UNBRIDLED ETHICS:

Cultivating Humans and History through Non-formal and Lifelong Education in Ulaanbaatar

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how local practices of history-making in Mongolia cultivate an ethical relationship to *time*. I examine how people combine multiple temporal practices to guide them towards enacting better social relationships. The focus is on a locally salient form of ethical cultivation currently being taught to adult learners in Non-formal and Lifelong Education (NFLE) centres across Mongolia. While this form of cultivation has long existed in the country, only recently has it been introduced into the national education system as a response to widespread concerns across the population that ethical life has become increasingly 'unbridled' (*hazaargüi*), resulting in a temporality in which people feel 'stuck' (*gatssan*). Ethnographic data was collected over 18 months of fieldwork in Ulaanbaatar. This focused on the practice of *hümüüjil*, the cultivation of human beings, at the heart of NFLE's attempts to produce ethical persons. I examine the explicit teaching of history (*tüüh*) as a means to animate a certain kind of person capable of creating affective tensions and identifications with the past in ways that are orientated towards ethical courses of action in the future.

Current debates on ethics in anthropology have often treated history ambivalently (e.g. Laidlaw 2014, Mattingly 2014). In these debates, history remains at the side-lines of analyses, generally equated to a set of moral ideals against which people determine ethical courses of action. This theoretical orientation tends to assume that history is chronological and, by extension, that causality is solely determined from the past. The practice of *hümüüjil* offers a field in which to explore a different theoretical approach. Focusing on a set of ontological entanglements that encompass local notions of history and ethics, my research examines how multiple temporalities and causal factors bring history to bear on people's capacity for ethical cultivation in complex ways. I demonstrate the ways in which ethical cultivation in this context draws together a pedagogical mode of historical consciousness in which time and value are reconstituted through relationships as a way of feeling, communicating and, ultimately, being human. By interrogating how conceptualisations of temporality come to shape understandings of the ethical, this research engages with key debates in anthropology about what it means to live historically, and the ways in which this intertwines with our sense of limits and possibilities, identities and evaluations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
NCLE	National Centre for Lifelong Education
NFE	Non-formal Education
NFLE	Non-formal and Lifelong Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

This research was conducted in the Halha Mongol dialect using the Cyrillic alphabet. When writing these notes, anthropologists often comment on the lack of any standardised transliteration scheme due to the wide variety of scripts and dialects in use across the Mongolian cultural region. However, I would argue that a clear anthropological convention has emerged (e.g. Empson 2011, Humphrey and Ujeed 2013). For consistency, I have opted to draw on this scheme. Where relevant to the analysis, Halha Mongol terms and phrases have been romanised following the Lessing *et al.* (1960) formulation detailed below. I have opted to replace three letters (Ъ Ь Ы) with the romanised 'i' to better reflect their sound. This scheme accurately represents the most common form of transliteration I experienced in Ulaanbaatar. There are some noteworthy exceptions. Famous names and terms that already exist in the public domain or in English language academia retain their original spelling. This includes the use of 'kh' instead of 'h' for names such as Chinggis Khan. The glossary in the following section provides a reference for the most commonly used terms applicable to this research.

А а	A a	И и	I i	Р р	R r	Ш ш	Sh sh	
Б б	B b	Й й	I i	С с	S s	Щ щ	Shch	shch
В в	V v	К к	K k	Т т	T t	Ъ ъ	’	(i)
Г г	G g	Л л	L l	У у	U u	Ь ь	’	(i)
Д д	D d	М м	M m	Ү ү	Ü ü	Ы ы	’	(i)
Е е	Ye ye	Н н	N n	Ф ф	F f	Э э	E	e
Ё ё	Yo yo	О о	O o	Х х	H h	Ю ю	Yu	yu
Ж ж	J j	Ө ө	Ö ö	Ц ц	Ts ts	Я я	Ya	ya
З з	Z z	П п	P p	Ч ч	Ch ch			

As a student of Mongolian, translating the idiomatic language of ethical cultivation and its educational philosophy proved especially challenging. As will become clear in the ethnography, parables and proverbs featured heavily in my fieldwork. I therefore employed a professional translator to accompany me to the centre on a daily basis to assist with the poetics underlying the obscure wording of more complex parables and proverbs. Each time these translations are used in the text, I have included the explanation given by the interlocutor to prevent any ambiguity.

GLOSSARY

Alban Bus	Non-formal
Bolovsrol	Education
Büteelj	Creative
Erdem	Scholar
Gatssan	Stuck
Gegeerel	Enlightenment
Hazaargüi	Unbridled
Hümüüjil	The cultivation of human beings (lit. the process of being human)
Hümüüjlüüleh	The form of upbringing, cultivation or education of human beings (lit. to make human)
Hün	Person
Hün chanar	Personality (lit. human quality)
Nasan Turshiin	Lifelong
Övlüüleh	To both inherit and pass on
Serüün	Awake
Soyombo	The national symbol of Mongolia
Tör	The state
Töv	Centre
Tüüh	History
Yos surtahuun	Morality
Yos zanshil	Custom
Yos züi	Ethics
Zambaraagüi	Disorder

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is thanks to a children's book about a little girl living on the steppe that my interest in Mongolia began. I don't remember the author nor story, just the beautiful illustrations of yurts scattered in a deep valley with yaks and goats grazing, intermingled, under a clear blue sky. From a young age, I became fascinated with the colour and charisma of the way of life that lay behind this image. Although that book didn't stand the test of time, it was this same fascination that brought me to Ulaanbaatar to conduct this doctoral fieldwork and to see the illustrations brought to life.

I have many people to thank for the outcome of this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisory team. I am especially grateful to my main supervisor Matt Hodges for his continued mentorship from the start of this project to the end. I also thank David Henig, Jon Mair and Judith Bovensiepen who have all participated on my committee at different stages of my project. Their comments have, each in their own unique way, helped me to take my research to a deeper level. I would also like to thank Julien Dierkes at the University of British Columbia for his guidance throughout the writing process.

My fieldwork would not have been possible without the numerous Mongolian friends and colleagues that welcomed me into the Non-formal and Lifelong Education centre. I have used pseudonyms and composite characters to protect their identities so cannot name them personally here. Nonetheless, without their many patient and generous exchanges I would not have learned what I did. My deepest appreciation goes to the teachers who, already burdened with work, took their time to answer each of my questions. I look forward to sharing this research with them all in the near future. I am also grateful to my research assistants; first Oyunaa, then Burmaa. Without their translation skills I would still be scratching my head over the endless proverbs, jokes and other complex idioms through which people would answer my questions.

Finally, I thank my PhD cohort at the University of Kent for their support and solidarity over the years. I owe my well-being to my friends and family for their support and understanding during the arduous writing process. My sincerest thanks goes out to every one of you.

MAPS OF MONGOLIA

Figure 1. Map of Mongolia

Figure 2. Map of Mongolian provinces and their administrative centres

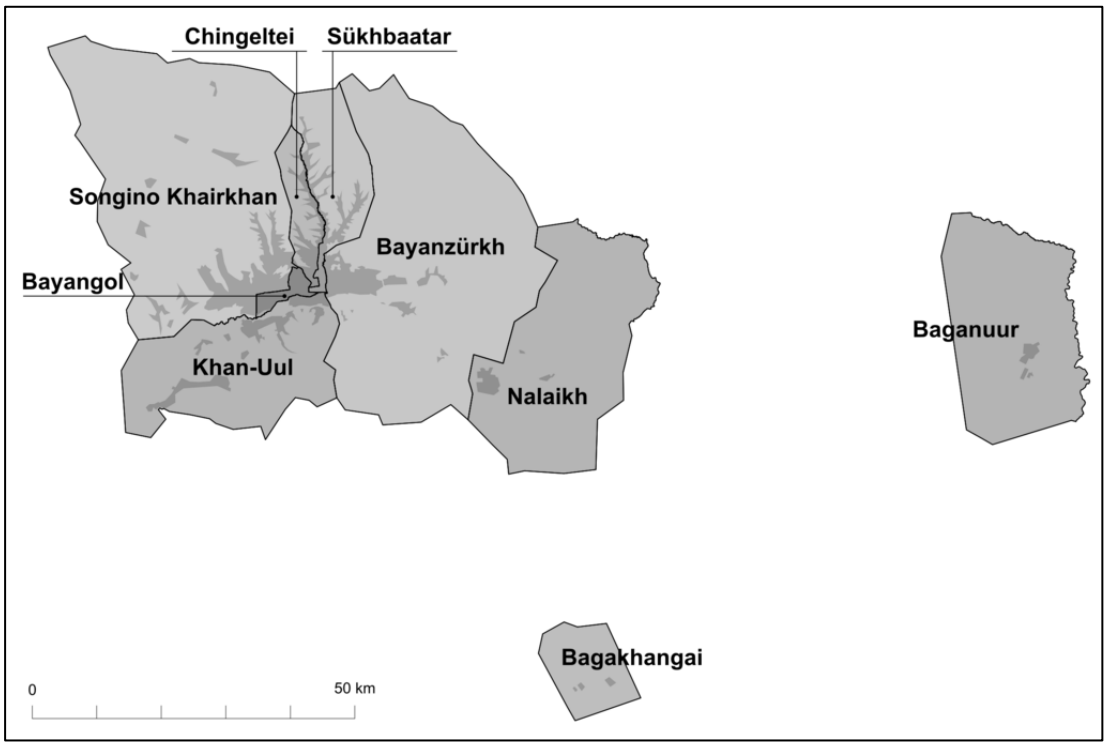

Figure 3. Map of Ulaanbaatar's nine districts

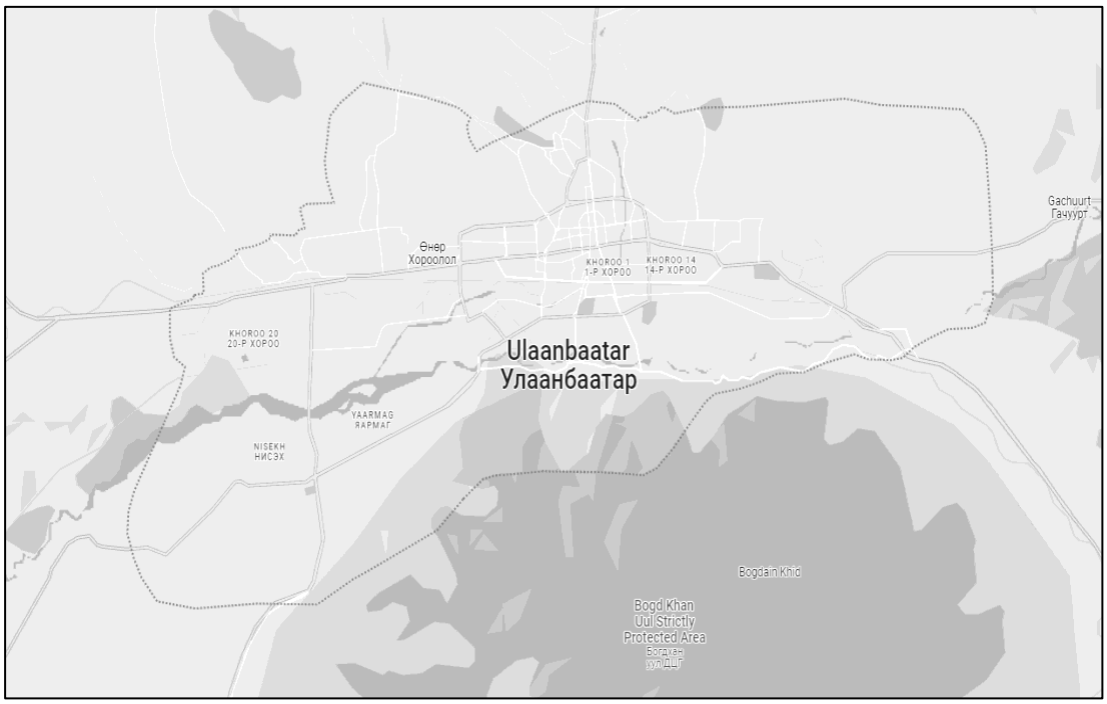

Figure 4. Map of Ulaanbaatar

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Chapter One.

Introduction. Cultivating a Historical Conscience: Ethics and Education in Mongolia

If you don't have ethics, you have a degree, not an education. People think that our universities are full but there are few ethical people. That is why society is disordered. We say that a child growing up unethical is like a horse without a bridle. It means that horses that are not taught in the bridle are not tame horses, they are always in a state of confusion. In the same way, a person who has not learned their customs has not cultivated the right mind, has no culture of communication. Ulaanbaatar is full of unbridled horses, people that are always drunk, quick to temper and greedy for money. There is selfishness taking place at every level of society. This is the norm we have set for the past 30 years. When democratic equality started in Mongolia, we didn't have a plan that's why we are stuck this way. We are always talking about human rights and freedoms, but we have forgotten that Mongolians have a great philosophy for cultivating human beings. It is a mistake of the education system. We have abandoned our philosophy to foreign influence and our human consciousness has deteriorated. It says in our democratic constitution to build a humane society. But to be truly humane we must consider what values we can take from ancient times, from socialism and democracy, how to combine them, and how to create a new path to development. At the very least, I want to teach people the historical elements of this consciousness not only to cultivate citizens but human beings. These need to be as important as human rights and freedoms. A person with ethics will have touched their chest with history. It's not about degrees, you just have to be human. (Extract from an interview with a Non-formal and Lifelong Education teacher in 2018).

1.1. History as a Measure for Humanity

This thesis explores what it means for ethics to be described as "unbridled" (*hazaargüi*) in contemporary Mongolia, and how local practices of history are being implemented in the national education system as a solution to this problem. The above quote refers to this predicament, illustrating that there is a certain historical significance to ethical cultivation that has been neglected in recent approaches to education. The teacher exemplifies a popular diagnosis; that an education without

ethics results in people showing a complete lack of restraint in their behaviour. His remedy, shared among many others, is to engage with history in ways that mobilise future possibilities while simultaneously cultivating a human conscience in the present. In what follows, I provide an ethnographic explication of history on these terms. I situate this within a theoretical framework that sits at the axis of the anthropology of Mongolia, time and temporality, and the ethical. Based on 18 months of fieldwork at an adult education centre in Ulaanbaatar, I explore the specific temporal multiplicity at work in the relationship between local notions of history and ethics, and how this cultivates the capacity for people to act in ways that guide social life towards a different future. I show that the possibility for practices of history to transform people's interactions in such a way must be considered within the nexus of ethics, education, and human cultivation. Using an explanation of these connections, this section introduces the topic of this research in more detail.

In Mongolia, it is not uncommon to hear people ask the question, "how human is this person?" (*hüneer ene hün her zereg ve*). It is asked when making an ethical inquiry into how good or bad a person's actions are, evaluating their conduct, attitude, character and conscience. At its core, it queries how well the person in question has learned to behave as a person in Mongolian society. That is, the extent to which they fulfil the conditions of a specific upbringing, form of cultivation or education known locally as *hümüüjlüüleh*, literally "to make human".

Most commonly expressed in its noun form, *hümüüjil*, meaning "the process of being human", this form of cultivation is perceived as central to the existence of Mongolian social life. Taken up as an activity that spans at least three living generations, it refers to a broad set of pedagogical practices that aim to instill in each successive generation the approved values of society and the knowledge upon which they rest. Passed down as an inheritance that combines songs, words, images and emotions, *hümüüjil* encompasses all that enables a person to cultivate moral behaviour throughout their lifetime. It does so by teaching them how to communicate in an ethical manner through locally specific customary relations, performed in both mundane and ritualised ways. In binding the ethical with the customary, *hümüüjil* is widely regarded as a practice that bridles social relations, holding Mongolian collective life in a given form over time. It is perceived as a positive restraint, taming and guiding people's interactions with one another to achieve a shared sense of orderliness, duty and direction in

everyday life. To question how human a person is, therefore, is to suggest that they have not cultivated, or have deliberately chosen not to uphold, the values of the past nor their posterity.

As a cultural practice that presences the past, *hümüüjil* is charged with historical meaning. As such, it occupies an important place in Mongolian notions of history. It is considered locally as an integral part of the historical record, one embodied and expressed through a set of longstanding and deeply felt cultural expectations concerning the ways in which people ought to act towards one another. In Halha Mongolian the word for history, *tüüh*, encodes this meaning by carrying a dual definition. On the one hand, it refers to a more conventional form of national historiography with its focus on documenting and disseminating a chronological series of events located in the past. On the other hand, *tüüh* refers to a person's biography extended over three generations (*gurvan üyeiin namtar)*, implying that which either has been or will be carried forward via *hümüüjil*. This duality exists in a dynamic tension whenever people invoke *hümüüjil* today. History is not treated as merely an issue of objectified knowledge about the past, although this does matter. More importantly, it is about being "awake" (*serüün*) to historical knowledge. To awaken history refers to the cultivation of a living responsibility to "inherit and pass on" (*övlüüleh*) something of the substance or value of the past in everyday life. Except where it appears in books, embalmed as it were, *hümüüjil* evokes a consciousness of the past in ways that simultaneously regard future possibilities as well as the dutiful and desirable ways of acting in the present. Crucially, it is the balance of these temporal relations that is the measure of a person's ethics, and by extension, their humanity.

As demonstrated in the introductory quote, the interrelationship between ethics, education and history is of increasing concern in Mongolia. There exists a common discourse that the values of the past are being set aside, disregarded or forgotten altogether because democratising and marketising processes alongside foreign influence work to rob social relations of their historically specific ethical dimensions. Such transformations are perceived as problems related to the lack of *hümüüjil*, whereby people have not cultivated a human conscience. In the bustling capital city of Ulaanbaatar especially, where social relations are condensed and abrasive, discussions regarding the lack of human cultivation are pervasive in everyday life and across

various media. As a consequence, there is a popular sense that the cultural and moral fabric of society is in a state of "disorder" (*zambaraagüi*), described as "unbridled" (*hazaargüi*), and defined as "without ethics" (*yos züigüi*). This unbridling of ethical life has now become a defining characteristic of the contemporary period.

Much of the regional literature reflects this discourse, in which the current social climate is described as one of "chaos", "disorder", or "disorganisation" (all *zambaraagüi*), "moral decay" (*yos surtahuun yalzral*), "crisis" (*hyamral*), or to a lesser extent "anarchy" (*anarhi*) (Empson 2020, High 2017, Højer 2019, Pedersen and Nielson 2013, Sneath 2007, Zimmerman 2012). Along with scholars of post-Soviet contexts in their conceptualisation of "wild capitalism" (Nazpary 2002), anthropologists of Mongolia have used "disorder" to delineate a field of social relations in which interactions between people fail to comply with certain customary rules of social coexistence, manifest as selfish behaviour, poor conduct or illegality. In such interactions, collective obligations are generally observed to be in conflict with monetary gain, leaving behind a sense of dispossession and lack of control[1]. In contemporary Mongolia, this is present in the many corruption scandals surrounding politicians, stratified wealth inequality and toxic urban air pollution. Popular social media platforms (e.g. Facebook) are never short of viral reports of greedy oligarchs, child trafficking or counterfeit products. My research shares in these common findings. However, I encountered a different cultural framing of "disorder". The most common term I heard when people described social life was that there was simply "no ethics" (*yos züigüi*), pointing to both the absence of *hümüüjil* as well as to any corresponding values that might regulate the consequences of economic reform on human terms[2]. This has come to shape a temporality in which people feel "stuck" (*gatssan*), unable to attend to the active husbandry of historical practices through which they enact meaningful efforts to live ethical lives.

[1] I give examples of how anthropologists have interpreted "disorder" in the theoretical framings section shortly. The rest of the thesis details how my findings confirm or differ from these.

[2] It is important to note that this designation does not translate simply to being unethical, nor does it imply any ontological claim that people do not have the capacity to be ethical. Rather, it points to the more specific claim that there is the explicit practice of *hümüüjil* through which a person becomes ethical. Failure to do so results in the inability to enact ethical relations.

Much blame is placed on the national education system as a major contributing factor to this sense of unbridled ethics. To be unbridled, refers to the absence of the historical form of education or cultivation that is *hümüüjil*[3]. In the three decades following the disintegration of socialism, the majority of formal schools adopted curriculums modelled on the education systems of democratic nations. Underpinned by *Human Capital Theory* (Shultz 1961, Becker 1962), the claim that an education is of comparable value to other resources for economic growth, these imported curriculums emphasise learning as preparation for the workforce for the purpose of national development[4]. Although generally respected, there exists some concern lingering in the public mind regarding the value orientation governing this type of education, especially its limits. It is criticised for privileging qualifications instead of relationships in the educational process. This is a reaction to what education theorist Gert Beista has labelled "learnification"; when education becomes contingent on the forces of the market, redefined in terms of providing individual learners with the resources and skills required for employment. Such transformations have shifted the language of education away from broader questions of purpose and on to the language of learning with little mention of what this process is supposed to accomplish (2010:18).

The problem is that, for the most part, imported curriculums contradict *hümüüjil* as the foundational ethos through which a person can fulfil their social responsibilities. On these grounds, schools are perceived as unable to draw students into their own histories and experience. Students have become alienated from the cultural subjects and values necessary for their development into well-rounded, ethical citizens. They fail, as the introductory quote shows, "to touch their chest with history" (*tüühtei tseejind hüreh*); to embody a sense of pride in local history and to understand oneself as deeply connected to a past and a way of being that extends beyond the person in the present.

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[3] As the thesis will reveal, I use the analogy of a bridle to conceptualise the shape and purpose of a set of temporal and affective relationships that guide ethical cultivation in this context. This requires an understanding of ethics that exceeds a focus on the relationship between evaluation and action. I explicate this in more detail in chapter four.

[4] Formulated by Schultz (1961), *Human Capital Theory* emphasises the economic value of education. The basic model argues that an individual's role in the economically competitive market is to accumulate a set of skills or abilities through formal education. As people accumulate human capital, their value in the labour market increases as they bring more expertise by virtue of their qualifications.

This perspective is reflected in ongoing national debates. In December 2017, for example, the president Kh. Battulga established a working group tasked with navigating beyond this situation through the teaching of Mongolia's core morals, *hümüüjil*, tradition and the philosophy of education in comparison with other countries. The goal was to clarify national concepts and develop further policies that "teach Mongolian people the art of being human first" (*Önöödör* 2020) [5].

As a direct response to such concerns, one small branch of the government is attempting to reaffirm a cultural and ethical commitment to the past through adult education. In the last decade, the National Centre for Lifelong Education has taken recourse to the ethical practice of *hümüüjil* with the specific intention to bridle social relations through the teaching of moral, aesthetic and civic competencies or values. This department operates under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports to organise a nationwide network of Non-Formal and Lifelong Education (NFLE) centres. For the past two decades, NFLE in Mongolia has constituted a complementary branch of the formal education system. Between September and June each year, each centre offers free courses to unemployed adults along five pathways; equivalency training for school drop-outs (to gain formal qualifications) [6], moral and civic education, aesthetic education, family education, and life skills courses (e.g. sewing, hairdressing, music, felt work, computing). Through these pathways, NFLE aims to cultivate human beings. It does so by drawing upon several entangled forms of consciousness – moral, historical and civic – to provide an ethical toolkit that enables learners to enact new and better relations in their everyday lives. Central to this aim is an understanding that the enactment of more ethical relationships would play a significant role in bridling a sense of order that is believed to have been more stable before. It is these unique developments in the education system that provide the central focus of this doctoral research.

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[5] From the news source *Önöödör* 'Moral Thermometer' series www.unuudur.mn/монголчуудын-ёс-суртахууны-халууны-шил-ажиллахаа-болих-нь/ (Accessed 02.03.2020).

[6] This pathway mostly constitutes the non-formal aspect of NFLE. Equivalency training is also provided to children that for various reasons are unable to attend formal school. At my fieldsite, it catered mostly to children referred to the centre by social workers due to problematic life circumstances. Given the vulnerability of these children I do not engage with equivalency training in this research.

Based on 18 months of fieldwork conducted over 2017-18, this thesis provides an ethnographic account of *hümüüjil* as it was practiced within one of the country's largest and most established NFLE centres in Ulaanbaatar. Focusing on the classroom, it traces the various courses, topics and actions that together amount to this specific form of ethical cultivation in Mongolia. From within this space, it explores the conceptualisation of ethics through the teaching and learning of history, cultural heritage, tradition, aesthetic intelligence, and civic well-being. Through an analysis of *hümüüjil*, my research inquiries into the temporal scaffolding of ethical cultivation in Mongolia. I draw on the anthropological approach that theorises the human experience of time as made up of "multiple dimensions (sequencing, timing, past-present-future relations, etc)" (Munn 1992:116). My analysis further resonates with Gell's use of "temporal maps" (1992:326), and Hodges' use of "temporal fabric" (2002:7), to theorise time as evoked in relation to a multiplicity of cultural signifiers and temporalising practices. I document and explore a set of key cultural propositions that people draw on to evoke and embody time through three core themes; ethics (*yos züi*), cultivation (*hümüüjil*), and history (*tüüh*). Following Gell (1985), focus is on framing the dynamics between time and these themes as they are manifest in temporalising practices, allowing for the dynamics themselves to be treated as analytical categories. I extend this to include an exploration of the ways in which these dynamics overlap, entangle or conflict with each other and how institutions "mediate divergent representations, techniques and rhythms of human and non-human time" (Bear 2014:6).

The thesis pays particular attention to the historical criteria that structure classes on how learners should best relate to themselves and others, as well as to objects, institutions, the past and future. Through the prism of ethical cultivation, my research also explores the interrelated themes of education, inheritance and citizenship in the context of temporalising practices. This reveals vital connections between knowledge and action, tradition and innovation, and self and state. As will become clear, these connections are central to the enactment of ethical relations in this context. A key overall aim is to correlate these themes with a broader analysis of the ways in which NFLE educators are attempting to solve some major (as well as some minor) problems arising from the transformation of social relations generated by various democratising and marketising processes, and how, in response to this, they are reconceptualising

adult education to provide an ethical map for people to navigate these new relations in their life, work and learning.

I will now expand this preliminary description and detail the key research questions that guided my inquiries. This is followed by a description of NFLE in Mongolia and its core aims for context. I briefly review the theoretical framings of the thesis, drawing from the points of connection and conflict between three bodies of literature: the anthropology of Mongolia, time and temporality, and ethics. I detail the ways in which these literatures overlap and supplement each other, each from their own perspective. In the final part of this chapter, I detail my methodologies and outline the subsequent chapters.

1.2. From Educational Agendas to Ethical Persons: Key Research Questions

This research focuses on three key questions in relation to *hümüüjil*. I explore these both ethnographically and theoretically. I ask: a) What criteria, practices and values constitute the practice of *hümüüjil* in contemporary Ulaanbaatar?; b) How are various relationships between past, present and future constituted in the cultivation of ethical persons?; and c) How does NFLE practice attempt to cultivate certain relationships to history in ways that might impact upon a learner's future actions, conduct and character? In giving ethnographic explication to these questions, the theoretical objective of this research is to explore what it means for people embody a relationship to time as an ethical one and, importantly, how this might enrich anthropological understandings of the interrelationships between the categories of the temporal, ethical, and educational.

As is the case for many ethnographic projects, these questions were not part of the original research design. In fact, this project was set in motion by an online article about the use of yurt schools to improve educational access in remote areas across Central Asia. I was interested in the reintroduction of nomad inclusive education as part of widespread development initiatives following the disintegration of socialism. Drawing on the limited literature available, my initial research outline focused on the ways in which transnational educational agendas (e.g. UNESCO's Education for All) informed and interacted with the lived realities of education provision for mobile pastoralist communities in rural Mongolia. From what I could glean from a handful of UNESCO reports at the time, Non-formal and Lifelong Education was promoted as an

important agent of opportunity in the country, one in which nomadic herders could aspire to different futures, and to acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will enable their inclusivity into rapidly changing economic and labour markets. I wanted to know if local communities felt the same, guided by the question: How do learners engage with Non-formal and Lifelong Education as a means to envision and secure a different future in relation to experiences of moral and economic uncertainty associated with recent socio-political change?

As it would happen, my guiding question did not change significantly over the course of my research. However, the framework in which I was asking it did. During a preliminary research trip I undertook for my Masters dissertation in 2016, I discovered that UNESCO was no longer involved with NFLE in the country. The online information upon which I had developed my research was outdated. UNESCO had, in fact, stopped coordinating NFLE projects in 2012[7]. As such, the global development initiatives around which I had framed my research were no longer a central driving force. I also found that none of the courses or materials provided by UNESCO remained in NFLE centres. What had taken their place was something altogether new. I learned that NFLE officials and educators were generally happy with the UNESCO collaboration to develop skills for economic self-sufficiency. They recognised that the practical needs of income and employment are an ever-present and problematic reality for many adults seeking educational opportunities in Mongolia. Nonetheless, they took the UNESCO collaboration ending as an opportunity to rethink and re-envision their approach to adult education. Instead of the "learning to know and do" model of global development agencies, officials told me, the Mongolian government shifted the focus of NFLE to include a broader set of values concerning the purposes and applications of adult learning. Without foreign influence, NFLE was to be based on a deeper, more autochthonous view of education as a pedagogical space for ongoing human formation and transformation. In their words, this new brand of NFLE was to be, first and foremost, about "learning to be and live together" as influenced by "traditional and national values, parents and friends".

[7] Although the precise reasons for this withdrawal are not published, I suspect that it is because of the shift in priorities when changing from the Millennium Development Goals focused on education to the Sustainable Development Goals, concerned with the environment.

When I returned the following year to conduct long-term fieldwork, my ethnographic focus was to understand precisely what constituted NFLE in the country, as well as what "learning to be and live together" actually means in the context of contemporary life. Given that the majority of the population now lives in close proximity together in Ulaanbaatar, along with the significantly larger participation in adult education in the city, I took the decision to conduct fieldwork there. In early September 2017, I attended a conference in Ulaanbaatar celebrating the 20th anniversary of NFLE in the country. While there I was introduced to the director and staff of a prominent NFLE centre in the city. Sharing a keen interest in my research, they invited me to conduct daily research at their centre. I thus began to regularly attend NFLE classes at the start of the academic year the following week.

Ethics immediately emerged as the predominant ethnographic issue. Although diverse in their content and activities, classes coalesced around a set of questions concerning what it means to be an ethical person (synonymous with being human), how to cultivate a specifically Mongolian one, and what societal conditions enliven people to perform *hümüüjil*, or conversely, what factors constrain them. Although confined to the NFLE classroom, these questions were clearly illustrative of a set of pervasive concerns across broader Mongolian society about the kind of person a Mongolian person should be and, crucially, the terms of autochthony on which they should be founded. The small classroom at the centre provided an intensive social space in which to study both how people felt about the problem and the resolutions that they sought after. In this sense, aspects of ethical life that are usually embodied or tacit were made visible in ways they would not have been otherwise. Moreover, classes were taught around what values and relations make this ethical person intelligible and sustainable in the context of contemporary life in Ulaanbaatar, and the processes of change catalysing them. This provided me with the opportunity to witness the ways in which people contemplate and negotiate an array of meanings surrounding what makes for a proper human being and the relationships among them alongside the broader structural factors that may influence, though not fully determine, them.

As my fieldwork progressed, my attention was further drawn to the crucial role that temporal and pedagogical language – history, heritage, tradition, culture, custom – played in answering these questions. Ethics in Mongolia, it became apparent, is intertwined in a dynamic co-existence with a certain sensibility towards the past, one

that reaches into deep sources of historical meaning at the same time as being responsive to the present of which it is a part. Presented with this ethnographic data, the practice of *hümüüjil* provided an opportunity for me to study what it means to cultivate an ethical relationship to time. The concept of history was highlighted at the centre as the predominant driving force behind *hümüüjil*. It further stood out to me from an analytical point of view as it did not rely solely on a singular nor linear temporality. Instead, it was about finding the balance between a dynamic set of temporalities that work to enfold time and value in such a way to produce ethical action.

Conceived on these terms, the form of ethical cultivation practiced in NFLE renders visible a previously unexplored form of historical consciousness in Ulaanbaatar. It brings to light "the basic assumptions about the shape of time and the relationship of events in the past present and future" (Stewart 2012:2)[8]. These assumptions could represent the past as documented in conventional accounts of history. Simultaneously, embodied experiences of the past in the present could reveal previously unknown pasts to be incorporated into the historical record (*ibid.*:215). In other contexts, experiences of the past could even dislocate themselves from chronology, for history to be transformed or remade in relation to specific socio-political circumstances (e.g. Bacigalupo 2016). As the chapters that follow will illustrate, the practice of *hümüüjil* contains its own distinctive set of personal, political and pedagogical dynamics.

Acknowledging and grappling with the complexity of these dynamics has largely shaped the structure of this thesis. A central theme throughout concerns the temporal

[8] There is a wider literature that I do not have space to consider here, which broadly resonates with the teaching and learning of history. Historical consciousness carries a set of evolving definitions regarding how people make sense of the links between the past, present and future to position themselves in time. One approach refers to the expression of a collective mentality as a defining feature of modern self-understanding (Koselleck 1979). History education scholars have argued differently that historical consciousness refers to a cognitive capacity to orientate ourselves in time, characterised as a capacity to evaluate and use historical tools (Seixas 2004), which takes form as a historical identity (Rüsen 2004). In philosophy, it is used to delineate an awareness of the variety of perspectives through which the past is made present (Gadamer 2006). While these definitions take into account the complexity and variety of historical sources and dislocate them from historiography, they emphasise narrative thinking and mental processes. The practice of *hümüüjil* relies on a local conceptualisation of education that does not view knowledge and action as separate endeavours, making these definitions problematic. To avoid any conceptual confusion, my use of historical consciousness remains anthropological throughout, allowing for an ontological approach to history-making to emerge in ways that include, but are not reduced to, narrative form.

substance of ethical life in Mongolia. Each chapter provides a different ethnographic perspective on the intersection between cultivating human persons, the ethical challenges of contemporary Mongolia, and the ways in which history temporalises the enactment of value. Chapter two begins by demonstrating the more conventional shape of time in terms of providing the history of education in Mongolia. This not only provides contextual information to understand the linguistic terms through which NFLE policy is enacted in everyday life in the classrooms, but also elucidates the key historicities through which local understandings of history (*tüüh*) engage with the past. The rest of the chapters show how different temporalities emerge through practices of ethical cultivation in relation to historical learning. Points of focus in each chapter include analysing how these temporalities might merge with or remake conventional notions of history, and how this multi-temporality forms a constellation of features that together generate a different path towards the future.

Prior to discussing the theoretical connections informing this analysis in more detail, I will briefly introduce the structure and context of Non-formal and Lifelong Education in Mongolia. Next, I present the Mongolian model of NFLE in relation to the global educational agendas upon which it is based. This is followed by an overview of local NFLE structure and its key features for context.

1.3. Non-formal and Lifelong Education in Mongolia

Non-formal and Lifelong Education are not singular concepts to define. Rather, they communicate a dynamic set of guidelines laid out by international organisations to assist governments in designing educational policies that extend beyond formative schooling. These guidelines encompass formal and non-formal, as well as informal, learning[9]. Given that local and national contexts will ultimately shape educational practice, the guidelines are outlined in very general terms to allow for different interpretations both within and across various contexts. It is for these reasons that I avoid going into significant detail here. For the purposes of this research, the first

[9] Much of the core literature on Lifelong Education tends to focus heavily on debates involving the conceptual differences between lifelong education and lifelong learning, (in)formal and non-formal education (or learning) (see Billet 2010, Colley et al. 2002, La Belle 1982, Jarvis 2004, Tuijnman and Borström 2002). As this research was conducted in Mongolian these distinctions and debates do not necessarily apply. In chapter two, I demarcate the key Mongolian terms through which NFLE was implemented.

section instead highlights the two predominant global educational agendas put forward by UNESCO (Faure et al. 1972, Delors et al. 1996) and the OECD (1973, 1996) that NFLE in its relevant form was founded upon. In my conversations with NFLE officials and centre directors, these foundational agendas were described as the basis for their interpretation on local terms. Many goals and functions overlapped with their own goals for *hümüüjil*. Section 1.3.2. then details the structure and organisation of NFLE in Mongolia. The rest of this thesis will illustrate the ways in which these agendas have been interpreted in locally specific ways in light of anthropological theory.

1.3.1. Lifelong Education: Global Agendas

Lifelong Education as it stands today took shape in the 1970's following its adoption by both UNESCO and the OECD (Jarvis 2009). Both organisations published reports outlining new modes, policies and sites of learning that focus on creating a "learning society" by expanding educational processes outside of their respective institutions. The UNESCO report approached Lifelong Education as a way to promote humanism with the intention to prevent war and conflict (Bourdon 2014). The OECD took a more pragmatic approach, advocating for Lifelong Education as a transformative and emancipatory force that could improve professional progression and reduce elitism in the education system simply by extending learning beyond youth (Field 2001). The goal was an economic one (Schuller 2009). The problem, as it was perceived at the time, was that education systems were not catering to the everchanging needs of industry and labour markets. Lifelong Education was therefore formulated as a solution for governments or agencies to generate policy reform that responds to imbalances between skill sets and employer needs. For the OECD (1996) in particular, education and the economy were conceptualised as practically indistinct. Lifelong learning become expressed through the language of adaptation and renewal in which education become the mediating factor between individuals and industry[10]. There are three central solutions in the OECD's outline on lifelong learning. Firstly, the onus of education is shifted onto the learner, with emphasis on enacting values of entrepreneurialism or self-reliance. Secondly, the focus of learning is the rapid and

[10] By the 1990's the concept of Lifelong Education had changed to Lifelong Learning to more accurately reflect the shift away from formal educational institutions (Barros 2012). This is not a distinction that carried much weight in Mongolia given the use of local terms.

continuous transformation of working life. Thirdly, the act of learning is considered life-wide and introduced into a wider variety of settings such as the workplace, during leisure activities or in community life. The concept of "Non-formal Education" was added to the discourse on educational policy around the same time as it shared the same characteristics. This dominant discourse still commands significant influence in policy circles today (Field 2010).

Alongside the OECD, UNESCO added a humanistic, rights-based view of lifelong education. They formulated their own model of education as "a continuous process of forming whole human beings" (Delors et al. 1996:19). The fundamental role of learning advocated here was personal and social development with the intention of reducing poverty, exclusion and oppression. Like the OECD, UNESCO outlined four key elements. Firstly, "learning to know" in terms of general knowledge. Secondly, "learning to do", or to acquire skills and competencies relevant to varying contexts. Thirdly, "learning to be" capable to act with autonomy and responsibility. Lastly, "learning to live together" by developing interdependence. Guided by these elements, lifelong learning is considered to cover both learning throughout a person's life, and across a wide range of settings and domains (*ibid.*:37)[11].

Since the 1990s, lifelong education has been replaced by lifelong learning to shift away from an institutional focus and promote instead the empowerment of individuals to take responsibility for their own learning and welfare. This is based around a particular image of education that combines economic agency with personal development to produce citizens that are prepared for shifting labour markets instead of reliant on the state to provide for them (Griffin 2010). In light of the more recent sustainable development goals, the emphasis has further evolved to promote education as something with public as well as private value, alongside advocations for lifelong learning to be a new right (UNESCO 2020). The goal is to address climate change by providing more equitable educational access across and within different contexts

[11] Described as "vertical" vs "horizontal" learning (Delors et al. 1996:37), this was a common analogy for *hümüüjil* noted by NFLE academics and officials familiar with the international discourse on lifelong education. Teachers and learners preferred the analogy of a bridle. Moving between both groups, centre directors would freely use both analogies.

around the world. Moving to a detailed focus on the context specific to this thesis, I now present the approach to NFLE in Mongolia.

1.3.2. Local Approaches to NFLE in Mongolia

The general consensus among centre staff was that NFLE policy is constituted on the basis of the UNESCO model more than the OECD model. Although both were recognised as influential, parallels were drawn more explicitly to the human centric meanings and values of the goals of "learning to be" and "learning to live together". The economic goals of the OECD were spoken about briefly on several occasions in reference to the concept of learning throughout one's life existing previously under socialism through widespread vocational training. It was more widely recognised by interlocutors that NFLE in its present form is the result of development interventions following the disintegration of socialism throughout the 1990s. During this decade of dramatic political and economic transformation, structural adjustment programmes imposed by international banks (e.g. IMF) significantly reduced the role of the state in the education of its citizens. The state consequently looked to global educational agendas and their corresponding agencies (e.g. UNESCO's Education for All) for funding opportunities. The conditions for such funding were modelled on the guidelines laid out above. Policies to promote Non-formal Education (NFE) were put forward through the "Law on Education" (1991) to legalise NFE as a parallel branch of the formal education system. A series of evolving national programmes for NFE were legislated between 1993- 2015 (Batchuluun 2009)[12]. These programmes fulfilled the UNESCO agenda by facilitating initiatives that provided skill enhancing opportunities for those that missed out on schooling during the initial economically challenging years of post-socialist transformation. Various iterations of the UNESCO model continued until approximately 2012 when NFLE officials took the decision to express their goals in different terms[13].

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[12] These include the "Education Master Plan (1993), the "Government Policy on Education" (1995), the "National Programme on Non-formal Education (1997-2004)", the "Master Plan to Develop the Education of Mongolia (2006-2015)".

[13] Where not referenced, the insights in this paragraph were given to me over numerous conversations with the centre director. Having worked in NFLE for two decades, and in a governmental capacity before that, her knowledge came from a wealth of experience.

Over the last decade, NFLE in Mongolia has begun to speak the language of UNESCO but through the distinctly local lens of *hümüüjil*. According to the National Centre for Lifelong Education, "it is becoming more important to focus the discussions with a new graduate on how to keep learning, instead of what to do for a living" (NCLE 2017:7). The aim is to "expose people to the values implicit within human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and respect, and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable people and societies to live in peace and harmony" (*ibid.*:8). The primary intent is to make positive changes in people's lives through a focus on lifestyle, behaviour and values. Consequently, this will "resolve the issues facing the nation and the world through teaching civic responsibilities and obligations to engage in and advance social goods and their posterity" (*ibid.*:8). These aims are targeted at approximately 90,000 unemployed adults, around 56% of which are young people, seeking free access to employable skills or personal development (Statistics Office of Mongolia 2019)[14].

Today, NFLE is a government institution and available nationwide. The National Centre for Lifelong Education overseas the budget, organisation and curriculum of each centre. There is allocated funding for one NFLE centre in each province and one in each of Ulaanbaatar's nine districts. Current statistics show all centres as active, although to varying degrees (NCLE 2017). Each individual centre operates under the local district governor's office. Under this system, the governor is responsible for providing general administration over the budget and activities, with a centre director in charge of coordinating and managing daily classes. The five pathways taught at each centre are set by the NCLE and remain consistent across centres. However, the content of each pathway may be fleshed out differently according to teacher preferences or skill sets in accordance with centre management. Classes are taught on a range of topics from financial skills to moral heritage, entrepreneurship to ecological sustainability, family planning to ethical communication. Diverse vocational courses are concurrently taught across centres. Among others these include: sewing, hairdressing, computing, music, and felt making. In rural centres, this could also include leather work, wood work or horticulture. Equivalency training creates access

[14] Viewed online at https://www.nso.mn/transparency/23 (Accessed 24.03.2020).

to formal qualifications, both through daily classes and flexible self-study that does not require physical attendance.

Despite its national presence, observers of education in Mongolia tend not to focus on NFLE. With the exception of Bernadette Robinson's (1999) report on Non-formal Education within the Gobi Women's Project, NFLE is virtually non-existent in the international discourse and literature on education in Mongolia. Much publicisation is given instead to a set of widely circulated statistical anomalies that show abnormally high literacy rates and university enrolment among the local nomadic population when compared to similar demographics around the globe. A parallel focus emphasises the prominent gender inverse in relation to educational access, with significantly more women receiving university degrees than men. These are presented as positives among journalists and international development agencies eager to quantify their success (e.g. UNESCO, UNICEF, World Vision)[15].

Achievements notwithstanding, these discourses tend to overshadow local debates regarding the idea of being human at the heart of the Mongolian heritage of educational thinking, as well as draw attention away from a set of complex issues underlying the statistics. For example, international funding was allocated to women's education as a key aim of the Millennium Development Goals to increase gender equality, despite actually exacerbating the gender inverse[16]. Similarly, there exists a significant increase in household splitting within herder families due to educational facilities being accessible mainly in urban centres (Bumochir and Ahearns 2017)[17]. As a consequence, educational access is often given as the predominant cause of rural to urban migration, putting a strain on families, herder livelihoods and the environment.

[15] This was made explicit to me in conversations with international development workers at professional networking events in Ulaanbaatar.

[16] This insight was given to me by the former British Ambassador to Mongolia, Catherine Arnold, in October 2017. As a prominent female working in high government spaces, she was often invited to participate in gender empowerment workshops for young women. She observed that the opposite was not true for her male counterparts, before sharing her concern over educational access for young men.

[17] I conducted ten interviews with herder families that all confirmed their choice of location close to district centres was dictated by their children's educational access and not by pastural needs of the animals.

