

Unsettled Meaning: Memorializing Lost Mobility through a Monument in Ordos, Inner Mongolia

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By narrating different meanings for a memorial to Chinggis Khaan, differing communities in the Ordos region of Inner Mongolia continue to construct their own identities as integral to the past and present of the landscape they and the monument occupy. To inform discussion of the present monument and the memorial processes that surround it, this article reviews textual references such as recorded Mongolian stories, nineteenth-century travelers' journals, and a contemporary Chinese conservation plan for the site. It also documents conversations with ethnic Mongols and Han from Inner Mongolia and Mongols from Mongolia, and it employs visual analysis of changes in local architecture and landscape over the past two decades. Distilling the myths and politics of the Ordos monument provides an intriguing picture not only of local interethnic relations but also of the entwinement of people, the architecture they construct and interpret, and the landscape they inhabit and claim.

The Mongol is born in the tent, but dies on the plain.

— Mongol proverb, reported by the Reverend Joseph Kler¹

The mobility that is lost, but commemorated in a memorial, is that of Chinggis Khaan, whose death interrupted a life of peripatetic conquest. For centuries a memorial to the great Mongol leader took the form of a mobile encampment of eight white tents that annually traversed the landscape of the Ordos region in present-day Inner Mongolia. Indeed, the name Ordos, "encampment" or "tent palace," derives from their ritual presence in this place. Yet, synecdochically, the memorial lost its own mobility when, in a 1950s design by

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the Chinese government, the tents were settled through the construction of a fixed cenotaph. Since this time, rituals associated with the mobile tents have been adapted or reinvented. However, the legitimacy of the revised memorial is today questioned by local Mongols, who express a parallel sense of loss. During its history, the continuity of both the memorial's myths and materials have previously been interrupted and revived several times. Nevertheless, its present plight resonates with their own situation in a landscape that no longer supports the mobility of the pastoral nomadism by which they once constructed both their livelihoods and identity.

Contemporary conflicts over the interpretation of the memorial reflect the history of Ordos, long a landscape of dual and dueling forms of occupation. Before the ancestors of the current Mongol population arrived, the territory attracted earlier groups of pastoral nomads who used its pasture in continuity with the steppe that stretched northward into Mongolia. Yet, competing for the land and its legacy, Han Chinese agriculturalists with roots in the settlements to the south also periodically domesticated this landscape with their furrowed fields. The struggle over the memorial to Chinggis Khaan thus precariously embodies the competing sensibilities of nomadism and sedentarization.

The deployment of any architectural form has political context and implications. In the architecture of monuments, however, the material manifestation is invested with intentional meaning. Where the political context is controversial (which is not infrequent, since monuments are often deployed as extensions of political arguments), the monument itself may thus become freighted with differing readings at crossed purposes. The history of the Chinggis Khaan cenotaph remains inchoate as the story unfolds, but this inexactitude of meaning has larger implications for how we comprehend even the recent interventions in Ordos. It reminds us that an architecture of messages can have differing and duplicitous meanings.

In discussing these issues, the article first relays the character of the Ordos landscape by recounting its use by nomads and sedentarists. A survey of mortuary practices will then contextualize the memorial complex of Chinggis Khaan that has come to occupy this place. A brief history of how this memorial became concretized through architectural rendition into a political implement next leads to consideration of how different parties have manipulated and continue to manipulate the monument's message to reflect their own political views. Finally, the article will conclude by analyzing the demands on the monument and its landscape in terms of sustaining future traditions.

ORDOS TOPOGRAPHY AND TOPONYMY

The Ordos plateau lies within the northerly clockwise circumambulation of the Yellow River — an appellation that reflects

the river's accumulation of yellow-tinged silt as it loops through the loess-lands that bound Ordos. The land itself is a mound of ancient compacted sand that forces the river to pass around it, through the softer yellow soils to its west, arching north and east before dropping southward again.² Along its southern edge, the plateau is delineated less by geology than by atmospheric conditions and the cultural response to them. Thus, as one nineteenth-century visitor noted, "In the south of the sandy regions of southern Ordos the country rises higher. . . . On looking upon it from the plains of the Ordos, it has the aspect of a flat swelling. . . . On our maps, a range, Lu-guan-lin or Bo-yui-shan, is marked, but in reality it does not exist."³ An iteration of the Great Wall system also traces the southern boundary of the plateau, leaving Ordos outside China for much of its history (FIGS. 1, 2). Complementing this iconic bulwark's military function, the wall also appears to sketch the line of the climatologist's 400-millimeter isohyet onto the landscape. Thus, according to one geographer, the Great Wall, "represents a reasonable average of the shifting line marking the practicable limits of permanent agriculture without extensive irrigation."⁴ Ordos lies on the dry side.

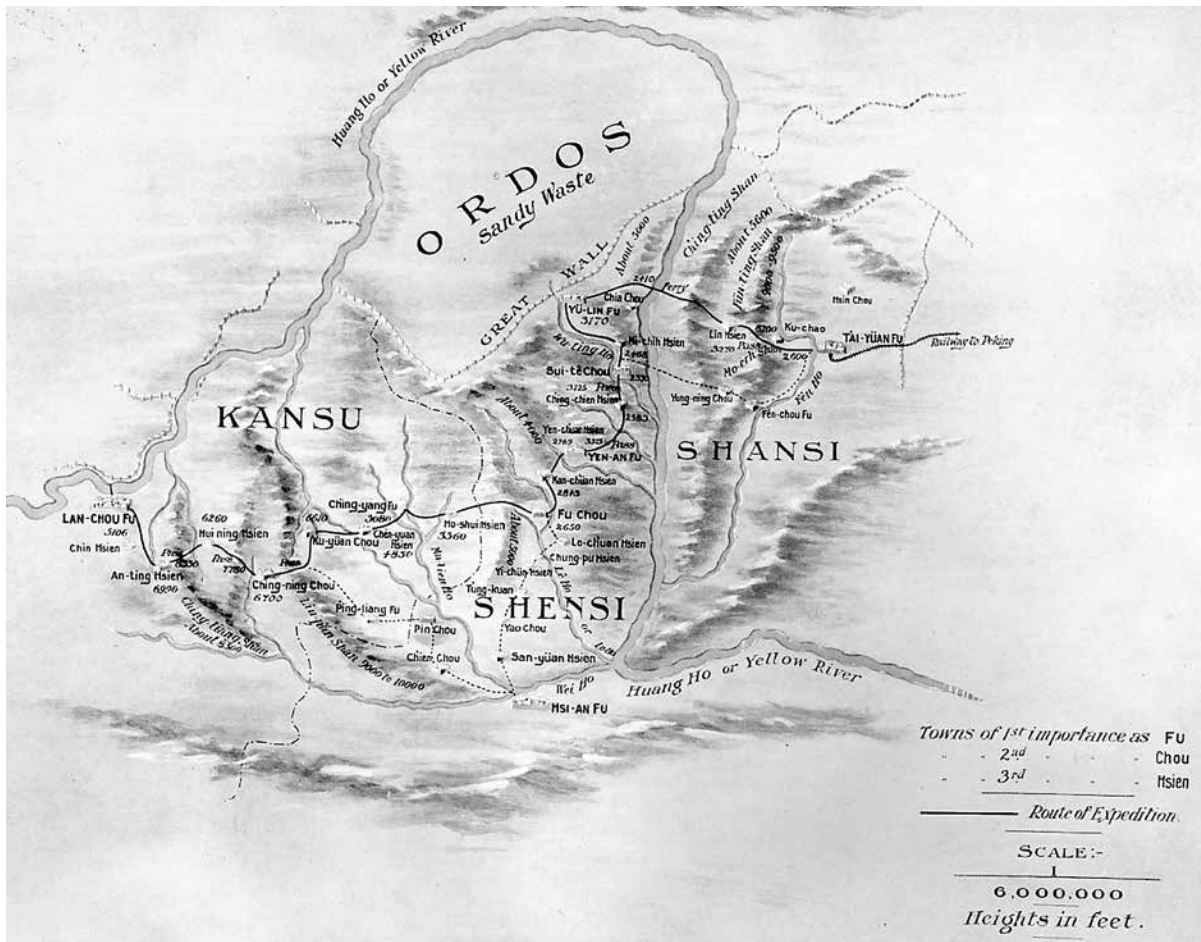
Situated thus, the mode of production in Ordos has toggled between pastoralism and agriculture, with each side having a historical argument for their competing and overlapping claims. Under various dynasties, as executed through local administrators, Han peasants were either encouraged — mostly during the Sui (581–619) and Tang (618–907) dynasties — or dissuaded from settling. The Qing (1644–1911) established an exclusion zone that did not allow Han Chinese beyond a set distance from the wall. The distance varied in policy, but was generally 50 *li*, or about 32 kilometers — though early in the Qing reign men were allowed to farm the plateau during summer months, while women were forbidden for concern that their presence would encourage permanent settlement.⁵

By the time of the late Qing, however, outside observers (primarily missionaries diligently noting the subtle social relations of the people they wished to convert) recognized a complex economy in which Han settlers not only held agrarian tenancy, but did so through the auspices of regional Mongol lords. With Mongol subjects disinclined to work the land, the lords, seeking to finance lavish debts by extracting more valuable commodities from their territories, not only encouraged the influx of Han, but did so by abandoning their own restrictions against converting pasturage to sown land.⁶ Major George Pereira, on his expedition by horse-cart from Beijing to Burma, remarked of Ordos that "Chinese emigrants are constantly arriving, some only staying for the season to work in the fields, attracted by higher wages."⁷ Though climatically the land favors nomadic pastoralism, political reality could marshal a technological solution — irrigation — to enforce at least a toehold for agrarian development. And with the river circumscribing the land, wells did not need to be drilled that deep.



