



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MONGOL STUDIES



ОЛОН УЛСЫН МОНГОЛЧ ЭРДЭМТДИЙН Х ИХ ХУРЛЫН ИЛТГЭЛҮҮД
PROCEEDINGS OF THE 10th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MONGOLISTS

III БОТЪ
МОНГОЛЫН ЭДИЙН ЗАСАГ,
УЛС ТӨР

VOLUME III
MONGOLIA'S ECONOMY AND
POLITICS

Улаанбаатар хот
2012 он

**III САЛБАР:
МОНГОЛЫН ЭДИЙН ЗАСАГ,
УЛС ТӨР**

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MONGOLIA'S ECONOMY AND
POLITICS***

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III САЛБАР ХУРАЛДААНЫ ДҮНГИЙН ТУХАЙ СОНСГОЛ

Эрхэм хүндэт эрдэмтэн судлаачид аа.

Юуны өмнө зохион байгуулагчдын нэрийн өмнөөс Монголын тулгар төр байгуулагдсаны 2220 жил, Үндэсний эрх чөлөөний хувьсгалын 100 жил, Ардын хувьсгалын 90 жилийн ойд зориулан Монгол улсын Ерөнхийлөгчийн ивээл дор зохион байгуулж буй Олон улсын монголч эрдэмтдийн X их хуралд цаг зав, хүч хөдөлмөрөө гаргаж идэвхтэй оролцсон Та бүхэнд талархал илэрхийлж, цаашдын ажил үйлсэд тань өндөр амжилт, сайн сайхан бүхнийг хүсэн ерөөе.

“Монголын эдийн засаг, улс төр” сэдэвт III салбар хуралдаанд нийт 66 илтгэл тавихаар төлөвлөгдсөнөөс ОХУ-ын 21, Монгол улсын 14, БНХАУ-ын 10, Япон улсын 7, БНСУ-ын 3, ХБНГУ-ын 2, АНУ, Франц, Швейцар, Канад, ИБУИНВ, Австри, Испани, Итали, Энэтхэг улсаас тус бүр 1, нийт 15 орны 60 эрдэмтэн судлаач оролцож, нийт 54 илтгэлийг тавьж хэлэлцүүлээ. Эдгээр нь Монголын эдийн засаг, улс төр, утга зохиол, урлаг, уламжлалт анагаах ухааны чиглэлийнх байлаа.

Тус салбар хуралдааныг 6 удаа хийж, үдээс өмнөх болон үдээс хойшхи хуралдаанд 30-40 эрдэмтэн судлаач нар идэвхтэй оролцож, манай орны нэрт эрдэмтэн академич Т.Намжим, Б.Жадамбаа, П.Нямдаваа, док. Батхүрэл, профессор Р.Ринчинбазар, доктор Ж.Долгорсүрэн, ОХУ-ын профессор В.В.Грайворонский нар хуралдааныг хөтлөн явууллаа.

“Монголын эдийн засаг, улс төр” сэдэвт салбар хуралдаанаар бид Монголын эдийн засаг, улс төр, нийгмийн харилцааны түүхэн хөгжил, өнөөгийн төлөв байдлыг шинжлэн тодорхойлж, хөгжлийн цаашдын чиг хандлагын талаар өргөнөөр авч хэлэлцлээ. Тодруулбал, Монгол улсын эдийн засгийн хөгжил, түүнд нөлөөлсөн хүчин зүйлс, хөгжлийн хүрсэн түвшин, гадаад дотоодын хөрөнгө оруулалтын төлөв байдал, үр өгөөж, түүнийг хэрхэн дээшүүлэх арга зам, бизнесийн орчин хөгжлийн асуудлууд, хүний хөгжлийн өнөөгийн төлөв байдал зэрэг өнөөгийн эдийн засаг нийгэмд тулгамдаж буй нэн чухал асуудлуудыг тодорхойлж, тэдгээрийг даван туулах арга замуудыг хэлэлцсэн нь манай салбар хуралдааны эрдэм шинжилгээний чухал үр дүн юм.

Мөн хуралдаанд Тогтвортой хөгжлийн хүрээнд өнөөгийн Монгол улсад бэлчээрийн мал аж ахуйн үйлдвэрлэлийн үйл явц, бэлчээрийн доройтол, түүний сөрөг үр дагавар, цаашид байгаль орчин, бэлчээрийн тогтвортой хөгжлийг хэрхэн хангах талаар тавигдсан илтгэлүүд нь олны анхаарлын төвд байлаа.

