

Similarities and Differences between Mongolia and Tuva in the Evolution of Bilateral Ties

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Similarities and Differences between Mongolia and Tuva in the Evolution of Bilateral Ties

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Outer Mongolia witnessed many attempts during the first half of the 20th century to reunite the Tannu Uriankhai, who had shared a regime for centuries, were ethnically identical, and had similar ways of life, cultures, and civilizations. These attempts failed, however. Despite circumstantial rationales for closer relations between Mongolia and Tuva, internal and external factors kept the two countries distant. Mongolia and Tuva's rapprochement and distancing were both conditioned by Russia and China, mostly by the policy and attitude of Russia.

Key words: Outer Mongolia, Frontier of Uriankhai, Tannu Tuva, ethnicity, religion, Soviet influence, migration, independence, border, Comintern, revolution, national autonomy

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1. Introduction

With the decline of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in the early 20th century, the Mongols under its rule sought to revive their political sovereignty throughout the territory where they had been living, and a unified Mongol state based in Outer Mongolia began gradually to take shape. Both the government headed by Bogdo, formed as a result of the National Independence Movement of 1911, and the subsequent one, known as the "People's Government," took note of this tendency and encouraged it enthusiastically—to the dismay of major powers such as

Russia, China, and Japan, who had been competing to enlarge their zones of influence in the vast Eurasian heartland.

The Mongolian authorities considered Tannu Uriankhai an ideal area to annex due to at least 3 or 4 core connections between the regions, including a shared administration, ethnic ties, and similar ways of life and religion. Let me briefly elaborate on these connections.

2. Territorial and administrative bonds

One of the Outer Mongolian authorities' major arguments for annexing Tannu Uriankhai was the centuries-old common administration that still existed in 1911. Moreover, most Tannu Uriankhai soums were under the direct rule of Mongol noblemen and khutagts. Thus, the Outer Mongolian Government considered that annexing Tannu Uriankhai, of Turkish origin, would be easier than annexing Buriat Mongolia in Inner Mongolia, as the Barga and Kalmyks had lived apart for centuries despite their ethnic similarities. Statements made by the Mongolian delegation during the first series of Mongol-Russian talks, held in the fall of 1921, are illustrative. The delegation argued that, in terms of lifestyle, culture, and history, the Uriankhais were not a distinct entity; moreover, they were tiny in number (fewer than 50,000), had no administrative body, and were incapable of holding talks with the Russian government. Additionally, the Uriankhai frontier had been under the Khalkha nobleman Chingunjav's rule until 1756, and after the uprising led by Chingunjav was crushed, 22 of the 44 Uriankhai soums were administered by the Manchu Governor stationed in Uliastai while the remaining 22 soums were transferred to Khalkha Zasagt Khan, Sain Noyon's provincial administration. Because the frontier had been under the same Mongol administration since ancient times—the speakers argued—the Uriankhais seemed incapable of autonomy, destined to be annexed by Russia, China, or Mongolia. Thus the Tripartite Agreement of 1915 placed Tannu Uriankhai under Mongolian rule.¹⁾

The administrative structures and territorial divisions of the aforementioned 44 Uriankhai soums have not been thoroughly studied. Dr. Ts. Tserendorj of Mongolia studied the administrative structure of Tannu Uriankhai and identified the following banner and soum land demarcations (Tserendorj 2002: 102):

1. **Khoshun/Banner of Tannu** (Tes river, Meerin zangiin banner, and Oinar banner): 4 soums
2. **Tozhu lake banner**: 4 soums
3. **Khem river banner** (Salchig banner): 4 soums
4. **Khovsgol lake banner** (Khasud banner): 4 soums
5. **Khemchig river banner** (Daa banner and Mangush banner): 10 soums
Banners ruled by Mongol noblemen
6. **Beis banner** (Sain Noyony banner): 17 otogs/ tribes
(Under the rule of Khalkha's Sain Noyon aimag/province's Oold Bishrelt governor)
7. **Maad zood banner** (Khotgoid banner and Daa vang's banner): 2 soums and 1 tribe
(Under the rule of Khalkha's Zasagt Khan aimags Duuregch governor)
8. **Shalik banner** (Salug banner): 1 soum

(Under the rule of Khalkha's Zasagt Khan aimags Dalai governor)

9. **Sartuul/Nibaz banner:** 1 soum

(Under the rule of Khalkha's Zasagt Khan aimags Akhai governor)

According to archival sources, these banners and soums were established in the following manner. From Chinggis khaan's time until that of Khotgoid's Genden daichin prince, the Tannu and Khovsgol Uriankhais had been considered frontier hunters, paying taxes in fur to their ancestors and never being molded into a soum.²⁾ Rates of taxation differed depending on the nature of the relationship between subject and ruler. For instance, some subjects paid 5 sables of fur to their native rulers and 1 sable to their alien rulers (their landlords) in order to live on certain territory or receive protection. The Uriankhais, the Hyrgys around the Yenisei river, and the Teleuts of the Altai mountain range often had to pay three tiers of taxation: to Russia, to Dzungar, and to the Altan khan (Oyunjargal 2009: 40). Fur taxation had been important in defining the borders of the Uriankhai frontier territory. As stated in the Buurchi Border Demarcation Agreement of 1727 between Russia and the Qing Uriankhais (who used to pay 5 sables of fur to Russia), Manchu and Mongolia were allowed to continue as before, while non-citizen Uriankhais now had to pay 1 sable of fur to each side after having been exempt from taxation ever since the Uriankhai border had been defined.³⁾

