

**Points of Transition:**  
*Ovoo*  
and the  
**Ritual Remaking of  
Religious, Ecological, and  
Historical Politics in  
Inner Asia**

**Friday, February 22, 2019**  
**9:30 AM – 6 PM**  
180 Doe Library  
UC Berkeley

**Sponsors:**  
UC Berkeley Mongolia Initiative  
Institute of East Asian Studies  
Townsend Center for the Humanities

## **Points of Transition**

### **Conference Participants**

**Sam BASS**, *Indiana University*

**Brian BAUMANN**, *UC Berkeley*

**Isabelle CHARLEUX**, *National Centre for  
Scientific Research*

**Bernard CHARLIER**, *Université Catholique de Louvain*

**Jacob DALTON**, *UC Berkeley*

**Devon DEAR**, *Harvard University*

**Grégory DELAPLACE**, *Université Paris-Nanterre*

**Aurore DUMONT**, *Academia Sinica*

**Kip HUTCHINS**, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

**Gaëlle LACAZE**, *Sorbonne Université*

**Laurent LEGRAIN**, *Université de Toulouse*

**Bolor LKHAAJAV**, *University of San Francisco*

**Jessica MADISON-PÍSKATÁ**, *UC Santa Cruz*

**Anne-Sophie PRATTE**, *Harvard University*

**Marissa SMITH**, *De Anza College*

**Sangseraima UJEED**, *UC Santa Barbara*

**Rebecca WATTERS**, *The Wolverine Foundation*

**The organizers of this conference  
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# Points of Transition

## Agenda

**9:30 AM – 9:45 AM**

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Jacob DALTON, *UC Berkeley*

Isabelle CHARLEUX, *National Centre for Scientific Research*

Marissa SMITH, *De Anza College*

**9:45 AM – 12:00 PM**

**Panel 1: OVOO DIVERSITY**

***Community, Faith, and Politics: The Ovoo Cairns and Rituals of the Shinehen Buryats Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

Aurore DUMONT, *Academia Sinica*

***With Each Pass, Another Stone: Ovoo at the Heart of Heritage, Environment, and Conflict***

Kip HUTCHINS, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

***From Attachment to Detachment: Praying at the Ovoo and Finding One's Place Far from the Homeland***

Bernard CHARLIER, *Université Catholique de Louvain*

***Dilemma of the Sacred Lands: The Ovoo and Its Environment***

Bolor LKHAJAV, *University of San Francisco*

***"They call out to their dead devils!" The Erküd and the Rejection of Communal Rituals in a Mongolian Banner***

Sam BASS, *Indiana University*

**12:00 PM – 1:30 PM**

**Lunch Break**

**1:30 PM – 3:30 PM**

**Panel 2: OVOO HISTORIES**

***Ovoos on Qing Dynasty Mongol Banner Maps (Late 19<sup>th</sup>-Early 20<sup>th</sup> century)***

Isabelle CHARLEUX, *National Centre for Scientific Research*

***Mapping Ovoos and Making Boundaries in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Khalkha Mongolia***

Anne-Sophie PRATTE, *Harvard University*

***Buddhist Origins of Ovoo Phenomena***

Sangseraima UJEED, *UC Santa Barbara*

***Rock-Pile Genius***

Brian BAUMANN, *UC Berkeley*

***Ovoos on the Border Between the Qing and Russian Empires***

Devon DEAR, *Harvard University*

**3:30 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Break**

**4:00 PM – 6:00 PM**  
**Panel 3: OVOO PROCESSES**

***Ovoos and Ovoo Practices of Erdenet Miners: Ethics of Belonging and Generation***

Marissa SMITH, *De Anza College*

***Ovoo Worship in Mine-golia***

Gaëlle LACAZE, *Sorbonne Université*

***“You Dream of the Mountain and the Mountain Dreams of You”: Mongolian Geo-Ethics and the Poetic Life of Altan Ovoo***

***The Center May Not Hold: Sacrifice, Love, and Uncertainty at Altan Ovoo’s National Takhilga***

Jessica MADISON-PÍSKATÁ, *UC Santa Cruz*

***Being Skilled: The Virtue of Accurately Composing with the Heterogeneity of the Cosmos in Mongolia***

Grégory DELAPLACE, *Université Paris-Nanterre*

Laurent LEGRAIN, *Université de Toulouse*

***Ovoo and Human-Nature Interaction***

Rebecca WATTERS, *The Wolverine Foundation*

**6:00 PM**

**Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

## **Points of Transition**

### **Abstracts**

**Sam BASS**, *Indiana University*

***“They call out to their dead devils!” The Erküd and the Rejection of Communal Rituals in a Mongolian Banner***

In Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, the banner was the basic level of social administration until the revolutionary movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in new forms of social and political organization. Representative members of banners were expected to attend communal rituals centered on *ovoos*. Scholars contend that these rituals were significant because they bound people to sacred landscapes that affirmed a sense of communal belonging through public participation in the rituals. These shared rituals, along with materials such as pasture and aboveground minerals shared among banner members, comprised the appanage community of Mongolian banners.

