

Nationalism and Globalization on the Inner Mongolia Frontier: The Commercialization of a Tamed Ethnicity

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Introduction: Imaging Urban Development on the Frontier

The history of Inner Mongolia during the last century has been in important respects a story of Sinicization. On the one hand, massive immigration by Han Chinese has transformed the Mongol community into a minority of around 20% in their homeland. On the other hand, as is the case of other minority peoples in China and elsewhere, there has been a steady erosion of the distinctive identity of the Mongols, especially in urban regions. Many now speak and read no Mongolian and have adopted Chinese names, dress and other markers of Chinese culture. Visitors to the capital of Inner Mongolia, Hohhot, as recently as ten years ago would have found it very similar in appearance to a dozen or more Chinese cities of about the same size. It comes as a surprise therefore that, in the last decade, the cityscape of Hohhot has come to display a public Mongol identity that differentiates it sharply from other cities in China. This new public face of Mongol identity is not a reflection of resurgent Mongol nationalism. Rather it represents a taming of ethnicity by the forces of tourism and the market through processes of nationalization and globalization.

Hohhot is located at the foot of the Dalanhar

(Ch. Daqingshan) mountain chain on average 1040m above sea level. To the south and southwest of the city, the Tumed plain sweeps down to the great northern bend of the Yellow River. Today's Hohhot developed from the merger of two towns constructed in the 16th and 18th centuries respectively. The first town was constructed in the 16th century under the Mongol Prince Altan Khan (1507-1582) who reintroduced Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolia and created the title of *Dalai Lama* ("Ocean of Wisdom"). [2] He named the settlement Köke Qota, or 'blue city' and under his rule, it became the administrative, military and cultural center of the Tumed Mongols who continue to live in the adjacent area known as the Tumed banner to this day. [3] Originally, Köke Qota was a small castle town surrounded by a single wall only one kilometre long; the town was called Guihua ('return to civilization' or 'taming the barbarians') in Chinese. In the late 17th century, the Manchu emperor Kangxi constructed another wall outside the existing wall, enclosing areas where Chinese, Hui and Mongol artisans and traders lived. This was the beginning of a mixed population within the city wall. Later, an administrative office, which served the Chinese population, was set up. In 1868 there were Muslim rebellions in Gansu and the Qing court, fearing that the rebels might attack their western outpost at Köke Qota, constructed another much larger circular wall around the city to include an expanded area which housed many Chinese workers and traders. Thereafter, the city's Chinese population grew more rapidly.

The second town was a garrison town which the Qing court constructed to the east of the existing town in 1737 and which they called

Suiyuan ('pacifying the frontier'). This garrison town was built in order to control the western Mongols of Tumed, Ulanab, and Ordos. In general parlance, the original town of Guihua came to be called the Old Town (*jiucheng*) and Suiyuan the New Town (*xincheng*). Whereas the old town had started as a town, the new town began as a mixed garrison settlement with Han Chinese and Mongol banner garrisons. Later a Manchu banner garrison was added and, still later, the Han garrisons were withdrawn. During the late Qing period, the two towns were often jointly called 'Gui-Sui'. During the period of the Inner Mongolian Independence movement led by Prince Demchugdangrob in the 1930s and 1940s, the city was called Köke ('blue'). When it became the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1954, [4] the name was changed back to Köke Qota (Hohhot in English transliteration, Huhehaote in pinyin). [5]

The leaders of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region tried to imbue their capital with Mongol characteristics. Key buildings, including the Inner Mongolia Museum and Theatre, incorporated Mongol motifs. From the late 1960s, however, the Cultural Revolution swept over Inner Mongolia. Apart from destroying old customs and ideas as elsewhere in China, the Cultural Revolution in Inner Mongolia targeted what was portrayed as Mongol ethnic separatism. Emphasising Mongol characteristics was equated with separatist sentiment, [6] and in the following two decades, the cityscape of Hohhot presented the same concrete block monotone. In the late 1990s, however, the pace of change in the urban landscape of Hohhot began to accelerate: green spaces were created, high-rise buildings went up, better lighting was installed. Most striking, ethnic identity became a prominent element in Hohhot's cityscape. [7] The leaders of the city and of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region worked closely with commercial and tourism interests to highlight the multicultural character of Hohhot and especially Mongol historical and cultural aspects in order to distinguish it from

other Chinese cities. [8] By making Hohhot distinctive they aimed to restore the dynamic character of the city that had historically been a major trading town on the route to Russia and Central Asia and to give it a global context. In other words, the newly rediscovered ethnic characteristics of Hohhot became a means of locating and branding the city in a global culture.

The development of Hohhot must be understood in the context of the broader urbanization and market-driven economic forces sweeping China. The imperative of economic growth drives Chinese urban development. [9] Prior to the 1980s, Chinese urbanization was limited by the combination of state restrictions on urban growth, limitations on commerce and the private sector, and investment priorities centered on heavy industry and military technology. The movement of people to cities and towns as well as inter-city migration were sharply restricted. Since the reforms of 1978, by contrast, marketization and relaxation of controls on population movement have led to accelerated urbanization nationwide. [10] Concurrent with the emphasis on modernization and wealth creation, substantial initiative and resources have passed from the national level to municipal, county, and township governments, as well as to the private sector. [11] In contemporary China not only have large cities accelerated growth, but there has been an explosion in the growth of small and medium cities and towns. [12] Chinese cities have been categorized into five different sizes: super large cities (*chaoda chengshi*, urban population of over 2 million), very large cities (*teda chengshi*, population between 1 and 2 million), large cities (*da chengshi*, 500,000 to one million), middle-size cities (*zhongdeng chengshi*, 200,000 to 500,000), and small cities (*xiao chengshi* 100,000 to 200,000). [13] Hohhot had belonged to the category of a large city with its population of under one million in recent decades, but by the end of 2006 its urban population (non-agrarian) hit one million,

making it a very large city. [14] The ambition of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Regional government is to develop Hohhot into a major metropolis with subregional, national and international reach. In 2006, the Inner Mongolian Autonomous government issued regulations targeting the development of Hohhot and Baotou, the region's steel center, as super large cities (*chaoda chengshi*) meaning that the population of each is projected to top 2 million. [15]

This rapid urbanization and increasing interest in developing Hohhot to become a super large city have to do with the broader idea of building a modern and global urban China. Image building has not only become a part of state policy in constructing what is described as a socialist, modern, environmentally sustainable, culturally sound and globally-oriented urban China; it has also become a source of pride for local officials and citizens, and a selling point for regional and local governments and communities. This led to an emphasis on regional and local history, culture and heritage in urban planning and cityscape. Theme parks devoted to traditional, historical and local/ethnic cultures appeared first in the Special Economic Development zones along the Chinese coast and later spread to other regions. Whereas in the first phases of the process many old buildings and historic city precincts were cleared to make way for roads and modern buildings, later city planners began to pay serious attention to heritage. Old temples, monasteries, mosques and anything that might represent a city or town's image were renovated or reconstructed to attract tourists and investors. This urban development is intended not only to attract tourists and tourist money, but also to demonstrate the advanced face of China to the outside world. As Dredge has pointed out, Chinese economic discourse intersects powerfully with culture. The environment, heritage and nationalism have important implications for tourism planning and product development and vice versa. [16]

The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, notably its capital Hohhot, was one of many that responded to this image building project in the context of rapid urbanization. Innovations began in the 1980s, but massive changes in the cityscape only became clearly visible from the late 1990s. [17] In 2000, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous regional government proposed the so-called '357 project', projecting goals of urban transformation for Hohhot over 3, 5 and 7 years: the government projected minor change in 3 years, medium change in 5 years and major change in 7 years. The plan envisioned annual investment of 100 billion yuan. [18] After an initial frenzy of destruction, Hohhot's urban development has stressed historical, ethnic and cultural heritage and an environmentally sustainable urban culture in which historical heritages have been reconstructed.

