

same Christian name. They are each distinguished by their second name which is their patronymic.

9. Seduction following childbirth is undoubtedly also related to a belief in ritual pollution. In this chapter the emphasis is on other aspects of female nature.

10. The association of the woman with the hearth has been noted in rural Greece (Campbell, 1964, p. 151; de Boulay, 1974, p. 133) and in other cultures (Yalman, 1967, p. 102). Yalman, for example, describes the Kandyan household and the separate cooking place of each married woman. 'The cooking area is private. . . . All else may be shared but granaries and cooking places may never be shared' (1967, p. 102).

11. The connection between the mouth and the vagina is made in psychoanalytic theory, and it has been noted that 'there is a strange unconscious neuro-muscular association between the vagina and the mouth. . . .' (Kitzinger, 1967, pp. 118-21).

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4

Women, Taboo and the Suppression of Attention

Caroline Humphrey

Taboo

There are innumerable injunctions as to what constitutes incorrect or improper behaviour for women in Mongolia. Many of these rules have the status of taboos, in other words categorical prohibitions (*tsaer*) whose breach would bring extreme shame and fear of supernatural punishment. But this does not mean that women appear socially paralysed in everyday life. To the casual observer it would be difficult to tell that the prohibitions exist, and he might simply note that women seem to have their own way of doing things. This points clearly to the area I wish to investigate in this study, the fact that taboos, although phrased in the negative, always and necessarily imply some kind of positive action. If one act is forbidden, people do something else. The existence of a taboo means that behaviour in that particular field of action is 'marked' or significant, and therefore the acts which substitute for taboos, or are performed instead of them, should not be seen merely as 'ordinary' behaviour, as opposed to tabooed behaviour. They should be looked at carefully, both in their own right (because this is after all what people actually do), and in their crucial relation to the forbidden act. This relation of prohibited acts to allowed acts within a given sphere of action is present in all cultures. But it is easier to discuss and perhaps, in fact, is more important in cultures such as that of the Mongols, where the minutiae of daily life are greatly formalised, usually by categorisation into named types of acts. We, for example, think of 'sitting' as comprised of numerous unspecifiable variations on one basic idea of body posture, but the Mongols divide 'sitting' into six different types; if one is forbidden to sit in the *xöidö xüch suux* manner (i.e. with legs stuck out straight in front) one nevertheless has to decide on another way, perhaps *söxöxch suux* (i.e. with knees together on the ground and the weight on the ankles) or *isomsoix suux* (i.e. with one knee up and the weight on the ankles of the other leg), and so on.

It is important to recognise that relatively few taboos are universally applicable to all categories of people in society. We should remember

that straightforward structuralist analyses, of the kind proposed by Mary Douglas (1966), and Tambiah (1969), have only really been applied in those few cases. Their concern was with what in a system of ideas becomes taboo, and the question of to whom the taboos apply is pushed into the background. There is a static logic of classification, essentially context-free. My concern on the other hand is with the implications of usages in respect of taboo, and its converse, correct behaviour, for modes of relationship in particular contexts of action as these change through the life cycle. This is much closer to Leach's approach in his paper on 'Trobriand Clans and the Kinship Category Tabu' (1962), as opposed to his work on ambiguous categories and the mechanism of taboos.

For my theoretical purposes it seems essential to introduce not only the idea of domains of 'marked' actions, which are indicated by the existence of taboos, but also to introduce the *subject* or *agent* for whom acts are prohibited or allowed. To return to the Mongol types of 'sitting', *xöbö xizh suux* is not taboo in an absolute sense, being quite appropriate relaxed behaviour for men amongst themselves, but it is utterly forbidden to young married women; *söxöxh suux*, which is a suitable way of sitting for young married women, would be considered a shameful posture for an elderly man. In this paper the subject I take is women. The category of 'women' as subject in this kind of analysis will have to be subdivided later by the three phases, as the Mongols see it, of a woman's life, but as a starting-point we shall be dealing here with the following essentially related elements: (a) women, for whom certain behaviour is prohibited or allowed; (b) taboos and prohibitions specific to women; and (c) the positive actions taken by women.

Mongolian Names Which Must Not Be Pronounced

The material of this paper refers to the period before collectivisation, that is, before the 1950s (although I shall sometimes use the 'ethnographic present' tense). Awareness of socialist political ideas had eroded some of the taboos among the more urbanised Mongols long before this, from the 1920s onwards. But in the countryside the prohibitions continued in force and many linguistic taboos were retained in the fifties when other traditional injunctions (e.g. in dress) were falling into disuse.

This paper will be concerned mainly with linguistic taboos, specifically terms of address, because I have more material on this than on other fields such as gesture, dress and food, but I should emphasise at the start that the patterns within all of these domains appear to be correlated with one another in a consistent way.

The linguistic taboos of the Mongols occur within the sphere of nam-

ing, and the prohibitions specific to kinship groups in everyday life should be seen in this more general context. All Mongols avoid casual reference to the names of dead people, predatory animals and certain mountains, rivers and springs, which are considered to be inhabited by spirits, and which in the past have caused various natural catastrophes. It is thought that the casual pronunciation of these names would catch the attention of the spirits with possibly disastrous consequences to the speaker. In ordinary speech there are standardised alternatives for such names: almost all tabooed mountains, for example, are called *xairtan* ('dear one'), with the result that maps of Mongolia made by travellers are peppered with this name in a most confusing way. It is possible, however, to use the real name in ritual contexts when the mountain is being addressed and offered sacrifices in order to avert disasters to the community.

