



ЯЗЫКОВАЯ СИСТЕМА

LANGUAGE IN SYSTEM

DOI: 10.22363/2618-897X-2025-22-4-882-900

EDN: ERWTBP

Research article / Научная статья

Nation-building and Writing System: *Mongol Bichig* in Linguistic Landscape of Ulaanbaatar

Erzhen V. Khilkhanova 

Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ erzhen.khilkhanova@iling-ran.ru

Abstract. This study examines the linguistic landscape of Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, in relation to the country's current nation-building processes, which are closely intertwined with the introduction of the classical Mongolian writing system, *Mongol Bichig*, into official documentation and school education. The author relies on the method of photographing linguistic landscape units in the center of Ulaanbaatar and on surveys revealing public opinion on *Mongol Bichig* and people's linguistic competence in it. The research shows a natural time lag between the intentions of the government and Mongolian society and the actual presence of *Mongol Bichig* in the linguistic landscape and everyday linguistic practices. The issue of *Mongol Bichig* is considered within the broad historical and linguistic context showing past and present efforts to construct national identity, currently building it on the original writing system. The research shows a natural time lag between the intentions of the government and Mongolian society and the actual presence of *Mongol Bichig* in the linguistic landscape and everyday linguistic practices. So far, *Mongol Bichig* performs mostly symbolic function. Its symbolic representations in the linguistic landscape of Mongolian capital are driven not only by historical memory, ideas of national identity and patriotism, but also by the strategies of commodification of national identity in the form of marketing of authenticity and locality.

Key words: linguistic landscape, nation-building, classical (traditional) Mongolian script, Ulaanbaatar, state language policy, commodification of language

Article history: received 14.03.2025; accepted 10.10.2025

Conflict of interests: the author declares that there is no conflict of interests.

For citation: Khilkhanova, E.V. 2025. "Nation-building and Writing System: *Mongol Bichig* in Linguistic Landscape of Ulaanbaatar." *Polylinguality and Transcultural Practices*, 22 (4), 882–900. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2618-897X-2025-22-4-882-900>



Нациестроительство и письменность: Монгол бичиг в языковом ландшафте Улан-Батора

Э.В. Хилханова 

Институт языкознания Российской академии наук, Москва, Российская Федерация

✉ erzhen.khilkhanova@iling-ran.ru

Аннотация. Рассмотрен языковой ландшафт Улан-Батора, столицы Монголии, в связи с современными процессами нациестроительства в стране, которые тесно переплетены с внедрением классической монгольской письменности — *Монгол бичиг* — в официальную документацию и школьное образование. Автор опирается на метод фотографирования единиц языкового ландшафта в центре Улан-Батора и опросы, выявляющие общественное мнение о *Монгол бичиг* и языковой компетенции людей в нем. В исследовании использовано широкое определение языкового ландшафта, которое включает в себя все языки, присутствующие в публичном пространстве. Проблема классической монгольской письменности рассматривается в широком историческом и лингвистическом контексте, демонстрирующем прошлые и нынешние усилия по формированию национальной идентичности, которые в настоящее время основываются на оригинальной системе письма. Исследование показало естественный временной разрыв между этими намерениями, разделяемыми правительством и монгольским обществом, и фактическим присутствием традиционной монгольской графики в языковом ландшафте и в повседневных лингвистических практиках. Пока еще *Монгол бичиг* выполняет в основном символическую функцию. Его символические репрезентации в языковом ландшафте монгольской столицы обусловлены не только исторической памятью, идеями национальной идентичности и патриотизма, но и стратегиями коммодификации национальной идентичности в форме маркетинга аутентичности и локальности.

Ключевые слова: языковой ландшафт, нациестроительство, классическая (традиционная) монгольская письменность, Улан-Батор, государственная языковая политика, коммодификация языка

История статьи: поступила в редакцию 14.03.2025; принята к печати 10.10.2025.

Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Для цитирования: Khilkhanova E.V. Nation-building and Writing System: *Mongol Bichig* in Linguistic Landscape of Ulaanbaatar // Полилингвильность и транскультурные практики. 2025. Т. 22. № 4. С. 882–900. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2618-897X-2025-22-4-882-900>

Introduction

Theory and Research Methodology

Linguistic landscape studies (henceforth LLS) is a field experiencing a boom in modern sociolinguistics since the end of the 20th century. Despite being a relatively young field, LLS have already developed its own history, theory and methodology. Initially, the quantitative approach dominated, as evidenced by P. Backhaus's work on urban multilingualism in Tokyo [1].

However, pure quantitative analysis only provides a cross-sectional view of LLS at a given moment in time, identifying the dominance, weak representation or absence of any idioms in the linguistic landscape. Such quantitative parameters are

typically examined within the context of language policy research, a foundational component of LLS [2]. LLS provide a fruitful methodological perspective through which language policy can be analyzed as a “discursive and multilayered process” [3]. Quantitative research is necessary and important when we deal with a previously unexplored area (see also [4]). A further analytical step should be to identify social meanings, social indexicality, and diverse contexts that define and explain both the quantitative parameters and the features of visual representation of certain languages in linguistic landscape [4; 5; 6; 7].

Although the concept of a linguistic landscape (henceforth LL) was originally naturally connected with semiotics, the semiotic side of LL signs was not emphasized at the beginning. This can be seen in the well-known definition of LL given by Landry and Bourhis in 1997: “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration” [8. P. 25].

In my research, however, I adhere to a broader definition of LL, considering it not only as a collection of static¹ linguistic signs, as in Landry and Bourhis’ study, but as a collection of all languages visible in public space. In this sense, a LL includes both static and moving signs, located on various kinds of goods and products found in the study area — manufactured goods, food products, etc. These artifacts contribute to the diverse repertoire of languages with which both permanent and temporary residents of the territory (including tourists) must engage. These linguistic signs, found on everyday goods and souvenirs, carry the meanings necessary for everyday orientation, while also signalling longer-term and strategic trends in language policy.

This approach aligns with current trends in LLS and, more broadly, in sociolinguistics and related disciplines. A broad understanding of LL as part of everyday life enables the identification of the agency, opinions and assessments of the various actors, both official and grassroots, who create and interpret LL signs. Modern LLS theory and methodology insists on perceiving LLs as a complex, historical, semiotically loaded material space in which language policy is implemented at both micro and macro levels [4; 5].

