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Analysis of the Symbolism of Blue in Contemporary Mongolian Poetry

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Abstract: This study examines the symbolic usage of the color blue in contemporary Mongolian poetry, analyzing a corpus of 2,217 poems by 264 poets between 1921 and 2003 through the theoretical frameworks of Northrop Frye's five-stage theory of literary symbolism and Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotic model. The research analyzes 177 instances of blue color imagery from 120 poems by 74 Mongolian poets, revealing 23 distinct lexical variants of blue terminology in the Mongolian language. The study employs a systematic categorization approach, identifying 10 semantic categories ranging from sky/heavens (63 instances, 36 %) to psychological expressions (four instances, 2 %). The analysis demonstrates that blue symbolism in Mongolian poetry operates across multiple levels – from literal descriptions of natural phenomena to profound archetypal representations of Mongolian cosmology, national identity, and spiritual transcendence. Key findings reveal that blue functions not merely as a chromatic descriptor but as a complex semiotic system deeply embedded in Mongolian cultural consciousness. The color serves as a bridge between traditional Tengristic beliefs (particularly the reverence for the Eternal Blue Sky) and contemporary literary expression, while simultaneously adapting to modern psychological, existential, and aesthetic dimensions.

Keywords: blue; contemporary; symbolism; Mongolian poetry; national identity

1 Introduction

This article examines whether the blue in contemporary Mongolian poetry is employed solely in its traditional symbolic meanings. “The origin of the term ‘symbol’ from the Greek symbolon carries the sense of joining, matching, and recognition, which has evolved into a broader cultural function: the transmission of shared meaning” (Eco 1976, n.p.). According to scholars, symbolism functions as a crucial

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cultural mechanism that enables the expression of human consciousness, sentiments, worldviews, and belief systems through meaningful elements such as symbols, sounds, colors, visual forms, numbers, and spatial orientations. Symbolism extends beyond linguistic representation; it constitutes a comprehensive epistemological and socio-cultural construct that embodies the collective consciousness, core values, moral codes, and cognitive frameworks of a particular society or ethnic group. Accordingly, symbolism is deeply embedded in cultural structures and literary systems, encompassing both oral and written traditions, social customs, ritual practices, aesthetic perceptions, religious worldviews, and the lived realities of everyday life.

Within this framework, color constitutes a fundamental element of the symbolic system, and “colors have always played a symbolic role in every culture, religion, and history. From prehistoric times, color symbolism represents the visual language of a specific time, era, aesthetics, and region. The concepts of light and splendor were essential in almost every theology, and color was an important medium for expression. Color glossary in ancient arts, specifically in manuscripts, provides us with the magnitude of aesthetics and symbolic expression of any artistic era. Colors can be explained through light and have their significance in the production of illuminated manuscripts and illustrations” (Anwaar 2024). Thus, color should be understood not simply as a visual stimulus but as a fundamental semiotic element that embodies and communicates the cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and ideological values of a particular community. The symbolic associations of color differ significantly across civilizations and ethnic groups, influenced by factors such as historical memory, ecological conditions, sociocultural structures, and religious systems. As S. Dulam notes (2011), “The primary characteristic of color symbolism lies in its universality. This universality is not only geographical, but also applies across all levels of cognition – cosmic, psychological, and mystical alike. Depending on which level, meaning, or cultural tradition it is interpreted through, a single color may possess varying symbolic meanings. The one constant is that color has always and everywhere served as a fundamental axis of symbolic systems” (n.p.).

“One of the Shamanic beliefs is to worship the Eternal Heaven or the Blue Sky and the Mother Earth. The universe is divided into three places: Above us is the sky, the Heavenly Father, and below us is Mother Earth. Between Heavenly Father and Mother Earth lies the Sunny world, between the sky and the earth, where all living creatures, human beings, and animals inhabit” (Munkhtsetseg 2023, 83).

Accordingly, color should be understood not only as an aesthetic phenomenon but as an integral component of the symbolic system embedded in the deep structure of culture. It serves as an active agent in processes of cognition, aesthetic experience, psychological perception, social awareness, and moral orientation. Despite its relevance, there remains a scarcity of systematic research in Mongolia that applies

symbolic theory to literary analysis or utilizes quantitative approaches to classify and examine poetic texts.

There is a broad scholarly consensus that the genesis and foundational basis of Mongolian written literature can be traced to *The Secret History of the Mongols*. This seminal text incorporates the rhetorical techniques, poetic structures, and linguistic aesthetics of oral folk traditions, which profoundly influenced and shaped the trajectory of later written poetic forms in Mongolia.

