On Wooden Horses: Music, Animals, and Heritage in Post-socialist Mongolia

By

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Abstract

"On Wooden Horses: Music, Animals, and Heritage in Post-socialist Mongolia" asks what there is to learn if we take Mongolian traditional musicians' use of heritage as a form of future-making, rather than past-making. This dissertation is based on 20 months of participant-observation, musical apprenticeship, and interviews with musicians, music teachers, composers, heritage administrators, herders across rural and urban spaces in Ulaanbaatar and Dundgovi, Mongolia. My focus throughout the dissertation is on the practices, transmission, and institutions surrounding *urtyn duu,* or long-song, and a two stringed spike fiddle called the *morin khuur,* or horse-fiddle. These two intertwined aspects of Mongolian music are two of the first elements to have been included on Mongolia's UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Throughout the dissertation I present cases in which nonhumans actively participate in the transmission and performance of heritage music. The musicians I profile take a broad variety of nonhumans, including horses, mountains, and ghosts, as bearers of a shared heritage. I argue that designation as "cultural heritage" brings bring these more-than-human networks into modernist institutions, allowing for people to imagine outside of both capitalist and socialist modernities.

In Mongolia, the effects of anthropogenic climate change are currently bringing desertification and winter storms that make the rural pastoral lifestyles increasingly less tenable each year. For many in the country, the loss of habitable land in rural pastures foregrounds a more dire potential, the degeneration of the planet beyond rejuvenation. These calamities come together with the economic and political crises caused by the disjuncture between the socialist and capitalist approaches to modernization, both of which were imposed on the country in the 20th century. Now, many Mongolian people are thinking of alternatives to modernity and looking

to what might come after. Traditional musicians are reacting by using pastoral music and the more-than-human relations this music requires to rebuild connections with the pasture while there is still time, and to prepare their art to survive in a future where such a reparation may not be possible.

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Note on Transliteration

Throughout this dissertation I will use a modified version of the Tibetan and Himalayan Library system for transcribing Mongolian Cyrillic into Latin script. The main changes I have to this system are that I use v, ", y, and ' for в, ъ, ы, and ь respectively. For letters which correspond to more than one phonetic correspondence according to vowel harmony, I have disambiguated the sounds in the text. A complete table of the transcription system I will use is as follows:

а: a	п: p
б: b	р: r
в: v	с: s
г: g	т: t
д: d	у: u
е: ye or yö (according to vowel harmony)	ү: ü
ё: yo	ф: f
ж: j	х: kh
з: z	ц: ts
и: i	ч: ch
й: i	ш: sh
к: k	ъ: "
л: l	ы: y
м: m	ь: '
н: n	э: e
о: o	ю: yu/yü (according to vowel harmony)
ө: ö	я: ya

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Introduction

The spring of 2017 found me in rural Dundgovi province, Mongolia, interviewing herders and musicians about the practice of singing to nursing livestock during the birthing season. Towards the end of the spring, I sat down with Damdin, an elderly, retired herder and traditional musician of some renown in the Gobi. When I asked him about herders' songs for sheep and horses, he stressed that nonhuman animals are an important audience whose feedback is vital for learning and perfecting traditional music. For Damdin, a great musician is one who brings the worlds of humans and ungulates together. As he said, “I myself learned how to sing from horseback, and for many years my only listeners were the sheep in the fields.”

Returning to Ulaanbaatar that summer, I was left with the question of how traditional music students, particularly those focusing on the *morin khuur*, or "horse-fiddle," managed to connect with this critical audience of rural nonhumans from the confines of urban institutions. Many of the music scholars, composers, and horse-fiddle teachers I interviewed in the city that summer expressed an anxiety about this increasing social distance between young fiddlers and pastoral nonhumans. The conservatories and orchestras that train and employ horse-fiddlers were all urban-based institutions, designed around a western model based on the separation of nature from culture. Concerns about this institutional distance from herds were exacerbated by the threat of ecological and economic disasters that make mobile pastoralism increasingly untenable for less well-off families, pushing people to urbanize.

At the National Conservatory, I spoke with Tuyaa, a musicologist who left her childhood home in rural eastern Mongolia to pursue her education in the Soviet Union in the 1980s before settling in Ulaanbaatar to teach music theory. During this interview I asked her what the future holds for pastoral-derived musical practices, like songs that evoke horse-gaits or that calm

livestock during nursing. She told me, in an even, matter-of-fact tone, “we are not there yet. In 20 years, when the countryside is gone, I do not know what will happen. For now, we still have nature, so we have not become disconnected. Even if the countryside is destroyed, I do not think we will disconnect from nature,” She continued, “it is the shape of our hearts, the key Mongolian people are tuned to.”

A quiet moment passed between us. “Our world ended once before, you know,” Tuyaa added. “In 1937.” She was referring to the Great Purge, an offshoot of Stalinist purges that took place in Mongolia from 1937 to 1939 supported by the Red Army of the Soviet Union. The purge targeted ethnic minorities (particularly Buryat and Kazakh people), Buddhist lamas, and the intelligentsia, leading to the deaths of up to 35,000 people, or 5 percent of the population of the country (Bawden 1989, 328-331; Atwood 2004, 209-210; Kuromiya 2014, 787).[1]

Tuyaa continued, “during the transition to socialism much was lost. Records were destroyed, artists thrown in jail or killed. In the 1940s, fifties, and sixties we wanted to replenish our culture. We listened to our elders, to livestock and the land and we revitalized.” Shortly after giving this reassurance, she added, “maybe the world will end, but even if the earth is destroyed, we have sent a recording of “*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*” (“The Sun over the Placid World”) into outer space on a satellite, so that whoever comes after will know that there were wise, beautiful souls who lived here.”

Though this kind of direct reference to socialist-era repression was somewhat rare in my interviews, similar strains of this cycle of destruction and regeneration emerge repeatedly. This cycle came through in an interview at the University of Arts and Culture with Baatar, a horse-

[1] I side with Bawden in his interpretation that though the purges were nominally overseen by Choibalsan, the leader of the Mongolian People’s Republic, the Great Purge can be seen primarily as an act of violence perpetrated by the USSR(1989: 329).

fiddle teacher specializing in long-song who himself pursued dual training as a classical musician at the National Conservatory and a traditional musician by seeking tutelage in rural southeastern Mongolia. He told me that he is not worried about his mostly urban students' abilities to learn what he considers to be nomadic music saying, “we have forgotten so much, but the fiddle remembers. More importantly, the fiddle reminds us.”

Perhaps this apocalyptic thinking is a useful heuristic for approaching the anthropocene in post-socialist societies. For Tuyaa, late capitalism and the global ecological disasters it promises are framed as another installment of a cycle of world-ending events tied to global, colonial modernist movements. The end of the world looms ominously in the forefront of her mind, informed by personal, familial, and cultural memories of a world that ended recently.

It is striking that Tuyaa foregrounds the role of animals and rural landscapes in the rebuilding process. She describes these nonhumans as equals to knowledgeable elders, as beings with perspectives that are vital to surviving world-ending violences. Baatar brings the horse-fiddle itself into this network of actors in his quote above. Non-humans stood as allies for recovering from the last time Tuyaa’s world ended and remain so in the blueprint she laid out for recovering again.

Furthermore, other potential nonhumans, those entities that might come after humans have destroyed this earth, stand in Tuyaa's projection as critical consumers of Mongolian musical heritage. Recordings of music sent off-planet present Tuyaa an opportunity to present a counter argument to future witnesses of the Earth’s destruction, to assert the existence of people like her who love and live with nature, but who have little power to slow down its destruction. This too is a kind of survival.

Sunset/Sunrise

"*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*" is the song most closely associated with Dundgovi province, popularized internationally by professional vocalist Namjilyn Norovbanzad in a series of concerts during the 1970's and eighties. Throughout the Gobi, long-song are vital for ceremonially opening and closing *nair,* traditional feasts usually held to accompany a wedding, new house, or a family reunion. Long-song are so important, and so difficult to master, that a good singer can earn a decent amount of money and pastoral goods during the Fall months traveling the countryside as an itinerant long-song singer.

This is how Damdin made ends meet for the early part of his life, shortly after the purges in the mid-20th century. His parents divorced when he was quite young, so he split his formative years with his mother and father. His mother taught him to sing and how to carry out the ritual of the *nair,* and he would travel the countryside with his father, singing for *nair* to support his family's incomes.

In Dundgovi there was a particular monk who had a large canon of long-song committed to memory. His knowledge was especially valuable, because he knew *aizam* long-song, extended songs with dozens of stanzas vital to the proper performance of *nair.* These songs are difficult to learn and vocally demanding, with up to 64 verses per song and sweeping melodies that surge into falsetto and double falsetto. For one song he was particularly well known, "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*."

"*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran,*" is commonly translated as "the Sun Over the Placid World" or "Endless Sunshine." Neither translation captures the fact that the song refers not to "*delkhii,*" the secular term for the earth, but rather to *Zambuu tiv* or Jambudvīpa, the land where humans seek enlightenment in Buddhist cosmology. The openly Buddhist didactic nature of the song made it subject to purge-era repression of religious materials.

As Damdin told it:

> "I begged the monk to teach me this song, but he refused and refused. He had taught the song to only two people before, two of his novices at the monastery. Both were killed during the purges,

> so the *lama* said he would not teach the song anymore for fear that he would invite retributions from the state on any more students. But I bothered him and bothered him about it until he gave in and agreed to teach me on one condition - that I never sing the song for people, that my only audience be the sheep in the fields."

The monk, who had witnessed the destruction of his monastery and the killings of his students, had resigned himself to the idea that his world, the *Zambuu tiv*, would not survive him. Socialist modernity was coming to destroy and replace the Buddhist world, so he swore Damdin to keep his knowledge of this song, and the world it contained, a secret.

For many years Damdin kept this promise. He continued to sing the song while tending to his livestock, only when he knew there were no other humans around to hear him. As he recalled this period of his life, he made it clear that the sheep were listening, and he sang to keep them calm. Keeping livestock calm is vital to herd health, as stressed animals will have a difficult time producing milk and will reject their young.

In subsequent interviews Damdin and fellow Dundgovi herder-musician Tsogt both insisted that their livestock were indeed listening and responding to their songs. They pointed to two types of evidence to back this claim. For one, they observed livestock's physical responses to their singing, like increased milk production. They also paid attention to social responses, like the repaired relationships between estranged mothers and youths, a process which I will return to in more detail in the third chapter of this dissertation. In Damdin's story, he described sheep as shared bearers of "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*," the burden of this song held up by a human singer and a nonhuman audience.

Years later, another long-song singer from Dundgovi named Namjilyn Norovbanzad heard that Damdin knew this song and came to request he teach her. He told her the same story that his teacher told him, arguing that it was not a safe song to teach. Norovbanzad reassured him, "the purges are over, people are starting to practice religion again, you needn't worry." Just as Damdin had kept after the monk, Norovanzad kept at Damdin until he agreed finally to teach her the song.

Norovbanzad would soon become one of the most famous and beloved singers in Mongolia. In 1978, she went international, recording a version of "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*" for the transnational project *Musical Voices of Asia*. This performance would earn her, and the once nearly lost long-song, a wide audience beyond the iron curtain.

When Damdin heard Norovbanzad's version of the song on the radio, he was troubled. He called her and asked, "did I teach you wrong or did you learn wrong?" The version she performed was different, with lyrics that lacked many of the Buddhist references that originally made "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran"* a subversive piece of music. She told him, "no, no you taught me well, and I learned well, but before I could record some representatives from the party sat with me and worked through what I could and could not sing on the radio."

Into the 21st century, Norovbanzad's recording of this song is still well-loved in post-socialist Mongolia. Several of my interlocutors joked that they should have made it the national anthem of the newly democratic Mongolia back in 1991. In a way, this song does represent the current era in the country well, as elements of traditional knowledge maintained through the transmission of cultural heritage are important assets to Mongolian people who are now revitalizing spiritual practices that were repressed during the 20th century. These practices, like the edited lyrics of Norovbanzad's recording, bear the marks of socialist-era repression nonetheless.

In addition to representing Mongolia to the world, Norovbanzad's recording of the song is what Tuyaa said will represent the world to whoever comes after humanity. In 2017, Mongolia launched its first ever satellite into space as part of the multi-national BIRDS project. The Kyushu Institute of Technology supported a team of students from Mongolia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Bangladesh to send CubeSats representing each of their countries into orbit on SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket. The engineering students uploaded music in the form of MIDI files to these small, cube-shaped satellites, which then

transmitted the songs as radio waves. If you have a HAM radio, you can even tune in. Though the only song officially uploaded to Mongolia's CubeSat is the national anthem, like all good radio stations, they take requests.

Having interviewed Damdin herself, Tuyaa knew his story and many others like it. She took to heart the lesson that a people can make a future for their world by entrusting it in a more-than-human audience. Facing a future without habitable pastures for humans or sheep, she had to look farther afield, hoping that "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*" being beamed onto a satellite will find an audience from another world.

Once again, this song, and the memories of the men, women, and sheep entangled with it, have been put in the hands of a nonhuman. Just as Damdin once sang the song to sheep as a way of maintaining a history at the edge of extermination, Norovbanzad's voice carried the song into the cosmos, and with it a heritage of the Earth as it teeters on the edge of destruction. Not any heritage, but a Gobi heritage, where the environment and the people who dwell within it are among the first to experience this destruction. Heritage is a form of a past-making, but it can be used as a form of future-making too. As Damdin and Tuyaa demonstrate, in order for heritage to be future-making, it must be a more-than-human endeavor.

Heritage and More-than-Human Futures

I argue that the performance of heritage has the potential for creating alternative futures to that of neoliberal modernity. The ecologically destructive conditions of neoliberalism push people to imagine futures in which humans have the possibility of non-extractive relations with the environment and non-human animals. In between imagining alternative futures and creating them is the material reality of nonhumans such as livestock and sacred mountains themselves. I

focus on more-than-human, environmental futures specifically because Tuyaa, Damdin, and Baatar describe increasing breakdowns of human relations with nonhumans, with Tuyaa going so far as to frame the future for rural Mongolians in terms of an ecological apocalypse.

To make this argument, I examine how people imagine and build toward more-than-human futures by using musical heritage to foster and intensify relationships between humans and nonhumans. Tuyaa described a future built on the active recognition and understanding of what Tsing refers to as "more-than-human sociality," social relations with and among a network of nonhumans (2013). Tsing argues that human lives are interdependent with a whole host of nonhumans, like animals, plants, fungi, and so on (2012). She urges that an anthropology that studies these more-than-human interdependent networks is vital for understanding moments of ecological crisis, as these networks offer future possibilities for life in the face of environmental breakdowns of neoliberal modernity (2015).

Domesticated animals are a major consideration of this dissertation. I worked with herders in Dundgovi and their herds, specifically sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and camels, the "*tavan khoshuu mal*" or "five snouts" of Mongolian livestock. I take the five snouts as what Haraway terms "companion species," nonhuman animals that actively participate in the production of the human subject (2003). Haraway posits that thinking through the interdependent relationships between humans and companion species allows for reconsiderations of kinship, opening the potential for more-than-human kin relations.

Following Haraway, a wave of literature on domesticated species considers the social potentials for examining these more-than-human kin relations with domestic animals (Fijn 2011, Govindrajan 2018, Swanson et al 2018). As Govindrajan points out, these kin relationships, built through individual acts of interspecies care, both affect and are affected by broader colonial

politics (2018). In this dissertation there are moments where humans treat livestock in a kin-like manner, caring for distressed camels with familial affection (see chapter two) and singing lullabies to baby sheep (see chapter three). These kin-like interactions set up the foundation for humans to be able to engage with nonhumans as bearers of a shared heritage. Recall that in her quote above, Tuyaa puts nonhuman animals and the land together in the same category as knowledgeable heritage bearers alongside human elders.

Though my focus is on interactions between humans and nonhuman animals, other non-humans are invariably involved in these relationships as well. The landscape is not a passive backdrop to the relations that play out between humans and animals, but a network of nonliving actors in and of itself. Mountains and stones engage in human and animal lives as enigmatic, but powerful, actors similar to Marisol de la Cadena's "earth beings," entities in the land itself that are only accessible to humans through the use of specific rituals (2015).

In *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia,* David Anderson argues that the Evenki hunter-herders he worked with inhabited what he called a "sentient ecology," where humans "act and move on the tundra in such a way that they are conscious that animals and the tundra itself are reacting to them" (2000, 116). Ingold takes a similar approach, arguing that human and non-human members of a shared environment participate together in a "dwelt-in world" (2000). In both Anderson and Ingold's descriptions, humans acknowledge nonhumans as participating together in the shared functioning of an ecosystem. What happens when that ecosystem breaks down or disappears? I argue that heritage provides a way for humans to reimagine relationships with nonhumans in the face of ecological breakdown.

Ethnomusicological Approaches

I focus on music throughout this dissertation as a particularly potent field of heritage practices for human-nonhuman interaction. Before the onset of the ontological turn in anthropology, ethnomusicologists had already begun taking an interest in the ways humans and nonhumans co-produce one another through musical practice. Anthony Seeger wrote that music (along with food) has the unique ability to transcend barriers between humans and nonhumans, bringing humans and animals into each other's social worlds (1987). Feld expanded on this argument, writing that sound is an embodied, multisensory way to create place and all of the more-than-human relationships that constitute that place (1996). He used the term "acoustemology," an acoustic epistemology, to define his approach to understanding how people use sound as a way of knowing the complete field of nonhumans with whom they collaboratively construct the local environment.

This scholarly interest in the role of music in human relations with the environment developed into the subfield of ecomusicology. Allen describes ecomusicology as the study of the relationships between music, sound, and ecology (2014). Ecomusicology is not simply a theoretical engagement with ecology, but one that engages with the urgency of environmental degradation. As Jeff Todd Titon stresses, ecomusicology engages with the “the study of music, culture, sound, and nature in a period of environmental crisis” (2013).

Ecomusicology arose in response to growing concerns within ethnobiology and applied ethnomusicology that traditional approaches to music research can create depersonalized and decontextualized archives of musical heritage and cut those practices off from the people and contexts that allow for them to flourish (Schippers 2015; Schippers and Bendrups 2015; Sheehy 1992; Titon 2009). Titon asserts that music is a vital resource for environmental sustainability

that can itself be maintained by applying models from ecological sustainability to musical issues (2009). In accordance with a broader literature from ethnobiology and geography that links cultural and ecological resilience (Fernández-Giménez 2000; Lertzman 2009; Liu et. al. 2007; McCarter et al 2014; Ostrom 2009), ecomusicologists argue that situating traditional musical practices in their interdependent, multi-species ecological contexts helps to support diverse musical and ecological knowledges without objectifying them (Guyette and Post 2015).

Ecomusicology is concerned primarily with musical practices constituting "traditional ecological knowledge." Ecologist Berkes defines traditional ecological knowledge as "a cumulative body of knowledge, belief and practice, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission" (2012, 7). My research covers some practices that can be considered traditional ecological knowledge, particularly the herders' use of song to bind orphaned lambs to new mothers I outline in chapter three.

However, in addition to ecolomusicology's focus on traditional ecological knowledge, I also examine beliefs, practices, and objects that have been officially designated as "cultural heritage" by institutional bodies. The category of heritage brings together practices from the canon of traditional ecological knowledge, like livestock coaxing rituals, along with practices that do not fit neatly within that frame, like the distinctly modern and cosmopolitan horse-fiddle itself. The study of heritage offers potential insights into how musicians create alternatives to modernity from within modernist institutions such as conservatories.

Though heritage-recognizing organizations exist at the state and local levels, I will specifically present cases related to musical practices recognized as cultural heritage by the international governing body on heritage, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO is the largest international governing body concerned with

heritage, and its influence can be felt throughout heritage organizations at all levels. Conversely, because of the size and breadth of UNESCO's heritage operations, there is often very little oversight or follow-up to heritage management. UNESCO's overarching, international status as a heritage governing organization thus offers a dual potential: cultural practices designated as heritage garner international recognition while also allowing local practitioners some degree of freedom in how they perform and maintain those practices.

On the 16th of November, 1972, UNESCO passed the "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage," citing the particular threat to traditional lifeways in the nascent post-modern era. This charter is one of a long line of initiatives since World War II to maintain tangible cultural heritage in the form of monuments and artifacts, and natural heritage in the form of landscapes (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 52). In response to work by heritage-bearers and folklorists from the post-colonial world throughout the 1980s and 1990s to recognize non-western epistemologies, UNESCO expanded its discourse on heritage to include "intangible cultural heritage," oral traditions, language, customs, music, dance, foodways, traditional medicine, and rituals, in short all aspects of social life that fit within classical anthropological definitions of culture (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Bortolotto 2006). Two decades of wrestling with how to properly safeguard this form of heritage led UNESCO to develop the list of 'Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' in 2001 and the "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" in 2003.

There is a wealth of literature on heritage that frames it as a way of constructing the past for consumption in the present (Handler 1988; Lowenthal 1996; Graham 2002). Lowenthal traces the desire to identify and preserve heritage as a reaction to the rapid rate of changes to society in the neoliberal era (1996, 6-7). Designation as heritage adds the value of uniqueness

and a sense of the past to those practices rendered unviable by the neoliberalization and globalization of markets, such as subsistence agriculture and pastoralism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 370). In this way, officially recognizing a practice as "cultural heritage" is a way to induct that practice into neoliberal modernity. Ecomusicologist Titon further warns that UNESCO's classification of cultural practices as Intangible Cultural Heritage transforms tradition into a resource, which can then itself be extracted and exploited (2009; 9-10).

Descola writes that modernity is built on the ideological separation of nature, the realm of nonhumans, from culture, the realm of humans and human creations (2014). If, as Latour argues, even modern science does not fully disentangle nature, culture, and politics (1993), modern music is surely no less entangled. The incorporation of ontological difference into modernist music institutions through the designation and mobilization of heritage highlights and intensifies the areas where modernity has failed to fully disentangle nature and culture.

Nature and culture are entangled in the performance of musical heritage in multiple ways. The materiality of musical instruments depends on resources from nonhumans, bringing the human performer into contact with elements drawn from horses and trees (see chapter one). Nonhuman animals stand as important sources for music students to learn the aesthetics of performing certain genres (see chapter two). Furthermore, nonhuman animals act as critical audiences for music themselves (see chapters three and four).

The distinction between nature and culture is important to the modernist project not because it imagines the two as separate, but because it sets up nature as something that can be controlled and exploited for the benefits of human consumers. Rather than relationality and interdependency, it promotes dominion. The musical practices I outline in this dissertation are incompatible with neoliberal modernity because they acknowledge and depend on an

entanglement of humans and nonhumans that does not fit within this model of the division of nature and culture. The musicians I profile take nonhuman animals and even some nonliving nonhumans as teachers, consumers, and bearers of shared heritage. Horses, mountains, and ghosts are taken as having similar musical capacities to humans through their roles in transmitting and consuming cultural heritage.

Harvey argues that under conditions of neoliberal modernity, people strive to homogenize and rationalize society (1989). Trouillot asserts that colonial, capitalist modernization depends on the existence of native "Others" and external "Elsewheres" (2002). As such modernity creates what he calls "alter-natives," other modernities that exist alongside and in opposition to the global colonial hegemony of the West.

As citizens of a post-socialist former Soviet satellite state, Mongolian people first experienced global capitalism in its early neoliberal form in the 1990s. I argue that through the designation of cultural practices as "heritage," people operating under the conditions of neoliberalism invite the creation of neoliberal modernity's internal "Others." The incorporation of difference into neoliberal institutions that people achieve through the mobilization of heritage creates contexts in which those people can build toward more-than-human futures beyond modernity.

For Trouillot, the creation of these "Others" and "Elsewheres" is an oppressive function for maintaining capitalist modernity. However, I argue that there may be an emancipatory potential for people to use heritage as a way of transforming their conditions from within modernist institutions. This potential that exists in the interplay between imagining entangled more-than-human cultural practices and engaging with the material lives of nonhumans.

What could we learn from considering heritage as a form of future-making? Tuyaa sees a future beyond late capitalism, a future that may well be beyond humanity. Heritage is a way of organizing practices and their underpinning ideologies that do not fit well within the global modernist capitalist model. Included in this cluster of practices and ideas are social forms of relationality among humans, as well as with land and with nonhumans that are potential ways of rebuilding after modernity falls apart.

This dissertation is a work of posthumanism, keeping with the posthuman turn in anthropology (Haraway 2003, Kirksey and Helmreich 2010, Kohn 2013, Tsing 2015, Govindrajan 2018), in that I engage with the subjectivities and agencies of nonhumans, particularly animals (chapters two, three, and five) and mountains (chapter four). Further, this is an anthropology that engages *posthumans* themselves, whether as the aliens picking over the ruined husk of what was once Earth culture for evidence of art and emotion as in Tuyaa's quote, as the perfected beings of a Buddhist Maitreya era when humanity ascends to its next form (chapter six), or as the ghosts of people killed during purges populating haunted spaces (chapter four).

I draw from this body of literature to argue that there is a potential for heritage which accomplishes something other than generating capital for the tourism industry (Graham 2002) or generating hegemonic power for a nation-state (Handler 1988), both of which strengthen neoliberal hegemony. The heritage-bearers I worked with in Mongolia use musical heritage as a way to build and maintain more-than-human networks of relation. Designation of these cultural practices that are otherwise incompatible with neoliberal modernity opens the door for musicians to use those practices to imagine futures beyond modernity.

For David Anderson, operating successfully within a sentient ecology depends on what he calls "knowing," an embodied understanding of one's place within a broader set of more-than-human relations across a landscape (2000, 117). Bringing Feld's argument that musical practice is an embodied, multi-sensory, and more-than-human form of place-making (1996), I argue that music is a significant way of "knowing" a sentient ecology. Furthermore, I contend that musical practice is a way of *being known* within a sentient ecology. The performance of musical heritage, through its introduction of ontological difference to the world of modernist neoliberal institutions, allows for people whose relationships with environmental nonhumans have been damaged or destroyed by ecological destruction to know and be known within an ecosystem.

Mongolia and More-than-Human Agency

Throughout these ethnographic treatments of more-than-human relations persists the question of how to represent the agency of nonhumans. Nonhumans have the capacity for materially engaging with their circumstances in transformative ways. To describe the role of animals and the land in the performance of musical heritage requires attending to the agency of those nonhumans without anthropomorphizing them.

Tsing writes that living organisms, including nonhumans, are all involved world-making (2015, 22). Agency in this configuration is the capacity for each species to transform the world in the process of making it habitable. In Tsing's example, human management of land through burning creates ideal conditions for pine growths, which bring with them matsutake mushrooms. These mushrooms then become central not only to the diets of local nonhuman animals like deer and bears, but also to an international trade network formed by human foragers. The interplay of these world-making activities brings human, mushroom, pine, and deer lifeways into what Tsing

refers to as an “assemblage,” a gathering of distinct but interacting species that create patterns of unintentional coordination (22-23).

Kohn argues that nonhuman entities have agency in their capacity to think (2013: 43). He redefines "thinking" as a semiotic way of engaging with the self and others, which consists of living beings creating meaning (72) and relating to other beings through representation (83-84). Kohn's "selves" consist of humans and living nonhumans, especially animals, trees, and insects. However, his definition of nonhuman agency as “thinking” expressly excludes nonliving entities, like geological features (94).

In this dissertation, living beings—including humans, non-human animals, and plants—participate in the performance and transmission of heritage. Beyond living entities, non-living nonhumans, especially ghosts and sacred mountains, also participate alongside their living counterparts. As such, I follow actor-network theory, referring to humans and nonhumans alike as "actors" (Latour 2005). For Latour, “*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor – or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant” (71). Using this definition, I take humans, animals, mountains, and even abstractions like institutions as having equal capacity to act within the network of musical heritage transmission, codification and performance.

Latour suggests that social scientists should move away from making assumptions based on the existence of intangible background forces, like “society” or “power” (2005, 22). As such, rather than taking “agency” as a nebulous potential for action inherent to certain entities, Latour refers to “agencies” in the plural, as accounts of actions that make a difference in the state of affairs (52). These anonymous agencies are “actants,” given form through what he names “figuration,” in which the actor committing the action or driving another to act is identified (53-54). This approach to agencies that avoids vague, anthropocentric forces in favor of studying traceable associations and transformations between humans,

animals, and objects allows for commentary on the role the nonhumans play alongside humans in musical production without assigning particular “intention” to them. Below I will give an overview of some of the kinds of agency that nonhumans can have in Mongolia. There are many agencies that can be figured as “a horse” in this context: as a symbol of the nation, as an economic product for a pastoral economy, as a spiritual being, as a material creature that consumes and reproduces, and as kin to humans and other animals.