I argue that Hohhot's emphasis on historical and ethnic cultural heritage was driven by economic and status interests consonant with the national Chinese obsession equating urbanization with modernization rather than by any desire to promote Mongol culture and ethnicity. In other words, ethnic culture and images, especially aspects of the nomadic Mongol culture, which had seemed utterly alien to 'modern urban' life in the new China, moved to the very centre of the urban image construction project and become valued commodities not for their own sake but rather for the sake of differentiating Chinese Hohhot from other Chinese cities. Ethnic heritage and culture, previously viewed as signs of backwardness, became the very means of catching up with the modern urbanization which is gripping coastal China, a symbol of the uniqueness of the city and a means of presenting the city to the global market. Paying homage to the visible or superficial ethnic culture and heritage for commercial purpose does not prevent assimilation of ethnic culture. This article shows how ethnic culture and cultural heritage have been promoted as part of the urban development of Hohhot in the context of the

market economy and tourism, how the power of selling produces and reproduces a selective 'uniqueness' of ethnicity and of the region in an age of globalization and yet how these special ethnic and regional characteristics -- whatever global qualities they might have -- must be framed in the context of changing socialist ideology, national politics and unity.

Cultural and Ethnic 'Make-up'

The contemporary population of Hohhot consists of Mongol, Chinese, Manchu, Hui (Muslim) and other ethnic groups. The official description of the population composition of Hohhot states: 'Mongols are the main body (*mengguzu wei zuti*), Han-Chinese are the majority (*hanzu wei duoshu*), and some 36 nationalities [or ethnic groups] such as Manchu and Hui live together'. [19] In fact, Mongols comprise a mere 14% of the total inhabitants of the city today. Nevertheless, Mongols are formally presented as the 'main body' of the city's inhabitants, as if to justify the name of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. This small Mongol population, however, is the largest number of Mongols to live in Hohhot at any time in its modern history. By 1949, 7,115 Mongols lived in Hohhot, representing only 3.4% of the inhabitants, while Hui, Manchus and Han Chinese made up 4.9%, 1.2% and 90.5% respectively. The Mongol population of Hohhot increased after Hohhot became the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, [20] reaching 14,172 or 5.3% of the population by 1954. By 1990, the Mongol population had increased to 98,381 or 10.4% of the inhabitants (Hui and Manchus accounted for 3.1% and 1.8% respectively while the rest were Han Chinese). [21] By 2006, the Mongol population had reached 200,000 which represented almost 74% of the entire non Han-Chinese population of about 270,000, or 14% of the total inhabitants of 1.43 million. [22]

This historical and ethnic composition is the basis of the very recent 'ethnicization' of the

cityscape which in turn is hoped to boost tourism and the local economy. The core of the city has been developed as four districts, namely Yuquanqu, Saihanqu, Huiminqu and Xinchengqu. Set up in 1954, until 1960 these districts were the only components of the city. In the last five decades, however, four adjacent counties (Togtokh, Horinger, Qingshuihe and Wuchuan) and the Tumed West banner [23] have been added to the city. The total area under Hohhot administration is 170,000 square kilometers, of which about 120 square kilometres comprises the central urban area. In 2000, some adjustment was made to the district divisions, requiring approval by the Chinese Central government. In recent years these four core districts have been developed following different emphases.

Yuquanqu (Jade Spring District) is the oldest part of the city, dating from the 16th century and together with Huiminqu has generally been called the old town. Though originally built by the Mongols and the centre of the Tumed Mongol administration, nowadays the district emphasises historical monuments such as temples which were built under Manchu rule. Even the very name Yuquanqu supposedly originated in the Qing period. It is said that in 1694, when the Kangxi emperor was returning from a victorious military campaign against the Zungar Mongols and arrived in the town of Guihua (today's Yuquanqu), his men and horses were thirsty but there was no water to drink. His horse began to dig a ditch from which a spring emerged. From that time forward, the spring was called Yuquan (Jade spring). Reportedly the spring (by then a well) was covered only in 1976. [24] The district boasts historic Buddhist temples and pagodas as feature attractions. Its old temples have been renovated and a new park constructed along with shops surrounding the temples. Even the old grey concrete buildings which surrounded the temples were painted in colours to match the temples.



Antique shops at the Dazhao Temple, Hohhot. There is even a market for large Mongolian traditional objects such as this wooden cart.



The newly built entrance to the Dazhao Temple, Hohhot, with apartment houses freshly painted to match in the background.

Huiminqu, the Hui or Muslim District, dates from the 17th and 18th centuries when Hui merchants settled outside the town of Guihua. In 1950 the area was proclaimed an autonomous Hui District (*huimin zizhiqu*) but in 1954 its name was changed to Hui District (*Huiminqu*). Huiminqu was completely renovated in ‘Muslim’ style in 2006. By mid 2006 all 184 buildings on the district’s main street (some 1150m long) had been rebuilt in ‘authentic’ Muslim style such that a brand new looking Muslim street emerged from the old grey concrete buildings. [25] The architectural facelift was proposed by an American design company and the project cost 65 million yuan. [26] The new look of the street is indeed impressive with its gold shiny

roofs and “muslim-style” motifs and colours. It even looks ‘authentically’ historical, especially if one does not know that the façade was completed only in 2006. While the reconstruction affected only the facade of the buildings, the result is an exotic and attractive streetscape for tourists.



The main street of Huiminqu, Hohhot, after the cosmetic surgery in “Hui or Muslim-style”

Saihanqu (Beautiful District) has been constructed as a ‘white-night town’ (*baiyecheng*), meaning that the district is so modern that, it is averred, night looks like day. The district, which is the most recently developed section of the city, emphasizes the modern features of light and water. [27] It is located in the south eastern part of the city on what was formerly farmland which was developed into an urban precinct in 2000 when Hohhot redefined its district administration. The main street of the area that linked the Baita airport and the city center was lined with lavish light designs, apparently oblivious to the cost of the energy consumed.

Xinchengqu (Newtown District), which had originally housed Mongol and Manchu garrisons, was given Mongol cultural characteristics. In 1990, 53% of the Hohhot Mongol population lived there and comprised 15% of the population of the district, while the Manchus, who also had a garrison settlement there but arrived later than the Mongol garrison, today make up only 2.9% of the district’s population.

