

The Encircling Hunt of Mongolia: Institutional Structures and Socio-Political Implications

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Introduction

A dramatic event occurred in the winter of 200 BCE. At the end of an expedition to punish and defeat the Xiongnu nomads of the northern steppe, Han Gaozu 漢高祖 and his armies prepared to launch an all-out attack. As the Chinese emperor readied for the decisive strike, however, he found himself and his armies already encircled by the Xiongnu cavalry. Over seven long days, tens of thousands of mounted nomadic soldiers steadily closed in on the Han armies. Only after he agreed to pay an annual tribute to the steppe nation was Gaozu allowed to retreat through a narrow corridor opened in the Xiongnu enclosure.⁽¹⁾

The Xiongnu siege of Han armies recalls a traditional Mongolian hunting practice in which mounted hunters would encircle their prey and then open a space to allow young and pregnant animals to escape.⁽²⁾ There is a long tradition

1 This event is recounted in full in William Honeychurch, *Inner Asia and the Spatial Politics of Empire: Archeology, Mobility, and Contact* (New York: Springer New York, 2015), pp. 1-2.

2 I do not consider all the Xiongnu peoples to be the ancestors of the Mongols, but I do take the view that the Xiongnu ruled Mongolia from 209 B.C.E. to 91 C.E. (Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* [New York: Facts On File, 2004], p. 595). For the origins of the Xiongnu, see Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 163-66.

in Eurasia equating hunting and war, whereby, as Thomas Allsen puts it, “they were complementary activities that merged into one another ... across the millennia.”⁽³⁾ In the Mongolian tradition too, the similarity and affinity between the practices of war and hunting was not out of the ordinary. Chinggis Khan often placed war and hunting in parallel, stating precepts such as “we go out to hunt and down many mountain bulls. We go to war and destroy many enemies,”⁽⁴⁾ and “dash in unity at the enemies when facing them. Kill the game in unity when hunting them.”⁽⁵⁾ Scholars have long pointed out that the Mongols used their military organization to undertake collective hunts, and that a single kind of social organization was utilized by the Mongols in both war and the hunt.⁽⁶⁾ According to David Morgan, broadly similar techniques, including the encirclement demonstrated during the aforementioned Xiongnu-Han war, were also used in both events.⁽⁷⁾ War was merely an extension of hunts held in peace time, whereby the only difference the Mongols noted between war and the hunt seems to have been whether the target was a human or a wild-animal.⁽⁸⁾

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- 3 Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 209.
- 4 Rashīd al-Din, *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh*, ed. Karīmī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Eqbal, 1959), v. 1, pp. 436–37 (cited in Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, p. 209).
- 5 Nozaki Motoaki 野崎元彰, “Mongoru shakai ni okeru shuryō no igi ni tsuite: toriwake shinji to shuryō no kankei kara” モンゴル社会における狩猟の意義について——とりわけ神事と狩猟の関係から——, *Tōyō shien* 東洋史苑 8 (1975): 32.
- 6 Aoki Tomitarō 青木富太郎, “Kodai mōkojin no kyōdō shuryō sei to heisei” 古代蒙古人の共同狩猟制と兵制, in *Katō hakushi kanreki kinen tōyō shi shūsetsu* 加藤博士還暦記念東洋史集説 (Tokyo: Toyamabo, 1941), p. 10.
- 7 David Morgan, *The Mongols*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 74.
- 8 See Shimada Masao 島田正郎, “Mongoru ni okeru shuryō no kanshū: yūboku no min ni okeru shoyū no mondai, ‘jō’” モンゴルにおける狩猟の慣習——遊牧の民における所有の問題 (上), *Hōritsu ronsō* 法律論叢 28.1 (1954): 17. Nozaki Motoaki also gives a similar view, see Nozaki Motoaki, “Mongoru shakai ni okeru shuryō no igi ni

This Mongolian style collective hunt was defined by a specific term *aba*, or the encircling hunt, which distinguished it from the individual hunting practice, the *ang*.⁽⁹⁾ It was not a mere war-like collaborative activity for killing game, but constituted a social institution.⁽¹⁰⁾ Like the Assembly (*quraldai*, *čiyulyan*, or *qural*)——the parliamentary institution——of traditional Mongolia, the encircling hunt institution had its own essential structure and associated rules.⁽¹¹⁾ Apart from harvesting economic supplies, the encircling hunt also served as a way of promoting martial arts, a form of unit training, a method of teaching and developing skills in command and logistics, as well as an opportunity of educating individual hunters about social order.⁽¹²⁾

tsuite: toriwake shinji to shuryō no kankei kara,” p. 32.

9 Sechin Jagchid and Paul Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture and Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1974), p. 28.

10 In spite of the term “institution” having had many various definitions, scholars tend to agree that an institution is something that creates and enforces rules. Hugh Hecló elaborates further by stating that “institutions represent inheritances of valued purpose with attendant rules and moral obligations. They constitute socially ordered grounding for human life. This grounding in a normative field implicates the lives of individuals and collectivities in a lived-out social reality” (Hugh Hecló, *On Thinking Institutionally* [Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008], pp. 38, 47). The Mongolian encircling hunt, in this sense, was nothing other than an institution.

11 However, the encircling hunt is distinct from other contemporary hunting institutions, for instance the “tiger hunting brigade” (虎槍營) of the Qing government, and the “spearmen” (*ǰıdači*), an organization of 60 men specializing in tiger killing in southeastern Inner Mongolia during the Qing period. The encircling hunt institution, by contrast, was constituted by ordinary members of Mongolian societies. For the institution of “tiger hunt brigade” and “spearmen,” see Brunnert, H. S. and V. V. Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kellogg and Walsh, 1912), pp. 327, 331; Wang Guojun 王国钧, *Menggu jiwēn 蒙古纪闻*, anno. Maxi 玛希 and Xu Shiming 徐世明 (Hohhot: Nei Menggu renmin chubanshe, 2006), p. 57.

12 The encircling hunt is assumed to have played other functions such as displaying

In the meantime, it should not be overlooked that the encircling hunting activity itself was an innately dangerous practice that contained many potential physical risks from wild animal attacks as well as human error. Denis Sinor points out that, for such an undertaking to be successful, the event had to be “sufficiently well organized and sufficiently numerous.”⁽¹³⁾ Thomas Allsen argues that a well-administered hunt was not only connected with the success of the hunt, but also the safety of the hunters, in particular that of the rulers who were leading the hunt.⁽¹⁴⁾

How was an encircling hunt “well-organized”? One answer to this fundamental question is that the hunt was well-organized on the basis that it employed a military formation in which hunters were supposedly organized into

and solidarizing political power, eliminating harmful wild animals, entertainment, and so forth. As for the purpose and role of encircling hunt, refer to Tsurechakofu ツレチャコフ, “Hokubu Ajia ni okeru genshi teki shuryō ‘jō” 北部アジアにおける原始的狩猟 (上), trans. Tamura Hidefumi 田村秀文, *Zenrin kyōkai chōsa geppō* 善隣協會調査月報 75 (1938): 49–65; ‘chū’ (中), trans. Satō Haruki 佐藤晴生, 76 (1938): 81–97, 74; ‘ge’ (下), trans. Satō Haruki, 77 (1938): 71–85; Aoki Tomitarō, “Kodai mōkojin no kyōdō shuryō sei to heisei”; Harayama Akira 原山煌, “Mongoru shuryō kō” モンゴル狩猟考, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 31.1 (1972): 1–28; Č. Sengge, *Mongʻol-un erten-ü angnal suyul-un sudulul* (Beijing: Ündüsiten-ü keblel-ün qoriya, 2004); Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 179–203. On the early period encircling hunts in Mongolia, see also Shimada Masao, “Mongoru ni okeru shuryō no kanshū: yūboku no min ni okeru shoyū no mondai,” pp. 14–38; and Yoshida Jun’ichi 吉田順一, “Mongoru zoku no yūboku to shuryō: jū isseiki – jū sanseiki no jidai” モンゴル族の遊牧と狩猟——十一世紀～十三世紀の時代, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 40.3 (1981): 102–37.

