be the opium revenues of east Suiyuan (Mori 2000:137). Under this pressure, Prince De reluctantly agreed to send his poorly trained troops to the west in late 1936, but the expedition proved to be a disaster. The combined force of Japanese, Chinese under Wang Ying, and Mongols was defeated with heavy loss of life and Batuhagalga fell into the hands of Fu Zuoyi's troops in December.

In August 1937, just after the Japanese invasion of China, Fu Zuoyi again attacked the territory of the Mongol Military Government, even capturing the capital, Jabsar. In September, however, the Mongols counter-attacked with Japanese help and recaptured not just Jabsar and Batuhagalga, but also the cities of Wuchuan, Baotu and Suiyuan. This victory strengthened the feeling that a sharp break should be made with the failing Republic of China. In October 1937, a second Mongol conference took place at Hohhot which made the bitter declaration:

After the establishment of the Republic of China as a commonwealth of five people, we Mongols, because of our trusting and innocent nature and believing that we would be treated equally, supported the Republic wholeheartedly. For over twenty years, however, [the Chinese Government] has looked upon Mongolia as a veritable colony; they have divided up our lands and territories, establishing new provinces and *xians*. It has not mattered which party or government has been in power – each has encroached on our sovereignty (Jagchid 1999:178-179).

The Mongols at the conference wanted a Mongol independent state, but the Japanese were reluctant. Muratani Hikojiro, advisor to the Mongol Military Government, said 'Building a Mongol independent state is a big issue and it is an international matter that would have implications for the Nine Power Treaty<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it has to be carefully discussed with the Kwantung Army and the Japanese government. We cannot decide immediately.' The Mongols referred to a promise by Tanaka Ryukichi that the construction of a Mongol state would start after the occupation of eastern Suiyuan and pointed out that Suiyuan had been taken but the Japanese urged them to be patient. In place of an independent state, the Japanese proposed an autonomous civilian government.

The conference was unhappy with Japan's reluctance to allow full independence, but as an interim measure agreed to transform the Military Government into a civilian Mongol Leagues Allied Autonomous Government in Hohhot (formerly Suiyuan). The new administration adopted the flag of the Military Government as well as the Chinggis Khan calendar. This new government, however, put much more focus on civilian affairs and creating the structure of a real state. The regime described its territory as covering the 'original Mongol territory', a vague formulation which could have included even Outer Mongolia and Buriatia. Temporarily, however, they claimed that the state was to include only Ulanbator, Shilingool, Chahar, Bayantala and Yekejuu Leagues and the cities of Baotou and Hohhot. In reality, however, Yekejuu stayed under Guomindang influence. Administratively the new government reversed the arrangements that had been imposed on the Mongols by the Chinese government. The provincial administration was abolished, and the *xian* (counties) governing the Chinese settlers were made subordinate to the leagues. The new government steadily set up an administration covering not only public order and finance, but also animal husbandry, judiciary, education and foreign affairs. The new government stressed the importance of education and human resources. It set up primary

<sup>3</sup> The Nine Power Treaty, signed at the Washington Naval Conference in 1922, guaranteed China's territorial integrity.

schools at all levels as well as several vocational schools. In matters such as industry, currency, mining, transport, post and telegraph communication, they relied on Japanese investment (Domuchokudongropu, 1994:200-206).

The government also set up Mongolian representative offices in the Manchukuo capital of Xinjing (Changchun), and later in Tokyo, as a first step towards an independent foreign policy (Zenrinkyokai 1938/1939:302-309). The Japanese government in Tokyo at its ministerial meeting on 21 December 1937 talked about 'setting up an anti-communist autonomous government in Inner Mongolia, whose position in the world was to be like that of Outer Mongolia' (*Riben diguo zhuyi qinhua shiliao* 1931-1945:248-249). The Japanese marked their special interest in Inner Mongolia in 1938 by creating a Mongolia Garrison (Chumogun), replacing the Kwantung Army which had previously supervised Inner Mongolia. All the high level officials of the new government were Mongols, but Japanese advisors were installed in the government. The Government did not seek international recognition as Manchukuo had done, but was largely dependent for its external relations on Japan and Manchukuo.