[28] The Mongol population is concentrated in this district because, when the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region government moved to Hohhot, government offices and cultural institutions, with a substantial Mongol staff, were located here. As the buildings in the Hui District have been refashioned in the Muslim architectural style, so too have many old buildings in Xincheng been outfitted with Mongolian ornaments, though not as drastic as the former. Parks have been created in which Mongol style monuments dominate and Mongol arts are displayed. A Chinggis Khan square was set up around a huge bronze statue of the Mongol hero. New streets and parks have been created using the names of Mongol historical personages. For example, a new main street in this district is called Chinggis Khan Boulevard. This street, located in the northeastern corner of the city close to Dalanhar (Daqingshan) mountain, will be the axis of a series of newly constructed cultural and landscape attractions: a large new theatre, a sports centre and a Mongol Yuan cultural corridor.

specialists, worked on the detailed plan and design. This construction project and its planning in conjunction with international experts was reported as an exemplary process for building a beautiful streetscape to achieve ‘international standards, [using] a strong local cultural atmosphere’. In November 2005, the city council set up a commission to landscape and design Chinggis Khan Boulevard. An evaluation group (*pingshenzu*) of 11 academics in the field of Mongolian history, culture, art and architecture was nominated as part of the commission. The experts checked the authenticity of the historical events, motifs and art forms involved. [29] The motto of the planning and design group, which consisted of international and national specialists, was: ‘mobilize the steppe tradition, display a dynamic culture, demonstrate an overall “human character” (*renxing*) in design, and marry the ethnic cultural essence with domestic and international architectural elements.’ [30] The architecture along the Chinggis Khan Boulevard is modern, the amalgamation of ‘ethnic contents’ is limited to superficial ornamental and monumental decorations.



Park benches with Mongol saddle motifs

In 2002, specialists from Tongji University in Shanghai were invited to design the project. In 2003, local planning and design specialists reviewed the draft plan. In 2004, specialists, including city planners, landscape experts, economic analysts, architects and light engineers from the US, along with local



Brand new exclusive apartments in Hohhot with Mongol rock painting motifs on the outer wall



Buildings refurbished with Mongol ornaments

Xincheng has been constructed as the symbolic focus of Hohhot. The street was to represent ‘the new outlook and symbol’ of Hohhot. Chinggis Khan Boulevard was to depict the steppe and Mongol Yuan dynasty culture would be the new symbol of Hohhot: according to Han Zhiran, a Mongol who is the Party secretary of the city council, ‘as soon as outsiders see this street they will immediately recognize it as Hohhot’. [31] Constructing a Mongol cultural ambience is the central theme not only in the Xincheng district, but in Hohhot as a whole. The city has been made to take on distinctive ethnic Mongol characteristics to represent the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region itself. Han Zhiran declared that ‘a city has to have its own special character. Hohhot, as the capital city of a minority autonomous region, is to emphasize the Mongol ethnic cultural character and to carry this into every single building, to make buildings cultural marks with a clearly distinctive cultural composition and thus highlight Hohhot’s charm’. [32]

Alongside the majority Han Chinese, the Mongols, Hui and Manchus form the main ethnic groups. Currently, the ethnic cultural character of the Mongols and Muslims has been embodied in the urban development of Hohhot. The Manchu cultural emphasis, by contrast, is not visible. The Muslim-style and Mongol-style ornaments and architecture and monuments are emphasised in the Old (Huiminqu and Yuquanqu) and New Town Districts where the

Hui and Mongol population are concentrated. The special characteristics are created as an emblem that distinguishes Hohhot from other cities and as a symbol of multiculturalism and ethnic harmony. In other words, ethnicity is being used to highlight local distinctiveness.

Ethnicizing Hohhot and Tourism

In China, it is widely recognized that the ‘ethnic minority’ areas are economically underdeveloped and the central government’s slogan is to develop the minority ethnic areas and enable them to catch up economically by encouraging minority regions to capitalize on their “wealth” – specifically their ethnic culture and heritage. Since the 1980s, with the introduction of economic reforms, it became possible, indeed people were encouraged, to emphasize the distinctiveness of Inner Mongolia. Hohhot has long been regarded as a frontier town by the central government and placed amongst the second ranked cities nationally. But the Hohhot authorities were determined to catch up with other provincial capitals. The city participated keenly in national level projects and competitions. If promoting ethnic culture had once been an indicator of separatism, emphasising ethnic local cultural characteristics become a road to success in national level competitions and attracting national projects. In other words, competition at the national level has driven the leaders of Inner Mongolia, and Hohhot in particular, to embrace the local ethnic cultural character and heritage.

Two major national level projects boosted awareness of local heritage and ethnic culture among Hohhot and Inner Mongolia leaders. The first was the campaign for the creation of a national level historical and cultural heritage city in the 1980s. In 1982, the Chinese Central Government issued a ‘law on preserving cultural heritage’ (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wenwu baohufa*) and nominated 24 cities as ‘historical and cultural cities’ (*lishi wenhua chengshi*). Hohhot was not on the list. Nevertheless it

responded to this central government initiative and promoted Hohhot's historical and cultural heritage. Then in 1984, the municipal authorities for the first time set up an office to administer cultural heritage (Huhehaoteshi Wenwu Guanlichu). In 1986, the city was nominated as a national level 'historical and cultural city'. [33]

The other event that has influenced the leadership in Hohhot to think actively about the historical and ethnic cultural heritage of the city and its attractiveness for the rising tourism market has been the campaign to join the much hyped Chinese project called Opening-up the West (*Xibukaifa*). The grand project of Opening-up the West was a central government policy that aimed at developing the economy of western China, including the Northwest, securing ethnic solidarity and social stability and contributing to national security. [34] A feature of this policy was the creation of so-called 'open frontier cities' (*yanbian kaifang chengshi*). 'Open' in this context meant easier access for outside settlers, visitors and investment, as well as the possibility of additional government financial support. Again, Hohhot had to lobby to be nominated. It had to project itself as culturally unique and important, using ethnicity and its ethnic cultural heritage as part of the campaign. It claimed that as a frontier city it could contribute much to ethnic unity and thus national security. The Inner Mongolian leadership was determined to rid itself of its 'third world' image [35] within China, and attract extra revenue from the central government. In 1992, Hohhot finally succeeded in getting its 'open frontier city' nomination.

One more national level competition is crucial to Hohhot's image building and its relationship to its ethnic cultural image. That is the quest to become an Environmentally Friendly Model City. Since 1997, 47 cities have been designated Environmentally Friendly Model Cities. Hohhot has yet to win this honour. There are 30 criteria for an Environmentally Friendly Model City.