The taboos which especially concern us here, however, are those which occur among people who are related to each other through the male line (agnatic kin), specifically within the kin group called *tövel*. In general, the names of seniors of either sex, reckoned by relative generation and age, are not used in address by juniors, although they may be used in reference. In the latter case such names are usually slightly disguised (Dugar becomes Duger, Gombo becomes Ombo, etc.). In order to address seniors, a junior person can either use a kinship reference term such as *abaga* ('father's brother') or, if the relationship is a more familiar one, he or she can use one of the honorific kinship address terms. I shall describe these in more detail later. This prohibition on the use of the names of seniors does not, however, amount to a taboo; it is more a matter of respect and decorum, a custom which is followed without the notion of very serious consequences if it were to be broken. Seniors, on the other hand, can use the personal names of juniors freely. This differentiation between seniors and juniors should be seen in the context of the general use of honorific words and expressions in dialogue between people of different status. In Mongol many common words, particularly for parts of the body and physical actions, have honorific variants, and these should be used by juniors while speaking to seniors, although the senior uses ordinary language in return.

In one specific case the prohibition on the use of names has the status of a taboo: the *ber* (the wife of a younger brother, of a son, or of an agnatically related nephew) is absolutely forbidden to use the names, either in address or reference, of her *xadamud* (her husband's older brothers, his father, his father's brothers, grandfather, etc.). The taboo includes the names of the wives of close *xadamud*. The *ber* is also prohibited from mentioning the name of her husband's patrilateral. Further-

more, she is strictly enjoined not to use any word in ordinary language which enters any of the forbidden names or sounds like them. This taboo was taken very seriously, and even today when honorific language is considered to be 'unsocialist' and is used only in private by old-fashioned people towards respected lamas and teachers, the prohibitions and taboos on names within kin groups are still largely current.

Mongol Names

To understand what these taboos imply it is necessary to know something about Mongol names. Children are given one personal name shortly after birth, either by their parents or in former times by a lama. Names are chosen according to the particular conditions affecting that child and they always have meaning. Broadly speaking, there are two types of names, one which consists of good qualities or symbols for positive values (e.g. the Mongol, Tibetan, or Sanskrit words for 'Happiness', 'Strength', 'Calm', or symbols such as 'Axe', 'Flower', 'Eagle'), the other type being names which are designed to deceive spirits (e.g. 'Nameless', 'Not-like', 'Who knows', or 'Animal', 'Smelly', 'Goat'). Names are thought to represent something of the essence of the person, and the pronunciation of a name in a sense brings that person into being even if they are physically absent. The names aimed to deceive spirits are called *tseerlesen ner* ('names which have been tabooed'), the idea being that the would-be real name is never mentioned and therefore never comes into being, and the person is meanwhile called by a substitute deceit name. In this case the deceit can also be carried beyond naming into ordinary speech. For example, a mother, whose child has been called 'goat' because the family is afraid that spirits will attack it, will say not 'My child is crying', but 'My goat is baa-ing' (Sodnom, 1964, p. 61).

After a year or two children are frequently given a nickname by their parents. This refers to their appearance or personality (*Aman Zunday* = Big Mouth, *Delden* = Long ears, *Nomxon* = Quiet, *Bulten* = Pop-eyes, etc.). These names generally are no longer used in address after the child enters adolescence. They may be employed to refer to a person, although considered to be insulting. Adults frequently acquire further nicknames (*Norai Sharav* = Bad-tempered Sharav, *Yamaai Sharav* = Jangling-voiced Sharav, *Ulaai Damba* = Red-cheeked Damba, etc.), which come to be used by people when talking about their juniors and equals.

In Mongolia names class people as individuals, not as members of categories. Thus a name given to a child should not be the same as any other name in the agnatic kin group, although it is true that a father occasionally uses part of his name in forming the names of his children.

If it happens that two people in a community have the same name it is forbidden for them to pronounce their common name. They call one another *am'dai* (*amindai*), which is derived from the word *am* meaning 'life' or 'breath'. They are mutually *xelsii ner* (i.e. 'having a difficult name'), this being the expression which is used to refer to anyone whose name one is forbidden to say. People say, 'One name is one ear' (*Ner negiin chix neg*) (Sodnom, p. 34) and therefore even outsiders cannot use the *am'dai* name on its own but have to differentiate the two individuals by adding clan names to each expression of the name.

The idea that each individual should have one name which if possible should be unique has resulted in an immense proliferation of Mongol names which encompass many, though obviously not all, aspects of their culture. Related to this is the internal complexity of Mongol names, the majority of which are built up of several components which are thought to 'go together'; *Artunsagaan* (pure + white), *Baatarchuluun* (warrior + stone), or *Tumenasanbayar* (thousand + age + happiness). Names composed of five or six parts are not unknown.

The Daughter-in-Law's Dilemma

Consider the implications of this for the unfortunate daughter-in-law (*ber*). She must memorise the names of all of her senior male affines and cannot use them, or any of their constituent parts, either when referring to the seniors, or to other people with the same name, or when selecting the vocabulary of her everyday conversation. The taboo still applies even when the *xadam* has died, and even when the *ber* goes home to visit her own family. She must find substitute words on every single occasion. It is not surprising that some linguists have described this phenomenon as a 'women's language' among the Mongols (Aalto, 1959, 1971). This claim is unjustified, since the differences affect vocabulary only and do not touch on syntax, and in any case only certain categories of women are involved. But nevertheless it is clear that the speech of the women observing the name taboos is constantly required to be markedly different from that of everyone else.

