

Travelogues of the early twentieth century and Qaraqorum

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Abstract: In the twentieth century, a large number of scientific research campaigns were organized in Asia, including China and Mongolia, by various countries, such as Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan. Western tourists or scientists who travelled to Mongolia during the 20th century and wrote reports can be divided, in the framework of this paper, into two groups: Russian tourists and scientists on the one hand, and members of the Sino-Swedish expedition campaign on the other. Among these travellers and scholars of Mongolia were Nikolay Przhevalsky (1839-1888), Pyotr Kozlov (1863-1935) led by Sven Hedin (1865-1952), and Haslund-Christensen (1896-1948). The travel notes left by these people cover almost the whole of Mongolia, and now these travel notes are included in Mongolian local research and used as material for the country's history and politics, while details about farming, religion, rites, and rituals will play an important role in future research. This is especially true for the Sino-Swedish expedition as numerous travel diaries from the Sino-Swedish joint field trip to Northwest China have been published, detailing the lives of the inhabitants of Inner Mongolia as well as Xinjiang. One interesting difference among the travellers mentioned above is that some of them visited Qaraqorum while others did not. The paper will investigate the reasons for these different itineraries, as well as some of the information provided by these travellers about Mongolia.

Keywords: Mongolia, ethnography, Russian explorers, Sino-swedish expedition, Qing Dynasty

There are many ways for human beings to find out about their past, one of the most important being written records. In the past century, with the development of the analytical profession, new methods have emerged, such as photography and image acquisition, which record the events of the past and the human condition in great detail. Regarding Mongolian history, available sources from Western observers are far more numerous than indigenous writings. In particular, travel notes written by Western tourists and explorers traveling across Mongolia in the twentieth century may help fill some gaps in the information.¹ These travelogues vary depending on the level of education and personal interests of the traveller, but when combined, they can provide important information for understanding many aspects of Mongolian history, politics, life, customs, religion, and even cities such as Qaraqorum.

¹ On travel writing as a genre, see C. Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011).

In the twentieth century, a large number of scientific research campaigns were organized in Asia, including China and Mongolia, by various countries, such as Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan. This period coincided with the decline of the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the expansion of the political alliances of the Western powers, and the looting of the economy. In the last years of the Qing Dynasty, the increasing contacts with external powers meant not only conflicts, but also the introduction of new Western knowledge and skills, and the concepts of “democracy” and “science” expanded China’s perception of society and state.

Growing economic and political relations between the Manchu Empire and the West set the background for more and more individuals traveling to Central and East Asia. Western tourists or scientists who travelled to Mongolia during the 20th century and wrote reports can be divided, in the framework of this paper, into two groups: Russian tourists and scientists on the one hand, and members of the Sino-Swedish expedition campaign on the other.² Among these travellers and scholars of Mongolia were Nikolay Przhevalsky (1839-1888), Pyotr Kozlov (1863-1935) led by Sven Hedin (1865-1952), and Haslund-Christensen (1896-1948). The travel notes left by these people cover almost the whole of Mongolia, and now these travel notes are included in Mongolian local research and used as material for the country’s history and politics, while details about farming, religion, rites, and rituals will play an important role in future research. This is especially true for the Sino-Swedish expedition as numerous travel diaries from the Sino-Swedish joint field trip to Northwest China have been published, detailing the lives of the inhabitants of Inner Mongolia as well as Xinjiang.

One interesting difference among the travellers mentioned above is that some of them visited Qaraqorum while others did not. What was the reason for this? In my opinion, the itinerary of the travellers changed based on their interests, whether they were historical or scientific. This is most evident in two of the main travelogues from this period, which will be analysed in this paper, namely the travel notes by Maisky and Larson. Larson was a Swedish missionary who lived and worked in Mongolia for 46 years. He made little mention of Mongolian history or archaeology because of his lack of interest in history or scholarship. In particular, no mention was made of Qaraqorum. On the contrary, he wrote in great detail about his experience in Mongolia, focusing in particular on the life and customs of the Mongols.

The situation was different for Maisky, who was a Russian historian and diplomat. As a historian, he wrote extensively about the ancient history of Mongolia, especially its capital city, including the history of the Mongol domination of Russia.

² On Scandinavian explorers in 20th century Mongolia, see Ch. Braae, “Scandinavian Explorers in Mongolia.” in *Among Herders of Inner Mongolia: The Haslund-Christensen Collection at the National Museum of Denmark*, ed. Ch. Braae (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2017), pp. 46-105.

