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The Prosperity and Decline of the Chinese Community in the Mongolian People's Republic (1949-1973)

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Abstract: After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Mongolian People's Republic and the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese community in the MPR emerged as a significant link facilitating bilateral relations. The formation and evolution of this community were intricately connected to the establishment and functioning of the Association of Overseas Chinese in Mongolia and its associated institutions. Throughout this process, the political decisions made by both the Mongolian and Chinese governments played a pivotal role. Particularly for the Chinese side, the Chinese community served as a crucial platform for its foreign policy objectives during this period. Additionally, the broader context of the Socialist Bloc also greatly influenced the development trajectory of the Chinese community in the MPR.

Keywords: the MPR, the PRC, the Socialist Bloc, the Chinese community, the AOCM

The migration of Chinese people abroad has a long history and spans various regions. Often, these Chinese immigrants establish sizable Chinese communities in their host countries, exerting significant influence and sometimes even shaping local politics, economy, and culture. Furthermore, the presence of these Chinese communities holds a crucial position in China's modern diplomacy. In countries with large Chinese populations, Chinese communities often play a significant role in their diplomatic relations with China. Especially after the founding of the People's Republic of China

(PRC), many countries have established overseas Chinese associations, supported or even led by the Chinese government, often through local embassies. This organizational effort has transformed previously disparate local Chinese groups into organized entities, forming a part of China's foreign policy. In this context, Mongolia-China relations are no exception. Understanding the relations between the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) and the PRC necessitates the study of the Chinese community in the MPR.

Currently, studies on the Chinese in the

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MPR after 1949 primarily concentrate on the Chinese workers who were involved in the construction of the MPR after 1955 (Алтантөгс, Н., 2019, 12; Алтантөгс, Н., 2019; Наранжаргал, Д., 2019; 敖坦., 2017; 谷继坤., 2015; 白林., 2019). In the historical backdrop of the Cold War, these studies meticulously examine the political decisions concerning the deployment of Chinese workers and illuminate the overarching trajectory of the relationship development between the two nations during the 1950s and 1960s through this crucial historical perspective. Furthermore, certain studies delve into the Chinese presence in the MPR, exploring specific facets such as nationality concerns, cultural establishments for the Chinese in the MPR, and the impact of historical Chinese reclamation in Mongolia, among others (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019; 谷继坤., 2023; 窪田新一., 2001; 窪田新一., 2003).

Although the aforementioned studies have examined the Chinese presence in the MPR after 1949 from various perspectives, they have not offered a comprehensive narrative of the historical development of the Chinese community in the MPR. Therefore, within the overarching

framework of the Socialist Bloc with Sino-Soviet relations as its core, this paper concentrates on the political decisions made by the Mongolian and Chinese governments concerning the Chinese community in the MPR. It analyzes the evolution of the Association of Overseas Chinese in Mongolia (AOCM) and its affiliated institutions, as well as the growth and decline of the Chinese community in the MPR from 1949 to 1973. What needs to be highlighted here is that the Chinese government currently categorizes Chinese individuals who have settled abroad into two groups: “Chinese with foreign nationalities” (外籍华人) and “overseas Chinese” (华侨, who hold Chinese nationality). However, in this paper, the term “Chinese” of the Chinese community in the MPR refers to ethnic Chinese individuals who have settled and worked in Mongolia for an extended period, irrespective of their nationality¹. This paper primarily relies on archival documents in Mongolian and Chinese languages, preserved in the Mongolian Central Archives of Foreign Affairs, the General Authority for Archives of Mongolia, and the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the PRC.

The Historical Origin and Formation of the Chinese Community in the MPR

During the Qing Dynasty, Chinese merchants, farmers, and craftsmen began immigrating to Mongolia on a large scale. By the beginning of the 20th century, some studies indicate that the number of Chinese in Khalkh aimags had reached nearly

100,000, constituting approximately 13.5% of the total population of Khalkh aimags at that time (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.16). Among them, Chinese merchants played a particularly crucial role in the economy of Mongolia, holding a

virtual monopoly position (Урангя, Ж., 2010, тал.18). This monopoly position was also evident in Khalkh aimags' significant debt to Chinese merchants, which had surged to 15 million taels by 1911 (Kotkin, Stephen and Elleman, Bruce A, eds., 1999, p.28). Even after Mongolia declared its independence in 1911, this situation remained largely unchanged. Chinese individuals continued to constitute a prominent group in Mongolia. By the end of the 1910s, nearly half of the population of Khuree² were Chinese (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.13). It should be noted that although the Chinese were a prominent group in Mongolia at that time, there was no organized community among them.

