

## 15. The uses of genealogy: A historical study of the nomadic and sedentarised Buryat

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A partir de l'étude de deux groupes Buryat avant la collectivisation, les Ekhirit-Bulagat et les Khori, on tente dans cet article de montrer comment s'élaborent différents types de généalogies.

Après avoir examiné les conditions écologiques, économiques, politiques et démographiques, et après avoir indiqué le rôle joué par les généalogies dans ces deux groupes, on analyse comment dans ces conditions spécifiques l'usage de la généalogie détermine la forme de celle-ci.

Chez les Ekhirit-Bulagat, l'économie pastorale et nomade était très limitée. Le rôle principal de la généalogie dans cette société était de régler les droits sur des pâturages peu abondants. Chaque ligne cadette devait faire reconnaître ses liens généalogiques avec la ligne aînée pour avoir accès au sol, tout en évitant de lui reconnaître un trop grande supériorité afin de préserver ses propres droits. Il en résulte des généalogies contradictoires et incohérentes.

Chez les Khori, l'économie était fondée presque exclusivement sur l'élevage extensif. On ne trouve pas l'antagonisme exacerbé entre sections lignagères observée chez les Ekhirit-Bulagat. Leurs généalogies ne servaient pas à revendiquer des droits sur les pâturages mais à définir les statuts politiques de prince ou de sujet. Ceci entraînait la formation de généalogies coniques avec reconnaissance de la séniorité. Le lamaïsme a pu aussi représenter un facteur constituant d'une telle structure généalogique.

In the activity of making unilineal genealogies, selection amongst the ancestors is virtually a necessity. There are many well-known formulations of particular mechanisms by which this takes place. The legal fictions described by Evans-Pritchard (1941, 1951) concern the preservation of lineal descent, despite real ties through non-members of the lineage; or, according to the "size factor" theory of I.M. Lewis (1961: 149), numerically large lineages count more generations to the same ancestor than do small ones because they have more levels of segmentation to account for. The best-known formulation of these mechanisms in general is probably that of "structural amnesia" (Gulliver 1955: 113-117). When groups of people claim unilineal descent from single ancestors, lines perceived as collateral are "forgotten" if it is wished to preserve the unity of a

particular group, but they are "remembered" if, for one reason or another, the group has occasion to split up. This makes it clear that the selectivity of genealogies is not simply a matter of the impossibility of remembering and recording all ancestors; it is a function of the conceptual framework of causality in which genealogies are used to account for actual relations by explaining them.

A question immediately arises; if genealogies necessarily involve the forgetting of certain ancestors — or the complete rearrangement of the social relations which a given ancestor actually had — then do they not also on occasion require the dredging-up, if not the invention of ancestors? In that case, it would be wrong to regard genealogies simply as lists of survivors, as what is remembered of actual kinship. Studying the variety of Buryat-Mongol genealogies has led me to think that we should see a more radical distinction between the representation (the genealogy) and the relations it is supposed to represent (the real kinship relations of the past) than that implied by "structural amnesia". This is because day to day decisions at the most basic social level, families and groups of families, force people in varying real conditions to create genealogies in different ways, despite the ideological weight of a general idea or cultural model of society defined in any particular genealogical idiom.

It is clear that mechanisms such as "structural amnesia" do not work in a uniform way in all societies nor even within the same "society". Particular social groups produce characteristic genealogies of their own. The Berber herdsmen, for example, cite only the ancestors necessary to account for present lineages, while Berber saints introduce a multitude of prestigious-sounding ancestors for effect (Gellner 1967: 38–40). As texts, genealogies have different characteristic shapes, determined not only by the extent of the operation of mechanisms such as "structural amnesia" and the invention of ancestors, but also by the range of acceptable and describable relationships: the recording of different mothers in a patrilineal genealogy, illegitimate births, adoptions, magical conceptions, and so on. There is always a reason why a particular person (or group) should record or not record such ties. The genealogical types thus established persist over time, being reproduced in the same form by different members of the group, as long as the conditions remain which made it useful to make these distinctions.

The shape of genealogies is important in practice because genealogical thinking is causal thinking: the past gives birth to the present, and the present gives birth to the future. Looking at genealogies from outside, from the point of view of the analyst, we may see that people are defining themselves only by reference to other people. But from inside, as Ego, positions are not relative but absolute. It is from this basis of belief in genealogies as though they were given, not created, and of the standing of every single person in a genealogically defined society as an Ego, that decisions are taken which affect practical life in the present and future. Thus genealogical decisions made for practical reasons

in the past, producing a certain "shape" of genealogy which includes or excludes people from amongst the ancestors, have a certain force with regard to present and future practical decisions (for example in inheritance) by virtue of the existence of the genealogy and people's belief in it.

But before looking at the effects in society of different kinds of genealogy, it is necessary to see how types of genealogy are produced. It does not seem to me to be the case that there are Platonic ideals of total genealogies, to which social groups refer. Rather, there are rules by which genealogies are made which create a particular "language". Genealogies are required to perform certain specific functions in a given society and these are relatively constant in time. But genealogies differ when the real conditions establishing the constraints on these functions differ, and it becomes necessary to change the rules for making genealogies so that they can continue to perform the same role. For example, if it becomes necessary to limit the number of people being absorbed into a genealogically-based society, a differentiation may be introduced among the genealogical principles in order to establish a ranking of claims; thus, to the rules "son of X" and "brother of X" there may be added "adopted son of X", "illegitimate son of X", etc.

In this paper I shall look at the conditions of the creation of genealogies among the nomadic and sedentarised Buryat in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries. All Buryat groups had the same ideas about what genealogies were for and what they should do: they should map everyone in Buryat society by reference to patrilineal descent groups; they should delimit the extent of exogamy; they should establish rights to inherited positions – political offices and occupational specialisations such as smith, shaman, or herbalist; and they should establish rights to pasture and other categories of land, and to water resources. But although Buryats had a common view of what genealogies should or could do, which stemmed essentially from the Mongolian nomadic pastoral culture from which they emerged, this does not mean that their genealogies were identical in shape. Different groups of Buryats in fact lived in varying ecological situations, and they were subject to different demographic, economic and political conditions. These led to sedentarisation of some groups by the nineteenth century while others were still nomadic and yet others in the process of sedentarisation. In order for genealogies to be put to the same practical use in these different conditions, the genealogies themselves were actually required to be different.

### **Economic, social and political conditions**

A controlled comparison of this kind could be made within the whole range of Buryat groups, from the most sedentarised and agricultural in the Balagansk region west of Lake Baikal, to the furthest offshoots of the nomadic Khori Buryats in the Barga steppes in Manchuria. On a larger scale the analysis could

encompass neighbouring peoples, such as the herdsmen of the Altai and Sayan mountains, the Evenkis, and the Khalkha Mongols; in many senses the north Asian steppes and forests comprise one culture zone. However, in the present paper I shall limit the analysis to two contrasted groups of Buryat, who are numerically and culturally the most important. These are the Ekhirit and Bulagat tribes or "clan-families" (Lewis 1961: 7), often known as the "western Buryat" because their homelands are on the north-western side of Lake Baikal, and the Khori clan-family, the main group of the "eastern Buryat". I characterise the Ekhirit-Bulagat as "sedentarised", and the Khori as "nomadic", but it should be remembered that these labels are historically specific to the nineteenth century. In fact, both groups originally belonged to the early nomadic pastoralist Mongolian culture and underwent processes of sedentarisation at different times, the western Buryats in the nineteenth century, and the Khori in the first half of the twentieth century (a process in this case speeded up by collectivisation in the 1930s). Strictly speaking, it is even incorrect to describe the nineteenth-century Ekhirit-Bulagat or Khori as uniformly and totally sedentarised or nomadic, since there were uncharacteristic minority groups within each of them, for example the Christianised *ulus* (village) of Khori Buryats which was totally sedentary even at this time.