Mobile, nomadic pastoralism has been a significant part of regional economies on the territory now known as Mongolia since at least the third century BCE (Atwood 2004, 16). As of 2019 the National Statistics Office of Mongolia reports that total national population of the “five snouts” of traditionally tended nomadic livestock (sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and horses) has reached over 70 million, compared to the human population of only 3.2 million (Үндэсний Статистикийн Хороо. n.d.). Nomadic pastoralism is a mode of economy involves deep interdependence of human and animal, as well as active management of the health of the landscape (Humphrey and Sneath 1999).

Nonhuman animals have a social role within Mongolian pastoralist encampments that goes beyond their role as economic capital for herders. Fijn writes that livestock actively co-produce place alongside their human herders, forming what she terms a "co-domestic sphere" (2011). In addition to producing place, Marchina writes that herders describe nonhuman animals as demonstrating a capacity for human-like nostalgia for their birthplace (*“nutag”*), contributing meaningfully in herders' social valuation of rural landscapes (2019, 78).

Livestock animals have spiritual power as well. Through a Tibetan Buddhist ceremony called *seterlekh,* an individual livestock animal can be designated the *seter,* and dedicated to a deity (Fijn 2011, 231; Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, 237). Once consecrated, it is forbidden to ride or slaughter the animal, and the animal is given relative freedom of movement across the pasture. In return, the animal acts as a

living connection between the family who "sacrificed" it and the deity to which it was dedicated. The *seter* animal is expected to use this connection to protect the rest of its herd (Fijn 2011, 231), as well as to bring the family prosperity and fertility (Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, 237).

Because of Mongolia's long tradition of mobile pastoralism, livestock animals, especially the five snouts, have become symbols of Mongolian culture. In both socialist and post-socialist Mongolia that state used the figure of horses and horsemen to represent the nation (Bulag 1998). Myadar argues that the image of the man on horseback tending to flocks of livestock, the "imaginary nomad," has become a symbol of Mongolian rural life both for nationalists within the country and for Westerners seeking an orientalized, exotic other to consume through tourism (2011). Bulag goes further to argue that Mongolian nationalists use the performative consumption and nonconsumption of certain animals to create ethno-nationalist distinction between themselves and their ethnic Chinese neighbors, splitting up animals into "virtuous" pastoral livestock and "dirty" agricultural livestock (particularly pork, symbolizing Chinese foodways writ large) (1998, 203).

The use of the horse as a symbol for a new, modern, masculine Mongolian nation is emblematized on the horse's head carving on the horse-fiddle itself. Two to four stringed fiddles were common in pre-modern Mongolia with a wide variation of head carvings including not only a whole host of animals, but also demons, Buddhist symbols, and mythical astrological creatures like the *matar* ("leviathan") and *matar-zögii* ("bee-leviathan") (Pegg 2001). The horse-fiddle was standardized and mobilized by the Mongolian People's Party in the 20th century through newly established musical institutions as the symbol of socialist, cosmopolitan Mongolia (Marsh 2009).

Landscapes and their physical features are not merely passive backdrops to these relationships between humans and animals. As both Sneath and Madison-Pískatá show in their examinations of national sacrifices to sacred mountains, landscape features contain spiritual entities that participate in the

local social lives of their surrounding areas as well as the political functioning of the Mongolian state at large (2014; 2018). Far from disenchanting the land, breakages from traditional relations with mountains, like the widespread introduction of industrial mining, have intensified encounters between humans and earthbound spirits, as Mette High demonstrates in her ethnographic treatment of dangerous run-ins between humans and earth spirits known as "black *lus*" at mining sites (2017). In *Tragic Spirits*, Manduhai Buyandelger demonstrates how active management of relations with spirits is vital to survival in Mongolia as the country goes through successive political upheavals (2013).

Beyond "actors" and "agencies," the concepts of "intermediary" and "mediator" from actor-network theory will be useful for this analysis (Latour 2005, 39). Both concepts refer to entities that transmit meaning or force from one actor to another. Intermediaries do so without transforming the force they are transmitting, while mediators "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry" (39). In chapter one, horse-fiddles appear as mediators, transmitting spiritual force between humans, horses, and landscapes through their performance. In chapter five, stone cairns called *ovoo* fulfill a similar role, transmitting offerings from human performers to sacred mountains.

Research Context

Mongolia was a socialist state under heavy political and economic influence from the Soviet Union from 1921 to 1990. Though Mongolia was never fully colonized by the USSR, it was the first Soviet satellite state (Isono 1976) and was subjected to Soviet colonialism. During the socialist period, the communist party strove to create a socialist Mongol nation to replace smaller ethnic, social, and regional attachments (Bulag 1998).

The Mongolian People's Party set out to accomplish this goal by raising the culture of the majority ethnic group, the Khalkha, to the level of national culture by standardizing, modernizing, and

normalizing Khalkha cultural processes (Bulag 1998). Turino asserts that the use of expressive practices like music to create the nation, what he calls "cultural nationalism" is “one of the essential pillars upon which the entire nationalist edifice stands" (2003, 175). Nascent states engaged in what Turino refers to as "modernist reformism," creating a new national culture by bringing selected elements of folk culture in line with modern, cosmopolitan modes of presentation (176). State agents created this national canon of music through the creation of folk orchestras and through the incorporation of local musical elements as aesthetic flourishes on otherwise European-derived compositions.

Turino argues that Latin American states used musical reformism to create capitalist nations of consumers (2003, 181-182). However, writing on 20th century Zimbabwe, he extends the general concept of musical nationalism to any use of music in a nationalist political project (2000, 190). Accordingly, this same process of music reformism was used by socialist ruling parties in the Soviet Union and Soviet Satellite States, including Mongolia, to weaken prior affiliations and instill modernist nationalism in their citizens as well. In *Performing Democracy,* Buchanan describes how Bulgaria established folk orchestras and housed them at newly formed institutions to disseminate socialist ideology in an attempt to forge a nation of socialist citizens (2006). This process of cultural reformism through institutionalization was a fundamental part of nation-building throughout the socialist world, including the Soviet Union (Bloch 2004), the Eastern Bloc (Rice 1996, Buchanan 2006), China (Rees 1998), and Mongolia (Marsh 2009).

In further attempts to foster national sentiment, the Mongolian People’s Party established musical institutions, like those set up throughout the Soviet Union and broader socialist world, in order to teach a standardized, performance-oriented corpus of music, thereby bringing a high degree of Soviet, socialist modernism to Mongolian musical practice (Marsh 2009). European instruments such as the piano and violin were brought into Mongolia and taught alongside pre-socialist Mongolian instruments

such as spike fiddles (like the two-stringed *morin khuur* and the two-to-four stringed *khuuchir*) and zithers (*yatga, yoochin*). As part of this project, luthiers and musicians standardized construction and musical aesthetics of those traditional instruments, historically open to wide, regional variation, for stage performance (Pegg 2001; Marsh 2009). The horse-fiddle emerged as the primary instrument of this new Mongolian nation, a connection between pre-socialist musical practices and socialist modern aesthetics.

While the literature on music reformism and cultural nationalism centers on the use of symbols to mobilize human actors, the lives and social roles of nonhumans were also materially affected by nationalizing projects. The process of musical reformism in Mongolia implicitly involved a separation of music and nonhuman animals. Before institutionalization, the primary locations for both the performance and transmission of traditional fiddle and vocal music were either within a pastoral encampment or in a rural pasture (Pegg 2001; Marsh 2009). Moving the primary location of performing, hearing, and learning horse-fiddle music from pastoral contexts to newly-established urban stages and conservatories, reducing the ability for livestock to participate fully in the reproduction of traditional music as they had previously. Though people continued to play and learn music in rural contexts with nonhuman audiences and teachers in mind throughout the socialist period, the development of a modern Mongolian national music involved a movement away from nonhuman animals, a serious cause for concern for the horse-fiddle teachers I interviewed.

In the late 1980's, a resistance movement formed among foreign-educated Mongolian elites, which made heavy use of home-grown rock music to spread pro-democratic messages (Fineman 1990; Ginsburg 1999). In 1991, that movement succeeded in bringing about a peaceful revolution and Mongolia shifted from single-party state socialism to parliamentary democracy and opened its borders to the West. After this transition, Western European and American musical styles became popular among

Mongolian cosmopolitans, especially pop-rock, hip-hop, and heavy metal, and a commercial music industry emerged (Marsh 2006).

For all of the changes to the political and musical context of Mongolia during this period, the seventy years of Soviet-inspired socialism had left its mark. The musical institutions established during that period, such as the Music and Dance College, remain important centers for the transmission of music and entrance into the musical profession to this day. Furthermore, the model of traditional music education developed during this period remains standard for horse-fiddle teachers at more recently established conservatories like the Arts and Culture University and even at the private fiddle schools that have come into being with the withdrawal of state funding for the arts. Current discourses in Mongolia surrounding cultural heritage continue an institutionalization of music reminiscent of the socialist cultural project, though from a very different perspective that privileges the past and tradition, rather than the future and modernization.

The 20th century brought two distinct political pushes for modernizing Mongolia. The communist modernity espoused by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party during the socialist era was focused on the dissolution of aristocracy and the ascendancy of scientific rationalism over religious and superstitious thinking (Wallace 2012)**.** The neoliberal modernism of the democratic-capitalist era in Mongolia, on the other hand, is characterized by materialism and individualism (Buyandelger 2013), with significant privatization of music education and heritage resources.

These two modernist ideologies, although both concerned with a linear model of social progress, are at odds with each other. The focus on individual choice promoted by the democratic-capitalist modernity is based on a radically different model of relations of production; its underlying capitalist materialism is anathema to the ideology of socialist modernism. Wallace (2012) argues that the

ideological rift between these two forms of modernism created a “crisis of modernity” in Mongolia at the end of the twentieth century.

These two political eras represent incredibly different societies, and as such Mongolian musicians have actively transformed their cultural and economic practices to manage the crisis of modernity. Throughout both periods, Mongolian musicians have actively blended local elements into these foreign-inspired, transnational modernist endeavors in order to establish Mongolia's place as a distinct, unique entity within the modernist world. The horse-fiddle has also retained its status through the transition from socialism to democracy as the main instrument for sounding Mongolian heritage. As Marsh argues, the horse-fiddle has represented a cosmopolitan Mongolian nation both in the socialist and post-socialist eras (2009).

Into the 21st century, horse-fiddle and its related genres, particularly long-song, were the first elements to be included on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage for the country. Musicians in a variety of emergent popular genres, from rock to heavy metal to rap music, have employed the instrument and elements from traditional genres to appeal sonically to Mongolian nomadic aesthetics. In the post-socialist era, the horse-fiddle has become a way for Mongolian musicians to ground their transnational musical practice in local sounds.

Methods

This dissertation draws on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork in central Mongolia. My research focused on the *morin khuur,* or “horse-fiddle.” This research puts a particular emphasis on one genre associated with the instrument in particular, long-song. In addition to being the first two elements inscribed on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage for Mongolia (UNESCO 2008, Annex 3), the performance of horse-fiddle and long-song emerged in my interviews as uniquely important for more-than-human relations.

I draw on semi-structured interviews and participant-observation in two areas of central Mongolia: the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, and Dundgovi province. Both Ulaanbaatar and Dundgovi province have central, but different, roles in heritage administration in Mongolia. In Ulaanbaatar the music schools, concert halls, and orchestras established as part of the socialist project maintain a central role in the transmission, performance, and administration of musical heritage. Ulaanbaatar operates as a central hub, drawing musicians and music students from around the country to pursue careers as professional performers of traditional music.

Following the ethical agreement under which I conducted this research, I will refer to my interviewees using pseudonyms. I conducted the majority of the fieldwork that informs this dissertation in the Mongolian language first, followed by personally transcribing and translating my interviews and notes. Unless otherwise specified, I quote my interlocutors in translation from Mongolian to English.

In keeping with my research's focus on music, I used ethnomusicological methods as well. Drawing on literature that addresses the research potential of music apprenticeship (Hood 1960, Rice 2003, Hahn 2007, Shelemay 2008, Bizas 2014), I enrolled in courses with a private horse-fiddle teacher, playing accompaniment with long-song vocal courses at the University of Arts and Culture. Following Wong's use of group musical performance as a distinct kind of authoethnographic method (2008), I joined the University of Arts and Culture's Horse-Fiddle Ensemble, participating in rehearsals and performances. These experiences allowed me to reflect on my own role as a student and performer through autoethnography of my experiences learning the instrument.

Rhythm and Mobility

I am interested in musical heritage, which is to say musical practices that have been identified, codified, and managed as representing traditional culture by an institution. As such, my research focuses primarily on perspectives of people operating within urban institutions as they imagine alternative futures by drawing on their pasts and their imaginaries of a nomadic Mongolian way of life. Despite the fact that this research took me around the country, I do not consider my research multi-sited. Throughout the course of my research I stayed within a fairly tight community of musicians, heritage bearers, and pastoralists. The reality is that in practice few people in Mongolia are fully "settled" or fully "nomadic." For the most part people spend part of the year in cities and towns, and part of the year in rural pastures. As such, I followed friends and hosts and they went about their normal yearly cycles. These cycles involved staying in rural Dundgovi during the spring to help with pastoral labor and in the early Fall to participate in *nair* and staying in Ulaanbaatar during the Winter and early summer to follow the normal operation of conservatories and the National Philharmonic.

Mobility is the fundamental aspect of Inner Asian nomadic pastoralism in that it allows for repeated pasturing on land that cannot support multiple consecutive years of foraging or agriculture (Fernández-Giménez 2002). Mobility of humans and livestock alike is such a core feature of Inner Asian economies that Humphrey and Sneath argue that the term "nomadism" would be better replaced with "mobile pastoralism" (Humphrey and Sneath 1999). Orhon Myadar warns against reifying an orientalist, essentializing view of a discrete Mongolian nomadic society that is uniquely mobile and separate from the country's rapidly increasing urban population (2011). Werner and Barcus argue that people flow between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles based on need, but that access to mobility is gendered in both nomadic and sedentary contexts (2015). Mobility and immobility are structured out across Mongolian life, not as a simple binary between (rural) nomadic people and (urban) settled people. As Marchina

points out, mobility is as much a part of the lives of nonhuman animals in Mongolia as it is human lives (2019).

Harvey and Bauman argue that modernity and its later stages (post-modernity for Harvey, "liquid" or late modernity for Bauman) have led to major reconstructions of the ways in which time and space are experienced (1990; 2000). Although they frame the transformation in different terms, Harvey and Bauman both argue that these reconstructions of society have restructured social material relations around the world, leading to increased mobility of people, objects, and ideas. Hannam et. al pick up and expand on this idea, arguing that new forms of mobility emerge from and are enabled by the fixities, spatial attachments, and institutions that they destabilize by cutting across rooted attachments to one place with rhizomatic attachments across space (2006). In the wake of these emergent mobilities, Urry questions the study of "societies" in social science, which he argues is based on nationalist ideas that become less important after the restructuring of networks across national borders (2000). He posits that social scientists should move from studying societies to studying mobilities and the global civil society that mobilities both result from and create.

Rather than taking urban and rural Mongolia as discrete, bounded societies, my research follows the flows of people, animals, and music between and across urban and rural space in Ulaanbaatar and its surrounding provinces. As Novak argues, the circulation of music through its encoded technologies is a performance in and of itself that has the potential of creating new audiences (2013), a potential that was not lost on Tuyaa when she described sending "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*" into space on a satellite for "whoever comes after." This is not to claim that there is totally free movement between city and country. Following Gavin Steingo, I examine the generative possibilities that *immobilities* can have for humans and music as well

(2015), adding that in the Mongolian case nonhuman animals also experience and respond to these immobilities.

The mobilities and immobilities driving musical heritage in central Mongolia operate on a series of rhythms: the nomadic rhythm of the change of pastures with the seasons, the semester-by-semester rhythm of students and teachers flowing in and out of Ulaanbaatar with the start and end of conservatory instruction, the biological rhythms of livestock birth and death, and the rhythms of the songs themselves. Following Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis,* I take these rhythms as repeated engagements that meaningfully construct space, and the social world at large, through near (but never perfect) replication over time (2004). Himself inspired by musical rhythms, Lefebvre coined the term “rhythmanalysis” to describe an analytical tool for examining these rhythms. He takes rhythm at various levels, from the large-scale movements of people and objects to the very minute rhythms of the body.

The various rhythms of social life interacting with one another cause a certain polyrhythmia, a cacophonous social state as the patterns of people, landscapes, and natural phenomena overlap. Lefebvre argues that people, knowingly and unknowingly, attempt to manage polyrhythmia by bringing their rhythms into sync with those around them to avoid arrhythmia, a state a dissonance where those rhythms come in to direct conflict with each other to the detriment of the social, mental, and physical well-being of those actors involved.

Lefebvre argues that as all rhythms are experienced in relation to the body' rhythms, any analysis of the rhythms of social life must take into account how those rhythms are embodied. Drawing on Despret's theory of bodily movement as the fundamental medium through which interspecies communication between humans and nonhuman animals occur (2004), I focused on moments when human performers used musical rhythms to create connections with nonhuman

animals. Human performers use musical heritage to try to create what Lefebvre terms "eurythmia," a harmonious state where disparate rhythms are brought into productive relation, across species boundaries as they attend to the rhythms of nonhuman animals through their performance.

Ulaanbaatar and Dundgovi

Ulaanbaatar sits on the Tuul river in central Mongolia, in a bowl formed by four sacred mountains. It would be hard to overstate the centrality of Ulaanbaatar to Mongolian society. Originally established as the seat of religious power in the 17th century, Ulaanbaatar has been the capital of independent Mongolia since 1924 (Atwood 2004). It is by far the largest city in the country. The Mongolian National Statistics Office reports that the city housed a population of over 1.4 million people as of the end of 2018, nearly half of the total population of the country (Үндэсний Статистикийн Хороо. n.d.). Ulaanbaatar was the center of the socialist music project during the 20th century, housing the Music and Dance College and National Philharmonic. It has maintained this central role in the post-socialist era, as the main node in the newly privatized music industry.

In Ulaanbaatar I interviewed 15 horse-fiddle performers and teachers from the Mongolian State University of Arts and Culture[2], National Conservatory[3], and National Horse-head Fiddle[4] Ensemble. Of the fiddlers I interviewed, I will present those perspectives that I found particularly representative of broader concepts that appeared in multiple interviews. As such, the voice of Boldoo, the affable middle-aged man who moved from rural western Mongolia to Ulaanbaatar in

[2] Монгол Улсын Соёл Урлагийн Их Сургууль
[3] Монгол Улсын Консерватори, formerly known as Хөгжим Бүжигийн Коллеж
[4] Монгол Улсын Морин Хуурын Чуулга

the 1980s to teach fiddle comes up multiple times. As does the voice of Tüvshee, the self-proclaimed urbanite and experimental musician, who supplements his day job as a music professor with an electronics business.

I also interviewed 5 heritage collectors, administrators, and researchers, almost exclusively young to middle-aged women based out of these institutions. Tuyaa, whose perspective will come up multiple times throughout the dissertation, was herself denied the opportunity to become a horse-fiddle performer due to the misogynistic practices of a prominent horse-fiddle teacher throughout the latter half of the 20th century. As such, she turned to cultural heritage research and collection as a way to explore her interest in the instrument.

In the winter Ulaanbaatar deals with some of the worst air pollution in the world due to the way the city traps the smoke coming from small homesteads around the city that have to burn coal to stave off the brutal cold (Hasenkopf 2012). The population of Ulaanbaatar is rising rapidly, with more people driven to settle in the city as *zud,* winter disasters caused by a drought followed by heavy snowfall, kills off large portions of livestock and makes pastoral life more and more untenable in rural parts of the country. As the population of Ulaanbaatar increases, the dual ecological catastrophes of *zud* and air pollution are exacerbated by the disastrous everyday functioning of the neoliberal state, which is incapable of providing services, including non-coal-based heating, to a rapidly increasing urban population.

Figure 0.1 Sükhbaatar Square in Ulaanbaatar, Blue Sky Obscured by Winter Air Pollution. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Dundgovi is a mostly rural province in south-central Mongolia. Grassy steppe in the northern part of the province transitions to the semi-arid steppe of the Gobi to the south. Though long-song is performed throughout Mongolia and Inner Mongolia (Yoon 2013), Dundgovi has a particular place as the home of Namjilyn Norovbanzad, the performer who brought long-song to the international stage in the mid-20th century. Her style, tied intimately with the Dundgovi landscape, has since become the standard among Ulaanbaatar-based long-song instructors.

In Dundgovi I interviewed a cohort of 5 elderly long-song singers and teachers in their 70s and 80s. Damdin, whose perspective as a fiddler and long-song singer informs much of this dissertation, has lived as a herder in northern Dundgovi for most of his long life. Tsogt, the long-song and horse-praise song singer, has a more complicated relationship with the pasture, having moved between herding and truck driving a multiple points in his career before retiring to his home county tend to a flock of sheep and goats. Over the course of several visits, I interviewed and worked with 10 other herders in northern

Dundgovi. Byambaa and Mandaa, two brothers in their 30s and 40s respectively who tend to the majority of their family's herds, provide much needed herder perspectives on the use of cultural heritage as living pastoral practice.

I began working with people in and from Dundgovi long before this dissertation project began. Over the course of repeated visits between 2010 to 2015 I watched as a significant summer water source for livestock in the county transform from lake, to seasonal pond, to dry bed. When I returned in the spring of 2017 and asked what happened to the lake, one of the elder herders named Myagmar, told me it had become a memory. Desertification and drought are major sources of concern for people in Dundgovi. Though there are no active mines in the particular county where I worked most closely, there are active mines throughout the Gobi and their ecological effects bring the true desert further and further north each year. For Damdin and Tsogt, who base their performances of long-song on the ecological and aesthetic layout of their steppe homeland, this desertification has troubling indications for their musical heritage as well as their livelihoods.

Figure 0.2 Dundgovi in the Summer. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Horse-Fiddle and Long-Song

The *morin khuur* is a two-stringed, bowed instrument. The instrument is often referred to as "horse-head fiddle" or "horse-headed fiddle" in English for the decorative horse's head carved into the pegbox. I will refer to the instrument as "horse-fiddle" throughout the text to stay closer to the original Mongolian name. Though there is slight variation in the size, they are typically about 3 feet long. The distinctive horse's head carving leads to a slender neck, which goes through the instrument's trapezoidal soundbox. As a part of the socialist modernization of the instrument, the traditional soundbox – a wooden frame with a sheepskin face – was replaced with a western style wooden soundbox with f-holes and a soundpost (Marsh 2009).

The two strings of the horse-fiddle are made of bundles of horsehair. Viewed from the front, the thinner string on the left is composed of 105 hairs while the thicker string on the right is composed of 130 hairs. Standard tuning sets the strings a fourth apart, the right string tuned to F and the left tuned to Bb. A less conventional tuning, more popular in western Mongolia, sets the strings a fifth apart, to Eb and Bb.

Figure 0.3 The Morin Khuur or "Horse-Fiddle." Photograph by KG Hutchins.

The instrument does not have an endpin, so the player holds the horse-fiddle between their legs. The player holds the bow of the instrument underhand with their right hand and manipulates the tone by lightly pressing the strings one the left side with the fingers of their left hand. For index and middle finger, the performer presses the top of their fingernail, near the cuticle into the side of the string. For the ring and pinky fingers, the player presses on the string with their fingertips, catch the string in the space between the finger and the nail. One of the primary genres of music associated with the horse-fiddle is *urtyn duu,* or "long-song." Long-song is a genre of music for voice, horse-fiddle, and flute. The genre gets its name from the way singers perform the texts, extending verses of only 6 to 12 words over melodies that last several minutes. Performers extend these short densely poetic texts over the course of highly melismatic improvisations.

As I mentioned above, long-song play a central role in Gobi social life, as the opener and closer for traditional celebrations. Long-song are also critical to relationships between humans and nonhumans due to their connection to landscape. In Dundgovi, long-song performers attempt to sound the landscape through their performance, affecting the vastness of the steppe through their improvisations. Long-song singers and fiddlers also perform for landscape, singing to the steppe and large rock features throughout the province as a form of worship or spiritual energy development.

Ethnomusicologist Carole Pegg describes long-song as sonic mimesis of the Inner Asian steppe, as the meandering, highly melismatic melodies recreate the topography of the landscape (2001, 106). Sunmin Yoon writes that because of the deep aesthetic and moral relationship between long-song and the local landscape, herders in rural Mongolia perform this music as a way to connect with their livestock and the land on an embodied, spiritual level (2019). As a genre of heritage music there is a major industry surrounding long-song education and

performance based out of Ulaanbaatar, pushing long-song singers to both draw on imaginaries of the rural steppe and connect with distinctly urban nonhumans in performance as well.

Horse-fiddlers both play long-song solo and as an accompaniment for vocalists. When accompanying a vocalist, the fiddler follows the lead of the singer, trying to match their improvisations. According to many of the horse-fiddlers and long-song singers I interviewed, a good fiddler should follow audibly behind the singer to avoid overtaking them. In performance this leads to a kind of echo effect that further reinforces the sonic connection between the genre and the vastness of the steppe landscape.

Structure of Chapters

In this dissertation I will describe several cases of human performers using musical heritage to connect with nonhumans as a way of imagining more-than-human futures beyond neoliberal modernity. In chapter one I examine how the horse-fiddle works as a mediator bringing humans, animals, and the land into relation with each other through the performance of the instrument. Chapters two, three, and four will focus on how human performers use heritage as a form of relating to nonhuman animals, using musical performance to create an embodied sense of interspecies empathy. Chapter five then considers how human performers use heritage to appeal to a larger network of nonhumans, including ghosts of deceased humans and landscape features like sacred mountains alongside animals. Whether these appeals are accepted by their intended audience is uncertain, indicating that ambiguity will be a fundamental part of building more-than-human relations in the face of the current climate crisis.

Chapter one follows a common thread from my interviews, that the horse-fiddle is “an instrument with its own soul” (*sünstei khögjim*). Its chords and bowstring must be made with the

hair of a living horse, creating a sympathetic link between fiddle, horse, and human performer. This connection between human and horse is what forms the soul of the fiddle**.** This chapter explores what it means for a horse, a human, and a musical instrument to share a soul. Individual horses are often identified by color, markings, and age as the composers of horse-fiddle songs that translate their specific gaits into musical form for human audience. The fiddle grants humans access to the world of ungulates, as herders use the instrument to calm horses and coax mother camels to nurse their calves. In this chapter I examine how the spirit of the horse-fiddle complicates the boundaries between human and nonhuman. The exploration of this boundary is especially salient in this post-socialist context where the breakdown of state repression of religious and spiritual practice has led to resurgence movements of Buddhism and folk religion along with the rapid spread of consumption-driven global New Age spirituality, each of which presents unique and at times conflicting definitions of what it means to be a person.

Chapter two focuses on how urban musical institutions, particularly the University of Arts and Culture's Music Department and the National Horsehead Fiddle Ensemble, are transformed from their Soviet-style formation through interactions with pastoralism and herd animals that have aesthetic importance for the performance of traditional and classical music. Performers of the horse-fiddle often claim that in order to play the instrument in an emotionally evocative way the fiddler must have an intimate knowledge of rural landscapes and an ability to empathize with livestock animals especially horses. However, to be a professional horse-fiddler in Mongolia involves considerable engagement with urban institutions, from the conservatories that give fiddlers' their accreditation, to the orchestras and ensembles that employ them. This chapter explores the various methods that musicians, composers, and music teachers use to manage what they see as an increasing gap in the pastoral knowledge considered a vital aspect of

the performance of the instrument among urban performers, and how those strategies transform urban institutions through interactions between of institutional heritage and pastoral, multi-species musical engagement.

Chapter three moves from the urban institution to the rural pasture, describing the application of song as a herding tool in Dundgovi province. The livestock-birthing season in rural Mongolia in early spring is a crucial time for both humans and non-human animals. While pastoralists throughout the country have many different approaches for managing the challenges they face during this time, herders in Dundgovi have a special set of tools for adopting orphaned livestock to new mothers: species-specific, semi-improvisational songs. These songs are herders' primary method for instigating nursing and developing parental bonds between orphaned newborns and foster mothers. In this chapter I take instances of livestock-singing in the Gobi as opportunities for the creation of mutual empathy between herder and animal. These performances implicate humans in the emotional worlds of sheep and give sheep the role of audiences of music— a position usually reserved for humans.

Chapter four follows a group of long-song singers as they travel to Hustai National Park, just outside of Ulaanbaatar, to sing for a population of wild horses. These diminutive wild equines, known as *takhi* or Przewalski's horses, were once nearly extinct in central Mongolia before being repopulated by concerted natural heritage conservation efforts throughout the 90's and early 2000's. This chapter examines how a group of long-song singers empathized with the *takhi* as a community of fellow post-socialist subjects and used long-song in an attempt to forge cross-species bonds with them. In this chapter, the performers entangle cultural and natural heritage in their use of long-song to welcome the *takhi* back to the steppe. By positioning the

takhi as a critical audience of long-song, the performers open up the category of "heritage bearer" to non-human actors.

