

Mongolian Group

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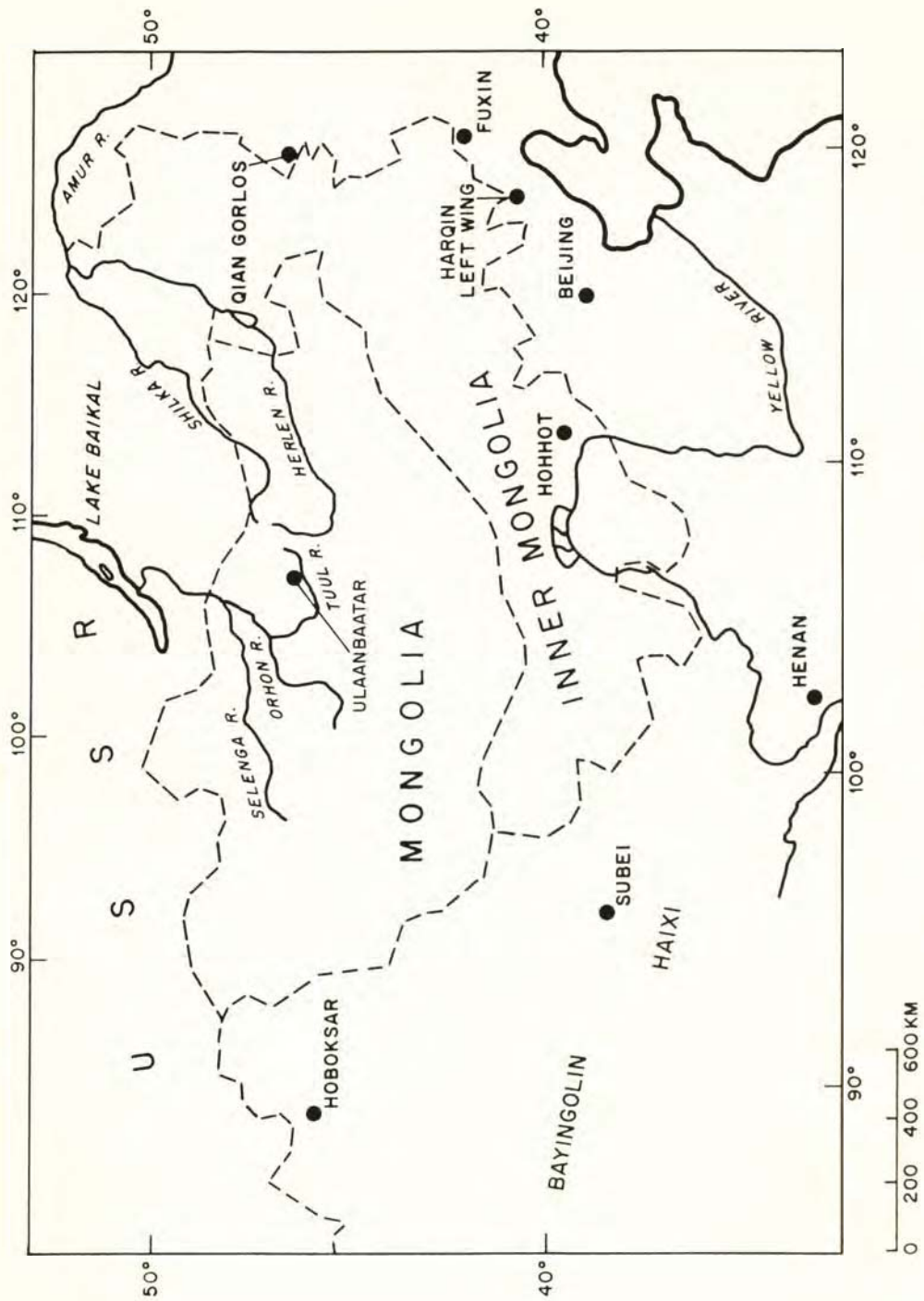
Mongol

Size and Location

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongols 蒙古 governed all of China, and much of the rest of the world besides. As a consequence, one can find Mongols living in many parts of China. The great majority lives in a more or less contiguous area stretching from the westernmost border in Xinjiang all the way across the northern part of China to the Greater Xing'an Range in the Northeast. The majority of the 3,411,657 Mongols in 1982¹ lives in the Inner Mongolian autonomous region. Other autonomous areas are found in Qian Gorlos 前郭尔罗斯 county in Jilin, Harqin Left Wing 喀喇沁左翼 and Fuxin 阜新 county of Liaoning, Subei 肃北 county in Gansu, Haixi 海西 prefecture and Henan 河南 county in Qinghai, Bayingolin 巴音郭楞 and Bortala 博尔塔拉 prefectures and Hoboksar 和布克赛尔 county in Xinjiang (see Map 8).² In addition, sizeable numbers of Mongols live in such southern locations as in Tonghai 通海 county of Yunnan and Yanyuan 盐源 county of Sichuan. Mongols also live beyond China's frontiers, such as in the Mongolian People's Republic, in the Buryat area of Southern Siberia, the Kalmyk area of the lower Volga River and in Afghanistan.

History³

Most Chinese scholars consider the Mongols to be the descendants of the Mengwu Shiwei 蒙兀室韦 mentioned in the Tang dynastic histories, but this view



Map 8. Mongol

has lately been questioned since the available evidence suggests that the Mengwu Shiwei were the forerunners of the Manchu-Tungus groups of China's Northeast. In any case, in the early twelfth century Mongols were already living along the upper reaches of the Onon, Herlen (Kerulen), and Tuul (Tula) rivers and in the region east of the Hentei mountains. They were organized into several tribes such as the Chiyan, Jadalan, and Taichiwu. In addition, there lived on the Mongolian plains and in the Lake Baikal area such groups as Tatar, Ongjici, Merkit, Wochici, Kereit, Naiman, and Onggut. These groups differed considerably in size and economic and cultural development, some of them being forest hunters and others nomadic herders on the plains. In the early eleventh century they banded together into a federation under the leadership of the Tatars. Hence outsiders came to refer to all tribes on the Mongolian plains as Tatars or Dadan 鞑靼. Until the rise of the Mongol world empire, reference was sometimes made to the Black Dadan living north of the Gobi and to the White Dadan living south of there.

