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SPIRITUALITY *VERSUS* RITUAL ?

ON MODERN TIBETAN BUDDHISM IN POST-COMMUNIST MONGOLIA

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Abstract. The present religious landscape of Mongolia bears witness to the changes brought about by 60 years of soviet style modernity and anti-religious policy on the one hand, and transition to democracy and globalisation on the other. In the previous centuries Buddhism under its Gelugpa (dge lugs pa) denomination had held a religious monopoly in Mongolia and played a key role in political and economic fields. It therefore suffered the heaviest blow during the communist years. The recovery of religious freedom since the democratic transition in 1990 has been followed in a very short time by a strong religious and spiritual revival and in particular by a conspicuous return of Buddhism, its unavoidable lamas (lam) and their complex rituals, under the new qualification of national heritage. Yet behind the apparent continuity of tradition, religious resurgence appears to involve a transformation in the way people and specialist alike address religion and practice it. Several factors are shaping this change, among them a greatly extended religious choice including modern Tibetan Buddhism from abroad. As a result of the new pluralist environment, Mongolian Buddhist institutions are contrived to adapt, in order not to loose to their foreign rivals the modern, urbanite new generations of Mongols eager to follow more fashionable Western religions providing them with both material and spiritual support. In this respect, Mongolian Buddhism is challenged by modern Tibetan Buddhism and its Western representatives who focus on the spiritual development of individuals, women and lay people included, and find themselves at odds with the ritualistic approach of local Buddhists.

Northern (or Khalkha) Mongolia escaped Chinese occupation in 1919-1921 thanks to the support of Soviet, atheist, Russia. Such a strategical alliance was to produce radical internal changes for a Buddhist country like Mongolia where « the religion of the yellow », as Mongols call the gelugpa form of Tibetan Buddhism, had been dominant as a faith as well as

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an institution since the second half of the 16th century, and where in 1911, following the fall of the Mandchu Qing dynasty, a Buddhist reincarnation (the Tibetan-born 8th Jebtsundamba Khutugtu), had been enthroned as « khan » or king of the new independent Mongolia by the local Chinggisid nobility, now free from its vassal duties towards the Manchu emperor. At the time of this alliance with the Bolsheviks, the Mongols were waging a struggle for their independence against Republican China, but the price to pay for Soviet help was the transformation of nationalist struggle into a revolutionary one and the acceptance of a *de facto* Soviet rule of their country.

As Mongolia was lacking revolutionary trained elements, Mongols from Russia, especially Buryats, as well as Russians, played an active role in applying Soviet policy in the country. Most members of the Mongol popular « revolutionary » party and officials in Mongolia were at the time sincere Buddhists. In the monasteries, several high religious personalities like Darva Bandida († 1927) were conscious of the need of religious as well as social and political reforms and showed good-will for the revolution. The idea of a reformed and purified Buddhism not conflicting with communist ideals made its way in the minds of reformers, allowing Mongols to conciliate their religious tradition and the necessary modernisation of their country.

This « Pure Buddhism » or « Renewal » trend was new in Mongolia proper, but familiar to the russified Buryats nationalists of the beginning of the 20th century like Tseveen Žamcarano, who had campaigned for a revitalized form of Buddhism based on simple primitive principles of the Buddha, freed from its popular superstitions and corrupted clergy, and named accordingly « buddhism » instead of « religion of the yellow » or « religion of the *burxan* » (a demand made to the Russian Tsar). As a scientist and political personality, Žamcarano, with Mongol leaders like Dambadorž, was instrumental in developing a nationalist pro-Buddhist line in Mongolia during the 1920s.

Another interesting nationalist stand among some high lamas – I shall use here the ordinary term Mongols use to designate buddhist monks in general – critical of the revolutionary policies was to identify a Mongolian form of Buddhism, the « religion of the Jebtsundamba lama of the North », downplaying its Tibetan aspect in favor of a Mongolian one ¹

The Mongol revolutionary party itself counted many lamas among its ranks and was encouraging class struggle inside the clergy. With some success : in 1925 and 1926, lower

¹ Charles Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia*, London : Kegan Paul, 1989 [1968] : 286

lamas in Urga opposed violently their superiors, demanding a more equal share in the income of the monasteries and proposing that teaching should be done in Mongolian as well as in Tibetan².

