The Animalification of Nationalist Sentiments

Horse, Herder and Homeland Relations in the Construction of Nationalism in Mongolia

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Abstract: This paper is about what I call the animalification of nationalist sentiments, based on stories, poems and films about some runaway horses returned to their birthplace, which Mongolians commonly call the *nutag* (homeland). These stories, poems and films deliver a message that even "Mongol horses" have a sense to love, miss, find and return to their *nutag*, and critiques those involved in mining and other businesses with environmental destruction as being worse than horses. The analogy of man and horse in this paper helps us to understand, first, how Mongolians perceive and explain sources of nationalist sentiment as natural and inevitable and, second, how a sense of nutag shared by both man and animal shapes human-animal relations.

Keywords: nationalism, human-animal relations, homeland, animalification and natural resource protection.

Introduction

This paper is an extension of my two recent articles, one on herd-herder relations based on the example of horse herding, co-authored with Byambabaatar Ichinkhorloo and Ariell Ahearn (Bumochir, Ichinkhorloo and Ahearn 2020), and the other on man and homeland relations and the indigenous cultural resources of nationalist sentiments in Mongolia (Bumochir 2019). In the first paper, to better understand human-animal relationships, we introduce three indigenous concepts such as herd (or animal) *zön* (intuition), *taa* (serenity) and *buyan* (fortune), to show how Mongol herders acknowledge not just animal agency (Philo and Wilbert 2000;

Steward 2009; Heikkinen et al 2011; Horstkotte et al 2017; Fijn 2011, 19; Marchina 2016, 103) but also herd agency. We argue that Mongol herders' acknowledgement of herd agency is the key aspect that shapes horse and horse-herder relationships. In the second paper, in order to better understand Mongolians' relationship with their homeland and nationalist mobilizations against mining, I introduce another indigenous concept, nutag, which means birthplace, homeland and country of origin, to show how Mongolians imagine their relationship with their birthplace and homeland. I argue that the discussion about "the ritual to bury the afterbirth and umbilical cord, and the practice of naming the birthplace *khüis* or *khüist* (umbilical cord that connects child and mother) establishes and declares an understanding that the man-birthplace relationship is 'natural' similar [to] the relationship between mother and child. Thus, I suggest that at the heart of the term *nutag* there is a ritually strengthened and naturalized relationship between person and nature" (Bumochir 2019, 169) or the natural homeland. These arguments in those papers, then made me think critically about the importance of *nutag* in human-animal relations, which was not the main focus of either of my articles. Besides our brief remark on tasks to habituate horses and discussions on how horses become accustomed to the herder, routine and places, in neither of those papers did I (or we) discuss the horse and *nutag* relationships and how Mongolians perceive horses and use them to explain why Mongolians should have nationalist sentiments to love and protect one's *nutag* and *ekh oron* (motherland). This paper therefore attempts to focus more on the missing aspect of *nutag* in human-animal relationships by exploring the tripartite relationship between (1) man and homeland, (2) horse and homeland, and (3) horse-herder and horse relations, and to show how portrayals of these relations trigger nationalist sentiments.

I noticed that not only our paper on horse-horse herder relations, but also other literature tends to have a reductionist approach known as symbiosis. Charles Stépanoff et al. state that: "Discarding the description of North Asian herding exclusively in terms of 'domination', many authors prefer today to use the biological notion of 'symbiosis' (Beach and Stammler 2006; Takakura 2015, 7, 8; Vitebsky and Alekseyev 2014); thus, according to Florian Stammler, Arctic herders establish with