Given the force of organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO influencing NFLE, the concerns of international discourse are not irrelevant to this research. However, they do little to express the everyday reality of NFLE. To fill this gap, this research takes the everyday practice of NFLE as its focal point. My goal is to not focus explicitly on the Lifelong Education agendas noted above, but to reveal the ways in which they manifest on the ground by attending to how NFLE is implemented and sustained through a set of local educational concepts and practices. In bringing ethnographic diversity to bear on NFLE in this way, I offer a more nuanced perspective than is normally theorised. As the chapters that follow illustrate, I pursue an analysis that centres on the practice of cultivating persons at the heart of Mongolian educational practice. This speaks directly to the kind of ethical project NFLE in Mongolia aspires to be within the framework of global agendas. Drawing upon a set of affective tensions underlying the ethnographically derived concept of *hümüüjil*, I further explore the ways in which this ethical project endows history with significance in an attempt to make the present meaningful. As will be argued more closely later, I highlight the ways in which NFLE attempts to prompt and engage people in the development of a historical consciousness that might affect their perceptions, judgements and actions. In order to fully articulate this, I now draw these various strands together through a theoretical framework that highlights a set of key temporal tensions between history, ethics and time that are vital to understanding education in this context.

1.4. Theoretical Framings

This thesis primarily draws from the anthropology of Mongolia in its distinctive approach to ethnographic analysis. It is common for anthropologists working in the Mongolian cultural arena to pose theoretical challenges regarding the ontological structures and dynamics informing social life. In adopting the terminology of ontology, I wish to emphasise a conceptual device that does not assume that social variation is predicated on cultural constructions, whereby difference is considered a matter of perspective (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017). By not conceiving of variation as located within one unifying global scheme, it becomes possible to speak of localised ways of being as arising out of plurality. This allows for different configurations of localised practices to be seen on their own terms. It also avoids prescribing conceptual categories on aspects of social life that are emergent, before they are fully explored. This creates the possibility for localised practices to furnish their own conceptual

effects in anthropological analysis. While I do not engage deeply with the anthropological literature on ontology, the two possibilities noted here are of significance for analysing the nature of the realities I faced in my fieldwork. Similar to other anthropologists working in the region, I found that local concepts did not map neatly onto the Euro-centric conceptual frameworks that I was used to.

A necessary characteristic of formulating concepts in the anthropology of Mongolia is that considerable space must be given to the translation process from Halha Mongol to English, as meanings are irreducible to any single categorisation. This is because local concepts materialise and give efficacy to social relations in ways that are always embedded in networks (Humphrey and Sneath 1999). For example, David Sneath usefully introduced the term "enactions" to express local idioms of exchange (2006:89). He shows that certain material flows (e.g. money) are constitutive of, rather than external to, social relations and persons in Mongolia. Rather than focusing on economic exchange as simply material transactions, the concept of enactions creates space for other vital characteristics, such as obligation and expectation.

In her account of informal economic relations in Russian and Mongolian higher state education, Caroline Humphrey (2017) makes a similar point. She argues that the anthropological concept of a "favour" emerged out of post-socialist contexts where people had to circumvent official routes and manipulate the system through personal connections due to shortages. She questions the implication that there is an official route by showing that doing things indirectly constitutes a matter of *habitus* in Mongolia[18]. This *habitus* conceives of favours as "a type of action that have moral value by virtue of the fact that they are *not being* conceptualised as exchanges" (*ibid.*:52, emphasis in original). Taking into account the cultivation of relations, social standing and sense of self-worth that favours afford, Humphrey defines the act instead as "moral aesthetic of action" (*ibid.*:51). Faced with this complexity, she suggests that ethnographically derived concepts should be approached as a set of *sui generis* practices to be theorised according to their own terms (*ibid.*:56).

[18] "A subjective but not individual system of internalised structures schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class" (Bourdieu 1977:86).

As will become clear, the ethnographically derived concepts of this thesis are interwoven in culturally and historically specific ways that are not easily pinned down. It is not always possible to draw a line between ethics and morality, tradition and modernity, creativity and custom, or the past and future. Consequently, in place of substantive definitions, I show that ethical cultivation in Mongolia is better seen as a polythetic category (Needham 1975). That is, as "a phenomenon which involves a constellation of features not all of which are necessarily present in any particular instance" (Humphrey and Hugh Jones 1992:2). Needham suggests that some phenomena cannot be defined by any singular or equally weighted criteria, nor is it reducible to any one feature, logic or quality. He establishes a mode of investigation that recognises that in different circumstances, different phenomena will display different characteristics. In the absence of consistent criteria, this ambiguity can be made productive by analysing a class of related concepts, what Needham calls "family or sporadic resemblances" (1975:367).

This mode of investigation surfaces in a variety of ways in ethnographies of post-socialism. Anthropologists have found value in polytheism as an analytic tool to critically interrogate the conceptual relations currently available in the discipline (e.g. Henig and Makoviky 2017). The aim is to not allow prescribed theories to strip away the phenomena in question from its social context, but to show how it is practiced by a range of different actors in relation to various cosmological, moral or economic circumstances. Taking Humphrey's analysis of favours noted above, by investigating the resemblances between morality and exchange she is able to demonstrate the social efficacy of the concept. In a similar vein, I use polytheism to frame a variety of phenomena that constitutes *hümüüjil*, and by extension local notions of ethics and history. Rather than trying to categorise local concepts, my goal is to demonstrate how one constitutive phenomena is inseparable from another, and the practices through which connections are made visible. This is ontological in that it opens up the distinctive conceptual potential of *hümüüjil* by revealing the limitations of the analytical tools currently at my disposal.

My suggestion will be that such phenomena are constituted through a "chronotopic constellation" that can be variously drawn in relation to different coordinates of space, time and value (Palmié and Stewart 2016:218). This draws from Bakhtin's notion of a "chronotope" that highlights how human experience perceives of time and space as

irreducible dimensions of one another, and how it is related to forms of agency (1981:84). Emerging from his analysis of literary genres, Bakhtin applied the term to explore how texts draw upon different narrative frameworks of time and space to convey subjective experience as context-specific, relative constructions. From an ethnographic perspective, Bakhtin's chronotope has been applied to refer to "representations that materialise timespace in a manner that enables the dimension of time to become visible. They achieve this through thickening the dimension of time by a layering of the effects of the images and narrative structures" (Bear 2014:7). Expanding chronotopic representations beyond narrative form, ethnographic approaches also emphasise a chronotope as "a scale of spatial and temporal horizons within which some events are understood as meaningfully occurring. It is also a set of understandings about how space and time are ordered" (Stasch 2011:3). In this perspective, chronotopes are dynamic, socially meaningful horizons that condition certain possibilities but do not determine them[19]. Instead, possibilities emerge through a variety of local temporal registers. A constellation refers to the ways in which chronotopes might give shape to the past, present and future differently according to changing environments and trajectories of social life. This analogy is polythetic in that different aspects can emerge or disappear from view depending on where the focus lies[20].

It is to a theoretical explanation of this constellation of features that I turn to now. For simplicity, I have arranged this section into three bodies of literature: the anthropology of Mongolia; the ethical turn; and time and temporality. A primary focus of this thesis is the relations and points of connection between these bodies of literature and, more specifically, on the key contemporary debates of relevance to concept of *hümüüjil*. The content of each subsection therefore draws together theory from each of the others to provide a more dynamic point of entry for thinking about the ways in which people practically engage themselves as being invested with ethical potential through various forms of historical knowledge available during a period of time. Moreover, I am interested in how these forms of knowledge speak to the enactment of value, as well

[19] I engage with Lambek's use the term "horizons" to describe "the extensions of the worlds we inhabit, not only in space but in time and understanding" in detail in chapter three (2018b:11).

[20] Use of the analogy of a constellation as a conceptual tool was also inspired by Jackson (2018).

as the different causal relations through which such enactments are produced, evaluated and affirmed. By drawing together various theoretical perspectives, I have sought to devise an answer that expands each body of theory independently. At the same time, I aim to show how these literatures can work together to create analytical adjustments that can then be applied to the previously unexplored topics of this thesis. This also applies to updating several key conceptual areas to reflect their contemporary forms.

1.4.1. Moral Ambiguity and Historical Transformation in Mongolia

Moving on, this section lays out the key ethnographic literature on Mongolia that has enabled me to formulate my analysis. My primary focus is on the theorisation of local notions of morality in relation to the broader historical transformation following the disintegration of socialism. My research builds upon this literature. At the same time, I explain where my analysis will depart from previous analyses. While descriptions of ethical life in Mongolia are present across the ethnographic literature, local understandings of the concept of ethics (*yos züi*) have yet to be placed at the centre of analysis. This is curious given that Caroline Humphrey's (1997) work on moral exemplars in Mongolia has been so influential in the anthropology of ethics. As I explain in more detail in chapter four, Humphrey locates philosophical models of morality as a formal, rule governed system in people's use of historical exemplars. Humphrey demonstrated that it is through the relation of identification with a moral exemplar that ordinary people's access to norms and values are mediated. The ethical, she suggests, is present in terms of the choice a person has to cultivate the life they want to lead by inscribing value to an exemplar of their choosing. It is considered seminal for demonstrating a system of morality informed by a different cultural lens. This took morality and ethics out of the philosophical domain and into an anthropological one. Nonetheless, it has shaped the anthropology of Mongolia somewhat differently. It has influenced two interrelated themes that now characterise the regional literature: moral ambiguity and historical transformation. By showing that exemplarity is commonly inspired by historical figures, Humphrey influenced other anthropologists working in the region to investigate the ways in which the past is embodied in the present as the main template for morality (*yos surtakhuun*) and source of moral authority (Humphrey 1992).

Earlier research on post-socialism in Mongolia contextualised this moral exemplarity within broader projects of nation-building and identity formation following the democratic revolution in 1990. Christopher Kaplonski (2004) notably explored the re-evaluation of historical knowledge previously deemed problematic within the socialist ethic. To establish an independent Mongolia, he notes, knowledge of historical figures was rewritten in light of democratic ideals. Most notable is that of Chinggis Khan, who was transformed in the public imagination from a member of the exploitative bourgeoise class to progenitor of the Mongol nation. His image became commonplace as a symbol of change and an emblem of respect worthy of democratic Mongolia. In selecting Chinggis Khan's positive traits such as his diplomacy, legal abilities and equality towards religious expression, the new democratic government was able to construct an exemplary model for political leadership and citizenship. Ultimately, Chinggis Khan represented the aspiration of the newly formed nation. This work captures the common tendency in the Mongolian popular imagination to split history into three periods; the deep past, socialist era, and the market era. The shifting conception of historical figures evidences the ways in which these periods are each valued on different terms. Moreover, in ascribing value to the thirteenth century, these narratives also operated to create the sense that the contemporary Mongol identity is the product of millennia (see also Billé 2014). This sentiment remains widespread today.

More recently, anthropologists have stepped away from a post-socialist perspective based on the recognition that this category may misrepresent the lived realities of contemporary life (Buyandelger 2008, Pedersen 2011). Rather than providing a before and after narrative, much work has drawn out a more complex and nuanced understanding of how shifting historical transformations reveal the changing nature of moral relations. This includes how people have addressed these transformations through local idioms of exchange (Sneath 2006), fortune (Empson 2011), or spiritual cosmologies (High 2017). This area of focus has demonstrated that there was no simple transfer of economic, political or moral concepts from a socialist planned economy to democratic capitalism. This has resulted in discordant ways through which people evaluate and enact appropriate relations today. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the concept of "disorder" *(zambaraagüi*) has been central to many recent analyses. Anthropologists have interpreted disorder by demonstrating how

different actors in the region choose to act in morally ambiguous or uncertain situations.

For example, Astrid Zimmermann's (2012) account of managerial responsibilities in a state-run kindergarten in provincial Mongolia captures this moral ambiguity. Her analysis traces the relationship between "corruption" and "obligation" as both aspects of social relations and functional features of the state. She details the emergence of a conflict between two incompatible value systems; a respect for leaders and a discourse of moral decay. On the one hand, there exists a collectivist ethics that structures a particular kind of shared morality evidenced through the hierarchical organisation of social life. This is characterised by respect and support, or obligation and loyalty between kin. By virtue of their position leaders are obliged to assist members of their social networks in obtaining resources such as funds or employment, irrespective of qualifications. On the other hand, there is a capitalist ethic framed in terms of individual utility and earnings. As Zimmermann points out, from one position a government employee helping a relative to get a job could be viewed as morally appropriate, but from another it appears nepotistic. Here, the question of what counts as an ethical action is unresolvable given the push and pull between competing value systems.

Over the past decade, this sense of moral ambiguity has only grown. This is in a large part due to the nation swinging from the fastest growing economy in the world with a GDP of 17.5% in 2012 to rapid economic decline with a GDP of just 2% in 2015. A result of the Chinese boom in steel and technology requiring coal and foreign investment in mining. Although things have slowly improved, disillusionment with the current political and economic situation can still be felt in the central square, where regular protests circle around the government palace loudly calling for an end to corrupt officials, environmental degradation or unlivable public sector wages. One immediate outcome of this situation is that democracy and capitalism have become associated with deregulation and chaos, defined by a lack of ethical limits (Højer 2019). In the absence of certainty, people reach into the past in the search for values that they hope can afford possibilities to move into a different future. As highlighted by Morten Pedersen, social life contains its own multi-temporal attitude, whereby people's hope for the future "gathers into fragile assemblages otherwise heterogenous

entities, dimensions and affects" (2012:6). It is through this dynamic field of temporal relations that the present is given certainty.

On an even larger scale than before, people have begun to assemble knowledge from the past not only for the purpose of aspiration but as a form of critique. In her most recent work, Rebecca Empson explores new kinds of "individual ethical projects" that have arisen out of these transformations (2020:12). The outcome of living through such economic fluctuation, she argues, is that people have become accustomed to navigating the stark space between democratic ideals, economic fluctuations and present reality. Within this gap, people continuously enact "ethical calculus" to revise their futures anew, day to day, as best as they are able with the rival moral visions and different ideals at hand (*ibid.*:21). Empson conceptualises this space as an "enduring present" (*ibid.*:21). To create forward movement towards something better, she suggests, requires different kinds of time. Her ethnography details the heterogeneous ways through which people anticipate a better future by re-envisioning ideals from the past to prefigure new possibilities in the face of economic limitations. Her goal is to diversify the concept of capitalism by showing how it is experienced differently according to specific historical transformations, while also attending to the ways in which these experiences catalyse the emergence of different kinds of subjects. It is about individual ethical projects in which people create a new kind of present for themselves in times of uncertainty.

Fieldwork for this research was conducted shortly after Rebecca Empson conducted her fieldwork for the research above. In many respects, our findings are similar. The complexity of moral ambiguity as a result of shifting and dramatic historical transformations and economic fluctuations also emerged significantly in my fieldwork. However, one key difference stands out. Empson applies the category of ethics analytically, not as an ethnographically derived concept. Applying the concept of ethics from an economic standpoint requires conceptualising ethics as an individual endeavour. That is, that people make evaluations on an individual basis. During the course of my fieldwork the most common, and often unprompted, comment I received from interlocutors was that there was no such thing as an individual in Mongolia. As I demonstrate in chapter two, actions and activities are indeed undertaken by one person, however a person does not equate to an individual subject. While local people understand the Euro-American notion of an individual, given widespread foreign

travel and the import of ideas from the media, the idea of an individual was only ever spoken about as contradictory to local ethical practices. As I introduce in the following section, present conceptualisations of ethics in anthropology do not have as far an analytical reach as this context requires. This, I argue, is due to a limited form of temporalisation that structures the concept. This research therefore seeks to open up a novel way of engaging with the relationship between the generally accepted definition of ethics in anthropology and temporality in Mongolia, which differs from existing approaches in important and significant respects.

It is also important to note that this research does not seek to critique the analyses noted above. Instead, I see them as each highlighting different phenomena, or chronotopic points, within a dynamic constellation of events, affects and identifications that together constitute ethical life in Mongolia. I complement and update Humphrey's work on exemplars by introducing the interrelated concept of ethics from a different perspective, as well as demonstrate its contemporary form. Rather than viewing value systems as contradictory as Zimmerman shows, I add nuance by demonstrating how value systems converge to produce something new. I utilise Kaplonski's use of historical identification and the re-writing of history, but apply a more multi-temporal perspective than previously analysed. And finally, I compliment Empson's analysis by integrating an analysis of local understandings of ethics to ethnographic examples that are not dissimilar to those presented in her recent research. In order delineate these findings, I must first problematise a set of theorisations that frame anthropological conceptualisations of ethics and its inherent temporal dimensions.

1.4.2. Causality, Tradition and History in the Ethical Turn

In the last two decades, there has been a sustained focus on building a coherent picture of the position of ethics in anthropology. Within this "ethical turn" (Mattingly 2013:301), there features an evolving debate regarding the application of ethics and morality as analytical tools through which to think about human sociality. Broadly speaking, these debates have revealed the diversity of ethical worlds, across a range of anthropological topics and ethnographic contexts. A key focus has been on the ways in which ethics and morality are variously organised around local concepts alongside the socio-historical processes that inform them. A parallel focus has been to revisit

core anthropological questions of social causation and agency as the centrepiece for human understanding. Scholars thinking through ethics and morality have sought to examine a specific set of causal inquiries into the question of why humans act as they do; their decisions, reflections, intentions or purposes. This extends to the study of how actions are meaningfully related to one another, including the conditions in which humans act and how states of affairs are produced by actions over time. What is at issue is the extent to which repeated actions – that is, practices – are invested with meaning and value over time in relation to both external determinants and internal evaluations deriving from a sense of free will. Several key points of focus have emerged as standpoints from which to delineate the ways in which human action is amenable to causal explanation on these terms. These include: what constitutes human good (and its omission); the recognition of persons; the evaluation of circumstances; and attributions of virtue, agency and responsibility (Laidlaw 2014, Lambek *et al*. 2015b).

A key feature of these debates has been to embrace the interdependence of the two main concepts; ethics and morality. A broad tendency has been to define these terms by their relation to one another, according to Bernard Williams' definition of the good that views people as acting in an ethical manner in reference to a prescriptive moral code (1985:9). Ethics, in this form of analysis, is intrinsically moral. It is concrete action informed by general principles that serve as the precondition for a cultural system or chain of reasoning. On these grounds, causality centres on the notion of evaluation. Attention is directed to ways in which people evaluate what courses of action to pursue in different circumstances and the extent to which actors feel free at certain points and constrained at others. Crucially, this approach implies that the social conditions that facilitate ethical action are somehow detachable from a person's behaviour. This rests on the idea that the sense of free will underlying a person's ethical actions is distanced and autonomous from the situation being evaluated (Fassin 2015). Human agency in this formulation primarily consists of individual acts that challenge moral rules or social norms (Mahmood 2004). As a result, individual acts have become the primary unit of analysis in the ethical turn. An ethical person is perceived as autonomous figure forged recursively through interactive social processes as well as the individual ability to cultivate their own ethical subjectivity (Laidlaw 2014). Correspondingly, causality is narrowed to the idea of telos, a teleology of individual

narrative or the lifespan of an idealised self as it is evaluated against the weight of social convention or cultural routine (Mattingly 2014).

With regards to the social experience of causality, more nuanced analyses have recently been explored through use of the concepts of evaluation, reflection and responsibility (Laidlaw 2014). Webb Keane (2016), for example, explores the dynamic points of articulation between social conditions and the ways in which they induce people to reflexively hold themselves accountable to themselves and their actions. Drawing on Williams' definition above, Keane suggests that in order to register certain experiences as ethical, anthropologists must treat everyday evaluations as involving a heterogenous set of practices and processes that, in a given interaction, are momentarily fixed in a certain constellation. According to Keane, the ethical is the set of potentialities that are opened up when human beings evaluate each other and themselves in the moment. He labels this potential as "ethical affordances". The "aspects of people's experiences and perceptions that they might draw on in the process of making ethical evaluations and decisions, whether consciously or not" (Keane 2016:27). These aspects may be contradictory and open to change, but overall take shape as "historically constituted ethical worlds" (*ibid.*:124). It is clashes or convergence between these worlds, Keane notes, that produce the causal factors affording ethical reflection. This is how rival moral visions have so far been approached in the anthropology of Mongolia (e.g. Zimmerman 2012).

It is in this way that problematic temporal idioms used to theorise the structured difference of time and place in the ethical turn emerge. Confronted with the problem of causality in the form of evaluation and its affordances, references to historically embedded worlds, labelled as tradition, have unproblematically worked themselves into these discussions as something of conceptual precondition. Much of this theoretical grounding has its basis in the philosophy of Alistair Macintyre (1988)[21]. For Macintyre, a "tradition" is:

[21] Given his critique of Macintyre, Laidlaw is an exception to the application of tradition from the perspective of virtue ethics (2014:55-77). However, he still applies Williams' distinction between moral precepts and ethical action that presumes a causal relationship between time, morality and ethics that is chronological, transmitting knowledge from the past into the present.

> An argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretative debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and whose progress a tradition is constituted (1988:12).

Tradition therefore involves a theory of the good that can only be justified relative to premises particular to itself, made available only through a moral canon as the central point of reference for ethical evaluation and action. Although Macintyre contends that internal interpretative debate is a core feature of a tradition, its significance appears to rest on a sense of coherence both within and between traditions. From an anthropological perspective, this runs the risk of becoming relativistic. It is therefore in need of certain adjustments to be used in anthropology.

For example, in their analysis of the how a small monastery in Inner Mongolia develops a form of Mongolian Buddhism, Caroline Humphrey and Hürelbaatar Ujeed draw on Macintyre's concept of tradition in order to evoke a relationship between religious cultivation and the past. They show how the past is referenced through traditional exemplars as the ground upon which self-understanding is constituted (2013:5). They acknowledge that tradition is not internally consistent or necessarily coherently integrated in relation to dialectics with the broader world (see also Pandian 2008) [22]. In adjusting Macintyre, they define a tradition as "what is held (in different ways) to be a corpus by people attached to an institution" (Humphrey and Ujeed 2013:5). This implies that the past has a causal effect simply because it is prior. That tradition exists before morality, and that morality exists before ethics.

Arguably, Macintyre's notion of tradition has imbued a much-needed sense of dynamism into the concept. Anthropological notions of tradition have long been

[22] Pandian argues that a plurality of fragmentary narratives of selfhood do not stop a tradition (in Macintyre's definition) being intelligible and effective. That when virtues are not coherent they can still be carried into the future as fragments of discourse and practice. A similar argument can be found in Hirschkind's (2006) work that gives expression to fragments of a tradition as sermons designed to alleviate fractures in ethical life. Veenas Das (2006) also argues that tradition does not require coherence to remain effective.

criticised as static, a periodising concept used as the opposition against which modernity defines itself (Fabian 1983, Trouillot 2002). Tradition was deemed to rest on Western notions of progress against which differences in other contexts were measured (Englund and Leach 2000). Macintyre's notion of tradition introduced movement into the term, acknowledging not just the transmission of a body of knowledge but also the mediations that come with each new generation interpreting that knowledge in light of societal changes. For example, Mahmood (2004), uses Macintyre's notion of tradition to demonstrate that virtues can exist not as abstract laws, but as cultivated qualities that enable religious practices to be performed effectively.

Despite this, several points of critique need to be addressed to bring Macintyre's notion of tradition in line with anthropological approaches to time and temporality. I will come to this in more detail in the next section. For now, I want to highlight how anthropologists equate history and tradition when applying Macintyre. Firstly, the relationship between traditions remains at best opaque and at worst relativist. This can be traced to the anthropological compulsion to assume that socially communicated meanings (in this case inquiry) formulates partial representations of a "historically constituted world" comprised of extensive unarticulated stocks of knowledge (e.g. Keane 2016 noted above). Not only does this raise the problem of how different traditions are integrative of one another, it also fails to demonstrate how a tradition can maintain itself if individuals do not act on the basis of defined intentions which cannot be recovered from canonical texts or cultural resources. The moral efficacy of tradition is always justified against the past.

Secondly, Macintyre's concept of tradition reduces the notion of something being historical to a linear sequence. One consequence of this is an overwhelming reliance on narrative frameworks in accounts of ethical life. Macintyre conceives of narrative as the investigation of the manifold causes of events, caused by singular actions over linear time (1981:204). He argues that we must "think of the self in narrative mode" and of actions as "enacted narratives" (1984:206). The emphasis is on discourse. Through narratives, both within and between traditions, he contends, people can act in pursuit of the good. Actions, in this view, only gain meaning by mapping them onto a journey of self-transformation that links inherited dispositions with life trajectories. Virtue exists as the exercise of narrative unity in a teleological sense (1984:218).

As such, the use of his concept of tradition is accompanied by causal explanations presented as narrative process. In the anthropology of ethics, this process been treated as conceptually synonymous with telos; the individual life lived along a teleological course that can be recounted chronologically to explicate transformations of people's moral reasoning. Anthropologists weave between the individual and social referring only at points in the narrative where they affect the course of events. For example, Mattingly locates ethical work within the "narrative self" (2018:41). She describes personal histories as the temporal home of the narrative self. She contends that the process of ethical cultivation is non-linear in the sense that the self does not develop from a novice to an expert in a straight line. The non-linearity of ethical experiments are nonetheless nested within the teleological life trajectory. The relationship between cause and effect requires pointing out here, since the only form of causal influence that external determinants have is on an individual act. Causal analysis in this sense focuses on the historically embedded self, beginning with the identification of events in the past in the context of wider conditions that determine a person's evaluation and resulting action. This tends to reduce the explanation of all phenomena to a set of rigid causal statements.

A reliance on narrative has implications for how anthropologists understand both ethical meaning and causality in relation to the notion of being historical. When narrative is applied, causes are ordered and provide the ground for the selection of moral codes. My point is not that this is necessarily incorrect. However, I do not conceive of this as inherent or universal to ethics. By locating an ethical act within the narrative of a person's life, the act only gains meaning by virtue of its emplotment into a historical narrative. In other words, singular events, produced by heterogenous causes, appear to be linked in sequence to more routine, repeated series of actions within wider contexts over time. As this research will demonstrate, *hümüüjil* carries with it a certain form of emergence in relation to ethical evaluation. The kind of history it expresses does not necessarily gain meaning in relation to events in a sequence. As chapters three and four demonstrate, there are affective and potent causes motivating *hümüüjil* that cannot be reduced to a narrative self in any sense. Within the anthropology of ethics, there is little theory to grasp causes that sit outside of linear temporalities narrated as history and expressed as tradition. Something akin to emotion, or ethical evaluation, is only ever rendered significant from its position on

the axis of a narrative. This need say nothing about the ways in which people might experience causality in heterogenous ways. It does not account for the efficacy of ethical relations beyond a single event. The means by which various actions are dynamically coexistent or multiple and, therefore, become moral, are neutralised and absorbed into a pre-existing structure of time.

My own line of thinking has been to consider alternative possibilities for anthropologists to make visible a heterogeneity of cultural templates that reveal people's ethical considerations – themselves caused in manifold ways – and their relation to social circumstances. This includes accommodating a multiplicity of temporalities (Bear 2014). In the next section, I take an original theoretical position on the temporality of ethics by engaging with the anthropology of time, temporality and history. In the chapters that follow, I use these debates to rethink anthropological theory on ethics.

1.4.3. Time, Temporality, and Historical Consciousness

The anthropology of time and temporality allows for a broader perspective on how to think about an ethical relationship to time. It is important to first note that Macintyre's discursive sense of coherent tradition can be placed in the category of Eurocentric thinking, objectified in a particular historical genre that assumes social change to occur within a temporal flow that is linear (Lévi-Strauss 1966, Sahlins 1985). This is based on a conception of time that Walter Benjamin has called "homogenous and empty time", referring to its positivistic measurement and irreversibility of historical experiences (1999:261). In the ethical turn, this linear conception is evidenced in the language used to describe the experience of time as "echoes" (Pandian 2008:472), or "tracks" (Lambek 2018a:137).

In attempting to capture the affective force of virtues that reverberate alongside canonical authority, Pandian refers to "echoes" as inchoate forms of ethical life. These include the language of moral argumentation, collective expressions of nationalist identities, political legacies or religious influences. Like Mattingly noted above, the relationship between cause and effect in Pandian's work remains locked in linear thinking as knowledge from the past, however fragmentary, is perceived to produce actions in the present through its transmission over time. In a different vein, Lambek is interested in the conditions that are required to bring out the capacity for a person to

be ethical. He uses the analogy of "tracks" to describe the "surface that facilitates movement against the friction of rougher ground" (2018a:138). Although Lambek's analysis of ethics explores the ways in which different criteria for judgements come in and out of relevance in different circumstances in ways that could apply to non-linear and heterogenous causes, he applies the term to describe the continuity and limits of ethical acts. He gives the life cycle as an example of a track, falling into the same pattern as other anthropologists. He structures daily activities within broader meanings of past, present and future by placing them into a process of narrative unity (*ibid.*:148)[23].

According to Matt Hodges (2014), such processual temporalities inform a range of contemporary theoretical paradigms. Process, he argues, is intrinsic to theories of practice and structuration as "a relation in which past-present-future are conjoined in a structured epochal moment, usually for the purposes of achieving a future goal" (*ibid.*:34). This suggests that the temporal fabric of current anthropological theory, in particular in the manner in which it is informed by, and appropriates the concept of process, is often based on an unproblematised conception of "homogenous and empty time" (Benjamin 1999:261). A similar argument is made by Jarrett Zigon (2014), by calling into question the application of linear temporalities when analysing morality in anthropology. Ethical action, he argues, is better "understood as made possible by means of a process of temporalisation rather than as carried out within the bounds of homogenous time" (*ibid.*:444). Such critics of linearity urge caution when deriving causation out of notions of process. In conceiving of anthropological paradigms as problematic in this way, these works raise the question of what non-discursive actions and practices might be registered in alternative temporal forms in ways that are significant.

A growing body of literature questions the applicability of dominant models of linear time and consequently pluralises conceptions of time that have been hidden (Hodges 2008, Bear 2014). This does not necessarily imply a rejection of causality but instead prompts a deeper examination of its temporality, one in which processual time is conceptualised as just one temporality amongst many in a heterogeneity of "modern

[23] I engage with Lambek's work throughout the thesis. Given the utility of his work to my discussions on historicities and their temporalities, I found his reference to "tracks" as problematic.

time" (Bear 2014). From this viewpoint, multiple modes of temporality can emerge and be explored in relation to broader conditions of global capitalism (Munn 1992:94-6). Linearity exists as just one particular socio-historical approach to time (Grosz 1999, Jameson 2005). As a result, how anthropologists conceive of causality can exceed the chronological ordering of events happening in the past and the subsequent evaluation of the events to determine action. Nancy Munn defines this temporalisation as a cultural practice through which people are not just "in time" but are "constructing it and their own time in the particular kinds of relations between themselves (and their purposes) and the temporal reference points (which are also spatial forms)" (1992:104). In revealing the multiple temporalities at work in cultural life, this definition complements anthropological practice theory and other approaches to the analysis of cultural life by showing how multiple temporal dimensions can be given expression at the same time.

The philosophical theory making this thinking possible is partly inspired by Bergsonian view of time as erupting as "durations"; that is, the "convergence of different temporalities within one rhythmic configuration" (Nielson 2014:167). For Bergson, time cannot be "that impersonal and homogenous duration, the same for all things and all people, which would flow onward, indifferent and void, external to all that endures" (1939:232, translated by Argenti 2018:15). Bergson is suggesting that time is not abstract, but perceived only through the senses, therefore indivisible from reality. The human perceptions of time – the temporalities – of each moment are not separate from one another nor are they successive, but can be understood as coexisting. This speaks to what Deleuze later theorised as a non-linear multiplicity that can be infinitely divided in any direction through continuous differentiation (Deleuze 1994:211, see also Hodges 2008:410). Deleuze (1966) argues that the past coexists with the present. That "the past in its undivided entirety has not ceased to be, but *is*. The present, by contrast, is not but, at every instant, *was*" (cited in Argenti 2018:16 emphasis in original). This opens up the possibility to "reach down into the past" while "probing towards an unrealised and perhaps unrealisable futuricity" (Gell 1998:258). Here, time is not a single metanarrative determining the structure of contemporary temporal experience but instead emerges as a dynamic field of mediating acts and representations that are not necessarily sequential (Bear 2014), and can act as relations between things (Ssorin-Chaikov 2017).

Determining how people operate within multiple temporalities has concurrently given rise to an examination of the variable ways in which anthropologists conceive of history. The anthropology of history is understood here as the ethnographically situated study of the various ways in which people make sense of, produce and represent the past (Stewart 2012:7). It also addresses how history is put into social circulation and implicated in present circumstances (Hirsch and Stewart 2005: 262-63, 268), and how it is approached as a "truthful" representation of the "actual" past (Palmié 2010:375). At their core, these approaches focus on how social life occurs through multiple registers of time and temporality[24]. Such approaches to "historicity" (Palmié and Stewart 2016:78) seek to go beyond the academic precincts of professional historiography, to expand the parameters by which history is made present to include not only the retention and retelling of events, but also prevailing ideologies, available cultural forms and affective dispositions (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, Lambek 2002, Palmié 2010, Stewart 2012).

Conventions of historicism that still inform Euro-American historiography and cultural debates normally start from a detached perspective in which the past is differentiated from the present and future to be constructed by historians as a chronology of events and dates of cause and effect. By contrast, "historicity" in its anthropological conception offers a lens through which to explore the complexity of living life that often disappears in historicist abstraction in order to show alternative modes in which the past is known, understood and represented in the flow of human experience (Hirsch and Stewart 2005, Palmie and Stewart 2013). According to Chakrabarty, "pasts are there in taste, in practices of embodiment, in cultural training the senses have received over the generations" (2000:251). In this way, the past is not irrevocable, but reshaped, contained by, and ultimately fused with the present (Benjamin 1999, Lambek 2003). In directing attention towards multiple registers of history, this literature challenges us to question how we understand relationships with the past, but also provides the opportunity to explore a range of issues and approaches under a unifying rubric.

[24] It also avoids problematic designations of indigenous temporalities as myths (Lévi-Strauss 1987), or typified as imaginative (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992), that privilege chronological time as the reference point for history.

A notable example is that of Sakalava spirit possession detailed by Michael Lambek (2002). The Sakalava do not measure history as events or points in the fixed past which year by year become increasingly distant, nor do they perceive the past as any kind of "foreign country" (Lowenthal 1985). Rather, Sakalava mediums carry and embody the past through their possession by the spirits of royal ancestors who comment on the present. In this sense, practices of spirit possession make history "come alive" through a combination of embodied presence, discursive interpretation and meaningful renewal (Lambek 2002:257). Drawing on the past in this way, the Sakalava are able to not only live in history but also with it, as both a retrospective form of knowledge production and a prospective social praxis (*ibid.*:262).

Another important touchstone is Charles Stewart's (2012) ethnography on the cult of Panagía's (Virgin Mary) in a mining community on the island of Naxos in Greece. Stewart explores local evaluations of history made visible in the dreams of inhabitants of Kóronos. He shows how the appearance of Panagía in dreams instigated local inhabitants to search for icons in the nearby mountains and to build a church in her honour. Stewart aligns three moments of crisis over the past two centuries that stimulated a resurgence in the local cult of Panagía: the creation of the nation state in the 1830s and ideological attempts to remove Greek Orthodox Christianity in favour of the classical past; the economic fallout of the Great Depression in the 1930s; and the contemporary migration of young members of the community to urban centres in search of better economic opportunities. In doing so, Stewart merges synchronic events with diachronic dreaming to show how this mode of historical consciousness is implicated in broader political shifts, as well as manifest in material and symbolic forms.

Stewart's work was a catalyst for the analysis in this thesis. Specifically, when considering the relationship between time and ethics. He provided me with the theoretical framing to understand how cultural practices of history-making are being used by local people as a way to mediate uncertainty. In situations where inhabitants of Naxos felt threatened by political and economic forces that were out of their control, Stewart shows how local anxieties are apprehended and articulated through dreams and visions, but also that they provide the basis for what people might constructively do (*ibid.*:210-5). By connecting historical consciousness and human agency in the cultural practice of dreaming, Stewart demonstrates how local political subjectivities

are created by the drawing together of a narrative, a morality, and a teleology to deliver affective resonance or ethical meaning beyond factual information about the chronological past of events (*ibid.*:127). This offers a different way of rendering the causes and intentions than is present in the use of Macintyre. It allows for historical causality to have temporal meaningfulness as different historicities that organise thought and create local dispositions to particular courses of action (see also Theodossopoulos 2020).

Like dreamers in Naxos, many residents of Ulaanbaatar are interested in mediating change to move into a future in which life will be different. They look to *hümüüjil* as a potent mode of historical practice that has the power to affect their perceptions, judgements and actions. To enact this historical consciousness, NFLE classes draw upon a chronotopic constellation to generate momentum and direction into an uncertain future. The synthesis of conceptual tools provided here allows me to attend to the specific configurations of temporal multiplicity that constitute *hümüüjil*, and the ways in which different constellations of these temporalities form to cultivate context specific obligations and evaluations for those that practice *hümüüjil* in the hope to create a new horizon for the future. To show how I studied this mode of historical consciousness, I now present a description of the methodology and fieldsite followed by a summary of each chapter.

1.5. Methodology and the Field

With over half the population of Mongolia now residing in or around Ulaanbaatar, the city is increasingly becoming central to contemporary ethnographic accounts (e.g. Empson 2020)[25]. Elsewhere, the complexities of studying urban social life have incited debates about the changing face of fieldwork in anthropology (Faubion and Marcus 2009). In multi-scalar urban spaces, scholars argue, it not always possible to reproduce the bounded archetypal sense of classic anthropological fieldwork (Jaffe and Koning 2016, Prato and Prado 2012). As someone that started their anthropological career in 2012, this argument has always felt like something of a truism to me. The kind of anthropology I have been taught never put the Malinowskian method of fieldwork on

[25] The majority of students conducting their doctoral research at the same time as me were based in the capital, suggesting that the next wave within the anthropology of Mongolia will centre on Ulaanbaatar.

a pedestal. For me, field sites (whether rural or urban) are not defined by space but research topic, and involve triangulating various forms of data to identify key negotiations between places, practices, and actors in relation to that topic. I consider myself to have conducted a typical piece of ethnographic fieldwork in this sense. The Non-formal and Lifelong Education centre demarcated a relatively self-contained field site in terms of the institutional boundaries around its educational activities and the actors that partook in them. Ulaanbaatar provided the backdrop for these activities to be made meaningful.

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted for this study for a period of 18 months (March 2017 – September 2018) at a Non-formal and Lifelong Education Centre in Ulaanbaatar. I attended the centre for the full academic year 2017-18. During summer it closes for Naadam festival when the majority of staff leave to spend several months in the countryside. Additional visits were made occasionally to other NFLE centres in and around the city to supplement data collected from the primary centre. At the centre, the teachers consisted of five women and two men, most of whom had graduated from the Mongolian National University of Education. Additional administration staff alongside the manager and director brought the total staff to eleven.

Focusing initially on the local realities of global NFLE policy, I used the centre as a focal point from which to "study through" the various layers of NFLE policy (Wedel 2005:39-40). I traced the cultural discourses around education, practices and performances of teaching and learning, and the perspectives of learners that NFLE policies are designed for. I spent the majority of my time at the centre itself, where classes, workshops and other one-off activities were conducted on weekdays between 8am-5pm. Each course offered was four weeks long and most learners would register for several consecutively, depending on their interest and skill requirements. The selection of interlocutors proceeded on the basis of their participation in centre activities. Teachers would also travel to local businesses upon request, such as social services and factories, to provide training for the company staff on anything from gender equality to reducing stress. Guided by the class schedules, my time would be spent accompanying teachers (and the occasional learner) in their daily trajectories in and around the centre.

Figure 5: Ulaanbaatar city in spring

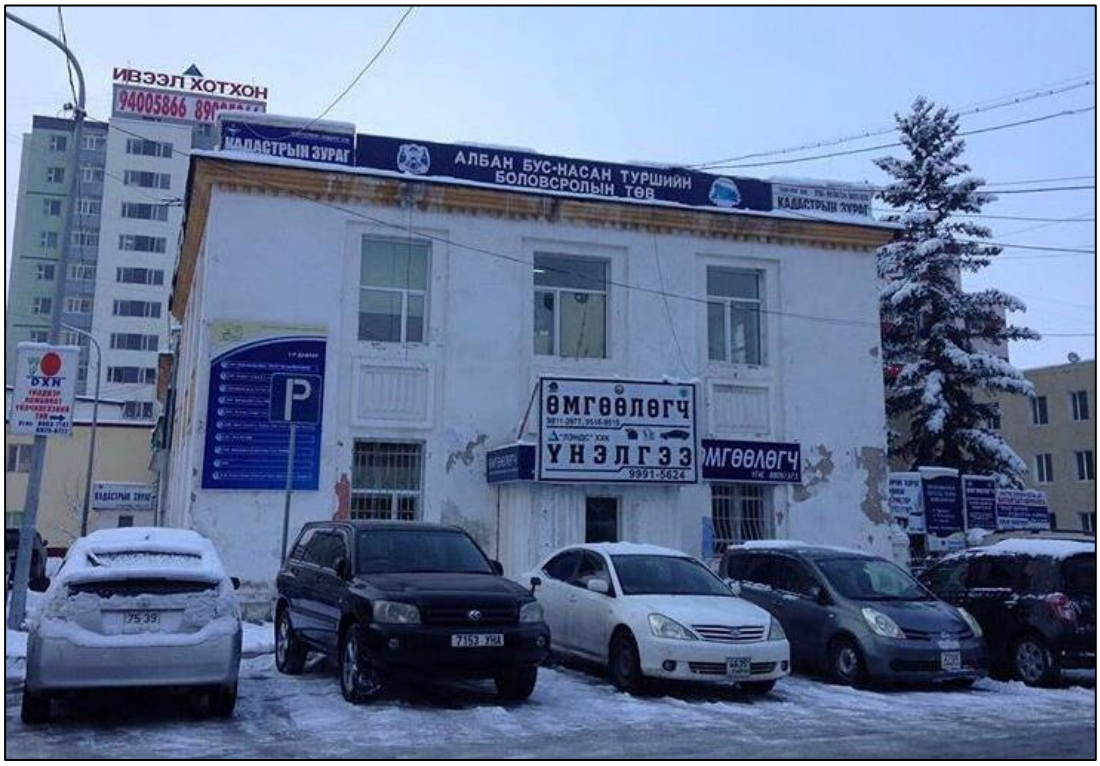

Figure 6. Fieldsite: The Non-Formal and Lifelong Education Centre

Figure 7. A class on “Reducing Bad Habits” at a small business incubation centre

Figure 8: Learning how to give manicures in beauty class

Figure 9. Learners wearing their creations from the *deel* making class on graduation day.

Figure 10. Conducting training for NFLE teachers from another province

Figure 11. A class on reducing video game addiction in children

Figure 12. A demonstration of Bolormaa's new instrument after attending music class

At the NFLE centre, participant observation combined with unstructured interviews provided the core methodology (Bernard 2005). I held regular meetings with the centre director, Odnoo, in which she would explain new developments in the district and how the centre is responding. These included Odnoo's perspective on what the local district governor wished to achieve more broadly through NFLE, grounded in her regular meetings at the district government offices. Odnoo's vision for teaching was expressed in daily interviews conducted at the centre with NFLE teaching staff, who were tasked with bringing it to life. Conversations with the teachers were held before and after classes, as well as during occasional down time. Over time, my conversations with teachers became crucial spaces to reflect on my ideas as they took pleasure in engaging with and speaking back to my findings. They assisted me in making connections with their class designs and the causal or cultural environments in which the teaching operated. These relationships extended beyond my initial period of fieldwork via social media, until the pandemic forced many of the teachers into different careers.

As mentioned in section 1.2., it became quickly apparent that NFLE policy was being interpreted in light of local educational philosophies and their historicities. The most prominent and explicit being *hümüüjil*. Centre staff were quick to point this out to me, and interviews with learners gave expression to *hümüüjil* by communicating a range of values that dynamically structure their lives in and around the city. Alongside NFLE policies and practices, *hümüüjil* quickly emerged as a key research area. As I describe in more detail in later chapters, classes centred on the teaching of history. They followed a process in which the ethical component is measured not by how strictly customary relations are preserved, but by how well they express new experiences. During classes, my translator and I would sit among other learners to take part. While I could translate much of what was being said in a literal sense, my translator Burmaa would assist me in understanding in the idiomatic use of the words; a process that provided much ethnographic insight. She also accompanied me where needed to conduct formal interviews with professionals or experts to avoid any miscommunication while I was still learning the language.

Before and after each class, I often had the opportunity to interview learners. This was more challenging for training outside of the centre due to the attendees having to return to their work. These interviews discussed the experiences that the learners had of the class topic in question that day, alongside the reasons, conditions and situations in

which people felt the topic was significant. Class topics were never talked about negatively, only the utmost respect was given to teachers efforts and the positive work that they were doing for the wider community. I built good rapport and eventually friendships with many of the learners that regularly attended classes at the centre. Over the course of the academic year, I was able to consistently follow the educational trajectories of approximately 50 women. Out of these, 10 volunteered themselves as key interlocutors, half of which I eventually got to know outside of the centre also.

