

Mobility and Immobility of Values: Understanding Knowledge as Salvation

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Abstract

“Mobility and Immobility of Values: Understanding Knowledge as Salvation” explores how the value of salvific knowledge traverses and shifts between different constellations of narrative time, space, political/religious agenda and a variety of human (political) relations. The author starts out with her interlocutors’ descriptions of knowledge as transformative in a moral and economic sense and links these to the more recent popularity of Mongolian self-help literature. In Mongolia, this genre draws on a framework of compassion, self-love and salvific knowledge. The article discusses the entanglement of self-help ideas of a US-Christian origin with historically localized Mongolian Buddhist narratives of self-cultivation and of becoming a bodhisattva. The controversy over moral guidance through conceptions of the future versus the past has had to be navigated carefully by different political agendas throughout time, for specific political projects and has had to be aligned with pre-existing ideological frameworks. These shifts in perspectives on knowledge are mirrored in viewing them as mobile or immobile.

The way knowledge is or has been perceived as salvific comprises shifts and continuities, which can also be looked at from the vantage point of mobility and immobilities. Mobility and immobility is not only intended to describe the conceptual traverse and shifts through time and locale, but also the social mobility and immobility that these shifts entailed. I will limit myself to the discussion of some references to knowledge, which have come up in conversations with my interlocutors and explore these over space and time.

One aspect which seemed to be apposite in references to knowledge was the way in which my interlocutors were convinced that education and profession had to be “mastered.” A sixty-year-old Democratic Party member said:

We had the most traditions [during socialist times]. They were the most prolific – customs used to be the most beautiful. In this day and age people say they are lost somewhat. However, even if that is so, it will become beautiful [in the future] we try to make them understood. It will be tremendously beautiful. Everything will be understood, how the beautiful internet came, beautiful education will be mastered [*saikhan bolovsrol ezemshij*], beautiful school, beautiful reconstruction, we have to make it understood now, we understand it.¹

¹ Emee, “Mastering Education,” interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity, *unpublished interview*. Ulaanbaatar, November 9, 2013).

In her account she focusses on “mastering knowledge” within the framework of a beautiful future and past customs. In her account it is a prospect. Delgerzaya, woman in her 40s, highlighted “mastering” one’s profession as related to both value in the sense of dignity *üne tsene*, but also social status.

Generally, to master your profession, when you don’t have the chance to master or have not mastered your professional labor, value becomes scarce. People themselves have to learn to respect themselves and one another, right? They have to explain their own thought, but if a person can take responsibility for their own deeds, they will attain more value. Nowadays people will attain more intellect, education and value than others.²

Her account contains the insight, that some people don’t have the chance and therefore lack “value,” while on the other hand referring to the capability to bear responsibility for one’s actions. Inherent seems to be a negotiation between the not only neoliberal, but also Buddhist understanding of self-determination and the limitations operating on it.

Another woman, whom I will call Soyolmaa, who had experienced social mobility through marriage, and had come from a previously poverty-stricken background, portrayed the quest for knowledge as a form of social capital:

How we lived didn’t seem very important to me, but lately I have started to think that society has vanished, it has changed, one has to work, educate and live like the others, right? Even if one has mastered one’s education it doesn’t become obvious what kind of (partial/private) person this person has become. Yes, when you are born and grow up – I think I have come to do things. [...] To say it clearly, when you have set and reached your own goal, having reached your goal you continue, right? Thus, that life has not become [what you thought it would be]. It is not that life, it is not just me, the persons who had to reach the goal and [...] at last having reached it parallel to one another, holding on to it one shouldn’t lose oneself and one’s humanity.

Then one loses [the sense of] living, [...], now precisely money will become my goal, now I will graduate from a great school and learn many languages people will respect me, that makes you dependent on others, right? It has come to the degree where how a stranger speaks to me is dependent on my outer appearance. This seems very strange to me, right? Because other people are already able to do it, I think I should also be able to do it. I have only come to think like this recently; at first, I was far removed from everything, as a person from the socialist era I am starting to despise money very much. I don’t value money and in not valuing it I wish the environment, also the outer environment to become pleasant, tidy, also that my children don’t lack anything, and when I think I don’t want my children to lack anything, then inside myself I have a conflict, right?³

² Delgerzaya. “Mastering your Profession,” interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity, *unpublished interview*. Ulaanbaatar, March 19, 2014.

