Some Modes of Relating Hospitality, Mastery, and Mobility in Early xx\textsuperscript{th} Century Mongolia

Modes d'hospitalité, maître et mobilité au début du xx\textsuperscript{e} siècle en Mongolie

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The history of European thought on hospitality has usually assumed that anyone called «host» is the master of his place. The general idea is that the host offers, or refuses, hospitality to the guest or the stranger, just as a master exercises sovereignty in deciding whether to let people in or out of his domain (see, for example, Derrida 2000). It follows that, while the host/master is understood to be emplaced in his domain, whether that be a domestic dwelling, a homeland, or a country, the guest/stranger is envisaged as a traveller on the move. This article asks how non-European thought might construe hospitality differently in the conditions of nomadic pastoral society. Taking the case of Mongol lands in the early XX\textsuperscript{th} century, it will be argued that, while the host does indeed provide hospitality from a momentarily static position, a place into which the guests may be welcomed, the master (ezen, pl.: ezed), by contrast, rejoices in exercising his special capacities for mobility, both physical and imagined. This means that, given a social environment of hierarchy in which movement confers strategic advantages, the supreme master on many socially, politically, or religiously important occasions does not have the role of host but that of a visitor in transit. In these particular situations, even though it is always honourable to provide hospitality, the host may well be at a disadvantage in rank and power, and the guest is the one who holds sway.

This article discusses not so much «everyday hospitality» among commoner households and visitors (see Sneath, this issue) as the larger events involving collectivities. However, it is not possible to separate the two clearly. For one

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thing, noble rulers and monastic officials offered hospitality on their own account as well as on behalf of collectivities, and for another, they were also variable personalities in their own right. Thus, while princes’ encampments always included at least one special yurt and servants for guests, some nobles lived simply and others extravagantly, and the hosts differed in the warmth and generosity with which they treated visitors (Larson 1930: 32-34, 54, 119). That being said, large-scale hosting events, such as festivities where mass crowds congregated, or great pilgrimages during which the populous caravans of servants and livestock accompanying high figures on their travels had to be accommodated, were gatherings that in important ways constituted the more comprehensive skeins of Mongolian society by linking people of diverse ranks and professions. The society of the period was thoroughly hierarchical — yet there was no class of common people fully autonomous from the nobles, who governed and held hosting events on behalf of their fiefs. The whole consisted of ranked nested administrative groups and institutions, each having its master-like head. Until 1911, both Inner and Outer Mongolia were incorporated into the Manchu Empire, and the supreme master over all other human masters was the emperor, whom the Mongols called Holy Master (Bogd Ezen).

I will argue that a crucial quality of master-hood on all levels in the imperial edifice was not only the authority to limit his subordinate subjects’ movements, but also the master’s corresponding capacity (or sometimes only his desire) to override the relevant governmental-legal restrictions himself. Further, to be a master (ezen) was to aspire to «super-mobility». This should be understood not only in terms of physical movement, but also in respect of the power and pleasure given by «freedom», the wilful capacity to come and go as one pleases, to transgress, and exert supremacy. As will be explained further below, the Mongolian conceptualisation of ezen included a metaphysical notion akin to the «transcendent» aspect of any category of persons or entities. A discussion of Inner Asian hospitality in relation to «masters» should therefore involve all beings known by this term, not only plain human masters, but also the meta-human spirit persona likewise called ezen (pl.: ezed) that were held to exert their own kinds of power in the cosmic polity. There is no word in English that accurately renders this central Mongolian concept; I therefore use the term «ezen-ship» to refer to the exercise of the gamut of capacities of «masters» of all kinds.

How, though, does this relate to hospitality? The Mongolian concept of the ezen applied throughout the social hierarchy, from the emperor to the commoner head of household, and thus in one sense it finds an appropriate match in recent anthropological theories of «hospitality» as a heuristic, for both ideas are scale-free. In the case of hospitality, Matei Candea and
Giovanni Da Col pointed to the idea’s “propensity to act as a “theoretical elevator” through which the gap between small-scale ethnography and the international political economy may be bridged” (2012 : S15). Ezen-ship is similarly an idea that may be applied at tiny or great scale. Yet the concerns of mastery and hospitality are different. Hospitality is a negotiation of alterity and externality, while master-hood is an incipiently expansive expression of sovereignty. The interesting confrontation that faces us in the Mongolian case is their meeting in the same political cosmological arena. I suggest that, since the master may be either the host or the guest according to the situation, « hospitality » as a set of relations cannot be understood through a single blueprint schema (as was proposed by Ortner 1989). Rather, it must have taken many forms. This article does not attempt an overall survey, but will focus on three relatively large-scale forms (or patterns) that occurred when hospitality, mastery, and mobility combined in different ways. All three were complex and important social phenomena, each worthy of a book in its own right; the aim of this article is therefore not to provide a proper ethnography, but to understand the various logics of hospitality when it cannot avoid the presence and impact of masters (ezed). In brief, and to be explained later, the three cases I discuss are a « radiating » form, a « supplicatory » form, and a « predatory » form.