After crushing an armed struggle for independence headed by Chingunjav between 1755 and 1758, the Manchu reshuffled the 16 otogs/tribes of the Tannu and Khovsgol Uriankhais into 4 banners and assigned the General-in Chief in Uliastai to rule them. It was formally decided in 1760 that the Tes river or Tannu banner would be governed by Dash zaisan, the Khem river or Salchig banners by Rinchin zaisan, the Tozhu lake banner by Bat zaisan, the Khovsgol lake banner by Itgel (a son of Ashid), and the Khotgoid made chairman since a suitable person was not available.⁴⁾ The Governor-in-Chief/Amban Noyon of Tannu Uriankhai was also put in charge of all of these. Due to the Uriankhais' illiteracy and practical administrative inability, a 1763 decree of the Manchu Emperor had created a seal for the Tannu Uriankhai Governor, but this seal was now bestowed upon Khalkha meerin Munajav as the overriding Ruler of the Tannu Uriankhai. Prior to Manchu domination, there had been 27 Uriankhai otogs/tribes at Vang Ravdan of Sain Noyon aimag, who had divided them into two banners to be ruled by his son Beis Tserev (given 17 tribes) and Gun Damba (given 10 tribes); thus began Khemchig's banner. When Gun Damba was removed from his position in 1764, the Khemchig banner under his rule was transferred to the Khovd Governor's administration, and Sharav became its overall Chairman (Potapov 1964: 242).

In 1786, due to his literary ability, intelligence, administrative experience, and thorough knowledge of Buddhism, Meerin Zangy Dash of Uriankhai was offered the seal of the Governor of Tannu Uriankhai to rule the Uriankhais. He presided at the Samgaltay border protection post, 9 postal station posts away from Uliastai.

In 1872, Zalan Gurgemjav, Ugerida/Chairman of the Khovsgol Uriankhais, requested that the Manchu administration make his unit independent due to difficulties in running official business caused by rapid population growth (bringing the number of people to 3,000) and his remoteness from the Governor's office (some 1,000 kilometers away). His request was accompanied by a considerable donation to the Uliastai Governor's office: 55 horses, 50

cattle, 200 sheep, and 1,000 liang of silver. The Manchu administration granted his request on December 20, allowing him to communicate directly with the Uliastai Governor's office (Fan 1996: 81). The map depicting Tannu Uriankhai's grazing land (pasture), probably drawn up between 1911 and 1918 and currently preserved at the Tenri University library in Nara, Japan, excludes the Khovsgol Uriankhai's territory (Todoriki 2008: 6).

Following this episode, the Khemchig banner's noblemen submitted similar requests to the Uliastai Governor and were satisfied. In 1899, however, Haidav, Chairman of the Khemchig banner, once again pleaded with Lian Shun, Governor of Uliastai, pointing out that the Khemchig banner's population had increased to almost 10,000 and that the effort required to communicate with Russia was increasing because they were so far from the Tannu Uriankhai Governor's office. Despite its difficult relationship with the governor, the Qing government granted his request in January 1900, effective immediately (Fan 1996: 81).

In the early 20th century, there were only three banners—Oinar, Salchig, and Tozhu lake—under the rule of the Tannu Uriankhai Governor, who sought external support to keep them under his command.

3. Ethnic bonds

The ethnicity of the Tannu Uriankhai played an important role in the history of Mongolo-Tuva relations. The Mongolians saw the Tuvans as having origins similar to their own, a key factor in potential unification, while most Tuvans considered themselves a people of Turkish origin—a separate nation with a distinct Turkish language. However, Tuva's historical works



Map 1 Changes in the territory of the Tannu Uriankhai /1755–1921/



Photo 1 The interior of Tuvan traditional yurt. Collection of Museum of History, Republic of Tuva, Russian Federation. Photo by I. Lkhagvasuren. 2012.

have acknowledged the ethnic bonds between Mongol and Tuva in important ways. The second volume of Tuva's history, published in 2007, points out that "these two nations have a centuries-old common destiny through their nomadic way of living, administrative and territorial structure, and Buddhism, as well as the involvement of some Mongol tribes in Tuva's nation-building process and the joint expeditionary wars that made them much closer." (Lamin, eds. 2007: 9)

Surveys of the Tuvans' ethnic origins inevitably touch upon the Uriankhais' ethnic roots. Mongol historian A. Ochir, in his article on Uriankhai ethnicity and history, emphasizes that several ethnic groups shared the name "Uriankhai." Whether these groups share a common origin remains an open question, however. "Uriankhan" (or "Uriankhai") was once the Mongol tribal name, but other tribes of Turkish origin gradually adopted it as well. Though historical texts have applied "Uriankhai" as a general name, the Tuva, Tubalar, Telengud, and Teles do not call themselves Uriankhais (Ochir 2000: 32). Accordingly, at the August 1921 Congress of Tannu Uriankhais, representatives of the 6 banners ended the use of "Uriankhai" and "Soyod" and selected "Tannu-Tuva Ulus/State" when issuing their resolution for the formation of an independent state.⁵⁾ The Tuvans refused to use "Uriankhai" because it had been not their original name but one borrowed from the Mongols. Moreover, when they gained independence from Mongolia, the aspiration to replace this Mongol tribal name appeared to prevail. Nevertheless, Tuvans do not ignore the name "Uriankhai," and a national pride flowing from Zelme and Subedei, Chinggis khaan's Uriankhai confidants, has emerged amongst them. S. Shoigu, Emergency Minister of the Russian Federation, even published a seven-volume compilation of historical manuscripts and source materials on Tuva, his native land, under the caption "Uriankhai—Tuva Debter/Annals" in 2007.