³ Soyolmaa, “Mastering Education,” interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity, *unpublished interview*. Ulaanbaatar, July 13, 2014.

The examples show how mastering knowledge is connected to knowledge as an investment in the future both in the sense of (social) capital and self-cultivation. In the sense of self-cultivation, it can also embody a moral choice. Hence, it may take the shape of a confluence of more economic preoccupations and Buddhist related notions of “karma” – the scholar on Buddhist Ethics Damien Keown writes:

According to Buddhism, human beings have free will, and in the exercise of free choice they engage in self-determination. In a very real sense, individuals create themselves through their moral choices. By freely and repeatedly choosing certain sorts of things, individuals shape their characters, and through their characters their futures.⁴

Hence, acquisition of knowledge becomes transformative in both a moral and economic sense. These associations of mastering knowledge, while not solely neoliberal, emphasize “personal” *khuvin* (also: private, partial) responsibility and capability.

A cursory review over socialist literature on education and the term of *ezemshikh* seems to suggest that these ideas of mastering knowledge are not new, however, moral guidance was more accentuated in the recent past.

The over estimation of knowledge is the cause of a loss of morality and it will poison education severely. However, if the goodness/aesthetics of a person has been improved, the immoral person, who values knowledge less and becomes poisoned to a great amount will not be able to uphold and master any kind of knowledge. [...] Because humans possess consciousness, their character, work and deeds – propaganda and definite directions are all of quality. Whatever a person does, he/she first needs to abstract and then it becomes practical work. The requirement to abstract will directly guide knowledge, interest, desires grounded in the conscious objective and direct the character traits of people.⁵

Today “mastering knowledge/education” participates in narratives on “rights” in particular human and children’s rights on the one hand. At the same time these rights to education are seen as beneficial for individuals to master their lives, appropriate or conquer private goods being self-dependent and sustainable, that is different practices to secure one’s fortune. The right to knowledge encompasses both progressive and reversive⁶ knowledge/education. An internet platform run by the Mongolian government and specifically by the Chairman of the Democratic party S. Erdene proposed to collect citizen’s suggestions on children’s rights (to no avail). It read:

⁴ Damien Keown, *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

⁵ Nyamaa, A. *Shinjlekh Ukhaani Kommunizmin Onol Ekhlen Suraltsakh Bichig*, ed. L. Bat-Ochir and S. Purev, (Ulaanbaatar: Ulsin Khevreliin Gazar, 1972), 279–281.

⁶ Christopher Atwood, “Explaining Rituals and Writing History: Tactics Against The Intermediate Class,” in *Representing Power in Ancient Inner Asia: Legitimacy, Transmission and the Sacred*, ed. Gregory Delaplace, Isabelle Charleux, Roberte Hamayon and Scott Pearce. (Bellingham: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 2010), 95–129.

Children's Right to education/development

6.1. Children have the right to master elementary education free of cost.

6.2. Children have the right to master their mother language, script, customs, and the inherited historical and cultural traditions.⁷

As the scholar Louiza Odysseos has observed, there is a tacit link between human rights and (neo)liberal governments' agenda regarding the rule of maximum economy "i.e. achieving maximum ends with cost-effective and minimal action." This rule also includes "[...] claims to assess government action in strictly economic and market terms."⁸

The enshrining of human rights into positive law (performative ontogenesis) and the creation and management of a human rights legal framework (structural ontogenesis) ensure that responsibility for making claims of social discontent and for social change rests with individuals.⁹

She goes on to say that "they remain abstractions in the absence of societal change [...]."¹⁰

Odysseos argues that this language of rights displaces earlier linguistic and action horizons. To put Mongolian experience in her words:¹¹ more socialist claims to redistribution of land [use] and wealth, pastoral justice and radical political reform are supplanted by the fight for rights of cultural self-determination – the rights to exist as cultural Mongolians. This emphasis on "culture" can also be seen in the orientation towards history and the national identity it hopes to create.

This discussion of rights and freedom was criticized by many of my interlocutors for having a negative impact on the consciousness of a child and leading to carelessness and chaos. For them, it was the embodiment of a loss of (senior) guidance.