13 Denis Sinor, “Some Remarks on the Economic Aspects of Hunting in Central Eurasia,” in *Inner Asia and its Contacts with Medieval Europe* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), p. 120.

14 Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, pp. 86–88.

army units.⁽¹⁵⁾ However, to simply arrange the hunters into a military form is certainly not enough to organize an effective and grand encircling hunt. The success of a large-scale military hunt, like success in a military confrontation, relied upon unit discipline, an effective chain of command, and the capability to deploy and control armed formations.⁽¹⁶⁾ Despite this understanding, it is unclear how actual military organization and discipline were activated at the hunts, which had to flexibly cope with numerous difficult and/or uncertain situations. Furthermore, as discussed below, the military aspects were stripped in the late Qing period, turning the encircling hunt into a civilian practice. How did the Mongols organize and order the encircling hunts without using a military formation? More importantly, what allowed the encircling hunts to survive as a civil practice?

This paper takes a historical institutional approach to the encircling hunt and explores its institutional structures and socio-political implications. It focuses specifically on how the Mongolian encircling hunts were organized and regulated throughout history, and how their institutional structures interrelated with the socio-political order of Mongolia. I argue that the hunt adopted broad existing social institutions into its organizational apparatus. I further suggest that the strong, socially-grounded nature of the Mongolian encircling hunts enabled their practice in different time periods and under different political structures.

This study draws on a wide-range of rare sources on the subject, from early Chinese-language records, local historical accounts written in various languages, to Mongolian archival documents. The archival documents, chiefly from nineteenth-century Inner Mongolia, are especially valuable, as they include legal regulations, judicial cases, and directions issued by the local chiefs regarding the encircling hunt. Although these sources are limited in number and they are spread across regions and time, collectively they shed new light on the historical

15 For example, see Aoki Tomitarō, “Kodai mōkojin no kyōdō shuryō sei to heisei,” p. 10, and Sengge, *Mongyol-un erten-ü angnal suyul-un sudulul*, pp. 349–53.

16 Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, p. 215.

evolution, regional variation, and in particular on the structure and practice of Mongolia's traditional encircling hunt.

In what follows, I first sketch the formations and regulations of the early (pre-Qing) Mongolian military hunt. I then explore how the military hunt was practiced and declined during the Qing dynasty. Third, I describe the civil encircling hunt in the Kharachin and Khorchin regions from Southeast Inner Mongolia from late-Qing period onwards. On the basis of these accounts, I next discuss the socio-political implications of the encircling hunt in general. I conclude with an evaluation of the scholarly findings of this paper and the political role of the encircling hunts during the Qing dynasty.

The Formations and Regulations of the Early Military Hunt

The collective hunt is known in English by the French word “battue,” which has its essential meaning in the time-honoured tradition of the driving or drawing of game from cover by beating the woods or bushes. Among the various forms of the collective hunt, the “royal hunt” was the most notable manifestation that was evidently practiced from northeast Asia to kingdoms in Western Europe. Among the various royal hunts themselves, the great Qing imperial hunt, held at Mulan in the royal hunting ground (*Mulan weichang* 木兰围场) in northern China, may well qualify as the most celebrated example, for as many as thirty-thousand participants usually attended these large-scale and prestigious events.⁽¹⁷⁾

It should not to be forgotten, however, that even at the great Qing royal hunt held at Mulan, the Mongols made up the majority of the hunting participants. In this regard, it is said that when a Manchu emperor was boastfully chasing and shooting game on the Mulan hunting ground, more than two-thirds of the thirty-thousand hunters were actually Mongols, who had mounted horses and created a

17 Mark C. Elliott and Ning Chia, “The Qing Hunt at Mulan,” in *New Qing Imperial History*, eds. James A. Millward et al. (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 74.

hunting enclosure for the emperor.⁽¹⁸⁾ Moreover, the Mongols at the Qing imperial hunts also performed other important and logistic functions: some of them were spearmen (*jidači*), the specialists of the tiger hunt who were armed with spears and were in charge of protecting the Qing emperor from wild animal attacks, and some were guides (*γaǰarči*), who guided the hunters on their marching routes while they were creating a circle or marching to hunt during the event. It can be said that there might have been no Qing imperial hunts at Mulan without the Mongols, who had initially presented the hunting ground to the Qing emperor. Without the Mongols, the Qing hunts at Mulan might well have been less colourful and magnificent in its ritual.⁽¹⁹⁾

From long before the Qing dynasty up until the 1970s, the Mongols regularly held encircling hunts on the steppe. The institution of the encircling hunt was certainly a revered steppe phenomenon as old as the Mongol people themselves. The earliest documentary records known to us are from China's *Hanshu* 漢書, which informs us that in 68 BCE, as many as 10,000 nomadic Xiongnu horsemen were actively hunting along the northern Chinese frontier, and that around 100,000 were hunting there in 62 BCE.⁽²⁰⁾ Although the numbers of hunters that appear in this record are certainly inaccurate, they still tell us that the Xiongnu armies hunted in large numbers. It is apparent that these big-scale Xiongnu hunts were not solely hunting activities, but also used as a cover for offensive military operations against China, as the Tibetans did during the Tibet-China war at the end of the seventh-century. Similarly, the Byzantine and Khwārazmian armies also utilized the hunts as military tactics, thereby disguising redeployments, withdrawals, and full retreats.⁽²¹⁾

18 *Ibid.*

19 Of the Mulan hunt, see Elliott and Chia, "The Qing Hunt at Mulan;" and Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 182–87.

20 Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, p. 230.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 223.

According to Xiao Daheng 蕭大亨's *Beilu fengsu* 北虜風俗 from the late sixteenth century, Mongolia's great encircling hunts started every autumn and continued for about three months.⁽²²⁾ The circumference could cover 200 Chinese miles (approximately 115 kilometers),⁽²³⁾ and several millions of animals would have been hunted during a hunting campaign.⁽²⁴⁾ The scale need not be so larger, however. Another Chinese source says that “the number of hunters reaches ten thousand, or several thousand, or [only] a few hundreds.”⁽²⁵⁾ As such, the scale of encircling hunts was dynamic, varying enormously depending on the purpose of the event as well as on who was leading the hunt, either royal or local. Nonetheless, it might be right to assume that the scale of hunts held during military operations, as suggested in the abovementioned Xiongnu hunts, was generally larger than during other occasions.

Although the hunting circle was usually created by the hunters themselves, typically horsemen, there was a particular form of encircling hunt in some regions, called *jegegtei aba* (literally “enclosed hunt”), in which the circle was delineated by ropes or other kinds of devices. According to Münküeyev, this form of encircling hunt was widely practiced among the early period Buryat people.⁽²⁶⁾ As for how this kind of hunt was conducted, the *Heida shilüe* 黑鞮事略, a thirteenth-century Chinese record made by a Song envoy who observed the

22 Xiao Daheng 蕭大亨, *Beilu fengsu* 北虜風俗, Fu beilu shixi 附北虜世系, guoxue edition, no. 29 (Beiping: Wendiang shuzhuang, 1936), p. 13.

23 Peng Daya 彭大雅, *Heida shilüe* 黑鞮事略, anno. Xu Tingshu 徐霆疏 (Tokyo: Kokkōsha, 1903), p. 6.

24 Zhou Mi 周密, *Guixin zashi* 癸辛雜識, anno. Wu Qiming 吳企明 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988).

25 Su Zhizao 蘇志皐 (Min'e shanren 岷峨山人), *Yiyü* 譯語, in *Jilu huibian* 紀錄彙編, ed. Shen Jiefu 沈節甫, 216 *juan* in 76 vols. (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), v. 56, j. 161, p. 22b.

