

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN MONGOLIA THE ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Mongolia is often regarded as a young democratic state that has successfully undergone the process of transformation from communism to democracy. However, a cultural anthropological analysis of Mongolian political life shows the potential differences between the ideas organizing social life in Mongolia and those known in advanced democratic societies. This article¹ traces some cultural peculiarities that have impacted on the political situation of contemporary Mongolia. Special attention has been devoted to the concept of *yos*, which is regarded as a relevant aspect of morality in Mongolian traditional culture and is still important in understanding behavioral motives of contemporary Mongols. The rules of *yos* contain a set of proper and improper behavioral criteria towards family members and friendship networks as well as providing a model for proper relations to the state. The concept of collective personhood in the Mongolian cultural way of thinking means a range of social consequences incapable of being observed through analyzes involving individualistic personhood-based methodology.

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Mongolia jest często uważana za młode, demokratyczne państwo, które pomyślnie przeszło proces transformacji z komunizmu do demokracji. Jednak, analizy mongolskiego życia politycznego z perspektywy antropologii kulturowej pokazują potencjalną różnicę między ideami organizującymi życie społeczne w Mongolii a tymi, które są znane w społeczeństwach z zaawansowanymi demokracjami. Artykuł ukazuje pewne osobliwości kulturowe, które mają wpływ na sytuację polityczną współczesnej Mongolii. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono koncepcji *yos*, która jest uważana za istotny aspekt moralności w tradycyjnej mongolskiej kulturze i nadal pełni ważną rolę w zrozumieniu motywów behawioralnych współczesnych Mongołów. Zasady *yos* zawierają zestaw właściwych i niewłaściwych kryteriów zachowania wobec członków rodziny i sieci przyjaźni, a także model prawidłowego stosunku do państwa. Koncepcja kolektywnej osobowości w mongolskim kulturowym myśleniu oznacza szereg społecznych konsekwencji, których nie można dostrzec w analizach z indywidualistyczną metodologią opartą na osobowości.

Key words: Mongolia, democracy, election, ethic, morality, *yos*.

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As a result of democratic movements in 1990, Mongolia, after almost 70 years of being under communism, started to govern itself independently without interference from its large neighbors: Russia or China. In 1992, a new constitution was adopted and Mongolia became a parliamentary republic. The Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), the sole party in Mongolia during the communist period, recognized the legality of other parties in order to establish a multiparty political system. To date, about 20 parties have been registered in Mongolia but political life in the country is focused around two movements: *khuv'sgalt namynkhan* – those who were affiliated to the post-communist MPRP, modified after the fall of communism, and *ardchilalynkhan* – connected to new movements established by the initiators of the democratic revolution in 1990. MPRP and Democratic Party (DP) have ruled the country over the last 20 years being either in coalition or by themselves. However, the most significant role has been taken by MPRP, because as the post communist party it has enjoyed real endorsement for its connection to Mongolia's historical past. The Mongols have a particular attitude to communism and evaluation of its communist past is not unambiguously negative. This is seen in independence-related issues – extremely crucial for a country sandwiched between two powerful neighbors.

Although Mongolia proclaimed its independence in 1911, the sovereignty of Mongolia was only recognized by the UN in 1961, with the strong support of the Soviet Union. Political repression and other negative issues connected with Moscow were in some way seen as the price for gaining independence.

According to Mongolian cultural category thinking, every being has its own position in the hierarchic order, therefore so-called the relation of younger and elder brother (Mongolia-Russia) in those times was accepted, because was confirming a certain state of things. The Soviet Union could be perceived as the fierce but protective elder brother, and this does not solely derive from Soviet propaganda. The Mongols accepted the tenets of communism according to the logic of their culture. The translations of communist ideas into Mongolian were undertaken mainly by Buryats, a Mongolian ethnic group living in the USSR and Mongolia, who were also fluent in Russian. The translation of the *Communist Party Manifesto* from Russian to Mongolian, for example, must have been a complex and tricky affair since neither the concept of communism, nor the notion of proletarian class existed in the Mongolian language. The first translation of the *Manifesto* was done in 1925, and the word “communism” was translated as *ev khamtyn yos* – “the principle of being in communal consent” which sounds very positive in a culture where the idea of harmony is a social ideal.