their animals an 'intimate partnership' that is the basis of a 'symbiotic domesticity' (Stammler 2010)" (Stépanoff et al. 2017, 58). In this trend, much of the literature neglects the importance of the accustomed place or the animal attachment to the homeland, or *nutag* in Mongolian, in the consideration of animal domestication and human-animal relationships. For example, according to Sandor Bökönyi, "The essence of domestication is the capture of and taming by man of animals of a species with particular behavioral characteristics, their removal from their natural living area and breeding community, and their maintenance under controlled breeding conditions" (Bökönyi 1989, 22; cited by Fijn 2011, 19). But in Inner and North Asia, there is no "removal from their natural habitat and breeding community," instead it is just the opposite. Herd animals in Inner and North Asia are not removed from their natural habitat, instead they are still in it, while being what Natasha Fijn, calls co-domestic,[1] "in contrast to the intensive, consumer-driven animal husbandry techniques used with 'domestic' animals on Western farms (see Bullier 2005; Noske 1989)" (Fijn 2011, 19). Moreover, Fijn points out that: "The domestication of an animal by humans, forming and making animals into a being of human design, is likely to be a Western concept. There are words in Mongolian that can be translated as applicable to the so-called domestic animals, derived from the animals being part of a domestic sphere (*geriin tejeever*), or associated with the home (*ger*). Mongolians refer to the animals that they herd simply as herd animals (*mal*), or the five kinds of animals (*tavan khoshuu mal*), and to themselves as herders (*malchin*) (Fijn 2011, 18). In her interpretation of co-domestication in Mongolia, she underlines that "herders and herd animals live with each other in shared landscape, inhabiting a co-domestic relationship, ecosocial sphere: the herding encampment (*khot ail*)" (Fijn 2011, 19), which is the main point I intend to address in this paper. What Fijn calls the "shared landscape inhabiting a domestic relationship" or the "ecosocial sphere" is the homeland or *nutag* in Mongolian. In other words, herd animals and herders share an accustomed *nutag*, which sometimes bonds and contributes to shaping

1 "My definition of a co-domestic relationship is the social adaptation of animals in association with human being by means of mutual cross-species interaction and social engagement" (Fijn 2011, 19).

the herder and herd animal relations. Also, Charlotte Marchina et al.'s (2017) recent article The Skull on the Hill, based on archaeological findings, provides empirical materials on what I call the tripartite relationship of horse, herder and homeland.

> *This article studies the modalities of these horse skull repositories within an interdisciplinary approach, combining social anthropology and osteology. The study of the choice of place for the skulls and their associated objects highlights the differentiation processes among the horses as individuals, in relation to their lifetime status. This relation between human and horses unfolds into the landscape, which is invested with numerous ovoo cairns and horse skulls; a reminder that these spaces are shared between humans, horses and invisible entities. In the absence of private land ownership on the Mongolian steppe and in the interest of a balanced coexistence with all the inhabitants of this shared land, we show that the horse skull repositories subtly combine honour to individual horses, respect to the master spirits of the land, and discrete appropriation of territory by herders* (Marchina et al 2017, 171).

Here, the shared land, space, territory and *ovoo* cairns is what Mongolians commonly call the *nutag* of both of the horse and the herder. Following above points made by Fijn (2011) and Marchina et al (2017) on the tripartite relationship, in this paper I will present poems, stories and films of how horses run away and return to their *nutag*, and/or to their herders (or owners), when they are sold or donated to a different place or held in unaccustomed places, and show how the shared attachment to the *nutag* binds horse and horse-herder. In those poems, stories and films, the *nutag* is a common ground where the horse and horse-herder meet and the so-called symbiotic human-animal relationship develops. Taking the impact of *nutag* into consideration in human-animal relations, I find that the horse

and horse-herder relationship is not only about the animal and human in question, but is complex and manifold.

As I mentioned earlier, the other topic I will discuss in this paper is nationalism. In my previous paper on nationalism, I show how a person and *nutag* relationship develops into the concept of *ekh oron* or the "motherland" and "show how the multiplicity, fluidity and multi-scalar character of the term *nutag* become essential resources of nationalist sentiments and powerful political tools to promote and justify resistance against mining" (Bumochir 2019, 163). In the same way, this paper shows how an analogy between man and horse, or what I call animalification, is made in film, which is another example of the multi-scalar character of how the term *nutag* triggers nationalist sentiments. Unlike the previous paper, this paper shows how a horse and *nutag* relationship is used to construct the concept of *ekh oron* and how the tripartite relationship of horse, *nutag* and *ekh oron*, which is considered to be natural, triggers nationalism in contemporary Mongolia.

The Nationalization of the "Mongol Horse"

Former political leaders of Mongolia, namely Kh. Battulga, the president, and U. Khurelsukh, the prime minister, both reveal nationalistic attitudes. In the 2017 presidential election campaign Battulga's slogan was Mongol *yalna*, which literally means "Mongol will win." His slogan was resourceful, because it can have different meanings. "Mongol" commonly indicates Mongolians as a people and/or the independent state of the Mongols. But in view of the political situation of the election and discussions about the ethnic origin of his main opponent, M. Enkhbold, who was the speaker and the chair of People's Party, his slogan questions whether a genuine Mongolian should win the election and rule the country or someone who is not a Mongol but a *Khyatadyn erliiz* (part-Chinese). Many sources were revealed against Enkhbold to prove that he had some *khujaa* (Chinese) ancestors in his maternal lineage. In the context of such a heated debate on the purity (*tsever*) of the Mongol origin, Battulga's slogan appeared as his personal support for the public reaction to the issue of Enkhbold's ancestry. Enkhbold's opponent in his party was U. Khurelsukh, who was the deputy minister and currently the People's Party chair

