Central Asian Studies

SOCIALIST AND POST-SOCIALIST MONGOLIA

NATION, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE

Edited by

Simon Wickhamsmith and Phillip P. Marzluf

Socialist and Post-Socialist Mongolia

This book reexamines the origins of modern Mongolian nationalism, discussing nation building as sponsored by the socialist Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and the Soviet Union and emphasizing in particular the role of the arts and the humanities. It considers the politics and society of the early revolutionary period and assesses the ways in which ideas about nationhood were constructed in a response to Soviet socialism. It goes on to analyze the consequences of socialist cultural and social transformations on pastoral, Kazakh, and other identities and outlines the implications of socialist nation building on post-socialist Mongolian national identity. Overall, *Socialist and Post-Socialist Mongolia* highlights how Mongolia's population of widely scattered seminomadic pastoralists posed challenges for socialist administrators attempting to create a homogenous mass nation of individual citizens who share a set of cultural beliefs, historical memories, collective symbols, and civic ideas; additionally, the book addresses the changes brought more recently by democratic governance.

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Socialist and Post-Socialist Mongolia

Nation, Identity, and Culture

**Edited by Simon Wickhamsmith
and Phillip P. Marzluf**

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Note on transliteration and Mongolian names

In transliterating *Mongol Bichig* and Cyrillic, we have used in both cases the Tibet and Himalayan Library system, with the exception of the Cyrillic *B*, which we transliterate with *V*. Tibetan transliteration follows the most-frequently used standard, established by Turrell Wylie, and Russian is transliterated according to the ALA-LC system.

Mongolian names are given using the *ovog* (patronymic or, occasionally, matronymic) initial, followed by the given name. Thus, the name of Choibalsan, who took his mother's name, Khorloo, for his *ovog* name, is written Kh. Choibalsan and indexed as Choibalsan, Kh.

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1 Introduction

Phillip P. Marzluf and Simon Wickhamsmith

The centenary of the 1921 Mongolian People's Revolution provides an excellent opportunity to examine the dynamics of culture and identity in socialist and post-socialist Mongolia. One-fifth of the way through the twenty-first century, three decades after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and a century after its own socialist revolution, Mongolia has become a site that attracts a large number of scholars from an increasingly diverse range of fields, who work on issues such as emerging democracies and civic societies, globalization, economic restructuring, and social and cultural change. Yet to carry out these studies requires cultural and historical sensitivity, an awareness of how members of a seminomadic, pastoralist culture – or of an urban population still rooted in some ways to this traditional nomadic culture – represent themselves and others and experience the physical and imaginary landscapes of their environment. It was in order to engage with this awareness and to explore how Mongolians negotiate new and alternative discourses, ideologies, and social practices while bearing in mind tradition and legacy that we initially conceived of this collection about Mongolia's twentieth- and twenty-first-century relationship with the humanities.

As the chapters in this collection demonstrate, the humanities were instrumental in developing Mongolia's new national and socialist identities through various strategies and technologies, including the adaptation of new terminology to define ideas about nationhood; language policy reforms; government and party sponsoring of literature, music, cinema, and art; and the shaping of ethnic forms of national identity. Moreover, as an approach to the academic study of Mongolia, the humanities can make an important contribution by their attention to languages, archival research, and primary texts to illuminate Mongolians' agency in responding to their changing worlds, addressing at the same time the concerns of B. Rinchen and D. Natsagdorj, among others, who feared that Mongolia would be received as intellectually backward by the West (e.g., Sodnom 1961, 16). An additional value of the humanities is to reveal the ways in which Mongolians have expressed themselves and related to their changing worlds; that is, by again focusing on archives, interviews, primary texts, and other sources, we can consider Mongolian history over the past 100 years, in Eric Hobsbawm's (2012) words, "from below," immersing ourselves in the complex interrelationship of history, culture, and identity in how individuals understand their experiences (11). As we

will address in more detail, the humanities, in other words, are well placed to explore “Mongolianness” without a need to resort to simplistic conclusions and assumptions that narrow these inquiries into an issue of identity alone.

In their attempts to bring Mongolia to the humanities and the humanities to Mongolia, the 17 international contributors to this collection offer a wide range of humanistic, transnational, and interdisciplinary research methods, including history, sociolinguistics, literary criticism, geography, film studies, and anthropology. Similarly, the contributors come from a wide range of backgrounds and scholarly fields, including those within and outside of academia, a diversity that opens up opportunities to study different strands of Mongolians’ experiences over the past 100 years. The contributors acknowledge the development of the modern Mongolian state even as they acknowledge internal forces, such as nomadic cultural traditions and practices, and external political, scholarly, and linguistic influences. In short, the diversity of voices and perspectives in this collection offers a genuine exchange of ideas and reveals the social, cultural, and political complexity that characterizes the constructions of Mongolianness; moreover, these benefits align with many Mongolians’ acceptance of a broader and more flexible range of evidence and academic inquiry, which draws as much on what is commonly accepted as on what can be explicitly referenced and proved (Wickhamsmith 2020, 14).

The main goal of this collection, then, is to showcase the ability of the humanities and social sciences to contribute to our understanding of Mongolian identity – that is, “Mongolianness” or ideas about “being Mongol” (Kaplonski 2004, 7), discourses which became especially pertinent immediately after the 1990 Democratic Revolution. It was during this transition that Mongolians actively distanced themselves from the previous socialist worldviews, symbols, and images; created or reimagined traditions and practices from the pre-socialist past; and separated themselves from non-Mongolians, including Han Chinese and other Asian groups (see Billé 2015) or “inauthentic” Mongolians, such as Inner Mongolians or Buryads (see Bulag 1998). At the same time, Mongolians navigated new global identities. Even though the past three decades have been especially rich for identity studies in Mongolia (e.g., Billé 2015; Bulag 1998; Tumursukh 2001), the socialist period, as we will see in several of the chapters in the first half of the collection, provided challenges for describing and theorizing Mongolian identity. Mongolians had to negotiate Soviet, internationalist, and modern identities with shared cultural Mongolian ideas.

The contributors to this collection offer new and alternative paths through the knotty issue of Mongolian identity, using the voices not only of political elites and historians, but of artists, poets, musicians, movie directors, linguists, scientists, pastoral women, and social media users; in particular, they explore how these various social actors participate in and circulate these ethnic and national identities. That being said, as we will explore more fully in the following two sections, describing Mongolian identity is far from clear. Despite the efforts of certain nationalist discourses, Mongolian identity – that is, identities – do not lie “out there” to be discovered as a commonsensical, unified

whole (Kaplonski 1998, 40); instead, we need to take into account the historical entanglements with groups such as the Manchu, Han Chinese, Tibetans, Russians, and Kazakhs; the ways in which historiography and the conceptual vocabulary have played a role (Atwood 1994; Kaplonski 1998); and the challenges in defining “Mongolianness” in ways that are appropriate for all groups, including Inner Mongolians, Buryad Mongolians, Mongolians in far-western Mongolia, and other non-Khalkh groups (Bulag 1998), as well as in defining “Mongolianness” in political and cultural ways (Sneath 2018). Of course, we also need to contend with the anxieties of Mongolians in the twenty-first century, who may feel that the defining conceptions of the land, culture, and language are no longer as viable in a deeply global and capitalist world.

Socialist Mongolia (1921–1990)

Ivan Sablin, Jargal Badagarov, and Irina Sodnomova’s “Khural democracy: imperial transformation and the making of the first Mongolian constitution, 1911–1924” (Chapter 2) outlines the ways in which the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR) and the 1924 Constitution emerged from the discourses, institutions, and social actors of the previous Russian and Qing Empires. Additionally, as a common theme that runs throughout the chapters in this collection, the nation-building of the MPR was, without question, strongly influenced by the Soviet Bolshevik Party and its informal relationship with the Soviet Party, yet we need to remain vigilant and tease out the complexity of these relationships and account for the contributions of Khalkh and Buryad Mongolian intellectuals and leaders. Moreover, Sablin, Badagarov, and Sodnomova reveal how this early history of the MPR was far from inevitable, and we can imagine many alternative twentieth-century “futures” for Mongolia.

Nonetheless, the impact of the MPR government and the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) commitment to Soviet socialism on Mongolian society was, depending upon who you were and where you lived, sudden and substantial, or gradual and patchy. The changes devised by the new state focused, in a more or less effective way, on social – educational, medical, and infrastructural – improvement, but while these changes were promoted as bulwarks of the new system, they were only implemented gradually and were not always easily accessible. For example, it was still easier to receive medical treatment from an herbalist (generally a Buddhist monk) in the early 1930s than from a western allopathic doctor (Bawden 1989, 146); similarly, at the same time, representatives of the MPRP expressed concerns that the Buddhist educational system was attracting more students than that of the socialist government (Pürevjav and Dashjamts 1965, 180).

Irina Morozova (2009) emphasizes the long duration that it took for the values and habits of what would become a “socialist identity” to develop, in particular among rural pastoralists. Through the example of a long travel poem written by the writer, D. Natsagdorj, in the late 1920s, Phillip P. Marzluf, in his “D. Natsagdorj, Mongolian travel writing, and ideas about national identity” (Chapter 3),

suggests how early formations of socialist identity could complement pastoralist forms and yet project young Mongolians towards more urban and European identities. Moreover, as Christopher Kaplonski (1998) and David Sneath (2018) have argued, Mongolia represents a case in which the socialist state was created before the socialist identity. In other words, a new national identity had to be constructed retroactively, recasting an elite, political notion of prerevolutionary identity and generalizing it for non-elites, a transcultural project in which Mongolian socialist leaders and intellectuals, heavily influenced by Soviet ideas and Russian Buryads such as Tsebeen Jamtsarno, adapted existing terms or created new ones to describe a highly Sovietized paradigm of national identity.

We should not lose track of the irony of how elite Mongolians, having initially invoked the discourse of Bolshevik revolution and sought Soviet support to untangle Mongolia from China (see Sablin, Badagarov, and Sodnomova in this collection) had by the late 1930s found themselves inexorably enmeshed in the Soviet Union's own process of transformation into a Stalinist dictatorship. At the same time, we should recognize that it was during this time that Mongolia became an object of academic and intellectual discourse through the kind of scientific exploration essayed by scholars and adventurers such as Andrei Simukov, the subject of Mary Rossabi and Morris Rossabi's "Andre Simukov and Mongolian nationalism" (Chapter 4). Such exploration, mapping, linguistic research, naturalism, and archaeology, shared through journals available to the world beyond the Soviet bloc, opened Mongolia to the world, with universities such as Harvard, Indiana University, the University of Washington, SOAS University of London, and the University of Bonn opening departments in Mongolian Studies during the Cold War in which scholars worked to develop expertise in Mongolian language, culture, and history.

The ideological movement of Mongolia towards the Soviet Union, and its increasing economic and infrastructural dependence upon it, intensified during World War II. The war effort occupied Mongolia's resources and labor almost entirely, necessitating that the hearts and minds of Mongolian citizens turn likewise towards Soviet models, which came to appear in all aspects of daily life in Mongolia. Among other significant changes, a process of collectivization was instigated on the Soviet model after the war. While the policy itself was successfully implemented, its effectiveness was far less obvious. The MPRP had failed in its initial attempt at collectivization in the late 1920s following its Seventh Congress (1928), but the need to confirm the dependency on and "friendship" with the Soviet Union required that the renewed effort succeed. The centrality of the appearance of reality (as opposed to actual reality) to the overarching ideological concept of Socialist Realism meant that Mongolians were presented to themselves as universally supportive of the Soviet Union, even when that support was neither in their interests, nor necessarily in their beliefs and values. The development of industrial towns such as Erdenet and Darkhan during the 1960s and 1970s reflected neither nomadic life nor the traditional Mongolian treatment of the land, nor did the successful training and eight-day orbit in Salyut 6 during 1978 of the cosmonaut L. Gürragchaa reflect the true pace of Mongolia's development

at the time. The vital role of literature in convincing readers about the benefits of socialist reform is reflected in Simon Wickhamsmith's "D. Sengee and the birth of Mongolian socialist realism" (Chapter 6), which examines how D. Sengee, a writer selected by Kh. Choibalsan to develop literature in the immediate aftermath of the Great Repression, invested Soviet Socialist Realism with his highly poetic understanding of Mongolia's nomadic culture, a process which could still be sensed, more than three decades after Sengee's death, in the intensely nationalist poetry of O. Dashbalbar.

While the lives of herders certainly improved, especially in terms of the development of the rural infrastructure (see Humphrey and Sneath 1999), improvement came at a social and cultural price. The complex system of traditional culture and arts, developed over many hundreds of years through interactions within and outside the Mongolian homeland, shifted from point to point with the corresponding shifts in political power and policy. As was the case in most other socialist countries (before and after the death of Stalin), traditional artforms were placed in the service of the state, and their history and nature morphed and warped to fit the current ideological mold. Several contributors to this collection, therefore, examine the ways in which the Mongolian uptake of socialism influenced what remained of Mongolian nomadic traditions during this period. Sunmin Yoon's chapter, "Shadows of a heroic singer: the legacy of J. Dorjdagva and its impact on the Mongolian long-song tradition" (Chapter 10) explores how the need during the Soviet period for cultural "heroes" to define and promote folk genres has continued into the present, while Baatarnaran Tsetsentsolmon, in her "'Running in My Blood': the musical legacy of state socialism in Mongolia" (Chapter 9), describes how the reliance on Soviet cultural forms brought changes in cultural capital. Tsetsentsolmon examines how identities were taken up by an elite social class formed by those who directed themselves toward European classical music models, as opposed to those who focused more on the kind of professionalized folk music described by Yoon.

Perhaps such ambiguities lie at the heart of Mongolia's "socialist identity." While there were clearly additional political and economic reasons why the initial collectivization process in the late 1920s failed, there was definitely resistance by livestock herders who resented the restriction on their independence. Moreover, government-sponsored atheism and secularism never managed to oust Buddhism in Mongolia as it had the Orthodox church in the Soviet Union (Kaplonski 2014, 38), and even Choibalsan preserved an altar in his *ger* until 1928. Yet, the MPRP and government authorities attempted to form a mass, homogenous, and centralized identity based on a socialist worldview. The most obvious and long-lasting of these efforts was the replacement of the traditional vertical script, *Mongol Bichig*, with a form of Cyrillic adapted to the Mongolian language. Myagmar Saruul-Erdene's "Official script changes in socialist Mongolia" (Chapter 5) demonstrates the intensely political nature of script reform throughout the first half of the socialist period. Zoljargal Enkh-Amgalan, in "'Faces of the State': film and state propaganda in socialist Mongolia" (Chapter 7), shows how actively the state reached out to Mongolian viewers to mandate ideal images of socialist

women and discredit religious beliefs and nonscientific herding practices, while Uranchimeg Tsultemin describes in “‘Capitalist Art’ and the invention of tradition in twentieth-century Mongolia” (Chapter 8) how an exhibition of young painters triggered a fierce debate about the nature of image, and so of representation, in socialist society, and led to a new genre of Mongolian art.

Post-socialist Mongolia (from 1990)

Although we entitle this collection, *Socialist and Post-Socialist Mongolia*, we do so mindful of some of the connotations and consequences attached to the term, “post-socialist.” We use this term for the most part as a neutral term to define the history of Mongolia (Müller 2019), yet for many audiences – in particular young Mongolians who may no longer appreciate the historical and cultural baggage of the socialist era and may doubt the extent to which it helps describe their daily experiences (Humphrey 2003, 13–14) – the term may be far from neutral. When it comes to examining the identity-based social and cultural changes, though, in particular those in the aftermath of the 1990 Democratic Revolution, traces of the socialist period still cling to the cultural practices of many Mongolians, yet they appear as receding layers, lying unevenly across the traces of the prerevolutionary distant past and underneath the dominant and emergent new cultural and social values of democratic, capitalist, and global Mongolia. Contemporary Mongolian cultural practices, in other words, are palimpsests, inscribed with – and underwritten – by various cultural discourses.

To demonstrate this palimpsestic quality, let’s look at a few examples. Alexander Diener and Joshua Hagen (2013) depict Ulaanbaatar as a landscape that intertwines prerevolutionary spaces, socialist and modernist architecture, and global and contemporary buildings. In other words, three historical periods interact with each other; yet, that being said, there are recent concerns that the post-socialist urban landscape may be erasing prerevolutionary and early socialist architecture (Tseesüren 2020). In this contemporary space, another example is to consider the three scripts of the literacy landscape of Ulaanbaatar, comprised of *Mongol Bichig* (the prerevolutionary script), Cyrillic Mongolian (the socialist and modernist script), and Latin (the global and contemporary script). Although, as Saruul-Erdene shows in his chapter, the historical contexts of these scripts is far more complicated than this – *Mongol Bichig*, for one, was still a viable script up until the early 1950s and was official recognized again as part of the “glasnost” (*il tod*) of the late 1980s by the MPRP (Marzluf 2017, 53). As Sender Dovchin’s “Language, identity, and relocalization: social media users in post-socialist Mongolia” (Chapter 12) indicates, young male Mongolian social media users exploit the social logics that guide their use of scripts and global loan words. In post-socialist Mongolia, young Mongolians perform male friendships through the use of English loan words, and they also express feelings of national pride and patriotism through the use of Japanese code-switching. A final example will clarify our point. A contemporary elementary-school social sciences textbook, in which the Mongolian government is presenting an explicit identity curriculum, includes Ch.

Chimid's poem, "I am a Mongolian" (*Bi Mongol khün*), which presents highly emotive imagery of pastoralism, traditionalism, and the Mongolian "native land" (Gardelle and Zhao 2019, 12). Here again is the palimpsest at work: a contemporary, post-socialist text cites a socialist poem – Ch. Chimid was an important poet and dramatist, who won a state award in 1962 (*Area Handbook for Mongolia* 1970) – which appeals to Mongolians' patriotism through traditional pastoralist symbols and imagery. As these examples show, contemporary Mongolian identity consists of layers of histories and cultural practices. That is, if we freeze a contemporary identity formation into an ahistorical "snapshot" (see Blommaert 2010), we run the risk of ignoring the complexity of the social and cultural forces interweaving themselves into that identity. Tsetsentsolmon, in her "'Running in My Blood': the musical legacy of state socialism in Mongolia" (Chapter 9), shows the post-socialist implications for contemporary Mongolians: their attitudes towards music have been informed, in part, by the cultural logic that structured musical tastes in the socialist period.

As we consider the historical complexity of identity formation in the post-socialist period, we, similarly, need to avoid creating a historical monolith of the post-socialist period. Former US Ambassador to Mongolia Joseph E. Lake and Michael Allen Lake's "Mongolia in Transition: 1986–1990" (Chapter 11) illuminates the interactions between Mongolian elites and United States diplomats from an insider's perspective. Similar to Sablin, Badagarov, and Sodnomova's contribution (Chapter 2), the Lakes remind us, importantly, that Mongolian history is not inevitable: there were many possibilities for Mongolian governance and models of national identity as they reacted to the dissolution of the USSR. In fact, in his memoirs of this period, P. Ochirbat (2018), the first "post-socialist" president, identifies the hunger strikes by Mongolian Democratic Coalition protesters during the spring of 1990, one of the steps towards the nonviolent resolution of the Democratic Revolution, as a uniquely kairotic moment (129); Ochirbat states, however, that they may have not been a successful strategy at a different historical time. The search for diplomatic interaction with "third neighbors" such as the United States, Japan, and South Korea to offset the dependence on Mongolia's two gigantic neighbors, Russia and China, is also tied to ideas about national identity; that is, in the immediate post-socialist period, the need to sever financial, political, social, and cultural ties with Russia and the recent Soviet past and negotiate the economic dominance of China. Alicia Campi (2019) summarizes the diplomatic efforts to link Mongolia with, among other possibilities, the Central Asian states, Japan, India, and the United States. Each one of these has implications for identity at the national scale.

Likewise, we must recognize the specific historical contexts of identity work in the post-socialist period. Holly R. Barcus, in her "Boundaries and peripheries: shifting frames of identity, territoriality, and belonging among Kazakh ethnic minorities in Mongolia" (Chapter 13), reveals how Kazakh national identity in Mongolia interacts with Mongolian (as well as those of the Kazakhstan nation state) national identities differently throughout the post-socialist period. For example, directly after the 1990 Democratic Revolution and the collapse of the

USSR, many Kazakhs emigrated to Kazakhstan yet then returned, building their Kazakh-Mongolian identity in the two far western aimags in Mongolia. Barcus shows how Kazakhs have, more recently, been moving to Ulaanbaatar and navigating their peripheral Kazakh ethnic minority identities with their central Mongolian civic national identities.

In terms of post-socialist Mongolian identities, the most significant new identity formation has been a “traditionalist” one, in which elites and government institutions have offered the images and symbols of prerevolutionary traditionalism, focusing on the authority of Chinggis Khaan; the “nomad” as a unique, universal, essential, and exceptional symbol of Mongolians; ideas about the land, culture, and language; and new ways of conducting historiography to overturn socialist histories. Humphrey and Sneath (1999), Campi (2019), Orhon Myadar and James Deshaw Rae (2014), and others have revealed how Mongolian nomadic and traditional pastoralism grounded post-socialist Mongolia in the decade after the new democratic state became legitimated, even though the government pursued international financial aid that exacerbated the growing inequality between rural and urban Mongolians (Campi 2019, 52–55). David Sneath (2018), for example, reported the emergence of pastoralism as an individual and practical response to navigate the economic contraction after the withdrawal of Soviet support and the transition to a free-market system. Bat-Ochir Bold (2001), in his history of Mongolian nomadism, indicates that post-socialist pastoralism is a new form, one completely privatized without any state or elite support: “As a novelty of history, livestock keepers have been left totally isolated” (162). Bold’s use of “novelty” is important to emphasize here: these traditionalist, pastoralist identities in the post-socialist period are new in that they may refer to symbols, images, and precedents of the distant past, yet they are not identities that were waiting and suppressed during the socialist period (or during the two centuries of Manchu colonial rule), but they are new ways of forming a Mongolian identity in a global, democratic, capitalist, and increasingly precarious world (see Kaplonski 2004; Marzluf 2017; Myadar and Rae 2014). On the other hand, as Ariell Ahearn shows in “Milk and human-animal relations in contemporary Mongolia” (Chapter 14), members of pastoralist communities in contemporary Mongolia continue to maintain traditional herding practices and adhere to the traditional relationships between human beings and the animals with whom they live.

Importantly, these traditionalist identities respond to different historical contexts within the post-socialist period and, consequently, different Mongolian anxieties, which have implications for the ways in which “Mongolianness” is defined and how inclusive this definition is (Billé 2015; Bulag 1998; Tumursukh 2001). One version of this form of traditionalism was exemplified by that of Dashbalbar, a poet and a member of Parliament during the first decade of the post-socialist period and the founder of the nationalist Mongolian Traditional United Party (see Kohn 2006). Dashbalbar defines “Mongolianness” in terms of three qualities: the “homeland” – that is, the borders of contemporary Mongolia – language, and customs, which parallels “Khel, Khil, Mal,” (Words, Borders, Herds), the writer Z.

Dorj's (2011) well-known three-part formula for defining Mongolian identity (see Myadar and Rae 2014, 569). According to these nationalist positions, Mongolians need to defend their borders, their language and culture, and their nomadic and pastoralist cultural practices. Without these three components, Mongolians fail to be Mongolian. For Dashbalbar, his position stems from post-socialist anxieties, such as the penetration of the borders by Russian horse-thieves in the north (Dorj 2011) and tainted Chinese products from the south (Billé 2015), urbanization, the influence of foreign investment, Mongolian emigration, property ownership by non-Mongolians, and female sexual purity (Tumursukh 2001). Two quotations will clarify Dashbalbar's (2008) position:

My homeland is full of foreigners, they have studied my mountains, steppes, meadows, Hangai and deserts, they have begun to plow them up. For Mongolian girls, foreign men are Buddhas, and Mongolian men are devils.

(276)

If we had been an agricultural nation, we would already have disappeared. And, if we had been an industrial nation, we would also have disappeared. We are not Europeans, we are not Russians, we are not Chinese, and we are not Americans. For that reason alone, we have remained. We remain, with our nomadic civilization, stuck between two great settled nations and have, over many summers, protecting our independence, developed the great project of the state, namely that we Mongols move nomadically, we move but we do not leave our homeland.

(330)

These anxieties continue to play out in post-socialist discourses, including fears about the environment and climate change (e.g., "Mongolia: A Toxic Warning" 2019), the role of Chinese investment in the mining industry (Campi 2019), and rumors about the absorption of Mongolia into China in 2049 as part of the Chinese Communist Party's 100-year master plan (e.g., Green 2019). As 21,000 Mongolians have emigrated to the United States, a figure that does not include the number of their children ("Mongolians in the U.S." 2017), Mongolians are especially anxious about the ways in which these young Mongolians will identify with their homeland (one, indeed, that they may not know), language, and customs.

As Dashbalbar's second quotation shows, the center figure that grounds "authentic" Mongolian identity is the pastoralist nomad, to the extent that urban Mongolians may qualify their level of "Mongolianness" through the ways in which they compare themselves with rural Mongolian pastoralists (see Watterson 2014, 3). Yet, even though we do so with some trepidation, remembering that many Mongolians hold strong emotional links to these identity-rich images and symbols, we cannot forget that these are exactly that – discourses, rhetorical statements, images, and symbols. As Myadar (2011) has contended, the central figure of the Mongolian nomad may be a myth, a rhetorical construction, a way to brand

a national identity and to differentiate Mongolian identities from those of non-Mongolians. Myadar (2011) encapsulates her argument in the following:

The essentialised and romanticised construction of Mongolia as the “timeless home of nomads” has endured – despite the fact that “nomadic” hardly describes modern Mongolia or the majority of its people. Rather, the Mongolian landscape and Mongolian herders are used to construct and perpetuate the romantic, if medieval, portrayal of Mongolia in order to serve the need of outsiders for an imagined Other and the need of Mongolians for a cultural demarcation and social bond.

(336)

As Myadar’s intervention indicates, readers of this collection need to come to grips with the fact that Mongolian identity is far from a completed, closed, inevitable, and ahistorical commonsense definition. Mongolian identity is constantly in negotiation and in a state of being reimagined. However, we cannot ignore the fact that given these global threats to commonsensical ideas about identity, Mongolian readers may find attempts to complicate or reject these “national populist projects” (Sneath 2018, 36) to be particularly disorienting.

Conclusion

We can learn a great deal from the statuary at the political heart of a nation. In 1991, the statue of Josef Stalin was removed from in front of Ulaanbaatar’s National Library and replaced by one of Rinchen, the foremost socialist intellectual; in 2012, Vladimir Lenin’s statue was removed from its place near to the MPRP Headquarters and the prestigious Ulaanbaatar Hotel, and replaced by that of the celebrated writer, Natsagdorj. Meanwhile, just after his murder in 1998, a statue of S. Zorig, one of the leaders of the Democratic Revolution in 1990, was unveiled to the south-west of Sükhbaatar Square. The placement of Zorig’s monument was intentional, as it counterbalances the statue of Choibalsan, which still stands before the main building of the Mongolian National University north-east of the square. And the most recent addition, Chinggis Khaan, sits in the center at the entrance to the Parliament Building, watching over the statue of D. Sükhbaatar at the center of the square and watching over the city and over the most recent generations of Mongolians who may aspire to trace their own lineage back to his (see Myadar 2016).

The chapters in this book, while they indicate that Mongolia’s path may not be straightforward, and despite reasonable concerns surrounding the way in which Mongolian culture and society will pursue this path as the twenty-first century continues, nonetheless reveal Mongolians negotiating traditional symbols, values, beliefs, and habits with those of globalism and hyper-capitalism. This dynamic and open-minded attitude is no better exemplified than in the recent global success of the folk-metal band, The Hu. From one viewpoint, The Hu are a classic example of the genre. The paradox of their slightly camp hyper-masculinity,

their genuine musical ability and dramatic stage presence, and their devoted and engaged fanbase do not really distinguish them from many of the more successful metal bands. However, their Mongolianness – their appearance as would-be Chinggisid warriors, the guttural emphasis of their amplified lyrics, their use of *morin khuur*, *limbe*, and *khöömei*, their primal and shamanic performance – makes them not only othered, and thereby alluring, but also ambassadors for modern Mongolia to people who might have no knowledge of Mongolia beyond Chinggis Khaan. They offer, then, a bridge into Mongolian culture for non-Mongolians, but through their success abroad, they have become a source of pride for Mongolians. So much so, in fact, that in November 2019, President Kh. Battulga awarded the band Mongolia's highest honor, the Order of Chinggis Khaan ("The Order of Chinggis Khaan" 2019).

The Hu, much like Ulaanbaatar's public statuary, and much like this book, offers a snapshot of contemporary Mongolia through the filter of the immediate and distant past, while also asking "whither Mongolia?" Thirty years of democracy has transformed the country, but today there remain questions – about Mongolia's role and place within Asia, about how tradition and innovation are to be negotiated, about the relationship between the new urban majority and the now minority rural community of livestock herders, and about the place of national arts and culture in an increasingly global and homogenous world. As editors, we hope that these chapters will encourage greater reflection, both on Mongolia and on other countries undergoing similar transitions, and greater engagement between Mongolian and non-Mongolian scholars, as we grapple with issues of identity, culture, and history over the decades to come.

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2 Khural democracy

Imperial transformations and the making of the first Mongolian constitution, 1911–1924

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Introduction

On November 26, 1924, the First Great Khural of Mongolia adopted the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) (*Bügd Nairamdakh Mongol Ard Ulsyn Ündsen khuuli* or *bügüde nairamdukhū mongghol arad ulus-un ündüsün khauli*), one of the earliest constitutions in Asia.¹ Its preamble appealed to the legitimacy of the deceased Bogd Khan but declared that from now on there would be no one-man rule and that all supreme state power would belong to the State Great Khural (*Ulsyn Ikh Khural* or *ulus-un yeke khural*) and the government elected by it (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009, 2). The word *khural* could be translated as “assembly,” “parliament,” and “congress.” The text, which in its Russian version used the word *khuraldan* (*khuraldaan*, also “assembly” or “congress”) and called the body the Great People's Khuraldan² (Vaksberg 1925, 40), made the State Great Khural similar to the Congress of Soviets in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR), as outlined in its 1918 Constitution, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), as stated in its 1924 Constitution. Between the MPR State Great Khurals and the USSR Congresses of Soviets, the Small Khural and the Central Executive Committee were vested with supreme authority. These bodies, however, were also nonpermanent, and supreme authority belonged to their presidiums of a few people, although in the MPR's case it was exercised jointly with the Cabinet (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009, 8; Rossiiskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Federativnaia Sovetskaia Respublika 1918; Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 1924; Vaksberg 1925).

Valentin Aleksandrovich Riazanovskii, a Russian law scholar who was then based in the USA, viewed the adoption of the 1924 MPR Constitution as a step in the evolution of Mongolian law and as the first document of the country's modern law (Riasanovsky 1948, 177). More recently, Christopher Atwood stressed the introduction of regular elections in the MPR as a major feature that made it different from and, arguably, more modern than the Japanese-dominated regime in Inner Mongolia, which still had to rely on princely authority. The extremely violent anti-religious and economic aspects of the Soviet version of modernity in the MPR (Atwood 2010, 390–91), however, challenge the optimistic view on the institutional developments of the MPR's first decades.

Whereas the introduction of elections may be seen as a step towards broader liberty, the 1924 MPR Constitution, which was written by the Russian jurist Petr Vasil'evich Vsesviatskii (1884–1938) and approved by a committee including the Buryads (Buryad-Mongols) Elbeg-Dorji Rinchino (1888–1938) and Tsebeen Jamtsarano (1880–1942), the Kazakh Turar Ryskulov (1894–1938), and the Khalkha Balingiin Tserendorj (1868–1928) (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2), corresponded to the nonprogressive Soviet sham and nominal constitutionalism (Medushevsky 2006). The 1924 MPR Constitution was a sham constitution, just like its 1918 or 1924 Soviet counterparts, because the rare and short assemblies only had sanctioning authority without time for proper deliberation and legislation. Over the 1920s and the 1930s, the regimes in the MPR and the RSFSR (USSR) also proved nominally constitutional, because it was the extraconstitutional party authorities that steered the government. The constitutions had little to no effect on the party policies and in fact may have facilitated them by providing the easily steerable small, ostensibly representative bodies. In this respect, *khural* “democracy” can be seen as a vernacular version of Soviet “democracy,” in which neither *khural* nor *soviets* (councils) had any significant authority.

While few would disagree that the MPR was a Soviet satellite state, or perhaps even a “prototype” for modern satellite states (Lattimore 1956, 39), the predominance of socialist ideology and the inclusion of Mongolia into the informal Soviet empire (with the USSR being the formal one) was certainly not the only possible scenario envisioned by indigenous Mongolian and Soviet politicians before and during the adoption of the 1924 Constitution. This chapter suggests analyzing its

Figure 2.1 Delegates and guests of the First Great Khural, Niislel Khüree (Ulaanbaatar), November 1924.

Source: Genkin and Ryskulov (1925, iv, 8).

Figure 2.2 Delegates and guests of the First Great Khural, Niisfel Khüree (Ulaanbaatar), November 1924, close-up. Left to right: Bazar Baradiin, Mikhei Erbanov, Turar Ryskulov, Elbeg-Dorji Rinchino, Balingiin Tserendorj, Agvan Dorjiev.

Source: Genkin and Ryskulov (1925, iv, 8).

genesis within the context of the global imperial crisis of the 1900s and 1910s and, more specifically, of the Russian/Soviet and Qing/Chinese imperial transformations. Such an approach makes the analysis different from the nation-centric narratives of Mongolian, Chinese, and Russian histories by going beyond the discussion of external influences and foreign policy of disjointed countries (Baabar 2005; Kotkin and Elleman 2015; Rupen 1964). Instead, it stresses the role of the entangled historical phenomena, the intersections of the imperial and postimperial regimes, and the heterogeneity of Mongolian and Soviet political discourses.

In the 1900s and 1910s, both the Russian/Soviet and Qing/Chinese imperial polities – consisting of overlapping composite social spaces (Gerasimov et al. 2009) – underwent imperial revolutions, in which previously marginalized groups sought to reshape the existing power asymmetries. In both cases, the attempted reconfiguration of the imperial spaces through parliamentarism, featuring ethno-national representation, failed. At the same time, the polities coming out of the transformations – the USSR and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) – institutionalized minority nations through autonomy, but just like in the case of constitutionalism, federalism (in the Soviet case) and autonomism (in both cases) proved sham and nominal (Bandeira 2020; Brophy 2012; Gerasimov 2017; Heberer 1989, 17; Sablin and Semyonov 2018; Semyonov 2009). Some Mongolic-speaking groups remained part of the two transformed imperial polities, but the MPR’s formally independent status, affirmed by the 1924 Constitution, was recognized by both the USSR and the PRC in the 1940s, which certainly made the document influential in the long-term perspective despite its sham and nominal aspects, especially since there were plans to include Outer Mongolia into either the USSR or a possible Chinese federation (Luzianin 2003, 155–56).

If discussed from the standpoint of the imperial transformations, paying attention to both the larger changes in the former Russian and Qing empires and the

localized agency in Mongolia, the 1924 MPR Constitution was a transimperial document. It was a product of the Russian and Qing imperial transformations, which were manifested in the agency of both indigenous and external actors, in the intersections between languages and discourses, and in the institutional entanglements. Yet the role of the Russian imperial transformation proved more significant. Mongolia became entangled in the Russian imperial revolution through Buryad agency, imperial policies, and the introduction of governmental institutions from the Russian context, although under Mongolian names. The MPR, as constituted in 1924, proved a product of the Soviet imperialism of “free nations” and one of the earliest building blocks in the informal Soviet empire that did not claim formal sovereignty over its dependencies but demanded structural adjustments, similar to the informal Japanese and American empires of the twentieth century (Duara 2007). Although the concept of *khural* was brought into modern political discourse by indigenous politicians, the 1924 Constitution made it into a major element of the Soviet structure in the making.

At the same time, *khural* as a Soviet-like congress was not an external institution for the Buryad makers of the 1924 Constitution. Congresses, accompanied by permanent *de jure* executive but *de facto* omnipotent committees, can be traced to the Russian *zemstvo* (“local” or “rural”) self-government that featured short assemblies (*sobranie*) once a year and standing executive administrations (*uprava*) (Emmons and Vucinich 1982). Congresses that assembled for religious, national, and professional self-government and the committees they elected, including the congresses of soviets of workers’, soldiers’, and peasants’ deputies and the executive committees, became the prime form of political self-organization during the Russian Revolution of 1917. A version of such institutions, the All-Buryad Congresses and the standing Buryad-Mongol National Committee (Burnatskom), was the government of the Buryad-Mongol Autonomy (1917–1919), while Rinchino and Jamtsarano rose to political prominence as chairmen of the Burnatskom. Even though Jamtsarano offered an alternative constitution draft, which would make *khural* a more potent parliament, the congress-like institution, introduced by the 1924 Constitution, was certainly not new to his political experience, and the standing committee can be seen as an analogy to the Burnatskom. *Khural* as a politically powerless institution was also not new to the Mongolian context, since in 1914–1919 there was the bicameral State Khural, an appointed consultative assembly, in the Outer Mongolian Autonomy (1911/1915–1919).

In the following, the chapter discusses the concept of *khural*, the history of assemblies in the Mongolic-speaking contexts at the time of the imperial transformations, and the development of the Mongolian constitution (as a concept rather than the 1924 text) with special attention to actors, discourses, and institutions. The main sources include the published and unpublished documents pertaining to Mongolian political history, such as the draft and alternative versions of the 1924 Constitution, legal acts of the Bogd Khan’s government, international treaties, the minutes of the First Great Khural of Mongolia, and supplementary documents. The chapter also benefits from extensive research literature in Mongolian, Russian, and English.

Discursive and historical contexts

Diverse Mongolic-speaking populations had been incorporated into the Romanov and Qing empires over the seventeenth century, with the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689) formally establishing the international boundary between the two empires in Inner Asia.³ The Oirads (Kalmyks) and Buryad-Mongols became the largest Mongolic-speaking groups in the Russian Empire, while Khalkhas, Barguts, Khorchins, Chakhars, and other groups remained part of Mongolia and other divisions of the Qing Empire. Although the different Mongolic-speaking groups were integrated into the two different imperial governance structures, they retained considerable degrees of self-government in administrative, economic, and religious terms. The interactions between different Mongolic-speaking groups continued until the twentieth century, despite the distances between them and their belonging to different imperial formations, and were stimulated by the spread of Tibetan Buddhism, predominantly of the Gelug Tradition, across most of them.

The Qing administration established the division of Mongolia into the Outer and Inner parts. In the 1630s, the Qing established the separate Mongolian banners (appanages), and in 1691 further banners were established for the Khalkhas. The banners consolidated the boundaries between the Mongolian and Han Chinese populations, as the populations were not allowed to leave them. Already by the early eighteenth century, however, Han Chinese settlement began in Inner Mongolia, gradually accelerating over the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Like Tibet and Xinjiang, Inner and Outer Mongolia were administered by the Lifan Yuan and governed by ambans (viceroys). The Mongolian nobility became integrated in the Qing structures. Outer Mongolia, however, retained broader administrative autonomy compared to Inner Mongolia and Hulunbuir (Barga), which belonged to Manchuria in administrative terms. Furthermore, Outer Mongolia had considerable religious autonomy from both Beijing and Lhasa, with the recognition of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu reincarnates as spiritual leaders of the Khalkhas since the seventeenth century. During the New Policies (1901–1912), the Qing government started full-scale Han Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia, which contributed to the rise of insurgencies there (Atwood 2004, 30–32, 93–94, 267).

In the Russian Empire, the Buryads in the Baikal region and the Kalmyks in European Russia were divided by thousands of kilometers and belonged to different administrative divisions (also in religious terms). Western and Eastern Buryads were further divided in administrative terms between the Irkutsk and Transbaikalian provinces, and, since 1822, subdivided into self-governing units of the Steppe Dumas (councils). Although the imperial government had recognized the elected Pandito Khambo Lamas as the leaders of the Eastern Siberian Buddhists since the 1760s, official regulations limited the spread of Buddhism to the west of Baikal and within Transbaikalia. At the same time, the regulations consolidated the religious autonomy of Buryad Buddhism under the non-reincarnate Khambo Lamas independent from Lhasa. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian government engaged in Russification and Christianization

efforts and, since the late nineteenth century, started mass peasant settlement of Siberia, including the Baikal region. In the 1890s and 1900s, the Steppe Duma self-government was abolished, while the new land regulations, adopted during the same period, pushed the Buryads into a marginalized position, with their lands being seized for settlement (Sablin 2016, 23–4, 49).

The contextualized development of different Mongolian languages and dialects under the different imperial regimes and in distant parts of Eurasia contributed to the diversification of terminology pertaining to assemblies. The word *khural* has been used as a general term for gatherings and appeared in the earliest extant texts, such as the *Secret History of Mongols* (Rachewiltz 1972, 300), and continued to be used for religious ceremonies as well (Sneath and Kaplonski 2010, 1:676). Other terms such as *chuulgan*, *tsuglaan*, *tsuglaar*, *zövlöl*, *zövlögöön*, *eye*, *khuiiv*, *duguilan*, *sugundui*, *khuraldaan*, *khuraldai*, *khurilta*, *düme*, and *sanal* also appeared in written documents. The word *chuulgan* had been used in the Great (Oirad-Mongol) Codex of 1640 (Munkh-Erdene 2010) and then throughout Qing and Russian imperial contexts up to the early twentieth century. The word *khuraldaan* was used in the 1727 Treaty of Kyakhta, which consolidated the Russian–Qing boundary and provided more detailed transboundary regulations (Amarsanaa et al. 2010, 207). In the Eastern Buryad context, along with *suglaan* (used across Siberia), another Mongolic word was used in the Steppe Duma context, namely *shuulgan* < **cighulghan* (“assembly,” “forum,” or “sejm”).⁴ The word *düme* was also used for the Steppe Dumas (Badagarov 2017, 8).

In the late nineteenth century, the Russian and Qing imperial contexts became increasingly entangled. This owed to the reorientation of Russia’s expansion to Central, Inner, and East Asia after its defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856). The expansion into the Qing territory became especially intense immediately after the war, culminating in the annexation of Outer Manchuria during the Amur Acquisition of 1858–1860, and then again with the railway construction and the Manchurian concessions in the late nineteenth century. Russian expansion in Mongolia was not as extensive as that in Manchuria. The Russian Consulate in Khüree (Ikh Khüree, Niislel Khüree, Urga, Ulaanbaatar since 1924) and a postal network, used by Russian merchants, were established in the 1860s. In the 1890s, however, the expansion effort intensified, with the first ideas of incorporating Mongolia into Russia being voiced at the court by the Buryad Petr Aleksandrovich Badmaev. About the same time, the Russian government also established relations with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama through the Buryad monk Agvan Dorjiev. The ideas of economic expansion and the utilization of religious connections were accompanied by the increasing research of Mongolia by the imperial scholars, who at the turn of the twentieth century started working with several Buryad informants and recent graduates of Russian universities. Jamtsarano and other Buryad scholars conducted extensive fieldwork and taught Mongolian language, contributing to Mongolia becoming a major focus of the imperial Asian Studies (Andreev 2004; Sablin 2016, 56–8; Tolz 2011).

The abolition of the Steppe Dumas, Russification, Christianization, and Russian settler colonialism contributed to Buryad political activism during the First

Russian Revolution (1905–1907). Buryad intellectuals, clan elites, and religious figures participated in congresses, sent deputations, and submitted petitions to the imperial authorities. Jamtsarano was among those who petitioned for religious freedom and education in Buryad. Although no indigenous self-government was reestablished, the petitions bore some fruit, such as broader religious freedom in the Russian Empire since 1905 and the inclusion of a representative of the indigenous peoples of Transbaikalia into the second convocation of the new Russian parliament (the State Duma) in 1907 (Kuras 2011; Montgomery 2011). Some Buryads went beyond petitions. According to Rinchino, he participated in illegal activities of the Social Democrats under Boris Zakharovich Shumiatskii (1886–1938) (Rinchino 1994, 10).

The Buryad representation in the Second State Duma proved brief, as it was dissolved in 1907. Yet it contributed to the integration of Buryad intellectuals into the wider imperial debates. Similar to many other minority politicians, Bato-Dalai Ochirov, the Buryad deputy, joined the liberal opposition of the Constitutional Democratic Party. The representatives of the imperial peripheries who assembled in the First and Second State Duma discussed their similar grievances, revolving around Russification and underrepresentation in governance, and many of them agreed that the asymmetric empire had to be reorganized into a federation or include national and regional autonomies. Even though the restrictive election law of 1907 eliminated special representation for the Transbaikalia's indigenous population, Buryad intellectuals continued to be part of the debates on decentralization. The State Duma deputies and other regional intellectuals from Siberia held discussions in the Siberian caucus and Siberian Regionalist publications, with Jamtsarano and Mikhail Nikolaevich Bogdanov (1878–1919), a Western Buryad, polemicizing on the future of Buryad self-organization. Jamtsarano welcomed many Western ideas, such as socialism, but suggested relying on indigenous culture (language and religion), while Bogdanov supported complete Westernization. Jamtsarano, Dorjiev, and Ochirov also advocated Buddhist reformism, while the former two also launched a Buryad-Mongol publishing house in Saint Petersburg in 1910. Furthermore, a Buddhist temple opened in the imperial capital in 1915, thanks to Dorjiev's effort (Andreev 2004; Bazarov 2011, 3:17–22; Sablin and Semyonov 2018).

The First Russian Revolution was partly triggered by the failure of the Manchurian expansion, the defeat in the Russo–Japanese War (1904–1905). The revolution itself was closely observed in the Qing Empire. The Qing government started its own modernization reforms in the New Policies, following its failure in the war with Japan (1894–1895) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901). The New Policies featured the establishment of the Consultative Assembly in 1907 and the adoption of the Constitutional Outline in 1908 (Bandeira 2017; Kurzman 2008).

The New Policies also affected the imperial borderlands. Inner Mongolia and Manchuria were opened to Han Chinese colonization in 1902 and 1906, respectively. Despite the small scale of Russian activities in Outer Mongolia, the Qing authorities viewed them as threatening and called for turning the empire's peripheries into “shields” against foreign expansion. Furthermore, colonization was also

supposed to mitigate the overpopulation of some of the inner provinces. Both the empire's defense and the overpopulation in parts of the European Russia were used in the Russian justification of settler colonialism in Asia. Just as the Russian elites favored Russification, the Qing authorities stressed the need for Sinicization of the Mongols in order to consolidate the empire through cultural unity. Although the settler colonization of Outer Mongolia proceeded very slowly, the reforms, funded by the regional population, began there in 1907, and the military presence increased significantly. The Qing reform plans agitated the Khalkha princes, who petitioned Beijing against colonization in 1907. In 1910, regional elites appealed to the ambans in Khüree and Uliastai against the increased taxation. The violent conduct of the Chinese troops aggravated the situation, and some members of the elites became proponents of independence (Atwood 2004, 303; Morrison 2017; Sneath and Kaplonski 2010, 1:841–44; Tatsuo 1999, 70; Tsukase 2017).

The entangled imperial transformations, 1911–1919

The Russian and Qing empires did not survive the global imperial crisis of the 1900s–1910s, with Mongolic-speaking elites, intellectuals, and activists engaging in the simultaneous and entangled imperial transformations. Autonomy claims and independence claims had similar causes and were rooted first and foremost in the Russian and Han Chinese settler colonialism. The Russian involvement in the Mongolian affairs made the two imperial spaces interconnected, with Buryad intellectuals becoming important actors in the Khalkha events in the early 1910s, and the revolution in Mongolia itself turning from anti-imperial (aiming at independence) into an imperial one (resulting in formal autonomy within China and practical dependency on Russia). The intermediate results of the imperial revolutions were different, bringing about a theocratic regime in Outer Mongolia in 1911–1919 and republican regimes in the Buryad-Mongol polities in 1917–1919.

In 1911, members of lay and Buddhist elites held gatherings in order to work out a response to the New Policies. The effort, headed by Prince Mijiddorjiin Khanddorj (1869–1915), Da Lama Tserenchimed (1869–1914), and Prince Tögs-Ochiryn Namnansüren (1878–1919), resulted in a Mongolian delegation to the Russian Tsar with an appeal for support. Nobles and religious figures established the Provisional Administration of Khalkha in November 1911. On December 1, 1911, after the return of the delegation from Russia and the outbreak of the Xinhai Revolution, it proclaimed Mongolia's independence from the Qing Dynasty. On December 29, 1911, the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu was enthroned as the new Holy Emperor (Bogd Khan). Makoto Tachibana (2014) demonstrated that the declaration of independence was not supported by all Mongolian nobles. The new government of the Republic of China proclaimed the slogan of the “Five Races under One Union,” envisioning representation of the non-Han Chinese population in the new government, but Mongolia and Tibet continued along the independence path, recognizing each other in 1913. The Russian government recognized the “autonomous order” of whole Mongolia in the Russian text of the 1912 Russian–Mongolian Agreement and promised to help against Chinese troops’

deployment or colonization. As noted by Sergei Kuz'min, the Mongolian version of the 1912 Agreement used the word meaning "independence," which was also used in the 1913 Mongolian–Tibetan Treaty, while the Russian text intentionally avoided such phrasing. In 1912–1913, rebellions broke out in Inner Mongolia in coordination with the Bogd Khan's government, but they were suppressed. Furthermore, in 1912–1913, several gatherings of Inner Mongolian nobles supported the Republic of China and disapproved of the 1912 Russian–Mongolian Treaty. Although their decisions may have been forced by the Chinese, Russian diplomats noted in 1912 that the Da Lama and Namnansüren supposedly hesitated about Russian support and were open to reestablishing relations with China. This means that there was no single image of the Mongolian future even at the very top level of the elites. The political community of the Mongols could be institutionalized not only through independence but also through the reconfiguration of existing imperial relations (with Beijing) or even the establishment of new ones (with Saint Petersburg) ("Agreement between Russia and Mongolia" n.d.; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1914, 4–5, 10; see also Atwood 2004, 94, 470; Brophy 2012; Dudin 2013, 157–60; Kuz'min 2015, 83–84; Sneath and Kaplonski 2010, 1:851–52; Tachibana 2014, 72–74, 80–81; Tatsuo 1999, 71).

In late 1913, the Russian government signed a joined declaration with the Chinese government, recognizing only Outer Mongolia's autonomy (self-government and economic autonomy) under the suzerainty of China. The 1915 Tripartite Agreement of Russia, China, and Outer Mongolia, reached in Kyakhta, reaffirmed this status, with the Chinese President officially "granting" the Bogd Khan his title. Symbolically, it was a performance of a new Chinese empire, with the one-sided bestowal of the title instead of a mutual recognition ("Russian – Chinese declaration" n.d.; "Tripartite Agreement of Russia, China, and Mongolia" n.d.).

While Mongolia's international status was still unresolved, the Bogd Khan's government engaged in state building. In 1912, the Bogd Khan ordered the creation of the Council of Ministers. In 1914, he established a bicameral consultative assembly – the State Khural (*ulus-un khural*) or the State Upper and Lower Khurals (*ulus-un degedü dooradu khural*). The idea, initially advocated by the Da Lama, was brought to the Bogd Khan's attention by Namnansüren and others (Javzandulam and Delgermaa 2003, 1:17, 27). According to Bayarsaikhan Batsukh (2014, 78), the Da Lama got the idea from Henry Wheaton's *Elements of International Law* (1855), which had been originally published in 1836 and translated into Mongolian from the 1864 Chinese translation. According to Ivan Iakovlevich Korostovets, the Russian Consul in Khüree, Mongols also used the Chinese translation of Johann Caspar Bluntschli's *Das moderne Völkerrecht der zivilisierten Staaten, als Rechtsbuch dargestellt* (*The Modern International Law of the Civilized States, Represented as a Legal Code*) (1868). The Mongolian translation of *Elements of International Law* followed the Chinese translation. All diverse terms for parliaments, assemblies, and congresses were translated into Chinese as 会 *hui* ("meeting" or "to meet") and, accordingly, into Mongolian as *khural* (Amarsanaa, Bayarsaikhan, and Tachibana 2006, 22–23; Svarverud 2007, 48, 88–93).

The Bogd Khan's decree on the establishment of the State Khural referred to the experience of the "powerful, rich, and cultured" states of the world, which had general assemblies of representatives, and stressed the need for deliberation and taking into account different opinions when resolving challenging and important issues. According to the decree, the assembly was to help defend the Mongolians from the "foreign enemy," improve administration and economy, make peace with foreign countries, and resolve internal conflicts. The Upper Khural was supposed to discuss the most important political issues, and the Lower Khural was intended for all others. The Upper Khural was to include the highest lay and Buddhist officials from Khalkha, Hulunbuir, and parts of Inner Mongolia, which corresponded to the continued effort to unite the whole of Mongolia. The Lower Khural was to consist of bureaucrats, including representatives of the four Khalkha *aimags* ("provinces") and of the Chinese ambans, which meant that the relations with the Chinese Republic had remained unresolved (Javzandulam and Delgermaa 2003, 1:23–25).

The fact that both chambers were appointed, while all decisions were to be approved by the Bogd Khan, led Pavel Dudin to conclude that the regime remained an absolute theocratic monarchy (2013, 158). Kuz'min, however, stressed the importance of the new institution, even though the decision-making process was slow and halted reforms. The Upper Khural, chaired by Prime Minister Namnansüren until his death in 1919, and the Lower Khural resolved a broad array of different issues pertaining to defense, trade, finances, economy, education, and religion. The two chambers also discussed such crucial matters as the desires of Inner Mongolian elites to join the Mongolian state, the Tripartite Conference in Kyakhta (1914–1915), and possible Japanese assistance (Kuz'min 2017, 273–74).

The 1915 Tripartite Agreement resulted in Outer Mongolia's entanglement in two imperial formations – the Russian Empire, which apart from sending advisors gained special economic rights, and the Republic of China. This contributed to the rise of new transboundary leaders, such as Tserendorj, who became deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1913 and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1915. His participation in Prime Minister Namnansüren's mission to Saint Petersburg in 1913–1914 and in the Kyakhta Conference in 1914–1915 made him into a key Khalkha intermediary between the Bogd Khan's government and the Russian authorities (Atwood 2004, 549–50). Buryad intermediaries, who came to Khüree as advisors, teachers, workers, and participants in expeditions, also became quite influential in regional politics. Jamtsarano simultaneously was an advisor to the Russian Consul and to the Bogd Khan's government (on educational matters) in 1911. Jamtsarano's latter position and his involvement in oral and written diplomatic communication resulted in extensive cooperation with Namnansüren and Khanddorj, the Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1913 (Ulymzhiev and Tsetsegma 1999, 35–39, 50–51).

For Jamtsarano and other Buryad intellectuals, Outer Mongolia became the site of the larger Mongolian nation building. Apart from translating numerous texts into Mongolian, Jamtsarano launched the publication of the first Mongolian periodical *Shine Toli* (*New Mirror*) in 1913. Although Jamtsarano authored or

translated most of the texts in *Shine Toli* and edited a further newspaper, *Niislel Khüreenii Sonin Bichig* (*Newspaper of the Capital*), in 1915–1917, Khalkha intellectuals, such as D. Bodo (1895–1922), joined his publication efforts. Jamtsarano's *Shine Toli* publications about countries of the world contained information on their political structures.⁵ Jamtsarano's articles on nature, society, and Buddhism in *Shine Toli* supposedly alienated the religious elites, resulting in the closure of the newspaper in 1914. Furthermore, Jamtsarano did not conceal his socialist preferences and included the works of Friedrich Engels, Ferdinand Lassalle, and other radical thinkers in the list of those due to be translated into Mongolian (Ulymzhiev and Tsetsegma 1999, 41–44).

In his *Ulus-un erke* ("Power of the State"), Jamtsarano presented a comparative study of political systems.⁶ He paid special attention to parliaments, their structures, and elections, as well as the relations between central and local authorities in most states, dominions (such as Australia and New Zealand), and parts of states (such as Finland or the states of the German Empire) with constitutions, probably using one of the two available collections in Russian (Gessen and Nol'de 1905, 1907; *Collected Constitutional Acts* 1905–1906). Jamtsarano used the word *khural* for parliaments. He interpreted their emergence from a progressive standpoint, explaining that the authorities had to adapt to changing times and gather representatives to establish khurals "to discuss problems, benefits, interests, income and expenditure, and many other matters" of the respective countries, as well as "to make laws to foster and rule the people." He continued, "Thus established, State Khurals proved to be beneficial in many respects, therefore making the state more powerful. [People] definitely understood that and nowadays most of sixty big and small countries have state *khurals*" (Jamtsarano 1914, 3).

Jamtsarano used different words and phrases to discuss parliamentary sessions. On one instance, he used a verbal (participial) phrase *cuglan kelelcekü* consisting of two verbs, *cuglakh* ("to gather" or "to assemble") and *kelelcekü* ("to discuss" or "to debate"). *Cuglakh* can be found as a root in *cuglaghan* ("gathering," "meeting, or "session"), formed by the suffix *-ghan* which is also found in *khuraldughan*, another word used for parliamentary sessions. *Khuraldughan* has the same root with *khural*, namely the verb *khura-* ("to gather") and the reciprocal suffix *-ldu* ("to each other or together"). Using *cuglaghan* and *khuraldughan*, Jamtsarano meant "gathering." Generally, the distinction between *khural* and *khuraldaan* in Jamtsarano's text was quite straightforward: *khural* meant a parliament-like body and *khuraldaan* was used only for temporary gatherings and sessions, although *khural* technically could mean any meeting or gathering (Jamtsarano 1914, 26–28). Jamtsarano also discussed the duration of sessions in pragmatic terms:

During law making the sessions [*cughlan kelelcekü*] do not go on uninterrupted. Generally, the sessions have a break after about four, five, six, [or] seven months, and [members] go to their lands or go to take a rest to a place they like and re-assemble [*khuraldun kelelceged*] on the order. It can be observed that within one year there may be even two assemblies [or sessions]

and break-ups. If the state matters are not too many and can easily be discussed and resolved, the duration of a session [*cuglaghan*] is not long. If the state matters are important and complex, then the duration of an assembly has inevitably to be longer.

(1914, 26–27)

Together with other Buryads who were involved in Mongolian politics, Jamtsarano quickly returned to the Russian political stage when the Romanov Empire collapsed in February – March 1917. The Buryad (Mongol-Buryad) Congress, which was held in Chita on April 23–25, 1917, adopted Bogdanov's project of the autonomy of all Buryads. The stance of the Buryad activists was different from their Khalkha counterparts, as they engaged in an imperial (rather than an anti-imperial) revolution seeking to reconfigure the shared social space rather than gain sovereignty (Gerasimov 2017). Autonomy-building followed the moderate socialist and liberal mainstream of the early revolution and stressed the need to create a representative assembly – the Buryad National (State) Duma (*Buryad ulusun chuulgan* or *Buriyad ulus-un cighulghan*).⁷ The masterminds of the 1917 autonomy, including Rinchino, disconnected from the concept of the clan-based executive Steppe Dumas and sought to establish a Buryad parliament to be named in Russian like the Russian State Duma and the projected Siberian Regional Duma, in which the Buryads were also anticipating to be represented. The universally elected Buryad National Duma was to become a modern parliament with supreme competence within the autonomy, while the institutionalization of the Buryad nation was to be finished by the convocation of the Buryad National Constituent Assembly. The adopted project was also to be approved by the anticipated All-Russian Constituent Assembly, also to be universally elected (Sablin 2016, 68–74).

Siberian Regionalism, the idea that Siberia was distinct from the rest of Russia in economic and cultural terms and needed regional autonomy, probably contributed to the use of the word *duma* when discussing the Buryad parliament in Russian. The concept of *zemstvo* self-government, which had become universally elected in the summer of 1917 yet still relied on rare assemblies and potent administrations, and the practices of the revolutionary self-government, which featured short congresses and potent committees between them, also played an important role in the building of the Buryad-Mongol Autonomy. A committee, the Burnatskom, was supposed to govern the autonomy between the sessions of the Buryad National Duma, and the April 1917 congress created the provisional Burnatskom chaired by Rinchino. The Buryad Autonomy was not recognized by regional revolutionary authorities or the Provisional Government and hence not finalized in 1917, and its governance continued to follow the congress model. In October 1917, the Third Buryad Congress formalized the system adopting the *Statute on the Provisional Bodies for Governing National Cultural Matters of the Buryad-Mongols and the Tunguses of the Transbaikal Region and the Irkutsk Province*. The document, to be used until the convocation of the Buryad parliament, established another body, the National Council, in addition to the congresses

and the potent committee (Burnatskom). The National Council consisted of *aimag* (district) representatives and was gathered when a congress could not be assembled. The Statute did not offer a clear division of authority between the three bodies, but since it was the Burnatskom which had full authority between the congresses and shaped the latter's agenda, it became the *de facto* most potent body (Sablin 2016, 71, 74–75, 77–79).

Bogdanov was elected one of the two Buryad deputies to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, but the Bolshevik-led Soviet government in Petrograd, established through the coup of October 25–26, 1917, disbanded it on January 6, 1918, after just one session the day before. Over 1918, which saw the first Soviet government in the Baikal region, the Allied Intervention (dominated by the Americans and the Japanese in Transbaikalia), and the establishment of anti-Bolshevik regimes, the Burnatskom under the leadership of Bogdanov, Jamtsarano, and Rinchino managed to survive. Furthermore, it managed to get recognition of Buryad self-government (although in an outwardly “Sovietized” form) in Transbaikalia from the Soviet authorities in July 1918, shortly before their fall. The warlord regime of the Cossack Grigorii Mikhailovich Semenov (1890–1946), himself half Buryad, also recognized the Buryad committee, which was renamed the People's Duma of the Buryad-Mongols of Eastern Siberia (but remained a committee reminiscent of the imperial Steppe Dumas) and headed by Dashi Sampilon (Sablin 2016, 84, 103–9, 117).

The collapse of the Russian postimperial state in the Russian Civil War brought about the proclamation of several independent states. In the context of the global imperial crisis, many national independence projects became part the so-called “Wilsonian Moment” (Manela 2007). Rinchino and some of the Buryad-Mongol politicians designed a plan of a united Mongolia state, to include Buryad-Mongolia, Outer and Inner Mongolia, and Hulunbuir. Backed by Semenov and hoping for Japanese support and protectorate, Rinchino and several other representatives of the Buryad-Mongols, Hulunbuir, and Inner Mongolian groups gathered in Chita for a constituent congress of the new state, declaring its formation on February 25, 1919. The future state, to be ruled by a president or a monarch, was designed as a federation of four constituent *aimags*, Buryad-Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, and Hulunbuir. The Inner Mongolian lama, Neise Gegeen (Nichi Toin Bogd Mendbaier), headed the provisional government seated at the Dauria station. Jamtsarano was elected Minister of Foreign Affairs in his absence, but neither attended nor wrote to the congress. Bogdanov attended some of the meetings but did not get involved. The project, however, gained neither international nor the Bogd Khan's support, and the Dauria government considered subduing Outer Mongolia by force (Sablin 2016, 115–40).

The collapse of the Russian Empire and especially the formation of the Dauria government prompted the Khalkha elites to reconsider the status of Outer Mongolia. In August 1919, a congress of noblemen supported the decision of the Bogd Khan's government not to participate in the Dauria government. In the same month, a group of nobles appealed for Chinese protection, even though the State Khural discussed the issue of autonomy in July 1919 and resolved that Mongolia

was an independent country (see also Lonjid 2000). The August debates in the State Khural revealed that there was a faction of nobles who sought to reform the government of Mongolia, in which China was seen as an ally. One of their reasons was the overextension of the Great Shabi, the religious polity within Outer Mongolia. Chen Yi, the Chinese High Commissioner who had brought additional troops into Outer Mongolia under the pretext of the Russian Civil War, and lay Khalkha officials drafted a reform plan in the fall of 1919. It prohibited Han Chinese colonization and conversion of Mongolia into a province and put the nobility in charge under the direct control of the Chinese High Commissioner. Despite the Bogd Khan's protest, on October 28, 1919, the Chinese National Assembly approved Chen's plan. General Xu Shuzheng, who arrived with more troops, however, rejected Chen's moderate approach. Xu advocated colonization and modernization of Outer Mongolia, dismissing its autonomy. In November 1919, the Upper Khural supported the revocation of autonomy but the Lower Khural rejected it. On November 17, after Xu's threats to arrest the Bogd Khan, Tserendorj and other members of his government signed the petition to revoke autonomy. Although the Bogd Khan refused to sign the petition, it was sent to Beijing where the Chinese President approved it and annulled the 1915 Kyakhta Agreement. On December 1, 1919, Xu officially became the supreme authority in Mongolia (Atwood 2004, 470, 550; Kuz'min 2017, 210–15).

