

# Chapter 7

## Somewhere between “Independence” and “Autonomy”: Translating Concepts in Modern Mongolian

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### Introduction

Although it is not a difficult task to narrate the history of Mongolia during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by using such English terms as “independence”, “autonomy”, and “suzerainty”, the fact remains that during that time in history there were no established terms in the Mongolian language to express such concepts, which naturally raises two fundamental questions: how were such concepts understood at that time without appropriate Mongolian vocabulary, and in what manner was Mongolian terminology invented to express them adequately.

While Korea and Vietnam, for example, were designated as “tributaries” (*chaogongguo* 朝貢國) or “dependencies” (*shuguo* 屬國) of the Qing Dynasty, Mongolia, along with Tibet were named “outlying regions” (*fanbu* 藩部) under the jurisdiction of the Lifan Yuan 理藩院, but at times they were all collectively called *fanshu* 藩屬. Between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as its “tributaries” were being colonized by such powers as France and Japan, the Qing Dynasty, fearing a similar loss of its outlying regions (藩部), attempted to incorporate them into China proper as its “territory” (領土) different from “dependencies” (屬國) [Okamoto 2017: chap. 11]. Mongolia and Tibet which reacted to such Sinicization tried to secede from the Qing Dynasty, taking advantage of the 1911 Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after the Revolution, Mongolia declared itself “independent” from the Qing Dynasty, thus creating the problem of defining its relationship to the newly formed Republic of China, not only for the Chinese authorities, but also for Imperial Russia which shared borders with Mongolia. In the several agreements attempting to determine Mongolia’s political status, its relationship with China was explained with such terms as “suzerainty” (*zongzhuquan* 宗主權) and “autonomy” (*zizhi* 自治).

<sup>1</sup> For more details concerning the Mongolian response to the 1911 Revolution, see [Nakami 1984; Tachibana 2012].

The term suzerainty (*suzeraineté*) first appeared in international relations to describe the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the various political regimes surrounding it, then spread to East Asia to describe relations between the Qing Dynasty and the neighboring regimes like Korea and Vietnam. While there is no fixed definition of the term, with its actual meaning differing depending on both geographical and historical circumstances, suzerainty is not to be confused with “sovereignty” (*zhuquan* 主權) whose existence it negates in various ways. In China, Japan, and Korea whose orthography is based on Han ideographs, the use of the Classical Chinese (*Hanyu/Kango* 漢語) terms *zongzhuquan* and *zizhi* would be appropriate; but for Mongolians, whose culture did not adopt Chinese script, it was necessary to translate the term into their native language.

The purpose of the present chapter is to analyze the various terms relevant to suzerainty, like *zizhi*, *zizhu* 自主, *zili* 自立, and *duli* 獨立, which described the political status of Mongolia during the decade of the 1910s, within the context of the Mongolian, Russian, and Chinese terms found in the Russo-Mongolian Agreement of 1912, the Mongol-Tibetan Treaty and the Russo-Chinese Declaration of 1913, and the 1915 Treaty of Kyakhta, in order to depict how such terms were translated by the parties concerned, what specific meaning they attached to those translations, and the influence of the resulting concepts on the actual diplomatic process.

## 1. How Do You Call “Independence”?

Although Mongolia is said to have declared “independence” from the Qing Dynasty on 1 December 1911, the Russian Consul at Urga (present day Ulaanbaatar) Vladimir Nikolaevich Lavdovskii informed Anatolii Anatolievich Neratov, the Provisional Foreign Minister that “This morning, the princes issued a declaration that Khalkha is now [an] autonomous (avtonomnyi) [region]” [МОЭИ: ser. II, vol. 19, part I, no. 136, p. 120], raising the question of why the Russian consul interpreted the move as a declaration of “autonomy” and not “independence”.

In modern Mongolian, “*tusayar toytanil*” means “independence”, “*tusayar toytaniqu*” “to gain independence”, and “*tusayar toytaniysan ulus*” “an independent state”; however, in the Declaration of 1 December 1911, which determined that

we Mongols, as originally a separate polity (*tusayar nigen ulus*) and in accordance with tradition, hereby found our own state, and establish a new regime by denying any other state the right of [determining] our own affairs” [Очир and Пүрвээ 1982: 110],

we do not find the phrase “*tusaγar toγtanil*” meaning “independence”. Furthermore, on 30 December the Princes of Khalkha sent a document to the Qing Dynasty authorities including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Waiwubu 外務部) stating

If the Mongolian people do not become independent (*öbertegen ese toγtanibasū*), it will be very difficult to avoid becoming embroiled in war and dissension...” [Очир and Пүрвээ 1982: 170].

Here the phrase “*öbertegen toγtaniqu*” probably expresses the meaning “independence”.<sup>2</sup>

Then in a telegram dated 10 April 1912 and addressed to the Acting President of the Republic Yuan Shikai 袁世凱, Jebtsundamba Lama, the newly enthroned khaan of Mongolia, stated,

If we do not become independent (*öbertegen ese toγtanibasū*), the reality is that it is difficult to escape from the hunter’s grasp. If independence (*γaγčaγar toγtaniqu*) is invalidated, it will be like throwing away dilapidated shoes. However, we have already announced to the world at home and abroad that [Mongolia] is independent (*öber-iyen ejen bolqu*), before the Qing emperor abandoned his regime [Очир and Пүрвээ 1982: 172].

Here again, in place of the contemporary “*tusaγar toγtanil*”, the term “*öbertegen toγtaniqu*” is used along with the other expressions possibly meaning “independence”, i.e. “*γaγčaγar toγtaniqu*” and “*öber-iyen ejen bolqu*”.

In fact, the Classical Chinese version of the telegram delivered to Yuan Shikai includes the following lines:

乃不自立。難脫漁囊之實在情形也。本喇嘛視舍獨立。猶棄敝屣。惟於清帝辭政以前。業經自主。佈告中外。<sup>3</sup>

If we compare this Chinese version with the above-quoted Mongolian one, it becomes clear that the latter is the translation based on the former, and such phrases as “*öbertegen ese toγtanibasū*”, “*γaγčaγar toγtaniqu*”, and “*öber-iyen ejen bolqu*” are all literal translations of the Classical Chinese terms *zili*, *duli*, and *zizhu*.

These facts are also backed by the Mongolian version of *Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法, which is missionary William Martin’s Classical Chinese translation of Henry

<sup>2</sup> “ese” is a negative particle, and “-basu” a suffix expressing the subjunctive mood.

<sup>3</sup> [Shen 1970: “Neizheng” 內政 (Internal affairs) 3, p. 2411]. Hereafter underlines in the quotations added by the author.

