

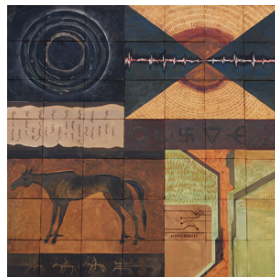


**American Center for Mongolian Studies**

## **Second Annual Conference**

**Sponsored by the Henry Luce Foundation**

**Cultural Practices in Post-Soviet Mongolia**  
Thursday, June 10 – Friday, June 11, 2010  
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



University of  
the Humanities



Language Policy  
National  
Academy



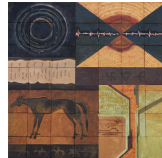
Department of Social and  
Cultural Anthropology,  
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Henry Luce  
Foundation



Second Annual Conference  
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Cultural Practices in Post-Soviet Mongolia  
Thursday, June 10 – Friday, June 11, 2010  
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The goal of the conference is to explore the scope and level of effort being devoted to Mongolia’s various cultural practices as a way to assess identity shifts. Cultural practices in the areas of: the arts, new practices, language, and religion will be explored in terms of ongoing revitalization, adaptation, change and preservation efforts in Mongolia since 1990

**Conference Program**

<u>Thursday, June 10</u>	<b>Open Society Forum – Second Floor Conference Room</b>
1:30PM - 2:00PM	REGISTRATION
2:00PM - 2:15PM	WELCOMING REMARKS
2:15PM - 3:15PM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS <i>Performing Mongolian: Culture and Identities in a Globalizing World</i> <u>Carole Pegg, Ph.D.</u> , Senior Affiliated Scholar, Faculty of Music and Department of Social Anthropology (Mongolia & Inner Asia Studies Unit), University of Cambridge
3:30PM -5:00PM	PANEL I: Cultural Practices – The Arts <u>Moderator:</u> Morris Rossabi, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of History, City University of New York  <i>The Transmission of Xöömii in Post-Communist Mongolia: Practices and Identity Issues</i> <u>Johanni Curtet, Ph.D. Candidate</u> , University of Rennes 2-Haute Bretagne, ACMS Language Fellow, Nadia and Lili Boulanger International Foundation Fellow, and French Society of Ethnomusicology’s Field Work Fellow

*Ballet in Mongolia*

Morris Rossabi, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of History,  
City University of New York

*Music, Identity and Place: Nadmid of Khotgoid Songs and  
Darima of Darkhad Songs*

Tsetsentsolmon.B, Ph.D. Candidate and Faculty Member,  
Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National  
University of Mongolia

5:00PM

Film clip: "Mongolian Bling"

5:15PM

DEPART for Khan Bank Theater for the Opening Reception

5:30PM - 6:30PM

**Khan Bank Theater**  
OPENING RECEPTION

6:30PM - 8:00PM

Exclusive, Pre-premiere screening of the new documentary  
film "Mongolian Bling" <http://www.mongolianbling.com/>

*Following the reception, the Writer/Director of the  
documentary film, Benj Binks, will briefly introduce his film;  
he will take questions from the audience after the film  
screening*

Friday, June 11

**Open Society Forum – Second Floor Conference Room**

9:00AM - 10:30AM

PANEL II: Cultural Practices – New Practices  
Moderator: William Fierman, Ph.D., Professor, Department  
of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University

*To What Extent Can Anthropology serve as 'Traditional  
Culture Builder' in Post-Soviet Mongolia*

Bum-Ochir.D, Ph.D., Acting Chair, Department of Social and  
Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

*Spread of the English Language in Post-Soviet Mongolia*

Suvdantsetseg.U, Ph.D. Candidate, University of the  
Humanities

*Urban Tea Libations: Residence and Space Symbolism in  
Mongolian Cities*

Gaby Bamana, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wales,  
Lampeter

10:30AM - 11:00AM

Tea and Coffee Break

11:00AM - 12:30PM

PANEL III: Cultural Practices – Language  
Moderator: Zegjima.Ch, Professor, Sc.D., Ph.D., University  
of the Humanities and President, Academy of Language  
Policy, Mongolia