Distinguished scholar D. Tserensodnom (1977, 68) proposed a tripartite classification of Mongolian poetry, dividing it into written poetry, oral-written poetry, and oral folk poetry. He further highlighted the rich diversity within these categories in terms of form and thematic content. This framework serves as a significant theoretical basis for examining both traditional and innovative poetic structures and stylistic developments within Mongolian literature.

Regarding the formal and structural features of Mongolian poetry, foreign and domestic scholars have held differing views. H. Gabelentz (1837, 22) noted: "...it is a parallelism characterized by similar endings and repeated words. Each line begins with a certain degree of alliteration, which plays a crucial role. However, the true metrical measure is absent, and even the number of lines remains unstable."

This observation highlights the phonological artistic system in Mongolian poetry, particularly the use of alliteration and end rhyme. However, Buyannemekh (1926, 26) expressed a different viewpoint, arguing that alliteration is not an indispensable element of poetry; rather, rhythm and syntactic harmony are more important: "When composing poetry, it is not necessary to employ alliteration. A poem becomes well-structured and harmonious when the syntax is properly arranged, and if our Mongolian poetry is based on this principle, it will flourish."

2 Literature Review

Studying the symbolism of the color blue as it appears in contemporary Mongolian poetry provides a crucial means to reveal the deep layers of cultural structure and to interpret the connections between ethnic cognition, aesthetic values, and historical consciousness. To begin with, a survey of the research landscape on the symbolism of "blue" in modern Mongolian poetry shows that no dedicated scholarly work has yet been conducted on this specific topic. However, it is appropriate to mention several key studies carried out within the broader fields of oral and written literature. Specifically, B. Renchin (1958) asserts that the color blue embodies fidelity and eternal existence in the traditional culture and artistic expressions of the Mongolian ethnic group.

Furthermore, in his seminal work *Ornamentation of Mongolia* (1971) he highlights blue as a symbol of the sky's eternal qualities and as a marker of commemorative mourning.

Kharkhuu (1980) provided a deeper analysis of this concept, interpreting the color blue as intrinsically connected to the aesthetic appreciation of nature. He argued that the symbolism of blue emerges from the traditional veneration of the "blue sky."

D. Maidar (1982) characterized blue as the color of the sky and a representation of affection and gratitude. In contrast, P. Chuluunbat (1987) gathered instances from epic narratives where blue is associated with coldness, desolation, and harshness, thereby illustrating the ambivalent qualities inherent in the symbolism of this color.

In their work, *The Mongolian Ger*, Maidar and Darsuren (1987) define the color blue as symbolizing emotional tranquility, the power of nature, courage, and integrity. Concurrently, the thirteenth-century Mongolian triadic concept of "worshipping the blue sky, the red belt, and the white heart" reflects the profound foundations of the reverence for the color blue.

The publication *Ethnography of the Mongolian People* highlights the color blue as a symbol of tranquility and perpetuity grounded in historical tradition (UNESCO 1990). In addition, O. Jagar (1999), in his article "Study of the Symbolism of the Color Blue in the Epic of Jangar," provides a significant analysis, explaining that blue conveys a triadic symbolic content encompassing eternal existence, exalted virtue, and majestic power.

In his study, Baldan (2000) applied statistical methods to examine the use of color in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, revealing that the color blue, while sparingly used in references to the state, natural phenomena, and material culture, held deep symbolic meaning. He further interpreted this finding as aligned with the traditional Mongolian astrological system of the five elements and their associated colors.

In his work *Symbolism in The Secret History of the Mongols*, scholar D. Tsedev (2002) conducted a focused study on the colors black, white, and blue, providing a systematic analysis of how the color blue was situated in the Mongolian intellectual and spiritual consciousness.

According to Jamiyanjav and Tamir (2008), the color blue occupied a pivotal position in Mongolian life philosophy, political ideology, and religious faith, having been established as a national emblem through designations such as "Blue Mongolia," "Blue Sky," and "Blue Script."

In her study, R. Biggermaa (2010) analyzed the symbolism of the color blue in twentieth-century Mongolian poetry, noting that in works like D. Natsagdorj's poem "I Was Born Under the Vast Blue Sky," the color blue embodies themes of celestial aspiration, developmental symbolism, and also depicts dualistic teachings, spatial dimensions, and the notion of remoteness.

