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Enlightenment in the Name of Chinggis Khan: The Founding of the Eastern Mongolian Publishing House in Mukden 1926/27

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Abstract: This paper is devoted to one of the first commercial Mongolian publishing houses in Republican China, which was founded in Mukden in 1926/27 and existed until the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. With its broad spectrum of publications, which included a textbook for primary education, translations and advices for self-improvement, its educational approach differed from earlier Mongolian publishing activities. Its founders saw themselves on a mission for education and aimed to spread knowledge relevant for Mongols in a globally connected world by making Mongolian language print material easier accessible to a wider public.

The paper argues that the founders of the publishing house were fueled by ideas of social Darwinism and saw competition not only on a global scale but also within the Chinese Republic. For this reason, their publishing project was meant to strengthen Mongols as a distinct, unitary group within the multinational Chinese Republic. At the same time, they raised their own profile as cultural translators and presented themselves as a scholarly elite. The Mukden publishers tried to set themselves apart from the institutions, which had dominated the field of Mongolian book production so far, but made reference to familiar concepts of sponsoring in order to strengthen their arguments for commercial publishing.

Keywords: cultural nationalism, education, Kesingge, Mongols, Republican China

The Eastern Mongolian Publishing House (EMPH) was among the first commercial Mongolian publishing houses in Republican China.¹ Founded in Mukden (today's Shenyang), it existed only a couple of years until the Japanese invasion

¹ There is no exact founding date of the EMPH (in Mongolian *Jegün Mongyol-un bičig-ün qoriya*). The calls for donations date from 1924 and 1926, the first publication came out 1927.

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of Manchuria, but takes an important place in Mongolian publishing history. With its broad spectrum of publications, which included a textbook for primary education, translations and advices for self-improvement, its educational approach differed from earlier Mongolian publishing activities. Among its output, the translation of an American self-help book stands out as one of the first Mongolian language publications of Western literature in Republican China and shows that the publishers were eager to mobilize knowledge resources of different provenances. The founders of the EMPH called for new educational models in order to reinforce their fellow Mongols' consciousness of being part of an ethnic community with a glorious history and cultural heritage and, ultimately, to raise the standing of Mongols within the Republic. When the publishing house was founded, the young Chinese Republic had clearly expressed its determination to act as a successor to the Qing-dynasty and propagated Sun Yat-sen's vision of "five nationalities as one family," a slogan first brought forward in 1912, and later frequently repeated. However, the affirmation of diversity and equality within the Republic was eventually counteracted by other statements of Sun Yat-sen suggesting that the Chinese nation should be formed by the assimilation of non-Han peoples.² Among the Mongols for whom the Chinese Republic represented an attractive political model were educated youths inspired by debates of the so-called New Culture Movement in China and members of the nobility, who hoped that, as an ethnically defined component of a multi-ethnic Chinese Republic, they would have a certain amount of autonomy.³ It was this mixed composition of (more or less convinced) supporters of the Republic who made up the founding group of the EMPH. Following debates in China and being stimulated by an intellectual climate, which focused on issues like "nation/race" and "struggle", they saw competition not only prevailing globally, but also within the Republic. In their view, Mongols' affiliation with the Republic made it necessary to establish Mongols within China as a distinct, unitary group. Uradyn E. Bulag observes that today China makes an effort to take on the role of Mongols in global history and that as a minority Mongols are defined in binary relationship with China and the Chinese at the expense of relations with third parties.⁴ As this study of the EMPH shows, the process of Mongols becoming a minority internal to China was accompanied by debates in which Mongolian intellectuals actively participated. They tried to position Mongols as an identifiable subject of global history while at the same

² Matten 2012: 88–89; Leibold 2007: 120–121.

³ Li 2009: 234.

⁴ Bulag 2010: 11–12 & 245. On Mongols being defined as an ethnicity rather than a nationality Bulag 2003.

time defining them as one of the nationalities in a multinational China. In this way, they were anticipating the debates on the complex issue of nationality and ethnicity in China. Among the sources used for this paper are prefaces to the EMPH's publications as well as two appeals for donations in which the future publishers propagate the spread of knowledge from varied sources, including Western literature. It is argued that the publishers cast themselves as experts who were able to mediate between different cultural spheres by creating a doom scenario of Mongols having been at the verge of extinction and presenting their publishing project as a way out of the current crisis.

The sense of crisis was not evoked without reason, because the EMPH was founded in a period of tremendous social and political upheaval. Warlords competed with each other over spheres of influence in Inner Mongolia, and the selling of land and natural resources, often abetted by the local authorities, had led to an increasing impoverishment of the Mongolian population. In 1925, the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was established under the supervision of the Comintern and with the assistance of agents from the Mongolian People's Republic. Moscow saw the revolutionary movement in Inner Mongolia as part of the "national liberation" of China, led at the time by a coalition of the Chinese Communist Party and the Guomindang.⁵ The members of the Inner Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party fought against the warlord Zhang Zuolin (1875–1928), who dominated Northern China, and maintained a strongly anti-feudal attitude in accordance with the requirements from the Comintern. In contrast, the founders of the EMPH had close ties with the nobility. It is important to bear in mind that the Inner Mongolian nationalist movement included competing groups with different loyalties and the Mukden publishers with their focus on knowledge enhancement, translations and book production presented a single, yet influential, voice in the project of national strengthening. The pioneering role of Eastern Mongolian intellectuals has been highlighted by Christopher Atwood, who sees the leading figures of the EMPH among the "Eastern Mongolian cultural nationalists." Referring to a concept developed by John Hutchinson, he argues that "[w]hile the cultural nationalists stayed aloof of politics themselves, their ideas spread wherever modern schools were founded in Inner Mongolia, and played a vital role in creating a coherent new class of intelligentsia, or 'Young Mongols'".⁶ For Atwood, the activities of the founders of the EMPH thus were part of a movement preceding or accompanying political nationalism, designed to consolidate a group-identity by cultural studies and to create the imaginary of a shared history and common

⁵ Liu 2006: 64–66.

⁶ Atwood 2002: 88–90.

language.⁷ However, when referring to the publishers as “nationalists”, a term from the political realm, we have to keep in mind that in the 1920s, the concept of “nation” or “nationality” was still in the process of being created as a new type of subject. Even though conceiving Mongols as a national community was potentially highly political, the publications of the Mukden group were marked by strong didactic concerns. The blurring of boundaries between cultural production and political expression is characteristic of their publishing activities, but is also a common feature in their biographies. As the following section will show, by the time the publishing house was established, most of its founding members had already made a jaunt into politics and many of them became active in the administration of Manchukuo later in their lives. For this reason, it will not be possible to separate their politically relevant from non-political cultural activities. Moreover, what distinguishes the Mukden circle from other activists in the field of nation-building was that they envisioned Mongols as a nationality within the state framework of the Chinese Republic and combined their national aspirations with a commitment to the cause of the Republic. In this context, the paper draws inspiration from Miroslav Hroch, who directs attention to situations of multiple and parallel national movements in which “members of the oppressed nationalities were bombarded by at least two national ideologies”.⁸ As Atwood points out, in the 1920s Mongols in China were torn between two models of state-building, one taking place in Northern (Khalkha) Mongolia and the other presented by the Guomindang.⁹ The sources on the EMPH are conspicuously silent on the Northern Mongolian alternative model which suggests that the members of the Mukden circle had a clear preference. The publishing house was founded in a region where the Guomindang had its strongest regional basis of support.¹⁰ Judging from their statements of intent, its initiators were rather grappling with Sun Yat-sen’s principle of “five nationalities as one family” and the Chinese model of a multinational state than with issues of class struggle and territorial integrity.

Some scholars have characterized the atmosphere of change created by the Mukden circle of publishers (as well as other Mongolian authors of the time) as “Enlightenment” and “Renaissance”.¹¹ As Sebastian Conrad reminds us, an assessment of the role of Enlightenment thought in global history should

⁷ Hutchinson 2013: 75.

⁸ Hroch 1985: 12.

⁹ Atwood 2002: 54–55.

¹⁰ Atwood 2002: 78.

