

※Special Essays※

Looking Back to History: Inner Mongolia under Qing Rule

By Sharad K. Soni* (India)

With a total of 23.84 million people,¹ what is today known as the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) of the People's Republic of China is populationwise much bigger than the independent State of Mongolia (previously used to be called Outer Mongolia) which has approximately 2.4 million population (as per 2000 population and housing census of Mongolia). Geographically too Inner Mongolia has its own importance due to the strategic location along China's northern boundary, where it is bordered by Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces in the east, Hebei, Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in the south and south west, Gansu province in the west, and Mongolia as well as Russia in the north and north east respectively. It is, therefore, a landlocked province with the distinction of becoming the first Autonomous Region of China in 1947; the other four include the Guangxi Zhuang, the Xinjiang Uighur, the Ningxia Hui and the Tibet Autonomous Regions. Over the years Inner Mongolia has come a long way and now enjoys significant status in the Chinese government policy towards the development of the region on the socio-economic and political fronts. Strikingly, in the post-Cold War period due to improvement in Sino-Russian as well as Sino-Mongolian relations Inner Mongolia has been witnessing even greater progress with flourishing border trade, a reality that

* Dr. Sharad K. Soni is Assistant Professor of Mongolian Studies, Central Asian Studies Division, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India). He can be contacted at sharadksoni@gmail.com

1 . The figure is estimated as of 2004. However, according to the 2000 National Population Census of China, the total population of Inner Mongolia stands at 23.76 million with almost 4 million Mongols, see "Inner Mongolia" at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inner_Mongolia.

also signifies the importance of IMAR as a political-geographical unit. But the history of Inner Mongolia as a political-geographical unit begins only with the Manchu occupation of China that gave way to the establishment of Qing dynastic rule (1644-1911).

It is in this context that this paper makes an investigation into the history of Inner Mongolia and traces its origin, which owes much to the Mongol fragmentation ever since the Mongol Yuan dynasty was overthrown from China. It also highlights subjugation of Mongols by the Manchus who made a specific distinction between Outer Mongols (*Wei Mêng-Ku*) and Inner Mongols (*Nei Mêng-Ku*),² besides examining the implementation of Qing policies in Inner Mongolia.

Fragmentation of Mongol Empire

An historical survey reveals that Inner Mongolia formed the base for the virile nomadic Mongols to descend and raid agricultural Chinese until Chinggis Khan united all the nomadic Mongol tribes and established his Great Mongol Empire (*yeke mongghol ulus*) in the thirteenth century.³ Having a commanding leadership quality Chinggis Khan's contribution to the expansion of the Mongol empire can be gauged from the fact that before his death in 1227 he had already formed "the basis of a far-flung Eurasian empire by conquering its inner zone across Central Asia."⁴ As a result the Mongol empire under Chinggis Khan and his successors covered a vast area spread from the shores of the Pacific in the east to the Adriatic Sea in the west, and from Siberia in the north to Southeast Asia in the south. Such a huge empire build up came into being surprisingly because "unlike previous nomadic incursions into settled areas, the rise of the Mongols was sudden and

2. Chang Yin-T'ang, *The Economic Development and Prospects of Inner Mongolia*, (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1933), p.57.

3. For more on the Rise of Mongols and their conquests see Sharad K. Soni, *Mongolia-Russia Relations: Kiakhta to Vladivostok* (Delhi: Shipra and MAKAIAS, 2002), pp.13-16.

4. John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation* (Delhi: World View Publications, 1998), revd. edn, p.164.

spectacular”.⁵ However, the legacy of Mongol conquest vis-à-vis China is perhaps the most remarkable because not only whole of China was brought under the Mongol rule but also it became the seat to govern the empire since the days of Khubilai Khan, the grandson of Chinggis Khan.⁶ It was in 1280 that all of China was brought under the Great Mongol Empire when southern China was added to Khubilai’s Yuan dynasty following the downfall of the Sung dynasty. Khubilai’s Yuan China witnessed not only Asia and Europe coming closer but in particular also marked the beginning of contacts between Russians and Chinese, which went down in the history as the first known contacts between these two different people.⁷ The whole span of thirteenth century, therefore, constituted an extraordinary period during which one people, the Mongols, played a decisive domineering role in the Eurasian continent.

However, Khubilai’s death in 1294 can be considered as the turning point in the history of Mongol rule in China. His successors lacked the ability to govern such a large territory as Yuan China had in its possession and so Mongol rule in China got weakened to give way to the establishment of the Ming rule in 1368. By the late fourteenth century the Great Mongol Empire as a unified entity faced severe blow as its other Khanates, namely Chaghadaï, Persia and Kipchak (Golden Horde) too did not remain intact resulting their fragmentation into several principalities.⁸ Yet, repeated attempts were made to unite the Mongols so as to recapture their lost territories and re-enter the world scene but they did not succeed primarily due to their being embroiled into fratricidal wars for power politics. What indeed marked the end of the Mongol age of conquest was the rise of Tamerlane (1336-1405), nicknamed

5. See Stephen Kotkin, “Defining Territories and Empires: from Mongol Ulus to Russian Siberia, 1200-1800,” at http://src_home.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/sympo/proceed97/kotkin.htm.