These positive signals from above, however, were compromised by new tensions on the ground. At the end of 1937, the Japanese established a Joint Committee of Mongol Territories (or Frontiers), chaired by Kanai Shoji. The Joint Committee was set up to oversee the Mongol Allied Leagues Government and two other governments (the Southern Chahar Autonomous Government and the Northern Shanxi Autonomous Government) that had been created with Japanese assistance in late 1937 (Shimada 1964:29-30, 112-113). These territories, south of the Great Wall, were virtually entirely populated by Han Chinese and their inclusion in a single framework with the Mongol Allied Leagues Government signalled a sharp retreat from the Inner Mongol idea of Mongol self-determination. The Mongol leaders, especially Prince De, could foresee no prospect of building a Mongol state while shackled to these two alien bodies and he resisted the foundation of the Committee. Prince De mobilized Mongols, including those in Japan, and wrote a protest letter to the Japanese army commander in Inner Mongolia as well as to Japanese officials in Tokyo. The Japanese, however, had a subtle response: they appointed him as the chairman of the Committee without consulting him. He began to lose interest in the Japanese and secretly resumed contact with Chiang Kaishek.

This sharp change of Japanese policy had its roots in broader strategic imperatives. Japan's invasion of China had not gone as smoothly as it had hoped, and the Japanese government increasingly sought to present themselves as representing the 'true' interests of China. One element in this strategy was offering a belated commitment to China's territorial integrity. In November 1938, Konoe Fumimaro, Japan's Prime Minister, proclaimed a new order in East Asia embodying a partnership between Japan, China and

Manchukuo. There was no mention of Mongols. If sacrificing Inner Mongol self-determination was part of the price for reconciling the Chinese to Japanese hegemony in East Asia, that was a price the Japanese were prepared to pay (Chūmōgun Sanbōchō 1939). The defeat of Japanese forces in a clash with the Soviet Union at Nomonhan in mid-1939 also convinced the Japanese of the importance of strengthening the northern frontier by creating larger administrative units.

In September 1939, the Mongol Leagues Allied Autonomous Government was indeed included with the Southern Chahaer and Northern Shanxi governments in a new Mongol Allied Autonomous Government (*Mōko rengō jichi seifu*), with Prince De as its head. The ranking government positions were shared between Mongols and Chinese. The heads of the six departments were occupied by three Mongols, two Chinese and one Japanese. The advisors or deputy heads were mainly Japanese. Although the three previous governments were abolished and the Mongol leagues stood directly under the new government with a unified revenue and organizational law, there was little practical integration between the three branches of new government. The Mongols kept their league and banner system and even the new juridical law was not implemented in Mongol region (Shibata 2007: 55-57). The unified new structure, however, signalled clearly that the Japanese had taken Inner Mongol self-determination in an autonomous state off the political agenda. Prince De's calls to the Japanese to establish a true Mongol state were always met with the vague response that the time was not yet ripe (Domuchokudongropu 1999:219-220).

As soon as the Wang Jingwei government was set up, the Japanese military arranged a meeting with Wang's representatives and the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government in Qingdao in 1940. Prince De was against the creation of the Wang government and therefore he did not go to the conference but sent Li Shouxin, the Commander of the Mongol army. At this conference the Japanese and Chinese agreed that the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government would be placed under Chinese suzerainty. Wang Jingwei was eager to show his interest in Mongol affairs and to offer his help. The Mongol representative, Li Shouxin, however, rejected the plan and declined aid from the Wang government because it would mean accepting the authority of the Wang Jingwei government (Li 1985:320-23). The Sino-Japanese agreement was sent to Prince De, the head of the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government, but he refused to sign it. Mongols were determined to be on at least an equal level with the Wang government. Later in 1940, the head of General Affairs of the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government, Prince Sung, visited Japan as the Mongol representative to participate in celebrations for the 2600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese imperial family line. The celebration

hall was decorated with flags of Japan, Manchukuo and the Wang Jingwei government, but not that of the Mongol government. When the Mongol delegate realized this Prince Sung made clear that either the flag of the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government should also be raised or the flags of Manchukuo and the Wang government were to be taken away. Otherwise, he and his delegation would not attend the celebration. The Mongol delegation saw this as humiliation: not recognizing them as an equal to Manchukuo and the Wang Jingwei government. In the end, all flags but the Japanese were taken away from the celebration hall (Jagchid 1999). The Mongol delegation attended the celebration as planned.

