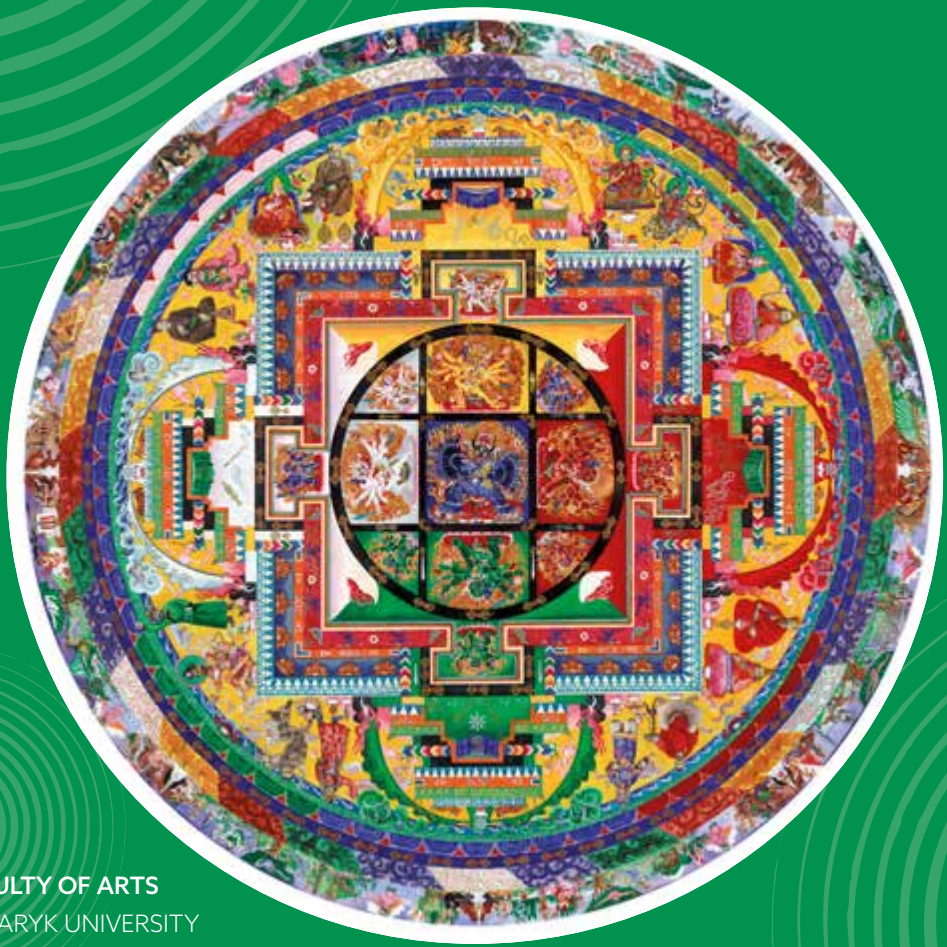
Mandala and History

Bidia Dandarovich Dandaron and Buryat Buddhism

Luboš Bělka



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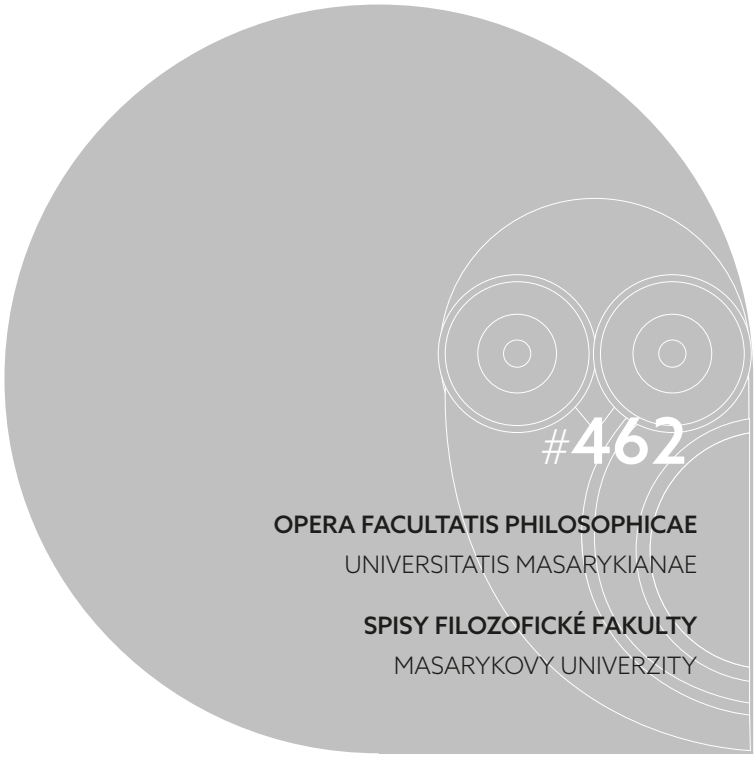

