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“The most wonderful summer of my life”: Walter Bosshard’s journeys in Inner Mongolia

KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, Bern University, Switzerland

Summary: This paper focuses on the Mongolian journeys of one of the most important representatives of modern photo-journalism, the Swiss journalist and author Walter Bosshard (1892–1975). From 1934 to 1936 he undertook five journeys in Inner Mongolia from which he brought back roughly 2,000 photos, of which only 131 have been published in his travel report *Kühles Grassland Mongolei* (“Fresh grasslands of Mongolia”) of 1938. The book gained wide popularity among Swiss and German readers and some of its photographs have achieved iconic status in modern ethnographic photography. The paper provides a description of Bosshard’s Mongolian journeys and introduces his travel report, analysing the discursive modes of his representation of the Mongolians.

(0.) Introduction

Although some of his photos of Mongolia and Mongolians have achieved iconic status, Walter Bosshard, one of the pioneers of modern photo-journalism, is a less well-known name in the world of Mongolian Studies. He travelled Inner Mongolia in the 1930s and in 1938 published a report about his journeys which is a testimony to his love of Mongolia and the Mongolians. Although Bosshard has been one of the most prolific “journalistic travellers” to Inner Asia and the Far East in the early 20th century, his journeys to Mongolia do not wholly fit into this category. He saw himself as one of the last eye-witnesses of a world soon to vanish, but at the same time he undertook his travels to Mongolia out of a more private motive. Mongolia was for him a refuge from modern civilization, a promise of personal freedom and unconstrained ease (Bosshard 1950, p. 87). In this respect, he may well have been one of the first “touristic” travellers to the country.

After providing a brief overview about Bosshard’s life and his Mongolian journeys, I will introduce the reader to his travel report. This report

gives a unique description of the life of the Inner Mongolians in the first years of the Japanese occupation and the formation of the Japanese satellite state of Manchukuo. However, Bosshard's travelogue is much more than a journalist's report about the social and political transformative processes of the Inner Mongolian regions in the 1930s. Bosshard provided a narration of a people on the verge of a modernity which he associated with an essential loss of innocence. He conjured up a counter-world to this modernity in the tale of the Mongolians as a people in a state of childlike naturalness and purity. I am particularly interested in this tale of innocence and loss which was tremendously successful in the years after the Second World War and for long decades shaped the image of the Mongolians in the German-speaking countries of Switzerland, Germany and Austria. Therefore in my analysis I will focus on the modes of Bosshard's representation of the Mongolians.

(1.) A short sketch of Walter Bosshard's life

Walter Bosshard was born on a farm in the village of Samstagern-Richterswil near Zürich in Switzerland on November 8, 1892. He went to primary school in Samstagern and to secondary school at Richterswil-Hütten, both in the Canton of Zürich. In 1908 he enrolled at the *Lehrerseminar* ("Teacher Seminar") at Küsnacht, Zürich, from which he graduated in 1912. He started his teaching career at the primary school in Feldmeilen in the school term of 1912/13,¹ yet in the same year 1912 he enrolled at Zürich University and later at the University of Florence to study art history. His studies were cut short by the outbreak of the First World War. From 1914 to 1918 he continued working as a teacher in Feldmeilen, but also served in the military in the Ticino. After the war, he was granted a holiday abroad.

1) In their biographical overview Pfunder, Münzer, Hürlimann (1997, p. 11), provide the dates 1914–1918 for Bosshard's time as teacher in Feldmeilen; however, the biographical materials preserved at the *Archiv für Zeitgeschichte* of the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) at Zürich contain teaching reports of the primary school Feldmeilen from the year 1912/13 onwards. Compare Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 2.

In July 1919, he embarked for the Far East. His first stop was Sumatra where he began to work on a coconut- and rubber-plantation. After a short intermezzo in Siam, Bosshard moved to Thailand where he started to trade in gems. His trading company existed till the middle of 1926 when Bosshard sold the business to a company in Schaffhausen/Zürich. In these years he travelled, mainly for business purposes, through the Far East, including Siam, India, Hong Kong, Japan, Java and Australia. During that period he started to take photos, and some of them, illustrating the small articles he wrote, appeared in the Swiss press. The year 1926 Bosshard spent in Europe, where he prepared himself for an expedition to Tibet and Turkestan. He enrolled in a photo and film course in Munich, and in Rome he participated in photo shoots in the Vatican. Furthermore, Bosshard concluded a contract for the publication rights of the prospective expedition photos with the *Schweizer Illustrierten*, that is to say with the Ringier publishing house (Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 9). In January 1927 he joined the German Central Asia (Tibet and Turkestan) expedition under the leadership of the geographer Dr. Emil Trinkler (1896–1931) as official photographer and technical leader. The expedition took him to Kashmir and Ladakh, Chinese Turkestan and the Taklamakan desert, before moving on to Russia. During the expedition, Bosshard wrote a diary which he later reworked into a book, published in 1930 under the title *Durch Tibet und Turkistan. Reisen im unberührten Asien* (“Through Tibet and Turkestan. Travels in unspoiled Asia”). He collected ethnographic objects which he later sold to the Bern Historical Museum. Furthermore, during the expedition Bosshard continuously published expedition reports in German and Swiss newspapers. The reports were accompanied by his photos. These illustrated articles made his name as a photo-journalist. Indeed, he gave the new medium an international reputation.

After his return to Switzerland in 1929 Bosshard held public lectures about Inner Asia, Ladakh and Turkestan, mainly in Zürich, but also in Paris. His articles and lectures added to his increasing public recognition not only in Switzerland but also abroad. Already in March 1930, he started his next venture. On behalf of the *Münchner Illustrierte Zeitung* and the photo agency *Dephot G.m.b.H* (= *Deutscher Photodienst, Berlin*) he travelled through the whole Indian subcontinent, covering more than 20.000 kilometres and interviewing as many as 5.000 Indian people. The

photo-series about this journey, which documented the independence struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi, brought Bosshard world-wide renown. In 1931 he published the results of his journey under the title *Indien kämpft! Das Buch der indischen Welt von heute* (“India fights! The book of the Indian world of today”). In his publication he concentrated on the political forces prevalent in the country, yet he stressed the personal character of his observations which, in his opinion, forbade generalisation (Bosshard 1931: XI). This combination of shrewd political analysis and personal observations and opinion is one of the trademarks of his writings.

From 1931 onwards Bosshard reported from China, first for the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, later for the magazine *Life* and the American news agency *Black Star*.² In Switzerland he reported for the *Zürcher Illustrierte*, *Radio-Zeitung*, and for *NZZ (Neue Zürcher Zeitung)* for which he was foreign correspondent from 1942 to 1956. From 1933 to 1939 Bosshard took permanent residence in Beijing. During that period he reported from nearly every hotspot in the Far East, travelling from Beijing to different locations in China, Singapore, the Philippines and Japan, to name but a few. In 1933 he accompanied the German geographer and explorer Günther Köhler and his expedition to the Koko Nor region. Together with the interpreter “Moses” who had already accompanied the American scholar Owen Lattimore on his journeys through Mongolia, Xinjiang and the Himalayas, they visited the monasteries Kumbum and Labrang.³ During a prolonged stay in Beijing Bosshard undertook his five journeys to Inner Mongolia, and in 1938 published his book *Kühles Grassland Mongolei. Zauber und Schönheit der Steppe* (“Fresh grasslands of Mongolia. Enchantment and beauty of the steppes”). From 1937 to 1939 he reported directly from the Chinese-Japanese war front and in 1938 managed to get an exclusive interview with Mao Tse-tung in his headquarters in Yen-an. In the Second World War, Bosshard, in his function

2) In 1939 he wrote a letter to the German press agency *Deutscher Verlag* with which his book about Mongolia had been just published, and announced that he would no longer publish with German agencies. He could not, as he asserted, compromise with regard to the German politics (Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 55).

3) Münzer, Hürlimann (1997, p. 40); they also list the manuscripts, articles in various newspapers and photo material from this journey.

as official correspondent for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, reported from different, mostly South and East European locations. His experiences at the front lines are documented in his work *Erlebte Weltgeschichte: Reisen und Begegnungen eines neutralen Berichterstatters im Weltkrieg 1939–1945* (“World history experienced: Travels and encounters of a neutral correspondent in the World War 1939–1945”) which was published in 1947. In 1942 Bosshard was sent as correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* to Washington, from where he reported for the following three years. After the war, Bosshard continued his career in the Far East. In 1946 he took residence in Beijing again. In 1949, however, due to the advance of the People’s Liberation Army, he had to leave Beijing hastily, in the process destroying incriminating correspondence and copies of his reports. From 1951 to 1956 Bosshard mainly reported from the Near and Middle East, with short sojourns in the Far East, particularly Korea, where in 1953 he suffered a major injury which led to his immediate return to Switzerland. The long-term effects of his injury led to his early retirement which he lived out alternately in Switzerland, Egypt and Spain. He died in Torremolinos on the 18th of November, 1975. His legacy, consisting of innumerable reports, articles, books, photos and films, is preserved in the *Archiv für Zeitgeschichte* (“Archives for Contemporary History”) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich and the *Schweizerische Stiftung für die Photographie* (“Swiss Foundation for Photography”), also situated in Zürich. There is also some material, mainly correspondence between Bosshard and the *Bern Historical Museum*, which documents the purchase and fate of the Mongolian artefacts, filed away in the museum.

This is a very short account of Bosshard’s rich and adventurous life, leaving out many of his journeys and the numerous books he wrote.⁴ In the German-speaking countries, his book about Mongolia was extremely popular. It was reprinted in 1949 and 1950, and also translated into French (Bosshard 1954a) and Swedish (Bosshard 1954b).⁵ Yet, after his early retirement, Bosshard’s oeuvre was remarkably quickly forgotten by his

4) A more thorough biographical overview is found in Pfrunder, Münzer, Hürliemann 1997, pp. 11–21. Münzer, Hürliemann (1997) provide valuable additional information based on the archival material related to Bosshard.

5) In the meantime, it has also been translated into Mongolian (Bosshard 2014).

contemporaries. This is all the more astonishing because he contributed decisively to the establishment of the medium of photo journalism in the first half of the 20th century, and was one of its prolific representatives (Fulton 1988; Gidal 1993, pp. 98–101). In Switzerland, a first exhibition of his photographic oeuvre took place in 1977,⁶ followed twenty years later by a second exhibition, based on extensive research into Bosshard's legacy.⁷ To my knowledge, the whole Bosshard collection, together with the numerous photographs he brought back from his Mongolian journeys, has only once been shown to a broader public, in an exhibition dedicated to Mongolia in Schaffhausen in 1990.⁸ Recently an exhibition about Bosshard's photographs from China was opened in the *Fotostiftung Schweiz* in Winterthur.⁹

(2.) The Mongolian journeys

Bosshard's travels to Inner Mongolia were not due to work obligations, and it is therefore not surprising that he did not exploit his Mongolian journeys in accompanying newspaper articles. He contributed only three articles on his Mongolian experience.¹⁰ Bosshard went to Mongolia for

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- 6) The exhibition entitled *Walter Bosshard – ein Schweizer Pionier des Photojournalismus. Photographien 1927 bis 1938* was organised by the Swiss Foundation for Photography in 1977 (Stempel 2009, p. 191).
 - 7) The exhibition, entitled *Fernsicht – Walter Bosshard. Ein Pionier des modernen Photojournalismus*, took place in the *Kunsthau Zürich* from November 7, 1997, to February 15, 1998, and in the *Musée de l'Elysée* at Lausanne from June, 26, 1998, to August 31, 1998 (compare Pfrunder, Münzer, Hürlimann 1997).
 - 8) Catalogue to the exhibition: *Die Mongolei. Begegnungen mit einem Volk und seiner Geschichte*, Schaffhausen 1990.
 - 9) It runs from September 2018 to February 2019, the catalogue to the exhibition is Pfrunder 2018.
 - 10) "Bei den Söhnen des Dschingis Khan", *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 1. 8. 1935, No. 31, pp. 1113–1115; „Helft den Mongolen! Die Aufnahmen stammen von unserem Ostasienmitarbeiter Walter Bosshard, der von Peking aus eine Reise durch die schwer heimgesuchten Gebiete unternommen hat“, *Zürcher Illustrierte*, 8. 5. 1936, No. 19, pp. 564–565; „Ein Sportfest der Mongolen“, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 22. 12. 1936, No. 52, pp. 2088–2089.

a very personal reason, following his longing for a world he imagined still untouched by Western civilisation, curiously timeless and unchanging. Yet, despite the romantic fantasies and orientalist stereotypes which are abundant in his book, at the same time he remained a shrewd and politically acute observer. His report of his five journeys to Inner Mongolia gives us a lively impression of how life during the turbulent years of the Japanese aggressive advance into the Mongolian regions had been for the Mongols, what political pressures they had been exposed to, and how they negotiated with the Japanese and Chinese claims to the Mongolian lands. Thus, in Mongolia Bosshard was simultaneously a tourist and a journalist. In his descriptions of Mongolia and its people he created an intricate web of interrelations between “home” and the far away regions he longed for. “Mongolia” as an emotional symbol (Torma 2011, p. 115) conveyed nostalgia for an authenticity of life which he imagined to be lost in the onslaught of modernity. This nostalgia included at once envy (Bosshard 1950, p. 81) and condescension towards this “completely uncivilized” (Bosshard 1950, p. 8) people, but not a meeting on equal terms. More than in his travel report he shows this condescending attitude towards the “natives” in the letters which are preserved in the *Bern Historical Museum*. It comes as no surprise that Bosshard saw his Asian surroundings through an “imperial eye” (Pratt 2008). Although Switzerland never had its own colonies, it participated in the colonial endeavour, for instance through its ethnographers, merchants and travellers who made use of the colonial infrastructure (Zangger 2011, p. 282).

