In search of the lost roots: Recovering ethnopedagogical traditions of Buryat-Mongols in "Khabsagai-Culture-Ecology-Education Center"

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IN SEARCH OF THE LOST ROOTS:
RECOVERING ETHNOPEDAGOGICAL TRADITIONS OF BURYAT-MONGOLS IN "KHABSAGAI-CULTURE-ECOLOGY-EDUCATION CENTER"

by

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In Search of the Lost Roots: Recovering Ethno-pedagogical Traditions of Buryat-Mongols in "Khabsagai—Culture-Ecology-Education Center" (73 pp.)

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This paper examines ecological views of Mongols comparing them with the traditions of native Americans. The concept of sacred place is explored as a vivid embodiment of traditional values, perceptions of and attitudes toward nature. Among special means of traditional education—ethnopedagogics the theory and practice of taboo is framed and analyzed in detail. A model for the education center where the ethnopedagogical principles of the past will be combined with modern methods of learning and teaching is suggested.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Human interaction with the environment is widely perceived both as the source of environmental problems and as the key to their solution. Since the 1960s, many Western scholars who were dealing with the analysis of industrial civilization's crisis have argued that implicit environmental ethics exist in most indigenous and traditional cultures. (B. Callicot, G. Cornell, L. White, C. Merchant) The dominating Judeo-Christian worldview was widely conceived as a cause of today's ecological crisis. (L. White, C. Bowers). Many Westerners have turned to other religions for alternatives to Western alienation from nature—to Taoism, Zen and others. In this search, beliefs and traditions of North America's Native Americans have played an important part in the enunciation of a new ecological spirit.

American Indians are conventionally portrayed as model ecologically-concerned citizens, who lived in a harmonious balance with the natural world. Even as early as 1871, Edward Taylor published his ideas about primitive animism, in which Indian and other tribal religious were said to be firmly rooted in their relationship to nature. Vine Deloria, Jr. and N. Scott Momaday are the most famous Indian writers who have made a significant contribution to the spread of the Indian ecologist image. They contrasted the nature-based worldviews of American Indians to the doctrines of white American Christianity.

Thus, the ecological perspectives, beliefs and values of traditional cultures could play an important role in re-thinking the attitudes toward nature in the industrialized...
societies of the modern world. Although it seems to be too straightforward, too oversimplified, to assert that the adaptation of values of one culture by the representatives of a different culture would lead to a proper solution, nobody can argue against the tremendous influence of the ideas and values of Native Americans on the environmental movement in the U.S.; nobody can deny that today American Indians do express "an intense association with the environment that identifies them as Indians." As Cornell points out, influential members of the early American conservation movement were deeply impressed by Native Americans' actual relationship with their environment. "The growth of the modern conservation ethic in the twentieth century was strongly influenced by the environmental perceptions and beliefs of Native peoples." (Cornell, 1982: 248)

The interest in these attitudes, values and beliefs is shared even by less radical elements in the environmental movement. (Booth and Jacobs, 1991)

It is extremely useful to research the ethnocultural traditions of different nations, since they include ecological experience (negative or positive) as help to solve today's environmental crisis. This is especially important in the current conditions of globalization of the world's political and economic systems. The process of globalization is full of controversy; it may be dissolving cultural differences and forming a single global culture (Smith, 1990); or is it capable of maintaining and generating cultural diversity (Wuthnow, 1992)? I think that the homogeneity of the world is not a goal to struggle for. But there is an inexorable trend today toward extinction of cultures, and consequently toward the disappearance of cultural diversity. Although some theorists contend that "the expansion of core economic and political influence promotes cultural heterogeneity," (Milton 1996:155) the terms which are used to describe contemporary
cultural change like "westernization," "Americanization," "McDonaldization," "Cocacolanization," and "cultural imperialism" (Hannerz 1989: 200) demonstrate how the culture of the center undermines those from the periphery. My own daughter prefers to play with Barbie (which is not simply a doll but an entire lifestyle, and particular values) instead of native Mongolian games and toys, so I could suggest another term- "Barbyzation" or "Barbarization" of her Mongolian culture.

The first paragraphs of my introduction appear to oppose the views of the contemporary culture flowing from the center to the periphery, inasmuch as the influence of, for instance, Native American land wisdom has affected the environmental movement in the U.S. The contradiction is only an illusion. Even if globalization is a dialectical process, the elimination of indigenous cultures unfolds in dangerous proportions.

What can you do? First, I think that if you want to live in a world with a healthy environment you should learn to respect cultural diversity. The cultural diversity of the world of two hundred years ago, before we created this multinational culture that is more dangerous than a multinational enterprise, has gone... we will have to develop a very profound respect for other cultures if we want to live in a sustainable world. (Anil Agarwal, quoted in Milton 1996: 172)

If the ecological traditions and environmental ethics of Native Americans are a popular subject of scholarship, if their very ethnic identity is connected with environmental values, if it is viewed that "it is Indian to be ecologically conscious," so the historical cataclysms of the last century nearly completely eliminated the traditional attitudes of my nation towards nature, which were based on a great reverence and reciprocity.
Representing the Northeastern area of the Central Asian Mongolian cultural-historical region, Buryats—the nation to which I belong—connects its origin, history, and life with Lake Baikal. Native pre-shamanistic beliefs, Central Asian shamanism, as well as Buddhism, played an important role in the shaping of Buryat environmental attitudes, ethnoecological views and traditional environmental ethics. During the socialist era, all native religious beliefs were prohibited as a "negative survival" of the past. The ruling Marxist ideology defined the total spectrum of the social relations, including environmental values and attitudes. Theoretically, Marxism proclaimed careful, responsible attitudes toward environment, as Marx underlined: "A man lives by nature. It means that nature is its body, with which a man has to be in a process of constant communication in order not to die." (Quoted in Erofeev, 1997: 12) In practice, however, the consumeristic approach to nature dominated, justified by the necessities of class struggle. To follow Native ways, especially in terms of keeping traditional attitudes toward nature, was considered to be a manifestation of nationalism, which was seen as "negatively affecting the class struggle for the worldwide victory of communism."

Thus, it is understandable why the theoretical re-thinking of the ecological traditions of the past as a separate subject of study began in the Soviet Union less than a decade ago. However, at the same time a large body of scientific research has been devoted to the phenomena of Central Asian shamanism, beginning with the famous "Black Faith or Shamanism among Mongols," written by the first Buryat Western-trained scholar Dorzhi Banzarov, in 1846. His work was the first one to point out the existence in the Mongolian world of religious forms of more ancient roots than Buddhism, and still is considered to be a classic work in Mongolistics. A comprehensive study of the religious
systems of Mongols was completed by W. Heissig—a prominent German orientalist (1961). American anthropologists contributed to the study of Mongolian history with the works of O. Lattimore. And, of course, Soviet and Mongolian scientists analyzed traditional cultures and religion among peoples of Mongolian origin. The work of Mongolian scholars such as B. Rinchen, M. Gaadambaa, Ch. Zhugder and of the Soviet scholars—M.N. Khangalov, T.S. Zhamzarano, B. Baradiin, L.P. Potapov, T.M. Mikhailov, G.R. Galdanova, is especially important. From the most recent researchers, we have to mention the works of I.S. Urbanaeva (1995; 1996), with her theory of Mongolian shamanism as an expression of the Central Asian esoteric tradition—Tengrianity. Different aspects of Buddhism in Mongolian societies, which corresponds in principle to the Tibetan form of Buddhism, were analyzed by B.D. Dandaron, N.L. Zhukovskaja, K.M. Gerasimova, and many others.

Although the Mongolian studies include a great amount of scholarship on different aspects of traditional culture, history and the worldviews of Mongols, not much attention has been given to the issues of ecological traditions and traditional environmental ethics. As I have already mentioned, the first monographs on ecological traditions in the culture of the peoples of Central Asia began appearing only in the beginning of 1990s, after "perestroika" began. Recently, V.N. Mantatov and O.B. Dorzhigushaeva (1997) published their research on Buddhist perspectives on the sustainable development of society. As for the study of traditional Mongolian systems of education and child-rearing practices, there is currently no well-grounded research in this field in Buryatia. However, in Mongolia, a comprehensive work "Huneer huun hiinh yhaan" of Mongolian scholar Eldev-Ochir (1994) recently appeared and evoked a true
interest among teachers and educators. There may be more works in ethnopedagogics in
Mongolia of which I am not aware, because after the collapse of the socialist order in
Mongolia, its society began actively searching for new ways to develop. Mongolia has to
redefine its place and position in the world. Education became a priority for the
development of the nation. A big emphasis is being given to the re-evaluating of the
cultural heritage and history of the Mongols.

I believe it is also time for re-thinking education in the Republic of Buryatia, one
of the republics of the Russian Federation. While in Mongolia, restructuring and re-
thinking of the content of education has become an important part of the democratic
development, in Buryatia the same processes are lagging. The present ethnic, economic,
and political situations of the Russian reality as a whole, and of a national republic in
particular, complicate the situation.

Buryats—one of three main peoples of the Mongolian origin—after the collapse
of the All-Mongolian Empire and as a result of internal conflicts in the Mongolian world
in the mid-1660s started to develop in the orbit of the Russian State. Both Russian and
Buryat historians used to emphasize the alleged voluntary character of Buryats' joining
the Tzarist Empire. However, contemporary revision of historical documents and sources
explicates the whole complexity and controversy of this issue. The process, which started
as an agreement between two equal parties, ended up as the real colonization of Buryat
territories and Buryat people: with all the integral parts of colonization—forced
baptizement and Russification; prohibition of native beliefs; relocation from native lands,
prohibition of traditional land management practices, prohibition of native language and
prohibition of maintaining ties to the rest of the Mongolian world which was considered
to be a politically dangerous movement—Panmongolism. Although the colonization began in the 17th century with growing numbers of Russian settlers, the biggest loss the Buryat nation experienced was during Socialism. Even the very name of the nation—Buryat-Mongols—and the name of the state establishment—Buryat-Mongolian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic—were changed to Buryats and Buryat ASSRepublic. Everything was done to eliminate any connections to the Mongolian roots. Traditional alphabet was prohibited, and the whole nation was forced to use first the Latin script and afterwards, Cyrillic. The nation, which traditionally was highly literate because of the practice to send one son from each family to the Buddhist monkshood, (monks were supposed to not only read and write using Mongolian script, but also, to use Tibetan and Sanskrit), thanks to the Stalinist "national policy" and "cultural revolution" became literally illiterate for the decade while transferring to Latin and Cyrillic. (Rinchen, 1973) The horrible atheist campaigns led to annihilation of hundreds of Buddhist monasteries, libraries, printing centers; to burning of thousands of books with Buddhist scripts and shamanist invocations, as well as secular literature. The campaign against Panmongolism (1947) caused the second wave of Stalin's repression and the physical extermination of Buryat intelligencia, lamas and shamans. The forceful administrative division (on September 26, 1937) of the whole Buryat population and its land split it into three parts: Buryat Autonomous Republic and two Buryat Autonomous Okrugs, which were excluded from the jurisdiction of the Buryat Republic and were governed by the Irkutsk regional government and Chita regional government. This also served to weaken Buryat-Mongolian ethnos. The motivation for this act was never declared and no documents of a discussion of these issues have been ever found. But it
was a logical end in a chain of repressions directed against the leaders and intellectuals of Buryatia in 1937. A homogenous territory of the Buryat nation was split and divided between three administrative territories and in each of them, including the Autonomous Republic, the Russian population numerically dominated. It dominated obviously in the party elite and government, too. The elimination of Buryat schools and the transition to Russian language as the only medium of education, official documentation, and even communication as such were also sources of Russification of culture and everyday life.

