NOMADS OF SOUTH SIBERIA

THE PASTORAL ECONOMIES OF TUVA

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Introduction

by Caroline Humphrey

There are few, if any, detailed first-hand accounts of Inner Asian pastoralism readily available to Western readers. We have, it is true, the works of generations of orientalists, historians, and travellers. Some more directly anthropological studies have been made on the basis of published materials and the accounts of Mongolian refugees,[1] and an increasing literature is beginning to appear as a result of fieldwork carried out by ethnographers in the 1960s and 70s.[2] But of its nature, the body of available literature is patchy in coverage and uneven in quality. The valuable materials published in the Mongolian People's Republic are unfortunately difficult to obtain and require knowledge of Mongolian. Vainshtein's book is therefore unique in this field. Its great merits are its systematic coverage of its subject, its awareness of sociological problems combined with historical depth, and its range of comparison of nomadic pastoral systems in the area.

Tuva presents, in fact, a paradigm of Central and North Asian pastoral economies. The great remoteness of Tuva – it is a group of high valleys at the headwaters of the Yenisei, cut off on all sides by mountains from the surrounding territories of Siberia and North-west Mongolia – has kept its peoples obscured from outside scrutiny until very recently. But a series of field studies by Soviet ethnographers working to some extent independently of one another has made it clear that in Tuva the three most important traditional economic systems of Inner Asia meet together.

The relatively small area of the upper Yenisei basin is highly differentiated ecologically and supports (*a*) a reindeer-herding and hunting economy in the mountainous forest zones, (*b*) a small-scale cattle- and horse-herding and hunting economy in the high forest and meadow zone, and (*c*) a fully fledged complex steppe pastoralism with five or more different kinds of herd in the dry upland steppes of the south and east. What is significant about this is that each of these types is found among sections of other Inner Asian societies with varied and different linguistic, cultural, and political features. The reindeer-herding and hunting type, for example, occurs among the Turkic-speaking Tofalars of the northern slopes of the Sayan Mountains, the Mongol-speaking Darkhats of the Lake Khövsögöl region, and, in a slightly different form, the Evenki who have a Tungusic language and are scattered throughout the vast area of Central Siberia. At

the same time, other sections of the Evenki have the cattle- and horse-herding and hunting type of economy, as do some of the Buryats, and different groups of Mongols are complex steppe pastoralists. In other words, what Vainshtein's book demonstrates is a separation of economy from ethnicity (i.e. linguistic, cultural, and to some extent even political features) in the entire Inner Asian region. The thesis gains immeasurably from Vainshtein's painstaking archaeological and historical research, since he is able to show that particular regions in Tuva, for example, the upland forest–meadow zone, have had consistently specific economies over two thousand years, despite the ethnic and political changes brought about by migration and conquest in that time.

The interest of Vainshtein's book therefore lies not only in his accurate description of the different pastoral techniques, which are set out systematically for the first time here, but also in the theoretical questions which it raises. Vainshtein himself does not discuss these explicitly, since his book is more a presentation of the data in as correct as possible a way than a sustained argument. Nevertheless, his conclusions touch upon several extremely important theories of Asian pastoral society and economy, and I attempt to point out these implications later in this introduction. (I should point out that the introduction has not been written in collaboration with Vainshtein and represents my interpretation only of his work.)

An important reason for the translation of this book is its unique source material for this region of the Soviet Union. Vainshtein has been able to use two kinds of data, numerical census materials as well as extended field experience, which are rare in combination for that country. Readers may notice that he refers comparatively infrequently to his own field experience in the text, preferring to quote from earlier officials and travellers. One of the reasons for this may be that, since his own work was conducted in the Soviet period, and his book is about the "traditional" economic systems, he hesitates to use data obtained in the present to talk about the past. But whatever the reasons, he has in fact spent long periods since the early 1950s in Tuva, with frequent revisits. This is why we may take it that when he refers without critical comment to a published or archival source this does not imply ignorance of the facts on his own part, but rather reflects a considered judgement that this information is correct.

