
Tricky Representations: Buddhism in the Cinema during Socialism in Mongolia

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The socialist state regarded religion as an obstacle to modernization and an opiate of the masses. From late 1937 through early 1939, Mongolia eliminated religion along with the intelligentsia, the upper classes, and political leaders. In the span of about 18 months, 800 Buddhist temple compounds (5,953 buildings) became ash heaps [Fig. 1]. Of 85,000 lamas, 20,356 were killed and the rest were jailed, sent to labor camps, or forced to adopt lay professions. By 1939 there were no official categories of religious practitioners registered in the census, and Mongolia became a classless and atheistic society (Baabar 1996).

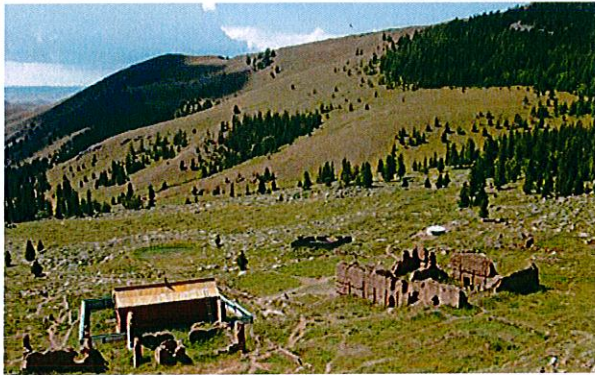


Fig. 1. The ruins of the Manjir Monastery, Tuv aimag.

Yet the destruction of the tangible structures of Buddhism did not eliminate religion from the people's minds. While the state was able to eradicate the public practices of religion — its institutions, ceremonies, and overall presence in major events — it was also paranoid, and rightly so, about the existence of religion in private spaces and belief, an intangible entity that could challenge the power of the secular state. The people's beliefs were the hardest to change. Aware of that, the socialist state delegated the task of eradicating religion from the minds of people to cultural production: to literature, arts, and cinema amongst many other

venues. The idea that all societies go through the same stages of development once propagated by the European enlightenment theorists was reinforced in Mongolia as a part of socialist revolution in the 1921 and subsequent nation-building processes. Ideologically, religion was seen as a remnant of the past and primitive superstition that impeded modernization and progress. In order to succeed the socialist state needed devoted and dutiful followers who believed in the ideology of socialism and nothing else. The state sanctioned mass media and art to shape people's minds, to produce culture that would transform the populace from devoted Buddhist to atheist citizens of a modernizing socialist country.

Yet the making of anti-religious propaganda films was a complex task and required an immense creativity on the side of the filmmakers. That is because Buddhism was not just a spiritual domain, but a complex cultural mechanism through which people made sense of their daily lives, maintained family memory, and constituted a core of individual and national identity. In order to eliminate religion in its entirety, the state needed to create new identities and tools that substituted for religion. In other words, the elimination of religion was as much an act of destruction as an attempt at the creation of a new culture. The filmmakers' tasks therefore were more complex than it was originally perceived. Many films inevitably offered a redefined understanding of religion, history, and national identity that were beyond the mandate and the expectations of the state. The anti-religious propaganda art had to create something new that was equally if not more convincing and truthful than religion. The socialist government was attempting to alter the minds of the Buddhist nation that had been shaped for almost three centuries in a matter of a few decades. Therefore, in order to

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comprehend the specific creativity on the side of the filmmakers in representing a redefined understanding of Buddhism beyond a simplistic atheistic message, it is helpful to revisit briefly the penetration of Buddhism to Mongolia.

