

MONGOLIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC



Sereeter's Family

Sereeter Choindongiin, aged 36 (1)
Ayushjav Dorjiin, 32 (2)
Narnakhuu Sereeteryn, 13 (3)
Gantsetseg, 10 (4)
Naransambuu, 8 (5)
Narantsetseg, 7 (6)



1,000 sheep owned by the co-operative
25 horses and colts
15 cows and calves
52 sheep
14 goats
2 dogs

Bayantuul Brigade

August 7

6:30 Ayushjav has finished washing near the river. She calls to her children in a soft but firm voice: "Minee huu serere! Minee ohin sereree!" (Wake up, my sons! Wake up, my daughters!) She needs her daughters to help her milk the cows and her husband, Sereeter, needs his sons to tie up the colts. Gantsetseg, as diligent as her mother, gets up immediately, followed by Narantsetseg, her younger sister. Their mother's voice is too gentle; the boys have not heard her call.

7:30 Sereeter returns home across the large open pasture with his horses, which at night wander freely in the immensity of the Mongolian steppe. It is Sereeter's first task to fetch them every morning. Retrieving the young animals is difficult and takes time, so his patience is strained when he sees that his older son is not awake to help tie up the colts. When he bends down to put his head through the door, there is no gentleness in his voice. The boys reluctantly lift the thick woollen blankets and face the glacial morning air.

It is summer now in Mongolia, but the northern country nights are always cold. The boys put on pants and their deel, the traditional tunic worn by men and women, and wrap their feet with strips of cotton cloth before pulling on their boots. Narankhuu, the eldest, takes two saddles from beside the door and walks to the horses. Every member of the family has a horse. They are vital to existence in a country with great distances between sparsely populated areas.

The two boys are off to take the sheep out on the steppe, as they do every day during their two-month school holiday. These 1,000 sheep are part of one of the vast, government-maintained sheep co-operatives. After a ewe is weaned, Sereeter and his wife are responsible for the first year of its life. Their work is assessed by the kilos of wool the sheep produce in a year. Sereeter must keep track of every single sheep, checking for weight loss or disease and paying special attention to them throughout the winter, with its strong winds and temperatures as low as -50°C.

8:00 Ayushjav has finished milking the cows and now lights the horse-dung fire, so the milk can be put on to boil. Gantsetseg is still in the field making up packs of fresh cow dung, which is also used as fuel. The shovel

the young girl uses is too big for her, so she often uses her hands to combine the piles of dung. She flattens the packs and leaves them to dry, then walks barefoot to the river to wash her hands.

Already a little mother, Gantsetseg walks back into the ger and tells Narantsetseg that she is lazy and that the floor she is cleaning is not clean enough. Narantsetseg makes a face. She wishes she were with her brothers on her horse. When the others are at boarding school and she is alone with her father, she is the one who helps her father gather the sheep. This year, Narantsetseg will also leave for school. Her parents know they will be lonely, but sending the children away to school is the only way to educate them.

They could have another child. The Mongolian government encourages large families; the country has vast resources and not enough people to tap them. A woman with five children is awarded her pension at an early age and receives two weeks of paid vacation a year in one of the many spas located throughout the country. But, for now, these benefits are not attractive enough for Ayushjav to consider having another baby.

As elegant as a princess, Ayushjav walks toward her husband, carrying two milk pails. During the summer months, their children's assistance with the sheep is essential, as Sereeter and Ayushjav's life revolves around the milking of the mares, which takes place every two hours.

Sereeter has caught the colts and tied them to a rope rail. Once the babies are tied up, the mares will not leave. Sereeter brings the first mare's colt to her and lets it drink for a few seconds. He needs all his strength to pull its mouth away while still holding the colt's body against its mother's. Hurriedly, Ayushjav bends to take the colt's place, making the mare believe that her colt is still sucking. Ayushjav's fingers are strong and she rapidly empties the two teats.

Mare's milk, available only during the two summer months, is one of the great pleasures of Mongolian cuisine. Once fermented it is called airag. Some is kept for the winter season, but most of the 45 litres produced each day are used up without difficulty. The family drink countless bowls of airag and visitors can help themselves freely. Mongolia's hospitality is

proportional to its solitude. A ger is open to all who wander by, with the expectation that a visitor will share news of the region.

9:00 The boys have left the sheep to graze. Their empty stomachs send them galloping over the flat plain to a breakfast of salted milk-tea and yoghurt. They leave the ger the minute they are finished eating, taking a happy Narantsetseg with them. The sheep have to be herded farther away. If they graze too long in one place, the grass will die and not grow again.

