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*Volume 2*

*1979*

*Number 1*

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# THE MONGOL KHANS AND CHINESE BUDDHISM AND TAOISM

by *Sechin Jagchid*

Before the Mongols made any contact with peoples of other cultures, their religion was Shamanism, a faith common among the nomads of North Asia. *Möngke Tenggeri*, or "Everlasting Heaven," was the most exalted amidst many other heavenly spirits and deities. People able to communicate with *Tenggeri* and other spirits were known to Mongols as *böes*, and *idügens*. Special shamans who could communicate with *Möngke Tenggeri* were honored with the title of *Teb Tenggeri*,<sup>1</sup> (*Chs. Kao-t'ien-jen* = "Heaven's reporter.") Their duty was to interpret the "Will of Heaven" to the people and to pray for the khan.

With the expansion of their empire, the Mongols made contact with many foreign religions; however, from the Mongolian point of view these alien religions were only branches of the Mongolian pantheistic teachings, their deities additional to the native gods. If foreign priests, monks, or *khojas* communicated with Heaven and prayed for the khan, they also would be honored as *böes*, for the more prayers for the life of the khan and the tranquility of the people the better. Because of their traditional pantheistic beliefs, the Mongols felt no necessity to sustain one religion and oppress another.

On the other hand it was clear to foreign religious leaders that unless they could win the support of the Mongolian rulers, they could not fully develop their religion. As a result, most religious leaders prayed for the khan and supported the state. This may explain why the Chinese Taoist leader Ch'iu Ch'u-chi, though very old, traveled thousands of miles to Afghanistan to pay homage to Chinggis Khan, and why the Tibetan lama Sa-skya Pandita, the fourth great master of the Sa-skya sect, also came personally to the camp of Kötan,<sup>2</sup> commanding

prince of the Mongolian armies in western China and Tibet.

The Mongols, who rose from being a small, unknown nomadic tribe to conquerors of the world, could not avoid contact with foreign cultures and different ways of life. Their adoption of those new things also applied to foreign religions. As their sophistication increased, the Mongolian rulers began to feel that their own simple primitive religion could not match these foreign religions, with their profound philosophical teachings and magnificent rituals, and they felt a need for new religions adequate to their new status as world conquerors. This is quite certainly why various members of the Mongolian ruling class at one time or another adopted Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam.

But why, among so many religions, did the Mongolian khans of the Yüan dynasty in China choose Tibetan Buddhism as the imperial religion and honor Sa-skyapa lamas as imperial instructors (*ti-shih*)? Besides the excuses given by monks and clergymen, that it was "by karma" (*irügel* in Mongolian, *yüan* in Chinese), "the will of God," or "Heaven's destiny," there were historical and cultural reasons. However, the purpose of this paper is not to discuss the religious faith of the Mongols themselves but to concentrate on the relationship of the Mongols to Chinese Buddhism and Taoism in the thirteenth century.

A difficult question to answer accurately is whether it was the Chinese Buddhists or the Taoists who contacted the Mongols first. According to available sources it seems that the Buddhists made the earliest contact. When the Mongols invaded North China during the Jurchen-Chin dynasty, the famous monk Yin-ch'ien, (also known as Master Hai-yün, 1207–1257), had already made personal contact with the *Kuowang* ("king of a state") Mukhali,<sup>3</sup> Commander-in-chief of the Mongolian forces and the top Mongolian administrator in North China. Through this powerful leader's recommendation, Yin-ch'ien received the honorable religious title *Kao-t'ien-jen* from Chinggis Khan. In his youth he was a disciple of Master Chung-kuan, and was later received in audience by Chinggis Khan. The *Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tsai* records:

When the master was thirteen years old<sup>4</sup> [1219] Emperor Chinggis was campaigning in the realm under Heaven. Just then the Master was in Ning-yüan when the city fell. [The

Master], among all the people, personally approached the presence of the Saintly [Emperor]. [The Emperor] advised him [to allow his hair to grow and] to wear a coil. The Master answered, "If [I] follow the style of the Nation [Mongols], I can not keep the style of a monk." Whereupon [The Emperor] made a decree allowing [him] to continue his original practice.

The *T'ung-tsai* continues:

When the Master was eighteen [1219], the Heavenly troops approached again. *Tai-shih kuo-wang*<sup>5</sup> [Mukhali] directed the troops to attack Lan-ch'eng.<sup>6</sup> All the people escaped and dispersed [but] the Master remained to serve Chung-kuan as usual. . . . The next day, the city surrendered. . . . The *Kuo-wang* put Chung-kuan and the Master under the direct rule of the Emperor Chinggis. . . . Emperor Chinggis issued an Imperial Decree to *Kuo-wang* Mukhali saying: "The old elder and the young elder, whom you reported to me through an envoy, are truly *Kao-t'ien-jen*. Nourish them nicely with clothing and food, make them the head-men, and take good care of them. . . . Upon receiving this Decree, the *Kuo-wang* bestowed upon them great mercy. . . . All their needs were supplied by the office. Thus the name of the Young Elder began to be known. At the age of nineteen [1220], Chung-kuan. . . passed away. . . . [Later] the Master entered Yen [Peking] and stayed at [the monastery of] Great Ch'ing-shou-ssu.<sup>7</sup>

By the time Hai-yün was thirteen, in 1214, Chinggis had been campaigning in North China for three years, and the Mongolian forces were besieging Yen (Peking). Consequently, Chung-kuan and Hai-yün had an opportunity to meet Chinggis Khan. The Khan's tolerance towards the young acolyte and his master was probably due to the traditional Mongolian Shamanistic practices. On the other hand, Hai-yün's bold refusal to obey the Khan's order might actually have pleased the Khan because of his disposition to honor a straight-forward person. However, the short visit had no further significance for Chinese Buddhism.

The Mongols occupied Yen (Peking), in 1215. In 1216, Chinggis, conferring the rank of *Tai-shih kuo-wang* on Mukhali, allowed him to manage the lord-chancellor's affairs. Mukhali's recommendation was important both for obtaining Heaven's blessings for the Khan and to indicate the Mongols' concern

for the religious activities of their Chinese subjects. From Chinggis Khan's decree one may infer that both master and disciple had already been recognized by the Khan as chief shamans, or *Teb-Tenggeri*, also appointed headmen over Chinese Buddhist affairs. Thus it appears that Chinese Buddhist leaders had earlier contact with the Mongolian authorities than the Taoists.

