

BLUE HEAVEN, PARCHED LAND: MONGOLIAN FOLKSONG and the CHINESE STATE

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IMAGINE YOURSELF in Hohhot, the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) in China. You are walking down 'Mongolian Street,' just off the Inner Mongolia Normal University campus. There is no sign proclaiming this as 'Mongolian Street,' and from the Hangzhou dumpling shop and hip-hop clothiers, you would never know that just four years ago, Mongol restaurants and businesses lined the road. Some shops remain: Chahar Öröö, a Mongolian restaurant named after the Chahar Mongols of the southeast; a bookshop in a courtyard; and a souvenir shop, surrounded by a very Chinese city.

How do Mongols in Hohhot and other urban centres in contemporary China express their heritage? Do they accept national stereotypes? How connected are city- and farm-dwellers with the traditional herding lifestyle now threatened by the Chinese government? To examine these questions, I will discuss Mongolian folksong as understood in the modern (Late Qing, Republican, and Communist) Chinese context. I base my discussion of Mongol attitudes towards folksong on a short period of fieldwork in Hohhot and Beijing.

The most readily available Mongolian 'folksongs' in China are in fact compositions by Han Chinese musicians from the 1940s through the Cultural Revolution. The first Mongolian 'folksong' I learned to sing, 'The Beautiful Grasslands, My Home' (*Meili de caoyuan wo de jia* 美丽的草原我的家, hereafter 'The Beautiful Grasslands'), places stereotypical elements of Mongolian traditional song and lifestyle into a Westernised musical idiom. This and similar songs bolster a vision of a diverse but united China, where its minority peoples live happily under the rule of the Communist party.¹ How, and to what extent, do these 'grassland songs' (*caoyuan gequ* 草原歌曲), modern-day folksongs which elegize the grasslands, represent Mongols in Inner Mongolia? I will explain the situation of Mongols in Chinese history and territory. I will then examine the concept of "folksong" in modern and contemporary China. I can then approach the question of the grassland song: what it is meant to represent, which aspects of traditional folksong it glosses over, and how Mongolians in urban centres relate to it.

I conducted fieldwork in Hohhot for three-and-a-half weeks and Beijing for two weeks in December 2006-January 2007. I compared 'prompted' songs to popular grassland songs. Prompted songs come from semi-structured interviews I conducted in both cities. With limited opportunity for participant observation, I chose to interview over two dozen people in this format. I asked interviewees to sing a song from their childhood or their hometown, hoping to elicit songs that would contrast with grassland songs. These songs reflect Mongolians' presentation of their culture to those outside of it, particularly to a young, white, female foreigner such as myself.

In line with recent ethnomusicological research such as Theodore Levin's research on Inner Asian nomadic music in *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing* (2006), the field is multi-sited, rather than a single geographical location. While the Mongols I interviewed came from different social backgrounds - urban, agricultural, and pastoral - they were, nevertheless, united by the common experience of life in a Chinese city. Their understanding of folksong varied according to the environment in which they were raised and by personal opinion, rather than by the *zeitgeist* of the city they now inhabited. Indeed, many Inner Mongols emphasize their connection with each other and with independent Mongolia, strengthening their ethnic pride through a pan-Mongolian identity.

The Mongols in China

Chinggis Khan's army of united Mongolic tribes ravaged Yanjing (now Beijing) in 1215. His grandson, Khubilai, restored it and made it the capital of his empire in 1264.² The Yuan dynasty ruled China until 1368, when it fell to the Ming. Mongolia remained independent during this time.

The Manchu Qing conquered several empires in the seventeenth century, including China and Mongolia. Mongolia was split administratively into Inner and Outer territories in order to effectively control a larger area. A Chinese-style administration was established in Inner Mongolia,³ linking it more closely to the central government, and also making it more susceptible to Chinese influence. Outer Mongolia split from China when the Qing dynasty fell in 1911; it declared independence in 1921 and became the Mongolian People's Republic, Stalin's first satellite state, in 1924.

The Qing government encouraged the settlement of Mongol land to create a buffer against Russian encroachment. Han Chinese settlement of Inner Mongolia began in the late nineteenth century continued through the Republican period.⁴ By 1911 the Mongols were already an absolute minority in their native land.⁵ The East became heavily agricultural, while southern villages were ethnically mixed. Only a few northern banners maintained the nomadic lifestyle.⁶ Currently, the Chinese government urges settlement and farming of border areas, such as Inner Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, for two reasons: to feed the nation, and to 'integrate' the regions into Chinese society.⁷ I will discuss this in more detail below.