A broad definition of LLs includes soundscapes too. However, I had to exclude from my analysis this aspect of LL, along with the multimodal nature of landscapes, as it would require much more extensive research. This article considers only one

¹ The term ‘static’ refers to immobile LL signs, listed, inter alia, in Landry and Bourhis’ definition. Their static nature is opposed to dynamic, movable LL signs placed on various kinds of goods and products — see the broad definition of LL above. The term ‘static’, however, should not imply that these signs, once placed on a building façade by business owners, cannot change; on the contrary, their appearance, disappearance and transformations are all meaningful and henceforth are objects of LLS.

type of sign, the importance of which for the country under investigation, Mongolia, cannot be overestimated. More specifically, I will focus on the classical Mongolian script (in Mongolian: *Mongol Bichig*)² — and its representation in the visual LL of the country's capital Ulaanbaatar. Attention will also be paid to the contribution of different stakeholders — the state, institutions, and business owners — to the representation of these signs in Ulaanbaatar. Language attitudes and opinions of Mongolian citizens regarding Mongol Bichig are also analyzed.

Ulaanbaatar is a particularly fruitful context for such an examination as it is the capital of a country that has been virtually unexplored in terms of its LL; there are only a few studies on this topic [10; 11]. Ulaanbaatar is by far the most representative city in Mongolia for exploring the LL, both because of its metropolitan status and size, and because 1/3 of the country's total population lives in it.³ Mongolia and its capital are extremely interesting subjects for LL research, not only because they have been poorly studied, but also because the country is currently undergoing an intensive nation-building process, which is clearly reflected in the dynamics of its LL.

Mongolia has a complex history of state formation and linguistic development, which largely took place under the protectorate and with the help of the Soviet Union, and before that, the Russian Empire [12]. Its history as a sovereign state formally dates back to 1924, when the Mongolian People's Republic was proclaimed on the territory of Outer Mongolia — modern Mongolia — with the help of the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mongolia has changed its foreign policy and today adheres to the “third neighbor” policy [13]. At the same time, the country tries to balance between Russia and China with whom Mongolia shares a common border; unlike the metaphorical “third neighbor”, these geographical neighbors are real (and powerful) and still retain their economic influence on Mongolia.

The paper is structured as follows: in the next section, data sources and research methods are explained; the section after that describes in short the historical and linguistic background of the country under investigation; the subsequent section is dedicated to linguistic landscape data in Ulaanbaatar and people's opinions and attitudes towards *Mongol Bichig*. In the concluding section, I summarise my findings, paying attention to the historical and symbolic values of *Mongol Bichig* and outlining possible outcomes of the contemporary Mongolian language policy.

² The classical (traditional) Mongolian script is a vertical writing written from top to bottom: It goes back to the Uyghur script and is now used as the main writing system by the Mongols of the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia (PRC), and also has limited use in Mongolia [9]. In this paper, the terms Mongolian script, classical (traditional) Mongolian script, Mongolian writing, *Mongol Bichig*, national script, Mongolian graphics are used as referring to the same object.

³ Үндэсний статистикийн хороо. Монгол улсын хүн амын тоо. Статистикийн мэдээллийн нэгдсэн сан (nso.mn). (accessed: 1.6.2023). (In Mong.)

Data and Methods

The following methods were used to analyse the linguistic space of Mongolia's capital city. To collect the ‘static’ material, LL units in the centre of Ulaanbaatar were photographed. The material was collected inside the segment outlined by two central streets of the city — Baga toiruu (‘Small Circle’) and Enchtaiwany ɔrgɔn chɔlɔɔ (‘Peace Avenue’) (Figure 1). The method of collecting empirical material in the city center is very common [see: 14; 15]; then these central streets become a kind of *pars pro toto* for the entire city or even the entire region [16]. In total, 576 units of static LL were used as material for analysis. As the unit of analysis was considered “a fragment of text within a spatially defined frame” [1. P. 66], referring to a specific establishment (shop, hairdresser, etc.).