Buddhism's path in Mongolia

Buddhism in Mongolia fought a centuries-long battle with the local shamanic and other folk religious practices in order to become a major religion, one that also carries local variations. It is known that Buddhism was introduced to Mongolia in the 13th century to the ruling elite. Although it did not spread among the larger populace, different local branches of Buddhism, mostly different versions of the Red Hat sect, (the Nya-ma-pa sect) seeped over the border from Tibet and deposited its specific teachings and practices in various corners of Mongolia. Thus, often different monasteries in various locations had maintained their specific local and historical identities and became integrated with the oral histories of the local population. The Red Hat sect is also seen as a derivative of Bon-po, Tibetan shamanism. Its resemblance with Mongolian shamanism, especially rituals of possession, also made it popular among ordinary people.

Since the 17th century, the Yellow Hat sect of Mahayana Buddhism began its mass conversion with support of the institution of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, the ruling elite of Mongolia, and the Manchu Qing colonial administration. In its

battle to win the devotions of the populace, Buddhism had been transformed to fit the expectations of the Mongols and replaced magic rituals, oral narratives, medicine, theatrical performances, and many other venues of social life. It took several hundred years, violent and peaceful measures, creative remodeling of

existing rituals, economic and legal support by the local princes and the institutions of Dalai Lama and many other ways for Buddhism to become a major religion.

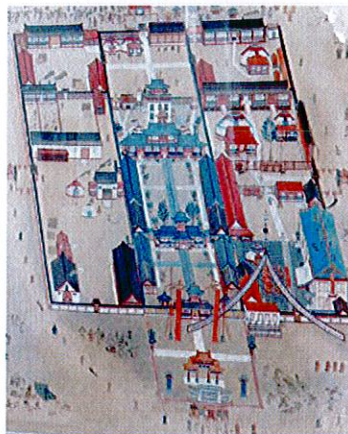
By the end of the 19th century, there were about 800 monasteries and over a hundred thousand lamas in a country with a population of less than 700,000 people. The history books indicate that a son from every family became a monk (Heissig 1980). Besides being almost the sole spiritual force, the Buddhist church also became the main economic and political power in the country.

The local monasteries owned large portions of land and livestock. And the monarch, the Holy Enlightened Bogdo Khan [Figs. 2, 3] was more of a spiritual leader than a political one. More specifically, the third Dalai Lama requested that the Mongol khans destroy *onggots* (the images and figures that represented shamanic spirits) and punish shamans and their clients by taking away their livestock (Heissig 1980). To attract believers, the lamas took on the roles of shamans by offering the rituals of healing, magic, and exorcism. The latter were adopted from Bon-po (Tibetan shamanism) where the lama oracles go into trance and were



Fig. 2 (above). Mannequins of the 8th Jebsumdamba Khutugtu or Bogdo Khan (1870-1924), the theocratic ruler of Mongolia, and his wife Dondogdulam (1870-1923). National Museum of Mongolian History, Ulaanbaatar.

Fig. 3 (below). The winter palace of the Bogdo Khan. Painting by B. Sharav? (copy by D. Djadambaa), early 20th century. Museum of Fine Arts, Ulaanbaatar.



meant to substitute for Mongol shamanic spirit possession. The Buddhist missionaries also replaced the functions of shamans by incorporating the rituals of worship of mountain cairns (*ovoos*) [Fig. 4], and by introducing various deities who protect livestock and life. Buddhism also offered individual identifications with the personalized Lamaist deities which replaced the shamanic guardian spirits and ancestors. The lamas taught *tarani* (magic spells) for individuals' protection, destruction of evil, good luck, and healing of illnesses. For each illness and body organ there was a separate *tarani*. Lamas prescribed healing packages consisting of *taranis*, herbal medicine, and rituals of cleansing and deflection that the clients could perform at home. Buddhism promulgated itself as a more advanced spiritual practice as it operated not through the spirits of the deceased or animals and nature, but by communicating with gods and deities (*sahius*). The missionaries prohibited shamanic blood sacrifice as cruel and barbaric, and instead, propagated Buddhism with its dairy offering as a more humanistic, gentle, and superior practice. Unlike in shamanism, which only has a celestial realm, Buddhism's upper (heaven) and lower world (hell) were meant to induce terror among non-believers.

