

MUSIC BETWEEN WORLDS:
MONGOL MUSIC AND ETHNICITY IN INNER MONGOLIA, CHINA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR IN PHILOSOPHY

IN

MUSIC

MAY 2013

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Acknowledgments

I owe my gratitude to the following funding organizations for contributing to the completion of this work: Andrew Nyborg Fellowship in Music, a John Young Memorial Scholarship, a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship, and a Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Doctoral Fellowship.

I would like to thank the many individuals who have supported me through my graduate school career, summers of fieldwork, and a long dissertation-writing process. I am immensely grateful to my Mongol friends and research collaborators that are too many to name here. I extend a special thanks to several individuals who have responded promptly and thoughtfully to email inquiries regarding Mongol music over the past two-and-a-half years, especially Xu Xin, Li Bo, Siriguleng, and Xu Xin. I have to also thank Andrew Colwell for many lengthy and provocative email discussions that have shed light on many aspects of Mongol music for me. I give my thanks to Daniel Kwok for providing me with his perspectives and initial field contacts and for Zhao Hongrou for her kind assistance and help making contacts during my stay in Inner Mongolia.

Stephen Tschudi, thank you for patiently and astutely guiding me on an important translation journey. Our work together has helped me put many of the pieces of this dissertation together and has perhaps more importantly, given me tools that I will use the rest of my scholarly career.

Mahalo nui loa to the classmates and colleagues who have read portions of this dissertation and offered me deep insights, among them, Nancy Marsden, Ri Choi, Brigita Sebald, Rebecca Dirksen, Justin Hunter, Emily Wilcox, and Andrew Colwell. I would also like to thank Heather Diamond, Sarah McClimon, Sunhee Koo, Alyson Jones, Jessica Turner,

Liz Macy, and many others for their excellent recommendations on how to survive the writing process.

Thank you, Beryl Yang, Carl Polley, Aaron Infante-Levy, Katie McClellen, and Jason Engel for your friendship and many fun, stress-relieving times over a game table.

I offer my thanks to those graduate school classmates not already mentioned, Priscilla Tse, Will Connor, Brian Diettrich, Rebecca Fineman, Sarah Carle, Ching-huei Chou-Lee, Clare Chan, Chadwick Pang, Justin Hunter, Yuanyu Kuan, Yang Xi, and many others for their friendship and camaraderie throughout my years at the University of Hawai'i ethno program.

I am grateful for my mentors at the University of Hawai'i, especially Ricardo Trimillos, Byong Won Lee, Jane Moulin, Katherine McQuiston, Cathryn Clayton, David Hanlon, and Mari Yoshihara, who have supported and nurtured my growth as a scholar and whose knowledge will continue to guide me into the next phase of my academic career. Barbara Smith, you are ever an inspiration and have made an impact on all of us in ethnomusicology program at the University of Hawai'i. I have tried to carry your careful attention to detail and wisdom with me in all of my writing endeavors.

I am indebted to many former mentors, including Dave Hagedorn, Andrea Een, Richard Bodman and Hongyuan, Wan Binbin Laoshi, Phyllis Larson, Robert Entenmann, Loie Flood, Kristen Druker. The knowledge I continue to pursue is largely built on the foundation you provided. Thanks to new mentors among them Jennifer Post and Paul Humphreys who have been cheering me on these last few months.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Frederick Lau for nine years of mentorship, inspiration, and encouragement. Thank you, Fred, for critically redirecting me and helping me to focus. You have shaped and guided my understanding of China and the field of

ethnomusicology in fundamental ways and I will always treasure the wisdom and friendship you have generously shared with me. Thank you for your enduring patience and for trusting me to work hard.

On a more personal level, the completion of this dissertation marks and coincides with two important phases in my family life. My first son Liam is almost six, the number of years since I started my Ph.D. program. My son Micah has journeyed with me through this entire dissertation process, even before he was born. Each of my sons has provided me motivation, insights, and opportunities to grow as a human being and a scholar in ways I never imagined. I will always honor Liam and Micah for the difficulties they endured through my times away from home, physically and mentally, and for the wisdom they provided me beyond their ages.

I cannot offer enough thanks to my parents, all four of them, who supported me with prayers, encouragement, and lots of childcare through this process. Mom and Dad, thank you for filling me with a desire to pursue knowledge from a very early age. I'll always be thankful for your willingness to drive me to all my music lessons growing up, our many long nights finishing up research papers in high school, and many other dedicated ways that you have been involved in my musical and academic life. I could have never gotten to this point without your support. I would also like to thank my Oma Charlotte, for her namesake, and for taking me on my first trip outside the United States, for widening my eight-year-old world and helping me learn how to be brave away from home.

My siblings deserve special thanks for offering their support during my studies. You are all amazing uncles and aunts and have been a special part of the lives of our sons. Jason, your presence has meant so much to Liam during our years in Hawai'i. Lara, you are the best aunt and have been a lifesaver on numerous occasions. Eric, thank you for stepping in

during the crucial week I was racing to finish. Katie, Josh, Heather, and Thomas, you four have also been wonderful in coming to our rescue in times of need.

My sincere thanks to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Children's Center, the Loyola Marymount Children's Center, and Fara and Mehran Kaihani. Your tender care, love, and guidance for our boys have been a blessing to our family and have kept my mind at ease during the day so that I could get my work done.

I dedicate this dissertation to Sean, my loving husband, who has kept me sane, given me inspiration, and who has been the rock of our family through my months of fieldwork and years of writing. Sean, you have been a constant sounding board, never complaining when you hear me struggle through the same ideas over and over and always helping me to see the “forest” when I am stuck in the trees. You have an amazing way of articulating my own ideas better than I can. Thank you for encouraging me to pursue my career above concerns of money or the possibility of relocation, for offering me some of my greatest insights, and for being, now and always, my biggest fan.

Abstract

The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) of China is home to a diverse group of ethnic Mongols who live across the border from the nation of Mongolia, in a division that has existed for almost a century. As Inner Mongols have negotiated their position as ethnic minorities in China and a people between cultural worlds, they have used music to reconcile, and sometimes even celebrate, the complexities of their history and contemporary condition. In this dissertation, I argue that Inner Mongols' contact with a variety of Mongol, Chinese, and Western musical styles has inspired them to take up creative and energetic musical expressions, particularly as they traverse shifting minority politics in China and determine how to represent themselves on national and international stages.

The first part of this dissertation traces the work of four musical elites, two Mandarin-language grassland song composers and two reformers of the *morin khuur* horse-head fiddle, who have been formative in the staging of a unified, orthodox *Mengguzu* (Mongol ethnic group) representations for the national stage. I demonstrate how these musical leaders adeptly negotiated the communist system in China and became the voices and faces of their Mongols through their musical developments and reforms.

The second part of this dissertation highlights new understandings of Mongolness that have emerged in the past decade. I explore Inner Mongol efforts to locate local heritage through the folk fiddle *chor*, on the one hand, and to forge links with the nation of Mongolia through *morin khuur* and *kboomii* styles, on the other. Through these two strategies—looking locally inward and transnationally outward—musicians have reconfigured themselves as Mongol peoples outside orthodox representations of previous decades.

Through these case studies, I demonstrate that Mongol individuals in China have occupied a central role in national and transnational discussions about musical Mongolness, cultural development, purity and preservation, and the Mongol past (Humphrey 1992, Marsh 2009). By critically examining instrument reform efforts, compositional fusions, musical discourses, and stage performances in Inner Mongolia, I explore how Mongol individuals have used music as a means to pursue creative artistic careers and, moreover, as a way to creatively invoke and contest musical representations of their ethnicity over the past six decades.

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Notes on Romanization

This dissertation negotiates what I consider to be four foreign languages: (1) Mandarin Chinese, my primary research language, (2) the Mongolian dialect in Inner Mongolia (written today in traditional vertical script), (3) Chinese transliterations of Mongolian language words—such as personal names, places, and song titles, and (4) the Khalkha Mongolian dialect from Mongolia (written today in a modified Cyrillic alphabet).

For Mongolian terms, I do not distinguish between Inner Mongolian or Khalkha spellings, using whatever spellings are most conventional in recent scholarship.

I prefer a “kh” spelling for the Cyrillic consonant “x” (a rough “h” sound), for example “morin khuur” and “khoomii” rather than “morin huur” and “hoomii.”

Mongol naming conventions in China differ based on parents’ preferences and on the amount of contact individuals have with Han Chinese. Traditionally, Mongols did not have surnames and many Mongols today still only have one Mongol name. Transliterated into Chinese, however, a single name in Mongolian may equal five or more Chinese characters, making them awkward and hard to pronounce. Many urban Mongols in China choose to have two names, one Mongolian for personal use and one Chinese for official use and among Han. Some Mongol parents simply choose Chinese names for their children to avoid confusion. Other Mongols have taken on Chinese surnames, which they use to precede their Mongol given name. An example is the morin khuur player Chen Bayer.

When asked to spell out their names in the Roman alphabet, my Mongol contacts typically chose to use Chinese pinyin rather than a spelling more consistent with the pronunciation of their names. Despite the awkward “mish-mashing” that happens to these names in Mandarin, I use whatever name my contacts prefer. (See Glossary.)

For place names, I have chosen the spelling that appears most widely in current academic scholarship and give alternative spellings in parentheses. The reader can refer to the Glossary for a complete list of terms, personal names, place names, musical titles, and institutions that appear in this dissertation and corresponding Chinese characters, where applicable.

List of Abbreviations

PRC	People's Republic of China
MPR	Mongolian People's Republic
IMAR	Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
YSXY	Inner Mongolia University Art Academy (Yishuxueyuan)
CCTV	China Central Television
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
IM	Inner Mongolia

Preface

...[H]ybridity, ethnic code-switching and multiculturalism were all commonplace phenomena [in Inner Mongolia] prior to their temporary erasure by the monolithic nation-state and colonialism. In this sense, we have a complex and hybrid social reality that renders difficult the definition of Inner Mongolia... (Bulag 2000:535-6).

... Mongols speak in many voices. Any attempts to bind them together by ethnicity are bound to fail (Bilik 1998:78).

The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) circles the eastern half of the northern border of the Peoples' Republic China (see Figure 1) and is home to almost four million Mongols, one-sixth of the region's population and roughly two-thirds of the almost-six million Mongols in China (data according to the 2000 census, China 2003). At 1,183,000 square kilometers, Inner Mongolia is the third-largest provincial-level region in China and has an economy today based on its large dairy industry, wheat farming, sheep and goat herding, mining, industry, and cashmere production. One third of China's Mongols lives outside the borders of today's Inner Mongolia in neighboring provinces including Liaoning, Jilin, Hebei, and Xinjiang.

The territorial name Inner Mongolia (*Neimenggu*) came about during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) as an administrative division between the more-isolated Mongolian territory north of the Gobi, labeled as Outer Mongolia (*Waimenggu*). While these terms situate the Mongolias with respect to their position in the Qing empire, native labels for these regions were the geographically oriented names *Obor Mongol* (Southern Mongolia, or Mongolia on the sunny side of the mountain) and *Ar Mongol* (Northern Mongolia, or Mongolia on the leeward side of the mountain). Mongolians ("Outer" Mongolians) today prefer the national label *Mongol Ulus* (the Mongolian Nation, or simply Mongolia) (see Borjigin 2004).

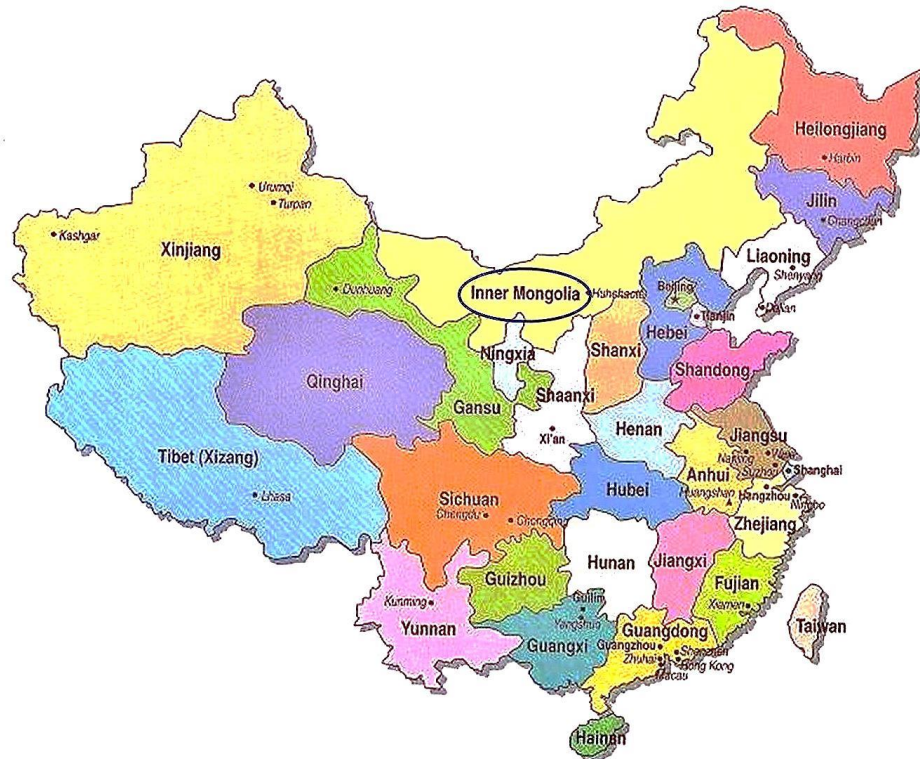


Figure 1. Map of China

Mongols first began to see themselves as a national entity after 1206, the year that Chinggis Khan named himself leader of a *Yeke Mongol Ulus*, the Great Mongol Nation (Weatherford 2004:65). After successful efforts to unite the many loosely affiliated, warring Mongol tribes, Chinggis Khan went on to establish an empire that stretched from Siberia to the Balkans (1206-1368) and laid the foundation for his grandson Kublai Khan to achieve success in conquering China. The Mongols became the first foreign power to conquer the entire region of China and ruled as the Yuan Dynasty from 1279 to 1368.

Nomadic peoples had engaged in centuries of trade and war with Chinese dynasties long before the time of Chinggis Khan. From the 200s B.C. to the 220s A.D., the Khunnu (Xiongnu) people came into conflict with the Qin (221-207 B.C.) and the Han (206 B.C.–220

A.D.) Dynasties and prompted the first emperor of the Qin to begin the building of great walls to keep out these northern aggressors (Jagchid and Symons 1989). In 907, the Khitan nomads successfully conquered parts of northern China and ruled as the Liao Dynasty until 1126 (Fairbank and Goldman 2002:113), a feat that would not be replicated until Chinggis Khan's son Kublai Khan conquered the entire region of China in 1279.

Historically, the territory of Inner Mongolia played a role as a transition zone between the nomadic peoples to the north and agricultural peoples to the south (Hyer and Heaton 1968; see also Grousset 1970, Jagchid and Symons 1989, Barfield 1981, Di Cosmo 1994, Lattimore 1962). Such lifestyle divisions between migratory and sedentary peoples made up what many scholars consider a clash of civilizations that occurred throughout Chinese history (see Williams 1996, Khan 1996, Bulag 2002b:4-5). Historically, nomadic peoples south of the Gobi have always experienced greater exchange and fluid cultural boundaries with China than with more isolated herders to the north.

The close administrative status of Inner Mongolia during the Manchu Qing Dynasty was in part due to its proximity to the capital of Beijing, but also due to the tribal connections that many Harchin Mongol princes from Inner Mongolia had with the Manchu court through intermarriage (Bulag 1999:33). Until the late nineteenth-century, the Qing engaged in preferential policies toward the Mongols and maintained a strict boundary to prohibit Han migration. However, after China's defeat in the Opium war in 1842 and the ensuing Boxer Rebellion in 1902, the famines that followed, and needs to pay war reparations, the Qing lifted the barrier and encouraged Han migration into the region. In the twentieth century Mongols in Inner Mongolia slowly lost autonomy over their land as princes sold plots to Han Chinese peasants, who later became rich by leasing their land to an onrush of other Han migrants (Bulag *ibid*). By 1912, the Chinese population rose to 1.5

million and was already twice that of the Mongol population (Song 1987: 50-62, quoted in Bulag *ibid*:108).

In 1911, soon after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Outer Mongolia achieved independence through the aid of the Russians. In 1921, after the Russian revolution (1917), the Soviets again helped the Mongolians solidify their independence from China and form the Soviet-aligned Mongolian People's Republic (MPR).

Inner Mongolia, unable to achieve unification with the MPR, experienced thirty-six years of upheavals until the establishment of IMAR in 1947. Inner Mongolia's eventual unification as an autonomous region of China came about through years of interethnic strife, involving competing agendas and factions among the Inner Mongols (see Atwood 2002, 2000; Bulag 2010b, 2000; Jankowiak 1988; Borjigin 2004). In the 1920s, the Nationalists dissolved Inner Mongolia into surrounding provinces, after which the Japanese took claim over parts of the eastern region in 1931. Mongols became divided into several competing nationalist factions, each choosing between one of three potential allies: the Japanese (whose Manchukuo occupied the eastern Khinggan region), the Chinese Nationalists, and the Chinese Communist Party (see Bulag 2010b).

Mao Zedong began courting the Mongols to win their alliance in the 1920s, realizing the strategic position that Inner Mongolia would offer in the defeat of the Japanese and eventually the Nationalists. At this time, many members of the Tumed Mongol tribe in southwest Inner Mongolia became trained as communist cadres, including the future chairman of IMAR, Ulanhu. In 1935, Mao secured the loyalty of Ulanhu and others in his famous speech that promised of Mongol liberation and autonomy through an alliance that would "preserve the glory of the epoch of Genghis Khan" (Hao 2006:32) (see photo of Ulanhu below Figure 34). True rights to self-determination that Mao promised in this speech

never came to be, but the 'Tumed Mongols' dedication not simply to autonomy but also to the goals of communism at this time make them one of the few of China's minorities to have communist members before 1949 (Baranovitch 2001:365).

In 1947, Ulanhu and the eastern Inner Mongols came to an agreement and established IMAR with its base at Ulanhot and Ulanhu himself as regional chairman. The group began gradually expanding westward to incorporate the rest of Inner Mongolia into its territory, the borders of which were first officially drawn in 1956 (Borjigin:71). The region's boundaries were reduced during the Cultural Revolution and finally redrawn in the 1980s to resemble its current formation today.

Inner Mongolia remains under the banner system of local administration organized by the Manchus, a system that in Inner Mongolia represented localities according to tribal divisions. Princes of the Khorchin, Kharchin, Ordos, Barga, and other tribes received their own banner territories to govern at the local level. Banners (*qi; boshuu*) were grouped into Leagues (*meng, chuulgan*), divisions that have largely transitioned today into prefecture-level municipalities (*shi*) through China's urbanization programs to "develop the interior" (see Bulag 2002a). Today only three of the original leagues remain, while nine other Inner Mongol regions have been assigned to the status of municipalities (see Figure 2).

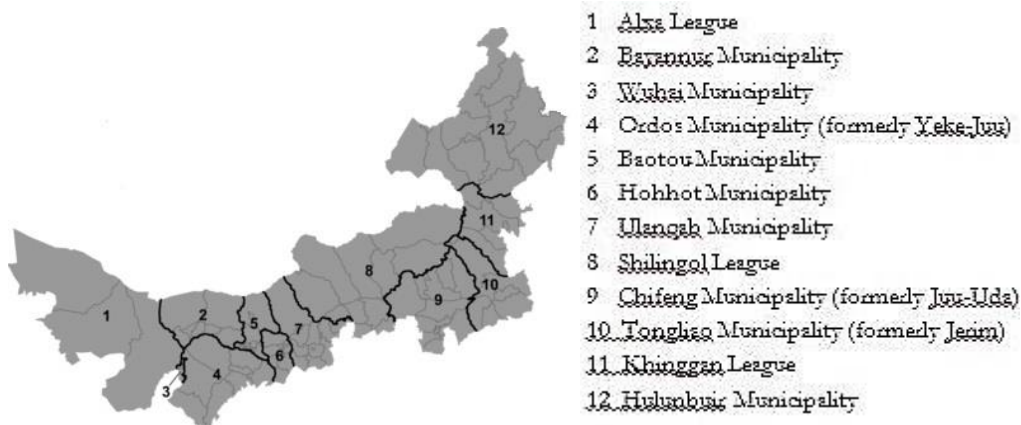


Figure 2. Map of Inner Mongolia and its Prefectural-Level Subdivisions

Although the Chinese media depicts today's Mongols as belonging to a romanticized grassland culture (see Chapter Two), Mongol pastoralism was already on the decline in the southern and eastern border territories of Inner Mongolia at the beginning of the twentieth century. When the communist party entered the region, this project of agriculturalism became even more pronounced. The communists saw herding as a backward mode of production and a barrier to progress. State projects encouraged Han agriculturalists to enter Inner Mongolia and “open up the wasteland” (*kaihuang*) (Song 1987:422, quoted in Khan 1996:27). The areas hardest affected by these projects include the eastern regions of Khorchin, Jiu-Uda (today's Chifeng), and the southwest regions of today's Hohhot and Ordos (formerly Yeke-Jiu). Although some of this land has shifted back to pastoralism, the majority of China's Mongols live either fully agricultural (*quannong*) or semi-agricultural/semi-nomadic (*bannong banmin*) lifestyles (Khan *ibid*). According to the 1982 census numbers of Mongol pastoralists had dropped to only 18.43 percent (Khan 1996:422). Although there are still traces of grassland culture in the isolated regions of Shilingol and Hulunbuir, the numbers of Mongol pastoralists are steadily decreasing as Inner Mongols choose to move to the cities or relocate through the state-run environmental reclamation projects (Dickinson and Webber 2007).

Taking a close investigation into the history of Inner Mongolia, it becomes clear that the definition of Inner Mongolia poses a series of conundrums. Understanding Inner Mongolia as a territory that has experienced waves of Han Chinese migration, the label “Inner Mongolian,” taken literally as a resident of Inner Mongolia, can encompass the twenty-four million Han Chinese that live in region as well as the four million Mongols that reside there. Furthermore, due to shifting historical boundaries and Mongol migrations outside the region, 1.8 million Mongols live outside Inner Mongolia and cannot be officially

labeled as “Inner Mongolian.” So how might one refer to the Mongol population of China and the musicians who are the subject of this dissertation?

For the purpose of this dissertation, I use the labels “Mongols in China” and “Inner Mongols” somewhat interchangeably despite the significant differences in connotations of these labels. I see the umbrella term “Inner Mongols” as valid in representing the historical and political ties Mongols in China have to IMAR, whether or not they reside within its current boundaries. I use the official ethnic category, *Mengguzu* (lit. Mongol nationality), when referring to Mongols’ minority status in China and the representational practices that have accompanied this status.

Mongolian nationals have long sought to discard the relational “Outer” label, and prefer to be called “Mongolians” rather than “Outer Mongolians.” Wherever possible I honor this preference, but on occasion use the label “Outer Mongolians” (*Waimengren*) to follow the language used by some of my field contacts, for clarity, and to situate these Mongols’ geographic “outside”-ness from the perspective of China’s Mongols. Unless otherwise specified, the label “Mongols” refers to China’s Mongols (the subject of this dissertation), and “Mongolians” refers to the Mongols who are citizens of Mongolia.

Chapter One Introduction

When I arrived in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, China for fieldwork in 2009, I became immediately engrossed in a vibrant and active musical community. I accompanied my contacts to daily musical events: televised folk song competitions, ensemble rehearsals, rock band jam sessions, large-scale formal concerts, stadium-filled musical extravaganzas, underground club music events, professional song and dance troupe variety shows, recitals of instrumental and vocal music, intimate music-sharing events among Mongol friends, lecture-demonstrations, and music lessons, among many others.

The challenge I faced during my research was not in finding the music—it was everywhere to be found—but in choosing what musical events to attend, pacing myself physically, and remaining flexible and ready to spring on any new opportunity that might arise.

As I reflected on these highly diverse fieldwork encounters, I observed the influential and powerful roles that many Inner Mongols have played as voices and appeared as faces for Mongols for Mongols in the national arena. Within today's liberal political and artistic environment, these individuals have forged a wide range of new musical pathways that serve to represent Mongols for the nation and in Mongol communities. I wondered, have individuals in Inner Mongolia always wielded such musical power of representation, or is this something new? What roles did Mongol musicians take under a politically charged musical climate in the Mao Zedong era (1949-76)? How might I understand the varied and contested territories over the scope of Mongol music in China today?

In this dissertation, I explore how a dynamic position between Mongol and Chinese cultures has enabled musicians in Inner Mongolia, even since the 1950s, to engage in creative strategies of musical borrowing, as well as internal heritage-seeking efforts today. I explore these formations as a particular result of Inner Mongols' relationships with the Chinese nation and Han Chinese consumers, intra-ethnic distinctiveness in their own region, and in the context of Inner Mongols' historical separation from Mongols in the nation of Mongolia.

In the chapters below, I highlight four musical case studies that contribute to this story of musical creativity and cultural in-betweenness in Inner Mongolia. I consider state-sponsored grassland songs (Chapter Two) and the *morin khuur* (*matouqin*) horse-head fiddle (Chapter Three) as studies to understand Mongols' relationship with the Chinese state. In these two cases, I show how individuals worked to shape regional Mongol music traditions into iconic musical forms that could represent Mongols—or Mengguzu (Mongol nationalities in China)—on the concert stage.

I then examine the revival of the regional fiddle *chor* (Chapter Four) and, cases of musical borrowing from the nation of Mongolia (Chapter Five) to study Inner Mongols as they seek to connect with their own regional heritage and transnational connections with a wider Mongol world. In these latter case studies, I situate the musical directions that have emerged in the past decade as musicians reconsider their musical past and promote alternative representations of themselves as Mongols.

These studies of musical borrowing in Inner Mongolia gravitate toward two key concepts that deserve attention as theoretical frameworks situated within existing literature, namely, (1) definitions of “Mongolness” and (2) the roles of celebrated individuals in creative musical processes.

Theorizing Mongolness

The examples in this dissertation illuminate musicians in Inner Mongolia who have actively engaged in manipulating combinations of sounds as they strategize their position of in-betweenness. I draw from the work of many ethnomusicologists who have discussed the capacity of music to represent aspects of cultural identity, place, and nation (see Stokes 1993, Averill 1994, Austerlitz 1997, Frith 1996, Turino 1999 and 2000, Romero 2001, Yano 2002, Sutton 2002).

Definitions of “Mongolness,” which I define as the traits that can mark an individual, object, or expressive form as Mongol, are difficult considering the existence of two Mongolias—Inner and “Outer”—and many subethnic Mongol groups within each. Scholars have discussed the challenges in determining definitions of “Chineseness” and what it means to dissect a concept that many take for granted as natural or inexpressible (Clayton 2009, Honig 1992, Ang 2001, Chow 2000, Chun 1996). In this dissertation, I situate Mongolness in China as a set of symbols and practices that, unlike the taken-for-granted Chineseness, have a conscious presence in the lives of Mongols in China.

I contextualize Mongols in China through their status as a minority people within state-defined contexts of ethnicity and canons of Mengguzu representations. Much scholarship on Chinese minorities has been devoted to understanding how ethnic minorities often become the center of national discourses of unity in China (Gladney 1994, Blum 2002, Schein 2000). Ralph Litzinger, writing about the Yao minority, writes that China’s margins can be seen as “noisy zones of contact and interaction, spaces of agency where hybrid cultural practices come into existence...” (2000:19). A study of musical practices among China’s Mongols offers a valuable way to better understand the politics of ethnicity-making

in both China and Mongolia and what happens at the peripheries of these state-defined formations.

As scholars have discussed in works addressing general issues of ethnic identity (Ericksen 1993, Hall 1996), definitions of ethnicity—in this case, what makes a Mongol a Mongol—emerge through relationships and, in the process of their inscription, become acts of political positioning. Today, Mongolians in the nation of Mongolia position themselves as the legitimate owners of Mongolness, or, as Caroline Humphrey proposes, as understanding their roots in a Mongol “deep past” (1992). These Mongolians are often quick to dismiss Mongols in China as assimilated “Khitad khuun” (Chinese people), irreversibly mixed into Chinese society.

The complexities of ethnic affiliation among a group of historically dispersed and isolated tribes is a messy situation, particularly for individuals at the peripheries of state- and cultural elite-defined Mongolness. Control over Mongolness tends to be concentrated among those who occupy positions of power—the Mongolian state, cultural elites, the PRC government, tourist industries in both nations, and perhaps even the United Nations.

In this dissertation, I show how select Mongol elites in China have shaped the boundaries of Mongolness and have pushed Mongol agendas in the national arena (see Chapters Two and Three). Most Mongols in China, however, exist in a vulnerable position as they reconcile heavy assimilation into the majority Chinese culture in their region (see Appendix A).¹ Mongolness is a salient and desirable feature for many of these individuals and evokes power, masculinity, a rich history of conquest, depth of traditional cultural practices, and often, a symbol of everything that is “not Chinese” (i.e. Han).

I found that music offers Inner Mongols a viable way to connect themselves with their tightly guarded and threatened Mongolness. References to “Mongol qualities” (*Menggu*

tese) featured heavily in discussions about traditional music, recently labeled as music “from the source” (*yuanshengtai yinyue*, see Chapter Four). I observed that, even if musicians have to sell themselves to the media in order to earn a living, their ethnic positioning as Mongol musicians provides them an important symbolic resource in their daily lives and guarantees that they spend time among like-minded Mongols.

However, not all Mongols have felt repulsed by Chineseness. In the case studies below, I demonstrate how a select number of individual Mongols in China have been willing to accommodate Chinese influences and to mix Chinese and Western aspects into their music, either to promote themselves in the Chinese political system, or to make a profit by appealing to an enormous market of Chinese consumers (Chapters Two and Three). I further discuss how Mongols today have reacted against the Chinese and Western influences that have entered their music culture and how they have sought to distance themselves from these influences (Chapters Four and Five). In each case study, I probe why certain musical elements of Mongolness, Chineseness, and Western-ness are selected, while others are discarded. Such examples, thus, provide insights into how this group of people has seen themselves in relationship with the Chinese state, with the West, within their own region, and with the nation of Mongolia since 1947.

Celebrated Mongol Individuals

Many scholars have discussed the important roles that minority elites, including performing artists, have played as ethnic spokespeople and political and cultural authorities in China (Litzinger 2000, Schein 2000, Rees 2000, Baranovitch 2003 and 2009, Jiang 2006). Scholars of Inner Mongolia have given particular attention to the figure of Ulanhu, a Tumed Mongol who became the founder and first chairman of IMAR (1949-1966) (Bulag 2002a,

2002b, and 2010b; Dreyer 1976; Hyer and Heaton 1968) (see photo below Figure 34).

Ulanhu rose in stature as a Mongol communist in the 1930s and played a key role as an arbiter between Mongols and the state during the early Mao era. The case of Ulanhu demonstrates the benefits that came for many minorities in China through their cooperative efforts, and the subtle agency and hidden forms of resistance that those individuals were able to exert in the process. The Ulanhu narrative reveals the uneven and inconsistent distribution of power in the PRC that left authority in the hands of a few and that, moreover, shifted widely from year to year through unstable political eras and campaigns.

There has been recent interest in studies of individual musicians in China and a methodological interest in musical biographies among ethnomusicologists. Chinese music scholars have shown how studies of individual musicians can shed a great deal of light on musical and social phenomena (see Lau 1996a and 1996b, Stock 1996, Rees 2001 and 2009, Anderson 2012, Wong 2012). Similarly, ethnomusicologists have begun more concerted efforts to engage in studies of individual musicians as an important and often-neglected methodology in the field (theoretical discussions include Titon 1980, Rice 1987, Stock 2001, Rees 2009, Ruskin and Rice 2012; important case studies include Neumann 1977, Frisbie and McAllester 1978, Harnish 2009, Danielson 1997, De Ferranti 2009, Williams 2011). Rather than simply looking at culture as a unified whole with a unified consciousness, studies of individuals offer an important window into subjectivities, creativity, and meaning-making that happen the case of valued musicians, often those who occupy unique positions in society.

During my time in the field, I discovered the important roles that musical elites have played in the Mongol musical community. I began to understand the extent to which the musical community orients itself around individuals, whether musical innovators or folk

transmitters (*chuanbengren*). The lives of individuals make up a significant portion of the musical stories in Inner Mongolia and I look at how individuals have significant power in the Chinese communist system, one that rewards “cooperation,” and how these individuals have occupied a central place in how Mongols and Chinese narrate the stories of Mongol music in China. In this way, the individuals have not merely gained power through their actions, but they are granted authority through a Chinese system locates lineage, authority, and faces to tradition as important in modes of representation.

Existing Scholarship on Music in the Mongolias

A number of sources dealing with Mongol music have provided crucial background to this study. The Danish scholar and travel writer Henning Haslund-Christensen, who traveled to Inner Mongolia in the 1920s and 30s, made over a hundred musical recordings while he was there, which he passed to his colleague Ernst Emsheimer for analysis (Marsh 2009:25). Emsheimer subsequently published the first English-language work on Mongol music that includes valuable descriptions of musical instruments and sounds in pre-PRC Inner Mongolia (see Haslund-Christensen 1943).

Carole Pegg’s pioneering work on music and dance in Mongolia offers thorough treatment of musical traditions across borders, demonstrating the existence of culture clusters that do not align with national boundaries (see Pegg 2001:12 for an excellent map of genre clusters in the Mongol regions). David Chao offers an excellent trans-border study of *urtiin duu* (long song) traditions in urban and rural areas of Mongolia and Inner Mongolia (2010). Jennifer Post’s study of Kazakhs in Mongolia offers helpful insights into ethnic politics and regional identities in Mongolia (2007). Theodore Levin’s and Valentina Süzükei’s study of throat singing and listening practices among nomads in Tuvan and Mongol cultures

illuminates the aesthetic world of these peoples and the connections they make between musical sounds and the natural world. I owe much to the work of Andrew Colwell (2009) and Sunmin Yoon (2011) for their work on throat singing and *urtiin duu* in Mongolia, respectively.

I build much of my work from scholarship of Nimrod Baranovitch, who has contributed significant work on popular music in Inner Mongolia (2001, 2003, 2009), and Peter Marsh, whose monograph on the *morin khuur* in Mongolia has provided me crucial background and insights into the history of this instrument and the national contexts in Mongolia. There is a growing field of Mongol music scholarship in China and Inner Mongolia, and this dissertation is assembled from the meticulous scholarship of ethnic Mongol scholars such as Ulanji (1998), Hujegiletu (2006), Siriguleng (2009), and Boteletu (2007) and the work of Han Chinese ethnomusicologists Xu Xin (2011) and Zou Jing (2010).

Music Genres

Scholars categorize vocal music in Inner Mongolia into the categories of unmetred songs and metered songs, referred to as *urtiin duu* (long song) and *bogino duu* (short song) (Ulanji 1998, Siriguleng 2009). *Urtiin duu* are classified as “long” due to the length in which the notes are held (not according to the length of time it takes to perform). While folksongs today are shortened to about three stanzas for the sake of compact performances, *urtiin duu* and *bogino duu* were traditionally composed of many, many stanzas in length. Other notable genres of metered vocal music in Inner Mongolia² include *uliger* (narrative songs), *bolboo* (spontaneous narrative singing), *tuul* (epic songs), and *khoomii* (throat singing). Song texts for vocal repertoires describe aspects of the natural environment, swift horses, beautiful

women, feelings of longing for one's homeland, and legendary heroes, among other themes (Marsh 2009, Jagchid and Hyer 1979).

In Inner Mongolia, folksongs are referred to in Chinese as *minge* (folksongs) and are given a regional description preceding, such as “Khorchin folksongs” (*Ke'erqin minge*, often known as Northeast folksongs *Dongbei minge*) or “Ordos folksongs” (*E'erduosi minge*) (Siriguleng, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot; Boteletu, interview, 29 July 2009, Hohhot). The term folksong in Inner Mongolia can refer to any song genre, but most typically to shortened versions (two to three verses) of metered narrative or epic songs.

In all pre-modern Mongol cultures, traditional vocal genres tend to be accompanied by a single instrument, though amateur singers often sing spontaneously in their daily life without instrumental accompaniment. When performed solo, instruments usually perform ornamented renditions of vocal melodies. Instruments include a variety of box fiddles: morin khuur (horse-head fiddle), chor (Eastern-region fiddle), and *ikil* (Western-region fiddle); tube fiddles: *kehuuchir* (two-string fiddle) and *dorvon chibtei khuur (sibu)* (four-string fiddle); plucked lutes: *tovshuur* (two-string plucked lute) and *shudraga* or *shanz* (three-string banjo); *yataga* (plucked zither); *yoochin* (hammered-dulcimer); and flutes: *limbe* (transverse flute) and *tsuur/modon chor* (end-blown flute). When played together, these instruments perform heterophonically.

Ensembles were rare in pre-modern Mongol lands due to the isolated nature of steppe communities, though groups of musicians could gather for large festivities and eventually, were organized in Buddhist temples and in the Mongol courts (Jagchid and Hyer 1979:237, Pegg 1995). Among genres considered more instrumental in orientation is *tatlaga*, a style of songs that accompany dance. *Tatlaga* features a unique morin khuur style that resembles the percussive sound of a horse trot. The morin khuur performs this ostinato style

with double stops, an accented bow, and characteristic percussive left-hand finger ornaments, typically in repeated patterns grouped in fours (see Figure 3, see also Chapter Three for the use of *tatлага* patterns in modern solo repertoire for the morin khuur).



Figure 3. Morin Khuur *Tatлага* Pattern

In the courts of Inner Mongol princes in Chakhar and Shilingol, elaborate banquets featured instrumental ensembles that would play a newly developed repertoire of *asar* heterophonic instrumental suites (Siriguleng 2009, see Chapter Three for more discussion). Musically, several of my Inner Mongol contacts consider the double-stop technique of the *asar* morin khuur style, with its light finger pressure and rapid slides between harmonics, to be a technique unique to Inner Mongolia³ (Siriguleng, interview, 17 July 2009, Hohhot; Li Bo, interview, 22 July 2010, Hohhot) (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Asar* from Taipusi Right-Winged Banner, Inner Mongolia

I am compelled by Valentina Süzükei's analysis of two distinct systems of music among Tuvans and Mongols based on listening practices (Levin and Süzükei 2006:47). She

classifies folksongs, such as *urtiin duu* and *bogino duu*, under the “melody-centered system,” whereas *khoomii* and solo instruments such as the *modon chor* flute would be classified under the “timbre-centered system.” She describes how this latter category requires a style of “timbral listening,” in which “each moment of sound is opened up and exposed to reveal a whole sonic universe within itself” and in which “homogeneity of sound are sacrificed in favor of timbral richness” (*ibid*:48). In *khoomii*, a form of overtone singing, the singer produces a low fundamental and emphasizes upper harmonics, thereby producing at least two and often many pitches at the same time. In timbre-centered *khoomii* styles, it is up to the listener to pick out the various upper partials that emerge in the sound.

To these two musical systems, I add a third “rhythmic ostinato-centered system” that involves repeated instrumental patterns, often accompanying song verse. Genres such as *tatlaga*, *holboo*, and some *uliger* feature rhythmic instrumental patterns that are repeated continuously with variation, usually on a fiddle or plucked lute. A notable characteristic of this accompaniment is the use of drone notes, often employed through open strings and fiddle double stops. This practice enables *khuurch* (singer-instrumentalists) to accompany themselves with simple fiddle patterns while they sing (Boteletu 2007). Technically complex, fast variations of *tatlaga* patterns have played a prominent role in modern solo compositions for the *morin khuur* in Inner Mongolia (see Chapter Three).

Features of Mongol Music

In order to look at the ways that musicians use music to evoke Mongolness in the chapters that follow, it is useful to outline a list of features of Mongol music and musical practices in traditional pre-PRC Mongol societies. Although it is a challenge to represent all Inner Mongols through a set of distinguishing features, the following characteristics came up

frequently in my conversations with musicians in Inner Mongolia and through my own experiences of their music. These are: (1) distinct differences in regional instruments and genres (Boteletu, interview, 29 July 2009, Hohhot); (2) use in participatory, small-scale, and everyday settings (Hugejiletu, interview, 1 July 2009, Hohhot); (3) predominance of vocal music with instruments serving in accompanying roles (Siriguleng 2009; Li, interview, 26 June 2009, Hohhot); (4) preference for dense and overtone-rich timbres (Erden Bukh, interview, 18 July 2009, Hohhot); (5) emphasis on drones (Siriguleng, interview, 17 July 2009, Hohhot); (6) pentatonic scales that rest on the sixth or fifth scale degree (personal observation); and (7) emphasis on ornamented melodic lines (Li, interview, 22 July 2010, Hohhot).