It is also important to note that these travellers were not like Marco Polo or Plano Carpini, who visited Mongolia in the thirteenth century, and whose itineraries have been analysed by Thomas T. Allsen.³ Maisky and Larson never saw Qaraqorum with their own eyes but only saw the ruins of the city. It should be noted, therefore, that these notes are not the primary source of research on the former capital of the Mongol Empire; they only provide information about the ruins of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Russian explorers and their travel notes

During the Russian Empire (1721-1917), most foreigners who travelled to Mongolia focused on religion, trade, and exploration. The missionaries were mostly Russian Orthodox missionaries, while the explorers were mostly researchers supported by the Russian Geographical Society. As for traders, they traded between Mongolia and Russia. They mainly collected Mongolian livestock and raw materials.

The first explorer of the 19th-20th centuries was the sinologist and theologian Nikita Jakowlewitsch Bitschurin (1777-1853). He wrote a travelogue entitled "Notes on Mongolia".⁴ He used materials in Chinese to study Mongolian history, ethnography, and geography, including "History of the First Four Kings of Genghis Khan's Descendants",⁵ "An Overview of Early Modern Dzungar and East Turkestan".⁶ He also wrote in Mongolian, mostly notably "A Historical Review of the Oirats or Kalmyks from the 15th Century to the Present".⁷ Nikolay Przhevalsky (1839-1888) also made five expeditions to Central Asia. As a result of these trips, he wrote: "Mongolia, the Tangut Country, and the Solitudes of Northern Tibet",⁸ "Khangai"⁹ and "Journey to the Land of Wild Camels".¹⁰ The explorer and ethnographer Grigory Potanin (1835-1920) travelled extensively in Mongolia. He authored two

³ T. T. Allsen, "Imperial Posts, West, East and North: A Review Article Adam J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Time Islamic World*." *Achivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 7/11 (2011), pp. 237-76.

⁴ Н. Я. Бичурин, *Записки о Монголии I-II* (Санктпетербург: Типография Карла Крайя, 1828).

⁵ Н. Я. Бичурин, *История первых четырёх ханов из дома Чингисова* (Санктпетербург: Типография Карла Крайла, 1829).

⁶ Н. Я. Бичурин, *Описание Чжунгарии и Восточного Туркестана в древнем и нынешнем состоянии* (Санктпетербург: Типография Карла Крайла, 1829).

⁷ Vv.Aa., *Mongyol sudulul-un nebterkei toli. Olan ulus-un mongyol sudulul* / Encyclopaedia of Mongolian studies (Huhhot, 2019), pp. 108-109.

⁸ N. v. Prschewalski, *Reisen in der Mongolei, im Gebiet der Tanguten und den Wüsten Nordtibets in den Jahren 1870 bis 1873* (Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1877). English translation: N. Prejevalsky, *Mongolia, the Tangut Country, and the Solitudes of Northern Tibet: being a Narrative of Three Years' Travel in Eastern High Asia* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1876).

⁹ N. M. Prshewalski, *Hanhai: Von Kuldschaüber den Tianschan und zum Lob-nor* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1952).

¹⁰ N. M. Prshewalski and H. Sträubig: *In das Land der wilden Kamele: von Kjachta zu den Quellen des Gelben Flusses, die Erforschung des nördlichen Randgebietes von Tibet und der Weg über den Lob-nor durch das Tarimbecken* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1954).

books, “Tangut-Tibetan margins of China and Central Mongolia”,¹¹ and “Essays on Northwestern Mongolia”.¹² Aleksej Pozdneev (1851-1920) also travelled extensively in Mongolia and published “Mongolia and the Mongols”¹³ and “Sketches of Life of Buddhist Monasteries and Buddhist Clergy in Mongolia”.¹⁴ Pyotr Kozlov (1863-1935) also travelled to Mongolia and became the first scientist to discover the secrets of Qara Qoto. He wrote a travelogue entitled “Mongolia and Amdo and the Dead City of Qara-Qoto” (1923).¹⁵ Further, the Russian historian and politician Ivan Maisky wrote: “Mongolia on the Eve of Revolution” (1921).¹⁶

Notes on Qaraqorum

Among those who travelled to Mongolia in the first half of the twentieth century, most of those who reached central Mongolia and explored the ancient Mongolian capital of Qaraqorum were Russians. Among them is the Russian historian and politician Maisky (1884-1975), who arrived in Qaraqorum in 1919 and wrote in his diary about the remains of the city.

Maisky was a Russian-born Soviet politician, foreign affairs officer, and historian. As a historian, he focused on the ancient capital of the Mongols, who ruled Russia for hundreds of years. His writings are important for later researchers. His travel diary, “Mongolia on the Eve of Revolution” details the location of the city of Qaraqorum at the time, the size of the city, as well as its remaining walls and fortifications surrounding the city.