Lately, during what they called globalism, the cities are becoming overly inhabited because the villagers have become unable to make decisions. Watching TV, surfing the Internet all these things having flooded in, every person has obtained equal rights, and people are also using this in an exceedingly wrong way.

Now, Elisa, it they have become like this – children come in here and say father, you shouldn't do this, mother you shouldn't this, we let [our daughter] because if we excluded [her] they would say we infringed her right. This right will affect the children negatively. When we were small and did something wrong, we would receive a spanking. This is what I needed; a child will understand that this happens when I do that. If I didn't do my work correctly, having brought together the cows, uniting them with their

⁷ Erdene, S., "Khüükhed Khamgallin Tukhai Khuuli." VIP 76 Very Important Person, accessed April 19, 2019, <http://vip76.mn/law/project/59>.

⁸ Louiza Odysseos, "Human Rights, Liberal Ontogenesis and Freedom Producing a Subject for Neoliberalism?" *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* no. 38, 3 (2010): 753.

⁹ Odysseos, "Human Rights," 763.

¹⁰ Odysseos, "Human Rights," 764.

¹¹ Odysseos, "Human Rights," 763.

calves and falling asleep or playing I would receive some you know what from my dad. You can hear with your ear and you taste through the hand. This is also beneficial to the children in return. Now if you did so it would be forbidden, it is a person's equal right. Nowadays a person may not shout at their own and strange children. This is also in a way correct, but it should also not be exaggerated.

Now if I shout at my child, you will scold me, it has almost gotten to the degree where you'd take me to court for that. I occasionally hear things like that when watching TV. Now it is correct that children's conscience and a person's own conscience should receive proper education. When I was little and played carelessly in front of my parents and their friends and I did something wrong, my mother's friend would scold me and say, go back, you go! If it got dark here and I was playing they would say 'go home'! If the cows and animals were over there, they would say – why are you here? Run, hurry up! Now people don't do this anymore, it's none of your business? Yes, it's none of your business. [...] These are all examples; it also pertains a bit to the cities. More and more people are drawn in to settle here. I wouldn't have come if it had been for myself. Sarnai was that small and had to go to school and needed to become knowledgeable. There was no kindergarten. Was there a hospital when you were ill? These were such bad conditions, so we came here and stayed [in the city].¹²

What this man in his sixties also negotiates is that knowledge is not a quality in itself; it needs to be subjected to and transmitted by a senior teacher, who directs it morally and shapes the consciousness of a child. The reference to *uqamsar* “consciousness” seems to be that of an understanding which supervises how knowledge is embodied and forms the character of a person. It is located both within Buddhist and socialist conceptions of how morality and character are formed. This is its moral aspect. However, it becomes evident that this morality is also shaped by governmental agendas, which this man sees as being in discord with the educational paradigm he holds. And yet it is not quite as straight forward as that. Caroline Humphrey had noted as early as 2002 that there was a sense of moral uncertainty prevailing that she witnessed in the 1980s:

The issue for my respondents, however, was not how much was inherited but the perception that modern city life had brought about a decline in filial respect and the emergence of individualist attitudes. For religious people these were both indices of the calamitous time' (*tsöviin tsag*) in which we live. The *tsöviin tsag* is a Buddhist concept, the declining era of ever-increasing impurity of minds before the emergence of the next Buddha, the Maitreya.¹³

¹² Togoonyam, “Children's Rights,” interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity, *unpublished interview*. Ulaanbaatar, April 2, 2014.

¹³ Caroline Humphrey, “Rituals of Death as a Context for Understanding Personal Property in Socialist Mongolia.” *Royal Anthropological Institute* no. 8 (2002): 73.

This seems to point then to more long-term narratives perpetuated beyond specific political agendas. And moral guidance is prescribed ex-post facto to the socialist past.