Chapter five builds on the previous chapters' examination of human-animal musical relations to consider a fuller range of more-than-human relations that includes nonliving nonhumans such as mountains and ghosts. In this chapter I present three stories about humans engaging these more-than-human networks by interacting with *ovoo,* spiritually significant piles of stone that adorn natural heritage cites. As environmentally-sourced artifacts that grow in size with each interaction with humans, *ovoos* delineate both space and time in ecologically and politically charged ways. Their presence and power as spiritual beings and historical markers is derived from and enacted upon the ecological and social landscapes which they oversee. This chapter explores how *ovoo* instigate, mediate, and commemorate conflict in ways that entangle environmental and cultural heritage and bring together the lives of humans, animals, and nonliving nonhumans through artistic performance.

Conclusion

Each of the following chapters presents a case in which a more-than-human social interaction is vital to the performance of horse-fiddle, long-song, or both. In these cases, the performance of horse-fiddle or long-song is also vital to sustaining interspecies relations. Though my focus is on nonhuman animals, musical interactions between humans and horses depends on broader more-than-human networks that include sacred mountains, ghosts, and others. The horse-fiddle itself, taken as a being with its own "flesh, blood, and soul," is part of this more-than-human community.

The designation of the horse-fiddle and long-song as "cultural heritage" brings them into modernity without rationalizing them completely. Heritage ascribes value to the aspects of these

musical performances that do not fit well within neoliberal modernity. Horses and ghosts do not typically have a place in modernist institutions as teachers or critical consumers of music, which are built on the fundamental premise of the secular separation of nature from culture. As heritage, horse-fiddle music brings considerations for nonhumans that would otherwise fall under the category of "nature" into institutions, the realm of "culture."

Tuyaa imagined the potential for other futures beyond capitalist modernity. She described rural, Mongolian, semi-desert futures that stretch out far beyond the destruction of the Mongolian landscape, and potentially beyond the destruction of life on Earth. Throughout this dissertation I present the perspectives of musicians, herders, and heritage bearers as they work toward creating alternatives to modernity from within modern institutions, using modernist bureaucracies. Heritage is the key to building these alternatives because it allows people to forge more-than-human relationships that challenge the nature/culture binary underpinning modernity.

Chapter 1

Ghosts in the Fiddle:

Imagining Other Modernities through Heritage

Throughout this dissertation I will present several cases in which Mongolian people have used traditional music to interact with nonhumans. The horse-fiddle teachers in chapter two insist that some genres of horse-fiddle music can only be truly learned in part from horses and camels, and bulls. In chapter three, herders in Dundgovi province use traditional song to encourage sheep to nurse orphaned lambs. In the fourth chapter, long-song singers to create a connection with the *takhi* horses at Hustai National Park. Finally, in chapter five long-song performers sing and play the fiddle for sacred mountains as a form of prayer.

All of these interactions between humans and nonhumans involved at least one of the following aspects of musical heritage: the *morin khuur* or "horse-fiddle," and *urtyn duu* or "long-song." In some cases, like Tüvshee's performance for Bogd Khan mountain which I will discuss in chapter five, connecting with a field of nonhumans involved both as he played long-song on his horse-fiddle. There is a connection between the centrality of these two musical elements to human-nonhuman relations and the fact that horse-fiddle and long-song were the first two elements inscribed on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding for Mongolia (2008).

I take cultural heritage to be practices and beliefs that have been institutionally recognized and managed through the neoliberal politics of heritage. Certain elements of cultural heritage in Mongolia, especially the horse-fiddle and its related genres, were already institutionalized in the service of the secularizing socialist project in the 20th century, before being institutionalized again as heritage in the 21st. How then does the horse-fiddle, an

instrument that has undergone these successive institutionalizations participate in more-than-human future-making? I argue that the horse-fiddle opens up discursive space for musicians to use cultural heritage to critically examine the world and their relationships with nonhumans from within modernist institutions. The fiddle has this power because it is a "mediator" (Latour 2005, 39), an object that both transmits and transforms the meanings of "horse" and "human" across species boundaries.

In most of my interviews with horse-fiddle players, a common idea has come up time and time again with regards to the fiddle's ability to connect humans with nonhumans. The explanation goes as follows: The fiddle's chords and bow strings can only be made from the hair of a living horse, never from a deceased one. The body is made with wood, and rosin with sap from a tree, taken from the land. Then a person plays it, animating the instrument with their emotional force. Together these elements give a kind of living energy to the object. The cooperation of living elements involved in the construction and performance of the fiddle gives the instrument a "*süns*."

Süns is a difficult term to translate into English. It can mean soul or spirit. *Süns* can also mean "ghost" when referring to haunted buildings. However, each of these terms has different meanings in practice. When I asked musicians what the *süns* of the fiddle is, I received a variety of different answers. Generally, the replies fell into three categories, understanding the *süns* either as a shamanic soul, a Buddhist nature spirit, or as a New Age vibration. Regardless of how the term is understood, as the fiddler Baatar put it, "the fiddle has its own body, its own blood, hair, and soul."

In this chapter I focus on perspectives from three horse-fiddle experts based out of music institutions in Ulaanbaatar: Boldoo, Tüvshee, and Tuyaa. Boldoo is a horse-fiddle performer and

teacher in his late forties. He was born and raised in rural pastures in the Altai mountains of western Mongolia before coming to Ulaanbaatar as a young man to pursue a career in music. By the time he arrived for training at what was then called the Music and Dance College (now the National Conservatory), he was already a skilled horse-fiddle player, having learned several horse-gait mimicry songs and dance tunes from his mother.

Tüvshee is a little bit older than Boldoo, in his mid-fifties. He teaches the horse-fiddle at the Arts and Culture University, specializing in classical music and long-song. When I first interviewed him, he was sporting a pompadour hairdo and a leopard-print silk shirt. He was one of the first musicians to try blending the horse-fiddle with electronic music, performing synth-heavy remixes of mid-20th century neo-traditional compositions by composers like B. Sharav and N. Jantsannorov. Now he uses his expertise to supplement the income he makes a music teacher with a small, family-run electronics business.

Tuyaa is a musicologist and music theory teacher. In our first interview she referred to herself as, above all else, a "*khödöö össön khün"* ("person raised in the countryside") and a "*geodeterminist*" ("geo-determinist"). She was raised in the steppes of rural far eastern Mongolia. When she originally came to Ulaanbaatar to follow her dream of becoming a professional horse-fiddler, she was turned away. The primary horse-fiddle teacher at the Music and Dance College at the time refused to accept female students, based on a now widely rejected idea that performing certain genres of traditional music, like horse-fiddle and polyphonic throat-singing, was dangerous to women's reproductive health. So instead, she traveled to the Soviet Union to continue her education, before returning to teach at the institution that had once rejected her.

All three of these people live and work in Ulaanbaatar, the capital and largest city in Mongolia. They all work at national musical education institutions. As such, their perspectives on aggregate represent a distinctly urban, higher education, institutional field of view. Working through institutions, their primary access to the horse-fiddle (and all of the more-than-human potential it brings with it) is through its institutionalized form as a heritage object. There are, of course, qualitative distinctions within this social class as gender, ethno-linguistic background, and rural or urban background are distinctions that make differences in these three people's lives.

In each of the three explanations below, the *süns* is a byproduct of the horse-fiddle's mediation between human and non-human actors within the network of musical heritage performance. However each of these three individuals identifies a different network. In Boldoo's version, the fiddle mediates the horse and human, creating a hybrid spirit for both in the process. In Tüvshee's explanation, the horse-fiddle mediates for a much larger network that includes all of the actors who contributed materially in some way to the fiddle's construction and performance, including the human musician, the horse who provides the hair, and the trees who provide the wood and rosin. Tuyaa, however, describes the fiddle's body as mediating between the musician and the fiddle itself, as the fiddle's body is what produces the *sünsleg avia* ("spiritual sound") and generates positive energy for the fiddler.

Modernities

In the 20th century Mongolia underwent two waves of modernization resulting from two different global colonial movements from the West. The first was the imposition of Soviet power, economy, and thought, that came from Mongolia's induction as the first satellite state of the USSR (Isono 1976). Though Mongolia was never fully a colony of the Soviet Union, and it

joined the Soviet cause to escape a previous colonization by the Qing Empire, the People's Republic of Mongolia was nonetheless subjected to Soviet modernization campaigns. The second modernization was the neoliberal transformation that came with the transition from single-party socialist state to parliamentary democracy.

Kaplonski argues that, at the beginning of the 20th century, the ruling communist party of Mongolia considered the persisting political authority held by the Buddhist establishment to be the primary hindrance for establishing a socialist state (2014). As such, party members treated the secularization of the country as a precondition for the production of a modern socialist Mongolia. Bawden reports that by 1939 the Mongolian People's Army, under direction from Marshal Choibalsan, had forcibly closed almost all of the monasteries and defrocked most of the monks in Mongolia, leading to the functional end of organized religion in the country (1989, 348).

Elements of traditional music played a major role in socialist modernization. I will discuss the institutionalization of traditional music in the 20th century in more detail in chapter two; for now, it is important to point out that the secularization of the music itself was a part of its incorporation into the socialist project. Ethnomusicologist Peter Marsh contends that horse-fiddle in its current form was adapted, standardized, and mobilized by representatives of the socialist state and allies from the Soviet Union during the 20th century to symbolize the modern, cosmopolitan, socialist Mongolian nation (2009). Long-song underwent similar adaptations during this period, as many singers experienced some version of what Norovbanzad went through when party officials required her to edit overtly Buddhist elements from the lyrics of "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*" before they would allow her on the radio.

While the transition to democracy lead to a renewed freedom of religious practice, the neoliberalism of society has led to disenchantment of another sort. Weber writes that capitalist modernity is built on the rationalization of religious life (1958). He argues that this process of rationalization has led to the "disenchantment of the world," an alienating state in which science has supplanted the role of magic in everyday life without satisfactorily fulfilling all of magic's social and psychological functions (1976, 155). Rationalization for Weber operates through bureaucracies, which render all aspects of human life quantifiable, predictable, efficient, and controllable (1968).

The politics of heritage can be seen as one of the bureaucratic avenues through which culture is institutionalized, and subsequently disenchanted. Organizations like UNESCO are bureaucracies that rationalize cultural practices that are otherwise outside of the modernity's purview by identifying, cataloguing, and assigning ownership of those practices to a state power. However, rather than becoming disenchanted through this process as Weber predicts, the horse-fiddle has maintained its magical nature.

After the transition, individualism became a more prominent value in Mongolia as the country entered the global capitalist market. As Harvey describes, proponents of neoliberalism push people to internalize the core values of individualism and personal responsibility in order to diminish social networks among the working class (2005). Though religion is no longer banned to practice in public, and many monasteries have re-opened, neoliberalism nevertheless exerts a pressure to individualize as many aspects of social life as possible.

As I have gestured to above, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that designation as "heritage" adds value to lifeways that are otherwise incompatible with neoliberalism (1995). As she argues, the discourse of heritage creates new cultural production that appeals to the past (1995, 370). The

politics of heritage subsumes aspects of Mongolian political, economic, and social life that otherwise do not have a place in neoliberal capitalism – like nomadic pastoralism or praise songs for local mountains – within the logic of capital.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that the heritage industry makes the local available for international consumption through tourism (1995, 373). Bunten writes that the politics of heritage allow people involved in the tourist industry to create an outward facing model of the idealized self (2008). Through the politics of heritage, local practitioners are able to use elements of traditional culture to create something new that not only has neoliberal value, but social value as well.

Of course, local people involved in heritage industries, like tourism or folk music performance, are also consumers of heritage. The designation of heritage allows for them to create an idealized image of themselves to work towards, that is not constricted by the same ideological brick walls that western post-enlightenment modernism comes with. Boym refers to the creation of an idealized version of a past home as "nostalgia," and she refers to this particular use of nostalgia to imagine potential futures as "restorative nostalgia" (2001).

Humphrey argues that since the transition from socialism to multi-party democracy, politicians in Mongolia have started appealing to the moral authority of a *deer üye* or "deep past" (1992). This *deer üye* is an amalgamation of pre-20th century historical epochs that, taken together, represent a break with the country's recent (secular) socialist past (1992). Colwell, writing on polyphonic throat singing, argues that this *deer üye* is instrumental in contemporary discourses on musical heritage in Mongolia (2019). As such, restorative nostalgia is especially prominent on discourses surrounding musical heritage in the country.

As Descola argues, one of the foundational assertions of the post-Enlightenment thinking that lead to both socialist and neoliberal modernity is the separation of "nature" from "culture" (2014). The designation of heritage gives people an opportunity to re-analyze their relationships with nonhumans through a non-western lens, without necessarily opening themselves up to the social risk of questioning modernity.

Many of the musicians I worked with, mostly cosmopolitan urbanites by nature of how the music industry operates, were uncomfortable with expressing overtly spiritual opinions directly. Boldoo elaborated in-depth on his personal cosmological beliefs, which had clear throughlines with both Tengriism and Tibetan Buddhism, but he would not name his beliefs as belonging to a spiritual tradition. Tüvshee was happy to describe his practice of Buddhism, but he practices alone, in private, away from monasteries. Tuyaa directly challenged the non-secular framing of the fiddle as *sünstei* ("with a spirit"), offering instead *sünsleg aviatai* ("with a spiritual sound").

Operating out of a conservatory in the capital city, where both socialist and neoliberal modernist thought are foundational to the institution, many musicians and music teachers are interested in the ways nature and culture are entangled but are nervous about the risk of coming off as "uneducated." This sentiment came through particularly in interviews with people who had left rural pastoral communities to pursue their music career in Ulaanbaatar. I was attentive to this concern because I felt like I could relate to this position, having grown up myself in a rural Appalachian community where both faith healing and New Age were common ways of thinking about the world before moving to a different part of the US to pursue my Ph.D. Because many Mongolian musicians have to find work outside of the country, moving to international

cosmopolitan nodes, especially Beijing and Berlin, many performers feel extra pressure to combat negative stereotypes that paint Mongolians as parochial or "backwards."

Despite the pressures to appeal to post-Enlightenment rationalist division of nature and culture to avoid derision, Mongolian musicians interact with nonhumans and have ways of thinking about those interactions. Designation as cultural heritage allows for these musicians to use the language of folklore, of transmission via tradition and communal ownership, to speculate on spiritual topics without risking being seen as anti-modern. For example, I interviewed a horse-fiddle player and builder with the National Philharmonic of Mongolia who told me, "this is not ratified research, but people say that in order to be a good horse-fiddle player you must be honest. If you are dishonest the fiddle will not sound." In this quote, the luthier provided a moral explanation for a physical attribute of the instrument that provides the fiddle with agency – to accept or reject the actions of an otherwise technically proficient performer in producing sound. Through the phrasing of "people say," he was able to argue that the horse-fiddle has its own will without the social risk of claiming that the fiddle is alive. In other words, because he was reporting on an aspect of cultural heritage, he could make ontological claims that are incompatible with neoliberal modernity without positioning himself outside of modernity.

The overarching mission of modernity is the homogenization and rationalization of society (Harvey 1989). Socialist modernity sought to create an undifferentiated field of socialist citizens, while neoliberal modernity aims to transform all humans into ideal consumers. However, as Lisa Rofel argues, modernity takes different forms according to local desires (1999). Writing on the Caribbean, Trouillot adds that although modernization is a project designed to recreate the West on a global scale, it depends on the existence of a native "other" to

compare against. As such modernity creates what he calls “alter-natives,” other modernities that exist alongside and in opposition to the global colonial modernity of the West (2002).

I argue that the designation and recognition of a cultural practice as “heritage” is a mechanism by which people in institutions create modernity’s “alter-natives.” This means that there is the potential for state actors to use heritage practices as a way of establishing and maintaining state hegemony. As Lowenthal argues, state actors use the politics of heritage to transform outpaced lifeways into national power (1996). The nationalization of culture through heritage is reflected in competition between states to claim certain elements on their own lists. Heritage discourse consistently leads to political contention between China and Mongolia, the two countries with the most significant ethnic Mongolian populations, as they fight over traditional genres like long-song and the art of polyphonic throat-singing (Stokes 2015).

However, there is also an emancipatory potential through cultural heritage. For the musicians that I worked with, the rhetorical embrace of heritage gave them an opportunity celebrate, interrogate, and analyze the entanglement of human and nonhuman lives in counter-modern ways. Through this examination, they were able to imagine and build toward more-than-human futures beyond modernity.

The Soul of The Fiddle

When I first asked the horse-fiddle teacher and performer Boldoo about the relationships between music and nonhumans, he explained to me that the fiddle is primarily for horses and camels, while vocal performance, is appropriate for sheep, goats, and cattle. He explained that this division relates to how close or far away different animals are pastured to the encampment. Sheep, goats, and cattle are kept close to home in Mongolian pastoralist encampments and are therefore easier to calm. Camels and horses however are pastured far away from the encampment

and develop strong wills while away from their herders. The horse-fiddle has the special power to calm these semi-independent livestock.

Boldoo's breakdown of the inner worlds of different livestock animals included different overall emotional characters. For horses, which Boldoo described as nervous and independent, the fiddle calms them and makes them docile. Meanwhile, the fiddle causes camels, sentimental and dramatic creatures, to weep. As I will describe in chapter two, I saw first-hand how dramatic camels could be–prone to antics and wailing into the night sky.

For Boldoo, the power of the fiddle derives from folk religion, situated in the subsistence mobile pastoralism. The ideal performance of the horse-fiddle as he described it would find the fiddler in a *ger,* the felt round-tent dwelling used by mobile pastoralists. In the circular space of the *ger,* the sound can travel upward, spiraling out through the roof ring which holds the top of the tent in place. The sound then travels out and hits the ear of the horses. The tune should then calm the horses and make them docile, especially if it is an *uyangyn urtyn duu,* a "melodious long-song."

Boldoo then moved on to explain that for camels, if you have access to a horse-fiddle but no fiddler, you can put a fiddle on the animal's humps and face it toward the wind. The air moving along the strings will cause the fiddle to resound, which in turn will calm the camel. Camels are tall enough that their humps catch strong and consistent wind coming off the steppe. The wind plays the fiddle. "People say," Boldoo added, using the phrasing of communal wisdom I described above, "that the *süns* of the fiddle is like a wind that guides the hand of a fiddler, just like how I guide the hand of my students when they are first starting to play the instrument."

In this explanation, Boldoo uses the *ger* as a metaphor for Mongolian subsistence mobile pastoralism. Boldoo argued that the horse-fiddle has maintained this spiritual relationship with

horses and camels as well as its importance to folk religious ritual because it never left the space of the *ger.* For him, the horse-fiddle did not become a court instrument like the *shanz* (lute) and was never fully made into a classical instrument enough to be divorced from the *ger*.

I have known Boldoo since 2010, as a friend and as a research contact. Throughout countless conversations and interviews over the years I have heard him become progressively more self-consciously spiritual in his perspectives on the fiddle. When I first returned to Mongolia in 2016, he told me in an interview that he had had a spiritual awakening while performing horse-fiddle atop a sacred boulder at Khamariin Khiid, a monastery and energy center in Dornogovi province. That he would tie his spiritual awakening to a place where Buddhism and New Age flow together is indicative of the larger picture of the kinds of spiritual hybridity unfolding in Mongolia at the moment. He is a Buddhist and calls on monks to perform rites. He also follows New Age beliefs about manifesting events into being. As for the *süns* of the horse-fiddle, he takes a shamanic perspective and describes the *süns* as a kind of soul.

This soul, the spirit giving a human life, should not be confused with a Christian soul. As Boldoo explained, a person can have many. In his words,

> "everyone has their own *süns,* you have yours and I have mine, but in each of us there may be more than one. You could be holding on to your great-great-great-great-whatever, some ancestor's *süns* too. If a person is angry all the time, it is because they have a *süns* on high that is filling them with anger. That is why a soul must be guided out of a body when someone has passed away and guided on the right path. Otherwise they will hang around and instill grief and emotional distress on their family and neighbors. For this you need someone much like a musician…a monk!"

There are two notable takeaways from this quote. The first is that, though he cloaks this claim in humor, Boldoo draws a clear comparison between the power of horse-fiddle players and Buddhist monks. Both are religious specialists in his explanation, with the ability to guide spirits in a similar manner. The second important takeaway from this quote is that, in Boldoo's construction, each fiddler has at least one soul. Horses also have souls, though he does not

mention whether other nonhuman animals do or not. This *süns* that the fiddle gives moves the fiddler's hand.

Boldoo makes the explicit claim that, not only does the fiddle have its own *süns,* but that furthermore it is *am'd,* alive. The fiddle has a *süns* and is alive because it is constructed of living elements. The fiddle is made with hair from the living horse, never a dead one. Through this hair, the fiddle has a connection with that horse and its *süns.* The human performer then imbues the instrument with their own *süns* by playing it. The performance bonds the fiddle and the fiddler to that horse's soul.

Boldoo explained that in his view, the confluence of the human musician's *süns* with that of the horse via the sympathetic connection formed by the instrument's body creates a separate soul for the fiddle. He used Tengriist metaphors to make this argument, likening the performance of the fiddle to the meeting of winds coming from the east and west. When the two winds meet, they create a third that travels its own direction, without losing any part of their original trajectories. "There is a thick string and a thin string on the fiddle, but when you play together you get a third sound - a sound that is at once both of the others and a sound unique to itself," he added. The soul of the human and of the horse makes a third soul for the fiddle. By playing you develop the insight to see beyond the two, and in so doing make visible another dimension of both. Boldoo finished this explication with an appeal to restorative nostalgia, "we once knew all about this, then we forgot. Now we are just remembering it again."

Boldoo's description of the soul of a person, a horse, and a musical instrument is a radical break with post-Enlightenment rational division of humans, nature, and human-produced objects. He has developed this worldview throughout his career as a horse-fiddler, slowly moving from a secular way of conceptualizing the instrument to this elaborated understanding that positions the

fiddle as an *am'd* ("living") object, the mediates the relationship between a human performer and a horse. He consistently tied this spiritual perspective to elements of cultural heritage, situating the horse-fiddle in the larger frame of nomadic pastoralist tradition.

Spiritual Creation of Buddha

Boldoo's explanation above focuses on the role of horse-fiddle music in connecting humans with nonhuman animals. However, horse-fiddle music, and long-song in particular is also a useful tool for connecting humans with nonliving nonhumans, especially mountains. As I will explore in more detail in chapter four, Tüvshee, the fiddler from the University of Arts and Culture, reported that he performs the horse-fiddle for sacred mountains as a form of religious practice. He referred to this kind of performance as a fundamental aspect of practicing his Buddhism. Buddhism is Mongolia's most popular religion, both before and after the transition.

Tüvshee offered that the wood used in the construction of the fiddle's body and the tree sap used as rosin are key to the fiddler's ability to produce music that resonates with humans, horses, and the land alike. While Boldoo's reading was more animistic, Tüvshee attributed the fiddle's potential to reach not only nonhuman animals, but nonliving nonhumans as well, to the unifying power of Buddha.

His explanation took the form of a religious folk tale, "to tell you this story I should introduce you to two characters: the Buddha and the Erlig Khan. Buddha works tirelessly to help the beings of the world to elevate themselves in life from his palace in the sky. Erlig Khan, the god of death in Black Shamanism, lives in the earth." From the very beginning, this story entangles Buddhism with other forms of Mongolian spirituality, invoking a shared deity, the

Erlig Khan, between the Mongolian form of Tibetan Buddhism and Black Shamanism, the branch of shamanism dedicated to entreating dangerous spirits to prevent harm.

Tüvshee continued with the tale, telling of how the Erlig Khan sent one of his attendants to spy on Buddha. The attendant found Buddha working on a project to bring joy to mankind. He took some hair from the mane and tail of his most beloved horse and fashioned the first horse-fiddle. When he bowed the fiddle, however, its sound was awful. It was scratchy, quiet, and thin.

The attendant returned to Erlig Khan with this news. After some consideration Erlig Khan said, "take him sap from our black tree and have him rub it on the bow and strings." When the attendant returned, he gave the rosin according to Erlig Khan's instruction. The fiddle resounded brilliantly, with a deep and moving tone.

The point of the story, Tüvshee told me, is that the horse-fiddle is itself a religious artifact. The human performer, the heavenly horsehair of its strings, and the earthly in the wood and sap used in its construction and performance connect all beings. Like Boldoo, Tüvshee brought up that the fiddle has two strings, which you play together to create a melody. He said to play the horse-fiddle is to know that you must have life along with death, joy along with sorrow, in order to have beauty in this world. The fiddle is made from the living elements of beings from the sky and from the earth. In the middle the fiddler imbues it with a human spirit in performance. That is why the instrument can connect humans with the other beings in creation. The *süns* in this sense is a natural spirit that is creation of the Buddha working in tandem with the Erlig Khan.

Though Tüvshee's performance of horse-fiddle for sacred mountains is a personal, private ritual that he conducts alone, I found in later interviews that he is not alone in practicing his religion this way. Another fiddler, who I will call Baatar, mentioned that he also plays horse-

fiddle as a kind lay Buddhist rite, but he pointed out that spiritual practices associated with the horse-fiddle tend to be hybrid by nature.

Like Boldoo, Baatar described the horse-fiddle as "alive." Baatar argued that the ability to sound nonhumans gave the instrument spiritual power. "When I play for a sacred mountain," he explained, "I choose a song that channels water, wind, and wild animals. I sound the entire environment of the mountain and thus becomes a ritual of praise for it."

Baatar explained that the horse-fiddle's *süns* is central to the hybridity between lay Buddhist practice, shamanism, and other folk religious practice in Mongolia. The fiddle has power as a Buddhist tool, a folk religious tool, a shamanic tool, and a herding tool because its *süns* gives human performers access to a more-than-human frame of knowledge. As he put it, the music of the fiddle "does not bring the sky to us, but us to the sky. Its spirit is not inherently Buddhist, not nomadic, nor shamanic. It is perhaps Mongol, but most importantly it is a horse. A horse does not belong to its destination, but it ferries the rider there."

Spiritual energy

After having heard the term *sünstei khögjim* in several interviews, I decided to ask Tuyaa, one of the Musicologists at the National Conservatory, how she would describe the term. She did not like the term "*sünstei khögjim*" ("instrument with a spirit") and offered instead "*sünsleg avia*" ("spiritual sound"). She told me that the *süns* is a metaphor; it simply means the fiddle can touch the hearts of Mongolian people, and furthermore has the ability to pull the talent out of a performer.

Throughout the interview, Tuyaa's answers started to take on more of an enchanted tone. She told me that "the strings are from a living horse, and the bow is also made from living

horsehair. That's why when the bow hits the strings the sound is so touching." The importance of the living elements used in the fiddle's construction is one of the constants running throughout my interviews. She continued, "from a young age I always knew this instrument had a *süns,* had flesh and blood, I just didn't know how to put it into words. Now I can say the word for it is '*energi*.' That is the character of the fiddle, its quality. The *energi* of the fiddle is the instrument's wind and breath."

Though she distanced herself from overtly Buddhist or shamanic readings of this force, she did refer to the fiddle's power using a spiritual term, "*energi.*" Though derived from the Russian *energi,* a cognate with the English word "energy," in the Mongolian usage, *energi* (pronounced "enerik") has a particular spiritual meaning. Madison-Pískatá describes *energi* as a form of energy in a distinctly Mongolian style of New Age spirituality (forthcoming 2021). *Energi* in her formulation is a post-socialist reinterpretation of what Humphrey refers to as "energies-in-nature," earth-based sources of power in the Mongolian tradition (1995). *Energi,* as she argues, demonstrates that New Age thought, as neither fully religious nor actually secular flourishes in post-socialist contexts with a histories of religious repression.

New Age is a slippery term, as it is not an organized religion so much as a loose collection of ideas and practices. By New Age in this case I am particularly interested in what Hanegraaf refers to as ideologies that sacralize psychology and psychologize religion (1998). New Age uses the secular, modernist rhetoric of pseudoscience to allow for enchantment to operate within a modernist, rationalist mode. Folkways that were repressed as "superstition" under the socialist model, like using stones for their healing properties, find a new life in neoliberalism as New Age practices through pseudo-scientific rendering.

I have noticed New Age ideas become more prevalent in Mongolia since 2010, especially among middle-aged women. The horse-fiddle is a magnet for New Age, given its role as a ritual tool in Mongolian folk culture. For example, I have heard several New Age explanations related to the custom of playing horse-fiddle for housewarming parties and Lunar New Year celebrations.