Түүнчлэн хуралдаанд Монголын соёлын асуудлыг олон талаас нь судалсан илтгэлүүд олноор тавигдлаа. Тухайлбал, эртний уран зохиол-түүхийн шаширт монголчуудын идээ ундааны соёлын асуудал хэрхэн туссан, монголын нийгэм дэх цайны бэлэгдэл, монгол уран зургийн дүрийн онцлог дүрслэлийн арга, хуурын аман холбооны урлаг, Ойрад монгол ардын дуу дахь морины зүсмийн учир, хөгжмийн ноотны монголчуудын мэдлэгийн талаарх түүхэн баримт зэрэг олон сонирхолтой сэдвүүдийг хэлэлцэн цаашид бид үндэсний уламжлалт урлаг соёлоо хэрхэн хадгалж үлдэх хийгээд хөгжүүлэх талаарх асуудлыг гүнзгийрүүлэн хэлэлцлээ.

Монголын уламжлалт анагаах ухаан судлал, хот байгуулалт, монголчуудын зан үйлийн онцлог уламжлалын талаарх илтгэлүүд нь хуралдааны нэн чухал сэдвүүдийн нэг болж хэлэлцэгдэв.

Тус салбар хуралдаанд тавигдсан илтгэлүүд “Монголын гадаад харилцаа ба түүхэн хандлага” гэсэн ерөнхий нэртэйгээ агуулгын хувьд тохирч буйг тэмдэглэж байна.

Манай оронд тавтай морилон саатаж, богц дүүрэн эрдмийн ачаатай буцаж буй Та бүхэнд аян замдаа сайн явахыг хүсэн ерөөе.

Академич Т.ДОРЖ

THE FELT MAKING PROCESS AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN MONGOLIA USING THE EHE ESGII

(Mother Felt)

Mari Kazato (Japan)

1. Introduction. This paper will clarify features of techniques of Mongolian felt making and its social background. Mongolian nomadic pastoralists live in *gers*, mobile tents. A *ger* is covered on the ceiling, wall, floor and beds by 20 to 40 pieces of felt, depending on the season. A piece of felt for a *ger* wall is about 2 meters wide by 6 meters long and 3 centimeters thick and other felt goods are made of it. Felt is nonwoven fabric, made of animal fiber, which is neither woven nor knitted.

On Mongolian felt making, Rona-Tas (1963) described its process on the site in Suhbaatar prefecture and proposed a typology among sub-ethnic groups of Mongols, Turks and Chinese based on literature. Yan (1996) examined regional differences of felt making processes, focusing on rituals and folklore, in Mongolia and China drawing on observation and literature study. They pointed out that Mongols used ‘*ehe esgii*’ in a felt making process and they translated the term as ‘mother felt’, yet its technical functions were not investigated enough. ‘*Ehe*’ is a multivocal word, meaning a mother as well as an origin, and ‘*esgii*’ means felt [Ozawa 1983]. I asked Mongol intellectuals what is the translation of “*ehe esgii*” to know they consider ‘*ehe esgii*’ as ‘original felt’. However, I translate ‘*ehe esgii*’ as the ‘mother felt’, following the above literature. According to Sampildendev, “the mother felt should have been made in the previous year and used as *ger* wall beautifully with very much care” [Sampildendev 1985:65]. However, the mother felt I observed was made in the previous year, but kept not used in a warehouse.

Mongolian pastoralists keep and rely on five sorts of domestic animals, i.e. sheep, goats, cattle, horses and camels. Especially, sheep provide materials of food, clothing and housing. Sheep wool felt is indispensable for their *ger* as exterior and interior materials. Pastoralists move 4 to 10 times a year tracking animal forage. When they move to the next campsite, they take down their *ger* and put it on camel’s backs or ox carts, wrapping the wooden parts of the *ger* and its belongings with pieces of felt. Felt used as exterior material is so thick, hard and large as to guard a family from natural threats, namely, a hard rain, a strong wind, plus 40 degrees hot in summer, minus 40 degrees cold with a snowstorm in winter, or attacks by wolves. Felt is also used for the interior such as bed mats (*gudas*) and floor carpets (*shildeg*), which are quilted fine with homespun camel strings. Though there are various purposes of usage and variations of additional fabrication, main body of felt is the same at all. Thus, let us call felt including exterior and interior material for their *gers* as ‘wall felt’ in this paper.