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The following book deals with the life, work and legacy of the Buryat Buddhist and Buddhologist Bidia Dandarovich Dandaron (1914–1974) against the background of Buryat Buddhism in the 19th and 20th centuries. The text is based on the author's earlier articles and monographs, which were substantially rewritten and enriched with new knowledge.[1]

My thanks and gratitude extend to my colleagues who assisted me with the preparation of this text and collection of materials. Some contributed with their testimonies and recollections of the period, people and events; others with critical comments and insights. I am also grateful to have been given photographs and permission to publish the Dandaron mandala in color. I would not have been able to write this book without all these things. I will try to mention all those who contributed to this work – in the alphabetical order and omitting academic titles. Some of these great people are not among us any more:

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1 For more details see Luboš Bělka, *Tibetský buddhismus v Burjatsku* [Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatia, in Czech], Brno: Masarykova univerzita 2001; Luboš Bělka, "Bidia D. Dandaron: the Case of a Buryat Buddhist and Buddhologist during the Soviet Period", in: Iva Doležalová – Luther H. Martin – Dalibor Papoušek (eds.), *The Academic Study of Religion during the Cold War: East and West*, New York – Bern: Peter Lang 2001, pp. 171–182; Luboš Bělka, "Mandala Dandarona: Vizualnaya reprezentatsia istorii neofitsialnoi buryatskoi buddiiskoi sangkhi sovetskogo perioda" [Dandaron Mandala: Visual Representation of the Unofficial Buryat Buddhist Sangha History during the Soviet Era, in Russian], *Tartaria Magna* 2/1, 2012, pp. 151–169; Luboš Bělka, "Dandaron Mandala: Unofficial Buryat Buddhist Sangha during the Soviet Era", *Orientalistika, University of Latvia*, vol. 793, 2013, pp. 132–143.

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However, my biggest thanks belong to my family.

1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1.1 The Buryat sangha within Tsarist and Soviet Russia

The position of Tibetan Buddhism, previously referred to as *Lamaism*, in Russia, later the Soviet Union, changed in accordance with state policy regarding this religion. The relationship between state authority and minority churches, in this case the Buryat sangha (Buddhist community of monks and lay believers), oscillated from a policy of tolerance to one of elimination of Buddhism in Russia.[1] The attitude of the Buddhist sangha also transformed in response to changes originating in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In the three-hundred-year history of the interaction between Buddhism and the state, several key turning points may be identified, in which religious policies of the Russian or Soviet government changed radically. The latter half of the 1930s can clearly be described as the most critical period. Official religious life ceased to exist for almost a decade as a result of harsh Stalinist reprisals. The first restoration of Buddhism in Buryatia began after 1946 and lasted until the *perestroika*, in the mid-1980s. The history of Buryat Buddhism is the history of a search (at least in part successful) for a mutual relationship between the Russian Orthodox state and the Buddhist sangha which was, in its early stages, connected to international structures.

1 A remarkable and probably the oldest publication describing the relationship between the Orthodox state and Buryat sangha in the 19th century from the viewpoint of the Tsarist administration is: Vladimir Vashkevich, *Lamaity v Vostochnoi Sibiri* [Lamaists in the Eastern Siberia, in Russian], Saint Petersburg: Tipografia Ministerstva Vnutrennykh Del 1885. See also Rustam Sabirov, "Buddhism in the Russian Republic of Buryatia: History and Contemporary Developments", in Bruce M. Knauft – Richard Taupier (eds.), *Mongolians after Socialism: Politics, Economy, Religion*, Ulanbatar: Mongolian Academy of Sciences, National University of Mongolia – Open Society Forum Mongolia 2012, pp. 235–248; Natalia Lvovna Zhukovskaia, "Buddizm i shamanizm kak faktory formirovanii buryatskogo mentaliteta" [Buddhism and Shamanism as Forming Factors of Buryat Mentality, in Russian], in: Natalia Lvovna Zhukovskaia (ed.), *O buddizme i buddistakh. Stati raznykh let 1969–2011*, Moskva: Orientalia 2013, pp. 136–141; Tsymzhit P. Vanchikova – Galina D. Chimitdorzhin, *Istoria buddizma v Buryatii: 1945–2000 gg*. [History of Buddhism in Buryatia: 1945–2000, in Russian], Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo BNTs SO RAN 2006.