Another positive of communism to the Mongols was its association with ideas of progress. The close cooperation which existed with the Soviet Union yielded rapid development in many spheres and this is still positively perceived by the Mongols; it was considered a step forward towards a progressive European culture and towards new ideas and social institutions. Mongols have also positive opinions of the urbaniza-

tion process, the modernization which took place during collectivization, and of the establishment of both educational and health care systems. All these changes were brought about by the MPRP in a mono-party system, which was perceived by people as a government institution. Thus, the image of an experienced ruling party, which for many Mongols was associated with *tör* (government and legitimacy to govern), still held currency for a long time even after the collapse of the communist system.

This was the reason why the MPRP have been successful in several free elections (with the exception of 1996–2000) and has wielded evident influence especially on the level of local infrastructures, having a reliable network of loyal people at its disposal. In 2010, post communists divided into two separate parties: The Mongolian People's Party and The Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. The split was initiated by the former Mongolian president, N. Enkhbayar, one of the most prominent politicians affiliated to MPRP. After the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party changed its name and became the Mongolian People's Party, the newly separated Enkhbayar's party seized the name of the old party – MPRP – for itself. This led to good deal of confusion as the new party had the old name and vice versa. The whole situation became even more complicated after Enkhbayar was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for corruption soon after the separation. All these events caused significant changes in the public image of post-communist parties. The party, which had been ruling the country for nearly 70 years and had enjoyed high respect, paradoxically turned to lose its position in terms of cultural symbolism. Such situation gave chance to the democrats. In 2012, for the first time in a 20-year-period Mongolian democrats finally won all levels of elections: parliamentary, presidential and local. However, the Democrats are still considered to be less experienced, disintegrated and too immature to rule. The proof of this seemed to manifest itself when after two years in power, Altanhuyag's team (DP) were dismissed for being unprofessional, corrupt and the cause of the economic crisis.

Another important context for understanding Mongolia's contemporary policy is the mining boom. Mining is a new branch of the economy in Mongolia, unlike extensive livestock production and a traditional nomadic herding lifestyle which were domains of Mongols for centuries. However, for the last decade Mongolia has embarked upon a new era of economic transition due to its newly discovered natural resources: the largest coal deposits in the world and the largest deposits of copper, gold and uranium. As a result, mining has become the primary economic sector which accounts for two thirds of the state's budget revenue. This is quite a substantial amount for Mongolia given the fact that budgetary resources have not scaled such heights before. This has favored rapid development of the country and in 2011 statistics proclaimed Mongolia to be the fastest growing economy in the world with a growth rate of 17%. However, euphoria was short-lived and in 2014, there was a noticeable economic downturn marked by an unemployment rate of 8.8% and inflation at 12.8% which translated into an economic crisis in Mongolia.

Increasing social discontent rose in the wake of the disappointment felt by the wider society from failing to share in the financial benefits accruing from the mining sector. People are asking why immoral politicians have enacted laws that are in conflict with the interests of the state, why they have allowed their virgin homeland to be destroyed, why they have pocketed bribes from foreign companies and why a full one third of the three million population live in poverty while the rich are rolling in money. There are many politicians and political activists in Mongolia, who argue that a democratic system that is not working properly is responsible for this current state of affairs.

In recent years, one can watch a number of initiative projects on the inventing and promoting of particular Mongolian traditions, which have been mooted in order to find optimal forms of governing better adapted to Mongolian realities. However, neither strong anti-government activists proclaiming nationalistic ideas, nor politicians, declaring their patriotic credentials have been able to provide definitive answers as to what the statehood-ruling traditions (*tört yosny ulamjla*) are.