At that time the Mongols appear to have been a medium-sized tribe living in the east-central portions of the present Mongolian People's Republic and adjacent areas of Siberia. The older portion of this nationality lived as forest hunters in the north, with a society in which an aristocracy had not yet risen to the position of great dominance that it enjoyed among the Mongolian tribes to the south (see below) but where the shamans were relatively more important. Most Mongol clans were engaged in nomadic pastoralism on the Mongolian plains, and their society was clearly demarcated into four different groups. Members of the aristocracy, whose task was to find suitable grazing lands, bore such titles as baatar (hero), noyen (prince), and segen (wise). They ruled over the warriors (free men), the commoners (ard), and slaves who consisted largely of former prisoners of war.

The Jurchen armies of the Jin state fought successive wars with these nomads to the north, between 1135 and 1139 and again in 1147 when they were beaten by the Mongols. By allying themselves with the Tatars, the Jurchens were able to avenge this defeat in 1161 when they mauled the Mongols. This setback was not, however, to last long. The very next year, 1162, marked the birth of Temujin who would eventually lead the Mongols far beyond the greatest power they had enjoyed in the past and would in fact make them a major power in world history. During his early manhood, Temujin, through an extraordinary combination of diplomatic skill, charisma, and perseverance, strengthened his own Mongol tribe, and in 1196 he was elected khan of the Mongols. After numerous plots and fights, all of which are recorded in the famous Secret History of the Mongols, Temujin finally made himself master over all the tribes between the Altai Mountains and the Greater Xing'an Range and in 1206 was proclaimed Chinggis Khan. From that time the name Mongol became a generic term referring not only to his own tribe but to all the tribes on the Mongolian plains.

Chapter 8

Chinggis Khan immediately began to create the foundations of a state to govern his new domain. He appointed a captured Tatar as judge and keeper of the genealogical records known as hoh debter (blue annals) and issued a number of regulations, which later became known collectively as the yasah. His descendants added various of his bilig, or pronouncements. The yasah and bilig became the core of Mongol law for centuries to come. Chinggis Khan also organized a new central army which was divided into decimal units of ten, one hundred, one thousand, and ten thousand soldiers. His personal bodyguard was placed above the army. In time it grew to the size of a tümen (ten thousand). The bodyguard had tremendous prestige in the new Mongolian state, and most generals came from the ranks of this unit.

Chinggis Khan's overriding ambition was to conquer the Jurchen state of Jin in North China, not only because he wanted to avenge its defeat of his tribe but also to acquire the riches of this wealthy state. After all, although he was the acknowledged leader of a large state in Mongolia, it was, in the manner of all previous steppe states, a federation of various tribes. As an astute leader and mindful student of history, he knew that even he had to periodically distribute material rewards in order to keep his federation together. Given the poverty of a nomadic herding society, these rewards could be obtained from the outside, either through trade or, more likely, war. The Jin state could serve him as an almost inexhaustible source of wealth, but it was also a very populous state with large fortified cities, and Chinggis Khan knew that he had to secure his flanks before he could attempt a frontal attack on Jin. Therefore, in a relatively brief campaign ending in 1209 he forced the king of the Tangut state of Xixia, located west of Jin in modern Ningxia, to submit to Mongol control. Two years later the entire Mongol army invaded Jin and after a hard struggle, the Jin capital of Beijing fell in 1215. The Jurchens, however, still did not surrender but instead moved their capital to Kaifeng. Chinggis Khan decided to return with most of his troops to Mongolia and hand over the task of conquering the rest of the Jin state to one of his generals, Muhali. The latter eventually accomplished the task with about 23,000 Mongol troops and a like number of native auxiliaries, mostly Kidan soldiers and Chinese engineers. It took him and other generals from 1217 to 1234, long after Chinggis Khan's death.

Meanwhile, the last of the Naiman chiefs and one of Chinggis' Khan's old enemies, had escaped across the Altai Mountains and conquered the Karakitai state, located in modern northern Xinjiang and eastern Kazakhstan. Unfortunately for this man, his new vassals, who included, besides the Kidans, also Uigurs, Karluks and Khwarezmians, declared their allegiance to Chinggis Khan who in 1218 ordered his general Jebe to annex their territories. With that campaign the Mongol state now extended westward to the area around Lake Balkash. It became a neighbor of the Muslim state of Khwarezm which stretched to the Caspian Sea in the west and Iran and Afghanistan in the South.

Mongol

The Mongol state was now as large as the largest steppe federation, that of the Turks, and Chinggis Khan may well have felt satisfied. He reportedly suggested to his new western neighbor, the sultan of Khwarezm, that their two states engage in friendly trade. The Otrar Incident of 1218, however, changed all that and with it world history. In that year the Khwarezmian governor in charge of the border province of Otrar ordered the execution of returning Khwarezmian merchants and the humiliation of some Mongol officers who had crossed the border by sending them home with shaven heads. Upon hearing of this incident Chinggis Khan saw no alternative to avenging this insult. Thus in the following year, his armies exploded westward, and in a lightning swift campaign they eradicated the state of Khwarezm. As part of this campaign a Mongol detachment of some 25,000 cavalry crossed the Caucasus and rode around the Caspian Sea on their way home. This brief invasion of Europe was a precursor of what was to follow less than a decade later.

Chinggis Khan returned home to Mongolia in 1225 but only to prepare for one more campaign, this one against the remnants of the Tangut state of Xixia. Back in 1209 its king had pledged loyalty to Chinggis Khan and promised to supply troops when requested to do so, but he had gone back on his word during the Mongols' western campaign. For this crime he now paid with his own life and the utter eradication of his state. In 1227, as this campaign reached its conclusion, Chinggis Khan died.

Under his sons and grandsons the Mongol world empire expanded tremendously. In 1235 his son Ögedei launched three simultaneous campaigns, one against Korea, the second against the Chinese rump state of Southern Song, and the third against Europe. At its height, around 1280, the Mongol world empire stretched from Europe to the Pacific, with only India, parts of the Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and Japan beyond its control but not beyond its influence. The resulting *pax mongolica* for the first and only time in history enabled a person to travel from, say, Europe to Canton without fear of molestation or even the inconvenience of border formalities. The empire also perfected a communications system that was swift and dependable and by far the best in the world. Another major contribution made by the Mongol world empire was its religious tolerance which exposed Asia even more explicitly to Christian ideas and so allowed the flourishing of several religions within the world empire. Though Europeans remained both ignorant of and hostile to the religions of the East, they carried valuable secular information from the Mongolian realm.