1.2 Internal development of the sangha at the turn of the 19th century

The social reforms of 1905 directly affected religious matters: the Tsar's Toleration Patent granted Russian citizens the right to leave the Orthodox Church freely and without legal or other consequences. In addition, it ensured the right of parents to raise their children in the spirit of their chosen religion and guaranteed non--orthodox churches, denominations and other ecclesiastic structures, such as Old Believers, the right to create and build temples, own property and even to establish elementary schools.[2]

Another example of expanding tsarist tolerance towards Buddhism came in the form of the approval, by Tsar Nicolas II, for the construction of a Buddhist temple in Saint Petersburg in 1907.[3] Thus, another non-Christian sacral building was built in the center of the Russian Orthodoxy (following the Muslim mosque).

The Buryat Buddhist clergy, lay intelligentsia and to a lesser extent common believers, all became involved in these events. Even before the outbreak of World War I, the process of forming differing opinions was apparent among the Buryat Buddhists. This process continued well into the 1920s and was especially apparent in the political development in the Soviet Union. The monastic community and the few members of Buryat national intelligentsia fell into two competing groups. This schism derived from their fundamentally different views on the developments in the sangha (community of Buddhist monks and lay people): the reformers (Rus. *obnovlentsi*) and the conservatives (traditionalists). Apart from these two groups, there was a third, not very numerous, group of nirvanists,[4] which rejected the schism and pointed out that Buddhists must devote their energy to the primary aim of Buddhism, the spiritual goal of all aspiration – the achievement of the state of nirvana by all sentient beings.

Kseniia M. Gerasimova in her monograph on the reform movement of Buryat Buddhist clergy mentions a link between rich Buryats (referred to by her as *kulak* in Russian or *noyon* in Buryat) and the conservative wing. The oth-

2 Cf. Harrold Berman, "Religious Rights in Russia at a Time of Tumultuous Transition: A Historical Theory", in: Johan David Vyver, van der – John Witte Jr. (eds.), *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective*, Hague: Kluwer 1996, p. 288.

3 Ernst Benz, "The Status of Buddhism in the Soviet Union and Its Relations to Buddhism in Southeast Asia", in: Ernst Benz (ed.), *Buddhism or Communism: Which Holds the Future of Asia?* London: Allen and Unwin 1966, p. 153; see also Aleksandr Andreev I., *Buddiiskaia sviatynia Petrograda* [The Buddhist Shrine in Saint Petersburg, in Russian], Ulan-Ude: EkoArt 1992.

4 Kseniia M. Gerasimova, "Sushchnost izmeneniia buddizma" [The Nature of the Buddhist Change, in Russian], in: R. E. Pubaev (ed.), *Kritika ideologii lamaizma i shamanstva: Materialy seminara lektorov-ateistov,* Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo 1965, pp. 28–46.

er group, *obnovlentsi*, was more democratic and progressive according to the author, but even this group spawned from the rich Buryat bourgeoisie (sic!). She states that:

> "Kulaks were politically organized in regional and gubernial congresses in the Verkhneudinsk, Chita, Gusinoozersk and Tsugol Monasteries. In the Chita congress in April 1905, the Buryats definitely split into *obnovlentsi* and *starodumtsi*, proponents of bourgeois autonomy without the supervision of peasants... The other group, the *obnovlentsi*, was established later in Aginskoe, 1906. Its members were representatives of intelligentsia, coming from the circles of noyons and kulaks. They were not numerous, but were important as ideologists and theoreticians of the *obnovlentsi*."[5]

1.2.1 Conservatives

The first to form an oppositional stance against the reformers were the traditionalists. The conservatives, represented by Lama E. Vambotsyrenov, the former Khori tribal chief (Bur. *taisha*), stood in strict and often armed opposition to Soviet power. Lamas-warriors did not just belong to the realm of popular myths and the imagination; these Buddhist fighters really existed, although their numbers were lower than Buryat legends have it. At the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, rebellions against the Bolshevik regime broke out in neighboring Mongolia[6] and in Buryatia, where lamas participated both as ordinary warriors and as instigators of the unrest.