*The Current Language Situation and Language Policy in Mongolia*

Zegiimaa.Ch, Professor, Sc.D., Ph.D., University of the Humanities and President, Academy of Language Policy, Mongolia and **Purevsuren.Ts, Ph.D.**, Professor and Director, Center for the Study of Mongol Ethnicity, University of the Humanities

*Language Preservation and Revitalization*

Amy LaCross, ACMS Research Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate, Linguistics Department, University of Arizona

*Mongolia and Language Processes in Post-Socialist States: Questions for Exploration*

William Fierman, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University

12:30PM – 2:00PM

**LUNCH: The Veranda**

For invited speakers; registered conference attendees may join the group for a no-host lunch

2:00PM - 2:30PM

**Open Society Forum**

VISIT THE BOOK EXHIBIT

2:30PM - 4:00PM

**PANEL IV: Cultural Practices – Religion**

Moderator: Bum-Ochir.D, Ph.D., Acting Chair, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

*Revitalization of Tsam Dance in Mongolia*

Krisztina Teleki, Ph.D., ELTE University, Faculty of Humanities, Linguistics and Philology, Budapest, Hungary

*Renovation and Changing of Mongolians' Religious Customs /based on the Ovoo Worship/*

Byambadorj.S, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

*Mongolian Shamanic Dance on Stage and in Practice*

Cathy Kmita, ACMS Research Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta

4:00PM - 5:00PM

**ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION – Wrap Up**  
Keynote Speaker and Moderators

5:30PM

Depart for Ambassador's Residence

6:00PM - 7:30PM

**US Ambassador's Residence**

**CLOSING RECEPTION**  
*attendance is by invitation only*

## **Abstracts**

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

*Performing Mongolian: Culture and Identities in a Globalizing World*

Carole Pegg, Ph.D., University of Cambridge

Mongolia's rich diversity of cultural traditions in the fields of performing arts, religious practices and languages arises from the range of nomadic pastoralist peoples (former 'tribes') within its borders. Using fieldwork recordings from the late 1980s and early 1990s, I will illustrate how the roots of these traditions lie in what Mongols then called the pre-communist tribal past of 'Old Mongolia'. But were the former 'tribes' with which Mongols still identified themselves – Bayad, Dar'ganga, Dörvöd, Khalkha, Myangad, Ööld, Sunid, Torgud, Urianghai etc - ever static bounded cultural entities? My book, *Mongolian Music, Dance and Oral Narrative*, argued that in the early post-Soviet period, distinctions and connections to former tribes and states varied as individual performers sought to re-establish 'difference' after the enforced imposition of a unified 'socialist national identity'.

We all currently face the dilemma of the potential of global flows to threaten cultural identities. In recent years, Mongolia and other nations have begun to participate in international programmes, involving digitized lists, aimed at preserving endangered traditions. But is fixing cultural heritage as a list of intangible objects the answer? If so, should we attach it to our nation or to smaller groups? Should the nation-state claim the traditions of its minorities as part of its own? I will review recent anthropological debates about protecting cultural identities, including the fluidity of the very concept of 'cultural heritage', how 'tradition' and 'authenticity' relate to creativity, hybridization and the future, and issues of 'rights,' 'property' and 'ownership'.

### PANEL I: Cultural Practices – The Arts

Moderator: Morris Rossabi, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of History, City University of New York

*The Transmission of Xöömii in Post-Communist Mongolia: Practices and Identity Issues*

Johanni Curtet, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Rennes 2-Haute Bretagne, ACMS Language Fellow, Nadia and Lili Boulanger International Foundation Fellow, and French Society of Ethnomusicology's Field Work Fellow

Xöömii is a vocal technique originally located in the Mongolian Altai and practiced among nomadic herders for centuries. Transmitted by oral tradition from generation to generation, it also entered the urban and institutional sphere of the university in the 1990s.

Faced with rapid social changes that Mongolia has experienced in less than a century, major changes have been made to traditional music and xöömii has not been spared. The practices have evolved and are still evolving today at high rate. Whatever the instrument or vocal techniques encountered, the changes were systematic at all levels: evolution of the repertory and playing techniques, and decontextualization of practices. Mongolian traditional music today, including overtone singing, became caught between hybrid practices: aspects of the tradition of the past (before Communism); a new tradition mainly processed by the ideology imposed by communism; and finally modernity and experiments with the opening of the country to globalization.