In consideration of the influence Buddhism exercised on Mongols all the way up to the Central committee members, of its still important economical role, and on of the reverence the Jebtsundamba was held in by the population, the new Komintern-guided regime had to deal step by step with the Church problem during the first decade of its rule. The Jebtsundamba was maintained at the head of the state, although without real power, until his death in 1924 when Church and State were separated under the terms of the new Constitution (+ law of 1926). Restricted anti-clerical measures like the abolition of the *šabi* or monastery estate system in 1925, or like the state taxation on monastery revenues in 1926, associated to atheist propaganda and caricatures of lamas spread by the party were unable to weaken seriously the position of the Church nor the loyalties of the Mongols towards their lamas.

It was enough, though, to arouse among the latters discontent against the new regime. Monasteries were active in spreading caricatural views about Mongol and Russian « Reds » « ready to kill their own lamas and parents », « to tread upon sacred scriptures », whose chief was assimilated to a « reincarnation of the Tibetan King Langdarma », threatening Mongols with all sorts of disasters while promising rewards to the faithful ones helping the clergy to spread clerical propaganda. Part of the clergy willing to restore « the old order » was putting its hopes in the Panchen Lama and the Japanese and indeed, throughout the 1920s, several plots and local riots were organised, headed by lamas or by lamas and nobles. The new regime still kept its « gradualist» (Bawden, 261) approach towards religion for some more years. Even the lamas who, encouraged by the revolutionary spirit, demanded democratic changes from their monastery in Urga did not get at the time the necessary backing from the party. As for the installation of a new incarnation of the Jebtsundamba, delayed since its death in 1924 by the authorities, it was banned only in 1929.

That year (the 7th Congress) marked a turning point in the party line. It saw the elimination inside the party of the Mongol reformers and Buddhists, advocating « to get rich » *bayažigtun* (in reference to Bakunin and the NEP), willing to conciliate the aims of the party and of a

² Bawden, *op. cit.* :261, 269, 287 ; O. Batsaixan, *Mongol ündesten büren erxt uls bolox zamd (1911-1946)*, Ulaanbaatar, Admon, 2005 : 190

« scientific » Buddhist faith³ or even looking forward to the installation of a new Jebstundamba (a wish expressed by Dambadorž: cf. Bawden, *op. cit.* : 284-285) and fearing Soviet imperialism (id., 292). Instead the party adopted the Soviet line defended by the Komintern agent B. Šmeral' advocating a direct jump from feudalism to communism without going through the capitalist stage (Batsaixan 193-195). The following year, on the occasion of the 8th Congress (1930) reformed Buddhism was under severe attacks as it could pose an even greater danger for the party success than reactionary lamas.

Thus, starting from 1929-1930, the party acted in order to effectively undermine the economic power of the Church and counter the clergy ideological influence. It launched an extremist anti-church campaign and a confiscation and collectivization policy in the country. This, as feared by the reformers, radicalized clerical resistance and led to a violent popular and clerical insurrection that only soviet forces were able to suppress in 1932.

In the following years, Komintern's guidance was replaced by Stalin's own guidance of Mongolian political life. When meeting Mongolian leaders like Genden, he showed a growing irritation to their inability to solve the religion question in their country. If the economical blunders of the extreme leftist policy were corrected after 1932, with collectivization temporarily abandoned, the elimination of the nobility, the Church and the intellectuals was still on the agenda and culminated in the well-known purges of 1937-1939, the destruction of the Buddhist Church and of its religious elites, the forced secularisation of the rest of the numerous clergy and the fully atheist policy of the following decades until the collapse of the Soviet tutelary regime in 1990

In order to testify to the democratic process going on in socialist Mongolia and for the socialist camp to use Mongolia's access to other Asian Buddhist countries, a minimalist Buddhist Church in Mongolia was allowed to function with a handful of monks : it was limited to the Gandantegchilen monastery, or what was left of it, which reopened in the capital city in 1944, and to the Buddhist school built next to it in 1970.

The many services and rites performed by the lamas for the population were drastically reduced but did not disappear altogether. Some religious activity could go on behind the doors as there were many secularized monks able to perform perform basic rituals for their family

³ See Žamcarano's statement : « [...] what Buddhist faith and scriptures teach...corresponds perfectly with science » (S. Pürevžav, D. Dašžamc, *BNMAU-d süm xiid, lam nariin asuudliig šiidverlesen-ni (1921-1940)*, Ulaanbaatar, 1965 : 113)

and friends. A few ancient lamas resumed officially their religious life as soon as the democratic transition allowed for it.