These range from clean air to clean water and from clean streets to a green environment. It is reported that Hohhot has only been able to fulfil 18 of the 30 conditions. In the last couple of years, the leaders of the city have strengthened their resolve to improve the city's environment. The city council emphasized construction of a green town with fresh air and dust-free streets by reducing the use of coal for heating and by controlling automobile exhaust. Their determination was demonstrated by their campaign to achieve six goals: 'blue skies, blue water, green colors, comfort and quietness, tidiness and cleanliness, and sustainability'. The city council set up a group to instruct people at every level of the city and to 'craft a model [city]' (*chuangmo*). [36] To achieve the goal of 'clean, beautiful, harmonious, unified and modern' [37], a so-called 86310 Green Project was launched on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous government in August 2007. '8' stands for constructing eight cultural attractions, [38] '6' stands for constructing six parks, '3' for completing three continuing park construction projects and '10' for completing ten green streets. By June 2006, approximately 2 million trees had been planted. [39] Building an ecologically sustainable (*shengtai chengshi*) and human-friendly city has been the goal in an attempt to present Hohhot as a model city to its people and to the central government. [40]

The Mongol steppe image would be engaged to help build an environmentally sustainable city. [41] Lawns were put in every school yard and street corner and in some places statues of 'grazing' goats or sheep were installed. To bring the steppes closer to city life, the area around Hohhot was introduced as tourist attractions. Even areas more than 100 kilometres distant from the city were presented as 'steppes around the city'. [42] The Mongol steppes have occupied popular imaginations in two conflicting ways: one as an idyllic green space for both Mongols and non-Mongols; the other as a backward and lonely place for non-Mongols. The

romantic image has now been further upgraded to a 'heavenly' place with endless green grass and fresh air, a place where rich but busy people can relax. It was believed that linking Hohhot's image of urban development with the fresh green Mongol steppe would present the city as a model of environmentally sustainable ecological urbanization (*huanbaode* or *shengtaide*). [43]



'Lambs' on the 'Steppe' in a city park

The emphasis on ethnic cultural distinctiveness is meant to complement Hohhot's modest industry and harsh climate and attract more tourists. In terms of industrial output, Hohhot cannot compete with the major coastal cities. In terms of a recreational tourism industry, it does not enjoy the year-round mild climate that coastal towns provide; its summer is short. Therefore, to make the city attractive to the outside world, distinctive ethnic characteristics offer the most useful trademark. Moreover, though short, the summer provides a dry and relatively fresh climate which most southern Chinese cities lack. This is a basis for attracting vacation visitors. Tourism has been booming in China. [44] In 2000, domestic tourists logged 740 million visitor trips. [45] To compete for tourist dollars, ethnic cultural heritage has emerged as the main source of regional distinctiveness. Along with maintaining a sustainable environment, 'steppe culture tourism' (*caoyuan wenhua luyou*) has been one

of the ten major projects that the Inner Mongolia Autonomous government has proposed as part of its 'Westwards opening' vision. [46] The fresh dry climate, the image of a green and cool grassland and ethnic cultural distinctiveness are keys to Inner Mongolia tourism.

Investment in the urban development of Hohhot as a city with ethnic characteristics was also part of the steppe culture tourism project. The emphasis on urban development for tourism reflects a recognition that most of China's tourists are comfort-minded and will spend most of their trips in cities with amenities such as hotels and superior dining. The countryside is mostly experienced in day trips. Overall, the quest of attracting tourism has worked. From being a region that attracted very little internal tourism, Inner Mongolia is reported to have received more than 7 million tourists during the first half of 2006. The Hohhot area itself received about 430,000 tourists during the months of July and August. The region's income from tourism increased by 38%, and that of Hohhot by 41%, compared to the previous year [47], if we can believe this official survey.

From Cityscape to Cultural Industry

Success in transforming Hohhot's cityscape and in attracting internal tourism encouraged the Inner Mongolian authorities to plan further ventures based on the area's distinctive cultural identity. 'Whether a city can compete depends on its cultural resources, cultural atmosphere and cultural level,' commented one official. 'Building a culturally distinctive city is an important means of competing in the global market'. [48] They began to refer to a regional cultural industry (*wenhua chanye*) which was to be developed as a means of strengthening the culture-based economy of the Autonomous Region. An editorial of the Inner Mongolia Daily Newspaper (*Neimenggu Ribao*) described the cultural industry as the most essential element in the regional economy, stating that

‘developing the cultural industry is an important path to building a socialist culture under the market economy and to fulfilling people’s spiritual needs; it is also a new growing aspect of the development of an economics-oriented society’. The sense of domestic competition for commercialized culture has become acute. ‘If we do not develop and strengthen the cultural industry of our region, it will be difficult to compete in the future and [our] rich cultural resources might be “stolen” by others’. From August 2006, the newspaper created a column dedicated to Steppe Culture (*cuoyuan wenhua*). [49] While the statements and reports were full of hype and unsubstantiated connections, nevertheless they positively assess ethnic culture.

One manifestation of this new cultural industry is a theme park focused on Mongol customs and history. The Mongol Customs Park (*Menggu fengqingyuan*) opened on the outskirts of Hohhot in July 2006 as a state-designated priority tourist project. It has been built as an AAAA level tourist attraction with an investment of 4.5 million yuan. [50] Being recognized as an AAAA tourist site means designation as one of the best constructed and economically beneficial sites in the region. This is a “golden title” in terms of tourist attractions. [51] Amongst other things, statues of historical persons, Mongol soldiers and Mongol imperial camps were recreated in the park. The park was constructed purely for tourism purposes; local people complain that it simply aims at cashing in on tourists, especially foreigners, offering nothing to locals in a city that has little green space.



Newspaper announcement for the opening of the main hall of the Mongol Customs Park, Hohhot. Text reads: “Environmentally sustainable park: Mongol warrior camp has opened”. (Reprinted from the Huhehaote Ribao, April 2006.)



Mongol warrior statue in the Mongol Customs Park

In addition, the Hohhot authorities introduced cultural festivals and memorial days which they hoped would create opportunities to promote special event tourism. Until recently, there was no regional festival, except for the anniversary

of the establishment of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government. In recent years, however, big festivals have been created and are celebrated on a massive scale.

The first such festival was the Zhaojun cultural festival (*Zhaojun Wenhuaajie*). Wang Zhaojun was the Chinese woman who purportedly married the Hun chieftain Huhanye and became a symbol of ethnic solidarity and peace. In her honor, a large memorial was built in a suburb of Hohhot. The name Zhaojun was selected for the new festival in part because a few industrial products already bore her name, hence the expectation that the festival would promote local industry. There were also political reasons: the name or legend of Wang Zhaojun was a symbol of the solidarity of nationalities, and Inner Mongolia (and specifically Hohhot) was to be promoted as a model of national solidarity. [52] The festival was inaugurated in 1999 and is a 10-14 day annual festival featuring a major concert and other entertainment, conferences, packaged tourism and other cultural and business activities. It has been held in July or August since its inception and its scale has increased steadily. The Zhaojun tomb, which had been merely a little hill in the wild landscape on the outskirts of Hohhot, has been developed into a major tourist attraction. The festival attracts tourists and raises awareness of Hohhot and Inner Mongolia far beyond the borders of Inner Mongolia. Each year the entertainment program highlights a theme and well-known artists are invited from Beijing and other places to perform. The main theme for 2002 was 'Hohhot moves in step with the world' (*Qingcheng yu shijie tongxing*). [53] Each year, foreign guests and business people, especially from Russia, Mongolia and the Central Asian countries, are invited to the festival either as guests or for business negotiations.