¹¹ Bai/Bai 2015; Atwood speaks of “Eastern Mongolian Educational Renaissance” (2002: 81) and “enlightenment” (2004: 337).

focus on its articulation and reinvention by various actors in different parts of the world.¹² When Enlightenment claims were put in relation with other aspects of cultural practice, they inspired debates on improvement and change. Thus, to speak in terms of “Enlightenment”, “civilization” and “progress” – often in one breath – was a way to make sense of a complex world and position a community within a global arena.¹³ The Mukden publishers did not invoke the term “Enlightenment”, but they called for “civilization” and “progress” and referred to these concepts in order to formulate particular claims. In their imaginary, Mongols lived in a golden age at the time of Chinggis and Khubilai Khan, went through a period of decay during the Qing period and had now arrived at a critical point. If they did not retrieve the legacy of the great Mongol Khans and, by adopting new knowledge, keep up with other nationalities they would have to face extinction. According to their reasoning, it was intellectuals like themselves who had the ability to educate and edify their fellow Mongols, not least because of their familiarity with the Chinese language and culture.

Publishers as cultural mediators

The founders of the EMPH all originated from the Eastern Mongolian leagues of Jirim, Juu Uda and Josotu. What united them in addition to their provenance was their educational background which included thorough knowledge of Mongolian, Manchu and Chinese. Even though several of them were commoners, none of them seems to have grown up under poor conditions and two, Šümingy-a (1885–1947) and Rolyarjab (1889–1941), were members of the nobility. Rolyarjab’s origin from the ruling family of Kesigten-banner (today part of Chifeng municipality) was important not only because he used his aristocratic network in order to raise funds for the publishing project, but also because of his familiarity with intellectual developments in Khalkha Mongolia. From 1918 onwards, Rolyarjab spent several years in Khüriye (today’s Ulaanbaatar), where he worked for the government of the Jibzundamba Khutugtu,¹⁴ the nominal head of the Mongolian state until 1924. It is not clear whether Rolyarjab had met the prominent Buryat-Mongolian scholar Zhamtsarano (1880–1942), who engaged in ethnographic and historical studies and played an important role in coining the

¹² Conrad 2012: 1005, 1026–1027.

¹³ Conrad 2012: 1016–1019.

¹⁴ Šuyar-a 1985: 337; Temole 2006: 395n3.

Khalkha nationality lexicon.¹⁵ However, there can be no doubt that the intellectual climate in Khalkha Mongolia had a stimulating effect on him.

After his return, Rolyarjab worked as an advisor to the warlords Zhang Zuolin (1875–1928) and Zhang Xueliang (1901–2001) and got in contact with Buyanmanduqu (1894–1980)¹⁶ and Kesingge (1889–1950),¹⁷ two other members of the founding circle of the EMPH. Both originated from the Qorčin Left Front banner and had attended the Mongolian School in Fengtian (Mukden) as companions of a member of the ruling family of their native banner.¹⁸ After their graduation in 1912, both became active in politics and in publishing. While Kesingge joined the Guomindang in the early 1920s,¹⁹ Buyanmanduqu became a member of the Inner Mongolian Revolutionary Party in 1925.²⁰ As Atwood has argued, these two movements were not diametrically opposed even before their merging in 1925, because for Inner Mongolians both, the Chinese and the Mongolian example, presented attractive models for revolutionary movements and preferences were divided along regional, religious, social and generational lines.²¹

In addition to their commitment to the EMPH, Kesingge and Buyanmanduqu also worked as authors and translators and wrote for journals and newspapers.²² Moreover, they moved freely between publishing and the academic world. Kesingge had founded a school in his home banner and in 1929 became a teacher at the Northeast Mongolian Banners' Normal School.²³ Just like in late Qing and early Republican China, teaching and publishing provided niches for educated youths which allowed them to earn a living and spread their ideas among a wider public.²⁴ In their calls for donations for a Mongolian publishing house, both Buyanmanduqu and Rolyarjab stress that the publishing project was closely connected to their educational ambitions:

¹⁵ Bulag 1998: 31; Munkh-Erdene 2006: 61. On Zhamtsarano see Tolz 2015.

¹⁶ On Buyanmanduqu see Futaki 2002; Liu 2006: 129–130; Jagchid 1999: 340.

¹⁷ Ke 2001.

¹⁸ Ke 2001: 16; Temole 2006: 396–397.

¹⁹ As a delegate of Jirim league, Kesingge joined the National Assembly convened in Beijing in 1922. Temole 2006: 394–395.

²⁰ Even though Buyanmanduqu authored the call for donations for the EMPH in 1924, his role in the publishing business after 1924 is not clear.

²¹ Atwood 2002: 53–55 & 77. For the relationship between the two parties also Liu 2006: 64–74.

²² Kesingge and Buyanmanduqu both had started publishing in the Japanese sponsored journal *Mukden-ü Mongyol sedküil* in the years 1919/20. On this journal Temole 2010 [1987]: 398–400.

²³ On this school and the Mongolian Cultural Advancement Society Atwood 2002: 943; Temole 2008: 651–652.

²⁴ Culp 2007: 217–220; Atwood 2002: 81.

(72) Even though this undeserving me is an exceptionally (73) stupid person, I think of my people (*töröl ayimay-ıyan*) with sorrow and because I cannot bear to see them in the depth of darkness coming close to extinction, I made up my mind to open up the way for Mongolian education, decided to contribute to strengthening the great Middle Kingdom and became engaged in the founding of a Mongolian publishing house; in order to let the people benefit and open up their knowledge on practices and theories, I chose writings in Manchu and Chinese as well as [writings] from the Eastern and Western oceans and translated them into Mongolian; when the Mongolian people read from morning to evening, turn to the side of knowledge and change for the better, only then will they be on an equal footing with the other citizens of the country. (Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924])²⁵

(76) For this reason, even though knowledge, competence, authority and power of our humble group is not sufficient to reinstate our nationality, enrich its literature and turn it into a defense for the country, we take the lead among like-minded peers and, after you all made your contributions, will open a publishing house with a small lithographic press; (77) by translating all sorts of new and old books both domestic and foreign into Mongolian and publish them in print, we want to meet the expectations of young people with a desire to learn and provide relief for those who suffer because they are hindered in their quest for reading material. (Rolyarjab 1944 [1926])²⁶

It should be noted that both texts were not (or at least not in the first place) targeted at the future reading audience, but rather at members of the elite inducing them to develop an interest in creating a wider reading audience and to make contributions. The publishing enterprise started from the premise that both, publishers and sponsors, had command of knowledge and education, while the future reading audience had not. Above, Rolyarjab explains his dedication to publishing by his concern for the needs of others and his will to help. The group of the non-readers is construed as a group of

25 (72) *öcöken minu bey-e . kedüi aday-un (73) jerge bidegülig er-e bolbaču . töröl ayimay-ıyan ebersiyen bodoju . tegün-ü qab qarangyui aysayar mököjü sönöküi-dür kürküi-yi üjeju üli tübdekü uçir . mongyol-un suryan kümüjigülkü jam-i manduyulqu-bar öber-ün kereg bolyan . yeke dumdadu ulus-i batudqaqu-bar qubin-u tusiyal kisügei kemen . mongyol bičig darumalaqu küriy-e bayiyulju . manju kitad ba . jegün barayun usun sang-un bičig qar-a-yin dotoraki irgen-ü medel-dür tusatai böged . jang surtal-i negegedegülju bolqui-yi inu songyon mongyolčılan orčiyulju . mongyol-un kümün irgen-dür örlöge üdesi unsiyulun . medel-dür siljin . sayin-dur geskü bügesü . sayi ulus-un irgen-ü toyan-dur jergečejü bolomui kemeküi inu bolai .* Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924]: 72–73.