“Another remarkable monument of the past is Khara khorum (or black ruin, Khar Balgas) on the banks of the Orkhon River, twenty kilometers north of Erdene Zuu. There were large cracks on both sides, flattened to the ground. What was that? Is it

¹¹ Г. Н. Потанин, *Тангутско-Тибетская окраина Китая и Центральная Монголия* (Санкт-Петербург: Типография А. С. Суворина, 1893). See also related entries in: Vv.Aa., *Mongyol sudulul-un nebterkei toli. Olan ulus-un mongyol sudulul* / Encyclopaedia of Mongolian studies (Huhhot, 2019), p. 94.

¹² Г. Н. Потанин, *Очерки северо-западной Монголии I-IV* (С. Петербург, Типография Т. и Безобразова, 1881-1883). See Vv.Aa., *Mongyol sudulul-un nebterkei toli. Olan ulus-un mongyol sudulul* / Encyclopaedia of Mongolian studies (Huhhot, 2019), p. 94.

¹³ А. М. Позднеев, *Монголия и монголы. Результаты поездки в Монголию исполненной в 1892-1893 I-II* (Санктпетербург: Типография императорской академии наук, 1896-1898). English translation in J. R. Krueger ed., *Mongolia and the Mongols*. Trans. by J. R. Shaw and D. Plank (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1971).

¹⁴ А. М. Позднеев, *Очерки быта буддийских монастырей и буддийского духовенства в Монголии в связи с отношением сего последнего к народу* (Санктпетербург: Типография императорской академии наук, 1887). English translation: А. М. Pozdneev, *Religion and Ritual in Society: Lamaist Buddhism in Late 19th Century Mongolia*. Trans. by A. Raun and L. Raun (Bloomington: The Mongolia Society, 1978). See: Vv.Aa., *Mongyol sudulul-un nebterkei toli. Olan ulus-un mongyol sudulul* / Encyclopaedia of Mongolian studies (Huhhot, 2019), pp. 94-95.

¹⁵ П. К. Козлов, *Монголия и Аmdo и мертвый город Харахото* (Москва–Петроград: Государственное издательство географической литературы, 1923).

¹⁶ И. М. Майский, *Монголия накануне революции* (Москва: Издательство восточной литературы, 1959).

a door? At a distance of 50-60 meters around the wall, there are 6-7 gravel mounds with the remains of a mainline made of clay and gravel.... There are rubbles of a watchtower near the west wall, half of which is about 15 meters above the ground now. It looks very high in the past. The city stretched from east to west, covering an area of at least 4 square kilometers.”¹⁷

Until the early twentieth century, the remnants of Qaraqorum had only been eroded by winds and rain. Because of the country’s indigenous beliefs, it was forbidden to disturb the base of this ancient capital. Nomadic Mongolians have a long tradition of refraining from touching or destroying nature and its remains. According to Maisky’s account, two herders said to him, “Hello, Russian. Do not disturb this debris, or it will bring you misery.” (*Сайн байна уу Орос оо, Битгий хөндөөрэй, Золгүй юм болно шүү*).¹⁸ From this conversation, it can be seen that although the city of Qaraqorum had been destroyed by the beginning of the 20th century, in the hearts of the Mongols, its importance as the capital of the Mongol Empire still existed.

By 1919, all that was left outside the city walls was gone. Only some remnants of the original palaces and buildings, such as fragments of stone, bricks, and fragments of pottery, were scattered everywhere.

As you walk slowly along the steppes around the wall, there seem to be traces of antiquity everywhere. Existing buildings are scattered with bumps, and excavated sites and traces. There are also piles of bricks, pottery, and granite fragments. There is also a stone pool, a large millstone, a grass-covered irrigation ditch, and a street full of building debris on either side. Here and there, there are cluttered granite fragments that seem to be the wreckage of columns, balconies, and crossbars. One or two of them have various patterns, a lion’s claws with sharp nails, a tortoise’s snout, a wheel and indistinct rings and circles. There are also occasional inscriptions, but they have been erased or have faded.¹⁹

¹⁷ “Өнгөрсөн үеийн бас нэг гайхалтай дурсгал нь Эрдэнэ зуу хийдээс хойд зүгт 20-нод км зайд Орхон голын хөвөөнд орших Хархорин(буюу Хар Балгас)болой. Хоёр талд нь том гэгчийн сэтэрхий гаран газартай тэгширсэн байв. Юу байсан юм бол? Хаалга юм болов уу? Ханьн эргэн тойронд 50-60 метрийн зайд мөн л шавар, хайргаас бүтсэн тэргүүн шугамын үлдэгдэл маягтай овгорууд байх бөгөөд тал бүрд нь 6-7 ширхэг харагдана... Баруун ханын ойролцоо харуулын цамхагийн туурь байх бөгөөд одоо хагас нь нурж унасан энэ үлдэгдэл газраас 15 орчим метр өндөр байгааг харахад урьд нь их өндөр байсан бололтой. Тэр хот 4км квадратаас багагүй талбайг эзлэн зүүнээс баруун тийш сунан тогтсон байж...” И. М. Майский, *Монгол орон хувьсгалын босгон дээр (Mongolia on the Eve of Revolution)*, (Ulaanbaatar, 2014), pp. 102-103.