In general, besides the Ekhirit-Bulagat and the Khori, the Buryat consisted of numerous smaller tribes and clans which had migrated into the Baikal area from other parts of Mongolia, and by the end of the nineteenth century the economies of those within the Russian State were somewhere between the two "types" described below. The Buryats remaining on the Mongolian and Chinese sides of the border, on the other hand, were mostly even more nomadic than the Khori and in any case were subject to very different social and political conditions. The materials on which this paper is based refer to the Buryats of the Russian State; the source data consists of Buryat, Russian, and a few Mongolian historical and ethnographic writings, and the oral accounts of informants (Barguzin and Selenga Buryats, 1967 and 1974) talking about the past.

### *Material conditions of production*

#### Territorial extent of resources

##### 1. Pastures

###### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Pastures were clearly limited by forest to the north and west, by mountains to the south, and by the presence of other groups (Khori, Khongodor, southern Buryats). During the 19th century pasture became even scarcer as increasing numbers of Russian

###### Khori

Although blocked by the presence of Ekhirit-Bulagat to the west, pastures were unlimited to the east even as far as Manchuria, and effectively to the south; reasons for not crossing the border into Mongolia were political rather than economic. North Mongolian

peasants settled here. In some cases the Tsarist government simply annexed the summer pastures used by Buryats and gave the land to Russian settlers, thus forcing these Buryats to turn away from large-scale herding.

## 2. Agriculture and hay-making

### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Agriculture was generally subsidiary to pastoralism in 18th century. But by the 20th it had increased to the extent that for many subgroups of Ekhirit-Bulagat it had become the main means of subsistence, although no group gave up herding entirely. Agricultural land was scarce, being limited to river-valleys, and because of the settlement by Russians it grew scarcer, even though new land was being taken over and converted from pasture. Rich Buryats turned increasingly towards production for the market.

During 19th and 20th centuries there was a great increase in hay meadows for winter feeding, until by the 1920s virtually all animals were fed on hay from November to May. Pastures were consequently further reduced.

## Demography

### Ekhirit-Bulagat

The Ekhirit-Bulagat population seems to have been significantly expanding during the 18th century when some valleys east and south of Lake Baikal were colonised. But after then the average population was not rising excessively (1.5% per year), and in some places declined (Kulakov 1898: 50–53); in Yangut clan, of normal economic prosperity, there was a population drop of 13.36% from 1897 to 1912. The greatest losses were in areas of more emphasis on pastoralism, whereas in regions with more agriculture the population was rising (Kulakov 1898: 42–48; Manžigeev 1960: 174).

## Herds

### Ekhirit-Bulagat

The main type of herd was cattle, in the

pastures were not overstocked. There were fewer Russian settlers here than in the west, mainly because the land was less suitable for agriculture.

### Khori

Not much land was suitable for agriculture, and there was little competition for what land there was. During the 19th and 20th centuries there was an increase in the amount of hay cut for winter feeding, but still much less was used than in the west. In some regions all herds were on the pastures right through the winter; in others, cattle and young animals were fed on hay while horses, sheep and goats, and camels were on pasture.

### Khori

Population figures are not known to me for Khori Buryats, but they are likely to be similar to those of the Selenga Buryats: average increase of 1.7% per year over the period 1800–1850 (Razumov & Sosnovski 1898). During the 19th century there was a huge increase in the number of supposedly celibate lamas; by the 1920s, lamas were 1 in 5 or 6 males.

The number of Russians within Khori territory is not known.

### Khori

The main type of herds were sheep and horses.

sense that no one could do without them, and the poorest people kept them in preference to other animals. An average family had 5–6 milking cows, 30–40 sheep, and 1–3 horses, and the richest had 100 cows and 300 sheep (Manžigeev 1960: 130–134). The most prestigious herds, as among the Khori, were horses, and rich people might have several herds of 15 or so head. Generally, the herds in the Ekhirit-Bulagat region were decreasing rapidly by the end of the 19th century.

### *Social organisation of production*

#### Dispersal of productive units

##### Ekhirit-Bulagat

The main unit of production and consumption was the family or domestic group. These were grouped in permanent winter settlements (*ulus*) along river valleys. The *ulus* consisted of one or more minimal lineages (which I call *urag* A) of 3–4 generations depth. *Urag* means “kin group”. Usually such minimal lineages were segments of the same minor lineage. Autumn and spring pasturing virtually ceased to exist during the 19th century. At summer pastures a wider group of patrilineal kin joined together, perhaps a minor lineage of 6–8 generations (*urag* B). The summer pastures of major and even maximal lineages were traditionally adjacent. The cattle economy was dependent on the fertilised hay fields, which were in river valleys at the winter sites; agricultural fields were on hills perhaps 5 km from there. In places where Russian settlement was heavy, summer pastures were sometimes annexed and the population became effectively sedentarised, based only on the winter *ulus*. The end of summer pasturing thus meant the end of the structural need for stable genealogy at the higher lineage levels.

#### Mobility

##### Ekhirit-Bulagat

There was very little mobility; average distance to summer pastures was 10–20 km at the end of the 19th century (Kubakov 1898: 60–65). There was virtually no free land for

A very rich owner had 8000 sheep, 4000 horses, 3000 cattle, and 1000 camels, and the Khori *head taisha* (prince) is said to have owned 10,000 horses, 3000 cattle and 4000 sheep at the beginning of the 19th century (Manžigeev 1960: 131). At the same time there were poor herdsmen, though not so many nor so poor as in the west. The totality of herds was increasing during the 19th century.

##### Khori

The main unit of production and consumption was again the domestic group, but settlement was more scattered than in the west. One–three domestic groups (*ail*) moved together and co-operated in herding. Most people lived in tents throughout the year, and were able to, and often did, move right across Khori territory during annual migrations. Winter camps were the most stable. During the 19th century more houses came to be built for winter, and hay was cut from the fertilised area round the winter house. The scattered houses at a winter site came to be called *ulus*. There were very few settled groups; most used at least four seasonal pastures.

##### Khori

Mobility was great, not only in terms of the annual movements to various kinds of pasture, but also in expansive migrations eastwards and southwards. During the 19th and

expansion, and previously unacceptable narrow stony valleys were filled up during the 19th century. The Ekhirit-Bulagat peoples had expanded into valleys east of Lake Baikal during the 18th century, but by the end of the 19th this was no longer possible as the valleys were full and themselves cut off from further expansion by forests or by Khori and other peoples.

### Exclusivity of access to resources

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Land was owned by lineages collectively and was subject to reallocation periodically. Reallocations at the major lineage level (10–11 generations) took place rarely, but at the *wrag* B level they occurred every few years, and at *wrag* A level every year in some places (Asalxanov 1963: 134–149; Ščapov 1875). Land-use was based on genealogical claims to descent within the given group. Pasture was used in common. The main item of reallocation was common hayfields, the shares depending on the number of adult males in the domestic group. Households with larger herds used the hayfields of poor families in return for gifts of animals or grain. Agricultural land was in fact owned in perpetuity by the man who cleared it and his descendants, and the same came to be true of the fertilised hayfield around the winter house.

