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Shifting Leadership Paradigms in Mongolia: A Comparative Analysis of Traditional Leadership Traits and Contemporary Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how leadership paradigms in Mongolia have shifted from historically documented traditional leadership traits to contemporary leadership styles. It combines two bodies of evidence. The first is a historical-comparative dataset of leadership trait assessments for more than 100 Mongolian rulers, statesmen and business leaders across seven historical periods, from the early states (3rd century BC) to the market transition after 1990 (Dorj & Batkhürel, 2011). The second is a survey of 92 leaders in 71 Mongolian business organisations, measuring seven contemporary leadership styles (charismatic, participative, situational, transactional, transformational, spiritual and servant) with 45 items and four dimensions of employee job performance (job satisfaction, employee traits, behaviour and results) with 22 items. Reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.663–0.838) and sampling adequacy (KMO = 0.689 and 0.790) were acceptable. Leaders reported the highest use of transformational leadership (weighted score 4.32 on a 5-point scale), followed by spiritual (4.06) and charismatic (4.03) leadership. Employee job performance correlated significantly with spiritual ($r = .375$), situational ($r = .329$), servant ($r = .310$) and transformational ($r = .305$) leadership, but not with charismatic ($r = .036$), participative ($r = .120$) or transactional ($r = .204$) leadership. Overall leadership style explained 18.4% of the variance in employee performance ($\beta = .429$, $p < .001$), with the strongest effect on job satisfaction. A crosswalk of 33 traditional traits onto the seven contemporary styles shows that the historical trait profile closely mirrors the styles leaders use today (Spearman $\rho = .84$, $p = .019$), but not the styles that are associated with performance ($\rho = .18$, n.s.). The paradigm shift in Mongolia therefore lies less in what leaders do than in what works: charisma, historically central to Mongolian leadership, has lost its performance relevance, while servant and spiritual leadership, built on purpose, values and care for followers, now matter most.

KEYWORDS: leadership styles; traditional leadership traits; nomadic leadership heritage; employee job performance; servant leadership; Mongolia; post-socialist transition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, Mongolia's socio-economic landscape has undergone deep structural shifts driven by democratisation, market liberalisation and, more recently, digital integration. Since 1990 the management of the state, society and business has been liberalised, the legal framework has been rebuilt around market relations, and the resources, capabilities and managerial results of the private sector have become decisive for national development. In this setting, organisational leadership has emerged as a primary determinant of firm performance and institutional agility.

Mongolian leadership, however, did not begin with the market transition. It was forged over more than two millennia within nomadic social structures, military discipline and highly centralised statecraft, from the Xiongnu (Hunnu) state through the Great Mongol Empire, the Yuan dynasty, the post-imperial khanates, the period of Manchu rule, the centrally planned economy and the market transition. Mongolian management scholarship has documented this heritage in detail. In particular, Dorj and Batkhürel (2011) systematically compared the personal

and leadership traits of more than 100 khans, statesmen, thinkers and contemporary state and business leaders across seven historical periods and concluded that about 60% of the leadership traits of Mongolia's leading businesspeople still reflect nomadic culture and traditional thinking.

International literature has examined Western leadership frameworks such as transformational (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978) and servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) at length, but there is little empirical research on how these models intersect with deep-rooted nomadic leadership traditions in transition economies. Historical studies of Mongolian leadership and survey studies of contemporary leadership styles have so far been conducted separately. This study brings them together and addresses three research questions:

RQ1. Which leadership traits characterised Mongolian leaders across the seven historical periods, and how stable were they?

RQ2. Which contemporary leadership styles do Mongolian business leaders use, and which of them are associated with employee job performance?

RQ3. To what extent do traditional leadership traits correspond to contemporary leadership styles, and where has the paradigm shifted?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Historical Foundations of Traditional Mongolian Leadership

Mongolian management thought has a long and rich heritage. The statecraft and economic administration of the Xiongnu state and other early states (3rd century BC to 12th century AD), the formation of the Great Mongol State, and the governing methods of Chinggis Khan and the great and lesser khans made a major contribution to it. The governing heritage of Chinggis Khan was carried forward and developed by the 35 khans of the Golden Lineage, and rulers such as Chinggis, Ögedei, Tamerlane, Khubilai and Ligden Khutagt developed an economic and managerial way of thinking grounded in nomadic civilisation (Dorj & Batkhürel, 2011).