At the same time, there were groups of people within Mongolian banners that rejected these rituals. These groups distinguished themselves in opposition to the larger banner community by their loci of worship, which were not shared with the rest of the banner. The Erküd of Üüshin banner, Ordos league (located in today’s southwest Inner Mongolia), were one such group. They were notable because they did not participate in communal banner rituals, considered ancestor

reverence to be heterodox, and neither created nor maintained *ovoos*. Antoine Mostaert, an eminent scholar who pioneered modern Mongolian studies, became interested in the Erküd because he believed they were vestigial Christian clergy leftover from the Mongol Empire and explained their rejection of banner ritual life in those terms. The Erküd, however, were just one example of a group that did not participate in each banner's communal, *ovoo*-centric rituals.

This paper addresses the significance of these groups to our understanding of the ritual aspect of Mongolian banners centered on *ovoos*. The Erküd and other non-normative ritual groups fit into banner life in ways distinct from other members of the banner community. More than just exceptions that prove a rule about Mongolian socio-political communal structure, groups such as the Erküd challenge the appanage community model by their historical existence and practices.

**Brian BAUMANN**, *UC Berkeley*

### ***Rock-Pile Genius***

That the rock-pile (Mongolian *ovoo*) was worshipped in Mongolian tradition during the period of Gelugpa hegemony is sure. Uncertain, however, is most every historical aspect of the nature of this veneration. How long has the cult existed in Mongolia? Does it originate only under the auspices of the Mongolian Gelugpa high priest, Mergen Gegen, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century? Does it predate Gelugpa 16<sup>th</sup>-century ascendancy among the Mongols? Did the cult exist in the time of Chinggis Khan and the Great Mongol Empire? Does it belong to a

purported “Mongolian Shamanism”? Is the Mongolian rock-pile cult comparable to other traditions in the Buddhist world? Is it comparable to traditions beyond Buddhism? What is the significance of a pile of rocks that one should venerate it in the first place? My paper answers none of these questions definitively but addresses them from the perspective of the rock-pile's stated source of potency—as a repository for genius. The paper will attempt to demonstrate that genius understood for what it is makes the rock-pile cult's reason for being comprehensible and that in being comprehensible the cult's history in Mongolian tradition comes into clearer focus as well.

**Isabelle CHARLEUX**, *National Centre for Scientific Research*

### ***Ovoos on Qing Dynasty Mongol Banner Maps (Late 19th-Early 20th century)***

The “maps” (or “picture maps”) of the banners of Inner and Outer Mongolia, drawn to be sent to the central Qing government in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, contain a great number of names and drawings of *ovoos*—about a quarter of the toponyms are *ovoos*. Two types of *ovoos* are distinguished on the banner maps: ritual *ovoos* and border-markers *ovoos* that punctuate the border with the neighboring banners; in addition, many mountains are also called *ovoo*. This paper raises questions about the naming of *ovoos*, their representation by drawings, pictograms, or symbols, and the accuracy of their location. Was the naming and/or depiction of *ovoos* important and useful information for mapmakers? Do ritual *ovoos* mark

and allow us to identify the main sacred mountains of a banner? Is the hierarchy of ritual *ovoos*, from the “prince” and banner *ovoos* to the community *ovoos*, made visible on banner maps, and are “banner *ovoos*” depicted in close relation to the seat of the banner administration? Can some border *ovoos* also serve as cult *ovoos*, following Caroline Humphrey’s concept of “edge-based centrality” (a sacred mountain marking the border and at the same time linking different communities) in Buryatia? Are there fewer or no *ovoos* in the Inner Mongol banners where agriculture was intensively practiced? By focusing on a few banners and comparing their ancient maps with modern ones, this paper aims at understanding the place, categorization, and inclusion of *ovoos* in the representations of a territory.

