

# Mongolian Responses to Globalisation Processes

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# Mongolian Responses to Globalisation Processes

*With the assistance of Paula Haas*



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# Introduction

*Ines Stolpe*

There is a broad consensus that globalisation started long before its large-scale manifestation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and most scholars refer to aspects of mobility, connectivity and the exchange of ideas that led to new fields of interaction and horizons of orientation. The interdisciplinary symposium “Mongolian Responses to Processes of Globalisation”, organised by the Department of Mongolian Studies at Bonn University in 2014, brought together scholars, including PhD candidates, from nine different countries. As a framework for conceptualising the symposium, we took the multiple and entangled relations between pre-socialist, socialist and post-socialist notions of globalisation as a starting point for exploring both the historical and contemporary dynamics of knowledge cultures, changing orientations, normative concepts and neo-traditional tendencies. In order to address the complexity as well as the diversity of perceptions on the topic, we invited scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds, perspectives and intellectual traditions. These varieties partly result from legacies of Cold War influences on institutional arrangements and knowledge production. Whether they were Mongolists, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, archaeologists, Tibetologists or specialists in Religious Studies, most of the participants shared not only a research interest concerning processes of change in the Mongol cultural sphere, but also a discontent with “the old disciplinary configurations of knowledge production”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the decidedly trans-disciplinary approach of the symposium aimed at moving intellectual frontiers towards a broader understanding of Mongolian Studies by engaging in productive dialogues on processes of sociocultural, political, and economic change in shifting global contexts and horizons.

When Arjun Appadurai, in reference to the United States, observed that “... the old way of doing area studies does not make sense in the world after 1989”, he also acknowledged that area studies have always been a counterweight to the marginalisation of “huge parts of the world” and can act as “a

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<sup>1</sup> Matthias Middell, ‘Is there a Timetable when Concepts Travel? On Synchronicity in the Emergence of New Concepts Dealing with Border-Crossing Phenomena’, *The Trans/National Study of Culture. A Translational Perspective*, ed. by Doris Bachmann-Medick (Berlin & Boston: Walter DeGruyter, 2014), 137–154 (p. 141).

salutary reminder that globalization is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and even *localizing* process.”<sup>2</sup> By connecting different fields of inquiry, the contributions to this book provide insights into a spectrum of current research on notions and various manifestations of globalisation within and from the Mongol cultural sphere. Engaging in a pluralism of theoretical and methodological frameworks and a diversity in terms of content, we wish to bypass dominant narratives on distinctive patterns and essentialist images of “the Mongols” and intend to shed light on the heterogeneity of cultural production as well as parallels and corresponding phenomena against the backdrop of transnational transformations. All essays in this volume explore processes of cosmopolitanisation in Mongol societies induced by changing interdependencies and global constellations, and they all draw on sources in Mongolic languages. With a focus on connectivity and interchange resulting from the mobility of knowledge cultures, the authors analyse the dynamics of social and cultural practices and their emancipatory potential across a variety of political landscapes.

In modern Mongolian, ‘globalisation’ was initially denoted with the term *globalchlal* – i.e. a foreign word stem with a Mongolian suffix – and at times also translated directly as *delhiichlel*. However, based on the idea of ‘a whole nation extending from sunrise to sunset’ (*naran urgahuigaas shingehüi hürtelh dayan irgen*) which has its origin in the Secret History of the Mongols, ‘globalisation’ expressed by the term *dayaarchlal* is now considered a fully Mongolised concept. The term *dayaarshil* is also used, but associations contained in this word are evocative of something that is – essentially – in the nature of things.<sup>3</sup> Following Dipesh Chakrabarty’s statement that “historical differences actually make a difference” and that “universal concepts of political modernity encounter pre-existing concepts, categories, institutions, and practices through which they are translated and newly configured”,<sup>4</sup> the following chapters present examples that show how “the modern subjects of global

<sup>2</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) (p. 16 and 17, italics in the original).

<sup>3</sup> Sendenjavyñ Dulam, ‘Orchin üed tulgamdaj baigaa zarim ner tom’yoog mongolchloh asuudald’, *Mongol ner tom’yoo sudlal-90*, ed. by N. Mönhtsetseg, O. Shinebayar, and G. Gerelmaa (Ulaanbaatar 2014), 197–201.