The Tuvans consider themselves ethnically intertwined with the Kyrgyz, who lived in the Minusinsk Depression in the 3rd century B.C and moved their Ajo, the king's palace, from the Tannu mountains to the south by the mid-9th century, when the Kyrgyz had grown powerful.⁶⁾ The Tuvans, originating from Turkish ethnic tribes like the Tele and Telengid, had intermingled with the neighboring Mongols under one rule many times without being absorbed. "They even absorbed the small Mongol tribes, creating an independent language, culture, and set of rituals. Therefore, there are many Turkish Mongols among the Tuvans" (Ochir 1993: 66).

Thus, the Mongols and Tuvans do have abundant ethnic ties, which became a pivotal factor in their friendly coexistence, if not unification.

4. Cultural and religious bonds

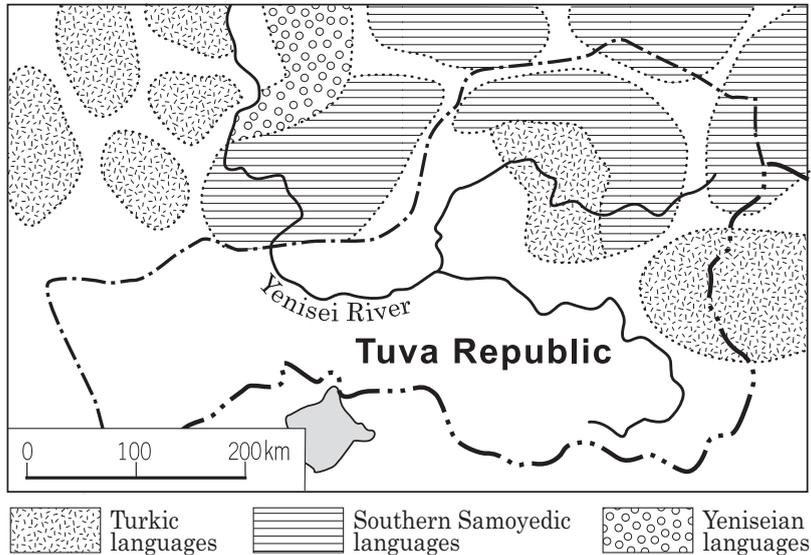
Another aspect of the Mongol-Tuva connection is their common culture and Buddhism, which form a shared spiritual heritage based on a nomadic mode of livestock breeding. Indeed, every letter and petition from Tuva asking for reunification starts with a reference to the groups' common ethnic and religious origin, which was and will naturally continue to be the object of sustained attention.

In the early 20th century, nearly 10% of Tannu Tuva inhabitants were monks. The first two monasteries (Kyrgyz and Oinar) were founded in 1722; another (the biggest monastery in Tuva) emerged at Samgaltay a year later. At the peak of Tuva's Buddhist era, there were 4,000 monks in 22 monasteries. All of them used to belong to Jebtsundamba hutagt of Khuree and were not entitled to reincarnate *gegeen* and *hutagt* on their own (Mongush 1984: 156).

Given that the Tuva nation may have emerged from an intermingling of Mongol and Turkish tribes, a number of Tuva words may have been derived from or influenced by Mongolian (Pope 1965: 161). On a linguistic map composed by Russian scholars illustrating the southwestern Siberian languages from the 17th century to the present, Tuva appears clearly at the intersection of many different languages, including Turkish, south Samoyed, Yenisei, Tungus, and Mongol (a Khalkha dialect) (Todoriki 2008: 9).

Bilingualism was fairly common among the Uriankhais, particularly among the elite. According to A. V. Adrianov, who surveyed Uriankhai at the end of the 19th century, "most Soyod monks, office bearers, and well-to-do people were fluent in Mongolian and they used to talk to me in the Mongolian language. Probably these Uriankhais do not emphasize their mother tongue" (Adrianov 1886: 193). Uriankhai noblemen used to send their children to Mongolia, specifically to Uliastai, to learn Mongolian, the official medium of state correspondence. For centuries, the Mongolian language was a sort of window through which Tuvans became acquainted with Asian history and civilizations and communicated with the outside world. A number of their manuscripts were written in Mongolian, and monks living in Mongolian monasteries disseminated the Mongolian language and culture among the Tuvans.

