

The Social and Ecological Problems of Urbanized Areas in Mongolia

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of studies on the formation of urbanized territories and metropolitan areas in Mongolia, and the influences of the industrial complex on the pollution level in urban landscapes, as well as on population health. The capital city, Ulaanbaatar, is one of the most highly polluted cities in the Central Asian region. The data on spatial distribution and the contents of toxic elements in the soils, snow cover, plants and human hair are given, according to the main ecological zones of the city. The statistical data on the dynamics of birthrate, rates of sickness and death of the population by the main groups of diseases are analyzed in accordance with the classification of the World Health Organization.

Key words; social and ecological problems, urbanization, pollution, dwelling-zone, gastrointestinal disease, Mongolia

Introduction

According to Danilova (2005) more than 20 remainders of the Hunnu town culture, over 10 Uigur towns, more than 20 Kidani towns and more than 30 small towns from the period of the Mongolian empire are known in Central Asia. Central-Asiatic settlements were nearly always small and were not populous. In the Yani epoch the function of metropolitan empires was executed in Da-du (Hanbalgasun) near Beijng. Significantly, after the collapse of Mongolian rule in Karakorum, in 1380 it was destroyed by Chinese troops and forfeited its status of state centre.

The capital city of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, which was previously called Ikh-Khure, Da-Khuree, Niislel –Khuree, came into being in the middle of XVII century, in the valley of river Tuul, near the monastery Ikh-Khuree. However, in Russian documents from the middle of the XIX century it was named Uрга. A trade complex and town administration formed around the monastery, so the stationary settlement became a national religious center, but also gained an administrative function and became an area Mongolians returned to and stayed. In the early XX century, the city already had governmental institutions, foreign consulates, a central post office, telegraph and Chinese theatre. Therefore, from this time began the process of shaping a town from the many

components of functionally different zones into united areas. In this time, there was a development of urban infrastructure: administrative complex, industrial zone, religious buildings, dwellings and trade quarters.

Between 1921 and 1990 the public authorities of Mongolia took measures to settle nomads, with some success. After the political and economic reforms in 1990 settled inhabitants returned to a nomadic lifestyle leaving villages deserted, breaking the former infrastructure and physical destruction of the population of the country. During this period the capital city of Mongolia developed, but this has caused deterioration of the ecological conditions.

Urbanization is accompanied by the development of industrial production, which for a long time was comparatively low. Besides manual labor there were small sized enterprises (approximately 480) belonging to Russian and Chinese, which animal skin, made footwear and clothes, jewellery products, woven carpets etc. There were only 300 Mongolian workers in 1928, but 140,000 in 1940. The intensive industrialization of the country started around the end of 1940s, and the main growth of the Mongolian industry occurred between 1975 and 1990. At the end of 1980s there were 35 power stations, 20 coal mines, 20 metal processing and repairing factories, 43 producing building material, 55 lumber-mills and