

Globalization's Impact on Mongolian Identity Issues and the Image of Chinggis Khan

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PART I: The Mongols, this previously unheard-of nation that unexpectedly emerged to terrorize the whole world for two hundred years, disappeared again into obscurity with the advent of firearms. Even so, the name Mongol became one forever familiar to humankind, and the entire stretch of the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries has come to be known as the Mongol era.¹

PART II: The historic science was the science, which has been badly affected, and the people of Mongolia bid farewell to their history and learned by heart the history with distortion but full of ideology. Because of this, the Mongolians started to forget their religious rituals, customs and traditions and the patriotic feelings of Mongolians turned to the side of perishing as the internationalism was put above all.²

PART III: For decades, Mongolia had subordinated national identity to Soviet priorities....Now, they were set adrift in a sea of uncertainty, and Mongolians were determined to define themselves as a nation and as a people. The new freedom was an opportunity as well as a crisis.³

As the three above quotations indicate, identity issues for the Mongolian peoples have always been complicated. In our increasingly interconnected, media-driven world culture, nations with

¹ Baabar, *History of Mongolia* (Ulaanbaatar: Monsudar Publishing, 1999), 4.

² "The Political Report of the First Congress of the Mongolian Social-Democratic Party" (March 31, 1990), 14.

³ Tsedendamdyn Batbayar, *Mongolia's Foreign Policy in the 1990s: New Identity and New Challenges* (Ulaanbaatar: Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002), 8.

small populations and histories full of difficulties in protecting national sovereignty, are both assaulted and supported by the effects of globalization. For Mongolia, the challenge of forging a new national identity under such circumstances is especially evident in 2006, when all eyes turn to Mongolia's 800th anniversary of statehood.

This anniversary commemorates the 1206 *kuriltai* that confirmed the ascendancy of Temujin over the nomadic tribal confederations by naming him khan. At this momentous 1206 assembly, Temujin took the sacred name of Chinggis, reorganized his army and administration, and chose the name *Mongol* (aka *Monggol*) for both the united tribal entity (*undes*, nationality) and associated geopolitical territory (*ulus*, nation). The mystery of the meaning of the word *Monggol* fittingly embodies the mystery surrounding exactly who and what it represented. This same ambiguity has continued through the centuries as the Mongol empire rose and waned, as the Mongol people united and split, and challenges the nation even in this globalized era.

Today Mongolia's globalization specialists are spending much time identifying priority sectors and development objectives. For example, Dr. L. Nyamtseren has noted that "for any country it is inevitable to be involved in the global process of integration. Mongolia needs to analyse carefully an [sic] international economic global trends, find out where exactly Mongolia stands at this moment, how positively or negatively the trend affects Mongolian economy and to identify its own developmental concept, strategy and policy."⁴ However, in order to identify developmental strategies, economists and policy planners--Mongolian and foreign alike--first must step back and look at the issues of what is democratic Mongolia's identity should be and how integration into the globalized marketplace community will strengthen and preserve this identity.

⁴ L. Nyamtseren, "Main Developmental Pattern of Mongolia in the Edge of the 21 Century," *Renovation of Mongolia on the Eve of the XXI Century and Future Development Patterns* (Ulaanbaatar: Mongolian Development Research Center, 2000, 122-143), 140.

Although this paper will concentrate on examining the impact of globalization on establishing a modern Mongolian identity in the twenty-first century, the identity issue must first be placed within the historical context of discussion of the nature of earlier Mongolian identities. This naturally leads to an examination of the role of Mongolia's founding father, Chinggis Khan, in defining previous and present Mongolian identity issues.

CHINGGIS KHAN LINEAGE AND CULT IN THE POST-MONGOL EMPIRE PERIOD

L. Munkh-Erdene at Hokkaido University, who has researched Mongolian nationalism in the late nineteenth century to mid-1920s prior to the establishment of socialism, maintains that the prime traditional basis for Mongol statehood was the Borjigid lineage (*Mongol ovogton*) which perpetuated "the *Mongol ulus* as an historical community."⁵ He cites native Mongol chronicles, which glorified Chinggis Khan and his descendants as having divine origin and the Mongol people (Blue Mongol) as the heart of an empire made up of other inferior peoples. To keep the bloodlines pure, intermarriage with the conquered Chinese people during the Yuan dynasty was prohibited. Thus, Chinggis Khan and his lineage were the cement connecting the various geographically dispersed Mongol peoples during the empire period.

In later centuries, after the breakup of the Mongol empire, lineage ties were strengthened by the fact that Chinggis Khan himself became the object of a special religious cult, centered on the Ordos region of China where a sanctuary existed housing his supposed relics.⁶ In Mongolia proper, the importance of the Borjigid lin-

⁵ Lkhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, "Inquiry to Mongolian Nationalism Through Terms and Concepts, From Late Nineteenth Century to Mid-1920s" (Sapporo, Japan: unpublished paper, 2004), 2.

⁶ John Man, *Genghis Khan, Life, Death, and Resurrection* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Thomas Dunne Books, 2004), 290-298, summarizing Rihu Su, "The Chinggis Khan Mausoleum and its Guardian Tribe" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania dissertation, 2000) and the April 1935 visit described in Owen Lattimore, *Mongol Journeys* (London: Doubleday, 1941).

age continued through the Manchu Qing period (1644-1911), buttressed by a close tie to the Buddhist Church. According to Mongolian political theory, the Borjigid line was a co-ruler of the Qing Empire through alliance with, not conquest by, the Manchu royal line. Initially, Mongols during the Qing period had a policy prohibiting intermarriage with the conquered Han Chinese. Munkh-Erdene believes that when this policy finally was changed by the Manchu court in the nineteenth century, the Mongolian nobles in Urga were motivated to lead a revolution against the Qing and its successor, the Republic of China, to preserve the purity of the Mongol lineage ('one origin, one blood'). Munkh-Erdene notes that some modern Mongol researchers believe that the Mongolian noble class did have a well established *Mongol ulus* and *Mongol ovogton* identity, and were seen by the Mongol commoners (*arats* and *shabi*) as exemplifying a very different identity from the hated Manchu and Chinese officials. For all classes there was a genuine fear of Chinese cultural and physical assimilation which would lead to the disappearance of 'Mongolness'.⁷

However, Christopher Atwood does not believe the Mongols before 1911 understood the concept of nationality which is defined by customs, language and ancestry, and differs from citizenship which is defined by residence with one sovereign government.⁸ Christopher Kaplonski seems to agree with Atwood because he suggests that the Mongols did not have a strong sense of ethnicity prior to the twentieth century, but rather only an identity based on "a limited locality," such as a tribe or even specific geographical location.⁹ Both viewpoints are disputed by Munkh-Erdene, who maintains that during the late Qing period a new Mongol "ideology included also anti-colonial, anti-assimilation, and anti-Chinese elements...It was not and could not be a Western type of civic

⁷ Munkh-Erdene, 2004, 3.