Wheaton's *Elements of International Law* (first edition 1836). The work, translated in late 1864 or early 1865, was also transmitted to Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, and played an important role when international law was first being introduced into East Asia. The Mongolian translation entitled *Tümen ulus-un yerüde-yin čaγaǰa*<sup>4</sup> was completed during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

For example, in Part I, Chap. II, Sec. 6 of *Tümen ulus-un yerüde-yin čaγaǰa* which discusses about the United States Declaration of Independence, it is stated:

A newly established state may exist and retain the right to exist even without the recognition of other states, if it can manage its internal affairs. For example, the United States of America declared on the 4 July 1776, that they would hereafter be definitely independent (öbesüben eǰerkeǰü öbertegen toγtanımı), and never be subject to the British [Амарсанаа, Баярсайхан, and Тачибана 2006: 226].

The passages corresponding to the above quotation in *Wanguo gongfa* are as follows.

蓋新立之國、雖他國未認、亦能自主其內事、有其國即有其權也。即如美國之合邦、於一千七百七十六年間出誥云、以後必自主自立、不再服英國。<sup>5</sup>

Here the Mongolian expression “öbesüben eǰerkeǰü öbertegen toγtanıqu”, the literal translation of *zizhu zili* 自主自立, was chosen to translate the phrase “free, sovereign, and independent” in the original English text, whereas the Classical Chinese term *zizhu* and *zili* were almost exclusively used as the translation of “sovereignty” and “independence” respectively in *Wanguo gongfa*.

Now let us trace the process by which the newly invented Mongolian terms were put into practical use on the diplomatic scene.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning the Mongolia translation of Martin's *Wanguo gongfa* 萬國公法, see [Tachibana 2005].

<sup>5</sup> [“Zainei zhi Zhuquan” 在內之主權 (Internal Sovereignty), *Wanguo gongfa*, vol. I, chap. 2, sec. 6]. The corresponding passages in Wheaton's original work are as follows:

A new State, springing into existence, does not require the recognition of other States to confirm its internal sovereignty. The existence of the State de facto is sufficient, in this respect, to establish its sovereignty de jure. It is a state because it exists.

Thus the internal sovereignty of the United States of America was complete from the time they declared themselves “free, sovereign, and independent States”, on 4 July, 1776. [Wheaton 1855: 30]

## 2. “Autonomy” and “Independence” in the 1912 Russo-Mongolian Agreement and the 1913 Mongol-Tibetan Treaty

Following its declaration of independence, the Mongolian government concluded an agreement with Imperial Russia on 3 November 1912. Russia, attempting to broker a post-declaration rapprochement with China, had encountered a refusal to negotiate on the part of the latter, which considered issues regarding Mongolia as exclusively internal affairs. The Russians then decided to approach the Mongolians, with whom it was thought to be easier to negotiate, concluding an agreement that hopefully would lead indirectly to a seat at the negotiation table with China [Nakami 1994: 98]. The resulting Agreement negotiated and concluded by Ivan Iakovlevich Korostovets, the former minister to the Qing Dynasty, consisted of four articles, the first of which stated,

The Russian imperial government will assist [the state of] Mongolia (Ru. Mongolia; Mo. *mongγul ulus*) by supporting its established autonomous regime (Ru. *avtonomnyi*; Mo. *öbertegen toyṭaniṭu öber-iyen eṭerkekü*) and its right to form a standing army to keep Chinese forces out of its territory and prevent its colonization by the Chinese [Очир and Пүрвээ 1982: 175].

In this article, the Mongolians chose the expression “*öbertegen toyṭaniṭu öber-iyen eṭerkekü*” for the translation of the Russian term “*avtonomiia*”. What is also worth noting is that the Mongolian term for “Mongolia” is “*mongγul ulus*” including the term “state” (*ulus*), which was approved by the Russians. Nevertheless, Plenipotentiary Korostovets also informed the Mongolian government that Russia would define the boundary of the “state of Mongolia” [СДДМВ: no. 25, pp. 30–1; Очир and Пүрвээ 1982: 180]. This indicates the conflict of view between the Mongolians and the Russians, with the former advocating the independence of both Inner and Outer Mongolia and the latter attempting to limit the Agreement’s scope to the autonomy of Outer Mongolia, which resulted in the rather hasty conclusion of the Agreement by utilizing the term “(state of) Mongolia” without any concrete definition of its actual boundaries.

This Agreement has been evaluated as Mongolia’s first independently negotiated international pact, which played an important role in the process of its achievement of independence [Барсайхан 2009]. Regarding its Article 1, Sandag has argued that “whereas it defined the state of Mongolia under Bogd Khaan’s rule as the “system of Mongolian autonomy”, the terms “the state of Mongolia” (*mongγul ulus*) and “self-standing and self-ruling” (*öbertegen toyṭaniṭu öber-iyen eṭerkekü*) in its Mongolian text are meant to express Mongolia as a sovereign state (*bürin erketü ulus*) [Сандаг 1971: 21], while Jamsran states that the Mongolian leaders understood the term “*öbertegen toyṭaniṭu öber-iyen eṭerkekü*” to mean “independence” (*tusaγar toyṭanil*) [Жамсран 1992: 106].

Thus, they have considered that the Mongolian expression “öbertegen toytaniju öberiyen ejerkekü” in Article 1 of the Agreement, which is the translation of the Russian term “avtonomiia”, meant “independence”. However, neither scholar has produced any concrete proof to back up their opinions.

As mentioned above, the expression “öbertegen toytaniju öberiyen ejerkekü” is almost identical to “öbesüben ejerkejü öbertegen toytaniqu” cited above in the passages discussing about the United States’ Declaration of Independence in the Mongolian version of *Elements of International Law*. Also, in Part I, Chap. 2, Sec. 14, “Tributary and Vassal States” of the Mongolian version, we find the same wording as in the Russo-Mongolian Agreement.

According to international law, the degree of independence of a tributary state or a state of a submissive tribe (qariyatu ayimay) is determined by the sovereign right (ejen-ü erke) which still remains in their hands. Thus, even when the coastal states of Europe paid tribute to the Barbary states, the right of their independence (öbertegen toytaniju öberiyen ejerkekü) was not infringed at all [Амарсанаа, Баярсайхан, and Тачибана 2006: 251].

The passages corresponding to the above quotation in *Wanguo gongfa* are as follows.

