



Herdsman to Statesman: The Autobiography of Jamsrangiin Sambuu of Mongolia

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This compelling autobiography encapsulates the profound changes that transformed the underdeveloped world in the twentieth century. Jamsrangiin Sambuu, born in 1895 to a herder family in a remote region of Mongolia, rose to become ambassador and eventually president of a haltingly industrialized and urbanized Communist country. In the process, he came to know Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, and other leading figures. Sambuu relates horrifying vignettes of the harsh and oppressive rule over Mongolia by the Chinese, the Manchus, and the Mongolian nobility and lamas until 1911. Yet his stories of exploitation and torture are balanced by a lively, picturesque, and informative portrait of traditional herding life, including diet, popular religion, marital ceremonies, and medicine.

Sambuu relates how his visceral hatred of the avaricious Mongolian Buddhist monks and nobles prompted him to join the Communist movement in the early 1920s. Valued for his education and work ethic, he rose rapidly in the Party bureaucracy, becoming ambassador to the Soviet Union during World War II and to North Korea during the Korean War. Recounting his eventful diplomatic career, Sambuu paints vivid portraits of Stalin, Anastas Mikoyan, and other prominent Soviet leaders. Enriched by a thoughtful introduction by leading scholar Morris Rossabi that sets the historical stage, this life story of a still-beloved Mongolian illuminates a world few in the West have seen.



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