

# Owen Lattimore interviewed by Caroline Humphrey, 21st May 1983 – Part 2

0:00:05 Kazakh's were Turkic speakers; in Chinese Turkestan and Soviet Union all nominally Moslems but their Islam was very thin; as nomads they did not have fixed centres with mosques, so did not have a clergy with vested interest in land and property; very different from the Buddhists among the Mongols; the lack of a clergy, and in pre-revolutionary days of a territory, also had no hereditary aristocracy

0:01:55 Education in present day Mongolia is open to both male and female; begin with a primary school in the country, each collective will have a school, those who live at the collective send their children on foot every day; from further off come on horseback or camel, bus, or even board at the school; education with Russian as the second language begins fairly early; they aim at ten years of schooling till 18 or 19 [image fails at this point though sound continues] ; after that enter university or specialized higher school is by competitive examination; once educated the large majority get city jobs; recollection of an old fashioned family with Buddhist pictures hanging in the tent; asked 16 year old boy what he was going to do when he left school; said he was going to Irkutsk in Siberia to do a year or two of veterinary science, not to become a vet. but to be able to deal with illness in herd, then he was going to come back and be the best herdsman in that part of Mongolia; they have competitions to judge herdsman; hold an annual parade in Ulaanbaatar for best herdsman who are summoned to the capital and presented with a medal

0:08:30 Arash was my friend and travelling companion for many years; he was a borderer from a family that had been stationed on the border between the Northern and the Western Mongols; dialect more Western Mongol than 'halh'; Arash's elder brother was a Lama shaman who had accompanied a famous counter-revolutionary who had been assassinated; Arash feared for his brother so both fled to Inner Mongolia; as a shaman, his brother once or twice killed people by using a knife to drive out evil spirits; Arash was a nominal Lama with a girlfriend and a daughter; had two or three animals and Arash earned his living by doing odd jobs when I wasn't there; I'd leave my four camels with him when I went back to Peking; I paid him to help me; I'd heard about him originally as he'd worked for the Sven Hedin expedition; he made it clear that he was a camel man and not a personal servant; I have lived most of my life outside my own country but always in an upper middle class position; Mongolian culture the only one I entered at a worker level, due to Arash; in camp I'd do the unskilled labour while he did the skilled; allowed me to see Mongolian life and culture from the level of the working class

0:14:44 Despite the fact that there is an honorific language, Mongolia is egalitarian in many ways; the ceremonial phrases were used both by ordinary people and aristocrats; De Wang was leader of Inner Mongolian Nationalist Movement non-Marxist, non- Communist; during Japanese occupation did not turn Communist

sympathisers over to the Japanese if they were Mongolian nationalists; he gathered Mongols from all over Inner Mongolia; set up schools and more people literate under him than at any other time; he was nominally a Buddhist; his political aim was not to detach Inner Mongolia from China, or let it fall into the hands of the Japanese, but did want autonomy for Inner Mongolia and for them to manage economy, education etc.; Chinese Nationalists would not back him neither would the Communists; he was given contributions but the princes were distrustful of him and were more likely to make deals with Chinese provincial governors or the Japanese; ultimately tried by the Communists as a traitor, sentenced to death but reprieved; after release worked for the Inner Mongolian library which he had created; I think he was a very fine man and I was honoured that he thought of me as a friend

0:21:17 Later Nationalist leader Ulaankh(fuu)'s name is an interesting marker; translates as Red Child which in both Chinese and Mongolian is a term of endearment for a newly born infant; Ulaanfu is an obvious echoing of Ulianov, the real name of Lenin; in his student days he could get by with this as the Chinese didn't understand; he comes from the Tumet of Hohhot, settled Mongols; during his student and early political days didn't even know any Mongol; most Tumet speak only Chinese; later he made an effort to learn Mongol but never fluent; his political success was due to him becoming a desirable acquisition for the Chinese Communist Party as he could be exhibited as a minority who was also an enthusiastic member of the Party; during 1960's like many other senior communists he was eclipsed but now rehabilitated