By the early 20th century, Buddhism became so strong that the Revolutionary Mongolian government did not even consider abolishing it until the Soviet leaders pushed them to do so. In his paper about the measures that the state took to pave its road to violence in 1937 and thereafter, anthropologist Chris Kaplonski (2008) notes that the Mongolian government considered abolishing the power of the Buddhist church, but they were also afraid, to a certain extent, of the backlash it would cause. He pays particular attention to anxieties that Buddhism was causing the Soviets and the fledgling Mongolian Revolutionary Government. "In [a] 1934 meeting with Stalin, Prime Minister Genden remarked that a lama who had been



Fig. 4. The top of a Mongolian ovoos, incorporating a Buddhist prayer flag and the Wheel of the Law.

previously arrested had to be released after only a year because of 'unrest among the people' over his incarceration" (Damdinsüren et al. 2005, p. 102). Perhaps the most telling phrase between Stalin and Genden that encapsulates the power of the Buddhist church is the following. In an interview in 1934 with Genden, then the prime-minister of Mongolia, Stalin noted "It looks as if there is a state (*uls*) within your state. One government is Genden's government. The other is the lama's. But the lama's government is strong" (Damdinsüren et al. 2005, p. 102).

Eradicating religion from the people's minds

Besides the devotion on the side of the populace, there were other problems in representing Buddhism in a negative light. The writers and producers of movies operated within an extremely narrow cultural space under heavy censorship; the state allowed only a few stereotyped images in the literature and films about the socialist revolution in 1921 and the following struggle for nation-building. The images included the Buddhist lamas as counterrevolutionaries, as the upper-class exploiting ordinary herdsmen, and amoral and hypocritical individuals who indulged in sex, deception, and corruption. The top clergy were cruel terrorists (*eserguu*), bandits, betrayers of the nation, allies with Chinese politicians and rich merchants. Most importantly, in the films on revolution, the lamas used the most sadistic tortures towards the revolutionaries. The most horrific image is one of lamas worshipping their banners with a heart that was pulled out while the victim was still alive. The heart was still pounding as the lama-terrorist squeezes it in his hands and then splashes the banner with a stream of blood by breaking the heart of a victim.

By producing images of crueler and more hateful enemies, and by dehumanizing the enemy, while humanizing itself, the state justified its violence. It cast itself as a vulnerable

rescuer of the people. But, as we learn from oral history, the banner worship using the heart of a victim was the practice of the revolutionaries themselves. Specifically, the glorious warlord Khatanbaatar Magsarjav, who led the Mongolian People's Army and who freed the western part of Mongolia from the Chinese and other counter-revolutionaries was indeed known for such practices.

Literature, especially short stories and novels depicting the socialist revolution, has utilized such images and motifs to exhaustion as they became almost standard ingredients in the literature on revolution and state formation. Any major diversion from those types of representations could be interpreted as a religious propaganda, and the producers and writers would be severely punished.

At least partially for that reason, many writers and scholars avoided the topic of religion, and there is a dearth of representation of Buddhism in Mongolian cinema, literature, and arts after the 1950s. The other reason for decline of religion in arts and cinema was the elimination of the Buddhist clergy during the state violence in the 1930s and 1940s. Simply put, how could one represent religion during socialism if it was not supposed to exist any more? The problem was that the state was aware that religion existed in the forms of beliefs, languages, memories, and hidden private practices far beyond its control. Yet the state could not allow the representation of religion in post-revolutionary, socialist, modernizing Mongolia. For one thing, there was a danger that such representations would awaken the memories of religion. And another thing, more importantly, representing religion in modernizing Mongolia would mean for the state to admit its failure to destroy it. Thus, anti-religious propaganda was needed, but in a way that would not provoke memories of the past or much needed spirituality, but only lead people to despise religion.