Perestroika brought hope for the Buryat nation. However, the processes of national and cultural resurrection, democratization are very complex. Extremism, the spread of nationalistic and chauvinistic movements after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, is one negative aspect of transition time; another one as I have already mentioned is the involvement into the processes of globalization. If the forced Russification almost eliminated the national identity and self-consciousness, so the processes of "Barbarization" could finish such a work.

The problems of "remembering oneself," the problems of cultural and ethnic revival, are not exclusively Buryat problems. Peoples around the globe who represent traditional cultures, are facing the same problems.

Being able to get acquainted with the literature on Native American views on nature, their influence on the modern environmental movement in the U.S., I started to compare their views with those of my nation, finding striking similarities.

In this paper, I will examine the ecological views of Mongols, giving a primary comparison with the Native American traditions, I will focus on the concept of sacred place in Mongolian culture and the theory of taboo in this context, using parallel
examples from Native American heritage. And, finally, I will propose a plan for the Culture-Ecology-Education Center, where the ideas of the past will be integrated with the modern methods of learning and teaching.
In the dominant view on nature in today's Russia, the land is lifeless. The land is a commodity. In these times, it is difficult to address issues of land use from the perspective of indigenous peoples, who perceive the land as sacred and alive. Priority is given to the short-term solution, like selling timber to Japan and South Korea, or lending big territories to the corporations of industrial countries for "development" without figuring out possible ecological consequences. To me, the restoration of the native beliefs and attitudes toward nature and native land, through proper education, is one of the measures urgently needed not only to save the environment, but also to save the integrity of my nation itself.

Buryat-Mongols—native people of the Baikal Asia—have elaborated through history their distinct relationship with the land and nature. They inhabited a vast territory with wide plains, dense taiga forests, high mountains, and the great Lake Baikal—the deepest and oldest freshwater lake in the world, which contains almost one fourth of the planet's freshwater. This variety of ecosystems was the background that defined Buryat-Mongolian ecological perspectives and belief systems.

The conscious attitude of man to his physical environment, the conscious decisions concerning the landscape around him, is determined by the empirical practice-by the activities on production of the means for existence. In the process of production the empirical knowledge of interdependence between abundance or scarcity of natural resources and climatic fluctuations; seasonal changes; the normal or extreme weather conditions; precipitation level and other ecological factors were of great importance. However, the practical activities of man were indissolubly connected with the spiritual occupation of the living space. (Abaev, 1992: 15)
Through millennia Buryat-Mongols have been passing on from generation to generation a view on nature that now we could call land-ethics. The basis of the ecological ideas is, first of all, an understanding of the oneness and interdependence of the processes in all components of nature. "The totemic ideas in the kinship of the first ethnosophical communities with particular animals and plants are the oldest, the most archaic kind of spiritual reflection of the ties between man and his environment. The oneness of natural world was understood in the limits of the ancestral blood affinity, which was the main principle of the social organization of the archaic human communities." (Abaev, 1992: 16)

The distinguishing feature of the land-ethics of my nation is a deep sense of embeddedness in the native land. Indeed, the whole pantheon of the gods of pre-shamanist and shamanist beliefs was in essence personified landscape and nature. The cult of Khan Gazar-Usun (the Lord Earth-Water) as one of higher divinity in the hierarchy of gods is a good example. Two other highest gods are Tengery (Eternal Blue Heaven) and Etugen (Mother Earth). The cult of Khan Gazar-Usun is the generalization of smaller cults of a particular river, or grove, or spring, or lake. Khan Gazar-Usun represents the whole spectrum of the features of the native land. (Heissig, 1980, Galdanova 1987)

Mongols also worshipped Earth as such. Marco Polo has the following to say on this subject:

They have one of their deities, whom they call Natigai, and they say that this is a deity of the earth or god of the country, who protects their women and their sons, their flocks and their grains... and they show it great worship and reverence, for each keeps an honorable place for it in his house. They make this god, namely out of felt and from other materials... (Heissig, 1980: 102)
This deity called by Polo "Natigai" is the Etugen Ehe of the Mongols. Between her, the ruler of the Golden world (altan delhe) and Heaven (tengery), there exists a fertile polarity, from which all things proceed:

Above the ninety-nine tengery...
Below the Mother Earth of seventy-seven levels...

Etugen Ehe is also called "brown-wrinkled Mother Earth" (boro horosotu etugen ehe) or "brown-wrinkled golden world" (boro horosotu altan delhei). (Holmberg, 1927)

The traditional understanding of the world by Mongols is based upon the unity of the human and the cosmos and the unity of man and nature. Man's respect toward nature is the essence of nomadic civilization and culture. If we analyze the oral traditions, we can realize the way in which my ancestors tried to generalize the interrelationships, interdependence and links among all natural phenomena, and between men and the world around them. The old proverbs, for example, say that “every beginning has its own end,” “A tree has leaves, environment has a sense,” “Water is soft, but can destroy hard rocks.” The expression of interrelationships between different phenomena in Mongolian oral tradition is trinitarian and it forms a distinct genre of philosophical folklore-triads.

(Damdinsuren 1957, Gaadambaa 1975).

White are the teeth in the youthfulness,
White are the hair in the senility,
White are the bones after death.

Rich is the earth with her herbs,
Rich is the ocean with his waters,
Rich is the sky with his stars.

True is death after birth,
True is impoverishment after accumulation,
True is parting after matching.
Fast are the clouds on the windy sky,
Fast is the thought in the smart mind,
Fast is the gallop of the good horse.

It is time for my nation to turn to the ancient wisdom, expressed in the symbols and characters of the great heroic epic "Geser," mythology and philosophical folklore. Good sources to understand the ecological traditions of Mongols are shamanic prayers and rituals.

In ethical views and relationships within society, nomads underlined the importance of community. In order to survive in the hard environmental circumstances, they had to be actively involved in the social life, in the life of the family, of the clan and the society. The value of community and the sense of corporate identity were very high. "If the things of others are going well, your own life will be well," tells the old saying. Mongols believe that the goal of life is to live tegsh (straight), in a balance and harmony with the world. Stuart explains the notion of tegsh life as

"... one stands alone and in power at the center of the world, with infinite blue Father Heaven above and Mother Earth supporting and nurturing below. By living an upright and respectful life, a human being (hun) will keep his world in balance and maximize his personal power (wind-horse, hiimorin)."

(Stuart 1997: 51)

Different sources on Native American belief systems suggest that they, like Mongols, have a close relationship with the natural world that shaped their beliefs and behavior. (Vecsey 1990, Brown 1985, Suzuki 1996) Native American cultures, diverse as they are, have integrally existed within the American landscape for thousands of years. Common to all Native American cultures are beliefs in a complex relationship with the natural world. They

... lived, and many still do live, what one might call a metaphysic of nature, spelled out by each group in great detail, defining responsibilities and the true
nature of that vast web of humankind’s cyclical interrelationship with the elements, the earth, and all that lives upon the land. (Brown 1985:110)

Scott Momaday explains further the relationship between Native Americans and the earth. The Native American is “… someone who thinks of himself in a particular way and his idea comprehends his relationship to nature.” (Momaday 1976:80) Ethnohistorian Harold Hickerson calls Indian religious expressions “the religion of nature.” Christopher Vecsey, in his “American Indian Environmental Religions,” quoted words of a missionary who spent many years among Dakota and Ojibwa, who once remarked that Indians worship nature; their altar and deity is the world around them. As Leon Shenandoah, the Tadodaho of the Six Nations of Iroquois stated: “Nature: that's our religion, our way of life.” (Vecsey 1990)

For the people in traditional societies, the connectedness with the native land is very important. Vine Deloria points out:

Within the western context we are always inclined to see land as a commodity and think first of its ownership; in contrast, the traditional Indian understanding of land focuses on its use, and the duties people assume when they come to occupy it. When an Indian thinks about traditional lands he always talks about what the people did there, the animals who lived there and how the people related to them, the seasons of the year and how the people responded the their changes, the manner in which tribe acquired possession of the area, and the ceremonial functions it was required to perform to remain worthy of living there. (Deloria, Jr. 1994: 259).

Indigenous people strongly believe in the power of the native land. A Mongol, for instance, comes to the very place of birth, where the placenta is buried to gain power and support for his life. This place is called toonto (little motherland) and is worshiped as a symbol of the whole native land. The nomadic lifestyle apparently must exclude the sentiments of the connectedness to a particular place, but in reality Mongols are attached
to their land. Mongolian expression *nutagtaa elegtei baihaa*, literally means to have liver to the place. It doesn’t sound very nice in English, but, if I am right and the English word *liver* has the same root as the word *live*, then this expression makes perfect sense even in English translation: a sort of attachment and embeddedness in the land, upon which the very existence—being alive—of humans depend. During numerous migrations a nomadic family takes with them a rock from the hearth as a symbol of the native land, and puts it on the base of the hearth on a new place.

Shamans—the keepers of native spiritual traditions—have to come to the native place regularly to pray and conduct special rituals. It is traditionally understood that a shaman must have an unbreakable connection with the native land where his ancestors were born and buried. Regularly, every month on a particular day, or at least twice a year, the shaman has to visit the place of an ongon. Ongon is the manifestation, the living space of the ancestor's spirit. Visiting this sacred place, the shaman gains spiritual power. Or, speaking modern language, a shaman’s energy must constantly be recharged. A shaman, who has lost his connection with his motherland for a long time or has left his native places, loses the spiritual power and in the end dies as a person who did not accomplish his destiny to help people (*Olon zondoo tuhatai baikha*).

I was very fortunate being able to work for a famous Mongolian shaman, Tseren-Zaarin, as an interpreter. Zaarin is the title given to the shamans of the highest 13th level of initiation. Originally from the Buryat Galzuut tribe, in the 1930s he and his family left the Soviet Union and escaped from the terror of Stalin to the steppes of Mongolian Peoples’ Republic. Of course, officials of Mongolia persecuted him too; he was in prison, but he has survived, while in Russia, thousands of Buryat-Mongolian intelligencia,
Buddhist clergy and shamans were exterminated. He was not able to visit the land of his ancestors for a long time. Only in the summer of 1996 could he return to the shore of Lake Baikal—the sacred sea of all Mongols—to stand on the land of his forefathers, and conduct ceremonies in honor of the spiritual owners of the Lake—Oihon-Baabai and thirteen Lords of the North, as well as Great Eagle Bird—the mythical ancestor of all Buryat-Mongolian shamans.

With big joy in his heart and big inspiration, Tseren-Zaarin led the ritual. Under the direction of Tseren-Zaarin, the initiation to the level of "Zaarin" of another shaman from Mongolia took place. As he also was originally a Buryat, the prayer and receiving of such a high title on the Buryat earth were extremely important and symbolic for him. His grandfather, Khulkhu-Zaarin, was a very powerful shaman too. Shaman Bazar has received shaman utha (hereditary shamanic gift) from him and other ancestors, although in the past he was fulfilling his predestination as just a bonesetter, healer (bariasha).