A curious manifestation of Inner Mongolian cultural activity is the Milk Days Festival (*niunaijie*), introduced in September 2006. Hohhot's nomination as China's milk capital

(*Zhongguo rudu*) in 2005 provided a huge marketing opportunity which the city decided to transform into an annual event. The festival was organized by the Hohhot Party Commission and city council in cooperation with the municipal party propaganda department, Inner Mongolian TV, Hohhot's Daily Newspaper and the Yili Milk Company. With its own flag and song, it touts the earnest motto: 'Develop the city through the milk industry'. A procession passes through the town and a 'Milk Princess', 'Milk Prince' and 'Milk Baby' are selected to heighten interest in the procession, which is followed by evening concerts. [54] The aim of Milk Days is of course to promote the very marketable milk products of Inner Mongolia. The region's two major dairy companies, Yili and Mengniu, are both based in Hohhot and a *Zhongguo rudu* (China's milk capital) sign was posted on every street corner and on taxis and buses. Soon after the nomination in August 2005, a big open air concert was organized and one of the best-known Mongol singers, Tengri, from Beijing, was invited to perform. Several thousand listeners gathered and the singer appeared on stage with a long *hadag* (Mongolian ceremonial scarf) and dressed in full Mongol costume. The main song performed was Mongolian, but it was sung in Chinese. The majority of the listeners were Chinese, and they were the main consumers of this 'ethnic culture'. To mark the event, a huge monument was erected in the city centre. The monument was made of 'milk tea'-colored (i.e. beige) marble: the upper part was a bucket-shaped arch with four walls, said to symbolize the openness of Hohhot in all directions, while the lower part was in the form of a pair of cow horn goblets, which were traditionally used to demonstrate brotherhood, alignment or alliance. And thus the pair of goblets symbolizes 'the great unity of the different nationalities (*minzu datuanjie*). On the front and back of the monument was written 'China's Milk Capital' in Mongolian and Chinese scripts respectively, along with Mongol-style motifs. [55]



Monument to commemorate Hohhot as the 'Milk Capital of China' (in Mongolian)



Monument to commemorate Hohhot as the 'Milk Capital of China' (in Chinese)

In short, the cultural industry that had been created on the basis of ethnic history, culture and legends, combined with ideological elements, has been deployed to enhance the economic power of Hohhot and the region in the

global marketplace. In this context, paradoxically, the emphasis on Mongol ethnic culture and steppe culture serves to make the city more cosmopolitan. The milk industry of Inner Mongolia is entirely in non Mongol hands, but as a commodity milk plays upon memories of the central role of milk in the Mongol diet. At the same time, milk is a quintessentially Western food with strong overtones of modernity. The smooth white liquid stands simultaneously for local identity and globalization. In the words of one government official, 'the more ethnic, the more cosmopolitan'. [56]

Hohhot: A Steppe Metropolis

Apart from the re-emergence of a local cultural heritage in the built environment of Hohhot and Inner Mongolia, symbolic cultural images have also been part of the urban image construction and economic pursuits of the regional government. The images of the steppe and the city had seldom been linked with urban advancement in modern times and in fact they had often been viewed as diametrically opposite phenomena. Now, however, the Mongol steppe is seen as an essential part of the urban image of Hohhot.

In 2005, Hohhot launched a plan to project the city as a 'steppe metropolis' (*caoyuan dushi*). According to the official statement, the concept 'steppe metropolis' included improving the service sectors and especially constructing buildings and streets with ethnic and regional characteristics; providing residents with a peaceful environment and strengthening the cultured atmosphere (*renwen qifen*). While the city itself was referred to as a 'steppe metropolis', the airport at Hohhot was also called a 'steppe airport' (*caoyuan kungang*) and has been extended to serve as an alternative to the Peking airport during the 2008 Olympic Games in that city. [57]

From 2004, the World Steppe Cultural Festival (*Shijie caoyuan wenhuajie*) has been regularly

convened in Inner Mongolia. The first such festival was organized in Hohhot along with the Zhaojun festival. The second was convened in Baotou, the major industrial city of Inner Mongolia. The third in the series was held in Ordos. Hohhot, Baotou and Ordos are considered to be the golden triangle of economic development in western Inner Mongolia. The event mainly consisted of large-scale concerts in which steppe culture was showcased. Apart from the World Steppe Culture Festival, the Zhaojun festival has also strongly promoted the steppe image. The main theme of the opening Zhaojun festival concert in 2006 was *Tiantang caoyuan* (“the heavenly steppes”).

The keywords in Hohhot’s image building in recent years have been the ‘steppe’ and the ‘horse’. To build a culturally representative and globally attractive city, the city council initiated a campaign to identify a suitable image and a competition for the best motif from April 2005. The results of the competition were published in Hohhot’s daily newspaper on 14th August 2006. No first prize was awarded, but there were two second prize winners, three third prize winners and five honorable mentions. Nine out of the ten prize winners referred to steppe culture in the form either of the color green or of galloping horses. [58] However, the green grass in the centre of Hohhot consists only of patches of lawns here and there which, moreover, are green during summer only; and the only horses that can be seen are engravings, or metal or stone horse statues. For a long time the only galloping horse was the stone statue atop the Inner Mongolian Museum. [59]



Southward galloping horse on top of the Inner Mongolia Museum



Horse statue



Horse sculptures

Emphasizing the Mongol steppe culture as a symbol of regional identity and urban development, however, is not only a cultural and economic issue, but also a political issue. The nomadic culture on the steppe is completely different from that of the agrarian-settler culture, the dominant culture of most parts of rural China, and therefore it distinguishes the region from other areas of China. This distinctiveness, however, must not be allowed to contradict the principle that Inner Mongolia is an integral part of China, a part of the Chinese cultural and historical heritage. To this end, steppe culture has to be 'correctly' defined. Research on steppe culture was intensified from 2001, with researchers of the Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences. Their project was designated a "specially entrusted project" (*tebie weituo xiangmu*) by the state, a significant project for the 60th anniversary of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous region. [60] Thus, from 2004 onwards, along with the World Steppe Culture Festival, academic conferences on steppe culture have been held annually. The third such conference was held in August 2006 in Dongsheng, with 116 papers presented. [61] He Tianming, the vice director of the Historical Research Institute of Social Sciences in Inner Mongolia has come up with a most attractive definition for steppe culture. He maintains that the nomadic and steppe cultures are different. Steppe culture, he argues, is a higher and more dynamic culture than nomadic culture, and he has presented steppe culture, along with the traditional Chinese Huanghe (or Yellow river) and Changjiang (Yangzi river) cultures, as one of the three main streams of Chinese civilization (*Zhonghua wenming*). He divided steppe culture historically into several distinct epochs. The period between 209 and 906 AD, he argued, could be seen as the construction period of the regional culture and was mainly based on nomadic culture. The culture between the years 907 and 1205 he saw as one of regional spatial

and economic expansion. The period between 1206 and 1911 is presented as a period of full development, during which time the basis was laid for China's unification and the steppe and settler cultures absorbed and assimilated each other. [62] His research can be understood within the ideological framework of constructing a basis for integrating steppe culture into mainstream Chinese civilization. Some have hailed his work as the best contribution on steppe culture to date.