FIGURE 1 (LEFT). Ordos (on left) is overlooked from its southern rim at Erlangshan (二郎山). View is eastward along a wall system that periodically demarcated China's edge. Photo by author, 2000.

FIGURE 2. (BELOW) Whereas nomads occupied Ordos pragmatically, interlopers have been unsettled by the lack of landscape features. Source: R.S. Clark and A. de Carle Sowerby, *Through Shên-kan: The Account of the Clark Expedition in North China, 1908-9* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912).



The multiethnic populating of Ordos parallels the recent history of Inner Mongolia as a whole. Since its integration into the Chinese state in 1949, the autonomous region's count of nearly four million ethnic Mongols has continually surpassed the entirety of the population of the independent country of Mongolia.⁸ But, when compared to almost nineteen million ethnic Han Chinese residents, this population also places Mongols definitively in the minority within Inner Mongolia, a territory designated as their titular autonomous region. In municipalized Ordos the divergence in percentages is more extreme still.⁹

On the one hand, the economies of each ethnic group are more diverse than might be indicative of a simple divide between pastoralism and settled agriculture. In the past decade Ordos has been transformed by the discovery and extraction of energy resources; and just as coal and oil profits have fueled the development of a metropolis on land that only a few years earlier had been open steppe, there are mixes of people in industries like coal mining and natural gas drilling. But the distribution of population densities (Han and Hui are clustered far more compactly than their Mongol counterparts) still leaves large portions of Ordos as pastoral rangeland. And it is this open Mongol territory that is being encroached upon dually by agriculture and industry (mostly coal mines and the electric plants that feed on the coal).

In its western reaches, beyond the 250-milimeter isohyet, Ordos is drier and sandier still. What little there is of grassland has had large divots ripped out, opening the lid of the plateau to the coal contained within. In previous models of energy production, the coal would be extracted and exported to sites of use: power plants in the heavy-industry zones of urban conglomerations. However, with the efficiency gains in ultra-high-voltage power transmission, a technology which China leads in developing, the new model sends only the electricity, via high-tension transmission lines, to urban and industrial centers halfway across the country. Further reducing transport logistics, the power plants are erected directly above the source coal seams. Western Ordos, now not only pocked by sulfurous coal pits, is thus also accumulating above-ground constructions through the building boom in coal-fired power plants. One after another of these edifices line the recently re-engineered State Highway 109, which crosses the plateau latitudinally west to east, from Yinchuan (in Ningxia) to Dongsheng (the parent city from which the new Ordos downtown arises). Each coal mine and power plant defends its vast property with multistory and often opaque fencing, mimicking the sprawling blocks of a blank city. The new wealth and influx of jobs these industries provide has spurred yet another cycle of the construction boom. Whereas the former model dictated that coal was carried to the cities, now coal effectively draws cities to the steppe.

Where the control of land is under dispute, the map may become a primary battlefield. Yet, if the political preoccupation with naming places has been less of an issue in this region,

it is simply because China has mostly won this battle. In particular, the use of "inner" to qualify Inner Mongolia reflects a Sino-centric worldview. In the frontier zone, the term is associated with forms of enclosure, whether the Great Wall or merely local walls or fences. In this regard, in "The Barbed Walls of China," D.M. Williams noted the contrast between a nomadic distrust of fixed enclosure and sedentarists' physical security and philosophical (Confucian) assurance in hierarchically concentric barriers — such as those enfolding an emperor in the Forbidden City, surrounded again by the city walls of Beijing, and ultimately by a nation-defining Great Wall.¹⁰ Caroline Humphrey has also noted that, as quotidian cultural practice, "[the] terms 'inside the gate' (*kou-li*) and 'outside the gate' (*kou-wai*)" foretell a geographic sensibility that necessarily affects any cultured perception of landscape.¹¹ The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region is thus not only now a part of China, it is contrasted with Outer Mongolia — the sovereign Republic of Mongolia — as being both further from Beijing and beyond the modern political boundary of China.¹² This geographic anachronism is clearer still on maps, where Inner Mongolia wraps much of the perimeter of "Outer" Mongolia (FIG. 3).

For its part, Mongolian terminology for the geographic regions clarifies its derivation, but further confuses these power-relations. The *övör* in Övör-Mongol can be translated either as "Inner" or as "South" Mongolia, to differing effect by contrasting political entities.¹³ "Inner" is a Sino-centric concept that places the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region firmly within the nationalizing project of the P.R.C., whereas "South" shifts the locus to return the region to an expression, whether culturally hegemonic or outright irredentist, of a greater Mongolia.¹⁴ *Övör*, in actuality, however, reflects the meaning "in front of." In this regard, the Mongolian cartographic sensibility stems from inhabiting a landscape in which south-facing (the sunny side of a hill) is the frontal direction. From a given position, something placed to the south — especially land or territory — is "toward the front" or "in front." "East" and "left" are therefore synonyms, as are "west" and "right." Likewise, territory is commonly divided politically into left and right "banners" — respectively, east and west. The Mongolian landscape is thus inherently an embodied spatiality — but not a solipsistic one, for "front" is a universal direction. This terminology becomes especially pervasive from the domestic perspective, as the orientation of the dwelling opens southward. The undifferentiated, round walls of the *ger* are broken only by the frontality of the doorway, invariably facing southward as compass to an entire cosmography.

At the regional and national scale, meanwhile, Chinese onomasticism inscribes the land. Ming-era (1368–1644) frontier outposts, built to reinforce the recent displacement of Mongolian Yuan rule from China (1271–1368), resorted to naming schemes that denoted the recapturing of the borderlands. As the Scheut missionary Henry Serruys discovered, "a goodly number of names comprise a word (i.e., a character) patently referring to the Mongols . . . close to a quarter of

FIGURE 3. Ordos, as located in Inner Asia. Source: Matt Zebrowski/UCLA Cartographer.



the names.” But “what is more, many convey a derogatory and demeaning connotation.”¹⁵ These names occasionally referred to historical encounters in which “barbarians” were routed or defeated, but more often they were normative titles, rallying Ming troops with allusions to future stability. In rare instances, such titles were both inscribed on the map (through naming) and engraved on the land itself. In particular, Serruys cited “what is called Ch’in-hu-shan 擒胡山 ‘Mountain where the Barbarians were captured,’ and an inscription . . . carved on a boulder to commemorate a decisive victory over the Mongols” (though he noted a “misspelling” — a dropping of the radical in the ch’in 擒 character).¹⁶

Landscape terminologies further extend confusion in the cross-cultural context of Ordos. Even where a Chinese term aligns with more neutral, topographical features for labeling, “misspellings” (or mischaracterizations) have confused the landscape vocabulary. “In half a dozen or so cases, [Serruys] found hu ‘barbarian’ written 湖 ‘lake’ . . . but one does not ‘fight, defeat, repel’ a lake!”¹⁷ Likewise, Williams discussed the “contrasting use of the Chinese term ‘huang’ (waste) . . . because the Chinese phoneme ‘huang’ can mean both ‘yellow’ and ‘desert.’ From [a Han informant’s] perspective, local rangelands are both aesthetically unpleasing and agriculturally useless.”¹⁸ By contrast, he noted, Mongols see white sand as infertile but yellow sand as sustentative of vegetation for pastoral browse and graze.¹⁹

Indeed, the very word Ordos subverts the government agenda, for here toponymic derivation redefines both the land and its contest. As Pereira wrote in 1911, “The word Ordos is unknown to the Chinese, but is used by the Mongols.”²⁰ From the Mongolian root, *orda* is an encampment or tent (mobile palace) of the camp commander. The Ordos plateau received this toponym in recognition of hosting an encampment of

eight white tents, the *naiman chagaan* (or *tsagaan*) *ordon*. Mythologized as a mobile palace of Chinggis Khaan in his lifetime (though more likely assembled to house his associative objects well after his passing), they kept his vigil in death.²¹

REST IN PEACE OR REST IN PIECES: BODIES AND LANDSCAPE

The present landscape is affected by the past through intentional uses of memory. More than a passive or latent nostalgia for events that occurred in a place, memory functions to give its enactors a political and cultural stake in a landscape. Monuments, while draped in sentimental memory, concurrently stimulate functional memory; they are actual stakes marking off the landscape and establishing a territorial claim. However, such regimes of signification have their limits, particularly when the various lineages that are drawn together to compose meaning in a monument remain unaligned with each other. However, the people for whom the monument is recognizable may have alternate purposes in making it so, recognizing the monument to differing ends.