(1) Regional Instruments and Genres

Professor Boteletu, a Mongol himself and prominent musicologist at the Inner Mongolia University Art Academy (YSXY) articulated that, “if you haven’t been to Khorchin, Ordos, and Shilingol, you cannot fully understand Inner Mongolia’s music” (Boteletu, interview, 29 July 2009, Hohhot). For this professor, first hand experiences among the eastern (Khorchin), western (Ordos), and central (Shilingol) peoples of Inner Mongolia is essential to knowing the contours of this expansive region and its music culture.⁴

Carole Pegg outlines differences in Mongol instruments, genres, and tunings based on geographic location and environment (2001), aspects that affected the materials that were available for instrument construction and the symbolism connected with the surrounding scenery (cf. Marsh 2009:29-30). In Inner Mongolia, box fiddles vary significantly from region to region in name, tuning, and construction. The three main centers for box fiddle traditions in Inner Mongolia—western *ikil*, central *morin khuur*, and eastern *chor* (see Figures 5 and

6)—correspond to the western mountains and deserts, central grasslands, and eastern rural areas, as described by Inner Mongol scholars Siriguleng and Boteletu (Siriguleng 2009; Boteletu, interview, 29 July 2009, Hohhot).



Figure 5. Box Fiddle Regions in Inner Mongolia



Figure 6. Box Fiddles in Inner Mongolia (Western Ikil, Central Morin Khuur, Eastern Chor)

Music in Inner Mongolia is unique from the nation of Mongolia in the extent of influence it has received from Chinese culture. These Mongols also lack of a dominant subethnic culture that might provide a guiding force for a solid musical identity. Whereas more than eighty percent of Mongols in Mongolia fall into the Khalkha ethnic grouping

(Mongolia 2010), Inner Mongolia consists of many named subcultural groupings that maintain strongly identified musical distinctions (see Figure 7). Although most of the seven features described in the list above apply to musical practices in Inner Mongol, aspects such as local instruments, regional ornamentation (see Figure 13 below), and dominant vocal genres vary from place to place.

Inner Mongols understand their regional music under three major groupings of styles based on geography—music of the Altai Mountains in the west, music in the central grassland steppes, and music in the agricultural east (Boteletu, interview, 29 July 2009, Hohhot). Scholars classify these regions based on similarities in music genres, instruments, and ornamentation styles that predominate in local cultures within these regions. Local music traditions that are highlighted in scholarship and the Chinese media are long song and morin khuur from Shilingol; long song from Hulunbuir; chor, sihu, metered folksongs (Ke'erqin mingge, dongbei mingge), uliger, and holboo narrative traditions from Khorchin; and metered folksongs and sihu from Ordos (*ibid*).

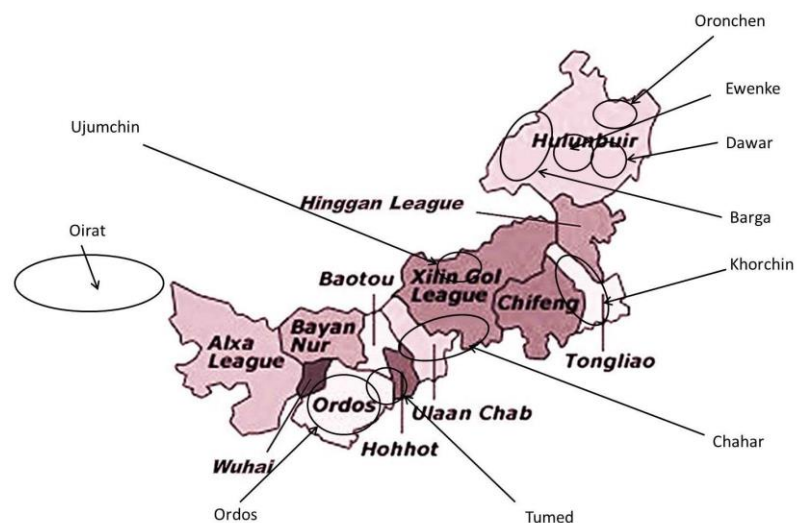


Figure 7. Map of Inner Mongolia Regional and Tribal/Subethnic Divisions

Regions in Inner Mongolia bordering the Chinese provinces of Shaanxi, Shanxi and Hebei (see Figure 1) such as Ordos, Hohhot, and Khorchin, were the first to adopt agriculture and received the greatest influences from Chinese musical traditions. As Mongols transitioned to a different pace of life and greater population concentration of the rural village, they developed metered folksong and narrative traditions based on Chinese models of *shuochang* (narrative song), often substituting heroes of Chinese legends with Mongol heroes. Ordos is known for its lively, Chinese-influenced folksongs, and Khorchin for its slightly more-subdued folksongs and rich uliger narrative traditions (see Figure 8). A dominant fiddle instrument in both of these regions is the dorvon chihtei khuur (*sihu* in Mandarin, henceforth *sihu*), an instrument found among Mongol and Han populations in and around Inner Mongolia.



Figure 8. Metered Folksongs/Narratives and Sihu Regions of Inner Mongolia (Western Ordos, Eastern Khorchin)

In western Inner Mongolia, music of Mongols mountainous Altai regions of Alxa and eastern Xinjiang, exhibit similarities in musical styles and aesthetics with cultures in Central Asia, such as the Uyghurs and Kazakhs. In the past, timbral-centered musical traditions such as *khoomii* and *modon chor* predominated in these mountainous areas, although these traditions had become almost unknown by the mid-twentieth century (Mo'erjifu, interview, 15 June 2010, Hohhot).

Regions of Inner Mongolia bordering today's nation of Mongolia, particularly Shilingol and Hulunbuir, are situated in relatively isolated grassland areas that have received the least Chinese cultural influences (what Mongols in China call *Hanbua*). These regions have retained aspects of nomadic lifestyles and are known by Inner Mongols as the richest centers of unmeasured *urtiin duu* folksongs, a genre considered to be connected intimately with the nomadic life and the expansiveness of the grasslands (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Long Song Regions of Inner Mongolia (Western Alxa, Central Shilingol, Northeastern Hulunbuir)

Traditionally, nomadic cultures in and surrounding Mongolia and China share many similar cultural and musical practices and are worth mentioning here. These groups, identified as distinct ethnic, national, and linguistic groups from the Mongols, include the Tuvans, Buryats, Kalmyks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and China's "three small minorities" (*sanshaao minzu*)—Daur, Ewenke, and Oronchen⁵ (see Figures 10 and 11). Inner Mongols increasingly position themselves within this wider lens of historically nomadic peoples. I observed the strong attractions that many young Inner Mongol musicians have toward Tuvan styles of *khoomii* (*khoomei*), a set of throat singing techniques that many Inner Mongols have added to their repertoire (see Chapter Five). Many Inner Mongol musicians are finding musical crossover opportunities with cultures such as the Buryats and Khazaks, whose music is more readily accessible within the borders of China.



Figure 10. Map of Inner Asian Nomadic Groups Bordering China and Mongolia



Figure 11. Map of Russian Republics of Kalmykia, Tuva, and Buryatia

(2) *Participatory Music-Making*

Mongol music is participatory in nature and is traditionally used in intimate daily contexts or in family festivities. Mongols engage in singing to accompany virtually all parts of their daily life, such as herding or horseback riding (Jagchid and Hyer 1979, Marsh 2009). Music can also be used for functional purposes, including encouraging a camel to nurse its young. An important musical context is the *nair*, an all-night gathering of family or friends in the *ger* (yurt tent) in which Mongols (typically males) take turns singing around the circle, usually accompanied by a morin khuur. The event begins with the most-respected male and

proceeds down in rank around the circle of the ger so that everyone has an opportunity to sing. I attended family nair events in Inner Mongolia at the East Ujumchin annual *ovoo* festival (to honor a local, outdoor Shaman-Buddhist shrine) in Shilingol during the summers of 2009 and 2010. In these contexts, one's participation in the event is more important than one's singing skill. There was traditionally little distinction between professional and amateur musicians and everyone was expected to have some ability in singing and playing instruments, typically learned through family members (Marsh 2009:31). Families would construct their own instruments from whatever materials were available in their surrounding environment and typically consisted of simple designs from household materials, such as wooden boxes or large wooden ladles (Hugejiletu, interview, 19 June 2010, Hohhot). As permanent Tibetan Buddhist temples gradually came into Mongol lands beginning in the fourteenth century, musicians could receive training at these temples. Many of these monks became traveling storyteller-bards and would wander the land and perform their tales in all-night gatherings, some on multiple consecutive evenings. Those who accompanied their narratives with a fiddle were known as khuurch (see Chapter Four for a discussion of the famous khuurch-turned-master-folk-artist Serash).

(3) Vocal-Oriented Music

Music in pre-modern Mongol cultures, including instrumental music, has nearly always been connected to vocal traditions (Boteletu, interview, 29 July 2009, Hohhot; Li, interview, 26 June 2009, Hohhot; Ulanji 1998; Siriguleng 2009). As already mentioned, instruments mainly provide accompaniment for singers and, when playing solo, typically perform renditions of vocal melodies. Scholars have noted the intimate connection between the morin khuur and the vocal line in *urtiin duu* (cf. Siriguleng 2009). In this style of

unmetered singing, the morin khuur trails behind the singer ever so slightly in a supporting, following role (see Figure 12). Vocal and instrumental techniques in this genre emerged through mutual imitation of one another such that trills, slides, and other vocal techniques resemble morin khuur styles and vice versa.

"The Cool Khangai Mountains"
 清凉的杭盖

Long song performed by Modege 莫德格
 Morin khuur player unknown

Molto Rubato, Freely ♩ = 55

Long Song Melody

Morin Khuur

Falsetto vodel

*** = Nogula Trill

Figure 12. "The Cool Khangai Mountains" Long Song Performed by Modege

(4) Preference for Dense and Overtone-Rich Timbres

As mentioned above, specific Mongol genres, such as *khoomii* and *modon chor* from western regions, have a uniquely "timbre-centered" approach to musical and listening practices that favors dense sounds with lots of overtones (cf. Levin and Süzükei 2006).

Although not all music is specifically timbre-centered, Mongol music generally favors sounds that bring out overtones. The strings of the morin khuur, for instance, were traditionally

made of hundreds of strands of horse hair loosely tuned together to bring out many overtones at once. From a Western-oriented musical aesthetic, the timbre of the morin khuur may sound “impure” (filled extraneous sounds) or unrefined,⁶ however this sound has been highly prized by many Mongols (see Chapter Four for a discussion of the *chor* fiddle and its distinctly fuzzy timbre).

Levin and Süzükei explain that, for nomadic Mongols, this dense and fuzzy sound is often intended to imitate the sounds of their acoustically rich landscape (Levin and Süzükei 2006). Süzükei describes the contrast between Western and Mongol timbral aesthetics as the difference between throwing a packed snowball that stays together and moves in a single direction, on the one hand, and throwing a loose handful of snow that scatters in all directions, on the other hand. Mongols appreciate the scattering of multi-phonetic sounds that they believe best imitate the timbres of nature (*ibid*:28).

(5) Use of Drones

Proceeding from the above preference for multiphonic music, Mongols frequently employ instrumental (and, in the case of *khoomii*, vocal) drone tones. Most instruments tune their open strings to an interval of a fourth or a fifth and make use of unfingered, open strings played together or in alternation to achieve the sense of a sustained drone pitch. In the case of the morin khuur, instrumentalists produce multiphonic sounds not only through the overtones produced by the buzzing of many strands of horse-hair strings, but also through the use of double stops, whereby the musician plays two strings with the bow at the same time. Most traditional morin khuur pieces, whether accompanying a singer or played solo, begin with a sustained note on both open strings.

(6) *Pentatonic Scales*

Like many musical traditions in East Asia, Mongol music typically fits into anhemitonic pentatonic scales, missing the fourth and seventh scale degrees. Melodies tend to rest on the fifth or sixth scale degrees and often employ a wide range with arching melodies and a climax pitch. Khorchin folksongs (as well as many modern, state-sponsored grasslands songs) seem particularly characterized by minor-tinged, plaintive pentatonic scales resting on the sixth scale degree, whereas Ordos folksongs seem to employ bouncier rhythms and modes resting on the fifth scale degree.

(7) *Ornamented Melodic Lines*

Mongol music is characterized by ornamentation and melodic variation techniques that vary according to genre, instrument or voice, region, and individual. Distinctive ornaments and timbral manipulations unique to Mongol music include trills, slides, and mordents. Vocal techniques characteristic of *urtiin duu* include falsetto, glottal stops, and a distinctive wide trill technique known in Inner Mongolia as *nogula*.

As in much East Asian music, melodies are generally understood, not as a distinct succession of pitches, but rather as anchor pitches that can be approached in any number of prescribed ways. The musician is responsible for selecting between flexible, but genre-specific and regionally codified routes to approach those anchor notes. In traditional Mongol music-making practices a folktune could be quite different from region to region, from person to person, or even from performance to performance by the same musician. Similar to Chinese music genres such as *Jiangnan sizhu* (silk-and-bamboo ensemble music from Shanghai), musicians develop an internalized sense of style and musicality over many years of listening to music in family and community settings (cf. Witzleben 1995). In the

transcriptions below, I provide two versions of the folktune, “Wuyoudai,” performed in Khorchin and Ordos sihu (four-string fiddle) styles (see Figure 13).

Khorchin Version:
Stately ♩ = 110 Sihu performed by Sun Liang 孙良

Ordos Version:
Lively ♩ = 120 Sihu performed by Wuyunlong 乌云龙

Figure 13. Two Regional Versions of “Wuyoudai”

The anchor notes of this folk tune are the A pitches in the second measure and the D pitches in the fourth measure. In the Khorchin version, the tune is lengthened by two measures in a brief elaboration of the D pitch. Though the general contour of the melody is similar in each version, the instrumentalists approach these anchor pitches in unique ways through slides, trills and melodic variation that are characteristic to the instrumental practices in each region. The strophic form of most Mongol music genres enables musicians to render melodic material differently upon each repetition of a folk tune. The first statement of the melody, such as in the transcriptions above, is generally the simplest, while further repetitions are more heavily ornamented.

Chinese and Western Music Influences

Mongol folk artists engaged in musical change and borrowing well before 1949, but this process became more pronounced upon Inner Mongols’ incorporation into the PRC. With the development of musical institutions, the rise of a class of state-trained performers, and frequent national performance settings, Mongols had strong imperatives to develop a

music that was packaged for short variety-show performances and that offered audiences iconic, ethnically distinct, and loud musical presentations that would give Mongols a strong presence in the national arena.

In the examples that follow in the next four chapters, I examine how the characteristics of Mongol music described above have been creatively selected, adapted, and sometimes discarded by Inner Mongol musicians as they modified their music to these new concert settings. In musical forms such as grassland songs (Chapter Two) and solo morin khuur music (Chapter Three), musicians have drawn from a vocabulary of Chinese and Western musical features in the creation of newly arranged musical forms that they have deemed successful in such performances.

Inner Mongol musicians highlight the changes in their music as incorporating the following features of Chinese music and PRC-nationalism: (a) a fondness for loud, high pitches, (b) a preference for pinched, nasal timbres, (c) a focus on politicized music in service of national unity, and (d) performance contexts that present extravagant, gaudy displays of national and minority culture.

They point to the Western, modernized features of their post-1949 music through the following descriptions: (A) the separation of instrumental music from vocal music (*qiyuehua*); (B) displays of technical skill and virtuosity gained through professional training; (C) a need to develop scientific, standardized instruments with stable tuning; (D) the rise of composers and fixed written compositions; (E) incorporation of tonal harmony and stratified, soprano-alto-tenor-bass (SATB) textures; and (F) a preference for pure, refined timbres and precise intonation of single-toned, centered pitches. This list of adapted-Western elements parallels the adjustments that were made to traditional music of

Chinese instruments and accompanied a strong ideology of Western music as a symbol of modernity and scientific progress.

Through the adaptations of Mongol musical elements in combination with Chinese and Western features, the musical panorama in Inner Mongolia has transformed since the 1950s and continues to adjust to new social contexts, including circulating global cultures, today. I use this dissertation as a way to highlight Inner Mongols participation in creating a national pan-Mengguzu (pan-ethnic Mongol) musical formation beginning in the 1950s, one that partially erased the distinctive regionalism of Mongol folk music styles, and the subsequent questioning and diversification of conceptions of Mongolness that have emerged in recent decades.

Field Site: Hohhot

I conducted a total of five months of fieldwork for this dissertation during the summers of 2009 and 2010. I centered this work in the urban IMAR capital of Hohhot—the cultural, musical, intellectual, and political center of Inner Mongolia. Many scholars have described the wide urban-rural-pastoral divide in Mongolia and China, typically lamenting the musical sacrifices that have occurred with the loss of grassland lifestyles and increasing urbanization in the Mongolias (Chao 2010, Yoon 2011, Pegg 2001, Post 2007). While I share these sentiments, I propose that a city like Hohhot offers a richness of musical engagements and interactions that are not possible in isolated pastoral communities. It is the dynamism of Hohhot as a musical magnet, a cultural mixing ground, and the home for dozens of musical institutions, media networks, and a robust musical economy, that leads me to use this city to represent Inner Mongolia in this dissertation.

Whether or not an individual lives in Hohhot, the musical changes and happenings in the city eventually trickle down to even the most remote areas of Inner Mongolia, albeit consciously filtered and adapted by individuals along the way. In my travels to grassland areas in Shilingol, I noted the similarities in instrument construction to those produced in Hohhot factories along with precise tuning and professional vibrato of morin khuur musicians there. In my studies of Mao-era Inner Mongolia, I have found that the centralization of musical activity in Hohhot after its selection as the capital in 1954 and the wide dissemination of standardized musical forms meant that the activities in the capital permeated much of the region and, moreover, had great significance in forming national representations of Mongols in China. Thus, Hohhot makes logical sense as a field site for a study of representation politics and musical change in Inner Mongolia.

William Jankowiak calls Hohhot the “symbolic center of the state’s commitment to protect and promote Mongolian cultural heritage” and goes on to describe the city the many symbols of ethnic Mongolness through the city and on official buildings, including images of grassland herders, horses, and dancers (1993:30). During my visit more than a decade after Jankowiak’s on-site research, I noticed many of the same motifs around the city, though all in front of a backdrop of a growing urban cityscape.

Like many Chinese cities, Hohhot now has a growing number of large department stores, fancy apartment high-rises, and American fast-food chains. Store fronts display their Mongol connections through government-enforced inclusion of the vertical Mongol script that accompanies Chinese characters on almost every building (see Figure 14). The city has signs of ethnic groups other than Mongols including the Muslim district in the old city center, a row of buildings where the long-time Hui inhabitants of the city once resided, and a long line of Xinjiang-style Uyghur restaurants near the Inner Mongolia University campus.



Figure 14. Images of Hohhot (From Top Left: Inner Mongolia Hotel, Mongol Restaurant, McDonalds, Inner Mongolia Museum, Muslim Street)

Hohhot's population is predominantly Han with ethnic Mongols making up less than ten percent of its population (as reported in the 2010 census, see Inner Mongolia 2011). Jankowiak describes how the population of Han had already risen from a four to one Han to Mongol ratio by 1949 (Jankowiak 1993:32). Most urban-raised Mongols in Hohhot have trouble maintaining their Mongolian language abilities, which Jankowiak argues is an ironic situation considering the city is the cultural center of the region (*ibid*). Still, the city is a rich

locus of interchange between many peoples and many different kinds of Mongols, and in terms of cultural exhibitions and musical performances, the city is dominated by “Mongol ethnic styles” (Menggu minzu tese).

Hohhot houses the top programs and institutions for the study and performance of Mongol music in the country. A quick glance at the number of institutions in Hohhot (see Glossary) demonstrates how the city is able to attract the best musicians across Inner Mongolia. Without even leaving the city, I had opportunities to meet individuals from a variety of backgrounds and regions, including scattered grassland, countryside, and urban areas of Inner Mongolia. I established close ties with the students, faculty, and performers at these institutions, particularly among professors and students at the Inner Mongolia University Art Academy (YSXY).

I made frequent trips to Beijing, which has its own vibrant Mongol music scene and where performers from Hohhot frequently travel for performances and CCTV (China Central Television) appearances. I took several opportunities to visit relatively isolated grassland areas in Inner Mongolia outside of Hohhot,⁷ including making a trip to Hailar and the Chenqi grasslands in northeast Hulunbuir and two trips to the Ujumchin grasslands in Shilingol. I took two organized tours with groups of Chinese tourists to grassland sites outside of Hohhot and had an opportunity to visit the semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural region of Alukhorchin in eastern Chifeng Municipality.

During five months of my fieldwork in 2009 and 2010, I conducted more than eighty semi-formal and casual interviews with individuals, who mostly consisted of performers, teachers, composers, music scholars, instrument makers, and arts troupe directors in the Mongol music community. I also had many excellent and stimulating conversations with

Mongol friends over dinner, in car rides, and of course, while drinking, after which I would need to run back to my room to jot down the themes of our exchanges.

I attended daily performances of music, including university concerts, song and dance troupe performances, concerts for *nadaam* festivals (summer games) on the grasslands, restaurant performances for tourists, and others such as those described at the beginning of this chapter. Through lessons on the morin khuur with Siriguleng, my patient teacher and musicologist friend, I gained an understanding of the instrument's regional styles and current systems of pedagogy as well as aspects of finger position, tuning, bow pressure and placement, and other features that influence the way folk musicians ornament their melodies (see Figure 15). I also took lessons on the Mongol sihu (four-string fiddle) and khoonii (throat singing) while I was in Hohhot, efforts that enabled me to appreciate how and why musicians make the stylistic decisions they do.

When I entered the field, I had fears that some Mongols would not feel comfortable enough in Mandarin to hold extensive conversations, or that they would feel too repulsed by the language to be able to fully express themselves. I feared this situation would hinder my ability to establish rapport and friendships. On the contrary, these Mongols expressed exceeding gratitude to me that they could speak to me at all. Even for Mongol musicians who tour frequently abroad, they appreciated having the chance to converse directly with a Western foreigner. The allure of having contact with foreigners is strong in Inner Mongolia, as it is in the rest of China, and this gave me a strong advantage in gaining rapport in the Mongol music community. My friends and contacts in Inner Mongolia went out of their way to aid my fieldwork endeavors and gave me the ability to accomplish speedy and thorough work in five months time.



Figure 15. Author Playing the Morin Khuur

Chapter Outline

The following chapters present four different lenses for understanding music and modernities in Inner Mongolia. Chapter Two sheds light on national representations of Mongols through the Mandarin-language Mongol song genre known as grassland songs (*caoyuan gequ*). In this chapter, I highlight the roles of two prominent composers who have been formative in the creation and shaping of this song genre and demonstrate how, despite the general dislike of these songs by the Mongol community, Mongols have found meaning in these songs as performers or consumers, while others simply perform them as a means to advance their careers.

Chapter Three illuminates an extended case study of the Mongol individuals who were involved in the modernization of the morin khuur in Inner Mongolia. I focus on conceptions of Western modernity, progress, and development that motivated their efforts. This chapter comprises two aspects of the reform of this instrument, (1) the adaptation and standardization of the morin khuur model and (2) the composition of a solo repertoire, that occurred in two time periods, (a) the 1950s to 60s and (b) the 1980s to 90s. As in the

previous chapter, this discussion demonstrates the powerful roles that Mongol individuals played as authors of culture and enables a fascinating illustration of the passionate musical enactments of modernity, and its later reconceptions, that occurred in Inner Mongolia.

Chapters Four and Five present case studies that characterize the diverse responses that individuals have had to conversations about ethnic representation and modernization in previous decades. These chapters demonstrate the alternatives to Western modernity and the nation that have appeared in Inner Mongols' consciousness.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the recent prominence of the two-string fiddle chor in Inner Mongolia and uncover the way that it has become, for those who seek to depart from a progress-oriented modernity, an alternative to the morin khuur and a symbol of a distinctly Inner Mongol identity.

In Chapter Five, I demonstrate how a trans-border relationship with the country of Mongolia offers another avenue as an alternative discourse to affiliation with the Chinese nation. For Mongols who seek to escape from their minority status, a connection to Mongolia has been for them a model on how to be more "authentically Mongol." As Mongols in China face the heavily guarded borders of Mongolian "purity" constructed by their neighbors to the north, many Inner Mongols have turned around to focus inward, merging the styles of others with unique styles within their own borders, and thereby taking ownership over their music as distinctly Inner Mongol and, for many, distinctly their own.

I conclude this dissertation in Chapter Six with a summary of the themes of this dissertation and with directions for future inquiry.

Through this dissertation, I demonstrate the paths Mongols have taken to understand themselves in a context of cultural in-betweenness and faced often with overcoming the challenges of their "otherness," whether in China or in Mongolia. These

studies provide a window into the complexities of the Mongol experience in China and the importance that music has played as musicians mediate and direct the political and cultural forces that surround them.

Chapter Two “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands”

...I’ll accompany you to the grasslands.
We’ll see the green, green grass.
We’ll see the blue, blue sky.
We’ll see the white clouds lightly floating
And carrying my thoughts away.

I’ll accompany you to the grasslands.
The sun is so brilliant there.
I’ll accompany you to the grasslands.
So that love will stay in our hearts...

(Lyrics for “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands”
(2005), translation by the author)

The lyrics above are an excerpt from the popular Mongol pop ballad, “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands,” a favorite selection among many Han Chinese visitors to Inner Mongolia. The text depicts a fantasy-like image of the grasslands as a natural environment devoid of modernity and ready to be consumed. “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands” falls into a broad genre of state-sponsored Mongol songs sung in Mandarin Chinese and referred to today with the marketing label “grassland songs” (*caoyuan gequ*) (see Appendix B for a selected list of grassland song titles). This loosely defined genre of songs, as arguably the most popularized and widely spread music of Mongols in China, offers a starting point to understand the relationship of music to minority politics in the PRC.

Mandarin-language Mongol grassland songs typically feature sentimental texts that describe the beauty of the grasslands and the joyful simplicity of the Mongol people. Musically, songs are characterized by their lilting melodies, professional, pop-style vocal quality, Mongol vocal ornaments, and electronic midi accompaniment. In “I’ll Accompany You,” the vocal melody complements the emotional quality of the song lyrics with exaggerated vocal slides, instances of vocal ornamentation, arching melody with a wide range,

and the distinctive minor-flavored mode featured in many of these songs (see transcription in Figure 16 below).

I'll Accompany You to the Grasslands
陪你一起看草原

Composer: Duan Qingmin 段庆民
Performers: Long Mei 龙梅

Lyrical, Emotional Quality ♩ = 110

Big scoop

Yin wei wo men jin sheng you yuan Rang wo you ge xin - yuan - Deng dao cao yuan
zui mei de ji jie Pei ni yi qi - kan cao - yuan. - Qu kan na qing qing de cao
Qu kan - lan - lan de - tian - - Kan na bai yun -
- qing qing de piao - Dai kan wo - de si - nian.

Figure 16. “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands”

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of grassland songs to situate music in Inner Mongolia within political and economic contexts since the 1950s. I investigate three snapshots along the timeline of grassland songs to examine the trajectory of musical styles and the contours of Mengguzu (Mongol nationality) representations in China since 1947. I argue that Mongol composers and performers of these songs, rather than experiencing the coercive force of the state, creatively appropriate language and musical symbols from the Chinese language, socialist and nationalist discourses, and from Westernized-Chinese popular music. I introduce musical examples below to show how composers and arrangers combine outside materials with iconic features of their own traditional music to creatively mold the standard tropes of Mengguzu representation in China. I discuss, further, how these

creative fusions offer creative fulfillment, on the one hand, but on the other hand, serve to advance individuals and their careers through the Chinese socialist system.

Experiencing Grassland Songs

During my stay in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, grassland songs became a natural and expected part of the urban soundscape. Upbeat melodies blasted on street corners during the day, while ardent singing from Han tourists drifted out of restaurant windows late into the evening. I received almost tireless exposure to pre-recorded Mongolian music—blasting on the streets, on the local television stations, and on long-distance trains to Inner Mongolia. I was startled at the rows of grassland song collections that lined the shelves of music stores in Hohhot (see Figure 17 below).



Figure 17: Sales of Grassland Songs (Left to Right: Record Store in Hohhot; Gift Shop in Hohhot, 5 CDs for US\$15)

In the 1980s, grassland songs rose as a popular commodity among Han Chinese and became the first musical product from Inner Mongolia to achieve national commercial success. The female Mongol singer Dedema became a household name after the success of her song “The Beautiful Grasslands are My Home.” The minority pop industry took off in Inner Mongolia and paralleled similar industries that were appearing among the Tibetan,

Uyghur, Yi and other minority communities in the 1980s. Mandarin-language minority pop songs were targeted specifically for Han Chinese consumption through television, tourism, and the karaoke bar. Songs package Mongol lifestyles as a nostalgic remnant of an imagined Chinese past, enabling Han Chinese to negotiate their own alienation in the modern world and understand themselves and their identities in relation to minority others (Gladney 1994). Songs such as “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands” offer Han the ability to escape into an alternate world of natural beauty, Mongol simplicity, and pre-modernity. Along with cashmere and milk, grassland songs became one of the top exports to come out of Inner Mongolia.

When urban Han Chinese sing karaoke, popular Mongol grassland songs frequently appear on their playlists. Favorites include “The Beautiful Grasslands are My Home” (1977), “Heaven” (2000), “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands” (2005), and “Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River” (1997), songs that each have relatively slow tempi, smooth melodic contour, and memorable tunes that are easy to sing. Television viewers in China, Han and minority, receive frequent exposure to grassland songs through media channels and live events broadcast in and outside Inner Mongolia. In addition to frequent appearances at New Year Gala television programs, prominent grassland singers receive invitations to perform at live events such as the Zhao Jun Festival Opening Ceremony in Hohhot, a large-scale annual event hosted in the Hohhot Stadium that features extravagant music and dance performances, as well as fireworks, on-stage sparklers, bright, multi-colored lights, fog effects, and large-screen displays.

Prior to the opening of market capitalism in the 1980s, state-sponsored Mongol songs had more direct political functions and were composed with the purpose of promoting socialist values and sentiments of national unity in Inner Mongolia.

State-sponsored songs in Inner Mongolia have thus transformed from strongly politically charged functions to a heavily consumer-driven industry.

I divide Mandarin-language songs in Inner Mongolia into three main eras: (1) orthodox songs in the Mao era (1949-1977), (2) songs that emerged in the free-market Deng Xiaoping era (1980s-90s), and (3) contemporary songs that have diverge into many new directions and musical styles (late 1990s-present). Songs in this last era are often difficult to categorize because they often cross-over into more mainstream Chinese popular music. Some grassland songs today are composed and sung in the Mongolian language (see discussion below). Today's grassland songs might only be referenced in this category due to performers' identities as "grassland song stars" (*caoyuan gexing*),⁸ lyrical references to the grassland, or their presence in state-supported media and tourism.

However, regardless of their genre-crossing status, grassland songs are often immediately recognizable due to their distinctive melodic and accompaniment features. Classic characteristics of these songs include those already described above: arched, lilting melodies, Mongol vocal ornaments, Mongol-style pentatonic modes that rest on the fifth or sixth scale degrees, and tonal harmonic accompaniment using a synthesized or string orchestra sound with drum kit and arpeggiated guitar. As a package, these musical features became the recognized ethnic flavors, *minzu tese*, that marked songs as national representations of Mongols in the PRC.

In this chapter, I discuss how this iconic set of Mengguzu song features came into being and why Mongol composers and performers took part in what some Mongols consider to be a musical and lyrical stereotyping enterprise. I show how Mongol composers used song melodies and lyrics as they developed and expanded how Mengguzu (Mongol nationalities) would appear on national stages, through processes of musical mixing.

In the following sections, I trace the history of state-sponsored arts and Mandarin-language songs in China and Inner Mongolia and then present case studies from the three eras mentioned above. For the first, I introduce the early Mandarin-language song “The Sun in the Grasslands Rises Never to Go Down” composed in 1952 by the Mongol composer Meiliqige (b. 1928). I then discuss the piece “Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River” by the composer Wulantuoga (1958-present) and its role in expanding the grassland song genre in the late 1990s. I end this chapter by demonstrating the creative avenues that the grassland rock band “Blue Wild” (Lanye Yuedui, henceforth Lanye) has taken today as they interpret Wulantuoga’s popular piece “This Grassland,” while using the financial success from their grassland song performances to fund other creative pursuits.

Although there are thousands of grassland songs each worthy for extended analysis, I choose these three examples as a representative sampling of songs in three different styles composed and performed across six decades. Meiliqige, with whom I was fortunate to meet twice in Hohhot, is one of the most prominently recognized musical figures in Inner Mongolia and his piece “Sun in the Grasslands” is a recognized classic. I highlight the composer Wulantuoga because of the solid place of his repertoire in the grassland song canon and his role in creatively expanding the genre while still maintaining enthusiastic support from the government. I was fortunate to have many encounters with the composer, including visiting him in his grassland home of Hulunbuir and observing two recording sessions in his studio.⁹ Finally, after hearing the band Lanye play in Hohhot, I sought out the band leader and gained useful insights into their rock interpretations of grassland songs and their other ongoing musical projects.¹⁰

Through these case studies, I demonstrate these musicians' willingness to pick and choose among Mongol and foreign musical features in the blending of new Mengguzu sounds for national and public arenas. I furthermore, problematize these Mongol composers' and performers' willingness to participate in this state-sponsored song genre, one that many Inner Mongols consider musically inferior and lyrically degrading compared to traditional song genres like *urtiin duu*. I am interested in how these songs actually offered room for Mongol expressions of creativity and modes of self-advancement in China.

Mongol Responses

Understandably, grassland songs have been a heated site of contention in the Mongol music community and for many, represent not only their cultural sell-out to Chinese consumers, but also signs of language and culture losses that Inner Mongols have faced through assimilation with the Chinese.¹¹ Issues of language loss are significant today with much heated discussion among Mongols about the future of language education in China (see Bilik 1998a, Bulag 2003, 2010a for extended discussion of language anxieties in Inner Mongolia today).

Today, Mongols in China have significant anxiety about losing remnants of their cultural past and previous ways of life. Many musicians in Hohhot lament the increasing urbanization of their region and its effect on musical traditions like long song, which, they express, require internalized experience of living on the grassland. Due to development policies and Han immigration into their region, Mongols face severe degradation of their environment as well as assimilation with Han Chinese culture due to their minority status in their own region (see Appendix A for population statistics).

Inner Mongols who already have fears about assimilation to Han Chinese society become among those most critical of these songs. For many, grassland songs epitomize the tainting of their traditional culture through the hand of the state and Chinese cultural influences. Many Inner Mongols consider the romantic imagery in grassland lyrics as a national blindfold imposed by the state as a way to cover up the realities of environmental degradation and decades of land misuse.

In conversation Mongols in China express discontent about both the lyrics and musical features of these songs. A musician friend expressed to me, "Everywhere you go you hear grassland songs, but these are not really songs of the grasslands. They are nothing at all like what I sang when I grew up in my grassland hometown. They just use common stereotypes like *khadag* (ceremonial cloth), sheep, and blue sky. Many people assume that grassland songs are representative of Mongol art... but because of audience influences, all of the flavor of Mongol music has changed..." (Elebuge, interview, 20 July 2010, Hohhot). Due to such strong contentions, many Mongols in China flatly reject grassland songs and others refuse to perform them altogether. For those who have childhood connections to the grassland or who have studied traditional music, they realize how little these songs resemble "real" songs of the grassland such as *urtiin duu*.

I heard musicians frequently criticize the singer Dedema for her Sinified singing style and for her inaccurate portrayals of Mongol culture in her songs. One contact stated to me that, "singers like Dedema sing about the grassland, but know nothing about it. Tengger... is a good representation of Mongol people. He actually grew up in a pastoral area and sings in a more traditional way" (Bayer, interview, 6 June 2010, Hohhot; for more on the Mongol pop singer Tengger see Baranovitch 2009, 2003). In this comment, Tengger's legitimacy as a singer rests on his ability to render the vocal techniques that he learned through his

upbringing on the grasslands. While some are outright dismissive of grassland songs, many understand them as a spectrum of songs from those more traditionally oriented to those that are lyrically insulting or musically Sinified.

Mongols' reception of grassland songs is furthermore complicated and nuanced according to context and population.¹² In her study of grassland songs in Inner Mongolia, Anne Henochowicz shows that many Mongols in Hohhot consider these songs as part of a repertoire of Mongol folksongs and, therefore, a legitimate component of their culture (2008). Mongols in Hohhot, having less proficiency in the Mongolian language, may find grassland songs linguistically accessible and appealing to their sense of nostalgia for an imagined grassland home that they likely never knew (see discussion below). I found that individuals with friendships, kinship relations, or other close connections to grassland song artists typically showed enthusiastic support for the songs of that artist, superseding any dislike these individuals may have otherwise held toward these songs.

Grassland songs, on the one hand, offer a body of songs for Mongol or Han¹³ listeners that are appealing, "user-friendly," and in some cases connected to family, friends, or positive experiences (such as viewing songs together on the annual Chinese New Year's Gala television program). On the other hand, songs can be a rallying point for Mongols as a reminder of the devastating loss of culture, language, and environment that have resulted from Chinese encroachment their native land (see Baranovitch 2009:191).

Art to Serve the Masses

The genre known now as grassland songs has its roots in the 1950s, at a time when the state actively encouraged song composition among both Han and minorities. Music became a tool that the communists used to instill national unity and to promote socialist

values to the masses, a project that drew inspiration and guidance from Mao's famous Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art (see McDougall 1980, Schein 2000, Rees 2000, Baranovitch 2003). Researchers were sent to distant locations across China to collect, rearrange, translate, and disseminate regional folksongs, including songs from China's ethnic minorities¹⁴ (see McDougall 1980, Wong 1984, Mackerras 1995, Rees 2000).

Mao Zedong realized that communist legitimacy in the newly established PRC depended on the incorporation of non-Han peoples into a "national consciousness."¹⁵ The state hoped that minorities would, in the process of hearing and singing patriotic adaptations of familiar songs, come to feel ardor for socialism and harmony as members of the Chinese nation, while also becoming conscious of the logic of their newly identified ethnic groups in the process (see Mullaney 2010¹⁶).

Newly arranged songs and compositions were performed in elaborate, large-scale concerts and "joint performances" (*huibao yanchu*) of ethnic song and dance for important occasions and as entertainment for local work units. In Inner Mongolia, troupes even traveled to distant grassland locations to perform for local herders and continue collecting folk music for future arrangements (see discussion of Ulanmuqir mobile ensembles in Chapter Three).

In the 1950s, select Mongol musicians like Meiliqige who had enough musical background and ability in the Chinese language tested into newly opened, state-run conservatories in China. These included Central Conservatory (established in 1949 in Zhangjiakou, the capital of Inner Mongolia at the time, and later moved to Beijing) and the Inner Mongolia Art Academy (YSXY) (originally established in 1951 in Zhangjiakou and later moved to Hohhot in 1957).

In the process of adapting minority folksongs, composers were encouraged to enhance the mass nature of the songs, to apply party ideologies,¹⁷ and moreover to distill a set of iconic musical “ethnic qualities” (*minzu tese*, *minzu fengge*)¹⁸ that could be used as a vocabulary for future compositions (Wong 1984, Mackerras *ibid*, Khan 1996:144-5). As addressed in Chapter One above, the territory of Inner Mongolia consisted of a diversity of unique, regional cultures and music styles and musical unity was certainly not a given. It was up to composers to determine a single, pan-Mengguzu representation of their ethnic group for the new nation. Mongol songs in China in the 1950s, such as Meiliqige’s “Sun in the Grasslands” (see below) were crucial in determining the icons of *Menggu minzu fengge* (Mongol ethnic style) and *Menggu tese* (Mongol qualities) that become hallmarks of the genre that came to be known as grassland songs in the 1980s.