Bosshard's first encounter with Mongolians took place in November 1928 in Kashgar, where he stayed for a short while during his Central Asian expedition. In the crowded market-place he saw six foreign looking men, “in ruby-coloured clothes, with dark-brown sun-burned faces, witty eyes and small, felt-covered hats” (Bosshard 1950, p. 15).¹¹ When he asked where they came from they told him about their home beyond the Gobi desert. One of them maintained that their homeland was the “most beautiful country there is on earth”. Bosshard's reaction is telling: “A new world suddenly arose before my eyes. I tried to imagine this most beautiful spot on earth” (Bosshard 1950, p. 16). But he is told that

11) Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the German are mine.

“the way is long and arduous. You have to ride on camel for many days through the desert, where there is no water, no sheep and no horse milk.” And, Bosshard asks, “if I have endured the heat, the cold, the hunger and the thirst – what then?” – “Then you come to the most beautiful green pastures. [...] Never do you want to return to the world of fixed houses.” (Bosshard 1950, pp. 16–17)

This opening passage of Bosshard’s work *Fresh grasslands of Mongolia. Enchantment and beauty of the steppes* promises nothing less than paradise on earth at the end of a long and dangerous journey. In its narrative structure the setting of the scene is reminiscent of medieval travel narratives which often framed the journey and the distant regions they described in religious terms, relating them to religio-geographical mappings of the world.¹² We will now follow Bosshard on his five journeys to Inner Mongolia. From these journeys he brought back a huge number of photos of which only a few have been published so far.¹³ The exact number of photos is difficult to estimate on the basis of the lists in the *Archiv für Zeitgeschichte*, but roughly summed up the Archives contain

12) Compare, for example, the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, one of the most famous medieval travel books. It tells of the Irish monk Brendan who undertook a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in order to find the island of paradise, the Garden of Eden (Sobecki 2003).

13) His book is illustrated with a selection of 131 photos. Furthermore, some photos were published in newspaper articles, sometimes with no mention of the photographer. Thus, the *Bern Historical Museum* preserves an article of the *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung* (No. 42, 1935, pp. 1422–1423) which under the title “Mongolei – Die schweizerische Film-Expedition in China” (“Mongolia – the Swiss film expedition to China”) published ten of Bosshard’s photos without mentioning his name. The article is curious for yet another reason. It says that “After many adventurous journeys through China and Mongolia and on to Siberia and Russia, the Swiss film expedition has returned to Switzerland. We are eagerly awaiting the cinematic harvest which will offer much new material” (p. 1422). However, a Swiss film expedition to China and Mongolia has never been carried out. It is not clear to which journey the unknown author of this journalistic piece alludes, perhaps to the German Koko Nor expedition of 1933 in which Bosshard participated.

nearly 2,000 photos (positives and negatives).¹⁴ Furthermore, probably during his longer summer sojourn in Naiman Ol,¹⁵ he shot a silent film titled *Mongolei* ("Mongolia"). The film, which is preserved at the *Archiv für Zeitgeschichte*, was finished in 1936 and is divided into two parts of fifteen minutes length each (Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 47, 27.8).

In his book, Bosshard structures his journeys in a very distinct way. In the table of contents he distinguishes three journeys and one "summer stay in the "Eight hill county" Naiman Ol (Bosshard 1950, p. 280). The last mentioned chapter takes up nearly half of his book. The structure reveals that a longer stay in Naiman Ol that is not classified as a journey makes up the core of the book. In this long chapter, Bosshard creates his own vision of Mongolia and its people. Naiman Ol is presented as a timeless space, where life takes on a dreamlike quality. The modern world rarely intrudes into this space, which encapsulates a counter vision to modernity. In his description of the "Eight hill county" Bosshard creates a "textual space" (Green 2014, p. 3) that is shaped through the discourse about the blessings and curses of the civilising process in the first half of the 20th century. "Nature" used both as a descriptive category and as a metaphor for a peaceful state of mind plays the dominant role: "In golden twilight the steppe enveloped us. The late full moon disappeared over the gentle hills to the south. In the narrow enclosure the sheep and the calves rested. They slept, breathing softly. The warm animal vapours were sweet and heavy like wine. The animals dreamed." (Bosshard 1950, p. 178)

14) Münzer, Hürlimann (1997, pp. 45–47): Photos No. 1–600, photos No. 601–1051, 1052–1206, photos No. 1207–1825; some separate photos, glued on loose paper from the journey to Jehol; 3 + 11 photos, a couple of photos which are similar or identical to the ones published in his book; 5 photos of the Delewa Gegen; 38 diapositives of Mongolian texts; 2 films (part 1 +2) and 5 security copies of each. All in all the photographic legacy of Bosshard consists of 20,000 objects, positives and negatives, diapositives, glass plates, big albums with prints, and films.

15) This time frame follows from the second part of the film which shows the exposure of a corpse on the steppes, described in Bosshard's book in the chapter "Summer sojourn in the Eight-hill-county" (Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 47).

(2.1.) THE FIRST JOURNEY

Bosshard's first journey to Inner Mongolia took place in 1934. He had already established contact with the so called "Mongolia Swedes", Swedish missionaries who had come to Mongolia with the *Swedish Alliance Mission* (Mossberg 2006; Horlemann 2013, pp. 179–180) in the late 19th century and since then had settled there and were mostly well integrated into Mongolian society. The most prominent member of this small Swedish community was Frans August Larson (1870–1957), the so called "Duke of Mongolia",¹⁶ who was a life-long friend of the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin whose Sino-Swedish Expedition he joined in the years 1927 to 1930 (Odelberg 2003; Sidenwall 2009, pp. 93–114). In his home in Beijing, Bosshard received Larson and the Mongolian Dilowa Gegen (1884–1964)¹⁷ as his guests probably in late winter or early spring 1934. In May 1934, Bosshard together with the American author John Marquand (1893–1960) travelled to the summer residence of Larson, the famous *Čayan küriy-e süm-e*, a former Buddhist temple, in Bosshard's spelling *Dschagan-Kurian-Suma* (Bosshard 1950, p. 45). In a letter dated August 21, 1963, to Professor Henking from the *Bern Historical Museum*,¹⁸ he maintains: "I expressly talk about the temple of Dschagan Kurya-suma, because the building was not a monastery, but originally, before the premises were occupied by Larson as his homestead, only 1–2 lama priests attended to it, and it served exclusively the pilgrims and caravan traders in saying their prayers" (Bosshard 1963). In the same letter he remarks that the temple is located approximately one hundred to one hundred and fifty kilometres north of Kalgan, a bit off the big caravan route from Kalgan to Ulaanbaatar.¹⁹

16) Larson 1930, translated into German 1936 (Larson 1936).

17) For his life see Diluv Khutagt 2009.

18) My sincere thanks go to the curator of the ethnographical collection of the *Bernisches Historisches Museum*, Dr. Alban von Stockhausen, for the courtesy and help he extended me in my search for documents pertaining to Bosshard in the archives of the Museum.

19) Unfortunately, there is no further information about this temple available. A temple of this name is not mentioned in Charleux 2006 who prepared an inventory of the temples and monasteries of Inner Mongolia. Compare also Heissig 1961/62, p. 558.

Their route took them from Beijing through the Nan K'ou pass north of Beijing (Bosshard's *Nankau*) to Kalgan by train, where they switched their means of transport and secured seats in the car of a Swedish missionary, Martinsson,²⁰ which brought them to their destination. From the travel report it is not clear for how long they stopped in *Čayan küriy-e süm-e*, and the exact dates of their stay could also not be ascertained. Probably they stayed only a couple of weeks. During their sojourn at Larson's residence they visited the steppe residence of Prince De Wang, in Bosshard's spelling Prince Teh-Wang, that is Demchugdongrub (1902–1966) from the Sönid Right Banner, the leader of the Inner Mongolian independence movement under the Japanese (Jagchid 1999; Atwood 2004, pp. 140–142), and Bosshard struck up a kind of friendship with him.

(2.2.) THE SECOND JOURNEY

Bosshard started his second journey to Inner Mongolia five months later, in September 1934, this time together with two Swiss acquaintances that were on a tour through the Far East, namely the economist Paul Keller (1898–1973), a professor at the University of St. Gallen, and Pablo (Paul) Bangerter, the son of a wealthy Swiss industrialist. Paul Bangerter was a former pupil of Rudolf Zeller, then curator of the ethnographical collection in the *Bern Historical Museum*. The correspondence between Zeller and Bosshard²¹ attests the fact that Bosshard is well aware of the financial resources of his travel companion, and intentionally and repeatedly suggests to Bangerter that he acquire ethnographical objects for the museum.²²

The companions travelled in the “Gobi express”, a Ford truck which was rebuilt so that people could sleep in it. Once more they took the

20) No further information is available about this missionary. He is mentioned by name in Hedin (1933, p. 148), and he is also included in a group photo (Hedin 1933, opposite p. 153).

21) The carbon-copies of the original letters are preserved in the archives of the *Bernisches Historisches Museum*.

22) Zeller was particularly keen to acquire a yurt. The museum's financial means, however, were modest, therefore it depended on donations.

route through Kalgan on to Čayan küriy-e süm-e, and from there to the missionary station Gul-Dschagan,²³ onwards to Dolonnor and back to Kalgan. On this journey Bosshard's friend Bangerter bought the complete small library of Čayan küriy-e, all in all 82 books of which 61 are in the Mongolian language, and 21 are written in Tibetan.²⁴ Furthermore, he bought a *ger*, complete with all furnishings, and many other small Mongolian objects, all together for a sum of 400 dollars.²⁵ The goods were shipped via Marseille to Bern, and arrived in the museum on May, 16, 1935: "The boxes from Peking are here. Yesterday we received the report; in the afternoon the revision could take place and today in the morning they were transferred and in the afternoon unpacked and provisionally laid out in my old office (...). Very interesting objects. The monastic library splendid."²⁶ Bangerter generously donated everything to the museum. However, a letter dated August 27, 1935, attests that some objects were given back to him.²⁷ In 1967, Bangerter finally donated them to the museum (Ethnographische Abteilung 1967). The books and objects are nowadays preserved in the Department for Ethnography of the *Bernisches Historisches Museum*, making up a good part of the Mongolian collection of the museum.²⁸

23) Sven Hedin (1933, p. 150) gives a detailed description of this missionary station.

It might be identical with the station Gottjaggan which was active from 1922 to 1943.

24) The Mongolian books have been described by Heissig 1961/1962.

25) According to the receipt preserved in the museum's archives.

26) In German: "Die Kisten aus Peking sind da. Gestern kam der Bericht; am Nachm. konnte die Revision stattfinden und heute morgen wurden sie ins Museum über und nachm. ausgepackt und in meinem alten Büro (...) vorläufig aufgebahrt. Sehr interessante Sachen. Die Klosterbibliothek grossartig. [...]."²⁶ The carbon-copy of the letter is not signed, however, its sender is in all probability Zeller.

27) The list of these objects includes "15 lamaist symbols", 25 offering bowls (about which the sender remarks that he has added a few, probably from the museum's stock, a prayer drum, one of the two temple trumpets, and a "sacred book" (Ethnographische Abteilung, 27/VIII/1935).

28) Of the 185 objects Bangerter donated to the Bern Historical Museum, 51 originate from Mongolia (Nos. 58–105, 179–180, 185 (Bernisches Historisches Museum 2016, pp. 12–21, 36–37). In the Museum, they form part of the collection of Walter Bosshard (Inventar Ethnografische Sammlung, 09/05/2016).

(2.3.) THE THIRD JOURNEY

Almost a year elapsed before Bosshard undertook his third journey in late 1935, (Bosshard 1950, p. 113) together with the Mongolia Swede Torgny Oberg.²⁹ They went by car through Hohhot (Kweihua) and Bailingmiao (Mo. Batu khaalga) which since 1935 served as the base of Prince De's Mongolian Congress for Autonomy (Atwood 2002, pp. 977–978, 1011).³⁰ During his stay Bosshard travelled by horse through the steppe, accompanied by his Mongolian guide and, as he calls him (Bosshard 1950, p. 221, 271) *guru* Arasch. Bosshard's narration about his three-day-stay in the steppe concentrates on Arasch. He was a lama, but he had a wife and child, as was customary among the Mongolians. Testimonies from ordinary monks about this particular arrangement are rare, and by imparting Arasch's self-reproach to his readers Bosshard provides a glimpse into the conflicting normative textures of Mongolian society of that time. The unresolved conflict between the prescriptive norms of the Buddhist *sangha* and the social demands of a family man drove Arasch to his decision to undertake a pilgrimage to Wutaishan (Charleux 2015). However, he quickly abstained from this endeavour when he learnt that his "servant and sister" (Bosshard 1950, p. 130) expected a second child from him.

(2.4.) THE FOURTH JOURNEY

A couple of months later, in the winter of 1935/36, Bosshard travelled again to the steppe. The immediate reason was the harsh winter of that year which had caused a famine among people and cattle. Bosshard was asked to help. This journey, entitled *Die kalte Hölle* ("The cold hell") in his

29) Torgny Oberg is known for his book *Karavanklockornas land* ("The Land of the Caravan Bells"), published in 1957 in Stockholm (Folkets i Bilds förlag). He was well acquainted with Owen Lattimore and is frequently mentioned in the latter's *Mongol Journeys* (Lattimore 1941).

30) On May 31 of the same year, Bosshard met Prince De Wang again at a press conference in Beijing which the Prince had convened (Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 45).

book, is a very touching account of the harsh living conditions when a *jud* (Stolpe 2010/2011), a particularly severe winter in which large numbers of livestock perish due to the weather conditions, occurs in the steppes. Bosshard counts his two journeys of the years 1935/36 as one journey. Thus, the events of his fourth journey are part of his chapter entitled *Dritte Reise* (“Third journey”).