Any discussion of memory and the sites to which it refers must address Pierre Nora’s claim that “if we still dwelled among our memories, there would be no need to consecrate sites embodying them.”²² Nora was writing from within a stable political establishment that had long since recognized its inclusivities: a state filled with national monuments, that no longer imposed itself as exclusive of factional identities and their markers. Whereas Nora juxtaposed memory as a popular form that must struggle for relevance against the imposition of authoritative history, the construction and retention of monuments is rarely an unprompted act, nor one taken by

the politically dispossessed within a society. The situation for China's Mongols — retaining some ethnic distinction from Han, Hui, and other categorical ethnicities dwelling within the bounds of Inner Mongolia, yet simultaneously expected to fulfill their minority position within the region and the greater Chinese state — makes their reading of the landscape a continuous struggle to compose and retain self-identity.²³

To highlight just one such example, the “Jindandao Incident” (1891) in northern Inner Mongolia, the official state interpretation masked violence by ethnic Han against local Mongols by promoting a narrative of proletarian (Han) resistance to feudalism. Here, the massacred were presented not as Mongols per se, but as corrupt functionaries of an unjust system.²⁴ Stabilizing the message in a monument to the Jindandao Incident meant not only forgetting the previous context (in this case, interethnic violence), but also imposing an un-remembering of any path to an alternate signification. In removing access to alternative readings, political authorities intended to alleviate the possibility of future interethnic retribution, but they conversely heightened the potential for new clashes. They did this by, first, implementing heavy-handed mechanisms of control, and, second, by eradicating the very venues where public memory (thus reconciliation) might occur.

The dead do retain some weapons for remaining relevant in the struggles of the living. Inscription into physical monuments might be dictated by the politically dominant, but inscription into cultural memory depends on the complicity of those doing the remembering. Unlike officially imposed history, myths circulate as samizdats whispered between the disenfranchised. And myths rearrange the messages of monuments, telling alternate stories and thereby maintaining the political engagement of each party competing over the landscape. The dead thus continue to affect the living who remember them; and, in parallel, landscapes of the dead influence those of the living.

In a May 17, 2005, lecture at the Scott Polar Research Institute on Eveny reindeer herders (who live just north of Mongolia), Piers Vitebsky noted that landscapes of the dead must be avoided, even when no body is present. There, the passed are not past, and memories of persons outweigh their physical presence. In Ordos, accounts written by the Reverend Joseph Kler similarly refer to an avoidance of landscapes that involve burial. Though not trained for ethnographic study, the Scheut missionary (Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariæ, or CICM) spent the early twentieth century among Ordos Mongols, writing observations of their quotidian culture. One account, of hunting, starts with locals retelling the exploits of Chinggis Khaan. The stories are at once timeless — as if the Khaan's escapades had just occurred — while also serving as the Mongols' marker of their ancestors' earliest occupancy of this terrain.²⁵ But there are also the places in Ordos that Mongols had ceased to inhabit. According to Kler: “in the Ordos everybody is at liberty to hunt whensoever he pleases, and wheresoever, except in certain spots where historical personages are buried.”²⁶

In other words, the dead are not simply dead; they must be socially made dead by the living through rituals and practices of burial and memorial.²⁷ In discussing the Eveny, Vitebsky introduced an interpretation of death practices as a completion of the life cycle, raising a further consideration (one that Vitebsky denied for the Eveny) that serves the broader, nomadic context. The stillness of death contrasts with the continuously peripatetic character of life for the mobile pastoralist. Death interrupts mobility at both the immediate scale of daily life and at the still wider scale of life's migrations. A nomad's spirit, constrained within its deceased body, experiences a rare permanency of place.

An array of mortuary practices are historically available in Mongolian culture for disposing of the body and liberating the spirit to again roam the landscape.²⁸ Through the diverse influences of Tibetan Lamaism, Chinese Confucianism, Soviet secularism, and Western cosmopolitanism, a core set of customs to which Mongols adhere may yet be recoverable. Kler took particular interest in rituals related to death, noting that “the Mongol proverb runs: ‘the Mongol is born in the tent, but dies on the plain.’”²⁹ With this, the Catholic missionary recorded three practices available for the treatment of the dead by Ordos Mongols. Earthen burial was permitted, but it was associated with customs of the Han (and to the north, the Russians).³⁰ Sky burial — the placement of the intact or dismembered body on open ground for devouring by wild animals or birds — was another common form; it was contiguous with Tibetan Lamaism, but likely originated much earlier. The scarcity of sufficient fuel on the steppe would seem to have barred cremation, but this was a third alternative offered by Kler. In the place where the ashes were scattered a small cairn would be erected; however, if desired by the family or the final will of the deceased, the ashes might alternatively be removed from Ordos, to be interred in a Tibetan monastery in Gansu or elsewhere. A number of these traditions have been elaborated upon in the observations of Humphrey, though she added yet another possibility that reverses Kler's proverb — by not only allowing a Mongol to die in the tent, but to ceremonially abandon the body to the tent, while dually abandoning the tent to the plain.³¹

A powerful figure in his lifetime, Chinggis Khaan's potency has only grown in death. Key to this potency is how his body may have been disposed of after his death in 1227. This question has remained central to the identity of Ordos, pulling China and Mongolia into contestations of cultural inheritance. A presumption that the Khaan's corpse would have been laid to rest in the landscape of his birth, in what is now Khentii Aimag, is beyond conjecture for Mongols with whom I spoke in the Mongolian Republic. In addition to the adversarial politics, cultural knowledge supplements this attitude. As Humphrey has written, ethnographically, the place of one's birth can never be totally separated from the person: “if someone is ill or dispirited, he should privately go and roll in the earth at this place, a sacred act of becoming physically

part of it, 'as if one belonged to that land', as one Mongol confided.³² That Chinggis's body would have returned to his home landscape after death may be a retrospective projection of contemporary rivalry, but it is one that is clear to Mongolia's Mongols. The Mongols of China are in a more tenuous position; they must reify the presencing of Chinggis's body in order to acquire their identity from the Ordos memorial, yet they must combat his coöptation by China into a Chinese personage. Uradyn Erden Bulag has contended that general Chinese interest in the mausoleum has been amplified by local Mongols only in recent decades, since the halt of the Cultural Revolution, because the connection of Ordos to Chinggis provides a platform from which local Mongols can assert a place for themselves within both the Chinese and Mongolian cultural spheres.³³

Identifying where Chinggis's body ultimately rests has been a pastime for archaeologists and historians, each with disparate interpretations of the few texts in existence on the subject, all recorded well after the Khaan's death. Conjectures include various places of burial in the land of his birth along the Onon River. Ancient cemeteries, palace ruins, and former battlegrounds all tantalize modern adventurers relying on old tales and new technologies. Other prospects hold that he was cremated; but this only leads to further speculation on the whereabouts of his ashes. A silver funerary urn containing ashen remains once traveled with his tent-memorial as recently as 1966, but was lost when Mongol Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution sacked the memorial.

However, redefining what constitutes a body may alter perceptions of what the Ordos monument means. Thus, Humphrey has argued that objects of personal affiliation and use may be bound up in the creation of personhood.³⁴ Items exemplifying Chinggis Khaan's masculinity — his boots or sash — and items displaying his warrior ability — his bow or sword — may indeed have interred his personhood in Ordos.³⁵ If the site did contain personal articles of the Khaan, or even his ashes, such artifacts might stand in for the body, thus elevating the structure to mausoleum status.³⁶

Bound up in this definition of what constitutes a body is also a definition of what comprises a site for remembering the (absent or present) body. Memorial, monument, mausoleum or cenotaph — each idiom contains partial applicability for the site of Chinggis Khaan's commemoration.

Reviewing the applicability of these terms and concepts, the Ordos assemblage is certainly a memorial, as would be any physical structure built for the purpose of remembering a person, place, event or cultural phenomenon. But "memorial" does not guarantee material incarnation. While the Ordos memorial does rely on a set of rituals, practices and events, solely calling it such does not assure acknowledgment of its material presence.