The 1931 census data used by Vainshtein has a unique interest, since at that time Tuva was not yet a part of the Soviet Union, and the local economy was still to all intents and purposes "traditional"; but at the same time governmental interest in accurate knowledge of all aspects of the economy was at a premium. In order to understand how this came about we need to consider the recent political history of Tuva.

Until 1911 the province of Tuva, also known as Tannu-Tuva, the Uryanghai country, or Tangno-Uryanghai, was part of the Outer Mon-

golian administration of the Ch'ing (Manchu) empire whose capital was in Peking. By 1912 Mongolia had declared her independence from China, but her real autonomy was limited by the interest which her neighbours, China and Russia, had in the country. A three-power conference in Kyakhta in 1915 affirmed the autonomy of Mongolia, which included Tuva, but it was to remain in the Chinese sphere of influence. Meanwhile, however, Russia had increasing political and mercantile interest in Mongolia. By 1918 both Mongolia and Tuva were involuntarily brought into the civil war still raging over the Siberian frontiers, since detachments of both White and Red armies frequently crossed the borders. For a short time the government of Mongolia passed rapidly from hand to hand as a confusing succession of armies – White detachments, Chinese war-lord troops, Buryat pan-Mongolian nationalists, and Mongolian and Russian revolutionary armies – fought for supremacy. In 1921 separate revolutionary governments under Soviet influence were set up in both Mongolia and Tuva, and in 1922 the Tuvinian People's Revolutionary Party was created. Tuva's existence as a separate state, the Tuvinian People's Republic, lasted until 1944. There is evidence that Mongolia wished to re-establish sovereignty over Tuva during the early 1920s[3] but this was not to be. The period until 1944 is termed "the people's democracy" in the official histories to distinguish it from the succeeding "Soviet" period. While certain measures were taken against "feudal" and "capitalist" elements in this period, the Tuvinian government was not able to carry out any far-reaching economic or social reconstruction.[4] Thus there was the anomalous situation of a revolutionary government in power but little in the way of a revolution. So, to all intents and purposes, the 1931 census, which incidentally was exceptionally detailed as to occupations and household and livestock property, reflected the "traditional" pre-Soviet situation of the domestic economy in Tuva.

One of the most eminent historians and ethnographers of Tuva, L. P. Potapov, wrote about the "period of people's democracy":

> The building of socialism . . . was hindered by a series of serious obstacles and was to take a long time, even with the continuous help of the Soviet Union and under her protection from outside threats. The economy of Tuva at that time was still developing on the basis of the old extensive, and technically-backward methods of nomadic pastoralism. Further development of the economy was held up by the complete absence of industry, of any mechanised transport, or improved means of communication . . . It should not be forgotten that Tuva suffered from a lack of qualified, or even simply literate, people either in the economy or in the cultural sphere, since literacy and education in the Republic were at the very beginning stages. The peculiar geographical isolation of Tuva, her distance from the industrial and cultural centres of neighbouring states, and also the relatively small size of her population, made the difficulties standing in her way even more severe.[5]

By the early 1950s reconstruction of the Tuvinian economy was under way, and important and irrevocable changes in the way of life – settlement of nomads, collectivisation, introduction of large-scale agriculture, creation of urban centres, universal education – were being carried out. Tuva is now transformed, and when the older generation disappears it is no exaggeration to say that nothing of the old way of life will remain in either the practice or the memories of the people, since even those odd artefacts or customs which do survive will be utterly changed in their relation to life as a whole.

Vainshtein's study, which uses the 1931 census and materials obtained from informants in the period of change from the early 1950s onwards, is therefore of considerable historical importance. This combination of numerical and field data is not available for any other part of Soviet Asia with regard to the pre-Soviet way of life; and as for Mongolia the census materials are almost certainly neither so detailed nor so accurate for the pre-collectivisation period. Maiskii's study *Sovremennaya Mongoliya* [Contemporary Mongolia] published in 1921, and based largely on his own research, is still the most comprehensive account of the pre-revolutionary economy of the Mongols.