<sup>4</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Place and Displaced Categories or How We Translate Ourselves into Global Histories of the Modern’, *The Trans/National Study of Culture. A Translational Perspective*, ed. by Doris Bachmann-Medick (Berlin & Boston: Walter DeGruyter, 2014), 53–68 (p. 59).



histories”<sup>5</sup> emerged in the Mongol cultural sphere from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Besides historical circumstances, they show that it is individual as well as “situational logics”<sup>6</sup> of encounters that are significant to contextualise the dynamics and implications of Mongolian responses to processes of globalisation both prior to and beyond the geopolitics of the nation state.

In her contribution **Globalisation or Isolation: Regulating Mobility of Mongols during the Qing Period (1636–1911)**, Dorothea Heuschert-Laage examines the design, implementation and consequences of mobility policies. She shows how Mongols of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century modified their concepts of space, defined their identity through territorial affiliation and pursued their own agenda within the framework of Qing law. They actively made use of the Pax Manjurica by moving across internal borders of the Qing Empire. Nevertheless, beyond images of free circulating people, items, and ideas, mobility has always been subject to limitations. Thus, Heuschert-Laage suggests that, instead of focusing on “a strong sense of border,” more emphasis should be placed on “a strong sense of mobility” when looking at Manchu policies towards Mongols, since they were more concerned with regulating human movements. Whereas the Manchu strategy aimed at monitoring and limiting the scope of activities, Mongols reinterpreted demarcations as a means to secure access to pastures. While people were bound to defined territories on the one hand, new dynamics of interregional mobility facilitated cross-cultural exchange on the other. Pilgrimage sites and centres of Buddhist studies, in particular, became places of supra-regional importance. However, worship was not the only motive for travelling, and inter-monastery networks channelled exchange across administrative boundaries, even for members of the nobility, who, in contrast to the clergy, were severely constrained in terms of their spatial mobility. In addition to monasteries and pilgrimage sites, places such as courier stations, border crossing points and watch posts became centres of transactions and trade, thereby contributing to new forms of transfer and connectivity. Heuschert-Laage’s insights into the substantial role of Mongols in modelling the nature of borders invites a rethinking of the global/local dichotomy.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas Langenohl, ‘Scenes of Encounter. A Translational Approach to Travelling Concepts in the Study of Culture’, *The Trans/National Study of Culture. A Translational Perspective*, ed. by Doris Bachmann-Medick (Berlin & Boston: Walter DeGruyter, 2014), 93–117 (p. 106).

Charlotte Marchina's chapter „**Common Property beyond this Fence**“: **Land Privatisation and the Adaption of Pastoralism among the Aga Buryats** also addresses changes in patterns of mobility, but in this case they were the results of the reform policies implemented in Russia after the fall of the USSR. The post-Soviet state imposes a capitalist model on Buryat pastoralists that is in line with forces of globalisation. While economic reforms favour private ownership, political reforms have resulted in a merger of two autonomous Buryat districts with neighbouring Russian provinces and, as a consequence, a reduction in the budget for promoting Buryat culture, such as language teaching and cultural events. Based on fieldwork, Marchina presents a case study of Buryat responses to enforced privatisation from the pastoralists' perspective. Although they were compelled by law to privatise animals and land and to adopt a sedentary lifestyle, the herders retained certain collective arrangements to the mutual benefit of cooperatives, local governments and private livestock owners. Independent herders can only make a profitable living by working with collectives that provide equipment and fodder at affordable prices, which is why decollectivisation has so far not given way to complete privatisation, and many pastoralists remain members of cooperatives, which are considered the successors of the *kolхозes*. When agrarian reforms were implemented from 2011, pastoralists were forced to take possession of the land to which they were entitled, but agreements between villagers and pastoralists bypassed the legal regulations because land use rights are considered a better option than privately owned plots. Marchina shows how land privatisation caused herders to look at the once collectively-owned grazing land in terms of property. This has caused tensions, not only over nomadisation practices (which have often been replaced by transhumance), but also tensions between private herders and collectives, between neighbours and even between the pastoralists and their animals. The distance and frequency of seasonal migrations have been reduced, and the reduction in mobility has led to more intensive forms of animal husbandry. Although being a pastoralist remains a powerful marker of identity for Buryats, it is often Russians who are employed for much of the actual herding work. This has unintended effects on the animals, who, as Marchina illustrates, appear to be uncomfortable with the implications of land privatisation as well.

Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz' contribution, **Of White Tsar and Black Faith: An Entangled History Approach to the Buryat Historical Chronicles**, questions the stereotypic binary conception of non-European cultures reacting to

European challenges, since it ignores not only the historicity of contexts and networks of non-European knowledge cultures, but also the influential presence of their epistemic cultures and taxonomies in manifestations of global modernity. Using an entangled history approach for her case studies of two Buryat chronicles composed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kollmar-Paulenz reveals dynamic and multi-centred genealogies of knowledge formations which leave no doubt that these processes need to be understood as parts of global history. From about 1700, the Buryats of the Transbaikal region located themselves in the Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhist cultural sphere that encompassed not only the Himalayas, but also Tuva and the Kalmyk territories on the lower Volga. Thus, they engaged in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and also a multi-centred network. However, when the Russian and the Qing Empires fixed their border, Mongols on either side faced different consequences: While the Russian Empire subordinated Buddhists in favour of the Orthodox Church, the Qing rulers acted as protectors of Buddhism and used the faith as a convenient means to strengthen their power. Both, however, met in discourses that considered religion – whether Orthodox Christianity or Tibetan Buddhism – as a means to “tame” the nomads. Notwithstanding the political divide, which resulted in restrictions of mobility, Mongols applied creative tactics to maintain their ties with the greater Buddhist world. Intellectual elites of the Transbaikal Buryats, who at the same time belonged to the Russian Empire, used the production of historical chronicles not least as vehicles for self-representation. As the case studies from the heyday of Buryat historiography show, besides epistemic cultures of Indo-Tibetan and Mongolian origin, the novel approach of both chronicles resembles the Russian and German ethnographic depictions of “shamanism”, including a shift towards individual actors. This indicates that the intellectual thinking of Buryat elites, who would go on to play important roles in the formation of modern Mongolia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was rooted in encounters with diverse epistemic cultures as part of an emerging global modernity.

Ganbaataryn Nandinbilig’s article on **Traditional Mongolian Games and Cultural Change** introduces a sample of traditional games, their design, material and symbolism against the backdrop of domestic as well as foreign cultural influences. These include pastoralism, hunting, the influx of Chinese and Indo-Tibetan Buddhist cultural elements during the Qing period as well as technological innovations. Using material from field studies, Nandinbilig shows that some of the games owe their popularity not only to symbolic and

educational values but in some cases also to their potential for subversion. Recently, the declining interest in playing traditional games has caused the authorities to take measures for their preservation via school events and textbooks.

Elisa Kohl-Garrity's chapter **Contextualising Global Processes in Negotiating the "Custom of Respect" in Ulaanbaatar** explores relationships between political change and notions of morality. Based on archival research and interviews conducted in a *ger* district in Ulaanbaatar, the author demonstrates implications of customs (understood as objects of quest and negotiation) in relation to moral questions in the past and the present. Kohl-Garrity shows how 'custom' provides a space to discuss political and social change, loss, and what is considered a lack of morality. She identifies narratives that oscillate between the value canons attributed to the remote past and those associated either with socialism or capitalism. "The custom of respect" (*hündleh yos*) as configured in senior-junior relationships, provides both a reverence for history and guidance for the future, but it has also led to dual-sided narratives about whether customs had been observed to a greater or to a lesser extent during the socialist period. In interaction with global processes and in connection with the multifaceted term 'culture', notions of respect describe ways of forming relationships embedded in dimensions of values which include aspirations for recognition.

Alevtina Solovyova's contribution **Chötgöriin Yaria in the Twenty-first Century: Mongolian Demonological Beliefs and Mass Culture in the Age of Globalisation** addresses contemporary concepts of devilry. The author demonstrates how narratives about the supernatural, which had always been part of the Mongolian folk tradition, changed under post-modern conditions. Based on orally transmitted ghost stories collected during field research, she explores Mongolian responses to globalising impulses concerning demonological beliefs. Among the sources used for the analysis are also written tales about ghosts and spirits which appeared in the mass media from the 1990s as well as new genres and features that have developed as a corollary of urban life, the internet and images of mass cultures. Analysing the appearance, character and functions of demonic beings as well as the semantics, pragmatics and structure of tales, Solovyova shows how the special genre of ghost storytelling developed new plot patterns that emerged from the interaction of vernacular religion and beliefs in foreign demonology as part of contem-