The soviet new imperialism, 1920–1921

Both Buryad and Khalkha actors attempted to use the Bolshevik expansionism, their attempts to ensure control over the former Russian Empire and export the revolution to Asia, for the benefit of the Mongolic-speaking groups. Indeed, the cooperation of Rinchino in establishing communication with the Khalkhas contributed to the Bolshevik decision to establish Buryad-Mongol and Kalmyk autonomies, while Dorjiev contributed to their more benevolent stance on Buddhism. The cooperation of S. Danzan (1885–1924), Bodoo, and other Khalkha intellectuals and activists with the Bolsheviks helped them establish a new regime in Outer Mongolia, cut its dependency on China, and engage in a program of modernization. Given that the Bolshevik leadership paid little attention to Outer Mongolia before, it was the indigenous actors who gave the nascent Soviet imperial project its geographic focus and provided it with concrete meanings. The Mongolic-speaking populations of the former Russian and Qing Empires were treated as a single political community, and this community was the first successfully “liberated” nation (or a group of three Mongolic nations) in the context of socialist decolonization.

In late 1919, after the failure of the Dauria project, Rinchino suggested that Soviet Russia ought to continue the policy of the Tsarist government in Mongolia. In the spring of 1920, he reformulated his ideas, promoting the idea of exporting the revolution to Asia through the linguistically and culturally kindred trans-boundary groups (Sablin 2019). In the meantime, those Khalkhas who opposed the revocation of autonomy merged into the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) under

the leadership of Bodoo and Danzan in 1920. In the summer of 1920, the new organization put together a delegation to Soviet Russia, which apart from Bodoo and Danzan, included Kh. Choibalsan (1895–1952), D. Sükhbaatar (1893–1923), and other activists. Rinchino and Shumiatskii, then one of the leaders of the nascent Far Eastern Republic (FER), met the delegation in Transbaikalia. Rinchino accompanied the delegation to Irkutsk and, after it split due to disagreements, the remaining negotiators to Omsk and Moscow (Sablin 2016, 158).

The Irkutsk talks in August 1920 focused on the status of Mongolia and discussed its future constitution. The members of the delegation declared that the MPP desired to establish contact with the revolutionary groups in China and requested funding from the Bolsheviks. The delegation claimed that the party sought to destroy “the feudal-theocratic order in Mongolia” and to establish “a democratic regime” and hoped that the Bolsheviks would help to work out a constitution. The delegation declared that the autonomy did not correspond to the desires of the Mongolian people, suggesting that Mongolia ought to have independent foreign policy and deny the Chinese any extraterritorial rights, which was to be reflected in the future constitution. Danzan expressed the MPP’s plan to unify all Mongolia (Inner, Western, Outer, and Hulunbuir) into one state. At the same time, Danzan maintained that the MPP considered such a unified state to be connected to China in the form of “federation or autonomy.” Mongolia’s possible participation in the Chinese federation deviated from the Bogd Gegeen’s letter to the Soviet government, which supported complete independence, but Danzan dismissed it as the position of the nobility. In a detailed summary of the talks, the Irkutsk Bolsheviks also stressed the desire of the MPP to proclaim Jebtsundamba Khutuktu a “constitutional monarch,” eliminate the hereditary rights of the nobles, and spread European culture, but noted that the planned struggle against the nobles was not shared by all members of the delegation. The delegation was also cautious about the Soviet assistance, opting against their direct military involvement (Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:42–43, 46; Luzianin 2003, 105–6).

These divergent opinions on Mongolia’s future once again pointed to the dynamics and heterogeneity of the Mongolian political discourse in the context of the imperial transformations. Rinchino adapted his initial project of continued Russian imperialism to the Soviet slogans of World Revolution, coproducing thereby the new Soviet imperial discourse. Danzan also sought to institutionalize an internally diverse Mongolian nation, but viewed it as part of the transformed Qing – Chinese polity.

The talks continued in Moscow. On October 14, 1920, the Bolshevik Political Bureau adopted a resolution, which connected the creation of autonomies for the Buryad-Mongols and the Kalmyks to exporting the revolution to Mongolia, after Rinchino raised the issue. Rinchino also suggested to unify Buryad-Mongolia with the rest of Mongolia and, possibly, China. Iakov Davidovich Ianson (1886–1938), in charge of the Bolshevik’s regional policy, and Deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Lev Mikhailovich Karakhan (1889–1937) supported him. Ianson and Karakhan suggested giving Buryad-Mongolia the right to secede from Soviet Russia and to join Mongolia as an autonomous unit, possibly joining

the Chinese federation in the future in order to deepen the revolution in China, but the People's Commissariat of Nationalities rejected the plan. The idea of the Chinese federation, however, emerged again in the program of the MPP, adopted at its formal constituent congress in Kyakhta in early March 1921. The program, whose authors included Rinchino and Jamtsarano, reaffirmed the desire of the MPP to unite all Mongolic peoples into one state. Projecting the federalist discourse of the Russian imperial revolution to China, the program pointed to the diversity of the peoples of China and suggested dividing it into several independent states – Southern China, Northern China, Sichuan, Tibet, Turkestan, Manchuria, and Mongolia – which could then be connected by a treaty of mutual assistance. The whole polity was hence supposed to become a treaty-based (federative) state capable of fending off foreign imperialists. The proclamation of the MPP to the Chinese people and revolutionary organizations, also adopted in March 1921, reaffirmed the idea of the federation (Luzianin 2003, 107–8; Sablin 2016, 160–65; Sablin and Semyonov 2018).

Shumiatskii, who headed the new Far Eastern Secretariat of the Communist International (Comintern), and Ivan Nikitich Smirnov (1881–1936), the leader of the Siberian Bolshevik organization, suggested making the planned Mongolian state a federation and a “toiling people’s republic” later in March 1921. Its central authorities were to be in charge of military, economic, and foreign affairs and to include federal “*sejm*-like” (“parliamentary”) bodies. The “Great Liberation Congress” of all “*somons*” (*sums*) of Outer and Inner Mongolia was to adopt the constitution. The government – the Council of Administration of United Mongolia – was to consist of five people, including one from Tannu-Tuva (to be part of Mongolia). Shumiatskii and Smirnov did not specify the relations between the government and the “parliamentary” bodies, but the design was very similar to that of the FER. The FER was controlled by a collective “president,” which was sanctioned by a congress, and hence continued both the *zemstvo* and revolutionary practices. Shumiatskii and Smirnov did not mention the Chinese federation but also did not view formal Soviet recognition of Mongolia as necessary. This owed to the new conditions in Outer Mongolia, where the forces of the anti-Bolshevik warlord Roman Fedorovich von Ungern-Sternberg (1886–1921) defeated the Chinese troops in the first half of 1921, and Shumiatskii and Smirnov connected the new Mongolian policy to the goal of defeating Ungern (Kuz'min 2004, 113–14; for the discussion of the Far Eastern Republic, see Sablin 2018).

The Mongolian People's Government of seven people, which was formed by the MPP on March 13, 1921, also dropped the slogan of the Chinese federation. It was supposed to liberate the country from both the Chinese and the Russian anti-Bolsheviks, to establish friendly relations with neighboring countries, and to convene the “Great Khural of popular representatives of Mongolia” for electing a permanent government and adopting the fundamental laws. In its proclamation to the Mongolians (*arads* [“herders” or “peasants”], lamas, and nobles), the Mongolian People's Government stressed that the “Great Khural” was supposed to elect the government of the “independent Mongolian state,” discuss the most important state issues, and adopt necessary laws. Tracing its own legitimacy to having been

elected by the “honorable and wise people” of the country, the Mongolian People’s Government declared that its authority was that of “the Mongolian people” (Kuz’min 2004, 154–55).

In the summer of 1921, regular Soviet troops and the forces of the MPP proceeded to Khüree under the pretext of defeating Ungern’s forces, which had crossed to Siberia but were soon thwarted back to Mongolia. On July 6, Khüree was taken, and on July 11, 1921, the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutuktu was enthroned as a “constitutional monarch” (Atwood 2004, 471–73). The Mongolian People’s Government convened the Provisional State Khural as a consultative body in October 1921. The assembly included ministers and their deputies, as well as representatives of *arads*, nobles, and lamas. On November 1, 1921, the Bogd Khan was forced to sign the Solemn Treaty (Oath Agreement, *Tangargiin geree*) with the new government. The Solemn Treaty may be seen as a proto-constitution, as it reaffirmed his unlimited religious authority but gave him only consultative rights in legislation and the right to suspensive veto on a limited number of laws, formally making him a constitutional monarch. Shumiatskii was among those who advocated constitutional monarchy with the authority of the “bourgeois-democratic forces” and cautioned against making the political and economic systems of Mongolia similar to Soviet Russia. The same year the Bogd Khan nevertheless wrote to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama that the Soviets, having destroyed their temples and books, had reached Mongolia and, with the assistance of the MPP, deposed him from the throne (Dudin 2013, 160–61; Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:79).

While Jamtsarano and Rinchino left for Mongolia, other Buryad intellectuals, including Gombozhab Tsybikov (1873–1930), participated in the making of the Constitution of the FER as members of the Constituent Assembly of the Far East. The Constitution of the FER, adopted in April 1921, included a provision on the Buryad-Mongol Autonomous Region. Both the FER and the autonomous region had parliaments – people’s assemblies – but in both cases parliamentarism was of the sham kind. Although all elections in the FER were direct and universal, the sessions of the FER parliament were short and took place twice a year, while between them the provisional legislative authority belonged to the Government (“collective president”). This made the FER reminiscent of both the *zemstvo* and revolutionary practices and the Duma regime in the Russian Empire in 1906–1917. In the late Russian Empire, the Cabinet could issue provisional legislation between the sessions of the Duma, but the latter had proper sessions, which despite the limited competence and restricted elections made it in some aspects more of a parliament than the FER People’s Assembly. Another Buryad-Mongol (Mongol-Buryad) Autonomous Region was established in the RSFSR in 1922 and had an extraordinary system of government by a revolutionary committee, which was subordinate only to higher authorities of Siberia and the whole RSFSR. The two Buryad-Mongol autonomies hence exemplified two distinct types of Bolshevik-dominated regimes, the one in the RSFSR was part of the formal empire, while the one in the FER was part of the first “people’s republics” in informal Soviet dependency (Far Eastern Republic 1921; Sablin 2018).

The constitution and the Khural, 1922–1924

The arrival of Soviet troops and Rinchino's political leadership in 1921 did not immediately undermine Khalkha agency, yet over the following years the power asymmetries between the Soviet envoys and the Khalkhas became evident and manifested *inter alia* in the first political purges in 1922 and 1924 and the adoption of the Soviet-like Constitution in 1924, which was written by external actors and enforced by the mediators. The process of its adoption demonstrated that the Bolshevik assistance demanded structural adjustments.

After the annexation of the FER to the RSFSR in November 1922 and the formation of the USSR in December 1922, the two regions were merged (with significantly reshaped borders) into the Buryad-Mongol Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (BMASSR) in 1923. The BMASSR had a standard system of Soviet government, which featured rare (once every two – three years) Congresses of Soviets elected in nonuniversal, unequal, and indirect elections. Between the congresses, there was a standing legislature – the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) – which also assembled rarely (two to three times a year). The supreme authority belonged to the permanent Presidium of the TsIK between the session of the standing and larger legislatures. In practice, however, the BMASSR was governed by the republican party organization. The system of TsIK Presidiums – which in practice were standing legislatures above two levels of nonpermanent legislatures – was not part of the 1918 RSFSR Constitution but was included in the 1924 USSR Constitution (Bazarov 2011, 3:65; Rossiiskaia Sotsialisticheskaiia Federativnaia Sovetskaia Respublika 1918; Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 1924).

The Solemn Treaty was supposed to become part of the future constitution (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2004, vii), which was discussed by members of the government and invited experts. Jamtsarano joined the drafting commission in 1922 (Ulymzhiev and Tsetsema 1999, 61). Jamtsarano's own early draft consisted of seven chapters and 24 articles. Article 1 reaffirmed Mongolia as a democratic constitutional monarchy and introduced a parliament, which was called the "Upper Great Khural of the Mongolian State" (*mongghol ulus-un degedü yeke khural*) or simply the State Khural, demonstrating that Jamtsarano experimented with terminology. He also used the term *khuraldaan* (*khuraldughan*) twice, but it is not clear if *khuraldaan* was used for a permanent or temporary gathering. The Great Khural had the right to appoint and resign the government (it is not clear if Jamtsarano meant the cabinet or a "collective president"). At the same time, Jamtsarano's draft included aspects of the executive rule, which were embedded in the systems of *zemstvo*, the Duma monarchy, the Soviet government, the Buryad-Mongol Autonomy, and the FER, because between the sessions of the Great Khural, the government had the supreme authority. Jamtsarano did not specify its exact competence between the sessions of the parliament or the sessions' duration and frequency, but the executive rule manifested in the joint right of the State Khural and the government to make amendments to the constitution. A further connection to the Russian discourse can be seen in the introduction of

regional autonomy intended for Tuva.⁸ The drafting commission, however, was dissolved, officially due to its inability to finish the work, and the task passed to the legislative department of the Mongolian People's Government (Amarsanaa, Bayarsaikhan, and Shazhinbat 2009, 2).

The development of a constitutional monarchy was interrupted by the death of the Bogd Khan on May 20, 1924. Soon thereafter, Mongolia plunged into a political crisis after Karakhan signed the Sino-Soviet Agreement on May 31, 1924, in which the USSR recognized Mongolia as part of China ("Agreement on General Principles for the Settlement of the Questions between the Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" 1925). The treaty became a major threat to Mongolia's independence, and the possible break with the USSR aggravated the struggle within the MPP. Danzan, who advocated cooperation with Chinese business and, according to Rinchino, gained the support of Tserendorj and other Khalkha politicians, ultimately lost to Rinchino and was executed without trial in August 1924 (Atwood 2004, 129–30; Rinchino 1998, 99). Despite the formal recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Mongolia, the Soviet government strengthened the asymmetry in its relations to the Mongolian People's Government. It kept the troops as "volunteers" and sent new advisors. Vsesviatskii, the Soviet legal advisor who had been invited "to speed up the work" on the constitution before Bogd Khan's death and arrived shortly after it, wrote the new draft constitution (Sanjdorj 1974, 136). Rinchino then translated it into Mongolian. A new commission, chaired by Tserendorj and featuring Rinchino, Jamtsarano, and Ryskulov (the new Comintern envoy who arrived in October 1924) discussed and amended it (Atwood 2004, 119; Kuz'min 2017, 338). This became a turning point for Khalkha agency in the process of Mongolian state-building. The most influential actors involved in the process of drafting the constitution were external to Outer Mongolia and in direct service of the Comintern. This, however, did not mean the end of debates, since there was no unity among the Comintern functionaries.

Ryskulov outlined his view on the main disagreements within the commission in his reports to the Comintern. Ryskulov viewed Jamtsarano as an ally of Tserendorj and claimed that after Jamtsarano's failed to get his "bourgeois, liberal" draft approved, Jamtsarano started to question Mongolia's very need for a written constitution. After a confrontation with Ryskulov, Jamtsarano did not raise the issue again but also did not participate in the meeting of the commission that adopted Vsesviatskii's final draft⁹ with amendments. According to Ryskulov, the constitution of the USSR and the FER were the main sources for the draft. The system of government was copied from that in the USSR. The Great Khural (Khuraldan) corresponded to the USSR Congress of Soviets, while the Small Khural corresponded to the TsIK. Similar to the USSR Constitution, the Presidium of the Small Khural (corresponding to the Presidium of the USSR TsIK) was made the permanent supreme body between the sessions of the Great and Small Khurals. The Cabinet was accompanied by an economic council, as in the Soviet government. Similarly, the Small Khural elected the Cabinet and its own Presidium, just like the Soviet TsIK. Like in the USSR, the rights in the MPR were reserved for

the “real people” (*jingkini arad tümen*, “real arad masses”). Only those men and women over the age of 18 who used their own labor to earn a living and the soldiers had the right to vote and be elected, while traders (who did not work themselves or received interest payments), lamas permanently living in monasteries, and former nobles (noble rights were limited but giving up titles was voluntary before the First Khural) were excluded. Only citizens were eligible to participate in the elections. Ryskulov claimed that Rinchino opposed mentioning the separation of church from state, but Tserendorj supported the provision which made it into the constitution. Church, however, was not separated from school. Ryskulov also maintained that Rinchino suggested keeping three-year terms for the government bodies, but the draft kept the proposed one-year terms (Atwood 2004, 119; Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:120, 130–31, 141; Soiuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik 1924; Vaksberg 1925).

The First Great Khural of 77 delegates assembled in Niislel Khüree (which was renamed Ulaanbaatar during its session) on November 8–28, 1924. In his introduction to its minutes, first published in Russian and only appearing in a more complete form in Mongolian (Dash 1984), Ryskulov called the Khural the first “People’s Assembly” (similar to its name in the Russian text) and claimed that it was representative of all parts of Outer Mongolia. He also pointed to the debates at the congress which became more open with its progression. Formally, the delegates represented the four aimags of Outer Mongolia, the Great Shabi, the Dörbet Oirads and the Kazakhs of Kobdo, the Buryads who were naturalized in Mongolia, and the army. It is, however, not clear how the body was formed. It was delegated by localities rather than elected directly, but the localities were still in the process of forming collegial authorities. Some decisions proved that despite the attempts of Ryskulov and other Soviet representatives to influence the debates, the First Great Khural was either not under full control of the Soviet representatives, or, perhaps, the latter had left some space for compromise. One of the First Great Khural’s key decisions was to keep the Great Shabi with the rights of an aimag and only to eliminate religious taxes and privileges, gradually integrating the members of the Great Shabi into citizenry. Mongolia also adopted the European calendar for days and months but kept counting the years from 1911, making 1925 year 15 of the Mongolian State (rather than of the Bogd Khan’s first enthronement). On other matters, however, the position of the Soviet representatives prevailed. The issue of the search for the new incarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu was raised but dismissed. Khüree was renamed despite Tserendorj’s opposition (Genkin and Ryskulov 1925, vi–vii, xi–xii, xiv, 1, 254, 259–60, 263–66).

Although there were dissenting voices, Rinchino, Ryskulov and, to a lesser extent, Tserendorj and other Khalkha members of the government steered and dominated the debates. The draft constitution was essentially adopted as it was. There were nevertheless questions on the relations between the Great and Small Khurals and demands to give the Great Khural the right to elect the Cabinet. Rinchino and then Ryskulov had to defend the right of the Small Khural to appoint the Cabinet. The former presented it as the “people’s control” over the

Cabinet between the sessions of the Great Khural, while the latter pointed to the one-year terms as a guarantee for the connection between the government and the people. Tserendorj also had to specify that the Small Khural would be elected proportionally to the parts of Mongolia, but such provision did not become part of the constitution. Rinchino had to defend the elimination of private property on land, forests, and other natural resources and the separation of church from state, but these provisions were adopted as well. The joint competence of the Presidium of the Small Khural and the Cabinet, which made the system different from that in the USSR, was also criticized as violating the responsibility of the Cabinet before the Small Khural, but this provision also passed. The Constitution did not specify the State Great Khural elections procedure, and the elections were indirect. The First Great Khural resolved that the next Great Khural was to have no fewer than 95 representatives, delegated proportionally to the population. This minimum number, however, did not make it into the Constitution, while the exact one was to be decided after a population census. Despite the electoral restrictions, the Small Khural of 30 people included six former nobles (two of them princes) and one lama, as well as the Buryad Bolshevik Matvei Innokent'evich Amagaev (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009, 8, 10–13; Atwood 2004, 119; Genkin and Ryskulov 1925, 249–52, 255–58, 260, 274–76; Vaksberg 1925).

As envisioned by Ryskulov, the First Great Khural proved to be a sanctioning congress rather than a deliberative constituent parliament. At the same time, it proved to be especially important for Mongolia's formal independence. The First Great Khural and the Constitution ignored the 1924 Sino-Soviet Agreement. Although the First Great Khural called for friendly relations with the Chinese toilers, it declared its support for the freedom of the Mongolian "tribes" and tasked the government with considering the issue of Tannu-Tuva, albeit based on the desires of the Tuvans. The Constitution also nullified all prerevolutionary treaties of Mongolia. At the same time, the Constitution entailed hints of the emerging informal Soviet superstructure. The MPR was to align its foreign policy with the interests of the oppressed peoples and the toilers of the world, although the Comintern was not mentioned in the Constitution. The matter of the MPP's (and hence the MPR's) subordination to the Comintern had been debated before the First Great Khural, with Ryskulov insisting on it, while at the First Great Khural, Rinchino stressed that the statehood of Mongolia was "a child of the Comintern" (Vaksberg 1925, 42, 44; see also Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:120, 130; Luzianin 2003, 137–40; Rinchino 1998, 89).

The position of the non-Khalkha actors on the future of Mongolia fluctuated. In 1924, shortly before the First Great Khural, Rinchino stated that he expected Mongolia to become part of the USSR. In the summer of 1925, he called himself a Pan-Mongolist, while in late 1925 (after both he and Ryskulov had been recalled from the MPR following the fallout of their struggle), he reaffirmed the role of the MPR as a springboard for exporting the revolution to Asia and again sketched the future federative republic of the peoples of China. The Comintern itself opted for a more moderate policy towards Mongolia in 1925. Amagaev,

reporting to the Comintern in 1927, stressed that the MPR represented “a unique type of state between bourgeois parliamentarism and the Soviet system, however with larger approximation to the latter” (Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:177; see also Luzianin 2003, 155–56; Rinchino 1998, 103–4). In the following decades, the MPR became a model for Soviet dependencies in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, which were dubbed people’s republics and did not have bodies called “soviets,” but at the same time reproduced the same system of sham and nominal parliamentarism, constitutionalism, and (in some cases) federalism.

As for Mongolia itself, the system of extra-parliamentary rule by the MPP, which was renamed the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party soon after the proclamation of the MPR, was certainly enabled by the sham aspects of the 1924 Constitution. At the same time, the most radical policies did not come into place before 1929. In 1926, the Third State Great Khural even discussed the possible search for the next Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, but deflected the issue citing the lack of proper Buddhist authority to conduct it. In 1928, Dorjiev again suggested to commence with the search in order to demonstrate that there was no pressure on religion in the MPR but to no avail (Kudriavtsev et al. 2012, 1:364; Lattimore 1962, 106–7).

Conclusion

The 1924 Constitution established a Soviet-like political system, and the State Great Khural did not become a real parliament since it was not representative of the whole population. The system of representation remained indirect. The State Great Khural also did not have proper session duration for deliberation. It did not have direct control over the government, and in practice it did not have any sovereignty within the system. The role of the government was performed by the MPP and in wider international terms by the Bolshevik Party (Ihalainen, Ilie, and Palonen 2016). The *de jure* system was not a complete novelty either in Soviet Russia and the USSR or among the Buryad intellectuals, since it reflected the widespread system of non-Bolshevik revolutionary self-government in the former Russian Empire, appealed to the latter’s local and central government practices, and even made it into Jamtsarano’s draft constitution.

The polysemic character of the term *khural* allowed it to survive the political changes in Mongolia of the twentieth century. The same word was used for the consultative body under Bogd Khan, for the constituent and regular “parliaments” of the MPR, and, since 1990, for the potent parliaments of Mongolia. The national connotations of the term *khural* were reinforced by its connection to Chinggis Khan’s time. The role of national mythology contributed to a fierce debate in political science on Mongolian political culture and transformations (March 2003; Sabloff 2002). In the context of this chapter, however, the conceptual connections between Mongolia and post-Soviet Russia are especially interesting. In the early 1990s, the reconfigured Buryad, Kalmyk, and Tuvan Republics of the Russian Federation adopted the term *khural* for their new parliaments. In the case of Buryad and Kalmyk post-Soviet nation-building, this

meant that the shared Mongolian past became especially relevant, like in Mongolia itself. It was also the ancient past of Chinggis Khan, since the word *khural* had not been used for indigenous assemblies in the Kalmyk and Buryat nation-building before. In the case of Tuva, the use of the term marked a return to the discourse of the Tuvan People's Republic, which had Great and Small Khurals until its annexation to the USSR in 1944, and hence stressed the historical sovereignty of the republic.

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Notes

- 1 The Meiji Constitution was adopted in Japan in 1889. In 1899, the Malolos Constitution was adopted in the first Philippine Republic (1899–1901).
- 2 The word *ulsyn* may be translated as both “state” and “people's.” By 1924, the State (rather than People's) Khural had already been an established term in Outer Mongolia. Furthermore, the 1960 MPR Constitution renamed the body the People's Great Khural (*Ardyn Ikh Khural*) to make the distinction explicit (Amarsanaa and Batsaikhan 2009).
- 3 The Khalkha khans, however, recognized the Qing rule only in 1691.
- 4 GARB (State Archive of the Republic of Buryatia), f. 129, op. 1, d. 3285, l. 21, 24 (Meeting of lamas on founding a boarding school).
- 5 Russia, England, France, Germany (*Shine Toli*, no. 2, 1913, pp. 22–40); Italy, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Holland (*Shine Toli*, no. 3, 1913, pp. 23–39); and Japan (*Shine Toli*, no. 4, 1913, pp. 54–58).
- 6 There is no date of publication on the book, but it was likely written in 1913–1914. The book states that it was written on the order of Namnansüren and continued the logic of publications in *Shine Toli*.
- 7 GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), f. 1701, op. 1, d. 16, l. 18 (Minutes of the Buryat Congress, Chita, April 24, 1917).
- 8 National Central Archives of Mongolia (MYTA), f. 31, op. 1, d. 10 (Jamtsarano's Draft Constitution). The Siberian Bolsheviks continued to envision a multilevel polity in place of the Qing Empire, in which Tannu-Tuva would be an autonomous part of Mongolia, while Mongolia would be part of the Chinese federation and the Soviet government would continue to refer to Mongolia as “autonomous.” The Tuvan elites and local Bolsheviks, however, declared the Tannu-Tuva's independence on August 14, 1921, much to the distress of Shumiatskii (Atwood 2004, 471–73; Luzianin 2003, 113–15; Mollerov 2005).
- 9 Ryskulov claimed that he had cowritten the text with Vsesviatskii, but there is no other evidence to back that claim.

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3 D. Natsagdorj, Mongolian travel writing, and ideas about national identity

Phillip P. Marzluf

Within ten years of the death of D. Natsagdorj, the members of the Committee of Mongolian Writers (*Mongolyn Zokhiolchyn Khoroo*) had begun the process of codifying him as the national writer of the People's Republic of Mongolia. In 1945, eight years after the death of the poet, the Committee of Mongolian Writers sponsored the publication of a slim volume of his work; at the inaugural Conference of Mongolian Writers in 1948, Natsagdorj was declared the nation's first "realist" writer (Sodnom 1966, 5–6). Despite his troubling aristocratic association – Natsagdorj's father was a *taiji*, one who could trace his lineage back to Chinggis Khaan (see Sodnom 1966) – Natsagdorj was later installed as an important model for socialist children, who would recite his "Pioneers' Song" (*Pionyeriin Duu*), "My Homeland" (*Minii Nutag*), and other poems. In a 1980s *Reader* (*Unshikh Bichig*), primary-level students were introduced to a short biography about Natsagdorj and exhorted to follow his example: "Like this famous writer, D. Natsagdorj, you children need to study and fulfill great things for your mother country and people" (Sharav 1984, 138). The school system and other youth-related organizations inspired young readers and writers by promoting such awards as the Natsagdorj Pin (*Natsagdorj Temdeg*) ("Byambajargal" 2013). Furthermore, throughout the second half of the socialist era, Natsagdorj represented an important part of the symbolic geography of Ulaanbaatar: a statue in his honor was erected in the Children's Park.

Similar to that of D. Sükhbaatar, the military leader and symbolic founder of the modern socialist Mongolian state, whose statue still resides in the center of the Mongolian political world (see Kaplonski 2004), Natsagdorj's image and status as *the* national writer still play an important role in post-socialist Mongolia. Natsagdorj remains an important part of the Mongolian language and literature curriculum, and he features a great deal in the Mongolian language national examination for secondary school graduates, including this one example from a national examination study guide:

The number of students who don't know the great writer D. Natsagdorj's poems and works by heart is almost nonexistent. How does his famous story, "Old Son," start?

(Battogtokh, Batmönkh, and Altantsetseg 2004, 181)

Natsagdorj's name and image are still associated with literacy contests, such as the "Best Reader – D. Natsagdorj Distinction" Award sponsored by the Sükhbaatar Aimag Public Library ("Best Reader," 2016). Indeed, beyond the borders of Mongolia, his image and words are used to motivate the second-generation adolescents of Mongolian immigrants living in North America and taking heritage language and cultural courses ("Welcome," n.d.). A telling observation about Natsagdorj's symbolic importance for post-socialist Mongolia is the fact that his statue replaced that of Lenin, which had stood as an important city landmark in front of the Ulaanbaatar Hotel for approximately 50 years. In terms of the geographical symbology of Ulaanbaatar, Natsagdorj has usurped the socialist authority of Lenin.

Given the interests of this book, the ability of Natsagdorj's image to transcend his status as a socialist-era poet constructed by the Soviet-influenced intellectual institutions of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party is a remarkable one. Natsagdorj has become a symbol of authentic Mongolian nationalism, this Romantic post-socialist form of identity that rhetorically uses historical authorities, images, keywords, language, and cultural practices to present itself as "authentic," "traditional," universal, eternal, and inevitable. David Sneath (2018) claims that these are dominant and commonsensical strategies for "mapping" Mongolian identity on the geographical territory of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Mongolia. This position asserts tautologically that Mongolians are Mongolian on the geographical basis of where they reside (i.e., within the boundaries of the Mongolian People's Republic [1924–1990] or Mongolia [1991–present]). They feel united, as citizens, because of ideas of "commonality and solidarity" (Sneath 2018, 35): in addition to geographical territory, they share kinship ties, biology, language, religion, culture, and ways of living, among other possibilities; moreover, they share these identity features across time, linking them to Chinggis Khaan and the formation of the early Mongolian states in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Natsagdorj, consequently, by which I mean his image – his construction – as much as his writing, is one of these identity features.

My purpose in this chapter is to complicate this dominant, commonsensical approach to Natsagdorj and national identity by examining one of his early poems, "Notes on the Trip to Berlin" (*Berlin Yavsan Zamyn Temdeglel*),¹ which he wrote in Berlin in 1927 to describe his travels from Mongolia to Europe. Rather than a comprehensive treatment about Natsagdorj as the national writer of Mongolia and his role in modern Mongolian literature, this chapter limits itself to Natsagdorj as a travel writer who reveals muted and subtle ideas about national identity. What makes this travel poem interesting and significant is its historical context – written on the eve of enormous political and social changes in Mongolia – and its transitional qualities: not only is it demonstrating shifts in poetic forms, but it offers readers glimpses at changes in identity. The fact that "Notes on the Trip to Berlin" is written as rough travel notes and that it presents a fairly clear itinerary of Natsagdorj's travels emphasizes these transitional qualities.

Readers should not consider it an irony that a poem with rich potential for national identity should have been written in Germany, far outside of the territorial

boundaries of Mongolia, and, moreover, on the modern theme of travel. Travel, as I explore in the following section, helps in the process of constituting national identities by ways of orienting, “mapping,” and apprenticing readers – in this case, admittedly, a small and difficult-to-define readership – to their identities that become now more important as the travelers find themselves outside of Mongolia.

This chapter will be divided into five sections. Briefly, I introduce the history of travel writing in Mongolia and outline the main theoretical conversations that constitute travel literature and that are significant for our purposes. Next, I describe the historical context of Natsagdorj’s travel to Germany, which prompted the writing of “Notes on the Trip to Berlin,” before then analyzing the poem according to its form, genres, and audience(s). In the longest section of the chapter, I analyze the poem as an itinerary – a proto-map – an interpretive move that enables us to discern several potential Mongolian identities offered by Natsagdorj. In the conclusion, I emphasize the way in which Natsagdorj is presented in post-socialist Mongolia to shape new identities based on concepts of land and language.

A brief history and theory of travel literature in Mongolia

From Western academic scholarship on travel literature, two conversations have important implications for understanding the context of Natsagdorj’s “Notes on the Trip to Berlin.” First, according to Tim Youngs (2013), travel literature can fix attitudes and images about non-Western cultures for Western readers; these attitudes and images can become unquestionable and commonsensical tropes (see Spurr 1993) and be highly resilient over time. From the thirteenth century, Western travel writers have shared, circulated, and referenced a consistent set of tropes about Mongolians, Mongolian culture and language, and Mongolian-Han Chinese relationships for Western readers. After the Second Opium War, in the 1860s, North American, North European, and Russian travel in the interior and periphery of the Qing Empire – including Mongolia – became more commonplace. As one hint at Natsagdorj’s motivations for writing “Notes on the Trip to Berlin,” B. Sodnom (1961, 15), Natsagdorj’s main biographer during the socialist period, claims that Natsagdorj was familiar with prerevolutionary travel writing in Mongolia. Although Sodnom does not provide specifics about these travel accounts, more than likely Natsagdorj would have come across Ivan Maiskii’s 1921 *Contemporary Mongolia*, a highly unflattering account of Mongolians towards the end of the Autonomous Period (1911–1921), when Natsagdorj studied in Leningrad in 1925. According to Sodnom (1961, 16), Natsagdorj sounds a call to action to depart from the feudal, prerevolutionary descriptions of Mongolians and to challenge the tropes that Mongolians were on the verge of “dying out” (*Mongolyn golomt mökhökh ni*) and were lazy, unclean, and highly superstitious and religious. As we will see, Natsagdorj contributes to a new, active, modern, and independent idea of Mongolian identity, adopting an urban and cosmopolitan identity, one far from the “feudal” tropes that appear in Russian and other Western travel writing.

Similarly, the second conversation from Western scholarship is the importance of paying more attention to the ways in which non-Western travelers, such as

Natsagdorj, interrupted, challenged, and adapted Western travel writing. Mary Louise Pratt (2008), most notably, asks us to consider the “autoethnographic” writing of non-Westerners, who do not merely erase these Russian, Soviet, or Western imperializing attitudes and tropes, but who blend and adapt these approaches. Pratt writes, “[A]utoethnography involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror” (7); these attempts by non-Westerners to make their positions more visible are “transcultural” (4), the term Pratt uses to describe the practice of how “subjugated peoples” use and adapt the dominant culture they are exposed to: “While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for” (6). In other words, when we examine Natsagdorj’s “Notes on the Trip to Berlin,” we’ll need to be aware of these attempts to transculturally blend Western travel writing with indigenous Mongolian forms and strategies.

We have learned a great deal about the tradition of Mongolian travel writing through Isabelle Charleux’s (2015) *Nomads on Pilgrimage* – yet, that being said, we do not know whether Natsagdorj would have had any contact with these types of travel texts. Charleux (2015, 10, 13–15) documents the rich genres that constituted the travel of Buddhist monks and pilgrims throughout the Buddhist world of Mongolia, China, and Tibet from the nineteenth century through to the 1930s: travel diaries and travel accounts (*orony dans*), translations for Mongolians of Chinese “mountain gazetteers,” Tibetan guidebooks, and other documents that note the distances between the major places of worship. According to Johan Elver-skog (2006), though, these examples of religiously motivated travel, in particular by Inner Mongolians in the nineteenth century Qing Empire, may tell us less about local, indigenous ideas about travel and Mongolian Buddhism and more about the construction of Mongolians as Qing Buddhist subjects, a new identity that interlinked them to the Manchus, Han Chinese, and Tibetans (139): in short, nineteenth-century travel was a way to perform a Qing identity: “Pilgrimage thus became a cult of empire” (122).

The historical and social context of Natsagdorj’s “Notes on the Trip to Berlin”

“Notes on the Trip to Berlin” narrates Natsagdorj’s travel in the fall of 1926 through the *örtöö* (horse relay or post) system in northern Mongolia, westward through the Soviet Union, and then by steam liner to Berlin. Though the narrator and other characters in the poem are not named, it is obviously autobiographical, mentioning obliquely in the final two lines the educational purpose behind the travel: Natsagdorj and Pagmadulam, his wife, travelled to Berlin to participate as students in the Administration for the Mongol Students in Germany and France, a study abroad program that took place from 1926 to 1929, in which approximately 45 students studied in Germany and, to a much lesser extent, France. In May 1926, an initial group of 35 adolescents (30 male and 5 female) arrived; they underwent intensive language training in a rural suburb of Berlin before being divided into

an academic group and a technical training group. The technical training involved cartography and map-making and other practical applications of construction and mechanical sciences such as tannery, lithography and printing, motor mechanics, and brick manufacturing (Wolff 1971, 269–70).

Natsagdorj and Pagmadulam were not a part of this initial group. They arrived in November and were different because they were older (i.e., Natsagdorj was 20 years old) and were married (Wolff 1971, 266–67). Other factors that made Natsagdorj's experience different than those of the other educational program students are the fact that he had earlier studied in Leningrad, having graduated from a military and political academy in 1925 (Sodnom 1961, 12) and being exposed, presumably, to Soviet ideas as well as those of modernist European forms and genres. Furthermore, Natsagdorj already had served informally as his father's secretary in several government ministries from the beginning of the revolutionary period and had leadership positions in two Soviet youth-based organizations, the Young Pioneers and the Union of the Revolutionary Youth (Sodnom 1961, 10–12). Unlike the other students, Natsagdorj was more of a political insider in revolutionary Mongolia, participating in early Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party conferences in 1923 and 1924 (Sodnom 1961, 11). Natsagdorj's aristocratic descent, moreover, was a challenge for a biographer such as Sodnom (1966), who depicted Natsagdorj's father as a poor and unruly *taiji* to justify Natsagdorj's position as the canonical writer of the socialist state.

According to Serge Wolff (1971), and inconsistent with the socialist hagiographies about the writer, Natsagdorj's experience in Germany was not a success. He was initially placed at the University of Berlin in the Journalism Department yet because of his limited German language skills, he was transferred to the University of Leipzig to work with the Mongolist, Erich Haenisch. Wolff (1971, 267) writes that Natsagdorj "seemed to be one of those people who try several things at the same time, not succeeding too well in any of them and who, therefore, blame Fate and the world." In any case, Natsagdorj and Pagmadulam were two of the only four students who failed to remain in the program and did not remain until 1929. For Wolff, the only memorable thing about Natsagdorj was the writer's attempt to teach him Mongolian.

The larger political and historical context of the Administration for the Mongol Students in Germany and France was, from the German perspective, an interest in extending German influence to Central Asia (Wolff 1946, 75). Political leaders of the nascent Mongolian People's Republic, however, desired to find allies beyond that of the Soviet Union and were wary, therefore, of Soviet dominance over this new nation (Christianson 2018). Within a few years, these fears manifested themselves. As Natsagdorj prepared to travel to Berlin, Mongolia's main economic partners consisted of China, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States (Sneath 2018, 26); the economy resembled that of the Soviet Union's New Economic Policy. Yet, by the time the education program students returned in 1929, Mongolia was a far different economic and political polity. The 15th Party Congress in the Soviet Union in December of 1927 reverberated back to

Mongolian Revolutionary Party officials, influencing the “leftist turn” that led to early – and largely unsuccessful – modernization, literacy, and collectivization movements and to violent assaults on the aristocracy and Mongolian Buddhist institutions. By 1930, 90% of exports and 75% of imports were controlled by the Soviet Union (Sneath 2018, 27). Again, Natsagdorj’s travel poem and the entire educational program itself played out against a backdrop of intense political and economic maneuvering in Ulaanbaatar and Moscow.

We should hesitate before making too much of the Administration for the Mongol Students in Germany and France as a strategy to counter Soviet political and social infiltration. For one thing, Soviet officials were involved in the early agreements that formed the education program (Wolff 1946, 75), and the program leaders were either Russian speakers or Buryad Russians (Wolff 1946, 76). Furthermore, as a modernization strategy, the educational program was consistent with the aims of Soviet socialist ideology. Whereas the interests in having students trained in building, textile, printing, and mechanical trades is not surprising, Mongolian government officials connected the educational program in Germany with the Mongolian Scientific Committee² to modernize the scientific terminology of the Mongolian language. In an article published for a German audience, the Mongolian head of the educational project, Ishi-Dorji, writes about the scientific and linguistic impetus for the “cultural organization” of the Mongolian People’s Republic:

The Mongolian language has proved to be sufficiently capable of development to absorb ideas of the great Indian and Chinese cultures. There is no need to explain that the literature of natural sciences and also of technical character could develop only to a limited degree. . . . Therefore, the creation of a reservoir of terminology and of the literature of exact sciences and technique is today one of the greatest tasks facing the cultural organization of Mongolia.

(qtd. in Wolff 1971, 280)

In one of the earliest renderings of official language policy, Ishi-Dorji claims that the activities of the Terminological Section in the Scientific Committee are a negotiation between accepting new loan words when necessary as well as using “old, already existing terms, as well as in working out and determining new terms, based on the Mongolian language roots” (qtd. in Wolff 1971, 287).

In addition to the development of scientific terminology, the Scientific Committee in its involvement with this European study abroad program emphasized the importance of map-making and the development of modern cartography and cartographic terms, or, in Ishi-Dorji’s terms, the “first modern geographical conceptions such as have been developed by European science” (qtd. in Wolff 1971, 283). At a practical level, 1000 large world maps and 10,000 small school atlases were printed in Germany (Wolff 1971, 282). According to Ishi-Dorji, the Scientific Committee also stimulated domestic surveying and explorations to provide

data for this cartographic development (Wolff 1971, 286). As far as cartographic theorists are concerned, the political implications behind map-making are obvious: maps constitute the nation state. As we will see, travel, forms of wayfinding, and an emerging “cartographic imagination” (Pickles 2004; Smith 2008) become important building blocks of a modern national identity. In summary, the goals of the European study abroad program in which Natsagdorj and other Mongolian students participated were consistent with those of building a modern socialist state and socialist national identity.

Genres, forms, audiences

“Notes on the Trip to Berlin” consists of 82 stanzas and a total of 324 lines. It encapsulates his travel, beginning on October 17, 1926, through Mongolia (Stanzas 1–20), through Russia (Stanzas 21–63), on the Baltic Sea (Stanzas 64–76), and in Germany (Stanzas 77–82). As an example of travel writing, it is easy to follow Natsagdorj’s itinerary through the four days of travel out of Mongolia, which includes stops at ten relay stations. After Natsagdorj boards a train in Üd City (i.e., Ulan-Ude) at two in the morning on October 29, his time markers on the westward train journey towards Leningrad become less clear.

Natsagdorj blends traditional, prerevolutionary pastoral or nature poetry with such modern forms as travel exposition, didactic passages, and socialist or proto-socialist exhortations. One example of the natural poetic genre, on which much of his stature as the state poet during the socialist and post-socialist periods is based, is the following description of Lake Baikal:

The water of the lake was deep, quietly lapping,
Blended with the sky in the horizon.
The blackish blue water shone
Layers of waves cast together.

Natsagdorj’s interweaves these descriptions of the natural landscape with modern appeals to travel, education, and socialism. Unsurprisingly, the genre of travel exposition constitutes the majority of the lines, including, in the example below, a description of train travel through the center of Russia:

We arrived in Omsk,
Crossed the Irtysh River on a giant bridge,
Kept on traveling west throughout the day and night.
Soon arrived in Sverdlovsk. (Stanza 50)

The didactic and socialist exhortations are far less frequent. Stepping out of his role as nature poet and travel writer, Natsagdorj serves briefly as a geography teacher when he tells his readers that the Volga river links the Caspian Sea to the Neva via a canal (Stanza 52). Taking on the role of a teacher of Soviet

socialist propaganda, Natsagdorj comments on the expanding nature of agriculture in northern Mongolia, passing a judgement on the modern economic changes (Stanza 9). In the most directly “socialist” passage, which we will return to in the following section, Natsagdorj delivers a paean about Moscow, the capital of the new socialist world:

The warm heart of the new world – Moscow.

The finest place of new learning – Moscow.

It is important to note that except for the genre of travel writing, the other three poetic forms that appear in “Notes on the Trip to Berlin” will play an important role in Natsagdorj’s poetry and prose in the 1930s, including for example his first collection of poetry, which was based on didactic health themes and anonymously published in 1935 (Damdinsüren 1961, 5).

This interweaving of traditional and nature-based genres and forms with such modern forms and appeals as travel and socialist-inspired didacticism and exhortation suggests that “Notes on the Trip to Berlin” is a transitional poem, showing shifts not only between traditional and modern forms but between potential forms of national identity. Obviously, Natsagdorj’s decision to produce his travel “notes” as poetry and not as dated diary entries or prose travel essays is one factor of this transitional quality. In roughly the same time period in 1927, Natsagdorj returned to the theme of travel in a much shorter and far more personal poem, “A Traveler Going to Study in a Faraway Land” (Natsagdorj 1961, 42), one that replaced the travel exposition with emotional depictions of the landscape. In 1928, Natsagdorj wrote a one-paragraph prose sketch about his European experience. In “May 1 in a Capitalist Country,” Natsagdorj invents a Mongolian narrator, Ochir, who is inspired by watching a May Day parade from his “window on the third floor of a building facing a large square in a Western European city” (Natsagdorj 1961, 207). Thus, despite the fact that we are working with little evidence, we can conjecture that Natsagdorj had several strategies available to him to render his travel “notes,” and that he depicted this particularly transitional form – a travel poem – to experiment with traditional and modern poetic forms and content.

One example of Natsagdorj’s blending of the traditional and the modern is the alliteration of initial sounds or syllables in the headwords. In Stanza 9, in which Natsagdorj comments upon a nontraditional content area, modern agricultural systems, he does so by repeating the initial sound in three of the four lines: “*Boroogiin . . . Buudai . . . Bidnii . . .*” (see Bawden 2003, xxxv–xxxvi). In addition to this example, in the stanza in which Natsagdorj describes Moscow as the center of the socialist world, he refers readers to the form of the *züir üg*, the proverb or maxim, a traditional Mongolian form that relies on parallelism and repetition. Finally, the combination of themes of natural beauty with attention to the forms of travel of the early twentieth century is another way of establishing the transitional nature of this poem. In Stanza 30, when Natsagdorj introduces his

first glimpse of Üd City, he juxtaposes this more mundane modern genre of travel with descriptions of natural beauty:

We rode fast against the icy wind
Smoking cigarettes and talking
Üd City appeared in the haze below a northeastern mountain ridge
Train smoke gushing above a nearby slope.

One additional formal feature of traditional Mongolian poetry that is worth noting is the absence of the individual narrator's point of view. There is no narrative "I," that explicit first-person narrator-as-traveler that, according to travel literature researchers, contributes to the "eye witness account" of travel writing and enhances the credibility of the traveler's experiences (Youngs 2013, 3). In fact, because of the lack of syntactical clues, the translator has several difficult decisions to make: do they invent the "I," creating an observing Natsagdorj narrator? Or, do they preserve the elliptical subject and rely throughout on passive structures? Or, do they adopt a plural "we" perspective? The elliptical narrative also makes it difficult for readers to learn anything about the six Mongolians with whom Natsagdorj traveled. His wife, Pagmadulam, is never mentioned, nor is another one of his travel partners and fellow writer, D. Chimid, who traveled with him on the last leg of the journey, from Leningrad to Berlin. The poem is populated entirely by countryside herders, Buryad farmers, Khalkha youths shivering on the back of Russian carriages, one "Russian woman" (*oros ekhner*), incomprehensible Germans, Mongolians living in the Soviet Union, and, of course, the young educational program students in Berlin.

Before I turn to the identity potentials that surface in this transitional poem, allow me to make one point about Natsagdorj's audience. Although it is difficult to say with any certainty, Natsagdorj's initial audience was his close friends and writers and, possibly, his fellow students in the educational program. In Chimid's (2016) parallel travel essay, in which he recounts the week of travel with Natsagdorj on the Baltic Sea from Leningrad to Berlin, he also mentions the mysterious "Russian woman" (Stanza 77), though, in this case, she takes on a more prominent role as someone teaching the Mongolian travelers German phrases. The "Russian woman" is most certainly Nina Ivanovna Chistyakova, who will eventually become Natsagdorj's second wife in 1931. The fact that Natsagdorj alludes to the "Russian woman" without any previous mention of her may suggest something about the nature of the intimate readership of his poem: the "Russian woman" only makes sense to readers who are aware of Natsagdorj's social connections. Unfortunately, we do not know enough about Natsagdorj's process of writing this poem, besides the fact that it was completed on August 17, 1927, almost ten months after he arrived in Germany, nor are we aware of whether he circulated drafts of the poem. The original manuscript was archived by the Scientific Committee, where Natsagdorj worked after his return from Germany (Sodnom 1961, 12–13). According to D. Tsedev (2016), it was first published in a 1928 edition of

Disciple (Zalgamjlagch), the official publication for the Young Pioneers, before its republication in the various socialist and post-socialist collections of Natsagdorj's works.

Ideas about potential identities

Natsagdorj's travel poem provides an itinerary, a long list of sequentially ordered proper nouns – cities, train stations, post stations, rivers, mountain passes, and other geographical features – to guide readers from Ulaanbaatar to Berlin. To orient readers, I have listed the itinerary below in the three major phases of Natsagdorj's travel:

Table 3.1 Natsagdorj's Itinerary in "Notes on the Trip to Berlin."

<i>Mongolia (Stanzas 1–20)</i>	<i>Russia (Stanzas 21–63)</i>	<i>Europe (Stanzas 64–82)</i>
Ulaanbaatar City (left October 17, 1926)	Troitskosavsk City (i.e., Kyakhta)	Baltic Sea
Maanit Pass	Elst Pass	Oder River
Tolgoit Pass	Selenge River	Shtenin City & Port (i.e., Szczecin or Stettin)
Khüi River Örtöö	Galuut Lake	Germany
Khöndlön River	Övgön Place	Berlin
Burgaltai Örtöö	Üd City (arrived October 27, 1926)	Shtenin Station
Khuntsal Örtöö	Selenge River (West of Üd City)	
Boroo River	Lake Baikal	
Khurimt Örtöö	Angar River	
Kharaa Örtöö	Irkutsk City	
Mankhtai Pass	Angar River	
Bayangol Örtöö	Dood Üd City	
Örmögtei Örtöö	Yenisei River	
Shar River	Krasnoyarsk City	
Khüiten Örtöö	Ob River	
Tömst Pass	Novosibirsk City	
Yeröö Örtöö	Omsk City	
Yeröö River	Irtiysh River	
Tsagaan Pass	Sverdlovsk City	
Ivtseg Örtöö	Asia/Europe Frontier	
Bürged Mountain	Kirov City	
Altanbulag Town (enters on October 20, 1926)	Volga River	
	Moscow	
	Leningrad	
	Great Neva River	
	Gulf of Finland	
	Kronstadt Island	

Given this itinerary, it is difficult to say whether Natsagdorj and his readers could interpret the poem with a modern "cartographic imagination," the ability, that is, to conceptualize the nation-state at a more abstract, ideological level

(Pickles 2004). Unlike Mongolian readers in the second half of the twentieth century, who had been thoroughly socialized into recognizing the Mongolian People's Republic, the Soviet Union, and other nations and geographical areas as abstract entities displayed on maps, Natsagdorj offers an itinerary, a proto-map, a transition from an identity of oneself that is localized to a new modern identity, which has an abstract awareness of one's own country and its relationship with the rest of the world. According to scholars such as John Pickles (2004) and D.K. Smith (2008), maps do not simply reveal the territory that is already out there; they produce a new social identity that interacts with the mapped territory in new ways. For Smith (2008, 6), maps provide citizens new ways to imagine and visualize their countries, new perspectives that are no longer local and concrete but now national, political, and abstract. For Pickles (2004), maps affect consciousness and language (12), ordering and domesticating the world (4). Pickles (2004, 4–5) writes, “Maps provide the very conditions of possibility for the worlds we inhabit and the subjects we become.”

In this section, I examine the potential of Natsagdorj's “Notes on the Trip to Berlin” as a poem that signals potential urban, national, and socialist-international identities for Mongolians in the early period of the Mongolian People's Republic. By emphasizing Natsagdorj's role as a travel writer – and not as a poet – and on the identity possibilities of “Notes on the Trip to Berlin,” we return to one of the goals of the study abroad program to Germany and France: to modernize the Mongolian language, in particular in scientific and cartographic terms, and to produce maps and atlases. In short, recalling Pickles's (2004) and Smith's (2008) associations of mapmaking with national identity, both Natsagdorj's poem and the study abroad program's core goals is to consider the possibility of a new urban, national, and, more tentatively, socialist identity.

First, Natsagdorj rejects grounding “Notes on the Trip to Berlin” with a traditional, pastoral ethnic identity. Other Mongolian literary texts that depict travel in the late 1920s and 1930s, including Dondogiin Tsevegmid's “Ganbat the Student” (“Suragch Ganbat”), M. Yadamsüren's “Three Women” (“Gurvan Khüükhen”), and S. Buyannemekh's “Herder Tovvudai” (“Malchin Tovvudai”), begin first in the countryside and then depict their characters' movement towards Ulaanbaatar and the awakening of their urban subjectivities (see Wickhamsmith 2020). Natsagdorj instead begins his poem in Ulaanbaatar and names it in the fourth stanza, one of the first times Ulaanbaatar is mentioned in a literary text.³ Natsagdorj's relationship with Ulaanbaatar, moreover, is a personal one. After he first names the city, he refers to personal terms, including “*manai khüree*,” invoking the name of the city – Ikh Khuree or Niislel Khuree – before 1924. Natsagdorj describes himself as “missing” (*sanagalzakh*) and “feeling deeply about” (*zoolon setgeliin dotor uyanar yoslokh*) the city. As the itinerary above indicates, cities play an important emotional role for Natsagdorj, especially when he arrives in the Soviet Union. In Leningrad, for example, where Natsagdorj spent time in 1925 and 1926 as a student, he compares the city to “his welcoming old homeland” (*tavtaiyaa khuuchin nutagtaa*).

Similar to the ways in which socialist urban identities were later constructed, Natsagdorj does not represent an urban identity as the opposite of a pastoral, countryside

one. These are complementary identities, in which the countryside authorizes and legitimates ideas about ethnic identity. In several lines, which begin to approximate the didactic style of socialist exhortative rhetoric, Natsagdorj describes the feelings of the Mongolian nomads as aroused by the “wide and beautiful countryside”; the travelers, although they were heading towards a “foreign country,” are depicted as “amazed by the happiness of their own homeland” (Stanza 13). Similarly, in Stanza 17, in another exhortative appeal, Natsagdorj announces his pride in the freedom of countryside Mongolians. But, in these lines, Natsagdorj, by the very act of reporting the travelers’ observations and feelings about the countryside, subtly separates himself and his fellow travelers from the countryside Mongolians. In the last two lines of Stanza 13, for instance, he uses a parallel construction to separate the possessive phrase “our own homeland’s” (*ööriin nutgiin*) from “foreign country’s” (*khariin orny*): this parallelism emphasizes the fact that Natsagdorj is indeed heading towards Europe and separating himself from his homeland.

In addition to an early invocation of an urban identity, Natsagdorj’s “Notes on the Trip to Berlin” projects readers towards a potential European and international identity, one that breaks Mongolia from China and the rest of Asia (see Billé 2015). Of course, Natsagdorj has to consider European and international perspectives to some degree, as these represented his destination and his purpose for travel. Thus, it may be doubtful that Natsagdorj had already deeply internalized modern Soviet ideas as well as Russian cultural attitudes against Asia at the time of writing the poem (see Billé 2015, 7). That being said, Natsagdorj depicts Russia and Germany in quite intimate and nonconfrontational ways. Unlike Western travel writers, who emphasize “contact zones” of difference, in which the travelers and the local interlocutors negotiate linguistic and other cultural differences (Pratt 2008), Natsagdorj rarely confronts his readers with difference. He emphasizes similarities instead. In Buryatia, Natsagdorj claims that the countryside is similar to that of Mongolia (Stanza 24); in Stanza 28, he compares a Buryad Buddhist temple to a Mongolian one; additionally, as Natsagdorj looks out the train window in the middle of Russia, he compares the Kyrgyz Steppe to the Mongolian Gobi (Stanza 48). In other words, Natsagdorj makes these local scenes understandable to his target Mongolian readers. Similarly, Natsagdorj includes very few non-Mongolians in his poem. In southern Buryatia, he passes a group of Mongolian youths shivering on the back of a Russian cart (Stanza 23), and he observes Buryad Mongolians participating in agricultural and pastoral livelihoods (Stanza 24). In Üd City (Stanza 33) and Leningrad (Stanza 56), the narrator runs into Mongolian acquaintances. Consequently, Natsagdorj’s version of the Soviet Union is one clearly seen through the intimate perspective of a Mongolian for other Mongolians. It is not until the close confines of the steamship cabin in Leningrad that Natsagdorj, finally, encounters cultural difference. In this case, he emphasizes the strangeness of the language of the German travelers he encounters:

From all sides of the cabin, their nasal sounds shouted out.
 “Ja, ja, nein, nein!” and more words that we couldn’t understand.
 We could only nod our heads and use hand gestures. (Stanza 61)

It is important to note that Natsagdorj emphasizes this scene of linguistic difference, not mentioning, for example, the role of the “Russian woman” in teaching him German vocabulary (see Chimid 2016). Nor does Natsagdorj focus on how he is perceived by Germans, unlike a Mongolian student who had arrived earlier and had felt as if he and his classmates were a part of a “mobile museum,” as they and their traditional Mongolian clothes attracted attention when they arrived (qtd. in Wolff 1946, 76). Natsagdorj writes generally about his interests in the “land, nation, and people” (*gazar, oron, khün ardyn baidal*), but readers encounter no people until the Mongolian students themselves, who are wearing Western clothing and are interested in hearing about news from Mongolia (Stanza 81).

Finally, Natsagdorj offers a few muted proto-socialist appeals in “Notes on the Trip to Berlin,” hinting at the great deal of importance these appeals to modern socialist ways of living and Soviet internationalism would take beginning in the 1930s. Again, at this stage, Natsagdorj’s poem is transitional and only nods towards the authority of the Soviet appeals and institutions. As Tsedev (2016, 252) notes, Natsagdorj introduces many Mongolized versions of European geographical terms, again hinting at a didactic relationship with his readers and the projection of a modern “cartographic imagination” and identity. Yet, excluding proper nouns, Natsagdorj uses Russian only three times, two of which – “*kanal*” (canal) and “*Budda*” (Buddha) – as common loan words, and one of which, “*perevoz*” (ferry boat), in its Mongolized form, “*bervaa*z.”⁴ Stanza 56, set in Leningrad, shows an example of this cultural mixing and ideas about transitional or emerging identities, as Natsagdorj emphasizes the “October Hotel” at the beginning of the stanza and then ends it with a visit to the Datsan Gunzechoinei, the local Buddhist temple, or *Buddagiin sumiin gazar*. Natsagdorj is purposefully, perhaps playfully, juxtaposing a revolutionary Soviet term with a core part of Mongolian religious identity; but, even here, by relying on the non-Mongolian expression of a “Buddha temple,” he is perhaps undercutting the force of that particular cultural tradition. Let us close this section by returning to the paean about Moscow. Again, Natsagdorj blends the proto-socialist appeal with the form of traditional Mongolian verse:

The warm heart of the new world – Moscow.
 The finest place of new learning – Moscow.
 We saw things, opened our eyes.
 We studied. Became men. (Stanza 54)

Writing to an audience of socialist Mongolians, Sodnom (1966) makes a great deal out of this stanza, arguing that it showcases the “big brother, little brother” relationship with the Soviet Union, emphasizes the importance of a Soviet education, and reminds readers that Mongolia was the second country to have a communist revolution (60). Sodnom, however, overstates the extent and directness of Natsagdorj’s socialist appeals here. As I have been attempting to show in this section, Natsagdorj is only hinting at emerging identities and socialist-based social and economic practices – such as farming (e.g., Stanza 9). He blends together

different genres and forms – some of which pointing in the direction of the more didactic socialist rhetoric that will influence his work in the 1930s – yet he still invests himself with appeals to an intimate Mongolian ethnic identity, to which he continues to appeal to as he travels towards Berlin.

Conclusion

Appearing in a Facebook post by the Mongolian Language Center (“‘Mongol Khemeekh’” 2019) and on the website of the Mongolian School of Colorado (“Welcome,” n.d.), two lines of poetry, from the penultimate stanza in “History Poem” (*Tüükhiin Shüleg*) (Natsagdorj 1961, 192–93), showcase Natsagdorj for a young twenty-first-century Mongolian audience:

A culture, its home language you can’t forget
A country you can’t separate from until your death.

These lines first forecast Mongolian anxieties on the eve of the Era of Repression in the late 1930s. For post-socialist purposes, these lines can be subsequently recast to express anxieties about globalization and the emigration of Mongolians and the industrialization and environmental degradation of Mongolian landscapes, sources of anxiety that are significant for constructions of post-socialist identities (Billé 2015, 20–21).⁵ Importantly for our interests, Natsagdorj invokes the national language and the country or land, a construction of a core Mongolian national identity that will appear in Z. Dorj’s (2011) “Words, Borders, Herds” (*Khel, Khil, Mal*) and other post-socialist nationalist discourses (see Baabar 2010; Dashbalbar 2008, 3). Returning to Sneath’s argument about national identity (see Introduction, this volume), we need to recognize these rhetorical uses of and by Natsagdorj as far from “traditional,” “authentic,” “primordial,” or whatever other concepts motivate post-socialist claims to national identity and the past.

As my analysis of “Notes on the Trip to Berlin” suggests, Natsagdorj experiments with and blends identities, producing an “autoethnography” (Pratt 2008) that depicts an independent Mongolian worldview that is not defined, at least directly, by the Soviet Union and the West. In this transitional travel poem, Natsagdorj explores nascent, emerging urban, national, and international identities, successfully countering the prerevolutionary and Qing-era representations of Mongolians circulated by Russian and other European and North American travel writers. As Natsagdorj travels to Europe, he remains in an intimately Mongolian world, one which welcomes him and in which cultural difference is rarely encountered. Natsagdorj’s poem is also “transcultural,” in that it blends a “modern,” Western theme and genre – travel and the daily notes of the traveler, respectively – with Mongolian poetic forms and appeals to nature and landscapes. As readers continue to examine Mongolianness and the ways in which post-socialist national identities interact with those of the socialist or prerevolutionary past, they may want to explore more fully Natsagdorj as a transitional and

mercurial figure, one whose status as an emblem of Mongolian authenticity is not as obvious and commonsensical as his central position in the post-socialist language and literature curriculum and in the twenty-first-century symbology of Mongolia may promise.

Notes

- 1 In the 1961 edition of Natsagdorj's *Works*, this poem was titled "From Ulaanbaatar to Berlin."
- 2 The Scientific Committee, established in 1921, was known in Mongolian as the Philology Institute in the late 1920s; it was renamed the Institute of Sciences in 1930 and then renamed the Academy of Sciences in 1961 (Atwood 2004, 2–3).
- 3 The name of the capital of the Mongolian People's Republic was officially changed to Ulaanbaatar at the end of 1924.
- 4 Natsagdorj uses a fourth foreign term, "*paar*" (a carriage led by a pair of horses), from the German *das Paar* ("pair").
- 5 For one Wikipedia contributor, the stanza that includes these two lines appeal to Mongolian nationalism so well that it was erroneously inserted to the end of "My Homeland" (*Minii Nutag*), a poem that patriotically describes the natural beauty of Mongolia ("My Homeland" 2019).

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4 **Andrei Simukov and Mongolian nationalism**

Mary Rossabi and Morris Rossabi

It may seem counterintuitive to attribute, in part, the development of nationalism to a foreigner, but Andrei Dmitrievich Simukov (1902–1942?) played such a role in Mongolian nation building. As a youth, he and his family faced difficulties during the Russian Revolution, and he was deprived of a university education. However, having had a lifelong passion for Mongolia, he secured an interview with the explorer Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov (1863–1935), who invited him to join his expedition in Mongolia.¹ Simukov remained behind after the conclusion of Kozlov's expeditions and organized his own journeys throughout Mongolia. During his wide-ranging travels, he devised a comprehensive map of the country; described its flora, fauna, and geology; reported on nomadic pastoral migrations; and offered suggestions on the herding economy. His remarkable works not only brought the communist world's attention to Mongolia, but they also provided support for consideration of Mongolia as a unique culture and of Mongolia as having a distinct history, language, and culture – that is, the attributes of a nation, which certainly contributed to the growth of Mongolian nationalism and nation building.

This chapter offers a description of Simukov's life and influence, the historical context of his work in Mongolia, his significance in terms of Mongolian nation building, and a translation of a biography written by his daughter, Natasha Simukova.

Russian explorers and Mongolia

Simukov was one in a line of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian adventurers and scientists who initiated projects of exploration in Mongolia. They so dominated such investigations that in 1912, one non-Russian explorer stated that “the exploration of Mongolia had been almost entirely monopolized by the Russians” (Carruthers 1912, 521). Many of these missions developed after Russia's successful expansion into Central Asia. Once the Tsarist government had reached its apex in Central Asia by occupying Tashkent in 1865 and Samarkand in 1868, it was close to the western borders of Mongolia. Geographers and scientists began to explore Mongolia. The question that arises is the motivations of these voyages. Was it, as two popular writers state, that “[a]ll European geographical societies accepted as a given their role as servants of expansion?” (Meyer

and Brysac 1999, 227). To be sure, military geographers sought to map Central Asia and Mongolia for political reasons, but Simukov and other explorers did not entirely have such an objective (see Geyer 1987; Hopkirk 1992). Simukov did not perceive himself to be working in the interests of the USSR, though some of his investigations were useful to the Soviet and Mongolian governments.