6. For more on early contacts between Mongolia and China, see Sharad K. Soni, *Mongolia-China Relations: Modern and Contemporary Times* (New Delhi: Pentagons, 2006), pp.1-18.

7. See Soni (2002), *op.cit.*, p.15.

8. *Ibid*, p.16.

Timur the Lame.⁹ In the post-Yuan period, relations between Ming China and the Mongols can be described in terms of policy pursued by the Ming rulers, which focussed on “not to subjugate the whole of Mongolia but rather to destroy the unity of the tribes, which gave them their striking power.”¹⁰ In fact, it was a “divide-and-rule” policy of the Mings that the Chinese could be able to manage the semi-nomads of southern Mongolia (present day Inner Mongolian region) as border allies against the fully nomadic and mobile tribes of northern Mongolian region (today’s Mongolia).¹¹

After some time, when the Ming rulers shed their anti-Mongol animosities, some Mongol people who could not go back to their native land when the Mings ousted their ruler were permitted to stay at their places of residence in China. Consequently, while some Mongols lodged themselves into Chinese mode of life or at least into Chinese system of governance, pacification of a major chunk especially those living outside the Chinese border remained a difficult issue. The reason, as Rossabi examines, was that “...[Since] the Mongols were scattered and divided into so many different tribes that pacification of all these groups was impractical. Moreover, the Mongols during the Ming, scarcely engaged the Chinese forces in full-scale battles. Small bands usually met the Ming troops and mostly encountered them on hit-and-run raids or what might be referred to as guerrilla warfare....”¹² This kind of warfare involving the Mongols reflects the prevailing state of their political organisation which unlike in the past was now unable to be led by a unified Mongol leadership. Rise of a new Mongol empire, therefore, remained a dream for the Mongols who had to pay a heavy price due to their own fratricidal wars. This once again resulted into division among various Mongol tribes who towards the beginning of fifteenth century split into two distinct branches – Eastern and Western or Oirats. The eastern

9. J.J Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.173.

10. Fairbank and others (1998), *op.cit*, p.200.

11. *Ibid*.

12. Morris Rossabi, “The Ming and Inner Asia”, in Denis Twitchett, Frederick W. Mote and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 8, Part-II, 1998, pp.225-6.

Mongols included Khalkhas, Buryats, Chahars and Tumets, while the western Mongols were a group of Derbets, Oirats and Olets.

Later on, in the 17th century, the eastern branch too got divided into northern Mongols (Khalkhas, Buryats) living north of the Gobi desert and southern Mongols (Chahars, Tumets) occupying the area south of the desert.¹³ Such divisions among the Mongols resulted in the step-by-step conquest of their respective areas by both the Manchus and the Russians who began to dominate the geo-politics of the Inner Asian region. So far as northern Mongols are concerned Khalkhas were brought into submission to the Manchu rule in China towards the end of the seventeenth century, whereas Buryats were conquered by the Russians and politically separated from the Khalkhas. Since then the Khalkhas of northern Mongolia also began to be referred to as Outer Mongols, the inhabitants of present day Mongolia and the southern Mongols as the Inner Mongols, the inhabitants of today's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. It has also been revealed that it was because of Southern Mongol nobles' greater cooperation that the Manchu rulers treated them as Inner Circle, while Northern Mongol nobles were treated as Outer Circle due to their comparatively longer resistance.¹⁴

Coming back to the Ming period what one notices is that after division among the Mongols the Ming rulers began to follow the strategy of playing off both the eastern and western Mongols against each other, though the latter were favoured most to counteract the former. But it did not work out properly and the Oirats (western Mongols) who played a major role in Mongolian political developments especially between 1423 and 1530 even went to the extent of advancing against the Ming power.¹⁵ For example, Batu Möngke

13. Peter S.H. Tang, *Russian and Soviet Policy in Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, 1911-1931* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1959), p.276.

14. Tsedendambyn Batbayar and Sharad K Soni, *Modern Mongolia: A Concise History* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2007), p.8.

15. O. Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia: The Great Game* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp.6-7.

(1470-1544), a descendant of the royal family, who is widely known as Dayan Khan made the first attempt and united the Mongol tribes – both the eastern and the western (Oirats) under his leadership. He is said to be so ambitious that like his predecessors he wished to “re-establish Mongol rule in China”.¹⁶ But again disunity as well as constant internecine warfare brought the Mongols down which proved to be advantageous for the Chinese to the extent that Dayan Khan “no longer threatened the survival of the Ming empire in the last three decades of his reign”.¹⁷ From that time onwards the Mongol areas became more or less independent princedoms with their own names, whose rulers adopted the title of ‘Khan’.¹⁸

The last of the Khans of all Mongolia was Dayan Khan’s grandson Altan Khan (1532-1582) of the Tumet Mongols who is credited with having founded the city of Höhhot, the capital of modern Inner Mongolia. Altan Khan also made one last attempt to unite the Mongols during the Ming Period,¹⁹ and was able to exert far greater pressure on the Chinese border areas. Under Altan Khan the reason for Mongol raids on the Chinese territory was again the dispute concerning tribute and trade privileges. When he was denied the terms and conditions he put before the Ming ruler to accept, a series of devastating raids followed since 1551 onwards. And it was only after almost twenty years that the Mongol raids culminated in a peace settlement in 1571.²⁰ With this peace settlement which was aimed at bringing peace in the Mongol-Ming stalemate, the Mongols in western part of Inner Mongolia were now quiescent for a while so that the Chinese could turn their attention to the eastern part of the region (the western part of Manchuria). But in this part the

16. Cited in Morris Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia: From 1368 to the Present Day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p.45.