A felt making process is generally as follows. First of all, they shear wool from sheep, then card the fleece and lay fiber in the same direction, sprinkle water, and finally put friction, pressure, and vibration on the wool to make it full to felt. In the case of the ‘wall felt’, watered material wool is rolled up within the ‘mother felt’ and then it is rolled on the ground, pulled by domestic animals such as horses and camels. Features of the ‘wall felt’ production may be described as follows: (1) using the ‘mother felt’, (2) producing many pieces of huge felt by handwork, (3) using animal power for fulling process, (4) organizing labor exchange, (5) taking place once several years and completing in 1-2 days.

In this article, I examine how Mongols make a number of large ‘wall felt’ only with handwork, focusing on the technical functions of the ‘mother felt’ and their social relationships involved in felt making processes.

2. Production of The Wall Felt through Three Sets of Rolling: An Example of Dundgov’ Prefecture.

I observed production of the ‘wall felt’ in two prefectures and that of a small felt article in another prefecture in Mongolia. To begin with, I describe the ‘wall felt’ making process in cooperation with two families (hereafter called D family and B family) in Dundgov’ prefecture on September 9 and 10, 2001. The first process was to shear sheep (*noos hyargah*). Fleece was classified into three types: *urt* (wool sheared from matured sheep in summer), *ahar* (wool sheared from matured sheep in autumn),¹ and *hurga* (wool sheared from lambs in summer). D said, “You can make felt of *ahar* or *hurga*, but cannot do it only of *urt*”. *Ahar* or *hurga* is suitable for felt in quality but limited in quantity of production, as *urt* is not enough in quality but abundant in quantity. The following work was to card the wool (*noos sawah*). On September 9, a windless day, D spread the fleece, which had not been washed, on a sheet of cattle leather outdoor, grasped two metal sticks of about 50 centimeters long with both hands and beat the fleece rhythmically. While he was beating it for some hours, the wool fiber was getting loosen. In the evening, D with his wife “rubbed the wool” (*noos zurah*). That is to arrange fiber in a direction and lay fragments of wool in the size of a hand palm on a board or sheet of cloth. Then, they rolled them up to “make a ball” (*bo’mbog hiih*) so that the rolled wool looked like a big ball. The ball was made each from the above three kinds of wool. These works were done in the *ger* by candlelight.

Next day, they laid the ‘mother felt’ on the ground and sprinkled water on it. Actually, they prepared two kinds of the ‘mother felt’. One was soft (hereafter called ‘mother felt S’), and the other was hard (hereafter called ‘mother felt H’). At first they laid the ‘mother felt S’ on the ground and then laid the ‘mother felt H’ on it, next they opened the wool

balls of the *hurga* and the *ahar* and laid them on the ‘mother felt H’, then laid that of the *urt*, at the end laid the *hurga* and the *ahar* again on the top (photo 1). After that they checked whether it was even. If they found a thin part, they added some wool on it. Afterward they sprinkled water on the top in order to soak into the bottom of material wool, and then rolled up all the layers: two of ‘mother felts’ and three layers of material wool. The three layers of material wool will become a piece of felt through a fulling process. The enrolled ‘mother felts’ and material wool were covered with well-soaked cattle skin and tied with a leather rope.² When the rope was tied up, they said, “*Tumbai, tumbai* (Expand, expand)”. After the rope was tied, they prayed, “*Yas shig hatyy bolooloi, tsas shig tsagaan bolooloi* (Become hard as bone, become white as snow)”.

Here we describe the fulling process with the traction of animals. They tied the enrolled materials with a 60 meters long sturdy rope and fixed a rope end on a camel (photo 2). As a man lead the camel to go ahead for a distance of 35 to 45 meters, the material rolled. Then, they connected another end of the rope to the camel, leading the camel to the opposite direction for 35 to 45 meters. They did such a round trip 60 times, which they counted for one set. They drew 1/3 of a set by a camel and 2/3 by horses. They said, “Camels are durable and strong but go slowly, whereas horses go fast but soon get fatigued and stop walking”. The reason why they use horses in the last 2/3 of rolling procedure might be that horses go faster than camels, as Yan described that rolling should be accelerated in the latter half of rolling procedure [Yan 1996:278]. Rona-Tas also wrote, “The time of the pulling on the ground depends on the quality of the wool. The finer the wool, the shorter the time of pulling” [Rona-Tas 1963:214].