Other late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century explorers were indebted to the Russian government and worked on its behalf. It is no accident that two years after the occupation of Samarkand that Nikolai Mikhailovich Przhevalsky (1839–1888), who had been trained as a soldier and was one of the most serious explorers of Mongolia, led his first expedition. Receiving support from the Tsarist government and the Russian Geographical Society, he initiated five forays into Central Asia, Tibet, and Mongolia. Przhevalsky is renowned because of his discoveries of wild horses, which were named in his honor, and wild camels and because of his identification of varieties of rhododendrons and honeysuckles, also named after him (see Przhevalsky 1876). Yet political objectives were enmeshed with his discoveries and perhaps overshadowed them. He eventually proposed that the Tsarist government subjugate Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet and bring them under the control of Russia and, in his books, denigrated the Asian societies in a blatant example of Russian Orientalism.

Pyotr Kuzmich Kozlov, Simukov's mentor, was also a soldier and joined Przhevalsky on his fourth expedition, succeeding the previous leader as the most renowned explorer in the region after the latter's death in 1888. Unlike Przhevalsky, Kozlov searched for archeological sites and was not as interested in mapping, which might have military and political implications, an indication that assistance in Russian expansionism was not as critical to him. His most important expedition resulted in the discovery of the Tangut capital at Khara Khoto in 1907. Having founded a Chinese-style dynasty known as the Xia, the Tanguts, who were related to Tibetans and had lands in present-day China's northwest, had developed a written language, translated Chinese texts, and enacted an extant law code (see Dunnell 1996). They had settled in the capital city and had adopted Buddhism. Kozlov found numerous Tangut books and Buddhist ritual as well as practical objects, which he shipped back to the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. On his other major voyage, from 1923 to 1926, he discovered the royal tombs of the Xiongnu, a steppe confederation that dominated Mongolia and Inner Mongolia from the third century BCE until around the first century CE (see Brosseder and Miller 2011; Watson 1961, 155–92). The tombs he excavated in Noyan Ula had a treasure trove of textiles, ceramics, and other objects, some of which he again dispatched to the Hermitage. Fortunately for Simukov, he was part of Kozlov's 1923 expedition, his first such foray.

China, Russia, and Mongolia, 1911–1921

Despite the Russian presence in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Mongolia, the role of China cannot be ignored. After all, the Qing dynasty had ruled eastern Mongolia since 1691 and western Mongolia since 1696. The fall of the

Qing in 1911 had offered Mongolia an opportunity to achieve independence. From 1911 until at least 1928, China did not have a central government that ruled the entire country. Provincial leaders and warlords controlled parts of China and did not abide by the policies of any higher authority. A weakened China and the ensuing chaos permitted the Mongols to move toward self-government. However, unity proved elusive.

Instead, the Eighth Bogd Gegeen (1869–1924), the Tibetan head of Mongolian Buddhism, eventually became the monarch for a short time. Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the Qing dynasty of China had mandated that each successive reincarnation of the Bogd Gegeen be a Tibetan. The Qing court initiated that policy to prevent a Mongolian Bogd Gegeen from leading an effort to develop Mongolian nationalism. It reckoned that a Tibetan could not arouse the Mongols and initiate a revolt against the Qing. He could, in theory, attract the spiritual feelings of the population but could not lead a serious revolution to liberate the Mongols. The Eighth Bogd Gegeen's character also undermined his efforts at leadership. His consumption of alcohol and his sexual excesses resulted in a devastating case of syphilis and then blindness (Bawden 1968, 165–66). His sexual appetite appeared to be boundless. One of his homosexual affairs led to his partner's exile and execution (Bawden 1997, 26). He also executed many others if they irritated or challenged him.² Foreigners and Mongols alike remarked on corruption in the Buddhist establishment (see also Rossabi 2013). The small group of elite lamas gained most of the income, which by around 1911 has been estimated as one-fifth of the country's wealth; lamas charged for any birth, marriage, and funeral rituals they performed.

Nonetheless, the Eighth Bogd Gegeen, as corrupt and as tyrannical as he was, remained the sole leader who could unify the Mongols, but he certainly was not an optimal choice. A few Mongolian leaders wished to remain in the orbit of China, but most, some of whom were indebted to Chinese moneylenders or banks, opted for independence. They believed that they needed assistance to be liberated from Chinese rule and turned to Tsarist Russia, their allegedly powerful neighbor for help. A few months prior to the October Tenth Revolution in 1911 in China, they pressured the Bogd Gegeen to dispatch a delegation to Russia (Ewing 1980). However, having suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of Japan six years earlier, Russia was reluctant to challenge the status quo in East Asia. The meeting ended inconclusively, but the revolution in China a few months later prompted the Mongolian leaders to form a new state, with the Bogd Gegeen as the titular monarch and five ministries to govern the country.

Now in a stronger position, the Mongols hoped that they would receive Russian support for their claims, but the support turned out to be limited. Agreements and treaties would offer recognition of some of the Mongolians' objectives. On November 3, 1912, Russia concurred that Mongolia was autonomous and could organize its own military forces. China had no choice but to acquiesce, and a year later it signed an agreement with Russia that acknowledged Mongolia's autonomy but yet under China's suzerainty, a murky and ill-defined status. Nonetheless, it set the stage for a 1915 treaty signed by Russia, China, and Mongolia, which

confirmed the arrangement of Mongolian autonomy and Chinese suzerainty (Fritters 1951, 108–9).

The actual implementation of this treaty cannot be gauged because of the onset of World War I and the Russian Revolution. World War I focused attention on Europe, not East Asia, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 undermined the country that could have guaranteed the treaty. China was the first country to seek to capitalize on the lack of a major Russian presence in East Asia. In 1919, the military clique that controlled Beijing but not much of the rest of the country (Salomon 1971) dispatched a military man named Xu Shuzheng (1880–1925) to reimpose China's rule over Mongolia. As soon as he arrived, he met with the Mongolian nobles and demanded their acquiescence to Chinese demands. Threatening to move more of his troops into Mongolia, he also required taxes to be paid to China (Boorman and Howard 1968, 144). Terrified at the prospect of an invasion, the nobles and the Bogd Gegeen appeared to submit, and independence and a revival of Mongolian nationalism seemed a distant dream. Zhang Zuolin (1875–1928), a warlord from Manchuria, saved the Mongols at this point (McCormack 1977). He was concerned about the power of the military clique in Beijing, which could threaten his territory. He acted first and overthrew the Beijing government, which neutralized Xu Shuzheng. Although Xu left the country in 1920, Mongolia remained vulnerable to foreign influences and threats.

The Mongols' inability to unify seems to confirm Benedict Anderson's (1983) perception of "imagined communities." They had a common language and culture and had been freed from the Emperor of China who claimed rule by divine right, and they had witnessed the inability of the Bogd Gegeen, another "divine right ruler," to govern, two criteria of Anderson's view of nationalism. Yet they faced disunity and lacked the kinship that created a community. The socially constructed concept of "Mongolianness" had not yet developed and had not created a political community, perhaps because of the lack of an Industrial Revolution and printing, which, Anderson believed, led to such a community. Ironically, as will be noted, the influence of the USSR would foster nation building and nationalism.

Ungern-Sternberg and USSR involvement

Although China failed to dominate Mongolia by 1920, the country faced other threats. The major one derived from Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg (1886–1921), an anti-communist who wished to restore the Romanovs in Russia and supported Buddhism and the Bogd Gegeen in Mongolia. In February of 1921, his troops moved into the Mongolian capital of Khüree (i.e., Urga) and placed the Bogd Gegeen on the throne. Then he allowed his troops to engage in a rampage, looting and killing Chinese merchants, Russian Jews, and even some Mongols. Although the Bogd Gegeen initially conceived of Ungern-Sternberg as a friend of Buddhism, his cruelty and violence, which earned him the sobriquet of "Mad Baron," lost him the Buddhist leader's support. Ungern-Sternberg had aroused the hostility not only of the Bogd Gegeen but also of Mongols of all classes in Urga. The ensuing violence and instability prompted several Mongolian leaders

to appeal to the Russians for assistance. On this occasion, the Russians responded and sent a military force that liberated Urga and ousted Ungern-Sternberg in July of 1921. A few months later, he was captured, and, after a peremptory trial in a theater in the town of Novoniko, before a crowd of several thousand people, he was found to be mentally ill but was nonetheless executed. The chief judge compared the sentence “to the compassion we show to a sick animal in finishing it off. In this respect, Baron Ungern will accept our mercy with pleasure” (Palmer 2009, 231). Within a few hours, a firing squad executed Ungern-Sternberg.

With Russian troops having expelled Ungern-Sternberg and occupying the capital city, why then did they not organize Mongolia as a Republic within what would be, in December of 1922, the USSR? It would appear to have been a perfect opportunity to add Mongolia to the new State. Yet, unlike the republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Tsarist Russia had never ruled Mongolia, which had been a Qing colony for two centuries. The Russians would have some historical justification for incorporating the Buryats and Kalmyks into the USSR because they had been under Tsarist jurisdiction, but there was no precedent for governance over Mongolia. Perhaps more important, Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), the Chair of the Council of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republics, sought to establish good relations with China and had dispatched Adolph Joffe (1883–1927) to devise an agreement with Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) to provide military assistance, advise on the organization of Sun’s Guomindang political party, and work out an alliance between the Chinese Communists and the Guomindang. The Russians did not want to jeopardize such an agreement by asserting Mongolia’s independence. They also went one step farther by signing an agreement with the government in Beijing. In this 1924 document, the USSR asserted that China was sovereign in Mongolia, and it pledged that it would pull its forces out of the country. These concessions were totally *pro forma*: Soviet technical and political advisers remained in the country while the Mongolian government and Mongolians, in general, hounded the Chinese residents and compelled most of them to leave by the late 1920s.

Nonetheless, Mongolia lacked an all-encompassing legitimacy. The USSR, its most important supporter, had acknowledged that it was not an independent country. How could Mongolian nationalism arise and receive reinforcement without diplomatic recognition of Mongolia from much of the world? Another impediment for Mongolian nationalism was

[t]he sense of local loyalty, of belonging to a group with different historical traditions from those of other Mongols . . . Western Mongols in particular felt themselves distinct, in language and in background, from the predominant Khalkha population, and local separatism was a matter of concern for at least a decade after the People’s government was first established.

(Bawden 1968, 244)

Moreover, the Bogd Gegeen’s foreign background as a Tibetan and his lascivious lifestyle had militated against his leadership of a national movement. In any event,

the Eighth Bogd Gegeen's death in 1924 made this moot because the government ensured that no reincarnation could be found.

Andrei Simukov: life and career

Andrei Simukov arrived in Mongolia at this critical juncture, with Mongolian nationalism facing serious challenges. His own Russian government had considerable influence over Mongolia, which dampened Mongolian nationalism. China claimed Mongolia as part of its territory, an even more serious impediment. Sources on the lives of Mongolians, the migrations of their herders, and even an analysis of the topography and a complete map were scarcely available, which also served to undermine Mongolian nationalism. Mapping has often had political implications, but nearly all maps of Mongolia were fragmentary and focused on specific regions. The various local Mongolian governments preferred area maps that helped in climatic and land observations and were not as interested in administrative divisions except to delineate the borders. An accurate map of the whole country would assist in blurring the divisions among Mongolian groups and regions and perhaps contribute to Mongolian unity and even to nationalism.

Simukov was one of the last extraordinarily accomplished nineteenth- and twentieth-century adventurers and explorers of East and Central Asia and the Silk Roads, a list which would include the Englishman Aurel Stein (1862–1943), Przhevalsky, and the Swede Sven Hedin (1865–1952). Like many of his predecessors, Simukov had little academic training in the sciences to which he would make enduring contributions. The chaos attending Russia's involvement in World War I and then its revolution undermined his access to the higher education to which he and his family would have aspired. Yet the political, economic, and social turbulence of his times did not crush his dreams and his enthusiasms. From childhood on, he had had two obsessions: the natural world and Mongolia. His vision and his determination finally offered him a serendipitous path to fulfill his dreams. He leapt upon the opportunity and would, in his years of observations and investigations in Mongolia, make important discoveries in the geography, zoology, and botany of Mongolia. Yet, only a few specialists know of his research and his career.³

His writings and reports about Mongolia reveal the extraordinary hardships he endured. He climbed lofty mountains, forded rivers with fast-moving currents, and suffered from high altitude sickness. He mentions the perils he encountered but does not dwell on them. He also does not point out that he was the first Westerner to travel through some of the places he describes. His pioneering efforts resulted in contributions to science but also led to detailed descriptions of shamanic performances, patterns of movements by herders, and comprehensive catalogs of animals in specific regions. In addition, he mentions Buddhist monasteries and alludes to political and economic developments in socialist Mongolia.

The overwhelming impression of these writings is Simukov's exhilaration in the field in Mongolia. He obviously loved the environment through which he traveled, and his beautiful descriptions of the flora and fauna attest to his happiness. His

insights about the landscape, the Mongolian people, the movements of herders, and the habitats of animals remain relevant to the present-day lives of Mongolian herders. His love of the outdoors offers a poignant and shocking counterpoint to his and the deaths of other scientists in the Gulag. His labor camp was in the coal mining district in the Vorkuta complex adjacent to the Pechora river, an appalling location for a man so attuned to Nature.

His daughter Natasha Simukova has been responsible for gathering her father's papers and having them published. She has also written a detailed account of his early life, which she gave to the two authors, with permission to translate from the Russian and to publish. She became a scientist in Moscow, married a fellow scientist, who was Jewish, and eventually migrated to the US with her husband and daughter, who is a professor specializing in linguistics. A widow, she currently lives in Brookline, Massachusetts. The following, which includes Simukova's biography of her father, has been edited and translated by the authors.

His father, Dmitri Andreevich Simukov (1862–1922), came from a Belorussian village, studied at the History-Philology Faculty of Petersburg University, and served in the Ministry of Finance. His mother, Natalia Yakovlevna Simukova (1875–1962) was born Miller, into the family of a Petersburg doctor. Andrei received a good education from his family and at the classical gymnasium where he displayed superior abilities; he learned German, French, Latin, and Greek, studied English, and took music and drawing lessons.

Under his father's influence, from childhood Andrei was attracted to geography and natural history, and his father also gave his son a great love and understanding of nature. When he was eight years old, he was given one of Kozlov's books. At 13, Andrei took independent excursions in areas around Petersburg alone or with friends for which he organized "The Society of Amateur Naturalists."

Later, Simukov wrote about subsequent events: "Different circumstances at that time led me down a different path" (Simukov 1934b). These circumstances were the revolutions in Russia, the Civil War, destruction, and famine. Thus, as in all of the country, the Simukov family was ruined.

His father lost his job. They lived on the small savings of his mother. Andrei earned money giving lessons, and he found work as a courier, stood for hours for kerosene and rations, and at night was on duty with a defense committee to protect homes against marauders. In spite of all that, he walked across half of the town to an acquaintance who was a naturalist in order to learn to make slides and work with a microscope (by the light of a candle or kerosene lamp).

The famine in the spring of 1918 during the entry of the Germans into Petrograd led the Simukovs to evacuate and follow the Ministry of Finance to Nizhni Novgorod. From there, Simukov's mother and the children moved to her husband's patrimony in the village of Sigeevka in the present Bryansk oblast. His mother taught and did the agricultural work of a peasant woman. His father worked in Moscow, and when he became seriously ill, he came

back to the village. His brother and sister were still children. Sixteen-year-old Andrei undertook the farm work of plowing, planting, and scything in order to feed the family. Gradually, the cottage was repaired. Here, in the village, Andrei met Melania Alekseevna, his future wife and expedition partner.

In August 1920, Andrei finished secondary school and went to study in Moscow. The proper documents were sent to the natural history division of the Physics-Mathematics faculty of Moscow University, but Andrei entered the auto-technical course of the High Military Armored Car division. Why he did not enter the university can only be guessed: perhaps his origin had been established and that he did not suffer from extraordinary poverty. After finishing the course, in the autumn of 1921, Andrei entered the Moscow Mechanical Electrotechnical Institute named for Lomonosov, having given up thoughts of scientific research activities and geography as unrealizable. He worked as a night watchman and gave lessons. Each summer was spent on farm work in the village.

Early in the spring of 1923, the life path of Simukov changed. By chance, he read an announcement about a lecture by P. K. Kozlov, and he knew from the newspaper about the organization of the famous explorer of the Mongolian-Tibetan expeditions. Of course, he hurried to the lecture, and hearing that workers were needed on the expedition, he quickly made an application. Out of several hundred wishing to go, three were selected, and one of these was Simukov. About the beginning of his work, "In Mongolia and To Mongolia," Andrei wrote on September 26, 1923 that, as part of the staff of the expedition of the Russian Geographical Society, under the leadership of P. K. Kozlov, equipped on the initiative of the Soviet People's Commissar of the USSR, he went for the first time across the border to the Mongolian People's Republic. He was 21 years old – under his belt were two courses at a technical institute of higher learning.

The investment in Simukov led to useful results for the expedition: the archeological excavations at the Noyan-uul kurgan (or tumulus) of the Xiongnu culture, the geographical finds in southwest Khentii, and an essay on the fauna of the Gobi. On the completion of the P. K. Kozlov expedition (autumn, 1926), Simukov was invited to work on the Scientific Committee of Mongolia with its secretary Ts. Jamtsarano. On January 1, 1927, 24-year-old Simukov worked at Uchkom (in the leading museum and cartographic section). His mission was to open a new space (the former summer palace of the Bogd Gegeen), which was completed in the summer of 1927.

However, on March 4, Simukov left with five workers for southwest Khentii, where he spent two months on an archeological dig in two new kurgans. A small Chinese cup was found with writing on it, which could be dated from the Xiongnu period. In May, Simukov went with his wife, Melania Alekseevna, for a thousand-kilometer trip through Mongolia on an expedition collecting botanical specimens and taking photographs. In the middle of July 1927, Simukov and two coworkers (an assistant from the museum,

Jargal, and M. A. Simukova) and the worker Jamba set off on their first Gobi expedition, which was to last five months.

From 1927 until 1939, Simukov was the leader of and participant in 15 large scale expeditions and a number of trips and excursions. His march route (about 70,000 kilometers) covered almost all of the territory of Mongolia. Simukov summarized in two works his study and analysis of the subjects and results of the research of the expeditions up to 1936. Here, in short, is an overview.

Simukov was the first to systematically conduct the complex physical-geographical research of Mongolia, especially in the Khangai (i.e., the forest-steppe area north of the desert) and the Gobi areas of the country. He first produced a map of several mountain ranges and a large number of spurs in the Mongolian Tianshan; then, he was the first to determine the basic natural zones of Mongolia with their horizontal and vertical shifts, which showed the fundamental complexes of flora and fauna in each zone; and he drew up a map of the growth and distribution of groups of mammals and the important trade in animals in all areas of the country. He took an active part in developing a new scientific regional administration for Mongolia and proposed the first economic regional administration in the country and selected a place for the capital of the southern-Gobi aimag (or province), the town of Dalanzadgad. Finally, Simukov outlined important directions for future research in Mongolia, frequently showing the strata useful for finding fossils of fauna.

Simukov's expeditions amassed an entire collection of ethnographic material, flora and fauna, specimens of fossils which were useful, as well as an abundance of rich photographic material for the Government Museum of Mongolia.

Simukov's wife gave birth to a boy in the spring of 1928 who was given the Mongolian name of Altai, and Simukov wanted to name his daughter Gobi, but his wife asked him to call her Natalia in honor of his mother. Tragically, in 1931, his three-year-old son died of scarlet fever. Afraid to lose another relative, in 1934, Simukov sent his family back to Russia. Dorjbalam, Simukov's daughter (with a Mongolian woman), was born in 1937 in Ulaanbaatar.

The active participation of Simukov in 1935 for the Scientific Committee led to the organization of courses for the preparation of specialists (the prototype of the future university), where Andrei read geography in the Mongolian language, so he could read and write the old Mongolian script. He wrote a terminological dictionary of geography, collected a wide variety of materials for a geographical dictionary-encyclopedia, and prepared items for a defining dictionary.

Without a doubt, he was especially influenced by his close friends in his understanding of Mongolia. His closest friend was Ts. Jamtsarano; B. Rinchen (1905–1977) was another close friend, as were the poet D. Natsagdorj (1906–1937), the family of T. Badmajapov, the Buddhologist M.I. Tubianskii, and the geologist I. P. Rachkovskii. He had a very close relationship with S. A. Kondratiev and family and doctor P. N. Shastin. He also had many

friends who had been participants on the expeditions – Fuchin, A. A. Turutanov, P. F. Chukhlomin, and the sportsman G. M. Korchanov and his family.

In 1934 in Ulaanbaatar, *The Geographic Atlas of The Mongolian People's Republic* (Simukov 1934a) compiled by Simukov was published in the Russian and Mongolian languages. The Atlas contained 18 maps and cartograms, which reflected in detail the natural conditions of the country, its administrative structure, including an ethnographic map, the numbers and density in regions and aimags, and described the cattle production in terms of each type of animal. This atlas was the first such publication in the history of research on Mongolia.

But his departure to the Soviet Union did not come soon, as the amount of work increased. From 1936 to 1938, Simukov led two expeditions to the Tsagaan-Bogdo region (Vorobiev and Simukov 1937), one to the Gobi and the Khangai, and, finally, a huge, almost five-month expedition to a western aimag, investigating the economy, the way of life, and the culture of all the nationalities in western Mongolia.

In the mid-1930s, the situation in Mongolia, as in the USSR, was becoming increasingly difficult. Friends disappeared. Rinchen and Natsagdorj were arrested. In the newspapers and magazines of both countries were the endless proceedings of “the enemies of the people.” Simukov sent a letter, not by post, but by courier to Moscow. His last letter from Ulaanbaatar was dated August 2, 1939 and was addressed to his wife and daughter, Natasha. It was conveyed by D. Gocho – an old friend of Simukov, who was the representative of the agricultural *artel* (i.e., cooperative) in Ikh Tamir *Sum* (or district) and went to Moscow to the All Union Agricultural Exhibition. On September 19, 1939, at the age of 37, Simukov was arrested in Ulaanbaatar by an organ of the NKVD in the Soviet Union. He did not admit guilt to any crime. Yet, on April 22, 1940, he was transferred from Ulaanbaatar in a special convoy to a prison in Ulan-Ude. On January 4, 1941, he was tried, in absentia, by a Special Group of the NKVD, “for his participation in an anti-Soviet organization.” At the beginning of February of 1941, Simukov was transported across Novosibirsk and Archangel to the Pechorskii camp in the Komi ASSR (the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic), where an official later concluded that on April 15, 1942, he died of “paralysis of the heart.” I [Simukov's daughter] believe that this information about the main cause of death is not accurate. In December of 1956, Simukov was completely rehabilitated “in the absence of any crime.”

His daughter ends by noting that his works disappeared from any Russian books about Mongolia. However, Mongolia preserved his studies, and the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan issued them recently in three volumes, along with a few essays about him in the first volume (Simukov 2007). His works not only survived but had an influence on Mongolia. He portrayed the country as a single unit in maps and in his geographic writings, all of which contributed to Mongolian

nationalism. However, it is his descriptions of the splendor and beauty of the country for which Mongolia will remember him.

In Mongolia, Simukov went on many expeditions for what became the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and wrote numerous articles about his research on the flora and fauna, the geography and geology, the archeology, the economy, and even the political landscape of Mongolia in the 1920s and 1930s. He mapped vast areas, mountain ranges, much of the Gobi Desert, the course of rivers and streams, wells, and springs. He studied animal husbandry in Mongolia, its pasture lands and pasturage system, the fertility of its herds, as well as the different types of nomadic settlements. He was also instrumental in developing Mongolia's regional economies and took part in and led many expeditions to various areas of the country, where he studied and advised on the best places for spas or a provincial capital, helped establish meteorological stations, and excavated ancient archeological sites for the Mongolian National Museum in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. He mastered both classical and modern Mongolian and wrote his reports in both Russian and Mongolian, earning him great respect and affection from his Mongolian contemporaries, from scholars to herders.

There is no question that Simukov was a meticulous observer and recorder of specific features of Mongolian geography and of its nomadic steppe culture. He was Director of the Mongolian National Museum and of the Department of Geography and took part in 15 expeditions. Part of his work appears to have had practical objectives and ramifications. Proper mapping of sites, including that of his *Geographic Atlas of the Mongolian People's Republic* (1934a), was essential for control of the population, particularly in a country as vast as Mongolia. Detailed analyses, such as Simukov's works, of the movements of nomadic herders in various regions, offered useful information to the authorities who sought to monitor and regulate pastoral activities. His observations helped the government to devise systems of local administration in the pre-collectivist stage of twentieth-century Mongolia. Simukov thus facilitated efforts at governance. To be sure, Simukov, as shall be noted later, did not foresee its use in this way by the government.

Later scholars have found Simukov's data to be both beneficial and extremely accurate. Cambridge University anthropologist David Sneath studied one of the sites where Simukov had conducted research 60 years earlier and verified his predecessor's results about herders' seasonal migrations. Measuring the total distance of pastoral movements in this region, Sneath confirmed Simukov's findings. As Sneath writes, "This seems virtually unchanged from Simukov's time. . . . This confirms the general picture that in this region pastoralists seem to be about as mobile as they were in Simukov's day" (Humphrey and Sneath 1999, 234). What greater compliment for a researcher than having his results confirmed 60 years after his initial studies?

Simukov's analyses are invaluable in understanding not only his own times but of the contemporary pastoral economy. His daughter's evaluation of his significance may appear to some to be hyperbolic, but the range of his publications is astonishing. He contributed to knowledge of monasteries and their role in the

economy, to a more a precise regional division of the country, and to a careful analysis of the Gobi and its environment. His essays on forests around Ulaanbaatar, on water transport, and on remote regions in Mongolia had considerable significance for public policy.

Naturally, mapping, collecting botanical specimens, paleontological investigations, and charting the movements of herders, among other of Simukov's studies, necessitated field trips, not library research – and, we might add, field trips in difficult conditions. One has only to read the accounts and diaries of Roy Chapman Andrews' (1884–1960) extremely well-funded yet demanding and occasionally precarious expeditions to recognize the arduousness of Simukov's travels, which did not have the resources, advantages, or monies that Andrews enjoyed (Gallenkamp and Novacek 2001).

Moreover, no one can gauge (although we can imagine) his suffering during the last three years of his life – from 1939 to 1942 – in the Soviet prison camp where he died. All of his extraordinary works, over the period of only one decade, were completed by the time he reached the age of 37. How much more would he have accomplished had he enjoyed a normal life span? The loss to knowledge and scholarship by the cruel and unjust snuffing out of his life is incalculable. He leaves a vast legacy, and his personal integrity and brilliance are highly respected by many in Mongolia, Russia, and beyond.

Simukov's voluminous writings also bolstered Mongolian nationalism. He was impressed with the strength and "abilities of this Mongol nation." The Mongolians, he wrote, had undergone a significant cultural change from Buddhism and lamas and from feudalism imposed by China to a progressive and less oppressive society. The disunity of the past, which was based upon the remoteness of the country, the scarcity of population, and the difficult weather had been transformed into a national consciousness for much of the population. Nationalist ideas had spread, as well as a belief that the country's culture, its philosophy, art, and music was of a high order and had also served to unify the populace. Similarly, the fact that the relations of the sexes had general equal rights contributed to strong national feelings (Simukov 2007, 593–97).

Simukov does not exemplify the Russian Orientalism of such explorers as Przhevalsky. He scarcely returned to Russia after his arrival in Mongolia with Kozlov's expedition in 1923. Spending most of the next 16 years in Mongolia, he departed only when he was arrested in 1939. He did not adopt a condescending attitude toward Mongolia and indeed had a daughter with a Mongolian woman. His wide circle of friends among Mongolian intellectuals marked him as different from the other explorers and offered additional confirmation of a lack of Orientalist attitudes. Similarly, although his work may have been coopted by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the socialist government to gain greater control and leverage over the nomadic and seminomadic herders, he certainly did not conduct his research for that purpose.

His personal legacy to Mongolia and Russia was extremely significant. His Russian daughter Natasha Simukova's career has already been described. Simukov's Mongolian daughter had a distinguished medical career in Mongolia and gave birth to three children, who have played important roles in Mongolian nation

building. Zorig, the oldest, studied at Moscow State University, and on his return to Mongolia in 1986, at the age of 24, became a lecturer at the National University of Mongolia. His exposure to *perestroika* or “restructuring of the economy” and *glasnost* or “greater freedom of expression” in Russia encouraged him to challenge the authoritarianism of the MPRP. He became one of the leaders of the 1989–1990 demonstrations that led to the collapse of one-party rule in March of 1990 (see Rossabi 2005, 2–4). His reward was election to the Khural (or Parliament) as a member of the Democratic Union in 1990 and as a Minister in the 1996 government. Appalled by the corruption that ensued after the collapse of socialism in 1990, he criticized the failed governments that took power from 1996 to 1998 and was about to be named Prime Minister when he was assassinated in October of 1998. His killers have not been identified or brought to justice. His sister Oyun, who had received a Ph.D. in Geology at Cambridge University, abandoned her career in geology at that point and entered politics. She was elected to the Khural and, over the years, served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Environment. Also distressed by the corruption in government, she founded the Civil Will Party, her own political party. The remaining brother worked at the International Republican Institute and then became an Ambassador to India.

The Simukov family has sacrificed the original Russian explorer and his Mongolian-Russian grandson to nation building and nationalism, to the cause of which they have made significant contributions. Unlike most other explorers who conducted research in Mongolia, Simukov was not in Mongolia to enrich the museums of other lands, but instead wished to bolster Mongolia’s own identity.

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Notes

- 1 On Kozlov’s pioneering expeditions, including the discovery of Khara Khoto, the capital of the Tangut Xia dynasty (ca. 985–1227) in northwest China, see Andreyev and Yusupova (2018). After his wife’s death, Kozlov’s home was turned into a museum, with some of the objects he collected. Interestingly enough, his principal work has been translated and published in a Chinese edition (Kozlov 2011).
- 2 In an ahistorical account, Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat, the first President of Mongolia, does not mention these unattractive aspects of the Eighth Bogd Gegeen and seeks, in a variety of ways, to rehabilitate him (Ochirbat 2018, 109–11).
- 3 For example, in a recent scholarly work on Asian maps (Narangoa and Cribb 2014), neither Simukov nor his map of Mongolia are mentioned.

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5 Official script changes in socialist Mongolia

Myagmar Saruul-Erdene

In Mongolia, new alphabets have been introduced to meet the challenges of significant historical changes. In other words, these script changes are political. For example, in the thirteenth century, Khubilai Khan introduced the Phags-pa script as a declaration of his new Great Empire. According to Gyorgy Kara (2005), Khubilai's "creation of a new script (one of the important symbols of national independence) also expressed striving for a break with traditions of the northern homeland. . . , with the 'old guard' of courtiers and the Uygur advisors who wielded too much influence" (52). As the Phags-pa was based on Tibetan scripts, Khubilai's declaration invited in "an era of strong Tibetan influence" on "the spiritual life of the Mongols" (Kara 2005, 52).

Another important example of script change before the twentieth century was Zanabazar's creation of the Soyombo script for special political and religious reasons. According to Ts. Shagdarsüren (2001), the new Soyombo script was politically relevant because it served as a symbol of "Mongolian independence [and] resistance against Manchu invaders" (129). Finally, another seventeenth-century example of script reform occurred in western Mongolia, where the Zaya Pandita contributed the Clear Script, proclaiming that the existing scripts were not so "clear."

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how script changes continued after the People's Revolution in socialist Mongolia; importantly, these changes were based more on political than linguistic explanations. The following sections will show the roles of Classical Mongolian Script, the various Latin script alternatives, and the Tibetan script in establishing the political authority of the Revolutionary Party, the socialist Mongolian government, and, of course, the Soviet Union.

Literacy policy in the 1920s

After the 1911 and 1921 revolutions, officials of these new Mongolian states emphasized the importance of education and literacy. Classical Mongolian Script was placed at the heart of Mongolian identity and the national revival movement during 1920s. For example, N. Magsarjav (2014) wrote in 1925:

Because the matter of educating young boys and girls of the *arats* [common people] inside the country was very important, the government passed the

Law of Elementary and Secondary Schools and gathered together for the first time boys and girls between the ages of eight and eighteen in August of the same year [i.e., 1921] they opened the elementary school classes. . . . Also, we Mongols have not studied foreign books and are wild and uneducated; the reason is because there are not enough materials printed in our National Mongolian language and script. Therefore, they [the government] discussed the issue and decided to establish the Philology Institute and allow them to translate the most important international books into our national language and script.

(300–1)

The terminology of “national language and script” is significant here. It clearly differentiates itself from “non-national” languages and scripts, or, in other words, Tibetan and Manchu. Before the 1921 People’s Revolution, there were three types of schools in Mongolia: religious-based schools, which focused on Tibetan; secular government schools, which focused on Manchu; and home schools, in which the national Mongolian script was studied. According to B. Rinchen (1964, 29–31), most educated people were from religious schools (44% of all males), followed by home-schooled Mongolians, and then students from the government schools. After the People’s Revolution, these types of schools and the languages they sponsored determined who was to become the leaders and the enemies of the new Mongolian socialist state: the herder-*arads* were supported by the new government ideology, whereas the “black and yellow feudals” became the enemies. Black feudals were the prerevolutionary government workers, and they were symbolized by the Manchu script and language; yellow feudals were lamas, symbolized by the Tibetan script and language. The ideology of the new Mongolian socialist state officially circumscribed the power of these new enemies: “The former lords and princes and lamas and priests in monasteries and all the feudals who benefit from others’ labor and priorities . . . shall be prohibited from being elected” (Batsaikhan 2018, 179). Instead of these prerevolutionary leaders, it was clear that the new nation’s foundation was to be the national language and script; that is, the vertical Classical Mongolian Script, which was based on the Uyghur script from at least the thirteenth century and, starting in the seventeenth century, became established as a highly developed written language with a precise orthography.

At the First Congress of the Mongolian People’s Party, the role of Classical Mongolian Script was emphasized, and a document was published, the Proclamation for the People (*Tumend tunkhaglan zarlakh bichig*), which called for all people to learn the national script. In 1921, The Philology Institute was established, and its main purpose was “educating people, eliminating people’s underdevelopment, and developing literacy, culture, and science” (“Philology” 2016). In this case, “literacy” here means instruction in Classical Mongolian. In 1923, in the *Mongolian People’s Party Journal*, party officials declared the limitations of literacy instruction in Mongolia: “We organized the Philology Institute, thinking that it would be helpful for people’s learning and education issues, but in our Mongolia there are very few soldiers and *arads* who know our own script based

on our own language and gradually we are forgetting the amazing period in which our Mongolian language rose” (*Documents* 1966, 65). In short, the learning of the Mongolian script and the literacy movement had an official linguistic purpose, despite the fact that they were juxtaposed against such languages as Tibetan, Manchu, or Chinese; what was significant was the focus on “enhancing and raising up the Mongolian language.” In the same issue of the *Mongolian People’s Party Journal*, the party declared the importance of the national script and literacy:

From now on let’s make our young boys learn our national language and script and different kinds of foreign knowledge; besides that, let’s translate and create all the different science items in our own Mongolian language and publish them. Let’s create a library and collect contemporary and ancient Mongolian language sutras and history. Also, if we are able to collect sutras like the *Ganjur* and the *Danjur*, which were translated at the time that our Mongolian language was prospering, and prepare them to be read, then our Mongolian national language and its meaning and quality will improve, and our own language will be well kept and also good for learning and enlightenment.

(*Documents* 1966, 66)

However, after the First and Second Great *Khurals* of the Revolutionary Party, literacy became more politicized. From 1925, most of the Revolutionary Party and State Great *Khurals* mentioned literacy issues not only in terms of the Ministry of Enlightenment (i.e., Education) but also as a part of the ideology efforts of the party. We can see this in 1935 in the main report of the Revolutionary Party’s 9th Great *Khural*, in which the party secretary D. Luvsansharav declared the following:

The issue of developing the people’s national culture and education has an extremely political nature and the execution of such a deed can beat and destroy the remnants of the ideology and influence of feudalism. . . . The basis of developing the national culture and education is people’s literacy. For that purpose, there are two important political works that need to be done: First, to develop schools with political education; second, the literacy of adults.

(*Documents* 1966, 290–92)

By the mid-1930s, the Mongolian script had become “a weapon of ideology.” In any case, regardless of these linguistic or political purposes, Classical Mongolian Script was consistently assumed to be an important basis of the literacy of the new Mongolian socialist state.

Latinization in Turkic-speaking nations of the Soviet Union

Despite the fact that the Mongolian government and the Revolutionary Party were actively promoting the national Mongolian script in literacy programs, the Revolutionary Party suddenly decided to change course in February of 1930 at

the 8th Great *Khural*: “We should abandon the Mongolian script, which is part of the remnants of the old bureaucracy and is not helpful for the progress of a new culture and education, and we should execute in a short period the project to harmonize the Latin script with Mongolian language and make it our national language script as Latin has already shown that it is capable of spreading modern culture” (Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party 1930). Despite this justification, if we look back at the history of Latinization in the Turkic-speaking nations of the Soviet Union, most of which had been using Arabic-based scripts, it is clear that the Latinization of the Mongolian language grew out of this previous movement, one based in a communist ideology. One of the members of the Latinization project in the Soviet Union, Farkhad Agazade, with K. Karakashly, published *The Essay on the History of the Development of the New Alphabet Movement and its Achievement* (1928), in which the “new alphabet” (i.e., Latin) was grounded in the symbols of the October Revolution and the authority of Lenin. According to Agazade and Karakashly (1928), Lenin’s views on literacy and illiteracy foreshadowed the need for the new alphabet. Lenin purportedly wrote that

since we have a phenomenon called illiteracy in our country, it is very difficult to talk about the Communist enlightenment. This is not a political goal; this is the condition without which we can’t even talk about politics. Illiterate people will stay out of politics; we should teach them ABC first. Without that, politics cannot exist. Without it, there will be only rumors, gossips, fairy tales, prejudices, but not politics.

(51–52)

In short, the first justification of the Latinization project was to counter illiteracy and political ignorance.

The second political justification of the Latinization project was unification. The first Turkic-speaking country of the Soviet Union that accepted the Latin script was Azerbaijan largely because of the efforts of S. Agamaly-Ogly, the head of the Committee to Accept the New Turkic Alphabet under the Central Executive Committee. Agamaly-Ogly met Lenin in 1922, introduced the idea of Latinization to him, and using the authority of Lenin as well his acceptance of the new script, successfully established the Latinization project throughout Central Asia. It is Agamaly-Ogly who repeated the phrase, “Latinization: This is the great revolution of the East,” which was attributed to Lenin even though no direct source supports this citation (Khansuvarov 1932, 21). From out of Agamaly-Ogly’s efforts, the “unification ideology” warranted Latinization projects in Karachi, Ingushetia, Balkar, Kabardian, North Ossetia, Chechnya, Adygea, Bashkir, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Crimea (Bazarova 2006). In the First Conference of Turkic Studies held in Baku in February of 1926, 111 participants from Turkic-speaking nations and 20 academic scholars voted in favor – 101 (for) versus 7 (against) – of a resolution that read, “Considering the advantages and technical superiority of the New Turkic [i.e., Latin] script over both Arabic and the Reformatted Arabic Script, and also relating the cultural-historic and progressive meaning of the new alphabet comparing to Arabic, the

Table 5.1 Unified new Turkic-Latin alphabet (see Agazade and Karakashly 1928).

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	E e	Ə ə
F f	G g	Q q	H h	I i	J j	K k
L l	M m	N n	Ŋ ŋ	O o	Ө ө	P p
Q q	R r	S s	Ş ş	T t	U u	V v
X x	Y y	Z z	Ž ž	Ь ь		

Conference considers that the introduction of the new alphabet to special Turco-Tatar republics and regions to be the work of every republic and every nation” (Agazade and Karakashly 1928, 78). After the conference, Agamaly-Ogly again took the initiative and established the Organizing Committee, which included six members and himself as the head. The Committee compared all the Latin script versions from the different nations and republics and introduced on June 1, 1927, the first version of the Unified Latin Alphabet (see Table 5.1).

Latinization in Mongolia

After the implementation of Latinization in the Turkic-speaking nations, the movement spread to the Mongolian-speaking regions in Russia. Yet, similar to the opposition of “Arabist” scholars in Central Asia like G. Sharaf who preferred the Arab script, the Latinization project was met with resistance, especially in Buryatia. G. Tsybykov in 1926 (“On the Issues” 1929), for example, explained the disadvantages of Latinization:

- 1 The transfer to the Latin script, which is closer to contemporary oral dialects, will alienate Buryad Russians’ “cultural unification based on the foundation of script commonness”; in other words, Latinization will first deepen language differences and, thus, the cultural differences between Mongolian tribes.
- 2 The transfer to Latin implies a “sharp break” from older cultural achievements, blocking access to cultural values, especially literature.
- 3 The transfer to the Latin script will attract the mechanical transfer of the terminologies from different languages; the nationalization of terminologies is only possible “if the script keeps the national form.”

To discuss the Latinization movement and learn from the Azerbaijan experience, I. Khabaev, one of the leading “Latinists” of Buryatia, and B. Baradin, a leader in Buryad philology, met in Baku on June 17, 1929, with the Central Committee members of the New Turkic Alphabet (i.e., Latin). The head of this Committee, B. Choban-Zade, declared the following:

Since this moment our new alphabet invades a new world – the world of Mongolian languages. This world is interesting from both a linguistic and geographical point of view. Right after we accepted the Dungan alphabet, we

entered the Chinese territory; thus, following this example, introducing the New Buryad-Mongolian alphabet gives us all the chance to touch Foreign Mongolia [i.e., independent Mongolia] with our new alphabet.

(Bazarova 2006, 91)

Indeed, the idea of Latinization had reached Mongolia. In a letter dated October 28, 1929, to B. Baradin from N. Khayankhivaa, the Head of the General Management Office of the Ministry of Enlightenment, he writes:

From newspaper articles, I have found out that the Buryad-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is already close to the Latinization of the Mongolian alphabet. I am interested in this issue very much because I think in the future that Mongolia will also face the problem to transfer into this script, based upon the examples of other small nations. I would like to see your work in this field so we can learn from your experience and start the preparation in Mongolia.

(Bazarova 2006, 105)

The fact that Khayankhivaa learned Esperanto in Turkey in the 1910s and became the first Mongolian Esperanto specialist accounts for his interest in the Latinization project. This enthusiasm for Latinization manifested itself in the following year, when Khayankhivaa, Choban-Zade, Tsybykov, officials from Mongolia, and the important Russian Mongolist and linguist, Nikolas Poppe, convened from February 26 to March 4, 1930, to discuss the orthographies of the Buryad-Mongolian script based on the Latin alphabet as well as the formation of a new Buryad-Mongolian literature.

The influence of this work on Latinization in Buryad-Mongolian became apparent in Mongolia later in 1930. For example, passed on October 17, 1930, government resolution no. 66 established that “every Saturday, during non-working hours there will be two hours of Latin class” (Idshinnorov 2013, 148). The Ministry of Enlightenment established the Committee of the Latin Mongolian Script, which devised a 27-letter Latin Mongolian alphabet (see Table 5.2). In 1931, many other resolutions were passed by the Mongolian government, including the following (Idshinnorov 2013, 149):

- Middle schools and technical schools should teach Latin as the main script and Mongolian script on a limited basis

Table 5.2 27-Letter Latin Mongolian alphabet (see Tsenddoo 2007).

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	E e
F f	G g	H h	I i	J j	K k
L l	M m	N n	O o	Ө ө	P p
R r	S s	Ş ş	T t	U u	V v
Y y	Z z	Z z			

- Newspapers and journals should have sections devoted to Latin script
- Before November 1931, the addresses, blank documents, book covers, and stamps of official organizations must be changed into Latin
- Before May 1, 1932, workers as well as state and party officials should learn the Latin script
- From May 1, 1932, all official documents must be written in Latin

Orthography and letters of the Mongolian Latin script

If we look at the letters of the first Latin Mongolian alphabet (compare Tables 5.1 and 5.2), we can conclude that it is practically the same as the Unified New Turkic Latin Alphabet, only without a few phonemes that Mongolian does not require. Despite this fact, the process to accept this version of the Latin alphabet was not easy. E. Rinchino, after participating in a conference in Moscow in January of 1931 with delegates from the Mongolian People's Republic, Buryatia, and Kalmykia in Moscow, suggested the confusion in deciding upon a particular Latin script:

As for Buryad-Mongolians, they experienced a number of alphabet changes for some time; first they practiced pure Turkic [i.e., Latin] alphabet, then an “Anglo-European” one, then again Turkic. The Turkic one was recommended to Khalkha Mongols, but it was not accepted, and a special committee was organized for Latin usage in Mongolian.

(Rinchino 1931, 237)

In addition to the letters of the alphabet, orthography and spelling were also controversial. For instance, Rinchen, one of the main figures in Mongolian linguistics, wrote on May 13, 1932, to G. J. Ramstedt, a Finnish Mongolist and founder of Altaic Linguistics, about the early struggles in adapting Mongolian to the Latin script:

Here in our place [Mongolia], we are adapting the New Latin Script, and now we are trying hard to establish a new literary language based on real people's oral dialect and working on making clear the rules and orthography of the new script. But this work is very difficult; there are many doubtful elements in the planned orthography rules. In particular, the reduced “U” and “Y” orthography is very suspicious.

(Saruul-Erdene and Urangua 2017, 65)

Rinchen uses two examples to show the limitations of the New Latin Mongolian orthography rules, claiming that *bürged* (eagle) and *usan* (water) do not correspond to the contemporary Khalkha Mongolian oral dialect, which would pronounce the second vowel sound of these words differently: *bürgüd* and *usun*. Rinchen argued that the second syllable reduction (i.e., “ü” to “e” and “u” to “a”) was a phenomenon of the Buryad Alair dialect and, therefore, not a good model

Figure 5.1 A student's note from a KUTV Latin Mongolian class taught in 1932.

Source: Author.

for the Khalkha Mongolian dialect. Ramstedt agreed with Rinchen, replying: “As for the second syllable vowels after ‘u’ and ‘ü’ in the first [syllable], for example, ‘urtu, ulus, ulu, uulu, yyly,’ etc., I have the same idea as you; I don’t see the reason why [we] have to write ‘a’ and ‘e’ after them, instead of ‘u’ and ‘ü’” (Saruul-Erdene and Urangua 2017, 89).

Rinchen and Ramstedt’s exchange was only a small part of the challenges that Mongolian linguists faced when considering orthographic rules. Though, despite Elbegdorji’s earlier claims, Mongolian scholars were at least in agreement that it was the Turkic-Latin version, instead of the Anglo-European script, that should be adopted. At the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow, a student’s notes reflect this agreement. In a class introducing the Latin Mongolian script to Mongolian students, Kokedei, a student in the program, reports, “This is the time that all the countries are trying to adopt Latin for their own language and culture.” In this case, the Latin Mongolian script consisted of 26 letters, including 7 vowels and 19 consonants (see Figure 5.1). Similarly, E. Batkhaan (1935), a Mongolian education minister and, later, a Mongolian language instructor at the Leningrad University, published a Mongolian language textbook, the *Guide for Learning the Spoken Mongolian Language*. This text featured the same letters and most of the grammatical forms that were taught at KUTV and Ulaanbaatar in the early 1930s.

Delay and reactivation of Latinization in Mongolia

Despite all of this academic activity and interest in the Latinization project, it soon became a victim of the Soviet and Mongolian corrections of “leftist” policies. As a project that was defined as “too left,” the Committee of Latin Mongolian Script

was terminated in July of 1932, and the Department of Education of the Ministry of Enlightenment became responsible for the matter. Soon afterwards, on November 11, 1932, the Small *Khural* of Mongolia and Cabinet of Ministers decided to prioritize the national Mongolian script, making Latin a voluntary subject. The political violence of 1937 and 1938 across the Soviet Union and Mongolia affected most of the researchers who worked on the Latinization project, and they were either executed or imprisoned. To name just a few examples, Khayankhirvaa was arrested in 1934 and executed in prison; Rinchen was arrested in 1937 and sentenced for 10 years. In Buryatia, Baradin was executed in 1937. Additionally, the two key Soviet Union pioneers of the Unified Turkic Latin Alphabet were also victims: Agamaly-Ogly died earlier in 1930, and Choban-Zade was found guilty and executed on October 13, 1937.

After the Era of Repression, the Latinization project was reinitiated. In 1940, at the 10th Great *Khural* of the Revolutionary Party and the 8th Great *Khural* of the Mongolian state, resolutions were passed to adopt the Latin alphabet in five years and advocate the use of Arab numerals. At the Great *Khural*, Kh. Choibalsan declared that the Classical Mongolian Script was “not good enough to write foreign terminologies and universal technical names. Therefore, we have to change the Mongolian script, which has become a burden to our country’s progress, and we have to start using Latin script” (Choibalsan 1951, 389–90). However, a different Latin alphabet was introduced: the Anglo-European Latin script. As the *Ulaan Od* newspaper Latin script lessons show (see Figure 5.2), cedillas have been omitted, digraphs such as “sh” and “ch” have been added, and “J” has replaced the “Z.” The shift to this different version of the Latin alphabet may have a geopolitical explanation. As Turkey had become an enemy of the Soviet Union, the Atatürk alphabet, based on the Unified New Latin Alphabet, became a symbol of the bourgeois world. M. Fazlullin’s adaptation of the Russian alphabet for the Tatar language in 1938 with digraphs and without any additional characters (Zakiev 2005) also shows the shift away from this once dominant version of Latin.

Throughout 1940 and 1941, the Mongolian government moved swiftly to shift to the Latin alphabet. On July 26, 1940, the Cabinet of Ministers, praising the resolutions of the State and Revolutionary Party Great *Khurals* and recognizing its political significance, organized the new Committee for the Latin Script and selected Yü. Tsedenbal as its head (Idshinnorov 2013, 150). On February 21, 1941, the Mongolian leaders listened to Tsedenbal’s report and passed the Joint Resolution of the Central Bureau of MPRP and Cabinet of Ministers, Number 17/13, which included the following four statements (Shagdarsüren 2001, 182):

- 1 The 29 letters that were planned and introduced by the Committee for the Latin Script are sufficient for recording our language sounds.
- 2 Instead of writing double vowels for long vowels, use the special stroke [i.e., the macron] and, until the printing techniques become available for this, temporarily use an apostrophe.
- 3 Semi-reduced or full-reduced vowels should not be written down.

- 4 Until real orthographical rules are produced, preliminary rules should be processed for the schools, which must be completed by the Science Committee and the Ministry of Enlightenment before March 30.

Suddenly, on March 25, 1941, only five days before the “preliminary rules” for the Latin orthography rules were scheduled to be completed, the Central Bureau

Cagaan tologoin бүлэг
Xicheel № 14

Latyu üsegyg xereglxede mongol
xeleny зарим дауныг темдеглехе
deen 2 üsegyg xolbojl xereglene:

<p>Sh sh shara</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">sha</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">ra</td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">sh</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> </tr> </table> <p>shabar shüür shugam shiber boroo xashin mori</p>	sha	ra	sh	.	.	.	.	<p>Ch ch chuluu</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">chu</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">luu</td> </tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin: 10px auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">ch</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">.</td> </tr> </table> <p>chadal chixi gerchi chimee changa</p>	chu	luu	ch	.	.	.	.
sha	ra														
sh	.	.	.	.											
chu	luu														
ch	.	.	.	.											

Pioneryn lager

Tarxan tengeryn amanda, dalan xüüxed
nõxõrldõd, daanchi salxan naadamaar, damal
yexeer xõgjildõd

Figure 5.2 The new version of Latin Mongolian in *Ulaan Od*.

Source: Author.

of the Revolutionary Party and the Cabinet of Ministers declared another Joint Resolution, Number 22/28, “About Creating the New Mongolian Script.” This resolution stated: “Latin letters are not enough to note Mongolian language and there are also some technical barriers, such as printing, etc. Plus, the progress of our country’s education and culture will go on only through the path of strengthening a brothership with the Soviet people and learning their rich culture” (*How the Mongolian People’s* 1967, 33–34).

In short, even though Latinization was the center of Mongolian literacy policy for more than ten years, it existed officially for only a month and collapsed. Scholars have disagreed as to why the Latinization project ultimately was abandoned in Mongolia. Kara (2005, 186), emphasizing the role of Latin in “creating a unified literary language for both peoples [Buryad-Mongolians and Mongolians],” bases these official script decisions on the Comintern policies for uniting – or separating – the Mongolian literary languages. Shagdarsüren (2001), on the other hand, ascribes these decisions to Lenin and Stalin. Shagdarsüren (2001, 188) concludes:

One question still remains mysterious. Why in both Soviet Union and Mongolia, did the Latinization project start so sensationally, and then why were whole ten years of work just wasted? After we researched, we found that Latinization project started sensationally, just after V. I. Lenin said, “This affair [using the Latin script] is the Great Revolution of East.” But this Latinization project, which started from the 1930s so enthusiastically, was terminated by Stalin, and he chose the Russian script.

In any case, abandoning the Mongolian script and choosing either Latin or Cyrillic was not an idea initiated by the Mongolian people. It is clear that these policies were directed from Moscow. If we compare the time periods of implementing the Arab, Latin, and Cyrillic alphabets, as in Table 5.3, we can see how these official

Table 5.3 Years of official script policies for Arabic-based Soviet national groups (see Chimegbaatar 1993).

<i>National group</i>	<i>Final year of Arab script</i>	<i>Years of Latinization</i>
Azerbaijan	1922	1922–1940
Ingush	1923	1923–1937
Kabardin-Balkar	1923	1923–1937
Karachai	1924	1924–1937
Adygei	1926	1926–1937
Bashkir	1927	1927–1940
Kazakh	1927	1928–1940
Kyrgyz	1927	1927–1940
Kumyk	1927	1927–1937
Turkmen	1927	1927–1940

<i>National group</i>	<i>Final year of Arab script</i>	<i>Years of Latinization</i>
Uzbek	1927	1927–1940
Avar	1928	1928–1937
Dargin	1928	1928–1937
Karakalpak	1928	1928–1940
Lak	1928	1928–1937
Lezgi	1928	1928–1937
Nogai	1928	1928–1937
Tatar	1928	1928–1937
Uyгур	1928	1928

script decisions of Mongolia so closely followed those of these national groups that were part of the Soviet Union; all of these groups, moreover, adopted Cyrillic in 1940.

Similarly, the two Soviet Mongolian national groups, the Kalmyk and the Buryad, preserved their national Mongolian scripts until 1927 and 1929, respectively. In Kalmykia, Cyrillic was used from 1927 to 1930, and then Latin became the official script from 1930 to 1938; in Buryatia, Latin was the official script from 1929 to 1938 (Chimegbaatar 1993). Again, because of the similarity in the time periods of these official script decisions, it is not useful to debate whether Latin or Cyrillic were an active part of Mongolians' attempts to build a new national identity. The Mongolian language policies were obviously following a Soviet precedent.

Mongolian in Tibetan script

As the Revolutionary Party and the Mongolian government used literacy as a “weapon of ideology,” it is important to recognize the fact that, beyond Latin and Cyrillic, Mongolian authorities used script reform to make connections with the more resistant parts of the population. Most importantly, government and party officials paid a great deal of attention to the fact that, at the beginning of the century, close to half of the male population in Mongolia read the Tibetan script. One study indicates that before 1921 “there were 115,000 *lamas* residing in 700 monasteries, and it was 40 percent of all the males above 16 years” (Dondog 1972, 10). Another statistic shows that, during the first two decades of the socialist Mongolian state, from 1922 to 1937, 48.8%–49.5% of the male population identified as *lamas* (Tsendenbal 1981). Almost all of these *lamas* read the Tibetan script, and many of them wrote in it as well. Additionally, because Tibetan was the language for intellectuals and served many years as the lingua franca for the region, most of the educated lay people also read in Tibetan. Moreover, Mongolians used the Tibetan script widely to write down Mongolian language materials. R. Otgonbaatar and A. D. Tsendina (2014, 148) list the most

common Mongolian language manuscripts and xylographs that were produced using the Tibetan script:

- 1 Tibetan-Mongolian dictionaries
- 2 Dictionaries of the rare words from certain texts
- 3 Bogd Gegeen's predictions
- 4 Prayers to be read during offerings and sacrifices.
- 5 Small prayers for everyday life
- 6 Translations of famous literary works and teachings
- 7 Collections of songs and poems
- 8 Reference materials for animal diseases
- 9 Medical works and ingredients for medicine
- 10 Private notes
- 11 Travelogues
- 12 Maps
- 13 Descriptions of five animals [i.e., the traditional five Mongolian herd animals]
- 14 Lists of items that someone owns
- 15 Fortune telling books

As this list indicates, the Tibetan script was a ubiquitous part of Mongolians' literacy throughout the first three to four decades of the twentieth century.

In order to reach these lama audiences, the Mongolian government produced the *Journal of the Lamas* in 1936, publishing all of the articles in both Tibetan and Mongolian scripts; 3000 copies were printed for each issue. The editors, who themselves were lamas, provided the rationale for this journal:

The state of Mongolia started to publish newspapers and journals more than ten years ago, and they spread in both the city and the countryside, and year by year the number of readers is increasing, thus the benefits of them are clear to our eyes. The only problem is that among us lamas those newspapers and journals are almost never read. The reason is there are not many people who read Mongolian script in our Mongolian temples and monasteries. On the other hand, these newspapers and journals for the public have a lot of news about city and country life and foreign countries, but news regarding temples is very rare; also, there are people who don't like to spread newspapers inside temples. Because of these reasons we have such a low number of newspaper readers among lamas.

(*Journal of the Lamas* 1936, 45)

According to Stephane Grivelet (2001, v), the editors of the *Journal of the Lamas* used features of classical orthography probably to "serve as an aid for the monks in learning the Mongolian script instead of the Tibetan script." In addition to this point about orthography, the journal editors include both Classical Written Mongolian and Spoken Mongolian features. For example, on the cover, *Ulaganbagatur*

Figure 5.3 Cover of the *Journal of the Lamas*.

Source: Author.

gotan daki (i.e., “in Ulaanbaatar”) (see Figure 5.3) is transcribed as ‘*u-la-’ang ba’thor ho’thon da-hi*. By that time, the second syllable of *gotan* [“a”] had already been assimilated to stressed “o,” meaning that the editors use of “*ho-thon*” is a spoken language form; at the same time, though, the editors have been influenced

by the written language when they decided to stick with the “o” in the second syllable of “*ba-thor*,” a word which had already gone through a similar evolution.

Conclusion

The collapse of the Qing Empire in 1911 and the emergence of an independent Mongolian state activated patriotic feelings and a search for national identity, which stimulated, in turn, an early literacy movement, the building of schools, and the first Mongolian newspaper, the *New Mirror* (*Shine Toli*). After the 1921 People’s Revolution, another big push for literacy occurred, in which “literacy” (*üseg bichig*) possessed a national character and focused on Classical Mongolian script as the heart of that movement. Government and party elites hoped to make people literate in *Mongol bichig* – that is, the Classical Mongolian script – and they believed by doing so that they could uplift Mongolian national identity, culture, religion, and literature. Yet, into the 1930s, alphabets became politicized, a “weapon of ideology.” Internationalism dominated nationalism. In this new ideological period, the Latin script replaced Classical Mongolian as the heart of the literacy movement. As I explored earlier, the politicization of official script policies influenced the forms of Latin that were considered and, ultimately, the sudden decision in 1941 to designate Cyrillic as the official script of Mongolia. These stories about how scripts were officially adopted, which are similar to that of more than 30 other ethnic groups in the Soviet world, demonstrate that it was indeed Moscow-based Soviet officials making these decisions. Quite possibly, the only independent decision that the Mongolian party and government officials made themselves was the use of Tibetan script for Mongolian. More research is necessary to understand the government’s use of this script.

Interestingly enough, the use of the Latin alphabet in post-socialist Mongolia is reminiscent of the ways in which the Tibetan script was adapted for the purposes of Mongolian. As Tibetan followed the rules of Classical Mongolian orthography, Latin closely follows those of Cyrillic Mongolian. In other words, the use of the Latin alphabet among Mongolians today is a “transliteration” – not a “real” alphabet with its own orthography rules. When using Mongolian in the Latin script on the Internet, Mongolian users are quite spontaneous, basing their script usage on Cyrillic orthographical rules and according to pronunciation. In this process, in which some new forms have been introduced and certain suffixes have been abandoned, this post-socialist, Latin-based “Internet Mongolian” reveals the ongoing evolution of the Mongolian language (Saruul-Erdene 2003).

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6 D. Sengee and the birth of Mongolian socialist realism

Simon Wickhamsmith

While it is D. Natsagdorj who is today promoted as the figurehead of Mongolia's modern literature,¹ it was S. Buyannemekh who was considered the most talented among revolutionary writers before Mongolia's Great Repression, the Stalinist purges which lasted from September 1937 to April 1939. In his biography of the writer D. Sengee (1916–1959), Kh. Zandraabandii (2017) gives Sengee's description of Buyannemekh:

We younger ones all talked about how he treated us like a father. . . . Because Mr. Buyannemekh had such a high reputation, writers would observe his life, and employ his language. When he came to visit the literary group of which I was a member, we would follow him around. . . . In the end, they turned against people like Mr. Buyannemekh on the pretext that they were counter-revolutionaries. Nowadays, it is understood that good people were arrested and punished under incitement from malicious people.

(36)²

At the remove of more than 80 years, it is hard to ascertain from this how Sengee felt about what happened during this period. What we do know is that, in October 1937, Buyannemekh was tried for counterrevolutionary activity and sentenced to execution by firing squad.³ Following his trial, his supporters rallied together and petitioned Choibalsan, who had taken control of Mongolia following Marshal Demid's execution six weeks earlier,⁴ for clemency. Choibalsan apparently agreed to their request and called the Interior Ministry to stay the execution. Nobody picked up the phone. A rumor circulated that Sengee, who had recently started work in the espionage section at the Ministry⁵ at the behest of Choibalsan, the head of the Ministry, had sat in front of the ringing phone, fully cognizant of what was happening, while Buyannemekh was led away and shot.⁶

Rumors such as this, of course, even though they fall short as evidence, tell us a great deal about reputations and expectations. Yet Sengee's nickname was "the dog" (*nokhoi*), a potent Mongolian image in equal measure of savagery and loyalty, and during the 16 years between leaving the Interior Ministry and his death at age 43, through tireless study and political advocacy, and through a combination of aggression towards, and personal support for, many of his fellow writers, he

established himself as the most influential advocate among the literary community for Mongolia's ever-closer union with the Soviet Union and for the utopian revolutionary discourse of Socialist Realism.

Sengee's close involvement with the Soviet-backed development of Mongolia under Choibalsan, between the latter's seizure of power following Demid's execution and his death in 1952, is reflected in the tenor and theme of much of his work during the 1940s. However, I hope to show in this chapter that his vision of and support for Mongolia's political and social trajectory at the time was expressed in a poetic voice which speaks both to the absolute ideals of Socialist Realism during the 1940s and 1950s and also to the reexamination of Mongolia's position and the revival of its traditional nomadic culture, especially following the democratic revolution of 1990.

The influence of Choibalsan

Among the writers who emerged unscathed from the rubble of Mongolia's literary culture following the Great Repression, perhaps none assumed so favored a cultural *and* political position as Sengee. He had been born in 1916 into a herder's family in what is today Selenge Aimag and had come to Ulaanbaatar in 1934, graduating from the Teachers' College in 1936.⁷ Sengee attracted the attention of Choibalsan at their first meeting, which took place the following year. According to Sengee's account (Zandraabandii 2017, 71–72), Choibalsan had recruited him for the Interior Ministry on the spot, instructed him to learn Russian, and encouraged him to nurture his ability as a writer in the service of the Party.

It was not only Choibalsan upon whom Sengee seems to have made an immediate impression. Ch. Chimid, also a protégé of Choibalsan's and younger than Sengee by 11 years, says that when he first met him, Sengee struck him as "a rather elegant young man," although he later realized that Sengee "wasn't one to give himself airs" (Sengee 1978, 3). Another close friend, B. Baast, describing their first meeting in 1942, notes that "although he gave the impression of being rather curt and proud, when his intention worked together with his actions, he was one of those charismatic people who retain a generosity of heart and a clarity of thought" (Baast 2012, 294). Indeed, Baast also tells of how, in the final months of his life, Sengee offered financial and emotional support when Baast's young daughter was gravely ill (Baast 2012, 303–4). These accounts suggest an ambivalence in Sengee, as though the attitude in him which had provoked rumors of his complicity in Buyannemekh's death was the troubled shadow-side of a powerful charisma. In his poetry, too, Sengee exhibited as keen a sensitivity to people and the natural world as to the ideology which had formed him, an emotional force which might manifest both in violence and in tenderness, in both stubbornness and understanding.

Sengee had shown considerable promise in the few poems he had written during the 1930s, but it was his sudden proximity to power which brought him to the center of the literary world. His two contributions to an anthology of Mongolia's leading young writers, published in 1941, were both unapologetic paeans

to the influence of the Soviet Union. “The First Bolshevik Rays on Our Party” (*Manai namd Bolishyevikiin ankhnii tuya*) and “Shockworker” (*Udarnik*; possibly the first reference in Mongolian literature to this key theme in Soviet Socialist Realism) (*Anthology of Poetry* 1941, 2:3–4, 50–51) reflected the relationships between Moscow and Ulaanbaatar, and between Stalin and Choibalsan, but they also addressed what was more idealized and spiritual in this utopian socialism, namely heroic labor and the paternalistic cult of personality.