Herds were owned individually by men and women, but managed within a domestic group.

### Fluidity of groups

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Groups were not fluid because of lack of land for expansion. The large family, with sons and their wives and children included in the domestic group, was more common than in the east (Basaeva 1974: 13–28). Fissioning of lineages was complicated by fixed assets in land and in frequent reallocations at higher levels: poorer groups objected to division of lineages since this removed the chance of a beneficial reallocation of land.

20th centuries Khori continued to move into the Aga Steppes, Manchuria, and Northern Mongolia.

#### Khori

As in the west, land was owned in common by the lineage, but in this case the operative unit was the entire Khori clan-family. This made it possible for individuals from any of the clans or lineages to use any land, provided someone else was not there first. Hayfields came to be cleared by the end of the 19th century, but there was no clear rule as to rights in them. In some places they were administered in common by the *ulus* or *buluk* (see below), in others they were owned by individuals as long as they were needed. Generally, labour gave the right to continued use of fields (the same was true of the small amount of agricultural land).

The same.

#### Khori

Groups were fluid at both domestic group level (with early fissioning into nuclear families) and at lineage levels. Territorial expansion made it possible for a fissioning group to reproduce the original group in the same form.

### Autonomy of production units

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

There was a comparative lack of autonomy in that members of the *urag* A were obliged to see that no one lagged behind in work in the fields, winnowing, felt-making etc. Agricultural tasks were done on a mutual help basis at given times of the year. Summer herding was done in common by rotation among members of *urag* A or B.

#### Khori

There was comparative autonomy of domestic groups in all production, although herding tasks were shared by the *ail* (2–3 domestic groups). Poor families herded the animals of the rich in return for a share of the milk and wool, but such arrangements were on a seasonal basis and could be broken by either party when they felt like it.

### Reciprocity

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Reciprocity was very strong at level of *urag* A: any slaughtered animal's meat was shared; guests were entertained in common; bride-price and wedding expenses were in common; there was an obligation to help poor. There were large numbers of rituals and sacrifices, at which a major part of the meat diet and alcoholic drink was consumed; these occurred at all levels, including *urag* B and major lineage. There was general reciprocity up to the level of major lineage, but also strong competition (i.e. negative reciprocity) between different *ulus* for land, and even stronger antagonism, amounting to fighting and stealing sometimes, between sections of major and maximal lineages for the same reason.

#### Khori

There was a comparative lack of reciprocity amongst neighbourhood groups since these do not necessarily coincide with kin, and virtually no kin-based rituals; anyone in neighbourhood could take part in festivals at *obo* (ritual cairns) or at lamaseries. Reciprocity was generally weak between all clan members, and between all Khoris.

### Marriage alliances

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

The exogamous group was *urag* B or even larger. Alliances were made between *urags* at either A or B level belonging to different maximal lineages; alliances, sometimes involving exchange of women, were carried on over several generations (Manžigeev 1960: 50–51). The range of possible marriages was thus restricted by a genealogically deep interpretation of exogamy, and traditional alliances between small groups.

#### Khori

Little is known about marriage alliances with particular groups; probably the range of possible marriage partners was wider than in the west. Exogamy was in theory 11 generations, but in practice 7 or less (Linxovoin 1972: 44–46).

### Differentiation of wealth

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

The western Buryats were poorer on aver-

#### Khori

There was a great differentiation of wealth



age than the Khori people. The differentiation of wealth between rich and poor was also less. But wealth in herds and grain was convertible here into money, and thus manufactured goods, buildings, etc. The market was increasingly used by rich western Buryats during the 19th century.

in herds, which were not so easily converted into other forms of wealth as in the west, partly because of the lack of towns and urban Russian settlement. Khori Buryats did not enter the market to any great extent. The only major conversion was of herds to religious merit (building monasteries, financing rituals, giving herds direct to holy men, etc). The many lamaseries were supported by the surrounding Khori population.

In the few areas with agriculture, there was a smaller differentiation of wealth, the population was more static, was more likely to consist of agnatic kinsmen alone, and consequently there was more reciprocity in the neighbourhood group (Asalxanov 1960: 68-83).

### *Political organisation*

#### Strategic position and defense of political groups

##### *Ekhirit-Bulagat*

In the pre-Russian period the western Buryats were sheltered from attack by the Mongolians by Lake Baikal and the Sayan Mountains. To the west there were only small hunting tribes, and so at this period there was no need for the Ekhirit-Bulagat to join together for defence. When the Cossaks arrived in the 17th century with superior arms (guns as opposed to bows and arrows) the west Buryat clans were easily defeated one by one and never subsequently united politically.

##### *Khori*

The history of the Khori in the Chingghis period is not clear, but by the 16th century they were feudal subjects of the Mongolian Altan-khan in South-Eastern Mongolia. They were given in the dowry of Altan Khan's daughter when she married the Solongut Bübei-Beile in the 1590s, but subsequently fled into Trans-Baikal, their present homeland. Here they were always open to attack from the east, from Bübei-Beile's army and from Tungus tribes. In the early 1600s they fled westwards to the other (western) side of Baikal, returning to the east 40 years later.

In fleeing from Bübei-Beile the Khoris requested protection from the Cossak fortresses and offered to pay taxes in furs to the Russian government. Mongolia at this time was rent by internal wars, and more and more groups of Khoris (and other tribes) fled northwards to become subjects of the Tsar. The border was not finally closed until the mid-18th century.

The need to act as a defensive unit against attack by the Mongolians made the Khoris a united group from the start, and this continued in their relations with the Russians.

## Leadership

### Internal relations

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Administration was carried out by the leaders of "clans" (Russian *rod*, of which some members were not actually kinsmen, see below) — *taisha* or *shülenge*; divisions of "clans" — *darga* or *zaisan*; and local groups of *urag* B level — *darga*.

Political leadership was inherited by virtue of primogeniture in genealogically senior lines, but all appointments had to be ratified by the agreement of (later, election by) the elders of the lineage. Election of minors, with a regenthood, was common. The occasional choice of a younger rather than an elder son as heir (for reasons of disability, drunkenness, etc.) by the elders gave rise to the possibility of dispute in further generations, i.e. two lines claiming descent from an office-holder. When lineages fissioned and the office of leader in the junior lineage was recognised by the Russians, a new "aristocratic" line was created which sometimes was able to challenge the original senior line for the highest post. Sometimes completely non-aristocratic but powerful lineages challenged elections. Thus there were almost always disputes about the appointment of leaders, despite the hereditary principle (Zalkind 1970: 289).

The main tasks of leaders were: collection of taxes, organisation of hunting for furs, general regulation of the economy so that all tax-payers were enabled to pay (taxes were payable in nature, not money), settlement of disputes.