The condition of the Chinese in Mongolia began to undergo fundamental changes after the People's Revolution in 1921³. To provide further specificity, following this period, the Mongolian People's Government pursued a non-capitalist development trajectory influenced by the Soviet Union and the Comintern. During this period of transformation, Chinese individuals in the MPR also found themselves subject to reform efforts, particularly Chinese merchants, who were viewed as emblematic of the "exploitative class" and thus became primary targets (Жамсран, Л., 1997, тал.170). From the latter half of the 1920s, the MPR systematically commenced the widespread exclusion of Chinese merchants, with backing from the Soviet Union (寺山恭輔., 2017, 第 41-43 頁). By 1931, China's portion of the MPR's foreign trade had

declined to less than 10% (Rupen, Robert A., 1964, p.199).

After losing their economic advantage, most Chinese left the MPR, but a small number of people chose to remain. Influenced by the prevailing class theory at the time, these remaining Chinese were collectively referred to as "Chinese workers". Following the establishment of the Mongolian Trade Union in 1927, the Mongolian government initiated efforts to regulate and oversee the Chinese populace through this organization. Specifically, to enhance ideological education among Chinese individuals and cater to their cultural requirements, the Mongolian government founded the Chinese Worker's Club under the auspices of the Mongolian Trade Union in 1930⁴. In addition, based on confiscated real estate belonging to Chinese merchants, the Mongolian government also established several local Chinese workers' clubs in areas where Chinese individuals congregated, such as Khentii Province and Choibalsan Province, among others (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.16,175-178). Another significant cultural institution for the Chinese was the newspaper *Worker's Road*, founded in 1929, which also fell under the jurisdiction of the Mongolian Trade Union. Inspired by the Chinese workers' newspaper in the Soviet Union during that era, the primary objective of *Worker's Road* was to disseminate the policies of the Party and Government of the MPR and promote the concept of proletarian internationalism among the Chinese populace (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.47-49).

After the establishment of these institutions, the scattered Chinese individuals in the MPR began to be gradually organized. For instance, in the early 1940s, the Chinese Worker's Club established numerous political study classes and literacy classes in Ulaanbaatar and other locations, with thousands of participants (МҮҮҮТА, Ф-535, Д-1, ХН-2519, тал.119-120). In addition to disseminating the policies and regulations of the Soviet Union and the MPR, these study classes also publicized China's revolutionary situation, such as the Anti-Japanese War, and emphasized the unity of the Mongolian and Chinese peoples in this regard (МҮҮҮТА, Ф-535, Д-1, ХН-2519, тал.119-120; МҮҮҮТА, Ф-535, Д-1, ХН-2540, тал.55-57). Even with such organizational efforts, the Mongolian government still struggled to conduct centralized and systematic management of Chinese individuals. For example, many Chinese individuals in Ulaanbaatar at that time were without fixed jobs. During the summer, they would work in local industries and mines for short periods, often disregarding the relevant regulations of the Mongolian government (МҮҮҮТА, Ф-535, Д-1, ХН-2522, тал.295). Regarding publicity and education, while the Mongolian government employed these cultural institutions to promote friendship between Mongolian and Chinese people within the theoretical framework of proletarian internationalism, Mongolian society still harbored negative sentiments toward the Chinese, influenced by intricate historical factors⁵.

This dynamic shifted only after

establishing diplomatic relations between the MPR and the PRC. With the commencement of operations at the Chinese Embassy in the MPR in 1950, the Chinese authorities also observed the prevailing negative attitude of Mongolian society toward the Chinese. Based on the observations of personnel from the Chinese Embassy, a report from the Chinese MFA dated November 22nd, 1950, addressed to Premier Zhou Enlai of the Chinese Government Administration Council mentioned that there was "differential treatment" of Chinese people in the MPR. The report also noted that "the ordinary staff of the Mongolian government still do not know enough about our country, and some even have a hostile attitude toward our country (外档, 106-00025-03, 第 34-36 页)". At the same time, there were increasing cases of Chinese individuals in the MPR complaining to the Chinese Embassy when they encountered disputes. In response, the Chinese MFA instructed the Chinese Embassy in an official letter on January 15th, 1951, that disputes should generally be resolved by the Chinese themselves according to Mongolian law. However, the letter also stated that "when the Mongolian side handles the matter improperly, we can make representations to the Mongolian side based on the reasons and demand that the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese be protected (外档, 106-00025-02, 第 14-15 页)."