The Mongol world empire fell almost as swiftly as it rose. Dissention among Chinggis Khan's grandsons was the single most important cause, and by 1368 China, Persia, and other areas once again were independent from the Mongols. The Russians were the last to be able to shake off Mongol control. Many Mongols remained in the conquered territories, where they were either absorbed into the indigenous population or eventually changed into new

nationalities. Of these the Bonan, Dongxiang, Tu and Eastern Yugur (qq.v.) currently live in Northern China.

The 1360s marked the end of the Mongol world empire. During that single decade, three of the four major regions of the empire were either greatly reduced in size or disappeared altogether. The western portion of the Jagatai khanate in Central Asia was overthrown by Timur. The neighboring Ilkhanate in present-day Iran came to an end with the death of its khan, Abu Sayid, in 1365. The greatest loss came three years later when the Great Khan Toghon Temur withdrew from Peking to the Mongolian homeland, thereby bringing to an end Mongol rule in China. Of the forty tümen stationed in China at that time, only six returned to Mongolia with him. To be sure, many members of these six tümen were not Mongol; available records mention Uigur and other Central Asian auxiliaries as being among them.

From 1368 to 1635 the realm of the Great Khan, which had once included both China and the Mongolian homeland, was now reduced to the latter. Hence, the former appellation Yuan was changed to Northern Yuan, somewhat analogous to the change from Song to Southern Song when the Chinese had lost the northern part of their country in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The political and social situation in Mongolia became desperate with the sudden influx of the six tümen. A series of local struggles and wide-scale civil wars were soon accompanied by repeated invasions by Ming armies from the south. During the civil wars, the western Mongols, or Oirats, took advantage of the disorder in the eastern part of the country to invade it and, during the period from about 1400 to 1454, usurped the role of leadership over all Mongolia. The Oirat leader Esen, although not a member of the Borjigid clan, had himself acknowledged as Great Khan. After his death in 1454 relative calm returned to Mongolia, and the position of Great Khan returned to members of the Borjigid clan. Dayan Khan (d. 1530) achieved a measure of unity in Eastern Mongolia. Although he was unable to bring the Oirats under his control, at least he managed to push them westward to the northern part of modern Xinjiang and the western Mongolian People's Republic. Within Eastern Mongolia Dayan Khan reorganized the six tümen, enlarging each beyond its original size of 10,000, and converting them from armies into essentially territorial units. He appointed one of his sons to head each of these six tümen. The Oirat divided themselves into four tümen, called Dorbed, Jungar, Torgut, and Hoshod or Hoit. Remaining outside Dayan Khan's control were several eastern groups, the most important of whom were the Horqin, Abaga, and Ongniyud.

Dayan's partial reunification of the Mongols did not long survive his death. Effective control soon shifted from the tümen to subordinate units, called otog, and later hoshoon (banner). For example, the Ordos tümen became divided into nine otog, and the Halha region (roughly the present Mongolian People's Republic), which had originally been only a part of a tümen, was now divided into seven otog.

The end of the Northern Yuan came in 1635, a year after the death of the Great Khan Ligdan, when his son handed over the imperial seal to Abahai, the chief of the new Manchu state. Actually, by then Ligdan did not control much more than his own region of Qahar. Other khans, nominally his subordinates, had been ignoring his commands and making their own accommodations to the new Manchu power. The first move in that direction occurred in 1614 when the Horqin khan, whose territory lay closest to Manchuria, gave one of his daughters to Nurhachi's son Abahai. He followed this act with a formal alliance in 1624 which effectively placed Horqin under Manchu control. The Harqin, Ordos, and Tümet khans actively fought Ligdan Khan and, at various times after 1635, separately submitted to the Manchus.

During the remainder of the seventeenth century, more and more Mongol khans living north of the Gobi followed their southern brothers into the Manchu fold. This process was completed in 1691 when, at a conference at Dolonnor, all the Northern Mongolian khans formally submitted to the Qing dynasty, and their dominions were divided into thirty-four hoshoon.

They might not have quite so quickly placed themselves under Manchu rule, had it not been for the Western Mongols. The latter, living in Northern Xinjiang, had only been indirectly affected by the change of dynasties in China proper. They were neither invaded by Manchu armies nor did they voluntarily submit to the new Qing dynasty. Life in Northern Xinjiang was, however, far from tranquil. The Western Mongols, also known as the Oirat (and as the Wala to the preceding Ming dynasty) actually comprised the four groups of tribes or tümen mentioned earlier. When Galdan became the chief of the Jungars in 1670, he quickly expanded his power in all directions. Some tribes who did not wish to come under his rule emigrated, the Khoits moving to Qinghai and the Torguts to the lower Volga river. By the 1680s Jungar power was felt in Southern Xinjiang, west of the Tianshan mountains, and in Northern Mongolia. In 1688 Galdan undertook an all-out attack on the Northern Mongols, and it was this invasion that prompted the Northern Mongolian khans to seek protection through submission to the Qing.

The Manchus did manage to defeat Galdan in battle at Jao Modo in 1696, but they failed to follow up their success by invading the Jungars' homeland. At the end of the 1720s Jungar armies once again invaded Northern Mongolia, and it became clear to the Qing rulers that only a long and expensive expedition to the Jungars' homeland would bring security to Northern Mongolia. The beginning of the end for the Jungars came in 1755 when Manchu troops invaded Jungaria, but it would take another four years of bitter fighting before the last resistance was broken and Jungaria laid to waste. This homeland of the Western Mongols was garrisoned by troops consisting of Manchus and other nationalities. In order to fill the vacuum created by the annihilation of the Jungars, the Qing court dispatched Tulishen to the lower Volga river to persuade the Torguts to return to

Xinjiang. A portion of the Torguts responded to this call in 1771, suffering horrendous losses on the long way back. The survivors were resettled in four locations in Northern Xinjiang where their descendants still live today.