In two or three days, Sereeter's family will move to an ungrazed area of the steppe, about three kilometres away. Moving is a fact of life - something they do over 20 times a year. It takes them less than one hour to prepare. The house separates into six collapsible parts; the furniture is also made to break down easily. The choice of a place to settle is important. There must be water and good grass. The grasses vary, depending on the winds and the temperature. Cows like long grass; sheep like it short. Sereeter has to see to everyone's happiness. From November to February, the family hide in the mountains out of the bitter winds of winter.

11:00 The mares have been milked a second time. Now there is a moment to relax. Ayushjav stands in front of the mirror to comb and braid her long black hair. She does the same for her older daughter. Always adding beauty and grace to her well-organised household, she ties huge colourful bows on Gantsetseg's plaits.

12:00 Ayushjav sits down in front of her stove, to make the bread that will be served with yoghurt, cheese and a bowl of mare's milk. In two hours, when her children return, lunch will be ready.

2:30 The sheep are safe for the afternoon and everyone feels like a nap. The boys lie in one bed, the girls in another. Sereeter and Ayushjav talk softly in their bed. As a bonus for their herdmanship, the couple have been offered a two-week holiday to visit the region of Uvur Hangai. They cannot decide whether to go. Sereeter is not particularly social and prefers simply going to a sanatorium for a checkup. He is a worrier and has stomach trouble, which makes him appear angry and severe. "He may have a menacing look, but he is very gentle," Ayushjav says. "He would not be able to live without me."

3:30 The children are off across the field to pick up

horse dung. Like all Mongolians on the steppe, the family uses everything connected with the animals: the dung, the skins, the meat and the milk. Ayushjav and her husband milk the mares; then Ayushjav sits in front of her house to make aaruul, another staple of the family's diet. She fills a cotton bag with yoghurt and presses out the water. She then spreads the moist yoghurt on plates and sets them on the roof of her house, where the sun quickly dries it into a cheese that can be kept a long time. Along with milk products, meat is central to the family diet, but when an animal is killed, it is shared with friends, relatives and people who pass by the ger.

6:30 Narankhuu and Naransambu leave to fetch the herd of sheep. Ayushjav milks the cows once more, and Sereeter frees the mares for the night. Inside the ger, the mare's milk sits in a tall plastic jar. It is one of the children's tasks to beat the airag with a long, flat-ended stick. The milk needs 5,000 strokes to ferment. Gantsetseg starts counting. When she gets to 500 she passes the stick to her sister, who makes another face at this daily chore.

8:30 Once the sheep herd has settled beside the ger, Sereeter walks around inspecting each sheep. He gauges their contentment by the way each chews its cud. Satisfied that they are all well, he goes inside, always ready to run back out if he senses the herd getting excited or annoyed.

It is dusk and everyone is sitting near the stove in semi-darkness. Torches and oil lamps are used for light, even though a small Honda generator can provide electricity. It is used mainly for emergencies. "It has changed our life, but using it every evening would mean too many trips to the centre for fuel," explains Ayushjav.

In the dim light, the ger looks like a house in a fairy tale. The colours of the embroidered furnishings add to the warmth of the stove, so that it seems the coldest winds of winter could not penetrate. But for now it is summer and the evening stars twinkle through the open roof flap. A perfect setting for the best of dreams.

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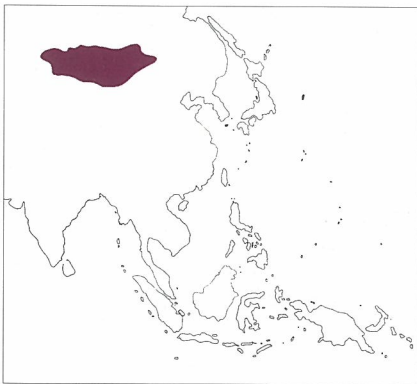
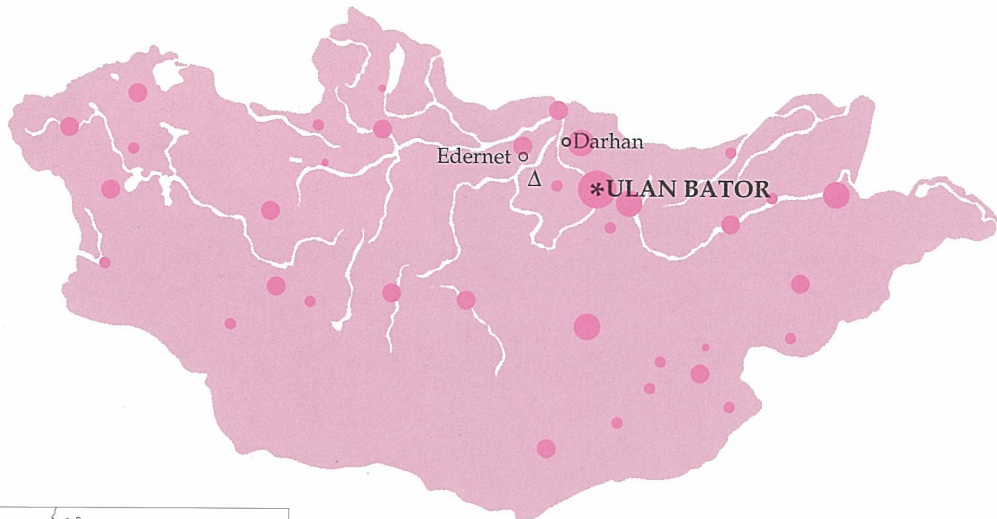
^ In half the time it takes his horse, Sereeter's motorcycle gets him to Shireet Sum, the closest administrative centre serving the 3,000 people who have their ger in the area. Now it's only an hours trip to the hospital and the boarding school.

