



## **Historical and contemporary transformations of Mongolian culture and art**

This series of lectures aims to provide an overview of historical and contemporary transformations of Mongolian culture and art within contexts they were constructed in the socialist and post-socialist eras. Exploring varied aspects, shifts, appropriations and manipulations of art and its politicization, the processes of categorization, diversification, and allocation of ‘national culture’ are critically re-examined.

### **1. Cultural Construction and Transformations of the ‘Culture’ Concept in Mongolia**

The notion of ‘culture’ (*soyol*) and the notion of ‘uncultured’ (*soyolgui*) played enormously important role in the construction of the new society of the Mongolian People’s Republic. The history of the twentieth century shows a transformation of this highly normative concept from a category associated with teachings, doctrine, ethics and nurturing to one linked to modernist notions of hygiene, secular education, urbanism and cosmopolitanism. In addition, it became a category that included a set of historical styles and works thought of as national ‘cultural heritage’ (*soyolyn öv*). With illustrations of cultural productions, the lecture introduces these strands of thought that have become central to the new nationalist politics of the post-socialist Mongolia following the collapse of Soviet State.

### **2. Religious Imagery in Art Representation and Ideological Changes in Mongolia**

After consolidating power in the 1920s, the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) promoted class warfare against aristocrats and Buddhist monks. In this new political order, Buddhist priests were re-categorized as ‘class enemies’ who had ‘stupefied people for centuries’ and ‘violated new revolutionary movement’. The class warfare was intensively propagandized through newly developing cultural institutions and productions aimed at promoting ‘revolutionary realism’. Along with the ‘religious revival’ after 1990, there was an ideological turn in depicting historical Buddhist monks as ‘enlightened’ ‘well-educated’ and ‘victimized’. The lecture aims to explore changes of religious imagery in art representation demonstrating with certain examples.

### **3. Folklorisation and Popularisation of Music in Mongolia**

The lecture examines the concept of ‘national’ or ‘folk’ music within the state culture-building process in both the socialist and post-socialist eras in Mongolia. By focusing on process of nationalization, commercialization and popularization, it is argued that musical culture was and has been politicized in both eras. Furthermore, it is argued that musical culture in post-socialist Mongolia can be regarded as the continuation, transformation and, in some cases, the amplification of the state socialist culture-building process, that is: ‘national in form and socialist in content’ became ‘nationalist in form and commercial in content’.

### **4. Resourcification of Cultural Heritage in Post-Communist Mongolia**

The concept of cultural heritage in Mongolia has been reshaped along with the numerous publications and reports on national heritage programs that have been written in terms of UNESCO’s definitions. The socialist notion of cultural heritage or ‘intellectual culture’ has largely been replaced by ‘intangible cultural heritage’ in public, state, and some degree in academic discourse. Not only the terms themselves but the content of the relevant categories have been transformed from something we can term ‘socialist cultural heritage’ to ‘national cultural heritage’ in new nationalist politics of post-socialist Mongolia. The process of registration can be regarded as a form of ‘resourcification’ – placing things into the political sphere – for “territorializing” art and claiming it for the nation-state.