26 (76) *egün-dür bolki bide-ner kedüi ayimay uysay-a-ban tengküregülün . udq-a suruly-a-yi köjigülün . ulus törö-dür qayiyul qalqabči bolyaqu . erdem čidal erke kücün teyin üli kürülčeki bolbaču . adali joriytu baysi nököd-i uduridču . qubi asiy elseged . nigen bayaqan čilayun keb-ün bičig-ün qoriy-a negegeju . (77) aliba dumdadu yadayadu-yin sin-e qayučin nom bičig-i . mongyolčılan orčiyulju darumal darumalayad . surqui-dur duratai keüked degüü-ner-ün keregleküi-dür neyilegülün . ürgülji nom bičig olqu ügei boyoydayčid-un jobayuri-dur tusalasuyai kememüi .* Rolyarjab 1944 [1926]: 76–77.

non-knowers, who suffer from a deficiency and are not able to help themselves. Their ignorance is characterized as so profound that counteractions, such as publishing and popularizing knowledge appear to be an issue of priority. Discursively construing a crisis and judging their contemporaries at the edge of disaster was a way of emphasizing the importance of the publishing project. In an allegedly desperate situation, the prospective publishers presented themselves as rescuers, who were ahead of their contemporaries and possessed qualities which others lacked. The resource, which needed to be mobilized, was their polyglot education and their knowledge of global issues. Along with their familiarity with Manchu and Chinese written culture, it was the Eastern Mongolian elite's expertise in foreign literature and current cultural debates, which was supposed to secure the Mongols' position within the Middle Kingdom.

While in the statements quoted above the scope of literature relevant for "opening up the way for Mongolian education" remains rather vague, it is instructive to note, which sources of knowledge were not included in this agenda. In Buyanmanduqu's and Rolyarjab's conception, global space seems to be divided into the "Middle Kingdom" and "the countries of the Eastern and Western oceans"²⁷ (or in the case of Rolyarjab "Europe and America"). In this global imaginary, the world seems to be a rather inchoate space, dichotomized between a larger China and a loosely defined counterpart culturally dominated by Europe, the United States and Japan.²⁸ The cultural and linguistic diversity of the Chinese Republic and the fact that it included (or at least claimed to include) more peoples than Mongols, Manchus and Chinese is nowhere touched on in the EMPH sources, suggesting that expertise in other literatures was not considered to strengthen the Mongols' position globally or within the state. This is especially significant in the case of Tibetan, which was an important scholarly language among Mongols since the 17th century its command having been the basis for a Buddhist monastic education. Therefore, the omission of Tibetan among the elements of knowledge making Mongols fit for the challenges of a globalized world can be read as a signal against the predominant role of Buddhist institutions in Mongolian education.²⁹

²⁷ Mongolian translation of Chinese *dongyang* and *xiyang*.

²⁸ On changing conceptions of space in early Republican China see Culp 2007: 212.

²⁹ Atwood 2002: 89.

Technological innovations and continuities in models of sponsoring

In contrast with most other agents involved in the manufacturing of Mongolian books before the 20th century, no member of the Mukden circle publishers had a monastic education background. As literary centers, Buddhist monasteries had played an increasingly important role since the end of the 15th century not only in education, but also in the production, commissioning and distribution of texts. These were not only written by hand, but also printed from woodblocks. As several scholars have emphasized, in Mongolia xylograph prints had by no means replaced or eclipsed manuscripts, which continued to be held in high regard and were produced and circulated up to the 20th century.³⁰ In addition to the Mongolian territories, Mongolian book printing also flourished in Beijing, where not only religious texts, but also legal texts, calendars, dictionaries as well as officially sanctioned historiographical and biographical accounts were manufactured.³¹

Against this background, it is striking that the Mukden group never entered woodblock publishing, even though this technology was commonly known and widely spread. Cynthia Brokaw argues that woodblock printing could be done relatively cheaply and the printing blocks were easily transportable, also allowing remote areas access to printing.³² However, as Rolyarjab emphasizes, the EMPH commenced its production with a lithography printing press and, within the year of its foundation, started to print with movable types, which then seemed to have replaced lithography. The provenance of the set of types used for publications of the EMPH in 1927/28 has been reconstructed by the Inner Mongolian scholar Temole. According to him, the types used by the EMPH came from Jilin, where they had been employed for the publication of the bilingual journal *Mongyol yerü üge-yin sedküil/Mengwen baihua bao*, which ceased publication in 1916. The types originated from St. Petersburg and, before they came to Jilin, had been used in Harbin for the publication of the Russian sponsored newspaper *Mongyol-un sonin bičig/Menggu xinwen* from 1909 onward.³³ Moreover, a couple of years earlier, in 1924, another Mongolian publisher, Temgetü (1887–1939), had started to publish Mongolian books in Beijing with

³⁰ Kollmar-Paulenz 2005: 203–205; Elverskog 2016: 24–25.

³¹ Heissig 1954: 1–5.

³² Brokaw 2010: 47–48.

³³ In 1915, the name of the Jilin newspaper had been changed to *Mongyol udq-a-yin sedküil / Mengwen bao*. Temole 1999: 117. These newspapers are discussed in Dasinim-a 2008 [1962]: 354–355.

a set of movable types, which he had developed himself.³⁴ The founders of the EMPH were thus not the first to dispense with the use of woodblock printing, but formed part of a movement among the Eastern Mongolian elite, who were eager to adopt new technologies of printing. This can be interpreted as an effort to set themselves apart from the institutions, which had dominated the field of book production so far. It should be stressed that it was not the availability of new technologies for multiplying texts, which precipitated changes in the field of cultural production. Rather, the decision of the Mukden publishers to turn to other technologies than woodblock should be read as a programmatic statement. In his study on publishing in early modern China, Kai-wing Chow stresses that it “is not printing itself that determines how it will be used, but rather the specific attitudes of the group who come to use that technology as well as the ecological, economic, social, and political conditions under which a specific technology is developed, introduced, marketed, used, and resisted. These various factors also shaped the symbolic production of the technology itself.”³⁵ By making use of new techniques,³⁶ the Mukden publishers positioned themselves at the forefront of technological progress and change. Their choice for new printing technologies can be understood as an attempt to de-couple book production from the existing networks between monasteries, woodcut artisans and printing houses, which had shaped Mongolian book manufacturing so far.

However, even though the foundation of the EMPH was marked by technological changes and new approaches in education and knowledge production, there was also a high degree of continuity. As will be discussed below, by no means all its publications mirror an enthusiasm for new ideas of global interconnectedness. Rather, the EMPH’s range of products also includes many texts, which had been popular among Mongols throughout the Qing-period. Moreover, a fundraising campaign directed at the nobility had stood at the outset of the EMPH’s founding. For centuries, members of the Mongolian elite had a significant influence on publishing projects as patrons, sponsors and consumers. In the mid-1920s, they became an important force in the Mongolian publishing market again by providing the circle around Kesingge, Rolyarjab and Buyanmanduqu with the necessary financial resources. For the future publishers, meetings of the well-educated and well-to-do Eastern Mongolian political elite provided opportunities to win them for the idea of a Mongolian publishing house and to raise funds. This can be concluded from the

³⁴ On Temgetü’s publishing house Krueger 1966. According to Temole 1999: 115 there is no indication that Temgetü shared his skills with other Mongolian publishers.

³⁵ Chow 2004: 252–253.

³⁶ Lithography was introduced in China by missionaries in the first half of the 19th century. Reed 2004: 61–62.

preface to the Mongolian translation of the *Selections from the Liaozhai zhiyi*, a famous collection of stories from Pu Songling (1640–1715), in which Šümingy-a, one of the founding fathers of the publishing house, recounts the following:

(3r) When you listen to the idle talk among Mongols, (3v) they say that nowadays the state of the country has changed and foreign studies as well as Chinese characters are absolutely necessary, [while] the Mongolian script is not an issue of special value and it is useless to spend much effort on it. [However], the unity and the welfare of every people (*ayimay-un*) depend on its language and script. After such self-restriction has become widespread [among Mongols] and [they] have more and more neglected their own script, I want to show my people another and obvious way and make them prosper! If they continue to silently keep their hands in their sleeves and not pay attention and if they do not alter and try to get to the top, in the future it will be even more difficult to change the situation; for this reason, I decided to establish a Mongolian publishing house in a town in the province of Fengtian with a couple of like-minded friends; we waited for the opportunity that the dukes and princes of various leagues³⁷ came together in the town of U³⁸ for a meeting and after I admonished and convinced them, we pooled the contributions and opened a publishing house; apart from the fact that we printed urgently needed books, scriptures and teaching material, we also agreed to publish stories and historical material. (Šümingy-a 1928)³⁹

From the calls of donation we know that the founders of the EMPH appealed to the nobility's familiar role as sponsors for the production of texts in order to raise funds. Above, Rolyarjab is quoted with his wish “to provide relief for those who suffer because they are hindered in their quest for reading material.” According to common understanding, providing funds for the translation or dissemination of religious scriptures was a way of making merit. In his call for donations, Buyanmanduqu likewise reminds the nobility of their meritorious role as donors:

³⁷ Members of the nobility with honorary titles probably from the administrative units of Jirim, Josotu and Juu Uda.