A monument suggests a real construction over a figurative one; but monuments also suggest something fixed in place and built to withstand a significant passage of time.

While the earlier, tent-based manifestation of the memorial was indeed a material construction (or many of them, both in the multiplicity of tents and the multiple moments of their re-erection during the yearly festivals), to rely on calling the form of commemoration a Chinggis Khaan "monument" is to favor the most recent, static incarnation over the earlier, mobile assemblage.

Today the nature of the structure that serves the memory of Chinggis Khaan is frequently translated from the Chinese as "mausoleum." But a mausoleum contains a body. More to the point may be the term "cenotaph," which suggests displacement of the body from the site of commemoration. However, I would argue that it is precisely the liminal position, of a not-quite-present yet not-definitively-absent body, that most powerfully potentializes both the site and the legacy of the Khaan.

A liminally positioned body is not inherently vested with authority, but the architecture of its monument compensates for the ambiguity of its place. In this very sense, David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove introduced a "discourse of . . . embodiment," in their analysis of the Vittorio Emanuele II monument in Rome. For them, the Italian structure represented opposite, though crossed relationships between memory and bodies.³⁷ Toward one purpose, the body of the king for whom the monument was named remains absent (caught in the political web of his day, the body of Vittorio Emanuele II lies in state in the Pantheon). Yet, identifying, but not presenting, the king is one function of his edifice. Inversely, however, the site was also made a national memorial through the presencing of another body, that of a soldier who died fighting in a war against foreign adversaries (at the 1917 battle of Monte Grappa), but whose name remains absent, lost. His service to the state became a sacrifice that displaced his body from any individual identity, thus making it a nationalized body. Such lacunae — cenotaphs lacking bodies yet tombs with bodies that lack identity — become the most powerful monuments to gather in national landscapes of memory.

Edwin Lutyens's design for the cenotaph in Whitehall, which quickly became an ur-type for cenotaphs throughout the British Commonwealth (Belfast, Auckland, Hong Kong, and Bermuda have facsimiles), similarly memorializes soldiers lost in foreign wars — though not at the site of their loss. Rather, it commands from its position fronting the Whitehall offices where the war-makers gathered to order soldiers into battle, sometimes to their deaths.³⁸ Transcending geography, the cenotaph thus connects domestic places of decision-making to the distant places that result.

The other model of a transcendent monument, the tomb for an unknown soldier, features a body, but makes its claim to universality through a stripping away of individual identity. The unknown soldier was first displaced from himself in his lifetime — stripped of personhood by assignment of rank, serial number, and uniform dress. He was then displaced from his home landscape to fight a foreign war, and displaced

again from his identity by death in the melee of the battlefield — stripped of name, rank, and serial number. Finally, he was displaced from the landscape of his death — repatriated from the foreign battlefield to an interment site in the capital of his home country (a city in which he resides in death, but which he may never have visited in life).³⁹ As a person whose death is both tragically senseless and patriotically heroic, the soldier becomes not just ascendant to national representation, but transcendent.

A touchstone for tying meaning in monuments to specific location is provided by Nuala Johnson's observation that "the space which these monuments occupy is not just an incidental material backdrop but in fact inscribes the statues with meaning."⁴⁰ Furthermore, as Michael Rowlands and Christopher Tilley have written, "the significance of the monuments and the activities that took place in and around them was dialectically related to their landscape settings: the land itself, its forms and features, gave power and significance to the monument and vice versa."⁴¹ But I disagree. The social and physical spaces in which monuments and memorials are activated can be distanced from the places inhabited by their adherents. With their remove from actual landscapes, such monuments not only lose no efficacy; they gain potency. Through distance and invisibility from actual landscapes, memory markers assume presence and hyper-visibility in the cultural landscape.

The Khaan's body may or may not have returned below the land, but his myth stretches out over the landscape, touching down at the myriad points where the anecdotal tale of his life intersects specific places. But it would be false to claim that the Khaan is the land.⁴² In the sense defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the system that gives rise to "collective bodies of a State" is different from the "potential (puissance) of a vortical body in a nomad space."⁴³ A terrain that is persistently host to the omnipresence of the Khaan's spirit, but absent any specific location of his corpse, is the height of potency because of its ever-displaced potentiality.

DISCONTINUITIES OF MATERIAL AND PLACE

As the proliferation of potential burial sites of Chinggis's body has subsumed significant portions of the map, so too a number of coeval cenotaphs for his commemoration have arisen over a diverging geographic spread. These places range from ones integrally related to the warrior, to others that remain only tangentially tied to the Khaan through intricate knots of his mythologizing. Capture is made *en passant* (catching a ghost by its tail) — or with respect to the warrior-nomad, just as in chess, the capture of territory is tied to the trail over which the Khaan has passed.

The story meant to legitimate Yekejuu (Ejin Horo-qi) as the location of his cenotaph tells of his penultimate ride through the region on a campaign against the Tunguts,

where Chinggis's "horsewhip fell onto the ground all of a sudden. When his guards were about to pick it up for him, he stopped them and said: 'This must have [sic] a reason, I see this place is a very nice place . . . a place for shattered nations to be rebuilt and for lives to be enjoyed, bury me here after my death.'⁴⁴ Within a year the Khaan would return through this region, but now as a corpse borne upon a palanquin. As Sain-Jirgal and Sharaldai further noted:

Also according to the "Golden History," a chronicle book of the Mongols by a Mongol of 17th century: "(after the Khan's death,) shirts, yurts and socks (of the Khan) were buried there (Ordos) and a false announcement was given (to the Mongols) that (the Khan was buried there)." So it is possible that the belongings of the Khan were buried in Ordos, posing as the real tomb (the custom of the Mongols was/is, the remains of a person is buried underground without any sign, even a tombstone) to meet the Mongols' need to worship the Khan and then a few years later, the Eight White Ordos were set up around the place by the decree of Khubilai Khan.⁴⁵

While little evidence exists to corroborate that the memorial dates to the era of Khubilai (much less to Chinggis), the oral traditions that accompany the *ordon* acknowledge their wandering not only across Ordos, but also away from this place. Alleged transits across Outer Mongolia in the fifteenth century and regions just north of Ordos in the mid-seventeenth century are less acknowledged as disruptions to the continuity of place. Discontinuities in the material manifestation of the *ordon* and the treasures they enshrine must also be assumed. By the late twentieth century, following the ransacking of the shrine by Mongol Red Guards, nearly all its objects were replaced. However, even well before the Cultural Revolution, the provenance of the sacred objects was questionable. Thus a visitor in the 1890s, shown a silver coffin or urn said to house the Khaan's ashen remains, noted its seemingly recent fabrication. Other treasures he was shown appeared to be "copies of relics, such as the saddle and sword, which are preserved in the camps of different Ordos tribes."⁴⁶

Twentieth-century disruptions in continuity of material and of place — mostly during the Nationalist (KMT)-Communist Civil War (which was itself interrupted by Japan's Kwantung invasion) — provide a further tumultuous history for the memorial, but one that never entirely severs its importance. In the midst of the Chinese Civil War, the Kwantung army thrust westward toward Ordos, intending to seize the sepulcher of Chinggis Khaan to leverage local Mongol support for a puppet Mengjiang state. But the Guomindang (KMT) commandeered the memorial first, and, with it, withdrew from Inner Mongolia.

For the remainder of the Japanese occupation of Inner Mongolia, the memorial resided with the KMT in Gansu. Unable to seize the mobile monument in its now hyper-

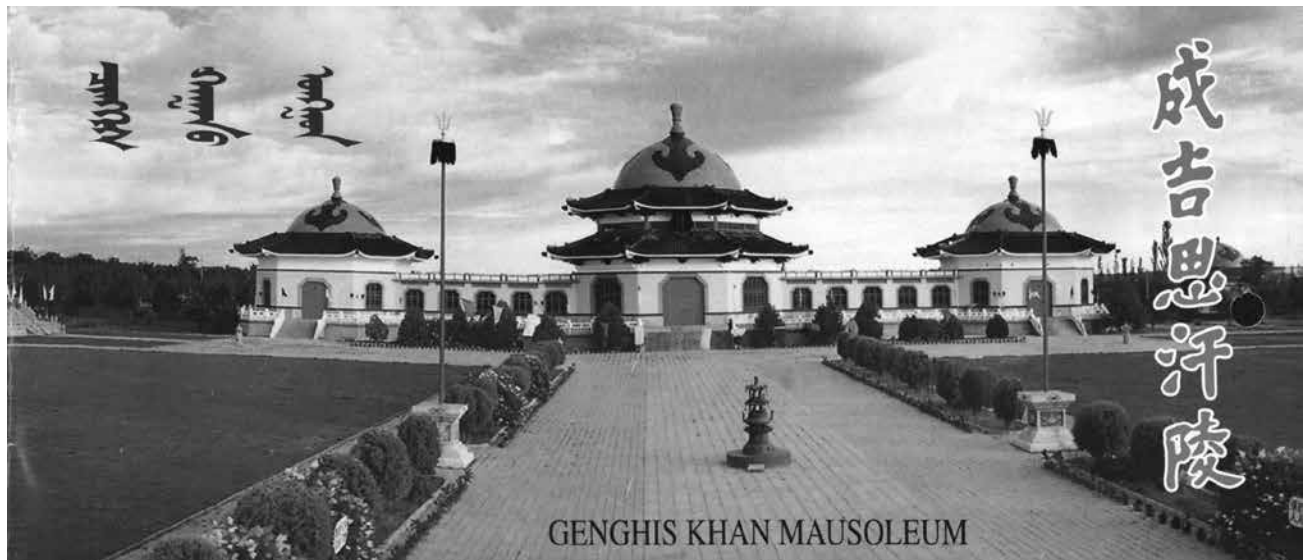


FIGURE 4. The cover of a now obsolete ticket booklet, in Mongolian (using Uighur vertical script), English, and Mandarin. Source: Genghis Khan Mausoleum, 2000.

