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978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

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LIVING WITH HERDS

Human–Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Domestic animals have lived with humans for thousands of years and remain essential within the everyday lives of people throughout the world. In this book, Natasha Fijn examines the process of animal domestication in a study that blends biological and social anthropology, ethology, and ethnography. She examines the social behavior of humans and animals in a contemporary Mongolian herding society. While living with Mongolian herding families and their herd animals, Dr. Fijn observed both sides of the human–animal relationship. Examining their reciprocal social behavior and communication with one another, she demonstrates how herd animals influence Mongolian herders and how the animals themselves are active partners in the domestication process.

Natasha Fijn is a researcher and observational filmmaker. Her main research focus is on human–animal interaction and social engagement. She currently lectures in Visual Culture Research at the Australian National University. Natasha has a background in anthropology, zoology, and wildlife filmmaking. She has worked with the BBC, Natural History New Zealand, and Green Umbrella Productions on wildlife documentaries and is now working as an independent filmmaker.

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NATASHA FIJN

Australian National University



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CONTENTS

<i>Lists of Plates, Figures, Maps, Tables, and Online Video Segments</i>	<i>page vii</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xvii</i>

PART ONE: CROSSING BOUNDARIES

PROLOGUE: LIFE IN THE KHANGAI MOUNTAINS	3
1 INTRODUCTION	17
Part I. Redefining Domestication	18
Part II. Inner Asian Nomads	28
2 A MONGOLIAN ETHO-ETHNOGRAPHY	36

PART TWO: THE SOCIAL HERD

3 SOCIAL SPHERES	55
Part I. The Social Landscape	56
Part II. The Social Animal	64
4 NAMES, SYMBOLS, COLOURS, AND BREEDING	81
Part I. Breeding	82
Part II. Nomenclature	90
5 MULTISPECIES ENCULTURATION	104
6 TAMENESS AND CONTROL	129
Part I. Tameness	130
Part II. Control	140

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

Contents

PART THREE: LIVING WITH HERDS

7	IN THE LAND OF THE HORSE	151
	Part I. The Horse in Mongolia's Past	153
	Part II. The <i>Naadam</i>	160
8	THE CYCLE OF LIFE: BIRTH TO DEATH, SPRING TO WINTER	175
9	THE DOMESTIC AND THE WILD	201
10	THE SACRED ANIMAL	221
	CONCLUSION: CO-DOMESTIC LIVES	241
	<i>Appendix</i>	247
	<i>References</i>	251
	<i>Index</i>	271

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LISTS OF PLATES, FIGURES, MAPS, TABLES, AND ONLINE VIDEO SEGMENTS

PLATES

Spring

Plates 1–8 precede page 1.

1. Brewing spring storm.
2. Feeding milk to a lamb with an ox horn.
3. Uuganaa with her new-born calf.
4. Neighbouring herders combing cashmere from a goat.
5. Saikhanaa returning from herding.
6. Ewes and nannies nursing their young within an encampment.
7. Khorlo handling a two-year-old (*byaruu*).
8. Naraa milking a *sarlag* by hand.

Summer

Plates 9–16 precede page 53.

9. Tibetan script on carved stone.
10. Collecting firewood with oxen.
11. Three jockeys resting between races.
12. Winning horse with medals.
13. Winning stallion with jockey and trainer.
14. Wrestling at a local *Naadam*.
15. Resting while out herding.
16. Deer stone (*Bugan chuluu*) lying out on the grassland.

Autumn

Plates 17–24 precede page 129.

17. Ulaanaa (Red) ox with a water cart.
18. Training a young ox.
19. Dogsomjav setting up the autumn encampment.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

Lists of Plates, Figures, Maps, Tables, and Online Video Segments

20. Horse hitching post and washing line.
21. Sacred Övöö with stallion skulls.
22. Human out herding with horse, sheep, and goats.
23. Mongolian *sarlag* bull (*Tarlan bukh*).
24. Ochero dismounting after the day's herding.

*Winter**Plates 25–32 precede page 241.*

25. Sacred lone tree in the valley.
26. Boy amongst sheep and goats.
27. Early lamb with children.
28. Snow falling inside a *ger*.
29. Passing snuff, with the horse herd in the background.
30. Moving a sick sheep under shelter.
31. Herding sheep and goats in winter.
32. Footprints leaving a neighbouring encampment.