³⁸ Probably the town of Ulayanqada (Chinese Chifeng).

³⁹ 3r *mongyol olan-u quyiquqljan sigümjileküi-yi sonosbasu . odo ulus-un 3v bayidal nigente qubisčuqui . qari-yin suruly-a kiged . dumdadu ulus-un üsüg bičig yekel-e čiqula keregleltei . mongyol üsüg bičig-i onča erkimlekü yabudal ügei . talayar küčün süidkekü bolai kemeldümüi . ay-a ayimay-un nigedün badaraqu anu . üge üsüg-tür bui bolai . eyimü kemjigetei bürin delgeren ulamlaysayar üsüg udq-a-ban oyoruyad . öber-e yambar dököm jam-iyar olan-iyar gegedgen degjigülsügei kemekü aji . egün-i dub duyui yar qančulaju qayiqurqu ügei . türügülen čirmaju muskin egegülkü ügei bolbasu . qoyiči bayidal-un qubisqu qolboydal-tan kündü-yin tula . sedkilge adali kedün nököd-lüge kelelčejü . tngri-yin čiyulultu muji-yin qotan-dur mongyol bičig-ün qoriya bayiyulsuyai kemen toytaysan tuqai . čibkital-a U qotan-dur jarim-un čiyulyan-u vang güng-ner qural čuylaysan učiral tokiyalduju . oldoi bi duradyan jöbsiyegdeged . 4r oloysan nemegüri asiy-i qamtudyan . bičig-ün qoriya-yi negegejü . čiqula keregleltei nom sudur . suryayuli-yin bičig-i badarayulun darumalaqu jabsar-a . nigentegegür üliqer teüke-yi mön qurayan darumalasuyai kemen kelelčejü . Šümingy-a (1928: vol. 1, 3r–4r).*

(73) I am just a single person, my knowledge [is] poor and my power [is] limited and I [try to] make something out of nothing; to get things started will certainly involve great costs and for this reason I have no other choice than to make my voice heard to you, scholars and honorable personalities, as you are of an elevated and generous spirit and have a warm, compassionate and kind-hearted mind. (74) If you really take pity and offer assistance to turn things to good and realize the foundation [of the publishing house], in the future, when knowledge and understanding of the Mongolian people will have gradually increased, it will ultimately be thanks to your favors. My words [are] foolish and my mind [is] simple and I make this humble request with a bow and ask for your kind attention. (Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924])⁴⁰

Both Buyanmanduqu and Rolyarjab start from the assumption that publishers and sponsors were disinterested in personal gains or fame and made their commitments unselfishly. In addition, the passage quoted above hints to the possibility that there will be some kind of reward for financial contributions. Even though the publishers tried to establish themselves independently from institutions and authorities who dominated Mongolian book production, they make reference to familiar concepts of sponsoring in order to strengthen their arguments for commercial publishing.

Mongols as an imagined community under the roof of the republic

Benedict Anderson argues commercial publishing to be the precondition for a changed envisioning of community ties and, ultimately, the emergence of nationalism.⁴¹ In the context of the EMPH it should be stressed that communities could also be imagined outside the framework of the nation and commercial publishing generated new ways of envisioning communal belonging as a series of interlacing relations.⁴²

In the passage quoted above, Šümingy-a uses the term *ayimay* to refer to a group of people who speak the same language, use the same script and share a

40 (73) *yayča öčöken minu bey-e . erdem nimgen küčün bičiqan . qoyusuyar joriy abču . egüsken kiküy-e sayar ügei yeke süidkel oroqu-yin tula . ary-a busu yirtinčü-yin öndörgegegen qalayun sedkiltei nigülesküi asarangyui olan erdemten baysi tan-a duradqan sonosqamui . (74) üneker örsiyeen tusalayad . ene-kü sayin jüg-ün egüskel-i bütügeküi-dür kürügülbesü . qoyiči edür-e . mongyol-un kümün irgen-ü medel uqayan ulam-iyar nemegdekü bolbasu . čöm olan abuyai tan-u kürtegegsen kesig bolai . üge bidayu joriy mungqay . örsiyeen tolilaqui-yi meküin yuyuju kičiyenggüilen duradqabai . Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924]: 73–74.*

41 Anderson 2016 [1983].

42 Breuilly 2016: 643.

common destiny. As Atwood has argued, *ayimay* (regional group) was one of the terms which became building blocks of the semantic field of “nationality” in the early 20th century. It was frequently combined with *uysay-a* (descent, lineage) and *töröl* (kind, sort), two other words, which were given new meaning in the struggle to find Mongolian equivalents for a political vocabulary denoting concepts of nationality, ethnicity or race.⁴³ In the following quote, Rolyarjab uses the term *uysay-a* to make reference to Sun Yat-sen’s principle of “five nationalities as one family”:

In the present time, the countries (*ulus*) of Europe and America all aim to gradually push forward in [the field of] civilization and all of them endeavour to enrich and enhance their nationality’s (*uysay-a ayimay-un*) literature⁴⁴; moreover, in this time in which the powerful ones compete with each other for profit, only our Mongolian nationality (*uysay-a*) continues in the same old way; even worse, because we gave up studies and inquiries and did not open up [new] fields of knowledge, [we] do not have the slightest understanding of peace and chaos; how can we make ourselves useful for the Republic as if we were arms or legs and, within the five nationalities (*tabun uysay-a-yin*), lay claim to our position as a great nationality? (Rolyarjab 1944 [1926])⁴⁵

It is instructive to look at the binary oppositions in which Rolyarjab represents Mongolian identity. In his effort to locate Mongols in global context, Rolyarjab contrasts the knowledge production of the Mongolian nationality with that of the countries of “Europe and America”. He does not seem to have a clear notion which countries make up this group, but in a climate of omnipresent competition, they are presented as models. However, for Rolyarjab, contest also exists within the Republic. With his rhetoric question at the end of the paragraph, he insinuates that the worst consequence of Mongols lagging behind in global competition would be not being able to claim their share *within* the Republic.

Rolyarjab’s concern of the Mongols’ not been acknowledged as a *great* nationality is most likely connected to the distinction of ethnic groups/

⁴³ Atwood 1994: 56–58; also Munkh-Erdene 2006: 62–65.

⁴⁴ The translation of *udq-a gegegen-dür* as “civilization” and *udq-a suruly-a* as “literature” will be discussed below.

⁴⁵ *ediige bolbaču eyuropa ameyirike-yin olan ulus cöm ulam-iyar udq-a gegegen-dür sidardaju . öber öber-ün uysay-a ayimay-un udq-a suruly-a-yi köjigülün delgeregülküi-yi ülü kičiyekün-ber ügei . tere deger-e olan küčürkeg-üd qarılčan ilegüü bolqui-yi temečekü ene čay-tur . imayta biden-ü mongyol uysay-a tan-u tedüi . qarin suruly-a asayuly-a gegegdejü . uqayan medel ese negeg-degsen-ü qaray-a ber . oyoyada engke समयun-u bayidal-i öčöken čü uqaqu ügei-dür . kerkin bügüde nayiramdaysan ulus-tur . yar köl-ün metü tusa bolju tabun uysay-a-yin dotoraki nigen yeke uysay-a bolqu qubi erke бүкүi-ben iledken čidamui .* Rolyarjab 1944 [1926]: 76.

nationalities (*minzu*)⁴⁶ within the Chinese Republic according to their strength. Following James Leibold, reference to the “domestic, small, and weak minzu” was first made by Sun Yat-sen in 1924 in the *Outline for National Reconstruction*,⁴⁷ and later became common in Guomindang rhetoric. Among Mongols, there was discontent with the classification as a “small and weak” nationality,⁴⁸ which is evident not only in Rolyarjab’s statement, but also in Buyanmanduqu’s statement above with his demand that Mongols should be “on an equal footing with the other citizens of the country.” He explains:

In recent times, our Mongolian nationality is content with its familiar ways, upholds its valued teachings, and the mind of the people not being on relentless fighting, we are becoming more isolated and fragmented by the day; even though we belong to the territory of the Middle Kingdom, we do not know the writings and the script of the inner territories. If things with the inner territories are even like this, what can you then say about the civilizations [of the peoples] of the Eastern and Western oceans?
(Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924])⁴⁹

Just like Rolyarjab, Buyanmanduqu distinguishes between political affiliation with a state or country (*ulus*) and the construction of ethnic belonging. Accordingly, the knowledge production of Mongols was in competition both with Japan, Europe and the United States and with other nationalities within the Republic. Atwood aptly characterizes the intertwined affiliations and rivalries of Mongols within the Chinese Republic as “nested loyalties.”⁵⁰ The community of Mongols was construed by acts of imagination, but it is notable that among the founders of the EMPH there was considerable variation in priorities. With his emphasis on language and script as the basis for the well-being of the people, Šümingy-a sets the stage for narratives of a community welded together by a common language and of language revival as a panacea for social and political maladies. In contrast, the focus of his fellow publishers is not so much on language, but rather on the acquisition of new knowledge. The nature of this knowledge was the subject of a controversial debate. While above Buyanmanduqu complains the lack of China-related knowledge, Kesingge, in

⁴⁶ For the ambiguity of this term Leibold 2007: 8–9 and Matten 2011: 92–93.