and the prime minister in October 2017. At the end of June 2017, a few days before the election and the Naadam national festival celebrating the establishment of Mongol statehood and independence (Munkhbayar 2019), he revealed his support for Battulga's campaign, where he drew an analogy between the presidential election and the Naadam horse race. In the meeting with the organizing committee of the Naadam festival the deputy minister stated that "Only Mongol horses should race in the Mongol Naadam" (Tuguldur 2017) and vigorously prohibited all attempts to bring in hybrid and/or foreign horses to race against Mongol horses. Although, he referred to the celebration of Naadam, his statement was actually his appeared as a reaction to the political debate about pure Mongol origins. Apparently, his analogy between man and horse in the presidential election and in the Naadam horse race works well for many Mongolians. Both events have an important place in the building of the Mongol nation state. For nationalists the key is to ensure everything is Mongol, including not just the political ruler but also horses, because the horse is a historically and culturally established national icon in modern Mongolia. Khurelsukh's statement was therefore not coincidental but intentional. I call such incidents of the use of the horse in the national context, namely in national politics, the construction of a national icon or a nationalization of the horse.

Besides my illustration of *nutag*, *ekh oron* and nationalism, as I find in this paper, the horse is also an essential historical and cultural resource, which is often used in shaping the Mongol national identity and nationalism. For instance, the depiction of a horse has been the key image in Mongolia's *töriin süld* (state symbol) throughout the socialist and post-socialist state. This is because "The complex role of the horse is a fascinating aspect of Mongolian herding society, especially because the horse is both a utilitarian resource, as Mongolian herders eat horsemeat in winter [see also Peemont 2017], and a unifying symbol, expressed on Mongolian flags" (Fijn 2011, 151). Its complex role in national identity and nationalism also appears in musical culture. Peter March (2008) illustrates the role of horse in the case of horse-head fiddle (morin khuur) and shows how the horse-head fiddle shapes musical nationalism.

Almost immediately following the 1990 Revolution, the instrument became increasingly visible in political rituals at the highest levels. In 1992, the Mongolian President ordered the creation and installation of a horse-head fiddle called the *Töriin khan khuur* or "State Sovereign Fiddle" in the nation's Parliamentary Building, where it is kept along with other official symbols of state. In the same year, a small "orchestra" of horse-head fiddles called the Horsehead Fiddle Ensemble was established and it has become the most popular state-sponsored musical ensemble in the country. It often plays for formal state events and rituals, such as concerts honoring visiting dignitaries. Since the early 1990s, the Mongolian President's annual address to the nation on the first day of the Lunar New Year festival, called *Tsagaan sar*, has been paired with a formal performance of a horse-head fiddle. And in the same period, the instrument has come to be a permanent part of the opening ceremonies of the State Naadam, an annual festival of traditional sports held each year in Ulaanbaatar and attended by the national political leadership and international dignitaries. Each of these new uses of the horse-head fiddle was rhetorically tied to specific events or stories set in the distant past, making its "revival" in the 1990s clear evidence of a nation and people in touch with its past and once again in charge of its own destiny (Marsh 2008, 2–3).

In the 2000s, later political leaders, N. Bagabandi, the Mongolian president, and N. Enkhbayar, the prime minister, continued such political ritualizations of the instrument and issued a joint decree entitled *Morin khuuraa deedlen, delgerüülekh tukhai* (on honoring and popularizing the horse-head fiddle),[2] which appealed to all governmental and non-governmental organizations, families and individuals to own and learn the instrument. I remember that the public immediately acknowledged the appeal and all families started buying horse-head fiddles or small souvenir versions of it to keep at home for various purposes, for instance, to protect homes from bad fortune, and/or to popularize it as decreed, all of which

2 https://www.legalinfo.mn/law/details/759?lawid=759&fbclid=IwAR37yRtNMCMxFnocq98GU9p34iF6gkZHfzYYhbdXY1mOS7TXe1X7yzFGlbg. Accessed on October 4, 2018.

contribute in nation building. As we see in the above, the horse has an important role in the building of the nation and the construction of nationalism.

For Mongolians, another important aspect of the horse is the sense and feeling attached to its *nutag*, which Mongolians often use as an analogy between the Mongolian man and the horse. This is another reason why Khurelsukh's analogy between man and horse worked well prior to the presidential election and the national Naadam celebration. In line with this, in the following I will show how stories about a return of a horse to its *nutag* constructs a powerful message and an appeal to endorse nationalist sentiments.