The centre predominantly enrolled unemployed female learners, consisting of young mothers and retired women looking to fill their time meaningfully by learning new skills or socialising. Learners tended to be between 18-35 years old, with several elderly women. On one occasion two 18-year-old boys enrolled in the hairdressing class to train as barbers, and older or retired men would occasionally partake in computer skills training without attending any other classes. Interlocutors would often explain this imbalance in gender participation in terms of societal expectation. It is generally assumed that men can support themselves without an education, and therefore to admit that a male adult learner needed an education is viewed as shameful, bordering on taboo. Whereas women are expected to be educated to support themselves and their family, seeking new skills and improvement throughout their life as expressed in *hümüüjil*[26].

Much of my understanding of the sense of disorder and the ways in which it disposed people to think about time was linked to the experience of living in Ulaanbaatar. During my everyday life, I personally witnessed every single example of disorder that was given in a NFLE class. As will become clear in the ethnography in later chapters, these include but are not limited to: gender violence on the streets, extensive littering, toxic air pollution, thieves, and government corruption. The timing of my research was also of primary importance. Frequent political protests and national debates were being held in and around the central square regarding the concept of ethics and corruption. Another line of protest focused on a freeze on teacher salary increase. Using a

[26] Although I do not perceive of the ethical dimensions of disorder as particularly gendered, my research offers a counterpoint to the presentation of disorder through vignettes of young men roaming the streets of Ulaanbaatar (e.g. Pedersen 2011). I document an account that predominantly explores a variety of women's perspectives and responses to unbridled ethics.

combination of broader research techniques I was able to triangulate these wider experiences with statistical data, political debates, policy documents, social media, cultural expressions such as heritage exhibits, poetry slams and comedy nights. Another line of research was conducted through a network of academics at the Mongolian National University of Education and the National University of Mongolia. I held meetings with a variety of education scholars and local anthropologists discussing contemporary politics and local approaches to learning. The cumulative picture of life in Ulaanbaatar that this variety of data created is presented in this thesis. While I focus the ethnography on the classroom itself, these experiences are analysed in light of socio-cultural or economic processes and political debates at the scale of the capital, national and regional level.

Finally, I do not provide a perspective on the countryside here. I visited one centre outside of Ulaanbaatar in the nearby town of Zuunmod. I spoke with visiting teachers from Bayankhongor and South Gobi provinces whilst in the capital for training. However, they were more interested in learning from what the centres in Ulaanbaatar had been doing for our conversations to amount to any specific new data. For this reason, my research is not limited to the city but predominantly reflects experiences there. It is important to note that the majority of my interlocutors were acquainted with both urban and rural lifestyles. Rather than seeing the different settings as opposed, people perceived both as simultaneous aspects of their identity (Humphrey and Sneath 1999). As such, the distinction was not a defining feature of NFLE teaching and learning.

1.6. The Structure of this Thesis

Chapter One has served as an introduction to this thesis. Most of the ethnography in the following chapters is in the chronological order of my experience of NFLE over the course of the academic year at the centre. The ethnography also takes the analysis from the scale of a person to a perspective on the state. As will become clear in each chapter, the cosmology from which *hümüüjil* derives does not distinguish between sets of nested relations seen to link the person, the state, the social order and the universe as a whole. In fact, *hümüüjil* integrates this scale. While the locus of *hümüüjil* is on the person, the state, society and the universe are seen as extensions of this person, as both internal and external to their actions. To demonstrate this integration, I start with

a discussion on the relationship of *hümüüjil* to local understandings of personhood, then move on to social order and finally end on the state. I highlight the ways in which this scale of relations has implications for how people engage with history, both personal and political, and the temporalities through which it is lived as a result.

Chapter two provides a contextual chapter to lay the foundations of understanding for the ethnographic chapters that follow. I examine the educational histories and their horizons that inform contemporary NFLE practice. I explore how people position themselves in relation to the past in ways that cultivate what the centre referred to as "An Educated Mongolian Person" through *hümüüjil*. This reveals various historical sources and experiences that give shape to educational activities at the centre. Importantly, I focus on the intersubjective interplay between the historicities of historiography and *hümüüjil* to reveal the presence of history in the practice of NFLE. Examining multiple historicities in this way allows for the ethical dimension to emerge in relation to political ideologies and socio-economic transformations that have broadly shaped educational practices in the region. I end the chapter with a discussion on the role of proverbs in *hümüüjil,* introducing them as a form of causality that does not rely solely on the past, but enacts a form of agency located in the future.

Chapter three introduces *hümüüjil* from an ethnographic perspective focusing on the NFLE classroom. It explores the way in which the practice of *hümüüjil* reveals a form of history-making that is cultivated through an identification with certain affective qualities and energetic forces. By focusing on the local concept of tradition (*ulamjlal*) as a key concept driving *hümüüjil,* I demonstrate the ways in which history is creatively made through a multi-temporal process embodied in a variety of forms. In locating historical causality in affective and potent forces, I argue, challenges the emphasis on discursive mediations underlying Macintyre's theorisation of tradition. I suggest that the conceptual horizon of tradition can be expanded to included non-discursive forms of causality in relation to ethical action. This requires a multi-temporal framework that accommodates a variety of causal factors.

Chapter four details the local conceptualisation of *yos züi,* or ethics. I first lay out the etymology of ethics and its relation to a broader semantic field that includes, among others; morality, custom, ritual, law and etiquette. This highlights the ways in which ethics is equated to a distinctive local ethos. I then present an ethnographic vignette of

ethics being taught in a class on communication. I highlight the ways in which history is encoded in this ethos as a way to prefigure the future in the present. I suggest that this inverts conventional linkages between historical causality and ethical evaluation. I show that history is reconstituted through social relations as a form of efficacy that enables transformation. Crucially, in the enactment of ethical relations, the value of history is not measured by knowledge. Instead, it is a matter of how to live historically in accordance with an openness to the ways in which actions in the present can create a better future.

Chapter five explores the teaching of history in civic education class and the ways in which the past takes priority in the cultivation of novel democratic forms of relating. I ask what it means to consider history as an ethico-political category, and the tensions and temporalities that make this possible. I argue that this is possible due to the logic of ethical order underlying both the practice of history and citizenship. Within this ethical social order, I demonstrate that the constitution of a citizen pivots on a notion of truthfulness that speaks to multiple historicities. I argue that, the presence of multiple historical truths affords people to relate to the past in a way that embodies a responsibility to others. I demonstrate that it is the very structuring of history here as an ethical relation to the past that affords a certain agentive capacity to the past in ways that drive its future oriented pedagogical and political force.

Chapter six details one ethnographic instance at the NFLE centre in which ethics was considered unbridled. This led to the assertion that democracy is "too open" or "anarchist" and therefore ethically reprehensible. I explore the role of history in determining the conditions under which my interlocutors came to think of themselves as both ethical and free. I demonstrate that the criticism of being "too free" and therefore immoral is interpreted locally as devoid of history. In doing so, I explore local understandings of democracy and its connection to *hümüüjil*. By exploring political interpretations from the perspective of ethics and history, I highlight the temporal texture of peoples experiences of power, as well as the speculations that drive NFLE practice at the centre, as part of a state-led education network.

Chapter seven marks the conclusion of this thesis. I return to the issues raised in this introduction, discussing them in light of the original ethnographic insights presented in each chapter. I reflect on how we can think about history in ways that go beyond

seeking moments of origin and instead seek moments of emergence. In NFLE, the ethical becomes a question of how to read, embody and awaken the past. Examining the anthropology of emergence or becoming in more detail, I align *hümüüjil* within wider debates that seek to understand the relationship between history, cultural reproduction, and emergence. These reflections have some bearing on how we might incorporate temporal multiplicity into the anthropology of ethics, and indicates a direction for future research.

At the core of this thesis is the notion of *hümüüjil* and how, pedagogically, it encompasses a means to make history come alive. My overall goal is to simply introduce an ethnographic account of this previously unexplored, yet crucial, feature of social life in Mongolia. My analysis wraps around the topics of education, ethics and historical consciousness to bring *hümüüjil* to life in anthropological terms. In each chapter, *hümüüjil* emerges through different chronotopic constellation of ethical criteria, temporal practices and cultural values. These are presented in relation to the wider historical processes to which people are exposed.

In doing so, I produce conclusions about the multiple temporal and ethical entanglements that allow people to cultivate order in a chaotic world. In this introduction, I have laid out an overview of the inherent connections between *hümüüjil* and local notions of history. I have suggested that current theories in the anthropology of ethics are not sufficient enough to do justice to *hümüüjil*, suggesting that adjustments must be made. Although the chapters that follow focus on one small centre, this thesis is crafted with this set of broader theoretical conversations in mind. I do not return to the anthropological literature on ethics explicitly. Rather, I have chosen to let the ethical concerns of the sorts that filled the classroom emerge on their own terms. This is an intentional move, to open up new insights into the relationships between history and ethics and the ways in which these might create opportunities for people to make evaluations that help them live in spite of societal disorder.

Chapter Two.

Presencing the Past:
Educational Horizons and their Historicities

2.1. *Hümüüjil* as Historical Experience

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which people perform, negotiate and articulate the past in the present to make education meaningful. In particular, I focus on educational horizons and their historicities to explore how people position themselves in relation to the past in ways that cultivate personhood through *hümüüjil*. Although the Non-formal and Lifelong Education (NFLE) centre itself was relatively new, it drew its task and purpose from the broader history and language of education in the region. I illustrate the various historical sources and experiences that flow into the contemporary constitution of NFLE in Mongolia, and the sense of legacy that it pursues. Rather than offering a conventional account of history that objectifies the past, I consider the presence of history in lived experience. I confine the details to the specific terms and periods in time most emphasised to me by NFLE educators and learners. It is just such emphasis, I suggest, that reveals the particular aspects of life and learning that people in Mongolia value today. A further focus is on the ways in which the value of education was expressed through a certain reverence towards the past, one premised on the balance of multiple historicities. This lays the foundations for the following chapters to explore how NFLE classes and activities drew connections to the past as an ethical resource in relation to contemporary circumstances. Building upon this context, the following chapters reveal the ways this history is reconstituted through relationships as a form of ethical cultivation.

Following Lambek, I use the term "horizons" to describe "the extensions of the worlds we inhabit, not only in space but in time and understanding" (2018b:11). A horizon does not reduce a situation to any mutually exclusive criteria, but encompasses the heterogeneity, malleability, and multiplicity of features that characterise lived experience and its interpretation (see also Crapanzano 2004). This avoids the need for any distinction between (professional) historiography and historicity (Lambek

2018b:12). Instead, horizon captures the ways in which the past is grasped and articulated in everyday life when historicities intertwine with historiographical perspectives through "multiple interpretive acts, layered against and overlapping one another on the part of successive generations and cohorts" (*ibid.*:xxvii). This affords an examination of how they shift, determine or affect one another. As mentioned in the introduction, the notion of history (*tüüh*) in Mongolia encodes a dual definition, expressing both objectified national historiography and subjective ethical historicities. *Hümüüjil* is one point at which these two historicities converge. I therefore use educational horizons as the foil against which to reflect on an altogether more complex historical experience where the past enables the interplay between objective processes and the ways in which they become charged with subjective meanings (Palmié and Stewart 2019, Stewart 2022). By treating history (*tüüh*) as a field of intersubjectivity[27], I elucidate the temporal relationship between *hümüüjil* and ethics as multiple and emergent. This enables me to avoid the assumption that historical knowledge is derived from the past as predetermined moral principles or traditions that provide the conditions for evaluation in the present.

The aim of this chapter is to present the cultural and historical context of NFLE. I do this in a way that avoids privileging the event in historical analysis by focusing on the intersubjective interplay of historiography and *hümüüjil* undertaken for the purpose of cultivating ethical persons. In highlighting multiple historicities in this way allows me to draw out ethical dimensions alongside the chronological ordering of events in the past in a way that doesn't need to be linear. The chapter is divided into six parts, most combine personal sensibilities towards the past with historiographical narratives and anthropological theory. Section 2.2. explores the NFLE centre itself by describing the material and symbols through which it communicates its overall mission. I then delve into the broader history and language of education in the region upon which the NFLE mission is premised. The language is of particular significance as it is central to contemporary NFLE practice. Section 2.4. lays out in more detail the structure of NFLE and includes an overview of the circumstances in which it operates. The last two sections expand upon this context by exploring the ways in which people seek to

[27] A site of "constructive, deconstructive and reconstructive interaction" that includes "persons, ancestors, spirits, collective representations and material things" (Jackson 1998:8-9).

act historically in relation to the past, present and future. I detail the pedagogy of *hümüüjil* that NFLE educators provide and analyse the concept of personhood (*hün chanar*) considered most consequential to this process. I show how understandings of education both shape and are shaped by a perception of what it means to be a person in Mongolia, or to put it differently, what it means to cultivate a distinctly Mongolian personhood. The final section demonstrates the ways in which proverbs encode an intersubjective form of historical interpretation central to this endeavour.

By examining historiographical sources and archival material along with the contemporary NFLE mission and its future aspirations, I demonstrate the horizons against which *hümüüjil* is cultivated, known, enlivened, experienced and revered. I draw inspiration from the work of ethnographic histories that are "composed of successive portraits or analyses written at different times in a series of ethnographic presents, each with their changing horizons of future and past" (Lambek 2018b:*xxi*). I share the same objective as Lambek. The goal is to discern where historical change is processed subjectively in experience rather than conceptually objectified in synoptic narration aimed at drawing overall conclusions on the basis of historical events. Whereas Lambek merges historicism and historicity in his ethnographic history, I have taken the decision to merge them at times and separate them at others. This is to reflect where people treated these historicities as intersubjective and where they did not, in their efforts to cultivate and enact ethical relations. This is to parse the synoptic content from the performative value of engaging with the past in a specific situation. To do justice to this analysis, I must first provide some context. It is to the symbolic and socio-historical background of education in Mongolia that I now turn.

2.2. Teaching with Reverence

Each weekday morning, not long after sunrise, a steady stream of women – and the occasional man – can be seen making their way through the thick iron doorway of a weathered two-storied soviet style building, deep within the industrial district of south western Ulaanbaatar. Tucked away from the busy main road behind flag covered high-rise buildings containing the district governor's offices, the centre appears somewhat nondescript by comparison. Aside from a single banner reading 'Non-formal and

Lifelong Education Centre' (*Alban Bus-Nasan Turshiin Bolovsrolyn Töv*) stretched along the roof facing the road, there is little to distinguish it as an official government institution, nor a place of learning. And yet, despite its appearance, the old building represents a great source of pride for centre staff. It grounded them with a sense that they were upholding a long legacy of education, one with its own cultural history. This made their work worthwhile. The respect they felt for the centre reverberated through the local community and through word of mouth alone they managed to quickly fill their courses. The people making their way inside came eager to attend a whole host of different classes that combined personal fulfilment with cultural knowledge and vocational skills, all provided for free. In what follows, I explore the ways in which perceptions of the past shape and inform contemporary NFLE practice by illustrating the various meanings attributed to history (*tüüh*). The next three sections maintain a broad focus to reflect the institutional perspective. My objective is to provide the contextual information necessary for readers to understand what motivates NFLE today.

The centre occupies a modest space on the top floor of the building. It contains five classrooms and a library, along with several offices. Although small in physical size, it operates as one of the largest and most established institutions of its kind in Ulaanbaatar. Since it first opened its doors in 1998, it has been at the forefront of NFLE practice in the country, something that the director Odnoo had worked hard to maintain. Out of both pride and preparation, she had made sure that their approach was readily visible to any visitor that walked through the door. This was particularly reflected on the central corridor walls, covered in powerful visual reminders of their pedagogy. Upon entering the doorway and walking up the stairwell, visitors were immediately greeted by a large handmade display of the Sustainable Development Goals. As they reach the top of the staircase, a floor to ceiling display of engraved glass panels came overwhelmingly into view. Decorating the top of the panels is the symbol of NFLE, serving as a metonym for human cultivation, or *hümüüjil*. The design features the Mongolian national symbol, the *soyombo*, hovering over three lines that represent pages of a book.

Figure 13. The national symbol for NFLE

For any local entering the centre, the meaning of the NFLE symbol would need little explanation. People were already accustomed to the notion of enlightenment (*gegeerel*) and skilful wisdom (*arga-bileg*) that the composite parts signify. This is due to the pervasiveness of the *soyombe* across Mongolia more broadly, as a highly revered symbol found on currency, the national flag and other objects that obligate respect. Deriving from the Sanskrit word for "self-existence" (Atwood 2004:518-9), the aspects of the *soyombe* are commonly thought to represent the elements of life; the sun, moon, fire, water, metal, earth and wood (Aryaasüren 2000). The sun and moon are perceived to represent either the universe or unity. Prior to the socialist revolution in 1921, the lower part represented the union of wisdom and skill. The surmounting flames symbolised the goal of enlightenment. During the socialist period, the symbol was secularised and used to impose a new set of ideological values. The fire came to represent renewal, with each flame symbolising the past, present and future. The arrows corresponded to defeating enemies, the ying-yang and the vertical rectangles signified strength and unity. Today, these meanings ultimately intermix, deeply embedded in the centre mission and class content as an interrelated set of cultural values that make education productive.

The symbol struck a bold note with NFLE staff, who viewed themselves as involved in the practical task of realising it. Among them, a general outline circulated regarding its ongoing significance. Similar to interpretations outlined in the anthropological literature, staff perceived the different aspects of the symbol as evoking a longstanding sense of wisdom as the one "true value" (*zöv üne*) in life. As High has noted in her

analysis of the Mongolian gold rush, interacting with materials that display the *soyombe*, such as money, obligates deep respect (2017:107). This is to ensure that material wealth does not take priority over the intellectual wisdom that the symbol represents. Teachers were reluctant to tease apart the individual meanings of the *soyombe* in relation to historical periods or past times but focused on an obligation to respect the cumulative picture that it represents. To display appropriate reverence to it, they told me, involves attending to all available interpretations of the *soyombe* that have existed throughout Mongolian history. As they saw it, the goal was not to apply the historical meaning of the symbol to their work in terms of a discourse of events nor an ideology. Rather, it was interpreted as a legacy to be fulfilled by drawing together various cultural and historical strands into an ethical-aesthetic approach to life that is applicable to the contemporary period.

This legacy constitutes one mode of historicity through which NFLE teachers conceptualise time, periods and events in relation to change and continuity. This historicity captures both the occurrence of past events that imposed certain meanings on the *soyombe*, and the ways in which these meanings have become successively embedded when people endow the past with meaning in the present. In her analysis of rituals of history in post-soviet Buryatia, Buck Quijada (2019) provides a useful framework for conceptualising this historicity. Drawing upon Austin's (1962) distinction between the constative meaning of speech and the performative meaning of speech, Buck Quijada points to an important distinction between interrogating the occurrence of a historical event (and its truth) and the rhetorical effect of talking about that event in the present. The constative refers to the content of speech, such as descriptive history and whether it can be verified as true or false. In contrast, performative speech results in action in the world. It has illocutionary force, producing an action that indexes shared understanding and a mutual transformation (Lambek 2013b). Applying this linguistic distinction separates the content of the objective truth of historiography from the performative value of stating a particular fact. It essentially highlights the difference between what history is and how it works (see also Trouillot 1995). In the case of the *soyombe*, it is to enact reverence. In this reverence, the linearity or accuracy of events does not have to remain coherent in any sense, as it can be all these things at once. The NFLE teachers located the meanings of the symbol as constative, declaring the origins of the symbolism as true. At the same time, the act of

reverence is performative, a form of historical thinking that is firmly rooted in a future-oriented present (Bryant and Knight 2019)[28]. To develop this historicity further, I next show how education is interpreted in light of the wider history in the region and the ways in which NFLE as an institution constitutes this history through the performance of the value of the past.

2.3. A Historical Mission

In order to understand the ways in which history (*tüüh*) is imbued with reverence and ethical value requires the explication of two modes of historicity. These include a personal historicity of ethical cultivation and the historicity of social texts. In the first part of this section, I incorporate the two historicities to show how educational practice performs the value of the past in a way that centrally incorporates the passage of historical time. I show how horizons of the past and future are in conversation and reveal the dialogue between them through a discussion on the kind of person NFLE aspires to cultivate. The second part of this section presents a more conventional historical narrative. This is a deliberate choice for simplicity. Each of the following chapters focuses on a locally salient aspect of ethical cultivation in NFLE. Rather than detracting from these more nuanced analyses, I have chosen to contain narratives of national history here as a form of baseline context to reflect how these narratives were put to work at the centre. Combining historical sources, archival material, ethnographic perspectives, and regional analyses from comparative education, this section conveys the constative and performative as an attribute of history as they were revealed to me during the course of my fieldwork. I give specific examples of where I witnessed them merging, and provide historical narratives where they did not.

2.3.1. An Educated Mongolian Person

At the entrance to the NFLE centre, below the national symbol, glass panels formally displayed the centre mission at length, starting by broadly defining NFLE as:

[28] I develop this future orientation later in the chapter.

Figure 14. The NFLE centre mission

> The basic tools for improving the quality of democracy through resolving issues of individuals, families, nations and the world in the interest of collective needs.

Alongside the panels were various framed certificates, awards and leaflets that span the last two decades. In a leaflet from the academic year 2016-7, the mission statement reads:

> A person should create an unchained educational environment necessary to live peacefully, healthily, and reputably, from birth until the end of their life and enjoy customary rights independently of others. We imagine the outcome of Lifelong Education as an "Educated Mongolian Person" with intellectual, mental and physical development and progression able to give humanitarian answers to questions and problems that arise from the common demands of the natural and social environments of the time.

Unlike the glass panels that have been up for many years, the leaflet formed part of the latest promotional material that the centre produces to distribute among the local community. Below the mission statement is a list of the five pathways that structure the branches of education on offer. At this particular centre these include; family education, civic education, moral-upbringing education, aesthetics education, and life skills training. The life skills component is then further divided into "livelihood" lessons that include equivalency training for school drop-outs, as well as courses in computer skills, *deel* sewing, hairdressing, and beauty. Inside the leaflet, photographs demonstrate these courses[29]. Several show a row of women wearing brightly coloured *deels* displaying certificates. Another displays an aesthetics class holding their horsehead fiddles on stage after giving a graduation performance. Both include a teacher standing to the side holding a bouquet of flowers, a token of respect and gratitude usually gifted by learners at the end of their month-long courses. Under the description of civic education there are two photographs set outside of the centre itself. One shows a group of men digging holes to plant trees in a city park, the other exhibits smartly dressed women attending a formal committee meeting, the large district governor's sign mounted on the wall behind them.

Viewed altogether, this material paints a distinctive picture of NFLE in Mongolia. It encapsulates, in a concise way, a conception of education that is motivated by the need to produce the kind of person that not only learns wisdom and skills but applies their practice to participate actively in their communities in accordance with custom. In this approach, knowledge and action are not thought of not as separate but are from the outset inextricably intertwined, and imbued throughout with contemporary imaginings of autochthonous culture. Anchoring this conception is the notion of an "Educated Mongolian Person" (*Erdem Bolovsroltoi Hün*). Although this is not a direct translation, this is how the staff chose to portray the meaning of an "Educated Mongolian Person" in both their English and Mongolian leaflets respectively. In using their translation, I aim to do justice to what they think is most important to communicate. I explain the Mongolian terminology in more detail shortly. For now, I want stress that for the first half of my fieldwork, an "Educated Mongolian Person" featured as the encompassing phrase through which the centre chose to express their overall mission. Each time I

[29] *Deel* refers to a customary garment. See Figure 9 for an example.

asked general questions about NFLE, I was specifically directed to the phrase in Mongolian, "*Erdem Bolovsroltoi Hün*".

When I was introduced to the phrase "Educated Mongolian Person", staff were quick to highlight three historically specific terms; enlightenment (*gegeerel*), education (*bolovsrol*), and human cultivation (*hümüüjil*). These concepts bear considerable historical value. As I show shortly, they variously developed in relation to Buddhist education as well as to the presence of Qing imperial code with its Confucian prescriptions. More recently, their meanings further evolved against the introduction of socialist formal schooling and the shift to a economically orientated democratic education system. For now, I want to note that these concepts weave together to create *erdem*; meaning, learning, skill, wisdom and virtue. Notably, this is synonymous with the notion of a "person with culture" (*soyoltoi hün)*. During the early stages of my fieldwork one learner was pointed out to me as an exemplar of "*Erdem Bolovsroltoi Hün*". Hishigjargal, a thirty year old mother of three, was known in the centre for her entrepreneurial spirit. Each course she took would result in a business, such as selling homemade crafts on Facebook. She was perceived as *erdem* for her ability to not only learn new skills – especially customary ones – but to improve her life on the basis of these skills.

Staff at the centre were quick to evoke the high priority that being educated takes within Mongolian society. Together, they communicated that although NFLE as an institution has a relatively short history, it was important to them to locate their project as part of a much longer history of organised or institutional learning in the region. This was revealed to be by the centre director Odnoo, who noted that the population's longstanding respect for learning was propagated during the reign of Chinggis Khan in the thirteenth century. This period bears significant weight across popular opinion and is subject to the greatest respect. Around this time, regular home schooling is thought to have been encouraged as part of the empire administration. There is evidence of precursory institutional learning in the form of private instruction offered in *ger* schools, catering to the sons of wealthy families (Lattimore 1962:83)[30]. This instruction primarily focused on teaching the Uighur script for administrative and

[30] *Ger* is the Mongolian term for yurt.

pragmatic purposes. Notably, although the least is known about this early layer of the historical palimpsest, it is thought to be the most valuable. This is especially with regards to the revival of Chinggis Khan when developing post-socialist nationalism (e.g. Kaplonski 2004). I will have more to say about that shortly.

In practice, this history is manifest today in the reintroduction of *ger* schools as part of NFLE efforts in rural areas. In Ulaanbaatar, where NFLE centres are located in buildings, references to the period of Chinggis Khan or his descendants occurred almost daily. For example, a book titled "The Tale of Chinggis Khan" (*Chinggis Khani Shastir*) was presented during teacher training as means to justify the values of responsibility, harmony and intellect that underlay the concept of *erdem*. I witnessed discussions of this book on many occasions. Each time, descriptions of history were not marked by events surrounding the Mongol empire. Rather, it was used to communicate the salience of ethical actions through the idiom of genealogy. That is, that the value of Chinggis Khan's story was understood as continuously existing in the present through the educational practices inherited from ancestors. This embodied connection to the thirteenth century caused people to make no distinction between the values of the past and present. In a class on family education, for example, learners were shown an example of Chinggis Khan's family tree. They were taught how to emulate this to produce a family tree of their own, nine generations on either side. The reason, for the teacher and learners alike, was to imbue a sense of social responsibility. When a person locates their actions in relation to history whether personal, familial or national, it was taught, they are obligated to act in an ethical manner. This reveals a perspective on history that is not constative, a container of passive resources, but a dynamic basis for interpretation and subsequent action. The historical archive is not in this sense objective, but is the subject itself. This indicates an engagement with the past not as a constative account but through a historicity that is not explicit in description themselves.

Importantly, Mongolian language and practice does not operate with categories directly corresponding to the concept of knowledge as information, conveyed through symbolic means verbally or otherwise. *Erdem* is always linked to notion of *uchir*, meaning the origin, cause or condition of an action. It refers to the common notion that to be considered such, knowledge must always result in an action in the world. The process of becoming a learned person (*erdemten*), is therefore understood to include

the integration of knowledge and action. For example, knowledge of events in the past, such as Chinggis Khan raising many strong children and recording it, can be perceived as learned knowledge only when it is enacted in daily practice in the present. In other words, a person has to act on historical knowledge in the present for it to have any value. A key approach towards history in NFLE was not the presentation of facts but what actions that learners could undertake in reference to this material.

Another historical period against which the notion of *erdem* was articulated was the widespread introduction of monastic schools during the sixteenth century. Around this time, the region became characterised by the proselytisation of Tibetan Buddhism and the vast expansion of a network of monasteries. A newly converted ruler, Altan Khan, began producing dedicated textbooks of didactic poetry to train children into Buddhist monkhood (Atwood 2004:160). Along with the spread of the religion, schooling began to expand beyond the home or *ger* as a result of monasteries making formal educational facilities widely available (Shagdar 2000). By the mid-seventeenth century, a clear monastic class had emerged and monastic schools had become the largest institution of formal education. In addition to schooling, the appeal and force of these monasteries led to them becoming highly respected ritual, economic and political centres (Heissig 1980). Much of their success was due to their integration into the nomadic context, as well as the merging of already existing shamanic beliefs and practices into this new wave of Buddhism (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006:29). The monastic schools proved increasingly popular, so much so that it became customary for almost all families to send at least one son to receive an education (Rinchin 1964, Shagdarsüren 1976, Bulag 1998). The basic curriculum emphasised reading and memorising Tibetan texts chanted during services at Buddhist temples. Only after this were children able to earn other academic titles through a curriculum of philosophy, Mongolian language, science, arts and handicrafts (Atwood 2004:159-60).

The most notable reference to this history was through the use of the term *gegeerel*, or enlightenment, as a descriptor for an "Educated Mongolian Person". With the spread of Buddhism, the term *gegeerel* entered common usage as the main term for education. *Gegeerel* derives from the Tibetan term *gegee* to connote "light shining". It further stems from the Buddhist term *gegeen*, a word that simultaneously captures the religious and educational aspects of bringing "light to the dark", becoming "wise", "illuminated" or "enlightened". An enlightened person, or *gegeen hün*, originally

meant a formally educated person who seeks a state of enlightenment through knowledge and meditation according to the ways of the Buddha (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006:29). Although declining today, this term remains in common usage. Until 2012, NFLE centres were officially called "Enlightenment Centres" (*Gegeereliin Töv*) illustrating the attempts to locate NFLE as a form of historical participation within a broader educational framework.

As one elderly learner Khulan explained to me, *gegeerel* has not lost its religious connotations, but a person can be atheist and still aim for it. At over seventy years old, Khulan had spent her career working as a Soviet statistician. Following retirement, she frequented several NFLE centres to fill her time, taking part in a new course each month. Among her cohort, this commitment to *hümüüjil* qualified her as an ideal person. During one conversation about how education changed during her lifetime, she explained that for her ideological change was a matter of finding harmony. When asked to tell me more, Khulan replied "a head of the *ger* is better than a *geling*, an old woman is better than a *getsel* (*gelengees geriin ezen, getslees chavgaants*). Both *geling* and *getsel* refer to a particular rank of lama that used to serve as doctors. The saying implies that experience makes you wiser than formal learning. Her experience, she told me, had taught her to build harmonious relations of mutual trust and care in times of political or ideological change. The ability to do so is what enabled a person to become enlightened. This example could be read as a reflection of historical consciousness, one that is not bounded to objective meanings, but on the dynamic harmony of acts that a person seeks in order to become enlightened.

There is an important baseline of historiography against which this point needs to be expanded. In order to understand and contextualise this historical consciousness it is necessary to briefly objectify history and the ideologies that drove change. The next section covers what is currently known about the broader history of education in the region. I have organised these into the periods most commonly referred to among my interlocutors. This provides the context for many analyses in later chapters whereby NFLE teachers and learners draw upon these broader changes and as historical influences that establish a reasonably stable definition of themselves and their evaluations.

2.3.2. The "Deep" Past (pre-1921)

The "deep" past as a term reflected the ethnographic category of the "deep period", or *deer üyed*, generally used by my interlocutors to refer to anything prior to the socialist revolution in 1921. This can also be translated as the "high period", connoting a certain reverence towards the past and implying a sense of degeneration towards the future (see also High 2017, Kohl-Garrity 2019). I would like to point out that engaging with the notion of a "deep past" tends to be outside of the remit of social anthropology due to a reliance on chronological accounts as manifest in written documents (Shryock and Smail 2011). Conventional historical accounts in the discipline often do not hold space for the contingency of earlier periods, nor do they make a case for certain social categories or practices that connect people viscerally to the past (*ibid.*:52). Given the deep respect my interlocutors had for this time period, my goal to include this level of depth is to bridge long and short term chronologies to reveal the forms of educational heritage through which people enact certain historicities.

Moving on, although it was never referred to as such due to ongoing sinophobia (see Billé 2015), NFLE practice is also aligned with Confucian ideals. For example, many of the proverbs and parables taught in classes could be traced to Confucius' analects. This was attributed to the colonisation of the region under the Manchurian Qing Dynasty between 1636 and 1912 (Atwood 2004:159). As a political move, the Manchurian administration allowed the continuation of monastic schools, viewing them as neither a threat nor a hindrance to their consolidation of power. However, they introduced their own parallel schooling system to educate a small number of civil servants in routine management tasks of official bureaucracy and the Qing imperial code (Sharkhüü 1965). Of note here is the explicit focus on teaching the Mongolian script as a technique for colonisation. As a nod to their ethnic proximity to the Mongolian people, the Manchurian administration officially adopted the Mongolian script (developed from the Uighur script noted above) in the seventeenth century. They introduced a policy to teach the script to at least four young men per province via small schools established at horse postal stations along traffic and communication routes. The Manchu administration's intentions for such literacy soon became clear. Although they aligned themselves with Mongolian people in terms of ancestry, language and the nomadic way of life, they gradually supplanted a Chinese government and allied themselves with Chinese cultural traditions (Bawden 1968). They utilised the common

script for translating and transmitting Confucian moral doctrine and its prescriptions, as well as imperial edicts across the Mongolian population (Steiner-Khamsi 2006:32). This sinocentrism made the Manchurian schools unfavourable in Mongolian eyes, but ultimately did not stop the merging of Confucian virtues such as sincerity, benevolence, filial piety and righteousness with already existing Buddhist and shamanic belief systems (Humphrey and Ujeed 2013).

This situation proceeded more or less uninterrupted until 1911, when the Manchu administration collapsed and Mongolia declared itself an autonomous theocratic state (Baabar 1999). Although this autonomy would only last eight years, it was an important period for education due to attempts to naturalise the idea of a nation as a stable cohesive unit. Again, due to the high position of value that Buddhism achieved in broader society, monastic schools were allowed to remain in place. However, the Manchurian schools were replaced by a state schooling system that was, first and foremost, aimed at decolonisation. The curriculum fostered patriotism and a sense of national belonging through the combined teaching of scientific rationalism and the promotion of an ethnic understanding of Mongolian identity (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006:38). Of critical consequence here is that although the content was nationalist, the theocratic leader Jebtsundamba Khutuktu looked to Europe – via Russia – to import a secular education system. In 1912, the first state school was established at the foreign ministry. By 1913, it operated entirely with a Russian curriculum focusing on mathematics, science and foreign languages. All teachers were Buriads attached to the consulate. *Ger* schools were subsequently set up to accommodate nomadic populations (Lattimore 1962:169, Shagdar 2000:79). By 1915, a Russian owned publishing house was translating books and newspapers into Mongolian. In 1918, when another Chinese occupation began, the Mongolian leadership sought even closer ties to Russia to remove the Chinese from their territories and solidify their independence.

2.3.3. The Socialist Past

The socialist period holds a complex place in local opinions of educational history. One person could both admire the socialist period for its approach to collectivism, and denounce it for being a problematic political ideology. Nevertheless everyone agreed that this period had a significant influence on the education system. Although

contemporary debates on education did not call for a return to the socialist past, the occasional appeal to the ideals of *hümüüjil* combined with comradeship were present among responses from elders, spoken of in the form of nostalgia.

The People's Revolution of 1921 ultimately freed Mongolia from Chinese occupation and allowed them to declare themselves an independent state once again. Given the assistance of the Russian government and the increasing spread of Bolshevik ideology, Mongolian leaders soon began to align themselves with the Soviet Union. Consequently, the monastic schools began to slowly decline. Following the death of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu in 1924, the nation became subject to a series of socialist reforms which steadily enforced the separation of state and religion. By 1930, there was a ban on entering monastic schools. The following year, it was prohibited to teach religion. Shortly afterwards, Stalinist secularisation escalated to violent means, culminating in the destruction of monasteries and the persecution, imprisonment or murder of the monks. By the end of the 1930s, monastic schools had all but disappeared. With few state schools to take their place there was little other opportunity for education. Maintaining an education system across vast distances and in extreme weather conditions proved expensive, so much so that it took the fledging socialist government over a decade to establish their own nation-wide state schooling system.

Throughout the 1940's schooling infrastructure steadily increased to over 300 elementary schools and the establishment of the Mongolian State University in Ulaanbaatar (Government of Mongolia 1993). In 1942, the Mongolian script was replaced with the Russian Cyrillic script. However, it wasn't until after 1950 that compulsory education was made available for all citizens as part of the socialist modernisation agenda. Titled "People's Education" (*Ardyn Bolovsrol*), the goal was to educate for a revolutionary nationalist culture. Much of the curriculum was designed to recast ethnic identity into Soviet terms (Bulag 1998). All genders were to attend school and it became no longer limited to the institutionalised preparatory phase of people's lives. In fact, any age could learn through vocational projects. It was during this period that the semantic core of the term *gegeerel* was replaced by a more instrumentalist view of education. It came to mean enlightenment in the form of secularisation. It also began to be replaced by the term, *bolovsrol*, to imply a form of institutionalised learning. Derived from the term *boloh*, rooted in a form of "to be" it

originates from the more general verb form *bolovsroluulah*, which has a broader meaning "to process, refine, or prepare" (Billé 2015, Stolpe 2010). This change in terms sought to bring about a radical break from monastic schools. However, all terms with the root *bol* connote something that is in the making. As such, the idea of cultivation inherent in *gegeerel* remained throughout the socialist period, hidden in plain sight, even if the religious connotations did not.

Similar to the monastic schools, the success of "People's Education" can be linked to its integration into the nomadic context. Unlike Soviet imposed settlement programmes elsewhere (e.g. Vitebsky 2005), herding was officially acknowledged as a fundamental feature of life and an important branch of the country's agricultural system (Stolpe 2015, Finke 2004). Arguably, this is the result of a series of nomadic herder led protests against sedentarisation that occurred throughout 1930's. Consequently, there was a concerted effort made to allow for "nomad-mainstreaming" (Stolpe 2015:28). That is, the promotion of equal opportunities for herder education and an active encouragement of its incorporation. Due to this emphasis on herding within Mongolia's modernisation agenda, Moscow contributed significant amounts of money and resources to create educational facilities at worker associations and herder collectives (Humphrey and Sneath 1999, Khulan 2004). Either within the collective itself, or in the nearest administrative centre, all of the children of herders were incorporated into the education system through a large network of boarding schools (Atwood 2004, Demberel and Penn 2006, Portisch 2012). The curriculum followed the tenets of Marxist Leninism, with a focus on learning the Cyrillic alphabet, mathematics, science, vocational training and literacy. Much recent research on these boarding schools as they were prior to 1990 suggests that they were generally popular among teachers, herder children and their parents (Krätli 2000, Khulan 2004). It was considered so successful that UNESCO awarded the country a medal in 1970 for achieving universal literacy (Dorzhsüren 1981:109).

Most research on this period of education tends to attribute its success on Soviet infrastructure in making schooling accessible to all citizens. This tends to miss the ways in which the architects of revolutionary nationalism began to articulate local customs in communist terms. Notably, *hümüüjil* was increasingly recognised by the state as culturally significant and thus subject to the propagation of socialist ideals. Commitment to customary forms of education no longer reflected a matter of religious

or cultural commitment but increasingly represented adherence to the revolutionary party. Writing about *hümüüjil* during this time, the Mongolian sociologist Kh. Nyambuu suggests that the success of comrades, workers unions and the party rests on the need to "revive" education and to save it from religious bureaucracy (1977:8). He provides a Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party approved government outline to "educate warriors in the tradition of hard work and historical goals proposed as socialist custom" (1977:24). In this work, the notion of culture (*soyol*) and *hümüüjil* were addressed as important tools for the implementation of communist cultivation. He justifies that "customs are the lifeblood of socialist construction closely related to practice and people's habits. It has a high ideology and unique art" (1977:30). To ensure that each new generation is moral and patriotic, he argues, young people must "radically revolutionise the past in them" by taking on "advanced traditions of behaviour" (*ibid.*:20). Much space is then given to the correct formation and practice of customs. The descriptions are devoid of meaning beyond the practical implementation of the action. Nyambuu appears to be submitted to the hope that actions performed in the name of communism would subtly transform the population and take them one step closer to development. Today, the impact of these efforts is uncertain and public opinion is mixed. Clearly, there exists an ongoing emphasis on the correct way to conduct oneself. People often expressed to me, also, that they were not always clear on the meanings behind the action. However, others claim these efforts as an unsuccessful attempt, as the content and reasoning behind customs transcended political ideology. The religious meanings simply went underground, so to speak, redirected towards the domestic space.

The regime that ruled under socialism tried to make their personal identities and histories irrelevant. The Marxist model of historical stages of development is equally important to acknowledge. Under socialist governance, a division into certain periods was prescribed with an implicit reference to "Lenin's History", directed and reaching toward a conclusion from feudalism, to capitalism and finally ending in socialism. Having been considered a feudal society prior to the revolution, Mongolia was deemed unique in its ability to "bypass capitalism" on its teleological journey into a brighter socialist future (Bulag 2002:16). Importantly, this prescription of stages was designed as a standpoint from which to view history in its entirety. This worked to not only

legitimate the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party's political line, as it was used as an effective means for justifying deficits and harsh realities of socialist materiality.

More importantly, also, framing history in its entirety relegated anything considered traditional as culturally and politically retrograde, and thus in need of eliminating. In the Mongolian socialist education system, the historical stages with their various labels were not only part of the curricula for history lessons at all levels of instruction, they were also present as a deterministic paradigm in almost all other subjects (Steiner-Khamsi 2006:61). Consequently, the very real propensity of Mongolia to govern and direct its own future was powerfully suppressed within a discursive environment where citizens were estranged from their cultural heritage. Whoever they were was not as important as the teleology they supposedly belonged to, whether they wished for it or not, whether they observed certain practices or not, they had become part of a Marxist chronotope.

2.3.4. The Age of the Market

This section details the broader political and economic events that created the conditions for the establishment of NFLE. Importantly, the introduction of capitalism and democracy are perceived as inseparable within the contemporary period. While local people draw a stark line between democracy and socialism, it is important to recognise that this transformation did not entail the simple replacement of one set of ideals, policies or practices with its ideological opposite (Verdery 1996). There remains a complex set of entanglements between all three periods mentioned here that is not calendrical in any sense, but manifest in the people's present preferences for certain types of education.

After 1990, at the end of seventy years of Soviet influenced communist rule, Mongolia was declared independent once again and began making arrangements for its first democratic elections. In 1992, a multi-party electoral system was introduced and although previously communist Mongolia People's Revolutionary Party was confirmed in office, the state nevertheless agreed to ratify a new democratic constitution. Naturally, education was one of the main spheres of public life that underwent extraordinary transformation (Heyneman 1998, De Young and Heyneman 2004). In place of a statement asserting that Mongolia bases its educational and cultural policy on Marxist-Leninism, the constitution was reformed to indicate that the

future of educational policy would be “humane, democratic, continuous and sufficient in nature, [and] shall be based on cultural heritage, advanced tradition and science” (Constitution of Mongolia: Education Law, Article 16 1992). Moreover, the policy emphasised that school institutions are supposed to fulfil two core tasks of education, phrased as *hümüüjil* and *bolovsrol* in accordance with the market economy (Stolpe 2010). This change to the constitution, often interpreted more as an aspiration than a realistic goal, aimed to establish a definitive break with the Soviet past and the stark disavowal of its legacy (Bain 2010, Pleukhahn and Bumochir 2018). What was to fill the void, it would appear, was mapped out in a schematic discourse of development vis-a-vis the Western world.

No longer receiving Soviet aid, Mongolian politicians had little choice but to seek assistance from new partners in the capitalist world, and global financial institutions and bilateral agencies (e.g. IMF, ADB, UNESCO, UNDP) were all quick to respond. Like elsewhere in the Soviet bloc, financial aid came with structural adjustment, leaving Mongolia grappling with series of externally imposed reforms constructed within the parameters of democratic transition towards a free market economy. These privatised public assets and minimised governmental involvement in the economy (Rossabi 2005:36). These reforms caused seismic changes in the region, the predominant experience of which was one of deep financial insecurity. The social, political and economic inappropriateness of such “shock-therapy” led to a major economic crisis, with a horrendous inflation rate pushing the rural population to the verge of a hunger crisis (UNDP 2000:29). As a response to the crisis, the government could do little more than make severe cuts to public expenditures by dramatically reducing social services – such as schools – and by either shutting down or privatising state-owned industries (Odgaard 1996:116). As the previously socialist education system was deemed unwieldy, inefficient and ineffective it was not spared, leaving to deteriorating facilities alongside the introduction of fees (Stolpe, Griffiths and Millei 2013). The overall threat of poverty coupled with widespread unemployment and lack of opportunity to improve livelihoods led to a high rate of school drop-outs, as many families flocked to the countryside to pursue herding for food safety. In fact, during academic year of 1992-1993 the school dropout rate reached its highest ever at 8.8% (NCLE 2017:17). Consequently, this was followed by the significant closure of many rural boarding schools. The social aspiration of rural families for intergenerational

mobility led to mass rural to urban migration and the phenomenal growth in extent and population in Ulaanbaatar around the millennium, with many families citing better access to education and health services as their primary reason to move (Ahearns and Bumochir 2016).