In view of my field work, based on testimonies and observations made between 2004 and 2009, I will explain how, in such a context, the xöömii singers transmit this art. We'll see how, through three generations of singers, practices of xöömii transmission have evolved and how issues of identity have been gradually instilled between the singers, but also in the political arena.

### *Ballet in Mongolia*

Morris Rossabi, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of History, City University of New York

Mongolia had an indigenous dance culture, but ballet appeared as a result of Soviet influence. Starting particularly after World War Two, Russian ballet masters came to Mongolia to teach, and promising young Mongol dancers went to Tashkent, Perm, and other centers in the Soviet Union for training. Such support resulted in a flourishing ballet culture, which was supported by the State. The culmination of such support was the construction of the State Opera and Ballet Theater in the center of Ulaanbaatar.

The collapse of the socialist system in Mongolia in 1990 resulted in considerable reduction in State support for the ballet with predictable results

### *Music, Identity and Place: Nadmid of Khotgoid Songs and Darima of Darkhad Songs*

Tsetsentsolmon.B, Ph.D. Candidate and Faculty Member, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

Music is socially meaningful as it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them. It is commonly claimed that one's own identity is constructed through music they use and songs they sing. Anthropological concern with identity in music allows us raise questions of how music is used by social actors in specific local situations to erect boundaries and to maintain distinctions between us and them.

The paper aims to explore how and to what extent music knowledge functions in identifying and distinguishing people, and how people perceive and interpret the process. The question to be answered is if there is a different type of identity for singers relying on their musical background and repertoire as well as their ethnic one.

*Hotogoids* and *Darhads* are two ethnic groups inhabited in neighborhood in Kuvsgul province, Northern part of Mongolia. The process of identifying people with their musical knowledge and performance can be seen in the way how local people recognize singers as 'of hotogoid songs' or 'of darhad songs' as well as their ethnicity. For example, Nadmid, hotogoid singer who mostly sings hotogoid songs is known as 'Nadmid of hotogoid songs' (*hotogoid duuni Nadmid*). The same example can be seen from 'Darima of darhad songs'(darhad duuni Darima).

### PANEL II: Cultural Practices – New Practices

Moderator: William Fierman, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University

### *To What Extent Can Anthropology serve as 'Traditional Culture Builder' in Post-Soviet Mongolia*

Bum-Ochir.D, Ph.D., Acting Chair, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

Traditional culture, nationality and ethnicity were not promoted during the years of Soviet regime from 1920s to late 1980s. For all those years, political oppression produced overwhelming public desire to re-built traditional culture. As a result, activities to reconstruct traditional culture became prominent since the social change happened in the country in 1990. In 1989, our department was established as a 'Department of Ethnography', to accomplish this need with to encourage reconstruction of traditional culture, nationality and ethnicity, by educating younger generation to love Mongolian culture, which highly contradicts the paradigms in anthropology such as critiques towards ethnocentrism. In 2007, L. Munkh-Erdene presented a paper titled *Teaching Ethnicity and Nationality: Deep Play and Thick Resistance*, at the AFP discipline meeting, addressing difficulties in teaching anthropology for students who regard Anthropology Department with its old paradigms to promote nationality and ethnicity (Munkh-Erdene 2007). Even though the department managed to change its name and content from Soviet School of Ethnography to western Social and Cultural Anthropology in 2007, many

people still perceive our department as an agency to promote nationality, ethnicity and traditional culture. Therefore the problem is not only in teaching but in a wider range extending to the government and the society as a whole. Partly the public is correct to view the department as such because we changed our scholarship from ethnography to anthropology, but not its region of study which is Mongolia and Inner Asia. In this sense we are still experts on Mongolian culture. There are a growing number of journalists from TV channels and newspapers approach various department members to tell the public about traditional Mongolian culture, addressing topics how to celebrate traditional New Year and other folk customs, and people who seek advice on shamanism mostly to become a shaman etc. Following this track, in this presentation I concern the public perception about our department of anthropology.