The time that I spent with Tseren-Zaarin and other shamans was a time of re-evaluating many things in my life. I came to realize more deeply how many of the native ways were lost in the time of forced Russification and during the time of the imposed communist ideology. I came to realize how important it is to restore the traditional native knowledge about the natural world. I came to realize how important it is to reestablish the moral, reciprocal relationship with nature. These people—the keepers of ancient knowledge and wisdom—are still alive; we have to learn from them. The shamanic prayers and invocations, shamanist legends, stories, talking with and, more importantly, listening to the shamans; understanding of traditional taboos would be a good source for the development of the environmental conscience. Nature, itself, would be a "textbook"
in these terms. Which leads us to discuss the concept and educational potential of the sacred space and place.
3. CONCEPT OF SACRED PLACE

In Mongolian and Buryat language, the term ‘sacred’—‘ariun’—literally means ‘pure’; or as an attribute of a place, ‘hatuu gazar’ means ‘powerful’ place or place of power. American historian J. Donald Hughes has explored the cultural differences between American Indian and European concepts of land and offered a good definition of the sanctity of geographic place.

Sacred space is a place where human beings find a manifestation of divine power, where they experience a sense of connectedness to the universe. There, in some special way, spirit is present to them. (Hughes 1986: 247)

A prominent French anthropologist, Callois, extends further the characteristics of the sacred:

The domain of the sacred is one in which he is paralyzed in turn by fear and by hope—a world in which, as at the edge of an abyss, the least misstep, the least movement can doom him irrevocably... Thus, in its basic form, the sacred represent a dangerous force, incomprehensible, intractable but eminently efficacious. (Callois 1932:19)

To my mind these passages do include the most important categories of the sacred. In the next chapter, I will explore in more details the feelings of fear and, paradoxically, feelings of hope, relief and security, which a person experiences in the special place.

"The sacred cannot be subdued, diluted, or divided. It is indivisible and always a totality, wherever it is found," points out Callois (Ibid.23). I experienced the importance of this statement this summer, working on the interpretive project on Lake Tahoe's Cave Rock. Cave Rock is a sacred site of the Washoe Indians. For thousands of years, Washoe bound up their life with Tahoe, it was the center of their universe. "Da ow a ga," they called the lake, associating with it their hopes and faith, their lives and their strength, their past, present, and future. The strong spiritual connection to the place, where the
Washoe believed their nation came to existence, is the center of their world and their way of life. And Tahoe's Cave Rock was a special place, where only very powerful shamans and exceptional medicine men could visit to gain spiritual power, inspiration, and to develop their ability to heal. Nobody else was allowed to approach this forceful site.

The normal flow of history was interrupted in 1931, when the highway was built, and a tunnel was dug up through the Cave Rock. But the power of Cave Rock was so immense, that even after the tunnel was built, the Washoe followed traditional taboo, even today refusing to drive on this highway and using a long route around. In 1992 the situation worsened when local rock climbers started to use the sacred site.

We were trying to identify the roots of special attitudes of native people toward Cave Rock and numerous aspects of the modern controversy around this site. Elders of the Washoe tribe told us stories about Lake Tahoe and Cave Rock. The stories depicted the presence of the dangerous force in this place, whether it was a story about "water babies" or about a giant bird, Ong, who had his nest in the Cave Rock, and who will return and punish people if the Washoe become disrespectful of this site. Every Washoe with whom we have talked stressed the same thing, that Cave Rock is a place of exceptional power, it is sacred, and that they were not supposed to even step on it or talk about it much. Only the most powerful medicine men could communicate with the power of the Rock; they would go to the site for a vision quest, to regain spiritual power, to pray for the well-being of the whole world. To me, these prayers for the well-being of the world are important in understanding the Washoe way of thinking. One can argue that for a traditional Washoe, the world was limited by the size of the tribe. Even in this case, in
their understanding, it was the prayer for the world in its entirety. And now, the highway runs right through the sacred place, water jets disturb the peace of the Rock under water, groups of rock climbers and curious hikers desecrate the site as they traverse it. In this situation, the desire of the Washoe Indians to protect the integrity of the sacred site is understandable. They are addressing not only the religious and spiritual significance of the place, but also (and mostly) the cultural and historical value of it for the Washoe and the U.S. As Brian Wallace, the Chairman of the Washoe tribe pointed out: "A community, a tribe, a region, even a country that cannot remember its past and honor it is truly in danger of losing its soul."

The federal agencies are aware of the significance of Cave Rock for the Washoe Indians, and they are trying to find a reasonable compromise in the conditions of the multiple use of the public land (although to me, the process of sacred place becoming "public land" especially "multiple use" land, is in itself problematic). We met outstanding people among officials, who were really culturally sensitive in this controversial issue. We had joined a group of archeologists who were conducting ethnographic and archeological research on Cave Rock for the Forest Service. One day, we even planned to scuba dive to investigate the underwater life of Cave Rock. I always wanted to see the world under water, so I was very excited. But when the scheduled day came, and we approached Cave Rock, I felt immediately an unusual Something, which could not be explained. All the participants of our project shared these feelings of a great reverence, verging on fear, the feelings of great admiration for the place. It was no question for me whether to go diving or not; I wasn't able even to hike to the top of Cave Rock. I mean that Something definitely prevented me from going up. One of our
friends, a participant in the project, tried to encourage us by telling the story about the Hebrew religious notion of the “Holy of Holies,” which allows a person who is supposed to ‘fix’ something in the “Holy of Holies” to enter. Our friend argued that since we had in mind a purpose of helping people to understand the significance of the place, a kind of ‘fixing’ mission, and our intentions were pure, we had a right to do what we had planned. Nonetheless, no one from our group dared to explore the underwater world of the site.

And it wasn’t just knowledge of the fact that the Washoe consider the major power of the place to be concentrated under water on the sand path to the northwest of Cave Rock; it was the feeling and understanding of the sacredness. Or maybe we just felt that we were not right ‘fixers’ yet. Indeed, who was I to ‘fix’ things, to know what the place thinks?

The group of archaeologists (very nice and dutiful people) started their work, Linda Shoshone and Darriel Bender, who are tribal members, (we were told that Darriel is a powerful medicine man) who had been doing a lot of work to preserve Washoe cultural heritage, were here to help the scientists. During the whole expedition, Linda kept on saying that she felt a strong headache, and that she even was not supposed to be here at all. Whereas Susan Lindström, the professor of archaeology, pled that she would do everything very carefully, like touching little. I deeply respect Susan and her difficult work, but the whole conversation was like a communication in different languages. For Linda, there wasn’t such a thing as “careful investigation of the sacred site”—you perceive it as a sacred with all the consequences and attitudes, and leave it alone, or you do not, and then you do whatever you want. On that day, I probably came to realize more deeply the idea of sacredness as a totality, which can not be divided.
Rudolf Otto’s work “Das Heilige” (The Sacred) discovers the characteristics of experiencing the sacred:

... the feelings of terror before the sacred, before the awe-inspiring mystery \((mysterium tremendum)\), the majesty \((majestas)\) that emanates an overwhelming superiority of power; he finds religious fear before the fascinating mystery \((mysterium fascinans)\) in which perfect fullness of being flowers. (Eliade 1961: 9)

Otto characterizes all these experience as “numinous.” The numinous presents itself as something “wholly other” \((ganz andere)\) something basically and totally different. In front of it man senses “his profound nothingness, feels that he is only a creature, or, in the words in which Abraham addresses the Lord, is ‘but dust and ashes.” (Eliade 1961: 10)

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. Eliade proposed the term “hierophany.” He underlines a “certain uneasiness” for modern Western thought to accept many manifestations of the sacred.

He [the Westerner] finds it difficult to accept the fact, that for many human beings, the sacred can be manifested in stones or trees, for example. But ..., what is involved is not a veneration of the stone itself, a cult of the tree in itself. The sacred tree, the sacred stone are not adored as stone or tree; they are worshiped precisely because they are hierophanies, because they show something that is no longer a stone or tree but the sacred, the ganz andere. (Eliade 1961: 12)

Every hierophany represents a paradox. By manifesting the sacred, the object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself. A sacred stone remains a stone. But, for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, it is a “ganz andere.” For them, as Eliade writes, “all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality.” (Eliade 1961: 12)

Regarding the sacredness of place Eliade points out: a) a sacred place constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space; b) this break is symbolized by an opening by which
passage from one cosmic region to another is made possible (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld); c) communication with heaven is expressed by one or another of certain images, all of which refer to the axis mundi: mountain, tree, vine, etc.; d) around this cosmic axis lies the world (our world), hence the axis is located ‘in the middle,’ at the ‘navel of the earth’; it is the Center of the World.

One of the notable characteristics of traditional societies is the opposition that they assume between their inhabited territory with the sacred center, and the unknown space that surrounds them. The former is world (our world), the cosmos; everything outside is no longer a cosmos, but chaotic space. The traditional culture of Mongols, for instance, refers to the mountain Sumber (Meru) as the center of the Universe. The center represents the meeting point with the sacred. All who are in immediate closeness to the center are us, the world around is our world, and everything else is alien and hostile. The famous Mongolian formula “five colored, four aliens” represents the structure of the ancient Mongolian world: five affiliated tribes and four enemy states. “Five colored” (with sophisticated color symbolism) were understood as tribes, situated according four cardinal directions and the fifth tribe—the center. The positioning of the royal military camp would also reflect the understanding of the sacred center and profane edges. Tuan points out:

Geographically, the broad and flat Mongolian plateau is the waterdivide for the great river systems of Siberia and Eastern Asia. It has some claim to centrality. The Mongols are aware of this but they take Mongolia to be a great mound and the center of the world rather than as a plateau rimmed by the higher mountains. They, the Mongols, live on the central mound whereas other peoples live below them, on its slopes. To most peoples of Siberia and Central Asia the world is either circular or rectangular... The sky of the Buryat is shaped like an overturned cauldron, rising and falling over the earth disc, of which the Buryat occupy the central place. (Tuan 1990: 32-33)
There are some exceptions from this basically ethnocentric perception of the universe by different nations around the globe. For instance, Aztecs or natives of Madagascar, who “believed that a superior race, semidivine, lived beyond the confines of their known territory.” (Tuan 1990: 44) However, for the majority of indigenous cultures, the cult of the native land as a “center of the world” is characteristic.

The notion of the sacred clan mountain is closely connected with the cult of the sacred clan land. As Eliade’s characterization of the sacredness of the place suggests, it is the symbolic image where the communication with Heaven takes place. (Eliade 1961)

The archeological findings allow us to prove that the sacred mountain is not a “symbolic image” it is a real place of communication with “more-than-human” realities. For instance, Menes and P.B.Konovalov stress the fact that the majority of the archeological monuments in Mongolia were found close to mountains; on the surface of mountains numerous petroglyphs were commonly to be seen. The thorough analysis of those places allowed Menes to argue that “practically all of the petroglyph mountains served as cult centers in the past.” (Menes, 1986 :95) At those places, offerings were made to the tribal mountain which in the Mongolian view was equivalent to the native tribal land as a whole.

One of the symbols of the universe in Mongolian culture is obo—a conical heap of rocks on the top or bottom of a sacred mountain, on the bank of a river, or on a lake. The elements of obo were meaningful. The vertical heap represents the height of the sky, the smoke of the fire—the voyage to the heaven, leaves of the birch—the renewal of nature. The behavior and actions of people praying on the obo had their profound meaning too. When passing an obo, travelers are required to walk around it three times
in a sunwise movement and to place a rock on it. In doing this, a person not only demonstrates his respect for the place, but also by adding a rock—symbolically increasing the power of the place’s spirit—a person receives good luck for his journey.