進貢之國、並藩邦、公法就其所存主權多寡、而定其自主之分。即如歐羅巴濱海諸國、前進貢於巴巴里時、於其自立自主之權並無所礙。<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the Mongolian representatives translated the Russian term “avtonomiia” as “öbertegen toytaniju öberiyen ejerkekü” (i.e. literal translation of *zili zizhu*), intending to understand it as “independence”, because the Agreement did not stipulate Mongolia’s relation with China.

After the conclusion of the Agreement, Mongolia, now perceiving that it had been recognized as an “independent” nation by Russia, sent documents of state announcing its “independence” to eight foreign countries, including Britain, the United States, Russia, Germany, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Japan. In the document addressed to Japan and delivered to its consulate general in Harbin, the Mongolian and Classical Chinese text<sup>7</sup> read in part,

<sup>6</sup> The passages corresponding to the above quotation in *Elements of International Law* is quoted in note 19 in Chapter 3 of this book.

<sup>7</sup> “Ro-Mō Kyōyaku ikken” 露蒙協約一件 (The Russo-Mongolian Agreement), in [Gaimushō 1947–: vol. 45-2, p. 784].

At present, we have seceded from the Qing and founded an independent (öbertegen тоүтанију öber-iyen eјkerkekü) state for the purpose of preserving our traditional territory, regions (γaјar orun), religious beliefs, and institutions [Очир and Пүрвээ 1982: 181].

我蒙古全體為保全原有領土暨宗教風俗起見故與清廷分離建設自立自主之國。<sup>8</sup>

Here again, the expression “öbertegen тоүтанију öber-iyen eјkerkekü”, the literal translation of *zili zizhu*, was used as in the Agreement.

Next, turning to the Mongol-Tibetan Treaty concluded on 11 January 1913, by which each party recognized the “independence” of the other, what kind of expression is used?

Whereas doubts had arisen that such a treaty actually existed due to the fact that the text could not be located, the original Mongolian and Tibetan texts were finally published in 2008, thus verifying the event [Барсайхан 2008: 334–6]. That being said, a debate still continues over the validity of the Treaty.<sup>9</sup>

As to the the wording of the text of the Treaty, Mongolian text in Articles 1 and 2 states,

The Dalai Lama, the Khaan of the state of Tibet, recognizes the fact that Mongolia has become independent [öber-iyen eјkerken] and formed a state [ulus törü], and that Jebtsundamba Lama, the leader of the Yellow Sect, was enthroned as its khaan on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Year of the Boar.

Jebtsundamba Lama, the Khaan of the state of Mongolia, recognizes the fact that the Tibetan people has become independent [öbertegen тоүтанin] and formed a state [ulus], and that they enthroned the Dalai Lama as their Khaan [Барсайхан 2008: 334].

Here, “independence” is expressed with the terms “öber-iyen eјkerkekü” (literal translation of *zizhu*) and “öbertegen тоүтанiqu ” (literal translation of *zili*), while the Tibetan text uses “rang btsan” (independence) for both,<sup>10</sup> with their Russian translation being “samostoiatel'nyi”, meaning independent or autonomous.<sup>11</sup> Referring to the Japanese

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> As to the latest research result concerning the Treaty’s validity from the viewpoint of international law, see articles contained in [Tashi Tsering and Sperling 2013] and [Tachibana 2018].

<sup>10</sup> For more on the Tibetan concept “rang btsan”, see Chapter 8 of the present work.

<sup>11</sup> “Ро-Мō Кыōyaku ikken” 露蒙協約一件 (The Russo-Mongolian Agreement), vol. 2, Ajia re-

(*dokuritsu* 独立) and French (*indépendant*) translations of the terms based on the Russian version of the Treaty,<sup>12</sup> we can safely conclude that the terms “*öber-iyen eđerkekü*” and “*öbertegen toytaniqu*” in the Treaty expressed the meaning of “independence” and were so understood by the other states.

As we have seen, while the expression for “independence” had not been established in Mongolian vocabulary, Mongolians began to use new terms created through the literal translation of the Classic Chinese terms *zili* or *zizhu*.<sup>13</sup> As will be discussed later, since the term *duli* was already being used in Classical Chinese, a gap occurred in the meaning of the above-mentioned Mongolian terms and those of the original Classical Chinese, giving the former a distinct Mongolian character.

### 3. “Suzerainty” and “Autonomy” in the Russo-Chinese Declaration of 1913

After the conclusion of the Russo-Mongolian Agreement, Russia and China opened negotiations aiming at an agreement over the issue of Mongolian independence,<sup>14</sup> leading to a declaration issued on 5 November 1913.

Although at first China claimed to negotiate on the condition that the Russo-Mongolian Agreement be abrogated, the Russians insisted that the basis of the negotiations depended on that Agreement, forcing the Chinese to acquiesce. While China made such demands as “Russia approving Chinese sovereignty over Mongolia” and “returning Mongolia to its former state”, the Russians recognized Chinese “suzerainty” over Mongolia and insisted that “Mongolian autonomy (*avtonomiia*) be established.” Such differences of opinion centered around a controversy over Chinese “sovereignty” or “suzerainty”, and whether Mongolia was to be placed within a same political order as that of the Qing Dynasty, or allowed to enjoy “autonomy”.

At the end of May 1913 the parties reached a compromise, with Russian acquiescence, that “Russia recognizes that Mongolia is an inseparable part of Chinese territory” and “Russia respects China’s rights arising from such a territorial relationship”, thus implying Russia’s *de facto* recognition of Chinese “sovereignty”. China, on the other hand, “guarantees that Mongolia’s present system of regional autonomy will remain

kishi shiryō sentā アジア歴史資料センター (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records), ref. B06150061300.

<sup>12</sup> “Ro-Mō Kyōyaku kankei ikken” 露蒙協約關係一件 (Records concerning the Russo-Mongolian Agreement), in [Gaimushō 1964–: Taishō 2, vol. 1, pp. 584, 588–9].

<sup>13</sup> Concerning the origins of modern Mongolian terminology literally translated from Classic Chinese terms, see [Huhbator 2012].

<sup>14</sup> For details on the negotiations leading up to the Declaration, see [Nakami 1980; Zhang 1995].



unchanged", ambiguously defining Mongolia's autonomy.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the Russian compromise, the Chinese Parliament opposed the Declaration draft, demanding it be further revised. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov then returned the negotiations back to the initial stage, ordering Vasilii Nikolaevich Krupenskii, Russian minister at Beijing, to begin the talks anew. The new draft issued by the Russians on 11 July 1913, which read, "China recognizes Mongolian autonomy (avtonomiia) with the exception of Inner Mongolia" and "Russia recognizes Chinese suzerainty (siuzerenitet) regarding Mongolia"<sup>16</sup> clearly indicated a return to their original position stressing "autonomy" and "suzerainty", which would eventually form the basis of the Russian-Chinese Declaration.