II

It would perhaps be useful here, before discussing Vainshtein's book itself, to mention briefly the other writings on Tuva available in Western languages. The matter is peculiarly confusing in that the "Tuvinians" were until recently known by a variety of other names: Soyot (the Mongolian form of the plural of Soyan), Mady and Kuchugut; these are all tribal names, of which Soyot became the best known and was extended to all the peoples of the area. The name "Uryanghai" was used mainly for the reindeer-herders whom Vainshtein calls Todjins, or East Tuvinians, but was also used for all Tuvinians in general. The Mongols call the "Tuvinian" reindeer-herders living inside the Mongolian border Tsaatan ("reindeer-people").

Under the name Soyot or Sayat the Tuvinians were mentioned in the works of the great eighteenth-century scholars and travellers Pallas[6] and Georgi,[7] and their Turkic language was discussed by the Finnish linguist Castren in the 1820s.[8] The English explorers Atkinson[9] and Ney Elias[10] passed through Tuva in the mid-nineteenth century, but the only substantial account in English is that of Carruthers, whose book *Unknown Mongolia* published in 1914 gives an interesting account of the Uryanghai.[11] Other works are by Olsen and Wilhelm,[12] also writing on the reindeer-people, and a short account of an expedition to Tannu-Tuva in 1926 was published by Bounak.[13] But the most important sources from the point of view of both range and quality are all in Russian and are mentioned in Vainshtein's bibliography.

III

Vainshtein's book is written with a Marxist orientation in the admittedly limited sense that he sees the natural resources and techniques of production as primary in the nomadic pastoral economy. Most of his book is devoted to a detailed description of the latter. In a sense his study is non-theoretical in that he provides data for a social theory of nomadic pastoralism rather than the theory itself. But he works, of course, with a set of ideas, and at the risk of misinterpreting him I think it useful to discuss them here.

The most important concept which lies behind Vainshtein's work is that of the "economic–cultural type", a theory developed by two Soviet ethnographers, Levin and Cheboksarov, on the basis of earlier suggestions by Tolstov.[14] The theory is an attempt to answer the question: how do we explain the clear differences in economy which exist within one ethnic group defined psychologically and linguistically, and how, on the other hand, can we account for the economic similarities between different ethnic groups, speaking separate languages? According to Levin and Cheboksarov the "economic–cultural type" is: a historically formed complex of economic and cultural features characteristic of social groups at specific levels of development or evolution and living in a given kind of environment. Thus, given a similar geographical environment and the same level of development of productive forces, one "economic–cultural type" can occur among different ethnic groups, widely separated from one another in distance or time. (Since the theory states that the "culture" is determined by the orientation of the economy in a given environment, there is no necessary connection between the "economic–cultural type" and specific cultures in the Western anthropological sense of the term.) For example, Levin and Cheboksarov cite the "economic type" of the "hunters and fishermen of the taiga" which occurred among the eighteenth-century Yukaghirs living in far North-eastern Siberia, among the Udegei and some of the Orochey of the Amur region, and among those sections of the West Siberian Khanty, Mansi and Ket, which did not keep reindeer.

The force of the word "culture" in the theory is the inclusion within each type not only of "material culture" (e.g. characteristic means of transport or hunting equipment) but also of those aspects of social organisation and values which appear to spring directly from the practice of that type of economy. For example, Levin and Cheboksarov conclude that "among the taiga hunters and fishermen, if there is no economic exchange with more developed peoples, there is no economic basis for the emergence of significant differentiation of property; but on the other hand among the reindeer-herders of the taiga the economic base served precisely to concentrate significant numbers of deer in the hands of individual

owners".[15] In a way, this is like the recent attempt of anthropologists such as Woodburn and others to work out the social and psychological implications of hunting and gathering as the basis of an economy.[16] But the Soviet theory is more specific and has greater content (even though material on demography, human ecology, and types of exchange is worked out with far less sophistication than in the Western studies of the Bushmen or Eskimos, for example); the theory demands the conjunction of three elements: a given type of environment, a specified level of social development seen in historical perspective, and a particular complex of economic practices.