One particular day of a certain season, the special ceremony devoted to the spirits of obo, obo tahih, takes place. After invocations and prayers of a shaman or a Buddhist lama, participants of the ceremony would take a handful grass, which means to receive happiness and well-being from the mother Earth (*hishig abaha*). As an offering, they would burn the heads and pericardium of the sacrificed animals to thank and to secure the multiplication of their herds.

The cult of obo is an expression of the cult of the mountains. Obo means not only the place were the gods are present but also a religious center, a temple, a sanctuary in the limits of one particular ethnic or administrative-territorial unit. (Galdanova 1987) Obo were usually placed on the magnificent, beautiful places with plenty of water and vegetation, not far from the roads, so everybody on the path can give something to the obo to secure the support and help of the gods on the way. (Michailov 1978) I do not think that the decision to erect an obo on particular place was influenced solely by the aesthetic virtue of the site. Moreover, I do not think the place could be chosen at all. The hierophany of place would reveal itself with the means of different signs.

Many scholars consider the obo cults to be preshamanist cults. (Michailov 1978, Galdanova 1987, Urbanaeva 1995). Heissig analyzed the meaning of obo in the context of shamanist conceptions and the transformation of the cult under the influence of Buddhism. The Lamaist liturgical writers, he argues, subsequently made ancient local deities and the Lords of the water into gods and dragons and the eight classes of Lords of
the Earth and Water—Sabdags and Luus. (sabdag-lords of the Earth; and luus
(dragons)-lords of the water). The famous creator of a Mongolian national liturgy,
Mergen Diyanchi Lama formulated this as follows:

...obos in this land of ours are made as a shrine and receptacle in which will
dwell the gods (tengri) and dragons(luus) and eight classes of lords of land
and water, who are a protection, enclosure, aid and tutelary genius (sulde) for
ourselves... (Heissig, 1980: 105)

Despite Buddhist addition into the Lamaist pantheon, the protective function of the local
deities remained the same. In the “Praise of the Obo”, spoken at the conclusion of the
Obo ceremonies, we find:

We adore the gods (tengri) and dragons, the protectors and tutelary geniuses
who accomplish perfectly our desires when we offer prayer, send offerings...
Through the strength of this our obeisance, worship and praise do you
constantly be companions and friends to us all, sacrificers and those on
whose behalf sacrifice is made, at home or in the steppe or wherever we may
be. Allay illness and the hindrances of ada and jedker-demons: spread the
splendor of long life and the joy felicity;... banish all the tormenting, inimical
todqar-demons; banish all plague and epidemic illnesses, and ills of day,
month and year; avert evils of the type of wolves attacking the flocks, thieves
and brigands stirring abroad, hail, drought or cattle-pest occurring...? (Heissig,
1980: 106)

As I have already mentioned, the sacred center of the tribal territory was mountains.

Among Mongols, along with the local spirits and deities manifested in the obo, the spirits
and personifications of individual mountains were also worshipped. Above all the
prominent mountains such as the Altai, Khangai, Kentei, Bogdo Uul, Sayan, Bayan
Zurch, Songgina, Chingeltei, are worshipped in invocation of their own.

When the difficult year will come,
Please, give us protection.
When the year with diseases will come,
Please protect us from diseases.
Let our cattle multiply,
Let us become rich.
Let our offspring multiply,
Let us become a plenty. (Central Asian Shamanism... 1996)

The spirits of the North Mongolian mountains—Chingeltei, Bayan Zurch, Bogdo Uul and Songgino in particular—were known and worshipped under the names “The Lords of the Four Mountains.” In a shamanistic song of invocation, recorded and translated by famous Mongolian academician B.Rinchen, Tungchingarbo—the spirit of the Bogdo Uul massif, is called upon:

Accompanied by bears as their traveling companions,
Setting forth with reddish-gray reindeer,
They arrived on their
Thirty-three dun horses.
Holy Dalha Tunchingarbo,
You are my refuge and my love,
The liberation of Umaxum! (Heissig, 1980: 107)

In fact, the Bogdo Uul massif can be considered one of the first official nature preserves, since the sovereigns of Mongolia officially prohibited there all activities, except for prayers and

The values associated with mountains are important for American Indian cultures, too.

These mountains and the land between them are the only things that keep us strong. From them, and because of them, we prosper... We carry soil from the sacred mountains in prayer bundle that we call dah nidiilyeeh. Because of this bundle, we gain possessions and things of value, turquoise, necklaces, and bracelets. With this we speak, with this we pray. This is where the prayers begin.

So, George Blueeyes explains the all-encompassing role of mountains in Navajo life. (McPherson 1992:16) Sacred mountains should not be climbed unless it is done in a proper way through prayer and song, and they should be returned to by medicine men every twelve years to renew their Blessingway prayers. Failure to follow correct
procedure leads to either individual harm or the loss of powers of a sacred site. In every ceremony the powers of the mountains and their deities are invoked to render aid in healing the sick, protecting the people and their goods, bringing rain for crops and livestock, and insuring tranquillity in life. Robert McPherson gives an amazing example of one Navajo man's explanation of the role of sacred mountains:

> the white people all look to the government like to the sacred mountains. You ... hold out your hands to the government. In accord with that, the government, you live. But we look to our sacred mountains ... . According to them we live—they are our Washington (government). (McPherson 1992: 23)

We have just seen that the mountain occurs among the images that express the connection between heaven and earth, establishing the center of the world.

To us, it seems an inescapable conclusion that the religious man sought to live as near as possible to the Center of the World. He knew that his country lay at the midpoint of the earth; ... But he also wanted his own house to be at the Center and to be an imago mundi. (Eliade 1961: 43) (emphasis added)

Dwellings in traditional cultures reflect this idea. “Cosmic symbolism is found in the very structure of the habitation. The house is an imago mundi.” (Eliade, ibid.) For instance, the sacred lodge of Algonquins and the Sioux represent the universe. The roof symbolizes the dome of the sky, the floor represents the earth, the four walls--the four directions of cosmic space. The ritual construction of the space is emphasized by a threefold symbolism: the four doors, the four windows, and the four colors signify the four cardinal points. The construction of the sacred lodge thus repeats the cosmogony, for the lodge represents the world. (Eliade 1961: 44)

The Navajo hogan is a spacious, dome-shaped dwelling, constructed from logs and mud. It has long served as a shelter and an arena for the wide range of activities in the lives of Navajo people—from cooking, weaving, sleeping, and childbearing to
storytelling and ceremonial singing and prayer. As David Suzuki and Peter Knudston pointed out in the “Wisdom of the Elders,” “To the Navajo, hogans are not just places to eat and sleep, mere parts of the workaday world; they occupy a central place in the sacred world.” (Suzuki and Knudston 1993: 155) The spiritual sanctity of the hogan has its roots in Navajo origin myth. After their emergence upon the earth from the darker realm below, First Man and First Woman carried out the act of creation. One of their deeds was to build and bless the first ceremonial house. In this house the first couple formed the first life forms to inhabit the earth's surface. “Because the hogan—then and now—is a microcosmic structure which stands at the center of the world, at the emergence place, it came to symbolize the universe in its totality.” (Suzuki and Knudston 1993: 55) The roof reflects the sky, its flat dirt floor corresponds with the earth itself. Each of the four wooden pillars that support the roof is aligned and clearly identified with one of the four cardinal directions. The Navajo link these directions together in a “sunwise” movement—from east to south to west and finally to north—so that, it would be sort of an imitation of the sun’s path by humans. The single entrance to the hogan faces east, in respect to the sole opening of the world, which lies in the east. Its geometric form is central to the sanctity of the Navajo hogan. Traditionally, it is in the shape of a circle. In Navajo culture, the circle represents symbolic cosmic significance.

The horizon, the great visible boundary between the edge of the earth and the edge of the sky, is circular. The daily trajectory of the sun through the firmament is circular. The radiant disc of the sun, nature's annual cycles of growth and fertility, and the climatic turning of the seasons, are circular. And the path of Navajo move as they move in a sunwise direction inside of a hogan, chanting and praying to restore the earth to the natural state of dynamic balance and environmental beauty called hózhó, is also circular. (Suzuki and Knudtson 1993: 156)
The hogan's inherent sacredness is proclaimed in many Navajo stories, prayers, and songs. Navajo Blessingway singer Frank Mitchell proclaimed:

Howowo 'ai yeye 'aiye!
It is a sacred house that I have come to,
It is a sacred house that I have come to, holaghei.
Now I have come to the house of the Earth.

Another description of a hogan stresses the sacred meaning of the hogans too:

The hogan is comprised of white shell, abalone, turquoise, and obsidian, bringing the home and the sacred mountains into one unit. The home is also adorned with the dawn, the blue sky, the twilight and the night—the sun in the center as the fire. (Ibid.)

In the basis of Mongolian traditional log and felt dwelling, there was one principle, the principle of the undivided uniform space. Their distinct understanding of the organization of the micro- and macrocosm Mongolian peoples transferred to their dwellings too. The shelter is a microcosm. The round tent or yurt represents the vaulting sky. The opening of the roof that lets out the smoke leads to the polar star, which on the cosmic level is variously interpreted as the stake that holds the celestial tent, or a sky holes in the multistoried heavenly vault. To the Mongols, a central axis passes though the holes and through the three regions of sky, earth, and underworld. Along it the gods descend to earth and the dead to the subterranean regions. Along the same axis the soul of the ecstatic shamans may fly up or down. In preparation for the rites the shaman erects a special tent. A birch is put in the center so that the crown of the tree sticks out of the air hole in the middle of the roof. Nine divisions are cut into the birch, symbolizing nine heavens, up which the shaman is expected to climb. (Tuan 1990)

The structure of the yurt helped children from early childhood to perceive the environment as an indivisible whole. It formed the basis for the specific sensitive way of
thinking. Beginning to orient themselves in the yurt, the children were positioned to absorb knowledge about the order of the universe. Indeed, in the basis of principles of the yurts’ organization lie the principles of the organization of the natural environments.

The ger (yurt) is not only the center of the universe, but also a microcosm within it. In fact, it is a map of the universe at large, and the vault of the heavens is reflected in the arched shape of the interior of the ger roof. The entrance always faces south, since that is the front of the ger. The north side is called hoimor, located behind the fire, is the most honorable spot in the ger. It is here that the sacred objects, ongon—spirit dwellings and other religious images are placed on a table. The right, west side is male, and storage place for men’s tools, saddles, bows, and guns. The left, east side is female, the storage place for the cooking utensils, cradleboards, and other women’s objects. Movement is "sunwise," in a clockwise direction." (Stuart 1997:52).