A substantial body of Mongolian scholarship has studied the nomadic way of life, methods of managing the nomadic economy, and the personal and leadership traits of Mongolian khans and statesmen from the 3rd century BC to the 20th century. Building on this work, Dorj and Batkhürel (2011) identified the distinctive features of Mongolian management, proposed the "MM" (Mongolian management) theory and a model of management for the era of nomadic civilisation, and divided the development of Mongolian economic and management thought into seven periods: (1) the early states, (2) the Mongol Empire, (3) the Yuan dynasty, (4) the 14th–17th centuries, (5) the period of Manchu rule and the early 20th century, (6) the centrally planned economy, and (7) the transition to a market economy. Within this periodisation they compared the personal, leadership and managerial traits of more than 100 khans, statesmen, thinkers and leading state and business leaders.

From this literature, three foundational pillars of traditional Mongolian leadership can be identified:

1. **Decisive authority and paternalism.** Leaders held strong operational command while carrying a paternalistic obligation to protect the community. Major decisions were deliberated in the khurultai (assembly of nobles).
2. **Meritocracy and mutual loyalty.** Subordinates were promoted on the basis of task competence and loyalty rather than aristocratic lineage alone, under the codified rules of the Great Yassa (Ikh Zasag).
3. **Nomadic adaptability.** Environmental uncertainty required high situational awareness, resourcefulness and flexible, rapid decision-making.

2.2 Leadership and Management in Business Organisations

Some scholars regard leadership and management as qualitatively different and even mutually exclusive (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Zaleznik, 1977): managers value stability, order and efficiency, whereas leaders value flexibility, innovation and adaptation; in Bennis and Nanus's (1985) phrase, "managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing." Others treat leadership and management as distinct processes or roles without assuming that leaders and managers are different types of people (Bass, 1990; Kotter, 1990; Mintzberg, 1973; Rost, 1991). Mintzberg (1973) defined leadership as one of ten managerial roles; Kotter (1990) argued that management produces predictability and order whereas leadership produces organisational change, and that the relative importance of each depends on organisational size and environmental dynamism; Rost (1991) defined leadership as a multidirectional, non-coercive influence relationship aimed at real change. Most scholars now agree that leadership affects the success of managers and that integrating the two processes is central to organisational performance (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004). This study follows that integrative view and treats senior executives, CEOs and middle managers of business organisations as leaders.

2.3 Seven Contemporary Leadership Styles

Contemporary organisational literature groups leadership behaviour into the following seven styles, which form the independent variables of this study:

- **Charismatic leadership (X_1):** inspiring followers through personal vision, confidence and rhetorical appeal (Conger & Kanungo, 1987).
- **Participative leadership (X_2):** involving employees in decision-making and consensus building (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).
- **Situational leadership (X_3):** adapting leadership behaviour to the task and to follower readiness (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).
- **Transactional leadership (X_4):** using contingent rewards, clear structures and operational monitoring (Bass, 1985).
- **Transformational leadership (X_5):** motivating employees to transcend self-interest for organisational goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 1978).
- **Spiritual leadership (X_6):** fostering intrinsic motivation through vision, hope and shared values (Fry, 2003).
- **Servant leadership (X_7):** prioritising employee well-being, empowerment and professional growth (Greenleaf, 1977).

Employee job performance (Y) is treated as a multidimensional construct. Following Mathis and Jackson (2003), who distinguish trait-based, behaviour-based and results-based information on employee performance, and adding job satisfaction, four dimensions are measured: job satisfaction (Y_1), employee traits (Y_2), behaviour (Y_3) and results (Y_4).

2.4 Conceptual Comparison of the Two Paradigms

Table 1 summarises the conceptual contrast between traditional Mongolian leadership traits and contemporary leadership styles. Section 4.6 tests this contrast empirically.