porary popular culture. Due to their strong connections with everyday life, demonological beliefs appear highly adaptable to the new social and cultural contexts of modern life. From a comparative perspective, the author identifies similar transformations in China, Japan and Korea, but also in many countries where the increased interest in the mystic and supernatural is part of the transnational post-socialist phenomena of popular culture. In Mongolia, local variants have turned into new unified types of demonology, for a *chötgör* can not only be imagined to appear in different guises and places – including the urban space – but also take on a range of functions in diverse narrative contexts. Solovyova demonstrates how the cultural phenomenon *chötgörin yaria*, featuring elements of folklore and fiction, can even provide insights into collective memories of World War II and the major political, economic and social changes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Raphaël Blanchier's chapter, **Mongolian Dance in the Face of Globalisation: A History of Interacting Local, National and Global Dance Forms**, raises the crucial question: What should be considered a relevant "local" level when studying responses to processes of globalisation? His analysis of the Oirad dance *bii bielgee* challenges the two prevalent accounts of a socialist nation state construction on the one hand and a post-socialist valorisation of peripheral cultural elements on the other. Blanchier traces the extent to which the national "stage Mongolian dance" (known as *Mongol ardyn büjig*) has been influenced by local dance forms since the socialist period and how this mutually supportive dialectic has not only paved the way for the recent promotion of *bii bielgee* by UNESCO, but even more for bringing it into line with prestigious global standards. The desire to have *bii bielgee* internationally recognised as a distinct Mongolian style while at the same time meeting international artistic levels of academic art forms, such as ballet and character dance, did not, in fact, lead to compliance with the demands of the slogan "national in form, socialist in content". Based on fieldwork and archival material, Blanchier demonstrates that the search for authenticity rather worked in favour of local dance forms, which is why the Oirad *bii bielgee* advanced to become an internationally acknowledged emblem of artistic culture. Against the backdrop of discourses posing globalisation as a threat to Mongolian culture, be it the fear of Russification, as expressed in the 1980s, or of the recent influx of American and South-Korean clip-dancing, *bii bielgee* appears to be a source of inspiration, not least for choreographic fusions with modern dance, jazz, and pop-rock. Thus, Mongolian choreographers today continue the

## Note on Contributors<sup>1</sup>

**Dorothea Heuschert-Laage** received her doctoral degree from the University of Bonn with a thesis on the Mongolian Code from the Kangxi period (1662–1722). 2011–2013 she worked at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale, Germany, as an associate researcher. Currently, she is employed as a postdoctoral researcher in a project at the Institute for the Science of Religion and Central Asian Studies at the University of Bern (Switzerland), where she investigates missionary encounters and processes of cultural translation in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Inner Mongolia. Her research interests include Mongolian cultural and political history (17<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), legal anthropology and the frontier regions of the Qing Empire.

**Charlotte Marchina** received her PhD in Social Anthropology at INALCO (National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilisation, Paris), where she taught Mongolian language and culture for several years. Affiliated with the research team ASIEs (INALCO, Université Sorbonne Paris Cité), she is also a scientific member of the French archaeological expedition in the Mongolian Altai and of the Monaco-Mongolia joint archaeological expedition. Her doctoral research focused on human-animal coexistence, communication and collaboration in nomadic pastoralism among the Mongols and the Buryats (southern Siberia, Russia). Her current research includes a diachronic study of Mongolian nomadic pastoralism in a multidisciplinary approach (social and cultural anthropology, archaeology, archaeozoology, biochemistry) in collaboration with the French National Museum of Natural History and the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

**Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz** is professor of History of Religions and Central Asian Studies at the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Bern, Switzerland. Her main research fields are the cultural history of Inner Asia, the Tibet-Mongolia Interface, and method and theory of religion.

**Ganbaataryn Nandinbilig** is Professor for Mongolian Culture at the National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar. Her main research fields are Mongolian

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<sup>1</sup> In order of appearance.

folklore, religion, and cultural studies of Inner Asia, and she has worked extensively on Mongolian games.

**Elisa Kohl-Garrity** is a PhD candidate of the Max Planck Research School for Anthropology, Archaeology and History of Eurasia (IMPRS ANARCHIE) in Halle/Saale, Germany. During her fieldwork in Mongolia from September 2013 to August 2014 she has been affiliated with the Mongolian Academy of Sciences with a scholarship awarded by the Mongolian President. Her research interests include notions of respect, anthropology of value, historical anthropology, post-socialist studies, collective identities, kinship, subject-formation, cosmology, ritual, tradition, and urban anthropology.