Having distinct similarities in textual and musical style with songs in the post-Mao era, many songs from the 1950s to the 70s have been retroactively added to the grassland song canon. Favorites include “The Sun in the Grasslands Rises Never to Go Down” (1952), “Meeting at the Aobao” (1953), “Shilin River” (1955), “Song of Praise” (1964), and “The Beautiful Grasslands are My Home” (1977) (see Appendix B). These songs are included on many, if not most, album collections of grassland songs as well as “grassland song menus” offered to tourists on visits to the grasslands (see Appendix D).

Meiliqige

The composer Meiliqige (1928-present) (see Figure 18) achieved national success as composer in the Mao era for his composition of songs later considered part of the grassland song canon. During his first year as a composition student at Beijing Central Conservatory in 1952, he designed and submitted a composition based on a chor (two-string fiddle) folksong

with self-composed patriotic lyrics honoring Mao and the communist party. The resulting piece, “The Sun in the Grassland Rises Never to Go Down” (see Appendix C for full text) would become one of the most important revolutionary compositions in China in the 1950s (Baranovitch 2009:184, 2001:362).¹⁹



Figure 18. Meiliqige, Playing the Chor Two-String Fiddle

After winning first place in a national competition in 1954, the song took off in popularity across the nation and had a strong presence on the radio and in the musical soundscape of Maoist China (Meiliqige, interview, 23 July 2010, Hohhot). On the occasion of its performance for the competition in 1954, Meiliqige describes how, “Normally you could expect no more than two encores, but the piece inspired the crowd to ask for three. It opened up a wave of fervor and became widely distributed across China” (*ibid*).

Meiliqige describes his devotion to Maoism and the enthrallment he experienced when he first met Mao, which led him to write “Sun in the Grassland.” He explained the inspiration he received from seeing Mao Zedong after his troupe first performed for the leader, saying, “We stood onstage only twenty meters away from Chairman Mao. His tall presence was amazing and we were so happy... After that occasion, I couldn’t even sleep at

night because I was thinking about performing in front of Mao” (*ibid*). In our conversations, Meiliqige described the composition of this piece as a creative endeavor, inspired out of his ardent and genuine fervor for Mao and what he describes as his classmate’s novel and ingenious suggestion that he use a chor folksong for the melody.

The Sun on the Grasslands Rises Never to Go Down
草原上升起不落的太阳

Composer: Meilichige 美丽其格作曲
Accompaniment: Ma Sicong 马思聪伴奏
Performer: Wu Yanze 吴雁泽

Allegretto ♩ = 96
Molto Vibrato

Lan lan de tian shang bai yun - piao, Bai yun xia mian ma er - pao, Hui dong -
bian er xiang si fang, - Bai niao qi fei xiang. Yao shi you ren lai wen -
wo, zhe shi shen me di - fang? Wo jiu - jiao ao de gao si ta, -
Zhe shi wo de jia - xiang. Zhe li de ren men ai he - ping, Ye re ai -
jia - xiang, Ge chang - zi ji de xin sheng huo, - Ge chang - gong chan -
43 dang. Mao zhu - xi - gong chan - dang, Fu yu wo men cheng - zhang: -
51 Cao yuan - shang - sheng - qi, - Bu luo de tai - yang. Cao yuan -
60 shang - sheng - qi, - Bu luo de tai - yang.

♩ vocal trill
Vib wide, exaggerated vibrato

Figure 19. “The Sun in the Grasslands Rises Never to Go Down”

Meiliqiige consciously fused Mongolian musical sensibilities with party ideologies and the cult of Mao in his composition. Musically, he “cleans up” the flexible, ornamented style of the Mongol folksong and crystallizes the melody into a succession of distinct, absolute pitches, strict metric rhythm, and harmonic accompaniment. The song retains traces of Mongol flavors (see Chapter One) such as occasional ornaments, melodic climax in the second phrase, and the minor-sounding mode (see Figure 19 above).

In the interest of emphasizing group Mongol solidarity over regional distinctiveness, Meiliqiige chooses to eliminate an emphasis on regional styles or geographic features. Although his piece originates from the Khorchin chor fiddle repertoire, his arrangement shows signs of a national style with its block chord accompaniment, balanced phrases, and relatively even—rather than dotted or double-dotted—rhythms (compare with Figure 13). Also unlike traditional Khorchin folksong style, the performance practice for this piece involves little melodic variation from one verse to the next and the song text is fixed according to the written poetry.

In his lyrics, Meiliqiige transports the common metaphor of Mao Zedong as the sun to the grasslands (see below). His text depicts the bright arrival of Mao and communism to Inner Mongolia and the gratitude of the Mongol people in bringing them “up to maturity” from their so-called minority backwardness. The following stanzas exhibit a united pan-Mongol voice that highlights the group over the individuals.

“The Sun in the Grassland Rises Never to Go Down” (1952)

White clouds float in blue sky,
Under the white clouds horses gallop
Waving whip sounds all around,
A hundred birds hover together.

If people ask me,
What place is that?
I proudly tell them:
This is our home.

People here love peace,
And have deep love for their native land
They sing about their new lives,
They sing about the Communist Party.

Chairman Mao, ah! The Communist Party!
They are bringing us up to maturity,
The sun in the grassland rises
Never to go down....

(Translation by Nimrod Baranovitch 2009)

The lyrics exhibit some of the pervasive “leitmotifs” of Mongolness used in grassland songs over the past six decades. The sanitized and generalized imagery of the grasslands—white clouds, galloping horses, and flocks of birds²⁰—appear as standard phrases in songs of this genre. Comparing the Mandarin lyrics for “Sun in the Grasslands” and “I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands,” it is possible to observe exact duplication of several linguistic phrases in the latter piece, written fifty-three years later:

“Sun in the Grassland”

In the **blue, blue** sky (line 1)
(Lanlan de tian)

white clouds float, (line 1 cont.)
(baiyun piao)

“I’ll Accompany You to the Grasslands”

We’ll go see that **blue, blue** sky. (line 6)
(Qu kan na lanlan de tian.)

We’ll go see those **white clouds** **lightly, lightly**
floating, (line 7)
(Qu kan na baiyun qingqing de piao.)...

The use of descriptive phrases “blue, blue sky” and “floating clouds” in lines six and seven of “I’ll Accompany You to the Grassland” directly evoke the language used in the opening line of “Sun in the Grassland,” a recognized and honored piece by the year 2005.

Of particular note in both pieces is the use of repeated adjective phrases, a construction that sounds poetic in Mandarin Chinese, but is not particularly idiomatic in the Mongolian language. Meiliqige had enough mastery of Chinese to employ this rhythmic poetic construction, which became a recurring linguistic device in future songs. Grassland songs that followed, while not necessarily quoting directly from “Sun in the Grasslands,” continued to maintain essentialized vocabulary to describe the grasslands.

Today, this song is considered by many Han and government officials as a part of China’s national music heritage. It is still sung in television performances, in restaurants in Hohhot, and through karaoke machines on tour buses. In 2006, when China launched its space shuttle to the moon, a score and recording of this piece was included in the capsule that was left there, recognizing its importance as an significant part of Chinese history and a symbol of the PRC nation that leaders considered worth preserving for all time.

Although this stereotyping enterprise has provoked strong reactions among many Mongols today, Meiliqige and others (see the case of Sangdureng in Chapter Three below) had political motivations in developing a united representation for the Mongol people. While certainly having desires to advance his own careers, Meiliqige realized that Mongols as an ethnic group in China needed to have a clean reputation as a “cooperative minority group” and needed to have a united voice in order to get their agendas across. “Sun in the Grasslands” provided a rallying point through which many Mongols in China came to know themselves, not as the factioned people that they had become in the pre-PRC era (see Jankowiak 1988, Atwood 2002 and 2000, Borjigin 2004, Bulag 2000 and 2010b), but as a united people with a voice in politics and perhaps, as promised by Mao, a chance for future autonomy.

New Era of Representations

The optimism of the 1950s, including celebration of minority diversity, gave way during the political campaigns and turmoil of the Great Leap Forward era (1958-1960) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). From the 1960s until the death of Mao, Chinese policies towards minorities emphasized national conformity and punished expressions of minority culture as signs of ethnic separatism (*minzu fenlie*). Although representations of Mengguzu difference needed to be silenced, composers continued to write songs using grassland themes. Songs composed in homophonic mass-song style, which existed prior to 1958 (e.g. “Song of Mongol-Han Unity” of 1948), reflected the political campaigns of the 1960s and 70 (e.g. “Building an Iron and Steel City on the Grassland” of 1958 and “Herders Sing of the Communist Party” composed in 1972).

At the death of Mao in 1976 and the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, China entered a new phase in its history. In the 1980s Deng Xiaoping opened China to the world after many years of closed-door policies, and economic liberalization took the place of staunch political ideologies. Since the 1980s, grassland songs have continued to appear in state song and dance troupe performances, but also in media and commercial settings, the most notable of which is tourism.

In the 1980s, the IMAR government reinvigorated programs to promote Mongol arts, largely as a way to make up for the devastations of the Cultural Revolution (see Jankowiak 1988, Baranovitch). The Inner Mongolia Party Committee at this time declared its decree to “Build a Great Region of Nationality Culture” (“Jianshe Minzu Wenhua Daqu”), which became the basis for a general policy for the promotion and marketing of Inner Mongolian performing arts through tourism. The basis for such an arts policy seems to come at a time when many of China’s interior regions, those largely inhabited by minority

peoples, facing a paucity of support from the central government, needed to market their ethnic culture in order to survive in Deng-era China (Oakes 2000, Hillman 2003).

Large segments of the Han Chinese population, particularly those in modernized urban areas along the coast, have felt strong fascination with the minority “other.” Organized trips to minority villages gave Han opportunities to remove themselves from the alienation of modern life and to experience an imagined window into their past (see Gladney 1994). Chinese national and local governments promote minority tourism as a way to stage orthodox representations of minority cultures, while appealing to the fantasies of the Han masses at the same time. Mullaney writes that the fifty-six minzu paradigm, used as a logic for state unity since 1949, now became a logic for tourism and commodification of minorities in the 1980s (Mullaney 2010:125).

Nimrod Baranovitch refers to a broad category of state-sponsored “minority pop,” including Mongol grassland songs,²¹ that rose in popularity as a commodity for Han Chinese includes state-sponsored Mandarin-language songs from a range of minority groups in China (Baranovitch 2003, 2007, and 2009; see also Upton 1996, 2002 and Baranovitch 2009 for a discussion of minority pop in Tibet; see Harris 2000, 2005a, and 2005b and Baranovitch 2007 for treatment of Uyghur pop). These songs are not only used as part of the tourist industry, but are also featured prominently in state-sponsored television programs such as the annual Chinese New Year’s Gala, the most highly watched television event in China (Gladney 1994).

Mongol grassland songs from the 1980s closely resemble the Mandarin-language ballads composed during the Mao era. Songs maintain minzu fengge (ethnic flavors) features such as arching melodies and vocal ornaments and contain the now-established grassland features of synthesized accompaniment and, typically, a smooth vocal timbre with vibrato.

However, many songs began to take on musical flavors of a new variety of state-sanctioned songs in the Chinese media known as *tongsu yinyue* (see Jones 1992), including the pan-national *minzu* style of singer Song Zuying, which feature a distinctly nasal vocal timbre and upbeat major-tinged pentatonic melodies.

Today, there are hundreds of tour sites scattered across Inner Mongolia with itineraries that include day-trips out of Hohhot, Baotou, or Chifeng, or overnight trips in which guests stay in the grassland in tourist yurts (*ger*). These Chinese-style industrial yurts are often made out of white-painted metal materials instead of traditional felt. The “fakeness” of these yurts and the modern, twentieth-century, Chinese pop style of grassland song entertainment does not seem lost on the Chinese tourist. Realistic depictions of the hardships of grassland life in a vast land with an unpredictable climate are absent from grassland songs, the tourist industry, and the Chinese media. Tourist industries classically cater to visitors in this way, attempting to provide them with imagery and expectations they had pictured even before they arrived (Desmond 2002).

Theme-park-style experiences, long found among minority groups in China’s southwest (Anagnost 1997, Oakes 1998, Mackerras 2003, Mullaney 2010) are becoming more common for tourists who seek a glamorized experience of Mongol culture. One high-end site on the outskirts of Beijing, called Xibei99 and built in 2009, houses ninety-nine *menggubao* (*ger* tents) from mostly Mongol, but also Kazakh, and Kalmyk cultures. (see Figure 20).



Figure 20. Xibei99 Menggubao Restaurant in Beijing

I took a two-hour bus ride to get to Xibei99 in 2010 and was struck by the resort-like nature of the restaurant complex. Guests are escorted through a maze of menggubao, all beautifully decorated with carefully theme-matched walkways and grassed landscaping, to their own private tent where they can order from an expensive array of “authentic” nomadic foods. Performances are available to guests who wish to pay, 100 yuan for a grassland song or 200 yuan for a yuanshengtai song, the latter which refers to traditional Mongol folksongs such as urtiin duu.

I spoke briefly with the performers and learned that grassland songs, whether due to their popularity or their price, are ordered in much higher quantity than yuanshengtai songs. Performers seemed somewhat ambivalent about their jobs at the restaurant. They make a much higher salary from these jobs than they can working for a state-run ensemble, but performers describe their feeling that such restaurant performances make them feel objectified and unappreciated, giving the Han visitors what they want when they want it (Erdun, conversation, 5 August 2010, Beijing). One of the contacts to whom I spoke described his current efforts together with a small ensemble, to rearrange folk songs with the hopes to break out as a neo-traditional ensemble and establish an independent performing career (Xiribu, conversation, 5 August 2010, Beijing).

In this way, even when performers have few opportunities to creatively negotiate their work they still willingly participate, knowing they may find other avenues for self-empowerment in their lives, musical or otherwise. I appreciate the perspective of one of my Mongol friends who said, “Playing in the... restaurant is just a way to make money so I can do what I really want to later. I choose to 'sell myself'” (Hugejiletu, interview, 19 June 2010, Hohhot). Agency comes in many guises and the choice to complicity participate in grassland songs might offer more choices in other areas of a performer’s life.

Tourism and media consumption of grassland songs fits into what the Mongol performer Zhang Quansheng described to me as Chinese needs for a “fast-food culture” (*kuaican wenhua*) (Zhang, interview, 21 June 2010, Beijing). I find his words telling as a reflection of the feelings that many Mongols feel about “selling” their culture:

The 1980s saw a lot of influence from economic pursuits, and this is natural since everyone wants to have opportunities to enjoy life. At this time, it was totally up to the tourists to decide the direction of Mongol music, they get to shout out which songs they wanted us to sing. From then until now, our path has been based on whatever they want. Nowadays, people just want a fast-food culture,... this is just part of the economic reform era. People are so busy and all they want to do is sit down at the end of the day and turn on something entertaining on television. Mongols are not thinking about higher questions such as “What is culture?” “What is art?” or “Who am I?” They are just making sure that they are fed at the end of the day. We are supported by an outstanding ethnic group... Now it is time to ask new questions, such as “What is our musical identity?” and “How do we want the world to know us?” We need to take a look at our souls, not take a step back... (*ibid*).

Zhang acknowledges that grassland songs have offered Mongols the ability to live comfortable lifestyles and to be “fed at the end of the day” and, indeed, these songs have offered many Mongols a way to jumpstart their musical careers, after which they can pursue what they want to.

In the next section, I suggest how urban Mongols may find some attraction to grassland songs themselves in their need for an escape from their own modern realities and in their desires to reconnect with an imagined Mongol past. Although many Mongols see

these songs as inaccurate representations of their culture, I noted with interest in a few conversations with urban Mongols that these individuals actually respect and enjoy some select grassland songs and singers, a phenomenon I probe below as I discuss the compositional output of Wulantuoga.

Wulantuoga

Wulantuoga (b. 1958) (see Figure 21), a prolific and nationally recognized composer, has enjoyed a broad musical career which has included not only the composition of more than five hundred grassland songs, but also the creation of music for film scores, television series, and operas. Wulantuoga recently collaborated with Don Frantz, producer of the *Lion King* Broadway show, on a Mongol-inspired opera, *The Heart of Love*, performed for the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

In 1997, he released his first big hit grassland song “Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River,” a song that offers a complex and unorthodox Mongol subjectivity. This song departs from the typical stereotypes and presents an intimate and reflective, rather than overly cheerful musical style.



Figure 21. Wulantuoga

Musically, Wulantuoga matches uses the unique lilting flavor of compound-duple meter throughout the piece and the intimate sound of arpeggiated solo guitar for the first verse, features which closely resemble Beijing-style campus ballads (see Figure 22).

Father's Grassland, Mother's River
父亲的草原母亲的河

Composer: Wulantuoga 乌兰托嘎
Performer: Qi Feng 齐峰

Smooth & Lyrical ♩ = 140

Fu qin ceng jing xing rong cao yuan de qing xiang. Rang ta zai tian ya hai jiao ye cong bu neng

6
3
xiang wang. Mu qin zong ai miao mo na da he hao dang. sharp pitch

10
Ben liu zai Meng gu gao yuan wo yao yuan de jia xiang. 3

phrase marking

Figure 22. First Verse of “Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River”

In the refrain section of “Father’s Grassland,” Wulantuoga features a heightened, emotionally charged melodic peak on the vocable “ai” (see Figure 23). The composer evokes a distinctly Mongol ethnic flavor (Menggu minzu fengge) through the trill-like ornamentation that resembles the nogula trill of long song, a technique that requires great skill to properly render. My Mongol contact Wenli, a prominent female khoomii singer in Hohhot, remarked on the ethnic style of this piece and the ability of singers Qi Feng and Tengger in the rendering the melody (Wenli, interview, 16 July 2009, Hohhot; also Jin, interview, 12 July 2009, Hohhot).

Smooth & Lyrical ♩ = 140

Ai! - - - Fu qin de cao - - - yuan. Ai! - - -

Mu - qin - de he. Sui ran yi jing bu neng yong bu neng yong mu yu

lai - su - shuo. Qing jie na wo - de bei - shang wo de huan - le.

--- phrase marking ↑ sharp pitch ♦♦ vocal trill

Figure 23. Refrain Section of “Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River”

This campus-ballad style and emotional vocal quality give the piece a reflexive tone that differs from optimistic, tong-su-style minority songs like “Sun in the Grassland” and “The Beautiful Grasslands are My Home” from preceding decades. The music fits the complex subjectivity and nostalgic melancholy expressed in the lyrics:

“Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River” (1997)

Father once described the scent of the grassland.
 Even living worlds apart, it helped him to never forget that place.
 Mother always loved to depict the onrushing of the river
 That flows on the Mongol grasslands, my distant homeland.
 I finally had the chance to experience this vast land;
 My tears fell like rain as I stood on the fragrant grassland;
 The singing of the river passes down blessings of the ancestors;
 To bless and protect this aimlessly drifting child, who found the road home.

Ai! Father's grassland,
 Ai! Mother's river;
 I cannot, cannot even tell this story in my mother tongue.
 Please accept my sorrow and joy;
 I am a child of the grassland!
 My heart has a song;
 My father's grassland and my mother's river are in this song...
 (Translation by the author)

The Mongol in these lyrics does not live in a fantasy grassland world, but in fact “cannot even tell his story in his mother tongue.” The text presents a realistic story of a Mongol who feels separated from his hometown and who wrestles with the very issues of assimilation and language loss that have become points of contention in the grassland song genre.

Due to its traditional folksong style and its nuanced lyrics, “Father’s Grassland” appeals to a wider Mongol audience and particularly to urban Mongols with whom I spoke. This song speaks to those who long to reclaim their grassland past, traditional culture, and lost language in the midst of their urban assimilation to Chinese society. Uradyn Bulag describes how urban Mongols “sing songs, drink and cry, celebrating their pastoral identity...,” but in fact have few desires to actually return to their imagined grassland home (2010a:278). “Father’s Grassland” offers such individuals a tool to access the nostalgia of the grasslands within their fast-paced urban lives and to express their urban- assimilated-Mongol subjectivity.

Wulantuoga has done much to promote his hometown and regional identity of Hulunbuir (see Figures 2 and 16), a region where he is a local hero among even remote Mongol herders. In a fairly radical breakthrough, one of his recent albums to honor his home region includes not only songs in Mandarin, but an accompanying disc of songs composed in the Mongolian language (see Figure 24). This represents enormous headway in the realm of this genre, which has included songs almost exclusively composed in Mandarin since the time of Meiliqi. This album comes at a time when language has become a source of anxiety for Mongols and a critical symbol of resistance for ethnic nationalists (Jankowiak 1993, Bilik 1998a, Bulag 2003 and 2010a).

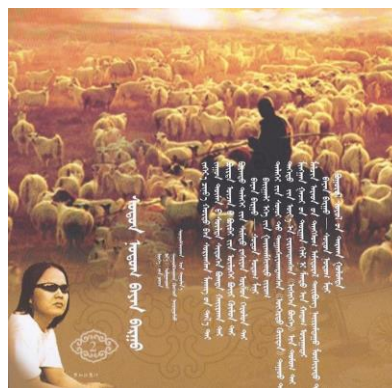
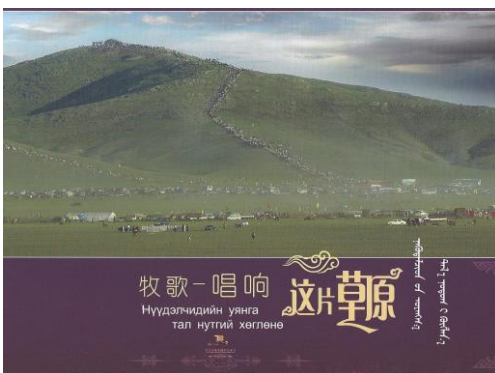


Figure 24. “This Grassland” Album in Mandarin and Mongolian

Wulantuoga’s works cross between those who cannot speak Mongolian on the one hand, and those who only speak Mongolian or even despise the Mandarin language, on the other hand. His songs have extended the grassland song genre to appeal to urban Mongol consumers, who have discovered in his songs an accessible way to express their own cultural longings. Although superficial stereotypes still dominate this genre, composers such as Wulantuoga have “pushed the envelope” of orthodox minority representations to present a more complex Mongol subjectivity.

The composer engages in a delicate dance with the government, conforming to official standards, thereby gaining government prestige and authority to branch out to do what he wants.²² He is now presenting music that is not just for Han tourists, but also palatable to a Mongol audience. This example demonstrates how composers actually have the power to change the status quo, in this case, promoting state-sponsored grassland songs

in the Mongolian language over the genre standard to compose in Mandarin since the time of Meiliqige.

Old Music, New Directions

In the past decade, a new generation of young grassland stars has emerged, many who enjoy earning a comfortable living while promoting Mongol music to a wide national audience. Ensembles such as “Blue Fields Band” and “Black Steed” achieve a degree of creative freedom even within their performance of stereotypical songs. These bands have resignified classic songs from the grassland canon by adding a rock beat and a gruff vocal timbre — symbolizing rock resistance as well as a traditional Mongol music sensibility for rough timbres. Unlike composers, performers begin their careers as largely voiceless members of state troupes or as tourist entertainers and have difficulties gaining power to express themselves artistically, sometimes engaging new meanings and subtle discourses of resistance at the same time.

A grassland rock band, Lanye Yuedui “Blue Wild,” has exhibited an interesting degree of artistic agency through their grassland song performances and their other independent works. Manda, the band leader of Lanye Yuedui described to me, somewhat embarrassedly, how it was impossible to perform rock music on television when they started in 1998 so they turned to grassland songs as an entry point into the Chinese market and state-sponsored media (Manda, interview, 30 July 2010, Hohhot).

One of the pieces that Lanye frequently performs is Wulantuoga’s classic from the grassland song canon entitled, “This Grassland.” This piece shows that today, even while performing Mandarin-language Mongol songs, they have taken the freedom to infuse a personal style and rock sensibility into their music.

This Grassland
这片草原

Composer: Wulantuoga 乌兰托嘎
Performers: Blue Wild 蓝野乐队

Heavily Accented ♩ = 110

Tian - e shu - zhuang zai da lai hu - an - bian Bo er - tie zhu - sheng zai

7 Hu lun bei er cao - yuan. Ye - ma kua - guo **KHe** lu lun - rit

12 **KHe** Cheng ji - si **KHan** ying - qin zai zhe pian cao - yuan.

/ Rough vocal timbre
KH Aspirated "h" emphasized

Figure 25. “This Grassland” Performed by LanYe

Through a gritty rock timbre and accented melody, LanYe adds a somewhat subversive tone to this classic grassland song (see Figure 25). The lead singer further adds gruffness through additions of a characteristic “kh” sound from the Mongol language to Mandarin words, such that the word “he” (river) becomes “khe,” and the ending syllable “han” in “Chengjisihan” better resembles the correct pronunciation, Chinggis Khan. In this last instance, the performer has re-“Mongolized” a Mandarinized-Mongol word, thereby exerting his re-ownership of this word, and perhaps even the figure himself (see Khan 1995, Borchigud 1996, Bilik 1998, and Bulag 2002a for discussions of the co-option of Chinggis Khan by the Chinese state). Through this rock reinterpretation, LanYe playfully resignifies the grassland song genre to meet their artistic needs for creativity and non-conformity.

When they are not performing grassland songs as a means of primary income, LanYe has the freedom to experiment artistically and to compose and perform songs in the Mongolian language. The band has recently supplemented their heavy-metal and rock

repertoire with collaborative neo-traditional compositions. They willingly sing grassland songs as a means to achieve economic security and government trust in order to comfortably venture into such new and creative musical arenas. Lanye has used music to fluidly negotiate and traverse constructed boundaries of Mongolness, and has demonstrated that even within their grassland song performances, they can insert a degree of artistic flexibility and agency.

Grassland Songs as Canon

I end this chapter by examining how grassland songs, originally a genre of newly composed songs, have turned into a recognized folksong canon in Inner Mongolia. A commemorative album was produced in the year 2007, marking sixty years of songs and dances about the grasslands in Inner Mongolia. The album includes a high-quality, hard-bound case with gold-edged pages (see Figure 26).

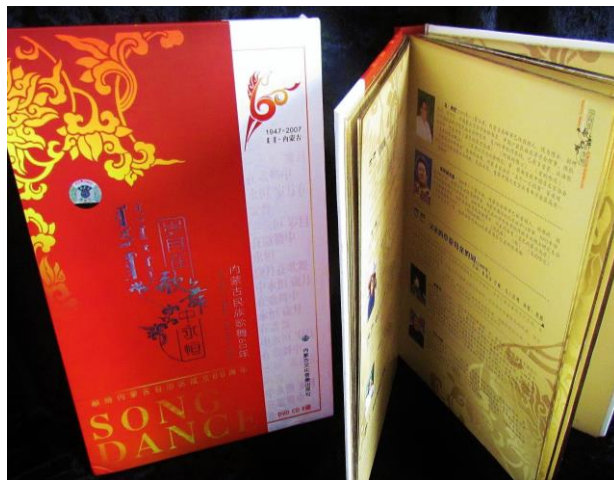


Figure 26. Sixty Years of Grassland Songs Commemorative Album (1957-2007)

This state-produced album contains roughly sixty classic pieces from the Mandarin-language song canon, at least one per year from 1957 to 2007. The pages of the booklet contain biographies of each composer, in a gesture to recognize these individuals'

artistry and contributions to the genre. Consider this excerpt from the liner notes of this album:

Inner Mongolia is often called a 'sea of songs.' Within the wide, boundless grassland and beyond, one can hear the pleasant folksongs and newly composed praise songs passed on by the Mongolians, Han, and people of all nationalities...

...Since the establishment of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1947, ambitious lyricists and song composers from Mongol, Han, and other nationalities have taken root in the grassland... [They] have sung about the abundant beauty of their homeland and have glowingly praised the rapid changes that have taken place on the grassland...

...Upon the reform and opening of China [in the 1980s]... grassland song compositions welcomed the dawning of a new era... and [Mongol] music and dance began to dominate the national stage...

(Liner notes for the 2007 commemorative album, *Suiyue Zai Guwuzhong Yongheng* [Art for the Ages: 60 Years of Ethnic Song and Dance in Inner Mongolia]. Translated from Chinese by the author.)

These statements are clearly designed to promote the genre as having a legitimate history that is worth commemorating. I am unsure how this album has been received in China, however such a project demonstrates how these songs are increasingly recognized as part of Inner Mongolia's musical soundscape and perhaps even its cultural heritage.

The twenty-some pages of composer biographies in this album exhibits how Meiliqige and Wulantuoga only comprise a fraction of the many composers and performers, Han and Mongol, in the grassland song world. The terrain surrounding these songs is certainly uneven and has enabled certain artists to emerge as prominent musical figures, speaking for a large group of Mongol individuals, some of whom are pleased with the representations and others of whom are disgusted by them. Some Mongols, such as those highlighted in this chapter, gain significant power through these songs, while some despise them and do everything they can to avoid them. Many express reasonable concerns that

these songs are just another way that Mongols, as a minority population in Inner Mongolia, continue to assimilate with Chinese society and succumb to the dominating influence of the Han Chinese market for their culture. These individuals have reasonable worry about continued Sinification at the expense of their Mongol roots.

Though I recognize these concerns, I argue that this situation is actually quite nuanced. Select Mongol composers and performers have had opportunities to insert their subjectivities into these songs and often invoke highly creative forms of agency. Their willingness to participate in the state media system involves give and take with government initiatives (see Baranovitch 2009). Although the government plays a strong role in determining much of the language of cultural presentation, individual composers have actively engaged in the composition of these songs and the creative use of a variety of musical materials and signifiers.

Through these compositions and re-compositions, musicians have consciously engaged in the creation of musical hybrids that can serve as a meeting ground between Mongol, Chinese, and Western musical styles. They had room to slide between these musical spheres in the formation and development of this song genre. Early composers like Meiliqige had significant power to select and standardize iconic features of Mongolness. He took practical considerations into account and chose features that would work for politically themed ballads on the national stage, such as wide-ranged melodies with pentatonic scales (often resting on the sixth scale degree) and ornamented vocal lines. Musical aspects such as the traditionally participatory nature of Mongol music, its highly diverse regionalism, and emphasis on overtones and drones were simply not functional for concerts that required a projected and compact package. Composers were highly pragmatic in fitting their music into the system in order to advance themselves and their ethnic group in the national arena.

Composers and musicians are actively determining what paths the future of this music will take, paths that include use of the Mongolian language and even the insertion of a broader range of pop musical styles such as rock. I argue that through cooperation and subtle boundary manipulation, Meiliqige, Wulantuoga, and Lanye have ultimately found opportunities for personal expression and empowerment. It is unclear what paths future songs will take, but the examples that these Mongols have set may prove as a guiding trail for those who seek to advance their careers by fitting into the existing system, while manipulating its boundaries at the same time.

Chapter Three Reform of the Morin Khuur

Mongolian music has to combine with European [classical] music, it is part of its fate... If we present our music just like an old grandfather, what kind of meaning will it have? Music must be youthful and relevant (Chi Bulag, interview 9 June 2010, Hohhot).

Why should we [Mongols] continue to use the traditional ox cart? Why not use the bullet train? It can seat 120 people and is many times as fast... [My piece] “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” would never have received such praise if it still resembled a traditional ox cart (Chi Bulag, interview 13 June 2010, Hohhot).

In the statements above, the distinguished morin khuur (horse-head fiddle) performer Chi Bulag asserts that Mongol music must follow a pragmatic path of musical modernization, adaptation, and borrowing from the West. He expresses his desire to cast off the “ox cart” of the Mongol musical path in order to catch the “bullet train” and meet the needs of the current society.

This chapter addresses the efforts to modernize and reform the morin khuur in post-1949 China. I examine conceptions of progress-oriented musical change, such as those voiced by Chi Bulag above, and show how these concepts directed the instrument’s shifts from traditional, regional forms to a single modernized form for the concert stage.

I trace stories of two morin khuur musicians, Sangdureng (1926-1967) and his pupil Chi Bulag (1944-present), mentioned above, and their central role in authoring the boundaries of the modern morin khuur as a pan-Inner Mongol instrument. An analysis of their work demonstrates how these individuals mediated among Mongol, Western (European), and Chinese musical worlds as they carved new pathways for this instrument. Such processes involved (1) reform of the morin khuur body and (2) the composition of a new solo repertoire.

During my time in the field, I found that Mongol individuals had varying and heated reactions to issues of musical modernization. Some passionately embraced musical development and change, while others avidly rejected it. I focus this chapter on stories of instrument reform from the 1950s to the 1990s as a guide to understand the drive to “improve” (*tigao*) the morin khuur that still exists today. In the chapters that follow, I discuss how segments of musicians have distanced themselves from these projects of musical modernization, efforts I see most clearly expressed through the revival of the chor fiddle (see Chapter Four) and morin khuur and khoonii exchange with the nation of Mongolia (see Chapter Five).

The Morin Khuur

The morin khuur, horse-head fiddle, is a two-string bowed lute played with a horse-hair bow and positioned between the knees in a seated position. It has a trapezoidal box resonator, bundled nylon strings tuned typically to a perfect fourth, and a carving of a horse at the top of the neck (see Figures 27 and 28). The morin khuur has often been considered the most representative and sometimes iconic instrument of the Mongol people (Marsh 2009, Pegg 2001). In traditional Mongol society north and south of the Gobi—today’s Mongolia and Inner Mongolia—every family would own a fiddle and display it in the most respected place at the back of the ger tent for family members and guests to play on important occasions or as an accompaniment to their daily life. Marsh describes how Mongols linguistically referred to a home with a horse-head fiddle as a complete tent (*buren ger*) and one without as a widow tent (*belemsen ger*) (Marsh 2009:30).

Mongol fiddles are known for their uniquely dense timbre, created through the vibration of hundreds of strands of bundled horse-hair strings (see Figure 28 and features of

Mongol music in Chapter One). Instruments were often ad hoc in nature and households would build their own instruments from whatever everyday materials happened to be on hand and would finger the instrument as they felt most comfortable. Today's fingering system involves pressing the side of the thick, tightly bundled strings, which are positioned about a half inch above the fingerboard (see Figure 27).



Figure 27 Morin Khuur (Played by Jinlong, Left) and Finger Position (Right)



Figure 28. Horse-head Carving (Left) and Bundled Horse-Hair Strings Secured at the Top of a Fiddle Neck (Right)

One of my first experiences hearing the morin khuur in China was during my attendance at the university jury examinations for college students at YSXY. Morin khuur players ascended the stage one-by-one to play a variety of technically skillful pieces, performed on modern, professional instruments, in an emotional style with large dynamic contrasts, and to the accompaniment of a piano. Their repertoire typically featured one or more violin styles, distinguished by energetic passages with nimble bowing and fingering techniques along with lyrical passages with long bows and wide romantic vibrato, such as in the famous piece “Soaring” by Qian Baiyila (see Figure 29 for the passage of rapid sixteenth notes that follows a lyrical folksong section).

Soaring
腾飞

Composer: Qian Baiyila 仟·白乙拉
Accompaniment: Chaogetusaihan 朝格图塞汗
Performer: Qian Baiyila 仟·白乙拉

Allegro ♩ = 150

Figure 29. Finale Section of “Soaring”

I was disappointed by what clearly seemed like a conservatory-style of repertoire (*xueyuanpai*) and had hoped to hear a more intimate and folk (*minjian*) style of Mongol music. I later realized that my attitude denied Mongols of a much-sought-after Western musical modernity and, for some, desires to remove themselves from national stereotypes of Mongols as a quaint grassland people (see Chapter Two). As I learned later, my Western ears

and limited knowledge of Inner Mongol musical styles made it difficult for me to recognize the subtleties of these musical pieces and the extent to which their repertoire and modernized instruments are still recognized as having essential qualities of Mongolness.

National Music and Modernities

Like grassland songs, the morin khuur fits into a history of stage performance and minority representation in China. Through national imperatives and their own desires for a strong voice on the concert stage, morin khuur elites, like grassland song composers, sought to develop a unified musical form that might solidify the scattered Mongol peoples across Inner Mongolia (see Chapter Two). Whereas grassland songs took their place as one of many repertoires of Mandarin-language minority songs in China, the morin khuur became the instrumental and material representation of Mongols in China.

Two of the most highly visible forms of Mongol music in China today and in the past, grassland songs and the morin khuur, are similar in several respects: (1) their significance as codified musical representations of Mongols, (2) their merging of musical systems—Mongol, Western, and Chinese,—and (3) the role of individuals in their formation and implementation.

Unlike grassland songs, however, the morin khuur became integrated into the Chinese conservatory system (*xueyuanpai*) and is distinguished as cosmopolitan in orientation as opposed to the more populist-oriented grassland songs (cf. Kraus 1989). Grassland songs never entered the conservatory and were performed by state arts troupes and, beginning in the 1980s, in media and tourist contexts. The morin khuur, by contrast, continued to have roots in the grassland (in the central Shilingol region) and had a strong

presence in state-run arts academies, in addition to its presence as a solo and ensemble instrument in state troupes.

For both Sangdureng and Chi Bulag, priorities for musical adaptation to stage contexts involved: (1) musical standardization, (2) loudness, (3) sound consistency, and (4) technical virtuosity. Like grassland songs, they maintained aspects of Inner Mongols' traditional music (see Chapter One), such as ornamentation and pentatonic scales, while discarding others that did not fit the requirements of the concert stage, such as the traditional participatory orientation (see analysis below). I argue that, for musicians like Sangdureng and Chi Bulag, the morin khuur became a way to prove that their Mongol music did not have to remain fixed in the past and could be modern *and* Mongol at the same time.

Early twentieth-century Chinese music intellectuals such as Xiao Youmei believed that European music was at a higher evolutionary stage than Chinese music. These intellectuals sought to create a modern Chinese music that might eventually be the equal of Western music, particularly as it adapted the “advanced” principles of tonal harmony (Jones 1992:37-41, Kraus 1989:43, Wong 2002:382, Tse 2007:94). This consciousness included a belief in the inherent backwardness (*luobou*) nature of Chinese music and followed a desire among other intellectuals during the New Culture Movement (1915-19) to shed off China's feudal (*fengjian*) past as an impediment to national progress (Kraus 1989:100-1). Many of the intellectuals of this era absorbed ideas and language during studies abroad in Japan, a locale they could access easier than Europe or the United States. Concepts of Western modernity, in many ways, arrived into China mediated and filtered through movements in Japan, a region that China now desired to emulate following their humiliating defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1895) (Tsui 2002:228, Elman 2006:9).

In the Mao era, linear, social evolutionist thinking about culture became a component that formed a strong basis of Marxist ideologies in China, which saw the natural advancement of society along a chain of progressively advanced modes of production. In the post-Mao era, ideologies became tempered with a new emphasis on scientific rationality and economic modernization (see Greenhalgh 2008), while discourses in the past decade have continued to emphasize modernization, but within a broader global and transnational orientation.

Language and ideology of musical change in China have largely been verbalized in terms that focus on progress (*jinxing*) and principles of science (*kexue*), technology (*jishu*), and logic (*shili*). Verbs in Mandarin representing these concepts include such terms as improve (*tigao*), clean-up (*zhengli*), develop (*fazhan*), advance (*jinbu*), raise (*tigao*), research (*yanjiu*), innovate (*chuangxin*), reform (*gaige*), standardize (*guifan*), classify (*fenlei*), and systematize (*xitong*). Language is also characterized by process-oriented terms (*-hua*) terms in Mandarin including modernization (*xiandaihua*), Westernization (*xihua*), professionalization (*zhuanyehua*), and standardization (*biaozhunhua*). More recent additions to these terms include: urbanization (*chengshihua*), globalization (*quanqiuhua*), and marketization (*shichanghua*). The results are framed with language of success (*chenggong*) and achievement (*chengjiu*), marking these reform efforts in terms of accomplished goals.

Those involved in the improvement of Chinese instruments such as the *erhu* (two-string fiddle), *pipa* (pear-shaped plucked lute), *yangqin* (hammered dulcimer), and *dizi* (bamboo flute) in the twentieth century incorporated these ideological concepts into their reforms. As Chinese musicologist Yang Jingming writes in his 1957 treatise:

Even though our [Chinese] national musical instruments are varied and colorful, judging from the contemporary point of view, they are insufficient and backward. For instance, the tone quality is not pure, the range is narrow, modulation is difficult, etc. We spoke of many types of local ensembles which are usually small to medium

in size and are not suitable to the musical taste of today's masses. The whole country is in the midst of building the highpoint of socialist society. Glorious life needs equally grandiose performing styles to match (Yang 1957:73; quoted in Han 1979:17).