IMAR was founded in 1947 in agreement between Mongolian communists and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁸ The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution highlighted the ethnic tensions in the area; traditional Mongolian culture came under attack, as it was considered part of the oppressive feudal system.⁹ Despite this, Inner Mongols held onto their cultural values. Ethnic revival efforts, such as the movement in Inner Mongolia in the late 1970s to early 1980s, leading to a month-long student protest in 1981¹⁰, evince more than pride in one's identity and past. They constitute a fight against assimilation and cultural erosion, two powerful opponents to traditional values and way of life. Minority nationalism rose again in the 1990s as people took on and worked within the labels given to them by the CCP.¹¹ Minority groups use the state framework to assert themselves, for instance by studying and promoting their culture through higher education.¹²

In recent years, the Chinese government has established the Western Development Strategy (WDS) to address the unequal concentration of wealth in the country's coastal regions and urban centres.¹³ As part of this project, the CCP encourages Han Chinese to move to interior regions, such as Inner Mongolia. The migrant Han establish and control new business ventures, often barring Mongols

and other minorities from participation. Such government-sponsored Han settlement in autonomous minority regions¹⁴ is denounced by some Western scholars as 'internal colonization.'¹⁵ Indeed, 'changing the 'relative backwardness' of the western region's outlook is listed among the goals of the WDS. Economic growth means cultural assimilation and the industrial and commercial domination of Han Chinese.

Mongols in Inner Mongolia are particularly affected by China's environmental policies. Since the 1990s, the Inner Mongolian grassland has been drying up, causing dust storms in Beijing during the spring that often reach Korea and Japan.¹⁶ The resulting desertification inflicts a dual stress on herders. Firstly, as the grasslands dry up, Mongols cannot adequately feed their livestock. Secondly, the Chinese government has blamed desertification on overherding.¹⁷ The Ecological Migration Project, initiated by the central government in the 1990s, seeks to move all herding Mongols off their land and institute 'ranching-style intensive grasslands management.'¹⁸ The government thus legitimates policies which harm the traditional Mongol way of life.

Inner Mongols and Mongolians alike take great pride in the imperial legacy of Chinggis Khan; it is perhaps the most salient uniting factor among the Mongol ethnic groups.¹⁹ Although economic development policies in China threaten Mongol cultural heritage, the economic and political openness of the past three decades has allowed Inner Mongols to openly practice their traditions and promote their ethnic identity.



A bust of Chinggis Khan, Chinese spirits, and Western kitsch mingle behind a restaurant till in Hohhot. A blue *hada* hangs over Chinggis Khan as a sign of respect.

Folksong and the Chinese State

Modern Chinese folksong collectors took nationalism very seriously, although the parameters of that nationalism changed over the course of the twentieth century. Before the Republican era, the only studies of Chinese folk music available were written by European diplomats and missionaries.²⁰ Native study began with the Folk Song Campaign, a product of the May Fourth Movement²¹ and active from 1918 to the 1930s. Initially, students from China's elite universities, in particular from Beijing University, formed a Mass Education Lecturing Corps, which went into the countryside 'to educate peasants in order to liberate them and uplift China.'²² Their professors initiated a project to collect song texts, the 'true expression' of the peasant classes.²³ Music collection followed. The Folk Song Campaign valued popular, peasant Chinese culture, and was part of the larger movement to raise China's image of its 'real' culture and to move away from the elitism of the past. While pure curiosity may have motivated some of the earliest song collecting efforts, one cannot separate the work of Republican-era scholars from the nation-wide crusade to save China from itself—to move away from the rotting high culture of the pre-modern period.²⁴

Folksong collection is a form of composition.²⁵ Students and professors selected certain songs they considered representative of the sentiment of the common people, rather than simply collecting as wide a range of songs as possible.²⁶ They also altered the lyrics to fit what they believed to be the proper sentiment, removing bawdy or otherwise 'disagreeable' content.²⁷ This process of adapting, composing, and at times, sanitising folksongs 'aimed primarily to make the "strange" accessible to Han ears' and to bring them in line with Western standards of song arrangement.²⁸