Space is also evaluated on the basis of and imbued by notions of time and knowledge. Political agendas play a role here. The countryside is perceived as the locale for historically transmitted customs and hence participates in a reified notion of “culture,” and the reverence for historical knowledge. Something, which Humphrey has called “the moral authority of the past”¹⁴ while knowledge in the city is cast in civilizational and progressive terms as what I would call the “moral superiority of the future.” Salvific knowledge of both is not exclusive, for reversive knowledge projects the past into a better future. Consider this teenager’s understanding of the countryside:

Generally, I think the most important is the Secret History, there are movies about it. Mongolians didn’t make the movies about Chinggis Khaan themselves, but they are very important and they truly did a good job, in them you can see exactly what this period was like. And then there are movies about e.g. this old beautiful [tale] of the intelligent Queen Mandukhai and so, right? But there are many movies, and they generally played an important role. And what else is there? Of course, there is the use of the Mongolian *ger* [Mongolian felt tent], but the city is of course not like this, when you go and see the country side, it is exactly like in the Mongolian old period? In the country side you can see this trait directly.¹⁵

The embodiment of progressive/reversive knowledge by the rural-urban divide is also a product of the Khrushchev era, in which Mongolian scholars were engaged in a movement to legitimize Mongolian history as high culture by studying customs of the rural population as I have shown elsewhere.¹⁶ However, it is also important to note that publications of the socialist era drew on historical reverence in a way. Notions of progress were promoted in various guises of “history” such as books called *The History of the Mongolian People’s Republic* or *The History of the Revolutionary Party*, arguably short histories. A variety of Mongolian short stories, culminated thematically in the promotion of secular scientific knowledge which guided a way out of the perceived “backwardness” of a class system and into an equal society, in which Mongolia looked up to their “older brother” (Russia) as role model. This type of progressive knowledge had to be encouraged and legitimized by usually old male characters of the story.

It was Ines Stolpe who first mentioned the appropriation of religious Buddhist terms for knowledge *gegeerel* “enlightenment” for socialist ideals of knowledge,

¹⁴ Caroline Humphrey, “The Moral Authority of the Past in Post-Socialist Mongolia.” *Religion, State and Society* no. 20,3,4 (1992): 375–389.

¹⁵ Oyutan, “The Secret History of the Mongols,” interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity. Ulaanbaatar, November 3, 2013.

¹⁶ Elisa Kohl-Garrity, “Contextualising Global Processes in Negotiating the ‘Custom of Respect’ in Ulaanbaatar,” in *Mongolian Responses to Globalisation Processes*, ed. Ines Stolpe, Judith Nordby and Ulrike Gonzales. (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2017), 105–128.

which contributed to their legitimacy and facilitated the transformation of one notion of knowledge to another.¹⁷ I would argue it was also the salvific aspect of knowledge which was retained, only, with a shift in political valuation of time. It was no longer the ancestral, religious genealogy, which transferred knowledge and experience and which “preserved” order or was the basis for informing the future. Progressive secular knowledge, which emphasized novelty, was now deemed salvific. A kind of reverence for the future, however was not novel either as the bodhisattva Maitreya (maidar) transported this sense of enlightenment into the future.¹⁸

Let me give an example of how the present salvific quest for knowledge might build on Buddhist notions of salvific knowledge and moral guidance. Just as historiographical literature has been immensely popular in the wake of the post socialist era, so have self-help books stacked shelves in bookstores in recent times. The translation of Samuel Smile’s *Self-Help* from Japanese, was particularly encouraged by a preface of the then president Bagabandi in 2001. The translation of self-help literature into Mongolian is no novelty as Dorothea Heuschert-Laage has shown for the nineteenth-century Qing dynasty.¹⁹ The self-help literature then as today seems to have been mediated first by a translation into Japanese.²⁰ Currently, this quest for salvific knowledge seems to be particularly gendered in that it is primarily directed at female consumers. Parallel to that there is an idea of the “self-made man” projected on to Chinggis Khaan with the abilities to ruggedly appropriate, successfully master and manage, excel and demonstrate (physical/mental) strength and independence. These associations complement the self-help discourse in speaking to the Mongolian businessman as the new Chinggis Khaan, portrayed in a neoliberal fashion.

Heidi-Marie Rimke noted about the political impact of self-help:

The self-help genre presents individual ‘development’ and ‘personal growth’ as a free moral and ethical decision and as a ‘natural’ undertaking embraced by well-meaning citizens. [...] the appropriation and application of self-help psychological discourses holds a key position in advanced liberal democratic society, and [...] these discourses and technologies contribute to the invention and scripting of selves – citizens who are psychologically ‘healthy’ inasmuch as they are governable, predictable,

¹⁷ Stolpe, Ines, “Schule versus Nomadismus? Interdependenzen von Bildung und Migration in der modernen Mongolei” (PhD dissertation, Humboldt-University, 2008), 68.