We are reminded of the issues raised by Leach in his work on the economic and political systems of highland Burma. The problems are the same, even if the conclusions are rather different. Leach observed that cultural classifications in use in highland Burma, such as the category "Kachin" or "Shan", did not coincide with linguistic boundaries; and he noted also that named "ethnic" groups frequently changed cultural identity within as short a period as one hundred years (Jinghpaw became Shan, Nagas became Jinghpaw, etc.). This seems also to have occurred in the Altai–Sayan area. Sometimes this process included a change of language, dress, etc., but it always seemed to involve an alteration of economic, and, in the Burmese case, political orientation. His conclusion is that "Shans" are people who work and organise their political life as Shans do, and that this can only occur given the basic environmental conditions for wet paddy cultivation, as opposed to hill rice farming. His approach is thus sharply contrasted with the idea, "usually accepted as a dogma", that those who speak a particular language form a unique definable unit, and that this group of people has always had a particular culture and a particular history. Leach writes:

> The point I want to make is that the territorial location, the relative sophistication, and the main features of the economic organisation of what we now refer to as Shan society are to a large extent determined by the environment. Given the requirements of a wet-rice economy in such a terrain, Shan settlements could hardly turn out to be other than what they are... Shan culture today extends in scattered pockets from Assam to Tongking and southwards to Bangkok and Cambodia. The hill peoples who are neighbours to the Shans are astonishingly varied in their culture; the Shans, considering their wide dispersal and their scattered form of settlement, are astonishingly uniform. My argument is that this uniformity of their culture is correlated with a uniformity of Shan political organisation which is in turn largely determined by the special economic facts of the Shan situation.[17]

There are thus distinct similarities between Leach's category of "Shan" and an "economic–cultural type", even although the line distinguishing between such categories and ethnicity is not as definite in Leach as it is in the Soviet theory.

It is not difficult to see why this theory should be attractive to Vainshtein, since the Tuvinians have had three clearly distinguishable economic orientations, each of which was identifiable among certain other nomadic pastoralists in Asia. Reindeer-herding of the Tuvinian type is found among the Tofalars, the Kamasins, some of the Darkhats of Mongolia, etc.; the cattle- and horse-herding plus hunting complex is found among certain groups of Buryat, some Western Mongols, some peoples of the Altai, and some Evenki; and the steppe pastoral orientation is widespread among south-eastern Buryats, Khalkha Mongols, Kirghiz, some Kazakhs, Khakass, and even Uzbeks.

There is a question here as to why the idea of "economic–cultural types" should present a problem to Soviet Marxism. Strictly speaking, in Marxist theory, at a given level of the development of productive forces and in a given geographical environment, there should be only one kind of socio-economic formation. The fact that there are the same economic types in different ethnic (cultural) groups does not present a problem. On the contrary it is precisely what one would expect. It is the existence of different cultures which is the unexplained problem, if one is operating with the concepts of modes of production. But in the theory of "economic–cultural types" the inclusion of some elements of culture introduces the suggestion that a given type of economic exploitation in a given environment may have cultural implications – not only those springing from economic operations as such, as already mentioned, but also those apparently unrelated to the economy, for example in language, dress, mythology, etc. Leach's suggestion on the basis of highland Burma material seems apposite here, i.e the idea that in such differentiated regions language, dress, etc., may be adopted with the purpose of confirming separateness from other groups.