Drawing upon different genres of oral literature, S. Dulam (2011) examined the national cognitive frameworks related to color, numbers, and directions, exploring their semantic interconnections. Through concepts such as “Blue Sky,” “Blue Mongolia,” “Blue Script,” “The Three Blues of the Universe,” and “Blue Grass,” he significantly expanded the comprehensive conceptualization of blue symbolism.

In a recent analysis of 256 long songs, A. Alimaa (2021) interpreted the Mongolian preference for the term “blue” over “green” when depicting plants and natural vegetation as reflective of profound cultural semantic layers.

3 Aims, Materials, and Methods

Accordingly, this study asserts the importance of examining color in contemporary Mongolian poetry, focusing exclusively on the color “blue.” Grounded in the theoretical and methodological frameworks of literary symbolism and employing semiotic analysis, it seeks to identify the symbolic meanings, usage patterns, and evolutionary transformations of the color. The ultimate goal is to reveal the unique features of Mongolian cultural heritage as manifested through the symbolism of “blue”:

- To explicate the depiction and symbolic framework of the color blue within contemporary Mongolian poetry
- To apply semiotic, descriptive, and archetypal methodologies grounded in both Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic model of signs and Northrop Frye’s theory of the five stages of literature
- To elucidate the coexistence and interaction of tradition and renewal in the symbolism of blue as an expression of Mongolian cultural consciousness

The research corpus comprises 2,217 poems by 264 Mongolian poets, sourced from key anthologies issued by the Mongolian Writers’ Union, such as *The Best Mongolian Poetry Anthology* (1961, 1971, 1981), *Mongolian Silver Era Poetry* (2000), *D. Natsagdorj Selected Works* (1981), and *Mongolian Poetry Anthology* (2003). From this corpus, 177 instances of blue color imagery in 120 poems by 74 poets were selected for in-depth symbolic analysis.

This study draws upon two key theoretical foundations: Northrop Frye’s five-stage theory of literary symbolism (1957) and Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic model of semiotics, comprising icon, index, and symbol.

- Literal Stage → Motif: This initial stage represents the primary narrative level of the literary text, where language is interpreted at its most direct, surface level. The focus here lies on the literal meanings of words, the external structure of the text, and the development of events. Within this framework, motifs emerge as

recurring narrative units – such as objects, actions, or expressions – that are repeated throughout the work to generate coherence or emphasis.

In the analysis of color symbolism, the study identifies blue imagery as a concrete, observable feature, expressed in phrases like “blue horse” or “blue sky.” These instances are examined for their frequency, placement, and narrative function, tracing how literal references to the color blue gradually transform into symbolic motifs with deeper poetic significance.

Integrating Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory, this stage aligns with the concept of the icon, where a sign maintains a direct resemblance to its referent. The color blue, in its most literal form, acts as an icon, visually and descriptively mirroring actual objects or scenes in nature (such as the sky, river, or a horse). These icon-like usages of blue provide the initial perceptual anchor from which symbolic meanings can emerge. By identifying how these icons evolve into motifs, the study captures the transitional process from literal representation to symbolic recurrence, laying the foundation for deeper semiotic layers explored in subsequent stages.

- Descriptive Stage → Sign: At this stage, the content of the literary work and its specific components transition to a more complex level of meaning and interpretation. Words and imagery begin to transcend their literal sense, becoming signs that embody deeper semantic, symbolic, and cultural values. The focus of this study is to examine how these signs function as interconnected elements within a logical network, thereby revealing the underlying semantic and semiotic structure of the poems.

In this context, the color blue becomes a sign that conveys emotional states, ideological values, or natural forces. For instance, the phrase “blue sky” does not merely represent a physical phenomenon but can signify ideals such as compassion, freedom, or eternity. At this level, blue is no longer a straightforward depiction of the visible world; instead, it transforms into a sign imbued with layered meaning and cultural significance.

This descriptive level corresponds to Charles Sanders Peirce’s category of the “index” in semiotic theory. An index is a type of sign that indicates or points to its referent through a causal or contextual relationship. In this sense, blue functions as an indexical sign that reflects internal emotional states, ideological orientation, or an individual’s relationship with the natural and cultural environment.

By identifying such indexical signs, the study traces how blue imagery contributes to semantic coherence, symbolic resonance, and cultural meaning within and across poetic texts. This allows for a more nuanced interpretation of how interconnected networks of signs generate symbolic depth and reinforce the cultural symbolism of blue in contemporary Mongolian poetry.