Table 1. Conceptual comparison of Mongolian leadership paradigms

Dimension	Traditional Mongolian leadership traits	Contemporary leadership styles
Primary source of authority	Ancestral prestige, military command, personal honour, nomadic merit, personal example	Professional competence, emotional intelligence, shared vision and values
Decision-making	Top-down command; elite deliberation in the khurultai; rule-based order (Yassa)	Participative, data-driven and situational decision-making
Relations with subordinates	Paternalistic protection, loyalty, strict hierarchy; reward and punishment	Collaborative engagement, empowerment, care for employee well-being
Strategic focus	Survival, geopolitical stability, control of resources	Market agility, innovation, digital transformation, talent retention
Performance drivers	Strict task execution, collective survival, allegiance	Job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, measurable results

Source: authors' synthesis.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Historical-Comparative Data

The historical evidence draws on the trait assessments of Dorj and Batkhürel (2011). For each period the authors compiled a list of leadership traits documented in historical sources (between 20 and 34 traits depending on the period) and recorded which traits each ruler or statesman displayed. Two indicators are used here: (a) the share of the period's traits displayed by each leader, and (b) the share of the period's leaders who displayed each trait. For the five periods of nomadic civilisation (early states to Manchu rule), the second indicator is available for 44 common traits, which allows comparison across periods.

3.2 Survey Sample

The contemporary evidence comes from a structured questionnaire survey of business leaders, defined as senior executives, CEOs and middle managers. Using purposive (non-probability) sampling, the required sample size was calculated as 91 (expected standard deviation 4/3 = 1.333, 95% confidence level, margin of error 0.2); 92

leaders were surveyed to increase precision. Respondents came from 71 organisations: 10 joint-stock companies (17 leaders), 54 limited liability companies (68 leaders) and 7 other enterprises (7 leaders). Table 2 summarises the sample.

Table 2. Sample profile (N = 92)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male / Female	41 / 51	44.6 / 55.4
Age	22–30 / 31–40 / 41–50 / 51+	15 / 29 / 43 / 5	16.3 / 31.5 / 46.7 / 5.5
Education	Higher / Vocational / Secondary	84 / 2 / 6	91.3 / 2.2 / 6.5
Academic degree	Doctorate / Master's / Bachelor's / Other	1 / 34 / 55 / 2	1.1 / 36.9 / 59.8 / 2.2
Position	Top management / Branch director / Middle / Lower	29 / 6 / 47 / 10	31.5 / 6.5 / 51.1 / 10.9
Tenure (years)	1–7 / 8–11 / 12–15 / 16–19 / 20+	5 / 11 / 17 / 38 / 21	5.4 / 12.0 / 18.5 / 41.3 / 22.8
Sector	Services / Trade / Food production / IT / Tourism & hospitality / Mining & energy / Construction / Light industry	33 / 16 / 14 / 9 / 8 / 6 / 4 / 2	35.9 / 17.4 / 15.2 / 9.8 / 8.7 / 6.5 / 4.3 / 2.2

Source: survey data.

3.3 Measures, Validity and Reliability

The seven leadership styles were measured with 45 items and employee job performance with 22 items, all on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very poor / strongly disagree, 5 = very good / strongly agree). Construct validity was examined with principal component analysis. Sampling adequacy was acceptable for the leadership styles (KMO = 0.689; Bartlett's test p = .003; average variance explained 45.4%) and for the performance dimensions (KMO = 0.790; Bartlett's test p < .001; average variance explained 52.5%). Internal consistency was assessed with Cronbach's (1951) alpha (Table 3). All values exceed 0.60, the commonly accepted minimum for exploratory research; transformational leadership ($\alpha = 0.677$) and job satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.663$) are below the stricter 0.70 threshold and are interpreted with caution.

Table 3. Reliability of the measures

Construct	Cronbach's α	Construct	Cronbach's α
Charismatic leadership	0.743	Spiritual leadership	0.838
Participative leadership	0.772	Servant leadership	0.789
Situational leadership	0.710	Job satisfaction (Y_1)	0.663
Transactional leadership	0.794	Employee traits (Y_2)	0.838
Transformational leadership	0.677	Behaviour (Y_3)	0.770
		Results (Y_4)	0.819

Source: survey data.

