

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE TIBETAN BUDDHISM ON THE RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE MONGOLIAN PEOPLES'

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**Key words:** *Tibetan Buddhism, religious culture of the Mongolian peoples, buddhist religious culture, the cult of "oboo", "lab-tse, oboo and oboo".*

The Buddhist religious culture for the Mongolian met ethnic community, especially at the beginning of the penetration and distribution on the territory Mongol sphere, was, certainly, rather an innovative structure in the system of ethno cultural traditions of their community. The phenomenon of adoption of the innovative system of the Buddhist culture, presently considered traditional for all area of Central Asia, indicates, probably, that the Mongol sphere, ( practically all Mongolian peoples of the Great Steppe), were almost ready to apprehend and fix a new religious system in their ethno cultural symbols.

Before adopting Buddhist Religious Culture with its specific Theory and Practice, all the Mongolians were considered to be Shamanists with a Shaman who was a mediator with his/her Patrons and Protectors between concrete clans and the Upper word.

It's the historical fact that the Buddhist Culture coming from Tibet and spreading among the Mongols, as well in the whole Central Asia, incorporated nearly all the local and regional religious rituals and customs of the Mongols' traditional beliefs – for example – the cult of "oboo" ( the Buryatian "oboo", the Mongolian – "ovoo", the Tibetan – "lab-tse"). The "lab-tse" in the early days was dedicated to the masters of concrete mountain territories. Buddhist Culture incorporated it and in somw period many masters of the "lab-tse, oboo and oboo" appeared to be of Buddhist origin [1].

According to the Buddhist philosophy, the person was considered not as a special being, standing above the nature, but first of all - as a representative of one of "categories" of all set of "living beings". All his life, as well as transition from one condition to another, he is caused by the principle of "karmic responsibility". Buddhism have developed the interaction problem between "the person and the nature", underlined the original, universal methodological approaches, which based on the other time-space parameters and absence or overcoming of dualism. That's why Buddhism has greatly influenced on the final formation of ethnical culture of the Mongolian peoples. Certainly, the dominant factor of mutual relations of the nature and the person is an economic development of society, transition from one mode of production to another. But the person and the nature are closely interconnected, therefore, when we speak about nature transformation, it is necessary to understand such activity which is directed on elimination of existing contradictions between the person and the nature. The broad range of culture-historical traditions of one or another people makes essential impact on mutual relations of the person and the environment. So, it is possible to claim that non-

1. Өгүүлэг "Монголын ард түмнүүдийн нийгэм-соёл, улс төрийн бодит байдал: уламжлал ба орчин үе" сэдэвт хамтын ажиллагааны судалгааны хурээнд бичигдэв. Эта статья написанна под проектом «Буддизм в социокультурных и политических реалиях монгольских народов: традиции и современность»



material aspects of culture contain the important cultural and confessional information. In this context we can speak about "ethnosystem" as flexible interaction of its three basic parts: an environment, a technological superstructure and non-material regulators (traditions, beliefs, ceremonies, habits, stereotypes, codes of conduct etc.)

Many Buddhist ceremonies connected with honoring of nature among the Mongolian peoples also have been borrowed from shamanic world view. The further development got a cult of trees which were considered as dwellings of spirits-owners, symbols of development of life. Due to Buddhism - passive and superstitious worship to nature have been forced, traditional world-view has been transformed into philosophical-ethical views, norms of moral responsibility of the person in relation to all living beings also have been changed. As for environmental problems in Buddhist culture there was an understanding of necessity of superfluous work for their decision. The main reason on which these problems arose was that the man, solving the private problems of increase of degree or level of personal survival rate applies for these purposes partial, private methods and technologies that is why leaves from integrity. So, solving private economic problems, the person causes disruption of natural balance that leads to changes in the environment. The nature was considered by Buddhists as the partner equal in rights in certain system of mutual relations and it meant that she should sacrifice herself for the person. And the person, possessing the developed sense of responsibility for all living beings and realization of interconnection with natural whole, should understand that damaging the nature he will wound himself. The main criterion of an admissibility of violence over the nature in the process of interaction with it was absence of personal interest in results of practical activities which could harm to living beings. The admissibility of certain violence over other beings was caused, thus, by necessity of final salvation of all living beings, all nature and the universe from painful circulation of death and births in the world of "sansara". Buddhism has changed not only religious culture of the Mongolian Peoples, but also has seriously affected on the social relations in society. Because the main task of this cultural-religious tradition is development of special condition of consciousness in which full harmony of subject-objective relations comes by means of the maximum concentration of psychophysical efforts on the objects of knowledge or activity. The Buddhism didn't reject and didn't destroy previous forms of religion and culture of the all the Mongolian Peoples in China, Mongolia and Russia, but incorporated and assimilated them and finally has led to formation of stable forms of Buddhist consciousness

Phenomenal is as well that the Mongolian met ethnic community at this stage of the development was integrated within Buddhist culture, having apprehended not only Buddhist ceremonial and cult practice, but also all its doctrinal and philosophical system, having organically brought in their outline both prebuddhistic religious knowledge and practice.