The strident and explicitly virile – on occasions, almost homoerotic – tone of these poems magnifies Sengee’s feeling of Ulaanbaatar’s, and perhaps also his own, indebtedness to Moscow and the extent to which the latter could assist and guide the former. The description of the energy of the Bolsheviks’ rays and the mystical power of the shockworkers’ labor echoes the design of revolutionary posters and revolutionary songs and uses simple and vivid language to encourage emulation and to elicit praise. Thanks to pieces such as these, and to his association with the now unassailable Choibalsan, Sengee was in 1943 elected as Secretary of the Mongolian Writers’ Union’s provisional organizing committee and quickly began to influence its activities. In 1944, the Writers’ Union started to publish a journal, *The Spark* (*Tsog*), and Sengee became its *de facto* typist, editor, and publisher (Baast 2012, 284).

Sengee’s role as the *primus inter pares* of the community of young writers – alongside the likes of Ch. Chimid, D. Tsevegmid, L. Tsend-Ochir, and S. Udval – allowed for his direct involvement in framing ways by which the centralized model of Soviet literature could be brought to bear on the radical new socialist canon which the Party was creating. This position made him the obvious choice to be the first Mongolian to attend the Gorky Institute in Moscow, where he studied between 1947 and 1952.⁸

Perhaps even more than the Party, though, the focus of Sengee’s affection and loyalty was to Mongolia itself, and to the Mongolian people: maybe this fierce patriotism was, in part, behind the anti-Japanese stance which had goaded his antagonism towards Buyannemekh. Much of Sengee’s writing addressed how Mongolia could progress socially and industrially, whilst acknowledging and safeguarding its natural beauty, a tension which continues to occupy its writers and politicians today, three decades after the withdrawal of Soviet influence, and with foreign investment in mining redefining both how Mongolia responds to outside forces and the dynamic interaction in the Mongolian psyche between the landscape and the Mongol ancestors.

The emotions of war

During Mongolia’s engagement in the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945), its literary establishment – like much of the country’s human and financial resources – was diverted towards glorifying the Soviet war effort and to supporting Mongolian troops. The utopian window which had briefly opened between the end of the Great Repression in April 1939 and the declaration of war following the invasion of the Soviet Union by the Axis powers on June 22, 1941, and which had

produced powerful poster-style texts such as Sengee's "Shockworker," soon gave way to the tough economic reality of the war effort.

While support for the Soviet Union remained a key element in Mongolia's cultural response to the war, Mongolia's writers came to focus on a far more ancient, atavistic feature of the conflict. The concept of the Mongol homeland (*Mongol nutag*), defined by "sacred" borders (*darkhan khil*), became a powerful unifying message, and a way by which poets in particular, by invoking traditional symbolism in modern language, could simultaneously make a contribution to the war and preserve the authenticity of Mongolia. For instance, in Ts. Damdinsüren's *The Tank Forces* (*Tankch* 1942) (Damdinsüren 1956, 66), the refrain emphasizes the sacred borders with language which, while squarely placed in the modern world, bears distinct – if romanticized – echoes of the Chinggisid Empire:

Protecting our sacred borders
there's a layered wall of steel.
When the toes of the enemy's boots push on,
there's an iron fist striking.

That these images of the tension between protection and resistance speak to Mongol shamanism as much as they do to a modern martial resolve should remind us that, while Moscow's anti-religion policy had been applied with some success to eradicate the external world of Mongol spirituality during the 1930s, it remained inherent in ideas such as *border* and in the metallurgical processes which bring about *iron* and *steel*.⁹ In this way, then, Damdinsüren's poem about soldiers operating tanks along the border takes on a transcendent meaning which Mongolian readers, however confident they might have been in the socialist project and their part in its unrolling, would likely have grasped also as lineage-holders of Chinggisid Mongolia.

The importance of reflecting contemporary life in literature necessitated that the development of a literary culture be related also to the cultural bases of that contemporary life. The use of a phrase such as *darkhan khil* conjures images of borders made impregnable not only through the "sacred" nature of traditional Mongol unity and the spirit of Chinggis Khaan, but also through the revolutionary force of revolutionary Mongol unity. That these two ideas of unassailable national unity were able to coexist does not indicate so much the flexibility of the Party's ideological system as the atavistic worldview from which the premodern (nomadic, martial) culture permeated and underpinned the new revolutionary culture. And it was this worldview which would come to characterize the development of Mongolia's socialist culture, and particularly its response to Socialist Realist ideology.

With this in mind, we can turn to Baast's account, according to which Sengee's principal theme was that of homeland, or motherland (*ekh oron*) (Baast 2012, 293–98),¹⁰ and notice how he used Mongolian notions of homeland to negotiate and develop the Party's expectations for the war. The literary historian

S. Luvsanvandan perhaps has this in mind when he writes, “The linking of the concept of ‘motherland’ to democracy, socialism and peace, and the opening up of the melody of socialism and the living spirit of internationalism in terms of loyalty to the motherland was the principal achievement of poetry during the 1940s and 1950s” (Luvsanvandan 1987, 61). Two of Sengee’s poems from 1943 – *The Border Guard (Khilchin)* and *A Cook on the Border (Togooch Khilchin)* (Sengee 1978, 49–50, 51) – stand out as exemplars of the tension which informs his work during this period.

The Border Guard

We have nourished the wild countryside,
and raised the wealth of our livestock,
we have prospered in our merry lives,
and produced a happy victory, and
we patrol our broad Mongolian lands
against our violent enemies.

When we secure and protect,
with overflowing joy,
the rich Mongolian homeland,
we heroic border guards
are resolute,
and sharp.

We will trample down
those who encroach and violate,
those who secretly threaten
our sacred Mongol homeland,
and if they again attack,
I am ready, a warrior at the border.

When we secure and protect,
with overflowing joy,
the rich Mongolian homeland,
we heroic border guards
are resolute,
and sharp.

We protect our blessed and happy Mongolia
from the fearsome enemy.
Resting on the golden staff of the sun,
which separates the envious
from me, the people’s border guard,
I will find peace.

When we secure and protect,
with overflowing joy,
the rich Mongolian homeland,
we heroic border guards
are resolute,
and sharp.

A Cook on the Border

Our comrades come down
from the border posts.
When they come, I have
warm food ready to eat.

But they tease me,
calling me "sir."
But what is the relationship
which we share?

With my warm heart, I can't do otherwise,
I have befriended the troops.
Each man loves the other men,
it is good to learn respect.

They set out, but
they don't come in time.
Certainly I know
there could be obstacles.

I've made them dried food,
layered and wrapped in newspaper.
I'll get it to those fine gentlemen,
as they take their place on the border posts.

Having taken part in 1939 in the Soviet defeat of the Japanese at the Battle of Khalkhin Gol, the only time when Mongolian troops saw active duty during the war itself was in the Soviet invasion of Japanese-held Manchuria in August 1945. The topos of the border guard, then, is central to Mongolia's war literature specifically because these were ordinary young Mongolian men, conscripts rather than a military élite, sent to protect their homeland. These troops played a primary role in keeping the Mongolian people feeling secure, even as the Soviet Union was aggressed by Germany. The true importance of the border guards, as much in news reports as in the literary works published in newspapers and journals and consumed by people at home, was to create the impression that Mongolia was defending itself against the enemy and that its people were safe. But the

enemy remains anonymous, and it is only in texts specifically lauding the Soviet military (i.e., the troops who were actively engaged) that words such as “fascism” (*fashizm*) and “Hitler” (*Gitler*) occur. The theme of the border is geophysically and conceptually so vast as to be meaningless in military terms, but by keeping in his readers’ minds the kind of aggressors described in “The Border Guard,” Sengee is able to create an idealized enemy against which an idealized border guard can defend the “sacred” border of an idealized Mongolia.

The contrast between these poems reveals a pattern in Sengee’s earlier work. The language of “The Border Guard” uses the threat, whether perceived or real, as a way to celebrate the heroism of the military. The natural world, seen in the illuminating power of the sun, as well as in the traditional nomadic association of countryside/homeland (*khödöö/oron*) and livestock/wealth (*mal/khöröngö*), is seen somehow as a justification for Mongolia’s border guards to patrol the country’s borders, as though the sacred *limen* is threatened, not by flesh and blood humans, but by some dark, yet unidentified, force. By melding physical threat with the traditional relationship with the natural world, then, this theme becomes a battle between good and evil, fought to preserve the sanctity of the Mongolian homeland.

The image of the natural world working reciprocally with the heroic soldiers is frequently seen in the work of other poets at this time. Ch. Lkhamsüren’s “At the Border” (*Khil deer*) (Lkhamsüren 1987, 1:30), written in 1944, tells of the nighttime capture of an enemy soldier aiming to breach the border. The last of the four verses uses the themes of the “hero” (*baatar*) – which again raises images of empire – and the subtle agreement, even the intervention, of the natural world to dispatch the enemy:

As the border-guard hero urges the enemy forward,
pushing him towards the encampment,
the clouds are moving above the hills,
and a bayonet whistles through the chill and vicious air.

The idea that Mongolia’s shamanic spirituality, tied up with the image of Chinggis Khaan and the Mongol Empire, could play a part in the heroic military struggle against those who would attack Mongolia’s modern revolutionary state was so antithetical to the materialist discourse promulgated by Moscow that one might argue that in the work of writers such as Sengee and Lkhamsüren, it was more a figure of speech, an inherently Mongol utterance, rather than a veiled reference to something beyond the Party’s conceptual field. Nonetheless, given that religion continued to remain (at least legally) a matter of private choice in Mongolia, we should not assume too readily that the people’s religious worldview (whether their practice was shamanism or Buddhism) had been eliminated, or indeed that such a process was even intended. With this caveat in mind, we could say that the “border-guard” topos itself comes from the apprehension of Mongolia’s homeland and borders as being “sacred” and spiritually, as much as physically, inviolable.

With the cook in “A Cook on the Border,” Sengee offers a warmer, more human perspective to this cosmic battle. There is a softness to the words, and to the images they describe, and a humor too. There is, after all, no clarity as to whether the narrator is male or female, and so the guards’ reference to her (or him) as *avgai*¹¹ can be read either as respectful, or as gentle teasing, or as something in-between the two. The commitment, though, of a cook to nourish and provide food for the soldiers remains the same, and the simplicity of this poem lies in the direct and open-hearted voice of the narrator. The care with which s/he treats the guards manning the border posts, defending the nation on the many levels we have been exploring, is neither particularly noble nor noteworthy because it is so mundane. But the observation which informs the cook’s monolog (and maybe this cook was based upon a real person)¹², although not especially detailed, is focused on the emotions, and there is deep tenderness in the wrapping of dried food to be delivered to the soldiers and in the pointed recognition of “obstacles” (*saad*) which might prevent the soldiers from returning to the camp.

The Sengee who composed this poem, then, is closer to the Sengee who, on the day that the war ended, May 9, 1945, composed two poems for children, “Boys and Girls of Russia, Please Come!” (*Orosni maamuu ireerei!*) and “Oh Goody!” (*Yee Gyalai!*) (Sengee 1978, 74, 76):

Oh goody, Mum!
The war finished today!

Oh goody, Mum!
The Soviets won the war!

Oh goody, Mum!
They say we’ll never go to war again!

This poem – and its companion, still sung in rainy weather by Mongolian children today – marked not only the end of the war, but the victory of the Soviet Union, and yet Sengee’s response was not a rousing and patriotic encomium but a couple of short, naive, and hopeful lyrics, rushed off, as Ch. Chimid explains (Sengee 1978, 74), at his desk on hearing the news.

An aestheticized reality

In 1925, Mongolia’s first Minister for Education, Erdenebathaan, wrote to Maxim Gorky, asking for advice on how Mongolia could best build upon its indigenous literary character, in order better to express the ideals of socialism, and in particular how to determine the most suitable works of western literature to be translated into Mongolian. Gorky’s response had a powerful role in the Party’s policy on literary translation for more than a decade.¹³ Eleven years later, following the introduction into Soviet letters of Socialist Realism, a theory largely conceived of

(at least officially) by Gorky himself, the Central Committee of Mongolia's Writers' Union sent another letter, but the ailing Gorky died before a response could be written.

The primary forces behind this second letter appear to have been Sengee, who had learnt Russian quickly and to a high level of proficiency, at Choibalsan's suggestion, and the playwright Sh. Ayuush (Zandraabandii 2017, 48). The following year, in a move which was presumably not unrelated to his enthusiastic engagement with Soviet literature, Sengee was appointed secretary to the Central Committee.

Following the Great Patriotic War, during which, as I have shown, he had cemented his primacy among his peers with works which spoke both to Mongolian–Soviet relations and to the particular nature of Mongolian culture, Sengee enrolled at the Gorky Institute. Over the five years he spent in Moscow, he developed a new voice, less politically aggressive now and more lyrical, and his language too grew more subtle and refined. In 1951, he wrote “I Love You” (*Chamdaa khairtai*) (Sengee 1978, 120),¹⁴ which brings the affection and sensitivity of poems such as *A Cook on the Border* to the love lyrics which would become a more important element in his work.

With the whiteness of the snow absorbed into my face,
the redness of blood clear in my cheeks,
I received a serene wisdom from my father,
and from my mother, I learnt goodness,
and my mind is under my companions' influence.
Famed for your fresh youthfulness,
and exemplary in your fine modesty,
I love you, you whose appearance
is elegant and lovely and revered.

As a young man, having been orphaned at 14 and singled out by the Party as a talented young writer, Sengee had developed an expression of love which incorporated the ideals of service promulgated by the Party and the cult of personality which had grown around Choibalsan. In his novella, *Ayuush*, written just prior to leaving for Moscow and which revolves around the Mongolian defeat of the Japanese army in Manchuria in 1939, the eponymous hero is loved by a woman, Burmaa, whose inability to properly express her affection he finds frustrating. The parallel maturing of Sengee's personal life and his life as a writer, under the influence both of his teachers at the Gorky Institute and of the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of Moscow as a whole, brought to his work a sensibility towards love, and perhaps towards the emotions in general, which it had not previously exhibited.

“I Love You” is a poem about idealized love, the same kind of love exemplified by the cook for the border guards, by the border guards for their homeland, and by the shockworkers for the trinity of nation, leader, and Party, and in Sengee's purity of vision and in his language of charged emotion, he chooses to focus

on the imagined, rather than the concrete. Evgeny Dobrenko's suggestion that the function of Socialist Realism was "to *produce reality by aestheticizing it*" (Dobrenko 2007, 4; his italics) is true also of the works of writers such as Sengee, who sought the same nobility in love as in toil. The production of reality through the production of literature, moreover, demands that what is written and aestheticized be believable to the reader. Even though we can, for instance, imagine a world in which border guards do not singlehandedly save the nation, in which a lover's youth is not fresh and her modesty not exemplary, such contexts are so individualized to the point of being, paradoxically, somehow not believable to the socialist Everyman for whose political and personal inspiration they have been written.

A response to socialist realism

The force of aestheticization, the idea that a writer can recast the world in such powerful imagery as to, in effect, recast the apprehension of the reader, exercises a persuasive effect on the observer. The key insight of Dobrenko's analysis of Socialist Realism is that aestheticization was used for the purpose not of imaginative entertainment, but of social engineering, a subtle transformation operating in plain sight. In Moscow, Sengee had been working at the heart of the "machine for the production of socialism" (Dobrenko 2007, 2) and, in the words of Mongolia's literary élite a few years after his death, had "studied in the mines of the wise masters in the leading literary nation of the world" (Khorloo et al. 1968, 429).¹⁵ On his return to Mongolia from Moscow, not only had he been educated to deliver Socialist Realism to Mongolia in its most advanced form, but it was his interpretation and application of what he had been taught that became a standard by which others would be judged.¹⁶

A significant feature of Sengee's development as a writer during the final years of his life is the ways in which he incorporated Socialist Realism into the Mongolian tradition of nature poetry. This development can also be understood as a second perspective of the theme of love, as seen in two poems written in 1957, "When spring did not come to your homeland . . ." (*Chinii nutagt khavar ireegüidee . . .*) and "Morning" (*Öglöö*) (Sengee 1978).

When spring did not come to your homeland,
 you felt a sadness deep in your heart.
 There are so many flowers, they say,
 and most delightful scents.
 While flowers grow
 even where the land is frozen solid,
 in the warm regions, where the earth is vigorous,
 there are masters of labor in the towns, they
 sow wondrous fine flowers
 to feast your eyes upon, to strike your nose! (137)

Morning

Dawn's rays begin to shine in the east.
The horizon shows white between the mountains.
Here, the mountains appear majestic and imposing.
In their midst stretches a light blue haze.
And from this thick gloom the mountain peaks emerge,
like ships upon the broad ocean. (134)

Such emotional expression, whether we can call it love or not, affects a more complex weave than that revealed in Sengee's work prior to his arrival in Moscow. What appear to be politicized images in these two poems – the contrast between cold ground and warm, the rays of the sun, the laborer's fine flowers, the mountains emerging from the mist – do not necessarily require a symbolic interpretation in order for them, or the poems as a whole, to be meaningful. They work, as the most accomplished exemplars of Socialist Realism work, as emotionally and imagistically credible artistic expressions, here describing the Mongolian landscape, and it is only when reread with an awareness of the political discourse at work that the emotional impact of these images becomes visible.

And yet, as Dobrenko stresses, the kind of vision that Sengee describes here is a radical shifting of the present into an aestheticized simulacrum, with what was envisioned for the future revealed, through a kind of linguistic sleight of hand, to be existing in the experienced present (Dobrenko 2007, 5). In this way, the effect of a futuristic present in the first of these two poems is sensed as the situation which prevails *right now* in the "warm regions, where the earth is vigorous," and invigorated by socialism. Sengee's readers, reading this text as a product of the Party's literature machine, and so as an expression of socialist reality, are to understand these beautiful flowers to be growing where they themselves are living. In the same way, they should also understand the flowers which are indeed growing around them to be indicators – like the color red, or the ever-present images of Choibalsan or Stalin – of the self-evident and ongoing achievements of socialism.

For a writer with as keen a sense as Sengee of the cultural importance of representing the traditional physical and conceptual landscape of Mongolia to his Mongolian readers, the majority of whom would have been raised in that landscape, even as he was writing socialism inextricably into that landscape, it was important still to use tropes which would bring to mind that which remained unchanging about Mongolia. So it was that he worked the theme of morning, with mists veiling the mountains, and the slow rising of the sun clearing the mists, and rendering the world pale and white before its colors were fully revealed, and so constructed in this poem an explicit description of a scene visible every day to herders, inseparable in the rendering of its imagistic surface from the transformative vigor of socialist reality.

For Sengee, this creative tension between the aestheticized hyperreality of Mongolian life seen through the lens of Socialist Realism and the aestheticized reality of the traditional life experience of Mongolia's nomadic community was a means by which he could speak of the world around him while, fusing artistic subtlety with political conviction, responding to it as the ongoing processes of socialism.

Later years

In 1954, his position as the Party's most highly regarded literary figure secured by the completion of his studies at the Gorky Institute, Sengee became director of the Writers' Union. During the five years which remained to him, he worked to build upon his experiences in the Soviet Union, and to develop with his colleagues Mongolia's literary response to socialism's industrial and intellectual advances, and in particular to refine the ideas of Socialist Realism.

The second Congress of Mongolian Writers, held between April 25 and 27, 1957, gave an opportunity to both the Party and the Writers' Union to appraise the general state of literature in Mongolia and literature's response to social and political developments since the first Congress, which had taken place in 1948. It was also the first time that writers had come together in such numbers since the deaths of Stalin and Choibalsan, and this provided them with the chance to listen to and discuss the Party's ideas and to work out how best to maneuver themselves in relation to those ideas over the coming years. As head of the Writers' Union, Sengee was tasked with delivering the keynote speech (Sengee 1978, 467–504),¹⁷ in which he gave a genre-by-genre overview of the literature and focused his audience on how they could deepen and broaden the appeal of the Party's directives on how best to compose literary works.

One of Sengee's own principal concerns, shaped by hardship as a child and by the intervention of the Party in his life, was the education of Mongolia's youth, and in addressing the issue of children's literature, while discussing the advances which had been made, he is clear about the work which still needed to be done:

As far as the creation of socialism is concerned, this is not work which our young people should do only in the future, nor is it a job which cannot be completed. For this reason, we need to inspire them to understand how special both scholarship and labor are. We need to educate them to love people, to have the mind of comrades, to be peaceful and loyal and just. So, every year we should publish literature [with such messages] in the hundreds, and the thousands.

(Sengee 1978, 475)

The connection between scholarship and labor, and how they could work together to forge socialism, was likewise a primary mover of Socialist Realism, the theme

with which Sengee ended his speech. In his discussion of both children's literature and Socialist Realism as a whole, he stresses the importance of learning from life:

The leading characters in our literature are the people who are building the new life. We have to show in our work those who struggle for socialism, such as the main representatives of industry, the herders, and the intellectuals. So, we need to show, truthfully and in a focused way, the best of their lives and their labor, and their hardships, as they are today.

(Sengee 1978, 495)

In other words, in creating literature for children, as well as for the people as a whole, the Party's intention was to spread socialism through imaginatively describing the lives of Mongolia's people. Sengee's contribution to this process, his time spent studying Soviet Socialist Realism with its leading, politically approved, exponents at the Gorky Institute, was a key factor to its unrolling in Mongolia.

Sengee's presentation of Socialist Realism in this set-piece speech developed its initial exposition by L. Dүgersүren¹⁸ in the corresponding speech at the First Mongolian Writers' Congress in 1947. Dүgersүren (1948) had explained its principles as follows:

First, Revolutionary Realism should powerfully draw the attention of writers towards contemporary life and towards its focused aims and show the new man who is creating the new life. . . . Second, Revolutionary Realism should deeply and in all ways illustrate the real circumstances and reveal life through establishing the exact relationships between them and finding the main and central issues [. . .]. Third, Revolutionary Realism should put all its strength into supporting the Party's attitudes towards literature. . . . Fourth, Revolutionary Realism must not fail to acknowledge the negative aspects of our real circumstances.

(21–23)¹⁹

The linguistic change which had shifted the concept from "revolutionary" (*khu-visgalt*) to "socialist" (*sotsialist*) realism reflected the ideological shift in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin in 1953, but not any noticeable change in practice. The focus remained on an increasingly refined account of the lives of Mongolian laborers through the Party's doctrinal filter and on how writers could best represent and promote this hyperrealist vision.

Sengee's commitment to his own literary vision, as a Mongolian writer first and foremost, was allied to, but did not in every case map directly onto, his commitment to the Party. As with any piece of literature, we can read a poem such as "Morning" from many (sometimes conflicting) viewpoints: such a plurality of possible readings is, perhaps, what makes a work – and perhaps also its writer – genuinely effective in cultural and social terms. But while Socialist Realism,

which Dobrenko imagines seeking to “rework . . . reality into an ideological consumable product” (Dobrenko 2007, 14), might work as a general theory, it does not necessarily represent how even the most loyal Party operative might express their observations of life and the world around them.

It is, moreover, not easy to clearly grasp what Socialist Realism meant to Mongolia’s Party leadership, nor to those like Sengee, whose job was to promulgate Party policy among his fellow writers, and to encourage their own creative expression. Neither Dүgersүren’s exposition in 1948, nor Sengee’s nine years later, of detailed instructions as to the nature and execution of a work of Socialist Realism, and despite such symbolic tropes as the color red and mountain peaks and peace and nation, and despite such rhetorical tropes as labor and industry and victory, Sengee and his colleagues were each striking out on their own, albeit in a semblance of solidarity, and trying as best they could to represent, according to their own understanding, the life they saw around them in the light of the Party’s directives.

Sengee’s post-socialist legacy

The vision of Mongolian Socialist Realism, as far as it is represented in Sengee’s work, is found not so much in the poster-like simplicity of his political poems, but rather in his lyrical and childlike evocation of the countryside, in poems such as “Pasque Flowers” (*Yargui*), written in 1957 (Sengee 1978, 141).

Pasque Flowers

My blue Pasque flowers, you
meet with freezing death
to show that in the future you will no longer be.

Without losing your luster
amid the skin of snow,
are you showing your vigor?

You did not grow on the southern slopes,
understanding that you would come
when the warmth of spring appears.

And yet you grew, unaffected,
visible everywhere, even
in the piercing storms!

When I truly look upon you, then
have the golden world take heart
and put on all its finery!

When rascally Heaven blushes, then
have it wash its face,
and chase the clouds away!

The coming of spring on the steppe, following the frequently harsh winters, is a common theme in Mongolian literature, but in Sengee's language we sense a natural world untouched by industrial labor, a simple, small blue flower, resilient against the elements, in a dance with the clouds and the snow and the earth. It is as though the new life of socialism has momentarily fallen away, and the constancy of the land remains, cycling through the seasons, with flowers heralding the return of the spring. Perhaps the promise of socialism is the chance for Mongolians to live the same life of sensitivity to the natural world as they always have, but in more equitable circumstances and without fear of political, economic, or class oppression.

If this is Sengee's true legacy, then it remains today in the lineage which he initiated. Among his students,²⁰ the poets B. Yavuukhulan (1929–1982) and D. Pürevdorj (1933–2010) took different routes to realize in their own work a lyrical romanticism informed by the sometimes harsh reality of life on the steppe. In the informal schools of Yavuukhulan's *uyangyn nairag* (lyrical poetry) and Pürevdorj's *irgenii nairag* (citizens' poetry), we find a vision of a Mongolia enhanced by social and political developments and yet still formed and influenced by the lineage of Chinggis Khaan and by generations of nomadic livestock herders.

There is, though, perhaps a stronger relationship between Sengee and Yavuukhulan's own student, O. Dashbalbar (1957–1999). While Sengee's literary star rose during the early revolutionary period, during a time when the influence of Stalin and Choibalsan polarized and mobilized political activity, Dashbalbar's rose initially during the 1980s, and then with a more pronounced political effect following the democratic revolution of 1989 and 1990. There is a combination of youthful idealism, Buddhist philosophy, and revolutionary fervor in Dashbalbar's influential 1980 poem "Love One Another, My People!" (*Amidaa biye biyee khairla khümüüs ee!*) (Wickham-Smith 2008, 120–21), while in his later work, written during his time as a politician and member of the Great Khural, he brought the rhetoric of nationalism and an appeal to Mongolian heritage to resist the advances of free-market capitalism in the form of foreign – primarily Russian and Chinese – investment.

In considering the lasting impact upon Mongolian literature of Socialist Realism in general, and the work of Sengee in particular, it may not be necessary to think with critics such as Dobrenko about the aestheticization of reality and the imposition upon it of an imagined socialist utopia. In the poems of Yavuukhulan and Pürevdorj, and in the poetry and essays by Dashbalbar, what is preserved is the tradition of Mongolian culture, mediated by contemporary characters living in the contemporary political and social sphere of Mongolian experience. For despite its appearance, the aestheticized language with which Mongolian Socialist Realism came to clothe itself allowed for the portrayal of real life in the literature:

the genuine energy of labor was a melding of hard work with commitment on the national and personal level, just as the experience of seasonal cycles was a melding of awe at nature's harshness with pleasure in its bounty.

This continuity of voices, from Sengee to those who remain active today,²¹ influenced by politician-poets like Dashbalbar, comes from the fact that, despite the industrialization, mechanization, urbanization, and globalization which has transformed Mongolia, and Ulaanbaatar in particular, over the past century, this patina of modernization covers only very thinly the nomadic culture, an understanding of which is vital for a correct reading of poems like "Morning" and "Pasque Flowers." In speaking about how writers should learn from life, Sengee was in fact pointing beyond the political to a quality of observation necessary to life as a nomad, a skill vital to the successful raising of animals, to traversing the steppe at night, with only the stars as guides, to locating the best place to erect a ger, and to the meteorological reading of the sky.

Conclusion

The narrative by which the Party promoted Socialist Realism in Mongolia suggested that it should reinforce, rather than replace, this natural quality of observation, and so bring it to bear on the processes of modern society as much as on the traditional lives of nomadic herders. Sengee's heart, similar perhaps to that of many of his fellow Mongolians, was conflicted between loyalty and adherence to the unidirectional and one-dimensional discourse of motherland and friendship and dependence focused on Moscow and loyalty and adherence to the ancient, multidimensional and cyclical discourse of the Mongol homeland (*nutag*) and the nomadic herding culture by which, figuratively and literally, it was defined.

Sengee's death from cancer, on May 6, 1959 (Zandraabandii 2017, 232–36), came at a time when Mongolian literature was negotiating the political "thaw" initiated by Nikita Khrushchev in the wake of Stalin's death and the political repositioning following Choibalsan's own demise a year before Stalin's. Young writers like Yavuukhulan and Pürevdorj used this opportunity to explore new stylistic and thematic avenues, and fiction writers such as Erdene started to build upon the developments in short-form fiction which had been initiated, in part at least, by Sengee's *Ayuush*.²²

The complexity of Sengee's vision for socialist Mongolia was, paradoxically, compounded by his great affection for, and commitment to, the idea of Mongolia as well as its practical reality. While the Mongolia in which he had been raised was the Mongolia of the revolution, and while the writers who had shaped him had been among the cultural and political leaders whose activity had defined the revolution, he remained a writer who saw as much strength and beauty in a tiny blue flower amid the snow as in the sweat of labor and the icons of socialism.

But Sengee, we must always remember, was also a highly effective political figure. From his positioning by Choibalsan within the mechanism of the Interior Ministry to his own deliberate positioning as the natural choice for Mongolia's first student at the Gorky Institute, and his elevation on his return to head of the Writers' Union, his was a career shaped by a complex of formative experiences.

The orphan from Selenge had risen, using his physical and intellectual strength to get to the top, and had skillfully maneuvered his Party loyalty to achieve his ambition and to assist those whose friendship and talent he valued.

In one of his final poems, “Young Communist Fighters” (*Ev khamtin zaluu baidagch*) (Sengee 1978, 150), written in 1959, Sengee celebrates Mongolia’s youth, returning in his imagery to a utopian language more akin to the “revolutionary realism” promoted during the 1940s than the more nuanced representation of the “socialist realism” that he had promoted in his speech to the Writers’ Congress two years earlier.²³ I have been unable to determine the precise date for the composition of this poem, and while we might speculate that it was conceived as a final paean to the youth which would lead Mongolia after his death (and maybe also to his own youth), it is perhaps more fitting to place it alongside a poem he had written on March 28, “The World Will Be At Peace” (*Ekh delkhii enkh amgalan bolno*) (Sengee 1978, 91–92), in which he describes a world made peaceful through industry. With “Young Communist Fighters,” Sengee, placing in the vanguard of the state a hypermasculine youth, elevates his beloved Party and its leadership, and the purity and happiness and peace he imagines feels immanent, an approximation of the real.

Young Communist Fighters

The people’s righteous children,
the vigorous heroes of pure labor,
through the bright instruction of the Party
will create happiness with their own hands.

Their bright red flags
they’ll raise high in the revolutionary state,
and every ancient custom wash
clean, as though with rainwater.

The young communist fighters
will fulfill their virile resolve,
they will cultivate their motherland
and make the future new.

Leaders, with an oceanic joyful faith,
protectors above all things of their sacred fame,
these wings of the warrior Party
will everywhere be fully proven.

Notes

- 1 So important is Natsagdorj even today to the cultural life of Mongolia that a statue of him stands just to the east of Sükhbaatar Square in Ulaanbaatar, where a statue of Lenin once stood. Natsagdorj’s preeminence, moreover, most likely came from his

being the only leading writer of his day not to be killed during the Great Repression. See Wickhamsmith (2020, 267–90) for more on the effect of the Great Repression on literature.

- 2 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- 3 See the account of Buyannemekh's trial and execution in Rinchin (2010, 5: 90–108). Buyannemekh was finally rehabilitated on November 16, 1962.
- 4 G. Demid (1900–1937) had taken part in the 1921 revolution, and during the 1930s served in a number of senior posts, including as Minister of War. In 1936, he and Choibalsan were appointed Marshals of the Armed Forces. Choibalsan resented Demid's popularity and within a few days of Demid's mysterious death on the Trans-Sibertain railway on August 22, 1937, declared that Demid had been a Japanese spy. Demid's death opened the way for an extensive purge of many believed to have been infiltrated by the Japanese, a surge of state violence that was influenced by Demid himself in his charges leveled at Buyannemekh.
- 5 Sengee worked for the Interior Ministry between 1937 and 1943.
- 6 Personal communication by D. Tsedev, Ulaanbaatar, July 2010. According to Tsedev, there was another instance when a passer-by found Buyannemekh bleeding on the floor of Sengee's office in the Interior Ministry, with Sengee nursing a bloody fist. We don't know the source of this antagonism, nor whether it was mutual, but in it we can see the mythos of generational change, as well as of what we might characterize as an expressly political shift from revolutionary zealots to Soviet apparatchiks.
- 7 See P. Khorloo's account in "A 5 Minute Poem" (*Tavan Minuten Shüleg*) (Tarva 1969, 16–25).
- 8 These dates are given by Ch. Chimid (Sengee 1978, 3), although the period between 1946 and 1951 has also been suggested (Bold and Bold 2011, 99).
- 9 *Darkhan* is itself used both adjectivally ("sacred") and nominally ("artisan").
- 10 Baast (2012) specifically uses *ekh oron*, a calque of the Russian *rodina-mati*
- 11 *Avgai* is used either as a term of respect towards an elder of either sex or as a word for a middle-aged woman.
- 12 Baast (2012, 30) mentions that both Sengee and L. Tsend-Ochir were sent by the Party to cover the war at first-hand.
- 13 No English translation of these letters has been made but see Renate Bauwe's (n.d.(a), n.d.(b)) German translations of Erdenebathaa's letter to Gorky (Berlin, 12 May 1925) and Gorky's reply (Sorrento, May 19, 1925).
- 14 Ayuush also knew Russian, having studied at the University of the Toilers of the East (KUTV) in Moscow during the mid-1920s.
- 15 Among Sengee's classmates were the Amar poet Rasul Gamzatov (1923–2003), the Azeri poet Samad Vurgun (1906–1956), and the Soviet poets Vladimir Soloukhin (1924–1997), Platon Voronko (1913–1988), Evgeny Vinokurov (b.1925), and Eduard Asadov (1923–2004), many of whose poems he translated into Mongolian (Zandraabandii, 2017, 166).
- 16 Notably, the second Mongolian writer to be sent to the Gorky Institute, B. Yavuukhulan, was one of Sengee's principal students (see Tsoodol and Saruulbuyan 2015, 70–73).
- 17 See also Zandraabandii (2017, 218–24) for a more extensive account of this speech.
- 18 According to B. Tsentsenolmon (2018, 214), Dүгөрсүрэн, head of the Party's Persuasion and Education division, was a last-minute replacement for the head of the Ideology Division B. Shirendev (1911–2001), who had been removed from his position for hitting a member of the Party's Central Committee.
- 19 See Wickhamsmith (2020, 291–320) for a fuller discussion of Mongolia's initial experience of Socialist Realism.
- 20 Apart from Yavuukhulan and Пүрэвдорж, the novelist S. Erdene (1929–2000) and the poet Ts. Gaitav (1929–1979) should also be mentioned here.

- 21 Among these, I would mention especially Ts. Bavuudorj (b.1968), B. Zolbayar (b.1975), and Ch. Ösöhböid (b.1990).
- 22 A trio of novellas – *Ayuush* (1947), Ch. Lodoidamba's *In the Altai* (*Altaiid*, 1949), and D. Tarva's *Damiran's Family* (*Damirangiinhan*, 1951) – was central to the development of Socialist Realist fiction at this time and laid the path for writers such as Edrene, Ts. Ulambayar, and S. Dashdoorov. The three volumes of B. Rinchen's novel "Rays of Dawn" (*Üüriin tuyu*, 1951–52) likewise set a benchmark for that form, although short stories and novellas remained more accessible for the general readership and thus easier to publish.
- 23 This appears to have been the general trajectory in the Soviet Union as well (see Friedberg 1960).

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7 “Faces of the State”

Film and state propaganda in socialist Mongolia

Zoljargal Enkh-Amgalan

In the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR), cinema was first institutionalized in the 1930s, and the Mongolian film industry produced 167 feature films and several hundred documentaries until 1990 (Rees 2015, 35). Its rapid growth was mainly supported by the Soviet Union, where many Mongolians participated in training programs and returned with a new expertise in filmmaking (Rees 2015, 55–56). However, despite this high output and the general importance of cinema for the nationwide distribution of state ideology, Mongolian films have received little attention in Mongolian Studies and Film Studies. Although there are several Mongolian works that focus on film criticism, narratives of film experts and filmmakers, as well as encyclopedias about the Mongolian film industry, studies on film in the context of state politics and culture remain sparse. One groundbreaking work is Lucy M. Rees’ book, *Mongolian Film Music: Tradition, Revolution and Propaganda* (2015), in which she discusses the development of the Mongolian film industry and its musical elements in the fields of traditional arts, socialist ideology, and post-socialism.

In this chapter, I will focus on the role of post-1960 cinema as a time that brought forth movies that increasingly celebrated socialist progress (Rees 2015, 61) and the liberation of women by featuring them as socialist role models. In doing so, I will use the two films *Ene Khüükhniüid Üü?* (*Oh, the Ladies!* 1963) and *Ankhny Alkham* (*The First Step* 1969) as examples to discuss how films were embedded in state policies of that time. My initial interest in these films stems from their heroic main characters – two young women cast as socialist role models (Enkh-Amgalan 2013). Both characters exemplify a new generation of Mongolian female youth that embraces socialist advances such as new technologies, non-religious and science-based education, and life in a society that provides equal opportunities for its citizens. They stand in opposition to an older, rural generation that favors tradition over socialist achievements. Accordingly, both films feature individual characters of two contrasting groups of Mongolian society that are meant to represent the old and new “faces of the state.”

Following Rees, I argue that in both *Ene Khüükhniüid Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham*, it was not solely socialist progress that was celebrated (Rees 2015, 61) but the actual people who were needed for the socialist enterprise to progress: young women and socialist youth. The economic and political circumstances after 1960 were marked by a drive for industrial growth and urbanization (Bawden 1989;

Sanders 2010), which required the creation of a new, young working class. The state furthermore aimed for population growth and established measures such as maternity leave and nursing homes (Benwell 2006, 126), new institutions that emphasized the emerging role of women in socialist Mongolia. While several studies center around women in Mongolia (Altangerel 2015; Benwell 2006; Buyandelger 2008a; Humphrey 1992; Schöne 1997; Shagdar 2018), socialist feminism as well as gender and women studies remain marginal research areas in the broad field of Mongolian Studies. Accordingly, by factoring in the historical circumstances of the two films, *Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham*, I will discuss how young women were represented in post-1960 cinema and in the broader framework of socialist feminism in Mongolia.

My analysis of these movies is oriented towards film as a medium of propaganda in which heroic main characters are used to translate more or less hidden messages of state ideology to the audience. I understand ideology, in this context, as a system of beliefs, ideas, and values, or, in other words, “a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgments about that world” (Croteau, Hoynes, and Milan 2012, 159–60). In this chapter, I approach an ideological discussion of these films that “asks what these messages tell us about ourselves and our society” (Croteau, Hoynes, and Milan 2012, 160) to (a) analyze the strategies of the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) according to its party propaganda and ideology (*namyn ukhuulga, üzel surtal*) and to (b) examine how film became a testimony of change and socialist success.

I do not aim to evaluate the individual work of the film directors, actors, and artists who were involved with *Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham*. Instead, my aim is to reveal to what extent socialist cinema after 1960 represented cultural and educational policies directed at young people and women in particular by using the bodies of young actresses.

After first describing the two films in the following, I will outline the history of film in its context of socialist education and propaganda programs in Mongolia. In the subsequent section, I will briefly draw on the history of women’s rights and liberation in the MPR, which will lead me to further discuss the films *Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham* and their political content with special regard to the role of heroic women, socialist feminism, and state propaganda.

Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham

Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü? is a comedy based on Ch. Lodoidamba’s novel, *Itgej Bolno* (*There is Hope*). Produced by Kino Üildver in 1962 and directed by R. Dorjpalam, it was first screened in 1963. The protagonist is Dulamsüren, a young woman and recently graduated veterinary from Ulaanbaatar. After graduation, she heard about a job vacancy in the *negdel* (collective production associations) that is led by her boyfriend’s father, Jamts. As a *negdel* chief, Jamts has serious doubts about hiring a woman for this work. His reasoning is twofold: first, he is convinced that women bring certain “disadvantages” with them, including pregnancy and maternity leave. Second, he believes that women cannot accomplish the same tasks

as men do since they, Jamts suspects, would not be as responsible and reliable. Despite these allegations, Dulamsüren decides to prove the chief Jamts wrong. Accordingly, she joins the *negdel* and uses a clever trick in order to get hired as a veterinary; dressed in trousers and a jacket, with short hair and a fake mustache, she introduces herself to Jamts as a man (see Figure 7.1). Her plan works, and, most importantly, she accomplishes every difficult task and proves to be highly competent and brave. She becomes a valuable worker but eventually, when it becomes increasingly difficult to hide her true identity, everybody finds out that Dulamsüren is a woman. However, since she proved to be as hardworking as any man, she was accepted in the *negdel* despite being a woman.

Figure 7.1 Dulamsüren dressed as a man. *Ene Khüikhnüüd Üü?*, 1963, Univision.

The movie is a comedy that is certainly provocative. One scene was particularly controversial: For the first time ever in the history of Mongolian cinema, the film acknowledges the idea of homosexual relationships; when Jamts, his son Tömör, and Dulamsüren drive through the city in a taxi, Tömör and Dulamsüren are both dressed in men's clothing and secretly caress each other in the backseat, disturbing the driver who responds to this unusual moment with a confused look in the mirror. In another scene, Dulamsüren, still in man's clothes, and Tömör hug and kiss each other in Dulamsüren's dormitory room, causing confusion and trouble for the *negdel* leaders (see Figure 7.2).

The film *Ankhny Alkham* is based on Ch. Gombo's novel *Övöljikh Khun* (*Hibernating Swan*) and was directed by G. Jigjidsüren, produced in 1969, and released in 1970. The main character, Myadag, is an agronomy student at a university in the city. In the opening scene, she is brought to the hay brigade where she will conduct a practical internship. After dismounting from the motorbike, she has to walk a while in order to reach the hayfield and finds a bird's nest with three eggs hidden in the tall grass. When she reaches the small brigade, she finds four older men, including the brigade leader Dorj, the Buryad Bazar, the elder Baldan, and the cook Jugder, and the young mower Bold. Their camp is located in a vast field and surrounded by mountains. It is minimalistic and is comprised of a tent and a shelter made from hay providing shadow and weather protection, a fireplace, as well as agricultural equipment and a few horses (see Figure 7.3). When she arrives, the older men welcome her with sarcastic jokes and suspicious, nitpicking looks. Myadag is young, dressed in urban-styled clothes, and does not hesitate to talk about her science education and the reason for her visit. Her appearance does not impress the workers, who see higher value in their many years of experience, beliefs, and traditional practices and dress. From the start, Myadag is confronted with ignorance and arrogance. Stubbornly, the old mowers let her know that they would not need her in the brigade at all. But she handles the situation with tactical maneuvering. With her constant eagerness and creativity, she proves to be a real agronomist in theory and practice. However, she struggles to convince the

Figure 7.2 Scenes of kissing between Dulamsüren and Tömör (left) and Dulamsüren and her female friend, Dulmaa (right). *Ene Khüükhniüd Üü?*, 1963, Univision.

Figure 7.3 Myadag and the hay brigade. *Ankhny Alkham*, 1970, Univision.

brigade men that time has come to cut the hay. The men, on the contrary, rest on their belief that time will tell when they should take up their work. But with her ingenuity and through challenging the brigade men, she manages to make them start working. During her stay at the hay field, she constantly returns to the bird's nest, watching how the hatchlings have eventually left the nest and made their first steps as flying birds.

Film in socialist Mongolia: state ideology and the film industry

Mongolia's film industry emerged from the socialist efforts of increasing the promotion of high culture and education during the "cultural revolution" (*soyolyn khuvisgal*) in the 1920s, which, according to Erika Taube (1982, 237), was a necessary and inseparable element of the socialist revolution as a whole. The anthropologist, B. Tsetsentsolmon (2014), points out that the cultural revolution "aimed at overcoming 'backwardness' (*khotsrogdol*) [and its] goal was to build a 'new culture' to train cadres, to introduce socialist ideology with a 'national cultural content,' and to create new 'advanced' forms in the cultural sector" (423). From the beginning of the cultural revolution, I argue, these ambitions were deeply integrated into cinema and, later on, in the film industry.

With the decree of the Second *Ikh Khural* (Great Khural) of the MPRP in 1923, film was credited with high ideological relevance because of its effectiveness to reach the masses, and by the late 1920s the “government budget devoted to education, mass culture, and entertainment” was increased (Atwood 2004, 475). While screenings were received with great delight among Mongolia’s emerging urban population at that time (Navaan and Solongo 2005, 7), film perfectly complemented the educational programs of the cultural revolution and helped disseminate socialist teachings across the whole country, often in the form of “[m]obile projection tents” (May 2009, 87). Ulaanbaatar residents who witnessed the first film screenings in Mongolia called the street where the movie theater was built the “place of illusion” (*illyuziony gazar*) or “magicians’ street” (*ilbechnii gudamj*) (Navaan and Solongo 2005, 10), associating film with the inexplicable. Eventually, film was incorporated into the developing socialist state with the Cinema Department (*Mongolyn Kino Khoroo*) established in the Ministry of Education in 1933 (Rees 2015, 33). On May 1, 1935, the first movie theater, *Ard*, was officially opened to the public (Navaan and Solongo 2005, 11). In 1936, with the help of around ten advisors from the Soviet Union, the Mongolian film industry was established under the name *Kino Üildver* (Film Factory), which formed a powerful institution that “has since flourished, not least because of its educational value” (Underdown 1976, 47).

The role of film for the socialist project was clearly determined in official language and educational discourse, in which it is often accompanied with words such as “enlighten” (*gegeerүүлэх*) and “educate” (*bolovsоруулах*). The role of film was already highlighted by the MPRP during the Second *Ikh Khural* held in 1923:

The electric shadow play [*tsakhilgaan süüdriin naadam*] is the introduction of the enlightenment to the people, and since it is important to let it be an essential part for the improvement of the common people [*ard*], our party must hold responsibility for managing this activity.

(Natsagdorj 1981, 257)

While enlightenment has been a condition reserved for feudal elites, electric light became “a central symbol of modernism, and . . . of the particular political project of Leninist state socialism” (Sneath 2009, 74), “both metaphorically and physically” (Sneath 2009, 76). Film, thus, experienced a transformation from something inexplicable to a product of modern science and socialist progress, and therefore proved substantially useful for the socialist state for breaking with the feudal past and promoting the socialist future. Film provided the opportunity to enlighten the masses, helping the MPRP “to disseminate socialist ideology throughout Mongolia and to convince a nomadic society that industry and progress were the direction the country should take” (Rees 2015, 52). With its institutionalization, Mongolian cinema increasingly developed as a useful propaganda tool.

The cultural revolution was initiated by the MPRP and subdivided into three stages covering the periods of 1921–1940, 1940–1960, and post-1960, and each

stage was framed by a set of specific political goals (Tsetsentsolmon 2014), which were deliberately integrated into cinema, as the following examples will show. The first stage emphasized cultural change, following a strong anti-religious discourse. Films of the 1930s and 1940s, such as *Tsogt Taij* (Tarich et al. 1945) echoed this discourse and pictured Buddhist lamas as inherently evil counter-revolutionaries, with the top clergy being "cruel terrorists (*eserguu*), bandits, betrayers of the nation" (Buyandelger 2008b, 56). The subsequent stage "proposed 'genuine revolution' (*jinkhene khuvisgal*) – described as a 'socialist cultural revolution'" (Tsetsentsolmon 2014, 423). Consequently, the movies of the 1940s and 1950s glorified the people's revolution and its heroes, Mongolia's fight for independence against the Manchu reign, and the victory of socialism, which can be seen in *Sükhbaatar* (Zarkhi and Kheifitz 1942) and *Ardyn Elch* (*The People's Messenger*, Jigjid 1959). Ultimately, after 1960, the goal of the third stage was "to complete the process of building socialism and socialist culture" (Tsetsentsolmon 2014, 423).

The post-1960 phase of the cultural revolution was a crucial period as it marked the onset of a time when "the country witnessed unprecedented growth, as its increasingly urban and educated population gradually left behind their earlier life as nomadic pastoralists in order to work in factories or in semiurban collective farms" (Pedersen and Højer 2008, 76). By 1959, the collectivization of livestock was successfully completed, incorporating 97.7% of Mongolia's rural households into the *negdel* system (Atwood 2004, 115). Meanwhile, as Ulaanbaatar grew as a modern city and further industrial cities such as Darkhan were established in the early 1960s (Sanders 2010, 194), "the Government . . . was seeking a modern civilization with industry, schools, radio and television – all of the culture of a developed socialist society" (Campi 2006, 49). Moreover, more than 60% of the total population of the MPR was under 30 years old during the 1960s, which is one reason why the MPRP began to pay particular attention to the younger generation to insure their commitment to socialism (Monts 1973, 68).

Given this context, a new working class had to evolve, and I argue that the films produced during this time were set to inspire the young generation to contribute to socialism. As a result, the "woman question" reemerged as a central topic for building socialism, and films produced after 1960 started to thematically focus on socialist progress and socialist role models in the form of young women as ideal socialists and heroic characters. In the MPR, socialism was defined as the driving force for liberating women (Tsedenbal 1976, 71), and granting women rights to work and education were declared major landmarks in this process (Benwell 2006, 126). Nevertheless, it took almost four decades until this socialist version of full liberation was allegedly achieved.

Oh, the Ladies! – the new socialist woman comes to Mongolia

The MPR stressed the importance of gender equality since its establishment in 1924 (Atwood 2004, 379), and it systematically began to implement policies for women's equal rights and liberation, starting with giving women suffrage in the

11th provision of the first constitution in 1924, which was followed by the elimination of the practice of marriage abduction (*bogtlokh yos*) in 1925 (Chimedtseren 1973, 31) and the passage of the women's protection law in 1926 (Chimedtseren 1973, 32). In *The MPR and its Historical Experience of Women's Liberation from Social Oppression*, E. Chimedtseren (1973) points out that further policies were directed towards women's educational and cultural activities and acknowledged that women should receive the same educational opportunities as men. As a result, the first women's magazine, *Ladies' Thought* (*Büsgüichüüdiin Sanal*; later renamed to *Working Woman* [*Ajilchin Emegtei*]) was published in 1925 (Chimedtseren 1973, 33). On March 8, 1927, the decision to found a women's committee for women's education was made. The committee was first called the Women's Department (*Emegteichüüdiin tasag*), and its first chairwoman was the poet D. Natsagdorj's wife, Pagmadulam, who had promoted women's literacy and culture as well as women's liberation from oppression during the Third *Ikh Khural* of the MPRP (Chimedtseren 1973, 43).

The Mongolian Women's Committee and the Union of Revolutionary Youth were responsible for women's enlightenment (*emegteichüüdiin gegeerel*) and liberation. The MPRP and the Union of Revolutionary Youth saw women's illiteracy as a major obstacle for their liberation. They created public spaces such as the Women's Red Ger (*Emegteichüüdiin Ulaan Ger*) and Red Corners (*Ulaan Bulan*) as institutions for organizing political and cultural events and activities such as literacy circles (*Bichig Üsgiin Bülgem*) (Chimedtseren 1973, 56). In the *Ulaan Ger* – of which several existed throughout the country – women gathered to learn how to read and write, how to work with a sewing machine and make modern dresses for themselves, and to sing revolutionary songs such as the “Women's Song” (D. Natsagdorj's *Emegteichüüdiin Duu*). Moreover, the Union organized women recruitment and propaganda (*surtal ukhuulgyn ajil*) programs in these public institutions. According to the 10th Congress of the MPRP, these places were built with the intention to integrate women more in building socialism. As a result, they became central public institutions for women's political and cultural education, which were also led by women (Chimedtseren 1973, 57, 65).

Through the establishment of schools such as the Women's School of Advancement (*Emegteichüüdiig Devshüülekh Surguuli*, which was renamed in 1940 to the Mongolian Women's School [*Mongolyn Emegteichüüdiin Surguuli*]) during the 1930s and 1940s, women furthermore started to learn new professions in industrial and agricultural sectors and occupied positions in higher education (Chimedtseren 1973, 61). Eventually, levels of literacy and workforce participation had become equal between men and women by the time of World War II (Atwood 2004, 175).

As the 11th Congress of the MPRP closed in 1947, the first five-year plan was about to be put into effect, and with it, new industrial and agricultural sectors and professions emerged that required the workforce of women (Chimedtseren 1973, 144). While the first five-year plan turned out rather unsuccessfully, the following years were shaped by processes of collectivization and changes to herder women's work, lifestyle, and environment. In their *negdels*, women became economically independent and started to participate in various kinds of social and

cultural production. Furthermore, new specific positions such as the agronomist and the veterinarian emerged in the agricultural sector, and with the mechanization of the *negdels*, women increasingly needed to acquire technological knowledge (Chimedtseren 1973, 101).

This history of women's liberation during the first decades of state socialism is also echoed in cinema. The documentary film, *BNMAUn Emegteichüüd* (*Women of the Mongolian People's Republic*, Bold 1948), introduced the broad variety of work carried out by women. A total of 16 repetitions of the title phrase, "Our women" (*Manai emegteichüüd*), by the narrator celebrated the importance of women for their economic independence and their contribution to the state's development. In another case, the female revolutionary D. Puntsag, who was educated by Pagmadulam, remembered that Nakhayeva, a member of the Third International, visited the MPR twice to provide women with work education. The film *Serelt* (*The Awakening*, Genden 1957) shows parallels as it features a female Russian doctor who arrives in the countryside to teach local nurses how to practice science-based medicine to counter the influence of Buddhist medicine, which is pictured as superstitious and practiced by an ill-behaved, exploitative monk. Nevertheless, it is important to point to the passive role of Mongolian women in this context, whether it is the male narrator who reports the achievements of women or the female Russian doctor who has to educate the Mongolian nurses. With the onset of the 1960s, this paradigm of representation experienced a shift in Mongolian cinema, which focused on the socialist vision of women liberated from patriarchal subordination in a new way that acknowledged and eventually promoted women's active role in building socialism.

This process of change and acceptance is exemplified in *Ene Khüikhnüüd Üü?* and embodied by the main character, Dulamsüren. It becomes particularly clear by drawing on the opening scene and comparing it to the closing scene of the film. In both the opening and final scene, Jamts says, "*Ee dee ene khüikhnüüd üü?*" (Oh, the ladies!). However, his prosody differs strongly either time, showing how the meaning of this particular line through the usage of word repetition persisted, developed, and changed throughout the whole film. The change of the line's meaning demonstrates a development of Jamts's perception of women from negative to positive views.

In the beginning of the film, Jamts and his assistant Dorj discuss that they need to hire a new veterinarian for their *negdel* and unmistakably explain why a woman would not come into consideration for this position, since pregnancy and maternity leave are serious disadvantages. The second sequence plays in Jamts's office and emphasizes the earlier conversation by pointing to so-called women's problems in which the *negdel* leader is surrounded by male and female workers who ask for maternity leave, holidays, and vacation. Eventually, Jamts's wife enters and calls him for lunch at home. Overwhelmed by all these requests, he mourns, "Ah, vacation here, food there . . . Oh the ladies!" In the closing scene, Jamts leaves the office desk, walking towards the camera. His chest filling the frame underpins his conviction and state of mind. The third sequence opens with Jamts's back filling the frame. But this time he goes into the opposite direction, away

from the camera and towards the table in the kitchen at his home where his son Tömör waits for him. Drinking *airag* (fermented mare's milk), the *negdel* chief and his son start a conversation about women's rights. Tömör opposes his father and eventually asks if he were aware of women's rights.

These first three sequences suggest that women and women's rights were not taken seriously by male authorities in the rural *negdel*. In fact, as a comedy, the film to some extent makes fun of this issue. At the same time, through exemplifying sexist views held by Jamts and Dorj, the first three sequences try to introduce the audience to the disfavor towards women in the workspace as a widespread and serious issue in a socialist society where all classes and genders are supposed to be equal.

Ultimately, it is Dulamsüren's persistent, revolutionary character that leads to the overall acceptance that women can accomplish any task that used to be reserved for men. By referring to Lenin, Chimedtseren (1973) underpins that women played a key part in the revolution, yet if a woman wanted to liberate herself, she must participate in revolutionary activities (Chimedtseren 1973, 8). According to this logic, there would be no socialism without the participation of women, while in turn the women's liberation and rights are not realizable without socialism. This idea of a win-win situation refers to the revolution's aim to replace the allegedly poor, oppressed women from the past with the strong, brave New Socialist Women.

In her research on women in the Soviet Union, Barbara Evans Clements (1981) argues that the development of the New Socialist Woman paralleled the political purposes of the Bolsheviks; moreover, it was an identity that was defined by a break from the oppressive history of women and as one that inherited heroic qualities. In fact, according to the revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai (1918), "The type of the 'new woman' varies from country to country" and women of modern times were "heroines with independent demands on life, heroines who assert their personality, [and] heroines who protest against the universal servitude of woman in the State, the family, society, [and] who fight for their rights as representatives of their sex."

Similarly, Chimedtseren (1973) further illustrates how women were frequently accredited with a revolutionary character in the context of myths and stories. Women appear as heroines as early as the 1920s, when Yanjinkhüü, Maakhü, ü and Yanjmaa were identified as the first revolutionary women fighting against foreign enemies. In one case, a herder woman even beat a *gamin* (Chinese soldier) with a frozen sheep leg (Chimedtseren 1973, 24). Later, during the 1950s and 1960s, women's fight for their *negdel's* property and herds provided the stuff for further stories. Hundreds of examples of how women risked their lives, saved large numbers of livestock from natural disasters, and sometimes even died were documented in books and the speeches of officials (Chimedtseren 1973, 169). While my aim is not to explore the validity of these stories and myths, I find it intriguing how heroic women were used to demonstrate how a committed *negdel* member should act by sacrificing their personal interests for the state and risking their own lives. It fits into the paradigm of the state's objective to install a

new “gender order” that “aimed to weaken family and kinship bonds and promote women’s loyalty to the state for the sake of future generations of communists” (Benwell 2006, 127). In this context, the general opinion was that in addition to employment, the state should simultaneously provide women with maternity leave, kindergartens, and other support to contribute to their liberation (Chimedtseren 1973, 237). However, while these policies for women’s freedom and liberation were partly successful, they were just a “mechanical way of solving problems” (Shagdar 2018); in fact, women ultimately became “worker-mothers with double work” (Benwell 2006, 127).

Dulamsüren and Myadag fit perfectly into both the political history of women and the myths of heroic women in socialist Mongolia. In *Ene Khüükhniüd üü?*, at the New Year’s party, Dulamsüren abruptly leaves the celebration to rescue horses in a snowstorm by herself, returning with frozen toes; whereas in *Ankhny Alkham*, as shown in Figure 7.4, Myadag jumps into a streaming river to rescue horses. Embodying a Mongolian version of the New Socialist Woman, both characters were constructed to inspire young people to embrace socialist values.

However, with comedy becoming a new genre to Mongolian cinema during the 1950s, post-1960 films were no longer considered “propaganda films” to the wider public as they contained less (obvious) propagandistic messages. I aim to problematize this assumption by drawing on anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin,

Figure 7.4 Myadag herds horses through a river. *Ankhny Alkham*, 1970, Univision.

who in *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (2002) demonstrates how the state and politics can be omnipresent and exist in manifold forms and images in all parts of society. The state undergoes “multiple metamorphoses” and appears as various “faces” in society and public places. According to Navaro-Yashin (2002), the state can be represented by every form of everyday life: “There is no face in which the political does not appear” (3). In the case of post-1960 cinema, I argue that socialist ideology and propaganda continued to be a major component as faces of the state appeared in the form of young female characters.

Breaking with the past – a first step

In March 1965, the MPRP discussed the “Improvement of the Quality of Feature and Documentary Films” (Monts 1973, 74), during which party leaders instructed filmmakers to focus on creating characters that fight for the revolution, represent a strong belief in socialist ideology, and show monumental efforts for work while being deeply integrated in everyday life and society (Monts 1973, 74). At the same time, the party declared that socialism had become an actual reality and advocated its final completion (Lungwitz 1988, 52). In order to do so, party leaders focused on integrating young Mongolians with the advancement of cultural standards and equal rights (Lungwitz 1988, 58f., 257). Films that have been produced subsequently increasingly included protagonists who were equipped with qualities promoted by the party such as youthfulness, hard work, and scientific knowledge. In *Ankhny Alkham*, Myadag exemplifies this vision by demonstrating versatile capabilities and constantly proving to be the following (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5):

- mechanically skillful (repairs a tractor)
- innovative (assembles a combine harvester from wood)
- heroic (jumps into a streaming river to rescue horses)
- creative (creates a scheme of the hay field and leaves it to the three old men upon her return to the city)
- strong-minded (criticizes a male agronomist for not carrying out his work properly)
- kind-hearted (takes care of the three old men at the hay field)
- ambitious (in order to learn from scratch, she chooses to go to the manual hay field instead of going to the technical brigade)

Equipped with these ideal characteristics, Myadag opposes outdated traditionalism, leading those who still have to learn in a similar way to the program of the MPRP that stresses the education of “all society members with the attitude of being honest and modest, and to plant the ideology of collective, comradely habitude in their behavior” (MPRP 1983, 104–5).

However, although Myadag did not have to go through the same struggle as Dulamsüren to gain respect and acceptance, including changing her gender, her experience is not an easy one. While the behavior of the old men suggests

Figure 7.5 Myadag repairs a tractor (top), makes hay (bottom left), and advises the male agronomist (bottom right). *Ankhny Alkham*, 1970, Univision.

that there still are general doubts about women in powerful positions, Myadag's experience in *Ankhny Alkham* hints that the conflict is based less on gender and more on the attitudes between old and new, tradition and modernity. In fact, the old men in *Ankhny Alkham* are more skeptical towards the agronomist as a new scientific profession. For example, in a conversation between Myadag and the brigade members, Myadag worries that it will rain soon, ruining their chances at haymaking. Dorj responds, "No worries, it will not happen! Our *boroometer* [a humorous spelling of "barometer"; *boroo* means "rain" in Mongolian] said so." Myadag skeptically asks, "Mr. Baldan, do you know how he [Bazar] knows if it will rain or not?" But Baldan stays convinced, answering, "If my back hurts, it is the sign that it will rain soon. But I don't know how it works for Bazar." After this conversation, heavy rain starts pouring, and the brigade is not able to make hay anymore. This outcome upsets the brigade leader Dorj, who vehemently criticizes Bazar and Baldan: "Now, it is becoming harder to believe in Bazar's magical power." And Jugder adds: "Bazar? He is becoming out of order. Nobody predicts and rules the sky!"

L. Sharavdorj, the cinematographer of *Ankhny Alkham*, remembers that this idea of predicting the weather through body symptoms did not fit into the frame of ideological cinema and was heavily criticized by the state because it “denies scientific achievements” (Baasandorj 2012, 42). From the viewpoint of the state then, this conversation first emphasized that traditional knowledge was outdated, conveying that superstition, religious belief, or the prediction of the weather were pointless concepts and that only scientific knowledge was trustworthy. Second, it criticized the fact that such traces of the old traditional society still existed in secular modern society, suggesting that these old concepts had to be defeated.

The roles of old and new are very clearly defined and categorized in both movies. The *negdel* leaders, Jamts and Dorj, in *Ene Khüikhniüüd Üü?*, as well as the older men, Bazar, Baldan, and Jugder in *Ankhny Alkham*, represent the old faces of the state as traditionalist, sexist, religious, and in the latter case, somewhat backward, old men. Altogether, these characteristics reflect the MPRP’s negative attitudes towards the vestiges of the old traditional society that it was desperately fighting to eliminate. Propaganda was a central element of this fight. In the 1960s, the state sponsored numerous programs and instructions that relate to scenes similar to those discussed above. For instance, the Mongolian Propaganda Union (*Mongolyn Erdmiig Delgeriülekh Niigemleg*) and filmmakers were instructed by the MPRP to produce secularist and scientific propaganda reportages or films that have “been classified and accredited to all areas – politics, communist education of the working people, educational science, science, secularism, socialist law, international relations, economy, agricultural and natural science” (Monts 1973, 73).

The state’s fight for social and cultural change worked in two directions: past and future. In terms of socialist cinema, this temporal focus is translated into celebration (past) and promotion (future) as two major propagandistic tasks. Celebration means that every single socialist goal that the MPRP achieved in different fields such as the creation of the intelligentsia, agricultural collectivization, or the implementation of equal rights in society were highly glorified and celebrated nationally by making them publicly and widely visible – not least on the screen. Promotion, on the other hand, is directed toward the creation of a flourishing socialist future. At a time in Mongolian history during which “the regime required of its people repeated public affirmation that the Communist governments of Mongolia and the Soviet Union were the acme of human history” (Atwood 2004, 378), cinema provided the opportunity to combine both tasks, and in the films that I discuss here, both celebration and promotion were embodied by Dulamsüren and Myadag.