In both Ulaanbaatar and the rural county where I do research in Dundgovi, people know me as a horse-fiddle player. This home cleansing ritual, known as *javar örgökh* (literally "to lift the chill") is a common aspect of being a fiddle player and as such I have been called to perform it many times. The novelty of my position as a foreigner playing this instrument and dutifully carrying out the social obligations of a fiddler comes with social testing; at each performance I have been grilled on what the ritual really means. While I usually give the same reply, "the ritual is about clearing bad spirits out of a house," the corrections I have received tend to lean on New Age concepts.

One middle aged man told me, "*javar* is not a spirit, like a ghost or something. It is negative sentiments that settle into a place. So, you are not lifting out bad spirits, just bad feelings that make you feel upset." Another woman, who I will refer to as Pagmaa, drew a more direct connection between the ritual and New Age, arguing that *javar örgökh* is a form of New Age manifestation, using the vibrations of the fiddle to drive away negative ideas and instill positive outcomes. She went on to argue that Mongolian folk religion is a precursor to New Age thought. Referring to the New Age self-help bestseller, *The Secret*, Pagmaa said, "really Mongolians have known the secret for a long time."

For Tuyaa the *süns* of the horse-fiddle is this New Age *energi*. *Energi* has a physical manifestation as the vibrations that the fiddle produces. These vibrations align with the hearts of

their audiences, human and nonhuman alike. Further, she argued that *energi* guides the hand of the fiddler, mirroring Boldoo's claims above.

As in the previous examples, Tuyaa's answer involves hybridity with folk religion and Buddhism. The *Energiin Töv* ("energy center") at Khamariin Khiid Monastery in Dornogovi province, where Boldoo had his spiritual awakening, is a pilgrimage site that brings together Buddhist and New Age rituals. It draws Buddhist power from the lineage of the Gobi saint Danzanravjaa, and its *energi* from the field of volcanic rock the monastery is built on.

Conclusion

Whatever the reason, a performer's ability to connect with the spirits, energies, or vibrations of landscape and livestock places the horse-fiddle as a mediator between humans and nonhumans. The fiddle's spirit has its own kind of agency that extends into both human and ungulate worlds, whether as a wind which guides the hand of the fiddler, a Buddhist incantation which bestows protection and guidance upon them, or as a conduit for energy which draws out their hidden potential.

The multiplicity of explanations and interpretations of the horse-fiddle's spirit gestures to an important facet of post-socialist Mongolian life: a major, pluralistic spiritual awakening. When I first started working with musicians in the region eight years ago, a lot of people were still very tentative about speaking publicly on religious or spiritual practices and beliefs. Many fiddlers I work with have told me that since I first met them, they have come to realize that spirits have more power than they originally thought and have changed their approach to the fiddle accordingly. In this way, reflections on nonhumans' ability to consume horse-fiddle music open up discourses on post-socialist personhood and spirituality. I argue that cultural heritage opens up the discursive space for people to be able to critically examine the world and their relationships with nonhumans without having to leave the ontological confines of modernity.

Chapter 2

The Melodious Hoofbeat:

Ungulate Rhythms in the Post-socialist Conservatory

One evening in late summer, my hosts in rural central Mongolia put on a *nair,* a seasonal party that in the northern Gobi consists primarily of singing and drinking fermented mare's milk. The venerated singer and fiddler Damdin carefully took a borrowed *morin khuur* (horse-fiddle) by the neck and pulled the high-arched bow off its tuning peg. After quickly tuning the instrument he set off on a tune that mimics the many gaits of a horse by pulling the fiddle's two strings together. The song was a kind of fiddle-tune known as *tatlagan-ayaz* called "*Jonon Khar*" ("Black Horse Jonon"). His fingers danced on side of the instrument's neck, index and thumb of his left hand pinching in on the black horsehair strings from both sides as his right hand guided the bow in a series of quick pulls from which the genre takes its name (from *tatakh*: to pull).

Damdin played a melody that traces the different moods of the Jonon Khar horse, starting forward with a short burst of syncopated hoofbeats before settling on a side-to-side trot of alternating short glissandos on the left and right string. After having spent the previous five years studying the horse-fiddle myself, I was used to the sounds of *tatlagan-ayaz,* at least the versions taught at urban classical music institutions like the National Conservatory. Still, I had a hard time following Damdin's song at points. While the other guests at this *nair,* a group of Damdin's relatives and neighbors from around the county aged 8 to 85, followed the song Some sections repeated too many times from a classical perspective, or only partially repeated, leaving musical phrases unresolved. For most of the song, he stuck to what, to me, sounded like a relatively straightforward 6/8 rhythm. However, there were moments when the horse played out through

the song slipped away, cantering off into the steppe, represented acoustically by a quick drop in volume and notably a slip from a consistent time signature.

After this performance Damdin told me that outside, the horses were listening to our music. Handing the fiddle to me, he warned that I should play in a way that will please the horses to hear. Before I had a chance to ask for more information, another elder, Tsogt, offered to demonstrate one of his famous horse-race praise songs. He pulled me from the felt round-tent calling out, 'someone bring me a horse! You have to be on horseback to sing this kind of song!' As Tsogt mounted one of the horses hitched near the encampment to sing, Damdin added 'a herder learns life from horseback.' Reins in one hand, silver bowl in the other, Tsogt began to sing the many praises of the horse he was riding. Being on horseback and tailoring the song to the horse were vital aspects of the performance for Tsogt, so that the horse was not only the subject of the performance, but a contributor to and audience for it.

Throughout this *nair* horses took roles as composers, participants, teachers, and audiences for horse-fiddle music. However, many horse-fiddlers learn their craft not at rural *nair,* but at urban conservatories. Institutions like the Music and Dance College were established as part of Soviet-influenced modernizing efforts during the 20th century and continue in the 21st century to be the primary avenues for musicians to start their careers as traditional musicians involved in the global trade in cultural performance.

Descola argues that modernist ideologies are founded on an objectification of ‘nature’ and its complete separation from the realm of ‘culture’ (2014). As I will explain below, conservatories in Mongolia function on this modernist ideological split between nature and culture. Where then do horses, a necessary category of teachers and audiences for horse-fiddle according to Damdin, fit in the conservatory where the fiddle is taught?

The multispecies nature of musical performance chafes at the rationalizing edges of the colonial modernist project. In Mongolia, this disjuncture is further complicated by the fact that colonial modernist projects have been enacted twice. During the socialist period, it was not uncommon for horse-fiddle performers to travel to rural pastures to supplement their conservatory education with deeper understanding of the rhythms of livestock animals, reshaping the flows of knowledge and warping the unidirectional flow from center to periphery in the process. Now, 30 years into post-socialist capitalist democracy, horse-fiddle teachers are faced with the prospect that addressing the same problem of how to incorporate horses, camels, and bulls into urban music education will require new solutions.

The horse-fiddlers I worked with all described the process of learning a *tatlagan-ayaz* as beginning with careful observation of the moods and movements of particular livestock animals as they move through pastures, over the course of a season. A successful performance of *tatlagan-ayaz* depends on the player's ability to then embody the animal portrayed in the song through their fiddling. In this chapter I draw from Lefebvre's (2004) rhythmanalysis, taking the *tatlagan-ayaz* song as a human use of music to interpret the embodied rhythms of nonhumans into musical rhythms. For urban-based, professional horse-fiddle players, success on their instrument requires them to be able to bring the disparate rhythms of the institution and the pasture into eurhythmia, a sublime state in which concordance between rhythms allows for the performer to create a piece of art that is greater than the sum of its parts.

In this chapter, I start with oral histories from horse-fiddle players to examine the musicians' memories of their lives under socialism and the role of non-human animals in their formation as performers. I then follow-up with an examination of how musicians are responding to changes to both conservatory and rural rhythms of life, which many heritage music teachers in

the country see as a widening of the gap between pastures and institutions under the current era of heritage tourist capitalism and aggressive climate change. Following scholarship in ethnomusicology that highlights the potential of musical apprenticeship for examining the aesthetic properties (Hood 1960) and cultural values (Rice 2003) associated with musical performance, I reflect on my own role as a student and performer through autoethnography of my experiences learning *tatlagan-ayaz* as well.

In this chapter I present the opinions and educational strategies of horse-fiddle teachers based out of conservatories and orchestras in Ulaanbaatar that were either originally formed during the socialist period or operate under the socialist-era institutional model, particularly the National Conservatory (formerly the Music and Dance College), the University of Arts and Culture's Department of Music, and the National Philharmonic's National Horse-head Fiddle Ensemble. I draw heavily on the oral histories and pedagogical strategies of Boldoo and Ganaa, both of whom are horse-fiddle players based out of Ulaanbaatar who attribute much of their success with the instrument to knowing how to learn rhythms from livestock animals and translate those rhythms to the fiddle. I bring in perspectives from several members of an informal group of concerned horse-fiddle teachers based out of the these institutions including Bilguun, Ganaa, and Erdene, all of whom are middle-aged men who live in Ulaanbaatar for part of the year spend part of the year (the mid-Winter and Summer months) in various rural locales.

Tomie Hahn writes that the process of learning dance involves “kinesthetic synesthesia,” an overlapping of the senses in which the student transforms what they see into the feelings of bodily movement needed to carry out the performance (2007). The fiddlers I worked with described a similar process, but at the multispecies level. To learn *tatlagan-ayaz*, Ganaa, Boldoo, and Bilgüün all explained that they watched horses, camels, and bulls and translated their visual

interpretation of those animals' movements into the bodily sensation needed to capture a song's rhythm. As such, I adapted Hahn's approach to the study of dance to the rural pasture, substituting the human dance instructor for a non-human animal.

I argue that the central role rural, non-human animals perform in the transmission of *tatlagan-ayaz* pushes fiddlers to explore the limits of modernist institutions. Boldoo, Ganaa, and Erdene recall their own formative years learning *tatlagan-ayaz* in the socialist era when they had opportunities to engage with horses, bulls, and camels in their pastures. The performers I worked with fondly recalled breaking the institutional rhythm of reporting to the conservatory in Ulaanbaatar each day by taking long stays in rural encampments. However, when teachers attempt to provide those same educational experiences to their students now, they find themselves flummoxed by incompatibilities between the socialist model and post-socialist conditions of their conservatories.

Pursuit of learning pastoral rhythms in both cases are described as disruptions to the regular schedule of musical institutions. However, horse-fiddle students are encouraged to find moments to step away from the official rhythm of classical music education, to leave the conservatory for rural pastures, in order to improve their mastery over *tatlagan-ayaz.* Horse-fiddle performers are expected to develop the ability to sound the conservatory during classical performance and sound difference from the conservatory during performance of heritage music.

Students who break the institutional rhythm rarely break from the institutions themselves. To the contrary, being able to convincingly play in such a way that evokes pastoral rhythms is something that the director of the National Horsehead Fiddle Ensemble told me he looks for when auditioning perspective performers. As fiddlers take breaks from institutional rhythm to pursue parallel music education in the pastures, they both strengthen the cultural hegemony of

the institution by subsuming rural, more-than-human approaches to the transmission and performance of heritage into the institutional model. However, through these breakages fiddlers also undermine the modernist institution's core assumption of separating nature from culture by transforming the spatial-temporal rhythm of conservatory education according to the material needs of nonhuman animals.

Rhythm in *Tatlagan-ayaz*

Tatlagan-ayaz, also commonly known by the shorter name '*tatlaga,'* is a genre of quick, rhythmic, lyric-less horse-fiddle tunes that often evoke the different gaits of horses, camels, and bulls. In my first interview with Boldoo, a horse-fiddle teacher and *tatlagan-ayaz* specialist, he told me that he has two distinct pedagogical approaches to the instrument. He said, "for classical music, for jazz and the like, you can learn from sheet music, but for *tatlagan-ayaz*, you need to learn from livestock." A member of the National Philharmonic, who I will refer here to as Ganaa, supported Boldoo's position, saying 'a teacher can give you the general shape of a particular *tatlagan-ayaz* tune, but to really play the song you need the horse.' Both Boldoo and Ganaa explained that you need livestock to be able to learn this genre because the songs' time signatures resist standardization.

Ganaa argued that you can hear the difference between a fiddler who counts time as a classical musician and a fiddler who counts time in livestock-educated way. He told me, "consider the famous Gobi fiddler Nergüi Khuurch. When he plays you can tell he isn't counting time. He keeps his own time, a time based on pulses." This pulse time, he explained, draws from livestock gaits, translating the different movements of horses, camels, and bulls into discernible rhythms.

“In music school,” Ganaa continued, 'you are taught to count time. A song can be 3/4 or 4/4, and so on, but the rural *tatlagan-ayaz* style does not use those time signatures well.' Great *tatlaga* according to Ganaa is best performed according to a personal, individual keeping of time that draws from the performer’s relationship with a particular animal. Though standard pedagogy at conservatories teaches fiddlers to keep an unchanging time signature throughout the course of a given piece and to reproduce that structure over multiple performances, teachers like Ganaa and Boldoo pointed out that performing *tatlagan-ayaz* in this way sounds off.

For Ganaa, Boldoo, and many of the other horse-fiddle teachers I interviewed, *tatlagan-ayaz* involves a careful observation of the various rhythms of non-human animals. Lefebvre’s “rhythmanalysis” is the study of how people produce space through repeated movements which through near (but never perfect) replication forms rhythms (2004). He takes rhythm at various levels including the natural cycles of nature, large scale movements of people and objects, down to the very minute rhythms of the body. He argues that as all rhythms are experienced in relation to the body' rhythms, any analysis of the rhythms of social life take into account how those rhythms are embodied.

The various rhythms of social life interacting with one another cause a certain polyrhythmia, a cacophonous social state that people attempt to manage by bringing their rhythms into sync with those around them and avoid arrhythmia, where those rhythms come in to direct conflict with each other. As ethnomusicologist Stephen Feld argues, moving through space is a multisensory act of place construction (1996, 94). Perceiving and producing sound are embodied forms of place making through bodily practice. A rhythmanalysis of the musical creations of Mongolian musicians then yields useful information about how those musicians co-create meaning with animals.

Focusing on bodily practice allows for a multispecies approach to understanding music that does not require estimates or assertions on the mental inner worlds of nonhumans. Cultural geographers Evans and Franklin draw on Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis approach to study the ways in which horse-riders (and the horses being ridden) attempt to bring the rhythms of the human, the horse, and the environment, together to achieve a state of eurhythmia, a sublime affective sensation that is more than the sum of its parts (2010). For the horse-fiddlers I worked with, eurhythmia in the form of a good performance of *tatlagan-ayaz* involves not only bringing together the bodily rhythms of the human, the horse, and the land, but also the larger scale rhythms of institutional and pastoral lifestyles.

A horse does not always keep a steady beat. It changes speeds and gaits, stops to turn, kick and play. A camel will bellow, trundle, and preen as it takes to the steppe in the morning. A bull might charge forward, but suddenly stop short and paw the earth. A good fiddler should be able to extrapolate a wide range of rhythms from the social life of the horse, camel, or bull over the course of a song. Performances that stick too rigidly to a given time signature take non-human animals as objects to be mimicked. Ganaa says these performances lack feeling. Ideally *tatlagan-ayaz* takes the livestock as subjects and interprets their gaits and behaviors through the horse-fiddle in ways that should ideally appeal to both humans and horses alike.

Socialist Era Memories

Throughout the 20th century, Mongolia's People's Party, like many other socialist governments of the time, used state-approved folk music as a key cultural tool for building public confidence in the socialist nation and implementing ideological goals of the socialist project (Marsh 2009, 47). The "cultural work," or the mobilization of arts, ritual practice, and tradition in the legitimation of state power and the production of proper socialist citizens

throughout the 20th century (Bloch 2004, 42; Marsh 2009, 47) has had a lasting effect on people's lives across the post-socialist world. Throughout the Soviet Union, "Houses of Culture" were established to be the center of social life, hosting holiday celebrations and artistic and sports clubs that continue to play a role in the daily social lives of citizens after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Bloch 2004, 43). To this end, state authorities elevated historically regional, small-scale musical practices to the level of national music, standardizing the performance aesthetics and pedagogy and establishing a number of state folk orchestras (Rice 1996, 7; Bulag 1998, 37; Buchanan 2006, 33-34; Marsh 2009, 55)

To create a new workforce of professional folk musicians, socialist states institutionalized the transmission of music, adapting pedagogies to replace pre-socialist informal or non-standardized contexts of teaching and learning music with state conservatories. Mongolia's People's Revolutionary Party established conservatories that adapted European classical music notation and pedagogical forms to pre-socialist styles of music and musical instruments that had previously been taught and learned through non-standardized aural-visual-tactile processes to prepare musicians to play in state classical and folk orchestras (Marsh 2009, 55). In Mongolia (Pegg 2001, Marsh 2009) as in other Soviet satellites like Bulgaria (Rice 1996), institutionalizing traditional instrument education involved transitioning from a mimicry-based teaching style to the use of notated sheet music involved as clear separation of institutional music learning from rural practice.

For Mongolian horse-fiddle performers, this led to two distinct rhythms of music education. To become a professional musician, horse-fiddlers would move to an urban center and appear at the conservatory to run drills during work hours on weekdays, and for half the day on Saturdays. Proficiency in *tatlagan-ayaz*, on the other hand, involved living with herds in rural

pastures and engaging in the slow practice of interpreting livestock movements. Bilgüün referred to these two educational styles as, “like the two chords of the fiddle itself. In order the make the instrument sound right, you have to develop two parallel strings, conservatory education on the right and pastoral education on the left.” He used this framing to highlight what he saw as a problem currently facing horse-fiddle students. In his words, “the problem we have now is that a lot of young fiddlers have the conservatory side developed and the pastoral side is lacking.”

Modernity strives to rationalize time, leading to the emergence of polyrhythmia. Munro describes how for enslaved people on plantations in the Caribbean, colonizers enforced a constant rhythm of work on top of the cyclical agrarian rhythms of crop planting, harvesting, and resting in order to extract as much capitalist value as possible (2010, 16-17). For the Soviet project, political control depended on a stratified network of institutions which disseminated the directives of a strong centralized government to the local, village level (Humphrey 1998). As such the conservatory was a primary locus for the administration of modernist time. For Mongolian nomadic pastoralism, the need to move pastures several times a year complicates the issue, adding a spatial component to the temporal cycles of pastoral production in conflict with rationalized, “homogenous and empty” (Benjamin 2003) institutional time measured in academic calendars and school hours.

Intensifying this distinction between institutional and pastoral music practices was the socialist projects emphasis on hygiene. Starks argues that hygiene was a core element of the Soviet modernizing project (2008). Public performances at Mongolian Houses of Culture operated as a way to assemble a crowd for the speeches from Party officials espousing proper socialist hygienic behavior (Marsh 2009, 48-50). Hygiene campaigns like these are attempts to rationalize the boundary between nature and culture, between humans and nonhuman animals. In

rural Mongolia, even the movement of the public performance space away from pastoral encampments near livestock to stages in urban centers separates nonhumans from these musical performances. As Starks and Thompson illustrate, Soviet modernizing hygiene campaigns also strove to create ideal socialist citizens by enforcing a regimented time structure to how people spend their work and leisure time (2008; 2008).

I argue that the development of a 'morally hygienic' way of spending both work and leisure time in Mongolia went beyond timekeeping. By dictating the appropriate way to engage physically with music and other leisure activities, the Party used institutions to implement a socialist rhythm, a repeatable, rationalized way of engaging with musical transmission that was explicitly disentangled from the unpredictable and flexible rhythms of livestock animals, weather, and fodder growth that form the pastoral polyrhythmia. The imposition of strict, regular meters on the performance of *tatlagan-ayaz*, along with the imposition of transmission via regular, repeatable schedules based out of urban institutions replicated the imposition of industrial production on the rhythms of pastoral life on a different scale.

Out to Pasture

Though I have presented these two styles of learning horse-fiddle in opposition to one-another, in reality many of the middle-aged and older horse-fiddlers I interviewed, like Boldoo and Ganaa, were raised at least partially in pastoral settings. They had the opportunity to learn livestock-centric genres in the pasture while also taking lessons in classical music and jazz at urban institutions. Furthermore, they report that leaving the institution temporarily to learn from livestock was not an uncommon practice during the socialist period.

Having never interacted with bulls before entering the conservatory, Boldoo recalled how he set out to live with the cattle-herding family until he felt that he really knew the animals in order to effectively learn how to play bull-based *tatlagan-ayaz*. He had to learn their colorations and temperaments, their methods of physical expression. During the day, he would work as a ranch hand for the family of a local fiddler, paying close attention to how cattle interact with each other in the pasture. In the afternoons he would sit with his back against the family's round-tent and watch the bull come in from the fields until after sunset. He only returned to his life as a fiddler in the city once he felt he could comfortably play the fiddle with an intimate knowledge of cattle's lives and behaviors.

In order to explain his experiences of learning this song, "*Mongol Bükh"* (the Mongolian Bull), Boldoo narrated the moods and movements of the bull he learned from as he performs them through the tune's distinct sections. As he told it, "the song begins with the two strings played together, open. This is the "*om zee*," the clearing breath." To demonstrate, he played the Bb and Eb strings open together, inhaling on the downstroke and exhaling on the upstroke. He then went on to break down the song into 5 sections,

> A1 is slow, the bull is searching for his flock. He is pawing the earth with his hoof and grunting.
> B1 is quick, the bull has found his flock and is trotting over to them.
> Back to A1, slow again. The bull has found his mate and is expressing his joy.
> B2 picks up the tempo again, and doubles the ornamental notes. The bull is driving his mate out into the pasture.
> C is a slow, but brief ending to the song that draws out the grunts into low bellows, which ultimately lead to a second *om zee* that means the song is over.

Through repeated observations and interactions with a herd of cattle, Boldoo developed a set of rhythms which inform his performance. This learning experience required him to flout the expected yearly rhythm of the socialist institution. For Boldoo and other horse-fiddlers based out of urban conservatories, temporary leaves of absence to stay in a rural pastoral encampment like

this were often sudden and without predetermined end dates. The development of this kind of interspecies empathy does not operate on an institutional timeline, dependent as it is on the social worlds of nonhumans. Just as the time signatures of *tatlagan-ayaz* resist standardization into classical music education, the rhythms of non-human animals disrupt the neatly structured rhythms of music education institutions.

One of the major goals of socialist era music institutionalization was to expand state ideologies even to the most remote areas of the country. Performances on local stages in province centers were originally intended as a way of centralizing musical performance and removing it from the pastoral context. However, in order to reach remote settlements and support themselves with supplemental income, by the 1980's Ulaanbaatar-based national ensembles had begun breaking up their troupes into smaller *brigats* (brigades) and sending them to perform at *khot ail,* small rural communities formed of pastoral encampments.

Erdene, a former member of one of these ensembles, reported that he learned many *tatlagan-ayaz* on these tours. In my interview with him, as he described his experience with the *brigats,* he pulled down an *igel,* a two-stringed fiddle similar in construction to the horse-fiddle, from above the family piano. He said these home-visits brought the institutional form of musical performance to pastoral environs. *Khot ail,* he continued while tuning his instrument, are set up in remote areas to serve the needs of their herds, particularly horses and goats which need to be pastured carefully because of their ecologically destructive manners of grazing.

Erdene may well have been referring to *Ulaan Ger* ("Red Houses") or other similar musical institutions set up during the socialist period to centralize and institutionalize rural musical performance (Marsh 2009, 51-52). However, he did not use that term, or any other terms for rural musical institutions of the socialist era like *Ulaan Bulgan* ("Red Corner") or *Soyoliin*

Töv) "Cultural Center." He exclusively used the term *khot ail*, emphasizing the domestic, pastoral space rather than the institutional space.

Erdene reported that these trips were his primary way of learning *tatlagan-ayaz*. Having finished tuning the *igel* at this point in the interview, he began to demonstrate one, the very same bull song that Boldoo once set out to learn on his own from a cattle-herding family. After he finished playing, Erdene told me "I'm a city guy, I didn't know about *tatlagan-ayaz.* So whenever we went out on *brigats,* I would try to learn something new."

While the state's intention may have been a unidirectional dissemination of official culture from the center to the periphery, Erdene recalls these performances as opportunities to exchange information with local herders. Furthermore, by re-centering the rural pastoral encampment in musical performance, urban-based performers like him had the opportunity to develop the sensibilities required for *tatlagan-ayaz* by interfacing with livestock that they do not normally engage with. In this case non-human animals participate in an exchange of knowledge, and they also set the meeting conditions of this exchange by having particular pasturing needs that are not easily transposable into the socialist metropole.

Post-socialist Rhythms

After 1990, the rhythms of Mongolian social life changed drastically. As part of the transition away from single-party socialist state, the Mongolian government implemented a new set of policies designed to re-modernize the country in preparation for entering the global free-market economy as a parliamentary democracy (Ginsburg 1995). Yi and Shi and Cui et al argue that the adoption of neoliberal policies during this period has led to the dramatic urbanization of the population from rural areas toward the capital city, Ulaanbaatar (2016; 2019). The horse-

fiddle teachers I worked with have to work around another effect of the country's neoliberal policies: a drop in funding for arts education pushing the teachers to find other lines of support through second careers and personal loans.

As Mongolia moved into the global economy, cashmere became the country's third largest export (El Benni and Reviron 2009, 25), leading herders to shift away from mixed flocks for meat and dairy production and from a full range of livestock (horses, cattle, camels, goats, and sheep), to an increased focus on goats. Sheehy and Damiran argue that this shift in herd composition, along with an increasingly arid atmosphere and warm temperatures due to anthropogenic climate change have led to an increased rate of pasture degradation (2012). For the traditional musicians I interviewed both in Ulaanbaatar and the rural Gobi, increasing desertification was a major concern.

To herders in Dundgovi, the increasing transformation of semi-arid steppe into desert poses serious concerns for finding renewable forage and water sources for their livestock, particularly for the horses and camels which are pastured closer to the Gobi than sheep, goats, and cattle which can be kept close to the encampment. Beyond the obvious difficulties droughts and desertification pose to maintaining livestock health, these ecological concerns have been making rural-based musical transmission more difficult as well. Fernández-Giménez et al warn that the degeneration of these pastures may lead to a "cultural tipping point" where herders leave pastoral lifestyles to the point that pastoral practice cannot be revitalized (2017, 65). This is true of musical traditions as well, as rural teachers like Damdin and Tsogt struggle to find students to teach horse-fiddle and long-song.

Despite the uncertain future of rural pastures and the livestock who populate them, the rise of cultural heritage tourism has increased the demand for horse-fiddlers that can evoke a

pastoral sound that is markedly different from the modernist, classical style. The element of audible, but palatable difference from modern conservatory aesthetics is a valuable aspect of heritage music. Writing on traditional musicians in Southwestern China, Rees found that the musicians she spoke with consciously developed performance styles that appealed to western tourists' desire to break with modernity (1998). For horse-fiddlers, there is both a domestic and foreign consumer base that wants a similar form of 'authenticity' from traditional Mongolian music. Between institutional and pastoral rhythms, there is the potential for what Lefebvre refers to as "arrhythmia," conflict arising from the incompatibility of two or more rhythms (2004). The conundrum then is, how do horse-fiddle teachers and students overcome the increasing arrhythmia between urban and rural life as the need for difference increases and the capacity for the cultivation of that difference decreases?

Horse-Fiddle Without Horses

For all of the changes brought by democratization, many of the music education and performance institutions established during the socialist period, like the Music and Dance College, have maintained their role as the primary centers of traditional music professionalization. Though the institutions of horse-fiddle education from the socialist era remain, the conditions of post-socialism have made it more difficult for students to pursue parallel music training in pastoral contexts. Increasing urbanization and environmental degradation have made nomadic pastures less accessible to the new generation of fiddle students matriculating at the moment. This social distance from livestock is a major area of consternation for those middle-aged and older fiddle teachers, who feel that their urban-based students are hamstrung in their ability to learn livestock-centric genres.

In response to this concern a group of professors, performers, and conductors from the State University of Arts and Culture, the National Conservatory, and the National Horse-Fiddle Ensemble have teamed up to start masterclasses for horse-fiddle students to develop their techniques for *tatlagan-ayaz* and other traditional genres. These fiddle teachers are experimenting with different ways to bring pastoral elements into urban, institutional music education. For the first masterclass the director wanted to bring in a rural herder-musician like Damdin to teach a group of Music and Dance College students. However, the fiddlers they reached out to refused to come, citing air pollution, danger, and expense as reasons to stay away from the city. As Damdin himself told me, “Ulaanbaatar is a foreign country to me.”

One of the members of the National Horse-Fiddle Ensemble stepped in to teach the first masterclass. The masterclass packed a performance room the new wing of the Music and Dance College. An after-hours and non-credit course, its high attendance demonstrated a real desire on the part of fiddle students for more education in pastoral approaches to playing the instrument. Throughout the masterclass, the teacher urged his students to seek out and learn from the nature in their own surroundings. He warned them that what they learn in school could prepare them to be good classical musicians, but it would not prepare them to be great fiddlers. Though his students attentively followed along, he became progressively more frustrated throughout the course. When I asked him later what he thought went wrong, he told me that he felt like he was grasping at straws trying to find ways to teach students how to play a horse-gait without a horse.