17. *Ibid.*

18. David Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia: Pastoral Mongolian Society and the Chinese State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.7.

19. See Morris Rossabi, “Altan Khan,” in Ainslie Embree, ed., *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, (New York, 1987), vol. I, p.50.

20. Rossabi, (1998), *op.cit*, p.237.

Mongol nobles continued to be intransigent so much so that Altan Khan's death in 1582 made the situation further worse. The Mongols eventually became a loose collection of disorganized roaming tribes, warring among themselves and occasionally raiding China, until the rise of the Manchus who finally subjugated the Mongols.

Subjugation of Mongols by the Manchus

The rise of the Manchus, which had profound effects on the fate of the Mongols, began long before 1644, the year in which a Manchu emperor was first seated on the Dragon throne in Peking as the ruler of the Qing dynasty. It was in the late sixteenth century that the Manchus, a Tungus people who belonged to the nomadic Jurchen or Jurchen tribe and lived in area what is today known Manchuria, appeared on the scene to give a definite blow to the Mings. A few years later in 1619 it was discovered that the Manchu leader Nurhaci (1559-1626) was extremely upset with the Mings because the latter had been interfering in the affairs of the tribes of Manchuria and even succeeded in bringing the Yehe tribe away from him.²¹ In order to regain control of the Yehe and at the same time teach a lesson to the Ming China he needed help which was sought from the princes of a powerful Mongol confederation called the "Five Tribes of Qalqa [Khalkha] living to the south west." In a letter addressed to the princes of this Mongol confederation, Nurhaci tried to win over them by emphasizing on "cultural identities" between the Mongols and the Manchus, and urged them to aid for a military campaign against Ming China.²² Finally, with their aid, Nurhaci launched his military campaign against the Ming forces and took control of the Key Ming cities of Liaoyang and Mukden in May 1621.

21. David M. Farquhar, "The Origins of the Manchu's Mongolian Policy", in John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.198. It is to be noted that by 1613 Nurhaci had subjugated all the Jurchen tribes except one, the Yehe which resisted him with the aid of the Ming troops.

22. See *ibid.*, p.199.

In 1624, another Mongol tribe in Manchuria, the Korchin too came in to alliance with the Manchus. All these developments encouraged Nurhaci to shift his capital to Mukden (modern Shenyang) in 1625, thus consolidating Manchu power for further assault towards occupying the Peking throne. But Nurhaci did not survive to see Peking becoming a seat of Manchu power as he died of wound sustained during a battle with Ming forces in 1626, the first major set back of his life. Nevertheless, at the time of Nurhaci's death the Manchus had already developed a well-organised state, both politically and militarily and the time was ripe for his son and successor, Abahai (1592-1643) to carry on the mission left behind by his father mid-way. Now this mission required unhindered steps forward which was not possible without subjugating the Mongols at the western frontier, the home of eastern Mongols. Already in the 1620s as the Manchu assault on China rose in intensity, "the process of Mongol fragmentation was also accelerated."²³ It became possible largely due to the fact that the Manchus resorted to factional politics by wooing one group of Mongols against the other. Even though Ligden Khan of Chahar tribe (1592-1634), who was claimed to have been the last of the Mongol Khans, tried unsuccessfully to reunite the Mongols.

Right after the death of Altan Khan the control of Mongol power along the Great Wall shifted from the Tumets to the Chahars, and so Ligden Khan considered himself as belonging to the imperial line of Chinggis Khan. It became clear to the Manchus also that without defeating Ligden Khan and subjugating eastern Mongolia, there was no way out to reach China proper. Thus the beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed Manchu diplomacy at work in creating a network of alliances with eastern Mongols who could be used against Ligden Khan as well as China. By that time already Mongols were a divided lot into several Khanates and princedoms and none of these groups was willing to recognise another's leadership, nor could any provide the kind of leadership required to keep the Mongol unity intact. Even Ligden's own Chahars began to abandon him and went over to the Manchu

23. C.R. Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), p.44.

side. Bawden rightly observes, “[the fact] that the existing Chinese dynasty [the Ming] was about to collapse and be replaced by a new and vigorous regime [the Qing] meant that Ligdan’s failure to restore the imperial power came at a critical time for the Mongols”.²⁴