The establishment of political pluralism in Mongolia after 1990 was accompanied by strong nationalist and religious feelings. Religious freedom was guaranteed by the new constitution elaborated in 1992⁴.

On the one hand, Buddhism, shamanism and the heroic figure of Chinggis Khan, the founder of the Mongol nation, have been operating since then as three main local sources, transmitted tools, from which post-communist Mongols (individuals, institutions or state) could draw in order to express and boost at various levels their specificity repressed under the socialist regime.

On the other hand, the globalization process has widened access of the Mongols to the outside world. Free circulation of individuals and ideas have meant that the locally developed sets of values are now in competition with new ones. In the religious field which is of interest here, Mongols have been approached since 1990 by impressive numbers of missionaries, especially Christian ones who are making up for having been denied access to Northern Mongolia up to then. Protestants of various denominations –17 of them were registered in 1999 : Baptists, Evangelicals, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church or Mormons) ...out of 29 religious groups altogether) - form the majority. Catholics are symbolically important thanks to their diplomatic representation, heir to the Christian monks who visited the Mongol Empire in the 13th century from the Mongol Empire and they do have an impressive new church, but they can boast only few converts. The Christian missionaries get to spread their religion through humanitarian actions, charities, medical support, English or computer classes. They present an easily accessible abstract of their religious doctrine, worded in a simple language and distributed around. Such approach, very different from the Buddhist church practices, is met with success in the population : not only the poorest Mongols (one Mongol out of three lives under the poverty line) can benefit from charity orientated actions, but young urbanites eager to have contact with what is perceived as modern and new get opportunities to be close to Westerners and for some of them to travel abroad through scholarships or religious training.

⁴ *Mongol ulsiin ündsen xuuli*, Ulaanbaatar, 1992 : in particular art. 16, § 15 ; art. 19, § 2.

According to a detailed poll conducted in 1994, only 7% of the Mongols declared themselves without religion, while 70 % said they were religious « believers » ; more generally 75 % believe in supernatural beings or forces (spirits of the land, buddhas, magic...). As Muslims (Kazakhs of Mongolia) counted for only 5% and Christians for about 3% then (10% now), and declared shamanist counted for even less (1,6%), 60 % of the declared believers were Buddhists⁵. Such results should of course be modulated, because as a term, « religion » *šašin* applies in mongol mainly to Buddhism and never to shamanism, and because pious Buddhists will easily visit a reputed shaman or some charismatic « master » (*bagsi*) if that could help solve their problem. The poll indicates a positive view of Buddhists, considered as educated, having freely chosen their religion and sensitive to social questions. Buddhism has always been associated to learning and culture, as it used to hold a monopoly on it for centuries. The fact that during the communist years Buddhism was turned into a subject of intellectual investigation for scholars may have also enhanced its cultural and intellectual dimension.

Nevertheless this new situation of religious pluralism is a source of worry for the state. Not that the ex-communist nomenklatura is troubled by the recent religious revival. On the contrary, traditional religions are now considered as a cultural heritage of the Mongols ; furthermore, from an emotional point of view, it is not forgotten that Buddhism was the religion of their own fathers – and like the rest of the Mongols many officials had ex-lamas among their kin. The cause of worry for the state are « foreign religions » or « non-traditional religions », as they are called : what is at stake here is their foreign character. Mongol converts are mostly young people and many fear that they will lose their mongolness. Restriction to foreign religious activity in Mongolia is made difficult by the economical dependency on international aid. For the actual government, making Buddhism is out of question as is closing the country to religious influences from abroad : Mongolia is a pluralist society which recognises the separation of Church and state. At the same time the state feels legitimate to prevent the loss of cultural specificity and national consciousness through their these influences⁶. In order to defend Mongol identity, the state tends to recognise a specific role to « traditional religion » in the new society. Mongolian leaders encourage the local Buddhist Church to reform itself : impose stricter moral to its clergy, put an end to their internal feuds, adapt to the transformed Mongol society, in order to be attractive to the new

⁵ S. Cedendamba, *Mongol uls dakhi šašiniü nökhcöl baidal*, 2003 : 152-163. The director of the Center for Buddhist culture at the University claims that 90 % of the Mongols are Buddhist (*burxan šašiniig šütedef* , id., foreword : 8-10)