Before turning to the establishment of NFLE as a response to this socioeconomic crisis and its consequences, it is important to note two simultaneous yet opposing movements that have come to define the education system throughout the 1990s. That is, significant debates about what it means to be Mongolian were being held alongside new foreign models of education being implemented (Erdene Ochir 1991:8). On the one hand, there was a nationalist campaign and renewed societal recognition of pre-1921 historical symbols and a rediscovery of traditional values that had been repressed under socialism (Bulag 1998). This was followed by a deep reverence to the commercialisation of all things Chinggis Khan (Kaplonski 2004). At the same time, there began something of a renaissance of religious revival (Humphrey 1992). Buddhist monasteries reappeared and shamanism was brought into the public domain once again and successfully incorporated itself as into the market economy (Buyandelger 2013). There was a pervasive belief that adherence to Buddhism or similar precepts can save Mongolia from encroaching external influence. These included showing awareness towards the environment, taking personal responsibility and striving for balance or harmony. As a result of these efforts, the meaning of religious and cultural terms often merged with nationalist ideals and became centered on the nation state. Mongolian identity also came to be ascribed predominantly in line with the ethnic majority Halha population. This notion of ethnic culture was reified and reimagined through images of an idealised past, with television programmes depicting nomadic life, historical dramas, throat singing or Buddhist poetry.

Conversely, proponents of this nationalism were challenged by the practical and economic constraints of reforming the education system. Given the need to turn to bilateral agencies, many foreign ideas were imported. The government looked to these new partners in Europe and America from which to borrow models upon which to base their education system (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2004). However, as mentioned above, a principle constraint throughout the 1990s was the significant cost of maintaining a nationwide education system. Although the government spending on education remained high it was not enough. They had no choice but to accept foreign

funded schools. Today, American, British, German and Turkish schools, among others, operate with their respective funding and curricula. These schools not only commodified what means to be an educated person (Tsanjid 2005:137-143), but are designed to provide for certain forms of employment that do not reflect the local job sector. What remains is a mismatch between the demand for and supply of skills. Moreover, given the influence of foreign experts in producing master plans for education, considerable terminological confusions have ensued, with repeated renaming and the use of old terms for new meanings or the other way around. So too, did the oscillation between a centralised and decentralised system throughout the decade prove counterproductive to development efforts (Stolpe 2010).

The notion of an "Educated Mongolian Person" resonates across the education system in a variety of different ways in relation to this cultural and historical terrain. Today, education consists of preschool, primary and secondary schooling, technical and vocational education and training. A range of NFLE activities are devoted to various target groups of the population. Education remains highly valued, especially among women who now dominate in university attendance. Current statistics show 48% of the population received a high school education, 30.5% earned a bachelor degree or diploma, and 6.7% attended technical vocational training (National Statistics of Mongolia 2019)[31]. Behind the statistics, the education system has solidified around three goals in national policy; modernisation, democratisation and "Mongolisation" (Stolpe 2010:3). All that I have included above percolated as different values that people could interpret in relation to these goals. The cultural influences amassed in and constituted by the past feature in debates about how to achieve these goals. Although the origins are not always immediately apparent and distinctions between different periods are not always salient, there is an entanglement between different periods and the possibilities for new action offered by them in the present. The following section looks at this in the context of NFLE today. I then explore this history as a template for how to live life in the present.

[31] Available at https://www.nso.mn/transparency/21 (Accessed 24.10.2019).

2.4. The Establishment of NFLE

It was against the above history that NFLE was created. As Odnoo informed me, NFLE is involved in the practical task of realising *hümüüjil* in an institutional context and channelling it into a better future. Having worked at the centre for almost two decades, Odnoo had the most first-hand experience of NFLE of any person I met during the course of my fieldwork. In this section, I flesh out her narrative with literature from the National Centre for Non-Formal and Lifelong Education along with conversations with related academics and officials. This was the picture painted to me by those working in NFLE.

Amid the turbulences of the 1990s, NFLE emerged as an educational space designed to respond constructively to the changing constellations of problem and context. In 1996, the Education Law was adapted to include both formal and non-formal education (Government of Mongolia Education Law, cited in Batchuluun 2009). The National Programme for Non-formal Education was created by the government a year later. It was designed as both a development strategy and to provide an autochthonous counter discourse to foreign influence. Officials crafted it in a way that can be simultaneously mapped onto global discourse and local approaches to life and learning. This dual emphasis promulgated both the global imperative for economic prosperity as well as the Mongolian need for education to foster social cohesion based on the perceived values of earlier times noted above.

The initial aims of NFLE were threefold: Firstly, to expand opportunities and transform the prospects of those marginalised or in poverty; secondly, to restore widely acknowledged – namely traditional – values in a time of transformation; and thirdly, to ensure inclusion in the country's socio-political and economic transformation in a way that addresses the needs of the communities suffering from reduced or stagnated educational opportunity (NCLE 2017). In affiliation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, NFLE was initiated as an attempt to expand opportunities for marginalised groups to bridge unemployment and employment, to enhance their ability to act personally and collectively, acquire new ways of seeing the environment so as to understand and alter it, and to attain qualifications that protect their right to work. It was perceived as a second chance for education for those that have been excluded from the formal system for numerous reasons relating to economic insecurity

(Batchuluun 2009). For example, it was first designed as a means of addressing the substantial numbers of school dropouts that had resulted from the disintegration of the socialist state and the subsequent dissolution of educational facilities at worker collectives. The conviction at the time being that education is vital in poverty stricken areas to (re)build a strong society capable of sustaining itself (UNESCO 2011). Centres were established in every *aimag* centre as a complementary system to formal education[32]. These centres made it possible for learners of all ages to complete their education by providing literacy and equivalency training. Under this scheme, 56 Enlightenment Centres (*Gegeereliin Töv*) were established at first. It was widely agreed that the meaning of *gegeerel* here was a reference to the revival of national culture (*soyol*) as opposed to its religious connotations[33].

In 2002, the National Programme for Non-formal Education was re-organised as the National Centre for Non-Formal and Distance Education (NFDE). In the same year, the Education Law specified that NFE Enlightenment Centres are responsible for delivering non-formal training at *aimag*, *soum* and district level and for assisting independent learners (Batchuluun 2009)[34]. Centres could operate either as an independent centre or an affiliate to other educational organisations. This led to a significant expansion of the number of NFE Enlightenment Centres to 326 nationwide. In order to ensure more consistency in structure and activities, the "Model Regulation for NFE Enlightenment Centres" was approved by the 169th order of Minister of Education, Culture and Science in 2003. These regulations defined NFE Enlightenment Centres as educational organisations whose goal is to provide non-formal educational services to local communities to deliver training, advocate, distribute information, and actively participate in community local development activities. Between 2008-2010 centres were operated in partnership with the UNESCO project and funded by World Vision and the United States Department of Agriculture programme "Herder Families Literacy and Life Skills" that focused in particular on

[32] *Aimag* is the local term for province.

[33] This insight was given to me by Odnoo in a centre team meeting where all other staff agreed.

[34] *Soum* refers to a small administrative unit.

adult learners seeking to improve their income generation skills (Government National Programme on Literacy Education 2004-2012).

In 2010, this regulation was revised by the 556th order of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science enabling NFE Enlightenment Centres to be established with the status of an affiliate to secondary schools in *soums* with population of less than 6,000 residents. These were to be established as an independent centre affiliated to the secretariat of the *soum* governor in towns with a larger population. In Ulaanbaatar, centres were to be established independently or as an affiliate to the secretariat of the district governor in Ulaanbaatar (NCLE 2017). Although this policy met the need for an increased supply of tertiary education, the National Centre for Lifelong Learning considers it to have failed to produce adult graduates who can improve Mongolia's international competitiveness. There ensued a shift in focus towards NFLE playing a role in overcoming the limitations of contemporary formal curriculums, which disproportionately stress academic achievement by positioning literacy as a field of knowledge that leads to the economic development of both the person and society. This was perceived as having created an unnecessary separation between the goal of cultivation and the goal of mastering knowledge. The consensus was that the new focus must not neglect the crucial ethical dimensions that distinguish human relations from the provision of information for technical proficiency. In a speech at the National Centre for Lifelong Learning 20th year anniversary conference an NCLE director stated:

> Learning is not only about knowing, but also about doing, being, and living together. Mongolian schools and universities offer limited opportunities to learn under these four pillars. It was mentioned that changes are coming to "learning to know and do". These two pillars of learning are measured by "intelligence quotient". Our schools do not specially prepare students to "learn to be and live together". But these two pillars play a more prominent role than the previous two pillars to achieve happiness in life. "Emotional quotient" is more important than "intelligence quotient". These quotients in people are influenced by traditional and national values, parents, and friends. If an individual plans in advance, learns with purpose and knows what to do with that knowledge, he or she gains stronger competitiveness than others. The

> time we are living in and the constant changes we face require us to learn continuously for our lifetime.

Around 2013, the National Centre for Non-Formal and Distance Education introduced its five pathways aimed at cultivating an emotional quotient. These are still in practice today. Moving away from a focus on literacy these new directions represent the complexity of influences and emphasises a considerable turn to historical, aesthetic and ethical customary knowledge. In 2017, a total of 218,044 participants received some form of education based around these parameters (NCLE 2017). In the same leaflet described in the introduction, the five pathways are described in the terms below:

> Family Education (*Ger Büliin Bolovsrol*): the skills abilities to plan family, to create a safe environment to raise children, to solve family conflicts and to keep gene pools pure, to learn familial role and responsibilities.
>
> Civic Education (*Irgenii Bolovsrol*): to gain a balanced national, traditional and civic society, to participate in individual, family, social, and multiparty relations as an equal citizen, to live both independently and in cooperation with others in ecological, economic, political, and legal domains.
>
> Moral-Upbringing Education (*Yos Surtahuun-Tölövshiliin Bolovsrol*): to understand the meaning of life and to determine life goals, to open and develop personal talents to improve life essence, to choose a profession, proper health, relations and ethical formation, to avoid bad habits and to take proper position in society.
>
> Aesthetics Education (*Goo Züi-Medremjiin Bolovsrol*): the skills to recognise proper social relations, reflect and implement imagination and feelings in the human-human, human-nature social relations, to promote human essence and values through art performances and plays, to feel and understand these aesthetics and values.
>
> Life Skills Training (*Amidrah Uhaany Bolovsrol*): professional skills in addition to social development, to enhance physical and intellectual

> talents to improve financial capacity, to access formal curricula, literacy qualifications and library services.

As the rest of this thesis will demonstrate in ethnographic detail, these pathways are indicative of a mode of historical consciousness that draws together constative and performative historicities to merge interpretation of the past with future orientated actions of ethical cultivation. In this way, NFLE practice relies on a form of historical consciousness composed of successive interpretations of local cosmology, Buddhist theories, Marxist ideology, local notions of personhood alongside a more recent emphasis on democracy or capitalism. While the chapter so far has explored these historical sources in chronological order, it is important to note that the cumulative effect of *hümüüjil* is not to construct a narrative per se, but to provide a guiding force for how people evaluate events in the past in the face of present contingencies and future goals. To demonstrate how people see themselves within this historical consciousness, I now present in more detail the form of *hümüüjil* shaping NFLE practice as it was introduced to me.

2.5. Cultivating Humans through *Hümüüjil*

"We have a saying for that" was the most common response I got to any question during my fieldwork. This was usually followed by a brief sentence or two generally along the lines of "there is no word without comparison, there is no *deel* without stitches" *(züirgüi üg baidagüi, züidelgüi deel baidagüi*), meaning "there is a proverb for every situation". It became so common in fact, that people started handing me copies of books filled with these teachings. "Aren't these just for kids" I joked one time after being handed yet another. I had been visiting another smaller Non-Formal and Lifelong Education Centre in one of the northern *ger* districts one afternoon in September 2017. When the enthusiastic director Batbayar handed me the book, I understood the title "*Minni Mongol Hümüüjil*" as "My Mongolian Upbringing" and thought there was something funny that I wasn't seeing. "No", he replied pointing to the cover before repeating "*hümüüjil*". He explained to me that, yes, *hümüüjil* does refer to bringing up a child and sometimes religious instruction too, but it also contains much more than that; it was about "what we gain as we grow up, our morals (*yos surtahuun*) and maturity (*tölövshil*)". Such fundamental approaches to learning,

Batbayar felt, had lost ground in recent decades. As such, they were of salient educational concern in his organisation of adult learning.

Batbayar is in his late fifties, short and energetic, and never stepped outside without his fiddler cap. As is expected of Mongolians his age, he is earnest, gentle and softly spoken. I had met him purely by chance while walking home across Ulaanbaatar's main square. It was typical throughout the short summer months for each of the city's nine districts to hold an open day in front of the government building on the central square. Under a line of white pointed tents the local district governor's office and its associated organisations would promote their services to passers-by. Batbayar was there with his staff under their NFLE banner, sandwiched between the fire brigade and social services. His stall was covered in leaflets like the one described above, fanned out across a table and surrounded by framed pictures of adult learners in beauty class or sat at a row of computers. In the centre of the table the two largest pictures were draped in a ceremonial sash of blue silk named *hadag*, a significant symbol of cultural respect. "We Mongolians have a saying" he had told me, "the highest thing is vodka, the highest honour is the *hadag* (*ideenii deed arhi, ediin deed hadag*)" before clarifying, "people must learn their culture to grow as better people in society. It is the most important thing. Come to visit my centre and I will say more". He handed me his business card before tending to other visitors.

Later, as we sat in his oversized office drinking milky tea and exchanging other forms of formal etiquette I inquired, among other things, about the *hadag* and *hümüüjil*. "There is a joke" he replied with smiling eyes and open hands. "Despite the possibility of human beings living to over one hundred years old now Mongolian people say, until sixty we are still trying to find the truth, by sixty one you are clever enough, sixty two you are already dead. It means that all your experience and life skills transfer to your kids. Even though the time of life is not eternal your philosophy can be eternal". He paused, broke off a small piece of dried curd from a bowl on his desk and stuffed it into the side of his cheek. He then leaned back in his chair before elaborating, "when Mongolian people think of knowledge they grow up with a standard academic view taught in school, but in life we also want to broaden our thoughts out so people can obtain good habits and grow as better people in society. The goal is to have positive energy in life and be an enlightened person. This is a true Mongolian person". For Batbayar all of this communicated, in a rather subtle way, the continuing importance

that the learning process plays in the cultivation of a person; one that is not limited to the mere transmission of intellectual knowledge but instead combines institutionalised education (*bolovsrol)*, enlightenment (*gegeerel)*, and cultivation (*hümüüjil*) into a three-dimensional triad. While his joke is rooted in Confucian teachings, his idea of knowledge and enlightenment behind it is concerned less with philosophy than with the idea of learning as the realisation of the task of becoming a person.

In Halha Mongolian, the terms for human and person share the same word, *hün*. However, this does not mean that the terms could be reduced to one another. Rather, a distinction was implied in the use of the term. When referring to a human, *hün* was used to describe our physical aspects as a biological species. To suggest that someone is a person, often qualified as a specifically Mongolian one as Batbayar shows above, implies that they have developed an ethos only achieved through the cultural practice of *hümüüjil*. Like everything else, this was expressed to me in numerous proverb forms. For example, when discussing the absence of *hümüüjil* one learner stated "if you don't know your history you are like a monkey on the mountain" (*tüühee medehgui bol oid moorson sarmaliktai ad*). This suggests that *hümüüjil* is nothing less than the genesis of humanity. The notion of a person therefore refers to a human quality, or *hün chanar*, a term that was equated with the concept of personhood or personality. In relation to personhood, one learner Zulaa told me while summing up a long conversation about education: "the sun illuminates the world, knowledge illuminates a person" (*nar delhiig giigüüldeg, medleg hüniig giigüüldeg)*. In effect, she was stating the ontological connection between education, personhood and morality in the practice of *hümüüjil.* Despite being a core feature of personhood in Mongolia, the practice of cultivation has yet to be explored in the anthropological literature. In my view, this is due to *hümüüjil* constituting the criteria for becoming human. This is often implicit, as the cultivation of a human conscience. It refers to the knowledge, values and responsibilities of personhood as an ongoing relational achievement, as opposed to the definition of personhood as fact.

Personhood, from the perspective of my interlocutors, is a status given to people when they demonstrate certain appropriate qualities. Some qualities are specified in their essential constitution, while others have to be performed. Crucially, these elements of a person do not contradict one another but exist congruently, together enabling "a true Mongolian person" to both come into being and come to reflexively and continuously

make themselves. The term for person, *hün*, is instructive. It is built around the root *hüv* meaning "share", "part", "percent" or "portion". This suggests a view of the person as arising from dynamic relations between people in society, where each person becomes an assemblage of substances and relations (Empson 2011:19)[35]. These aspects of a person have been analysed in various ways. First is the "bone" of the father and the "blood" or "flesh" of the mother (Vreeland 1957:58). The idea of shared bone is used in the formation of agnatic kin. The male component of a person is contained in the idea of shared bone that is passed down between generations. In contrast, women are separated from their natal families at marriage and are held to contribute blood to their in-laws.

Rebecca Empson's (2011) research on householder life among Buriad herders provides a more diverse composition of personhood that goes beyond biological elements. She shows that personhood is also performatively generated in and through relations with other people, objects and the environment. Through a discussion on the ways in which a person's body is composed not just of parts but also of vital forces such as fortune, luck and vitality, Empson traces the actions and behaviours through which different elements of the person can be separated and contained within objects related to them. Living in conditions under which kin members are likely to be separated from the household people hold back, or contain, aspects of a person via objects in order for their fortune to not leave with them. Accumulation of fortune over generations is highly valued and often made visible in and around the household chest. Drawing on Strathern (1988), Empson argues that these objects are displayed on or hidden within the household chest to reveal or conceal composite parts of persons in different relational encounters. Objects such as photograph montages on top of the chest make visible patriarchal relations based on descent and bone, while inside the chest there are private albums, placenta or hair associated with the horizontal, affinal relations based on blood. These objects become assertive through different relations

[35] I use Deleuze's metaphor of "assemblage" occasionally throughout this thesis to convey a heterogenous configuration of values, temporalities, objects and people and the ways in which they enter into relations with one another (Bryant 2009). It is useful to give shape to social phenomenon that are emergent and heterogenous without applying a predetermined concept (Marcus and Saka 2006).

and actions, with attributes of a person's internal potency tending to become dominant according to different circumstances, times, and interests[36].

Similarly, Sandrine Ruhlmann's (2019) research on food practices among herder households further demonstrates how a person's life force is performatively generated through certain behaviours as well as specific corporeal techniques. In her detailed account of food sharing and etiquette, Ruhlmann highlights the importance of efficacious actions to establish the soul (*süns*), vitality (*hiimori*), and breath (*am*) of a person in relation to the metaphysical world of Mongolia. For example, she argues that a child is not considered a person until they can eat meat correctly off the bone (*ibid.*:139-40). Before this time an infant's personhood is considered unstable and fragile, with a high likelihood of evil spirits taking the infant away. Similarly, a soul is not considered established in the body until a child's hair has been cut around the ages of 3-6 years old. Most importantly, she shows in great detail the ways in which people operate with the idea that each person is animated by a crucial life force or vitality with the Buddhist name *hiimori* (*hii* meaning air *mori* horse) that can cause them to be in or out of balance (see also Empson 2011, Humphrey and Onon 1996, Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, Merli 2006). *Hiimori* is generally considered individual to each person as the accumulation of positive or negative personal energy that circulates inside their body; usually contained in their chest. When defining a Mongolian person, the performativity of *hiimori* was often privileged in the answer, as something that animates a person according to their actions, thus influencing their work, health, temperament, and life in general.

During the course of my research, the question of what it means to become a person was discussed by NFLE teachers, first and foremost, as a question of *hümüüjil*. I wish to add to the literature on Mongolian personhood by highlighting that NFLE has transposed *hümüüjil* out of the familial sphere and into state education. My analysis goes beyond forces of luck and vitality to show how the performative degree of personhood is now institutionalised as a matter of history. Unlike the present term for education, *bolovsrol*, *hümüüjil* does not have the same institutionalised connotations. However, it is increasingly understood as something to be managed via an institutional

[36] A similar argument is shown in Fox (2021), whereby meat is analysed as a relation that transcends the urban-rural divide, acting as another element within the assemblage of personhood.

educational logic. It is associated with philosophical, pedagogic and instructional teachings that centre on the correct way in which a person is performatively constructed. It implies the inheritance of knowledge continuously passed down through the generations via a combination of stories, proverbs, parables and jokes existing in everyday speech. Although diverse in its manifestations, most people that I spoke with gave credence to *hümüüjil* and generally held it in high esteem given its ability to cover all areas of human existence, as well as its educational purposes, moral teaching, and character-building qualities. Common lessons imparted through *hümüüjil* regard values and actions that relate to what constitutes good or bad character, dignified composure, probity teachings about reputation, generational hierarchies and friendship. It was considered a "traditional" (*ulamjlal*) way of knowing and acting; the history, laws and feelings that governed life[37]. The teachings assure a promising future for those who keep traditions and customs (*yos zanshil*) alive. They are intended to help and guide the individual in everyday interactions or challenges through a certain index and play with the past, they do not narrate it.

Many of my interlocutors spoke fluent English, each time they would translate *hümüüjil* as a form of "cultivation". It refers to both the developmental horizons that lend people ethical direction and the practices that people act upon in their pursuit of a good life. According to the people I spoke with, to identify as a Mongolian person is not simply a matter of genetic replication, speaking the language or citizenship, although these were prerequisites. Mongolian personhood remains firmly contingent on a certain human conscience or quality cultivated via *hümüüjil*. Especially in Ulaanbaatar, given the physical detachment from mobile pastoralism, many residents turned to this knowledge to evaluate themselves and others. Framing personhood with respect to cultivation presents a different causal relation. Rather than personhood being a unitary entity, it is more productive here to think of it as a dynamic frame or guiding force in which people are continuously in the process of becoming themselves and

[37] I differ from my interlocutors in this sense. I do not conceive of proverbs as timeless principles. This essentialisation is also present in the small amount of literature on proverbs written from other disciplines. My sense is that anthropologists have yet to engage with proverbs in a nuanced way due to this essentialisation. I offer an alternate reading below.

realising themselves by assembling the ideal elements. It is a dimension of all humanity.

In NFLE, this process is made present in several ways. A common reference point was the proverb "fathers teaching is gold, mother's teaching is knowledge" (*aavin surgaal alt, eejiin surgaal erdem*). It means that the father's teachings go to the heart (the location of character), while the mother's teachings influence intellect. To a larger extent, women are still considered mainly responsible for teaching cultural knowledge to their children. However, there is a need to learn and value the teachings of both parents in order to become good people. Like in English, Mongolian refers to the heart as the location of goodness. The chest (*chegji*) is the faculty of memory, with learning from parents taken into the heart to receive the information into oneself. To know something, involves not only intellectual knowledge but also acting on that knowledge to enact good relations. The aural, physical and intellectual are indissolubly united. In this sense, knowledge of the past is understood to always produce action in the world, as a form of practical judgement (phronesis) immanent to social life (Lambek 2013a:4).

Importantly, *hümüüjil* determines the criteria by which people become persons. It is the cultural practice for legitimating various performances of personhood. It can be found in the intersubjective or social dimension in the ways in which a person should cultivate themselves in both institutional and domestic ways. As such, it motivates and constrains the horizon against which people act and evaluate. According to Lambek (2013b), persons are constituted through the interplay of performance and the practice of acts that render people into ethical persons in that they are subject to recognition and evaluation. By ethics here he means the "availability, acceptance of, and susceptibility to criteria, not only necessary doing what is right or good, rationalising the right and good, or theorising about them. Acts have a temporal dimension, since those who enter into them have been shaped by prior acts and the criteria and commitments engaged therein (*ibid.*:841). He suggests that performance is the embodiment of certain criteria that shape practice. At the same time, practice produces new performances. In this sense, a person is both the biological individual as well as the cumulative product of acts against which they hold themselves accountable (*ibid.*:838). He makes an important distinction, that "to be subject to criteria is not the same thing as being caused by it" (*ibid.*:846).

In decentring causality from criteria, Lambek gives the concept of personhood a more contingent temporal quality. In the interplay of performance and practice, the criteria for personhood are not theorised as encompassing moral orders that determine appropriate forms of action. As mentioned in the introduction (1.4.1.), the temporal register against which anthropologists (e.g. Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, Mattingly 2012) often build their analyses of ethics and morality tend to rely on Alasdair Macintyre's (1984) concept of tradition as a moral corpus that authorises ethical action. This assumes that ethical values are constative, therefore fit into discrete and consistent histories. When personhood is acquired through a process of embodying the performances of criteria alongside the act of producing new criteria in practice through its interpretation, a person cannot be detached from their ethical values. As Lambek notes, "it becomes an embodied part of them and they become an embodied part of it – rather than experiencing a detached externalised engagement with or against it" (2013b:843). This collapses the degree of separation between moral order and individual agency that a person has with respect to their ethical orientation. Instead, ethical persons not only fulfil their obligations but produce them.

The most common manifestation of *hümüüjil* that I experienced was in the form of proverbs. The next section analyses the way in which proverbs are perceived as a living history embodied in local practices, ideas and constructs with respect to ethical considerations. Building upon Lambek, I demonstrate the temporality of proverbs as a contingent product of a history (*tüüh*), not a static moral corpus but the performance of a historical consciousness that shapes the future.

2.6. Proverbs: Causality from the Future

This chapter would not be complete without a mention of proverbs in the performance of *hümüüjil*. Given the constitution of *hümüüjil* as a matter of correctly enacting any and all relations, broadly defined, there existed no precise corpus or historical blueprint to which each person can hold themselves accountable. It is not found in narrative accounts of history but in the allocation of identity and embodied in ethical practices that cultivate a certain human quality. The most pervasive way in which people sought to capture the essence of human cultivation was through the use of proverbs (*züir ug*). In this section, I explore proverbs as performative acts that require interpretation,

lending themselves to future horizons. I show how they index both subjective and shared historicities in ways that are assimilated and embodied in everyday life.

My analysis differs from that of the NFLE staff and learners, who viewed proverbs as a fairly essentialised moral repertoire against which they identified with the past through repetition. To an extent, this is reflected in the anthropological literature also. In her work on moral authority, Humphrey (1992) locates the source of morality in the ancient historical past. She details the ways in which the little known deep past was given legitimacy as the point of historical origin against which newly democratic Mongolian people could establish a sense of identity for themselves following the disintegration of socialism. She draws upon local terms for revival to describe moral injunctions as a "conscious reiteration" of the past, more than repetition (*ibid.*:384). However, I would argue that Humphrey is misaligning proverbs as constative here rather than performative acts. This is evidenced by her use of external events being reiterated to allow for the inner identification with the past. I want to focus instead on what a moral repertoire might look like if embodied, contingent and emergent.

Instead of starting with the past, I want to pursue a different trajectory for ethical authority in the present. This involves conceptualising proverbs as interpretive more than reiterative or repetitive. As mentioned above, proverbs featured heavily in conversations during my research. They became a recurring theme throughout my entire fieldwork experience as a powerfully multivalent way people effectively expressed reverence to the past and endowed it with their own interpretations, meanings and value. No class was ever free from the mention of a proverb or two, particularly in response to a question of how to apply a lesson to learners' everyday lives. Interestingly also, it was often the case that no personal opinion was given until a proverb had been quoted. The logic and universal applicability of proverbs was never in doubt. Because of the immense number of proverbs in use, it is common for a particular proverb to be considered very important by one person and virtually unheard of by another; even if both people are the same age and from the same city. As such, the improper use of proverbs never came up. What is true of one person may not be true of another and each proverb did appear to have its own suitable occasion to be evoked, yet they were also open to multiple interpretations that can support ambivalent or contradictory beliefs. As the later chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, proverbs

encoded successive interpretations that are both repetitive but also contingent on the educational horizon of which it is spoken in reference to.

People generally agreed that the most common characteristics of proverbial teachings were about material wealth and ostentation, poverty, the importance of preparation, privileging the need to see something over hearing it, as well as luck, fortune and honourable destinies. They are not opposed to current governmental laws or other bodies of knowledge but interpreted in light of both. They provide a template for shared understanding and evaluation. Although difficult to access in any complete sense, proverbs provide a fragmentary yet overwhelmingly univocal description of what people value over a few themes. They assign importance to how a person ought to act, their desires and behaviours that seemingly formed into a more or less stable set of knowledge against which people held themselves and others accountable. The fact that the past is conceived as having intellectual ownership of proverbs makes it both educational and instructional resources accessible to all. Although initially ambiguous to me as a student of Mongolian language, I was in a unique position where the use of a proverb in my presence called for a commentary. These interpretations contained far more lessons than evident from direct reading of the proverbs alone. Most importantly, as proverbs were ethically informed, they revealed the horizon of goals, expectations and values that people sought to enact in the future. In this way, the ethical can be understood as a form of historical interpretation.

Proverbs represent a different way of engaging with history, one that is fragmentary but no less meaningful. While they might appear as a timeless framework of meanings, a more accurate approach would be to conceptualise them as containing a recursive chronotope both old and new to the context. That is, at the same time as people interpret events in or knowledge of the past, the past exists congruently through proverbs as a form of embodied historical action that carries its own present instantiations. Here, knowledge of the past is at once objective, intimate, embodied and for many, potent (see chapter three). In this way, proverbs index, host and reaffirm different temporalities. In this final part of this section, I explore how the interpretation of events relate to the affective qualities of the present and prefigure future lives (see also Das 2006).

The constative and performative acts of history-making inform and implicate one another in complicated ways in a proverb. Each proverb is a product of the past that is constantly changed by reinterpretation according to life contingencies. At the same time as they actualise certain regions of the past as knowledge, proverbs offer the potential to surpass the limits of the past to uncover new possibilities when confronted with an uncertain future. In this sense, they offer freedoms that shared historical texts deny. Drawing on Lambek (2018b) once more, it is possible to reconcile an engagement with the past as ethically oriented to the future. In his ethnographic history, Lambek focuses on the interpretation and reinterpretation of wedding ceremonies within the context of exchange and feelings of ritual obligation. In doing so, he presents a more nuanced picture of social change and the enactment of values from the past. Lambek shows that weddings do not simply reproduce criteria from the past but create a space in which people navigate modern prosperity and traditional practices. It is in this shifting horizons that questions about the appropriate ethical actions arise (Stewart 2022:299).

In addition to the notion of shifting horizons, I would like to present another temporal perspective regarding the use of proverbs drawing from Bryant and Knight's discussion on "causal fetishism" (2019:164). In their work on the anthropology of the future, Bryant and Knight question the one dimensional use of causality as an event in the past from which something is brought about. I would like to draw out one point they make to introduce another temporal perspective on causality. Bryant and Knight draw from the work of Heidegger (1977). They stress Heidegger's point that the Greek word for "cause" used by Aristotle, *aition*, contains a broader meaning than its post-enlightenment interpretation that draws one line between cause and effect. They note, Heidegger argues that *aition* also connotes a sense of *responsibility* to which something becomes indebted (Bryant and Knight 2019:172-3). When cause entails responsibility, they suggest, it affords a temporality that turns causality towards the future, "as cause being created from effect, being indebted to effect" (*ibid.*:173). In drawing this relation of indebtedness from the future, causality is embodied in a horizon beyond time against which people determine their actions and evaluations.

In presenting an alternate temporal dimension to the notion of causality, Bryant and Knight offer a useful counterpoint to the linear notion of cause and effect underlying Macintyre's notion of tradition. It essentially complicates the notion of transmission

from the past to the future, to a horizon in which the future causes effect as much as the past. My point is that, rather than conceiving of proverbs as a moral corpus transmitted from the past in which meanings are predetermined, it is possible to theorise the mention of a proverb as drawing together causality from both the past and the future. In his work on education, Ingold refers to this past-present-future relationship as being in "correspondence with others – answering to them, not in the receipt of what is handed down" (2018:5). He makes the important point that transmission contains an inherent dimension of futuricity that cannot be theorised on the basis of conceptualisations that perceive of learning as a form of passive absorption of knowledge or values. It is noteworthy to point out that anthropologists using Macintyre account for this by referring to tradition as a "repeated mediation" more than transmission (e.g. Humphrey and Ujeed 2013:4). However, I would argue that they have yet to properly consider forms of causality behind people's ethical evaluations from a temporal perspective that goes beyond simply deriving knowledge or principles from the past as the basis for evaluation.

2.7. The Future of History

This chapter has introduced a set of ontological connections and their historical influences that constitute contemporary NFLE practice. In doing so, I introduced the key features of NFLE as I encountered them, and the historicities and cultural influences that motivated people to engage with it. As will become clear, these educational historicities and their horizons contribute to the practical operation of NFLE and its discourses. Today, *gegeerel* and *bolovsrol* delineate much of the contemporary pedagogy, but *hümüüjil* was often stated as the reigning organising principle and form for a range of classroom activities. I have used the concept of horizons to explore how contemporary NFLE approaches arise in relation to multiple historicities, each with a focus on practical questions of ethical behaviour. These horizons show a reverence towards the past, future aspirations, as well as anxieties about ethical failure. In highlighting the reverence NFLE staff felt towards education more broadly, I have begun to unravel the ways in which history is intertwined with respect in this context, and revealed as an attribute of interpersonal relations through the use of proverbs. In using multiple historicities, I have shown that the lived experience of practicing *hümüüjil* cannot be reduced to any chronological account painted by historical determinism alone.

By showing *hümüüjil* within a broader temporal frame and how objective and subjective historicities are affective of one another, I have pointed to a different set of causal relations that give rise to ethical cultivation. We can see that history here maintains a productive tension between the constative and performative acts. This relates to one of the key arguments of this thesis. That is, that theoretical approaches in the anthropology of ethics are poorly prepared for analyses that explore relations between multiple temporalities. Although Lambek is the exception, it is curious that the contingency of ethical action emerges more in his work from the anthropology of history than the anthropology of ethics. My research has brought me to the insight that the anthropology of ethics does not yet have the conceptual language to address ethical evaluation if not deduced from a corpus through a relation of linear cause and effect. My argument is similar to Lambek (2015a) in that he opens up a discussion across the borders of traditions, but I differ in several respects which I discuss in the next chapter.

The depiction of history (*tüüh*) in this chapter has paved the way for the ethnographic explications of these historicities in the practice of NFLE. In the next chapter, I move on to an ethnographic example of the first class that I experienced at the centre. Through a focus on the teaching of tradition (*ulamjlal*), I address the link between *hümüüjil* and history in more detail. I argue that my interlocutors do not characterise tradition or historical experience as causality in terms of discourse, narrative, or transmission as one after the other. I show instead that tradition involves a constellation of temporal features. In drawing together these multiple temporalities, I demonstrate how local notions of tradition are given an explicit ethical character and operate as a value generating practice that produces movement towards a more certain future.

Chapter Three.

Hümüüjil:
The Teaching of 'Tradition'

3.1. Temporal Husbandry

The previous chapter presented the multiple historicities of Non-formal and Lifelong Education (NFLE) in Mongolia. I explored what it means to know history (*tüüh*) and the ways in which knowledge of the past is understood to produce action in the world through the intertwining of several coexisting historicities. I also provisionally introduced the practice of human cultivation, known as *hümüüjil*, through which history is taught and enacted in NFLE. As noted in the introduction, the practice of *hümüüjil* is considered the primary method for cultivating persons in Mongolia as well as the predominant frame of reference through which people enact qualities of an ethical life. It refers to the cultivation of human beings, giving structure to teaching and learning in ways that seek to transform embodied experience into an environment for good relations. Importantly, it is considered a primary register through which history (*tüüh*) is lived and experienced in Mongolia. In this sense, history is always ethically informed, and vice versa. According to my interlocutors, history and ethics together create the bridle with which they can guide uncertainty towards a different future.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between *hümüüjil* and history (*tüüh*) in more detail. Through two ethnographic vignettes drawn from fieldwork, I illustrate the ways in which *hümüüjil* was practiced in NFLE classes. Both of these classes are from the moral-aesthetic pathway, focused on cultivating a sense of history (*tüüh*) through the teaching of tradition (*ulamjlal*). I am interested in the ways in which *hümüüjil* embodies a mode of history-making that seeks to enliven ethical courses of action in the future. I pay particular attention to the notion of tradition (*ulamjlal*) taught at the NFLE centre as a multitemporal process whereby history is embodied and made present. This has implications, I argue, for how anthropologists conceptualise tradition in relation to ethical action. Crucially, I do not theorise morality as pre-existing or

determined by a discursive structure, whereby a moral system from the past provides the criteria against which a person acts or evaluates themselves and others (Macintyre 1988). As mentioned in the chapter one (1.4.2.), this conceptualisation serves to prove or objectify the existence of discursive forms of historical knowledge as facts that provide the basis for actions in the present. As such, it temporalises the past as a resource for one or another moral tradition as an ongoing dialogue between past and present. I am interested instead in expanding the conceptual horizon of tradition using ethnographic examples that demonstrate a different temporalisation, one more multiform and changeable that the hegemonic narrative allows. Through temporal multiplicity, I suggest, tradition does not act to *prove* moral systems as objective facts, but works to *move* people towards a potent and affective form of historical consciousness that generates significant value.

A crucial aspect of *hümüüjil* here is that it was only ever referred to by NFLE teachers when discussing their work in abstract and generic terms. To them, it was the broad goal of NFLE. In the classroom, the term itself was notable by its absence. Aside from the class I describe below, *hümüüjil* was rarely mentioned explicitly. On a daily basis, teachers referenced it by talking more specifically about the traditions (*ulamjlal*) that class topics are built around. For them, the performance of *hümüüjil* was akin to the teaching of tradition. They defined it as the artifacts of cultural heritage, the method through which to instill the behaviours or values of society, and the sources of knowledge from which they draw value. On many occasions, the teachers would describe tradition in essentialised and dichotomised terms in relation to modernity. As will become clear in the ethnographic vignettes below, they did not teach tradition in this same way they spoke about it. Therefore, I do not approach tradition here as essentialised or opposed to modernity. Instead, I explore it as a potent domain that temporalises the process of historical change in complex ways. I show how tradition absorbs, hosts and refracts multiple temporalities and their historicities, rather than determines them.

To demonstrate this point, I first have to navigate some conceptual baggage in relation to the application of tradition in anthropology. Section 3.2. clarifies my position by moving beyond any unproductive discussions that dichotomise tradition versus modernity. I also raise questions regarding the ways in which tradition has been applied in anthropology in recent years in relation to ethics more broadly, and the

Mongolian region in particular. I then turn to two ethnographic vignettes that capture a process that is not historical in its origins, but by virtue of the fact that it provokes intense affect. I show how evaluation is intrinsic to the experience of a form of historical feeling in the practice of *hümüüjil*. Section 3.5. analyses the evaluative orientation of historical affect through a discussion on temporal multiplicity. Section 3.6. concludes with a brief discussion on historical consciousness.

3.2. The Anthropology of Tradition

In the introduction (section 1.4.2.), I raised epistemological questions concerning the conceptual horizons available in current anthropological theory by examining the temporal interconnections between historical meaning, causality and ethical evaluation. The specific temporality through which tradition is applied in anthropological terms is central to my argument. One original contribution of this thesis is that the concept of tradition does not yet hold space for temporal multiplicity. This section builds upon this argument in more detail. I explore the ways in which tradition has been applied in anthropology to address how people engage with the past as a resource for the present. In what follows, I broadly discuss the main paradigms of consequence to theories of tradition and highlight two key theoretical transformations. I then point to where these fall short. My objective is to expand the temporal scope of tradition out of its current limitations by exploring a broader assemblage inherent to tradition and the ethical actions undertaken in its name. The following two sections demonstrate ethnographically the ways in which tradition contains a different temporal assemblage that is dynamically intertwined in complex and shifting chronotopic constellations. I then go on to an analysis suggesting that tradition in NFLE cannot be considered outside of the concept of historical consciousness. This builds upon the previous chapter through a focus on causality from the future, but also introduces another previously analysed dimension of causality drawn from non-discursive relations with affective qualities of vitality.

There is considerable conceptual baggage surrounding the use of tradition as an analytical term due to its application within modernisation theory. Primarily associated with the work of Anthony Giddens (1991), modernisation theory purports an epochal approach to tradition and modernity as contrastive categories in a teleological process. In this process, modernity is conventionally understood as

desirable, having transcended the past through a process of "detraditionalisation" (Heelas 1996:3). In essence, tradition is ossified in the past, whereas the modern moves social life into the dynamic present. Giddens argues that modernity, in contrast to the pre-modern (traditional) world, derives from a reordering of the social perception between time and space as a result of institutionalisation (*ibid.*:2). He suggests that pre-modern societies reckon time using markers that are intrinsically tied to place. These markers of time often rely on the environment and are imprecise, such as dawn or noon. By contrast, modernity separates time from place through the precision and abstraction afforded by clock time and subsequent industrialisation. These, he argues, disembed social relations from localised contexts by "emptying time" and reorganising it across large time-space distances (*ibid.*:17). By centring his argument around discontinuity and contrast, Giddens inevitably remains oblivious to the multivocal ways in which tradition is constructed within modernity. In drawing a distinction between tradition and modernity through a rupture approach, he is problematically exhibiting modernist thinking within his theorisation (Hodges 2010).

This rather simplistic theory of modernisation had important implications for anthropology, whereby tradition was often only theorised in its relation to modernity. This resulted in difference being translated into a matter of inferiority. Although the use of Giddens' theory varies, theorists have tended to periodise social relations to dismiss the traditional as uninteresting or archaic, such as Bauman's "liquid modernity" (2000). Another avenue altogether reduced tradition to being a different variety of the modern as "multiple modernities" (Thomassen 2012). It also fed into prominent modernist theories of nationalism, whereby tradition was approached as an "invention" under the guise of state nationalism in a European sense (Anderson 1983), as the relics of the bygones times that can be reinvented as set of idioms about the past that justify the present (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). These theories frame the concept through temporal displacement as static, or as imaginaries of a way of life more secure or constant. They ultimately present tradition as an encounter with the timespace of modernity, as a descriptive category constructed by people when they need to differentiate themselves and therefore claim certain traditions as their own.

At the same time as the paradigm of modernity was taking shape, it also became the explicit subject of anthropological critique. This had important implications for the concept of tradition. One key transformation that challenged the hegemonic narrative

of modernity can be found in Fabian's (1983) critique of anthropology. Fabian argues that human experience may appear "incorporative", but is actually "founded on distancing and separation" (*ibid.*:26). He argues that, by approaching different societies as spatially bound and therefore equally comparable on the basis of space, requires the "radical naturalisation of time (i.e., its radical dehistoricisation)" to make the equal treatment of cultural difference appear neutral (*ibid.*:16). In this sense, societal difference becomes arranged into an evolutionary hierarchy from traditional to modern. In this teleology, variation does not conceive of societal difference as contemporaneous. Fabian contends that the comparative method produces marginality by denying coevalness to certain peoples and various cultural dimensions of their lives (*ibid.*:155). Notably, Fabian's critique came around the same time as the discipline's crisis of representation (Clifford and Marcus 1986)[38]. At this time, anthropologists shifted away from more essentialist approaches due to the recognition that anthropological theory and practice was built on a self-other relationship that legitimised modernity (Trouillot 1991).

A second key transformation in anthropology's treatment of tradition removed the static meaning of the term and gave it a "live" dimension (Lambek 2015:236), to be applied as a working hypothesis for historical change. It has become one of the crucial temporal tools for anthropological understandings of the causal structures that govern ethical conduct and drive moral experience (Mattingly et al. 2018). Much of this thinking comes from the application of Alasdair Macintyre's work and his proposal that moral claims are always made within a diversity of "traditions of enquiry" each, with their own history (1981:9). More precisely, he is referring to a set of ongoing canonical ideas of the good that act as the background against which people evaluate their actions in relation to ideals of true and false, right and wrong. In Macintyre's view, tradition is defined retrospectively (2009:165). The truth of a tradition does not have to contain objective certainty but is rather a discourse between current circumstances and a prescriptive moral code inherited from the past. This code is often used to make various claims to national and cultural integrity. Macintyre conceives of

[38] Inspired by post-colonial critiques, the crisis of representation scrutinised the moral implications of anthropological representations of the Other as detached or fundamentally different to us. This triggered debates that reconceptualised the division between description and judgement, unsettling the assumption that moral neutrality was possible.

narratives of tradition as the manifold causes of events, caused by singular actions over linear time (1981:204). This concept of tradition has been widely applied in the anthropology of ethics when formulating notions of human good, whereby moral ideals are determined by a particular cultural context determined by historical conditions (e.g. Mahmood 2004, Mattingly 2014). It is important to note that my critique of Macintyre focuses less on his work directly, but on the ways in which anthropologists have used the concept of tradition without questioning the temporal assumptions inherent in Macintyre's theory. Few anthropologists apply Macintyre beyond a short reference to tradition operating dynamically as a mediation more than a static concept[39].