As Article 1 of the Declaration states that "Russia recognizes Chinese suzerainty regarding Outer Mongolia", and Article 2 that "China recognizes the autonomy of Outer Mongolia", the Russians achieved what they intended for the most part. On the other hand, Article 1 of the exchange of notes matched the Chinese demand that "Russia recognizes Outer Mongolia as a part of Chinese territory."

In the background to Russia's turnaround back to the initial stage of the negotiations lay the influence exerted by Korostovets, who had successfully negotiated the Russo-Mongolian Agreement. On 23 November, Namnansüren, Prime Minister of Mongolia who was visiting St. Petersburg, communicated to the Prime Minister's Office at Urga that:

There existed within the Russian government both pro-Mongolian and pro-Chinese factions. The extremely powerful pro-Chinese faction was determined not to raise any objections over Mongolia if China refused to recognize the Russo-Mongolian Agreement, and during that past summer the Chinese and Russian governments conferred in an attempt to have China take over full right and to conclude an agreement. At that time, the former ambassador [Korostovets], who had arrived [from Urga], persuasively blocked such a move... and with the backing of Russian Premier (Vladimir Nikolaevich Kokovtsov) and Governor-General of Irkutsk (Leonid Mikhailovich Kniazev), he was able to renegotiate and conclude an agreement that

<sup>15</sup> "Zong-E shangding Meng-shi xieyue jieyao" 中俄商訂蒙事協約節要 (Summary of Russian-Chinese Talks on the Mongolian Treaty, 3 June 1913), in Waijiao dang'an 外交檔案 (Diplomatic Archives), "Zongyiyuan huiyi Eyue-an" 衆議院會議俄約案 (Parliamentary Deliberations on the Draft of the Russo-Chinese Agreement, *Minguo* 民國 2, June 3<sup>rd</sup>), Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 03-32-162-01-001.

<sup>16</sup> СДДМБ, no. 75, pp. 65–8; "Zhi zhu-E Liu gongshi Eyue-shi" 致駐俄劉公使俄約事 (To Ambassador to Russia Liu on the Russian Agreement, 16 July 1913 in Waijiao dang'an, "Kulun dili-an" 庫倫獨立案 (Urga Independence Proposal), vol. 10 (*Minguo* 2, July 16<sup>th</sup>), Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 03-32-158-02-033.

would be ratified by both countries and announced to the other states.<sup>17</sup>

The development “during that past summer” indicates the Russian-Chinese mutual understanding at the end of May, and “to have China take over full right” may mean the recognition of Chinese “sovereignty”, which was opposed by Korostovets with the backing of Kokovtsov and Kniazev.

In the memoirs of Korostovets we find an item regarding the draft of the agreement of late May, “To begin with, it included recognition of China’s sovereignty, which will significantly alter the meaning and purpose of our agreement with the Mongols” [Коростовец 2004: 379]. Moreover, Korostovets says that he attempted to dissuade Foreign Minister Sazonov with the argument, “If we recognize Chinese sovereignty, it would result in a worsening of our future position in Mongolia”, and suggested that “we present to the Chinese a statement proposing that China recognize the autonomy of Outer Mongolia and we recognize Chinese suzerainty regarding Outer Mongolia and all the rights stemming from it.” Sazonov replied, “I never imagined that our recognition in the draft of Mongolia as a part of China would be the equivalent of recognizing Chinese sovereignty. That was a mistake of oversight” [Коростовец 2004: 381]. It is noteworthy that the substance of Korostovets’ suggestion to Sazonov is almost identical to the latter’s instructions to the Russian minister at Beijing on 11 July. Therefore, the change of direction in the negotiations with China was the result of opposition to the draft of late May on the part of Korostovets, his winning Sazonov over to his side, and the support of Kokovtsov and Kniazev for him.

Concerning the resulting Russo-Chinese Declaration, an editorial in the newspaper *Novoe Vremya* opined:

China has recognized Mongolian autonomy and everything stemming from that status. Outer Mongolia will conduct its domestic affairs without any interference from the Republic of China, i.e. the Chinese government relinquished its demand for the sovereign possession (suverennoe obladanie) of Mongolia.<sup>18</sup>

Thus it gave rise to the interpretation that Russia had China recognize Chinese “suzerainty” over, and the “autonomy” of, Outer Mongolia, having refuted any Chinese claims to “sovereignty” over Mongolia.

<sup>17</sup> Монгол Улсын Үндэсний Төв Архив, ФА2-Д1-ХН11, Х3а-6b. Hereafter, the abbreviations stand for the following words: Ф: Фонд (number of fonds); Д: Данс (number of lists); ХН: Хадгаламжийн нэгж (number of items); Н: Нугалбар (number of documents); Х: Хуудас (number of pages).

<sup>18</sup> *Новое время*, 10 (23) November 1913, no. 13530.

Meanwhile, in a telegram sent on 22 November by the Chinese State Council to all provinces we find the words,

It is a matter of preserving our national territory—that is, our sovereignty. Recognizing autonomy on the part of Outer Mongolia is essentially related to the concessions made in Stipulation II<sup>19</sup> of the Regulations of the Treatment of the Mongols in August of last year [Gao 1913: 23],

It emphasized that by the Declaration China had Russia recognize Mongolia to be part of Chinese territory, with the intent of restoring Chinese “sovereignty” over it in the future.

Despite the seeming rise of a difference of opinion over the question of the Chinese “sovereignty”, prior to the Declaration, on 5 October 1913, Russia’s Provisional Foreign Minister Neratov stated, “As the result of recognizing the Chinese exercising suzerainty in Mongolia, it is clear that we have also recognized that Outer Mongolia is a part of Chinese territory” [СДДМВ: no. 93, p. 80], thus indicating the possibility that Russia understood the correlation between “suzerainty” and “national territory” as self-evident. Still, the expression “Outer Mongolia as part of Chinese territory” was included only in the documents of state exchanged between the two countries, not in the Declaration itself, as Neratov was reluctant to do so.

Then on 9 December 1913 Aleksandr Iakovlevich Miller, Russian Consul General stationed at Urga, handed over to the Mongolian authorities a Mongolian translation of the Declaration. Article 1 reads, “The Russian Empire recognizes the limited relationship (*kemjii\_e-tei qolbuγdal*) between China and Mongolia, while Article 2 says, “The Chinese government recognizes that Outer Mongolia may exercise its own prerogative (*öber-iyen erke-yi ejerkejü*) in conducting its domestic affairs and is a country with no ties to the Chinese government (*kitad jasay-un γajar qamiy\_a ügei ulus boluγsan*).”<sup>20</sup> What is noteworthy here is the use of explanatory phrasing instead of the abstract terms “suzerainty” and “autonomy” and the inclusion of the phrase “with no ties to the Chinese government”, for which there is no equivalent in either the Russian or Classical Chinese versions of the Declaration.

