"Topomorphic Revolution," Power, and Identity: A Study of the Implications of Landscape Transformations in the Tongliao Region of Modern Inner Mongolia

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is the study of landscape transformations in the Tongliao region of Inner Mongolia, their driving forces and their implications in terms of social organization and identity. I first examine the mechanisms through which the Qing Empire exercised power over the land and circumscribed the notion of a "Mongol Identity" through the mapping of the territory, the restriction of migration and the imposition of a particular legal code. Then, I look into the transition from empire to nation-state in the first part of the twentieth century, and show that the transformation of political institutions had a limited disruptive impact on pastoralism. Finally, I document the dramatic transformations of the landscape that took place in the post-Mao era from the early 1980s to the 2000s—which I call "topomorphic revolution." I find that, by shaping the space and setting boundaries in the territories, empires and nation-states successively set the terms for the Mongol ethnic identity, and transformed the social norms and power relations prevailing in the society of the Tongliao area in Inner Mongolia.

RESUME

Mon mémoire est une étude des transformations du territoire dans la région de Tongliao en Mongolie Intérieure des temps modernes. En premier lieu, j'examine les mécanismes grâce auxquels l'Empire des Qing a exercé son pouvoir sur la terre et a circonscrit la notion d'une «identité Mongole» de par la cartographie du territoire, la restriction des mouvements et l'imposition d'un code de loi particulier. Puis, je me penche sur la transition d'empire à

état-nation dans la première moitié du vingtième siècle et montre que les transformations des institutions politiques ont eu un impact limité sur le pastoralisme. Finalement, je documente les transformations dramatiques du territoire qui ont eu lieu à l'ère post-Mao—que j'appelle « Révolution Topomorphique ». Cette étude soutient qu'en sculptant l'espace, les empires et états-nations ont fixé les conditions de l'identité mongole et ont transformé les normes sociales et les relations de pouvoir au sein de la société dans la région de Tongliao en Mongolie Intérieure.

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CONVENTIONS OF TERMINOLOGY

The terms “Mongol” and “Mongolian” are often confused or used interchangeably in English. Following Christopher Atwood, I chose to reserve the term “Mongolian” to designate the inhabitants of the country of Mongolia. Conversely, I use the noun “Mongol” to designate the members of the Mongol ethnic group, regardless of their citizenship. Consequently, the inhabitants of Inner Mongolia who pertain to the Mongol ethnic group will be designated as “Mongols.” Accordingly, the adjective “Mongol” will be used to describe objects related to the Mongol ethnicity. The adjective Mongolian could be used to describe institutions and cultural traits whose history goes beyond the “Inner” and “Outer” Mongolia divide. The term can also relate to things pertaining to the country of Mongolia.

INTRODUCTION

The sheep grasslands are fading away; the yellow grassland is void.
The songs of autumn crows sound more and more remote.
On dried up grassland, I am the ephemeral herder,
fooling myself by singing beautifully worded songs that praise the grasslands.
Dizzy, sleeping after drinking, these people
having abandoned their lifestyle and dreams,
They forgot their parent's grassland, which turned to roadside weeds.
The Mongols, they left the horses behind and became slaves to the moto and car.
We, today's Mongols, are increasingly far from prosperity.

—*We, Mongols of This Time* (ManaiMongoliin En Uye)

The Mongol popular singer Teng Geer who penned these lyrics is a key figure in the representation of Mongol identity through song. Although he is categorized as a state artist—as he is on the state payroll and is a beneficiary of the state media network—his music conveys a high level of freedom of expression and political autonomy.[1] *We Mongols of This Time* (Manai Mongoliin En Uye), one of his most recent songs, vividly depicts the struggles contemporary Mongols face. Teng equates the fate of Mongols with the degradation of the landscape and the loss of grasslands, both symbols of Mongol identity, *par excellence*. The artist's lyrics fuse identity and space, a relationship that has long been undermined by the pervasive dissociation between nature and culture within Western discourse.

In the course of my four months of fieldwork in the Tongliao region, I quickly observed

1 Nimrod Baranovitch, "Compliance, Autonomy, and Resistance of a State Artist: The Case of Chinese-Mongol Musician Teng Geer," in *Lives in Chinese Music*, ed. Helen Rees (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 174.

that landscape transformation was a recurrent theme in my conversations with Mongols. Those I had the chance to talk with vividly described how spaces had been degraded over the previous decade or two: how this river dried up, or how those pastures had become fields, how grazing animals had vanished from sight, and so on.

Through my exposure to indigenous folk and popular songs, moreover, I was struck by the recurrence of lyrics praising nature, blue sky, grasslands, and animals in Mongol music culture. Such themes were more predominant there than in any other folk culture I had ever encountered. This compelled me to focus on the transformation of landscape in connection with the transformation of Mongol ethnic identity. Indeed, as I became more immersed in Mongol culture and society, I soon found that, for Mongolian people, everything connects with the organization, control, and division of land. I thus felt compelled to let the voices residing within Mongolian folk culture orient my focus as an observer and researcher. Therefore, it seemed only appropriate that I adopt a landscape-based approach to analyze the recent transformations of ethnic identity in the Tongliao region of Inner Mongolia. Accordingly, this thesis will investigate how spatial transformations impinge upon ethnic identity and power relations, and draw out the mechanisms through which this occurs.

My definition of identity is based on the constructivist work of Berger and Luckmann. Highlighting the dialectical relation between identity and social environment, the authors argue that identity is formed through social processes and further influences the course of those social

processes.[2] In that connection, I see "identity" as a dynamic process and not as a reified unidirectional result of social organization. Indeed, my fieldwork made it very clear that transformations of space shape social identity, and that people in turn become agents of further spatial transformations. In short, this is a dynamic, multi-directional, symbiotic, and mutually-reinforcing process. In exploring the dialectic between nature and society, Berger and Luckmann view nature as acting to limit possibilities for humans. But the socialization process also influences nature—the inner biological process of organisms as well as broader external social contexts.

The research for this Master's thesis started with preliminary fieldwork in the summer of 2012. I had the opportunity to spend three months in the field and conducted in-depth conversational interviews with local people who shared their daily life preoccupations and historical memories with me. I then undertook to link my own observations to the literature on Mongol identity. I soon found out that most of the problems Mongols have continued to face in the contemporary era are rooted in Qing rule, which, according to Pamela Crossley, "left the deepest mark on our notion of Mongol identity."[3] This made it crucial for me to include a historical perspective in my work in order to understand broader patterns underlying my research questions.

Although many authors have examined the causes of grassland degradation in Inner

2 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *La construction sociale de la réalité* (Paris : Armand Colin, 2006), 284.

3 Pamela Crossley, "Making Mongols," in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Identity, and Frontier in Early Modern China,* ed. Helen Siu, Pamela Crossley, and Donald Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)*,* 79.

Mongolia, their findings continue to be disputed. Authors often put forward overgrazing as an argument to explain pervasive land degradation.[4] Williams, however, has dismissed this view, arguing that the overgrazing claim was used as an instrument of the state to put the blame on local populations and to enhance its own control. Therefore, he claims that development and scientific discourse, which have imposed fencing and agricultural modernization policies, have been most detrimental to local populations.[5] Empirical data from the research literature show that the reclamation of land for agriculture is responsible for the loss of green pasture land.[6] In the broader socio-economic context, Ginat and Khazhanov suggest that pastoralism is incompatible with modernization, which depends on a growth-based economic system.[7] The demographic argument that emphasizes the impacts of the Han immigration to Inner Mongolia is also extremely salient in the context of the more-or-less uninterrupted flow of Chinese immigration into Inner Mongolia over the last two centuries.[8]

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4 Chong Dong, Xiumei Liu, and K.K. Klein, "Land Degradation and Population Relocation in Northern China," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 53, no. 2 (2012): 163-177.

5 Dee Mack Williams, *Beyond Great Walls: Environment, Identity, and Development on the Chinese Grasslands of Inner Mongolia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 24-33.

6 Liu Shuang and Peng Gong, "Change of Surface Cover Greenness in China between 2000 and 2010," *Chinese Science Bulletin* 57, no. 22 (2012): 2835.

7 Joseph Ginat and Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Changing Nomads in a Changing World* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 8.

8 Sechin Jagchid, *Essays in Mongolian Studies* (Provo, Utah: David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, Brigham Young University, 1988), 186. Qian Zhang and Françoise Bouillot, "Mongolie Intérieure : Désertification, migration et transformation des modes de vie," *Hommes & Migrations* 2, no. 1284 (2010) : 42, URL : http://www.cairn.info/revue-hommes-et-migrations-2010-2-page-42.htm. For a study of the Chinese migration in Communist China, see Henry G. Schwarz, "Chinese Migration to North-West China and Inner Mongolia, 1949–59," *The China Quarterly* 16 (1963): 62-74. For the Han emigration in the Late Qing and Republican period, see Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940): 13-15; see also Thomas R. Gottschang and Diana Lary, *Swallows and Settlers: The Great Migration from North China to Manchuria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

Considering the importance of migrations, many authors have argued that the issues that contemporary Mongols face are rooted in Qing imperial rule, which had a devastating impact on Mongol pastoralists. Indeed, while the early Qing restricted movement and circulation in Mongolian territories, the late Qing considerably relaxed these restrictions and even encouraged migrants to settle in Inner Mongolia. Conversely, some Communist sources blame nineteenth century foreign imperialism for bringing capitalism to Inner Mongolia, a system said to be in "contradiction" (*maodun* 矛盾) with Mongolian pastoralism.[9] These writings are used for obvious political purposes and rely on ideological discourses that fail to present any nuanced view. Overall, while all authors might not say that the Qing inflicted a "lethal blow to nomadic life" as argued by Jagchid,[10] the dramatic consequences stemming from the Qing rule in Inner Mongolia are hardly contested.[11] Others believe that the collectivization period (1950s to 1980s) had a detrimental impact on pastoralist livelihood in Inner Mongolia following the argument of the "tragedy of the commons."[12] Furthermore, Chairman Mao Zedong's promotion of grain cultivation and human mastery of nature are also claimed to be antagonistic and destructive

9 Hao Fan 浩帆, *Neimenggu Menggu minzu de shehui zhuyi guodu* 内蒙古蒙古民族的社会主义过渡 [The Mongols of Inner Mongolia's Transition to Socialism] (Neimenggu renmin chubanshe, 1987), 17-18.

10 Jagchid, *Essays in Mongolian Studies*, 186.

11 Crossley, *Empire at the Margins*, 79; Jagchid, *Essays in Mongolian Studies*, 199; Nicola Di Cosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia," *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998): 287-309. Evelyn S. Rawski, "Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 836.

12 Robin Mearns, "Community, Collective Action and Common Grazing: The Case of Post-Socialist Mongolia," *Journal of Development Studies* 32, no. 3 (1996): 297.

forces that have had an impact on environment and fostered land degradation.[13] Indeed, in the aftermath of the failed Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), grain reserves were low and the transportation infrastructure was not developed to efficiently move large quantities of grain from one region to another. Therefore, fears of grain insufficiency led the Communist Party to focus on local self-sufficiency in grain production.[14] In this context, Mao Zedong created the Grain-first policy in the early 1960s, which was promoted by the slogan *yi liang wei gang* 以粮为纲 (take grain as a key link). The implementation and repercussions of this policy are still debated by scholars: while some argue that it epitomized the "folly of collectivism" and led to dramatic land degradation and desertification, Peter Ho argues that the Grain-first policy rather called for the diversification of agriculture and did not have such devastating economic and ecological effects.[15]

Conversely, other scholars view the socialist system as favourable to mobile pastoralism and the market economy as the chief threat to the existence of mobile herders.[16] Most of the new research on pastoralism reinforces this view, refuting the assumption that Mao's policies created

13 Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War against Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4. Hong Jiang, *The Ordos Plateau of China: An Endangered Environment* (United Nations University Press, 1999), 22-23.

14 Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield, "Land Degradation in Socialist Countries," in *Land Degradation and Society*, ed. Piers Blaikie and Harold Brookfield (New York: Methuen and Co, 1987), 218.

15 Peter Ho, "Mao's War against Nature? The Environmental Impact of the Grain-first Campaign in China," *China Journal* 50 (2003): 39-40.

16 Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, *The End of Nomadism*: *Society, State, and the Environment in Inner Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1; Ho, "Mao's War against Nature?," 42; David Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia*: *Pastoral Mongolian Society and the Chinese State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Fernandez-Gimenez et al., *Restoring Community Connections to the Land: Building Resilience through Community-based Rangeland Management in China* (Wallingford, Oxfordshire: CABI, 2012), 56.

major disruptions to the livelihood of pastoralists.

After a review of the literature, many questions remain unanswered. Some of the connections and explanations seem to lack clear mechanisms that would have led to the transformation of pastoralism. In other words, borrowing Jagchid's expression, what exactly fostered the "lethal blow to nomadic life"? Why did Qing influence leave such deep marks on Mongols, whereas communist rule brought only "cosmetic changes"[17] to the Mongols' indigenous social organization? And why did post-Mao era developments result in a "topomorphic revolution"[18] in Inner Mongolia? The expression was first used by Walter to designate a fundamental change in the structure of space: "A topomorphic revolution is a radical shift of topistic structure, a fundamental change in the form of dwelling together. Such revolutions conceal, interrupt or break the old forms, causing new structures by patterns of exclusion, enclosure, and dissociation."[19] It was then used by Williams to describe the dynamic that prevailed in contemporary Inner Mongolia.[20] My use of the expression stems from my land-focused approach. The prefix *topos* derives from the Greek language and refers to "place"; *morphe* signifies "form." The entire expression would then refer to a revolution in the form of places. The primary meaning of the word "revolution" has three sub-definitions according to the

17 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia*, 71.

18 Williams, *Beyond Great Walls*, 13.

19 E. V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 23.

20 Williams, *Beyond Great Walls,* 8.

Oxford Dictionary.

1. A forcible overthrow of a government or social order in favor of a new system.

- the American Revolution
- (in Marxism) the class struggle that is expected to lead to political change and the triumph of communism.
- a dramatic and wide-reaching change in the way something works or is organized or in people's ideas about it.

One might see some logical problems in the structure of this definition: the third sub-definition is broader than the definition 1 provided that a "change in the way something works" can refer to a much greater variety of things than "government or social order." Should the *Oxford Dictionary* editors move the third dot in place of the line 1, the sub-divisions would have appeared much more logical. As it is, the definition reveals a strong bias in favor of political institutions that seem to prevail over things and ideas about things. In contrast, my use of the expression "topomorphic revolution" should be read as an effort to deconstruct the institutional bias that is inherent to the understanding of the word "revolution," and to emphasize the politics of *topos* that often fall outside of the study of "government" and "social order."

My choice of words should also be understood according to the evolution of the present research. Indeed, at first, I aimed at focusing on the relation of the villagers with the state, in the context of the recent implementation of subsidy programs. After reviewing the literature on these

issues, I went to the field, and conducted a set of interviews with the people to understand their position vis-à-vis the government policies. My ideas had been very much influenced by the work of James C. Scott on everyday life resistance as well as O'Brien and Li on "rightful resistance."[21] I conducted some individual interviews and some focus groups within households that often revealed people's disillusion and powerlessness regarding local cadres' corruption. But I soon realized that people had much greater agency in their rapport with the land than in their rapport with the government. In other words, if there was any "ideology" that was driving their everyday life choices and behavior, it would be primarily embodied in their interaction with their spatial and natural environment. So I started to study how changes in the organization of the territory happened and what were their influences on people's lives. Therefore, my use of the word "revolution" is inscribed in an attempt to deterritorialize the concept from the institutional and Marxist contexts, in order to highlight the importance of phenomena that operate through the *morphe* of the *topos*. As the reader shall see, the *topos* is embedded in a web of power relations that naturally involve the state and the population.

While different historical periods are usually studied separately, I believe that comparative analysis—which incorporates the late Qing, the communist period, and the post-Mao period—is required to explain why disruptions of Mongol pastoralists' livelihood have occurred in given socio-historical contexts and not in others. In other words, I aim to determine the specific

21 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

mechanisms through which imperial and state power has been exercised on the pastoralists of the Tongliao region in Eastern Inner Mongolia. To be sure, I shall explore how such power has threatened the existence of the pastoralist livelihood within the empire and within the nation-state. Indeed, patterns of domination and control by elite groups over subjugated populations bring about distinct consequences, temporary or long-lasting, superficial or deep. What are the main factors that could be used to explain the intensity and profundity of the disruption to the Mongol groups that conquest elites brought about in different time periods? Finally, how are these disruptions reflected in the expression of so-called "ethnic identity" for these groups? The following section will position the Mongol problematic within the literature on Chinese ethnic minorities and advocate for an approach focused on space and landscape, in order to understand the dynamics at play in the Tongliao region in Eastern Inner Mongolia.

As Crossley, Siu, and Sutton point out, ethnicity is ephemeral. Ethnic boundaries are constructed, just like lineages, communities, and nations.[22] With recent breakthroughs in understanding ethnicity as a social construction, lots of ink has been spilled over how discourses and social practices serve the construction of social identity. Thomas Mullaney has brilliantly illustrated the discursive power of the Chinese state in shaping ethnic minorities in his study of the ethnic classification project, which categorized fifty-six nice and neat ethnic groups, or *minzu* 民族, populating China in the 1950s.[23] Indeed, Mullaney's study thoroughly deconstructs and

22 Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*, 5.

23 Thomas S. Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). See also Gregory Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China: From*

questions the foundations of what has been sold to the Chinese people as a "scientific categorization of groups." This taxonomic work epitomized the growing influence of modern social sciences on nation-building efforts following the demise of China's last imperial dynasty. For Bulag, "China's minzu-building project can be understood as a boundary-producing project predicated on the Chinese notion of genealogy and Stalin's four criteria defining nationality"—namely common language, territory, economic life, and psychological traits.[24] Indeed, the "cornerstone" of Chinese ethnology is Lewis Henry Morgan's theory of social evolution, which divided cultures into an evolutionary hierarchy with three main stages: savagery, barbarism, and civilization.[25] This conceptualization implied a temporal order in which "primitive" societies were described as "living fossils."[26] Accordingly, nomads were seen as more advanced than hunters, but less evolved than agriculture-based societies like the Han Chinese. Archaeological discoveries have shown a reverse trajectory, however, wherein agricultural cultivation has appeared to be a precondition for people first to domesticate animals, and later to devote themselves exclusively to herding.[27]

Furthermore, the equation of Morgan's classification system with the Chinese concept of

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Malinowski to Moscow to Mao (M.E. Sharpe, New York and London, 1994).

24 Uradyn E. Bulag, *The Mongols at China's Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 10.

25 Charles F. McKhann, "The Naxi and the Nationalities Question," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 42.

26 McKhann draws parallels between Confucian moral and Morganian evolutionism that both "primitivize" and "exoticize" the people seen as less evolved, while setting the standards for a natural and moral order. Ibid, p. 39.