FIGURES

P.1 Key people related to Dogsomjav's encampment	page 6
P.2 Key people related to Choijo's encampment	12
3.1 Naraa's drawing of the Jargalant Valley	58
4.1 Genealogy of a Mongolian horse	84
4.2 Genealogy of a Mongolian cow	85
4.3 Mongolian cattle and <i>sarlag</i> hybridisation	89
4.4 Drawings of <i>tamga</i> symbols	94
5.1 Proportions of correct horse responses to herder vocalisations	116
5.2 Proportions of correct cattle responses to herder vocalisations	117
8.1 Seasonal calendar	176
8.2 Migratory movements between seasonal pastures	184
9.1 Conceptual diagram of wild–domestic spheres	203
10.1 Depiction of <i>Maliin Banzuragch</i>	222
10.2 Shaman's drawing of a <i>seter</i> animal	233

MAPS

P.1 Mongolia	2
P.2 Bulgan field site	11
P.3 Arkhangai field site	15

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Lists of Plates, Figures, Maps, Tables, and Online Video Segments* ix

TABLES

P.1 Animal numbers at the Bulgan field site	8
P.2 Animal numbers at the Arkhangai field site	14
3.1 Timeline of Mongolian horses	69
3.2 Timeline of Mongolian cattle	71
3.3 Timeline of Mongolian sheep and goats	78
4.1 Terms for male and female herd animals, based on breeding status	86
4.2 Categorisation of ages of four kinds of herd animal	96
7.1 Astrological table for racehorses	164
7.2 Race categories	167

Appendix Tables

A.1 Categorisation of horse colours in Mongolia	247
A.2 Medicinal plants for herd animals	249

ONLINE VIDEO SEGMENTS

www.cambridge.org/9781107000902

- 1 Saikhanaa the Herder
- 2 Saikhanaa and the Calves
- 3 Saikhanaa and the Horses
- 4 Moving Encampments
 1. Moving Encampments by Ox
 2. Moving with the Herd Animals
- 5 Lhagva the Herder
- 6 A Day in the Life
- 7 Medicinal Treatment
- 8 Training for *Naadam*
- 9 The *Naadam*
- 10 Vocalisation Dictionary

GLOSSARY

i. General Mongolian terms

<i>Ail</i>	one family's home
<i>Am</i>	mouth
<i>Am'd</i>	anything that lives or is animate
<i>Am'tan</i>	animal (often wild)
<i>Arat</i>	folk method of breeding livestock
<i>Arkhangai</i>	Mongolian province within the Khangai; an area of one of the field sites
<i>Baigal</i>	nature
<i>Baigal' gazar</i>	landscape or place
<i>Baigal' orchin</i>	environment
<i>Bulgan</i>	Mongolian province within the Khangai; an area of one of the field sites
<i>Deel</i>	a long garment, similar to a coat or dress
<i>Em dom</i>	magical medicinal cure; medicinal home remedy
<i>Ger</i>	home, that is, a nomadic tent, equivalent to the yurt
<i>Geriin tejeever</i>	to feed or nurture within the domestic sphere
<i>Im</i>	earmark or symbol
<i>Jakhdag</i>	a lock of hair
<i>Khadag</i>	blue, silk sash
<i>Khangai</i>	Mongolia's central mountainous region
<i>Khirigsuur</i>	ancient stone monument and grave site of Turkic origin
<i>Khot ail</i>	family encampment, domestic sphere
<i>Khusuur</i>	scraper, made from wood or pelican beak; used for scraping sweat from horses or as a brush for dislodging dirt from a horse
<i>Mal</i>	domestic animal or herd animal
<i>Malchin</i>	herder
<i>Maliin banzuragch</i>	God who protects the five kinds of animals

<i>Mal süreg</i>	to herd
<i>Morin Khuur</i>	Mongolian horse-head fiddle
<i>Naadam</i>	festival or celebration
<i>Negdel</i>	a cooperative or a communal farm during the Soviet era
<i>Otor</i>	a temporary camp where herd animals graze on better pastures
<i>Övöö</i>	sacred rock cairn on prominent mountain top
<i>Saalchin</i>	milker
<i>Seter</i>	Sacred or holy animal (Tibetan, <i>tsehtar</i>)
<i>Shilbuur</i>	elongated whip
<i>Soijakh</i>	hardening animals for winter
<i>Tamga</i>	brand or stamp on horse's hindquarters and the branding iron itself
<i>Tavan khoshuu mal</i>	the five kinds of animal
<i>Tengger</i>	the sky, the heavens, a god, the weather
<i>Tsagaan Sar</i>	White Month, or Mongolian New Year celebration
<i>Tsetserleg</i>	garden; central town in Arkhangai Province
<i>Udgan</i>	a woman shaman or healer
<i>Uurga</i>	horse lasso-pole
<i>Zud</i>	severe weather during winter
<i>Züs</i>	external features; coat colour