A document from the Mongolian government to the Russian government dated 16 December, with presumably the Mongolian translations in mind, states,

<sup>19</sup> Stipulation II of the Ordinance (enacted 19 August 1912) stated, “The original jurisdictional governance rights of the Mongolian princes will remain as they are” [Mōseibu Sōmushi Bunshoka 1937: 20–1].

<sup>20</sup> МУУТА. ФА4-Д1-ХН162-Н5.

We have confirmed with all sincerity and amity the principle of our Mongolia being a completely independent political entity [under the Declaration] (Mo. *manai mongyul ulus бүр мөсүн өбөтөгөн тойтанижу ulus төрү болуҗсан*; Ru. *vpolne samostoiatel'nogo politicheskogo sushchestvovaniia Mongol'skogo gosudarstvo*). Furthermore, since Mongolia is completely removed from any relationship to China, we will not accept any relationship predetermined without our express approval [Барсайхан 2003: 239–40; Попов, А. 1929: 37].

In other words, Mongolia interpreted the Russo–Chinese Declaration as recognizing its national independence, completely free of any ties to China.

It was in this manner that a serious perception gap arose among China, Russia, and Mongolia over the questions of “suzerainty” (*siuzerenitet*) and “autonomy” (*avtonomiia*), which, as we shall see later, would be further tangible with the opening of the Kyakhta Conference in September 1914, which was convened to adjust the gap.

#### 4. “Autonomy” and “Independence” at the Kyakhta Conference

It required more than forty rounds of official talks between 8 September 1914 and 7 June 1915 to conclude the Kyakhta Treaty, the proceedings of which were created in Russian, Mongolian, and Chinese, with the signatures of those who participated in the talks from the three states confirming their contents. The co-signers included Ts. Jamtsarano (Amusalanuofu 阿木薩拉諾弗 in the Classical Chinese version) and Tsogt Badamjav (Zhuoketuo 卓克托) both interpreters from Mongolia, Arved-Adol'v Frantsevich fon Renne (Lianna 連納) and Ippolit Semenovich Brunnert (Bulunna 卜倫納) from Russia, and Fan Qiguang 范其光 from China. Upon a comparative reading of the three versions of the Conference proceedings, despite no significant differences in the events and speeches recorded, a closer look reveals certain terminological irregularities in the Mongolian version, as shown by the following analysis of the concepts of “autonomy”, “independence”, and “suzerainty” brought up during the Conference, leading to an understanding of the reason for such irregularities.

To begin with, on 15 September during the second round of talks, the Mongolian representative stated,

We Mongols... have founded a separate state [Mo. *tusaγar ulus төрү*; Ru. *otdel'noe gosudarstvo*] detached from the Qing Dynasty... We have been an independent state [Mo. *өбөтөгөн тойтаниҗсан ulus*; Ru. *samostoiatel'noe gosudarstvo*] for four years now [Барсайхан 1999: 27, 308].

我蒙古……前與滿清脫離關係、組織立國……自獨立以來、迄已四載。<sup>21</sup>

The above passages show that Mongolian representatives understood their “states” to have maintained its “independence” since the Declaration of Independence in December 1911.

In response, during the third round on the 19<sup>th</sup>, the Chinese representative queried,

Has Russia recognized the independence [Mo. *tusaγar toγtaniγsan*; Ru. *nezavisimost'*] of Outer Mongolia?

俄國是否已承認外蒙古獨立。

to which the Russian representative replied,

Russia has only recognized the autonomous regime [Mo. *öbertegen eγerkegsen*; Ru. *avtonomnyi stroi*] of Outer Mongolia... There is a great difference between an autonomous region (*öbertegen eγerkekü orun*; *avtonomnaia strana*) and an independent state (*tusaγar toγtaniγsan ulus*; *nezavisimoe gosudarstvo*) [Барсайхан 1999: 29, 312–13].

俄國承認外蒙古為自治區域、並指明自治區域與獨立國之區別。<sup>22</sup>

In sum, 1) when the Classical Chinese *duli* 獨立 is translated to the Russian “*samostoia-tel'nyi*”, its corresponding Mongolian expression is “*öbertegen toγtaniγsan*” (which we have already determined is a direct translation of the Chinese *zili* 自立); and 2) when it is translated to “*nezavisimost'*”, the phrase “*tusaγar toγtaniγsan*” appears as its counterpart in the Mongolian version, leading to the conclusion that the Mongolian is being influenced by the Russian rather than the Chinese.

On the other hand, looking at the Mongolian representatives’ report on the proceedings to the central government in Ugra, we find the term *duli*, which one of the Chinese representatives remarked, directly translated to “*γaγcaγar toγtaniqu*” [Барсайхан 1999: 13], suggesting that a Classical Chinese interpreter in the Mongolian contingent might have translated what the Chinese representatives uttered and written them down.

<sup>21</sup> “Dierci huiyilu buyi” 第二次會議錄補遺 (Addenda to the Proceedings of the Second Round of Talks), in *Waijiao dang'an*, “Qiaketu huiyilu” 恰克圖會議錄 (Proceedings of the Qiaketu [Kyakhta] Conference), *Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History*, 03-32-174-01-002.

<sup>22</sup> “Disanci huiyilu” 第三次會議錄 (Proceedings of the Third Round of Talks), in *Waijiao dang'an*, “Qiaketu huiyilu”, *Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History*, 03-32-174-01-003.

During the fifth round on 29 September, a statement from the Chinese contingent reads,

Autonomous regions (Mo. *öber-iyen jasaqu yaḡar orun*; Ru. *avtonomnaia strana*) are included as parts of territories under suzerainty (*uy eḡen-ü erke*; *siuzerenitet*). There are no independent states (*ḡaḡčaḡar toḡtaniḡsan ulus*; *nezavisimoe gosudarstvo*) there, no titles of *khaan* and no [separate] era names [Барсайхан 1999: 36, 319].

宗主權之下領土一部份之中一自治地方。不能有獨立國、不能有帝號、不能有年號。<sup>23</sup>

Here the Chinese representatives shows their understanding that only autonomous regions may exist under the suzerainty of a certain state.

