

Evolution and revolution: empirical view of transformation of traditional organization in Mongolia

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Abstract

Like in many other pastoral societies, Mongolian herders have traditionally relied on a set of interrelated strategies to survive in low-productivity environment. These strategies encompass both management practices such as actions directly affecting land or livestock, and management institutions, that operate at formal and informal rules levels. This study analyses the role of traditional organization and institutional transformations in shaping pastoralists' adaptive capacities and strategies in post socialist Mongolia. The study shows that indigenous Mongolian herding groups formation is a process of dynamic re-emergence of traditional and development of more novel adaptive practices rather than a fixed social and economic unit. The social borders formed under the influence of various factors do not always take into account the integrity of socio-ecological system. Mobility, reestablishment, evolution of pasture management going through feed-back learning are processes that can occur at a rapid pace with little or no external intervention. New socio-economic conditions that appeared recently in Mongolia generate new opportunities and new solution for nomads to cope with changes. Also different herders strategies on the grassland management create diverse types of territorial organizations within pastoral system boundaries.

Key word: pastoralism, mobility, customary institution, socio-territorial organization,