The exercise is seen as a trial of the daughter-in-law's training and quickness of wit. Young girls are told myths and stories in which the new wife of a prince is given a brain-teaser by her father-in-law as a test of her taboo-avoidance abilities. In one of these stories the father-in-law goes out to herd his sheep and finds a ram hanging from the stump of a lone elm tree at the head of a brook. He goes home, and knowing that there are people called *Usan* ('water'), *Modon* ('tree'), *Xontin* ('sheep'), *Xuts* ('ram'), *Chono* ('wolf'), *lizhing* ('donkey'), and *Numan* ('bow')

amongst his agnates, he calls to the daughter-in-law, '*Ber ee!* I have lost a fat white ram from my flock. Go and look for it!' The daughter-in-law goes out and searches in the steppe and at last comes across something glimmering at the foot of an elm tree; it is the head of the ram, and a wolf is trotting off into a gully. She goes home and says,

I found the thing you were looking for. At the head of the current beside the growing-thing is the sticking-out one who is older brother to the bleater; the howler has come along and eaten it up. Why don't you mount the sticking-out-ears and take your shooter and go and see what is up? (Sodnom, p. 61).

This is one of a well known type of story among the Mongols. According to Roberte Hamayon, who has done long periods of field-work in Mongolia, fathers-in-law do sometimes test their daughters-in-law by trying to catch them out, or by setting up further arbitrary word taboos which are not already included in the forbidden list of names (Hamayon and Bassanoff, 1973, p. 54).

Looking at the phenomenon of name taboos more closely, it is possible to make the following observations. First, in practice not only the proper name is tabooed but also titles and descriptive names. For example, if the father-in-law's name is Nyam, but he is commonly called Adunuch Nyam (horse-herdsman Nyam) the daughter-in-law still has to find another word for 'horse' (*adu*) as well as a substitute for Nyam. Second, the deliberately polluting or absurd names used to deceive the spirits are treated with just as much circumspection as other names. For example, the female affines (of the daughter-in-law category) of a man called Baast ('with faeces' or 'shitty') were required to use the word *xomool* ('horse-dung') when talking about what was in fact human faeces (Tserenxand, 1972, p. 60). Third, words which merely sound like the name, as well as the components of the name itself, are tabooed, even if the meaning of the homophone is completely different. Thus, a woman whose own mother-in-law was called *Tegsh* (meaning 'level' or 'flat') also tabooed the word *tevsh* ('wooden platter') and substituted for it *ix lavag* ('large bowl'), (Sodnom, 1964, p. 63).

We can conclude from these facts that the taboo is not attached to the proper name *per se* in its capacity of representation of the inner essence of a person. It is attached to words which have the function of names in the crucial respect of having the capacity to attract the attention of the person named. Further proof of this is the fact that while homophones of names can be tabooed synonyms never are (see list below).

As for the words which the *ber* decides (or is required) to substitute for the tabooed words, the first observation we can make is that they are standardised within local communities, but often include dialect words

and tend to vary over Mongolia as a whole. In Xovd Aimak the substitute for *gal* ('fire') was *zel* (presumably a dialect word, in the general language 'tethering-rope'; see Tserenxand, 1972, p. 60) while in central Mongolia and among the Khorchin Mongols the substitute was *tsuusal* ('spark'). This pattern indicates that while no overall system exists within the language with regard to tabooed words, an important requirement is that the substitute words should nevertheless be understandable within the community. In other words, the daughter-in-law cannot pay out her father-in-law by talking glibberish, nor can she exercise independence by inventing totally original substitutes.

If we look at the following randomly selected list of tabooed names and words, it is clear that the substitute word is by no means always a synonym for the word it is supposed to replace.

Table 4.1

NAME	TABOOED WORD	SUBSTITUTE WORD
Oron Tseveen (Tseveen the deputy; oron = job, place; Tseveen - Tib.)	orox = to enter	shurgax = to penetrate, jump in, insert oneself (Sodnom, 1964, p. 63)
Shar (shar = yellow)	shar = yellow	angir = a species of diving duck, yellow coloured (ibid., p. 64)
Xazai	xazaar = bridle	noqt = halter (loc. cit.)
Galzund (galzuu = rabies, madness)	gal = fire	tsuusal = spark (ibid., p. 65)
Sandag (Tib.)	saya = million	toot = 'having number' (Tserenxand, p. 60)
Bayadaa (bayad = West Mongol clan)	bayan = rich	uyen = ermine (loc. cit.)
Xarzuu (xarax = to look at)	xar = black	bargaan = darkish, obscure (Kuo-yi Pao, 1964, pp. 287-8)

We can conclude that it must always be obvious that a tabooed word is in question when the *ber* uses one of the substitute words, since she will always be talking somewhat oddly on these occasions. One can imagine her saying, 'Shall I put the cooking-pot on the spark?' In other words, her kinship status as *ber* in a given household is constantly being made obvious by her linguistic choices.