Under the CCP, folksong composition became an overt process. Former conservatory student and party cadre Lü Ji founded a music study group within the League of Left Wing Writers, part of the CCP infrastructure.²⁹ Some of the group members had a musical background, often in the Western classical tradition, while others were simply curious about folk music. The initial goal of the study group was not to collect folksongs, but to compose them in the Soviet style for 'the people' to sing at anti-Japanese rallies.³⁰ The group evolved towards a mission to find the basic elements consistent throughout all Chinese music - across time, space, and ethnicity - and from these elements create a 'homogenised' Chinese music, a new national sound to represent the people.³¹ This is quite an ambitious goal, considering that musical records date back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.), and that different ethnic groups often have unique musical traditions with little or no relation to Han Chinese music. The aspiration was to take the stately court music of one thousand years before, the *maqam* of the Uyghurs in the Northwest, and all the other disparate musical practises existing under Chinese sovereign territory, and create a singular Chinese sound.³²

In reality, CCP composers did not blend Uyghur music with Han *kunqu* opera. Instead, they composed folksongs in the style of particular ethnic groups, presenting these songs as minority folksongs (*shaoshu minzu de minge* 少数民族的民歌). Thus the Han Chinese composer Wang Luobin, the 'folksong king,' was able to compose 'Uyghur' folksongs, 'Hui Muslim' folksongs and so on, all of which are also considered to be Chinese folksongs.³³ In fact, Wang ran into trouble with Uyghur intellectuals in the 1990s, when he sued a Taiwanese singer for recording his song 'The Beautiful Girls of Daban' (*Dabancheng de guniang* 达坂城的姑娘), written in the 1930s, without paying him royalties.³⁴ The Uyghurs claimed that he had not

composed that song, but that it was an ‘actual’ Uyghur folksong. Its origins have not been confirmed.³⁵ As in the case of Wang Luobin’s work, folksongs of the revolutionary era are still re-recorded and performed with great pageantry today.

Members of an ethnic minority may perpetuate Han stereotypes about their own people through the performance and composition of folksong. This is the case with ‘The Beautiful Grasslands,’ made famous by the renowned Mongol alto singer Dedema. Indeed, the song launched her career as a solo artist.

美丽的草原我的家	The beautiful grasslands, my home,
风吹绿草遍地花	The wind blows the grass, filled with flowers
彩蝶纷飞百鸟儿唱	Butterflies flutter, all the birds sing
一湾碧水映晚霞	Clear waters shine in the dusk
骏马好似彩云朵	The steeds cluster like rosy clouds
牛羊好似珍珠洒	The cattle and sheep scatter like pearls.

Chorus:

牧羊姑娘放声唱	The shepherdess raises her voice to sing
愉快的歌声满天涯。	Her happy song fills Heaven and Earth.

美丽的草原我的家	The beautiful grasslands, my home,
水清草美我爱它	Clean water, lovely grasses, I love Her
草原就象绿色的海	The grasslands are like a green sea
毡包就象白莲花	The yurts are like white lotuses
牧民描绘幸福景	The herders paint a happy scene
春光万里美如画	Springs spreads, pretty as a picture

Chorus

Born in 1947 in Alxa League, the same year that Inner Mongolia became the first autonomous region in China, Dedema has worked her way up through national conservatories and organizations. Dedema was a member of an *ulanmuchir* (*wulanmuqi* 乌兰牧骑), a type of travelling folk performance troupe which spread Maoism (‘Mao Zedong Thought,’ *Mao Zedong sixiang* 毛主席思想) to the countryside; the troupes, modelled on Soviet song-and-dance troupes, have become an institution of cultural preservation throughout China.³⁶ Dedema is currently on the committee of the All-China Youth Federation, the core organization of Chinese Communist youth programs.³⁷

Dedema’s musical education follows a typical pattern: talented minority youth are sent to national academies, where they learn ‘the mainstream, Western-influenced, pan-Chinese conservatory style’ and are then sent to state-sponsored troupes.³⁸ Minority musics are thus standardized and essentialised, with ‘representative’ themes exaggerated and repeated. Minority performance represents the goodwill of the Chinese state as a system which promotes *minzutuanjie* (民族团结): cultural diversity within a unitary political system.³⁹

The efforts of Tenger, a folksong singer-songwriter who has partially styled himself on the Western folk musician, has had a very different impact on the Chinese perception of Mongols, and indeed on Mongols of themselves. Tenger, like Dedema,

is famous throughout China. He has similarly worked his way through the state system of *ulanmuchir* and university musicianship⁴⁰, studying at the Tianjin Music Conservatory in the 1980s.⁴¹ A native of Ordos league, to the southwest of Hohhot, his song 'Mongolian' (*Mengguren* 蒙古人) won him fame in Mongolia as well as at home.⁴² In a magazine interview (1992), Tenger said that he could not 'sing anymore the kind of songs that deceive oneself as well as others, like "The Beautiful Grassland Is My Home."⁴³ Here he refers to the current plight of Mongols living on the grasslands of Ordos, stricken by poverty and drought.