27 Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21-22.

minzu[28] remains problematic in any case because many groups, namely the Hui,[29] the Miao,[30] and the Yi, do not share Stalin's four criteria. This led Harrell to state that ultimately, "what makes a group a ***minzu*** [emphasis in original] is that the government, more precisely the Minzu Commission, says that it is one."[31] In the case of the Mongols, the pastoralist livelihood was designated as the symbol *par excellence* of Mongol identity, which excluded Mongol agriculturalists and fostered anxiety among Mongols whose livelihood had shifted from pastoralism to intensive agriculture.

This framework was applied universally to classify everyone in China into one of the fifty-six ethnic groups. Mullaney even describes the crystallization of this taxonomy in textbooks and in people's minds as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Indeed, scholars argue that, as the Chinese people appropriated the taxonomy proposed and/or imposed by the state with little contestation, the gap shrunk between the model envisioned by the team of communist scholars and the lived reality of the various "*minzu.*"

This taxonomic *tour de force* imposed by the Chinese Communist Party has been

28 The term *minzu* was first used by Liang Qichao who translated the Japanese term *minzoku*, which first related to the French word *nationale* in the Early Meiji period. Then, the word came to approximate the German word *Volk* that was used to describe a community with putative shared linguistic, cultural, and historical background in the context of the Prussian Kingdom expansion. See Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 232.

29 Dru Gladney reports that some debates "raged" within the Communist Party over the recognition of the Hui identity. Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1991), 89.

30 Norma Diamond, "Defining the Miao: Ming, Qing, and Contemporary Views," in Harrell, *Cultural Encounters*, 92-116.

31 Stevan Harrell, "Ethnicity and Kin Terms among Two Kinds of Yi," in "Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups in China," Special issue, *New Asia Academic Bulletin* 8, eds. Chien Chiao and Nicolas Tapp (Hong Kong: New Asia College, 1989), 181.

theoretically titillating for scholars concerned with the relationship between discourse and power, in the aftermath of Foucault's seminal contribution to our understanding of knowledge and power. Indeed the power differential is central to Stevan Harrell's model of the "civilizing project" where the "central" population claims a superior degree of civilization and commits to elevate "inferior" groups up to its standards. Harrell further argues that the civilizing project objectifies ethnic minorities as feminine, uneducated, primitive groups.[32] However, the author's model fails to capture the Chinese view of the Mongols, whose legacy of conquest and empire precludes the application of emasculating rhetoric.

Furthermore, as Mark Elliott points out, problems with this model arise when it is applied to Manchus, a so-called "peripheral" group that constituted the "center" for close to three hundred years.[33] The "center-centered" historical and anthropological approach has been seriously challenged by the scholars of the New Qing History such as Crossley, Elliott, and Rawski who have proven the limitations of relying on central state documents to understand the making of the Qing Empire. This new historiography specifically reassesses previous historical studies that had highlighted the gradual assimilation of the Manchus in the Han-Confucian cultural system, which correlated with the Sinicization model that Herold Wien's *China' March toward the Tropics* put forward.[34] Recent scholarship has seriously challenged this model by

32 Stevan Harrell, *Cultural Encounters*, 3-10.

33 Mark C. Elliott, "Ethnicity in the Eight Banners," in *Empire at the Margins*, eds. Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, 32-33.

34 Herold Jacob Wiens, *China's March toward the Tropics* (Hamden: Shoe String Press, 1954).

pointing out how the Manchu ethnic identity not only endured[35] but was also a fundamental dimension of Qing rulership.[36] In parallel, the Sinicization model that relied on a putative irresistible charisma associated with so-called Sino-Confucian culture and that ostensibly slowly engulfed barbarians, has proven to be a conceptually flawed oversimplification.[37] However, some authors, such as Ho Ping-Ti, still vigorously defended the sinicization model under attack.[38] I believe that Ho is right in pointing out the "false dichotomy" that is inherent to the question whether the Qing empire owes its success to the borrowing from Han Chinese institutions or to its multi-ethnicity. It is my position that there cannot be an absolute answer to this debate. Indeed, we cannot downplay the flow of cultural exchanges that induce certain transformations, which could have been labelled as "sinicization" or "barbarization" by historians; neither should we understate the contribution of non-Han Chinese populations to the so-called Chinese Civilization. To be sure, we cannot expect styles of rulership to be rigid and impermeable and identities to be constituted as discrete independent units.[39] Provided that cultural influence and exchange are an inherent condition of ethnicity and culture, it is hard to

35 Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Cambridge : Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 189.

36 Evelyn S. Rawski, "Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 829-850; Pamela K. Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

37 Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Thinking about Ethnicity in Early Modern China," *Late Imperial China* 11, no. 1 (1990): 2-3.

38 Ping-Ti Ho, "In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's 'Reenvisioning the Qing'," *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1988): 123-155.

39 This was demonstrated in Fredrik Barth's seminal work on ethnic boundaries. See Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*: *The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1969).

argue that there was no sinicization at all.[40] Neither can one claim that the Chinese civilization was fully embraced by the ruling "barbarians" at any given point in history. Henceforth, I will avoid using the term sinicization in order to not be caught in a circular argument. I aim at adopting an approach that is focused on the periphery not for the purpose of weakening the "Chinese center"; at this point, my motives are simply to better understand the dynamics at play in the peripheral regions of China and to avoid an entrapping Han-Mongol dialectic—as much as possible. China's "periphery" has been at least as important as the "center" in nation-building projects. As Gladney eloquently argues,

> "Minority is to the majority as female is to male, as "Third" World is to "First," and as subjectivized is to objectivized identity. The widespread definition and representation of the "minority" as exotic, colorful, and "primitive" homogenizes the undefined majority as united, monoethnic, and modern."[41]

In other words, the relationship with the periphery provides a fountainhead for a sense of coherence, homogeneity and unity of the majority, thereby resolving painful internal ruptures and identity conflicts. More broadly, psychoanalysts and anthropologists of the self have shown how crucial the periphery of the body is in the definition of the subject, informing it of its boundaries and pointing to what it is not.[42] Simultaneously, authors from a number of fields have highlighted the necessity of having a history of the periphery to understand empire-building

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40 Considering the vast regional variations within "China", the term "sinicization" is problematic, given the impossibility to pinpoint an all-encompassing definition of "Chineseness."

41 Dru C. Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994): 93.

42 Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoir de l'horreur : essai sur l'abjection* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1980).

and identity issues. Specifically, Qing historiography has proven particularly fruitful in revealing the necessity of an "ethnic-centered" history considering the influence of non-Han populations in constituting the Qing Empire, whose magnitude and frontiers legitimized the contemporary Chinese government's territorial claims.[43] With respect to contemporary Chinese culture, Dru Gladney has undertaken the project of *Dislocating China* and questioning the concept of a "Han" majority constituting 95% of "Chinese" population.[44] In the field of critical studies, Gilles Deleuze's understanding and criticism of capitalism is helped by a theoretical shift to a perspective of the "other": "History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even if the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history."[45] Although Deleuze was criticized by David Sneath for his romanticization of the nomad, and for lacking empirical evidence to support his claims,[46] his work remains very influential in cultural studies and should be read as a discursive study, and not as ethnographic or historical. Marshall Sahlins, in his chapter entitled "The Original Affluent Society" proposes an eloquent criticism of productivism through a study

43 See Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*; Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way* (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2001).

44 See *Dislocating China: Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004). This argument also figures in his seminal study of the Hui *minzu*, see Gladney, *Muslim Chinese*.

45 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 32.

46 David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society & Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

of hunter-gatherers' societies.[47] Similarily, the anthropologist Anna Tsing, in her forthcoming book, builds her conceptual framework on an opposition between foraging and the human "love affair" with grains.[48] Also, James Scott sheds light on the material context of ethnicity by studying non-state populations living in upland South East Asia.[49] In the field of Mongol studies, Erderchuluu advocates for a history focused on Mongol documents instead of relying on extrapolations of Chinese central productions to understand Mongol society.[50]

Specifically, periphery-centered historical studies often lead to the reassessment of previous understandings of state history, which implies that the importance of ethnic minorities ought not to be overlooked in scholarly work. As Elliott states, "ethnicity has an important role to play in historical analysis; it is neither an exclusively modern concern, nor a peripheral one, but leads, like gender history, from the margins right to the center of historical issues."[51] Such a study of the periphery has to be mindful of the constructed nature of ethnic boundaries, how they fluctuate, spark contestation or leave footprints in subjectivities and territories.

My study aims to situate ethnic boundaries within the realities of material life, spatiality, and daily life. Most significantly, I will focus on spatial, territorial, and landscape issues that circumscribe expressions of ethnic identity in the Tongliao region of Inner Mongolia. Indeed,

47 Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (London: Tavistock Publications, 2004).

48 Anna Tsing, "Unruly Edge: Mushroom as Companion Species," *Environmental Humanities* 1 (2012): 141-154.

49 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland South-East Asia* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2009).

50 Erdenchuluu Khohchahar, "The Study of Mongolian Legal History: New Approaches on the Basis of Local Documents" (Unpublished paper, 2013).

51 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, xiv.

while working in the field, I observed that notions of landscape and territory not only pervaded folk songs, poems and popular culture, but also seem to have undergone dramatic transformations since the late Qing. This supports Lattimore's view that the mobility of herders through the landscape was central to the definition of classes in Mongol areas.[52] In parallel, Mark Elliott's study of the historical ethnicity of the Manchus shows how space was central to the definition of the Manchu's identity, which was closely tied to the Eight Banners, a system of social and military organization rooted in indigenous Mongol land administration.[53] Elliott documents how the Qing rulers carefully maintained a structure of ethnic boundaries in urban quarters of China, which he theorizes with the concept of "residential segregation."[54] Furthermore, the Manchu government perfected the Banner system in an effort to expand imperial rule in regions that had not been incorporated into the Middle Kingdom after the Yuan dynasty. Hence, as Peter Perdue makes clear in his account of the Qing conquest of Inner Asia, space and territorial matters are of utmost importance in understanding empire-building and identity.[55] To quote Liu Xiaoyuan, "Important steps in the formation and transformation of territoriality are landmarks of epochal significance by themselves."[56]

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52 Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Clinton: The Colonial Press, 1940), 71.

53 Rawski, "Presidential Address," 834.

54 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 126.

55 Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

56 Xiaoyuan Liu, *Recast All under Heaven: Revolution, War, Diplomacy, and Frontier China in the 20th Century* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2010), 6.

Hence, while historians of the last century have focused their attention on ideological conflicts, political persecutions, discourses and warfare, they seem to have overlooked the critical importance of territory and peoples' rapport with it. Yet, shifts from empires to nations, from tradition to modernity, from tribes to ethnic groups, from pastoralism to agriculture or vice versa all parallel a deep transformation of landscape and territories that need to be addressed in scholarly research. This follows Charles Maier's argument that the history of the twentieth century has to be studied from the perspective of territoriality, the importance of which supersedes the significance of periodization in the understanding of social and political changes. This eminent historian notes that the study of globalization elevated the scholarly importance of territory and space, after having long been taken for granted.[57] In line with this intellectual trend, I advocate integrating issues of space and landscape as essential elements of sound scholarship.

This is not to say that this pursuit should resurrect the "debilitating geographical determinism" that prevailed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century scholarly work, which was framed in a racist and colonial tone that saw Inner Asian tribes as trapped in a cycle of stagnation which kept them from moving out of their "backward" condition.[58] This form of geographical determinism was closely tied to a cultural and social reductionism that viewed "races" as discrete units of individuals whose characteristics were determined by their physiological attributes. Perdue points out that in contemporary studies, language and subjective

57 Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *The American Historical Review* 105, part 3 (2000): 807-808.

58 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 16-18.

identity prevail over the "'objective,' nearly timeless features of land and race in defining the boundaries of the modern nation-state." He also notes that land is, of course, neither "timeless" nor "objective." Except for some rare pristine habitats, its contours are shaped by human and fluctuate with changes in discourses and political ideologies. While previous works that were focused on land and geography have emphasized the influence of land on civilizations and culture, I propose to investigate people's changing rapport with the land as well as the interplay between landscape, discourse and identity.

Since Henri Lefebvre's decisive work on the production of space, numerous scholarly works have increasingly raised red flags as to how discursive metaphors of space have created blind spots in the study of spatial reality. Smith and Katz show how academic language is peppered with spatial metaphors that have evolved independently from the development of material space in society. The authors point out how scholars "map," "explore," "localize," "(de)-territorialize," "colonize," and see objects "travelling" in theoretical "spaces." In other words, spatial lexicon has been appropriated by writers to study social structures, institutions and discourses, which occlude social contexts from which these special metaphors derive. This is particularly remarkable in Foucault's work. For Spivak,

> "Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, but the awareness of the topographic reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions… The clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university all seem to be screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism."[59]

59 G. C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. L. Crossberg and C. Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 292, cited in Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, "Grounding Metaphor:

Foucault himself has recognized the limitations of his recourse to spatial metaphors, which he calls "necessary," but "regressive" and "non-rigorous."[60] This criticism calls for a reinvention of historiography to go beyond hegemonic metaphors of space, by acknowledging the erasure of the roots of these metaphors—sacrificed on the altar of theoretical discourse.

The peripheralization of space and landscape in scholarly research is hardly surprising,[61] given that written documents are usually archived and have far greater impact on history as a discipline and on collective memory than ever-changing landscapes. In his influential work on the history of the English countryside, Raymond Williams points out that "social exploitation leaves no visible mark in rural areas, but is dissolved into a landscape."[62] The propensity of landscape to surreptitiously transform itself, leaving no mark but its own transformation, is particularly true in semi-arid Mongol areas, which are highly subject to erosion and desertification.

Following Euclidian geometry, space was until recently conceptualized as an empty, infinite area containing things. This has changed through the ground-breaking work of the intellectual Henri Lefebvre, who shows how space is produced by society. There is a history of space, which means that we can examine the specifics of space at different times with different

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Toward a Spatialized Politics," in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, eds. Michael Keith and Steve Pile (New York: Routledge, 1993), 74.

60 Smith and Katz, "Grounding Metaphor," 73.

61 The reader should not excuse this use of a spatial metaphor.

62 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 144, cited in Williams, *Beyond Great Walls,* 200.

modes and relations of production.[63] For instance, Lefebvre writes that the hunter-gatherers travelled across space and merely left the traces of their itineraries on natural spaces. This contrasts with intensive agriculture, which requires the exploitation of space—or land—as primary material for production. This mode of production implies distinct schemes of space striation as well as different possibilities for the movement of populations across space. Henri Lefebvre further paves the way for the study of the power relations among people who shape spaces. However, the power relations between people and space or between people and land still need to be explored. My study will show that the change from pastoralism to intensive agriculture implied a dramatic shift in people's power differentials vis-à-vis their natural and spatial environment and vis-à-vis domestic and public places.

Philip Descola made a significant breakthrough in the understanding of different people's rapport with the non-human. He proposes a system that categorizes people according to their relation with non-human beings. His model includes four categories: "totemism," "animism," "naturalism," and "analogism." Each category corresponds to a mode of identification with non-humans. In particular, animists do not dissociate humans and non-humans; naturalists divide nature and culture, totemists divide the world into groups encompassing both humans and non-humans in which each group has particular characteristics; analogists suppose discontinuity between each being, which are simultaneously connected by a unifying principle.[64] However, I

63 Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris : Éditions Anthropos, 1974), 117-118.

64 Philip Descola, "À propos de Par-delà nature et culture," *Traces* 12 (2007) : 231-252.

tend to resist such structures of categorization based on the inherent dynamics of change and fluidity that characterize people's rapport with non-humans. That being said, his research is one of the few that examines people's rapport with non-human beings, and such a perspective will inform the present research. I shall slightly narrow down the angle by focusing on people's rapport with space and landscape.

This thesis aims to reconstitute the major phases of land transformation, focusing on their impact on Mongol ethnic identity. Indeed, the study of Mongol ethnicity is so intertwined with spatial and landscape issues that conventional theoretical frameworks that ignore space fail to capture the peculiarities of the impact of the "topomorphic revolution," which took place in modern Inner Mongolia following the dramatic territorial disruptions caused by the Qing rule.

This is a risky endeavour for two main reasons. First is my use of a mixture of literature review and fieldwork to address this research question. While Lefebvre strongly advocates the use of interdisciplinary approaches to analyse the social relations underlying the production of space,[65] boundaries between academic disciplines are still erected and eagerly defended. However, I maintain that the situation in late twentieth century Mongolia cannot be comprehended without understanding the events that happened during the Qing dynasty. Second, the thesis seeks to make both empirical and methodological contributions to the field. A plea for new approaches that address the study of space and land, it attempts to shed new light on the historical trajectory of the Mongol's changing rapport with the land, which parallels the

65 Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace,* 107.

unprecedented spatial transformations of pasture lands in the Tongliao region of Inner Mongolia.

METHODOLOGY

New trends in qualitative research deeply influenced my choice of methods to conduct the present study. This section positions my approach within those new trends. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, qualitative research has undergone fundamental transformations, in line with shifts in socio-political circumstances and academic fashions. In its early years, when it was associated with positivism, ethnography was rooted in a colonial exercise of producing "objective" accounts of a foreign "other."[66] The second phase of ethnographic research took place during the Cold War and attempted to pair qualitative and quantitative research by presenting results in a form that was "implicitly numerical."[67] With the influence of feminist theories, phenomenology, neo-Marxism, constructivism, semiotics, ethnic paradigms, and other intellectual movements, the modernist ethnography came to an end and gave way to a third phase, which was characterized by the blurring boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities, as Clifford Geertz articulated in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). Geertz further argues that more pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended perspectives were progressively replacing the old functionalist, positivist, totalizing approaches. These new trends challenged the authority of the researcher over his or her subject matter and led to a crisis of

66 Normand K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 15-16.

67 Howard S. Becker, *Sociological Work: Method and Substance* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), 31, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook*, 16.

representation embedded in poststructuralist and postmodernist discourses. According to the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* "Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials… Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand."[68] Furthermore, qualitative researchers may "invent," or "piece-together" new tools or techniques in order to answer certain research questions. Using whatever material is available in given contexts, they produce a solution (bricolage) that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. Ideally, "the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry."[69]

The qualitative methodology employed in this study is anchored in this trend of multi-method bricolage, which brings together different empirical materials to address particular research questions. The blurring of social science and humanities through a combination of historical inquiry and fieldwork is particularly evident in my research. Indeed, assuming that contemporary Mongol identity is rooted in the Qing dynasty,[70] my understanding of the ethnogenesis of the Mongols would be incomplete, if not flawed, had I not addressed the important disruptions to indigenous social organization induced by the Qing imperial rule.

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68 Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook*, 4.

69 Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook*, 5.

70 Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*, 79.