¹⁸ Ines Stolpe, “Mongolia’s Golden Ages: A Brisk Gallop through Changing Respresentations,” *Asien The German Journal on Contemporary Asia* 129 (2013): 143.

¹⁹ Heuschert-Laage, Dorothea, “Enlightenment in the Name of Chinggis Khan: The Founding of the Eastern Mongolian Publishing House in Mukden 1926/27.” *Asiatische Studien/ Études Asiatiques* 73/4 (2019), 683–711.

²⁰ See also Xia Xiaohong for an example of self-help literature during the late Qing dynasty and its translation into Chinese via Japanese. Xia Xiaohong, “Western Heroines in Late Qing Women’s Journals: Meiji-Era Writings on ‘Women’s Self-Help’ in China,” in *Women and the Periodical Press in China’s Long Twentieth Century: A Space of Their Own?*, ed. Michel Hockx, Joan Judge and Barbara Mittler. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 236–254.

calculable, classifiable, self-conscious, responsible, self-regulating and self-determined. Constructed and acted upon as such, individuals are rendered entirely responsible for their failures as well as their successes, their despair as well as their happiness. Indeed, this is the social subject of a liberal governance.²¹

The popularity of self-help books in Mongolia as well as the popularity of network marketing like Herbalife (referring to the consumer's "independence" and "self-reliance" once again) and Oriflame obviously does not feed on Calvinist inspired notions of success as sign of having been chosen by God, as they have in the US. Rather, they draw on Buddhist notions of self-cultivation and enlightenment, paired with notions of fortune as an expression of the grace of divine abundance. The latter has its legacy in governmental agendas of the Qing dynasty²² as a succession of a different grace discourse from the Yuan dynasty and more general present-day spiritual practices.²³ These ideas of enlightenment and fortune lead to the more general notion that one may improve morally and thereby "progress" through the acquisition of knowledge. Consider this young monk's explanation of the Buddhist process of knowledge acquisition.

When you speak about the impact [of Buddhist religion], a person has to instruct the Buddhist religion, teachings and doctrine from within. A person will search for enlightenment from within themselves. [...] They think in this way they want to further develop their knowledge, education, respect, culture and arts. If you don't think in this way you can't just embody them like this.²⁴

Self-help books, in particular those targeting women have capitalized on the notion of "loving yourself." They speak to salvific knowledge in that they seem to provide information and show how to invest in oneself to improve one's personal fortune. Companies such as Monos and Nivea and a range of others have created sales in Ulaanbaatar on the basis of "loving yourself." These enterprises then build on notions of (self-) enlightenment and investment and are primarily occupied with what Michel Foucault called moral subjectivation "setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object."²⁵ A manager at a cosmetic company in Ulaanbaatar poured a dietary product into her cup and explained:

²¹ Rimke, Heidi-Marie, "Governing Citizens through Self-help Literature" *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2000): 63.

²² Atwood, Christopher, "Worshipping Grace: The Language of Loyalty in Qing Mongolia," *Late Imperial China* 21,2 (2000): 86–139.

²³ Empson, Rebecca, *Harnessing Fortune: Personhood, Memory and Place in Mongolia*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁴ Lam, "Enlightenment," interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity, *unpublished interview*. Ulaanbaatar, June 14, 2014.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Vol 2, *The Use of Pleasure*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 29.

I am very zealous when it comes to work [...] my parents said: my child when you work ...‘add salt until it dissolves, work until you are finished’ do your work very well! Your mind will reflect in your work and you will receive a beautiful reply. [...] Precisely in being so zealous in my work I abandoned my family, my life and everything. [...] Why I did this? Because I have a very good salary and improved my life, I really worked zealously to perform my work truly. One day, looking back on my family I realized [...] I had changed into a bit of a careless woman. After the birth of my son [...] I looked into the mirror ‘it was you yourself who made yourself become bad, and fat, you shouldn’t eat that much and at last [I realized] I have to love myself first, if you do, then you respect [yourself], a person who hasn’t experienced love themselves cannot love/be compassionate to another. [...] I paid little attention to my husband because I am exactly like a man, I ascended everything myself.²⁶

Another opinion on “loving yourself” voiced by the blogger Baigalmaa on sugar.mn was that “self-love” had a positive impact on one’s karma – “A person can charge up his energy through self-love, which directs his life and environment”²⁷. It is important to note that the way self-love is depicted is as something one has to learn. Self-love is also directly related to fortune in that a lack of “energy” i.e. tiredness literally means “poverty.” Outer appearance, which is a sign of “self-love” becomes crucial as it reflects the state of energy a person has. This outer appearance in turn is often referred to as “cultivation” *soyoltoi* and also comments on a person’s education in a progressive sense (and carries a likewise socialist ideal of cultivation until today).