Not only have the state and Han Chinese individuals co-opted Mongolian culture into Chinese civilisation; in part, Mongol folksingers have also stood to benefit from gaining a wider listenership. Tenger's first nationwide hit, 'Heaven' (*Tiantang* 天堂) gripped China during a high tide of patriotism. On 7 May, 1999 NATO planes bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. Four embassy personnel died. The U.S. apologized for the 'accident', claiming it had been targeting a different building indicated on an outdated map.⁴⁴ The bombing triggered protests in major Chinese cities; protesters threw stones at the British and U.S. embassies in Beijing, while students throughout the country took up anti-American and anti-NATO chants.⁴⁵ During this dramatic political surge, Tenger took the CCTV stage for the first time in his career, singing 'Heaven':

蓝蓝的天空	Blue blue the high skies
清清的湖水哎耶	Cool clear lake waters, <i>ai'ye</i>
绿绿的草原	Green green the grasslands
这是我家哎耶	This is my home, <i>ai'ye</i>
奔驰的骏马	Fast-running, my steed
洁白的羊群哎耶	Clean white the sheep, <i>ai'ye</i>
还有你姑娘	And there is you, my dear
这是我家哎耶	This is my home, <i>ai'ye</i>
我爱你我家	I love you, my home
我家我的天堂	My home, my Heaven
我爱你我家	I love you, my home
我家我的天堂	My home, my Heaven

On the page, the lyrics may appear clichéd and hollow, much like the images in 'The Beautiful Grasslands.' Yet Tenger gives the words great force and pathos. In the recorded version, he whispers the first verse after a minute-long duet of *morin huur* (the Mongolian horse-head fiddle, *matouqin* 马头琴) and Chinese flute (*dizi* 笛子, similar to the Mongolian horizontal flute, the *limbe*). Then, at the chorus, he suddenly strains his voice into a heart-felt rasp: *I love you, my home; My home, my Heaven.* When Tenger first composed and sang this song, 'home' meant the Mongol grasslands. For most CCTV viewers, however, China was clearly the 'Heaven' Tenger praised. Dr. Aitoru Terenguto, a Mongol from IMAR and professor of literature at Hokkai-gakuen University in Japan, emphasizes the 'double meaning' of 'Heaven.'⁴⁶ It is Tenger himself who created the second, national meaning. In spite of his strong stance on making known the hardships of the Mongols in China, he also

accepts, to a certain extent, the placement of Mongol culture within Chinese culture. Tenger pushes the boundaries of Chinese society, but does not break them; this strategy maximizes the impact of his words and songs.⁴⁷

Dedema and Tenger, both products of the conservatory, have developed their music along two ends of the folk-pop spectrum. Dedema has maintained the style of folksong composition which arose in the early Communist period, while Tenger has balanced innovation with his political and musical upbringing. Both artists are admired by Inner Mongols for representing their people on the national stage.



Posters for Mongolian and Inner Mongol pop groups with December 2006 concerts in Hohhot. Found in a courtyard off 'Mongolian Street.'

Singing Pan-Mongolia

While the government uses grassland song to subsume Mongol culture within Chinese civilisation, Mongols in Hohhot draw on this and other genres of 'folksong' and popular song to create an international identity. Regional differences among different Inner Mongol groups diminish as people look collectively to the homeland, which includes both Inner Mongolia and the independent country of Mongolia.

Back in Hohhot, one of the waitresses at Chahar Öröö agreed to be interviewed. A small woman with a round, rosy face, she does not look her eighteen years. She comes from an agricultural village outside the city of Chifeng. Having left school after year nine, she moved to the city to be with her older sister, a third year undergraduate at Inner Mongolia University. She listens to grassland songs in Mandarin and Mongolian, as well as hip-hop and pop. When I asked her to sing a song from her hometown, she chose 'The Beautiful Grasslands,' because, she explained, 'I am from the grasslands.'⁴⁸ But she is not literally from the grasslands. Did she choose the song out of convenience, singing what she thought I would want to hear? Or does she feel a connection with the grasslands which the song, for all its faults, provides?