In the early 20th century, inhabitants of Tannu Tuva generally fell into two categories: westerners engaging in nomadic livestock breeding and southerners engaging in hunting and reindeer breeding. The eastern part of Tuva was a vast land, densely forested and sparsely populated, where roughly 5% of the total population bred reindeer, hunted, and engaged in



Map 2 Language map of Tuva from the 17th century to the present

limited animal husbandry. Over 95% of the population lived in the western region, engaging in nomadic animal husbandry, partially irrigated land cultivation, and fishing. Socioeconomically, the western region was far more advanced than the east. Nomadic animal husbandry formed the basis of its economy and was a stable means of livelihood for the Tuvans as for the Mongols. Although no formal census data on livestock are available, some researchers claim that, by the early 20th century, Tuvans had between 800,000 and a million head of livestock: 60,000 to 80,000 horses, 100,000 to 160,000 cattle, 600,000 to 800,000 sheep and goats, 8,000 to 10,000 reindeer, and nearly 1,000 camels and yaks (Aranchin 1982: 17).

5. Post-Qing competition among Russia, China, and Mongolia for Tannu Uriankhai (1911–1920)

With the end of Manchu domination, the Uriankhai frontier faced an uneasy challenge in determining its destiny. Given their political and economic weakness, small population, and non-existent government, it was impossible for Tuvans to gain independence. They thus faced the tough dilemma of either merging with Mongolia for ethnic and religious reasons or submitting to powerful Russia for protection. Desiring to inherit the former border of the Manchu dynasty, the Middle Kingdom also kept an eager eye on Tannu Uriankhai.

By the mid-19th century, Tsarist Russia had begun to contemplate annexing the Uriankhai frontier, an important strategic location with abundant natural resources, by taking advantage of the area's weak international legal frameworks to resettle a large number of Russian peasants and invest in commercial and mining ventures there. Tannu Uriankhai lay as a buffer zone on the Russia-Manchu border, too remote for constant control. The Manchu

administration wished to act against Russian peasants and wandering gold diggers attempting to settle secretly, unlike in Outer Mongolia, where a host of its representatives already resided (2,100 in 1910 (Aranchin, eds. 2001: 325)). There were few Russian subjects on the Uriankhai frontier, so the Russian authorities decided in November of 1911 to increase their number by 400,000 (Aranchin, eds. 2001: 310). Soon afterward, in February of 1912, diplomats stationed in Beijing proposed to take advantage of this auspicious political moment to resolve the Uriankhai frontier issue. Though foreign Minister Sazonov had rejected the idea because it lacked legality, Tsar Nikolai II opted for swift action, insisting on continuing the plan of resettling Russian peasants.

After Governor Gombodorj convened the assembly of the three banners' noblemen to discuss the future of Tannu Uriankhai, they split into two distinct and contentious factions, one favoring Russia and the other China. Agvaandemchig and others representing the wealthy class defended their positions by asking, "What is Mongolia? Why are they better than we? Barring milk and butter, of which we have enough, what else would they offer us? Russia is a power that would provide us with iron, equipment, and fabrics" (Aranchin, eds. 2001: 323). However, noblemen from the Salchig and Tozhu lake banners believed that, given its religious and cultural affinities, Mongolia was the better choice. After prolonged debate, the personal influence of the governor convinced them to become independent under Russian protection. In a letter addressed to the Russian government dated February 1912, Gombodorj states: "*Though the Manchu and Mongolia got their independence, we are being left aloft without government. Nevertheless, I was elected as head of the administration by the Uriankhais living in Tes, the Yenisei rivers, and the Tozhu lake basin. As Mongols respecting Buddhism, we would like be under Russia's protection for the purpose of elevating our religious figure as head of state.*"⁷⁾ However, due to its ongoing diplomatic negotiations with China and Mongolia, Tsarist Russia had to deny the request and conceal its desire to annex the Uriankhai frontier. It also had to turn away at the border the Tuvan delegation (led by the governor's son) trying to reach to Petersburg. Meanwhile, Russia had been following the events in Tuva closely and even intensifying the settlement of its peasants there. Thus, due to the international situation (particularly China's possible reaction), Nicolai II avoided establishing official relations with the Uriankhia noblemen, taking a "wait and see" position that favored the Tuvan noblemen eager to merge with Mongolia. In April of 1912, Baljinyam of the Salchig banner and Togmid of the Toj lake banner wrote a letter to Jalkhanz Khutagt Damdinbazar of Zasagt Khan province, expressing their willingness to merge with the province under Bogdo geegen's benevolence. They explained that Governor Gombodorj had sent a letter to the city of Usi for the purpose of joining Russia: "*Unless we accept it along with the Russians, he will confiscate our properties and send us away by military force. Given our proximity, we two have consulted and decided to merge with Mongolia's Zasagt khan province under the Bogdo khaan's protection. Since we respect Jalkhanz Khutagt Damdinbazar, who is a descendent of Khotgoid noblemen, we wish to become his disciples and work for the Bogdo. Please send us Mongolian troops.*"⁸⁾ Mongolia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs then instructed Gonchigdamba, Governor of Khovd, to send an official along with troops to the Salchig and Tozhu lake banners and to write a letter to Governor Gombodorj about the matter. A. Hionin, Russian Consul in Uliastai, angrily informed his headquarters that "*without properly studying the situation,*

the Khutagtu's Government considers it is time to annex the Uriankhai frontier on the sole basis of the Uriankhais' request" (Belov 1998).

