

An Effective Response to the Lessons of History in Mongolia¹

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Introduction

Garamtseren Bayarjargal's² article "Re-Establishment of the Christian Church in Mongolia: The Mongolian Standard Version Translation by National Christians" describes a past Christian presence among Mongolians and asserts that post-1990 Mongolian Christianity is not new, but is in a process of "re-establishment." The article also describes Mongolian Bible translation history with special emphasis given to the author's Mongolian Standard Version Bible translation project.

Bayarjargal's article raises five questions the answers to which explain why the Bible Society of Mongolia's approach to history is different and results in translations which convey Bible meaning more distinctly from Mongolian Buddhist meanings.

¹ This response is submitted by request of the authors following the publication of the article by Bayarjargal Garamtseren, "Re-Establishment of the Christian Church in Mongolia: The Mongolian Standard Version Translation by National Christians," *Unio cum Christo* 2.2 (October 2016): 49–66.

² Otherwise known as Bayarjargal Garamtseren or G. Bayarjargal (Mongolian publications name people in this way, since Garamtseren is the name of Bayarjargal's father).

1. *Is Christianity Being Validated by Post-1990 Ethnic Values and Why?*

When missionaries arrived in Mongolia after 1990, their Mongolian contacts tended to legitimize Christianity based on post-1990 ethnic values.³ The important question on Mongolian minds was, “Was Christianity in our cultural past?” Articles appeared by Mongolians associated with Christianity claiming that Christianity was not new but a part of Mongolia’s past. Bayarjargal’s article fits this genre, since he similarly asserts that Mongolian Christianity is not new but that God is, “properly speaking, *re-establishing*—his church” (emphasis added).⁴

When Christian missions began to come to Mongolia around 1990, so did Mongolia’s ethnic revival, which created a heightened awareness of Mongolia’s ancient history and widespread emulation of Buddhist and shamanist traditions. This revival peaked after the Soviet system collapsed around 1990. Although some Mongolians were sad to see Russian influence wane, others regarded Russians as a “departing colonial power ... [which made] Mongols feel like second-class citizens in their own country.”⁵ These drastic changes made Mongolians feel vulnerable about their national borders, independence, and racial purity.⁶ They viewed foreigners as “powerful” and “threatening,” to be “admired and emulated,” but to also “be kept out.”⁷ In essence, Mongolians felt “hybridized” by the Sovietization process, and “desperate to claim some authentic Mongol origins.”⁸

Mongolians *en masse* looked to their deep past and found authentic Mongol roots for genuine Mongolian identity, especially in the founding era of Chinggis Khan.⁹ Cultural forms such as ancient religious beliefs, stories, proverbs, clothing styles, and genealogical records were rediscovered and popularized, and in this way “the traditional past ... emerged as [the] critical source of authority in post-socialist Mongolia.”¹⁰

One advantage of claiming Christianity as a part of Mongolia’s past was expressed by Hugh Kemp during a symposium in Ulaanbaatar. He

³ Jeffrey Blythe, “Evangelical Christianity in Post-socialist Mongolia: An Ethnography of an Encounter” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2000).

⁴ Bayarjargal, “Re-Establishment,” 50.

⁵ Christopher Kaplonski, *Truth, History and Politics in Mongolia: The Memory of Heroes* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2004), 36.

⁶ Uradyn Erdenebulag, *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 81.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 137, 170.

¹⁰ Caroline Humphrey, “The Moral Authority of the Past in Post-Socialist Mongolia,” *Religion, State and Society* 20.3–4 (1992): 375–89.

encouraged Mongolian Christians to “hold their heads high” as a *legitimate* part of their modern nation, since Mongolian Christians had played a key role in the nation’s past.¹¹

The first word of Bayarjargal’s title, “Re-Establishment,” represents this ongoing effort to validate Mongolian Christianity by post-1990 ethnic values, which idealize traditional cultural forms.

II. *Is Modern Christianity a Re-Establishment or a Brand-New Expansion?*

In a significant sense, post-1990 Christianity among ethnic Outer Mongolians is a brand-new advance and not a re-establishment.

Bayarjargal’s article repeatedly refers to Christian “Turkic” tribes in the ancient Mongolian empire, particularly regarding the Kerait (Turco-Mongol), Naiman, Ongud, and Uyghur peoples. However, none of these were ethnic Mongolian Mongolian-speaking tribes. While scholars agree that Christianity existed among various Turkic groups within the Mongol empire, they see little evidence to suggest that Mongolian-speaking ethnic Mongolians were also Christian. The same may be said about individuals highlighted in Bayarjargal’s article, particularly Markos (also known as Yaballaha III) and Rabban Sauma.¹² Neither of these Christians were ethnic Mongolians whose mother tongue was Mongolian.