It is clear even from this short list that the substitute words are quite

distinct from the tabooed words from the phonemic point of view. Instead of employing the sort of devices used by other kinsmen (i.e. non-*ber*) when referring to people whose names are tabooed in address, regular slight deformations of the name (Ombo for Gombo, Eren for Tseren, etc.), and many other similar small additions or subtractions from the name), the *ber* herself must choose a word which sounds quite different, that is, one that is made up of different component morphemes, even at the expense of semantic exactitude. This practice is what we should expect if the aim is not so much to substitute a synonym for a tabooed word but to suppress the *sound* of the tabooed word altogether. This supports my theory that it is the attention-catching function of names which is at issue here. But I should point out that not all similar-sounding words in everyday language are automatically tabooed. For example, while in the case of the name Sandag, the word *sayz* ('million') is tabooed, *sayz* ('only just') is not. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that *sayz* ('million') is a different part of speech from *sayz* ('only just') and hence is usually spoken with much less emphasis and a different intonation. But this is probably not the case with many similar-sounding words in Mongolian, some of which may be tabooed when the homophones (like-sounding words) are not. Therefore, it is clear that what we are dealing with is not a complete ban on all sounds homophonous with the set of recognised fathers-in-law's names – which would render the daughters-in-law's lives linguistically impossible – but a formalised and socially determined rule which *stands for* such a complete ban.

Naming and Address – A 'Marked Domain' of Taboo

At this point it is worth saying more clearly how the taboos observed by the *ber* fit into the more general system of naming and address among the Mongols. First of all it should be emphasised that the *ber* is the only kinship category to extend name taboos into general speech. Indeed, the verb from *ber*, *berlex*, has the meaning 'to observe linguistic taboos'. Incidentally, this verb has other meanings which are relevant to the argument of this paper; the first is 'to be ashamed, shy, or confused', and the second is 'to perform services for a respected person'.

There are five regular differentiating features of the Mongolian address system.

- (1) There is a distinction between second-person pronouns *ta* 'you' (senior), and *chi* 'you' (junior); this is exactly like the distinction in French or Russian, where the respectful form is the same as the plural.
- (2) Kin reference terms are also used as terms of address; this can

occur in own and senior generations, and junior generations of the mother's brother's lineage, and is a sign of respect and formality.

(3) Intimate honorific address terms are used. These are very different phonetically from the reference terms and are instantly recognisable by the fact that they commonly consist of two repeated sounds, e.g. *dziadzia*, *gagaa*, *nyanya*, *möömöö*. Many, if not all, of these terms can be applied to several categories of kinsmen. For example, some people told me that they call the paternal uncle *dziadzia* while others said the term is used for the older sister. The very similar term *adziaa* has an even wider spread, being used not only for any senior male of the kin group and respected lamas, but also for the father and mother, and any male or female friend of the family of the parents' generation. It is apparent that families sometimes invent their own variants of these terms, as it were from the baby speech of the children. Probably the use of these terms was more formalised and specific at the beginning of this century, since Aberle (1958) for the Kalmyck Mongols and Kuo-yi Pao (1964, p. 307) for the Khorchin Mongols were both able to give lists of terms with the kin categories they were applied to, and they were both working with early twentieth-century material. It seems that many of these terms are like our 'granny' or 'grandad', in that they are sometimes used by people in the community who do not stand in a grandchild relation to the person addressed. As a general set, these terms thus combine respect with intimacy and with local knowledge. Outsiders to the community do not use these terms, and it seems clear that they *could not*, since each family has different conventions for their application.

(4) The fourth category of the Mongol address system is the use of nick-names. These are used in the family circle by seniors for children up to the age of about ten. If they are used in address after this age, and particularly for adults, this is an insult.

(5) The final possibility is the use of personal names. Names are not used in any circumstances for the generation above the speaker and can be used for older siblings only in combination with the reference term, e.g. *Damdin* (name) *axa* (older brother). However, the special honorific address terms are more common for older siblings. Names can be used for younger siblings of the speaker and people of descending generations.

To sum up: there are two ways of addressing kinsmen senior to the speaker, by reference terms and by special honorific terms, the former being more formalised than the latter. The *ta* version of the second person is used with both of these. There are also two ways of addressing junior kinsmen, by names and by nicknames. The *chi* version of the second person is invariably used with both types of name.

The totality of this address system is a domain within which *actual* usages are marked (significant) in relation to *potential* usages, including those which are forbidden. But it is impossible to understand the meaning of actual usages by citing only the rules in the abstract, since such rules are only generalisations after the event. In order to understand the total system it would be necessary to describe the social contexts in which every subject is speaking. In this chapter, however, I am looking specifically at Mongol women and shall only sketch in the contexts in which men operate. I shall argue that women's modes of address, although occurring within the total set of social relations which are dominated by the male descent system, should not be seen merely as an epiphenomenon or a reflection of more fundamental social relations: they are *as themselves* an important means by which the system is reproduced.

The Mongol Local Community

Mongols in the central nomadic zones, at the time to which this chapter relates, lived in small encampments of two to six tents, each tent being the home of a nuclear family. (Collectivisation, which took place in 1959-60, has subsequently altered the settlement patterns and living arrangements to a great extent, cf. Humphrey, 1974). The core group was the patrilineal extended family, with dependants, friends and servants camped alongside. Sometimes two or three unrelated men joined together, but usually the pattern was of a nomadic grouping of brothers or of a father and sons. In the more settled farming regions on the fringes of China and in parts of Buryatia the extended family included more people and was more stable, since sons could not easily move away. Nevertheless, even in these areas pressure on pastures and fields forced some men into migration. In the greater part of Mongolia, which was nomadic, sons could easily move away. There was thus a constant tension between the desire to keep the agnatic group together for economic and political reasons and the prestige of its headman, and the belief of individual herdsmen that they might be better off economically somewhere else.