Dulamsüren embodies the celebration of past achievements and the promotion of socialist visions of equality for the future by being both woman and man in one person. In fact, as a Mongolian version of the New Socialist Woman, Dulamsüren embarked on the tough mission of promoting gender equality in rural collectives. Myadag represents the successful liberation of women from past oppression as a socialist achievement. Women were now empowered to criticize the last traces of old values. With these characteristics, Dulamsüren and Myadag display the new faces of the state.

In this context, their roles and especially their professions were not chosen randomly. In *Ene Khüikhniüd Üü?*, Dulamsüren obtains a job as a veterinarian (zootekhnich), a profession that was highly promoted as a marker of modernization during socialist times. After Dulamsüren started her work in the *negdel*, one montage sequence that is almost equally divided into five seconds shows her daily work routine as a veterinary: She visits hay fields, takes notes, conducts medical examinations of livestock, and analyzes samples in the laboratory (see Figure 7.6). Although these scenes might appear odd in the first place, it is *how* her work is displayed in this sequence that makes it distinct. If this montage sequence were

Figure 7.6 Dulamsüren during her daily tasks in the *negdel*. *Ene Khüikhniüd Üü?*, 1963, Univision.

to be cut out from the film, one would easily believe that it was part of a socialist documentary film. The camera distances and the image frames in this sequence are mostly recorded in medium shot, medium long shot, and long shot. The medium long shot in particular permits a nice balance between more prominent figures and still dominant surroundings (Bordwell and Thompson 2008, 191). The use of the medium long shot in this sequence underpins Dulamsüren's role. It shows her in her working environment, one that consists of a beautiful landscape – a romantic setting for rural socialist life – as well as large herds of livestock, well settled *gers* (the traditional Mongolian home), and other *negdel* members working hard and helping her. While these images demonstrate the successful completion of collectivization, the chosen framing (straight-on angle, medium long shot) contributes to the ideological effect.

In *Ankhny Alkham*, the filmmakers – and the state – try to introduce through Myadag the new profession of the *agronomch* (agronomist) as another achievement in the agricultural sector, one reminiscent of the emphasis on the “new socialist attitude of the nomadic population to labour” during the five-year plans (Morozova 2009, 125). When Myadag starts to work in the hay brigade, the older men have never heard of an agronomist before nor Latin terms for local vegetation, and they struggle to understand Myadag's approach to work (see Figure 7.5). With her ingenuity, she challenges the herders to complete their work and subversively introduces the idea of socialist competition, which was seen as “the most important thing to improve both labour activity and the consciousness of collective herders” (Badamkhatan 2010, 1016).

By letting the female characters adopt modern professions, criticize their older peers, and play heroic roles, the state indirectly talks to the public by using the faces, bodies, and voices of the cast. Using both Dulamsüren's and Myadag's body and character can be understood as a method in which the state governs the words of the protagonists and therefore takes over “public life,” what Navarro-Yashin (2002) understands “as a site for the generation of the political,” whereas it is the public “that produces and recasts the political” (2). In a final scene in *Ankhny Alkham*, Bazar is convinced by all that Myadag embodies and represents, leading him to say: “No, with a youth like this I really want to contribute to building socialism.” In *Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü?*, Jamts, still unaware of Dulamsüren's real identity, even says, “If Dulamsüren really was a woman, I'm ready to substitute every man in the *negdel* with such a woman.” These statements show how film characters address the spectators on behalf of the state. The state prompts the audience to look at these film characters and their heroic qualities, indicating that the only possible way for accomplishing the building of socialism is to acknowledge Dulamsüren and Myadag as role models and follow their lead.

Nevertheless, while the state managed to personify its propagandistic tasks of celebration and promotion with Dulamsüren and Myadag, one major problem with the narrative of revolutionary socialist women in Mongolia persists. This problem reflects the idea that women only were brave and great because they were liberated by the MPRP. Several years after *Ene Khüükhnüüd Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham* were released, the MPRP leader Yü. Tsedenbal (1976) proudly said: “Our first

constitution is proof for the liberation of the working-class women from hundreds of years of oppression, providing women with suffrage equally to men" (71). By saying this, Tsendenbal claims the success of the MPRP in liberating women and equipping them with equal rights. This claim is projected on cinema, too, and becomes clear in *Ene Khüikhnüüd Üü?* when Tömör rhetorically asks Jamts, "Father, you do know that women have the same rights as men do, don't you?" (*Aav aa, ta emegteichüüd eregteichüüdiin negen adil erkhteig gedgiig medne biz dee?*). Tömör's question, I argue, refers to a legal provision from the third general constitution released in 1960, which reads, "In the Mongolian People's Republic, women have the same rights to participate in all areas of state, economic, socio-political and cultural activities as men do" (Lungwitz 1988, 129).

The MPRP propagated the idea that women were independent and autonomous only because of the equal rights that its policies had brought forth, thereby enabling women to contribute to building socialism together with their male counterparts. In this sense, Barbara Clements (1994), by referring to Russia in the 1930s, has a valid point when she writes, "Party planners realized that women were a great untapped labor pool from which to draw the workers needed to build Soviet industry" (71). With regard to this new workforce, political leaders "expanded training programs and set quotas for female recruitment. The media kept up a chorus of calls for women to join the great campaign to build industry and socialism and liberate themselves in the process" (Clements 1994, 71). The MPRP followed this approach by specifically focusing on cinema. Generally, socialist feminism was embedded in a world dominated by men, which is also emphasized by Manduhai Buyandelger (2008a, 241), who refers to feminist developments across various formerly socialist states:

The first-generation feminists called for equal rights on the basis that women were rational beings like men. The socialist women demanded equal rights as fighters in a class struggle and as workers of the state. In both cases women demanded equal rights not as human beings in their own right, but because of their potential contributions to movements and causes championed by men. Whether arguing for equality in terms of rationality or class struggle, women did not seek to claim autonomous spaces for themselves, but in a space paved by men and by using the language of the male-dominated discourse.

With regard to the MPR, this becomes particular evident in the case of Dulamsüren. In order to gain respect and to achieve her goal, she has to turn into a man first.

Conclusion: the state's attempts to change faces

One major goal of the MPR was to build socialism, which included a transformation of Mongolian society from allegedly backward tradition to modernism in the course of three stages. In this process, as I have argued throughout this chapter, cinema played a pivotal role for the state attempting to change the "face" of its

people and itself, therefore providing one of the “ways for Mongolians to shift from the traditional past to the socialist future” (Marzluf 2017, 143). By 1970, when *Ankhny Alkham* was released, a speech held by Tsendenbal celebrated the successful cultural revolution and heralded the creation of an “Army of Intellectuals” (Ardyn Sekheetnii Armi). Tsendenbal (1976) claims that the MPRP caused these changes by “liberating the working class from uncivilized barbarism, eliminating illiteracy, . . . , and developing modern medicine and science, culture, arts, and literature” (548). As this chapter has demonstrated, both of the protagonists of the two films showcased these achievements. In *Ene Khüükhniüd Üü?*, state ideology was even translated experimentally with Dulamsüren changing her gender. However, in the case of *Ankhny Alkham*, the propagandistic uses of cinema had to be developed in a more nuanced way to handle the sensitive topics of the abandonment of religion and some old traditional values.

In their statements, socialist-era intellectuals and artists can hint at how these attempts to change faces were perceived by the public. In a 1970 article, the Mongolian film critic, S. Danaajav (2015), argues that

if anyone who is young watches this film [*Ankhny Alkham*], one would definitely get inspired to work just as hard as Myadag does. As a spectator, this work, eventually, has become appreciated and successful because the filmmakers were able to manifest the great efforts of the young generation who sculpt socialism, which is our glory and splendor.

(52)

In a newspaper article from 1979, the art expert and consultant of the MPRP’s Propaganda Department, G. Rinchensambuu, points out that both party and nation are responsible for developing film scripts based on a combination of film aesthetics and film ideology. He furthermore stresses that “the important achievement of our cinema is that there has been an improvement in depicting modernization, presenting the creative work of the new socialist people, their mind, and the dialectic of their high inner spirit” (Rinchensambuu 2015, 196). An additional statement is from Jigjidsüren (2015), the director of *Ankhny Alkham*, who reaffirmed the importance of cinema as a part of achieving – and maintaining – socialism: “In modern times, it is everyone’s responsibility, ambition, and expression of creative activities to fulfill the slogans that are promoted by the party and that are of importance to the economy, state, and politics. Thus, to work firmly to improve the quality of art is our exigent goal” (Jigjidsüren 2015).

Certainly, these quotations need to be understood in a socialist context. In an interview in the post-socialist period, Dorjpalam, the director of *Ene Khüükhniüd Üü?*, recounts that his film ideas were mangled by the MPRP, which criticized his comedic approach and favored historical movies (Baasandorj 2012, 41). However, the quotations above do account for how the two films were produced by the decisions and programs of the state, and it becomes clear that in both *Ene Khüükhniüd Üü?* and *Ankhny Alkham*, the main characters, Dulamsüren and Myadag, embody the achievements of successful communist education (*kommunist khümüüjil*),

representing new "faces of the state" as Chimedtseren (1973) confirms: "The faces (*nüür tsarai*) and life of [our] modern countryside are now changed. . . . Our new people's face and image were created" (204).

To introduce and disseminate its ideology to society, the state is representing itself through the characters Dulamsüren and Myadag. It is through their bodies that the state introduces itself to the people with its own mouth and voice to talk, and its own eyes and gaze to control and direct the *ard*. It builds a face-to-face relationship between state and spectator. In short, the dynamic character of film enables an interaction with the *ard* that is active – and at times subversive.

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8 “Capitalist Art” and the invention of tradition in twentieth-century Mongolia

Uranchimeg Tsultemin

In June 1968, the Exhibition of Young Artists (*Zaluu uran buteelchdin üzesgelen*) opened at the only art gallery in Ulaanbaatar at that time, built and run by the Union of Mongolian Artists (UMA). The exhibition consisted of works by young artists, including *Ekh* (Mother 1968) by Sosai (see Figure 8.1), P. Baldandorj's *Khövsgöl Nuur* (*Khövsgöl Lake* 1968) (see Figure 8.2), and *Arvan Yamaa* (*Ten Goats* 1968) (see Figure 8.3) and *Arvan Khoni* (*Ten Sheep* 1968) by G. Dunbüree, which were unusual in not following exclusively the tenets of the then dominant style of “socialist realism.”

The exhibition opened with the approval of the Chairman of the UMA, N.-O. Tsultem¹ (1923–2001) and stirred interest precisely because it featured works that functioned outside of socialist propaganda. The exhibition was heavily criticized by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) for years to come and triggered a negative view of the UMA by the Party. Over the next two decades until the early 1990s, such criticism had a far-reaching impact, creating an atmosphere of discouragement and fear and placing Tsultem and the artists in a difficult situation. Under pressure from the MPRP, and himself condemned by a Party “warning” (*namyn sanuulga*), Tsultem and the UMA took several measures to define and oversee the Party's more regulated principles of socialist art. These various strategies for publicly reinforcing the mainstream practice of socialist realism necessitated that he and his colleagues question the nature of “Mongolian” art and how to define a specific “Mongolian traditional style” in the era of Sovietization.

This chapter will look into the realities of “socialist realism” in 1967–1969 and will outline the process of Tsultem's invention of what he termed *Mongol Zurag*, or “Mongol painting,” in the struggle to construct a new socialist culture and a new identity for Mongolia and its citizens. In the course of my research, it became apparent how exclusive dependence on archival documents alone is likely to lead to a misinterpretation of this period of turmoil, since the documents do not embrace the full and complicated reality of what was visible and what was hidden, the relationship between the local knowledge and the information recorded in official MPRP documents. Subsequently, based on interdisciplinary and comparative research,

Figure 8.1 G. Sosai, *Ekh (Mother)*, 1968).

I will argue that the artists' response to "socialist realism" included an extended process of searching for, and defining, Mongolian identity, through which a new cultural form – *Mongol Zurag* – was created and kept alive, and practiced to this day.

Figure 8.2 P. Baldandorj, *Khövsgöl Nuur* (Khövsgöl Lake, 1968).

The art scene in Mongolia: 1967–1969

By the early 1960s, the art scene was dominated by so-called “socialist realism,” which had been propagated in Mongolia from the 1940s onwards. The first professional artists, such as Tsultem, G. Odon, and Ts. Dorjpalam, who all studied oil painting in the Soviet Union during the late 1940s, returned home in the early 1950s and became staunch advocates of socialist realism, as can be seen in such new genres developed in Mongolia as landscapes and group portraits. Among these, Odon’s 1958 painting *Ajlyn Daraa* (*After Work*) (see Figure 8.4) is considered a masterpiece of Mongolian art; it depicts a group of agricultural workers in a field, resting at the end of the day. Dominated by brown colors, a strictly organized composition, and within a carefully arranged setting, the painting has the somber appeal of French academism and of Russian realist painters of the nineteenth century such as Ilya Repin (1844–1930) and Vasily Surikov (1848–1916) (Jackson 2015; Kemenov 1987). Odon, who had studied painting in Moscow’s Surikov Academy of Fine Art in the late 1940s, had likely seen the works of these

Figure 8.3 G. Dunbüree, *Arvan Yamaa (Ten Goats)*, 1968).

masters and studied their techniques, especially given that his own school was named after Surikov. Paintings such as *After Work* marked the introduction in Mongolia of an oil-on-canvas medium using linear perspective. Odon was one of the masters of the new medium and, together with Tsultem and Dorjpalam, he returned home from Moscow to pioneer the new profession of “artist” and the new style of “socialist realism” described by Josef Stalin in 1939.² According to Stalin, “if the artist is going to depict our life correctly, he cannot fail to observe and point out what is leading it towards socialism. So this will be socialist art. It will be socialist realism” (James 1973, 86). According to the art historian L. Sonomtseren (1976),

As the result of the historical need caused by revolutionary new society and its rich life, the general direction and artistic principles of the new Mongolian fine art were formed, and new art media appeared, which were further enhanced by new content and forms. . . . Following the ideology of the revolutionary party, [Mongolian artists] depicted real life with true realism [*bodit zövөөр*] and directed the core meaning of artworks towards the rights and

Figure 8.4 G. Odon, *Ajlyn Daraa (After Work)*, 1958).

benefit of ordinary people. . . . In this way, fine art developed by enriching the national fine art's vibrant heritage and by learning from the realist art of the people of the world as well as from the achievements and successes of Soviet high-class art.

(33, 108)

Along the lines of this “true realism,” of themes related to workers and farmers, and typical of socialist realism, new painting genres were developed during this period, such as landscapes, historical paintings, posters, monumental murals and statues, and paintings for public art and for the new socialist architecture that framed Mongolia's capital Ulaanbaatar in the Soviet style. Among these, such works as Tsultem's *Talyn Ail (A Ger On the Steppe)* (1955) were regarded as masterpieces, and in this case earned the artist a State Award in 1959 from the Party (see Figure 8.5).³ *A Ger On the Steppe* depicts a simple scene of a rural road in the countryside leading past a group of camels to a traditional *ger*. This kind of landscape is typical in the Mongolian countryside, yet Tsultem's depiction was new in that it reflected the approach of realism and the application of linear perspective through the means of oil-on-canvas. Like Odon, Tsultem's study at the Surikov

Figure 8.5 N.-O. Tsultem, *Talyn Ail (A Ger On the Steppe)*, 1955).

Academy of Art had been guided primarily by the “realism” of European painting from the nineteenth century onwards.⁴ Tsultem studied in the studio of Sergei Gerasimov (1885–1964), a famous artist in the early Soviet era, whose works, such as *Prazdnik v Kolkhoze (Collective Farm Festival)* (1936), defined the scope of representation and themes identified with Soviet art.

There were many prominent artists in the 1960s, including D. Choidog, L. Gavaa, D. Amgalan, B. Gombosüren, and O. Tsevegjav, whose works are among those masterpieces of twentieth-century Mongolian art now held in the National Modern Art Gallery in Ulaanbaatar. As Tsultem (1969) publicly stated, “Works by artists such as Ü. Yadamsüren and L. Gavaa, the sculptor M. Mijir, and many others vividly illustrated the bright friendship between the Soviet Union and Mongolia and hence were appreciated by their colleagues. These artists received Diplomas [awards] from the Soviet Union of Artists [in Moscow].” Among these, Tsevegjav was the only one who did not study art in Moscow (Dagiimaa 2015). However, his works demonstrate the excellence of the training in Mongolia itself and a dedication to socialist realism. Consider, for instance, his painting *Emneg Surgalt (Breaking a Horse)* 1963), which is striking in its dramatic composition and dynamics (see Figure 8.6). Not only did the artist stay true to realism in terms of anatomy and modeling, and to the academism of brown hues on which Soviet-induced socialist realism was dependent, but it also extended the scope of the socialist art practiced in Mongolia; while the style and its ideology promoted the alleged achievements and prosperity of the socialist state, Tsevegjav, Tsultem, Amgalan, and others creatively applied the style to the diverse subject matter of Mongolian scenery and ordinary life on the steppe. This same Tsevegjav also painted the now celebrated *Ekhiin Tsagaan Setgel (Mother’s Soul)* 1968), which was subsequently shown at the *Exhibition of Young Artists* (see Figure 8.7).

Figure 8.6 O. Tsevegjav, *Emneg Surgalt (Breaking a Horse)*, 1963).

Figure 8.7 O. Tsevegjav, *Ekhiin Tsagaan Setgel* (*Mother's Soul*, 1968).

The exhibition in 1968: why “Capitalist Art”?

The July 1968 exhibition included works such as Tsevegjav’s *Mother’s Soul* that did not follow the social realist models. This painting shows a basic but profound composition with three colors that each symbolize a particular concept: blue indicating the sky/heaven, green suggesting the earth, and a white column connecting the two realms and symbolizing the mother’s soul. Baldandorj, who referred to him as his teacher, recalled that Tsevegjav was struck by deep grief for his recently deceased mother,⁵ and in his mourning, he painted this work aiming to suggest with the white color the purity of his mother’s presence, residing now between the two realms.⁶ According to the art historian L. Batchuluun (2015), “*Mother’s Soul* . . . has a deep intensive content. . . , and with it [Tsevegjav] created a sensation, and he belongs among the founders of the [new] trend” (4, 28).

Sosai was a self-trained artist, eccentric and prolific; his painting, *Ekh* (*Mother* 1968), presents an abstract figure on a red background, reminiscent of the number eight (see Figure 8.1). I first “discovered” this long-forgotten painting at Sosai’s studio in 1995 and conversed with the artist at length, featuring him in a TV program.⁷ Sosai reminisced that he took the basic form from rock art long understood to be a petroglyph representing a birthing mother. He added a few more elements, such as two “arms” holding a blooming lotus flower, a bowl filled with seeds, and “eyes,” to suggest a human form and so extend the notion of motherhood in this image. It was nothing more than this simple thought, Sosai recalled.⁸

Baldandorj, who was a senior student soon to graduate from his art studies in Prague, painted *Khövsgöl Nuur* (*Khövsgöl Lake* 1968) with dominant blue hues and geometric forms to suggest a pair of fish in the lake (see Figure 8.2). As Baldandorj recalls, he wanted to show the lake because it was a national heritage site, and there were concerns over its preservation and protection at the time. Baldandorj must have seen the political upheaval during what is now known as the Prague Spring (Bischof, Kamer, and Ruggenthaler 2010) during the first half of 1968 and his favor for abstract forms was likely also inspired by calls for the freedom of speech and democratization during this time. His composition was based on nonfigurative shapes and is rather simple, akin to the artist’s similar simple abstract works produced in the mid-1960s as part of his studies in Prague.

G. Dunbüree’s *Arvan Yamaa* (*Ten Goats*) (see Figure 8.3) was different from these nonfigurative paintings as it depicted figures of animals. Another painting of his, *Arvan Khoni* (*Ten Sheep*), had a similar composition of livestock scattered across the canvas. These paintings were criticized as being meaningless since they did not follow the standards of socialist realism. They surely were not intended to illustrate the “prosperity” of the socialist state. However, they are undeniably remarkable in their idiosyncratic simplicity of form and composition. Dunbüree’s *Ten Goats* was among the works most attacked by the Communist Party officials, who went as far as informing Moscow and asking the Kremlin for further instructions.

Ten Goats, *Ten Sheep*, and these other early abstract paintings were simple and devoid of the socialist propaganda that the Soviet government disseminated

throughout socialist countries around the world. Instead, they presented freedom of thought and expression, and so put socialist propaganda at risk.

The aftermath of the exhibition in 1968 and the invention of tradition

The initial wave of criticism of the works shown in the exhibition, which opened in July 1968, and the hardline attack which resulted in official punishment took place nearly six months later. In early January 1969, when the pressure and punishments from the MPRP began in earnest, Tsultem was forced to issue a documented and publicly visible record of both his own and the artists' "loyalty" to the socialist government and the MPRP. Such a late reaction to the exhibition, which had been shown without any difficulty, supports the artists' recollections that initially the MPRP and Politburo did not pay much attention to the works shown and the freedom of styles they represented, since the exhibition was endorsed by UMA.⁹ As the artists recall, it was the discussion that followed the exhibition that caused the trouble.¹⁰ According to the UMA programming calendar for each exhibition, a routine discussion about the exhibition took place among the artists at the gallery in late summer 1968. Amid much praise of the works, their innovation, and their uniqueness, someone dropped the name of Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), saying that "even Lenin did not have a full understanding of what art is."¹¹ One of the attendees reported these derogatory comments about the great leader Lenin to the authorities at the MPRP, and so the matter became a critical issue.

Denouncing "capitalist art," the Politburo of the MPRP enforced a number of strict measures to channel a single view of art as being devoid of "formalistic" (*khelberdekh*) abstract elements. As Sonomtseren (1976) points out, "Art depicts people's life and the [class] struggle [against the capitalists; *temtsel*], and art does not express any empty [ideas]" (108–9). Under pressure from the MPRP and condemned by a party "warning" (*namin sanuulga*), Tsultem, as the UMA Chairman, was at the heart of these events. While many of Tsultem's works follow the tenets of "socialist realism," he had many goals, often unusual for the time, targeted at a broader and more diversified development of fine art in Mongolia.

Throughout 1969, the UMA conducted meetings and activities to discuss how "wrong" and inappropriate the previous year's exhibition had been. Baldandorj, like many artists, was forced to "acknowledge" his alleged wrongdoing by publicly stating the following:

Our Party and the government [*nam zasag*] have clearly showed us a wise and correct path for artistic practice. . . . I acknowledge my full understanding of my mistake and my commitment to strive to serve people and create good work. . . . I aim to demonstrate with my work, and not with my words, how correcting my mistake is now my main focus.

(Tsultem 1969, 86–88)

The *Exhibition of Young Artists*, which had opened under Tsultem's leadership in a spirit of consensus, suggests he had not been blinded by the myopic lens of socialist taste, and that he sought in art a breadth of perspective. Tsultem was one of the artists whose early life had taken place in the bustling city-monastery of Ikh Khüree (today's Ulaanbaatar), and thus his views on diversity in art were not limited to Western media and styles.¹²

By 1968, Mongolia's only window to the world was the Soviet Union. Artists such as Tsultem, Yadamsüren (1905–1986), D. Damdinsüren (1909–1984), A. Sengetsokhio (1917–1985) and others, who had been brought up in Ikh Khüree, had witnessed the destruction of Mongolia's well-established Buddhist culture and its replacement by the new socialist arts and institutions imported from Moscow (Uranchimeg 2014, 2017). This transformation of Mongolia triggered and necessitated a constructive reevaluation of the traditions, Buddhist art, and much else that was culturally and socially important to Mongolians (Uranchimeg 2017, 135–36).

The forced acknowledgements and the fear of public offence triggered by the *Exhibition of Young Artists* pointed to the fact that the Soviet political and economic intrusion also resulted in intellectual oppression, forcing educated Mongolians to conduct a thorough revision of what constituted Mongolian identity and authenticity. Sonomtseren's book, *Contemporary Mongolian Art (Mongolin Orchin Üyein Urag)* begins with the words "national" (*ündesnii*) and "traditional" (*ulamjalt*), demonstrating the discussions current in Mongolian society at the time, when artists were not isolated but were aided by writers, music and theatre performers, and composers in these intellectual discussions. Sonomtseren's and Tsultem's frequent use of these terms also reveal their efforts to distinguish and understand them, and as such, these questions captured in these terms became central to the discussions among Mongolian intellectuals, which were kept private and hidden from public and official records.¹³ One of the exhibition participants, and now a famous artist, B. Chogsom, remembers the pressure placed upon Tsultem, recalling how Tsultem had to choose his words in public so that they aligned with the Party and its ideological critique. Consequently, Chogsom recalls, Tsultem's public words greatly differed from the genuine support and assistance he provided to Chogsom throughout his life (Batchuluun 2013, 29, 43). Through the long and turbulent process of building a new culture, even prior to 1968, Tsultem had been active in instigating, encouraging, and supporting discussions with his colleagues (Yadamsüren in particular) about what "Mongolian" art meant in the modern era, employing critical measures to battle against Soviet intrusion and Russianization. Yadamsüren's now well-known *Övgön Khuurch (The Old Horsehead Fiddle Player)* (1958) (see Figure 8.8) and Sengetsokhio's *Khar Buur (Black Camel)* (1968) were among the early creative responses to, and outcomes of, this collective drive to construct a genuine Mongol culture (Uranchimeg 2017, 139–41). Christopher Atwood (2005, 727) refers to this process as "the neo-traditional movement in Mongolian art . . . clearly expressed in the creation of the Mongol zurag (Mongolian painting) style." Tsultem spent years making a critical effort

Figure 8.8 Ü. Yadamstüren, *Övgön Khuurch* (*The Old Horsehead Fiddle Player*; 1958).

to theorize and formulate the style his colleagues were using; it was he who had coined the term *Mongol Zurag*, mentioning it in his writings alongside examples of East Asian art such as Japanese *nihonga* (Japanese painting) and Chinese *guo-hua* (Chinese painting) and writing extensively about this new tradition from 1963 until his death in 2001.¹⁴

According to Eric Hobsbawm (1992), the invention of traditions is “a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past. . . [where] a ‘tradition’ is deliberately invented and constructed by a single initiator” (4). In the Mongolian case, Tsultem was instrumental in constructing, formulating, and ritualizing *Mongol Zurag*, lavishly illustrating the style’s historical legacy from its nomadic background. According to Tsultem, the roots of the tradition of *Mongol Zurag* stretched back to rock art and petroglyphs in prehistoric times, continued through the centuries of steppe confederations in pre-imperial Mongolia, and into the imperial period. *Mongol Zurag* style, he suggested, continued its development in the late Buddhist period (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) as well, with its finest accomplishments being in secular paintings of the early twentieth century.¹⁵ The trajectory of the development of *Mongol Zurag* was thus charted by Tsultem to support the invention of the new tradition in his published book on the topic (Tsultem 1986). He also painted in the *Mongol Zurag* style. His 1972 painting *Uria (The Appeal)* (see Figure 8.9) derives its inspiration from an earlier print by Balduugin Marzan Sharav (1869–1939), and exemplifies the features of *Mongol Zurag* (Atwood 2005, 728). As Atwood (2005) notes, “In this style, the traditional medium of *thangka* painting (mineral paints on cotton) is used for non-religious topics” (727). Indeed, these twentieth-century artists often studied Sharav’s works in order to construct their narrative compositions (*khüürnel*) with flat, decorative forms and bright colors, which were quite different from the style of socialist realism.

Since *Mongol Zurag* indicated an increasing awareness of Mongolia’s cultural heritage, Tsultem described his goals as “1) to bring the knowledge of [Mongol] Zurag as an independent traditional art genre into the realm of scholarly research. . . ; [and] 2) to define the concept of ‘Mongol Zurag’ as an art form” (Tsultem, 2018, 8). He wrote,

While introducing the ideas and techniques of European realistic painting. . . , we do not . . . have the right to abandon our traditional Mongol Zurag style. . . . Today . . . Mongol Zurag is entering a new stage of its development. . . . Specific qualities inherent in Mongol Zurag [are] narrative composition, particular combinations of colors, refinement of technique, truthfulness to life, humor, etc. . . . Mongol Zurag, which was created through the efforts of many generations of folk talent and which has traversed a remarkably long road of historical development, will further evolve as an organic part of contemporary Mongolian Art.

(Tsultem 2018, 221, 226)

The style that Tsultem, Yadamsüren, and their colleagues started “as a means of distinguishing forms of traditional painting from works employing Western media, formats, and modes of representation” characteristically had strong vivid colors, a flat and decorative quality, bird’s-eye perspective, and often a narrative composition. The style was intentionally different from the Soviet-imported oil painting of socialist realism. And yet, these artists applied the style and technical

Figure 8.9 N.-O. Tsultem, Uria (The Appeal, 1972).

aspects to depict socialist themes of collectivism, Soviet-Mongol brotherhood (see Figure 8.10), and a happy and prosperous life under socialism. While these themes were clearly aimed at satisfying the taste of the communist leaders and passing their censorship, the question still remained whether this was indeed the way to protect the artists' heritage. Not only did the invention of the style help them to realize their own sense of cultural distinction and national identity, but it was also intended as part of a larger scheme for retrieving the past during this difficult time. As Hobsbawm (1992) stated about similar invented traditions,

Figure 8.10 Ü. Yadamsüren, *Nökhörlöl* (*Friendship*, 1967).

“Adaptation took place for old uses in new condition[s] and by using old models for new purposes” (5).

While the artists’ collective effort culminated in opening a class for *Mongol Zurag* in what was then the only Fine Art College in Ulaanbaatar, the art scene was still dominated by oil-on-canvas works with a focus on socialist realism. The number of exhibitions, artworks, and painters of *Mongol Zurag* in the twentieth century shows that traditional painting, like the modernist style, was still in the minority, and that artists continued their struggle against Sovietization until the end of the socialist era.¹⁶

Conclusion

The *Exhibition of Young Artists* had a profound influence on the development of Mongolian art and culture. Unlike the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, the MPRP did not appear to intervene directly in daily matters of the UMA before 1968; it neither demanded strict censorship of art in each exhibition and every artist’s creative process, nor did it show any particular concern regarding styles in art prior to 1968. The ideological tension between East and West was not translated to art in Mongolia as it was in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; socialist realism became even more controlled and regulated by governmental agencies with the help of all-artist unions established in socialist countries, whereas abstract and

modernist styles indicated freedom of speech and expression, and so were seen as “Western” and “capitalist.”

In the discussions following the 1968 exhibition, the topic most attacked and most strongly interrogated was the viability of modernist styles and unusual subject matter in a socialist state. Artists who showed their “formalist” works in July 1968 were, in the years that followed, forced to produce art in the style and subject matter of socialist realism. Baldandorj was required to stay in Mongolia, taking a forced leave from his senior graduation year from college in Prague. During his year in Mongolia, he was required to paint portraits of socialist leaders and other works in the socialist realist style. As for Dunbüree, he turned his *Ten Goats* into a new painting, *Mongoltrans* (see Figure 8.11). In 1998, the Mongolian Government finally offered Baldandorj an apology by recognizing him with the prestigious award of “Honored Worker” (*gaviyat zütgelten*).

Tsultem’s archives record the pain of the Party’s punishments and the struggle with censorship, yet they also show – and the artists themselves remember – how artists were still able to travel throughout Eastern Europe, with no similar incidents occurring after 1968. Tsultem, who had endorsed the *Exhibition of Young Artists*, was able to find ways to work around government control and to allow artists some creative experimentation, even though publicly he had to promote the mainstream socialist approach (Bavuujav 2015). Due to his maneuvers, which helped to keep the MPRP censorship committee away from the nuances of creativity among the artists, modernist art experimentations continued in Mongolia throughout the remainder of the socialist period, allowing many versatile artists, among them Amgalan and Do. Bold, Sosai and Chogsom, Ch. Bazarvaan and Ts. Enkhjin, R. Dūinkhorjav and S. Tögs-Oyun, and others, to remain the key representatives of modern art in Mongolia, while their works often strayed from socialist realism in both style and subject matter.

The *Exhibition of Young Artists* was an example of how Soviet political intervention also imposed intellectual oppression on a scale that had even more damaging consequences and targeted the complete destruction of what was deemed to be Mongolian identity and authenticity. The style, which Tsultem termed *Mongol Zurag*, was part of a set of measures accelerated by the “capitalist art” incident of 1968, and which continued in opposition to socialist realism and the medium of oil painting. *Mongol Zurag* was an invention of tradition in Hobsbawm’s terms, and in this regard, echoes the similarly invented tradition of *nihonga* in Japan and *zhonguohua* in China, respectively (Andrews 1990; Conant 1995). It had begun in the early 1950s, and gradually the style had intentionally been articulated and conceptualized by Tsultem in 1971 as “traditional style painting.” The invention of *Mongol Zurag* was, then, a creative response to the political intervention in Mongolia of the Soviet Union and its aggressive policy of cultural reform. *Mongol Zurag* artists remain very active today and continue the debate of what constitutes Mongolian identity and authenticity through their works and exhibitions at home and overseas.¹⁷

Figure 8.11 G. Dunbüree, *Mongoltrans* (*Mongoltrans*, 1971).

Acknowledgments

This chapter is based on my longtime interest in the topic and the research that I have been conducting on and off since 1995, when I had my first interviews, studio visits, and meetings with the artists G. Sosai, P. Baldandorj, B. Chogsom, and G. Dunbüree. Following these visits during which the artists generously

shared their memories and knowledge of the 1968 exhibition, and showed me their old, long-forgotten paintings, my first articles on the topic were published in then the only English newspaper, *The Mongol Messenger* (see Uranchimeg 1995, 2002, 2008). I thank these artists for sharing their knowledge and resources with me.

Notes

- 1 When transliterating modern Khalkha Mongolian into the Latin alphabet, I distinguish between such different vowels as o and ö, u and ü, except in the case of Tsultem.
- 2 As C. Vaughan James notes, there were different terms to define Soviet art proposed by Soviet intellectuals in the early 1930s such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Alexey Tolstoy, and Maxim Gorky. These terms included proletarian realism, tendentious realism, monumental realism, communist realism, and Stalin's socialist realism.
- 3 This painting, as well as Odon's *After Work*, is considered a national treasure and is prominently displayed in the National Modern Art Gallery in Ulaanbaatar.
- 4 The term "realism" was coined in relation to specific French artists, such as Gustave Courbet and Jean-François Millet, whose approaches were intentionally distinct from contemporaneous art movements and were aimed at depicting workers, peasants, and their associates in simple settings. Their "realist" style had a far-reaching impact, especially in Russia in the late nineteenth century, and set a precedent for the creation of "socialist realism."
- 5 Personal communication with Baldandorj, Fall 1995.
- 6 White has had a special meaning for the Mongols from ancient times. For instance, the historical tropes of the Eight White Tents and the Nine White Banners are all examples of the use of the color white (see Uranchimeg 2021, 57–90).
- 7 The notion and the meaning of abstract art remained unknown to Mongolian viewers until recent times. In 1995, I organized a TV program on the topic, interviewing Sosai and Baldandorj about their understanding of abstract art and about their works from 1968. The program aired September 1997 on Mongolian National Broadcasting, the country's main TV channel, and included artists working with nonfigurative style, such as Ch. Boldbaatar and B. Tömörbaatar.
- 8 For further analysis about Sosai and his works see Uranchimeg 2018a, 136–38.
- 9 Many artists mention this fact. For instance, in a recent interview (December 2019), G. Dunbüree also referred to the chairman of the UMA, N.-O. Tsultem, and his endorsement of the exhibition (Personal communication with Ts. Tümenbayar).
- 10 This fact is mentioned by all the artists who had taken part in the exhibition with whom I spoke, including the late Sosai, Baldandorj, and Tsultem, and living artists, such as Chogsom and Dunbüree.
- 11 Personal communication with Baldandorj, Fall 1995.
- 12 For more about Ikh Khüree, see Teleki (2011) and Uranchimeg (2009, 2020).
- 13 Archival documents do not fully illustrate the complex reality of political tension that forced many people to record certain words and speeches in these party-endorsed records. Artists' interviews and private records, as well as artworks, are all vital sources for a comparative analysis.
- 14 Tsultem's early writings include articles about the modernization of Mongolian art (Tsultem 1963). He wrote about *Mongol Zurag* in his doctoral dissertation, which he defended at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1971 (Tsultem 1982). He later wrote more specific studies about key aspects of Mongolian art (Tsultem 1986, 2018).
- 15 This methodology, based on such chronology and historical interpretation, has since that time been accepted and reiterated by Mongolian scholars and writers. See, for instance, Sonomtseren (1976).

- 16 Christopher Atwood (2005) suggests that “the officially approved impressionism influenced socialist-realist style was overshadowed in the 1960s and 1970s by the new Mongol zurag school” (727). This statement, however, needs to be reconsidered as it is not supported by a growing number of documents and by the artworks themselves.
- 17 A new *Mongol Zurag* Society was established in 2005 in Ulaanbaatar with the aim of promoting the traditional style; it now organizes annual exhibitions of *Mongol Zurag* art. See this society’s *Manifesto*, which outlines its goals and includes interviews with contemporary *Mongol Zurag* artists in Uranchimeg (2018b).

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9 “Running in My Blood”

The musical legacy of state socialism in Mongolia

Baatarnaran Tsetsentsolmon

Introduction

In the early 2000s, I had a chance to accompany a senior violinist and music educator, D. Alimaa, on the piano in the White House Hotel restaurant in downtown Ulaanbaatar. As I had not performed in public for a while, my clumsy sight-reading hindered Alimaa’s performance. Yet, regardless of the small audience, she kept striving for virtuosity and mastery. On the way back home, she asserted, “It [the violin] was embodied in my flesh and blood (*makh tsusand shingesen*). Nothing could replace it.” At that time, it sounded completely familiar to me as an alumna of the Music and Dance College, the present Mongolian State Conservatory, the main music institute in the country. Alimaa was sent to the Leningrad Conservatory after finishing fifth grade in Mongolia. She was always proud of being trained there as an earnest student practicing from five o’clock in the morning.

Expressing the intense emotions of a faithful classical musician, Alimaa demonstrates the musical taste (i.e., cultural needs) of the elite class created by state socialism. She further unveils the pathway of Soviet-style European classical music that connotes upper class values and prestige. Alimaa’s example shows how the social impacts of Soviet cultural values, domesticated in Mongolia in the twentieth century, have reached far beyond that period. In Mongolia, the role of European classical music has gone from framing the elite social class in state socialism to supporting national culture in post-socialist nation-building.

European classical music was introduced to the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR) similar to the implementation of the Soviet modernist project on non-Russian nationalities. The aim was connected to the “raising of the cultural level of masses [and] bringing world cultural achievements” (Kotkina 2013, 509). Classical music, regarded as the most sophisticated and complex musical form, was set to draw lines between art genres as well as social classes through which citizens could advance. While aiming at establishing an egalitarian society, state socialism in Mongolia created distinctive and hierarchical binaries – “high art and low art,” “professional and amateur art,” “rural and urban art,” and “classical and folk art” – which, in effect, indicated social classes. Backed with the aristocratic link to the tradition of European classical music, elitist perspectives to make classical music superior to popular genres such as folk and pop music were consolidated in official music education.

The whole apparatus of professionals, musical events (e.g., *Dekada* and the Cultural Days), and institutions (e.g., the Mongolian Composers' Union, the State Opera and Ballet Theatre, the Music Conservatory, and the State Philharmonics) were directed to build normative "cultural needs" and tastes. All types of cultural practices and tastes were related to upbringing and official education. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) points out the correspondence of the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts (of genres, schools, and periods) to a social hierarchy of the consumers; according to Bourdieu (1984), "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (6). However, in his cultural criticism of class inequality legitimized through socially constructed symbolic differences, Bourdieu further validated the hierarchy and privileged high culture over mass culture. With my attempts to deconstruct the socially recognized categories, I try to illuminate this hierarchical structure and, in the process, blunt its power. The cultural transformation of twentieth-century Mongolia brought new cultural tastes that were classified in hierarchical, contested, and even discriminative ways. Received as the legacy of the socialist cultural construction, European classical music became a means to shift the scale of cultural sophistication to the international level as well as to become a part of post-socialist Mongolian national pride.

This chapter explores the process of adopting Eurocentric cultural values, in this case classical music, based on the social evolutionary scheme proposed by Marxist theory. The focus of this chapter is on the hierarchical relationship between classical music and other types of music, in particular folk music, and the inversion of the values attributed to classical music due to the changes of the social system. To do so, I present parts of the history of each music genre, their (inter)relations, and sociopolitical entanglements. In this regard, my contribution differs from Peter Marsh (2009), who argues for an overarching history of socialist cultural development through the transformation of the horse-head fiddle (*morin khuur*). Approaching his argument on the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, I trace the (dis)continuity between socialist and post-socialist cultural values and their social effects. Examining classical music not as a monolithic system imposed on a society but as agentive acts, this chapter provides an ethnographic approach that documents Mongolian insiders' views, practices, and perceptions of art genres, hierarchical structures, and social stratification. Narratives of various voices are integrated with my own self-reflective experiences. I try to revisit and review my memories and experiences from a critical distance to reflect the wider social transformation. Again, I argue that the ideas created in state socialism about the hierarchical cultural structure and its relationship to social class have become a resource of the new nationalist politics of post-socialist Mongolia.

Soviet classical music as a "marker of nationhood"

This section describes the historical growth of European classical music as it became a significant part of the "national culture" through Soviet music education in the era of Mongolian state socialism. It further describes the cultural taste and social class created by the modernization project of the MPR. The contemporary

notion of "national culture" entails the Soviet political agenda of *national'naia kul'tura*, as "national identity" or "symbolic ethnicity" (Martin 2001b) oriented towards its non-Russian populations. As Terry Martin points out, it was a systematic promotion of symbolic markers of national identity including "national folklore, museums, dress, food, costumes, opera, poets, progressive historical events, and classic literary works" (Martin 2001a, 74). Cultural reforms created new social classes or national elites, who are "highly familiar with lifestyles and values of the USSR" (Sneath 2009, 73). Socialist national identities had been pursued at both institutional and individual levels because of the Soviet policy to promote cultures of diverse nationalities and, subsequently, to control them. The following paragraphs show the history of Soviet-styled classical music in educational practice and, moreover, in social structuring in Mongolia.

Soviet classical music and its social effects, as a part of the socialist modernist project, can be regarded as examples of the "categories of thought that the state produced and imposed especially through the school system" (Bourdieu, Wacquant, and Farage 1994, 1). The government applied systematic educational programs to train highly educated professionals in the Soviet Union and middle-level specialists (*dund bolovsroltoi mergejilten*). The Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) defined artistic workers such as musicians and singers to be "the most sophisticated leading students to develop a new culture" (Zagdsüren and Tsend 1967, 61).

The reframing and renaming of the music school shows the historical transformation in musical education, both in classical and folk. The first Artistic School (*Uran saikhny surguuli*) was established by the Prime Ministerial order no. 45 in 1937, and its name was changed to the School for Musical Drama (*Khögjimt dramatik surguuli*) by Resolution 34/30 of the Ministers' Council and the Central Commission of the MPRP on June 1, 1947. Later, it became the Music and Dance Secondary School (*Khögjim büjgiin dund surguuli*)¹ by Resolution 385 of the Ministers' Council of the MPR issued on September 12, 1957 (Natsagdorj 1986, 326). The music genres of classical and folk music had overlapped earlier so that both students and teachers were "able to perform equally well in both domains" (Marsh 2009, 55), though the Music and Dance Secondary School eventually separated the music education for the two genres. The first classes for the piano, violin, and ballet were opened with 70 pupils. It became "the largest and most important institution for the training of the national cadre" (Marsh 2009, 54) of music education.

Soviet cultural policy aimed to identify Russia as a European and world cultural center through opera, ballet, literature, and music (Kotkina 2013, 509). For training local professionals, the music school organized annual visiting programs of Soviet specialists (*Zövlöltiin mergejilten*) from the 1960s. Apart from major music classes, Soviet teachers also taught subjects such as music history, solfège (or sol-fa), and general phonology. The number of Soviet specialists increased from nine in 1960 to 15 in 1963 and 20 in 1964 (Saruul and Tarasov 2014, 73). Mongolian teachers worked as "assistant teachers" (*assistent bagsh*) under Soviet specialists to interpret to students and learn pedagogy. Mongolia requested to train

20 musicians (pianists and violinist) and 20–25 ballet dancers in Moscow and Leningrad in 1963 (Saruul and Tarasov 2014, 65).

For the most part, political and intellectual urban elites were the ones who enjoyed their privilege in “high art” and sent their children primarily to the classical music class. T. Tsolmon, the most successful pianist and the only one to receive the state prize, the “People’s Artist” (*Ardyn Jüjigchin*), was one of the early professional pianists. She was a daughter of the Health Minister, G. Tuvaan, and ophthalmologist and university professor, R. Nyamaa, and a granddaughter of the well-known scholar, B. Rinchen. Tsolmon first saw a piano through the window of Kh. Choibalsan’s home in Nükht, which was then the “summer camp of officials” (*darga naryn zuslan*). Tsolmon was sent to the piano class of the Music and Dance School in 1958 and to the Soviet Union in 1964. The first group of students included N. Bütünbayar (1951–2018), Ch. Chinbat (1952–), and Yü. Oyun (1952–2000), all of whom later played crucial roles in the development of classical music and ballet in the country. They were children of such national elites as orchestral conductors, composers, officials, and lawyers. Tsolmon recalls her experience in a specialized music school of the Leningrad Conservatory as studying in “a wonderland” and “diving into the culture” (*soyol dotor n umbakh*) (Interview, May 12, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). Tsolmon returned home in 1975 after 11 years of study in the Soviet Union: six years in Leningrad and then five years in the Gnesin Russian Academy of Music in Moscow. She noticed a large difference in the development between Russian and Mongolian classical music. Tsolmon was very strict and critical at the beginning, as it was hard for her to adapt herself to the musical environment back in Mongolia. She is reluctant to express anything negative now:

Later, I realized that the classical art had just started then in Mongolia. The sound of a symphonic orchestra sounded completely different to me. The biggest difference was especially in tuning. Now, I realize that we were just nomadic herders who looked after herds until recently. Suddenly, we had to learn to play the piano, violin, or whatever.

(Interview, May 12, 2019, Ulaanbaatar)

This perspective reveals the consolidation of Mongolian socialist modernism, which was based on the social evolutionary schema of distinctive cultures of urban center and peripheries. The term “cultured” came to stand for the new virtues extolled by the secular modernist state and the lifestyle associated with socialism, which was modern, educated, and urban (Tsetsentsolmon 2014, 428). As William Outhwaite and Larry Ray (1960) note, “Marxism understood itself straightforwardly as a modernizing movement whose program was to intensify industrialization urbanization, efficiency, centralization, and the sweeping away of the ‘idiocy of rural life’” (88).

The collective memory, especially those of Soviet-trained Mongolian professionals about their Russian teachers and specialists, remains positive. These attitudes were shaped by the Soviet campaign to promote a Brotherhood of Peoples

(*bratstvo narodov*), which was propagandistic and symbolic (Martin 2001b). The narratives of classical musicians recalling the Soviet specialists show the growth of their identities both as professionals and urban elites. Tsolmon looks back to her first impression of Russian teachers, in which they were temperamental and completely different from Mongolians who were calm and who did not readily express their feelings. She says, "We got frightened when the Russian teachers suddenly exploded as we did not see such emotional expressions before" (Interview, May 12, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). Because of the firm belief that studying classical music required a strict discipline defined as "quasi-military" (*khagas tseregiltiin*), it was common for students to be scolded and locked in classrooms by Russian teachers. Appointments to Mongolia were also preferred by Russian teachers over those, for example, of Arab countries such as Yemen. Common expressions to describe Russian teachers were "from their true heart" (*ünen setgeleesee*), "dedicated" (*ünench*), "just like brothers" (*akh düü shig*), "treated equal as Russians" (*oros khüükhedtei adil üzeh*), "giving without any expectation of return" (*kharamgui ögökh*), "right people" (*zöv khümüüs*), and "without double-dealing" (*khuramch zangüi*). These pedagogical and personal relationships lasted a long time for some Mongolian students as their Russian teachers personally supported them to study in the Soviet Union. Though these relationships suggest the chauvinist nationalist rhetoric that considers Russians as "elder brothers" (Martin 2001b, 16) to Mongolians, these relationships were more personal than authoritarian and intended to enhance the professionalism of classical music in Mongolia.

Along with the Soviet modernization through urbanization and secular education, the socialist state promoted nationalization, following the Soviet policy to promote art produced by national cadres in their native languages. The first national professional composers, S. Gonchigsumlaa, L. Mördorj, and B. Damdinsüren, were trained in the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s. The three of them are labelled as "the three keystones" (*tulgyn gurban chuluu*) of the modern Mongolian music. The focus was to promote national operas and ballets that "successfully syndicated classical art forms and expressions with national art" (Natsagdorj 1986, 187). Following the first national opera, *Three Fateful Hills* (*Uchirtai gurban tolgoi*), jointly composed by Damdinsüren and B. Smirnov and performed in 1942, many national versions of "socialist realist" classical music were produced. The aim of these attempts was to amalgamate national characteristics (*ündesnii ontslog*) and socialism in order to construct a culture designed to be "national in form, socialist in content, and international in characteristics" (*ündesnii kelbertei, sotsialist aguulgatai, internatsionalich shinjte*) (Dashdavaa 1989, 34). As it was not exactly clear what that Soviet formula meant (Martin 2001a, 68), the terms of "socialist" and "national" were interpreted in diverse ways. National operas and ballets with socialist themes include *The Way to Happiness* (*Jargalyn zam*) (1952) and *The Truth* (*Ünen*) (1956); the ballets *Gankhuyag* (1959) and *Our Collective* (*Manai negdliinhen*); and orchestral pieces such as *Overture about the Party – Symphonic Poem* (*Namyn tuhai udirgtal-nairaglal*) (1952), *Light of October* (*Oktyabriin tuya*) (1957), *My Homeland* (1955), and many others.

The nationalizing campaign further took steps to translate the classical arts into the native language. Musical terminology and names of classical music instruments were domesticated into the Mongolian language. The Commission for Terminology (*Ner tomyony komiss*), an official institution to authorize new terminologies, published a series of dictionaries on different disciplines. Music presented new terms such as *tөгөлдөр khuur* (piano), *khiil* (violin), *morin khiil* (cello), *duuri* (opera), *büjgen jüjig* (ballet), and many others (e.g., see Badraa 1956) that are still in use now. Additionally, librettos of Russian and other classical operas were translated into Mongolian. For example, the State Music and Drama Theatre was opened with Tchaikovsky's opera, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Mongolian in 1963.

The process to nationalize socialist cultural values as well as reevaluate pre-revolutionary cultural practices (Tsetsentsolmon 2014) intensified during the last decades of state socialism. National cadres debated whether to translate these cultural terms in the native language. Nationalist scholars calling for the preservation of prerevolutionary "cultural heritage" tried to interpret new cultural values by connecting them to history and tradition. Alternatively, those who endeavored to preserve the "high art" in its original language opposed translation. For example, B. Jamyandagva, the first professional ballet choreographer trained in the Soviet Union, strongly criticized the attempt to translate ballet as *büjgen jüjig*, a term that could not capture the essence of this art form. When I was studying in the music school, I personally experienced a similar clash of ideas. While practicing the piano at home, I was counting the meter of the music as *neg i khoyor i* (one and two and) as it was taught at school. Each subdivision was counted as "i," the Russian word for "and." However, I was told by my grandfather, a folklorist and linguist, that I should not use a Russian word in counting. He instructed that "the traditional Mongolian way of counting the subdivided meters, used in folk songs, epics and others, was to repeat the vowel of the previous word, such as 'neg ee, khoyor oo.'" Yet, when I counted just as my grandfather said during my class at school, my piano teacher found it incorrect and improper. This personal anecdote suggests that the socialist state created interlinked but contested national cultural ideas about modernity and tradition.

The "State Concert" (*Töriin kontsert*) – concerting the state

This section presents ethnographies that show how different modes of technologies served to channel and control cultural productions, institutions, and artists during the period of state socialism. Musicians, similar to many other subjects of the state, were unable to stay out of politicization. Through the various hierarchical and structural cultural events to realize state programs such as "State Concerts" (*Töriin kontsert*) or "Reverent Concerts" (*Khündetgeliin kontsert*), Cultural Days, Ten Days of Culture (*Dekada*), and public activities (*Olon niitiin arga khemjee*) flowed the emblematic form of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1989) as well as urban-centered modernity. The terminology of these cultural events

hints at this modernist power. A "concert," for instance, was a form of collective performances including different art genres performed on the same stage in turns. Having elements as "programs" (*program* or *khötölbör*) and "numbers" (*nomer*), each of which were controlled and approved by official commissions, concerts became a vehicle to control art and artists. Anastasia Tsedenbal-Filatova, a wife of the political leader Yü. Tsedenbal, was an influential figure in the arts and education during the late period of state socialism.² One example of her control was the fact that she personally checked the attendance at rehearsals of State Concerts for *Naadam* and other occasions.

A hierarchical system of state prizes was introduced by state socialism and became a vehicle of manipulation and a way of channeling political influences in society. Celebrations of what was a "socialist competition" rewarded state artists with such uplifting titles as "Cultural Leading Worker" (*Soyolyn tergüünii ajiltan*), "State Honored Artist" (*Gavyat жүжигчин*), "State Honored Cultural Figure" (*Soyolyn gaviyat зүтгелтен*), "People's Artist" (*Ardyn жүжигчин*), and "Labor Hero" (*Khödölmöriin baatar*). There were certain criteria for musicians to get state awards, including attendance at state concerts, music festivals, competitions, and rural propaganda tours called *brigad*. According to N. Tuulaikhüü, a State Honored Artist and conductor of the symphonic orchestra of the State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, the theatre organized tours to rural administrative units as *brigads* to promote classical music in three different provinces each year: "Each tour of *brigad* lasted for one month. That is how rural people (*khödөө орон нутгийнхан*) came to know musicians. I toured around the whole country three times for *brigad*" (Interview, May 9, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). This touring practice reflected a Leninist commitment to the integration of urban and rural life by bringing urban lifestyles to pastoralists (Sneath 2018, 31).

The state control of art practices and artists was at its most pernicious in handling the personal lives of its subjects. Each organization had someone to serve as a secret agent assigned by the Ministry of Public Security (*Niigmiig ayulaas khamgaalakh yam*). Tuulaikhüü recalls, "People knew who worked as spies in the group and traced their thoughts and conversations. Then they avoided talking to and communicating with them" (Interview, May 9, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). Tour concerts abroad would include a secret agency in a group. Apart from permanent "spies" (*tagnuul*), artists were individually instructed to secretly monitor their fellow musicians during trips. For example, the first visit to a non-socialist country featured ballet dancers who attended an international competition in Japan in 1978. The group had four people – two ballet dancers Oyun and O. Ganbaatar, choreographer Jamyandagva and pianist Tsolmon. According to Tsolmon, none of them knew that they were separately instructed by the Ministry of Public Security before their departure. Although they were hesitant at the beginning, later, they found out about the same assignment for each to monitor the others during the trip. Tsolmon experienced a worse incident of state control, while on tour in Afghanistan in 1979, which still causes

her distress. Describing her experience as “the shame of our country” (*manai orny gutamshig*), Tsolmon narrates her dark memory:

After a tour in Bulgaria, we were suddenly sent to Afghanistan. It was just one year after the so-called revolution³ in Afghanistan. When we arrived, it was full of tanks around. I did not even understand why they sent us there. Probably, they sent us because we were brotherhood countries. From Russia, Pyeha [Edita Stanislovavna, Soviet pop (*estrada*) singer] came. It still feels horrible for me even now. After the performance, none of us was allowed to leave Kabul. There were guns and tanks in the street. However, we did not hear a sound of shooting in Kabul. Finally, we returned home from this horrible place. Afterwards, all of a sudden, we were called to the prosecutor’s office, one by one. It lasted for the whole summer. They asked me: ‘[One of you]⁴ bought a sheepskin coat. How much did he buy it for?’ I said, ‘I do not know. I was just asked to try it on.’ Then they asked how many dollars we took with us and who sold dollars to us. They dared to threaten and interrogate people like Ts. Purevdorj⁵ and N. Norovbanzad⁶ and scared them. My parents were very worried. I was totally stressed out and lost weight. That was a horrible case.

(Interview, May 12, 2019, Ulaanbaatar)

For such special trips and occasions, as Tsolmon’s story demonstrates, the political control tightened over not only artistic performances but also all aspects of the musicians’ personal lives.

The political role of classical music was further witnessed by D. Tungalag, a senior pianist and teacher who attended several high-level tours. The first tour was in China in 1987 after the end of a long period of tense relations. Secret agents were definitely in the group. A big group of Mongolian artists went for the Cultural Days (*Soyolyn ödrүүд*) in Huhhot, Inner Mongolia under the control of the governments of both China and Mongolia. Not only the artists but also the performance programs were checked and controlled. Tungalag also attended the Cultural Days of Mongolia dedicated to the anniversary of the North Korean leader Kim Il-sung’s birthday. The programs were checked and approved nearly half of a year in advance. Tungalag recalls the tour:

I performed as a solo player (*solist*) and accompanied (*kontsermeister*) with singers Naidalmaa, Bandi, and Purevdorj. Each of us prepared two programs – one classical (*songodog*) and one folk (*ardyn*). The control was very high, even over how to step on the stage.

(Interview, May 17, 2019, Ulaanbaatar)

The narratives about different cultural tours unveil the political engagement of the classical arts as well as “Soviet internationalism” in modernization of the state socialism. While celebrating the achievements of the new culture, the state exercised control over musicians and the values attributed to classical music in

a variety of ways and technologies. However, despite these repressive strategies, artists emphasized their aspirations to reach artistic progress within the state system rather than their suppression by this system.

Individual connections based on family relations, political engagements, and homeland regions successfully circumvented such official controls. Within the system of center and peripheries, rural artists achieved recognition during provincial Cultural Ten Days (*Dekadas*) in Ulaanbaatar. *Dekadas* were systematized events of a Soviet modernization project to stimulate diverse cultural practices (Kotkina 2013, 516) and to control Mongolian artists' development. From an artistic point of view, these musical institutions aimed to upgrade local theaters and improve their repertoire. Provincial theaters organized one or two concerts in Ulaanbaatar and proposed their candidates to be rewarded by the state. D. Luvsansharav, a "Labor Hero" composer, regretted that the *Dekadas* gradually became a competition focused only on state awards by the 1980s. Provinces competed against each other to place the highest numbers of state awarded artists. During its *Dekada* in 1983, Töv Aimag succeeded in having three or four artists awarded the State Honor by directly appealing to Tsedenbal (Luvsansharav, Interview, 2013, Ulaanbaatar). In this context, appealing to personal relationships with provincial governors and political representatives from the same province worked more effectively than professional judgements. In addition to a progression of awards through which musicians should pass, there was the possibility of manipulating the system by Tsedenbal and his wife, Tsedenbal-Filatova. In short, the intensive state control over music and benefits was undercut by individual-based shortcuts. In this regards, Mongolian socialist society was both "authoritarian" and, at the same time, extremely "personal."

Ethnicization and folklorization of music

In the Soviet Union, folk music and folklore were important parts of the state program to highlight socialist national identities as symbolic markers of nationhood: "Folklore in the Soviet Union has been used consciously for propagating the cultural construction and political education of the masses for one goal – the realization of socialism and communism" (Oinas 1975). Backed up by the propaganda project launched by Lenin, traditional music was appropriated, reworked, and redeployed for propaganda purposes as "new wine in old bottles" (Harris and Norton 2002). This section reveals how music played a role in the process of folklorization and ethnicization of the socialist state.

The MPR conducted a series of campaigns to create a great number of singers, songs, bands, musicians, and ensembles. This multiplication (*olshruulakh*) policy produced a self-defined term of "singing people" (*duuch ard tümen*) that is still common in post-socialist Mongolia. A senior composer, Luvsansharav, admits that good singers and musicians were very rare in the prerevolutionary time. He recalls, "I remember my mother exclaimed, 'Oh my god (*ee burkhan mini*), someone from a neighbor banner was singing the song *Khandarmaa*.' She was saying so because singing such songs as *Khandarmaa*, *Sünjidmaa* or long songs and

playing the *morin khuur* were very rare and blessed at that time” (Interview, 2013, Ulaanbaatar). This anecdote supports the idea that the cultural history of the twentieth century “developed” traditional musical practices and increased the number of traditional performers.

Another aspect of the state socialist policy related to folk music is multiethnicization. The Soviet nationality policies emphasized that “distinctive national identities would coexist peacefully with an emerging all-union socialist culture” (Martin 2001a, 74). In the context of Mongolia, the idea was to shape a socialist Mongolian national culture of distinctive folk identities. David Sneath (2007) contextualizes the emergence of “folk” as a cultural collectivity as follows:

Like the nation, society stood for ‘the people’ or *volk* as a whole, with its own generalized culture, traditions, and form. In this populist imagination, human aggregates were not simply the subjects of a ruler but must form social and cultural collectivities, and this was reflected in the emergence of various forms of folk studies.

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Compared with other art genres, folk art was solidly embedded in society through academic scholarship and cultural practices. Various disciplines such as folklore, oral literature, folk music, and ethnology worked to essentialize the concept of the “folk.” Studies of folk oral literature (*ardyn aman zokhiol sudlal*) were one of the main disciplines developed at the earliest stage of “modern science” in Mongolia. The Philology Institute (*Sudar bichgiin khüreeleen*), the forerunner of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, conducted expeditions with Soviet researchers sent by the Mongolian Commission of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union from the 1920s. Following Soviet researchers who collected Mongolian oral tradition and poetic folklore such as A. D. Rudnev, A. M. Pozdnev, V. L. Kotvich, B. Y. Vladimirtsov, S. A. Kondratiev, and the Buryad-Mongolian, Ts. Jamtsarano, local Mongolian scholars such as Rinchin, Ts. Damdinsüren, B. Sodnom, P. Khorloo, U. Zagdsüren, Sh. Gaadamba, and others constructed the study of Mongolian folklore (*Mongol ardyn aman zokhiol*) in terms of artistic characteristics and classification of types and genres. For the construction of folk music during the socialist period, it is also important to recognize that the idea of the “folk,” as constituted by different ethnic groups, had to be constructed as well. Uradyn Bulag (2011) explains this process:

Early ethnographic studies of various groups in Western Mongolia were . . . part of a larger political operation aimed at destroying aristocratic and ecclesiastical domination in Mongolia through “liberating” smaller Mongolian groups who were called “small ethnic groups” (*baga yastan*). This operation not only created “ethnic groups,” but also created ethnic hierarchy in terms of number, dividing the population into two categories, majority and minority, following the Western model of nation-state building.

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An early resolution of the MPRP highlighted the importance of "all types of distinctive features" (Namsrai and Lkhamsüren 1984, 255). The concept *yastan* (ethnic group), translated from the Russian concept *narodnost'*, has been critically reexamined as a category of Soviet "nationality policy." Munkh-Erdene (2011) describes the concept as "the system of ethnicization" for categorization, diversification, and allocation introduced to state policy, scholarship, and education. As a result of this wider process, the concept of Mongolia changed from a political category to an ethnographic category, and earlier provinces or administrative units such as Khalkh, Dörvöd, Dariganga, and Darkhad became the names of communities or ethnic groups (Munkh-Erdene 2011).

The State Ensemble of Songs and Dance was one of the main institutions to implement the policy of the diversification of ethnic features. D. Nadmid, a folk singer known as "Nadmid of Khotgoid songs" (*Khotgoid duuny Nadmid*), recalls the strategy for "multiethnic" (*olon yastny*) songs:

The ensemble used to send us to our homeland or other parts of the country so that we could learn as many folk songs from the countryside as possible. Depending on their background, singers were asked to specialize in songs of one *yastan* (ethnic group) such as Buryad, Kazakh, and Darkhad. Tsogzolmaa, artistic director of the ensemble, asked me to learn Darkhad and Khotgoid songs, and I was sent to Khövsgöl province, my hometown. In this way, I started to sing Khotgoid and Darkhad songs.

(Interview, May 2009, Ulaanbaatar)

This policy continued during Luvsansharav's tenure as artistic director of the Ensemble. His utmost aspiration was to present the multiethnic variety of musical elements in professional music compositions. Expressing his dissatisfaction over contemporary composers for not sticking to this diversification, Luvsansharav states:

We have 15 or 16 ethnic groups and two nations: Buryads and Kazakhs. I am still worried about who will develop diverse songs, melodies, and harmonies of ethnic groups like the Zakhchin, Torguud, Ööld, Bayad, Üzemchin, Tsakhar, Barga and so on. We need such songs now. Contemporary composers write back-to-front (*khöl tolgoi n oldokhgüi*) homogenous Mongol songs that one cannot differentiate at all.

(Interview, 2013, Ulaanbaatar)

What Luvsansharav points out is the canonical perspective produced by state socialism in which diverse features of traditional culture are perceived as raw materials to be processed into advanced forms. Earlier standard music education used folk music as the basis to teach classical music, for instance, by turning *khuuchir* players to violinists. Later on, the pedagogical methods and playing techniques of classical music were applied to traditional music.

In this way, the relations between folk and classical music had become correlated but also contested.