¹⁸ И. М. Майский, *Монгол орон хувьсгалын*, pp. 105.

¹⁹ “Хэрмийг тойрсон хээр талаар аажуухан сажлан явахад хаа сайгүй л өнө эртний ул мөр байх мэт. Урд өмнө нь байсан барилгадуус хоцорсон ховил, овон товон, ухаж төнхөгдсөн ором харагдана. Энд бас бөөн бөөн тоосго, ваар шавар, боржин чулууны хагархай хөглөрчээ. Мөн чулуугаар бүтээсэн усан сан, тээрмийн том гэгчийн чулуу, өвс ногоонд дарагдсан усалгааны суваг, хоёр талаар нь байшин барилгын үлдэгдэл дүүрэн байх гудамжны ор мөр ч байх шиг. Энд тэнд эмх замбараагүй хөглөрсөн боржин чулууны хагархай байгаа нь ямар нэгэн багана, тагт, хөндлөвчөөс үлдсэн бололтой. Тэдгээрийн ганц нэг дээр элдэв хээ угалз, урт гэгчийн хурц

The ancient capital of Mongolia, which underwent centuries of historical changes and natural erosion such as wind and rain, by the beginning of the 20th century had become a place marked only by city walls and filled with pottery.

Notes on the life of Mongolians in the early twentieth century

Ethnographic research is an important part of a travel diary, as it can accurately reflect the characteristics of an ethnic group and fully reflect the life, customs, appearance, society, language, and beliefs of a people.²⁰ Many Russian scholars and scholars of other nationalities who participated in the joint Sino-Swedish expedition to the Northwest published detailed travelogues about Mongolia and the people around Qaraqorum in the early 20th century. Frans August Larson (1870-1957), a Westerner who lived in Mongolia for 46 years, knew Mongolia and Mongolians well. His book, “Duke of Mongolia”,²¹ covers many aspects of Mongolia’s history, geography, climate, religion, people, and life. In it, he provided his audience with a wealth of material that is important for understanding the life and behaviour of Mongolians in the early 20th century. In the following section, we will look at how travellers’ depictions of Mongolian housing, clothing, family relationships, and the position of women in the eyes of Europeans were recorded in the travelogues.

What Larson observed were customs and a way of life that was reminiscent of that described in the 13th and 14th century travelogues. Mongolians were herders, they did not live in a house in one place, rather they moved their livestock between pastures and so were continually on the move in order to find good grass and water. Therefore, their dwellings and home furniture were suitable for a nomadic herder life. The *ger* was easy to move. Also, interior furniture traditionally had a fixed location. When entering a circular *ger*, there was a *tulga* in the centre of the *ger*, with kitchen utensils on the left side of the door and Buddhist and religious objects on the opposite side. Men sat on the right side of the house, and women and children sat on the left side. They respectfully sat in the back of the *ger* whenever a visitor arrived. They also lit a fire to keep the *ger* warm and to prepare tea and food. When it was cold, they heated their home, and conversely, when the weather warmed up, the *ger* gradually became more comfortable to live in.

“The Mongolian people dwell in a cone-shaped structure which foreigners call a *yurt* and the Mongols a *ger*. The inside framework is a crisscross lattice of wood, generally willow, bound together with short rawhide thongs. These press up into a small

хумстай арслангийн сарвуу, ёст мэлхийн хоншоор, хүрд, учир нь үл олдох цагаригь тойргуудтай дүрс, бас хааяа зарим газарт бичээс байх боловч илт арчигдаж, элэгдэж бүдгэрсэн байх учир унших ямар ч боломж байсангүй.” И. М. Майский, *Монгол орон хувьсгалын*, pp. 105-106.

²⁰ On travel writing and ethnography see J. P. Rubiés, “Travel Writing and Ethnography.” in P. Hulme and T. Youngs eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 242-61., which focuses, however, on early modern travel writing.