Meanwhile, Inner Mongolia was rendered fully open to Chinese influence. The principal agents of sinification were Chinese traders who supplied luxury goods to the Mongolian aristocrats on credit. As more and more khans found themselves unable to settle their accumulated debts, they handed over their people's grazing lands to the Chinese merchants who, in turn, quickly resold them to Chinese farmers. This process brought about two disasters to Inner Mongolia. Chinese began to settle in large numbers in Inner Mongolia. At the same time Mongolian commoners were confronted with a stark choice: Either stay and work for their new Chinese masters or try to continue their herding tradition farther north. Some Mongols did manage to reestablish themselves north of the Gobi, but most failed because the traditional herding economy there was unable to support a greatly increased population. As a result, throughout the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century uprisings and brigandage grew in most parts of Inner Mongolia.

The exploits of many resistance groups, who attacked both Chinese immigrants and Mongolian aristocrats, came to be celebrated in the Mongols' folk literature, but these men utterly failed to halt the Chinese juggernaut. Immigration, intermarriage, and cultural cooptation sinified large parts of Inner Mongolia. When the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911 and Northern Mongolia declared its independence, an Inner Mongolian attempt to join their northern brothers was thwarted by the Chinese. Perhaps the last attempt at gaining some measure of freedom from the Chinese was made during the second world war when the Japanese supported an autonomous government in the eastern parts of Inner Mongolia, but Japan's defeat in 1945 also doomed this government.

Language and Literature

Mongolian is a member of the Mongolian language group which, in turn, belongs to the Altaic family of languages. It is closely related to Daur, Bonan, Dongxiang, Tu, and Enger (Eastern Yugur), discussed elsewhere in this survey, as well as Oirat, the language spoken by Mongols living in Xinjiang. Besides these Mongolian languages spoken in China, there is Buryat, spoken mostly around Lake Baikal in Siberia and, to a much lesser extent, in the northern part of the Mongolian People's Republic and in the Barga region of Inner Mongolia. Farther afield are Moghul in Afghanistan and Kalmuck on the lower reaches of the Volga river in Europe.

The Mongolian language has a number of dialects, the most important of which within China are Qahar, Hargin, Horqin, Ujumuqin, Ordos, Urat, Bargu, and Darigangga. Speakers of these various dialects have no difficulty in

understanding one another nor the speakers of Halha, the main dialect in the Mongolian People's Republic.

The oldest stage of Mongolian is called Ancient Mongolian. Its beginnings are unknown, but its end has been placed in the twelfth century. It had no script. Aside from occasional Chinese transliterations and borrowings found in neighboring languages, we know nothing about Ancient Mongolian. The next stage is known as Middle Mongolian, spoken between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. It was characterized by initial h in some words like harban 'ten' which would later disappear. On the other hand, intervocalic g, a feature of Ancient Mongolian, was no longer pronounced by that time. Finally, Modern Mongolian (sometimes called New Mongolian) has been spoken since the seventeenth century.

Modern Mongolian has seven vowels, as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <u>a</u> as in <u>am(an)</u> 'mouth' | <u>o</u> as in <u>noxor</u> 'friend, comrade' |
| <u>e</u> as in <u>enə</u> 'this' | <u>ɔ</u> as in <u>tandas</u> 'precipitation, |
| <u>i</u> as in <u>bit/ig</u> 'letter, book' | sediment' |
| <u>ɔ</u> as in <u>ort/in</u> 'present, modern' | <u>u</u> as in <u>xun</u> 'person' |

Spoken Modern Mongolian also has long vowels which, however are not represented in the script used by the Mongols in Inner Mongolia.⁴ One kind of long vowel is indicated in the script by intervocalic g. Examples are:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <u>bagatur</u> → <u>baatar</u> 'hero' | <u>dɔgɔlən</u> → <u>dɔpolon</u> 'swiftly' |
| <u>dager-a</u> → <u>dær</u> 'above' | <u>agɔla</u> → <u>ɔal</u> 'mountain' |
| <u>borɔgan</u> → <u>borɔo</u> 'rain' | <u>təgud</u> → <u>tuud</u> 'doubt, indecision' |

Another kind of long vowel is no longer indicated by intervocalic g, as in ɔdɔ (< əduɔgə) → ɔdɔo 'now' and təuxə (< təguxə) → tuux 'history'.

There are thirteen consonants:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <u>n</u> as in <u>nəg(ən)</u> 'one' | <u>s</u> as in <u>sain</u> 'good' |
| <u>b</u> as in <u>bag-a</u> 'small' | <u>f</u> as in <u>bai/ing</u> 'building' |
| <u>x</u> as in <u>xel</u> 'language' | <u>t</u> as in <u>tab(an)</u> 'five' |
| <u>g</u> as in <u>gadzar</u> 'place' | <u>d</u> as in <u>dalai</u> 'ocean, sea' |
| <u>l</u> as in <u>bolon</u> 'all right' | <u>tʃ</u> as in <u>ɣət/in</u> 'thirty' |
| <u>m</u> as in <u>minu</u> 'my' | <u>dʒ</u> as in <u>dʒam</u> 'road, way' |
| | <u>j</u> as in <u>jab-</u> 'to go' |

In addition, the consonants p, r, w, f, k, h, ts, and dz are used exclusively for foreign loan words.

Like other Altaic languages, Mongolian is characterized by both

agglutination and vowel harmony. If the first vowel is a front vowel (ə, o, or u), all subsequent vowels must also be front vowels. The same rule applies to back vowels (a, ɔ, and ɔ). The neutral vowel i may be used in combination with either front or back vowels.

The Mongols living in Inner Mongolia and the northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin use a script that dates back at least to the early thirteenth century. The earliest extant specimen of the Mongolian script is an inscription on a stele done about 1225. Judging from the consistent manner in which the letters were written and from other internal evidence, we can assume that at least some of the Mongol tribes had been using this script for a considerable time, perhaps a hundred years or more.

Whatever the precise date of its introduction into Mongolia may be, the Mongolian script definitely was adopted from the Uigur script which, in turn, had been taken from the Sogdian script. As the Mongols developed their own written literature, they made some changes in the shape of letters and added new letters to express Tibetan and Sanskrit loan words (see Table 7).