Hierarchical but entangled categories

The music genres constructed by socialist modernization framed a conceptual hierarchy that not only involved new artistic practices but also social relations. Based on an evolutionary model, Soviet model classical music was designed to be a sophisticated and superior art form among others. Bourdieu (1984) theorizes the power of the state to produce and impose categories, especially through the school system. According to him, the social divisions and hierarchies are also constituted as such by the actions of the state which, by instating them both in things and in minds (Bourdieu 1984, 2). Although Bourdieu points out the historical construction of the contrasts of different cultural groups, he acknowledges the power of high culture and the dominant class. The distinctive binaries constructed by the socialist state such as classical and folk music, as well as therefore, professionalism and amateurship, represent developmental stages oriented towards modernity, development, and civilization. Although they were coinciding and equal at the beginning, the genres became distinct from each other, separating the communities of “the classical” (*songodiinkhon*) and “the folk” (*ardynkhan*), at least among musicians. After the collapse of state socialism, however, the attitudes regarding these genres have become relaxed, assimilated, and reversed.

While cultivating and institutionalizing various art practices, whether traditional or “European,” the perception and usage of those art forms were structured in a hierarchy. This process strengthened and reinforced cosmopolitan national elites as social divisions. Because of the aristocratic origins of European classical music, Mongolian classical musicians have held elitist views towards classical art; therefore, they aspire to stay within a narrow social grouping. In this way, these elites explicitly contrast classical music with more popular forms. According to D. Tungalag, “To be trained in classical music, one’s background education and upbringing are very important. Parents should be the ones who at least read books and are interested in the classical art” (Interview, May 17, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). In short, the socialist state created a hierarchy of social values – in effect, a new upper social class of intellectuals.

This elitist prejudice had been gradually shaped in the recruitment process of the classical music community. While classical music students had been recruited from the elementary level, the enrollment into folk music classes was available only at the secondary education level at the Music and Dance Secondary School. This process, which still occurs in post-socialist Mongolia, enabled classical students to be trained longer than folk musical students. The difference goes far beyond the music genres. An alphabetical order was standard for classes in socialist educational system; however, in this case, it was used not only for ordering but classifying (with hierarchical implications) art genres as well as social classes. Classes of Group “A” were for classical music students, whereas “B” classes were

for folk music students. The former enrolled students mostly from urban elite families and the latter from the countryside. Tsolmon recalls:

There was a clear hierarchy in which classical music was superior, indeed. I do not know whether it was because the piano was harder to learn or because students had to start earlier. Either piano students had more loads of hard work or they were more talented. At that time, there was a bias in favor of classical music. In our time, classical music received a lot of attention. It went to our heads (*biye tookh*).

(Interview, May 12, 2019, Ulaanbaatar)

The narrative about the divide between the classes were frequently told by teachers, parents, and students. I remember a parent of a student who studied in the "B" class strongly criticize the behavior of "A" class students during a parental meeting. "You should not be arrogant, overbearing, and flaunting as many 'A' class students behaved," he asserted. The distinction implies not only the music genres but also the social backgrounds of the students. The socialist state drew a distinction between urban (*khotyn*), with its associations of modernity, and the rural (*khödөөний*), which was regarded as a touchstone of tradition (Sneath 2018, 10).

Classical musicians are disinterested in and sometimes even opposed to engaging popular genres; folk musicians, on the other hand, have always aspired to align or assimilate themselves with classical music and enhance their performance. For example, playing the Carmen Suite No. 1 with a *morin khuur* ensemble would be an "advancement" from some perspectives, but probably not from the viewpoint of classical musicians. Tungalag contends, "I am against this. As it was originally composed for the cello, the *morin khuur* could never make those sounds. I do not like it when folk art is engaged too much with the classical art" (Interview, May 17, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). This attitude opposing the blending of classical and folk music has been inherited among young post-socialist classical musicians. I witnessed a young pianist calling a performance titled *Raakh II*, a 2011 adaptation of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 2* by the folk-rock band, Altan Urag, a "sacrilege" (*shüteen buzarlakh*). Despite the fact that the combination of European classical music with traditional music had been one of the dominant conceptions of socialist nationalism, classical musicians reject these hybrid folk-classical forms: they are not "classical" enough for them.

Several of my memories from the music school in the early 1990s depict the conceptual hierarchy in which classical music dominated over the folk. The music training had strict standards so that students with lower grades would easily be dropped from the school. However, it worked differently for the classical and folk music classes. Students were withdrawn, from 35 to nine in my class, due to failure in "professions" (*mergejildee tentsehgüi*), or the musical instrument they were specializing in. However, those who were dropped from the classical music class could readily enroll into the folk music classes. Two of my classmates who studied violin changed to the *morin khuur* and *limbe* (traditional flute) in this way,

another practical example of how classical music is perceived as more prestigious than folk music in terms of proficiency and requirements.

The division between the classical and folk music was similar to a binary category solidified in socialist modernism: “amateurship” (*sain duryn*), related to folk music, and “professionalism” (*mergejliin*), related to classical music. Regardless of the institutional contexts of folk music, it denotes “amateurship” for classical musicians. According to Tsolmon, the term “amateur” is hardly used within her professional contexts (Interview, May 12, 2019, Ulaanbaatar).

However, the state perspective towards amateur art was much more far reaching. The process was to increase the numbers and types of institutions, art forms, instruments, and professionals (Tsetsentsolmon 2015, 123). Meanwhile, a variety of events were held to promote amateurs to reach every corner of the country within the larger context of Soviet “amateur activity” (*samodeiatel'nost'*) (Lapa-sha 2004), which included singing competitions and “art examinations” (*urlagiin üzleg*) in all types of organizations, concerts, and festivals. These were distributed across administrative units and downward to smaller local socialist units such as collectives (*negdel*), state farms (*sangiin aj akhui*), and brigades (*brigad*). The resolution of the MPRP in February of 1952 stated that the Central Committee demanded the intensification of amateur art (*sain duryn uran saikhan*) by selecting talented people in great numbers and by developing all types of activities of folk amateur artists (*uran saikhanchuud*) (Zagdsüren and Tsend 1967, 139). Furthermore, the resolution of the 11th Party Congress gave directions “to support and control amateur art activities, send specialists to local regions, organize competitions, and annually run examinations of amateur artists at provinces and districts” (Zagdsüren and Tsend 1967, 139). Statistics indicate that the number of amateur groups and bands, including all musical art genres, increased from 3293 in 1980 to 4785 in 1988 (State Committee for Planning and Economics 1989, 101) and of amateur performers from 284,500 to 350,500 (101).

Amateur singers and musicians selected from various competitions and festivals were recruited in folk music professional institutions. The State Folk Song and Dance Ensemble (*Ulsyn ardyn duu büjgiin chuulga*) was established by a party resolution on December 1, 1950 (Zagdsüren and Tsend 1967). The Ensemble enrolled amateur artists, in this case known as *ardyn avyastan*, “folksy talented people,” and delivered institutional training as traditional household learning (*ger surgalt*). The ensemble organized a campaign to recruit talented candidates. Knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian songs and dances were also an advantage for candidates (Interview with Luvsansharav 2013, Ulaanbaatar). Most of the earlier singers and musicians of the State Ensemble, who were drivers, military officers, herders, factory workers, and others, changed from an amateur status to that of well-known state-honored artists.

In the last decades of state socialism, scholars proposed new approaches to challenge Eurocentrism and Soviet hegemony (Tsetsentsolmon 2014, 423). For example, the notion of the “traditional professional classical art” (*ulamjlalt mergejliin songodog khögjim*) (Badraa 1998) attempted to redefine the hierarchies imposed by socialist rhetoric on what constituted the “classical” and the “professional”

(Colwell 2019, 38). Two music practices, *khöömei* and *urtyn duu*, were reframed to make them as culturally valued as traditional classical art forms. They were further utilized in the post-socialist period to cultivate cultural nationalism, revive traditionalism (Colwell 2019), and construct national Mongolian identity on an international scale, such as by getting them registered on the UNESCO lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Tsetsentsolmon 2012). Late socialist cultural practices became a resource to mobilize nationalism, urbanism, and capitalism in post-socialist Mongolia.

Musical legacies of socialist Mongolia

After the collapse of state socialism in the early 1990s, the "democratic" Mongolian state redefined its national identity by unmaking socialist identity. For the construction of the new national identity, nationalist ideologies (Bulag 1998; Kaplonski 1998; Munkh-Erdene 2008) oriented themselves towards pre-socialist traditions. The processes of political independence and the construction of the historical narratives about independence, sovereignty, and security of the nation-state generated the Mongolian form of capitalism (Bumochir 2018, 357). Economic disruption led to the closure of state enterprises, a collapse in living standards, declining public services, and rising levels of unemployment (Sneath 2018, 33). As Lars Højer (2019) argues, the new dichotomous perceptions of regulation/deregulation, socialism/market, domestic/foreign, and poor/rich feature in post-socialist Mongolia. However, despite the transformations they have undergone, the social values and cultural practices regulated by socialist musical education persisted into the post-socialist period, and the state has pursued policies engaging both European classical music and folk music. However, the policies for each of these types of music had a slightly different implication: classical music was deliberately adopted as the achievement or the legacy of the previous social system, while folk music was perceived as in need of protection and fostering. The amateur art practices as well as the state prize system, moreover, persisted both in institutional settings and daily practices.

The following paragraphs outline the recent processes of (dis)continuing and adapting what was built by the socialist MPR. After the 1990 Democratic Revolution, when *naimaa* (commerce) became the only means of survival for many families (Humphrey and Sneath 1999, 65), many artists, who were without preparation and in shock, stopped their careers. Few dedicated musicians stayed in the theater, and alcoholism and cash deficiency were big problems. In Tuulaikhüü's words, all socialist-era national operas and ballets produced for the past 50 to 60 years were "put into the coffin" (*avsand orson*); only a few operas such as *Three Fateful Hills* and *Tears of a Monk* (*Lambugain nulims*) as well as ballets like *Skillful Khas* (*Uran Khas*) survived (Interview, May 9, 2019, Ulaanbaatar). Enjoying the freedom of creativity and aspiring to "international recognition" (*olon ulsad gargakh*), the theater performed classical operas in their original languages such as Italian, Russian, French, and German; these productions were not translated into Mongolian.

Despite these changes, classical music, as “the legacy of socialism,” became a vehicle for nation-building and modernity in post-socialist Mongolia. Mongolian elites regard the classical arts in Mongolia as more sophisticated than those in other Asian countries because of the existence of schools, symphonic orchestras, professional institutions of the academic theater, and regular stage performances. In Ulaanbaatar, Mongolian elites are also proud of the comprehensive theater based on the eighteenth-century classical style, which includes theatrical occupations such as sewers, artists, costume-designers, shoemakers, and others. As Franck Billé (2010) has discussed, Mongolians have oriented and aligned themselves more towards Europe than Asia. Similar to the role of the Cyrillic script, another sign of socialist modernity (Billé 2010, 247), Mongolians have used classical music and European values to measure the growth of their culture and shift their priorities.

A popular anecdote that demonstrates the role of the classical arts in Mongolia is the 1997 official visit of the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahatir bin Mohamad. He was amazed by the development of classical music in Mongolia, and, on the spot, asked his officials to establish a children’s symphony orchestra in Malaysia. Similarly, Singapore, Korea, and Japan are further examples Mongolians like to take as economically advanced countries with less developed European classical music traditions. Meanwhile, the system established during state socialism showed its potential with internationally recognized laureates in opera singing and ballet. Opera singers such as G. Ariunbaatar and E. Amartüvshin, who were from herder families and trained in Mongolia, became prizewinners at the International Tchaikovsky Competition and BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and marketed themselves to the world. The post-socialist state transforms these individual achievements into a form of national pride to consolidate its national identity. On “National Pride Day” (*Ündesnii bakharkhalyn ödör*), G. Ariunbaatar received the Chinggis Khaan Medal in 2016 from the President Ts. Elbegdorj. Given the national identity interests of this book, it is important to note that National Pride Day, or the birthday of Chinggis Khaan, has been celebrated since 2012 and recognizes “a citizen who had made a valuable contribution to strengthening the independence, sovereignty, and solidarity [of Mongolia], to transmitting historical and cultural traditions, and to promoting them to the world (“Regulations” 2013).”

The hierarchal system of state awards set by state socialism still exists in post-socialist Mongolia to channel musicians and artists through different social and cultural sectors. In addition to the attractions of state prizes that offer satisfaction, fame, and monetary incentives, professional artists, either senior or junior, long “to be evaluated by the state” (*törd ünelүүлөkh*) after “serving for the state” (*törd зүгөkh*). Granting prizes, the state implicitly controls and manipulates subjects for advocating its policy. However, this official recognition is not the case for underground artists such as hip-hop singers and rappers. For example, Enerel, a popular young rapper who has released many hit songs, does not identify himself as part of the art community. Enerel claims, “I am not an artist (i.e., “art man” [*urlаgiin khün*]). I just wanted to make songs and did not think about what would

come out then."⁷ Young freelance artists focus on their individual expressions and omit the existing institutional or collective identities and social groupings. Meanwhile, the state apparatus sticks to the structures and categories inherited from the socialist system.

The social effect of classical music on contemporary Mongolia is pivotal and diverse. While the institution of professional music remains restricted to the upper class, public interest in music education is rising. Students who are not involved in the state school can access courses provided by individual artists and private schools. According to T. Solongo, who has run a private school and taught the piano for ten years in Ulaanbaatar, she has trained over 3000 students. Parents train their children in classical music for different purposes such as reducing their screen time, improving their personal development, or fostering their competitive feelings with their peers. In some cases, parents want to "animate" (*ami oruulakh*) the piano that has been purchased and placed as a prestige item at home.⁸ The contemporary music scene in Mongolia flourishes, one that was first constructed during the socialist period through the correlation of classical music with elites. While it was previously channeled through a single social class aspiring to professionalism, classical music education now reaches the public. In this turn from "elites" to the "masses," these musical practices shift from taste-based appreciation to imitative or imaginative tasks.

The social divisions reflecting music genres, tastes, and professions drawn by state socialism overlap and blur with each other in the post-socialist era. Singers trained in classical vocal techniques as opera singers markets themselves as trained in singing folk and popular songs. Many of them sing socialist-era popular songs and imitate old manners. A young contemporary singer, L. Banzragch, has reached wide audiences by singing the old songs of a popular socialist singer with whom he shares the same name, who transitioned from a driver to sing for the State Ensemble of Folksong and Dance. Many other contemporary singers duplicate the timbres, manners, and songs of well-known socialist-era singers such as P. Adarsüren, D. Tümendemberel, and others. Despite the increasing urban density of post-socialist Mongolia, songs with the themes of homeland, birthplace, landscapes, mountains, rivers, horses, mothers, and even tea made by mothers reframed popular songs as a distinct genre of *zokhiolyn duu* (composed songs) or *niitiin duu* (popular songs). Additionally, public events originate from the socialist "amateurship campaign" such as "The Singing Day" (*Duulakh ödör*), a monthly organized collective dancing and singing event, which stimulates nostalgia for retirees and amateur artists. Yet, given these direct influences from the socialist period, late socialist national elites also advocated urban-oriented notions of *khotyn khögjim* (urban music) or *khotyn soyol* (urban culture), which were grounded with ideas about Soviet modernization and urbanization but combined with globalization and capitalism. In short, a variety of cultural practices and habits created during the state socialism have been transferred to contemporary Mongolia and have interacted with post-socialist practices in new ways.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the social impacts of state socialist cultural construction in twentieth-century Mongolia and their transformations in post-socialist nation building. Soviet-styled classical music, introduced as new social values, adopted the Soviet model of modernity backed by Marxist ideas about social evolution. Within a space drawn by socialist nationalism, the MPR established an indispensable structure of education, production, and consumption. The state policy oriented towards modernity and tradition formed hierarchical, contested, and discriminative categories. Moreover, state socialism introduced such binaries as “high art and low art,” “professional and amateur art,” “rural and urban art,” and “classical and folk art.” The music genres – classical music and folk music – were involved in the construction of new social divisions and classes.

Since the 1990s, classical music, similar to other elements of socialist modernity, has been adopted as a legacy of state socialism and reidentified as a part of post-socialist Mongolian culture, consistent with the new values of globalization and cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, classical music became a vehicle for the new nationalist politics of the post-socialist Mongolian state, which, to orchestrate its nationalist and populist policy, manipulates cultural actors and individual achievements through its various technologies inherited from state socialism. At the same time, folk music, at least some forms of it, has been elevated to become part of the post-socialist national identity. In this process, the cultural values and the relationship between modernity and tradition constructed by state socialism have transformed and even reversed in some cases. Although Bourdieu (1984), with his concepts of *habitus* and taste judgement, further legitimizes the autonomous high culture, my ethnographies also demonstrate flexibility, transformability, and variability of tastes across classes, thus modifying Bourdieu’s relational concepts.

To demonstrate the persistent layers of cultural values and divisions, I will close with a final anecdote about Alimaa, the violinist with whom I opened this chapter. I encountered her on a bus in Ulaanbaatar a few years ago. It was shortly after the first Mongolian rock band, *Soyol Erdene*, was awarded the Star of Fame (*Aldryn Odon*) by the Ulaanbaatar City Council in 2015. Even though her late husband was a member of the band, Alimaa looked chagrined with the band’s recognition, saying to me: “See, they extol the virtue of *estrada* (pop) music but not classical.”

Notes

- 1 The name of this college remained the same until it was renamed the Music College (*Khögjiin Kollej*) in 1991 and then the Music and Dance College (*Khögijm Buijiin Kollej*). Finally, in 2017, the school was renamed the Mongolian State Conservatory.
- 2 After the collapse of state socialism, some artists were nicknamed the “surrounded ones” (*toiron khüreelegchid*) of Filatova and accused of obtaining their achievements and state awards through their close relationship with her.

- 3 Tsolmon refers to the Saur Revolution or the April Revolution, which was led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan against the rule of Afghan President Mohammed Daoud Khan on April 27, 1978.
- 4 The identity of this person is kept anonymous due to privacy reasons.
- 5 Purevdorj (1929–2007), Labor Hero and People's Artist of Mongolia, was one of the first professional opera singers and founders of vocal training at the State Opera and Ballet Theater.
- 6 Norovbanzad (1931–2002), Labor Hero and People's Artist of Mongolia, was a famous long-song singer of the State Ensemble of Folk Song and Dance whose career reached its peak during the MPR.
- 7 Enerel made these comments on the *Red Pen* [Ulaan Bal] television program broadcasted in March 2020.
- 8 Facebook message to the author, February 15, 2020.

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10 Shadows of a heroic singer

The legacy of J. Dorjdagva and its impact on the Mongolian long-song tradition

Sunmin Yoon

The continuing legacy

In the summer of 2014, Mongolia celebrated the 110th anniversary of the birth of one of its master long-song (*urtyn duu*)¹ singers, Jigzavyn Dorjdagva (1904–1990). Forty-nine of his *urtyn duu* recordings in the archive of Mongolian National Broadcasting (*Mongolyn Ündesnii Olon Niitiin Radio Televiz*; hereafter MNB) were selected and released as a three-CD collection, together with his biographical information, under the title of “Anthology of the Eternal Long-Song Collection” (*Mönkh Tengeriin Ayalguu Urtyn Duuny Tsomog*). An hour-long documentary was made about him and broadcast by MNB, including interviews with numerous singers, composers, musicians, and music critics. A local theater museum was built in his hometown of Saikhan Ovoo in Dundgovi Aimag, housing an exhibition of his archive – photographs, clothing, manuscripts, and the medals he had been awarded.

Singing competitions and festivals to celebrate his anniversary were held occasionally throughout the year, mainly in Ulaanbaatar (hereafter UB), Mongolia’s capital, and also in his hometown. Prior to this celebratory year, books based on recordings of interviews with Dorjdagva by the cultural critic J. Badraa (1926–1993) (Jantsannorov 2005a) and by the musicologist J. Enebish (1937–) (Enebish, 2014) had been published in 2005 and 2014, respectively, entitled *A Great Singer’s Words (Ikh duuchiny yaria)* I and II. For the first book, the interview between Dorjdagva and Badraa, covering stories of older (local) singers, long-song performance practices, and the wider Soviet context, was transcribed and commented upon by a well-known contemporary composer, N. Jantsannorov (1948–). Following this book, Jantsannorov (2005b) published another book titled, *The Traditional Terminology of Urtyn Duu (Urtyn duuny ulamjlalt zarim ner tomiyoony gargalgaa)*, which drew from the first volume and included only technical musical terms related to *urtyn duu*. I have seen the extent to which this latter book has become an essential text among professional singers in UB. Enebish’s second volume of *A Great Singer’s Words* is a transcription of his interview with Dorjdagva and was recorded and compiled by Enebish himself. This book focused in particular on musical discussions of *urtyn duu* singing techniques.

Several years before these celebrations, during my earlier fieldwork in 2009, I was working together with students in an *urtyn duu* class taught by a famous contemporary *urtyn duu* teacher, J. Tüvshinjargal. One Saturday morning, I received a phone call from the teacher, asking me to come to the school and saying that all the *urtyn duu* students were getting together there. When I arrived at the school, he mentioned the name of J. Dorjdagva, whom he described as a great singer, explaining that Dorjdagva had been his teacher. Still in the preliminary stages of my fieldwork, I was not yet aware of the position held by Dorjdagva, but that weekend, sitting together with all the students and listening to the tape of the interview between J. Badraa and J. Dorjdagva was enough for me to become quite curious about who this was and why we had to spend several hours in a classroom at the weekend, on a cold winter's morning, listening to Dorjdagva talking on a tape, rather than having copies distributed among the students. Later I found out that the interview was a rare recording stored at MNB and that this was the material which N. Jantsannorov had transcribed and published.

As I have learned about Dorjdagva's teachings regarding singing techniques and musical ideas through these published materials and events and by observing the enthusiasm and respect for him among the current wave of professional singers, his name has frequently come up over the course of my fieldwork from various perspectives in my conversations with established *urtyn duu* singers in the city as well as with herder singers who still practice the traditional way of *urtyn duu* in the countryside. Conversing with singers, it is obvious that Dorjdagva's teachings and approach have been influential on the development of the contemporary *urtyn duu* scene and that he has been the primary force behind current *urtyn duu* performance. At the same time, there was one question that came to my mind: "Why J. Dorjdagva in particular, considering the other talented singers who were around at the time?"

This chapter investigates the process of the Sovietization of the Mongolian *urtyn duu* tradition through the particular lens of Dorjdagva's life and work, looking closely into the establishment of "professionalism" during the Soviet era and also into how this professionalism has been continued, reworked, or reversed in the post-socialist era. Within this broad frame, I will examine specifically the implication of revolutionary heroism in socialist culture and how Dorjdagva's legacy relates to these discourses surrounding heroism and the precise role it played in the *urtyn duu* tradition of the twentieth century.

J. Dorjdagva, his life and times

J. Dorjdagva's life covered a pivotal era in Mongolia's modern political history. Mongolia had been a theocracy under the Bogd Khan from 1911, following the collapse of the Qing Empire. A struggle for power between 1919 and 1921, during which nationalist and socialist groups opposed to China's continuing influence sought to gain independence, led to the Soviet-backed revolution of 1921 and to Mongolia's increased social and political dependence upon the Soviet Union.

Following the model of Soviet socialism, Mongolia strengthened its military power, introduced a process of urbanization and industrialization, and conducted a great purge of intellectuals and Buddhist monks between September 1937 and April 1939.

Dorjdagva was born in 1904 in Dundgovi Aimag, a region famous for producing a large number of fine *urtyn duu* singers. He was born as the sixth child, one of several talented siblings, many of whom became good singers. His father, Jigzav, was a herder but also played the *morin khuur* and *limbe* and was himself a good singer. At the age of nine, Dorjdagva was sent to the local monastery at Ongiin Gurvan Khiid to be trained as a Buddhist monk, but young Dorjdagva was homesick and finally went back home to stay, and it was during this time that he was able to learn songs from local singers while herding his family's livestock. After the death of his father, he came in 1923 to Khüree (UB), and became a student and subsequently chant master (*umzad; umze*) at Dashchoim-bol school at Gandantegchinlen Monastery. However, with the social and cultural changes in UB in the wake of the 1921 People's Revolution, Dorjdagva started to become more interested in working in the theater and in music. His elder brother Jigmid had been working for the new state police force and, following his advice, Dorjdagva decided on a trajectory away from monastic life and looked into taking on more secular work. Between his return in 1927 to lay life and 1931, he worked in a wool factory and also in a printing company as a printer and an inspector of raw materials. This opportunity led him to learn how to read and write, and as this interest grew, he built close relationships with writers and intellectuals, whose influence was rising at that time in UB's society. As a response to the communitarian aspects of socialist ideology, a form of a voluntary art movement (*sain duryn uran saikhny khödölgöön*) had developed, including the Sühkbaatar Club, of which he quickly became a member. In 1932, he joined the People's Entertainment Department (*ardin tsengeliin khüreeleen*), studying with older, state-sanctioned singers (*töriin duuchin*) of *urtyn duu*, such as M. Dugarjav, B. Luvsangompil, G. Povron, and S. Gombo (Dashdorj and Tsoodol 1971, 117–24).

During the earlier revolutionary period, roughly between the Seventh Congress of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) in October 1928 and the deaths of Stalin in 1952 and Choibalsan in 1953, Soviet music teachers, scholars, and folklorists entered Mongolia's cultural landscape. As in other Soviet bloc countries, Soviet music teachers and their ideas encouraged the Mongolian People's Republic to "develop" not only musical languages and practices different from those of traditional nomadic society (such as introducing a European conception of staged performing arts and European musical genres and discourses), but they also introduced systematized musical knowledge, such as musical terminologies and techniques, or methods of transmission, all common practices in Western art music. Soviet culture also introduced new knowledge in science and education and greatly influenced Mongolian culture in ways that were not limited to music but which also extended to fine art and literature, changing the overall perception of artistic creation and expression.

In this way, a new wave of exploration and discussion was generated mainly within the circle of Soviet intellectuals and among their Mongolian counterparts who had been trained according to the Soviet system in UB. This was particularly the case in Dorjdagva's early adulthood, and his move from life in a monastery to a more urbanized context centered around performing art music reflected a common trajectory at this time. Dorjdagva had a chance to study in 1932 with the Soviet musicologist A. Kol'tsov, and also received the opportunity to travel to Moscow to sing for Stalin and to make a recording with other musicians. In the same year, he was recognized as a national (*aldart gaviyat*) singer. He subsequently worked extensively as a singing and music teacher in Dornod Aimag as well as in some of the schools in UB and served also as a judge for long-song competitions. In order to ground his study of music, between 1953 and 1956, he also undertook the formal study of Marxism-Leninism in night schools (Dashdorj and Tsoodol 1971; Jantsannorov 2005a).

The dependency of Mongolia's musical landscape upon Soviet culture and ideology became increasingly more visible, gaining traction both among the professional musicians in UB as well as in the understanding of nonprofessional musicians. In my interviews with older singers who had lived through Mongolia's Soviet period, they often mentioned that *urtyn duu* had been neither encouraged nor highly regarded as a genre since the lyrics were already too philosophical (if not religious or spiritual) and the musical features comparatively too complex and diverse to be presented on stage, which ran contrary to the musical idea of "people's revolutionary art" promoted by the Soviets. Nevertheless, the *urtyn duu* genre never fully disappeared, as most older singers mentioned in my interviews, but survived both in the rural regions among herders, moving also to urban performing centers, where it continued and was preserved by a few well-known professional singers such as Dorjdagva.

One professional singer active during the Soviet era, S. Tsoodol, states that "Mr. Dorjdagva did not only disseminate the ancient *urtyn duu* by singing them, but with his teacher Dugarjav, he thought out opportunities for breathing the ideas of the new era into the form of *urtyn duu*." He continues,

Dorjdagva was a singer who did not so much regulate the correct melodies of the songs, as subtly teach the method of singing in relation to the correct melodies of the songs. He investigated the understanding of singers from previous generations through scholarly works about song and music, and he recorded what was particular and specific, which are otherwise imperceptible, in the inimitable character of *urtyn duu*.

(Dashdorj and Tsoodol 1971, 123–24)

Building technical knowledge

From the two books mentioned earlier (Enebish 2014; Jantsannorov 2005a), it can be seen that Dorjdagva's musical knowledge and his explanations of *urtyn duu* were not only extensive, but systematic. Dorjdagva (1970) makes an interesting

point in his introduction to his book *Urtyn Duu*, saying that, “when notating the *urtyn duu*, although it is difficult to rationalize and show the rhythmic sense of *urtyn duu*, in my opinion, we should strive to the best of our ability to represent it as, for instance, a certain numerical unit [i.e., time signature]” (Dorjdagva 1970, 3). In fact, he illustrated the use of time signatures such as 3/4, 4/4, and 5/4 in relation to *urtyn duu* in his introduction. Insofar as *urtyn duu* is considered as a free rhythm vocal genre and characterized by freely improvised, elongated ornaments, the strict numeral presentation is indeed curious, and yet his approach, seeking to understand *urtyn duu* through the lens of systematic Western musical language, is clear in his introduction.

Based on interviews I conducted among contemporary singers and on an analysis of the historical material he left behind, I shall here, and in the next section, consider Dorjdagva’s legacy from two angles. First, as a singer himself, and based on his own detailed observation and understanding of the tradition, he established a specific body of terminological and pedagogical knowledge regarding the singing techniques for *urtyn duu*. Considering that *urtyn duu* is an oral tradition and taught mostly by rote in everyday herding life in the manner of other music-making practices in Mongolia (Post 2017; Yoon 2019), simple “listening” rather than a pedagogy articulated through language and musical discourse was itself a way of learning and transmission. Rural singers often mentioned that they would learn the lyrics first and then learn the melody from one of their older family members. In this way, time spent in the countryside, wandering about and herding, became a classroom for these herder singers, as they listened to their livestock and to the surrounding ecology as well as to the singing of others at feasts. In this traditional understanding of the learning and teaching process, embodiment was central to transmission and the act of singing a more corporeal process. Many singers I have met in nonprofessional circles often find it hard to explain their technique, and when I asked about specific terms I had studied with professional singers from the city, they would often answer that they did not know the term.

In contrast, most of the urban singers who had mainly trained in school or else had become established as professional singers, or rural singers who had attended an occasional short workshop with professional singers, often mentioned certain singing techniques such as *shurankhai* (falsetto), *tsokhilt* (or *tsokhilgo*, a strong laryngeal trill), *shigshilt* (a short trill before raising the pitch), and so on. Even then, such terms and concepts are not completely standardized, with each individual describing them to me in slightly different ways, showing how far these descriptions diverge from the commonly accepted ways of presenting this kind of musical knowledge. Music is ephemeral, and verbalizing the sense of the sonic product, whether that be a simple description or analysis, is particularly difficult when it comes to non-western musical materials. When it is approached from within the frame of other musical languages and perspectives, it requires yet greater sensitivity. This is not a process unique to Mongolia during the Soviet era but is an omnipresent consideration when any cultural or musical exchanges occur. As B. Tsetsentsolmon (2015) mentions, “Labelling performances or types of musical ‘traditional’ and ‘folkloric’ is not just simple description, but part of

a process of developing strategic normative definitions of public culture” (122). As singers and scholars borrow the concept of musical framework from another, rather than their own, culture, the establishment of a terminology is not just a linguistic invention to describe an existing musical concept, but rather the use of the term in question requires a drastic change of gaze and understanding of the musical concept.

Dorjdagva worked with Russian music teachers, but he had also developed his musical literacy through his background as a monk and, specifically, as a chant-master, through working in a printing company, and through his association with Mongolian intellectuals during the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, he was able to find ways to articulate specific techniques and, even more importantly, to theorize his own approach to teaching certain techniques, although this was mainly within the framework learned from Soviet music teachers. In addition to his legacy as a performer, he left a legacy as a teacher, working in a variety of educational environments, which paved the way for subsequent generations of singers to have access to a far more “systematized” traditional knowledge base, particularly when singing schools (in which he worked as a teacher) came to be established in UB.

The interview between Enebish (2014) and Dorjdagva includes highly technical exchanges in which Dorjdagva frequently employs Russian musical terms, emphasizing the importance of the awareness of the technical and physical aspects of vocality:

A singer of *ardyn duu* doesn’t sing with their mouth wide open. They don’t gape like opera singers, like this [perhaps opening his mouth wide – MD]. It’s the same in Russia and in Mongolia! In singing *ardyn duu* [folk song], the mouth is tighter [*oirkhon*], it mustn’t be close together like this [perhaps showing his upper and lower teeth, and lips – MD]. The reason is that, when you have such great power, such great “focus” [*shinge*], to gape with the mouth weakens the assistance they [perhaps indicating the palate and tongue – MD] can give. There is no assistance from either the palate or the tongue, and in the emptiness of the [mouth] cavity, rather than *oyo-o-uu-hoe-ee-ye*, it pushes here and here, as in *ee-hie-hie-hi-ii’hi-hii!* . . . I wouldn’t mess around with being a “singer” if I didn’t know these things. After you know these things, you understand where you are lacking. . . (laughs) . . . how can you sing if you don’t know them? So if you don’t know them, there’s no way you can be a singer. They’re very precise things.

(Enebish 2014, 71–72)

In his interview with the music critic J. Badraa, Dorjdagva likewise illustrates a wide range of singing techniques, including methods of breathing, techniques of vocal practice, the articulation of melodic lines, and ornamentation (Jantsan-norov 2005a, 46–104). Dorjdagva often talks about these singing techniques as though his own teachers, such as Dugarjav and Gombo, had already taught them in great detail and with great understanding, and as though they had initiated the development of this knowledge of singing along with Soviet teachers such as

F. I. Kleshko.² However, from what I have observed, it is clear that it was Dorjdagva who had constructed the discourse through which specific knowledge of *urtyn duu* could be understood.

Contemporary singers' narratives about J. Dorjdagva

The second way in which Dorjdagva impacted the current *urtyn duu* tradition was made especially clear to me when I interviewed *urtyn duu* singers in my field-work. I have often heard two distinct opinions about Dorjdagva: he was either a great teacher who knew many songs and taught a lot of students, thus preserving the traditional long-songs; or else he had irreparably changed a long-standing tradition and had created the current urban and professional form of *urtyn duu*, perhaps combining different local styles and versions of *urtyn duu*. This gave me the impression that Dorjdagva had been someone who had certainly continued the legacy of the *urtyn duu* tradition, but that he had also turned the continuing tradition of *urtyn duu* into a more centralized performing art and so had created the idea of professional *urtyn duu* singers. Yet, why do these distinct opinions exist about Dorjdagva's influence, and what does this mean for contemporary *urtyn duu* singers?

In summer 2017, I met a singer named P. Dulmaa (b. 1932) in Bayanzürkh district (interview with author, July 1), a suburb of UB. She mentioned Dorjdagva in very positive language, and she particularly highlighted his teaching skills and how detailed he had been in the "course" she had taken with him, especially in his way of articulating how songs should be sung. Another singer, D. Tserendorj (b. 1930; interview with author, June 22), whom I met in the Khan-uul district on the outskirts of UB, and who had also worked with Dorjdagva, also praised him, emphasizing particularly his pioneering contribution in preserving the traditional *urtyn duu* genre, which otherwise would have disappeared during the Socialist period. Another well-known professional singer and teacher who had studied with Dorjdagva, J. Tüvshinjargal, cherished his memories with him, saying that he possessed the knowledge of the original (older) versions of *urtyn duu*, which Tüvshinjargal considered to be important. These older versions included the religious long-song (*gür duu*), which had been subject to severe anti-religious censorship during the Soviet period.

In contrast, some singers I met, particularly in countryside regions such as Dundgovi, and Dornogovi, as well as in some of the central Khalkh regions of Arkhangai and Övörkhongai Aimags, presented different feelings about J. Dorjdagva's contribution to the *urtyn duu* tradition. They were convinced that Dorjdagva had mixed the local styles (*nutgiin ayalguu*) so that these unique local styles disappeared, whether he had intended this or not. What he created as a new style (or, perhaps, his own style that did not belong to any one region) became the primary version in the repertoires that are practiced today in UB, creating the tradition in a more homogenous form.

Mongolian *urtyn duu* are not only specific to individual aimags or regions but also to ethnic groups and smaller regions, even to individual singers, and so occur

in many different versions. These regional styles (*nutgiin duu* or *nutgiin ayal-guu*) do not follow administrative boundaries, but rather cultural and ecological ones. In this way, a more diversified range of regional versions has come to exist (Yoon, forthcoming). One of the distinctive qualities of this is that practice and improvisational skills are unique to where a song has been sung. The specific regional qualities of both techniques and lyrics are also closely related to the surrounding environments and to the oral knowledge embedded among the local population, who follow their own herding practices. Singers I met often describe the local geography where they were born or the geographical features in the region which produced a song. For this reason, regional style is not only a presentation of certain vocal and artistic techniques but also represents a more holistic understanding of the songs practiced by singers. Among *urtyn duu* singers in a given region, then, the regional variation and the expression of their own locale is a source of pride and a reflection of the importance of their micro-ethnic identity and presence within Mongolian culture. These local styles remain alive, as I observed during my fieldwork between 2007 and 2019, particularly among older herder singers. Nowadays, in the post-socialist era, people seem to have become strongly committed to the presentation of their local identity. Nevertheless, the singers who know these local styles are still rare, and I found it was common for local singers to be keenly aware of UB's rapidly changing musical scenes, the most famous professional singers, and the versions of long-songs which they more generally sang.

Uniting different styles

Carole Pegg (2001, 253–59) illustrates the process of Sovietization around folk tradition in Mongolia during the 1920s and 1930s, when ideological control came to the fore to enlighten the working-class and mobilize voluntary art and to develop a centralized policy regarding education and musical and other performing arts, all in the name of “cultural enlightenment” (*soyol gegeerel*). Although this policy was initiated in UB, its dissemination into the countryside was dynamic, and after 1921, when Ts. Jamtsarano established the Philology Institute (which would later become the Mongolian Scientific Committee and then the Mongolian Academy of Sciences), expeditions were often sponsored to remote rural regions that yielded valuable research for the institution, collecting folk traditions such as songs, epics, and stories of various different ethnic cultures. Pegg argues that, following Stalin's reforming policy to “neutralize” and “stabilize” the folk songs and instrument practices, in the *urtyn duu* tradition in particular, the central Khalkh style was declared to be representative of the genre and designated as the style that the limited number of state-approved singers were allowed to perform (2001, 256–59). Alongside Pegg's argument, while in the field, I learned from my conversations with singers that, during the Soviet period, UB's intellectuals, professional singers, and music teachers were actively mobilized to the countryside, where they held competitions and conducted small workshops (courses) that sometimes led to the recruitment of singers with especially good voices to the city. Some of

the selected singers in the countryside were brought to UB and made recordings which today are housed in the archive of MNB in UB. But the circulation of *urtyn duu* through MNB was limited to certain songs and certain singers' singing styles. In this way, the distinctive regional versions of *urtyn duu* were not always chosen to be broadcast, and so the genre became defined by a few limited songs, singers, and styles.

According to Dorjdagva's biography, when he stopped practicing as a monk and was laicized, he became interested in the famous local singer Ts. Chimedtseren, and became his student, learning from him the central Khalkh (Khangai regions) and Bayanbaraat (west side of Dundgovi) tunes. When he was working as a singer at the National Central Theater (*Ulsyn Töv Teatr*), he also had the chance to make contact with singing teachers from other regions. For example, he studied with B. Luvsangompil, a singer from Khan Khentii (modern-day Khentii Aimag) for three years, and he also learned from the singers G. Povron from Zasagt Khan Aimag (modern-day Govi-Altai and Bayankhongor Aimags) and S. Gombo from Khövchiin Jonon Van Khoshuu (today around the eastern region of Sükhbaatar and Khentii Aimags), and also mastered many local styles of singing *urtyn duu* throughout the Khalkh area (Badraa 2005, 13–16).

Additionally, he served as a judge for numerous music competitions, at which he could meet singers. These competitions, which became a bridge by which amateur musicians might turn professional (*mergejliin urlag*), developed strongly after 1945 (Dashdavaa 1987). The first competitions were held in 1945 and included diverse genres such as folk songs and dance, *magtaal* (blessings) and *yerööl* (prayers), and circus skills. These competitions involved preparatory heats, which were conducted from the level of small administrative units (such as *khoroо*, *bag*, and *sum*) to the aimag level, and the final winners were often sent to UB for the competition final. Badraa (2005) recounted that Dorjdagva was frequently a judge in these competitions (13–16). It is likely, then, that Dorjdagva could, through his involvement in these competitions, have listened to, learned from, and contacted a variety of local singers, both herder and rural singers and voluntary artists.

When I discussed Dorjdagva with the cultural scholar D. Tsedev, he said that Dorjdagva's sister, Maam, had mentioned to him that Dorjdagva was certainly a heroic singer (*baatarlag duuchin*) and that he had mixed different kinds of *urtyn duu* into his own style (interview with D. Tsedev, July 2019). I personally found in my research diverse repertoires and styles of songs in the countryside that singers had learned from their grandfathers and grandmothers, yet they still had the notion that UB's centralized *urtyn duu* practice, mainly learned through their TV or radio, were superior to their local styles. Thus, what remains of Dorjdagva's recordings and the current practice of professional singers in UB, who rigorously followed his teaching, is still dominant in the *urtyn duu* musical landscape, empowering the more professional styles while weakening the local styles and creating both formalized styles of singing and limited repertoires.

In Dorjdagva's (1970) anthology of *urtyn duu*, which contains about 100 songs, he classified each song, indicating whether it was in an eastern style (*zuun aimgiin ayalguugaar*), which includes central Khalkh and the Govi styles, such as Borjiin

or Bayanbaraat, or in a western style (*baruun aimgiin ayalguugaar*), without mentioning either specific locality or ethnicity. One famous *urtyn duu*, “Sun of the World” (*Zambuu Tiv Naraan*) is presented in two versions – the “eastern” (central Khalkh) and “Bayanbaraat” (western part of Dundgovi region) – while the influential singer N. Norovbanzad’s collection (2000) includes her own version, Dorjdagva’s version, and a version sung by another singer, S. Gonchig. Gonchig’s version is similar to the central Khalkh version in Dorjdagva’s book, but Dorjdagva’s version in Norovbanzad’s book is not close to any version included by Dorjdagva, despite Norovbanzad’s claim that it is from Dorjdagva’s 1970 book.

This kind of confusion is often the case among the anthologies of *urtyn duu* currently available in Mongolia. Which version is whose, and where it came from, is becoming increasingly vague, unless I meet a singer who learned a song from their grandmother or grandfather or from their parents within the family tradition. In contrast, the homogenous styles and versions of *urtyn duu* that were mainly circulated by the few “heroic” professional singers who broadcast them on UB’s radio and TV now constitute a fully established song repertoire as part of contemporary *urtyn duu* practice. Therefore, whether or not this was Dorjdagva’s intention, when the MPRP singled out a few heroic singers, including Dorjdagva himself, it created a path traced by representative singers and teachers and so narrowed the breadth of the *urtyn duu* tradition, making it into a highly skilled and centralized staged musical practice.

Socialism, revolution, heroism, and its cultural product

In the course of the historical transition of *urtyn duu* during the twenty century, Dorjdagva’s teacher, M. Dugarjav (1893–1944), despite the fact that he became a state-sanctioned singer and subsequently thrived in both popularity and influence, has been all but forgotten and is rarely discussed nowadays among Mongolian *urtyn duu* singers. According to Enebish, Dugarjav was a singer and composer who was involved early on in creating revolutionary songs. Enebish (1989) particularly emphasized Dugarjav’s understanding of traditional artforms, but also the creative as well as ideological implications of his work. Dugarjav became a state-sanctioned artist considerably earlier than Dorjdagva, but he was arrested in 1941 and sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment, eventually dying in 1946, and his reputation, despite his rehabilitation in 1962 (Sanders 2017, 251), never fully recovered. Between these two great historical singers, then, why is one still considered a hero among the current singers, while the other, his own teacher, has been frozen out?

Soviet socialism pursued collectivization economically and socially, as well as emphasizing “mass” movement (rather than individualism). Socialist revolution, as seen in the Soviet Union in October 1917 and in Mongolia in 1921, is a struggle of class and power, redistributing capital and regenerating culture in the name of politics. In the process of revolution, according to Sherry Ortner (2006), socialism understands “how the voices of individual social actors in everyday lives in fact become a powerful agent.” Nor was this exceptional in the processes

of ideological transition and of rebuilding the nation during periods such as the post-socialist era. Ironically, however, the emphasis on the social actors comes *after* the revolution, as has happened to several heroes of revolutionary socialism. In discussing one of the instruments to control the masses and so build the ideological institution, Katherine Verdery (1996) illustrates how, in Romania, heroes' "exemplary" biographies, their "triumphs, along with victimization and sacrifice" provide "things they share as individuals with the nation that unites them as 'Romania'" (71–73). Interestingly, in order to revolutionize and to rebel against the previous powers – the elites, the rich, feudalism, and religion – it became necessary for socialism to revoke these previous powers and the previously powerful class, letting those without power be seen. The party fed the minds of that class which previously had had no power with the idea of empowerment.

Most Mongolians (including singers) I have met cherish the medals and awards they have received from the government (this tradition remains even today, 30 years after the end of the Soviet era), and having thus earned "legitimized pride" in what they have done, and as an individual in relation to the state, they honor the feeling of acceptance and acknowledgement upon which human societies are built. The earlier revolutionary movements in Mongolian culture were called *sain duryn uran saikhny khödölgöön*, which translates as "voluntary art movement," although here the idea of voluntary action indicates that it was carried out "with good intent," which requires a focus on solidarity, motivation, and activity in the mind of the individual. While the state and party's sanctioning of individuals' revolutionary roles were all a part of the "encouragement" of the common people (*ard*), who were the critical social revolutionary actors, the awards process also promoted certain selected figures on the road of revolution. Mongolian artists and musicians are awarded ranks such as *Mongol Uulsyn Ardyn Jüjigchin* (Mongol People's Actor), *Mongol Ulsyn Ankhny Gaviyat Duuchin/Jüjigchin* (Mongol People's Talented Singer/Actor), *Soyolyn tergüüni ajiltan* (Leading Cultural Worker), and *Khödölmöriin baatar* (Hero of Labor), and so on. These particular individuals were not only exemplary figures for people to follow without question, but they were also created and promoted by the state for social and cultural unification and control. They have become the new power, the new cultural heroes, a process which likewise defines the pattern of culture, and thus they become the culture itself. According to David Leeming (2020),

The culture hero, unlike the warrior hero or the questing hero, establishes the community's institutions and traditions; he literally establishes "culture." This is not to say that the culture hero cannot also become a warrior or a questor. The culture hero sometimes takes the side of the people against the creator. . . . The culture hero, then, nurtures the given culture and, metaphorically, is the culture, the ultimate embodiment of what the culture is. . . . The culture hero embodies the very soul of a culture. He presents much more than the Ego, the central reference point of the collective consciousness of the culture. Rather, he is the embodiment of the culture's Self, i.e., the collective totality of the culture's unconscious and conscious

psyches. . . . Ultimately, the culture hero is who we are or who we could be. The culture hero is Self-knowledge.

(191)

For this reason, the contemplation of one specific figure, such as Dorjdagva, can act as a critical prism through which Mongolia's musical history can be read, following Jonathan Stock's (2001) assertion that "musical individuality is a marked characteristic of the musical culture as a whole" (5).

Considering the ideological use of heroism and the concept of the "great figure" in the context of socialism, although the role played by Dorjdagva did not exert an exclusive influence on the current state of Mongolia's *urtyn duu* practices, his work as a teacher and scholar, as well as the verbal exposition of his knowledge of singing techniques, have certainly played no small role in the continuation and transformation of the *urtyn duu* tradition. One might assume that *urtyn duu* had never explicitly been politicized but only discouraged due to its philosophical nature and because it is, musically speaking, explicitly non-metric, lyrical, and poetic. *Urtyn duu*'s modification under Soviet influence was, therefore, in comparison to other aspects of expressive culture in Mongolia, somewhat limited. It is still hard, in the context of the *urtyn duu* tradition during the Soviet era, to characterize Dorjdagva's activities as a teacher and singer as explicitly political. However, it is certain that he exercised a powerful impact on the continuation of the tradition, simply because there were so few singers, whether broadcast on the radio or otherwise actively working in UB, with such a well-established body of knowledge related to *urtyn duu* and with such support from the MPRP and from other singers.

Dorjdagva's contribution led to the rise of UB's professional *urtyn duu* practice, promoting the central Khalkh style of *urtyn duu* and weakening local styles, whether or not that was an ideological directive from the MPRP. Moreover, his establishment of an extensive body of technical knowledge and of discussions regarding the singing of *urtyn duu*, whether or not that was his intention in response to Soviet "modernization," has greatly influenced contemporary *urtyn duu* practice. Dorjdagva's heroic legacy then continues even today, and he remains a cultural hero in the post-socialist era in the absence of any ideological pressure, which further enhances and empowers the musical techniques, song repertoires, and artistic philosophy he left behind. In Mongolia's process of post-socialist nation building, and with the reinforcement of heritage culture, Dorjdagva's music-making has become identified as the tradition and continues to be developed in relation to how contemporary singers understand the nature of the *urtyn duu* tradition. In this way, not as a cultural hero in a socialist state but as an important voice that represents Mongolian cultural and national identity, Dorjdagva is still today the "hero." Exactly where the "tradition" originated and how much this respected figure and his knowledge were infused with or developed out of the Soviet system has become insignificant. The Soviet Union collapsed, and Russia has moved on, but this hero who had been created as a part of the Soviet intervention into Mongolia's traditional culture seems now to be continuing in a different

context – that of cultural preservation and nationalism. The standard Mongolian dictionary defines the term *baatar* (hero) as “first, having a brave determination without fear; second, a title given to someone who expresses brave determination and develops merit [*gaviya*]” (Tsevel 1968, 63). Robert Segal (1990) describes a hero as one who “is heroic because he rises from obscurity to the throne” (xiii). With these definitions in mind, Dorjdagva could be a hero who found a way to sustain the life of traditional *urtyn duu* during a time of ideological repression and reformation. Dorjdagva’s life spanned a time when the *urtyn duu* tradition, which had come to be considered as “feudalistic” and “backward,” might have become obsolete had Dorjdagva’s heroic presence not helped to shape it as part of Mongolia’s mid-twentieth century revolutionary culture. His impact and the changes he made could, then, be seen as having been a necessary evil for the continuity of the *urtyn duu* tradition, to help it survive and flourish today.

Notes

- 1 *Urtyn duu* is often translated as “long-song” due to the elongation and ornamentation of the vowels in the lyrics. Among Mongols, it is often considered as one of the representative and important Mongolian folk songs. This genre was inscribed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2006. In this chapter, I will mainly use the Mongolian term *urtyn duu*, although the translated term “long-song” will also occasionally be used.
- 2 In 1945, F. I. Kleshko was one of the first to establish Mongolian choral singing, and Dorjdagva worked with him to train the members of the state choral group (Uyanga 2020).

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11 Mongolia in transition

1986–1990

Joseph E. Lake and Michael Allen Lake

The years from 1986 to 1990 witnessed a dramatic shift in Mongolia. It began this period as the second oldest communist country; it emerged as the first post-communist country in Asia. These years saw the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire and a dramatic change in Mongolia's relationship with the United States, which became an important supporter of the new Mongolia as it struggled to build the first democratic political system and free market economy in Central Asia. The chapter discusses this period through the eyes of many Americans who supported the process and from the memoirs of some senior Mongolian officials, and it offers more of a personal perspective on change rather than an analysis of events. It is also a classic tale of diplomacy with results achieved through a confluence of events and the efforts of individuals on each side, often despite a lack of policy guidance or knowledge and understanding of the other side.

In the early 1980s, foreign visitors saw Mongolia as a nation seeking to bridge the gap between its nomadic past and its socialist future. A popular propaganda poster, for example, shows a Mongolian horseman leaping from the yellow path of feudalism, over the black path of capitalism directly on to the red path of socialism. Mongolia was seen as a model satellite and an example of how communism could transform a backward feudal society into an industrial nation. The late 1980s revealed how false those perceptions were. As J. Batmönkh (2001), the last Marxist-Leninist leader, observed in his memoir, "Our social structure could not stand the test of time" (11).¹

Communist Mongolia: built on foreign debt and assistance faces change

While Mongolia had a seemingly strong economy, the foundations of that economy were weak. Between 1974 and 1989, Mongolia's population grew by an estimated 50% (Worden and Savada 1989, 263). Mongolia had critical problems that the government was unable to address satisfactorily, such as increasing real income and providing adequate housing and health care for this growing population (Batmönkh 2001, 89). On a per capita basis, in 1989 Mongolia was one of the largest recipients of foreign aid in the world. The Soviet Union and its satellites provided credit to cover the financial gap between imports and exports. Batmönkh

(2001) reported that at least 60% of investment in Mongolia's five-year plans was financed by foreign loans (92). As a result, Mongolia built up a huge foreign debt to sustain the image of success. Between 1975 and 1989, Mongolia's debt to the Soviet Union increased by 6.7 billion to 9.7 billion rubles (Batmönkh 2001, 26). According to *The Economist*, from 1981 to 1985, Mongolia absorbed approximately \$3 billion in Soviet aid, a sizeable sum for a population of only two million (Jarrett 1988, 82).²

Mongolia was dependent on Soviet support at the most basic levels. In 1984, Mongolian–Soviet links included direct ties among 20 Mongolian and 30 Soviet ministries and departments that were tasked with handling economic affairs (Worden and Savada 1989, 157). At the beginning of the 1980s, about 32,000 Soviets and 15,000 East Europeans were working in Mongolia (Worden and Savada 1989, 150).

In his May 1987 speech to the 13th Congress of the Mongolian Trade Unions, Batmönkh was very clear, stating, “The main failing is that socialist competition is oriented only to fulfilling net plan indices and is insufficiently linked to key problems of the country's economic development” (Jarrett 1988, 84). He also expressed concern about continued shortages of foodstuffs and consumer goods, the poor quality of many goods, inadequate housing, and bureaucratic problems such as red tape and lack of initiative (Jarrett 1988, 84).

1986: the winds of change blow from Moscow

As with most major events in Mongolian history between 1921 and 1990, the catalyst for the change which ultimately brought the world's second oldest communist country on to the world stage as a fledgling democracy came from Moscow. Mongolia had relied on Soviet economic support and military presence to build the nation and protect itself from China. But just as Mongolia was facing its own internal challenges, the ripples of Gorbachev's rise to power and introduction of glasnost (*il tod*) and perestroika (*öörchlön baiguulalt*) in Moscow reached this remote corner of Central Asia.

The impact of Gorbachev's initiatives threatened Mongolia's security and economic well-being. As the Mongolian leaders sought to adjust to both the domestic challenges and the evolving relationship with the Soviet Union, they could not imagine the changes the next four years would bring. Despite efforts of some in the government, from the perspective of Mongolia's leadership, there was no clear advantage to building ties with the US (Yondon 1997),³ but unexpected Soviet encouragement to do so pushed another change on Mongolia.

In January 1986, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze visited Ulaanbaatar. As a result of preliminary discussions about the visit, the Soviets were aware of renewed interest among some Mongolian officials to pursue diplomatic relations with the United States, even though Batmönkh had personally vetoed the proposal. To Batmönkh's surprise when they met, Shevardnadze raised the question of Mongolia establishing diplomatic relations with the United States. According to D. Yondon (1997, 22), then First Deputy Minister of Foreign

Affairs, Shevardnadze said the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Politburo had concluded that Mongolia establishing relations with the United States meets “our common interest.”

The same source reported that the Mongolian Foreign Minister M. Dүgersүren recommended to the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party Politburo that Mongolia take no action on Shevardnadze’s comment and wait for another approach by the United States (Yondon 1997, 23). The Mongolian leadership remained ambivalent.

Subsequent events are less clear. From the Mongolian perspective, Yondon discusses what the Mongolians perceived as an approach through the US Interests Section in Cuba in early 1986 (Yondon 1997, 23). But the Head of the US Interests Section described the meeting as a Mongolian initiative.⁴

In April 1986, the new Mongolian Ambassador in Tokyo sent a diplomatic note to the American Embassy offering to continue the excellent relationship that his predecessor had with Ambassador Michael Mansfield (Johnson 2019). It is not clear from the memories of those involved on the American side whether it was the usual courtesy circular diplomatic note to all missions sent to the American Embassy by mistake, or an initiative by the Mongolian Ambassador (Donald Keyser, email to authors, July 25, 2019; Johnson 2019; Yondon 1997, 24). Yondon (1997, 24) makes no reference to it in his memoir, although he does recall an effort he believed he made in the summer of 1986 through the Japanese Ambassador in Ulaanbaatar. As a result of this failure to communicate and understand each other, the United States did not have any reason to believe there was serious interest on the Mongolian side to restart the effort to establish diplomatic relations.

Gorbachev’s July 28, 1986, Vladivostok speech announced Moscow’s willingness to withdraw troops from Mongolia – suggesting Moscow’s commitment to the Mongolian state it had nurtured was decreasing (Batmönkh 2001, 176).⁵ This shift put pressure on the Mongolian leadership for change. After the Vladivostok speech, senior Chinese officials in both Beijing and Washington encouraged the United States to reach out to the Mongolians. From the perspective of the Mongolian leadership, there was no clear advantage to building closer US ties. However, Soviet encouragement to do so certainly raised the specter of change in that relationship at a time when Mongolia faced multiple domestic problems.

The confusion on the Mongolian side is well documented in Yondon’s (1997) account, *The Big Veto*. Despite the confusion and mixed signals, the United States initiated another effort to negotiate with Mongolia (Jarrett 1988, 79).⁶ On August 19, 1986, the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Vernon Walters, was instructed to approach the Mongolian Permanent Representative, G. Nyamdoo (who had participated in the aborted 1973 talks) and propose discussions for normalization (U.S. Department of State 1986). Despite continued resistance by some in Ulaanbaatar, the Mongolians gave an initial positive response.

Negotiations were finally initiated on December 12, 1986, and completed with a joint signing ceremony by Ambassador Nyamdoo and Secretary of State George Shultz on January 27, 1987.

1987: slow development

While establishing relations with the United States was a major change for Mongolia, goals were limited on both sides. As the first US Ambassador to Mongolia observed in 1988, "Their sensitive geopolitical location, overwhelming economic dependence on the USSR, insularity and ignorance of the non-communist world, and distance from the US all severely constrain how far a Mongolia-US relationship can proceed even if the political atmosphere continues to improve" (U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar 1988c).

In the meantime, the Mongolians continued to feel the weakening of Soviet support. Soviet troop withdrawals began on April 16, 1987, and, according to Soviet officials, were completed in early June. This drawdown still left the USSR with about 45,000 troops in the MPR (Jarrett 1988, 81), but it was a message to the Mongolian government and made them more nervous given their traditionally strained relationship with China.

The pressure was on to broaden international ties to support Mongolia's continued independence. However, there was a weak foundation on which to build a relationship with the United States given Mongolia's limiting experience of 66 years in the Soviet world. They had little understanding of the difference between working with Moscow and working with Washington.

There was no strong driving force on the American side. The United States' interest was limited and its commitment to build ties even more nebulous. US business interest in Mongolia was not significant – approximately one million dollars in trade in 1986 and an estimated 500 Americans visited Mongolia in 1987. The only national interest mentioned at the time was creating the ability to help understand changing Soviet goals in Asia and Sino-Soviet relations.

Mutual understanding and personal relationships are the essence of successful diplomacy, and money is the lifeblood of bureaucracy which makes possible a presence to build this understanding and relationship. Without a driving force from either side, relations developed slowly.

Even though the United States recognized Mongolia in January 1987, the first American diplomats did not arrive until March 1988, and the Embassy officially opened April 17, 1988.⁷ Even then it was staffed by Americans only for the summer. The first telegram addressed to the new Embassy was delivered to the Embassy of the USSR – the telegraph office did not even know that the US was there. Communication problems persisted and were a practical problem in working successfully with Washington until after Secretary Baker's 1990 visit. Of the approximately 200 telegrams sent by the Embassy between October 1989 and February 1990, almost 19% did not get through on the first try. The initial American commitment was to spend approximately \$125,000 ("What Will Embassy" 1988) in the first year and limit the resident staff to two American officers for the first five years.⁸

Even if their goals were not clear, the Mongolians were more active than the Americans. The Mongolians purchased an Embassy building in Washington, and Ambassador Nyamdoo, who had negotiated the agreement, became the first

Mongolian ambassador to the United States, presenting his credentials to Deputy Secretary Lawrence Eagleburger on March 14, 1989.⁹ However, the absence of any driver for improved relations delayed him having an opportunity to meet with the Secretary or formally present his credentials.

The first US Ambassador, Richard L. Williams, presented his credentials to the Mongolian President on September 13, 1988 – 18 months after relations were established (“Richard Llewellyn Williams” n.d.). Symbolic of the desultory pace of development, during the winter of 1988–89, the US Embassy in Ulaanbaatar was staffed entirely by Mongolian employees – probably another first for the United States.

Williams’s September 1988 meetings with Mongolian senior officials emphasized both the nebulousness of Mongolian thinking and the concern about China that drove their efforts to build a relationship with the US. During a meeting with Williams, the Foreign Minister Ts. Gombosüren recalled that in 1956, after the 20th Party Congress in Moscow when Khrushchev denounced Stalin’s dictatorship, the Soviet Foreign Minister had gone to Beijing to tell Mao that many of Stalin’s mistakes would be rectified. Mao responded that he hoped Mongolia’s independence would be speedily corrected. Gombosüren recounted other similar Chinese statements and border incursions during the Cultural Revolution (U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar 1988c).

When Secretary Shultz met with Gombosüren on October 5, 1988, the only practical result of the meeting was agreement that relations were developing at a satisfactory pace (U.S. Department of State 1988).

Meanwhile, Mongolia’s future was being driven by events beyond its control. The Soviet empire was crumbling, increasing pressure on the Mongolian leadership to seek an undefined future different from the past. The Mongolian people were unhappy with the slow pace of changes initiated by Mongolian perestroika. In 1988, an embassy officer, Victoria Nuland, who had broad contact with younger Mongolians, described their desire to “recapture their traditional script, their culture, their songs, their literature, their history” (personal communication, April 26, 2019). She also noted that one of the results of changes in Eastern Europe was that East Europeans came on the trains bringing goods to trade, music, and ideas. Young Mongolians began to see economic opportunity beyond the Party, the army, and the nomadic lifestyle. During a September 1988 visit to Darkhan, local officials were frank in discussing unhappiness among workers demanding more and better quality consumer goods, especially cloth, books, household goods, and electronics (U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar 1988b).

Steve Mann, the *chargé d’affaires*, attempted to engage senior Mongolian officials but with limited success since Ulaanbaatar was waiting to receive an ambassador. However, the consistent policy message coming from the Mongolian side was a conservative one: Mongolian leaders saw themselves in the Soviet orbit as they always have been. The generational conflicts that would come to a head in the December 1989 to March 1990 period were already becoming clear.

Although not recognized at the time, this was the first time change in Washington was also destined to have a significant impact on Mongolia’s future.

January 1989 brought the George H. W. Bush Administration to Washington and a new Secretary of State, James Baker, who personally would have a seminal influence on the future of the US–Mongolia relationship.

Mongolia continued its efforts to build a presence on the international stage, drawing heavily on its experience in the Soviet bloc, focused on form with substance to follow, while the US focused on substance. Despite the differences in approach, incremental progress in the relationship continued.

Discussion continued concerning mutually agreeable permanent Embassy sites. The US reopened its Embassy in Ulaanbaatar in a temporary location with the arrival of a two-person permanent staff led by Michael Senko, a mid-level political officer and later an Ambassador, as chargé d'affaires on June 4, 1989. An agreement for Cooperation in Cultural and Education Exchange was finally signed when Secretary James Baker met with Foreign Minister Gombosüren in New York on September 29, 1989. More importantly, at that meeting Baker informed Gombosüren that he looked forward to stopping in Mongolia – a harbinger of the key role he would play in the future development of the bilateral relationship.

1988–1990: the vortex of change in Ulaanbaatar

In June 1988, US Embassy Ulaanbaatar noted that the Mongolian Government and Party are “much better at articulating the problems than formulating the cures” (U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar 1988a). This prescient observation identified the fundamental challenges faced by the regime in the last two years of its existence. Signaling the changes, at the end of June 1988, the man who had dominated Mongolian diplomacy for 25 years, M. Dүgersүren, stepped down.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Mongolia’s relationship with the Soviet Union was crumbling. The government was increasingly aware that changes had to be made internationally. If they understood the implications of what was happening in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), it was not reflected in their interactions with the United States. CEMA was the basis for economic relations between Mongolia and the rest of the Soviet bloc that provided economic assistance and was the source of most trade. At the CEMA Prime Ministers meeting in Sofia on January 9–10, 1990, reluctant agreement was reached with Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov’s proposal that, starting in 1991, trade should be based on world prices and convertible currency (Haberman 1990). On March 17, 1990, in Prague, the complete reorganization of CEMA was announced (Jefferies 1993, 40). However, in Ulaanbaatar, foreign policy and economics quickly took a back seat to the dynamic environment of political change.

The Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) Plenum on December 11, 1989, and the meeting of the Great People’s Khural on December 12–13 gave glimmers of change. However, the most noteworthy event was the December 10 demonstration organized by the Mongolian Democratic Association (MDA) that produced a list of demands – including democratic elections in 1990 and a more market-oriented economy. A December 14 article in *Izvestia*, the official paper of the Soviet government, noted the MDA demonstration as well as widespread

unhappiness in Mongolia with the pace of perestroika. The article provided an even more ominous reference for the future pointing out Mongolia's economic dependence on the Soviet bloc and that Mongolia had yet to take a decisive step away from "credit socialism."

As Batmönkh (2001) described in his memoirs, the leadership struggled through the beginning months of 1990 to seek an understanding with demonstrators. They were not successful (Batmönkh 2001, 3–11). The beginning of the end for communist rule in Mongolia and the weakening of ties with the Soviet Union were becoming another driving force in the bilateral relationship with the US. In Batmönkh's (2001) words,

During those harsh spring days, people continued their hunger strike in front of the Government House and made political demands. More and more people were joining the event. The Mongolian Democratic Association continued to demand the resignation of the Central Committee of the MPRP, its Political Bureau and the Government, to dissolve the People's Great Khural, and to set up a Provisional People's Khural. It would have been difficult for any citizen to remain calm and peaceful at home and in their workplaces under such circumstances. Time was pressing us to take urgent, decisive political steps in order to bring back a peaceful life and to reduce existing societal tension.

(12)

Finally, on March 9 things came to a head when Batmönkh (2001) refused to sign a harsh decree to crack down on the demonstrators (13) and ultimately recommended the Politburo resign (16). In a televised address that evening, he announced that a March 12 Special Party Plenum would agree to the demands of the hunger strikers, including the resignation of the Politburo. It not only changed the political future of Mongolia but also began to change the dynamic of its bilateral relationship with the United States. Batmönkh's announcement marked the end of 69 years of communism in Mongolia. Mongolia faced a different future with no plans and no clear agenda.

Through this period the two small embassies which had opened in Washington and Ulaanbaatar had carried out the day-to-day work of diplomacy to build the relationship, despite being ill prepared to lay a foundation for the new Mongolia. Against the backdrop of dramatic domestic changes in Mongolia, the gradual implementation of cultural contacts started; discussions were initiated on the facilitation of business ties, including initial talks about a trade agreement and Most Favored Nation status. With little initial success, the Mongolians pushed the United States to support their desire to join the Asian Development Bank and encourage foreign investment in an unspecified joint venture enterprise.

A new impetus and an uncertain future

The dramatic events of March 1990 gave new impetus to the bilateral relationship. The political future of Mongolia had changed and the dynamic of its bilateral

relationship with the United States began to change as well. On March 12, 1990, Secretary Baker agreed to see Mongolian Ambassador Nyamdoo. When they met on March 15, the Secretary opened the door wide to future developments in the relationship, emphasizing the US wanted to see Mongolia move forward to a free market and suggesting he and Foreign Minister Gombosüren should stay in touch to further improve bilateral relations (U.S. Department of State 1990). From the perspective of Washington at large, Mongolia did not matter, but Baker became the driving force on the US side for the relationship.

In Ulaanbaatar, the Central Committee of the MPRP met for two days, March 12 and 13, to call for an extraordinary meeting of the Congress of the MPRP to amend the article of the Mongolia People's Republic's Constitution about the party's leading role. It also accepted the resignation of the Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee and elected new members.

The Mongolians appeared to be aware of the implications of the changing nature of CEMA and the potential end of credit socialism that had built modern Mongolia. On March 30, Ambassador Williams was advised that First Deputy Prime Minister Byambasüren would like to visit the US at the end of April in connection with a United Nations General Assembly Special Session. Meanwhile, they actively sought membership in (and assistance from) the Asian Development Bank, established diplomatic relations with South Korea, and reached a trade agreement with Japan that included aid and Export-Import Bank credits.

However, their efforts to build the relationship with the United States did not suggest a clear understanding of how the world worked outside the socialist bloc and a willingness to share with the United States the reality they faced. At that time, the United States did not understand the implications for Mongolia of CEMA's impending demise. As a result, the United States had little knowledge of the looming economic disaster facing Mongolia. It is possible that the Mongolians themselves did not fully understand the implications of what was happening.

Williams's farewell meeting on March 31 with the new Head of State, P. Ochirbat, reflected the Mongolians' preoccupation with the reality of domestic change and how to manage it. Yet Ochirbat seemed to recognize the need to change how Mongolia worked with the rest of the world. He expressed an interest in creating scholarships in the US to train their people how to deal with the non-socialist world.

At Gombosüren's farewell dinner for Williams that night, he emphasized the changes that were taking place in Mongolia and throughout the socialist world and Mongolia's desire to continue to change. He characterized the US-Mongolia relationship as good but needing specific and concrete content, political and economic ties, and scientific and technical cooperation. He also stressed the importance Mongolia placed on its relationship with the United States and its need for US political and economic support, including economic aid.

Williams was very careful in his response, reflecting that policy in the US had yet to catch up with the dramatic changes in Mongolia. Promising to seek to strengthen the relationship, he noted that in the short term, direct economic aid appeared out of the question. He emphasized the possibilities for trade and

investment ties with US business and educational assistance for attending US universities were made by the organizations involved, not the US government (U.S. Embassy Ulaanbaatar 1990a, 1990b).

The third neighbor emerges

On April 19, 1990, Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, Richard H. Solomon, hosted a private lunch for Ambassador Nyamdoo and the as yet unannounced nominee for Ambassador, Joseph E. Lake. At this lunch Nyamdoo renewed Foreign Minister Gombosüren's invitation to Secretary Baker to visit Mongolia in connection with a possible US–Soviet ministerial meeting at Lake Baikal in August, stressing that August was a good time to visit Mongolia.

Solomon responded that the Secretary's schedule would make it difficult for a visit at that time. Solomon suggested that he might visit in late July or early August after the ASEAN meeting. In the course of the discussion, Nyamdoo emphasized Mongolia's delicate balance between the Soviet Union and China, noting Soviet troop withdrawals by 1991 and the difficulties Mongolia was having in negotiating with the Chinese.

When First Deputy Prime Minister Byambasüren visited the United States in late April to attend the United Nations General Assembly Special Session, he stopped in Washington. On May 1, he had meetings with Vice President Dan Quayle and Secretary Baker. The meeting with Baker was very positive and although no commitment was made, Byambasüren left believing that the Secretary would visit Mongolia in 1990. Baker was clearly the driving force on the US side as this was his third meeting with a senior Mongolian official in five months – an unprecedented event for a country with which the US had no significant engagement and no defined interest. But the level of Baker's interest was still not yet recognized by others in the US government.

On Monday, May 6, the nomination of Lake as the new ambassador was announced. The next day, during a Congressional hearing in response to pressure from Representative Steve Solarz, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs Desaix Anderson said the US would soon have a resident Ambassador in Mongolia. A phone call from Anderson after the hearing was the first word Lake received that he would be going to Ulaanbaatar permanently in the summer of 1990 instead of 1991 as had been planned. As a practical matter, this meant there was no funding for an expanded Embassy and programs or a residence for a US Ambassador.

In late May, Secretary Baker decided he would visit Mongolia that summer. The Secretary's decision prompted rapid movement to negotiate a Peace Corps agreement, which he signed while there, and pushed movement in several other areas of the bilateral relationship. Although baffled by it, some parts of the US Government began at least to recognize the Secretary of State's interest in Mongolia.

Baker's plan to visit Mongolia accelerated the confirmation process for a resident Ambassador, and on June 22, Lake was confirmed. The race was on for the

new Ambassador to be in Ulaanbaatar before the Mongolian elections and Baker's arrival. After Lake arrived on July 13, he presented his credentials to President Ochirbat on July 18, and Secretary Baker's visit was announced on July 20. As the Secretary's spokesperson, Margaret Tutwiler, said, "The Secretary's visit is an important step in US-Mongolian bilateral relations, and serves to demonstrate our support for Mongolia's peaceful democratic reform process, leading to Mongolia's first multiparty election since 1921."

The Secretary's planned visit became the vehicle for starting to create a strong base for the new relationship. Secretary Baker's personal interest, particularly his support for the success of the Mongolian transition, became the driving force on the US side. The disinterested bureaucracy began to be energized. The Mongolians were soon to receive what they most needed from the Americans to build the relationship – attention. However, they were ill-prepared for what lay ahead.

Mongolia's July 22 and July 29 elections were the litmus test for whether the Secretary would visit. The United States brought in four officers, one from Washington and three from Beijing, to observe the electoral process. The US evaluation was that the election was a fair, open, and democratic process. An incredible achievement when you consider the history of Mongolia. Baker arrived on August 2.

In the three weeks between Ambassador Lake's arrival and that of the Secretary, in addition to the election observers, the small Embassy staff was augmented with temporary duty assistance to prepare for a wide ranging four-day visit by Secretary Baker. One of the advance stops captured the essence of the challenges Mongolia and the United States faced. Ambassador Lake flew to a remote rural area in a Soviet-designed, Polish-made AN-2 biplane. In Mongolia, domestic animals were not fenced in; rather, the places one did not want them to go were fenced off. The runway was fenced off, but in classic socialist fashion the fence had not been maintained. In order to land, the plane had to buzz the runway to drive the yaks off. It was a long way from Washington, DC and the US Air Force jet on which Baker would arrive.

Unfortunately, Baker did not visit the site, thanks to Saddam Hussein's August 2 invasion of Kuwait that coincided with his arrival in Ulaanbaatar. Baker emphasized his interest in Mongolia when he discussed this coincidence in his memoir, *The Politics of Diplomacy*. His comments capture the essence of his attitude toward Mongolia and the US policy that emerged from his efforts:

It was apparent that my trip to Ulan Bator [sic] would have to be truncated but it was important not to cancel altogether. Mongolia was a small, ethnically homogeneous country of two million with an uncomplicated economy, that had been dominated for decades by its giant Communist neighbors, the Soviet Union and China. Yet it was newly independent and democratic, the first Communist nation in Asia to commit itself to reform. Only days before, Mongolia had completed its first multiparty elections in nearly seventy years, with a voter turnout of more than 90 percent. The revolution in Eastern Europe was slow in spreading across the Urals, but Mongolian democracy

had a real chance to flourish, and I wanted to lend the moral encouragement of the United States to their efforts.

(Baker 1995, 6)

Although his first visit to Mongolia was cut dramatically short, during his remarks Baker suggested that the United States could be Mongolia's "third neighbor" after the Soviet Union and China. Baker's personal commitment to Mongolia set up the fundamental problem that haunted the US relationship with Mongolia in the year ahead – the bureaucracy's inertia versus the leadership's policy.

Challenges ahead

Immediately following his departure, on August 3, Baker made a significant decision approving the waiver of legal prohibitions on foreign assistance to Mongolia over the objections of the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs led by Assistant Secretary Richard Schifter (Solomon and Mullins 1990). Finding money for assistance was still a significant challenge. If US officials could find funding, they could now use it. Obviously, the Mongolians faced some of the same problems within their system. A property agreement had been reached previously for the United States to occupy an unbuilt building when it was finished at some indeterminate time in the future.

Meanwhile, the two small Soviet-style apartments used by the Embassy were simply not big enough to house the minimal staff, much less the changes anticipated in the future. Immediately prior to the Baker visit, an American television crew had done an interview with Ambassador Lake. His office was so small that only the interviewer and the Ambassador could fit in. The cameraman had to set up his camera in the hall. After the interview, the cameraman quipped that it was the first time he had ever filmed an interview in a closet.

Despite the efforts of the Mongolian Bureau for Diplomatic Services, they were unable to find an available building which would appear to be adequate for an American Embassy. Ambassador Lake went to see President Ochirbat and frankly told him that the Embassy could not accomplish the goal of building the relationship that he and Secretary Baker desired because the only space available was inadequate to do their work. Within days, the building which is now the US Embassy in Ulaanbaatar was offered to the Ambassador.

Meanwhile, from the US perspective, what was happening in the Soviet–Mongolian relationship was essentially opaque. US decisions about Mongolia were made without knowing the implications for Mongolia of the January 1, 1991, changes in CEMA economic relations in general and with the Soviet Union in particular. After decades as an extension of the Soviet economy, Mongolia's economy would be independent from the Soviet Union's whether Mongolia was ready or not.

The Mongolian government must have been aware of the dismal economic future it faced with the demise of CEMA, but it did not share its understanding with the United States. In a September 1990 meeting, President Ochirbat asked Ambassador Lake to arrange for \$230 million dollar a year assistance for

Mongolia, anticipating this would replace Russian assistance. The Mongolians could not even conceive of the magnitude of challenges such a proposal would entail in terms of the US Congress and bureaucracy. They simply saw the US as the answer.

Over the following year, between October 1, 1990, and September 30, 1991, US assistance went from zero planned aid to over \$30 million. A significant step forward from 1987 when there was a serious debate about whether the US could afford to open an Embassy in Mongolia and only budgeted \$125,000 for the task (“What Will Embassy” 1988). This \$30 million was an incredible change by US standards but a pittance from the Mongolian perspective.

As change began to take place in Mongolia, the US was idealized far beyond its capabilities and the reality of the relationship. After having been the evil monster for so long, it now seemed perfect in every way. The new US presence, however small, was welcomed with open arms, and the Mongolians were disappointed that the US did not do more.

Despite these challenges, the foundation for the relationship was being laid thanks to the commitment of Secretary of State Baker and the hard work of the people from both sides in their tiny embassies. Mongolia was a place where the United States could make a difference.

Notes

- 1 Research for this chapter came from three US Department of State Freedom of Information Act Requests: 199900358 (Documents of record pertaining to the relations between the United States and Mongolia, January 1987 to July 1990); 199900361 (Documents of record pertaining to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Mongolia, January 1986 to January 1987); 199900431 (Documents of record pertaining to relations between the United States and Mongolia, July 16, 1990 to August 30, 1993).
- 2 In 1990, the Department of State estimated that Soviet aid to Mongolia had totaled \$800 million to \$1 billion annually (“Soviet Relations with Mongolia” 1990).
- 3 Yondon was First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1972 to 1988. His memoirs contain an extensive and detailed account of efforts to establish relations starting with the 1971 initiative.
- 4 Ambassador Curtis W. Kamman was Head of the US Interest Section of the Embassy of Switzerland in Havana in 1986. He was also one of the two American Foreign Service Officers assigned to study Mongolian in the 1960s in anticipation of opening a US Embassy in Ulaanbaatar (Amb. Curtis Kamman, email to authors, June 26, 2019; *U.S.- Mongolia Relations* 2005).
- 5 Although some have suggested the Vladivostok initiative took the Mongolians by surprise, Batmönkh says in his memoir that Medvedev, former Secretary of the Central Committee, contacted him by telephone to inform him that “our Secretary-General [Gorbachev] is planning to speak about regional peace and security and to propose some concrete initiatives during his visit to the Far East, namely in Vladivostok. In this connection he is planning to speak about the partial withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Mongolia.” Batmönkh (2001, 176) claimed he responded that he had been supporting this step “designed to establish peace and security in Asia.”
- 6 Jarrett was the desk officer for Mongolia and author of the 1986 telegram instructing United Nations Ambassador Vernon Walters to approach the Mongolians. He provided

an excellent, but not officially cleared, perspective on the American understanding of Mongolia in 1987 in this *Asian Survey* article. In a May 6, 2019, email to the authors, he said, “The level of interest was only moderate . . . but there also wasn’t much objection.” Alicia Campi (2018) writes that she was in contact with Ravdan Bold, who worked at the Mongolian Embassy in Tokyo (and later Ambassador to the United States), in moving the recognition process forward. Ambassador Bold was unable to respond to the authors’ questions concerning this period. This account, however, differs from the declassified official record and the memories of key US officials in correspondence with the authors (Donald Johnson, Embassy Beijing; Donald Keyser, Embassy Tokyo; and Ambassador Williams, Director of the Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs, Department of State).

- 7 Steven Mann, later an Ambassador and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, was the first chargé d’affaires in Ulaanbaatar. The second officer was Victoria Nuland who served later as an Ambassador as well as Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson for the Department of State.
- 8 Richard L. Williams served as Director of the Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs from 1985 to 1989. He was resident in Washington as the first US Ambassador to Mongolia from 1988 to 1990.
- 9 Memorandum from Assistant Secretary William Clark to Secretary of State Baker, April 3, 1989.
- 10 Dүгүсүрен served as deputy minister at various times in the 1950s and 1960s and twice as minister, 1963–1968 and since August 1976. Between these two terms he was Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and Geneva. The new Foreign Minister, 56-year-old Gombosүren, had served as deputy minister in the early 1980s and then transferred to the party Central Committee’s international relations department. At the 19th Party Congress in 1986, he was elected to candidate membership of the Central Committee.

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12 Language, identity, and relocalization

Social media users in post-socialist Mongolia

Sender Dovchin

Drawing on the linguistic practices of young social media users in Mongolia, this chapter discusses how new forms of languages and identities are produced in post-socialist Mongolia while varied “global” linguistic resources are assimilated and injected into the local language – Mongolian. This study is timely in the context of post-socialist Mongolia, as multiple foreign languages continue to spread over and are used in more diverse ways than ever in today’s digitally connected contexts such as social media. Before 1990, Mongolia was a socialist nation, the satellite of the Soviet Union, with the Russian language being the most important foreign language for political discourse and social mobility, accompanied by the vast popularity of Russian movies, cuisine, arts, and literature across Mongolia. Many Mongolians would study in the Soviet Union at the tertiary level, while many Russian teachers and ex-pats were invited to Mongolian schools and other institutions. From the start of the 1960s, the Russian language was taught as a required foreign language beginning in the fourth grade for general public schools. During this time, the Mongolian language started absorbing many loan words from Russian, which are still commonly used in current Mongolia (cf. Marzluf and Saruul-Erdene 2019).

English and other Western languages were uncommon in the socialist era, and Western cultural elements were largely resisted as “capitalists’ language and culture” (Marsh 2010). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mongolia embraced a new democratic society in 1990, transforming itself peacefully from a socialist to a democratic country with a free-market economy. Mongolia welcomed the cultural and linguistic diversity from the rest of the world, accompanied by English and other foreign languages that have replaced the once-popular Russian language. While English plays an extensive role in both institutional and noninstitutional contexts nowadays, specifically due to the enhanced increased availability of new media and technologies, other Western (German, French, Spanish, etc.) and Asian (Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, etc.) languages have also become one of the inextricable sociolinguistic realities for the daily lives of social media users in Mongolia. New social media sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram are particularly caught up in this transition, where these different languages are mixed continuously and interlaced with the Mongolian language (Dovchin, Pennycook, and Sultana 2017).

Today, considering the relatively small population (about 3 million), the statistical report of *Internet World Statistics* (2019) shows that there are more than two million Internet users in Mongolia, with approximately two million Facebook users. Within this impressive online social network, the linguistic bricolage of Mongolian with other global languages that appears on the thousands of online pages and websites is often treated as the same languages that are taught in the foreign language classrooms. While a great deal of concern has been expressed about the role of English and other additional foreign languages in institutional contexts in Mongolia since 1990 (Cohen 2005; Marzluf 2012), there has been less focus on the noninstitutional role of these languages in Mongolia. They seem to appear with tremendous frequency in the form of English-Mongolian, Japanese-Mongolian, Korean-Mongolian, and other types of bricolage in the Facebook context, while the foreign language is typically treated as ideologically and linguistically separate from the Mongolian language and culture by the majority of language educators and policymakers in Mongolia.

This is a problem because the informal function of these foreign languages in a particular society is an integral part of understanding the overall linguistic and cultural development and evolution of post-socialist Mongolia since 1990. The social media linguistic practices of young Mongolians are rapidly evolving due to current globalization, which impacts on overall sociolinguistic practices. These practices need to be addressed within current language educational settings. We, as language educators, need to investigate and grasp the implications of these new conditions and the ways English and other foreign languages are being integrated into the newly transformed local society (Dovchin 2017b). This chapter thus seeks to understand the noninstitutional role of multiple diverse global languages in Mongolia such as English, Japanese, and Russian, avoiding dominant conceptualizations of foreign languages either as a distinct linguistic code or as hegemonic foreign languages.

The chapter addresses three main questions:

- 1 How and to what extent are diverse languages used in the language practices of social media users in Mongolia?
- 2 What happens to the Mongolian language as a result?
- 3 What are the implications for post-socialist national identities?

The theory of linguistic relocation

Recent trends in the sociolinguistics of globalization related to the role of language mixing in the local language context have started to question whether such conventional categorizations as “codeswitching” really work in understanding the real-life sociolinguistic use of people living in today’s globalized world (Canagarajah 2013; Dovchin 2018; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Lee 2017; Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). As noted elsewhere, codeswitching is a common practice in which two separate language systems are used in daily interaction (Myers-Scotton 2007). Codeswitching essentially refers to the linguistic code-switching and

code-mixing by bi/multilinguals of two or more languages in discourse (Gardner-Chloros 2009; Poplack 2001). Codeswitching deals with speakers who are essentially proficient or at least skilled in the various languages they borrow or switch, flouting other language users who are not necessarily fluent or proficient in the various languages they switch between (Dovchin and Lee 2019).

It is, of course, common to find dialogues such as codeswitching in which speakers fluently switch between two or more languages. What might cause us to hesitate, however, as Emi Otsuji and Alastair Pennycook (2010, 241) acknowledge, is that the so-called codeswitching dialogues might “derive not so much from the use of different first and second languages” but instead as the result of mixed linguistic codes becoming the *lingua franca* of people’s communication. When people use a diverse pool of linguistic resources simultaneously, it becomes not very helpful to analyze their repertoires “with a concomitant assumption about distinct codes being switched or mixed” (Sultana, Dovchin, and Pennycook 2013, 700).

From this point of view, new post-structural theories have started emerging, reiterating the troublesomeness of delineating linguistic topographies through unequivocal languages or language categories and advocating for the flexible transitioning between and across languages (Dovchin and Lee 2019). Terminologies such as translingual practice (Canagarajah and Dovchin 2019; Lee 2017), translanguaging (Li and Zhu 2019), transidioma (Jacquemet 2013), polylingualism (Jørgensen et al. 2011), metrolingualism (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), transglossia (Dovchin, Pennycook, and Sultana 2017), linguascapes (Dovchin 2018), and transcribing (Li and Zhu 2019), inclusive of a “translinguistic turn,” have emerged in an effort to apprehend the critical hurdle of linguistic diversity in today’s highly globalized world. The main emphasis of these concepts is understanding language as non-static and fluid, as it dismisses the concept of “languages” as nameable categories (Lee 2017). Languages have always been kaleidoscopic and fluid, because they may take on miscellaneous layers of (dis)integration and (dis)assemblages of semiotic resources with one’s communicative practices (Pennycook and Otsuji 2019). It is far more relevant to view this type of linguistic bricolage as the “integrated forms of stylization” (Sultana, Dovchin, and Pennycook 2013, 700), since these speakers are involved within the combination of various cultural modes, symbols, styles, and genres.

Under this “translinguistic turn,” to specifically grasp the meaning of integrated English and other additional languages within the local language, thus, can be referred to as linguistic resources that are continually being reformed and recreated in a specific locality. English, for example, can serve a local sphere through creatively mixing varied genres and resources, which means the localized English may involve more than just English. English has widely diversified, developing into homegrown local forms and used in multiple locations (Schneider 2007, 1). In many contexts, English has become a local and indigenized language, which indigenous populations adapt and appropriate for themselves, “thus contributing

to its diversification and the emergence of new varieties” (Schneider 2007, 1). For example, the use of English (in post-colonial communities) is not unconditional:

It is clear that the [Sri Lankan Tamil] community is using English on its own terms. The pervasive code-switching suggests that English is made impure through mixing with Tamil. Tamils are accommodating English in a way that it will fit into their ethos. In other words, they are vernacularizing – or Tamilizing – English!

(Canagarajah 2005, 439–40)

The use of English in local contexts thus is about, according to Suresh Canagarajah (2013), how individuals mobilize different semiotic resources and adopt different negotiation strategies to make local meanings across linguistic boundaries rather than focusing on fixed grammar, forms, and discrete language systems. Christina Higgins (2009, 2) refers to English as a “component of ‘urban vernaculars,’ or ways of using language that is better described as amalgams rather than as codeswitches between languages.” English needs to be seen as part of local language practice. In order to understand how hybridized English is interpreted in the local context, Higgins (2009) reconceptualizes English as a social everyday practice that is continuously being reconstructed in a specific locality. English can serve a local sphere through creatively mixing varied genres and resources, which means the localized English may involve more than just English. Out of this mix, new locally relevant meanings, new forms of languages, and new forms of identities may occur. We could view English, and other additional languages in different local contexts as “translocal” languages since different forms of locality are, according to Jan Blommaert (2010, 79), transported into other contexts of locality such that these “localities do not necessarily become more ‘global’ or ‘deterritorialized’ because of such patterns of translocalization”; that is, in Blommaert’s (2010, 79) words, “meanings are primarily imported into local systems of meaningfulness” and “they remain as local as before.” This is in line with Pennycook’s (2010) argument that we need to consider what language users do with English (and any other languages), how they use it to their own conditions, and what new meanings are generated by this use. The common portrayals of English, for example, as having spread around the world as the language of a globalizing world inadequately portray an understanding of what is already local. It is thus far more dynamic to understand English (and any other languages) through how it transforms into the question of what it means to be local.

The notion of “relocalization” in this regard is essential in understanding the language used in terms of “fertile mimesis,” a form of language repetition that creates a difference (Pennycook 2010, 35–37). The linguistic relocalization is not understood as a repetition of the same thing, but of repetition as an act of linguistic renewal and revitalization. Language is relocalized each time differently, which creates a new or local meaning in which it occurs. As Sirpa Leppänen et al. (2009, 1081) suggest, “The skilled use of the new media together with the use of English

form a powerful combination providing local actors access to translocal activity spaces and communities of practice where young [people] can create discourse that is appropriate and meaningful within their particular contexts and normative frameworks.” The use of English, for example, in Finnish social media contexts, Leppänen (2007) further notes, is characterized by innovation, appropriation, and creativity, constructing particular new meanings, identities, and communalities. Young Finns appropriate English as a communicative resource in different ways to negotiate their meanings, identities, and a sense of belonging, along with the varied Finnish other resources at their disposal. As Leppänen et al. (2015, 4) point out, superdiversity in social media is realized by “the mobility and mobilization of linguistic and other semiotic resources that are distributed, recontextualized and resemiotized in various ways in countless and rhizomatic digital media practices mushrooming on the internet.”

Meanwhile, the theory of relocalization also advocates for the performance and construction of new local identities, as the locality is not a pre-given or predecided entity but is rather produced through “the processes of borrowing, blending, remaking and returning” (Pennycook 2007, 6). English in this sense acts as a relocalized language, “a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations” and is “bound up with transcultural flows, a language of imagined communities and refashioning identities” (Pennycook 2007, 6). The critical point of relocalization theory is to understand how people break predefined, predecided, and fixed rules and go beyond distinct categories or established thoughts so as to mix elements or transcend their boundaries and limitations. We need to, thereby, take relocalization processes seriously in terms of identity construction or identity performance because the multiple layers of combination of resources, modes, ideas, and meanings embedded within relocalization form new local identities, opening up new ways to understand how English in relation to relocalization may affect the creation of new local identities. People use language varieties, not because of who they are, but rather to perform who they are by using varieties of language. Relocalization, in this regard, should be discussed as the way in which people perform acts of identity through a series of constant social and cultural acts, rather than through the expression of a prior and predefined identity. These arguments identify the practices of linguistic relocalization as a productive space, which suggest new ways of exploring the enactment of one’s identity, and language is the medium through which identities are negotiated and created. Social media users, therefore, perform acts generative of new identities by constantly manipulating and playing with the linguistic resources available to them, rather than performing pre-fixed acts (Dovchin 2020).

Following these lines of thought, this chapter will look at the role of English and other additional global languages in how the Mongolian social media users relocalize available resources and make new or locally relevant meanings, languages, and identities out of that context in order to create their own post-socialist identities and “Mongolianness.” The role of diverse global languages in the local context is therefore understood, following Sender Dovchin, Shaila Sultana, and Pennycook (2015), not only through how social media users borrow, repeat, and mimic those languages but also through the ways they make new local linguistic meanings and

new identities within this complex relocating process (see also Dovchin 2017a, 2017c). I am interested in how social media users take up not only “linguistic innovations with heavy borrowing from English, but any number of other languages” along with other local linguistic and cultural resources that are pragmatically and intertextually involved within their daily lives (Jacquemet 2005, 265–66). These social media users show the complex processes of “relocalization” – a form of language repetition that creates new meanings and identities to digital language practices as they draw on diverse linguistic and cultural resources.

Linguistic netnography

The data examples used in this chapter derive from a larger longitudinal “netnographic study” – an ethnographic qualitative research methodology that specifically looks at the linguistic behavior of online users (Androutsopoulos 2015; Kozinets 2015; Varis 2016). A digital ethnographic analytic framework is often used to look at online users’ linguistic behaviors, employing a natural and unobtrusive manner. It is a qualitative research method explicitly devised to investigate the multiple interactions and texts across virtual communities. It can be understood as a written account resulting from fieldwork, in which both fieldwork and textual accounts are methodologically informed by the cyberspace (Varis 2016). Through netnography, the researcher participates in the online environment while observing and taking notes of what is culturally and linguistically happening in a particular online space (Dovchin 2015). One of the most important methods incorporated within netnography is an online ethnographer’s prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and cautious vigilance (Kozinets 2015). This method gives us unobtrusive access to observe the social media users’ diverse linguistic resources and the linguistic creativity they draw upon. It provides a convenient space for self-reflection and self-identification for many social media users, which can be expressed through the array of textual and linguistic resources.

Through netnography, I looked into the linguistic behaviors of social media users in Mongolia, starting from July 2011 until December 2018, focusing specifically on Facebook and YouTube. As for Facebook participants, 50 students from various social backgrounds aged between 18 and 28 from the National University of Mongolia (NUM) volunteered to participate in the research. Their socioeconomic and regional backgrounds before they gained admission to university were diverse, varying from affluent to poor and from rural to urban. These participants were immediately added to my own Facebook accounts as soon as they decided to become part of the research project. When students leave the classroom, the first thing many of them do is to switch on their computers or mobile phones (assuming they were off to start with) and open their Facebook. I have particularly selected an extract for the Facebook data presentation section from the hundreds of pages of data that the netnography has yielded, with the primary aim of introducing a range of linguistic resources that Facebook users make use of in their linguistic relocation practices (see Table 12.1).

As for YouTube data, following Tina McCorkindale’s (2010) research method to deal with social media data, only public YouTube pages were selected for this

research due to ethical issues, while “closed” or “restricted” YouTube pages were not qualified. Following Heather Battles’ (2010, 35) reference to the Internet-based public groups and message boards – “publicly available, unsolicited information” – YouTube public pages became one of the most useful online sites to engage with the Mongolian social media users in “real-time.” I have particularly selected an extract for the YouTube data presentation section from the hundreds of pages of data that the netnography has yielded, with the primary aim of introducing a range of linguistic resources that YouTube users make use of in their mixed language practices (see Table 12.2).

These examples, however, cannot fully represent the role of English across all social media users in Mongolia in general, as the research has been restricted to only a limited number of social media pages. Social media profile names of all users retrieved in these extracts are pseudonyms, and profile picture windows were all removed to protect anonymity. Linguistic examples presented in the chapter followed the Leipzig Glossing Rules. All Mongolian data texts, including the interview accounts used in the data examples of this paper, have been translated from Mongolian into English by the researcher.

Linguistic relocation, social media, and identities

The examples in Table 12.1 are taken from the Facebook interaction between a group of Mongolian male friends. The discussion is focused around the photo, which was uploaded by the Facebook user, Temüülen. With 5000 Facebook friends, Temüülen is an active Facebook user who updates his Facebook on a daily basis and is often seen to be directly interacting with his Facebook friends.

Table 12.1 Extract from Temüülen’s Facebook conversation.

	<i>Facebook conversation</i>	<i>Transliteration of Mongolian Cyrillic (when applicable)</i>	<i>Translation</i>
1	Temüülen: Хэрлэн голоос 3 ширхэг жижигхээн шпрот барьчихаад буцаад явж байтал туслах зураг дарчихаж. Наадмаар ч сайхан явчихаад ирсэн шүү. Хамт явсан бронууддаа баярлалаа.	Kherlen goloos 3 shirkheg jijigkheen shprot barichikhaad butsaad yavj baital tusalakh zurag darchikhaj. Naadmaar ch saikhan yavchikhaad irsen shuu. Khamt yavsan bronuuddaa bayarlalaa.	My assistant took a shot of me when I was heading back after I caught three very small sprats from the Herlen river. Had a great trip during Naadam. Thanks to bros who accompanied me.
2	Bat: Mani bol 20g barij bailaashd		I caught 20.
3	Zorig: Загастай ирсиймуу бро	Zagastai irsiimuu <i>bro</i>	Did you come with the fish bro?
4	Temüülen: Mongol ylna zogsolt ymu: p		‘Mongolia victory!’ kind of gesture?
5	Zaya: Мундаг бро шүү 😊	Mundag <i>bro</i> shüü	You are my super bro!

Notes: Language guide: Mongolian – regular font; English – *italicized*; Russian – **bold**.

In Table 12.1, Temüülen presents us how English (and also Russian) is mixed with the Mongolian language, creating further locally relevant new meanings. We see how a peculiarly American English form, specifically from male urban African-American usage, the term, “bro” (meaning “brother”) has been relocated into the Mongolian language, in which the new relocated version has already become the popular online orthographic choice for many social media users in Mongolia. For example, in line 1, Temüülen updates his Facebook wall in Cyrillic Mongolian, describing how he enjoyed his trip with his friends during *Naadam*, a traditional Mongolian festival held throughout the country in mid-July. The festival hosts “three manly games,” including traditional Mongolian wrestling, horse racing, and archery. Many Mongolians take summer holidays during this time and travel across the country with family members and friends. On his Facebook wall post, Temüülen provides a caption to his photo where he is seen walking in the river with his friend. He explains that he was on his way back to the campsite after catching three “sprats” from the Herlen river. Note that Temüülen uses the relocated Russian, “shprot barichikhaad” (“after catching the sprats”), integrating the original Russian term “shprot” (“sprats”) into the Mongolian phrase, “barichikhaad” (“after catching”), and creating this Russianized Mongolian phrase. Note, however, that the Russian term “shprot” has been deeply relocated into the Mongolian language since the Soviet Era. Mongolians view this Russian-originated phrase as part of the Mongolian language, and hardly anyone seems to question the authenticity of this Russian phrase and think of it as “foreign.”

In fact, there are many deeply relocated Russian linguistic resources that are commonly used in the Mongolian language since the Soviet era, which may make no sense to native Russian speakers. These relocated Russian phrases are thus better understood through the sociolinguistic history and background of Russian language and culture in Mongolia. As I established earlier, Russian was the most important and widely spoken foreign language in the past when Mongolia was a socialist nation. Before 1990, Russian was the only foreign language taught across all educational levels as a compulsory course subject in Mongolia. Since 1990, when Mongolia transformed from a communist regime to a democracy, its overall higher education policy in terms of foreign language education has been drastically reformed. Its heavily Soviet-style educational system, with Russian language teaching playing the primary foreign language role, has been gradually replaced first by English and more recently by other languages. As a result, the sociolinguistic significance of Russian has been drastically lessened in a newly democratic Mongolia. A majority of the Mongolian population started to learn English, diminishing the importance of Russian (Dovchin 2018). However, the role of the Russian language and culture has never been entirely erased. In fact, as Kelli Beery (2004, 106) highlights, “Mongolians seemed to have little need of Russian and concentrated on the learning of English” after the Democratic Revolution, yet Russian is “so entrenched in Mongolia that it was never fully replaced.” As Franck Billé (2010, 243) also notes, “For many Mongols Russian does not feel foreign and . . . it only takes a little alcohol to tease out a Russian facet that is just there under the surface: when drunk, many Mongols will start speaking Russian.” Many Mongolians still have a strong emotional attachment to

the Russian language, culture, cuisine, and literature. Many Russian high schools still exist in Ulaanbaatar and are deemed to be some of the most elite of the higher education institutions in the capital (Dovchin 2018).

Meanwhile, in line 1, Temüülen thanks his friends who accompanied him on his trip: “Khamt yavsan bronuuddaa bayarlala” (“Thanks to my bros who accompanied me”). Here, the original English term “bro” – the abbreviation for “brother” – has been used in the form of Cyrillic Mongolian orthography, “bronuuddaa” (“to my bros”). This is the Anglicized Mongolian phrase, in which the relocalization of the English term “bro” is integrated into the Mongolian suffix plural “-nuud” and the preposition “-daa” (“to my”). Note also that the original English word “bro” is relocalized into the grammatical, phonetical, and syntax structure of the Mongolian language. The Anglicized Mongolian term “bro” has been widely used throughout the rest of the Facebook interaction. In line 3, Zorig replies, “Zagastai irsiimuu bro” (“Did you come with the fish bro?”); in line 5, Zaya writes, “Mundag bro shüü” (“You are my super bro!”). Both Facebook participants use the Cyrillic Mongolian “bro” by relocalizing it into the Mongolian syntax structure.

In post-socialist Mongolia, the term “bro” is widely used in greetings between young male companions, which symbolizes strong male bonds or long-time buddies. There is no appropriate Mongolian equivalent for English “bro,” and it is worth noting that these male Facebook participants are “doing gender” through the usage of English “bro.” It seems like a highly potent linguistic site and a symbolic formula for the construction of masculine identity (Meân 2001; Melnick and Wann 2004). These male buddies seem to “do gender” while spectating each other’s activities on Facebook, as they tend to fortify their masculinity and “brotherly” identities by “male-bonding” through certain masculine terms such as “bro.” Note, however, that this English term has been used in Mongolia only since the start of 1990 when Mongolia transformed itself from a socialist to a democratic society. Before 1990, English was rarely heard in Mongolia since it was considered the language of capitalist ideology (Marsh 2010). Since 1990, following the popularity of the English language, English linguistic resources have become one of the most commonly relocalized resources in the language practices of Mongolians. Multiple new examples and new forms of English relocalized terms were born within the Mongolian society (Dovchin 2017c). These Anglicized Mongolian terms now sound and look “totally Mongolian.” These types of English resources serve as a process of linguistic relocalization, in which they can no longer be categorized as English but rather as established artifacts of the linguistic diversity of post-socialist Mongolia.

Example 2

The examples in Table 12.2 are taken from the YouTube discussion board associated with a Mongolian TV program called “The 100 Leaders of Mongolian Nation” (“Mongol tulgatny 100 erkhem”) featuring Asashoryu, a former Yokozuna (“Grand Champion”) of Professional Sumo Wrestling in Japan. Asashoryu (i.e., Dolgorsüren Dagvadorj), a Mongolian-born sumo wrestler, became the first Mongolian Yokozuna in Japan. In this TV program, Asashoryu discusses with the hosts about his love for his country and parents and his emotional attachment with sumo. As the interview gets intense, Asashoryu becomes more emotional and teary-eyed.

YouTube's geographical representation of this program's viewership suggests that Asashoryu's audience is primarily Mongolian. This video attracted 449,998 YouTube viewers, who left their impressions and commentaries on the discussion board of the program. The relocation of Japanese sumo accompanied by Japanese linguistic and cultural resources, the discussions about a post-socialist Mongolian hero and sumo champion, and English social media-oriented resources embedded within the Mongolian language form a new post-socialist Mongolianness and patriotic identities across Mongolian social media users. Out of 332 comments, most of the viewers express patriotic views and their national feelings of pride, suggesting that Asashoryu was one of the "national heroes" of Mongolia; in fact, many viewers claimed they had stopped watching sumo when Asashoryu retired from wrestling. I will present seven comments out of 332 comments overall.

Table 12.2 Extract from YouTube sumo comments.

<i>YouTube discussion board</i>	<i>Transliteration of Mongolian Cyrillic (when applicable)</i>	<i>Translation</i>
1 ВК: Би тэнгэрийн хүү Удахгүй би аян замд гарна Эр хүний замналд гарна <u>Аса</u> аваргаас илүү замнал байх болно.	Bi tengeriin khüü Udakhgüi bi ayan zamd garna Er khünii zamnald garna <u>Asa</u> avargaas ilüü zamnald baikh bolno	I'm a son of the sky I will start my journey soon The journey of my manhood It would be a journey beyond being an Asa Yokozuna.
2 ТН: аса аваргыг барилдаж байхад <u>сүмог</u> шимтэн үздэг байж ээ.	<u>Asa</u> avargyg barildaj baikhad <u>sumog</u> shimten üzdeg baij ee.	When Asa Yokozuna was wrestling, I used to watch the sumo enthusiastically.
3 SR: Энэ хүнийг <u>сүмогоос</u> гарсанаас хойш бараг үзхээ байсандаа тэр спортыг . . . Мундаг хүн шүү бүх зүйлийг даваад гараарай. . .	Ene khüniig <u>sumogoos</u> garsanaas khoish barag üzkhée baisandaa ter sportyг . . . Mundag khün shüü bүkh zүйliig davaad garaarai. . .	After this man retired from sumo, I almost stopped watching that sport. Super man! You will get over everything!
4 CD: <u>Сүмо</u> гэдиймаа японд у үсэг байдаггүй	<u>Sүmo</u> gediimaa yaponд u үсэг baidaggүй	It should be spelled as 'Сүмо'. There is no letter 'y' in the Japanese language.
5 AA: Avariin hamgiin ehelj duulsan ypon duunüii ner n yu yum bol medeh n heeled ogooch <u>onegaishimas</u> .		What is the name of that Japanese song that the Yokozuna was singing at the start? Can you please let me know if you know? onegaishimas.
6 LB: Аваргын дуулаад байгаа япон дуунуудын <u>линк</u> эсвэл нэр нь байна уу?	Avargyn duulaad baigaa yapon duunuudyn <u>link</u> esvel ner ni baina uu?	Do you have the link or the name of these Japanese songs that the Yokozuna is singing?

Notes: Language guide: Mongolian – regular font; English – *italicized*; Russian – **bold**; Japanese – underlined.

The second extract primarily presents us with the ways that Japanese linguistic resources are relocalized within the social media users in Mongolia. Before 1990, Japan was considered by Mongolians as one of those “imperialist” and “capitalist” nations and generally treated as the enemy of communist Mongolia. However, with the arrival of democracy in 1990, Japanese linguistic and cultural elements began moving freely across Mongolia. The human mobility between the two nations rapidly expanded, and the number of Japanese ex-pats, tourists, and businessmen arriving in Mongolia substantially increased. Similarly, the number of Mongolians traveling to Japan has dramatically increased for multiple reasons, including to study, live, and work.

In particular, young Mongolian boys have started going to Japan to learn Japanese professional sumo (Dovchin 2018). As a result, the Japanese sumo has become extremely popular in Mongolia. There have been several Mongolian-born Japanese sumo champions in professional Japanese sumo history, including Hakuho, Asashoryu, and Harumafuji. Hakuho (i.e., Mönkhbat Davaajargal), for example, is the first non-Japanese sumo champion, who holds the record for the most undefeated tournament championships. A majority of the male Mongolian research participants declare their “passion” and “obsession” with Japanese sumo, due to the multiple reigning Mongolian champions in the world of professional Japanese sumo-wrestling (Dovchin 2015). Following this trend, “sumocized Mongolian” has been widely created and used in Mongolia, and the Japanese sumo-oriented linguistic resources have started being relocalized within the Mongolian language system. In other words, with the arrival of Japanese sumo in Mongolia in 1990, many Japanese sumo-driven new local words have started emerging. The “sumocized Mongolian” terms, therefore, belong to those normative expressions used by the majority of sumo fans in Mongolia (Sultana, Dovchin, and Pennycook 2013). Note that the Japanese sumo has been only popular in Mongolia since the post-socialist time, and the linguistic identities related to the Japanese sumo are relatively new, having been practiced only after 1990.

In lines 1 and 2, for example, we can see how the Japanese sumo title for the Mongolian sumo champion “Yokozuna Asashoryu” (“Asashoryu, the champion”) has been relocalized into the Cyrillic Mongolian language as “Asa avarga.” Here, the Japanese name “Asashoryu” has been transformed into the Cyrillic Mongolian as “Asa” – the shortened Mongolian version of “Asashoryu.” “Asa” has been linked with the Mongolian word, “avarga,” referring to the Japanese “yokozuna” (“champion”). “Asa avarga,” thus, is the common term for many Mongolians to refer to “Yokozuna Asashoryu” and many Mongolians use “Asa avarga” more frequently than the Japanese version. In line 1, the YouTube user writes an inspirational and motivational poem about Asashoryu, in which “Asa avarga” has been mixed with the Mongolian preposition suffix, “-aas” (“beyond”), creating the term, “Asa avargaas” (“beyond Asa champion or Yokozuna”). In line 2, “Asa avarga” has been mixed with the Mongolian suffix, “-yg [. . .] baikhad” (“was”), forming the term, “asa avargyg” (“Yokozuna Asashoryu was”). Here, the Japanese term, “sumo” has been relocalized into the Mongolian language through the mixture with the Mongolian

suffix “-g” (“the”), formulating the Japanized Mongolian term “sumog” (“the sumo”).

In fact, the Japanese term “sumo” has been relocated so profoundly into the Mongolian language since 1990, it is almost viewed as the Mongolian word by many Mongolian speakers. As shown in lines 3 and 4, the term “sumo” has been used in many different ways: in line 3, it has been Mongolianized through Cyrillic Mongolian orthography, expanded by the Mongolian suffix, “-goos” (“since”), resulting in “sumogoo” (“since sumo”). This YouTube commentator echoes many other YouTube discussants who also stopped watching sumo since Asashoryu’s sudden retirement. Sumo was extremely popular during the Asashoryu era, and for many Mongolians, sumo has almost become a national sport. However, Asashoryu announced his sudden retirement in 2010 due to his involvement with assault allegations. Since his retirement, many Mongolians have lost interest in sumo despite the fact that there are still active Mongolian sumo wrestlers. Asashoryu was specifically well known for his speed and for the entertaining style of his wrestling.

Since the Japanese term “sumo” is one of the most used Japanized Mongolian terms, some Mongolians even seek to normalize the term according to the grammar system of the Japanese language. The YouTube commentator in line 4, for example, offers an alternative “correct” spelling of “sūmo” instead of commonly used “sumo” because the letter “y” does not apparently exist in the Japanese language. It is therefore grammatically correct to use “sūmo” for this YouTube commentator despite its deep relocation into the Mongolian language.

Note also that the Japanese term “onegaishimas” (“please”) has been used in line 5 by one of the Mongolian YouTube users to ask for the Japanese song title that was sung by Asashoryu during the TV program. “Onegaishimas” has been used as a polite way of making a request embedded at the end of the Mongolian full sentence, “Avargiin hamgiin ehelj duulsan ypon duunui ner n yu yum bol medeh n heeled ogooch onegaishimas” (“What is the name of that Japanese song that the Yokozuna was singing at the start? Can you please let me know if you know? Onegaishimas”).

In line 3, the Russianized Mongolian term “sportyg” (“the sport”) has been used, the combination between the Russian origin word, “sport” (“sport”) and the Mongolian suffix “-yg” (“the”). The Russian root term “sport,” however, has been used in the Mongolian context even before the democratic revolution of 1990. It has been deeply relocated into the Mongolian language since the Soviet Era and is currently treated as the Mongolian or local word by the Mongolian speakers.

Lastly, we can also see the examples of English technology-oriented terms which have been relocated into the Mongolian language since 1990. With the emergence of the Internet and social media, technology-oriented English linguistic resources, which were absent in the language scene of socialist Mongolia before 1990, have become popular in the local context. In fact, tech-oriented Mongolianized terms are used by thousands, if not millions, of other Mongolian social media users both in online and offline contexts. To name a few: “chat-lakh” (“to chat”), “emaildekh” (“to email”), “messagedii” (“let’s message”),

“Facebookdekh” (“to Facebook”), “taglakh” (“tagging”), and so on (Dovchin 2017d, 2018). Nevertheless, they are now treated as some of the most ordinary linguistic resources in the local language and culture, followed by the wide spread of new technology in Mongolia. These types of tech-oriented relocalized terms are considered as fairly new linguistic norms and new linguistic forms as they have only been in use since the arrival of a free-market economy in 1990 and the rise of mobile technology in the early 2000s in Mongolia. However, these terms are already considered as part of the local vocabulary of Mongolia today, since there is no appropriate Mongolian translation that might capture entirely the concepts and images associated with the understanding of these technological terms. It is, therefore, also problematic to simply define these tech-oriented terms as English, as they only make local meaning at the level of semiotics in conjunction with the Mongolian texts, producing Anglicized Mongolian expressions. English is mostly relocalized and used as part of the technology default language integrated within the Mongolian language rather than functioning as a separate linguistic code. For example, in line 6, the term, “link” (“link”) has been relocalized through Cyrillic Mongolian orthography embedded within the Mongolian syntax, creating the local expression, “yapon duunuudiin link” (“the link of Japanese songs”). There is no equivalent Mongolian translation for “link,” which is one of the most popular technology-oriented terms that has been deeply relocalized and commonly used in the Mongolian language in the post-socialist era (Sultana, Dovchin, and Pennycook 2015).

Conclusion

Drawing on social media language practices of Mongolian users, this chapter offers an important contribution to understanding the role of English and other additional global languages in post-socialist Mongolia. The flux of social media undoubtedly has had an impact on post-socialist Mongolians, inventing, constructing, refashioning, and crafting their language practices and identities in their local contexts.

From the initial glimpse, it can be argued that the presence of these global languages in the social media space of Mongolian users is unquestionably popular and common. However, the fact is that now, when we visit social media pages such as Facebook and YouTube, English and other additional global languages are predominantly fused and mixed with the Mongolian language. It is almost impossible to either determine or comprehend the sole meaning of, for example, English or Japanese without paying attention to their relationship with Mongolian. English, Japanese, Russian, Korean, and other languages have become indecipherable to the native speakers of these languages when in contact with the Mongolian language. These languages are effortlessly integrated into the Cyrillic and transliterated Roman Mongolian scripts, full Mongolian syntax, and the Mongolian grammatical, phonetic, lexical, and syntactic systems. Rather than merely borrowing these diverse global languages for the Mongolian context, the Mongolian social media users relocalize these languages alongside Mongolian to

function in the space of localization. They can no longer be considered as a separate linguistic system but rather as part of the local language. Mongolian social media users exploit the varied symbolic and stylistic meanings attached to these different global languages to accommodate their own communicative practices through relocalizing these linguistic and cultural resources while generally maintaining the multiple layers of local meanings. Put simply, the social media users relocalize diverse available linguistic resources associated with particular stylistic and sociolinguistic contexts into the new local spheres of language use in an effort to capitalize on the original stylistic and symbolic meanings. The relocalization of this combination of global languages and Mongolian expand the linguistic horizon of the new linguistic domains of the Mongolian language. The linguistic relocalization further creates new locally relevant words, meanings, phrases, and terms, enriching the Mongolian language in the post-socialist era.

Overall, social media users in post-socialist Mongolia have started relocalizing their varied available linguistic and cultural resources, producing not only entirely new meanings and new languages, but also a new way of constructing their local identities. For contemporary Mongolian Internet users, the social media scene has become the most popular site for the construction of what it means to be Mongolian. Positioned locally between the fluidity of the global digital practice and the increasing global spread of English and other global languages, post-socialist Mongolian social media users are in a position of fluidity. Yet, this fluidity is also strongly relocalized and fixed by the strong Mongolian linguistic, cultural, and national resources such as the Mongolian language, Mongolian heroes, and other nationally relevant ideas and ideologies. This is an entirely new set of multiple and fluid post-socialist identities constructed in the forms of social media texts. The formation of these newly formulated post-socialist identities is a continuous process that reveals ideas about belonging and citizenship in Mongolian social media communities. These identities are not a predetermined or prefixed entity, but rather a constant site of struggle, negotiation, shift, and reformation. New forms of post-socialist Mongolian identities are performed and reformed through the linguistic relocalization practices of social media users, providing the Mongolian social media users with alternative ways of being modern Mongolians.

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13 Boundaries and peripheries

Shifting frames of identity, territoriality, and belonging among Kazakh ethnic minorities in Mongolia

Holly R. Barcus

Contemporary frontiers are not simply lines on maps, the unproblematic givens of political life, where one jurisdiction or political authority ends and another begins; they are central to understanding political life. Examining the justifications of frontiers raises crucial, often dramatic, questions concerning citizenship, identity, political loyalty, exclusion, inclusion and the ends of the state.

(M. Anderson 1996, 1)

Introduction and background

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as Mongolia began to emerge from its socialist period (1924–1990), and reassert itself as a sovereign nation distinct from the Soviet Union, the importance of forging a new “Mongolian” national collective identity emerged as well (Batbayar 2002; Sneath 2010). The quest for and process of negotiating a national identity has received much attention in the literature from both Mongolian and non-Mongolian scholars (See Batbayar 2002; Bulag 1998; Diener and Hagen 2013b; Kaplonski 1998; Sneath 2010). Alexander Diener and Joshua Hagen (2013b, 644) summarize the contested nature of national narrative formation, writing “In Ulaanbaatar, nomadism confronts sedentary modernism and neo-liberal capitalism, as well as the continuing communist legacy. In the city, like the country’s economy in general, these ideals are comingled and interconnected, but the linkages between them remain unstable and largely insecure.” Although Diener and Hagen (2013b) are specifically interrogating the visual and material landscape of Ulaanbaatar, their summary touches on the key tensions evident in national narrative development in Mongolia, specifically between nomadism and modernism, and the often conflicting perspectives on pre-socialist, socialist, and post-socialist imaginations of national identities.

Located at the far periphery of the former Soviet sphere of influence, Mongolia was a remote borderland region, emerging from its socialist period in 1989 and eagerly embracing new potentials for democracy (Rossabi 2005). The nation-building process was a primary task for the new government and establishing a cohesive national narrative of Mongolian identity, one that was inclusive of the broad territory and numerous ethnic groups, became an essential step in

nation-building. Much has been written about this process and the new icons and images that were produced to unify the nation. Christopher Kaplonski, for example, uses images of Chinggis Khaan, D. Sükhbaatar, and Zanabazar, to “explore the larger issues of the relationship between politics, the uses of history and the construction of identity” (Kaplonski 2004, 2). Diener and Hagen (2013b) extend this use of history as a multilayered and multidimensional expression of identity through urban form in Ulaanbaatar. Despite the attention paid to national scale narrative identity in Mongolia, identities are by nature nested and multifaceted and national identities are often not entirely aligned with state territorial identities (Kaplan and Herb 1999). As David Kaplan (1999, 31) argues,

National identity first, is bound up with the territory that helps define it; second, is not an enduring constant but a set of cultural attributes bundled with articulated political objectives; third, exists as an identity distinct from the state; and fourth, is situated within a hierarchy of geographically based identities that coexist and sometimes compete with it.

For the Mongolian Kazakhs, this nested hierarchy of identities and an adherence to a national identity separate from the state identity finds its roots in early imaginations of ethnicity and the perpetuation of state-sanctioned delimiters of ethnic categories, as formalized notably during the socialist period and carried through to the contemporary era.

Although Mongolia maintained its autonomy as a nation-state during the socialist period, its policies towards minorities deeply resembled those of the USSR, where a dual approach to managing ethnic minority populations simultaneously promoted individual ethnicities while seeking and demanding centralized control and creating a supranational structure primarily concerned with ethnic (Russian) majority status. Within Mongolia, the ethnic minority Kazakh population was clustered in the far western province of Bayan-Ölgii.¹ This remote region is home to the largest concentration of Kazakhs in Mongolia and remained relatively isolated through the early 2000s. Subsequently, this population is regarded as one of the few populations of Kazakhs to have extensively preserved cultural traditions and lifeways into the contemporary period (Diener 2009, 201), despite religious repression and collectivization efforts during the socialist period.

Although nation-building seeks to unite disparate groups of people who find themselves territorially united, social and geographic peripheralness, such as exists in the social and geographic borderlands of a territory during nation-building periods, can foster a stronger sense of ethnic identity in and among the peoples of border regions. This chapter utilizes the case study of Mongolia’s Kazakhs as an example of this process, drawing on two distinct periods of nation building to develop the argument. Mongolian Kazakhs have historically and contemporarily occupied a tenuous position balanced between narratives of inclusion in the state and exclusion from the nation. During the socialist period and under the umbrella of perpetuating socialism, including Kazakhs as part of the state-building process was essential to state building. With the fall of socialism, however, and the

redefining of collective Mongolian national narrative of identity, Kazakhs occupy a more tenuous position as not-quite-part of Mongolia and not separate from the nation in the early post-socialist period. In the late post-socialist period, however, this population seems to be moving socially and geographically towards greater inclusion in the state narrative of identity, while seeking to retain particular elements of ethnic identity. In this chapter, I argue that the roots of contemporary imaginings of ethno-cultural and civic identities of Kazakhs in Mongolia can be traced to their peripheral social and geographic locations formalized during the socialist period. This chapter describes these shifting frames of identity, territoriality, and belonging amongst Kazakh ethnic minorities in Mongolia.

Conceptual framework

Framing the evolution of identities within the context of nation-building processes, the importance of social and spatial borderlands helps contextualize the evolution of Kazakh identities from tribal and clan-based identities to a more contemporary imagining of Kazakh ethnicity as part of the nation-state of Mongolia. Diener (2009), in particular, develops a similar thread in his book, *One Homeland or Two?*, which incorporates the role of boundaries and state policies in the evolution of homeland narratives for the Mongolian Kazakh population. This chapter extends the analysis to include more recent expressions of ethnic identities, describing how the socialist period deeply shaped Mongolian Kazakh ethnic identities and how new migrations encourage the emergence of a more contemporary and highly nuanced ethnic identity.

Nations and nation-building – empire, identity, and borders

In 2005, Craig Reynolds wrote that the “nation is the soul, while the state is the body” (23–24), suggesting that the state forms the framework for the body of the nation, or possibly, as is reasonable to assume, contemporary nations. While territorial boundaries define the state, nations are defined by communities. These communities or nations within state boundaries may (or may not) share a collective identity associated with the state. Ethnic minority populations, in particular, while they may share the same rights of citizenship, may also possess their own narratives of identity within the state, ones that may complement or contradict state narratives. These narratives of inclusion and exclusion shape the lived experiences of ethnic minority groups within nation-states.

For this particular chapter, it is important to contextualize what was happening in Mongolia during the socialist period within the broader regional project of Soviet Empire building underway across the Eurasian steppe. In considering the role of nation-building, and specifically the implications of nation-building for ethnic minority populations such as the Kazakhs, the question of ethnicity and ethnic identity intersect with both historic nation-building processes and more contemporary processes of globalization, nationalism, and borderless “imagined” communities (see B. Anderson 1983).

As the quotation at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the placing of borders is neither arbitrary nor insignificant. Rather, these lines on the map engage questions of citizenship, political loyalty, exclusion, and identity (M. Anderson 1996). They further delimit the endings and beginnings of power structures, sovereignty, and the cultural landscape (Paasi 2003, 462). Boundaries are the means by which empires and nation-states establish territory and governance processes. They determine not only where but who – who are the peoples that will be included within the territories.

The delimitation of boundaries on maps happens after first being determined by military conquest and treaty negotiation (Perdue 1998, 264). Extensive land-based empires such as the USSR and the Mongol Empire incorporate within their boundaries a wide diversity of cultural and ethnic groups. As such, the governance and administration of multiethnic empires must manage disparate groups effectively enough to maintain the dominance of the imperial elite. Conversely, according to Beatrice Manz (2003), the existence and dominance of the imperial structures shape ethnic identities in ways that endured beyond the empire itself (71–72). The process of legitimation through identification and categorization, as Manz suggests, as well as through territorial delimitation, thus has far-reaching consequences.

As expansive empires gave way to nation-state structures, the question of “building” nations and the creation of national identities evolved as well. Much has been written about both the nation building process, particularly as it concerns post-socialist states, as well as the varied trajectories of ethnic minority populations and identity formation within these states (see Manz 2003; Reid 2010; Reynolds 2005). Identities by nature are multifaceted and multi-scalar (Kaplan and Herb 1999) and often place-based (see Relph 1976; Tuan 1991). Linking place and identity is not new, and concepts such as place identity and place attachment (see Proshansky, Fabian, and Kamiknoff 1983; Harner 2001) help articulate how specific geographic territories are linked to both natural and built environments and how these environments influence both group and individual identities. Anthony Reid (2010, 7) goes further to suggest that *ethnie* nationalism that identifies characteristics such as shared culture, language, and religion is associated with specific territory. Having a specific territory can, in turn, affect relationships between the majority and minority population groups. Jouni Häkli (1999) notes:

The contextual character of majority-minority relations is evident in the differences in how territoriality and the geographical scale are appropriated in ethnic groups’ self-definition as well as in the different paths along which the attitudes of minority groups develop toward the majority with which they reside territorially. For instance, a territorial emphasis in the group’s self-definition may turn into a positive and inclusive identification – a “peaceful coexistence” – with the majority identity. On the other hand, cultural demarcations may come to express longstanding contradictions and ambiguity in the relationships between ethnic minority and majority.

In Bayan-Ölgii, Mongolia, the cultural landscape of the Kazakhs provides distinct clues to the key differences between Kazakhs and ethnic Khalkha Mongols, notably the employment of Kazakh language and Islam as markers of difference. Most nonofficial signs are written in the Kazakh language and until recently, the Kazakh language was also taught as a primary language in many of the public schools in Bayan-Ölgii. Most *sum* centers in Bayan-Ölgii also have at least one mosque, and the call to prayer is heard at expected times.

While these markers may now, in the contemporary period, exist in the landscape even in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, their existence as the dominant built landscape features in Bayan-Ölgii speaks to the borderland nature that is both geographically peripheral to Ulaanbaatar and socially peripheral as well.

Social and spatial borders and peripheries

Border Studies encompasses a wide range of perspectives (see Wastl-Walter 2011). One element of these studies is the concept of “periphery.” Periphery can be applied to territory, such as being on the “edge” of a region or state, and it can be applied to social relations and communities whereby one’s “social location” (Pessar and Mahler 2003, 816) may position an individual on the “edge” of a social group or community.

Geographic peripheries and borderlands are often demarcated by territorial boundaries of nation-states. Such delimiters rarely consider the territorial boundaries of ethnic groups or indigenous populations. The histories of nations are replete with examples of co-ethnic populations who find themselves divided into “new” territories and nations whose boundaries spatially divide once cohesive ethnic territories (Herb 1999).

In the same way, boundaries are drawn around territories; through the process of nation-building, states draw parameters around belonging and identity. For example, they may define citizens and noncitizens, or privilege particular groups over others. These frameworks of inclusivity or exclusivity may work to further delimit groups at the core and groups on the periphery. As David Newman (2011) argues,

Demarcation is not only about the lines on the map which are then transformed into physical fences and walls on the ground. It is as much about the way that the societal managers determine the nature of inclusion and exclusion from various social categories and groups.

(35)

Following Newman (2011), borders and peripheries are somewhat malleable and may change through time. Being at the center or core of a territory or social group depends on the boundaries of the place or group, the social and geographic boundaries that are imposed. For the Mongolian Kazakhs, being at the periphery, both geographically and socially during the socialist period, allowed for relative coherence and preservation of a particular Kazakh identity into the post-socialist

period. But as Diener (2009) argues, the “viability of the Kazakh homeland in Mongolia is dependent [upon] the willingness of the ethnic Mongol elite to accommodate the Kazakh minority within the national and territorial structures of their now truly independent state” (160).

In summary, geographic and social borderlands and peripheries play an important role in influencing exclusion and inclusion within a nation-state. For Kazakhs in Mongolia, being geographically located on the edge of the territorial boundaries of the state allowed this population to develop a level of cultural and social autonomy from the broader Mongolian nation-state. This is still evident in western Mongolia. Movement of the population both spatially, through migration, and socially, through social mobility, however, has changed this positionality in the contemporary period, but the origins can be traced to earlier time-periods of nation building.

Who are the Mongolian Kazakhs?

Comprising nearly 3.9% of the total population (NSOM 2016b), the Kazakhs in Mongolia are culturally distinct from the dominant Khalkha ethnic Mongols and maintain a level of geographic and social separation. Kazakh culture, population size, and isolation from the core area of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, helps maintain within group ethnic identity still today. Historically, the Kazakh population was clustered in western aimags of Bayan-Ölgii and Khovd. In Bayan-Ölgii, Kazakhs are the majority population, comprising 88.6% of the total population in 2015 (NSOM 2016a, 28, 40).

The Kazakh population maintains the Kazakh language, a Turkic language, and practice Islam, although, like ethnic Mongols of these early periods, they too were seminomadic pastoralists and possessed specific clan identities, notably Kerei and Naiman (Bulag 1998, 98). Kazakh “ethnic” identity is historically based on tribal and kinship affiliations, and their collective sense of identity has evolved over time, particularly since the end of the socialist period (Barcus and Werner 2015). Mongolia’s Kazakh population retained many traditional cultural lifeways and practices into the twenty-first century due in part to their geographic isolation in western Mongolia (Diener 2009, 201) and carried many of these lifeways through to the contemporary period (Barcus and Werner 2015).