Despite the shortcomings of grassland songs and the government policies behind them, a number of people I interviewed in Hohhot highlighted their good points. During my stay at Inner Mongolia Normal University (IMNU), where the College of Sociology and Folklore hosted me, I interviewed a number of Masters students in the College, many of whom said that grassland songs promote a greater understanding of Mongol culture through the accessibility of their lyrics and style. Sarna, a CFS graduate student from Xilingol League, said of 'The Beautiful Grasslands,' 'Although she [Dedema] isn't in among us, she can still reflect the Mongol love of homeland, or our extolling of the grassland... Contemporary people

sing about the grasslands from the heart. Traditional music is not the same. It is written in engagement with [everyday] life.’⁴⁹ Sarna, who herself grew up on the grasslands, divides the practicality, indeed necessity, of traditional song in daily routine from the removed yet more ‘heartfelt’ folksongs and grassland songs of today.

It sounds as though sincerity has increased with distance. What Sarna may have been referring to, though, is the nostalgia for the old ways contemporary Mongols feel, and the ethnic pride which arises from it. Traditionally, Mongols sing to entertain themselves while they work or ride on horseback, to convey epic stories, and even to force recalcitrant mother camels to suckle their offspring.⁵⁰ Nostalgia for a timeless Mongol past which includes this beauty of the mundane goes beyond the desire for a time and place devoid of the environmental and cultural degradation of the modern world. Many miss the autonomy and strength of the new-born Mongol nation. Sven Hedin lamented in 1943:

These tunes are a dying echo from times of greatness and of fantastic achievements in the history of Asia. They vibrate with pride over a world-embracing past and with melancholy that the survivors of this people have lost their power and their importance and are doomed to oppression by mighty neighbours.⁵¹

This same sentiment, however, can excite the pride of a contemporary Mongol, and encourage him/her to act to preserve what (s)he can of his/her precious culture to pass on.

Sarna has changed with her circumstances. As a secondary school student, she preferred popular music over folk and traditional musics. When she moved to university, however, she ‘started to like the music of my own people.’ As people change environments and deal with new sets of social values, they may cycle through cynicism and sincerity in fulfilling their new role and eventually integrating into the situation. Goffman gives the example of farmers-turned-hôteliers who at first find the values of their middle class clients disagreeable, but later take pride in emulating those same values.⁵² The person performing this new role may be ‘taken in by his own act,’ thus transforming his own sense of self.⁵³ For Inner Mongols who move from the grassland to the city, they may outwardly hold onto rural, traditional values in order to distinguish themselves from the technological, materialistic world they have entered. At the same time, they may slowly assimilate into urban society.

Zhaorte, manager of the Sulede Mongolian Music Bar in Beijing, seemed to exemplify the separation of ideal Mongolness combined with an urban, Chinese lifestyle. Originally from Ordos, both he and his older sister own land in IMAR. He has traveled all over China, mostly in the North, including Xinjiang and Tibet. He studied the dulcimer at the Inner Mongolia University School of the Arts about a decade ago. He has made friends with quite a few foreigners through his bar, particularly Germans. He is currently learning English and earning his Masters degree from the Beijing Film Academy. When I asked him about Mongolian folksongs, he said:

A lot is lost when a song travels from the grasslands to Beijing. A lot. On the grassland, you have everything that you need: land, sky, horses, sheep. In the city people worry away their lives thinking about money, how to earn money; on the grassland, your only concern is the weather and your flock. Life on the steppe is tranquil. Such beautiful and varied music could only come from a

tranquil heart, a tranquil existence. You can't get that in a fretful, shallow city. That's why pop songs are so fast-paced and vapid.⁵⁴

When I asked him if he wanted to live on the grasslands, though, he said no. He eventually wants to have a summer house on his land, but will continue to develop his career in Beijing. Zhaorte has idealised his homeland, yet also separated himself from it. His attitude is one shared by the students in Hohhot; it is the product of the Mongolian activism among the urban élite which began in the late 1970s. I do not wish to imply that the feelings of Zhaorte, Sarna, and others are insincere. I merely wish to point out their place in a trend among Inner Mongols in urban environments.

Although I asked interviewees to sing a song from their hometown or one that they remembered from childhood, I rarely elicited a traditional song. In one recording session with Saihana and her friends in the female dormitory, she pulled out a book of Mongolian songs titled *MP3*⁵⁵ with an alluring woman in a red sleeveless blouse, perhaps Central Asian, tossing back her hair on the cover. Saihana and her friend Tongganataji, both from Xilingol, sang some songs from the book for me to record. What they sang were neither traditional songs nor folksongs, but popular songs written in Mongolia in the 1980s. Among them was 'Horseman' ('Aduchin'), a film theme from Mongolia. Film songs and other popular songs from socialist Mongolia came south after China reopened to the world in 1979. One Inner Mongol from this generation, Sechenbaatar, was vital to the dissemination of these songs. A native of Xilin Gol league, Sechenbaatar entered the IMNU School of Music in 1979. In 1980, he began singing Khalkh songs, mostly from film scores. Accompanying himself on the acoustic guitar, he would visit friends' dormitories at IMNU and Inner Mongolia University, building a network of student-listeners. Later, he used a cassette recorder to distribute the songs he sang. Although few students had cassette players, Sechenbaatar's voice carried far on Hohhot's campuses. Many Mongol students could sing all of the songs they heard him perform live or on recordings. Around the same time, Inner Mongolia Television began to broadcast Inner Mongolians singing songs from Mongolia.⁵⁶