- Formal Stage → Image: At the formal stage, attention shifts to the artistic form, structural composition, genre characteristics, and stylistic devices of the literary text. Within this level, symbolic meaning is generated through the aesthetic arrangement of language, where rhythm, metaphor, parallelism, and other poetic tools transform literal references into richly layered symbolic images.

In the context of blue color symbolism, the color takes on an aesthetic and emotive function, evolving into a visual and emotional image that conveys mood, identity, or an entire worldview. For example, metaphoric expressions such as “endless blue steppe” or “the blue hush of memory” do not merely describe scenery; they evoke expansive existential states, spiritual longing, or national consciousness. These images contribute to the poetic atmosphere while simultaneously embedding cultural or philosophical meanings.

- Mythical Stage → Archetype: At the mythical stage, literary meaning reaches a profound symbolic level grounded in shared cultural memory, mythological frameworks, and the collective unconscious. Here, individual symbols evolve into archetypes – universally resonant images and motifs that emerge from fundamental human experiences and are deeply embedded within the cultural imagination.

In this context, the color blue assumes a role far beyond visual or emotional evocation. It becomes a cultural archetype representing Mongolian cosmology, spirituality, and national identity. Recurring figures such as the “Blue Sky Father,” the “Celestial Blue Horse,” or “Eternal Blue Mongolia” are not merely poetic embellishments but enduring symbolic constructs that encapsulate values like eternity, divine order, ancestral connection, and the sacredness of the steppe.

These archetypes function as symbolic constants within Mongolian poetry, shaping collective narratives about the nation, nature, and human destiny. They are reinforced across generations of poetic expression, illustrating how mythology is preserved, adapted, and reinterpreted in literary form.

From a semiotic perspective, this stage aligns with Charles Sanders Peirce’s concept of the “symbol,” a sign that acquires meaning not through resemblance or direct connection but through convention, cultural context, and interpretive tradition. In this sense, blue archetypes are culturally learned symbols, whose meanings are stabilized by long-standing associations and repeatedly invoked in the symbolic grammar of Mongolian poetry.

By synthesizing Frye’s theory of archetypal patterns with Peirce’s symbolic category, the study demonstrates how blue operates as a mythopoetic symbol, transmitting profound philosophical and cultural meanings. These archetypes do not merely decorate poetic texts; they serve as foundational elements of symbolic

thought, shaping how Mongolian poets express identity, transcendence, and the spiritual order of the world.

- Anagogic Stage → Monad: The anagogic stage represents the most abstract and metaphysical level of symbolic meaning in literary analysis. At this level, symbols are no longer confined to cultural, emotional, or narrative frameworks – they point toward universal existential themes such as human existence, spiritual transcendence, eternity, and the infinite dimensions of time, space, and the cosmos. This stage reflects what Northrop Frye describes as the movement toward the “Monad” – a holistic, indivisible symbolic unit that encapsulates totality, unity, and metaphysical essence.

In the context of this study, the color blue transcends its earlier narrative, emotional, and cultural functions and emerges as a universal symbol. It represents not only the vast Mongolian sky or national identity but also infinity, creative force, and spiritual wholeness. The poetic image of blue at this stage fuses Mongolian cosmological thought with universal human concerns, offering a vision of harmony between the temporal and the eternal, the individual and the cosmos.

From a semiotic perspective, this symbolic transformation aligns with Charles Sanders Peirce’s category of the “symbol proper,” where meaning is purely conventional and interpretive, grounded in collective understanding yet capable of abstract expansion. At the anagogic level, the symbol becomes self-referential and totalizing: it refers not merely to a thing or a concept but to an entire worldview. Blue, in this sense, becomes a metaphysical sign – a unifying symbol that integrates poetic, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions.

The study identifies poetic instances in which blue functions as a Monad, synthesizing disparate symbolic layers, motif, sign, image, and archetype, into a single, coherent expression of existential totality. This final symbolic stage reveals how Mongolian poets employ blue not simply as a color or metaphor but as a vehicle for expressing wholeness, sacred order, and the universal human longing for transcendence.