The state of democracy in Mongolia and its specificity have also piqued the interest of numerous foreign research centers, particularly in recent years, when attention to Mongolia has increased in connection with the mining boom. Research conducted in the field of social and cultural anthropology is especially numerous. One of the most extensive works written on the contemporary changes Mongolia has undergone under the influence of the mining boom is the *Democratic Change In Mongolia* edited by Julian Dierkes. The authors stress that

“Unusually among Asian post-socialist societies, Mongolian democracy does seem to be somewhat firmly entrenched” (Dierkes 2012,10).

It indicates, at the same time, the weakness of formal institutional capacity and adaptability in a rapidly changing and demanding environment (Dierkes 2012, 302). A thorough analysis of the situation was also conducted by Cambridge research centers under British anthropologists Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, who point to a number of differences arising from cultural background. David Sneath (2007) in his renowned book *Headless state* writes about the need to apply “appropriate conceptual apparatus of nomads” in relation to particular forms of social institutions, arguing that the imposition of European research categories (in regards, for example to the state) in an analysis of local societies distorts the description of indigenous reality. A number of articles by Caroline Humphrey (2012a, 2012b) and Rebecca Empson (2011, 2012) are also insightful anthropological works on Mongols’ specific thinking categories, relevant for understanding local social relations.

Much research has also been carried out based on a western-humanity- methodology perspective using western tools to describe the cultural reality in Mongolia. Anthropologist Paula Sabloff, may be a really sympathetic Mongolian-loving person but her conclusions regarding the Mongols’ attitude to democracy are quite far from

my insights. In her book *Does Everyone Want Democracy? Insights from Mongolia* there are many implications that Mongols blindly follow the Western mood and are just repeating what they have read or heard about the Western ideals. She states:

“Here, people clearly want their country to travel that path [democracy O.T.]. They especially value their freedoms, be they political, economic or human rights. This is evident not only in these interviews but also in the 1992 ratification of a constitution that champions Western democracy and capitalism” (Sabloff 2013, 105).

It is worth pointing out that notions such as personal dignity, human rights and freedom quoted so many times in her interviewees’ answers are connected to the Western concept of individualism, developed in 18th–19th century Europe. The idea that all humans must be individualistic personages means that all human beings share ideas of autonomy, privacy, dignity and many others, defined as components of individualism. Whereas in Mongolian cultural context there are no such ideas, or even if there are, they have different meanings on an ontological level. The same situation is to be found in Mongol- attitudes to an understanding of the law contrary to the customary rules – *yos*. It seems the definition of tradition should also be reconsidered in the sphere of the cultural category of thinking. Applying purely western notions in anthropological studies without bearing in mind the differences involved distorts the description of the Mongolian reality.

Reflections on the contemporary social organization of the Mongols inevitably involve the problem of morality. As Stanislaw Zapasnik (2010, 192) says,

“In Europe, the creation of morality as an independent field of consciousness takes place with development of the idea of individual autonomy, and such a type of morality does not exist in Asian cultures”.

A broad anthropological analysis of Mongolian morality is given in the article *Exemplars and rules* by Caroline Humphrey (1997, 25) where she states:

“The combination of terms used by the Mongols to translate the European idea, *yossurtakhuun*, seems to be of rather recent origin. I shall argue that each of these two terms does, however, denote an area of moral activity which is important in Mongolian culture”.

“*Yos* means the commonly accepted rules of order, reason and custom, while *surtakhuun* (literally ‘those things that have been taught’) refers to personal ethics. The two are not unconnected, but I shall argue that, as practices of evaluating conduct, they work in different ways”.

She also argues that “the most important arena of morality appears in the relation between persons and exemplars or precedents” (Humphrey 1997, 33). In defining “exemplar-focused way of thinking about morality” she notes:

“... [U]nlike in Europe, in practice almost no place is given to general ethical precepts as emanations of God or society. Rather, such precepts tend to authored and they then appear in relationships as tied to the personalities of both the mentor and the follower” (Humphrey 1997, 33).