⁴⁷ Leibold 2007: 56.

⁴⁸ On the Mongolian attitude also Li 2009: 235.

⁴⁹ *oyiraki on-ača . man-u mongyol uysay-a . tegün-ü idegesigsen dadyal-dayan amurayad . tegün-ü erkimlegesen suryal-ıyan sakıju . irgen-ü sedkil čirman temečekü ügei . edür iren qayaydan sarnıquı-dur kürčü . kedüi-ber dumdadu ulus-un yajar-tur qamıyaraydan aqu bolbaču . qarın dotoyadu yajar-un bičig qar-a üsüg udq-a-yi ču ese medemüi . dotoyadu yajar-un-ki-yi basa ene metü tula . jegün barayun usun sang-un udq-a gegegen-i yayun ögöletel-e .* Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924]: 72.

⁵⁰ Atwood 1994: 40–41; Bulag 2002: 18–21.

the preface to the *One hundred rules to achieve success* (a work discussed below), compares the Middle Kingdom to “America” and sees this as a stimulus for Mongols to learn from people of this country. For this reason, he made an attempt to popularize texts of foreign authors by translating them from Chinese into Mongolian. This entailed a process of appropriation in which terms and ideas encountered in Chinese were translated into Mongolian.

Global interconnectedness and the project of translation

At the turn of the 20th century, translations from European languages and Japanese provoked fundamental changes in the Chinese terminological lexicon, and, via Japanese, terms commonly used in classical texts were reintroduced into the Chinese language with a new meaning. Here it is argued that the founding of the EMPH was closely connected to efforts of popularizing Western-derived notions of “civilization” and “literature” among Mongols and to frame a Mongolian vocabulary for these terms. Thus, the epistemic transitions and lexical innovations taking place in early Republican China were taken up by members of the Eastern Mongolian elite and led them to invent a Mongolian vocabulary of modernity. Even though their terminology did not generally prevail, their voices give evidence of the complex process of negotiation which accompanied the development of a new conceptual lexicon. Their terminological solutions shed light on their engagement with new ideas and on processes of adoption and invention.

In his call for donations, Buyanmanduqu stresses the versatile nature and the fluidity of knowledge:

(70) Today vessels and ships make their way everywhere, waterways and overland routes are interconnected, all conditions are mutually known and, in addition to an impressive development, in the rising tide of the spirit of civilization (*udq-a gegegen-ü*), the whole world is pervaded [as if] under one roof and comes close to flowing [together]. All countries which have a script (71) translate each other's writings comprehensively and investigate [one another's] customs and habits and to have the chance for learning and education is helpful for everything, even for government affairs. As all sorts of material substances are exchanged and traded, I believe that mutual information on one's situation is just like a commercial matter. If someone says “I want to consult the teachings of other countries in order to make up for my own deficiencies”, there is absolutely no other way than to borrow and translate the writings of civilized countries (*udq-a gegegen ulus-un*). (Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924])⁵¹

51 (70) *edüge terge ongyoča yekel-e nebtorejü . usun qayurai-yin jam jalyalduyad . bui ügei-ben qarılčan duyulyaju . ulam-iyar yekel-e kögjigsen ču bayituyai . udq-a gegegen-ü sanay-a-yin*

According to Buyanmanduqu, the reason why some peoples were ahead of others was that they had got *udq-a gegegen*. This compound is a neologism and can be understood as a direct translation of the Chinese term for “civilization”, *wenming*.⁵² While the translation of Chinese *ming* as Mongolian *gegegen* is evident, the Mongolian word *udq-a* as a counterpart of the Chinese character *wen* is striking and can be seen as an example of how Mongolian authors and their audiences linked familiar concepts with Chinese characters in their new, “modern” meaning. *wen* is a key term in Chinese culture and its spectrum of meaning goes far beyond the common translation of “writing/literature”. Originally meaning “pattern”, *wen* linked the present to the past and was thus needed in order to ensure cultural continuity. In the late Qing and early Republican period, the character *wen* had gained renewed prominence as part of compound words denoting concepts such as culture (*wenhua*), civilization (*wenming*) and literature (*wenxue*).⁵³ In their understanding that striving for civilization was the fate of the times, the Mukden publishers were taking up ideas of China’s Hundred-Day Reform and, most notably, of Liang Qichao (1873–1929), for whom the world had entered a stage of civilization and China was bound to catch up with Western countries in order to realize it.⁵⁴ The word *udq-a* (meaning, content), which was used for rendering the character *wen*, goes back to the Sanskrit word *artha* and was also used in the context of Buddhist philosophy.⁵⁵ The Mongolian word commonly used for “writing/script” was *bičig*. In the early 20th century, however, as equivalent to Chinese *wen*, the term *udq-a* became a key word in debates accompanying the appropriation of new knowledge and the translation of unfamiliar concepts into Mongolian.

tülkigen-dür . bükü yirtinčü-yi nigen kögerge-dür debten čidququi-dur kürkü siqaba . aliba bičig üsüg büküi ulus-ud . alin ču (71) čöm bičig qar-a-yi qarilčan orčiyulju . jang surtal-i kinan . suryan kümüjigülküi-degen ildar bolyaju . jasay surtal-dur kürtel-e ese tusalayulqun-bar ügei: eldeb bodas-i ulariyulun qudalduju . bui ügei-ben qarilčan duyulyaqui anu . yayča qudalduy-a-yin kereg-tür itegemüi . kerbe busud ulus-un surtal-i abčiran . öber-ün kürülčekü ügei-degen nöközügei kemebesü . udq-a gegegen ulus-un bičig qar-a-yi jigelen orčiyulqu-ača yadan-a . yerü öber-e sayin ary-a ügei bolai . Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924]: 70–71.

⁵² A classical Chinese compound which was used to translate the English word “civilization” into Japanese and was later reintroduced into modern Chinese. Liu 1995: 302–309.

⁵³ Kaske 2001: 31–32.

⁵⁴ Huang 2011: 10.

⁵⁵ In Buddhist context, the Mongolian term *udq-a* is used in relation with the concept of relative truth (*siduryu udq-a*) and absolute truth (*mayad udq-a*). Kollmar-Paulenz 2001: 282–283n415. In the early 18th century, *udq-a* was also used as equivalent to Chinese *wen* in order to translate compound words such as *tianwen* (astronomy), in Mongolian *Tngri-yin udq-a*. *Qorin nigetü tayilburi toli* 2013: 105. Other compound words with *udq-a* in Kuribayashi 2010: 546.