The wool became complete felt through 3 sets of rolling. Through 1 set of rolling, the material wool became a piece of soft felt like the “mother felt S”, which could be used as the ‘mother felt’, but not as a *ger* wall yet. According to Rona-Tas, such felt is called “the *xuxen esgi* (the daughter felt)” in Suhbaatar prefecture [Rona-Tas 1963:208]. The former ‘mother felt S’, which had already rolled for 1 sets, became hard felt like the ‘mother felt H’, and the former ‘mother felt H’ became a complete wall felt after a set of rolling. They spread the new produced soft felt on the bottom, and laid the new ‘mother felt H’, which was the ‘mother felt S’ at first, then they rubbed the three layered wool on the top. They repeated this procedure until they got a necessary number of pieces of felt.

Then, they finished the complete felt by stretching out in order to adjust the size. A man stood in the middle of the felt, jumping and kicking with the heels of shoes, as 7 persons grabbed and pulled the edge. In this day’s work, they made 8 pieces of the wall felt: D family made 3 and B family made 5. The final product belonged to the owner of the wool, though the animal gears were accommodated each other.

The features of D family and B family’s felt production were that the wool became complete felt through three stages of fulling; 1 to 3 sets of rolling. When 1 set was finished, material wool became a piece of soft felt, which can be used as the ‘mother felt’, but not as *ger* wall yet, as mentioned above. After these 2 sets of fulling, it got stronger but not the wall felt. After 3 sets, it could be a *ger* wall to protect a family from wind, rain, heat and cold, as well as to endure frequent movements that may reach ten times a year.

3. Production of The Wall Felt through Five Sets of Rolling: An Example of Zavhan Prefecture. I observed a wall felt making process in Zavhan prefecture on August 3, 2004, which was a lucky day selected by consulting a Mongolian lunar calendar called a “pastoralists’ calendar”. At first, I brief the fulling process in the case in Zavhan prefecture. Only horses are used for rolling power. 1 set equals a round trip of 20 to 25 meters rolling and it was called a *tal*. After 1 *tal* of rolling, the wool became *nyalh esgii* (baby felt or new felt).³ After 2 *tal*, it became *ho’ngo esgii* (light felt), after 3 *tal*, “*ehe esgii*” (mother felt), after 4 *tal*, *adag esgii* (last felt), after 5 *tal*, *esgii* (felt). Thus the wool became the wall felt through 5 *tal* of fulling processes in total.

From now on, I describe an actual felt making process in order. They spread fleece, which was not washed, on a plastic sheet, and stretched the fleece out to 2 to 6 meters in size like a net. They called it *tor* (net). They said, “When it becomes felt, the size will be 2 to 4 meters”. Then they rubbed the wool (*noos zurah*), which was not washed and carded, on the *tor*. They said, “If you use not carded wool, you need much wool. If you use carded wool, you need less wool.” They put their hand on the wool layer, checking whether everywhere was equally laid. Rona-Tas wrote, “They took great care of the equal laying because on this depends the quality of the felt” [Rona-Tas 1963:201]. As they found a thin part, they added some wool on it. They said, “It is possible to make thin felt from carded wool. When you make a hard felt from not carded wool, the felt will be thick and heavy.” After laying wool all over the *tor* equally, they rolled it up using a stick as a core. The rolled up wool was also called *tor*.

Then, they prepared the ‘mother felt’ and a baby felt. The ‘mother felt’ had already been rolled through 3 sets, and the baby felt had been rolled through 1 set. They spread and watered on the ‘mother felt’, and laid the baby felt on it and watered again. And then, they rubbed *o’ngo noos* (beauty wool) on the baby felt. The beauty wool was carded wool of *hurga* or *ahar*, whose fiber was soft and short. They said, “It is indispensable to add beauty wool to make a good felt,” and “Because the baby felt was watered, the wool wouldn’t stick to it”. Then, they spread the rolled up *tor* on it and sprinkled water over it. After that, they put an axis on the layers and rolled up all of them; the mother felt, the baby felt, the beauty wool, netted fleece and rubbed wool, altogether. The roll was covered with two pieces of soften leather and closed with a leather rope.