But even for Marxists there seems to be an almost instinctive need to classify people by ethnic-cultural criteria (quite apart from the political need to do so), and this is perhaps why the theory of "economic–cultural types" seems to present an intriguing problem. Accordingly, the theory of "economic–cultural types" implies its converse, the idea of ethnic territories (called "historical–ethnographic areas" by Levin and Cheboksarov). This theory again has three elements: a given territory, a particular time in history (since ethnic units are not necessarily very stable), and a defined "culture" brought into being by inter-connections between social groups over a long period of time.[18] Vainshtein does not use this theory in his book, perhaps because it is internally unsatisfactory: the idea of "culture" is never defined clearly in the paper. But it may also be because it is in fact difficult to establish "the Tuvinians" as an ethnic group on grounds of "culture" alone, however this is defined. Even linguistically they are a doubtful category, since outside people such as the Tofalars speak Turkic dialects closely related to Tuvinian, while the

inhabitants of the well-populated Erzin region of Tuva speak Mongolian:

> The Mongolian feudal lords and colonisers of the Ch'ing Dynasty kept their accounts and conducted all relations with the Tuvinians in Mongolian, and this led to their language – which was also energetically spread by the lamas – gradually ousting Tuvinian. This can be felt even in the present day. In some places, for example Naryn, the older and even the middle generation speak in Mongolian, although the Tuvinian language is beginning to be established, mainly through the younger generation.[19]

Even from the genealogical point of view "the Tuvinians" are hardly separate from neighbouring peoples, since clans with identical names and apparently related by kinship are found among the Tuvinians, the Tofalars, Teleut, Kumandins, Tubalars, etc., scattered throughout the Altai–Sayan region.

Vainshtein may have been influenced in his concept of Tuvinian ethnicity by the idea of "ethnos", currently much discussed in Soviet ethnography.[20] An ethnos is ethnicity which is persistent through time despite changes in mode of production, and it is defined by a set of variables which have different significance in each case; but it is always separate from a unit established on economic or political criteria alone. Vainshtein gives continuous contact and interaction, common territory, similar type and level of economic development, and interrelated dialects as the factors which made Tuva an "integrated cultural whole". It seems apparent to me, however, that the politico-administrative divisions were also of great importance for the Tuvinians, especially the tightly organised military–fiscal system of the Ch'ing, which excluded the Tofalars, for example.

The main point here is that Vainshtein's criteria for establishing the Tuvinians as an ethnic group are quite distinct from those which define the various "economic types". In this book he is more interested in the latter than in theories of ethnicity; the advantage of his method is that he can investigate the working, the limitations, and the possibilities for evolution of specific economic forms without having to tie them to cross-cutting ethnic traditions.

IV

Before discussing Vainshtein's conclusions I should mention the development of the typological approach which he uses in the chapter on reindeer-herding. This is probably the section of the book which will appear most strange, even old-fashioned, to Western readers. A large part of the chapter is devoted to tracing the origins of reindeer-herding in Eurasia. It is a long time since the mainstream of Western anthropology has been directed towards the investigation of the origins of social or economic institutions; for many anthropologists the very idea has an

almost disreputable ring to it. But given the wealth of historical documentation and archaeological material from North Asia this is an absurd attitude. In part the Western misunderstanding of Soviet attempts to discover "origins" may be due to the lack in the English language of an adequate translation of the idea *proiskhozhdenie*, which is usually rendered as "origins" but also means "descent", "lineage", "extraction".

In effect, what Vainshtein does is to take the phenomena of reindeer-herding all over Eurasia and divide them into "types" according to complexes of functions (such as the use of deer for riding, for sledge- or cart-haulage, for pack-carrying, for milking, etc.), and associated techniques (the deer-decoy, the herding with dogs, etc.). He then attempts to reconstruct the genealogical tree, as it were, which links these types, using archaeological, historical, and ethnographic evidence. The "origin" has no more significance than any other part of the developmental scheme.

His conclusion is that reindeer-herding first emerged in the Sayan region (i.e. the general area where the Western and Northern Tuvinians now live), but that the present "Sayan *type*" of deer-herding, with its peculiar constellation of features, emerged only much later under the influence of other kinds of pastoralism.