A four-month fieldwork stint in the Tongliao region provided substantive material for me to investigate the implications of fundamental landscape transformations following the dismantling of the people's communes, which coincided with the introduction of a market economy. Such fieldwork enabled me to gather empirical data from direct observation, interviews, analysis of artifacts, songs and folk culture, photographic representations, analysis of maps, political discourses, and the study of space. It took place between May and August 2012 and December-January 2013. Hence, I had the chance to make some observations both in the summer and in the winter, which was insightful to understand how people adapted to harsh climatic environment at different times of the year. I conducted interviews with thirty people, as well as household focus groups where I would provoke discussions about the politics of the village. Furthermore, I often took part in social gatherings, which provided great occasions to get involved in informal conversations with my hosts. Therefore, I could also get access to conversations between people, which was very helpful to understand what issues preoccupied them and then design my research accordingly, instead of focusing on predefined research topics that would not be aligned with the reality in the field. Due to my limited ability to speak Mongolian, interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. When informants sometimes switched to Mongolian, being obviously more comfortable expressing themselves in their native language, my partner—a native speaker of Mongolian—would help interpret.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Efforts to connect fieldwork to historical inquiry is inherently difficult due to limitations in scope. The geographic area Masters' fieldwork can cover is obviously limited, which may limit the generalizability of the findings within the Tongliao region, given that Inner Mongolia is a vast and diverse territory. Transformation has occurred at an astonishingly rapid rate during the last centuries in the Tongliao region, which makes it an ideal location to study the forces driving the alterations of landscape and socio-cultural patterns. It goes without saying that the scarcity of the historical sources on this specific location as well as the limited duration of this study may weaken connections between historical material and the data collected in the field. Nevertheless, I contend that comparative research and work using multiple methodologies are essential to understand systemic patterns that recur at different historical times. Hence, although it may involve significant risk, I believe it is necessary to get a sense of the broader patterns of the transformations that have affected the Mongols in that particular place.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

This thesis is divided into two main parts, with Chapters One and Two in the first and Chapter Three in the second. The first part addresses the imperial power that was exerted on the Mongol population, which came to shape space in the Tongliao region. The first chapter of my thesis explores the profound transformations of the Mongol space that paralleled the creation of the Mongol ethnic consciousness by Qing institutions. I argue that the creation of boundaries was

a fundamental feature of the Qing Empire, and paradoxically, the success of Qing efforts to reify the Mongols into well-defined banners simultaneously initiated the decline of the pastoralist Mongols. Chapter Two examines the early twentieth century transition from Empire to nation-state. The second section of the thesis focuses on the very shift in power relations between people and their space, addressing the second half of the twentieth century. Chapter Three contrasts landscape transformations and changes in ethnic identity in Mao's era with those in the reform period. It shows that the transformations of the landscape were much more significant in the reform period, compared to the Maoist era, causing profound disruptions in the socio-cultural organization. I contend that this is because the introduction of the market economy drastically altered pastoral space. I further connect the landscape transformations with socio-cultural changes by providing evidence of people's changing rapport with the land in terms of power and identity. The conclusion will connect the main arguments presented in each chapter to the broader problems of Empire-making and nation-building. I will reassess how power, space, and identity play out in the context of the ethnogenesis and ethno-maintenance of the Mongols of the Tongliao region.

CHAPTER 1 THE MAPPING OF LAND AND THE ETHNOGENESIS OF THE MONGOLS

> "Empires, in the end, are masters of the men who build them; you cannot claim a great destiny and then refuse to follow it up."[71]

This chapter traces the origin of the Mongol ethnic identity back to the Qing dynasty. I will argue that the ethnogenesis of the Mongols parallels the mapping of the land by the Qing rulers. Paradoxically, the creation of Mongols as a well-defined ethnic group threatened the very survival of their indigenous practices. Indeed, the integration of Mongols into the Qing Empire involved not only the mapping of the land, but also severe restrictions in the circulation of people across the land, as well as setting clear-cut boundaries between the different groups populating Inner Asian soil. The transformation of fluid and shifting identities into rigid groups whose movements were restrained was irreconcilable with the Mongol indigenous social and territorial organization. Thus, the creation of the Mongol ethnic group by the Qing paradoxically marked the beginning of the end of the Mongols.

After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the Mongols were made up of various local groups whose alliances and loyalties were constantly shifting.[72] In other words, the unrestrained movement of groups generated highly fluid and shifting forms of identity. It would be erroneous to consider the Mongols a unified group prior to the Qing, as the term "Mongol" was primarily

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71 Owen Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria: Their Tribal Divisions, Geographical Distribution, Historical Relations with the Manchus and Chinese, and Present Political Problems* (New York: John Day, 1934), 35.

72 Almaz Khan, "From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero," in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers,* ed. Stevan Harrell (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 251.

used by the Chinese as a catch-all term to designate pastoralist groups living beyond the Ming territories.[73] The so-called Mongols, on the other hand, referred to themselves by their specific tribal names. The extreme mobility of these groups precluded any easy categorization or mapping, and their system of land tenure relied on fluidity and movement across the land. Nor can the pattern of social organization among the Mongols be considered to have been atemporal or unchanging. Furthermore, mobility and pastoral organization exhibited extensive variation, depending on climate, vegetation, types of animals, availability of pastures, and so on.[74] Accordingly, the notion that there was one "traditional" Mongol way of life is misleading. Instead, adherence to period-specific terms is essential to identify and compare different forms of organization. Despite the difficulty of categorizing patterns that were far from uniform across time and space, highlighting the broader patterns to understand the major changes that have taken place in the last centuries is still worthwhile.

Furthermore, scholars unanimously concur that mobility has always been and remains crucial for pastoralism.[75] Patterns of migration depended not only on geography, but varied considerably across social strata.[76] Indeed, in the pre-modern era, the population of Inner

73 Ibid.

74 Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, 73.

75 Sneath and Humphrey, *The End of Nomadism*, 1; Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, 71.

76 As Sneath argued, the myth of the equalitarian nomad does not apply to the Mongols. His work, *The Headless State*, gives plenty of evidence of social stratification from very early times into the modern period. The word "class" might be anachronistic and too tinged with Marxist ideology to accurately describe the Mongols' social reality. Therefore, I choose to use the word "strata" to signify the different segments of society that were characterized by varying levels of material wealth and power.

Mongolia was made up mostly of three distinct social groups, with their own particular livelihood strategies. The nobles and the monastic elites stood at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy with the most wealth and animals in their herds. They often had sedentary settlements that could be forced to move, depending on weather and other factors. The second tier of the social hierarchy was made up of independent households who owned smaller herds. The third tier was made up of laborers who did not own any animals, but who worked for the elite or the monasteries as herder specialists. The latter were in charge of long seasonal migrations that could cover up to 200 kilometers. Indeed, herds were consolidated to benefit from huge economies of scale, since herding significantly more animals did not require that much more labor. Owners of small herds, in contrast, had shorter migratory trajectories and did not produce much beyond their subsistence needs. David Sneath provides an informative account of the 1930s Russian ethnographer A.D. Simukov's extensive study of the patterns of pastoral migration in Inner Asia. The latter researcher classifies the pastoral movements into six categories:

The Western type of movement, characterized by summer camps in the highlands, and winter camps on lower slopes of the mountains;

The Ovorhangai system similarly involved summer camps in the upper reaches of rivers, and winter pastures far to the south. Each leg of this yearly migration spanned 150 to 200 km;

The Steppe type consisted of having summer pastures in open areas, and spending winters on the slopes of the mountains to seek shelter from wind;

The Eastern type, mostly found in Eastern Mongolia, where summer pastures were located in the north, and animals were moved into sheltered hollows in the winter;

Finally, the Gobi desert type, where herders spent summers in open pasture areas, and moved to valleys or hills in the winter;[77]

Extensive migrations had several advantages in terms of production. Namely, they optimized the consumption of the pasture grasses by continuously rotating the herds. Furthermore, they produced fatter and more resistant animals, which were less likely to die under extreme weather conditions compared to the more sedentary animals kept by the owners of small herds. Wealthy families and monasteries promoted the concentration of animals, which was easier to manage than the division of the herds into separate units. Collective herding of large groups of animals by specialist herders offered significant economies of scale.

To be sure, in contrast to agriculturalists, Mongols expressed land use rights as the right to move with herds within a given perimeter.[78] Lattimore describes the Mongol notion of "sovereignty" as a freedom of attachment to a specific territory, given that that freedom of movement was a defining feature of tribal power. He writes:

"No single pasture could have any value unless the people using it were free to move to some other pasture, because no single pasture could be grazed continuously. The right to move

77 A.D. Simukov, "Mongol' ski Kochevki [Mongolian Migrations]," *Sovremennaya Mongolyia* [Contemporary Mongolia] 7, no. 47 (1934): 40-46, cited in David Sneath, "Spatial Mobility and Inner Asian Pastoralism," in Sneath and Humphrey, *The End of Nomadism*, 222.

78 Sneath, *The Headless State*, 18

prevailed over the right to camp. 'Ownership' meant, in effect, the title to a cycle of migration."[79]

The wealthier and more powerful a tribe was, the more extensive its migrations. Indeed, larger herds of animals required vast areas of pasture, which explains the correlation between wealth, power, and movement. As Baabar and Kaplonski note, "while the peasants viewed themselves as inseparable from the land, nomads were not attached to a particular plot of land, and when their situation worsened because of nature or adversaries, they would move to unbelievably far-off places and feel at home."[80] Accordingly, abandoning a piece of land was common and even desirable for herders in need of fresh pasture lands, as opposed to exclusive ties to land among sedentary societies.[81]

Instead of identifying with set territories, Mongol social organization functioned as shifting alliances between commoners and princely families with established genealogical ties to Genghis Khan. "Pan-Mongol" identity was, in fact, of little bearing, given the relative autonomy of tribes and the range of their movement across space. Indeed, until the Qing dynasty, the Mongols faced few outside threats, and expended most of their energy on internal tribal warfare. If the past was any indication of what was in the future, they would have been right to perceive few threats from outside the steppe. Indeed, before the Qing the steppe people had never been

79 Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, 66.

80 Baabar and C. Kaplonski, *History of Mongolia: From World Power to Soviet Satellite* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1999), 8.

81 Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria*, 76.

conquered by outside empires. Even during the successful military campaigns of Emperor Wu Di of the Han dynasty against the Northern Xiongnu in the second century B.C., there were no outright alliances with or conquest of the "northern nomads."[82]

The Qing dynasty is often portrayed as an enterprise of common interests between the Mongols and the Qing state, given the number of intermarriages between both groups and the fact that both saw the Chinese as subjects of their respective empires. In the Khorchin region, Mongols had particularly close relations with Qing rulers, especially in terms of marital exchanges. The first Emperor of the Qing dynasty took a consort from the Borjigids family. Most importantly, the Mongol woman who wed Hong Taiji became the Empress Dowager Xiaozhuang, Shunzhi's mother and Kangxi's influential grandmother.[83] However, considering the devastating impact of Qing rule on the Mongols, other authors maintain that the Mongols were subjugated by the Manchus. The question loses relevance, however, when one examines the details of the Qing empire-building process. Indeed, the impact of the Qing Empire proved devastating for the Mongols, whose land was tacitly conquered by the flow of Han Chinese migrants who settled and became a majority of the population in Inner Mongolia by the Republican period. The structure of demography in contemporary Inner Mongolia is rooted in the Qing Empire and has to be understood in relation to this Manchu conquest of the Mongols.

The migration movements in Eastern Inner Mongolia started in the early seventeenth

82 Xiaobing Li, *China at War: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 161.

83 Dujiaji 杜家骥, *Qing chao Man Meng lianyin yanjiu* 清朝满蒙联姻研究 [A study of the Manchu-Mongol inter-marriages in the Qing Dynasty] (Beijing : Renmin chubanshe, 2013), 30.

century. Although the first two emperors of the Qing Empire, Shunzhi and Kangxi, had officially prohibited Han Chinese to settle beyond the Great Wall, they were in fact ambivalent regarding settlement policies, and James Reardon-Anderson points out that one can find as many imperial edicts from the seventeenth and early eighteenth century encouraging migration to Manchu and Mongol territories up north as edicts discouraging such migration.[84] It is only during the Qianlong era in 1740 that a closure policy was adopted in areas north of the Great Wall. However, the implementation proved to be unsuccessful, as migration kept going and people who had already settled in Southern Manchuria moved northward. In 1860, the prohibition was lifted and the Qing encouraged Han migration to Manchuria to counter Russian encroachment.[85]

The Qing dynasty marks the first time in history that the Inner Asian tribes were brought into the Chinese Empire. The Manchu warfare strategy of pitting some Mongol tribes against others made Qing conquest possible. Indeed, the Jurchens—who Hong Taiji later named "Manchus"—exploited the scattering of the Inner Asian groups and ultimately subjugated the Mongols. According to Nurhaci, the first emperor of the Qing Empire:

"The Mongol kingdom is like clouds. While gathering, clouds produce rain. While united, the Mongol tribes become an army. When they are dispersed, it's like the dispersal of clouds when rain stops. Then, when they are dispersed, we should urge to get them."[86]

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84 James Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers: China's Expansion Northward, 1644-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 48.

85 Christopher Mills Isett, *State, Peasants, and Merchants in Qing Manchuria 1644-1862* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 43.

86 *Qing Taizu Wu huangdi shilu* 清太祖武皇帝實錄 [Chronicles of Taizu, Qing Emperor], Volume 4 (Taipei:

In other words, the dispersal of the Mongols provided an opportunity for the Manchus to use a divide-and-rule strategy in order to conquer the steppe. More precisely, the Mongols were caught at the intersection of three vast empires: Russian, Zunghar, and Manchu. While the Mongols of Manchuria allied with the Manchus at an early stage, the Khalkas were threatened by the Zunghars led by Galdan Tseren. Suffering from repeated attacks by Galdan, hordes of Khalkas fled south and, on the brink of starvation, managed to reach the Manchu border. The Manchus took them in and protected them from Galdan. In 1691, the Zunghars were defeated by Kangxi so that all the Mongols were placed under the Manchu rule. In sum, while some Mongols (i.e., the Eastern Mongolia Borjigids aristocrats) were prone to ally with the Manchus, others (the Zunghars led by Galdan) fiercely resisted, and others (the Khalkas) sought Qing protection while facing the Zunghar threat.[87]

The sociologist Zhou Jinghong describes the relationship between the Qing rulers and the Mongols as 有亲有疏 *youqin youshu,* simultaneously kin and distant. He further conveys that the Manchus saw Mongol lands as a reservoir of soldiers, and especially skilful cavalry, which implied that the Manchu rulers cherished them principally because of their crucial military role in helping build the Qing Empire.[88] As a result, they were protected by the Manchus so that they

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National Palace Museum, 1932), p. 33 of the electronic version.

87 For the complete account of the conquest, see Perdue, *China Marches West*, 174-193.

88 Zhou Jinghong 周竞红, "Qingmo Minguo shiqi Neimenggu diqu zhengqu guanli tizhi bianqian ji dui Mengguzu de yingxiang" 清末民国时期内蒙古地区政区管理体制变迁及对蒙古族的影响 [The Change and Influence of the Administrative System in Inner-Mongolia during the Time between the Late Qing Dynasty and 1911—1949], *Zhongyang minzu daxue xuebao: Zhexue shehui kexue ban* 中央民族大学学报：哲学社会科学版 [Journal of the Central Universities for Nationalities: Philosophy and Sociology Edition] 31, no. 6 (2004): 41.

could better serve the rulers' interests. Hence, the policies that the Manchus designed for the Mongols served the interests of the Empire and led to the transformation of earlier Mongol practices, namely of justice,[89] administrative division, and pastoral movement.

The customary non-attachment to land that prevailed in pre-Qing times shifted in 1748 when the Manchus reformed territorial divisions and successfully imposed bonds between Mongol princes and given parcels of land through the Manchu banner system and the efficient mapping of Inner Asia. Of course, the Qing banner system was derived from the Mongols' military institutions that were already in use during the Yuan Dynasty (Mongol: *Koshun*). However, there were significant differences between the Qing and the Mongol banner systems. More precisely, the traditional Mongol banners corresponded to a unit that was larger than the household but smaller than the tribe. Inner Mongolian banners included approximately 3000-8000 members in the high steppe, and 15,000-25,000 in regions neighbouring China proper.[90] The leader of the banner was in charge of assigning pastures to the households and negotiating the use of common land with neighbouring banners.[91] Most importantly, "the *Koshun* had no fixed territory, but fit into a system of nomadic pastoralism, which was governed by the opportunity or need to move in search of greener pastures, rather than devotion to a

89 To read more on the transformation of punitive measures in Qing Mongolia, see Vesna A. Wallace, "Legalized Violence: Punitive Measures of Buddhist Khans in Mongolia," in *Buddhist Warfare*, ed. Michael Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 82-92.

90 Christopher Pratt Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes in Inner Mongolia's Interregnum Decades, 1911-1931*

91 Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers,* 35.

particular space."[92] In other words, people considered the land as a collective good that was rotated among households. As Reardon-Anderson puts it, "it was not 'owned' by anyone, and could not be separated, sold, or permanently alienated from the common endowment."[93] In contrast, after subjugating the Mongols, the Qing rulers imposed a new set of rules that fixed the membership of each banner, and prohibited the movement of people and animals in and out of the banners. The common use of land was kept, but the land could now be rented to outsiders such as migrant farmers. Finally, the banner chief was henceforth appointed by the Qing court.[94]

As Michel Foucher argues, the modern bounded state originates in the mapping of the frontiers of seventeenth century Eurasian empires.[95] The main purpose of these maps was to restrict mobility, in order to control the movement of fluid populations, composed of refugees, nomads, tribes, traders, soldiers, and other mobile groups.[96] In the case of the Qing, in 1690, the *Lifanyuan* 理藩院 (Court of Colonial Dependencies),[97] an agency in charge of governing Inner Asian dependencies, ordered that Mongol genealogies be recorded and Mongol banners be mapped to include geographical characteristics and monuments. These maps were to be updated

92 Ibid, 35.

93 Ibid, 35.

94 Ibid, 36.

95 Michel Foucher, *L'invention des frontières* (Paris : Fondation pour les études de défense nationale, 1987), cited in Peter Perdue, "Boundaries, Maps and Movements : Chinese, Russian, and Mongol Empires in Early Central Eurasia," *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998): 265.