Chinese Taoism by this period had developed into two main streams, mainly because of the political confrontation between the Jurchen-Chin and the Chinese Sung. To the north, in the realm of Chin, was the Chüan-chen Sect headed by Ch'iu Ch'u-chi (also entitled, Ch'ang-ch'un chen-jen, "the perfect man of everlasting spring"); to the south of the Yangtze River was the Cheng-i Sect led by Chang *T'ien-shih*, "the heavenly instructor," and his household.<sup>8</sup> In the early thirteenth century, there was still no need for the Cheng-i Sect and its leaders to establish contact with the Mongols; however, due to the military threat of the Mongols, the Chüan-chen Sect was pressed to sue for the favor of the invaders. Ch'ui Ch'u-chi, head of the sect, was brought to the attention of Chinggis Khan by a Chinese courtier, Liu Chung-lu. In 1219, the Khan dispatched Liu to Shangtung to invite this famous Taoist to his court. The meeting took place during Chinggis' western expedition against Khorezm. It is unclear whether this historic invitation was motivated by the Khan's interest in meeting the "Perfect Man" or whether it was due to a consistent Mongolian policy of summoning the various religious leaders they could reach. But, it is understandable that the "world conqueror" would anxiously desire a long life.

According to a late Yüan work, T'ao Tsung-i's *Ch'o-ching-lu*, Chinggis Khan's decree to the Taoist Ch'iu Ch'u-chi was as follows:

As soon as [We] humbly discovered [you ] *hsien-sheng*<sup>9</sup> [teacher], in [your] retreat in the old territory of Shantung, We limitlessly admired and were sincerely concerned about [you]. . . . However, with many mountains and rivers between [us], it is impossible for Us to fulfill the ceremony of welcoming you in person. But We will devoutly cleanse Our body with baths and eat vegetarian food. . . . [We] invite [you], the teacher, to condescend in your immortal steps and to come to Us, notwithstanding the deserts and the remote-

ness. [You] may faithfully instruct Us for the sake of the people and the state, and sympathetically provide the nourishing method for Our body. We will serve you in person beside [your] immortal seat. We earnestly hope that even one phrase from the remnant of your spit may sustain [Us].<sup>10</sup>

Here, for the Chinese courtier Liu Ch'ung-lu the so-called "nourishing way for body" was perhaps the only method to get promotion for himself. To accomplish the dual purposes of the Khan and himself, Liu went as a special emissary in 1219 to summon the immortal Taoist from Shantung. The elegant Chinese decree that Liu delivered to the Taoist Master was very different from one of purely Mongolian tone. It was very different from the style of others found in the *Secret History of the Mongols* and from the Yüan colloquial decrees to both Buddhist and Taoist temples collected in the *Ta-Yüan sheng-cheng kuo-ch'ao tien-chang*.<sup>11</sup> Chinggis Khan did not have an appreciation of Chinese culture, as did his grandson, Khubilai. Moreover, the expression "devotedly cleansing Our body with baths and eat vegetarian food" is entirely out of character for a warrior hero of the nomadic world. The same is true of the notion that "even one phrase from the remnant of your spit may sustain Us."

Chinggis Khan's historic conversation with Ch'iu Ch'u-chi took place in the snowy mountains of Afghanistan. It was a novel chat between the world conqueror, who had spent his life at war on horseback, and a religious leader, from the quiet life of retreat and meditation. Though the talk did not really satisfy the Khan, it did result in mutual understanding and respect and greatly influenced later historical events. Taoist records assess the meeting as very successful. However, in an account written by the Yüan monk Hsiang-mai, the story is somewhat different: "All the answers of Master Ch'iu to [the Throne] were quite common."<sup>12</sup>

Master Ch'iu's disciple, Li Chih-ch'ang, recorded the main talk as follows:

After settling in the hostel, [the Master] immediately went for an audience. The Emperor, comforting [him], said, "[You] did not respond to the invitations of other countries, but traveled tens of thousands of miles to arrive [here]. We are greatly pleased." [The Master] replied, "The reason that

[I], a person of the countryside, accepted the decree to come was [the will] of Heaven." The Emperor was pleased and allowed [the Master] to be seated. After a meal [the Emperor] asked, "As a *chen-jen* ["the perfect person"] from afar, what kind of medicine of perpetual life do you have to help Us?" The Master replied, "There is a way to prolong life but no medicine for perpetual life as such." The Emperor appreciated his honesty and [ordered] two tents to be erected east of the Imperial Pavilion to accommodate [the Master]. [Later] the interpreter asked: "You are addressed as *Tenggeri möngke kümün*. Is that what you call yourself or do other people so address you?" The Master said, "It is not [I], a person of the countryside, who calls myself that. I am called that by others." The interpreter again asked, "What were you called in the old days?" [The Master] replied [to the Emperor], "The people of the world call [me] *hsien-sheng* [teacher]." The Emperor asked Chimkhai, "What should the perfect person be called?"<sup>13</sup> Chimkhai replied, "Some persons call [him] respectfully the teacher, the perfect person, or the immortal." The Emperor said, "From now on let [him] be called the immortal."<sup>14</sup>

It is not difficult to see that the sincere desire of Chinggis Khan was for the medicine of perpetual life. His quest failed, but he was not distressed. He calmly approved of Ch'iu's honesty. On one hand the Khan exerted strict self-control. On the other hand, because this famous Taoist had "not responded to the invitation of other countries but had traveled tens of thousands of miles" to meet Chinggis Khan, the Khan said that he was greatly pleased. It appears that he wanted to impress the Chinese, with whom he was actually waging a psychological war. In order to emphasize the fact, the Khan had his interpreter ask the Taoist whether the high title, *Tenggeri möngke kümün*, "the Heavenly everlasting person" was self-assumed or whether it was legitimately conferred by others. This suggests that the Khan tried to find out whether the Taoist was an imposter.