The Buddhist conservatives advocated the traditional Buryat conception of religion and rejected all changes and reforms. Their efforts were directed towards the maintenance of the pre-war status quo and the traditional lifestyle of the Buddhist community.

Tensions between these two movements in the Buryat Buddhism escalated at the beginning of the 1920s and the risk of open armed conflict between the feuding factions became imminent even within individual monasteries. The potential conflict was resolved by an unexpected agent: the intervention of Soviet power, the Communist Party, combat groups of atheists, the Komsomol, the secret police and finally the Red Army.

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5 Kseniia M. Gerasimova, *Obnovlencheskoe dvizhenie buryatskogo lamaistskogo dukhovenstva, 1917–1930 gg.* [Buryat Lamaist Clergy Reform Movement, in Russian], Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo 1964, pp. 113–114.

6 See for instance: Larry W. Moses, *The Political Role of Mongolian Buddhism*, Bloomington, Indiana: Asian Studies Research Institute 1977; Bulcsu Siklos, "Mongolian Buddhism: A Defensive Account", in: Shirin Akiner (ed.), *Mongolia Today,* London: Kegan Paul 1991, pp. 155–182.

1.2.2 Reformers


Fig. 1

Agvan Dorzhiev, not dated.
(Archive of Aleksandr I. Breslavets)

The reformers represented about a fifth of the Buddhist clergy and were led by the well-known Buryat Lama Agvan Dorzhiev,[7] personal teacher and advisor to the 13th Tibetan Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso. A. Dorzhiev (see Fig. 1 and 2) held the prestigious title *tsanid khambo*; "Master of Buddhist Philosophy" and was an official representative of Tibet at the Tsar's court in Saint Petersburg (then Petrograd). Later, he became the Tibetan ambassador to the Soviet government in Moscow. The reformers wanted to restore Buddhism to its original state by effecting radical changes to the ecclesiastical structure, which would remove the past imperfections and would simultaneously bring the teaching and practice of Buryat Buddhism, and thus Buryat learning, closer to the modern context. Lamas, scholars, writers, politicians and philosophers who participated in the movement understood these planned reforms in a broader sense rather than purely religious. The reform itself consisted of the following points:

(1) the introduction of Mongolian as a second ritual language besides Tibetan, because this language is closer and more comprehensible to Buryats;
(2) the monks' leaving monasteries and approaching common people, their work among peasants and nomads;
(3) the abolishment of the institution of recognized rebirths, referred to rather inaccurately as "reincarnations", (Bur. *khubilgan*);
(4) the incorporation of western science into the traditional Buryat learning;
(5) a closer connection of Buddhism with the Buryat national movement;
(6) a return to an original form of Buddhism, which was not yet corrupted by later developments and internal disputes within the monastic community;
(7) an understanding of Buddhism as an ethical system and lifestyle rather than a mere religion;
(8) the conception of the Buddha as an ingenious man, teacher, philosopher and thinker while rejecting his apotheosis, which was typical of most Mahayana schools including the Tibetan form (Vajrayana).

The Buddhist reform movement, in particular its wing led by Agvan Dorzhiev (1857–1938), was not limited to the reform of internal issues of the ecclesiastical

7 His autobiography in Agvan Dorzhiev, *Zanimatelnye zametki. Opisanie putechesestvia vokrug sveta* [Important Notes. An Account of the Travel around the World, in Russian], Moskva: Vostochnaia literatura 2003; see also Jampa Samten – Nikolay V. Tsyrempilov, *From Tibet Confidentially: Secret correspondence of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to Agvan Dorzhiev, 1911–1925*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives 2011.