Women moved between agnatic groups, being born into one group and becoming wives in another. Those very few exceptions who did not marry and remained with their fathers were considered to be bad omens, and after they reached the age of forty or fifty often became *shaygants*, 'lay-sister' or 'nun'. Kuo-yi Pao reports that even so they were thought to attract newborn babies and eat their flesh (1964, p. 40).

Some girls, usually only when a man had no sons, made an uxori-local marriage, and were able to inherit their fathers' property for their own

lifetimes. In these cases, the incoming son-in-law was adopted by the girl's father, often at an early age, but the girl remained the head of the family, the property being held in trust for her children. It is interesting that the position of the son-in-law in uxori-local marriage was in many ways parallel to that of the daughter-in-law in normal virilocal marriage. He had similar low status, and was expected to work for his parents-in-law, but, however, was not required to observe the extension of name taboos into ordinary language. In other words, he avoided his parents-in-law's names in address, just as did all people of junior generation, but he could use the names in reference and did not have to taboo similar-sounding words.

Women in Context

1. The Girl

The first context of a woman's life was her girlhood at her parents' home which lasted until she left to become a wife. A daughter at home was treated with far more indulgence than a son. One man said that fathers did not reprimand their daughters because they realised that they would start having hard lives as soon as they married into their husbands' families. Sons, on the other hand, had to stand straight before their fathers and say '*dzeel*' when replying to questions. This is a word implying absolute obedience and was formerly used by servants when replying to their masters. A daughter could even joke with her father, and she also had a warm relationship with her mother.

Although girls did not have a position in the status hierarchy of their lineage of birth (cf. the Khorchin saying '*oxin xin iye ügei*', 'a daughter has no generation') (Kuo-yi Pao, 1964, p. 290), they were considered to be its property. A girl's reputation and the bride-wealth she gained were a matter of common concern. In some Mongol groups this sense of property applied even in a sexual sense. Among the Western Buryats, for example, a special party was held for a bride in her own settlement on the eve of the wedding. She was expected to tour the homes of the young men of her own community in the company of her girlfriends and it was not anticipated that she would remain a virgin.

An unmarried girl thus had a privileged position in the generally formal, reserved, and rule-laden Mongol family environment. To recall the modes of address, it is apparent that a girl's prevalent mode in these years was informal: she would use the intimate honorific terms (*dzi-adzia*, *möönöv*, etc.) for older kin, and nicknames for the few people junior to herself (her younger siblings).

2. The Young Wife

The second context is that of the young wife in her husband's family, this stage lasting until her own children were old enough to marry. A young married couple had their own tent, but the wife was required to do all the housework for her parents-in-law in the *ix ger* (the 'big tent' of the camp). She was required to rise first in the morning and go to bed last at night, to be always occupied and never be seen to rest, and to be always ready to perform any task required of her. She was not allowed to eat together with the men and senior wife of the group, but neither was she allowed to save a bit of food for herself to eat after they had finished; she could have only what was left over. She was subject to an extraordinary number of regulations in dress, comportment, orientation and the like, of which I shall mention only a few. One set of rules was concerned with maintaining a calm, almost blank demeanour. She was not allowed to raise her head, to laugh, to cry, to sing without being asked, to grind her teeth, or make any noise when eating. A second range of prohibitions forbade the slightest hint of her sexuality, especially when in the presence of the father-in-law or other men of the *xadam* category. She always had to wear a hat in his presence, do up all her buttons, pull down her sleeves over her wrists, never show her knees, never be seen undressing, or urinating or defecating, never feed her baby at the breast in front of her father-in-law, never comb her hair in public, and always hide away her own personal clothes in a special box (Hamayon and Bassanoff, 1973).

Childbirth and menstruation were both polluting. According to Petri (1925) the Buryats saw childbirth, particularly the blood of childbirth, as the more dangerously polluting of the two. A pregnant woman, on the other hand, was not impure, and she was not subject to the restrictions imposed on menstruating women or women who had just given birth. Among the shamanist Buryat a pregnant woman could even attend rituals normally reserved for men only. This was because she was able to attend in the capacity of bearer of a yet unborn son of the lineage. A woman herself was always polluting in her reproductive functions.

In all situations where status was measured, such as the distribution of meat, the *ber* could expect the most humble portion. It was expected, in fact it was considered right, that she would appear both tired and hungry.

It follows from this, that she could expect little help from any of her affines. The father-in-law had little to do with her, and instructions he issued were usually transmitted as commands through the mother-in-law: 'Tell that girl to do such-and-such!' The relationship with other senior male affines, even the husband's brothers, was almost as formal and distant. With the mother-in-law a woman was expected to behave

with great respect and was required to say '*dzeel*' when addressed by her. The mother-in-law ran the households of the camp, and it was the daughter-in-law's duty to follow her instructions. The husband's younger siblings, especially his sisters, were not friendly either, and would tease a young bride unmercifully. Kuo-yi Pao (1964, p. 290) explains that this was because of jealousy at the incoming women taking away their brothers' attention.

The young wife's relationship with her husband was particularly ambiguous. Husband and wife had to maintain an attitude of indifference in public, and a wife had to avoid use of his name in address. In reference she could use the name, but only by disguising it by changing the vowel-harmony (*Dugar* became *Düger*, etc.). A wife addressed her husband as *ta*, while he called her *chi* and could use her name (Aberle, 1958, p. 54). Generally, a wife avoided calling her husband anything and attracted his attention by exclaiming '*xui*' ('hey!').