The phenomenon of Buddhist Culture in the of nomadic traditional structure of the Mongolian peoples has the ethno differentiating aspects, but also ethno integrating functions are undoubted.

The ethno integrating factor of Buddhist culture accurately is fixed also in its anthropocentric, met ethnic, universal orientation, spiritual harmony, moral self-improvement, mercy, compassion, clear hierarchy of Buddhas and Bodhisatvas and all Buddhist pantheon, whereas in the shamanic culture of Mongol sphere some tendencies, which inspirited tribal belongings, polytheism with the numerous sacrifices according to the tribal shamanic system are presented.

The ethno consolidating and integrating role of Buddhist bases on the high degree of tolerance in relation to the other religious systems is evidently seen in the evolution of the religious culture in the Mongol sphere environment.

The great influence of Buddhist religious culture on a Mongol sphere (Mongolia; the Inner Mongolia of the People's Republic of China; Buryatia, Kalmykiya in Russian Federation and other not administrative adjacent territories), its considerable positions in the Mongolian world, kept and continues to keep up today a Buddhist monastic community (Sangkha). Besides, it should be noted,



that the lifestyle and outlook of nomads historically developed under the conduct of the Buddhist monks within many previous centuries. The ethno confessional picture of Mongol sphere on an extent more than a half of the millennium practically can't present itself without of Buddhist religious tradition and culture coming from Tibet.

In this article on a material of own field researches, the author tries to give the analysis how fully and widely the general fundamental concepts, categories and symbols of the classical forms of the Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongolian peoples, found reflection in religious theories and practices existing today in the realities of the Mongolian Ethno sphere.

Buddhist Symbols became the components of the Buddhist theory and practice and a basis Canon for the ordinary Mongol nomads. Being the special components of the Buddhist religious culture, Buddhist symbols represented for a long time as translators and interpreters of Buddhist traditions. Thus, each religious and local tradition in synchronically and diachronically aspects transformed and adopted them according to the earlier religious symbols, as a whole, without breaking syntaxes, neither semantics, nor pragmatics of these semiotics systems.

Religious and philosophical theories and the practices of the Buddhism having universal values are actual still today. Their consolidating and integrating roles of the Buddhism among the Mongols are undoubted. In the Central Asian Buddhism, which has already incorporated cultural and religious experience of previous eras, there are many archaic and shamanistic elements of religious culture of the population of Central Asia, including the Mongolian peoples.

The main categories of the Buddhist theory stated in the doctrine about four noble truth an octal (median) way of fear, including correct views, the correct reflections and ability to follow them, the correct speech, the correct behavior, the correct way of maintenance of life, the correct efforts, the correct thought (its orientation), the correct concentration - to some extent corresponded to standard laws of Great Steppe codes of nomadic culture of the Mongolian peoples. Another matter, cultural and religious sense of an octal way of rescue, at early stages of distribution of the Buddhism among the Mongolian peoples, as the text of religious culture, hardly was adequately perceived by new adherents since object and subject components this theory were innovative for traditional attitude and outlook of the nomadic culture.

It is interesting to note that in the system of traditional outlook and attitude in archaic culture of the Mongol sphere, according to their nomadic theory of regeneration existing in traditional culture of the Mongolian people, (probably, even irrespective of influence of the Buddhist theory of reincarnation), traditional Mongolian society believed that it is possible to regenerate somewhere among "the relatives" - in the world of a locus of the Mongolian culture. By the way, still after death the Mongolian peoples have a custom to put special tags on a body of the dead - to identify the relative on birthmarks or other special signs of the again given rise. After regeneration, (if that took place), according to data of the Mongolian popular beliefs, a locus of time and vital space of the individual, and also society Mongol sphere, again, - from the moment of the birth, - revolves, repeating ceremonies and initiation rituals; sacral registration of alliance with other sort or a tribe; valuable reference points and standards of behavior of a maturity and its hierarchy of values; again finishing this process by such categorical and key concept in each ethnic culture - death.