Mongolian popular songs from this period are about love: love of one's homeland, romantic love, love of one's horse, love of nature, and love of father and mother.⁵⁷ In 'Aduchin', a man sings of missing his lover, but also praises his horse. Besides romantic love, these themes distinguish Mongolian popular song from Mandarin pop of the time, almost exclusively from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The songs also differ significantly from Mongolian traditional song, touching on agricultural life and devoting entire songs to the description of a father figure. Traditional songs often describe nature and longing for one's homeland and mother, especially from the perspective of a young girl married to a man far from the place in which she grew up. The theme of the father, however, is almost absent.⁵⁸ Today as then, Inner Mongol students point to the 'high culture' of Mongolian popular song and other art, especially in terms of poetic lyrics.⁵⁹

In Hohhot, Mongols from different ethnic backgrounds share their songs with each other; Eastern Inner Mongols sing Ordos songs, while Inner Mongols learn Oirat songs from Xinjiang.⁶⁰ People from an agricultural or urban background befriend students whose families are nomads. All students are exposed to Khalkh songs and culture which leads, in turn, to the dissolution of regional and ethnic boundaries, and a sense of pan-Mongolian unity. In the countryside, locals would prefer that an outsider not sing their songs; in the city, the trend is towards musical unity.⁶¹ Yet overall, 'for Mongols in China, their "tribal" background has to a large extent given way to their overall Mongol identity.'⁶² Young, educated Mongols,

when placed in the Han-dominated setting of Hohhot, downplay the differences amongst themselves for the sake of group strength.

Accompanying the merger of different Mongol cultures is the blurring of the timeline of Mongolian history. Despite the various combinations of pastoralism and agricultural practices and the rise of urban Mongol culture⁶³, Mongol is still synonymous with nomadism. The mythologised past has taken on perhaps greater importance than ever before. It counteracts the displacements of a rapidly changing world. For the Mongols of IMAR, an idealised grassland where its people bend solely to nature, combats the dislocations of sinicisation, urbanisation, and westernisation. Bithell argues that '[m]usical choices can also be part of the process whereby people in the present choose or construct a history that meets their current needs.'⁶⁴ Bithell associates such choices with nationalism. I would extend this choice beyond the national movements on the state scale of the 19th and early 20th centuries, to that of ethnic minorities in China and other countries in the recent past.

'Homeland' and 'folksong' are not fixed. One's 'homeland' might not be where one was born and raised. One may call a song from a film a 'folksong'. These concepts, like that of ethnicity itself, are not objective; they emerge from a people's interpretation of their own origins and history. Such redefinitions of one's ethnic identity are often the product of social situations which remove one from one's native environment – where one is in the minority, in an urban setting, or in another non-traditional situation. Thus the independent state of Mongolia and nomadism are still important to their ethnic identity.

In Conclusion: The Future of the Past

Since Deng Xiaoping opened China to the world in 1979, many Inner Mongol intellectuals in Hohhot have turned to their 'roots'. After the decade of the Cultural Revolution, when all elements of Mongolian tradition were labeled feudal and regarded as a social blight to be excised by the Red Guard, Mongols are now freer to pursue a greater understanding of their own culture through scholarship, music, and other cultural practices. Communication with Mongolia is more open, allowing literature, art, and music to cross the border. Inner Mongols look to Mongolia as part of their heritage and homeland, even when Mongolians do not think the same way about Inner Mongolia.⁶⁵ At the same time, Chinese state policies seek to curtail, even end, nomadism and to assimilate Inner Mongols into the Han mainstream. While the government allows Inner Mongols more freedom of expression, it still routinely strikes out against local nationalism. Authorities disbanded Mongol intellectual study groups in May 1991, arresting its organisers.⁶⁶ Hada, the former owner of a bookstore, is still serving his fifteen-year sentence in a Chifeng prison, despite news of his torture and international pressure to release him.⁶⁷ He was sentenced in 1996 because of his membership with the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance, which promotes Mongol cultural and civil rights.⁶⁸