A relevant example can be found in Caroline Humphrey and Hürelbaatar Ujeed's (2013) analysis of Mergen Monastery and its attempt to define Mongolian Buddhism. They explore the temporal framework that plays a role in the upholding of tradition (*ulamjlal*). Using Macintyre's definition, Humphrey and Ujeed reveal the ways in which lamas position themselves in relation to historical events, exemplars and decisions to build a distinctively Mongolian tradition. They note that the use of tradition in this context is more than discursive (*ibid.*:5). By showing the way in which each generation of Mergen lamas slightly change the tradition by imitating and emulating from the past what is most valuable to them in the present, they show that it is not just about the transmission a body of religious teaching. To Humphrey and Ujeed, tradition is defined as "a corpus by people attached to an institution" that is made available through the "repeated mediation" between the past and the present that has its own historicity (*ibid.*:4). That is, tradition is continuously modified in the present that change the reference to the past in the present. Importantly, there exists an element of choice in the production of the Mergen tradition as different lamas each adopt a set of practices for cultivating religious conduct. Meditating the development of a tradition here inherently involves navigating change as a process internal to the institution. Historicity is manifest in "the fragile reproduction of tradition in the ability of individuals in the ability of individuals to play or refuse to play, to divert performances in their own diverse ways, to pluralise pasts, and to interfere with others

[39] Lambek (2015a) and Zigon (2014) have both raised questions about the use of Macintyre form a temporal perspective. I discuss these works later in the thesis.

on behalf of what they take to the ensemble" (*ibid.*:5). Although religious institutions tend to strive for encompassing ideals in their constitution, Humphrey and Ujeed somewhat problematically treat a moral canon as prior to ethical evaluation. They do not properly consider futuricity as a necessary temporality in their analysis of local aspirations for Mergen Monastery.

As I show in more detail below, living change is also seen as a necessary feature of tradition in NFLE. However, Humphrey and Ujeed conclude that their analysis should not be imagined as a "generalised unidirectional flow, but rather episodic – crystallising or flipping over into a new form with particular events or creative acts" (*ibid.*:385). They show that ethical practice of the lamas is the product of their personal identity in relation to the institution as intertwined with the cumulative retelling of historical events surrounding the monastery. The effectiveness of this theory is contingent on the implication that moral truths are discursively transmitted through the learning of historical events. These constitute the cause for ethical action and not the condition. Ethics and morality get theorised in a position in which one has to come first, predicated upon the existence of singular and coherent moral horizon in relation to historical events that give ethical practices their meaning. This tends to reduce the explanation of all phenomena to a set of rigid causal statements.

Just as in Mergen Monastery, NFLE teachers at the centre also viewed themselves as upholding a tradition; one of *hümüüjil*. Although also an institution, teachers did not claim a moral corpus around which to frame their teaching of tradition. As such, I follow more recent literature that has started to question the ways in which Macintyre's concept of tradition has reintroduced the idea of historically self-conscious and culturally bounded units into the anthropological canon (Mair and Evans 2015). When trying to theorise ethics across borders, Mair and Evans point out that incommensurability is a vital feature of ethical decision making. Recognising a similar theoretical problem to the one I have outlined in the introduction, they suggest that the production of individual ethical selves relies not on an affinity with one or another moral corpus, but on the creative production and elaboration of difference (*ibid.*:201). As such, they contend that focus should be shifted onto the multiple strands, traditions and discourses around which ethical relations are enacted.

Building upon Mair and Evans argument, Lambek (2015a) provides a means to expand the conceptual borders of tradition beyond its current application within anthropology. He suggests that the use of Macintyre's concept of tradition as an internally consistent concept should be replaced with Gadamer's notion of tradition as "a long conversation" (*ibid.*:230). The problem with Macintyre, Lambek notes, is that differences between traditions are framed within a modernist approach, whereby certain elements of the past are drawn together into one tradition or another, even if these elements exist in fragments (*ibid.*:238). He critiques Macintyre on four points derived from his ethnographic work. Firstly, he points out that traditions can converge, merge and migrate. This points to the core perspective of contemporary anthropology that does not approach cultural meaning as bounded in any sense. Secondly, he states that tradition can be internally heterogenic in ways that are not fragmentary. Thirdly, he argues that the meeting points between traditions can be productive for establishing new forms coherence that did not exist beforehand. Finally, he suggests that tradition can be transmitted by succession, through generational inheritance, or by secession as invented where necessary for a variety of reasons (*ibid.*:234).

As a result, Lambek's preference for Gadamer is premised on the fact that he solves these problems by allowing for mutual comprehension across traditions. For Gadamer (2006), Lambek explains, language is the temporal and sociohistorical dimension along which tradition moves. An ethical tradition can be found in the possibility for people to come to an understanding through dialogue. Unlike Macintyre's bounded notion of tradition, Gadamer's conversation is open to a broader vocabulary aimed at coming to an understanding of a problem and therefore a new mode of discourse. It is about a process of fusion that occurs when two or more horizons between traditions meet, one that remains open to the possibility of being transcended as new problems arise. The ethical exists here in the exercising of judgement to do the right thing, where no external measure is present, and in a situation that has commensurable and incommensurable aspects (Lambek 2015a:228). On this basis, Lambek makes the point that:

> Tradition is at once the effects that past conversations have on how we converse now, our realisation of or reflection upon, and sometimes our objectification of, such effects, and the means of accumulation, storage, and transmission of those conversations, for example in manuscripts,

> schools, initiations, disciplinary practices, veneration of ancestral figures, and authorisations of various kinds (*ibid.*:235).

Here, I come closest to Lambek's argument insofar as he questions the ethical dimension of Macintyre's concept of tradition. Following his lead, I explore how moral ideals are entangled with practice in ways that avoid abstracting moral ideals from people's capacity to act in an ethical manner. However, I take a different but complementary approach. Lambek conceives of the substance of tradition as knowledge, and ethics as the facet of interaction – what he calls "performative acts" – when finding a balance between different forms of knowledge (*ibid.*:239). A performative act refers to that which is demarcated and reproduced within a specific tradition. The ethical is located in the interaction between performative acts and what Lambek refers to as streams of practice in which multiple traditions are located (*ibid.*). In another paper he states that, "ethical action and discernment are made possible through the establishment of criteria by means of everyday speaking as well as through the performance of ritual acts" (2015b:7). Put another way, a person at any given moment finds coherence between the relevant criteria at hand from one or more traditions to discern what is the right course of action practically. I share in the perspective that "the ethical is immanent to our lives as human beings" (*ibid.*:8). The temporal point Lambek is making overall here is that the evaluative practice of discerning criteria and acting on the basis of that is both prospective and retrospective. As such, it should be characterised as an object of ethnographic inquiry in itself but a dimension or quality to be illuminated.

I do not disagree with this temporal perspective. I think that Lambek is correct in his assertion that moral criteria is not determined only from the past. A fundamental feature of ethics is that it contains the possibility to transcend what is transmitted within a tradition to find new routes through uncertainty (Mair and Evans 2015). Ultimately, there can be no movement towards an alternative future unless there is difference, or variation. If that weren't the case, difference would only be present in the degree of transmission between people and how much criteria they know. However, unlike Lambek, I cannot rely on the separation between knowledge and practice to explain how ethics informs anthropological understandings of the human condition on a universal scale. As mentioned in chapter two (2.3.1.), knowledge and action were not treated as separate dimensions in the practice of *hümüüjil*. For a person

to truly know something they must have acted on that knowledge in the correct manner. As I show in the following section, the temporal relationship between identifying with traditional knowledge as that which precedes the moment of ethical discernment is not entirely the case. In the case of the NFLE class below, discursive knowledge is not the only form of content in a tradition, and it does not always come first. I explore a different temporal composition of tradition that does not leave aside the non-discursive features of ethics that articulate cultural content and the ways in which people access it as a matter of history. As will become clear, they did not approach tradition as a discursive argument or simply a mediation between personalities. Instead, tradition here highlights a different kind of relation within this temporal multiplicity. Through these temporal relations people formulated an ethical conscience. It is to an ethnographic explication of this argument that I turn to now.

3.3. Return the Way You Came, Singing the Song You Learned[40]

It was a cold morning in early September and the small library-cum-classroom had yet to warm up. Unperturbed, four women waited patiently, each sat behind single wooden desks that had been haphazardly arranged into a semi-circle facing the front of the room. The eldest of the women gestured for me to take a seat alongside them, before returning her attention towards the teacher, Nyamka, at the side of the room. She was struggling to adjust the focus of her projector. Increasingly aware of our gaze upon her, Nyamka explained in a cheerful manner that it was *very* important that this particular picture looked beautiful. She returned her attention to the image as it slowly sharpened. It was a photograph of an elegant black stallion galloping majestically across the steppe. A common and much respected image seen across Mongolia. Once satisfied with the quality, Nyamka turned to begin. She introduced herself as the moral-aesthetic teacher. "Today's class", she explained gesturing towards the stallion, "is about making us feel unique, and to energise our bodies, hearts and minds". She pushed a button on a CD player beside her while instructing us to close our eyes and imagine the Mongolian landscape. After a few moments of silence, the sentimental sound of a horsehead fiddle, or *morin khuur*, began to fill the room.

[40] The title of the class and a common proverb: *irsen zaamaraa, sursan duugaa duulj butsah*.

It was not the first time that I had heard this famous song. Titled *Jalam Khar*, or Black Stallion, it is about a fabled horse that gallops thousands of miles to return to its homeland[41]. Many people like to claim that it is the unofficial national anthem of Mongolia and it is easy to see why. The short staccato strokes mimic the rhythm and gait of a horse galloping at full speed. There is something about the sound that is so deeply felt that it transcends any urban setting and transports the listener to the feeling of being in the Mongolian countryside. In Halha Mongolian there is a word for this feeling, *ömögshih*, referring to an intense feeling of happiness, pride and patriotism when encountering certain customary forms that today represent the legacy of a nomadic pastoralist way of life. When she taught these classes, Nyamka would tell me later that day, it was her job to induce the feeling of *ömögshih* in learners, to try and make them feel connected to their homeland, to awaken in learners both a combined sense of duty and desire and to bring into light the unique relationships Mongolian people have with one another. This was an important part, she said, of cultivating an ethical person (*yos züitei hün*).

As the music continued I heard the desks beside me shuffle. I opened my eyes to find that two of the women had become so energised by the music that they had gotten up to dance, laughing together as they synchronised their movements. Although they didn't know the famous dance associated with the song, they improvised as much as they could, repeatedly bouncing their shoulders up and down to imitate the rise and fall of a rider. After a little encouragement a third learner followed suit, allowing herself to be swept up in the moment. She swiftly introduced another move to the dance. In unison, the three women began to swing their outstretched arms above their heads as if lassoing from horseback. Clearly ecstatic with the spontaneous dancing, Nyamka grinned proudly as she joined myself and the remaining elderly learner to enjoy the rest of performance from the audience. It was not until the music finished and the dancers dispersed that Nyamka returned to the front of the class. Not wanting to lose momentum, she immediately began a discussion. Without any explanation of the song, she asked, "how can we learn from these songs, dances and folktales?"

[41] To listen to a similar rendition of *Jalam Khar*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhcJrRAA28U (Accessed 10.11.22).

The learners answered in a respectful order, eldest first. Clearly several decades older than the others, the woman beside me didn't hesitate to begin. With little prompting she suggested that "the songs, dances and folktales are more than entertainment, they are a resource." She explained that "the songs are precious because they provide one of the main instruments and methods of *hümüüjil*." Everyone, including Nyamka, nodded in agreement. Elaborating on this comment, the second learner responded with the saying, "proverbs in the heart, soft rain in the clouds" (*züir üg zürhend, züs boroo üülend*). She was pointing out that in the same way that soft rain is best for the land, so too is following the advice of proverbs best for a person's heart, the location of their character. To show good character, she went on, Mongolian people must turn to this knowledge "to learn the advice of their elders even from ancient times". "When we follow their advice we show good character, we must pass this knowledge on to our children" she finished.

There was so much implicit in the term *hümüüjil*, it seemed, that nothing more needed to be said about it. The remaining two learners instead turned the discussion to the challenges they face when trying to teach their children about the legacies of custom and value that together add up to *hümüüjil*. In her mid-thirties, the next learner expressed concern that she does not know how to teach her children how to show good character through *hümüüjil*. This was not because they have not learned the songs, folktales and proverbs. It was because these paths to cultivation are said to be lacking in society more generally. What was disrupting her children's ability to learn and act upon this knowledge and, she added, to some extent her own, was "because people in the city forget their traditions and customs". She described Ulaanbaatar as especially lacking a coherent set of values. Among other controversial problems she spoke about were not knowing neighbours, false news, poisonous foods, improperly disposing of trash, and not listening to elders. The learner used the term *üiliimchgee* when referring to the enactment of good actions. A term built from the root *üile*, which translates to "act" but also contains within that act a sense of obligation, duty and respect. In this way, the ethical dimensions of an act, such as intention, are considered as valuable as the historical origin of the act.

Working off the assumption that she would receive answers along these lines, Nyamka continued on to the next phase of the class. She presented herself as more knowledge and acted as their guide. "Like the stallion being brought together with its homeland"

she began, “so too can these problems and solutions be brought together by our traditions”. She wrote three names and their relations on the whiteboard as follows:

Sevjid	Grandfather	Founder (*üüsel*)
Sukhbaatar	Father/son	Developer (*högjil*)
Amarmandah	Grandson	Successor (*zalgamj*)

Pedagogic in both form and content, Nyamka began to present these historical figures as a parable for *hümüüjil*. Nyamka’s choice was not an insignificant one, for they are all considered highly respectable figures in Mongolian popular culture. “Let’s take the biography of Sevjid as an example” she said, “these three relations represent the past, present and future”. Her teaching went on to link the famous choreographer Sevjid to the founding of Mongolian dance as they know it today, including what we had just witnessed to *Jalam Khar*. She taught us that Sevjid used to study as a monk in a Buddhist monastery. As such, he watched the religious dance *Tsam*. At annual national celebrations such as Naadam festival, *Tsam* performers wear large, intricately detailed masks and costumes to emulate the gods. According to Nyamka, Sevjid became inspired by these movements. He decided to “mix them up” with other prominent non-religious dances, known as *biyelgee*, to create a new type of movement. Consisting of historical elements such as religious rituals and aspects of the nomadic way of life, these movements had never been seen before. In this way, the dance comes to document a sort of history that invites reflection on the complicated ways in which the past is known, lived and embodied.

With this brief introduction, Nyamka continued on to Sukhbaatar. She stated that “as fathers do, Sevjid taught his son all that he knew, especially all of his choreography”. Given his young start, she continued, Sukhbaatar became such a talented dancer that he went on to graduate as a dance teacher in 1971. He then trained all of the dancers in famous movie dramas, receiving one of the highest accolades in 1973. Although his work broke with existing practices when they first appeared, this rise to fame combined with the influence of these movie dramas ensured that the new movements became a fixture in popular culture. They ultimately became accepted as distinctive

and even canonical, achieving the status of traditional among later generations. Inspired by the past but responsive to the present of which they were a part, Nyamka was encouraging us to see Sevjid and Sukhbaatar as exemplars of *hümüüjil.* This set the terms for a certain kind of ethical person, one that follows a process whose success is measured not by how strictly traditional forms are preserved, but, rather, by how well they express new experiences and ideas while also placing a great value on studying and learning from the practices of the past. It was about bringing the past with them in ways that represent more than simply garnering wisdom from the folktale or the learning of the dance. They have a responsibility to confront the problems of their own eras. As times undergo continuous change, so too must their traditions vary in answer to it, and vice versa. This is an idea that I would later come to know as the hallmark of Nyamka's pedagogical approach.

"And now for Amarmandakh," Nyamka stated while placing a new in disk into the CD player. This time she did not ask us to close our eyes. Instead, there was a look of anticipation on her face. The beginning of the track began with the same soft horsehead fiddle overture that had played at the beginning of the class. It was as though *Jalam Khar* was triumphantly finding his way home. It started tentatively, then little clusters of dissonance gave way to a pulsing, pounding beat as a heavy bass dropped behind the fiddles and a dance remix followed suit. In the relative silence of the NFLE centre the sound felt oppressive, as though it took the air out of the room. It was barely recognisable as the same song with complex rhythms I could not begin to describe. The song did nothing but gather momentum. It felt insistent and overbearing, reminiscent of the stressful city streets. Watching the learner's reactions it was clear that they disapproved. With a look of disgust one learner even commented, "I don't know what this is!" To their relief, we did not have to listen to the entire track.

Ever mindful of the learner's reactions, Nyamka abruptly stopped the music and began to justify the thinking underlying her choice. "Like Sevjid", she explained calmly, "Amarmandakh mixed traditional dance with modern music to represent the modern era in traditional culture. The song is alive". Although very much a product of the present, Nyamka explained that she wanted to help the learners to understand, at least, that the song implies the importance of *hümüüjil* for the reproduction of human life itself, extended over three generations, as the generations themselves overlap and reproduce. To know their history does not have to mean repetition, she taught us, but

must be "creatively made" (*hiih buteelj*) and perpetually remade in response to themselves as they are in the present. She explained that, "forgetting traditions and culture presents a challenge but we can cultivate ourselves in creative ways. If you can hear the horse neighing in both songs", she said referring to the horse like sound of the fiddle, "that is the goal of the lesson". Before turning to an analysis of the form of tradition here and its ethical implications, I want to offer another example in which Nyamka enlivens a relationship with history in ways that impelled learners to think of their relations with one another.

3.4. Inside this Melody, Inside this Poem

In early May 2018, Nyamka taught another class on the horsehead fiddle. By now, she had a reputation for leaving participants feeling positively enlivened. Learners would regularly comment to me that they left her lessons significantly more energised. Raised in a herder household in Khovd province before being trained in film censorship in the capital, Nyamka's classes were usually geared towards stimulating and engaging learners through a combination of visual and aural art. Her reasons for this, she explained to me, were to "awaken traditional understanding". She saw NFLE as providing *hümüüjil* in order to teach values that were previously part of a social and familial ethos in Mongolia, but which are no longer always available in those arenas. Her job was to nurture "bright people" (*serelt hün* or *sergelen)*; used when referring to a sharp, entrepreneurial person. Deriving from *sergeeh*, meaning to restore or revive, a *serelt hün* conveyed a sense of enlightenment cultivated in relation to the contemporary era. As usual, her pedagogical approach was to take a culture symbol of Mongolia to explore as an intentional form of such cultivation.

The title of the class was "Inside this Melody, Inside this Poem". It was "a poetic celebration of personal spiritual achievement" through learning about the horsehead fiddle. As she had never learned to play the instrument herself, something that she often claimed brought her great shame, Nyamka wished instead to use her class as an opportunity to relish in the thrill of the sound and its ability to invite pleasant emotions in complex yet subtle ways. As she explained to me and eight other learners, all women:

> Sometimes people mistake aesthetics for clothing and correct speech. In some NFLE centres, aesthetic means sewing and hairdressing. Here,

> it is more based on feelings. I teach the art of feelings before the concept of beauty or ugliness. When you see paintings, what kind of feelings do you have? How can you manage these feelings into well-being. Aesthetics is based in feelings so I try to include all sensations of the body. Today, the melody is your body and the poem is your vision.

She then instructed all of us to close our eyes and listen, concentrating on feeling the presence of ourselves. She then played a recording of the classic poem "*Morin Khuur"*" by the famous T. Tsedendorj (1960). The poem is about the central place the *morin khuur* holds as a core element of traditional Mongolian culture. Behind the booming voice of the man heartily reciting, a small Mongolian symphony orchestra of predominantly *morin khuur* players accompanied with a graceful rendition of the famous classical song "White Stupa", or *Tsagaan Suvraga* [42]. It was immediately clear that the rendition struck a bold note with all present, each person swaying, smiling or lip syncing along to the words.

After a couple of minutes the music faded, Nyamka then divided the other learners into pairs, gave each a piece of paper and instructed them to share their ideas and feelings. "What melodies or lyrics cause emotions in your minds and heart?" she asked before played the song again in the background. After some time gathering their ideas and drawing them on large sheets of paper, Nyamka invited each group to present their feelings to the rest of the class. One by one the women shared their feelings. Curiously, they all discussed exactly the same topic; their *hiimori.* As explained in more detail in the previous chapter (2.4.), *hiimori* is a force of vitality internal to each person as the accumulation of positive or negative energy that circulates inside their body, usually contained in their chest. Drawn on each group's piece of paper was a version of the steppe with swirling patterns (representing vitality), a sun shining and flowers growing around *gers* and a white stupa. The first explanation given was, "the earth and sky is listening when we play *morin khuur*. It has the power to relax people, to make them peaceful. And of course in Mongolian language *hiimori* is not separated from its original name, we should love Buddha". Her partner nodded in agreement then

[42] To listen to a similar rendition visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5I8BWAijxJ4 (Accessed 10.11.22).

Figure 15: Class Teamwork

followed, “whether in the countryside or the city this is the melody of the Mongolian homeland, it can be everywhere there is no separation. When we say *hiimori* it is something inside of our body and mind, if we feel good *hiimori* is up”. This was followed by a lengthy class discussion on comparing the sound of the recording to the satisfaction of seeing a horse race. “When every Mongolian sees the first horse coming to the finish line they have this mental condition to cry, be happy and laugh. That is the condition of knowing *hiimori* is well” explained another learner sat at the front of the class. She concluded “*hiimori* and *morin khuur* are always connected”. Here, Nyamka construes tradition, and by extension, history, as assuming the same vital force akin to the notion of a soul. It was also a kind of personal life force in each living person. Something that is not located in an event, but by virtue of fact that it is perceived as coming from the ancient past it was deemed moral at the same time, but expressed as outside of time.

The class followed along these lines for some time, each learner giving different examples of how the poem elevated their *hiimori* along with other measurements of satisfaction. These included “positive energy” (*eyereg energi*) and “superstition” (*muhar süseg*). A learner gave an example, “I was walking down the street about to slip on ice and a man came and helped me from falling and said be careful. It was such a little act of kindness in daily life but I was so happy as he was a stranger but he

helped me. Even a small act of kindness showed a big heart. I still remember that day. If I keep showing ethics in daily life I can make a good memory for a stranger like he did for me." After some discussion, Nyamka asked the class to consider why *hiimori* is important for becoming an ethical person. She gave her own example, stating that it helps her feel less stressed. For Nyamka, *hümüüjil* has implications for how she felt, as much as what she knows. The class discussion gathered momentum again, this time with the learners listing qualities of an ethical person that they felt *hiimori* instilled in them. Among others these included: showing self-respect, having a good heart, being organised, and a good listener that never discriminates. "What does the music make you feel?" Nyamka asked. The first to answer was the youngest learner, who spoke of her experience with an example, "it reminds me of my brother. He is a police officer, he is good at listening to people and gives advice very patiently." Another learner followed suit saying, "my little brother shows kindness to strangers and family. If two people are different classes he treats them the same despite appearances." A theme emerged in which each response following the familial structure of *hümüüjil*. "My mother is good example of good behaviour, I'm her daughter and learned all my ethics from her so I am example of that" one of the older learners contributed. "I show respect to my daughter all of the time and she is ethical too" she finished.

When Nyamka finally stepped in she summarised, "that music and poem are official institutions of history and respect". "In ancient times" she continued, "Chinggis Khan said you should treat children as kings until three years old, until nine years old treat them like a slave. It means to train them to imitate good things not bad things. This includes love and respect and being self-confident". She then briefly taught the class about the names of the distinctive parts of the instrument and how to handle it properly. For example, it must be located towards the northeast, not the southeast, to avoid another force that animates social life in the region, this time one of misfortune. This came with a caveat, Nyamka stated, that many people no longer live in *gers* but in apartment blocks. Nevertheless, she explained at length that emotions are more than an inward sensibility and must be cultivated within the context of social life:

> Society and the world is changing. Even the person is changing so quickly. The main part of lesson is to give direction for living a happy life full of satisfaction. It is also to advance your concept of the value of your life as that is changing too. Aesthetic life is changing. Even the

> concept of beauty has changed a lot in the modern era. Our cultivation tends to look at the good attitude and kind hearted, or even the environment not appearances, not fake beauty. People with a good attitude can love the earth, respect people and develop the country. The basic of all this is aesthetic training. People who can feel the beauty in their heart can't really hate others, curse or hurt others or violate others because they can feel beauty inside and taste the aesthetic form of everything because their heart is full of love and forgiveness. They are full of beauty that is why they never beat, shoot or stab someone. This aesthetic training course is about analysing the different sides of beauty to understand the complex meaning of beauty and skill.

Nyamka finished her speech with a proverb "beauty saves the universe" (*goo saihan ertontsiig avarna*).

The last part of her class was always most important to Nyamka, as she attempted to align the *morin khuur* as an object of cultural heritage with the contemporary cultural politics broadly circulating in social life or on social media. In this class, she played another piece of music, this time a remix of *morin khuur* playing White Stupa although with electronic interference and a heavy, stomping beat. The reaction from learners was the same as usual. All bar the youngest learner did not enjoy it. Like Amarmandakh's piece above, Nyamka explained that the learners must "still find *hiimori* in these strange sounds", as she was trying to teach that there is countless different varieties of things in the world. That there cannot be only one tradition. Nyamka never really expanded upon this kind of point in her lessons. She later told me that there was something about ethics or aesthetics that she felt was beyond the point of being expressed with words. This is why she tried to incite such feeling in her classes. To me, this pointed to a mode of history that lay beyond the types of knowledge that conventional forms of historiography require, namely writing about events that occurred in the past. Here, the affective qualities of *hiimori* offer a different mode in which people experience novel information about the past.

In her practice of *hümüüjil*, Nyamka teaches tradition as something to be creatively made in and through the cultivation of several sets of relations; interpersonal, generational, material, and affective. Each of these give expression to a different

temporality that converge into the basis for formulating notions of an ethical person. As such, the presence of a single moral canon and an associated system of values that rely on a singular linear view of time cannot be assumed. Nyamka was explicit in fostering traditional dynamics that were not limited to one set of ideals but found in the integration of variation and difference relevant to the people involved. For her, tradition is not about competing truths each relative to one another but needed to be combined to create new feelings, relations and actions on the basis of novel information. Although Macintyre (1988) suggests that traditions can interact if the structure of the predominant tradition prevails, he also argues that a tradition has force only internal to itself. Essentially, traditions remain spatially and conceptually bounded homogenous units deemed to be rationally incommensurable to one another. In his view, relativity persists in that one tradition could not only rationally assess another tradition beyond a partial understanding. To engage in another tradition from a person's point of view would require learning "a new and second first language (1988:364). In this sense, rationality is the only measure for understanding tradition.

As I explore in the next section, not all of the multiple temporalities place value before their cultivation, as something that exists before ethical action is undertaken. The temporality of *hiimori*, for example, does not derive from a set of moral principles but is felt as an identification with a specific timespace. Therefore, any application of Macintyre's (1984) notion of tradition, theorised as determined by historical context from which they are transmitted, would obscure the diversity of chronotopes at play here. In Macintyre's perspective, cause is often conflated with conditions, simply meaning a set of events which bring about another event or set of events, to connote adherence to a moral code. This implies a linear historical direction. Tradition, in this thinking, essentially equates to causality. In other words, tradition constitutes the reasons or clearly defined ideals that are subsequently linked to personal values and the actions people take in seeking them. Such historical contextualism, I suggest, disregards certain dimensions of historical consciousness. In Nyamka's class, the practice of cultivation is neither in front or behind of values but involves the inhabitation or enlivening of history as an aesthetic experience. In this sense, context cannot be treated solely as causal, although it does not exclude the possibility that it could be. Causality simply takes more than one temporal form.

3.5. Harnessing Traditions with Multiple Temporalities

In this section, I examine the multiple causal factors underlying tradition in Nyamka's practice of *hümüüjil*. Drawing from the anthropology of time and temporality, I explore the teaching of history as a practice constituted through a specific temporal constellation. In my interpretation, Nyamka's practice of enlivening tradition (*ulamjlal*) did not only value age as primary register, but valued the accumulation of the affective qualities of *ömögshih* or *hiimori* that enable or enhance the capacity for different ethical relations. In what follows, I first lay out the framework of "modern social time" (Bear 2014:6) that I utilise to capture this temporal complexity. I then explore the multiple causal relations each with their own temporality that come under the guise of *hümüüjil*, history (*tüüh*) and tradition (*ulamjlal*). These historicise, make present, and prefigure the future, all at the same time. In particular, I lay out the ways in which people contemplate their present conditions and potential futures in terms of the past, as condensed in artifacts, representations and practices. The concluding section explores the evaluative orientation of historical affect and the implications this has for the anthropology of ethics.

In Nyamka's view, the instrument, music and poem represented a condensed set of temporal artefacts. For her, teaching these topics represented an act of tradition that together embodied national history, sentimental resonance, and a moment for the listener to think through social change in ways that embrace difference. To frame this perspective, I draw from the concept of "modern time" to capture the complex mediations that involve more than one form of historicity or futurity (Bear 2014:3). This theory derives from the sense that framing temporal analyses as abstract time versus the human experience of it is not sufficient. For example, the concept of emergence, while important, tends to gloss over a more complex picture (*ibid.*:13). Modern time expresses a broader range of social and non-human representations and rhythms and the ways in which they are mediated by institutions (*ibid.*:6). It is based in the abstract time reckoning of capitalism. As people navigate abstract time, Bear argues, they draw from a diverse variety of other temporalities to give expression to the existence of difference in their lives. These differences are characterised by doubt, conflict or mediation but also possibility, in light of the different experiences of agency that arise out contradictory social effects (*ibid.*:7).

The theoretical background making this theory possible is Gell's (1992) version ideal types of time and his concept of time-maps as the qualities and techniques that give expression to different types of time. Gell identifies three ideal types of time: non-human space-time that exists outside of human perception; the personal experience of time; and the social framing of time. In distinguishing these types, Gell inquiries into the techniques people use to coordinate between these time-maps. There is a distinction here between the "A" series with phenomenological qualities, where time is experienced as dynamic, and a "B" series where time is seen as objective and measurable to heighten a sense of before and after. For Gell, time-maps are thickened by a heterochrony of these different types of time that include depth and affect. As Bear states building upon this idea, "multiple representations and social rhythms form a dynamic simultaneity from which further representations and experiences unpredictably emerge," as such time becomes experienced as layered, folded and non-linear (2014:6).

Although Nyamka used the essentialist language of modernisation theory to oppose tradition and modernity, her goal was to express a more complex form of history-making in which the two categories were not mutually exclusive. There is more than one chronotope converging with regards to the temporality of historicisation here. The first, and most predominant, was the notion of linear irreversible time as expressed through metaphors of kinship, lineage and biological inheritance from ancestors. This was discursive, visible when people spoke about their relationships to the past and anxieties in the present. For example, the comment that people "forget" their traditions, as though they are relics to be preserved from the past. Or, the comment that people must learn from ancestors, as though the historical knowledge can be transmitted as property from one generation to the next. Curiously, this form of linear historicisation was not alone, it was also translated into people's personal historicities through the lens of *hümüüjil*. This is evidenced in Nyamka's choice of Sevjid, Sukhbaatar and Amarmandakh as exemplars of the three generational inheritance that is central to the structure of human cultivation. This link to *hümüüjil* functions as a key site to develop legitimacy by drawing attention to exemplars that learners can relate to in the present. This exemplarity is contained in the term for inheritance, *övlüüleh*, that contains within it the meaning of inheriting from the previous generations and passing that knowledge down to the next. The examples given by learners in reference to the character of an

ethical person offer another example, whereby *hümüüjil* is expressed in the learning from family members about how to be a good person. The convergence of historicist style teaching with learner's own sense of cultivation emplaces their personal experiences of *hümüüjil* into a long sense of time and existence organised into historical time. The meeting point of these two time-maps is both at once a representation of the past (historicist) and a practice of history (*tüüh/hümüüjil*). This means that at the same time the past can be separated, it thickens with the responsibility to learn to live with and in relation to change.

At the same time as Nyamka locates the moral exemplarity of the past in linear generational inheritance, she also displaces it. By combining her narration of historical events with music or poetry, Nyamka hopes to produce effects in the present. More precisely, her teaching is designed to provoke intense affect by drawing upon the locally salient notion of desire in form of *ömögshih* and *hiimori*. This presents a different orientation for making time present that does not presume linearity in which ethical evaluation exists prior. Affect refers to a felt bodily intensity in the form of overwhelming emotions, moods and sentiments, and the feeling of possibility that emerges as a result (Rutherford 2016:286)[43]. Of concern in this time-map is the temporality of affect with regards to future-oriented potentialities. Firstly, the present is not radically distinct from the past when it comes to affect. Both *ömögshih* and *hiimori* represent a mode of historical intensification that is timeless in origin but physical in effect. To consider these as an affective quality of history-making requires an examination of the ways in which the past has an energetic dimension. This does not exist outside of historicist narratives, as to feel the effect of Nyamka's historical narrative means that the learner's thoughts have attached to words and experiences in order to feel *ömögshih* and *hiimori*. My point is that these affective qualities evoke historical thoughts rooted in embodied experience. The ethical is present in that, in order to feel these affects, the learners have to evaluate the past in order to ascribe meaning to the feeling and to establish appropriate conduct in relation to it. This entails

[43] I do not engage extensively with the concept of affect as it exists as a sub-discipline in anthropology (e.g. Rutherford 2016, Stewart 2007). I prefer to use it to describe a certain felt quality that exists in relation to local notions of history-making rather than a discrete object of inquiry in its own right.

a form of historicisation that displaces narrative descriptions of the past by orientating it to the future in the form of a bodily sensation, as a desire for responsible relations.

In highlighting *ömögshih* and *hiimori* as a form of non-discursive historicisation, it is possible to explore an alternative to the predominant definitions of tradition that theorise it as either a conversation or dialogue. For example, Lambek argues that tradition is formed though the "temporal layering of acts and utterances" (2015a:235). This is done through what he calls "the grammar of ethics", that is, "the general conditions and processes of human thought, feeling, action that generate specific criteria, virtues, values and judgements" (*ibid.*:245). In describing the temporal relations as layering, implies a process of sedimentation that is limited when attempting to describe the more complex relations between temporalities other than coexistence. In my interpretation, *ömögshih* and *hiimori* do sediment an objectification of historical narratives to an extent. In this regard, I agree with Lambek (*ibid.*:245). However, they also displace, converge and contradict it. The relations between multiple temporalities did not hold equal potential to orient people to conduct themselves in an ethical manner in the future.

A more productive way of conceptualising tradition in Nyamka's classes would be to apply what Pedersen and Nielson refer to as a "trans-temporal hinge" (2013:122). This allows me to express more than a conversation that objectifies the past or a tradition. A trans-temporal hinge recognises a "gathering point in which different temporalities are momentarily assembled" (*ibid.*). In analysing the temporal ontology of local contexts in this way, I firstly avoid overemphasising Western philosophy in my fieldsite. Secondly, in Nyamka's class tradition was the pivot point upon which otherwise disparate temporalities can be distinguished. Rather than layering, the relations between horizons of events, sensations and desires are given shape in a way that recognises convergence but does not erase the original temporality. Finally, the notion of a hinge does not privilege discourse, narrative or transmission in the temporality of tradition. My sense was that *ömögshih* and *hiimori* produced an intensification of history that exists in a horizon beyond discourse, containing more than can possibly be conveyed by verbal transmission. Regrettably, capturing this

horizon is beyond the reach of this thesis[44]. For now, I can acknowledge it as a point of focus for future research.

3.6. A Value Generating Timespace

This chapter has explored the multiple temporal relations through which tradition (*ulamjlal*) and history (*tüüh*) are embodied as a field of ethical action in NFLE's practice of *hümüüjil*. I examined two paradigmatic transformations regarding the concept of tradition in anthropology and pointed to the problematic overemphasis on discursive forms of analysis. Through two ethnographic vignettes of moral-aesthetic education at the NFLE centre, I presented a different analysis of tradition in which the measure of value was grounded in a set of temporalities that invoke aesthetic experiences in learners in ways that drive them to enact better relations in the future. I showed that in practice of *hümüüjil,* transmission takes place on grounds of multiple temporalities. In the teaching of tradition (*ulamjlal*), I suggested, time is multiple, non-linear and thickened with ethical problems, incommensurability and potential. When perceived in this way tradition is opened up to be perceived as a value generating practice within more complex timescapes that brings social worlds into being and gives them an explicit ethical character.

In his work on historical consciousness in Greece, Stewart (2012) distinguished between the history of dreams in Naxos, and the mode of historicising that dreams entail. Intervening between these two historicities is an "existential temporality" in which the unconscious part of a person is responsive to current events (*ibid.*:15). That is, dreams combined elements of known events with unknown pasts in ways that generated new forms of historical thought. This historicisation involved, Stewart shows, "looking into the future and into the past to find ways of acting in the present" (*ibid.*:215). In much the same way, Nyamka was attempting to draw out the unconscious, or in this instance aesthetic, dimensions of historical consciousness in her teaching of tradition to produce ethical cultivation. Her goal was to help learners know and feel how they ought to act towards one another in the future. Building upon

[44] I encountered limits not only when translating Halha Mongol terms into English, but also through the medium of written analysis. Visual anthropology might provide a more productive medium to capture and represent these non-discursive dimensions of historical consciousness.

Stewart's notion of historical consciousness, I have shown how Nyamka draws together an ethical relationship to time and the multiple temporalities that make this possible.

Now that I have brought this temporal multiplicity into view, the next chapter examines local understandings of ethical relations and the ways in which time is reconstituted through a set of communicative practices taught as responsibility. In doing so, I explore the relations between temporalities in more detail. I examine another non-discursive mode of historicisation expressed in an understanding that communication prefigures the future. I argue that the communicative practices taught as a key dimension of *hümüüjil* reflect a form of historical connection as much as an ethical one.

Chapter Four.

A Lesson on *Yos Züi*: The Temporality of Ethics

4.1. The Ethos of History

The practice of *hümüüjil* described in the previous chapters focused on its conceptualisation as a "living tradition" (Lambek 2002:265), one that conceives of history (*tüüh*) as something to be creatively made in and through a set of affective and conceptual tensions, as well as historicising practices, that are entangled with chronological time in complex ways. I showed how multiple temporalities weaved together to form a relationship specific to time and place. So far, I have touched upon the ways in which this trans-temporal hinge is concerned with ethical value. In this chapter, I take this ethical dimension as my focal point. I examine the ways in which history (*tüüh*) is creatively made in and through the proper enactment of social relations. This is articulated, I demonstrate, through the local concept of *yos züi*, or ethics, that motivated the practice *hümüüjil* within Non-formal and Lifelong Education classes. In addition to exploring the multiple temporalities structuring *yos züi,* I extend this argument to examine how they relate to one another.

I discuss *yos züi* three parts. First, I introduce the basic lexicon of *yos züi*, including its related terms, criteria and distinguishing features. This provides a starting point for thinking about the locally salient categories that constitute the notion of ethical cultivation in contemporary Ulaanbaatar. Secondly, I describe ethnographically the elements of *yos zui* most emphasised in NFLE classes. I pay special attention to the question of how temporality and ethical value are interwoven in the practice of *hümüüjil* through the cultivation of "responsibility" or "communication" (both *hariultslah*). In foregrounding communicative practices as a form of historical connection as much as an ethical one, I argue, allows for a better understanding of how people evaluate themselves in culturally specific ways. In particular, how *yos züi* is understood as cultivating a disposition that prefigures the future by making certain types of behaviour more likely than others. I then analyse the ways in which *yos züi*

represents an ethos that recognises a person's character as a mode of historical consciousness, and the questions of relationality between historicities and their temporalities that it invites.

4.2. Introducing *Yos Züi*

Anthropologists of Mongolia have all written about ethical life to a certain extent when discussing the widespread description of "disorder" (*zambaraagüi*) currently pervasive across the country. However, the local term for ethics, *yos züi*, tends not to feature heavily in these analyses. During the course of my fieldwork, discussions around *yos züi* and its related terms were central to my daily experience. At the NFLE centre, it was treated as the basis for becoming educated and, by extension, being considered a good person. In conversations and classes, it was discussed as the constitutive dimension of the human condition. In the introduction, I opened with the question "how human is this person?" (*hüneer ene hün her zereg ve*). When a person is perceived to be *yos züigüi*, or unethical (literally translated as without ethics), this question is asked as judgement. It implies that the human being in question has not learned how to act in the appropriate manner that befits a good person. *Hümüüjil* is the process required to transition from a human to a person, and attaining *yos züi* is the goal.

Described as an ethos by NFLE teachers and learners, *yos züi* was a measure against which to evaluate the quality of a person's character and conduct as well as an important ingredient of everyday social relations. For any interaction to be considered appropriate it must be cultivated and performed through the language, emotions and behaviours governed by the ethos of *yos züi*. Although most closely translated as ethics, I want to caution from the outset that its connotations do not map directly onto the English term. In its broadest sense it can be described as ethical, which in this context is to say the question of how a person should cultivate (*hümüüjlüüleh*) a human quality or conscience (*hün chanartai*) and about what kind of human being they should be in accordance with a certain characteristic spirit of Mongolian social life as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations. Caution is due, however, in that distinctions commonly made within anthropology such as those between ethics and morality, causality and condition, or meaning and evaluation, are not completely absent but tend to be interwoven in considerably more complex ways. As it stands, the

concept of ethics in anthropology falls short of explaining the mode of historical consciousness that *yos züi* draws together (1.4.2.). This stems from a reliance on Williams' (1985) definition of the good that distinguishes between morality as pre-existing code and ethics as the actions people undertake against these ideals (e.g. Laidlaw 2014, Keane 2016). By assuming that ethical action follows a process in which knowledge of the good is predetermined, scholars in the anthropology of ethics rely on a concept of process that is singular, linear and based on an unproblematised conception of "homogenous and empty time" (Benjamin 1999:261, see also Hodges 2014, Zigon 2014). It follows that only an ethnographic examination can reveal the multiple and non-linear temporal aspects of *yos züi* as they thread together in the textured context of everyday life.

The ethnography below focuses on the cultivation of *yos züi* as part of the "Moral-Aesthetic Education" (*yos surtahuun – goo züi medremjiin bolovsrol*) pathway at the NFLE centre[45]. As a core feature of *hümüüjil, yos züi* was elemental to daily classes. Its cultivation included lessons on everything from good communication to correctly putting on a *deel*, the ability to market yourself to being patriotic, avoiding bad habits (e.g. smoking, addiction) to environmental sustainability. As part of these efforts, *yos züi* was taught as a prime manifestation of a local ethos through a focus on forms of communication through which multiple relations can be achieved. These relations reveal a chronotope that looks to the future, one manifest in the behaviours, emotions and other vital forces that people evaluated as good.

The impetus for this chapter comes from the need to introduce two new lines of inquiry into studies of the ethical and the temporal in anthropology. My primary concern is to introduce an ethnographic account of the context and constitution of *yos züi*. Currently, the analysis of the local concept of ethics in Mongolia is less present in the literature, as compared to various studies on the concept of morality (e.g. Humphrey 1997, Zimmerman 2012). My second concern is to highlight the need to rethink the terms of reference for the concept of the ethical to take into account a broader range of

[45] The title of this course varied in relation to the Mongolian NFLE literature. The official pathways were labelled separately as "Moral-Upbringing Education" (*yos surtahuun-tölövshiliin bolovsrol*) and "Aesthetics Education" (*goo züi medremjiin bolovsrol*). However, staff at the NFLE centre chose to combine their classes and titled it as such.

temporalities. As outlined in the introduction (1.4.2.), the dominant interpretative paradigm in the ethical turn conceptualises morality as comprised of a set of publicly prescribed rules that are in some sense predetermined as a tradition. These historically informed precedents constitute the evaluative criteria against which people reflect upon themselves and their situations as true or false, right or wrong. Here, the ethical must be justified in the light of shared morals to some degree. These values are conceived as existing as prior external constraints or conditions in which internal motives produce ethical actions. To understand people's actions, therefore, anthropologists have assume that causality exists in a linear process in which knowledge comes first and actions are evaluated on the basis of that knowledge. On these grounds, causality centres on the notion of evaluation.

My problem is not with the distinction between ethics and morality on these terms, but rather with the temporality through which actions gain their meaning. In ascribing to this theory, any ethical action can only gain meaning within the interior of a discourse where values function as historical content. That is, a person's conduct acquires meaning by virtue of its emplotment onto the linearity of events as a form of historical explanation and conformity to its precedents. Any ethical actions in the present, whether produced by a unique combination of causes, become linked in a sequence within a historicist notion of time, and referred to against this repeated series of events predominantly framed within institutional contexts. Each value, although unique, derives its significance from its position on the axis of time. My point is that in conceiving of values and evaluation in this way, anthropologists tend to obscure the relationship between multiple causal factors that exist as forms of historical expression outside of the remit of linear notions of time. That is, those that can be found within other modes of historical consciousness.