Priscilla Tse describes the improvement processes that musicians undertook in the reform of the Chinese dulcimer, yangqin (2007). Such improvements were understood as increasingly better the more the instrument changed and the more it was able to incorporate new “scientific” (kexue) methods of construction. Yangqin musicians imagined a global hierarchy of dulcimers in which the Hungarian dulcimer, cimbalom, with its loud volume and wide range, was positioned at the top as the standard for all other dulcimers to achieve.

Folk instruments were considered fundamentally primitive, unscientific, and in need of updating and standardization. Intellectuals believed that changes to the instruments and the adoption of Western notation, pedagogy, four instrument sizes (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), and tonal harmony, were the first steps to raising their instruments to the standards set by Western classical instruments. Intellectuals rarely locate the precise “Europe,” “West,” and “Western classical music” of which they speak. Yangqin players consider this version of their instrument from the somewhat peripheral central European country of Hungary as the distant goal that they long to reach.

I found that for Mongols, the violin, as the leading instrument of the symphony orchestra, takes the highest positions of respect as advanced and scientific musical creations. I observed the way the violin became imbued with power among my Inner Mongol contacts. The power and mythos surrounding the violin includes the admiration of its virtuosic solo repertoire and the belief in its scientifically perfect and beautifully elegant construction. Such self-denigrating admiration is ironic, considering theories among some Mongols and a few foreign scholars that horse-hair bow string instruments in Europe such as the viol originally

came from Mongol instruments (Li, interview, 26 June 2009, Hohhot). The power that the violin carries in Inner Mongolia comes from a strong and pervasive conception of Western superiority in technology and developed high art forms.

Statements that I heard among my contacts in Inner Mongolia demonstrate how the language of musical progress, a legacy of the New Culture Movement, exists even among minorities at the Chinese borderland. My Mongol contacts expressed such sentiments as:

“The history of the violin is longer than the history of the morin khuur, so it is naturally more developed” (Li, interview, 26 June 2009, Hohhot).

“As rich as the morin khuur is, it cannot surpass Western instruments because it is just not very scientific (kexue)” (Dulan, interview, 30 May 2010, Beijing).

“The quality of morin khuur teaching materials needs to be raised (tigao) and systematized (you xitonghua). Morin khuur methods are just not standardized (bu guifan) compared to that for the violin or the cello” (Saqieronggui, interview, 10 June 2010, Hohhot).

When I heard these statements, I wondered, why do these individuals see their music through such an equation of Western superiority? Why do they leap to assume that the violin is more advanced than the morin khuur? Are they simply colonized, either by the West or by Chinese modernization ideologies?

I have found that an analysis of musical modernity in Inner Mongolia is by its nature a messy endeavor. What do Inner Mongols even mean when they talk about “the violin,” “the West” (*Xifang*) or “Westernization” (*Xihua*)? Is everyone in agreement? Where did these understandings of modernity come from and in what way was it filtered through China, the Soviet Union, or Japan?

I have observed how modernity for many Mongols is expressed as an “unfinished and open-ended project” and a reflexive desire to push toward external goals (Oakes 1998:20). I believe, like Oakes and Rofel, that those who feel farthest from modernity tend

to experience and engage with it in the most reflexive and pointed ways (Oakes 1998, Rofel 1999). I position Inner Mongol modernities within a Chinese and global cultural landscape as individuals who consider themselves to be the “others of modernity” (Rofel *ibid*:xii,3) and typically point to external sources, often the West, as the source of modernity.

However, instead of pursuing a concrete definition of modernity, I find it productive to investigate why Mongols verbalize notions of modernity the way they do—in this case in terms of Westernization and devotion to European classical music. Why are such conceptions of modernity meaningful to them? And how might musical composition and performance enable other meanings to surface? While Sangdureng and Chi Bulag seem to conform to European and Chinese models for musical modernity, I suggest that a deeper analysis, in the musical text, reveals a commitment to a distinctly Inner Mongol musical modernity and, moreover, a strategic pragmatism that they accomplished through creative musical mixing.

Going on Stage

By the early twentieth century the Mongol princely courts of the central Shilingol and Chakhar regions had already generated a form of stage music (see Chapter One), however nationalized performing contexts after 1949 brought about much more fundamental musical changes to suit large-scale performance venues. The emphasis on stage performance in the PRC and the development of a “modern musical infrastructure” (Jones 2001:24) pushed musical adaptation and professionalization to a new level.



Figure 30. Inner Mongolia Ulanmuchar Performance

The first Joint Performance of National Folk Music and Dance (Quanguo Minjian Yinhuo Wudao Huibao Yanchu) was performed for Mao in Beijing in April of 1953 and included folk musicians and dancers collected from across the nation. The second such event in 1957 and another event specifically for minority song and dance in 1964 included Mongol performers including the fiddle player Serash and urtiin duu singers Hazhabu and Baoyindeliger, each who were then offered positions at the newly formed Inner Mongolia Art School (later YSXY) in Hohhot. Stories describe how Mongol musicians attempted to fit their music to these large-scale joint performances, adaptations which typically included the shortening and rearrangement of folk songs similar to processes that occurred in court music contexts.

Sangdureng realized through these stage performances that their instrument needed to go through significant changes to be loud enough and consistent enough (in timbre and tuning) in a variety of weather conditions for such performances. He proceeded to reform the instrument in preparation for future national and regional joint performance events. He realized the need to select a single iconic instrument that could serve as the standard instrumental representation for the Mongol minority group in such performances. In this way, the rise of a modern solo morin khuur tradition came about largely because of the

requirements of such performance events, which included the need for an instrument that was standardized, loud, reliable, and eventually, could enable the performer to play fast.

Song and dance troupes became a standard performing institution in PRC China and were the primary medium for the dissemination of political ideologies to the masses through public performances and radio broadcasts. The first song and dance troupe in Inner Mongolia, the Inner Mongolia Arts Culture and Arts Troupe (Wenhua Yishu Gongzuotuan) was established in 1947 in the IMAR capital Ulanhot. This troupe, which included both Serash and Sangdureng among its first performers, was later renamed the Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Troupe and relocated to the new capital of Hohhot in 1954. Several Mongols were employed at the Central Minorities Song and Dance Troupe established in Beijing in 1952, while hundreds of performers, including Chi Bulag, were recruited for the Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Theater in Hohhot in the 1950s. The first Ulanmuchar traveling performance troupe was established in Ulanhot in 1957 with a purpose to serve isolated herders on the grasslands through labor and performing arts “education” (see discussion below).

Performing ensembles in Inner Mongolia became de facto academies for the training of artists and inculcated a sense of belonging in the new nation as a minority people. Many of the well-known Mongol performers today received their foundational training, not in their grassland or village hometowns, but in these ensembles. Performers in the early years were often expected to perform a variety of tasks including singing, dancing, playing a variety of instruments, and composing new performance repertoire, tasks they typically learned from each other, from trial and error, and from the folk artists they met on their travels. These troupes would also serve as teams of ethnographers as they gathered folksongs for future performance arrangements on their travels to distant locales in Inner Mongolia. Ironically,

such arrangements would ironically disseminate back to those and other distant grassland areas in the guise of “education” (see Ulanmuchir discussion below). Like joint performances, these troupes demanded standardized instrument models that would hold up under a variety of weather conditions and be loud enough to be heard whenever sizeable audiences gathered.

Performers were recruited from state troupes to become the first faculty members at newly created institutions for the study of Mongol music. These institutions included the Inner Mongolia University Art Academy (YSXY) in Hohhot, established in 1957, and the Central Institute for Nationalities in Beijing, established in the early 1950s. Each of these institutions housed a department of music where performers, composers, and musicologists were trained under a new system of nationally determined standards for music education. Graduates from these programs would then be ready to either fill positions in the state troupes as performers or composers, or to circulate back into the higher education system as professors. Through educational institution, the state was able to control and regulate how music was created and conceived. This system favored scientific and theoretically advanced forms of knowledge over orally transmitted, local and folk forms of knowledge that were characteristic of in Inner Mongolia prior to the twentieth century.

As musicians entered these university departments, they were required to choose a specialty in performance, research, or composition (Meiliqige, interview, 23 July 2010, Hohhot). Programs in morin khuur performance, based closely on Western models, required the development of systematized teaching methods and a new canon of repertoire, a calling taken up enthusiastically by Sangdureng and later, Chi Bulag. These select musicians who became the new professionals in Inner Mongolia and China, through fortunate circumstances of selection, gained authority to lead the direction for instruments such as the

morin khuur. Through a system of pedagogy that focused attention on precision and advanced training, a clear boundary was set up between the “backward folk” and the advanced professional, offering power and prestige to those now considered to be highly skilled experts. Morin khuur player Qian Bayila reflects this musical ethos through his statement that, “Without skillful technique or effort, how can one be called a performer?” (quoted in Meng 2009:184). In new China, the stage and concepts of Western classical musical refinement dictated the language of music, which became articulated through such terms as skill, technique, advancement, and systematic improvement.

In the next sections, I continue to examine articulations of modernity in language, and look further into the ways that Sangdureng and Chi Bulag put such conceptions of modernity into action. I break this discussion into two parts, (1) their reform of the morin khuur body and (2) their composition of a new solo repertoire.

Motives for musical reform, including the nebulous goal of advancing the morin khuur to the status of the violin, and concrete goals of increasing instrumental volume and achieving consistent tone color and pitch required creative solutions and compromises. Reformers had to determine how exactly they wanted this new morin khuur modernity to sound, including what aspects of the old instrument to keep and what aspects to replace. I demonstrate in these sections how these Mongol reformers retained control over the direction the instrument has taken, using the tools and language of Western progress and linear development, but inscribing a sense of their modern Mongol subjectivities onto it in the process.

PART I: REMODELING THE MORIN KHUUR

After studying these instruments [violin, viola, cello, piano, and erhu], I realized that the morin khuur should change in pace with the developments of the rest of society... (Chi Bulag, interview, 13 June 2010).

Why shouldn't the morin khuur develop? We are always exchanging things with others. After all, Chinggis Khan brought pants to Europe... If we fly in an airplane, does that mean that we're not Mongols? ... We all originally came from the ocean and have been developing and changing since then (Chi Bulag, interview, 13 June 2010).

I incorporated elements from the violin, erhu, sihu, cello, and whatever else I needed. As a result, the morin khuur ended up the way it did. If it didn't take this shape, it would still resemble the older form of the morin khuur and it would never survive on the concert stage. (Chi Bulag, quoted in Meng 2009:179).

Sangdureng

In the 1950s and 60s, the Mongol performer of the morin khuur, Sangdureng, and the instrument factory owner, Zhang Chunhua (see Figure 31), conducted a series of systematic research efforts to adapt the morin khuur to new national stage contexts. They realized that the morin khuur simply too soft and variable in pitch to be suitable for large performance events.

Sangdureng was not only motivated to reform the instrument to adjust aspects of loudness and pitch consistence, but also so that musicians would have the ability to play together in state ensembles. As morin khuur Li Bo explains, "he [Sangdureng] looked around and some instruments were big and some were small, some were long, some were short, but they could not play each other's instruments and couldn't play together" (Li Bo, lecture, 14 February 2011, Honolulu). Fiddle instruments had no standard form and were constructed in different ways from household to household (see Figure 32).



Figure 31. Surviving Morin Khuur from the Early Twentieth-Century

The morin khuur itself was not an obvious choice as a stage representation of Mongols in China. Emsheimer describes six unique fiddles that Haslund-Christensen brought back from his voyage to Inner Mongolia in the 1920s and 30s, only one (from the Chakhar region) of which had a horse head (Marsh 2009:28,38). The chor and sihu (dorvon chihtei khuur) (see Figure 33), both widespread and well loved in Inner Mongolia, were equally valid choices for a pan-Mengguzu instrumental form. So why the morin khuur?



Figure 32. Chor and Sihu Fiddles from Inner Mongolia

My frequent inquiries with Mongol musicians on this matter suggested a few factors that may have influenced Sangdureng's selection of the morin khuur over the chor or sihu. Firstly, the morin khuur is an instrument unique to Mongols, unlike the sihu, which used

among Han musicians in neighboring Shaanxi province. Secondly, Sangdureng may have been attracted to the lively *tatлага* repertoire of the *morin khuur* and its ability to play fast. The *morin khuur* has much greater bow control, which enables a variety of fast techniques and greater control over sound production than the *sihu*, not to mention its wider pitch range (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot). Thirdly, the *morin khuur*'s sound and body may have been considered more adaptable to the stage than the whispery, dark, rough-timbred *chor* fiddle and the slow tempo characterized by its repertoire. The *chor* may have also been easily eliminated due to its connections to Buddhist temples, Mongol creation myths, and other non-Socialist elements.

After a series of experiments on various woods, body shapes and thicknesses, skin types and tautness, and bow designs, Sangdureng and Zhang Chunhua ultimately came up with a standard model of the instrument with a snakeskin membrane around 1964. Working to professionalize the instrument, he arranged and composed a number of solo pieces, standardized the tuning and fingering systems for the *morin khuur*, and published one of the first methods for teaching the *morin khuur* in 1956 (Siriguleng 2009:4).



Figure 33. Sangdureng Playing an Early Version of his Reformed Morin Khuur (Left) and Zhang Chunhua in his Workshop (Right)

Sangdureng rose to prominence due to his resourcefulness, but he also happened to be in the right place at the right time. He grew up in Khinggan League, a semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural area of the eastern part of Inner Mongolia, and was an amateur player of the sihu. His abilities on this fiddle and his residence near the IMAR capital Ulanhot offered him the fortunate opportunity to be selected among the first group of members of the Inner Mongolia Culture and Arts Troupe in 1947.

As a member of the troupe, he came under the tutelage of the well-known fiddle performer Serash and began learning the morin khuur for the first time (Boteletu, interview, 30 July 2010, Hohhot). He soon became a well-known and skilled player and used his many travel opportunities as a performer to learn from other folk musicians he met on the road, a process described in Mandarin as “learning from the strength of others” (*bocai zhi hongchang*). Most notable among these on-the-road tutors is Balgan (1913-1966), a morin khuur player who performed in the court of the famous political figure Prince De (Demchugdongrub; Dewang) and who transmitted the central-region Shilingol style of morin khuur playing, a style considered central to the morin khuur tradition (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot) (for more on Prince De see Jagchid 1999, Bulag 2010b:177-81).

Sangdureng also had the unique opportunity to travel to the MPR in the 1950s, where he studied with Jamyan the leader of morin khuur reforms in that region (Ulanji *ibid*). He absorbed much influence from Jamyan’s newly developed model of the morin khuur, including ideas about instrument construction, tuning, and fingering techniques (see Chapter Five). Combining these new ideas with what he had studied from Balgan, Sangdureng settled on a perfect fourth tuning style borrowed from Jamyan and a hybrid fingering technique drawing upon those of Jamyan and Balgan (Siriguleng 2009:23).

The contribution for which Sangdureng is most well-known is his partnership with Zhang Chunhua in the “improvement” and standardization of the morin khuur model. Stories of this partnership are described as efforts to “carry out systematic research” (*jinxing xitong de yanjiu*) and “study together” (*buxiang xuexi*), the results of which are framed as contributions and achievements that would “carry the instrument forward” (Matouqin 2002, Siriguleng 2009). In my conversations with eighty-eight-year-old Zhang Chunhua, he described the systematic trial and error that he and Sangdureng went through to arrive at a suitable morin khuur model. (Zhang, interview, 18 July, 2010, Hohhot). They experimented with replacing the traditional leather face with range of other facings including horse skin, python skin, and wood facing. The two collaborators visited acousticians in Beijing and nylon merchants in Guangzhou in their concerted efforts to increase the volume of the instrument and to refine it for the concert stage (Siriguleng 2009). They made experiments with three-string versions of the morin khuur and developed soprano, alto, and bass instruments that they attempted to combine together in an ensemble (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot).

In his retelling of the story, Zhang Chunhua emphasized the systematic nature of their experimentation and their use of various technologies from across the country as they worked to make the instrument suitable for the stage. This emphasis on instrument making as an industry rather than an ad hoc process is a characteristic feature of instrument reform since the early twentieth century in China. Tse describes how yangqin instrument makers made precise mathematical calculations and conducted research on aspects such as string tension in order to achieve the right sound for their modern instruments (2007:86-7). She writes that this new yangqin model arrived at such a state of “scientific” complexity that it required specialized machinery and manufacturing processes in order to be made and could

no longer be made in a one's home or small workshop (*ibid*:88). Through methods of science, research, and use of technology, these reformers engaged their notions of modernity onto the very body of their instruments.

None of these efforts described above would have been possible without the significant financial support and encouragement offered by the IMAR chairman at the time, Ulanhu (see Figure 34). A Sinicized Tumed Mongol, Ulanhu was able to bridge the interests of the state and the Mongol people (see Hyer and Heaton 1968, Dreyer 1976, Bulag 2002b and 2010b). Ulanhu supported the construction of an instrument factory in Hohhot in the 1950s under the direction of Zhang Chunhua (Zhang, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot). He gave Sangdureng and Zhang financial support to travel throughout China to research instrument materials and to study instrumental acoustics from a cello maker in Beijing. In his apartment Zhang displays a picture of his and Ulanhu's daughters riding together in a boat, which suggests that he had a close relationship with Ulanhu.



Figure 34. IMAR Chairman Ulanhu

Ulanhu's involvement with Zhang and Sangdureng likely came about through his own agendas for music in Inner Mongolia. Ulanhu was central in the promotion of the Ulanmuchar, a small traveling ensemble of twelve to fourteen musicians and dancers (Bulag

1999:29). This mobile troupe was created in order to bring orthodox state music and dance to isolated herders on the grasslands, individuals who had no means to attend live performances or listen to the radio and became the conduit that could promote state ideologies to these isolated “masses.”

The current Inner Mongolia Ulanmuqir director described this ensemble as having functions: (1) to serve the people, and (2) to develop new music (Sarula, interview, 17 July 2009, Hohhot). The ensemble engaged with herders in a process of “learning from one another” as troupe members collected folk songs and styles for later recomposition, on the one hand, and herders were “educated” in modern musical styles and socialist consciousness, on the other (*ibid*) (see Figures 35 and 36). Ulanhu’s Ulanmuchir initiative was praised by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai and became a model for other national arts troupes (Dreyer 1976:199) (see Figures 37, 38, and 39).



Figure 35. Ulanmuchir Performers “Learn from a Herdsman”



Figure 36. Morin Khuur Master Class, Caption Reads “New Songs for Old Herders”



毛主席于一九六四年在北京接见全国少数民族群众业余文艺会演演员和乌兰牧骑队员
Chairman Mao received the actors and members of Ulanmuqi, who took part in the Minority People's Song and Dance Festival in 1964 in Beijing.

毛主席于1964年在北京接见全国少数民族群众业余艺术观摩演出的演员和乌兰牧骑队员,这是他为乌兰牧骑队员鼓掌致敬。毛主席曾经3次接见乌兰牧骑队员。

Figure 37. Chairman Mao Praises the Ulanmuchar



1965年12月, 周恩来总理与乌兰牧骑队员同唱《草原儿女爱延安》。

Figure 38. December 1965, Premier Zhou Enlai and Ulanmuchar Performers Sing “Grassland Daughters Love Yan’an” Together

望你们保持不锈的乌兰牧骑称号,
把革命的音乐舞蹈传遍到全国土地上,
去鼓舞人民。

——周恩来
摘自1965年12月22日在中南海接见乌兰牧骑时的讲话

Figure 39. Zhou Enlai’s Speech to the Ulanmuqir at Zhongnanhai, Dec. 22, 1965 (“May you preserve the untarnished name of the Ulanmuchar and go out to inspire the people by spreading revolutionary music and dance across the whole nation.”)

Through his Ulanmuchar and other propaganda efforts in Inner Mongolia, Ulanhu became known as a “model for other minorities” (Bulag 1998). He promoted a sense of

Inner Mongols' assimilation to state ideologies for the sake of advancing Mongol agendas as well as for his own political legitimacy.

Sangdureng, like Ulanhu, gained great recognition through his efforts to cooperate with national projects of modernization and instrument reform. He presented the instrument at a number of prestigious national instrument conferences in the early 1960s and gave highly acclaimed performances for the Chinese instrumental music community (Siriguleng 2009:38). Sangdureng demonstrated his ability to fit Mongol music into a Chinese language of musical progress in a way that also helped Mongols to perform more practically on the concert stage.

Sangdureng's reform choices demonstrate his willingness to alter fundamental aspects of Mongol fiddle tradition and sound in order to give Mongols a stronger presence on the national stage. He focused on eliminating regional fiddle diversity in favor of a standard instrument that all Inner Mongols could share. In order to create a resonant sound that would project on stage, Sangdureng worked with Zhang Chunhua to alter traditional instrumental timbre in favor of clear and projected timbres over the traditionally fuzzy, overtone-dense, and muted timbres of traditional fiddles.

Zhang and Sangdureng carried significant power and freedom to determine their own creative course for the instrument and their decisions were informed not merely by aesthetic preferences and concerns about ethnic representation, but also by desires to maintain their power and advance themselves in their musical careers. Among many morin khuur reformers at the time, Sangdureng was able to establish the professional, stage instrument and performance technique that became the backbone for further morin khuur modernization efforts in the 1980s.

The Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia

Unfortunately, Sangdureng's prominence as musical reformer, an elite position that advanced his career in the early 1960s, cost him dearly during the Cultural Revolution that followed. In 1967, only three years after Zhang Chunhua and Sangdureng worked out a standardized morin khuur model, Sangdureng became incriminated as an ethnic separatist and died from severe beatings and a head injury he received in a struggle session (Zhang, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot).

His imprisonment and death occurred in Inner Mongolia during one of the most brutal purges of the Cultural Revolution in China.²³ In September 1967, hundreds of thousands of Mongols were accused of involvement in plans to reunite with the MPR through an (imagined) resurgence of the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (IMPRP, *Neirendang*). Educated Mongol elites, including officials, team leaders, teachers, and artists, were targeted as suspects and confined to questioning. Displays of Mongol culture in any form were seen as signs of ethnic separatism (Sneath 1994:420) and the morin khuur became an especially suspicious target and was banned throughout the province until 1977 (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot).

Siriguleng describes the effects that the Cultural Revolution had on morin khuur music in Inner Mongolia, which included the loss of many prominent performers, the destruction of many newly composed and transcribed pieces of morin khuur music, the halting of all Inner Mongol arts troupe performances, and the interruption of morin khuur instruction at art academies (Siriguleng 2009:99).

At the death of Mao in 1976, morin khuur musical activity and reform resumed in Inner Mongolia, but not without what Jankowiak describes as Mongols' "outpouring of personal anguish and grief" due to the horrors they had experienced (Jankowiak 1988:274).

In our conversations, Mongols surprisingly point to the 1980s as a time at which Mongols felt the relief of freedom in a new era and pushed their music in new and exciting directions. They express candid honesty about the destructiveness of this period, but suggest that the few surviving musicians at this time did not dwell on the past and took up the reigns of as musical leaders with few fears of government persecution. Siriguleng describes the cheerfulness expressed in newly composed works of this period, such as “Rising Sun,” “Song of Prosperity,” “New Spring” and others that “reflected the new feelings of change on the grasslands and people's high-spirited vigor that happened after reform and opening” (Siriguleng 2009:99).

Zhang Chunhua, who had survived this era, picked up his morin khuur reform projects where he had left off and introduced a standard set of nylon strings and a refined version of his snakeskin model. Many instrument makers experimented with bow reform, which had already begun to transition to a European tourte-style bow similar to the violin (see Figure 40).



Figure 40. Morin Khuur Grab-Style Bow (Top) and Tourte-Style Bow (Bottom)

In the aftermath of the horrors they experienced, Mongols had the opportunity to revise their national reputation as an ethnic group, and to perhaps heal their own wounds in the process. Musicians such as Chi Bulag embraced a rebuilding mentality to catch up with the standards of Western classical music that paralleled the 1980s and the forward-oriented, economic development period of Deng Xiaoping.

At this time, Chinese continued to use terminology of “backwardness” (luohou) and “feudalism” (fengjian) to describe the past, while language of advancement, civilization (*wenming*), and economic reform became embraced with enthusiasm (Schein 2000:23, Greenhalgh 2008). Louisa Schein describes how modernity was “actively manufactured in the frenzied clamor of post-Mao cultural politics” (*ibid*:25), a modernity that musical reformers like Chi Bulag pursued whole-heartedly.

Chi Bulag

In the 1980s, Chi Bulag, a student of Sangdureng, realized that the instrument was still not loud enough or consistent enough for an emerging repertoire of large-scale solo morin khuur works. In 1983, he built upon the “achievements” (chengjiu) of his mentor and worked with instrument factory director Duan Tingjun to develop a wood-faced morin khuur, a model he continued to reform until the 1990s. Chi Bulag developed his own morin khuur pedagogy and composed dozens of solo pieces that are now considered the core of the solo repertoire for the morin khuur.

Chi Bulag is now one of the most celebrated Mongolian musicians in China and around the world. His composition "Ten Thousand Galloping Horses" has become the representative piece for the morin khuur and has been performed at many prominent national occasions, including at a concert leading up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

In this section, I highlight a particular performance in Beijing that led him to pursue continued reforms to the Zhang-Sangdureng model of the morin khuur. This story demonstrates the measures that he took to engineer a powerful and visible form of Mongol modernity and, moreover, to advance himself as a performer.



Figure 41. Chi Bulag

Chi Bulag was born in 1944 in the eastern Khorchin region of Inner Mongolia and was given the title of the fifth living Buddha of the Moli Temple at age three (Meng 2009:177). His reputation as a virtuoso player was already established by the 1980s. Chi Bulag grew up as a musical prodigy, playing the sihu as well as the violin and Chinese dizi well by the age of eight. (*ibid*). The Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Theater recruited him in 1957 at age thirteen and he moved to Hohhot with the ensemble where he studied the morin khuur for the first time. He took lessons with a number of teachers including Sangdureng, took lessons on the violin, and also studied composition. Although his studies with Sangdureng were limited, Mongols emphasize Chi Bulag's ascendancy in an important student-teacher lineage of fiddle playing that began with Serash, continued through Sangdureng and culminated in Chi Bulag. This simplified lineage history tells a compelling story of great masters who came in succession through a transmission of so-called musical brilliance.

After the Cultural Revolution, in which the performer spent several years in prison and a period of time in a labor camp, he gained prominence as a virtuosic morin khuur performer. His piece "Ten Thousand Galloping Horses" won first prize for performance

and second prize for composition at the PRC Thirtieth Anniversary Performance of Literature and Art in 1979. This performance was broadcast on national television and appears to have turned heads in the musical community and around the country (Meng 2009:178). Ulanji described to me how Chi Bulag's style was "bright and magnificent" (*canlan, xiongzhuang*) and describes how the performer represented a new generation of morin khuur performers (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot).

Similar to the language used to describe Sangdureng's career, Chi Bulag's musical work is framed in terms of his numerous achievements in the development of the morin khuur. In conversations I had with Mongol musicians and in printed materials, these achievements were summarized as (1) the crafting of a new instrument model, (2) the further standardization of morin khuur technique, published in a "Morin Khuur Method" volume in Mongolian and Chinese versions in 1973, (3) a significant body of musical compositions, (4) cultivation of a new generation of morin khuur performers, and (5) the creation of his Wild Horse Morin Khuur Ensemble (Yema Matouqin Yuedui), the first successful such ensemble in China. (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot; Ulanji *ibid*). His morin khuur model became the accepted standard in the 1980s and 90s and his compositions make up a large portion of the repertoire that morin khuur students study and perform today.

A Drama of Reform

In the process of learning about Chi Bulag's life and musical career, a single story stood out in my conversations with members of the Mongol musical community what they considered to be the turning point in Chi Bulag's work and the history of morin khuur development. The story centers on his 1983 performance of the first morin khuur concerto, a piece by the female Han composer Xin Huguang (1933-2011)²⁴ entitled "Tone Poem of

the Grassland,” which Chi Bulag performed in concert together with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra. The telling of this story centers on the initial failure of Chi Bulag’s python-skin morin khuur as it fell out of tune under the bright lights of the concert stage and failed to be heard under the loud sound of the orchestra. This experience of humiliation would be the impetus that led Chi Bulag, together with instrument craftsman Duan Tingjun, to develop a new, wood-faced model of the morin khuur.

Written in 1977 at the closing year of the Cultural Revolution, “Tone Poem of the Grasslands” memorializes the Mongol fiddle players Serash, Balgan, and Sangdureng, who perished during that era. The piece is organized in sections to recognize the musical legacy of these players. As Siriguleng suggests was common among many composers of this era (see his statement above), Xin intended her piece to symbolize the resurgence of optimism in the late 1970s despite the tragedies of the past decade (Li Bo, interview, 22 July 2010, Hohhot).

The piece appeared at a time when many composers in China were engaged in writing large-scale works for Chinese instruments and orchestra. An example is the famous “Great Wall Capriccio” for erhu premiered in 1983 in Shanghai by Min Huifen. This period of concerto compositions in China corresponded with the renewed devotion to musical development and fascination with Western classical music, particularly the symphony orchestra. A solo concerto with orchestral accompaniment was thought to somehow legitimize an instrument as having reached the level of a bona fide solo tradition. “Tone Poem of the Grassland” offered performers an opportunity to promote the morin khuur as an instrument that could rival the violin and the erhu. Despite Xin’s use of a somewhat revolutionary musical style, musicians still treasure this composition as a showpiece for their instrument and as a watershed in the history of the morin khuur that raised the standards for

morin khuur performance (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot; Duan, interview, 26 July 2010, Hohhot).

When Chi Bulag arrived in Beijing in 1983 to rehearse the piece for the first time, he brought with him the python-skin morin khuur model that had been carefully reformed by Zhang Chunhua and Sangdureng a decade earlier. This instrument had accompanied with him through many years of performances in the grasslands, recording studios, and even on China Central Television. However, when he ascended the stage in Beijing, the variable temperature and humidity on and off the stage caused the instrument to go wildly out of tune. The strings loosened beyond control and the instrument's skin supposedly relaxed so much that very little sound came out on stage. The morin khuur also had the challenge of competing with the sound of a full symphony orchestra and because of the length of the piece, needed to sustain a stable timbre and intonation for over twenty minutes. More significantly, the morin khuur as a local instrument remained in relatively stable climates and humidity conditions. When Chi Bulag brought his instrument to Beijing, the humidity level outdoors and then on stage under the bright lights was enough of a change that the instrument lost its sound.

Chi Bulag explains the story as follows:

We rehearsed for many hours, but every time we played together, the strings on my python-skin morin khuur popped loose. Because python skin morin khuur sound boxes still had flaws (maobing), when the wind blew or when it rained, the strings would just automatically lose their sound or pop loose. Even with adequate preparation it would still persist. Not five minutes would go by in the rehearsal, and I would again have to tune my strings. There was a performer who turned to me and said: "Comrade Chi Bulag, we are performing a morin khuur concerto, not a tuning concerto. You really need to change instruments." This one sentence shattered my ethnic pride (zhe yijuhua lajile wode minzu zizunxin). (quoted in Siriguleng 2009:75)

Morin khuur scholar Altendolekh, who was working on a biography of Chi Bulag at the time of my interview, offered me his own elaboration of this story and explained that, “After Chi Bulag’s performance the conductor shouted out to him, ‘Why is the morin khuur so soft and so out of tune? Look at these Western instruments, they are made with scientific methods. They never go out of tune and have the ability to play loud enough on stage’” (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot). According to Altendolekh, the crucial element of this story was the implicit backwardness of the morin khuur compared to the instruments of the symphony orchestra. Morin khuur craftsman Liu Buhe summarized this sentiment when he described this reform story to me in his workshop, saying, “The conductor and symphony members criticized Chi Bulag [at the rehearsal], but it was no fault of his own, the instrument was just backward (luohou)” (Liu, interview, 26 July 2010, Hohhot).

According to Altendolekh, Chi Bulag returned to Hohhot with the conductor’s words resonating in his mind (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot). He became resolved to adapt the instrument so that it might achieve a successful stage performance. He sought out the instrument maker and factory director Duan Tingjun (see Figure 42) and requested that he create a louder wood-faced instrument body for him. His primary goals were to increase the volume of the instrument and to make its tuning and timbre stable under a variety of humidity and temperature changes, but perhaps more so, to restore his “ethnic pride” and dignity a performer. This initial attempt, made under the pressure of time and limited funds out of Chi Bulag’s own pocket, did not prove to be successful.

Chi Bulag described the reception of this first attempt in Beijing:

On the morning of the third day, I changed out my instrument body with the parasol wood instrument body that he [Duan] had made for me, which still didn't even have varnish on it yet, put it on my instrument neck and sat down to rehearse. The string loosening problem had basically been solved, but there was no resonance to the

sound. The conductor Wei Jianian said: "How can you call this a morin khuur? It sounds more like an eighteen-dollar violin. Even the python-skin morin khuur was better than this. (Siriguleng 2009:75)



Figure 42. Duan Tingjun in His Workshop in 2010, Playing the “Chi Bulag Morin Khuur”

After several rounds of adjustments, the pair finally came up with a suitable model of the morin khuur that would project above the level of the orchestra and that satisfied the conductor. With a few more adjustments throughout the late 80s and early 90s, Duan and Chi Bulag developed a widely accepted pinewood model of the instrument, which they produced in mass quantities and distributed across Inner Mongolia.

Most Mongol performers, makers, and scholars in Inner Mongolia know this story and seem agreed on the importance of this event as a crowning moment for Mongol music in the 1980s. I observed several unifying features in their telling of this story. The stories speak to Chi Bulag’s independence in these initial reform efforts, removed from government support and exchange with Mongolia, both of which Sangdureng was fortunate to have had (Duan, interview, 26 July 2010, Hohhot; Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot). Music and the arts received lower priority in the post-Mao era and so much of the initial work of Chi Bulag and Duan Tingjun came from their own expenses, costs that I imagine

paid off once their models made it to the market. Chi Bulag abides by his belief, however, that “making money is the antithesis of good art” and emphasizes that it was love and emotion for the morin khuur that carries through his work (Chi Bulag, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot).

Wood-faced morin khuur were very rare in Inner Mongolia at this time, and so Chi Bulag and Duan essentially embarked on their reforms from scratch, with limited aid from the unsuccessful models produced by Zhang Chunhua in the 1950s. Mongolia had been using a wood-faced model since the late 1960s, however Mongolia and China had virtually no contact during the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s until the late 80s, and so Chi Bulag and Duan Tingjun were therefore independent in their efforts and eventually turned the heads of the musical community in Mongolia for their innovations (see Chapter Five).

Tellers of these stories expound upon Chi Bulag’s determination and perseverance in his efforts. A morin khuur player, Bayinmenghe, described to me his respect for Chi Bulag’s lifelong diligence and sense of responsibility, presumably to his art and the Mongol people (Bayinmenghe, interview, 22 June 2010, Beijing). As Mongols tell of Chi Bulag’s defeat and then eventual success in Beijing, they emphasize his ability to overcome all odds and to eventually perform with the symphony in what they consider to be a high level of musical achievement.

Furthermore, these stories center on not just scientific advancement of the morin khuur, but also desires for it to retain its Mongol character. Instrument maker Liu Buhe describes how the sound of Chi Bulag’s first trial instrument was very “hard” (*ying*, lacking in resonance) and nothing like the morin khuur tone (Liu, interview, 26 July 2010, Hohhot). Such discussions suggest that the aspect of timbre became an important feature of the morin khuur reform. Duan and Chi Bulag worked hard to retain the fuzzy, rustling sound they

considered essential to the morin khuur sound (see Chapter One for more on the importance of timbre in Mongol music).

Duan Tingjun described to me how they had a particularly difficult time getting the timbre right while still having a loud enough volume and a stable enough intonation. Duan referred to the rustling timbre of the morin khuur as a crucial distinguishing feature that was in danger of being eliminated by the transformation to a wood-faced instrument (Duan, interview, 26 July 2010, Hohhot).

As Duan and Chi Bulag experimented with their new morin khuur model, they had concerns that, in order to maintain its rustling sound, so intimately connected with the traditional morin khuur, its timbre could not transform completely into the sound of the violin (*ibid*).

Ironically, many morin khuur players, including those in the nation of Mongolia criticize Chi Bulag's morin khuur for its bright timbre that, many say, was influenced by the violin or by Chinese music. Two of my contacts phrased this almost identically. "The morin khuur tone color is much too tight [pinched, nasal] and too much like the violin" (Hugejiletu, interview, 19 June 2010, Beijing; Alatengsang, interview, 20 June 2010, Beijing). Here, they refer to the loss of the fuzzy timbre that gave the traditional instrument its uniquely Mongol quality, a viewpoint to which I return in Chapters Four and Five below.

Chi Bulag sees his efforts as representing a modern Mongol spirit. Returning to the bullet train analogy presented at the beginning of this chapter, Chi Bulag's philosophy suggests that the end goal for Mongol music should be reached through whatever advanced technologies are available, even if it means altering or discarding traditional objects from the past. He does not see this process as one that compromises the Mongolness of his music or his connection to the grasslands. He states that, "The motivation for my three reforms to the

morin khuur originated from the love and passion that grassland herders have for the morin khuur, and this gave me my strength" (Meng 2009:180)²⁵

Sangdureng and Zhang Chunhua constantly balanced agendas of personal gain and desires to accurately represent and promote their ethnic group. They found ways in which these agendas were able to overlap through Their promotion of the morin khuur as a legitimate, cosmopolitan instrument—for themselves as performers, and as a loud stage presence for their ethnic group—became a way that both agendas were able to overlap. They saw the morin khuur as the best avenue for their own and Mongol success, even if it meant fitting into the framework set up by the Chinese state. Sangdureng and Chi Bulag worked as state cooperators within government paradigms, efforts that advanced their careers for the most part, but tragically resulted in the death of Sangdureng during the Cultural Revolution in 1967, an end that was unimaginable during his acclaimed successes in 1964.

Uradyn Bulag argues that a “romance of resistance” is less salient as a framework in Inner Mongolia than one of “resistance-within-collaboration” (1999:29) and the independent creativity of agents such as Ulanhu as they adapted state policies to local situations (1993:22). Similarly, Jiang Hong suggests that Mongols herders gain power through their cooperation and become empowered “without directly upsetting the system” (2006:645). She writes that for Inner Mongols, “a safe expression of agency had to be nonconfrontational and nonsubversive” (2006:652).

This reality applies to the experiences of Sangdureng and Chi Bulag in China. These Mongols often authorized a Chinese framework for their music, such as the desire to erase regional instrumental variant and to develop a systematic and standardized instrument model. However, such conceptions may have fit with their own agendas for themselves and for their ethnic group, thereby constituting only a marginal compromise.

Sangdureng and Chi Bulag put Inner Mongolia into the national spotlight and used the morin khuur to reorder perceptions of Mongols as a backward people. By developing a loud, stable, scientifically advanced instrument, Sangdureng and Chi Bulag demonstrated that Mongol instruments can be just as modern and cosmopolitan as Han Chinese and Western instruments, and therefore just as worthy of attention and power.

PART II: CREATING A CANON OF MORIN KHUUR MUSIC

I incorporated elements from the violin, erhu, sihu, cello, and whatever else I needed. As a result, the morin khuur ended up the way it did. If it didn't take this shape, it would still resemble the older form of the morin khuur and it would never survive on the concert stage (Chi Bulag, quoted in Meng 2009:179).

[My piece] 'Ten Thousand Galloping Horses' would never have received such praise if it still resembled a 'traditional ox cart' (Chi Bulag, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot).

In this section, I explore the efforts of player-composer Chi Bulag as he developed a canon of solo repertoire for the morin khuur, an effort that carried the instrument into the professional world of the university institution and gave it a viable presence on the national stage. Chi Bulag, like Sangdureng, was a multi-talented musical persona and became a classic model of a performer-composer-educator-reformer, common among many musicians in China at this time (see Rees 2009). Particularly in the 1950s and 60s, state-employed morin khuur players were called to prepare solo pieces for specific events, and arranged new folksong repertoire for their own performances and only later published those pieces for others to play (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010).²⁶

Today, the standard morin khuur repertoire used in university music departments consists of (1) arranged folksongs, (2) compositions by Mongol and other composers in China, (3) arrangements from violin repertoire, and (4) pieces borrowed from the composed

morin khuur repertoire in Mongolia. For the purpose of this section, I focus on the second category as a way to look at the way composers, particularly Chi Bulag, used musical composition to articulate their ideas about modernity. I highlight two celebrated pieces of Chi Bulag in particular, “Recollection” and “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses,” and demonstrate how these pieces merge the musical worlds of classical violin technique and Mongol folk melodies and styles.