The Western Mongols in Xinjiang, Qinghai, and the Alashan region of Inner Mongolia use a slightly different script, called Todo, or "clear" script, because it eliminates some ambiguities in the Mongolian script by using, for example, different letters for o and u (see Table 8). The Todo script is based on a reform carried out in 1648 by the Buddhist monk Zaya Pandita. Although far less material is published in Todo than in the Mongolian script, there is presently a fair amount of Todo material in print. This includes books, both original as well as translations from other languages and transcriptions from the Mongolian script. The quarterly literary journal Han Tenggeri has published many samples of folk literature, and the monthly magazine Örinin Qolmon (Venus) is devoted to contemporary affairs and modern popular literature. In addition, there are a number of local newspapers and textbooks printed in the Todo script.

As the Mongolian empire rapidly expanded in the thirteenth century Khubilai Khan ordered his aide, the Tibetan monk Phags-pa, to develop a new script capable of transcribing the many diverse languages spoken in his empire. The resulting script, known as the Phags-pa script to us and as square script to the Mongols, bears an unsurprisingly close resemblance to the Tibetan script (see Table 9). It was used in official communications but never gained popularity, and was abandoned as soon as the Mongol world empire came to an end in the late fourteenth century.

The other Mongolian scripts no longer used are Galig and Soyombo, both used for religious texts. The Uigur Mongolian script was abandoned by the Mongolian People's Republic during the second world war and by the Buryat Mongols still earlier, in 1931, in favor of the Cyrillic script.

Mongolian literature began with the Secret History of the Mongols, written in 1240.⁵ In addition to being the premier indigenous source on the early

Table 7
MONGOLIAN SCRIPT

| | A | B | C | D | | A | B | C | D |
|----|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | ᠠ | ᠡ | ᠢ | a | 15 | ᠰ | ᠴ | ᠱ | s |
| 2 | ᠡ | ᠢ | ᠣ | ə | 16 | ᠰᠡ | ᠴᠡ | ᠱᠡ | ʃ |
| 3 | ᠢ | ᠣ | ᠤ | i | 17 | ᠰᠢ | ᠴᠢ | ᠱᠢ | t |
| 4 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | ɔ | 18 | ᠰᠣ | ᠴᠣ | ᠱᠣ | d |
| 5 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | ω | 19 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | tʃ |
| 6 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | o | 20 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | dʒ |
| 7 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | u | 21 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | j |
| 8 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | n | 22 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | r |
| 9 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | b | 23 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | w |
| 10 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | p | 24 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | f |
| 11 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | x | 25 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | k |
| 12 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | g | 26 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | h |
| 13 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | l | 27 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | ts |
| 14 | ᠣ | ᠣ | ᠤ | m | 28 | ᠰᠤ | ᠴᠤ | ᠱᠤ | dz |

A = Initial position
B = Medial position

C = Final position
D = IPA transcription

Table 8
TODO SCRIPT

| | A | B | C | D | | A | B | C | D |
|----|----|----|----|---|----|-----|---|---|----|
| 1 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃʌ | a | 15 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | s |
| 2 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | a | 16 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ |
| 3 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | i | 17 | ʃ | ʃ | | t |
| 4 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | ɔ | 18 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | d |
| 5 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | o | 19 | ʃ | ʃ | | tʃ |
| 6 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | o | 20 | ʃ | ʃ | | dʒ |
| 7 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | u | 21 | ʃ | ʃ | | j |
| 8 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | n | 22 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | r |
| 9 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | b | 23 | ʃ | ʃ | | w |
| 10 | ʃ | ʃ | | p | 24 | ʃ | | | f |
| 11 | ʃʃ | ʃʃ | | ʃ | 25 | ʃ | | | k |
| 12 | ʃʃ | ʃʃ | ʃ | g | 26 | ʃ | ʃ | | h |
| 13 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | l | 27 | (ʃ) | | | ts |
| 14 | ʃ | ʃ | ʃ | m | 28 | ʃ | | | dz |

A = Initial position
B = Medial position

C = Final position
D = IPA transcription

Table 9

PHAGS-PA SCRIPT

| | A | B | | A | B |
|----|---|-----|----|---|----|
| 1 | ᠠ | ka | 21 | ᠵ | ža |
| 2 | ᠡ | k'a | 22 | ᠶ | za |
| 3 | ᠢ | ga | 23 | ᠨ | ·a |
| 4 | ᠣ | ŋa | 24 | ᠤ | ya |
| 5 | ᠤ | ča | 25 | ᠬ | ra |
| 6 | ᠥ | č'a | 26 | ᠤ | la |
| 7 | ᠦ | ja | 27 | ᠤ | ša |
| 8 | ᠨ | ña | 28 | ᠰ | sa |
| 9 | ᠬ | ta | 29 | ᠬ | ha |
| 10 | ᠰ | t'a | 30 | ᠤ | ·a |
| 11 | ᠨ | da | 31 | ᠵ | ya |
| 12 | ᠤ | na | 32 | ᠤ | ga |
| 13 | ᠤ | pa | 33 | ᠤ | ya |
| 14 | ᠤ | p'a | 34 | ᠤ | wa |
| 15 | ᠤ | ba | 35 | ᠤ | |
| 16 | ᠤ | ma | 36 | ᠤ | i |
| 17 | ᠤ | ca | 37 | ᠤ | u |
| 18 | ᠤ | c'a | 38 | ᠤ | e |
| 19 | ᠤ | ja | 39 | ᠤ | o |
| 20 | ᠤ | wa | 40 | ᠤ | è |

A = Phags-pa letter

B = Pronunciation

history of the Mongols, the Secret History is also the oldest repository of Mongolian folk literature. Later works in this historico-literary genre included the Altan tobchi (Golden Chronicle) of the early seventeenth century⁶ and the Erdeni-yin tobchi, written by Sagan Sechen around 1662. Another major literary master writing before the twentieth century was the Inner Mongol Injannasi who drew heavily on the great Chinese social novels of the Qing dynasty.

Although these and other works are important events in the history of Mongolian literature, most of traditional Mongolian literature was told and retold inside the ger and around the camp fire. This extraordinarily rich oral tradition embraces virtually every genre, from the heroic epic, like "Geser" and "Janggar," to riddles, proverbs, and aphorisms.