Bosshard does not tell his story in a linear way. On his fourth journey he sets out by train from Beijing “from an already awakening spring landscape to snow and ice” (Bosshard 1950, p. 136). In the next sub-chapter, he recounts the efforts of the Swedish missionaries to support the impoverished Mongols. They bought cows in order to reinstall the supply of milk among the people. Thereafter Bosshard accompanied the missionary Joel Eriksson (1890–1987)³¹ to the Western Dörbed region to deliver twenty cows. The officials of the local government and the destitute Mongolians were supposed to meet the missionary on the 15th of August near the temple of Murgetschi (Bosshard 1950, p. 142). This date can only relate to August 1936. However, Bosshard spent the summer of 1936 in Naiman Ol, the “Eight hill county”, departing in June of that year from his Beijing home (Bosshard 1950, p. 160). He does not give an exact date for his return, but it must have been late summer, perhaps the beginning of August, because he tells us that “the summer was drawing to its end. The nights started to get chilly [...]” (Bosshard 1950, p. 261). Therefore, we may assume that Bosshard accompanied the missionary after his return from Naiman Ol.

(2. 5.) THE FIFTH JOURNEY

On June first, 1936, Bosshard set out on his one longer stay in Inner Mongolia. Via Kalgan he travelled once again to Larson’s residence and

31) He worked as a doctor among the Mongols, see Hedin (1933, pp. 148–149), and Bosshard 1950, p. 59. In 1985 he donated his photographic legacy, consisting of more than 800 negatives, to Uppsala University Library. Some of his photographs are published on the internet, alongside a biographical sketch of his life, see <https://uppsalalibraryculturalheritage.wordpress.com/tag/swedish-mongolian-mission/> (last accessed 18. 05. 2017).

from there on to Naiman Ol, the “eight hills” where for two months he stayed alone in his own *ger* at an old missionary station. Nearby, however, lived his friend Arasch with whom he explored the surrounding steppes. When the political situation deteriorated (Atwood 2002; 2004, pp. 247–248; Narangoa 2001) he departed via Čayan küriy-e süm-e to Beijing, a journey which once more took nearly a month. When he finally arrived in Beijing, he was surprised to read in an English newspaper the headlines “Anxiety is felt for Bosshard somewhere in Mongolia!” (Bosshard 1950, p. 262). This news was picked up by the *Zürcher Illustrierte* under the headline “Vermisst!” (“Missing!”) (Münzer, Hürlimann 1997, p. 44). His prolonged stay in Naiman Ol in complete isolation from the modern world had led to rumours that he had been captured by bandits. This was to be his last journey to Mongolia. He never again visited the country, but it remained his country of longing, as he tells us in his travel report in many touching words.

(3.) The unchanging world of Mongolian nomads

In his political reports and articles Bosshard was a keen and politically well-informed observer. Still, in his account about Mongolia and the Mongolians politics play a minor role. True, he reports about the constant threat the Inner Mongolians had to face in the thirties of the 20th century: in the north, the Japanese prepared (and succeeded in) their invasion, in the south more and more Chinese farmers poured into the steppes, and everywhere competing warlords took over in a rapidly disintegrating country (Atwood 2004, p. 246–247). Bosshard comments on these political vicissitudes and also the moves and reactions of the Mongolian princes, especially Demchugdongrub, to cope with the increasingly desperate situation of the Mongolians. But he was much more concerned with the Mongolians and their “care-free life, the cheerfulness and that blessed [...] hospitality” (Bosshard 1950, p. 15) that he ascribes to them. From his point of view the Mongolians are a people “born from the steppes” and “incapable of any culture” (Bosshard 1950, p. 8, 12).

In his description he evokes the glorious Mongolian past, contrasting it to the dismal present. He paints the picture of a warlike people

that under the unceasing energy of their great leader Chinggis Khan conquered the known world but whose martial spirit had been broken by “pious lama-priests” (Bosshard 1950, p. 13).³² According to him, this “completely uncivilized people” (Bosshard 1950, p. 8) that remained in a state of child-like innocence and simplicity, now suffered the brutal fate of being expelled from paradise. They were catapulted from “a past lost in dreams into the brutal present” and as a consequence “their carefree life, their cheerfulness and hospitality” are relics of this past (Bosshard 1950, p. 15). His description of a Mongolian ethnic essence is at the same time loving and condescending, a paternalistic attitude well known from a by-gone colonial period. He understands himself as the chronicler of an unchanging nomadic world which is on the verge of being destroyed and whose fate is sealed: “What would the future bring this people that wanted to enjoy life in the steppes peacefully and undisturbed? The dark clouds on the horizon did not promise anything positive, and I felt as if the Mongolians had already spent all their life-energy which would be needed for the fight for freedom and independence” (Bosshard 1950, p. 266). On the one hand, this dark romanticism has to be understood against the backdrop of a widespread cultural criticism of technological progress in the intellectual circles of Western Europe at that time (compare also Stempel 2009, p. 280). On the other hand, Bosshard’s narrative is informed by the specific European historical experience of travel-in-space as travel-in-time. In the era of evolutionism in the late 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the progress or backwardness of a people was spatially projected onto the globe (Torma 2011, p. 14). Movement in space often entailed movement through time, and Non-European places were usually situated in the past. In consequence, this specific entanglement of time and space led to a “denial of co-evalness” and consigned Non-European peoples to an “imaginary waiting room of history” (Chakrabarty 2008, p. 8). The travel reports were part of this cultural technology of European self-affirmation.

32) This is one of the distinctive tropes in the European discourse about the Mongolians. Already Marco Polo complained that the warlike character of the Mongolians suffered when they converted to either Buddhism or Islam (*The Travels* 1982, p. 101). Compare also Kollmar-Paulenz 2003, pp. 267–271.

Bosshard's journeys into the world of the Mongolians are time-space-travels, from the present swift-flowing civilisation to an unchanging and timeless past in which the boundaries between myth and reality, past and present, are frequently blurred. Thus, when the author encounters the troops of prince De Wang riding along, he evokes the "hordes of Dschingis-Khan" (Bosshard 1950, p. 62) that ride straight into the sinking sun (Bosshard 1950, p. 65). This image serves as a metaphor of both the past and the future of the Mongolians: "[...] as the evening rays threw their golden light over the steppe, it was as if once again they wanted to recollect the glory and splendour of bygone times" (Bosshard 1950, p. 65).

Some passages in Bosshard's travel report have a dream-like quality. In the sub-chapter *Nächtlicher Spuk im Grasland* ("Nightly apparition in the grasslands") it is ultimately not clear whether he sees or only dreams of warriors who, having died on foreign battlefields, return home to help their people against new enemies: "When after a while which seemed to me like a small eternity I woke up, ghost-like horsemen silently rode over the steppe as far as the eye could see. [...] Was this a dream, a sensory illusion?" (Bosshard 1950, p. 80).

Bosshard himself sums up his experience: "For centuries, Mongolia remained as Marco Polo once described the country: of breath-taking beauty and romance, of a silence that brought to mind how much modern technology, the cars, radio, Jazz and rattling trains have robbed us of. And the rare people one met! One wants to envy them their unpretentiousness if one did not know how difficult it is to bear. During this short journey I often felt as if I had fallen asleep over an old history book and as if everything had been a dream." (Bosshard 1950, pp. 81–82).

In her analysis of German expeditions to Central Asia in the first decades of the 20th century, Franzisca Torma asserted that the travelers undertook short time-travels because they believed that they could encounter the lost qualities of time in actual space. Thus, through the medium of the travel report particular localities and social spaces were established as relics of an otherwise lost authenticity (Torma 2011, p. 110). The travel reports created a *chronotopology* of a vanishing world, a synthesis of space and time in the narrative. Bosshard creates just such a *chronotopos* (Bachtin 2008), a space-time which is informed by the oppositional perception of time and space for which the European present builds an

important reference point. Space and time are completely entangled in his narrative, and time emerges as the fourth dimension of space: “The present pushed forward from the periphery of the town, where the train station was, through the small lanes to the old-fashioned caravanserais in whose courtyards precious bales of merchandise lay close to kneeling camels and men.” (Bosshard 1950, p. 28)

(4.) Conclusion

In his travel report Bosshard provides us on the one hand with a thick ethnographic description about life in the Inner Mongolian regions in the 1930s. Together with the abundance of photos his account is a very important ethnographic source that up to now has not been made full use of in research about the history of Inner Mongolia. On the other hand, his travel report can also be read as evidence of the enduring European discourse about the “perennial nomad” that since the times of the first travellers to the Khans included a dose of critical self-reflection about the failures of their home society (Kollmar-Paulenz 2003, pp. 257–258, 263–266; Kollmar-Paulenz 2013, pp. 279–289). Nearly every well-worn trope, from the freedom-loving and carefree nomad to the “wild hordes” of Chinggis Khan, can be found in the book, stressing the happiness and contentment of a life without “clocks and time-tables, address-books and telegraph offices” (Bosshard 1950, p. 230). These generously applied tropes of a simple life have a strong aestheticizing effect, but they also manage to draw the reader into the landscape and the people, much more than a dry description would be able to do. For its readers, the Book opened up an alien world. This was particularly the case in war-time Switzerland that was enclosed from all sides by hostile powers and in consequence withdrew into itself. In a letter of 1996 to the *Archiv für Zeitgeschichte* an elder woman still remembers the impact Bosshard’s book had on her: “For us, his “Fresh Grasslands of Mongolia” has been something of a cult-book” (Stempel 2009, p. 254). Together with its lively style which the author achieved by liberally using direct speech throughout his narrative, this was probably one of the reasons why the book was such a tremendous success in Switzerland, Germany and Austria, and later also in France and Sweden.

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Etiological legends in publications and archives of Russian travelers to Siberia and Mongolia: revealing special “religious” version of ATU981-type etiological legend

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Summary: The article deals with archival and published materials of Russian travelers to Siberia and Mongolia in the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Its main aim is to underline the importance of these materials for reconstructing the folk-narrative tradition of the period. The author will attempt to achieve this goal by revealing etiological stories and motifs in publications and archives. An attempt is made to reconstruct the etiological narrative of ATU 981-type on the basis of secondary sources – articles on ethnography and travel reports.

Introduction

Etiological narratives (*domog ülger*, Мон. домог үлгэр) present a ‘folk’ point of view on how things came to be the way they are or were at a given time or under certain conditions (El-Shamy 1997, p. 257). These narratives are widely spread among all Mongolian peoples in Kalmykia, Buryatia and other regions of close-knit settlement of the Buryats in the Russian Federation, Mongolia and in all regions where Mongols and Oirats reside in close-knit settlements in the People’s Republic of China. In some publications, these stories are seen as a part of animal epics (Basangova 2003), while others distinguish these narratives as a separate genre (Tserensodnom 1982, Tserensodnom 1989).

Some of the etiological legends turned out to be unnoticed by researchers into the texts of Mongolian folklore, published in Russian in the second half of the XIX – early XX century. They were neither labeled as folk

etiological legends, nor even mentioned in catalogues of a 'folk narrative' type. However, the etiological legends of the Mongols have many features in common with folktales. These are: traditional narrative formulas (i.e. inception, finale etc.), common characters, narration style and, in some cases, typical narrative schemes.

None of the four Mongolian etiological texts published by the famous Russian traveler Grigory Potanin (1835–1920) in 1881 (Potanin 1881) is included in the catalogue of fairy tales of Mongolian peoples compiled by L. Lörincz (Lörincz 1979). Only one of the stories mentioned refers to the story-type described by Lörincz, "The Swallow and the Bumblebee", while the rest represent unknown types. The same situation happened with etiological stories, published by Potanin in the editions of 1883 (Potanin 1883) and 1893 (Potanin 1893). 15 Khalkha-Mongolian and Tibetan etiological narratives, published by Russian officer Adam Bennigsen (1882–1946) in 1912 (Bennigsen 1912), are also omitted from the catalogue.

Even a cursory analysis of Potanin's 1881 edition shows that it contains at least 8 etiological narratives written down by Mongolian peoples and at least 28 etiological stories written down by the Turkic peoples in Siberia and Mongolia. An overview of Adam Benningsen's publication shows that it contains 21 Mongolian and 4 Turkic etiological stories, written down in Khalkha presumably in 1911 or 1912. These observations suggest that published materials of Russian travelers may prove to be an important source for the history of the folk etiology of the Mongols. This type of source – published or unpublished texts and data on them, is known in Russian folkloristic as "first sources". In the case of Mongolian folk narratives, written down by Russian travellers, the first sources can be subdivided into two groups. Firstly the texts, written down in Mongolian, using different types of transcriptions. Secondly, Russian retellings of Mongolian texts.

Legends included in ethnography reports

The importance of "first sources", created by Russian travellers, was first mentioned by folklorists from Mongolia. They managed to reveal the characteristics that never changed in a lot of Mongolian folktale- and

etiological narrative-types by using publications in Russian, made by Grigory Potanin, Adam Bennigsen, Matvei Khangalov (1858–1918) and others (Tserensodnom 1982, Tserensodnom 1989).

Many folk narratives, published by Russian travellers captured all the attention of folklorists. But materials on ethnography also turned out to be very useful for revealing etiological narrative-types. Articles on ethnography, reports of travellers etc. are known in Russian folklore studies as “second sources”. Being written mainly in Russian, these sources are also important for the reconstruction of the Mongolian folk narrative tradition.

For example, this is the case with three Buryat variants of the narrative of the story ATU (Uther 2004) 981 “Gratitude of the rescued old man” (Belova, Kabakova 2015, pp. 443–445), published by Matvei Khangalov in 1888 (Khangalov 1958, pp. 29–32) in his work on the hunting practices among the Buryats of the Balagan region.