96 Perdue, "Boundaries, Maps, and Movements," 265.

97 There are a wide variety of translations for the *Lifanyuan* organ, for example, the "Court of Management of the Outer Dependencies" by Perdue, *China Marches West*, 468, and "The Ministry of Managing the Non-Chinese Population" by Chia Ning, "*Lifanyuan* and the Management of Population Diversity in Early Qing (1636-1795)," *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers* 139 (2012): 2. I choose the terminology proposed by Mark Elliott in *The Manchu Way,* 40: "Court of Colonial Dependencies."

every decade.[98]

Paradoxically, when the Qing rulers redesigned territorial divisions according to their political agendas, this marked the rise of Mongol ethnic consciousness, as well as the beginning of Mongol decline.[99] Interestingly, the reification of tribes through their attachments to parcels of land as well as their management under particular organs such as the *Lifanyuan* and legal codes that would apply only to Mongolian territories,[100] crystallized their identity, but simultaneously jeopardized their very existence as a pastoralist ethnic group, which relied on fluidity and movement across space. Rawski reports that "Qing bureaucratic administration broke down the traditional lifestyle of pastoral populations in the peripheries."[101] Specifically, population movements were strictly regulated under the *Menggu lüli*, which enhanced the power of the elite over commoners. The territories were divided into leagues (*Meng* 盟, or *ayimagh*), which were further divided into banners (*qi* 旗 or *qosighus*). Di Cosmo points that the number of banners more than doubled between 1691 and 1765, which indicates the Qing's success in fragmenting Mongol territories, in order to generate optimal territorial units that were prevented from unifying as tribes through warfare, while also closely regulating their break-up into ever

98 Patrick Taveirne, *Han-Mongol Encounters and Missionary Endeavors: A History of Scheut in Ordos (Hetao) 1874-1911* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 81.

99 Khan, "From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero," 256.

100 The *Menggu lüli* 蒙古律例 (Mongol Statutes and Precedents) was the legal code that the Qing government used with respect to the Mongolian territories. It was promulgated by the Qianlong Emperor in 1766. See Taveirne, *Han-Mongol Encounters,* 83.

101 Rawski, "Reenvisioning the Qing," 836.

smaller units.[102]

The powers of the Banner leaders were not only strictly regulated and circumscribed by the Qing, but the movement of population across banners was also cautiously guarded. According to the *Mongol Statutes and Precedents*, people who needed to travel to other banners (administrative divisions) to visit relatives were required to request permission from local elites, and a leader had to accompany groups of ten or more.[103] For unauthorized incursions outside of one's assigned banner, nobles faced various fines and commoners risked the loss of herds.[104] The restriction of movement involved tight control of Han immigration, since the Qing sought to "keep the fighting spirit of the Mongol unadulterated by contact with the 'soft' Chinese."[105] Indeed, the Qing relied heavily on the Mongol supply of horses, which greatly benefited their military conquests. Therefore, the settling strategy of the Manchus differed greatly from the policies they implemented in Xinjiang, which had to host military settlers, who were to cultivate the land to provide a steady supply of grain to military troops. Furthermore, the Qing rulers also anticipated eventual social instability should the Han Chinese engage in predatory mercantilism and usurious money lending in Mongol territories. As Schlesinger argues, "the Qing state… worked constantly to keep people within the Empire in touch with their roots: Manchus with

102 Di Cosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia," 300-301.

103 *Menggu lüli* 蒙古律例 [Mongol Statutes and Precedents] (Haikou: Hainan chubanshe, 2000), article 109.

104 *Menggu lüli* 蒙古律例, article 13.

105 Di Cosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia," 302.

Manchuria, Mongols with Mongolia, and Han with China."[106]

According to Rossabi, the Qing were fairly successful in controlling Chinese immigration to Manchuria until the nineteenth century.[107] However, it must be noted that the Mongols themselves were in favour of Chinese penetration and set up mechanisms for circumventing the law. Indeed, Mongol princes received substantial rents from the Chinese tenants who farmed their land. Furthermore, the Mongols sought to ape the way of life of the Manchus—their rulers— characterized by the exploitation of Chinese.[108] Ironically, while the Manchu policy was designed to preserve "Mongol-ness," the Mongol elite sabotaged the policy at the expense of the Mongol society. Recent scholarly work on the social organization of the Mongols seriously questioned the unity of the commoners and the nobles as a culturally unified group. Indeed, Sneath's study shows how the Mongol elite perceived itself as a different blood line than the commoners. The legitimacy of the elite came from the claim of common descent from Ghenghis Khan.[109] However, Atwood argues that "most Mongols up to the very eve of the Republic then defined 'Mongol' not simply as an ethnic group, but as a realm or country, which even without a unified independent government retained distinctive language, customs, and political institutions

106 Jonathan Schlesinger, "The Qing Invention of Nature: Environment and Identity in Northeast China and Mongolia, 1750-1850" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), 27.

107 Morris Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia: From 1368 to the Present Day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 194.

108 That resonates with the economist Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class.* The former University of Chicago professor argued that emulation and predation drive economic life. See Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Mondern Library, 1934). He is cited in Hervé Kemph, *Comment les riches détruisent la planète* (Paris : Seuil, 2007), 76.

109 See Sneath, *The Headless State.*

focused on Chinggis Khan and the Mongol nobility."[110] Therefore, despite the genealogical divide between the ruling class and the commoners, the Mongols still had a sense of commonality that contrasted with the Han Chinese who were referred to as *Khitad* in the Mongolian language.[111]

Although the number of agricultural colonies in Mongolia became significant in the eighteenth century, they had begun during the early Qing in the regions bordering Manchuria, and then expanded in the South and the Eastern regions, such as Jirim league (*Zhelimu* 哲里木), the most north-eastern league that borders the provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang. As Sneath reports, "it became increasingly profitable and common for the ruling nobles of the banner to sell or mortgage prime land to agriculturalists for profit."[112] Rossabi inventories the types of immigrants that entered Manchuria in the nineteenth century: merchants; individuals looking for ginseng, fur, and gold; and peasants driven off their land by famine, high taxes, and natural disasters.[113] The soldiers in charge of enforcing the anti-migration laws accepted bribes. To fund its costly and lengthy campaign against the Taiping Rebellion, the Qing government even collected money for the sales of Manchurian land to the Chinese. Hence, the Mongols progressively lost their freedom of movement by having to deal with increasing numbers of Han

110 Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes,* 38.

111 Ibid.

112 David Sneath, "Competing Factions and Elite Power: Political Conflict in Inner Mongolia," in *Conflict and Social Order in Tibet and Inner Asia*, ed. Fernanda Pirie and Toni Huber (Boston: Brill, 2008), 90.

113 Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia*, 87.

migrants whose presence threatened their pastoralist livelihood. Furthermore, the thirst for Chinese goods among Mongols, which had fuelled numerous raids and military campaigns for two millennia, only worsened. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced a new pattern of commodity acquisition: the Mongol elite accumulated huge debts through trade with Chinese merchants, so that by the nineteenth century, most of the Mongol nobles were deeply in debt.[114] This promoted a proto-capitalist economy, in which the nobles needed to extract surplus from the herds in order to repay their debts. This mode of livestock exploitation further differentiated them from small herders who relied on a subsistence-based strategy of production.

Regarding political administration, the Manchu authorities established Chinese administrative units in Mongol territories such as *fu* 府，*xian* 縣， *zhou* 州，*ting* 廳 as a pretext for controlling the Chinese population. The state was extending its presence on the frontier and facilitating peasant colonization. More precisely, these offices were in charge of the tax collection on private farmlands. In reality, the Manchus were increasing their political control over Mongol territories and weakening Mongol leadership.[115] These settlements could be understood in the light of Shepherd's study of how the Qing government sought to balance borderland security, administrative control, and revenue extraction in Taiwan. Indeed, the author sees that considering the fiscal burden of establishing state presence in remote territories, new

114 Sneath, "Spatial Mobility and Inner Asian Pastoralism," 225.

115 Jachid, *Essays in Mongolian Studies*, 208.

lands were colonized only if they were of strategic importance for the empire.[116] In the case of migrations to Manchuria, the cost of administration far exceeded the tax revenues, which means that "China Proper" was subsidizing settlements in Manchuria until the last decade of the Qing Dynasty.[117]

The pattern of Han immigration intensified during the twentieth century and led numerous authors to predict that Mongols would disappear in the near future. By the end of the nineteenth century, a new phase of Chinese emigration began, in which the Manchus promoted Chinese immigration into Mongol territories. This corresponded with the establishment of the Qing New Policies *Qing xinzheng* 请新政, which followed the failed Boxer Rebellion in 1900. From 1901 to the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911, these new policies first aimed at restructuring the Qing administrative organs and then to "foster citizenship and popular participation in governance."[118] The policies also attempted to develop industry and trade in order to revive the Qing power. Indeed, chambers of commerce were established across the empire, which promoted the interests of the businessmen, a "new interest group recognized by the state."[119] With this ultimate effort to save the Qing Empire, new economic, education, and military offices were created in Mongol territories, which took political power away from the Mongol princes and put

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116 John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 408.

117 Mills Isett, *State, Peasants, and Merchants*, 31.

118 William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 258.

119 Ibid, 259. See also Douglas R. Reynolds, *China, 1895-1912 State Sponsored Reforms and China's Late-Qing Revolution* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 102-103.

it in the hands of the Manchu and Han administrators.[120] Furthermore, the new pro-trade policies promoted Han immigration and freedom for Chinese merchants in Mongol territories. Facing pressure along the Russian frontier, the Manchus indeed gave up protecting Mongol territories and let hordes of Han migrants enter South Mongolia to make the territory more densely populated and, ideally, to prevent invasion from the North. This produced significant demographic insecurity, which sparked several rebellions such as the Barga rebellion in 1911-1912 and the Jasakto Khan uprising from 1911-1913.[121]

Moreover, Han money-lenders gained a financial grip over Mongol nobles who borrowed heavily and often had to sell their land to their Han creditors, leaving the commoners landless and impoverished. As a result, landless people immigrated to the urban centers, became bandits, or joined Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. But that did not happen without resistance: between 1891 and 1930, numerous Mongol rebellions erupted. Commoners led some against Mongol nobles; Mongol princes themselves led others against the onslaught of Chinese immigration that was exerting considerable pressure on the local population. According to Sneath, the failure of the existing social order to resist the Chinese land grab became the impetus for Mongol revolutionary movements.[122]

These circumstances help explain the indelible mark that the Qing Empire left on the

120 Xiaoyuan Liu, *Reins of Liberation: An Entangled Story of Mongolian Independence, Chinese Territoriality, and Great Power Hegemony, 1911-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 8.

121 Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria,* 119.

122 Sneath, "Competing Factions and Elite Power," 92.

Mongol people. Pamela Crossley further argues that a "durable notion of coherent Mongol identity" within a non-Mongol Empire made both the Qing Empire and the People's Republic of China possible.[123] Yet, she overlooks the impact of this Mongol identity on the Mongols themselves. I argue not only that ethnic boundaries were imposed; but, most importantly, in defining certain ethnic boundaries, the Manchu rulers became the "genitors" of the Mongol ethnic identity. This is the foundation of the ethnogenesis of the Mongols by the Manchus. The notion of Mongol identity established during the Qing was not consistent with pre-Qing Mongol social organization. Although it served the Qing and the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Qing-created Mongol identity compromised the very survival of the Mongols within the PRC, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and any non-Mongol state. Indeed, the restriction of pastoral movement caused a fundamental disruption in the pastoral livelihood, given that herding Mongols relied on the freedom to move for their very survival. Most importantly, the fixity of territories, people, and boundaries replaced the fluidity that had characterized the Inner Asian people before the Qing. While the Qing administration created "Mongol" identity and fostered nationalism, its measures deprived Mongols of the agency to self-determine and to organize their social structure, and created a nationality doomed to forfeit its social and cultural defining features.

According to Benedict Anderson, all communities are imagined. Furthermore, the boundary-making process is a crucial component of the imagination of communities since it

123 Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, *Empire at the Margins*, 79.

positions the limits of that community and organizes it as a finite unit.[124] Yet, they should be distinguished by the *style* in which they are imagined.[125] And I would add *by whom* they are imagined. In other words, the agency of the members of a given community to imagine themselves as a community, a community's constituent elements, and its boundaries is of utmost importance to the long-term survival of the community. This does not mean that a community shaped by "outside" forces cannot endure. Rather, the reduced agency in the self-determination of a given community implies that the community depends on an imagination that has its own motives. And these motives can include the very destruction of that community in the worst case. Consequently, a minority group's reliance on a powerful ruling group to define itself strengthens its "ethnic consciousness," but simultaneously locates the power of identity-making in the hands of the powerful group, who can align the ethnic-making process according to its own interests that may be antagonistic to the interests of the minority group. Hence, the study of "ethnic consciousness" also has to take into consideration the loss of agency of "ethnic" groups in determining the parameters of their "ethnicity." In the case of Chinese Mongols, the resurgence of their ethnic consciousness as Mongols came with the sacrifice the fluidity of identity, which was a defining feature of their social organization.

In their effort to deconstruct the myth of sinicization, scholars of ethnic minorities have thoroughly emphasized how ethnic minorities are alive and kicking in contemporary China, how

124 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 7.

125 Ibid, 6.

"ethnic consciousness" developed, how an ethnographic survey successfully created categories that mapped contemporary ethnicity.[126] But while cultural anthropologists and historians seem all too happy to find "cultures," they often overlook the loss of cultural fluidity that comes with the fixity of cultural "definitions." Indeed, accentuated fluidity undermines the very concept of "culture," since it threatens the process of categorization that is inherent to scholarly work. To be sure, clear-cut boundaries are desired by the rulers of empires, makers of states, social engineers, and researchers whose work depends on their ability to describe social and cultural boundaries. I believe the devastating impact of imposed rigid boundaries has been overlooked in the literature. Similarly, national boundaries have so colonized our imagination that phenomena that are not anchored in nation states are nearly impossible to examine.

Studies of the Mongols of China are characterized by a plethora of failed, contradicting, ephemera and enduring attempts to construct boundaries. Qing imperial rule illustrates the long-lasting impacts of a series of attempts to circumscribe, define, and restrain the movements of a population, thus replacing indigenous fluidity with territorial and ethnic boundaries. The long-lasting impact of such policies will further be explored in the following chapter, which shows how Mongols were subsumed into the Chinese nation-state.

126 Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation;* Gladney, *Muslim Chinese;* Harrell, *Cultural Encounters.*

CHAPTER 2 NATION AND NATIONALITY BUILDING

The making of nations, on the one hand, involves tracing national boundaries, and on the other, making the populations of nations homogeneous—or quasi-homogeneous. There is a fundamental contradiction in the shift from empires to nation-states. On the one hand, empires are driven by the desire for expansion and tend to push out their frontiers by annexing a wide variety of people and territories.[127] When nation-states progressively replace imperial institutions, the borders that were previously set by the empires are appropriated by the nation-states, and theoretically the state's boundaries should always be congruent with those of the nation.[128] As Ernst Gellner further states, the condition that nations and states should be coterminous is fairly recent as history abounds with cases of culturally plural societies.[129] Rooted in empires, most contemporary Inner Asian nations, like most nations of the world, obviously do not meet this condition. In other words, new nations are caught up in the Leviathan of Empire dating from the early modern period. This inadequacy consequently generates a great deal of anxiety for rulers who are caught in the tumultuous transition between empire and nation-state.

Rather, this is to say that in China, nation-building coincided with state-building during the Republican period as a means of bringing the two closely into line. Indeed, Sun Yat-sen first

127 We also might recall considerable efforts were also invested in keeping the subjects within the empires.

128 This condition was enunciated by Ernest Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

129 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55.

asserted the claim that the Han ethnic group comprised 95% of China's population in an effort to unify people of "China" against the decaying Manchus through the construction of ethnic nationalism. To support this ethno-racial discourse, the myth of common Han descent was revived, and this new nationalism was used against the Manchus, the Western invaders, and the Japanese.[130] The present chapter will review Inner Mongolia's transition from an imperial possession to a province within the Chinese nation state.

Han-Chinese nationalism stemmed from the disillusion with a "decadent" Manchu government that failed to prevent Western invasions. Accordingly, the initial Republican slogan was **"**expel the Tartar Barbarians, revive Zhonghua, establish a Republic, and distribute land equally among the people" (驅除韃虜, 恢復中華, 創立民國, 平均地權 *quchu Dalu, huifu Zhonghua, chuangli Minghu, pingjun diquan*).[131] Not surprisingly, this slogan proved to be unpopular in minority areas, especially among Mongols who felt threatened by this anti-non-Han campaign. As a result, the slogan was revised, and a commonwealth of the five peoples (Han, Manchus, Mongols, Muslims, and Tibetans) was promoted. However, in on-the-ground policies, the stream of settlers into Mongol areas increased, and the political power of the local Mongols dwindled. Furthermore, in their *Outline of Nation Building*, the nationalists stated that they would support the "small" (*xiao* 小) and "weak" (*ruo* 弱) minority people, help them to

130 Kai-Wing Chow, "Imagining Boundaries of Blood: Zhang Binglin and the Invention of the Han Race in Modern China," in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 35; Werner Meissner, "China's Search for Cultural and National Identity from the Nineteenth Century to the Present," *China Perspectives* 68 (2006): 11.

131 Zhongyue Xu 徐中約, *Zhongguo jindai shi* 中國近代史 [The Modern History of China] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe,1980), Volume 1, 468.

self-govern and self-determine and protect them against foreign invasions.[132] This statement encompasses two contradictory ideas: 1) minorities are weaker and need the "Han"; and 2) they should be self-governing and exercise self-determination. Not unexpectedly, the need for self-determination was overshadowed by Han control and domination of minority areas. Indeed, the fear of the fragmentation of the territory, along with the need to support their claim to legitimacy, oriented the Republican policies, which ended up not being aligned with the needs of local populations. The Republican era was catastrophic for Mongols, with the increasing flow of Chinese migrants into their land. Indeed, the Republican government promoted emigration to Inner Mongolia in order to secure the frontier, or to make the area more "Chinese," and thus easier to manage. The Chinese Eastern Railway opened in 1903, and the South Manchuria Railway became operational in 1907.[133] That provided a means of transporting grain over great distances and fostered Chinese settlement far beyond its previous reach. The leagues of Hulunbuir and Jirim were particularly affected by Han migration.

While Han immigration is a recurrent theme in scholarly work on the history of Mongolia, the presence of significant numbers of Korean immigrants is often overlooked. And yet, the Korean population in Manchuria increased from 110,000 to 1.4 million between 1910 and 1940.[134] They were further recognized by the Communist Government as an ethnic minority, the

132 Sun Yat-Sen, "Jianguo dagang," 建國大綱 [Fundamentals of National Reconstruction] (Taipei: Chinese Cultural Service, 1953), Article 4.

133 Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria*, 99.