Within such a narrow space as was allowed for creativity, filmmakers or at least scholars and historians needed to be especially imaginative to come up with a suitable plot. Representing Buddhism in the historical past would be the safest way, but there was also a rather poignant condition that made the production of culture even more difficult overall.

The scholars who had the deepest knowledge of history, the ones educated in the histories of European enlightenment, secularization, and modern democracy, and who could contribute to literature, art, and filmmaking, had been persecuted. In the 1910s and early 1920s several dozen students were sent to study in Germany and France. They spent five to ten years there and became the most educated and progressive professionals in Mongolia. Dressed in the latest fashions of the German upper-class, groomed to perfection, and poised in front of the camera while holding a cane or a pipe, these young professionals epitomized everything that socialism considers to belong to the bourgeoisie who must be eliminated. In the 1930s almost all of them were purged. Religious practitioners were also persecuted and those remaining did not dare to raise their voices. Courage was necessary to produce films and books on religion even in a negative light. And individuals with such courage were rare. The two films that I discuss in this paper are exceptions. One is the film *Tsogt Taj*, which is about the historical past and which develops anti-religious propaganda in an unusual way, and the other is *Awakening (Serelt, 1957)*, which juxtaposes religion against modernity.

Nationalism and religion: *Tsogt Taj*

A powerful attempt to show the harm of Buddhism was made by a famous Mongolian scholar, writer, and filmmaker Rinchen Byambin in his epic film entitled *Tsogt Taj*. The national film studios, the Mongol Kino, were founded in 1935 with Soviet technical assistance. The films were devoted to the themes of nationalism and heroism, and some were based on traditional epics. Produced in 1945 right at the end of the World War II, the film *Tsogt Taj* is an anti-Buddhist film that also redefines Mongolia's relationship with China, Tibet, and the Manchus, and looks at Buddhism not as an enlightenment project, but as a colonial tool. The film is a historically-based fiction. It depicts the events of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, when Mongolia was falling under the sway of the Manchu Qing Dynasty. It is about a Mongolian prince who fought against Manchu encroachment and against the Mongol princes who were converting to Buddhism in exchange for political and economic powers granted by the Manchus and the Tibetans, particularly, the institution of the Dalai Lama.

The film fulfills the state order to present Buddhism in a negative light, but goes further in explaining the role of Yellow Hat Buddhism that is set against the Red Hat Buddhism in Mongolia. The producer's detailed knowledge about Mongolian history was unequalled by almost anyone in Mongolia. Rinchin was one of the few scholars who had survived the persecutions and he utilized his knowledge and skills as a linguist, ethnologist, historian, and writer. Rinchen unravels the magic of religion, its techniques and circumstances of getting into people's minds, from his perspective as a defender of the Red Hat sect of Buddhism. The film is set specifically against the domination by the Yellow Hat sect of Buddhism but does not have a strict atheist message.

In the film, the Tibetans, who are also interested in dominating Mongolia, conspire with the Manchus about their strategy to seize the Mongolian population using the power of Buddhist deities. Each represents the stereotypes of their identities. The Tibetan missionary is sly, politically savvy, and uses persuasive court speeches. The Manchu warlords are aggressive and domineering. Together, they are a union of military and spiritual conquest.

Yellow Hat Buddhism arrives as the Manchus defeat the last descendant of Chinggis Khan, the Ligden Khan, who dies before getting Chinggis Khan's state seal to Tsogt Taij [Fig. 5], a prince who is fighting for the country's independence. The Mongol princes are divided between Red Hat Buddhism and the followers



Screen shot courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/ Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 5. Tsogt Taij.

of the Yellow Hat sect. Importantly, only Tibetan Buddhism is cast in a negative light. The Red Hat sect in this film is not a religious identity, but a form of cultural identity that is no different from traditional Mongolian identity expressed through long songs, poetry, and wrestling. The film shows no religious ceremonies, practitioners, and doctrines associated with the Red Hat sect.