4 Findings and Results

4.1 Descriptive Categorization of Blue in Contemporary Mongolian Poetry

A total of 177 instances of blue expressions were observed in selected works of contemporary Mongolian poetry. These include the following lexical variants:

1. хөх – blue
2. цэнхэр – cerulean
3. цэгээн – pale blue
4. хөхрөх – bluish
5. хөхөмдөг – bluish-tinted
6. цэнхэртэх – becoming cerulean
7. хөх цэнхэр – deep azure
8. цэнхэртсэн – having turned cerulean
9. хөх усан – aqueous blue
10. цэнхэр хөхүүн – azure-bluish
11. цэв цэнхэр – clear cerulean
12. бүтээн хөх – dim blue
13. дуртмал хөх – cherished blue
14. чилдэн хөх – translucent blue
15. сүүгэл хөх – pearl-blue
16. хүйтэн хөх – cold blue
17. хүйлэн хөх – frozen blue
18. тунамал – sedimentary blue
19. агсам хөх – vast blue
20. улбар хөх – reddish-blue
21. нойрмог хөх – drowsy blue
22. хээлэн хөх – patterned blue
23. тунгалаг хөх – transparent blue

These 23 lexical variants of blue reflect the intricate sensitivity of the Mongolian language to the nuances of the natural environment. The diversity of expressions for what is essentially one color demonstrates the Mongolian people's perceptual and cultural depth in their observation of nature. This phenomenon likely arises from the interplay between Mongolia's four-season climate, its vast and varied landscapes, and the symbolic worldview embedded in the Mongolian mentality.

Looking at the frequency distribution of these blue color variants, we observe that out of 177 total occurrences, “blue” appears 118 times, “cerulean” 14 times, and “bluish” 10 times, while other variants occur between one and five times each.

Total 177:

- Blue – 118 times (67 %)
- Cerulean – 14 times (8 %)
- Bluish – 10 times (6 %)
- Others – 1–5 times (20 %)

The frequency and percentage of words used with variants of the color “blue” are shown in the following table (Tables 1 and 2).

When examining their collocational patterns, as illustrated in the following table, “mountain” appears 63 times and “sky” 19 times in conjunction with these blue variants, while other collocates occur between one and six times. A notable temporal pattern emerges from this analysis: from 1921 to approximately 1980, blue color terminology was predominantly employed within the conceptual framework of nature and landscape. However, from the 1980s onward, there has been a marked diversification in the typological range of blue color expressions. This phenomenon can be attributed to the rigorous ideological scrutiny and censorship mechanisms that governed artistic creation, publication, and dissemination in socialist states during the earlier period.

4.2 Semantic Categorization of Blue in Contemporary Mongolian Poetry

Based on a systematic categorization of 177 instances of the color “blue” found in contemporary Mongolian poetry, 10 taxonomic categories have emerged through a semantic similarity analysis. These classifications were developed by considering not only the shared meanings and contextual uses of the color lexemes but also their discursive functions, culturally embedded symbolic layers, and alignment with cognitive prototype structures. The resulting categories, along with their frequency,

Table 1: The frequency and percentage of the words.

No.	Word	Freq.	Pct.
1.	Sky	63	35.6 %
2.	Mountain	19	10.7 %
3.	Mongolia	6	3.4 %
4.	Wolf	6	3.4 %
5.	Meadow	6	3.4 %
6.	Water/river/sea	5	2.8 %
7.	Mist/fog	5	2.8 %
8.	Tatty	5	2.8 %
9.	Forest/tree	4	2.3 %
10.	Universe/space	4	2.3 %
11.	Homeland	4	2.3 %
12.	Others	50	28.2 %
	Total	177	100 %

Table 2: The frequency and percentage of the blue semantics.

No.	Category	Example phrases	Freq.	Pct.	Symbolic meaning (brief)
1.	Sky/heavens	Blue sky	63	36 %	Idealized space, celestial realm
2.	Nature/earth	Blue mountain, blue water, blue stone	47	27 %	Mongolian homeland, natural beauty
3.	Natural phenomena	Blue mist, blue air	23	13 %	Haziness, dissolved spatial sensation, mystery
4.	Grass/flora	Blue forest, blue grass, blue leaves	10	6 %	Source of life
5.	Wildlife/fauna	Blue wolf, blue goose, blue pigeon	8	5 %	Legendary, symbolic wisdom
6.	National identity	Blue Mongolia, blue flag	8	5 %	State, national symbol
7.	Time and space	Blue dawn, the azure trail, blue passage	7	4 %	Morning dawn, distant path, spatial imagination
8.	Artistic imaginary	Blue poetry, Azure sing, blue moon	5	3 %	Art, creative work, thinking
9.	Sorrow/psychology	Blue sorrow, blue laughter, blue limitation	4	2 %	Inner contemplation, contradictory emotional state
10.	Others	Blue hearth, blue tent	2	1 %	Home, sacred fire
–	Total	–	177	100 %	–

percentage distribution, and dominant semantic orientations, are summarized in the table below.