The Khalkha version of the story of the above-mentioned type ATU 981 is given in the report of the leader of the Gobi Party of the Scientific Committee of the MPR Vladimir Kazakevich (1896–1937) about his journey, carried out in 1924. In total, the report contains retellings of 13 folklore texts 6 of which are etiological legends. This document is kept in the archives of the Institute of History and Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Mongolia and until recently was not widely known (Kuz'min, Svinin 2000). Though the text of the report is written mainly in Russian, with a lack of Mongolian words and phrases, given in Cyrillic transcription, I would claim that its importance equals that of “first sources”. Etiological legends, incorporated into the text of the report, show the very existence of narratives in the everyday life of mid-1920s Mongolia. Now I will make an attempt to show how helpful “second sources” are, in the form of an article on ethnography and a travel report, in revealing the exact type of etiological legend.

Disclosure of ATU-981-type etiological legend from publications on Buryat ethnography

In the article of the Buryat scientist Matvei Khangalov, devoted to the custom of the ritual hunting of wolverines called *zagete-aba* (Bur. зэгэтэ-аба),

the custom of *uhe unguhae* (Bur. үхэ үнгүлхэ) is mentioned. It consisted in the fact that an old man, who had reached an advanced age (about 70 years), had to be killed in a certain way (Khangelov 1958, p. 11). The reason for the existence of such a cruel tradition was outlined when the researcher considered the nomadic way of life that the Buryats had been pursuing in the past. The lack of adequate transport made it difficult for old people and the entire group in which they were to move (Khangelov 1958, pp. 11–12). As an appendix to this article, first published in 1888, Khangelov gave three legends, two of which confirm, and the third denies, the presence of this rite among the Buryats (Khangelov 1958, pp. 29–32).

The first legend is given in the form of a detailed narrative with the following content:

Nine sons of the *Western Hat* (Bur. Баруун хаад), living in the sky, and the ruler *Esege Malan* (Bur. Эсэгэ Малаан [тэнгэри]), who lives on earth, compete in construction. The first tries to build a cast-iron bridge, the second – the palace of *Beejing-suglan* (Bur. Бээжинг-суглаан). The opposing sides cannot finish what they started. *Esege Malan* cannot complete the roof. Every day he calls on one subject to appreciate his work. The subject indicates a failure, the roof itself is destroyed and the *Esege Malan* executes the subject. It is the turn of the young man who hides his father from the rite of the *uhe unguhae*, to evaluate the work of *Esages Malan*. The young man, on the advice of his father, says that the work is ready and it ends magically. The young man explains everything to the ruler who abolishes the custom, since the old ones can give good and useful advice to young people. As a result of the dispute won, the ruler goes to heaven, and the sons of the *Western Hat* – to the land (Khangelov 1958, pp. 29–31).

The second story Khangelov recorded from the Balagan Buryats:

The ruler learns that there is a golden cup on the bottom of the sea. In order to get it, he sends his subjects one after another, but they always drown. It is the turn of the young man who hides his father from the rite of *uhe unguhae*, diving to get the cup. Father explains to him that the cup is on a mountain that stands on the seashore, and in the water its reflection is visible. A young man climbs the mountain and takes out the cup. The ruler asks the young man how he learned about the location of the cup. The young man tells him in detail about the conversation with his father. The ruler forbids the custom, since the old people are useful to young ones with their advice and instructions (Khangelov 1958, pp. 31–32).

The third legend, in which the presence of such a ritual is denied by the Buryats, is the shortest. In its contents it is similar to the second:

The ruler of a certain kingdom *Guli-khan* (Bur. Гүүли-хаан) learns that at the bottom of the sea you can see a golden dish. In order to get it, he sends his subjects one by one, but they always drown. It is the turn of the young man, who hides his father from the rite of *uhe ungulhae*, to dive for the dish. The father explains to him that the dish is on a mountain that stands on the top of a tree, and in the water one sees its reflection. A young man climbs a tree and takes the dish. The ruler asks the young man how he learned about the location of the dish. The young man tells him in detail about the conversation with his father and the ruler abolishes the custom (Khangalov 1958, pp. 29–32).

The three texts considered above were cited by the researcher as auxiliary material for his ethnographic reconstruction. They were published in Russian, without reference to sources or time and place of recording.

Unfortunately, relying only on the Russian texts of legends, given in Khangalov's publication, makes it possible to consider only the general structure of their content. But this is enough to try to find similar stories in the folklore traditions of other peoples of the world.

In the indexes of international fairy tales the story of how the custom of killing old people was abandoned is mentioned by the ATU 980 "Ungrateful Son" and ATU981 "The wisdom of the hidden old man saves the kingdom" (Belova, Kabakova 2015, pp. 443–445).

For a long time, anthropologists debated the extent to which this folk story reflected the real practice of ritual murder of the elderly. It was believed that the rite existed, but nowadays this view has been questioned (Belova, Kabakova 2015, p. 443).

Three ATU981 type texts, quoted by Khangalov, help us to identify the plot's variable elements within a particular ethnic tradition. At the level of content this is: first, the nature of the difficult task that the main characters need to carry out, and secondly, the name of the ruler interacting with the young man saving his father from death. On the contextual level, legends can recognize the existence of this custom among people in the past, or deny it. The second variable contextual element is the religious, or secular nature of the story.

Disclosure of ATU-981-type etiological legend from travel report to Khalkha

The search for parallels to stories about how to stop killing the elderly in stories from other Mongolian peoples led me to the Archive of the Institute of History and Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Mongolia, where there exists a document compiled in 1925 by the Soviet Mongolist Vladimir Kazakevich. He was the head of a small expedition of the Scientific Committee of the MPR, who worked in the unexplored areas of the south of modern Mongolia from July 9 to December 6, 1924.

The 88-page report, compiled by Kazakevitch in 1925 (Archive, Fund 7, Inventory 3, Unit 1 v), contains information on various aspects of Mongolian life in the early 1920s, including retelling Mongolian etiological stories in Russian.

A notable “legend”, narrating the appearance of a wall in the Gobi locality of Ikh-Hongorj (Mon. Их Хонгорж) dates back to September 6, 1924:

“In those ancient times, when there was no religion in *Khalkha*. *Bator-hara-janjin* (Mon. Баатар-хар-жанжин) once, being on a hunt, fell from his horse and uttered the words “*Burkhan*” (Mon. Бурхан), “*Dalai Lama*” (Mon. Далай лам), “*Banchen-Bogdo*” (Mon. Панчен богдо) and “*Gurban-Erdeni*” (Mon. Гурван эрдэнэ), without understanding their meaning. Surprised at these wonderful words, he asked his attendants to explain to him their meaning, but the people around could not answer. So several days passed, a young man from his entourage came to the prince and explained the mysterious words to the bewildered lord. The fact is that at that time there was a cruel custom of killing parents when they reached old age. When this time came, the children were to push into the parents’ mouth sheep’s fat to choke them. But the young boy loved his father so much that he secretly dug a deep hole away from everyone, where he hid the old man, bringing him food at night. The father then explained to him mysterious words, which the young man told to *Bator-hara-janjin*. The latter travelled to Tibet, where he went to all the monasteries and worshipped all the great lamas. On the way back, he took with him one living *Burkhan – Jebzun-damba-gegen* (Mon. Жабцан-дамба-гэгээн) and one statue of Buddha to spread the religion in *Khalkha*. Despite *Burkhan’s* size in terms of human capacity, *Bator-hara-janjin* carried it in his hands. However, while still in Tibet he became very tired, stopped to rest and put the *Burkhan* on the ground. When, after resting, he began to get ready for continuing his journey, he could not tear off the *Burkhan*, which had grown into the ground. Angered, the prince snatched his sword

and cut it in half, and the upper piece suddenly became gold, and the bottom turned out to be silver. The golden top, with chest and head, *Bator-hara-janjin* brought to Urga, where it is in the monastery of *Dzun-hure* (Мон. Зүүн хүрээ), and the silver remains in Tibet. Beforehand, before the trip to Tibet, the prince built *Yunshobukherim* (Мон. Үншөөв-хэрэм), in which he collected and stored water necessary for his journey” (Archive, Fund 7, Inventory 3, Unit 1 v, pp. 63–64).

Like the legend, quoted by Khangalov, the text recorded by Kazakevich has a religious context. The first, among other things, explains how the deity of the mythological pantheon of the Buryats, *Esege Malan Tengri*, ascended to heaven, the second, being a local legend, tells how Buddhism was adopted in *Khalkha*.

Disclosure of special “religious” version of ATU981-type etiological legend, common to Khalkha and Buryats

Below I will try to compare the first of the Buryat stories about the abolition of the custom of killing old people with the story recorded by Vladimir Kazakevich in Gobi:

Buryat story	Khalkha story
<i>Outset</i>	
Ruler of the Earth competes with Rulers of Heaven in building a house.	The ruler goes hunting.
<i>Difficult task, the failure of which can cause death to the character</i>	
Ruler of the Earth needs help of his subjects to complete the construction of a magic palace. Every subject who fails to help him dies.	The ruler unexpectedly utters religious terms, but does not understand their meaning. He asks his subjects to explain the terms.
<i>Hiding an old man from the rite of the uhe ungulhae by his son</i>	
The son feels compassion for his father and hides him in a box for several years.	The son feels compassion for his father and hides in a deep hole, bringing him food at night.
<i>A piece of advice from the saved old man</i>	
Hidden old man advises what to do.	Hidden old man explains the meaning of the terms.

<i>Solving of the difficult task</i>	
The young man follows the advice of an old man and the construction of the palace is completed.	The young man retells the explanation of the old man to the ruler.
<i>Dialogue between the ruler and the young man with an explanation of the appearance of the knowledge about how to solve difficult task</i>	
The Ruler of the Earth asks the young man about the source of his knowledge and the young man says that it comes from his father, saved from the deadly custom.	There is no mention of dialogue.
<i>Abolition of the custom</i>	
The custom of killing old people is abolished by the ruler's order.	There is no mention of the abolition of the custom.
<i>"Religious" ending</i>	
The Ruler of the Earth becomes <i>tengri</i> (Bur. тэнгэри) – the Ruler of Heaven and Rulers of Heaven (Nine sons of the <i>Western Hat</i>) become Rulers of the Earth.	<i>Khalkha</i> adopts Buddhism.

Common elements of both Buryat and Khalkha “religious” versions of the narrative about “The wisdom of the hidden old man” are:

- A reference to the times when there was no proper religious tradition.
- A detailed description of the custom of killing old people.
- Merciful son.
- A difficult task to be solved.
- Grateful old man, who suggests solution of the difficult task.
- Proclamation of old people as bearers of wisdom.
- Adoption of contemporary religious tradition.

Fluctuating elements are:

- The type a difficult task.
- The presence / absence of the motive of the imminent death of a merciful son in the event of failure in solving a difficult task.
- The place where the old man is hidden.

Based on the comparison above, I can make an assumption about the existence of a special version of the ATU981 etiological narrative type among Buryats and Khalkha, in which the abolition of the custom of killing the elderly legitimizes the establishment of a “proper” religious tradition. The sources reviewed confirm the existence of this narrative type between 1888 and 1924 in the territory stretching from the Baikal Region to the Gobi desert.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to underline several features of the Buryat and Khalkha ATU981-type etiological legend, written down by Russian travellers.

First, the stories were built into narratives of other genres. In the case of stories about the origin of religion, this is an indispensable condition for the existence of this story. It should be followed by a narration about how this or that religious tradition was established.

Secondly, all the above texts were perceived by collectors in the late 19th - early 20th century as sources for ethnographic research, so they provide not enough information for folklorists (i.e. data on informants, exact place and time of writing).

However, this sample, based on deriving ATU981-type stories from “second sources” (i.e. articles on ethnography and descriptions of travels, kept at the archives), shows how useful for the reconstruction of folklore narrative tradition these sources are.

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“*Goddesses Made of Gold Lasciviously Copulate on Altars*” – Perceptions of Mongolia in Czechoslovak Travel Writing from the 1950s

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Summary: This paper discusses the perception of Mongolia in the travelogues written by Czech and Slovak pro-regime authors who visited this country during the 1950s. The author focuses on the political background of these travels within the context of the proletarian internationalism promoted in the socialist camp. The author highlights the reappearing motives of these travel accounts such as the positive portrayal of the people, the perception of the landscape, description of the physical features of the Mongols, construction of dichotomies between the gloomy pre-revolutionary past and the bright present, and the negative treatment of religion. The final part provides a brief comparative analysis with the travelogues from China in the 1950s which utilized similar narrative strategies.

1. Introduction

The 1950s represent the first period of very intense political, economic, technical, educational and cultural cooperation between Czechoslovakia and Mongolia. These contacts were the result of the ideological proximity of the two countries which had become members of the socialist camp under the leadership of the Soviet Union. The Mongolian People's Republic became the second socialist country in the world in 1924 and Czechoslovakia became a socialist country after the seizure of power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in February 1948. Official diplomatic relations between these two countries were established in April

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1950 and in 1957 the Czechoslovak-Mongolian Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance was signed on 8 April 1957 which was followed by an Agreement on Cultural Cooperation signed on 10 March 1958 (Srba; Schwarz 2015, pp. 343–344). This legislative framework facilitated significant cooperation between these two countries which included the dispatch of Czech and Slovak experts to Mongolia, mutual exchange of students and scientists and Czechoslovak development aid. One of the tasks faced by Czechoslovak propagandists was to bring closer to their citizens this geographically and culturally distant country in order to construct a sense of brotherhood between two nations jointly building socialism in different part of Eurasia.