It was considered a disgrace for a husband to neglect his parents' or agnates' interests in favour of his wife, and a man had to take special precautions to avoid seeming dominated by his wife in case he be despised and criticised. For example, when a man went away on a journey he did not greet his wife on his return, but first bowed to the family altar and then gave an account of his journey to his father. His wife should make no sign of her happiness that he had returned, otherwise her sister-in-law would tease her; she should remain calmly at work. However badly a young wife was treated, her husband was the last person who could help her. Even an appeal to his own siblings or to his mother might lead others to think he was over-influenced by his wife.

A daughter-in-law had to be careful to avoid saying anything which might affect the relationship between her husband and the rest of the agnatic group. In particular she had to be careful not to act as a wedge between her husband and her mother-in-law, because the mother-in-law was the only person in the family who could legitimately protect her. Brothers often quarrelled over matters of property and prestige, but a young wife was not supposed to intervene even if her husband appealed to her. She should say, '*uuden tirsen ax-diiu xoyolaa xereg namad xamda ügei*' - things between you and your own born brother have nothing to do with me' (Kuo-yi Pao, 1964, p. 285).

A wife's position improved after she had children, particularly sons, but even so, neither she nor her husband could intervene if senior members of the agnatic group punished her children (Vreeland, 1954, p. 55). Among some Mongol groups, if the young wife got on well with the family, the father-in-law would lift the restriction of her sitting north of the fireplace and walking round the back of his tent (two particularly

irksome restrictions), and she would be known as *darzan ber* ('freed daughter-in-law') (Badamxatan, 1965). It is interesting that among the western Buryat, where the *ber* was the wife of a politically important man, her more distant *xadam* relatives could 'refuse' the relationship. The *xadam* in this case ritually took off her hat and did some other previously unthinkable act such as urinating in front of her and thereafter the *xadam/ber* prohibitions were at an end between them (Petri, 1925, p. 31). This has not been reported for the Khalkha Mongols, where political position more nearly coincided with genealogical position.

After her marriage a woman's relations with her own family continued to be warm and informal, and she was allowed to visit them annually after the 'new year'. A girl's father gave her an endowment (dower) of cattle soon after the marriage, and these remained her own property. At each visit to her father she was given presents which could include more cattle, and her husband and children were treated with great indulgence. The gifts increased her father's prestige, by demonstrating his wealth and his generosity. However, her own family would not encourage her if she wished to leave her husband. As a last resort, a wife could run away home taking her wealth with her, but she might well be forced by her father to return to her husband's camp.

3. The Mother-in-Law

The third and final context of a woman's life was when she herself became a mother-in-law. By this time, since the Mongolian expectation of life was until recently fairly short, a woman's own parents-in-law were probably either dead or retired into a religious and other-worldly old age. The mother of a grown son was now part of the senior generation. She hastened to find a bride for her son to carry the burden of household chores, and her role thereafter was to direct activities, particularly in acting as a mediator between the senior men of the lineage and the incoming junior wives. Her increasing identification with her husband's lineage was really on behalf of her sons. This in turn altered her relationship with her own natal family. If she had previously been a favourite daughter returning home for a few days of indulgence, she now became, together with her son, more like an interloper, entitled to ask for things, but being given them only with some reluctance. In her husband's household, on the other hand, she was now accorded the privileges of seniority, including eating and sleeping in the place of honour, being served first and greeted first by people entering the tent. Her own name was now almost never uttered, since the senior agnates were no longer around.

Thus we can say that the junior wife's characteristic mode of address

was formal: primarily she used the kinship reference terms, since virtually everyone she was in contact with was senior to her, although she could use names for her husband's younger siblings. The senior wife, on the other hand, would use personal names on most occasions, since she was surrounded by her own children and their spouses. For grandchildren she might well use the teasing nicknames.

Kinship and Property

What I have been discussing up to this point has been the developmental process within the family from a woman's-eye-view. Certain essential socio-economic actions which take place between men, such as bride-wealth, have been ignored up to now. As a system (i.e. the cognitive realisation of the dominant structure), Mongol kinship is coherent only when seen from the point of view of men, whose interest it appears to reflect. The agnatic group entered into relations with other similar groups to exchange women and bride-wealth. Rules of eligibility of spouses, always in general established by men (who were the guardians of genealogies) prevented the marriages of daughters or sisters to men of the groups from whom mothers or wives had recently been taken. The kinship reference terminology divides agnatic groups into five categories outside a man's own patrilineage (*torolmiid*): (1) the groups from whom his mother, his father's mother, father's brother's mother, etc., had been taken (*zagatnar*); (2) the descendants through women of this group (*boher*); (3) the group from whom his wife has been taken (*xadam*); (4) the groups giving spouses to his children (*xud*); and (5) the descendants through women of his own agnatic group (*zee*).

In the Mongol system non-reciprocal usages of address (i.e. *tu* and reference terms from one side, and *chi* and names from the other) establish the mother-giving groups (*zagats*) as superior to Ego while the daughter-receiving groups (*zee*) are junior. Moreover, a far greater interest is shown in the differential status of women-givers (that is mothers/wives/daughters-in-law givers), each of which have a separate term. The descendants of the women of a man's patrilineage, on the other hand, are all called *zee*, whatever generation they belong to.