ii. Mongolian dairy products¹

<i>Aarts</i>	curds from sour milk, made from boiled yoghurt with a portion of milk: The curds are placed in cotton cloth and pressed between boards to remove the whey. May be stored in sheep stomach and used during the winter.
<i>Aaruul</i>	curds that are pressed, sliced, and then dried, with or without sugar added: They are dried on a board in the open air on the roof of the <i>ger</i> , or hung inside above the fireplace. Yak <i>aaruuul</i> is made into larger portions and contains a higher fat content.
<i>Airag</i>	fermented mare's milk, known as "white beer" or "koumiss": Fresh mare's milk is poured into a cowskin bag. Milk is added to an initial culture throughout the day and then churned 800–1,000 times and left to ferment overnight. <i>Airag</i> has a sweet–sour taste and fragrant smell.
<i>Byaslag</i>	cheese made from warm milk with a small portion of yoghurt: After the milk turns to curd, the mixture is placed

¹ For more detailed information regarding some of these dairy products, see Indra (2003).

Glossary

xiii

	in cotton cloth and pressed between boards to remove the whey (the cheese is not salted or aged the way many cheeses are).
<i>Eezgii</i>	yoghurt added to milk to become sour, to curdle: <i>Eezgii</i> is the residue on the bottom after boiling.
<i>Nermel</i>	distilled spirit from fermented milk: The fermented milk is placed in a wooden barrel and repeatedly heated to distil a liquor from the condensation that forms inside the barrel. The liquor has an alcohol content of approximately 10–12 percent.
<i>Öröm</i>	thick cream: Milk is heated and aerated with a ladle and left to congeal for twelve to twenty-four hours; then the cream is scooped off the top. The substance is often eaten with bread, tea, and deep-fried dough for breakfast.
<i>Shar tos</i>	“yellow oil,” or boiled butter: It is made from fermented cream that has been stored in sheep stomach or wooden tubs.
<i>Suutei tsai</i>	brick tea made with milk and salt: The mixture is poured from a height until the milk has homogenised.
<i>Tarag</i>	yoghurt: It is made from a portion of previous yoghurt culture added to warm milk, covered with cloth overnight to activate the culture. Obtained from cow, goat, and sheep milk in summer.
<i>Tsagaan tos</i>	“white oil,” derived from fermented cream: Boiled butter is mixed with <i>eezgii</i> and flour, hot tea, or water. It is often eaten with sugar.
<i>Tseghe</i>	milk-based alcoholic drink similar to <i>airag</i> but made from cow, sheep, or goat milk: Milk or water is often added to the drink to reduce sourness.
<i>Tsotgii</i>	unboiled milk made into cream: It is made from cow, sheep, and goat milk.
<i>Tsotgiin tos</i>	butter: It is made from <i>tsotgii</i> .
<i>Uurag</i>	colostrum, or rich protein milk after the birth of young: It solidifies into a creamy, jelly-like consistency, slightly sweet and similar to egg in taste.

iii. Key animal terms²

<i>Aduu</i>	Mongolian horse
<i>Argali</i>	mountain sheep

² For a dictionary of Mongolian animal husbandry terms, refer to Dorjgotov (1999).

<i>Azarga</i>	stallion, uncastrated male horse (also a horse herd, including a stallion with mares and young)
<i>Bod</i>	horses, camels, and “large cattle,” such as yak
<i>Bog</i>	sheep and goats
<i>Bukh</i>	bull, or uncastrated male horse
<i>Byaruu</i>	two-year-old cattle
<i>Daaga</i>	two-year-old horse
<i>Em khon'</i>	ewe, female sheep
<i>Em yamaa</i>	nanny, or female goat
<i>Er byaruu</i>	bullock, or young male cattle
<i>Gunj</i>	heifer, or a young cow that has not yet calved
<i>Güü</i>	mare, or female horse
<i>Ireg</i>	wether, or castrated male sheep
<i>Khainag</i>	cross-breed between a yak and a cow
<i>Khuts</i>	ram, or male sheep
<i>Mor'</i>	gelding, or castrated male horse
<i>Ortoom</i>	second-generation cross between yak and cow
<i>Sarlag</i>	yak, including both male and females
<i>Serkh</i>	wether, or castrated male goat
<i>Shar</i>	ox, or castrated male bovine (yak, yak–cow hybrid, Mongolian cattle)
<i>Takhi</i>	Asiatic wild horse – known as Przewalski's horse
<i>Temee</i>	Bactrian camel
<i>Ugjikh</i>	bottle-fed lamb or kid
<i>Ukhna</i>	buck (or billy), or a male goat
<i>Yangir</i>	mountain goat