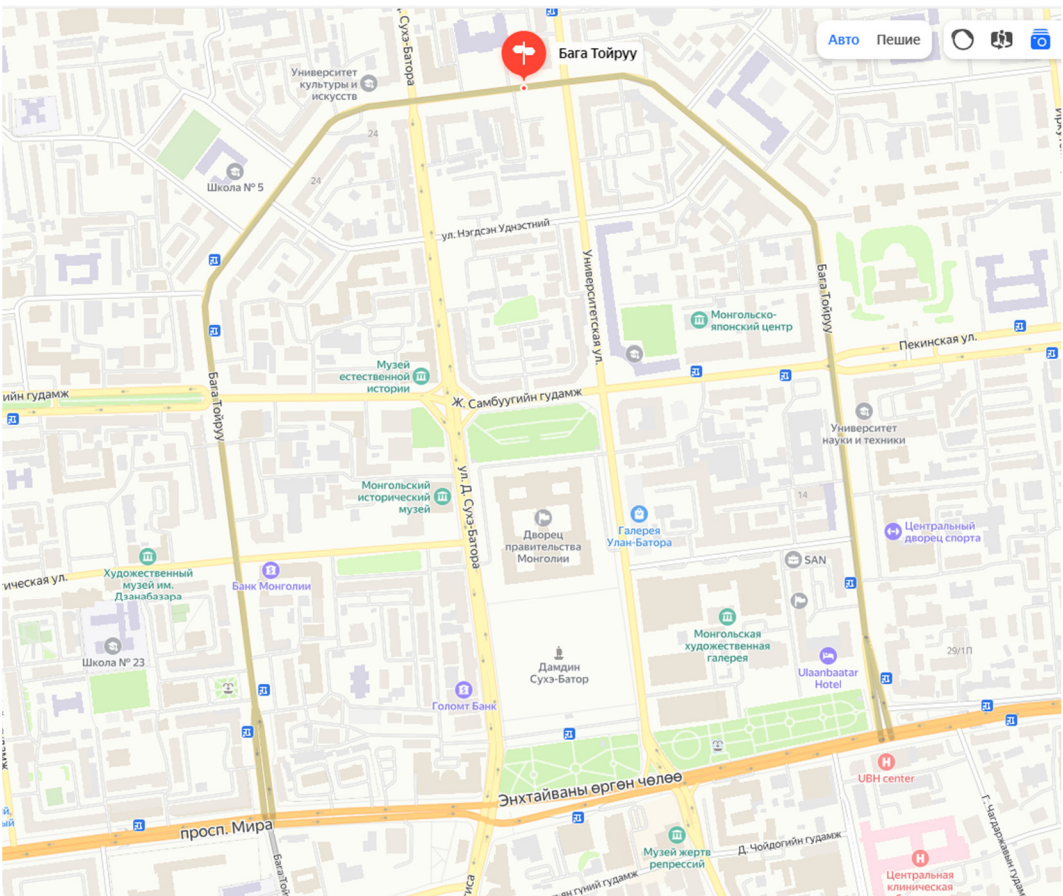


Figure 1. The investigated segment in the center of Ulaanbaatar

S o u r c e : Yandex Maps — transportation, navigation, and place search, 10 April 2025.
<https://map.yandex.ru>.

In addition to identifying the general trends of LL within the segment outlined in Figure 1, one of the variants of quantitative LLS methods was used, namely, *the method of total fixation of visual textual information*. Due to the method's complexity, the total photographic fixation was used for a limited space segment starting from the intersection of Baga Toiruu Street with Peace Avenue to its intersection with Universitetskaya Street, which is approximately 1.5 kilometers (more than half the length of Baga Toiruu Street) (see Figure 1). Using the quantitative method is necessary to identify the actual, statistically confirmed ratio of languages in LL, which forms the basis for subsequent interpretations. Finally, the collection of 'artifacts', that is, all languages visible in the public space (see the broad interpretation of LL in the Introduction) was carried out in different places of Ulaanbaatar, without linkage to the center. Field material was collected in April and August 2024.

Opinions and assessments of individuals involved in creating and interpreting LL were revealed through analysis of official documents and public opinion poll results. To obtain this and other information on Mongolia and its current and historical context, I also relied on academic publications.

3. Mongolia: Historical and Linguistic Background

As mentioned in the Introduction, Mongolia has come a long way to today's independence first from China, and later from the Soviet Union [see, for example: 17; 18]. The first Russian consulate was opened in 1861 in Urga, a settlement that would later become the capital of Mongolia, and in the 17th and 18th centuries was the nomadic residence of Mongolian Bogdo-Gegens, the traditional leaders of Buddhism in Mongolia and neighboring countries [19]. Urga was renamed to present-day Ulaanbaatar in 1924, when, with the support of the USSR, the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) independent from China was proclaimed and its Constitution was adopted. Even later, till the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow sought to control Mongolia as a buffer state between the USSR and China. The Mongolian People's Republic was perceived as the 'sixteenth republic of the Soviet Union.' Before the collapse of the USSR, Mongolia ranked first in the world for of the study and dissemination of the Russian language, except for the countries of the former Soviet Union [20].

After 1991, as a result of the massive outflow of Russian-speaking specialists and military personnel from Mongolia, as well as a result of the severance of trade and economic ties between the countries of the former socialist camp, the volume of Russian language learning and its prestige sharply decreased. The country's official authorities have also chosen to distance themselves from the Russian language due to the decline in its economic value. This, along with the widespread use of English as the language of international communication and the strengthening of

Mongolia's economic contacts with neighboring Asian countries — China, South Korea and Japan — led to displacement of Russian from educational, cultural and other spheres. Along with English, the languages of the aforementioned countries are coming to the fore [10]. However, Russian is still present in Mongolia: a whole network of Russian schools has been preserved, and many cultural events related to the Russian language are being held [21; 22]. Russian remains in demand among Mongolians as a language of international communication, scientific information and education. Many experts note that abolishing the visa regime between Russia and Mongolia in 2014 not only contributed to growth in cross-border trade, but also created an economic demand for Russian [22; 23].

All the twists and turns of Mongolian history have affected the language sphere not only in relation to the Russian language. The result of the Soviet Union's "soft power" policy towards Mongolia was the abandonment of the traditional Mongolian script on the grounds of its 'archaism' [24. P. 36]. In the Soviet Union, due to the ideologized national and language policy of the USSR, there was a tradition of calling it *the Old Mongolian script*. In 1941, the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced as the basis of Mongolian writing system. Scholars have different views on the significance of this change. Some associate the formation of the national Mongolian language with the transition to the Cyrillic alphabet and believe that it has proven its worth in practice. The educational success of the Mongolian people is particularly attributed to the use of the Cyrillic alphabet [25. P. 99]. There is also another opinion linking the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet with the Sovietization/Russification of the MNR [24].

However, the change in the writing system had one undeniable negative consequence: it alienated ordinary people and scientists, particularly humanities scholars, from their vast historical spiritual culture and from Eastern philosophy, science, and literature written in classical Mongolian script. Not only was the temporal connection interrupted, but the territorial connection was too. Native speakers of Mongolian languages living in China (including the Shanahan Buryats) still use *Mongol Bichig*, whereas Buryats in Russia do not. This obviously hinders close communication and interaction between Mongolian-speaking peoples [25. P. 100; 26].

After the collapse of the USSR, Mongolia, which has broken away from the ideological influence of its "northern neighbor," began to make efforts to return the Mongolian graphics to official paperwork, to the secondary schools' curricula, etc. The "National Program of Mongolian Writing — I, II" was adopted, during which the Mongolian script was included in the curriculum of 6–9 grades in secondary schools; civil and educational documents are now published in both Cyrillic and Mongolian scripts; textbooks and books in Mongolian script are being translated and published. Nevertheless, the goals set by both programs were not fulfilled at a sufficient level. It could be said that the education of the Mongolian script is still

in its infancy; also, an environment for its widespread use still needs to be created [27. P. 113].

In February 2015, the Great State Khural of Mongolia adopted the Law “On the Mongolian Language,”⁴ where the state policy regarding the Mongolian script was further specified. It is planned to keep records of state and local government bodies in two scripts: Cyrillic and national script. Paragraphs 7 and 11 of this law became the basis for the adoption and implementation of the “National Program of Mongolian Writing — III,” the purpose of which is to fully prepare the transition to the use of two scripts from 2025.