In confirming a title for the Chinese visitor, the Mongolian monarch also made a very careful choice among the three alternatives of "teacher," "perfect person" and "immortal" (*shen-hsien*). He selected the last one, and did not entitle Ch'iu the teacher (*hsien-sheng*). From this, one may infer that the conversation did not convert the Khan to the teachings of this Taoist, although he remained a supporter. This contrasted with the



later conversion of his grandsons: Prince Kötan accepted the Sa-skaya Pandita as his teacher and Khubilai Khan made the Phags-pa Lama the Imperial Instructor of his realm.

Most of the Chinese writers would like to emphasize the important achievements on both sides as follows. Ch'iu Ch'u-chi's leadership in the religious world was firmly guaranteed by the Khan. The Taoist priests and temples of North China were protected and exempted from tax and corvée duties. Through these special privileges Ch'iu was able to provide safe refuge for many intellectuals and others in Taoist temples during the troubled periods of the Mongolian conquest. On the other hand, Chinggis Khan achieved fruitful results for Mongolian strategy from this meeting. The Jurchen-Chin Emperor and officials of the Chinese Sung dynasty had invited the Taoist several times but were all politely turned down. This was the notion that of those who invited him only Chinggis Khan was the true Son of Heaven with a Mandate to unify the universe, and the only sovereign to whom Ch'iu should pay his respects. In this manner Chinggis had achieved a success in his psychological political propaganda.

The noted contemporary Confucian scholar, Yüan Hao-wen,<sup>15</sup> estimates that by the end of the Chin dynasty and the beginning of the Yüan, twenty percent of the population of North China was under the influence of the Chüan-chen Sect.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for Chinggis Khan, a good connection with the leader of this powerful sect meant a great victory in his campaign against Chin.

Chinggis Khan's contact with Ch'iu Ch'u-chi might have been the Khan's first encounter with the cultivated, philosophical and religious leader, and he obviously was greatly impressed. Earlier, the Khan had had a brief contact with the Buddhist monk Hai-yün, but the Khan was not more favorably inclined to Chinese Buddhism as a result. Chinggis Khan could not have known of the long struggle between Taoism and Buddhism in Chinese history. Eventually in this struggle the Khan too granted special privileges to this Taoist leader, which enabled him to provide refuge for Chinese intellectuals in his temples. This action disappointed both Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars. The expansion of Taoist influence stimulated the Buddhists to launch a counterattack later, during

the reign of Möngke Khan (r. 1251-1259).

Chinggis Khan passed away in 1227 and his son Ögödei ascended the throne in 1229. This same year, the great Buddhist supporter Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai was promoted to the position of premier. All these events were unfavorable for the Taoist Ch'üan-chen Sect. However, Ögödei Khan did not alter the traditional Mongolian policy of religious tolerance, so the Buddhist counterattack against the Taoists was postponed for two decades. During this significant change in the political situation, the great Taoist Master Ch'ui Ch'u-chi also died. From that time, the Taoist movement was not as active as the Buddhists under the leadership of the outstanding monk Hai-yün.

Regarding the Buddhist movement among the Mongols, the *Yüan shih* records, "When the Yüan arose in the north they already honored Buddhism."<sup>17</sup> The record must have some historical basis, but the record is unclear as to the time, the persons involved and other details.

The Yüan monk Nien-ch'ang recorded Hai-yün's activities in the Mongolian Court:

In the first month of the *ting-yu* [1237] the Second Empress of Emperor T'ai-tsu offered to the Master the title of *Kuang-t'ien chen-kuo ta-shih* [The great master of glorifying heaven and pacifying the kingdom]. In the winter of the year *chi-hai* [1239], the Master was again appointed Abbot of the Great Ch'ing-shou Monastery.<sup>18</sup>

The most meaningful thing Hai-yün did, and most important for later history, was his teaching of Buddhism to Khubilai at the latter's princely residence, in the year 1242. The monk not only won Khubilai's sympathy and support for Chinese Buddhism but also succeeded in planting the basic truths of Buddhism in the heart of the future khan, which finally made him receptive to Buddhist teachings and led him to favor Buddhism over other religions. In *T'ung-tsai* the Yüan monk Nien-ch'ang wrote:

In the *jen-yin* year [1242] the Great Prince Khubilai invited the master to his pavilion and asked him about the general ideas of the Law of the Buddha. At first the Master explained the teaching of men and heaven, and the relationship between cause and effect. Next he explained several key words of the Law to open the Prince's heart. Then faith grew

in the heart of the Prince; and he asked for the disciplined heart of a bodhisattva.

At that time secretary Liu Ping-chung<sup>19</sup> was in the service [of the Prince]. [Khubilai] again queried, "Does the Law of the Buddha provide the way for the realm under heaven to enjoy tranquility?" The Master said, "In the realm of the Law, it provides life to the four kinds of living beings. These facts are all included in the realm of the Law of the Buddha. However, as for the tranquility or unrest of a state, everything depends upon the joy or suffering of the people. The joy or suffering, peace or danger, depends upon politics. Of course, it also depends upon the Will of Heaven. In the teaching of the Law of our Buddha, the function of the court has already been pointed out clearly. It is neither easy nor difficult, but it might be impossible for Your Highness, the Prince, to practice. It would be better to invite wise men and learned scholars from all parts of the realm to query them about the history of tranquility and the decline of states, now and then. Your Highness may learn something by listening to them." The Prince asked again, "Among the three religions [Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism] which one is the most honorable, which has the best law, and which is the outermost?" The Master answered, "Among all sages, only Buddhist monks are not tricky. Therefore from ancient times, Buddhism has always been held above the others.