In the wake of an unsupportive response from Russia and the Salchig and Tozhu lake banners' merging with Khalkha, Amban Noyon Gombodorj parted with his administration and looked to the government in Khuree to revive his authority. In a letter addressed to Jalkhanz Khutagt, he says, "*of our Tannu Uriankhais, five banners merged with the Manchu empire and believed in Buddhism. However, ministers in Uliastai seized assets from two of my banners, the Uriankhais of Khovsgol lake and the Uriankhais of Khemchig river, and were separated from my administration. However, we 12 soums of the three Uriankhai banners are eager to merge with Bogdo khaan's Government. Please reunify these two banners, which were separated from each other by the Manchu.*"⁹⁾

To keep their external support intact, the Mongol noblemen were careful when dealing with the Tannu Uriankhai Governor. In *A New History of the Mongols*, historian N. Magsarjav says that, in accordance with the Tannu's Salchig and Tozhu lake Uriankhais' requests, they were assigned to Zasagt Khan's Jalkhanz Khutagt administration. Though Gombodorj, Amban Noyon of the Tannu Uriankhai, sent a letter requesting the unification of all of Tannu Uriankhai with Mongolia due to Russia's attempts to interfere in Tannu Uriankhai affairs, his request was not granted.

It is known that the Tannu Uriankhai noblemen usually communicated with Jalkhanz Khutagt, since he was nominated as the minister in charge of the western frontier in early 1912. On the other hand, he was a descendent of Khotgoid noblemen, who had commanded Tannu Uriankhai in ancient times and were seen by the Uriankhais as not only religious but also state and political figures. The Mongols used religion skillfully while annexing the Uriankhai frontier, giving them a spiritual advantage in dealing with the Russians and helping them maintain the balance of power.

Feeling bottlenecked by the Chinese, the Russian government decided to start talks with Mongolia in order to consolidate its influence there and put pressure on China. The Mongolian government consistently attempted to win Russian recognition of Inner Mongolia, Barga, and the Uriankhai frontier as its territory. Negotiating a Mongolia-Russia agreement in November of 1912, Tserenchimed Da Lama, Minister for Interior Affairs, protested a Russian draft by arguing that, since the Khuree Government ruled Inner Mongolia, Khovd and Uriankhai were excluded from it (Jamsran 1997: 68). I. Y. Korostovetz, in correspondence with his superiors, mentioned that requests came constantly from Tannu Uriankhai banners seeking to merge with Khalkha because of their common religious and spiritual bonds. S. D. Sazonov, Russian Foreign Minister, responded that they should hold firm to the position that the Uriankhai frontier was not within Khutagt administration. After the talks, I. Y. Korostovetz stated that the Russian Imperial Government was entitled to choose how to define its guarantee of Mongolian autonomy and, apart from Khalkha, to decide what territory would be governed by the Mongolian government (Grumm-Grshimailo 1926: 752)—meaning that the Uriankhai frontier was beyond the Mongolian government's jurisdiction. The Russian side stated its position clearly when Khanddorj, Foreign Minister of Mongolia, visited Russia at the end of 1912. Receiving the Mongolian delegation, S. D. Sazonov strongly condemned Mongolia's inclusion of Tannu Uriankhai in the list of banners to be merged with Mongolia,



Photo 2 Tuvans (1920). Collection of Museum of History, Republic of Tuva, Russian Federation.

saying that the banners of Uriankhai were not Mongol at all.¹⁰⁾

The Russian and Chinese Declaration of 1913 not only began to limit Mongolia's independence with an autonomous and separated Outer Mongolia on the Khalkha and Khovd frontiers but also dealt a blow to hopes of establishing a unified Mongolian state. Having strengthened its position on Mongolia (particularly on the Uriankhai frontier) through diplomacy, Russia vigorously pursued its scheme to occupy Uriankhai.

When Russian officials assigned to the border and immigration issue came to the Uriankhai frontier in the spring of 1913 and found that almost all the Uriankhais had merged with Mongolia, they employed various tactics (including coercion, threats, and brainwashing) in an attempt to grab the Uriankhai frontier for Russia. In March of 1914, Gun Baljinnyam, Ugerida/Chairman of the Salchig banner, wrote to General Shanzodva's Ministry that two officials appointed by the Russian government were establishing a ministry, a Russian school, a hospital, a grocery store at Belter (at the curve of the Khem river) providing free and discounted services, and a policeman to maintain law and order. They had cut a huge amount of wood to build houses—enough for an entire new settlement. Russian officials openly declared that Russian rule would be maintained, threatening that any stolen Russian property would be paid for by the Uriankhai equivalent. Gun Baljinnyam's letter requested help in removing the Russians and maintaining tranquility in the area.¹¹⁾

A. Miller, Russian Consul General in Khuree, had repeatedly requested that the Mongolian government stop sending envoys to the Uriankhai frontier and discharge Uriankhai conscripts from armed service in Khovd. The Mongolian government, attaching little importance to the Russian diplomat's request, appointed Jalkhanz Khutagt as governor of the Uriankhai frontier in the spring of 1914. Jalkhanz Khutagt met with the Russian consul in Uliastai on his way to the western frontier to discuss the situation in the frontier areas, complaining that

the Uriankhai people of the three banners (the Salchig, Tozhu, and Khemchig) had merged with Mongolia as his disciples but that Tsererin, consul in the city of Usi, was threatening to use force against them. The Russian consul said that Tsererin was a junior officer without authorization to do such things and that the rumor of threats was of no importance.¹²⁾