The Program includes such items as, for example:

- The National Council of Civil Servants should include a chapter on knowledge of the Mongolian script in civil servant questionnaires, and ensure that civil servants are examined on their knowledge of the Mongolian script;

- Citizens and public organisations should receive training in the Mongolian script and promote the dissemination of the Mongolian script (in the electronic form as well), and should use the national script to label domestic products [Ibid. P. 115].

The year 2025 is an important milestone in the history of the writing system reform in Mongolia. On January 1, 2025, the law on the dual writing system came into force in the country. The current Cyrillic alphabet is from now on duplicated in the Mongolian script throughout the document flow. By this time, the preparation of state institutions for reform has been in full swing — printed forms and government letterheads with double font were approved. Half of the 200,000 civil servants have been trained. The Mongolian company *Bolorsoft* has launched the *Kimo* program, which automatically converts Cyrillic into Mongolian and vice versa⁵.

Thus, significant efforts are being made by both the government and individual business representatives to promote the original Mongolian script alongside Cyrillic.

***Mongol Bichig* in Linguistic Landscape of Ulaanbaatar and in Public Opinion**

The starting point of my research is a quantitative analysis of the percentage of languages in the LL of Ulaanbaatar (Figure 2). The percentage was calculated using the method of total fixation of languages on a part of Baga Toiruu Street (see Section 2).

⁴ Монгол хэлний тухай [An Internet resource] // Монгол улсын хууль. 12.02.2015. Эрхзүйн мэдээллийн нэгдсэн систем. URL: <https://www.legalinfo.mn/law/details/10932> (accessed: 12 April, 2020). (In Mong.)

⁵ Mönkhzul, B. A text converter from Cyrillic to Old Mongolian script has been developed // Mongolian National News Agency [An Internet resource]. 06.05.2022. URL: <https://www.mont-same.mn/ru/read/296346> (accessed: 01.02.2025). (In Russ.)

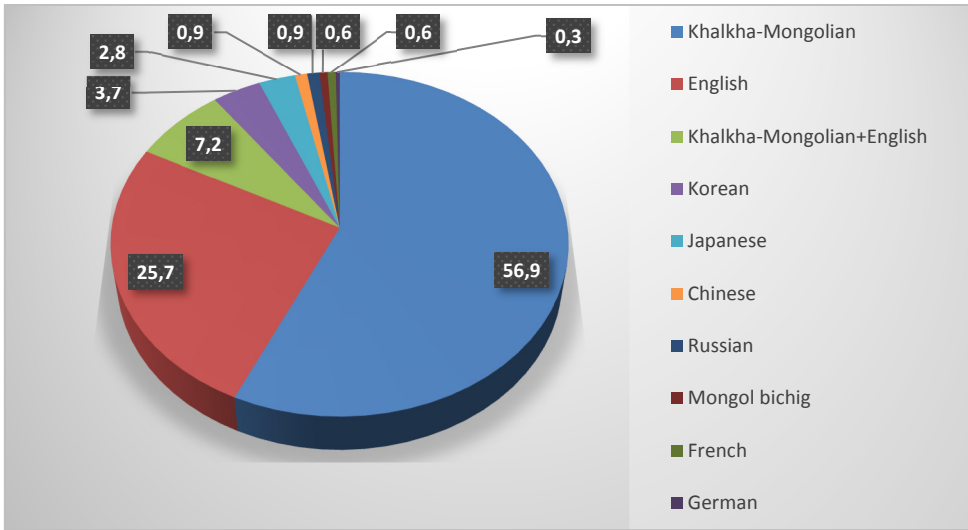


Figure 2. The share of languages in the linguistic landscape in the studied segment of Ulaanbaatar’s center, %
Source: compiled by E.V. Khilkhanova.

As we can see in Figure 2, the object of our interest — *Mongol Bichig* is clearly underrepresented in the LL of Ulaanbaatar. In the studied segment, it follows the poorly represented Chinese and Russian languages. Chinese, unlike Russian, has never been widely observed in LL of Ulaanbaatar. Russian today is gradually giving way to English, Korean, and Japanese both in the visual public space of Mongolian capital and in the hierarchy of languages in the minds of its inhabitants [10; 11]. The LL signs where *Mongol Bichig* was used were found only on official institutions (see, for example, Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3. Classical Mongolian writing on the signboard of the Prosecutor’s general office of Mongolia
Source: photo by E.V. Khilkhanova, 2024.

The top-down construction of the LL in terms of *Mongol Bichig*’s representation is particularly evident in Figure 4, where we see several signs from different institutions at once, and only one of them — The National Art Gallery of Mongolia — has *Mongol Bichig* on its signboard, since it is an official government institution.



Figure 4. Classical Mongolian writing on the signboard of the National Art Gallery of Mongolia in comparison with other signboards

Source: photo by E.V. Khilkhanova, 2024.

As for the bottom-up construction of LL, I did not find the use of Mongolian writing in static LL signs created by unofficial actors in the studied urban segment. However, it would be completely wrong to claim that *Mongol Bichig* is present only on official signs. If we interpret LL in the broad sense of the term (see the Introduction), then the national writing is found on many types of souvenirs and food produced in Mongolia. This is also a consequence of the implementation of the ‘National Programme of Mongolian Writing — III’, which requires the use of national writing on domestic product labels. However, not all Mongolian-made products are labelled in *Mongol Bichig*. *Mongol Bichig* is usually present on those manufactured goods and food production that are considered traditional, authentic and often intended for touristic consumption. A significant role here plays the fact that *Mongol Bichig* itself looks very ornamental due to the ornate character of its symbols. So, *Mongol Bichig* contributes to ethnographic branding and makes Mongolian goods seem even more authentic: see, for instance, a leather panel — one of the popular types of Mongolian souvenirs (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The souvenir leather panel with an inscription in *Mongol Bichig* on it*

S o u r c e: https://img.alicdn.com/bao/uploaded/i4/371644636/O1CN01hk3E3v1k7KhNRuT3f_!!0-item_pic.jpg, 13 April 2025.

*) This image is not an advertisement.