I will present ethnographies on how anthropologists and anthropological institutions were asked to conduct tasks to build and reconstruct culture. In 2008 our department was asked to produce a hand book of Mongol customs and rituals by the decree of the President of Mongolia. According to his decree it is a project to educate our people in traditional customs and to make Mongolian culture popular and available. When the book is available people can perform traditional customs by following what the book says. This is what I call 'building culture'. Mongolian government and the wider public see the department of anthropology as an official institution specialized on the research of Mongol culture so that its scholars are the best people who would know the culture accurately. This discussion will address a question of anthropologists' impact on indigenous cultures. More precisely, questions such as to what extent anthropologists can participate in processes of building and reconstructing culture. How anthropologists' participation in such processes contradict to anthropological arguments on the relationship of anthropologist and people in question. For example, the topic will lead us to rethink the general paradigm of anthropology as an interpretation of cultures. Moreover, the discussion will cover ethical issues in anthropology by addressing the question of accuracy and liability of anthropologists' impact on building culture.

I conclude that the case is proposing a dilemma to be an anthropologist or a native. How much anthropologist and how much native can native anthropologists be at the same time? Major anthropological focus was on development anthropology, more precisely, western anthropologists' participation in developing the so called 'third world'. Is the discussion should be different in case of native anthropologists?

### *Spread of the English Language in Post-Soviet Mongolia*

Suvdantsetseg.U, Ph.D. Candidate, University of the Humanities

The changes in politics, the economy and society that have occurred in Mongolia since 1992, when foreign relations prospered, are increasingly influencing all branches of society. This can be seen especially in the demand for teaching English intensively in a short period of time, as well as in the broadening influence of English. This presentation addresses the influence of English language policies on communications in politics, the economy and in society in the last 20 years, and the government of Mongolia's implementation activities to spread the use of English.

### *Urban Tea Libations: Residence and Space Symbolism in Mongolian Cities*

Gaby Bamana, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Wales, Lampeter

This presentation will discuss three main practices that illustrate the process of change in the Mongolian culture. I will demonstrate how change in economy and residence (from the ger to the urban dwelling, from pastoralism to wage economy) alters tea libation practices and space categories. Therefore, I argue that people strive to make sense of their identity in spite of the inevitable changes in their environment. This process is symbolic and still provides a common sense of belonging to the very same world individuals have always been members.

### PANEL III: Cultural Practices – Language

Moderator: Zegiimaa.Ch, Professor, Sc.D., Ph.D., University of the Humanities and President, Academy of Language Policy, Mongolia

#### *The Current Language Situation and Language Policy in Mongolia*

Zegiimaa.Ch, Professor, Sc.D., Ph.D., University of the Humanities and President, Academy of Language Policy, Mongolia and Purevsuren.Ts, Ph.D., Professor and Director, Center for the Study of Mongol Ethnicity, University of the Humanities

This presentation will discuss how the Mongolian language situation has changed during the democratic period and address Mongolian state language policy and implementation questions. This includes issues such as: the official language of Mongolia; minority language status (for example, Kazakh, and others); questions related to the structure, plan and usage of scripts; the study and spread of foreign languages, and influences of foreign languages. The issues are related to the implementation of language policy, based the use of language in social communications.

#### *Language Preservation and Revitalization*

Amy LaCross, ACMS Research Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate, Linguistics Department, University of Arizona

While Khalkha Mongolian is the official language of Mongolia, many minority languages are spoken in the country. Urbanization, economic pressures, and education policies have placed many of these minority languages at risk of extinction. The current paper proposes that these languages represent a vital aspect of every Mongolian's heritage. As such, it is argued that informed choices must be made in regard to these languages' survival. The current paper examines in depth what happens when languages die and presents an overview of minority language preservation and revitalization. Besides offering examples of revitalization and preservation attempts in other locations, current revitalization and preservation attempts in Mongolia are highlighted.