134 Edward Taehan Chang, "Chosonjok Koreans in China," *Amerasia Journal* 29, no. 3 (2003): 39.

Chaoxian zu 朝鲜族, and they have been able to preserve their lifestyle until now in contemporary Inner Mongolia. The Japanese Empire also created a "migration machine" in its attempt to colonize Manchuria. From 1937-1945, 200,000 immigrants moved from Japan to Manchuria, a significant number, but far from the official target of nine million.[135]

The declaration of Outer Mongolia's independence coincided with the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. Although it is often claimed that the fall of the Qing empire broke the link between China and Mongolia, the Mongol princes in fact declared independence before the Chinese revolution in 1911, which indicates that the foundation of the Mongol People's Republic was not a spontaneous opportunistic gesture in a moment of political instability, but was planned before the Wuchang Uprising, which in October 1911 brought an end to two millennia of imperial rule.[136]

The division of Inner and Outer Mongolia is rooted in age-old tribal rivalries. As Lattimore notes, the reluctance of Inner Mongol princes to submit to the ruling class of Outer Mongolia is one of the factors perpetuating their separation, despite several attempts by revolutionary parties to reunite both sides. Also, economic interdependence with China created a disincentive for Mongol princes who were afraid of losing trade revenues if Inner Mongolia were to divorce itself from China. Furthermore, as Lattimore mentions, at that point the Inner Mongols

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135 Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 394-395. See also Charles Armstrong, *The Koreas* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 66.

136 Liu, *Reins of Liberation*, 7.

had not anticipated the devastating impact of railways and modern weapons, two new Western technologies that would severely threaten their power from within the Chinese state.[137]

Historians from Inner Mongolia have emphasized the agency of individual actors in influencing early twentieth century Inner Asia's complex geopolitics. Indeed, based on local archival material, Inner Mongol scholar Bailadugeqi shows that the eventuality of liberation from the Chinese grip was nothing less than plausible for Inner Mongolia, and the conundrum of the Mongol princes' rivalries, alliances, treacheries and betrayals contributed to the failure of the Russian-Buriat attempts to engulf East Mongolia.[138] Indeed, the Buriat Mongol Peter Badmayev (Bademayefu 巴德玛耶夫) had actively promoted Russian support for Mongol insurrections against the weak Qing and advocated arming Mongols in the Hulunbuir area. He had also called for bringing Tibet under Russian control by fostering diplomatic ties between the Dalai Lama and Russia.[139] In the spheres of culture and education, he founded the Mongolian language journal *Life on the Eastern Frontier* as well as a school in the city of Chita, in Southern Russia. Among the Mongols who moved to Chita was Fuhai 阜海（also referred to as Laxiduandebu 拉西端德布）, along with his father Fu Desheng 阜德胜, who both came from the Keerqin Middle Banner. Fuhai then worked as a translator for the Russian embassy in Ulaanbaatar. His position

137 Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria*, 100.

138 Bailadugeqi 白拉都格其, "Fuhai yu Qingmo Minchu Neimenggu dongbu zhengju bianhua" 阜海与清末民初内蒙古东部政局变化 [Fuhai and the Changes in the Late Qing to Early Republican Eastern Inner Mongolia], *Neimenggu daxue xuebao* 1 (1997): 16-24.

139 John Kenneth Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 3.

as a middleman gave him significant power in terms of access to information, which he used against the Mongol revolutionary movements in support of the Qing court and the Republican government.[140]

Bailadugeqi further documents the efforts of the Mongol prince Wu Tai 乌泰 to promote resistance against the Qing and Republican governments. Wu Tai (1866-1929) was from Jirim League 哲里木盟, Kezuoqian banner 科左前旗. Of princely descent, he occupied official positions in the Mongol administration: he was vice-governor of the Jirim League in 1881. He borrowed significant sums from the Russians to foment revolution in Eastern Mongolia. On repeated occasions, Fuhai reported Wuhai's activities to the Qing court, using his translator position to leak information about Mongol unrest. The basis of Fuhai's interest in sabotaging his peers' attempts to gain independence through alliances with the Buriats and the Tsar remains unclear. Yet, we know that Bailadugeqi describes Fuhai as the "first Mongol capitalist entrepreneur." After leaving his translator position, he worked as an intermediary in selling and renting land to Chinese migrants, as well as in a wood-cutting business. After the fall of the Qing, Han immigration continued and Wutai actively prepared for the Hulunbuir protest. Fuhai again betrayed him by reporting these preparations to the Republican government.

The story of Fuhai and Wutai illustrates the fierceness of some Mongol princes in their revolutionary efforts, which faced not only Qing and Republican governmental opposition, but that of other Mongol princes and officials who were vested in profit-making from the sale of land

140 Bailadugeqi 白拉都格其, "Fuhai yu Qingmo Minchu Neimenggu dongbu zhengju bianhua" 16-24.

and aggrandizement of political status through alliances with the Chinese ruling class.

The continuing Chinese control over Eastern Inner Mongolia had dramatic influence on the transformation of landscape and demography, with the uninterrupted flow of Han migrants, except when it slowed down during the Cultural Revolution. It led more to conflicts over land, than to ethnic struggles, as Sneath puts it.[141] In other words, it cannot be simplified as a struggle between Mongols and Manchus, or between Mongols and Han Chinese. It opposed groups that sought to convert pasture lands into agricultural settlement, on the one hand, and those who favored conserving grasslands as pastures, on the other. Nor can it be simplified as a conflict between Mongol nobles seeking profits from renting or selling land and commoners resisting eviction, because many Mongol princes took part in or even led some Mongol rebellions. Further, I argue that casting this conflict as one over land ownership is equally misleading, because of the significant divergence in the concept of property and ownership among agricultural settlers and pastoralist populations. The Mongol struggle does not adhere to geographical, class or ethnic lines. It eluded contemporary categorization and has continued to underpin tensions into contemporary times.

The reengineering of territorial divisions was a centerpiece of Republican state-building strategies. Indeed, the Republican government promptly replaced the Qing administrative divisions with new "Chinese-like" territorial divisions and systematically put Mongol land under Chinese jurisdiction.

141 Sneath, "Competing Factions and Elite Power," 90.

Yuan Shikai divided the Inner Mongol territory into three military divisions. Furthermore, in Mongol areas, the Meng (leagues), and the Qi (banners), were replaced by prefectures 府 *fu*, sub-prefectures 厅 *ting*, departments 州 *zhou*, and counties 縣 *xian.* In the Keerqin banners, this created three prefectures, one department, three sub-prefectures, and 12 counties.[142] In other words, Republican efforts concentrated on displacing the internal boundaries that had prevailed in Qing Mongolia in order to enhance their ascendency over the groups that populated this territory. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the secession of Outer Mongolia, the Republican government further promoted Han-Chinese immigration into pasture lands, in order to dilute Mongol populations and prevent further "disintegration" of the "Chinese territories" that were being claimed. In response, Mongols started to occupy and cultivate the land in order to *couper l'herbe sous le pied des Hans,* as a means of resistance against Han penetration. However, these acts of resistance generated land-booms in 1916-19 and 1926-28, which were intensified by famine and civil war in Mainland China. In 1929, the assimilationist Republican Government reorganized the territory into four regular Chinese provinces: Ningxia, Suiyuan, Chahar and Jehol.

In 1931-1932, Manchuria came under Japanese control. This put the Mongols of Manchuria again in a key position vis-à-vis the Japanese ascendancy over China. Indeed, the Mongols populating the Russo-China border zone were highly important strategically, due to

142 Zhou Jinghong, "Qingmo Minguo shiqi Neimenggu diqu zhengqu guanli tizhi bianqian ji dui Mengguzu de yingxiang" 清末民国时期内蒙古地区政区管理体制变迁及对蒙古族的影响 [The Changes in Regional Administration and their Influence on Ethnic Mongolians in the Late Qing and Republican Period], *Zhongyang minzu daxue xuebao* 31, no. 6 (2004): 44.

military friction between Russia and Japan. Furthermore, 40% of Manchuria consisted of Mongol lands still controlled by Mongol princes.[143] Therefore, the Japanese sought to gain Mongol support by promising independence and supporting Mongol nationalism. In 1933, they created the autonomous "Inner Mongolia" province within Manchuguo. The Japanese continued to support the Mongol push for independence; and in 1938, a Mongol autonomous government was established under the rule of Prince Demchugdomrug, even while Chinese warlords still controlled the western part. Further, this government was called "Mengjiang" 蒙疆. Although the Mengjiang's Autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia was originally intended to be a puppet state that would serve the Japanese interests, it gained the support of Mongols in their struggle against the Republican assimilationist policies.[144] In reality, the Japanese sought to replace the Chinese mercantile domination with their own, by expelling Chinese merchants and strengthening Japanese control over the Inner Mongol economy.

As Soviet forces successfully drove the Japanese out of Manchuria in 1945, the Japanese sponsored an East Mongol Autonomous government, organized and led by Khafungga, an intellectual from the Keerqin banner. Although Lattimore argues that the Mongols of Manchuria were caught between the prospect of forming alliances with the Khalkas of the Mongolian People's Republic and forming alliances with China, the possibility of an independent Eastern Mongol state could not be ruled out. The weak political position of the East Mongol

143 Li Narangoa, "Educating Mongols and Making Citizens of Manchukuo," *Inner Asia* 3 (2001): 102.

144 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia,* 14.

Autonomous government, however, enabled Ulanhu, a high-ranking member of the Chinese Communist Party, to gain the support of a significant number of Mongol nationalists. Ulanhu, also called Yun Ze, had been a member of the Chinese Communist Party since 1925. Originally from Tumed, Western Mongolia, he fought the Japanese and became a senior figure at the Minority Institute of Shanxi, and worked for the development of communist policies toward minorities. He would later climb the ladder of the CCP's politburo to become the vice-premier of the People's Republic of China in 1954. He effectively brought most of the Inner Mongol territory under the Communist government by obtaining the support of independent Mongol nationalists. In the meantime, while the Communists were courting indigenous support, the Kuomintang (KMT) government sought the aid of the United States, against the Soviet and the Communist Party, to win over Manchuria.[145] However, while Ulanhu had successfully annexed the north-eastern territories to the Inner Mongol Autonomous administration, the KMT lacked a strong Mongol nationalist support base and eventually lost the Civil War. Ulanhu was able to further annex territories to the new Inner Mongol Autonomous region, so that by 1955, Suiyuan and Jehol were incorporated. However, this diluted the proportion of the ethnic Mongol population considerably, dropping from 35% in 1949 to 12% in 1955.[146] The massive Mongol support for the Communists came with the CCP's promise of independence and right of secession for minority nationalities, which the CCP had formulated in 1930.

145 Rossabi, *China and Inner Asia,* 261.

146 Christopher Pratt Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 249.

These rights were dropped in 1938, however, and Mongol autonomy was further eroded by increasing Han immigration and decreasing political representation of Mongols.[147] On May 1st, 1947, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was established, governed by Ulanhu. The 1954 PRC constitution emphasized the idea of China as a "multinational unified country" (统一的多民族的国家 *tongyi de duo minzu de guojia*).[148] The promises of self-determination, autonomy or independence were replaced by calls for "appropriate political representation."[149] Meanwhile, Ulanhu was lobbying to temper the socialist policies and adapt them to the Inner Mongolian reality.

First, the Communist land reforms were carried out with wide regional discrepancies in Inner Mongolia. The "democratic reforms" *minzhu gaige* 民主改革 that were implemented in 1947-1948 involved the redistribution of animals to the ones who herded them. As a result, some animal owners preferred slaughtering most of their beasts or giving them to their relatives over handing them to the "poor."[150] The receivers of animals would equally fear persecutions and consume them *en masse.* This caused a dramatic loss of animals in pastoralist areas.[151] As a result, violent rebellions broke out in Ulanmod Township in Hinggan League: two hundred rebels killed cadres and tried to flee to the Mongolian People's Republic. Fearing for the stability

147 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia*, 62-63.

148 The 1954 Chinese Constitution, Article 3.

149 The 1954 Chinese Constitution, Article 68, 各有关民族都应当有适当名额的代表.

150 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia*, 63-64;

151 Uradyn E. Bulag, "From Inequality to Difference: Colonial Contradictions of Class and Ethnicity in 'Socialist' China," *Cultural Studies* 14 (2010): 544.

of the region, the CCP then adopted more lenient policies for Inner Mongolia. Ulanhu also called for a softer approach and obtained a special status for Mongolian regions that allowed people to have their animals herded by others. Namely, in 1948, the leader proposed a policy of the 三不两利 *san bu liang li* (three nos and two benefits), which stipulated that there would be no class struggle, no redistribution of property, and no class labelling in Inner Mongolia. A symbiotic relation between herdsmen and landlords was put forward, which contrasted with the policies that were implemented in the Chinese agrarian regions.[152] As argued by Bulag, the successful demarcation of the Mongol territory and the winning of a special status for pastoralists that enabled them to pursue their customary land use warranted a boundary between the pastoralist Mongols and the Han Chinese.[153]

People's communes started to be introduced in 1958 in Inner Mongolia. These units included 650 households on average, which is significantly less than the average communes in the rest of China that counted 5,000 households.[154] The development of haymaking areas to feed the animals during the winter was promoted by the second five-Year Plan. A work-point system was also implemented, but Sneath reports that due to the shortage of financial resources in local party branches, the points were seldom converted into *Yuan.*[155] In sum, by the end of the Great Leap Forward, Inner Mongolian society underwent major reorganization. However, as argued by

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid, 547.

154 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia,* 81.

155 Ibid, 94.

Sneath, "a whole series of fundamental aspects of Mongolian society had been retained. The actual operation of the pastoral household and encampment, its division of labour, the symbolic ordering of domestic space; all helped provide the frameworks for pastoral life and were not radically altered."[156]

Ulanhu's efforts towards the autonomy of Inner Mongolia within Communist China were brought to an end at the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. The Inner Mongolia Revolutionary Committee, led by Teng Haiqing accused Ulanhu and his partisans of organizing a separatist party, the Neirendang 内人党 (Inner Mongolia People's Party), presumably aiming at splitting Inner Mongolia from China and annexing it to the Mongolian People's Republic. Ulanhu and his supporters were purged in 1966-67. Simultaneously, the CCP launched the extremely violent anti-Neirendang movement. According to the official statistics, 346,000 people were identified as Neirendang members, 16,222 people were killed, 120,000 were tortured, injured, or crippled, and over one million were affected by the campaign.[157] Or, in Philip Salzman's words, one of three Mongols were humiliated by Red Guards during the Neirendang inquisition.[158] However, in 1979, an investigation led by the Inner Mongolian Party Committee demonstrated that the Neirendang no longer existed at the time of the Cultural Revolution.[159]

156 Ibid, 95.

157 Enze Han, "The Dog that Hasn't Barked: Assimilation and Resistance in Inner Mongolia," *Asian Ethnicity* 12, no. 1 (2011): 58.

158 Philip Salzman, "The Great Chinese Grasslands and the Fate of Their Pastoral People" (Paper presented at the Department of Anthropology Speaker Series, McGill University, Montreal, Oct. 21, 2013).

159 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia*, 111.

Overall, in Mao's era, institutions were dramatically transformed, political power shifted hands, and religious establishments were brought down. The Taiji—noble families who ruled over certain territories—lost their privileges and their authority, as the communist state assumed authority. The effects of this revolution varied considerably by region and depended on conditions before the communist takeover. For example, some informants recalled that the Borjigids Taiji of Maodaotu sum, Beizihaorao gacha named Baoshaoye held tens of thousands of horses at the beginning of the twentieth century. He became addicted to opium and expensive imported cigarettes, which he traded for horses and other animals with Chinese merchants.[160] By the communist era, he had become poor and was spared from the persecutions that rich land owners were subjected to. His fall began before the communist revolution and his loss of political power only reinforced his loss of legitimacy vis-à-vis the Mongol populace. Other rich owners in the area who commoners had respected were also spared from humiliating treatment and were allocated a "middle class" position according to the new communist social hierarchy. Moreover, the ownership of animals and the land-based jurisdiction of the elite continued to be respected by commoners, despite communist efforts to redistribute land and livestock.

Overall, the transition from empire to nation-state was a painful and violent experience for the people of Inner Mongolia. Although at first they retained some agency and could effectively adapt the CCP's policies to their pastoralist livelihood, the repression of the Cultural Revolution

160 According to David Bello, "opium had reached far into the Chinese interior by the early 1830s." David Bello, "Opium in Xinjiang and Beyond," in *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1852*, ed. Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 129.

instilled a climate of fear.[161] However, Sneath documents that the activities of the Cultural Revolution did not have a significant impact on the livestock totals, which indicates that the grazing patterns were not significantly disrupted despite the political turmoil.[162] Indeed, while communist ideology promoted a production-oriented rapport with land and nature, commoners did not benefit from the increase in the animal population, because they were prohibited from consuming the meat. Most of the surplus went to the government, which used at least some of it to pay back debts to the Soviet Union. As a result, the population did not internalize a productivist logic. They kept herding as usual and became animal rich, but, ironically, felt poorer than ever. In other words, the shift in rapport with the land promoted by the central state did not translate into a transformation of the local people's rapport with the land. It merely represented a shift in the way labor surplus was extracted from the population. If, prior to the communist revolution, the monasteries and rich families managed to appropriate the surplus that common people generated by herding the animals for them, the communist government replaced the local elite in that role thereafter. Indeed, the communist reforms were a lethal blow to the privileges of the noble families that claimed descent from Genghis Khan. However, we can still observe that, although the power structure shifted when the communes were introduced, this change in the social hierarchy barely affected the pastoralist livelihood. Cash cropping had not yet replaced raising livestock for subsistence and animal migrations still occurred on a large scale. Herders

161 Williams documents the "residual fear" that the Inner Mongolian pastoralists still feel in the post-Mao era. See Williams, *Beyond Great Walls*, 88.

162 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia*, 124.

were situated in settlements established in the center of communes, but their mobility did not decrease, as herds supervised by specialist herders continued to migrate as they had historically.[163]

This is not to downplay the profound impacts of Mao's attempt to conquer nature in a military fashion by building dams, encouraging population growth, deforesting for the purpose of well-making, hunting down animals and birds, decimating plant life, etc. Judith Shapiro's study shows how these destructive policies that involved political repression and dogmatism had profound repercussions on Chinese society and ecology and on people's rapport with the land: "Maoism constructed a world that pitted humans against nature, and inculcated this world view among the people through repression, indoctrination, utopian promises, and censorship."[164] Furthermore, Mao vigorously promoted the transformation of natural environments to meet human needs. He aimed to marshal science to overcome nature, as he clearly stated: "If people living in nature want to be free, they will have to use natural sciences to understand, overcome and change nature; only then will they obtain freedom from nature."[165]

However, in Inner Mongolia, the war against nature took a different trajectory, since Mao's discourse was less tied to the pastoralist reality than to the agrarian social organization. Thus, in the context of the pastoralist population of Inner Mongolia, despite Mao's promotion of

163 Fernandez-Gimenez et al., *Restoring Community Connections to the Land*, 56.

164 Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War against Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 196.