3.4 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, the historical trait data are summarised by period and by leader (RQ1). Second, the survey data are analysed with weighted scores, Pearson correlations, simple and multiple linear regression, and chi-square tests of leader characteristics (RQ2). Third, an integrated comparison is made by mapping 33 of the 44 common traditional traits onto the seven contemporary styles on the basis of their conceptual content (for example, “can make people follow him or her” onto charismatic leadership, “makes decisions by consensus” onto participative leadership, and “mercy and compassion” onto servant leadership). For each style, the historical prevalence (mean share of leaders displaying the mapped traits across the periods in which they were recorded) is then compared with its contemporary use and its correlation with employee performance, using Spearman rank correlation (RQ3).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Leadership Traits across Seven Historical Periods

Table 4 shows the share of each period's documented leadership traits displayed by individual leaders. Leadership capability peaked in the imperial era: Chinggis Khan displayed all 20 traits of the period, and Ögedei and Möngke 80% each. High levels recur at turning points in Mongolian history: Queen Mandukhai the Wise (100%) and Batmönkh Dayan Khan (85%), who reunified the Mongols in the late 15th century; Khubilai Khan (80.8%) in the Yuan period; Tögs-Ochiryn Namnansüren (89.7%) during the restoration of independence; and D. Sükhbaatar (88.2%) in the early 20th century.

Table 4. Leadership trait scores of Mongolian leaders by historical period

Period (number of traits)	Leaders and share of traits displayed (%)	Mean %
Early states (26)	Attila 73.1; Modu Chanyu 69.2; Yesügei Baatar 65.4; Borjigidai Mergen 57.7; Khabul Khan 30.8; Ambaghai Khan 26.9	53.9
Mongol Empire (20)	Chinggis Khan 100; Ögedei 80; Möngke 80; Tolui 70; Güyük 65	79.0
Yuan dynasty (26)	Khubilai 80.8; Temür Öljeitü 76.9; Toghon Temür 76.9; Khaishan 65.4; Ayurbarwada 61.5; Shidebala 61.5; Yesün Temür 38.5	65.9
14th–17th centuries (20)	Mandukhai the Wise 100; Batmönkh Dayan Khan 85; Ayushiridara 75; Ligden Khutagt 70; Tögüs Temür 60; Esen Taishi 50; Elbeg Khan 45	69.3
Manchu rule and early 20th century (29)	Namnansüren 89.7; G. Badamdorj 72.4; Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutagt 65.5; G. Tserenchimed 62.1; Chin Van Khanddorj 55.2	69.0
Centrally planned economy (34)	D. Sükhbaatar 88.2; D. Bodoo 64.7; Kh. Choibalsan 61.8; B. Tserendorj 58.8; A. Amar 44.1; D. Chagdarjav 41.1; S. Danzan 35.3; P. Genden 32.3; Ts. Jigjidjav 26.5; Ts. Damdinbazar 14.7	46.8

Source: calculated from Dorj & Batkhürel (2011, pp. 77, 101–103, 121–122, 143–144, 151, 178–179).

Table 5 shows how widely selected traits were shared among the leaders of each period of nomadic civilisation. Three traits form a stable core that appears in every period in which it was recorded: strong aspiration and a clear personal goal (100%), preservation of tradition (100%), and personal example and the respect of others (71–100%). Strategic vision (60–86%), organising ability (67–86%), ability to make people follow (60–100%) and endurance (50–80%) were also consistently high. By contrast, traits associated with collective and people-oriented leadership were consistently weak: consensus-based decision-making (33–43%), mercy and compassion (40–50%), and the formation of a leadership team (43–50%). Early-state rulers rarely displayed respect for science and culture or the development of statecraft (16.7% each), traits that became more common under Manchu rule (60% each).