A solo morin khuur repertoire, like the development of the morin khuur model, became one of the crucial aspects of this process of defining a modern Mongolness. As early as the 1950s, morin khuur performers realized that they could not rely solely on folksong arrangements for morin khuur performance and pedagogy. Sangdureng was of the first to recognize the need for a collection solo repertoire for the morin khuur, with rousing qualities of speed and dynamic contrasts, that would give it as much stage presence as the violin.

He made efforts to compose a number of solo pieces using Chinese cipher notation, combining traditional morin khuur techniques with new musical forms and a variety of skillful techniques borrowed in part from the violin. Such repertoire, including his famous piece “Ordos Spring,” contains many new techniques borrowed from the violin such as rapid sixteenth-note passages, combined with Mongol-flavored ornaments, slides, and double stops characteristic of the morin khuur. This piece is still a treasured part the standard performance literature for morin khuur players today (see Figure 43).

Such Western-oriented compositions tended to emphasize changes in mood, speed, dynamics, and emotional intensity. “Ordos Spring” demonstrates a progression through sections in an A-B-C-fast A arrangement (final section of the C passage notated above). Today’s notated versions of “Ordos Spring” include key and time signature changes to further accentuate the change in moods between these sections. Violin-like sections with

rapid sixteenth-note patterns such as in the finale to this piece became a hallmark of most finale sections in the morin khuur repertoire in China.

Ordos Spring
鄂尔多斯春天

Composer: Sangdureng 桑都仍
Performer: Li Bo 李波

Allegro ♩ = 150

heavy tremolo bow ricochet bow

spicatto

etc.

Figure 43. Allegro Passage of “Ordos Spring”

The transition to fixed written composition incorporated the concept of a single composer as musical author and the idea that musical pieces come in one standard version with only slight variations based on one’s teacher or personal style. New pieces such as “Ordos Spring” had much less spontaneity, including a fixed sense of rhythm and limited opportunities for ornamentation.

In addition to his solo compositions, Sangdureng adapted traditional oral methods of morin khuur transmission into a notated and systematic method. In 1956, he published an essay entitled “On the Performance of the Morin Khuur,” which covered his standardized formulation of a morin khuur methodology and became the foundation for the instrumental methods today (Siriguleng 2009:4). This new emphasis on technical proficiency replaced what used to be an emphasis on evocative, flavorful playing that would vary widely between regions and individuals.

In this analysis that follows, I examine the way that Chi Bulag incorporates these imported techniques and styles into a Mongol musical system, in the process demonstrating his flexibility to shift between musical languages.

Musical Changes and Combinations

The most pronounced changes to morin khuur music in the 1950s include the adoption of: (1) a “solo instrument” orientation, (2) sectional instead of strophic form, (3) notated musical compositions, (4) tonal harmony, (5) a “single-pitched” rather than “drone/overtone-oriented” musical technique, and (6) an overwhelming emphasis on violin techniques.

The solo morin khuur, now accompanied by a piano or sometimes a Mongol yataga (zither), became a leading rather than a following instrument. This solo orientation, based on Mongols’ notions of the solo violin tradition, eventually resulted in extroverted displays of technical skills. This performative virtuosity was and is displayed through wide romantic vibrato and expressive body movements for lyrical passages, and technically complex passagework for fast passages. Musicologist Siriguleng refers to this as the development of a very new instrumental style for the morin khuur (*qiynebua*), focused on instrumental techniques rather than a vocal-accompaniment sensibility (Siriguleng 2009:64).

Performers in the Mongol courts had already begun thinking about changes to traditional musical form for staged contexts in the early twentieth century. Mongol vocal music, as mentioned above, is primarily organized strophically and songs could be many verses, to the extent that some last all night. Court musicians shortened and arranged traditional urtiin duu repertoire by shortening them down to two verses and inserting a short song between those verses, creating an ABA form. This made music more palatable as a

“consumable” performance art, rather than a participatory art. In the 1950s the first prominent fiddle player Serash arranged his own folksongs, notable of which is the famous song “Hailong” arranged in long song—short song—long song format (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot).

Tonal harmony, considered in China as a feature that demonstrates the complexity and superiority of European classical music, became a necessary component for many composers in their modern morin khuur compositions. Mongol melodies were adapted to fit a linear, goal-oriented sense of melodic motion that often involved the small-scale melodic form of antecedent and consequent phrases. Newly composed music in the 1960s and 70s such as Xin Huguang’s “Tone Poem of the Grassland” use a Chinese revolutionary language of ascending triadic arpeggios, homophonic chord progressions, a flurry of tremolo sixteenths, and triumphant endings on the tonic chord (see Figure 44).

Many violin-inspired passages maintain a distinctly Western emphasis on thirds, evidenced through the prevalence in morin khuur compositions to include parallel double stops in thirds. Compositions often alternate between a Western parallel-double-stop-style and a traditional morin khuur drone-double-stop-style, often with somewhat seamless transitions.

A crucial change in musical style unique to music in Inner Mongolia was the transition from an “overtone technique” (*fanyin yanzoufa*) to what Mongols call a “single-pitched technique” (*danyin yanzoufa*). The overtone technique is a characteristic Inner Mongol fiddle style used primarily in asar instrumental suites (see Chapter One). It involves a constant double-stop position of the bow and a light finger technique, often on the top of the strings and in an position further down on the neck of the instrument (higher in pitch, lower in hand placement).

Tone Poem of the Grasslands

草原音诗

Composer: Xin Huguang 辛沪光

Performer: Chi Bulag 其·宝力高

183 **Allegro** ♩ = 150

Morin Khuur

Figure 44. Allegro Segment from “Tone Poem of the Grassland”

This fanyin yanzoufa overtone technique involves a sense of “many sounds” (*duoshengbu, chor*) in the pitches of the double-stopped strings, in the harmonics produced by the left hand, and in the generally dense timbral richness of the bundled horse-hair strings themselves. A Western emphasis on “single-pitched technique,” involves the use of single stops and a succession of squarely pressed discrete pitches, often with vibrato, and a focused

bow technique with even volume and consistent timbre from frog to tip. This was a foreign musical aesthetic for Mongol musicians, who typically valued an ornamented style and timbres that bring out prominent upper partials.

As evidenced in Chi Bulag's statements above, his aim was to raise the morin khuur to an equal status with the violin in terms of its technical feats of finger and bowing technique. He believed that, with the addition of techniques borrowed from the violin, cello, and erhu, the morin khuur could achieve a powerful presence on the stage. Practically every piece in the modern morin khuur repertoire features passages of fancy, rapid fingerwork, contrasted by smooth lyrical passages with heavy vibrato.²⁷ To indigenous *tatлага* styles (see Chapter One), Sangdureng, Chi Bulag, and others borrowed bowing techniques from the violin, most notable being a bounced spiccato bow, rapid tremolo, and the technically challenging ricochet bow technique (Meng 2009:177, 179).

Musicians made many of their musical changes in accordance to the standards of Western classical music, yet in practice, Mongol composers and musicians value their own regional styles and creatively combine them with Western musical styles. Composers make their continuity with the past clear, particularly in their use of distinctly regional folksongs from Inner Mongolia. My Mongol friend Suya states this as if this was an obvious fact saying, "Of course! Everything comes from folk songs originally." (Suya, interview, 14 July 2009, Hohhot).

In post-1949 Inner Mongolia regional styles became "up for grabs" for individuals regardless of their region of origin. Styles that were formerly quite isolated and that were passed down in family lines became the provenience of any musicians in Inner Mongolia, with the idea that "now that we are all Mengguzu (Mongolian nationalities in China), all of this music counts as our shared tradition." Certain melodic signifiers from regional folksongs

became musical markers of Mongolness and often stripped of their regional associations (this is seen in examples of grassland songs in the previous chapter). Such markers include a minor-flavored pentatonic mode with emphasis on the sixth scale degree, arching melodic lines with a wide pitch range, and ornaments such as mordents, trills, and slides (see Chapter One for description of these features of Mongol music).

Recollection

I first heard Chi Bulag's piece "Recollection" at the jury examinations in Hohhot and later, heard it in repeated performances at a morin khuur competition hosted by Chi Bulag. At the competition, all participants were required to play "Recollection" as an entry piece in the first round. Thus, having heard this piece roughly seven or eight times on that one occasion, I had time to reflect and "recollect" on this piece. I initially dismissed it as just another "Westernized" composition attempting to imitate pieces in the violin repertoire, but gradually learned to appreciate the Mongol qualities of this piece and its significance for the individuals who perform it. For this analysis, I am using Chi Bulag's performance in 2006 at the Golden Hall of Vienna with his Wild Horse Morin Khuur Ensemble.

"Recollection" is a solo piece accompanied by piano and breaks into three parts in a slow-steady-fast sectional form. The progression from slow to fast is typical of Chinese silk and bamboo ensemble music and also hearkens to pieces in the violin repertoire such as Camille Saint-Saëns' "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso," a composition that begins in a contemplative manner and ends in a fast flurry of virtuosic displays. In the frequent ensemble renditions of "Recollection," such as the one I choose to highlight here, Chi Bulag plays the first section and the ensemble enters in unison for the second and third sections.

The first section (A) opens with a piano introduction that uses a free and elastic sense of pulse (see Figure 45). The accompaniment, composed by the arranger Yerda, employs an impressionistic style, with slow arpeggiated chords, open intervals, use of unresolved non-chord tones, and lack of a clear sense of harmonic progression. This style, with its emphasis on the fourth and the fifth, may be a strategic choice for this arranger as he works to fit the musical sensibility of the instrument.

Recollection
回想曲

Composer: Chi Bulag 齐·宝力高
Accompaniment: Ye'erda 叶尔达

Morin Khuur

Piano

3

Freely

mf "A" theme

6

freely arpeggiated

p

4

5

9

freely falling

freely falling

12

(quote from "B" theme)

rit

5

17

rit

freely falling

Figure 45. Opening Passage (A) of "Recollection"

Chi Bulag enters solo on the morin khuur in the fourth measure and proceeds in an impromptu style bordering on free meter with a meditative quality of recollection suggested by its title. The melody in this section features a free and impressionistic style of arpeggiation with brief moments of flavorful ornamentation and a brief statement of the (B) section melody toward the end of the passage. The elongated notes evoke a freely elaborated style such as in *urtiin duu* long song (see Chapter One and Figure 12). The compositional style of this section requires the player to achieve an even volume and timbre from the frog to the tip of the bow, with the expectation that the player will add gradual crescendos and decrescendos to further smooth out the musical phrases. Such a technique poses a strong contrast to the *tatlaga* and *asar* techniques that use an accent-release-style of bowing (see Chapter One and Figures 3 and 4).

The melodic theme in the (B) section involves arching phrases and a minor pentatonic mode that emphasizes the sixth scale degree and gives it a distinctive folksong flavor. This section prescribes only a limited degree of ornamentation and, when played in ensemble, each player renders the ornamental turns, trills, and slides in precisely the same way.

The third section (C) is a fast “allegro” that features rapid fingering and bowing sequences that sound almost like a violin exercise (see Figure 46). Chi Bulag breaks interpose these segments with lyrical phrases of a new folksong-like melody that includes a measure of untraditionally accented notes. The rhythmic ostinato in the piano resembles a faster version of the traditional *tatlaga* horse-trot rhythm with its patterned combination of eighth and sixteenth notes. Despite the violin-like display of step-wise sequences, the rapid licks use a pentatonic minor mode and remain centered around the pitch F (i or vi, depending on how you choose to orient the key), giving this section a Mongol-like sense of pitch organization.

149

Morin Khuur

Piano

poco a poco cresc.

155

poco a poco dim.

p

161

165

sf

ff

Figure 46. Ending Passage of “Recollection”

Chi Bulag employs a few instances of double stops at the end of the piece, a typical feature of traditional morin khuur music. However, he arranges these double stops in a violin-like perfect sixth arrangement that suggests triadic harmony rather than a drone pitch. Most of the piece requires a single-pitched technique (without double stops or harmonics), a technique that requires the player to use a drawn-out sound centered on a core fundamental instead of a traditional focus on overtone-rich sounds.

“Recollection” closes with an ascending pentatonic scale up to a climactic series of heavily accented tonic chords to mark the piece’s ending in a style typical of European classical music codas.

As a standard selection for competitions and conservatory juries, this piece requires students to demonstrate their mastery of three distinct musical styles, free meter, lyrical folksong melody, and rapid passagework. The player performs content that is subtlety, and in the case of the folksong, more obviously, Mongol, through techniques that are largely Western and violin-like.

In performances of this piece, morin khuur players use their body, fingers and bow arm a way that is largely indistinguishable from that of a cello player. However, looking deeper into the music, it is possible to see that the piece is not hegemonically Western, but includes a broader sense of tonality that hints at a Mongol musical system. The impressionistic harmonies elide a sense of a hegemonic tonic chord and focus instead on the open intervals, prized by the Impressionists for their anti-Romanticism, and by Mongols because of their preference for drones and the harmonic series. Listening through the distracting technical displays of the third section, it is possible to see there, also, a vague sense of harmonic progression with the dominance of a single repeated chord with a cyclical rhythmic pattern over a linear sequence of chords. Whether such hidden messages of resistance to a “dominating Western tonality” were intended or not, Chi Bulag offers a piece that creatively merges musical systems of violin-like lyricism and showmanship with folksong ornaments and flavors.

A Revolution of Galloping Horses

“Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” received its first renowned performance in 1979 and went on to be one of the most performed morin khuur pieces in China. In five months of fieldwork in Inner Mongolia, I heard the piece performed on about ten or eleven occasions, by far more than I heard any other morin khuur piece. If Mongols had to choose an instrumental anthem of Inner Mongolia, I would suspect that this piece would be high on the list. The piece’s exciting pace, driving rhythms, and evocative representation of a stampede of racing horses creates quite a powerful impact, especially when performed with large groups of morin khuur players as it typically does.

“Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” is the signature piece of Chi Bulag’s Wild Horse Ensemble, a group of twelve or so members that he formed in 1986. Chi Bulag frequently gathers his students together to play this piece for large-scale regional and national events, almost in a Suzuki-like fashion. I saw a group of fifty-or-so young morin khuur players perform this piece for the outdoor opening ceremony for Hohhot’s annual summer Grassland Culture Festival (Caoyuan Wenhua jie) and was impressed by the coordination between those young players, some as young as maybe ten years old, and the dramatic force that the large ensemble created. I can only imagine the response the piece received at the opening ceremony for the Zhaojun Arts Festival in 2001, an event that involved a group of 1000 players performing the piece together in unison. Chi Bulag restaged a smaller-scale version of this event in 2008 when he represented Inner Mongolia in the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics in performance that included eighty morin khuur performers and an accompanying ensemble of dancers.

To understand some of the potential meanings layered inside this piece, I offer a brief analysis of the standard Chi Bulag version of “Galloping Horses” before presenting

four unique variations on this piece that demonstrate the way performers add their own elaborations and personal stamps onto this piece today.

The inspiration for “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” came from the traditional morin khuur tatlaga technique and it is possible to see how Chi Bulag manipulates the tatlaga rhythmic patterns in his composition (see Figure 3). “Galloping Horses” begins with a short piano introduction that opens with a sweeping glissando and a trot-like rhythms with alternating right and left hands. The morin khuur enters with heavy pulsing bows on the full sound of double-stopped open strings, as the player simultaneously slides a softly pressed left hand rhythmically up to the octave harmonic.

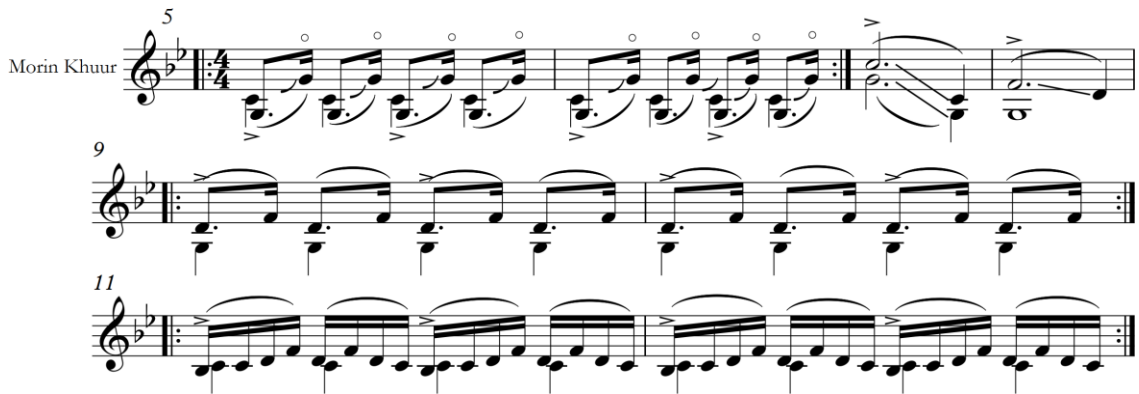


Figure 47. Opening Passage of “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses”

After four measures of this pattern the player lands on a double-stopped harmonic in a high perfect fourth low on the neck and then slides down to the open strings and back up to another drone chord before proceeding to another four measures of a rhythmically pulsing double-stopped bow and lightly drumming left hand finger. Chi Bulag borrowed all of the morin khuur material up to this point from Sangdureng’s “Running Horses.” The piece continues from here into new compositional material, but retains the basic foundation on tatlaga technique. Chi Bulag also maintains two-measure-long measure segments in

tatлага style and glues each section together one after another, each of which are fairly similar in rhythmic drive and ostinato pattern.

Rather than a macro-sense of musical organization, Chi Bulag instead uses short rhythmic motives, one to four measures long, lined up one after the other. I counted eight distinct rhythmic patterns (with bowing variations) that he pairs with different pitch combinations throughout the piece (See Figure 48). The piece achieves a sense of perpetual motion achieved from these horse-gallop-like patterns.



Figure 48. Rhythmic Motives in “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses”

Chi Bulag adds another level for these combinations with his alternation between single-stopped and drone-based double-stop bows. The result is that, even without a larger sense of organization, the entire piece can be appreciated by the listener as a perpetual motion of rhythmically propelling motives that come one after another in two- or four-bar intervals. It is only in the last four bars of the piece that the piece comes out of this sense of perpetual motion and the morin khuur descends in accented double stopped chords, followed by an arpeggio up to the final two measures of accented chords and a final unison double stop on what is now established as “tonic.”

Throughout “Galloping Horses,” Chi Bulag cleverly merges violin techniques with a traditional tatлага pulsing bow style to represent the sound of the hoof beats. He achieves

this in a seamless way that makes the Western violin and Mongol morin khuur techniques seem like parts of the same musical language. The first quarter of the piece features Mongol-flavored tatлага patterns with double stops and drones (all except for two measures), and later breaks out into sliding descending pattern followed by hammered ricochet bow techniques borrowed from the violin (see Appendix E for full score). Such violin-inspired bowing techniques, such as ricochet and hammered bows, conform to the rhythmic patterns defined by the tatлага motives (see Figure 48 above).

At measure 53 “Gallop ing Horses,” Chi Bulag writes a technique to resemble the sound a horse “whinny,” calling for the player to perform a vibrating glissando up and down the instrument. The player starts from the open strings, travels down the neck with a vibrating motion of the hand (to move up in pitch), and then returns in a vibrating motion back up the neck (to move down in pitch) (see Figure 49).

The image shows a musical score for Morin Khuur in 4/4 time, spanning measures 53 to 68. Measure 53 is the starting point of a technique described as a vibrating glissando. It features a descending line of notes with a wavy, vibrating quality, annotated with "slide from opposite side of the neck" and "(same as previous)". Measure 58 shows a continuation of this technique with a more pronounced vibrato. Measure 63 is marked "ricochet" and features a series of rapid, repeated notes. Measure 66 continues this pattern. Measure 68 is also marked "ricochet" and concludes the passage with a final note and a double bar line.

Figure 49. Ending Passage of “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses”

The player is called to perform a similar sliding motion in the next four measures, only this time the player reaches around to grab the strings from the opposite side of the neck in another playful display of showmanship. After several more measures of fast spicatto and ricochet bowing techniques, Chi Bulag transitions the morin khuur out of its pounding, cyclical rhythms in a final flourish and three accented chords to mark the end of the piece.

Like “Recollection,” this piece elides a standard sense of tonal harmonic progression. The piece uses a nearly constant sense of drone employed through open-string double stops, an important feature of morin khuur music. The circular nature of the repeated one- to four-bar phrases also limits a sense of linear tonality. Only when Chi Bulag exits these patterns through final-sounding, triadic chords at the end is the pitch of C established as tonic.

It is unclear what Chi Bulag’s intentions were as he composed the piece in the late 1970s, but there are noticeable differences in the “performative virtuosity” in this piece as compared to “Recollection.” Although “Galloping Horses” may arguably be the more demanding piece, the technical aspects of the piece require much less “showiness” in terms of how the body is used. Whereas performers must use the whole bow from frog to tip in “Recollection,” one can get by in *tatлага* style, and even in spicatto violin style, of this piece with only a few inches of bow hair.

The fast fingering style in the final section of the former piece requires frequent shifting up and down the neck of the instrument such that the player demonstrates a furious kind of showmanship when performing these sections. In the latter, other than about eight measures of chromatic double stops and the huge sweep of the hand up and down the neck for the “whinny” slide technique, the player can achieve the rapid fingering techniques while remaining in a single finger position, making this piece look seemingly easy. Players perform

“Gallop ing Horses” with a much more casual and relaxed attitude, often engaging with one another or rocking back and forth light-heartedly.

Creative Recompositions

Chi Bulag’s “Ten Thousand Gallop ing Horses” is performed in a range of contexts in China.²⁸ It is a standard, if not overplayed, fare on the national stage in representations of the Mongol ethnic group in China and, like grassland songs, plays an important role today in the selling of Mongol culture today. I heard the piece numerous times including the opening of the Grassland Culture Festival in Hohhot, in tourist settings, song and dance troupe performances, university recitals, and other contexts. I noticed that “Gallop ing Horses” is included as a hallmark piece on almost every album of commercially recorded morin khuur music in China.

In the frequency with which this piece is programmed, I wondered if performers every got sick of playing it.²⁹ Do they enjoy its musical content or do they simply perform it because it is what audiences demand? Do musicians feel a sense that “Gallop ing Horses” is just perpetuating another stereotype of Inner Mongols as a “grassland horse people”? Even in the “modern” driving qualities of the piece, the title might suggest that Mongols cannot escape a grassland identity and ubiquitous associations as a horse-riding people. Chi Bulag, perhaps rightfully, did not choose to name his piece “Ten Thousand Bullet Trains.”

The standard unison performance of this piece offers little room for individuality or counter-discourse. This large-scale ensemble performance practice, so common in national stage performances of “Gallop ing Horses,” requires that players render the piece in perfect synchronization.

Yet solo and small ensemble performances offer much room for creativity. many Performers have found room to flexibly play with the structure and arrangement of “Gallop ing Horses” within subtle and sometimes not so subtle manipulation of its patterned motives, introductory materials, and choices for melodic counterpoint. Performers have utilized the loose organizational structure of the one- to four-bar phrases in Chi Bualg’s composition as a skeleton for creative addition, arrangement, and recomposition, often in ways that are imperceptible by audiences.

Among the many reinterpretations of this piece that I heard in Inner Mongolia and that I have since seen through dozens of streaming videos posted on the internet, four stand out to me in particular. The first is the established Han morin khuur performer Li Bo’s addition of a left-hand plucking technique in the middle of the piece. He is one of the few performers I have heard who plays the piece exclusively solo, representative of his professional career as an international solo performer. His left-hand plucking in combination with a spicatto bow, used by Pagannini in his caprices, is known as an exceptionally difficult violin technique to master and as such, connects Li Bo and to his international audiences through their ability to appreciate his virtuosity.

The second instance is the recomposition of this piece I heard in several performances by the neo-traditional ensemble Anda Union. Their additions include an unmetred opening in which the ensemble members, starting softly and gradually increasing in volume, freely play their own “horse whinny” sounds with vibrating slides down the neck of the instrument. Combined with a roll of a large drum, the only accompaniment used in this rendition, the effect is of the gradual approach of a distant herd of horses before the performers leap into the classic opening of the piece. The ensemble includes other instances of polyphony throughout the piece, including a second morin khuur counterpoint line

toward the middle of the piece and the group's signature call-and-response "woo" hoots, perhaps evoking the shouts of the horse riders, at the end of the piece.

A televised performance of "Galloping Horses" by a Mongol ensemble of the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Troupe in Beijing offers a third example of creative additions to this piece. Toward the middle of the piece, one of the musicians breaks out of the texture while the other five ensemble musicians continue a spiccato ostinato accompaniment in the background. The solo performer then renders a free improvisation of unmetered *urtiin duu* (long song), totally independent of the driving rhythms of the ostinato accompaniment. This creative addition of *urtiin duu*, one that I have heard in other performances as well, offers an interesting counter-discourse to the incessant forward momentum of Chi Bulag's piece. The performer engages the folk song melody with the elongated pitches and metrically elastic ornamentation of long song before joining back in with the ensemble to conclude the piece.

A fourth and final illustration of the potential for recomposition that musicians have seen in "Galloping Horses" is the orchestral-rock-style midi rendition of the piece that is included on a solo morin khuur album by performer Bayinmenghe. The piece begins with the full sound of the orchestral-midi accompaniment, along with the pounding sixteenth notes of a synthesized drum beat, a pulse that continues throughout the entire piece with a distinctly digital and "technological" sound. The acoustic solo morin khuur enters the texture after a sweeping synthesized harp glissando and launches into the opening phrases of the piece. In its midi arrangement, the piece has a strong sense of chordal movement, though often in dissonant-sounding accents rather than a traditional chord progression. The morin khuur also engages in a kind of call-and-response with the accompaniment as each alternates portions of the original morin khuur line for portions of the piece. Most

interesting in this arrangement is a section in the middle in which the morin khuur plays a continuous pizzicato ostinato while the midi orchestra “performs” a statement of the Khorchin folksong “Gada Meiren,” a song known for its Mongol nationalist overtones and expression of Mongol pride (see Chapter Four) (Bulag 2004:106, Baranovitch 2009:191, Henochowicz 2011).

Each of these reinterpretations of “Gallopers” demonstrates desires among Mongol performers to insert their subjectivities into this piece and, in many ways, their desires to claim it as their own. These and many other creative manipulations of this piece are interesting displays of performative agency and individuality as Mongols reject evocations of a unison Mongol consciousness. Such creative performances enable Mongols to enjoy themselves in a piece that might otherwise seem like a tiresome part of practically every staged national or regional performance of Mongol music in China.

Chi Bulag’s piece, rather than stifling creativity, has been a means through which Mongols creatively assign new meanings to its performance. Through this process of creative musical manipulation, they demonstrate their ownership over this piece of standard repertoire and insert “hidden transcripts” into their performances that likely escape the eyes and ears of Han viewers and the state (Scott 1990). Going back to Jiang, this is a way that Mongols inventively “reappropriate state power,” giving audiences what they want while getting their own sense of meaning and entertainment from the experience (Jiang 2006:652).³⁰ The Mongol performers above exert not only a savvy cosmopolitanism, but also messages such as creative displays of virtuosity (Li Bo’s left-hand plucking version), expressions of ethnic tradition (Central Nationalities’ long song version), ownership over the horse motive symbols (Anda’s horse-neigh version), and perhaps even sentiments of Mongol nationalism (Bayinmenghe’s “Gada Meiren” version)

I am amazed when I see performers like Anda Union, though they likely execute this piece hundreds of times per year, exhibit genuine enjoyment every time they perform it. When I asked one of the musicians whether he gets sick of performing this piece, he answered that he enjoys the performances in which they can play the piece live over microphones, instead of through a canned recording (Wurigen, conversation, 3 August 2010, Chifeng). Indeed, their creative agency becomes significantly stifled when they perform in outdoor settings with poor sound systems and are forced to “lip sync” to their studio recording,³¹ but the group nevertheless enjoys being together on stage and appreciates having the ability to pursue music together as a living.

Despite some dissatisfaction with performing contexts, Anda engages in an interesting reappropriation of grassland motives. Anda evokes horses and horse riders in a way that perhaps enables them to take ownership over this classic horse leitmotiv, even in their seemingly conformity to the dominant system. Such hidden resistance and cooperative acceptance may exist simultaneously, coming out at different opportunities wherever convenient.

In his compositions, Chi Bulag flexibly merges a Western musical style, primarily from the violin, with Mongol musical sensibilities, including use of Inner Mongol folksongs and *tatlag* *morin khuur* techniques. Despite his statements that proclaim the superiority of Western classical music, he offers subtle discourses of resistance to Western tonal hegemony in his compositions, such as in the accompaniment of “Recollection.” Similarly, solo *morin khuur* players and ensembles offer their own hidden transcripts of subversion to dominant modes of representation in their renditions of “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses.” Both Chi Bulag and these performers negotiate a fine line under a Chinese state system that expects conformity to orthodox minority representations. The semiotic richness of music enables

these musicians to achieve a range of meanings through a creative merging of musical signifiers, Western, Chinese, Mongol, and individualistic.

Chi Bulag established a position as a morin khuur authority in the 1980s that enabled him to form the basis of a new solo repertoire and the establishment of the morin khuur as viable solo instrument within the Chinese institutional music system. The composer had the power to determine what essential features of morin khuur style and Mongol flavor would linger as signifying aspects of his minzu ethnic group. He was one of many composers to codify a set of standard Mongol musical features such as slides, trills, and mordents, characteristic folksong melodies, and trot-like *tatлага* rhythms.

The morin khuur is far from a finished project. Mongols still actively discuss what direction the instrument, and Mongol music in general, should take in the twenty-first century. I was surprised to hear fierce debates about issues of “protect and develop” (*baohu yu fazhan*) and “inherit and change” (*chuangcheng yu bianqian*), with Mongols positioned along different parts of the spectrum. Members of the Mongol community engage in a continuing debate about the changes the morin khuur has experienced in the twentieth century, with the primary focus on these conversations centering on the directions taken by Sangdureng and Chi Bulag, and whether those changes were a positive or negative direction for the instrument to take. Some of the conversations I had with Mongols in China included such statements as:

“For quite some time we were obsessed with studying Western things, but now we are realizing that our own things are just as good... It is true that playing the violin will raise one’s technique, but it doesn’t have a lot of meaning...” (Hexige, interview, 6 August 2010, Beijing)

“The morin khuur has already developed to a stable level. We don’t need to keep developing it, otherwise it will just transform into the violin. We should work to preserve its flavor and style and then spread it around [so that others will know about it]. Not many other young people recognize [the importance of our traditional

culture]. They think that other cultures are better and that their own music is not good...” (Bayinmenghe, interview 22 June 2010, Beijing)

These statements demonstrate a conscious reflexivity about the past and suggest that many Mongols today believe that musicians should think more critically about pursuing a Western-style or violin-style modernity and instead take a step back and “realiz[e] that our own things...” for instance *urtiin duu* and an overtone rich timbre, “...are just as good” (Bayinmenghe *ibid*).

My Mongol friend Elebuge expressed such an attitude, particularly when he realized that modern morin khuur music has very little meaning to herders in his home community in Shilingol. He states, “When I came home from the city to my hometown in Shilingol [native region for the morin khuur] and played “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” to my grandfather, he said, ‘no, stop! play some long song!’ He was looking for real flavor...” (Elebuge, interview, 20 July 2010, Hohhot).

The implication in my friend’s statement is that “real” Mongol music exists among the herders, those individuals who should have more voice in determining the direction of the music, instead of relying on the superficiality and whims of Chinese audiences to determine how Mongols direct their music (see Chapter Four for an extended discussion of reactions to musical modernity in Inner Mongolia).

While many Mongols express their dissatisfaction with past and current efforts to develop the morin khuur, a very large portion of Mongols today celebrate Chi Bulag and his ability to independently build from the work of his mentor Sangdureng in establishing a solid and viable solo stage tradition for the morin khuur. Working as an innovator in the realms of instrument craftsmanship, pedagogy, technique standardization, composition, and performance, Chi Bulag inspires awe among many in the Mongol music world in China (Ulanji *ibid*; Li Bo, interview, 22 July 2010, Hohhot; Dulan, interview, 20 June 2010, Beijing;

Bayinmenghe *ibid*). Many musicians expressed to me their desire to see *more* individuals like Chi Bulag step forth to become the next generation of morin khuur composers and to develop an even more systematic pedagogy (Ulanji *ibid*; Dulan *ibid*; Cunbule, interview, 11 June 2010, Hohhot; Na Huhe, interview, 14 June 2010, Hohhot; Saqieronggui, interview, 10 June 2010).

Still other musicians take a middle road, between those vehemently opposed to progress and those who embrace it. In one of our conversations, musicologist Siriguleng offers an interesting perspective from his position as a performer, educator, and scholar. I quote his statement here in full for the thoughtful reflexivity in his words:

The problem is, if we want to transmit the traditional exactly, what year should we go back to? 1890? 1891? 1901? If we keep going back, we'll just go back to when we were monkeys. We don't really want to go back to the way everything was in the past. Sure, the wood face changes the sound, but we don't want to have to kill a cow every time we make an instrument. We shouldn't think that everything in the past was good and now everything is bad... Should we stop using cellphones or riding in cars? Should we go back to living in a ger tent? Now there are many choices, we can take the bus or a taxi. The bus is much cheaper and environmentally friendly, but may take an hour. If the morin khuur goes back [to the way it was], there are many inconveniences. For instance, the pegs can suddenly release during a performance. At first, I really believed in social Darwinism, that things progress from simple to complex and that today's morin khuur is the most developed. Later I reversed my opinions and realized that the early morin khuur has some great things. In fact, today's performers really can't play as well as the old recordings. Now I have come back and believe that some things must change. My thought process has been like a swinging pendulum (Siriguleng, interview 18 July 2010, Hohhot).

Siriguleng's thought process demonstrates the kinds of debates that are happening, not only in the Mongol community, but in the internal questioning of individuals themselves as they encounter an increasing array of new ideas and perspective-shifts in the "ideoscapes" of today's global world (Appadurai 1996). Individuals are moving beyond a reflexivity that is forward- and goal-oriented (Giddens 1990) to a reflexivity that seems to shift backward and forwards in time, and of course, sideways in space to the opportunities for transnational

connections across borders. As Siriguleng suggests, again using a metaphor of travel, Mongols today have many options available to them as they seek to get to their destinations. Mongols do not have to take the bullet train to achieve their goals, though it may still be a convenient option and one that affords self-advancement or a comfortable lifestyle.

Unfinished Projects

There are many forgotten narratives of morin khuur reform that have been silenced under the dominant narrative of morin khuur development; a story that began with Serash, continued through Sangdureng, and culminated in Chi Bulag. Instrument reform did not take a single path in China and involved many individuals and experiments that met with varying degrees of approval. Such models include Darma's steel-string morin khuur that, though honored with a prestigious government award, was never accepted by the instrument community (Liu, interview, 26 July 2010, Hohhot). This particular story demonstrates that aesthetic considerations for the "rustling" tone of the bundled nylon strings that the community favored over a timbre even closer to the violin or cello. Many other such experiments took place that were not picked up by the musical community, either due to a lack of acceptance or due to the powerful presence and government support that were accorded to the few individuals whose projects "succeeded."

Even the morin khuur models that emerged from the partnerships described above, though dominant throughout Inner Mongolia, have not been accepted uncritically by the musical community and, as noted above, continue to stir a range of reactions. Today, a majority of instrument makers have shifted their construction methods to match instrument the shape and sound of instruments in Mongolia (See Chapter Five). Another common feature of high-end instruments today is the addition of violin-style c-bouts, the inward

curving waistline that allows the bow to pass through. The traditional trapezoidal shape of these instruments is thus altered to look much more like Western string instruments³² (see Figure 50). Inner Mongols who have concerns with developing the instrument today are thus largely still looking outside their borders, often to the violin for those who seek a modern, Western sound, and even to Mongolian morin khuur instruments for those looking for a modern sound that is, they consider, more “authentically” Mongol than their own version.



Figure 50. Violin-Shaped Morin Khuur with Curved “C-Bouts”

Clearly, musicians, performers, and craftsman have been guided by many factors and concerns, not the least of which is their desires to advance their own careers. Musical decisions are not merely guided through desires for self-expression or for the sake of political messages of ethnic identity or ethnic resistance. The stories of Sangdureng and Chi Bulag above demonstrate the ways that cultural figures in Inner Mongolia attained great measures of power and voice, largely through their cooperation and collaboration with the state. After gaining the trust of Ulanhu, Sangdureng had numerous opportunities and funding to travel and to freely pursue projects of his choosing, such as his commitment to developing soprano, alto, and bass versions of the morin khuur (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot). Chi Bulag has gained prestige to the extent that he now receives extensive support from the government, including funding to build a Chi Bulag International Morin Khuur School in Hohhot.

Both morin khuur reformers were participants in a controlled political climate, but they used their positions as a way to promote new meanings for Mongols as a modern and cosmopolitan people on the national stage. For Chi Bulag, a modernity-equals-stage-power equation was clearly a defining factor in his development of a loud and consistent instrument model and his composition of a technically complex, violin-inspired solo repertoire, each which could attract national attention and promote a modern image for the Mongol people. Such goals may be operating within a Chinese-defined framework of linear progress, yet just like Yao intellectuals have engaged critically in negotiating and authorizing discourses of modernity in China (Litzinger 2000:259), so too have Mongols done so through the morin khuur. Such modernization projects seem to have fit with Sangdureng's and Chi Bulag's desires to be a legitimate presence in the Chinese, transnational Mongol, and international music arenas, and a modeling after Western classical music happened to be the best tool they saw to achieve that goal.

The morin khuur continues to play a role as a nationalized minzu instrument in the PRC. Morin khuur performances are featured at national events, including the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and rows of Chi Bulag's album recordings line the "Chinese traditional music" sections of record stores in China. In 2010, the regional government of Ordos Municipality in the Western region of Inner Mongolia, a region that did not originally transmit the morin khuur, decided to begin manufacturing ten thousand morin khuur instruments in order to fashion the city as the "Morin Khuur Capital of China" (Siriguleng, interview, 7 June 2010). Such a project demonstrates one of the many kinds of ambitious state endeavors to engineer culture for the sake of a beautiful slogan.

The instrument moves in and outside of China today within wide transnational spaces. Chi Bulag's performance at the Golden Hall in Vienna in 2005, the first

all-morin-khuur concert in the world, gave morin khuur players in China the international legitimacy they had been looking for, and demonstrated to the Inner Mongols that their morin khuur is refined enough to play on the same stage as the finest classical musicians in the world. (Chi Bulag, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot) (see Figure 51).



Figure 51. Cover Photo for “Golden Hall of Vienna” CD Album

Several musicians spoke to me pridefully with their desires to help the morin khuur to “spread around the world” (*zouxianq shijie*). Ba Narisu expressed his desire to play transcriptions of violin pieces so that it will be easier for Westerners to understand the morin khuur. Taking a different perspective, Mailasu voiced that, “There may be a day when all cello players around the world will play arrangements of morin khuur repertoire [instead of morin khuur players playing transcriptions of Western repertoire], and that will be the day that we will have achieved success” (Mailasu, interview, 6 October 2010, Hohhot).

Morin Khuur Legacies

In 2007, Chi Bulag received titles of “Transmitter of Cultural Heritage” by the Chinese National Cultural Union and the Bureau of Culture. Ironically, Chi Bulag never saw himself as a transmitter of the cultural past, but saw himself as an innovator and reformer of

new music in dialogue with tradition. His goal has been to discard the “ox cart” of Mongol tradition in favor of modern technologies that might give Mongol music more relevance and practical use in today’s society (see opening statements to this chapter).

Today Chi Bulag is almost equated inseparably with the morin khuur tradition in Inner Mongolia. Musicians approximate that his pieces make up about eighty percent of the Inner Mongol morin khuur repertoire (Ba Narisu, interview, 3 June 2010, Hohhot) and these pieces such as “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” are now considered a new canon of folksongs (Siriguleng 2009:99). Chi Bulag is thus a transmitter of the heritage that he himself creatively generated.

Today tens of thousands of young morin khuur players in China advance through compositions by Chi Bulag, many who go on to successful careers in morin khuur performance.³³ Sangdureng and Chi Bulag profoundly affected the musical landscape of Inner Mongolia and the lives of these thousands of individuals, many who grew up hearing and admiring the music of Chi Bulag. The instrument that these young players use today came about as part of a project of “regional-instrument-made-national” conducted by Sangdureng and Chi Bulag only decades ago.