v In this country of vast steppe and little forest, dung is used for cooking and to warm the colourful home. Ayushjav embroiders to decorate the house and nothing is left unadorned.

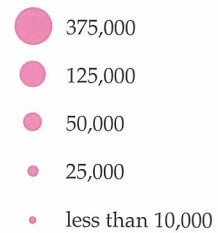


MONGOLIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

From Mongol, meaning the tribe of Chinggis (*Genghis*) Khan. Upon conquering the other major tribes of the steppes, he decreed that all "dwellers of felt tents" be called Mongols.



Population



△ Family visited by author



GEOGRAPHY

Three major topographic zones: in the north and west, fingerlike mountain ridges; to the east, vast hilly steppe plains; and in the south, the Gobi plateau of grasslands and desert. Max. altitude: 4,374 m. (14,351 ft.) (*Tavan Bogdo*)

Area: 1,565,000 sq. km. (604,250 sq. mi.)

Density: 1.2 pers./sq. km (3.1 pers./sq.mi.) (1986) (lowest density in the world)

Arable land: 0.8% (1985) (83% of the land is steppe and suitable for grazing)

Forest: 9%

Climate: Characterized by extreme variations in temperature and very low precipitation. Winters cold and sunny; summers short, with sudden downpours. The center of the world's maximum atmospheric pressure, it has an average of 230 to 260 clear sunny days a year.

CAPITAL:

Ulan Bator, pop. 575,000 (1991)

The Mongolians

LANGUAGE:

Mongol (*official*), of which the Khalkha dialect is most prevalent. Kazakh (*Turkic language*) also spoken.

RELIGION:

Mongolian culture has been heavily influenced by Tibetan Buddhism (*Lamaism*). Since the 1921 revolution, religion is separate from state and school and today there are few practicing adherents.

POPULATION:

Total: 2,310,000 (1992)

Annual growth: 2.7% (1985-90)

Doubling time: 25 yrs.

Urban: 52% (1990) (*est. for year 2000: 55%*)

Rural: 48%

AGE GROUPS (1989):

16% under 5 yrs.	29% from 20 to 39
42% under 15	12% from 40 to 59
53% under 20	6% 60 yrs. and over

ETHNIC GROUPS:

(*about 20 different groups*)

Khalkha Mongol: 78%	Bayat: 2%
Kazakh: 5%	Other: 12%
Durbet: 3%	

FAMILY:

Persons per household: 5.0 (1979)

Marital status: no data

Female head of household: no data

Fertility rate: 4.7 (1991)

Teenage births: 5.5% (1989)

Births out of wedlock: no data

Contraception: no data

SOCIAL INDICATORS:

Life expectancy: 63 yrs. (*male: 61; female: 64*) (1990)

Infant mortality: 62/1, 000 live births (1991)

Crude birth rate: 35/1, 000 pop. (1991)

Crude death rate: 8/1, 000 pop. (1991)

HEALTH:

Access to health services: 100% (1987-90)

At some times of the year, accessibility within an hour is not feasible and mobile units are relied upon.

Births attended by trained health personnel: 99% (1983-91)

Maternal mortality rate: 140/1, 000 live births (1980-90)

Population per physician: 379

Children (*under 1 year*) immunised against DPT: 84% (1990-91)

HOUSING:

Television: 41/1, 000 pop. (1990)

Radio: 132/1, 000 pop. (1990)

Electricity: no data. It can be assumed that the majority of the rural population are without electricity.