The Prince honored him as his instructor. The Prince asked him to stay, but the Master insisted on leaving. Before his departure, the Prince asked, "After you leave, how shall I keep the Law of Buddha?" The Master said, "It is difficult for faith to grow. Faith is not easy to develop. Since it has emerged, it is important to hold it fast with all your heart. Please do not forget the disciplined mind of a bodhisattva. Do not find fault with the Three Jewels, and always be mindful of the sufferings of the people. Always do beneficial works for others. These are the Laws of the Buddha."<sup>20</sup>

In the *Ta-Yüan Chih-yüan-pien-wei-lu*, a work of the Yüan monk Hsiang-mai, there are also some records of the early Buddhist activities in the pre-Yüan Mongolian Court. Among them, however, the most remarkable achievements were those of the Kashmir lama, Na-mo. In "The Biography of Tege" in the *Yüan shih* it says:

Tege . . . was a man from Kashmir. . . . Both his father O-t'o-ch'i [Otochi] and his uncle Ma-mo [Namu] were disciples of the Buddha. One day O-t'o-ch'i and his brother said to each other: "The world is full of unrest, and our country is de-

clining, but in the northeast there is the sign of the Son of Heaven. Why should we not go and follow him?" So they came together and were received by T'ai-tsung [Ögödei Khan]. Ting-tsung [Güyük Khan] made Na-mo his instructor. . . . Hsien-tsung [Möngke Khan] honored Na-mo with the title of *kuo-shih* ["state instructor"], bestowed upon him a jade seal, and appointed him to administer Buddhist affairs in the realm under heaven.<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly, the influence of the great Phags-pa Lama on Khubilai Khan was a decisive factor. Nevertheless, the Chinese Buddhist scholar Liu Ping-chung, another important figure, influenced the Mongolian rulers in their appreciation of Chinese Buddhism. Liu, who later became one of the important founders of the Yüan state, originally was a monk attached to the princely residence of Khubilai. In attending the young prince, he had ample opportunity to influence him with the teachings of the Buddha. In addition, Hai-yün and Liu Ping-chung had an intimate personal relationship as master and disciple. Consequently, in the struggle of Taoists against the Buddhists, Liu was naturally on the side of the latter. Liu, half monk, half Confucian scholar, later became one of the main planners for the forthcoming Yüan Dynasty, and he recommended many important Chinese scholars to Khubilai. The stand of the Mongolian Court in the case of the Buddhist-Taoist struggle was obviously influenced through such contacts.

Hai-yün was continually ordered to administer Buddhist affairs during the reigns of Güyük Khan (1246-1248) and Möngke Khan (1251-1259). This was not only a personal success for Hai-yün, but also influenced Mongolian policy towards religious affairs in China. "The Annals of Hsien-tsung [Möngke Khan]" in the *Yüan shih* records, "the monk Hai-yün was in charge of Buddhist affairs and the Taoist Li Chen-ch'ang<sup>22</sup> was in charge of Taoist affairs."<sup>23</sup>

The *Ta-Yüan sheng-ch'eng kuo-Ch'ao tien-chang* records:

On the sixteenth day of the fifth month of the thirty-first year of Chih-yüan [1294] the Premier's Office received a Saintly decree which said: "In the Saintly decrees of the Former Emperors, Chinggis and Ögödei, it has been said, 'Release the [Buddhist] monks, the Christian priests and the Taoist priests from all their corvée duties and taxes. Have them report to Heaven and pray for [Our] long life. Now

according to this precedent of the Former [Emperors'] Saintly decrees, exempt [them] from their corvée duties and taxes and have them report to Heaven and pray for [Our] long life. This by His Majesty.' ”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, both Chinggis and Ögödei Khan exempted from corvée duties and taxes the Buddhist, Taoist and Christian priesthoods, according to the traditional Mongolian broad-minded attitude towards all religions.

The aforementioned “Biography of Tege” mentions the arrival of the Kashmir lama Na-mo in the Mongolian Court and says, “Hsien-tsung [Möngke Khan] honored Na-mo with the title of *kuo-shih* [State Instructor], bestowed upon him a jade seal, and appointed him to administer Buddhist affairs in all the realm under heaven.”<sup>25</sup> However, it is difficult to decide whether this event happened before or after Hai-yün's appointment. Nevertheless, this set the precedent for appointing a non-Chinese monk to administer Buddhist affairs in all the empire, including China. In other words, this was a forerunner of the institutionalized function of *Ti-shih*, the Imperial Instructor, a post always occupied by the great lamas of the Tibetan Sa-skya sect.

Through the meeting of the famous Taoist master Ch'iu Ch'u-chi with Chinggis Khan, the Ch'üan-chen sect obtained especially favorable support from the Mongols and consequently, “flourished like the sun in the middle of the sky.”<sup>26</sup> This Taoist sect was then able to save many people, but also inevitably attracted the hostility of Buddhism. The evil deeds of the Taoists listed by Hsiang-mai in the *Ta-Yüan Chih-yüan pien-wei-lu* are likely exaggerated and prejudiced; nevertheless, they are not all false accusations.

In general, after the death of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi the Taoists were not as active as Buddhists. This was probably due to the rise to power of Ögödei Khan and his appointment of Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, a devoted Buddhist, as his premier for Chinese affairs. Even so, the Taoists were not neglected by the Mongolian court, and Taoist leaders “received documents with the Imperial Seal to administer the affairs of their religion.” When Möngke Khan ascended the throne (1251) he appointed Li Chen-ch'ang to oversee Taoist affairs.<sup>27</sup> (This “Li Chen-ch'ang” is a mispronunciation of the name Li Chih-ch'ang, the author

of *Hsi-yu-chi* and Ch'iu Ch'u-chi's counselor in the Ch'üan-chen Sect.)

The long historical conflict between Taoism and Buddhism was not mere cultural struggle between two different religions, one of Chinese origin and the other Indian background, but was also a political and economic conflict. This complicated earlier historical background was not known to the Mongolian rulers during their early occupation of China. However, when the Buddhist monks discovered that their opponents had gained support from Chinggis Khan, they immediately recalled these painful historical experiences suffered in the past, and tried to find some way to influence the Mongolian court so as to prevent a reoccurrence of the disaster suffered by the Proper Law.