Internal squabbles and lack of unity among the eastern Mongols too resulted in to a further split: Southern or Inner Mongols and Northern or Outer Mongols. It were the Inner Mongols against whom the Manchus campaigned, while Outer Mongols by and large remained neutral and stayed away from involving themselves in the struggle of Inner Mongols against Manchu conquest. Finally in 1632, the Manchu forces under the leadership of Abahai launched a massive attack against the Inner Mongols. The comparatively weak forces of Ligdan Khan could not match the much stronger forces of the Manchus and at the end in 1634 faced a crushing defeat.²⁵ However, Ligden with his 100,000 people fled in the direction of Höh Nuur [Kukunor] and although he managed to reach there, on the way itself he had already lost about 80 per cent of his subjects.²⁶ Shortly afterwards he died at Kukunor, thus came to an end of the imperial line of reigning Mongol Khans dating back to Chinggis Khan. Since then the title “Khan” began to be adopted by numerous Mongol princes, while earlier it was limited in use only to the rulers of the four major Mongol Khanates of Eurasia.²⁷ With the subjugation of Inner Mongolia a major hurdle in the Manchu conquest of China was now eliminated, and before Peking fell into hands of the Manchus Inner Mongolia had already been placed well under their control.

24. *Ibid.*, p.41.

25. B. Shirendyb and others, eds., *History of the Mongolian People’s Republic* (Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1973), p.171.

26. See Baabar [Bar-Erdene Batbayar] (1999), *Twentieth Century Mongolia*, C. Kaplonsi, ed., D. Sühjargalmaa, S. Burenbayar, H. Hulun and N. Tuya, trans.(Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 1999), p.61.

27. Clubb (1971), *op.cit*, pp.19-20.

The year 1636 marked a turning point in the future prospects of the Manchus, particularly because of two reasons- firstly, Abahai proclaimed himself as emperor of his new dynasty of Qing (“pure”) and secondly, at his enthronement ceremony forty-nine princes of sixteen banners of Inner Mongolia elevated him as their great Khan (Mongolian: *Deed Erdemt*; Chinese: *T’ien Ts’ung*).²⁸ All this alongwith military and administrative capacities made him a strong contender for the Peking throne and he became more determined in his mission to overthrow the Ming dynasty. But he died in 1643 and succession passed on to his son Fu-lin who ascended the Peking throne on 30 October 1644 as Emperor Shun chih, the first Manchu-Qing emperor of China. The “divide and rule” policy, which the Manchu rulers inherited from their predecessors, worked properly in order to keep their overlordship intact on both the Inner as well as Outer Mongols. As regards Inner Mongolia, the Manchus organised it as part of their military reserve and brought it under their protection exercising strict control over its government. This organisation was the origin of the institutional and administrative concept of “Inner” Mongolia, resulting in two Mongolias markedly different from each other, Inner Mongolia being much more closely integrated with China. Although administrative distinction between Inner and Outer Mongolia was formally introduced by the Manchu-Qing dynasty, its origin was much older and can be traced back to the period of Dayan Khan in the fifteenth century.

On the other side, tribal war between the Outer and the Western Mongols continued until 1688 when the Western Mongols under the leadership of Galdan Boshigt (1651-1696) invaded Outer Mongolia. In order to fight back the Western Mongols, the Khalkha nobles of Outer Mongolia requested for military aid from the Manchu rulers of China,²⁹ who quickly responded, as the prevailing situation was conducive to their expansionist designs. Having succeeded in subjugating the Western Mongols or *Oleuths*, Manchu Emperor K’ang-hsi called a convention of the Khalkhas at Dolon-nor

28. See Urgunge Onon and Derrick Pritchatt, *Asia’s First Modern Revolution: Mongolia Proclaims its Independence in 1911* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), p.2.

29. *Ibid*, pp.2-3.

in Inner Mongolia in 1691,³⁰ where the Khalkha nobles recognized the Manchu Emperor as their great Khan. The struggle between the Manchus and the Western Mongols, however, continued, and it was not until 1750s that the Manchus finally dealt a crushing blow to the Western Mongols. Whereas the main body of the Western Mongols still remained in the northern part of what is today Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, a portion of their territory was annexed to the north western part of Outer Mongolia where they had been at war among themselves. As a result, one group split up to migrate to the lower Volga in Russia, where they came to be known as Kalmyks.³¹ After conquering Western Mongolia, the Manchus ruled the two Mongolias-Inner and Outer till 1911, though Outer Mongolia was administratively ruled more loosely and indirectly while compared to Inner Mongolia.

Inner Mongolia under Qing Administration

The close integration of Inner Mongolia into Manchu-Qing rule was influenced by geographical setting of the region which proved to be a vital link for spreading Manchu control over other parts of Mongol inhabited territories. Obviously, the use of Inner Mongol tribes as allies constituted an “essential factor” in the rise of the Manchus. The first documented evidence dealing with relations between the Manchu Emperor and the Inner Mongol tribes has been found to be dated 1636, which marked the acknowledgement of Manchu emperor’s suzerainty, though it was stipulated that “should the dynasty [Qing] fall, all the laws previously existing should come into force again.”³² But Inner Mongolia never returned to its previous status, as it became more of a “province” than a mere territory of Manchu-China.³³ It appears that what was begun as subjugation of the Mongols of Inner Mongolia following their defeat by the Manchus culminated in their

30. Tang (1959), *op.cit.*, p.279.

31. Owen Lattimore, *Nationalism and Revolution in Mongolia*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955), p.7.