According to the above instruction, during the meeting between Chinese Ambassador Ji Yatai and Mongolian Foreign Minister N. Lkhamsuren on

February 2nd, 1951, Ji Yatai mentioned that some Mongolian organizations, such as manual workshops, the broadcasting association, and the auto repair shop, unfairly treated Chinese employees. In response, he emphasized: "The most important thing is that the Chinese and Mongolian citizens in this country (the MPR) need to understand the meaning of the founding of the PRC... Now, as a result of the struggle of the Chinese people, the country (the PRC) and people (the Chinese people) have entered into a new stage, and with the establishment of the PRC, the situation has been very different from before. (Now) the interests of the people of the Soviet Union, Mongolia, and China are the same." Ultimately, he specifically requested that the Mongolian side should resolve this problem following the principle of internationalism (MYYTA, Ф-1, Д-5, ХН-134, тал.1-6). This was a case where both sides attempted to address the issue of nationalism using class narratives. For both countries, which belonged to the same Socialist Bloc, shared concepts such as proletarian internationalism became important theoretical foundations for dealing with historical issues and bilateral relations. It can be said that this general outline characterized the development of Mongolia-China relations in the 1950s.

The Mongolian side responded positively to the concerns raised by the Chinese side. In fact, the Mongolian government was actively improving the status of Chinese individuals in the MPR at that time. For example, after the establishment of the PRC, the situation of Chinese artists in the MPR

generally improved. Many Chinese artists were awarded national honors, including the title of national first-class actor, which was one of the highest honors in Mongolia's cultural sphere at that time (MYYTA, Ф-13, Д-1, ХН-218, тал.1-2). In addition to this, the Mongolian side also assisted the Chinese side in establishing the AOCM. According to statistics from the Chinese MFA, there were approximately 10,000 Chinese individuals in the MPR at that time⁶. And they were primarily involved in private small businesses or handicraft industries. The Chinese side believed that the aforementioned Chinese Worker's Club and other institutions lacked contact with ordinary Chinese and did not effectively fulfill their organizational role. Generally speaking, Chinese individuals were perceived as isolated from mainstream Mongolian society and lacked a unified organization among them (外档, 106-00025-03, 第 21-22;23-24 页). The establishment of the AOCM became the key measure to improve the situation of the Chinese in the MPR.

The AOCM was officially established in 1951, and according to its General Charter adopted on January 25th, the Congress of Overseas Chinese in the MPR was designated as the highest authority of the association. However, concurrently, the association also acknowledged the leadership of the Chinese Embassy. This charter also outlined the establishment of branch associations in areas where the Chinese population was relatively concentrated. It is noteworthy that the charter specified that the association and its

branch associations should supervise subordinate cultural institutions such as clubs and Red Corners (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.50-52). This was indeed related to the matter of transferring Chinese cultural institutions in the MPR. From 1950 to 1951, drawing on the experience of overseas Chinese working in countries such as the Soviet Union and North Korea, and considering the dire financial situation of the Chinese Worker's Club, the Chinese side repeatedly proposed transferring the Chinese Worker's Club and the *Worker's Road* to the AOCM (МУУТА, Ф-4, Д-18, ХН-6, тал.129-136). In the new friendly atmosphere at the time, although the Mongolian trade union had a negative attitude towards the issue, the Mongolian

side officially handed over these two institutions to the AOCM on March 26th. When explaining why the Mongolian asset was handed over to the Chinese side, Mongolian leader Ch. Choibalsan said: "Because we are no longer dealing with the KMT's China ... We transferred the club based on the principle of friendliness (with the PRC) (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-85, тал.9)."

With the completion of the handover work, a Chinese community with the AOCM and its affiliated institutions as its core, and de facto led by the Chinese Embassy, was formally established in the MPR. This changed the previous loose state of Chinese individuals in the MPR. They were systematically organized within this relatively independent community.

