

CULTURAL GENOCIDE

Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia were renowned for their wealth and splendor, containing treasures of material and intellectual culture collected during the centuries of Buddhist religion development.

Full of life with crowds of pilgrims, believers and monks, they served as major centers of culture and education as well as the community life. Datsans or theological institutes and various schools offered education in all areas of Buddhist knowledge: philosophy, medicine, astronomy, arts and mathematics.



Monasteries served as the main centers of cultural and social life attracting thousands of believers.

canons, books, records were burned and monasteries destroyed.

"Their way of education is very open and relaxed. Everyday exercises in dialectics in front of class mates or important people, the atmosphere of freedom - all these make one very vivacious, eliminates shyness and teaches to be audacious, often on the brink of being daring..." described the monastery life at the turn of century B. Baradiin, a Russian researcher of Buddhism.

But 1937 arrived and nothing of this splendor and grandeur remained. Millions of religious

The report of the Religious Affairs Department from August, 1939: "Out of 767 registered monasteries 724 have been demolished." This included more than 2,000 temples, 312 datsans or religious schools along with classes and libraries.

The final report notes that half of 5,500 buildings used for religious purposes were destroyed by 1939.

A rough estimation of the confiscated property of monasteries can be concluded from the request for "1,006 trucks (three tons each) needed to transport" to the capital city. And this included only the most valuable items like golden and silver statues, precious stones.

Much of this property was sent to the Soviet Union. Some available archive records indicate that 70 tons of copper and bronze statues were taken to Russia. Another document, a transportation permission, mentions 1,566 trucks full of Buddhist icons and statues taken in 1939 alone.



In 1941 the State Bank received 30.9 tons of gold and about 60 tons of silver. Religious chalices, icon lamps and statues alone accounted for more than 60,000 pieces and the number of saddles, harnesses, traditional knives, smoke pipes lavishly decorated with silver, gold and precious stones simply is not available.

Not much remains now of the flourishing Buddhist culture in Mongolia. Only two dozens temples remain as sad remainders of the former glory.

Under the communist regime nothing should have reminded future generations of the "builders of communism" about the past culture of the nation.



*All gold and silver that once covered
sacred temples and stupas was torn down,
melted and taken away.*

