

sophie Kants“ (aus dem Klappentext). An dieser Stelle sei auch den Übersetzern gedankt, denen es gelungen ist, ein anspruchsvolles Buch gut lesbar ins Deutsche zu übertragen.

Gudula Linck

DAVID SNEATH / CHRISTOPHER KAPLONSKI (eds), *The History of Mongolia*. (3 Volumes). Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2010. 1100 pages, €487.00. ISBN 9781905246366

*The History of Mongolia* is a collection of diverse papers on Mongolian history arranged in three books divided into five parts. Each part opens with an introduction written by one of the editors, the renowned anthropologists David Sneath and Christopher Kaplonski. Their intention was to provide a range of papers, contemporary writings as well as little known texts, some of which appear in English for the first time. “For good or ill, the emphasis here is on the history of rulers rather than subjects” (p. ix), the editors admit, reflecting their historical interest as well as the accessibility of material. From the explanation of their procedure it appears that they have gone to some lengths to present a diverse set of texts in an anthropologically interesting manner. Let us consider the topics and texts of each of the five parts.

Part One is the shortest and relatively briefly covers the area before Chinggis Khan. David Sneath’s introduction gives a short overview of the overlapping and alternating power structures of the various polities ruling the Mongol plateau. We read about the necessary distinction between the Xiongnu and the Hun, which was not made by early scholars, we learn that Chinggis Khan was not the first ruler to use the name “Monggol” – that was his great-grandfather Qabul Khan – and we are introduced to Kitan rulers, under whom Buddhism became well established in the area. The four texts of this first part consist of two contemporary scholarly pieces, a classical text and a translation of a primary source. The basic pattern of historical consideration of the early Chinese-Mongolian relationship is the dichotomy between a nomadic power as predator on the one hand and agricultural and urban settlements as prey on the other. The construction of the Great Wall of China, still the largest building on this planet, can be seen as the most obvious manifestation of this confrontational pattern. However, the two scholarly texts in this part offer a different view, which overcomes the binary approach by analyzing nomadic economies that do include forms of agriculture as well.

The second part deals with the history of Chinggis Khan, the famous Mongol emperor, the power constellation in the steppe before his rise, and the magnificent empire he established. In his introduction, David Sneath begins with an overview of the available sources. The original text of the well known *The Secret History of the Mongols* is lost, but it has been reconstructed from Chinese

translations. Furthermore, there are numerous Chinese sources for the Yuan dynasty and, in addition, Persian, Latin and Arabic sources. Second, here, too, Sneath provides a general outline of the many polities in the Mongol area of the twelfth century, followed by a brief history of Chinggis Khan's life and times, his rise and how he built his empire. His successors consolidated the empire with its modern communication structure and the capital Qaraqorum, and continued its military expansion, which to the surrounding world seemed to be unstoppable. Only the deaths of Emperors Ögedei Khan and later Möngke Khan brought the Mongol conquests of the early thirteenth century to a halt. The empire reached its greatest expansion during the reign of Qubilai Khan, who founded the Yuan dynasty and relocated the capital to China. The introduction ends with an outlook on the reign of Qubilai Khan and the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, which will be the topic of Part Three. Part Two contains ten texts. Two of them are different translations of the prominent historical text *The Secret History of the Mongols*: one is a precise, scholarly translation and the other is more readable. They are followed by six scholarly papers that cover a wide range of political and social aspects. The ensemble of texts is completed by two excerpts from insightful eyewitness accounts of European Christians.

The topic of Part Three is the Yuan dynasty, which created the largest and most powerful of the Mongolian empires. Again, David Sneath first gives a concise outline of the political formations during the transition from the Yuan to the Qing dynasty. He describes the size of the realm and the ways in which Qubilai enforced the Mongol imperial institutions, i.e. the military, civil and jurisdictional administration of the empire. Apart from the centralized bureaucracy the empire was not strongly centralized and offered local rulers a lot of scope. Qubilai Khan strongly supported the arts, cultural activities and religious expression, which was still very diverse; Qubilai established close ties between Mongolia and the Tibetan Buddhism through his religious teacher Phagspa Lama. We get an overview of the numerous successors, of the transition to the Ming Dynasty in China, and of the various Khans in Mongolia, who were a rather destabilizing political influence. Altan Khan restored Mongol influence during the sixteenth century. He became famous for reinvigorating Tibeto-Mongolian ties by inviting the Gelug Lama dSod-nams rGya-mtsho and bestowing the title of "Dalai Lama" on him. Zanabazar became "Bogdh Gegen", the religious head of Mongolia, and was to be followed by seven reincarnated successors. Acceptance of Buddhism by other Mongolian khans triggered a rivalry that led the Khalkha Mongols, under the guidance of Zanabazar, to seek help from the Qing dynasty. Part Three contains eleven texts, the first of which is an excerpt from Marco Polo's account. It is followed by three papers examining different aspects of Yuan governance. Three papers by Mongolian scholars give an insight into Mongolian national historiography. The following three papers deal with Buddhism in Mongolia. The first is an excerpt from a translation of *The Jewel Translucent Sutra*, a classic Mongolian historical text, which is put in a wider

context by another scholarly paper. An excerpt of Walther Heissig's classic examination of Buddhism in Mongolia provides an insight into shamanic and Buddhist belief systems. The final paper of the third part widens the perspective of a single nomadic society by comparing different pastoral governance systems of the time.