In 1943 Haslund-Christensen wrote that Mongol heritage was 'gradually dying out' before scholars and explorers could sufficiently document it.⁶⁹ That same lament is still heard today. Pastoral civilisation faces a gradual death as all countries, Mongolia and China alike, regard industrialisation as the inevitable path of the future.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Haslund-Christensen would be happy to see that Mongolian traditional culture has not died yet, and that researchers are documenting and analysing the culture more than ever before. In IMAR, Mongols connect themselves with their pastoral ancestry through folksong. Agricultural and urban Mongols still identify themselves with the fundamental icons of their culture, Chinggis Khan and the pastoral lifestyle. To be Mongol is no longer to be nomadic, but rather to have the

nomadic ideal in mind.

A common attitude towards China among Inner Mongols is rejection, 'a refusal to identify with a Chinese state that is largely perceived to be alien.'⁷¹ They look to Mongolia as a 'paradise' where Mongol culture and society flourishes, uninhibited by foreign powers. In fact, Mongolia was the puppet of the Soviet Union until 1990.⁷² Even in pre-communist times, it was influenced by the West, particularly America. The Mongolian communist government purged Buddhist temples, made people thought to threaten the state 'disappear', and outlawed all mention of Chinggis Khan.⁷³ Fact and myth remain on different planes, with myth predominant in the public imagination. Through musical tradition, an ethnic group that has moved away from its traditional way of life links itself to its ancestors both historically and culturally.⁷⁴ In Hohhot, Mongols from a variety of backgrounds, not just pastoral, use song in this way. Modern and contemporary folksongs tie Inner Mongols not only to their past, but to their parallel present in independent Mongolia. From 'The Beautiful Grasslands' to 'Aduchin,' the Inner Mongol imagination reaches across borders of state and time.

NOTES

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- ¹ Nimrod Baranovitch. 'Between Alterity and Identity: New Voices of Minority People in China.' *Modern China* 27:3 July 2001, pp. 359-401. p. 363.
- ² Colin Mackerras. *The New Cambridge Handbook of Contemporary China*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001. p. 225.
- ³ Sechin Jagchid and Paul Hyer. *Mongolia's Culture and Society*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1979. pp. 257.
- ⁴ Christopher Atwood. *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*. Facts on File, New York, 2004. pp. 240, 449-450.
- ⁵ Uradyn Bulag (a). *The Mongols at China's Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity*. Rowman & Littlefield, Oxford, 2002. p. 108.
- ⁶ Bulag (a) 109.
- ⁷ Bulag (a) 19.
- ⁸ Bulag (a) 2.
- ⁹ David Sneath. 'The Impact of the Cultural Revolution in China on the Mongolians of Inner Mongolia.' *Modern Asian Studies* 28:2 1994, pp. 409-430. p. 416.
- ¹⁰ Baranovitch 371.
- ¹¹ Rachel Harris (a). *Singing the Village: Music, Memory and Ritual among the Sibe of Xinjiang*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004. p. 6.
- ¹² Rachel Harris (a) p. 6, 14.
- ¹³ Human Rights in China (HRIC). *China: Minority Exclusion, Marginalization and Rising Tensions*. Minority Rights Group International, U.K., Feb 2007. p. 21.
- ¹⁴ HRIC 23.
- ¹⁵ qtd. Bulag (a) 105.
- ¹⁶ Jon Herskovitz. '12-day Toxic Sandstorm the Price of Chinese Growth for South Korea.' *The Scotsman*, 23 February 2007.
- ¹⁷ HRIC 14.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ 'Mongolians honour Genghis Khan.' *BBC News*, online, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/5167718.stm> (11 July 2006); 'Chinese agency examines survival of Mongol culture.' *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 30 April 2007.
- ²⁰ Of note is the work of Jesuit missionary Jean Joseph Marie Amiot, whose *Memories of Chinese Music, Ancient and Modern (Mémoire de la Musique des Chinois tant anciens que modernes)* was first published in 1779.
- ²¹ On 4 May 1919, students in Beijing gathered to protest the handover of Shandong Province, a German sphere of influence before World War I, to the Japanese through a provision of the Treaty of Versailles. The protest spread to universities, worker's unions, and other institutions nationwide. From a simple protest, the Movement became a call for political reform and a reinstatement of Chinese national strength and unity after the embarrassments and suffering of the previous eighty years, beginning with the Opium War in the 1840s.
- ²² K. F. Wong. 'From Reaction to Synthesis: Chinese Musicology in the Twentieth Century.' pp. 37-55. B. Nettl and P.V. Bohlman, ed. *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991. p. 41.
- ²³ *ibid.* 40.
- ²⁴ Susan Daruvala. Comment to author, 25 April 2007.
- ²⁵ A. Hürelbaatar. Comment to the author, 26 April 2007.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*
- ²⁷ Harris (a) 7, 162.
- ²⁸ Harris (a) 9.
- ²⁹ Wong 44.
- ³⁰ Wong 46.