26 N. Ts. Münküeyev, “A Mongolian Hunting Practice of the 13th Century and the Buryat Terms Zeegete Aba and Aba Khaidag,” in *Tractata Altaica*, eds. W. Heissig et al. (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976), pp. 417–33.

hunt, provides a detailed description. First, the circle, made of ropes with feathers, was completed before the start of the event. The rope circle served to contain the animals enclosed and prevent them from escaping from within the enclosure. Second, the great encircling hunt was regarded as a national event for which all families within the nation were required to supply ropes—and also possibly horsemen later—to the central hierarchy of the Khan.⁽²⁷⁾

Two points emerge from this specific method of creating a hunting circle. First, it reflects the nomadic life and steppe environment, since the ropes used were made of hair from animals, such as manes. Understandably, it is less practical to encircle the vast steppe using a wooden fence for hunting, as was utilized in some forest areas of Mongolia. Second, this hunting technique implies that the main target of the hunt in question was wild animals such as antelope, which might be afraid of ropes with feathers and consequently remain within the circle. In contrast, as the practice of ancient Indians who used nets to hunt lions proved,⁽²⁸⁾ it was probably impractical to encircle game such as wolves or foxes by using a single line of rope enclosure on the wild steppe. It would further suggest that such animals were in turn hunted within the circle created by the mounted hunters.

How a large-scale encircling hunt was actually structured and operated is described in the *Guixin zashi* 癸辛雜識: “whenever [the Mongols] hunted in a great circular form ... they divided themselves into two groups and rode to east and west. [They] paraded for approximately a month and eventually the leaders of two columns met each other. [The individual horsemen] kept a distance of around one Chinese mile (approximately 576 meters) between each other.”⁽²⁹⁾ The structure of such a huge hunting encirclement is more graphically described in the following account of a great hunt held by Chinggis Khan in the year of 1224:

27 Peng Daya, *Heida shilüe*, pp. 6–7.

28 Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, p. 30.

29 Zhou Mi, *Guixin zashi*.

When he (Chinggis Khan) set out from there,⁽³⁰⁾ he ordered a great camp made, a golden throne set up, and a large banquet held ... During those few days Genghis Khan had gone hunting, and Otchi Noyan did not go to the right-hand circle but remained a bit behind. For seven days he was stationed in the *ordu* for that offense.⁽³¹⁾

In this great encircling hunt, led by Chinggis Khan, Otchi Noyan, one of Chinggis Khan's brothers, had been ordered to lead the "right-hand circle." It is logical to assume that there was a counterpart "left-hand circle" as well, which would have been led by another high-ranking general. As this case and the previous passage from the *Guixin zashi* show, a traditional encircling hunt was conventionally divided into two flanks, the right and the left-wings of the center, which was the commanding position of a great Khan or chieftain. This military-hunting structure of left, right, and center was later observed by Bābur (1483–1530) among the Mughals from Central Asia and the nomadic successors of the Chagadai Khanate in the early sixteenth-century.⁽³²⁾ This format survived in the nineteenth-century Alasha Banner military hunts: the "center" (*töb*), the "right flank" (*barayun yar*), and the "left flank" (*jegün yar*).⁽³³⁾

Meanwhile, there were clearly established rules for maintaining the order and execution of the hunting event, such as those described above in the *Guixin*

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- 30 According to Rašid-ad-din, *Sbornik letopiseŭ*, T. 2, trans. O. I. Smirnova (Moscow-Leningrad, 1952), p. 230, this region was called as "Buka Sujiku".
- 31 Rashiduddin Fazlullah, *Jami'u't-tawarikh = Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, trans. & anno. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge: Harvard University, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998), pp. 260–61.
- 32 Zahir al-Din Bābur, *The Bābur-nāma in English*, trans. A. S. Beveridge (London: Luzac, 1969), pp. 154–55.
- 33 *Egüride qauli bolyan toytaγayad daγaγu yabuγulqu-yin dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-7-(22), Alasha Left Banner Archives, Alashan Meng, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China [hereafter Alasha Left Banner Archives].

zashi, noting that the hunters in the event were ordered to maintain a fixed distance between each other. Any disturbance of the hunting orders, particularly when it allowed animals to escape, was a punishable offense. For instance, the Oirad Legal Code (1640) stated:

Whenever people (hunters) disturb the encircling hunt by gathering or marching together, [they] will be fined five horses each. If [they] stray on their horses three shooting distances (*ondosqa*) [from their given position], [they] will have their horses confiscated. If [they stray] two shooting distances, they will have one sheep confiscated. If [the infraction] is one shooting distance, they will be fined five arrows.⁽³⁴⁾

Moreover, in his great *yasa*, Chinggis Khan stated: “When irresponsible soldiers and hunters negligently release animals from within the circle, they should be punished with floggings or even by death.”⁽³⁵⁾ There were also procedures and rules dealing with other interaction cases. For example, the *Beilu fengsu* observes:

They count all the participants [of the encircling hunt] and divide the catch into equal shares according to established rules, but they do make a distinction between shooters and their aides. When they kill an animal, the skin, hair, hoofs, and horns go to the shooter in recognition of his skill, but the meat is divided and they all receive an equal share. No one dares steal and hide arrows or the lost tips of arrows because they are afraid of being severely punished. If someone shooting arrows with his bow were to wound one of his companions by mistake, and if that person should die, [the shooter] is bound to give only one slave in compensation, or a camel [to the

34 E. Buyan’öljei and Bao Ge, *Mongyol-Oyirad-un ča’aja-yin bičig* (Hohhot: Öbör Mongyol-un arad-un keblel-ün qoriya, 2000), p. 211.

35 Harayama Akira, “Mongoru shuryō kō,” p. 17.

family of the victim]. Should he not pay that, he would be obliged to give two horses. The same rule applies in the case of a similar accident in battle. This kind of accident is not regarded as willful murder.⁽³⁶⁾

Three points in the citation need evaluation. The first is regarding the distinction between the shooter and aide. This rule is seemingly common in pre-modern hunts in general. A similar principle existed amongst Germanic people in the fifth to eighth century, where anyone who killed an animal wounded by another person was only entitled to the right front leg while seven ribs and the remaining parts belonged to the hunter who initially wounded the game.⁽³⁷⁾ According to the Östgöta Law from the first half of the thirteenth century in Norway, the hunter who killed game got certain parts of the haunches.⁽³⁸⁾ Second, the meat, apart from the designated parts for the shooter, was shared equally by all hunters at the hunt, probably including the shooters themselves. This rule implies a welfare system where the meats from the hunt were in theory public property, and were equally distributed to individual hunters regardless of who killed the game. Finally, bodily injuries or death caused by accident or a property offence committed during a hunting campaign were settled in accordance with the military law used during war. Although its contents are not well known, this principle was also applied in the Alasha Banner encircling hunts.⁽³⁹⁾

36 Xiao Daheng, *Beilu fengsu*, p. 13.

37 Martina Giese, "Legal Regulation on Hunting in the Barbarian Law Codes of the Early Middle Ages," in *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and Continental Influences*, eds. Oliver Grimm und Ulrich Schmölcke (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2013), p. 489.

38 Sigmund Oehrl, "Hunting in the West Norwegian Gulathing Law (*Gulapingslög/Gulapingsbók*)," in *Hunting in Northern Europe until 1500 AD: Old Traditions and Regional Developments, Continental Sources and Continental Influences*, eds. Oliver Grimm und Ulrich Schmölcke (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2013), p. 510.

