

Reviews

The Changing World of Mongolia's Nomads, photography and text by Melvyn C. Goldstein and Cynthia M Beall. University of California Press, Berkeley (1994) pp. 1-176. Photographs, tables, figures, index.

Reviewed by John A Young, Professor and Chair, Anthropology Department, Oregon State University.

Goldstein and Beall have produced another spectacular book in the same format as their earlier work, *Nomads of Western Tibet*. Photography depicting the lives of Mongolia's herding nomads who have survived for centuries in one of the harshest environments on this planet adds a stunning effect. The text comes alive as it is illustrated with colorful scenes of nomadic life on nearly every page. But what makes this work more than a mere picture book is substantial ethnographic investigation carried out during three separate visits spanning a total of more than six months starting in the fall of 1990 and finishing in the summer of 1992. This time period is significant because the authors were able to observe the transition from socialist mode of production modeled after Russian collective enterprise to a private market system. As they did in their study of economic reform in Tibet, the authors again have proven their capability to make the most of being in the right place at the right time. The book opens with a brief history of the glory of Mongolian conquests in centuries past and quickly moves to a rich description of the natural resources, material culture, food processing and adaptive knowledge associated with a community of nomads located in Moost, a remote area of Western Mongolia.

The authors explain seasonal migration cycle of the nomads, along with the care and management of horses, yaks, camels, sheep and goats which provide them with their livelihood. That the people studied are pictured and often referred to using their names allows the reader to identify with them in a personal way. Interesting details are provided as well. For example, the caption on one photograph states, "Butter stays fresh for nearly a year when sewn tightly into a (dead) sheep's stomach." We are treated to verbal and visual description of pack trains, to assembling of transportable shelters (*ger*), and the practice of Tibetan Buddhist ritual which has undergone a revival occurring simultaneously with market oriented reforms. The heart of the book is its description and analysis of the *negdel*, or herding collective. The authors go to great lengths to present a clear picture of collective economics and its relationship to household finances and decision making.

Upon their arrival in 1990 the authors found a surprising level of prosperity, including durable consumer goods imported from abroad, and a universal system of schooling that provided an avenue of upward mobility for young people, some of whom move on to work in industrial towns. The collective, despite eliminating great disparities in income,

contained a number of disincentives outlined by the authors. The reported result was a stifling of productivity. As reforms began to be implemented, the collective turned ownership of animals over to nomads who had previously herded them as a delegated task. Many herders were reluctant to give up the advantage of the marketing and other services provided by the collective. Soon they turned the collective into a shareholding company, thus maintaining some advantages of large-scale organization. In general, the translation to a market system meant hardships. Trade goods from abroad disappeared and disposable income declined, trends that evoked a return to traditional crafts, such as felt making, and traditional agricultural supplements, such as growing barley. The more difficult times that came with the termination of state subsidies, however, did not lead to discouragement.

The authors found that people felt empowered by the absence of disincentives, as they were able to benefit from working harder. They were optimistic about successfully providing for their needs themselves. Goldstein and Beall researched only the first year of decollectivization, still too early to provide definite answers to several critical questions. Will extreme economic and social inequities of the past reemerge? Will trade with Xinjiang and other parts of Western China replace the missing trade with East European socialist countries? Will there be destabilizing pressure placed on the environment due to a high birth rate and the expansion of herds still viewed as a traditional form of wealth? If these issues are to be assessed in subsequent phases of the nomads capitalist transition, the authors here provide a solid foundation and exemplary model for other researchers to follow. The essential contribution of this book is its insight into how national policy changes play out in the lives and livelihood of a little-known people who were remote and inaccessible to observers from Western countries.

Native Canadian Anthropology and History: A Selected Bibliography (revised edition) by Shepard Krech III, University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 212 pp.

**Reviewed by Bruce G. Miller, University of British Columbia
Department of Anthropology and Sociology.**

There can be only sympathy for someone attempting to select three thousand citations out of all of the publications on the anthropology and history of Canadian First Nations. Shepard Krech III's aim in attempting this is to prepare a bibliography for undergraduates to use to in creating well-researched projects in the fields of Native studies, anthropology, and history, and also to direct specialists to useful but obscure sources. The volume is intended to be used together with comprehensive bibliographies, a number of which are listed in these pages. Krech did not omit material which has been poorly reviewed, preferring to allow readers to make up their own minds about quality--surely a good thing given the rapidity with which evaluations change. Krech did omit dissertations, theses and "gray matter," arguing that these are hard to get hold of. The volume focuses on the