Table 5. Prevalence of selected leadership traits among Mongolian leaders by period (% of leaders)

Leadership trait	Early states	Empire	Yuan	14th–17th c.	Manchu era
Aspiration, clear personal goal	100	100	–	–	100
Preservation of tradition	–	100	100	100	100
Personal example, respect of others	–	100	71.4	85.7	80
Ability to make people follow	–	100	100	71.4	60
Strategic vision	66.7	80	85.7	85.7	60
High organising ability	66.7	80	71.4	85.7	–
Endurance, dedication to work	50	80	57.1	71.4	80
Wit, resourcefulness, cunning	–	80	57.1	57.1	100
Uses reward and incentives	50	60	100	57.1	–
Uses punishment as a management method	50	60	71.4	–	–
Delegates authority	100	–	100	–	–

Leadership trait	Early states	Empire	Yuan	14th–17th c.	Manchu era
Listens patiently to others	66.7	–	–	–	60
Mercy, compassion	50	40	42.8	42.8	–
Builds a leadership team	50	–	42.8	–	–
Makes decisions by consensus	33.3	–	42.8	–	–
Respects science and culture	16.7	–	–	–	60

Source: Dorj & Batkhürel (2011), summary table of traits of the great and lesser khans. "–" = trait not among those recorded for the period.

Two further observations concern the modern era. Among state leaders of the market transition after 1990, only diligence, strategic thinking and innovation-seeking were displayed by 60% or more of the leaders studied. Among Mongolia's 35 leading businesspeople, assessed on 53 indicators, about 60% of the observed traits reflected nomadic culture and traditional thinking; the most frequent were the ability to build a strong team (71.4%), having worked independently from an early age (68.6%), being a role model for others (62.9%), strategic vision (48.6%) and having stood out as a leader since childhood (42.9%) (Dorj & Batkhürel, 2011, pp. 277–281).

4.2 Contemporary Leadership Style Profile

Weighted scores of the items describing each style show that Mongolian business leaders report using all seven styles at a moderate to high level (Table 6). Transformational leadership is used most (4.32), followed by spiritual (4.06) and charismatic (4.03) leadership. Participative and transactional leadership are used least (3.87 each).

Table 6. Use of contemporary leadership styles (weighted scores, 1–5 scale)

Leadership style	Weighted score	Rank
Transformational	4.32	1
Spiritual	4.06	2
Charismatic	4.03	3
Situational	3.93	4–5
Servant	3.93	4–5
Participative	3.87	6–7
Transactional	3.87	6–7

Source: survey data (N = 92).

4.3 Inter-correlations of Leadership Styles

Table 7 shows the correlations among the seven styles. Transformational, spiritual and servant leadership form a closely related cluster (r = .583–.656), and transactional leadership is strongly related to transformational (r = .643), participative (r = .541) and spiritual leadership (r = .532), which supports the view that transactional and transformational behaviours are complementary rather than opposite (Bass, 1985). Charismatic leadership stands apart: it is not significantly correlated with any other style and is weakly negatively related to participative (r = –.108) and servant leadership (r = –.088). In Mongolian business organisations, charisma is thus a personal attribute separate from the participative and people-oriented behaviours of the other styles.

Table 7. Pearson correlations among leadership styles (N = 92)

Style	X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5	X_6	X_7
X_1 Charismatic	1						
X_2 Participative	–.108	1					
X_3 Situational	.181	.323**	1				
X_4 Transactional	–.006	.541**	.397**	1			
X_5 Transformational	.139	.406**	.422**	.643**	1		
X_6 Spiritual	.175	.318**	.462**	.532**	.656**	1	
X_7 Servant	–.088	.380**	.407**	.478**	.583**	.597**	1

*** p < .01 (two-tailed). Source: survey data.*

4.4 Leadership Styles and Employee Job Performance

Employee job performance is most strongly associated with job satisfaction (r = .849), followed by employee traits (r = .487), behaviour (r = .390) and results (r = .266) (all p < .05). The four dimensions are also positively interrelated (r = .365–.555), which confirms that job performance is a multidimensional construct in which satisfaction plays the central role.

Table 8 shows the correlation of each leadership style with overall employee performance. Four styles are significantly and moderately associated with performance: spiritual (r = .375), situational (r = .329), servant (r = .310) and transformational leadership (r = .305). Transactional (r = .204), participative (r = .120) and charismatic leadership (r = .036) are not significantly related to performance.