In the fall of 1913, Khamba Lama Jamts and Gun Buyanbadrakh sent a letter through A. Tsererin to M. S. Knyazev, Governor of Irkutsk, about merging with Russia. They requested from the Russian government exemption from conscription and a guarantee of protection for their Buddhism and nomadic livestock breeding.¹³⁾

Given that Buyanbadrakh had come with his officials to Jalkhanz Khutagt in the summer of 1913 to accept the latter's seal and authority, the sincerity of his professed desire to merge with Russia was doubtful at best, and Russian pressure must have played a considerable role in prompting the request. Yost, assigned by Buyanbadrakh as Interim Governor in his absence, wrote to Jalkhanz Khutagt that Tsererin, Minister of Ust, had said that the Russian emperor would protect Uriankhai and had instructed Chin Vang Khanddorj, Foreign Minister of Mongolia, accordingly: lack of compliance would cause Russian troops to send their banner away to the Durbet area, and they were not to pay taxes to Mongolia or Russia. Any officials arriving from Mongolia would be subject to arrest. Tsererin threatened¹⁴⁾ the soum officials who happened to be in his path. Hearing of the Khemchig river Uriankhai's request to merge with Russia, Jalkhanz Khutagt sent an official as his personal envoy to the Khemchig banner to assess the situation. This envoy went to Meerin Zangi Buyanbadrakh's residence, where he was informed that the locals intended to separate from Mongolia and merge with Russia and given a copy of their appeal¹⁵⁾ to pass on to Jalkhanz Khutagt. This appeal mentioned that the Uriankhai banners' taxes were not only different from others' but also rising continually, compelling some Mongol noblemen to request the merge with Russia.

Knyazev forwarded the Uriankhai noblemen's request to Nikolai II in St. Petersburg and recommended a formal announcement of the Uriankhais' submission to his authority. He also pointed out that, should the request be denied, they might seek support from Khutagt, religious head of the Khuree of Mongolia (Potapov, ed. 1964: 356).

On April 17, 1914, Nikolai agreed to annex the 5 banners of the Uriankhai, informing Governor Gombodorj and the noblemen of the Daa and Beis banners of their acceptance into Russia in June. The Uriankhai banners pledged in writing not to communicate with Mongolia or other states. The noblemen of the Salchig and Tozhu lake banners failed to attend the ceremony for receiving the Russian emperor's decree organized by the Russian government on July 17, 1914. Gombodorj, the Amban Noyon, reunified these two banners with Russia and promised them every support if required.¹⁶⁾

Russia and China issued the Declaration on Outer Mongolia in November of 1913, and Tsarist Russia formally announced its annexation of the Uriankhai frontier in April of 1914. With the prohibition on Uriankhai contact with Mongolia and other countries, Mongolia's position in Uriankhai deteriorated. Though the Mongolian government rejected its two big neighbors' denial of Mongolian independence and insistence on Chinese sovereignty, there was no option but to place all hope in the Tripartite Agreement's impact on the Mongolian issue, which was referenced in a note exchanged between Russia and China when the Declaration was signed.



Photo 3 Buddhist monastery in the Chadan region, late XIX century. Collection of Museum of History, Republic of Tuva, Russian Federation.

The note instructed the region's noblemen to keep quiet until the Tripartite Agreement was concluded, as it would define their respective territories and subtly persuade the Uriankhais to maintain a low profile and wait for an eventual solution.¹⁷⁾

Disappointed with his lack of Russian support and facing increasing pressure and encroachment, Governor Gombodorj began to lose faith in Russia and espouse the views of his son, Sodnombaljir, who favored Mongolia. Meanwhile, Russian authorities were implementing coercive measures with the increasingly discontented locals, even imprisoning and torturing noblemen of the Salchig and Tozhu lake banners to force their obedience (Potapov, ed. 1964: 370). Pre-empting Sodnombaljir's contemplated enthronement by Gombodorj, the Russians assigned Agvaandemchig, one of their ardent supporters, in his place. When some noblemen headed by Gombodorj and Sodnombaljir conspired against Agvaandemchig in the winter of 1916, the Russians not only crushed the movement but also inflicted severe punishment on its participants, though a few escaped to Mongolia. Soon afterward, Agvaandemchig was assassinated while traveling from the Samgaltay monastery. Commissioner Gregoriev did not attempt to catch the culprits but negotiated with ex-Governor Gombodorj to nominate his son as Governor Amban Noyon. Due to growing instability and anti-Russian sentiment in Uriankhai, the Tsarist government increased its military presence 50-fold and sent A. I. Pil'ts, Governor of Irkutsk, to review the domestic situation in July of 1916.

The frequent visits from high-ranking Russian officials and the military buildup in China could not but focus attention on the Uriankhai frontier. The Chinese representative in Khuree held talks with the Mongols on Uriankhai in August of 1916, seeking permission to have an official and 50 troops pass through to Uriankhai. The Mongolian government assented and had a Mongol official accompany the party as well.

The Mongolians were well aware of the strong position taken by the Russian government and of the futility of their own efforts. Wishing to use the Chinese government's physical force and influence to take Uriankhai back, they agreed to pursue a coordinated policy with China. Requests from the Uriankhai banners strengthened this policy considerably. In the summer of 1917—acting on the instructions of Buyanbadrakh, Governor of the Khemchig Daa banner—a monk named Dagdanai came to Khuree to discuss Chinese annexation of the Daa banner. Togmid of the Tozhin banner and some noblemen and monks from the Salchig banner requested to become subjects of Bogdo khan in early 1918.