39 The Alasha Banner hunting law stated that if someone shot an arrow that wounded

The Military Hunt during the Qing Dynasty

The practice of the encircling hunt has been widely confirmed throughout Qing Mongolia (1635–1911). In Khalkha, a judicial document from 1806 describes the local practice of encircling hunting. The encircling hunt in this case was held in the northern part of Khalkha, in a banner governed by Namjildorji, a ruling prince with the imperial title of *beyise*.⁽⁴⁰⁾ South of Khalkha, the event was also witnessed in the Ordos region. In 1696, the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing dynasty, when he was on an expedition to suppress the Junghar federation of western Mongols and was camping within the Ordos territory, wrote to his son in Beijing, “[The Mongols of Ordos are] familiar with the encircling hunt (*weilie* 围猎) and there are plenty of pheasants and rabbits.”⁽⁴¹⁾ The encircling hunt also took place in other contemporary Inner Mongolian territories—the Alasha, Kharachin, and Khorchin regions.

However, the characteristics and practice of the encircling hunt differed among the various banners in Qing Mongolia. It is possible to explain this phenomenon, without the usual reference to culture, which is, as Hugh Hecló puts it, “often used as an escape hatch to explain anything and everything.”⁽⁴²⁾ Put simply, it occurred because there was no unified law on the encircling hunt for

someone else during the hunt, he was to be punished heavily according to military law (*čerig-ün qauli*). See, *Egüride qauli bolʻan toʻtayaʻad dayaʻju yabuʻulqu-yin dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-7-(22), Alasha Left Banner Archives.

40 Monumenta Historica Instituti Historae Academiae Scientiarum Reipublicae Populi Mongoli, comp., *Ardyn zargyn bichig*, Tomus IV (1968), pp. 20–21.

41 *Qingdai waifan Menggu huibu wanggong biao zhuan* 钦定外藩蒙古回部王公表傳, in *Qingdai Menggu shiliao heji* 清代蒙古史料合輯, comp. Zhongguo gonggong tushu guan guji wenxian zhenben huikan/shibu 中国公共图书馆古籍文献珍本汇刊·史部, 7 vols. (Beijing: Quanguo tushu guan wenxian suwei fuzhi zhongxin, 2003), v. 4, j. 43, no. 27 (傳第二十七), p. 425.

42 Hecló, *On Thinking Institutionally*, p. 32.

the whole Mongolian territory during the Qing period. In time the Mongolian princes enacted laws to regulate encircling hunts within their own principalities, like the above-noted Alasha Banner hunting law, but the Qing emperors failed to formulate a specific law for the Mongols on the encircling hunt.⁽⁴³⁾ According to the Qing law, participating in the Qing royal hunt at Mulan was a mandatory duty for high-ranking Mongolian nobles,⁽⁴⁴⁾ but organizing an encircling hunt in their own homeland was a matter determined by the Mongols themselves.

Nevertheless, there is no clear evidence from the Qing period of an encircling hunt being held regularly on the great scale of a league, the administrative unit that had jurisdiction over several to ten odd banners. Although Hu Pu'an 胡樸安 does note that there were encircling hunts at the level of a whole league or on the scale of over two banners within a league,⁽⁴⁵⁾ this kind of large-scale encircling hunt, if it was the case, is thought to have been very rare and irregular in Qing era Mongolia. By contrast, it is probably true that the *jasag*-organized regular encircling hunts held in Mongolia during the Qing period took place over areas the size of a banner, an exclusive and autonomous territory ruled by an indigenous *jasag*, who had no authority to hunt within the lands of other banners. It can be observed that just as administrative and socio-political structures differed somewhat from banner to banner,⁽⁴⁶⁾ owing to the autonomous

43 This fact can easily be shown by comparing the provisions of Mongol laws, such as the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan, the Oirad Legal Code, or the Khalkha Jirum, with the Qing law, the Mongolian Legal Code.

44 For example, see Lifanyuan Zeli 理藩院則例 (Chinese version of 1890), in *Qinding Lifanbu zeli* 欽定理藩部則例, eds. Shanghai daxue faxueyuan 上海大學法學院 et al. (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1998), j. 20, 21, 22.

45 Hu Pu'an 胡樸安, ed., *Zhonghua quanguo fengsu zhi* 中華全國風俗志, 4 parts in 2 vols. (Taipei: Qixin shuju, 1968), v. 2 (下), j. 9, p. 42.

46 For details see Khohchahar Erdenchuluu, "The Study of Mongolian Legal History: New Approaches Based on Local Documents," in *Cultural Heritage of the Mongols: Manuscript and Archival Collections in St. Petersburg and Ulaanbaatar*, eds. Russian Academy of Sciences and Mongolian Academy of Sciences (2014), pp. 40–53.

nature of the individual banners, so did the encircling hunts also show different characteristics among banners.

One available case for studying the military encircling hunt in Qing Mongolia is the Kharachin Right Banner hunt. In his work *Menggu jiuwen* 蒙古紀聞 (*Records of Experiences in Mongolia*), completed in 1918, Wang Guojun 王国钧, a former government official of the Kharachin Right Banner, notes: “In each banner [Kharachin Right, Middle, and Left], the banner chief (jasag) assembled the people to hold encircling hunts (*xingwei cailie* 行围采猎) in the beginning of spring and in the end of autumn every year This custom remains, but only in the Kharachin Prince’s Banner (Kharachin Right Banner) as the tiger hunting event.”⁽⁴⁷⁾ As this account shows, the official encircling hunt of the Kharachin region was a jasag-led official banner event that was discontinued by at least the 1910s, with the exception of the tiger hunt. However, as we will see, it does not mean that the encircling hunt itself disappeared after these years. Rather, it had changed from a military maneuver to as civil campaign.

In regard to the military hunt in the Kharachin region, a Mongolian archival document from the Kharachin Right Banner, which records that the jasag had issued a direction to the people in his banner to stage an encircling hunt in 1763, provides significant information. The entire document reads:

Decree of the Prince (jasag): To all those within the banner. I am going to depart on the first day of the first month of winter (October) to attend an assembly (*qural*). On the way, I am going to undertake hunts (*aba*) at the hunting grounds of Dörben-nutuy. For learning and practicing martial arts, a hunt is an extremely important event. But people participating in the hunt usually hold clubs (*bilayu*) but no other weapons such as bows and arrows. This situation is utterly unsuitable for the hunt. Therefore, from now on, whenever the hunt is held, all of the lieutenant colonels (*jalan janggi*), captains (*sumun janggi*), lieutenants (*orolan kögegči*), and corporals (*bošoγo*),

47 Wang Guojun, *Menggu jiuwen*, p. 56.

who have jurisdiction over [each *sumu* (corps)], must force the sons and younger brothers of the officials and ranked persons (*jingseted*) to participate in the hunt on every occasion. [All of these officials] must seriously instruct the sons and younger brothers of the officers and ranked persons as well as the soldiers to bring all their weapons, such as bows and arrows, and dispatch them [to the hunt] after having their weapons inspected. When a hunt is held, the ranked people, officials of the hunt [listed above], and the soldiers should not bring only clubs or sticks. If [someone] disobeys this order and has no bows or arrows and brings only clubs, the captain, lieutenants, and others who have jurisdiction over the offenders will be punished along with the offenders, after the offences were discovered in an investigation or through accusation by other people. Establish this [rule] as a permanent law (*čaγaǰa*). Meanwhile, in regard to the date of the hunt, I will issue another direction. For this reason, I issued an earlier decree.⁽⁴⁸⁾

As stated in this 1763 *jasag* direction, an encircling hunt was not only a manly outdoor hunting activity but also an organized military maneuver in which men were encouraged to practice the martial arts. For this reason, this 1763 law was established to compel men, especially young people, to participate in the encircling hunt and to order the hunters to arm themselves with not only clubs or sticks, but also bow and arrows for the event. This decree has a similar aim to an order given by a Manchu leader, Hong Taiji, to his followers in 1632, where he compelled the “sons of princes (貝勒), ministers, and officials to join the encircling hunt to learn the skills of shooting from horseback.”⁽⁴⁹⁾ Similarly, in

48 *Engke amuyulang-un 28 on-u ǰakiya dangsa* [ca. 1763]; MS no. 502-1-10, pp. 39b–40a, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Archives, Hohhot, Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China.