The Development and Prosperity of the Chinese Community in the MPR

In the first half of the 1950s, the AOCM primarily focused on the following areas. Firstly, to achieve centralized leadership, the AOCM conducted statistics and registration of the Chinese in the MPR with the assistance of relevant Mongolian institutions. Secondly, the AOCM cultivated the patriotism of the Chinese in the MPR through propaganda efforts and coordinated the policy tone of the two countries by promoting a friendship campaign between the Mongolian and Chinese peoples. Thirdly, the AOCM attempted to reduce disputes by urging the Chinese to learn and abide by Mongolian laws and regulations. Fourthly, the AOCM addressed the issue of the Chinese returning home. According to the instructions of the Chinese government, it

was also responsible for persuading those who could work to stay to address the labor shortage in the MPR (外档, 118-00477-08, 第 115-118 页).

After the Chinese Worker's Club and the *Worker's Road* were handed over to the AOCM, they began to systematically accept guidance and aid from the PRC. In the 1950s, five Chinese experts were sent to assist the work of the Chinese Worker's Club (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.316). Under the guidance of these Chinese experts, the Chinese Worker's Club began to stage Chinese dramas reflecting the Chinese Revolution and socialist construction, such as the *White-Haired Girl* (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.345). Meanwhile, the *Worker's Road*

invited typographers and other experts from the PRC as well (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.47-49).

With assistance from the Chinese side, the Chinese community also played an important role in promoting Chinese culture in the MPR. Since the two countries had not yet established normative cultural relations at that time, the AOCM acted as a crucial institution for bilateral cultural exchanges. For instance, in October 1951, the Film Screening Bureau of the MPR and the AOCM signed an agreement that authorized the Mongolian side to rent Chinese films from the AOCM and screen them in Ulaanbaatar and the countryside (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-66, тал.73-75).

In the mid-1950s, the external environment for Mongolia-China relations experienced further enhancement. During this period, Sino-Soviet relations reached their zenith, and the nations of the Socialist Bloc emphasized mutual aid and knowledge exchange grounded in the theory of proletarian internationalism. In this amicable atmosphere, the Chinese community in the MPR encountered a fresh opportunity for development.

As per the Agreement on Dispatching Chinese Workers to Participate in Production and Construction in Mongolia signed on April 7th, 1955, the initial contingent of 6,000 Chinese workers arrived in the MPR one month later (毕奥南., 2013, 第 35 页). The Mongolian authorities placed significant importance on fostering exchanges between Chinese workers and Mongolian society. On July 18th, 1955, the Mongolian Trade Union

developed a handbook outlining the organization of education and mass work among Chinese workers. In addition to highlighting the cultural activities of Chinese workers, this handbook also emphasized the necessity of enhancing exchanges between Chinese workers and the Mongolian populace through mutual language learning, sharing production experiences, joint concerts, and similar activities (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.61). This illustrates that besides their contributions to the construction of the MPR, Chinese workers were also regarded as symbols of friendship between the Mongolian and Chinese peoples. Their interpersonal communications and interactions within the MPR served as a tangible manifestation of this rhetoric.

In 1956, more Chinese workers arrived at the MPR, and because they would work there for an extended period, many brought their families. Consequently, the number of Chinese workers, their families, and overseas Chinese in the MPR reached about 23,000 (石邵湘., 2010). Considering that the MPR had a population of less than 1 million at the time (Статистикийн Нэгдсэн Сан., 2021), the Chinese already accounted for a considerable proportion of the MPR.

As of 1956, Chinese workers were distributed throughout all provinces of the MPR, with more than 80% of them concentrated in Ulaanbaatar and the nearby Tuv Province (Наранжаргал, Д., 2019, тал.22-23). Although there were not many Chinese workers in other provinces, small communities of Chinese were formed to a certain extent in these places. With the

arrival of Chinese workers, the Chinese community in the MPR expanded dramatically, leading to existing institutions being unable to meet their requirements. Therefore, to address the education problem of Chinese workers' children and their medical needs, the Chinese government decided to establish the Pei Cai (培才) School and the Friendship Hospital in Ulaanbaatar.