The exemplars and not ideas are the most significant here. Comparing Mongolian and Western notions of morality, Humphrey points out that the concept of the Mongols' "exemplar-focused morality" does not correlate with any characteristics of moral standards in the West, which stem from European norms and codes, such as the Catholic catechism, and French or American constitutions (Humphrey 1997, 33–34).

Another anthropologist, Christopher Kaplonski (2006, 67) argues that:

"History in and of itself is seen as a part of the moral sphere in Mongolia and that this is a result of its structuring around individuals rather than dates or events" [...] Not only exemplars used for "potent moral lessons", but through them, history is seen as being moral at a more fundamental, almost ontological, level".

The concept of "exemplar focused morality", which is really important in understanding the meaning of morality for Mongols, is closely related to the hierarchical vision of universe order, where the main principle of governing relations is connected to the concept of *yos*. *Yos* commonly translated as "custom" or "ritual", bears also the sense of a particular order consistent with the principles governing the universe. Any act consistent with that order is considered to be "proper" (*zöv*) for human beings. What is inconsistent is improper (*buruu*). In this sense, *yos* is different from the concept of "custom" in European cultures, which, as I understand it, refers mainly to the practices and ways of behavior stemming from tradition and understood in the categories of Western culture.

On the relationship of *yos* with morality Humphrey (1997, 28) writes:

"They make a distinction between rules as socially accepted customs (*yos, zanshil*) and as edicts (*zarlig*) of temporal rulers. However, there is a certain cosmological elision between the two, which suggests that both can be taken by Mongols to be largely concerned with power, and there seems to be a sense in which both are thereby removed from the sphere of morality conceived by the Mongols".

The basic problem in understanding the *yos* is the difficulty of clarifying the concept, because this idea is realized through a combination with other concepts and through a building of a sense of order together with specifying a nature of concepts joined with *yos*. One can therefore speak of a certain elusiveness, but also the ubiquity of this concept, which allows it to be compared with the Chinese idea of *Tao* – the Way-, natural order and etiquette *li* as well. The Dictionary of Classical Mongolian language states: "*Yos* is a property of things that arise inevitably, the path of fate" (*yummy zailshgüi züi togtool, jam tav'lan*). The basic and most widespread form of the word is *yostoi / yosgüi* (literally having *yos* / no *yos*) which translates as "should / should not be".

The etymology of the word dates back to texts written in classical Mongolian script, in particular the *Secret History of the Mongols*, the oldest written textual resource on the Mongols from the 13th century. The word *yos* appears in a few text fragments as a synonym for "*tör*" – words of Turkic origin, which in the modern Mongolian lan-

guage means statehood, and when combined with the word *people (uls)* means *policy (uls tör)*. The major characteristics of *tör* were described by T. Skrynnikova:

“*Tör*” – “the Highest Law” – is something that one can feel, accept, have in the self, transfer, or one can become detached from it. One can follow and submit to this order, but it exists as something external to humans, as it is given from above and not created and humans have nothing to do but comprehend it. Even *khan* is not the creator of *tör* but merely a follower. During the reign of Genghis Khan it was called the law established by the Sky” (Skrynnikova 2013, 59).

“The law is the principle of universal balance in the micro- and the macrocosm, which ensures compliance with the established order, laws, standards and rules, a compliance that protects harmony in the Universe, Nature and Society. [...] The executor of the Sky’s will on earth was the khan, the guardian of the Law” (Skrynnikova 2013, 59).