Without forcing the conclusion that ethical action is necessarily determined by a series of events that anchor peoples sense of value in the past, this chapter examines how moral values are shared in ways that are not transcendent or detachable from a person's actions. This perspective was predominately inspired by the anthropology of history (Stewart 2012, Lambek 2018b). It also speaks to several lesser explored questions raised within the anthropology of ethics regarding the ways in which assumptions about linear time inform conceptualisation in the discipline more broadly, and how this has provided a central dimension to the study of morality and ethics (Das 2006,

Mattingly et al. 2017, Prasad 2010, Zigon 2014). For example, Jarrett Zigon (2014) calls into question the way in which a linear idea of time is implicitly accepted in anthropology as a key template for understanding how morality is historically acquired. Through his life-historical research on the moral experience of Muscovites, Zigon argues instead that "moral experience and a key feature of that experience – ethical action – are best understood as made possible by means of a process of temporalisation rather than as carried out within the bounds of homogenous time" (*ibid.*:444). In developing concepts that assume Benjamin's notion of "homogenous and empty time" (1999:261), Zigon argues that anthropologists obscure the "discontinuities, clamour, and radical otherness encountered in actual 'moral life'" (Zigon 2014:447). Zigon goes on to deny the existence of time in his analysis, arguing that measurements of time should be theorised instead as "an active process of temporalising, that is, an active process of creating what can be understood and glossed as time" (*ibid.*:448). While I do not deny the existence of time in my analysis, Zigon does raise an important point regarding the temporal dynamics and causal structures of change that moral evaluation and ethical action require. In what follows, I also draw upon Benjamin's notion of "homogenous and empty time" as the temporality underlying historicism. This exists alongside other sets of incremental, non-discursive actions, which are nevertheless causal. These, I argue, each represent a different temporality that sit in relation to the irreversibility of time. Before turning to the ethnography detailing these, the next section explicates the concept of ethics in Mongolia in more detail.

4.3. *Yos Züi* and Related Terms

In contemporary Ulaanbaatar, *yos züi* is a key term that reveals the temporal dynamics that inform sociocultural order and its transformations. Although of ancient origin, the term has gained increasing relevance over the past two decades as people have used it when seeking to challenge the emergence of individualistic values that have resulted from more recent democratic and capitalist influences. In what follows, I lay out the various ways in which my interlocutors conceived of *yos züi*. I then explore the actions and behaviours undertaken in reference to *yos züi* as they were rendered observable to

me in NFLE[46]. I further complement this with regards to the small body of scholarly literature currently available surrounding the topic (Empson 2020, Humphrey 1997, Kohl-Garrity 2018, Tangad 2016).

Y*os züi* belongs to a broad family of concepts that centre on notions of good behaviour and its cultivation to build a sense of order (Tangad 2016). It was typical for people to use the related terms of morality (*yos surtahuun*), ethics (*yos züi*), custom (*yos zanshil*), aesthetics (*goo züi-medremj*) and respect (*hündleh yos*) somewhat interchangeably. There was never any concern among my interlocutors to clarify neat definitions between the terms as they were all implicated in the lexical field. Many of my interlocutors went so far as to deem such a task unnecessary. This is due to a profound sense that the terms are not meant to be understood as stand-alone concepts in ways that the English translations demand. Instead, together these terms interlace to embody and express an ethos in ways that are culturally distinctive. As such, each term always acts as a constituent of the others. That is, for any interaction to be considered ethically appropriate it must be embodied in feelings (aesthetics) that call for attentive communication (respect), moral evaluation and cultivation. This can only be achieved through the proper pedagogies (custom or *hümüüjil*) and responsible forms of communication that enable a person to mature throughout their lifetime. Importantly, communication and responsibility in this context shared the same term (*hariultslah*). During the course of my fieldwork, there was a distinctive lack of consistency in how the terms were utilised, further revealing the considerable overlap and interaction between the concepts in everyday life. Despite this inconsistency, however, *yos züi* featured as the preferred and most pervasive of the concepts in everyday use.

A brief glance at the etymology sheds some light on this family of concepts. With the exception of aesthetics, the terms are each built around the notion of *yos*. This root bears two predominant meanings[47]:

[46] Given the extensive reach of *yos züi* throughout all areas of everyday life, it would be problematic to focus on providing an encompassing account here. I therefore confine the details to my experience at the NFLE centre.

[47] The Great Dictionary of Mongolian Language viewed online https://mongoltoli.mn/ (Accessed 21.04.21).

1. In the course of social development, the inevitable patterns and nature of things in various forms.
2. The customs of people in life, the rules to be followed, the customs and the law.

In colloquial terms, *yos* was most often translated as "etiquette" but it refers more broadly to actions that structure the conditions for all that is good or proper. It was used to convey a sense of customary law and order, especially in situations that centred around the correct performance of a ritual or when referring to responsible (or respectful) forms of social interaction. Any practices undertaken in relation to *yos* were done so with at least somewhat conscious orientation towards proper behaviour (*zöv zan baidal*). The most common use of the term is *yostoi*/*yosgüi* (literally having *yos* /no *yos*) meaning "must/must not". The centrality of *yos* in everyday life also features notably in its pairing with other words to convey a sense of discipline and social reproduction; such as "formality" (*alban yos*), "justice" (*shudraga yos*), "regulation" (*yos juram*) or "ceremony" (*yoslol*). Ultimately, the word expresses that the cultivation of appropriate conduct of a person and their affairs is present. Any action considered taboo (*tseer*), or chaotic (*zambaraagüi*), is perceived as a threat to appropriate conduct and thus disturbing the order of *yos*.

A person that embodies *yos* has learned the hierarchy implicit in the proper social ordering of relations. This hierarchy promotes an order of respectful valuation that arranges all sorts of things into a hierarchy between seniors and juniors, material or agentive objects, people and the environment. *Yos* is essentially the mode for conveying meaning in these relationships. A classic example often cited by my interlocutors was *geriin yos*, the spatial organisation and orderly movement of people (dead or alive), objects, and vital forces such luck (*chiimori*) and fortune (*hishig*) within a *ger* encampment. In this space, the order of *yos* arranges the positioning and movement of people and objects in the *ger* in relation to one other. This includes ranking people differently along the lines of occupation, achievements, age, and gender depending on how they stand in relation to each other and the host. Importantly, this order implies equality in the sense that it is an "egalitarian hierarchy" (Haynes and Hickel 2016:5). That is, a form of sociality in which difference of rank does not presuppose inequality, enabling value to be allocated across a balanced and intentional order. In addition to hospitality, actions undertaken with regards to this order applies

to maintaining relations with spirits or other unwanted entities that lurk around the encampment[48].

Perceived as a positive social phenomenon, *yos* affords people with a powerful orientation for human action and desire. It is central to local models of a good society as it opens up a moral and ethical space that is affective and relational. The regional literature has primarily focused on this in relation to morality, or *yos surtahuun* (e.g. Humphrey 1997, Kohl-Garrity 2018, Tangad 2016, Zimmermann 2012). For example, Caroline Humphrey (1997) usefully explores morality in relation to people's dependence on and deference to exemplars. She shows that *yos surtahuun* does not conform to philosophies founded upon abstract structures of pure reason or on any strict adherence to rules but is mediated through moral exemplars. That is, people access societal norms and values specifically through their personal identification with prominent historical figures. Humphrey's breakdown of the concept is useful to note. She relates *yos* to the moral "way things should be" and *surtahuun* the ethical "way I should be" (*ibid.*:32). Deriving from the pedagogical *surgah* meaning to "let somebody learn" or "to become accustomed to", *surtahuun* conveys the "teaching of" something. This teaching refers to all experiences and areas of life that might offer moral orientation as opposed to solely formal teaching in an institutionalised sense, although this context can be included in such. Together, *yos surtahuun* is focused on what Humphrey calls "practices of the self" (*ibid.*:42); a personal ethics that gives space to each person's ongoing capability to sow their own potential and empowers them with ability to choose to lead the kind of life they value. Here, *yos* and *surtakhuun* operate as symbiotic poles that balance the dynamic between everyday practicality and the need for a unifying social order in relation to ideal educated person.

Within this formulation, Humphrey also identifies a third moral aspect relating to the arbitrary "way things are" that are prominently expressed through the enactment of respect (*hündleh yos*) shown to senior kin or through a master-disciple relationship (*ibid.*:32). Though conceptually distinct, moral exemplars are coterminous with respect for authority in Mongolia, in that those who make up authority can be embodied in historical figures, officials at various levels, and the wealthy or famous.

[48] For a detailed description of these activities see Ruhlmann (2019).

Through relationships of exemplarity, she suggests, a variety of possible paths open to a person. By emulating the qualities, virtues and values of exceptional persons drawn from *üilger*, "the combination of the ideal represented by the teacher and their words or deeds" (*ibid.*:37), ordinary people can acquire an understanding of norms and motivations and act in accordance with them. In this sense, an individual does not experience any sense of obligation or responsibility to act in isolation but only with others within a relational setting. Moral orientation is thus considered a matter of group identification found within the element of choice that centres on a shared mode of evaluation of its value-laden norms.

Curiously, *yos surtahuun* did not feature in my fieldwork outside of my direct questions about it. Rather *yos* was most often paired with the term *züi*; "the basic ethos that gathers and binds people together in communities and prompts social action"[49]. *Züi* also functions as the suffix "-ology" in English to refer to the study of something. As such, the study of and learning from exemplars were still very much regarded as a key feature of ethical life (see chapter five). However, it appears as though the terminology has shifted. Viewed together, *yos züi* was broadly defined by the NFLE teachers as "the correct way to behave and act in relations between society, people, and the environment so that people can live a balanced life in their hearts and minds and have harmonious relationships". This was demonstrated in more detail by the aesthetics teacher Nyamka:

> When saying *yos züi* we mean lifelong principles. For example, no matter how angry you get you never lose respect for your parents in law. Saying *yos surtahuun* can be about professional clothes and other rules. As a teacher I must watch my language and not wear revealing clothes. These rules are important but lifelong principles are more important truths. It is the feeling that it is the right thing to do.

Like many others with whom I spoke, Nyamka perceived of *yos züi* as indistinguishable from notions of personhood (*hun chanar*) and 'culture' (*soyol*). Here, *soyol* refers to more than problematic notions of timelessness, boundedness and the

[49] The Great Dictionary of Mongolian Language. Viewed online https://mongoltoli.mn/ (Accessed 21.04.21).

production of national ideologies. It aligns more closely with the notion of being 'cultured'. This is evident in the terms for being educated or 'civilised' (both *soyoltoi*, literally with culture)[50]. The terms for culture, education and cultivation were sometimes combined by my interlocutors to convey the sense of cultivating good manners, being educated and appreciating the arts (*soyol bolovsrol hümüüjil*). To convey the same meaning, it could also be combined with 'enlightenment' (*soyol gegeerel*). For Nyamka, *yos züi* is always embodied in the words and actions that express Mongol identity, values and connection to others in shared ways. Something that she referred to as simply "thinking the Mongol way". As I show below, this is more than a matter of identifying in a particular way with knowledge from the past that relies on a fixed, stabilised sense of self and 'culture'. This ethos is also less about momentary decisions and the rules that determine them than about a living responsiveness to the obligations and possibilities that are presented to people as they organise their lives in relation to others. It is a never-ending practice about how to be a human being and about how people's actions might prefigure their lives to live as one. In this sense, it privileges ongoing judgement, negotiation and ambiguities in lived social realities. In light of this explication, I now present a vignette drawn from fieldwork with one class at the NFLE centre to demonstrate these terms in context. I intend to show here how *yos züi* and its evaluations operate in practice by looking at how it endows people with a sense of standing and the ways in which it can be productive through certain temporal dynamics that seek to draw on a different relationship to the past to prefigure the future.

4.4. Moral-Aesthetics Class: Conflicts in Communication

"Let's practice greetings" the teacher began as she reached out confidently to shake a learner's hand, "hello, my name is Enkhe" she said whilst flashing a big grin, "see what I did there? Greetings are a simple skill of communication". At only twenty one years old, Enkhe would always bring a lot of energy to her classes with a contagious enthusiasm. She approached another learner, arm outstretched. "Eye contact is so important" she instructed before shaking hands animatedly again, "hello, my name is Enkhe, now your turn". All ten learners looked amused yet demur. The women had all

[50] For a comprehensive discussion on the multiple and changing conceptualisations of 'culture' (*soyol*) in Mongolia see Stolpe (2008) and Tsetsentsolmon (2014).

signed up for the month-long beautician course. As part of their training they had to attend moral and civic education classes first thing each morning. They watched attentively in silence, seated in a semi-circle of brown wooden chairs facing the front of the small library. Not willing to push the learners too early in the class, Enkhe gave up shaking hands and began to explain the topic of the day; moral and aesthetic (*yos surtahuun – goo züi medremj*) training with a focus on overcoming "conflicts in communication" (*hariltsaani zörchil*). "We need to understand different views of thinking to find solutions to disagreements and learn to share our opinions" she explained. Enkhe would often use the topic of communication as an ethical anchor in her classes. She viewed it as the conduit for *hümüüjil,* as well as the framework through which to enact respect. She told me that she simply felt that she could not teach her classes without it.

"Greetings are so important as they define the ethical person, you need to show emotion. Good body language is important to show respect and to grow trust", she continued before asking, "what do we know about good behaviour and basic standards of communication? How can we influence others by showing good behaviour?" She looked up expectantly at the class and waited for a comment. Rather than rote instruction, the kind of moral-aesthetic education Enkhe practiced was one in which cultivation is to be achieved through guided discussions and debate. This meant focusing her classes on a particular social tension that she thought might agitate some sort of contention and therefore provoke a discussion. This was to make lessons as relevant to the real everyday problems at hand. She centred her teaching on how to negotiate and reconcile "changes in morals and ethics" in learner's lives. Although she admitted that reconciling differences was ambitious and something that she did not have the answer to, she nevertheless hoped that by discussing the tensions arising from interactions between different kinds of values, learners would somehow make more tolerant and informed ethical choices in the future.

As so often happened within this particular cohort, 70-year-old Bolormaa was the first to share her opinion. Despite her slight stature and soft tone, Bolormaa emanated an authoritative power, one that only comes with a lifetime of professional and familial authority. "If you smile too much people will think you are after something. "We think it's unethical," she said in a reproachful tone. Several others nodded in agreement. Before I could ask why Bolormaa turned to me and explained, as though it were

obvious, that for many Mongolian people such greetings are often associated with mistrust. “People are wary if you say something one way. They wonder what people will think of you. Mongolian people do not express much for this reason” she explained. Another elderly lady sat beside Bolormaa elaborated, “many people feel suspicious when greeted in this way, we think that they are trying to fool you or are after something from you, especially money”. She grabbed the air in an imitative gesture. For the elderly learners especially, greetings were often talked about as a symbol of change in the country, as a manifestation of the values they felt were under threat. Not missing out on the opportunity for an audience, Bolormaa began to lecture the class at length:

> Generally in society people prefer customary knowledge and humane behaviour over money. In the past we were more polite, more gentle than now, today people are losing their customs. In ancient times we used to use greetings a lot, long and complex greetings that were rich. We never said “hey” or “what’s up”. We never used to say negative words like *baihgui* (negative form of “to be” used commonly as a way to say something isn’t there or isn’t to be). We don’t like to use it because we trust language as the most important thing for the future. We should try to avoid negative words but youngsters use simple words like foreigners. If you say “what’s up” (*yu gej*) and “not much” (*yumgui*, literally without things) it means we have nothing and are poor but young people say this. Somehow we stopped using seasonal greetings in the city. For elderly people in the countryside their mind and knowledge is just based in custom but in contemporary society our mind is just like a box because we don’t use words from our history but have become more globalised. During *Tsagaan Sar* we used to ask permission for marriage using more ethical words (*ger guih yos*), more ancient words like “to behold” (*haraltei erool marmaal*). When people marry there is custom, the grooms side visit the bride’s side and ask the parents for permission. If we don’t talk like this and simply follow contemporary culture that’s irresponsible. Us elders think the loss of custom is bad. In the socialist era we never judged communication.

> Mongolian people think words are alive that's why we did not use bad words.

She paused, caught her breath, then concluded with the proverb "a precious gift is from the mouth" (*amni belgees, amdiin beleg*), before insisting gently, "words are everything. Every saying is going to happen".

These remarks may be interpreted as a discourse of moral decline in which the sense of right and wrong no longer derives from the values of the past. For Bolormaa, the cultural ideals she grew up with have become problematic and unlivable because of socio-political transformation. I heard this narrative from many sources. Ethics and history were often essentialised in this way, as the loss of intelligibility between the traditional and the modern, in which the conditions for ethical action have significantly diminished. I would like to propose a different reading, however, that focuses on the form of efficacy that Bolormaa is communicating here. I interpret this efficacy as an ethical act that works to prefigure the kind of future a person wants to come into being. In doing so, I am able to draw out a certain complexity within the notion of *yos züi*, one that reveals a temporal orientation that draws causality from the future.

A major goal of *hümüüjil* is to cultivate virtue through the power of words. A widespread cultural dimension of ethical life is not only concerned with learning and erudition but also a customary form of communication that is perceived as producing effects in the world. In her work on harnessing fortune, Empson describes this form of aesthetics in the region as "intended to evoke a feature of an act that is held to produce particular outcomes and is tied to ideas about the moral means of accumulating wealth or fortune" (2011:69). This wealth is not necessarily monetary, but could include having a successful, positive life, or to enhance ones *hiimori* (see 2.4.). In Bolormaa's speech, for example, she is expressing this aesthetic. She explains that to say "not much" in response to being asked how they are will result in the speaker literally having nothing as an outcome of speaking those words. This is significant to my argument because it suggests a different temporal relation between the past and future, one in which historical knowledge can be converted into efficacy to prefigure a different future. This pushes the past away from homogenising forms of historical explanation that determine it as irrevocable. Instead, fixed ideas about cause and effect are opened up to be altered on the basis of a person's speech. This is confirmed by

other locally salient concepts such as insurance (*daatgal)*. During my fieldwork, I spoke to an American working at one of the country's largest banks. She explained that encouraging Ulaanbaatar residents to buy house insurance was proving extremely difficult because people felt that if they bought it something bad would happen to their home on the basis of the efficacy that the act of purchasing insurance would contain. To the dismay of the bankers, people would ensure nothing bad happened by not speaking or acting upon the prospect of them needing home insurance.

Before returning to the class, I would like to highlight the multiple chronotopes and their temporalities currently at play. The discussion operates within the language of linear notions of time, one that divides the past into periods each with their own socio-political or economic distinction that is reified into an essentialised object with its own content. Engaging with the past here, however, is not to determine what events happened and in what order, but how they consist of potency and produce good in the world through the prefiguration of words. It was about speaking to historical knowledge, but in a way that exceeded its narration. These two temporalities, one looking back and another looking forward to the prefigured future, are substituted and translated into one another without reducing each one to the other. They are mediated by the emotion of nostalgia, a specific positioning to a past that is irreversible but looks to future as a form of longing (see Angé and Berliner 2014)[51]. It is in this engagement with multiple temporalities that a virtuous character is cultivated and evaluated. As each temporality postulates a different form of past and future, characterising an action as unethical didn't suggest that performing it is contrary to some general rule or principle. The act of evaluation involved referring to different relations to the past as they exist concurrently. These relations afforded both personal attributes and the ways in which they could contain some kind of veracity that extended beyond the present and into the future. To develop this point, I now return to the classroom.

After her lecture, Bolormaa surveyed the other learners to see if anyone wanted to comment. None of the learners disputed her claims. "Socialism is different from now," Enkhe interjected, "the requirement for a work position is this new communication

[51] The temporality of nostalgia involves an emotional disposition towards a past that is temporalised as irreversible. A nostalgic person tends to reflect on an idealised past to make a judgement about the present.

skill. Nowadays communication is just like marketing. Marketing for the modern era! If you are kind to others you deserve a good deed. Especially beauticians and manicurists need to communicate with people gently, and must be professional too. You can't show discrimination by age, gender or profession, or through the appearance of clothes. If you communicate well with customers your business will grow". Like Nyamka, Enkhe taught tolerance in diversity as a cultivable virtue and a quality, the potency of which lies in the adaptability to shifting circumstances. She referenced this view with a nod to Chinggis Khan letting different religions coexist harmoniously but framed it as a contemporary responsibility. Enkhe was more interested in a practical response to relating to the past. This adds in another temporality, one that begins with the formulation of the desired future, but not to prefigure it. As a way of actively orientating a person temporally, identifying with exemplars engages with history in a way that exceeds its narration. The future instead sets the conditions of possibility for action in the present.

Enkhe went on to stress the importance of illuminating Mongolian virtues in different forms of communication and proposed an integrative approach which would incorporate multiple influences in such a way that, she believed, would avoid flouting the cosmological order of things – namely *yos* – while also creating wealth. She counselled against the unbridled influence of foreign greetings and instead advocated for the intentional cultivation of virtues such as empathy, gentleness, and tolerance in diversity when greeting and across all forms of communication. "Morals and ethics starts in the heart and mind. If we show good behaviour we can influence our family and society too" she said, more than once. For Enkhe, the actual words were not so important, at issue was the "positive thoughts" (*eyereg*) and "influence" (*nölöölöl*) behind a person's intention and behaviour. Being concerned with the other is essential for *yos züi*. Cultivating a person is a necessary condition for that person to transform others. The transformation of others is not achieved by imposing any coercive force upon them. The ethos at the heart of these practices was most clearly anchored in an embodiment of respect. In her eyes, this had more agency than words.

Through its inherent link with *hümüüjil*, Enkhe would describe *yos züi* to me as a historical practice. For her, narrating the values of the past would tell her what direction to think about the events in the past and charges them with a form of efficacy or ethical valence. It was about producing an ethos. In this way, the past is not being

acted upon in this chronotope. The ethos of history (*tüüh*) and, by extension, *yos züi*, was taught as an ongoing practice of evaluation triggered by external issues, demanding a response that draws together values of the past in a way that entails a preparedness of change towards a better future. In this way, no one temporal framework underpins *yos züi* in any complete sense. Rather, many temporalities are given expression at the same time, operating together as resources for one another (Ssorin-Chaikov 2017). To expand upon this point, I will now detail the final half of the class in which several more temporalities were revealed in the teaching of responsible communication.

4.5. History as Responsibility

Following Bolormaa's long interjection, Enkhe moved on to the core part of her class. "Of course respectful communication is much more than speaking," she began, implying that communication contains responsibility. As mentioned above, communication and responsibility share the same word, *hariultslah*[52]. "There are three types of communication in ethics; human to human, human to objects, and human to the environment," Enkhe continued. She started with the first, asking learners to give examples of bad communication that the learners face on a daily basis regarding people.

Before Bolormaa could speak this time, one young learner Odnoo responded quickly. She began to talk about the interpersonal problems brought about by *zeel*, informal networks of friends and acquaintances borrowing money from one another. Given the near ubiquity of *zeel* in Ulaanbaatar, all of the other learners agreed that this was a good example, many by nodding their heads. Odnoo continued to speak about getting caught in webs of relations of debt. She offered the example of lending a small amount of money to a friend, despite being in debt to someone else. When the person that she had borrowed money from asked her to repay the debt, Odnoo explained, she tried to contact the girl that she had lent money to in order to have enough to repay, but the girl ignored her and remained uncontactable. The other learners looked defeated, their expressions suggesting that they know the problem full well but are unable to offer

[52] The term *üüreg* is also used to denote responsibility, although this is applicable more often to kin-like relations.

any solutions. Most of all, Odnoo concluded, she was concerned with the loss of trust between people and that *zeel* influences bad ethical behaviour. Elsewhere, these informal networks of debt have been analysed as an "urban chronotope" that organises relations into a disorderly beat (Pedersen 2017:483)[53].

"Let's think about the history of money," Enkhe stated casually, as though she had not come with the information already prepared. "If our finances are stable we can develop sustainability in daily life too," she explained moving towards the large easel and notepad she had at the side of the room. She faced the class, asking us to call out definitions of what we think money is. In no time at all, the list read; a tool for exchange, intellectual property, and property of *tör* (most closely translated as the state)[54]. With this information, Enkhe jumped into a narrative about the evolution of money. She began by explaining its origin in "ancient times" used as a property of exchange. "It's still money but in a different shape. It changed to the metal shape, then to paper money in 1921, and now there are electronic uses and services for everything." Today, she explained, the value of the Mongolian *tögrög* is in decline because "we don't respect our money or the value of the *tögrög* so why would other countries value it."

"And about human to property" Bolormaa interjected in complete disregard for Enkhe leading. "People leave money as an offering on the mountain. This is bad." It started a discussion with the other learners chiming in, about the ways people see the place of money as moral object with its own generative and protective qualities and values beyond the economic. That is, that the respectful treatment of money has the potential to promote the accumulation of more money. The increased use of leaving money as an offering is new, they told me, it happened alongside inflation. They were talking about the very small-value bank notes of five or ten *tögrög* bills, the former recently dropped from circulation due to inflation, the latter is too small to buy anything. It was common to see these notes on an *oboo*, or cairn; a structure of stones or trees located at boundaries points such as rivers or mountain peaks that mark sacred or pastoral territories. For the learners, *oboos* have various religious, social and administrative

[53] In other parts of the country debt relations have been analysed as framed as "heterochronic" in which social relations "fold" time within itself (Bristley 2021:639).

[54] I analyse the nuance of *tör* in more detail in chapter five (5.2.).

functions in which a ceremonial blue scarf named *hadag* should be left as a sign of respect, not money. I was informed that money contains the national symbol of Mongolia, the *soyombe*, and it is therefore disrespectful to disregard it. This counts too for the use of small notes for toilet paper, Enkhe added, noting that it brought her great shame to see people be so disrespectful. Be clean, she insisted, be clean in public toilets and with your money.

A quiet learner sat at the back of the class raised her hand. Enkhe gestured calmly for her to join in. After introducing herself as Ayanaa, the learner began "I have trained my daughter from a very young age to behave with ethics towards money and to respect money. She is six years old now, she asks for money of ten or twenty *tögrög* notes to keep every day. She says when I am older to use the treatment for mum's legs." Ayanaa had a pair of crutches leaning on the desk beside her. "Parents need to cultivate children this way, between needs and their limits and wishes that are limitless. Greed is wish's creator. To save money my daughter can define her wish and need is about using money wisely." Enkhe was clearly energised by this example, sharing that "children must be trained in good behaviour." Failing this, she noted "we have problems like today, in bars they sell alcohol which causes bad fortune because it makes people drunk." This kind of spending was not perceived by the class as good for fortune. Later that day, Bolormaa described the meaning of Enkhe's example with a different example, "if you are hungry and you steal food it will not taste good or be nutritious because you stole it. It might even be poisonous!"

"And what about the environment?" Enkhe asked, aware that it will soon be time to end the class. The learner's noticed too, being eager to return to their manicurist training they began to pack their things up. As they did so, one of the youngest learners answered, "garbage is the most disrespectful thing. People feel shame when they say this word" there was a pause "in the past Mongolian people did not waste anything, now the countryside if full of garbage everywhere you go. On weekends we go to Terelj (a nearby national park) to clean it up, but it just ends up back there again. It is very shameful for us. Very shameful". Another followed, sharing that "in ancient times people never touched trees or mountains. This seems like superstition but it is moral too. Mining camps just make money and destroy the land. We would never hurt animals except for food, now the fur trade exists. The antler business is connected to human trafficking." Enkhe agreed before finishing, "if there is something to learn

about communication with ethics from this lesson, it is to show respect with our hearts and minds."

I would like to make two final points about the relations between temporalities in this class. Firstly, it is common in the anthropology of Mongolia to analyse aspects of the "cosmoeconomical" order in which wealth and relationships are enacted through money, quite literally as "two sides of the same coin" (Empson 2014:182, see also High 2017, Sneath 2006, Zimmerman 2012). That is, relations and obligations are ontologically integrated in local cosmologies of wealth and power. In their choices to engage in certain relations (or not), people are able to prefigure a future that they wish to bring into being. As Empson notes, "the world in which they act, which gives them, or limits, their agency, allows them to prefigure a trajectory over which they have some command" (2020:247). Nyamka's class confirms the same findings, in which money as an object or economic relation contains a form of potency that is inextricably linked to human actions. As such, the handling of money or means through which is earned has the potential for positive or negative effects that go beyond any abstract matter of moral evaluation by having impacts on people's well-being (see also High 2017:18). Building on this literature, I would like add a new theoretical dimension that addresses how monetary enactments fulfil the ethical obligations of local cosmoeconomies by exploring how temporal relations offer both limits and resource for people's actions.

My second point is that the cultivation of *yos züi* denotes a field of consciousness that acts as to bridle the linear flow time, as well as affective, material, nostalgic, and prefigurative temporalities in a person's actions. In learning how to correctly communicate with people, objects and the environment, Nyamka and the learners drew upon all of these temporalities simultaneously. Following Ssorin-Chaikov (2017), this simultaneity can be made productive not only in the opportunity to examine temporal multiplicity, but also the ways in which different temporalities act as a measuring device for one another. A useful way of thinking about this uses Ssorin-Chaikov argument that "time is not a substance that "flows" or an area that "begins" or "ends." It is not a thing but a relation between things" (*ibid.*:8)[55]. This allows temporal relations to be analysed as together or separate while each temporality maintains its

[55] Like Bear (2014) described in section 3.5, Ssorin-Chaikov anchors this thinking in Gell's (1992) notion of A and B series time maps.

own structure. While I apply Ssorin-Chaikov here, I also go beyond this definition in thinking about which temporal relations converge or separate to establish the conditions for *yos züi*, I will focus on how Nyamka's class absorbs and mirrors temporalities in ways that convert the historical past into the potential for ethical action in the future.

Nyamka was deliberate in her choice of historical narrative in her teaching, such as her prepared piece on the history of money. Experience had taught her that classes on *yos züi* would inevitably lead to the question of money and misfortune. For her, the effectiveness of using history as a teaching device compliments the future oriented teaching of communication practices. Both temporalities make a temporary appearance in the class, which orders knowledge, actions and values in a particular assemblage. This assemblage operates to convert one temporality to the other and back again, to reinforce and hold each accountable to one another.

For example, at the beginning of class, Bolormaa embedded her criticism of contemporary language in a version of time that is linear, modernist and nostalgic. This is entangled in the combined temporality of disorder. The linear vectors underneath Bolormaa's speech see social order as the potential to structurally repeat itself (or in this case failing) to prefigure what she considers to be a more stable future; cosmoeconomically, ethically and politically. Nyamka's initial response mirrored the same values, but in a temporality that places value into the future as influence and energy through a person's actions. This relies on a perceptually different notion of past, present and future in which it is difficult to ascertain causal sequence. However, by then emplotting the same values in the historical past by her reference to Chinggis Khan she is refracting them across multiple chronotopes simultaneously. Another example of this is Nyamka teaching learners to interact ethically with material money, teaching the enactment of good relations as constitutive of historical knowledge, aesthetic experiences and embodied in emotion. Communication in this sense appears to operate across all three. In exploring these relations between temporalities, *yos züi* operates as a hinge for a set of temporal relations that combine to enable people to make connections between the past, present and future in ways that extend across and through times, cosmologies and embodied perception.

4.6. Value as a Temporal Relation

This chapter has demonstrated the relationship between history and *hümüüjil* as taught through ethical relations. Rather than examining the category of ethics as actions undertaken in reference to a set of moral ideals transmitted from the past, I have explored a more complex picture. I showed that *yos züi* is not only constituted by multiple temporalities and causal factors, but also demonstrated how relations between these temporalities are structured, experienced and reflected in everyday discussions of disorder. This allows for an understanding of how values are absorbed, refracted and mirrored across different forms of historicisation in times of crisis to overcome uncertainty (Knight 2015). When history entails an ethos, I argue, it reveals communicative practices within which it is possible to rethink spatialised conceptions of linear time that dominate in anthropology (Hodges 2008:405), and especially in analyses of ethical practices (Zigon 2014). This obscures the relationship between past and future. It blurs linearity, showing both the past and future to be simultaneously sources of uncertainty and also offering a sense of direction, as though each has some binding and hence obligatory force for being ethical. In my perspective, a person's ethical character is formed precisely in the engagement with multiple temporalities and their historicities.

The chapters have so far revealed *hümüüjil* to as a mode of historical consciousness that draws upon multiple temporal vectors and causal factors to cultivate human beings. With its multiple ties to the past and present, *hümüüjil* identified here historicises time and value through affective and aesthetic practices that cannot be separated out as either past, present or future. Instead, they combine momentarily into a specific chronotopic constellation that powerfully binds and guides human action. In the introduction, I pointed out to the work of Stewart (2012) as a catalyst for my thinking about historical consciousness on these terms. In his discussion on formations of value, he shows how different buried materials contain different orders of value in different contexts. These values can be identified separately, he suggests, but together operate in a dynamic interdependence that draws together morality, teleology and narrative in ways that organised thought and created local dispositions to particular course of action (*ibid.*:124-9). Inspired by this theorising, this chapter has sought to demonstrate the formations of ethical value underlying *hümüüjil* and the qualities and practices it draws together. Using Ssorin-Chaikov (2017), I have provided a temporal

structure to these relations as they are draw together as well as entangled in chronological time.

Now that I have examined the temporal multiplicity of *hümüüjil*, the next chapter explores different chronotopes of truth and history that produce a transformation of knowledge of the past into the cultivation of ethical relations in the present. I move the discussion from the person to the local understandings of citizenship as they were taught as part of the civic education course. This reveals several additional points to consider in the chronotopic constellation of time, temporality and value through which social life is guided and able to move forward into a more desirable future.

Chapter Five.

Creative Citizens:
Time for a New Past

5.1. The Ethico-Political Force of History

This chapter explores the complexities of how people reckon different chronotopes of historical truth in the practice of *hümüüjil*. Specifically, it analyses what it means to consider history as an ethico-political relation. That is, not to consider history as a temporally distinct singularity. Rather, history can also afford a means of binding and articulating the ethical and political dimensions of social life together at a particular time and place. In previous chapters, I have demonstrated the personal aspects of ethical cultivation at the core of *hümüüjil*. The purpose is to instill in learners the appropriate modes of relating for the cultivation of an "Educated Mongolian Person" able to fuse knowledge and action in ways that better their community. This practice serves as to draw together a distinctive cultural ethos as the key to living an ethical life. In this chapter, I explore how this ethos plays out in the notion of a citizen. By anchoring my reflections on the civic education teacher Batzorig and his classes, I explore how people make sense of their past, set priorities, project what might happen next, and try to shape the future anew. I analyse how the idea of the present is conceived of as an expression of a complex relation of temporalities in which diachronic succession is not so fundamental as are the ethical interactions among past, present, and future. This is achieved when multiple forms of historical truth are simultaneously projected as legible. These multiple truths derive from the two chronotopes that give meaning to local practices of history (*tüüh*); the political and the personal. I argue that, although seldom described as such, history in this sense affords a relation to the past that is perceived locally as an injunction and a responsibility. I demonstrate that is the very structuring of history here as an ethical relation to the past that gives agency to history (*tüüh*) in ways that drive its future oriented pedagogical and political force.

5.2. The Historically New

When I first met the civic education teacher Batzorig in early October 2017, I asked him about his approach to Non-formal and Lifelong Education (NFLE). He replied with the saying "know your history, you need to learn from it" (*tüühee medej, sudlah herehtei*). At the time, I was immediately reminded of George Santayana's famous quote-turned-adage; "those who cannot remember their past are condemned to repeat it" (1953: 397). I had assumed that Batzorig was paraphrasing. After all, he had struck me as the most scholarly of all the NFLE staff, having previously held a junior teaching position in political science at the National University of Mongolia. I mentioned Santayana's quote in English, offering the explanation that by seeing how things went wrong in the past, we can make them right in the future. Batzorig nodded in a way that suggested he neither agreed nor disagreed, before reaching a different conclusion. He stated that "learning from the past is not just about studying a book, you should be able to analyse it and think about how you can use these lessons in your everyday life." Most importantly, he emphasised more than once, was the need turn history into heritage (*öv*), such that it may continue to be expressed and enacted for many years to come. "The point of civic education is not to teach people how to be like a politician", he clarified, "not everyone can be like a politician, but everyone can be a father or mother". The difference was subtle, but nonetheless instructive.

Batzorig was unsure of when or where his saying had originated, but thought that such information did not matter. The explanation he gave instead pointed to a different direction for the importance of history, one that moves away from any exclusive concern with isolated discussions of who did what to whom and when. He told me that he liked to refer to this saying a lot, especially when teaching people how to "distribute good Mongol actions" (*Mongol sain uiliimchgee*). Anyone with a historical textbook can recall a date, he stressed, but this kind of knowledge alone will not improve the future of democracy in Mongolia; good civic behaviours are needed. The task at hand was "to make it a habit for learners to participate politically with ethics". He provided a list of virtues, what he believes to be the fundamental characteristics of an ethically engaged citizen: "be responsible in everything you do, respect to be respected mutually, be loyal to society and nation, and show equal participation and equal rights when sharing your opinion." When taught correctly, he explained, history can help to guide learners in these behaviours and motivate them to do the right thing. As such, good actions are deeply rooted in history but not confined to any past. "They are not

just about ancient times but about us as well", he said, "the truths we learn from our history we can use to creatively make something new, step by step to contribute to the development of our democracy".

In stressing this point, Batzorig was revealing the temporal orientation of contemporary forms of historical consciousness in Ulaanbaatar. Of particular interest to me here is the way in which history and ethics seemed to dovetail almost intuitively in his explanation of civic education. This was not merely in a didactic sense of imparting new information about certain ideals of character or citizenship, but more fundamentally, as an attempt to clear the way for the arrival of something new. Speaking of history on these ethical terms, as a set of inherited behaviours that condition novel prospects for democracy, suggested that there are complex and multiple ways in which Batzorig relates to the past. By invoking something new, or emergent, as central to knowing history, Batzorig was starting from a different position. For him, the events of the past are irrevocable, but the value of the past is not. Instead, it was important to keep the past contemporary by learning both about and from history not as separate endeavours but as overlapping features of life that require each other to make sense. This raises an interesting question regarding the temporal texture of ethical life in Mongolia. How can it be that the future of civic life takes the form of the inherited past as transformed into something new in the present?

The chapter is structured into four parts. Each section explores a different aspect of temporality but together they form a mode of historical consciousness unique to Batzorig's classes. Before turning to the ethnography of his civic education classes, the first section explores the notion of a citizen taught at the NFLE centre. I then discuss the broader political legacies, prevailing ideologies and linguistic features that have conditioned Batzorig's personal and pedagogical choices. I want to point out that there is an important distinction in this chapter between new versions of the past and new pasts. First, I give an overview of the former; how new pasts have been rewritten and rehistoricised in relation to changing political contexts. Section 5.4. focuses on Batzorig's choices in relation to this "official" history, and the way in which he grounds his own historical truth claims in ethics as a result. For him, this ethics acknowledges the values of past generations as well as to the imbrications of these values within learner's daily lives. Here, ideas about the past merge with the present in an ethically charged mode within a temporal orientation that also looks towards the

future. Section 5.5. theoretically expands upon this temporal space. It demonstrates that by temporalising history as an ethical relation opens it up from the position of people's living actions in the present. Drawing from the anthropology of history (Lambek 2002, Stewart 2012), I explore this pluralistic account of the past insofar as different historical practices can contain interacting but distinctive notions of truth depending on whether they are embodied as value or fact. In examining the tension between these multiple truths as they play out in Batzorig's teaching, it is possible to illuminate new modes of temporality that draw relations between local perceptions of time, value and causation. As a starting point for this analysis, it necessary to explore the locally salient notion of the citizen in which *hümüüjil* and history (*tüüh*) meet.

5.3. Creative Citizens

During the second half of my fieldwork, staff at the centre had a specific name for the kind of person they were trying to cultivate through *hümüüjil*; a "Creative Citizen" (*Büteelch Irgen*). This replaced the notion of "An Educated Mongolian Person". In collaboration with the local district governor, the centre director had coined this title as a way to encapsulate the overall mission of their project. Her words at a graduation ceremony summarise it:

> In accordance with the activities of the District Governor's Office 2017-2020, Article 4.1.7., our centre works to produce "Creative Citizens", organised for the purpose of reducing the number of unemployed adults through sewing, hairdressing, beauty and computer training. We also offer learners moral-aesthetic and civic education in order for them to use their new skills to contribute value on a personal, local, and district level.

After the graduation ceremony, I asked her to tell me more. She responded with the saying, "customs are customs, governments are governments" (*yos yombogor, tör tömbögör*). With these words, she was conveying that a Creative Citizen was one located at the intersection of two value orientations; the ethical (custom) and the political (government). She was implying that both custom and the government should hold equal influence and that both must be combined as a dynamic tension exists between the two, propelling them forward in tandem. It is for this reason that governmental involvement in the education of ethical life is not considered

controversial in Mongolia, but to a large extent necessary. In fact, I found that most people – NFLE officials, teachers and learners alike – felt that this relationship was integral to the practice of *hümüüjil* and people would often draw attention to this ethico-political dimension as foundational to their identification as a citizen, more so that other indicators such as owning a passport. This points to a different relationship to the state than is usually presented in academic literature. Generally speaking, a state's involvement in ethical life, particularly through education, has tended to be conceived of as an inscription of discipline and self-control that is tied to state interests such as national belonging (Appadurai 1996).

5.3.1. Education and Nationalism

Across the social sciences, the concept of education carries certain resonances regarding the role of government agents and of the citizen within contemporary state power. At its most elemental, the study of state-led education invites two preeminent perspectives that both centre on the effects of institutional power relations on people and the ways in which they are both produced by and reproduce them. One approach follows Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), which demarcates schooling as central to the development of economic actors. Through educational institutions such as the school, they argue, the state operates to inculcate certain categories of thought as legitimate with the intention of producing "common schemes of thought, perception and action" (a habitus) of various social structures such as the class system (*ibid.*:194-6). The other perspective examines education as a technology through which to regulate a population through the internalisation of patriotic beliefs, feelings of responsibility and virtuous behaviour; a process to which Michel Foucault applied the term "governmentality" (Foucault 1991:20). Both stress how state education is the employment of tactics of power. Importantly, this operates in the form of conscious or unconscious dispositions or embodiments. It is dispersed from the top down for the purpose of national polity building and is accompanied with some sense of common history, shared symbolic systems or cognitive frameworks. The whole package combines to form a worldview that effects transformations in how a person aspires to conduct themselves to acquire membership in a national polity.

Needless to say, the teaching of nationalist history-making has a longstanding relationship with education in terms of its role in projects of nation-building. In his

work on nationalism, Ernest Gellner (1983) highlights the intrinsic nature of this relationship. He argues that technological changes brought about from industrialisation led to the need for a workforce. Out of this need, education systems were developed to produce a workforce that shared a language and cultural traditions. He suggests that the need to organise society in such a way led to the idea of a nation emerging as a homogenous, single state with a delineated territory whose task it is to essentially protect the integrity of itself. The primary method through which it does so is state-led education. As sociologists of education demonstrate, for the majority of people history classes offer the main source of knowledge about the past (Jaskulowski et al. 2022). Other analyses of historical textbooks suggest that content is predominantly designed to reproduce and consolidate national integrity (Seixas 2018). Through selected historical events, figures or cultural repertoires of emotion, states use history education to instill national identity in learners (Benei 2008). This contains a temporal perspective in the construction of the past on national terms generally taught as fact via a chronology of events.

These perspectives serve to highlight what has become a common frame of reference in anthropology when exploring education in general and citizenship education in particular. There exists a common tendency for educational institutions to be approached as points at which the government models or disciplines social actors to embody a national sense of belonging that is reflected in their thoughts, dispositions, and sentiments. Schooling, more often than not, is analysed not as a neutral place of learning but a coercive mechanism of the state. Sketched out in ethnographies of education is a particular approach to ethical life that treats it as a relationship between the state and the person characterised by power, knowledge and subjectivity. For example, Benei (2008) explores the ways history is made visceral in India for the purpose of reproducing a national sense of belonging and identifications. Actions undertaken in relation to history, such as national songs or icons of state modernity, are read as a form of ideologically shaped discipline.

While all of the above literature is of significant value for an understanding of state-led schooling, it is important to note at this point that a key ethnographic finding of my research is that the relationship between state and education in the production of a Creative Citizen cannot be reduced an analysis of power, knowledge, and subjectivity. This, of course, is the kind of clarification that anthropological research is particularly

well suited to identify. To an extent, the concept of governmentality could be applied. So too can the contours of the state can be described in Gellner's terms. However, at the same time the local notion of the state diverges from these conceptualisations. To simply transfer these concepts would impede a nuanced analysis of local interpretations. For example, Foucault argues that the disciplinary exists before the educational, as a process that encompasses every sector of society (1991:293-308). In theorising *hümüüjil*, this distinction is difficult to distinguish, as *hümüüjil* is a practice that engulfs every sector of society. It involves a combination of discipline and education to produce the ideal, ethical person and state. For example, take the word for state or government, *tör*. Through this term, the state is commonly represented in two ways that depend on different cultural representations of governance. On the one hand, it refers to the idea that there is a legal and constitutional order, that of the state which the government has to maintain; commonly distinguished as *uls tör* (state government). This can be aligned with Gellner's concept of the nation. On the other hand, *tör* was not imagined as a separate entity placed above yet encompassing society. It is thought of as a living being of sorts, one rooted in people's capacity for ethical action and the enactment of social relations[56]. Given these multiple meanings, it is not possible to give primacy to *tör* as a complex of institutions and patterns of activities different from that of the person or family. This is evidenced by the common saying:

Fix yourself,	*Biyee zasaad,*
Then fix your home,	*Geree zas,*
Fix your home,	*Geree zasaad,*
Then fix your state.	*Töröö zas.*

The saying conveys that the relationship between the state and the person is something to be practiced as a matter of ethical life. This is rooted in a meaningful order that conceives of the person, family and *tör* as different scales within an integrated set of

[56] While discussions on *tör* are prominent among scholars working in Mongolia, its mention in publications has so far only reached the footnotes in anthropology (e.g. Pedersen 2011). This does not devalue its importance, but highlights the ambiguity of the term. It is a complex concept to get analytical grasp on in the context of everyday life because it is largely implicit. However, the mediation between *tör*, *hümüüjil* and history (*tüüh*) in NFLE offered me a fruitful site for revealing these otherwise unseen dimensions of social and political life.

relations. Implicit in both the saying and the directors quote is the widespread idea that ethical cultivation, namely *hümüüjil*, is the key binding and building force in this order. The expression carries the idea that to "fix" yourself is to do so through ethical cultivation, which in turn creates the conditions to regulate families, which in turn creates the necessary disposition for governing the state. This continuum was apparent in the way that teachers conceived of their roles as more familial than professional, the fulfilment of which was deemed indispensable to the well-being of the wider community of learners. A common statement related to this order was that societal problems or state failures are inevitably attributed to the insufficient enactment of *hümüüjil*. Crucially, each person and their actions are deemed accountable for the well-being and functioning of *tör*. As such, the person and state are mutually related in a dynamic process that spreads out over multiple spheres of relations simultaneously. The roots of such thinking can be traced as far back as the thirteenth century, when *yos* was used as a synonym for the term "statehood" or "highest law" (Tangad 2016:139). The different aspects of the scale are held in relation to each other through the order of *yos* at any given time without collapsing into one another. To claim, in a Foucauldian sense of "self-making" and "being-made" by power relations (Ong 1996:737), that *tör* operates as a form of "governmentality" understood as "techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour" (Foucault 1997:82) would impose a distinction and hierarchy of power that I do not conceive of as constituting *tör*. While a concise conceptualisation is outside of the scope of this thesis, it is worth pointing out that in the practice of cultivation, discipline and education are perceived locally as indistinguishable from one another in a form of power that centres on the notion of being human.