Take the Pei Cai School as an example, apart from admitting children of Chinese workers, this school also enrolled children from local overseas Chinese (邯郸市归国华侨联合会., 2021). According to the agreement between the governments of the MPR and the PRC, the Pei Cai School operated under the leadership of the Chinese Embassy, with all teachers and staff being dispatched by the Chinese side (Наранжаргал, Д., 2019, тал.126). The Mongolian side was responsible for the salaries of school teachers and the upkeep of the school (Наранжаргал, Д., 2019, тал.122-123). By 1959, the Pei Cai School had expanded into an all-through school with over 1,400 students. Despite its considerable size, the quality of teaching at the school was not very high due to the high student mobility and the limited capacity of some teachers. It was common for students to repeat grades. Additionally, the Pei Cai School aligned with the political trends in the PRC for education. For instance, in 1959, influenced by the "Great Leap Forward," Chinese schools encouraged teachers and students to utilize their spare time for labor. The Pei Cai School also followed suit and organized students to work on collective

farms in the MPR (МУУТА, Ф-6, Д-2, ХН-1756, тал.19-20). It can be seen from this that the Pei Cai School, under the jurisdiction of the Chinese Embassy, had considerable independence, and its teaching content and methods were basically the same as those of domestic schools in the PRC. In the context of the friendly relations between the two countries at that time, the Mongolian side also respected this kind of independence.

In addition to establishing new institutions, the old Chinese cultural institutions in the MPR also experienced further development with the assistance of the PRC. For instance, in 1956, thanks to personnel and technical support from the PRC, the *Worker's Road* transitioned to lead-type printing (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-164, тал.228), and in 1958, the newspaper's release frequency was increased from once every 5 days to once every 2 days (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.47-49). With the arrival of Chinese workers, the readership of the newspaper expanded further, leading to a circulation of 4,500 copies (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.66-67).

With the establishment of new Chinese cultural institutions and the development of existing ones, the Chinese community has become a significant presence in Mongolian society. In addition to serving Chinese workers and local overseas Chinese, the AOСM and its affiliated cultural institutions also carried out activities to promote Chinese culture and foster Mongolian-Chinese friendship. Considering the substantial number of Chinese and their

dispersion throughout the MPR, it can be said that the existence of the Chinese community represented the largest-scale interpersonal exchange between the two countries at that time. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Chinese workers established numerous cultural facilities such as clubs, children's palaces, and schools in

the MPR as part of the economic cooperation between the two countries (白林., 2019). These constructions not only had positive significance for the development of Mongolian cultural undertakings at that time but also embodied the official rhetoric of the proletariat friendship.

The Issue of the Return of the AOCM and Its Affiliated Institutions

As the Chinese community in the MPR was experiencing smooth development, the Chinese government unexpectedly broached the issue of returning the AOCM and its associated cultural institutions to the Mongolian side. During a meeting on March 27th, 1959, between Chinese Embassy Counselor Meng Ying and the Vice Foreign Minister of the MPR, Meng Ying raised the prospect of Chinese citizens in the MPR acquiring Mongolian citizenship⁷ and engaging actively in the nation's development. In line with this, the Chinese government expressed its desire to return the AOCM, along with its affiliated Chinese Worker's Club and *Worker's Road*, to the Mongolian authorities. Despite the initial rejection of this proposal by the Mongolian government, citing difficulty in agreement at that time, the Chinese side reiterated the same proposal on June 23rd (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-267, тал.4-5).

In fact, what made the Mongolian side hesitate was the handover issue of the AOCM and the potential change of nationality of Chinese citizens in the MPR. On April 7th, during the meeting between the secretary of the Mongolian Trade Union

Central Committee and the leader of the AOCM, the Mongolian side inquired: "The AOCM is the governing institution. Why should it be handed over to us?" In addition to reiterating the reasons provided by the Chinese Embassy on March 27th, the leader of the AOCM also noted that due to a recent resolution issued by the Mongolian Council of Ministers regarding foreign citizens residing in the MPR obtaining Mongolian nationality, it was anticipated that many Chinese would acquire Mongolian nationality (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.66-67). From this, it can be inferred that the handover of the AOCM and its cultural institutions was indeed related to the issue of Chinese citizens in the MPR obtaining Mongolian nationality. Therefore, it can be speculated that the Chinese side proposed the handover to facilitate local overseas Chinese becoming Mongolian nationals.

A study indicated that both the MPR and the PRC had concealed intentions regarding the matter of Chinese citizens obtaining Mongolian nationality. Particularly, during that period, the Mongolian side sought to encourage the immigration of ethnic

Mongolians from Inner Mongolia to the MPR by recruiting “Chinese workers”. Consequently, the Mongolian side twice urged the Chinese side to dispatch Mongolian workers from Inner Mongolia. However, the Chinese side adamantly refused such requests, consenting only to send Han workers and actively advocating for the settled Han individuals in the MPR to acquire Mongolian citizenship (Алтантөгс, Н., 2019,12). This also reflects the sensitivity of the Mongolians as a transnational ethnic group in state relations. The emphasis by the Mongolian side on the unity of the Mongolian nation and the emphasis by the Chinese side on the national integration of its 56 ethnic groups were, in fact, contradictory to some extent.