Identifying the crisis of the present

The concept of *wenming/udq-a gegegen* was linked to an idea of evolutionary development and was circulated in conjunction with a changed perception of the present and the past.⁵⁶ This section will discuss how the founders of the EMPH framed history as a story of rise and decline and advocated publishing as a means to make history useful for the cause of the Mongolian community. In early 20th century China, the understanding of history as a progressive, unilinear process was closely connected to the spread of ideas of Social Darwinism which turned progress, contest and the shared destiny of nations to core issues.⁵⁷ Part of this narrative was to conjure the notion that the nation was at a critical juncture where change and rapid action was necessary. The description of a crisis scenario for the present state of Mongols is a common feature of all documents related to the founding of the EMPH. While in the passage quoted above Buyanmanduqu sees his contemporaries “in the depth of darkness coming close to extinction”, Rolyarjab complains about their ignorance and backwardness. In the preface to the *Selected translations from the Liaozhai zhiyi*, Šümingy-a criticizes the Mongols’ apathy and indifference, whereas Kesingge diagnoses them as phlegmatic and dull in the preface to the *One hundred rules to achieve success*. The precariousness of the Mongols’ current situation was emphasized in order to make readers aware of the imperative need for national strengthening. The portrayal of the gloomy Mongolian present is contrasted with that of the golden past, the time of Chinggis Khan and Khubilai Khan. Buyanmanduqu stresses the global role Mongols played in the 13th century:

(71) When the Taizu⁵⁸ Chinggis Khan established his position, he brought his own people under his control and, by constantly proving his bravery with tireless energy and unfaltering courage, entirely subdued the countries of the Eastern and Western oceans and founded (72) five realms. After he had consolidated his military achievements in this way, he gave his attention to the promotion of literary activities, he used Turkic people to develop a script and had books on stars, planets and numbers composed by Arabic people, gathering Europeans like Marco Polo around him, he made thorough investigations and nothing escaped his attention; even though his beloved and great legacy is not yet fulfilled, there has been no [adequate] successor after the time of Shizu.⁵⁹ (Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924])⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Huang 2011: 2–3.

⁵⁷ Duara 1995: 20 & 33.

⁵⁸ Chinese dynastic title of Chinggis Khan (reigned 1206–1227).

⁵⁹ Chinese dynastic title of Khubilai Khan (reigned 1260–1294).

⁶⁰ (71) *tayizu činggis qayan manduyad . ayimay-ıyan darungyuyilan . čirman salamayayılaju bayatur iderkeg bolquı-yı kičiyegsen-ıyer . jegün barayun usun sang-un ulus bükün-i čöm dayayulju . ulus* (72)

While Buyanmanduqu focuses on Chinggis Khan in order to reconstruct the Mongols' past strength, for Rolyarjab, it is Khubilai Khan, who should be remembered in order to gather strength from the past:

(74) On closer examination, more than six hundred years have passed since our Mongolian holy Khubilai Sečen Khan for the first time assigned the Phagpa Khutugtu to create a new script. However, in this period only few works [were created] which enhanced and enriched the literature of our nationality; even though in the past, during the time of the Qing-empire, learned men were gathered several times by imperial decree and corrected and improved the Mongolian script, they were concerned only with Buddhist teachings; apart from their translations into Mongolian which concentrated heavily on books related to the veneration of the three [jewels], (75) there were no works which would spread the word about the rules and principles of holy men or that would [enhance] translations or promote the study of writings; for this reason, the mind of our Mongolian people became confused so that they consider themselves to know about the qualities of becoming a Buddha and being superior to other peoples; in addition, it is very rare that someone acquired enough knowledge to fully understand the rules and principles of the world and to comprehend the physical laws or became an expert of science. (Rolyarjab 1944 [1926])⁶¹

When Buyanmanduqu and Rolyarjab evoke the memory of Chinggis Khan and Khubilai Khan in order to collect funds for a Mongolian publishing house, they do not simply do so in order to instill their readers with a sense of community and emphasize their shared past. Rather, the two prominent rulers epitomize a cultural program, which needed to be re-activated in order to fill the concept of common ancestry with life. Both are associated with literary achievements, science and the employment of able personnel,⁶² thus making it likely that they would have

bayiyuluysan anu tabu . ene metü čerig-ün yabiy-a-yi nigente toytayayad . dakin bičig-iyar jasaqui-yi sanaju . türke-yin kümün-i kereglen bičig üsüg jokiyalyaju a la bai-yin kümün-iyer odon yaray ba toyan-u bičig toytayalyan . ewu jwu-yin kümün ma ke böww löww-yin jerge kümüd-i quriyan abčiraju . asayun niytalaqui-dur ese beledkegsen-ber ügei . qayiraqan yeke köröngge tegüskedüi bügetel-e . šizu-ača qoyisi darui kümün ügei boljuqui . Buyanmanduqu 1944 [1924]: 71–72.

61 (74) *kinabasu biden-ü mongyol-un boyda qubilai sečen qayan tan payba qutuytu-dur tusiyaju . tulyur sin-e üsüg jokiyalyaysan-ača inaysi . jiryuyan jayun ilegüü on boljuqui . yayča ene qoyorundu-dur . tus uysay-a-yin udq-a suruly-a-yi delgeregülin kögjigülügsen yabudal čögeken . uridu čing ulus-un üy-e-dür . kedüi uday-a daray-a jarliy-iyar olan merged-i qurayaju . mongyol üsüg-i ariyudqan jasaysan bolbaču . dang yayču burqan-u surtayun-i erkilen . yurban sang nom-un* (75) *ayimay terigüten-i yekede čiqula bolyan mongyolčilaju delgeregülügsen-eče busu . yerü boyda kümün-ü yosun-i badarayuluysan . nom bičig-i orčiyulun bičig-ün suruly-a-yi kögjigülügsen yabudal basaču ügei-yin tulada . teyin-kü biden-ü mongyol arad burqan bolqu udq-a činar-i medekü čidaqui anu . busud ulus-ača ilegüü kemen sedkil-iyen anduyulqu-ača busu . egenegte yirtinčü-yin yosun-dur nebteregsen . bodas-i tuyulqu medel-dür kürügülkü . erdem uqayan-dur mergejigsen anu masi čuqay bülüge . Rolyarjab 1944 [1926]: 74–75.*

62 As has been stressed by Atwood and Elverskog, early 20th century Mongolian intellectuals were inspired by the Tümed Mongolian author Injannasi (1837–1892) and his historical novel

advocated the founding of a Mongolian publishing house. Rolyarjab evokes the image of the 13th century as an age of erudition and openness and contrasts it with an age of decay. He identifies the Qing dynasty as the time when Buddhist scriptures were translated into Mongolian and for him, the production and spread of Buddhist literature accounts for Mongols' present weakness. By explaining the lack of scientific knowledge among his Mongolian contemporaries with the high status of Buddhism, he takes the same line as European travelers and scholars, who portray Mongolian Buddhism since the mid-19th century as having a stultifying effect on people and discouraging their wish for progress.⁶³ In accordance with many other intellectuals in early Republican China, Buyanmanduqu, Rolyarjab, Kesingge and others present the world as an arena, where biologically defined groups competed for limited resources. In this worldview, Mongols' self-sufficiency and retreat to Buddhism had been a kind of pardonable deficiency during the time of the Qing dynasty, but were no longer pardonable in the early 20th century when those with *udq-a gegegen*, "civilization" set the standard for all other peoples in an ever more competitive environment. While Rolyarjab and Kesingge locate *udq-a gegegen* in "Europe and America," Buyanmanduqu situates it among the "peoples of the Eastern and Western oceans." Therefore, when he emphasizes that Chinggis Khan once subdued the peoples of the "Eastern and Western oceans," this recollection of past strength was meaningful because it implied that Mongols once mastered those who were regarded as embodying *udq-a gegegen*, "civilization".

The output of the EMPH: Educational literature and learning from the west

The EMPH existed from 1927 until 1931 and roughly estimated published twenty-five books within these few years. The exact number remains unclear. Walther Heissig examined an advertisement of the EMPH from 1929, which included a list of twenty-three available titles.⁶⁴ In 2008, a list of twenty-two titles published by the EMPH was presented in Chinese translation by Temole, who was

Köke Sudur (Blue Chronicle) in their effort to characterize Chinggis Khan as a wise ruler embodying ethical principles like benevolence and filial piety. Atwood 2002: 89 & 980 & 983; Elverskog 2008: 101–103.

⁶³ Kollmar-Paulenz 2003: 276–280.

⁶⁴ Heissig 1950: 601–604. The EMPH edition of the *Subud Erike* was published in facsimile in Heissig 1965: 1–70.

able to inspect fifteen of them, but stated that the exact number of publications is yet to be determined.⁶⁵ According to Heissig and Temole, the publications of the EMPH include Mongolian language instruction, literature translated from Chinese, Buddhist instruction, ritual texts and prayers, didactic poetry and literature as well as history.