In the anthropogenic myths of the Mongol sphere there exist an oral execution, that these circles of round lifestyle may be repeated indefinitely, as the category of their traditional understanding of space and time.

Buddhist symbols, such as "karma", "sansariyn hurde" - "the sansara wheel", "mandala", "reincarnation" and many other terms of the Buddhist theory and practice, organically and quite naturally apprehended by the Mongol sphere because system of their traditional outlook, and the traditional picture of their world were ready to adopt them. The Mongolian monks, when translating classical Buddhist texts from Tibetan into written Mongolian ("the Mongol bichig", "Khushan



Mongol) of course used some additional letters and signs into their writing because there were not some syllables in Mongolian language in comparison with Tibetan. Tibetan Buddhist Culture also influenced on the writing traditions of the Mongolian people. That is why the writing tradition of the Mongols have a very complicated history. For some historical and cultural reasons, their writing exists within a broad range including more than 10 (ten) graphic systems, which were used on the whole territory, inhabited by the Mongolian people and which reflected different regional and local variations of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It is necessary to underline that nearly all types of writings among the Mongols are fixating some Canons of Buddhist Theory and Practice.

The proto-Mongolian ethnic communities, starting from the period of the formation of writing, tried to use various graphic symbols belonging to their own culture. That is the tracks of animals and bird, inhabiting their ethnic territory.

From our point of view, the Mongolian meta-ethnic community had extended opportunities in choosing a writing tradition, but they preferred the Uyghur writing. The latest research of Mongolian scholars proves competently, the Sogda writing tradition which provides basis to the Uyghur alphabet, was adopted by the Mongolian people simultaneously with the Uyghur people long before the Chingis khan, that is about 700 years before the foundation of the Great Mongolian Empire.

The analysis of written tradition of the Mongolian people, their evolution in spacial and temporal dimensions on the ethnic territory, reveals that "Mongol bichig" (Mong), "Hushen mongol" (Bur.), "Tod Bichig" (Kalmyk) begins dominating in the Mongolian cultural tradition following the Khitan writing, Square writing, Oyrat writing, Soyombo writing, Vagindara's writing.

The most surprising thing is that the lexical and phonetic units of the Mongolian writing tradition have close ties with the Khitan, Korean, Manchu and Tangut writing traditions (Ts. Shagdasuren, p. 249-265).

During the field research in Mongolian Arahangai and Uverhangai aimaks in 1985 one of the informants told me an astonishing version about the acquisition of writing traditions of the Mongolian people. He said that the vertical writing of the Mongols "came down from above, from the Heaven" – "dereese buusan, tengereese unasan" [2]. Moreover, the archaic cults of the Eternally Blue Sky and Mother-Earth of the Mongolian people lead me to the conclusion about the absolute adequacy of their mentality stereotypes to the preferred manner of writing.

The latinization and cyrilization of writing traditions among a great bulk of the Mongolian people (the Buryats as the representatives of the Ara-Mongol - the Northern Mongols, the Kalmyks in European Part of Russia, All the ethnic groups in Mongolia violated the deep dependence on the ethnic stereotype not only in writing tradition, but also influenced the deep aspects of the traditional stereotype of thinking and behavior of the nomad. The change of graphic symbols of the vertical manner to the horizontal manner made these ethnic groups undergo some kind of cultural shock and as a consequence of this – cultural mental adaptation to the new writing traditions, which, of course, required a certain period of time. More than that – there were little, if any, Buddhist doctrines written by these types of writings.

All the Mongols (the khalkha, the oyrats, of the Republic of Mongolia) the different ethnic groups of Inner Mongolia (the People's Republic of China), the buryats and the kalmyks (Russian Federation) have been used to one typically common cultural met text written in vertical writings and nearly all the Buddhist canonic literature was translated from Tibetan into it, where semantic ethno cultural and religions meaning and symbols were similar, but have many local variants and invariants inside the met text (text, context, subcontext).

Due to Canons of classical traditional shamanic theory there exist three substances called in modern Russian-speaking literature as "soul", "spirit" which is not absolutely corresponding to real phenomenon which in the Mongolian language are presented as "sunesen", "sur", "sulde", and in Buryat – hunehen", "hunehe hulde", "hulde", "hur hulde", "hur", sometimes – "amin"



that in a worldunderstanding of the Mongol Peoples reflect both a phenomenon, and its adequate interpretation.