⁸ Christopher Atwood, "National Questions and National Answers in the Chinese Revolution, Or, How Do You Say *Minzu* in Mongolian?" *East Asian Working Paper Series on Language and Politics in Modern China* 5 (Bloomington, Indiana: 1994), 37-73.

⁹ Christopher Kaplonski, "Creating National Identity in Socialist Mongolia," *Central Asian Survey*, 17/1 (1998), 35-37.

nationalism.”¹⁰ Yet, Munkh-Erdene does note that perhaps with the Khiagta Agreement in 1915 there is a distinction in the way Mongols used *undesten* (nationality) for Mongols in Mongolia proper versus *ovogton* (all Mongol peoples in general). He also indicates that Jamsarano in the late 1920s refers to his ‘Mongolian tribes’ (*undesten*), which signifies both his nationalism and his understanding of nation.

The autonomous government under the Bogdo Khaan, a native Tibetan but spiritual and political ruler of the Mongol state which emerged from the collapse of the Qing, is a peculiar period in Mongolia’s historical consciousness. During these years of turmoil and occupation by Chinese and then White Russian armies, Mongols grew in consciousness of nationhood. By this time it is clear that the Mongols had a definite sense of nationality and were seeking an independent sovereign nation for the Mongol nationality alone. This is not to say there was no idea of unification with other Mongol groups in other regions, but independence for the area of autonomous Mongolia was the major goal.

THE COMMUNIST PERIOD

After the 1921 communist revolution in Urga, power was first consolidated in the hands of the revolutionaries by the deliberate crushing of aristocratic rule. However, the arrest and execution of many in the noble class, including those claiming direct relationship to Chinggis Khan, was a peculiar problem for the new socialist government. How could the Borjigid descendants be liquidated without liquidating the Mongol state? One solution to the problem was to abolish the use of all family and clan names in 1925: “It was purely for political reasons, to eliminate the influence of the nobility and destroy the hereditary status of their children. Two or three generations later, people here didn’t even know they had lost their clan names.”¹¹ One of these people without memory

¹⁰ Munkh-Erdene, 2004, 4.

¹¹ “In Search of Chinggis Khaan,” *Mongolia Today—Online Magazine* 2 (2000), in www.mongoliatoday.com/issue/2/tomb_mistery.html.

of a clan name is N. Enkhbayar, former Prime Minister and recently elected new President of Mongolia.

During the early socialist period Mongolia needed to find a new identity, since it was tearing down its old Borjigid aristocratic one. The Mongol land had to be glorified, as well as the communist revolutionaries who had achieved independence and beaten back the foreign occupiers of the last years of the autonomous period. One major contributor to forging the new identity that was strongly linked to the physical Mongolian landscape was the poet D. Natsagdorj, who was the editor of the newspaper *A People's Warrior*. Educated in Leningrad, Berlin and Leipzig, he wrote articles about Mongolian history and the new Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) for German magazines. In 1929 he returned to Mongolia where he wrote *A Short History of Mongolia* and translated many foreign novels. In the 1930s he wrote his best dramas, including *Amidst Sad Hills*, songs, and his great poem, *My Motherland*. His works were used by the communist state to extol the new Mongolian identity: "In these poems filled with inspiration the great poet sculpted the beautiful image of Native Land dear to every Mongolian heart."¹² In fact, he was lauded as the inventor of a new genre in Mongolian literature, propaganda poems.

The conscious development of popular identification with the Mongolian land as opposed to traditional 'feudal' and religious culture is evident in Carole Pegg's research on Mongolian musical and dance genres. Pegg documents how the Mongolian official establishment in the late 1920s consciously modified old Mongolian motifs to glorify the socialist revolution, and to write out Chinggis Khan from Mongolian history and performance. Poetry and song which had been created to eulogize the founding father only could continue during the socialist period if such references were dropped. New "themes acceptable under communism included nature, the homeland, love of parents, children, the state, and the Party. References to ethnic identity and associated heroes were not permissible."¹³

¹²Erdenbilig (1986), 21, cited in Munkh-Erdene.

¹³Carole Pegg, *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 23.

But supporters of the traditional Borjigid lineage standard of Mongol identity did not completely disappear under communism. Mongolia's leading intellectual of the twentieth century, Biambyn Rinchen (1905-1977), was arrested in the late 1930s for being a 'nationalist', 'pan-Mongolist' and anti-revolutionary. Even after his release, he did not hide his respect for Chinggis Khan as a far-sighted world political leader. Rinchen's life motto was "Mongolia must be Mongolian," and some Mongol writers assert that he was a strong influence on the young leaders of the 1990 Mongolian democratic revolution.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the Japanese in the 1930s believed that they could influence communist Mongolia to move toward their camp by promoting pan-Mongolism and Chinggis Khan, following the same policy as they were pursuing in Inner Mongolia. The Mongolian leader Demid, who was accused of siding with the Japanese, was said to have proclaimed: "Let the Khalkhas return and restore the times of the Great Chingis; the Great Japan will help."¹⁵ Under pressure from Stalin, such leaders were systematically purged from the Mongolian government.

Several decades later in 1962 Mongols sought to associate their national identification with Chinggis Khan on the 800th anniversary of his birth in Khentii aimag. A stone monument was secretly was by the government, and a conference was organized by the Academy of Sciences to assess his historical role. While the conference was in progress, a critical telegram from Soviet Academician Zhukov, who maintained Chinggis Khan had played only a 'reactionary' role in Mongolian history, was sent to B. Shirendev at the Academy. Nevertheless, some Mongol intellectuals proceeded with their favorable re-evaluation of Chinggis Khan's role. The head of the Historical Committee, Academician Natsagdorzh gave a lecture entitled "Chinggis as the Founder of the Mongol State," which was reported on by the Party newspaper *Unen*. He stressed the positive benefits Chinggis had brought to Mongolia, including

¹⁴ Shagdariin Sandag and Harry H. Kendall, *Poisoned Arrows, The Stalin-Choibalsan Mongolian Massacres, 1921-1941* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 149-151.

¹⁵ Sharad K. Soni, *Mongolia-Russia Relations: Kiakhta to Vladivostok* (Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2002), 120.

unification, statehood, law codes, and literacy, versus the destructiveness of his military campaigns. Ts. Damdinsuren wrote a report refuting some of the criticism of the Soviet scholars.¹⁶ Commemorative anniversary stamps even were issued by the government.