The efforts of Na-mo and Hai-yün influenced the Mongolian rulers to renew their policy towards Chinese religions. Moreover, the conversion of Prince Kötan to Tibetan Buddhism and the personal relationship between Prince Khubilai and Phags-pa Lama greatly aided the Chinese Buddhists in expanding their influence in the Mongolian court. First of all, they discredited Ch'iu Ch'u-chi, accusing him of dishonesty in dealing with Chinggis Khan. In order to gain the support of the new Khan Möngke in retaliating against the Taoists, they foresaw a sympathetic attitude on the part of the Mongolian rulers, and made assertions to the Khan that they were the victims of evil Taoist activities. The Yüan *Han-lin* scholar Chan Po-ch'un,<sup>28</sup> in his preface to the *Ta-Yüan Chih-yüan pein-wei-lu*, the work of the monk Hsiang-mai, said:

The Taoist Ch'iu Ch'u-chi, Li Chih-ch'ang and others destroyed the T'ien-cheng Confucian Temple of Hsi-ching and turned it into [the Taoist temple] Wen-ch'eng Kuan. [They] destroyed the image of Buddha Śākyamuni, the white jade [image] of Kuan-yin [Avalokiteśvara], and the sacred pagoda of Buddhist relics. [They] plotted against and occupied four-hundred eighty-two Buddhist monasteries, and spread the false words of Wang Fu,<sup>29</sup> the *Lao Tsu pa-shih-i hua-t'u* [The eighty-one conversion figures of Lao Tsu] to mislead the people. Then the Elder [Fu-yü of the Shao-lin [Monastery] led the honorable instructors to the Court and memorialized [the case] to the former Emperor Möngke.<sup>30</sup>

Upon receiving this Buddhist petition, Möngke Khan decreed a debate in the year 1258 between the monks and the

Taoists. Hsiang-mai continued:

Then His Majesty, the Emperor [Khubilai] was ordered by [the Former Emperor] Möngke, to assemble the elite of the nine schools<sup>31</sup> again to discuss and to distinguish between the truth and falseness of the two ways of the monks and the Taoists. Accepting the Saintly Decree of the Former Emperor, His Majesty, the Emperor, decided to summon the two sides of Buddhism and Taoism with the Elder of the Shao-lin [Monastery] as the head of the monks and Chang *Chen-jen* as the head of the Taoist priests to come to the palace at Shangtu to discuss face to face in the presence of [His Majesty] under the Grand Hall. Also present were the State Instructor Na-mo, the State Instructor Phags-pa,<sup>32</sup> His Excellency the Senior Guardian of the Heir-Apparent 'Ts'ung [Liu Ping-chung]; other monks totalling more than three hundred; Confucian scholars Tou Han-ch'ing,<sup>33</sup> Yao Kung-mao<sup>34</sup> and others; Premier Meng-su-su,<sup>35</sup> Vice-Premier Lien,<sup>36</sup> Premier Molkhachi, Chang Chung-ch'ien<sup>37</sup> and two hundred others [officials and scholars] to witness; and the Taoist priests Chang *chen-jen*, Wang *hsien-sheng* from Mantzu [South China] and more than two hundred others to debate with the [Buddhist] monks.<sup>38</sup>

The presence of so many dignitaries and luminaries illustrates how great and significant the meeting was. It also shows the deep concern of both Möngke Khan and Prince Khubilai. Besides the Buddhist and Taoist opponents, many Confucian scholars attended, including Yao Shu, Tao Mo, Chang Wen-ch'ien and Lien Hsi-hsien. The crux of this great debate was recorded in "The inscription for the destruction of the false scriptures of the Taoist collections in all districts as commanded by the Saintly Decree" (*Shen-chih fen-hui chu-lu wei-Tao-tsang-ching chih pei*). The inscription was composed by the *Han-lin* Scholars T'ang Fang and Wang P'an<sup>39</sup> in the year 1284:

In the time of the reign of Emperor Hsien-tsung [Möngke], the Taoists produced a book called *Lao-chün hua-hu ch'eng-fo ching* ["The scripture of Lao 'Tsu's transformation to Buddha through the conversion of barbarians"] and *Pa-shih-i-hua tu* ["The eighty-one conversion figures"]. The words are vile, shallow and extravagant. [Their] purpose is to despise Buddhism and to elevate their own teachings. Then His Majesty was staying at [his] princely residence. [Former] Emperor Hsien-tsung ordered the two parties of Buddhists and

Taoists to proceed to His Majesty's palace to debate. Both of the parties agreed that: if the Taoists won then the monks would wear hats to become Taoist; if the monks won then the Taoists would shave [their] hair to become monks. The monks asked the Taoists, "Your book is named the Scripture of Transformation to Buddha through the Conversion of the Barbarians. What does the [word] Buddha mean?" The Taoist answered, "The Buddha is the [great] awakening. It means the awakening of heaven and earth, the awakening of *yin* and *yang*, the awakening of and benevolence and uprightness." The monk said, "It is not so. The awakening means self-awakening, to awaken others, the fulfillment of the deed of awakening and the clear completion of the [above] three awakenings. Therefore, this is said to be the Buddha. It is not limited only to the awakening of heaven and earth, *yin* and *yang*, and benevolence and uprightness." His Majesty said, "I also understand by heart that benevolence and uprightness are the words of Confucius. [They] said that Buddha is the awakening of benevolence and uprightness. Their theory is wrong." The Taoist again proceeded and presented the *Shih-chi* and other books and tried to talk more and to win by chance. The Imperial Instructor Pandita Phags-pa said, "What book is it?" [The Taoist] said, "It is the book about the emperors and kings of earlier dynasties." His Majesty said, "Now it is purposed to discuss religion. Why should all hang on these emperors and kings of earlier dynasties?" The Imperial Instructor said, "In our India, there is also a *Shih-chi* [record of history]. Have you heard of it?" [The Taoists] answered, "Not yet." The Imperial Instructor said, "Let me explain it to you. In India the King Bimbisara praised the merit of the Buddha and said, 'Above heaven and under heaven there is nothing equivalent to Buddha.' When he was speaking these words, where was Lao Tzu?" The Taoist could not answer. The Imperial Instructor again asked, "Is the theory of the conversion of the barbarians [recorded] in your *Shih-chi*?" [The Taoist] said, "No." The Imperial Instructor said, "Since it is not in the *Shih-chi*, and again it is not recorded in the *T'ao-te ching*, it is clear that this is a falsehood!" The words of the Taoists were submitted. Minister Yao Shu said: "The Taoists are defeated." His Majesty commanded that the punishment be performed as it had been agreed upon and dispatched the envoy Toghon to proceed to the Lung-kuang Monastery to shave the hair of the Taoist Fan Chih-yin and seventeen other persons to make them monks, and burn forty-five books of the false scriptures. In the realm under heaven two-hundred thirty-seven Buddhist Monasteries that had been



occupied by the Taoists were all ordered to be returned [to the Buddhists].<sup>40</sup>

From these records it is clear that this great debate was a Taoist struggle against an alliance of Buddhists and Confucian scholars. The background for this debate was not only religious contradictions but also political and cultural conflicts. The most decisive argument that put down the Taoists was from the mouth of Phags-pa. This not only increased his personal prestige and brought him reverence from Khubilai, but also greatly influenced Chinese society and its traditional culture and thought. Of course, the influence of Na-mo should not be neglected.