0:24:39 The Diluv Khutagt a marvellous man; first met through a Mongol friend in Peking; he was a so-called Living Buddha from Western Mongolia; better educated in Tibetan than Mongol; genuinely pious and observing Buddhist; in pre-revolutionary Mongolia, High Lamas were frequently appointed to political and administrative duties and he was made Governor General of the Uliastai region in the Altai; because of that he met most of the great men of his time in the 20's and 30's; in the 1930's when the purges began he was arrested and accused of spying for the Japanese; he was given a suspended sentence and told to go home; on the way home he and a disciple edged down to the Inner Mongolian border and got across; stayed as a refugee; became close friend of De Wang; when Japanese took Peking they captured him and took him to Japan and tried to make him into a Japanese puppet; got back to China and went to Shanghai, then to Hong Kong, and from there to Chungking where I found him in 1941 when I went to work as advisor to Chang Kai-Shek; he lived with me in my quarters; we could talk in Mongolian and nobody understood us; after Japanese surrender, he got to Hong Kong, then by sea to Calcutta, then up to Tibet; became an intimate of the entourage of the infant Dalai Lama; Tibetans sent him back into China to make a report; he was in Peking when Chang Kai-Shek collapsed; got a letter from him saying he was going back to Tibet; I arranged for him to fly to America; my son was his godson; he came and stayed as a valued member of the seminar I was then running at Johns Hopkins University; after wife and I came to England in 1963 he stayed with friends in New York; I flew to New York when he was dying; I and Japanese colleague Fujiko Isona have produced a memoir of him; included an autobiography which my son and I recorded; he spoke in Mongol and I translated for my son to write in English; also description of his monastery in Mongolia

0:35:04 As a Living Buddha he combined a highly active secular life with his religious observances; in his autobiography he described frequent visits to princes; also he held high administrative office at one time; he would sit and mutter prayers in Tibetan; he observed various hours and special days of religious observance; a great weakness of the Buddhist church in Mongolia was that church and observances were closely tied to the Tibetan language which was not generally understood; religious ceremonies were displays but no systematic teaching of the religion to the laity; no such thing as a sermon; people supposed to be faithful, humble, respect, but not understand; he said of himself there would be no reincarnation; I never enquired into that; he said I had the sort of mind that would never understand religion

0:39:50 The historian, Dalai's family before they joined the collective had been relatively prosperous, and he'd started in education; became a young pioneer and finally joined the party; during 1950's when relations with China were good he took a degree in Chinese in China; came back to Mongolia as a China expert; today he is the head of one of the far eastern sections of the Academy of Sciences; his father, though prosperous, had been a progressive even before the revolution; he was interested in development of Mongolia and was one of the founders of the local cooperative; he tried to be as Marxist as he could; Dalai told me that when he came back after 4-5 years in China, his father told him that the horse given to him at puberty had died while he was away; his father had taken the horse's body to the Steppe and left it for the vultures and wolves to eat the flesh; he had cleaned the skull and had taken it up a mountain; he told Dalai to go up the mountain and honour the horse; combination of revolution and tradition very Mongol story; Dalai has written probably the best book in any language on China under Mongol rule in the Yuan rule; he doesn't write papers as he's building up his institute; he is interested in old tradition and folklore and encourages this in the Academy, as everyone there does; am invited to seminars and at one the question of nomadic feudalism came up; to my comments Dorj said that as Marxist they couldn't accept them but were put in such an interesting way that had to be discussed

0:47:48 If I was starting again today I would like to do something about the place in world history of the great Mongol conquests; at present time the Soviet historians treat Chengghis Khan as a purely destructive phenomenon; the Chinese say that he established security on the trade routes between them and the west and along these the beneficent influence of Chinese civilization was able to flow to the barbarians; these differing views get tangled with Sino-Soviet quarrels; I think that Chengghis Khan did terrorize a large part of the world but the evil that he did was no invention of his, but was part of the pattern of the time; to treat him as a unique destroyer is a distortion of history; the official Soviet and Mongol stand is that in a period of tribal warfare he put an end to the tribes and imposed feudal law which was constructive and laudable, and only when he turned away from Mongolia to foreign conquests that he became a destroyer; I think this far too crude and that other things should be taken into consideration.