In September 1962 Tomor-Ochir,¹⁷ a secretary of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party's Central Committee who was engaged in a political struggle with Premier Yu. Tsedenbal, was dismissed from office for inflaming nationalist feelings among the people through his connection with the Chinggis Khan anniversary. The special stamps were withdrawn and the party press criticized intellectuals who were considered too nationalistic. The whole issue was examined at a Party ideological congress in 1963, attended by a Soviet delegation under Ilichev. Robert Rupen has suggested that "probably what brought the Genghis Khan celebrations to such an abrupt end was their entanglement with the unrelated Sino-Soviet dispute, since the Chinese, viewing Genghis as an important Chinese emperor, had organized big celebrations of their own. But basically the disowning of the anniversary celebrations was a minor victory for rigidity and party solidarity in the chronic contradiction between the claims of communism and of Mongol nationalism."¹⁸

The legacy of the failed attempt to resurrect Chinggis Khan is seen by the fact that ten years later, noted Mongolian historians Shirendev, Natsagdorzh, Perlee, and Bira in their *History of the Mongolian People's Republic* criticized Chinese historians for being "apologists for Genghis Khan and his bloodthirsty deeds."¹⁹ They quoted Tsedenbal and the January 1963 report by B. Lkhamsuren at the Republican Conference on Problems of Ideological Work.

¹⁶D. Dashpurev and S.K. Soni, *Reign of Terror in Mongolia 1920-1990* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1992), 61-62.

¹⁷ Tomor-Ochir is thought to have been killed in 1985 by pro-Tsedenbal supporters with the help of the Mongolian secret police, the *Dotood Yam*. See Dashpurev (1992), 63 and 76 n. 30.

¹⁸C.R. Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 418-419.

¹⁹*History of the Mongolian People's Republic* (Moscow: Nauka Publishing House, 1973), 54.

The official history admitted that there was some progressive significance to Chinggis Khan organizing the tribes in a single organic state, yet cautioned that “attention must be drawn to the quite obviously ruinous effects of the Genghis Khan conquests both on the peoples who were subdued and on Mongolia itself, the population of which was reduced and its productive forces dispersed over foreign lands.”²⁰

The anti-Chinggis Khan line and dissociation of the founding father with the Mongol state continued to be maintained by the Mongolian government and intellectual establishment until the end of the socialist period. This was explained in the official history as: “The political unification of Mongolia in a single state could have helped towards a further advance in the country’s productive resources and its economic and cultural progress. The obstacle to this, however, was the aggressive policy of the Mongol feudal leaders headed by Genghis Khan, who turned the people into warriors and the country into a military camp. The aggressive campaigns of Genghis Khan and his successors against the peoples of China, Iran, Russia and other countries were a supreme disaster, since they held up for a long time the progressive development of those peoples. During these campaigns enormous material and cultural assets were destroyed and tens of thousands of people were wiped out. The aggressive wars of the Mongol feudal leaders also had the effect of halting the growth of the productive forces and culture of Mongolia itself and brought the Mongolian people nothing but sufferings.”²¹

THE REVIVAL OF CHINGGIS KHAN DURING THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

In the 1989-1990 struggle by the young Mongolian democrats against communism, the leading political parties put forth a number of demands, one of which focused on Mongolian identity issues. They called for “the revival of traditional Mongolian culture,

²⁰ *History of MPR* (1973), 54 and 518 n. 120.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

re-introduction of the old Mongolian script, rehabilitation of Genghis Khan and encouragement to Buddhism.”²² The founding father of Mongolia, dead 800 years, suddenly was pulled from the rubbish heap of history by young, historically ignorant Mongols seeking both to criticize their communist elders and find a new nationalistic identity. Rock musicians sang songs dedicated to the Great Khan. The nation’s number one band, Khonkh, stood next to a giant portrait of Chinggis and mournfully sang an apologia for the lack of respect of previous generations: “Will you forgive us?/ For we used to focus/Only on the black spots of your life,/Distorting the record of history/And thus deceiving future generations.”²³ The term Bogdo Ezhen [saintly/holy/august Lord/Ruler] was found increasingly in opposition political newspapers and documents.²⁴

This phenomenon was certainly initially home-grown. Mongol writers such as Sh. Sandag, when reviewing the communist past, have claimed that one of the main reasons Mongolia maintained its independence during the twentieth century was because any country that produced such great world leaders as Chinggis Khan and Khubilai Khan could not have its statehood and cultural identity extinguished.²⁵

In early 1990, prior to the downfall of the communist government, an organization called the “Palace of Chinggis Khan,” which was meant to represent the *ovogton* or large extended family descended from the world conqueror, was established by Khalkha Mongols claiming direct descent from him. This private social and cultural association was given much publicity in official and non-official newspapers as having the goal of the perpetuation of the memory of Chinggis. Yet the organization was open to all Mongols regardless of bloodlines, because Chinggis Khan is the father of Mongolia and thus the ancestor of all Mongols. At this time

²² Soni, 2002, 223, quoting Mike Faber, “Mongolia Moves Towards Perestroika,” *Development Policy Review* 8:4 (December 1990), 426.

²³ Nicholas Kristof, “Where Genghis Khan Is In,” *The New York Times Magazine* (May 27, 1990), 23.

²⁴ *Ardebilal* [Democracy] 7 (June 1-10, 1990), 4.

²⁵ Sandag and Kendall, 2000, 170.

daily prayers with incense in his honor were resumed after a more than a sixty year hiatus at the capital's Gandan monastery.

The Mongolian Revolutionary People's Party (MPRP), in the midst of rejecting communism and reincarnating itself as a social-democratic party, faced a national election in 1990, and thus desired to identify with the growing nationalistic movement praising the great khan. It permitted a modest public celebration in honor of Chinggis Khan's birthday in May with a special edition of the newspaper *Unen*, full of articles on Chinggis, including an article by an astrologer which concluded that the Mongol leader conveniently was born on May 1st (traditional communist May Day could then be retained as a national holiday). The newspaper also included the text of the poem, "The Tomb of Chinggis," composed by national poet R. Choinom in the early 1960s but until then banned from print as too chauvinistic and nationalistic.

The nationalistic frenzy was fed by the events surrounding the conference held in Ulaanbaatar in August 1990 dedicated to the 750th anniversary of the *Secret History of the Mongols*. Although planning for the event had started years before and the Mongolian government had obtained UNESCO support to celebrate the anniversary of the writing of this unique Mongolian historical epic about Chinggis Khan's life, only small announcements were placed in *Unen* explaining the conference. A nine-part stamp series, with only one stamp of Chinggis' image, was printed. However, the winds of political reform and revived Mongolian nationalism encouraged the conference's activists and young scholars to glorify the nation's founder. Quickly, a new ballet for children and an opera were commissioned, and special songs and poems were written.

A special exhibit devoted exclusively to works glorifying Chinggis Khan was organized by the Mongolian Artists Union, timed to correspond with the conference on the *Secret History*. In a pan-Mongolist gesture, art pieces also were displayed from well-known Inner Mongolian artists. Images of Chinggis Khan proliferated in the 'black market' and portraits bearing his injunction: "If my body dies, let it die, but do not let my country die," appeared everywhere. Also, there was an artistic movement to modify the Chinese-stylized official Yuan dynastic portrait characterization of

Chinggis to make him appear less sinicized, younger, and more Mongol in physical appearance. Thus, the 1990 Secret History conference became for Mongols the catalyst for an explosion of long suppressed joy and pride over Chinggis Khan.