At first sight it might appear that Vainshtein is merely tracing the diffusion of details, for example of types of saddle, as if they were independent traits travelling on their own, disconnecting from one culture in order to be linked to another – in other words, the very kind of diffusionism already largely rejected by anthropology. But in fact he uses material objects as indicators (*a*) because such items can be traced in the archaeological record, and (*b*) because they are direct indications of economic functions: there is a clear reason why a pack-carrying saddle is different from a riding-saddle. Vainshtein is careful to take into account the whole range of data available for each economic complex in different historical periods. He seems entirely justified in suggesting that reindeer-herding in the Sayan region underwent a radical transformation; the early Samodi system, in which deer were used for meat and later pack-carrying also, was transformed by the invasion of Turkic horse-herdsmen; horse-herding techniques when used for reindeer, i.e. riding and milking, altered the whole strategy of the deer economy, from a rather uncontrolled predatory pastoralism to a controlled and intensive rearing of whole herds. Whether Vainshtein is right or not that there was one origin of reindeer-herding and that it was in the Sayan region, we should nevertheless recognise that he has illuminated some very twilight regions of economic history.

Two important points emerge from this chapter, even if the diffusionist aspect of the argument is ignored. The first is that the simple designation of a productive occupation for a given people, for example reindeer-herding,

sea-fishing, plough agriculture, tells one very little and is not sufficient to specify an "economic–cultural type". This is because each of these occupations could consist of a range of possible practices or functions, only some of which may actually be put into general use by a given population. Nor does the acquaintance with a technical possibility mean that it will be generally used: the early Sayan deer-herders knew that it was possible to ride deer, but this was not a main function of the reindeer economy for them and they had not developed a riding-saddle.

The second point indicates why this is so. It is that, within the complex of *possible* functions of reindeer within an economy, some are, if not incompatible with one another, at least practically and psychologically difficult to combine. Among the Evenki, in places where reindeer were regarded as "living meat" they were not much used as pack-animals, and vice versa.[21] As Ingold says with regard to the Lapps, the herding of reindeer for meat can be seen as a variation of hunting, with the use of decoy-deer and dogs both derived from hunting experience, and this is in contrast to the reindeer pastoralist emphasis on maintaining and increasing stocks of living deer.[22] This very fact indicates the virtual certainty of an evolution of economic functions within the general occupation of reindeer-herding (although it does not specify which function is prior); it also shows the necessity of including some concept of economic values, and of specifying such values, when discussing each of these systems. As Ingold says, "It is difficult to see how capital as hunting expertise realised in the killing of deer can be transformed into capital realised in their accumulation."[23]

In the Skolt Lapp area, where deer are valuable for meat, they are not milked, and other hunting is reduced to a minimum; Ingold, citing Paine, sees a development from a hunting to a pastoralist economy of a predatory kind:

> The territory, together with its resources, was viewed as the joint property of the group. As long as these resources were perceived to be quite sufficient to maintain the traditional hunting economy they should "be regarded as capital in an economic and extra-economic context". Heuristically, we may suppose that increasing scarcity of wild deer would assign to the deer a strictly economic value over and above that of the territory itself. Thus, if the assignment of economic capital value to deer was the consequence of an abnormally low deer/pasture ratio, the result was an abnormally high deer/pasture ratio as herds grew exponentially. The model for the pastoralist concept of ownership would have derived not from the hunter's ownership of his kill, but from the implicit "ownership" of domesticated deer.[24]

It is interesting to compare this with Vainshtein's account of the Sayan case. Here it was the increasing use of deer for pack-carrying and haulage that transformed pastoralist values, and the influence of techniques from