The text continues, denying the Russian approval of Mongolia's independence,

We [Chinese representatives] have requested the Outer Mongolian representatives to admit that their state is not independent (Mo. *ḡaḡčaḡar toḡtaniḡsan*; Ru. *nezavisimost'*), and not to renounce its independence is because at this very Conference the Russian representatives has repeatedly declared that their government indeed recognized Outer Mongolia's autonomy (*öber-iyen jasaqu*; *avtonomiia*), but certainly not its existence as an independent state, and denied Outer Mongolia's independence in the international context [Барсайхан 1999: 36, 319–20].

要求外蒙代表聲明並無獨立情事、而不日取消獨立者、何也。蓋因俄使在會屢次宣言俄國只承認外蒙自治并無承認外蒙獨立國。外蒙之獨立、委國際上已無此種事實。<sup>24</sup>

It is worth noting here that the Mongolian term for independence “*ḡaḡčaḡar toḡtaniḡsan*” is a direct translation of the Chinese term *duli*, suggesting that for this portion of the proceedings the Mongolian translator was referring to the Chinese text. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that in the Mongolian text recording the third round, which seems to have been created based on the Russian version, the term “emperor” is rendered as “imperatur” following the Russian pronunciation, while the text for the fifth round presents it as “quvangdi”, the transliteration of the Chinese pronunciation. In addition,

<sup>23</sup> “Diwuci huiyilu” 第五次會議錄 (Proceedings of the Fifth Round of Talks), in *Waijiao dang'an*, “Qiaketu huiyilu”, Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 03-32-174-01-005.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

while the former renders “suzerainty” as “kemjij\_e-tei ejerkekü” following the Russian “siuzerenitet”, the latter contains “uγ ejen-ü erke” (lit. “the original owner’s rights”), a direct translation of the Classical Chinese *zongzhuquan*.

Therefore the terminological irregularities appearing in the Mongolian text and the conceptual confusion resulting from them stem from the Mongolian representatives’ reference to the Russian text in some places and the Chinese text in others in creating the proceedings. This signifies that there were no established Mongolian terms meaning “independence” or “suzerainty” at the time of the negotiation.

It was such irregularities in the nomenclature that led to confusion on the part of the Mongolian Plenipotentiary Dashjav, who could not understand Russian or Chinese, and his occasional requests for the explanation of what the controversial terms “suzerainty” and “autonomy” meant.

For example, regarding the Chinese interpretation that “only autonomous regions may exist under suzerainty”, the Russian representative commented,

There are examples of the term “autonomy” (aütunumi) used to mean the autonomous rights (öber-iyen jasaqu erke) of a region within a given territory, and also used frequently regarding a smaller country which retains only half of its rights (qayas erke-tei). Furthermore, the term “suzerainty” (südzerenitet) must not be used when referring to the provincial districts of a given territory. And it is invariably used when a larger country rules an affiliated smaller country with limitation (kemjij\_e-tei ejerkekü) [Барсайхан 1999: 41].

Then during the fifth round,

There is no great difference between an autonomous state (Mo. öber-iyen jasaqu ulus; Ru. avtonomnoe gosudarstvo) and an autonomous region (Mo. öber-iyen jasaqu orun; Ru. avtonomnaia strana) [Барсайхан 1999: 55, 324].

自治國與自治地方無大區別。<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the Russian representatives understood that while “autonomy” is used when referring to both states (gosudarstvo) and regions (strana), “suzerainty” is applied not to provinces of a given territory but to states, and demanded that Mongolia should be treated as a “state”, since there is little difference between states and regions. The problem lies in the fact that while in Russian there was no great difference between “gosudarstvo”

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

and “strana”, they would take on an altogether different meaning when translated into Chinese *guo* 國 and *difang* 地方. This leads us to the conclusion that the difference in meaning between two terms, which is not so great in one language, may become significant when they are translated into another language.

We find the Mongolian representatives reporting to Urga the Russian representative’s comment during the seventh round on 8 October that,

The Chinese representatives’ claim that the term “autonomy” (öber-iyen eјerkekü) should always be used in the sense of “regional autonomy” (γaјar orun-u öberiyen јasaqu) is unwarranted. We, the Russian government, regard Mongolia as an autonomous state (öber-iyen eјerkegsen ulus) [Батсайхан 1999: 50].

And the proceedings record the remark of the Mongolian representatives who persisted in regarding Mongolia as a “State”:

We will not agree on any terms to any attempt to demote the Autonomous State of Outer Mongolia (Mo. öbertegen eјerkekü γadaγadu mongγul-un ulus ; Ru. avtonomnoe gosudarctvo Vneshnei Mongolii) to the status of an autonomous region (Mo. öber-iyen јasaqu kijаγar; Ru. polozenie samupravliaiushchegosia kraia) [Батсайхан 1999: 67, 333].

無論如何、斷能允將外蒙自治降為自治之地方。<sup>26</sup>

The Russian representative also iterated in support of Mongolia,

We, the Russian government, steadfastly hold Outer Mongolia to be an individual autonomous state (Mo. öbertegen eјerkekü tusаγar ulus; Ru. otdel'noe avtonomnoe gosudarstvo); and although China exercises the limited rule (kemјiy\_e-tei eјerkelge; pravo siuzereniteta) over it, Mongolia, which possesses its own government, may act on its own within its own sphere of authority and its own territory without interference from the Chinese government [Батсайхан 1999: 68, 334].

俄國政府對於外蒙之意見、確係視為單離自治國。中國只有宗主權。故外蒙當然有政府。其領土及權力範圍以內行動自主。不受中國中央政府轄。<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> “Diqici huiyilu” 第七次會議錄 (Proceedings of the Seventh Round of Talks), in Waijiao dang’an, “Qiaketu huiyilu”, Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 03-32-174-01-007.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



Miller, Russian Consul General stationed at Urga, interpreted China’s refusal to recognize Mongolia as a “state” as stemming from a fear that Russia would ultimately annex the Mongolians into its Empire [МОЭИ: ser. III, vol. 6, part 2: no. 415].

This controversy over Mongolia as a “state” or a “region” has already been analyzed by Zhang Qixiong 張啓雄, who has pointed out that the Russian logic of “a state within a state” was viewed by the Chinese as an excuse for protecting Outer Mongolia [Zhang 1995: 217]. On the Russian side, Foreign Minister Sazonov, in a telegram addressed to Krupenskii, Russian minister at Beijing, on 18 October, referred to the Chinese argument as “playing with words with the intention of shrinking the scope of the political rights enjoyed by autonomous Mongolia” [МОЭИ: ser. III, vol. 6, part 2: no. 415].