mobilized form, however, the Japanese commanding colonel, Kanagawa Kosaku, did oversee the construction of an alternate Chinggis memorial. This was fixed in location at Ulaanhot, a former administrative capital for Mengjiang on the Manchukuo border, setting a precedent for the later Chinese structure in Ordos.⁴⁷

Sain-Jirgal and Sharaldai have reported that through the end of the Japanese occupation, and even after, the Ordos memorial remained a temporary visitor in Gansu, and that the quadrennial festival associated with it continued according to the ritual calendar, with the arrival of Mongol pilgrims and the in-gathering of the *ordon* in this non-Ordos landscape. Eventually, Japan's military machine ground to a halt in 1945. But from Yan'an, less than one hundred miles from Yekejuu, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) regrouped and eventually forced back the Nationalists. In 1949 the KMT fled further west with the Chinggis memorial, to the Kumbum monastery in Khokh Nuur ("Blue Lake," a rare Mongolian toponym to persist). The memorial remained there for another five years, but the visit of the KMT to this site was brief. Three weeks after their arrival there, they were relieved of their Ordos treasure by the conquering PLA. Eventually, the Chinese Communist Party then returned the eight white tents to Ordos, and also ensured that the memorial would not wander again.⁴⁸

The concrete memorial erected at Yekejuu in 1956 physically replaced the mobile *naiman chagaan ordon* and compacted their geography (FIG. 4). Once dispersed across hundreds of kilometers of Ordos steppe, all rituals of the memorial are now consolidated at a single site. The original memorials — eight white tents (or possibly six white tents housing eight sacred objects) — were each normally resident at their own pasture or hillock. But at the prescribed time of the memo-

rial ceremony, the individual tent-shrines would converge on the primary site at Yekejuu. While the origins of the mobile monument remain difficult to discern in the retrospectively ascribed mythology, more recent histories, such as that by Peter Andrews, have been assembled primarily from the accounts of British political agents, Russian explorers, and various religious missionaries to Ordos.⁴⁹

Through an interpretive architectural history, Andrews was able to genealogically trace the *chomchog* tent forms used prior to 1956. Differentiated from the typical *ger*, *chomchog* not only exhibited a greater formal presence, but did so from a speciated architectural lineage. Whereas a typical *ger* would be cylindrical, rising to a conical roof, the *chomchog* would have flatter, more orthogonal walls which would rise through bent roof struts to reach a crowning apex. While both yurt forms demanded that one stoop to pass through a pre-hung doorframe, such elements of the *chomchog* as the "knee-bend" roof struts synecdochically invoked the genuflection demanded of visitors paying respects to the Khaan. Re-creations of the *chomchog* inhabit the interior of the current concrete monument (FIG. 5).

Accepting that all sites are invented, the concrete cenotaph — due in part to its recent history, discontinuous set of practices, and commercially oriented development, but also to its political insensitivity — seems particularly false to the memorial process. But the evidence presented does not bear out such a story. Evidentially, the material has been refabricated in multiple known and (likely) many unknown instances. And practices have been multiply disrupted, deviating with each reinvocation of history. Commercialization, though not a motive in past disruptions, may be the dominant theme in the current iteration of the cenotaph. But it is not the only intent of those who continue to hold the image of the Khaan



FIGURE 5. *Within the sedentary monument, simulacra of the mobile chomchog are ready to receive homage. Photo by author 2009. The inset of a previously extant chomchog is from Sain-jirgal and Sharaldai, Altan ordon nai dailga [The Offering Ceremonies of the Golden Ordon], 1983.*

as a marker to the place. For various visitors, the experience is held according to differing purposes.

Aside from three saddles hidden from the Red Guards in September 1966, the refabrications are recent. But the embedded sentiments are unrestricted by material incarnation: “This shrine is ours,” Mukhulain Banzranjav, the shrine caretaker, said recently. “The state doesn’t own them — we do. We have taken care of the Eight Sacred Relics for centuries, and we won’t give them away.”⁵⁰

Such comments beg the question whether material culture is necessary to the symbolic structures of identity. A simple logic that determines that inauthentic materiality leads to an equally inauthentic cultural identification may not be appropriate to ethnographic understanding where myth, perception, and the nearly imperceptible accumulate into a kaleidoscopic picture that only partially reflects reality, and where reality itself is open to determination by the memorial’s adherents. That the relics, simulacra of simulacra, continue to be refabricated may even lend credibility to their materiality as an important focus, regardless of the discontinuities in the historical fabric. Indeed, this is what symbols do. Traditions, though possibly invented, or at least reformulated in the recent past, still hold meaning. In one sense, this is ensured by their very enactment. But, more importantly, traditions are persuasive when they closely adhere to the power source from which their symbology is drawn; they ring hollow when they have become detached from actual power or are pursued solely as invented ritual.⁵² The memorial, then, functions at dual levels — as a monument when presenting the tenacity

of Mongols in the landscape of Ordos, but also as a reminder that control is no longer by their own determination.

The recent history of the Chinggis memorial reads like a series of controlled experiments in the destruction of authenticity. If the mobile, tented *ordon* are taken as authentic forms and Ordos as their original position, the first experiment retained the forms, but exiled the memorial from its origin. A second experiment then posited returning the memorial to Ordos, but replacing the previous memorial with a sedentary fabrication (the 1956 version), and then (after the Cultural Revolution) reforging the destroyed sacred items.

Following the displacement of the first experiment, the pilgrimage by Mongols continued. But this alone could not rule out the importance of landscape as a contributor to its meaning, for a sense of the memorial being in the wrong place was apparent even to its PLA captors in Qinghai. The second experiment has also been inconclusive, for though the monument is now fixed and its component items retain no material authenticity, Mongols continue to visit it here too.

The displacement of the first experiment, correctable with the return of the memorial to its associated landscape, left only a ghost trail behind of the places the monument had once been. But this was nevertheless a trail that could be reconstructed: both the material and its symbolic qualities remained nearly unscathed by the distances traveled. The destruction of the second experiment, however, has involved a different scenario, one that reminds us that this is no experiment. If the items had merely been dispersed, they might eventually be returned. But the greater likelihood is that the destruction and replacement has been irreversible. Possibly, in time, patina will lend legitimacy to the refashioned material. And yet, even as it stands now, after the imposed history, Mongols continue to visit the memorial, and from it they continue to build an identity.

An evaluation by the Cultural Heritage Conservation Center of Tsinghua University has sought to determine the role and relevance of both the tangible monument and its intangible impact on China’s cultural terrain. The center’s 2007 report (a late formality, since the monument had already been inscribed on the Nationally Protected Monuments list in 1986) began by considering the materiality of the monument. But, perhaps because this lacked sufficient material-historical significance, it soon turned to the landscape (as a remnant of authentic context), the people (a dispossessed Mongol tribe called the Darkhad who had served as guardians to the *ordon*), and periodic ceremonies as being equally constitutive of its meaning.

Though the study attempted sensitivity in defining Mongol interest in the monument and its trappings, it did little to consider self-reflexively why the state or its non-Mongol population should care about it. Conveyed as a scientific study of a Chinese heritage site, the report adequately ascertained physical, environmental, and even cultural hazards. But it left unacknowledged the future threats posed by the monument — for there are dangers that Chinggis Khaan’s memorial continues to pose to the political landscape of Inner Asia.