horse-herding further intensified the reindeer economy. In the Skolt Lapp case deer are only occasionally rounded up for selective killing and the Lapps do not themselves nomadise closely with the deer; but in Tuva the staple diet in summer is reindeer milk and the products of gathering in the forest, and deer are almost never killed for meat. Milking does and the training of deer for riding and pack-carrying require close attendance of the deer herds all year round, and hence several nomadic shifts in the annual cycle. According to Carruthers the "most important use the Uryanghai make of their reindeer is for transport purposes",[25] in other words, for transport to winter hunting-grounds which provide the main source of meat, and to summer pastures for the deer. Thus, by the present day, the fact that the Tuvinian and Lapp herds both contain reindeer is about the only thing they have in common; although both may have started from the hunting of wild deer for meat, the economic significance of deer is quite different by now in the two cases. Vainshtein suggests that the sequence of changes in the Sayan region was as follows: (1) the hunting of wild deer, (2) periodic culling of semi-domesticated deer for meat, (3) use of domesticated deer for transport to hunting and pasture areas, (4) milking of domesticated deer, and (5) riding of trained deer. The Skolt Lapp economy employs "type" (2), the Nentsi and other North-west Siberian peoples employ (3) but not (4) or (5), and the Tuvinians use (3), (4), and (5) but not (2).

V

By contrast with the chapter on reindeer-herding, which is concerned with transformations of technique within a single occupation, the main part of Vainshtein's book shows the astonishing continuities and lack of change in the two other economic adaptations of Tuva: complex steppe pastoralism, and the cattle- and horse-herding and hunting type. Here he is able to claim that these "economic types" have endured for centuries. His main documentation is on the steppe-pastoralist type, so enormously important in Inner Asian history. He describes continuities in three areas of the complex economy: herding, agriculture, and craft and commodity production, and straightforward as this might seem – we are all familiar with the idea of the "stagnant" nomadic societies of Asia – it raises in fact many questions of interpretation and of theoretical importance.

Herding

Vainshtein devotes a whole section of his book to the cutting of hay for winter fodder and the construction of byres and pens. He makes the point that these were both native techniques, although hay fodder was not universally used until the present century. The significance of this will

probably escape readers who do not realise that many authoritative Soviet sources, for example the survey *Peoples of Siberia*, one of the few translations available to Western anthropologists, maintain that these practices only appeared "after the revolution" under Russian influence.[26] Similar statements have been made about the role of these techniques in Buryat and Mongolian pastoralism. The effect of this is to present such pastoralist economies as backward and less productive than they might be with the benefit of these practices The idea is that hay-cutting and byre-construction occur in settled mixed-farming economies which are at a "higher" level of development. Therefore their introduction into pastoralism would not only increase production but would also create the conditions for a direct and qualitative transformation of society. This theory is typical of the "economism" so prominent in Soviet thinking in the first period after the revolution, for example in the idea that more "socialist" relations of production would be achieved in collective farms, not by the initiative of the working people, but by the accumulation of new means of production and technical knowledge. For the same reasons it was assumed that where hay was produced in nomadic societies this was a privilege of the rich, i.e. the section of society described by some authors as "capitalist" (i.e. at a higher evolutionary stage than other categories in society).

Vainshtein gives evidence to show that this was not the case; hay was produced at least by the early nineteenth century (and there is no reason to suppose that this was not also true for previous centuries); and far from being a privilege of the rich, it was a resort of the poor herdsmen who were unable to migrate to new pastures and who had to try every means of keeping the few animals they had alive. Byres dug underground, and completely unlike the Russian type, were regularly used as standard techniques.

If hay-making and byre-construction were long available as techniques, but were not increasingly used by the richer herdsmen or those with more labour available, this would appear to be evidence that they did not in fact make an appreciable difference to the increase of herds, or rather, that their advantages in greater security during the winter were offset by their disadvantages in decreasing mobility over the pastures. In Buryatia, the western regions which placed greater reliance on hay fodder were the poorer, not the richer, areas, and these were also the regions where over-population made more extensive pastoralism impossible. It is true that within a *settled* centrally planned pastoral economy, such as that of present Soviet collective farms, hay production and efficient byre-construction are essential, but this is embedded in a totally different organisation of the economy, and should not be confused with discussion of nomadic pastoralism *per se*.