Fig. 2

Lama Rinpoche gives the ***lun initiation*** in Gegeta Monastery, Buryatia. From left to right: the superior of Chelutai (Sholot) Monastery, superior of Chesan Monastery and Pandito Khambo Lama Choinzondorzhi Iroltuev, Lama Rinpoche, Agvan Dorzhiev, superior of Gegeta Monastery, and ***gelun-bagshi*** of Ana Monastery, summer 1902. (Archive of Aleksandr I. Breslavets)

structure. It influenced laymen and the non-Buddhist population as well. The movement's followers expressed their views peacefully, non-violently and tolerantly, which was certainly not usual in Russia at the turn of the 19th century. In 1912 Bazar B. Baradiin prepared a project aimed at teaching Buddhism in Buryat secular schools, which were not connected to monasteries, and stressed the ethical aspects of Buddhist doctrine and its practical implementation. B. Baradiin advocated that, if Buddha's teachings were presented in a non-religious fashion at schools, it would help foster the moral aspects of the personality of children. Such ideas must be mediated in the form of friendly discussions and not by promoting tedious religious dogmas. Civilized and experienced Buddhist spiritual leaders, lamas, who were able to use popular and scientific literature about Buddhism in their classes, were needed for that purpose. This should have raised respect amongst students for the importance and role of the clergy in the life of the nation.[8] Baradiin's school reform was influenced by his own

8 Kseniia M. Gerasimova, *Lamaizm i natsionalno-kolonialnaia politika tsarizma v Zabaikalie v XIX i nachale XX vekov* [Lamaism and National-Colonial Policy of Tsarism in Transbaikalia in the 19th and

experience from a year's study and research stay at the Labrang Monastery in Amdo.[9] In the years 1906 and 1907 he was schooled in the workings of the traditional monastic educational institutions, which provided Buryat, Mongolian, Tibetan and other monks with a highly valued Buddhist education.

1.2.3 Nirvanists

Nirvanists were a specific, not very numerous group. As their name suggests, their attitude was focused on the achievement of nirvana, and therefore they rejected participating in other monastic movements. Little is known about this group, due to the small number of adherents and its negligible influence. The attention of participants in the political events in Buryatia focused on the main actors, and not on marginal movements during the 1920s and 1930s.

1.2.4 Balagat movement

The most dominant feature of the Balagat movement is its conclusion; the efforts of this reform wing resulted in a historically unique attempt at the establishment of the theocratic state in Buryatia in 1919. The founder of the movement, Lama Lubsan Samdan Tsydenov (1850–1922), who boasted the title *Dharmaraja*, king of dharma, which he bestowed on himself, was a *sui generis* heretic (if such a term could be used for the Buddhist tradition and practice). He refused the traditional Buryat monastic way of life, which dominated in Mongolia and Buryatia. His goals were ambitious: he wanted to reform Buddhism in Buryatia by disrupting monastic structures and trough spreading the reformed teachings to the west of Russia. He was convinced that traditional monastic Buddhism was not viable and that only an adapted form, based primarily on the direct leadership of a teacher over his student, might be acceptable for other nations living in Russia. Naturally, this agenda interfered with the core of the Gelugpa hierarchy and it is therefore not surprising that it encountered strong opposition from the majority

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the beginning of the 20th century, in Russian], Ulan-Ude: Buryat-mongolskii nauchno-issledovatelskii institut kultury 1957, p. 137.

9 See Bazar B. Baradiin, *Zhizn v tangutskom monastyre Lavran: Dnevnik buddiiskogo palomnika 1906–1907 gg.* [The Life in the Tangut Monastery Labrang: An Buddhist Pilgrim's Diary, in Russian], Ulan-Ude – Ulanbatar: Institut mongolovedenia, buddologii i tibetologii SO RAN 1999; see also Anya Bernstein, "Pilgrims, Fieldworkers, and Secret Agents: Buryat Buddhologists and the History of an Eurasian Imaginary", *Inner Asia* 11/1, 2009, s. 23–45;
Anya Bernstein, *Religious Bodies Politic: Rituals of Sovereignity in Buryat Buddhism*, Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press 2013, pp. 50–54.

of the clergy and common believers. Later, it even led to a religious schism in Buryat Buddhism. Tsydenov's anti-institutional agenda was not absolute and universal; it was directed against the existing structures, not against all Buddhist institutes. This is evidenced by his conception of a completely new institution; the theocratic state.