The Socialist Establishment of Nationalism on *Nutag*, *Ekh Oron* and the Horse

As a result of the communist ideology, the meaning of the word *nutag* and its broader form *ekh oron* dramatically expanded to the "Soviet version of nationalist thought" (Bumochir 2019, 173 cited by Sneath 2010, 251). David Sneath writes that "Mongolia itself was described as the 'motherland' (*ekh oron*), and a concept of 'homeland' (*nutag*), in which people have their roots, became a core value in the national political culture" (Sneath 2010, 253). In this section, I will show how ideas in the concept of *nutag*, meaning one's naturally related birthplace, turned from indicating a local territory to the later imported term *ekh oron*, referring to the national territory of the politically independent country of Mongolia. *Ekh oron* is a translation of the Russian term *rodina-mat'*, which literally means "motherland-mother," also known as "Mother Russia," from the twentieth century. The appearance of "Mother Russia" has been understood as manifestation of the Soviet state's wartime renunciation of appeals to Marxism-Leninism and its embrace of nationalism. "The word *rodina*, from the verb *rodit'* to give birth, can mean birthplace both in the narrow sense of hometown and in the broader sense of 'motherland' …" (Kirschenbaum 2000, 825). Although the two terms differed in the past, the same link between the birthplace or hometown and the motherland also appears in the blurred link between *nutag* and *ekh oron* in contemporary Mongolia. The word *nutag* fluidly embodies a much wider range of things and ideas,

such as the environment, nature, resources, history, origin, authenticity, identity, sovereignty and spirituality (see also Bulag 1998; Namsaraeva 2012). Further, in terms of space, "*Nutag* can be located at different levels, from a local to a much larger space, and can vary in scale depending on whether it refers to the group or to the individual" (Namsaraeva 2012, 142) or to the people of an independent state (Bumochir 2019, 163).

The 1930s poem *Minii Nutag* (My Homeland) by D. Natsagdorj, a prominent Mongolian poet known as the father of modern Mongolian literature, made an enormous contribution in expanding the meaning of *nutag* to *ekh oron*. It depicted the landscape of Mongolia and praised its natural beauty and its importance to Mongolians. The chorus is *Ene bol minii törsön nutag, Mongolyn saikhan oron* (This is my birthplace, The beautiful homeland of Mongolia). With this, the connotations of the word *nutag* began embracing the meaning of the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic. The poem was compulsory in the secondary-school curriculum and every student had to learn it by heart. Certainly, most if not all Mongolians, including me, could recite it from memory (Bumochir 2019, 173).

The same link between *nutag* and *ekh oron* also appears in the case of the horse in the poem *Khüren mori* or The *Brown Horse*, about the escape and return of a horse from Russia to Mongolia during the 1921 revolution. The poet Ch. Lkhamsuren (1917-79) wrote it in 1962, based on his childhood biography as a poor orphan and his memory of the horse he owned. In the same year the author received the *Töriin shagnal* (State Honored Award), the highest state award, initiated in 1945 as an "Award named after Marshall Choibalsan" (*Marshall Choibalsangiin neremjit shagnal*), the communist leader and prime minister of Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) (1939–1952). By awarding the author, the communist government politically promoted the importance of the 1921 communist revolution, which ended the so-called feudal tyranny and foreign imperialist invasions (see also Bumochir 2018, 361-63) and popularized the concept of *ekh oron* (Bumochir 2019, 173), which should be protected from the imperialist and capitalist states in World War II, which was key in the Soviet propaganda. As a result of this political promotion, almost every Mongolian not only memorized *Minii nutag* from the

secondary school Mongolian literature textbook, but also the poem *Khüren mori*. For instance, I remember *Khüren mori* because my teacher at secondary school made us all memorize all its 287 lines. Later I discovered from my father, S. Dulam, who is in his early seventies, that it was not only my generation who memorized it. When I asked him, he immediately started reciting the poem with a melody from memory. He thinks that he memorized it at school in the 1960s, but he also clearly remembers that he learned it from the national radio. At the end of 1960s, when he was a child, as he remembers, there was a radio program called *Khüren mori*. In this the producer made horse-head fiddle music for the poem and this is where my father learned the poem with a melody.