32. See G.M. Fritters, *Outer Mongolia and its International Position* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1949), p.151.

33. Ken Shen Weigh, *Russo-Chinese Diplomacy: 1689-1924*(Banger, Maine: University Prints and Reprints, 1928), p.147.

enrolment as vassals and yet simultaneously as allies in the Mongol banners. The Ming Chinese devices were further strengthened to keep the Mongols in check, mainly by “assigning the [various Mongol] tribes to fixed geographic areas, confirming new chiefs in their succession, conferring titles and honours, supervising inter-tribal councils and postal communications, permitting regulated trade at fixed markets, and bestowing the customary gifts on regular tribute missions.”³⁴

Whatever policy with regard to the Mongols was followed, it was essentially targeted to prevent the accumulation of power by any single Mongol leader, and herein lay the key to Manchu success in keeping Inner and Outer Mongolia separate ever since the two areas came under Qing rule. However, as Rupen argues, although the seventeenth century internal strife among the Mongols benefited the Manchus in gaining slow but steady control of Mongol areas, it was revealed that the identical policies proclaimed particularly for both the Inner and Outer Mongolia often differed in practical results. It was basically due to the fact that the Qing rulers enforced their will more effectively in contiguous Inner Mongolia than in distant Outer Mongolia.³⁵ For all practical purposes Inner Mongolia was treated more or less like the “interior” of China. For the smooth functioning of administration in Inner Mongolia, the whole region was divided into six leagues, embracing 24 tribes, which in turn consisted of 49 banners altogether.³⁶ Sometimes Inner Mongolia was also referred to as “the country of Forty-nine Banners,”³⁷ thus signifying the importance of institution of the banner system.

Although developed as a tool for the Manchu’s own administration and mobilisation, the banner system, a population based political-military

34. Fairbank and others (1998), *op.cit.*, .218.

35. Robert A. Rupen, *Mongols of the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1964), pt-I, pp.70-71.

36. A league was called *mêng* in Chinese and *chulgan* in Mongolian; a tribe – *pu* in Chinese and *aimak* in Mongolian; a banner or military unit – *chi* in Chinese and *heshun* in Mongolian. See Chang Yin-T’ang (1933), *op.cit.*, p.6.

37. Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Mongolia*, Handbooks Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office – No. 68, (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), p.16.

organisation, also came to be applied to all parts of the Mongolian world that became subjects to the Qing rule.³⁸ But it is noteworthy that whenever various Mongolian groups submitted themselves to Manchu authority, “there seems to have been virtually no difficulty in establishing the banner system of government among them, and at no time does Mongolian dissatisfaction with Manchu control seem to have derived from this system itself.”³⁹ In the administrative hierarchy of Inner Mongolia, the banners each of which was placed within a fixed area under a hereditary-chieftain known as *jassak*, were organised into tribes, each with its own hereditary leader. These tribes were further grouped into leagues, each under a Captain-General, and then the leagues were placed directly under the control of *Li-fan Yuan*, the so-called Court of Colonial Affairs in Peking.⁴⁰ Though the league Captain-General known as *chulgan darga* was elected, his appointment as well as removal was subject to the approval of the Manchu emperor. Besides, there was Manchu-Chinese official known as *tu t’ung* (military governor) appointed to act “as the adviser or rather the supervisor” of the league Captain-General.⁴¹ All the Manchu-Chinese officials were to perform their duties entrusted to them by the Imperial Government, as any kind of inactivity on their part could mean “looseness of the government.”⁴²

Unlike Outer Mongolia where a league was made up of at most two tribes, in Inner Mongolia the Qing policy to break up their tribal organisation

38. David M. Farquhar, “The Origins of the Manchus’ Mongolian Policy”, in John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.204.

39. *Ibid*, pp.204-5.

40. The *Li-fan Yüan* was the single most important department of the Manchu administration which was responsible for handling the affairs of not only Outer and Inner Mongolia but also of other Qing dependencies in the Inner Asian region. See John K. Fairbank and S.Y. Têng, *Ching Administration: Three Studies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), p.130. Also see Rossabi (1975), *op.cit*, pp.160-161.

41. For further details of the administrative hierarchy in Inner Mongolia see Chang Yin-T’ang (1933), *op.cit*, pp.6, 59-62, 68; Ma Ho-t’ien, *Chinese Agents in Mongolia* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1949), pp.148-51.