With the Democratic Revolution, Mongols were able to focus not only on redefining national identity, but also on restoring their own personal tribal and family identities. In 1991 President P. Ochirbat began the process with a decree restoring family names. People were permitted to choose their own name, and over sixty percent chose the name of the clan of Chinggis, the *Mongol ovogton*, Borjigid.²⁶ This was an indication of the strong identification Mongols continued to have to a common ancestor or common bone that is connected to the Borjigid royal lineage.

EXPOSURE TO GLOBALIZATION NURTURES TRADITIONAL IDENTITY THEMES

Newly democratic Mongolia in the 1990s was exposed to the modern Western world and the whole issue of globalization. At first glance, it might be assumed that globalization's impact on modern Mongolia's identity only would favor the emerging urban culture over the traditional rural one, accelerating the evolutionary process from the socialist era. Connecting Mongolia with the technologically diverse Western world with its instant media seemingly should promote the new over the old in the minds of its people. In fact, concern has grown that Mongolia in this new global era is losing its traditional culture or is a society split in two, as the modern urban Western lifestyle centered around Ulaanbaatar loses touch with the needs of the growing poor rural herdsmen around the country.

Many Mongols inside and outside the government were forced to re-examine the question of "what is Mongolia's identity?" The government's particular challenge is to formulate development strategies for Mongolia that maintain Mongolia's uniqueness and sovereignty, as the nation seeks to integrate itself more within the

²⁶ "In Search," 2003.

Asian region, something that its long-standing Soviet ties had prevented for over seventy years. Coming up with a modern reformulation of Mongolia's identity in today's globalized world is an issue that has been discussed for the last fifteen years by Mongolia's policymakers and strategic studies experts. For example, Tseden-dambyn Batbayar from the Institute of Strategic Studies has written extensively on Mongolia's search for a new post-Soviet identity. Noting that early Mongolian nationalism was submerged beneath the expansive push of both China and Russia, he claimed that in 1990 "independence rekindled the desire to rediscover Mongolian identity."²⁷ For Batbayar, Mongolia's identity must be a product of geography, of culture which includes Chinggis Khan, and of foreign policy. He believes that as Mongolia debates whether it belongs to Central Asia or Northeast Asia, it is actually debating if it will have a nomadic versus a modern identity.

Batbayar and many other Mongolian policymakers have an obvious bias against nomadism, implying that if Mongolia retains traditional nomadism, it cannot become modern. Thus they reject the nomadic economic model which has sustained the nation and people in difficult climatic and geographical conditions over the centuries. Most of the Western development and poverty alleviation experts who advise Mongolia promote such a biased, dismissive attitude, as seen in UNDP and Asian Development Bank reports. The embodiment of rejecting nomadism is Mongolian President Enkhbayar, who when prime minister famously stated: "It is not my desire to destroy the original Mongolian identity but in order to survive we have to stop being nomads."²⁸

However, some Mongolian economists, such as D. Byambasuren, are convinced that nomadism is one of the keys to Mongolian modern as well as traditional identity: "In the history of [sic] world, Mongols are known as nomadic herders, bearing the nomadic branch of traditional civilization tree at the edge of the twentieth century. Therefore, nomadic life values and culture are to appear as a main basis that determine national mentality and ways

²⁷ Batbayar, 2002, 17.

²⁸ David Murphy, "No Room for Nomads," *Far Eastern Economic Review* (May 31, 2001), 122.

of survival of Mongols.”²⁹ Some modern Mongolian anthropologists believe that Mongolian nomads are freedom loving, individualistic, and quick learners, characteristics highly suitable to the new democratic free market era.

Like the communists of the last century, modern Mongolian policymakers today have the dilemma of choosing what in traditional Mongolian culture to promote and what to denigrate and change. The Mongolian nomadic lifestyle and economy with its special form of poverty dramatically increased in the country's early globalization period, so it is debatable whether or not nomadism is destined in fact to disappear. In the early twenty-first century, it is apparent that the majority of Mongolia's leaders choose to reject nomadism as a backward economic form despite its being uniquely Mongolian, but they still seek to retain and glorify the national father of Mongolian nomadism, Chinggis Khan. They can take this attitude because, curiously, in the democratic era the Mongols have found that many Westerners actually highly respect Chinggis Khan for his empire rather than criticize him as ‘uncivilized’.

WESTERN VIEWS OF CHINGGIS KHAN INFLUENCE DEMOCRATIC MONGOLIA'S IMAGE

Globalization's impact of linking Mongolia to international cultural and ecological non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as affiliates of the United Nations like UNESCO and ecological/environmental groups, somewhat unexpectedly is providing financial underwriters and vocal advocates for preserving traditional Mongolian cultural elements which had been under attack for so much of the socialist twentieth century. Living between two giant neighbors which had little affection or nostalgia for the Mongolian empire, the Mongols had become accustomed to foreigners negatively evaluating their historical past. However, with the end

²⁹D. Byambasuren, “National Factors Affecting Development Strategy of Mongolia,” *Renovation of Mongolia on the Eve of the XXI Century and Future Development Patterns* (Ulaanbaatar: Mongolian Development Research Center, 2000), 107.

of Mongolia's isolation from the global marketplace in the 1990s, some Western nations, particularly the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain which were not overrun by the Mongols and did not have any memory of destruction or murder to color their views, indicated they were favorably impressed by what they knew of Chinggis Khan and his empire. Mongolia soon clearly understood that the one thing almost everyone in the world did know about the country was Chinggis Khan, and for many of these foreigners he was awe-inspiring rather than awful. As Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times* wrote: "He may have killed people by the millions, but he was also a great nationalist and one of the most brilliant commanders in history."³⁰

Mongols also learned that many serious Mongolists in the United States wrote with admiration about Chinggis Khan. For example, Kaplonski asserted that "Genghis Khan forged the Mongols into a unified group of people and created a nation single-handedly. He's like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and all our Founding Fathers rolled into one."³¹ There was even the radical approach to Chinggis Khan, advanced by Paula Sabloff, which has led to a new school of reinterpreting him as a democratic leader.³² Even a scientifically-trained Mongolian historian such as Batbayar was enthralled by the peculiar concept that his nation's once despised founder is not associated just with murder, but also with promoting democratic principles!³³ Thus, many in the Mongolian intellectual and political establishment have enthusiastically embraced Chinggis Khan not only as a symbol of past glories, but also as a symbol recognized around the world as a great leader of the new democratic Mongolia.

But why were Westerners in the 1990s attracted to Chinggis Khan and the imperial past in the "democratic" Mongolia? The founding father, who had been a non-person for much of the twentieth century, became the object of intense foreign curiosity

³⁰ Kristof, 1990, 23.