This great debate has also been recorded in the Tibetan *Hor Chos-'byung* (a history of Mongolian Buddhism) by Jigmen-namkha:

Then in China there were many people of wrong views. They were the followers of the ancient Tai-shang Lao-chün and were called *shing-shing*. Considering this matter as a harmful thing to both themselves and others, the Khan commanded [Phags-pa] to extinguish these evil persons and to cause them to follow the Proper Law [of Buddha]. Thereupon through the principle of proper reason he subdued this heresy, swiftly extinguished the leading figures of the *shing-shing*, turned their wrong views into proper views and ordered them to become monks to develop the Law of Buddha Shakyamuni.<sup>41</sup>

This Tibetan record indicates that the event was a significant victory in Buddhist history and was highly praised by Tibetan Buddhists. In fact, however, this victory did not overcome the Taoist activities effectively, and therefore, after Khubilai became the Khan (r. 1260-1294) the Buddhists again petitioned the court to destroy the Taoist scriptures. This was again authorized by Khubilai Khan and in the winter of 1281 he ordered the Buddhists and Taoists to debate their doctrines. The decree says:

Formerly, according to the Decree of Emperor Mōngke, in the year of *wu-wu* [1258], the monks and the Taoists carried out a debate on the Law of Buddha. The Taoists lost. Upon this, the *Huan-hu-ching* and other scriptures, which were falsely made from the lies of the Taoists, together with their

wooden blocks, were ordered to be burnt and destroyed. At present, because it was memorialized that the Taoists did not destroy those scriptures and wooden blocks, which should be destroyed, but hid them, [the Court] sent the Vice-Premier Chang, the Deputy-Premier Chang, Minister Chiao, together [with the monks], the General-Director [of Buddhist Affairs] Chüan and the Taoists Chang t'ien-shih,<sup>42</sup> and others to go to the inner part of Ch'ang-ch'un Kung to collect them. Now Vice-Premier Chang and the others returned and memorialized: "The Scriptures of the [*Tao*]-*tsang* [the canon of Taoism], except *Tao-te-ching* which is the real scripture of Lao Tzu, are all creations of later persons. Most of them calumniate the teaching of Buddha [and] steal the words from Buddhism. Moreover, some of them were copied from the books of the *yin-yang* [school], medical and other words of many scholars, but with their names changed. The annotations are distorted and erroneous, and have lost their original truth. [The Taoists] have falsely made charms and amulets, and absurdly told people that those who wear them would not be drowned in water, burnt in fire or wounded by swords and knives. When Chang t'ien-shih [and others] were ordered to test them in fire, they all implored for mercy and said, 'these are all false. [We] dare not try.' Again the report of Chi *chen-jen*, [and others] say: "The [collection] of the scriptures of *Tao-tsang*, with the exception of the *Tao-te-ching* of Lao Tzu, are groundless words fabricated by later people. [We] are willing to have all of them burnt. It will also make us feel cleaner.'" This was authorized by the Throne [by saying], "From now on the Taoists should follow the *Tao-te-ching* of Lao Tzu for their practices. If there are those who prefer the scriptures of Buddha they may become monks. If they are not willing to become monks they should marry and go back to their lay life. Except for the *Tao-te-ching* these groundless scriptures in the *Tao-tsang* that were created from falsehood, together with their wooden blocks, should all be burnt and destroyed."<sup>43</sup>

According to the Taoist record *Hua-hu ching*, Lao-Tzu went west to convert the barbarians. Even T'ien-chu (India), the holy land of Buddhism, it was claimed, came under the influence of the teachings of Lao Tzu. According to this Taoist notion the Buddha was not only transformed into Tai-shan Lao-chün (Lao Tzu) but was even made Lao Tzu's disciple. This greatly offended the Buddhists, and consequently, all debates were concentrated on this crucial topic.

The victorious Buddhists did not cease to undermine the

Taoist influence and again extended the Buddhist movement from North China to the south. The Buddhist-Taoist conflict probably already existed before the Mongolian occupation. After the collapse of the Southern Sung, Yang-lien-chen-chia came to the Chiang-che area (present Kiangsu and Chekiang) as the General Director of Buddhism south of the Yangtze River. It appears that he was utilized by the Buddhists there as the leading figure in their retaliation against the Taoists. This movement resulted in the excavation of the Sung tombs and was one of the great mistakes of Mongolian rule in China. In his *Ch'o-ching lu* (Vol. XII) T'ao Tsung-hsi wrote: "In the Chih-yüan period [1264-1294], the Buddhist monks became overbearing. [They] turned Taoist temples into Buddhist monasteries and shaved the Taoist priests. Also many great tombs were excavated."<sup>44</sup> However, in Chang Po-ch'un's preface for the *Ta-yüan Chih-yüan pein-wei-lu* it records quite differently:

At that time, the General Director of Buddhist Affairs on the south of the Yangtze River, Master [Yang-] lien-jen-chai, greatly cultivated saintliness and in three years, from the spring of the twenty-second year of Chih-yüan [1285] to the spring of the twenty-fourth year [1288], rehabilitated more than thirty Buddhist monasteries. Those who abandoned Taoism, and became monks were some seven or eight hundred presons.<sup>45</sup>

As for the background of the key person, Yang-lien-chen-chia, there is no information regarding where he came from or what sect he belonged to. If the speculation is correct this questionable monk must be a person from the Chinese Yang family who adopted the Tibetan Buddhist name Rin-chen dgah-ba. However, in the Chinese tradition a monk rarely put his family name with his religious name. This problem still needs further study.