AMONG THE RELICS, A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

In a side hall within the monument, a vitrine now encases its treasures (or, more accurately, the simulacra of simulacra of such items). Among these relics, a double-edged sword makes a palpable metaphor not only for the entombed items, but for the entire monumentalizing project. To wield control of such a monument places the Chinese authority in a precarious position, for an instrumentalized symbol can put its master with either blade if not wielded carefully. A symbolic implement may turn from an emblem of power into a target of vulnerability when deployed without legitimacy. Thus, the now singular positioning of the Khaan's relics at Yekejuu has become an obvious place for protesters to rally, not only over conditions of the monument itself, but for any perceived slight to the populace the monument is made to represent. Remaking Mongols as Chinese citizens means that the monument becomes a surrogate on their behalf, particularly toward perceived injustice.

Indications of this volatile potential have already surfaced. In architectural telephony, a mini-simulacra of the Chinggis monument became the target of controversy outside of Ordos when the government-financed China Travel Service added a reproduction (at 1/15 scale) of the Khaan's cenotaph to its Florida Splendid China attraction (Jinxiu Zhonghua 锦绣中华). Mimicking a theme park in Shenzhen, the Kissimmee, Florida, franchise attempted to compress China's architectural highlights on a single site suitable for a one-day visit two miles west of Disney World. This replica cenotaph would have been insignificant had not its symbolism been turned against the Chinese government. Protests over the park by "Citizens Against Backyard Communism" and other provocatively named groups were primarily motivated by higher-profile issues, like China's policy on Tibet and Taiwan (coincidentally, the park was sited where purpose-built Splendid China Boulevard intersected a pre-existing Formosa Gardens Boulevard). Thus, as one protester, Kenneth R. Timmerman, fumed, "the Committee against Communist Chinese Propaganda in Clearwater, Florida . . . has written park management repeatedly, requesting they change exhibits that refer to minorities and to the occupied countries of Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and East Turkestan as if they were happy parts of China. In addition to the Potala Palace, the group objects to the inclusion of replicas of the Mausoleum of Ghengis Khan."⁵² After a decade of operation, the Florida Splendid China closed at the end of 2003. A 2007 aerial photo revealed that most of its structures had been abandoned in place, including the Potala, but the Ordos model had vanished (FIG. 6).

In general terms, controversy over the Kissimmee park paralleled that surrounding construction of the Shenzhen Splendid China park.⁵³ As James Hevia has explained:

The miniature offers a transcendental perspective akin to what Benedict Anderson calls the "bird's-eye view"

of modern mapmaking. However, whereas Anderson notes the importance of boundaries in modern maps as demarcations of an "exclusive sovereignty wedged between other sovereignties" that become fixed in the process of colonial expansion, Splendid China does not pretend to this cartographic convention. Its boundary serves to demarcate the space of representation, within which the nation can be rendered as a total concept, a timeless essence, as something not determined by what it excludes or what it abuts up to and against. The boundary of the model becomes in this sense inwardly referential, detached from what lies outside itself, timeless because it assumes the eternal verity of the idea of "China" as a bounded entity. This boundedness offers the conditions of [what Geoffrey Bennington calls] "total surveyability. . . ." "At the centre, the nation narrates itself as the nation," uncomplicated by the difference instituted at its margins. Note, therefore, the unproblematic inclusion of the characteristic housing styles and landscape of a number of "national minority" peoples.⁵⁴

Eventually, Splendid China's appropriation of Mongolian architecture served as the trigger that caused Oyunbilig, executive director of an Inner Mongolian independence lobby, to reassert Sain-Jirgal and Sharaldai's (1983) history of the shrine through the English translation that I have referred to in this article.

Protests have a distinctive history in Ordos, for it may have been the unique formation of resistance groups in the late nineteenth century that instigated this very competition for Chinggis's inheritance.⁵⁵ Henry Serruys, the CICM scholar, building upon the work of his confrère Joseph van Hecken, has compiled an archive of letters received in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Bishop Alphons Bermijn and Reverend Antoine Mostaert, successive heads-of-mission at Bor-Balgas (present-day Chenchuanzhen 城川镇), in the Otog Front Banner of Ordos.



FIGURE 6. Model of the Ordos monument at the Splendid China theme park in Kissimmee, Florida. From <http://caccp.freedomsherald.org> (accessed April 27, 2010).

The letter campaign was believed to have begun with Ordos Mongols in the 1850s before spreading to other steppe regions.⁵⁶ The letters articulated the complex political realities of Mongol and Han interactions with each other and with China's elites (Qing functionaries, either Manchu or Mongol) over land rights and usage. The subject of protest in these letters was often the tenancy of specific tracts by Han agriculturalists. However, the object of protest was not Han farmers so much as Mongol princelings who were disturbing the steppe economy for self-benefit through policies of taxation, debt clearance, and lucrative cash-crop farming.⁵⁷

"Revolutionary circles" of Mongol tribesmen composed the letters. But what made them curious was that Mongol subjects should appeal to Chinese officials concerning mistreatment of steppe land by Mongol lords (employing Han laborers). Moreover, the officials were functionaries of the Qing, who, though sedentary in their position atop the imperial hierarchy, promoted a myth of themselves as warrior-nomads of the Manchurian plains. The Qing outwardly exalted Mongol-Yuan rule as a model by which non-Han conquerors could administer China. Yet surreptitiously they maneuvered to limit the potential of their Mongol vassals from reorganizing into a restless force — one that might threaten their own monopoly on power. By a delicate, trilateral maneuver, Qing officials invested financially in architectural constructions for Tibetan Buddhism in order to disrupt Tibetan religio-political alliances with Mongol princes. Concurrently, Qing officers invested symbolically in ceremonious gatherings to forge stronger bonds with the Mongol aristocracy, retaining their assistance as middle-lords and local governors over Han and other Chinese peoples.⁵⁸

The historical context of the Qing in this period, however, is of an embattled dynasty in its waning days, one that had endured calamities both natural and political throughout the late nineteenth century. Defeat by foreign militaries as well as domestic revolts by the Taiping (1851) and Dungan Muslims (1860s to 1870s) also set a low tolerance for dissent. Thus, even though the Ordos protest letters were careful to include honorifics in their address and extremes of humility in their requests, petitioners rarely gained redress for their grievances. Moreover, the letters motivated a covert backlash, as unofficially sanctioned "counter-circles" were launched to suffocate dissent through violence and terror.⁵⁹

Though the protests letters did little to alleviate conditions at the time, they did eventually succeed in reconstituting communication and organization among the nomads. In existential threat to sedentarists, herders unfastened state control of land literally, by removing or altering landmarks. "When the multitude formed circles and came together . . . we decided to go around everywhere (to inspect) the old landmarks on the borders with other banners and (on the boundary) of the land given out to the Chinese set up (new landmarks)."⁶⁰ Another time, it was "discussed and decided by the multitude of our circles . . . to re-erect all the border

marks of places where the border of the territory of our banner touches upon other territories, and we have reset them all around the banner, but quite intentionally in one or two spots no border marks have been set up."⁶¹

Today, however, the steppe is irrevocably territorialized — and nowhere is this condition more evident than at the Chinggis Khaan monument itself. Fencing surrounds the site, demarcating territory beyond the control of the very Mongols the monument is said to represent. The discontented are physically distanced as the monument recedes behind ever more expansive cordons and perimeters.

Yet, at the same time, if its operators were to cease constructing more spacious enclosures, the entire enterprise could be left vulnerable to a collapse of meaning (FIG. 7). Any lapse in demonstrating the importance of these relics might translate into a perceived lapse in leadership. To retain relevance, and thus authority, the monument demands constant attention and investment. As a result, over the past two decades its expansion has subsumed ever larger portions of the landscape. Implicit in this reading is not just the authority of the cenotaph, but also that of its operators, the state sponsors of territorialization. Yet, without a continuous supply of significant new historical material, the physical expansion of the site takes shape solely in the hollow task of



FIGURE 7. Views recede to ever more distant bounds, imposing monumental emptiness on the steppe landscape. Photo by author, 2009.

revising its encompassing fences, gateways and paths at ever greater distances from the monument itself.⁶²

In the gap between my first visit in 1991 and a subsequent stop in 2000, the tri-domed cenotaph was mostly unchanged but its surroundings had been completely revised, with an informal collection of visitor structures demolished in favor of formalized approach paths and a triumphal gateway arch. Subtle cues linking the current landscape to that of the Khaan's era, such as a stupa, piled-stone *ovoo*, flagpoles, incense cauldrons, and the like had also been added or highlighted by a new layout of pathways. By 2009, however, the cenotaph itself had been expanded with an added hall, revised paintings (including murals of the great Khaan's life), and updates or additions to the ancient relics. Outside, the gateway of 2000 was no longer an entry, having been outdistanced by a new, circumscribing fence and entry pavilion — this one with turnstiles activated by laser-scanned admission tickets (FIG. 8). Other outlying structures have since been constructed for galleries and interpretive displays, populated by yet more murals and simulacra of ancient relics.