Frustrated in his dealings with the Japanese army in Mongolia, Prince De also tried to negotiate directly with the Japanese central authorities. He travelled to Japan twice to talk to the Japanese government figures, in 1938 and 1941, with a proposal for a Mongol state in his pocket. He was welcomed as a state guest and met the Japanese emperor, foreign minister and other high government officials. On Prince De's second visit, Prime Minister Matsuoka exclaimed the words 'Mōko banzai!' [Long live Mongolia!] at the dinner banquet. In October 1941, Prince De's long campaign at last showed signs of progress. The name of the Mongol Allied Autonomous Government was changed to 'Mongol Autonomous State'. The Japanese prescribed, however, that this new name was only for 'internal' use. For external relations, the previous name Mongol Allied Autonomous Government remained in use and there was still no attempt to cede formal sovereignty or to seek international recognition for the Mongol state (Zenrinkyōkai 1981).

Only with the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941 did Mongol authority within the Mongol Autonomous State begin to grow. As Japanese attention shifted to other theatres, the Mongols took a greater role in policy making. In 1942, the Mongols removed the post of Japanese Supreme Advisor (Jagchid 1999:84). It seems likely that Prince De's government had little or no practical influence south of the Great Wall. In the territory of the former Mongol Allied Leagues Autonomous Government, however, the Inner Mongols continued the process of state-building, including the establishment of a postal service and the issue of a postage stamp in 1943 to commemorate the 'Fifth Anniversary of the establishment of the Mongol Government' (Post:n.d.). The stamp featured a galloping horse, symbolizing good fortune and a bright future in Mongol culture.

The external environment, however, became steadily less favourable to Mongol aspirations. First, the Japanese increasingly built their political strategy in East Asia around an accommodation with Chinese nationalism. Especially with the establishment of the Wang Jingwei government in 1939, Japan became reluctant to offend Chinese nationalist sentiments by making

any public concession to the Mongols. Whereas the Japanese sponsored new states in the Philippines, Burma, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the last years of the war, they were not willing to make this concession to the Mongols. Second, by the end of 1942, it was apparent that Japan could not win the war. It was not yet clear whether Japan would be able to retain any of its gains, but the Inner Mongol state's ambiguous standing as an ally of the losing side did not give it a strong position. This weakness was confirmed at the end of the Second World War in 1945. On 9<sup>th</sup> August armies from the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic crossed the border into Inner Mongolia, where relatively few Japanese troops were available to oppose them. On the day of Japanese surrender, 15th August, Prince De dissolved the Mongol Autonomous State and fled to Beijing. This hasty abandonment of the state which seemed to bring Inner Mongols closer to political independence than ever before in their history would appear to indicate both the weakness of the state and the fragile Inner Mongol self-confidence. In reality, it reflects the key fact that disappointment with Outer Mongolia and with the Chinese Republic had by no means fully discredited these two which lurked in the Inner Mongolian political consciousness. Tellingly, Prince De, in his Beijing exile, did not abandon politics but continued to seek a range of alliances with Guomindang political leaders in the hope of restoring Inner Mongol autonomy. When these negotiations failed to deliver what he hoped for, he moved to Outer Mongolia in an attempt to build an alliance there. Still more important, the promise of national self-determination within a multi-ethnic state was taken up by the Chinese Communist Party which won strong support in Inner Mongolia. The victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 was built in part on an offer to the Mongols of far-reaching autonomy, including the maintenance of a separate Mongol army.

### Conclusion

The decision to aim for what might have become an independent sovereign state in central Inner Mongolia took place in the context of Mongol frustration and disappointment with other political options. In just over two decades following the Chinese revolution, independent Outer Mongolia, the Chinese Republic and the Japanese-sponsored state of Manchukuo each raised and then dashed the hopes of Inner Mongols for national self-determination. The Mongol governments sponsored by the Japanese were an attempt by Mongols to secure the self-determination that had been a major part of Inner Mongol political aspiration since 1911. The failure of this Inner Mongol endeavour in the war years was partly because of the truncated portion of the Mongol lands that it encompassed, partly because the extent of Chinese settlement in the Mongol lands severely limited the political options to give the Mongol

minority real power in its own lands. The Mongols were caught between three large powers, each with its own interests extending far beyond the Mongol lands. Inner Mongol nationalists tried to achieve self-determination by hitching their cause to the juggernauts of great power strategy. In the end, however, the moments when their interests coincided with those of the greater powers were too brief to allow them to consolidate an autonomous future.

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