### External relations

#### Ekhirit-Bulagat

Since political leaders were exempt from tax, the Russians wished to keep their numbers to a minimum, and therefore they supported (by edict) the inheritance of office. The Russians desired Buryat leaders to be strong enough to gather the tax and keep order, but not powerful enough to challenge Tsarist authority. They did not usually interfere in internal Buryat matters, but reserved the right to dismiss leaders and ratify new appointments when appealed

#### Khori

Leadership positions were inherited in the same way as in the west, but challenges to the aristocratic lines were far fewer. The hierarchy of posts was more complex than in the west, and was accompanied here by a system of titles on the Mongolian model. Titles were inherited on a wider scale than the official posts, and so more people came to hold titles than actually performed the associated duties of political leader. Even titles however were only inherited by one of a group of sons, while other sons would have lesser signs of rank. Titles and ranks were carefully marked by differently coloured buttons (*jins*) on hats. They were acquired by birth, while the political posts had to be ratified also by agreement of the elders.

The duties of leader, besides those mentioned for the western Buryat, were: allocation of border duties, prevention of trade or marriages with Mongolians, collecting together and keeping a check on nomadic groups (in theory Khoris were not allowed to camp in distant places in groups less than 20). Leaders however had no armed force at their command to check disobedience on a large scale but would have to call on Russian help.

#### Khori

Because of the relative lack of internal challenge to Khori leaders in comparison to those of the west, the Tsarist officials treated them with more respect, thus contributing in turn to their greater authority. The Khoris were in fact in a more independent position, being highly nomadic and living close to the Mongolian border.

Buryat leaders were used by the Russians to advertise the Russian way of life; thus the Khori *taisha* (princes) were offered money

to. There was thus large-scale bribery of the Russian officials responsible for these matters.

The western Buryats were not united in their representations to the Russians. Conflicts between Buryat leaders were endemic; on the communal level they were usually about land, on the individual level they concerned competition for office (Zalkind 1970: 333). Leaders of clans never met together to discuss common policy, and even the Russian annexation of land in the late 19th century brought no unity among the traditional leaders.

and Tsarist court ranks to build houses and sow corn.

From the start there was a recognised hierarchy of Khori leaders, with the Galzuut *taisha* at the head. Despite the fact that the Khoris consisted originally of two groups of clans, one of these groups always acknowledged the seniority of the other. This was expressed genealogically in the myth of origin, one group of clans descending from the sons of Khoridoi's first wife and the other from his second.

Unlike the western Buryat, the Khori acted in a united way in relation to the external world. Matters of law, taxes, land, border-service and relations with the Russians, were discussed at meetings of the elders of the entire clan-family. Measures were taken in respect of the entire group.

To summarise: in both Ekhirit-Bulagat and Khori society there was an ideology of patrilineal descent, but in practise this worked in different ways in the two groups. In the east, since the possession of land by individuals was not an issue, land-rights continued to be held at the highest level (clan-family of Khori) and households were more or less free to nomadise where they wanted. In the west on the other hand, a combination of factors (natural conditions suitable for hay/agriculture economy and not suitable for all-year-round pasturing, and definite limits to territory) led to the comparatively intensive use of land. This, combined with the arrival of increasing numbers of settlers, made land scarcer and more valuable during the nineteenth century. The solution to the problem of collectively owned but scarce land was periodic reallocation. But because of the shortage of land, reallocation was nearly always at someone's expense, and the result was antagonism at every level where reallocation occurred. In general, unlike the Khori economy which had been greatly expanding until the end of the nineteenth century, the Ekhirit-Bulagat economy was in decline. The increasing reliance on hay did improve the milk yield of cattle (Manžigeev 1960: 89), but it did not halt the decrease in total numbers of the herds due to lack of pasture for extensive herding. The greater reliance on agriculture had the effect of further reducing the possibility of extensive herding.

These economic conditions had a certain effect on the political situation of the two groups, which differed considerably despite their identical position within the Tsarist administration. Both were governed by indirect rule, by means of hereditary/elected leaders of "clans" (Russian *rod*) and divisions of "clans".

Politically, the Khori clan-family was a single, centralised unit under a single *head-taisha* (prince). In 1837, when the Khori Buryats living in the Aga region separated off and asked to be given their own *head-taisha*, a second identical

structure was created. The Khori clan-family consisted of eleven clans, conceptualised as the descendants of the 11 sons of Khoridoi by three different wives. The line producing the *head-taisha* was the senior line of Galzuut clan, i.e. the descendants of the eldest son by the first wife. The Galzuut clan was not numerically the largest, and we may suppose that without the institution of the Tsarist government-backed *taisha*-ships, the recognised hierarchy of clans might have been challenged. However, Tsarist backing cannot have been the only factor since it operated also for the Ekhirit-Bulagat clan-families which existed in perpetual discord and had no acknowledged head.

The Khori Buryats' early political unity is clear; in 1702 they sent a common delegation, consisting of a representative of each of the eleven clans, to Tsar Peter I, requesting official recognition of their pastures. This they received. Again in 1804 they successfully negotiated with the Russians: they ceded the valley of the Ingoda River to settlers but in return received the extensive pastures around the Onon River. In the 1880s representative Khori *head-taisha* again went to Moscow to discuss the question of settlers on their land. Frequently Khoris contributed as a single group to government funds, e.g. in the early 1800s, when they gave 1000 horses to Moscow to compensate for those lost in the Napoleonic wars (Pučkovskij 1957: 111).

Although the Khori *head-taisha* represented his clan to the Russians, his control over the members of his clan was minimal. People who did not want to pay taxes or perform services could easily move far away to the east, even outside the borders of the Russian state. As a result, when refugees from wars among the Khalkha Mongols arrived in Khori lands, they were welcomed as subjects by the Khori princes. Pastures were allotted to them readily and they were "adopted" into Khori clans, since by definition only clan members were subjects of the princes. This democratic treatment was necessary, given the fact that the Mongol refugees could instantly move back over the border if they were dissatisfied. The Buryat historian Tsydendambaev has estimated that a large proportion of "Khoris" were in fact Mongolian refugees who arrived in the early 18th century before the border was closed.

The Ekhirit and Bulagat clans were never politically unified (except for a probably mythical common stand against the Russians in the seventeenth century). After their inclusion in the Russian state, the largest political grouping was the maximal lineage or major lineage which the Russians identified as *rod*. It was from these units that the *taisha* were drawn. In these western regions the *rod* came more and more to have a territorial dimension, and in many cases fissioned off sections of lineages were administratively included in foreign *rody* if they were settled too far away from the main lineage. Some groups were thus forced to struggle for land rights not only vis-a-vis their own agnatic kin, but also against non-kin lineages.

The continuous and unresolved battle between lineages for control of land made an acknowledged political hierarchy impossible: populous lineages with

little land were always demanding reallocations, while lineages with comparatively low population density tried to avoid them. It is also true that the absence of previously established political hierarchy in the west, such as that which had been created among the Khori for defensive reasons, must have been a factor in keeping the competition for land unresolved.

The situation was complicated by the presence in Ekhirit-Bulagat territories of many "foreign" groups of refugees from Mongolia. These people, if at all numerous, were thought of as enemies who had forcibly settled themselves a long time ago on Buryat land; the small and insignificant groups were reckoned to be descended from lone refugees who had been kindly given a widow to marry and allotted an undesirable bit of land. None of these "foreigners" were ever adopted into Ekhirit or Bulagat clans in an acknowledged and unequivocal way as happened among the Khoris.