Thus, in accordance with traditional thinking categories, the Mongolian state is seen as a part of the hierarchically ordered world of goddesses, differing spirits, human beings, and animals, to name just some. Since the state is understood as a being of sorts, its sustainable development must be conducted in harmony with the rest of the universe. Harmony is assured through rituals governed by *yos*. One of the most important rituals at state level is *Ovoo takhikh* which is a sacrificing ceremony on sacred cairns, conducted by the ruler. It is now also carried out by the president, who in the name of his people asks the most powerful mountain spirits to be favourably disposed to the Mongols as the state community. The success of the rituals and the moral backbone of the ruler determine the fate of the community. The canons and etiquette of behavior in Mongolian culture are not as sophisticated as in Confucian China – but though they are a little looser, the basic principle categories of thinking are very similar. This also applies to the conception of a family, where appropriate moral behavior (in accordance with *yos*) of the head of the family shapes the fate of other members. Each family member has clearly defined roles and responsibilities corresponding to hierarchies of age, gender, and respect for the principles appropriate to each of them in providing harmony in the family. It is worth noting that this idea of harmony includes relationships with the world of one’s dead ancestors, who can be contacted through particular rituals. One can appeal to them to strengthen so called “vital forces” such as *süld*, *chiimor*, *hishig* and *buyan* (health, luck, prosperity and wealth).

Therefore, human individuals that ontically do not distinguish the self as a separate autonomous being, assume their place according to a given moment and a given set of social order (and space). This is expressed by the word *yostoi* and defines one’s behavioral conventions which are dependent upon role and place in society. In such an arrangement, questions such as “*Who am I?*” and “*What is my will?*” are not as important as they are in individualistic cultures. Moreover, manifesting will, through privacy and autonomy are considered negatively and are equated to selfishness. Mongolian conceptual cosmology lacks the idea of individualistic personhood, therefore barely

any tools are available for even contemporary Mongols to distinguish egoism from individualism. I have the impression that the younger generation are at the cusp of discovering the concept of an individual under the influence of Hollywood films and books by authors such as Ayn Rand. However, from my observations of the behavior of the Mongols, I can conclude that the behavioral motives of the vast majority still follow the *yos*. While their emotions and inner thoughts are rather difficult to explore, their external behavior consistent with *yos* can be clearly seen in the social life of ordinary Mongols. This is manifested in the tradition of receiving guests which has changed little through the centuries, topics of discussion, the way tea is served and poured and the way people greet and part.

In traditional culture, humans perceive the self as an integral part of the family, being tied not only through duties and fate but also through receiving the vital force. Emotions are of least importance, though they undoubtedly exist in this culture. This contrasts with Western habits, where the relationship within the family is primarily based on emotional ties between its members, their wills, decisions and choice. The specific cultural attitude to emotions in a social relationship context was described in a book of Sulamith and Jack Potters entitled *Chinese Peasants. The Anthropology of a Revolution* (1990). The cultural construction of emotions they described are very close to the traditional Mongolian ideal of social relations, where emotions are of less importance than rituals and behavior conventions:

“Because they are assuming the existence of a continuous social order that requires no affirmation in inner emotional response, but only in behavior, there is no need for them to treat emotions as inherently important. Emotional experiences has no formal social consequences (It may, of course, have informal ones). [...] What is uniquely characteristic of the individual’s private experience – in particular, the emotional – is socially irrelevant” (Potters and Potters 1990,183).

Another aspect of the *yos*, which has other relevant social consequences is its interpretation of customary law, which as a reference to the eternal order ruling the universe, has undoubtedly, a positive meaning. It can be however said that normative law is perceived by the Mongols as superficial, temporary and often negative, as can be seen in terms of criminal law. This negative attitude to the law can also be justified by history as the legislators of the Mongolian law were representatives of the Manchu dynasty transferred the law from the China, and later they were communists who implemented the law from Moscow. According to the Mongolian philosopher Nagaanbuu (2011, 383) *khuul* (law) is an expression of Manchu origin and thus a strange notion for a Mongolian reality, founded on *yos* relations. In his opinion, *yos* was the true Mongolian concept of law and the renowned legal code of Genghis Khan *Ikh Zasag* (Yasa) was simply *Yeke Yoso* or the “Great *Yos*”. There is much debate over what exactly the *Ikh Zasag* was. I think the scholars are right in stating that “The earliest source we have seems to indicate that the *Ikh Zasag* was basically a set of precedents and not a thought-out piece of legislation” (Kaplonski 2006, 84).