42. Pao Chao-Hsieh, *The Government of China: 1644-1911* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1925), p.328.

and tradition worked so forcefully that several tribes, sometimes as many as eight, were brought together to form a league.⁴³ As already mentioned there were six leagues known as Jirim, Josotu, Juu Uda, Shili-yin Gool, Ulaanchab and Yekhe Juu which were composed of 24 different tribes to be organized into 49 banners in Inner Mongolia.⁴⁴ Besides, there were also a number of other Inner Mongolian groups who remained outside the system of league administrations and were not subjected to be ruled directly by their hereditary princes, such as the eight banners of Chahar, divided into right and left wings with four banners each, as well as those of the Tumet and Barga Mongols.⁴⁵ Typically in the league system, the banner was the local unit, and hence not only the leagues but also the banners were considered to be the real administrative units. Theoretically, the local administration enjoyed self-autonomy i.e., the Mongol elements were continued to be ruled by the hereditary Mongol chieftains, yet in practice the Manchu administrative organs exerted vigorous influence over the Mongols.⁴⁶ In this respect, the head of the banner called *Jassak* (Administrator), who held the position with the approval of the Manchu emperor, resembled the character more of a vassal lord than of an official. Moreover, he was assisted by a number of staff to carry out administrative work.

The status of Inner Mongolia under the Qing administration remained as a subject of close supervision or rather governance of the imperial court in Peking. It was more so due to the fact that the central authority reserved for itself the right to exercise power of calling league conferences (*diet*) and deciding the matters to be discussed during the whole proceedings. This ultimately influenced the local administration at the banner level in terms of

43. *Ibid.*, p.326.

44. The spellings of League names follow the same pattern as given in Christopher P. Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes in Inner Mongolia's Interregnum Decades, 1911-1931*, (Leiden, Boston, Köln: E.J. Brill, 2002), p.60.

45. Sneath (2000), *op.cit*, p.9.

46. Chang Yin-T'ang (1933), *op.cit*, p.6.

Qing domination. It would, therefore, be no exaggeration to say that Inner Mongolia was governed more or less like a province. It is, however, to be noted that although the princes of Inner Mongolia possessed far less power than those of Outer Mongolia, the treatment they received from the Qing authority especially during pilgrimage was very much distinct. For example, the Mongols of both sides of the Gobi had to visit Peking in winter every year or every two years to pay tribute to the Qing ruler and also to attend a religious ceremony at “the Lama Miao” (the Lama Temple).⁴⁷ While “those who came from Outer Mongolia were provided with lodging and market accommodation outside the Anting Gate (North Gate of Peking) at a mile’s distance from the city wall, those from Inner Mongolia...were received at a place near the palace in the capital.”⁴⁸ Obviously, the Mongols of Inner Mongolia considered themselves to be more close to the Qing authority in contrast with the corresponding ones in Outer Mongolia.

Nevertheless, the above mentioned understanding of “closeness” on the part of the Inner Mongols basically worked in two ways: while on the one hand it helped the Manchus to maintain the Inner Mongols as their allies, on the other it strengthened the Qing policy of keeping the Mongols of the two regions divided. As Lattimore points out, “the policy in question had been based on the sound theory that the Manchus could hold China in peace if the Mongols were unable to unite.”⁴⁹ This unity was prevented by, apart from others, granting the Inner Mongol tribal chiefs a privileged position, particularly subsidising them with award of honoured titles and local power, something that could help the Qing rulers to win their loyalty. Another method that proved to be most effective in ensuring the Mongol loyalty was the matrimonial alliances between the Mongols and the Manchus. However, inter-marriage seems to have worked only one way as it has been revealed

47. *Ibid*, p.67

48. *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

49. Owen Lattimore, “The Historical Setting of Inner Mongolian Nationalism”, in *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928-195*, (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1962), pp.442.

that marriage took place mainly between the Mongol nobles and the women of Manchu imperial family. Manchu princes rarely married Mongol women as no evidence has been found of a Mongol woman occupying the position of an empress or imperial concubine. In any case, intermarriage between the Mongols and the Manchus was encouraged by the imperial court, while it was prohibited between the Mongols and the Han Chinese through enactment of several prohibitive laws from time to time at least until the end of the nineteenth century.

Qing Policy Shift and its Impact on Inner Mongolia

Initially, discouraging Han Chinese to intermingle with the Mongols was part of the overall Qing frontier policy of playing one race against another in order to have their supremacy over all of them. However, it was in the beginning of the twentieth century when the Manchus identified their interests more closely with the Han Chinese interests that the Qing imperial rulers began to realise the folly of their frontier policy. Consequently, a major policy shift took place that encouraged the Han Chinese immigration to settle in the frontier regions including both Outer and Inner Mongolia, besides repealing even the inter-marriage prohibition laws. This policy of encouraging Han migration was also aimed at counteracting Russian settlement in eastern Inner Mongolia, which at that time was intensified in search of economic prosperity. Commenting on the folly of Qing frontier policy, Pao Chao Hsieh says, “Had these suicidal territorial policies [discouraging Han migration to frontier areas] been changed earlier, China’s frontier troubles would have been reduced and her frontier development [would have been] much more advanced.”⁵⁰ By the time the Qing dynasty fell, it was too late to get rid of all the social prejudices as long separation had already created enough “misunderstanding” and “distrust” between the Han Chinese and the Mongols. China, thus, had to pay the price for it because at least Outer Mongolia conditioned by the colonial legacy of the Qing dynasty finally became independent.