Intensifying its policy on Tannu Uriankhai, the Chinese government sent Yang Shichao (former head of Chen Lu, resident representative of China in Khuree, graduate of Petersburg Law School, and fluent in Russian) to Uriankhai in of June 1918 in order to set up a Chinese administration there.

Along with some officials, Yang Shichao and Tsogt-Ochir came to Khuree in October of 1918 and began preparing to enter Uriankhai. A. P. Hionin, Consul of Russia in Khovd, concluded that the secret Mongolia-China agreement on cooperation in Uriankhai was being implemented. With the appointment of Yang Shichao as Commissioner for Uriankhai by the Chinese Government in early 1919, preparations for imposing control on Uriankhai intensified. In February of 1919, Itegemjit beis Tsogt-Ochir reached the Samgaltai monastery, where secret consultations among the Mongol, Uriankhai, and Chinese delegations sought to ensure that Mongol and Chinese troops penetrated the Russian border post in order to instigate an Uriankhai uprising and prepare horses for riding and freight. By this time, the Uriankhais were no longer following the rules and orders given them by the Russian administration (Potapov, ed. 1964: 370).

By mid-1919, the Mongolo-Chinese, Omsk's, and Soviet Russian governments were competing to control Uriankhai, while over 300 troops led by Magsarjav were stationed at Belotsarsk, conducting surveys and working among the local population. Chinese military contingents were stationed in places like Chadan in Khemchig and Shagonar.

The Mongolian government was trying to remove the Russian troops from the Uriankhai frontier. B. Tserendorj, Mongolian Minister for Foreign Affairs, wrote a note to Orlov, Consul of Russia, on June 10, 1919, mentioning that, regardless of political affiliation, Russian troops were not entitled to enter the Uriankhai frontier without Mongolia's permission. In mid-1919, H. Magsarjav suggested to Yan Shichao, China's special envoy at Tannu Uriankhai, a joint attack on Red Russian troops. Yang Shichao responded by saying that, given Red Russia's enormous power and their own small numbers, such an attempt would do nothing but provoke their enemy. Instead, he suggested waiting for Russia's power to decline and keeping their scheme secret while maintaining an alliance with the White Russians that would eventually allow them to defeat the Red Army and liberate the Uriankhai frontier.¹⁸⁾

Magsarjav and Jamsranjav submitted to Bogdo khaan their report on the defense of the frontier on July 8, 1919, mentioning that they had won over all the Chairmen and noblemen of Uriankhai and obtained a petition to merge with Mongolia.¹⁹⁾ After the Chinese military put an end to Mongolian autonomy in November of 1919, Magsarjav, Minister at Tannu Uriankhai, returned to Khuree after deputing somebody in his place. In *Russia and Mongolia*, Russian historian E. A. Belov suggests that, instead of concentrating on defending its

autonomy through military and diplomatic means, the government in Khuree committed a grave strategic error: allowing the Chinese administration on the Uriankhai frontier and thereby creating conditions favorable to a Chinese military occupation of Outer Mongolia in 1918 and 1919 (Belov 1999: 189–190).

A. I. Kashnikov, who was Commissioner for the Revolutionary Committee of the Yenisei district, the Chinese official Yang Shichao, and Beis Jamsran, who was appointed by the Mongolian government to replace Magsarjav, all agreed to establish rules and procedures that would ensure Uriankhai self-determination, prevent the Uriankhai frontier from becoming a springboard for an attack on Soviet Russia, and make it a neutral zone in order to safeguard Russian interests and regulate commercial activities. Due to attacks by White Russian troops and other factors, however, they were unable to follow up on their agreement. Not long afterward, in July of 1920, Mongol troops left the Uriankhai frontier. In early 1921, the Red Army worked with local guerrillas to defeat the White Russian troops and send away the Chinese ones, giving the Soviets complete control of the Uriankhai frontier.

6. Tuva under Soviet influence

Russia's position was weakened considerably when the Soviets declared Tuvan autonomy in June of 1918 in an attempt to woo Tuvans who disliked Russia's expansionist policy and the intensive efforts made by Mongolia and China from 1919 to 1921 to take Tuva back and push the Russians out of the frontier. However, eager to keep Tuva under its control (12,000 Russians had settled there), Soviet Russia sent military contingents there to put pressure on Mongolia and China and lend moral support to Tuva's pro-Russian authorities. In early 1921, Soviet leaders were divided on the "Uriankhai issue." Siberian revolutionaries like B. Z. Shumyatski and I. N. Smirnov ardently believed that Tuva ought to be merged with revolutionary Mongolia. This position was held not only by some Soviet leaders but also by all those who believed that Tang Uriankhai had been a springboard for the revolution in Mongolia. Shumyatski wrote in his petition to Chicherin, Foreign Minister of Russia, that "*Given the continuing formation of Mongolia and the uncertainty of the future form of its political and international perspective, the issue of the Uriankhai frontier's unification with Mongolia should be left open*" (Luzyanin 1998: 18). The Soviet authorities finally decided to separate the Tuvans from the Mongols, keeping the former self-reliant but under their control for the time being, given the uncertainty of Outer Mongolia's status and its possible inclination toward China in the event of a successful revolution there. This political decision was made as part of a broad strategy of isolating the Tuvans from Mongolia politically, administratively, practically, and ethnically.