Mongolia is presented as prey to the Manchus and Tibetans. Tsogt Taij interprets the image of a Buddhist deity Manjusri as the representation of the Manchu Emperor. He warns the Mongols who had gathered in front of the monastery that while today they are worshipping the deity Manjusri, tomorrow they will worship the Manchu Emperor. Tsogt Taij fights against the establishment of the law that states individuals who do not memorize the sacred prayers will be punished with a fine of



Screen shot courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/ Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 6. Tsogt Taij and the gardener drinking wine and singing before the storming of the palace.

three to five head of cattle. Throughout, film shows that Tsogt Taij and his close friends and followers are highly educated individuals. Tsogt's palace is a school for boys and a library, and contains a collection of rare art. His mother also teaches the girls. Their knowledge of poetry, history, and arts is extensive, and an exchange of knowledge is their way of life. The palace is surrounded by a beautiful garden cultivated by a Chinese gardener who is also a poet and a connoisseur of rare wines [Fig. 6].

In contrast to highly educated, compassionate, cosmopolitan, and noble-looking Tsogt Taij and his people, the film

presents the Buddhist lamas as vulgar, bored, shallow, and unkind to the populace. The Buddhist Lamas and their Mongolian followers do not have regard for the local culture, books, and artifacts; so they loot and destroy everywhere they go.

But it is the internal struggle among the Mongol aristocrats — the ambitious princes who fought for greater power on the grasslands — which allowed the penetration of the Manchus and Tibetan Buddhism. The disunity of princes is represented by the struggle between Tsogt Taiji and the Gush Khan even though Tsogt's son Arslan is in a romantic relationship with Gush's daughter Khulan [Fig. 7]. Once the latter



Screen shot courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/
Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 7. Khulan, the daughter of Gush Khan — the traitor who burns the palace of Tsogt Taij — and the beloved of Arslan Taij, Tsog Taij's son.

burns Tsogt's palace, the relationship between Gush Khan and his daughter Khulan is severed and the latter joins Tsogt to fight against the Tibetans.

The plot of the film culminates when Arslan, the son of Tsogt Taij, a 22 year-old prince who had been sent to Lhasa to fight the Tibetans, fails to carry out the important mission as he falls prey to the savvy politics of conversion and seduction of the Tibetan politicians. Instead of carrying out the attacks on Tibet, he falls for a stunning princess [Fig. 8] who summons him to the courts of the Dalai Lama. There the Mongol prince becomes converted to Buddhism in order to marry the Tibetan princess. The young prince disregards the scolding of the elder general, and leaves his beloved Khulan who fights in his father's army. As Tsogt Taij learns

about the betrayal of his son, he orders his son to be beheaded. The young prince's conversion to Tibetan Buddhism and a withdrawal from the battle against Tibetans decides the faith of the Mongols for the next few centuries. Without the prince's reinforcements the Mongol army is defeated and the country falls under the sway of Buddhism and Manchu domination

The most negative aspects of Buddhism are represented through the institution of the Dalai Lama in Tibet. The Dalai Lama is a young boy who is a captive in his own elaborate palace. When his advisor enters his chamber to inform him about the arrival of the Mongolian prince (the son of Tsogt Taiji), the young Dalai Lama is asleep in his bed. The advisor awakens him and gives detailed protocol instructions for converting the Mongol prince to Buddhism.

A young man will come towards you and bow to you. You should say: 'Did you have a good journey?' The man will come closer and bow to you. Upon my signal you should touch his head with your right hand, just like this [and he showed how to do that]. Now, please tell me what will you do? asks the advisor.

The young Dalai Lama repeats the instructions. And in the next scene we watch the enactment of the conversation, which



Screen shot courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/
Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 8. The Tibetan princess presented to Arslan.

is the conversion of the Mongolian prince to Tibetan Buddhism.