I am not sure if it was a coincidence that Lhamsuren wrote his poem in 1962, because according to some eye witnesses some horses given to Vietnam by Mongolia in 1959, began returning to their *nutag* in Mongolia in the early 1960s. Maybe Lhamsuren had heard of this and wrote his poem *Khüren mori*. My father, S. Dulam (2019), and the writer B. Nominchimed (2018) have both written about the Mongol horses donated to Vietnam. In 1959, during the visit to the MPR by the Vietnamese president Ho Chi Minh, Tsedenbal Yumjaa (1916–1991), the general secretary of Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, presented him with five kinds of herd animal (horses, camels, cattle, sheep and goats). In autumn 1961, 300 soldiers were selected to take the horses from Mongolia to Vietnam by train which took about a week. Each train contained about 40 horses and seven to eight soldiers in charge of feeding them. According to S. Khalzan from Erdenetsog, Bayankhongor, and G. Myagmarjav from Telmen, Zalkhan, who were in charge of the horses, on the Vietnamese border, brown and black-brown horses escaped and ran into the forest; they captured the brown one and lost the black-brown stallion (Nominchimed 2018; cf. Dulam 2013, 240-41). Some say the horse reached its *nutag* in Mongolia in 1960, after about a year (Dulam 2013, 240). In 1963 about two years after the horses had been taken to Vietnam, the black-brown stallion returned home to Möngön Morit, Töv *aimag*. One morning the stallion's owner stallion spotted something bulgy and black lying by the side of his herd of horses which looked like a yak calf. According to the owner, it was his black-brown

stallion he had donated to Vietnam and it was thin as a lath, covered in wounds and scratches. Later the Ulaanbaatar city government bought the stallion and declared it sacred (*darkhlakh*) in the herd (Nominchimed 2018).

In 2001, Nominchimed (2018) had a chance to meet and interview the ambassador of Vietnam and asked him about the horses. The ambassador told him that the Vietnamese called those horses fugitive (*orgodol*), because many of them escaped and were lost. Nominchimed acknowledges that many of the Mongol horses sent to Vietnam escaped, and he presented a story about a brown horse from his sum Khaliun in Govi-Altai *aimag*, which was one of the other horses returned from Vietnam. According to him, it was his uncle Z. Bekhjav's brown horse called *Böön süүlt* (clotty tail) which he had donated to Vietnam. In the next year spring after the donation, in Khyaryn nuur (Khyar Lake) his uncle broke down in tears when he saw *Böön süүlt* standing among his herd of horses. But he was also scared to see the returned horse because he did not know how to explain it to the local communist leaders and he decided not to tell them. Bekhjav told Nominchimeg that he took his horses for donation to Zamyn-Uud and saw them taken onto the train, and he could not tell how the horse escaped and found its way back to its *nutag*, possibly from Vietnam. In addition to these stories of *güideg mori* (running horse) from Vietnam, Nominchimeg (2018) collected material about other guideg moris that returned from Russia and Europe, those donated to Russia during the war. Nominchimeg collected and presented these stories about Mongol horses to say that "not to believe in the wonderful character of Mongol horses is a tragedy of our youngsters" (Nominchimeg 2018).

During socialism the sense of nationalism was different, and historic and ethnic nationalistic tendencies based on Chinggis Khan and the Greater Mongolia were absent due to the Soviet oppression (Munkh-Erdene 2012). Instead, the idea *ekh oron* mirroring Russian *Rodina-mat'* and its Soviet nationalism appealed against so-called imperialism and capitalism, which was the focal point during socialism. But after the collapse of socialism, in the absence of the Soviet oppression, besides the socialist sense of *ekh oron* the recently produced film based on the poem Brown Horse has triggered other nationalistic tendencies in response to problems of the

global capitalist economy such as environmental destruction and land use and ownership by different businesses, as I will discuss in the following.

Post-socialist Re-presentation of the Socialist Nationalist Resources

In 2019, a film based on *Khüren mori* called *Khiimori* (or The Steed) which means the "Wind Horse" or "fortune" (Humphrey and Ujeed 2012),[3] directed by G. Erdenebileg, won the Spirit of Cinema Award at the 26th Oldenburg Film Festival, Best Feature Film Awards at the 23rd San Diego International Film Festival, the Golden Peacock Award at the 50th International Film Festival of India and was submitted to the 92nd Academy Awards and the 77th Annual Golden Globes. The film is a re-production of the socialist-era poem in the form of a film in post-socialist Mongolia and is a post-socialist re-presentation of the socialist nationalist discourse based on *nutag*, *ekh oron* and the horse.