Parts Four and Five deal with the sovereign country of (Outer) Mongolia; the other parts of Mongolia increasingly fell under the influence of their big neighbours, namely the Russian Empire in the north and the Qing dynasty in the south. Christopher Kaplonski introduces Part Four in three steps. First, the era of the Qing Dynasty is politically characterized by various competing Mongol polities. He points out the crucial role of Zanabazar in politics, religion and the arts. Zanabazar induced the Khalkh Mongols to seek protection from the Manchus. The administration was mainly built upon existing structures, so no major changes occurred. Russian interest in Mongolia increased as well, but remained mainly economic. Second, Kaplonski outlines social issues. Here, Buddhism is characterized as the main factor at various levels. Buddhism is placed in a historical perspective and the common reading of it as a primary factor in the loss of military strength by the Mongols is rejected. Nonetheless, the influence of Buddhism was immense. The Buddhist hierarchy competed with the secular nobility, and the accumulation of wealth and livestock gave the monasteries a lot of influence. The monasteries became the most important educational and trading centers. In contrast to Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia was never fully subjected by the Qing dynasty and henceforth served as a shield against Russian influence. Third, Kaplonski introduces the texts in this part in greater detail. The general selection of the texts concentrates on Mongolian (secondary) sources wherever possible. Kaplonski has "done so because of a strong desire to privilege, where possible, the Mongolian voice" (pp. 642f.). After two primary sources he presents a good balance of texts from Mongolian, Russian and Western authors that offer a variety of scholarly and political readings of the situation. The two texts by Natsagdorj and Sanjdorj for example depict a heavily socialist reading of a stagnant Mongolia under the Qing, whereas the following paper by Elverskog offers on the contrary a picture of a dynamic Mongolian and Qing culture.

Part Five covers twentieth-century Mongolia, the beginning of which, according to Kaplonski's introduction, can be dated to 1911. He gives an overview of Mongolia's path to independence, which is not so easy to "untangle" (p. 851). First attempts to become independent of the Qing dynasty were largely ignored by the international community. Help against the Chinese was sought from the Soviet Union, even though the parties seeking help were initially not particularly socialist. "Mad Baron" Roman von Ungern-Sternberg marched from the civil war in Russia to Mongolia, where he routed the Chinese and installed the eighth Jazvandamba as the Bogdh Khaan – only for his forces to be routed by a Mongolian army with Russian support. A constitutional monarchy under

the Bogdh Khaan survived until his death in 1924 and smoothed the transition to the Mongolian People's Republic. Lying between China and Russia, Mongolia faced several waves of socialist changes, including exceptionally brutal purges in the late 1930s, which killed most of the monks and destroyed most of the monasteries. The custom of the elite to study in Moscow or in Eastern European countries helped to bring the wind of change to Mongolia as well. The democratic revolution in Mongolia in 1989–1990 led to huge difficulties as the state-supported nomadic economy of the previous decades quickly collapsed.

Part Five contains 14 texts. We find primary sources, one of monastic life in contemporary Ulaanbaatar (*Ikh Khüree*), another from the army of Baron Ungern-Sternberg, excerpts of the autobiography of a reincarnated lama, Diluv Khutagt, and a revolutionary paper written in 1988. The scholarly papers offer different perspectives, such as a contemporary text from 1930, three different analyses of the socialist situation, a socialist text, as well as a rather challenging Mongolian paper. The three concluding texts are by the two editors themselves and Caroline Humphrey, the founder of the Mongolian Inner Asian Studies Unit in Cambridge. Needless to say, all three texts are studies in anthropological precision.

To summarize: it is a very well balanced collection of papers, leaving enough space for diversity and further analysis. A remarkable quality of this work is the strong presence of Mongolian texts that are generally unknown to those who do not read Mongolian. Each part includes primary sources, Mongolian scholarly and classic texts and contemporary papers. The introductions are concise and open up the field for an insightful diversity of texts and further studies on the respective period. The five introductions alone form an – admittedly overlapping – interesting history of Mongolia. The authors do not write *the* history of Mongolia, but they provide information on the historical background as well as different perspectives on reading history. As mentioned at the beginning, within the framework of an edited collection on the history of Mongolia the editors transcend the narrowness of a “history of rulers” through both the eyewitness accounts and the diversity of texts. Both of the editors have conducted intensive fieldwork in Mongolia and did a project on oral history of Mongolia. Hence, their approach to history may be enriched by an anthropologically holistic view. The reader benefits from this approach through a careful selection of texts and profound introductions.

After highlighting the qualities of this impressive work, some critical remarks need to be made. First, there are technical mistakes in the references that one would not expect in a work of this quality. The patient reader surprised by the complete absence of references after the first two introductions will be rewarded with all of the references to the first three introductions after the introduction to Part Three. Concerning the content, the editors offer, as stated above, a wide and insightful range of texts. Yet, given the fact that Buddhism has played a role throughout the history of Mongolia, that it was a dominant factor

from a religious as well as a social and political point of view, the role of the Yuan dynasty in promoting it, and in particular the fact that before the socialist purges the greater part of the activities of the Mongolian intelligentsia took place inside the monasteries under a strong Tibetan influence, one might have expected that this aspect would receive more attention. Of course, many of the texts deal with Buddhism in one sense or the other, but the specific Mongolian Tibetan interface with all its tensions, for example, could have been given greater prominence. That could have been achieved by including some historical texts about the image of Mongolians among Tibetans, for instance, or some texts from the monastic canon to show Buddhist scholarly writings about and their reading of history. But, of course, a history of this kind deals more closely with one aspect and less closely with another, and there will always be some aspects that cannot be included.

Finally, *The History of Mongolia* is a great piece of scholarship and indisputably "a must" for all libraries and ambitious private collections on Inner Asia.

Bernhard Schittich

HANNA SCHNEIDER (Hrsg./Bearb.), *Tibetische Handschriften und Blockdrucke, Teile 16 und 17: Tibetischsprachige Urkunden aus Südwestt Tibet (sPo-rong, Ding-ri und Shel-dkar)*. (Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, XI, 16–17). Stuttgart: Steiner, 2012. 2 Bände.

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