²¹ F. A. Larson, *Larson, Duke of Mongolia* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1930).

bundle for transport. When a *yurt* is set up, men stretch out four to eight of these sections, according to the size desired, to form a circular wall about four feet high. On opening is left on the south side in which is placed a carved door frame. Next, two workers stand in the centre of the circle and hold a wheel on poles high above their heads. Other poles are stuck cantingly into slots in the wheel with their lower ends fitted into leather loops at the top of the lattice. This makes a skeleton cone. Over this skeleton cone, with care to leave the wheel uncovered, the workers put three or four layers of wool felt, which are shaped to fit the cone and fasten them with horsehair rope. It is the custom in the autumn to renew half of the *yurt*. In the last mild days of summer, the felt is taken off the *yurt* as, shaken, and the bad pieces discarded. Then it is put on again with what was the back top layer now the front top layer, with new, felt at the back.”²²



Fig.1. Mongolian grasslands, Inner Mongolia (*photography by Walther Bosshard*)²³

At the beginning of the last century, Mongolians wore traditional Mongolian costumes. Nowadays, traditional costumes are often worn only on holidays and anniversaries. Therefore, in order to study the clothing and ornaments of the Mongols a hundred years ago, it is clear that the detailed descriptions in these travel notes, or the pictures and recordings of that time, will be an important tool. Larson’s notes detail the attire and ornaments of the Mongolian men, women, and monks of that time. The 13th century Franciscan John of Plano Carpini (1185-1252), in his travel diary, offers one of the most significant descriptions of Mongolian clothing culture, classifying three main styles: clothes for males, females, and monks. For example, Carpini writes: “On their head they have a round thing made of twigs or bark, which is an ell in height and ends on top in a square; it gradually increases in circumference

²² Larson, *Larson, Duke of Mongolia*, p. 52.

²³ The photos by Walther Bosshard are collected in the Archives of Contemporary History at ETH Zurich (www.afz.ethz.ch). The author of the paper had access to the pictures included in the article with permission of the archive.

from the bottom to the top, and on the top there is a long and slender cane of gold or silver or wood, or even feather, and it is sewn on to a cap which reaches to the shoulders”.²⁴ But by the beginning of the 20th century, even the women of wealthy families had stopped using it. As Larson notes:

“The garb of man, women, and children, whether commoner or noble, is practically the same. They wear trousers and shirt under a long outer garment slit on the sides so as not to hamper them when in the saddle. Men and unmarried girls have a long garment bound with a wide girdle. This girdle is a length of silk wound several times about the waist. Married women wear their outer garments hanging free. Everyone wears high riding boots of stout leather, turned up at the toe tip to suit the Mongolian stirrup. The tops are high and have a pocket in them for the man’s pipe or for any article the women may desire to carry there. The garments are fashioned of cotton, of silk, or fur in winter. The robes of priests are of crimson or yellow, and those of the lay folk are of every other colour.”²⁵

Further, he adds:

“...Noblewomen have headdresses of gold set with rubies, emeralds, and pearls, often with a long curtain of jewels, which hangs to the waist behind, set in a network of gold. Commoners’ headdresses are of silver, with the stones according to the wealth of the woman’s family. Every feminine headdress has deep old-rose coral set in it. Coral is the national ornament of Mongolia. Some women use no ornamentation except lovely pieces of coral that have been handed down from the generations, set in silver. Every woman also has a snuff bottle made of gold or silver and ornamented with coral and jewels. Every Mongol man, whether lama or layman, wears a long knife, thrust through his girdle on his right side. These knives are carried in a sheath which also contains a socket in which chopsticks are carried. Attached to each sheath is a chain with a heavy ornament. The chain is twisted through the girdle and the end ornament keeps it from slipping out. Knife sheath and chain are of gold or silver studded with precious stones, according to the wealth and fancy of the owner. On the left side, every man wears a flint purse with a chain and end ornament to match those on the knife. Each man also has a snuff bottle, larger than the woman’s, which he carries in his girdle. Each person in Mongolia has his or her food bowl. These are of birth-root, often gold- or silver-lined and with gold or silver ornamentation on the outside. No person in Mongolia goes abroad without taking his food bowl with him. It is carried in front of his or her garment.”²⁶

²⁴ Ch. Dawson, *Mission to Asia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 7.

²⁵ Larson, *Larson, Duke of Mongolia*, pp. 50-51.

²⁶ Larson, *Larson, Duke of Mongolia*, pp. 50-51.

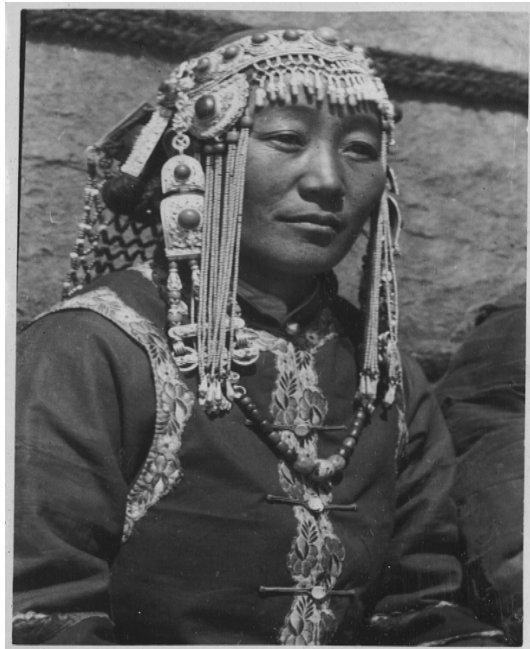


Fig 2. Tsahar woman, Inner Mongolia (photography by Walther Bosshard)