After the class I found the director again to ask him if he considered this first masterclass successful. In frustration he put up his hand and sharply retorted, “I wouldn’t say it was much of a masterclass at all, would you?” He brushed past me without waiting for a response, but turned back to say, 'if we can’t bring the country to the city, we’ll just have to send the students to the

country!' He considered the masterclass a failure, and furthermore that any course that depending on the institutional rhythm, the seminar in an urban conservatory, was doomed to fail in the same way.

Though expressed in frustration, the idea of sending urban-based students to engage with rural, pastoral lifeways is not without precedent. A voice professor at the Arts and Culture University has found success in teaching her long-song students landscape-based singing by taking them on field trips to various rural landscapes to learn to sing with the land, an approach I will return to later in this dissertation. This approach has caught on, first adopted by a polyphonic throat singing professor in the same department and then later as part of a "rural economy life skills" (*khödöö aj akhui*) curriculum practiced at a handful of private horse-fiddle schools.

There is a parallel between this plan and the earlier practice of *brigats*, of shipping urban-based fiddle performers to different rural pastoral encampments. This plan is partially a reversal in form in that the fiddlers are being sent to learn from herders and their herds rather than to perform for them. However, the conditions of post-socialism make previously common plans less feasible. The problems of the neoliberalization of the country make these kinds of trips non-viable, there simply is not funding available to send a group of students with their instruments to a rural pasture.

By the time I left Mongolia in 2018, no educational fieldtrips for the horse-fiddle students had been organized. The professors in charge cited incredible difficulty finding funding, transportation, and housing for their students along with their fiddles. The transition from a state planned economy to free-market capitalism has left a gulf in financial and organizational support for public projects, including arts education. Horse-fiddle teachers and students are left with a uniquely post-socialist problem of making a socialist structure operate within a capitalist system.

These masterclasses indicate a real desire on the part of both teachers and students to incorporate techniques and aesthetics for performing *tatlagan-ayaz* otherwise unavailable within classical music institutions. However, the teachers expressed in frustration that their masterclasses cannot succeed without some access to horses, camels, and bulls. This frustration points to an inability for the urban institution in its current form to totally absorb or replace the roles of non-human animals in a holistic horse-fiddle education. Non-humans perform their rhythms through their bodies, simultaneously reacting to and constructing space and they move through it. This is a vital aspect of *tatlagan-ayaz* that the horse-fiddle teachers involved in this project maintained must be learned in the pastoral context.

Back to the Pasture

Back at the National Conservatory, Boldoo told me that one of his students, who he had not heard from for six weeks, had returned to his private lessons. This student, Mönkherdene, grew up on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, a self-described lifelong urbanite. Though he stepped away from the conservatory for over a month without warning in his last year before graduating, Boldoo did not seem upset at him. To the contrary, he was beaming.

Mönkherdene left the city to work as a seasonal assistant herder. Toward the end of summer, herders in the grasslands in the north-eastern provinces look for extra hands to gather grass to dry and store in Ulaanbaatar as insurance against increasingly common and severe winter disasters that cause large-scale livestock starvation. Mönkherdene said that he took this job so he could be close to horses, to help him learn a *tatlagan-ayaz* called ‘Guilgee’ (‘Full Gallop’). He told us that he taught himself this song by paying close attention to the horses as they galloped during the day and by listening to the recording he had made of Boldoo on his

phone at night. 'He went out on his own to do this,' Boldoo exclaimed excitedly, 'now that is the only way to learn this music!'

Taking this advice, I decided to follow in Mönkherdene's footsteps and take a trip to a rural pasture to try to learn a *tatlagan-ayaz* myself. I met with Boldoo at the Music and Dance College at the end of the winter to ask how I should prepare for my upcoming trip to the rural Gobi for the spring. He led me down a winding path around the newly constructed wing of the conservatory, to the back of the compound where the old socialist-era school still stands, hidden from the street. Boldoo ushered me to a two-floor wooden cabin off to the side of the complex, the only building on site not built in the soviet, yellowish concrete slab style.

Standing in the cold, Boldoo flipped through a keyring and told me, 'this is the old singing classroom.' Inside, the walls were lined with framed photos of vocal teachers at pianos from the formative early years of the college. He showed me to an old classroom that has recently been re-purposed by students who are starting a folk-rock band. A young music instructor sat at a table in the corner, quietly carving a large pile of throat-singing flutes out of PVC pipe.

I could not help but notice that this space has its own rhythm. It was a refuge for people to develop their music and career prospects parallel to the conservatory. Using this space to practice, hold private lessons, or work with foreign researchers after school hours, musicians engaged in a near rhythm of conservatory work. They came to the same complex, played music, and construct and repair instruments but in otherwise abandoned buildings, at odd hours, with space heaters to combat the lack of insulation and the fact that the heating has been turned off. These buildings were kept locked, so either an instructor or a guard would have to approve of these activities for them to continue.

Setting up two chairs for us next to the space heater, Boldoo started to give me advice on what to ask for and pay attention to, both for my research and for my own development as a horse-fiddler. He told me that the most important thing would be to watch the camels, to see how they run, and listen to how they bellow into the night when they come to nuzzle their calves. This was a chance for me to really learn how to play a *tatlagan-ayaz* that evokes the characteristics of a camel, "*Builgan Sharyn Yavdal*" ("Gait of the Bridled Yellow [Camel]"). Though I had previously attempted to learn the song, I had never really grasped it. Boldoo insisted that being able to call upon a real, embodied knowledge of how the camels move and bellow was necessary for me to play it correctly.

A month or so later I stood out in front of my hosts' felt tent in the northern Gobi. It was our first night at the spring pasture, having set up the encampment yesterday and finished up with the fence-mending this morning. Throughout the day as we carry out herding chores like watering the sheep, I tried to pay attention as much as I could to the way the camels trotted, shambled, and heaved their way through the dusty steppe. The male camels had been pastured in "the Gobi," which is the term my hosts used for rural pastures deep enough into the semi-desert as to be too hostile to encamp. This group of camels was allowed to wander, with herders only checking on them periodically. The recent mother camels and their calves were kept close to the encampment, to account for new mother camel's tendency to reject their young and leave them in the pasture. In the morning, the camels jogged out into the steppe to search for food. The calves were left behind.

Figure 2.1 Mother Camels and Calves Kept Close to the Encampment. Dundgovi, Mongolia. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Each day, I watched the camels as they charged into the steppe, taking long strides with their heads tossed back. Approaching, the camels' thick, reddish-brown neck beards, left to grow over the course of the winter, swayed side to side in response to their heavy gait. Departing, they kicked up big clouds of dust that followed them deep into the pasture.

After the mother camels left, one of my hosts, Byambaa, and I started cleaning up the fenced enclosures to prepare them for the sheep and goats, who would soon be birthing. The camel calves sat together nearby, tied to stakes in the ground to keep them from wandering off before they are strong enough to survive on their own in the steppe. The countryside is often quiet but rarely silent, as joking, gossip, whistling, singing, spitting, and laughing, create a persistent soundscape. But when Byambaa shouted from among the calves, everyone fell silent.

Even the camels stopped their bellowing and turned to stare expectantly at Byambaa as he pushed through them, to a calf who had fallen to the ground and stopped moving. Byambaa approached and disentangled the calf from its hitching line from around the animal's neck, thinking it dead. Just as he got the still limp calf free, it sprung up and started prancing away, bouncing on the tips of its toes and lifting its knees high why barking out a kind of triumphant laughter.

This calf was dramatic. He would wail and kick his feet when he felt restless, tied to his hitching line. There were several times throughout the spring when he wrapped himself up in the line and fell to the ground, playing dead and teasing his herders.

Around dusk each night a chill wind carried a mixture of Gobi scents to the encampment - goat and sheep musk, burning dung and fur from the trash pile, and the strong prickly taste-aroma of sage. That early in spring it was quite cold at night, even in the Gobi. The mother camels nuzzled up with their calves and formed a wall of body and fur against the night winds. Each evening, once they had settled in, the mother camels arced their long, fuzzy necks back and bellowed. Long, warbling, deep and booming cries that carried over the steppe. The camels' song sounded, to my ears, mournful and nostalgic, yet protective all the same. Through interacting with the camels throughout the spring I came to understand that in order to perform a convincing bellow on the horse-fiddle's strings the fiddler must call to mind the loving, often fraught relationship between the mother and calf.

After these observations, I made several adjustments to my playing style. Small changes had major effects on the sound of the piece. For example, I adapted the dust-drawing strike-pull-coil motion I saw camels take with their strides into my left-hand technique, adding a bouncy, thrumming element to the performance. More significantly, I attempted to recreate Boldoo's

method of breaking down the *tatlagan-ayaz* into sections derived from the animals' different rhythms. Here is a representation of how the observations I made of these camels informed my performance of Builgan Sharyn Yavdal:

> I begin with the *om zee*, breathing in on the downstroke and out on the upstroke. Rather than Bb-Eb, this song begins with Bb-F.
> Section A starts at a medium pace, very deliberate. The camel is starting off into the steppe, beard swaying side to side.
> B is strong, loud, evoking a joyous camels high stepping, playful trot.
> C pushes the song to a higher register, and alternates between the left and right strings as the camel's humps sway side to side when it picks up speed.
> D is quiet, as the camel is running off into the steppe. Picking up on Damdin's performance from the *nair*, I take this section as a time to break away from standard time, allowing the camel in the song trail off.
> E ends with the bellow before returning to a second *om zee* to finish the song.

When I returned to Ulaanbaatar, I played *"Builgan Sharyn Yavdal"* for Boldoo again, using what I had learned from watching the camels. Boldoo was satisfied that I had finally turned a corner, going from simply "playing notes" to "actually performing." *"Builgan Sharyn Yavdal"* would become my go-to song to play for friends and host-family members for the rest of my research, and I was called upon to play this song for Lunar New Year's celebrations to fulfill the "*javar örgökh,"* the ritual "lifting of the chill" as discussed in the introduction. Learning from the camels in Dundgovi turned my performance of the fiddle from a curiosity into a potential for carrying out this culturally and spiritually significant ritual.

Conclusion

Damdin's performance and assertions at the *nair* that open this chapter raised two questions for me. The first question, which I addressed in this chapter, is how do non-human animals act as teachers of horse-fiddle music in a conservatory system that is based on a separation of 'nature' from 'culture?' The rhythms that horses, camels, and cattle, perform through

their bodily engagements with the steppe are necessary elements of *tatlagan-ayaz* education that disrupt the urban-based rhythms of conservatory education without destabilizing them.

In the next chapter I address the second question raised by Damdin's claim that the livestock are listening to our performances, namely: what does it mean for non-human animals to be critical consumers of music? The following chapter goes deeper into how people relate to non-human animals musically, and how musicians encode that relationship in the music by describing how people in Dundgovi province use music as a form of care taking for their livestock.

Chapter 3

Like a Lullaby:

Music as Herding Tool in Rural Dundgovi

Springtime in the Mongolian Gobi is a short and intense season of strong winds, dust storms, and wild temperature changes. It is also the birthing season for livestock, a critical period for herders fraught with challenges for animals and humans alike. Due to the difficult weather of this period and the strain on livestock weakened from the winter, it is common for mothers to die and for newborn animals to be orphaned or for living mothers to reject their own newborns. In these cases, the herders I worked with in Dundgovi province will often use species-specific, semi-improvisational songs to help bond the baby animal to a mother and encourage her to nurse.

I argue that this practice of singing to livestock presents a case in which musical performance blurs the lines between human and nonhuman sociality. This practice of livestock singing fills many different roles: it is a herding tool, a method of cross-species communication, and a form of musical cultural heritage. Musical herding practices, in which human and animal sociality are brought together, open up a space for us to consider how humans and nonhuman animals co-produce one another. Taking music-making as a form of multi-species engagement, I consider instances of this practice of singing to livestock to promote nursing to be contexts for interspecies bonding and social development that influence human-animal, human-human, and animal-animal relationships which extend beyond the context of the musical performance itself.

Animals and Music

Ethnobiologists have long been interested in the mobilization of traditional ecological knowledge in ecosystem management (Anderson 1996; Berkes et al 2000; Lepofsky 2009; Turner et al 2000). Recent considerations of the interaction between artistic production and ecological management (Curtis 2006; Guyette and Post 2015; Tucker 2016), along with theoretical movements toward the integration of ontology into ethnobiology (Daly et al. 2016), push researchers to examine the full webs of relationality at play in multi-species musical engagements.

There is a long history of ethnomusicological literature on musical relations between humans and non-humans in pastoral contexts. Studies of herders' use of song and instrumental music for calling to livestock and warding off predators assign a limited kind of audience role to herds, as they react to human calls and respond to voices they recognize (Campbell 1951; Ivarsdotter 2004; Johnson 1984). Ethnomusicology of Inner Asian nomadism goes further, to consider how animals take part in the composition of music, describing how people use mimetic performances of animal-derived song to achieve both mundane and spiritual ends (Levin and Süzükei 2010; Pegg 2001).

In recent years, scholarly interest in non-humans and music has expanded into the two separate, but interrelated, subfields of zoomusicology and ecomusicology. Zoomusicology brings together musicology and studies of animal behavior to examine the musical capacity of non-human animals (Mâche 1992; Martinelli 2009). Ecomusicology, drawing from concepts, theories, and methods from both ethnobiology and applied ethnomusicology, focuses on music's role in the network of interactions between humans and non-humans within an ecosystem (Allen 2011). Both of these fields are concerned with the question of non-human agency and music,

approached either at the species (e.g., zoomusicology) or at the ecosystem level (e.g., ecomusicology).

As a cultural anthropologist interested in music and pastoralism, I bring the species and ecosystem level approaches of zoomusicology, ecomusicology, and ethnobiology into dialogue with my own discipline's focus on individuals, both human and non-human. Recently, anthropologists and ethnobiologists have been increasingly interested non-humans as ethnographic subjects (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010; Miller and Davidson-Hunt 2013). Tsing calls for an anthropology that considers more-than-human sociality, pushing ethnographers to think through the complex web of entanglements connecting human, plant, animal, and fungi lives (2013). Such a multispecies approach requires us to expand anthropocentric concepts to include non-human agents. For example, Van Dooren and Bird Rose investigate penguin and flying fox's capacity for creating narratives, arguing that, through engagements with the urban landscape of Sydney, these animals imbue place with storied meaning (2012).

In pastoral contexts, where animal and human lives are closely interrelated and inter-dependent, the question of animal agency is vital. Philosopher Vinciane Despret writes that domestication processes have effects on the inner worlds of the human and non-human involved, transforming the identities of both (2004, 130-131). Expanding on this concept, Govindrajan theorizes that humans and domestic animals create interspecies kinship relationships with one another through acts of intimacy and care (2018). Along these lines, anthropologists focusing on pastoralism describe herders as self-conscious participants in a multi-species set of social relations with livestock, wild animals, plants, and other non-humans (Anderson 2000; Fijn 2011; Govindrajan 2018).

In this chapter, I take sheep as having a kind of agency as critical consumers of music. Though both zoomusicologists and ecomusicologists have written about music as a site for multi-species communication and collaboration between humans and non-human animals (Nollman 1999; Rothenburg 2008; Simonett 2015), theoretical treatments of non-human animals' consumption and response to human-composed and human-performed music are still nascent (Doolittle and Gingras 2015). In order to understand multispecies musical production, this body of literature needs critical theorizations on the role of nonhuman animals as consumers of music.

For the herders I worked with in Dundgovi, observing and understanding how sheep respond to their singing is an important part maintaining the health of their herds. Reflecting on these experiences, herders engage in discourses that theorize the animals' capacity as an engaged audience for human-produced music. I suggest that, through acts of musical performance, heritage bearers bring together the social worlds of human and sheep in this rural Dundgovi pasture. The affective power of song draws humans into the intimate world of mother-child relationships among domestic sheep**.**

Spring in Dundgovi

Dundgovi (literally "Middle Gobi") is a province in southern central Mongolia. It sits on the north side of the Gobi, with semi-arid, grassy steppe to the north giving way to scrubby semi-desert to the south. Spring in Mongolia, though short, is a critical season for herders and their herds. A roughly 45 day stretch from mid-March until the end of April marks the birthing season for livestock. Dust storms and nightly freezes, along with the weakened state of the animals after a long and difficult winter, complicate this already dangerous period. The difficulties endured by the animals often result in a number of orphaned and rejected newborns.

Figure 3.1 Dundgovi in the Spring with Nursing Sheep and Lambs. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Fall in this region, on the other hand, is a relatively peaceful season. Livestock finish birthing by the end of spring and fatten throughout the summer, so that by the fall herds are at their most calm and stable. During this period, horses provide milk that can be fermented into a refreshing, mildly alcoholic beverage called *airag*. It is also a temperate period of calm weather in the region. A counterbalance to the stresses of spring, fall is a time for celebrations that involve other kinds of singing and music-making that intersect with the practice of livestock-singing in ways that bring the emotional worlds of non-humans into human-centric performance contexts.

Though there are many species of livestock raised in Dundgovi and throughout Mongolia, most of the herds in the province are made up of the *tavan khoshuu mal*, or "five

snouts" of traditionally herded domesticated ungulates: sheep (*Ovis aries*), goats (*Capra aegagrus hircus*), cattle (*Bos taurus*), horses (*Equus ferus caballus*), and Bactrian camels (*Camelus bactrianus*). There are different versions of nursing songs for each of the "five snouts," and each species' songs consist of different words and slightly different melodies. Though the melodies and lyrics herders use for livestock-singing change from pasture to pasture throughout Mongolia (Biraa 2017; Fijn 2011; Pegg 2001), in the county where I did my research, *toig* is the word for sheep, *tsii* or *tsee* is for goats, *öög* is for cattle, *khöös* is for camels, and *gürii* is for horses.

In conversation, these words have no meaning. Their function is solely for soothing the particular animals they are associated with. I will here focus on *toiglokh*, the general term for livestock-singing used for sheep. This is the example I have the most experience with and has been the one most commonly used by herders with whom I worked.

In this chapter, I start by detailing the use of springtime livestock singing with nursing sheep by two brothers in their late thirties to early fourties, who I will call Byambaa and Mandaa. Then, I turn to three herders and singers in their seventies and eighties, experts in a variety of traditional herding practices and musical genres, especially *urtyn duu*, who I will refer to as Tsogt, Naraa, and Damdin. I draw upon experiences and interviews with them at different points in the year, exploring how they relate the human-livestock interactions of springtime with their human-centric traditional musical performances in the fall.

During the spring, I participated in pastoral labor, acting as an additional (if ineffective) pair of hands during a period when many urban-based relatives join herders for the difficult work of moving the encampment from winter to spring pasture and helping with new mothers and lambs. While working with herders, I paid special attention to ways in which musical

engagement forms a part of everyday pastoral practices. During the fall seasons, I participated in four *nair*, day-long traditional celebrations defined by singing and drinking fermented mare's milk, taking them as sites of the performance and intergenerational transmission of long-song, a genre of music that has a close relationship with livestock-singing in the province.

As the efficacy of livestock-singing relies not just on herders' abilities to affect their wills upon sheep, but also on their abilities to foster enduring care relationships between new mother sheep and lambs, I took a multi-species approach with my participant-observation. I paid special attention to times and places where human and non-human socialities overlap, such as the sheep corral at dusk when the herds are brought home from the pasture and orphaned lambs are brought together with new mothers. Two of my hosts in particular, Mandaa and Tsogt, gave me instruction on how they read interactions between livestock and engage empathetically with them.

Singing for Sheep

Byambaa and Mandaa were both raised in this county in rural Dundgovi province and learned herding from a young age. They moved out of the province to work in the city for several years before returning to the Gobi to take care of the family flocks of livestock after their eldest sister and her husband retired from herding. The family raises an expansive herd of sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and horses, the full range of the traditional *tavan khoshuu mal*. Responsibility for the herds is spread among various siblings and cousins throughout the county, though Byambaa and Mandaa take care of a large share, with a few hundred sheep and goats staying in the fenced enclosures next to the small felt round-tent that they share and the cattle pasturing nearby.

In the middle of March, I traveled with Byambaa and Mandaa's relatives from the city to help them move their encampment. We packed their felt home on to the back of a truck from the winter pasture, where they had been staying for several months, and reconfigured it on their spring pasture nearby. Within a few of days of us moving the pasture and setting up a fenced enclosure for the sheep and goats to stay in at night, the expectant mothers began to give birth to lambs and kids.

In the first week one of the mother sheep died giving birth. Her lamb survived. Byambaa brought the orphaned lamb beyond a second set of fences within the sheep enclosure (see figure 3.2), where a few nursing sheep and lambs had already been separated from the rest of the flock. He left the lamb to stay with the other newborns and new mothers for the rest of the day. Around sunset, after he and Mandaa brought the sheep back from the pasture to their encampment, he returned to the mothers' circle. Dusk is a vital time for newborns to enter the care of their mothers; if they are not fed and accepted, they will have a hard time surviving the night, as temperatures fall below freezing and the wind picks up. He fed a rope through the back of the enclosure so that we could tie one of the nursing mothers to the back fence. He selected a sheep who had recently given birth but seemed hearty and healthy enough to support another lamb and squatted next to her, looping his left arm around the mother's neck and holding the lamb close with his right. After a few moments of quiet reassurances, he began singing "*toi-toi-toi-guu ee-khe-khe-khee ee-ye-ee*."

Figure 3.2 Sheep Enclosure with Fenced Area for New Mothers and Lambs. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Byambaa continued to sing like this, with variations on the melody and ornamentation until long after the sun set. He paused only to shout for me to bring him a flashlight so that he could continue to make sure that the lamb is in the right position to nurse in the dark. Later that night he told me that he would continue to repeat this process of bringing the orphan together with the mother and singing to them at sunset until the new mother accepted the baby as her own and cared for it without his direction. On the first night, he sang to this pair for over half an hour before the sheep nursed and thereby brought the *toiglokh* to a successful conclusion. However, on the second night, it took only a couple of minutes for the sheep to take to the lamb. After two

evenings of *toiglokh*, Byambaa decided that the sheep and lamb were ready to be reintegrated into the herd as a mother-child pair.

Once the sheep and lamb were reintegrated into the herd, they acted like any other mother-child pair. The lamb followed the mother, and called to her when in distress, and the mother responded with care and concern. The new mother interacted with this adopted lamb in just as she did with the lamb to which she had given birth, and her relationship with that lamb seemed to be largely unchanged. Though Byambaa engineered this relationship by separating the mother sheep and lamb from the rest of the herd and singing to them over the course of a couple of evenings, the mother sheep and adopted lamb developed a caring, trusting relationship that extended outside of the space and time of the *toiglokh* performance itself. Govindrajan proposes that through acts of care, humans build kinship relations with nonhuman animals (2018). Byambaa uses traditional song as a form of care to create kinship not just between himself and the sheep, but to build kin relations between the sheep and lamb as well.

Byambaa continued taking sheep aside and singing to them each evening for the next couple of weeks, using *toiglokh* to adopt a handful of lambs to new mothers throughout the rest of the birthing season. He explained that the singing itself is what makes the sheep nurse, and that the singing calms the sheep and lamb. In conjunction with the pair's confinement to the secondary enclosure and isolation from the herd, the singing made the animals comfortable with each other's presence. He was not alone in voicing this perspective. The idea that singing calms sheep and causes them to nurse came through in each of my interviews with herders from around the county for the rest of the spring. Singing in this area was such a useful tool for promoting nursing that many of the people I worked with report that they sing while milking as well.

Later that spring, I asked Tsogt if there are other methods for handling child rejection among livestock, but he told me, "no, just *toiglokh*." Though in other pastures throughout Mongolia, and the Central Asian steppe more broadly, pastoralists may engage in a wide variety of sheep adoption practices, in this county in rural Dundgovi province, my interlocutors stressed that singing is their sole method. If there are other techniques, Byambaa and Mandaa did not need them that year; of the seven lambs adopted to new mothers through the use of *toiglokh*, only one adopted mother rejected her new lamb after being reintegrated into the herd.

In this case, *toiglokh* is a pastoral tool and an affective practice. As a form of domestication, *toiglokh* addresses a problem for the herder, as an orphaned or rejected lamb is a threat to the reproduction of the herd. In keeping with Ingold's claim that wealth in pastoral contexts assumes and depends on the reproduction of the herd itself (1980, 201), an orphaned or abandoned lamb represents a liability to Byambaa and his family's economic well-being. So, Byambaa directed the will of the sheep and lamb by causing them to bond through this use of song.

However, the effect Byambaa was attempting to instill is an emotional one. He used song to impart feelings of comfort, calm, and trust upon the sheep and lamb. Once he reintegrated the animals back into the herd, he depended on the sheep and lamb to build upon those feelings. It is the music, and the herder and sheep's shared ability to engage emotionally and affectively with it, that allows for this domestication practice to take place. The emotional impact on the sheep and lamb, and the relationship that they maintain after reintegration, are what make *toiglokh* a functional tool for maintaining the herd.

The 2016 report on Mongolian Intangible Cultural Heritage to UNESCO describes livestock-singing in other parts of Mongolia as a "monotone chant" (Huh 2016, 92). In

Dundgovi, some herders did indeed perform the song this way. For example, Byambaa's brother Mandaa had a very chant-like style, as he repeated "*toig-uu*" with the same two-tone pitch movement. However, Byambaa's form of *toiglokh* traced a dynamic melody that rose briefly before plunging low, finally driving up in pitch and volume in a stirring crescendo, punctuated by a pulsing vibrato ornamentation. His *toiglokh* was stylistically similar to another form of Mongolian traditional music, long-song.

Elements of Long-song in Pastoral Practice

Long-song is a genre of vocal performance characterized by dense poetic texts sung through long, highly ornamented and semi-improvisational melodies. Unlike *toiglokh* and other livestock-dedicated coaxing music, long-song is a performative art style intended for human audiences, with deep philosophical texts and soaring melodies. Listening to Byambaa as he performed the *toiglokh* for the orphaned lamb and her new mother, I could hear discrete ornamentations and melodic runs from long-song. When I asked him about it later that night, he told me at first that he does not consider himself a singer, though he admitted to knowing a song or two. When I compared his singing to the chant-like versions of *toiglokh* that I have heard of previously, he offered that Dundgovi herders like himself like to sing with a bit of long-song flair.

Byambaa told me that such herders adapt long-song to the space of the sheep enclosure and their non-human audience. He himself played with the form of long-song by moving fluidly between chanting and long ornamental runs. He lifted melodies from particular songs and replaces the lyrics with the repeated "*toig toig-uu,*" a sound meant specifically to calm sheep.

Shifting between recognizable melodies, chanting, and long stretches of ornamental improvisation, Byambaa weaved elements from long-song throughout his *toiglokh.*

Byambaa and Mandaa's herds finished birthing relatively early in the season, long before the end of April. With no fences left to patch and no lambs left to birth, Byambaa sent me to stay at Tsogt and Naraa's encampment to work with them and with Damdin, who lives in the nearby administrative center of the county. On the way to Tsogt and Naraa's place, Byambaa told me to bring up my questions about long-song and *toiglokh* with these elders. The three of them are well known in the county as excellent singers of *toiglokh*, whose livestock-singing is both effective at calming the animals and aesthetically beautiful. In addition to being expert herders, all three are virtuoso *urtyn duu* singers and teachers.

Long-song, like *toiglokh* and other forms of livestock-singing, is widespread throughout the Mongolian-speaking world and takes a variety of forms (Pegg 2001; Yoon 2013). As such, I do not aim to make a universal claim about its practice or origins. Rather, I am interested in how the particular relationship between *toiglokh* and long-song in Dundgovi invites us to think of non-human animals as potential audiences of human music. Damdin, a retired herder and the primary traditional music teacher for the county, explained that the relationship between *toiglokh* and long-song in this province is not accidental.

Damdin described long-song as a herder's art form, best learned from horseback. A singer must take a special consideration for non-human audiences, such as horses and sheep, and non-human sources of inspiration, especially landscape features. In his mid-eighties now, he settled in town and retired from herding, but he still teaches long-song to his apprentices in pastoral contexts. He said that he teaches from the pasture because long-song and *toiglokh* have similar kinds of power. Just as *toiglokh* has the power to move the emotions of the sheep, long-

song has the power to move the emotions of people. Sheep and people, he reminded me, are not so different.

Gesturing out the window of his house in the administrative center, Damdin directed my attention to the spreading steppe. I looked out the window to see the dusty orange plane of the Gobi, dotting by dark green patches of sage. From this vantage point behind the window in this village, the vastness of the steppe was deceptive, the horizon hemmed in by a wall of mountains. The steppe is so quiet that every noise is amplified, echoing and distorted over the small bumps in the landscape. Every unique sound of wind running over different rocks, every bleat and bellow from distant livestock, every barking dog reaches comes through clearly, but distant.