Let me first locate the issues in relation to recent anthropological discussions of hospitality. In the introduction to a recent journal special issue on hospitality, Matei Candea and Giovanni Da Col (2012) highlight the themes that have sparked renewed anthropological interest. These include first the debate around the paradox of « hostipitality » starkly outlined by Jacques Derrida (2000) : in short, the impossibility of reconciling the ethical requirement of openness to others with the equally necessary requirements of exclusionary sovereignty; second, the theme of exteriority and interiority, involving discussion of the outsider, who may appear as a source of vitality, as with the Stranger King (Graeber & Sahlins 2017), or as the entrapped guest (Swancutt 2012), or as a life-sapping parasite (Da Col 2012); and thirdly, the theme of the relation between hospitality and cosmopolitanism, which raises issues of boundary-crossing, inequality, and reciprocity in ontologically diverse political constellations. The literature on hospitality in Mongolia has contributed to each of these themes, mostly through discussion of contemporary hospitality among pastoralist households (Højer 2004; High 2008; Humphrey 2012). These studies highlight how Mongolian hospitality subverts distinctions between disinterested and self-serving actions. They note the stated high value of generosity and willingness to help others, and yet they also observe how hospitality involves wariness and craft, that in some cases it includes commercial exploitation, and in others...
sleights of hand wherein the guest may become a captive of the host, or conversely the invited friend may become an aggressor-trespasser on the host. Hospitality in present-day Mongolia is routinely given without any expectation of a return, and yet in the end it is conditional, not universal. Grégory Delaplace (2012) analyses such conditionality in terms of a deeper cosmological capacity for reciprocity with strangers. The Mongols of his field area esteem the visiting ghosts of the Russians highly, because the Soviets are judged to have been generous, while those of the Chinese are disliked and feared as parasites. Reciprocity with the former is both necessary and ethically good, whereas it is judged that the past actions of the Chinese show them to be incapable of reciprocity, and therefore excludable from relations such as hospitality.

For David Sneath (this issue), on the other hand, the ethical side of Derrida’s famous aporia is swept aside, since he argues that hospitality is in effect a product of the overriding forms of governmental sovereignty operative in a given historical period. Hospitality, he proposes, should not be understood as a matter of generosity, nor of reciprocity or any form of exchange thinking, but is founded on obligation. The obligation to host others, whether old friend or complete stranger, has two main aspects, the enacting of a social role, that of self-respecting host, and more fundamentally the carrying out of a duty placed on householders within a historically changing system of power relations. Sneath rightly points out that providing shelter to passing strangers who might otherwise perish was stipulated by xviith and xviiith century Mongol law codes. However, to my mind, just as with theft or cheating, the existence of penalties for refusing hospitality does not disprove the existence of a general – if circumspect – ethic of generosity to strangers, as is well attested by travellers in the late xixth-early xxth centuries (Gilmour 1883: 11-13 and 18, 1893: 26-31; Larson 1930: 54; Burdukov 1969; Pelliot 1928: 49-50). Frans Larson, for example, who lived for over forty years in Mongolia, observes that travellers in populated regions took little with them, that wandering lamas might sleep in a different yurt every night, that offering to pay was an insult, that visitors were given the best place, and that a guest would even be tucked in by the host for the night (1930: 73-77). If such «generalised hospitality» was largely based on practical reality – the knowledge that «one day, somewhere, I too will be a traveller in need» – it coexisted with other motives. What I would add to Sneath’s point that providing well for visitors was closely related to the ideal of the self-respecting householder is that this ideal was not only

1. Not to provide hospitality was regarded as shameful; a common expression was «no tea, no face/pride» (Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 133).
about obeying the law, but also about effective performance of the « master of the household » (geriin ezen) role as a diverse complex of activities. These included the ordering of the domestic domain to bring in and give out its people, livestock, and possessions, and also to care for its spiritual fortune, notably the Buddhist idea of the merit (buyan) accruing to the members’ souls in the hereafter as a result of good actions. To be a good master was a matter of religious as well as practical ethics.

In expanding the analysis to wider cosmopolitical relations, this article has to address the problem that ordinary masters of households were by no means the only masters around. The commoner geriin ezen was lowly indeed compared to the imperious, powerful, and often heartlessly cruel and greedy masters that loomed over them. In this situation, the dutiful character of hospitality that Sneath rightly argues for can be explored further by extending analysis to unequal, and indeed ontologically unlike, subjects; that is, to the encounters between diverse masters able to exert radically different kinds and degrees of power.

The Mongolian Master (ezen)

The concept of ezen never refers solely to a physical person or thing. It always refers to the object’s « idealistic » aspect in social thought as well, that is, to the reality of the idea of that thing or person. The philosophy behind this seems to lie in the conviction that all entities in the world (or categories of entities, such as « mice » or « birch trees ») have the right to exist unharmed in their own ways. To talk of something’s ezen is to refer to that entity either as a category or as a particular example; thus the « master of fire » (galyn ezen) could refer to the idea (or spirit) of a specific hearth or to the master of all, or any, fires. As mentioned earlier, the notion of master is multi-scalar: just as the most magnificent snow-topped mountain has its ezen, so does the tiniest thing – and the ethical person should give respect to both. Owen Lattimore, the inverertate traveller and intimate of the Mongolian camel caravans during the 1920s-30s wrote:

« Then, when we had finished loading, we always drank up the last tea we had brewed, after which Arash would throw out the leaves, always muttering: “Khurkhhi, khurkhhi! Pity the good tea!” […] Even remnants of food and tea leaves that have been used have their ezen. What kind of man is he who, when he has had all he wants of these gifts of heaven, throws the rest away without thought or thanks? » (1941 : 173).2.

2. The notion of the « mite » that is due respect and must not be harmed seems to have been broader than the Buddhist injunction not to take life (and indeed almost no Mongol at this period would kill useless or harmful creatures such as scorpions, snakes, spiders, or lice, but gently remove them instead). The notion of ezen rested rather in an ethic of recognition of the existence of every …/…
The implications of this way of thinking for relations between humans who are politically and economically radically unequal are interesting: the rightness of the social hierarchy is not denied, and yet there seems to be an equivalence, in the abstract, in the proper conduct expected of any actor in relation to ezen of various kinds. In principle, any human master should not only act with care and not harm, but also see to the flourishing of all the many people, animals, and things in his domain, each of which has its transcendent or « spirit » aspect, its ezen.