Table 8. Correlation of leadership styles with employee job performance

Leadership style	r with performance	Strength
Spiritual	.375**	Moderate
Situational	.329**	Moderate
Servant	.310**	Moderate
Transformational	.305**	Moderate
Transactional	.204	Weak, n.s.
Participative	.120	Weak, n.s.
Charismatic	.036	None, n.s.
Overall leadership style	.429**	Moderate

*** p < .01. Source: survey data (N = 92).*

Simple regressions of each performance dimension on overall leadership style confirm a significant positive effect throughout (Table 9). Leadership style explains 18.4% of the variance in overall employee performance (β = .429, p < .001). The effect is strongest for job satisfaction (β = .444, R^2 = .197) and behaviour (β = .353), and weaker for results (β = .301) and employee traits (β = .291). Leadership therefore acts on performance mainly through employees' satisfaction and conduct, and less directly through measurable output.

Table 9. Regression of employee performance dimensions on leadership style

Dependent variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R^2	F(1, 90)
Overall job performance	0.483	0.107	.429	4.507	<.001	.184	20.32
Job satisfaction (Y_1)	0.596	0.127	.444	4.698	<.001	.197	22.07
Employee traits (Y_2)	0.390	0.135	.291	2.882	.005	.085	8.31
Behaviour (Y_3)	0.495	0.138	.353	3.576	.001	.124	12.79
Results (Y_4)	0.371	0.124	.301	2.991	.004	.090	8.95

Source: survey data.

A multiple regression of the overall leadership assessment on the seven styles ($R = .588$, $R^2 = .346$, adjusted $R^2 = .291$, $F(7, 83) = 16.27$, $p < .001$) shows which styles shape leaders' overall leadership profile (Table 10). Transformational ($\beta = .510$), transactional ($\beta = .496$), spiritual ($\beta = .464$) and servant leadership ($\beta = .434$) make the largest contributions; participative ($\beta = .270$) and situational leadership ($\beta = .239$) make smaller ones; and charismatic leadership makes no significant contribution.

Table 10. Multiple regression: contribution of the seven styles to the overall leadership assessment

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	2.353	0.377	–	6.244	<.001
Charismatic (X_1)	0.021	0.016	.133	1.268	.208†
Participative (X_2)	0.182	0.068	.270	2.660	.009
Situational (X_3)	0.183	0.078	.239	2.338	.022
Transactional (X_4)	0.348	0.064	.496	5.390	<.001
Transformational (X_5)	0.331	0.059	.510	5.623	<.001
Spiritual (X_6)	0.380	0.076	.464	4.975	<.001
Servant (X_7)	0.349	0.076	.434	4.572	<.001

Model: $R = .588$, $R^2 = .346$, adjusted $R^2 = .291$, $F(7, 83) = 16.27$, $p < .001$. † p recalculated from $t = 1.268$ with 83 df; the SPSS output reported .008, which is inconsistent with the t-value. Source: survey data.

4.5 Leader Tenure, Education and Organisational Form

Leaders' self-assessed leadership level (moderate, good or very good) was cross-tabulated with academic degree, tenure and organisational form. Academic degree is not related to leadership level: the share of very good ratings was 58.8% among master's degree holders and 43.6% among bachelor's degree holders, a difference that is not statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 1.96$, $p = .375$) (Table 11). Nor is organisational form ($\chi^2(6) = 4.05$, $p = .670$). Descriptively, leadership level and job satisfaction tend to rise with tenure, particularly beyond 12 and 16 years of experience respectively; most respondents (76 of 92, 82.6%) have 12 or more years of experience. Limited liability companies employ leaders of all ages, and leadership positions in Mongolian business are becoming younger.

Table 11. Self-assessed leadership level by academic degree

Academic degree	n	Moderate	Good	Very good	% very good
Bachelor's degree	55	6	25	24	43.6
Master's degree	34	3	11	20	58.8
Doctorate / other	3	0	2	1	33.3

Bachelor's vs. master's: $\chi^2(2) = 1.96$, $p = .375$. Source: survey data.