Due to this deeply rooted factor, the Mongolian side ultimately refused to accept the AOCM and only agreed to accept the Chinese Worker’s Club and *Worker’s Road* that belonged to the MPR previously. On September 5th, the handover was officially executed, and the two institutions returned under the leadership of the Mongolian Trade Union (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.81). The value of the real estate, including the office building, workers’ dormitory, and movable properties such as cars and printing presses received by the Mongolian side, is approximately 900,000 tugriks. However, the reception committee assessed that these facilities, particularly the buildings, were too old to be utilized any longer (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.76-78). It can be inferred that this situation was related to China’s challenging economic circumstances at that time⁸. It is

possible that the economic difficulties were also one of the reasons that prompted the Chinese side to transfer these institutions to the Mongolian side.

For this reason, the reception committee proposed that the construction of the new buildings of the Chinese Worker’s Club and printing house should commence in 1960. Additionally, the Central Committee of the Mongolian Trade Union established a dedicated department responsible for organizing propaganda work for Chinese workers, and both the Chinese Worker’s Club and *Worker’s Road* were placed under the leadership of this department. After the two institutions were returned to the Mongolian side, they both emphasized the dissemination of Mongolian policies to some extent (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.69-70).

Although the Mongolian side initially rejected the idea of accepting the AOCM, the Chinese side persisted in their desire to transfer it to Mongolian leadership. On July 26th, 1960, the Chinese Embassy reiterated their hope that the AOCM’s operations could be overseen by a dedicated agency of the MPR. Additionally, they proposed transferring the Pei Cai School⁹ and the Friendship Hospital to the Mongolian administration. In addition to the reasons mentioned earlier, the Chinese Embassy also explained this time that the PRC had handed over the management of overseas Chinese associations in North Korea and North Vietnam to the respective governments of those countries (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-267, тал.4-5). From this information, it can be inferred that the

handover of overseas Chinese affairs to the MPR was part of China's foreign policy at that time. Against the backdrop of the Sino-Soviet competition, it seems that the PRC was attempting to demonstrate its recognition of the jurisdiction of these countries over local overseas Chinese through the transfer of overseas Chinese affairs. This move could have been aimed at fostering closer ties with these countries and aligning them more closely with the PRC amid geopolitical competition.

In response, the Mongolian side maintained a negative stance. In a report submitted by the MFA of the MPR to B. Jargalsaikhan, Director of the Foreign Affairs Division of the Central Committee of the MPRP, the suggested response to the Chinese side was as follows: "The Chinese residents in the MPR have adhered to our country's rules and regulations, actively contributing to our nation's development. Many have integrated fully into our society

and become our citizens. While there are still some Chinese citizens present, they manage their affairs through established public channels, much like other foreign nationals. Hence, establishing a council specifically for Chinese citizens is deemed unnecessary. Therefore, we do not see the need to accept the AOCM affiliated with the Chinese Embassy (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-267, тал.4-5)."

The Mongolian government aligned with the recommendation of the MFA and ultimately declined to accept the AOCM, the Pei Cai School, and the Friendship Hospital. The MPR was acutely aware of the tensions between the PRC and the Soviet Union during that period, and this decision likely aimed to avoid appearing to favor China's overtures. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the Mongolian reluctance to accept these institutions may also stem from its reserved stance on granting nationality to Han Chinese.

The Decline of the Chinese Community in the MPR

After 1960, the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations began to impact the relationship between the MPR and the PRC. The Chinese community in the MPR also faced challenges as bilateral relations soured. In 1961, 29 overseas Chinese applied for visas to return home to visit relatives through the relevant Mongolian agency. However, the Mongolian side only issued exit and entry visas to 11 people, while the others received only exit visas or were not accepted at all. In response, the Chinese Embassy protested with the

Mongolian MFA, emphasizing that these individuals had families in the MPR and were only temporarily leaving the country (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-267, тал.64-66). This example not only reflects the sensitive external environment at that time but also confirms the aforementioned negative attitude of the Mongolian side towards the settlement of Han Chinese in the MPR.