After 1990, when hundreds of Outer Mongolians responded favorably to Christianity, it was the first time in history that many Mongolian-speaking ethnic Mongolians had done so. It is also significant that this unprecedented response came as interested Mongolians widely used the 1990 Bible Society of Mongolia New Testament and its descriptive term for God.¹³ In 1997, Kemp asserted, “This numerical growth [of Mongolian Christians] has all been on the back of the BSM Shin Geree [1990 BSM NT] and must be evidence enough for its efficacy.”¹⁴

However, the 1990 New Testament was eventually sidelined for various reasons. One of these reasons is related to Mongolia’s post-1990 ethnic revival, which influenced Mongolians associated with Christianity to prefer traditional Mongolian Buddhist or shamanist words for Bible concepts.

¹¹ Hugh P. Kemp, “Töv Aziin Nutag dah’ Ilgeentiin niigemlegüüdiin Üil Ajillagaa (18–20 зууны эхэн),” Ulaanbaatar, May 22, 2015.

¹² Bayarjargal, “Re-Establishment,” 53–54.

¹³ Past Mongolian Bible translations used “Buddha” (*Burhan*) for God.

¹⁴ Hugh P. Kemp, *To Feel the Spirit: A History of the Mongolian Bible* (Auckland: Privately Printed, 1997), 58.

III. What Are Important Lessons from Mongolia's History?

Bayarjargal competently explains translation challenges that swept over Mongolia after 1990, a semantic confusion that also swamped Christian missions.¹⁵ During these years, ill-chosen words for Bible concepts were popularized. This happened as missionaries commonly depended on interpreters who were untrained in translation principles, unfamiliar with Bible teaching and concepts, and often had only a rudimentary understanding of the foreign languages used by missionaries.¹⁶

During the 1990s, the word *Burhan* (the term Mongolians use for Buddha) was popularized as the word for God. All that Bayarjargal mentions about this word is that Isaac Schmidt in the early 1800s rejected *Burhan* for God because “[Schmidt] saw the latter term [*Burhan*] being equal to Buddha.”¹⁷ By stating it like this, he makes Schmidt’s concern seem novel (unusual) rather than universal. In truth, *Burhan* primarily meant Buddha in Schmidt’s day, still primarily means Buddha, and has a Buddhist image among modern Mongolians.¹⁸

One reason Bayarjargal supports using *Burhan* for God¹⁹ is hinted at when he twice describes *Burhan* as “the traditional” word for “God,” once juxtaposed with the Bible Society of Mongolia’s term, which, in context, is criticized as “a new, non-traditional term for God.”²⁰ It suggests that “the traditional” is preferred to the “non-traditional.” However, “the traditional” in this case means preferring a Buddhist term for God.

Many Mongolian pastors also support using *Burhan* for God based on their understanding of its traditional meanings that predate Buddhism. For instance, although *Burhan* today primarily means Buddha, and almost certainly meant Buddha originally,²¹ a prominent Mongolian Bible school

¹⁵ Bayarjargal, “Re-Establishment,” 64.

¹⁶ Before 1990, Russian was Mongolia’s second language.

¹⁷ Bayarjargal, “Re-Establishment,” 59.

¹⁸ The primary meaning of a word is “that sense that is culturally more relevant to more people.” John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God, with Scripture and Topical Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 172.

¹⁹ Bayarjargal’s Mongolian Standard Version translation is set to employ *Burhan* (Buddha/Buddhist image/idol/god) for God.

²⁰ Bayarjargal, “Re-Establishment,” 59–60. Perhaps Bayarjargal’s reason for describing *Burhan* as “the traditional term” for God is based on its usage in past Mongolian Bible translations and missionary efforts. However, before 1990, so few Mongolians called God *Burhan* that this usage is oddly more “traditional” for foreign missionaries than for Mongolians.