In my recent paper on *nutag* and nationalism, I discuss naturalization (consideration of the relationship as natural or *baigaliin* in Mongolian) and ritualization (performance of rituals emphasizing the relationship) of the man and *nutag* connection in the example of umbilical cord, which is reified in the ritual by burying the afterbirth and the umbilical cord in the birthplace (Bumochir 2019). In the film Khiimori, I find a different example of the naturalization of horse and *nutag* connection. At the top of the film promotion flyer it says *Atgakhan shoroonoos ekh oron ekheldeg*, which means "a motherland starts from a handful of earth." As we find it in the film, the brown horse was born with a hand-sized piece of something

3 "However, there is no inner sense that tells a person whether his *sülde/hiimori* is flying high or 'lying down' (*hevten*). This is a form of subjectivity where one's state of being, fortunate or not, can be known only from external signs. Possessing the regular good things of life, such as healthy children, wealth, and so on, indicates a generally fortunate or *hiimoritoi* (with *hiimori*) person, but this is not enough to tell if one's fortune is sufficient for some particular enterprise. Divination may be necessary, but better still is success in a chancy matter such as gambling, wrestling, or hunting, which boosts fortune and projects it forward for future victories. A burst of fortune is thus future-oriented, but it also spreads laterally to the social surroundings. This is the case with hunting the wolf, which, of all wild animals, is renowned as being the wildest and the most *hiimoritoi* – the worthiest prey – as it is dangerous, intelligent, and elusive" (Humphrey and Ujeed 2012, 155).

dark brown like a liver in its mouth,[4] which is called an *unagany zuult* (foal bite) in Mongolian. According to the film, *unagany zuult* is *shoroo* (earth) gathered and preserved in the fetus's mouth from food passed from the mother to the fetus through the umbilical cord (Erdenebileg 2019). Although *unagany zuult* is not earth per se, in the film it is called *shoroo*, which is earth. Using the analogy of earth and *unagany zuult*, the director strongly emphasizes the point that sometimes foals are born biting earth from their birthplace, which is a reification of the horse and *nutag* natural connection. This reification of the physiologically developed connection of the horse and its birthplace in the womb is the film's key to explain why a horse can be deeply attached to its birthplace, and hence has a desire to return to the *nutag*. In brief, according to the director of Khiimori, the natural connection starts developing in the womb when the minerals from grass and water that the mother consumes passes to the fetus through the umbilical cord, which suggests that the bonding develops as a physiological process from birth. The message in the film is that because it is physiological it is biological and therefore natural and inevitable.

Apparently, there is another internationally known Mongolian film called *Sharga daaga*, the Yellow Colt, from 2013, directed by Ch. Khoroldorj. As promoted in the flyer the film is "inspired by the true stories of Mongol horses that run back to their mother land."[5] The film depicts a return of a yellow colt to its mother's *nutag* after she was sold into a different one when the colt was in the womb. In similar vein, the director of *Sharga Daaga*, also shows the same of idea of the natural bonding of animal and place developing since the fetus was in the womb (Khoroldorj 2013). Addressing the idea of the natural bonding of animal and place in these films potentially engages two different discussions, one on how and why animals are accustomed to certain places, while the other is on the use of earth, land and territory in the nationalist discourses, which I turn to in the following.

4 "Meconium is the first feces produced by the foal. It may be released prepartum into the amniotic fluid in times of fetal distress such as in dystocia. The normal foal's lungs are bathed in amniotic fluid before birth. If meconium is released into the fetal fluid, the foal, as it gasps, will inhale the particles. Meconium is a sterile substance (prepartum)" (Paradis 2006, 149).

5 For more information see also https://asianmoviepulse.com/2019/01/film-review-yellow-colt-2013-by-khoroldorj-choijoovanchig/. Accessed on November 26, 2018.

Both Dulam (2013, 240-41) and Nominchimed (2018), who write about horses returned from Vietnam, explain that herd animals have *zön* to return to their *nutag*. For Mongol herders, herd animals have a *zön* – an intuition to stay, find and return to the *nutag* or other accustomed places (Bumochir et al. 2020). As we demonstrate in our paper on human-animal relations, herders in Mongolia use these intuitions in herding horses. Relying on horse's *zön* to stay around, find and/or return to certain accustomed places and on the herder's ability to anticipate herd locations, herders in Mongolia leave horses to graze unattended (Bumochir et al. 2020). As such, animals, like man, develop certain feelings or perform certain practices triggered by naturally following their *zön*, and nothing helps or hinders such practices. In other words, *zön* triggers and leads animals to have certain feelings and to do something, for instance, horses to return to their *nutag*, as we find in these films. In this paper, I am not in a position to prove or disprove whether horses have a "natural" or "birth" connection to their birthplaces. Instead, my intention is to show how Mongolians consider the horse and *nutag* bonding as inevitable and a horse's desire to return to its *nutag* as unstoppable, claiming that the bonding is biological and natural from birth, which I argue helps to justify and appeal nationalist sentiments to protect one's *nutag*.