Existence "sulde" and "suns" at the Mongolian peoples testify to existence of a phenomenon of presence of a certain substance which in Buddhist tradition is absent as the category of "soul" but is fixed as a certain substance in the form of a clot of "Dharmas" and reincarnated by means of creation of new structure and the scheme of streams of Dharmas, and during the prebuddhist period – in shaman and in more archaic all-Mongolian religious tradition – as a clot of vital force and vital energy of the specific individual and even collective.

It is necessary to emphasize that religious term and concept of "soul", are presenting in the Christian religious culture. The Mongolian met ethnic community rather well represented subject and object area of an integrated condition of psychology and human physiology, and, being nomadic culture, completely and objectively conceiving, nevertheless allowed such psych anthropological reality as "suns" and "sulde". Therefore such tempting and specific category as the Buddhist theory of reincarnation was included into the ethno sphere of the Mongolian peoples as innovative structure in the sacral plan, but nevertheless rather organic from the point of view of psychophysical energy of the nomad, from the point of view of his outlook based on love and careful attitude to the nature and all living beings.

The shaman religious tradition of the Mongolian peoples subdividing the world into three levels – the world top - "ded zambulin", the world average - "dund zambulin" and the world bottom - "dood zambulin" - in the third, bottom world fixes Erlik Khan, lord of Death with bronze mirror, reflecting terrestrial acts of the dead. The naturalistic image in the Sansara Wheels center of a pig, a rooster and a snake, symbolizing in Buddhist interpretation ignorance, passion and the anger, six types of beings: deities (тиб.- Lkha), asurs, people, animal, against and inhabitants of a hell from whom in the Buddhism the first three are considered favorable, the last three – adverse [3].

One of the highest stages of evolution of ecological culture of the Mongolian peoples was the system of the ecological traditions which have developed as a result of synthesis of the Buddhism with traditional beliefs and cults, ceremonies and customs of the Mongolian peoples. As we see, the traditional ecological culture of the Mongolian peoples hasn't been ignored by the Buddhism, but has been melted, synthesized and assimilated by a Buddhist cultural-religious complex. The Buddhism hasn't broken ethno ecological consciousness of the Mongolian peoples, but has kept it and has even more ennobled to the level of world religion, has developed it further, having enriched with experience of many other people of the East (Indians, Chinese, Uighurs, etc.). The Buddhism has brought high level of the ecological consciousness corresponding to level of development of religious-philosophical and ethical doctrine of the world religion.

Thus, ethno cultural specifics of perception by the Mongol Peoples Buddhist theory and practice (generally in the form of the Tibetan school of Gelugpa), is first of all, that a Mongol sphere not merely adapted all phenomenal categories of Buddhist culture, but also, in a certain degree, Buddhism brought to the Mongols' of the Great Steppe the unique universal and harmonic religious system. Being the innovation among the Mongol peoples in the 13th and the 16th centuries, over four hundred years Buddhism became a tradition and the whole Mongol sphere started to identify itself, personally and collectively with Buddhist theory and practice. In the modern period the confessional and cultural identity of nearly all the Mongolian Peoples lies upon Buddhism.



## LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT

*The article touches upon the problems of the specificity of the adaptation the Buddhist theory and practice by the Mongolian Peoples. It seems, that the Mongol sphere (All the Mongolian Peoples – Hamag Mongol, or met ethnical Mongolian Community) was ready to adopt the Buddhist cultural system because of their traditional way of thinking, traditional worldview and lifestyle. In the time of penetration in the Mongolian society Buddhist theory and practice was somehow an innovation in their religious cultural system, but in the result, they have adopted it rather successfully. The specificity of the adaptation was, that the nomadic lifestyle and culture, being a unique phenomenon, adopted Tibetan Buddhism not only according their traditional worldview, but due to similarity of their ethno cultural traditions with Tibetans.*

*The dynamics of the religious Culture of the Mongolian Peoples passed several stages in it's evolution. As we know, the Mongols in their ethnical history, have adopted Buddhism and it's Culture twice – in the 13th and in the 16th centuries.*

*Before it, from time immemorial, all the Mongols were followers of some archaic religious beliefs – such as the cult of "The Ever Eternal Blue Sky" (Hukhe Munkhe Tengeriyn min') with "The Wide and Extensive Mother land" (Uuzham Delxiyn Gazar min'), the cults of the Sun and Moon, the warship to the sky objects - (Doloon Ubged), the North Star (Altan Gadas), the Venus (Tsolmon), the Milky Way, etc..... Also they prayed to the mountains, the stones, the caves, the rivers, the lakes and all the water reservoirs. And those religious beliefs also was similar with Tibetan traditional religious culture before Buddhism came to Tibet from India.*