In the context of increasingly fierce ideological disputes between the MPR and PRC, the Chinese community in the MPR became directly involved in the conflicts. In

the early 1960s, the Chinese side began to mobilize workers and overseas Chinese in the MPR to distribute pamphlets promoting China's policies. Consequently, the Mongolian side repeatedly filed memorandums of protest to the Chinese side, accusing such behavior of "interfering in Mongolia's internal affairs." However, the Chinese side contended that this was an act in compliance with "international norms" and refused to accept the Mongolian side's protests (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-315, тал.41-47). In such a tense atmosphere, a fatal incident occurred. On March 6th, 1964, the Mongolian police arrested Chinese workers Yu and Dou after a quarrel between Mongolian workers and Chinese workers. Tragically, on June 11th, Yu was found dead in the detention center. The Mongolian court concluded that Dou had killed him and sentenced Dou to 15 years in prison. However, the Chinese side disputed this judgment, alleging it was the Mongolian side's political retaliation for the earlier sentencing of a Mongolian student in the PRC (孙一先., 2013, 第 198-199 页).

Amid such tensions and the deterioration of bilateral relations, Chinese workers began to depart from the MPR in groups starting in April 1964. With their departure, the Chinese population in the MPR significantly declined, and institutions like the Pei Cai School and the Friendship Hospital primarily catered to local overseas Chinese. Nonetheless, the Chinese community remained a focal point in the conflict between the two nations. The Pei Cai School emerged as a key propaganda tool for China in the MPR, owing to its

relative independence which limited direct intervention from the Mongolian side. While this autonomy posed no issues during friendlier times, it became a battleground for ideological disputes amid tensions between the two nations. Particularly during the Cultural Revolution, although Chinese Embassy leaders tended to avoid direct involvement in the political movement, teachers and students at the Pei Cai School began to embrace the ideology of the movement. For example, given the extensive connections these overseas Chinese students had with Mongolian society, they distributed a considerable number of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (孙一先., 2013, 第 246 页).

Amid this intense propaganda and counter-propaganda struggle, a significant incident that impacted relations between the two countries eventually unfolded. In 1967, a conflict erupted between teachers and students of the Pei Cai School and Mongolian guards¹⁰. As a result, the Mongolian authorities announced the expulsion of three Chinese teachers, provoking uproar among the overseas Chinese teachers and students. In response, they decided to accompany the expelled teachers to the train station. Despite the Chinese Embassy's recommendation to maintain peace during the farewell and refrain from shouting political slogans, the suggestion was overlooked as the Chinese MFA was influenced by radical "rebels" at the time (孙一先., 2013, 第 251 页). During the farewell procession on May 21st, hundreds of overseas Chinese teachers and students sang the Internationale, chanted

slogans, and ultimately engaged in severe physical clashes with Mongolian police and staff (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-384, зүүлт хуудасын тал.1-7).

The Mongolian side regarded this incident as “a political provocation involving diplomats from the Chinese Embassy” (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-384, зүүлт хуудасын тал.1-7). On the contrary, the Chinese side regarded the three expelled teachers as “heroes against revisionism” and organized a reception for more than 1,000 people at the Beijing Railway Station (人民日报., 1967). This incident, along with other conflicts that occurred in 1967, eventually brought Mongolia-China

relations to a freezing point, and bilateral diplomatic relations were downgraded to the level of charge d'affaires that year. In 1973, after lengthy negotiations, the Pei Cai School and the Friendship Hospital were finally transferred to the Mongolian side, and the Chinese employees who worked in these institutions also returned to the PRC (孙一先., 2013, 第 297-299 页). In this manner, the Chinese community in the MPR, conceived under the banner of proletarian internationalist friendship, ultimately dissolved against the backdrop of the Socialist Bloc's fragmentation.

Conclusions

The trajectory of the Chinese community in the MPR from 1949 to 1973 can be outlined as follows: Initially, while Chinese individuals held a position within modern Mongolian society, historical tensions between Mongolia and China resulted in a general decline of this group before 1949, and no fully organized community was formed among them.

Secondly, post-1949, Mongolia-China relations flourished within the Socialist Bloc framework. During this period, both governments actively fostered people's friendship rooted in proletarian internationalism. Benefiting from this conducive environment, the Mongolian side transferred the affairs of Chinese individuals to the Chinese side. Under the guidance of the Chinese Embassy, numerous institutions were established or

expanded, with the AOCM serving as the nucleus. Consequently, the Chinese community in the MPR started to take shape in the early 1950s and experienced further growth with the influx of Chinese workers in the mid-1950s.