With the rise in literacy among the Mongols in the twentieth century, the institution of the storyteller declined and it has been gradually replaced by a flourishing written literature. Since the early 1950s several hundred volumes of literature have been published in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Beijing.⁷ Great efforts have been made to record folk literature. Modern works of prose and poetry have also been produced in great quantity. In addition, several periodicals publish smaller-scale literary works. Aside from Tenggeri and Örinin Qolmon, set in the Todo script and published in Xinjiang (see above in this section), the largest and best literary journal is the quarterly Qolmon. Others are Checherlig, the bi-monthly Monggol hele bichig, and the quarterly Monggol hele udh-a johiyal. All are published in Hohhot, except for Checherlig which is published in the Juuda League.

Society⁸

Mongolian society is based on kinship and the most important units are the nuclear family, the ail which is a group of households related to each other, and the common descent group or clan, called obog. Very large obog were divided into yasun. Judging by the Mongols' creation myth, their society appears always to have been patrilineal.

Every Mongol knew his genealogy, and even today it is not uncommon for two Mongols meeting for the first time to recite their genealogies to each other, often reaching back many generations. Sometimes such a recitation may reveal a distant relationship between the two.

Above the clan were federations formed between a main clan and other clans related to it through marriage. Exogamous marriage was strictly observed.

When a child was born, the mother lay undisturbed in her ger for three weeks while no strangers were allowed to enter. If the new child was a boy, a bow and arrows were hung outside the ger, and a shaman, later a lama, was also usually called in to bestow his blessings on the child. Many names given to children reflect various aspects of herding life. Others may indicate good or bad

Mongol

characteristics, various colors, or have some religious meaning. Because of Buddhism's great influence on the Mongols, many names were, and some still are, of Tibetan origin.

By the age of five a child was taught to ride a horse, and when they were eight years old boys were initiated into the techniques of horse racing and wrestling, while girls were taught such skills as sewing, cooking, sheepherding and milking.



Illus. 16. A Musician Wearing the Deel

The Mongols never had rites of passage or any other ceremony to mark the advent of adulthood, but the age of eighteen might be considered the age of majority because it was then in aristocratic families that a young prince was given the seal of office.

Marriages were exogamous, and sometimes accomplished by kidnapping. The more usual form was to agree on a contract between the parents when the prospective bride and groom were about fourteen years old. The boy's side presented a bride price which was reciprocated at the time of the wedding with a dowry. So many gifts were exchanged during weddings that many families gave away nearly all they owned. In the past a shaman might preside over part of the ceremonies which were conducted first at the bride's home and then at the

groom's home, after which the new couple entered their own, newly constructed ger.

In at least two respects the Mongols differed from their Han neighbors with regard to marriage. First, generational differences did not seem to be as important. Second, the position of women was much higher in Mongol society. It was quite common for widows to remarry or to return to their families. Women also participated in matters of state. Chinese and European emissaries were amazed to see women joining in discussions with them. Widows quite routinely took over the reins of government at the death of their husbands until a new leader was chosen. This relatively high social status for women was lowered during the Qing dynasty when, as a consequence of Chinese political and commercial penetration, Chinese social values also made themselves be felt in many parts of Mongolia, particularly in Inner Mongolia.

Interment seemed to have been the prevalent method of burial in ancient times, with cremation rather rare because of the scarcity of fuel on the steppes. After the reappearance of Buddhism in the late sixteenth century, however, another form of burial became popular. Given the Buddhist preference for the soul over the body which is considered a vile receptacle, a new practice grew up whereby the body of a recently deceased person was carted to a kind of open-air cemetery where it was dumped to be devoured by wild animals. This was considered by non-Buddhist visitors as barbaric and by Buddhists as a person's last act of compassion to give his body to nourish needy animals.

Whether young or old, most Mongols conduct their recreational activities within the family or the ail, a group of a few households. The reason for this, of course, is the wide dispersal of a small population across the steppe, which makes frequent visiting impracticable. The "three manly sports" of horse racing, wrestling, and archery are extremely popular, and are invariably performed during the annual festivals known as naadam. Among less strenuous forms of recreation, story telling is unquestionably the most popular, and a good badarch, a kind of wandering minstrel, is a much sought-after person. This popularity also accounts for the extraordinary richness of Mongolian oral literature.

Playing the morin huur (horsehead fiddle), chess, and a kind of marbles game employing an antelope's anklebone round out the list of recreational activities. As almost everywhere else, Mongols have resorted to the use of drugs, but opium, heroin and other hard drugs have never found wide acceptance. Instead, many Mongols indulge, often to excess, in milk-derived alcohol, such as arhi, arj, and horj. Tobacco smoking is also widespread, especially among the elderly.

In the past there were numerous Mongolian festivals, but many of them have now either been discontinued or changed. Others were local or regional activities. Of the major festivals, the most important and possibly oldest one has been New Year's. Traditionally, a family would rise before daybreak and, just as the sun rose above the horizon, everyone would step out of the ger and

bow toward the east, then to the south, west, and north. Then some airag (fermented mare's milk) would be sprinkled on the ground as an offering to tenger (heaven). Afterwards everyone would assemble in the ger of the head of the extended family, and the eldest son would present to him a bowl of airag on a hadag, a scarf used for ceremonial purposes and as a gift. Finally, everyone would exchange gifts with each other. The following day, it was customary to visit relatives, an undertaking that often took weeks to accomplish. During the Buddhist period, monasteries and temples used the latter half of the first month for a temple fair at which Chinese merchants sold their wares and plays were performed.

Two other traditional festivals, no longer observed, occurred on the twenty-first day of the third month and on the sixteenth day of the fourth month. These were dedicated to the memory of Chinggis Khan. It is not known why those two particular days were chosen. The first festival may have been connected with an event, known as the Baljuna Incident, during Chinggis Khan's youth when he was still known as Temujin. The second festival was held on what is presumed to have been his birthday.