They tied a sturdy rope on the both ends of the axis and fixed another rope to the center of the rope. Two men on horses grasped each end of the second rope and go ahead for 50 meters and returned to the opposite direction for 50 meters (photo 3). They called 20 to 25 times of this round trip as 1 set, a *tal*. After a *tal* rolling, the ‘mother felt’ became the last felt, the baby felt became the light felt, and the top layer including the net and the rubbed wool became the baby felt. Felt was finished to adjust the size by stretching out.

4. Production of A Small Article: An Example of O’mnogov’ Prefecture. In Mongolia there are techniques to make small felt articles such as boots and small kitchen bags without using the ‘mother felt’. I observed the production of felt boots in December 1996. At first, a woman laid a big boot pattern of canvas on a board, rubbed non-washed wool on the pattern, laid a small boot pattern and rubbed wool on it again, tucking the edge in. She put water in a washbowl and stood the board with the material in the washbowl. She scattered salt and sprinkle hot water on it. Then rolled all the material up and rolled it softly on the board. She sometimes opened it and changed the direction of rolling, and rolled it again and again. At last she cut the mouths of the boots with a knife and turned it inside out. Boots were finished. The above techniques to make a small article is almost the same as the instruction of felt making text books in Japan and US to use cloth or plastic sheets as patterns, putting hot water with alkaline substance to open wool cuticles and promote fulling process.

5. Relationship among Labor, Material, and Tools. Although small articles are made by techniques in common with the modern Western textile art which adopted scientific knowledge, why the wall felt is made by the special techniques using the ‘mother felt’? Mongols said that the ‘mother felt’ was indispensable for wall felt making. Let us think about what is the ‘mother felt’ in the process of wall felt making in Mongolia.

The first function of the ‘mother felt’ is that of a pattern. When you lay wool on the ‘mother felt’ of 2 to 6 meters in size, roll to add pressure to it and stretch it to adjust to the size, you will have a copy of the ‘mother felt’. The second function is that of a sheet. A plastic sheet is used in the textile art in Japan and the West, and a willow branch sheet in some parts of Mongolia. However, in my research areas there were no plastic or willow sheets. The third function is that of wall felt. The ‘mother felt’ can be used as a *ger* wall, although the degree of hardness are various.

Let us now compare the two study cases by focusing on how to deal with the wool and how to roll the enrolled material. In Dundgov’ they dealt with the wool precisely so as to card all the wool and arranged fiber in a direction, but the fulling process was simple, only with three stages. In Zavhan, the labor to make preparations of wool was less, and the fulling process had five stages. Comparing the rolling distances, in Dundgov’ it was 40 meters (average rolling distance) x 2 (a round trip) x 60 (rolling times of 1 set) x 3 (sets) = 14,400 meters, and in Zavhan 50 meters (rolling distance) x 2 (a round trip) x 22.5 (average rolling times of 1 set) x 5 (sets) = 11,250 meters. The distance in the case of Dundgov’ is 1.3 times longer than that of Zavhan. That is, the animal power used to complete felt in Dundgov’ is 1.3 times more than in Zavhan. The feature of felt making in Dundgov’ is to use more human labor and animal power, while that in Zavhan is to use less human labor and animal power. A fulling process of felt is gradational and almost endless. The more pressure and vibration is put on it, the harder the felt becomes. How much human labor and animal power is invested depends on what quality of felt the felt makers want.

Focusing on tools, there are a few special tools for felt making in Mongolia. Although there are axis and its attachments in some areas, the wall felt can be made only with the ‘mother felt’, wool, human labor, and animal power.

6. Conclusion: What is the ‘mother felt’? First, I would like to reconsider the name of the ‘mother felt’. As mentioned above, new felt was called as daughter felt in Suhbaatar [Rona-Tas 1963:208] and baby felt in Zavhan. According to Rona-Tas, Vjatkina K.V. writes that after the felt is ready, the Mongols say, “A pretty girl (*xorxon xuxen*) is born” [Vjatkina 1960:179, Rona-Tas 1963:208]. These family metaphors to express felt making process suggests that the meaning of “*ehe esgi*” might be the ‘mother felt’ but not original felt.