**Bernard CHARLIER**, *Université Catholique de Louvain*

***From Attachment to Detachment: Praying at the Ovoo and Finding One’s Place Far from the Homeland***

In Mongolia, the nomadic herders of sheep and goats entertain a strong attachment to their “homeland,” or *nutag*. This attachment to the land and most precisely to the spirits (*savdag*) who inhabit it is not only created at birth but has to be maintained and entertained throughout one’s life during daily rituals and seasonal *ovoo* ceremonies. The daily and seasonal rituals, which consist in recitations of prayers and milk libations, generate with the passing of time a reciprocal relationship between the herders and the spirits. The relationship becomes so strong that the elders do not like to leave their homeland as the spirits would miss them and

withdraw their protection. Through an analysis of the prayers recited at each encampment and during two *ovoo* ceremonies, the new year and the sub-district (*bag*) celebrations, I will first show how these prayers are of paramount importance to maintain a relationship with the spirits of the land and to attract their protection. Second, in the context of important internal migrations from the countryside to the city, I will analyze how these prayers are at the same time reproduced and modified among herders who recently left their homeland to settle in a province near the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Finally, I will mention the case of an elder who recently settled in Ulaanbaatar and who refuses to pray for the *savdag* at the *ovoo* of the city. I will argue that the reproduction of the prayers and their modifications constitute one particular way to maintain the relationship of protection with the spirits of the land the herders have left, as well as one particular way to create new relationships with the spirits of the land where the herders have settled. In some cases the refusal to participate at an *ovoo* ceremony accounts for the difficulties to get used to a particular territory, like those of new migrants who recently settled in the capital city.

**Devon DEAR**, *Harvard University*

***Ovoos on the Border Between the Qing and Russian Empires***

This paper examines *ovoos* along the border between the Qing and Russian empires, beginning with the conditions of their construction and incorporation into the 1727 Treaty of Kiakhta. The paper then uses Manchu-, Russian-, and Chinese-language archival sources to examine the place of *ovoos* in cross-border

trade through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, it explores the roles *ovoos* played for imperial officials, cross-border traders, and local communities who lived along the imperial border.

**Grégory DELAPLACE**, *Université Paris-Nanterre*  
with **Laurent LEGRAIN**, *Université de Toulouse*

### ***Being Skilled: The Virtue of Accurately Composing with the Heterogeneity of the Cosmos in Mongolia***

This paper proposes to explore how being “skilled” (*mergen*) plays out and is relied on in Mongolia within two different contexts, both linked to *ovoos* in more than one way. In archery, on the one hand, to be “skilled” involves being able to read a complex array of environmental conditions and respond to them through a series of coordinated gestures so that the arrow reaches its aim at a (geographical) distance. This is particularly important in the context of the yearly *naadam* celebrations, in which *ovoos* play a prominent part, as the accuracy of the archers’ shots during the contest guarantees the community’s prosperity for the year to come. In funerals, on the other hand, skill—in the form of “divination” (*merge tölgö*)—is what is required from the ritual specialist (as a “skilled person,” a *mergen hün*), in order to ensure the proper conduct of the ritual and, most crucially, the proper installation of the dead person’s body within or in relation to her “homeland” (*nutag*). Here also, being “skilled” involves responding to a complex and heterogenous set of contextual and environmental conditions (the time of death, the dead person’s birth year, the place of death, its cause, etc.) with a series of coordinated gestures so that the ritual fulfills its

purpose at a (temporal) distance. What is particularly crucial in the context of funerals could be argued to be true of any ritual in Mongolia—to the point that a skillful action meant to “fix” (*zasa-*) heterogenous conditions through one “right” (*zöv*) set of actions is what *in fine* constitute a ritual in Mongolia. This link between “skill” as a virtue and “prosperity” as an aspiration might be one of the reasons why (non-weaponized) arrows are frequently found in the context of rituals of “beckoning” (*dallaga*), which are commonly associated with *ovoos* in Mongolia and performed around them.

**Aurore DUMONT**, *Academia Sinica*

### ***Community, Faith, and Politics: the Owoo Cairns and Rituals of the Shinehen Buryats Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

Based on fieldwork conducted since 2011, this paper explores the relationship between sacred cairn (*ovoo*) construction and the parallel political recognition of the Buryat community in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (People’s Republic of China). More precisely, it shows how *ovoos* and their annual rituals have always served as powerful symbols for the Buryats’ identification throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Numbering around 8,000 people, most Buryat pastoralists live nowadays in the Shinehen area of Hulunbuir prefecture, situated on the Russo-Mongolian border where they settled from Russia after the October Revolution. The erection of the first Buryat *ovoo* on Chinese territory coincides with the recognition by the local court (*yamen*) of Buryat refugees as new citizens of Hulunbuir at the beginning of the 1920s.

Following waves of migration (between 1918 and the late 1920s), the Buryats gradually expanded their territory, constructing new cairns one after another. I argue that by serving as a territorial marker that connected a group of people to its collective territory and legitimized the use of pastureland, the *ovoo* was also an essential material and symbolic monument for the political recognition of a given “ethnic group.”

Merged into the “Mongol ethnic minority” in the 1950s, the Buryat were not officially recognized as a separate group in the People’s Republic of China. However, today they are locally known for their monasteries, numerous lamas, and the important role they have played in the religious revival of the area over the last twenty years. Indeed, local authorities actively support the organization of the Buryats’ *ovoo* annual worship, since they are promoted as part of the “grassland culture” (*caoyuan wenhua*). Considering the *ovoo* cairn as a support for local history, I will show how previous and contemporary *ovoo* construction and worship link territory, politics, and identity in Inner Mongolia’s most multi-ethnic area.