In practical political life, the effective masters of Mongolian territories in the early 20th century were the ruling lords (sing.: jasag noyon) of the administrative units called Banners. Frans August Larson, who arrived in Mongolia in 1893, wrote of his first years when the Manchu administration was approaching its sclerotic end: « The whole of Mongolia then was divided into innumerable states, each ruled over by a nobleman with the power of an absolute monarch in his own territory » (1930: 4; see also Pelliot 1928: 214). The right to rule was dependent in Mongol eyes on noble ancestry in the first place, and only secondly ratified by appointment by the emperor in Peking. The insistence on descent meant that the nobles were thought to be of a different kind to the commoners. They were subject to different laws and surrounded by deference: a lordly manner was expected, and a strict code of comportment, speech, and clothing regulated interactions with them. Commoners had to dismount and bow deeply when they met a noble out on the steppes (Larson 1930: 43). In the next two sections, I discuss the implications for hospitality of the super-mobility of lofty masters, whose « nature » separated and elevated them above ordinary persons, and yet who were in the end also subjects within the cosmopolitical world in which all existed.

…/… entity, as Lattimore recounts in a parable told him by Mongols. The Great Khan of all Mongolia is visited by his four subordinate Khans, who come in homage to offer presents and serve tea. But the Great Khan makes no sign and does not drink. It turns out that he realises he had sinned: in dismounting, he had torn a shred off his silk gown and thought nothing of it. And now, during the audience with the puzzled princes, the dragons in the patterns on his gown had stirred into life, had magically removed the Khan's prayer beads, and placed a shred of silk on the table, reminding him of his fault. « Thus, it can be seen », ran the homily, « that not the smallest, least important thing but has its ezen, its lord and spirit, and must be used with respect for its own self, not carelessly for the pleasure of the us » (Lattimore 1941: 174-175).

3. Other men of rank were known as « nobility of leisure » (sula noyad, Jagchid & Hyer 1979: 277).
4. This was an ideology rather than biological fact or universal political reality. Yet it held sway for example, in Western Mongolia in 1900, where a Jasag Noyon who had been appointed from among commoners, rather than inheriting the post on the basis of noble descent, was denigrated by his subjects as « not a real ruler » (Burdakov 1969: 50).
The Master as Host: Radiating and Encompassing

From early in Mongolian history, as Christopher Atwood (2015) has argued, mobility was central to the kind of mastery that the ruling elite of the Mongol Empire aimed for:

«Historians of Inner Asia have often stressed the ecological constraints imposed by the environment on nomadic polities. These ecological constraints have been seen as demanding dispersal of population and seasonal migrations governed tightly by the imperative of maximizing livestock productivity. Recently, however, advances in historical geography and textual research have allowed a number of itineraries of leaders in nomadic empires to be traced. The resulting picture is, however, not one of ecological constraint, but rather elite-level Inner Asian nomadism as a political strategy, sharing technology with the mobile pastoralism of herders, but governed by fundamentally different aims. It is likely that this imperial nomadism routinely sacrificed pastoral efficiency for the needs of controlling people and capturing resources».

Christopher Atwood shows that the ordinary nomadic herders were confined to relatively limited, seasonally fairly regular circuits, while the ruling leaders made long-distance forays, taking vast herds with them. This practice was not a temporary response to military challenge, but continued long into the peacetime of the Mongol Empire. It was, Atwood argues, primarily a technique to project power. Not only, as in the Roman Empire or Tudor England (Kisby 1999) to distribute over a wide space the burden of feeding the ruler’s vast retinue, but also a reflection of the need to deliver in person the emperor’s supremacy and charisma to the various localities in his domain. And this, from the leaders’ point of view, was a fine mode of existence. As we read in Rashid al-Din’s description:

«From the beginning of the Year of the Sheep until the Year of the Ox, a period of seven years, Ögedei Khan concerned himself with pleasure and merrymaking, moving happily and joyously from summer to winter residences, from winter to summer residences, constantly employed in the gratification of all manner of pleasures in the company of beauteous ladies and moon-faced mistresses» (quoted in Atwood 2015: 308).

In this elite social environment, for a ruler to adhere to a fixed routine was seen as a sign of indolence or weakness (unlike in the regular pastoralism of his subjects, which demanded predictability). «Imperial itinerance demanded the opposite: the willingness to defy the weather, etc. and visit the major areas of the empire with one’s unexpected presence» (Ibid.: 315).

It is true that early Mongol rulers had stationary seasonal residences constructed at some of their more regular stopping places, and these palaces were supported by storehouses for supplies sent by cart from far and wide.

5. Privately circulated abstract of Christopher Atwood article (2015).
But the Khans’ great agglomerations (*ordos*) were mobile, and rulers used moveable palace tents for audiences and hosting. The Emperor Ögedei and his successors constantly struck out from previous circuits, travelling to distant places, for example, when visiting provincial rulers, attending an ancestral shrine, going to worship a holy mountain, organising a collective battue hunt, or calling assemblies of subordinate princes, forcing them to leave their personal strongholds and attend at whatever place the sovereign had chosen. I suggest that such outwards projection was the key to a certain type of hosting – which I call « radiating ». Integral to the enactment of masterful power in peaceful times was the possibility of halting at various sites *en route*, making them a temporary centre (Humphrey 1995), and calling the populace to a great feast and audience. This would include everyone, invited or not, subjects or potential subjects, to whom the emperor would « radiate » his beneficence, his proffered protection, his justice.