As I took in the view, dust kicking up in a red haze around tiny white flecks of far-off sheep, Damdin started again. He told me, “look at our land, see how it is? It is vast, calm. So our hearts should be: vast, calm. We sing the vastness of the steppe through our song.” The extended, meandering melodies, the sharp rises from low, sustained notes to an ethereal falsetto, and striking vocal modulation as ornamentation reflect the landscape features of the steppe and the desert, bringing with them the moral and emotional character of the landscape. Musically, performers use these techniques to instill a sense of steppe-like calm in their audience, whether they are addressing a human audience with long-song or a non-human audience with *toiglokh.*

Here, it is important to be clear about the roles different non-humans played in Damdin's explanation. The landscape has a moral and aesthetic character that singers can read and sound through their performance. Sonic constructions and reconstructions of landscapes is well documented as a spiritual practice in Inner Asia (Levin and Süzükei 2010; Post 2007).

Feld argues that music is a multisensory faculty through which people create place (1996). In doing so, he argues, the senses involved in this musical production become tied to that

place in turn. Nonhuman animals participate in this sensing of place as well. Livestock in this case, participate in the act of sensing the rural Gobi landscape by acting as critical audiences for the musical performances of their herders.

Damdin attributed much of his skill as a long-song singer to his experiences singing to livestock, saying "for many years, my only listeners were the sheep in the field." While Damdin drew upon the landscape as a source of inspiration, he valued sheep as a critical audience for the music. As a teacher, Damdin directed students to interpret the landscape of the Gobi as they sing, but he paid particular attention to how the sheep and horses respond to the students' performances. Reading the calmness or agitation of the livestock based on their behavior, he considered their feedback as an important indicator of the students' merit as singers.

Tsogt and Naraa, a married couple of herders and singers who encamp near Damdin's town, also perform long-song and *toiglokh* in interconnected ways. Like Byambaa and Mandaa, they were raised as herders but took a long hiatus from pastoralism. Tsogt spent his younger years as a driver, while Naraa worked as an accountant. Now in their mid-seventies, they have both retired to the countryside to take up herding again with a small flock of about 100 sheep and goats. They are also musicians and music teachers, performing for local celebrations and passing on *urtyn duu* and a variety of other traditional praise songs to apprentices throughout the province and beyond, particularly at celebrations during autumn.

Tsogt and Naraa purposefully blend long-song and *toiglokh*. In interviews, they both told me that they choose songs that they sing in the fall for human audiences and adapt them to sing as *toiglokh* for sheep during the spring. Tsogt said he is partial to singing "*Kheer Khaltar*" ("Speckled Bay Horse") to his herds, replacing the song's verses of poetic text with a cycle of vocables that he repeats for as long as takes to get the sheep to nurse. He used the song as the

melodic basis for his livestock coaxing and ornaments his performance with *tsokhilgo,* a modulated vocal pulsation associated with long-song.

Tsogt explained that he usually chooses a song that moves him to sing to his livestock. He told me that he sings it because it will sooth the sheep to hear just as it soothes him to sing. He interprets the responses of the sheep, noting what calms or agitates them. Singing to sheep is his primary way of practicing this technically difficult singing style, so that the aesthetics of what appeals to sheep become a part of his performances for human audiences in the fall. Tsogt told me that many herders, especially old-timers, have a favorite long-song song they use for helping their sheep nurse. Each herder picks a different song that moves them. While Tsogt himself claimed "*Kheer Khaltar*" ("Speckled Bay Horse") as his favorite tune to sing, he wistfully recalled how, when Damdin still herded, he would sing the most beautiful *toiglokh* version of the song "*Jargaltain Delger*" ("Expanding Joy") for his sheep.

Singing for Humans

As spring passed, Tsogt and Naraa's herds finished birthing as well. The livestock who survived this critical period continued to fatten during the summer. Though there were no more orphaned or rejected lambs to tend to, Byambaa and Mandaa continued to use livestock-singing while milking. Just before the beginning of fall and the onset of the festival season, Byambaa's family collected milk from horses to ferment into a mildly alcoholic drink called *airag*. To encourage them to produce milk, Byambaa sang to the mares just as he sang to the sheep and lambs, replacing the sheep-calming sound "*toig*" with a sound meant to calm horses, "*gürii.*"

Both Damdin and Tsogt asserted that, without *airag,* there can be no long-song. "It soothes the throat of a singer," Damdin told me, "and it gives the singer confidence to sing well."

Tsogt added that the milk from the horse connects people with the livestock and with the land through the grasses that horse eats. That the horse's milk is collected with the aid of livestock-singing is another way in which the practice is linked to long-song in this region.

If spring is the season for *toiglokh,* fall is for long-song. Throughout the fall in Dundgovi, there are a number of celebrations, called *nair*, in which friends and family members gather in one person's home to feast, sing, and drink *airag*. Venerated singers, usually elderly men like Tsogt and Damdin, are called upon to begin and end these parties by singing long-song.

The *nair* is a hospitality frame, which Humphrey describes as a context for creating a tone of social equanimity (2012). Legrain argues that the primary role of singing in the *nair* is to create a shared feeling to foster social cohesion (2016). Madison-Pískatá explains that long-song has a special power for encoding the moral character of a landscape (in this case, the serenity of the Gobi) and reproducing it through performance (2018). Good singing, as Damdin tells us, brings the peace and vastness of the steppe into the social space of the *nair,* just as good *toiglokh* brings the same peace to the mother sheep and lamb.

At the beginning of the fall, I returned to this rural county in Dundgovi for the first *nair* of the season. Silver bowl of *airag* in hand, Tsogt started out the celebration with "*Kheer Khaltar*" ("Speckled Bay Horse"). He had practiced a version of the song throughout the spring as *toiglokh,* so he was well prepared to perform the long-song version in this celebration. His sheep had become an audience for long-song, just as the sounds of what works to promote nursing found their way into his performance at this *nair*.

The main difference between this version of "*Kheer Khaltar*" and his *toiglokh* version was the addition of narrative, both textual and melodic. When singing to sheep, Tsogt used the words, "*toig-uu toig-uu,*" which he explained have no meaning outside of their use for calming

sheep. When singing the long-song, however, he performed a full set of lyrics: a poem that pairs the colors of different horses with moral instruction, exploring a realm of Dundgovi pastoral philosophy that is common for this genre.

The purpose of *toiglokh*, ultimately, is to induce the mother sheep to nurse and the new lamb to suckle. The singer stops whenever the relationship between the sheep is established. As such, livestock-singing rarely follows a melody directly from beginning to end. When singing to sheep, Tsogt broke into chant halfway through a verse, repeated sections of verses, and left melodic phrases unresolved. As a long-song song however, Tsogt performed *"Kheer Khaltar"* with more structure, tracing a melody that has specific beginnings and endings which break the text of the song into couplets.

Despite these differences, there were two key similarities between Tsogt's *toiglokh* and his long-song: style and purpose. The overall melody he sang and his placement and sound of ornamentations, the aspects of *urtyn duu* that vary greatly by singer and performance were the same as the version he uses for his nursing sheep. As he sang at this celebration, I heard him break into an extended falsetto improvisation in the second verse that I had heard him use for his sheep and goats several times during the spring.

Having practiced his songs in the pasture, Tsogt reflected on the tastes of his sheep to inform how he sang in this *nair*. He told me that, in both *toiglokh* and long-song, his goal is to create a calming atmosphere. Like Damdin, he measures his skill as a singer against his ability to bring the same kind of calm to the sheep and humans alike.

Like a Lullaby

Why should singing to livestock cause them to nurse and, furthermore, to form an enduring maternal bond? Herders' opinions on why this practice works were mixed and varied from species to species, but there were a few theories on the efficacy of nursing songs that applied to all five of the *tavan khoshuu mal* livestock animals. The two most common both relied on an idea of co-training between non-human and human.

One argument put forward by Tsogt is that the animals are trained from a young age to know that the song is a call to nurse, in the same way that they are trained to respond to a variety of herding calls. The other main theory, which Mandaa preferred, was that herders adapt sounds similar to those they hear from mother animals and consider the livestock's reactions as they produce these sounds. Taken together, these two ways of accounting for the efficacy of livestock-singing point to a co-production of the practice and a mutual training, where herders teach animals how to consume a kind of music, just as the animals teach the herder how to sing it effectively.

Both of these perspectives depend on music's ability to relax the sheep and promote nursing. The empirical observations of my interlocutors in this case present interesting contributions to recent studies in veterinary science on the use of music to relax domestic animals (Kogan et al. 2012; Snowdon et al. 2015; Wells et al. 2002) and to promote milking with dairy livestock (Uetake et al. 1997). However, as a cultural anthropologist, I am more drawn to how both of these answers also point to ways in which the boundaries of human and non-human can be blurred and transformed through musical performance.

The first answer points to a way in which herders use *toiglokh* as a form of cross-species communication. Walther writes that interspecies herding only functions because of a herder's

ability to communicate with the herd as their most dominant member (1991, 11-12). As a form of training, *toiglokh* alters the social structure of the herd, putting the human in the role of most dominant sheep. However, it puts the herder in a unique position not just as a head of the flock, but as a facilitator of mother-child relationships as well. The herder draws upon long-song, a genre of music from a repertoire of human sociality, by incorporating the genre's melodies and vocal techniques as he performs *toiglokh* to promote this relationship between two sheep. By combining forms of affective engagement from the human and non-human realms, the herder acts not as a sheep, but as what Despret would call a "human-with-sheep," engaged in a mutual transformation of identity across species (2004, 131).

The second answer, in which the herder learns what sounds to sing by imitating sheep, also highlights the permeability of the categories of human and non-human. As Simonett points out, the act of a non-human animal teaching music to a human creates a context in which both parties can cross those boundaries (2015). The aesthetics that humans learn from performing *toiglokh* mingle with aesthetics they learn from the physical and moral character of the steppe and Gobi landscapes, forming the basis for their performance of long-song.

There was one other answer to the question of why *toiglokh* works that stands out to me for the connections between humans and animals it evokes. Boldoo, the former herder, now professional musician and music teacher, argued that the songs herders sing to nursing sheep have the same function as *büüvei*, a particular genre of a lullaby for human children. In form, the practice is quite similar, as it involves the repetition of a single word, "*büüvei*," over the course of a semi-improvised melody to calm the child and make them sleep (see: Dagvadorj 2016). While there is a commonly-repeated etymology of the word as a contraction of '*büü ai*' ("do not be afraid"), in conversation, *büüvei* simply means "lullaby."

Boldoo explained that livestock-singing and lullabies are both musical practices that develop an attachment between a parent and child. Furthermore, for him, the two practices operate on similar theories of relationship building and character development. Returning to this practice often builds a feeling of trust in the child for the parent, and a connection between the two. He contended that this trust extends throughout the life of a person, setting them up to develop a *zöölön* or "softhearted" character rather than a *khatuu* or "hard" character that drives them to drink to excess, start fights, and cause trouble. Dagvadorj echoes these sentiments, writing that *büüvei* is as significant to a child's development as mother's milk, and that, "of people with nasty personalities, we say: 'their mothers' must not have sung *büüvei* to them'" (2016, 3).

In Boldoo's view, *toiglokh* works the same way. The song, along with the caring embrace, creates a sense of trust in the young for the mother. It facilitates a mutual feeling of comfort and shared affection. Only in this construction, the herder acts as a surrogate. While sheep and lamb continue to build on this mother-child relationship, with all the care and trust that it involves, the herder's primary contribution to the development of that relationship, the *toiglokh* song, is temporary. Byambaa held the mother and child together in his embrace, and he created that relationship between the two, building their trust in one another while instilling trust for himself in both. His goal was to create the kind of mutual trust between the mother and newborn that would allow them both to reintegrate into the herd, at which point, this kind of special care and attention would no longer be necessary.

Boldoo claimed that the social and moral aspect applies to sheep as well. Just as a lack of lullabies in childhood can lead a person down the path of becoming *khatuu* or "hard," neglected or abandoned livestock can grow up to be *zerleg*, "wild." He argued that an orphaned livestock

animal lacks a necessary social relationship for its physical and emotional development, which, in turn, makes it unable to effectively socialize within the herd. A herder can heal this orphaned animal through *toiglokh*, instilling a *zöölön* character in the sheep, like a lullaby does for human children.

Conclusion

The practice of *toiglokh* brings three different relationships into dialogue with one another: human-sheep, sheep-sheep, and also human-human. The first of these relationships is human-sheep, as the herder sings to the livestock and they respond by nursing. In Dundgovi, the herders I work with balance knowledge of *urtyn duu*, an aesthetic practice that works for fellow humans, with a careful consideration of the sheep's responses and the efficacy of *toiglokh*. Ideas and goals for the use of music in fostering a human child's social development and general positive sociality find their way into the act of caring for newborn livestock as well, rendering the act of livestock-singing something like a lullaby.

The second relationship involved in the practice of *toiglokh* is a sheep-sheep relationship. The herder works to develop a bond between the mother and the lamb that, if successful, will lead to an adoption and reintegration into the herd as a mother-child pair with the mutual acceptance that relationship entails. The trust and care of this relationship will continue to be a part of the emotional lives of the sheep and lamb long after the *toiglokh* is complete, and it will allow the orphaned or rejected lamb to take part in the social world of the herd. *Toiglokh* then is an important aspect of the maintenance of the herd's social cohesion, as it is threatened by the calamities of a dangerous birthing season.

The third type of relationship that intersects with *toiglokh* is human-human. Singing to sheep in the spring gives people opportunities to learn and practice their long-song techniques so that they can bring that experience into the *nair* during the fall and express the same kind of calm and comfort that they instill in the sheep with *toiglokh.* By combining the expertise gained through *toiglokh* with aesthetics drawn from landscapes, long-song singers bring a whole network of non-human pastoral relations into the *nair*. As national institutions draw upon the expertise generated in these contexts for state heritage music education, the emotional lives of sheep have effects that subtly reverberate outward from the pasture to the institution.

Livestock-singing has the ability to cross species boundaries because of its status as music, as Martinelli defines it, “an affective, emotional engagement that is accessible to humans and non-human animals alike” (2009, 7). As Damdin explained, music gives us an opportunity to engage with the aesthetics and emotions of disparate entities. Humans can draw out the calming, expansive nature of the steppe landscape, and use that to share deep emotional concepts regarding child-care and social development with sheep. The herders I worked with take the sheep's responses to their singing into consideration as they perfect their long-song, treating the animals as a critical audience whose aesthetic tastes are valuable. Livestock-singing brings the emotional worlds of sheep and steppe into the production of human cultural heritage, and human heritage becomes an active, vital aspect of those non-human worlds in return.

Chapter 4

A Song for the Horses:

Interwoven Natural and Cultural Heritage at Hustai Nuruu National Park

I returned to Ulaanbaatar from Dundgovi at the end of May to find that I had received an email from a friend, Chuluun, a retired chemical engineer and traditional music lover. The foaling season for the Mongolian wild horse, the *takhi*, was nearly over, he wrote. "I am going to bring a group of singers to them," the email said, "would you like to join us as we sing a song for the horses?"

In previous chapters I have presented perspectives from people working within urban music institutions. Conservatory-based music teachers and researchers like Boldoo, Tüvshee, and Tuyaa both represent and are informed by the official perspectives at their institutions. In chapter three I presented a perspective from herders operating outside of these institutions. Despite this, herder-musicians Damdin and Tsogt are considered valuable sources for conservatory education. The horse-fiddle performer, teacher, and ensemble director Bilgüün has invited Damdin to come speak at conservatories and universities in Ulaanbaatar multiple times his capacity as a long-song singer (though he has rarely chosen to make the trip up to the city, as he told me, "Ulaanbaatar is a foreign country to me").

However, discourses on heritage are not confined to institutions, and the performance of traditional Mongolian music for non-human audiences is not restricted to pastoral nomadic contexts. In this chapter, I present perspectives from people who are neither conservatory musicians nor herders, but who nonetheless use heritage to work toward a more-than-human future. This chapter focuses on two people in particular. Chuluun is a former chemical engineer in his late sixties. Now retired, he plans and funds small-scale art projects based on his love of

horses and of traditional music, both of which he developed an appreciation for as a child in a herding family. Tsegii is a banker who learned how to sing long-song as an adult in order to connect with the steppe, which she felt disconnected from having spent her formative years in the city. After coming into her own as a singer, she has started traveling the country, performing music-based rituals for sacred sites.

In this chapter I profile how Chuluun, Tsegii, and a handful of other long-song singers used long-song to create new social relationships with a recently repopulated community of once-extinct wild horses. This group of singers use long-song to contribute to the project to replenish the population of a species of horse once extinct in the wild. This chapter describes the follow-up to a successful natural rejuvenation project, the repopulation of wild *takhi* horses in central Mongolia. Government and NGO directed projects pick up on the division of heritage into natural, tangible, or intangible. Usually funding for these projects in Mongolia involves international monetary investment, which brings UNESCO ideas about how heritage should be conserved. However, these divisions have not changed local ideas about the interdependence of natural and cultural heritage. When intangible aspects of heritage are not prioritized officially, people find ways to sneak cultural aspects into preservation efforts.

The natural heritage program of re-introducing *takhi* to central Mongolia was successful in creating a healthy community of re-wilded horses. Chuluun does not consider simply having healthy bodies to be the full extent of rehabilitating that community of wild horses. Because of the *takhi*'s long associations with humans, Chuluun considers the social relationship between humans and horses be a necessary aspect to rebuild.

Chuluun chooses the cultural heritage practice of long-song to build connections with the *takhi* because he takes this form of traditional music as a more-than-human endeavor that has the

potential for cross-species communication. In this chapter I argue that the performance of cultural heritage is the method the people I worked with used to build those multispecies relationships. This case offers a challenge to the distinction between environmental and cultural heritage and highlights the role that music can play in the mediating interspecies relationships involved in conservation.

Horse as Heritage Bearer

Following Haraway's *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), anthropologists have begun to examine the relationship between humans and domestic animals as an opportunity to reconsider kinship. Literature following this model shows that relationships between humans and domestic animals are formed through repeated acts of intimacy (Govindrajan 2018; Schroer 2018). Hearing the way Chuluun speaks about *takhi,* it is clear that he feels personal affection for them. As I described in chapter 3, Mongolian herders explicitly perform traditional songs for their livestock, so Chuluun and his team's act of singing to the *takhi* is a form of intimacy in this vein.

In each of these theories on domestic animals as kin (Haraway 2003; Govindrajan 2018; Schroer 2018) as well as theories on the human-animal relationship specific to transhumant pastoralism (Ingold 1980), the trust generated through acts of intimacy is weighed against acts of domination by the human over the animal. The *takhi* are not companion species in Haraway's model, because they are not pets or domesticated livestock. Chuluun's relationship with the *takhi* may be generated through acts of intimacy, but domination is not an inherent aspect of his relationship to them.

The *takhi* are meant to be wild. The phrase, "Przewalski Horses, the Last and Only Species of Wild Horse in the World" is blazoned on Hustai National park's brochures and website (“Хустайн байгалийн цогцолборт газар” n.d.). The Hustai *takhi* are highly dependent on humans, despite their wildness, staying close to the protection offered by the ecologists charged with studying them and surviving due to legal protections on their pastures. Fijn argues that *takhi* are wild not by virtue of their physiological condition, which has been actively managed by human zoo-keepers for at least 13 generations between their first capture and eventual re-wilding, but according to their shy and distant disposition towards humans (2015, 294).

Chuluun based his approach to establishing social relations with the *takhi* on his memory of intimate interactions with domestic horses in his youth. With those domestic horses, he reported having an easy time determining whether the animals trusted him or not, indeed such trust was a necessary aspect of riding and racing them. However the *takhi* are not quite domestic nor totally wild. As such developing relations with them carries both the familiarity of Chuluun’s pastoral memories and the sheer ontological difference that can exist between a human and a wild beast of prey. More-than-human acts of intimacy can be fleeting and ambiguous as to the kinds of relation that create.

The singers I profile in this chapter use musical heritage to try to create a horizontal relationship with the *takhi* that is intimate without involving the aspects of domination inherent to human relationships with domestic animals. Music is a more-than-human activity and can be used to create new kinds of affective relations between humans and nonhumans (Feld 1996; Martinelli 2009). By performing long-song to create a relationship with the rewilded *takhi* without the official support of Hustai National Park Trust, Chuluun demonstrates that cultural

heritage, especially musical heritage, will be part of natural preservation projects whether supported by the organization or not.

In this chapter I argue that *takhi* are bearers of a shared heritage, alongside their human counterparts. If, as I have maintained throughout this dissertation, heritage is a distinctly neoliberal version of cultural beliefs and practices, then being a "heritage bearer" is a distinctly neoliberal form of social participation. As demonstrated in chapter two, the transformation of a multispecies cultural practice like long-song into cultural heritage creates space for people to reshape modernist institutions to allow for more-than-human engagement. Through their performance of long-song for *takhi*, Chuluun, Tsegii, and the other long-song singers involved in this project transform the *takhi* into heritage bearers. In doing so, they open up to category of heritage bearer to include nonhumans.

This chapter examines this combination of natural and cultural heritage. We see here a natural heritage revitalization project that does not in and of itself create public confidence in the long-term health of the animals, leading to a use of cultural heritage to create confidence in the project. Local people recognized that natural and cultural heritage cannot, or maybe should not, be managed without respect to one another.

Takhi

Takhi (*Equus przewalskii*), also known as Przewalski's horses, are a wild equid relative to the domestic horse endemic to Mongolia. They are often referred to in conservation documents as the worlds "only" or "last" truly wild horses (Dulmaa and Shagdarsüren 1972) as opposed to feral communities of domesticated horses. They are diminutive and stocky, reaching only 4 feet high and around 6 feet from tip to tail, with thick necks and short legs. Unlike their domesticated cousins, *takhi*

do not vary widely in coloration, being mostly dun with black manes, and a black stripe down the back, though subtle variations are identifiable.

The *takhi* were extinct in the wild by the end of the 1960's. The degeneration of wild *takhi* populations and their preservation both began in the early 1900s. Reporting on the status of the *takhi* as of the mid-sixties, Mongolian ecologist Khaidav reported that the number of wild *takhi* was falling due to what he referred to as 'careless' hunting and *zud*, steppe winter calamities in which a season of drought is followed by heavy snow and make it difficult for ungulates to graze (1969). Since then, in addition to Khaidav's concerns about overhunting and the increasing number and severity of *zud*, a number of other theories have been put forward to explain how the *takhi* became extinct, from capture programs for Western zoos (Van Dierendonck and Wallis de Vries 1996), competition for forage resources with livestock herds (Kaczensky et. al. 2007), to military action in the *takhi*'s habitat along the Mongolia-China border between Khovd province and Xinjiang in the early 20th century (Ryder 1993). Broadly, most of the theories as to why the *takhi* died out in the wild agree that the cause was anthropogenic. Furthermore, Van Dierendonck and Wallis de Vries quote a Mongolian scientist named S. Dulamtseren as claiming that the western zoo capture programs led to breakdown of internal social structures within *takhi* herds, seriously hampering their resilience and leading to their extinction (1996).

Commonly accepted theories on the extinction of the *takhi* present it as an inevitable result of increasing interaction with local humans, placing much of the blame at the feet of local herders and subsistence hunters. Van Dierendonck and Wallis de Vries argue that the *takhi* were pushed to progressively less hospitable pastures by the nomadic pastoralists who had "colonized" the steppe of the period over several millennia (1996, 731). Interpretations of this sort that gesture widely to thousands of years of activities by 'nomads' ignore the fact that, though there is

a recorded history of local Mongolian interactions with *takhi* going back to the 13th century (Bouman and Bouman 1994), the local population of *takhi* dropped significantly after World War II, around 50 years after European capture programs had begun to disrupt wild herds and kill off adult *takhi* to bring foals back to zoos in the West (Wakefield et. al 2002).

I argue that it is significant that the *takhi* began to die off at an increasing rate after European colonial activities in Mongolia at the beginning of the 20th century and the introduction of Soviet modernity to Mongolia starting in the 1920's. Even operating under the flawed assumption that the final extinction of the *takhi* is just the conclusion of a series of events put forth over millennia of competition with local herders and their livestock, I argue that that colonial modernity, defined by an intensification and political mobilization of speed (Virilio 2006), drove the *takhi* to extinction at an accelerated pace. In a period in which colonial violence was affecting Mongolian people's lives, this community of endemic horse was also being subject to imperialism. The shared history of violence is not lost on people like Chuluun.

Preservation efforts for the *takhi* began in 1969 with a federal hunting ban, perhaps too little, too late (Dulmaa and Shagdarsüren 1972). It would not be until 1992, after the transition, that repopulation programs would be put in place. In cooperation with a number of European zoos and conservation NGOs, the Mongolian government has brought a total of 84 *takhi* from western zoos to Mongolia during the period of 1992-2018. The Prague Zoo in particular, through their "Save the Wild Horses" program, has been an active partner with the Mongolian government, releasing breeding pairs of *takhi* and aiding them in acclimating to living wild on the steppe. Whatever role western zoos may or may not have had in their extinction, they were instrumental in the repopulation of the species.

Hustai Nuruu National Park

The primary target area for these repopulation efforts has been Hustai Nuruu National Park[5] in Töv Province, central Mongolia. Another population has been reintroduced to Great Gobi B Strictly Protected Area, split between Khovd province and Govi-Altai province in the southwestern Gobi bordering Xinjiang, one of the previous endemic habitats of previous *takhi* populations identified by Khaidav (1969). While the Hustai population of *takhi* have been closely protected, staying in a national park where people are now barred from herding or hunting, the Great Gobi B population live alongside herders.

Hustai Nuruu, a 50,000 hectare plot of land in the western Khentii Mountain escarpment just 60 miles west of the capital city, has emerged as the central area for re-population programs. Because of its proximity to the capital city and the allure of seeing wild horses, Hustai is a regular destination for domestic and international tourists. Hustai is also central to Chuluun's story, as the spot that he chose to sing to the *takhi*.

The history of Hustai Nuruu is also the history of post-socialist nature preservation in Mongolia. In 1993, this area was designated a nature preserve to for the primary purpose of reintroducing *takhi* to the wild and was upgraded to the designation of National Park in 1998 ("Хустайн байгалийн цогцолборт газар" n.d.). Hustai National Park Trust, established in 2003, was the first Mongolian NGO established to address issues of natural preservation.

[5] Also known as Khustain Nuruu, 'Hustai Nuruu' is the conventional English spelling officially used by the park.

Figure 4.1 Takhi Cross the Road in Hustai Nuruu National Park. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

As of 2020, Hustai National Park Trust claims a population of 335 *takhi* in the park, making it the largest population of wild *takhi* in the world. Other areas with significant wild *takhi* populations have not done as well. The previously flourishing community of *takhi* in Great Gobi B crashed during the winter of 2009/2010, due to a severe *zud*, which depleted *takhi* herds by 60% on average (Kaczensky et. al 2011). Meanwhile *takhi* outside of the central Asian steppe are also dwindling, as a significant wild *takhi* herd living in the Chernobyl exclusion zone since 1998 has diminished from a healthy 65 horses down to around 30 as of 2011 and has likely

continued to fall, due potentially to poaching and the resurgence of wild predators in the area (Gill 2018).

The Mongolian government considers the repopulation of *takhi* to Hustai as a successful endeavor so far. Furthermore, ecologists write that the reintroduced *takhi* have adapted well to life in Hustai, using available forage and resources in a similar manner as feral domestic horses, though staying close to their release sites (King 2002). The main unanswered question for Chuluun and many other local Mongolian people is, will the *takhi* be able to adapt to living life on the steppe after so many generations of living only in captivity? Chuluun maintains that there is more to living on the steppe than eating grass and finding potable water, even for horses.

There are two social relationships that are vital for the long-term survival of the *takhi*. The first is the internal social structure of the herds themselves. As Dulamtseren argues (Van Dierendonck and Wallis de Vries 1996), social breakdown within herds is ultimately what lead to the specie's first extinction. This is a difficult social relationship for humans like Chuluun to impact directly, though he still makes an attempt.

The second social relationship at play is the relationship between *takhi* and local humans. To settle into the steppe, and become truly 'wild,' the *takhi* need to be able to take their role in relationship with humans again. In order to rebuild that social relationship, Chuluun devised a plan to sing long-song to the *takhi,* using cultural heritage to address what he saw as a potential problem for a natural heritage preservation project.

