



#### About Malthe Barnkob Lehrmann

Malthe Barnkob Lehrmann er antropolog, han har skrevet sin ph.d.-afhandling ved Institut for Antropologi, Aarhus Universitet. Han har indgået som gæsteforsker i forskningsprogrammet Emerging subjects of Mongolia ledet af Rebecca Empson. Hans forskningsmæssige fokus er på Revolutionær subjektivitet, nihilisme og kosmologi.

#### Time and place for the defence

13 December 2021 at 13-17

Moesgaard Museum, Moesgård Allé, 8270 Højbjerg

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# EMERGENCE

## SHADOW WOLVES – TRAGIC VERTICALITY AND THE EMERGENCE OF INTELLECTUAL, REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECTS IN MONGOLIA

PhD dissertation by Malthe Barnkob Lehrmann



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

# Shadow wolves – Tragic verticality and the emergence of intellectual, revolutionary subjects in Mongolia

**My PhD thesis examines the manner in which cosmology and morality come to shape revolutionary practices in Mongolia. Based on fourteen months of fieldwork in Ulaanbaatar, conducted among social bandits in the ger district and among self-proclaimed revolutionaries in the city centre, this thesis presents ethnographic material on masculinity, nihilism and spiritual belief within revolutionary practices.**

In addition to contributing to a regional, ethnographic understanding of contemporary Mongolia, this thesis contributes to three insights in various fields of anthropological research: anthropology of revolution, post-Soviet anthropology, and morality and ethics. These are:

1

That the subject of the revolution, contrary to current assumptions, is not only shaped by violent events and ideological and political activism, but is equally concerned with cosmological questions about being and existential thinking.

2

Transition is not merely an anthropological tool for analysing structural change, but is problematized, ethnographically, when humans themselves seek to create transition.

3

That morality and ethics are not merely an analysis that deals with the creating of man by man through identification practices set in an already

cosmos contained everything that exists. Instead, the analysis of morality and ethics must necessarily engage with the ethnographically charged relationship between self and the cosmos as a starting point for such an analysis.

## Conclusion

In attending to moral claims made in this context I have explored what kind of revolutionary subject is created in the intersection between rational science ideals and an ever-intrusive spirit world. The thesis's main argument is that revolutionary self-cultivation is based on the inclusion of a tragic otherness, which in this thesis is termed a 'void' of potential negativity. This otherness exists in Mongolia in the form of the vitalistic force called *süld khiimori*, which is linked to the Mongolian landscape. The internalization of *süld khiimori* is essential for the intellectual revolutionaries because it gives them the vitality and strength to transcend the norms of society. This however creates a paradox because *süld khiimori* is linked to the spiritual beliefs that the intellectual revolutionaries seek to counter by enlightenment.

## Facts about the empirical basis of the dissertation

Fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Ulaanbaatar and Tolgoit in Mongolia. As part of my fieldwork, I have worked methodologically with exhibition design as an experimental space.