By associating the arrival of Buddhism with colonialism, warfare, and the erasure of Mongol identity, this film achieves a persuasive anti-Buddhist propaganda. We see the destructive nature of Buddhism layer upon layer. To start, Buddhism is a source of individuals' hardship and decline of economic condition, as the clergy and the Mongol elite who support Buddhism establish an order that allows the church to confiscate 3-5 head of livestock from every individual who had not memorized prayers. Buddhism is a source of family fights and destruction of relationships between parents and children. Tsogt Taij loses his only son to the enemy. The girlfriend of the Mongol prince, Tsogt Taij's son, renounces her father who joined the Manchus and Tibetans. Buddhist monks erase Mongolian culture; they destroy the garden of Tsogt Taij's palace, burn books, and kill all the students. Finally, coupled with the Manchus, Buddhism causes internal warfare among the princes, which leads to bloodshed among ordinary people [Fig. 9].



Screen shot courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/
Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 9. A battle scene.

The film was made during World War II, and it clearly has a patriotic aura, set against war, destruction, and violence. The emphasis on the destructive nature of Buddhism had been extended to the concerns of the time when movie was made. The country was fighting with the Japanese. The news about the battles on the Soviet lands had been promptly delivered, adding to the existing anxieties and fears. Mongolia also had just emerged from massive political violence during which almost every

family had been affected. The populace was subdued and terrified. The film was supposed to enhance courage and patriotism and help get through the difficult time.

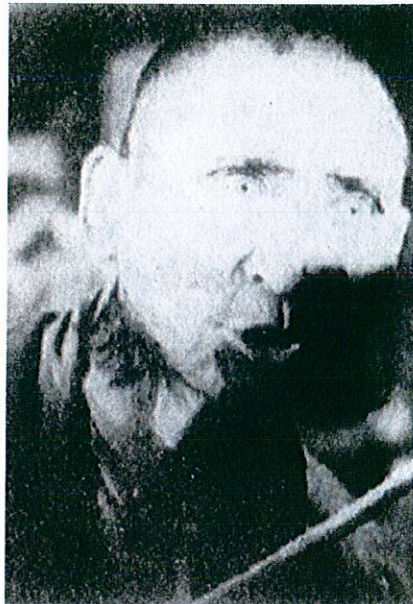
But the intriguing aspect of the film, and the reason that I chose to discuss this particular one and not any other is that the film celebrates Mongolian identity with long songs, folk tales, poetry, and local intelligentsia. These attributes were also the targets of the socialist state. In the film, Rinchen reminds the audience about their Mongolian identity, while the Soviets had already began their modernizing projects such as building schools, changing the Mongolian alphabet, and clothes and dwellings. While Rinchen propagandizes against Buddhism, he does it not in order to promote socialism or modernity, but to re-establish national identity. The film was also an attempt to represent Mongolia as rich and cosmopolitan (with a Chinese gardener and a Muslim house attendant), not as primitive, stuck in a timelessness, as was usual in the depiction of Asia of that time.

Awakening

While historical movies were important in demonstrating the way religion had come to dominate the masses, the state also needed movies that would glorify modernity and state propaganda against religion. One of the most powerful movies that represent religion against modernity is titled *Awakening*. The movie begins with a doctor finishing surgery in a modern hospital. He is summoned to the countryside, and while he travels in a car with two young people, he tells the story of his youth.

When he was a young boy of about fourteen, his parents gave him as an apprentice to his maternal uncle, a lama. But the boy lives more like a slave to the lama than his apprentice. His lessons are meager, but his housekeeping workload is high. He is constantly scolded and beaten by the lama [Fig. 10, facing page]. Things will gradually change after a young Russian female doctor arrives at a nomadic settlement to volunteer her services to the local population. Despite her comfortable hospital with beds, ironed sheets, and shiny floors, the sick ignore her, and flock to the felt tent of the lama, who cures people with the power of his spells, sutra recitation, and herbal medicine.