**Kip HUTCHINS**, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

***With Each Pass, Another Stone: Ovoo at the Heart of Heritage, Environment, and Conflict***

As environmentally sourced border markers that grow in size with each interaction with humans, *ovoos* delineate both space and time in ecologically and politically charged ways. Their

presence and power as both spiritual beings and historical markers is derived from and enacted upon the ecological and social landscapes they oversee. This paper explores how *ovoos* instigate, mediate, and commemorate conflict in ways that entangle environmental and cultural heritage. As growing structures spiritually associated with moral landscapes and healthy ecosystems, *ovoos* are central to discourses on both environmental and cultural heritage. Bearing the marks of history, they also stand as heritage of conflicts unresolved.

This paper presents three ethnographic vignettes in which *ovoos* play central roles in both conflict and heritage. First, I explore a case in which contestation on how best to maintain an *ovoo* in an environmentally and spiritually sustainable way opens up a space for negotiations of post-socialist Mongolian environmentalisms and ecological spiritualities. Then I detail how an *ovoo* mediates urban disasters for musicians involved in the heritage industry in Ulaanbaatar, and how that protection is at odds with Western structures, and consumers, of cultural heritage. Finally, this paper examines how *ovoos* spring up simultaneously as memorials of violence and caretakers of nonhumans in the form of ghosts and birds in a former monastery brought to ruin through socialist purges. Each case presents its own context of *ovoos* at the heart of a conflict that involves a commingling of cultural and natural heritage. Taken as a whole, these stories do not form a unified, linear narrative based on a Western teleology of progressive environmentalism or forward-marching history. Rather, they come together as something of a rhetorical *ovoo*, an assemblage of overlapping acts of eco-spiritual resilience.

**Gaëlle LACAZE**, Sorbonne Université

### ***Ovoo Worship in Mine-golia***

The *ovoos* are multiple and vary as much in space as in time. Since 1992, the evolution of their form and number has revealed the political and social changes of Mongolian society. Thus, since the late 1990s, the number of wooden stakes has multiplied on the *ovoos*. The increase in pickets corresponds to the religious renewal linked to the democratization of the country. Freedom of worship has led to the renewal of *ovoo* rituals. Today, *ovoos* are the subject of a perennial cult. All kinds of sacred or lay objects are placed there. Mountain *ovoos* are at the heart of many conflicts. For example, in the Gobi desert, the Altan *ovoo* mountain is the subject of a conflict between ORANO and local herders. It is not the only conflict between mining and *ovoo* worship. My article will analyze how the evolution of *ovoos* and related practices reflect Mongolia's democratization process.

**Laurent LEGRAIN**, *Université de Toulouse*  
See **Grégory DELAPLACE**, *Université Paris-Nanterre*

**Bolor LKHAAJAV**, *University of San Francisco*

### ***Dilemma of the Sacred Lands: The Ovoo and Its Environment***

Mongolia has been modernizing its methods to preserve traditional ways of life without undermining the essence of its traditional and national heritage. Historically, the long-lived

nomadic lifestyle has fostered a strong belief in a built-relationship between human and nature. The construction of an *ovoo* is one of many cultural paths to communicate with nature. An *ovoo*, a Mongolian term for a cairn, is a pile of stones, dirt, and trees branches that is laden with gifts and offerings from people to connect with the land's spirit. Although the rituals and ceremonies surrounding *ovoos* still take place on the national level, the so-called sacred sites are in need of cohesive and implementable environmental protection.

This research paper will briefly touch on the historical background of the construction of *ovoos*, while the primary focus will be the modernization of *ovoos*, seeking alternative methods on how to clean, protect, and preserve national heritage sites. *Ovoo*-based traditions have not lost the tangible national heritage at the state level, but my online survey shows the much-needed environmental care surrounding *ovoos* to keep their sacred and special presentations. Moreover, *ovoos* as cultural sites are facing two major problems: 1) mining and environmental degradation; and 2) people continuing to disconnect with the sites' roots due to the surrounding environment cluttered with garbage. Thus, this research paper will seek policy recommendations to persuade the state and local governments to take action to keep *ovoos* and their surrounding environments clean and presentable. This paper argues that, additionally, there has to be accountability at the local level even for those *ovoos* that are not state-promoted. Otherwise, the so-called national heritage sites are viewed as a mixture of wasteland and a place for worshipping nature. As such, poorly managed and neglected *ovoo* sites are influencing

visitors' perspectives, both domestic and foreign, thereby undermining Mongolian cultural property and its values.