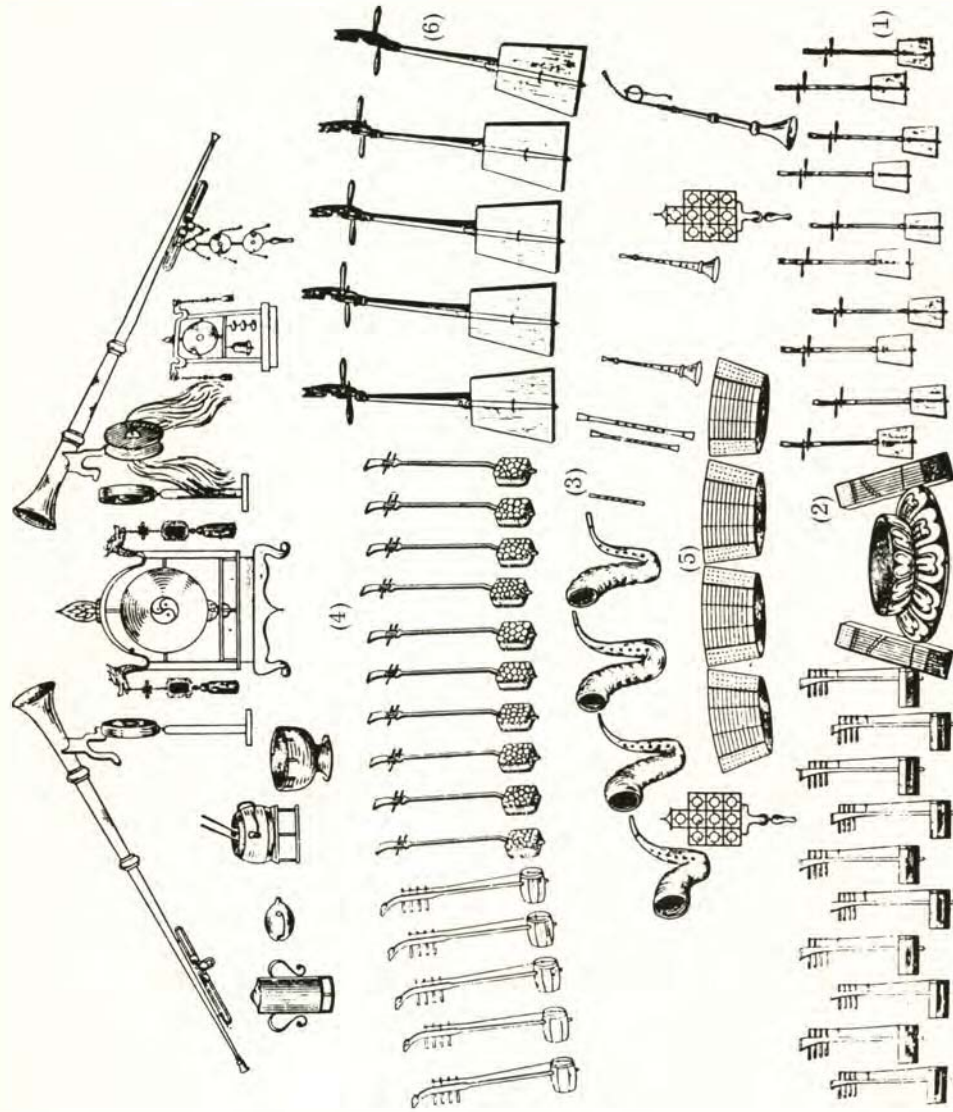
During the fifth month, Mongols started to milk the mares to make airag. This was, and in some places still is, a festive occasion for games and other forms of entertainment. Finally, during the summer months each banner would hold its naadam, a festival when the "three manly sports" would be practiced. Originally called the oboo festival, in reference to a shamanistic practice, the naadam now quite possibly has come to rival New Year's in importance.

Mongol folk music is extraordinarily rich. There are so many variations of vocal technique, including unique types of singing, that nobody has yet recorded all of them.

Old lyrical melodies and certain ritual-like songs are performed with characteristic ornamentation, glissandos, trills, and tremolos which are strongly reminiscent of instrumental sound effects. The most surprising element is the wide vocal range of the songs. Falsetto singing is extremely widespread and performed with strong volume, thus enabling an experienced singer to greatly expand his vocal register. At a certain point the basic melody is transposed an octave higher, thus greatly extending the melodic line.

The so-called long songs (urtan duu), in particular, are sung in this manner. Another peculiarity in the performance of these songs is that the words are broken up by empty syllables which serve to heighten vocal technique and tonal color. Some long songs have no text at all and are performed throughout with such empty syllables. The long songs are sung exclusively by women and so, though they retain the high notes, lack the deepest registers.

Mongol folk music goes beyond expanding the vocal range and a unique vocal technique. It has developed a technique, called höömii (lit. throat) whereby an individual can sing in two voices at the same time. One is a single



Illus. 17. The Instruments of a Traditional Mongolian Orchestra

prolonged droning fundamental tone above which a flute-like melody is sounded in a high register. This technique is accomplished by tensing the vocal chords and pressing air through them with great force.

Other forms of singing demand a high degree of intellectual concentration. Among the different types of epics, there are vocal sagas and praise songs for which the singer accompanies himself while improvising and varying the text, melody, and accompaniment simultaneously.

The legend of the origin of the morin huur can be briefly summarized as follows: A hero has a winged horse. When he calls the animal, the performer imitates the sound of the horse's neighing and hoof beats on his instrument, either by beating or sliding the bow on the strings. The horse and his master fall asleep. An enemy cuts off the horse's wings, thus destroying it. The hero mourns for his horse, and this lament is performed as an instrumental interlude in which, after the pure pentatonic melody, chromatic intervals are suddenly heard. Finally, he makes a musical instrument out of the horse's hide, mane and head—the "very first" morin huur. That is why there is a horse's head carved at the end of the instrument's fingerboard.

The morin huur (1)⁹ is the most popular instrument among the Mongols and is usually used for vocal accompaniment. The story of its origin shows how deeply it is rooted in Mongol folklore. It is a cello-like instrument with two strings and a trapezoidal body which is held between the knees, supported on the ground, as in the case of the Western instrument. Its tone and especially its glissandos and tremolos virtually reproduce the sound of vocal ornamentation. When used as accompaniment, it all but converts a solo performance into a duet. It is also used in solo instrumental performances.