4.6 Integrated Comparison: Traditional Traits and Contemporary Styles

Table 12 brings the two bodies of evidence together. For each contemporary style it lists the traditional traits that correspond to it, their mean historical prevalence, the coverage of these traits across the periods of nomadic civilisation, the style's contemporary use and its correlation with employee performance.

Table 12. Crosswalk of traditional leadership traits and contemporary leadership styles

Contemporary style	Corresponding traditional traits	Historical prevalence (%)	Coverage (%)	Current use (1–5)	r with performance
Transformational	Strategic vision; supports creative thinking; initiative and develops others; personal example; innovator	74.0	68	4.32	.305**
Spiritual	Aspiration and clear goal; preservation of tradition; educator and ideologist; respects science and culture; develops statecraft	72.6	52	4.06	.375**

Contemporary style	Corresponding traditional traits	Historical prevalence (%)	Coverage (%)	Current use (1–5)	r with performance
Charismatic	Ability to make people follow; leader's image; influence, trust and dignity	70.9	53	4.03	.036
Situational	Wit and resourcefulness; not afraid of mistakes; critical thinking; tact in communication	66.8	65	3.93	.329**
Transactional	Uses reward; uses punishment; detailed planning; organising ability; takes responsibility	65.0	68	3.87	.204
Participative	Delegates authority; discusses issues; understands people's views; consensus decisions; listens patiently	62.9	32	3.87	.120
Servant	Mercy and compassion; humane and tolerant; builds leadership team; builds capable team; not self-interested	50.4	48	3.93	.310**

*Historical prevalence = mean share of leaders displaying the mapped traits across the periods in which each trait was recorded (Dorj & Batkhürel, 2011). Coverage = share of trait–period cells in which the traits were recorded at all (five periods of nomadic civilisation). ** p < .01. Mapping of traits to styles by the authors.*

Three patterns emerge. First, there is strong **continuity in what leaders do**. The rank order of historical prevalence closely matches the rank order of contemporary use (Spearman ρ = .84, p = .019): transformational, spiritual and charismatic leadership lead both rankings, and participative leadership is at or near the bottom of both. The ranking of the styles that Mongolian leaders favour today reproduces the profile of their historical predecessors.

Second, there is **discontinuity in what works**. Neither historical prevalence (ρ = .18, n.s.) nor current use (ρ = .33, n.s.) predicts which styles are associated with employee performance. Charismatic leadership illustrates this most clearly: the ability to make people follow was displayed by 60–100% of historical leaders and charisma is the third most used style today, yet it is unrelated to employee performance (r = .036).

Third, **servant leadership marks the clearest paradigm shift**. Its traditional antecedents (mercy, compassion, team building) were the least prevalent of all clusters (50.4%), yet servant leadership is now significantly associated with performance (r = .310). Spiritual leadership, by contrast, combines continuity and relevance: its traditional roots in purpose, aspiration and preservation of tradition are among the strongest in Mongolian history, and it shows the strongest association with performance today (r = .375). Situational leadership, rooted in nomadic adaptability and resourcefulness, likewise remains relevant (r = .329).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Continuity of the Nomadic Leadership Heritage

The close match between the historical and contemporary profiles supports the conclusion of Dorj and Batkhürel (2011) that Mongolian business leadership remains strongly rooted in nomadic culture. Vision, purpose, personal example and the ability to command a following, the qualities that distinguished Chinggis Khan, Mandukhai the Wise and Batmönkh Dayan Khan, are still the qualities that Mongolian leaders cultivate most. This continuity is a resource: transformational and spiritual leadership, the styles most used today, are also positively related to performance.

5.2 The Charisma Paradox

The most striking finding is that charisma, historically central to Mongolian leadership, is unrelated to employee performance and to the other leadership styles. A plausible explanation lies in the changing workforce. Younger, better-educated employees in market-oriented firms respond less to personal authority and more to meaning, support and fairness. Charisma without participative or servant behaviour may generate admiration but not engagement. This finding cautions against leadership development programmes that emphasise personal image and rhetoric at the expense of people-oriented behaviour.