The political mistake of the Mongols discussed above was due to religious conflict but also to a lack of understanding of Chinese history on the part of Mongolian rulers. As a result, from the beginning to the end of the Mongolian occupation of China, a well-balanced policy toward both Chinese Buddhism and Taoism was never forthcoming.

In the Buddhist-Taoist struggle, all sects of Buddhism, even those of Kashmir and Tibet, joined in an alliance against the

Taoists. Consequently, the Taoist Chüan-chen sect, once so greatly supported by the Mongolian court, collapsed after the two great debates. With the establishment of the Yüan Dynasty in China, the Cheng-i sect headed by the *t'ien-shih* ("heavenly instructor"), Chang Tsung-yen assumed the leadership of Taoism instead of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi's Chüan-chen sect. Other sects, such as the Chen-ta and Tai-i sects, gained influence at court, but they were not as influential as the Cheng-i sect. The way Khubilai Khan treated the *t'ien-shih* Chang Tsung-yen, entitling him *shen-hsien* ("immortality"), was quite similar to his grandfather, Chinggis Khan's handling of Ch'iu Ch'u-chi. The "*shih-lao chuan*" in the *Yüan shih* says:

After the pacification south of the [Yangtze] River [Emperor] Shih-tsu dispatched an envoy to summon [the *t'ien-shih*]. At the audience, [the Emperor] said to him, "Formerly in the year *chi-wei* [1259], We came to O-tu [present west of Wu-chang] and sent Wang I-ch'ing to visit your father, [the former *t'ien-shih*]. Your father reported to Us, saying, 'Twenty years from now, the realm should be unified.' The words of the immortal have already come to pass." Consequently, [the Emperor] allowed [him] to be seated and dine.<sup>46</sup>

This was the same way Chinggis Khan fought his psychological warfare through the propaganda of the Immortal Ch'iu Ch'u-chi. Whether or not the honored treatment of the Taoist Cheng-i sect by the Mongolian court removed the hatred in the heart of the Chinese people created by the misguided Mongolian religious policy should be carefully studied in the future. In general the Yüan Emperors tried to adopt a comparatively evenhanded policy toward all religions under their control. Of course, this approach was based on the traditional polytheistic beliefs, Shamanism. The Mongols probably thought that the term *t'ien-shih*, "the instructor of heaven," had a similar meaning to *Teb-Tenggeri* in Mongolian. This might have been one of the factors that interested the Mongolian court in the Cheng-i sect.

According to available materials, such as the decrees collected in the *Ta-Yüan sheng-cheng kuo-ch'ao tien-chang*, both Buddhist monks and the Taoist priests were treated equally. At least officially there is no unequal treatment to be seen from an examination of the laws. The "Monograph of Officials" in

the *Yüan-shih*, records that "The Ministry of Rituals administers the affairs of worship, confers titles on godly persons and administers matters pertaining to the literati, monks and Taoists."<sup>47</sup> It continues: "The *Hsüan-cheng Yüan* has jurisdiction over Buddhist monks and [their] disciples, and rules the land of Tibet."<sup>48</sup> This office was "headed by the State Instructor."<sup>49</sup> Thus the handling of Buddhist affairs was separated from the ordinary civil administration and the monks were put under the protection of a special powerful office headed by a Tibetan religious leader. Locally, especially south of the Yangtze River, the *Kuang chiao tsung-kuan-fu* (the general director's office for propagating religion) was established as a Buddhist administration. Later this office came under the Branch Office of the *Hsüan-chen Yüan* in Hangchow. In addition to these organizations, a special office, *Kung-te-shih ssu* (the office of the emissary for meritorious affairs) was abolished and reestablished from time to time. All these administrations indicate that the Mongolian-Yüan court's concern for Buddhism was much more deep than that for Taoism.

Carrying out religious services and building religious centers were major activities for the believers of both Buddhism and Taoism. The activities were seen not only as blessings for the welfare of their deceased ancestors but also as beneficial to themselves and to society. The Mongolian authorities often required the religious organizations to pray for the long life of the Khan and for blessings for the state, in order to express their loyalty. On the other hand, at court the monks, Taoists and other religious groups were active in order to win the confidence and support of the Khan, and to gain such privileges as exemption from taxes and duties. In this situation both Buddhism and Taoism carried out the constructions of Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples unceasingly. This eventually created a great financial deficit for the Yüan administration.

The Khans of the Yüan dynasty accepted Tantrayana Tibetan Buddhism as their religious belief and honored the masters of the Sa-skyapa sect as their Imperial Instructions, and thus it promoted the development of Tantric Buddhism in China. Tibetan Buddhism was accepted by the Mongolian nobility because of the cultural similarity between the Mongols and the Tibetans. But it was rejected by the Chinese, especially by the intellectuals, because of the basic cultural difference be-

tween the Chinese and the Tibetans. Consequently, most Chinese materials on this subject are one-sided and based upon their prejudices against an alien culture. In fact, most Imperial Instructors mainly remained silent on state affairs, and were ordered not to be involved in politics. The case of Tibet was an exception. As a result of the excessive belief in Buddhism and the exorbitant honor given to monks, many illegal activities took place among the clergy. Although this was not entirely neglected by the Yüan court, Chinese historians still commonly claimed that "half of the Yüan realm was destroyed by the monks." Of course this is an exaggerated, subjective interpretation of the Mongolian rule.

In short, the Mongolian Khans' selection of their own religious faith was based upon their own traditional nomadic culture. Nevertheless, their attitude and policy towards both Buddhism and Taoism in China gave rise to many deviations in their administration. This might be a result of basic differences and misunderstandings between nomadic culture and that of the agricultural world of China.