Blunting this first edge of the symbolic sword, however — by suppressing protest through distance — only heightens the severity of the second edge. Sequestration of the actual relics from access by their devotees may jeopardize Mongol complicity in investing this site with meaning and thus undermine any authority it may hold whatsoever. So long as stakeholders benefit from belief in the relics, all are willing to suspend consideration of the symbols' inventedness — investment in instrumentalized symbols being proportionate to their usefulness. However, if authorities exert their control irresponsibly, the symbols may no longer be granted meaning, resulting in a loss of complicity by the governed.

Should the simulacra of simulacra become dissociated from the Khaan's spirit, they would cease to impart associative authority to the state. By rendering the reliquary meaningless, Chinese officials would forfeit the tool by which they control the myth of Chinggis. With the Khaan's spirit sundered from its material incarceration, his specter could indeed return to potency. A ghost of the Khaan, liberated and transcendent in the minds of his followers, might spread across the landscape of Ordos and the steppe beyond, proving ever more dangerous to the maintenance of political order.

IN CONCLUSION: EXTRAPOLATING ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE

In an introduction to an edited volume hinging on Alois Riegl's essay "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and its Origin," Kurt Forster wrote, "the deliberate memorial — Riegl called it the 'intentional monument' — is exposed to a kind of historic double jeopardy: memory is all that sustains its meaning but its physical form will have to survive the vagaries of changing perceptions and values."⁶³ The existing



FIGURE 8. An expensive new entry integrates gates and fencing into an assemblage of exclusions. Photo by author, 2009.

form of the Ordos monument, distinct as it is, however, misses the vitality of the living monument. And it may be for this reason that the solidified version of the Chinggis cenotaph is never quite enough.

While the main monument has suffered multiple attempts at reconstruction and repair, even the surrounding region has been revised over the last two decades. Most recently, the addition of an outlying theme park was meant both to express and to capitalize on the importance of the Yekejuu site. Tourist camps, a set of commercial structures, a petrol station, and now even a toll plaza to enter a new freeway (where not even a paved road existed a decade earlier), also degrade the centrality of a monument once isolated on the steppe (FIG. 9). Furthermore, the recently built, centrally planned Ordos city may soon send its sprawl across the landscape in the direction of the monument. At the same time, by periodically aggrandizing the site with still further built forms, those who control and build the site implicitly acknowledge that no amount of construction will entirely convey the site's actual cultural impact. The monument's relevance remains mobile even in its most solid, most sedentary form — endlessly avoiding being pinned in place or in composition.

What the monument may best represent is an unintended identity for Mongol and Han Chinese alike. The Chinggis memorial, now sedentarized after centuries of mobility, identifies the contemporary relationship of nomadism within the larger, sedentary society. Mongols have retained a self-image of pastoral nomadism, but this identity survives largely in a mythic sense of the past. Yet the discontinuities between the present and the past, between contemporary practice and mythic self-identity are possibly what drive the potency of the memorial's cultural impact. It is within this framework that Mongol and Han Chinese will continue to negotiate their respective ownership of cultural legacy in the material of the monument and the space of the landscape.

FIGURE 9. Ordos infrastructure, clad in theme-park aesthetics, stretches anticipation for the sedentarized monument across the landscape. Photo by author, 2009.



REFERENCE NOTES

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7. G. Pereira, "A Journey across the Ordos," *The Geographical Journal*, Vol.37 No.3 (1911), pp.260–61.
8. Local officials point out that the People's Republic actually joined Inner Mongolia, because Inner Mongolia established itself in 1947, two years earlier than the P.R.C.
9. Hong et al., "The Ordos Plateau of China." Based on 1989 data, urban areas were 88 percent Han compared to 12 percent Mongol, but that ratio has become even more lopsided since the development of both existing and new urban zones since 2001. See U.E. Bulag, "From Yekejuu League to Ordos Municipality: Settler Colonialism and Alter/Native Urbanization in Inner Mongolia," *Provincial China*, Vol.7 No.2 (2002), pp.196–234.
10. D.M. Williams, "The Barbed Walls of China: A Contemporary Grassland Drama," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.55 No.3 (1996), pp.674,669. On the irony of Beijing's plan having initially been set by the Mongolian-born Khubilai Khaan — a figure who transits between the nomadic and sedentary occupation of urban space — see N.S. Steinhardt, "The Plan of Khubilai Khan's Imperial City," *Artibus Asiae*, Vol.44 No.2/3 (1983), p.137.
11. C. Humphrey, "Landscape Conflicts in Inner Mongolia," in B. Bender and M. Winer, *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp.59–60.
12. This simplification is not to reify borders set by intricate and historical assertions of power, but it does acknowledge present conditions. Despite the rhetoric of irredentists, Inner and Outer Mongolia have each had their political machinations for purposely remaining exclusive of the other. Inner Mongolians had opportunities to contemplate secession from Chinese rule when centralized controls were weakened during the collapse of the Qing, the political and military crises of the Republic, and the Civil War years. But Inner Mongolian elites found Chinese suzerainty preferable to competing in Outer Mongolian politics. Dislodging Han workers from Mongol lands also meant risking the cultural and economic autonomy by which Mongol leaders themselves benefitted. Secession from China would thus have left the local princes even more isolated and vulnerable, since the elites in Ulaanbaatar, struggling to retain their own authority, were unlikely to have welcomed a greater, but decentered Mongolian state. Instead, Inner Mongolia thrived in a parallel political system in uneasy coalition with a KMT-dominated Legislative Yuan, resulting in the October 1931 Law of Mongolian Leagues, Banners, and Tribes (*Menggu mengbuqi xuzhifa*) for non-Han counties of Inner Mongolia. See J. Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism: How the Qing Frontier and Its Indigenous Became Chinese* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.59. For Ordos, this in-between condition lasted until being returned to the national political system through municipalization in 2001 (see