**Jessica MADISON-PÍSKATÁ**, *UC Santa Cruz*

***The Center May Not Hold: Sacrifice, Love, and Uncertainty at Altan Ovoo's National Takhilga***

This paper discusses how politics and poetics of sacrifice and care are enacted through ritual poetic relations between human beings and mountain *ovoos*, and how these performances forge and maintain structures of feeling that contribute to emergent environmental ethics. Drawing from participant observation and interviews conducted during the quadrennial *Takhilga*, or “national ceremony of sacrifice” to *Altan Ovoo* (Sükhbaatar Aimag, Dariganga Süm), I pay special attention to the poetic practices that comprise both the ritual and its celebratory aftermath. I also explore the domestic (and domesticated) life of *Altan Ovoo* via interviews with a family that narrates its relationship of care and exchange with the mountain over four generations. *Ovoos* here are not only political actors, but also consumers of poetry, and the act of poetic performance is intended to strengthen and re-inscribe relations of sacrifice, care, dependency, and exchange between humans and geological bodies. I examine how repeating poetic co-engagement with geological terrain coalesces into these *Dariganga Nutag*, a geosocial landscape that provides an ethical map for understanding environmental ethics on a broader scale, particularly in the context of Mongolia's mineral extraction boom.

This paper complicates the notion that Mongolian human/geological relations and their attached moral frameworks are primarily mediated either by religion or political economy (or both): my fieldwork in Dariganga reveals a more collaborative and creative form of ethics that is drawn from the circulation of poetic genres and practices. Mineral extraction is simultaneously a creative and destructive action, and the ethical considerations and concerns that arise from it are linked to broader understandings of the role geology takes in social, political, and ecological life.

**Anne-Sophie PRATTE**, *Harvard University*

***Mapping Ovoos and Making Boundaries in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Khalkha Mongolia***

This paper examines the cartographic representation of *ovoos* as markers of inter-banner boundaries in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Khalkha Mongolia. I argue that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Qing experimented a series of sovereignty crises on various frontiers, Mongolia became a laboratory of experimentation for the representation of territories and frontiers. For the first time in 1864–1865, the map-making policy required correspondences between boundary-*ovoos* erected *in situ* and those represented on maps. While the Qing rulers tasked local Mongolian leaders with making maps and setting *ovoos*, they sought to impose a spatial ideology premised on geographical correspondence, strictly defined territories, and linear boundaries, which elicited tensions among locals, who advocated for the preservation of indigenous territorial divisions. Relying on a year of research at the National

Archives of Mongolia, this paper aims to document the complicated process of remaking the geography of the Khalkha Mongolian steppe through the establishment of boundary-*ovoos* and their pictorial representation on maps, while situating these events in a broader world historical context.

**Marissa SMITH**, *De Anza College*

***Ovoos and Ovoo Practices of Erdenet Miners: Ethics of Belonging and Generation***

This paper considers the role of *ovoos* in the ethical generation of wealth by first-, second-, and third-generation employees of the four decade-old Erdenet Mining Corporation in north-central Mongolia. In the paper I describe everyday “tidying” of roadside *ovoos*, yearly Tsagaan Sar visits to a particular *ovoo* and monument complex between the mine and the city, the construction of a colossal statue of the Shakyamuni Buddha at this complex, and music videos commissioned and produced by the mining corporation with artists from Erdenet. I consider how these are all sites and events at which matters of belonging are worked out, acknowledging the transgressions of production and exchange and establishing not only who is allowed to, but who must, extract and generate this wealth and for the benefit of whom. On the one hand, *ovoos* at Erdenet are, like *ovoos* elsewhere throughout Inner Asia, associated with all kinds of belonging, from the local to the cosmic, and sometimes more hierarchical, sometimes more horizontal, integration of human and nonhumans across these scales. On the other, *ovoos* at Erdenet are sites where anxieties about mining as a particularly

dangerous form of generation are acknowledged and reckoned with, particularly its destruction of the landscape that threatens pastoralist locals’ regeneration and generation of wealth, and mining’s involvement with Russian and other foreign transactors, isolating Erdenet miners from the Mongolian nation and kin living in other localities.

**Sangseraima UJEED**, *UC Santa Barbara*

***Buddhist Origins of Ovoo Phenomena***

Throughout Mongolian lands, we find countless examples of *ovoos* and different shapes and sizes dating to various periods of history. Nowadays they represent a variety of consecration methods and customs. Some of the theory behind their construction and purpose point to pre-Buddhist practices among the Mongol groups. This talk will examine some probable Buddhist origins to the construction and purpose of *ovoos*. It will draw from texts attributed to Guru Padmasambhava describing how an *ovoo* should be constructed dated by the tradition to the Tibetan imperial period; later 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts of *ovoo* consecration rituals and expositions composed by Mergen Gegeen; and contemporary oral legends of some specific examples from the Alasha region of Inner Mongolia to attempt to argue for Buddhist origins to the *ovoo* phenomenon that dominates the Mongolian landscape today.