The daily tasks of Mongolian nomadic livestock herders were divided up between family members: male members were more likely to work on the herd in the countryside, while female members were more likely to coordinate household chores. Equality between men and women in Mongolia was of great interest to Westerners. It is interesting to note that the 13th century Plano Carpini notes: “They show considerable respect to each other and are very friendly together, and they willingly share their food, although there is little enough of it.”²⁷

Similarly, Larson notes:

“A good many of the women are absolute rulers in their yurts. They know and track every animal in every flock and herd, and will not permit the men of their family to sell or trade them without their consent. Often when I have wanted to buy a good horse of a man he has asked me to wait until he has obtained the consent of his wife. As a rule, I find such families very prosperous, because women seem to be better able than men to attend to the small things that build a fortune. They avoid wastefulness, and nurse sick animals or weak lambs and calves and foals, more wisely than men. Compared to those of the West, the morals of the Mongolian women are, to put it mildly, lax. There has never been a double-standard system in Mongolia. The Mongolian women are not property; a Mongolian woman can and does do exactly as she pleases.”²⁸

²⁷ Dawson, *Mission to Asia*, p. 15.

²⁸ Larson, *Larson, Duke of Mongolia*, pp. 70-71.

Thus, compared to the 13th century travelogue Larson's account testify to the fact that the nomadic pastoral and social conditions of the Mongols had remained largely unchanged. Further, Larson's work contains a good deal of influential Buddhist material that has been popular among Mongolians since the 16th century. The respectable position of monks within herder families could be seen in the fact that the Mongols were zealous worshippers of the Yellow Religion and taught their children to read and write.²⁹ Regarding the education of children, he notes:

“Mongolians treat each other with great respect. While men take care of the outside of the *ger*, they have a special respect for their wife inside the *ger*, and they take care of everything in the *ger*. Children do not go to school, they are prepared from an early age to cope with a difficult life, and they help their parents with family chores. To make the fire, they collect dung, and they herd livestock, and help demolish houses. Occasionally, an itinerant monk will visit a family for a few days or even a few weeks. During this time, the monk teaches the children to read and write.”³⁰

About a field trip to the Northwest

Sven Hedin was the first to launch a joint field trip to Central Asia. At the time, Dr. Hedin had travelled to Central Asia three times, and this was his fourth trip. The number of scientists, finances, and manpower was greater than ever before. This is evidenced by the fact that the Europeans of the time and the participants in China described it as a “traveling university”.³¹

The tour guide, Sven Hedin (1865-1952), was a Swedish geographer, hurdler, and travel writer. From an early age, he loved to explore, so he studied geography. He was an academician at the Royal Academy of Sciences and the Swedish Institute of Literature and was awarded 11 prestigious doctorates from around the world. He was honoured as a member of many scientific societies and organizations.

During a series of visits to Germany between 1925 and 1926, Sven Hedin undertook to study the conditions of air travel from Berlin to Beijing, funded by the Lufthansa airline. After arranging a scientific mission for conduct a meteorological survey to build an airport, he held talks at China Government House and obtained the approval and support of the Government House and local military authorities. However, due to protests from scholars in China, there were further negotiations, and eventually, a nineteen-point agreement was reached to establish a joint field trip between China and Sweden.

²⁹ Larson, *Larson, Duke of Mongolia*, pp. 70-71.

³⁰ H. E. Dettmann, *Karawanen-Fahrt mit Sven Hedin* (München: Schneider Verlag, 1963), pp. 25-27.

³¹ S. Hedin, *Auf großer Fahrt. Meine Expedition mit Schweden, Deutschen und Chinesen durch die Wüste Gobi 1927-1928* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1929), p. 11. English translation: S. Hedin, *Across the Gobi Desert*. Transl. by H. J. Cant (London: George Routledge & Son, 1931; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1933).

Xu Binchang 徐炳昶 (1888-1976) led the researchers from China, including Yuan Fuli 袁复礼 (1893-1987), Huang Wenbi 黄文弼 (1893-1966), Ding Daoheng 丁道衡 (1899-1956), Zhang Fanxun 詹蕃勋 (fl. 1920s-1930s) and ten more people from China. E. Bergman and E. Norin (fl. 1920s-1930s), W. Haude, and seventeen other members from Sweden, Germany, and Denmark took part. In addition to Mongolian and Chinese workers, the expedition now has a total of more than 60 people. The field study lasted for eight years, and the members of the field study were constantly changing.