The definition, according to the reports, is still vague: 'Steppe culture is the creation of joint efforts by indigenous peoples, tribes and other ethnic minorities or nationalities (*minzu*) and a culture of adjusting the steppe ecology. This culture includes the steppe peoples' modes of production and lifestyles, their customs, social systems, religious beliefs, sports, arts etc.' [63] Steppe culture has been reported in romantic terms as a culture which 'respects nature and ecology', and 'its spirit is progressive, cultivated, heroic and positive'. [64] The party secretary of the Communist Party of the Inner Mongolian Social Science Academy, Wu Tuanying, argued that steppe culture and nomadic culture were different. 'Steppe culture belongs to a regional cultural type, like the maritime and river cultures, but nomadic culture belongs to an economic type of culture along with the hunting culture and agriculture. ... Steppe culture emerged from the steppe ecology and spread all over the world. Not all steppe areas developed a nomadic culture.' [65] He also reportedly said that like the Egyptian and Yellow River cultures, steppe culture was much older than nomadic culture.

One interesting aspect of this analysis is its rejection of the conventional idea equating nomadic life with steppe culture, arguing instead that steppe culture constitutes a higher form of civilization. Nomadic culture has been considered a backward and primitive culture in Marxist as well as modernization theory. His argument can be understood as an attempt to

elevate the regional cultural image and thus the image both of Mongol civilization and Chinese civilization as whole. This research on steppe culture has been a major project of the Communist Party Propaganda Department's State Planning Office and at the same time it is also an Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region major cultural development project. [66] The essence of this project and its conclusion was to claim that 'steppe culture' was 'an important part of Chinese culture', and thus developing Hohhot as a city with a distinctive Mongol and steppe culture was still framed within the context of the broader 'Chinese civilization'. Interestingly, one of the nuances of the argument is its international element, namely that steppe culture is a dynamic culture which spans the globe.

Conclusion: Dressing up Hohhot

The city of Hohhot has been changing at breakneck speed in recent years, and especially since 2005, in preparation for the 60th anniversary of the Autonomous government. Most of the streets have been torn up, ready for re-paving or broadening, parks have been constructed, new buildings have been built and old ones renovated in the old 'cultural' style. The pace of change in Hohhot has been so rapid and extreme that a newspaper reported that 'those who return home from outside will not recognize Hohhot'. [67]

Road construction and the building of newer and more spectacular buildings, were aimed at promoting Hohhot's image, its economic development and its place as a regional and global city. The emerging cityscape brings major positive changes including an impressive new 'ethnic style' along its new avenues. The physical changes, however, also have their downside. Most major roads in Hohhot have been rebuilt three to five times over the last 15 years. Local people are fed up with this constant construction and call the roads of Hohhot 'zip roads' (*lasuolu*), meaning that they are as easily

opened and closed as a jacket zipper. The hasty construction and reconstruction of the local cultural heritage has also given rise to popular critiques centred on the fact that the renovations have mainly been made to improve the facade but have done little for the interior facilities. The urgency to create a 'beautiful' and 'clean' city to commercialize and commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Autonomous government in 2007 left little time to improve anything from the inside out. Local critics say that the changes are nothing more than 'putting clothes and hats' (*chuanyi daimao*) on the old concrete buildings.

The discourse of preserving or inventing ethnic cultural heritage and characteristics in an urban landscape has never been so vigorous in modern China in general, and in Inner Mongolia in particular. Urban development in China is shaped by an economic discourse which is tied to cultural values and changing socialist ideologies. In ethnically distinctive areas such as Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang, however, urban development has hardly been straightforward. Urban development, along with tourism planning, involves the interplay of nationalism and modernisation. Ethnic culture and heritage was long considered backward, primitive and antithetical both to China's socialist civilization project and subsequently to the modern, progressive urban culture that sought to replace it. Emphasizing distinctive Mongol and other ethnic cultures initially seemed politically dangerous, even associated with separatism. Only in recent years, under market pressures, however, has ethnic culture come to be both politically valued and economically prized. [68] For the first time, globally significant local characteristics have been emphasized and ethnic cultural heritage has been seen as an inseparable part of creating a unique urban landscape. Hohhot is a prime example of this trend.

At the same time, the commercialization of Mongol culture constitutes an annexation and

subordination of Mongol identity to Chinese identity. For centuries, Mongol identity was regarded as a polar opposite of Chinese culture, an archetypal barbarian culture that should be resisted and/or transformed. As the political threat of Mongol separatism recedes, the opportunity has arisen to appropriate Mongol material culture as a romantic, perhaps primitive version of Chinese culture. Moreover, points of similarity between Mongol and modern Western culture, and the grassland culture have become symbols of cosmopolitanism in Inner Mongolia. Ethnic cultural heritage has been reconstructed as quickly as it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. But what is the meaning of the new culture for a people cut off from essential elements of its historic heritage? The uniqueness of urban Hohhot and the region of Inner Mongolia as a whole, under present political circumstances, can only be viewed as unique within the new framework of steppe culture presented as one of the three originating themes of Chinese civilization and not something distinctively Mongol. In the current discourses of economy and the cultural industry, profit and cultural unity now underpin political unity.

Promoting ethnic culture and heritage in the cityscape is a means of making the city more attractive to domestic and international audiences because they can offer values which distinguish one place from another. In other words, ethnic culture and cultural heritage gives Hohhot a distinctive brand in the global market and these elements constitute economic capital for the region. Promoting ethnic culture and heritage in an urban culture, however, does not necessarily mean respecting the intrinsic value of the cultural heritage, but rather adapting or moulding that culture and heritage for commercial and/or nationalistic purposes. In the case of Hohhot the question remains whether that culture expresses Mongol interests or interests of the Chinese state and Chinese entrepreneurs who hold dominant positions in the autonomous region. It seems clear that

promotion of ethnic culture and cultural heritage will last only as long as leaders believe in its commercial value and see that value compatible with political and market goals.

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Notes

All photos were taken by Li Narangoa and Li Chinge, unless otherwise noted.

[1] I would like to thank Uradyn E. Bulag, Robert Cribb and Mark Selden for their constructive and insightful comments on an earlier version of this paper. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Symposium on Urban Development in Asia which was held at the Osaka Metropolitan University in September 2006.

[2] He constructed the Dazhao Monastery here in 1579 and initiated a translation program of Buddhist sutras. Xilituzhao Monastery, just across the street from the Dazhao Monastery, was built in the 1780s.

[3] Today, the Western Tumed banner is part of Hohhot and the Eastern Tumed banner is part of Baotou.

[4] The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was founded in 1947, well before the founding of the PRC in 1949.

[5] The name Qingcheng, a literal

translation of Köke Qota into Chinese, is also used, but only in artistic or romantic contexts.