Tsydenov's rules of the life of the sangha, theoretically formulated in the first decade of the 20th century and put into practice in his own life, met with wide, largely critical responses in the other parts of Buryatia. However, his ambitions went beyond religious reform. Tsydenov envisioned the creation of the above mentioned theocratic state. If his attempts had been successful, it would have meant a substantial change in the political situation of south-east Siberia.[10]

The Buddhist sangha was to play a significantly greater role than in the past, where, according to Tsydenov, it only obeyed instructions from Saint Petersburg, Irkutsk and Verkhneudinsk. The Soviet authors N. A. Pupyshev, B. N. Vampilov, V. P. Grishchenko in their later, not yet published, work on Buryat Buddhism, state the details about the theocratic state led by Lubsan S. Tsydenov:

> "In April 1919 Lama Dharma Randzyin-gygen (a variant of Tsydenov's name and title) declared himself a 'Living God'. Together with his assistants he elaborated the basic legislature and constitution of the theocratic state. The state should have been headed by the president [in the Russian original *erchin-said*] and a vice-president or assistant [in the Russian original *did-said*]. Ministers [in the Russian original *amba-noet*] should have been appointed to lead the following sectors: (1) interior; (2) foreign affairs; (3) justice; (4) the court; (5) trade and industry; (6) finance; (7) agriculture, and (8) national education. Each minister was to have his assistant or deputy... Lubsan S. Tsydenov authorized the *Constitution of Buryat Theocratic State*, prepared by his friends and colleagues, on 4 April 1919. The Constitution mentions that all the believing Lamaists are subjects of the king of three worlds, Dharmaraja [Tib. chogyal */chos rgyal/*, literally king of dharma, of Buddha'a teaching; Bur. *choidzhal*]. Lubsan S. Tsydenov was perceived as a spiritual and secular leader, designated by the Buddha himself [sic!]. Pursuant to the Constitution, the government ministers of the theocratic state were elected from amongst local lamas."[11]

10 See e.g. Aleksandr Andreev, "Dreams of a Pan-Mongolian state: Samdan Tsydenov, Baron Ungern, Agvan Dorzhiev, Nicholas Roerich", 2009, http://www.budcon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169&Itemid=117&lang=en (21 July 2013); see also Nikolay V. Tsyrempilov, "Konstitutsionalnaya teokratia Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenova: popytka sozdania buddiiskogo gosudarstva v Zabaikalie (1918–1922)", [The Constitutional Theocracy of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov: an Attempt to establish a Buddhist state in Transbaikalia, 1918–1922, in Russian], *Gosudarstvo, religia, tserkov v Rossii i za rubezhom* 33/4, 2015, pp. 318–346.

11 N. A. Pupyshev – Vampilov B. N. – Grishchenko V. P., *Buddizm i lamaizm: Kratkaia istoria, proiskhozhdenie, razvitie i rasprostranenie v Indii, Tibete, Mongolii i Buryat-Mongolii* [Buddhism and

The authors *inter alia* mention that the theocratic state was an attempt to seize power with the support of foreign soldiers and Ataman Semënov.[12] For this purpose they formed "... several armed troops to whom L. S. Tsydenov gave prophecies [in the Russian original *aboral*]. Believers had to bring him gifts [in the Russian original *mandal*] such as food and money so that he may deliver the prophecy."[13]

The key political event in the establishment of the short-lived theocratic state is dealt with by E. Kh. Daribazaron on the basis of newly released archive materials in Buryatia. He points out that the Buryat citizens were traditionally exempt from service in the Russian army and they duly appreciated this privilege (it did not apply to Buryat steppe Cossack troops, which were regulated by special decrees and rules and guarded the border with Mongolia and China). Thus, it was not surprising that Ataman Semënov met with strong opposition and outrage when in 1919 he ordered the mobilization of Buryat men born between 1895 and 1898 in Transbaikalia. Buryats approached their clergymen, mainly Lubsan S. Tsydenov, and asked for protection from forced recruitment. According to E. Kh. Daribazaron, these circumstances played a decisive role in the declaration of the Buryat theocratic state.[14]

Lubsan S. Tsydenov was imprisoned by Soviet authorities on 20 January 1922 and died in a Novonikolaevsk jail in Novosibirsk on 15 May of the same year. After the final defeat of the remnants of the Tsydenov reform movement in 1922–1923, the advancement of the reform agenda in Buryatia was limited to the clergy and lay people, faithful to Agvan Dorzhiev.

Lamaizm: A Short History, Origin, Development and Spreading in India, Tibet, Mongolia and Buryat-Mongolia, in Russian], Moskva: Institut iazyka, literatury i istorii B-M ASSR 1941, unpublished manuscript, pp. 582–584 (*Arkhiv Muzeia istorii religii*, Sankt-Petersburg, f. 31, op. 1, no. 183).