5.3.2. The State as an Ethical Relation

The difficulty in conceptualising *tör* is indicative of some of the ambiguities surrounding it. To forestall any possible misunderstanding, I do not mean to say that governance in Mongolia does not include the possibility of coercion or oppression. My point is, rather, that the state is an idea more than a system (Abrams 1988:75, Graeber 2004:65). This idea is locally understood as a matter of cultivation as well as an ideology. It is about the ways in which behaviour is characterised as communitarian and enacted in accordance with custom. A useful way to approach citizenship in this context is to follow recent work on the relational dimensions of the state as a

meaningful way to understand its tensions in practice. I employ a definition of the state as coming into existence "within relations between actors who have unequal access to material, social, regulatory, and symbolic resources and who negotiate over ideas of legitimate power by drawing on existing state images – at once reaffirming and transforming these practices within concrete practices" (Thelen et al. 2018:7). This definition does not ignore the perspective of political economy, but adds to it by focusing on how actors shape state formations, images and practices. In doing so, it enables an investigation how various ideas of *tör* mark a form of embodiment that is as much pedagogical as familial, and as much about the state as it is about the person. Such an approach can be useful in trying to avoid potentially simplistic analyses of governmentality in 'neoliberal' times that generally occur in studies on education. Rather than working along these lines I want to argue, with the help of NFLE, that there is another way of analysing state-run education when exploring the ontological set of categories and concepts relevant to local practices of education and the relations they give rise to. My contribution here is to open a discussion that acknowledges that education operates to produce a workforce at the same time as it can go beyond it.

To explore citizenship through the lens of cultivation, specifically *hümüüjil*, requires an exploration of the practices though which *tör* comes into being. As the previous chapters have shown, *hümüüjil* articulates two kinds of history-making; that which is learned about historiographically and that which is cultivated, passed down through the generations. To be considered an ethical person involves acknowledging the educational claim that the past has on the present as an invitation for learners to evaluate their own actions in relation to themselves and others. It is also possible to think of the state as pedagogically cultivated between these two forms of history. With regards to the notion of a Creative Citizen, the intended teaching of history is to animate and mediate a process of ethical cultivation. As such, history here entails a form of human cultivation that has an application for building a state in ways that do not do not generally correspond to the divisions mentioned above. Instead, history contextualises the past in the present to create a relation between the two that guides future actions.

Take, for example, my mention of Santayana's quote noted above. In suggesting it, I was implying that the pedagogical justification for knowing about history is to warn against repeating past mistakes. I was referring to the pervasive view that stems from

the idea that historical knowledge provides the foundation from which to understand current conditions. Simply put, that the past is understood as having repetitive elements and that over the course of time different people confront the same issues often enough that it is possible to detect recurrent patterns and thus project outcomes on to an otherwise indeterminate future. At its core, to know history in the sense of which I was referring with Santayana relies on the position of hindsight in the present so that a person can judge the past and take corrective measures in their lives. Generally speaking, it is grounded in a historicist rendering of past as separated from the present and thus irrevocable, with no immediacy except through acts of documentation. This rendering relies on a notion of time as a linear and progressive configuration between the past, present and future. Experience is converted into a sequence of events in which the cause precedes the effect in time. These events, however dislocated in time and space, are then made into a history, a singular chronology that can be learned about, analysed as an object of research and thus used to judge historical development (see also Hirsch and Stewart 2005:264).

Quite different from the sequential time of historicist thinking, Batzorig's explanation of his saying started from the widely acknowledged but rarely considered view of what it actually means to *learn from history*. In addition to knowing what happened in the past, Batzorig was acknowledging the educational claim that the past has on their lives in the here and now. It was about how to cultivate a good citizen. This broadens the pedagogical task of history beyond the question of repetition to ask how past events and experiences come to be meaningful in a way that is emergent; a process of coming to know something new in the present through the act of comprehending past lives and events. Batzorig's response suggested that the construction of a citizen in relation to history is not to determine whether the past was right or wrong. It concerns both a person's relationship to the past in the present and their responsibility to future generations. To "know your history", according to Batzorig, actively entails not repeating it but drawing lessons from history, taking an active role in making the past part of their everyday actions to cultivate responsible, ethical citizens. In my view, this responsibility converts evaluation from a judgement on the past events to a judgement on the person in the present. History, therefore, is posited as an effect—and not solely a root cause—of present ethical investments.

An unexpected example of this was offered to me during the NFLE graduation in which Odnoo introduced the definition of a Creative Citizen noted above. The short ceremony was held at the district governor's office opposite the NFLE centre. On either side of the large room, tables displayed the work of graduates, including *deels* and other clothing, as well as nail art from the manicure class. While admiring this colourful display, I drew attention to one piece of nail art in particular that showed six members of a family wearing *deels*, framed against a painted backdrop of the steppe (pictured below). I was quickly pointed to the creator, who happily joined me to explain her choice of image. Until this point, I had assumed that the practical classes on beauty and manicure had been solely for the purpose of future employment. However, this learner, Mandah, impressed upon me a different view. She explained that she had also painted nails for the other hand but did not bring them all to display that day. These depicted her grandparents, parents and siblings. Altogether, she joked, "I would need fifteen finger nails to wear them all!" She talked me through the painting of her husband, herself and four children on each nail on display. The meaning behind her choice was to show respect to her family, both past and present. She wasn't interested in painting something fashionable. For her, this was bad (*muu*). Although they no longer lived on the steppe, Mandah told me, the countryside was a great source of inspiration for her. The nomadic context of "ancient times" was where she drew knowledge of her ancestors from. This knowledge is manifest today in her actions of hard work and good character. The implication was that the nail art was the materialisation of *hümüüjil*, both historically and ethically. Not only did she express herself as a creative citizen through depicting familial relations and describing her duty to be a good mother, but her personal history (*tüüh*) was physically enacted through her ability to learn something new expressed in relation to her past. This made her aware of her need to be a good person that instils the values of previous generations into her own children.

By proposing the questions of what can be learned from knowledge of the past as well as how it might teach her something anew about how be a good citizen in the present, Mandah was making assertions about the past that were articulated on ethical terms. From this unique yet fundamental perspective, the principles that animate history are by not just a matter of the epistemological terms for the apprehension of past events. An engagement with history here regards a concern with themselves in the present, as

Figure 16. Mandah's nail art in the orange frame

a fundamental condition through which to inhabit the world (Rogers 2009). By invoking this creativity as central to history and citizenship, both Batzorig and Mandah were offering a practical response to the question of how to relate to the past in ways that might be integrated into their lives in terms of cultivating values and principles. This contains a specific pedagogical force intended to embody or enact a capacity to grasp history in such a way that something emerges out of the teaching such that it renders it meaningful in ways that evoke ethical thought, feeling and action. It is a pedagogical mode of historically consciousness through which they can live and that that extends beyond the present. To make this historical consciousness visible, I next explore a set of tensions underlying truth and tense that set the conditions for affording history ethical agency.

5.4. Truth and Tense

In this section, I examine a set a tensions that lay at the heart of Batzorig's experience of learning and teaching history. These tensions pivot on different ways of reckoning truth in relation to history. I show how several understandings of historical truth are expressed at the same time. I include a discussion on tense in Halha Mongolian to

further evidence these tensions. As I explain in detail below, tense is expressed on the basis of evidence more so than it indexes time. This has implications for how people engage with knowledge of historical truths as they relate to present lives.

Owing to his congenial, talkative disposition, Batzorig quickly became one of my key interlocutors. Over the course of the six months he taught at the centre, we shared many conversations about the roles, meanings and possibilities attributed to the idea the past. Most often these took place directly after he had taught his morning civic education class on a matter related to history. From the beginning, we quickly fell into a routine of staying behind as the learners would casually file out, returning to their various life skills classrooms for the rest of the day. Sat at desks opposite one another, I would ask Batzorig questions about the class and he would respond dutifully. I usually prepared a set of questions during the class aimed at drawing out his pedagogical decisions and the factors that influence them. He would take great care when answering each one, and slowly, as if forming his ideas in the process of expressing them.

At first, I thought this slow manner was because Batzorig was unsure, nor had the confidence to articulate his ideas directly. Perhaps, I thought, he had not considered the dialectics of history, ethics and civics underlying my questions in such an explicit way before. This assumption was not completely wrong, but as I got to know him better I came to learn that he had been nurturing similar questions for some time. One particular question, "what it means to be a good Mongol citizen" was uppermost in his mind. He told me that he answered slowly not because he was unsure, but because these dialectics generated a developmental puzzle that he did not have any clear answer to. This puzzle was a source of considerable frustration for him. Indicative of this complexity, my questions would immediately take on the shape of a doctoral project, presentation or paper in his mind. He would reflect that there were parts of this puzzle that could not directly relate to the books he had read. Consequently, he wanted to research the answer himself. When I asked how he intended to do that he replied good naturedly, "be positive and always think what you can achieve" adding the proverb, "find a way and you can overcome the challenge" (*argiig olbol, berhiig davna*).

With this answer, Batzorig was communicating the widespread belief in Mongolia that in order to achieve something or bring a particular future into being, a person needs to

act as though that future already exists. It is the idea that "fate" (*zayaa*) can be prefigured or altered in the present (see also Empson 2020:98). For Batzorig, this meant studying. He had read every history book in the library. He believed that if he gained as much knowledge as he could with the right mindset he would solve the puzzle. As well as being knowledgeable, he kept himself politically engaged and considered himself forward thinking. At twenty-four years old he defined himself as part of an emerging generation of young modern nationalist intellectuals. This generation that he belonged to did not affiliate themselves with any political party directly. They were not interested in ideologies or political positions. Nor were they interested in any consideration of history as a series of substantive accounts that had ultimately been constructed from the perspective of political ideology. But Batzorig nonetheless recognised that he was conditioned by his country's political history, engrained as his favourite books were to the dictates of historicism. It was an inescapable feature of contemporary life that provided the interpretive, intellectual ropes and pulleys that animated the ways in which Batzorig spoke about himself and his generation.

As the same time as he was an intellectual, Batzorig's interviews were also deeply personal. There was a great deal of integration between personal and political history. Like most other people that I spoke with, Batzorig liked to divide the past into periods with specific names. These distinct "eras" (*üye*) were; the ancient era (*deer üye*), socialist era 1921-1990 (*sotsializmyn üye*), and contemporary era (*orchin üyeiin erin üye*). His ability to express history was shaped by this language, but his emphasis on his own personal history and experiences in the present when speaking about the past gave the impression that chronological specificity was irrelevant. He viewed his own personal history in ways that did not rely on one singular and unified view of the past but instead placed value elsewhere. He endorsed a notion of historical truth that was dispersed across multiple forms of history. For example, Batzorig was part of the NFLE teacher committee organising an educational event for local district governors and political party employees from the surrounding areas. Along with the centre director Odnoo, Batzorig had identified a new book to teach titled "The Tale of Chinggis Khan" (*Chinggis Khani Shastir*) (see also 2.3.1.). Although I could not attend the training, I was present when the NFLE teachers were planning the session, and later when they conducted a presentation as part of their evaluation. Batzorig was

assigned to produce the historical content for the day, which he delineated as; reputation, value, peace, harmony, wisdom and justice. Here, two forms of truth are evident. Batzorig's presentation was purely historiographical in its content, deemed objective and deeply interwoven with local notions of statehood. Given Chinggis Khan's status as the most prominent exemplar, tied with origin myths and notions of descent, reference to Chinggis Khan went beyond objective certainty. Rather, truth was located in the determination and enactment of all that is considered ethically appropriate, regardless of whether the book stated it explicitly. Quite outside of the binary between fact and fiction, Batzorig's understanding of truth was not merely descriptive but evaluated the past on the basis of polysemy – or the multiplicity of meaning – of historical resources.

Before demonstrating this ethnographically, it is important to emphasise that widespread notions of historical "truth" (*ünen*) in Mongolia do not call to mind discursive engagements with the past labelled as "myth" (Lévi-Strauss 1955:428), "historical imagination" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:17) or "creative productions" (Lambek 1998:11). The point to emphasis here is that the focus of these debates beg the question of which truth is most significant in how it can be objectified as a property or representation of events that happened in the past. However, my interlocutors simply did not express historical events as somehow more true and therefore superior to the values they derived from the past. Rather, they expressed different forms of truth as simultaneously present in ways that do imply a sort of confrontation (Bloch 1977, translated in Zipes 2019:398). On the one hand, there existed the truth of positivist facts. For example, Chinggis Khan's well recorded biography. This truth was used to justify the authority of Batzorig's session. On the other hand, there exists an ontological form of truth that denotes a degree of being that is the goal of a person's desire, such as being a "true Mongolian person". Looking at truths in this way reveals them to be concerned less with objectivity than with the processes they fulfil (*ibid.*). One way to approach these truths is to examine how they are encoded in the construction of tense in Halha Mongolian.

Unlike in English, in which tense is divided into the past, present and future, Halha Mongolian does not necessarily convey tense in relation to time (Binnick 2012, Brosig 2014, 2018). The language does have two distinct systems to convey the past and present. However, the distinction is not temporal, but is contingent on whether or not

the speaker has experienced the event they are recounting. Emphasis is on personally evidencing the information being spoken and how that was experienced. This could be mean whether or not the speaker knows the person they got the information from, or whether they witnessed it. Another distinguishing factor of tense is the status of the speaker relative to who they are talking to or the events being described. Alternatively, the speaker can also use tense to convey the need of the moment in relation to the recent past, present, or imminent future. The different tenses are expressed with the use of various suffixes, three of which are most relevant here. These are explained using a combination of Binnick's (2012) analysis of the Halha Mongolian verbal system in relation to the past tense, Brosig's (2014, 2018) discussions on the ways in which these verbal systems emphasise evidence, along with my own experience of learning and using these tenses during fieldwork. What is interesting is that several of these suffixes can be used to convey the past in the sense that it is used in English, but they evidence different aspects of the speaker and situation.

Firstly, there is the simple past form (suffix *-jee*)[57]. This tense does not convey the exact time of the topic under discussion. However, it only applies to the past or present and cannot be used to discuss the future. It is used for indirect reporting when the person has inferential or second-hand access to the event. For example, it is predominantly used in the news media and other forms of publishing. It was also used often by teachers in NFLE classes to convey current information they had gathered on a particular topic, mostly from online resources such as social media. It asserts that the speaker did not experience the event themselves. When used in everyday conversations, adding this suffix generally implies that the person has recently discovered the event or point in discussion, and so it is likely to have just happened.

Secondly, there is the direct form (suffix *-laa*). Again, this does not refer to past, present or future directly. In fact, it can apply to any of the three. What is important with this tense is that the point in discussion will have happened sometime close to the present. It evidences a recent or about to happen occurrence. It is a common to hear this tense in daily conversations as it is used to express situations in context moments before an action is carried out, or to report on immediate or direct access to the event.

[57] These suffixes follow vowel harmony therefore examples will show variation.

For example, in the NFLE classroom it was used to confirm that a learner understands (*medlee*), hears (*sonsloo*) or expresses doubt (*ergelzlee*) over what is being taught. There is a temporal openness to this tense in that it can be used when the speaker does not refer to a concrete event, or when they might have invented what they are saying. This openness is also reflected in the use of the suffix to convey a verb when there is no set beginning or end relevant to the conversation such as growth (*urgalaa*) or development (*hugjilaa*).

Finally, there is the direct perfect form (suffix *-san*). This features in a similar way to the English past tense. It does not convey a definitive time but evidences that the topic of conversation occurred sometime in the past. It is commonly used when referring to established events that have happened and are over. As such, this tense is used when discussing historical events as it disassociates the speaker from the source of the information and turns it into a seemingly objective or established knowledge. In this way it formulates the language of historicism in Mongolian historical textbooks. Unlike the first tense above, this suffix does not imply that the speaker has personal experience of the event being recounted. However, it nonetheless implies a sense of authority that overcomes this through the communication of positivist facts.

Anthropologists of Mongolia have drawn attention to this temporal ambiguity when they focus, for example, on the "multi-temporal attitude" (Pedersen 2011:10), or the way in which time "unfurls" (Empson 2020:92). In Rebecca Empson's latest work, for example, she details a historically informed religious movement in which her friend Sara accesses the soul of her past life to gain knowledge for herself in the present (*ibid.*:119-133). The communication of the past here transcends any division in time. As an MP with a government career, Sara felt discontent towards the current political state of affairs. In her search for alternate ways of prefiguring herself as a citizen of the nation she turned to "ancient" wisdom, much like Mandah noted above. In a reading group, Empson learned that Sara believed she was a high-ranking queen in western Mongolia in the thirteenth century. Though learning about this soul, she learned how to be exemplary mother, wife, daughter, person, and gained skills she considers lost to moral corruption in contemporary Mongolia. The relationship between truth and tense here draws together several forms of truth so that Sara could

Figure 17: A burr puzzle

take the historical narrative beyond the point of telling and use it to prefigure her future. Batzorig gave his own temporal metaphor for how he felt Mongolian people attend to time. He used a small *burr* puzzle that sat on the children's section of the library to convey his meaning. The puzzle consists of an interlocking, Rubik's cube like wooden block of notched sticks combined to make a three dimensional, symmetrical shape. From what I could judge, the whole puzzle represented an event and each of the notched sticks was meant to represent a different truth that fit together with the others. He used this to explain his approach to teaching history but did not delve into how. Later that day, I was discussing the burr puzzle example with a learner in the *deel* sewing class. As a young politics student at the National University, Battsengel prided herself on giving me the "modern" point of view. She agreed with Batzorig, but couldn't express her view in terms of the puzzle. Instead, she took the example of the *deel*. The *deel* can be interpreted in several ways in Ulaanbaatar, she described to me while measuring up some fabric. According to Battsengel, a *deel* represents "a piece of history, a symbol of cultural heritage that obligates much respect, and a problem for modern society because people use it to show their wealth when others have nothing." She was frustrated with the ways in which people would have a new, expensive *deel* each summer for Naadam festival. For her, in this instance the *deel* would no longer represent a piece of history due to it not expressing a

temporalisation that centred on the enactment of respect in relation to the past and to others in the present.

Despite Batzorig's love for history, he reserved a degree of cynicism towards the historiographic definition of *tüüh*. He told me that, the problem with the storyline that textbooks contain and that which the school systems curriculum officialises is not simply that they are incomplete, or inaccurate, but they leave learners unprepared to acknowledge the "true" meaning of history. These were important lessons he hoped to teach the learners, that the official historical text was not always right about everything. What he referred to as "putting right the misinterpretations of the historical chronicles of 1921-1990".

As Batzorig told it using direct perfect form (suffix *-san*), that the events surrounding 1921 created a conflicting time for his country; when the "Red Russians" came to the aid of Mongolians to emancipate them from the bad Chinese occupiers. On the one hand, the nation gained its sovereignty back after 300 years of occupation. On the other, however, this sovereignty forced seventy years of a radicalised Marxist ideology onto its subjects. This ideology did not allow for anything "truly Mongolian" and thus violently purged all forms of ancient religious and cultural heritage dating from 1921. A consequence of such a long dislocation from "true" Mongolian history, Batzorig lamented, is that he "still doesn't have a full understanding of what being Mongol is, what the definition of Mongol-ness is, or what being a good Mongol citizen is". As a result of the socio-economic and political changes of the socialist period Batzorig felt that he does not know very much about the "true past" because he cannot enact the values he perceives as deriving from "ancient times".

For Batzorig, the historical past is something to be both mourned and celebrated. He had grown up in a society that denied any merit to socialist history, considering it important only in critique. To him, this has led to a general crisis of historical amnesia in which urbanisation and rapid development was making people forget their sense of "traditional heritage". At the same time, however, there is an enormous and growing interest in the past as manifest in historically orientated tourism, participation in festivals, revival of traditions and the commemoration of historical periods and figures. As Empson has explained, "what vision and value is retained from the past and what is new and transplanted are difficult to disentangle in current articulations, which

themselves are born from the ability to step outside one's current life and reflect on it through such analogies" (2020:48).

Identity crisis notwithstanding, Batzorig felt hopeful since he benefitted from the openness of "modern times" – defined by a certain novelty with regard to the past. He saw the circulation of a growing array of social and political doctrines that traced their intellectual origins to different historic, cultural and ideological influences as a good thing. At his time at university, he learned much of what he considers to be valuable knowledge today from the works of western liberal thinkers in addition to state-sanctioned works of socialist thinkers and modern Mongolian historians operating in the "renaissance period" of the early 1990s (Humphrey 1992:375). More than willing to tap the wisdom of various different thinkers when necessary, he emphasised history as a strategic means to provide context and resources to expose students to values of civic engagement that cut across time periods, ideologies and current events. As I show in the ethnographic vignette in the next section, of one of his classes, it is a matter of interpretation and therefore unique to each person. It is knotting together these various notches of the puzzle in order that allowed for a moment of new possibility for thinking and acting in the present.

5.5. Civic Education Class: National Intellectual Inheritance and Pride

In the classroom, Batzorig took to his teaching role wholeheartedly. He laboured intently to translate his own puzzlement into ordinary terms that learners would find both interesting and applicable to their everyday lives. These efforts did not go unnoticed, as learners regularly express to me their admiration and respect for his committed approach. They found him an especially compelling storyteller, whose choice of historical narratives kept them engaged. This was because, for leaners, Batzorig's approach to historical knowledge looked more like an orientation to understanding themselves in present. In each lesson, he would find one or more contemporary issues that were currently circulating on social media or in any other arena of local civic life. He focused attention on the ways in which learners should engage with historical knowledge (in all its cultural forms) in ways moulded by their own personalities, experiences, and sense of tradition. He didn't view the past in any nostalgic, nor irretrievable sense. For Batzorig, intellectual heritage was the goal, but it was also the fundamental means of pedagogy, a process that, far from linear,

continuously represented something quite new; an appraisal of present conditions that mobilises not the past itself but conjured images of the past to transfigure experience in the present.

To accomplish such a transformation, there was one narrative in particular Batzorig returned to time and time again; the biography of Chinggis Khan. He was somewhat of a Chinggis aficionado and saw his role as burnishing that idea of a patriot hero in the minds of learners. Almost exclusively, his favourite historical topic centred on "ancient" times. In popular knowledge this referred to everything before 1921, but especially made people think of the thirteenth century way of life. While he did not teach every class exclusively on Chinggis, something I imagine the director instructed against, Batzorig's examples, sayings and general advice could often be traced back to the *The Secret History of Mongolia* (Kahn 1984) to lend his examples tension, coherence and meaning. He would seldom mention a date, the empire itself, the lengthy military campaigns, the profound death, destruction or dislocation, or other ways in which historians have explored these historical events in detail (e.g. Weatherford 2005). Instead, Batzorig would focus on Chinggis' biography, beginning with his upbringing, to raising his children and finally with his descendants ruling. This constant replication of Chinggis Khan rehearsed the two types of values underlying *tüüh* by which Batzorig, among many other people that I spoke with, would define themselves against a waning of a way of life that today is considered "truly Mongolian".

Several months into fieldwork at the centre. Batzorig wrote the subject in the top left-hand corner of the board: "National Intellectual Heritage and Pride". As he faced the class, Batzorig began with a short story about Alakhai Bekhi, a daughter of Chinggis Khan. The students were provided with an apical figure through which an ethical problem can be considered. These figures are important not only in their historical deeds, but also as exemplars that offer ethical experience of history. He explained:

> Famously, Chinggis Khan's daughters received the same education as his sons. Alakhai Bekhi was given in marriage to another tribe of the Golden Order as part of Chinggis Khan's political ambition. He stated that "if I go far to make war I have to be related to close tribes". It was about alliance. Chinggis Khan taught Alakhai Bekhi that "you are

> going to be queen of the tribe to your chief and your son. You need three qualities to be queen, three equal "husbands"; the state, your flawless reputation, and finally your actual husband. Your priorities are to be loyal to your country as the Queen and ambassador for political policies". This means she had to think about her reputation, keep it clean. Three years after the marriage, Alakhai Bekhi's husband was poisoned. They caught the perpetrator and brought him to the queen. What would you do? Choose the death penalty or forgive him?

After receiving the instructions, students were asked to discuss this tale. They conferred among each other, pondering if the queen will be killed if she forgives him. They deliberated the point that Alakhai Bekhi must keep the peace, asking if it is possible to turn him into a loyal servant. Mindful of these dilemma's Batzorig feigned ignorance from the side of the classroom. As soon as the learners were out of questions he answered them:

> Well, she decided not to kill the man as she wanted to keep the peace and loyalty with the tribe and wanted men to be loyal to her country. By keeping the peace, she would not cause a revolution. So, I wanted to give an example of the wife's policy, not only that of a great warrior, but instead show Chinggis Khan as a democrat. He realised the continuation of his policy through his daughter and his other children. So, there is a passage over a mountain too high to go over, and a flooded river too high to pass, but where there is a will there is a way.

Implicit in this description was the common view of that "ancient" time is both a long time ago but also another dimension of the present. For Batzorig it was not about reforming the past to fit the present, but about the creativity to learn beyond simply reproducing the past. In using the proverb, he was asking learners to cumulate historical experience with an ethical eye, not a chronological one. After a short pause at the end of his example, Batzorig gestured to the learners one by one to comment. Each learner took it in turns to speak:

> Hishigjargal: It is not only about being a loyal servant but about people's good actions. If you are strong physically you can win fight

with one person, if your morals are strong you can influence other people. They will follow your good influence.

Serjbadam: You should not be ready mentally to not give up. Never give up, always fight. Negative thoughts shouldn't get you. No matter how hard life is or the situation in society just take small steps to move forward. There's always options and solutions.

Nasanjargal: Your emotional state rules your physical bodies. It means that if emotions are the right shape that's guidance to be on the correct path. No matter if you are upset or angry at the concrete situation, try and see the bigger picture and act accordingly.

Sarantsetseg: Your reputation is fragile so you should always save face. Each single hair is connected to many hairs, together it will be a strong rope. This means your reputation needs to be clean. Do the small actions that create a pattern of activities and life.

Mandah: People can influence other people but also your actions can influence other people. If you love and respect someone with loyalty you will gain the other people. If you don't respect a loyal servant will influence people in a negative way. It is the same as if you make fire with dried wood it will have more warmth, make it with wet wood and there will be lots of smoke but it won't burn.

As mentioned previously, learners would almost always respond to a question with a proverb or saying. Classes would follow the same pattern. A historical narrative would be told, and treated by learners as a casting off point for reflecting on ethical behaviour. In this particular class, the rest of the time was filled with a discussion of how the learners could apply their answers to their lives. It is in this causal relationship between narrative and injunction that historical consciousness is made intelligible, where the relationship between saying and history is not either/or but both. In this example, the accuracy of historical knowledge is not only measured against what came first but by its ability to allow the learners to evaluate the correct way to behave in the present. This was reflected in the use of direct perfect form (suffix *-san*). The textual forms of history from which Batzorig drew his reference and oral forms of history that see

proverbs as a source of authority inform and implicate one another. To fully comprehend and properly adapt to this teaching, the learners do not rely fully on the settled past. Instead, they draw agency from it. At issue here is how the interpretation of events relate to the present and future lives. The proverbs that frame the answers convey this interplay between the past and the cultivation of ethical life. It is in this way that the two forms of truth underlying *tüüh* play out in the production of a citizen.

In his work on dreaming and historical consciousness in Greece, Charles Stewart (2012) highlights a certain temporal simultaneity at the heart of agency. He demonstrates the historical value of dreaming in that they produce knowledge about the past in a way that offers new possibilities for thought and action in the present. These dreams, "in both their interior form and in their performance, work through the problem of agency where a future must be faced using knowledge of the past" (*ibid.*:212). Stewart draws upon Heidegger's (1996) definition of temporality as a "subjective relationship to time that is definitive of being" (Stewart 2012:14). Recognising the fact that people make choices based on what they know and within the context of their own historical positioning, Stewart argues that dreams provide "temporal excursions" that are intrinsic to being human in that they carry the resolve to act anew in the present, opening new possibilities action (*ibid.*). These temporal excursions subsequently enter the historical record with a recursive quality.

Like dreaming in Naxos, Batzorig is getting learners to experience the past in a way that offers them agency to act well in the present. In a similar fashion, proverbs appear temporally ambiguous like dreams – even timeless – because they cut across the periods and ideologies that conventional forms of historicism are built upon. There is a recursive quality since each person goes to own previously learned repertoire to apply it to present instantiations according to life contingencies. Every proverb offers the potential to surpass its limits, so in a sense they offer a form agency that historicism denies. Operating together, proverbs and conventional forms of history actualise certain periods of the past (Das 2006), and come to define the affective qualities of the present to offer agentive capacity to alter the future (Empson 2020). This integrates both repetitive and non-repetitive aspects of the past. In Batzorig's teaching of Alakhai Bekhi, his goal was to draw the learners into a form of historical experience that causes them to reflect on they own notions of what is right and wrong. This represents an articulation with history and enhancement of it as a form of present knowledge in

which meaning is woven and renewed to produce a different outcome in the future. Namely, good behaviour. Rather than being cut off from history in time, the past is reconciled as an ethical dimension of the present. I did not witness the extent to which Batzorig's classes caused the learners to behave in a more ethical way outside of the classroom. However, an important part of *hümüüjil* at the NFLE centre was a sense that the act of teaching history in and of itself would produce ethical outcomes.

I wish to highlight instead the "temporal map" underlying Batzorig's approach (Gell 1992:326). Firstly, the historical content is talked about as periodised, this is the language available people to express their deeply felt ideals. Secondly, it is a multiple process of transmission in which past, present and future are constantly mediated through multiple modes of truth and value. For example, the value of a proverb is considered as true as the content of a history textbook. Thirdly, these truths allow for the interpretation of the present to contain the possibility of multiple ways of crafting the past in the present, and of the present with respect to the past. This points to a set of temporal conditions within which older values can be given new direction, shape and form. The past acts as device for evaluation but also a technique for social improvement. The idea is that the past is always necessary, but the past which is there is not necessary. It is dependent upon the future which determines the present and its interpretation of truth based on ethical value. This demands a historical consciousness that is open to the agency of actors in the present.

I want to finish this discussion with a wider point about how *hümüüjil* requires a broader set of causal factors underlying a the notion of a historical event as defined retrospectively. Rather than conceiving of a historical event as simply that which happening in the irrevocable past, I draw form da Col and Humphrey's notion of a "quasi-event" that incorporates the actualisation of future horizons in various social settings. That is, "a quasi-event is not an ordinary fact but a unique fact of the everyday, *one that forces a shift in attention toward what will happen next or toward what might have happened*" (2012:2 emphasis in original). Originally theorised in relation to fortune and luck, the quasi-event takes into consideration temporalities of contingency that occur when a person moves across various forms of truth and cause. In the case of Batzorig, for example, contingency occurs within the potential that historical narratives have to create a culturally specific range of ethico-civic dispositions. For him, a historical event is always open to this potential in relation to

people's actions towards one another. The historical events he teaches therefore engender moments of ethical, political and historical convergence that orientate learners to several temporalities simultaneously.

5.6. The Potential of History

This chapter has examined a set of tensions underlying multiple notions of truth that are simultaneously projected as legible in the teaching of *hümüüjil*. Batzorig's work was an attempt to articulate both personal and political forms of truth underlying the practice of history (*tüüh*), and through that process, produce Creative Citizens. Broadly speaking, these tensions blur the boundaries between forms of historiography and Batzorig's personal identifications with it, and open up a version of the past that resignifies history as meaningful coordinates of ethical truth to engage with people's potential to act differently in the future. For him, history doesn't necessarily give answers to people but should initiate them into the evaluating themselves, so they are equipped to formulate their own meaningful decision making in relation to broader society. Historical understanding operates here as a way of finding accordance with the past in the present in order to achieve a future task. This implies temporality in which history provides the potential for evaluation by offering a variety of pasts that vary as the present varies. This creativity is necessary for an experiencing of both history and ethical action.

A key insight of this chapter is that the permanent character of history as taught in NFLE was that it is not predetermined, but revealed itself in the potential for cultivating ethical relations in the future. While I examine the contingency of history as a form of emergence in more detail in the conclusion (7.3.), for now I wish to highlight the temporality of potential as a key facet of the relationship between history (*tüüh*) and *hümüüjil*. I draw once again on Bryant and Knight's (2019) analysis of the future to illustrate the significance of potential. Applying the philosophy of Massumi, Bryant and Knight define potential as "the immanence of a thing to its still indeterminate variation, under way" (*ibid.*:124). As potential is not necessarily grounded in the actual, they argue, it creates a temporal space – an absent present – in which new social forms can emerge. The fact that potential could not be realised in the future instigates ethical questions in this space. These questions encourage people to act in certain ways that are contingent to everyday demands and entangled with politics

of the present, but always open to the potential of a different future. In the case of Batzorig, history always offered the potential that plays on his conscience to cultivate good citizens.

The next chapter explores the final scale of relations inherent to creative citizenship; the state. I examine an instance where the potential of history was not realised due to political intervention at the NFLE centre. I analyse the ways in which staff evaluated the state negatively as a result, leading to the assertion that disorder has created an "anarchist democracy".

Chapter Six.

The State of Ethics:
Democracy, Disorder and the Problem of Freedom

Democracy, it's so heavy to talk about. You know that Mongolia was in communication with the Soviet Union and other countries in the socialist community until 1990. Since then we have a relationship worldwide with every country in the world. We gained freedom of speech and can express our ideas. But there is too much freedom in the democratic process, that's why it is having negative impacts. Just look at the events happening recently in our organisation, the new director was approved because of her political connections. It's my understanding that she has had a career far from the education sector. Because of this the last one month has been hectic. We had already got the staff count and budget approved by the governor's office and we cannot change it again without a real reason. That's the political parties for you, once they are at power they think they have full rights to change everything and put their people in power. I don't trust them, they jeopardise everything. I think ethics is only money and power these days. It's too open, we live in an anarchist democracy. People like to say they have freedom but only their opinion counts and they don't think about their duty of respect

6.1. Democracy as Anarchy

I begin this chapter with an excerpt from an interview with Burmaa, the Non-formal and Lifelong Education (NFLE) centre manager, in late June 2018. Here, she expresses her view on the status of Mongolian democracy and its relationship with the education sector. In her example, of which I go into more detail below, she explains that despite originally accepting the values of liberal democratic freedom, the implementation and reality of it has fallen short of her expectations, leaving her with a general sense of

distrust and malaise towards the democratic process. In much the same way as the learners I described in chapter four (4.4.), Burmaa uses the language of *yos züi*, or ethics, as a shorthand to criticise the disruptive impact that the state and its politicians have on small governmental institutions, and their capacity to seek selfish gain at the expense of ordinary workers. She felt that they swim presently against a very strong current, forced to navigate a political landscape that has done nothing but introduce ethical conflicts into her endeavours to uphold *hümüüjil*; what she considers to be a Mongolian educational heritage that commands significant respect. As a result, she rejects the version of liberal democratic "freedom" (*erh chölöö* literally break from rights) – or at least certain dimensions of it – that run counter to her conceptions of the civic, the ethical, and ideas about what it means to be a good Mongolian person.

In the previous chapters, I have explored *hümüüjil* and *yos züi* from the perspective of the personal and citizen. I showed that a creative citizen is one that pertains to the personal, the civic and the state in relation to one another. This social order is connected through the cosmology of *yos*. Through the lens of *yos*, and by extension *yos züi*, people conceptualise the relation of the person to external levels of existence. Although the person is centred, the state (*tör*) is also thought of as an extension of the person through their actions, and the effect that these actions have on society as a whole. These actions perform relations through certain qualities that manifest them such as *hiimori* (personal vitality), *hariultslah* (communication), and *hündleh yos* (respect). The right ethical practice is intended to create a balance between past and present, people and the environment or institutions. In this chapter, I examine the relationship between ethical qualities and disorder through local interactions with the nation state (*uls tör*). I highlight an example in which interactions with state politics caused ethics to be considered unbridled at the Non-formal and Lifelong Education centre, and how this problem was attributed to the absence of *hümüüjil*. This demonstrates the temporalities around which people construct their political horizons, as well as expectations local people have for ethical care and responsibility to constitute the interface between the state and person.

The next section introduces the notion of democracy to which Burmaa was referring to above. I discuss this briefly in relation to the anthropological literature on agency, ethics and freedom. Section 6.3. offers an ethnographic example of unbridled ethics at the centre. I detail the relationship between being unethical and consumerism as an

individual utility. This is followed by a second ethnographic vignette of a moral-aesthetic class teaching "personal ethics" (*huvi hünii yos züi*) as a reaction to the unethical events that had unfolded at the centre. Section 6.5. then provides an analysis of democracy as evaluated through the lens of *yos züi*. I argue that freedom in the context of *hümüüjil* implies a form of history-making, and discuss this in relation to the wider anthropological literature. Finally, the opinions I present in this chapter towards the state were extremely common among all people that I spoke to during the course of my fieldwork. To convey this wider narrative, I illustrate the opinions of people in the NFLE centre with political cartoons that circulated around the period when fieldwork was conducted. These were indicative of the broader political climate.

6.2. Democracy Under Socialism

One morning in May 2018, I was early to the centre. All the teachers were busy working quietly so I sat myself to one side on an old sofa in the corridor next to an elderly women I had not seen before. We quickly struck up a conversation. That week I had been thinking about citizenship and explained my research to the lady on those terms. She made a comment that I had not heard before. She thought "democracy was better under socialism." Before I had a chance to delve into this comment further, I was called to a meeting with the centre director Odnoo. By the time I returned, the lady had gone elsewhere, but the comment stayed with me. In what follows, I examine the meaning and evaluation of democracy in local terms as they were provided to me at the centre.

Throughout my fieldwork, any mention of democracy would often be met with heavy sighs, awkward looks and shrugging shoulders. It was not that people did not feel that they had much to say about how they are governed, but rather a profound sense of ethical ambivalence surrounded the concept. As Burmaa described, she felt that democracy was heavy (*hünd*), a term that perfectly captures the sense of confusion and failure that weighed it down[58]. "I think the understanding of democracy among Mongolians is not so good" she had explained to me the same morning that she made

[58] Elsewhere, it has been pointed out that *hünd* formulates the root of *hündleh yos* (respect), denoting a weight of obligation and reverence (Kohl-Garrity 2019:1). In my fieldwork, my sense was that the weight was referred to as a negative burden, as something my interlocutors did not feel obliged to bear as it could lead to misfortune (see also High 2017:2).

the comment noted at the beginning of the chapter. “Everyone knows the word, but no one knows what it really means and if we are implementing it right or not” she finished. Burmaa was referring to the word *ardchilal*, that is translated into English as “democracy” but does not connote the same meaning or definition. Stemming from the historical revolutionary word *ard*, meaning subject, proletarian, people, common and the masses, when added to the suffix *-chilal* it translates literally to “people-isation” (Plueckhahn and Bumochir 2018:346). At its core, *ardchilal* connotes the sentiment of people helping one another in the name of moral duty and the collective good.

Working from the vantage point of the everyday lives of the teachers and learners in and around the centre, this chapter explores the assertion that democracy is “too open” or “anarchist” and, therefore, ethically reprehensible. Although Burmaa is quoted above, she was not the only person to articulate a critique of the contemporary Mongolian state in these exact terms. In fact, her judgements found much support in the context of a wider narrative of political and ethical transformation in Mongolia, where a fundamental distrust in state representatives has become increasingly widespread (Bonilla and Shagdar 2018, Højer 2019). This is especially apparent among residents of Ulaanbaatar, where the problem of “too much freedom” occupies a prominent place in critiques of public life. This disapproval is labelled “red rage” (*ulaan galzuu*). It was often claimed to me that residents had lost all hope in formal politics. People castigated democracy’s present entanglement with capitalism for failing to provide ethical limits to power, as a legitimate social order in the name of which ordinary people can trust that their politicians would do what is best for the collective nation. This has produced a myriad of different appeals to responsibility (*hariultslah*/*üüreg*), with demands that people must be held accountable for their actions. As scholars have noted, there is a constant stream of speculation surrounding the intentions of various political actors and the detrimental choices made by shifting factions of political parties (Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan 2017).

In what follows, I pay special attention to what these discourses and experiences of unbridled ethics reveal about the conditions under which people come to think of themselves as free. Towards the end of my fieldwork, the experience of distrust and the problem of democratic freedom were major organising factors behind the NFLE

Figure 18. Political cartoon showing justice being beaten up by "the economy" on one side and "the people" on the other[59]

centre's outlook, tellingly encapsulated in the events that had unfolded on the day of Burmaa's quote above. I examine the question of why liberal democratic freedom has become the object of so much contention and why people perceive the political landscape as confronting ethical life in particularly "anarchist" ways. I argue that local understandings of democracy are directly connected to how a person is thought to be ethically cultivated and explore how freedom is expected to feature relationally in this constitution. Turning attention to questions of freedom through the framework of *hümüüjil* not only throws into relief the important practices through which people cultivate themselves, but also involves thinking about locally specific criteria for evaluating democracy on a more ethical scale than is usual in political analysis.

In seeking to clarify the current understandings of *ardchilal*, I was often confronted by the polysemic nature of the term (see also Bumochir 2018). Not only in terms of it having existed under socialism in a different form, but as having different outcomes

[59] Viewed on Instagram @satso_cartoon (Accessed 10.11.2022).

depending on what value system people were referring to. *Ardchilal* was rarely spoken of as a form of representational governance as typically envisaged in terms of a Euro-American version of liberal democratic statecraft; namely regular free and fair elections, a free press, an independent judiciary, and politicians that uphold the rule of law and display a commitment to human rights. Put simply, this version of democratic equality entails that everyone whose basic interests are affected by policies should be included in the process of making them. While people would acknowledge that these aspects do exist and function (to varying degrees), any mention of democracy would usually be followed by the claim that, although much talked about and increasingly valued, this view of democracy is rhetorically overplayed and of not much relevance to their lives as lived.

When asked to clarify what the term evokes instead, the reference points people would use to characterise *ardchilal* centred on notions of equality, peace, harmony, care or respect. Their answers were closely associated with following the social order of *yos* as it underscores the stakes involved in ethical action (see 4.3.). For example, in civic education class Batzorig emphasised to the learners:

> The definition of Mongolian citizenship is to be democratic. That means to understand not just your rights but your obligation to respect other's rights in frame of the law. You must be able to trust in the state and legal system. It is being humanistic and respectful because in the present era it is borderless. For example, if you want to criticise someone using social media there is no limit to providing "facts" that are false information. Freedom of speech is the cause. If you make someone's name bad from false information you just care for your freedom of speech without thinking of their reputation.

It is worth noting here again, that any emphasis on *yos* is not separate or compartmentalised from the realm of democratic politics. Nor do people view *tör* as an entity imposed on them from the outside. As shown in the previous chapter, the ethical and political exist in unbroken scale that covers the person, family and state in continuity. In this thinking, the state exists within the principle of universal balance in which its development must be conducted in harmony with the rest of the universe. It implies a set of cultural expectations concerning the ways in which people act towards

one another, as something that a person can "feel, accept, have in the self, transfer or become detached from" (Skrynnikova 2013:59, cited in Tangad 2016:139).