The next two figures illustrate the use of *Mongol Bichig* on Mongolian food products, mostly belonging to premium segment largely focused on tourist consumption. So, *Mongol Bichig* is present on one type of premium Mongolian vodka called Aurug. According to the producers, this is the name of one of Genghis Khan's palaces that was taken for the brand. "Aurug" in Old Mongolian means 'great'; another historical meaning of the word "aurug" is 'an ancient warehouse, a palace where all the valuable trophies of the warriors of the 13th century were kept.'⁶ One of the notable design elements is a poem in traditional Mongolian, written as if on the bricks used to build Aurug (see Figure 6).

Figure 7 shows the use of *Mongol Bichig* in the packaging of a chocolate set from the famous chocolate brand Golden Gobi.

⁶ Mongolian Vodka Aurug // World Brand Design Society. 15.10.2019. URL: <https://world-branddesign.com/mongolian-vodka-aurug/> (accessed: 02 March 2025). It should be noted that the word "aurug" is absent in the Big Academic Mongolian-Russian dictionary; perhaps because it is a dictionary of the modern Mongolian language (Big Academic Mongolian Russian Dictionary in four volumes. 2001. Ed. by Doctor of Philology, Professor G.C. Pyurbeev. Moscow: "Academia." Print.).



Figure 6. The premium Mongolian vodka Aurug with an inscription in *Mongol Bichig* as one of the main design elements*

S o u r c e: <https://worldbranddesign.com/mongolian-vodka-aurug>, 13 April 2025.

*) This image is not an advertisement. Alcohol is harmful to your health.

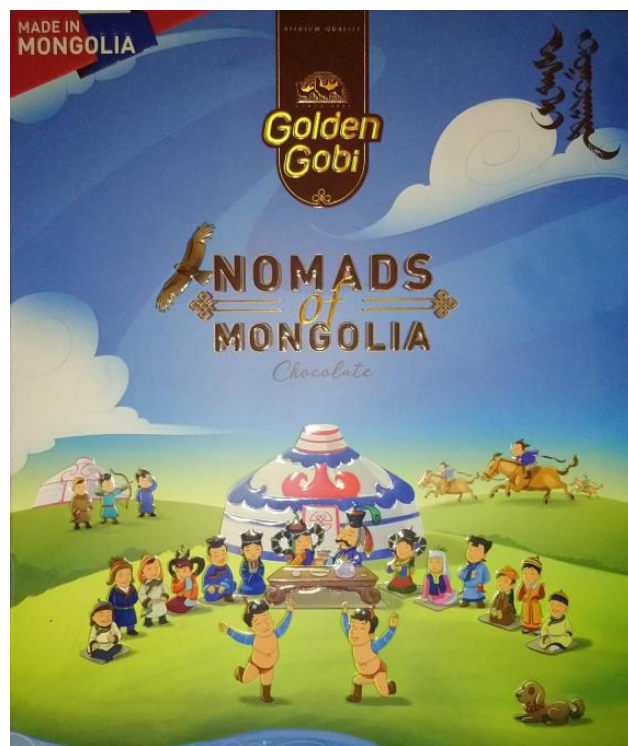


Figure 7. A Golden Gobi chocolate set “Nomads of Mongolia” with an inscription in *Mongol Bichig* on it*

S o u r c e: photo by E.V. Khilkhanova, 2024.

*) This image is not an advertisement.

Thus, the presence of *Mongol bichig* in LL performs two main functions. Firstly, it is part of the state language policy, and writing names of official institutions in two languages (in Mongolian Cyrillic and in classical Mongolian script) follows the requirements of the Law on the languages of Mongolia and the relevant programs. *Mongol Bichig* is an important component of modern Mongolian nation-building. The symbolic significance of the introduction of its own writing system, which differs from both Russian and Chinese, is to unite the geographically divided Mongols, to assert a unique national identity and independence of the country. Secondly, *Mongol Bichig* in LL serves as an additional means of ethnographic branding creating authenticity, thereby guaranteeing “the cultural distinctiveness of a tourism product” [28].

Despite the significant symbolic weight of *Mongol Bichig*, we cannot yet speak about its massive presence in LL. What is the reason for that? Can the weak presence of the Mongolian script in LL be attributed to the poor linguistic competence in it of Mongolian people? Can we say that the top-down language policy and its manifestation in LL does not have mass support among citizens? Finally, what is the attitude of people towards the Mongolian script?

In search of answers to these questions, let us turn to public opinion polls conducted by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences [29]. The surveys mostly aimed to reveal people’s skills in Mongolian writing, but also included questions about public opinion and attitudes towards the script. According to a 2007 sociological study, 8.4% of participants wanted to use the Mongolian script, 4.4% voted for the Latin alphabet and 72.6% wished to keep the Cyrillic alphabet as the official script. A more nuanced second survey found that 64.9% of respondents thought that official documentation should be in Cyrillic, 31% in Mongolian script and 3.7% in Latin script. There is some discrepancy between how people perceive a complete transition to the traditional (and at the same time relatively new) writing system, and its use in documentation only. In the second case, *Mongol Bichig*’s supporters are significantly more numerous. Although all the respondents had at least some reading skills in Mongol bichig, currently they are not yet ready to fully switch to it.

This lack of readiness is still evident not only among the general population, but also among government employees, i.e. those who are themselves responsible for maintaining documentation in both Mongolian and Cyrillic scripts. According to a large-scale 2021 survey in which around 150,000 civil servants participated, their knowledge of the Mongolian script was as follows: over 50 per cent were willing to use the Mongolian script alongside Cyrillic in official documents, while 46.4 per cent were not, citing their inadequate knowledge of the Mongolian script as the reason.

Finally, one of the recent studies from 2019 tested the reading and translation skills of 681 people belonging to five age groups. Special attention was paid to young generation: 178 students in several Mongolian universities and colleges took part in the survey (for sampling details, see [29]). The study revealed that writing and

reading skills in Mongolian script were different depending on the respondents' age. Students' reading skills were estimated as 76.4% and writing accuracy was 20.9%, while the same skills of adults were dissimilar depending on whether they were taught Mongolian script at the secondary school or not. The translation skills of the participants were quite low, so they could not perform the given task to translate from the current official Cyrillic script into the classical Mongolian script. Most of them have secondary school knowledge of Mongolian script and can only read it.