⁶ Cedendamba, *op. cit.* : 150

generations of Mongols⁷. Representatives of the state display respect towards Buddhism and shamanism⁸, patronize religious ceremonies (cf. participation of the Mongol president Očirbat to the inaugural ceremony of the new statue of Janraiseg and more recently the venue of the Prime minister at Bodhi Gaya in 2004 for the « first stone » of the future Mongolian buddhist monastery to be built there, or the patronage of the Ministry of Environment in erecting in 2005 the new standing Buddha facing the capital city at the foot of Bogd Khan mountain). Lamas and shamans are also invited to contribute to state ceremonies such as the veneration of some sacred mountains of Mongolia (resumed in the 1990 by presidential decree) or state ceremonies in honor of Chinggis khan (as on mount Burkhan Khaldun, in spring 2006).

If the Mongolian Buddhist Church as an institution still benefits today from a privileged position in the society and in its relations with the state, it did loose, though, its old ideological and cultural domination. Socialist Mongolia may not have succeeded in producing a strong ideological challenger to Buddhism (atheism as a intellectual or philosophical current is curiously absent today), but it did contribute to weaken the influence of Buddhism, mainly through its efficient education policy which has without contest wiped out the cultural domination of Buddhist Church.

Today, Buddhism has to accept old and new rivals – shamans, local healers, foreign missionaries – and finds itself in competition with them for attracting lay people and securing donations. The new comers' pressure can be felt but is still rather light.

Even without the unifying figure of a prestigious incarnate lama like the Jebstündamba, the Buddhist monasteries and the lamas dominate the post-communist religious scene : believers queue for religious services in the monasteries ; busy lamas living among lay people, armed with cell-phones and 4-wheel driven cars, are invited to private homes to held rituals and many families like having their own lama to consult and the reasons to do so are many and can be related to health, work, travel, family disputes, bad luck, death, drawing horoscopes.

As an example, one ritual to the 21 Târâ that I observed in a family of Russia-educated engineers in the capital city was organised because of tensions between the younger son and his wife, health problems of their baby and bad astrological pronostics : the situation was

⁷ Cf. adress words of the President Bagabandi at a conference on State-Church relations sponsored by the main Buddhist monastery in the capital city (*Tör, süm xidiin xarilcaa : orčin üye* 1988, pp. 6-10). Mongol officials acknowledge the positive impact of foreign religions regarding this point.

⁸ Cf. art. 9 of the 1992 constitution : « In Mongolia, the state respect religion (*šašin*), religion respect the state ».

interpreted by the near by temple's astrologue in terms of some impurity having entered the home of the family : a cup (traditionally offered at some funerals) probably coming « from a bad direction » and a symbolic cure (*dom xiix*) was prescribed. A lama known to the family and able to perform that specific ritual was then invited to the house. Such practices are easy to organise in the capital city, but Buddhist revival may not have been so rapid in rural areas (as noted by Ole Bruun in Arkhangai in 1999 and 2000⁹), apparently because of the lack of a strong religious authority and in spite of « robust beliefs » on behalf of the herders and « religiously informed practices ». The situation in the country is indeed very difficult economically, inducing important migration to the buzzing capital concentrating some 40 % of the population. Monasteries and temples thrive in town whereas many small temples which had reopened in the beginning of the 1990 do not function anymore. In the case observed by Ole Bruun (Doržceveen lama), Buddhism was back into play only once a « spiritual authority drawing on external sources » was present again : here the spiritual authority is originally a ruthless man who became Buddhist, went to Dharamsala for 2 years and came back to his native place to build a monastery which has become a flourishing enterprise. Considered as the reincarnation of a local saint, he became quite famous and has attracted many young disciples. His services include healing, divination, spiritual guidance, advice on theft, astrological determination of good and bad days for herding activities, insight into departed family members, and so on.

The fields of intervention relate, as we see, to mundane preoccupations and have not fundamentally changed from what they used to be in pre-modern Mongolia. The same continuity can be seen in the monopolistic handling of religious knowledge and ritual techniques by monks while lay devotees are passive users and patrons of rituals. The Mongol lama acts as a go-between for the devotee in order for the latter to obtain benefits from religion. (This does not infer that lay people always hold the Mongol Buddhist clergy in high esteem. On the contrary, one hears many harsh words about their lack of morality, business-like attitudes ; educated Mongols are also conscious of the low level of religious training, consequence of the human, intellectual and material destructions of the late 1930s.