I see this imbalance as closely related to the distribution of property. At marriage a substantial, previously agreed-upon bride-wealth is paid by the husband's entire agnatic kin group to the woman-giving agnatic group before the wedding can take place. The amount is frequently more than the total property of one nuclear unit. The wife brings with her a different kind of property as a dowry, not cattle, but jewels, clothes and utensils, which have been prepared by women and pass between

women. After the marriage, however, the bride's family, as already noted, can give her large numbers of cattle as an endowment (*tyj*) which belongs to her alone. The amount is determined by her father at his own free will. In rich families it can equal the bride-wealth, and further instalments can be given when the bride visits her home with her husband and children.

If we recall that the aim of the senior men of a patrilineal group is to keep the families together so that they personally can enjoy the management of a large pool of property, it becomes clear that in-coming wives are dangerous points of potential defection from the group. In a nomadic society such wives are individual centres of independence, each with their own small accumulation of property. If, on the other hand, they are kept under control, they can be seen as points whereby the sources of wealth of affinal groups can be tapped for the benefit of the agnatic group as a whole.

It should be pointed out here that leadership in the agnatic group is at odds with property inheritance within it. The headship passes collaterally from brother to brother before it descends to the next generation in the person of the eldest son of the senior brother. Property, on the other hand, goes lineally from father to son. There is thus a tendency for brother to split from brother as soon as there has been a division of the father's property, and the leadership pattern can be seen as an attempt to counteract this. The in-coming endowment of each wife from a different source is a constant stimulus to independence for each man, since this property is in theory his wife's alone and not disposable by the agnatic group. It is in this context that I would say that the love of the young couple for one another is a direct challenge to the authority of the patrilineage, since it might inspire the man to promote the interests of his nuclear unit over those of the larger group.

The terms of address and the rules of interpersonal behaviour in the family are ideological and practical means of preventing the defection of younger men. One facet of this is the enforced submission of the sons, so that they do not demand an early division of the father's property. Another is the negation of the influence of young wives on their husbands, which lasts until women begin to act in the interests of their own sons, who still have to inherit from the seniors of the group and be allotted bride-wealth. Just one example, which clearly represents the ideal structure of the extended family, is the sitting pattern at meals of the Korchin Mongols in the 1920s. The senior man and his wife sat at one table in the place of honour together with their unmarried children, and each of the married sons sat at a separate table with his own unmarried sons. The women, apart from the senior wife, cooked and served

the meal, and then ate and fed the small babies after everyone else had finished (Kno-yl Pao, 1964, p. 31).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I shall give an answer to what seem to me two crucially and inextricably related questions: first, why is such peculiar cultural weight, or ideological distortion, placed on the relationship between the *xadamud* (father-in-law, senior male affines) and the *ber* (daughter-in-law, in-marrying junior women)? And second, why does this take the form of taboos on personal names and the homophones in everyday speech?

Take the second question first. Earlier in the chapter I made a series of observations on the name taboo. Personal names in Mongol culture class people as individuals, not categories. Titles, descriptive names, deceiver-names (and probably even nicknames) are also tabooed. Homophones are tabooed, but synonyms (i.e. words which mean the same as the name but sound different) are not. I conclude that what is at issue here is the suppression of attention. It is clear that the *sound* of the words involved is very important, and my explanation for this is that personal names, and words which are phonetically similar to the name, not only attract but *compel* the attention of the person addressed. If we look at the whole domain of address, it is clear that personal names have this quality to a greater extent than either special intimate address terms or reference terms used in address. The former do not compel attention because each term can be attached to several categories of kinsmen and women. The latter are less compelling for a different reason: their relativity. Unlike a name, a reference term used in address is not absolute but invariably includes the speaker. Thus a woman does not look up when someone calls 'Mother!' unless it is the voice of her own child calling.

Mongols do not name certain people (nor, indeed, dangerous rivers, wild animals, dead ancestors, etc.) directly because to speak the name aloud does not merely make the named one look up, as it were, but actually focuses attention on the pronouncer of the name. It is to avoid such potentially dangerous focusing on oneself that each person takes care not to say the name. So what the name taboo between the *xadamud* and the *ber* establishes is that the father-in-law (and other senior males) will not have his attention compelled by the daughter-in-law, and *refuses* to focus his thoughts on her.

Now the first question: why is the emphasis placed on taboos for the daughter-in-law in particular? If we recall the life cycle of Mongol

women it will be remembered that in the beginning of their lives, as unmarried girls, they are identified as junior members of their natal lineage, as belonging to that lineage even if they have no political rights in it. At the end of their lives, as mothers-in-law, women are identified with their husbands' lineages by virtue of their status as mothers of sons in those lineages. These two assessments coincide with the real interests of women in these positions in this patrilineal politico-economic system. Identification with the two lineages appears also in the use of address terms by women at both of these stages, since in both cases a woman's predominant mode of address is the informal, inclusive mode of people who belong. As a young girl, she uses the intimate but honorific special terms (*mōmōō*, *adzia*, etc.) for seniors, and nicknames for juniors. As a mother-in-law she uses names and nicknames for juniors, and is herself addressed as *mōmōō* or *adzia*.