Travelogues written by Slovak and Czech pro-regime authors, which were published either in book form or in journals and newspapers, became an important propaganda tool as these writings provided evidence of the progress of Mongolia and thus contributed to overcoming the barrier of ignorance² between the two “friendly nations”. Authoritative first-hand reportage and travelogues provided to the broad general public an insight into a country which – apart from prominent visitors – could have been visited only by a very limited number of guests during this period. These state-sponsored trips of Czech and Slovak authors, who in general did not have any detailed first-hand information about Mongolia (their scarce knowledge was usually derived from Soviet books and articles, some of which were translated either into the Slovak or Czech language). The authors of these travelogues were pro-regime intellectuals, and their loyalty towards the Czechoslovak communist regime was a *conditio sine qua non* for their dispatch on an official visit to Mongolian People’s Republic. Their contacts with Mongols were mediated by local Russian language interpreters and guides, resulted in the publishing of travelogues commissioned by the state and party authorities. These writings represented a mandatory publication output of prominent writers which should have served for the further education of the masses. The

2) The limited knowledge about Mongolia can be illustrated also by the title of the article of Adolf Hoffmeister, O Mongolsku, které tak málo známe [About Mongolia, which We Know so Little] (Hoffmeister 1954; see also Hoffmeister 1956, p. 29 for an identical title of a chapter on Mongolia).

following paper provides preliminary analysis of this “Eastern encounter” between the Czechoslovak Eastern European “political pilgrims”³ and the Central Asian country in the 1950s which was framed within the shared socialist ideology and the promoted proletarian internationalism which should have overcome national affiliations.

Despite the fact that one can find descriptions of Mongolia in several travelogues published in Czechoslovakia during 1950s, a visit to this land-locked country was usually just a stopover on the road to the People’s Republic of China (or on the return trip back home) which was the main destination of these official visitors.⁴ Some of the authors spent only a couple of hours at the airport in Ulaanbaatar and their stay in Mongolia is mentioned only very briefly in several paragraphs (Moric 1958, pp. 12–13; Ferko 1959, pp. 104–105), while others spent several days in Ulaanbaatar and then they took a train or a plane to continue to Beijing (namely the Czech writers Adolf Hoffmeister and Marie Pujmanová in Autumn 1953, the Slovak writer Vladimír Mináč in Autumn 1954, the Slovak writer Ladislav Mňačko in 1956) and these authors devoted more space to their encounter with Mongolia.⁵ There are only two short travelogues of authors

3) I borrow the term from the Hungarian-American historian Paul Hollander who analysed the travelogues of Western leftist intellectuals about the Soviet Union, Cuba and China (Hollander 1983). His monograph provides a useful comparative framework for the perception of Mongolia during the 1950s in Czechoslovak writings as well as the arrangements of these official visits. However, in contrast to Czechoslovak authors these Western leftist writers were often not in favour of their own political system, they had to face negative perception of the socialist countries during the Cold War era in their home countries, and the goal of their travel accounts was to deliver an alternative, more positive depiction to their readership in the Western countries. At the same time it has to be taken into account, that these Western travelogues were published in journals and publishing houses, which were not under such a strict censorship as it was the case in Czechoslovakia (and other socialist countries as well) during 1950s and thus they may have provided more balanced and complex depictions of the visited countries.

4) For the perception of China in Czechoslovak travelogues see Slobodník 2015a; Slobodník 2017.

5) Some of the authors quite frankly perceived the stay in Ulaanbaatar as a needless delay of their trip to China – see e.g. Mináč 1955, p. 9.

who specifically visited Mongolia in order to spend several weeks there: the Czech journalist Jiří Hronek visited Mongolia in 1950 and during his long trip he went also to the Soviet Union, People's Republic of China and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (see Hronek 1951); and the Slovak writer Dominik Tatarka visited Mongolia in 1953 (see Tatarka 1957).⁶ Pavel Poucha, the founder of Mongolian studies in Czechoslovakia, spent four months in Mongolia in 1955 and his research trip resulted also in the publication of a travelogue completely focused on Mongolia (Poucha 1957), but as he was a scholar with excellent knowledge of Mongolian history, culture and language, his travelogue will be not included in this analysis of the genre of "socialist travelogues" from friendly countries.⁷

Regardless of the length of their stay in Mongolia, when reading their impressions one has to keep in mind that these authors were part of official carefully organized and planned visits, during which they were always accompanied by local guides and interpreters in order to see only the positive side of socialist Mongolia as was the case also when they travelled around China.⁸ Moreover, as these travelogues were published in Czechoslovakia in state owned and state controlled publishing houses, the authors had to depict a very positive idealistic and idealized image of Mongolia with the underlining enthusiasm for the construction of a socialist regime, while all negative features which they encountered during their visits were consciously (as part of the self-censorship) not included in their account, or they were later eliminated by the censors.

6) The comparatively marginal role of Mongolia in Czechoslovak propaganda may be illustrated by the fact that even these accounts were not published as separate travelogues about Mongolia, but they were included in a collection of other travel writings penned by Jiří Hronek and Dominik Tatarka.

7) For a brief analysis of Poucha's perception of Mongolia (especially Buddhism) see Bělka 2016, pp. 159–162; Slobodník 2015b, pp. 119–120.

8) For the control of movements of official guests from friendly countries to China see Slobodník 2017, pp. 87–93. However, the entry from the private travel diary of the Czech archaeologist and art historian Lumír Jisl, who in 1957–1958 visited both Mongolia and China, shows that foreigners were in Mongolia not under such tight surveillance as was the case in China: "*I have to repeatedly recall this liberty and freedom in Mongolia*" (Jisl 2016, p. 66). For more on Lumír Jisl and his visits in Mongolia see Bělka 2018 in this volume.

Therefore these travelogues typically offer a quite schematic and stereotyped image of Mongolia. This article attempts to provide a preliminary analysis of this neglected – but beneficial both for the general picture of the perception of Mongolia in the West as well as for the comprehension of the mechanism of propaganda work in communist countries – genre and to identify several of the predominant motifs to be found in these works.

2. Central Motifs of the Travelogues

2.1. PEOPLE AND LAND

The description of Mongols is very positive. Several authors mention their friendship and hospitality (e.g. Hoffmeister 1956, pp. 34–35; Nebor 1959) and repeatedly they are described as a proud and unrestrained people who “*are roaming free as birds*” and deeply rooted in the centuries-old traditions of their forefathers (Mňačko 1958, p. 264).⁹ For visitors from Czechoslovakia, the nomads in particular epitomized in their eyes upright people who are living in close connection with nature and “*these Mongols did not seem to be wild or warlike, even their eyes were not always screwed up*” (Tatarka 1957, p. 185). The foreign visitors repeatedly mentioned also the physical features of the Mongols – namely their dark black hair and bright white teeth (Hoffmeister 1956; p. 30; Pujmanová 1953; Tatarka 1957, p. 185). However, the Mongols are featured in the travelogues not only as an anonymous group of people, but – as is the case in the travelogues from China – we repeatedly find also brief descriptions of individuals. This is the favorite narrative strategy employed by the authors with the aim of stressing the authenticity of the travelogues using portrayals of carefully selected representatives of progressive classes of socialist Mongolia (workers, herders, peasants, members of pro-regime intelligentsia). The life stories of these “ordinary citizens” were intended to show the rising living standards of the Mongolian nation after the establishment of

9) According to this author, the free spirit of Mongols represents the reason why they were not willing to work as railway men and these posts were almost exclusively held by Soviet people (Mňačko 1958, p. 264).

the communist regime and their dedication to building a new socialist Mongolia and at the same time in a didactic manner they should have familiarized readers in Czechoslovakia with the current developments in Mongolia. For instance, Hronek devoted several pages to his meeting with the exemplary and specially honoured or “shock” worker Sambu from the leather manufacturing factory in Ulaanbaatar who “*was able to fulfill the plan for nine years and eight months just in two years*” (Hronek 1951, p. 169). Sambu embodies the new Mongol fully dedicated to his job: “*I want to work properly, because with my work I contribute to the struggle for peace and struggle against capitalism*” (Hronek 1951, p. 171). His life story¹⁰ – a former “serf” working for a rich “landlord” turned into a factory worker with high living standards – exemplifies the progress of socialist Mongolia and at the same time it familiarized the Czechoslovak reader with the similar fates of their Mongolian counterparts: people who in the past suffered under the yoke of local and foreign exploiters from which they were liberated by the communist parties and now they, the Czechoslovak and Mongolian people, jointly contributed to the construction of the socialist camp. Similarly, the story of the nomad Jamiyan

10) And it is certainly not a mere coincidence that the same shock worker Sambu is positively mentioned also in the newspaper article published a couple of years later by a different journalist (Podlipná 1953). The local respondents for the interviews with official guests from friendly socialist countries were carefully chosen by local guides. And this was the case also with the Western leftist visitors in socialist countries – see Hollander 1983, pp. 288–290. The orchestrated and prearranged character of these interviews in China during the 1950s is clearly reflected in the critical internal travel report, dated late autumn 1954 and drafted by the Czech writer Jarmila Glazarová (she visited China together with Vladimír Míniáč). The itinerary that was prepared for them by the Chinese hosts was, due to organizational difficulties, identical to the itinerary of the Czechoslovak cultural delegation, who visited China in autumn 1953. Not only was the itinerary identical, but also the “spontaneous meetings” with the same representatives of Chinese progressive classes who were interviewed already in 1953. These accounts were subsequently published in Czechoslovakia during 1954. Therefore Jana Glazarová complained: “*We spoke with leading labourers and shock workers and we knew their tales word by word from the short stories and articles of last year’s delegation.*” Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Territorial Department – General, China, 1945–1959, box Nr. 18

serves the same propagandist aim, as his starvation and poverty in pre-revolutionary Mongolia is juxtaposed with his current prosperous living conditions (Hronek 1951, pp. 174–178). The portrayals of individual Mongols are utilized by the authors in order to stress one of the central motifs of the travelogues, namely the communist fraternity and solidarity of the two culturally and geographically distant nations interconnected by ideological proximity and the shared enthusiasm for the building of socialism. The travelogues should have mobilized public support in Czechoslovakia for the Mongolian People's Republic and all the authors repeatedly stress the common struggle, shared destiny and comradeship in the construction of socialism as allegedly formulated by the nomad Dashigaba: *“But the most important thing is, that Czechoslovakia like Mongolia is on the road leading towards socialism and together we are defending the peace”* (Hronek 1951, p. 181).¹¹

The Mongolian landscape also attracted the interest of Czechoslovak visitors as for the majority of them it was their first encounter with a desert or a steppe. The Mongolian landscape (especially Gobi which most of the authors either crossed by train or flew over by plane heading for Beijing) represented for them a completely strange environment: *“We felt like terrestrials on the Moon”* (Hoffmeister 1956, p. 31); *“Under us there is a very bizarre land. I am not the first one to whom this part of Mongolia resembles the land on the Moon (...) This is the Gobi desert, dead land, Moon-like land, ghostly land”* (Mináč 1955, p. 9); *“Dreadful, bleak and gut-wrenching Gobi”* (Mňačko 1958, p. 265). When summarizing his short stay in Mongolia, Adolf Hoffmeister likened it to an extraterrestrial experience: *“We depart from the Mongolian planet. Will we ever live to see a Czechoslovak cultural delegation to fly to Moon, to Mars or to Venus?”* (Hoffmeister 1956, p. 51).

But some authors also positively describe the unique landscape of Mongolia and perceived it as a *“fantastic land”* *“untouched”* by human beings in contrast to the landscape in China cultivated by countless generations of Chinese peasants (Mňačko 1958, p. 261). Dominik Tatarka in particular devoted large parts of his travelogue to poetic descriptions of

11) Similarly: *“All of our labour is common, it is labor devoted to progress and peace”* (Hronek 1951, p. 171).

a wild land untouched by human hand (Tatarka 1957, p. 185). Tatarka left Ulaanbaatar and travelled across the steppe and parts of Gobi: “*Quiescence and eternity exhale out of Gobi*” (Tatarka 1957, p. 200). He was fascinated by the natural environment in Mongolia which had a “*magic appeal*” to him (Tatarka 1957, p. 224).¹² Due to its geographical location Mongolia is characterized as the safest country of the world, protected by both of its socialist neighbors, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (Tatarka 1957, p. 237).

2.2. PAST VERSUS PRESENT

Another frequently employed narrative strategy of the authors is the construction of dichotomy in a temporal (gloomy past versus joyful present and bright future) sense.¹³ The establishment of the Mongolian People’s Republic in 1924 (and more broadly the Russian Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917) represents in their understanding the turning point in Mongolia’s development (e.g. Tatarka 1957, p. 240). The modern history of Mongolia is presented in a black-and-white manner: Mongolia before 1924 is associated exclusively with negative connotations which are the antithesis of the positive developments after the seizure of power by

12) Detailed and positive descriptions of Mongolian landscape and nature in Tatarka’s travelogue might be connected to his later self-styled image of a lonesome “Carpathian shepherd” as this pro-regime author gradually turned during the late 1950s into a dissenting voice criticizing Stalinism and after the invasion of the Soviet army in August 1968 he sharply opposed the Czechoslovak communist regime. On Tatarka and his literary production see Bátorová 2015.