### Genealogies

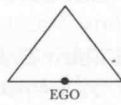
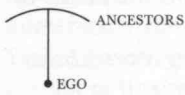
Buryat society was seen in terms of clans and lineages, and these were represented or explained by genealogies and not in any other way. The idea that the Buryat were a single people (an idea which seems to have occurred fairly infrequently) was therefore represented by a common father of Bulagat, Ekhirit and Khoridai – Bargu-Baatur. An even more inclusive genealogical myth made Bargu-Baatur the father of three different sons, Ilyuder-türgen, ancestor of the west Mongol Ikinat and Zungar clans, Gur-Buryat, ancestor of the Ekhirit and Bulagat clans, and Khoryodoi-Mergen, ancestor of the Khori clan. This version was found among the Kudinsk Buryat, i.e. Ekhirit-Bulagat people amongst whom were living large groups of "foreign" Mongols of the Ikinat and Zungar clans. Other myths link the Buryats as a whole with other Mongol peoples. In other words, there were a series of myths of lesser or greater inclusivity, none of which had absolute authority over the others.

For the purposes of this paper, which deals with the comparison of Ekhirit-Bulagat groups with the Khori, I shall discuss genealogical myths at the level of the clan-family and below. This is the level from which Buryats themselves usually start when giving a genealogy.

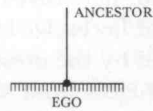
Ekhirit-Bulagat and Khori genealogies are very different from one another, and this can be summarised as follows:

Ekhirit-Bulagat	Khori
Many origins	Single origin
Prolific (many versions)	Standardised (few versions)
Contradictory (within single genealogy)	Internally consistent
Illegitimate links between people included	Illegitimate links not recorded

“Umbrella” shape



“Pyramid” shape or “broom” shape



Oral

Written or oral

Despite the important differences between Ekhirit-Bulagat and Khori we find that characteristic patterns were present in the genealogies of each group, so that it makes sense to talk of an “Ekhirit-Bulagat type” or “Khori type” of genealogy (whereas the category of “Buryat genealogy” does not exist).

The fact that genealogies regulated rights to land is crucial in establishing these different patterns. The Russian administrative system did concentrate land conflicts at certain levels of segmentation, particularly the *rod* level (approximately maximal lineage) and the *inorodnaja uprava* level (a group of related *rody*). This imposed a certain inflexibility and non-relativity on the fissioning off of lineages, but it did not alter the fact that genealogies continued to be used to define groups and relations between groups.

The Ekhirit-Bulagat situation was as follows: the genealogically based social system with inherited political office meant that while clans as wholes owned land, the allocation was in fact controlled by senior lines within the clan. Land allocation to a junior segment within the clan could at any time be rescinded by “the clan as a whole” directed by the senior line. This meant that any junior line firstly wanted to be able to demonstrate a genealogical link with the senior line in order to be able to claim any land at all, but at the same time had a strong interest in being able to declare that it was in some way different and superior to the senior line — because in this way it could resist the threat of take-over of its land by reference to seniority. In other words, every group had to claim a long genealogy up to the most senior lines *but* simultaneously in some way not recognise the unequivocal right of these lines over their land. This was one of the reasons why there was no lineage among the Ekhirit-Bulagat clans which was totally accepted as being legitimately senior. It also resulted in nearly every group having internally inconsistent versions of their genealogy: one showing regular patrilineal descent in the male line from a famous ancestor, the other introducing some magical non-linear element into the story, usually one which tied an ancestor to a particular place in a supernatural way. These genealogies established the claims of a “junior” line in relation to a “senior” line. But at the same time there were genealogies put out by “senior” lines which embraced or smothered the claims of “juniors”. Such an account might

be either admitted or denied by the "junior" group depending on their strategy at the time.

We can thus isolate two reasons why the Ekhirit-Bulagat never developed an over-arching, all-inclusive genealogy: firstly because land-claims were *actually* made by relatively low-level groups in competition, and secondly because scarcity of land forced groups to multiply their claims in such a way as to negate the legitimacy of higher-level genealogies.

This multitude of conflicting versions mainly occurred at the top level of genealogies, that is over eleven generations from Ego. Although there seems at first to have been only confusion in the higher relations of lineages to one another, it is possible to discern a few regularities if one looks at the numerical size of a lineage and its advantages or disadvantages in territorial position. According to these criteria there are two main categories: the extensive clans living in broad river valleys, and the numerous small lineages living in marginal or disadvantageous places. The first group consisted of a related group of "original"-descendant clans of the Bulagat or Ekhirit clan-families linked together by various conflicting and contradictory kinship ties: elder brothers — younger brothers, uncles — nephews, half-brothers with different mothers, illegitimate sons of a sister, and so on. In this group it is noticeable that the only clan which had anything like an established claim to seniority among the Bulagat was the Alagui, a rather small clan living somewhat on the fringes of the main system of river valleys. The other clans in this category were larger and at the same time tended to inhabit more advantageous territories, and all of their genealogical claims were disputed. As a group they claimed to have been driven out of their first homeland in the Kuda Valley by enemies, or to have left it because their herds multiplied, and then to have spread out into their present territories which were then uninhabited. The other category of clans, the small, disadvantaged ones, tended to have separate and different genealogies: they did not usually claim direct *descent* from the large clans, nor did they have any relationship with one another. They seemed rather to be relegated to acknowledged illegitimate links with the large clans (i.e. through women or disgraced men); alternatively they admitted to "foreign" origins from the Khori clan or from the enemy Ikinat and Zungar clans. But while admitting defective ancestry in one way or another in terms of patrilineal descent, this group of small lineage retaliated by introducing powerful shaman ancestors into its genealogies. This was directly relevant to the matter of territory because shaman (or shamaness) ancestors were amongst those most likely to be transformed after death into *ejid*, the spirit-owners of particular places. It was in this "magical" way that these small clans chose to legitimise their claims to land.

There were thus several kinds of claim to territory: one through legitimate descent from an ancestor who was the first to take over uninhabited land; another through magical, autochthonous origin at a particular place; a third through kinship, not necessarily patrilineal, with shaman ancestors who had



become spirit-owners of the land; and finally there was a fourth type, perhaps the weakest, in which "foreign" ancestry was admitted, but it was claimed that the ancestors either won or were allotted particular bits of land from the original inhabitants.

The situation in which all of these claims and counter-claims were made concrete was the sacrifice to the ancestors and spirit-owners (*tailgan*). Sacrifices occurred annually, and they were held at all levels of segmentation from the lowest (*urag* A, 3–4 generations) to the highest (maximum lineage, about 11 generations or more). This meant that any one group of agnates would attend several sacrifices during the year at different levels of inclusiveness. A *tailgan* sacrifice was conducted by the elders of whatever group was gathered together, and each component segment of the group was spatially arranged from right to left in order of genealogical seniority. The sacrifice was held at a ritual site, usually on a mountain, within the territory claimed by that group. The ancestors and spirit-owners of that place, without whose blessing life would have been impossible on that territory, were invoked in a long speech by the officiating elder. Thus, the placing of agnatic kin-groups at one site and the process of the ritual necessarily made clear one rank of lineages at that moment. Not surprisingly, the *tailgan* was sometimes the occasion for fierce quarrels.

All of the larger lineages of the Ekhirit-Bulagat segmented in the course of time, and sections of them were to be found living in various places, often at some distance from the ritual site and "original" clan territory. Since attendance at the *tailgan* meant membership of the lineage, and exclusion from it entailed loss of rights, junior, fissioned-off groups attempted to attend as many sacrifices as possible at higher levels in order to preserve the right to claim land in the original territory. Conversely, senior lines, particularly if things were going badly for them, tried to prevent the fissioned-off groups from appearing. This was justified on the grounds that "they [the junior groups] are taking away the ancestors' blessing from us".