The Big Zoo

Chuluun was raised in a family of nomadic pastoralists and horse-racers. He spent his early years learning to train horses, to sing for horses as a form of encouragement, and to read the horses' reactions to see how they feel. Once he reached adulthood Chuluun, like many Mongolians during the socialist period, left his family's nomadic pastoral encampment to work in the eastern Bloc. He framed this plan to sing for the *takhi* at Hustai with a memory from those years,

> When I was a little kid I used to sing for the horses before races. The song gets the horses excited, so they jump and buck when they hear it. In 1982 I was in Bulgaria working as a chemical engineer. I missed my homeland and the steppe so much. My friend saw that I was sad and feeling homesick so he took me to the zoo, to see the *takhi* they had there.
> When I saw those horses, I was so sad. They were there in a pen. When I saw them, I felt like them. Like I was also in a big zoo. So, I sang a song for the horses. I thought, well they are not in Mongolia but maybe it would be soothing to hear anyway. And when I sang for them they pepped up! Started to jump and play and prance about.

Chuluun has relatively positive memories of the socialist period generally. He had a nice job, traveled often, and had a strong international group of friends. Despite all of the reasons to be happy, he felt deeply sad during his time working in Bulgaria and could not articulate why. Seeing the *takhi* in the zoo was an awakening moment for him. The imperial project was, as he put it, a “big zoo,” and he was a living, feeling, conscious being, removed from his home in the steppe like the *takhi*.

This story had stuck with Chuluun for 36 years, still potent enough in his memory that his eyes misted up as he told it to me in the spring of 2018. By this point he was retired from his career in engineering, and had become a patron of the arts, especially long-song. Chuluun was happily back in the Mongolian steppe and had started taking as many trips to rural pastures as he could to be among the horses. The *takhi* were back in the steppe as well, after 13 generations apart.

As he laid out his plan, Chuluun explained that he was nervous about the *takhi*'s ability to adapt and thrive to their ancestral homeland. His concerns were exacerbated by the threat of climate change increasingly desertifying the ecosystems that *takhi* formerly roamed and increasing the severity of *zud*.

In keeping with his singing to the *takhi* at the zoo many years earlier, he determined that the best way to welcome the horses back, to rebuild multispecies social relationships with them and help them integrate into the social ecology of the central Mongolian steppe, would be through traditional song.

Chuluun picked a critical time for the intergenerational survival of the *takhi* herd, foaling season, for this project. He assembled a team of singers that he had worked with in the past, a grandmother-daughter-granddaughter trio named Tsegii, Tsetseg, and Tungalag. A couple of days later, we piled into a Soviet-era Russian van and made the short trip from Ulaanbaatar to Hustai Nuruu National Park, ready to try singing for the wild horses.

To Hustai

When we first arrived in Hustai, we stopped just outside of the gates to the park for Tsegii and Tsetseg to make an offering to the land. They both flicked milk from measuring cups three times towards the valley that winds through the mountain range, a traditional spiritual practice called *"tsatsal*." We waited for a bit on the outskirts of the park, in the hopes that the *takhi* would bring their newborn foals to water closer to evening. As we waited, the singers strategized on what songs to perform for the horses. Taking advice from Chuluun and the other singers, Tsegii took the lead and selected three songs from the canon of Mongolian traditional music, "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*" ("the Sun Over the Placid World"), "*Zeergenetiin Shil*" (the Zeergenet Plateau), and "*Tsombon Tuuraitai Khüren*" (the Dark Brown Horse with the Rounded Hooves).

Each of these songs is a long-song, the semi-improvisational, highly melismatic genre of vocal performance discussed in chapter three. Their first choice was "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*," the song I was first taught by Damdin and that Tuyaa insisted would bring Mongolian culture into outer

space. As Damdin explained, the song draws heavily from Buddhist thought, and expresses the interconnectedness of the lives of all the beings on Earth. Tsegii explained that they chose this song as a way of establishing that all life is interdependent, including the lives of *takhi* and humans. A selection of the lyrics are as follows, with my translation into English:

> Жаа. Энэ сайхан замбуу тивийн наран
> Илхэн бүхий дэлхий дээгүүр
> Мөхдөлгүй дэлгэрч түгэн
> Мандаж мандсаар байдаг л билүү зээ, та мину зээ
>
> Жаа. Тэр лугаа адил
> Олон түмний минь өршөөл
> Үнэн сэтгэлтэй бүхнийг
> Ялгалгүй асарсаар байдаг л билүү зээ, та мину зээ
> Жаа. Үүлэн чөлөөний наран мэт
>
> Өчүүхэн энэ явах насаа
> Үнэн мөнх дор барьж
> Үгүй муухайгаар хууртдаг шүү дээ, та мину зээ
>
> Жаа. Идэр цовоо саруул сэргэлэн насандаа
> Эс сурсан эрдэм номыг
> Өтөлж харьсан хойноо
> Эргэж сурна гэдэг маш бэрх биш үү дээ, та мину зээ
>
> *Jaa.* Beautiful sun over this gentle world
> will you always rise,
> above the entire planet
> spreading endlessly?
>
> *Jaa.* The same way
> will my people care for others
> with compassion and an honest heart
> for all, without discrimination?
>
> *Jaa.* Like the sun freeing itself from the clouds,
> as you move through this humble life,
> hold on to the truth forever,
> do not be deceived by ugliness.
>
> *Jaa.* In old age, looking back
> would knowledge left unstudied
> in the clear, energized years of youth

be too hard to return to and learn now?

"*Zeergenetiin Shil*" ("the Zeergenet Plateau"), is a song about the two protected hunting grounds of Chinggis Khan. Tsegii said that she chose that song because it is dedicated to wild game animals. She hoped that it would appeal to the *takhi*'s wild nature, and maybe give them more comfort in assuming the role of a newly re-wilded population.

When I asked why they chose "*Tsombon Tuuraitai Khüren*" ("the Dark Brown Horse with the Rounded Hooves") Tsegii told me at first, "it is a song about a little brown horse!" Then she followed up with, "consider the lyrics." They go as follows, again with my translation:

Цомбон туурайтай хүрэн нь
Цохилсон хар алхаатай
Цовоо янзын Эгиймаа нь
Цочоод сэрэхэд санагдлаа

Дунд ухаагийг эхэнд
Дуутай мөндөр шаагина
Дурсгал болсон Эгиймаагийн
Дууг нь сонсоход содхондоо

Бараалан харагдах хөндий нь
Байсан нутгийн бараа даа
Багын амраг Эгиймааг
Барааг нь хараад баясана даа

Нүүгээд явсан нутаг нь
Нүүгэлтэж бараантаад харагдана
Нүүдлийн хойноос харахад
Нүдээр дүүрэн нулимстай

Ачаалаад явсан ачаа нь
Арын замаар ганхана
Ачааны хойноос харахад
Алаг нүдэндээ нулимстай

Оонын хоёр эврийг
Ороож зангидаж болддоггүй

Орчлон хорвоогийн жамыг
Огоорч мартаж болддоггүй

When I wake up with a start, I recall
clever, eager Egiimaa,
with the black locks of hair
like the rippling mane of the dark brown horse with rounded hooves.
Atop a small hill,
loud hail falls.

I am struck when I hear the song
that Egiimaa, now a memory, used to sing.
The valley that appears in the distance
is the faint image of my old homeland.
I would be filled with joy
to see the distant silhouette of my first love Egiimaa.

The land where I have moved
appears laid out in front of me.
When I look back to where I came from,
my eyes fill with tears.

The luggage I carry
sways out along the northern road.
When I look out behind the luggage
my dark eyes tear up.

The two horns of the antelope
can never come together and touch.
The way of the world and of the universe
can never be forgotten or denied.

There is a kind of grim humor in the choice of this song. In the lyrics, the narrator describes the pain of being forced to leave one's homeland. In the final verse, the narrator declares that there is no way to predict the future or to change fate. Taken together the message that the singers attempted to convey to the *takhi* is clear: "we welcome you here as fellow living beings, we hope that you will become wild, but we understand that returning home is not the same as being home."

After dinner and a restroom break, we got ready to go. We took to the trail that winds through valley of Hustai, an unpaved dirt road that eventually opens up to a few pathways

leading to different areas of the park. On the road we passed a couple of cars coming back to the gate and asked them if they had seen any *takhi,* but they said that the horses were hiding on the far side of the mountain and wouldn't come into view.

Discouraged by this news, we chatted to pass the time and keep up our spirits as we wound our way into the valley. Tsegii asked me if my research covered people singing to make it rain. I told her I had not seen any of that in person and asked her if she had. She had heard tales of things like that, but also had not experienced it in person. In fact, she told me, this kind of spiritual singing is relatively new for her.

Tsegii was born and raised in Ulaanbaatar. In her thirties she decided to learn long-song, but said she could never quite grasp that special essence that seemed to come naturally to the singers who grew up in the countryside. That is, until she took a job as a banker in a provincial center and spent a couple of years seeing rural life.

Tsegii said that she knew she should figure out that missing element in her long-song. Moving to country town, she described the way she taught herself long-song as a process of awakening an embodied, hereditary predisposition toward the music. “After all, it’s in my blood,” she explained, "I just had to activate that Mongolian sound with life on the rural steppe."

I present this quote in particular to highlight how Tsegii describes the relationship between her national identity and the cultural heritage of long-song as necessitating her embodied dwelling within the natural heritage of the rural steppe. To be clear, this perspective draws on romantic nationalist ideas about an atavistic relationship between the dominant national culture and the physical territory of the nation. This approach to nationalist ideology that combines ancestry with landscape narratives is well researched in the Mongolian context (see Bulag 1998).

However, Tsegii's quote is not simply a rote repetition of a nationalist trope. Ingold argues that human and nonhuman lives across an ecosystem constitute a "dwelt-in world," in which agents co-constitute each other through active engagement, or "dwelling" (2000, 5). In Ingold's construction, the landscape becomes a record of the lives dwelling upon it, past and present (189). Tsegii framed herself as a person separated from the steppe by the violent history of colonial modernization in Mongolia. As such, dwelling in the steppe is a way for her to reclaim not only her identity as a Mongolian person, but to reclaim the more-than-human relationships that dwelling in the steppe entails. Learning long-song for Tsegii meant creating relationships with nonhumans across the steppe landscape, including animals and sacred mountains.

Tsegii takes the *takhi*, like her, as beings separated from the steppe by a 20th century history of violence. Taking the *takhi* as co-bearers of heritage (national, cultural, and natural), she extends this essentialist, embodied, national identity to the animals through her performance. In order to resume their role as Mongolian wild horses, dwelling in the steppe, they must be brought not just back to the steppe, but into a steppe that reverberates with long-song.

We pulled up to the Hustai Park ecologists' station, a complex made of a handful of felt round-tents outfitted with satellite and large antennae. The scientists staying in the park to observe the *takhi* throughout foaling season came out to tell us that the horses have been unusually nervous around humans this year. They point us to where we might find some, along a southern trail, but advise that we might not see any *takhi,* and probably would not be seeing foals.

As we piled back into the van, Tsegii continued telling stories about her journey as a long-song singer. Since coming into her own as a performer, she told us that she had started

having more run-ins with the supernatural. She gave an example of a recent run-in she had with "*lus savdag*," a kind of nature spirit. Recently on a trip to Bayankhongor to perform, Tsetseg's home province, Tsegii and Tsetseg passed a location where people usually give offerings while traveling, a *joloochny ovoo* like the one I had just visited with Bayar a month earlier. Tsegii told us that they did not have any offerings so they skipped it, only to have their car break down a short while later. They managed to get to the next town and picked up a new car, but again neglected the offerings and again the car broke down. I asked if that spirit was tied to the road or to some kind of natural feature. She shrugged and said "I have no idea, I just know it needed an offering."

This story points to Tsegii's continued process of using long-song as a way to access more-than-human relations on the steppe. She asked Chuluun and I what we thought of her story, if we believed that *lus savdag*, spirits of the water and land, could cause the problem and if they would lash out like that in response to a missed offering. Her story, and the lack of surety with which she told it, highlighted how ambiguous these more-than-human relationships can be, foreshadowing the difficulty we would later have reading the responses of the *takhi* to Tsegii, Tsetseg, and Tungalag's singing later that day.

Chuluun, introspective, answered Tsegii's questions with a long story which I had trouble following, about how *ovoo* worship contributes to bacteria transmission by bringing people together with spoiled food offerings. Tsegii rebuffed him saying, "but our stomachs were fine, it's just our car that broke down, what's the cause of that?" He shrugged and joked, "maybe you have a shitty car." We pulled over to the side of the road, ready to set up and wait for the *takhi* to come to us.

We set up around a spot where a little creek pools up into a pond, in the hopes that the *takhi* would come by to drink from it. Tsegii and Tsetseg pulled out their two-liter bottles of milk again and flicked spoonfuls of it in the four directions. It did not take long for little white spots to appear on a slope to our south. Chuluun pointed out the trajectory the horses seem to be taking, and we moved a little further down the road in order to avoid disturbing them or blocking their access to the creek. When the *takhi* came more clearly into view, I could see two white ones, a bay, and a black horse taking the lead, a surprising variety of colorations given everything I had read about the *takhi*'s uniform, dun appearance. Each of the horses in this first wave of *takhi* were about the same size, with no foals.

The three singers faced the horses and sang "*Zeergenetiin Shil*" together. The power of their voices carried across the valley to the *takhi*, and the horses immediately turned their heads toward the singers. They continued looking back at us periodically as they meandered towards the water. One, the bay, was so interested in us that he ended up being left behind and had to run to catch up with the rest of the heard. The ladies sang for about two minutes, stopping at what seems to be the first stanza break after 4 lines.

The *takhi* approached the water as the singers switched to "*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*." Each time they sang, the three womens' voices echoed into the valley, though not simultaneously. Tsegii's voice led; at times driving ahead of the others, at times lagging, waiting for the others to catch up. When the herd disappeared fully behind a short hill overlooking the pond, the singers switched to "*Tsombon Tuuraitai Khüren*." This was the first long-song I myself had learned back in 2011 so, taken by the moment, I joined in the singing. Once our song ended the *takhi* lost interest in us and made their way back into the valley.

From my perspective, it looked like the *takhi* had clearly come to listen to the singers and paid close attention to them. However, Tsegii seemed a bit crestfallen about the response by the *takhi*. As the

takhi made their way back up to a sunny slope near whence the emerged and begin rolling playfully in the dirt, she whispered, “they hardly noticed us at all.” Grinning, she turned to Chuluun and joked, “maybe you need to bring professional singers next time.”

Chuluun had the sharp eyes of a someone used to watching far-off herds across the steppe. On a ridge far to the southwest he spotted two tiny flecks of white coming down the mountain, which turned out to be more *takhi*. Further investigation with the binoculars revealed three adult males with no foals, but we went to get a closer look just in case.

Across from them, on the northern ridge, we were able to spot mares with foals coming down for water. Though Tsegii seemed disappointed at the singers’ efforts, Chuluun pointed to this emergence as a sign of success. “No matter what, we saw *takhi* and foals,” he offered.

The *takhi* were not the only wild animals that came after the singing; on our way out we found a herd of 30-40 deer had come down from the northern mountains to a slope overlooking the spot where Tsegii, Tsetseg, and Tungalag had been singing “*Zeergenetiin Shil*” (“the Zeergenet Steppe”). Tsetseg quietly offered, “the song is for them, after all.”

Conclusion

Compared to the surety of the socialist project, post-socialism in Mongolia is marked by ambivalent moments like these, where empirical projects designed ad-hoc have confusing results. Was the singing successful in appealing to the *takhi*? Chuluun would say yes, but Tsegii was less sure. For both though, the next step was "come back and sing again." Connections like this need to be formed over time, there was never a doubt in the power of long-song itself in forging this inter-species connection.

In this chapter I examined a case in which cultural heritage bearers used traditional music to contribute to a natural preservation project. I argue that Chuluun and Tsegii’s use of long-song to

connect with repopulated wild *takhi* re-entangles cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, this performance positions *takhi* as heritage bearers, bound to the same embodied nationalist narratives as the performers themselves.

Chapter 5

With Each Pass, Another Stone:

Ovoo at the Heart of Heritage and Conflict

There is a legend that has come up countless times in my interviews with Mongolian heritage bearers that says that long in the past, people would unknowingly encamp near wrathful mountains.[6] The mountains, offended by the humans' careless trespass, would bring down calamities upon them. So, the people put up *ovoo,* spiritually significant piles of stone, to identify these mountains and let others know the rules for engaging with them. I bring up this story not to assert a claim to origins, but to highlight the role of *ovoo* as advocates on behalf of humans. These ritually significant structures translate the wills, needs, and behaviors of people and mountains to one-another and thereby mediate conflicts between the two.

Ovoo are sacred heaps, usually made from piles of stone or collections of branches tied together by ritual sashes. Throughout Mongolia many spiritually significant areas, especially mountains and major water features, are marked by *ovoo* of various sizes. A common form of worship at *ovoo* is to walk clockwise around the structure three times, picking up stones from the ground and tossing them on the pile as you make your silent circumambulation. Through this act, worshipping the mountain becomes a process of building the *ovoo* itself.

The *ovoo* works through accruing new stones, along with a variety of offerings. Common offerings include teacups, Buddhist icons, horse skulls, and sashes. A comprehensive list of potential offerings is impossible, as people give offerings that represent their own personal needs. *Ovoo* also vary widely in terms of spiritual purpose, with specialized offerings to match.

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[6] *Khilegnekh,* wrathful. Occasionally *khatuu,* hard.

Furthermore, ongoing debates of what are and are not appropriate offerings are themselves part of the *ovoo* tradition. Food offerings of milk, candy, or rice are especially contentious as they draw nonhuman scavengers to the *ovoo.* Not all offerings are immediately physically evident, as musical performances are also common forms of *ovoo* worship.

Ovoo are constantly growing structures that bring together the wills of humans, sacred landscapes, and nonhuman animals and plants. Humans source the material to create and expand *ovoo* from local nonhumans: trees, stones, and occasionally livestock. While people use the *ovoo* to commune with and ask for protection from mountains and lakes, nonhuman animals like small rodents and birds make their homes in and atop the pile.

In 2017, *ovoo* worship, included in a broad set of Mongolian land veneration traditions, was added to UNESCO's list of "Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding" (UNESCO 2017). *Ovoo* also figure prominently in the files detailing the cultural and spiritual importance of natural heritage inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, such as the 'Orkhon Valley cultural landscape' (UNESCO 2004) and the 'Great Burhan Haldun mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape' (UNESCO 2015a). These inclusions implicate *ovoo* in international politics of heritage management and preservation. Though above I have presented generalized examples of the proper care and management of *ovoo,* in practice people have different ideas about their meanings and use.

Furthermore, the inclusion of *ovoo* worship on an international list of heritage opens up the practice to scrutiny from an international community of heritage administrators and enthusiasts. Handler argues that heritage researchers objectify cultural processes through reporting on them (1988), placing me, an American anthropologist, as part of this community of

Mongolian heritage consumers. As the ecomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon cautions, the politics of heritage can be used to transform cultural practices into exploitable resources (2009, 9-10).

Local and international conflicts between humans over *ovoo* are further complicated by the material conditions and desires of the nonhumans involved. Beyond being symbols, the sacred mountains and landscapes for which *ovoo* mediate are physical features housing multispecies ecosystems of plants and animals. Furthermore, these geological features are themselves agents, participating actively in the social lives of the humans and animals residing upon them.

In this chapter I ask what there is to learn about heritage from thinking through the multispecies engagements that play out the maintenance of *ovoo.* First, I detail the experiences of a heritage bearer and hunting guide, Bayar, to explore a case in which contestation on how best to maintain an *ovoo* in an environmentally and spiritually sustainable way opens up a space for negotiations of eco-spiritual practice. Then turn to the stories of two musicians involved in the heritage music industry in Ulaanbaatar, Tüvshee the horse-fiddle player and Zulaa, a long-song singer examining how they use *ovoo* to spiritually mitigate financial instability and avoid health crises. Finally, this chapter returns to Bayar to examine how *ovoo* spring up simultaneously as memorials of violence and caretakers of nonhumans in the form of ghosts and birds in the ruins of a monastery.

The people I profile in this chapter depend on heritage for their careers. Bayar draws on both natural and cultural heritage to support his income working as a tour and hunting guide. Operating out of Ulaanbaatar, he spends the summer traveling to a variety of natural heritage zones throughout rural Mongolia, like Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and the Orkhon Valley. He draws on his upbringing in a herding and hunting family in rural northern Mongolia to inform

how he engages with these landscapes, trying to mitigate the spiritual and ecological harm of international tourism on these sites.

Tüvshee returns in this chapter. He is a horse-fiddle performer and teacher, and as such heritage is at the core of his career. The privatization of Mongolia's economy has made it so that working as a musician is not enough to support a family on, so he started a side business selling electronics, based on the knowledge he gained experimenting with blending horse-fiddle and electronic music in the 1990s. Zulaa is a long-song singer, and recent Arts and Culture University graduate. At the time of my interview she was not employed consistently by an orchestra or conservatory. Both Tüvshee and Zulaa performed long-song to sacred mountain around Ulaanbaatar to ask for

Natural, Tangible, and Intangible Heritage

UNESCO maintains distinct lists for identifying heritage, originally dividing the concept into 'natural heritage,' socially significant and unique environmental zones, and 'cultural heritage,' architectural monuments of social and historical significance (UNESCO 1972). Throughout the 1980s and nineties, representatives from nations in the global south advocated for UNESCO to consider intangible forms of cultural heritage as just as vital and meaningful as artifacts of physical culture, critiquing the Euro-centrism of conceptualizing culture primarily in terms of architecture (Bortolotto 2006). The actions of these representatives lead to what Bortolotto describes as an increasing shift toward thinking of culture in terms of ongoing processes rather than fixed objects. As a result of this shift, in the early 2000's UNESCO broke down the category of cultural heritage into two further subcategories: “tangible” heritage, in the

form of culturally significant artifacts and architectural sites, and “intangible” heritage, referring to practices, beliefs, and knowledge maintained through oral history (UNESCO 2003).

UNESCO further breaks down the category of intangible cultural heritage, maintaining two distinct lists: the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" and the "List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding" (2018). The Representative List serves to increase the global visibility of local practices that demonstrate the diversity of human culture. Meanwhile the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding identifies those cultural practices which are in immediate danger of disappearing due to external factors. In practical terms, inclusion in the latter list also includes measures to aid local people in the performance and transmission of their heritage. As many Mongolian traditional practices are closely tied to nomadic pastoralism, which is threatened both by environmental degradation due to climate change and the neoliberalization of Mongolia's economy, most of the cultural practices I describe in this dissertation are covered under List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Anthropologists have questioned the validity of separating “natural” from “cultural” phenomena generally (Strathern 1980, Descola 2014). The elements on the natural heritage list have value as heritage by virtue of human interactions with the environment and efforts to imbue it with meaning (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Cleere 2001). Tangible heritage consists of objects that have no inherent meaning or cultural value outside of the *in*tangible heritage to which they are connected (Byrne 2009). By the same token, the intangible aspects of social lives are inextricably embodied through and constrained by the material reality of heritage bearers’ lives (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Dirksen 2019).

The interdependence of natural, intangible, and tangible heritage is especially clear in Mongolia, where places like Great Burkhan Khaldun mountain are added to the world natural heritage list because of their role in mountain worship, with *ovoo* listed as the site's culturally significant architecture (UNESCO 2015a). *Ovoo* highlight how permeable and interrelated these categories truly are. They are artifacts of tangible heritage that accrue more artifacts in the form of offerings of ritual sashes, ceramic icons, horse skulls and the like. They mark areas of ecological and cultural significance such as sacred mountains and lakes that are home to spirits, where social and environmental prominence are inextricably intertwined.

Heritage and Conflict

There is a large body of scholarship that frames the designation of a place, object, or practice as heritage and the consequent mobilization of that label in terms of conflict. Heritage can be used by the state to ratify national boundaries and diminish affective attachments that challenge its authority, thereby disempowering minority ethnic and political voices and creating a nationalistic sense of xenophobia (Handler 1988; Bulag 1998; Collins 2011). Conversely, heritage also forms the core of counter-hegemonic histories that oppressed people can use to appeal to the international community and subvert elite and nationalistic narratives (Graham 2002; De Cesari 2010; Camal 2015). On a more fundamental level, designation and consumption of heritage is described as a measure to combat the social effects of neoliberalism, as people transform lifeways that are incompatible with global capitalism into consumable aspects of a tourist economy (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Lowenthal 1996).

Each of these arguments foregrounds human contestations and nationalist politics involved in heritage-making. However, a variety of nonhumans are also central to discourses on

heritage within Mongolia, from the living plants and wildlife of natural heritage zones to the mountains and spirits that populate culturally significant places and practices. Following a recent turn in anthropological literature that considers the sociality of nonhumans (Van Dooren and Bird Rose 2012; Tsing 2013; Posthumus 2018) and their role in negotiations of power (Povinelli 2016; Govindrajan 2018), I take nonhumans as actors in contestations over heritage. I am drawn to wonder what role nonhuman animals, spirits, and landscape features have in these conflicts.

I take *ovoo* as what Latour refers to as "mediators," entities that transmit force or meaning between actors (2005, 39). I choose "mediators" in this case because mediators, unlike what Latour calls "intermediaries," transform the meaning or elements they are transmitting, leading to unpredictable results (39). The *ovoo* carries offerings from humans to the spirits of the mountain, and transmits the protection from those spirits back to the humans. Engagements with earth-based spirits, much like engagements with wild animals as seen in the previous chapter, often lead to vague, contradictory, or difficult to read responses.

I argue that the act of mediation not only transforms the meaning of what is being transmitted, the act of mediation also transforms the meaning and the material reality of the *ovoo* itself. Bayar asks for protection and forgiveness from the land by adding stones and clearing off food offerings from an *ovoo*, making it larger and changing its material components in the process. As it becomes larger, the *ovoo*'s prominence against the backdrop of the local landscape grows, increasing its potential to be seen across the steppe and incorporated into future rituals.

This chapter explores three sites of conflict over the practice and administration of heritage in which *ovoo* play central roles, as their presence and growth create, prevent, or resolve disharmony. *Ovoo* are nonhuman mediators capable of transmitting meaning between humans, animals, mountains, and spirits across a network in which their worlds are mutually intelligible.

By taking a multispecies approach to my examination of *ovoo* practices, I highlight the full range of actors involved in the shaping of heritage, including those nonhumans left ignored by readings of heritage that focus solely on conflict between humans. I argue that the role that *ovoo* play in these conflicts demonstrates that collaborations with a broad, interconnected field of nonhumans is central to how people mobilize heritage, and will be a vital part of its preservation whether or not this relationship is intentionally fostered at the institutional level.

Tour Guide Pilgrimages

Towards the end of fall 2017, I sat down in a coffee shop near my apartment in Ulaanbaatar for a casual interview with Bayar, a storyteller, spiritualist, and ethnographer. He was one of many people to tell me some version of the story that started this chapter. He expanded on the legend, adding,

> each mountain has different rules for how to interact with it. So people put up *ovoo* at different parts of the mountain to make those rules known. An *ovoo* teaches you how to interact with the mountain. One might be set up to mean 'adults only past this point,' or another might indicate 'men go up this path and women around to that path.' But they always tell you 'approach with reverence.'

As part of his explanation of the history and folklore of *ovoo,* Bayar mentioned that *ovoo* worship is central to his spiritual practice. He told me that he worships nature in a way that he referred to as "sort of shamanic." As he put it: "my grandmother and great-grandfather were shamans, and they taught me all about worshipping nature. They taught me how to respect the land." He clarified quickly that he did not consider himself a shaman, but that he sees things in a shamanic way based on veneration of the sky, the land, and nonhuman animals.

When I asked him to elaborate on what seeing in a shamanic way meant, he responded, "see, shamanism is empirical. You see it, you believe it. Religion requires too much imagination.

You white people are very imaginative. When you look up, you look beyond the sky, and imagine a god out there in a whole other world. When I look at the sky, I just see the sky."

Bayar is proud of his ability to read the land and the behaviors of wild animals, skills he attributed to the knowledge passed down from his shaman grandmother and his subsistence hunter grandfather respectively. However, he made it clear that he cannot commune with those nonhumans directly. He makes his prayers silently to himself as he passes around *ovoo,* using it as an intermediary that will pass his prayers on to the sky, the mountain, and the animals.

At the time of this interview, Bayar had just returned from a summer spent working as a tour guide for westerners looking for a rural adventure. Bayar is a sought-after guide, especially with big game hunters. This is due in part to his skills with English and experience with Americans, but also because of his role as a heritage bearer along with his intimate knowledge of Mongolian landscapes and wild animals.