**Rebecca WATTERS**, *The Wolverine Foundation*

### ***Ovoo and Human-Nature Interaction***

*Ovoos* are frequently perceived by Western conservationists as part of a set of practices that encompass “nature worship” and that therefore hold potential for reinforcing conservation objectives in Mongolia. This paper examines *ovoo* narratives in and around areas of conservation importance, including protected areas in the Khangai region of Ovorhangai Aimag and the Darhad region of Huvsgul Aimag, to assess how *ovoos* present complex sites of human-nature interaction and also cross-cultural encounter. Drawn from field time with hunters, herders, rangers, and American researchers and students, these narratives illuminate personal, political, and gendered aspects of *ovoo* worship that sometimes fuse with and sometimes contradict the objectives of conservation practitioners.

## **Points of Transition**

### **Participant Biographies**

**Sam BASS**, *Indiana University*

Sam Bass is a PhD candidate in the fields of History and Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. He studies Mongolian and Inner Asian pastoral-nomadic history, focusing on society, law, and culture in the Qing Empire. He is currently writing a dissertation about the history of slavery, adoption, and family in Qing Mongolia, and just finished a year and a half of archival research in China, Mongolia, and Russia sponsored by Fulbright and the SSRC. His interest in Inner Asia began when he worked in Xinjiang, China for several years as a translator and began studying Kazakh and Mongolian at that time. Although he is pursuing a degree in history, he is also interested in anthropology, languages, and just about anything to do with the Inner Asian region.

**Brian BAUMANN**, *UC Berkeley*

Brian Baumann is a lecturer in UC Berkeley’s Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Group in Buddhist Studies. He teaches courses related to Khalkha Mongolian language, literary Mongolian, Mongolian Buddhism, Mongolian history, and astral science.

**Isabelle CHARLEUX**, *National Centre for Scientific Research*

Isabelle Charleux is director of research at CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research, Paris), deputy director of the GSRL (National Centre for Scientific Research–Group Societies, Religions, Laicities), and co-director of the periodical *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*. Her research interests focus on Mongolian material culture and religion. She published *Nomads on Pilgrimage. Mongols on Wutaishan (China), 1800–1940* (Brill, 2015) and *Temples et monastères de Mongolie-Intérieure* (Paris, CTHS/INHA, 2006).

**Bernard CHARLIER**, *Université Catholique de Louvain*

Bernard Charlier, PhD (2011, University of Cambridge), is an anthropologist who has been interested for several years in the study of man-animal relationships in Mongolia. In his book *Faces of the Wolf: Managing the Human, Non-Human Boundary in Mongolia* (2015, Brill), he analyzes the different ways in which some nomadic herders living in western Mongolia relate to the wolf and more generally manage the man-animal boundary. He has carried out research at the Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale (funded by the Fondation Fyssen) on the relationships among the perception of nature, the consecration of animals, and ritual figurative practices. He has worked for two years as editor of *Social Compass: International Review of Sociology of Religion*, and has recently finished a three-year postdoctoral fellowship funded by the Fond National de la Recherche Scientifique on the internal

migration of herders in Mongolia. He is currently an invited associate professor at the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium).

**Jacob DALTON**, *UC Berkeley*

Jacob Dalton, Khyentse Foundation Distinguished University Professor in Tibetan Buddhism, holds a joint appointment in South and Southeast Asian Studies and East Asian Languages and Cultures. He teaches Tibetan Buddhism. After working for three years (2002–2005) as a researcher with the International Dunhuang Project at the British Library, he taught at Yale University (2005–2008) before moving to Berkeley. He works on tantric ritual, Nyingma religious history, paleography, and the Dunhuang manuscripts. He is the author of *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (Yale University Press, 2011), *The Gathering of Intentions: A History of a Tibetan Tantra* (Columbia University Press, 2016), and co-author of *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Stein Collection at the British Library* (Brill, 2006). He is currently working on a study of tantric ritual in the Dunhuang manuscripts.

**Devon DEAR**, *Harvard University*

Devon Dear is an independent scholar living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area. She received her PhD from the Committee on Inner Asian and Altaic Studies at Harvard University in 2014. Her dissertation examined everyday economic life, including both trade and resource extraction,

along the Russian-Mongolian border. For this project, she conducted multilingual research at the National Archive of Mongolia, the archive of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in China, and in several Siberian provincial archives. From 2014 to 2016, she was an assistant professor of pre-modern Chinese history at the University of Kansas, where she taught courses ranging from introductory surveys to graduate seminars. After leaving Kansas, she spent two years designing a world history curriculum for an educational technology company in the Bay Area. Her research has been supported by Harvard University, the University of Kansas, the Social Science Research Council, and the American Center for Mongolian Studies. In addition to slowly finishing her monograph on the social life of Russian-Mongolian trade, she is also wrapping up another project on the history of California's oil industry, with a particular focus on the relationships between oil-producing counties on the coast and those in the San Joaquin Valley.