Thirdly, during the 1950s, the Chinese community emerged as a significant platform for promoting Chinese culture within the MPR and advancing the agenda of people's friendship as promoted by both governments. This relationship contributed to a degree of amelioration in the historical animosity between the two peoples.

However, despite some improvement, lingering historical tensions between the two nations persisted, leading the Mongolian government to remain cautious regarding the Chinese community in the MPR. Moreover, the development of this

community was highly susceptible to fluctuations in political relations between the MPR and the PRC, as well as broader shifts within the Socialist Bloc. This was evident in instances such as the Mongolian side's refusal to accept the AOCM, and the Chinese community in the MPR became embroiled in ideological conflicts between the two nations in the 1960s. In summary, the top-down official agenda consistently influenced the trajectory of the Chinese community in the MPR during this period, resulting in its limited resilience to changes in the political landscape.

Regarding the fate of the Chinese in the MPR, post-1973, tensions persisted in relations between the MPR and the PRC. The Mongolian government remained vigilant, concerned that the Chinese government might exploit the over 7,000 overseas Chinese in the MPR to advance its

agendas. While there were indications of improved relations between the two nations in the early 1980s, fierce conflicts resurfaced over the Chinese side's insistence on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the MPR. Against this backdrop, in 1983, the Mongolian authorities undertook a significant repatriation of overseas Chinese, citing their refusal to comply with Mongolian government work arrangements (Бэгзжав, Л., 1999, тал.55-56; 中华人民共和国国务院公报., 1983, 第 571-572 页). Following this incident, the population of overseas Chinese in the MPR experienced a sharp decline to approximately 1,500 individuals (黄家骅, 2008, 第 81 页), marking its lowest point in history. It wasn't until after the Mongolian democratic revolution in the 1990s that the Chinese community would regain activity within Mongolian society.

Notes

*This paper is partly based on the author's presentation "Mongolia's Chinese Community Under the Influence of Sino-Soviet Relations (1949-1960)" at the academic conference "MONGOLIA OF THE XX CENTURY AND RUSSIAN-MONGOLIAN RELATIONS", Irkutsk, May 28th, 2021.

¹ The reason for adopting such a definition was not only because it better reflected the actual situation of the Chinese community in the MPR at that time, but also because during the period mentioned in the paper, especially in the 1950s, the nationality issue of Chinese individuals in the MPR had not been resolved.

² Khuree is the old name of Ulaanbaatar.

³ The Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) was officially established three years later, in 1924.

⁴ When it was founded in 1930, the institution was just a Red Corner and was officially expanded into a club in 1932.

⁵ According to Kubota's research, this negative sentiment among Mongolians is closely linked to the history of Chinese reclamation in Mongolia, see (窪田新一., 2001).

⁶ Some of them returned to the PRC in the 1950s, but the number of those who returned is unknown, see (谷继坤., 2023).

⁷ On March 13th, 1959, Chinese ambassador Xie Fusheng expressed to the Mongolian

side that the Chinese side hoped for the Chinese who had settled in the MPR to become Mongolian nationals. The Chinese citizens referred to here are those people. See (Түмэнбаяр, Ц; Оюунчимэг, Г., 2019, тал.81).

⁸ Due to movements such as the “Great Leap Forward” and natural disasters, the PRC experienced three years of economic hardship from 1959 to 1961.

⁹ In fact, as early as 1959, 210 Chinese students were transferred to Mongolian schools. On June 6th, 1960, the Chinese side once again proposed sending 485 Chinese students from the Chinese school to Mongolian schools. According to the Chinese explanation, since the parents of these students were predominantly overseas Chinese residing in the MPR, attending Mongolian schools would better facilitate their adaptation to life in the MPR and

enable them to participate in Mongolia's socialist construction in the future. However, during the implementation process, most of the 210 Chinese students enrolled in 1959 returned to the Chinese school due to language barriers and opposition from some parents. Nonetheless, the Mongolian side affirmed their capability to accommodate 485 Chinese students. See (ГХТА, Ф-5, Д-2, ХН-250, тал.50-53;57-59).

¹⁰ During that period, the Pei Cai School and the Mongolian Information newspaper were housed in the same compound. Suspecting that overseas Chinese students had defaced pictures of Mongolian leaders displayed in the newspaper's window, the Mongolian authorities opted to close the main gate of the compound. This action led to dissatisfaction among the overseas Chinese teachers and students, sparking a clash with the Mongolian guards.

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