iv. Key behavioural terms

<i>Aashtai</i>	moody, bad tempered, ill bred, momentarily angry
<i>Agsam mor'</i>	a horse with mettle, or spirited and lively
<i>Darkhlakh</i>	protector of the herd
<i>Dogshin</i>	impolite, difficult to control, perhaps violent, fearful, unbroken horse (opposite of <i>nomkhon</i>)
<i>Dölgöön</i>	calm, peaceful (<i>dölgöön aash</i> is an animal with a gentle disposition; <i>Dölgöön</i> is also a common name)
<i>Emneg</i>	untamed, similar to <i>khangal</i> (often applied to oxen)
<i>Erkh</i>	self-willed, pampered (but can also mean “tame” with animals, or “spoil” in relation to children)
<i>Khangal</i>	wild, untamed, untrained, unbroken horse
<i>Khatuu amtai</i>	hard-mouthed horse, or a horse that pulls on the reins and is unresponsive

Glossary

xv

<i>Khatuu khamtai</i>	hard-nosed ox, unresponsive to signals
<i>Khenz</i>	individual animal that is small and cute, literally meaning “late born”
<i>Khöngön khöltei</i>	easy riding horse, or an ox that is light footed and quick stepping
<i>Muu</i>	bad, not good, useless, evil (or <i>muukhai</i> when the animal butts and kicks)
<i>Nomkhon</i>	tame, quiet, calm or placid (key word to indicate a good animal; the antonym of <i>aashtai</i>)
<i>Omgolon</i>	restive, impulsive, difficult, arrogant, or haughty
<i>Oroo</i>	shy, elusive (often in relation to horses, <i>oroo dogshein</i> means spirited whereas <i>oroo khuljaa</i> means a runaway horse)
<i>Sain</i>	good, fine, kind, or nice
<i>Sergelin</i>	quick witted, alert, or astute (<i>sergelin galzuu</i> can mean “a bit crazy”)
<i>Shildeg</i>	selected, the best; used in relation to racehorses
<i>Shiruun</i>	tough, rude, rough, violent behaviour (similar to <i>omgolon</i> and <i>aashtai</i>)
<i>Shudenge mor'</i>	green, or newly broken-in horse (also referred to as <i>sain nomkhroo ügüi mor</i>)
<i>Taivan</i>	calm, gentle, peaceful (similar to <i>dölgöön</i>)
<i>Tolgoilogch</i>	leader
<i>Tsogio mor'</i>	horse that is a galloper
<i>Zalkhuu</i>	lazy, or idle
<i>Zerleg</i>	wild, or not habituated to humans (can also mean “crazy”)
<i>Zöölön amtai</i>	soft-mouthed horse, quiet when ridden (similarly referred to as <i>am zöölön surguul'tai</i> , as a manageable, or trained horse)
<i>Zöölön khamtai</i>	soft-nosed ox, quiet and easy to pull along or hitch behind a cart
<i>Zörüüd</i>	stubborn or obstinate (often a loner)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

xix

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Author's Note

I took all photographs and digital video footage, which supplement this book, during my time in the field in Mongolia (during 2005 and the spring of 2007). Throughout this book Mongolian words are designated in parentheses and italicised. I have referred to the names of Mongolian protagonists by the shortened versions of their names that were used in an everyday sense, unless informants asked to be referred to by their full name within this book. The translation of Mongolian words is written in accordance with the grammar of *Colloquial Mongolian* (Sanders & Bat-Ireedüi, 1999), such as the use of “kh” instead of “h” and elongated vowels instead of the shortened form, such as Ulaanbaatar instead of Ulan bator. Mongolian has “front” and “back” vowels. The front vowel of “ö” is pronounced as the “yea” in “yearn” and “ü” as the “u” in “put.” I have opted to designate the “shortened” sound at the end of some words as a single quotation mark, as in “mor” (the word for gelding).

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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SPRING



Plate 1. Brewing spring storm.



Plate 2. Feeding milk to a lamb with an ox horn.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Plate 3. Uuganaa with new-born calf.



Plate 4. Neighbouring herders combing cashmere from a goat.

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Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Plate 5. Saikhanaa returning from herding.



Plate 6. Ewes and nannies nursing their young within an encampment.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-00090-2 - Living with Herds: Human-Animal Coexistence in Mongolia

Natasha Fijn

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Plate 7. Khorlo handling a two-year-old (*byaruu*).



Plate 8. Naraa milking a *sarlag* by hand.