[6] The Inner Mongolian Revolutionary Party, which actually existed in the 1920s to 1940s became the main target of Red Guards.

[7] Hohhot with a population of 821,000 in 1995 nearly doubled its population to 1.5 million (including the farming population) by 2003. Zhao Xiuxing et al., Huhehaote “cheng zhong cun” xianxiang paoxi [Analysis of the “village in city” in Hohhot], *Nei Menggu Shifan Daxue xuebao*, vol. 35, no. 2, March 2006: 106.

[8] The first Mongol-type building after the Cultural Revolution was the Hohhot city office with a Mongol yurt-style roof. This design was taken from the Chinggis Khan mausoleum in Ordos built in 1956. Also, a mobile “story telling yurt” was put up in the heart of the town (thanks to Uradyn E. Bulag for this information).

[9] For example, see George C S Lin, ‘China’s industrialization with controlled urbanization: Anti-urbanism or urban-biased?’ *Issues & Studies* 34 (6), 1998: 98-116; L J C and G H Cui, ‘Economic transition at the local level: Diverse forms of town development in China.’ *Eurasian geography and economics*, 43 (2), 2002: 79-103.

[10] For example, the number of big cities (population number between 500,000 and one million) increased from 27 in 1978 to 78 in 2004, the number of middle-size cities with a population

between 200,000 and 500,000 increased from 59 in 1978 to 213 in 2004; the number of small cities with a population between 100,000 and 200,000 increased from 115 in 1978 to 320 in 2004 [ZH-Wikipedia, accessed on 17 September 2007]; B Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[11] J Logan (ed.), *The new Chinese city: globalization and market reform*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

[12] George C. S. Lin, “The growth and structural change of Chinese cities: a contextual and geographic analysis”, *Cities*, vol. 19 (5), 2002: 229.

[13] [Available here](#), accessed on September 17, 2007.

[14] It was a commercial and administrative town until the 1950s and later developed a textile industry and steel plant.

[15] Manzhouli and Erlian were to be developed international trade gateways. “[Neimenggu zizhiqun renmin zhengfu guanyu yinfa jiakuai chengzhenhua fazhan ruogange guiding de tongzhi](#)” [Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government’ Regulation Announcement on Promoting Urbanization], *Inner Mongolian Government Document*, [2006] no. 3, January 11, 2006, accessed on July 11, 2007.

[16] Dianne Dredge “Development, Economy and Culture: Cultural Heritage Tourism Planning, Liangzhu, China”, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, vol.

9, no. 4, December 2004: 405-23.

[17] Especially in preparation for the 50th anniversary of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Government in 1997 (Zhang Yanjie, “Gouzhu xiandaihua shoufu de zuyin” [Constructing the Modern Capital’s Footprints], *Neimenggu Xuenquan* [Inner Mongol Propaganda], no. 3 1999). The first Gallop Bridge for cars was built for this occasion. The bridge was not only to help regulate inner city traffic, but was also supposed to symbolize the advance of Hohhot. The construction was a failure in terms of design and aesthetics, too steep to be used for busy vehicular traffic and too ugly to serve as a symbol for the city.

[18] “2005 Di er jie Zhongguo xibu (Neimenggu) chengshi jianshe zhanlanhui” [The second exhibition of city development in Chinese Northwest (Inner Mongolia) in 2002, accessed on July 11, 2007. The Hohhot leadership was obsessed with road construction: The city’s roads have been broadened, paved and repaved. Roads were built hastily, and with each new leader, the “old ones” were ripped up and reconstructed. This is partly due to failure to consider water and sewerage plans, so that each time water or sewerage pipes required repair or augmentation, roads were torn up again. Corruption was also partly to blame. Constructing or reconstructing roads offers lucrative opportunities for all levels of management and leadership. With the frenetic rebuilding of the roads, the city looks like a constant construction site. In this respect, contemporary China has some resemblance to the “Construction

State” identified by Gavan McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996.

[19] “Fazhan zhong de Huhehaote yuanying nin” [A Developing Hohhot Welcomes you], *Neimenggu Xinwenwang*, November 17, 2006, accessed on July 12, 2007.

[20] The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Government was located first in Ulanhot in the eastern part of Inner Mongolia between 1947 and 1949 and then in Kalgan (Zhangjiakou) between 1949 and 1952. In 1952, it moved to Guisui and thus Hohhot became the joint capital of Suiyuan province and the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. In 1954, Suiyuan province was incorporated to Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Hohhot remained capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

[21] Wang Junmin, “Mengguzu renkou de chengshihua jincheng” [The Urbanization of the Mongol Population], *Zhongyang Minzu Daxue Xuebao* [Journal of the Central University for Nationalities], vol. 29, no. 144, May 2002: 29-32.

[22] “Fazhan zhong de Huhehaote yuanying nin” [A Developing Hohhot Welcomes you], *Neimenggu Xinwenwang*, November 17, 2006, accessed on July 12, 2007.

[23] A Mongol administrative unit, similar to a county.

[24] *Beifang Xinbao*, May 4, 2006: 6.

[25] ‘Showfu “44331” gongcheng jinzhan

shunli' [The capital's '44331' projects have been progressing well], *Huhehaote Ribao*, July 5, 2006.

[26] 19,900 of the district's 300,000 inhabitants are Muslims. [Available here](#), accessed on July 13, 2007.

[27] Since 2005, about 5.8 million Yuan has been invested to develop this district as a town without night and with water - totally modern situated in a green environment. To create a beautiful natural environment, about 30,000 wine grapes and 3,000 other fruit trees and flowers have been planted ('Changyou "changle buyecheng" manbu "huapen yitiaojie"' [Comfortably walking through the 'long enjoyable white-night town' and watching the 'street of flowers', *Huhehaote Ribao*, June 2, 2006].

[28] Wang Junmin, "Mengguzu renkou de chengshihua jincheng" [The Urbanization of the Mongol Population], *Zhongyang Minzu Daxue Xuebao* [Journal of the Central University for Nationalities], vol. 29, no. 144, May 2002: 29-32.

[29] *Huhehaote Ribao*, May 20, 2006.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "Neimenggu sida biao zhixing jianzhu gongcheng jinru quanmian shigong jieduan" [Inner Mongolia's four representative construction projects all in progress], *Beifang Xinbao*, 19 July 2005; "Hushi jiadi yong xiandai jianzhu jiajie Meng-Yuan wenhua" [Hohhot is the best place for marrying modern architecture with Mongol-Yuan culture], *Beifang Xinbao*, September 21, 2006.

[32] "Huhehaote: gaobinwei jianshe caoyuan dushi" [Hohhot: High quality development of a steppe city], *Huhehaote Ribao*, July 5, 2006.

[33] By 2006 there were all together 99 such cities, Hohhot being the only one in Inner Mongolia. Wang Juan, "Lishi wenhua mingcheng Huhehaote de fazhan baohu" [The Development and Maintenance of the Historical and Cultural City of Hohhot], *Neimenggu dianda xuekan* [Journal of Inner Mongolia Radio & TV University], vol. 73, no. 9, 2005: 17-22.