5.3 The People-Oriented Gap

Participative and servant behaviours were historically the weakest elements of Mongolian leadership: consensus-based decisions, compassion and team building were displayed by fewer than half of the leaders in most periods. Today participative leadership remains among the least used styles and is not significantly related to performance, while servant leadership has become a significant correlate of performance. The paradigm shift in Mongolia is therefore not a move from authority to participation in general, but specifically a move towards caring for, developing and serving employees, which is consistent with the dominant role of job satisfaction in employee performance ($r = .849$).

5.4 Situational Adaptability as a Nomadic Legacy

Situational leadership is significantly associated with performance ($r = .329$). This reflects the historical nomadic necessity of rapid adaptation to climate, terrain and political circumstances; wit and resourcefulness were displayed by 57–100% of leaders across the periods. In a volatile, resource-dependent economy, the capacity to adjust leadership behaviour to circumstances remains a competitive advantage.

5.5 From Lineage to Experience-Based Merit

Leadership level is not related to academic degree, while it tends to rise with tenure. This echoes the meritocratic principle of the Yassa, under which advancement depended on demonstrated competence and loyalty rather than lineage alone. In contemporary business, accumulated practical experience rather than formal credentials appears to be the main path to effective leadership, although the higher share of very good ratings among master's degree holders suggests that formal education may still contribute and deserves further study with larger samples.

6. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Theoretical Implications

1. **Integrating historical and survey evidence.** The study offers a method for linking historical leadership trait data with contemporary leadership style measures through a trait–style crosswalk, which can be applied in other societies with a documented leadership heritage.
2. **Distinguishing continuity of practice from continuity of effectiveness.** The results show that cultural heritage shapes which styles leaders use, but not which styles are effective in a changed economic context. Cross-cultural leadership theory should keep these two questions apart.
3. **Evidence from Inner Asia.** The study adds empirical evidence from a post-nomadic, post-socialist economy to the leadership literature, which is dominated by Western and East Asian samples.

6.2 Practical Implications for Managers

- **Leadership development programmes** in Mongolia should build on the strengths of the heritage (vision, purpose, personal example, adaptability) and add the behaviours it historically lacked: listening, team building, empowerment and care for employees.
- **Job satisfaction should be treated as the main channel of leadership effect.** HR departments should monitor employee satisfaction systematically and hold leaders accountable for it.
- **Charisma should not be a selection criterion in itself.** Leader selection and promotion should assess people-oriented behaviour and situational judgement, not personal presence alone.
- **Experience-based development paths** such as mentoring, rotation and gradual delegation can accelerate the development of younger leaders, given the importance of accumulated experience.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has several limitations. First, the survey sample ($N = 92$) was drawn by purposive sampling from business organisations only, which limits generalisation to the public sector and to the population of Mongolian firms. Second, leadership styles and employee performance were both reported by leaders, so common-method bias may inflate the observed relationships (Podsakoff et al., 2003); future studies should use employee ratings and objective performance data. Third, the reliability of the transformational leadership and job satisfaction scales was below 0.70. Fourth, the historical data are expert assessments based on historical sources, with trait lists that differ by period, and the mapping of traditional traits onto contemporary styles involves interpretive judgement; the crosswalk results, based on seven styles, should be regarded as exploratory. Future research could test the crosswalk with structural equation modelling on larger multi-sector samples and compare Mongolia with other post-nomadic societies in Central Asia.

8. CONCLUSION

Leadership in Mongolia is undergoing a fundamental but selective transformation. Two thousand years of nomadic statecraft left a leadership heritage built on aspiration, vision, personal example, organising ability, adaptability and the capacity to command a following, and Mongolian business leaders today still lead in

recognisably the same way. What has changed is what makes leadership effective. In contemporary Mongolian business organisations, employee performance is associated not with charisma but with spiritual, situational, servant and transformational leadership, and its main channel is employee job satisfaction. The task for Mongolian leaders is therefore not to abandon their heritage but to complete it: to combine the vision and adaptability of the nomadic tradition with the care for and empowerment of people that the tradition historically lacked.

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