One day, the boy's sister, Suren, becomes ill, and the Russian doctor and her Mongolian assistant manage to convince her to stay in their hospital. But the lama uncle gets angry at the parents and they bring Suren to the lama. The daughter's condition worsens as the lama predicts that her days are numbered and interprets it as a consequence of receiving the treatment from the wrongdoer. The parents blame themselves for letting their daughter stay in the Russian hospital and leave their daughter in their extra tent, as she passes out in fever. In the meantime, Suren's boyfriend who was in the Russian hospital, overhears in a conversation between Suren's brother and the doctor that Suren wants to come to the hospital, but her parents had given up on saving her. Suren's boyfriend escapes the hospital and gallops on a horse to bring her from her home to the hospital. Upon leaving the tent where Suren was lying on a bed, her boyfriend knocks over the butter candle. The couple leaves on a horse to the hospital while the tent burns to the ground. Suren's family assumes that their daughter died and was burned with the tent [Fig. 11]. The lama uncle tells them that because of her sins, she is reborn as a lizard in



Screen shot courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 10. The lama uncle holding a stick for beating his disciple.

a desert — a bad fate and a lifetime of suffering.

During the 49th day of mourning, the lama uncle provokes Suren's father to seek revenge on the Russian

Fig. 11. Suren's father, distraught after hearing from the lama uncle about his daughter's supposed death.

doctor by blaming her for the death of their daughter. Suren's father runs to the hospital and tries to stab the doctor with a knife, when Suren, who has gotten considerably better, gets up to save the doctor from her father's attacks [Fig. 12]. Upon seeing the daughter that he had mourned for 49 days, the father loses consciousness. After awakening, the father runs back to the lama's felt tent and threatens to kill him for almost making the family bury their daughter alive.

Suren becomes the Russian doctor's nurse, and the local population now lines up to see the Russian doctor, while the lama receives no patients. Being a coward, he attempts to kill the doctor by following her during a snowstorm and by causing an accident during which the doctor and her horseman fall into a ditch and their horse dies. But luckily, Suren's father, who was supposed to meet them, helps them out and then captures the lama and takes him to the designated authorities.



Screen shots courtesy of John Wells, Mongolian Cinema/Mongol Kino <<http://www.kisetsuga.com/mongolkino/>>.

Fig. 12. Suren stops her father from killing the Russian doctor.

apprentice. He is a womanizer and uses taking female patients' pulse as a way of approaching them. The lama is also brutal, as he always has a stick next to him with which he brutally beats his disciple.

But the most powerful aspect is the film's plot which unravels the magical powers that the lama claims to have. The lama is a charlatan and a fraud. That becomes clear to the main heroes, who learn that their sick daughter neither died nor turned into a lizard, but was being treated by the Russian doctor.

The film propagates the triumph of biomedicine over traditional healing, the Soviet teachings over Buddhist, and the power of the state over the clergy. Most importantly, the film shows the changes in the people's beliefs about religion through the power of medicine. The film was made in 1957 for the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution. It was a token of gratitude to the Soviets for bringing modernization, medicine, and anti-religious teachings to Mongolia.

Whether the state was able to achieve the elimination of religion from people's minds might seem almost irrelevant today when Buddhism has regained its strength after the collapse of socialism. The propaganda movies that presented religion in a negative light during socialism also reminded people what religion was like. There is an ironic aspect to the state's competition with religion for the minds of the people. The state perceived that individuals can have only one religious identity. By trying to eliminate religion, the state ended up transforming itself into a religious entity. The state doctrines are in the history books, poetries, and national anthems, its rituals are festivals and national holidays, its magic is the inspirational speeches of its leaders adorned in the power suits and broadcast through TVs and media. But the more unexpected outcome was that religion remained active in the private sphere. That, however, did not prevent the populace from worshipping the state and having several beliefs, not just one.

Note: This essay is based on a lecture co-sponsored by the Silkroad Foundation and the Institute of Asian Research at the University of British Columbia and delivered at UBC on November 9, 2007, as part of a series on "Tibet-Mongolia Links in Religion and Medicine."

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