Interestingly, too “loving kindness,” which is not distinguished lexically from “love” *khair* has a longer historical governmental agenda it seems – and with it salvific knowledge. The common phrase of *kesig qairlaqu* became popular to extract goods from superiors particularly during the end of the Qing dynasty in times of poverty; however, it had been primarily used by the Qing emperor, who compassionately and lovingly awarded grace. I carefully propose that the use of the term *qairlaqu* referring to the quality of loving kindness may be one of the terms used to refer to the nature of bodhisattvahood²⁸. It was definitely part of a “language of patronage” as Heuschert-Laage or “tutelage” as Di Cosmo called it. Moreover, it was no doubt also associated with filial piety as Atwood²⁹ seems to suggest. Farquhar’s seminal work

²⁶ Shürentsetseg, “Love Yourself,” interview by Elisa Kohl-Garrity, *unpublished interview*. Ulaanbaatar, July 26, 2014.

²⁷ Baigalmaa, “Ööriigöö Khairlakh Surakh ni, ‘Karma’-g Öörchildög,” *last modified February 12, 2017* <https://sugar.mn/view/oriyg-khayrlazh-surakh-n-karma-g-rchildg>.

²⁸ Thanks goes to Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz for pointing out that *nigülesküi* translates into “compassion” and *asaraqui/qayiralaqui* denotes “loving kindness” in Classical Mongolian Buddhist texts. De Rachewiltz (2013, 102) differentiates the meanings of “favor, grace” from “to love, feel pity, begrudge” and argues for a pre-classical *qaira-* (*qayira-*) having later been replaced by *qairala-* (*qayirala-*). General dictionaries like that of Hans-Peter Vietze (2006) or Ferdinand Lessing (1960) feature a more general translation including love, grace, mercy and compassion.

²⁹ Atwood, “Worshipping Grace,” 105.

identified the Qing emperor as bodhisattva,³⁰ in specific the bodhisattva Manjusri. Elverskog³¹ and Kollmar-Paulenz³² both identify compassion as the main trait or motivation for a bodhisattva. The bodhisattva is an enlightened being, which has left the cycle of rebirths. He becomes a moral guide. In this sense the knowledge he holds is salvific. We may then also discern a crucial political master-disciple relation not only through the “two orders” *khoyer yos* of worldly ruler and spiritual master or preceptor-officiant and donor relationship³³, but also in this emperor as bodhisattva relation vis à vis his subjects. Moreover, as Kollmar-Paulenz³⁴ has shown there is a politico-spacial dimension to the master-disciple relation: Tibet with the Dalai Lama as emanation of Avalokitesvara and Mongolia with Chinggis as emanation of Vajrapani and the Russian Tsar as emanation of the bodhisattva White Tara, were constructions of a political order in the nineteenth century. This is one way of using “salvific knowledge” in political relations. Let me take a leap in time.

Obviously, the socialist government did not rely on the notion of a compassionate bodhisattva ruler. The strong promotion of salvific knowledge remained – even if its reference to history coated the promotion of progress. The political master-disciple relation also remained crucial – it was Lenin *bagsh* [teacher], who (ideally) became the object of reverence and guidance. Conceptually (rather than factually), it was the people, who ruled. However, they were morally and conceptually guided – instructions and teaching came from the party:

The historically significant resolution by the Central Committee of the MPR should be realized and fulfilled. It is always important to take measures to protect socialist property, to improve and responsibly supervise the process of basic registration. Regarding the setting of examples, the leading role of party members has to be further enhanced and communicated during the party meetings and punitive measures introduced. To increase, strengthen, love and protect socialist property the party’s ideology, propaganda and the people’s public activities have to be implemented stronger and one should direct one’s attention mainly to the communist education of workers.³⁵

³⁰ David Farquhar, “Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch’ing Empire,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no.1 (1978): 5–34.