At the same time, of course, the senior group strenuously maintained the right to go and settle amongst any segmented kinsmen by virtue of the myth in which the apical ancestor in his original wanderings visited all of these places, which were thereby available to all of his descendants. This was the same myth which the fissioned-off groups themselves used when justifying their presence in lands away from the "original" clan territory which were claimed by other people.

The relativity of genealogies of the Ekhirit-Bulagat is clear. Every group seemed to have a less aggressive and a more aggressive version depending on the situation. Only for an acknowledged senior line of the senior clan (and this did not exist) would there have been a point in maintaining a pure genealogy with a single ancestor. For everyone else it was better to confuse things.

The tiny, marginal groups living at the head of valleys near the forests had purely "defensive" genealogies: "foreign" origin meant that they were not



likely to claim anyone else's land, but powerful shaman ancestors meant that anyone taking their land was likely to be supernaturally punished. For everyone else — the fractious inhabitants of the well-populated river valleys — the aggressive version of a genealogy contained many ancestors at the higher levels. The links between these ancestors were as legitimate as one group could claim and another would admit. Everyone had at least one other fall-back genealogy at this upper level. The result was a teeming confusion, in which famous ancestors of various kinds ("warrior", "father-in-law", "shaman", "hunter") proliferated, some even being claimed by quite separate groups in different regions. The warrior ancestor Uxaa Shara, for example, was claimed by both the Shono clan in Verkholensk and the Hergelder clan in Barguzin (Baldaev 1970: 211–215, 244–245).

The proliferation of ancestors at upper levels gave the Ekhirit-Bulagat genealogies their characteristic top-heavy "umbrella" shape. It is clear that this was connected not only with quarrels over land but also to the separation of political from religious (shamanist) roles. Shamans during the 19th and 20th centuries were not the same people as clan or lineage headmen, and shaman lines were invariably either from small marginal groups or, more rarely, from deviant sections of the larger clans. Since it was frequently shaman ancestor-spirits which became spirit-owners of the land, it was necessary to establish some kind of link with these also, if one was to live in peace and prosperity in that place. Droughts, epidemics, attacks by wolves, and even outbreaks of thieving or cattle-rustling were all attributed to the displeasure of spirit-owners of the region. Since the spirits were occasionally women and shaman-lines often originated with women, this gave a further diversity to the links traced to the "ancestors".

Thus West Buryat people asked not only the question, "Who are the descendants of X?" but also, "Who are my ancestors?", and young boys were instructed in their genealogies not only from ancestor X downwards, but also from Ego upwards. At lower levels only a list of names was given, but among the distant ancestors it was also necessary to know a complex of genealogical myths.

The greater the decline of the West Buryat economy during the 19th century and the more severe the "disasters" which occurred, the greater the accumulation of ritually important shaman ancestor-spirits. The process of "discovery" of them is described in many sources (Manžigeev 1960: 187). In a situation not of expansion but of retrenchment it was important not only to have direct lineal ancestors validating rights to land but also to have protection from shaman spirits on the land on which one was settled. Also, as the land-base shrank in relation to population and competition intensified, appeals to shaman-line ancestors (perhaps inherently more flexible than agnatic claims) must have become more important. The close connection between land-use and ritual is shown by the fact that when the common summer pastures of the four major Gotol lineages were annexed by the Russians in 1860, new spirits were immedi-

ately discovered at the different winter sites which remained to these lineages, and communal summer sacrifices to the lineal ancestors were discontinued, i.e. when new relations were established between kin-groups and land it was found necessary to validate these immediately by new deities, and vice versa, to protect the separate rights of each group against claims by the other three it became expedient to "forget" the previous common deity.

Eastern Buryat Khori genealogies were quite different. They formed a consistent hierarchy with a single apical ancestor (Khoridoi) and included only legitimate males. The hierarchy of clans and lineages was established through standard patrilineal criteria of seniority: (1) by generation; (2) by age between brothers. The latter was extremely important. Darbaev's official genealogy (1839) of the Galzuut clan, for example, lists men always at "X's 1st son A", "X's 2nd son B", "X's 3rd son C", etc. The only other criterion used, and this occurred only at one level, the differentiation between the eleven original clans of the Khori clan-family, was the distinction between first, second and third wives as mothers of Khoridoi's eleven sons and one daughter.

Genealogies were never used among the Khori Buryats to validate territorial claims, since land and water of all types was held in common by the entire clan-family and not allocated to sections of it. There was an early tendency for clansmen to live in the same region, but this was not so much because of particular bits of land held in common as for reciprocity of other kinds for example, in pasturing. The nineteenth century shows a continuous process of intermingling of members of different clans and a dispersion of the Khoris in general over wider and wider areas. The more suitable a region was for pastoralism, the more individuals of various clans went to exploit it, and so we find that the most prosperous areas from the herding point of view were also the most mixed in population. When, by the second half of the nineteenth century, hay began to be used in winter and some pressure on land began to be felt, neighbourhood populations everywhere were so heterogeneous that genealogical reckoning could in no way deal with the situation. Instead, a totally new system of local groups (*buluk*: Buryat "division", "section") emerged. These consisted of a few hundred people of mixed origin who banded together to protect certain land and water rights, chiefly rights to irrigated and fenced hay-meadows. However, even in this situation movement was very free and individuals could become members of a *buluk* quite easily, simply by right given by participation in the work of clearing and fencing the meadows. Many households continued hardly to use hay fodder at all.

Genealogies however did not cease to be of immense importance to the Khori Buryat. During this entire period (seventeenth–twentieth centuries) political offices, ranks, and titles, together with herds and other wealth continued to be inherited by reference to genealogies. (If offices were not directly inherited from father to son, then office-holders continued to be elected from amongst a narrowly defined lineal group within the clan.) The genealogies of

princely lines were written down in Mongolian script, and in fact it is probably true to say that writing in secular life was used almost exclusively for this purpose: the recording of historical chronicles of the Khori in general, and princely genealogies in particular.

Probably, the central myth of Khoridoi and his eleven sons was definitively formalised in the early 18th century. The word "Khoridoi" is in fact a title meaning "leader of the Khori" and not a personal name (Tsydendambaev 1972: 188–190), and there is evidence that at an earlier period some people thought there were thirteen, not eleven, clans ("the five Sharaldai, and the eight Nagatai"), which was later explained away by genealogists on the grounds that two of Khoridoi's son had died in infancy, or migrated to the west. Careful studies by Tsydendambaev have shown that many of the "Khori" clans in fact had unclear origins and some may have been included among the Khori only after the latter had chosen to become Russian subjects. It is clear that, as subjects of the Tsar, the Khori were much more independent than they had been under the Mongolian Khans. Moreover, they were freed, as Siberian "natives", from the obligation to do military service in the Russian army, whereas in Mongolia feudal ties implied before all else the obligation to fight. It is not surprising, therefore, that many groups and individuals from northern Mongolia decided to join the Khori, and since "being a Khori" was defined genealogically it was necessary somehow to establish the necessary ancestry. There is evidence of considerable manipulation of the genealogies at this period, primarily insertion of groups at the level of a lineage (*xüxüür*) into the eleven clan framework. It was only after the border was closed to large-scale migration (mid-eighteenth century) and genealogies began to be written down that the standardised Khori version appeared. The writing down of genealogies clearly was a move to consolidate the power of the leaders.