The traditional separation of monks and lay people on the basis of « praying vs offering/paying » (cf. the *yon-mchod* relation between the lay « master of the offering » and a spiritual master, reduced to a ritualist master in the popular rituals) surfaced almost unchanged after 1990 rupture. Buddhist revival meant at the time recovery of what had been brutally

⁹ See « The politics of Buddhist resilience in rural Mongolia : about a paper presented at the Mongolia Society in 2001 », *Mongolia Society*, fall 2001: 15.

interrupted and focus was therefore on getting repossession of a tradition rather than on adapting it to a transformed environment. The old model has been reactivated and is still running successfully, although the actors's respective position and competences had been undergoing great changes, especially in the case of urban Mongols.

But Mongolian Buddhism is clearly able to satisfy religious demands made by the lay people concerning their well-being and prosperity and in this respect its main challengers are the shamans and other charismatic healers (entrepreneur lamas being potential ones, as we have just seen). Such demands belong to a local repertoire and are dealt with accordingly : the religious interaction between the lamas and the lay people takes place into a familiar socio-cultural frame. The new foreign actors in the religious field do not master the repertoire nor the frame, and they would therefore be unable to answer the local's demands. Such practices would anyway be categorized as superstitions rather than religious acts.

So Buddhism is still an important religious actor, strongly articulated to its socio-cultural environment. But can this model of traditional Buddhism which does not leave much personal responsibility to the lay Buddhist accommodate the aspirations of more demanding individuals in a modern society ? Furthermore, being rooted in local history and traditions may contribute to its social legitimacy, but how then representing Mongolia's modernity ?

In this respect, foreign religions benefit, at least in the eyes of the new generations, from the prestige associated to Western culture and way of life. I have mentioned the Christian missionaries' different approach in spreading their doctrine in simple words to the ordinary people. As a result, it soon became easier in Mongolia to learn about foreign religions doctrines than about Buddhist doctrine and principles : these were not easily accessible due to the predominant use of Tibetan as a liturgical language, and to the fact that Mongolian versions of the Buddhist scriptures exist but mainly in the old script, and are preserved in libraries. With religion attitude partially shifting from a cultural norm to an individualized choice, the lack of accessible documentation on Buddhism in comparison with other religions became obvious. As a result, an important effort has been made by the Mongols to mongolize, simplify and popularize the Buddhist doctrine for the public.

This is mainly done through printing. General bookshops in town are full today of dozens and dozens of Buddhist publications. One of the most productive publishers is the Shambala association which has produced many cheap and « practical » booklets presenting protective deities, essential *dharani*, means to attain the Shambala kingdom.. Often themes are related to

the « red » schools of Tibetan Buddhism (like the book on Majiglavdonma, from the Jonapa school).

Buddhist centers have been established, such as the Mongol center called « Bodi Čandamani » (1988), aiming to help the development of Buddhism and demonstrate its utility for society. It tries mainly to reach young people. Typically its aims have nationalist connotation and refer to the duty, « saint duty », to preserve and transmit for the young generations « the traditions and the cultural heritage of the Mongol nation ». A well-known singer (Sarantuyaa), a TV channel (UBS) and a radio station contribute to the Bodi Čandamani center. It has also the support of a foreign Western Buddhist organisation, the Tibet Foundation in London.

Of special interest is the present confrontation in this country of ancient Buddhist tradition of the local form of Buddhism and the « modernist » variant of Buddhism, Westernized or internationalized, which has developed around and from the exiled Tibetan community and the XIVth Dalai lama.

The London-based Tibet Foundation has dedicated a program to the « restoration of the doctrine, the Buddhadharma, in Mongolia » and aims at promoting the religious education of monks and believers ». Among its publications are several bi-lingual Mongolian-English books for children. Comparing to the Mongolian center just mentioned (Bodi Čandamani center), the aims presented (about the moral and spiritual development of children and teaching them the karma principle) are perfectly universal and free of any element referring to local, traditional or national dimension of Buddhism.

