Nomadic Kingship after the Mongol Empire:
The Rivalry of the Mongols and the Oyrads
and their Religious Conversion to the Tibetan Buddhism.

Miyawaki, Junko

The seventeenth century was the turning point for the history of the Mongols. The Qing Dynasty from the east and the Russian Empire from the west began stretching their territories over the Central Asian grasslands that had been strictly limited to the mounted nomads descending from the Mongol Empire. The Mongols, now living under the rule of non-Mongolians and losing the mode of age-old living standards, were for the first time pressed to write the genealogical records coming down from Chinggis Khan to themselves and the bravery of their forefathers. Also the historical records called Mongol chronicles produced in immeasurable numbers by the Mongols themselves in the seventeenth century, too, were strongly influenced by the Tibetan Buddhism that had been wide and deep since its acceptance by Altan Khan at the end of the sixteenth century.

The Mongol nomads returning to the grasslands after losing their colony in the agricultural zones had only their genealogies as the written records and the valor of their forefathers only by oral transmission. In that sense, the Mongol chronicles in the east born in the seventeenth century and the Oyrad ones in the west in the eighteenth were written down by their sheer will making them ultimate linguistic sources. The Oyrads produced their chronicles later than the Mongols did so were because they were one century later compared to the Mongols in their east transformed under the pressure of alien culture that had them placed under their influence.

There is another reason to be the student of Mongol history that made the
seventeenth century was rare in its studies. More detailed records were born in the Qing Dynasty and the Russian Empire too as they became controllers of the nomadic societies. The Qing Dynasty becoming master of the Mongols after the seventeenth century had had as its official languages Manchu, Chinese and Mongolian until the twentieth century. In Russia in their west, too, the Cossacks and military officers had sent various reports to Moscow on the nomads whom they came in contact with on the spot. Such documents are now preserved in their bodies as the public treasures.

In Japan, study in Mongol history was mainly conducted by the historians in the Oriental fields, in its stream the debates on Dayan Khan and the Jüün Ğars. The debates on Dayan Khan were centered round how Mongol chronicles could been trusted, and those in the latter, in which the author herself was involved, were about what kind of kingship was ‘the last nomadic empire Jüün Ğar’ sweeping over the Central Asian grasslands in the latter half of the seventeenth century, only meeting destructive end at the hands of the Qing Dynasty in the middle of the eighteenth.

All scholars preceeding the author, including Pallas, a German who worked for the Russian Empire, Zlatkin of the Soviets, and Hiroshi Wakamatsu, interpreted the Jüün Ğar wholly in the relation with the Russians. The present author, in the contrary, examined Mongolian, Manchu and Tibetan sources regarding the last nomadic empire Jüün Ğar from the east, and concluded that it meant the tribal confederation headed by the Jüün Ğar chiefs, and the title of the Jüün Ğar tribal chiefs representing the empire was qong tayiji meaning a viceroy borrowed from Mongolian, only given them by the Dalai Lama Regime of Tibet.

Oyirad tribes stretched from the territories of the Mongol Ulus today in the east to the shores of the Voiga River in the west, and from the beaches of the Baikal Lake in the north to Tibet in the south in their golden age. Nomadic tribes who lived so far away kept their relationship through close marital ties between their chiefs, but all the same time remaining to be constant rivals. Only exemption in the Jüün Ğar chiefs was Galdan, who was conferred the title of Khan by the Fifth Dalai Lama only to mean the leader of the Oyirad tribal confederation. Also the title of Khan conferred upon the Xoşuud chiefs was meant the protector of the Tibetan Buddhism ever since Güüş Khan.
The theme of the graduation thesis and the master’s thesis of the author were a doubt of a legend that the Khalkha Mongols were attacked by the Galdan of the Jüön Gar and surrendered to the Qing Dynasty in 1688 because the rJe-bsun-dam-pa Quturytu, who had been a high ranking lama, insisted that the Russians had never believed in the Buddhism and their customs had been different, whereas the Qing Dynasty had been true believer in the Buddhism, and so were the end of the question about whom they should rely on, and the insistence bore fruit of the Khalkhas calling for help to the Qing Dynasty.

On these points she pointed out that the Khalkhas were divided three khans’ aimaks under the leadership of the rJe-bsun-dam-pa Quturytu only after they had surrendered to the Qing Dynasty in 1691, that the Quturytu was not yet leader of the whole Khalkhas in the surrender, that the Mongols themselves had been traditionally strongly attached to their Left and Right Wings, that the Quturytu himself had not belong to the dGe-lugs-pa sect in the days prior to the surrender, and that was the reason why Galdan belonging to the dGe-lugs-pa had regarded him with hostile eyes.

When we consider why the Central Eurasian nomads were divided into the Turkic and the Mongolic, we find that the distribution of the religions almost exactly falls on that of nations here. Peoples classified as Mongolic now are those who were Tibetan Buddhists converted in the sixteenth century and later. The Tuvinians are only exemption classified as Turkic people, living in an old home of the Oyirad tribal confederation and governed as a part of the Mongols in the Qing days, so they came to be Tibetan Buddhists.

The Oyirads were called the Qalmaqs by their Turkic neighbors in the sense of those who were ‘staying’ without becoming Muslims, that are Kalmyks in Russian. The Toryuuds making up one of the Oyirad tribal confederation moved to the banks of the Volga in 1630’s, and returned mostly to their old home in the Ili in 1771 after the destruction of the Jüön Gar Empire by the Qing Dynasty. The people of the Kalmyk Republic today are descendants of those left behind on the western bank of the Volga as it happened. They are the Mongolic people living westernmost and believing the Tibetan Buddhism today.