As illustrated in the table above, the symbolic use of the color blue in contemporary Mongolian poetry is closely tied to nature, worldview, and core national values. The highest frequency category, “Sky/Heavens” (63 instances), reflects the enduring influence of Mongolian cosmological beliefs, particularly the traditional reverence for the Eternal Blue Sky. This suggests that blue, as a symbolic color, occupies a central position within the archetypal layer of meaning in poetic discourse.

The categories “Nature, Earth/Land” (47) and “Natural phenomena” (23) demonstrate the significance of blue in portraying the physical environment, atmospheric conditions, and elemental transformations. These usages highlight the symbolic role of the color in aesthetic imagery and semiotic representation.

In the categories “Grass and Flora” (10) and “Wildlife/Fauna” (eight), the blue color is linked to living nature. This reflects a uniquely Mongolian cultural-linguistic tradition in which greenish natural elements are often metaphorically described using shades of blue. Such patterns underscore a culturally embedded symbolic synesthesia rooted in indigenous environmental perception.

The category “National identity” (eight) indicates that blue functions as a visual and conceptual emblem of statehood and ethnicity, evident in phrases such as “*Khukh Mongol*” (“Blue Mongolia”). Thus, the color also serves as a socio-political and cultural signifier within literary expression.

The categories “Time and space” (seven), “Artistic imaginary” (five), and “Sorrow/Psychology” (four) reveal that the symbolic function of blue extends beyond the physical world. It engages with psychological and imaginative dimensions, acting as a metaphorical bridge between internal states and abstract temporal-spatial experiences.

Lastly, the “Others” (2) category encompasses instances of symbolic blue that do not fit neatly into the above classifications, likely representing idiosyncratic, intuitive, or experimental uses of color imagery by individual poets.

4.3 Analysis of 177 Instances of “Blue” Color Usage Collected From Contemporary Mongolian Poetry (1921–2003) According to Northrop Frye’s Five-phase Theory of Symbols

This analysis reveals that the semantic space of this color exhibits an exceptionally broad scope and multi-layered structural complexity.

4.3.1 Manifestation of Blue Motifs in the Literal Phase

In the initial Literal Phase, blue color concentrates on realistic depictions of nature, geography, and weather phenomena, serving a cognitive function in the physical environment. At this stage, blue color is employed in its direct meaning, used for straightforward representations of natural phenomena.

Examples include:

- Celestial blue: “in the blue sky,” “from the azure sky,” “eternal blue sky”
- Botanical blue: “blue grass,” “blue-yellow flowers,” “bluish-green willow”
- Natural blue: “blue-azure river,” “azure ribbon-like stream,” “blue mountains”

At this phase, the blue color fulfills the fundamental role of expressing the chromatic characteristics of specific objects.

4.3.2 The Semiotic Significance of Blue in the Descriptive Phase

In the Descriptive Phase, this color transforms into a semiotic instrument that conveys graceful imagery and emotional sensations. At this stage, blue color becomes a medium for expressing emotions, feelings, and natural beauty.

Examples include:

- Emotional depiction: “blue laughter reaches,” “born with a blue birthmark – I am a Mongol”
- Aesthetic imagery: “the blue color appeared beautifully noble,” “I love the vivid blue color”
- Environmental impression: “bluish trees blossoming,” “blue mist intensely spreading”

Here, the blue color performs a semantic function that conveys not merely color but emotional and aesthetic sensibilities.

4.3.3 The Depiction of Blue in the Formal Phase

In the Formal Phase, blue becomes a crucial poetic element that constitutes the stylistic manner and formal structure of poetic language. At this stage, blue color serves as an element of artistic form, poetic structure, and rhythm.

Examples include:

- Poetic rhythm: “writing oblique blue verses, from the poem collection called ‘Azure Voice’”
- Artistic form: “I was born to rule the vast blue sky,” “breathing from the clear blue sky’s embrace”
- Poetic imagery: “mountains like blue tents, light as hollow harp”

Here, the blue color functions as an artistic element that constructs the language, rhythm, and structure of poetry.

4.3.4 The Archetypal Representation of Blue in the Mythical Phase

Furthermore, in the Mythical Phase, the blue color becomes intimately connected with Mongolian national mythology, state ideology, and Tengristic archetypes, emerging as a historical–political symbol. At this stage, the blue color expresses the profound meanings of Mongolian culture, mythology, and national values.