I agree with Yi-Fu Tuan, that “in the absence of books and formal instruction, architecture is the key to comprehending reality.” (Tuan 1977: 102) The education in a Mongolian family began with the simple, with the acquaintance with the cardinal directions. In Mongolian languages the notion of “baruun” means the west, the western, and the right. The notion “zuun” means the east, the eastern and the left. In defining the parts of a yurt, “baruun” and “zuun” play a role of the “eastern” and “western” parts, (Basaeva 1988) so the location of the different objects in the yurt instructed children to always go out from the cardinal directions regardless of whether the object is to the right or to the left from the subject. The entrance to the yurt was strongly directed to the South, because of the Mongolian worship of the Sun in zenith. (Viktorova: 1980) The herders taught their children to distinguish accurately different cardinal directions and always set the yurt with the entrance oriented to the South. The household ware and utensils are located strictly according to the cardinal directions, and according to the place of the falling down of the sun rays through the smoke hole—the toono. The smoke...
hole and sun rays functioned like clock. At different times of the day, sun rays will pass different parts of the yurt. The whole circle of the dwelling is “divided” into 12 parts—hours. Every hour was given the name of an animal, and this hour corresponds with approximately 2 hours in European chronology. The inner design of the yurt, the placement of different things were strongly determined by the time. (See Fig.1)

Such a merger of space and time in the yurt creates a unique spatial and temporal picture. The spatial picture of the microworld in the yurt was a model of the macroworld, imagined by the nomads of Central Asia. The arrangement of the things and subjects in the yurt in accordance with the cardinal directions and circular movement of the sun light was very important in the process of the children’s education. First of all, it formed in the children's mind a clear understanding of the deterministic principle of the world order, where everything has its cause and consequence. Second, it formed the understanding of the unity of time. And, finally, it contributes to deeper understanding of the unity of the micro and macro worlds.

The Mongolian peoples, introducing the distinct order in the arrangements of the yurt, created a specific logic in children’s minds, and formed a discipline. The same job did the division of the yurt, of cause just a conditional division, into the mail and female halves. “The place of a man is on the west part, and the one of a woman - on the east part.” (Basaeva 1984: 118) The movement of the young women in the yurt was limited, for instance the daughters-in-law had no right in the yurt of her father-in-law to enter the western part. (Basaeva ibid.) From early childhood the nomads came to realize the difference in the rights of men and women, which allowed them to understand the logic of Nature, which divided everything alive into males and females. They came to realize
the advantages of men and the possibilities of women. Thus, the traditional dwellings representing distinct understanding of the universe historically served as a means of education.

The built environment, like language, has the power to define and refine sensibility. It can sharpen and enlarge consciousness. Without architecture feelings about space must remain diffuse and fleeting. The designed environment serves an educational purpose. In some societies the building is the primary text for handing down a tradition, for presenting a view of reality. To a nonliterate people the house may be not only a shelter but also a ritual place and the locus of economic activity. Such a house can communicate ideas even more effectively than can ritual. Its symbols form a system and are vividly real to the family members as they pass through the different stages of life. (Tuan 1990 107-112)

I have tried to explore the concept of the sacred in traditions of indigenous people. The sacredness of nature is the central idea in the world view of traditional cultures. To maintain a spiritual connection to the particular place—place of emergence; center of the world; place of communication with the "more-than-human" reality—is to maintain the identity of an ethnos. In the traditional cultures of Mongols and Native Americans, the land itself has power to insure a mindful and respectful attitude toward nature and what we can now call environmentally conscious behavior. Speaking with the words of Annie Peaches, a seventy-seven years old Apache woman:

The land is always stalking people. The land makes people live right. The land looks after us. The land looks after people. (Basso 1996)

The idea of the moral efficacy of the landscape in indigenous societies is passed from generation to generation by the means of stories of ethnogenesis, cosmological myths, legends and traditional taboos.

Anthropologist Keith Basso, in his book "Wisdom sits in places," gives an interesting analysis of the experiential importance of geographic place in the Western
Apache culture. He gives a functional description of the connection of native moral teachings with particular sites—"theory of wisdom." Using places and their meaning, Apache theory of wisdom proposes, writes Basso, that the social and moral development of a personality is based on "extended reflection on symbolic dimensions of the physical environment." Accordingly, ... "features of the Apache landscape, their richly evocative names, and tribal narratives that recall their mythical importance are viewed as resources with which determined men and women can modify aspects of themselves, including, most basically, their own ways of thinking." (Basso 1996: 146) The tribal narratives—called "agodzaahi," which literally means "that which has happened" always begin and end with the place name—exactly where the events in the story actually occurred.

"Mountain and arroyos," Basso writes, "step in symbolically for grandmothers and uncles." Yet Basso's suggestion that the sites in the land serve a "symbolic" function (that they have come to "symbolize" moral teaching) implies an unwarranted degree of arbitrariness to the association between moral lessons and the natural landscape, by implying that the association is more conceptual and pragmatic than it is organic and unavoidable, argues David Abram. (Abram 1996: 161) I agree that Basso's point diminished the extent to which the places themselves may be felt to be the "active instigators of those painful lessons, the ultimate authors of those events and hence those stories." (Abram ibid.) Of course, Basso stresses the primacy of place in western Apache storytelling:

Nothing is considered more basic to the effective telling of a Western Apache 'story' or 'narrative' than identifying the geographical locations at which events in the story unfold. For unless Apache listeners are able to picture a physical setting for narrated events (unless, as one of my consultants said, "your mind can travel to the place to really see it."), the events themselves will be difficult to imagine. This is because events in
the narratives will seem to “happen nowhere” (dohwaq'agodzaa da), and such
an idea, Apaches assert, is both preposterous and disquieting. Placeless
events are impossibility, everything that happens must happen
somewhere. The location of an event is an integral aspect of the event
itself, and therefore identifying the event’s location is essential to properly
depicting, and effectively picturing, the event’s occurrence. (Basso, 1996)

So, it is absolutely obvious that a place in the Western Apache experience of phenomena
played an active and central role. Yet, Basso provides no indication of why, then, do the
Apache, and native cultures in general, give so much importance to places? David Abram
formulated an answer, which I totally support.

The answer... is obvious. To member of a non-writing culture, places are
never just passive setting. A particular place in the land is never, for an oral
culture, just a passive or inert setting for the human events that occur here. It
is an active participant in those occurrences. Indeed, by virtue of its
underlying and enveloping presence, the place may even be felt to be source,
the primary power that expresses itself through the various events that unfold
there. It is for this reason that stories are not told without identifying the
earthly sites where the events occur. For the Western Apache, human events
and encounters simply cannot be isolated from the places that engender them.
(Abram 1996: 162)

For indigenous cultures the place where something happened is never accidental to
those occurrences. “The event belongs, as it were, to the place, and to tell the story of
those events is to let the place itself speak through the telling.” (Abram 1996: 163) Thus,
the wisdom of ancestors is embodied in the stories, the stories reside in the land—
wisdom sits in places. For the native cultures the understanding of the sacredness of the
land and places are the

...foundation of all other beliefs and practices, because they represent the
presence of sacred in our lives. They properly inform us that we are not larger
than nature and that we have responsibilities to the rest of the natural world
that transcend our personal desires and wishes. (Deloria 1989: 279-281)
4. TABOOS CONNECTED WITH THE CONCEPT OF SACRED PLACE AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL ROLE

Humans, when touching upon incomprehensible phenomena and events, put a taboo on them. "Cannot," "must not"; "do not"; "it is prohibited"—those were the words of education the young generation of Mongols heard when dealing with inexplicable phenomena. It is very difficult to reveal the whole conceptual basis of taboo; it is very possible that such a basis has never existed, because if it did, it would imply the necessity of explanation—"Why it is prohibited?"

All sources that I have mentioned in connection with ethnopedagogics of Mongols, such as "Zurhai," "Mirror of wisdom," heroic epic "Geser" and shamanic stories and legends merely state forbidden acts. Zurhai, for example, does not explain reasons why, it just uses the arguments of a particular location of the stars and moon. (Khamaganova 1996). Shamanic legends and stories simply manifest the prohibition: "It is unthinkable to do."

The lack of "scientific" reasoning does not diminish the influence of taboo on the education and processes of rearing/nurturing among Mongols. On the contrary, the institution of taboo probably was introduced with one goal—the educational goal.

The laws according to which peoples of the Mongolian world lived were simple and vivid. But even so, the laws could not anticipate all collisions of human life or every human activity. A famed Buryat historian, Sh. Chimitdorzhiev, in his retrospective analysis of the Buryat legal system, beginning with the common law and first written
laws of 16th century, gives interesting examples of different articles of laws. Article 38 of the Steppe Conduct states: “If somebody will offend their own parents, he must be punished with the knout publicly, in front of the other young people; if parents will impoverish they have to receive support from their son, voluntarily.” The punishment for an out-of-marriage affair was as follows: “If somebody, according mutual inclination, will be close with the wife of another person, they both must be whipped, and a man has to give a horse in favor of the husband of this woman.” Different articles of the Steppe Conducts were as follows: punishment for physical and verbal abuse; punishment for causing damage as result of a quarrel; rules on using alcohol, and dealing with drunk people; on support of parents and younger brothers; on expenses in festivals, Buddhist holidays and weddings; on fees and offerings for invited Lamas, shamans, and healers; on adoptions and inheritance of property; on mutual gifts and friendship; on use of hired labor; on investigation of property thefts; on catching and protecting thieves, fugitives or liars; on adultery; on punishments for gossips and lies; punishments for gambling; on mutilation of livestock and others." (Chimitdorzhiev 1997: 25-26)

The laws had punitive functions. Taboos, to my mind, carried conditioning/educational functions. The laws cannot “educate,” they warn, prevent and foresee some events. Taboos, stating that a particular action is not allowed, set very clear educational aims of self-discipline. In the first case—that of violating the law—the physical or social-verbal punishment follows; however, in the case of taboo violation, the person remains one-on-one with himself. (bieree baiha) The mechanism of forming self-discipline by the means of taboo has clearly educational, instructional, and informative functions.
The perception of knowledge without proof is an axiom. This idea belongs to
the pedagogues and mathematicians of ancient Greece, but as we can see the nomads of
Central Asia also understood the importance of the introduction to education and child-
rearing the principles of truth, which do not require proof, like taboos.

Without explanation of the reasons, the young generation was told that wild
animals, which came to human dwellings were not to be killed; that marriage between
relatives from seven generations back is not allowed; that it is not allowed to extinguish
fire with water; that is unthinkable to built a new house on the place where there was
already one.

Probably the knowledge that was perceived by the child as an axiom was kept in
mind more deeply than knowledge which included an explanation of its cause - effect
-ties. Let's discuss an example, a Buryat story, "Swans." Once upon a time nine white
swans - daughters of the higher Tengery Esege Malan Tengery came down to the Earth,
to the lake Tengery, on the bottom of Munko-Saridak Mountain, to the South-West of the
ninety-nine glacier peaks of Mundarga. Then they traveled to the Aha River, to the Cliff
Hairhan, below Zima. And there three swans had misfortune. They "buzarhadaa," or
they desecrated themselves. Buzarhadaa means to violate a ceremonial taboo (to visit a
prohibited place, to eat "unpure" forbidden food, to wear "unpure" dress, etc.)

The description of the events is very detailed. All the geographical features and
names are real. Such a detailed description of the event serves not only to confirm the
reality of a story, and to convince listeners that the violation of a taboo really took place,
but also and more important, to underline that the place itself was an active participant of
the incident. In this story, swans—daughters of the higher divinity—remained on the
Earth forever. The loss of their divine status was the punishment for violating a taboo. The story does not tell us who has punished those swans. It is remarkable that they were not freed from the punishment even though they were daughters of the highest being in the heaven. Everybody who violates taboo will be punished, regardless of his origin—heavenly or earthly. It was a conclusion to which children were led by the elders, the storytellers of the past.