This chapter describes stories of the coming-into-being of the morin khuur and a staged form of musical modernity in Inner Mongolia. The morin khuur in China is not simply a product of Westernization, as I had considered when I first heard students play their solo conservatory repertoire, but is one of creative adaptation for the sake of national visibility. Sangdureng and Chi Bulag mediated between old and new (cf. Wong 2012), and adapted whatever tools they believed would help them to reach the goal of a successful stage performance.

They engaged in reform and composition to promote themselves and their ethnic group as modern, culturally relevant, flexible, and able to master the “high art” of Western classical music. At the same time, they had the ability to retain aspects of musical Mongolness, such as ornaments, pentatonic scales, drones, and *tatлага* rhythms that connect them to their past. They negotiated a state system that enabled them to rise in status as musical authorities of the *morin khuur*, gave them opportunities to travel abroad, and helped them to insert their creativity into a musical tradition that reveres their names today.

Chapter Four

Inner Mongol Heritage and the Chor Revival

In Chapters Three, I address the roles that Sangdureng and Chi Bulag played in the reform of the morin khuur, particularly as their efforts fit into discourses of musical progress, stage presence, and the need for an instrument to represent Mongols in China. Many Mongols still commit themselves to projects of musical modernization and even today, express strong desires to build on the “success” (chenggong) of Chi Bulag so that the morin khuur might stay in pace with society, advance to the high art status of the violin, or spread around the world (Saqieronggui, interview, 10 June 2010, Hohhot, and many others).

The musical landscape in Inner Mongolia has opened to a range of many views about the future of Mongol music, however. Individuals today have less need to represent Mongols through a powerful and unified presence for the national stage, as did innovators of grassland songs and morin khuur musical forms in the past. In the absence of the strong hand of the state in their musical practices, musicians have greater abilities to exert their voices in the public arena and to exert multiple and conflicting senses of self that range from the individual, to the local, ethnic, national, or even transnational. The case studies in these chapters probe two directions that I found to be the most fascinating and salient areas of for the forming and reforming of musical meanings in Inner Mongolia, namely revivals of the two-string fiddle chor in this chapter and the exchange of morin khuur and khoomii with Mongolia in chapter Five.³⁴

In this chapter, I examine the ways that musicians have celebrated the chor and its sound as a representation of a local and historically rooted Mongolness. I illustrate how, for many Inner Mongols, the timbre of this instrument evokes meanings of their ethnic past, the

richness of their regional culture and folklore, the tragic cultural losses of their history, and the multifaceted dynamics of their position between China and Mongolia.

Celebrating Serash

The year 2007 marked the 120th anniversary of the birth of Serash (1887—1968), a folk musician of the chor fiddle (see Figure 52). After a series of events that year and in the years that followed, interest in Serash and the instrument experienced a profound revival in Inner Mongolia. Events included (1) the commissioning of a bust of Serash in 2007, now displayed prominently at the center of the YSXY campus where Serash worked and taught (see Figure 53), (2) a chor symposium in 2007 of prominent scholars from YSXY who contributed papers on Serash and the importance of the chor and his legacy in Inner Mongolia (published in a bound volume in 2009), (3) two chor workshops in 2007 and 2009 aimed to foster a new generation of chor students,³⁵ and (4) the establishment in 2009 of the Inner Mongolia Chor Society. In 2010, efforts were underway to commission one thousand chor instruments for the inauguration of a chor school at a primary school in Chifeng Municipality.³⁶

This series of events brought attention to the chor as a subject of study in Inner Mongolia and after 2007, several prominent dissertations and scholarly articles have covered topics related to the chor, Serash, and regional music in Khorchin (see Xu 2011). The celebration of Serash and the tsuur in Inner Mongolia sparked interest in the national media, as well.



Figure 52. Serash



Figure 53. Unveiling the Bust of Serash, Inner Mongolia University Art Academy, Hohhot

On my first field trip to China in 2009, I attended a rehearsal for a CCTV television special entitled “The Travels of the Chor” for the program *Folksong China*. As I entered the rehearsal room one of my young contacts led me excitedly to my seat and directed my attention to the chor musician who was performing (see Figure 54). I listened carefully as the player drew his bow across the thick horse-hair strings. Scholars and young performers in the room were gazing with fascination at the performance, listening attentively to a sound that I could barely hear from across the room. The sounds I did hear were so dark and

whispery, and contained such prominent and scattered overtones that I had trouble picking out a core or fundamental pitch.



Figure 54. Burenbayar Playing the Chor at a Rehearsal in Beijing

At the time, I did not know about the recent revival of the chor in Inner Mongolia and made efforts to understand why my musician friends expressed such interest in the sound of this folk instrument, which was so different from quality of the loud and bright-timbred morin khuur.

In the following sections, I trace how I came to understand the chor's new prominence in Inner Mongolia since 2007. I explore how its raspy timbre evokes, for many today in the Hohhot music community, aspects of Inner Mongol history and folklore, complexities of Inner Mongols' regional in-betweenness, and their experiences of cultural loss. While many musicians have used the morin khuur to express an extroverted and future-oriented Mongolness through impressive performances on the concert stage, other musicians have turned the chor for a more subtle, internal, and introverted expression of Mongolness as a means to harness the past and connect themselves to the depth of their regional culture.

The Chor

The chor (chao'er) is a two-string box fiddle from the eastern Khorchin region of Inner Mongolia (see Figure 55 and 56). The term chor in Mongolian means “multiple sounds” and refers to three overtone-centered musical phenomena in Inner Mongolia: (1) the modon chor flute in the west, (2) the *chor-in duu* throat singing style that accompanies urtiin duu in the central region, and (3) the *otosun chor* box fiddle (the subject of this chapter) in the east. Though it lacks a horse-head scroll, the chor is otherwise visually similar in construction to the morin khuur. It has a similar playing posture and a sound box with either an “upright” or “inverted” trapezoid shape (see Figure 55). The traditional chor is typically performed by a khuurch storyteller who plays narratives—including uliger and holboo—epics, and folksongs distinct to the Khorchin region. Many narratives are adaptations of Han Chinese stories translated into Mongolian and substituted with Mongol heroes.

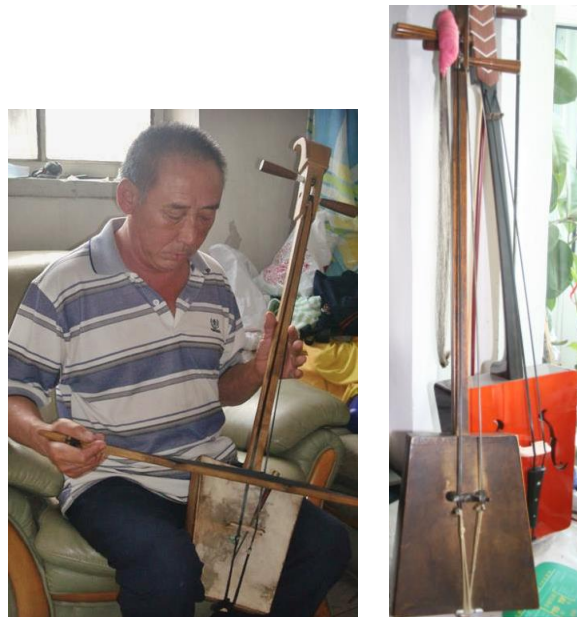


Figure 55. Khuurch Zhalasen Playing the Chor (Left), Surviving Chor Instrument of Serash (Right Front), New Wood-Faced Version of the Chor (Right Back)



Figure 56. Khorchin Region of Tongliao Municipality, IMAR

Due to its raspy, whispery sound quality, the chor was stigmatized by Mongol reformers from the 1950s through the 1990s as a backward and unscientific folk instrument, unworthy of the stage. Zhang Chunhua explained the chor’s first reception as it was played in front of Mao, saying that, “When the chor was played for Mao in Beijing, he complained that only the first three rows could hear it... After all, the chor was really only suitable to be played in a small ger” (Zhang Chunhua, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot). This stage-centric attitude led performers and instrument reformers to bypass the chor in favor of the morin khuur from the 1950s until very recently as a suitable instrument to represent Inner Mongols.

Morin khuur and chor player Erden Bukh describes how his teacher Odkhon Bayer, a deceased chor pupil of Serash and highly revered figure today, was looked down upon in the 1990s. “He was just considered a folk artist who plays out of tune... The chor was not really respected until recently” (interview, 27 July 2010, Hohhot). Players still describe how the chor is “simple,” “easy to learn” and that “there is no way for it to play with an orchestra” (Qian Bayila, interview, 12 June 2010, Hohhot). For many morin khuur players, the chor exists outside their musical preferences for a technically impressive stage instrument.

Today, many Mongolians have found themselves reflecting on the morin khuur’s so-called “musical improvements.” Mongols of many persuasions are moving away from

such an all-encompassing drive toward musical development to appreciate and protect music that they believe is closer to their Mongol roots. Musicians criticize the morin khuur for sounding too modern (Boteletu, interview, 30 July 2010, Hohhot), too Sinified (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot), or “too much like the violin” (Boteletu, interview, 30 July 2010, Hohhot). Criticism is also directed toward young players of the morin khuur, evident through the comment of one professor that, “They [young students] understand technique, but not style. All that’s important to them is playing fast” (Hugejiletu, interview, 1 July 2009, Hohhot). In this new conception of musical value, in which style is prized over precision, the chor becomes a viable resource and antithesis to the morin khuur.

Such sentiments of anti-modernity parallel larger trends in Chinese society and around the world. Around the year 2003 a new term, *yuanshengtai* (literally “original ecology”), became popularized through the Chinese media, largely through its use in Yang Liping’s minority dance extravaganza production *Dynamic Yunnan* (see Yang 2009). Businesses and the tourist industry use this term frequently to label a culture or product (such as milk) as “untouched,” “original,” “pure,” “unspoiled” or “lacking in added influences.” Mongol musicians and scholars use the term *yuanshengtai* to mark music that is connected to its local origins and lacks outside influences such as Westernization, Sinification, and market orientation (*shichanghua*), processes they see as associated with conservatory and popular music styles. Like many contemporary contexts around the world, Inner Mongol musicians have used their local forms of folk music as a means to connect to an imagined pre-modern past (Averill 1994, Austerlitz 1997, Romero 2001, and Turino 2000).

Local folk cultures have been become especially meaningful to individuals as they confront and negotiate the often-alienating effects of urban life and modernity, aspects which are an especially harsh reality in China and the urban center of Hohhot. Mongols are

now engaged in “debating their past” (Romero 2001), both pre- and post-1949, as they reconcile histories of cultural mixing and the losses of language, environment, traditional ways of life, and what many consider to be the essential timbral aspects of their sonic world and musical system (see Chapter One).

As Inner Mongols have begun efforts to revive the chor and the Serash lineage, they have realized the precious few surviving instruments and players with oral repertoire, making the instrument a viable arena for activism, awareness, and preservation by those now concerned with its survival. Many Inner Mongol scholars and musicians now sense an immediate and necessary need to preserve and document the music of a dying generation of folk artists, including the disciples of Serash and other important Mongol musicians. A rising interest in cultural heritage and preservation in China and Inner Mongolia has led musicologists, government authorities, and media producers alike to look outside the professional conservatory system for models of great artists, whom they promote in scholarship, commemorative events, festivals or television programs. Individuals such as Serash, having connections with a long career of folk musicianship, have become important repositories of this so-called dying musical heritage.

Serash’s life story has been interpreted in various artistic climates: from lowbrow folk artist to professional musician to celebrated folk master. Born in 1887 in Khorchin Left-Wing Middle Banner, Serash was already in his sixties at the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Formerly an itinerant lama and performer of narrative songs on the chor, Serash was selected to join the Cultural Workers Ensemble in 1949 and later moved to Hohhot as part of the first cohort of instructors at the Art Institute in 1957. His life follows the trajectory of many folk artists in post-1949 China, including the well-known blind musician Abing (see Stock 1996). Serash followed many other musicians from rural or pastoral areas

into the Chinese institutional system, thereby leaving behind his folk career as an itinerant storyteller and entering the world of the “professional” (*zhuanye*) musician and teacher. Folk artists at this time were considered “musically illiterate and technically inadequate,” while those operating within state troupes and universities gained honor and prestige and established their own solo styles and musical lineages (*liupai*) (Lau 1998:49; Lau 1996a and 1996b). Such an evolutionary conception of music made a clear-cut distinction between the untrained, amateur folk musician and the trained, refined, skilled professional musician.

The *yuanshengtai* movement in Inner Mongolia, as in other parts of China, has turned this hierarchy upside down. Now, those occupying a position on the “folk” side of the “folk—professional” divide gain the highest prestige as cultural transmitters (*chuanchengren*) of important and dying folk arts. Serash has become one of the most highly celebrated figures in Inner Mongolia’s folk music history as a transmitter of one of the “purest” (most *yuanshengtai*) folk chor traditions. His life story has become resignified to emphasize the purity of his chor style, while erasing some of the complexities of his entry as a teacher into the YSXY and more than ten years of residence in Hohhot.³⁷

Sinified Khorchin as Pan-Inner Mongol?

The close association of the chor with the Khorchin region offers another interesting irony in the recent celebration of the instrument. The Khorchin region and its Mongol inhabitants (the Khorchin Mongols) are characterized by their hybridity and high degrees of Sinification. The region experienced waves of Chinese migrants in the twentieth century and cultural and language practices of the Han Chinese and Mongol began to co-mingle. Although Khorchin is home to the largest subethnic grouping of Mongols in China, the Khorchin dialect is considered an inferior pidgin form of the Mongolian language and many

Mongols from the area feel ashamed by their “incorrect” pronunciation and use of many Chinese loan words (Bulag 2003:756).

Khorchin is known, however, for its important ethnic lineage and as a region that produced many important historical figures. The Khorchin claim their ancestry with the Borjigin line of Chinggis Khan through his youngest brother Khasar (Bulag 2002a). Members of the Khorchin nobility had heavy involvement in the building of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and many kept powerful ties to the court until the late eighteenth century (Han 2001). With the establishment of the IMAR capital in Ulanhot, many influential Khorchin subsequently emerged in the early years of the PRC as figures in politics as well as music (Siriguleng, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot). The chor emerged out of this intersection of cultural influences and carries many rich, yet strongly Chinese-influenced musical traditions.

While regional Mongol identities became muted in the 1950s in favor of expressions of national unity and efforts to reinforce the fifty-five minzu paradigm (Mullaney 2010), often through pan-Mongol musical expressions such as grassland songs and the morin khuur, regional Mongol identities have increasingly made their way into representational paradigms of Mongols in China. Television programs spotlight unique regions of Inner Mongolia and even grassland songs address themes specific to certain place-based identities and local landscapes (see discussion of Wulantuoga in Chapter Two).

The chor has distinct regional connections, stylistically and symbolically, to the Khorchin region and this identity seems to follow the instrument wherever it goes in Hohhot today, whether in the media, in a rehearsal space, or in the university classroom. Yet, I found that this regional instrument has transcended its significance as a “Khorchin instrument for Khorchin people” to be a “locally rich Inner Mongol tradition from the

Khorchin region for Inner Mongols.”³⁸ The sections below describe how symbols of timbre and folklore have given this instrument added significance as an instrument that might represent Inner Mongols through shared experiences of history and loss, even if it retains its highly place-based identity in the process.

Chor as History and Folklore

Gada Meiren (1892-1931), the figure, oral epic narrative, and folksong, all have iconic connections to the Khorchin region and the chor. The story, based loosely on historical evidence, tells of the Mongol Gada Meiren who led an unsuccessful uprising in 1931 against the Manchu warlord Zhang Zuolin in order to protect his native home of Darkhan, one of the Khorchin banners of Jirim League (Henochowicz 2011). The events were set in motion after the local Mongol prince sold the banner territories to Zhang and the herders of that land were forced to move out. The herders banded together with Gada Meiren in November of 1929 and organized a small resistance force that lasted until April of 1931 when they were defeated by Zhang’s army (*ibid*). The story is significant for Mongols as a tale of Gada Meiren’s struggles to defend his homeland against the invading Chinese, a theme that resonates deeply with Mongols today who resent Han Chinese presence in their lands today.

Khuurch storytellers transmitted the legendary story through narrative folksongs with chor accompaniment, often lasting hours or even a series of days. The version of the “Gada Meiren” folksong most well known in China is a four phrase melody that is sung strophically to many lines of text. The chor’s connection to this tune, including emotionally rendered versions sung by popular artists such as Tengger and others, provides added

significance to the instrument as a sonic representation of Mongol suffering and loss in China.

The Communists promoted and published their own arranged (*zhengli*) versions of the Gada Meiren story and folksong that highlight the hero's revolutionary struggle against the Darkhan herd-lord and the Nationalist Party (Henochowicz 2011). The story and folksong received attention through a range of other efforts in China, including a symphonic poem, opera libretto, award-winning film, and recent television drama. The semiotic flexibility of the story and its approval by the state makes it an avenue for Mongols to express nationalistic sentiments within an acceptable medium. While Chinese typically consider Gada Meiren a symbol of Mongol-Han solidarity in the battle against feudalism, Mongols understand Gada Meiren as a tragic national hero who fought against Han encroachment on their native lands (Jankowiak 1993, Borjigin 2004, Baranovitch 2009).

In the Gada Meiren folklore and media representations, the chor becomes the oft-embodied medium through which the song and story is transmitted. The sorrowful nature of the chor's sound for its listeners becomes reinforced through its connection to a tragic story, not only of the death of a national hero, but also of the Mongols' loss of their land to the Chinese.

Furthermore, the revival of the "Gada Meiren" folksong and the chor have occurred within the past decade at the same time that Inner Mongol have faced struggles over whether to seek culturally reunion with or ethnic differentiation from Mongols in Mongolia. Khorchin folklore becomes a significant cultural resource for those Inner Mongols who search for heritage that they can claim as uniquely their own. Such hidden associations with history, emotion, and cultural uniqueness have become layered onto the sound of the chor and have increased its significance as a celebrated instrument for Inner Mongols today.

Timbre as Identity

The raspy, overtone-dense timbre of the chor, scorned as backward only two decades ago, has emerged as a central part of the chor's symbolic connection to Inner Mongols' unique heritage and historical losses, and moreover, to their traditional sonic universe. One of my contacts expressed his preference for the sound of the chor over that of the morin khuur saying, "the morin khuur really cannot express our [Mongol] nationality (minzu) like the chor can." For traditionalists, the chor is not only preferred over the morin khuur, but has a "timbral identity" that is closer to an ideal Mongol sound (Xu Xin 2011 and personal communication, 7 March 2012; see also Chapter One).

The loosely tuned horse-hair strings of the chor, combined with a relaxed and subtly nuanced bowing style, gives the musician the ability to bring out or suppress harmonics and to produce a range of timbres that can appear throughout a single melodic phrase. The contemporary morin khuur simply cannot achieve the timbral variety of the chor due to its tightly stretched strings that require pressed, rather than relaxed, bow and left-hand fingering techniques. In the transcription below of the famous chor melody and folksong "Gada Meiren," I show the range of timbral sounds that chor players produce on their instrument. This transcription comes from a restored historical recording of the player Serash, recognized by Mongols as one of the most important inheritors of the chor tradition (see Figure 57).

Musicians describe the chor's timbre through Mandarin terms such as broad (*guangkuo*), rich (*fengfu*), introverted (*neixiang*), and rising and falling (*yonyang*). Many of my contacts referred to the downcast (*dichen*) and sorrowful (*bei'ai*) quality of the chor, a sound that matches the tragic narrative of Gada Meiren. Xu Xin writes that "its unique sound gives

people a grieved, ‘yearning for the past’ feeling and has the ability to make people cry” (Xu Xin *ibid*). The sonic associations of the chor with nostalgia and emotions of sadness come as an antithesis to orthodox minority representations in China. The chor may offer Mongols something that they can use to distance themselves from the colorful and extravagant stereotypes of their ethnicity in Chinese media. Attributing the loud, bright, high-pitched, and refined sound of the modern morin khuur to influences from a Chinese or Western sound aesthetic, certain musicians now cherish the barely audible, dark, low-pitched, and “unrefined” or rough sound of the chor as a profound symbol of their “Mongolness.”

Slow, Heavy, and Stately

~ = small finger hit ↓ = flat pitch ⊙ = soft, whispery timbre ○ = harmonic
 ↑ = sharp pitch ⊗ x = growly timbre ◊ = open overtone sound

Figure 57. “Gada Meiren” Performed on the Chor by Serash

The chor’s tragic sound has come to represent not only the story of Gada Meiren, but the tragic death that Serash and many other Inner Mongol folk aristos experienced at the hands of Han Chinese authorities during the Cultural Revolution. Serash occupies an important place in the chor “mythos” today and in a reinscribed history as a tragic and heroic creative master who never received attention until many years after his death.

Individuals speak of him with great reverence, articulated well by Ulanji’s statement that “There is no music that can surpass Serash’s “Hailong” [one of his most famous

arranged compositions]” (Ulanji, interview, 13 June 2010, Hohhot). In contemporary representations of Serash, his folk purity (*yuanshengtai*) tends to be emphasized over his efforts to be modern. One of his students described his teaching methods, saying “he used only oral teaching methods... he couldn’t even write his own name” (Sayinna, interview, 21 July 2010). Despite his illiterate past, Serash himself was not stuck in the past, but adopted conscious notions of musical progress and improvement. As musicians search for a pure remnant of an Inner Mongol past, however, and seek to fit into heritage discourses in China, they interpret the life of Serash to meet contemporary musical ideals. Spanning two musical eras, Serash is a bridge between Inner Mongolia’s past and present and an important resource for urban Mongols seeking to distance themselves from musical modernization.

These Mongols have now discovered cultural heritage within their own borders that evokes rich history and, for many, can constitute their visions of themselves. Zhang Quansheng attributes the chor’s Mongol identity as coming from its connection to the past and the emotional sensibilities of the ethnic group. He explained, “The chor’s unfolding history and music are emblematic of Mongolian culture. [It is] the instrument that can best represent the deep emotions of the Mongolian people” (quoted in Meng 2009:187). In a contemporary Chinese context in which one must often be loud and colorful in order to be noticed, the chor emerges as a humble and yet deeply profound symbol for many Mongols.

I heard musicians, young and old, describe the transition they experienced as they came to appreciate the chor. Zhang, describes, “When I was eighteen years old, I didn’t understand the value of the chor one bit, and I considered its sound to be too primitive. At that time I played morin khuur and chor and I [attempted] to play in a very Western style. I thought that the more it sounded like the violin or cello, the better... It was only when I was

thirty years old that I realized how beautiful and moving the timbre of the chor is.” (Zhang Quansheng, interview, 21 June 2010, Beijing).

These statements point to the transformation of a whole system of musical values once based on musical advancement that is now shifting toward musical heritage and roots-seeking. Players have become increasingly attuned to the subtleties of chor timbre and sonic identity, understanding that such subtleties can only be learned through repeated exposure and listening, rather than through their accustomed focus on note-reading, intonation, technical precision and speed. In this way, Mongols are conceiving of new ways to listen. Appreciating the chor requires a whole new way, or perhaps an *old* way, of hearing music, which Mongols achieve through a process of attributing and contributing many layers of symbolic attachments to the instrument. Far from departing from modernity, these musicians use the chor as a way to fiercely engage with and bring new modernities into being.

Heated Debates

I found that the chor is not simply a means for expressing oneself as a Mongol in China, but is way to exert status within a complex web of power dynamics in the musical community. Certain Mongols have gained the authority to speak for the instrument and its tradition and thereby have the ability to achieve institutional and social power through the chor. Serash’s disciples and their students carry his legacy at the university today and it is, therefore, not a coincidence that his lineage occupies a central place in the academic canon.

For some, the question of voice and ownership of the chor becomes a sensitive subject. Although many people cherish Serash for his mastery of the chor and the stylistic legacy he left behind, a number of Mongol musicians and scholars point to other artists who

they believe carry equally rich and unique chor styles. Such contentions have stimulated emotional arguments among members of the musical community over “whose chor is the most authentic.”

Another equally significant debate concerns questions regarding the future directions the instrument should take. Musicians argue about whether it should continue to develop or whether it should be honored in its pure and unaltered form. Proponents of development argue that the chor will certainly die out and become irrelevant to society if it does not keep pace with current musical trends (see a stage model of the chor in Figure 58).



Figure 58. Sedeng Playing His Reformed Chor Model

Those argue for the chor’s preservation bemoan that any modernization efforts will make the chor indistinguishable from the morin khuur, changing its very essence. Mongols make extensive and frequent use of paired Chinese-language phraseologies, such as safeguard and develop (*baohu he fazhan*) and inherit and change (*chuancheng yu bianqian*), to describe and position themselves within these polarized debates. The following are a sampling of emotionally charged statements I heard along the safeguarding— development spectrum:

Ethnic instruments MUST develop. Instruments should match the era that we are living in. As long as the instrument still exists, that is good. It means it has kept pace with the times (Darma, interview, 15 June 2010, Hohhot).

The chor needs to change... The morin khuur rose over the chor because the chor didn't develop. The chor will certainly die if it doesn't follow people's needs (Burenbayer, interview, 27 June, 2009, Hohhot).

I oppose their [i.e. those who favor reform] goal to bring the chor to the stage and to make it as good as the West.... I have no problem with instrument reform,... but I disagree with the development of the chor in this way. It is just not suitable (Boteletu, interview, 17 June 2009, Hohhot)

The majority of Mongols will not accept the chor's transformation into something resembling the bright, metallic feeling of the morin khuur (Xu Xin, personal communication, 7 March 2012).

My main concern is that the morin khuur is becoming more and more like the violin and the chor is becoming more and more like the morin khuur. It is fine for instruments to develop as long as they do not develop into another instrument! (Hugejiletu, interview, 1 July 2009, Hohhot)

We should work to preserve the tradition of the previous generation. This young generation cannot really play the traditional styles anymore. When the old generation dies, the tradition will also die. (Saqieronggui, interview, 10 June 2010, Hohhot)

If the instrument is changed, everything about the music is changed (Erden Bukh, interview, 18 July 2009, Hohhot)

Both safeguarding and development are important. We should have some new things while also preserving the old things. There should be many musical options available. (Li, interview, 29 June 2009, Hohhot)

Through the chor, Mongols express intense and heated thoughts about the way that Mongol music should sound and the direction that Mongol instruments should take in China today. In most cases, statements such as those above do not simply raise superficial debates over facts or opinions, but intensely disputed arguments with great implications. The chor become a contested terrain over which Mongols debate not just the meaning of an individual or musical tradition, but also the direction that Mongol culture in China should take in the future.

Returning to my first encounters with the chor described at the beginning of this discussion, I wonder how to precisely unpack the multifaceted dynamics behind my Mongol friends' excitement for the chor. Why might players who, only five or ten years earlier, would have had little interest in the chor now gather around the instrument in rapt attention? I probe a deeper understanding of the changing meanings, layered symbols, and power dynamics surrounding the chor and position this event within a broader context of cultural trends and personal motivations.

I argue that certain Inner Mongols draw upon symbols layered within the chor's sound, such as sadness, historical losses, cultural heritage, and regional uniqueness, as a way to negotiate musical changes and losses of the past six decades. Furthermore, I suggest that the chor enables Inner Mongols to celebrate their untouched cultural heritage *and* their hybridity at the same time and to simultaneously invigorate the diversity *and* unity of Inner Mongolia.

The celebration of the chor and its narrative repertoire, a product of more than a century of Han Chinese and Mongol cultural comingling, may actually work in transforming the often-derided symbol of the rural-Sinified Mongol (Khan 1996) into a source of cultural richness, rather than a source of "pollution." Some Mongols in China may actually find ways to celebrate their in-betweenness and to reconcile their fluid identities rather than rejecting them. The chor and its narrative genres, therefore, become a valid representation of Inner Mongol culture, a resource that they can claim "exists neither in Mongolia, nor in Tuva." (Nars and Bater, interview, 18 July 2009, Hohhot). Such a statement reflects sentiments among many Mongols who desire to prove to wider Mongol worlds, including Mongolia, Tuva, Buryatia, and others (see Figure 10 above for maps of these regions), that

they have held onto something uniquely Mongol and do not always have to seek musical purity outside their borders (see Chapter Five).

A certain segment of Mongols have begun to view the chor, even in its regional associations and connections to a highly Sinified area of Inner Mongolia, as a viable symbol of a pan-Inner Mongolia identity, an identity that becomes especially salient in the context of the relationship between Mongols in China and the country of Mongolia (see Chapter Five).

As China's Mongols are faced with conflicting notions of what constitutes the Mongol "essence" and who owns it (Humphrey 1992, Jankowiak 1993, 50), they conscientiously search for ways to distinguish themselves from the unitary and exclusive definition of "Mongolness" in Mongolia. While symbols associated with "Chineseness" typically provoke loathing among Mongols on both sides of the border, the history of cultural exchange in the Khorchin region is precisely what makes its culture stand out as distinctly Inner Mongol. Speaking with pride for her home region, one of my Mongols friends commented that, "We have certainly experienced Sinification, but our culture is still incredibly rich" (Nahaya, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot). Perhaps this statement, rather than apologetic, may have the potential to be reversed to suggest that "our culture is incredibly rich because we have creatively indigenized outside influences."

A segment of Mongols in China today use the chor to debate and reposition themselves within a history of loss and through their contemporary existence of in-betweenness. These Mongols understand that chor is not just an instrument, but an arena for inter- and intra-ethnic debates, discourses of nationalism, and negotiations with the uncertainties of modernity. The chor, which might be described as weak, soft, and unrefined instrument, has transformed through this revival to symbolize artistic authority, regional heritage, and the heroic strength of the Inner Mongol people.

Chapter Five

Mongol Music Across Borders

In this chapter, I problematize the case of Mongols in China within a broader transnational relationship with Mongolians in the nation of Mongolia (henceforth in this chapter, Outer Mongolians). The preceding chapters of this dissertation focus on Inner Mongols' relationships with the Chinese state (Chapter Two and Three), with Han Chinese (Chapter Two), and inter-regionally with one another (Chapter Four). This chapter focuses on the broader trans-border consciousness that has, for some Mongols, offered inspiration for connecting to a Mongol identity and sense of culture uncorrupted by Chinese influence, whereas for others, has given a palette of materials to borrow from in determining localized and individualized musical expressions.

The historical separation of these two regions, under different styles of communist influence, politics of cultural representation, and adaptation to and assimilation with Russian and Chinese cultural paradigms and populations, has amounted to profound cultural differences and subjectivities in the two regions. How have these differences between the two Mongol regions been perceived, reinforced, or transcended since their national division one hundred years ago? How does music become a site of both rigid exclusivity and flexible boundary-crossing?

In this discussion, I examine two hubs of musical activity that have been particularly touched by flows of culture in and out of Mongolia. In the first, I return to the discussion of the reform of the morin khuur presented in Chapter Three and discuss the role of Mongolia in these reforms, in the past and today. For the second, I examine the energetic, but controversial, drive to import khoodii from Mongolia that began a decade ago and has since exploded into a range of neo-traditional ensemble formations in Inner Mongolia.

Mongol Borderlands and Transnationalism

I understand the Inner Mongol borderland as a dynamic space for the production of new meanings (Rosaldo 1993, Appadurai 1996, Clifford 1997, Donnan and Wilson 1999 and 2010, Koo 2007). The case studies in this chapter shed light on the in-betweenness that has been both a challenge and a resource for Mongols in China as they discover how they want to voice themselves musically. I demonstrate the ways that Mongols in China work simultaneously within the nation, within their own region, and transnationally across borders, as they musically articulate their in-betweenness.

Prasenjit Duara and James Clifford posit alternative approaches to the study of the nation, observing the contested nature of local and transnational narratives of history (Duara 1995) and the fluid, traveling nature of culture (Clifford 1997). For many Mongols in China today, affiliation as Mengguzu ethnic minorities under the Chinese state, no longer offers hope for the future and only serves to remind them of the many losses they have experienced under the Chinese state. Promises of ethnic autonomy have yet to come true in Inner Mongolia and losses of land and language and ever-increasing cultural assimilation make reconnection with Mongolia, culturally if not politically, a tempting goal for China's Mongols.

Mongolia offers a beacon of hope as a purer repository of traditional Mongol culture that might be accessed through musical exchange. Many Mongols I encountered in China spoke of their desires to borrow culture from Mongolia in order to symbolically raise their cultural status and to reconnect with what they consider a truer form of Mongolness.

After years of separation, it has become evident to any who travel across the border that the Mongolians have consciously separated themselves from Mongols in China, who

they label as *Khitad khuun* (Chinese people) and, furthermore, consider Mongol music in China to be polluted and un-Mongol. (Borchigud 1996, Marsh 2009). Since the 1980s, Inner Mongols have come to recognize an ethnocentric attitude among Khalkha Mongols (the dominant-majority ethnic group in Mongolia) that equates Khalkha culture with Mongolian cultural and national identity (Bulag 1998, Han 2011).

Scholar Enze Han writes that “[t]his exclusive construction of the Mongolian national identity based on the core Halh Mongol has effectively shut off the chances for other Mongol people, outside of Mongolia, to be considered as proper Mongols. As a result, many Inner Mongols who were not of the Halh group and went to Mongolia initially with a strong passion of pilgrimage and Mongol co-national-ship faced with great shock and disillusionment.” (Han 2011:71) The transnational, pan-Mongol community that many Inner Mongols imagined and longed for seemed like a shattered dream.³⁹

For a large segment of Inner Mongol musicians in China, the solution to the Khalkha Mongolians’ negative reception of their music has been to emulate Khalkha musical styles in the attempts to rectify their impurity. I describe below how they have borrowed instruments, repertoire, khoomii techniques, and even teachers from Mongolia while sending students there to learn and bring back their knowledge. Everything Outer Mongolian, thus gains prestige as more Mongol and less Chinese.

The discussion that follows situates the ways that Mongol musicians have used the morin khuur and khoomii to negotiate the boundaries of Mongolness. I argue that, on the one hand, many Mongols discard elements from the Inner Mongol musical past in the search for a pure Mongolness outside their borders, on the other hand, others adopt musical practices from outside their borders in order to better express their Inner Mongolness, and for some, their individuality. I show how they have used their music to negotiate the

boundaries of Mongolness—in China as one of fifty-five national minorities distinct from the Han Chinese, and transnationally as a group of Mongols separated from ethnic Khalkha Mongols in the nation of Mongolia.

Morin Khuur Models In and Out of Mongolia

In this section, I look at current trends in morin khuur communities today in which individuals have increasingly sought to reestablish connections themselves to the nation of Mongolia through construction techniques, styles, and sounds of the morin khuur in that region.

The morin khuur took distinct paths in Mongolia and China, largely due to differences in local repertoire and needs to adapt to performance and political contexts in each region. Today's morin khuur in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia have distinctly different timbral qualities due to differences in aspects of body thickness, materials used for the body and tuning pegs, string spacing, construction of the bow, tuning, and finger techniques in each region (see Figures 59, 60, and 61).



Figure 59. Morin Khuur from Inner Mongolia (Left) and Mongolia (Right)



Figure 60. Li Bo Holding Morin Khuur from Mongolia (Right Hand) and Inner Mongolia (Left Hand)

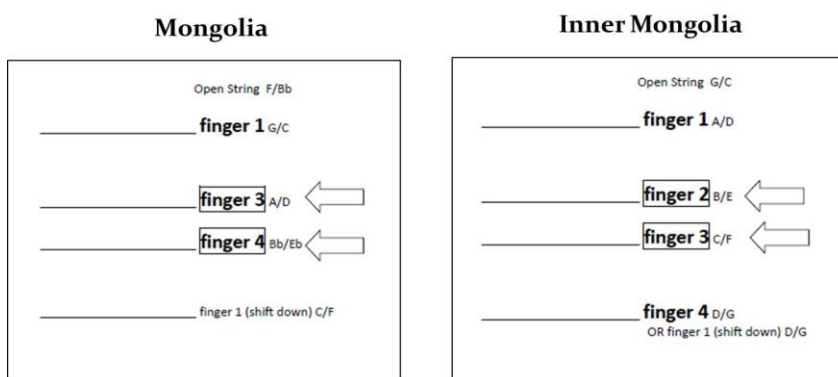


Figure 61. Morin Khuur Fingering Conventions in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia

Chi Bulag's first visit to Mongolia in 1988 became a crucial episode in the recontact between the two Mongolias and, moreover, became an important impetus for both regions to rethink the scope of their own ethnic and musical identities. Reactions to Chi Bulag's morin khuur were not all positive and invoked this exclusivity. Marsh describes the disdain that the Mongolians felt toward the timbre of the instrument, as they described it as having experienced too much Chinese influence, especially in its higher tuning (*ibid* 113-14).

The composer Jantsannorow described the morin khuur he heard on his visit to China as lacking in a "pure horse-head fiddle sound" (*ibid* 115), presumably describing the

brighter, nasal quality and its likely influences from Chinese musical aesthetics. In his statement, the composer evokes an emerging trope of national purity that became common in the 1990s and that privileged Khalkha Mongols, over all other Mongol sub-ethnic groups, as inheritors of the “deep past” of the Mongol people (Humphrey 1992).

Facing such reactions, players in Inner Mongolia now question their own morin khuur model, in its highly standardized form developed by Sangdureng and his pupil Chi Bulag, questions in large part provoked by contact across the border with Mongolia. They have borrowed construction techniques from Mongolia in an effort to model the supposedly “pure” sound of the Mongolian morin khuur as opposed to the pressed, nasal, and bright timbre of the morin khuur in China.

This difference in the instrumental timbre of Chi Bulag’s model, and particularly in the instrument’s high tessitura (tuning height), became a point around which Mongolians staked their claims to an instrument with deeper roots to a true Mongol past. Timbre as a powerful signifier in the Mongolias has been a force that has “represent[ed] and inscribe[d] boundaries” (Stokes 1994:5) to separate the Inner Mongols from the Mongolians, as Mongolians enforce physical and symbolic borders between the two regions.

For Inner Mongols, notions that their culture and music are impure and tainted from Chinese contact strikes deeply at their own fears and insecurities. Inner Mongols today express their anxieties about loss of their physical, cultural, and linguistic territory to Chinese colonization and influences, a process that has been underway for over a century (see Bilik 1998b, Bulag 2003). Understanding themselves as assimilated Mongols, many have reified Mongolia as an imagined homeland and Mongolians there as inheritors of the purist forms of Mongol culture. Connecting themselves with Mongols across the border offers a feeling

of escape from the oppressive influence of Chinese culture and their own minority status, not only in China, but also in Inner Mongolia.

My contacts frequently made comments that expressed their sentiments of Mongolia's cultural superiority, such as "Mongolia has protected original things (*yuanshengtai de dongxi*)," "Culture standards are better in Mongolia," and "Culture in the country of Mongolia has been passed down (*chuanxia lai*) more directly [than in Inner Mongolia]." One contact expressed his anxieties over issues of cultural purity in regards to language loss that has resulted from Mongols' minority status in urban centers: "It is easy to lose one's culture in Hohhot [the capital of Inner Mongolia]. There is about one ethnic Mongol for every 100 people. You can tell just by looking at [babies raised in the city] -- their first words were 'baba, mama' not 'oboo, omoo.'"

Those who construct Mongolia as a cultural mecca use the modern Khalkha morin khuur as a way to reconnect with a truer form of Mongolness, in an ironically different way than the chor enthusiasts in the previous chapter (see Chapter Four). In this way, certain segments of China's Mongols deal with questions of their transnational legitimacy as Mongols by participating actively in musical border-crossing and borrowing.

Today it is rare to find an instrument maker in Inner Mongolia who does not use models and methods of craftsmanship from Mongolia as the basis for their instrument construction. They have incorporated aspects from Mongolia's morin khuur instruments such as a wider body, ability to tune to either the Mongolian Bb-F or the Inner Mongolian C-G tunings, and a warmer, deeper timbre. For Mongols in the solo professional world in the urban capital Hohhot, owning an instrument made in the style of a morin khuur from Mongolia or, even better, and instrument purchased directly from Mongolia, seems to constitute a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993). When I visited in 2009 and 2010 very

few players were using the thinner Chi Bulag model anymore. Mongols in China have felt the scorn from their neighbors deeply, including insults about the Chineseness of their instruments, and many solo performers and instructors are doing everything possible to rectify this relationship gap.