The political allegiance of ordinary subjects in the nineteenth century was ascribed on the basis of genealogical position, according both to Buryat customary law and the Russian system of the *rod*. However scattered they were, a prince's tax-paying subjects were defined as the members of his clan, and the same was true at lower levels (lineage chief, headman of lineage segment). The Tsarist support of the "traditional" hereditary principle (e.g. in the *Položenie* of 1812 – Zalkind 1970: 284–285) may indeed have enhanced the importance of genealogies which had in fact less significance in feudal Mongolia (except among the aristocracy) where commoner clans were deliberately broken up and sent to serve in different parts of the country. In contrast the Russians tried to keep clan members together for ease of tax collection.

Genealogical knowledge was thus necessary, at least to some extent, for ordinary herdsmen to operate politically. But after the closing of the Russian–Mongolian border the Khori ceased to be warlike, and political units, especially those at higher levels, never actually physically gathered together for any activity. There were few, if any, clan-based ritual occasions among the Khori after

their massive conversion to Lamaism in the eighteenth century. Weddings, with their large exchanges of property, were the primary occasion for corporate activity on the part of lineages, and at a rather higher level of segmentation (7–11 generations) the most important function of genealogies was in determining the limits of exogamy. Even if not all the kinsmen within the exogamous limits would participate in the expense of a wedding (or any other occasion in fact), it was still necessary to know who they were, in other words to know a very wide circle of living people – including some generations on the mother’s side – who would almost certainly be living scattered in different places. This gave Khori genealogies what I call a “broom” shape, i.e. a line from a single ancestor and then proliferation of agnatic kin in present generations.

It is possible that the conversion of the Khori to Lamaism was related to the cessation of large-scale military activity and provided a new focus for leadership and prestige. Each Khori *taisha* was associated as patron with his own monastery. Society as a whole related to the lamaseries, and thus supported them, in much the same way as it had previously supported a body of fighting men.

During the nineteenth century more and more genealogies were written down, usually by scribes or lamas working for the princely families, but with the aim of recording not only chiefly lines but all the members of the clan. The writing-down of genealogies among the Khori coincided with the expansion of population and pastoral production and the dispersion and intermingling of kin groups. Written genealogies were added to and kept up to date, and could be used as legal documents. The aim of recording all the names of all the members of a whole clan was of course never realised, even though some of the genealogies contained several thousand names. Realising that his own knowledge and the information collected from friends would be patchy, the scribe usually gave an over-all *resumé* of the clan’s divisions before setting out his own detailed record of a particular section of it. A clan was divided into sections called *xüxüür*, named after founding ancestors from 7 to 8 generations distant. Each clan within the Khori clan-family had from 5 to 25 *xüxüür*, some of these being themselves internally subdivided: groups based in Khori lands proper, the Aga steppes, or even North Mongolia or Manchuria. A genealogist would attempt to cover fully the members of his *xüxüür*, and then would add notes on other scattered lines of his acquaintance; for example, a man belonging to the Khodonts *xüxüür* of the Sharait clan of the Khori clan-family and writing the genealogy of this section would add a note that “from the descendants of the Akhaidai *xüxüür* of the Sharait clan there are the Püskei and Torgoboi living in the Aga steppes” (Tsydendambaev 1972: 93).

The writing-down of genealogies had certain consequences. It can be assumed that, at the initial point of writing-down, when the accounts of knowledgeable old men were compared and the most common version recorded, “structural amnesia” must have been operating, as in oral genealogies; we can see this because, although the Khori population did greatly increase during the 18th and

19th centuries, there are still nothing like enough ancestors in the early parts of the genealogy to account for the present. This gives Khori genealogies their characteristically pyramidal shape. But once the names were written down, it was impossible to ignore them, and furthermore, since genealogies were held to be true, all names were recorded, even people with no descendants. Unlike the Ekhirit-Bulagat, the Khori had no reason to exclude or deny their kinsmen; on the contrary, the more kinsmen scattered over the steppes, the better. From the generations where the genealogies were written down "structural amnesia" virtually ceased to exist.

Writing in general in Mongolia was sacred in the sense that something of the essence of the thing written was thought to adhere to the writing itself. The setting-down and periodic updating of genealogies was a ritual act accompanied by offerings to the Lamaist deities. It is clear that writing had some kind of precedence over the spoken word, and that genealogies were supposed to agree with other written texts. Thus we find that Khori genealogies, when they cover the same ground, tend to be identical or very similar to one another; but this does not mean that they correspond to reality.

Although "structural amnesia" of the kind operating in oral genealogies ceased to exist, other factors stemming directly from the method of writing genealogies and the attitude towards writing made it inevitable that the records would diverge from real kinship. The method of writing a genealogy was to set down the name of the apical ancestor first, enclosed in a circle, and then put down the names of his sons enclosed in further ovals joined to the father's name by direct lines. Grandsons' names were attached to the sons in the same way. Seniority between brothers was indicated by joining the eldest brother to the right of the father's oval and younger brothers successively to the left. The system of writing itself left no room for many of the elements recalled most frequently in the oral genealogies of the Ekhirit-Bulagat: links through women, illegitimacy, adoption, magical birth, and so on. It would have been possible to record, even within the framework of a strictly agnatic system, the complexities of the real composition of the lineage, the adoption of sons, for example, which was extremely common among the Khori and almost *de rigueur* in a family without an heir, but this was only done in exceptional cases, by means of additional notes. Khori genealogies were thus idealisations. Even if the names of all males in the lineage were recorded, the actual relations resulting from adoption, levirate marriage, and so on were not set out.

In part this may have been the consequences of the fact that genealogies were written by scribes of princes and constituted registers of subjects. Either someone was a subject, or he was not; ambiguities were not required. If the Russians recognised a man as a subject, the prince was required to collect his tax. There was a clear motive for having more subjects since both Buryat and Russian officials frequently took a rake-off from the collected furs, herds, etc. Comparison of genealogies with the historical chronicles also found among the

Khori shows that it was fairly common for small separated groups of one lineage to be taken in as members of another by a prince who desired more subjects; in this case, the incoming group could only be inserted into the genealogies as "sons", and only independent inquiry could show that the process had happened. A short Khori chronicle accompanying the genealogy of Bübei (of the Khudai clan) shows that people realised this process occurred but had no way of recording it: "Khori had eleven sons whose descendants multiplied and these sons came to be called the 'eleven fathers', ancestors of the eleven clans making up the Khori people. But amongst the Khori there mingled in the sons of others fathers, in such a way that it is impossible to distinguish or separate them."

This raises the question of why a centralised, acknowledged hierarchy based on patrilineal descent could arise and remain amongst the nomadic Khori when it did not among the sedentarised Ekhirit-Bulagat.

In the case of the Ekhirit-Bulagat the need to possess particular bits of land created an essential dislocation between the land-holding groups and genealogical units. Competition was actually between land-holding groups, but was conceptualised — because society itself was so conceptualised — in terms of lineages and clans which did not coincide with them. The operation of land-claims was carried out by reference to genealogical criteria. This use of genealogy was essential because production was organised on the basis of low-level kin (i.e. genealogically structured) units. The reality of land-holding split the ideological unity of higher level genealogical groups, because these groups had no common interest which overrode that of possession of land. This can be seen from the exclusion of genealogically qualified kinsmen from lineage sacrifices if they seemed to threaten the existing land allocation. Thus one can see conflict of the Ekhirit-Bulagat type as constituting a true "contradiction" of the forces and relations of production.