49 *Manwen laodang* 滿文老檔, trans. and anno. Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'anguan and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan lishi yanjiusuo, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), v. 2, p. 1346.

the Qing Alasha Banner, the encircling hunt was viewed by the *jasag* as “an important campaign that serves the function of accustoming [the men] to military manners.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ Like the Manchu sovereign and the ruler of the Alasha Banner, the *jasag* of the Kharachin Right Banner obviously had a strong awareness of the military implications of the encircling hunt at the time.

It is also evident from the above document that the majority of hunters in an encircling hunt were either soldiers, the *sumu* officers, those ranked men who were not officers but the holders of privileged titles from the *jasag*, as well as their sons and younger brothers. The soldiers in an encircling hunt in the Kharachin Right Banner seem to have been organized into units for each *sumu*, which numbered 43 (or 44) in total and were commanded by the so-called “officers of the encircling hunt” (*aba-yin qafančud*; the captains, lieutenants, and corporals), in addition to the lieutenant colonels, each of whom supervised several *sumu*. The formation of the encircling hunt was military in nature.

Other important characteristics and roles of the Kharachin encircling hunt can also be observed from the document. First, the hunt was an official banner event that involved all men—and to some extent their families—within the banner, except for possible private subjects of regular nobles. Second, there seemingly had existed several hunting preserves in the banner at the time and one of them, which was said to be used in the 1763 hunt, was called the Dörben-nutuy. Finally, the hunt was an event for training the young elites as not only qualified soldiers but also experienced commanders. As also seen in the Manchu Emperor’s decree cited above, the sons and brothers—the possible successors—of the officials and ranked people in the Kharachin Right Banner were forced to join the hunt. By incorporating the elite youths into the hunting maneuvers, the *jasag* could forge strong bonds with them and train them as the future commanders in both the banner office and hunting field. In this regard, as also seen in the case of the Alasha Banner hunting campaign,⁽⁵¹⁾ a hunt in the

50 *ĵakiya-yin tobči dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-57, Alasha Left Banner Archives.

51 For example, the Alasha Banner *jasag* stated that “it is enormously useful for the

Kharachin Right Banner at that time served not only as a military unit training but also a youth educating program.

Nevertheless, this law clearly reflects the *jasag's* current sense of crisis that the young men—the future military men for the Qing from the Kharachin Right Banner—had become less familiar with weapons such as bows and arrows, and that hunters in general had become less serious and tended to be negligent as they utilized only basic clubs or sticks during the hunt at that time. These facts further demonstrate that by the 1760s the military hunt in the Kharachin Right Banner had already moved into a period of decline.

The decline of the military hunt was not only a local trend appearing in the territory of this banner, but also a Qing central crisis which occurred on the neighboring royal hunting ground of Mulan. It is said that under the Qianlong reign (1736–1795) “the [royal] hunt at this time appears to take on the contours of what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger have famously called ‘invented tradition,’ the result of ‘a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition.’”⁽⁵²⁾ Both Kharachin and Qing hunts at the time had already become more perfunctory events compared to their early practices.

The coincidental declines of the military encircling hunt in both the Kharachin Right Banner and Mulan were demonstratively interrelated. Indeed, the Kharachin hunters were, in reality, closely connected to the Qing imperial hunts at Mulan where the Kharachin men performed not only the role of hunters, but also important and logistic functions as spearmen or guides. Moreover, the Kharachin princes, like other Mongolian leaders, met and hunted with the Qing emperors at Mulan.⁽⁵³⁾ The decline of both hunts was probably caused by a

young soldiers from the eight corps (*sumu*) of our banner to learn how to shoot such weapons as guns and arrows [through a hunt].” See *ĵakiya-yin tobċi dangsa* [1821]; MS no. 101-5-57, Alasha Left Banner Archives.

52 Elliott and Chia, “The Qing Hunt at Mulan,” p. 80.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

relatively long period of peace on the northeast—unlike the western—frontier of the Qing dynasty at that time. As the Qing royal hunt was discontinued from beginning of the reign of the Daoguang emperor (r. 1821–1850),⁽⁵⁴⁾ the Kharachin military hunt seems to have disappeared soon after that in the late Qing period. However, the Kharachin encircling hunt survived among civilians.

The Civilian Encircling Hunt

The Civil Practice of the Kharachin Encircling Hunt

Compared to the mid-Qing period, the Kharachin encircling hunt in late-Qing had changed its structure from *sumu*, the military formation, to *nutug*, a territory-based civil unit, and accordingly from its main orientation to military preparation to simply harvesting game and entertainment. From the late-Qing period on through the era of Republican China, the *nutug*, a Mongolian word meaning “livelihood area,” or “homeland,” became the local administrative division in many banners of Inner Mongolia, including the Kharachin banners. In this period, in turn, the *sumu* organization within the banners became less influential in the banner administration. The encircling hunts in this period were not organized by the banner government, but by civilians. In short, the institutional change that occurred regarding the encircling hunt was a transition from being a military to a civil hunting institution.

Of the encircling hunts under the *nutug* system in the Kharachin region, Lubsangčoyidan gives a brief description in his late 1910s work *Mongγol-un ʒang ayali-yin oyilaburi* (*Encyclopedia of Mongolian Customs*).⁽⁵⁵⁾ According to Lubsangčoyidan, the hunters of encircling hunts in this time were organized into several units, each of which was composed of people from the same *nutug*. At the

54 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

55 Lubsangčoyidan, *Mongol-un ʒang ayali-yin oyilaburi*, anno. Qa. Danbijalsan (Hohhot: Öbör Mongγol-un arad-un keblel-ün qoriya, 1981), pp. 262–66.

start of an encircling hunt, all the hunters from different *nutug*, mounted on the horse, but did not assemble at one spot as in the military hunt. Instead, they marched toward the designated battue site from the various *nutug* where they lived.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The number of hunters in each *nutug* unit had varied and each unit was at first independently organized but then gradually moved to become closer to each other and eventually created a complete hunting circle. Such a marching style is clearly contrastive to that of the Kharachin military hunting practice, which was largely reflected in a decree of the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661–1722) who stated that “the squads of hunters have to be organized on military principles, not according to convenience on the march or family preference.”⁽⁵⁷⁾

The hunting dates were decided by the people together. During the encircling hunt they hunted pheasants, rabbits, antelopes, and foxes, etc.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Although it is unclear how many game were killed during a hunt, it is recorded that not every hunter had been successful in killing game for meat at the hunting event.⁽⁵⁹⁾ This fact suggests that killing animals at the hunt was a competitive enterprise between hunters and that this required the event to be well organized and regulated.

In a *nutug* unit in the encircling hunt, there were commanders such as a hunting head (*aba-yin daruγa*), four adjutants (*bošoγo*), as well as many fire-heads (*γal-un aqa*), or leaders of the smallest camping groups. Among them, the hunting heads seem to have played the most important role in the events. A hunting head managed and commanded the entire process and supervised the whole event and its order. He oversaw the hunters coming from each direction so that they did not disturb the order by staying behind or going ahead, and prevent the animals from escaping, or the killing of beasts before the start of the battue.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 262–64.

57 Jonathan D. Spence trans., *Emperor of China: Self-portrait of K'ang-hsi* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p. 13.