Insisting on the nature of what Mongolia retained as the “regional autonomy”, the Chinese representative stated during the ninth round held on 20 October 1914,

There is no term “state” (ulus) within either the Russo-Mongolian Agreement or the Russo-Chinese Declaration... What is included are rights to regional autonomy (öber-iyen jasaqu) under suzerainty (уҗ еҗен-ү ерке), but the term “state” is not included [Батсайхан 1999: 66].

The Mongolian representative responded,

In the Declaration made by Russia and China, Russia, in recognizing China’s limited governance (Mo. kemjijiy\_e-tei eҗerkekü; Ru. siuzerenitet [i.e., suzerainty]) over Outer Mongolia, referred to an autonomous state’s (öbertegen eҗerkegsen ulus; avtonomnoe gosudarstvo) relation to an independent state (tusayar toytaniysan ulus; nezavisimoe gosudarstvo); the limited governance does not apply to autonomous regions (öber-iyen jasaqu җаҗар; avtonomnaia mestnost’) or districts (kiҗayar; okrug) [Батсайхан 1999: 85, 341].

蒙古代表答以按照中俄聲明文件第一條、俄國承認中國在外蒙古之宗主權、即係承認獨立國與自治國之關係、并謂宗主權一語斷難用在自治地方 (avtonomnaia mestnost’) 或自治省分 (avtonomnyi okrug)。<sup>28</sup>

In this exchange, while “autonomous” appears as “zizhi” and “avtonomnyi” throughout the Chinese and Russian versions respectively, the Mongolians applies the terms

<sup>28</sup> “Dijiuci huiyilu” 第九次會議錄 (Proceedings of the Ninth Round of Talks), in Waijiao dang’an, “Qiaketu huiyilu”, Adademia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 03-32-174-01-009.

“öbertegen eĵerkekü” to “states” and “öber-iyen ĵasaqu” to “regions” or “districts”. On that same day the Russian Representative Miller, responded to the Chinese argument regarding autonomy and suzerainty with the words, “it is an attempt to downgrade Outer Mongolia to the status of a region with the weakest semblance of autonomy” [MOЭИ: ser. III, vol. 6, part 2: no. 415].

To summarize the three interpretations of Mongolia’s “autonomy” presented at the Conference, while Mongolia insisted on being an “independent” or “autonomous state”, Russia defined it as an “autonomous state” from the perception that the term “suzerainty” could be applied to a “state”, and China claimed it to be an “autonomous region” from the perception that the term “suzerainty” only applies to “regions” (*difang*). In short, each party attempted to reconcile these two concepts with what it claimed, by manipulating minute differences among Mongolian, Russian, and Chinese interpretations.

On the terminological level of the three-party dispute, there is the Chinese *duli* being mainly rendered as “nezavisimost” in Russian, but also “samostoiatel'nost” in places. These terms were then translated into Mongolian as “tusayar toytaniĵsan” and “öbertegen toytaniqu”, respectively. However, when translating the Chinese *duli* directly into Mongolian, the result is always “ġaġĉaġar toytaniqu”, i.e. the literal translation of the term. The Chinese *zizhi* is rendered consistently in Russian as “avtonomiia”, which in turn is translated into Mongolian as “öbertegen eĵerkekü” in the case of “states”, and “öber-iyen ĵasaqu” in the case of “regions”, while the literal translation of *zizhi* into Mongolian comes out unconditionally “öber-iyen ĵasaqu”, both for “states” and “regions”.

What is at issue here is that while the Mongolian sources related to the Kyakhta Conference are peppered with terms translated from Russian and those translated from Chinese, the former were translated into Mongolian by applying the terms originating from the literal translation of the Classical Chinese, detaching their meaning from that of the original Classical Chinese terms. For example, the direct translations of the Chinese terms *zili* and *zizhu*, “öbertegen toytaniqu” and “öbertegen eĵerkekü”, both had been used for expressing “independence” in the Mongol-Tibetan Treaty of 1913, implying the absence of significant difference between the two terms. However, as “öbertegen toytaniqu” was later used to translate the Russian “samostoiatel'nost”, from the similarity between the origins of the two terms, and “öbertegen eĵerkekü” to translate the Russian “avtonomiia”, which involved “states”, in the Kyakhta Conference-related sources, the former came to be ranked above the latter.

Furthermore, “suzerainty” was translated from the Russian “siuzerenitet” into “kemĵiy\_e-tei eĵerkekü” (lit. limited governance), and from the corresponding Chinese *zongzhuquan* into “uġ eĵen-ü erke” (lit. rights of the original owner), making it almost impossible to identify the two terms as expressing the same concept.

**Translation of the Key Concepts in the Sources Related to the Kyakhta Conference**

Russian	Mongolian translated from Russian	Classical Chinese	Mongolian translated from Classical Chinese
nezavisimost'	tusaγar toγtaniγsan	<i>duli</i> 獨立	γaγčaγar toγtaniqu
samostoiatel'nost'	öbertegen toγtaniqu		
avtonomiia	öbertegen eγerkekü	<i>zizhi</i> 自治 (states)	öber-iyen ɰasaqu
	öber-iyen ɰasaqu	<i>zizhi</i> 自治 (regions)	
samouprablenie			

Of course, the Mongolian delegation was by no means unaware of the complex and often confusing political concepts being discussed, as shown by one attempt to analyze the situation during the Conference.

We, Mongolia, have insisted that 1) there are the terms, “öbertegen toγtanin” and “öber-iyen eγerkekü”, contained in the Russo-Mongolian Agreement, 2) in the Russo-Chinese Declaration, Russia recognized China’s “kemjij\_e-tei eγerkekü”(suzerainty) regarding Mongolia, and 3) there is also the term Mongolian “öber-iyen eγerkekü”, which China has recognized in the Declaration. However, in actuality [China] continues to argue that there is no term “öbertegen toγtaniqu” in the Russo-Mongolian Agreement, only the term “öber-iyen eγerkekü”.

That is to say, the Russian terms [for both “öbertegen toγtaniqu” and “öber-iyen eγerkekü”] are “aütunumi” in French, the Mongolian “öber-iyen eγerkekü” is thus expressed as “aütunumi”, in the Russo-Chinese Declaration. According the Russian-Chinese dictionary, “aütunumi” is translated as “öber-iyen ɰasaqu”.<sup>29</sup> That is why China interprets it as “öber-iyen ɰasaqu erke” (right of autonomy) within its territory.

Furthermore, in the Russo-Chinese Declaration, the Mongolian “kemjij\_e-tei erke” (limited right) is expressed in France as “südzerenitet”. In Chinese that concept is expressed as “uγ eγen-ü erke”, which has given rise to a divergence in understanding [Барсайхан 1999: 40–1].