Importantly, then, to speak of *ardchilal*, is to refer to a "way of life" that is not reducible to cosmology, ideology, politics or economics (Sabloff 2013:2). That is not to say it has not been deeply entangled with such transformations. In fact, upon independence from the Manchu dynasty in 1924, communist ideology was sincerely welcomed in accordance with the notion of *yos*. Lacking a direct translation to convey communism ideology, Buriad translators referred to it instead as *ev hamtyn yos*, or "the principle of being in communal consent" (Tangad 2017:134). *Ardchilal* formally entered the constitution in line with this translation in the 1960 constitution under the declaration of a "people's democratic state" (People's Great Khural 1960). As noted by Dulam Bumochir, democratic values – civil society, freedom and human rights – were at this time contained under the declaration to "reveal and protect the freedom of 'genuine people'" (Bumochir 2017:98). The term "genuine people" (*jinhene ard*), he argues, implies the etiquette of *yos* through the collective spirit of joint commitment to the cause.

Since 1990, it is widely perceived by my interlocutors that the disintegration of socialism and three decades of reform have eroded the conditions that once made *ev hamtyn yos* possible. As I detailed in earlier chapters (2.3.4.), the state's control over the means of production, especially regarding its role in providing employment and livelihood was significantly diminished. The constitution preserved much of its original content with the exception that socialism was changed to civil society (*irgenii niigem*). As my landlord once explained to me, during the democratic revolution few ordinary people had any real understanding of how the capitalist economy operated, at the time she was simply disinterested in the need to own property because ownership was perceived as unethical. Given these kinds of perspectives, the newly democratic state leaders were initially reluctant to emphasise capitalism (Plueckhahn and Bumochir 2018:345). Instead, *ardchilal* emerged as an effective touchstone for opposition to regimes of state socialism because it spoke to ethical order of *yos* that established good relations between people. Neither capitalist nor socialist, *ardchilal* was open to multiple meanings. As such, the transformation away from state socialism was coupled with a sense of ambiguity or working misunderstanding (*ibid.*).

Since around 2000, *ardchilal* has increasingly become aligned with American style democracy, but also the market (*zah zeel*) and ultimately instability (*emh zambaraagüi*) (*ibid.*:346). As Batzorig described in his description of a good citizen in the previous chapter (5.1.), the values underlying democracy centred on responsible communication, respect for others, freedom of belief and religion, loyalty to the state and equal rights. An important aspect of present democratic rights that he chose not to mention is the freedom to acquire private wealth. What has happened is that the concept of *ardchilal* encompasses old and new meanings that people live with and between in their own personal interpretations of what it means to be democratic. This especially applies to notions of freedom.

When exploring freedom more broadly, anthropologists have tended to perceive it as occupying the role between choice and constraint (Robbins 2004). For example, Webb Keane notes that modernity and historical processes have resulted in the increase of a type of freedom in which people can "realise true nature of human agency" against a set of seemingly artificial constraints such as tradition (2007:6). A widespread approach to freedom in anthropology conceives of a person becoming at least partially self-aware to the point that they can separate themselves from pressures that appear to be external to their choices and control, such as cultural expectations or legal requirements. Subjects become constituted and exist within this configuration of power (Laidlaw 2014). This is further driven by the popular notion of liberal democracy that perceives of this kind of agency as a crucial aspect of human equality. That each person has the right to realise their own agency and express themselves without constraint, and that all such agency is equally valid and true (de Tocqueville 2000). In this sense, democracy contains a formulation of agency that recognises the degree of power between individual efficacy opposed to societal power in some form, in which freedom can only occur when that person resists or realises the social structures around them. In places where ethical life requires a person to renounce their agency to that of another person or time (such as the ancestors), freedom in a liberal sense appears to diminish, as "a source of political self-betrayal" (Hickel 2015:7).

In his work on the moral order of anti-liberal politics in South Africa, Jason Hickel (2015) presents a nuanced picture of the ways in which liberal democracy is interpreted on local terms in rural Zululand. He details how liberal policies are perceived as detrimental to kinship hierarchies that maintain ritual orders central to the production

of good fortune. This good fortune affords social development. Without this development, democracy appears culturally retrograde and therefore equated to death. This is evidenced by liberal policies, such as abortion and support for single mothers, evaluated locally as ethically reprehensible. In this context, Hickel argues, liberal freedom is not conceived of in the same way as freedom and agency noted in the paragraph above. Rather, the concept of being liberal in Zululand perceives of baseline nature of agency as one of chaos and disorder. Emancipation from this chaos is afforded by social hierarchies that create a sense of order. Morality plays an important role in this disorder, as that which mediates peoples actions in a way that produces good fortune and reduces taboo.

Hickel's work resonates with my own analysis of *ardchilal* (democracy). Among the NFLE teachers, the absence of an order that centred every person in relation to one another in a hierarchical form was conceived of as chaotic. This is due to it jeopardising the flow of fortune or other affective qualities such as *hiimori*. Unlike Zululand, however, my interlocutors did not conceive of chaos as the natural state of the universe. Rather, *yos* fulfilled this role as that which delineates the hierarchical relations of respect among the person, family, state and universe. In the context of my research, this order is seen to be devolving, confused with new ethical orders that emerged in relation to capitalist ethics of individuality. As Mette High demonstrates in her analysis of the moral "cosmoeconomy" of the Mongolian gold rush, navigating the chaos (*zambaraagüi*) of contemporary life in the country involves the negotiation of fortune (2017:3). The mishandling of wealth, either money or gold, is conceived of as undermining local values, leading to social detriment such as pollution.

In what follows, I present two ethnographic examples that contain reference to freedom at the NFLE centre. Firstly, I detail the events that led up to Burmaa's opening quote. This demonstrates an account of political dissatisfaction grounded in the specificities of the teacher's experiences. The second example details one class that aimed to resolve the problem of too much freedom through ethical cultivation. This includes their attempts to teach a version of democratic citizenship that centred on the order of *yos*. In doing so, I use NFLE as the grounds from which to better understand how larger shifts are understood by ordinary people and subsequently refashioned into critiques and new political forms on the ground. These reflect the emerging political sensibilities of ordinary citizens as they are locally constructed, not only through what

is considered ethically correct, but also as a product of the perceived unethical behaviour that constitutes much of the political arena.

6.3. The New Director

On the morning that Burmaa had chastised democratic freedom as "heavy" (see introductory quote in 6.1.), the NFLE staff and I, Burmaa included, had casually streamed in the centre to begin our daily preparations. As far as anyone knew, it was to be a day like any other. Most of the staff had arrived to work a little earlier than normal to organise the classrooms for a cohort of NFLE teachers from Bayankhongor province in the capital to receive training. As a similar event to one they had held recently for some colleagues from Ömnögovi (South Gobi), the atmosphere was relaxed as they looked forward to a social day free of formal teaching. Often feeling exhausted and overworked, the younger teachers were especially grateful to have a lecturer from a local university there to take up most of the day with a session on engaging the public. This was designed to help the Bayankhongor staff encourage different demographics to their classes. All that the centre staff were required to do was to provide hospitality and give short presentations on their work. While waiting for their guests from the countryside to arrive, Enkhe sat with Bayaraa drinking tea in the small yellow walled teacher's office while comparing their presentations. The already bright space was made all the more vibrant as Enkhe fanned out numerous colourful handmade booklets and posters filled with photographs of the topics she utilised in her moral-aesthetic and library classes. Bayaraa reciprocated by throwing a large dice onto a similarly colourful handmade board game she claimed learners enjoyed using to address inter-generational or gender conflicts in her family education classes. They repeated the actions as other teachers came and went from their desks, until the tea was gone.

The relaxed atmosphere was short lived, however, when two steely and unfamiliar women dressed in suits arrived and entered the Director's office. It was not unusual for the director Odnoo to have visitors, although if important the staff were normally informed in advance. Before I had time to comprehend what was happening, I was whisked outside for a photograph with arriving Bayankhongor staff in front of the district governor's building, crowned as it was with a large state emblem. By the time

I returned, news of the two women's arrival had spread. The shock and dismay among the staff was palpable. Their normally sunny dispositions were replaced with hurried whispers and judgemental glances. Odnoo was being replaced, it appeared, by a Mongolian People's Party (MPP) appointed official. Having resisted the imposition of broader politics on the centre management for 19 years (an unusual achievement in state institutions), this came as an immense surprise to everyone present. Odnoo had been at the centre from its inception, and was generally admired for her ability to maintain a stable operation despite the ever-shifting party politics and fluctuating economy. It was received as ethically reprehensible not only because Odnoo was just one year away from retirement, but also because the new director stated that she had only ever worked for the party. She had little to no experience running an institution of this kind. It was clear that the new director had got the position due to her network and obligations. Amongst the commotion and explosion of whispered gossiping, Burmaa caught my eye before shrugging her shoulders and lamenting that, ""it is all so negative, we even ask the state emblem to forgive us (*töriin süld örshöö*)" as if to her the state was a living being of sorts.

According to Burmaa, a notice had come from the district governor a month prior informing them that Odnoo was to be replaced. The management had not said anything as they were not sure whether it would happen or not, until the new director arrived that morning. To everyone's relief, Odnoo had used this extra time and her contract to fight for her job and was approved, albeit reluctantly, to stay for her final year before retirement. Despite offering to remain as the primary director and to spend a year training the new MPP official as her replacement, she was instead demoted to assistant director and given a smaller office. As Burmaa put it according to the adage, "for the sake of the government a mouse strangles itself to death (*töriin tölöö, ogotno booj üheh*). It means please never participate in politics, politics is from above and they will just implement as they want to." [60]

This situation is reminiscent of what Astrid Zimmerman (2012) described in her analysis of the tensions between corruption and obligation in a state-run kindergarten

[60] A common proverb. The mouse is insignificant in comparison to political issues and should therefore not even try engage in politics.

Figure 19. Political cartoon with the caption "our ancestors souls and emblems are always feeling sorry for us today"[61]

in Ulaanbaatar (see 1.4.1.). She notes that working in state institutions commands significant respect. These positions afford material comfort as they create the opportunity for people to secure jobs and finances for themselves and their network regardless of professional experience or qualifications. As the state run institutions remain prominent in the country, these jobs can also command political influence. Zimmerman draws a distinction between obligations of care that come with these work positions and forms of monetary corruption. On the one hand, leaders are located within the ethical order of *yos*, as evidenced by the term *töriin huni yos* (literally state person etiquette) referring to a state official or leader. This implies leaders exist within a set of ordering set of principles that morally obligate them to help their network live well. On the other hand, from outside of the state leaders network these obligations can appear as corruption, interpreted through the lens of liberal democratic freedom that perceives of equality as separate to the weight of custom. Looking at the example of the new director at the NFLE centre, both of these two moral interpretations of

[61] Viewed on Instagram @satso_cartoon (Accessed 10.11.22). The image shows a Russian soldier asking "are you a fool?" to a Mongolian man that replies "think about whose power you have come from so far son!!!"

freedom and order at play. This resonates with Hickel's (2015) discussion of hierarchy noted above, in which conventional liberal freedoms fail to accommodate differences – often moralised – through which social hierarchies are created.

Burmaa acknowledged that it is no secret that there is little difference between personal networking and political affiliation in Mongolia, with officials being regularly hired and fired each election cycle dependent on their affiliations. She seldom missed the chance to emphasise her disappointment, along with other teachers and learners I spoke with throughout the day. Each time I sat with the Burmaa or the other teachers that day the new director was the first thing they spoke to me about. Each time there was an update from outside of the hall where training was being carried out, one teacher would gesture to another to sneak quietly outside into the hall. A minute or two later they would return to the hall whispering as quickly as they could to the others. This was followed by a round table of judgement, always negative. They couldn't help but condemn the situation as generating a sense of inadequacy in terms of what they deemed as fair and equal. This suggested a point that goes further than just moral contradiction about the impact of the new director noted by Zimmerman (2012).

After training had finished for the morning, Burmaa invited me to her office to explain the situation in a more professional way than the dismayed whispers of the younger staff. Burmaa sat behind her neat desk, surrounded by neatly stacked papers. It is hard to convey the tone of disapproval, bordering on defeat, with which Burmaa explained to me why she felt the arrival of new director was unethical. The change went deeper than titles, she began, because the approval of the new director did not allow the centre to receive a larger budget. Their predicament was made more difficult by the fact that alongside Odnoo staying, the new director insisted on bringing on another staff member under the ambiguous title of "representative" (*tölөөlögch*). Something of a personal assistant to the new director, no one was clear on what exactly this new staff member's role was. The work load was certainly not too much for one person to handle. On an already tight budget, Burmaa had to find enough money for two new salaries leaving the current staff short. As NFLE teachers were already on the lowest salary teachers can earn, of around 300MNT (approx. $100) after tax, this had serious far reaching material implications for all the teachers lives. Many teachers were so frustrated, including Burmaa, that they spoke of not returning the following September. The other staff expressed their distaste for the new director's

representative by attacking her character and circulating rumours that she had been in prison some time before, although the accuracy of these claims was never substantiated.

Later that day, I caught a moment between presentations to talk with the other staff. When I asked them to explain why everyone felt appalled by the arrival of the new director, I had expected them to only talk of the disruption to their salaries. They told me that they were certainly not happy about their salaries. Curiously, their answers centred on the question of freedom and their search to combat it. As Odnoo explained to me:

> During the socialist era, everything was clear and easy because we had a planned economy but now under the market people do not know how to make good choices. People took cared for each other then. Now they think only about themselves. They understand democratic freedom as a right, a right to everything. This is why we changed the classes to practical skills and knowledge that learners can use to protect themselves from the selfishness and immorality of others.

In this comment, Odnoo is expressing her view of democracy as equating to selfishness and immorality based on individual choice and desire. This is indicative of a sense of moral disorientation that the transformation to democracy and capitalism caused, and that which has not yet been reconciled. As Katherine Verdery (1996) proposed, post-socialist contexts often invest local processes with their own terms. As such, the transformation of democracy cannot be assumed as merely the dismantling of socialist structures, but must also take into account the longstanding immorality people were taught towards property ownership or money through which these structures were lived and experienced. Odnoo describes this sense of rupture between the freedom of the socialism as highlighting a moral rupture. It has affected not just the NFLE staff's standard of living but Odnoo's sense of what is right and wrong. There was a sense that Odnoo and the other staff did not conceive of freedom from the perspective of individuals. Their idea of being a good person that acts according to the order of *yos* has been replaced by narrower instrumental and competitive calculations, to get what one wants at the expense of others. Under capitalism, the previously shared values of "people-isation" underlying democratic thinking have seemingly retreated in favour

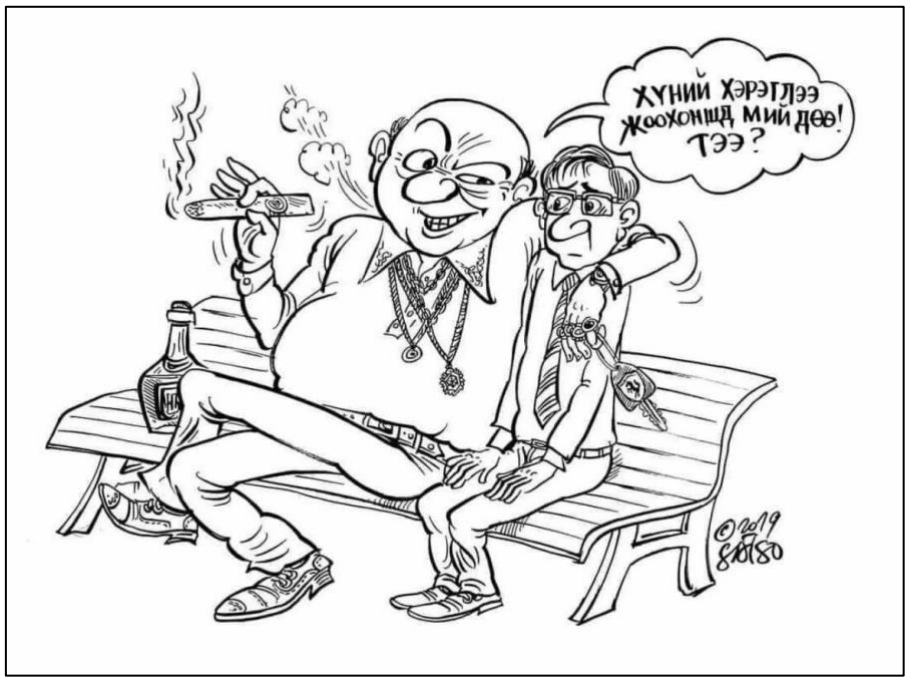

Figure 20. Political cartoon with the caption "Get financial freedom and let it go to the toilet."[62]

of their exact opposites in autonomy, individualism and consumerism. The moralising of these two extremes has caused Odnoo to mobilise the past as a sense of nostalgia, one that reifies the moral order of socialism even though her comments may not reflect the reality of that period.

Crucially, one dimension of freedom is that it has become a synonym for corruption, understood as an objective measure of power that is all individual agency and no order. This is mostly discussed in relation to money. From this perspective, freedom was talked about as being wrongly mistaken for an unbounded limitlessness, a form of consumerism with no moral, legal or civic accountability. The idea of freedom as a right and people exercising it "because they can" was a pervasive one during the course of my fieldwork. A common saying expressed that it doesn't matter if it is bad or wrong, if you have the means to do something just do it (*chadaj baigaa yumand arga baihgüi*). In this sense, freedom is available to anyone with the wealth or resources to exercise it and is associated with individual utility, sheer irresponsibility and forms of

[62] Viewed on Instagram @satso_cartoon (Accessed 10.11.2022). Speech bubble reads, "It's the little things that people need! Yeah?"

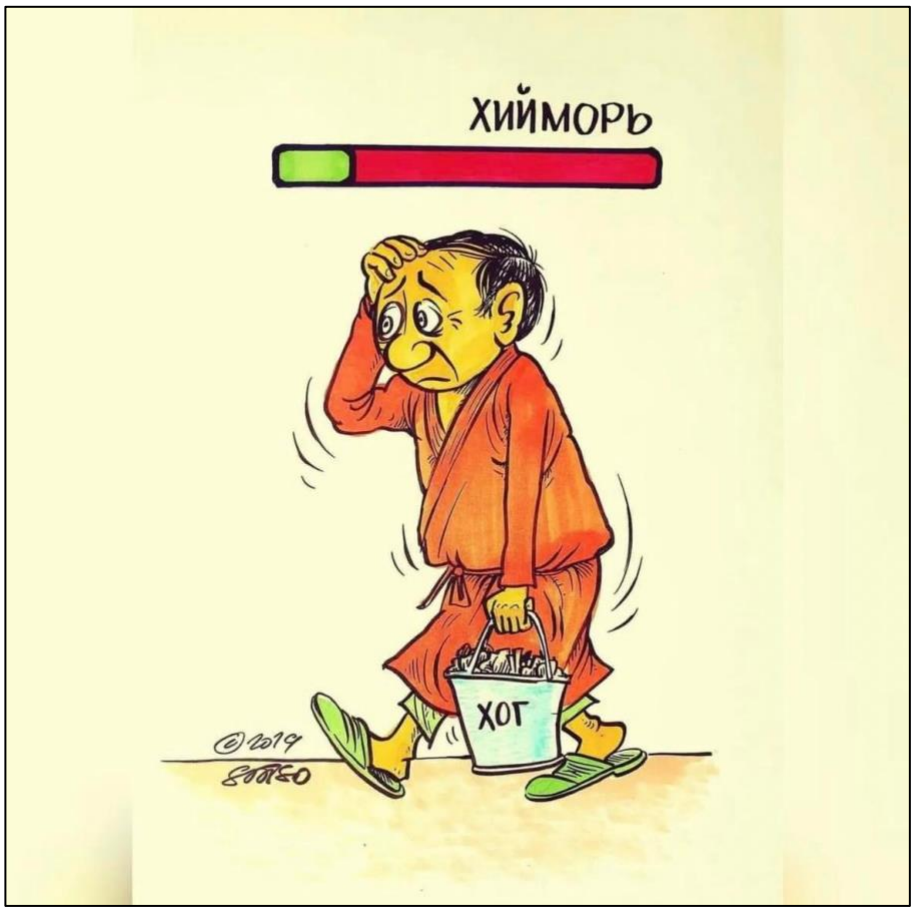

Figure 21. Political cartoon of a man's *hiimori* depleting while carrying a bucket of rubbish[63].

corruption or lawlessness. All defining features of unbridled ethics. In the absence of order, individual actions lose their meanings as socially recognised ways to protect against disorder.

In seeking to re-establish the conditions for which they consider to be ethical, NFLE staff were quick to start teaching lessons on the topic. Unhappy with the current system that tends to serve the interest of the establishments and the political elites, they framed their lessons not around democracy as a set of political structures or ideologies but as an ethical ideal. Topics included: "how to not be like a politician", "knowing the law to protect your rights from the immorality of others", and "why disrespecting state money causes economic crises". In what follows, I present one class dealing directly with the contradictions between liberal democratic freedom and what is

[63] Viewed on Instagram @satso_cartoon (Accessed 10.11.2022.)

considered ethical freedom. They renounced individual liberal freedom but did not reject democracy at its core. I am interested in the ways in which they established different ethical boundaries to freedom.

6.4. Personal Ethics

In the days following the arrival of the new director, the NFLE teachers continued as normal. The dismay everyone felt soon dissipated. A common feature of cultural life I often noticed in the field was that people were quick to chastise someone for wrong doing, but rarely held it against them in the long run[64]. The classes teachers designed as a reaction to the director's presence were subtle enough to go unnoticed. I now turn to one of these classes in particular, held in the small centre library as was usual.

Enkhe introduced the class topic of "personal ethics" (*huvi hünii yos züi*) by stating that "morality and ethics starts with the little things, don't look for it in the authorities, it's just us and you. If we have a good ethics we don't need the law, but yes" she paused for a moment, avoiding Bolormaa's gaze, "people can't show good ethics in everyday life". As if having been waiting for her chance, Bolormaa then took up her favourite theme of unbridled ethics. Her comments came tranquil and measured, as if said a thousand times before:

> Mongolian people are so bad, so selfish now. People don't want to help other people. I think it is connected to the change in society. In the socialist times, there was nothing like this. During the democratic change in 1990 people became so open minded and free. They just suddenly got given freedom. Well, what they thought was freedom. Now people act free in ways that are rude, drinking in the street and walking naked in the street. People like to talk about their right to freedom but they don't really understand their duty of respect.

Bolormaa would always speak about this – and everything else for that matter – with a restless impatience, as though soon it would be too late. On several occasions, she even gestured towards me at the back of the classroom while instructing the younger

[64] This came up in political debates with Mongolian friends when asked why the cumulative wrong doings of politicians seemed to be ignored shortly after being revealed.

learners at the centre to share their opinion too, as though to prove her point, saying "tell her, tell her, make sure she understands". This class was such an occasion. A teenage learner that aspired to be a beautician, Baigalmaa, answered Bolormaa's request:

> Yes democracy gives us too much freedom, too much transparency. Because we are a free society there is no discipline. If we have no discipline that means we have no respect. If you compare it with school and doing homework, you do your homework out of respect for your teacher. At home, you help your family because you respect them. Now there is no respect and today it is an anarchist style of society.

Another learner Oyunaa dutifully turned to me, her hands fumbling her notebook:

> Of course we do need democracy, but I am not sure if we are doing it the correct way or not. There are lots of positive things but it's misinterpreted. At the beginning of democracy, the industrial sector was privatised the wrong way. Back then there were lots of factories near here making shoes, leather or carpets. Now they have all gone and we don't have jobs. People buy poor quality things from China, this is bad. We have to re-establish the factories to make things better.

Oyunaa went on to explain how young people nowadays interpret freedom as a right to everything regardless of the needs of others. The sense is that the relations enshrined in the order of *yos* are defunct, or what amounts to the same thing. The conditions for the cultivation of an ethical person that acts in relation to the values of the past and the people of the present are thought to have largely disappeared. It was as if to lose respect for *yos* is to lose the very social fabric that enables one to live as a good person. As noted in previous chapters, *hümüüjil* cultivates this order through a specific constellation of relations between the past, present and future. To be considered problematically free here therefore implies that a person's actions fail to acknowledge the right relationship with the past, whether knowledge-based or affective. This presents a temporal dimension to the concept of freedom as a form of agency that sits between choice and constraint (e.g. Laidlaw 2014). To understand freedom on the terms described in NFLE, requires stepping outside the paradigm of agency being solely individual, and something someone comes to realise in themselves.

It was not the first time I had heard this kind of criticism. In fact, concerns over the morally corrupting influence of freedom were quite typical for learners in many classes, of all walks of life and all ages. My interlocutors were often explicit about this. As shown by the discussion of the class, the rise of disorder goes hand in hand with the problem of freedom. Learners would ascribe people's selfishness, deepening poverty, increasing divorce rates, epidemic alcoholism, and the individualistic striving for personal gain to the failures of democratic freedom. Woven into these narratives were worries over the future of their Mongolian identity. The risk, as my interlocutors saw it, was that there was too much choice and not enough accountability. In anthropological discussions of risk and freedom, processes of industrialisation and capitalism are deemed to have produced reflexively conscious subjects able to choose from endless opportunities to reduce the risk located externally to them (Giddens 1990, Beck 1992). The theory stipulates that the more risks that need addressing produces subjects that become too free. This creates uncertainty when there is too much subjectivity and too much choice. To a certain extent, the learners were addressing this excess of choice in how people have been able to live their lives in the past three decades of democracy and capitalism. However, there is also another element to this risk, to which I turn to now.

There is also a choice between different forms of freedom which carry different types of risk. As Humphrey (2007) has shown in Russia, multiple notions of freedom inform different understandings of political life. She demonstrates that one term for attaining freedom, *svoboda*, refers to the sense of security that comes from living within a cohesive group of people that live free from foreign rule. This involves "entry into a privileged political state of liberty, rather than as a move out from captivity into an indefinite state called freedom" (*ibid.*:2). In this sense, freedom does not entail self-realisation as such, but produces a feeling of the person being part of the whole (*ibid.*:3-4). This aligns closely with the understanding of freedom taught at the centre in relation to enactments of *yos*. It explains why people identify with a sense of ethical freedom under socialism. In drawing connections between freedom and security, feelings of risk emerge when consumerism threatens to impose a foreign set of interactions that degrade the holism of *yos*. I now return to the class to demonstrate this ethnographically.

"In our population of only three million", a middle aged lady sat next to me emphasised with little upheavals of her hands, "we *must* protect Mongolia". Enkhe asked how she proposed to do so. "We must respect our elders. There are so many messages from elders, it's an everyday philosophy, not proverbs but a living code. They teach us how to live correctly". After a brief pause it became clear that the learners had finished their comments, so they turned their attention from each other back to their teacher. Enkhe responded by smiling softly, before asking the class "ok, so what else defines a person with good moral ethic and vice versa?" The learners were always quick to agree, commenting on the duty to respect the elderly by listening to and learning from what they say, being loyal to Mongolia, and polite to those around you. Although only one constituent of life today, it casts a shadow over almost everything political, as expressed by another elderly learner Hishigjargal:

> People get selfish a lot. Last year a law about tobacco came into force, so people can't smoke in public area. For one to two weeks everyone was aware, after one month it was so good. Then they lost strength and ignored the law. I hope the violation law will be implemented actively because I don't want it to be like the tobacco law. Now neighbours in the *ger* districts contact each other to help a lot as they have lived together many years, but apartment people can't be like them because they've changed a lot. There's traffic rules, parking is difficult and disabled parking is ignored because there are few parking places. It's now getting better, but few years ago most buildings didn't have a ramp for disabled people. These kinds of clauses we don't discuss at high level this just regulated by our behaviour and personal culture but we lack a moral ethic. There is no moral ethic in our politics so the new law is in place to fix this. Mongolian people must respect our Mongolian state.

For Enkhe, the "obligation to respect other's rights" was the focus of this class, she had explained to me later that day. She led a discussion around evaluating which type of behaviour is respectful and ethical, which is not, and who acts in a selfish egotistic manner (considered disorderly) rather than contributing, sharing and subordinating themselves to what is best for the respective group. In this case, the Mongolian

population as a whole (*Mongolchuud*). Enkhe pointed out that everyone in the class agreed that an ethical person must first respect the needs of others before themselves.

Enkhe follows Hishigjargal's comments with a mind mapping session of people, famous or otherwise, that demonstrate a moral-ethic based their actions couched in the order of *yos*. As described in earlier chapters, the order of *yos* – of ethical relationality – constitutes the self as a person in a way that doesn't necessarily revolve around the free individual. Rather, the way in which people assert accountability and determine what is valuable to the present moment is through historical figures as exemplars (see Humphrey 1997). In much the same way as people used proverbs to assert the authority of their words, people used exemplars as a relationship through which to stand in a ordered way to notions of the good or appropriate. In my experience, an exemplar or authority could be anyone, and could be changed freely at any time. It was the category itself that was important, to defer a person's choice through the exemplar was expected as part of ethical cultivation. In this class, exemplars ranged from parents to religious leaders, famous singers and popstars. Learners commended their exemplars on the basis of their generosity, wisdom, and ability to overcome difficult things such as drug addiction. Here, deference to an exemplar referenced the kind of freedom central to *yos*, one that is held by an overall state of adherence to the people of whom learners feel like they are a part. Against this sense of freedom, individual interests of consumerism will inevitably break it down.

In locating their rejection of democracy in the practice of *hümüüjil*, NFLE centre staff demonstrated their understanding of the political as not compromised exclusively of institutions, clearly organised groups, or coherent ideological projects but rather through a set of the tensions surrounding enactment of freedom and *yos*. In this view, a cultivated person is not presumed to be their own self realised individual but emerges in different contexts in relation to different forms of historicisation around consumption and wealth. When history entails a political disposition in this way, the relationship between freedom and constraint cannot be reduced to moral constraint versus ethical choice. Instead, a person has some degree of free will in the choice they have to identify with whichever exemplar they choose. At the same time, in identifying with the past a person is denying individual utility to themselves by identifying with those that the group self-identifies with and have attributed power to. In this sense, identifying with an exemplar diffuses power away from individual agency through a

form of historical mediation. It is an act of personal agency that is also an act of individual self-denial.

6.5. Democracy, Freedom and Making History

I have shown that *hümüüjil* offers a powerful expectation that people place on themselves and upon political institutions or politicians that offer a vehicle for moral critique. I have also demonstrated that exploring *ardchilal* from an ethical perspective opens up a different notion of freedom. As democracy was widely perceived of as unethical during my fieldwork, suggesting that political actors are not cultivating the values of the past – *hümüüjil* – leads me to the broad conclusion that democracy is being perceived locally as devoid of history (*tüüh*) in this context. To locate their criticisms of "too much freedom" as an instance of individual utility linked with consumerism, NFLE staff were expressing that problematic freedom is somehow outside of history as they determined it. Significant to this thesis, future research would focus on an analysis of this absence. For now, I would like to conclude by drawing out a link between freedom and *hümüüjil* as a starting point for thinking about this insight in more detail.

This chapter has argued against theorising moral orders as predetermined, as that against which people determine the right course of action. To analyse the understanding of ethics in relation to *hümüüjil* on these terms, would be to conceive of cultivation as a linear process of growth and learning that serves to divide the past and present from the future. This exists, for example, in that people considered to be cultivated or uncultivated are differentiated. In this temporalisation, the present is conceived of as incomplete, and the future predetermined by what already exists. Freedom, in this configuration of learning, operates in tension between possibility and actuality, as that which is now and that which is not yet but will be (Biesta 2012). As the previous chapters have shown, *hümüüjil* contains an orientation to the future in ways that are emergent and contingent on causal factors that are made possible through alternative temporalities to that of "homogenous and empty time" (Benjamin 1999:261). For history (*tüüh*) to "awaken" in each generation, it must contain an orientation towards a different kind of freedom, one that is not based on an ideal that is to be achieved through cultivation, but as the ground cultivation itself. *Hümüüjil* draws upon a mode of historical consciousness that speaks to more than a person's

knowledge or capacity for evaluation. It is about speaking to the past but also beyond it, in excess of its possible narration. *Hümüüjil* therefore involves being open to historical events, to the new and unforeseen that comes with each generation, rather than as an endless repetition of what already is. There is a historicity to the freedom that *hümüüjil* creates, one than cannot be reduced to linear forms of time.

Chapter Seven.

Conclusion:
An Ethical Relationship to *Time*

7.1. *Hümüüjil*: The Pedagogical Dynamics of Cultivating History

I opened this thesis with a quote from a NFLE teacher explaining what it meant for ethics to be considered unbridled. He was expressing concern over the lack of ethical cultivation in the education system. For him, this was the reason that social life had become "stuck" in a state of disorder whereby people did not enact respectful relations. People simply had not learned their history, and therefore could not have cultivated the qualities necessary for the enactment of ethical relations. The solution to this problem, I was told explicitly, was to practice a long-standing educational philosophy that seeks to cultivate a human conscience through the awakening of history. This would bridle social relations and guide peoples actions towards a different future. This thesis has examined the various ways in which the cultivation of a humans and history are central to local approaches to Non-formal and Lifelong Education in Mongolia. I have argued that although different concepts, human cultivation (*hümüüjil*) and history (*tüüh*) are deeply intertwined, and revealed in local conceptions of ethics (*yos züi*). This is due to a set of ontological connections underlying social order (*yos*), that are rooted in the enactment of relations between generations, the past and future, objects, and affective or energetic forces that circulate across social life. These relations are considered to be crucial to social reproduction and the ability to prefigure the future. These connections also lie at the heart of local perceptions of disorder (*zambaraagüi*) in producing a temporality of uncertainty when people fail to behave in ways that embody the values of the past.

Drawing on the practice of *hümüüjil*, NFLE teachers sought to invoke the values of the past in adult learners in ways embodied ethical courses of action in the future. They acknowledged two central dimensions to local understandings of history (*tüüh*): personal or generational history and national historiography. Generally speaking, these two dimension create intersubjective entanglements of historicities, blurring together

different temporal orientations of truth. Each class sought to cultivate ethical persons through the teaching of both dimensions of history. This required teachers to draw together a broader set of causal factors and affective qualities than is conventionally present in the teaching of chronological history. Each casual factor, such as the personal vitality of *hiimori*, acted as one node within a chronotopic constellation of temporalities, affects and desires through which people draw from the past while extracting the transformative agency or efficacy it contains.

This research has highlighted a complex set of ethical and temporal relations drawn together in the practice of *hümüüjil*. In doing so, I have sought to offer two predominant contributions. The first is ethnographic, to document an account that focuses on the previously unexplored practice of *hümüüjil* as a significant dimension of education in the region. Currently, *hümüüjil* is generally only mentioned in relation to the production of identity in Mongolia (e.g. Billé 2015). While the concept is widely known among anthropologists working in the region, it so far has yet to be placed at the centre of analysis. This tends to also be true for the local concept of *yos züi* (ethics) and, to a lesser extent, the local concept of *tüüh* (history). By introducing *hümüüjil* as enacted through a kinship of connections between the ethical, historical and educational, I hope to have shown how my interlocutors reconciled the learning of factual events or figures with larger ethical truths expressed through their ontology and conceptions of humanity. This builds upon recent work that has begun to analyse the complexity of the temporal dimensions of contemporary social life in Ulaanbaatar as a result of recent socio-political and economic uncertainty (Empson 2020, Pedersen 2011). At the same time, I have challenged previous analyses that tend to treat the relationship between morality and history as pedagogic in retrospective and discursive terms (e.g. Humphrey 1997, Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, Kaplonski 2004). This leads me to the second contribution of the thesis.

A key theoretical insight of this thesis is that it is only through an engagement with history that people could create movement towards a different future. In this sense, historical practices do not only measure points in fixed time but, at the same time, presume a transformation of that time into something other than the precast continuum of linearity. This refracts causality and agency across different temporalities, horizons and orientations. In their teaching of history, NFLE staff did not treat the past as gone but dormant within a person, as a form of obligation, respect or notion of the good that

is to be awoken. This not only challenges conventional notions of history that equate time primarily with pastness, but also complicates anthropological conceptions of ethics and morality that cast the relationship between history and morality in terms of a chronological flow of causality between past and present. In the practice of *hümüüjil*, history obligated a person to attend to their relations with others by drawing the past into a relationship with the person. Rather than presuming there is a linear temporal flow operating in the practice of cultivation, I have shown that *hümüüjil* depends on the person embodying the past by mobilising a complex of affective qualities and temporalities that bring history to bear on their lives as a form of personal significance whereby the future demands responsibility. In this sense, *hümüüjil* is a mode of historical consciousness in which people are made by history at the same time as they are making history. The measure of a person's ethics can be found in the tension between the two.

7.2. Reconciling Ethical Cultivation with Time and Temporality

I came to conduct this research through an exploration of hope, temporality and Non-formal and Lifelong Education. Initially, my theoretical focus was on the future-oriented present, to understand why people chose to engage with adult education in the context of rapidly changing economic and moral environments. My thinking drew heavily from core theory within the anthropology of time and temporality that conceives of temporal experiences as multiple, dynamic and open to non-linear conceptualisations (Bear 2014, Hodges 2008, Lambek 2002, Munn 1992). While conducting my fieldwork, this future-orientation quickly became a question of ethical cultivation, history, and disorder (statis). This led me to an impasse. During the course of writing this thesis, I engaged with the literature on the anthropology of ethics. My goal was to find a route through this body of work in a way that captured my ethnographic experience of *hümüüjil* as a form of historical practice embodied in a multi-temporal process of ethical cultivation. I was searching for concepts regarding evaluation that offered the same kind of temporal multiplicity that I saw giving shape to concept of *yos züi* (ethics). However, I was unable to find sufficient analytical tools that did justice to the ethico-temporal dynamics of my ethnographic data. This led to the main argument of this thesis. While I state that in more detail shortly, for now I wish to point out that the focus of my theoretical analysis derived from the incompatibilities I identified when trying to reconcile the anthropology of time and

temporality alongside the anthropology of ethics, in relation to my ethnographic data. Rather than creating an account of either temporality or ethics, I sought to instead productively question why I could not find a combined route through these bodies of work.

The anthropology of history provided me with a welcome corrective (Lambek 2002, Stewart 2012). This work calls attention to various ways in which the past is lived, embodied, known and represented in different contexts (Palmié and Stewart 2016). I have taken the practice of *hümüüjil* at the NFLE centre as an ethnographic opportunity to explore a number of historicities that draw historical knowing out of the past and into a form of educational expression that seeks to guide and move people into a different future. In this sense, to have drawn from historicism would not have been wholly incorrect, but rather incomplete. The concept of historical consciousness has been pivotal in my formulation of the relationships between time, temporality and ethics beyond a chronological approach to time. Drawing from the work of Charles Stewart (2012), I could combine the two core dimensions underlying the notion of history (*tüüh*) in my fieldwork; time and human conscience. Historical consciousness afforded me the language to apply ethical causality to events in the past, present and future, as recursive or emergent. These were accommodated by different political ideologies and involved locally salient conceptual relations and affective qualities. Stewart's work shifted my focus from the causality of the past to the production of a historical consciousness within which it is possible to rethink the relationship between history and ethics, to show how pasts create affects in the present in the same temporal space in which does the future.

This brings me to reflect on the key argument of this thesis. I have sought to question the treatment of history in the anthropology of ethics and morality as that which merely constitutes the organisation of knowledge that determines why people act the way that they do. In this formulation, ethical evaluation is made intelligible only through reference to causality as effect. I have argued instead that the cultural content of *hümüüjil* derives from a set of temporal and affective relations that are both internal and external to the person and that establish accountability and collective wellbeing. This presents temporal orientation that turns causality towards the future as much as to the past (Bryant and Knight 2019). In showing history as both given and enacted through affects, as well as the personal, political, cosmological and ethical, I have

challenged predominant assumptions underlying one-dimensional temporalities of causality. This chronotopic constellation brings a distinctive theoretical dilemma into view. Cultivation exists only when the future is incomplete and being held open so that a person can move beyond that which has been learned in the present. At the same time, however, a person has to resonate with their own past and present as well as destabilise the relationship between them in order to move beyond it. Attending to this dilemma, I conclude this thesis with some observations on emergence.

7.3. Historical Becoming

A question that has been at the centre of this research is whether *hümüüjil* represents a practice of becoming historical (made by history), or a form of historical becoming (history-making). It appears to be both. Learners were expected to embody the past in ways that exceed history to restore a temporality of movement towards what they perceive to be better ethical relations and political thinking. As such, history cannot be treated as a bounded concept that is knowable in the abstract ahead of time. The defining feature of *hümüüjil*, and education more generally, is that a degree of emergence needs to occur as the condition that makes learning possible (Biesta 2012).

In her work on temporal multiplicity, Bear notes that one driver behind her theory was to present a more complex picture than the concept of emergence allows (2014:13, see section 3.5.). I agree with this. There exists a body of theory around emergence that conceives of social reality as always in a state of emergence (e.g. Pickering 1993, Latour 2013). In this thinking, emergence takes on an ontological position, as the ground for movement from the evolving past into the emergent future. As Bear points out, this prevents the exploration of temporal complexity; the frames, rhythms or orientations that people encounter in life beyond the repetition of linear notions of time. Building on Bear's point, I want to present a different position in relation to emergence in anthropology. There exists a body of work that is more attuned to the temporal texture of what it means to be human (Biehl and Locke 2017, Hodges 2021, Rabinow 2011). Rather than taking the concept of emergence as the temporal ground of social reality, these works conceptualise emergence – or becoming – as an "anthrophilosophical concept that evokes a specific ethnographic mode of being in time" (Hodges 2021:16). Here, emergence does not explain the temporality of social life, but affords a certain conceptual utility when analysing it.

In the context of NFLE, *hümüüjil* embodied a form of history-making that continually sought to inscribe multiple historicities with truth to make them pedagogically workable. To assume any single determinate past would be to deny the emergence of ethical evaluation as contingent in relation to the past and future as a multiplicity of ideas, facts, feelings and potential. An understanding of the past as part of the contemporary is important as it opens up for alternative readings of history when envisioning and creating new imaginaries for the future. The work of Rabinow (2007) provides an analytical handle on *hümüüjil* as a dynamic practice perceive the past, create it and act anew. The task, as he sees it, is to shift our modes of inquiry away from rigid definitions and focus instead on the emergent or discordant relations through which tradition and modernity interpellate within broader ontological entanglements of time and value. Rabinow defines the contemporary as a "moving ratio of modernity moving through the recent past and near future in a (non-linear) space that gauges modernity as an ethos already becoming historical" (2007:2). Crucially, this definition of the contemporary does not signal an epoch, nor is it fixated on the modernist view of tradition as located in the past (Osborne 1995). Rather, Rabinow refers to a modality in which "older and newer elements are given form and work together" (2007:3). In this perspective, tradition and modernity are not opposed but conceptualised as adjacent to one another, with reproduction and innovation simultaneously at stake. Emergence refers to the dynamics in which old and new elements are recognised, renegotiated and reassembled in multiple configurations when different contemporaneous events interact. This requires becoming not only concerned with content and practice but attending to the concept of assemblage that remains open to change, interpretation and creative reinvention.

In their theory of becoming, Biehl and Locke (2017) make a similar point about temporality. They argue that the concept of becoming opens analysis up to a "horizoning work" in which people experience multiple temporalities, potentialities and imminences in which ethical and political milieus are always in the making (*ibid.*:5). In these milieus, agency is distributed across shifting social fields and subjectivities, such that causality cannot be reduced to clock time. Biehl and Locke's work captures a temporality that unfolds in the present through "a dynamic interpenetration of past and future, actual and virtual. Distinct from potentiality and not reducible to causality or outcomes, becoming is characterised by the

indeterminacies that keep history open, and it allows us to see what happens in the meantimes of human struggle and daily life" (*ibid.*:6). They apply a Deleuzian framework to convey becoming as operating through a different temporal rhythm to history, as that which pushes the boundaries of existing forms to seek new terrain (*ibid.*:9). In focusing on the human capacity for change, Biehl and Locke offer a concept that affords an exploration of new ways of becoming that emerge in response to social fragmentation and ontological threats in ways that remain unfinished.

While I accept the contingency of becoming, I cannot apply the same distinction between history and becoming that Biehl and Locke do. At a broad level, *hümüüjil* operates through temporalities that fuse historical knowing and becoming to produce human beings. This raises an important point in theorising the distinction between repetition and becoming in relation to history. Rabinow details this distinction as drawing a line between the existing world and the reconfiguration of what exists such that there is a disruption to bring something new is into existence (2011:60). He suggests that in this image of thought, historical contextualisation can be theorised as determining the conditions for certain events to come about. Essentially, the historical conditions the emergent. That is, "history designates only the collection of conditions, as recent as they may be, that need to be overcome in order 'to become', to create something new" (*ibid.*:62). In pointing to becoming as that which is not history, Rabinow presents a challenge for me to grasp an orientation towards becoming in the practice of *hümüüjil*. Clearly, *hümüüjil* requires an alternative concept that encapsulates a sense of historical conditions as arising from becoming itself. *Hümüüjil* actualises history through temporal dispositions and causal factors that emerge from coexisting entanglements of temporalities that incorporate both the future and the past. The very structuring of history as cultivation requires people to evaluate their own meanings in relation to their lives not as process of conditioning but as a contingent practice that holds the present open to its full potential. In the NFLE classroom, for example, instead of separating continuity and difference on opposite sides of history and becoming, teachers and learners brought them together in their evaluations. Importantly, difference is not generated from comparison between traditions, but internal to them through the act of cultivation. In this way, *hümüüjil* compels us to rethink current understandings and concepts of history or becoming in anthropological terms and reach for a novel image of thought that moves beyond them.

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