Incorporation into the Manchu Empire and the advent of mass conversion to Buddhism in the xvi<sup>th</sup>-xvii<sup>th</sup> centuries, complicated such practices, notably by the mapping of the boundaries of princedoms and banners, and the building of static monasteries. This situation, which lasted until 1923 in Outer Mongolia and up to the mid-1940s in Inner Mongolia, introduced a new geography for masterly hosting of the radiating type. The rulers, the hereditary princes and dukes, had to confine their encampments to their own provinces or constituent banners according to rank, and were now required to obtain permission from the Manchu bureaucracy to embark on long journeys. But the old imperial culture of mobility was still cherished. Nobles frequently disobeyed or circumvented the regulations (Heuschert-Laage 2017 : 27-33), and cultivated an ideal of hardiness and fighting readiness. They went on living in yurts and took the utmost delight in wild hunting expeditions (Larson 1930 : 20-25 ; Humphrey & Ujeed 2013 : 167), in racing their horses, and setting competitions for their archers and wrestlers. Meanwhile, these worldly martial pleasures were counterbalanced by frequent pilgrimages, journeying to welcome high Buddhist lamas, and travelling to attend religious services.

By the early xx<sup>th</sup> century, hosting by the Jasag of a mass feast with tournaments of manly arts (*naadam*) was a regular annual event in each Banner:

« It is the custom for the ruler of each state to hold a big festival every summer, when all his people flock together and enjoy themselves. On these occasions, the ruler and his family wear their finest robes. The festivals last a week or ten days » (Larson 1930 : 18).

These celebrations usually took place following worship at the Banner *obo*, the sacred cairn built to venerate the patron’s martial ancestors and land spirits, where sacrifices were offered to request protection for the entire population of the Banner (Jagchid & Hyer 1979 : 122-124).

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To be a host on a grand scale, one has to have the wherewithal to put on an appropriately magnificent show (a point to which I shall return). The early Mongol rulers discussed by Atwood had dragged most of their wealth around with them, but with the advent of mass Buddhism a huge amount of wealth was shifted to the monasteries. In a Mongolian landscape, they were almost always the only stone-built buildings, by far the largest and most impressive in any case. Wealth poured in from donations from the devout, not only the funds required for purchase of precious statues, jewels, manuscripts, and paintings, but also the fundamental resources of land, bonded families (« serfs »), livestock, and produce. Because they had to house large populations of lamas, monasteries were always built by a water source, and were furnished with buildings for storage, cooking, and accommodation for visitors. For travellers from afar, monasteries were obvious places to stop. Inevitably, they also became important sites of grand hosting events. Hierarchical like the society outside, a monastic institution was headed by an abbot, colloquially termed its ezen, while the various subdivisions were headed by lama-officials, the ezens of those sections.

A festival hosted by an abbot was again hospitality of what I have called the « radiating » type. If the Banner oboo was a circular structure drawing veneration and dispensing good fortune on all sides, monastery-based hosting events were founded on the similarly centripetal spatiality of the mandala. The mandala was in its Indian origins directly related to royal power – reflecting the concept of the king as holy cakravartin – he who turns the wheel (cakra) of his kingdom from its centre, and whose chariot wheel has rolled along its perimeter without obstruction (Elverskog 2006 : 113). The Banner oboo could be moved from place to place to accommodate to the political situation; likewise, the mandala was envisaged as victoriously planted here and there, to suppress and convert wild autochthonous beings. Since the Buddhist monastery was constructed (at least in idea) on the model of a holy mandala, the abbot host seated there could enact hospitality in a masterly idiom, dispensing sacred benefits along with banquets for guests.

By the 1900s through to the 1930s, most « radiating » hosting events were combined Buddhist-aristocratic affairs. There were many reasons for this: most monasteries equipped for providing food and accommodation were under the specific patronage of a Jasag ruler, either on his own account or representing the Banner; the abbots were commonly scions of the local noble house; the ritual, even at primarily ancestral Banner oboo, involved Buddhist lamas to do the chanting; and all such festivities provided the

6. The mandala (« circle » in Sanskrit) is a diagram of the universe composed of squares, each with four gates, set inside a circle with a centre point.
opportunity for high lamas and noble officials to meet and make political
arrangements. In uncertain political times, it was far from the case that
abbots and nobles were invariably on good terms (Jagchid 1999: 112), but
nevertheless on many occasions the solid monastery buildings surrounded
by walls provided a safe haven for a ruler (e.g. the Prince of West Sunit,
who made Bat-Khaalag monastery his base during war in the late 1930s).
Even in peaceful times, the mass gathering for a Banner oboo festival was a
wonderful chance to combine religious with aristocratic « radial » hosting:
a travelling Reincarnate Lama could settle for a time at a ruler’s encampment,
and thence « hospitably » exude his holy presence and give out teachings,
initiations, and blessings. The arrival of the Panchen Lama at the West Sunit
festival in 1932 made the Banner occasion all the more glorious, since, to
receive his blessings, worshippers streamed in not only from the two Sunit
Banners, but from far and wide, including distant Outer Mongolian regions
(Lattimore 1941: 239). In all these examples of the « radiating » type of
hosting, ezen-ship coincided with being the host. However, this was not
the case in the two kinds of hosting to be described below.

Supplication Hosting of Land Gods
and Reincarnate Lamas

There were religious and fiercely efficacious powers around, more erratic
and far more mobile than either the prince or the abbot. These were a) the
quasi-deities known as the Masters of the Land, gazaryn ezed, who could
bring prosperity and happiness, or alternatively misfortune and misery;
and b) the Reincarnated Lamas, the embodied bearers of the soul-stuff of
legendary Bodhisattvas, who were meta-humans attributed with untold
magical powers, abilities to cure disease and misfortune, and to foretell the
future. The relation between ordinary humans and these religious beings
gave rise to a different kind of hosting. This is the type I call, in short,
« supplication », although takhil, the Mongol word for the rite of offering
food and a seat for deities also has the implication of enticing, blandishing,
and cajoling. Hosting in this case was designed to attract the spiritual being,
to invite him to partake, and persuade him to give spiritual blessing, good
fortune and protection against enemies.