13) In contrast to Czechoslovak travelogues about the North Korea and the People’s Republic of China from the 1950s, where authors often make use also of the spatial dichotomy (North versus South Korea, China versus Taiwan), the descriptions of Mongolia do not employ it for obvious reasons. With one exception: “*The capitalist Orient, this is an abyss just close to another abyss, an exhibition for tourists with dollars, a romantic façade built as a coulisse in order to hide the indescribable poverty of the people and the lamentation of those dying from starvation (...) The Orient which is constructing socialism, this is a sight full of joy; joy from the sight of free people*” (Hronek 1951, p. 166).

the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party: "*Mongols were starving and dying out*" (Mňačko 1958, p. 281) and the backward pre-1924 Mongolia is associated with the "*stink of putrescence*" (Mňačko 1958, p. 281). The past of Mongolia is described in very grim colours: "*It was a primitive country of feudal lords and unmeasurable poverty of the toiling people, now it is a country of prosperity of workers, who built new factories, a university and theatres, who publish books, write poems, novels and theatre plays*" (Hronek 1951, pp. 184–185). The pre-1924 Mongolia is labelled as a country with semi-colonial status where the population suffered under the double yoke of Mongolian exploiters (namely aristocrats, lamas and shamans) and foreign exploitation (Mňačko 1958, p. 281; Hronek 1951, p. 153; Podlipná 1953; Verner 1954). On the other hand, the post-1924 developments are described in a very positive way with substantial progress in Mongolia's economy, living standards, education, emancipation of women and health care. The authors repeatedly refer to precise numbers of livestock per capita or gross industrial output in order to stress the progress of Mongolian society (e. g. Hoffmeister 1954, p. 33; Hronek 1951, p. 166). The booming development of this formerly agrarian country is characterized by ongoing electrification, construction of railway lines and industrialization which for the communist writers embodied the progress of the humankind in the socialist bloc (Pujmanová 1953; Mňačko 1958, pp. 265, 274; Hronek 1951, p. 168). Agricultural cooperatives represented for the writers a shift from pre-modern animal husbandry to the new socialist progressive agricultural techniques, but the ultimate aim which had to be reached in order to become a modern nation is – according to one author – the inevitable sedentarization of nomads (Mňačko 1958, p. 265). In order to put the developments in Mongolia into a broader picture which should convey to the reader the victorious road to socialism in Eurasia, the authors often mention Soviet (and to a lesser degree also the Chinese) economic assistance in the industrialization and modernization of Mongolia as well as the contribution of Soviet veterinary surgeons (Tatarka 1957, pp. 223, 257; Hronek 1951, p. 168; Pujmanová 1953; Mňačko 1958, p. 262; Anonymous 1954; Podlipná 1953). The future of modern socialist Mongolia was associated mainly with Ulaanbaatar, which with its broad avenues, modern buildings, educational and government institutions fulfilled in their eyes the characteristics of a modern and flourishing socialist

metropolis:¹⁴ “[Ulaanbaatar] *represents the foreseeable future in which this country of migrating nomads will catch up with the most developed regions of the Soviet Union*” (Tatarka 1957, p. 252).¹⁵

In their musings about the Mongolian past several of the authors touched upon the theoretical question of the socio-political development of Mongolia, as the Mongolian path did not fit into the pattern of historical materialism promoted by Marxist theoreticians, according to which human society follows a linear trajectory of development from a primitive to a slave, feudal, capitalist and finally socialist period (with the communist utopia as the future goal). In their understanding Mongolia represented a special case as it made a great leap from (semi-colonial) feudal society to socialism, which is called “bypassing capitalism” in the Mongolian historical narrative (Stolpe 2013, pp. 139, 145). This historical experience of Mongolia is perceived as a positive example which proves that it is possible to make such a leap and, moreover, by bypassing the period of bourgeois capitalism the Mongols did not acquire bad habits associated with this phase of development (Hronek 1951, p. 155; Hoffmeister 1956, p. 47). However, Marie Pujmanová noted that due to this rapid social development there has been no Mongolian proletariat, something that was a challenge for the Party’s ideological work among the exploited masses (Pujmanová 1953).

2.3. TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Despite the fact that the Czechoslovak authors represented an officially atheist country, they devoted comparatively large parts of their travelogues to the description of Mongolian religions (mainly Tibetan Buddhism).¹⁶

14) See also Mňačko 1958, p. 275; Hronek 1951, pp. 165–166.

15) But some authors were not impressed by Ulaanbaatar – Adolf Hoffmeister described it as a city with just one square (Hoffmeister 1954, p. 32) and Dominik Tatarka noted down his impression of the temporary and provisional character of the Mongolian capital and a certain feeling of aridity and low spirits (Tatarka 1957, pp. 187–190).

16) For an analysis of the perception of Tibetan Buddhism (mainly in China and Tibet) in the travelogues written by Czechoslovak authors, see Slobodník 2015b.

Religion was perceived by these authors through a traditional Marxist approach according to which religious beliefs are a historical phenomenon, a product of class society which is predestined for natural decline in the classless socialist society. References to religion were associated mainly with the backwardness of Mongolia in the pre-1924 period and religious dignitaries (lamas and shamans) were portrayed as the representatives of the exploitative class while religion was portrayed as a tool for the suppression of the masses (e. g. Hronek 1951, pp. 152–154; Anonymous 1956).¹⁷ At the same time one has to bear in mind that the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples in Mongolia were largely destroyed during the massive anti-religious campaign in 1930s (Atwood 2004, pp. 46–48). Thus the Czechoslovak visitors could see only the remains of the once flourishing religion which were partially preserved for propaganda purposes.

Due to this ideological background Adolf Hoffmeister perceived the role of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolian history in a very negative way as, according to him, in the past “*the Lamaist Church had grown as mould in the land (...) Every family was leashed by its member – monk to the Church and to the monastery. The Church had an agitator in every family. Thus half of the laboring force dropped out – and the economy perished*” (Hoffmeister 1956, p. 42). Religion represented the main obstacle to socio-economic progress in Mongolia for Ladislav Mňačko too, who during his stay in Ulaanbaatar mused about the history of the country: “*...the vitality of this ancient country was undermined by the Lamaist beliefs*” which resulted in the complete pacification of the Mongols (Mňačko 1958, pp. 280–281). Similarly, Tatarka reproduced this traditional Western/European trope about Buddhism which “tamed” the impulsive and wild Mongol nomad who became completely addicted to religion and consequently lethargic (Tatarka 1957, p. 240). This motif of the pacification of the Mongolian bellicose spirit through Buddhism can be found even in early descriptions of Mongolia in the late 18th century and regularly reappears in later works (see Kollmar-Paulenz 2003, pp. 267–269).

For the comparative perspective (namely the representation of Chinese religions) see also Slobodník 2015c.

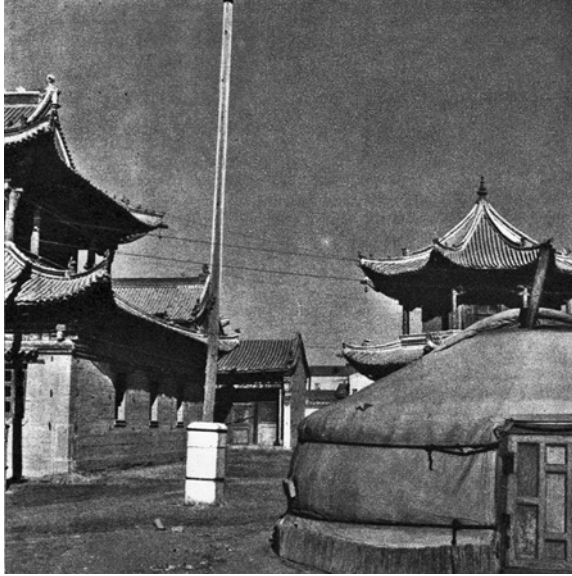
17) For an analysis of the perception of Buddhism in Mongolia see also Bělka 2016.

Hoffmeister and Mňačko while describing Mongolia in the 1950s praise the triumph of atheism over religious beliefs, which according to their understanding reflects the victory of socialist reforms over tradition: “*The country which lies so close to the sky has become a country without the god*” (Hoffmeister 1956, p. 46). And this motif is found in the concluding chapter on Mongolia in the travelogue written by Mňačko: “*It is better to be a human being than a reincarnated god. Mongolian people have understood this regardless of whether the golden Buddha in the center of the Lamaist temple is smiling or is knitting his brows. His time will never again return*” (Mňačko 1958, p. 285). Tatarka mentioned positively the depopulated state of Erdene Zuu: “*But now the monastery is empty. It has been turned into a museum or better to say a storehouse of cultish utensils*” and “*hardly anybody from the local population might be interested in them*” (Tatarka 1957, p. 229).¹⁸ On the other hand in Tatarka’s account we find also unbiased parts dedicated to the early history of Buddhism and its basic teachings (Tatarka 1957, pp. 231–235). According to Tatarka Buddhism “*embodies the vital feeling of the nomadic population*” and also his description of the *obo* stone shrines he saw in the steppe is neutral (Tatarka 1957, pp. 202–203).

The negative Western approach towards Tibetan Buddhism which preceded the Marxist criticism of religion can be found in several quotations. Hoffmeister summarized his impressions of Mongolian Buddhist monasteries and temples in this way: “*In the temples the cruel, menacing, revengeful and bloody religion of Tibet revels (...)* *The sculptures stand handcuffed and the goddesses made of gold lasciviously copulate on altars*” (Hoffmeister 1956, p. 48). According to Tatarka, Mongols had embraced the most dogmatized form of Buddhism and their understanding of Buddhist teachings laid stress on the most negative aspects of this religion, namely mass monasticism, celibacy and the believe in transmigration (Tatarka 1957, pp. 235, 238). Tatarka also noted with distaste the depiction of female genitals on the Buddhist wall paintings in Mongolia (Tatarka 1957, p. 147). Mňačko described the 8th Jibzundampa Khutugtu, who was until his death in 1924 the highest religious authority in Mongolia,¹⁹ in

18) See also similar comments by Mňačko 1958, pp. 283–284; Tatarka 1957, p. 250.

19) For more on him see Atwood 2004, pp. 269–271.



Picture 1: “*Now the monasteries are empty. Witnesses to the past...*” (Mňačko 1958, appendix with black and white photos). Original description of the photography (made in Ulaanbaatar) by the author of the travelogue who noted the annihilation of religion in Mongolia with a certain satisfaction.

the following words: “*Undignified, syphilitic old crock, master of foolish tricks and various forms of filthy magic*” (Mňačko 1958, 282).²⁰ Also for Pujmanová Lamaism was “*the cruelest form of Buddhism*” and during the obligatory visit in the anti-religious museum housed in the former Choi-jin Lama Temple in Ulaanbaatar, she noted: “*It is a congeries of gruesomely grinning wrathful Lamaist evil deities who had to terrify the people*” (Pujmanová 1953). These direct allusions to magic, wrath and cruelty, as well as sexual interpretations of Tibetan Buddhist art reflected the distorted image of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, which can be traced back to the negative presentation of the Tibetan religion in the monograph by the

20) Hoffmeister described the 8th Jibzundampa Khutugtu as a “*gambler, profligate and drunkard*” (Hoffmeister 1956, p. 43).

British explorer, army surgeon and Tibetologist L. A. Waddell titled *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* published in 1895, where Tibetan Buddhism is presented as primitive “Lamaism” – a corrupt form of Indian Buddhism which he associated with devil worship and the overall degeneration of religious practice.²¹ According to this understanding, Tibetan Buddhism (i.e. “Lamaism”) represented the exact opposite of the earlier “pure” scholastic Buddhism of the early Theravada and Mahayana Indian Buddhist texts. Thus Hoffmeister, Pujmanová, Tatarka and Mňáčko – consciously or unconsciously – continued this tradition of a critical Western approach towards Tibetan Buddhism.

3. Glimpses behind the Scenes of the Official Image

The published text provides a coherent and idealized picture of a blooming Mongolia with a glorious future ahead. However, some information preserved in archives or in recently published memoirs reveals the hidden story behind these visits and travelogues. As mentioned above, the travelogues were published in state owned publishing houses which were under the tight scrutiny of communist censorship. Immediately after the seizure of power by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in February 1948, an extensive mechanism of institutional control of mass media and publishing houses was established which was under the authority of the Press Surveillance Office. With regard to international developments, the Press Office of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly issued precise guidelines on reporting for journalists which were to be followed. Thus the Czechoslovak reader received tightly controlled information which was supposed to provide a propagandist picture of world affairs that had to be in accord with the official ideology and the Cold War rhetoric of a world divided by the Iron Curtain.²²

One curious instance of interference by the Press Surveillance Office relates to Tatarka’s travelogue from Mongolia, which includes a drawing

21) For a compelling discussion of this negative perception of Tibetan Buddhism in the late 19th century, see Lopez 1998, pp. 35–39.

22) For details on the propaganda apparatus see Zavacká 2005, pp. 17–62.



Picture 2: The drawing of a *cham* (Mong. *tsam*) mask published in Tatarka's travelogue (Tatarka 1957, p. 249; drawing by Václav Sivko).

of a *cham* (Mong. *tsam*) mask (Tatarka 1957, p. 249). This religious motif drew the interest of the censor who complained to the publishing house that the drawing, in the original typesetting of the book, was located on a page where it accompanied paragraphs describing the life of ordinary Mongolian workers: “*The arrangement of the mentioned illustration on page 255 in connection with the text would be an offence to the Mongolian toiling population.*”²³ The director of the publishing house Slovenský spisovateľ, Ivan Kupec, agreed to relocate the illustration to a different part of the text related to Mongolian religion.

The archives preserve an interesting example of critical reflection on the image of Mongolia perpetuated by one of the authors. Adolf Hoffmeister, a prominent writer and academician who visited Mongolia (and China)

23) Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives), Fund of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, location number PV-SEKR/STD, 1957, Nr. 70, box Nr. 54, “Daily Report Nr. 34, Secret, 11 April 1957”.

in 1953, requested via the Ministry of Culture in July 1954 that three copies of his article (Hoffmeister 1954) should be delivered through the Czechoslovak embassy in Moscow to the Embassy of the Mongolian People's Republic. However, this request was declined by officials from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs who complained that Adolf Hoffmeister had, in his short article, focused mainly on negative aspects of Mongolia, namely the “*superficial characteristics*” of Mongolia as “*a country without roads, without cities, without railways and factories*”, a country “*somehow without the present time*” where “*the clock of civilization runs backwards*”.²⁴ As a result of this criticism the three copies of the article were returned to the Czechoslovak Ministry of Culture with a request to evaluate and to review it. This issue sheds some light on the intricate process of the fabrication of a positive schematic pattern in the descriptions of Mongolian People's Republic.