The difference in the form of Buddhism appears more clearly in the activities the Foundation for the preservation of the Mahayana tradition (FPMT) of Zopa Rinpoche, which has been active in Ulaanbaatar since 1999. The Buddhist center adorned with a colourful stupa that the FPMT has built in the center of town is altogether an information center on Buddhism, a place for holding Buddhist religious activities, a place to learn English and a vegetarian cafe, (the Stupa Cafe). More recently, the FPMT has opened a second center in the industrial town of Darkhan in the north of the country. The director of the FPMT is from Switzerland ; the Buddhist teacher, an fully ordained monk, is a French woman, Chantal *bagsh* (« Master Chantal »), a fully ordained lama. The Ulaanbaatar center runs in the suburbs a soup kitchen, a medical post and children educational activities on the grounds of a small nun monastery, the Dolma Ling monastery, that the FPMT is helping developing (against the local tradition as, contrary to Tibet, Mongolia did not have monastery for women). The religious activity of the FPMT at the Buddhist center consists in preparing simple religious literature for the lay

people by translating English Buddhist booklets into Mongolian, a work done by their locally hired Mongol translator). The doctrinal teachings and meditation sessions offered by the French lama – in English, translated by the Mongol interpreter – is also aimed to the ordinary people. They take place in a special room on the first floor adorned with Buddhist icons, dedicated to praying and meditation. People sit in front of the lama, on cushions, as it would be in most Buddhist centers in the West – but a far cry from the way Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhists would act in their local monasteries. A specific devotional ritual does exist, though, instaurated by the founding Rinpoche of the FPMT : in a room on the ground floor devotees are invited to fill up small cups with water and place them on shelves along the wall. The center does not attract crowds like do regular Buddhist monasteries and other Buddhist places of devotion or pilgrimage in Mongolia. Its organisation is very peculiar if compared with the activities and rituals offered by Mongolian monks, either inside the monastery or outside, as they are often invited to perform rituals on private request. The center functions like other FPMT centers in the West and « Master Chantal » has been previously teaching Buddhism in a FPMT center in Florida before her coming to Mongolia). There is but a small degree of interaction between the center and the local Buddhist monasteries, either through FPMT financial support (such as providing help to one of the temples at the main monastery of Gandantegčilen), taking part together in some religious festival or attending the same public teaching by a visiting Rinpoche at one of the local monasteries. Indeed Western Buddhists of the FPMT appear much at odds with local Mongolian Buddhism which they rather identify as superstitious practices, far from what they consider the true Mahayana tradition that *they* follow and intend to spread in Mongolia Not mentioning their surprise to see that most Mongol monks do not bother to follow the gelugpa rule on celibate. In an article on the modern form of Buddhism developed among the exiled Tibetan Buddhist church, G. Dreyfus attract to the modernist trend advocating meditative practices detached from rituals, the latter being seen as superstitions or concessions made to the laymen. This is congruent with Western Buddhists' interpretation of Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a « religion », as a spirituality rather than a faith based on the acceptance of dogma. For modern Buddhists, this reflects the true essence of the Buddhist tradition, the rest being locally developed and historically constrained alterations. Such views on Buddhism are foreign to the reality of its traditions in Asia where ritual is fundamental and are indeed reinterpretation and

innovation ignoring ritual, mythology and metaphysics which are at the heart of the Buddhist canon and have been playing an major role in all historical traditions ¹⁰.

The modernist form promoted by Western Buddhists is centered on one's individual spiritual realisation through meditation exercises, a « desincarnated » approach. On the contrary Mongolian Buddhism is a social, political and economical institution ; on the side of spiritual practices left to a small religious elite in the monasteries, it has developed a whole range of rituals in order to meet the demands of the ordinary people and counter other religious traditions. Mongolian Buddhism is not an exception and much the same could be said of other Asian countries where Buddhism became a powerful institution. Interestingly, the Western Buddhists who have been disillusioned about Mongolia's Buddhism do not seem to view Tibetan Buddhism in the same light. This can be partly explained by the new, « modern », configuration of the Tibetan Church in exile which has been separated from its original social background and has since raised out of necessity new support and followers in developed Asian countries and in the West, a configuration lacking in Mongolia. As a religion Buddhism is strongly articulated with the local culture and history. It has grown a specific Mongolian identity and its present revival does not indicate any interest in giving up its ritualistic features on which it has thrived in the past and is thriving again in post-communist Mongolia.

¹⁰ See Georges Dreyfus, « Entre déités protectrices et gloire internationale : Analyse de l'attitude du 14^e dalai-lama face à la modernité et au bouddhisme », in Martin Brauen éd., *Les dalais-lamas. Les 14 réincarnations du bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, Paris-Lausanne, Favre, 2005, pp. 172-201.