Shoroo is an important aspect in the nationalist discourses in Mongolia, which often embrace concepts of the human and birthplace connection, land, territory and political independence. In my paper on nationalism and *nutag*, I wrote about of my father's, his elder brother's and his cousin's journey to their birthplaces. The most important reason to visit their *nutag* was to visit their birthplace and to roll in the earth at the very place they were born in order to strengthen their natural ties to their birthplaces. According to them, the strengthening of the relationship between a person and their birthplace helps to avoid hardship and acquire good fortune (Bumochir 2019, 169). But when people are not in their *nutag* or unable to visit to their *nutag* then many keep and worship stones from their birthplace for protection and good fortune. Such stones are commonly known as *nutgiin chuluu*, which means a "stone of the *nutag*." People believe that *nutgiin chuluu* is a small piece of one's *nutag* (similar to the *unagany zuult*) that helps to keep them connected to

their *nutag* wherever they live. Both of the above examples remind Mongolians of the importance of *nutag* or the importance of having a *nutag* and protecting it from all sorts of threats such as mining. For this reason, in the above paper I argue that nationalist sentiments in the popular mobilizations against mining in Mongolia reveal indigenous cultural sources that trigger nationalism (see also Bumochir 2019). This paper presents another indigenous cultural source in the relationship between the horse and the birthplace that trigger nationalism.

The aspect of *shoroo* or *gazar shoroo*, which means soil, land and territory, is not only cultural, but as many Mongolians intend to highlight, it is also a historical source that triggers nationalism. There are two well-known statements that people often reference from the history of Mongolia. In a myth about the Xiongnu emperor Modu Chanyu (234 BC–174 BC): "depicted by the ancient Chinese historian Sima Qian (135 or 145 BC–86 BC), his enemy the Chinese emperor first asked for his famous fast horse and then his favorite consort, which he agreed to give. Finally, the enemy asked for his land, and Modu flew into rage and said, 'Land is the basis of the nation' and 'he executed all the ministers who had advised him to do so' (Qian 1993, 135). In Mongolian, this is often translated as *gazar bol ulsyn ündes* (land is the basis of the people, nation or country; see also Kradin 2012, 54)" (Bumochir 2020, 49). Also, "Mongolian historians claim that the Oirat ruler Galdan Khan (1644–97), who fought against the rule of the Qing Empire, is the one who said *Minii nutgiin gazar shoroonoos burkhan guisan ch bitgii ög* (do not give away my land even if God asks for it) (Dashnyam 2014, 228)" (Bumochir 2020, 49). The political use of both of these statements in contemporary Mongolia have had a massive influence in shaping nationalism with reference to history, which is apparent in the message "Motherland starts from a handful of earth." With this message, the film appeals to its audience to love and protect the environment and fight for the motherland, which trigger nationalist sentiments based on *nutag* and *ekh oron*.

Both of the films and those who write about runaway horses, namely Dulam and Nominchimed, draw an analogy between man and horse to suggest that the feelings attached to one's *nutag* is natural, so the nationalist sentiments that grow

from such resources are inevitable. I can also find similar indications in the taboo against all attempts to stop runaway horses. Maybe it is a coincidence that my father and Ch. Lkhamsuren, the author of *Khüren mori*, are both from Bayankhongor aimag (province), and from the neighboring *sums* (sub-provinces), Bayanbulag and Baatsagaan. When I asked my father about *güideg mori*, he said elderly people in his *nutag* used to warn youngsters never try to catch or stop unidentified horses running back home. They used to count such incidences as a great sin, which is a strong expression of the acknowledgement of and deference to the horse and its *nutag* connection. According to him, some elders even used to make a milk libation wishing the runaway horse to return safely to its *nutag*. I also find exactly same custom in the film *Yellow Colt*. When the unknown yellow colt joins Badam's herd he severely prohibits his children from keeping and riding it and he warns them that this would be a sin (Khoroldorj 2013). Also, in the poem *Khüren mori* and its film version, *Khiimori*, the author and director condemn the monk who seizes the horse from the poor orphan boy, the greedy merchant who captures the horse and rides it for his travel for trading purposes and the foreign military invader who captures the merchant and gets the horse. During socialism, all of these figures including the monk, wealthy merchant and the foreign invader were considered enemies in communist propaganda, and all are depicted as those who intend to stop the horse returning to *nutag*, which is a sin. Or according to the logic of the human-animal analogy, they are all enemies preventing Mongolians from expressing their horse-like 'naturally' developed nationalistic sense to love and protect their *nutag* or *ekh oron*. Using the same analogy, in his forties the film's director, G. Erdenebileg, also said people of his and earlier generations used to know and understand the poem while the younger generation stopped learning it and the importance of *nutag* (Badamtsetseg 2018). This is similar to the writer Nominchimed's regret that younger generation fail to believe in a horse's sense and ability to find and return to *nutag* from afar.