12 His name was later crossed out by a pen, probably by B. N. Vampilov, who gave the manuscript to the Archive of the Museum of Religious History in 1981.

13 N. A. Pupyshev – Vampilov B. N. – Grishchenko V. P., *Buddizm i lamaizm...*, p. 584.

14 E. Kh. Daribazaron, "K voprosu o teokraticheskom dvizhenii v 1918–1926 gg. v Khorinskom vedomstve" [To the Question of the Theocracy Movement in Khori Vedomstvo in 1918–1926, in Russian], in: Shirab B. Chimitdorzhiev (ed.), *Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii "Tsybikovskie chtenia – 7"*, Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo BNC 1998, pp. 100–101.

1.3 Buryat sangha during the Soviet period:

1.3.1 Search for relationship: 1917–1924

Although the first decrees of the Soviet government proclaimed to solve the fundamental problems of life in ethnic minorities in Russia, they were actually never met. The noble declarations of Bolshevik representatives were in fact worthless and, for instance freedom of religion, was never put to practice. Freedom of religion should have been ensured by the separation of church and state, which was guaranteed by the decree of 23 January 1918. The original version of this decree did not expressly mention Buddhism; an amendment was adopted seven months later, which concerned the "Buddhist and Lamaist faith". The Soviet regime collapsed in Transbaikalia at that time, and therefore the amendment on separation of church and state could not be implemented until the mid-1920s, after Soviet power had become firmly established.

1.3.2 First wave of reprisals: 1925–1928

During the first wave of the destruction of Buddhism, monasteries were referred to by Soviet propaganda as hotbeds of counterrevolution and hostile attitudes towards the ruling power. These accusations included spreading anti-Soviet ideology and armed terror. The actions of Buryat Communist Party organizations were based on a document entitled *Lamaism in Buryatia*, which was prepared under the supervision of Mikhail N. Erbanov,[15] chairman of the Sovnarkom Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, B-M ASSR (Rus. *Sovetskii Narodnyi Komitet, Soviet National Committee*) in May 1925.[16]

15 Although Mikhail N. Erbanov was referred to as a "friend of lamas" by ardent Bolsheviks at the end of the 1920s, he was a rather aggressive atheist and not a protector of Buddhist clergymen. This is demonstrated by a story included in the biography of Nicolaus Poppe, a leading representative of Leningrad oriental studies at that time. When visiting Ulan-Ude on the occasion of a scientific conference in 1936, Poppe was invited to have dinner with this "Buryat Choibalsan", the nickname given to him by Buryats. He cautiously reminded Erbanov that state and party representatives should pay better care to Buryat national customs and traditions, which in his view meant maintenance of at least one Buddhist monastery or temple as a historical, ethnographic and arts museum. Erbanov answered: "I disagree. I am sure that you also wish to keep a few lamas in the monastery to protect them. However, I can assure you that they are so well protected in labor camps that you do not have to worry about them." See Nicolaus Poppe, *Reminiscences*, Washington: Center for East Asian Studies 1983, p. 106. Erbanov was arrested in Moscow in 1937 and executed shortly afterwards. More about him e.g. in G. D. Basaev – S. Ya. Erbanova, *M. N. Erbanov,* Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo 1989.

16 B. N. Batorov, "Osushchestvlenie v Buryatii Leninskogo dekreta Ob otdelenii cerkvi ot gosudarstva i shkoly ot cerkvi" [The Implementation of the Lenin Decree about the Church and State Separation, in Russian], in: *Stroitelstvo sotsializma i utverzhdenie nauchno-materialisticheskogo, ateisticheskogo mirovozzrenia,* Moskva: Mysl 1981, p. 16–17.