165 Cited in Peter Ho, "Mao's War against Nature?," 37.

agriculture and grain cultivation, communist rule does not appear to have induced long-lasting changes in spatio-economic organization. As argued by Peter Ho, in the years following the implementation of the Grain-First policy, the areas of land cultivated in Inner Mongolia actually *decreased*.[166] Ho further shows that the number of animals actually increased during the Cultural Revolution, contrary to the commonly held beliefs that blame Mao's policies for the destruction of pastoral life.[167] According to Fernandez-Gimenez, "during this period, common property of grassland and animal husbandry did not have a huge effect on the grassland ecosystem."[168] I would argue that the containment of the "revolution" in the discursive and political realms explains this lack of change. In other words, Mao's reforms led to only minor changes in the organization of the territory and people's rapport with the landscape, focusing instead on the redistribution of power in society. Therefore, the impacts of the communist propaganda on Inner Mongolian territories were limited and people had yet to be "pitted against nature." Most of the economic activities endured until the introduction of market mechanisms in the post-Mao era. The next chapter will document these profound disruptions to the pastoralist livelihood that occurred in the last two decades of the twentieth century in the Tongliao region.

166 Ho, "Mao's War Against Nature?," 46.

167 Ibid, 47.

168 Ibid, 57.

CHAPTER 3 CULTURAL VERSUS TOPOMORPHIC REVOLUTION

Over the last three of decades, a "Topomorphic Revolution" has taken place in Inner Mongolia. Indeed, the dramatic transformations that the landscape has undergone have involved shifts from pastoralism to intensive agriculture, as well as massive desertification. The area of cropland has increased by 77% between 1992 and 2004.[169] Graph 1 shows the increase in the number of hectares cultivated between 1983 and 2010. Needless to say, these changes have significantly disrupted the social organization of pastoralist Mongols who constitute 15% of the province's population. Furthermore, the desert has been expanding at the astonishing rate of 3595 square kilometers per year.[170]

[169] Ranjeet John et al., "Land Cover/land Use Change in Semi-arid Inner Mongolia: 1992-2004," *Environmental Research Letters* 4, no. 4 (2009): 5.

[170] L.X. Zhang et al., "Energy Analysis of Cropping-grazing System in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China," *Energy Policy* 35, issue 7 (2007): 3843.

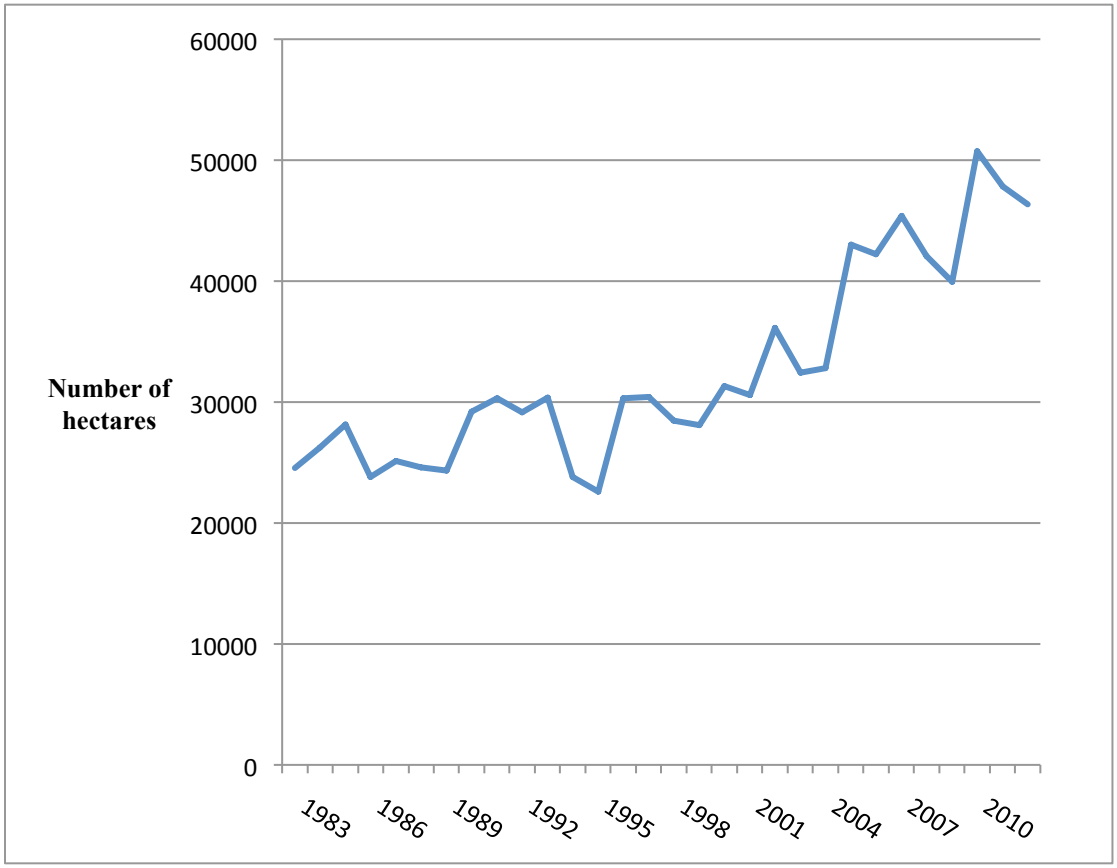


Figure 1: Hectares of Land under Cultivation in Inner Mongolia. Data Source: All China Data Center.

In the next section, I will review the events leading to the "topomorphic revolution," which had a profound impact on the pastoralist people populating the area. I will show that, contrary to popular belief, the communist revolution caused much less disruption to the social organization within the Tongliao region than the topomorphic revolution that took place during the post-Mao era. In my view, this is because the household responsibility system, through which land was fragmented and divided into private units, led to a profound transformation of the land. This reorganization of the land greatly disrupted pastoralist activities. I will argue that, paradoxically, the antagonistic relationship between humans and nature was created during the post-Mao era in

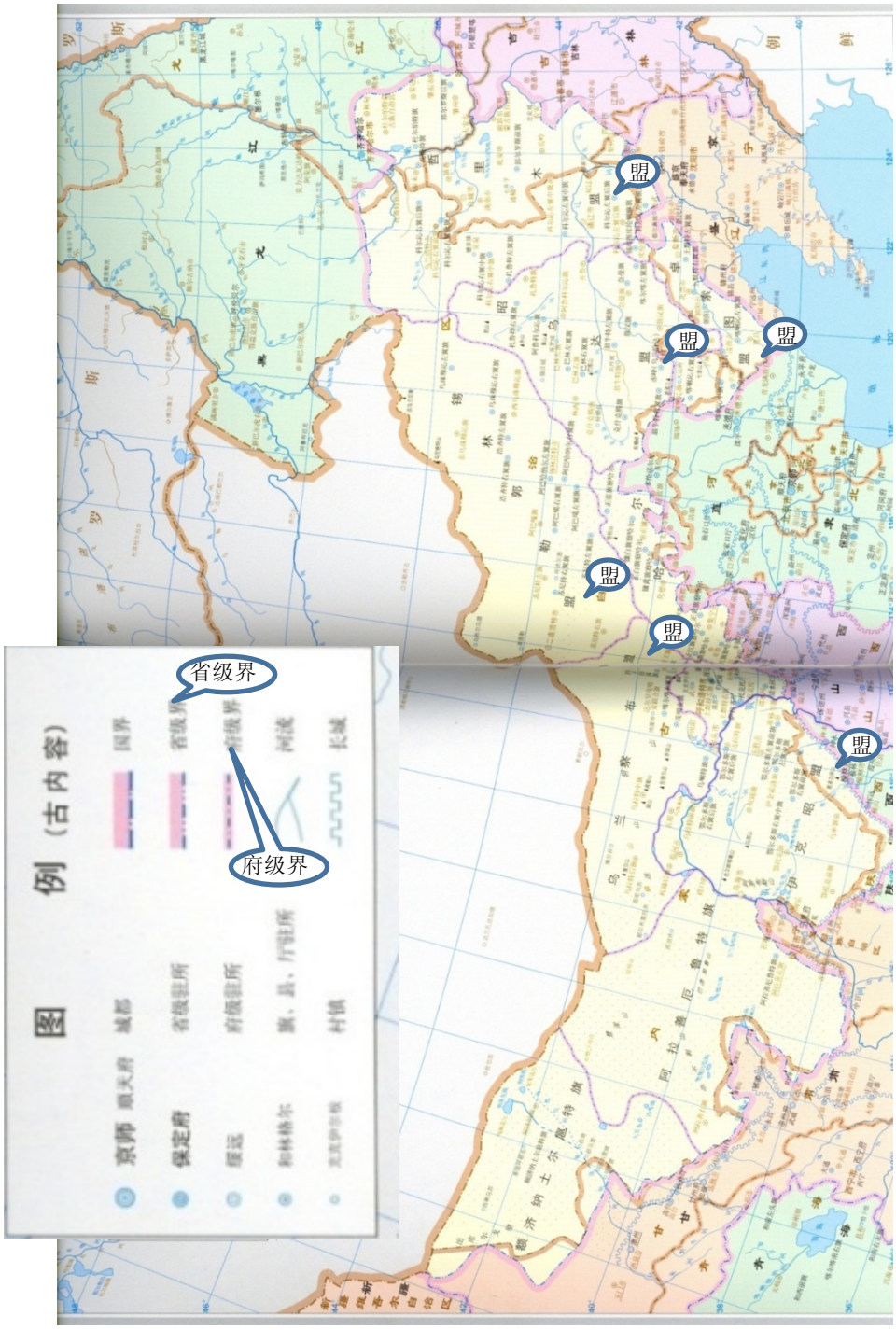
Inner Mongolia, in contrast to Shapiro who believes that it had happened under Mao's rule in "China proper."

I will rely on data collected in Maodaotu 茂道吐 sumu (Mongol: *sum*, Ch: *sumu* 苏木), *Beizihaorao* 贝子浩绕 gacha (Mong: *gacha*, Ch: *gacha* 嘎查), in Tongliao 通辽 prefecture, Ganqika 甘旗卡 County. According to the Mongol nomenclature, Maodaotu is situated in Jirim league (Mong: *aimak,* Ch: *meng* 盟*),* Keerqin Kezuohou 科尔沁科左后 Banner (Ch: *qi* 旗*;* Mong: *Khorqin jungarun heit oshu)*. The emic Mongol divisions are still employed nominally, while the political administration follows the Chinese pattern of organization. Some confusion still persists today between the Chinese county-prefecture-township divisions and the indigenous Mongol terminology. Map 1 was published in a Chinese atlas in 2002. The legend indicates the provincial boundaries (*sheng* 省) and the administrative sub-divisions referred to as 府 *fu* which signifies "government." The 府 areas correspond to the 盟 *meng* (Mongol: *aimak*; English: leagues) on the map. *Meng* originate in the Mongol indigenous territorial administration, whereas *fu* are aligned with the Chinese system. As Map 1 illustrates, both systems of territorial division clearly overlap, while the banners *qi* 旗 and the leagues *meng* 盟 appear on the map but are left out of the legend that indicates provinces *sheng* 省 and *fu* 府. In the mid-2000s, the Zhelimu 哲里木盟 league (Mong: *Jirim*) was effectively replaced by the Tongliao 通辽 Prefecture, but not without protest from the Mongol people residing in the area. Published two years later in 2004, Map 2, indeed, no longer displays Zhelimu Meng, which is replaced by Tongliao Prefecture. Map 3, published in a road atlas in 2005, further subdivides the Tongliao

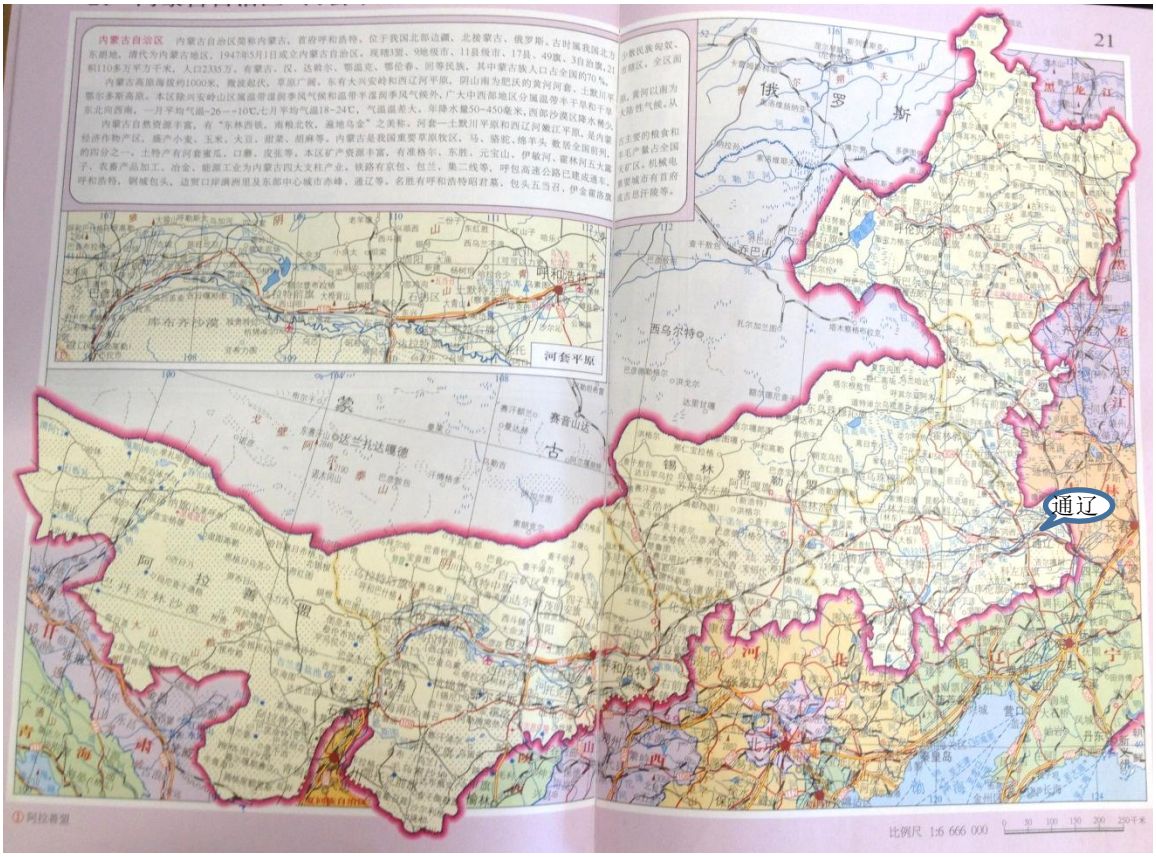
and the Chifeng prefectures into two distinct administrative divisions.

Repeated changes in the administrative divisions further precluded the Mongols from identifying with the land in accordance with indigenous divisions. This case illustrates the efforts of the nation-state to disrupt previously existing boundaries and to replace them with new ones on maps designed by the state, through the erasure of indigenous territorial terms.[171] This practice circumscribes the expression of ethnic identity in structures that are defined by the majority. It realigns the practices of the local populations with the spatial structure that is imposed by the nation-state. Previous territorial references, as a result, increasingly lose relevance as they are erased from the newly defined and newly mapped space.

171 This resonates with Ruth Mostern's path-breaking study of the reforms of the administrative divisions during the Song Dynasty. By documenting the fluctuations of the territorial divisions, she shows that the revolution in imperial state power is intrinsically linked with the reorganization of space. Her work paves the way for new inquiries in history that focus on spatial phenomena. Ruth Mostern, *Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern: The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960-1276)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).



Map 1: Conflicting Territorial Divisions in Inner Mongolia. Zhang Bai 张柏，*Zhongguo wenwu ditu ji, Neimenggu zizhiqu fen ce* 中国文物地图集，内蒙古自治区分册 [Chinese Historical Atlas, Inner Mongolia Volume] (Xi'an: Xi'an ditu chubanshe, 2003), 47.



Map 2: Erasure of the Leagues *(Meng)* in Inner Mongolia. *Zhongguo ditu ji* 中国地图集 [Chinese Collection of Atlas] (Beijing : Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 2004), 21.

Map 3: Division of the Tongliao and Chifeng Prefectures in Eastern Inner Mongolia. *Zhongguo ditu ji* 中国地图集 [Atlas of China] (Beijing: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe, 2004), 21.

Situated in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, the Keerqin region was formerly ruled by the Borjigids princes. Historically, in some parts of Inner Mongolia, the Mongol nobles were members of the Borjigids clans who legitimized their privileged status by claiming to be descendants of Bodonchar, one of Genghis Khan's ancestors.[172] The genealogy was carefully memorized and transmitted orally to sustain the legitimacy of living nobles. In fact, members of princely lineages were the only ones with surnames. In the names of commoners, a given name

172 David Sneath, "Political Mobilization and Construction of Identity in Mongolia," *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 3 (2010): 262.

was attached to their father's given name. Furthermore, Mongol society as a whole was divided into "Black Bones" *(Khara Yasse)*, referring to commoners, and "White Bones" *(Tsagan Yasse)*, denoting nobles. These appellations predated Genghis Khan and, according to my informants, remained in use into the twentieth century.[173] The White Bones were recognized as descendants of Genghis Khan, whereas the black bones had no such claim. Accordingly, internal boundaries often conformed to genealogical lines and defined social roles and status. In particular cases, however, these boundaries were fluid and could be crossed. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century, a Borjigid Lama who was also a Taiji in the *Maodaotu sumu,* fell in love with a woman slave—a black bone—and married her against the protests of his family. The couple's son, nevertheless, inherited the Taiji position and held this title until the Communist takeover.

As mentioned earlier, the Borjigids were the first Mongol group to ally with the Manchus during the Qing dynasty. Their region was then annexed to the Japanese Empire as part of Manchuria, and became officially part of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region ruled by the Chinese Communist Party in 1947.

Khorchin is a tribal name that means "sharp." According to the transmission of the oral history of the tribe, the name originates from the Genghis Khan era, where Khorchin people were seen as particularly skilled at shooting arrows, and so were put on the front lines of military regiments. Historically, Khorchin used to be famous for its lush bountiful grasslands. Its natural

173 For a substantive discussion on class and hierarchy in Inner Asia, see Sneath, *The Headless State*.

beauty is remembered in the Khorchin folk song *Tuguljin Uul* (Tuguljin Mountain, Ch: Tuerji 吐尔基). The song praises the "bright coloured flowers growing on the hillside," the "plentiful lynxes and tigers," "all kinds of animals that are inseparable from the area," "the hundred birds singing," etc. In China, I often heard people say that the more westward the territory, the more plentiful the grasslands and the more pristine the natural environment. However, the Khorchin grasslands of Eastern Inner Mongolia were famous throughout Mongolia and were known to most of the tribal groups through folklore.

The Tuguljin Mountain was not only cherished for its geographical beauty. It also had an important material value for house construction material. Indeed, people used to dig the stones that would be used to build house foundations as well as walls in their backyard. It was also common for some villagers to dig and sell the stones in the winter to get extra money. A truck full of stone could be sold for 100 RMB in the 1990s. However, in the early 2000s, the government sold the entire mountain to private mining companies that proceeded to intensive extraction. As a result, in less than ten years, there was no longer a mountain but a huge quarry hole. According to my informants, individual diggers would have required at least one hundred years to come to terms with the mountain the way industrial powers did.

