Many recent examinations of globalization begin with an apology from the authors for adding yet another work to an already over-studied subject. Our excuse, however, is that there are few studies on the impact of globalization upon educational reform in Mongolia, and there exist virtually no analyses of educational import in Mongolia from a historical perspective. It is important to recognize that educational import in Mongolia did not begin in the past decade. However, earlier phases are either under-documented or not easily accessible. For a book that attempts to advance research on the politics and economics of policy borrowing they are essential.

We are not alone in insisting that there is nothing new about transnational networks and globalization. Most scholars who conduct historical analyses of these phenomena also acknowledge that more attention must be given to earlier periods of interstate or intercultural transactions. A. G. Hopkin’s edited volume *Globalization in world history* (Hopkin 2002) is the product of a trend, summarized by Charles Tilly’s assertion that “humanity has globalized repeatedly” (Tilly 2004: 13).

A particular perspective on globalization studies was put forward by world-systems theory. This view must be credited with disaggregating the cluster of countries that engage in transaction and introducing a much-needed discussion on power and the hegemonic relations between them. Whether a country is core, peripheral, or semi-peripheral within each cluster or world-system determines its status, as well as its access to various resources (Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). Propelling the study of “long-term changes” (Denemark, Friedman, Gills et al. 2000), authors in this field examine shifts in commercial circuits, cultural influence, and political dependencies from one world-system to another. For example, Janet Abu-Lughod (1989) traces world orders from AD 1250 until 1350, and maps a multicentered world consisting of 8 regional commercial circuits. According to this analysis, the “modern world-system” (Wallerstein 1974) has its origins in the sixteenth century, and over time it expanded from Europe to cover the entire globe. After World War I, the system began to bifurcate into separate world-economies, market and planned, and since 1990 has reverted back to a singular, capitalist world-system (Wallerstein 2004). “Modern world-system” is...
a term often used interchangeably with “world-economy” or “world-empire” to describe a capitalist world order whose survival depends on continuous expansion.

In our work, we emphasize the plural in world-systems theory and apply smaller units of analysis. We envision a cluster of countries whose residents see themselves as members of the same transnational space. Wallerstein’s comment on the hyphen in world-system underlines this point:

Note the hyphen in world-system and its two subcategories, world-economies and world-empires. Putting the hyphen was intended to underline that we are talking not about systems, economies, empires of the (whole) world, but about systems, economies, empires that are a world (but quite possibly, and indeed usually, not encompassing the entire globe). (Wallerstein 2004: 16)

With this in mind, we distinguish between various world-systems or “spaces” that Mongolia inhabited between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Recent educational import is presented separately, and we devote much of the book to reflection on policy borrowing under postsocialist conditions.

Mongolia is an important case study in the world-systems perspective because, depending on the historical period, it has figured as a core, semi-periphery, and periphery in its own world-system. There is a close correspondence between world-systems and educational trade wherein the likelihood of export is greater for core states, and import more common for dependent or peripheral states. No doubt, a more detailed analysis of education under the rule of the Mongol and other non-European empires would be insightful for studies on colonial education that, regrettabley, tend to focus exclusively on formal education under European colonial rule. However, such a project would clearly transcend the scope of this book. Instead, we focus on formal education and periods in Mongolian history (seventeenth century until 1990), in which reforms from elsewhere were either imposed or voluntarily borrowed.

Mongolian education traditions developed within a nomadic civilization, lending them a unique cultural profile. Uradyn Bulag has characterized nomadism as “the ultimate cultural symbol defining the core of Mongol identity” (Bulag 2002: 10). The factor “nomadism” is thus a central feature for comparison in our analysis of educational imports. Although all forms of formal education in Mongolia were influenced by imports, various autochthonous concepts did exist before educational institutions were established. However, they are not discussed in detail here. Throughout every era of educational import we consider, concepts native to Mongolia may be continuously identified. Once all external influences have been subtracted, these concepts can be characterized as the persistent, culturally specific core of what Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2003) has called a “residuum.” In our view, the residuum is not static, but rather a dynamic repertoire of interpretation patterns responsible for the transformation and Mongolization of imported models as they are incorporated.