[34] Hu Angang, "Jiakuai xibu kaifa de xinsilu" [New Ways of Fostering Westward Development], *Zhongguo guoqing fenxi yanjiu baogao* [Research Report on China's Current Affairs], no. 8, 2000.

[35] Uradyn E. Bulag, "Municipalization and Ethnopolitics in Inner Mongolia", in Ole Bruun and Li Narangoa (eds), *Mongols from Country to City: Floating Boundaries, Pastoralism and City Life in the Mongol Lands*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2006, p. 67.

[36] "Ba Huhehaote jiancheng guojia huanbao mofan chengshi" [Making Hohhot into an Environmentally Sustainable Model City of China], *Huhehaote Ribao*, June 5, 2006

[37] "Shoufu chengjian yao yiren weiben tuchu tese tigao pinwei" [In building a provincial capital we must make people the focus, highlight the distinctiveness and elevate the quality], *Huhehaote*

Ribao, June 9, 2006.

[38] The eight cultural attractions under construction include the Inner Mongolian Exhibition Center, Inner Mongolian Theater, Inner Mongolian Sports Centre, Inner Mongolian Museum, Inner Mongolian Youth Center, Zhaojun Museum, Museum of Chinese products, and the Chinese Equine Museum (“Huhehaote: gaobinwei jianshe caoyuan dushi” [Hohhot: High quality development of a steppe city], *Huhehaote Ribao*, July 5, 2006).

[39] “Qingcheng ‘86310’ yuanlin huhua gongcheng jinzhuan sunli” [Qingcheng’s “86310” green project has been progressing well], *Huhehaote Ribao*, June 23, 2006.

[40] *Huhehaoteshi renmin zhengfu wenjian*, no 26, 2006 (March 29, 2006), p.28.

[41] “Ba Houhehoue jiancheng guojia huanbao mofan chengshi” [Making Hohhot into an Environmentally Sustainable Model City of China], *Huhehaote Ribao*, June 5, 2006

[42] “Shiqu zhoubian caoyuan quanjiechu” [Connecting with the steppes surrounding the city], *Huhehaote Ribao*, July 13, 2006.

[43] The biggest iron and steel industrial center in China is Baotou, which is also the biggest city in Inner Mongolia. It lies barely 150 km from Hohhot. The heavy industrial smoke from Baotou pollutes the air not only of that city but also of Hohhot. Moreover, until very recently,

most of the heating and cooking systems in the region used coal fuel which produced a lot of smoke, and because of the Dalanhar (Daqingshan) mountain chain which half surrounds Hohhot, the smoke is not easily dispersed in winter. Hohhot and Baotou had the image of being two of the most polluted cities in China and the constant reconstruction of roads and buildings made the city appear even dustier than ever.

[44] World Tourism Organization, 1997, in Dianne Dredge “Development, Economy and Culture: Cultural Heritage Tourism Planning, Liangzhu, China”, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2004: 405-23.

[45] There have been many organized tours in recent years: arriving in big coaches, following tour guides with red flags, photographing hastily and scurrying into shops to buy souvenirs.

[46] Tang Gongshao Su Shaoqiu, *Xibu da kaifa: Zhanlue zhi’nan* [Strategic guide to the Westward Great Opening-up], Chengdu: Xi’nana Caizheng Daxue Chubanshe, 2000, pp. 292-93.

[47] “Zongxiang zhuzhu nide zhangfang” [Always wanted to follow your lead], *Beifang Ribao*, August 18, 2006.

[48] “Zhaojun wenhuajie zhuli shoufu fazhan duoying” [The Zhaojun festival promotes the capital’s development], *Huhehaote Ribao*, August 10, 2006.

[49] “Eerduosi hunli: minzu wenhua changye de ‘Qing qima’” [Ordos Wedding: the rise of the ethnic cultural industry],

Neimenggu Ribao, August 17, 2006.

[50] “Menggu fengqingyuan zhengshi kaiyuan”, July 29, 2006.

[51] China’s tourism destinations are graded A, AA, AAA and AAAA according to the quality of the sites, the services offered and their economic potential. A and AA level tourist sites can be so designated by local tourist bureaux and authorities. But to be recognized as AAA or AAAA level sites, the sites have to be evaluated by provincial and central state authorities. (Jing Li, “Tourism Enterprises, the State, and the Construction of Multiple Dai Cultures in Contemporary Xishuang Banna, China”, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 9, no. 4, December 2004:320-21.

[52] “Suzao caoyuan lishi mingcheng, zhanshi shoufu wenhua fengcai” [Mould steppe historical town, display capital’s cultural style], *Huhehaote Ribao*, July 24, 2006. For more on Zhaojun and her changing role in history, see Uradyn E. Bulag, *The Mongols at China’s Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

[53] In 2004, the Zhaojun festival was combined with the first International Steppe Culture Festival (*shijie caoyuan wenhuajie*). The main theme of the festival that year was thus steppe culture and the steppe was claimed to be the “first trademark and the greatest invisible resource of Inner Mongolia”. “Liujie Zhaojun wenhuajie jianjie” [Brief summary of six Zhaojun festivals],

Huhehaote Ribao, July 24, 2006.

[54] “Shoujie niunaijie shengda kaimu” [The grand opening of the first Milk Festival], *Huhehaote Ribao*, September 18, 2006.

[55] Xi Shui, *Shanghai jiyou* [Shanghai Philately], no. 6, 2006: 11.

[56] “Chengshi wenhua jianshe de hexin lilun: wenmai chuancheng xingxiang sheji” [The core of city culture development: transmitting the cultural pulse and designing imaginatively], *Huhehaote Ribao*, August 19, 2006.

[57] “Huhehaote: gaobinwei jianshe caoyuan dushi” [Hohhot: High quality development of a steppe city], *Huhehaote Ribao*, July 5, 2006.

[58] *Huhehaote Ribao*, August 14, 2006.

[59] This stone horse once ran northwards. During the Cultural Revolution that orientation, like so much else, came under attack: the north was the direction of Ulaanbaatar, rather than Beijing. It was thus reversed and now faces south, towards Beijing.

[60] *Beifang Xinbao*, September 6, 2006:6.

[61] “Woqu caoyuan wenhua yanjiu lilun tixi chubu xingcheng” [The tentative formation of an academic theory on steppe culture], *Neimenggu Ribao*, August 18, 2006.

[62] “100 duowei zhuanjia xuezhe gei caoyuan wenhua xia dingyi” [Over 100

experts offer a definition of steppe culture], *Beifang Xinbao*, August 21, 2006.

[63] Ibid.

[64] *Beifang Xinbao*, August 29, 2006:1.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] *Beifang Xinbao*, August 3, 2006.

[68] Where ethnic cultural promotion transcends the official economic frame, it can pose sensitive political issues. The recent closure of a Mongol internet chat room that aimed to attract funds from Mongols to help poor Mongol students continue their study, and the jail sentence of a Mongol intellectual, Hada, illustrate contradictory elements in ethnic policy.