²¹ This is the conclusion, by far, of the broadest range of scholars. See, e.g., Aleksandra Wazgird, “God on the Steppe: Christian Missionaries in Mongolia after 1990” (MA thesis, University of Oslo, 2011), 110.

principal demurs, stating, “*Burkhan* [*Burhan*] was originally used in the pre-Buddhist context, and only later adopted by Buddhism, and therefore is the correct generic Mongolian word for ‘God.’”²² Notice that this reasoning implies that what *Burhan* means today is not as important as what *Burhan* may have meant in Mongolia’s deep past. This thinking reflects post-1990 ethnic values, which consider past Buddhist and shamanist cultural forms as traditionally Mongolian.

The Bible Society of Mongolia, however, approaches history differently. That is, while the “Re-Establishment” article promotes the *emulation* of Mongolian history and traditional forms like the Buddhist word *Burhan* for God, it instead *evaluates* Mongolian Bible translation history, including the use of *Burhan* for God.

The Bible Society of Mongolia recognized that between 1846 and 1990 most missionaries depended on the 1846 *Literary Version* of the New Testament or its later editions, all of which used *Burhan* for God. These missionaries included Stallybrass and Swan in Siberia (1818–1840), James Gilmour in Mongolia and China (1870–1890), and several missionaries to Mongolians mainly in China before 1990. Yet these past efforts combined had negligible results.²³ While there are several reasons for this, the Bible Society of Mongolia discovered one factor was that the use of *Burhan* for God confused Mongolians. For instance, the society found that several past missionaries had rejected this term, including Gilmour, perhaps Mongolia’s most famous missionary, who concluded that *Burhan* for God had misled Mongolians and that another term should be used.²⁴

The Bible Society of Mongolia also surveyed thirty-five Mongolian dictionaries dated from 1717 onwards, and they depict the primary meaning of *Burhan* as Buddhist in every case. The Buddhist meanings of *Burhan* were confirmed by Mongolian students at Leeds University in the UK (fall 1971), Mongolian scholars at Mongolian State University in Ulaanbaatar (fall 1972), and Mongolian participants in a Bible translation workshop in Ulaanbaatar (spring 1993). Repeatedly, Mongolians confirmed that *Burhan* primarily means Buddha and is not appropriate for the Christian God.²⁵ Most professional linguists who have studied this word concur that *Burhan* primarily

²² Wazgird, “God,” 110; Blythe, “Evangelical,” 162–63, 175–80.

²³ John Gibbens, “Concise History of Expressing the Nature of God in Mongolian and Resultant UBS/BSM Relations,” n.d., Pdf., 4.

²⁴ Gilmour recommended that *Degedü ezen* (High lord) be used for God instead of *Burhan*. See Gerda Ollén and Joel Erickson, *Vid Gobiökens Gränser* (Stockholm: Svenska Mongolmissionens Förlag, 1943), 223–24.

²⁵ Gibbens, “Concise History,” 4.

means Buddha and if used for God creates a confusing blend of Buddhist and Bible meanings (see Caesar Malan,²⁶ Daniel Arichea,²⁷ Yutaka Shibayama,²⁸ Maria Tatar,²⁹ M. K. Syn,³⁰ Jeanice Conner,³¹ and John Gibbens³²).

IV. What Are the Highest Priorities of Bible Translation?

Based on this research, the Bible Society of Mongolia made two strategic translation decisions. First, since past Mongolian Bibles were form-based,³³ it would produce meaning-based translations.³⁴ Second, since past Mongolian Bibles borrowed Buddhist religious words,³⁵ including Buddha for God, it would introduce descriptive terms for Bible concepts including *Yertöntsii ezen* (owner/lord of universe/world) for God.³⁶ This strategy followed the practice of famous Mongolian translators who used descriptive terms for words in modern science, technology, and medicine so that Mongolians could accurately understand concepts.³⁷ These decisions were validated as surprisingly effective in the early 1990s.

However, by the mid-1990s, missionaries and their interpreters were promoting the Mongolian Union Bible Society translation, which

²⁶ Solomon Caesar Malan, *A Letter to the Right Honourable The Earl of Shaftesbury; President of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1856).

²⁷ Daniel Arichea, "Report on Mongolian Visit," 1993, 1, Manuscript, Bible Society Archive, Bible Society of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar.

²⁸ Yutaka Shibayama, "Burkhan and Kami," *Mongolica: An International Annual of Mongol Studies* 6.27 (1995): 636–50.

²⁹ Maria Magdolna Tatar, "Pure Souls and Evil Demons: Towards a Christian Terminology in Mongolian," in *Life and Afterlife and Apocalyptic Concepts in the Altaic World: Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PLAC)*, Château Pietersheim, Belgium, September, 3–8, 2000, ed. Michael Knüppel and Alois van Tongerloo (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 65.