- Bulag, "From Yeke-juu League to Ordos Municipality," pp.196–234). A more subtle understanding of Inner Mongolians' negotiation between politics and culture is set forth in Uradyn Erden Bulag's self-reflexive introduction to *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.1–26; the Mongol-Chinese author is himself Ordos born.
13. B. Huhbator, "The History and the Political Character of the Name of 'Nei Menggu' (Inner Mongolia)," *Inner Asia*, Vol.6 No.1 (2004), pp.61–80.
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18. Williams, "The Barbed Walls of China," p.678.
19. In another nomadic context, herders have been shown to be able to scan sand colors for their absorption indices, a pragmatic need for passive heating or cooling when selecting campsites and resting places for livestock. See T. Banning and I. Köhler-Rollefson, "Ethnographic Lessons for the Pastoral Past: Camp Locations and Material Remains Near Beidha, Southern Jordan," in O. Bar-Yosef and A. Khazanov, eds., *Pastoralism in the Levant: Archaeological Materials in Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, WI: Prehistory Press, 1992), p.186.
20. Pereira, "A Journey across the Ordos," p.263. In "From Yeke-juu League to Ordos Municipality," Bulag lamented that the region's name, though consolidated in Chinese policy as the official label for the municipality, will soon lack meaning. Transliteration renders Ordos as E'erduosi (鄂尔多斯), but the common abbreviation retains only the initial phoneme in an acronym; E'erduosi City thus reduces to E'shi (鄂市).
21. B.-O. Bold, "The Death and Burial of Chinggis Khaan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.19 No.1 (2000), pp.95–115.
22. P. Nora and L.D. Kritzman, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, [1984–92]), p.2.
23. China, through its *Zhonghua minzu* policy, recognizes 55 minority ethnicities, plus majority Han, as composing the Chinese nation. I use the word "Han" when referring to the ethnic group within China, reserving "Chinese" for all citizens in the People's Republic, the (Mandarin) language, or the related culture. The first difficulty in this, however, is that references, particularly those that precede modern China, do not make this distinction. In their context, Chinese means the non-Mongolian inhabitants. This anticipates my second dilemma: identifying Han and Mongol citizens of China as constituent of a "Chinese" people adheres to a nationalizing politics promoted within the Han-dominant government, but does not necessarily reflect the sentiments of those so categorized. On the contentiousness of *Zhonghua minzu* among the designated minorities, see D. Gladney, *Dislocating China: Reflections on Muslims, Minorities, and Other Subaltern Subjects* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Ethnic categorization is further complicated because people in geographic proximity inevitably have crossed bloodlines and tangled histories. Owen Lattimore, in "Inner Mongolian Nationalism and the Pan-Mongolian Idea: Recollections and Reflections," *Journal of the Anglo-Mongolian Society*, Vol.6 No.1 (1980), pp.5–21, provides an anecdote of categorical mutability. This involves meeting "Mongolian bandits" (herdsmen disenfranchised from their land who survive by petty theft, but who are descended from Han workmen who themselves had been exiled to the steppe) and their half-hearted pursuers, "Chinese soldiers" in the employ of Beijing, who are themselves former Mongolian nomads, who have long since been settled and Sinicized.
24. Huhbator, "The History and the Political Character of the Name of 'Nei Menggu' (Inner Mongolia)"; but also see note 14, above.
25. J. Kler, "Hunting Customs of the Ordos Mongols," *Primitive Man*, Vol.14 No.3 (July 1941), p.38. Whereas "official" biographies, often based on such problematic accounts as the *Secret History*, attempt to reconstruct the life of the Khaan, it is the fragments retold by local followers that reimburse the landscape with his presence.
26. Kler, "Hunting Customs of the Ordos Mongols," p.41.
27. G. Feeley-Harnik, "Finding Memories in Madagascar," in S. Küchler and W.S. Melion, *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), p.125.
28. According to Caroline Humphrey: "A Mongolian landscape seethes with entities which are attributed with anything from a hazy idea of energy to clearly visualized and named spirits. . . . It is not possible to discern a coherent cosmology in all this." C. Humphrey, "Chiefly and Shamanist Landscapes in Mongolia," in E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon, eds., *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.141.
29. Kler, "Sickness, Death and Burial," p.29.
30. Prior to Mongol occupancy of this landscape, Xiongnu and Turkic tribes buried their elite using chambers, tumuli, and other elaborate constructions.
31. C. Humphrey, "Rituals of Death as a Context for Understanding Personal Property in Socialist Mongolia," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol.8 No.1 (2002), p.76.
32. *Ibid.*, p.69.
33. U.E. Bulag, "Municipalization and Ethnopolitics in Inner Mongolia," in O. Bruun and L. Narangoa, *Mongols from Country to City: Floating Boundaries, Pastoralism, and City Life in the Mongol Lands* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2006), p.70.
34. Humphrey, "Rituals of Death," pp.65,68,86 n3.
35. Embalming practices of neighboring cultures appeared to have been unknown to Mongols at this time. That they might have transported bodies seems less plausible than that they might have transported relatively more stable relics — either the items that denoted his personhood, or his ashes, if Chinggis were cremated. According to a textual reference, the palanquin carrying the Khaan's corpse became immobilized in the Munu Mountains, on the rim overlooking Ordos, which likely portended to his entourage that they hasten the disposal of the body in the surrounding landscape. The mobilization of Chinggis's personal articles to represent his body may have arisen from this situation of metaphorical, corporeal, and palanquin immobility. See P. Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp.141–44.
36. "Reliquary" may be yet another term to consider here. A faction of Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism relies on the relic-cult. This may account for some of the relevance of the site for contemporary Mongols, but not for the initiation of the *naiman chagaan ordon* in the pre-Buddhist eras of the great Khaans or Yuan, nor that of the current structure.
37. D. Atkinson and D. Cosgrove, "Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870–1945," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.88 No.1 (1998), p.30.
38. S. Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space, and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005).
39. On memorial landscapes of a nation's capital, see J.F. Meyer, "The Changing Meaning of the National Mall," in *Myths in Stone: Religious Dimensions of Washington, D.C.* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2001); and K. Savage, "A Monument to a Deceased Project," in K. Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2009).

40. N. Johnson, "Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography, and Nationalism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol.13, No.1 (1995), p.51.
41. M. Rowlands and C. Tilley, "Monuments and Memorials," in C. Tilley, ed., *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2006), p.506.
42. Linkages of body and land here are opposed to the feudal European practices of ruling bodies-of-state, as suggested by Ernst Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); and Carlo Ginzburg in *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp.64–66. Body-doubling did occur, but to spiritual ends rather than investments in power. The Khaan's duplicate in clothing was buried not for his apotheoistic placement among the divine spirits, but rather either to dupe his own spirit, fool evil spirits who might chase him, or divert the spirits of looters seeking his tomb. See A. Campi, "Review of *Genghis Khan, Life, Death, and Resurrection* by John Man," in *Bi-monthly Journal on Mongolian and Tibet Current Situation*, Vol.15 No.1 (2004), pp.66–78. Joseph Kler, in "Sickness, Death and Burial," p.29, described a body-double who "takes upon himself the evil, accepts the destiny of the king, dresses up in the best raiment of the king, mounts the king's horse, and gallops away" to distract and draw evil spirits away from a sick regent. If the ruler died, Kler continued, duplicates were made not of his body, but of architectural elements he might recognize — a straw replica of his doorway, for instance — and then burned so his spirit would be tricked into believing his residence was no more. The spirit would then depart, leaving undisturbed the survivors in his household.
43. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, "1227: Treatise on Nomadology — the War Machine," in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p.366.
44. Sain-Jirgal and Sharaldai, *Altan ordon nai dailga [The offering Ceremonies of the Golden Ordon]* (1983), translated by Oyunbilig (1997), available at http://members.tripod.com/mongolian_page/white.txt (retrieved April 21, 2007).
45. *Ibid.*
46. Carles, "Problems in Exploration II: Ordos," p.677.
47. Completed in 1944, the Ulaanhot memorial, damaged in the Cultural Revolution, was rebuilt or altered between 1983 and 1987. Designs for the Ulaanhot and eventual Ordos monuments might each take compositional inspiration from the periodically agglomerated *ordon* at Yekejuu. One might alternatively draw cues from the other (though which borrows from which is difficult to disentangle amid their staggered construction and reconstruction cycles). Both, however, are stylistically consistent with an architectural aesthetic designated to ethnic minorities.
48. Sain-Jirgal and Sharaldai, *Altan ordon nai dailga*. Likewise, Almaz Khan has asserted an affinity of the early Chinese Communist Party for the Khaan memorial, stemming from Mao's personal dedication to the *ordon* as they passed through Yan'an. An entourage bearing the relics, retreating from Japanese occupation, filed through the Communists' own base of retreat. Just southeast of Yekejuu, Yan'an sits in a valley that serves as a transit corridor between Ordos and Gansu. See A. Khan, "Chinggis Khan: From Imperial Ancestor to Ethnic Hero," in S. Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), pp.248–77.
49. P.A. Andrews, "The Tents of Chinggis Qan at Ejen Qoriy-a and Their Authenticity," *Journal of the Anglo-Mongolian Society*, Vol.7 No.2 (1981), pp.1–49.
50. G. Borjigin, Radio Free Asia (February 17, 2005) http://www.rfa.org/english/news/social/china_mongolian-20050217.html retrieved March 20, 2007.
51. E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.237.
52. K.R. Timmerman, World Tibet Network News (March 27, 1999), available at <http://www.tibet.ca/en/wtnarchive/1999/3/27-3.html> (retrieved March 20, 2007). Verbally picketing diminutive dioramas may seem mirthful, but Timmerman subsequently ran in the 2000 Maryland Republican primary for U.S. Senate on a platform of hawkish interventionism. See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics/elections/2000/states/md/senate/> (retrieved May 24, 2007).
53. See A. Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), pp.162–63.
54. J. Hevia, "World Heritage, National Culture, and the Restoration of Chengde," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, Vol.9 No.1 (2001), pp.220–21. The Anderson quotes are from B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions/NLB, 1983), pp.172,184–85. The Bennington quotes are from G. Bennington, "Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation," in H. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.121.
55. Invoking pan-Mongol nationalism, restive Ordos Mongols called upon the military of Outer Mongolia to protect the *ordon* after the Qing collapsed. But this alerted local Han forces of the nascent Chinese Republic to the value of such a memorial in forging a national identity from composite local elements. See U.E. Bulag, *Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China's Mongolian Frontier* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), pp.37–38.
56. Serruys, "Documents from Ordos on the 'Revolutionary Circles': Part I," (1977); and Henry Serruys, "Documents from Ordos on the 'Revolutionary Circles': part II," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.98 No.1 (1978), pp.1–19.
57. Serruys, "Documents from Ordos on the 'Revolutionary Circles': Part I," p.485.
58. Hevia, "World Heritage, National Culture, and the Restoration of Chengde," pp.219–43.
59. Serruys, "Documents from Ordos on the 'Revolutionary Circles': Part I," pp. 485–86.
60. *Ibid.*, p.493; parentheses in source.
61. *Ibid.*, p.492.
62. Late-nineteenth-century references note that fences around the gathering site were rebuilt or replaced when weathered and dilapidated. As permanent constructions, they joined platforms for the *ordon*, establishing a precedent for the now sedentary monument. See Andrews, "The Tents of Chinggis Qan at Ejen Qoriy-a and Their Authenticity," pp.7–8.
63. K.W. Forster, "Monument/Memory and the Mortality of Architecture," *Oppositions*, Vol.25 (1982), p.6; and A. Riegl, same volume, pp.21–51.