³¹ Beth Brophy, "Rethinking the Legendary Barbarian Genghis Khan," in *Untold Tales of the Great Conquerors*. U.S. New and World Report (2005), 48.

³² Paula Sabloff, *Modern Mongolia: Reclaiming Genghis Khan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2001).

³³ Batbayar, 2002, 26.

when the young Mongolian anti-communists used his image in their demonstrations as a nationalistic rallying point. Foreigners then sought to “sell” Chinggis Khan by linking his name to their efforts and products to attract the favor of the Mongols. The first major manifestation of this phenomenon was the “Gurvan Gol” [“Three Rivers”] expedition conducted by a group of Japanese scientists and Mongolian Academy of Sciences from 1990 to 1993, sponsored by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper. Japanese scientists employed ultrasound technology to identify as many as 1380 underground cavities that could be old royal tombs. However, the expedition was very controversial from the outset, because the Japanese were accused of bribing Mongolian officials to secretly prospect for minerals under the cover of searching for Chinggis Khan’s tomb. The expedition had not counted on the intense protests of the Mongolian public against any attempt to excavate for the grave, because of the taboo about desecrating the burial spot Chinggis had made such a great attempt to hide from the world.

As we approach the 800th anniversary of Mongolian statehood, we are now in the midst of an ever greater Chinggis Khan boom promoted by foreigners. The origin can be traced to a 1995 article in *The Washington Post* which named the Mongolian leader the “Man of the Millennium.”³⁴ After Sabloff’s promotion of Chinggis Khan as a democratic leader worthy of modern Mongolia, a number of new biographies by non-Mongolist writers such as Jack Weatherford³⁵ of MacCalester College and John Man³⁶ of Great Britain appeared to great sales. Weatherford, whose well-written book reached *The New York Times* bestseller list despite its shaky scholarship, has been interviewed on National Public Radio and other programs in the United States to explain his view that Chinggis Khan was a progressive, wrongly criticized, great ruler.³⁷

³⁴ Joel Achenbach, “The Era of His Ways,” *The Washington Post* (December 31, 1995), F1.

³⁵ Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Crown Press), 2004.

³⁶ John Man, *Genghis Khan, Life, Death, and Resurrection* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004).

³⁷ “All Things Considered,” National Public Radio, with Robert Siegel, March 25, 2004, in <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1791972>.

Chinggis Khan has attracted the attention of other types of media: the BBC has a one-hour documentary planned for release in 2005-6; Russian director Sergey Bodrov is planning a Hollywood-style epic on the young Chinggis called "The Mongol;" and there also is a much hyped film project on Chinggis Khan announced by Hollywood actor Steven Segal.

U.S. News and World Report in the fall of 2005 published a collector's edition on "Untold Tales of the Great Conquerors," which has an article on rethinking Chinggis Khan's legacy. It concludes that perhaps Chinggis was both a barbarian and a renaissance man: "Now, nearly eight centuries after his death, Genghis Khan's reputation seems to be undergoing a dream makeover."³⁸ British reporter Andrew Osborn has written that Chinggis Khan, modern Mongolia's sole historical figure capable of resurrecting a sense of greatness, is a "feel-good rallying point," for a people increasingly disenchanted with the country's supposedly democratic post-Communist rulers.³⁹ Even foreign-organized adventure tourists, newly exposed to Mongolia in this globally-interconnected world are encouraged to go to Mongolia to view the new Chinggis Khan as no barbarian, but "a pragmatic assimilationist," whose legacy to his nation was "the curious, hungry readiness to embrace good things from whatever sources and to combine them opportunistically as life flows along."⁴⁰ Is this not a recipe for success for the modern globalization proponent?

The foreigners' dream to find the tomb of Chinggis Khan has not gone away. For several years there has been an American expedition pressuring Mongolian officials for permission to survey likely sites, and in 2005 this search has even been turned into a kind of archaeological tourism. It seems step by step the world-wide media (e.g. *National Geographic*, the History and Discovery channels, the *Wall Street Journal*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Time Magazine*), manipulated by foreigners seeking tomb booty and/or

³⁸ Beth Brophy, "Rethinking the Legendary Barbarian Genghis Khan," in *Untold Tales of the Great Conquerors*. U.S. News and World Report (2005), 46-51.

³⁹ Andrew Osborn, "The Cult of Genghis Khan," *Independent News* (London: May 11, 2005).

⁴⁰ David Quammen, "In the Kingdom of Eternal Blue Heaven," *National Geographic Adventure* (January 2006), 102.

international fame, are complicit in pressing the Mongolian authorities to agree to search for the founding father's burial site.

Even if Chinggis Khan is not considered a democratic national leader, it is clear that most of Mongolia's contemporary historians as well as the populace would agree with Mongolian historian Baabar who wrote about Chinggis and his meaning for today's Mongols: "For Mongols who traditionally revered their ancestors, Chinggis Khaan was a god....Chinggis Khaan is something more than [a national hero] for Mongols: their lodestar, spiritual force, and the object of not only of national but of personal pride."⁴¹

However, there is a small caveat: below the surface, such adoration of Chinggis Khan as the symbol of "Mongolness" recently seems to be producing a murmuring backlash. This author has spoken with Western-educated young Mongolian intellectuals who decry the national fixation and glorification of the great khan. Perhaps they are responding to the obvious clash between exalting the founding father and denigrating the traditional nomadic culture which he epitomizes. It appears that this contradiction will continue to pull at the Mongolian psyche, and globalization and integration into the world perhaps exacerbate, not resolve, this issue.

INNER MONGOLIAN IDENTITY ISSUES

Among other Mongol peoples physically outside the independent nation, the search for national identity in our newly interconnected world is similarly tortured and contorted. There are several young Inner Mongolian scholars who have been confronting the question of "Who are the Mongols?" in the multi-ethnic state of modern China.

One such scholar is Almaz Khan, who from Berkeley has written on the *minzu* identity of the Mongols at the end of the twentieth century. He notes that the Mongolian identity is a matter of negotiation and contestation between the Mongols and the Han Chinese as well as between different regional and occupational

⁴¹ Baabar, 1999, 34.

subgroups of Mongols in Inner Mongolia. He calls this complex web of relationships which affect the overall Mongol group identity “a homogenizing ‘Mongolness’ for the *public* domain.”⁴² Khan emphasizes the importance of historical memory on the part of Mongols and Chinese in Mongolian “self-imaging and representation.”⁴³ Both ethnic groups focus on the ‘otherness’ of Mongolian identity. Mongolia is beautiful, wild, mysterious, barbaric, and dangerous. Such an image affects the “PRC state politico-economic policy and practice and has affected the process and shape of the Mongol’s *minzu* identity.” Despite the fact that millions of Chinese agriculturalists for over a century have poured into the Inner Mongolian territory and this massive colonization has changed the traditional pastoral economy and demography and forced most Mongols to give up animal husbandry to adopt agriculture and urban living, *Nei Menggu* [Inner Mongolia] “continues to be perceived the way it has always been: as an exotic and wild region where all is boundless blue sky, grassland, herds, and nomads.”⁴⁴