Conclusion

The Animalification of Nationalist Sentiments

Mongolians often consider the relationship between man and *nutag* to be 'natural,' which means that for Mongolians nationalist sentiments have 'natural' or 'biological' triggers or feelings that can be psychological (Bumochir 2019). In this paper, I find an alternative form of naturalization (considerations as natural) of nationalist sentiments in the man and *nutag* relationship by drawing an analogy between man and horse in the poems, stories and films about runaway horses. In the interview, G. Erdenebileg, the director of *Khiimori*, states that he tried to deliver different messages, but the key message was the analogy between animal and man in regard to the animal and homeland, and man and homeland relations.

> In brief, [the film] clearly delivers the message that human beings became worse than animals. Many people will be ashamed of themselves after watching and feeling the story about how a Mongol horse yearns for their mother *nutag* and soil, and runs back home from abroad. Today we are rootling and digging the soil of our motherland. Also, we are selling. Many betrayed their motherland and withdrawing. Some taking stones [of our motherland] and selling in the foreign countries. All of such loathsome can only come from human being (Badamtsetseg 2018).

The director of the film explains that in Mongolia not only people but also horses have deep natural attachments to their *nutag* and have a desire to love, miss and return to the *nutag*, which is an artistic interpretation of nationalistic sentiments to protect local and national territories and the environment from mining and other cases of the sale of natural resources to foreign bodies.

The above analogy drawn between man and horse in the film in regard to *nutag* is what I call the animalification. To be more precise, according to the director, not only man but also animals such as the horse have a sense of attachment to the *nutag* from birth, hence this sense is natural. Animalification is therefore an alternative form to consider nationalist sentiments to protect land and territory as physiologically developed in the womb from birth, which is what I call the naturalization of nationalism through drawing an analogy between man and horse. Such an explanation helps the director and his audience to understand the sources

of nationalist sentiment and explains that it is natural and therefore inevitable. While his critique targets those involved in mining, trade and other businesses that destroy the environment, he considers that those who have lost their natural attachments to their *nutag* and nationalist sentiments to love and protect it have a weaker sense to love and protect than some animals such as horses.

To show how the animalification of nationalist sentiments is constructed and publicized in Mongolia, the first section of the paper shows how the horse become the national symbol and a politically significant "Mongol horse" where some politicians even compare the presidential election to the national Naadam festival horse race. This is an example of animalification by drawing an analogy between man and horse. The second section is about the socialist establishment of nationalism based on the concept of *nutag* or birthplace and how the concept transformed into the broader Soviet nationalist concept of *ekh oron*, which is a Mongolian equivalent of the Russian term r*odina-mat'*, literally meaning "motherland-mother." This section also presents two poems, the first, *Minii nutag* (My *nutag*), by D. Natsagdorj, known as the father of mother Mongolian literature, which made a great contribution to transforming the content of the word *nutag* from birthplace to a politically independent country or the *ekh oron* mother country. The second poem depicts a runaway horse from Russia to Mongolia fighting against the so-called enemies of the communist revolution and the state, namely a White Russian military officer, a monk and a greedy merchant on its way to its *nutag* or *ekh oron*. The third section of this paper explores the re-presentation the nationalistic concepts established during socialism and the re-production of the poem about the runaway horse in the form of a film. This section also shows how the socialist context of nationalism targeted imperialism, capitalism and class turned into ethnic nationalism, targeting the consequences of the global capitalist economy and mining, such as environmental destruction and the exploitation of land. Finally, this last section explains how the presentation and re-presentation of stories, poems and films on runaway horses returning to the *nutag* analogically constructs animalification of nationalism and appeals to Mongolians' nationalism,

to love and protect the national *nutag* or the territory of *ekh oron* from the destructive consequences of global capitalism and contemporary consumerism.

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