This expedition was a great success in the fields of history, archaeology, ethnography, geography, living matter, and meteorology. In the field of history, it was very successful in analysing the traces of ancient history and comparing them with the historical records of the ancient peoples living in Central Asia, especially in Xinjiang. Archaeological finds included more than 120 boxes of ancient artefacts, including new stone tools, pottery, bronze ware, bone, and glassware. Moreover, there were many Chinese bamboo inscriptions from the Gashuun Lake area and large bones of giant lizards and eggs from the Gobi Desert. Important discoveries were made. Geography and topography revealed that Lake Lob was drying up. More than 160 measurements of the latitude were taken. 35 minerals were collected, most notably from the Bayan-Ovoo ore mine. Numerous animal fossils were identified and collected for living biology, of which more than 470 turned out to be new species. Also, more than 7,500 plant fossils were collected. On meteorology, they established seven meteorological stations on the river and for the first time scientifically studied precipitation, air pressure, and climate change in the Northwest of China. The field trip to the China strengthened the scientific exchange between the West and the East and initiated and deepened research in a wide range of disciplines, including history, geography, ethnography, archaeology, biology, and meteorology.³²

As a literary form, the travelogue not only expressed the author's views, but also covered topics such as sightseeing, politics, history, society, customs, geography, religion, and landscapes. Therefore, travel notes provide important material for research on a country's history, politics, economy, geography, culture, and social structure. Much of the travelogues about Inner Mongolia were recorded by Westerners in their mother tongue, and many of them have not been translated into Mongolian, so the Mongolian world does not have access to these works.

The Sino-Swedish expedition lasted a total of eight years, and due to the large number of participants, a significant volume of travel notes have been and continue to be published. Most of the European members of the expedition were from Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, and as at that time the importance of the German language in Western Europe had not yet been lost, almost ninety percent of the travel notes were

³² Wang Keyun 王可云 (aut.), Fang Xinliang 房鑫亮 (superv.), *Zhong Rui xibei kexue kaocha tuan yan-jiu* 中瑞西北科学考察团研 (Master's Thesis, East China Normal University 2005), pp. 3-35.

published in German. Among the expedition members, Fritz Muehlenweg (1898-1961) was the only researcher to write and publish many travel notes on Mongolia's livestock, ritual, behaviour, and religion. Also, members from China who participated in the trip wrote diaries. The history, geography, political situation, ethnic life, customs, religion, physical characteristics, and clothing of the people living in the area were observed. The following is a list of works in German from these notes:

- Sven Hedin's "Across the Gobi Desert",³³ "Riddles of the Gobi",³⁴ "Jehol, City of Emperors" (Jehol, die Kaiserstadt, 1932),³⁵ "The Flight of 'Big Horse'",³⁶ "The Silk Road",³⁷ and "The Wandering Lake".³⁸
- Nils Ambolt's "Karavan. Travels in Eastern Turkestan",³⁹ and "Achieving My Dream".⁴⁰
- Paul Lieberenz's "Crossing the Sands of Asia with Sven Hedin".⁴¹
- Ferdinand Lessing's "Mongols, Herders, Monks, and Demons".⁴²
- Works by Hans Eduard Dettmann, such as "Crossing the Gobi with Sven Hedin",⁴³ "The Adventure of My Life",⁴⁴ and "Traveling by Camel with Sven Hedin".⁴⁵
- Henning Haslund-Christensen's "Tents in Mongolia",⁴⁶ and "Men and Gods in Mongolia".⁴⁷

³³ Hedin, *Auf großer Fahrt*.

³⁴ S. A. Hedin, *Rätsel der Gobi. Die Fortsetzung der Großen Fahrt durch Innerasien in den Jahren 1928–1930* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1931). English translation: S. Hedin, *Riddles of the Gobi Desert*. Trans. by E. Sprigge and C. Napier (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1933).

³⁵ S. A. Hedin, *Jehol, die Kaiserstadt* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1932). English translation: S. Hedin, *Jehol, City of Emperors*. Trans. by E. G. Nash (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1933).

³⁶ S. A. Hedin, *Die Flucht des Grossen Pferdes* (Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1935). English translation: S. A. Hedin, *The Flight of "Big Horse": The Trail of War in Central Asia*. Trans. by F. H. Lyon (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1936).

³⁷ S. A. Hedin: *Die Seidenstrasse* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1936). English translation: S. Hedin, *The Silk Road: Ten Thousand Miles Through Central Asia*. Trans. by J. Hare (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1938).

³⁸ S. A. Hedin, *Der wandernde See* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1937). English translation: S. A. Hedin, *The Wandering Lake*. Trans. by F. H. Lyon (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940).