Yos, as an important component in the behavior motives of Mongols and has further economic and political relation-consequences. It drives behavior patterns which could be seen as incomprehensible from an economic rationality standpoint. Items such as snuffboxes, saddles (costing thousands of US dollars) and cell phone numbers from one of the cellular networks, starting with lucky numbers 9911 (set people back more than 10 thousand USD) which shock foreigners but work for the Mongols.

The notion of prestige is important here as a kind of criterion by which person deserve or not to occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy. There is no equivalent in the Mongolian language for the word “prestige”, which can be interpreted as a feature granted naturally for those located at the top of the social hierarchy. They are referred to as “*ner törtei khün*” – men who have *ner* and *tör*. *Ner* is translated as “name” and *tör* as a synonymous with *yos*: those who have *yos* on their behalf, have the rules, the proper persons. The opposite of *ner tör* is *ichikh nüür* – literally “face of shame”, which is analogous to the concept of face and the risk of its loss in Chinese culture.

The concept of individual, whose identity is an integral part of the family also has important consequences on a broader social level such as a lack of division between private and public spheres and the construction of non-kin relations in accordance with those in a family. This makes it possible to see the state as an extended family, where the ruler or president, is the father who will be expected to possess characteristics appropriate for the father of the family. *Yos* imposes an obligation on family members to determine specific distribution of welfare in a group. What cannot be afforded by the individual, become possible for a team of family or relatives, including common goals, joint ventures and investments. In situations where the state does not provide security in many spheres of life, people have to rely firmly on each other.

Family interest is even more important for *töriin khüni yos* – obligations pertaining to a statesman or official. Hence, corruption, especially in the mining arena, is quite widespread. It is, however, worth pointing out that the reason for this is not merely wealth accumulation, but as pointed out earlier, the character of obligations and relations between members of a group. Describing the cultural context of corruption in Mongolia, David Sneath distinguishes between “enacting” vs “transacting”.

“Rather than viewing these as negatively and positively valued varieties of a single analytic category – exchange – I argue that transfers of goods and assistance are better viewed as materialization of various types of social relations. As an explanatory idiom exchange should only be applied to some acts of material transfer – transactions. Other categories of transfer are better seen as enactments of aspects of persons and roles for which the language of obligation and expectation are more apt” (Sneath 2006, 90).

The political parties of Mongolia can be analyzed by applying similar referential background. Party membership assumes belonging to some structure not due to any views and ideology, but mainly for the opportunity it affords to have access to jobs

in state institutions, credit loans or chances to win public tenders. It is commonly acknowledged in Mongolia that post-election many officials are hired and fired depending on which team they belong to.

Byambajav Dalaibuyan in his analysis on informal relations in Mongolia argues:

“The revival of traditional social institutions and practices presented an alternative in the ‘era of the market’. As opposed to formal political and economic institutions, the informal networks of familial kinship, friendship and other social ties as well as informal rules and practices have come to constitute the primary mechanism through which people gain access to valuable resources, such as information, money, social support and political influence” (Byambajav 2013, 31).

In this situation, ideologies of party and platforms are irrelevant. Thus, even such basic models of western politics as “left/right wing” can be obscured in a Mongolian political context and be empty idioms copied from western political science vocabulary. In this regard, being conservative means backing the communist party, the only previous existing party. On the other hand, Democrats in Mongolia promoting human rights, social equality and the dismantling of the hierarchical mode of society present themselves as right wing in arguing for the importance of pre-communist Mongolian tradition. However, these notions are rarely used and are very confusing for many Mongols. The platforms of the various political parties do not on many substantive points differ greatly.