The period of the taboos, on the other hand, coincides with the middle stage of women's lives when they are *in fact* a danger to the father-in-law's group because their own loyalty and interests are divided. While endowment-cattle are still coming through from their own natal group they cannot yet identify totally with their husband's lineage. Sociologically and psychologically, however, the important point is that a young married woman is already an adult. She lives independently from her natal group and has her own property. There is an imbalance here with

own sons, who still have to inherit the family wealth. Just one example: in the extended family of the Korčinin Mongols in the 1920s. The one table in the place of honour together with each of the married sons sat at a separate table. The women, apart from the senior women, were seated at a table in the rear of the room. The terms of the family are ideological of younger men. One of the dangerous rivers, sons, so that they do not speak the name of the river, as it were, but actually use the name. It is to avoid such taboos that each person takes care to avoid the name of the *xadamuud* (and other senior males) will not speak the name of the daughter-in-law, and refuses to marry her. This is the emphasis placed on taboos for the family? If we recall the life cycle of Mongol

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is involuntarily attracted by the sound, and the father-in-law must not be compelled.

If this theory is correct, then what I have said should apply to other patrilineal societies where the agnatic group is subject to similar pressures and where personal names have the same kind of function. Junod's material on the Ba-Thonga gives at least one example of the same kind of taboos on names and their homophones (Junod, 1912, pp. 236, 357). There may, of course, be cultures where the hearing of a sound pattern similar to a personal name does not compel attention. And there are, perhaps, cultures where compelling attention by using names is not linked to ideas of power as, for example, among egalitarian hunters and gatherers. However, the nexus of relations I have outlined here does seem to have general significance in patrilineal, non-egalitarian societies. This encourages me to repeat my conviction, expressed earlier, that such taboos are not merely incidental phenomena to be separated off under a heading such as 'symbolism'. They are social practices which are integral to the systemic reproduction of kinship groups.

Thus there is a sense in which, in nomadic societies (or other situations such as labour migration) where men may be absent from the local group, it is *women* who define the agnatic group by practising name taboos for a certain range of men, whether they are present, absent, or even dead. In this way the 'negative' observance of a taboo in fact requires linguistic acts which have positive social consequences.

Note

I would like to acknowledge the helpful advice of Dr Terence Turner and Dr Esther Goody in preparing this chapter.

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The threat to the father-in-law is constituted not so much by the daughter-in-law's own ambiguity of feelings as by her emotional power over her husband. Until he reaches a position of authority himself in the agnatic group he may be tempted to place more importance on his own nuclear unit and even escape the power of the senior agnates by physically moving away. Conjugal sentiment must therefore be trodden down. It is consistent with this that taboos related to sex (between father-in-law and daughter-in-law) are so important, because the *xadamud* must not recognise the power of what they are trying to suppress. All of the daughter-in-law's marked behaviour in many different domains is governed by the prohibition on her exciting or provoking the father-in-law. Her positive behaviour is such that she must be seen to be observing the taboos, for example by using peculiar language. She must not focus attention on herself by saying the *xadam*'s name, so that *he* should not be betrayed into revealing an interest in someone whom his own agnatic ideology insists on suppressing. The extension of the taboo to words sounding like his name is a paradigm of the relation: attention

is involuntarily attracted by the sound, and the father-in-law must not be compelled.

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5

Privileged, Schooled and Finished: Boarding Education for Girls

Judith Okely

Theoretical and Methodological Questions

The public school¹ has moulded a large proportion of the dominant male elite in British society, as well as their wives and mothers. It has also had a wider influence and has affected, albeit elusively, the alternative state form of schooling. While we find considerable research into public schools for boys,² there is little serious investigation of the girls' schools, not indeed of the larger topic of gender differentiation in education.³ It is assumed either that girls' boarding-schools are replicas of those for boys, or that they are of peripheral importance. The male and female institutions are not analysed as parts of one system. In addition to the studies of boys' schools, we have a plethora of autobiographies by men, while little comparable information exists from women, since few achieve the status which calls for an account of themselves.⁴

Statements about the educational achievements of 'the middle class' have tended to conceal their gender bias. Certainly some middle-class girls attend schools, boarding or day, of high academic quality, which encourage independent careers for their pupils. But there are other middle- or upper-class girls who are denied this, and precisely because of their class. The development of a distinct class consciousness is seen as more important than scholarship and achievement for them, as are beliefs which maintain the boundaries of their class. The girls are protected for a future marriage contract within an elite whose biological and social reproduction they ensure. They have no economic and political power independent of males such as their fathers, and later their husbands and sons. Born into a privileged and powerful elite, the women learn to live ambitions only vicariously through men.

The girls' school may be, invisibly, a preparation for dependence, while the boys' school is more visibly a preparation for independence and power. Some of the lessons of a girls' boarding-school carry uncertainties, or are inapplicable in later life. There is greater continuity for boys who, for example, are not confronted with the marriage-career dilemma which, for girls, becomes a source of conflict within their iden-

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CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN | VOLUME 4

Defining Females

The Nature of Women in Society

EDITED BY
Shirley Ardener



BERG
Oxford / Providence

Published in 1993 by

Berg Publishers Limited

Editorial offices:

221 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02906, USA
150 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1JF, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Defining females : the nature of women in society / edited by Shirley Ardener.

p. cm. — (Cross-cultural perspectives on women)

Originally published: London : Croom Helm in association with the Oxford
University Women's Studies Committee, © 1978, in series: Oxford women's
series.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-85496-727-3 (pbk.)

I. Women—Social conditions. I. Ardener, Shirley. II. Series.
HQ112L.D43 1992

305.42—dc20

92-39823

CIP

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the
British Library

ISBN 0 85496 727 3

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