Access to safe water: 65% *urban: 78%; rural: 50%* (1988-90)

Source of water: no data. It can be assumed the majority of the rural population get water from wells and rivers.

Toilet facilities: (1983)

Sanitation facilities: 50%

Construction materials: no data. The majority have canvas ger (*yurts*).

Energy consumption in kgs of oil equivalent per capita: 598

EDUCATION:

Literacy: 93% (*male: 95%; female: 90%*) (1984-85)

Gross enrollment ratio (1986)

First level: 100% (*completing in 1978: 95%*)

Second: 92%

Third: 22%

Educational attainment for pop. 10 yrs.+ (1979)

None: no data

First level: 37%

Second: complete 7%; incomplete 23% (*specialized secondary: 6%*)

Third: 5%

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY:

Economically active population: 46% (1989-91)

Agriculture: 32% act. pop.; 18% of GDP

Mines: 10% act. pop.; 12% of GDP

Industry: 24% act. pop.; 20% of GDP

Services: 34% act. pop.; 50% of GDP

Per capita GNP: US\$780 (1987)

Military expenditure as a percentage of GDP: 10% (1990)

National currency: tugrik

Principal resources: Livestock, coal, iron ore, tin, semi-precious stones, gold, tungsten, oil, uranium

HISTORY

EAST ASIA

People's Republic of China

Chinese civilisation begins to develop near the Yellow River at least 10,000 years ago.

1766-1122 B.C.: Shang, the first fully historical dynasty established.

1122-211 B.C.: Zhou (Chou) Dynasty is characterised by a sharply divided class society and wars between contending states. Beginnings of Confucianism and Taoism in the latter half of this period.

221-206 B.C.: Qin (*Ch'in*) Dynasty unifies China.

207 B.C.-A.D. 220: Han Dynasty achieves great cultural and technological advances.

220-581: Prolonged disunity follows the fall of the Han; foreign influences are incorporated, including Buddhism from India.

618-907: Following the brief Sui Dynasty, the Tang (T'ang) rules a reunified China and institutes important governmental reforms, including the civil service system.

960: The Song (Sung) Dynasty brings technological advances such as printing, expansion of trade, and a flowering of the arts.

1271: Mongols conquer China and establish the Yuan Dynasty.

1368: The Ming Dynasty begins, a period of social stability and hostility to foreign influences.

1644: Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty established by Manchus. The empire reaches its greatest extent and prospers until the 19th century.

1840: Opium War with Britain introduces an era of European imperialism in China, with the opening of several ports to foreign powers.

1912: The Republic of China proclaimed under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen. The war lord era ensues, during which Chiang Kai-shek rises to power.

1927: Chiang establishes Nationalist government in Nanjing.

1934-35: Chinese Red Army undertakes its 6,000 mile "Long March" from Tiangxi to Yanan.

1937: Following another conquest of Manchuria, Japan launches a full-scale invasion of China. Troops remain until the end of WWII.

Oct. 1, 1949: Civil War ends with proclamation of the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong. Chiang and his Nationalist forces flee to Taiwan.

1958: The Great Leap Forward, an effort to modernise the economy, contributes to a severe famine.

1966: Mao Zedong proclaims the Cultural Revolution, which ends with his death in 1976.

1977: Deng Xiaoping comes to power and begins to lay the foundation for economic and social reform.

1982: A new constitution is promulgated containing more detailed provisions than ever before on citizens rights and specific functions of organisations.

1989: The political struggle between conservative and reformist factions high up in the Communist Party continues. Following the death of Hu Yaobang, regarded as a symbol of reformist politics, student demonstrations erupt in Beijing and other cities.

20 May 1989: Martial law is declared in response to pro-reformist demonstrations.

3-4 June 1989: During the night, heavily armed troops and tanks kill an estimated thousand students, workers and bystanders in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

1990: Deng Xiaoping resigns from his last official position as chairman of State Military Commission.

1992: Prime Minister Li Peng outlines a sweeping programme of economic changes aimed at strengthening market reforms and restructuring the state apparatus.

Japan

Evidence of human habitation 30,000 years ago.

660 B.C.: First emperor, Jimmu, is thought to have come to power.

300s A.D.: The Yamato court rules over the first unified Japanese state. **710-784:** Buddhism flourishes.

794-1185: Heian period.

1192: The first military government, or shogunate, is established.

1573-1867: Period of warring states leads to Tokugawa shogunate; gradual political unification.

1868-1912: Meiji Restoration begins Japan's modernisation and the first constitution is drawn up.

1909: Korea is annexed.

1923: Great Tokyo earthquake.

1926-1989: Showa period. Truly constitutional government achieved.

1931: Japan seizes control of Manchuria.

