

“Post-Pandemic Societies in Inner Asia” Project Seminar in Tokyo

# Pastoralism, Spirituality, and Performance: Mongolia and Kenya

Date: May 15, 2023, 14:30 - 17:30

Venue: Agora Global 3F, Project Space, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

## PROGRAM

**Welcome from the organizer, Kamimura Akira** (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) 14:30-14:40

**Keynote address:**

**Troy Sternberg** (Oxford University) 14:40-15:10  
Does Religious Change Lead to Environmental Change in Kenya and Mongolia?

**Surna** (Chiba University) 15:10-15:35  
Folk Remedies for Domestic Animals among Mongolian Pastoralists:  
A Case Study in Subei, Mongolian Autonomous Country, Gansu Province,  
China

Tea Break (15 minutes)

**Chieko HIROTA** (Hokkaido University) 15:50-16:15  
Diversity of Seasonal Movement by Kazakh Pastoralists in Mongolia:  
A Comparative Study of Cases in Four Counties of Bayn-Ulgii Province

**Kamimura Akira** (TUFS) 16:15-16:40  
Hybridity and Vitality of Culture: Mongolian Traditional Performing Arts  
during and after the Covid-19 Pandemic

Tea Break (10 minutes)

**Discussion** 16:50-17:30

**Closing** 17:30





## Post-Pandemic Societies in Inner Asia

<https://www.ppiia.ouce.ox.ac.uk/>



### Troy Sternberg



Senior Researcher, University of Oxford, School of Geography. Extensive travel led to Troy's interest in desert regions, environments and people. Thoughts on how arid lands functioned and why there was such great diversity and extent led to his D Phil on pastoral environments in the Gobi Desert (Oxford, 2009). Research focused on extreme climate hazards (drought, dzud), environments (water, steppe vegetation, desertification) and social dynamics (pastoralists, social-environmental interaction, mining and communities). Since 2005 Troy has continued to work in Mongolia and since 2015 in Central Asia.

Abstract: Does religious change lead to environmental change in Kenya and Mongolia?

Changes in religion and spirituality shape how pastoralists perceive and use their land and natural resources in Mongolia and Kenya. This ongoing research studies how contemporary changes in belief and practice affects environmental engagement. In Maasai drylands of Kenya, this examines a transition to evangelical Christianity with notable changes in land use. Modified religious practices include ways of indirectly claiming land for pasture, foreign support (US) for churches, and changes to customary herding patterns. The process also has social implications as more behaviour is proscribed by the church, there are changing gender roles, and 'prosperity gospel' is followed.

In Mongolia, we evaluate the role of Buddhism and shamanism in the countryside. The establishment of ovoos and a role in demarcating land is a recurring theme. Monks speak of encouraging positive environmental education and practices. Whilst there may be differences in approaches, both Buddhists and shamans 'pray for rain at ovoo ceremonies'. There is an impression of shamans being a UB and city phenomena, whilst Buddhists are grounded in customary land use practices.

The talk presents a contemporary context and initial field investigation in two very different pastoral landscapes.

### Surna

Graduate Student, Chiba University

Abstract: Folk Remedies for Domestic Animals among Mongolian Pastoralists: A Case Study in Subei Mongolian Autonomous Country, Gansu Province, China

This study examined healthcare practices for domestic animals among Mongolian pastoralists living in the Subei Mongolian Autonomous Country of Gansu province, China. The region is home to approximately 5,000 Mongolians, accounting for almost 40% of the population. Domesticated animals include goats, sheep, horses, yaks, and camels. The cases and remedies discussed in this study are for these species. The study utilized participant observation and interviews, gathering 63 cases and remedies through interviews with two pastoralists and a veterinary surgeon with extensive experience in the field, all of whom were Mongolian.

Among the cases, the following remedies were used for "mild" illnesses: administering "medicinal materials", washing the affected area, rubbing the affected area, and burning the bleeding surface area. For "severe" cases where death is considered likely, in addition to the above remedies, acupuncture, bloodletting, and a treatment called "domnakh" in the local Mongolian language were used. Infectious cases could not be treated and must be quarantined when found and buried in the ground or incinerated when dead. Western veterinary pharmaceuticals and vaccinations are now increasingly recognized for disease prevention, and their use is becoming more common.

### Hirota Chieko

Research Fellow, Hokkaido University. She has been interested in the practice of Kazakhs living in western Mongolia,



which is the enthusiastic decoration of the interiors of their yurt dwellings (known in Kazakh as "kiiz-ui"), and has conducted research to find out the background to this practice. Hirota has also examined the present pastoralism and social interactions among relatives in relation to the keeping of the decorative habits of the Kazakhs in Mongolia. The main research place is Bayan-Ulgii Province, Mongolia.

Abstract: Diversity of Seasonal Movement by Kazakh Pastoralists in Mongolia -A Comparative Study of Cases in Four Counties of Bayan-Ulgii Province-

Based on case reports from four counties in Bayan-Ulgii Province in western Mongolia, this presentation will point out the diversity of seasonal movement patterns among Kazakh pastoralists in Mongolia, discuss background factors that have produced such diversity, and clarify issues for future research.

According to the latest report of the research team of Marchina, who surveyed pastoralists in Nogoon Nuur County, Bayan-Ulgii Province, it was pointed out that the previous studies on the migration patterns of Kazakh pastoralists in Mongolia based on the words used to describe seasonal camps, which may have underestimated the number of camps [Marchina et al. 2022: 55].

Certainly, there is room to reexamine the high mobility of Kazakh pastoralists in their seasonal movements. However, as far as the reporter has studied the seasonal movement of Kazakh pastoralists in Altai, Sagsai, and Burgan counties of the province, the seasonal movement of Kazakh pastoralists today forms increasingly diverse patterns depending on social and economic factors in each household and the geography of the place of residence. It is only some Kazakh pastoralists who remain highly mobile, and the mobility of both people and livestock should be examined more carefully.

### Kamimura Akira

Researcher, Institute of Global Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. He has conducted his fieldwork in

western Mongolia and other regions of Mongolia since 1992. His research topics are (1) the ethnicity and history of west Mongolia, (2) land use: pastoral migrations, pastureland as commons, and the perception of landscape drawing on old manuscript maps, and (3) traditional and contemporary Mongolian performing arts. He is also a principal investigator for a research project, "Sound World and Arts of Voice in Western Mongolia: How to Communicate with the Master of the Altai Mountains."



Abstract: Hybridity and Vitality of Culture: Mongolian Traditional Performing Arts during and after the Covid-19 Pandemic  
This paper clarifies how the hybridity of culture relates to cultural vitality, using as an example the "Dance Chance" movements and events carried out on Facebook and YouTube by Mongolian people around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Mongolian Government decided to broadcast a pre-recorded video clip on television instead of a live performance of the opening ceremony of Naadam due to the pandemic. On July 16, Erdene-Ochir, the founder of the "Dance Chance" movement, posted their dance performance on Facebook from the countryside. He patched into the performance a Kalmyk folk song from the clip's contents, the domestic tourism boom following the extended severe quarantine, and the "Kiki Dance Challenge" originating from the song by the famous rapper Drake. The post made many Mongolian followers spread their performances in various versions worldwide through social media. Mongolian traditional or national performing arts were invented as a new socialist national culture or a hybrid of European and Mongolian traditions. The description of the development of the "Dance Chance" movement during the COVID-19 pandemic shows the link between the hybridity rooted in Soviet cultural policies and the vitality of the current culture.

Contact:

E-mail: [kamimura.akira@tufs.ac.jp](mailto:kamimura.akira@tufs.ac.jp)