It is possible to say that Mongolian society actively used taboo in education and the child-rearing processes. I would mark out the following principles that underlie the idea of taboo:

1. The violation of taboo is punishable. The punishment is conducted by neither a society, nor any concrete person. The punishment comes from above. It is of astral origin.

2. Everybody is equal before taboo. Taboo equalizes all, both humans and inhabitants of Heaven. Nobody is given the right to break a taboo.

3. The only way someone can avoid taboo violation is with “knowledge.” Only knowledge of all actions, which eventually could lead to taboo violation can protect from improper actions and conducts.

4. In an educational sense, taboo formed a conviction in the existence of a justice of a higher order.

Taboos reflected peculiarities of the Mongolian nomadic way of life. A nomadic cattle breeding economy, being fully dependent on the “whims” of nature, is very vulnerable. Big herds of livestock could be devastated by blizzards or snowfalls. Infectious diseases could kill hundreds of thousands of animals. In general, the influence of natural forces and elements is unpredictable. The faith in the existence, and more
important, in the action of a higher power did strengthen the spirit and mind of people. 

Faith in the social justice enforced by taboo was the product of education in Mongolian societies. The answers to the questions like: “Why is livestock dying?” or “Why one is followed by misfortune and failures?” people found in the reaction to violation of taboo. There is nobody to blame but oneself. A man in a miserable situation sought the cause of it in his own actions, words, and thoughts.

The story about an athlete, Namsarai, tells us about a man with exceptional physical strength. To show his physical ability, he pulled out a big tree with the roots from the soil, and stuck its top into the ground. Acting in such a way, he violated a taboo, which stated that it is not appropriate to place a tree with its roots up, even if it will be used in construction—to say nothing of doing it for fun. Social opinion connected the early death of the athlete with his taboo violation.

The narrative of the Ehirit, one of the Buryat clans, also tells about a man who had an incredible physical power. His early death and absence of offspring were explained by his alleged boast: “If there were something on the sky to grasp, I could have bent the sky to the earth.” There were particular places where it was not allowed to talk loudly. There was a taboo on certain words. It was unthinkable to insult the sky and its inhabitants. This fact would be considered not as blasphemy or atheism, but as an insult to the whole society, its past and future.

The society supported the idea of astral authority of the institution of taboo. Taboo is not anything invented by somebody; the keeping of taboo was a responsibility of each person, a man himself had to maintain proper behavior.
In their wisdom, the elders used fear of violating taboo in education and in child rearing. Children always have fear. They fear staying alone; they fear darkness and frightful fairytales; they fear beasts, and many other things. Using this natural fearfulness of the child’s mind the societies of the Mongolian world inculcated the notion of taboo. Fear becomes one of the most powerful motives to try to come to know new things, the New.

Fearing the darkness, a child tries to light up the fire in the yurt, goes into darkness to bring firewood, to maintain fire, which disseminates darkness. A child does something—takes an action. The prime motive for which is fear.

Listening to the frightful stories about evil spirits, or boholdois, a child does not interrupt a storyteller, does not run away. On the contrary, he asks to continue the narrative, with the hope that these terrible devils will be overcome. In these terms, in asking for the continuation of the story, a child is asking for new knowledge. And again in the basis, in the primary cause of the desire to get new information, new knowledge lies not only innately curious nature of the child’s mind but also a great portion of fear and fascination before the mysterious and the frightful.

During long migration, a nomadic family distributed the duties connected with travel equally among family members. Children were often asked to graze livestock. Being responsible for the herd, a child of course felt pride for the assigned task, but at the same time a child felt fear, fear of doing something wrong. This fear to do something wrong forced a child to accomplish accurately the assigned work. But with the acquisition of new knowledge about the world around the child, the fear of taboo disappeared. It is better to say that the factor of fear in the idea of taboo diminished.
With the accumulation of one’s own life experience, and with the knowledge from stories, taboo became an ordinary thing, a part of everyday life.

As the child grew, taboo got into his blood and flesh, becoming part of his habits and world, his way of thinking and acting. The habit of taboo, the attitude toward it as commonplace, in no way contradicted or questioned either its astral origin or the inevitability of the punishment. Taboo came down to the Earth according to the will of heaven; it had a mission to protect the human race, warning it from the deeds and acts which could offend heaven, and destroy balance on the Earth.

Special taboos marked certain places; for instance, the “shamans’ groves,” where it was taboo to cut any trees. There are also special places “barisa”—places and trees where gods stopped to have a rest. Near barisa it was prohibited to touch any bushes or trees. Entering such a special place, a person finds himself under the patronage of Heaven. In such places, which are holy in and of themselves, there was a taboo on any human activity. A human person could only “be” there, not anything more. The meaning in all this is probably that to behave properly, for keeping taboo, the person receives Heaven’s own protection. A man, being constantly under pressure from nature powers and elements, entering the zone of sacred places, finally gets an opportunity to be simply himself. He does not fear anything; he does not fear any surprise, for in such a zone there could be no surprise, because it is a sacred, holy place. The feelings of finding a refuge and protection had a tremendously favorable effect on the human mind and psyche. Internal freedom and serenity of soul arising in the person would be attributed to the miraculous qualities of these places. However, ordinary people were not allowed to approach some places of exceptional power for their routine purposes.
In the majority of cases, the price for improper behavior was the death of a violator. A possibility of death causes one of the most emotionally strong forms of fear. Children, of course, were aware of death; they saw the death of relatives from aging or diseases. Nomads' attitude toward death was practical. They conceived death to be a transition from one world to another. The ancient burial sites of Mongols contained weapons, jewels, and food—anything that a person might need in the world, in the other life. As I mentioned already, according to Mongolian cosmology the universe consists of three worlds. The lowest, third world was conceived, as a rule, to be the world, where the need of weapons was the highest.

At a funeral, children became acquainted with the existence of another world, where on the one hand, the rules and laws common for the earth existed (like use of weapons, food and cloths), but on the other hand, there were also some totally new and strange rules.

Buddhism brought along with its teaching particular rules and regulations, according to which a dead person is supposed to be buried on an exactly calculated day and time. The lamas would determine the time, name persons who were not allowed to be present at the funeral, determine people who had to touch the deceased, and other rules of attendance. The lamas also would recommend the direction the funeral procession will move.

Such a careful regulation of the funeral procedure was to help the dead to complete all his missions on the Earth, so they would not disturb him in the other life, in the other world. And the whole process of preparation and rigorously followed rules of
the organization of a funeral demonstrated to the youngsters the reality of the existence of the other world.

Death, in the mythology of Mongolian peoples, is not personified. Where Europeans imagined death as an entity in a white robe with a scythe, Mongols' death was amorphous and ubiquitous. Death plays the role of an instrument, by means of which the transition from one time to another, and from one space to another takes place. In "Geser" there is a description how after the death of evil Ata Ulan, his body was cut into pieces and scattered. But, from each piece of the body different monsters originated. Children listening to the "Geser" came to realize that physical death doesn't mean spiritual death, too. The mind, spirit and body are united only during life on Earth. Both shamanism and Buddhism emphasize the importance of the unity of mind, body and spirit. In shamanism, for instance, even now the special ritual devoted to return a soul to the body is performed. The concept of mind-body unity in educational terms helped to form the personality with definite moral qualities. According to Buddhism there are three kinds of sin—sin of the body, sin of the mind, and sin of the tongue. For the sin of mind the body was punished and vice versa.

The people, brought-up with the understanding of mind-body unity, possibly were supposed to be more careful of the interactions of their mind and body. There were taboos on certain words—deeds of the tongue. During prayers and ceremonies "bad" thoughts and memories were not allowed.

Taboo also protected human life from the influence of evil and supernatural powers. A person who always obeyed all the taboos stepped into the patronage of Heaven. Heaven was well disposed toward people who worship it not only during
prayers and ceremonies, but also during everyday life-adhering to taboos, which was more important. It was crucial to conduct thanksgiving prayers, to make offerings and sacrifices, and to praise gods; i.e., to do social-public action with the invitation of clergy—lamas or shamans.

But not less important was not to do certain things. Inaction in some situations was as powerful as action. According to the logic of Mongolian peoples, proper inaction was a manifestation of the respectful attitude toward Heaven too. The societies of the Mongolian world by the means of the ethnopedagogics educated children, that inaction could be a wholesome thing. Basically, taboo indeed means a prohibition of definite actions, words, and thoughts in a definite place and definite time. Using this principle, the ethnopedagogics teach the young generation that it is important not only to do something, but also that, it will be more effective if this action will be done in the right place and right time. For instance, the words could be much more powerful if they were pronounced in particular moments. Before shooting an arrow, Geser talks to it, and the flight of his arrow lengthens.

The ideas of taboo in the context of ethnopedagogics stimulated the interest in a verbal means of communication between a child and the world around him. The words said in sacred places had magical meaning, or some words were taboo. The young generation, partaking in the maintaining of taboos, grew up with the certainty of the importance of mastering the words. A child tried to enrich his vocabulary within this context. The verbal games were extremely popular. Magtaals (praise) and erools (wishes) are the distinct genres of Mongolian folklore. Competitions took place for the
best composer of a praise or a wish. The antitheses of Magtaals and eroools are "kharal" or maledictions, until today people believe in the dangerous power of "kharal."

Analyzing taboo, I came across an interesting dialectical combination of prohibition and permission. For instance, passing "barisa" or "obo" and other sacred places, adults made some offerings—money, candies, ribbons, etc. Tasting savory waters of arshan, they also left offerings for the lords of these springs. They were supposed to use a cap or their own hands to drink from arshan and were never allowed to drink with their mouth directly from the source. Of course, it was an absolute taboo for adults to touch the offerings given to the owners of the place. A child, however, was allowed to take money and sweets. Permission was conceived as a heavenly permission. It was the will of Heaven to allow a child to use offerings.

The practical character of such a permission is obvious. A child, by virtue of his spontaneity, curiosity and lack of knowledge will anyway touch gifts to barisa or arshans. In the excitement of a game or in a hurry, a child will never spend time in search of a cup or glass; for him it will be natural to quench the thirst immediately from the spring. Such providence, which allows children to break some taboos, is laudable. Actually, until a certain age a child was thought to be a god himself.

Thus, taboos had a significant role in the ethnopedagogical traditions of Mongols. Using taboo as an educational tool Mongolian society paid attention to the actions of supernatural powers like good or evil spirits. As I have mentioned, Mongols had a taboo prohibiting the use of a place where a yurt or a house had stood before. The profound educational sense of this prohibition is the unwillingness to offend or insult the memory of people who previously lived there. Even if the place was the most suitable and
convenient for the new dwelling, Mongols never ever would have built a new house on the spot of a previous one. They assumed that it is impossible to light one more hearth on the place where there once was a life-supporting hearth. The first drops of freshly prepared food or drinks were given to the spirits of hearth fire, and to the spirits of ancestors. The spirits of ancestors embodied "supernatural" powers. The degree to which those powers would be benevolent or malicious in their relations to living people, depended upon the actions of the people themselves. When a shaman conducted a ritual for the well-being of a family, he invoked the spirits of the deceased members of the family-fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, at least seven generations back and then to the mythical ancestor. The supernatural powers were the spirits of the people of the past. In order to please the ancestors' spirits, every family each year was supposed to conduct a special ceremony of the feeding the spirits.