Frequently highlighting and emphasizing the differences between morin khuur in Mongolia and China in this way, today's morin khuur teachers and leaders in the musical community may actually strengthen, rather than break down, conceptual and musical barriers between the two regions. Musicians constantly reiterate how there are two different ways to tune the instrument, two ways to place the fingers on the string, two different finger numberings, two different notation styles, among other aspects.

While some musicians have expressed a desire to collaborate with Mongolia in the creation of a standard pedagogy, tuning, and fingering system, the reality is that the two-system morin khuur pedagogical model remains. Not surprisingly, while Mongolians in Mongolia learn only their own system, Mongols in China become “bimusically” fluent in both (Hood 1971). It is common for students or ensemble members to carry two instruments with them and to switch between them, even on the same musical performance. One morin khuur player explained Inner Mongols' mastery of two styles with pride, saying, “Musicians in the country of Mongolia can only play [Outer] Mongolian styles, while Inner Mongols play both styles” (Dulan, interview, 30 May 2010, Beijing). Morin khuur students thus frequently reconcile two musical worlds, including two distinct systems of fingering (see Figure 61 above) as well as two different ways of understanding the boundaries of Mongolness.

University music departments now employ a sizeable number of morin khuur instructors from Mongolia, each of whom brings with them instruments for their students as well as systems of fingering, pedagogy, and repertoire from Mongolia (Siriguleng 2009). Each year dozens of students from Inner Mongolia enroll in bachelor's or master's degree programs in Mongolia.⁴⁰ Siriguleng describes how the number of compositions from Mongolia increased dramatically in the morin khuur repertoire in Hohhot beginning in 2001 (Siriguleng 2009:99). Mongolia's large body of morin khuur repertoire, much greater contacts say than exists in Inner Mongolia (Saqieronggui, interview, 10 June 2010, Hohhot), has been included in the standard repertoire at institutions in Hohhot, including YSXY, the Music Department at Inner Mongolia Normal University, and many song and dance ensembles (Siriguleng *ibid*).

A number of Inner Mongols have gained rewards from their efforts to musically import and emulate morin khuur practices in Mongolia. During my stay in Hohhot in June of 2010, one of my contacts had just returned from a morin khuur competition, in which he had taken tenth place (Ba Narisu, interview, 3 June 2010, Hohhot). Such accomplishments are not rare among Inner Mongols today and demonstrate their success in learning and mastering the Outer Mongolian morin khuur language. Today's rising morin khuur stars in China are having a strong international presence and may prove a competitive force in the international morin khuur community, potentially offering room to displace the current power hierarchy.

However, indiscriminate adoption of Outer Mongolian morin khuur practices, to the exclusion of Inner Mongol styles, ignores and delegitimizes important aspects of morin khuur reform in Inner Mongolia (discussed in Chapter Three). This limited view erases the efforts of Inner Mongol morin khuur reformers Sangdureng and Chi Bulag and does not

account for the Khalkha Mongols' own desires to "catch up" and emulate the Chi Bulag model in the 1980s.

History of Morin Khuur Exchange

In the 1950s and 60s, Mongolians in Mongolia shared the concerns for adapting the morin khuur to the stage as did Mongols in China. These concerns include aspects of sound projection, maintaining tuning in dry and humid climates, and an ability to blend with other instruments (Marsh 2009:63, 67). Marsh describes how Mongolians used "scientific methods" to "improve" their instruments, terminology that matches with that of the Mongols in China (*ibid*).⁴¹ In 1967, the morin khuur player Jamyan finalized a version of his wood-faced morin khuur, which became the basis for future models in Mongolia (*ibid*). Such clear similarities in musical trajectories and concepts of musical progress in Mongolia and China (see Chapter Three) suggest the common influence of Soviet-style arts policies.⁴²

From 1949 until 1961, while China's relationship with the Soviet Union remained strong, travel between the two Mongolias took place with relative ease. On his visit to Mongolia as part of a cultural delegation in the 1950s, Sangdureng was exposed to many new aspects of instrument construction and technique from Jamyan. Sangdureng was compelled by the side-placed finger technique used in Mongolia and he brought this technique back to Inner Mongolia to replace the lighter and weaker sound of the prevalent top-placed technique. Jamyan's "single-pitched" (*danyin yanzoufa*) melodic style, borrowed from the cello, attracted Sangdureng and he chose to alternate between this technique and the traditional drone- and overtone-based melodic style in his compositions (Na Huhe, interview, 14 June 2010, Hohhot) (see Chapter Three).

Sangdureng did not borrow everything he saw while he was in Mongolia, however, and consciously took his own paths in the development of the Inner Mongol morin khuur. Aspects of tuning (including pitch height), sound quality, fingering, string spacing, and measurements of the morin khuur developed independently in the two regions. Sangdureng was particularly sensitive to the requirements for Inner Mongol folk styles and chose to discard the 1-3-4 cello fingering in favor of the 1-2-3-4 fingering more idiomatic to Inner Mongol ornamentation.⁴³ In this way, Sangdureng saw exchange with Mongolia as a way to gain new knowledge and to connect with Mongolians across the border while feeling comfortable maintaining connections to Inner Mongolia and carving out his own pathways.

Cross-border relations between Sangdureng and Jamyan would have likely continued through the 1960s as the two reformers continued to finalize their morin khuur models. However, by 1963 all Chinese, including Inner Mongols, were expelled from Mongolia. Chi Bulag was one of the first cultural ambassadors back to Mongolia in the late 1980s, after twenty years of almost complete isolation. As described above, the 80s became a period in which the two regions not only reestablished ties, but also observed the changes that had taken place across the borders in the meantime.

Although, Inner Mongol morin khuur players today focus on the Khalkha Mongols' disparagement of their culture for its Sinification, Marsh reveals that, upon Chi Bulag's recontact with Mongolia, feelings of cultural shame went both ways (2009). Marsh illustrates the shock that Mongolians experienced when they heard Chi Bulag's performance in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar (2009). As Chi Bulag graced the stage with his smaller, and more nimble instrument and flashy modern repertoire, the Mongolians experienced an immediate crisis of identity. Marsh quotes from his interview with the fiddle maker Ulambayar, who said to him:

We began to realize that the Inner Mongols had made more progress than us. Those Chinese [Inner Mongols] improved the horse-head fiddle a lot; they rose to another level of development. Being introduced to these players, they made us ask ourselves what is going on? Why did their horse-head fiddle become so much more advanced? Maybe they improved it and we are falling behind. (Marsh 2009:112-13)

This identity crisis moved the Mongolians to continue their own reform efforts and to undertake a process of reclaiming the morin khuur as part of their own national identity (*ibid*:115). Shortly after Chi Bulag's visit, the morin khuur community in Ulaanbaatar organized a Horse-Head Fiddle Center to begin intense efforts to develop the morin khuur and, after a return trip to Inner Mongolia, the renowned Mongolian composer Jantsannorow began the composition of his first horse-head fiddle concerto (*ibid*). Such a surge of activity reveals the full extent of Chi Bulag's impact on the music community in Mongolia and on the development of what became an exclusively Khalkha national identity.

The stories of Sangdureng's and Chi Bulag's visits to Mongolia reveals that cross-border exchange has involved give and take. Sangdureng feel the need to import everything that he learned from Jamyan, nor did Chi Bulag's reception in Mongolia involve only negative reactions. Inner Mongol players today often overlook or erase these complexities in favor of uncritical adoption of the Mongolian morin khuur, perhaps as it offers symbolic escape from the state or from the perceived Chineseness of their Inner Mongol instrument.

In their efforts to borrow and model from Mongolia, Inner Mongols simultaneously participate in de-legitimizing their recent musical past. Their musical adaptations suggest implicit rejection of Inner Mongol music from the past sixty years as somehow "inauthentic" or "impure." Consider a few comments from my Mongol contacts below regarding their disdain for the morin khuur model in Inner Mongolia:

The morin khuur tone color is much too tight. It is better in Mongolia. Their morin khuur instruments there are more ‘true’ [to the past] (zhenzhende). The Inner Mongol instrument is too much like the violin. The situation here today is very chaotic... (Alatengsang, interview, 20 June 2010, Beijing)

Chi Bulag’s choice of the morin khuur tuning was certainly affected by the Chinese environment. You see, in China, they really love high pitches. You can tell even in a restaurant, everyone speaks in high and loud voices, and this is just not the way it is in Mongolia... Mongolian instruments are much more nuanced, emotional, and soft. One of the most unique things is the Mongolian morin khuur’s ability to make animals cry. I wanted to conduct an experiment to see if it would work with an Inner Mongol instrument, so I took it out and played it for the camels, but it just made them run away... (Altendolekh, interview, 9 June 2010, Hohhot).

These sentiments come in tandem with the roots movements described in the last chapter. Like recent chor revivalists, individuals who participate in morin khuur exchange with Mongolia heatedly criticize and cast off the Inner Mongol morin khuur for its Chineseness. Ironically, Chi Bulag’s “Chinese-style” morin khuur that most players reject today was actually part of the force that stirred the Mongolians to launch their morin khuur revivals and discourses of purity in the first place.

There are certainly those Inner Mongols who have expressed doubts about blindly following the Mongolian morin khuur. One of my morin khuur contacts remarked that, “[Most] Inner Mongols are way too concerned with following trends in Mongolia. There are great styles to be treasured in both Inner Mongolia & [Outer] Mongolia” (Dulan, interview, 30 May 2010, Beijing). I observed that many Inner Mongols are now stepping back to appreciate and embrace local traditions within their own borders. For morin khuur players, this has mostly meant turning to the chor as a uniquely Inner Mongol fiddle tradition (see Chapter Four), as well as undertaking efforts to collect and adopt regional folksongs into their music (see below).

Among young Inner Mongol morin khuur players who aim to improve the morin khuur and relations between the two Mongolias, most operate with a pragmatic outlook.

Many players express a wish that Inner Mongolia could support and nurture a new generation of composers who can write for solo morin khuur, such as are found in the nation of Mongolia. Still others express their desires to work across the border to develop a more systematic method of pedagogy such that students do not have such confusion in reconciling two systems. If they haven't already studied or performed abroad in Mongolia, many have plans to do so. It seems that the Inner Mongols are making some headway in easing the tensions between the two regions, at least somewhat, through these efforts at collaboration.

I encountered a segment of Mongols who have engaged in a multifaceted approach to mixing, as they utilize khoomii in Mongolia and Tuva with folksongs from Inner Mongolia and neighboring regions such as Buryatia (see Figure 10 above for maps of these regions). In the next section, I describe the khoomii phenomenon that has taken off in China, the directions that have emerged, and the implications that this movement has for definitions and boundaries of Mongolness in Inner Mongolia.

Khoomii Exchange

Since the early 1990s Inner Mongols have endeavored to import Mongol khoomii—known as throat, overtone, or biphonic singing—a practice that had essentially vanished in Inner Mongolia. Recognizing its value as a prized aspect of Mongol culture and one that they themselves lacked, Inner Mongols again reached across the border to import musical practices.⁴⁴

Disputes over the ownership of khoomii ended in fierce conflict in 2011 after China applied and received UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) status of Intangible Cultural Heritage for the art form. Initiated primarily by

the Chinese and local governments, this UNESCO project has only inflamed Mongolians' resentment toward China and Inner Mongolia and has widened relations between the two region. Most Mongols in China recognize that the *khoomii* they teach and perform came from across the border, and in fact, this is what makes it all the more appealing to them. At the same time, musicians have added their own creative additions and now feel a sense of ownership over their music. Young people have been particularly active as *khoomii* practitioners in Inner Mongolia and have established *khoomii* ensembles as a way to connect themselves to Mongolia while also drawing from local music trends and their own creativity.

Khoomii had all but vanished in Inner Mongolia until the famous and respected *khoomii* teacher, Odsuren Baatar, arrived from the country of Mongolia as a resident teacher in 1993. Until around 2006, Odsuren spent frequent residencies at state troupe institutions in the region's capital of Hohhot. Odsuren became the leader in a *khoomii* revival movement that took off in Inner Mongolia and today many thousands of singers consider themselves proficient *khoomii* practitioners. This flourishing of *khoomii* resulted in China's successful and highly controversial application to UNESCO to designate *khoomii* in China as intangible cultural heritage last year.

During his residency at the Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Troupe beginning in 2003, Odsuren molded the original ten members of Anda Union into a *khoomii* ensemble using the model of groups in Mongolia such as Hosoo Trans Mongolia (see Figures 62 and 63). The group has recently learned *khoomii* techniques from a Tuvan teacher from the ensemble Chirgilchin. Many of Anda's first pieces were direct arrangements of pieces performed by the Mongolian ensemble Trans Mongolia and the Tuvan ensembles Chirgilchin and Huun Huur Tu (see Figure 64).



Figure 62. Anda Union



Figure 63. Hosoo Transmongolia



Figure 64. Huun Huur Tuu (Left) and Chirgilchin (Right)

After Anda took first place in the National Young Singer's Competition, Yuanshengtai (Traditional/Source-Music) Category, in 2008, similar ensemble formations started appearing by the dozens in Inner Mongolia, many of whose musicians perform a

mixture of self-taught Mongolian and Tuvan singing techniques. Musical repertoire for groups like Anda, though incredibly varied, typically consists of arranged folksongs with melodic ostinati, harmonic or drone accompaniment and world-beat drum patterns that emphasize upbeats and rhythmic variation.

Anda’s arrangement of a local folksong from the Eastern Khorchin region of Inner Mongolia demonstrates the mixing of the regional with the transnational in the ensemble’s music. Following a chant-like opening, the first singer presents the folksong melody. He sings with a nasal timbre, yodel-like vocalizations and ornaments, which the Anda musicians describe as having a “thick flavor” (*weidao hen nong*) (see Figure 65)

Lively

Folk Song Melody

5

~ Vocal ornament (like a mordent) ◊ Yodel-like timbre
〰 Prominent rolled "r"s

Figure 65. “Darilacha” Khorchin Folksong Performed by Anda Union’s Wurigen

Following the first presentation of the folk tune, the ensemble members pass the melody from one musician to the next, each presenting different Mongolian and Tuvan khoomii techniques. This demonstrates a conscious process of musical mixing, as a folksong style combines with two unique sets of khoomii traditions and an inventive musical form. Ensemble members play Mongol, Tuvan, and Chinese instruments, including morin khuur horse-head fiddles, a Tuvan barrel drum, a standing Chinese drum, and regional versions of the tovshuur plucked lute from Tuva and the Oirat Mongol tribes of Xinjiang.

Anda’s morin khuur players use both Inner and Outer Mongolian instruments in performance (notice the instruments resting behind the players in Figure 62). They

commission their Outer Mongolian-style instruments from a maker in Hohhot to resemble the larger shape and deep, lower, and resonant sound of Mongolia's instruments. Through their use of instruments from multiple locales, and khoomii styles borrowed from Mongolia and Tuva, Anda connects itself to a larger Mongol, nomadic, and global world. For many khoomii ensembles, transnational connections across the border with Mongolia no longer constitute an end goal. Rather, ensemble musicians express their desires to develop a repertoire of sounds that they can use in new and creative musical inventions.

Another ensemble, Zulu, established in 2007 has taken an especially global and individualistic approach to musical borrowing. In their first album, one of the members introduces the ensemble, saying:

Hello, this is Zulu Ensemble... We are based in Hohhot, and come from a variety of regions and cities of Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. Basing our repertoire on a foundation in Mongol and Tuvan musics, we combine numerous musical styles and generate a new form of ensemble music. In many of our pieces, we fuse elements of flamenco, African music, Buddhist music, rock, psychedelic music, and improvisation. In this way, we integrate ethnic music and modern music together into a mixed sound... You can hear Mongol enthusiasm and passion in our music and a distinctive ethnic quality... We hope our music will give everyone a new experience. Thank you for your support of our ensemble! (translated from the Chinese by the author)

Their self-introduction explains much about their approach to music-making and their positioning of themselves as a group. Rather than concerning themselves with Mongol purity, they instead seek a global savvy through musical combinations of sounds as diverse as flamenco, Buddhist, and African musics. Their statements suggest that the Mongolness of their music largely exist in the spirited "Mongol enthusiasm and passion" of their performances, as well as their Mongol and Tuvan musical foundation. I found this language consistent to my conversations with many Mongol ensemble members in China.⁴⁵

Zulu band members have undertaken their own fieldwork efforts in order to connect themselves not only to music around the world, but also within their own region. Such folksong research endeavors are becoming common among young performers, many of whom may have never experienced folk music outside of the city. A Mongol musician from Beijing expressed his ardent desire to collect rich and unique “Inner Mongol flavors” and “regional styles” (*Neimenggu tese, diqu fengge*) for his ensemble’s new compositions (Hugejiletu, interview, 19 June 2010, Beijing). For many such musicians, Inner Mongolness seems to come best through a rootedness in folksongs with the additions of borrowed musical styles and ensemble formations outside the region. Anda’s band leader Nars summarized this ethos well, “It is important that we create our own musical style and make it distinctly Inner Mongol” (interview, 21 July 2010, Hohhot).

In a surprising turnaround, Mongols in China discuss their growing disinterest in Mongolian *khoomii* in favor of the more varied and *yuanshengtai* (original, unaltered) *khomei* techniques from Tuva. Describing current *khoomii* trends in Mongolia, one ensemble musician remarks, “Nowadays music in the country of Mongolia has become very Westernized. *Khoomii* singers even sing Pavarotti using *khoomii*” (Wuni, casual conversation, 3 August 2010, Chifeng).

Many musicians now confidently challenge the Khalkha Mongols as gatekeepers of cultural purity. My Inner Mongol contacts pointed out ways in which the Khalkha Mongolians are just as influenced by Russian culture as they are of Chinese culture. One contact mentioned, “They use forks and knives in Ulaanbaatar [capital of Mongolia], and so have Westernized faster than us in this sense” (Hugejiletu, interview, 1 July 2009, Hohhot). Another says, “Nowhere in Ulaanbaatar can you find traditional ‘hand-style meat’ [communal meat cut with a ceremonial knife and eaten with the hands] as you can find

anywhere in Hohhot” (Sudebilige, interview, 18 July 2010, Hohhot). Many Inner Mongols criticize Mongolians for their use of the Cyrillic alphabet instead of the traditional vertical script, which has been retained in Inner Mongolia.

Mongols in China recognize the benefits of their advanced economy, enabling them to have safe, comfortable lifestyles, with increasing opportunities to travel nationally and internationally.⁴⁶ While Inner Mongols lament the devastating effects that development has had on their grassland ecology, they concede that Inner Mongolia, having experienced greater economic development, has much lower incidence of street violence and crime than in Mongolia.⁴⁷

Today Mongols in China increasingly move their music in directions that elide their musical unity as *Mengguzu*, a project that drove the musical efforts described in Chapters Two and Three above. Mongol musicians have the ability to invoke symbolic connections to a post-national, trans-border Mongol identity without appearing subversive. After China successfully secured “ownership” over *khoomii* with UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage status in 2011, *khoomii* now appears in the media as a symbol of national heritage, hiding the layered understanding of this art form that Mongols have when they perform it. *Khoomii* can, in the same moment, represent Mongol performers’ desires to shed off their Chineseness and connect with Mongolia, their acknowledgment of trans-border hostilities, their experiences of trans-border friendships with *khoomii* teachers, their new connections and fascinations with Tuva, and their individual creativity in their manipulation of the art form.

Khoomii ensembles have made grassroots efforts to collect, arrange, and sometimes even preserve regional Inner Mongol music traditions. For these musicians, the process of rearranging unique local musical styles in Inner Mongolia constitutes a way to reconnect with

their past and to adapt this music through combination with global styles, such that it can be enjoyed by future generations and around the globe (Hugejiletu, interview, 19 June 2010, Beijing). Young musicians express the importance of preserving the fading traditions within their borders, yet have little qualms about adding outside elements from Mongolia, Tuva, Africa, or other global sounds into their music in order to make their sound appealing to themselves and to a wider market. These musicians have extensive knowledge of and the ability to consume world music over the internet. For these musicians, like many young and globally connected musicians around the world, borrowing becomes just another way of expanding their vocabulary and ultimately harnessing their individual voices.

This chapter demonstrates the ways that Inner Mongols use music to cross borders and reconcile a position of in-betweenness. As they have come to grip with their Chineseness in the eyes of the Khalkha, Mongols in China have needed to step back to look at the fuzziness of their identity, which they realize is neither Mongolian nor Chinese. Mongols have arrived at several shifting musical responses to this transnational identity crisis. Some have directly modeled themselves on musical practices in Mongolia, seeking to establish themselves through a model of Mongolness that never received influences from Chinese culture. Others have made efforts to extend the radius of the Mongol ger tent to include all nomadic lands in a larger pan-Mongol (or pan-nomad) musical system. Finally, a large segment of young people has begun to exert themselves as creative individuals with links to both Inner Mongolia and a global soundscape of musical practices at their disposal. In each of these cases, Inner Mongols understand themselves outside the state and the fifty-five minzu (ethnic minority) system. For most urban Mongols today, transnational exchange offers freedoms to explore and shift between many different strategies of self-positioning and opportunities for empowerment outside the boundaries of the state.

Chapter Six Conclusion

The case studies in this dissertation examine how Mongol musicians past and present, have synthesized, reconceived, transgressed, and even enjoyed the fuzziness of the realities in which they live. Their existence between musical worlds, Chinese, Mongol, and Western, offers room for creative musical merging and as Mongols navigate and project self and group representations. Through musical activities—grassland song composition and performance, morin khuur reform, revival of the chor, and musical exchange across the border—Inner Mongols have creatively negotiated boundaries of their ethnicity within the context of the Chinese state and with Mongols outside of China.

Musicians in Inner Mongolia are faced with many questions about their own legitimacy as Mongols, assimilated with Chinese culture. I found that dilemmas about the boundary, scope, ownership, and future of Mongol music became a source of anxiety for Mongols, but also a source of motivation to action.

This dissertation investigates how individuals become empowered through music to solve the dilemmas of their in-betweenness and to position themselves strategically and with a powerful presence on national and transnational stages.

In Maoist China, music became an important part of the reordering of the Mongol world and restructuring how Inner Mongols conceived of themselves within the Chinese nation. Mongol musicians at this time had ideological, pragmatic, and personal reasons for enacting musical change. Participating in projects of nation building and discourses of musical progress, Mongols such as Meiliqiige, and Sangdureng realized the practical need to package Mongol music for the concert stage. Grassland songs were adapted the regional diversity of Mongol music in favor of a standard pan-Mengguzu vocal form sung in

Mandarin and achieved widespread success and canonized status as a national art form. The morin khuur was adapted to be a loud, standardized, virtuosic stage form that dazzled audiences and demonstrated that Mongols have the capacity to master the language of European classical music and modernity. Through these efforts, musicians of both musical forms had the ability to advance their careers and to gain government trust to pursue further creative works.

In post-Mao China, today's Mongols have the freedom to look outside state projects of nation building and many more individuals have had opportunities to direct the course of Mongol music than had in the past. The result is a myriad of different voices and opinions simultaneously exerting different conceptions of what the Mongol musical future should be like. Progress-oriented longings are tempered in Inner Mongolia today by those who see a more complex and shifting reality and who seek to understand the past, future, and transnational scope of their ethnicity. Inner Mongols use music today to appreciate their regional heritage and to develop an understanding of a shared history and experience at the same time.

Music, in each of these cases, remains at the center of discourses about Mongolness. A place like Inner Mongolia is far from peripheral to discussions of modernization, heritage discourses, and creativity and can provide a telling story about how a people at the national peripheries becomes the center of discussions about ethnicity and group boundaries.

I end this work by describing the continued struggles that Inner Mongols face today as they negotiate policy changes and their minority status in China. I suggest that despite the seeming powerlessness that Inner Mongols encounter through state projects, they continue to use music as a symbolic resource and a way to work out their unique experiences as

Mongols, and as individuals, in China. This chapter concludes by proposing topics for future research on music in Inner Mongolia.

Mongols in China experience a range of anxieties that influence their musical actions today, including the harmful effects of environmental degradation, language loss, and shifting minority policies within their own borders. Today in China herders are blamed for land degradation and many are moved en masse off of their land through environmental resettlement programs (Dickenson and Webber 2007), significantly impacting their cultural and musical connection to their native land. Urban Mongols face significant anxieties about the rapid pace at which they are losing their language (see especially Bilik 1998a, Bulag 2003 and 2010a) and continue to have fears about their assimilation into Chinese culture. As the last chapter demonstrates, Mongol assimilation to urban Chinese society has come in to focus and has become a source of humiliation when Mongols travel across the northern border and discover fully the extent of their own Chineseness.

Mongols today fear that their preferential treatment as a *minzu* (nationality) may give way if Chinese chooses to depoliticize *minzu* and adapt a concept of *zuqun* (ethnic group) that, according to sociologist Ma Rong, would decrease the viability for ethno-nationalist movements (Ma 2004; see also Bilik 2007 and Bulag 2010a). The political consequences of the transition to a *zuqun* model would be Mongols' loss of rights for a second child and the elimination of affirmative action for college entrance and official positions.

Describing the unstable nature of Mongols' reality in China and the necessity for creative solutions, Bulag writes that "the life world of the Mongols is constantly shifting; the survival of the Mongols demands flexible tactics, if not grand strategies, and it requires that the Mongols comprehend all the forces around them, near and far, affecting their fate..." (2010b:12). The stories above demonstrate the way that Mongols creatively use music to put

their “flexible tactics” and “grand strategies” into action. Music has offered a productive and active solution for Mongols to ease their anxieties and to perform and promote alternative realities.

The accessible nature of music has meant that any Mongol, regardless of whether they were raised in urban Beijing or pastoral Shilingol, can learn to “be Mongol” through musical expressions. In this way, music, more than language and environment, has been a steady and readily available symbolic resource despite the loss of the others. Music for most of these Mongols is anything but peripheral and is instead central to framing how they understand themselves and in motivating them to action.

Music does not mean the same thing or serve the same function for all people. The case studies above demonstrate that Mongols do not always see their situation as one requiring struggle. For many Mongols, music can be a road to their own advancement in the political hierarchy that can afterward become an avenue for creative freedom. Such a status is reserved for those fortunate enough to rise as powerful musical elites in China, which often meant being skillful in negotiating politics, including skillful musical and linguistic abilities to communicate with the Han in their musical and verbal languages**, but also being in the right place at the right time.

For others who do not have this fortune, music may be a way to exert alternative discourses or for some, a way to just “mak[e] sure that they are fed at the end of the day” (Zhang, interview, 21 June 2010, Beijing). These musical subjectivities and pathways sometimes seem as numerous as the Mongol population itself. I again quote from Uradyn Bulag who astutely writes that “Inner Mongol” should not be “a voiceless category in a binary relationship with the Chinese and within China alone,” but “as internally divided, with factions interacting with other players within and without China...” (2010b:11).

Musicians' recent efforts to embrace music within their borders demonstrate how, consciously recognizing the effects of Sinification on their music, some musicians today see their cultural in-betweenness as a resource, rather than a humiliation or a liability. Inner Mongols have begun to ask more questions about what Mongolness is exactly and who counts as a Mongol. Should they abide by others' definitions—namely the Chinese state, Mongolians in Mongolia, or the prominent elite Mongol musicians in China who have historically determined representational tropes of Mongolness? Should they care what it means to be Mongol at all, particularly in an era where many simply want to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle and express themselves as individuals?

Ethnic fuzziness has and continues to complicate the formation of a solid and unified on-the-ground, as opposed to a national, Mongol identity. With the majority of China's Mongols coming from Sinified, semi-agricultural backgrounds—aspects that pose a problem in establishing cultural uniqueness from the Chinese majority—the unified representation of Mongols as a grassland herding people has served as an imaginary reality (Khan 1996), often positioning the very Mongols who chose those representations on the margins of this Mongolness. The existence of many “adopted” (my term) Han individuals in the Mongol music community is also a testament to the flexible nature of their ethnic consciousness. The memorial service in 2011 for the female Han composer Xin Huguang, the composer of the first morin khuur concerto and mother to the famous Mongol musician Sanbao, brought out prominent members of the Mongol music community including Tengger and prompted an outpouring of grief from Mongols in China (Wulashan 2011).

The meaning of Mongolness continues to be complexified in a Chinese climate that celebrates Mongol culture through imaginings of shared history, but also ethnic differences. The government continues to co-opt Chinggis Khan as a Chinese national hero who

defeated Europe in a great “Chinese racial victory” (Bulag 2002a; see also Khan 1995, Borchigud 1996, Bulag 2010b), thereby positioning the strength of the Mongol people as representative of the strength of the Chinese nation. At the same time, many Han Chinese have begun looking to Mongols as a people worth emulating for the external qualities they perceive themselves lacking, including masculine vigor, prowess and bravery in battle, and their hearty ability to withstand nature. The recent surge in popularity of works such as Jiang Rong’s novel *Wolf Totem* (2008) and other memoirs of sent-down-youth in Inner Mongolia, demonstrates a Han imagination that works out understandings of themselves through contrast with the other, in this case the Mongols (see Pan 2006). A study of Mongols in China tells us much, not just about the Mongols, but also about the Chinese. This study is in part, an opportunity to examine the “evolving ideological contours of China” in which Mongols have been positioned, and have positioned themselves, since the establishment of IMAR in 1947 (Bulag 2010:28).

This dissertation leaves room for much exciting research to be conducted in the future. Topics of music and gender are absent from this dissertation and play a strong role in structuring how Mongols see their music in their own lives and community and in the context of the nation. There is much work to be done on the mutual influences and interactions between Chinese and Mongol music cultures throughout history and I am grateful that some scholars have already taken up this call (see Gibbs 2009). Scholars in China are actively pursuing studies of isolated regional music cultures in Inner Mongolia, and such projects among the many isolated pastoral, semi-pastoral, and rural music cultures of Inner Mongolia bring a more complete picture of this region into being and should be translated and also pursued by English-language scholars.

There is an unfortunate paucity of exchange between music scholars in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia and, with increasing cooperation today, research that ties these two regions together will better represent these territories as a cultural gradient rather than isolated, bordered regions. Such work between regions has been conducted extensively by Carole Pegg (see especially 2001, 1989), but will benefit from further cross-border collaboration between native and English-language scholars who work in each region. Theodore Levin and Valentina Süzükei have offered contributions to the study of nomadic music cultures and connections to the natural environment (Levin and Süzükei 2006) as well as Jennifer Post in her studies of the Kazakh plucked lutes (Post 2007). Many scholars have looked at the devastating effects of land policies and degradation on culture in Inner Mongolia (Williams 1996 and 2002, Jiang 2006, Dickinson and Weber 2007). There is room for research on the musical effects of environmental destruction in Inner Mongolia, and moreover, the creative and productive responses that musicians have taken as they work through the destruction of their natural world, a world they consider intimately connected with their music.

Musicians have also come to grips with their own significant internal diversity—in factors relating to historical experiences, socio-economic modes of life, linguistics, national sentiments, degrees of Chinese assimilation—that make ideas about the future of music in Inner Mongolia not a unison sentiment, but a wide texture of polyphonic debates.

Mongols today continue to pose highly reflexive questions about the future of their music, particularly faced with questions of environmental and linguistic loss and the viability of their connection with Mongolia. As Zhang reflected to me, “We are supported by an outstanding ethnic group... Now it is time to ask new questions, such as ‘What is our musical identity?’ and ‘How do we want the world to know us?’ We need to take a look at

our souls, not take a step back...” (Zhang, interview, 21 June 2010, Beijing). I am excited to see what directions Inner Mongols choose to take their music in the next decade and how they will continue to reexamine and reinterpret their past.

This dissertation offers one possible starting point to understand how Mongols use music to articulate a variety of complex subjectivities: as Mongolians living on the Chinese borderland, as musicians engaged with a difficult balance between tradition and modernity, and as Inner Mongols reconciling their local identities in a globalized world.

Appendix A. Population Data

PRC Population 2010¹
1.34 billion TOTAL
1.23 billion Han (91.5%)
5.8 million Mongol (0.47%) (8th Largest Minority After: Zhuang, Manchu, Uyghur, Hui, Miao, Yi, Tujia)

IMAR Population 2010²
24,706,321 TOTAL
3,995,349 Mongol (17.13%)

Hohhot Population 2010³
2,866,615 TOTAL
204,846 Mongol (8.56%)
2,498,541 Han (87.16%)
(1:12 Mongol:Han)

Distribution of Mongols in China⁴
68.72%: Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
31.28%: Outside Inner Mongolia (1.8 million)
11.52%: Liaoning Province
2.96%: Jilin Province
2.92%: Hebei Province
2.58%: Xinjiang Autonomous Region
2.43%: Heilongjiang Province
1.48%: Qinghai Province
1.41%: Henan Province
5.98%: Rest of China

¹ China National Bureau of Statistics. 2011. "Communiqué of the National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China on Major Figures of the 2010 Population Census[1] (No. 2)." http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents/t20110429_402722516.htm (Accessed: April 2013).

² *ibid.*

³ Inner Mongolia News Online. 2011. "Huhehaote Shi 2010 Nian -- Diliuci Quanguo Renkou Puchao Zhuyao Shuju [Hohhot 2010 -- Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China]." <http://inews.nmgnews.com.cn/system/2011/06/13/010607482.shtml> (Accessed: January 2013).

⁴ China Department of Economic Development. 2003. *Tabulation on Nationalities of 2000 Population Census of China*. Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe.

Appendix B: List of Famous Grassland Songs

"The Rising and Never-Setting Sun in the Grasslands" (1952)	《草原上升起不落的太阳》
"Meeting at the Aobao" (1953)	《敖包相会》
"Shilin River" (1955)	《锡林河》
"Building an Iron and Steel City on the Grassland" (1958)	《草原上建起钢铁城》
"Grassland Morning Song" (1959)	《草原晨曲》
"Song of Praise" (Part of the "East is Red" Epic Suite) (1964)	《赞歌》
"The Beautiful Grasslands are My Home" (1977)	《美丽的草原我的家》
"For the Sake of an Even Finer Grassland" (1981)	《为了草原更美好》
"I am a Little Grassland Rider" (1981)	《我是草原小骑手》
"There is a Beautiful Legend of the Grassland" (1982)	《草原上有一个美妙的传说》
"The Beautiful Grassland Dusk" (1984)	《草原夜色美》
"Grassland Love" (1985)	《草原恋》
"I Come from the Grassland" (1987)	《我从草原来》
"I Was Born on the Grassland, I Found Love on the Grassland" (1989)	《生在草原恋这草原》
"I Long for the Grassland" (1993)	《我思念草原》
"Blue Mongol Grassland" (1997)	《蓝色的蒙古草原》
"Father's Grassland, Mother's River" (1997)	《父亲的草原母亲的河》
"Grassland Feeling" (1997)	《草原情》
"Mongol" (1997)	《蒙古人》
"Where are the Grasslands?" (1998)	《草原在那里》
"Beautiful Menggubao (Yurt)" (200?)	《美丽的蒙古包》
"Heaven" (2000)	《天坛》
"Great Hulunbuir Grassland" (2000)	《呼伦贝尔大草原》
"Horizon" (2001)	《天边》
"I Have a Meeting with the Grassland" (2001)	《我和草原有个约定》
"Grasping the Hand of the Grassland" (2002)	《牵手草原》
"Cheers to Inner Mongolia" (2003)	《为了内蒙古喝彩》
"I'll Take You to the Grassland" (2005)	《陪你一起看草原》
"This Grassland" (2006)	《这片草原》
"Three Lucky Treasures" (2006)	《吉祥三包》
"How Big is the Grassland" (2007)	《草原有多大》

Appendix C: Grassland Song Lyrics

“The Sun in the Grassland Rises Never to Go Down” (1952)

《草原上升起不落的太阳》

Chinese Lyrics and Music by: Meiliqige 美丽其格

蓝蓝的天上白云飘
白云下面马儿跑
挥动鞭儿响四方
百鸟齐飞翔。

White clouds float in blue sky,
Under the white clouds horses gallop
Waving whip sounds all around,
A hundred birds hover together.

要是有人来问我
这是什么地方？
我就骄傲地告诉他
这是我们的家乡。

If people ask me,
What place is that?
I proudly tell them:
This is our home.

这里的人们爱和平
也热爱家乡
歌唱自己的新生活
歌唱共产党。

People here love peace,
And have deep love for their native land
They sing about their new lives,
They sing about the Communist Party.

毛主席啊共产党
抚育我们成长
草原上升起
不落的太阳。

Chairman Mao, ah! The Communist Party!
They are bringing us up to maturity,
The sun in the grassland rises
Never to go down....

English Translation by Nimrod Baranovitch

“Father’s Grassland, Mother’s River” (1997)

《父亲的草原母亲的河》

Composed by: Wulan Tuoga 乌兰托嘎

Chinese Lyrics by: Xi Murong 席慕容

父亲曾经形容草原的清香

让他在天涯海角也从不能相忘。

母亲总爱描摹那大河浩荡

奔流在蒙古高原我遥远的家乡。

如今终于见到这辽阔大地

站在芬芳的草原上我泪落如雨

河水在传唱着祖先的祝福

保佑漂泊的孩子,找到回家的路

啊! 父亲的草原

啊! 母亲的河

虽然已经不能用不能用母语来诉说。

请接纳我的悲伤我的欢乐

我也是高原的孩子啊!

心里有一首歌

歌中有我父亲的草原母亲的河

Father once described the scent of the
grassland.

Even living worlds apart, it helped him to
never forget that place.

Mother always loved to depict the onrushing
of the river

That flows on the Mongol grasslands, my
distant homeland.

I finally had the chance to experience this vast
land;

My tears fell like rain as I stood on the
fragrant grassland;

The singing of the river passes down blessings
of the ancestors;

To bless and protect this aimlessly drifting
child, who found the road home.

Ai! Father's grassland,

Ai! Mother's river;

I cannot, cannot even tell this story in my
mother tongue.

Please accept my sorrow and joy;

I am a child of the grassland!

My heart has a song;

My father's grassland and my mother's river
are in this song....

English Translation by the Author

“I'll Accompany You to the Grasslands” (2005)

《陪你一起看草原》

Arranged by: Lü Xuedong 乌兰托嘎

Chinese Lyrics by: Duan Qingmin 段庆民

因为我们今生有缘，
让我有个心愿：
等到草原最美的季节，
陪你一起看草原。

去看那青青的草，
去看那蓝蓝的天，
看那白云轻轻的飘，
带看我的思念。

陪你一起看草原，
阳光多灿烂。
陪你一起看草原，
让爱留心间。

因为我们今生有缘，
让我有个心愿：
等到草原最美的季节，
陪你一起看草原。

去听那悠扬的歌，
去看那远飞的雁，
看那漫漫长长的路，
能把天涯望断。

陪你一起看草原，
草原花正艳。
陪你一起看草原，
让爱留心间。

Because we are fated to be together,
Let me make one wish:
Let's wait until the most beautiful season,
And I'll accompany you to the grasslands.

We'll see the green, green grass,
We'll see the blue, blue sky,
We'll see the white clouds lightly floating,
And carrying my thoughts away.

I'll accompany you to the grasslands,
The sun is so brilliant there.
I'll accompany you to the grasslands,
So that love will stay in our hearts.

Because we are fated to be together,
Let me make one wish:
Let's wait until the most beautiful season,
And I'll accompany you to the grasslands.

We'll hear that melodious song,
We'll see the geese flying away,
We'll see the long and boundless roads,
Where we can gaze to the far corners of the earth.

I'll accompany you to the grasslands,
The flowers are so colorful there.
I'll accompany you to the grasslands,
So that love will stay in our hearts.