Khan asserts that this archaic image of the pastoral Inner Mongolia has been propagated since the founding of the People’s Republic of China through the spread of state media and arts, especially by television. Nevertheless, Han Chinese sociopolitical control in the latter half of the twentieth century has advocated the “advanced” state of a settled way of life and forced more and more Mongols to shift away from pastoral life to agriculture. This then has accelerated the disintegration of a coherent Mongolian culture and society, which in turn “has served to awaken a stronger sense of Mongol ethnic consciousness and a keenly felt need for, and attempts at, cultural revival and identity reinforcement. This reinforcement centers on the symbolism of pastoralism in opposition to the agricultural.”⁴⁵

The oppression of the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia inspired an ethnic revival movement in the 1980s, yet since the

⁴² Almaz Khan, “Who Are the Mongols? State, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Representation in the PRC,” in Melissa J. Brown, ed., *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1996), 126.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

Cultural Revolution most Mongols no longer wear traditional dress and urban Mongols generally are unable to speak Mongolian. Mongolian political representation in the regional government has dropped from 50 percent in 1947 to 10-15 percent in the new century. In response to the real issue of ethnic survival, Khan recognizes the growth of art and literature, often associated with Chinggis Khan, to express Mongolian sentiments, and the emphasis on the image of pastoralism as a rallying point, cultural marker and demarcation of Mongolian identity.⁴⁶ "For the Inner Mongols, Chinggis Khan has come to serve specifically as a symbol of ethnic/cultural survival of their group in relation to the overwhelmingly dominant Chinese state and society."⁴⁷ Yet, for the wealthier, more politically facile Inner Mongolian intellectuals and urban Mongols, the embracing of the pastoral symbols to which they attach sentimental value but do not represent their actual everyday Chinese way of life reality is a kind of "self-denial" of their actual cultural lives or "self-othering."⁴⁸ Such Mongols are the majority, and they usually are embarrassed by their rural cousins, but as agriculturalists and city-dwellers who have "demographic and economic weight, they have no (positive) symbolic values to offer to the nation-state, the Han Chinese, or the Mongols as a whole."⁴⁹

Inner Mongolia's attitudes toward Chinggis Khan, according to Khan, are different from how 'Outer Mongols' see him. Khan believes that Chinggis Khan as a national symbol was suppressed in the nation of Mongolia during the communist period not because he was a rival rallying point of Mongolian nationalism, but for political reasons governed by the Sino-Soviet relationship and because the Russians never liked the Mongol conqueror.⁵⁰ Khan explains that Chinggis Khan became "a symbol of opposition and yearning for a strong Mongol fatherland and independent nation-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁷ Almaz Khan, "Chinggis Khan: From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero," in Stevan Harrell, ed., *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle ; London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 248.

⁴⁸ Khan, "Who?," 1996, 152.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 262.

state,”⁵¹ so democratic Mongolia rightly has elevated him to a national hero.

Uradyn Bulag, who has established himself as an expert on Chinese Mongolian minority policies, also has written about the Chinese ‘Inner’ Mongols quest for identity through Chinggis Khan: “What Mongols see of themselves in assessing the twentieth century is that they are weak and overwhelmed by the Chinese, and that they are themselves hopelessly divided, unable to either become a united people or defend their interests in the face of the combination of a powerful Chinese state and large-scale Chinese migration to Inner Mongolia. Their decline in this century is a sharp contrast to their history of glory and valor. The constant yearning for Chinggis Khan is, in this sense, a yearning for the recovery of Mongol prowess.”⁵²

Bulag has noted that the Chinese cleverly appropriated Chinggis Khan in the twentieth century and made him a Chinese hero--“the only Chinese to defeat the Europeans.” Bulag sees this as a revision of Chinese multiculturalism theory, so that Mongolian and other non-Han Chinese heroes, who were long denounced as China’s enemies, are now defined as Chinese.⁵³ Yet, how Han nationalism, which was originally targeted against China’s historical enemies such as the Mongols and Manchus, could then embrace unwilling non-Han peoples as equals in the post-dynastic period, becomes a real question.

China’s absorption of Mongolia’s founding hero has been a centuries-long process. The Manchu Qing dynasty created a special administrative unit supported by an annual budget to care for the shrine of Chinggis Khan in the Ordos. In the nineteenth century the Qing court opened Inner Mongolian grasslands to Chinese agricultural development and settlement. After the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, Inner Mongols experienced even more intense Chinese colonialism which in the main erased

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁵² Uradyn E. Bulag, *The Mongols at China’s Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 234-235.

⁵³ Uradyn E. Bulag, “The Chinese Cult of Chinggis Khan: Genealogical Nationalism and Problems of National and Cultural Integrity” (Victoria, Canada; October 3-5, 2003), 2.

Inner Mongolia as a viable independent political entity. The cult and symbolism of Chinggis Khan lost its dynastic sponsorship. Meanwhile, in independent communist Mongolia, after the late 1920s, the Chinggis Khan cult was suppressed and local shrines destroyed.

When the Japanese established control in Manchuria in the 1930s under the Manchukuo government, they planned to permanently house the Ordos relics and memorial to Chinggis Khan in a massive mausoleum in Ulaanhot, Inner Mongolia to rally the Mongolian tribes to their side in the fight to expand Japan's Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere. Mongols, supported by Pu Yi's Daur (Darhad) Mongol wife Wan Rong and the Daur general Guo Wenling, built a Chinggis Khan temple (completed on September 30, 1943), the central symbol of Mongolian nationalism in eastern Inner Mongolia. This temple, Wang Yeh Miao, was "where the guardian spirit of the holy founder of the Mongol dynasty will be deeply revered, so that it may become a shining example for the creation of a united Great Asia."⁵⁴

However, pro-Chinese Nationalist princes appealed to the Nationalist army to protect the Ordos relics from removal. As a result, they were evacuated to Gansu and passed through Communist-held Yen'an to a welcome by a 10,000-strong throng. In 1944 the Communists with Mao's approval established a Chinggis Khan memorial with statue in Yen'an. When the Communists won the Chinese civil war, their new government, to placate the Inner Mongols, constructed a large Chinggis Khan mausoleum in 1954, remarkably similar in design to the destroyed Japanese model. It consisted of three *ger*-shaped buildings at Ejün Horoo Banner in the Ordos for the housing of treasures and 'relics'. There, the Darhad guardians of the sanctuary were confirmed in their positions and the Chinese government subsidized annual sacrifices.⁵⁵ It officially was dedicated on April 8, 1956, the year of the Sino-Soviet split, so Chinese officials also may have been trying to woo the goodwill of the Mongols across the border.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "Genghis Khan's New Fan Club," *The London Times* (June 1, 1980).

⁵⁵ Bawden, 1968, 417.