50. Pao Chao Hsieh (1925), *op.cit*, p.341.

On the other hand, situation in Inner Mongolia was very different on both the political as well as demographic levels. Politically, Inner Mongolia's close association or rather incorporation into the Qing empire proved to be a permanent arrangement as it outlasted the demise of the last dynastic rule in China and exists even today as an autonomous region; demographically, the Mongol population had been swamped by the Han Chinese settlers.⁵¹ One of the main reasons for an extensive Han Chinese settlement in Inner Mongolia was to increase population density in the northern frontier areas so as to defend the country against potential Russian invasion.⁵² The activities of these Chinese settlers in Inner Mongolia from the economic point of view were limited not only to cultivate grasslands for agricultural production but also to raise revenues through their commercial activities in order to support the imperial government's Mongolian administrative apparatus. Han Chinese economic penetration, thus, served the dynasty's interests, which resulted in binding the Mongols "more tightly to the rest of the empire".⁵³

However, socio-economic changes in both Mongolias due to Chinese settlement, which has often been referred to as "Chinese colonisation" by several scholars, occurred along with military change as well. Despite the fact that the Mongols of both Mongolias were liable to serve their Manchu overlord during campaigns, the Outer Mongols were kept aloof from wars in the nineteenth century, while the Inner Mongols participated in action exhibiting their superiority over the traditional troops in the service of the Manchu-Qing dynasty.⁵⁴ But, at the same time, it was also realised that the

51. See Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.171.

52. Rong Ma, "Changes in Local Administration and their Impact on Community Life in Grasslands of Inner Mongolia, China", *China Report*, vol.39, no.4, 2003, p.460.

53. Joseph Fletcher, "The Heyday of the Ch'ing order in Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 10: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, Part I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.353.

54. The key figures of Inner Mongolia who fought alongside the Manchus in the nineteenth century included among others, Wangchinbala (1795-1847), a Tümed Prince during the Opium War in 1841; and Senggerinchin, a Khorchin prince against the Taipings in 1853-55, against the British and French in 1858-60, against bandits around Peking in 1860 and against the Nien rebels until he was killed in 1865. See *ibid*, p.352.

day of the traditional style troops was gone, and that they were no longer required in the light of the emergence of a completely new situation, i.e., innovation of modern equipment. To shed some additional light on this situation, Lattimore notices the following:

The best troops available to the Manchus were increasingly, from decade to decade, not Manchu bannerman and Mongol levies, but new-style armies of Chinese, with relatively modern equipment, under Chinese Commanders- *a change that confirmed the transformation of the dynasty itself from being a Manchu dynasty ruling over China to being an essentially (though archaically) Chinese dynasty of “Emperors of China”*.⁵⁵ (Emphasis added)

At first the Chinese migration “was seasonal and licensed by the government, but gradually the Chinese settled down and acquired land from the Mongol princes.”⁵⁶ Interestingly, the glory of Chinese culture, which had taken a back seat for quite some time, now suddenly came into the forefront and the Qing rulers began to believe that “the Chinese civilisation must be extended to the non-Han nationalities, not only for the benefit of China itself, but for the regeneration of the ‘benighted’ frontier peoples.”⁵⁷ And to make it a reality, every possible obstacle was dealt with firmly. Realising that this might lead to assimilation and ultimately to Sinicization, the Mongols out of their resentment took to uprisings. These uprisings were essentially local in character far from being well-organised “national revolts”, though later on in 1911 Outer Mongolia witnessed a national liberation movement. But Inner

55. Owen Lattimore (1955), *op.cit*, p.17.

56. With Han Chinese migration and their settlement in Inner Mongolian region many of the Mongols, too, started settling down as farmers, despite their natural dislike for sedentary life, and despite the policy of the Qing government to preserve their traditional economy. But this led to the widening of social differences as well because the Chinese settlers were favoured over the Mongols by the Manchu officials. Later on, the central government itself embarked on a policy of “colonization”. For more see *A Regional Handbook on the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region*, HRAF-60, Wash-7, New Heaven, 1956.

57. Thomas E. Ewing , “Ch’ing Policies in Outer Mongolia, 1900-1911”, *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.14, no.1, 1980, p.152.

Mongolia, where uprisings against Qing rule and Chinese merchants took place relatively earlier than in Outer Mongolia, never found such an opportunity to become independent. Some primary sources released in the 1970s point to the occurrence of insurrections definitely in Inner Mongolia as far back as in 1861 and further in 1864, 1870, 1890, 1899 and 1901.⁵⁸ Thus, it confirms the suggestion by numerous scholars that in most of the key developments of nineteenth and early twentieth century Mongol history, it was Inner Mongolia, which showed the way and Outer Mongolia simply followed.