This geographic and social isolation or peripheralness has played an important role in the perpetuation of strong ethno-cultural identities up to the present time. However, such strong identities were further fostered by the exclusionary practices of the nation-state during periods of acute nation-building. As noted, Kazakhs in Mongolia historically affiliate identities with specific clans and territories. These tribal lineages were paramount in shaping lifeways and identities. During the socialist period, under the broader frame of Soviet influence, Mongolia adopted an ethnicities or nationalities approach to managing ethnic groups, shifting conceptions of ethnic identities, and, as is further discussed in the next section, the post-socialist period too reflects a notable shift in the framing of ethnic identity evolution for the Kazakh population in Mongolia. It is not until the present that these borderland communities and identities are slowly being eroded.

Data and methodology

This chapter describes the socialist period as strongly influencing the framing, imagination, and practice of Kazakh identities. To establish this, I look to historic accounts of Kazakh presence in Mongolia through the lens of borders and peripheries. Four periods are noted in this conceptualization of socialist influence: 1) pre-socialist, 2) socialist, 3) early post-socialist, and 4) contemporary. The pre- and socialist periods rely on secondary accounts and data sources about this period in Mongolia and the Soviet state broadly. The early post-socialist and contemporary period data come from fieldwork, which includes both contemporary experiences of respondents and their memories of the early post-socialist period. In each of the time periods, I focus on three themes to highlight the different dimensions of change. These themes include changes in civic identities, changes in ethno-cultural practices, and implications of geographic, peripheral location.

For the contemporary period, this chapter draws on observations and fieldwork among the Mongolian Kazakh population between 2006 and 2016 and reflects on historical changes that have positioned the Kazakhs not just as a minority population within Mongolia, but also as an “other” population whose identity remains fluid but is often considered in comparison to Mongolian Khalkha ethnic identities. Data come from historical accounts and contemporary field data collected during the 2000s. Two different field-based data collection efforts were undertaken. The first extended from 2006 to 2009, including three summer field data collection periods. During this period, 184 household interviews and 28 life history interviews were conducted in Bayan-Ölgii Aimag. Details of this data collection process and results were detailed in several papers (see Barcus and Werner 2010, 2015). A second phase of data collection was undertaken between 2015 and 2016. An additional 100 household questionnaires and 36 life history interviews were collected from Kazakh migrants to Ulaanbaatar (see Barcus and Shugatai 2018). This chapter draws on observations and evidence from these field studies to assess the linkages between nation-building processes of two different time-periods in Mongolia and contemporary imaginings of ethnic identities, specifically as they relate to the Kazakh population. As is the case in all identity research, conceptualizations of individual identities are highly fluid and subject to both the interpretation of the individual and the researcher. As much as possible, the emerging themes and ideas related to group identities are compared across interviews and observations to establish patterns in how identity and “Kazakh” are framed in these periods.

Tracing the evolving frames of ethnic identity across time periods

Pre-socialist period

Diener and Hagen (2013a) note that the many and diverse ethnic groups that predated state delineation of socialist identities “possessed varying ‘reservoirs’ of national histories, traditions and imagery to draw upon as they entered the post-socialist period” (489). Kazakhs arrived in what is today western Mongolia

in the 1860s–1880s, seeking pastures for their herds on the eastern side of the Altai Mountains. Most Mongolian Kazakhs trace their ancestors to Xinjiang province, the source of the earliest migrants, as well as to a later wave of families from Xinjiang seeking asylum in Mongolia from political turbulence in Xinjiang (1930s–1950s) (see Bulag 1998; Diener 2009; Enwall 2010). This area, however, was not considered part of Mongolia until later in the twentieth century.

Western maps of 50 years earlier show two separate parts of the Manchu Empire in “Mongolian” territory, with the western part of Mongolia distinct from “Outer Mongolia”. . . . The western region, which later was to play an important role in the events of 1911 and after was not yet viewed as an integral part of “Mongolia.”

(Kaplonski 1998, 43–44)

In the twentieth century, the western territories were incorporated into the territorial lands of Mongolia and Bayan-Ölgii Aimag was created in the 1940s (Bulag 1998, 98–99).

Thus, in the pre-socialist period, ethnic identification and cohesiveness was based on tribal and clan identities. This period predates the Mongolian “nation” but initiates a definition of the Mongolian “state” based on territories and borders. Civic identities did not begin to emerge until the socialist period, when the Kazakh population was incorporated into the Mongolian state through territorial acquisition.

The socialist period (1924–1990)

The socialist period marked the onset of a new form of governance, socialism, and tight alliance, or colonization, of Mongolia by the Soviets (Rossabi 2005). The project of creating a national identity in Mongolia also began during this period (Sneath 2010; Kaplonski 1998). In this period, I argue that the process by which the Soviets influenced the institution of ethnic identifiers in Mongolia, combined with the historically peripheral and borderland territorial location of the Kazakh population, affirmed Kazakh identity as “other.” Kaplonski (1998, 44) argues that although religion in autonomous Mongolia was a somewhat unifying factor, it was not central to the nation-state, thus identity centered on the nation needed to be constructed. According to Kaplonski (1998), “[I]n order to govern, the socialists had to create a national identity” (44), a goal that became the focus of the first half of the socialist period. Key features of the Soviet socialist policies and history help contextualize changes taking place in Mongolia during the socialist period and foreshadow the implications of these policies for contemporary Kazakh ethnic identities.

Soviet processes of managing nationalities – framing the socialist period in Mongolia

Beginning in the 1920s, Mongolia’s governance structure and processes came under the increasing influence of its Bolshevik, and later, Soviet, neighbor. This

influence is an important aspect of understanding the emergence and framing of Kazakh identity in Mongolia. Having attained power during the 1917 Revolution, the Bolsheviks faced the challenge of managing a territorially immense, ethnically diverse population. Predating the revolution and certainly continuing thereafter, one of the emergent and dominant concerns affecting the empire until its end in 1989 was what was referred to as the “the nationality question” (Hirsch 2005, 64). Even at the very beginning, Lenin was concerned that without cooperation among the vast array of ethnic groups within the empire, and especially if oppression ensued, “combative nationalism” would undermine “a fraternal cooperation of the workers of all peoples in building the new society” (Kohn 1971, 52).

For the Bolsheviks, and later the Soviets, the end goal was turning nomadic populations and periphery peoples into “cultured socialist citizens” (Hirsch 2005, 63). Francine Hirsch (2005) writes that

two paradigms vied for supremacy between 1918 and 1924 and found supporters among Bolsheviks and experts alike. These were the ethnographic paradigm and the economic paradigm. The former took the “ethnographic principle” – or the “principle of nationality” as it was called in the Paris Peace Conference – as its starting point and drew inspiration from the European nation state. Arguing that administrative-territorial divisions should conform to ethnographic boundaries, its supporters attempted to apply the “national idea” to the Soviet context.

(63–64)

Administrative and territorial organization was thus seen as a means of addressing the nationality question. Hirsch writes that until the early 1930s, rural people in the Soviet Union continued to identify themselves along clan and tribal lines, but this all changed by the early 1930s (Hirsch 2005, 145). According to Rogers Brubaker (1994), “nationhood and nationality were institutionalized in the Soviet Union [as] territorial and political on the one hand, ethnocultural and personal on the other hand” (47). Dmitry Gorenburg concurs, arguing that

[t]he slogan “national in form, but socialist in content,” symbolizes this dual approach. The national “forms” of ethnic republics, titular control of regional governments, and separate political and academic institutions for these republics all acted to reify and maintain ethnic identities. At the same time, the Soviet government enacted policies that favored the use of Russian.

(2006, 273)

In addition to the territorial management of nationalities, the Soviets sought to address the “nationality question” through its nationalities policy. In much the same way as the territory was ruled from Moscow but comprised a federalism of states, ethnic minorities were allowed on the one hand a degree of autonomy while simultaneously being forced to assimilate (see Hirsch 2005 for discussion). The early days of the federal system yielded significant autonomy to the ethnic minorities, but this quickly changed from broader autonomies, particularly related

to linguistic autonomy, to the suppression of differences among ethnic minorities (MacKenzie and Curran 2001). Desire for central control came in the form of linguistic and religious policies aimed at diminishing the power of the church and instilling a national universal language, Russian. Through the process of dividing by territory, then consolidating by similarity and finally by universalizing the Russian language, the Soviets, from the 1920s to 1989, carried out a process of controlling nationalities across the empire. Elements of these ideas emerged as well in Mongolia.

Nationalities and ethnicities in socialist Mongolia

Taking this framing into account, the question of ethnicity and ethnic identities takes on various narratives during the socialist period in Mongolia. For example, if we consider the question of consolidation of ethnicities and the issue of language across Mongolia, the parallels between Soviet socialist policies enacted across the USSR and those employed, at least partially, in Mongolia can be assessed in regard to the Kazakh population. This is the period in which the three themes more clearly emerge, underscoring the effects that socialism had on the nation-state broadly and the Kazakh population specifically. These themes include changes in civic identities, ethno-cultural practices, and implications of geographic, peripheral location.

Civic Identities. Numerous scholars have written about the development of “national” identity as a necessary precursor to the development of socialism in Mongolia (see Sneath 2010; Kaplonski 1998; Bulag 1998). This included the process of differentiating peoples based on ethnic groups and then beginning the process of “consolidation” to a common national identity. As David Sneath (2010) describes,

In the twentieth century, Mongolia became subject to the Soviet version of nationalist thought. As the state constructed a single national “people” (*ündesten, ard tümen*) it also, following the Soviet model, constructed the past in terms of tradition (*ulamjlal*), and launched the ethnographic project of identifying and describing sub-national “ethnic” groups or tribes (*aimag, yastan*).

(251)

This process of identifying and categorizing different ethnic groups became part of the nation-building process during the socialist period. “This state-constructed ethnic identity creates the conditions for people to manipulate identities,” writes Bulag (1998, 35), arguing that the identification of ethnicities and nationalities question in Mongolia was a process by which, during the socialist period, the *yastans* evolve into *ündestens*, thus smaller groups begin to “associate” into the larger *ündesten*, which in Mongolia is defined as the Khalkha Mongol group. He cites the decline of *yastans* from 23 in 1956 to 10 in 1969 as evidence of this process (Bulag 1998, 31–37). Bulag’s description of the state process of constructing

ethnic identities during this period echoes David Kaplan and Guntram Herb's (1999) concept of nested identities and calls for individuals within the territory to define their ethnic identities as part of their broader civic identity within the state. Diener's (2009) writings reflect a similar perspective:

Ethnic criteria were used to establish limited self-determination over land in the interests of breaking the allegedly discriminatory practices of the Khalkha against other ethnic groups and trumping the feudal dominance of local patrons. Ironically, the term "*aimag*" in the Mongolian Language was often used to refer to both "province" and "people". Such a practice of conflating people and territory not only evokes the nationalist literature . . . but is also, ironically, congruent with the dichotomous nature of Soviet nationality policy.

(87)

Ethno-Cultural Identities. The question of language is also key in understanding the process of assembling a nation. The Cyrillic Mongolian Script, as opposed to the traditional script, was adopted in the 1940s and established the Khalkha dialect as the standard language in Mongolia (Bulag 1998; 34; Marzluf 2012). The Russian language would also eventually make its way into Mongolia and was particularly prominent among the educated and rising party elite, and a way in which to facilitate language identities into national identity formation (Marzluf 2012). For the Kazakh population, the primary spoken language in Bayan-Ölgii, particularly the rural areas, is Kazakh. During the socialist period, both a Kazakh-language newspaper and a Kazakh-language publishing house existed, producing not only regular newspapers but several hundred books in Kazakh including fiction, nonfiction, and translations of books originally written in Mongolian and Russian (Enwall 2010, 249–50).

Although Mongolia's implementation followed later than the original policies in the USSR, and took on a particular Mongolian form, the use of ethnic group classification and language policies, which loosely followed the nationalities policies being employed across the Soviet Union, ultimately shaped the interpretation of ethno-cultural identities that would reemerge post-1989.

Borders and Peripheries. From a borders or peripheries perspective, the geographic location of Mongolia's Kazakh population, clustered in the remote and minimally accessible region of the country, isolated this population geographically from the remainder of the nation. This geographic peripheralness fostered continued Kazakh language use and ethnic identity, serving to maintain a distinctive set of cultural practices. However, as the socialist period evolved, violent suppression of religion pushed these practices underground in western Mongolia, as it did across Mongolia. As noted earlier, Bayan-Ölgii was incorporated officially into the territorial boundaries of Mongolia in this period. Although some Kazakhs would be transferred for employment to other locations across Mongolia, the majority of this population would remain clustered in western Mongolia through, and beyond, the socialist period.

Across the three themes, the socialist period in Mongolia imposed a more specific definition of “Kazakh” on this ethnic and cultural group effectively establishing through state-sanctioned processes who was or was not part of the group and defining accepted and prohibited expressions of these identities. Thus, in this period, the “civic” aspects of belonging to the nation (membership in the ethnic group) prescribed which elements of ethnic identity were acceptable. Being located in both a geographically peripheral place (having only been added territorially to the nation in the 1940s) compounded the effects of differing ethnic and civic identities.

The early post-socialist period

By the early 1990s, the nation-state of Mongolia had begun its second period of significant nation-building during the twentieth century. The early years of the new democracy were characterized by severe poverty and economic struggle (Rossabi 2005). Food insecurity was common and the withdrawal of Russian economic trade and support left Mongolia’s newly elected government struggling to put the country on a sound economic path. For the Kazakhs, still dominantly clustered in the far western provinces, the emergence of the independent Kazakhstan nation-state, calls for repatriation and the “return” of the Kazakh diaspora to Kazakhstan, created opportunities for Mongolian Kazakhs to “return” to the “Kazakh homeland” of Kazakhstan. Supported by generous repatriation incentives and policies, nearly half of the Kazakh population of Mongolia migrated to Kazakhstan in the early 1990s, expecting to be united with co-ethnic Kazakhs and to have better economic opportunities than were available at the time in Mongolia. This out-migration and subsequent return in the late 1990s was accompanied by growing ethnonationalism among Mongolia’s Kazakh population (see Barcus and Werner 2010, 2015; Diener 2009).

In this period, *ethno-cultural identities*, *geographic peripheries*, and *civic identities* intertwined to create a stronger degree of ethnic identity, fostered by geopolitical imagining of Kazakhstan and its relatively close proximity to the majority of Kazakhs in western Mongolia. Kazakh repatriation policies and validation of Kazakh ethnic identities fostered both migration to and from Kazakhstan but also a broader narrative of Kazakh ethnic identity.

The revival of Kazakh culture and nationalism in Kazakhstan inspired a similar parallel movement within the Kazakh population of Mongolia, which remained largely concentrated in the western aimags. In Kazakhstan, as Edward Schatz (2000) notes, Kazakh ethnonationalists promoted a “national-cultural revival” seeking to establish Kazakh as the official language. “After rancorous debates and heightened interethnic tensions in the early part of the decade, a compromise was forged in 1996. Kazakh was to be the ‘state’ language, while Russian was an ‘official language on a par with Kazakh’” (493).

Inspired by these political movements in Kazakhstan and calls for repatriation by the newly independent Kazakhstani government, Mongolian Kazakhs sought to establish themselves as the second nationality (*ündesten*) in Mongolia after the Khalkha, accomplishing this in the 1991–1992 Congress (Bulag 1998, 97). The

shift from *yastan* to *ündersten* signaled a shift in political status (Bulag 1998, 31), while the revival of traditional culture was one dimension of an effort to leverage “collective identities [to enable] mutual-help networks in the often precarious post-Soviet economic and social turmoil” (Sneath 2010, 260). The shift from *yastan* to *ündersten*, however, ethno-culturally and politically marks Kazakhs as “other” in Mongolia. They are a separate nationality, not just a different ethnic group within the Mongolian “nationality.” In interviews conducted between 2006 and 2009, almost two decades post-transition, a majority of Kazakhs in Bayan-Ölgii still felt strongly that Kazakhstan was a homeland of sorts for the Kazakh community in Mongolia (Barcus and Werner 2009). Many felt torn between their land of birth in Mongolia and what they considered the “homeland” of all Kazakhs in Kazakhstan.

The Kazakhs’ peripheral location and relative concentration in Bayan-Ölgii, had fostered a preservation of cultural practices and identities to a much greater extent than other Kazakh populations (Diener 2009, 201). Concomitantly, this remaining strong ethnic identity set them apart from other ethnic groups in Mongolia as well. The simultaneous shift towards a post-socialist government in Kazakhstan provided a pathway for Mongolian Kazakhs to envision themselves as having an identity, ethnic and national, separate from Mongolian identities, and inspired an imagination of the Kazakh “homeland” in Kazakhstan (Diener 2009; Barcus and Werner 2015). The ability to call on a reserve of cohesive ethnic identities, post-socialism, fostered the reimagination of Kazakh identity in Mongolia. This, however, was also fully supported by political events and imaginings in Kazakhstan. The desire of the Kazakhstani government to establish Kazakh ethnic identity bolstered the movement towards a cohesive Kazakh identity in Mongolia by providing through repatriation policies an escape from the economic distress of Mongolia and the opportunity to “return to the Kazakh homeland” of Kazakhstan, thereby leaving behind their economic, social, and geographic positions on the periphery of Mongolia.

But interviews also revealed that Mongolian Kazakh experiences in Kazakhstan were not uniformly positive. Some respondents reported poor housing conditions and inadequate job opportunities. Co-ethnic discrimination and the label of “*oralman*” marked Mongolian Kazakhs and Kazakh repatriates from other countries as well as “other” (Werner, Emmelhainz, and Barcus 2017). These experiences, argue Holly Barcus and Cynthia Werner, prompted a reterritorialization of identity through language, religion, and kinship ties in western Mongolia (Barcus and Werner 2015, 123). The increasing number of mosques in *sums* and the *aimag* center provided a visual affirmation of reemerging religious beliefs. Respondents during this time further reflected on the importance of shrine visitation and their connection to their birth place in western Mongolia as important reasons for returning from, or not migrating to, Kazakhstan (Barcus and Werner 2015). Kin networks and kinship ties emerged as particularly salient reasons for remaining in Mongolia. As Barcus and Werner (2015) write,

The social importance of these kinship identities and the corresponding geographic concentrations create strong linkages between the land of a particular

place and its incorporation into the cultural identity of individuals and families. Given that minimal lineages are geographically concentrated, it follows that maintaining a presence in the territory becomes an increasingly important aspect of these identities. It is particularly important because it reinforces strong kinship bonds and lineage adherence. Thus place identity is fostered through the generational ties to a territory, and reinforced through the importance of birth and burial sites.

(125)

While many Mongolian Kazakhs chose to stay in Kazakhstan, and have been successful, many returned to Mongolia by the end of the century, although the migration to and from Kazakhstan continues (see discussions by Barcus and Werner 2010, 2015; Diener 2009; Finke 1999, 2003; Werner and Barcus 2015).

The early post-socialist period in Mongolian history evidenced the long shadow of Soviet socialism in Mongolia and the implications of ethnic policies for the Kazakh population. Strong cultural ties to western Mongolia manifested themselves in territory and place attachments, reaffirmed by changing migration trajectories. While the designation of *ündesten* provided a level of acknowledgment and political stature, the majority of Kazakhs continued to be clustered in the western *aimags*, isolated economically and socially from what had rapidly become the economic and social center of Mongolia – the capital city, Ulaanbaatar.

The contemporary period

As the previous sections suggest, identity and identities within Mongolia were significantly influenced by geopolitical projects of the state. Kazakh tribal and clan affiliations were still paramount identity markers as Mongolia embarked on its socialist period. The socialist era saw the imposition of a Mongolian version of the Soviet ethnicities policies that further identified *yastan* and *ündesten* formally but also sought to bring many *yastan* into the broader Khalkha *ündesten* designation. The Kazakh population, although subjected to the same policies, remained distinct from the Khalkha majority and established themselves as a separate *ündesten*, or nationality, within Mongolia by 1992. For the Kazakhs, living in the geographic borderlands and being simultaneously part of the Mongolian state and feeling part of the Kazakhstan *homeland*, the more recent, contemporary period is one of transition (Barcus and Werner 2015).

Migration to Ulaanbaatar during this period, which began in the mid-2000s, again reframes ethnicity for Kazakhs in Mongolia. Kazakhs, particularly the growing number who are residing in the capital city, increasingly speak Mongolian and English fluently and achieve high levels of education and social mobility. Civic identity as *ündesten* in Mongolia remains strong; however, migration to the core of the country (Ulaanbaatar) has reduced although not eliminated social and geographic peripheralness.

Borders and Peripheries and Ethnic Identities. Geographically, an increasing number of ethnic Kazakhs now reside in Ulaanbaatar, and a growing segment of

the population is young, educated, and affluent (Barcus and Shugatai 2018). The level of cohesive ethnic affiliation, prescribed during the socialist period and rallied around politically during the post-socialist transition, is less visible in Ulaanbaatar. With out-migration from the aimags of significant co-ethnic concentration, namely Bayan-Ölgii and parts of Khovd Aimag, and relocation to Ulaanbaatar, the geographic isolation of the Kazakh population is diminishing, and with greater dispersal across the vast housing areas in Ulaanbaatar, there is no equivalent concentration of co-ethnics in Ulaanbaatar. Young career-focused Kazakhs in Ulaanbaatar lament that their children are more likely to learn Mongolian and English languages than they are to become proficient in Kazakh, despite speaking Kazakh in the home. Many Kazakhs now seek opportunities to learn about the cultural life-ways of traditional Kazakhs through local celebrations. In this period, migration to Ulaanbaatar and cultural cohesiveness become intertwined in conversations. Pressure for economic survival and success as well as state education structures favor learning the Mongolian language. Preserving the Kazakh language is seen as the key cultural element, along with to some extent religion, but migration to Ulaanbaatar, distant from the periphery, symbolizes a struggle for cultural continuity. This desire for language instruction for younger children emerged in most interviews. Parents and grandparents regret the lack of formal instruction and are often torn between maintaining the Kazakh language by speaking it at home and embracing the Mongolian language, in which fluency facilitates social mobility. These concerns are articulated by several interviewees:

Yes, I teach my children Kazakh. But they have no language environment. Children speak in Mongolian all day. But there are no Kazakh subjects.
(802_0020)

In terms of culture and language, these [are] not good because most Kazakh students cannot speak Kazakh. Most of them do not know how our culture or traditions are because they just act like Mongolians. Of course, it is not something bad, but I think we should know our own cultural and language very well. That is the challenge here [in Ulaanbaatar] I think.
(LH_1_0016)

For this newly established generation of professionals of Kazakh ethnicity, the importance of the socialist era is increasingly limited. Young professionals in their 20s and 30s never knew the socialist period, its policies, or its repression. For those who are fluent in English or Russian, which an increasing number are, there are many opportunities in the new Mongolia mining economies. Of course, not all Kazakh migrants to Ulaanbaatar are socially mobile or fluent in several languages. For many, those who are older or those who have less education or human capital, Ulaanbaatar and its vast *ger* districts can be alienating and difficult. For some, the move to Ulaanbaatar represents new opportunities for their children. While their own social mobilities may be compromised, their hope is for greater social mobility and education for the next generation (Barcus 2018).

Increasingly, the growth of the Kazakh population in Ulaanbaatar is evidenced in the landscape. There are now two large mosques, and respondents note that they attend Kazakh cultural events throughout the year. Although they are a small portion of the population in Ulaanbaatar (0.7% in 2015) (NSOM 2016a) and widely dispersed across the city (rather than clustered in particular neighborhoods), these gatherings are important to the perpetuation of Kazakh practices and identities. Eighty-two percent of respondents had attended cultural festivals in the past year (Barcus and Shugatai 2018). Additionally, social groups, such as the “Kazakh Students Bolashak Association” in several Ulaanbaatar universities, bring young Kazakhs together for art and cultural events.

Although western Mongolia still holds strong place values and place-based identities for Mongolian Kazakhs, Ulaanbaatar offers greater access to education and social mobility opportunities. These opportunities, while helping with economic insecurity also challenge ideas of cultural perpetuation and cohesion as compared to western Mongolia. For example, a Kazakh woman in her 40s reflects:

In Bayan Ölgii people keep their language and culture. But here [Ulaanbaatar], we live in different districts and some of the young people keep their religion and some of them don't believe in Allah. Some of them don't know where our mosques are located. And we do not have enough information about our religion.

(802_0025)

Thus, relocation from the geographic periphery to the central location of economic and population growth has again reframed the experience of being an ethnic minority in Mongolia. But the narrative in this contemporary period is again changing. This time, the concern is about continuing to practice and preserve elements of Kazakh culture, particularly amongst the younger generation.

Civic identities. From a civic perspective, assertion of a Kazakh identity remains important, particularly for cultural perpetuation. Ethnic affiliation is strong but also conditioned by economic and social mobility opportunities. The socialist period in Mongolia delimited Kazakhs as an ethnic and cultural group (*yastan*). In part because of cultural differences between Kazakhs and ethnic Mongols, the size and concentration of the Kazakh population in western Mongolia and the peripheral borderland location of the population contributed to a relatively cohesive imagination of Kazakh ethnic identity in Mongolia. While emergence from socialism facilitated civic identification as “Kazakh” and as a separate nationality within Mongolia (*ündesten*), the contemporary period is marked by Mongolia's economic growth and globalizing economy. Migration to Ulaanbaatar, as well as continued migration and cultural exchange with Kazakhstan, continues to influence perceptions of civic identities. Migrants to Ulaanbaatar, however, in comparison to earlier interviews in Bayan-Ölgii, see a future for Kazakhs in Mongolia and their role as an integral part of the nation and the state.

This chapter has traced the evolving conceptualization, practice, and framing of Kazakh identities in Mongolia. Set within a historical context, this paper asserts that we can identify shifting frames of ethnic identity, territoriality, and national

belonging among Mongolia's Kazakh population. Specifically, three themes representing these shifts are described including the ethno-cultural practices and identities, civic identities, and borderland geographic location. I argue that how these themes are framed represents a subtle but identifiable shift from periphery to the central core for this ethnic minority population.

Conclusion

This chapter describes three themes that frame identity amongst the Mongolian Kazakhs. These include the expression of and adherence to civic identities and ethno-cultural identities and can be traced to the lasting impacts of geographic borderland peripheralness. Two periods of nation building accentuated the differences between Khalkha Mongols and Kazakhs through social policy and peripheral locations. The socialist period marked the Mongolian Kazakhs by their ethnic background, and their concentration and isolation in western Mongolia shaped the formation and persistence of the collective Kazakh identity in western Mongolia. However, as social policies change and geographic peripheralness recedes, so too do ethnic distinctiveness and identities. In this chapter, I've tried to trace the multiple threads of the socialist period influence on the collective Kazakh identity in Mongolia. Beginning with the early evolution of tribal and clan identities into the socialist imaginings of ethnicity through ethnicity policies and practices closely linked to those of the Soviet process, to the emergence of ethnonationalist sentiments during the post-socialist period, and finally, to the current contemporary period where geographic and social mobility is increasing and ethnic identities are receding.

Kazakh collective ethno-cultural identities are increasingly diverse. While early imagining and political motivations for clarity in civic identity were paramount in the early post-socialist period, being on the geographic periphery of the country influences ethnic cohesion and collective identity. The fluidness of identity and identity formation through time warrants continued attention by scholars. New imaginings of borders, boundaries, and communities influence how individuals and communities conceptualize and practice identities. The evolution of the Kazakh collective identity in Mongolia serves as an important example of how the history of territories and government has far-reaching implications for community cohesiveness and the perpetuation of ideals related to ethnicity and identity at multiple scales.

Note

- 1 Kazakhs in Mongolia are clustered in Bayan-Ölgii Aimag and in Khovd *Sum*, Khovd Aimag. This research centers on Bayan-Ölgii.

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14 Milk and human-livestock relations in contemporary Mongolia

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Introduction

It is surprising in many ways that milk has not received much attention in the academic literature on Mongolia, despite its centrality in pastoral production and the role it has played in everyday lives and routines both during the socialist period and today. In this chapter, I explore the everyday labor practices associated with milk and milking, which reflect the multispecies households of Mongolian pastoralists as well as wider socioeconomic changes in rural Mongolia. Milk might be considered as a type of social bonding agent, as an important element in hospitality practices, gift reciprocity, spiritual practices, and moralities. Much of the contemporary anthropology of Mongolia (Bumochir 2020; Buyandelger 2013; Humphrey 2002; Pedersen 2011; Plueckhahn 2020) focuses on the religious practice or the changing dynamics of political, economic, and social organization without much attention to perhaps one of the more mundane yet constant forms of labor and social currency in rural Mongolia. Further, in many cases attention to livestock–human relations often focuses on horses, a so-called charismatic animal according to animal geography theory (Lorimer 2007). Although Mongolian rural masculinities are certainly understudied, horse-related labors and related rituals (e.g., branding, racing, training) are largely in the sphere of men’s work. In this sense, the everyday work of milking and female domestic labor has been somewhat marginalized. One notable exception is Natasha Fijn’s (2011) book exploring human–animal relations in Mongolia that discusses milking practices and includes nuanced descriptions of gendered divisions of labor. Multispecies ethnographies of Inner Asia (Oehler and Varfolomeeva 2020), however, are continuing to appear with renewed attention to dwelling, architectures, household compositions, forms of multispecies communication, and kinship. These ethnographies are primarily focused on mobile societies – where mobility is central to social, political, and economic organization – and the centrality of livestock and other animals in these societies. This scholarship provides fertile ground to explore the social lives of humans and livestock in Mongolia; where, despite significant change in recent decades, traditional forms of mobile pastoralism continue to thrive.

Milk and the production and exchange of dairy products more broadly might be characterized as one of the axes on which the rural pastoralist household spins. Some of the most revealing informal interviews that I conducted during my ethnographic work in rural Bayankhongor from 2013 to 2014 occurred while milking and chatting with women on the milking line or *kholboo*. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to illustrate, through ethnographic vignettes, the centrality of milk in contemporary rural household labor, local knowledge, and social relationships. Knowledge and techniques for preserving milk in the form of dairy products, for example, are central element in Mongolian traditional cuisine and culture. Additionally, I argue that attention to milk and the everyday labor around milk and milking reveals new developments in household organization and contemporary forms of pastoralism. Milking additionally encompasses the close relationships between humans and livestock within the traditions of Mongolian pastoralism. These relationships are physical and embodied attunements between livestock and livestock caregivers that are often not examined in great detail in accounts of Inner Asia pastoralism. Fijn (2011, 35) refers to these relationships as a form of “co-domestication” that emphasizes the sociality between herds and herders rather than human cultivation of livestock for market sale only. To reflect on these livestock–human attunements, I draw upon literature from pastoralist studies more generally and the scholarship on multispecies households. Giving attention to milk and milk-related labor also brings to the fore women’s work and their particular routines and spaces within the pastoralist household. Fijn (2011), these spaces and routines might best be described as a form of “co-domestication” given the intertwined nature of households and livestock in terms of dwelling structures, diet, spirituality, embodied interactions, and daily and seasonal routines. The social reproduction work that is intertwined with milking work is an area of research that should be further investigated in the Inner Asian context, where more traditional forms of mobile pastoralist livestock husbandry are still practiced. This chapter thus aims to serve as a jumping off point for future research on the anthropology of milk in Mongolia and Inner Asia.

Milk in pastoralist livelihoods

Multispecies ethnography emerging from work in Northern Eurasia is fascinated with sacred places, landscapes, and rituals, usually focusing on reindeer herding and hunting groups (e.g., Anderson, Wishart, and Vate 2013; Jordan 2011) without necessarily engaging with the wider literature on mobile pastoralism. This latter literature is often more focused on the political economy of pastoral systems and engages with policy-related issues and concerns. A focus on milk perhaps helps to bridge these two literatures in some ways. One area of focus for the latter group of scholarship has been the impact of state policies on the ability of pastoralists to maintain particular cultural forms. Forced sedentarization is still practiced in China in order to shift pastoralists from grasslands to enclosures, often due to certain political ideologies, which discriminate against mobile societies (Yeh 2013). The empirical literature on mobile pastoralism has continued to defend the value

of mobile pastoralist systems, use of common grassland, and indigenous knowledge. An important element of the case made by empirical studies is the role of mobility in taking advantage of scarce and changing environmental resources in arid and semiarid environments. In other words, pastoralists are able to not only “get by” in extreme environmental conditions but to cultivate forms of abundance through mobility and free grazing of livestock (Davies and Hatfield 2007). Masa-hiro Hirata’s (2020) recent work also identifies milk culture as foundational to pastoralist systems across arid Eurasia.

A core aspect of mobile pastoralism is the use of livestock to aid mobility through use as pack and transport animals and as the source of materials to maintain livelihoods, dwellings, and dietary needs, including milk, blood, meat, fiber (including felt), and skins (Gertel and Le Heron 2011). While many non-pastoralists may imagine that one of the primary motivations for household production is to produce meat and sell livestock for meat, this is often a misconception. Herders in Mongolia are often quite hesitant to sell livestock unless the price for meat offers worthwhile returns. This tendency can be seen among other pastoralists societies (Sadler et al. 2010). The *malyn buyan* (wealth of the herds) cited by herders in Mongolia is associated with the abundance of milk and dairy products (see also Empson 2011) and the continual reproduction and growth of herds over time.

As has been noted by Kate Sadler et al. (2010), pastoralists’ relationship to milk has changed over time as milk has become commodified and the target of particular economic development interventions. Additionally, they found that milk has not been a core object of study for many research projects outside of East Africa. Indeed, many contemporary studies of milk in Inner Asia are led by the biological and nutritional sciences (Morita et al. 2016; Rich-Edwards et al. 2011; Tsegmed et al. 2007; Watanabe et al. 2008). Heritage livestock breeds are largely adapted to local climate conditions such as the high cold deserts or more extreme arid conditions in the Middle East, and yields reflect local availability of forage and water. Sadler et al. (2010, 205) note that

how a pastoral producer responds to market opportunities has much to do with their status in terms of herd or flock wealth, family labor and capital availability. The broader framework of changes in national and international market demand, and official policies or subsidies for particular species also encourages or dampens commercial responses by pastoralists.

Research on Somali pastoralists societies by Olivia Pearson and Matthias Schmidt (2018) describes processes whereby milk has become increasingly commodified, giving specific attention to the process by which the sale of milk transitioned from a taboo practice to a key source of monetary income.

In contemporary Mongolia, we are starting to see more of a shift again towards the intensification of livestock production that was initiated in the Soviet era. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), “Milk is one of the four strategic commodities of Mongolia” (“Public and

Private” 2019). Recent years have seen increases in investment in the agricultural sector, including a \$30 million loan in 2019 from the World Bank for a Livestock Commercialization Project (World Bank 2019). The project identifies decreasing milk and meat yields over the course of the last decade due to climate hazards and livestock disease. National laws have been passed to address this issue, including the Animal Health Law of 2017 and the Animal Genetics Law of 2018. The core part of the World Bank project is to reinvigorate veterinary services which were originally established during the socialist era. This project will additionally “support semi-intensive and intensive production models in the meat and dairy sectors by establishing dairy clusters, feedlots and high health compartments” (2019, 17). International agencies such as the FAO and World Bank have supported the commercialization of agriculture as a pathway to economic development at both the national and household level. Interestingly, much of the liquid milk available for sale in Mongolia is imported from Russia and China and powdered milk imported from New Zealand (Thrift 2014). Eric Thrift’s (2014) discussion of the controversy surrounding a brand of Mongolian yogurt which was suspected of being produced in China provides an insightful glimpse into the symbolic and cultural qualities of milk in Mongolia. In this article, he points out the current irony of Mongolia’s reliance on importing milk powder despite the large domestic livestock population. Thrift (2014) writes, “Milk is a highly symbolic commodity representing purity, the pastoral heritage, and maternalism” (496). It is much easier to obtain local milk from provincial centers where herders directly sell dairy products and milk (often contained in re-used liter beer or juice containers).

These recent developments, although firmly rooted in capitalist ideologies, nonetheless share some similarities with the 70 years of socialist agricultural intensification targeted at increasing yields of livestock in order to export to other countries in the Soviet Bloc.

Soviet milking labor

Like other Central Asian countries with nomadic pastoralist heritage, Mongolia’s collectivization program was initially met with resistance from herders, including the slaughter of livestock as a form of protest against collectivization (Kreutzmann 2012). As discussed in Daniel Rosenberg’s (1981) ethnography of Mongolia’s collectivization program, the adoption of the Soviet model of production in Mongolia was an experiment in shifting social norms and developing a system of planned agricultural intensification. In his words, “forced collectivization was a disaster” in the initial instances of reorganizing pastoral labor systems (26); nonetheless, by the mid-twentieth century the countryside was largely transformed into *negdels* or co-operatives. According to Christopher Atwood (2004), *negdels* at first referred to voluntary collective labor arrangements that later became more widely formalized and institutionalized. Investments in machinery and infrastructure for herding were part of this effort, including the building of livestock and hay shelters (Rosenberg 1981, 29). Rosenberg, however, provides a fascinating discussion of the dysfunction faced by *negdel* associations throughout the 1940s,

including opportunistic practices by administrators and members. Policy change in the 1950s led to the quota system, which obligated herders to produce according to centrally planned production figures. Rosenberg (1981) explains that in this case, if herders did not produce the quota amount, then they would face penalties and have to pay to make up for underproduction.

There is limited English language material on the everyday practices and sociality of *negdel* cooperative labor. From interviews with elderly herders, we know that individuals both male and female were assigned to tend specific live-stock groups, often organized according to age and sex of the livestock (Mari 2007). These people formed a *suuri* (base group) and were given production quotas for “milk, meat, hides, wool, cashmere or live animals” (Bruun 2003, 165). Rosenberg (1977) describes the mechanization of the production of dairy products in factories, explaining, “While milkmaids previously had to work hard manufacturing dairy products in their encampments, the dairy factory has freed them from this hard labor to give them more time for themselves, and to improve their education” (112). This factory used Soviet technology and processes, had quality control measures, and the products were sold to the central government and cities. Rosenberg further describes, “Each herdsman has a plan to fulfill . . . thus if a milkmaid does not meet the plan target for milk, for example, she must either make up the difference with milk from her private cows, or pay the *negdel* the market price for the amount of milk short of the plan target” (123). According to Rosenberg’s analysis from the 1970s, rural work consisted of a combination of mechanized and production-based modes of pastoralism and the maintenance of relatively small herds of privately held livestock by individuals. This is reflected in the descriptions of an elderly herder in Khanbogd, Ömnögovi from an interview in 2018. She was a camel herder for a *negdel* for 30 years and was responsible for a herd of 300 head during the socialist period. She additionally had a small herd of private animals – approximately 100 small livestock. The *negdel* built deep motorized wells (sometimes more than 100 meters deep) during the socialist time which are still used today and often the source of controversy and conflict around water use rights in the mine-heavy South Gobi.

During the dismantling of socialist herding collectives, the privatization of state property was carried out. Then herding collectives took the motor and the house of the well away. Only the well hole was left there. Then later [in the 2000s], railways were being built. Water demand was very high for that. Then our water had been used. That well has plenty of water in its source. . .

My pension is 239,000 tugrik. It is very low, isn’t it? I have been herding for my whole life. I was delivering one or two tons of camel wool to the state during the socialist time. It is hard labor to herd camels, raise baby camels, cut wool, etc. After working that hard, receiving this much pension is regretful. If I am young and I have 300 camels, I would live in affluence. Milk, wool, meat . . . It is regretful to have this much pension. I can afford only my own food. I can afford nothing else with this much money. If I live by myself,

I can't afford it. If I want to buy a cover for my *ger*, I would need two or three months of pension for that.

[During the socialist time] I was a pillion passenger with my eight-day-old child on the motorcycle. It was wool delivery time. I gave birth at the end of March. Wool delivery was due on April 15. I went to cut the wool with my new-born baby and came back with her. It is labor intensive to cut, beat, and press the wool. I went back and forth three times in just one month after the birth. People had no sympathy at that time. I will be fined, if I deliver less wool. I wouldn't get paid and the state will take it back.

Many of the accounts of pastoralism in the post-socialist transition period provided relatively dry reports (Strickland-Scott 2001) of household divisions of labor without much attention to the place of milk in everyday social reproduction and relationships. An example of these dry accounts reads as follows: "The women are in charge of everything connected with the preparation of foodstuffs. They milk the animals year-round, collect fuel, boil the milk to make yoghurt, cheese and butter, and provide the family with three meals a day" (Bruun 1996, 72). Indeed, milking is women's work and affects women's bodies and identities in particular ways, which was apparent during the socialist period and beyond. The post-socialist focus on the political economy of pastoralism and land use practices makes it clear that pastoralist households in Mongolia rely heavily on their livestock for food and income, but it provides less detail on the embodied nature of this form of work. The next sections aim to provide more detailed descriptions of contemporary milking practices based on work in central-west Mongolia.

Household milking and women's bodies in Bayankhongor, Mongolia

Bayankhongor Aimag includes the southern region of the Khangai mountain range, the eastern ridges of the Altai range, and the Gobi Desert to the south (Atwood 2004, 39). It is a Gobi-type ecological region, consisting mainly of desert-steppe and steppe with a stretch of the Khangai mountain areas in the northern regions extending below its borders with Zavkhan province. Mongolia has a continental climate, cold and semiarid, where temperatures can range from -40°C in winter to $+40^{\circ}\text{C}$ in summer. The desert and desert-steppe regions receive less than 100 mm of rainfall a year, while the forested steppe and mountain areas receive up to 400 mm per year (Laituri and Thompson 2012, 39).

The aimag borders were partly a legacy of Qing Dynasty administration. Alicia Campi (2006, 45) reports that the current site of the Bayankhongor provincial center was a Manchu relay station located on the road to the city of Uliastai. Bayankhongor was home to a number of large Buddhist temples, which were largely destroyed during the socialist purges (Atwood 2004). The Erdene Bandidaa Monastery controlled a territory of about 20,000 square kilometers, including the present-day county of Ölziit (Fernandez-Gimenez 1999, 326). Buddhism remains

the main religious practice. I lived with a herder family in Өлзийт from 2012 to 2013 and frequently travelled with the local district governor (*bagiin darga*) to visit herder households. Additionally, I spent time interviewing herder families in the northern *sum* of Bayanbulag and Gurvanbulag.

In contemporary rural Mongolia, herding families spend the milking season, generally from February to November, hand milking a variety of small and large livestock. The livestock birthing season involves a significant amount of work, including training first-time lactating livestock to be milked. As my host family and most of the families in the *bag* (small local administrative unit) where I lived kept goats and sheep, the majority of my milking experience comes from interactions with these smaller breeds. The following ethnographic vignettes aim to provide detailed accounts of milking-related labor in order to capture the materiality of milk, the embodied nature of this work, as well as insight into gendered divisions of labor and the situated knowledge formed from livestock-human bonds.

During long summer days in July and August, one family might milk cashmere goats once or twice a day, yaks twice a day, and mares every two hours or so. Bactrian camels are milked predominately in desert areas. Milking practices vary considerably by region, type of livestock, and availability of labor. While I remember milking sheep with herders outside of Kharkhorin in 2004, I did not see any sheep being milked in Bayankhongor from 2012 to 2013. Each breed of livestock has a very different character and requires different milking techniques, postures, and sounds for communication as well as different types of nutrition, pasture, and care. Livestock husbandry in the harsh Mongolian climate requires highly developed skills and experience of working with livestock in extreme temperatures over the course of the year. These skills are still being learned, for now, on grasslands, which are protected as common property in the national constitution. This system of tenure allows households to practice mobility while still maintaining a relationship to a local place for generations.

My host family milked goats one to two times per day depending on the season. This activity is done by all rural households in much the same fashion across the country. There are slight differences in routine depending on the number of times each day a household milks and the types of livestock milked. In the Khangai areas of northern Bayankhongor, for example, the majority of households do not milk their sheep and goats due to labor shortages and instead obtain large yields from yak and cow herds that are predominately kept in those regions. In the steppe and desert steppe, goats are the primary livestock milked, though cows and horses feature as well. Camels are predominately milked in the Gobi Desert areas. Milking structures routines during the day for women, especially during the busy months of spring, summer, and fall. Living in close proximity to livestock, I was always struck by the thin layers of canvas, lattice, and felt that separated us from livestock. In the evening when the herd returned to sleep, the sounds of snorts and bleats could be easily heard through the walls. In the morning, sometimes the goats would rub against the lattice walls and wake us up. During rainstorms, some would come knocking on the door with their horns to be let in for shelter. In this sense, the herds were intimately connected to our shelter, just as the shelter

itself was constituted by the felted fiber of wool with the smell of meat and dairy infused in its soft material. I often imagined the *ger* as a giant mother goat that we inhabited. Time revolved around milking and the production of dairy products such as clotted cream, yogurt, *aaruul* (dried curds), and milk vodka (distilled yogurt).

Milking goats typically begins either in the morning when the goats are already gathered at the *ger* before going out to graze for the day or in the evening after they return from grazing. Goats, being clever creatures, learn the milking routine and line up to be tied into a *kholboo* or milking line, which resembles a zipper. One rope attached to the ground at two ends forms a ground rope, while another rope is woven between the necks of the goats and the ground rope. The goats' heads face into one another as their necks are temporally tied together by the rope woven between them. When it is time to form the milking *kholboo*, usually the male relatives of the household help to herd the milking goats closer to the location of the ground rope. In areas that lack a corral or shelter area, the *kholboo* is tied to the ground in the areas outside of the *ger* where livestock usually sleep at night. One person ties the heads and the others catch the goats and herd them into the direction of the rope tied on the ground. The goats have already generally learned what this process means and some of them start to bunch together impatiently. Newly lactating yearlings and others would need to be caught by their horns or legs and pulled into the formation. Some would refuse to participate and needed more careful herding into the line. Usually the goats are tied together two at a time. When I was staying with a family with a large corral, they usually tied the ground ropes onto two of the corral support posts.

Tying the *kholboo* requires speed, strength, and skill. It is challenging to keep the rope tidy while weaving it around the goat necks, as it very easily wraps around a goat's horns and feet to become completely tangled into a big mess. Also, when forming the *kholboo*, the rope needs to go around the ground rope, and meanwhile, goats are bunching together and piling up, stepping on your toes with their sharp hooves as their horns get caught in the ground rope. Another difficult aspect of the *kholboo* is placing the goat heads and necks properly – their horns are longer than their heads and sometimes create too much space around the ground rope, and then the goats get loose. If the rope became loose, the milkers might try to break free and roam away to find their kids who are typically kept away from them until after milking is finished.

After the *kholboo* is tied, the women and children of the household take their short stools and pails and sit behind the goats to start milking. The traditional stools are yellow in color and wooden, just tall enough to allow one to sit maybe five or six inches off the ground. If more than one household has combined their herds and are milking together, they milk their own livestock that are recognized through familiarity or paint markings applied on horns or backs. When milking and herding, one learns the personalities of each goat – their tendencies to kick, squat, or bleat for their kids in the distance.

Herding and milking are embodied experiences that are rarely described in great detail. Goat bodies and human bodies are in close proximity; one smells the sweet smell of milk, the musky smell of goat hair and the occasionally oniony smell of pasture grasses being chewed as cud. The gurgling sounds of goat stomachs processing food are next to your ears. If the weather is cold, or even freezing, the goat bodies block the frigid wind and the warm milk keeps one's fingers from getting numb and losing mobility. There is an oniony grass called *taana*, which grows in Ölziit. *Taana* can be translated as "wild leek" (Bawden 1997) and is related to wild onions. I collected it by hand with my host father once; he feeds it to the goats in the fall and says it is healthy for them. I could tell when the goats were eating *taana* because it smells very strongly on their breath. The *taana* could be tasted in the milk and creates a tangy, almost metallic flavor in yogurt. It also affects the taste of mutton. I was surprised when I traveled north to the *sum* of Gurvanbulag and Bayanbulag that the yogurt almost never had the *taana* flavor. Chewing their cud, a goat will emit an oniony burp while gazing peacefully at you in the *kholboo*.

Children as young as three hold little cups or a ladle with one hand and attempt to get milk out of the goat teats with the other hand as they watch mothers and older sisters nearby make fast work. Goat teats are soft and about half the size of an adult pinky finger. They can be difficult to get milk out of, and one usually wets the teat with a bit of milk to facilitate the motion of squeezing and pulling the milk out and into the pail. The milk pails fill up, collecting bits of falling hair, dust, and dried dung. The white milk is starkly different from the surrounding environment, and the shining white canvas of the nearby *ger* is the only thing similar in color. The milk accumulates in buckets while family members discuss recent news or events. Rumors of livestock thieves in the area, or stories of the troubles of nearby families such as their debts or health issues are discussed. It is also a time to check the livestock for injuries or illness or to recount the day's events.

The milk, transferred to buckets, is brought into the *ger* and strained with a cloth or filtering tool and the pasteurizing process begins. A ladleful of water is added to a large clean *togoo* (large wok-like metal bowl), which is cradled by the round edges of the stovetop in the middle of the floor. Mongolian *ger* stoves have a circular lid which can be removed and placed aside. The *togoo* then fits neatly into the opening at the top of the stove. The milk is transferred from the bucket to the *togoo* over a dung fire, a beautiful stream of rich white liquid collecting into a still pool. Sitting on a short wooden stool in front of the fire, one stokes the fire to low heat using a combination of dried horse and cow dung. The dried horse dung is not as dense as the cow dung and burns faster but makes the heat of the fire easier to control. If the fire is too intense, the milk will burn or boil over. A pair of large scissor-like prongs are used to control the heat of the fire and to add pieces of dung to maintain consistent heat. Sometimes my host sister added a little flour to the milk in order to help set an extra thick cream on top. The milk must be carefully watched as it heats slowly. Bubbly milk foam froths to the top. This is a good sign. When the foam grows to the right amount, one must begin to ladle the

milk and pour it back into the *togoo*, which creates foam with bigger bubbles. It is traditional to hold the ladle with the concave side pointing away from the door, towards the north side of the ger. Otherwise, it is said that a proper cream will not form and set. After this process, the milk either remains on the cool stove for the night or is removed from the stove to set on the kitchen shelves. Sometimes we would flip a stool upside down and rest the *togoo* on it. The *togoo* fits perfectly on the stool legs. In the morning a thick layer of clotted cream will have formed and can be removed, eaten on fresh bread, or melted into tea in the morning. It is served proudly to guests and stored away to be sent to family members who don't have livestock. A family is praised for their dairy products if they are clean of any debris and retain the rich white color of milk, without corruptive elements. Each locality makes different dairy products and they taste differently depending on the pasture grasses in the area. It is more common and acceptable for dairy products (rather than raw milk) to be sold, and this was clearly seen in the northern *sum* of Bayankhongor where yak milk is plentiful and dairy products were made in great quantities. These products were then often sold to merchants from the adjacent Govi-Altai Aimag for further sale.

My Mongolian host family explained to me that selling milk is something that people normally do if they are in financial distress. Milk is used for the consumption of the household in tea and made into curd, which is dried in the sun into nutritious hardened bars called *aaruul* (see Figure 14.1) to be consumed

Figure 14.1 Two varieties of *aaruul* drying on wooden carts and *ger* roof in northern Bayankhongor.

Source: Author.

throughout the winter, given as gifts, and used during the summer Naadam and winter Lunar New Year Holiday. In Ölziit, herder families were asked to donate a quota of dairy products for the summer Naadam festivities. Families give milk as gifts to urban relatives, along with other dairy products such as *airag* (fermented mare's milk) (Bat-Oyun et al. 2015). Dairy products are central to gift giving. Bringing a liter of fresh milk to relatives or friends who do not have livestock is a sign of great respect and regard. My colleagues in Ulaanbaatar were delighted to receive Mongolian *aaruul*, milk vodka, or *airag* when I returned to the city for brief visits over the summer. When travelling on public buses from the aimag centers to Ulaanbaatar during *airag* season, the aisles are filled with large plastic containers containing *airag*, which are used as seats in some cases.

Milk has also been discussed in relation to spiritual and religious practices in Mongolia. Possibly the most academic attention to milk (and related dairy products such as *airag*) can be seen in descriptions of its use in rituals or in performing libations. Milk is used as a libation to the earth and sky, flung toward the sacred mountains, and used to bless loved ones whenever they leave the home for a safe journey. William Stephens (2020) describes milk libations recorded by Marco Polo and Franciscan monks as well as contemporary practices of milk "sprinkling" at sunrise, especially in the form of the first cup of morning milk tea. Buddhist practitioners since the end of socialism use milk and dairy products in important rituals such as *ovoo* ceremonies and as offerings to Buddhist deities to attract prosperity and good life (Bareja-Starzyńska and Havnevik 2006). Sandrine Ruhlmann's (2019) fascinating account of food sharing in Mongolia identifies the importance of certain types of foods in "structuring relations."

Gaby Bamana (2015) also describes the gendered quality of tea making and hospitality practices in rural Mongolia, where women are primarily responsible for handling milk and making boiled milk tea to be served to family and household guests. He writes, "The practices are primarily concerned with domestic processes of family replication (such as marriage and bride tea rituals – practices through which the family as an institution regenerates itself) and the socialization of members" (200). I would additionally argue that tea rituals are one part of a wider set of milk-related practices that are involved in the social reproduction of the rural household. Dairy products such as *aaruul* are used in offerings at Buddhist religious sites and at *ovoo* rock cairns and in informal mountain worshipping practices. *Airag* and dairy products such as *aaruul* represent household abundance and are offered with respect to household guests and are displayed and consumed at major holidays such as the lunar New Year celebration of Tsagaan Sar and the Naadam summer holiday. Ideas of morality are also displayed in the exchange and circulation of dairy products according to the obligations between junior and seniors, men and women, guest (outsider) and host (insider), ruler and subject, and spirits/gods and humans. These social hierarchies and moralities of respect can be seen in many drinking rituals in Mongolia such as the tea ceremony Bamana (2015) describes as well as hospitality rituals. When traveling around Ölziit, households would offer bags of their *aaruul* to take back with me, and I would return home laden with the delicious, yellow oily variety that was famous

in my field-site region. Upon entry to any ger, a visitor is offered tea and a taste from the household's plate of homemade dairy products. In the summer, a hostess would often arrange the fresh thick morning *öröm*, or clotted cream on the top of the plate. Thick drippings of cream would spill down the pile of hardened dairy products and guests would take a taste by scooping the clotted cream with two fingers or eating it over top of the *aaruul*. Members of my field-site community often said that a true sin was allowing dirt or something impure to get in milk or dairy products. Spilling dairy products on the ground for any reason was not allowed, and any milk lost from the kicking legs of a bad-behaved goat was lamented and would be transformed into a libation by making sure that some of the spilled milk was sent in the direction of the sky with an accompanying prayer.

When families in northern Bayankhongor brand their young horses, a ritual offering of *airag* is made in the direction of the sky. Horses that win races are also drizzled with *airag* on their rump during Naadam ceremonies. Milk represents purity and abundance and is used as an offering to the gods during daily libations, to see people off on long journeys, and during religious ceremonies as well as holiday celebrations. Dairy products are used as offerings on rock cairns, Buddhist stupas, as offerings to sacred mountains or other sites, and as offerings during a journey such as before crossing rivers. Sharon Hudgins (2014) describes the *tsatsal*, a special instrument used for making milk offerings by women. She describes a wide range of events in which milk is used as a blessing or offering – including during castration of male animals and during children's hair cutting ceremonies. In northern Bayankhongor, where Buddhist traditions are still actively practiced, dairy products are left on stupa and *ovoos*. In my interpretation, dairy products are the most valuable item that herders can offer as the most work goes into transforming them from raw milk to finished dairy products.

***Saakhalt Ail* arrangements**

A significant amount of labor involved in milking is keeping the baby goats separate from mothers during the day. This also occurs with the larger livestock, which is normally apparent visually during summer months when baby cows, yaks, or horses are kept toggled to a rope close to the ger. For horses, which are milked throughout the day, the babies are released from the toggles to drink a bit, then the milker swoops in to milk the remaining amounts while the colt is held close to the mare, usually with the rump of the colt in the same position as would occur naturally when drinking. Women usually say how pleasurable it is to milk horses. Indeed, horse udders are incredibly silky and their teats are easily accessible (quite unlike yaks).

In Bayankhongor, the practice of *saakhalt ail* was predominately used, though this is not always the case in other regions of Mongolia. This practice was cited by Sandagsuren Undargaa (2017, 224), with reference to rural labor coordination, who states, "Two camps within the vicinity of 500 meters of each other swapped juvenile livestock to separate them from their mothers to prevent suckling. This conserved milk and provided it for human use." When staying with my host family

in Ölziit, we practiced the *saakhalt ail* arrangement. The milking goats spent the day with the nearby household's herd and their milking goats spent the day in our herd. The herds are separated in the evening; the *saakhalt ail* sends our milking goats toward us and we send their milking goats to them.

There was a week when my host sister, KB, went to Ulaanbaatar to prepare for her wedding when our *saakhalt* arrangements went awry. She was the fastest milker of all of us, knew the individual livestock better than us, and was the center of our livestock labor force. My job in the house was typically to cook, clean, milk, and help make dairy products. KB took turns herding with my host dad, milking, and giving medical treatments to the animals. My host mom, who was ill, collected *argal* (dried dung), helped herd, and made dairy products. Dad herded, got water, and helped repair equipment. My host parents' eldest daughter lived in the Bayankhongor Aimag center with her eight-year-old son, her grandmother (my host father's mother), and her infant daughter. The family locations and movements are interesting and too complex to describe in this story, but at the time the eight-year-old grandson, Maydee, was staying with us in the countryside.

When KB was absent, my host mother and I tied the goats into the milking line and milked them while my host father and Maydee tended the main herd of sheep, goats, and babies. Typically, we milked in the evening around four or five o'clock. After milking, the baby goats would be reunited with the mothers to drink the last drops of milk, then we would send the milkers back to the *saakhalt ail* for the night. We attempted to wake up early and do two milkings in order to produce a bit more milk, but this schedule fell apart when we realized that it did not make much of a difference. Other families did milk their goats twice a day. Another nearby family I stayed with, for example, woke up at 5:00 a.m., milked their goats, and then immediately went to the aimag center to sell the milk.

There is a risk in milking the goats too late in the evening as we did during KB's absence. The baby goats learn through routine that they will have a chance to suckle their mothers when milking is complete in the evening. Sometimes while we milked, the milkers would call loudly. KB or my host mother would hush them. I never realized why they so adamantly hushed the goats until KB was away. The mother goats would call to the goat kids, and the kids would call back. In this way, the babies would locate the mothers and come rushing in lightning speed from afar. Almost nothing could stop them once they got past a certain point. During this particular time, we were milking as quickly as possible, knowing the herd of babies would come rushing over to suckle their mothers. My host dad and Maydee ran wildly, throwing rocks, shaking bottles with pebbles inside, and flailing sticks, but nothing stopped the quick babies. It created a horrible helpless feeling when the babies took all of the milk from us and made chaos of our milking line. We needed that milk – it was all we had. The milk made tea, yogurt, and dairy products. At the height of summer, all labor is concentrated on collecting milk and storing it, and most of our nutrition came from yogurt. It was no wonder that more than one argument arose from this situation, with my host mother accusing my host father of ineptitude, my host father accusing my host mother of milking too late in the day, and Maydee getting yelled at for not running fast enough to

keep the babies at bay. These seemingly mundane moments of crisis further demonstrate the situated, often unspoken forms of knowledge and understanding that are encapsulated in everyday milking routines.

Emotions and embodiment

Bayankhongor's northern *sums* of Bayanbulag and Gurvanbulag are *khangai* (mountainous, forested) regions that border Zavkhan Aimag. The winters are generally colder and summers wetter than the Gobi-steppe region of Ölziit closer to the provincial center. For example, in the summer of 2013, it was difficult to find enough dry dung to light a fire due to the frequency of rains, and in the winter the *gers* were so cold that wearing heavy winter *deels* (long jackets with lamb wool interior) and felt boots inside was the norm, and using many layers of heavy winter *deels* as blankets was key to keeping away the nighttime chill.

While all rural households have goat and sheep herds, yaks and yak hybrids were prolific. Milking yaks requires special skills and bonding. They are large and strong creatures that are much more difficult to handle than the smaller goats who can be easily maneuvered into a milking *kholboo*. In the region of northern Bayankhongor, some yaks were hobbled, and women often used the colorful *deel* belt sashes as ties around the yak legs to prevent them from running away. My host sister explained that yaks usually bond with one person. She told a story of how she was asked to milk a yak and the animal allowed her to get a full bucket of milk before kicking it over. My host sister explained this was the yak's way of expressing her dissatisfaction at being milked by a new person. While in Bayankhongor, I was allowed to milk a slightly older "blue" colored yak with the female head of household standing nearby. She also explained that yaks bond with the women that normally milk them and they need to be retrained to new people. Using a stool, I positioned myself close to the side of the yak's body with a metal bucket braced between my knees. Yaks normally have a skirt of hair which needs to be moved aside to find very small teats. Yak skin is surprisingly very thick and rubbery, and milk usually gets caught on the very hairy underbelly of these prehistoric-looking creatures.

Our hosts in Bayanbulag had over 1000 head of livestock, including this herd of yaks and a herd of sheep and goats and horses. The heads of household explained that they were experiencing serious labor shortages especially for milking all of the yaks and producing dairy products. Their son was a ceremonial guard in the Mongolian army and his father asked him to leave his position to help with the livestock. At the time of our research, he had just returned from Ulaanbaatar. His mother explained how important it was to find him a wife who could help with the milking. She suffered from headaches and joint pain, to the point where she would be crying with pain while doing the milking.

The labor of milking and making dairy products affects women's bodies in particular ways. When travelling with a *sum* doctor around the countryside, he would often offer women massage for their backs, shoulders, and hands. Generally, the work of Mongolian women is difficult on the knees, with much time spent

kneeling, squatting, or sitting on low stools. Elderly Mongolian women would always mention their knee problems to me, and I also began to experience this strain after doing intensive *geriin ajil* (ger housework) over the course of a year. From hand washing laundry, to chopping meat for meals, to washing *ger* floors requires repetitive strain on the hands, shoulders, and knees as one is bent over tubs, buckets, and the stove to complete tasks.

The embodied nature of milking took on other forms including song and vocalizations to calm livestock. When singing in the evening with our host family from northern Bayankhongor, our host mother, a beautiful singer, explained that she could not remember the words to songs unless she was milking. As discussed by K. G. Hutchins (2019), singing to livestock is an emotional experience and a form of communication between livestock and humans. In Hutchins's (2019) article, he focuses on a range of nursing songs and vocalizations that are used to help orphaned livestock bond with new mothers, which was also popularized in the documentary film, *The Story of the Weeping Camel*. More crucially, however, Hutchins cites herders who describe livestock and the landscape itself as an audience for herder songs. My host mother in northern Bayankhongor echoed this sentiment when she explained that her singing performances were most complete when milking. Fijn (2011) also provides a fascinating discussion of the use of song in herder–livestock relations. She writes, “Herders not only sing to their animals but refer to the animals as ‘singing’ themselves. There is a name of the pandemonium of noise before lambs find their mothers after sheep are released from the pens each morning, referred to as ‘*khonii nair*’ or the sheep chorus” (108). These accounts demonstrate the interconnectedness of human lives and livestock as they co-create the rural pastoralist homestead in Mongolia. These contemporary practices are an amalgamation of traditional knowledge and rituals, socialist era forms of work, and contemporary engagements with capitalist markets and cultures. A lasting image from the rural *ger* is working with my host sister to make dairy products as we watched Korean soap operas beaming in from the satellite TV. There is no denying that the embodied nature of herding is changing as new technologies and incentives are presented and adopted by households. Nonetheless, a core part of mobile pastoralism remains the knowledge developed through the practice of doing and relating to livestock, which forms the basis of embodied skills, forms of communication, and intuitions.

Conclusion

It was milk that taught me how “place” can be understood in rural Mongolia. It consisted of an interface with temporal and spatial coordinates, which means that it occurred in a particular location and time but was also transformational in nature. Milking, as an event that brought together people around a common task in the context of a specific physical environment, constituted “place.” Place had meaning through the event; doing the work of milking (both alone and with others) taught me about pastoralism, politics and rural economies, gender, and the environment. I realized that conceiving of place as a series of ongoing (routine)

and extraordinary events is a necessary part of carefully attending to the relations that make these events possible. Milk was essential to household nutrition, hospitality practices, and herding work. Also, milking involved situated knowledge, experience with animal husbandry, as well as bonding, training, and communicating with livestock. Milking and milk-related work were embodied differently for men and women and reflect the complex histories of socialism and the particular market-based economics of modern-day Mongolia.

Once my host father pointed out that living off livestock is a perfect cycle: the animals eat the grass, which creates their milk and meat and produces dung. We, humans, consume the milk and meat and use the dung for heat. And we care for the animals and raise them, so the cycle can continue. Milk is one of the substances from which social reproduction manifests itself in rituals across the life course and is a fluid which maintains relations between the landscape, spiritual entities, and the livestock themselves. This chapter has attempted to start an academic conversation about the forms of social organization and work connected to milk. It is perhaps a mundane practice, often overlooked in favor of more eye-catching topics. Nonetheless it remains at the backbone of Mongolian pastoralism and culture and should be taken into account in order to understand how relations between humans and their livestock counterparts are changing and re-forming over time.

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