This is the Mongolian understanding of the Chinese position, outlined previously, that

<sup>29</sup> Although the title of the “Russian-Chinese dictionary” is not specified, P. Popov’s Russo-Chinese dictionary [Попов, П. 1896] renders “avtonomiia” as *zizhi* 自治 and *ziquan* 自權.

“öber-iyen eđerkekü” (*zizhu*) only means “äütunumi” in French (Russian), which does not include the meaning of “öbertegen toytaniju” (*zili*) but rather denotes a status, expressed in Chinese political jargon as *zizhi* (öber-iyen jasaqu), which is conferred only on regions within China’s sovereign territory.

Therefore, the Mongolian term “öbertegen toytaniju öber-iyen eđerkekü”, supposed to denote “independence” in the Russo-Mongolian Agreement, came to be interpreted in Classical Chinese in a downgraded form as “regional autonomy”.

Due to such an unsolved divergence concerning the Mongolian expression for “siuzerenitet” and “avtonomiia”, the final version of the Kyakhta Treaty ended up with the Mongolian expression for the two terms being written phonetically based on French (Russian).

In a document entitled “An Explanation of the Content and Meaning of the Chinese-Russian-Mongolian Treaty” submitted to the Bogd Khaan after the signing of the Treaty, we find

The two terms, “südzerenitet” and “äütunumi ” are French expressions. While the former should be rendered “suzerainty” (uy ejen-ü erke), the latter “autonomy” (öber-iyen jasaqu) according to the Chinese, the Russians claims that “südzerenitet” means “limited rights of governance” (kemjij\_e-tei eđerkekü erke) and “äütunumi” means “ruling oneself” (öber-iyen eđerkemüi). And we, Mongolia, insists that “südzerenitet” should be translated “limited rights to govern” (kemjij\_e-tei eđerkekü erke) and “äütunumi” “ruling on one’s own” (öber-iyen eđerkekü). Thus there arised a dispute over the translation of these terms, which remained unsolved; therefore, the terms have been rendered phonetically based on the original French.<sup>30</sup>

As we have seen in the above quotation, the divergence among the Chinese, Russian, and Mongolian understandings of such concepts as “autonomy” and “suzerainty” at the Kyakhta Conference was so great as to oblige the three parties to adopt phonetic renderings, not translation, to express them; in other words, they managed to reach an agreement only by leaving space for interpreting these concepts conveniently to each country’s diplomatic position, without confirming their fundamental meaning.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Mongolian terms for the concepts of “independ-

<sup>30</sup> МҮҮГА. ФА4-Д1-ХН279-Н1.

dence” and “autonomy” were for the most part all direct translations from Classical Chinese: “γaγčaγar toγtaniqu” (*duli*), “öbertegen toγtaniqu” (*zili*), “öber-iyen eγerkekü” (*zizhu*), and “öber-iyen ĵasaqu” (*zizhi*). Among them, “öbertegen toγtaniqu” expressed the meaning of “independence” immediately after the Declaration of Independence, as its Chinese original *zili* had once denoted “independence” in the Classical Chinese terminology.

As the Classical Chinese term *zizhi* and its Russian counterpart “avtonomiia” were conceptualized in Mongolian as “öber-iyen eγerkekü” (*zizhu*) when referring to states (ulus), and the Russians also interpreted the term “siuzerenitet” (suzerainty) as involving “states”, the Mongolians and the Russians insisted that Mongolia was an “autonomous state”. Although, Korea, for example, was categorized as a “state” (*guo*) exercising “autonomy” (*zizhu*) under the “suzerainty” (*zongzhuquan*) of the Qing, the Chinese delegation insisted at the Kyatkha Conference that “suzerainty” was only applicable in the case of the “autonomy” of “regions” within Chinese territory, not the “autonomy” of “states”, thus marking a change in its definition and use of the *zongzhuquan* concept. That being said, were we actually observing a change of usage or just a tactic in diplomatic negotiating? Historian of East Asian international relations, Okamoto Takashi 岡本隆司, is of the opinion that at the time of the Conference, the Chinese were trying to tie together the concepts of “suzerainty” and “territory” in an attempt to have the former imply “Chinese sovereignty”, which was to be essentially refuted by “suzerainty” [Okamoto 2017: chap. 13].

In the present chapter, we have clarified a fairly wide gap in interpretation between the Russian “avtonomiia” and the Chinese *zizhi*, which were almost automatically translated into each other through the vocabularies rendered into Mongolian. In this way, we have observed how the involvement of a third party, like Mongolia, in negotiations between two countries that would have not always necessitated mutual understanding of basic concepts, made it necessary to debate and reconfirm those concepts. It is for this reason that East Asian history at the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which could have been easily explained in English, turned out to be far more complicated than expected, necessitating an analysis of the primary sources in various languages, when we closely investigate the details surrounding the process of the negotiations.

Here, the newly created Mongolian terms for “independence”, “öbertegen toγtaniqu” and “öber-iyen eγerkekü” originally based on the literal translation from the contemporary Chinese terms *zili* and *zizhu*, respectively, then confronted a new term, *duli*, introduced from Japan, thus causing a gap in meaning between the Mongolian and Chinese terms. It was this “time lag” in the introduction of new terms through translation that placed these concepts somewhere between “independence” and “autonomy”. Moreover, the application of the Mongolian terms literally rendered from Classical Chinese in the translation of Russian terms by no means led to unify each concept, but rather added

to the confusion. In the end, the Mongols, finally realizing the futility of expressing their own interpretation by literally translating Classical Chinese terms, created the new term, “tusayar toytanil”, which is today the official Mongolian term for “independence” (“tusayar toytaniqu” being the predicate, “to gain independence”), a phrase which first appeared at the Kyakhkta Conference. Thus this Mongolian term was a historical product as the result of the negotiation process where Mongolia, Russia, and China gathered.

It is true that the Mongolian “öber-iyen eđerkekü” (autonomy) and “uy ejen-ü erke” (suzerainty) are the terms which appeared only in the transitional period, to have been replaced by “aütunumi” and “südzerenitet” phonetically adopted from French, and are no longer part of contemporary Mongolian vocabulary. That being said, the experience of understanding the meaning of “autonomy”, “independence”, and “suzerainty” throughout the Kyakhkta Conference was an important legacy leading up to the Mongolian revolution and in the gradual process of discovering that country’s own term for “independence”. This is why the efforts made by Mongol translators to render modern concepts into their language cannot be overlooked.