Examples include:

- Mongolian mythology: “in the legend of Blue Mongolia’s glory,” “blue wolf”

- Celestial-divine realm: “of the eternal blue sky,” “I was born to rule the Blue Sky’s Domain”
- National symbols: “daughter of blue Mongolia,” “across the blue Mongolian steppes”

Here, the blue color embodies archetypal significance, representing the deep foundations of Mongolian culture, historical legends, and national heritage.

4.3.5 The Monad of Blue in the Anagogic Phase

At the Anagogic Phase, the highest level, the blue color encompasses profound transcendent qualities that express the eternal existence of the universe, divine supreme power, and spiritual world concepts. At this supreme stage, blue color expresses spirituality, eternal meaning, cosmic unity, and the primordial source of all things.

Examples include:

- Eternal meaning: “of the eternal blue sky,” “inherited from the eternal blue sky”
- Cosmic unity: “in the blue sky’s mandala,” “from the orderly blue universe”
- Spiritual philosophy: “the law of the blue sky,” “the azure firmament is clear”

Here, the blue color becomes a supreme-level symbol expressing cosmic unity, eternal meaning, and profound spiritual wisdom.

The analysis confirms that the color “blue” in contemporary Mongolian poetry serves not merely as a chromatic characteristic but as a central symbolic element deeply embedded in multiple layers of cultural, intellectual, aesthetic, and psychological functions. It encompasses meanings that range from natural phenomena to the profound cultural significance and belief systems of Mongolia.

There is a total of 177 instances:

- Sky-related: 45 % (approximately 80 instances)
- Natural descriptions: 25 % (approximately 44 instances)
- Emotional expressions: 15 % (approximately 27 instances)
- Archetypal meanings: 10 % (approximately 18 instances)
- Anagogic meanings: 5 % (approximately eight instances)

This demonstrates complex characteristics that express Mongolian cognitive patterns, natural-cosmic sensibilities, and cultural archetypes across all phases of Frye’s symbolic framework. The blue color constitutes a multi-layered symbolic element in Mongolian poetry, creating a comprehensive imagery that encompasses all five phases of Frye’s theoretical framework.

5 Discussion

The study of color symbolism is not merely an aesthetic measurement but serves as a key to understanding multifaceted phenomena that emerge from a people's cognitive system, cultural heritage, and internal moral order. This research examined how the color blue is symbolized in contemporary Mongolian poetry through the lenses of literary semiotics, symbol analysis, and Northrop Frye's five levels of symbolism theory.

5.1 The Multifaceted Representations of the Color Blue: The Intersection of Psychology, Nature, and Culture

In the Mongolian language, the color “blue” (*khukh*) transcends a singular chromatic concept and embodies a diverse range of natural phenomena, emotional states, historical consciousness, and spiritual expressions. The presence of approximately 23 lexical variants – such as *tsenher* (sky blue), *khukhrukh* (to turn blue), *khukhumdug* (bluish), and *suumen khukh* (azure) – within contemporary Mongolian poetry attests to the color's complex aesthetic, cultural, and psychological dimensions. This diversity reflects the simultaneous operation of multiple levels of color symbolism, including archetypes, imagery, and signs. Such complexity illustrates how blue functions as a multilayered semiotic system within Mongolian literary and cultural contexts.

5.2 The Expression of the Sky: The Symbolism of the Blue Sky

The symbol of the “Blue Sky” emerged with frequency in the research and represents the central cosmic structure, the natural law, and the supreme force within the Mongolian worldview and consciousness. In traditional Mongolian cosmology, the “Blue Sky” is regarded as the eternal power and the supreme being who protects authority and governance through generations. This symbol can be interpreted as the most expansive manifestation of symbolism at the “anagogic” or monad level in Northrop Frye's framework.

In contemporary Mongolian poetry, the blue sky inhabits the realms of dreams, existential reverence, ultimate truth, and enlightenment. This reflects a developmental shift from traditional religious beliefs toward psychological and philosophical dimensions.

5.3 Nature and the Color Blue: The Aesthetic Symbolism of Spatiality

In poetic imagery such as “Blue Mountain,” “Blue Water,” and “Azure Horizon,” the color blue is intricately connected with natural elements. These depictions, reflecting Mongolia’s four seasons and climatic changes, convey the inner emotional landscapes of the human psyche, exemplifying the literary level of imagery. Through the color blue, the profound relationship between nature and humanity, as well as the spatial perception of the environment, is vividly articulated. This representation is grounded in aesthetic principles emphasizing harmony, balance, and tranquility.