Children loved to partake in such activities. It was not even necessary to be a child from the same family to attend family rituals. Indeed, all children were free to come. The society admitting someone else's child to the plainly family event had its own definite goals. Children got acquainted with the names of friend's ancestors; they came to realize that behind each of them were not alien "supernatural" powers, but the spirits of their ancestors, who stood as guardians and protectors. It was possible that children knew, for instance, the grandfather of their friend. Probably they remembered him when he was alive, giving them some sweets and telling them stories. And now he became a spirit, a spirit "materialized" in a concrete personality, not frightful, but kind and friendly.
Thus, the presence of "supernatural" powers in taboo had also a number of educational functions:

1) protection of the living population from unexpected events which could cause misfortune;

2) acquaintance with the genealogical lineage of a particular society member. The demonstration of the antiquity of the clan, and family;

3) the formation of abstract thinking.

As mentioned already, the sacred places are characterized by the presence of the Higher powers, "supernatural powers." They had a neutral charge. However, if someone violates taboo, the anger of those powers would follow a disturber. The owners of the place would see in the taboo violation bad intention and disrespect to them. Indeed, a wild animal who ate the offering to the owners of the place was not punished, for he acted unconsciously. Whereas a human, possessing reason and will, could violate a taboo only deliberately. Just as deliberately, he would adhere to taboo. Thus, the social character of taboo is obvious.

As the means of ethnopedagogics taboo played an important part in traditional "ecological" education. A child from the time he could realize himself and his environment started to memorize taboos connected with special places, actions, and words. The memorization of location of sacred places required deep attention to the environment, and distinguishing features of the landscape in particular. Knowing that in the zone of sacred places one could find protection and rest, a child was imbued with profound respect toward those places. The taboos, connected with the sacred places,
were a peculiar marking of the "Little motherland," designation of it in the emotional memory, a spiritual voicing of the special places in the environment. When introducing the taboo on cutting any trees or bushes in the sacred territory, a society had a definite goal. The educational meaning was to teach people to realize the environment not as a sphere of human dominion, provided to gratify his desires. Nature had its own intrinsic value; Nature had its own significance on the scales of Heaven.

Recognizing the rights of Nature, Mongolian society educated its members, especially young generations, in the spirit of a deep respect to the environment. Nomads traveled huge distances. People often would stop in completely unknown territories. In order not eventually to violate a taboo, a nomad would carefully study a place, and he would try not to use any tree on the place, which reminded him of the sacred place he had already known. The guiding principle was "it is not bad to overdo, but it is bad to underdo." The respectful attitude toward Nature would reward the humans with purity of thought, an internal balance, and a calm character.

Taboos on killing the totem animals kept alive the interest in the past of the clan and the nation. For instance, killing swans and geese as a closest relative to swans was prohibited because, according to a legend, a Swan is the pra-mother of Hongodors—one of the Buryat clans. Another legend tells us about a boy who was brought up by the wolves and who started a clan named Wolf—Shono. The royal clan of Chingis Khan had his origin from the Blue Wolf (Borte Chino) and the Red Deer (Goa-Maral). Many Buryat clans connect their origin with the Prince Bull—Buha Noyon. With deep interest children listened to the historical narratives about the origin of Mongolian peoples.
A taboo against killing pregnant game species, or female species with cubs, helped children to get acquainted with the life circle of wild animals.

A taboo against cutting trees and bushes on the shore of the Lake Baikal and along river banks promoted interest in the understanding of interdependence in nature and the role of trees in prevention of soil erosion.

Taboos fixing in the mind of a child many "don’ts" promoted the development of child’s creativity. The psychology of education states that prohibitions do not stop a child’s development, but, on the contrary, they contribute to his inventive abilities. A taboo to punish a child until he reaches a certain age positively influenced his emotional development. A child by the means of his own tests, errors and mistakes came to realize the world around him. He was allowed to do everything, but at the same time he would experience the consequences of his action himself. A child was freed from the regular, continual parents’ remarks, like “Why have you done it?”, “If you ever do it again, you will be punished.” Children remembered parents as kind persons, who once allowed them to do whatever they wanted. Thus, the institution of taboo eased the communication between parents and a child, giving children more freedom to choose.

The institution of taboo has also played a significant role in the forming of the ethnic mentality of the peoples of the Mongolian world. As N.Gumelev pointed out, the mentality of an ethnos on the level of the subconscious is a genetic memory. I am not sure whether the term “genetic memory” is the accurate one. The Buryat term would be Ug garbalyn durasgal, which literally means the inherited ancestral memory. I would like to underline that obedience to taboo made its way into the genetic memory or ancestral memory of the Mongolian peoples—Mongols, Buryats, and Kalmyks. After all,
the commitment to adhere to taboo developed the feeling of a subconscious closeness between humans, which led to consolidation of individuals into communities, ethnosi.

The institution of taboo was indeed a unifying factor in the building of a clan, a nation, and an ethnos. The phenomenon of taboo served for the strengthening of the society.

The stronger a society, the stronger the requirements to obey taboos.

Taboos, regulating relationships between humans and the world around them were significant for the cultures of Native Americans too. Keith Basso in “Wisdom sits in places” gives an example of a story about a taboo violation:

It happened at “whiteness spreads out descending to water.”

Long ago, a boy went out to hunt deer. He rode on horseback. Pretty soon he saw one [a deer], standing on the side of a canyon. Then he went closer and short it. He killed it. Then the deer rolled all the way down to the bottom of the canyon.

Then the boy went down there. It was a buck, fat and muscular. There he butchered it. The meat was heavy, so he had to carry it up in pieces. He had a hard time reaching the top of the canyon with each piece.

Now it was getting dark. One hindquarter was still lying at the bottom of the canyon. “I have enough meat already,” he thought. So he left the hindquarter where it was lying. He left it there.

Then he packed his horse and started to ride home. Then the boy got dizzy and nearly fell off his horse. Then his nose twitched uncontrollably, like Deer's nose does. Then pain shot up behind his eyes. Then he became scared.

Now he went back to the canyon. It was dark when he got there. He walked down to where the hindquarter was lying—but it was gone! Then he returned to his horse. He rode fast to where he was living with his relatives.

The boy was sick for a long time. The people prayed for him on four separate occasions. He got better slowly.

Some time after that, when the boy had grown to manhood, he always had bad luck in hunting. No deer would present themselves to him. He said to his children: “Look at me now. I failed to be careful when I was a boy and now I have a hard time getting meat for you to eat.”

It happened at “whiteness spreads out descending to water.” (Basso 1996)

This tale illustrates the misfortunes that are the consequences of violating Apache norms of proper behavior—of violating a taboo against disrespectful attitude
toward pray. This story reminded me of the story of my own relative. He was seriously wounded during World War II, and completely recovered in a couple of years. However, after a long period of time he started to suffer from epilepsy. The doctors saw the cause of the disease in the old wound from the War time. Shamans, however, told him that he is suffering because he has offended a goose in a "strong place"—on the bank of Selenga River. To offend a bird is a bad deed in itself, but the fact that this event occurred in a special place in front and in presence of the Lord of Selenga River worsened the situation and made his recovery impossible. Even the most strong rituals would not help.

I do not argue that taboos, connected with the sacredness of nature, are necessarily universally similar in every indigenous society, as taboos reflect the diverse cultural and spiritual relations with a particular environment. But the feelings of necessity to adhere to taboos were paramount to all traditional cultures, forming their very identity, and being a part of their genetic memory. The whole notion of restricting human activities to maintain a balance on the Earth was an inherent part of indigenous cultures and their ethics. Taboo were indeed a bright and powerful means to convey values and attitudes from generation to generation.

I have to acknowledge that taboo in indigenous societies could be conceived as an obstacle on the way of progress. One can argue that regulations by the means of taboo were important in the static world. In the dynamic of rapidly changing situations, traditional taboo will lead to the lack of analytical reasoning. It would be a legitimate argument. However, in my opinion, the problem now is not how to adapt oneself to the modern world, but how to remain oneself, how not to be swallowed by the conditions and
requirements of the contemporary globalization processes. And in these terms traditional taboos would be of a great importance and helpfulness.
5. CONCEPTION OF THE CULTURE-ECOLOGY-EDUCATION CENTER

Throughout this paper, I have been trying to stress two essential points. The first is that there is a big need to re-evaluate environmental values and attitudes in the modern industrial world. The second is that the indigenous people have valuable things to offer, but first they have to restore their native ways and their tradition in order to maintain ethnic and cultural identity in the context of globalization. I have demonstrated how distinct attitudes toward special places of power have embodied Mongolian traditional ecological culture. Separate examples from the Native American traditions stressed the significance of the sacred places in indigenous cultures and traditional rearing practices.

In the previous chapter I have discussed the character of traditional taboos and their roles in Mongolian societies. I have emphasized that traditional taboo served as an educational tool; that taboos arise from axiomatic knowledge, which does not require a proof. In the sphere of both human behavior and cognitive abilities taboo comes from the perception of the environment as a whole. The concepts of sacred place and traditional taboos bring me to a discussion of their possible use in modern education.

The Culture-Ecology-Education Center, "Khabsagai," (CEEC) that we plan to establish is situated in the valley of Khabsagai, 90-km northeast from Russian city of Irkutsk, one of the biggest cities in Siberia. Buryat elders and shamans have designated this place for the needs of our center. The project foresees the establishing of the educational institution of a closed type for 60 students in the age of 14-17. CEEC will be a research station for people interested in shamanism, Buddhism, indigenous spiritual traditions, ethnology, and cultural ecology. During school vacations, facilities of the
CEEC will be used for summer schools, conferences and courses for the universities in similar areas of studies.

CEEC will provide a new venue of sustainable tourism. The tourists will have an opportunity to become acquainted with the traditional technologies and handcrafts, which will be practiced by students, will visit sacred places, take part in ceremonies.

David Orr has suggested (Orr 1994) that all education is environmental education. Analyzing the etymology of "education" in different languages, we will come to interesting results—all of them valid. For instance, "Die Erziehung" in German derives from the verb "ziehen," which means "to pull out." In my opinion it expresses very explicitly the purpose of education—to pull out the individual potential of a child.

Another word "Bildung"—from the verb "bilden" which means "to construct," "to form," which implies another goal of education—to form a personality, using a child’s potential through formal instruction and training. In Russian the word "vospitanie" derives from the verb "pitat," which means to feed, and the prefix "vos," which indicates the motion upwards, so the blended meaning would be to give food for growth—both food for thought, for emotions, feelings, convictions, and food for physical development. Another word "obrazovanie" almost entirely coincides with German "Bildung." As for the English word "education" its original meaning from Latin "educare"—to take care, to rear—is probably the most sympathetic, but the problem is that different dictionaries give definitions of "education" primarily as formal schooling, training, and instruction. When using the word "education" I am never sure whether it combines everything—teaching, training and rearing, bringing up. I feel more comfortable with the Mongolian word for education—"humuuzhuleh," which literally means the art of making humans become
humans. Although all of the above-mentioned terms do imply in different degrees, the same thing, the Mongolian "hunuuzhuleh" incorporates all of their nuances. So, when I use the term “education” in this paper I always mean the totality of connotations as in Mongolian term. With these connotations, all education is indeed environmental education—education of who you are, what you are, what are your roots, what you value and how do you relate to the environment, to the world around you.