³¹ Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism, And the State in Late Imperial China*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 186.

³² Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, “Zwischen Machtpolitik und unermesslichem Mitgefühl: Die Dalai Lamas.” In *Tibetischer Buddhismus im Westen*. <https://info-buddhismus.de/Dalai-Lamas-zwischen-Machtpolitik-Mitgefuehl.html> (accessed April 1st, 2019), 3.

³³ David Seyfort Ruegg, “Mchod yon, yon mchod and mchod gnas/yon gnas: On the Historiography and Semantics of a Tibetan Religio-social and Religio-political Concept,” in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Géza on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkeller. (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1991), 448.

³⁴ Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, “Systematically Ordering the World: The Encounter of Buriyat-Mongolian, Tibetan and Russian Knowledge Cultures in the 19th Century,” *Etudes de Lettres* no. 296,2,3(2014): 123–146.

³⁵ Jamiyan, J., “Sotsialist Ömchiig Khairlan Khamgaalakh Zorilt. [Goal to (Love and) Protect Socialist Property],” *Namin Amidral* no. 3, (1967): 15–16.

Affectionate rhetoric, which Dorothea Heuschert-Laage identifies as “language of patronage”³⁶ and Nicola Di Cosmo associates with “tutelage”³⁷ during the Qing dynasty was not precisely absent. “Love” or “compassion” was now rendered by the citizens of the USSR to the Mongolian citizens.³⁸ It pertained among others to socialist property possibly reminiscent of the way Qing (and the Bogd Khan who adopted this rhetoric) “shares” had been compassionately bestowed/allotted. However, I propose that the pair word “love and protect” is not really understood in this manner and is just rendered nowadays as a composite with the primary meaning of “protect.” During the Qing dynasty, divine abundance was distributed by the shares the Qing emperor bestowed as grace, who was chosen Tngri (eternal heaven) as Elverskog³⁹ elaborated. Socialist property on the other hand now had to be “loved and protected” by the people, who in turn had to be instructed by the party.

The value of salvific knowledge traverses and shifts between different constellations of narrative time, space, political/religious agenda and a variety of human (political) relations. To what degree we see mobility or rather immobility at work here will also be determined by our theoretical stance and to what extent we favor such rather broad trajectories of comparison. The questions we ask are also shaped by our intellectual history, such as the old debate between Heraclitus and Parmenides, as David Graeber⁴⁰ has indicated for value. “Heraclitus saw the apparent fixity of objects of ordinary perception as largely an illusion; their ultimate reality was one of constant flux and trans-formation.” He goes on to explain how Parmenides “[...] held that it was change that was illusion. For objects to be comprehensible, they must exist to some degree outside of time and change. There is a level of reality, perhaps one that we humans can never fully perceive, at which forms are fixed and perfect.”⁴¹ Moreover, if we think of historical periods as distinct, we might opt for seeing more mobility within a period and less between or across periods and vice versa. We could also look at the relations between mobility and immobilities as well as their overlaps and borders. Another way out of this binary opposition, and probably a more fruitful one, would be to look at the intellectual history of *khödölgöön* “mobility” (and its opposite *khödölgööngüi baidal*) in relation to *erdem* “knowledge, wisdom,” a concept, which seems to contain this aspect of “salvation.”

³⁶ Dorothea Heuschert-Laage, “From Personal Network to Institution Building: The Lifanyuan, Gift Exchange and the Formalization of Manchu–Mongol Relations,” *History and Anthropology* no. 25,5 (2014): 648–669.

³⁷ Nicola Di Cosmo, “From Alliance to Tutelage: A Historical Analysis of Manchu-Mongol Relations before the Qing Conquest,” *Frontiers of History in China* 7, no. 2 (2012): 191.

³⁸ Tsendenbal, Yumjaagin, *Yu. Tsendenbal Itgel Ügüüel Khelsen Üg.* (Ulaanbaatar: Ulsin Khevreliin Khereg Erkhlekh Khoroo, 1967), 10.

³⁹ Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*, 18.

⁴⁰ David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value.* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 50.

⁴¹ Graeber, *Value*, 50.

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