Viktoria V. Nomogoeva mentions a later date for the nationalization of monasteries:

> "The Communist Party of Buryatia decided to nationalize all religious institutions in the summer of 1926. Most monasteries, churches and other sacral buildings were closed down in the years 1930 and 1931; all ceremonies were forbidden. Repression of clergy followed."[17]

By the end of November 1925, special permanent boards for religious matters were established at the aimag committees of the Communist Party. These committees' main task was to put into practice the provisions of the decree on the separation of church and state. As part of the nationalization policies, monastery property, both movable and immovable, was handed over to local religious communities of clergymen and lay people, whereby, as intended, lay people became involved in the process. Another aim of the expropriators of monastic property was to separate clergy and laymen, which was to be achieved through the mentioned change in ownership of the movable property and real estate. The last step was to confiscate the property of local religious communities and factually hand it over to the state.[18] The Soviets used the property of the monasteries and temples to influence the views of village people and lay Buddhists and to deepen the existing schism among the clergy. They distributed the monastery property for the benefit of the reformers, which created animosity between the reformers and conservatives. A strictly confidential instruction was issued for all members of regional executive committees (Rus. *raiispolkom, raionnyi ispolnitelnyi komitet*), which said:

> "To the representatives of all regional executive committees: (1) the Buddhist Lamaist church is currently divided into two hostile camps – old Lamaists and new Lamaists; (2) the new Lamaist stream, which rejected the institution of khubilgans (reincarnations) and imposed an obligation to work on lamas, is certainly a progressive movement in our conditions and undoubtedly advantageous in terms of our society and ourselves; (3) because the new Lamaist stream is beneficial to us in the current situation, it will be necessary to provide it all possible support in specific local conditions of organizing local religious *obshchinas* and transfer of ritual assets. The most risky moment in terms of potential hindering the transfer of monastery property to new

17 Viktoria V. Nomogoeva, "Iz istorii borby s religiei v Buryatii v 1920–1930-e gg" [About the Fight against Religion in Buryatia in 1920s-1930s, in Russian], in: L. V. Kuras (ed.), *Tezisy i doklady mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-teoreticheskoi konferentsii "Banzarovskie chtenia-2", posviashchennoi 175-letiu so dnia rozhdeniia Dorzhi Banzarova,* Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo BNC 1997, p. 79.

18 Batorov B. N., "Osushchestvlenie v Buryatii...", p. 19.

> Lamaists is the existence of old Lamaist groups of believers in certain monasteries. In order to prevent the transfer of this property to conservatives, monasteries must be handed over to new Lamaist groups everywhere, where they applied for them. Although the conservatives may outnumber the obnovlentsi, it must not be a reason for releasing the property to conservative groups."[19]

An important role in the anti-religious campaign was played, besides party organizations, the secret police and the Red Army, by the *Buryat-Mongolian Union of Militant Atheists* (Rus. *Buryat-mongolskii soiuz voiinstvuiushchich bezbozhnikov*) founded in 1925. By year 1928, the Union cells operated in every aimag and almost every village. The journal *Science and Religion* (Bur. *Erdem ba shazhan*), the principal media tool in the campaign against religion, in particular Buddhism in Buryatia, was published from 1928 onwards.[20]

The decimation of Buddhist structures took on many forms and severely affected human rights. Buddhist clergy, except novices (Bur. *khuvarak*), were stripped of both their active and passive suffrage in 1926. The restrictions progressed and those clergymen who remained in monasteries were denied the right to use the agricultural land (which they had been forbidden to own) and at the same time were subjected to high taxes since 1927. According to official data, in 1930 there were still seventy-three religious schools with more than four thousand khuvaraks in Buryatia. The Soviet government introduced compulsory school attendance in Buryatia in the same year, which resulted in outflow of boys from monastery schools. Khuvaraks from eight to fifteen years of age were obliged to attend Soviet schools, and therefore had to leave monastery educational institutions. In 1934 the authorities recorded that elementary schools were attended by 97.5 percent of all Buryat children.[21]

1.3.3 Second wave of reprisals: 1929–1938

A radical turn in the history of Buryat Buddhism began at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, when the Bolshevik regime started the first wave of violent repression of monasteries and monastic community regardless whether the monastery or monks belonged to the reformers, traditionalists or

19 A. V. Damdinov, "Agvan Dorzhiev v obnovlencheskom dvizhenii buryatskogo buddiiskogo dukhovenstva" [Agvan Dorzhiev in the Buryat Buddhist Clergy Reformers Movement, in Russian], in: L. E. Iangutov (ed.), *Buryatskii buddizm: Istoria i ideologiia,* Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo BNC 1997, p. 87; the translation maintains the official style of emerging Soviet bureaucrats.

20 Viktoria V. Nomogoeva, "Iz istorii borby...", p. 80.

21 B. N. Batorov, "Osushchestvlenie v Buryatii...", pp. 20–24.