³⁰ M. K. Syn, "How to Translate 'God' in the Inner Mongolian Context," *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* 5 (2006): 109–33.

³¹ Jeanice Conner, "How Faint a Whisper: The Role of Translation in the Development of Syncretism in Mongolia," August 2008, Bible Society Archive, Bible Society of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar.

³² John W. Gibbens, "Modern Evangelical Mission in Mongolia, 1971–2011: Communication and Mutual Misunderstanding" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2012).

³³ Or formal correspondence translation.

³⁴ Or functional correspondence translation.

³⁵ Mongolian Buddhist words have dominant Buddhist meanings, yet include shamanist meanings from the merging of Tibetan Buddhism with Mongolian Tengerism (shamanism) in the sixteenth century.

³⁶ This term was discovered by Gibbens in a 1968 dictionary by Nyamsuren and then was approved for "God" by academics at Mongolian State University. Criticisms of *Yertöntsii ezen* for God are not addressed in this present response.

³⁷ D. Dashdavaa, "Orchuulgyn onolyn, hel shinjileiin zarim asuudal," *Orchuulah erdem* 2 (1976): 16.

popularized the use of *Burhan* for God. This happened just as Mongolian Buddhism also robustly revived.

In his 1888 book *Among the Mongols*, Gilmour laments, “After a Mongol has received some idea of Christianity, he for the most part expresses himself entirely satisfied. He says it is good. It is like his own religion. It is the same.”³⁸ By 2010, Mongolians³⁹ were observed to commonly say that Buddhism and Christianity are the same and that the *Burhan* of the Buddhists and the *Burhan* of the Christians are the same.⁴⁰ History was repeating itself, a situation that the 1990 Bible Society of Mongolia New Testament and its term *Yertöntsii* ezen for God was designed to avoid but into which the Mongolian Union Bible Society Bible and its term *Burhan* for God had plunged headlong. One lesson of history is that when Mongolian Buddhism is dominant, using *Burhan* for God in a Christian context confuses Mongolians, and efforts by Christians to make “Buddha” mean “God” are impeded.⁴¹

Validating Christianity by post-1990 ethnic values may be beneficial, but the priorities of Bible translation are more valuable. The highest priority of Bible translation is to convey the original Bible meaning accurately, clearly, and naturally in the target language. No other value or agenda is more important, and thus international Bible translation agencies urge translators “to make every effort to ensure that no political, ideological, social, cultural, or theological agenda is allowed to distort the translation.”⁴²

V. Are BSM's Source Languages Questionable?

The “Re-Establishment” article explains well the disadvantages of hard-to-understand Bible translations and translations based on secondary languages.⁴³ However, the author errs in stating that the 2015 Bible Society of Mongolia *Bibli* is “either translated from a secondary language or hard to be verified as coming from the original languages.”⁴⁴ A similar misimpression is given in an American Bible Society article that claims that Bayarjargal's

³⁸ James Gilmour, *Among the Mongols* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 194.

³⁹ Frequently Mongolians associated with Christianity.

⁴⁰ “*Ulaanbaatar hotyn irgediin shashiny talaarh medleg, igtel ühemshil*” *Sunalgaany tailan* (Ulaanbaatar: “Emong Mongolia” HHK, 2011).

⁴¹ Since the sixteenth century Buddhism has been Mongolia's dominant religion. Even so, an attempt is being made to use words from the current, majority religion for Bible concepts.

⁴² Forum of Bible Agencies International, “Basic Principles and Procedures for Bible Translation” (approved April 1999; revised October 2006); cited June 7, 2017; online: http://www.ifoba.org/uploadedFiles/about_ifoba/Translation Standards.pdf.