The decision to sell the mountain sparked protest and left a footprint in the collective memory of the community. Indeed, my informants remembered a group of protesters climbing to the top of the mountain and yelling slogans in Mongolian such as: "the mountain is ours"; "we rely on the mountain for living." The police promptly came, and the villagers further shouted:

"the Communists are up here, and the Guomindang are down there!" (They were referring to the police as the Guomindang, and to themselves as the Communist "good guys"). The protesters knew pertinently that the Guomindang no longer existed or did not have anything to do with the sale of the mountain, but they appropriated the Communist propaganda that systematically portrayed the Guomindang as evil as opposed to the benevolent Gongchandang, and used this rhetoric to indirectly criticize the decision-makers who were taking away their natural resources. As a result, they got arrested and fined 500 to 600 RMB, which was a substantial amount of money at the time. The government went on with the sale and the stone extraction quickly started. Then, in 2003, a group of mining prospectors discovered a tomb from the Liao Dynasty in Tuguljin Mountain. The tomb had never been looted and contained lots of valuable objects as well as archaeological material. It was further argued that the woman who was buried on the site was a Khitan shaman.[174] Mining companies came after archaeologists on the field, so that a few years later, the mountain no longer jutted out of the landscape as machines extracted stones day and night. Several of my informants deplored the fact that the only mountain of the area that used to be praised as a natural beauty succumbed to the mining industries, which did not bring any benefit to the local people who were deprived from a source of construction material and had to buy bricks from the market.

Moreover, the songs and poems that refer to the Tuguljin Mountain became alienated from

174 Feng Enxue 冯恩学, "Tuerji shan Liao mu muzhu shenfen jiedu" 吐尔基山辽幕幕主身份解读 [An Explanation about the Owner of the Tomb of Liao Dynasty at Tuerji Mountain], *Minzu yanjiu* 3 (2006): 67-71.

the physical relief that had inspired them. Cultural productions could no longer refer to this particular element of the landscape, which further alienated people from their space as well as from their cultural heritage that is indivisible from the physical landscape.

Folk songs about the Khorchin region have travelled through time and are still performed in Outer and Inner Mongolia. Hence, legendary pasturelands of Eastern Inner Mongolia are still preserved on the cultural scene, while fading away from the geographical landscape. Indeed, the close proximity of Han-Chinese populated centers to Eastern Inner Mongolia, has fostered an astonishing transformation of the land. As a result, today, the area is covered with corn fields, which curve along the hilly sand dunes. At the border of the Gobi desert, one might think that the soil is unsuitable for the cultivation of crops and, at best, might serve as pasture land. However, we should keep in mind that the surface of the Gobi desert is widely diversified, and that only three percent of its surface is actually sandy desert.[175] These semi-arid conditions are ideal for pasture grazing, and can also be cultivated, although this fosters soil depletion and desertification. Figure 2 below illustrates the diverse relief that can be observed in the surroundings of Maodaotu. Viewed from atop a sand dune, corn fields are traversed by horse-drawn carts with forest land in the background. Wetlands that host many different animal species are also common. Inhabitants of Maodaotu recalled a wide and deep lake near their village, as well, half of which dried up in less than two decades.

In fact, the Tongliao area receives 400mm of precipitation annually. Groundwater flows

175 Ole Bruun and Ole Odgaard, *Mongolia in Transition* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996), 7.

everywhere approximately eight meters below the ground, and can easily be pumped up and consumed or supplied to animals without being boiled, due to the filtering properties of sand (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: The Surroundings of Maodaotu

Figure 3: Wetlands in the Surroundings of Maodaotu

Figure 4: Herder Pumping Water into a Trough

Figure 5: A Herder Bringing back his Sheep to the Village

TRANSITION TO THE MARKET ECONOMY

In the aftermath of the dismantling of the people's communes, land-use rights were distributed in 1984, following the establishment of the Household Responsibility System. According to the double-contract responsibility system,[176] the livestock were redistributed to private households in 1981 and land use rights were reallocated to families in 1984.[177] In exchange for the ownership of land, households were to pay taxes to the state.[178] As reported by

176 The word "double" is added to encompass both "land" and "livestock," in contrast with the household responsibility system that only refers to the land.

177 Dee Mack Williams, "Grassland Enclosures: Catalyst of Land Degradation in Inner Mongolia," *Human Organization* 55, no. 3 (1996): 308.

178 Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia,* 130.

Williams, the privatization of rangeland was part of a strategy aiming at the "rationalization" of the animal husbandry sector.[179] In 1985, the Sixth People's Congress in Beijing approved the Rangeland Law. The rationale of this policy was based on the assumption that pastures were degrading due to "lack of stewardship."[180] It aimed at reducing livestock, and restraining herd mobility by demarcating areas with fences and allocating pastures to individual households.[181] Commenting on the Rangeland Law, Peter Ho argues that "far from promoting the sustainable use of rangelands, the new system has tended to enhance pasture degradation, with economic freedom acting as a stimulus for individuals to increase production, whatever the long term implications for the range."[182]

The utilitarian nature of these policies concealed an underlying ideology that was antagonistic to pastoralism. Following the "tragedy of the commons,"[183] the assumption underlying the need for land reform was that collective property was inadequate, and supposedly led to overgrazing and mismanagement of the land. Hence, the government promoted the division of land using fenced-in units to optimize the patterns of grazing rotation and to foster

179 Ibid.

180 Victor R. Squires, *Rangeland Degradation and Recovery in China's Pastoral Lands* (Cambridge: CABI, 2009), 27.

181 Ibid.

182 Peter Ho, "Ownership and Control in Chinese Rangeland Management since Mao: The Case of Free-Riding in Ningxia," *ODI Pastoral Development Network Paper*, no. 39c (1996): 1.

183 The "tragedy of the commons" is an influential economic theory that was proposed by Garrett Hardin. It states that in the context of common use of resources, each individual acts independently in his or her, self-interest, which runs contrary to the long-term best interests of the whole group. See Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162, no. 3859 (1968): 1243-1248.

better management of the land. Indeed, some "damaged" parcels of grassland could be fully preserved by fences to facilitate the recovery of the grass, while herds could be redirected elsewhere. But the question of where to put herds in the meantime escaped the attention of policy makers.[184]

Starting from 1979, the dismantling of the communes and the introduction of the market economy brought about an unprecedented need for cash: public services introduced by the Communists such as schools and hospitals were no longer free, so that people had to convert their livestock into capital in order to take advantage of education and healthcare.[185] As a result, specialist herders demanded salaries to care for herds, so families had to pay them in order to continue to have their animals properly guarded. It made no sense for these families to herd separate units of animals and not take advantage of economies of scale, so they paid approximately 70 to 80 Yuan (12-14 CAD) per lamb per year, at a time in the early 1990s when the market price of one lamb never exceeded 200 Yuan (34 CAD). Trapped in this price-scissors mechanism, villagers had little choice but to sell their cattle and take up intensive corn farming.

Furthermore, due to the severity of banditry in the area, several families had animals stolen and had to turn to intensive grain cultivation to survive, after losing their main money-making

184 Williams, *Beyond Great Walls,* 111.

185 According to my fieldwork observations, shamanism was still very popular among local people who did not have a high level of trust in the health care system. For example, one of my consultants sustained multiple fractures on his forearm when he fell off a horse in the early 1990s. The fear that he would lose his arm if he were to seek treatment at the prefecture hospital led his family to request the services of a local shaman, who helped heal his broken arm within a month. Shamans were open to flexible financial arrangements with families so that cash was not always required to receive treatment.

asset.[186] This contributed to dramatic changes in the management of land itself, on the one hand, and people's rapport with the land, on the other. Indeed, while the pastoralist livelihood is characterized by indirect wealth extraction through the herding of animals, intensive cash cropping involves the direct extraction of grain from land, grain that can be easily converted into cash, which enables conversion and accumulation of value. In a pastoralist livelihood, by contrast, animals are simultaneously assets, stores of value, a means of exchange, a means of transport, and sources of nutrition, clothing, shelter, social value, prestige, and even domestic heating. Accordingly, some of my informants pointed out that before the market reforms, barter was the main form of exchange and the use of cash was frowned upon. This concurs with Bruun and Odgaard's observations that in "old values," livestock were regarded as the only "reliable wealth of people."[187]

Herding required less labor than intensive agriculture and could make use of economies of scale if done collectively. The ability to rotate the livestock across hundreds of kilometers of land constituted the main productive asset for the herders, who needed to be flexible in order to adapt to changing weather conditions. Namely, mobility and flexibility enabled herders to choose certain locations over others in order to escape a cold winter snowstorm, for example. Most

186 Jörg Janzen observed a similar situation along the Tuva-Russian border in Mongolia between 1999-2000. He writes that the thefts of animals are among the contributory factors to the decrease in livestock numbers. See Jörg Janzen, "Mobile Livestock-keeping in Mongolia: Present Problems, Spatial Organization, Interactions between Mobile and Sedentary Population Groups and Perspectives for Pastoral Development," in *Pastoralists and Their Neighbors in Asia and Africa*, ed. Ikeya Kazunobu and Elliot M. Fratkin (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2005) vol. 69, p. 71. Also, Williams notes that in the years 1990s, numerous thefts of livestock occurred in the Chifeng area in Inner Mongolia. He further mentions that these events were of great concern for the entire community. See Williams, *Beyond Great Walls,* 97.

187 Bruun and Odgaard, *Mongolia in Transition*, 27.

importantly, mobility and the rotation of livestock facilitated the regeneration of pastures in between migrations. Also, several groups of herders could cohabit an area within the same perimeter as long as they followed different migratory routes. In contrast, grain cultivation involved the appropriation of parcels of land, which became the main productive asset. Hence, a shift from pastoralism to intensive agriculture involved profound transformations not only in the patterns of land ownership and possibilities for circulation across the land, but also in social relations vis-à-vis people's relation to land and territory. It also involved new patterns of setting internal boundaries across land, since land ownership was carefully demarcated in sedentary agriculture, often with the help of fences. In other words, this transformation of the landscape and its meaning turned the system of values that had prevailed in Mongol society upside down.

I suggest that such a dramatic change cannot be solely a product of the introduction of the market economy. Indeed, if we take Outer Mongolia as a basis for comparison, the transition to a market economy did not lead to the systematic replacement of pastoralism by intensive agriculture. To the contrary, while Mongolia experienced unprecedented urbanization under the Soviet regime, the collapse of the USSR fueled a massive reversion to a semi-pastoralist livelihood. As Bruun and Odgaard state:

"The transition to a market economy has implied the reversal to semi-nomadic pastoralism for a considerable part of the population…. When the state-driven economy collapsed after 1990, livestock again provided people their essential source of food, materials for clothing and shelter,

and means of transport."[188]

What accounts for this striking difference in modernization trajectories between the two Mongolias in the wake of the communist influence? We could argue that the market price structure in Outer Mongolia was better adapted to the pastoralist way of life, since by that point at least 80% of the population of Inner Mongolia were Han settlers who had no interest in herding. Hence, the price structure may have been configured to benefit the majority Han people over Mongol herders in the transition to a market economy. But this fails to fully explain why livestock as a currency-like asset, value storage and means of exchange among the Mongols were abandoned.

I would argue that the fundamental shift from pastoralism to agriculture in the Tongliao region, as a function of the structural transformations of the landscape, was fostered mainly by the Deng Xiaoping regime's agriculture-centered policies of land division and ownership.

FENCING AND TRESPASSING

The division and the bounding of parcels of land with metal-wire fences profoundly disrupted the herders' movement across the land. It hindered circulation across the land and deprived herders of access to crucial pastures. As Figure 4 shows, however, holes in fences and evidence of displaced wooden pillars can be seen all along the walls of metal wire that scar the land (see Figure 4).

188 Bruun and Odgaard, *Mongolia in Transition,* 27.

Figure 6: Damaged Fence

Figure 6 is a striking example of a fence that was built along a path used by herders and their herds. As a way of claiming their right to circulate, herders loosened the fence so that they could open and close it to let their animals pass through. The damaged fencing that dots the landscape reveals a struggle for circulation and mobility in a context where the new organization of land in clearly delimited private parcels precludes the circulation and mobility of people and animals. Movement and fluidity of populations on the land have been replaced by rigidity and fixity. This sparks "everyday life forms of resistance," to borrow Scott's expression.[189] These

189 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

new territorial arrangements, furthermore, have provided structural reinforcement to intensive agriculture. This form of production has become normalized through incentives embodied in the fenced land itself, which, of course, has come with discourses and market incentives that have promoted agriculture.

SPACE AND IDENTITY

The topomorphic revolution, like the Cultural Revolution, did not spare the religious sphere of society although the former occurred twenty-five years after the latter. While Mao's Red Guards violated and destroyed religious places and artifacts, the driving forces of the topomorphic revolution also worked to exclude local cults and rituals from public spaces. The present section will show how people's changing rapport with the land is embodied in local cults, daily life practices, and definitions of private versus public spaces. My analysis will rely on ethnographic observations that, I believe, indicate new patterns of behavior that are related to landscape transformation.

Jestou's family members have been paying respect to a dragon deity for four generations. His great uncle first introduced the dragon to the family, and had asked his relatives to visit a specific sand dune in the village's surroundings to make regular offerings to the divinity. Although this was interrupted by the hysteria of the Cultural Revolution from 1966-1976, the cult has continued even to the present day. During the 1990s, however, the sand dune was covered with corn fields that extended as far as the eye could see. This space obviously became

unsuitable for the dragon cult. So the family moved the cult observances from the outside fields to the inside of their house. They arranged a kind of altar, with small statues, photos, and colorful decorations in a corner of their second bedroom. They even had their son make an inscription to honor the dragon using a pirated version of Photoshop. The color print of the sign bore the inscriptions “Seat of the King White Dragon” and “Seat of the King Black Dragon” with rays of sun shining brightly on the background. The print was displayed on the altar, which vividly marked the space as dedicated to the revered dragon. The inhabitants of the house, two elders in their mid-sixties, would regularly present offerings and prayers to the dragon within their domestic space.

A second ethnographic account is a story of the remains of a Buddhist past that refused to disappear from the landscape, despite the efforts of some villagers to destroy those traces in

Figure 7: Buddhist Trees Standing between Two Corn Fields

order to promote the cultivation of corn. Several hundred meters away from the village, four deciduous trees stand majestically. Originally, five of them were in the backyard of a Buddhist monastery until it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The trees are the only objects remaining from the monastery. During the 1990s, some villagers were tempted to cut down the trees for firewood. One such villager, who successfully cut down one of the trees, reportedly died not long after. Others who tried to cut down the trees were afflicted by inexplicable misfortune, according to some informants. From then on, no one has dared lay a hand on the trees. They perpetually stand out as remnants of a past when religion and cults were prominent features of the landscape in the Tongliao region. Traditionally, old and tall trees were revered in Mongolia and other places where shamanism and/or animism were practiced.[190] A sense of respect for old trees is nurtured, such that people feel reluctant to harm or cut them down. Local people believe that spirits or divinities might inhabit such trees. Except for the legacy of these four trees, the village today is devoid of any outside religious, spiritual, and even social or communal space. All ritual and religious activity is conducted in domestic space.

A third case illustrates the manifestation of the extractive rapport with nature in relation to religious relics. Among its members, the Baotu family included a high-ranking Lama who was

190 The cult of the tree is present among Mongols, Tungus people, Manchus, and even Koreans. In shamanism, it is seen as mediating earth and sky through its deep roots planted in the soil and its elevated crown reaching the sky world. Art Leete and R. Paul, *Shamanism in the Interdisciplinary Context* (Boca Raton: Universal Publishers, 2004), 188; see also Julian Baldick, *Animal and Shaman: Ancient Religions of Central Asia* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). Similar practices figure in pre-modern Confucian texts and are related to the cults of ancestors. Indeed, in the *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 敬慎 chapter, article five 齒亡舌存， Chang Chuang asks Laozi: "Do you know why one walks hurriedly with small steps when passing a mighty tree?" Laozi replies: "Walking hurriedly with small steps when passing a mighty tree, is it not to pay respects to what is aged?"

active in the religious affairs of the village before the Communist takeover. During the Cultural Revolution, monasteries were sacked or burned down, and religious objects were destroyed. In an attempt to protect the religious heritage of his family, Baotu's great grandfather buried some golden Buddhist statues, despite the high risk of reprisal. The secret of the "hidden treasure" was kept in the family until the present. In 2012, Baotu acquired a metal detector for 2800 yuan (approximately 450 dollars) in order to find the statues and sell them on the market. For Baotu, they were not worth any more than their monetary value. His view implied that these objects should not only be unearthed but that the incentive to convert them into cash precluded any reappropriation of these relics by the family. In contrast with the first case where the cult of the dragon was simply relocated from public to domestic space, the case of the religious relics involved their removal from this particular location—an erasure of the traces of what was once considered "sacred," to borrow Eliade's term.[191] Market forces had transformed these objects into liquid capital, and Baotu valued them purely based on their market price. He had invested in a metal detector in hopes of making a profit from their extraction and sale.

I suggest that these three cases are symptomatic of what I would call the "rationalization of territory," which is characterized by a profound shift in people's relation to the land, and, more broadly, to space. The rationalization of territory involves the perception of the space not as storage of resources that can be capitalized, but as a productive asset *per se.* It also involves the exclusion of non-productive elements from the public space, since their presence in a

191 Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane* (Paris : Gallimard, 1965).

rationalized public space cannot be legitimized, unless the space is converted into a proto-domestic sphere through privatization (i.e., monasteries or other religious establishments). Indeed, while the land became a productive asset, non-productive elements such as ritual spaces and religious relics have lost their legitimacy in public space and have been relegated to private domestic space. Serious attempts to cut down sacred trees are also aligned with this tendency to exclude these non-productive things from public space. As a result, the space available for people to inhabit, circulate, and perpetuate rituals has diminished. Whereas Mongols previously had no attachment to particular places, they now belong to units of property where most of their activities are conducted. They now seek to master their environment and instrumentalize it in order to extract and accumulate wealth. I argue that the loss of legitimacy of the non-productive assets situated in public spaces is a defining feature of the post-Mao era in the Tongliao region, which is having irrefutable effects on identity.[192]

Moreover, the Mongols' economy is more market-integrated than ever, provided that people buy all of their inputs and sell most of what they produce. Their agriculture relies heavily on genetically modified seeds that are more resistant to drought, fertilizers, and the use of mechanized farming machinery, which has replaced draft animals. The Chinese government has provided generous subsidies since the early 2000s, a direct incentive to use agricultural technology: tractors, seeds, and fertilizers.

192 Given that the ideological principles underlying the shift to a market economy are hegemonic, this phenomenon can be observed in many places of the world. Its manifestations are particularly salient in the context of the shift from a pastoralist to an agriculture-based.