58 Wang Guojun, *Menggu jiuwen*, p. 56.

59 Lubsangcöyidan, *Mongol-un ĵang aγali-yin oyilaburi*, p. 267.

He oversaw and judged those who succeeded in killing game, and those who wounded or killed others by mistake, as well as those who were shot through their own negligence in the hunt. Before the encircling hunt, the hunting head inspected the battue sites and confirmed the marching routes, and then sent a message to all hunters on how to march forward and hunt in the circle, as well as instructing them in the starting and ending times of the hunt. The adjutants served as messenger functionaries in communicating the instructions of the hunting head to the fire-heads. A fire-head commanded his own group of hunters. Following the completion of an encircling hunt, the adjutants and fire-heads had to make a general report to the hunting head, including information on who killed the animals and who was a skillful hunter.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Although the organizational orders and command positions of the hunting unit of *nutug* differed from that of the previous military unit, the *sumu*, both hunting organizations performed similar functions: they were both the local administrative units of the banner, although they functioned in different periods; the *nutug* hunting commanders (hunting head and adjutant as well as fire-head) corresponded to those at the *sumu* unit level (captain, lieutenant colonel, and ten-household-head). These structural similarities suggest that the civilian *nutug* hunting formation maintained similarly effective operations as the military hunt. Furthermore, this three-layer commanding structure of the hunt itself is not complicated and seems to have constituted an effective chain of command.

In the case of disputes over the ownership of killed animals, according to Lubsangčoyidan, the chief of the encircling hunt decided in advance that he would claim these animals even though he did not hunt them himself. If he did not claim them, the carcasses went to the hunters who killed them. A unique method to determine disputed ownership of killed animals appears in the following passage:

If there was any dispute between two hunters over who had killed an animal

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 262–66.

by throwing [a club] or shooting [arrows], they were instructed to throw their weapon at the carcass of the animal three times, from a distance measured by the length of one arrow, times the hunter's age.⁽⁶¹⁾ If neither of the competing hunters could not hit the carcass with their implements three times, the chief of the encircling hunt commanded that the killed game be given to a poor third man. If a hunter argued over the ownership of a killed animal deceptively, then that hunter would be punished by flogging with a fixed number of lashes in accordance with the law of the encircling hunt (*aba-yin čaγaγa*).⁽⁶²⁾

Three things in the above quotation require further explanation. First, the “chief of the encircling hunt” (*aba-yin noyan*) acts as the *jasag* or another powerful nobleman or similar personage. Second, presenting the disputed game to a poor third person during the hunt was a kind of Mongolian welfare tradition that originated in the Mongol empire, where the soldiers paid booty contributions to their commanders for the maintenance of poor or disabled troopers.⁽⁶³⁾ Finally, regarding the “law of encircling hunt,” despite not mentioning “military law” in the passage, the “law of encircling hunt” is seemingly, in its contents, a legacy of the “military law” applied to criminal cases and human error during a hunting or war campaign, as appears in the previously cited passage of the *Beilu fengsu* and in the case of the Alasha Banner military hunt.

To sum up, the Kharachin encircling hunt experienced an institutional change from a military formation to a civil organization, presumably in the late Qing period. In addition to the structural evolution, the organizer, the purpose of the event, the commanding institutions, the way in which the meat of the game was divided, the operating process, and the decision-making and dispute-

61 For example, if the hunter is forty-years-old, the distance set for him is equivalent to the length of forty arrows.

62 Lubsangčoyidan, *Mongol-un ʒang aγali-yin oyilaburi*, p. 266.

63 Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 80.

resolution system at the hunt changed. Exactly when this change occurred is uncertain, for it seems that it was neither a clear-cut formal change, nor a one-day event. The facts revealed in the 1763 law of the Kharachin Right Banner indicate a gradual endogenous changing process of the encircling hunt, caused possibly by the exogenous factors of the Qing dynasty at the time. Such an institutional evolution of the Kharachin encircling hunt reminds us of the “gradual institutional change” theory, proposed by James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, which emphasizes the interaction of political context and the properties of institutions themselves when explaining institutional change (the Qing-Mongolia context and the societal nature of the encircling hunt institution).⁽⁶⁴⁾

The Khorchin Encircling Hunts

Another case of civil-oriented hunts in southeastern Inner Mongolia in a later period is the Khorchin hunts. This is known from a narrative story, primarily written in the Mongolian script by jamsarengjab, who had participated in the encircling hunts in the Left Middle Banner of Khorchin.⁽⁶⁵⁾ According to this account, the encircling hunt was held between September and March every year, on the logistical scale of one or several *nutugs*, and was continued up until the 1970s. The larger-scale encircling hunt in this banner was referred to as the “Hauling Hunt” (*tatayan aba*), a name possibly derived from the earlier encircling hunts utilizing the rope-circle. When the encircling hunt took place, unlike the

64 James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, “A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change,” in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, eds. J. Mahoney and K. Thelen (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 1–37.

65 He was initially requested by Japanese scholar Hasumi Haruo 蓮見治雄 to write down what he knew about the encircling hunts held in his homeland, Khorchin. Hasumi Haruo has published this story with a transcription and a literal Japanese translation. For whole text, see Hasumi Haruo, “Mongoru ni okeru makigari no ichi shiryō” モンゴルに於ける巻狩の一資料, *Yūboku shakaishi kenkyū* 遊牧社会史研究 50 (1977): 2–7.

Kharachin practice, people first gathered at one spot and then fanned out to create a circle for the hunt. The circle consisted of both local horsemen (*čoboyā*) and men on foot (*olan daruqu*). The basic units in an encircling hunt were the groups, each of which was from a different village.

Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the hunt was led by local nobles. Thereafter, it was held under the auspices of the people's council. There was a hunting head (*aba-yin daruγa*) both before and after 1949. The hunting head was selected from the ranks of honorable older men in the banner, especially after 1949. This was not a permanent post—the hunting head could be changed every year. *ĵamsarengĵab* unfortunately does not address exactly how an encircling hunt was held during the Maoist era. However, I assume that the encircling hunt in this banner during the Maoist period had not yet become a revolutionary activity driven by a new ideology of against nature in the Maoist China.⁽⁶⁶⁾

In keeping wild animals on the hunting ground, the hunters who marched in the circle were not permitted to shout so as not to surprise and cause the wild animals to escape. Anyone who broke this rule would be fined. They were also not allowed to let the animals escape from within the circle. Before 1949, if the hunters allowed tigers or wolves to escape, they were obliged to kill and offer their carcasses to the nobles after the event. If they failed to kill the escaped tigers and wolves, they would be fined. If lesser animals such as antelopes, hornless river deer, rabbits, or pheasants escaped, the hunters would only be rebuked for their mistake. There were also rules against killing swans, taking eggs from wild birds, and hunting the young of animals such as foxes and rabbits, but not those of wolves.⁽⁶⁷⁾

66 My assumption is based on the facts that the system of selecting an honorable old man to be the hunting head, participation from local Mongolians, and the rules protecting young animals. For more details, see Hasumi Haruo, "Mongoru ni okeru makigari no ichi shiryō," pp. 4–7.

67 Hasumi Haruo, "Mongoru ni okeru makigari no ichi shiryō," p. 7.

As to the ownership of killed beasts, if these were tigers, wolves, leopards, antelopes, hornless river deer, or foxes, they belonged to the nobles, whereas other animals such as rabbits and pheasants were given to the hunters who killed them. In the encircling hunts held after 1949, animals killed by a dog belonged to the keeper of the dog, but if the dog caught an animal before the start of the hunt, the hunter closest to the animal received it.

There are a few other accounts of the Khorchin encircling hunts. Bai Delin 白德林 gives a short description where a single village or several villages jointly held an encircling hunt, and its circle reached a circumference of 15 to 20 kilometers. Whenever the hunting head (*aba-yin da*) was unable to mediate disputes over the ownership of a killed animal, as in the Kharachin case, the parties threw their clubs towards the carcass from a certain distance. This practice was carried out under the mediation and supervision of an old man or a child who could claim the disputed animals if neither party was successful in the competition.⁽⁶⁸⁾ As Xing Li 邢莉 notes, in the Khorchin region, the catches from an encircling hunt belonged to the hunter who killed them, whereas in the neighboring Juu-Uda region, the person who first touched the carcasses, regardless of whether he killed the animals or not, gained them.⁽⁶⁹⁾ These evidences demonstrate the regional variations of the encircling hunt within the areas of southeastern Inner Mongolia.