⁴³ Bayarjargal, “Re-Establishment,” 62–63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

Mongolian Standard Version translation “will be the first Mongolian Bible translated directly from Hebrew and Greek.”⁴⁵

Contrary to the above assertions, both the 1990 New Testament and the 2015 *Bibli* of the Bible Society of Mongolia are indeed firmly based on original Bible languages and not on a secondary language such as English. Again, these Bible translations are founded on the true meaning of the best available source texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Regarding the 2015 *Bibli*, it was constantly checked for accuracy against the original languages by Bible Society of Mongolia’s translation team and moreover by United Bible Society and Wycliffe Bible Translators consultants well schooled in the original Bible languages. Gibbens, who is responsible for Biblical exegesis in the Bible Society of Mongolia’s translation work, studied New Testament Greek at Moorlands Bible College in the 1960s and then Hebrew at the University of Leeds in the 1980s, first in the Theology Department, then later in the Semitics Department under a Jewish Rabbi. Furthermore, Wycliffe Bible Translators and United Bible Society consultants approved the 2015 *Bibli* as trustworthy, reliable, and checked against Hebrew and Greek source texts.⁴⁶

Can a Bible translation be verified as translated from the source languages of Scripture by simply looking at its texts? Please consider how differently the King James Version, the 1881–85 Revised Version, the Revised Standard Version, the English Standard Version, and the Good News Bible differ from each other in form and style, yet all are based on the original Bible languages. The reason for the vast differences is the result of such things as different translation emphases (meaning-based versus form-based) and differing scholarly opinion about meaning.

Since verification of source languages by examining a target language translation text cannot be certain, claims made by other Bible translation teams regarding their source languages should be accepted rather than cast into doubt.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ “A New Chapter for the Bible in Mongolia,” *American Bible Society News*; March 31, 2016; Online: news.americanbible.org/article/a-new-chapter-for-the-bible-in-mongolia.

⁴⁶ Carl Gross, Stephen Pattemore, and Larry Allen, “Translation Consultant Approval Form,” June 2, 2008.

⁴⁷ Besides the Bible Society of Mongolia, the *Mongolian Bible Translation Team* (2016) and *First Bible* of the Trinitarian Bible Society (New Testament published July 2017) claim Hebrew and Greek as source languages.

VI. *An Excellent Mongolian Bible Translation*

Although Bayarjargal's assertion is true that modern translated publications commonly "give a 'foreign' and translationese feeling"⁴⁸ to the Mongolian language, we must again confirm that the Bible Society of Mongolia's 1990 New Testament and 2015 *Bibli* are definitely not in that category of translation. Please consider the following: In October 2016, during a drive to Hentii Province, two Mongolians discussed the pleasing qualities of the 2015 *Bibli*. One young man remarked that he heard this new Bible for the first time read aloud at church camp and the following Monday went straight to the local bookstore to buy one for his family. He added that he and his wife now love this translation, since its words go straight to the heart and they feel like they are reading the Bible for the first time.

The 2015 *Bibli* effectively responds to lessons from Mongolian Bible translation and missions history. It is a meaning-based translation which is tightly rendered, based on the original languages, and conveys Bible meaning accurately, clearly, and beautifully in natural Mongolian. Its terminology communicates Bible meaning distinctly from dominant Mongolian Buddhist meanings, a strategy that proved surprisingly effective in the early 1990s. It is our hope that many Mongolians will come to trust Christ through this excellent Bible translation.

Response

BAYARJARGAL GARAMT SEREN

My response follows the order of John Gibbens's questions (hereafter Gibbens).

I. In Mongolia in the 1990s and especially in the 2000s, there has been a search for the source of true Mongolian identity, a search commented upon by Mongolist scholars. I believe such a phenomenon is no surprise and even expected when a nation's identity and history have been seriously altered and rewritten for a political agenda for so long. However, my characterization of the history of Christianity in Mongolia is not based on these "ethnic values" and "cultural past" (to use Gibbens's wording, 228). I want to specifically emphasize that my references are not ethnic and cultural, but historical. Since the past history of Christianity in Central Asia has only recently

⁴⁸ Bayarjargal, "Re-Establishment," 64.

received the attention of scholars and researchers, I wanted to bring up related historical and archeological facts; the existence of Turkic-Mongol tribes who had Christian faith, ecclesiastical structure, and spirituality in the Church of the East during the Mongol empire, Markos's leadership of the Church of the East, and translation of the Scriptures into Mongolian are all little-known historical facts. They establish the historical roots of Christianity in Mongolia.