#### *Mongolia and Language Processes in Post-Socialist States: Questions for Exploration*

William Fierman, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University

The fall of socialist regimes at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s set in motion processes that profoundly affected the corpus and status of the languages in the countries where these changes occurred. Especially in the post-Soviet countries, the corpus changes have involved replacement of words borrowed from and through Russian, rejection of Russian-based orthography, and even change of script. The status changes have also been great: although Russian's decline in relative status to local language has been nearly universal has declined in almost all post-socialist countries, the weakening of Russian's position shows great variation. This presentation offers a list of factors that appear to have shaped the variation in language corpus and status changes across post-socialist countries. They include level of national consolidation prior to the late 1980s, the history of language development and domains of use at that time, international political orientation of the post-socialist states, nature of political system, demography, and economic factors. Placing Mongolia in the context of other post-socialist states, this presentation will begin to explore the extent to which the factors listed above and/or other factors have shaped language planning in this country.

## PANEL IV: Cultural Practices – Religion

Moderator: Bum-Ochir.D, Ph.D., Acting Chair, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

### *Revitalization of Tsam Dance in Mongolia*

Krisztina Teleki, Ph.D., ELTE University, Faculty of Humanities, Linguistics and Philology, Budapest, Hungary

The *Tsam* religious dance (Tibetan: 'cham) is one of the most complicated Buddhist tantric practices that could be revived after the democratic changes in Mongolia. Prior to monastery demolitions in 1937-1938, its practice was widespread throughout the county. At present *Tsam* is performed only at three places (Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar; Amarbayasgalant Monastery, Selenge aimag; Dashchoinkhorlin Monastery, Bulgan aimag.) The lecture gives an overview of the history and revival of the dance describing its origin, spread, types and flourishing prior to the religious repression as well as its restart and present-day practice. Being a Tantric practice *Tsam* is more than a one-day spectacular dance. It requires special preparation from the monks preceding the outer dance including physical exercises, contemplation, performing different rituals and a three-day ceremony with the inner *Tsam* dance. The lecture aims at describing all these features and comparing the dances of the three monasteries.

### *Renovation and Changing of Mongolians' Religious Customs /based on the Ovoo Worship/*

Byambadorj.S, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, National University of Mongolia

Following the 1990 democratic revolution, religious traditions and customs are recovering from social and economical changes in Mongolia. Here are some reasons why we have chosen to discuss traditions of Ovoo worship.

- Ovoo worship contains many religious traditions of Mongolians
- Ovoo worship contains both traditions of Shamanism and Buddhism
- Ovoo worship has many traditions are related to the life and culture of Mongolians
- Ovoo worship is a means of traditional environmental protection

In addition, this presentation will address how traditions of Ovoo worship have changed:

- Changes around Ovoo worship customs
- Social influences which follow customs
- Traditions of creating and developing Ovoo worship
- Changing of Ovoo's form and design
- Renovating Ovoo's role

### *Mongolian Shamanic Dance on Stage and in Practice*

Cathy Kmita, ACMS Research Fellow and Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta

While researching shamanic dance in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, I have observed several types of shamanic dance. Some were carried out by shamans in ceremony; others were performed by dancers on stage. Shamans use dance along with drumming and song in ceremony. This may range from the imitation of animal movements and noises as the shaman connects with a spirit to a circle dance such as yohor or andai. From the examples viewed, it seems that shamanic dance in eastern Inner Mongolia is influenced by Manchu shamanism and

is more structured while shamanic dance in Mongolia appears much less so. Versions of shamanic dance that are performed on stage vary in their adherence to what shamans do in practice. In Mongolia, while the dance is highly athletic and choreographed, the impression of shamanic trance is strong and there is an attempt to present an authentic appearance in the costume, atmosphere, and even movements. In Inner Mongolia, however, the similarities to actual shamanic dance and costume are more loose and fanciful with options such as bared midriffs and snare drums. In this paper, I will explore the varieties of Mongolian shamanic dance among shamans and in stage performances. In particular, I will look at how these types of dances are presented on stage, how these are different in Inner Mongolia and Mongolia, and how this relates to the current religious and cultural conditions. International cultural influences on shamanic dance in the context of globalization and the manner in which elements of these dances are used on stage to create spectacle largely for tourism and entertainment purposes will also be explored.