Brian Graham argues that heritage, in both its tangible and intangible forms is the single most important resource for the international tourism industry because tourism operates within a knowledge-based economy (2002). Bayar's role as an intangible heritage bearer affords him both social and economy capital within the rapidly expanding tourism industry in Mongolia. Tourism, especially trophy hunting, offers him opportunities to pursue lucrative side-gigs throughout the summer. However, he reported ambivalent feelings about this line of work. "On the one hand", he told me, "it is pretty ridiculous that people come to Mongolia just to kill a ram." Bayar mentioned that some hunters from the United States and Europe even spend tens of thousands of

dollars on permits to try to shoot endangered endemic Mongolian animals. “They don’t even pay by the animal, just by the bullet. One shot, if they miss it's over.” [7]

UNESCO identifies the presence of threatened or endangered animals as a major element of natural heritage (1976). If endangered game animals like the Altai *argali* ram (*Ovis ammon ammon*) constitute a fundamental resource for Mongolia's natural heritage areas, then international trophy hunting is a form of natural heritage consumption. This corner of the heritage industry is especially troubling for Bayar, having been raised in a subsistence hunting family whose spiritual practice involves veneration for sacred game. Still, he decided that if he is part of the hunt, he can keep the damage the hunters make to the environment and to the wild flocks to a minimum. As he put it, “I lead the hunters to old or sick animals, never to mothers. And I make the necessary prayers.”

Bayar explained that his travels around the country as a tour and hunting guide to natural sacred spaces give him the opportunity to tend to these landscapes as a form of spiritual work. As Bayar described, both international and domestic tourism put physical and spiritual burdens on the landscape. He said that foreign trophy hunters cause obvious problem for wild animals, disrupting the social structures of their flocks by carelessly targeting according to size and accessibility rather than hunting in an informed, ecologically beneficial manner. He pointed out that even supposedly nonviolent eco-tourism disturbs wild animals and plant life, as people trample wild forage and leave plastic litter behind.

Bayar is continually faced with the question of how to address those damages and furthermore mitigate the spiritual impact of his role in it. He came to the conclusion that he could

[7] In his 2019 article on Donald Trump Jr's trophy hunting scandal, Anand Tumurtogoo estimates that western trophy hunters spend $20,000-50,000 apiece on permits to go on hunting tours in Mongolia, targeting endangered wild game like *argali* rams.

mitigate the physical and spiritual damage to wild flocks by directing hunters to appropriate game and making his prayers via local *ovoo*. Often, these prayers involve cleaning away litter from on or around the *ovoo* as well.

The spiritual practices Bayar described involved some socially risky behaviors. "Not everyone agrees on my definition of litter," he explained. Some of the things he clears away are widely accepted to be litter, things like cigarette butts or plastic water bottles. However, he also clears the food offerings off of *ovoo* and cuts the ritual sashes from saplings to allow them freedom to grow. I asked if the spirits of the land might be offended by his removal of their offerings. He told me that practicing his religion means he must keep the *ovoo* and the ecosystem healthy.

“The food draws rodents”, Bayar explained, “who live inside the *ovoo*, and infest it with their nests.” The rodents would then take these offerings as their own, gnawing away at the innards of the *ovoo.* He described in great detail how rodents knock over the carefully placed ceramic offerings and disperse piles of burning incense with their crawling bodies. These rodents have their own relationships with the *ovoo* in which they dwell. It protects them and provides them with food and shelter. However, their patronage of the *ovoo* is at odds with Bayar’s, undermining its structural integrity and bodily purity.

Even though he means well, Bayar admitted that this practice occasionally gets him in trouble with local people. On his most recent trip through the Khangai mountains his *ovoo* maintenance activities caught the ire of a local herder, who caught Bayar removing offerings. “I was throwing away rice and candy that had been left on the *ovoo* and I heard this guy shouting at me!” He laughed as he told this story of how he found himself involved in a three-way struggle between himself, the herder, and a colony of mice. Bayar and this herder, whose name he never

mentioned, argued over this issue for some time. Bayar acted out the confrontation, “the herder said, 'what are you doing with my offerings? Don't you respect the *ovoo*?' I told him, *I* respect the *ovoo*, that's why I'm doing this!” As he told the story, his voice became louder and his gestures more animated, drawing attention from the other coffee shop patrons. He smiled and sheepishly added, "see? Troublemaker."

Though the argument started contentiously, their shared goal of creating and maintaining a healthy spiritual landscape through proper care of its *ovoo* allowed for them to end the conversation amicably. Bayar continued his story quietly, “I let him explain his viewpoint to me, and then I explained to him how I see the world. I told the guy that we have to adapt our thinking because the environment is being destroyed too fast these days and we have to be really careful with how we manage these sacred landscapes.” In the end they compromised. The herder conceded that Bayar might have some insight from his experiences in a wide variety of sacred spaces, while Bayar admitted that he should show more humility toward local stewards of the land. The herder agreed to let Bayar finish clearing off the *ovoo* so long as he made an offering of his own, in his own way. He set up a wooden post to adorn with the ritual sashes he had cut from nearby saplings. The foreign tourists that Bayar was working for at the time sat awkwardly in the van, with no knowledge of the Mongolian language and thus, not privy to the conversation.

Working as a tour guide presented Bayar with an internal conundrum. He balanced his displeasure at participating in a tourism industry that exploits the landscapes he holds sacred against the idea that this line of work might be the best opportunity to mitigate the spiritual and ecological damage that industry creates. He resolved this dilemma through his maintenance of the *ovoo* he finds around tourist destinations. *Ovoo* offer him an opportunity for some spiritual

and cultural resiliency within the broader apparatus of tourism that heritage creates. However, his strategies for tending them have brought him into external conflicts with local people and nonhuman animals.

Music for the Mountain

The designation of *ovoo* as Mongolian cultural heritage opens local people's interaction's up to critical consumption by outsiders, particularly Western cultural tourists. In this section, I present cases where Mongolian artists use traditional music as a spiritual practice dedicated to *ovoo.* I further examine how the designation of *ovoo* as heritage leads to pushback on Mongolian musicians' personal religious practices from Western observers.

I spent most of winter 2017 conducting interviews with horse-fiddle performers, singers, and traditional music instructors in Ulaanbaatar on the uses of heritage music. For my first interview of the season I started with Tüvshee, a fiddler specializing in long-song. Based on a body of literature that takes heritage as the transformation of pre-modern lifeways into commodifiable goods (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Lowenthal 1996), my interview questions focused on the economic use of intangible cultural heritage.

Early in the interview after a few of these economically-focused questions, Tüvshee stopped me, saying "you cannot really make a living selling traditional music, not in Ulaanbaatar." He crossed his arms over his chest and continued, "I mean think about it, in Mongolia we only have a population of three million people. Even if every person in the country was my fan, I would have a hard time making ends meet just selling albums." In fact, though he is a professional horse-fiddle performer, composer, and professor, his main source of income is an electronics business which he runs on the side. Many of the traditional musicians and artists I

interviewed that winter were in a similar situation, balancing an unstable and underpaying career in the arts with other business pursuits that offer more financial security.

Tüvshee finished his explanation of the grim realities of the Mongolian traditional music industry with this concession, “playing the fiddle does help me make money though, in a way". When he has a financial concern, he said that he bundles up his horse-fiddle, hikes up to one of the sacred mountains that rings the city, and plays long-song to the *ovoo* there as a way of asking the spirits of the mountain[8] and its rivers[9] to help him in business.

Ulaanbaatar sits in a bowl formed by four holy mountains: Bogd Khan, Chingeltei Khairkhan, Bayanzürkh, and Songino Khairkhan. Most prominent among them is Bogd Han, which sits at the south end of town. It is one of those under-represented places in the history of natural heritage management, established as a nationally protected natural area by the Mongolian government in 1778 (Atwood 2004; UNESCO 2015b) predating the 1872 formation of Yellowstone Park by nearly a century. In addition to being a national park, Bogd Khan, along with the other three mountains that ring the city, is a major part of the spiritual character of Ulaanbaatar. As with other natural heritage areas throughout Mongolia, communities of nonhuman animals make up the spiritual landscape of Ulaanbaatar's holy mountains. Bogd Khan in particular is known for its elk, and protection for the wild game has been a major part of natural preservation laws of the site since the 18th century (Atwood 2004).

[8] *Savdag*, mountain spirit.
[9] *Lus,* water spirit.

Figure 5.1 View of Ulaanbaatar from Zaisan Monument, the Entry Point to Bogd Khan. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Tüvshee broke down the way he prays to these mountains for me, explaining that the wood and rosin that go into the performance of the fiddle create a sympathetic relationship between the music of the fiddle and the spirits of landscape. The horsehair from the instrument's strings bring the nonhuman animals who live on the mountain into this relationship as well. He said that he taps into that connection to communicate his needs and his feelings to the otherwise unreachable mountain. In this ritual, the horse-fiddle and *ovoo* are his mediators. “This is the primary way I practice my religion”, he explained.

Unlike Bayar, Tüvshee did not describe himself as shamanic, nor did he describe himself as worshipping nature. He is a devout, practicing Buddhist. I bring this fact up only to highlight that *ovoo* practices are not necessarily tied to one religion or philosophy in the Mongolian context. Rather *ovoo* worship is tied to a discrete set of social relationships between particular people, mountains, spirits, and animals.

Using musical performance as a form of worship or veneration of mountains and water features is a widely documented as a part of rural spirituality in Mongolia (Pegg 2001; Post 2007), as well as throughout nomadic Inner Asia (Levin and Süzükei 2010). Bogd Khan mountain is one of the few sacred natural spaces in Mongolia to have a centuries-long history as a fixture of a major city, seeing the rise of Khüree and its transformation into Ulaanbaatar (Atwood 2004). Tüvshee's interaction with Bogd Khan as a protector takes a distinctly urban form. In addition to asking for financial stability, he told me that he conducts this ritual at the beginning of winter to protect him from air pollution related illness and car accidents, two major physical dangers of Ulaanbaatar life.

Tüvshee's comments about the close connection between long-song, *ovoo,* and urban life stuck with me throughout the rest of that winter. A few weeks later, over coffee with a group of friends I asked Zulaa, a professional long-song singer, what she thought about the relationship between music and Ulaanbaatar's sacred mountains. She told me she goes up Bogd Khan mountain once a week in the winter. Hiking is important for her lungs and voice, especially during this season when air pollution is at its worst. Born and raised in Ulaanbaatar, she finds the clear air of Bogd Khan a relief.

Though Zulaa usually likes the company of the hiking groups, on the days leading up to a major performance she said that she goes up alone. She has a ritual for those occasions, in which

she lugs a massive backpack up the mountain trail. Upon reaching a flat peak ringed by *ovoo* of different sizes and ages she stops and sets down her pack. Carefully, meaningfully, she removes a bundle, which she unrolls into a performance *deel* and set of horn-style hair plaits. She sings to the Bogd Khan in full performance dress, to ask the mountain to help her in her upcoming performances and send some financial opportunities her way. With New Year's celebrations and the threat of family hospital bills, winter is always a financially difficult time of year for Ulaanbaatarites.

Zulaa makes her living as a professional singer and is a card-carrying member of the Mongolian National Long-Song Association, but at the time of this conversation she did not have a consistent appointment in an orchestra or ensemble. She mentioned that she had a featured performance coming up. So she would visit Bogd Khan soon and perform the songs she was planning to sing for it. She would use this performance as an offering to the mountain, and ask for her concert to go well and lead to more consistent employment, or even to a record deal in return.

As she recounted this story, one of our mutual friends was steaming. Carl, a European expatriate, long-term Ulaanbaatar resident, and self-styled expert on Mongolian traditional music reacted to Zulaa's story hotly. Rolling his eyes, he berated her, "asking for money? This is a perversion of the traditional way." Carl had positioned Zulaa within what Trouillot refers to as the "Savage slot," the ever-shifting category of non-Western people which the Western capitalist imagination self-defines against (2002). In Carl's imaginary, Zulaa as an Asian traditional musician, should occupy a utopia that is entirely outside of capitalism and modernity.

Both long-song and ritual practices of worship at *ovoo* are part of Mongolia's internationally recognized intangible cultural heritage. Zulaa's appeal to *ovoo* and private

mobilization of intangible cultural heritage practices to meet financial needs offended Carl's sensibilities. Based on conventional western ideas about authenticity in intangible heritage, he argued that *ovoo* should not be used with material ends in mind. In response to Carl's outburst Zulaa put up her hands. She pointed out that, though tradition is fine, "no one can survive trying to live an ancient life in the modern day."

As a singer and instrumentalist respectively, Zulaa and Tüvshee use long-song to appeal to mountains, via their *ovoo.* Mountains then intervene on their behalf, helping them navigate the inherently cosmopolitan calamities of Ulaanbaatar life, from financial insecurity to increasingly severe climate disasters and their consequent health crises. In this ritual, the *ovoo* act as mediators as they carry Tüvshee and Zulaa's offerings to the mountain and direct the mountain's power back in turn.

Though both Zulaa and Tüvshee were very open about the fact that they perform music at *ovoo* as a way of venerating local mountains, they kept many details about these performances private. They declined to specify what songs they chose or how they chose them and what aesthetic choices informed their performances. In both cases the idea of me coming along for one of these performances was out of the question. Though neither said as much, I inferred that they were only comfortable with opening some aspects of *ovoo* worship to outside scrutiny.

Zulaa and Tüvshee's usage of a heritage music and mountain-worshipping rituals, both of which have been designated intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, to resolve distinctly modern, urban issues leads to a secondary conflict. The inscription of these concepts as heritage creates a cosmopolitan consumer base, who bring with them western notions of what is an appropriate approach to traditional spiritual practices. The *ovoo* for better or worse, with its premodern history and ancient appearance, was the centerpiece on Carl's reprobation of Zulaa. It

was the fulcrum around which broader conflicts of colonialism, race, and gender played out between friends at a coffee shop downtown.

Monastery Ruins

At the end of spring I joined up with Bayar again. The tourist season was about to pick back up, so he wanted to revisit some spots in the Gobi, monasteries mostly, to scope them out for future tours. I went with him, taking this as an opportunity to see the backend of the tourism industry.

We started our journey in the typical way for those leaving Ulaanbaatar and heading into the country: with an offering to a *joloochny ovoo*, a drivers' cairn. Bayar took his time clearing off food and drink offerings. He showed me a bottle of vodka that he had pulled off the *ovoo* before tossing it in the trash can. Grimacing, he shook his head and we took to the road.

Of the monasteries we visited throughout the Gobi, one stood out in particular for the more-than-human network it brought together. Sum Khökh Bürd is both the ruin of an ancient monastery and an oasis that gives migrating birds a place to rest. The small wetland surrounding Khökh Bürd was breathtaking, cut as a band of greenish-blue water and tall waving yellow reeds against the red and brown backdrop of the semi-arid steppe.

As the length and severity of droughts in the region become worse in response to climate change, water features like this one are becoming more vital to the birds who migrate through. Not far away in this same province I had seen a lake used by herders to water their livestock dry up each year since I started working in the region in 2010. By 2015 it had disappeared completely, driving herders away from that pasture. Approaching Khökh Bürd, both Bayar and I

were shocked to see flocks of ducks and seagulls. Just under the shadow of the nearby *ovoo*, a nesting pair of demoiselle cranes pranced in the shallow, slowly-coursing water.

Figure 5.2 Sum Khökh Bürd and its Surrounding Wetland. Photograph by KG Hutchins.

Before entering the monastery, we visited the *ovoo* on the overlooking hill. From this vantage point, we could clearly see ruins poking up from behind the reeds. Bayar directed my attention to a single swan siting regally among the rushes in the heart of the marsh, flanked by a dozen seagulls, a few ducks, and two cranes. He told me the swan is a sign that the *ovoo* around the wetlands are doing good work, indicating that some of their duties are to maintain the health of the wetland enough that birds can continue to use it as a place to rest.

The area around the monastery was fenced off, having been renovated by the Mongolian government in 2016. The gate was flanked by two buildings: a park ranger station on one side

and the central office for a tourist camp on the other. The presence of these stations highlighted the multiplicity of ways that 'heritage' is consumed at places like Sum Khökh Bürd. The ranger station indicates the wetland surrounding the ruins as a protected natural zone. Meanwhile the tourist camp, with yurts for rent set up within the fenced off area, uses the ruins' status as an artifact of Mongolia's tangible cultural heritage as a source of value for the domestic tourism industry.

Both buildings were empty, and the gate hung open, so we let ourselves in. We followed a stone path that winds around the marsh to the ruins. At the end of the path, a complex of crumbled rooms faced a stage, purportedly first constructed by the Buddhist luminary Dulduityn Danzanravjaa for performances of his plays. Just past the stage there was another new structure, a museum dedicated to the history of the monastery. Like the ranger station and tourist camp, this museum was empty. Looking through the windows we noticed that it had not yet been filled with exhibits.

There was very little of the monastery itself left standing. What was once a cohesive structure was now a maze of freestanding walls and piles of stone. The roofs of the structure had all fallen in. Even the walls that were still standing sported massive holes. Bayar seemed off-put. Gazing through one of these holes he remarked that the walls looked like they had been blown apart by dynamite.

Kestrels soared about the ruins using those holes as resting spots. They treated the crumbling, pitted walls as kestrels in other parts of the Gobi treat natural cliffs. I stood on the stage, rebuilt as part of the Mongolian government's 2016 rehabilitation effort, and tried to imagine what it would have been like to perform here when the monastery was still active. Behind me I heard Bayar say, "this is a place of tragedy." When I turned to ask him what he

meant, he pointed out an *ovoo* that had been constructed bearing fresh silk sash offerings deep in a collapsed room.

The ruins are populated by a handful of small *ovoo* like this one. Several more dot the ridgeline. Just outside the front gate there is a large *ovoo* in the state-constructed style with wooden supports and an even, geometric shape presumably built-up when the site was rehabilitated as an ecologically protected area.

Bayar explained that *ovoo* pop up around abandoned or ruined monasteries "like mushrooms after the rains". Quietly, he added that some people build them and worship at them to assuage the spirits of monks who were killed during the Stalinist purge during the late 1930s. Even though this monastery was ancient and appeared to have fallen out of use before the socialist era, it bore markers of that period's state violence.

As we retraced our steps back out of the ruins, Bayar asked if I believe in ghosts. Nodding back over the water to the amphitheater he continued, "people say the ghosts of monks get trapped in these monasteries. Some people even come out to places like this at night looking for lights". As we departed a group of people, well dressed in the traditional style, had found a way into the ruins through the back and were carefully adorning its *ovoo* with ritual sashes. Bayar insisted that we pay respects to that large, seemingly state-constructed *ovoo* before we leave, to help maintain the wetland's ecosystem.

In the previous chapter, Chuluun and Tsegii were were not confident in the rejuvenation of the *takhi* population. They addressed this concern with a cultural heritage practice, long-song, to support the *takhi'*s rehabilitation. Here, the wetland rehabilitation surrounding this demolished monastery did not include a conciliation of the spirits at the site. So, people snuck in to construct small *ovoo* around the site to incorporate a cultural heritage practice into the rehabilitation.

At this monastery natural heritage, cultural heritage, and the "negative heritage" of commemorated violence intersect (Meskell 2002). The heritage of this site operates on a nonlinear moral temporality. The *ovoo* here stand as bulwarks against a future which promises desertification and climate change on behalf of a wetland and the birds who rely on it. The very same *ovoo* work as reminders of the violence of Soviet pseudo-colonialism and Stalinist purges and as offerings to the spirits of the dead at a monastery that likely fell to ruin long before the socialist period began. The *ovoo* operate as witnesses to the ghosts of monks that are said to haunt the monastery and play out the deaths of other monks who would be killed centuries after them on a stage for an audience of ghost-hunting humans and migrating birds.

Conclusion

To return to the legend at the start of this chapter, it is notable that mountain-spirits and people in the story occupy the same environment but are unable to understand each another without the intervention of *ovoo*. Their worlds overlap just enough to create discord. In each of the above examples, *ovoo* act as mediators, transmitting the wills and needs of nonhuman animals, mountains, and ghosts with humans. The designation of *ovoo*-related worship practices as heritage implicates them and the networks they mediate for in broader structures of transnational consumption. To frame heritage as either a quest for state hegemony or a form of political subversion for oppressed groups misses the nonhuman actors engaging with, constituting, and shaping heritage sites and practices.

Bayar, Zulaa, and Tüvshee engaged in what they described as mutual preservation with *ovoo* and the multispecies networks that those *ovoo* represent. In their own ways they each tied their spiritual, financial, and physical health to the health of these *ovoo*. They have all been faced

with difficult situations arising from transnational structures, and they work through *ovoo* to find solutions that mobilize a more-than-human web of social relations.

However, in resolving their first conflict they are invariably led to a second. Bayar's solution to the environmental and spiritual degradation that come with tourism puts him into conflict with local people and animals in the areas he tries to restore. Tüvshee and Zulaa's solution to concerns of health and financial stability is subject to the ire of western consumers, who use the inscription of spiritual practices and spaces as internationally valuable heritage to stake claims on the musicians' right to mobilize their own cultural resources. As the first pass around the *ovoo* is never enough to complete a ritual, these three continue to work through *ovoo* to find further solutions to these conflicts. With each pass, another stone is added, creating artifacts that grow and spread in number in commemoration of these struggles.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Though the designation of cultural practices as heritage is often a form of past-making that incorporates cultural differences into a neoliberal nationalist frame, throughout this dissertation I have argued that heritage has the potential to be a form of future-making as well. Through performing instruments and genres of music designated "cultural heritage," musicians are able to imagine alternatives to modernity even from within modernist institutions. The conditions of neoliberal modernity in Mongolia promise a near future defined by ecological breakdown and degrading relations between humans, nonhuman animals, and the land. In response to this ecologically disastrous future, I contend that people use heritage as a way of imagining more-than-human alternative futures in which humans have non-destructive relationships with animals and the land. I have presented cases in which musicians, herders, and heritage bearers build toward these futures by using musical heritage to cultivate with more-than-human networks of relation.

In the first chapter, horse-fiddle teachers Boldoo and Tüvshee along with musicologist Tuyaa, all working from conservatories in Ulaanbaatar, used heritage to imagine a variety of alternatives to the secular, modernist idea of a disenchanted world. They each offered perspectives on what it means for the horse-fiddle, a musical instrument and element of cultural heritage, to have a *süns,* or "spirit." Their answers drew the agency of the instrument into three distinct ontological frames. Boldoo, Tüvshee, and Tuyaa used heritage as a way to critically examine their relationships with nonhumans from the confines of modernist institutions.

Chapter two further engaged the use of heritage at urban music institutions. Multiple horse-fiddle teachers based out of the National Conservatory, University of Arts and Sciences,

and National Philharmonic claimed that non-human animals, especially horses, cattle, and camels, are vital resources for learning horse-fiddle music, whose perspectives are difficult to incorporate into institutional music education. I show that, in order to integrate the bodily movements of these livestock animals in the transmission of heritage genres, these fiddle teachers transformed the institutional rhythms of conservatory education.

While the second chapter considered the role of animals as teachers, chapter three asked what potentials arise when animals are treated as critical audiences for heritage music. Herders like Byambaa and Tsogt used traditional song to build relationships between orphaned lambs and new mothers. I demonstrate that, in these performances, heritage music enables human herders to engage socially across species boundaries.

Chapter four turned to Chuluun and Tsegii who also performed musical heritage for non-human animals. Here I described their efforts to use long-song to build new relationships with the recently repopulated community of wild *takhi* horses at Hustai National Park. Through their performances, they identified these horses as bearers of a shared heritage, both natural and cultural. Chuluun and Tsegii disagreed on whether their singing was successful. I propose that their disagreement highlights the ambiguity inherent to creating new more-than-human relationships in the wake of ecological disasters such as the extinction of *takhi* in central Mongolia during the 20th century.

Chapter five explored how relationships between humans and animals are entangled in broader networks of relation. The first network is the total field of (human and nonhuman) agents involved in the performance of cultural heritage, including sacred mountains. Like the horses and sheep in chapters two, three, and four, these geological features are treated by performers Tüvshee and Zulaa as critical audiences for long-song. The second network is the global network

of heritage consumption, as the designation of Tüvshee, Zulaa, and tour guide Bayar's personal spiritual practices as heritage invites scrutiny from Western tourists.

Throughout this dissertation, my argument has not been that the political designation of cultural practices as "heritage" is exclusively an emancipatory act that people use to destabilize hegemony of neoliberal modernity. Nor did I argue that the performance of heritage is exclusively a form of future-making; indeed nationalism and nostalgia run throughout the situations I have discussed. However, I want to highlight the potential for people to use heritage as a way to access alternatives to modernity in which the entanglement of nature and culture is not only recognized, but supported through non-destructive relations between humans, nonhuman animals, and the land.

Epilogue

Traveling back to Ulaanbaatar from Süm Khökh Burd, the hunting and tour guide Bayar and I unexpectedly happened upon an active monastery. On top of a hill covered in volcanic rock sat a jet-black, four-story temple with gold detail work on the eaves depicting snarling yellow dragons. Arrayed out in a semi-circle in front of the monastery were a couple of small buildings alongside nomadic felt tents of different sizes.

At first the only living being in sight was a fat orange temple cat, sunning itself in front of one of the gold-painted buildings. As we approached, Bayar pointed out that this building must be a shrine to Manjushri, the bodhisattva associated with insight. There we were greeted gruffly by a young monk with a Khangai mountain accent. He told us the monastery is named "Choir" and that is the main monastery serving the region.

The monk refused to give his name, though he did agree to a short interview with me and Bayar. He led us to the main building, guiding us past the volcanic stone outcroppings that jutted out from the steps up to the black tower. Facing that main building sat a pinkish concrete statue of the national hero Damdin Sükhbaatar on horseback, strikingly similar to the equestrian statue in the middle of Ulaanbaatar's central "Sükhbaatar Square."

In fact, the monk told us, it *was* the equestrian hero statue from Ulaanbaatar during the socialist era. In 2011, when the government built a taller version out of sturdier materials, a wealthy Dundgovi donor brought the old statue to Choir. On hearing that, Bayar excitedly exclaimed, "this is my childhood here," and snapped a picture on his phone. Sükhbaatar and the monastery sat together in the desert, staring at each other for the foreseeable future.

The monastery itself was as impressive inside as out. The eastern and western walls were lined with large aquariums full of koi fish. Two rows of heavy wooden seats with intricate carvings of swallows and blossoming flowers led to an impressive altar. In the northwestern corner a spiral of clear plastic stairs wound up to the third floor, while on the northeast side a small replica of a nomadic tent cut from that same clear plastic material guarded the staircase down to the archives. The ceiling was painted with yellow dragons. More gold-painted dragon reliefs adorned four thick columns which were sheathed in thick plastic protective sleeves.

The monk directed our attention to both the sturdiness of the construction and the beauty of the ornamentation. "See the walls," he said, gesturing towards the nearest one. "Built thick, and sturdy. See the columns, that paint is made of gold, and they are protected by the clear plastic outer shell." When I asked him why they bothered protecting the columns with the plastic covers, he replied,

> We did this for two reasons, but they both boil down to one basic idea: we want the place to last. We want it to be well built and maintained enough that people will keep being able to come and use it for generations. We also want it to be beautiful enough that they will recall it fondly. A person who came here as a child should be able to take their grandchildren here and rejoice in its continued beauty.
>
> The second reason is a bit grander of scale. The goal of our Buddhism is to elevate and educate humankind. Once humans have developed to the point where they are no longer violent – to nature, to each other, and to animals – then and only then Buddha the teacher can depart and his successor, Maitreya, will come to teach humans the great knowledge and technologies of the universe. We built this temple to last, so that in 2500 years or however long it takes, elevated people living in the Maitreya era can come see it and know that this was the work of the humans who lived in the Buddha era.

The monk described a future beyond capitalism and environmental degradation. To achieve this future, humanity would have to become nonviolent, to ourselves and nonhumans alike. He described a "gentle world." In other words, the world he described is an *uyakhan Zambuu tiv*, the “placid world” of Buddhist cosmology in which humans engage in peaceful relations with their fellow-beings featured in the long-song “*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*” (“Sun Over the Placid World”).

This monastery is a piece of cultural heritage that has been specifically curated to appeal to both current humans and the people of the Maitreya era – ascended beings who are neither human nor entirely nonhuman. The monk's description of how the monastery would show Maitreyans that Buddha-era humans were capable of beauty and insight reminded me of Tuyaa's idea that beaming “*Uyakhan Zambuu Tiviin Naran*” into outer space would show whoever came after humanity disappeared that there were great artists on Earth. This monk, like Tuyaa, was involved in curating a heritage that would survive beyond, into a post-capitalist future, for the benefit of a group of people that are themselves beyond humanity. The monk's vision of the future was utopian, while Tuyaa's was dystopian, but survival into both depended on cooperation between humans, nonhumans, and the landscape.

This dissertation has focused primarily on interactions with musicians connected in one way or another to urban, post-socialist institutions. As such, their primary method of engaging with more-than-human futures is through heritage, the institutionalized version of more-than-human cultural practices. As climate change promises increasing ecological devastation throughout Mongolia and across the world, this has been the exploration of just one possible avenue of future-making among many.

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