**Grégory DELAPLACE**, *Université Paris Nanterre*

Grégory Delaplace started fieldwork in Mongolia at the end of the 1990s. His work on funerals and the daily relationship with dead people among Dörvöd nomadic herders in the Northwestern region of Uvs, as well as in the capital city Ulaanbaatar, led him to study the 1950s reform of burial practices, as well as stories of dead people's apparitions to the living and the making of funerary portraits out of identity photographs. He is particularly interested in the daily negotiations surrounding people's relations to land in the context of herding, mining, and other business ventures. He is

the author of *L'invention des morts* (Nord-Asie, 2008), the co-author of *Representing Power in Inner Asia* (2 vols., with R. Hamayon, I. Charleux, and S. Pearce, 2010), and *Frontier Encounters* (with F. Billé and C. Humphrey, 2012). He has published papers on a range of topics including *fengshui*, shamanism, hip-hop, and the 2008 riots in Ulaanbaatar. Since 2011, Delaplace has been teaching as a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Paris-Nanterre. In 2015, he was awarded the Bronze medal of the CNRS, and he became a fellow of the Institut Universitaire de France in 2017.

**Aurore DUMONT**, *Academia Sinica*

Aurore Dumont is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Ethnology in Academia Sinica, Taiwan. After earning a double degree in Chinese and Russian language and culture, she completed her PhD in anthropology at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 2014. Her doctoral research explores the contemporary pastoral practices of the Evenki people in Inner Mongolia. Between 2015 and 2017, Aurore Dumont was a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for China Studies (Chinese University of Hong Kong), where she extended her interests to ritual practices and ethnohistory. Based on regular fieldwork carried out in Inner Mongolia since 2008, her current research focuses on ritual practices (*ovoo* cairns and shamanic graves worship) among the Tungus and Mongol societies of Northeastern China from the Late Qing to the present day.

**Kip HUTCHINS**, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Kip Hutchins is a PhD candidate in cultural anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research examines how nonhumans intersect with heritage in post-socialist Mongolia, with a particular focus on musical performance and transmission. He takes a multi-modal and multi-species ethnographic approach, and has been working with musicians, music teachers, herders (and their herds), heritage bearers, and heritage administrators in rural Dundgovi province and urban Ulaanbaatar since 2010. From the winter of 2016 to the summer 2018 he returned to central and southeastern Mongolia to conduct fieldwork for his dissertation with funding from a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad fellowship and an American Center for Mongolian Studies Cultural Heritage fellowship, in conjunction with the Mongolian State University of Arts and Culture. Currently, he is writing his dissertation on the role of livestock animals in the cultural heritage politics and institutions of traditional music in Mongolia. His dissertation considers how these nonhuman animals participate in (and disrupt) the composition, transmission, and consumption of genres of music related to the *morin khuur*, or horse-fiddle. His dissertation takes the ways nonhumans open up socialist-style heritage institutions to non-Western forms of musical creation and interpretation as sites of decolonization that reinterpret institutions.

**Gaëlle LACAZE**, Sorbonne Université

Gaëlle Lacaze was a lecturer in ethnology at the University of Strasbourg (2005–2016). Since 2016, she has been a university

professor at the UFR of Geography at Sorbonne University. She has been travelling the Mongolian steppes since the early 1990s and is fluent in Mongolian and Russian. She is an anthropologist specializing in body issues who has published two books and co-edited two others, written some 50 articles, and made four films. Her favorite themes are body techniques and non-verbal language. Her thesis focused on the techniques of the body among the Darhad, the Mongols of the Hövsgöl. This research was published as *Le corps mongol* (2012). She then developed a comparative analysis of the ways in which Kazakhs and Mongols drink and eat and led a humanitarian mission to fight alcoholism in Mongolia (Médecins du Monde). She has worked with Kazakh and Mongol cross-border traders. For the last ten years, she has been interested in gender issues and has conducted research with Mongolian women sex workers and migrants as well as Mongolian prostitutes in China.