Let us here investigate how to use the ‘mother felt’. In Dundgov’ D family and B family made felt together, exchanging their labor, knowledge, animal power and other tools such as the ‘mother felt’. B family, husband and wife of their 50’s, needed 5 pieces of the wall felt, but they didn’t have enough knowledge to make felt by themselves. So, they applied collaboration with D family who were concerned as elders in the area. Although D family needed only two pieces of new wall felt and a piece of felt to be repaired, they thought that they should not deny their close neighbor’s request, and expected that B family provide much more animals than them, and thus they agreed to make felt together. D family took out from their warehouse a piece of new felt that had been made until the last year, and they used it as the ‘mother felt’. You cannot make felt just lending the ‘mother felt’, but you need to learn how to use it and make felt through co-working experience with elders.

Additionally, there is the morality of mutual aid in Mongolia. I heard in Zavhan, “if you see a scene of felt making, you should go to help them”. Actually, neighbor women in 2 kilometers away came to help wool laying, and presented a thermos bottle of hot milk tea. And that two young men on horse backs passing near the working site came to roll the material for several times by their horses. According to Sampildendev, felt makers should “arrange the date of felt making and inform neighbors about it previously. Then, those who heard it will arrange to take part in the felt

making” and that “some prepare animals to pull the felt” [Sampildendev 1985:65]. This means Mongols organize labor exchange for felt making.

Felt making is held in summer, but for a family it happens once in several years. Thus, felt making techniques might be succeeded from parents to children and through co-experience of mutual aid in the area community. With regard to a felt making process, it is very important to take attention to equally laying of the wool on the ‘mother felt’. If there remains a thin part, it will be a hole. So, people go crawling around checking any thickness of the wool with their hands again and again. It is easy to say, “The wool should be laid equally”, but in practice it is persistent efforts for elders and beginners to crawl pushing the wool checking thickness very carefully and deliberately. Through such a bodily co-experience with the elders, beginners “learn by their hands” as they say.

In fact, in the socialist era, felt making was restrained as household industry, because household industry deemed to disturb the industrial development of socialist Mongolia. Felt was produced in state-owned factories intensively, and pastoralists bought felt for a part of their salary earned by keeping domestic animals owned by animal husbandry cooperatives.⁴ According to Yan, “the government purchased all the wool and so no wool was left at pastoralists” [Yan 1986:280]. However, since the transformation in 1990s, factories bankrupted and the felt production was delayed. Thus, people began to make felt themselves again for their own usage. B family’s trial was one of those examples. D family requested by B family, provided the ‘mother felt’ and passed their knowledge to B family through working on the wool all the day together. Formerly, D family was initiated felt making techniques by their predecessors, and B family will also transmit the knowledge to their younger generations.

Mongolian way of felt making is different from the modern European way, especially in its use of the ‘mother felt’. The ‘mother felt’ makes it possible to produce lots of felt mats in the same size and at the same time. It is not a special tool but a piece of wall felt, which is sometimes used as *ger* wall. Mongolian way of felt making does not require any special tools, but needs local knowledge acquired through practice of working with elders on how to make hard felt from fluffy wool. Mongolian felt making using the ‘mother felt’ is a historical process to pass knowledge such as sense of hands to deal with wool. In this process the ‘mother felt’ plays roles as a functional tool to make copies of numbers of large felt as well as a medium to connect people in the area community and to pass knowledge and techniques from elders to the young.

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Photos



Photo 1. Opening *bo'mbog* and laying on the ‘mother felt’



Photo 2. Pulling felt material by a camel in Dundgov’



Photo 3. Pulling felt material with an axis by horses in Zavhan

Notes

- ¹ Rona-Tas (1963) expresses them as *axrin nos* and *urtin nos* [Rona-Tas 1963:199].
- ² Generally in felt making, alkaline substance such as salt or soap is used with water so as to let wool cuticles open easily and promote a fulling process. In Mongolia, an axis (*gol*) is sometimes put on the center of the roll. Thus, I asked D’s wife, «Don’t you sprinkle water with salt or soap on the wool, and don’t you use an axis?» and she answered, “No”.
- ³ Yan wrote that *nyalh* means ‘new born’ or ‘immature’ [Yan 1996:279]. According to Battur S., a doctor of agriculture, there is an expression that “*esgii nyalharah* (felt become immature)”, i.e. the horses become unruly and pull the felt by force, or people who involved in felt making made some mistake, and consequently felt ends in failure [private mail].
- ⁴ As Rona-Tas observed felt making in 1957 and 1958 under the socialist era, those were considered as public events under auspices of a local cooperative [Rona-Tas 1963].