Nevertheless, when asked "Why are you learning the Mongolian script?", respondents cited a desire to preserve national heritage in general and the Mongolian national script in particular. However, this positive and patriotic attitude contradicts with the "lack of environment in which the Mongolian script is used" [Ibid.]. 100% of the participants responded that there is no environment to use the Mongolian script outside the classroom, and they do not use it at all in their everyday life.

These data correlate well with my observations on LL of Ulaanbaatar. Note that the survey participants themselves suggested that there is a need to create "the Mongolian script environment *in a visible way*" (my emphasis — *E.K.*) [Ibid.]. Thus, it can be concluded that Mongolia is still in the process of introducing the Mongolian script into official records management; in fact, this is also stated in the law on the languages of Mongolia. Some institutional developments are also evident: as we have seen, the Mongolian script is present in some online activities and product labeling. It has been introduced into the education system: from 2018, the Mongolian script has been taught in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades for 1 hour per week, and all citizens have at least some reading skills in it. However, the process of bringing the Mongolian script into the everyday life of Mongolian people is in its early stages. It should also be noted that Mongolian citizens support the government's initiatives and demonstrate a generally positive attitude towards the Mongolian script. The authenticity represented by the language guarantees the cultural distinctiveness of a tourism product [30] together with traditional motifs, symbols, and colors [31].

From all LL signs, the vertical Mongolian script is perhaps the most "loaded" with social meaning; it is not even an index, but rather a symbol. Its symbolic representations in the LL of Mongolian capital are driven primarily by non-utilitarian, irrational motives — historical memory, ideas of national identity and patriotism. At the same time, the Mongolian script is tied to the commodification of national identity, in the form of marketing of authenticity, which is a common trajectory of many languages today, when language becomes involved in the globalized new economy as a source of symbolic added value, and as a mode of management of global networks.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the twists and turns of Mongolian history have impacted the writing system, including the classical Mongolian script. The modern

period of the country's history is characterised by its attempts to construct its unique national identity, building it — as has been the case throughout world history — on the original writing system.

LLS are useful in this regard because LL shows the extent and nature of the representation of languages in public space. LL and landscapes in general are the place of convergence of long-term governmental strategies and everyday life, top-down and bottom-up constructions of identities and policies. LL is a place of material embodiment of people's speech behavior reflecting both their ideologically motivated and inertial, passive language choices.

My research has shown that classical Mongolian writing, alienated from the Mongolian people for many years, is struggling to return to everyday linguistic practices. Despite the government and Mongolian society generally being united in their desire to introduce the Mongolian script to document management and other areas, *Mongol Bichig* can still be found in Ulaanbaatar almost exclusively on the signboards of official institutions and some Mongolian-made products. Currently, these products are intended not only for domestic consumption, but largely for tourists. The original and beautiful character of *Mongol Bichig* serves as an index of authenticity and locality in this case.

In conclusion I can say that the contemporary struggle of Mongolian people with the writing system which is relatively new for many of them is a natural phenomenon. The transition of an entire country to another writing system cannot be quick and easy. Measures such as training people in *Mongol Bichig* have a delayed effect. The final conclusions about how successful the introduction of *Mongol Bichig* was can be made in some ten years at the earliest.

References

1. Backhaus, P. 2007. *Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. Print.
2. Hult, F.M. 2018. "Language policy and planning and linguistic landscapes." In *Oxford handbook of language policy and planning*, edited by J.W. Tollefson and M. Pérez-Milans. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 333–351. Print.
3. Barakos, E., and J. Unger. 2016. *Discursive approaches to language policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Print. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53134-6>
4. Blommaert, J., and I. Maly. 2019. "Digital Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (ELLA 2.0)." *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*. URL: [https://www.academia.edu/41105061/Digital_Ethnographic_Linguistic_Landscape_Analysis_\(ELLA_2.0\)](https://www.academia.edu/41105061/Digital_Ethnographic_Linguistic_Landscape_Analysis_(ELLA_2.0)).
5. Blommaert, J. 2013. *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity*. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090419>
6. Chernyavskaya, V.E. 2023. "They call the main entrance a porch": social meaning in semantics and metapragmatics." *Slovo.ru: baltic accent*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 72–85. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.5922/2225-5346-2023-1-5> EDN: CNSNOC
7. Chernyavskaya, V.E. 2023. "Typography as Social Index: Soviet Landscape in the Modern Russian Discourse." *ИПАЭХМА. Journal of Visual Semiotics*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 50–73. URL:

- http://praxema.tspu.edu.ru/archive.html?year=2023&issue=2&article_id=8715 <https://doi.org/10.23951/2312-7899-2023-2-50-73> EDN: OQFRMN
8. Landry, R., and R.Y. Bourhis. 1997. "Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 16, pp. 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>
9. Gruntov, I.A. 2017. "Mongolian writing." *Big Russian Encyclopedia*. Electronic version, 25 March 2024, <https://old.bigenc.ru/linguistics/text/2226967?ysclid=lvkxirt3b2544844170>
10. Khilkhanova, E.V., and V.V. Ivanov. 2023. "The commodification of languages and linguistic landscape of the capital of Mongolia." *Sociolinguistics*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 129–153. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.37892/2713-2951-2-14-129-153>
11. Khilkhanova, E.V. 2024. "The Linguistic Landscape of Ulaanbaatar: what signs and people tell about." *Mongolian Studies (Elista)*, vol. 3, no. 16, pp. 591–609. (In Russ.). <https://doi.org/10.22162/2500-1523-2024-3-591-609> EDN: DCMTWZ
12. Yukiyasu, A. 2021. "Integration and division of the "language": language policy of the Mongolian peoples in the USSR and Mongolia in 1920–1940." *Sociolinguistics*, vol. 5, no.1 [online], pp. 9–30. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.37892/2713-2951-2021-1-5-9-30> EDN: SMWDTP
13. Zheleznyakov, A.S., D. Baasansuren, and I.L. Nedyak, "Modern Mongolia's multi-fulcrum policy through the prism of the Russian policy's oriental vector." *Polis. Political Studies*, 2013, no. 5, pp. 121–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668386>
14. Cenoz, J., and D. Gorter. 2006. "Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages." *International Journal of Multilingualism*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668386>
15. Blackwood, R., and S. Tufi. 2015. *The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean: French and Italian Coastal Cities*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Print. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137314567>
16. Gorter, D. 2018. "Methods and techniques for linguistic landscape research: About definitions, core issues and technological innovations." In: *Expanding the Linguistic Landscape: Multilingualism, Language Policy and the Use of Space as a Semiotic Resource*, edited by M. Pütz and N. Mundt. Bristol: Multilingual Matter, pp. 38–57. Print. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788922166-005>
17. Mikhalev, A.V. 2010. "The Ethno-Political Situation in Post-Socialist Mongolia." *Proceedings of the Altai State University. Series: History, Political Science*, vol. 68/2, no. 4/2, pp. 160–165. (In Russ.) EDN: LSZADC
18. Terentyev, V. 2015. "State policy of nation-building in Mongolia and the formation of ethnic self-conscience of western Mongols." *BSU Bulletin. Humanities Research of Inner Asia*, no. 2, pp. 11–20. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.18101/2306-753X-2015-2-11-20> EDN: VEBZPD
19. Mongush, M. 2003. "Bogdo-gegen known and unknown." *Oriental collection*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 118–123.
20. Tomtogtokh, G. 2015. "Russian in the socio-cultural space of modern Mongolia." *Linguistics and intercultural communication*, vol.18, no. 4, pp. 208–213. (In Russ.) EDN: UZCHFZ
21. Erdenemaam, S. 2014. "About the status of the Russian language in Mongolia and interferential mistakes made by Mongolian students." *Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 138–143. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.15293/2226-3365.1403.14> EDN: SFDVED
22. Tsybenova Ch.S., G.A. Dyrkheeva, V.G. Zhalsanova, Ts. Sarantsatsral, and Ts. Tsogzolmaa. 2023. In: *The Russian language in Mongolia: the sphere of education* [Collective monograph], edited by G. A. Dyrkheeva, Ts. Sarantsatsral. Ulan-Ude: Buryat Scientific Center (Sib. Branch) of RAS, Print. (In Russ. and Mong.)
23. Dyrkheeva, G.A., Ch.S. Tsybenova, S. Cerenchimed, and E. Dashdondog. 2021. "Russian in Mongolian education system: state, dynamics, problems." *Sociolinguistics*, no. 1, [online], pp. 31–48. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.37892/2713-2951-2021-1-5-31-48>

24. Ariungua, N. 2022. "Mongolia and the policy of 'soft power': historical aspects." In: *"Soft power" policy in Russia-Mongolia relationship* [collective monograph], edited by V.A. Rodionov, A. Nyamdoljin. Irkutsk: Publishing house "Ottisk", pp. 30–45. Print.
25. Dyrkheeva, G.A., and N. Gombodorzhiyn. 2019. "Language Policy in Mongolia: Problem of Revival of the Old Mongolian Script (the Mongolian Script)." *Humanitarian Vector*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 98–104. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.21209/1996-7853-2019-14-3-98-104> EDN: ZTGIAIX
26. Khilkhanova, E.V., Ch. S. Tsybenova, and V.V. Ivanov. 2024. "Urban multilingualism in Russian regions: linguistic landscapes and attitudes towards languages (the cases of Kyzyl and Ulan-Ude)." *New Research of Tuva*, no. 4, pp. 188–203. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.25178/nit.2024.4.13> EDN: LSIFBB
27. Kolyagiyn, D. 2021. "Classical Mongolian Script: State Policy Revisited." *Mongolian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 13, pp. 108–119. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.22162/2500-1523-2021-1-108-119> EDN: HZMVZA
28. Heller, M., A. Jaworski, and C. Thurlow. 2014. "Introduction: Sociolinguistics and tourism — Mobilities, markets, multilingualism." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 4, no. 18, pp. 425–458. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12091>
29. Gerelmaa, G., and B. Bayartyua. 2020. "Sociolinguistic Research of National Mongolian Script Skills." *Bulletin of BSU. Language. Literature. Culture*, no. 3, pp. 99–107.
30. Pietikäinen, S. 2010. "Sámi language mobility: Scales and discourses of multilingualism in a polycentric environment." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 202, pp. 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.1515/IJSL.2010.015>
31. Duchêne, A., and M. Heller. 2012. *Language in late capitalism. Pride and profit*. Routledge. Print.

Список литературы

1. Backhaus P. Linguistic Landscapes: A Comparative Study of Urban Multilingualism in Tokyo. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007. Print.
2. Hult F.M. Language policy and planning and linguistic landscapes. In *Oxford handbook of language policy and planning* / ed. by J.W. Tollefson and M. Pérez-Milans. New York : Oxford University Press, 2018. P. 333–351. Print.
3. Barakos E., Unger J. *Discursive approaches to language policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Print. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53134-6>
4. Blommaert J., Maly I. Digital Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis (ELLA 2.0) // Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies, 2019. URL: [https://www.academia.edu/41105061/Digital Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape Analysis \(ELLA 2.0\)](https://www.academia.edu/41105061/Digital_Ethnographic_Linguistic_Landscape_Analysis_(ELLA_2.0)).
5. Blommaert, J. *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity*. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090419>
6. Чернявская В.Е. Парадный вход называют крыльцом»: социальное значение в семантике и метапрагматике // Слово.ру: балтийский акцент. 2023. Т. 14. № 1. С. 72—85. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2225-5346-2023-1-5> EDN: CNSNOC
7. Чернявская В.Е. Книгопечатание как социальный индекс: советский ландшафт в современном российском дискурсе // ПРАΞМА. Журнал визуальной семиотики, 2023. Т. 36, № 2. С. 50–73. URL: http://praxema.tspu.edu.ru/archive.html?year=2023&issue=2&article_id=8715 <https://doi.org/10.23951/2312-7899-2023-2-50-73> EDN: OQFRMN
8. Landry, R., Bourhis, R.Y. Linguistic landscape and ethnolinguistic vitality: An empirical study // *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. 1997. Vol. 1. № 16. P. 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X970161002>
9. Грунтов И.А. 2017. Монгольская письменность. Большая Российская энциклопедия. Электронная версия. URL: <https://old.bigenc.ru/linguistics/text/2226967?ysclid=lvkxirt3b2544844170>.