**Laurent LEGRAIN**, *Université de Toulouse*

Laurent Legrain is a lecturer and researcher (*maître de conférences*) at the University of Toulouse Jean-Jaurès. He has conducted fieldwork in Mongolia since the beginning of 2000, mostly among the Darhad in the northern part of the country on the Russo-Mongolian border. His PhD research has focused on a widely distributed attachment to song and poetry in Mongolia. He has hypothesized that this attachment to song is part of a wider attention to environmental sounds and has tried to ethnographically grasp how this form of attention to sound has, on the one hand, been shaped historically (his focus is on the socialist period) and, on the other hand, arises in the normal

course of daily life. In 2014, prompted by the fact that many acclaimed singers are described as *mergen*, a qualification and a title given to archers (among others) at the *naadam* festival, Legrain launched research among Mongolian archers to try to figure out exactly what *mergen* people are, how they embody a kind of human achievement, and by what means they act effectively in the world (oratory skills, coordinated/right/harmonious gestures, ability to show restraint in any situations, a propensity to give attention and to respond to an array of environmental forces, fluctuating energies and environmental conditions). His research was interrupted in 2017 when he joined the Centre d'Anthropologie Sociale (CAS) at the University of Toulouse, where he is now busy teaching and supervising students.

**Bolor LKHAAJAV**, *University of San Francisco*

Bolor Lkhaajav holds an MA in Asia-Pacific Studies from the University of San Francisco. She is a researcher and contributing writer for *The Diplomat* magazine. Bolor's research is focused on Mongolia's foreign and national security policies. Since 2015, she has been conducting independent research on strengthening Mongolia's foreign and national security policies.

**Jessica MADISON-PÍSKATÁ**, *UC Santa Cruz*

Jessica Madison-Pískatá is a PhD candidate in Cultural Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and also holds an MFA in Poetry from The New School in New York City. She first spent time in Mongolia from 2011–2013,

when she worked as a United States Peace Corps volunteer in Baruun-Urt, Sukhbaatar Aimag. With funding from the UC Humanities Research Institute, the Association for Asian Studies, and the American Center for Mongolian Studies, she recently finished a year of fieldwork in Ulaanbaatar and Eastern Mongolia. While there, she worked with poets, educators, and community members conducting semi-structured interviews, on-the-road interviews (also known as “walking interviews”), collaborative mapping, participant observation, and collaborative translation. In addition to her dissertation, she is currently working on translations of the work of controversial Dariganga poet Ochirbatyn Dashbalbar. Her dissertation explores the poetic life of minerals in Mongolia, and the sets of ethics that form around repeated creative co-engagement between humans and geologic forms. Poetic relations with geological bodies, expressed through genres of landscape poetry that derive from and are inscribed in the affective and material terrain of the *nutag* coalesce into a geosociality that provides the ethical backdrop for Mongolia's current mineral extraction boom. By engaging with the ways in which relations between humans and the mineral world are expressed and mediated poetically, she looks at how poetics forge and maintain structures of feeling that feed into emergent environmental ethics.

**Anne-Sophie PRATTE**, *Harvard University*

Anne-Sophie Pratte is a fifth-year PhD candidate in Inner Asian and Altaic Studies at Harvard University. She is originally from Montréal, where she completed her undergraduate studies and earned an MA in East Asian Studies

at McGill University. Her dissertation research examines the political history of territory in Qing Mongolia with a focus on cartographic representation, frontiers, and boundaries. In 2017–2018, she was a research fellow at the American Center for Mongolian Studies and Ulaanbaatar and conducted archival fieldwork at the National Archives of Mongolia and the National Library.

**Marissa SMITH**, *De Anza College*

Marissa Smith is a cultural anthropologist specializing in the study of practices of production, value, technology, and sustainability, tracing forms of the nation, the state, the corporation, and human-nonhuman relationships. She is especially interested in the cosmopolitan projects of people in rural places and has conducted fieldwork with Mongolian mining specialists, as well as with archaeologists and local shamanic practitioners working near the Mongolian-Russian border. Smith currently teaches Introduction to Cultural Anthropology and Magic, Science, and Religion at De Anza College in Cupertino, California.

**Sangseraima UJEED**, *UC Santa Barbara*

Sangseraima Ujeed read for a BA in the study of religions at SOAS in London in 2012. She completed her MA and PhD degrees in Tibetan Buddhism at the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford, graduating in 2018. She was awarded the ACLS Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in Buddhist Studies in 2016 and later the Postdoctoral Fellowship in 2018. She is currently based at

UCSB for the postdoctoral fellowship. She is also a junior translator for the Padmakara translation group based in Dordogne, France.

**Rebecca WATTERS**, *The Wolverine Foundation*

Rebecca Watters is a wildlife biologist and writer based in Bozeman, Montana. She is the executive director of The Wolverine Foundation. She spent two years in Mongolia doing environmental work as a Peace Corps volunteer and started the Mongolian Wolverine Project in 2009 to assess and monitor climate-sensitive mountain wildlife in Mongolia. She is a graduate of St. Lawrence University, where she received a BA in anthropology, and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where she received an MA in environmental science.