Furthermore, horses are still conspicuous in villages, but their numbers are decreasing at an alarming rate. Families are selling off masses of horses. Once crucial to Mongol survival, horses have become useless and even burdensome with the widespread adoption of fossil fuels. Prior to the mechanization of agriculture, horses were inherent elements of pastoralist life, just as camels continue to be in some regions. Most of my male informants, for example, began riding horses as early as five years of age, at a time when everyone showed great pride in their horses. Equestrian festivals continue to be widely attended every summer in different locations across Inner and Outer Mongolia. From a historical perspective, horses have been a defining feature of Mongol identity through discursive productions by the non-Mongols.

However, in the last several decades, horses have become also costly to feed, and offer little more than aesthetic charm in the villages I visited. Horses are commonly seen being sold for various prices. Most of them are transported to the slaughterhouse and processed into consumable meat. An average horse will fetch 20,000 RMB ($3,500 CAD). Horse owners experience the sale of a horse as a sad event; but, at the same time, this is an easy source of extra cash and a very rational practice under the present circumstances. Given that horses have been and remain an intrinsic expression of Mongol identity and the daily life of villagers, their gradual disappearance from the landscape further deprives Mongols of a long-standing and cherished marker of their identity. In other words, horses are also subject to the rationalization of territory, having become “unproductive” entities in the new landscape. To be sure, the mere aesthetic and symbolic value of horses is insufficient to legitimate their presence in the newly defined

productive space.

Figure 8: A Horse Cart Heading back to the Village

Figure 9: A Man Driving his Brand New Tractor in his Backyard

The aesthetic of the village was also transformed through a subsidy program for the construction of new houses. Indeed, houses used to be made of pounded earth or sun dried bricks made of clay and dry grass. It took about a week for a family to erect a house with the labor contribution of the other villagers who would successively drop-by and work a day or two for free. Those houses generally need to be restored after twenty years. In the 2010s, the government offered free construction material to households who would build new houses made of red bricks, on the condition that old earthen houses would be destroyed. The policy aimed at removing all the earthen houses that shaped the landscape in the villages of the Tongliao region. The cheapest subsidized house would measure 40 square feet and included a bedroom and a kitchen. The

owners had to pay approximately 6000$ for the labor if they were to hire workers. While walking in the village of Maodaotu, I could see many brand new houses adjacent to aging brownish earthen constructions. All the informants would agree that earthen houses were warmer in the winter than the new thin-walled constructions. Indeed, while sitting near the brick walls, I could feel the streams of cold air, while the earthen walls seemed impermeable to cold wind, even though cracked and old-looking. The poor insulation of the houses was less suitable to the harsh Inner Mongolian climate, which further deprived the Mongols from resources to adapt to their natural environment. As of 2013, the local government had not enforced the requirement to remove the earthen houses so the villagers could make use of both houses at their convenience. Indeed, the demolition cost and people's attachment to old houses provided incentive for owners to keep both buildings. But it might be a matter of time before people are threatened with fines that force them to get rid of the earthen houses. This policy enhanced the obsolescence of old practices of house-building. While aesthetically compelling, the new houses required techniques that were foreign to the local Mongols, so that at first, the construction labor force was mostly constituted of Han migrants. After some years, the Mongols did acquire the techniques and were able to integrate the labor force.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the patterns of clothing. While before, clothes used to be made of leather and wool that are known for their insulating properties, people now buy cheap and fashionable coats at the local market and at the neighboring town (Dalin and Tongliao). The cloth-making skills are almost entirely lost, and people are content with thin and

poor-quality manufactured coats that do not offer any protection from the cold. As a result, in the winter, people barely go out, since they lack the equipment to cope with average -20 degrees Celsius temperatures. The new aesthetic standards alienated people from the techniques that were required to create equipment that was well adapted to local climatic conditions. Indeed, the new construction material that was promoted by the state and the penetration of the manufactured clothes alienated people from their natural space by depriving them of the adequate accessories to cope with environmental conditions. That contributed to the transformation of people's rapport with space and the environment, since they were disempowered to inhabit and to interact with their natural space.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

The rationalization of territory has also transformed the human attachments to and bonds with the land. As land became a productive asset, the people inhabiting that land became productive agents. The transformation of every piece of arable land into a productive asset fostered the appropriation of land by people who aimed at accumulating capital through the exploitation of land. The post-Mao household responsibility system, which distributed land use rights among households, obviously facilitated this appropriation. This established direct correlations between the area and quality of land held by the people and their production and accumulation capacities.

Indeed, in the Mongol context, pre-modern pastoralism involved the interdependence of

humans with nature and space. The survival of people and their animals depended on correctly anticipating weather conditions and carefully planning migratory routes. People had no control over natural conditions and barely altered the space in which they lived. Of course, the circulation of animals and grazing would consume fields of grasslands, but the migrations were designed to allow pastures to regenerate. In other words, people exerted little control over vast open spaces.

In contrast, the privatization of land has involved more-or-less unlimited power over restricted areas that are discretely bounded by fences. In the latter case, the space that is situated outside of the limits of one's property falls outside of one's sphere of interest and responsibility. People then become alienated from their broader surroundings and develop strong bonds with their "own" land. This gives way to supra-liminal spaces that can be governed by a supra entity—the state—whose role it is to oversee the whole. In contrast, the diffuse and shared responsibility of groups over large and undefined spaces reduced the need for meta-structures of power, and provided conditions for flat or non-existing hierarchies of power over land. Of course, Mongol pre-modern societies were highly stratified,[193] but power was expressed in religious, genealogical and tribal terms, not as strict territorial power.

Furthermore, the very survival of farmers now depends on their ability to transform and exploit their land through cash-crop production. The land became objectified and reduced to its productive function. This new spatial organization implies that people oversee their space, own it,

193 See Sneath, *The Headless State*.

exploit it, and extract everything they can from it. People have attained a position of domination over land and space, but this domination is carefully restricted to the specific places to which they are lawfully—or rightfully—entitled. This concentrates power in the hands of land owners, who have gained a sense of supremacy and entitlement over natural elements and spatial features that are part of their property. Accordingly, people's dependence on nature is overshadowed by their mastery over land and ability to transform it through new agricultural technologies. Indeed, the pre-modern dynamic has been reversed, in the sense that the landscape is now shaped by humans, and its structure depends on human action.

In general, power relationships are created when an entity is placed in a state of dependence on a second entity, which asserts real or symbolic control over the first entity's survival. Very often, however, the dependence of a powerful party on the subaltern party is concealed through particular rhetoric and practices. For example, rulers usually depend on those they rule as much as—if not more than—the latter depend on their rulers. Majority populations likewise depend on minorities to define themselves more than minorities depend on the majority.[194] The same can be said of gender relations, which, historically, were often characterized by patterns of domination of one gender over the other in an attempt to conceal the high degree of dependence of men on women in terms of production of descendants—among other things.[195] I contend that the changing rapport between Mongols and nature indicates a new

194 Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China," 93.

195 Carol P. MacCormack, "Nature, Culture, and Gender: A Critique," in *Nature, Culture, and Gender,* eds. Carol

pattern of domination that conceals an underlying form of dependence. Of course, farmers in Inner Mongolia rely on the weather and are highly vulnerable to drought, but the parameters of their new relationship to land involve the construction of wells and the use of drought-resistant seeds that reduce their vulnerability – at least in the short run.

Khazanov, a specialist of nomadism and pastoralism, further highlights the incompatibility of pastoralism with economic-growth based systems: "On the one hand, the extensive and mobile pastoralism still remains as a viable economic alternative in many arid and semi-arid zones of the world. On the other hand, its dependence on natural pastures hinders steady economic growth."[196] The author points out the fundamental paradox that pastoralism is ecologically viable, but is antagonistic to economic growth. I argue that "economic growth" is part of an abstract system of meanings and values that is fundamentally dissociated from human, moral, ecological, or political principles. It follows the law of "chrématistique"—the law of money or profit making, which is often in opposition to socio-cultural norms and the common good.[197] Khazanov's work captures the point of tension between a livelihood that follows the laws of natural ecosystems and a livelihood that follows a system of profit-accumulation. Accordingly, the land becomes a reservoir of potential profit to be extracted. In other words, land is used to

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P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 14.

196 Anatoly Khazanov and Joseph Ginat, *Changing Nomads in a Changing World* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998), 2.

197 Michel Freitag, *L'impasse de la globalisation : une histoire sociologique et philosophique du capitalisme* (Montréal : Écosociété, 2008), 83.

increase monetary value instead of being used for its own features and potentialities.[198] Furthermore, considering the vulnerability of semi-arid ecosystems, intensive agricultural cultivation significantly hastens the desertification process and converts green pastures into permanent sandy dry lands.

Mongol practices are now aligned with the laws of an abstract system of economic growth and profit-making through agricultural exploitation and the extraction of natural resources, which alienates them from the ecological, economic, and social foundations of pastoralism. This abstract system of economic growth depends on extraction of resources from the land followed by their conversion into monetary value, while simultaneously negating the system's dependence upon land.

It should be noted that capitalism and communism both rely on an abstract ideological or system of value that is disconnected from reality. As Ezra Vogel states, "Perhaps forty and fifty million died prematurely during the Great Leap Forward, because of famine that was caused by the excessive zeal of Mao Zedong to establish the commune system and move rapidly to socialism that was not based on realities and was not based on what was going on in the outside

198 Here, I refer to the natural features, such as weather, grazing capacity, rotation and regeneration of pastures that condition the very existence of the pastoralist. Specifically, I am referring to what Khazanov described as "the cyclical fluctuations that maintained a long-term balance in the pastoral economy," *Changing Nomads in a Changing World*, 8. This is not to say that extraction was not a fundamental feature of the Inner Asian tribes. Indeed, these people relied on supplies from the sedentary populations that were often forcibly extracted from them. According to Khazanov and Baabar, the mobile pastoralist livelihood precluded any form of accumulation, production of goods or agricultural products (see Khazanov 1998, 9; Baabar 2004, 6-7), although this has been called into question by archaeologists. Hence, these goods used to be acquired by raids and looting. Such patterns drove Genghis Khan to build up the largest empire in world's history, whose main focus was put on trade and circulation of goods, Jack Weatherford*, Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Crown 2004). Therefore, we can say that pastoralists nurtured a relation of dependence on nature but also relied on a form of domination and military superiority over sedentary peoples from which they extracted what they needed.

world."[199]

The eminent social scientist of contemporary China points out the disconnect between the socialist system and the reality on the ground as a major cause of the disaster of the Great Leap Forward in mainland China, including Inner Mongolia; but to a lesser extent than in grain-cultivating provinces like Sichuan. Central planning was based on inaccurate and incomplete information, local peasants lost their agency and their indigenous knowledge was devalued.[200] The socio-economic structure was inadequate to sustain the basic needs of the population. As previously stated, in the Tongliao area, indigenous pastoralist structures were maintained despite Communist efforts to gain control of the area.

Similarly, the capitalist system that Deng Xiaoping introduced had a huge impact on the structure of the economy of the Tongliao region, the management of the land, and the people's rapport with the land. Its failure to provide an ecologically viable alternative to pastoralism is source of deep resentment in the rapid depletion of the land being swallowed by the desert. In sum, although capitalism and communism both share common ground as abstract systems, alienated from on-the-ground reality – the system of market value for capitalism, and the system of central planning for communism—the very mechanisms through which they induced transformations took different forms. But both systems have either "failed to improve the human

199 Ezra Vogel, "Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China," Youtube Video 14:00, Posted by the "Cambridge Forum," April 3rd, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g7-akFVe0k.

200 The evacuation of local knowledge by states' top-down structures is analysed by James C. Scott in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

condition"[201] or worsen the condition of humans and their livable environment.

In terms of identity, the shift in the way people relate to the land eroded the ethnic consciousness of the Mongols vis-à-vis the Han people in the Tongliao area, since both groups now share the latter's socio-economic organization, which relies on intensive agriculture. Given that Mongol identity was based on pastoralism, the erosion of this ethnic marker fosters Mongol anxiety and vulnerability with respect to identity. Therefore the convergence of the spatial and social organization of the Mongols and the Hans has forced the former to find other ways to redefine their distinctiveness.[202] In other words, with the shift from pastoralism to intensive agriculture, ethnic boundaries are blurred and identities are increasingly uncertain.

Most importantly, while understanding identity as relational, the change in the Mongol rapport with non-human beings (landscape, natural elements, and objects) reveals significant transformations in the way their identity as humans is understood and lived. Like Descola, I suggest that the human rapport with non-human entities is a defining feature of identity.[203] Accordingly, the dialectical rapport between humans and their external environment must be factored into the study of identity, which otherwise tends to privilege people-to-people relations. My fieldwork shows that the "topomorphic revolution" in the Tongliao region of Inner Mongolia

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201 Ibid.

202 This is aligned with Appardurai's remark that "given the growing multiplicity, contingency, and apparent fungibility of the identities available to persons in the contemporary world, there is a growing sense of radical social uncertainty about people, situations, events, norms, and even cosmologies." "Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization," *Public Culture* 10, no. 2: (1998): 226.

203 Philip Descola, "À propos de Par-delà nature et culture," *Traces*, 12 (2007): 231-252.

also revolutionized people's identity through the transformation of their very rapport with their surrounding environment. Namely, the subjugation of land that was transformed into a disposable resource dissociated the people from their natural environment and defined the boundaries between people and nature. Furthermore, the fencing of the land further delineated public and private spaces, as well as areas of power where owners now exercise monopolies over their private land. This has served to fragment identity in an ideologically homogenized and physically segmented space.

In sum, the new hierarchical relationship to land, which enhanced and legitimated human power over his or her space, disrupted the potentialities of human actions, the meaning that is attributed to humans' existence in space as well as future potentiality of existence in space. I argue that the inscription of this particular ideology on space was a crucial driver of social and cultural change in the Tongliao region. Along these same lines, Henri Lefebvre argues that "any revolutionary program must have the creation of space at its core: there must be an alignment between recreated macro-structures of politics and economy on the one hand and everyday life on the other."[204] Accordingly, it appears that the revolution that left the most severe blow on the Tongliao region of Inner Mongolia had little to do with the Red Guards, but occurred surreptitiously during an apparent political lull in the post-Mao period. In other words, Deng's political program put space at its core, while suspending ideological discourse. Namely, the privatization of land in the Tongliao region and the "protection" of fragile pasture lands, which

204 Harvey Molotoch, "The Space of Lefebvre," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 6 (1993): 891.

were enclosed and rendered inaccessible, forced social structures to realign with the newly created space. I argue that the transformation or creation of particular spaces is a powerful driving force for change in social organization, and that changes in spatial structure are all the more easily carried out because private owners and government agencies often monopolize the management of land through the regulation of property rights. In the case of the Tongliao region, the state exercised its power over the organization of space to revolutionize the division of land, which profoundly disrupted indigenous social organization.

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the transformation of the Tongliao region provides a glimpse into the primary mechanisms with which empires and states have exercised power by acting on space, boundaries, and spatial boundaries.

First, the Qing Empire enhanced its control over Mongol territories by creating new administrative divisions, mapping the land, and imposing restrictions on the movement and circulation of people and animals. Most importantly, the "Mongol" ethnic category as we know it today crystallised under the Qing rule. Formerly fluid groups with shifting alliances and no attachment to designated territories or specific identity as bounded ethnic groups were broken down and fused with carefully delineated banners, which ultimately led to a loss of Mongol diversity and of the fluidity of their social and cultural identity. Furthermore, the promotion of Han immigration into north-east pastoral areas in late Qing put considerable pressure on local pastoralists. Nationalists further reorganized territorial boundaries and fostered Han migration into Mongol territories to manipulate territorial and social group boundaries in order to centralize power away from localities. The CCP also ceaselessly shaped and reshaped the territorial divisions and cartography of Inner Mongolia.

Most importantly, this study demonstrates that the recent "topomorphic revolution," characterized by privatisation and the enclosure of former pasture land, profoundly disrupted the social organization of Mongol peoples and the distribution of power among them. Indeed, as

individuals and groups in the region gained power over concentrated, bounded parcels of land, they lost diffuse power over expansive, unbounded lands and lost the ability to exercise agency over the organization of land according to their preferred economic activities. A new sense of domination over nature and space was thus introduced, which undermined villagers' chances to inhabit their own semi-arid spaces and contributed to intense desertification and inhibited clear provisions for land use among future generations. In other words, the fragmentation of space into private parcels of land not only disrupted previous land use patterns—i.e., pastoralism—but transformed the norms, power relations, received meanings, and other social attributes of the land.

From this perspective, this thesis connects power, space and identity by documenting the shift in people's rapport with the land following a radical transformation of landscape that reverberated across many spheres of social life (e.g., religion, economic activity, domestic space, aesthetics, etc.). This focus on social rapport with the land—as opposed to rapport between different social groups or between state and society—offers a new perspective on power and identity. In other words, this is an account of the ethnogenesis and the evolution of the Mongol identity from the perspective of spatial transformation that seeks to reposition humans broadly within their material and environmental space, while avoiding the pitfalls of anthropomorphism. To understand humans in this context, we must recognize that the rapport between humans and non-humans is as fundamental to collective social identity as the rapport between any two groups of humans. Most importantly, understanding how empires and states act on this rapport to shape

bounded social bodies is imperative.

This framework marks a shift away from conventional center-periphery models by focusing on the dynamics that are internal to the periphery, which I have tried to convey in the terms of the people living in that periphery. In other words, well-intentioned efforts to simplify, categorize, and emphasize "ethnic consciousness" that elude the issue of who sets the terms of ethnicity, I believe, threaten to reduce the agency of those who have depended on fluidity and movement for their very existence. This loss of agency is a direct result of the concentration of power among imperial and state entities that exercise the power to define people and places. To expose the tangible impacts of such dynamics, my research has aimed to capture the power relationships that are mediated through local spaces and land, as well as the forms of power that are exercised on space.

Moreover, I have emphasized the dialectical relationship between people and space, which helps account for the agency of people in the "periphery" and avoids reducing them to passive receptacles of central discourses, policies, or ideologies. More extensive examination of the relationship between space and power through future research promises to illuminate how social realities are constructed in different historical timeframes and different geographical and virtual places. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other recent technological aids that can be used to track changes in the landscape may make such research increasingly feasible. Google's release of a "time machine" feature in Google Street View, for example, will enable users to see

how places have changed over time.[205] The rise of new temporal or historical perspectives on space may also shape the way people interact with their spatial environment by giving importance to spatial transformation and making that change readily apparent to them—albeit mediated through screens and network communication platforms. In this connection, researchers should not ignore opportunities to study people's changing relationships with the land, which are fostered not only by state policies, but by emergent technologies and media that present new vantage points on social and geographical reality.

205 Samuel Gibbs, "Google Introduces 'Time Machine' Feature in Street View," *The Guardian,* April 23, 2014, accessed April 23, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/apr/23/google-introduces-time-machine-feature-in-street-view?CMP=fb_gu.

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