10. Хилханова Е.В., Иванов В.В. Коммерциализация языков и языковой ландшафт столицы Монголии // Социоллингвистика. 2023. Vol. 14. № 2. P. 129–153. <https://doi.org/10.37892/2713-2951-2-14-129-153>
11. Хилханова Е.В. Языковой ландшафт Улан-Батора: о чём говорят приметы и люди // Монголоведение (Элиста). 2024. Т. 3. № 16. С. 591–609. <https://doi.org/10.22162/2500-1523-2024-3-591-609> EDN: DCMTWZ
12. Юкиясу А. Интеграция и разделение «языка»: языковая политика монгольских народов в СССР и Монголии в 1920–1940-е годы // Социоллингвистика. 2021. Т. 5. № 1. С. 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.37892/2713-2951-2021-1-5-9-30> EDN: SMWDTP
13. Zheleznyakov A.S., Baasansuren D., Nedyak I.L. Modern Mongolia's multi-fulcrum policy through the prism of the Russian policy's oriental vector // Polis. Political Studies. 2013. No. 5. P. 121–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668386>
14. Cenoz J., Gorter D. Linguistic Landscape and Minority Languages // International Journal of Multilingualism, 2006. Vol. 1. № 3. P. 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668386>
15. Blackwood R., Tufi S. The Linguistic Landscape of the Mediterranean: French and Italian Coastal Cities. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Print. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137314567>
16. Gorter D. Methods and techniques for linguistic landscape research: About definitions, core issues and technological innovations // Expanding the Linguistic Landscape: Multilingualism, Language Policy and the Use of Space as a Semiotic Resource / M. Pütz, N. Mundt (eds). Bristol: Multilingual Matter. 2018. P. 38–57. Print. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788922166-005>
17. Михалёв А.В. Этнополитическая ситуация в постсоциалистической Монголии // Известия Алтайского государственного университета. Серия: История, политология. 2010. Т. 68/2. № 4/2. С. 160–165. EDN: LSZADC
18. Терентьев В. Государственная политика нациестроительства в Монголии и формирование этнического самосознания западных монголов // Вестник БГУ. Гуманитарные исследования Внутренней Азии. 2015. № 2. С. 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.18101/2306-753X-2015-2-11-20> EDN: VEBZPD
19. Mongush M. “Bogdo-gegen known and unknown.” Oriental collection. 2003. Vol. 13. № 2. P. 118–123.
20. Томтогтох Г. Русский язык в социокультурном пространстве современной Монголии // Лингвистика и межкультурная коммуникация, 2015. Т. 18. № 4. С. 208–213. EDN: UZCHFZ
21. Эрдэнэмаам С. О статусе русского языка в Монголии и интерферентных ошибках монгольских студентов // Вестник Новосибирского государственного педагогического университета. 2014. Т. 4. № 3. С. 138–143. <https://doi.org/10.15293/2226-3365.1403.14> EDN: SFDVED
22. Русский язык в Монголии: сфера образования [Коллективная монография] / Ч.С. Цыбенова, Г.А. Дырхеева, В.Г. Жалсанова, Ц. Саранцацрал, Ц. Цогзолмаа; ред. Г.А. Дырхеева, Ц. Саранцацрал. Улан-Удэ: Бурятский научный центр (Сибирский филиал) РАН, 2023.
23. Дырхеева Г.А., Цыбенова Ч.С., Церенхимед С., Дашидондог Э. Русский язык в монгольской системе образования: состояние, динамика, проблемы // Социоллингвистика. 2021. Т. 5. № 1. С. 31–48. <https://doi.org/10.37892/2713-2951-2021-1-5-31-48>
24. Ариунгуа Н. 2022. Монголия и политика «мягкой силы»: исторические аспекты // Политика «мягкой силы» в российско-монгольских отношениях [коллективная монография] / В.А. Родионов, А. Нямдолжин (ред.). Иркутск: Изд-во «Оттиск», 1989. С. 30–45.
25. Дырхеева Г.А., Гомбодоржийн Н. Языковая политика в Монголии: проблема возрождения древнемонгольской письменности (монгольской письменности) // Гуманитарный вектор, 2019. Т. 14. № 3. С. 98–104. <https://doi.org/10.21209/1996-7853-2019-14-3-98-104> EDN: ZTGIAH
26. Хилханова Е.В., Цыбенова Ч.В. С., Иванов В.В. Городское многоязычие в регионах России: лингвистические ландшафты и отношение к языкам (на примере Кызыла и Улан-Удэ) //

- Новые исследования Тувы. 2024. № 4. С. 188–203. <https://doi.org/10.25178/nit.2024.4.13> EDN: LSIFBB
27. Колягуйн Д. Классическая монгольская письменность: переосмысление государственной политики // Монголоведение. 2021. Т. 1. № 13. С. 108–119. <https://doi.org/10.22162/2500-1523-2021-1-108-119> EDN: HZMVZA
28. Heller M., Jaworski A., Thurlow C. Introduction: Sociolinguistics and tourism — Mobilities, markets, multilingualism // Journal of Sociolinguistics. 2014. Vol. 4. № 18. P. 425–458. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12091>
29. Gerelmaa G., Bayartyua B. Sociolinguistic Research of National Mongolian Script Skills // Bulletin of BSU. Language. Literature. Culture. 2020. № 3. P. 99–107.
30. Pietikäinen S. Sámi language mobility: Scales and discourses of multilingualism in a polycentric environment // International Journal of the Sociology of Language. 2010. № 202. P. 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.1515/IJSL.2010.015>
31. Duchêne A., Heller M. Language in late capitalism. Pride and profit. Routledge. 2012. Print.

Bio note:

Erzhen V. Khilkhanova is a Doctor of Philology, Assistant professor, leading researcher of Research Center on Ethnic and Language Relations, Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1 Bolshoy Kislovsky Lane, Moscow, 125009, Russian Federation. ORCID: 0000-0001-9369-343X. E-mail: erzhen.khilkhanova@iling-ran.ru

Сведения об авторе:

Хилханова Эржен Владимировна — доктор филологических наук, доцент, ведущий научный сотрудник Научно-исследовательского центра этноязыковых отношений, Институт языкознания РАН, Российская Федерация, 125009, Москва, Большой Кисловский переулок, д. 1. ORCID: 0000-0001-9369-343X. E-mail: erzhen.khilkhanova@iling-ran.ru