## NOTES

1. See F. W. Cleaves, "Teb Tenggeri," *Ural-Altaiische Jahrbücher*, 39 (1967), pp. 248-260.
2. Prince Kötan, son of Ögödei Khan, see *Yüan-shih* 107, 7a. T'u Chi in his *Meng-wu-erh shih-chi* 37, wrote a brief biography of Kötan. See also John Andrew Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan—Rashid al-Din Tabib*, New York, 1971, pp. 20-21.
3. "Biography of Mu-hua-li," *Yüan-shih* 119.
4. According to Western reckoning, Hai-yün was only twelve.
5. According to the "Biography of Mu-hua-li," the title *t'ai-shih kuo-wang* was conferred on him by Chinggis Khan in the year *ting-ch'ou* (1217).
6. Lanch'eng, present-day Lanhsien, Shansi Province.
7. See Nien-ch'ang, *Fo-tsu li-tai tung-tsai*, 21, 9a-11a, 12 a-b.
8. In North China the Taoist religion was divided into three sects, Chüan-chen, Tai-i, and Chen-ta; on the south of the Yangtze River there were two sects, Cheng-i and Mao-shan. Later there developed from the Cheng-i sect a branch known as Hsüan-chiao. See also note 42.
9. *Hsien-sheng* is a general term for a learned person, such as sir, teacher, or mister, but it was also applied to the Taoists. This word was often mispronounced *shing-shing* in many Mongolian and Tibetan materials.

10. Wang Kuo-wei, *Meng-ku shih-liao ssu-chung*, Taipei, 1961, pp. 231–233, and T'ao Tsung-i, *Ch'o-ching-lu*, Taipei, 1962, Vol. 10, pp. 150–151.

11. See the decrees of the Yüan emperors to the Buddhists and the Taoists that were collected in the *Ta-Yüan sheng-cheng kuo-ch'ao tien-chang*, reprinted by the Palace Museum, Taipei, 1976.

12. Wang Kuo-wei, p. 356.

13. The "Biography of Chen-hai" in the *Yüan-shih* makes no mention of this matter.

14. Wang Kuo-wei, p. 340.

15. See the attached "Biography of the Son Hao-wen" to the "Biography of Yüan Te-ming" in *Chin-shih*, 126.

16. Yao Tsung-wu, "*Chih Yüan Ch'üan-chen-ch'iao ti min-tsu ssu-hiang yü chiu-shih ssu-hsiang*: (The Nationalistic Thought and World Salvation Thought of the Ch'üan-chen sect at the Period of Chin and Yüan). *Tung-pei-shih lun-ts'ung*, Taipei, 1959, Vol. 2, p. 262.

17. "Shih-lao-chuang," *Yüan-shih*, 202, 4b.

18. Nien-ch'ang, 21, 14b–15a.

19. See "Biography of Liu Ping-chung," *Yüan-shih* 157.

20. Nien-ch'ang, 31, 15b–16b.

21. "Biography of T'ieh-ko (Tege)," *Yüan-shih* 125, 13b.

22. Li Chen-ch'ang is an erroneous reference to Li Chih-ch'ang.

23. "Annals of Hsien-tsung," *Yüan-shih* 3, 3a.

24. See the entry *shih-lao* (Monks and Taoists) of Vol. 6 of Li-pu, *Ta-Yüan sheng-cheng kuo-ch'ao tien-chang* 33, the Palace Museum edition, Taipei 1976.

25. See note 21.

26. Yao Tsung-wu, "Ch'iu Ch'u-chi nien-pu," in *Tung-pei-shih lun-ts'ung*, p. 245.

27. See note 23.

28. "Biography of Chang Po-ch'ung," *Yüan-shih* 178.

29. Wang Fu was a Taoist leader of Eastern Chin period (316–419) who had failed in his debate against the Buddhists.

30. Nien-ch'ang, 21, 39a-b.

31. The "nine schools" were the Confucian, Taoist, Naturalist (*yin-yang*), Legalist, Dialectician (*ming*), Mohist (the followers of Mo Tzu), the *tsung-heng* (a school of political alliances and strategies), Agriculturalist, and others.

32. Phags-pa was granted the title *Ti-shih*, or Imperial Instructor, in the sixteenth year of Chih-yüan (1279), after the nirvana of this great lama.

33. It was Tou Mo. See "Biography of Tou Mo," *Yüan-shih* 158.

34. It was Yao Shu. See "Biography of Yao Shu," *Yüan-shih* 158.

35. It was the Uighur minister Meng-su-ssu. See "Biography of Meng-su-ssu," *Yüan-shih* 124. He had been the *jarghuchi* and therefore he was called by the Chinese *ch'eng-hsiang*, Premier.

36. It was another Uighur Confucian scholarly minister, Lien Hsi-hsien, who was well-known as "Mencius" Lien (Lien Meng Tzu).

37. It was Chang Wen-ch'ien. See "Biography of Chang Wen-ch'ien," *Yüan-shih* 157.

38. Hsiang-mai, *Chih-yüan pien-wei-lu*, Yangchou ts'ang-ching-yüan, 1907 edition, 4, 20b–21a.

39. "Biography of Wang Pang," *Yüan-shih* 160.
40. Hsiang-mai, 6, 1a-2b.
41. H̄jigs-med nam-mkhah, *Chen-po hor-gyi-yul-du dam-paihi-chos ji-ltar-byun-bahi-tshul-bsad-pa rgyal-bahi-bstan-pa-rin-po-che gsal-bar-byed pahi-sgron-me*, 1819. The Japanese edition was translated by Koho Hashimoto and was published in Tokyo, 1940, under the title of *Moko ramakyo shi* (the history of Mongolian Lamaism).
42. This Chang *T'ien-shih*, the Heavenly Instructor Chang, was Chang Tsung-yen, the Thirty-sixth *tien-shih* after Chang Tao-ling, the founder of Cheng-i t'ien-shih sect of Taoism.
43. Nien-ch'ang, 21, 30a-31b. In this entry there is another record of an imperial decree on the twelfth day of the twelfth month of the same year.
44. Tao Tsung-i, p. 202. See note 10.
45. Nien-ch'ang, 3, 40a-b.
46. "Shih-lao Chüan," *Yüan-shih* 202, 11a.
47. The entry *Li-pu* (Ministry of Ritual), in the "Monograph of Officials," I, *Yüan-shih* 85, 21a-b.
48. The entry of Hsüan Cheng-yüan, in the "Monograph of Officials," III, *Yüan-shih* 87, 8a.
49. *Ibid.*