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“Folk” Knowledge and Experiences for Environmental Conservation of the Mongols

The main purpose of this study is to conduct exploratory research on the applicability of “folk” knowledge and experiences for environmental conservation among the Mongols, with specific emphasis on traditional ecological knowledge, environmental ethics, eco-friendly technology, sustainable use of rangelands, and community-based environmental conservation. Furthermore, it will examine possibilities to apply such folk knowledge, experiences, and methods for environmental conservation and rational use of natural resources in practical life.

Methods for identifying useful and poisonous plants, natural resources, and landscapes, as well as for examining of the weather (natural regularity, etc.) will be analyzed in terms of traditional ecological knowledge. For example, by examining traditional ecological knowledge, we can compare locations of sacred sites to locations of national parks and protected areas, both of which frequently coincide. It is also very common that the names of certain places indicate the natural resources that can be found there, such as Tost uul (Oily mountain), Oyutolgoi (Turquoise hill), Erdenet (treasure) and so forth. Hundreds of years ago, early inhabitants of Mongolia labeled places according to the resources they had discovered there (e.g. Oily mountain, Turquoise hill, etc.)

Based on fieldwork data, oral historical and folkloric documents, handwritten manuscripts, and other research materials, collected over several years, we will explore elements associated with the environmental ethics of the Mongols. For instance, many Mongolians raised their children to show compassion towards young animals, refrain from cutting flowers and grass, to use a clean ladle to scoop up river or spring water, and so forth. There are handwritten and block print books written by saints and learned men about proper behavior and living in harmony with the nature.

Environmentally friendly technologies of nomadic people will be a main target of the study. In this sense, we will collect data concerning eco-friendly technology and investigate how to apply these technologies to the practical life of herders and farmers of nomadic, semi-nomadic, and sedentary societies. We will look at, for instance, the peculiar methods and technology of some rural inhabitants used to build cattle-sheds, such as using snow-drift, hardened dung of sheep and goats, stones and so forth.

Examining the sustainable use of rangelands by the nomadic Mongols will be a main part of my study. In keeping with the topic, the practical knowledge and experiences including in Mongols daily routines; ways of shifting and exploiting pastures for preserving rangelands; and the consideration of natural geographical peculiarities, seasons, and number and composition of livestock in the choice and allocation of pastureland will be studied. Community-based environmental protection in rural areas of Mongolia, such as the activities of rural groups joined to protect their native land, will also be a part of the research.

To conduct the planned research we will use fieldwork data, handwritten and block print books, folkloric sources, relevant academic literature, and fundamental theoretical and methodological books concerning environmental sciences and technologies.

As research methods, I intend to use methods and techniques such as synthesis, case study, interpretation, comparative content analysis, and evaluation in the first stages. Ideas from theories of political ecology, ethics, and rangeland management will be applied to the research.

I would like to mention that the research will not cover all of the issues on traditional ecological knowledge, eco-friendly technology, sustainable use of rangelands, and so forth. It will only cover some of the knowledge and experiences that are widely used among the nomadic Mongols.

The main result of the research will be a book entitled "*Folk* knowledge and experiences for environmental conservation of the Mongols" and other relevant papers and presentations will be written.