II. In the strict sense of the term, Gibbens is right in his statement that “post-1990 Christianity among ethnic *Outer Mongolians* is a brand-new advance and not a re-establishment” (227, emphasis added). Indeed, the term *Outer Mongolians* signifies the division of Mongolia into Outer and Inner Mongolia in the first half of the twentieth century. In my article, however, I have used the term “Mongolians” in the broad sense to refer to both today’s ethnic Mongolians and their ancestors. At the outset, I wrote, “I will attempt to give a brief overview of the history of Christianity and Scripture translation *in the land of Mongolia*” and stated that “inhabitants of modern-day Mongolia and Central Asia in the pre-Mongol period ... were mainly *Turkic-speaking tribes*” (emphasis added).¹ These Turkic-speaking tribes were a large part of the Mongol Empire.² Thus they are ancestors of present-day Mongolians. Their history, whether ethnic or religious, is a part of the history of all Mongolians. The ethnicity of today’s Mongolians is a result and amalgamation of intermarriage and mix between many Mongol and Turkic tribes, especially during the Mongol Empire within the royal families, on ethnic, social, cultural, and linguistic levels. The history continued with wars, relocation of people, subjugation, foreign oppression, and so on. To expect today’s Mongolians to have the same ethnicity as past Mongolians would be impossible and anachronistic. The ecclesiology, liturgy, and function of the Church of the East in the past centuries were distinctly different from those of today’s Christian Church, especially the Protestant evangelical church. However, I have purposely used the term *Christian Church* to include all, despite their shape and form, who claim Jesus Christ as their only Savior and Lord. Therefore, the presence of Christianity in the land of Mongolia today is a re-establishment of the Christian Church and not a brand-new advancement.

¹ Bayarjargal Garamtseren, “Re-Establishment of the Christian Church in Mongolia: The Mongolian Standard Version Translation by National Christians,” *Unio cum Christo* 2.2 (October 2016): 50.

² Ibid.

There is no doubt that the 1990 Bible Society of Mongolia New Testament was widely read and greatly used for God's purposes in the early 1990s, but it must be remembered that it was the only Mongolian translation readily available at that time.

III. and IV. Gibbens's third point concerns the use of the term *Burkhan*, and the fourth point asserts that such use confuses Mongolians. He states, "By 2010, Mongolians were observed to commonly say that Buddhism and Christianity are the same and that the *Burhan* of the Buddhists and the *Burhan* of the Christians are the same" (233). As a Mongolian, I do not think this generalization is true for most Mongolians, and it can be acceptable for some only in the sense that the message of Christianity (or any other religion) is the same as that of Buddhism (or vice versa), despite what term(s) they may use. Furthermore, the origin of the term *Burkhan* is debated; *Burkhan* can refer to Buddha but does not mean Buddha and Buddha is not the only reference. The term *Burkhan* is a general term that can also be used in reference to a deity, mother, parent, nature, force, spiritual power, and so forth, just as the English word "God/god" can be used in various religious settings. Thus, Gibbens is in error when he states that the "past Mongolian Bibles borrowed Buddhist religious words, including Buddha for God" (232). These translators did not use the word Buddha, but *Burkhan*; they are not the same. Furthermore, Gibbens is not correct in saying that Mongolian Christians are trying to "to make 'Buddha' mean 'God'" (233). They are not using the word "Buddha," but "*Burkhan*." Today no Mongolian Christians use the word "Buddha" to refer to the God of the Bible. Certainly there is no such effort to change the meaning of the word "Buddha."

The point that the use of the term *Burkhan* might cause confusion to Mongolians could be a legitimate concern, but in reality, the whole Christian context, biblical teaching, and worship completely rules out this possibility. It will be informative to read Gibbens's own validation of this point, but unfortunately his PhD thesis is embargoed for consultation until year 2032.³ A few odd individuals might think that Jesus is Buddha, but I have yet to see a group of Mongolians thinking so. Tens of thousands of Mongolians have come to biblical faith in Jesus through a translation using the term *Burkhan* and their lives are transformed by Jesus. The goal of our Bible translation is the same: to present the biblical meaning in accurate, clear, and natural language.

³ <http://lib.leeds.ac.uk/record=b3261785~S5> Shelf mark: not available for consultation before 1st October 2032.

V. The 2015 Bible Society of Mongolia *Bibli* contains transliterations of some proper names that markedly differ from the Hebrew original; the reproducing of unpronounced letters (e.g., the final *h* [ה] in biblical Hebrew) seems to indicate a secondary source language. This is my personal opinion, however, and does not have to be accepted. I have informed the writer of the article, “A New Chapter for the Bible in Mongolia,” about the incorrect information that the Mongolian Standard Version is the first translation from the original languages, but the correction has not appeared yet.⁴

⁴ See “A New Chapter for the Bible in Mongolia,” March 31, 2016, American Bible Society, <http://news.americanbible.org/article/a-new-chapter-for-the-bible-in-mongolia>.