The recently published memoirs of the Czech writer Pavel Kohout, who was a member of the large Czechoslovak cultural delegation which visited China and Mongolia, contains a noteworthy description of a state reception for the Czechoslovak guests hosted by Yumjaagiin Tsendenbal,²⁵ then prime minister of Mongolia and General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. The prominent Slovak poet Vojtech Mihálik, another member of the delegation, appeared completely drunk at the state reception dressed “*like an extremely disgraceful caricature of a Mongol*”. Mihálik approached Tsendenbal with a toast and after finishing his cup he dropped down on the marble flooring. He was carried away by four guards of the prime minister and the tense moment of the official meeting was relieved once Tsendenbal turned this affair into a joke and started to laugh loudly (Kohout 2011, pp. 998–999). This hidden history of official travels deserves more research making use of private

24) Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Territorial Department – General, Mongolia, 1945–1959. All the quotations about Mongolia are from Hoffmeister's article published in 1954. However, it is worth mentioning that the parts on Mongolia were included in the second edition of his book without any changes (Hoffmeister 1956, pp. 29–37).

25) Kohout erroneously noted down the name of Khorloogiin Choibalsan, but at the time of the visit of delegation in Mongolia Choibalsan had been dead for almost two years and his successor Yumjaagiin Tsendenbal was in charge.

travel diaries, memoirs published in the post-socialist period and interviews with the participants.²⁶

4. Conclusion

The socialist travelogues discussed above provided a distinctive representation of Mongolian People's Republic in the period of the construction of socialism. It is a very positive, schematic and idealized depiction of a country with a shared political destiny which belonged to the socialist camp and which joined with Czechoslovakia in the common struggle against the enemy, i.e. Western imperialism and capitalism. Mongols are perceived as "comrades in arms" in the Manichean political struggle between good (socialism) and evil (capitalism) and the aim of these travelogues was propagandist. They had to bridge the cultural and geographical gap between Czechoslovakia and Mongolia and mobilize support for the Mongolian cause. Mongolian society and Mongols are portrayed not from the position of superiority of the white European visitor but they are officially on equal footing. The exoticization of the "Oriental other" was suppressed and the authors were mainly seeking similarities in the political and social developments which were common to both Czechoslovakia and Mongolian People's Republic. For this perception of "brotherly" Asian countries under communist rule in "socialist travelogues" I tentatively coined the term socialist anti-orientalism.²⁷

The travelogues from socialist Mongolia show many analogies with similar travel writings (often authored by the same writers) about China, namely the dichotomy past versus present, employed narrative strategies (e.g. interviews with "ordinary citizens"), the critical attitude towards

26) For the different perception of China in published travelogues and the private travel diary of Lumír Jisl see Slobodník 2017.

27) See Slobodník 2015a. For other examples of this genre see the paper by Nemanja Radonjić (2016) who analysed the Yugoslavian travelogues about Africa, and the contributions by Róbert Gáfrík (2015) and Agnieszka Sadecka (2015) who focused on the Slovak and Polish perceptions of India during the 2nd half of the 20th century.

religions or the focus on the progress of socialist revolution (e.g. industrialization, collectivization). This pattern of description was not exclusive to the Mongols from the Mongolian People's Republic – Tuvinians and Tuva were portrayed in a similar way as the author of a short article contrasted the backwardness, poverty and enslavement of the population by lamas in pre-revolutionary Tuva with the tremendous social progress in agriculture, industry and education especially after Tuva joined the Soviet Union in 1944 (Horváth 1957). However, in contrast to China, there was not a U-turn in mutual relations to compare with the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s and early 1960s (during which the Czechoslovak leadership loyally supported Moscow's policy towards China),²⁸ after which China was suddenly portrayed in Czechoslovakia as an ideological enemy and as heretics of the socialist camp. At the same time it may be presumed that this schematic pattern of representation of socialist Mongolia could be found also in travel writings from other socialist countries from the 1950s.²⁹

The analyzed works lucidly illustrate the constraints of the representation of a culturally different and distant country framed within a predominant authoritative ideology which the state authorities were able to impose on the literary production of the intellectuals.³⁰ Despite these limitations, the genre of “socialist travelogues” provides interesting and noteworthy glimpses both of the visited country and the home country of the authors of these works.

28) For more on the Czechoslovak policy during this period see Kolenovská 2014.

29) For a preliminary comparison of Czechoslovak and Hungarian travelogues from China see Slobodník; Lelkesová 2015.

30) For a completely different, negative perception of the Mongols framed within a distinct ideology, see the article published in a journal intended for young readers, members of the organization Hlinkova mládež (Hlinka Youth) which supported the pro-Nazi regime of the wartime Slovak Republic (1939–1945). The article described the adventures of Slovak soldiers who participated in the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany and its allies, and the anonymous author noted the attack of “*savage Bolshevik Mongols who were hidden in the tree-tops*”, nevertheless “*the brave Slovak soldiers were not frightened*” and ultimately they won. Probably this article refers to a fight with Buryats enlisted into the Red Army (Anon. 1941).

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Hungarian Travellers in Inner Asia and in the Area of the Mongols

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Summary: This article provides a brief overview regarding the handful of Hungarians who travelled to the heart of Asia, in particular, to the area of the Mongols. They can be categorized by their aims, motivations, and historical circumstances of the given periods: 1) the Tartar invasion in the 13th century; 2) the geographic expeditions and growing scientific interest of the 19th century; 3) the construction of Ulaanbaatar in the 1920s; 4) academic research, beginning with Louis Ligeti; and finally, 5) cooperation during the socialist era (Comecon). In addition to internationally known scholars, well-known travellers will be briefly introduced with the aim of enhancing general knowledge of European travellers' aims and experience among the peoples of Inner Asia. The present study is mainly based upon Hungarian secondary sources; its second section offers a new contribution to Hungarian–Mongolian connections in the 20th century, as well as listing the institutes that today house the majority of objects from Inner Asia, in particular from Mongolia, collected by Hungarian travellers. This Hungarian sample can be relevant to the general topic of travel interest in Asia, but it also features one recurrent and predominant aspect: the ongoing search for the origin of the Hungarians.

Introduction: The Asian roots of Hungarians

The notion of their Asian roots has been an important part of Hungarians' (Magyars') identity ever since the Middle Ages. The Legend of the Miracle Stag¹ was recorded in the 13th century chronicle *Gesta Hunnorum et Hungarorum*. The Legend of the Miracle Stag is a myth about the journey of the ancestors of the Hungarians from the East to their present home in the Carpathian, or Pannonian basin, the headland of the Euro-Asian steppes in the heart of Europe. The original homeland of the Magyars,

1) For details, see Pintér 1996; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_mythology.

a nomadic tribe from the Ural Mountains speaking a Finno-Ugric language, is referred to as the “Magna Hungaria”. The Magyars arrived in the Carpathian basin (inhabited by the Huns from the 4–6th centuries) in the 9th century, becoming a ruling elite in the territory of modern Hungary and Transylvania. Having adopted Christianity in the 11th century,² the Magyar rulers apparently had not forgotten about their “pagan brethren” living in their last known homeland in the Ural mountains, and several envoys were dispatched to establish connection with them in the 13th century. Some of these embassies indeed succeeded in finding Finno-Ugric speakers in the Urals whose language was mutually intelligible with Hungarian. Although between the 14th and 17th century no more attempts to contact the eastern Magyars took place, the search for the origin of Hungarians was revived during the Enlightenment and Romanticism periods. Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842), known as the first Tibetologist, originally left Hungary to look for the relatives of the Magyars in Central Asia.

The Hungarians’ strong awareness of their eastern origins has been unique among the European nations. The reasons for their distinct self-perception are probably connected to both culture and language: living in the Pannonian grasslands, the Hungarians have long preserved many features of nomadic origin, including ancient beliefs and (militant) passion. In addition, Hungarian, a Turkic-influenced Finno-Ugric language, is remarkably different from the surrounding Indo-European languages.

In the following study, I try to show how this specific setting of the Hungarians played a crucial role in the motivation of Hungarian travellers of different eras who set out for Asia.

The period of the Tartar Invasion in the 13th century: Friar Julian’s travels

Travelling European friars played an important part in surveying the Tartar invasion, the lifestyle of the Mongols and Central and Inner Asia in the 13th century. They travelled for many reasons: converting pagans to

2) For details see Kristó 1996, 2001.

Christianity, serving kings and high priests as envoys, and studying the Mongol Khans' behaviour, army, subordinates and customs. Their reports have remained mostly in Latin.

The report of the Italian John of Plano Carpini (Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, 1182–1252) is well-known: he belonged to the Franciscan order and visited the Mongols at the request of Pope Innocent the Fourth. Carpini left Lyon in France in 1245, together with Friar Stephanus Bohemus. A Polish friar, Benedictus Polonus (Benedykt Polak, c. 1200–c. 1280) joined them in Poland and became their translator. Carpini handed over a papal bull to Batu Khan (1207–1255/56) in the royal tent that Batu had seized in Muhi in Hungary in 1241. Then, he travelled further to Karakorum, the capital of the Mongolian empire. He arrived back in Lyon with the response of Güyük Khan in 1247 (Györfly 1986, pp. 91–183).

William Rubruck (Willem van Ruysbroeck, Guillaume de Rubrouck or Willielmus de Rubruquis, c. 1220–c. 1293), the Flemish Franciscan missionary and explorer accompanied King Louis the Ninth of France, and in 1253 set out from Constantinople at the behest of the king on a missionary journey. “He followed the route of the first journey of the Hungarian Friar Julian, and in Asia that of the Italian Friar Plano Carpini.”³ He arrived back at the King's court in 1255; his description of Karakorum remains the most detailed (Györfly 1986, pp. 201–380).

Even before these famous clergy, one of the first friars to give an account of the Tartar invasion in Europe was Friar Julian. Before his journey, four Dominican friars were sent from Hungary to find the “Magna Hungaria.” They searched for three years, and finally, one of them, friar Otto who was traveling as a merchant, met up with some Hungarians. However, after returning to Hungary with the aim of recruiting others to join him and return to Asia, he suddenly died. Some years later, four more Dominican friars were sent in 1235 to look for the Magyars who remained in the East and convert them to Christianity. Two of them were forced to return, and Gerhardus died during the journey, but Friar Julian met with

3) For details, see Györfly 1986; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_of_Rubruck. He also states that three envoys, namely Plano Carpini, Ascelin of Lombardia in 1245 and André de Longjumeau in 1249 were sent before Rubruck to the Mongolian court.

Hungarians near the River Etil who welcomed him with great pleasure and perfectly understood his words. According to Friar Julian's account, they were brave and great warriors; the Tartars could not defeat them but lived with them in harmony. The Magyars lived in the vicinity of the Tartars, whose neighbours (the Mongols) were said to be aiming at conquering the world. Friar Julian returned to Hungary for two reasons: to inform the Hungarian King, Béla the Fourth of the location of the Hungarians who remained in the East, and because Julian well understood that the Christian conversion of these Hungarians could result in conflicts with their neighbours. Therefore, he returned to Hungary and wrote his report in Latin in 1237. The Pope (perhaps Pope Gregory the Ninth) was also informed of his findings (Györffy 1986, pp. 61–70).

The second trip of Friar Julian took place in 1236–1237. He met the Mongols, and even possessed or at least saw a letter from Batu himself which has since disappeared. Friar Julian's short account is an important source regarding the Mongols' way of living at that time (Györffy 1986, pp. 71–82).⁴

Despite the advance warning in the form of frightening news regarding the Mongolian invasion, Hungarians living in Hungary were defeated on 11 April 1241 on the bank of the river Sajó at the plateau of Muhi. The Mongols ravaged the country, but returned to Karakorum in 1242 as Ögödei Khaan had passed away and a new Khaan had to be enthroned. Hungarian historical sources, poems, and oral history have remained about the first and the second Tartar invasions in Hungary (e.g. B. Szabó 2007; Prebend Rogerius 2001); the second invasion of 1285 remained unsuccessful.

Geographical expeditions to Inner Asia and growing scientific interest in the 19th century

The second chapter in the history of Hungarian travellers to the heart of Asia occurred only in the 18th and particularly in the 19th centuries due to growing interest in the East. The study of the *Gesta Hunnorum et*

4) The reports of Friar Julian are kept in the Vatican. Pater Richardus wrote a report about the first trip (1235–1236), and Julianus himself penned his report *Letter about the Lifestyle of Tartars* regarding his second trip (1236–1238).

Hungarorum, the history of the Hungarians, turned the search for Hungarian relatives near the Urals and in Asia into a topical issue again: scientific research into linguistics and geography became lively. Hungarians travelled individually or in groups, including experts in different fields. One of the most famous travellers, Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842) aimed at travelling to the area of the Uyghurs to find the Hungarians who had left Dzungaria. During his trip he ran out of funds. Assigned by British representatives to prepare a Tibetan dictionary, he lived seven years (1823–1830) in or near three different Tibetan monasteries in Ladakh: Zangla, Phuktal, and Kanam. (The first two are identified as Tibetan *bzang la* and *phug brag* while the Tibetan name of the third – Kanam – is not clear.) Csoma de Kőrös wrote the first Tibetan-English grammar and dictionary, and informed the West about Tibetan Buddhist culture; he laid the basis for Tibetan studies (Csoma 1834, 1910). He worked in the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta after 1831 and wished to continue his trip to the land of the Uyghurs in the hopes of achieving his original goal, but died suddenly in Darjeeling. His grave became an important pilgrimage site for Hungarians, and his achievements connect Hungarians to the Himalayas: Alexander Csoma de Kőrös is known to all Hungarians as an itinerant scholar of great endeavour and persistence. His testimony is preserved in the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.⁵

Another Hungarian, Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913) also focused on discovering the origin of Hungarians, resulting in accounts of Central Asia, especially Buhara. He wrote linguistic comparisons of the Turkic, Tartar and Hungarian languages. His testimony is also preserved in the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.⁶

Sir Aurel Stein (Stein Aurél, 1862–1943) who led four expeditions from 1900–1930 to the oasis towns of the Silk Road, especially to Dunhuang, was also of Hungarian origin. A part of his findings is housed at present in the British Museum, whilst others are preserved in the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.⁷ His expe-

5) https://konyvtar.mta.hu/index.php?name=v_3_2_1_csoma.