The Encircling Hunt as Socio-Political Practice

The Qing royal hunt at Mulan involved into an “invented tradition” in the mid-Qing period. However, such characteristics of the encircling hunt as “invented tradition” have probably never appeared in Mongolian society. For the

68 Bai Delin 白德林, “Mengguzu shoulie wenhua kaoshu” 蒙古族狩猎文化考述, *Nei Menggu minzu daxue xuebao* 内蒙古民族大学学报 32.1 (2006): 31.

69 Xing Li 邢莉, “Mengguzu de shoulie” 蒙古族的狩猎, *Nei Menggu minzu shifan xueyuan xuebao* 内蒙古民族师范学院学报 62 (1995): 9.

Mongols, the encircling hunt was, rather, a socio-institutional practice. It did not end because of the collapse of the traditional socio-military polity in 1949. Rather, as the Khorchin case has clearly shown, it survived afterwards in civil organizations, which does not fit the definition of “invented tradition” at all. After the rumoured disappearance of the encircling hunting tradition in Inner Mongolia in the late twentieth century, no encircling hunt was created and practiced specifically to build Mongol identity or for being “Mongols.” It might be even said that, throughout its history, the encircling hunt—more broadly hunting itself—had been an essential component of the life and culture of traditional Mongolia.⁽⁷⁰⁾

As a social institution, however, the encircling hunt displayed regional variations, tended to differ in terms of (a) the terminology of the event itself (*yeke aba* in Alasha, *tatayan aba* in Khorchin, and *qomorγan* or *küriye aba* in other regions); (b) official titles of commanders of the hunters; (c) the composition of the circle (only horsemen or horsemen with men on foot); (d) the weapons used during the event; (e) the manner of hunting animals and judging or settling cases, as well as (f) the end of the hunt. The scale of the encircling hunt, both the number of hunters and the size of the circumference, seems also to have varied between the different regions. Moreover, even in a single region, the scale and the conformation of a circle in an encircling hunt was not always the same for it sometimes only amounted to a half circle. In the Alasha Banner, for instance, the hunters at an encircling hunt sometimes only created a half circle placed against the side of a mountain.⁽⁷¹⁾

As case studies have indicated, the encircling hunts were strongly linked to Mongolian society. The regular encircling hunt as a whole was neither the preserve of a group of professional hunters who specialized exclusively in the

70 To understand how the hunt is reflected in the Mongolian oral and literary culture, see Očingerel, “Dagedü Mongγol-un aba görögen-ü jang üile ba tegün-ü suyl-un üne čene,” *Barayun Mongγol sudulal* 75 (2010): 113–18.

71 Interview with Töbjiryäl from the Alasha banner in 2006.

encircling hunt, nor the prerogative of certain elites. Rather, normal men were mobilized from their societies for each encircling hunting event, much like the practice of calling up laymen in time of war. The social members performed hunters at both military and civil hunting events. In this regard, it can be said that the encircling hunts played a fundamental role in linking the local elites with common people, and integrating these classes as a hunting group. Just as “the army was society” in Mongolia, as noted by Joseph Fletcher,⁽⁷²⁾ the encircling hunting organization was also an essential reflection of Mongolian society.

Apart from mobilizing the regular social member, the societal nature of the encircling hunt institution also appeared in the other organizational principles of the hunting event. There were no special organizing rules set up exclusively for grouping the hunters in a regular encircling hunt. As shown, the basic organization of the hunters during the encircling hunt was not unique, but was, in fact, based on existing military or territorial community units (*sumu*, *nutug*, or village) at different times. Furthermore, as an Alasha Banner judicial case demonstrates, the judicial institutions applied to encircling hunts were seemingly indistinguishable from those used in the courts.⁽⁷³⁾ Moreover, the encircling hunts used the existing so-called “military law” to judge the incidents that occurred during the events. All these social characteristics of the encircling hunt demonstrate the pragmatic nature of the Mongolian hunting organization, which was largely based on existing social organizations and institutions and therefore ensured the encircling hunt institution survived through different political regimes.

The structure of the encircling hunting formation also reveals social structure, political order, and social hierarchy, especially under the traditional pre-1949 regime. For instance, in an encircling hunt, the holder of supreme

72 Joseph Fletcher, “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspective,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46.1 (1986): 23.

73 *Egüride qauli bolʻyan toytaʻayad dayaʻu yabuyulqu-yin dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-52-(21), Alasha Left Banner Archives.

power was positioned at the center, the most privileged position. Thus, the right of one individual to march in the center of an encircling hunt or troop was a special privilege bestowed by the ruler, which represented the marcher's high status. In his *Erdeni-yin Tobči (Precious Summary)*, a seventeenth-century Mongolian historical chronicle, for example, Sagang Sečen notes that, in recognition of his political merit, his chieftain granted him the privilege of "positioning in the vanguard during the expedition of the troops; marching at the center when the grand hunt is held."⁽⁷⁴⁾ Similarly, during an encircling hunt held in the Alasha Banner, the dukes and other high-ranking officials from the central banner government (*tamaya-yin yamun*) had been favourably positioned, probably in a hierarchical order, in the center, together with the *jasag*.⁽⁷⁵⁾

Leading each of the two flanks of the center at the hunt was also a prestigious activity that showed the leader's high status. As demonstrated earlier in the case of the 1224 hunt led by Chinggis Khan, the leaders of the right and left wings of the hunt were considered to have been high-ranking officers. Bābur states that in the early sixteenth-century Mughal encircling hunt, "the most reliable men go to the extreme points of the right and left [flank]." Once, as he observed, two leaders disputed over taking the top point of the right flank at the hunt, and the matter was settled by giving one leader the prestigious position at the hunt and the other at war.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Other evidence of political order and privilege in the encircling hunt shows the use of the guard class. The guards enjoyed special privileges in the Alasha Banner hunts, for example: they played a commanding role at the grand hunt

74 Yang Haiying 杨海英, comp., *Mōko genryū* 蒙古源流 (Tokyo: Fūkyōsha, 2007), p. 192. The original wordings read: "*qosiyu-bar yeke ayan-dur emüne, yeke aba-da töb-tür yabuqu*".

75 *Egüride qauli bolyan toytaγayad daγaγu yabuγulqu-yin dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-7-(22), Alasha Left Banner Archives.

76 Bābur, *The Bābur-nāma in English*, p. 155.

even though they were not official military officers.⁽⁷⁷⁾ Placing the guards at privileged positions in the hunts was not an institutional innovation by the Alasha Banner. Rather, it was a reflection of the legacy of the Mongol empire where Chinggis Khan had first created an imperial guard (*kesig*) system. According to David Morgan, during the early stage of the Mongol empire, any “trooper in the imperial guard took precedence, if necessary, even over a commander of a thousand in the army proper.”⁽⁷⁸⁾ Membership in the imperial or local (banner) guard was viewed as an elevated and honorable status, not only in the hunt but also for other societal or political events.