The greater the level of inclusiveness of clans the more they were likely to diverge from territorial groups. The uneven growth of kin-defined population in relation to land could be dealt with more easily at lower levels because reallocations were more frequent. At the higher levels, certain splits in clans and maximal lineages became petrified by the boundaries of the administrative *rod* and *inorodnaja uprava*. But the tendency was for greater, not lesser, conflict between these groups as land became scarcer.

In the Khori case, on the other hand, there were no internal reasons for clans to oppose one another as long as further pastures were available, and there were good external motives for presenting a unified front: i.e. their early subjection to Khalkha Mongol princes, and constant threat from that quarter, the need to obtain a grant of land from the Tsar when they came to Russia, and the more recent repeated waves of Russian settlers on their land. Of course a "united front" could only be shown by the representatives (princes, headmen) of the clans, since the members themselves were dispersed over large areas.



Sometimes, in fact, the Khoris also had religious representatives (e.g. a shamaness in the delegation to Tsar Peter I, or high lamas in relations with the Mongolians), but they never *replaced* genealogically defined representatives.

Clan-based rituals, including the sacrifices to ancestors and spirit-owners, became relatively unimportant among the Khori by the mid-nineteenth century (although they continued to some extent in places, such as the Aga steppes, where lineage dispersal was limited). Much more significant was Lamaism, adopted on the Tibetan and Mongolian model, which itself had a centralised, hierarchical organisation based on the ranking of the head-lamas of monasteries. By contrast, although repeated attempts were made by missionary lamas, the Ekhirit-Bulagat people never took up Buddhism. The Khori were so enthusiastic that by the beginning of the twentieth century at least one in six adult males was a lama. It is interesting that the hierarchy of the Lamaist church, though having no formal connections with the Khori clan system, did in fact coincide with it at the level of the heads or representatives; thus the head of the church, the Bandido Khambo-lama, was repeatedly from the aristocratic line of the Khori *head-taisha*, and on occasion the same man took both offices. Younger sons of princes frequently took high monastic office, which solved succession problems also, since Lamas were in theory celibate. The Russians encouraged this convergence: because Lamas were exempt from taxes, as were princes, it minimised loss of revenue to have the same people occupying both roles.

An important aspect of Lamaism was that rather than rely on attachment to specific local places (as contrasted with the Ekhirit-Bulagat shamanic and spirit cults) it concentrated people, regardless of provenance, into places or monastic institutions. This gave a purchase for hierarchical authority and control over the highly mobile population. The shift to Lamaism thus correlated with the different Khori demographic distribution of descent groups and with the different political significance of place.

This convergence between religious and political centralisations was expressed genealogically. A single line of ancestors was traced back through Khoridai to the Mongolian Khans, and even further to Indian and Tibetan sages who were also "kings" (Tsydendambaev 1972: 59).

Although the Khori continued to give offerings to local deities, this cult too assumed a Lamaist form and had a quite different significance from the Ekhirit-Bulagat. Spirit-owners of particular places had several transformations: as ancestors, sons of "Khorioikh"; as mythical Mongolian khans; as Lamaist deities with Tibetan names. By the twentieth century the Lamaist version was probably the most commonly used.

In the north-central Asian area in general we can see a series of variations between two extremes in the cult of locality-spirits: on the one hand, genealogically based clan sacrifices to ancestors, and on the other neighbourhood-based worship of standard Lamaist deities. The Khori Buryats were never as extreme as the feudal and territorially dispersed Khalkha Mongols in their conversion to

the latter, since ancestral and mythical names were never entirely forgotten. But, in any case, the crucial close link between ancestors, spirit-owners, and lineage-communities, which existed among the Ekhirit-Bulagat, was broken: among the Khori, clan and lineage-communities were not territorial groups even in a notional sense; Khori deities, whether ancestors, “Khans”, or bodhisatvas, were not actually in residence at unique particular spots but were more generalised “owners of the land” who could be worshipped from many different ritual sites which they protected; it is perhaps relevant that for the Khori as well as the Khalkha Mongols there was not a very developed idea of particular places as unique – place-names were descriptive (“Red Rock”, “Rich Valley”, etc.) and recurred all over the Khori lands. This contrasts with the specific link of Ekhirit-Bulagat ancestors with particular sites.

Thus, although there are one or two episodes in Khori genealogical myths which correspond exactly to Ekhirit-Bulagat myths about land – for example, the ancestor who travels and drops off followers, or bits of property, at certain places and thus establishes them as mystically “his” – in the Khori case this was not at all developed, explored, or contradicted, because it did not matter in everyday life. Not until the most recent times (i.e. after collectivisation) were Khori people dependent on the fertility (seen as the “blessing” of the spirit-owner) of particular places.

### Conclusion

The same conceptual elements existed for both the Ekhirit-Bulagat and the Khori in making genealogies, but these were emphasized differently because the genealogies were put to different use. The crucial factor was the different ways in which genealogies were used to validate rights to land.

In using genealogies and ancestral myths to attach groups to particular bits of territory, the sedentarised Ekhirit-Bulagat made certain that their genealogies would be both contradictory and internally inconsistent. This example demonstrates that the holding of communal property does not necessarily cause “kinship” relations to be unambiguously defined, but may have the reverse effect: when property becomes scarce, this leads to a confusion in the genealogy because people are motivated to put forward conflicting claims. Unilineal genealogies become internally inconsistent when they are required simultaneously to fulfill two functions: legitimising claims to property by virtue of descent from the original holder, and defending the interests of junior lineage segments against the claims of senior groups declaring themselves to be more directly related to the first ancestor. Because land objectively was held by competing groups at relatively low levels of segmentation (in particular the *ulus* or winter settlement), no higher-level group could attain a dominant position and thus no dominant all-embracing genealogy could emerge. This made it impossible for genealogies



to form the conceptual basis of a centralised political hierarchy of clans and lineages.

In the case of the Khori Buryat, on the other hand, the extensive nomadic method of pastoralism necessitated collective possession of large tracts of land within which herdsmen could move fairly freely, and there was no need therefore for genealogies to determine rights to land below the level of the clan-family as a whole. But in order for rights to wide pastures to have any functional meaning, herdsmen maintained a wide network of agnatic ties which were established on the basis of a shared concept of Khori society as a whole. And such communal rights could only be maintained in the face of the outside world by virtue of the existence of acknowledged representatives of this collectivity, who could negotiate politically with the Russians. The legitimacy of these representatives was established on the same basis and by the same instrument as that which mapped the Khori people as a whole, i.e. genealogies. The strictly hereditary principle of succession to leadership positions was consciously supported by the Russian government since it limited the number of office and title holders who were exempt from tax. Thus, if the emergence of a centralised leadership took place originally in a military context (wars in Mongolia), it was maintained, more or less unchallenged, by a combination of factors: the economic need for wide and undivided pastures, the necessity for repeated negotiation on the subject of these lands with the Tsarist government by representatives of a unified community, and finally Russian official support for leaders, and hence *de facto* for a system of leadership, on whose loyalty they were dependent both for substantial tax revenues and for security in the border area with Mongolia. The internal mechanism by which leaders were recruited and tax-paying subjects defined was the use of genealogies, in this case in a written, consistent, and semi-legal form.

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