Thinking in terms of hunuuzhuleh, I will try to define the goals, structure, and system of education in “Khabsagai—Culture-Ecology-Education Center.” The project “Khabsagai” suggests adapting traditional principles of ethnopedagogics of native people into the school education processes. If the traditional taboos, which regulated relations between man and nature, are still in the “genetic memory” of our students, we are convinced that they could and should grasp the environment as a whole. The task will be to create a suitable system, a framework, which will allow students to experience this different approach. The location of the center—the sacred place of Buryat-Mongols, in itself will be a leading factor in the education process. However, education in the Center will combine ecological traditions of Mongolian peoples with scientific methods of the West—the forms and methods of education would be modern, according to the requirements of the world civilization at the end of 20th century.

Holistic education will give the students knowledge, will develop skills, and environmental conscience necessary for them to play a prominent role in the solution of ecological problems in their communities and regions.

I would like to define basic ethnopedagogical principles of Mongols as:
♦ Individualized education: a teacher takes into consideration the individual character of each student. Buryat-Mongols used to realize this principle by the means of *Zurhai*—a system of correspondence of individual psycho-physiological rhythms with the rhythms of nature.

♦ Proper relationships between a student and his teacher. Buryat-Mongols realized this principle by the means of *Bagsha*—a conduct of behavior in educational processes, where a teacher conceives a student as a unique personality, who is equal to a teacher in his intellectual abilities; a student, on the other hand conceives a teacher as an outstanding personality, who knows everything. Traditional importance of the role of elders is another implication of the principle "*Bagsha*." An elder is an elder not only because of age, but also and mostly because of knowledge and experience.

♦ Self-realization of a student by the means of proper interpersonal relationships—that is of the principle "*Aha-duu*"—which means relationships, mutual aid and understanding between younger and elder sisters and brothers within one family. Traditionally Buryat-Mongolian families valued having many children. The role of the elder son or daughter was to help parents to raise younger children. The younger brothers and sisters never questioned the authority of an elder. They learned to obey, but at the same time each of the younger member of a family eventually could become an elder brother or sister to youngsters yet to be born, therefore the whole system of "*Aha-duu*" relationships promoted not only humility and the ability to obey, but also leadership qualities.
Knowledge becomes conviction only when supported by practice.

Education as a total way of life—"Yostoi amidral," the popular proverb of Mongolian peoples says: "Erhim bajan - erdem bileg. Dunda bajan-uhi hubuud. Adag bajan-aduu mal, ed zoort." The highest richness is wisdom; the middle richness is children; the small richness is material prosperity. It was understood that not knowledge as knowledge is valuable, but wisdom-as knowledge, proven by practice and which becomes a way of life.

In terms of the forms and methods of teaching I would suggest some principles which are common place for an American educator, but for a post-soviet Russian school it would be innovative. First of all, curriculum structure will give the students opportunity to choose elective courses, which is a new idea for the Soviet schools. The center will provide an opportunity to study for a school year; students are not necessarily obliged to complete their education in our center. We assume that even one school year will help children to experience a different approach and gain skills and knowledge that they can use in their future lives. Typically, in Russia a student studies in one school from the elementary level to the high school, and usually does not have an opportunity to change the school. The idea was inspired by American options, when a University student can study, for instance, fall semester in one university and spring semester-in another. This idea of giving more freedom to choose is worth implementing.

In the class, emphasis will be given to teamwork, which in itself is not such a novel idea, but the principle of multi-age groups would be an innovative one. Individual conversation and consultations with teachers will be another effective means of the educational processes. Evaluation of the students' work will be done not only on the basis
of the total sum of information that they were able to absorb, but mostly by their creativity and critical thinking. The organization of learning time will combine traditional understanding of time with western efficiency through maximizing time per school hour and implementation of a teaching approach of the 5-E's learning cycle.

Proper combination of theoretical knowledge with practical activities in school farms and greenhouses, as well as at school workshops and at the tourist center will help to convert knowledge into convictions or at least practice.

The school day will start at 6:00 a.m. with conversation with the school principal or prominent guest. This meeting is optional; all students are invited. The topic of presentation is announced ahead. Broad spectrum of themes would be offered during the school year.

Every morning each student will have a psychological diagnostics by the methods of Zurhai. A special person—Zurhaich will diagnose the psycho-physiological conditions of a student, giving this information to the teachers. It will help the teacher to minimize or maximize tasks and number of exercises in each particular case.

From 7.00 till 9.00 students prepare for the day, do fitness exercises, have breakfast and revise their homework. Classes start at 9 a.m. A chronological unit for the lesson will not be limited by the “academic hour”—45 minutes, which is now a standard time for the lesson in Russian schools. The time unit, which is more close to the traditional Mongolian “animal” hour, (roughly corresponding with 2 hours in European chronology) will be used. It will help to organize the learning environment and learning processes more efficiently, excluding the danger of compartmentalized knowledge. Because extra time, which a traditional hour contains, will help a teacher to engage interdisciplinary and
multidisciplinary approaches to the subject of study, as well as enhance exploration and elaboration of the topic by the students themselves.

The organization of the learning process will be based on the instructional model of 5E's Learning cycle: Engagement, Exploration, Explanation, Elaboration, and Evaluation. American educators introduced this teaching approach to the theory of education. (Trowbridge and Bybee, 1996) These didactic principles were used in the Soviet schools too, but with different priorities. In Russia the emphasis was given to the explanation and elaboration phases, whereas in the U.S., teachers pay more attention to the engagement and exploration activities. In Russia an assumed interest of the students in the subject of study was taken for granted; and it nearly eliminated the engagement activities. In the U.S., on the other hand, much attention is given to promote motivation to study (which sometimes, at least according my own observation, includes a danger to convert a classroom in some sort of circus arena). As in Russia a social task of a teacher was to convey information from a particular perspective, often in a dogmatic form, the core of the lesson's unit was the explanation, the task of a student was to memorize teacher's explanation. In the U.S. a teacher is not free from the obligation to promote the socially accepted dominant views—P. Friere's expression "hidden curriculum" adequately describes this phenomena—nonetheless, generally a teacher in the U.S. will value and encourage an independent thought of a student, that is why an overage American teacher gives more time to the exploration phase.

In Khabsagai the new topic will begin with engagement activities. I would suggest minimizing this stage, taking into consideration the traditional striving for knowledge in Mongolian peoples, and assuming that it is not completely lost.
The next step in the learning cycle is an exploration phase. The exploration phase gives students an opportunity to experience a hands-on, inquiry approach. They will design an experiment, make observations, and gather data, guided by the questions of the engagement activities.

The following explanation phase will be the prerogative of the teacher. The instructor will synthesize the information gained during the exploration phase and formalize the explored concept. We will expect the instructor to show different existing approaches toward the subject of study as well as his or her own perspective.

Elaboration phase will imply students’ independent work and work in multi-age groups, where the older students will help younger students to elaborate their understanding of the subject. This principle will help to realize three aims:

♦ The change of the learning methods will help students to maintain their interest in the subject of study; the work in the small groups will give them an opportunity to avoid the pressure of presenting, for example, their ideas in a larger audience;

♦ By helping the youngsters to master the subject the older students will help themselves better understand the

♦ A teacher will finally get an opportunity to direct the educational processes.

An extra time, which will contain each lesson unit, will give an opportunity to emphasize interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary links—other disciplines’ perspectives on the topic, which will be given by the teacher. Students will be able to see the bigger picture; they will be able to see the interdependence of all phenomena.
The evaluation phase will conclude the lesson. I would suggest that a teacher would not be required to evaluate students' progress or failures on each class. The most important thing is to make an objective evaluation of a student's knowledge and changes in attitudes on the long-term scale.

The organization of the lesson units according to traditional understanding of time will help to avoid fragmented information and hence will help to avoid compartmentalized knowledge. The use of the modified contemporary theory of 5E's will help to intensify the process of learning.

After classes students are will work on the school farms and a greenhouse. The purpose of the school farms is not only to teach traditional techniques of livestock breeding and food processing but also to supply the school with meat, dairy products and vegetables. At the tourist center, students will share with visitors their understanding of traditional values and attitudes. I hope that the position of interpreter of native ways will help students to realize more deeply their identity and will positively affect their self-esteem. The work will be a realization of the “Yostoi amidraF” principle of ethnopedagogics—implement knowledge in real life.

Evening hours will give the students opportunity to work under a teacher's guidance on elected subjects of study on an advanced level as well as to practice their hobbies. Evening and early morning activities include physical training and fitness exercises.

This intense schedule will not negatively affect the child's personality. The very basic premise will be strong attention to the psycho-physiological peculiarities of a student, which will regulate individual “loading.” The diversity of activities will also
diminish lassitude. An important thing is to allow a student to have individual time for personal reflection. This time will include observations and meditations on the sacred site. The student will be given an option to speak directly to the land. David Orr writes that he does not know if it is possible to love the whole earth, but he does know that it is possible to love a particular place. Our hope is that our students will learn how to love earth, if they learn how to love Khabsagai. And speaking with the words of Gary Snyder they will find their place on the planet, dig in, and take responsibility from there.

There are certain limitations in Khabsagai project. The main ones are:

- The role of a teacher. The ethnopedagogical principle Bagsha actually implies an absolute obedience to a teacher. The role of a teacher becomes extremely important. The chance of diminishing child's responsibility and natural curiosity, sense of adventure, is very high. To avoid such a danger teachers in Khabsagai must be chosen carefully, and properly trained.

- The concentration on the ethnic values could foment nationalism. The measure to avoid it would be a clear understanding on the goals of education in the Khabsagai. Goal is to raise the sense of patriotism as opposed to nationalism. The basic difference is expressed in the words of the famous Russian filmmaker Nikita Michalkov: “To be a patriot means to be better, to be a nationalist means to be better than others.”

- Traditionalism in negative connotations of the word could lessen the ability of analytical thinking. It could contain a danger of suppressing critical thinking. The combination of the ethnopedagogical methods with the modern
achievements of the science will help to avoid reactionary traditionalism.

And respect to each child will help him or her avoid becoming a conformist.

Seeing clearly the limitations and weaknesses of the “Khabsagai” project we also see the strength and potentials of this educational model, which is our own stride in the search of the lost roots.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Orientation</th>
<th>Expressive Meaning</th>
<th>Utilitarian Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mouse</td>
<td>Gatherer of valuables</td>
<td>The storage of the expensive things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bull</td>
<td>Abundance of food</td>
<td>The storage of dairy products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tiger</td>
<td>Strength and masculinity</td>
<td>The place of the host</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hare</td>
<td>Fragility and weakness</td>
<td>The place of the hostess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dragon</td>
<td>Lord of the sky</td>
<td>The storage for the gifts of the sky—rain and snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Snake</td>
<td>Dweller of the earth</td>
<td>The storage of the gifts of the earth—drinking water and firewood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Horse</td>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>The entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sheep</td>
<td>One who needs owner’s help</td>
<td>The storage for meat products and place for the sheep’s babies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Monkey</td>
<td>Noble animal</td>
<td>The storage of saddles and other horse equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rooster</td>
<td>Fertility and youthfulness</td>
<td>Male part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Dog</td>
<td>The guard of the property</td>
<td>The place for the honorable guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Boar</td>
<td>Saturation</td>
<td>The place for the honorable guests</td>
</tr>
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