⁵⁶ "Genghis Khan's," 1980.

The present Inner Mongolian autonomous region took shape only in 1956, at a time when Mongols were already a 1-5 minority in their own homeland. For Inner Mongols, especially communist ones, there still is a continuous struggle to resolve the nationality question of how historical and cultural differences between Mongols and Chinese are mediated in a socialist, but nationalist, regime.⁵⁷ Khan sees a parallel evolution in the evolving of Chinggis Khan from an exclusive symbol of imperial legitimacy through actual kinship bloodlines to an embracing symbol of ancestry for all Mongols (all are “sons and grandsons of Chinggis Khan,” as Mao said).⁵⁸ He also attributes the growth of the image of Chinggis Khan to mass media and Chinese movies. It will be interesting to watch as China opens itself up to globalization to see how the world’s fascination and reinterpretation of Chinggis Khan will impact on both Han Chinese marketing strategy and theory of China as a multi-ethnic culture.

Complicating the identity situation is the reaction of Han Chinese to Chinggis Khan in communist China. Wurlig Borchigud, a researcher who claims direct descent from Chinggis Khan’s Borjigid clan, has written about how China used its educational system in the 1950s and 1960s to formulate a common Chinese culture of shared descent by teaching that all modern Chinese ethnic groups, including the Inner Mongols, are natives of China’s common territory and actually can trace their origins to the founding Yellow Emperor of China.⁵⁹ After the destruction of the Cultural Revolution was repaired, Chinese since the 1980s have been flocking to the Ordos shrine of Chinggis Khan to ‘worship’ him as a Chinese national hero. To Bulag such a phenomenon serves the interest of contemporary Chinese nationalism: “The Chinese cult of Chinggis Khan may be understood both as a statist attempt to accommodate minorities within China and as the exercise of a racial nat-i-

⁵⁷ Bulag, 2002, 7.

⁵⁸ The Yunnan Mongol community published a poem entitled, “We Are the Sons and Daughters of the Steppes: Children and Grandchildren of Chinggis Khan,” Khan, “Chinggis”, 275-276.

⁵⁹ Wurlig Borchigud, “The Impact of Urban Ethnic Education on Modern Mongolian Ethnicity, 1949-1966,” in Stevan Harrell, ed., *Cultural Encounters on China’s Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle ; London: University of Washington Press, 1995), 279.

onalism on the part of a victimized nation seeking to exact revenge for the humiliations of Euro-American and Japanese colonialisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”⁶⁰

How then have the Inner Mongols reacted to all of this? Have the Mongols in China taken pride in the Chinese embrace of their national hero? A measure of the tension between Chinese and Inner Mongolian views of national identity as seen through the prism of Chinggis Khan is played out today over the plan for the government of China to spend about \$20 million to renovate the Ordos mausoleum shrine built to Chinggis Khan. A local but well-connected Han Chinese businessman has proposed revamping the shrine into an entertainment complex and theme park, attractive to domestic and foreign tourists. Chinggis Khan would be packaged by the Chinese as the founder of a great Chinese dynasty and a good tourist attraction in his own right. The shrine would be privatized and its maintenance taken away from the Darkhad Mongol traditional protectors to become a profitable Chinese Mongolian Disneyland! Inner Mongolian authorities in 2004 quietly had agreed to let construction begin on the new project.

However, press accounts were published revealing the construction plans. News spread quickly among the 3.9 million ethnic Mongols in Inner Mongolia. In late 2004 campuses of the Inner Mongolian Normal University and other universities had to be sealed off, and a concert by the famous hard rock band from independent Mongolia, Hurd, was cancelled to stave off demonstrations.⁶¹ Darkhad Mongol pickets gathered at the mausoleum site for over a month, forcing the local government in December 2004 to halt construction and sack the mausoleum/museum director. The sensitive issue, described on internet sites, has mobilized the Inner Mongols and Mongols outside China to resist further attempts at commercializing the shrine: “This shrine is ours. The state doesn’t own them [relics]--we do.”⁶²

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁶¹ James Brooks, “Ulan Bator Journal: The Mongolians Are Coming to China With Heavy Metal! China Frets Over Mongolian Metal Band,” *The New York Times* (November 26, 2004).

⁶² B. Gardi, “In Inner Mongolia, Tribe Resists Bid to Turn Shrine Into a Theme Park,” *Radio Free Asia* (February 17, 2005), in www.smhric.org/news-75.htm.

It is a good guess that the whole question of how to treat Chinggis Khan and his importance in identity issues, for both Han Chinese and Inner Mongols, will continue to be a significant issue. Khan concludes that “the symbolism of Chinggis Khan has gone through a complicated history of change in signification and application,” and shown a high degree of adaptability in different historical contexts as the concept of Mongolian ethnicity in China has changed.⁶³

SOME COMMENTS ON THE KALMYK AND BURIAT MONGOLIAN IDENTITIES

For Mongol groups still incorporated in the Russian state after the collapse of socialism in 1990, a re-examination of national identity issues, particularly when exposed to the successful independence movements in the Baltic and Central Asian republics, naturally took place. Buriats were annexed to the Russian state in treaties in 1689 and 1728, when the territories on both sides of Lake Baikal were separated from what is now independent Mongolia. From that time until the early twentieth century, the Buriat population increased from 27,700 to 300,000. Buriats to the west of Baikal (Irkutsk Buriats) were Christianized, ‘russified’, and took up sedentary agriculture. The eastern Buriats (Transbaikali Buriats) remained Lamaist Buddhists and some continued to be *ger*-dwelling. Under the Czarist government, Buddhism thrived and became an important factor in Buriat cultural development, as it was among the Khalkhas to the south. The Buddhist Church ceased to exist officially in the 1930s, during the Stalinist general persecution of religion. In 1958 the word ‘Mongol’ was removed from the name of the republic (Buriat ASSR).

However, in the late 1980s there was a revival of lamaism as part of Buriat Mongol national consolidation and spiritual re-birth.⁶⁴ Contacts between Buriats and independent Mongolia increased greatly during the democratic era. While certainly having an

⁶³ Khan, “Chinggis,” 277.

⁶⁴ www.economicexpert.com/a/buryat.htm.

opportunity to learn more about the father of the Mongolian nation, Chinggis Khan, was one of the results of communication with other Mongol groups and Western nations, Buriat national identity also was influenced by the revival of shamanism. Perhaps renewal of shamanic practices was accepted as part of the revival of traditional 'Russian' forms of religious practices (which also included Lamaism), and thus was more acceptable to Russian political authorities, who feared any 'pan-Mongolism' movement.