Notwithstanding various difficulties surrounding the Mongols, seeds of nationalism were already sown particularly in Inner Mongolia, where resentment further grew against the underhand practices of the Chinese merchants and attempts by the Qing rulers to implement reforms as part of their policy shift. Moves towards implementing reforms, as Baron Korff observes, were considered by the Mongols “to be interferences with their local self-government.”⁵⁹ This was the situation of the Mongols at the turn of the twentieth century. Soon the official Chinese colonisation became steadier but it was not until 1906 following the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) that the Qing government announced the application of “New Administration” (*Hsin Cheng*) to Inner Mongolia. Consequently, *Li-fan Yüan* was raised to the status of a ministry and renamed as *Li-fan pu* with two departments working under it- the Department of Investigation (*Tiao-ch’a chü*) and the Department of Records and Reports (*Pien-tsuan chü*), which were entrusted with the task of handling the apportioning of pasture land, colonisation, mining, timber, fishing, military training and education.⁶⁰ As part of “New Administration” policy several plans were devised on the basis of investigations carried out by the Qing officials. One such investigation was conducted by Prince Shu who recommended the plan for “extensive Chinese colonisation of Inner Mongolia

58. See Rossabi (1975), *op.cit.*, p.212.

59. Baron S.A. Korff, “Russia in the Far East”, *American Journal of International Law*, vol.17, 1923, p.277.

60. Ewing (1980), *op.cit.*, p.152.

with the aim of absorbing the Mongols into the Chinese nation.”⁶¹ The recommendation, however, was described as being a developmental plan for the whole region.

All this points to the Mongols having been targeted for complete Sinicization that could threaten the identity of conservative and nationalistic Mongols. Yet, the impact of Sinicization process was not always negative. It is evident from the fact that a few Mongol nobles who were educated in Chinese ways put their demands before the Qing court for socio-economic changes in Inner Mongolia. For example, in 1908, Gungsangnorbu (1871-1931), the Prince of Kharachin tribe, gave a petition to the Qing court, which contained eight demands:⁶² a) to establish banks as soon as possible; b) to hasten the construction of railroads; c) to develop mineral resources; d) to develop farming, industry and commercial enterprises; e) to take special care of diplomatic matters; f) to popularise and elevate education; g) to modernise military forces; and h) to establish a police administration. The very next year in 1909, Ghonchughsereng, another Prince who belonged to the Khorchin tribe, petitioned the court on following four items:⁶³ a) to control religion to stop superstition; b) to develop education to increase the knowledge of the people; c) to train Mongolian troops to fortify border defence; and d) to select land for cultivation to protect the livelihood of the people. But all these demands failed to receive desired response. It means, although Sinicization somehow provided an opportunity to the Mongol nobles to think constructively, the Manchus even to the end of their rule were unwilling to encourage them in their constructive efforts.

What is worth to be noted here is that after the Qing policy shift the key issue before the imperial government was to reorganise banner lands into

61. Cited in Chang Yin-Tang (1933), *op.cit.*, p.70.

62. Sechin Jagchid, *Essays in Mongolian Studies* (Provo, Utah: David M. Kennedy Centre for International Studies, 1988), p.202.

63. *Ibid.*

Chinese administrative units not only in the Mongol inhabited areas including Manchuria but also into other Qing domains in Inner Asia. But the situation was not favourable to the imperial rule as anti-Manchu and anti-Chinese sentiments were expressed in vary many ways. Besides, it was also the time when “the nationalist currents that had swept over Europe in the nineteenth century now began to reach Inner Asia.”⁶⁴ Consequently, the Mongols of Inner and Outer Mongolia as well as the Uighurs and Kazakhs of Xinjiang started dreaming of establishing their “own national states”. However, except Outer Mongolia none of the Chinese domains in Inner Asia were able to sever their ties completely with China even after the fall of the Qing rule in 1911. The fate of Inner Mongolia too fell victim to circumstances of the day and despite strong urge for “nationalism” or in other words “Pan-Mongolism”, nothing substantial similar to what Outer Mongolia achieved in terms of independence from the Qing rule, could be realised.

To sum up, although the Mongols began to be fragmented right after overthrow of the Mongol Yuan dynasty by the Mings, the intensity of Mongol fragmentation increased with the rise of the Manchus so much so that Mongolia as a whole could not remain united and a sharp geographical division took place. This led to the emergence of mainly two Mongolias – Outer and Inner, strikingly different from each other. While Inner Mongolia found itself being much more closely integrated with China since 1636, Outer Mongolia came under Qing domination due to the submission of the Khalkha nobles in 1691. As such the integration of Inner Mongolia into a single political entity of China proper occurred during the Qing dynasty, which exists even today as an autonomous region. In order to prevent any future Mongol unification it was the divide and rule policy that was followed vigorously by the Qing rulers. Besides, in the beginning of the twentieth century a major shift in Qing frontier policy encouraged the Han Chinese immigration to Inner Mongolia which was also aimed at counteracting potential Russian settlement in eastern Inner Mongolia. That way the

64. The credit for introducing the idea of nationalism into the Chinese domains in Inner Asia goes largely to the Russians and the British, see Rossabi (1975), *op.cit.*, pp.218-19.

Manchu-Qing rulers exercised their overlordship over both the Inner and Outer Mongolia until 1911 when under the influence of Chinese revolution Outer Mongols too declared their independence. But, remarkably, in most of the key developments of nineteenth and early twentieth century Mongol history, it was Inner Mongolia which showed the way and Outer Mongolia simply followed.