Several other instruments are in common use among the Mongols. The yatga (2) is similar to the Chinese zheng and the Japanese koto but has no equivalent in the West. One might say that it has the shape of a zither and the size and tone of a harp. Unlike the zheng and koto, which are played horizontally, the yatga is often played in a diagonal fashion, with one end resting on the ground and the other leaning against the player's leg or shoulder. The limbe (3) is a cross-flute made of bamboo which originated in Tibet. The shudrag (4) is related to the Chinese sanxian and is a three-string plucked instrument. The yoochin (5) is another zither-like instrument, similar to the Chinese yangqin, with a trapezoidal body that is placed on a table when being played. The yoochin is almost always used by women for vocal accompaniment. The ih huur (6), as its name ("big huur") indicates, is simply a larger version of the morin huur.

Religion¹⁰

The earliest religion among the Mongols was the worship of nature. All natural phenomena became the objects of veneration. These included bodies

visible in the sky, fire, forests (sometimes individual trees), mountains (sometimes individual rocks), rivers and other bodies of water, and above all tenger, 'sky' or 'heaven'. At first, individual humans may have worshiped these various natural objects, but soon after the formation of permanent social organizations, one or more members came to be regarded as intermediaries between nature and the individual human. This occurred far back in prehistoric times, so that by the time of the first extant historical records, the position of intermediary had evolved into a definite social position, held mostly by men but sometimes also women who, by virtue of putative special powers, interpreted natural phenomena, predicted the future, banished illnesses, and served as links between the living and the dead. Much later these intermediaries also presided over special events in the family or larger social bodies. Today they are generally called shamans and the worship of nature shamanism. Despite the innumerable local variations, shamanism as found among the Mongols shares many features with religions in many other parts of the world, such as the medicine man cult among the native American peoples.

The beginnings of Buddhist influence among the Mongols cannot be accurately determined, but there can be no question that by the time of the Mongol world empire, many aristocrats, most notably Hubilai Han, had become interested in Buddhism. For about two centuries after the empire's demise Buddhism fell into disfavor and shamanism once again became the predominant religion among the Mongols. In the 1570s Altan Han, the most influential of the Southern Mongolian rulers whose capital was the modern Hohhot, made a pact with the head of the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism. This led to a return of Buddhism to Mongolia.

This time Buddhism penetrated every layer of Mongolian society. Hundreds of monasteries and temples were built, and between one-third and one-half of the entire male population ended up as monks. Among Buddhism's positive contributions to Mongolian society may be listed urbanization and literacy, albeit usually only in Tibetan. These gains were purchased, however, at an exorbitant price. Church officials came to collaborate closely with the secular aristocracy in preserving the status quo, thereby stifling innovation, social mobility, and reform. In addition, the high proportion of monks, who as members of the Yellow Sect were celibate, caused a drastic decline in the population.

After the Communist victory in China religious practices were curtailed, virtually all monasteries were closed, and their property confiscated. During the so-called cultural revolution all aspects of Buddhism came under harsh attack, but today the authorities once again permit some limited form of religious practice.

Recent Developments

More than two years before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Mongols were the first to receive an autonomous area. On May 1, 1947 the Inner Mongolia autonomous region was created, and in subsequent years other areas were added to it until it reached its present size, reaching from the border of Xinjiang in the west to the Xing'an range and the Amur river in the Northeast. During the "cultural revolution," the western and northeastern regions were detached from Inner Mongolia, but they were restored in 1979. Other autonomous areas for the Mongols are listed at the beginning of this chapter.

While the traditional herding economy has been preserved, great strides have been made in farming, thanks in large part to irrigation which now is employed on one fourth of all cultivated land in Inner Mongolia. As a result, Inner Mongolia now produces a surplus of grain, despite a huge increase in population. Even greater progress has been made in industry and urbanization. Since 1957, Baotou has been the region's leading iron and steel manufacturing center. In addition, many factories have been built for generating electricity, making cement, and processing tobacco and sugar. The main railroad line to Baotou has been extended to Lanzhou, and portions of it have recently been double-tracked. A number of branch lines extend from this trunk line to industrial sites and mines throughout Inner Mongolia. Hohhot, the capital, has a population approaching one million, and is the administrative and cultural center of the entire region.

Education has grown apace, with fifteen institutions of higher education, enrolling about 12,000 students. Of these, Mongols and other minorities account for about 3,000 students. The 5,194 middle schools have 192,679 minority students, and the 26,980 elementary schools include 388,780 minority students. As of this year, five years of universal education, with 95 percent attendance, has been achieved everywhere in Inner Mongolia. Quite a few towns and cities have gone to seven years, and some even to ten years, which is on a par with the most advanced schools in the entire country.

Health care for the Mongols, like that for all other citizens of China, has greatly improved. Hohhot and other cities have many general hospitals, while in the grasslands, mobile health teams look after the well-being of the herders. In addition, veterinary medicine has also made much progress.

Notes

¹Minzu yanjiu 23 (1983), 80.

Chapter 8

²The Mongols in Xinjiang, variously called Oirats, Western Mongols, and Torguts, numbered 117,460 in the 1982 census. Minzu tuanjie 150 (1983), 10.

³No comprehensive history of the Mongols, especially of those living in China, exists at present. Grousset includes an adequate account of traditional Mongolia while Charles Bawden's Modern History of Mongolia (New York, 1968) goes from the seventeenth century to about 1960. The latter book restricts itself, however, almost entirely to that part of Mongolia which lies beyond Chinese control. For an account of specifically Inner Mongolian history, see Yu Bayan in the bibliography.

⁴The Cyrillic script, used in the Mongolian People's Republic, does represent long vowels.

⁵For the most comprehensive survey of the history of Mongolian literature until the early twentieth century, see Walther Heissig.

⁶See Hada-un ündüsün huriyanggui altan tobqi in the bibliography.

⁷Most of these works are listed in Henry G. Schwarz, Mongolian Publications at Western Washington University (Bellingham, 1984).

⁸A good first-hand account of Mongolian society until 1949 has been written by Jagchid Sechin in his Mongolia's Culture and Society (Boulder, 1979).

⁹Numbers in parentheses behind instruments' names refer to Illustration 17.

¹⁰Good recent English-language treatments of Mongolian religions are Walther Heissig, The Religions of Mongolia (Berkeley, 1980) for shamanism and Guiseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet (Berkeley, 1980) for Lamaist Buddhism.