The hosting of the Master of the Land took place at an oboo7, and was
followed by the same kind of open festivities, games, and general feasting
mentioned earlier in the case of « radiant » hosting. In other words, two

7. In the case of the West Urad Banner, this was not the Banner oboo presided over by the ruling duke,
but a mountain-top cairn that geographically dominated a wide area extending beyond the Banner.
different kinds of hosting events could occur at separate times within one overall festival. This reminds us of an important point made by Matei Candea and Giovanni Da Col about hospitality and temporality, the fact that a major « event » is likely to encompass a multiplicity of singular events and transactions. In this way, they suggest, « altruism and selfishness, trust and suspicion, benevolence and malice are present, but never co-present ». It is « the careful avoidance of simultaneity », they suggest, that makes hospitality the locus of moral dilemmas (2012: S11; italics in original). This same feature, I suggest, enabled the flipping of modes of hospitality during the separate stages of oboo festivals. Whereas the prior takhil rites at the oboo involved a strictly delimited set of hosts (males only, no adult women, no strangers or foreigners) reverently hosting a spirit guest, the subsequent « radiating » hosting festivities (naadam), held at a lower, less sacred spot, were ebulliently cheerful and open to all.

In fact, the practice of veneration of the Master of the Land embodied a contradiction: the idea suggests the existence of a « land » (gazar) of which the « master » (ezen) is the spiritual principle, with the implication that the nomadic human inhabitants are but guests or trespassers on his territory. But, unlike burial ritual which followed this logic, the takhil rites to welcome the Master of the Land proposed the opposite scenario: the human inhabitants were the hosts and the Master was the guest. This was the case because the Master as a spirit or minor deity was envisaged as intrinsically mobile and initially absent. He had to be begged by elaborate supplicatory prayers to come to his seat.

As an example, let me draw upon materials from the Urad West Banner in Inner Mongolia. The Master of the Land in this case was called Muna Khan, the same name used for the sacred mountain peak of which he was the deity. Local accounts, however, did not identify the deity with the mountain, but proposed in different variants that some legendary/historical human figure had magically become the Master.8. In the best-known narrative, Muna Khan was mostly domiciled in Tibet, being the manager of a forest that supplied fuel to one of the great monasteries near Lhasa. Whatever the case in such stories, Muna Khan was not pictured (in the painting worshipped in the rite) in mundane guise, but instead as a divine hero in energetic motion, brandishing weapons and mounted on a galloping blue horse, the same one that was said to transport him from Tibet in one night. Land master he may be, but the deity as painted does not actually touch the earth. His space is in the sky, among the clouds and

8. See Hildegard Diemberger (1998: 52) for a discussion of the distinction in Tibet between the sacredness of the mountain as a territorial god and as a holy place.
above mountains. Across Mongol lands mountain deities have distinct personalities; some are benign, and others are vengeful and fearsome. In Buddhist explanations, they are described as wild, autochthonous spirits, later violently tamed by Buddhist masters and bound by oath into service to Buddhism (Charleux 2019). The horseman image of the deity is shown as heroic but unearthly, galloping towards some unknown place, in other words, as an unpredictable visitor, who has to be enticed to descend by the hosts. The ceremony is designed to do just this, to coax the flying deity down and place him on his sitting-place (*suudal*), the *obo* cairn, which the hosts describe enticingly as a magnificent palace.

In the Urad West Banner pre-1947, elaborate arrangements were made to ensure that the hosting party represented all the local sub-groups; they had to provide in turn every three years the piles of meat and delicacies for the feast, while the lamas from the nearby Mergen Monastery arranged to supply the ritual items and chanted the long multi-vocal prayer to Muna Khan. That this was regarded as a hosting event is evident from the wording of the prayer, which calls the deity and his elaborate entourage «guests» (*zochid*), contains an «invitation» section, as well as describing the marvellous repast and accommodation offered.

Yet far more holy from a Buddhist point of view than the spirit land masters were those wonderful and meta-human people, the Reincarnate Lamas. In legend, their earlier incarnations were able to transport themselves in an occult way, but not without leaving sign of their journeys (the sacred geography of Urad West Banner included numerous marks, said to be the footprint, the dropped bowl, etc. of such figures). In the here and now, the Reincarnate Lamas were also highly mobile. But they needed a monastic seat, if only as a base from which to give teachings and blessings, and then to set out again on their meritorious doctrine-spreading travels. Meanwhile, monasteries needed a resident Reincarnation (*Gegen*) to give them glory and high religious status. This double need gave rise to another series of «supplication»-type hosting occasions, in which various actors could act as hosts, singly or in combination.

Galluu, a lama at Mergen Monastery in Urad who took to writing history, describes the occasion of inviting in a new Reincarnation (a young child) after the previous incumbent had died:

9. The flying horseman is one of two standard images of mountain masters throughout Mongol lands. The other depicts the Master of the Land as seated figure in a wider sacred geography of mountain ranges, *i.e.* as now having arrived at his own mountain. See Daniel Berounsky (2005) for the land deities of the Aga Buriat Mongols, and Isabelle Charleux (2019) for the spirit of the Khangai range in Central Mongolia.
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«The Banner and monastery prepared a great expenditure to invite the 3rd Mergen Gegen. Inviting a Reincarnation is like inviting a bride and involves discussing the livestock and money to be given to the mother and father to return the meritorious deed of the white milk [they gave to the child in rearing it]. Especially when inviting a Gegen and Bogd they [the monastery officials] give the fortune-merit of “nine whites”, the nine kinds of treasure (erdeni), the five types of livestock, and gold and silver. They prepare all these very well and hold a great feast and ceremony. They invited the 3rd Mergen Gegen thus when he was aged five in 1721 » (Galluu 2003 : 89).