A look at the political situation in Mongolia would draw the observer to the traditional categories of evaluation which pertain, including, amongst others, the concept of *yos*. A good example of this was the presidential election of 2013, when the candidate of the MPP, Badmaanyambu Bat-Erdene a famous wrestling champion, was standing. Though he did not win the election, his 41% of support, can be considered a very good result since political conditions were extremely unfavorable for his party and the election campaign was open to question. I am of the opinion that Bat-Erdene actually did not need a PR machine, because he being a wrestler connoted a number of positive cultural meanings. Wrestling, along with archery and horse racing, have great power significance in traditional Mongolian culture. Being a good wrestler also implies having high moral standards according to the criteria of a traditional value system. There are many expressions connected particularly to the wrestling culture. For example, the expression *judag* (magnanimous, righteous, honorable) used mainly in regard to wrestlers, means someone who is *zöv* – the right/proper person.

As mentioned before, in accordance with the traditional way of Mongolian thinking, one of the roles played by the president is the *ovoo takhikh* ceremony. The way the president (in the name of his people) performs the rites is more important than his personality – thus removing the requirement for the president to be a charismatic personality. All he needs is to match the ideal of a good leader. His manners as well as the possession of an appropriate appearance are of greater relevance.

The leader should exude a regal and dignified posture and Bat-Erdene fulfilled these requirements perfectly.

The electorate gave Elbegdorj, the candidate from the Democratic Party, 50% of the votes. As one of the initiators of the democratic movement his political image is associated with ideas of human rights, liberalism, democracy; though it seems that a majority of Mongolian society is not yet ready to understand those ideas. The reason why Elbegdorj won the election, in my opinion, is that he managed to mobilize the capacity for family, friendship and local bonds to establish networks supporting him. Naming the phenomenon of Mongolian election in terms of social capital in sociological research is evidently not enough to characterize Mongolian political realm.

To summarize, a part of Mongol society are proud of the rapid development of their economy as it fulfills their aspirations of living in a modern country. It is hard to disagree with this when we look at the high skyscrapers and the sprawling capital abound. However, in my opinion, the factor behind this development lies not in a well-established market and effective legal system, but in collective entrepreneurial management skills. Certain cultural orientations rooted deeply in traditional ethical norms of *yos* unwrap a range of behavior models, distinct from those in Western cultures. On the one hand, many economic projects: familial, public or even state undertakings suffer from poor cost calculations, but on the other, they are accompanied with a belief in luck and an absence of risk-taking fear. Relying on family, strength, wit but in conjunction with a disinterest in privacy and private property – all these cultural peculiarities, stemming from the notion of *yos*, have allowed many Mongols to achieve success. This success is of a collective and family nature, although it is proving to be more difficult to achieve at the level of state organization.

Bearing this broad sense of *yos* in mind, conclusions on how Mongols perceive democracy can be understood as stated by Sabloff:

“They believe that democracy will better enable them align their deeply held values and personal goals with the lifestyle they desire than other forms of government, particularly communism. Some want democracy to gain freedom from oppression or government control of their lives. [...] Some want it for self-determination. Others believe it will help them and their nation attain dignity. And still others consider it the best way to help them meet family obligations or succeed in the global economy. Democracy, in other words, is more than a form of government; it is a way of life” (Sabloff 2013, 2).

My conclusion is that democracy, as an idea, in terms of the Mongolian cultural category of thinking, has to be seen through the lens of *yos*, a part of the commonly accepted rules of a cosmic order which inevitably comes. The process of democratization involves legal procedures which are in many cases misaligned with Mongol-ethical norms. Thorough research on the rules of *yos* from Mongolian historical and philosophical perspectives could provide an important aspect of *tört yosny ulamljal* – the tradition of ruling statehood that Mongols have been searching so intensively for.

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