Research on this intriguing topic is being done by doctoral student Manduhai at Harvard University, who did two years of field work among Buriats in Dornod, Mongolia and at the Ulaanbaatar Shamanic Center. She argues that "one of the multiple meanings of Buriat shamanic practices is a construction of nationalism--as an imagined community that articulates a collective identity. Shamans foster nationalism by bringing together the spirits of lost land, Buriat people, and the Celestial Court in one communal ritual. Research shows that such practice of nationalism was developed historically as a form of Buriat resistance to colonialism and displacement."⁶⁵ Manduhai concludes that the political instability within Mongolia led to shamanism's resurgence among Mongol Buriats.

As for the Kalmyk Mongols, this semi-nomadic branch of the Oirat Mongols migrated from Chinese Turkistan to the steppe west of the Volga in the mid-seventeenth century. As allies of the Russians, they guarded the eastern frontier of the Russian Empire for Peter the Great. About 300,000 Kalmyks who lived east of the Volga in 1771 tried to return to China but were tragically decimated enroute. The Kalmyks west of the Volga, who remained in Russia as practicing Lamaists, were given the Turkish name Kalmyk or 'remnant'. After the incorporation of the Soviet Union, the Kalmyks were given an autonomous region. However, many Kalmyk units fought the Russians in collaboration with the Nazi Germans in World War II, so Stalin deported about 170,000 to Siberia in 1943 and dissolved their republic. About 6,000 were all-

⁶⁵ Buyandelgeriyn Manduhai, "The Spirit of My Homeland is Recalling Me: Nationalism, Landscape, and Ritual Among the Buriats of Mongolia: Abstract," Central Eurasian Studies Society 4th Annual Conference (Boston, October 2003).

owed to return to the Volga homeland under Khrushchev and the Kalmyk ASSR was re-established in 1958.

The Kalmyks sought independence at the dissolution of the USSR in the 1990s, but instead were made a republic within the Russian Federation in February 1992 in an effort to calm the political crisis. The new president of the republic agreed to abandon their separatist claims in 1994. In the post-Soviet period, Kalmyk Buddhism and cultural forms such as the Kalmyk epic *Janggar* have been revived. Still, the Mongolness of the Kalmyks is proclaimed on the official website of the republic, where reference is made to the fact that the Kalmyks “used to be a part of the Mongol state created by Chinggis-khan in the 13th century.” It also defines the Kalmyks as “a Mongol-speaking nation in the European part of Russia.”⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

Mongolia is trying to establish itself as a viable democratic, Western-oriented, free market economy with a unique and valuable native culture. It is seeking to redefine its national identity and world image in terms that inspire its own people and at the same time revise any negative image left from its imperial past 800 years ago. “Mongols are seeing off the 20th century with the crisis of ethical heritage.”⁶⁷ The key to this search for a new identity appears to be the redefining and renewal of the symbol of Chinggis Khan, the founder of both the Mongolian state and nationality. As the historian Baabar told a foreign reporter in 2005: “He is the founder of our state, the root of our history. The communists very brutally cut us off from our traditions and history and got us to adopt the ways and views of Western civilization—with a red color of course, but still Western. Now we are becoming Mongols again.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ www.kalmykiaembassy.ru/html/ehistory/html.

⁶⁷ Byambasuren (2000), 109.

⁶⁸ Pocha, “Mongolia” (2005).

Byambasuren proclaims that at this period of new independence after the struggles of the twentieth century, it is not wrong to be proud of the great Mongol empire. He maintains that the only way Mongolia can progress in the world is if Mongols themselves are healthy: "True essence of this phenomenon is that Mongols discovered themselves in a completely new way and started to restore their national values."⁶⁹ Dr. Ts. Tsetsenbileg of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences notes that "understanding how Mongolians view Genghis Khan throws light on how Mongolians view their own heritage and, to a certain extent, themselves. Within this rapidly changing world, Genghis Khan, if we acknowledge him without bias, can service as a moral anchor. He can be Mongolia's root, its source of certainty at a time when many things are uncertain."⁷⁰

Most of the international response to this emerging Mongolian identity has been positive. Mongols are no longer feared nor looked down upon as barbarians. In fact, foreigners have reacted very enthusiastically to preserving Mongolian culture and history which has permitted the Mongols, regardless of where they live, to explore their roots and heritage with pride. The only caveat is that some foreigners may fall prey to using Chinggis Khan and his memory to promote their own value systems and thus, consciously or unconsciously, distort the entire Mongolian process of re-examining their history as they seek a modern, global identity.

The challenge to "invent" a modern Mongolian identity in independent Mongolia is equally felt in other Mongol communities in China and Russia. Identity issues are even more significant for the growing Mongol immigrant Western-based communities living outside the traditional homelands, because they must struggle with what and how to preserve of Mongolian culture while functioning in completely different societies. There is also the question of how should Mongolian peoples respond to other cultures which are expropriating Mongolian iconic symbols as their own national heroes, as China is deliberately doing. Mongolian reaction to the Chi-

⁶⁹ Byambasuren (2000), 110.

⁷⁰ Jehangir S. Pocha, "Mongolia Sees Genghis Khan's Good Side," *International Herald Tribune* (May 10, 2005).

nese attitude of claiming Chinggis Khan as a Chinese hero bears watching.

Other nationalities and culture may soon be claiming Chinggis Khan as their own. In February 2003 an Oxford, England study published in the *American Journal of Human Genetics* on "The Genetic Legacy of the Mongols" estimated that the Mongol leader's blood lineage has more than 17 million direct descendants—one in every 200 people in the world living now, although only one-fifth are present-day Mongolian men!⁷¹ A follow-up study by the 2005 Search for Adam television series produced by the National Geographic Genographic Project confirmed that the Mongolian leader is the ancestor of about 0.5 percent of the male population of the world today.⁷²

Globalization today acts as a catalyst for the urban Mongols to abandon the economic particularities of nomadic culture, and yet this same globalization has brought monied Western cultural preservation organizations to Mongolia to protect and publicize those very same nomad traditions. Integration within the Asian region and world economy will provide both opportunities and challenges in the future for Mongolia, as it struggles to define its post-socialist national identity. This is summed up by economist Byambasuren: "The world that Mongols enters into relation with is entering new development stage and undergoing transition. The world of the 21st century is going to be entirely different from the one of the 20th century. It is going to be the world that lives according [to] globalization and intellectual competition rules. In order to compete and obtain [its] own sustainable position Mongols should have new understanding of themselves and of [the] entire world."⁷³ It is certain that Mongolian national identity will continue to be closely linked to the image of Chinggis Khan. Less clear is whether or not the Mongols will be proud of the 'universalizing' of their national symbol, Chinggis Khan, or chauvinistically react

⁷¹ Nicholas Wade, "A Prolific Genghis Khan, It Seems, Helped People the World," *The New York Times* (February 11, 2003) and Pocha, 2005.

⁷² Beth Brophy, "Father of His Country, and Everyone Else," in *Untold Tales of the Great Conquerors* (U.S. News and World Report: 2005) 50-51.

⁷³ Byambasuren, 2000, 118.

to protect their unique relationship to his image to maintain their national self-identity of *ulus* and *undes*.

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