«Supplication» in such cases involved hosting as enticement, to lure the child Reincarnation into the monastery away from his parents. Later in their lives, Reincarnations were tricky people to pin down. They commonly had several monastic seats. A remote Banner might build a monastery with a special house for a Gegen invited all the way from Tibet, only to find that he stayed there for less than a year and was never seen again (Burdukov 1969 : 50).

For this reason, supplication hosting by a monastery was also seen as a kind of entrapment, which, if successful, could lead to networks of lasting relationships between political rulers, spirit masters, and Reincarnations – that is, between different kinds of masters. One of the scions of the ruling family of Urad, Galdanwangchug, the son of the reigning duke in the early xixth century, wrote in his memoirs that, when a Jasag Noyon wanted to found a prestigious and powerful monastery, he had to «capture and seat» (barigdan suulga-) a Reincarnate Lama, and inform the high religious authorities. Holy Jiramba Lama was one such lama who had been wandering from place to place. He was «captured» by the Amban (ruling official) of the Chahar Western Four Banners. But Jiramba would not settle down until a new monastery was built for him at the particular place he desired. At this desert spot, however, there was no wood. Jiramba Lama therefore asked the Duke of Urad West Banner, the author’s father, whether timber could be taken from Muna Khan, the spirit-owner of the great mountain in his Banner. The Duke agreed to request the timber from the deity, the necessary wood was carted off, and the Duke thereby became a particular kind of master, the «Master of Donations» (ögliiin ezen) with respect to Jiramba Lama, the Reincarnation, who became in contrast the «Site of Supplication» (takhilyn oron) (Humphrey & Ujeed 2013 : 168). These were essentially dissimilar personas, but tied in a mutuality that was recognised throughout Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist culture. In this case it created a close relationship that lasted throughout the two men’s lives. Whenever he was ill, which was frequently, the Duke would invite

10. In the history of Mergen, on two occasions parents are recorded as refusing to give up their son to the monastery, even though he had been recognised as a reincarnation.
the Lama to stay at his encampment, which seems to have cured him on many occasions. Or alternatively, if the Lama heard that the Duke was ill, he would invite him to his monastery and provide him with hospitality, because he was his «helpful Master of Donations» by giving the wood all those years ago.

I concur with David Sneath that such mutual hospitality should not be seen as an «exchange», particularly not of an economic kind. It was, rather, the playing out of the identities that each man had towards the other, the Duke as «Master of Donations» and the Jiramba Lama as Holy Teacher (Bogd Bagsbi) to whom supplication should be addressed. The Holy Lama was a sacred, occult being in human form. It was understood that he had higher concerns, might always be away on his travels, or secluded in meditation. The Duke, even when he was the host, was always the supplicant.

“Predatory” Hospitality

If an action is to be counted as hospitality, one common assumption is that provision for the visitor is made from one’s own resources, and another is that the guest is one’s own guest. However, the hierarchical, quasi-feudal nature of Mongolian society in the early 20th century make both of these propositions problematic. There were forms of hospitality in which the ones providing the wherewithal for guests were the subjects of the master who performed as host, not the host himself. The practices I shall describe recall the point made by Shryock in a different context that «Hospitality is always partially unseen» (2004: 59). Not only large-scale festivities but also individual hosting involves display, beyond which activities of assembling, requisitioning, preparing, cooking, clearing up, and so forth are carried out by usually unnoticed people. The Mongols at this period took nuanced attitudes to this situation. The hierarchical order was not yet openly questioned. Serfs, servants and personal slaves of a noble master, like the albatu («those with duties»), who owed similar tithes and services to Banners and monasteries, seem to have accepted their status. What people did object to, as can be seen from their petitions of grievances, was when a master (a ruling lord, a monastic abbot, or a Manchu official) used the pretext of official expenses to extract provisions that were then used for personal objectives (Veit 1975). Extravagant hosting events and expensive travelling – for leisure, trade, or pilgrimage – were chief among these.

11. It was, if anything, strengthened when, after the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1911, the highest Reincarnation in the land was chosen to be Khan of Mongolia, thus establishing theocratic rule, until that was rocked by invasions from China and Russia in 1920-1921.
Let me describe some examples. There was a kind of “hospitality of travel” that enabled nobles to make carefree journeys, either leisurely affairs with their families and entourage, which they enjoyed (Larson 1930: 181) or fast travel for an urgent purpose. The Manchu Empire maintained a system of relay stations (öröö), at which commoners had to serve in rotation to provide mounts, food, and living quarters for people journeying on official business. This was hospitality as an obligatory duty. However, noblemen and women also frequently travelled for their own non-official reasons: to attend a religious ritual, visit a relative, go to flirt with the wife of a friend away on duty, go hunting, or on business, and so forth. Without carrying the necessary pass for the örtöö, they would speed across the steppes relying on their status for informal “travel hospitality”, provided in this case by random common herders. Frans Larson, who had made friends with a prince of Ordos, describes how he travelled across Inner Mongolia by this “lasso relay” method. Started off by his friend the prince with a servant and two horses, taking nothing but a chit and a few necessities in a roll, he galloped off over the plains; when these horses tired, the servant dashed up to the first horse herd that came into sight, lassoed two fresh mounts, left the tired animals in the stranger herd, and they galloped on. Keeping eyes open for sight of a herd, this operation was repeated day after day, “the same courtesy being extended to us in neighboring princes’ states as we passed”. The role of lasso-man was also replaceable as the journey went on (Ibid.: 14-15). Larson’s account does not state whether he took his own tent, or relied on yurts met on the way, but he makes clear that over and above any universal generalised hospitality for tea, food, and overnight stays there was a separate travel system that applied to nobles only. This was a system of “generalised reciprocity” between the rulers of different domains, but it cost them nothing. It rested on the actual substance (horses, fodder, lasso-men) being provided without recompense by the common folk, who also had to deal with the consequences, such as returning horses to their owners.