- ³¹ Wong 44, 47.
- ³² Wong 47.
- ³³ Rachel Harris (b). 'Wang Luobin: Folk Song King of the Northwest or Song Thief? Copyright, Representation, and Chinese Folk Songs.' *Modern China*, 31:3 July 2005, pp. 381-408. pp. 383-384.
- ³⁴ Harris (b) 388.
- ³⁵ Harris (b) 383.
- ³⁶ Rees 20.
- ³⁷ 'Brief Biography of the Artist.' *I Come from the Grassland*, online, available at: [http://www.dedema.com/yishujianjie\(cn\).htm](http://www.dedema.com/yishujianjie(cn).htm) (3 June 2007)
- ³⁸ Rees 22.
- ³⁹ Bulag (a) 12.
- ⁴⁰ Terenguto Aitoru. Comment to the author. 27 June 2007.
- ⁴¹ Baranovitch 371.
- ⁴² Baranovitch 1.
- ⁴³ cited in Baranovitch 359.
- ⁴⁴ Later that year, however, intelligence sources revealed that the bombing had been deliberate. U.S. and European forces had determined that the embassy was transmitting military information to the army of Slobodan Milošević. 'We made an error, says Nato but the bombing goes on; US and UK embassies attacked in huge demos.' *The Guardian*, 10 May 1999.
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- ⁴⁶ Aitoru Terenguto. Comment to the author. 3 August 2007.
- ⁴⁷ Baranovitch 376-377.
- ⁴⁸ Aodunhu, waitress at Mongolian restaurant in Hohhot. 27 December 2006.
- ⁴⁹ Sarna, CFS graduate student from Xilingol League. 18 December 2006.
- ⁵⁰ Levin, Theodore and Valentina Süzükei. *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2006. p. 138.
- ⁵¹ S. Hedin. 'Preface.' Hedin, Sven, ed. *The Music of the Mongols: Part I, Eastern Mongolia*. Tryckeri Aktiebolaget Thule, Stockholm, 1943. pp. 7-12. p. 11.
- ⁵² Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, Edinburgh, 1956. pp. 10-12.
- ⁵³ *ibid.* 49.
- ⁵⁴ Zhaorte, Ordos native, founder and owner of the Sulede Mongolian Music Bar in Beijing. 10 January 2007.
- ⁵⁵ MP3, or Moving Picture Experts Group Audio Layer 3 sound file, is a standard format for digital audio files. Because of its use on portable music players and in Internet music sharing, MP3 can also refer to a particular song, similar to a CD track. The title MP3 evokes a youthful, technological sensibility.
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- ⁵⁷ *ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ Hürelbaatar 27 July 2007.
- ⁵⁹ *ibid.*, Sarna.
- ⁶⁰ Hürelbaatar 27 July 2007.
- ⁶¹ Uradyn Bulag (b). Comment to the author. 28 March 2007.
- ⁶² Uradyn Bulag (c). *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998. p. 182.
- ⁶³ A. Hürelbaatar. 'A Survey of the Mongols in Present-Day China: Perspectives on Demography and Culture Change.' Kotkin, S. and B. Elleman, ed. *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan*. M.E. Sharpe, London, 1999. pp. 191-222. pp. 219-220.
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- ⁶⁶ Asia Watch *Continuing Crackdown in Inner Mongolia*. Human Rights Watch, online, available at: http://www.smhric.org/Hada/Alban_6.htm (20 March 1992)
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- ⁶⁸ *Guardian*. 'China Denies Mistreating Ethnic Mongolian.' 25 July 2007.
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- ⁷⁰ Daniel Allen. 'China breathes new life into Mongolia.' *Asia Times*, 1 September 2007.
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- ⁷² Bulag (c) p. 3.
- ⁷³ Christopher Kaplonski. 'The Singularity of Memory: The History of Repression and Political Violence in the Mongolian People's Republic.' Lecture at Cambridge University, 12 March 2007.
- ⁷⁴ Anthony Seeger. *Why Suyá Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. p. 137.