English Translation by the Author

Appendix D: Grassland Song Menu

Mongol Holiday Village (Mengguren Dujiacun) Tour Site (est. 1987)
Xilamuren Grasslands, Baotou Municipality

Songs available for lunch performances or karaoke, provided by onsite ensemble
(keyboardist, singers, dancers, and morin khuur players)



Figure 66. Song Menu Cover

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| 1、向着太阳 | 2、美丽的草原我的家 |
| 3、草原夜色美 | 4、牧人的情怀 |
| 5、蓝色的故乡 | 6、蓝色的蒙古高原 |
| 7、草原在哪里 | 8、草原上兴起不落的太阳 |
| 9、山歌好比春江水 | 10、自由飞翔 |
| 11、坐上火车去拉萨 | 12、遇上你是我的缘 |
| 13、陪你一起看草原 | 14、我和草原有个约定 |
| 15、我不想说再见 | 16、康定情歌 |
| 17、帅哥哥 | 18、桃花运 |
| 19、牵手草原 | 20、乌兰巴托之夜 |
| 21、驼羔之歌 | 22、草原情 |
| 23、牧场飘香 | 24、家乡 |
| 25、长调情 | 26、月亮之上 |
| 27、青藏高原 | 28、雕花的马鞍 |
| 29、赞歌 | 30、献给阿妈的歌 |
| 31、父亲 | 32、母亲 |
| 33、妈妈的羊皮袄 | 34、草原恋 |
| 35、骏马奔驰保边疆 | 36、草原之夜 |
| 37、天堂 | 38、蒙古人 |
| 39、嘎达梅林 | 40、天边 |
| 41、吉祥三宝 | 42、草原迎宾曲 |
| 43、敖包相会 | 44、草原牧歌 |
| 45、为内蒙古喝彩 | 46、高原红 |

Figure 67. Mandarin-Language Song Selections



Figure 68. Other Song Selections (From Top to Bottom: Pop Songs in the Mongolian Language, Long Songs, Dance Pieces, Morin Khuur Pieces, Khoomii)



Figure 69. Ensemble Keyboardist

Appendix E. Full Score for “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses”

Ten Thousand Horses Galloping 万马奔腾

Composer: Chi Bulag 齐·宝力高

Accompaniment: Du Zhaozhi 杜兆植

Performers: Wild Horse Ensemble 野马乐队

Vivace ♩ = 230

Morin
Khuur

Piano

p *ff*

g drone

5

8

g drone

11

c drone

poco a poco cresc.

The musical score is written for Morin Khuur and Piano. The Morin Khuur part is in the upper staff, and the Piano part is in the lower staff. The score is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and tempo of Vivace (♩ = 230). The piano part begins with a *p* dynamic and a *ff* dynamic. The score includes performance instructions such as 'g drone' and 'poco a poco cresc.'.

13 *c drone*

Musical score for measures 13-14. The right hand plays a continuous eighth-note drone on the C string. The left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes and chords.

15 *spicatto* *c drone*

Musical score for measures 15-16. Measure 15 features a spicatto effect on the right hand. Measure 16 returns to the c drone. The left hand continues with its rhythmic accompaniment.

17

Musical score for measures 17-18. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs. The left hand continues with its rhythmic accompaniment.

19

Musical score for measures 19-21. The right hand plays a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs. The left hand continues with its rhythmic accompaniment.

22 *g drone* *c drone*

Musical score for measures 22-23. Measure 22 features a g drone. Measure 23 returns to the c drone. The left hand continues with its rhythmic accompaniment.

25

Musical score for measures 25-26. The system consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 25 features a rapid sixteenth-note run in the treble staff, with a dotted line above it. The grand staff provides harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Measure 26 repeats the treble staff pattern with a double bar line and repeat dots.

27

g drone

Musical score for measures 27-28. The system consists of three staves. Measure 27 continues the sixteenth-note run in the treble staff. Measure 28 features a 'g drone' indicated by a circled 'g' above a note in the treble staff. The grand staff accompaniment changes to a more rhythmic pattern. Both measures end with a 6/4 time signature.

29

Musical score for measures 29-30. The system consists of three staves. Measure 29 shows a change in the treble staff to a slower, eighth-note melody. The grand staff accompaniment features chords and moving lines. Measure 30 continues this melody. Both measures end with a 5/4 time signature.

31

hammered ricochet

ricochet

spicatto

spicatto

Musical score for measures 31-32. The system consists of three staves. Measure 31 features a 5/4 time signature and a treble staff with a 'hammered ricochet' and 'spicatto' marking. Measure 32 features a common time signature (C) and a treble staff with a 'ricochet' and 'spicatto' marking. The grand staff accompaniment is sparse, with some chords and rests.

34

Musical score for measures 34-35. The system consists of three staves. Measure 34 features a treble staff with a long, sweeping sixteenth-note run. The grand staff accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. Measure 35 repeats the treble staff pattern with a double bar line and repeat dots.

36

Musical score for measures 36-37. Treble clef has a continuous eighth-note melody with slurs. Bass clef has a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

38

g drone

Musical score for measures 38-39. Measure 38 has a repeat sign. Measure 39 has a "g drone" annotation above a sustained note in the treble clef.

40

Musical score for measures 40-41. Measure 40 has a repeat sign. Measure 41 has a melodic phrase in the treble clef.

42

spicatto

Musical score for measures 42-43. Measure 42 has a repeat sign. Measure 43 has a "spicatto" annotation above a staccato eighth-note melody in the treble clef.

44

Musical score for measures 44-45. Measure 44 has a repeat sign. Measure 45 has a melodic phrase in the treble clef.

46 slide gradually in thirds while bow tremolos

48

50 ricochet ricochet

52 Morin Khuur slide from opposite side of the neck

55 (same)

6

58

62

64

ricochet

66

68

ricochet

Notes

- ¹ The Mongols I met in Hohhot and Beijing had a strong sense of their Mongol distinctiveness in their everyday lives, particularly as they negotiate Han-majority urban landscapes. Such distinctiveness came out in their choice of friend communities, mannerisms, careers, food and drink preferences, clothing, and other parts of their daily life. Mongols “perform” these aspects of their ethnicity within their own communities in a much different way than they do for cultural outsiders in tourist contexts or on television.
- ² These genres are also sometimes categorized as short songs.
- ³ Siriguleng referred to this technique, characterized by its double stops and slides to harmonics, as “boldt dardlukh,” a term that I have not seen elsewhere and so attempted to transliterate based on my hearing of his pronunciation.
- ⁴ I am fortunate to have had opportunities to visit regions in western Ordos and central Shilingol, as well as the eastern region of Chifeng and the northeast region of Hulunbuir. I strongly regret that I did not have the opportunity to go to Khorchin, Professor Boteletu’s hometown, but have gained much from hearing about this region from him and many other contacts and friends from this region.
- ⁵ The “three small minorities” are officially recognized as separate minzu (ethnic minorities) from the Mongol ethnic group (Mengguzu).
- ⁶ Most cellists are sensitive to what is referred to as “wolf tones,” sounds that are produced when the string vibrates widely enough that it emits a growly sound. Most cellists keep a dampener on the far side of the bridge that is designed to lessen the frequency of these undesirable tones.
- ⁷ Arranging these trips to the grasslands was not easy. Isolated grassland locations are difficult to reach and nearly impossible to find without the help of locals. I was fortunate enough to meet people who were willing to take me on trips back to their hometowns, on tours, or on fieldwork trips, though I had to be ready to drop everything once these opportunities arose since my Mongol friends did not plan these trips far in advance.
- ⁸ Recognized grassland singers include Dedema, Tengger, Han Lei, Qi Feng, and many others.
- ⁹ I express deep gratitude to Professor Daniel Kwok from the University of Hawai’i for his assistance in connecting me with Wulantuoga laoshi.
- ¹⁰ Lanye is not unique in their performance of rock arrangements of songs from the grassland song canon. Another notable rock band that has arranged rock-style grassland songs is the popular band Black Steed (Heijunma).
- ¹¹ Mongol grassland songs have surprising similarity with *bapa haole* songs in Hawai’i. These English-language songs, such as “Little Brown Gal,” “Tiny Bubbles,” and “My Little Grass Shack,” were performed from pre-statehood years until the Hawaiian Renaissance in the late 1970s.
- ¹² For instance, one would expect Mongols to express particular dislike of Han composers and singers of grassland songs, but they seem much more critical of Mongols who are so assimilated that they sing in Mandarin or that are so desperate that they sell their culture to the Han Chinese.
- ¹³ So far, I have never found cases in which minority groups consume Mandarin-language songs from other minorities. In the case of Mongols, they have little interest in “minority pop” from neighboring Uyghur and Tibetan minority groups, but have much interest in hearing and learning more about traditional music styles of these groups.
- ¹⁴ Lü Ji’s 1941 speech, “Guidelines for Chinese Folk Music Research,” stated that national music should not only be of the Han people, but of the national minorities as well (Wong 1984:47).
- ¹⁵ Mao himself declared that, “The Chinese Communist Party has consistently recognized the nationalities question as being one of the major questions of the Chinese revolution and the liberation of the national minorities as being a part of the liberation of the Chinese ... nationality struggle is in reality a question of class struggle.” (Dreyer 1976:61).
- ¹⁶ Mullaney offers detailed treatment of the complexities of the 1950s ethnic identification project in China and the state’s need to naturalize the “fifty-five minzu model” both to minorities and to itself.
- ¹⁷ This process of “rearrangement” or “cleaning up” (zhengli), included not only the insertion of socialist ideals, but also the elimination of signs of “bourgeois values” or “feudalism,” including romantic love or religious superstitions.
- ¹⁸ In this project of musical collection and institutionalization, China took a strong lead from the Soviet Union. Donna Buchanan describes the creation of Soviet-style musical institutions in Bulgaria that transformed

“village lore” and local musical traditions, those aspects considered to represent the common people, into a modern political musical apparatus (2006:133).

¹⁹ Nimrod Baranovitch calls this piece the “vox populi of the Inner Mongols” (Baranovitch 2009:184, 2001:362).

²⁰ Meiliqige’s use of grassland and nomadic imagery is ironic considering that he himself is from the sedentary, semi-agricultural region of Khorchin.

²¹ Mandarin-language Tibetan songs are, interestingly, also referred to as grassland songs for their references to the natural environment of parts of the Tibetan plain.

²² A number of my experiences with the composer attest to Wulantuoga’s status as a well-accepted composer by local authorities. I attended an album release party for Wulantuoga in Hohhot and noticed the typical long row of local government lingdao (officials) who presided over the occasion and gave speeches: Another story involves my visit to his home region of Hulunbuir. Wulantuoga paid for me to stay in one of the top-floor suites of the best hotel in the city center of Hailar. I was already grateful for this gesture, but even more surprised when I was invited to lavish banquets every evening that I was there, in which he and his companions and government officials would drink several bottles of the highest-quality, expensive Mongol baijiu (hard rice liquor). From each of these observations, I speculate that most of Wulantuoga’s “business and travel” expenses may come directly to the government. He invited me to come out with his party to visit his friends in the grasslands the afternoon I was scheduled to leave. He was able to get one of his “lackeys” to change my train ticket for me and laughed when I expressed concern that I would need to stay in the hotel one extra night, as if I was silly to think that such a thing would matter.

²³ Scholars estimate that nearly one in four Mongols was arrested during the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia and that the death toll may have numbered anywhere from twenty to 100 thousand, a greater number than in any other Chinese province (Jankowiak 1988:275-6; Bulag 2010a:268; see also Dreyer 1968; Hyer and Heaton 1968; Jankowiak 1993; Woody 1993; Brown 2006; Bilik 1998b).

²⁴ Xin Huguang had strong ties to Inner Mongolia and spent twenty-six years of her compositional career there. She had three songs together with her Mongol husband, a classmate she met at Central Conservatory in Beijing, one son of whom is the distinguished and celebrated Mongol composer Sanbao. Her story of acclaim in Inner Mongolia is one of several cases of “adopted” Han individuals, including also the morin khuur player Li Bo and composer Du Zhaozhi, who are treasured as musical insiders in the Mongol community. Such critical roles of Han individuals in the Mongol music world perhaps demonstrate the flexible ethnic relations that are possible in Inner Mongolia.

²⁵ It is worth noting that Chi Bulag is a fascinating character with a number of inconsistencies and quirks. These aspects of his persona point to his existence between multiple worlds, including China, Inner Mongolia, Mongolia, Europe, and even Japan, where he has held a residence for many years. He fashions himself a Renaissance man and maintains a wide spectrum of interests including history, poetry, and cartoon art, all of which he meticulously charts in a daily journal. Even in his accented Mandarin and expressions of strong distaste for certain aspects of Han Chinese culture he makes use of many poetic idioms and literary references in Mandarin, while simultaneously referencing the Secret History of the Mongols (citation and explain) and mention of his ancestry to Chinggis Khan. He fashions himself as a Mongol Pagannini and frequently speaks of the superiority of European classical music and the violin. He also speaks of his devotion to the Communist party and expresses his gratitude for the support he has now gained from the current IMAR chairman. Indeed, although many of his early efforts were self-funded he has earned enough trust from the government and international prestige to receive a variety of funding for large-scale efforts, including his performance in the Golden Hall of Vienna in 2005 and a project underway to build an International Chi Bulag Morin Khuur Academy in Hohhot.

²⁶ Today, some in the morin khuur community lament that Inner Mongolia lacks specially-trained composers to write pieces for their instrument, as most of the pieces even today are still generated by performer-composers.

²⁷ Notable examples include Li Bo’s “Expansive Otor” and Darma’s “Hometown Longings,” among many, many others.

²⁸ The Chinese title for “Ten Thousand Galloping Horses” uses the character “wan,” ten thousand, which has a special significance in Chinese as “the largest number imaginable” or a “myriad.” Chi Bulag’s use of this distinctly-Chinese idiom in his title suggests the national orientation that he initially intended for the composition.

²⁹ It is a foundational part of the morin khuur repertoire and often stands as an initial hurdle for students to overcome, much as the “Bach Double Concerto” might be for students of the violin. Having played and heard

the piece already for many years when they establish performing careers, I sensed that many players became tired of the piece at the very point when they have imperatives to play it for audiences who demand its programming.

³⁰ Such subtle hidden meanings recall the ways that hula performers in Waikiki dance mele ma'i, a procreation or "genital" chant, with suggestive lyrics in Hawaiian that would be lost on tourists who simply enjoy an "exotic" and beautiful show.

³¹ Musical lip-synching is common in China for television broadcasts, likely due to the state's exertion of control in advance over the performance content.

³² The price of c-bout-style morin khuur is much higher than flat-edged morin khuur, presumably because of the more technical requirements of carving and finding wood of the right outward curvature for the face of the instrument.

³³ In 2009, eighty to ninety students auditioned for eight university-level openings in morin khuur performance at the YSXY, the institution recognized as the most prestigious in China for its morin khuur program (Erden Bukh, interview, 19 July 2009, Hohhot). In addition to this and other well-recognized state institutions, there are numerous private universities and training academies designed to either prepare students to enter state universities or independently offer bachelor's level degrees in morin khuur performance.

³⁴ These are by no means exclusive groups and individuals move in and out of categories frequently.

³⁵ The workshop title was literally, "The Inner Mongolia Workshop for Chor Arts Transmitters" (内蒙古潮尔艺术传承人培训班). From my conversations with teachers and students at YSXY, it seems that the workshop did not produce much success due to how unaccustomed folk artists' were to teaching in an institutionalized setting and to the short amount of time allocated to lessons.

³⁶ The establishment of this chor school may earn this city the name "Chor Capital" of the world to rival the "Morin Khuur Capital" in Ordos.

³⁷ Ironically, far from passing on a "pure chor tradition," Serash worked to systematize his chor style, adapting it to be more instrumental than vocal in style, and shifting his pedagogy for an institutional context.

³⁸ This process resembles a similar phenomenon that Uradyn Bulag describes for the Ordos region, in which the reification of local symbols, such as Chinggis Khan and women's dress, have been resignified as "the core of Inner Mongol culture" (Bulag 2002a:219).

³⁹ The now-seemingly-irreconcilable political split between Inner and Outer Mongolia seemed for a brief time in the early twentieth century as a temporary separation that would eventually result in reunification. Historian Christopher Atwood describes a short-lived five-year period from 1923-1929 in which an Inner Mongolian Youth Party (also known as the Inner Mongolia People's Revolutionary Party) gathered to make demands for reunification with Mongolia, thereby becoming one of the last and unsuccessful efforts to reimagine Mongols as a unified nation (2000). A group of eastern Inner Mongols made a last-ditch attempt at unification in 1945 after the creation of the Mongolian People's Republic, but this too failed (Bulag 2004). In both this occasion and in 1925, it seems the Mongolians had some sympathies for their southern neighbors, but did not help the Inner Mongols for fear of losing their own independence if they became embroiled in China's political upheavals (Dreyer 1976). After this last failure of 1945, Inner Mongols realized that the best they could hope for was a trans-border cultural relationship that could connect the two regions through cultural exchange, if not through political union.

⁴⁰ Several contacts mention how they immediately confronted stigmas of their "Chineseness" upon their arrival in Mongolia, including remarks about especially about their linguistic dialect (Nars, interview, 21 July 2010, Hohhot and others).

⁴¹ Similarities in the ethos and language of modernity appear to be still prevalent today, as a composer from Mongolia whom I met in Hohhot, whose name I unfortunately was not able to catch at the time, described to me his continued desires to "raise the status of the morin khuur to be as advanced as the violin," a comment I heard in this exact wording on many occasions in Inner Mongolia.

⁴² Donna Buchanan describes the reforms that took place in Bulgaria for such instruments as the gudulka that through the necessities of standardization, increases in instrument volume, and the creation of instrument "families" for the purpose of combination in modern state-run ensembles (Buchanan 2006:152-3). In the same way, reformers in Mongolia developed a bass version of the morin khuur and introduced a Great Morin Khuur Ensemble in 1956 as part of the state-run song and dance music apparatus in Mongolia (Marsh *ibid*:57). These efforts distinctly parallel Sangdureng's desires throughout the early 1960s to create a morin khuur ensemble that would feature soprano, tenor, and bass morin khuur, desires that may have been shaped in part by Sangdureng's exchange with Jamyan.

⁴³ The importance of the 1-2-3-4 fingering technique used on the Inner Mongol morin khuur may be due to the predominance of the sihu in Inner Mongolia. The sihu, which uses 1-2-3-4 fingering, has an intimate connection to folksongs of the Khorchin and Ordos regions that later became part of the morin khuur repertoire. When played on the sihu, these songs include frequent slides that the performer renders by sliding between the fourth and second fingers, a technique that would not be possible with the 1-3-4 fingering.

⁴⁴ The khoomei movement involves borrowing not simply from practices in Mongolia, but also from the Tuvan khoomei that has circulated globally for many decades through recordings and international performance by musicians such as Ondar, Huun Huur Tuu and Tuva Kyzy. Mongols in China have access to these Tuvan styles through the internet, but their first direct exposure to and instruction in khoomei came from Odsuren Baatar, which is why I position khoomei as having begun as a cross-border relationship with Mongolia.

⁴⁵ Zhang Quangsheng, leader of Haya band, describes his group as a “fringe” and “new age” Mongol band. He says “Mongolian culture and music is the foundation of our sound, certainly, but this is a foundation toward the path of world music.... I write music from my heart without direct quotation or inspirations. Folksongs have already been developed enough and it’s hard to keep that up...” (Zhang, interview, 21 June 2010, Beijing).

⁴⁶ As a people who have tended to accept Chinese rule (Jankowiak 1998) and who have demonstrated few autonomy movements, constituting what Enze Han labels as the ethnic “dog who hasn’t barked” (2011), Inner Mongols have gained enough trust from the government that their transnational sentiments are largely cultural and not political. In their willingness to comply and cooperate with the state for the most part, Inner Mongols today enjoy the freedom to reconnect with their Mongolian ethnic siblings and to travel abroad, whether to Mongolia or elsewhere. I was amazed at the relative ease that my Mongol musician friends had in getting visas to travel to Mongolia, a process that could be done on very last-minute notice for touring musicians or students.

⁴⁷ A few statements to these effects that I heard include the following comments: “The country of Mongolia is so great culturally, but they are poor and have lots of social problems.” “It is not safe there, very backward.” “In the winter [in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia] there is so much dirt in the air. We even reversed the name of the city to sound like ‘dirt city’ in Mongolian.” “The economic situation is better in Inner Mongolia [than in Mongolia].” “It is not safe to live there! Mongolia is developmentally behind China.” (Surige, interview, 10 June 2010, Hohhot).

Glossary

Place Names

<u>MONGOLIAN NAME</u>	<u>CHINESE CHARACTERS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Alkha League (Alxa/Alashan)	阿拉善盟	region of western Inner Mongolia (IM)
Baotou Municipality	包头市	region of western IM
Barga Banners	陈巴尔虎旗	regions in Hulunbuir
Bayannuur League (Bayanuor/Bayan-Nor)	巴彦诺尔蒙	region of western IM
Chakhar Banners (Chahar)	察哈尔	regions in Ulanchab
Chifeng Municipality (formerly Juu-Uda League)	赤峰市	region of eastern IM
Hailar District	海拉尔区	region in Hulunbuir
Harachin Banners	哈拉沁旗	regions in Jirim & Juu-Uda
Hohhot Municipality (Huhhot)	呼和浩特市	capital of IMAR
Hulunbuir League (Kholon Buir)	呼伦贝尔/呼盟	region of northeast IM
Ikh-Juu League (Yeke-Juu)	伊克昭盟/伊盟	region of western IM
Jirim League (Jirem/Jerim)	哲里木盟/哲盟	region of eastern IM
Juu-Uda League (Jo-Uda)	昭乌达盟	region of eastern IM
Khinggan League (Hinggan)	兴安盟	region of northeast IM
Khorchin Banners (Horchin/Horqin)	科尔沁旗	regions in Jirim & Juu-Uda
Ordos Municipality (formerly Ikh-Juu League)	鄂尔多斯	region of western IM
Republic of Buryatia		region of Russia inhabited by Buryats
Republic of Kalmykia		region of Russia inhabited by Kalmyks
Republic of Tuva		region of Russia inhabited by Tuvans
Shilingol League (Shili-yin Gool/Shilin-gol/Xilingol)	锡林郭勒/锡盟	region of central IM
Tongliao Municipality (formerly Jirim League)	通辽市	region of eastern IM
Tumed Banners	土默特旗	regions that formerly comprised Hohhot
Ujumchin Banners (Ujemchin)	乌珠穆沁	regions in Shilingol
Ulaanchab Municipality (Ulan Chab/Ulanqab)	乌兰察布市	region of central IM
Ulanhot District	乌兰浩特区	distruct of Khinggan League, former capital of IM
Zhangjiakou District	张家口区	city in Hebei, former capital of IM

Music Institutions and Ensembles

<u>INSTITUTION/ENSEMBLE NAME</u>	<u>CHINESE CHARACTERS</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Central Institute of Nationalities	中央民族大学	Beijing
Central Minorities Song and Dance Troupe	中央民族歌舞团	Beijing
Sun Yatsen Park Ethnic Music Ensemble	中山公园民族音乐团	Beijing
Arts Troupe for the Inner Mongolia Radio and Television Broadcast Station	内蒙古广播电视艺术团	Hohhot
Ethnic Ensemble of the Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Theatre	内蒙古歌舞剧院民族乐团	Hohhot
Hohhot Song and Dance Troupe	呼和浩特民族歌舞团	Hohhot
Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Ulanmuqir	内蒙古之治区直属乌兰牧骑艺术团	Hohhot
Inner Mongolia Song and Dance Troupe	内蒙古民族歌舞团	Hohhot
Music Department at Inner Mongolia Normal University	内蒙古师范大学音乐系	Hohhot
Music Department at the Inner Mongolia University Art Academy (YSXY)	内蒙古大学艺术学院音乐系	Hohhot
Black Steed	黑骏马	Beijing
Blue Wild	蓝野乐队	Beijing
Blue Wolf	苍狼乐队	Beijing
Hanggai	杭盖	Beijing
Yinhe Siqin	音和思琴原生态组合	Beijing
Anda Union	安达组合	Hohhot
Ayin	阿因原生态组合	Hohhot
Wild Horse	野马乐团	Hohhot
Zulu	Zulu 组合	Hohhot

Individuals

<u>NAME</u>	<u>CHINESE CHARACTERS</u>	<u>HOME REGION</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Alatengaole (1942-2011)	阿拉腾奥勒	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	grassland song composer
Altendolekh	阿拉腾都拉 嘎		ethnomusicologist
Altensang (192?-present)	阿拉腾桑		morin khuur performer
Ba Narisu	巴·那日苏		morin khuur performer

Bainmengke	白音孟和		morin khuur performer, leader of Yinhesiqin
Baiyinmenghe	白音孟和		morin khuur performer, leader of Inkhschin
Balgan (1906-1966)	巴拉干	Abag Banner, Shilingol League	morin khuur performer
Baolidao	宝力道		morin khuur performer
Baoyindeliger (1945-present)	宝音德力格尔	Bayannuur League	long song singer
Bater	巴特尔	Yeke-Juu League (Ordos Municipality)	trumpet player, Anda Union percussionist
Batobagen	巴头巴根		morin khuur performer, Hanggai band member, Zulu band member
Bayar	巴雅尔		morin khuur performer-teacher
Boerjinfu	宝尔金夫	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	morin khuur performer, Inkhschin member
Boteletu (Yang Yucheng) (1973-present)	博特乐图	Jirim League (Tongliao)	ethnomusicologist
Burenbayer (1940?-present)	布林巴雅尔	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	morin khuur & chor performer-educator
Chen Bayar (1958-present)	陈巴雅尔	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	morin khuur performer-educator
Chi Bulag (1944-present)	其·宝力高		morin khuur performer-composer-educator-reformer
Chi Odkhonbayar (1938-2002)	齐·敖特根巴雅尔	Jarud Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	chor & morin khuur folk artist-educator
Chinggis Khan (1162?-1227)	成吉思汗		"Great Khan" of the Mongol Empire
Cunbule	存布乐		morin khuur performer-teacher
Darma (1944-present)	达日码	Ikh-Juu League (Ordos)	morin khuur performer-composer-educator-reformer
Dedema (1947-present)	德德玛	Alkha League	grassland song performer

Demchugdongrub (Dewang) (1902-1966)	德王	Chakhar Province, Republic of China	prince of Chahar, leader of an Inner Mongolian nationalist movement in the 1930s
Du Zhaozhi (1929-2011) (Han)	杜兆植	Guangdong Province	composer & arranger
Duan Tingjun (Han)	段廷俊		morin khuur maker & factory owner
Dulan (female)	都兰		morin khuur performer-teacher
Elebuge	额乐布格		khoomii singer
Erden Bukh (1976-present)	鄂尔顿布和	Ujumchin Banner, Shilingol League	morin khuur & chor performer-educator
Gada Meiren (1892-1931)	嘎达梅林		leader of a Mongol rebellion in Darkhan Banner (1929-31)
Gerile (female)	格日乐	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	archivist at the Inner Mongolia Arts Research Institute Archives
Guo Jingjing	郭晶晶	Hulunbuir League	ethnomusicologist
Habolifu (1985-present)	哈泊力夫	Beijing	grassland/pop song singer & composer
Hazhabu (Lajau) (1922-2008)	哈扎布	Abag Banner, Shilingol League	long song singer
Hexige	贺希格		morin khuur performer-teacher
Hosbayar (Khalkha)		Mongolia	morin khuur performer-educator
Hugejiletu (Ajinai Ensemble)	胡格吉乐图		morin khuur performer, leader of Ajinai Ensemble
Hugejiletu (Professor)	呼格吉乐图		ethnomusicologist
Husileng	呼斯楞	Bayannuur League	grassland song singer
Ilqi	伊立奇		tovshuur performer, leader of Hanggai Band
Jamyán Gombodorj (1919-2008) (Khalkha)	扎米彦	Mongolia	morin khuur performer-educator-composer-reformer in Mongolia
Jantsannorow (Khalkha)		Mongolia	symphonic music composer in Mongolia
Jinlong	金龙		morin khuur performer
Ke Ming (Baoyexizhalasen)	克明 (包耶希扎拉森)		grassland song lyricist

Khasar (Qasar/Hasar/Jo'chi)	哈萨尔		Chingghis Khan's younger brother
Lasurong (1947-present)	拉苏荣	Ikh-Juu League (Ordos)	long song & grassland song singer
Li Bo (1955-present) (Han)	李波	Ulanhab League	morin khuur performer-composer-educator
Li Keqinfu (Li Xingwu)	李柯沁夫 (李兴吴)		ethnomusicologist
Li Wenbin (Chongqudeng) (Han)	李文斌 (虫曲灯)		khoomii singer, leader of Zulu
Liu Buhe	刘布和		morin khuur maker & store owner
Long Mei (1972-present) (female)	龙梅	Baotou Municipality	grassland song singer
Mada	玛达		Lanye band member
Mailasu	麦拉苏	Ar Khorchin Banner, Juu-Uda League (Chifeng)	khoomii singer-teacher
Meiliqige (1928-present)	美丽其格		grassland song/opera/symphonic music composer
Modege (1930-present)	莫德格	Ujumchin Banner, Shilingol League	long song artist
Moerjifu	莫尔吉夫		ethnomusicologist
Na Huhe (1959-present)	纳·呼和	Jarud Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	morin khuur educator
Nahaya	娜哈娅	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	singer & yangqin performer
Nars	那日苏	Ar Khorchin Banner, Juu-Uda League (Chifeng)	morin khuur & khoomii performer, leader of Anda Union
Nima	尼马	Ujumchin Banner, Shilingol League	morin khuur artist
Odsüren Baatar (1949-present)			khoomii performer-educator in Mongolia
Ounier	欧尼尔	Xinjiang Province	morin khuur & khoomii performer, Zulu member

Qi Feng (1970-present)	齐峰	Hohhot Municipality	grassland song singer
Qian Bayar (1959-present)	仟·巴亿拉	Ar Khorchin Banner, Jiu-Uda League (Chifeng)	morin khuur performer-educator
Qiao Jiangzhong (1941-present) (Han)	乔建中	Shaanxi Province	ethnomusicologist
Saihanniya (female)	赛汗尼亚		morin khuur performer, Anda Union member
Sangdureng (1926-1967)	桑都仍	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	morin khuur performer-composer-educator-reformer
Saqieronggui	萨切荣贵		morin khuur performer-teacher
Sarula	萨如拉		vice-director for the Inner Mongolia Ulanmuqir
Sedeng	色登		chor & morin khuur maker
Serash (Serashi) (1887-1968)	色拉西	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	chor & morin khuur folk artist-educator
Siriguleng (Zhang Jinsheng)	斯日古楞 (张劲盛)		ethnomusicologist, morin khuur performer
Sudebilige	苏德毕力格		morin khuur performer-teacher
Sun Liang (1910— 1997) (Mongol)	孙良	Liaoning Province	sihu artist-performer-educator
Suya (Mongol female)	苏雅		sihu performer-teacher
Tengger (1960-present)	腾格尔	Ikh-Juu League (Ordos)	grassland song/pop music singer
Tonglaga	通拉嘎		television producer, morin khuur performer, ethnomusicologist
Ulanhu (1906-1988)	乌兰夫	Tumed Banner, Hohhot	IMAR chairman (1947-1966), Vice-President of China (1983-1988)
Ulanji (Zhamusu)	乌兰杰 (扎 木苏)		ethnomusicologist
Wenli (Suyilasaihan) (Mongol female)	文丽 (苏伊 拉赛汗)	Hulunbuir League	khoomii singer-teacher
Wulantuoga (1958-present)	乌兰托嘎		grassland song composer

Wulantuya	乌兰图雅		grassland song performer
Wuni	乌尼	Juu-Uda League	morin khuur performer, Anda Union member, Zulu member
Wurigen	乌日根		morin khuur performer, Anda Union member
Wuyunlong (1934?-present)	乌云龙	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	sihu artist
Ximurong (Mongol female)	席慕蓉		author & grassland song lyricist, currently residing in Taiwan
Xin Huguang (1933-2011) (Han female)	辛沪光	Jiangxi Province	symphonic music composer
Xiribu	西日布		long song singer at Xibei99
Xu Xin	徐欣		ethnomusicologist
Zhalasen	扎拉森	Khorchin Banner, Jirim League (Tongliao)	narrative singer & chor/sihu artist
Zhang Chunhua (1922-present) (Han)	张纯华	Shaanxi Province	morin khuur maker & factory owner
Zhang Quansheng (Mongol)	张全胜		morin khuur performer-educator, leader of Haya, Blue Wolf member
Zhao Hongrou (Han female)	赵红柔		ethnomusicologist
Zou Jing	绉婧		ethnomusicologist

Chinese Terms

<u>TERM</u>	<u>CHINESE CHARACTERS</u>	<u>ENGLISH TRANSLATION</u>
<i>banmu bannong</i>	半牧半农	semi-nomadic, semi-pastoral
<i>baobu</i>	保护	protect
<i>bianhua</i>	变化	change
<i>biaozhunhua</i>	标准化	standardization
<i>bocaizhongchang</i>	博采众长	learn from the strength of others
<i>canlan xiongzhuang</i>	灿烂雄壮	bright & magnificent
<i>caoyuan gequ</i>	草原歌曲	grassland songs
<i>changdiao (urtiin duu)</i>	长调	long song
<i>chao'er (chor)</i>	潮尔	two-string box fiddle
<i>chao'er dashi</i>	潮尔大师	master artist of the chor

<i>chenggong</i>	成功	success
<i>chengjiu</i>	成就	achievement, achieve
<i>chengshihua</i>	城市化	urbanization
<i>chuancheng</i>	传承	inherit
<i>chuangcheng yu bianqian</i>	传承与变迁	inherit & change
<i>chuanchengren</i>	传承人	transmitter
<i>chuangzuo gequ</i>	创作歌曲	composed piece of music
<i>chuanxialai</i>	传下来	pass down/transmit
<i>danyin yanzoufa</i>	单音演奏法	single-pitched technique/without harmonics or double stops
<i>diqi</i>	笛子	Chinese bamboo flute
<i>Dongbei minge</i>	东北民歌	folksongs from Khorchin & surrounding regions
<i>duoshengbu</i>	多声部	many sounds/overtones
<i>duandiao (bogino duu)</i>	短调	short song
<i>E'erduosi minge</i>	鄂尔多斯民歌	Ordos folksongs
<i>erhu</i>	二胡	Chinese two-string tube fiddle
<i>fanyin yanzoufa</i>	泛音演奏法	overtone technique/with harmonics & double stops
<i>fazhan</i>	发展	develop/development
<i>fenlei</i>	分类	categorize
<i>gaige</i>	改革	reform
<i>Gangtai yinyue</i>	港台音乐	popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan
<i>guifan</i>	规范	standardize/standardized
<i>Hanhua</i>	汉化	Sinification
<i>Hanzu</i>	汉族	Han Chinese ethnic group
<i>huibao yanchu</i>	汇报演出	joint-performance of music and dance (Mao-era context)
<i>humai</i>	呼麦	overtone singing/throat singing (Chinese transliteration)
<i>Jiangnan sizhu</i>	江南丝竹	silk & bamboo music from the Shanghai area
<i>jinbu</i>	进步	progress/advance
<i>jinxing</i>	进行	advance/carry out
<i>jishu</i>	技术	technology
<i>kaihuang</i>	开荒	open up the wasteland
<i>Ke'erqin minge</i>	科尔沁民歌	Khorchin folksongs
<i>kexue</i>	科学	science, scientific
<i>lingdao</i>	领导	government officials
<i>matouqin (morin khuur)</i>	马头琴	two-string horse-head box fiddle
<i>menggubao (ger)</i>	蒙古包	Mongol tent/yurt
<i>Mengguguo (Mongol Ulus)</i>	蒙古国	Mongolia/Mongol Nation
<i>Mengguzu/Mengzu/Menggu</i>	蒙古族/蒙族/蒙古	Mongol ethnic minority in China

<i>Minzu</i>	民族	
<i>minjian yinyue/minyue</i>	民间音乐/民乐	folk music
<i>minjian yiren</i>	民间艺人	folk artist
<i>minzu</i>	民族	nationality/ethnicity
<i>minzu fenlie</i>	民族分裂	ethnic separatism
<i>Neimenggu Zizhiqu (Obor Mongol)</i>	内蒙古之治区	Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR)
<i>nenggeshanwu</i>	能歌善舞	good at singing and dancing
<i>pipa</i>	琵琶	Chinese pear-shaped plucked lute
<i>qiyuehua</i>	器乐化	instrumental orientation
<i>quanmu</i>	全牧	fully pastoral
<i>quannong</i>	全农	fully agricultural
<i>quanqiuhua</i>	全球化	globalization
<i>sanshaominzu</i>	三少数民族	three small minorities (Daur, Ewenke, Oronchen)
<i>shaosbu minzu</i>	少数民族	Chinese minority nationalities
<i>shichanghua</i>	市场化	marketization
<i>sibu (dorvon chibtei kbuur)</i>	四胡	four-string fiddle (used in both Mongol and Chinese music)
<i>tigao</i>	提高	improve/advance
<i>tongsu yinyue</i>	通俗音乐	state-authorized popular music in China
<i>Waimenggu (Ar Mongol)</i>	外蒙古	Outer Mongolia (Mongolia to the north/leeward side of the mountain)
<i>Waimengren</i>	外蒙人	Outer Mongolian
<i>wenming</i>	文明	civilized
<i>Wulanmuqi (Ulanmuchir)</i>	乌兰牧骑	"Red Branch" mobile song and dance troupes in Inner Mongolia
<i>wutaihua</i>	舞台化	stage adaptation
<i>xiandaihua</i>	现代化	modernization
<i>xifang</i>	西方	the West
<i>xihua</i>	西化	Westernization
<i>xitong</i>	系统	system
<i>yangqin</i>	扬琴	Chinese hammered-dulcimer
<i>yanjiu</i>	研究	research
<i>ying</i>	硬	hard (timbre)/lacking in resonance
<i>yuanshengtai</i>	原生态	"original ecology"/"from the source"
<i>zhengli</i>	整理	arrange/clean up
<i>zhuanyehua</i>	专业化	professionalization
<i>zouxiangshijie</i>	走向世界	go out to the world
<i>zuqun</i>	族群	ethnic group

Mongolian Terms

<u>TERM</u>	<u>CHINESE TRANSLATION/ TRANSLITERATION</u>	<u>ENGLISH TRANSLATION</u>
<i>Ar Mongol</i>	外蒙古	Outer Mongolia (Mongolia to the north/leeward side of the mountain)
<i>belensen ger</i>		empty ger
<i>bogino duu</i>	短调	short song
<i>buren ger</i>		complete ger
<i>chor</i> (instrument)	潮尔	two-string box fiddle from eastern Inner Mongolia
<i>chor</i> (sound phenomenon)	潮尔	many sounds/term to refer to harmonic denseness in Inner Mongolia
<i>Daur</i>	达瓦尔	ethnic group, one of the "three small minorities" in China
<i>dombra</i>	冬不拉	Khazak plucked lute
<i>dorvon chihitei kbuur</i>	四胡	Mongol four-string tube fiddle
<i>Ewenke</i>	鄂温克	ethnic group, one of the "three small minorities" in China
<i>ger</i>	蒙古包	Mongol tent/yurt
<i>bolboo</i>	好来宝	extemporized narrative song genre
<i>ikil/igil/yakil</i>	叶克勒	box fiddle from western Inner Mongolia
<i>khadag</i>		ceremonial cloth
<i>Khitad kbuun</i>	中国人	Chinese person
<i>kboomii/boomii</i>	呼麦	overtone singing/throat singing/biphonic singing
<i>khuuchir</i>	四胡	two-string tube fiddle
<i>khuurch</i>	胡尔齐	narrative singer & fiddle player
<i>limbe</i>	蒙古弟子	transverse bamboo flute
<i>modon chor/tsuur/shuur</i>	冒顿潮尔	end-blown Mongol flute
<i>Mongol Ulus</i>	蒙古国	Mongolia/Mongol Nation
<i>morin kbuur</i>	马头琴	two-string horse-head box fiddle from central Inner Mongolia
<i>nair</i>	奈热	all-night festive gathering in the ger
<i>nogula</i>		long song trill technique
<i>Obor Mongol</i>	内蒙古	Inner Mongolia (Mongolia to the south/sunny side of the mountain)
<i>Obor Mongolcuud</i>	内蒙人	Inner Mongol
<i>Oronchen/Orochen</i>	鄂伦春	ethnic group, one of the "three small minorities" in China
<i>ovoo</i>	敖包	outdoor Shaman-Buddhist shrine
<i>shudraga/shanz/sanz</i>	蒙古三线	three-string plucked lute
<i>tovshuur/tovshur/topshuur</i>	托布秀尔	two-string plucked lute
<i>tuul</i>	英雄叙事	heroic epic

<i>ugsaantny khogjim</i>	民间音乐	folk music
<i>Ulanmuchir</i>	乌兰牧骑	"Red Branch" mobile song and dance troupes in Inner Mongolia
<i>uliger/ bensen uliger</i>	乌力格尔	genre of metered narrative song
<i>urtiin duu</i>	长调	long song
<i>yoochin</i>	蒙古扬琴	hammered-dulcimer
<i>yataga</i>	雅托嘎/蒙古箏	plucked zither

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