For Heissig, the great importance the publishers placed on didactic literature⁶⁶ and translations from Chinese⁶⁷ shows that they had received a conservative education and were adhering to traditional values and attitudes. There is an apparent incongruity between the calls for donations in which the founders of the EMPH distance themselves from existing institutions of knowledge production, and the titles published, which to a large part had been circulating in manuscript form for a long time. To explain this, one must consider that the decision for the publication of a certain text is always the result of calculating and can be influenced by a number of political, economic or technical factors, in addition to ambitions of the publishers and expectations of the audience. In the case of the EMPH, the publishing project was carried out and sponsored by a mixed group of people and the donors certainly also shaped the choice of publications. Moreover, as Buyanmanduqu and Asalatu relate in a posthumous biography of Kesingge, he was put under pressure by “the warlords” and was hindered from publishing translations such as *Heinu yu tian lu* (*Black Slave’s Cry to Heaven*, translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*), Liang Qichao’s *Bolan miwang ji* (*Record of the Fall of Poland*), Shen Wenjun’s *Guochi xiaoshi* (*A Short History of National Humiliations*) and others.⁶⁸ Even though it is not clear why these publishing plans failed, it seems that Kesingge followed the development of the print media market in China and took an active interest in the genre of “lost country histories”. This literature, which flourished in China since the first years of the 20th century, focused on unsuccessful attempts of peoples and states to cope with foreign attack and internal decline. It can be read as way to make sense of global interconnectedness, imperialism and the dynamics of the modern world.⁶⁹ For this reason, even though the majority of

⁶⁵ Temole 2008: 649–650. For the research of this article, the author was able to inspect seven publications of the EMPH preserved in libraries in Inner Mongolia.

⁶⁶ For example the *Oyon tülkigür kemekü bičig* (*Key to Wisdom*), *Jibdzundamba qutuytu-yin buyan-u suryal* (*Teachings of the Jibzundamba Khutugtu*), *Činggis boyda-yin sang* (*Offerings to Činggis Khan*), *Umaratu šambala-yin irüger* (*Prayer of northern Shambala*).

⁶⁷ For example translations of the *Sanzijing* (*Three character classic*), *Huangshi gong sanlüe* (*Three strategies of duke Yellowstone*), *Shengyu guangxun* (*Amplified Instructions on the Sacred Edict*), *Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu* (*The debate between Confucius and Xiang Tuo*), *Songyoju orčiyuluysan liyuu jai zhi yi* (*Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*).

⁶⁸ Buyanmandu/Asalatu 1985: 101.

⁶⁹ Karl 2002: 15.

published literature confirms Heissig's opinion on the conservative anchoring of the publishing house, in the context of this paper, it is important to note that the publishing program also picked up debates and educational trends taking place in China since the late 19th century.

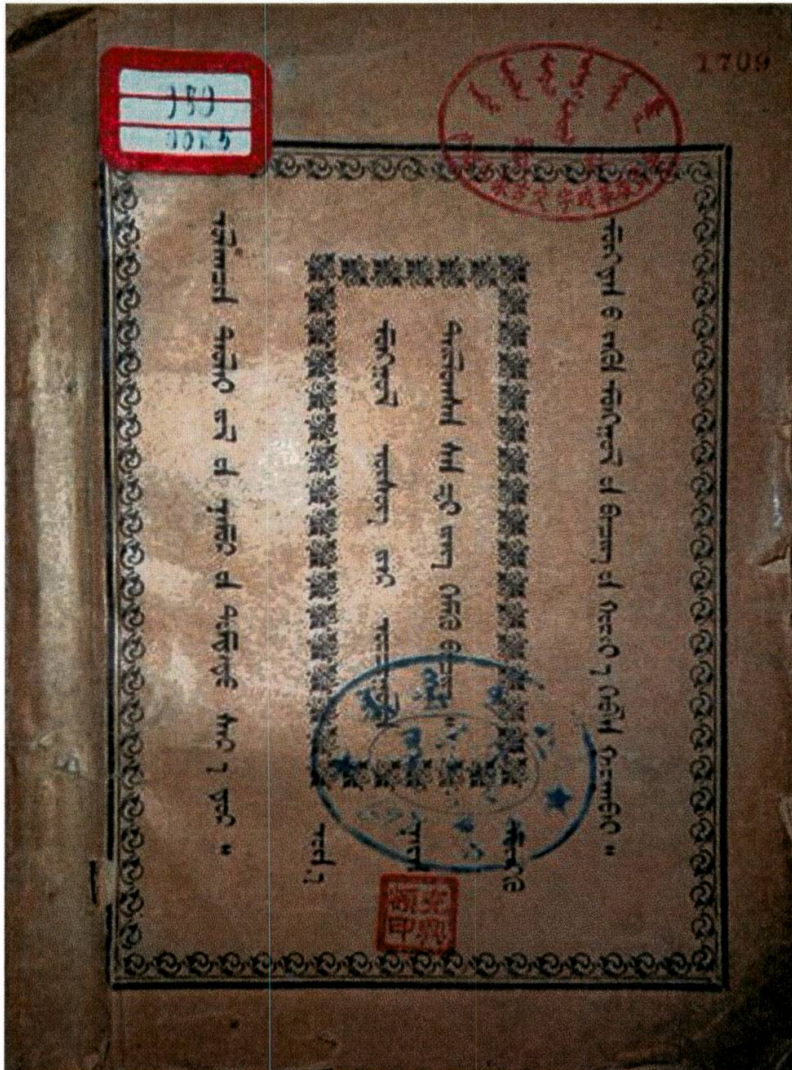


Figure 1: Front cover of an annotated Mongolian translation of the *Sanzijing* (*Three character classic*) published by the EMPH in 1927 under the title *Mongyol üsüg-iyer orčiyulun tayiluysan san zi jing kemekü bičig*. The book is preserved in the library of the Social Science Academy of Inner Mongolia in Höhhot. I am grateful for permission to use this image.

The Mongolian title is in the center, date of publication (female-red hare year) on the left, and the price on the bottom. The name of the publishing house is placed easily visible on the right side of the cover, contributing to its name recognition and branding. At the bottom edge is the seal of Kesingge, to whose library the book once belonged.

The publishers' concern to generate knowledge on their readers' position in a global context manifests itself particularly in two publications, a textbook and a collection of precepts.

The textbook, first published in 1927 and reprinted in 1929, was the most successful publication of the EMPH.⁷⁰ On the front page, the Mongolian title *Angqan suryaqu ulus-un udq-a* is translated into Chinese as *Chuxue guowen*, which suggests that it was modelled on Chinese *guowen* textbooks. While Chinese language readers from the late Qing period still required students to memorize passages which they did not understand, *guowen* textbooks published from 1904 onwards were inspired by Japanese models and introduced new ways of teaching with texts from daily life.⁷¹ The *Angqan suryaqu ulus-un udq-a* is modelled on late Qing dynasty Chinese textbooks in both its structure with lessons close to the everyday life of Mongolian children and its focus on science and geography.⁷² Accordingly, Mongolian language teaching went hand in hand with the introduction of neologisms such as *neyilegülkü ger-e* (contract, from Chinese *hetong*) or *neyite-yin küriyeleng* (public park, from Chinese *gongyuan*) and children were acquainted with unfamiliar concepts in social and political life. The publishers presented themselves as experts, who kept pace with recent developments in the world and were authorized to impart information on various global phenomena,⁷³ but their Mongolian cultural background allowed them to embed their lessons on geography, history or social life into the context of Mongolian pastoral life.

Another example for the Mukden publishers' intended role as cultural translators and arbiters of new knowledge is a collection of precepts published under the title *Fabiy-a бүтүгекү jayun toytayal* (*One hundred rules to achieve success*). It is the work of an unknown American author, which was translated into Mongolian from Chinese by Kesingge.⁷⁴ The small book contains one hundred precepts arranged under ten subheadings concerning issues like time management, knowledge, health and efficiency. Men, who are exclusively addressed in this publication, are divided in winners and losers and the author expands on

⁷⁰ A copy of the 1929 edition is preserved in the Social Science Academy of Inner Mongolia in Höhhot. Overview of content in Erdenitoytaqu 2010 [1981].

⁷¹ Kaske 2001: 295–308.