Moreover, organizing an encircling hunt was the prerogative of a *jasag* and probably also of powerful noblemen in Qing Mongolia.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Apart from the monopoly on holding an encircling hunt, the *jasag* and other nobles also enjoyed privileges in the ownership of killed animals. In the Khorchin region, as mentioned, large animals such as wolves, tigers, antelopes, snow-leopards, roe deer, and foxes were killed at an encircling hunt and claimed by nobles, whereas small beasts such as rabbits and pheasants belonged to the hunters who killed them. This rule was similar to that in traditional hunts in Germany, where the beasts were divided into large and small (sometimes with a middle rank between them) and the nobles enjoyed the ownership of killed animals from the former category, even though a commoner had hunted the animals during a private hunting activity.⁽⁸⁰⁾ In the case of the Alasha Banner, the *jasag* enjoyed a monopoly on the right to hunt a deer and to possess its meat.⁽⁸¹⁾ Moreover, like

77 *Egüride qauli bolʻyan toytaʻayad daʻajū yabuʻulqu-yin dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-7-(22), Alasha Left Banner Archives.

78 Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 80.

79 Regarding the case of noblemen, it is hard to assume that a nobleman could hunt over whole territory of the banner he belonged to. Rather, he was limited to his homeland, the *nutug*. Detailed exploration is needed.

80 See Koyanagi Taiji 小柳泰治, *Waga kuni no shuryō hōsei: sasshō kindan to ranba* わが国の狩猟法制——殺生禁断と乱場 (Tokyo: Seirin shoin, 2015), p. 20.

81 See Purujebarisukii (Przhevalsky) プルジェプリスキー, “Arashan” アラシャン,

the great Qing hunting ground at Mulan, or the deer reservation mountain in the Alasha Banner, there were game preserves and natural reserves in some banners, which also regulated and monopolized the hunting resources.

Several ritualistic hunting performances suggest the functioning of a political structure during the hunt. At the early Mongol hunts, as David Morgan notes, the slaughter started after the Khan shot the first arrow against the game.⁽⁸²⁾ The Khan maintained his supreme position even during the slaughter of game. For example, 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini gives a detailed description on how the Ögedei Khan (r. 1229–1241) had performed during a grand hunt: “in order to view the scene, [he] had seated himself upon a hilltop; whereupon beasts of every kind set their faces towards his throne and from the foot of the hill set up a wailing and lamentation like that of petitioners for justice. Qa'an commanded that they should be set free and the hand of injury withheld from them.”⁽⁸³⁾ It is also believed that certain similar ritualistic activities were performed by the *jasags* at the Qing period Mongolian hunts.

The encircling hunt could in turn contribute to rearranging social status. As evidenced by the words of the Jin emperor Shizong (r. 1161–1189) that the chase was “to exhibit and practice the [art] of war,”⁽⁸⁴⁾ an encircling hunt could provide an opportunity for a man to change his honorary status. He could enjoy the honor bestowed upon him if he hunted well or suffer the reverse fate if he hunted poorly. In the Alasha Banner, the hunter who killed an antelope or a wolf in an encircling hunt by shooting an arrow was rewarded.⁽⁸⁵⁾ In the Kharachin region, the hunters were judged and awarded titles in accordance with their hunting

trans. Tanaka Kazuto 田中一呂, *Zenrin kyōkai chōsa geppō* 78 (1938): 43–44.

82 Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 75.

83 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, *History of the World Conqueror*, 2 vols., trans. John Andrew Boyle (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958), v. 1, p. 29.

84 *Jin shi* 金史, 135 *juan* in 8 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), v. 1, j. 6, pp. 141–42.

85 *Egüride qauli bolʻyan toytaʻayad dayaʻu yabuʻyulqu-yin dangsa* [ca. 1821]; MS no. 101-5-7-(22), Alasha Left Banner Archives.

skill. One of the titles given to the best hunters was “*mergen*,” a traditional Mongolian title meaning “skillful in hunting.” By contrast, the term “*γar kündü*” or “heavy handed” was used to identify a hunter who killed an animal in an overly aggressive manner—which meant the hunter was less capable in controlling his power and therefore regarded as less skillful and less accomplished—during the encircling hunt.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Far worse than the label “heavy handed” was “thief” (*qulaγai*), the pejorative term that would be applied to a crime of theft during an encircling hunt. In such ways, an encircling hunt could rearrange one’s honorary status.

It should be mentioned that the encircling hunt also seems to have contributed significantly to the maintenance of social order. Max Weber points out that the impact of military discipline “has had even greater effects upon the political and social order” than the conduct of war.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Similarly, the enforcement of group order and individual discipline at the hunting campaign was believed to have important effects in strengthening and inducing a sense of orderly community and disciplined private life in the minds of the hunters who regularly joined the encircling hunt. The hunt taught the youth collective order and discipline in manner, while it also carried out a social renewal and confirmation of unit order for the others. Undoubtedly, the hunting order planted into the mind of the individual hunters a sense of respecting community order, self-control, and the orderly way of personal as well as family life.

Furthermore, certain crimes such as theft, or disputes over the ownership of killed game during an encircling hunt were punished or judged openly. The amount of compensation for a wound or death of a hunter through another’s mistake was declared publically. These public punishments and judgments had broader “performance effectiveness” than those in a court room which were far less open to the public, and were an institutional lesson to all hunters in their social life. They also became authoritative precedents for similar incidents

86 Lubsangcöyidan, *Mongol-un ǰang ayali-yin oyilaburi*, pp. 264, 266.

87 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds., G. Roth and C. Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1968), v. 2, p. 1152.

outside the hunt, such as at a dispute over ownership of game by an individual hunting when others were involved. By spreading and stabilizing the mainstream legal order established by a ruler or a banner court in society, the encircling hunting events served to reinforce both political dominance and general social control.

Conclusion

The *aba*, or the encircling hunt, was a typical form of collective hunting practice in Mongolia. It experienced an institutional change from a military formation to a civil organization. As one of the important forms of collective activity in nomadic Mongolian history, the encircling hunt was more than a practice of killing wild animals—it was an institution with broad socio-political implications. Its institutional structures represented and interrelated with the socio-political structures and order of Mongolian society itself, and its institutional evolution reflects the change of the traditional civil-military polity of Mongolian society. As a social institution, the encircling hunt facilitates a ruling strategy, social training, and the rearrangement and maintenance of social order.

This paper offers insights into the general issue of why there was an encircling hunt institution and practice among the Mongols as well as other nomadic peoples. It is possible that either the military or civil hunt is nothing other than the demonstration of a way of survival in central Eurasian steppe. In other words, both physical and economic survival required organized social collaborations due to the steppe environment and pastoral nomadism. Put simply, collective operation could militarily ensure the security of society and economically benefit members. The encircling hunt can thus be seen as one of the institutionalized forms of collective activity, driven by the essential necessity and the principle of social collectivity.

Let me return to the central question, posed at the beginning of this paper: how was the encircling hunt “well-organized”? It was adopted from various existing social institutions and rules, which were included in its organizational

structures. By doing so, the encircling hunt institution succeeded in taking advantage of these existing institutions, in particular of their internal mechanisms and functions. This paper argues that the socially-grounded nature of the encircling hunt is the best indication for answering why the hunt survived throughout different political regimes and under different organizational structures. In a general sense, the organizational principle of the encircling hunt was largely practical. This finding agrees with David Morgan's view that the Mongols were "pragmatists" in regard to their way of government.⁽⁸⁸⁾

In addition to the scholarly and social significance of the encircling hunt, it is also worth emphasizing the political role of the encircling hunt, in particular the military hunts during the Qing dynasty. As discussed, for the Mongols the hunt simulated war, and the hunting and military campaigns were not separated institutionally. The practice and institution of the Mongolian encircling hunt had served in "empire-building" in both pre-Qing and Qing periods. During the Qing dynasty, the Mongols hunted to train themselves as skilled soldiers for the Qing state. And the Mongols hunted together with the Qing emperor at the imperial hunting ground of Mulan where their participation made the hunt a great event. Indeed, the Mongolian "hunters" fought constantly, even with each other, in order to build and maintain the Qing empire. Indisputably, the Mongol "hunters" not only made the Qing imperial hunt great, but also served more broadly to secure the grandeur of the Qing empire.

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88 Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 94.

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