Simmering discontent about such arrangements tipped over into open anger when they were used too frequently (one petitioner grumbled, “whenever he went to worship somewhere we had to pay for it”, Veit 1975: 134). It was also objectionable when an official insisted that an official duty must be given the appearance of welcoming hospitality. When the noble Lamzhav turned up at a relay station and the people there had not prepared a comfortable tent and food for him, but only offered a ritual scarf, he was furious and threatened them. Word spread down the line of

12. Nobles did not receive salaries from the state, but relied on the people of their domain to provide for their needs. On their travels, even if they owned thousands of horses, it was customary for a noble to “draw on the country for men, tents, food and anything else that he needs” (Larson 1930: 8).
stations, and one by one each hastened to prepare lots of money, food, and presents, and "every household complimented him again and again" (Ibid. : 116). This was sufficiently aggravating to form part of a petition against Lamzhav written by Badamsav, a commoner, in 1916 (Ibid. : 117-120). Another source of complaint was the custom for a noble and his cavalcade to journey out midway to provide a hospitable welcome for a great Reincarnation approaching on his travels. As with nobles' pilgrimage convoys to Wutaishan in China, which might be accompanied by as many as 3000 monks (Charleux 2015 : 271), vast expenses for horses, presents, and luxurious food were often charged to the Banner subjects rather than paid from the noble's own resources (Veit 1975 : 73). Nothing effective was done to end such abuses until the whole political system was overturned.

The massive caravans accompanied by herds that took the Jasag Noyon to Peking for their regular attendance at court were in principle paid for by the Manchu administration. However, this did not prevent nobles also extracting provisions along the way, as well as using the occasion to do business, and still pocketing the payment made in Peking, another accusation made in the petitions (Ibid. : 79, 88). In general, official journeys could turn into enforced hospitality from people whom it rendered almost destitute. In Western Mongolia in 1911, the Manchu official was due to carry out his three-yearly inspection of the border posts. Local people hoped the collapse of the dynasty would mean the cancellation of the inspection, but panic spread throughout the whole area when people heard it was going ahead. "With curses" the local herders provided for the transit of the great man and his suite: 20 to 30 white yurts at each post, two or three of which had to be lavishly furnished with rugs and red hangings, several hundred horses for the cavalcade, tens of camels for luggage, and over a hundred drivers. The most difficult demand was the silver that had to be produced to pay for the food, drink, and bedding that would provide hospitality at each station. But this was not the trading season; the locals had no silver, and had to borrow it from Chinese merchants. The unfortunate hosting parties and their animals waited for weeks at the posts, neglecting their own households, in expectation of the arrival of the official. Nevertheless, they had to give the appearance of a cordial and fawning welcome (Burdukov 1969 : 32-33).

The examples have shown various ways in which the hierarchical political order enabled hospitality events to conceal forms of « predation ». Socialist historians were later to regard the entire quasi-feudal arrangement as exploitative in an « objective » Marxist sense, but my designation of predation refers to activities that were « subjectively » seen as unjust at the time. These were the prodigal habits, reckless borrowing, arbitrary expropriation and
extra cruel use of punishment by certain nobles. The justifications prevailing in noble circles were given short shrift by the complainants. We read, for instance:

« [...] the Jasag decided that the money the people had given to pay the debts he had incurred with the Chinese for various reasons would not be returned to them, since the people had helped the Jasag under the principle of the relationship between father and son, master and servant. He, the Jasag, could not refuse their loyalty and return to them the money which they had paid for him » (Veit 1975: 88).

The fierce objections by the commoners (« there is no so-called principle of relationship between father and son, master and servant, so why did the Jasag Dugarstembel and his officials find it a basis for their actions? », Ibid.: 89) give grounds for us to see this case indeed as predation, rather than simply the functioning of a feudal political system.

Perhaps the nobles’ extravagant conception of their entitlement to roam at others’ expense goes back to their sense of identity. They felt they were different from ordinary people because they continued to think of themselves as the living descendants of the Chinggisids, as the heirs to an expansive, freedom-loving warrior culture, however anachronistic that had now become. The moral dilemmas for nobles are revealed by a xixth century duke’s memoirs detailing his internal conflicts between, on the one hand, his love of hunting and military culture, and his cruelty to a servant, and, on the other, his moral education as a Buddhist forbidden to take life and taught to remember that each person and being has its proper existence (Humphrey & Ujeed 2013: 176-184).

I may seem to have strayed from hospitality, but these examples of « predation » recall the distant debates about cosmopolitan hospitality raised by critics of aggressive colonialism, such as Vitoria and Bartoleme de las Casas in the xviiith century, and taken up later by Kant (1996 [1795]: 121). The critics argued, disputing theories of the God-given right to Spanish imperial expansion, that the conquistadores in Latin America were violating the « law of nature » whereby all peoples of the world are (equally) human. They maintained that the natives of America had a right to be treated with respect and mutuality; their land should be invaded and settled only with consent. They, the natives, should not be the only ones forced to be hospitable – should the conquistadores not be so too (Pagden 1995: 49-51)? Instead, the Spanish were acting as inhospitable aggressors, and using hypocritical justifications for violence (Brown 2010: 314). The comparison with early xxth century Mongolia might seem anachronistic, were it not evident, even at this time, that in some fundamental way commoner Mongols could well feel themselves equal, if not superior, to foreigners settling on their
land. Larson, who spent at least some of his time in Mongolia as a Swedish missionary, recalled riding comfortably across the steppe and feeling sorry for a ragged old woman he met. She was on foot, in a land where folk «prefer never to work except from the saddle», trudging along, carrying out the meanest task in Mongolia: gathering dried dung for fuel. The old woman straightened her back and addressed Larson haughtily: «You are a foreigner – whence have you come? Has your journey been in peace?». To Larson’s brief answer she responded, «How sad for you that you are not born a Mongol – but how fortunate you are that you found your way to Mongolia before you died!», and she waved her twig shovel in a circle that encompassed the flowering summer grasslands (Larson 1930: 78-79).