**Alevtina Solovyova** is a member of the Centre for Typological and Semiotic Folklore Studies, a lecturer at the Department for Chinese History and Philology and at the Department of Mongolian and Tibetan History and Philology of the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow, Russia. Her research interests include Mongolian studies, Chinese studies, cultural anthropology, folklore, and mythology of Central Asia.

**Raphaël Blanchier** is a PhD candidate and T.A. in the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Practical School for Advanced Studies) in Paris, France. He regularly conducts immersive fieldwork on Mongolian dance and in particular on Oirat dances, in collaboration with the International Research Group “Nomadism, Society and Environment in Central and Northern Asia”, the Centre for Mongolian and Siberian Studies (CEMS, Paris), the Laboratoire d’Anthropologie Sociale (LAS, Paris), the Mongolian Institute for the Study of Culture and the Arts, and the Mongolian National University for Culture and the Arts (Ulaanbaatar). His research focuses include Oirat identity and heritage, questions in dance performance and transmission, Mongolian dance history and recent development, the importance of the nation state institutions in contemporary Mongolia.

**Elvira Churyumova** was born in Elista, Kalmykia. She was trained in History and Management at the Kalmyk State University, Russia. She holds a PhD in Political Sciences from the Institute of Socio-Political Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. Her doctoral research was on the social and political situation in Kalmykia during the global economic crisis in 2009–2011. She also has a MSc in Migration Studies from the University of Oxford.

Currently, she is a Researcher on the Kalmyk Cultural Heritage Project at the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit, the University of Cambridge.

**Sendenjavyin Dulam** is an internationally renowned scholar in Mongolian Studies. He is currently working as a leading professor at the Mongolian State University of Culture and Art (SUIS). Dulam was born in Bayanbulag *sum* (Bayanhongor *aimag*) and studied Mongolian language and literature at Mongolian National University to become a teacher. He has been writing poetry since 1970. His PhD dissertation examined the traditions of Mongolian mythology, and he earned his Doctor of Science (Sc.D.) on the structure of symbolisations in Mongolian literature and folklore from the Buryat Institute of Sociology. He has researched on a broad spectrum of topics with a focus on symbolism, is an acknowledged expert on cultural heritage and has been invited to teach at several universities abroad, including Paris, Cambridge, Beijing, Strasbourg, Lanzhou, Rome, and Bonn. Dulam has received numerous honours for his work, including “Best Scholar of Mongolia” in 2005. Some of his major publications, such as *Images in Mongolian Mythology*, and the four-volume *book Symbolism in Mongolia*, have been translated into several languages.

**Ines Stolpe** is Professor of Mongolian Studies at the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn. After graduating in Comparative Education and Mongolian Studies in Berlin and Ulaanbaatar, she obtained her PhD in Central Asian Studies from Humboldt University, Berlin, on the interdependencies of social and spatial mobility in contemporary Mongolia. From 2004–2008, Ines Stolpe was research associate at the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 640) “Changing Representations of Social Order” with a project on cultural campaigns in Mongolia. Her research interests and areas of teaching include Mongolian language, cultural and political history and social change, politics of remembrance, civil society, educational philosophy, and post-socialist studies.

**Judith Nordby** completed a PhD on 20<sup>th</sup> century Mongolian history in 1988 at the University of Leeds. She was head of Mongolian Studies at Leeds from 1988 to 2012. She provided reports on the politics and economy of contemporary Mongolia for the Economist Intelligence Unit for several years and was a regular participant in the Mongol-British Round Table. Since she retired in 2012 she has continued her research into contemporary Mongolian affairs and acts as a consultant on matters Mongolian.



**Ulrike Gonzales** is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn. She received her M.A. in Central Asian Studies from Humboldt University, Berlin. Her current doctoral research focuses on specific civil society organisations and informal political participation in contemporary Mongolia. Her research interests include post-socialist studies, Mongolian social and political history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and historical travel accounts of Mongolia.

**Paula Haas** studied Chinese and Mongolian Studies at the University of Venice Ca'Foscari, Italy, and obtained a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. Her research interests include Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, trust, cooperation, and ethics.

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