The Mongolian authorities who came to power with Soviet support in July of 1921 did not recognize Tannu Tuva's independence and tried until 1926 to bring its people under their own authority. Following Soviet and Comintern instructions, the Tuvans followed Mongolia's example and adopted its practices in the fields of politics, administration, and legislation. They named their ruling party the "Tuvan Revolutionary Party" and formed the Small and Great Khural. Moreover, the principal provisions of their constitution were very similar to those of Mongolia's.



Photo 4 Tuvan delegation visiting Moscow in 1920. Collection of Museum of History, Republic of Tuva, Russian Federation.

Soviet leaders criticized and tried to change Mongolia's policy toward Tuva. For instance, in his 1932 book against rightists, leftist leader U. Badrakh devotes a whole chapter to the rightists who refused to recognize Tang Tuva's independence and protested against the USSR (Badrakh 2001: 86–117).

Mongolian authorities had to recognize Tuva's government in the fall of 1925, partly because of a Soviet military intervention against the Khemchig banner that crushed an armed uprising against Tuva's pro-Russian government and partly because of heavy pressure from the Comintern to change their Pan-Mongolic ideology. P. M. Nikiforov, Russian representative in Mongolia, reported to his headquarters: "*We [together with Amagayev] pressured the Mongols to abandon their Pan-Mongolic ideology, but senior leaders were reluctant, while country-dwellers were prompt to accept them, which led to Ulaanbaatar's recognition of the Uriankhai government in November of 1925. The solution to the Uriankhai issue brought some chilliness to the relations between the government and the representative's office*" (Roshin 1999: 146). Even some Soviet diplomats criticized the act of forcing Mongolia to recognize Tuva as meaningless. For instance, L. M. Karakhan argued that the Soviet-Chinese agreement gave Mongolia autonomy with a wide range of rights and that, as it appeared almost impossible to win recognition of Tuva from Mongolia, proposing such a thing seemed strange. He also said that it would dismay the Chinese and make them concerned about Tuva, which had no well-established governmental or non-governmental structure and lacked economic entities. He insisted that policies toward Tuva should aim to strengthen its statehood and facilitate negotiations for a certain degree of autonomy with China. In short, he felt that

Mongolia's recognition of Tuva would have no real importance for either party and that, instead of pursuing aggressive policies, Mongols ought to help organize society, set up a political party and youth league, conduct a public awareness campaign, and promote trade.²⁰⁾

The Mongolian and Tuvan governments signed a mutual recognition agreement in Ulaanbaatar on August 16, 1926. Its 12 articles addressed issues such as exchanging envoys and setting up border demarcation commissions.²¹⁾ Mongolian authorities who were eager to annex Tannu Tuva faced formidable challenges in safeguarding their own territory from Tuva, which had totally submitted to Soviet influence. Despite four rounds of border talks between Mongolia and Tuva in 1930 and 1940, their border remained undefined. When Tuva merged with the Soviet Union in October of 1944, the border issue turned into one between Mongolia and the Soviet Union.

American scholar P. Tang writes that the Soviet policy of separating Tuva from Mongolia had three aims: isolating Mongolia, as a part of China, from the outside world; pushing China away from Outer Mongolia through the latter's independence; and thwarting Mongolia's attempt to annex Tuva on the pretext of securing its independence.

Thus, the Russian strategic policy of annexing the Uriankhai frontier blocked any attempt at assimilation between Mongolia and Tuva and had completely attained its goal by the middle of the 20th century.

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Notes

- 1) Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Mongolia, Found 2, folder 78, p. 13–20.
- 2) Mongolia's National Central Archive (MNCA) F.A-140, folder-22.
- 3) Relations among Tuva, Russia, and Mongolia over three centuries (1615 to 1915) Archival documents on the beginning of Russia-Tuva relations 380 years ago.: 49, Kyzyl, 1995. *За три века: тувинско-русские-монгольские-китайские отношения(1616–1915)*. Архивные документы к 380 летию начала русско-тувинских связей., стр-49, Кызыл, 1995.
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- 5) Declaration of Russian protectorate over Tuva in 1914. Archival Documents. Kyzyl, 1994. *Установление покровительства России над Тувой в 1914 году*. Архивные документы. Кызыл, 1994.
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- 8) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140: 22.
- 9) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140: 22.
- 10) Mongolia's National Central Archive, F-4: 12.
- 11) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140, f-22: 12–13.
- 12) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140, f-22: 13.
- 13) Declaration of the Russian protectorate over Tuva in 1914. Archival documents, Kyzyl 1994.
- 14) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140, f-22: 14.
- 15) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140: 22.
- 16) Declaration of the Russian protectorate over Tuva in 1914. Archival documents, Kyzyl, 1994.
- 17) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140, f-22: 2.
- 18) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140, f-54: 4.
- 19) Mongolia's National Central Archive, A-140, f-1: 4.
- 20) Russian foreign policy archive. F 111, op. 6, f 109: 27.
- 21) Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mongolia. F 118, f 2: 17.