I have tried to sketch out some of the larger-scale scenarios in which hospitality engaged with «masters», in other words, with political and/or religious clout. It has been argued that a master was not expected to be stuck in one place. Rather, master-hood came with ideas of superior mobility of one kind or another. In the case of the rulers of domains, this idea may have derived from the nobles’ continued imaginative attachment to the imperial heritage, that is, to the transmission of the desire to act as a sovereign roaming at will throughout the realm. Such a master would halt his journeys and from such a stopping-place offer hospitality, but this was a spot chosen at will, or from a variety of social reasons, rather than taken out of economic pastoral necessity or feudal compulsion. This article has described two forms – «radiating» and «predatory» – that hospitality could take in the hands of such an imperious and incipiently mobile lord.

We anthropologists could perhaps go further and envisage links between the two patterns if we stand back and contemplate at a higher order the moral economy as a whole – perceiving relations that are not obvious because they were unspoken, separated in time, or concealed (by ruling aristocrats and monastic officials) as unworthy of consideration. For example, we might theorise that a noble would justify compelling hospitality from his subjects (predation mode) by recalling his lavish feasting of them at the annual ritual festivals (radiating mode); or we might point out that a great master’s welcoming feast for the populace that depended on the «unseen» (Shryock 2004) provision of labour and resources, derived very possibly from predatory relations with certain people in lower social ranks. However, I have no evidence that such «practical logic» was employed by Mongols at this period (although that does not rule out the possibility). Rather, the available materials suggest that the prevailing ethos was to grant human

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ezed with the legitimate authority to « gather in » people and their wealth, whether as a host by attracting subjects to a generous festival scenario, or, alternatively, by appearing as a haughty visitor and forcing the subjects to become reluctant hosts. The legitimacy of this « right » was inscribed in the law codes of various periods – and as the existence of petitions of complaint shows, it could be questioned if a noble demanded too much, or used the proceeds for the wrong purposes. But I have also argued that, just as there was a transcendent aspect to the very notion of ezen, the practice (ezen-ship) extended into realms far beyond the law. This can be seen in the wilful, fickle, and « wild » ezen who was the spirit of the land, and also in the relation between aristocrats and the unearthly religion-guided Reincarnate Lamas, whose « mastery » was of a different order to the human kind. These occult masters were conceived to be super-mobile, or rather magically mobile in the world conceived cosmologically. The prevailing ritual idiom was for ordinary mortals humbly to invite such a spiritual being to deign to grant his presence as the guest. This did not mean that the costs of providing such hosting were not counted (Humphrey & Ujeed 2013: 196-197).

But the rationale was subtly different from that of a household ezen – i.e. his legal duty, living up to the role of host, and generosity to a traveller without expectation of reciprocity from that particular person. For, in the supplicant case, the host, often a collectivity of people, situated itself as a subject in a cosmological realm in which material resources were offered as an inducement for an intangible return poetically expressed – the deity’s presence and its indefinite blessings.

Each of these three scenarios implied a normative « balance » that regulated what was expected of the host and the guest/visitor. It was acknowledged that – in the way of the world – there would be nevertheless great and often incalculable differences in the potentialities available to each of them. Only if people’s expectations were violated, as was shown in some examples of « predatory hospitality » , did they respond resentfully to these differences. Thus, hospitality in the sense of an ethical order for managing relations with « non-selves » of one kind or another was entangled with the set of multi-scalar ideas surrounding ezen-ship (master-hood). For if my household has a master, so too do all the others great and small, and the Mongolian narratives cited here maintain that any master and any guest, however supreme, however mean, is entitled to care and respect.
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Caroline Humphrey, Some Modes of Relating Hospitality, Mastery, and Mobility in Early 20th Century Mongolia. — This paper addresses the question of the relation between hospitality and mobility. Using materials from early 20th century nomadic pastoral Mongolia, it suggests that an overall field of interaction was produced by the notion of the « master » (ezen). This applied at all levels from the head of household to the emperor, but it also extended beyond the human realm to masterful deities and holy Buddhist figures. One of the chief qualities of the ezen was the capacity to move at will, in contrast to lower-status herders who were bound to particular territories. Thus, the ezen could well be a host, but the high value placed on aristocratic and religious mobility meant that the master could also appear as a travelling visitor. Hosting scenarios were therefore diverse in terms of the balance of power between host and guest, and this paper proposes three modes by which the different relational sets were thought of and organised.

Caroline Humphrey, Quelques modes de mise en relation de l’hospitalité, du pouvoir et de la mobilité au début du XXe siècle en Mongolie. — Cet article traite des relations entre hospitalité et mobilité. À partir de matériaux relatifs au pastoralisme nomade de la Mongolie du début du XXe siècle, il suggère que la notion de « maître » (ezên) donnait lieu à un champ global d’interactions qui se déclinait à tous les niveaux, depuis le chef d’un foyer jusqu’à l’empereur lui-même, s’étendant même au-delà du domaine humain pour inclure les divinités maîtresses et les personnages sacrés du bouddhisme. L’une des caractéristiques principales de l’ezên était sa capacité à se déplacer à son gré, par opposition aux éleveurs de basse extraction qui étaient attachés à des territoires particuliers. Ainsi, un ezên pouvait être un hôte, mais étant donné la grande valeur attribuée à la mobilité aristocratique et religieuse, les maîtres se donnaient surtout à voir comme des visiteurs en déplacement. Les scénarios d’hospitalité différaient donc de par l’équilibre des pouvoirs qu’ils ménageaient entre hôte et invité. Cet article distingue trois modes selon lesquels les différents agencements relationnels étaient pensés et organisés.