6) https://konyvtar.mta.hu/index.php?name=v_3_2_1_vambery.

7) https://konyvtar.mta.hu/index.php?name=v_3_2_1_stein.

ditions strengthened the connection of Asia and Hungary; he was also a researcher who had connections with Buddhism.

Other research expeditions, such as the journeys of György Almásy (1867–1933, father of the famous explorer Count Leslie Almásy), and many other expeditions took place in China and in Tienshan: Jenő Cholnoky (1870–1950) travelled in China near the Yellow River; Jenő Zichy (1873–1906) travelled in the Caucasus;⁸ and Gyula Princz (1882–1973) travelled to Tienshan.

Among these travellers were nobles, sons of noble families, gentlemen and talented individuals such as the above-mentioned Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, who studied at the University of Göttingen. The majority of them became members of the Hungarian Geographical Society, founded in 1872, which had its own geographic bulletin; they also became members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which had been founded in 1825. Their main purposes were the search for the origin of Hungarians in addition to their interests in geography, linguistics, and adventure.⁹

Scientific interest to Mongolia grew stronger in the 19th century. Joseph Budenz (1836–1892) studied at the University of Göttingen, and was one of the first linguists to compare words in Ugric, Turkic, and Mongolian: what we today refer to as Altaic studies. He wrote a book on Finnish (Finno-Ugric) Grammar, Mongolian grammar, and completed a Chuvash word list.

Ágnes Birtalan's most recent publication (Birtalan 2016) relates the biography and research of Gábor Bálint de Szentkatolna (1844–1913). Gábor Bálint de Szentkatolna lived in Urga for five months in 1873 collecting Khalkha materials after studying the Kalmyk language in Kazan, and visiting Kalmykia.

Louis Lóczy (1849–1920) was a famous geographer and geologist, who carried out research in the area of the Gobi Desert as well as other parts of Inner Asia in 1877–1880 as part of the expedition led by Count Béla Széchenyi (1837–1918) (Kreitner 1882).

8) For details, see Slobodník 2013.

9) There were many travellers in the 19th century searching for the ancient roots of Hungarians in Siberia as well.

Constructing Ulaanbaatar in the 1920s¹⁰

Historical reasons are to thank for the third chapter in the history of Hungarians living for some time in Asia. During and after World War I, Hungarian soldiers were transported to Siberian labour camps. Some prisoners of war crossed into Ulaanbaatar and remained there for some time when escaping or returning home. The years 1919, 1920, and 1921 are extremely important in the history of Mongolia, due to the Chinese invasion, the presence of the White Army of Ungern von Sternberg (1886–1921), the entry of the “liberating” Red Army, and the revolution, which took place in 1921. It was exactly in this pivotal historical period that some Hungarians arrived and strived to be of assistance in the construction of Ulaanbaatar. In addition, some “red” Hungarians seem to have arrived directly from Russia with the purposes of training the modern Mongolian army.

Prisoners of war returning from Siberian labour camps known by name were: Joseph Geleta (living in Mongolia from 1920–1929), Andor Radnóti-Roth (1922), Pál Báder (1924–1958), and his son, Jenő Báder, and Jenő Sallai or Szalay. Training the People’s Revolutionary Army were János Mészáros and a man whose surname was Pánczél.

Among them the most famous is Joseph Geleta (1893–1964), an electrician living in Mongolia cc. 1920–1929; he was the planner of the first Mongolian Parliament building (*Bömbögör Nогоон*, ‘the round green one’). Geleta had been an officer in World War I, and as a prisoner of war he was deported to Siberia. He did not join the October Revolution in 1917 and the Red Army, but wished to escape home through Mongolia and China. He arrived in Mongolia before Ungern von Sternberg, and perhaps fought in the Kuomintang army of the Chinese. He lived in Kyakhta where he married, then moved to Urga, becoming the chief electrical engineer for the Ministry of National Economy. He arrived in Hungary with his family in 1929. His notes were published as an adventure chronicle by Leslie Forbáth in Hungarian and in English, and translated into Mongolian as well (Forbáth 1934, Geleta 1936, Forbat 2016).

10) This section of my paper is drawn from my previous research concerning Hungarians who lived in Ulaanbaatar in the 1920s (Teleki 2012, pp. 110–111).

Andor Radnóti or Andor Roth (Andor Radnóti-Roth, 1893–1964) was a medical student at the University of Budapest. He was captured by the Russians, and worked in the hospital of Verhneudinsk (Ulan-Ude), becoming a doctor for the Hungarian soldiers of the Soviet army in Siberia, as well as near the River Selenge. He married a Russian woman, Ada Abramovna, and wished to return to Hungary via Mongolia and China. The Chinese troops invading Mongolia and the incursions of White Russian gangs in Mongolia hindered his plans. With the support of the writer-politician Ts. O. Dambadorj (1892–1932) and the Buryat scholar Tseveen Zhamcarano (1880–1942), Radnóti met the key figures of the revolution, including D. Sükhbaatar (1893–1923). He fought in Kyakhta in 1921, and was also a member of Kh. Choibalsan's (1895–1952) Committee of Assessment of Damages, subordinate to the provisional Mongolian government. He was an adviser to the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army's Health Department until August 1922. He received permission on 1 April 1922 to use his three photographic cameras to take photographs of "non-military subjects." He arrived back in Hungary at the beginning of the 1930s. He revisited Mongolia as a veteran of revolutions before his death in 1964 (Kara 1971, pp. 1–8). His private documents and 66 photographs are preserved in the Hungarian National Museum.¹¹

The names of a handful of other Hungarian travellers have remained: for instance, Károly Nagy made three journeys to Mongolia and recorded an interview with Jenő Báder who shared his childhood memories of Hungarians living in Ulaanbaatar (Nagy 1985, pp. 307–316.). His account includes the following details:

Pál Báder was a young mason in Budapest. He became a prisoner of war in 1915, and lived in a prisoners' cell in Ulan-Ude where he worked as a repairman. He participated in the Revolution in October in 1917, and became a border guard near Kyakhta. He moved to Altanbulag in 1924, then to Ulaanbaatar. Being a mason, he participated in the building of several buildings of the modern city, such as the university, hospitals, schools, and other new buildings. He lived in Ulaanbaatar with his family and arrived in Hungary in 1958. His wife was Russian. Their son, Jenő

11) An interesting fact is that he took photos at the same Maitreya procession in Urga as the American explorer, Roy-Chapman Andrews (1884–1960).

Báder lived in Mongolia until the 1970s; he was a doctor, later working as receptionist at the Hungarian Embassy. He states: “Another escaped prisoner of war was Sallai Jenő (or Szalay) known by the Mongols as the ‘German Sallai’ as he was a smith and could handle instruments in a precise manner. After leaving Ulaanbaatar Sallai lived in Altanbulag until the 1950s.” (Nagy 1985, p. 313.) He adds: “Military experts who assisted in organising the new Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Army also resided in Mongolia for a while, such as someone whose family name was Pánczél and János Mészáros (residing in Mongolia in the early 1920s), who was a tall, thin man. He is said to have started as the leader of the guards of the Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow and to have become a military adviser in Mongolia a few years later. In Hungary he became an officer in the Horthy regime (lasting from 1919–1944), and died in 1956” (Nagy 1985, p. 313.). The bequests, if any, of these latter-named Hungarians in Mongolia remain unknown today.

Academic research beginning with Louis Ligeti

Much more detailed and more accurate information is certainly available concerning academic research work carried out in the area inhabited by the Mongols in the 20th century. The researchers who completed this work went on to develop Oriental studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Hungarian universities. Professor Louis Ligeti (1902–1987), who established the Department of Inner Asian Studies at Eötvös Loránd University in 1942, spent almost three years (1928–1931) in nine different monasteries in Inner Mongolia, including Malgai miao, Ke’erqin wang miao, Linyue si, Sifo miao, Longquan miao, Guangfa hongfo si, Hong miao, Wangzi miao, and Beizi miao. At these locations he studied monastic life, the Mongolian Kanjur and other sacred texts. Ligeti published reports and monographs resulting from his research expeditions (Ligeti 1933, 1934, 1942). He did fieldwork among the Moghols in Afghanistan from 1936–1937 (Ligeti 1939). Ligeti was a linguist who paid great attention to clarifying the words of Turkic origin in the Hungarian language. He defined three periods when Turkish elements were added to Hungarian: 1) during the migration and settlement of the Magyars

in Hungary; 2) before the Tartar invasion; and 3. during the century and a half of Ottoman rule in Hungary (1541–1686). He also paid close attention to questions of the Hungarian nation and the Hungarian language. He published the majority of his collected materials, and proposed research topics to his students. His bequest is secured in the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and will be available to the public as of 2027. The texts, artefacts and other materials which he gathered on his various trips are held in such collections in Hungary as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts.¹²

Byambiin Rinchen (1905–1977), professor of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences visited Hungary in 1955 and defended his PhD thesis. His thesis is preserved at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Rinchen invited some of Ligeti's students to visit the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, an especially meaningful gesture after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Therefore, in 1957, three students could visit Ulaanbaatar and also travelled to the countryside: András Róna-Tas (b. 1931), who went on to become a world-renowned expert in Altaic studies; Katalin Kóhalmi (1926–2012), a specialist of Manchu-Tungus languages, and György Kara (b. 1935), similarly a world-renowned Mongolist. The first expedition, in 1957, by these three students is considered as foundational for the present-day fieldwork of Hungarians in Mongolia: this research is continued by Alice Sárközi, Géza Bethlenfalvy, Mária Magdolna Tatár, Ágnes Birtalan, and many others. Professor András Róna-Tas has written a detailed monograph about this journey (Róna-Tas 1961), and, in recent years, has turned his attention to the prehistory of Hungarians. Another famous scholar of the period was Vilmos Diószegi (1923–1972). Diószegi was an ethnologist, interested in the shamanistic faith of the pagan Hungarians. He conducted research in South Siberia and in North Mongolia from 1957–1964, publishing several books related to shamanism (Diószegi 1958, 1960, 1962, 1967). He also researched the geographical occurrence, in Hungary, of belief in the magical consequences of being born with “surplus bones”.

12) http://hoppmuseum.hu/hopp_ferenc_en/.

His archive is preserved at the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Museum of Ethnography.¹³

We must also mention the archaeologist István Erdélyi (b. 1931) co-leader of Mongolian-Hungarian excavations in Mongolia from 1961–1990, as well as the Turcologist István Vásáry (b. 1945) whose research focuses on the Turkic elements of the Golden Horde. József Terjék (b. 1941) studies Tibetan Buddhism and sacred texts written in Tibetan, whilst Judit Vinkovics (1952–2019) was a specialist in Mongolian Buddhist art.

Cooperation during socialism

Diplomatic relations between Hungary and Mongolia were established in 1950. Another group therefore is comprised of Hungarian statesmen and experts who visited Mongolia during the socialist era. Mongolian statesmen were in the habit of presenting gifts to their foreign guests, including Buddhist artefacts maintained now in various scientific institutions and private collections. In addition, archival documents and photographs exist concerning these diplomatic visits in both Mongolian and Hungarian archives.¹⁴

Within the framework of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) Hungarians worked in Mongolia to support herders and to assist in establishing factories, for example the Biokombinat in Songinokhairkhan district in Ulaanbaatar and the Meat Factory in Darkhan. Among others, Hungarian electricians worked in Ulaanbaatar, and geophysicists worked all over Mongolia, including the Gobi Desert.¹⁵

13) Dávid Somfai-Kara has published certain materials from this collection. Cf. Diószegi et al. 2002.

14) Zsolt Szilágyi and L. Altanzaya are currently preparing a monograph concerning this material.

15) Some brief accounts and old photographs are available at <https://mongolia.gportal.hu/>.

Collections in Hungarian libraries and museums

Unfortunately, not too much tangible heritage of Mongolian culture has remained in Hungary from the period of the Tartar invasion. Apart from the chronicles and reports of Friar Julian, other forms of literature and oral history commemorate this event; some contemporary weapons are available in the Hungarian National Museum. The Hungarian National Museum also preserves 66 photographs taken by Radnóti-Roth Andor around 1922 in Ulaanbaatar, as well as his private documents.

The Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, largely its Oriental Collection, preserves materials written or collected by Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, Ármin Vámbéry, Gábor Bálint de Szentkatolna, Aurél Stein, Louis Ligeti and other travellers, as well as Tibetan, Mongolian and Manchu manuscripts and block prints that were brought mainly from Mongolia during socialism.¹⁶

Whilst the shamanic data collection of Vilmos Diószegi belongs to the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the items he collected from the Mongolian areas are housed in the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest. This museum also preserves about 700 Buddhist objects (statuettes, painted scrolls, etc.) collected by the Austrian traveller, Hans Leder (1843–1921) from Mongolia at the beginning of the 20th century (Lang-Bauer 2013).¹⁷ The Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts includes artefacts collected by Louis Ligeti as well as by other travellers to Tibet and Mongolia.

A selection of materials from the above-mentioned collections awaits publication (Birtalan, in preparation). In addition, there exist also other small, individual collections of statesmen, researchers and experts who visited Mongolia during socialism.

16) For catalogues see Kara 2000, Orosz 2009.

17) Cf. <http://gyujtemeny.neprajz.hu/neprajz.01.01.php?bm=1&kv=343866&nks=1>;
<https://moncol.net>.

Conclusion

The interest of Hungarians in the East was very much connected to history and the origin of the Hungarian nation, language and religion, but at times resulted in the discovery of extraordinary new topics instead. Several scholars who focused on history or Altaic studies also ended up researching Hungarian origins, whilst others followed in the wake of pioneering travellers. The interest of Hungarians in the East is unbroken: even nowadays many researchers study historical, linguistic, religious and cultural connections to recall the meeting points with Asian nomadic nations.

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