

Paper Guide

Paper SAN4f: Ethnographic Areas: Inner Asia

2020-2021

Part IIA & IIB, Social Anthropology Human, Social, and Political Sciences Tripos

Paper Co-ordinator: Dr Thomas White (trew2@cam.ac.uk)

Supervision and supervision arrangements:

This is a seminar-taught paper and therefore no supervisions are required. However, students are encouraged to incorporate ethnographic material from this paper into their reading for essays and supervisions on their core papers. They are also encouraged to work independently to single out topics for particular reading and, later, revision – as they would for a supervised paper. Students can get in touch with the paper coordinator for advice and guidance on how to organise their independent work for this paper.

Syllabus for SAN4f:

Inner Asia is the region of the great steppes lying between Russia and China, and it includes the contemporary countries and regions of Mongolia; Buryatia, Tyva and Altai in Russia; and Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Gansu, Qinghai and Tibet in China. Politically divided and now subject to a variety of regimes (from 'communist' to 'democratic'), the region has a great deal in common in terms of culture, religion and economy, and this combination makes for interesting possibilities for comparative analysis. While the region was characterized by remoteness and peripherality for much of the twentieth century, it is now gaining a new geopolitical prominence, particularly in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Its fragile ecologies and mineral wealth have also become central to discussions surrounding anthropogenic environmental change and resource extraction.

This paper seeks to combine insights from the *longue durée* of history (e.g. comparative studies of imperial formations; the relation between the religions of the region and governmental forms; the character of 'socialism' and 'postsocialism' in this region) with exciting new anthropological research now being carried out. The latter includes studies of new forms of shamanism and healing practices; environment, land use and ideas of nature; resource extraction, infrastructure and spatial transformations; ethnic politics and religion; and shifting notions of gender and work. Inner Asia has been a region

founded economically on mobile pastoralism and courses also discuss indigenous perspectives on movement, time, and spatiality.

Mode of assessment:

One three hour written examination at the end of the year. Three questions to be answered from an undivided paper.

Intended for students reading: Part IIA and Part IIB Social Anthropology

Paper Description: This paper introduces students to some of the central issues and debates in the anthropology of Inner Asia.

Definitions:

Syllabus: the range of topics covered by the paper and on which students will be examined.

Paper description: a brief guide to the rationale behind the paper.

Paper: a set of subjects offered for examination.

Course: a programme of work directed towards a particular paper. Note that the term is used in various ways, from the teaching and learning undertaken for an entire degree ('degree course') to individual lecture and seminar series ('lecture course'). In the latter sense, papers at Cambridge are ordinarily taught through several lecture courses, as well as through supervision and personal reading. Supervision work and reading are important. The lectures detailed here will address topics that fall within the scope of the paper, but are not intended to be exhaustive. They may also include materials of more general interest.

Lecture and seminars for this paper are as follows:

Michaelmas Term

'Introduction: Rethinking empire, frontier and colony from Inner Asia': Dr T. White (1 lecture)

'Nomads and the Inside/Outside World': Prof D. Sneath (1 lecture, 1 seminar)

'China's Frontiers, Eurasian Crossroads: the Belt and Road Initiative, Xinjiang, North Asian Borders': Dr T. White and Dr S. Namsaraeva (2 lectures, 1 seminar)

'Religious Revivals in Inner Asia: Buddhism, Islam, Shamanism': Dr White, Dr Diemberger and Dr Ellis (1 lecture, 1 seminar)

Lent Term

'Religious Revivals in Inner Asia: Buddhism, Islam, Shamanism': Dr White, Dr Diemberger and Dr Ellis (2 lectures, 2 seminars)

'Kinship and Gender in Mongolia': Dr J. Ellis (1 lecture, 1 seminar)

'Health, Nature, and Soviet Legacies in Mongolia': Dr Turk (1 lecture, 1 seminar)

Please check the Social Anthropology website for updated information on dates, times and locations of all lectures and seminars
(<http://www.socanth.cam.ac.uk/current-students/timetables>)

Background reading

Billé, F. 2014. *Sinophobia: Anxiety, Violence, and the Making of Mongolian Identity*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Bulag, U. (2010) *Collaborative Nationalism: The Politics of Friendship on China's Mongolian Frontier*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield

Buyandelger, M. (2013) *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Gender, and Memory in Contemporary Mongolia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Diemberger, H. (2007). *When a Woman Becomes a Religious Dynasty: The Saming Dorje Phagmo of Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Empson, R. (2011) *Harnessing Fortune: Personhood, Memory, and Place in Mongolia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

High, M. (2017) *Fear and Fortune: Spirit Worlds and Emerging Economies in the Mongolian Gold Rush*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Humphrey, C. & D. Sneath (1999) *The End of Nomadism: Society, State and the Environment in Inner Asia* Durham: Duke University Press

Kinzley, J. (2018) *Natural Resources and the New Frontier: Constructing Modern China's Borderlands*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pedersen, M. & L Højer (2020) *Urban Hunters: Dealing and Dreaming in Times of Transition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sneath, D. (2007) *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia*, New York: Columbia UP

Thum, R. (2014) *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Yeh, E.T. (2013) *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.