5.4 Shifted Meanings: The Polarity of Positive and Negative Connotations

In numerous poems, the color blue appears with connotations of melancholy, sorrow, and desolation. For instance, expressions such as “blue mist,” “azure grief,” and “cold blue sky” illustrate the dual nature of the color, highlighting its dichotomous qualities and the aesthetics of emotional rupture. This demonstrates that, at the semiotic level of the sign, the color blue functions as an operative unit that constructs the poem’s emotional tone and atmospheric mood.

5.5 National Consciousness and State Symbolism: “Blue Mongolia” and the Color of Sovereignty

Expressions such as “Blue Mongolia,” “Blue Spot,” and “Blue Banner” demonstrate that the color blue serves as a symbol of national identity, state ideology, and the nation’s resilience. These usages carry archetypal qualities, emphasizing the cultural essence of the color blue at the national level. For example, the concept of the “Blue Book” is not merely a color designation but a symbol representing governmental authority, historical documentation, and national unity. This reflects a deep cultural layer manifesting at the archetypal level as theorized by Frye.

5.6 Historical Continuity and Tradition–Innovation in Literature

In contemporary Mongolian poetry, the symbolism of the color blue retains its archetypal roots derived from traditional beliefs and worldviews; however, at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it has undergone a transformation influenced by poets' inner consciousness, existential concerns, globalization, religion, and philosophical sensibilities. The use of blue in the works included in this study reflects a new semantic layer in literary expression, where the color embodies the individual's inner space, intellectual reflection, memory, and emotional shaping, thus marking a novel level of symbolic meaning.

This study demonstrates that the use of the color blue can be rigorously analyzed according to Northrop Frye's five levels of symbolism. Symbolism does not convey meaning on a single level; rather, it manifests across multiple layers, deepening alongside the reader's cognitive engagement. From this, it is evident that the use of blue in contemporary Mongolian poetry preserves traditional understandings of color symbolism while evolving into a flexible, multi-layered system that expresses psychological, existential, and aesthetic dimensions. The color blue emerges as:

- A representation of the natural world and celestial phenomena
- A symbol of homeland and national consciousness
- An expression of emotional states
- An object of analysis at the intersection of tradition and innovation

This research not only shows the possibility of studying color symbolism within the interdisciplinary framework of cultural studies, literary theory, psychology, and history but also vividly reveals how the color blue occupies a central place in the conceptual and emotional landscape of the Mongolian mind. Future research may continue to explore the manifestations of blue in twenty-first-century poetry, with further attention to gender, historical context, and linguistic variations.

6 Conclusions

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates that the color blue in contemporary Mongolian poetry represents far more than a simple aesthetic choice; it constitutes a fundamental element of Mongolian cultural identity and symbolic thought. The research reveals that blue operates as a multi-layered semiotic system, effectively bridging traditional cosmological beliefs with modern literary expression.

The study's most significant contribution lies in showing how ancient Mongolian reverence for the "Eternal Blue Sky" continues to influence contemporary poetic discourse while simultaneously evolving to accommodate modern psychological, existential, and artistic sensibilities. The 23 lexical variants of blue terminology reflect the sophisticated relationship between the Mongolian people and their natural environment, particularly the vast steppes and expansive skies that characterize their homeland.

The application of Frye's five-stage symbolic framework proves particularly effective in revealing how blue symbolism operates simultaneously across literal, descriptive, formal, mythical, and anagogic levels. This multi-dimensional analysis shows that Mongolian poets employ blue not merely as descriptive language but as a vehicle for expressing cosmic unity, national consciousness, emotional depth, and spiritual transcendence.

The research establishes that blue symbolism in Mongolian poetry serves three primary functions: (1) as a connector to traditional Tengristic cosmology and cultural heritage; (2) as an expression of national identity and political consciousness; and (3) as a medium for contemporary psychological and existential exploration. This tripartite function demonstrates the remarkable adaptability and enduring relevance of traditional symbolic systems in modern literary contexts.

Future research directions should explore gender-specific uses of blue symbolism, comparative studies with other Central Asian literatures, and the evolution of blue symbolism in twenty-first century Mongolian poetry – particularly in the context of globalization and technological change. This study provides a foundational framework for understanding how color symbolism functions as a cultural preservation mechanism while remaining dynamically responsive to contemporary literary and social developments.

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