³⁹ N. Ambolt, *Karawanen. Im Auftrag Sven Hedins durch Innerasien* (Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1937). English translation: N. P. Ambolt, *Karavan: Travels in Eastern Turkestan*. Trans. by J. Bulman (London and Glasgow: Blackie, 1939).

⁴⁰ N. P. Abolt, *Zum Ziel meiner Träume* (Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1944).

⁴¹ P. K. Lieberenz and A. Berger, *Mit Sven Hedin durch Asiens Wüsten: nach dem Tagebuch des Filmoperators der Expedition Paul Lieberenz* (Berlin: Wegweiser-Verlag, 1932).

⁴² F. Lessing, *Mongolen, Hirten, Priester und Dämonen* (Berlin: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1935).

⁴³ H. E. Dettmann, *Mit Sven Hedin durch die Wüste Gobi* (Berlin: Schneider, 1938).

⁴⁴ H. E. Dettman, *Das Abenteuer meines Lebens Mit Sven Hedin auf Forschungsreisen* (Göttingen: W. Fischer, 1965).

⁴⁵ H. E. Dettman, *Karawanen-Fahrt mit Sven Hedin* (München: Schneider, 1950).

⁴⁶ H. Halsund-Christensen, *Abenteuer in der Mongolei* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1933); English translation: H. Halsund-Christensen, *Tents in Mongolia* (London, Routledge, 2019).

⁴⁷ H. Halsund-Christensen, *Zajagan: Menschen und Götter in der Mongolei* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1936). English translation: H. Halsund-Christensen: *Men and Gods in Mongolia* (London: Routledge, 2019).

- Gösta Montell's "Traveling through the Steppes of Mongolia",⁴⁸ "Between Gods and Men"⁴⁹
- Fritz Mühlenweg's "The Valley of No Return",⁵⁰ "Truth and Imagination"⁵¹ "The Secret Journey through the Gobi Sands",⁵² "Mongolian Secrets",⁵³ and "Three Times in Mongolia".⁵⁴

Works written by Chinese scholars who participated in the expedition include Huang Wenbi's "Diary of Exploration in Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang 1927-1930",⁵⁵ "The Exploration around Lob Nor: A report on the exploratory work during 1930 and 1934",⁵⁶ Xu Binchang's "Diary of an Expedition to the West"⁵⁷ among others.

Concluding remarks

20th century travel journals about Mongolia provide in-depth information about the Mongols of the time of the time when they were written and are important in the social sciences, especially in the field of ethnography and folklore.

Of course, the twentieth century was a time of great change for the Mongols, as the great transformations in the world political scene also affected Mongolia. Traditional nomadic pastoralism gradually disappeared in Inner Mongolia as Mongols were divided into three countries in terms of political affiliation and benefited from new technical, professional, and other economic influences. Under the political authority of the Soviet Union, Mongols in Mongolia and the Soviet Union also adjusted their lives in many respects, one notable example being the adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet. These innovations brought about a marked shift in the politics, economy, and culture of Mongolians. Ethnography and folklore also followed these changes. Today, when we study the life and behaviour of the Mongols, we must take into account the traditions that date back to the beginning of the last century.

⁴⁸ G. Montell, *Durch die Steppen der Mongolei* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1938).

⁴⁹ G. Montell, *Unter Göttern und Menschen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1948).

⁵⁰ F. Mühlenweg, *Das Tal ohne Wiederkehr oder die Reise von Magog nach Gog* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1952).

⁵¹ F. Mühlenweg, *Echter und falscher Zauber: Geschichten von der Mongolei* (Freiburg–Basel–Wien: Herder, 1963).

⁵² F. Mühlenweg, *In geheimer Mission durch die Wüste Gobi* (Freiburg: Herder, 1950).

⁵³ F. Mühlenweg, *Mongolische Heimlichkeiten: Erzählungen und Weisheitssprüche aus der Wüste Gobi* (Lengwil: Libelle, 2002).

⁵⁴ F. Mühlenweg, *Drei Mal Mongolei: Dampignak und andere Erzählungen; Reisetagbücher und Briefe aus der Sven-Hedin-Expedition durch die innere Mongolei* (Regensburg: Libelle, 2006).

⁵⁵ Huang Lie 黄烈 (ed.), *Huang Wenbi meng xin kaocha riji* 黄文弼蒙新考察日记 (1927-1930), (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990).

⁵⁶ Huang Wenbi 黄文弼, *Luobu nao'er kaogu ji* 罗布淖尔考古记 (Beijing: Guoli Beidaxue, 1948).

⁵⁷ Xu Binchang 徐炳昶, *Xuxusheng xiyou riji* 徐旭生西游日记 (Ningxia: Ningxia renmin chubanshe, 2000 [1930]).