1937: Japanese armies invade China.

1941-45: As one of the Axis Powers in WWII, Japan invades most of South-East Asia and establishes military bases on many Pacific islands.

1945: First two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by US and Japan surrenders.

1945-52: US occupies Japan.

1947: New constitution vests sovereign power in the people, guarantees fundamental human rights and renounces war.

1952 to present: Dramatic recovery makes Japan one of the world's greatest economic powers. With conservative political parties in power since World War II there has been little disruptive social unrest or political confrontation.

Republic of Korea

Evidence of being inhabited from early Paleolithic times.

2333 B.C.: Legendary King Tangun, to whom Korea traces its origin, ascends the throne.

400s A.D.: Height of Three Kingdoms: Silla, Koguryo, and Paekche.

668: The Korean peninsula is unified under Silla.

936: The Koryoi kingdom is established.

1259: Conquest by the Mongols.

1392-1910: Yi Dynasty, with Confucianism as the official creed is established and there is impressive scientific and cultural development.

1600s: After successive Chinese invasions, Korea retreats from foreign contact, earning the name "Hermit Kingdom".

1910-45: Japan annexes Korea. After the Japanese surrender in WWII, Korea is partitioned, with Soviet troops occupying the north and the United States the south.

Sept. 9, 1948: Proclamation of Republic of Korea in the south and Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north.

1950: North Korea invades South Korea, UN troops under US command support the south.

1953: Border re-established at the 38th parallel.

1956: Syngman Rhee elected president.

1961: National uprising leads to Rhee's resignation; Park Chung Hee's military forces takes control.

1979: Martial law is declared following Park's assassination.

1981: General Chun Doo Hwan becomes president.

1987: Roh Tae Woo is elected to replace Chun.

Mid 1988: Thousands of students in Seoul and Kwangju take part in anti-US and anti-government demonstrations.

1988: Seoul hosts the Olympic Games. North Korea calls for a boycott by its communist allies, which was ignored by all but Cuba, Ethiopia and Albania.

1991: The US military presence in South Korea is scaled down with the removal of nuclear weapons.

Mongolia

Inhabited since Lower Paleolithic times (*between 100,000 and 500,000 years ago*).

200s B.C.: The Huns emerge as the first powerful united tribe among many pastoral nomadic peoples.

552-840 A.D.: Turk and Uighur empires rule Mongolia.

1204: Chinggis (*Genghis*) Khan conquers the major tribes of Mongolia to create a powerful confederation which goes on to invade great areas of Asia and Europe.

1279: Qubilai (Kublai), grandson of Chinggis, establishes the Yuan Dynasty after conquering China.

1368: Yuan Dynasty falls, and Mongol power begins to decline.

1500s: Lama Buddhism, introduced to Mongolia from Tibet, begins to flourish.

1600s: Internal strife leaves Mongolia vulnerable to the Manchus, leaders of China's Qing (*Ch'ing*) Dynasty.

1700s: Manchus integrate Inner Mongolia with China, and dominate Outer Mongolia. Russia controls Buryat-Mongolia (*in Siberia*).

1911: Mongolia shifts to the Russian orbit until the 1917 Revolution, when it reverts to Chinese.

1921: Mongolia, with the help of Russian troops, drives the Chinese out of Outer Mongolia.

Nov. 4, 1924: Proclamation of the Mongolian People's Republic in Outer Mongolia. Inner Mongolia remains part of China. All foreign contacts except with the USSR are terminated.

1929-32: An unprepared programme of collectivisation ruins the country's economy and stock of cattle falls by at least a third. A rigorous anti-religious campaign turns many people against the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party.

1932: Uprisings break out across the country, resulting in intervention by the Soviet army.

1936: Marshal Choybalsan becomes effective dictator of Mongolia.

1945: A plebiscite confirms Mongolia's wish to remain independent. The country's international position of isolation and unique dependence on the USSR does not change until the communisation of Europe and the success of the communists in China

opens a wider field of diplomatic activity.

1946: The traditional Mongolian alphabet is abandoned in favour of a form of Cyrillic script.

1962: Mongols celebrate the 800th anniversary of the birth of Genghis Khan.

1986: Mikhail Gorbachev offers to withdraw some Soviet troops from Mongolia as a step towards normalising relations between Moscow and Beijing.

1989-90: Newly formed opposition parties organise peaceful demonstrations in Ulan Bator, demanding political and economic reforms.

1990: Punsalmaagiyn Ochirbat becomes the country's first elected President.

January 1992: A new constitution is adopted, the country's name is changed from the Mongolian People's Republic to Mongolia, and the Communist gold star is removed from the national flag.