⁷² For Qing dynasty models of this textbook Temole 2008: 650.

⁷³ Culp 2007: 211.

⁷⁴ A copy of the book, which was published in 1928 under the Mongolian title *Fabiy-a бүтүгекү jayun toytayal*, is preserved in the Social Science Academy of Inner Mongolia in Höhhot. In the preface, Kesingge refers to the author as “Bü Lin Dün”, but unfortunately does not render the American author's correct name or the English title, nor does he give the Chinese translator's name or the Chinese title.

what the former will accomplish and how the latter will fail in one hundred situations. With its emphasis on industriousness, stressing the need for professional development and advocating the use of machines over manual labor it is typical for American success literature written between 1870 and 1910.⁷⁵ What probably appealed to Kesingge and made him choose this book for translation was the encouragement to adapt to changing times and the claim that success could be achieved through individual virtue. In the preface he explains:

(1v) Even though the robe of us Mongols may have become worn out, everybody in the world knows that we once had a great name. However, over the last centuries, [our] common people focus on the Buddhist religion in a wrong way and as they became hindered and oppressed by the deception of the Qing, they no longer let the light of their ancestors shine or contribute to the development of their people (*ayimay-iyān*), but instead they carelessly drop and abandon both their work and their personal business; as their mental capacity is weakening, they are getting phlegmatic and enjoy being idle (2r) and they do not care at all that they themselves and their ethnic group (*ayimay uysay-a-yuyan*) are declining and degenerating and come close to suffering extinction. Isn't this a most unbearable, lamentable, shameful and disgusting state of affairs? [...] On closer examination, this writing of *Bülindün* is innovative, concise, plausible and clear and excellently suitable for use in practice; even though there are a few points which do not fit with our habits, (2v) we will certainly benefit if we make adjustments and modifications, examine things and try hard. [...] I translated [this book] into Mongolian [because] I honestly believe that it [opens up] a great opportunity if [our] common people give their best effort just as Americans and Chinese [do].⁷⁶

Kesingge evokes the scenario of Mongolian weakness in order to mobilize underlying resources. According to him, strength could be gathered from the fame Mongols had during the time of the Mongolian empire and from unmasking

⁷⁵ Hilkey 1997: 9 & 15, who identifies them as easy-to-duplicate bestsellers, produced by the subscription book industry and marketed by travelling salesmen. "But more often than not success manuals were the work of relatively unknown ministers and educators, many of whose names do not appear in biographical dictionaries of authors, educators, and divines and whose books are not listed in encyclopedias of literature." Hilkey 1997: 55–56.

⁷⁶ (1v) *man-u mongyol-un debel mayu bolbaču deged neretei aysan-i . delekei toyatan ken üli medemüi . yayča oyiraki kedün jayun on-ača inaysi . olan bügüdeger burqan-u šasin-i buruyu-bar onuju . čing-ün meke-dür čidürlegden daruydaysayar . deged-iyen gereltügöljü ayimay-iyān kögjigülküi-yi bayituyai . qarin ajil üiles amini kereg-iyen ču qasi yasi tayaydan orkiju . jönögsin noyirmoylaju jalqayuran jiryaju .* (2r) *bayin bayiysayar bey-e kiged ayimay uysay-a-yuyan bayuran dorodaju sönön mökökü jobalang-dur kürküi-yi ču siyud üli qayiyurqui-dur kürčüküi . ene oyo tačiyadaltai бүтөлтөй ибелжөлтөй қасиралтай керег бусу уу . [...] kinabasu bo lin dön-ü ene bičig sin-e niyta dököm güiken . keregleküi-dür masi onobčitai . man-u jang ayali-luy-a neyilelčekü yajar qay-a* (2v) *bui bolbaču . qubisqan ulariyulju kinan čirmaybasu tusa-yi olqu anu mayad . [...] mongyolčilaysan eregeljelge masi ünenči . olan bügüdeger amirig ba kitad-un metü čirmaybasu yekel-e jabsiyan bolai:* Kesingge 1928: 1v–2v.

Buddhism and the loyalty to the Qing dynasty as factors responsible for Mongols' weakness. Kesingge's assessment is markedly backward-looking and stands in contrast with more radical positions among Inner Mongolian intellectuals of the time, who identified "foreign and domestic reactionaries" as the reason for the present crisis.⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that among the peoples Kesingge considered to be more advanced and apt to serve as models, were not only Americans but also Chinese. By suggesting that for Mongols within Republican China, the Chinese way of life was a source of progress, he seems to take Chinese cultural hegemony for granted. However, this statement was made in the preface of a book which was translated into Mongolian via Chinese and in this context can be read as an acknowledgement of the intermediary position of Chinese intellectuals for Mongolian readers interested in global issues. Bulag argues that before 1949 frontier minorities had two options to resist to warlord domination: Either they looked outside China for support to national liberation or they trusted in the modernizing power of the Chinese state.⁷⁸ Kesingge's approach is different in several ways. Firstly, his criticism concerns faults and deficiencies on the Mongolian side and is not aimed at political conditions. Congruently, his focus is on strengthening the individual character and personality, a development which, according to his logic, will inevitably lead to an ethnic strengthening. In his attempt to utilize resources inside and outside the Chinese Republic, he acknowledges that in the process of becoming modern, Chinese were ahead of Mongols and thus could serve as models to learn from. However, they were not the only ones and, as his translation of Western literature shows, he was driven by the idea that Mongols should develop competences of their own by acquiring knowledge from many different sources.

Conclusion

In the programmatic statements of the founders of the EMPH, the frequent use of words from the semantic field of awakening and progress is striking, such as *čirmayiqu* "to make an effort", *tengkeregülkü* "to recover strength", *kөгjigүлкү* "to develop", *negegekү* "to open up", *kүmүjigүлкү* "to bring up", *kičiyekү* "to exert oneself" et al. This vocabulary was used both with regard to book production (or consumption) and the raising of a national consciousness. Thus, the creation of a reading public went hand in hand with the construction of Mongols as an

⁷⁷ Atwood 2002: 467–468.

⁷⁸ Bulag 2002: 58.

“imagined community.”⁷⁹ However, the founders of the EMPH had to reconcile the narrative of Mongolian nation building (or rather “nationality building”) with their affirmation of Mongols being part of the family of five nationalities which make up Republican China.

For this reason, in a kind of double strategy, they argued that Mongolian publishing was a means to contribute to the well-being of the Republic, while at the same time presenting it as a remedy to counteract the weak position of Mongols within the Republic. Sun Yat-sen’s concept of “five nationalities as one family” was invoked both in order to encourage Mongols to contribute their share to the joint project of the Republic and to make them aware of their impending marginalization. Even though the publishers committed themselves to the Republic, they felt endangered by its internal rivalry.

For the members of the Mukden circle, widening their countrymen’s range of knowledge opened up new perspectives for their own career. Commercial publishing and the educational field provided opportunities for them to propagate new ideas and establish themselves as cultural authorities at the same time. By making use of new techniques of printing, the initiators of the EMPH set their project apart from the institutions which had set the agenda in Mongolian book production so far. In order to expand audience and promote name recognition, the name of the publishing house was placed in a prominent place (Figure 1). The best-selling publication of the EMPH was a textbook and its wide distribution indicates the Mukden group’s efforts to counterbalance the dominance of Buddhist monastic education. However, even though in their writings the founders of the EMPH take a critical stance on the impact of Buddhism on Mongolian history, the spectrum of published literature also includes Buddhist instruction. The heterogeneity of the EMPH’s publications should be understood in the context of its experimental character, the divergent views of its founding members, and its dependence on donations and consumer acceptance. There is no information on political or financial constraints which very likely also shaped the choice of publications. The most exceptional publication, a Mongolian translation of American self-help literature published in 1928, shows that Kesingge, who had translated the book from Chinese, was eager to popularize foreign literature in Mongolian. The members of the Mukden circle made use of the existing Mongolian vocabulary in order to reconfigure unfamiliar ideas and concepts, which they had encountered in Chinese translations. Even though not all lexical innovations they suggested are commonly used in current language, they are significant because they show that the encounter with new ideas and visions of the world was accompanied by intra-Mongolian debates and a critical consideration of the position of Mongols in a globalized world.

79 Anderson 2016 [1983]: 133–134.

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