Vainshtein also makes the point that in the complex steppe-herding "economic–cultural type" both the form of migration and the size of the productive group (*aal*) are very old. The *aal** is naturally a small unit of a few households, since a multitude of tiny dispersed units is the most efficient way of using the pastures. Where there is historical evidence that Inner Asian herdsmen combined into larger units, Vainshtein has no hesitation in attributing this to non-economic military factors, primarily the need to unite for defence. This was true of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, during the period when the battles which led to the formation of Genghis Khan's empire were taking place, and also of the Mongols later, when the dissolution of the empire was the occasion for more internal fighting. When peaceful conditions were restored the large Mongol conglomerations (*küren*) disappeared. Vainshtein therefore sees no reason to suppose that the *küren* was a prior and different form of social organisation which gave way to the *aal* with the appearance of class society. In his view the *aal* was always present. It is clear that the form of the *aal* must be closely related to the various herding tasks to be carried out. Vainshtein is able to record that some of these are very old (e.g. the composition by types of animal of the household herd, techniques of horse-herding, and so on), but unfortunately the material may not be available to give a detailed description of the relation between work requirements in the *aal* and its recruitment and fission. Nevertheless, Vainshtein's point is clear: the *aal* was present from at least the time of the early Mongols, and larger groupings of nomads arose only for military reasons.

Agriculture

Vainshtein's argument here involves the identification of two separate kinds of agriculture found in the Inner Asian region. Both of these involved irrigation, agriculture being otherwise almost impossible, but whereas one type was found at the location of prisoner and garrison settlements of the steppe empires and was associated with a sophisticated iron plough, the other was far more widespread in both place and time, used only a wooden furrow-making implement, and was the native agricultural tradition of the nomads themselves.

Some scholars have maintained that the Tuvinians, and even peoples such as the Buryats and Mongols, had no agriculture of their own at all, and only began to till fields under Chinese or Russian influence in the nineteenth century. This is an absurd suggestion, as Vainshtein makes clear, since the Tuvinians had their own agricultural vocabulary and working tools, and in fact taught Russian settlers techniques of irrigation,

* One or more households forming a productive group. Equivalent to the Mongol *ail* and the Kazakh *aul*.

not the other way around. Tuvinian irrigation was similar to that found among Buryats and Mongols, and traces of canals have been found at archaeological sites in Inner Asia dating from very early times. We therefore have to agree with Vainshtein that an apparent paradox is true: irrigation agriculture is a characteristic of nomadic pastoralism *as such* in these regions, and is not to be tied exclusively to a particular ethnic culture, or attributed to outside "influence".

The issue has been confused by the existence at some periods of the iron-plough agriculture. Certain Soviet archaeologists have put forward the idea that agriculture itself "developed" from the simple to the sophisticated iron-plough type and that a proportion of the nomadic population took up intensive settled farming near the cities of the steppe empires, such as Karakorum, supplying the "feudal" nobility and the army with grain.[27] This was part of a general thesis that the Mongolian empire was a "feudal state". Accordingly, it was maintained not only that agriculture "developed", but that manufacturing, building, masonry, metal-work, and pottery also assumed new dimensions, and that artisans emerged from the nomadic environment and settled in towns. This indeed was the foundation on which the Mongol "feudal" state was based. The argument is not closely worked out from the theoretical point of view, since "feudalism" as such is never defined, but because the argument was produced by an authoritative team of archaeologists working on the site of Karakorum in the 1940s (until recently it was the only such large-scale study) it has had considerable influence on subsequent writings. It takes its place in a whole series of debates on Asiatic social formations. At least in part it has the aim of showing that social development in Asia did not follow a pattern that was peculiar to that continent, but progressed in a way which was parallel to Europe. Hence the emphasis on the development of agriculture and professional high-grade artisan production in cities.

Vainshtein disagrees with this formulation, at least insofar as the facts of nomadic technology are concerned. He exercises a praiseworthy restraint in not trying to make his material fit into some counter-scheme (of which there are several in the Soviet literature). He simply states that the evidence appears to show that the agriculture of the nomads was always practised with primitive implements and archaic methods and never transformed itself into the more developed type found near Mongol settlements. The latter was conducted by prisoners from amongst oasis or farming peoples deliberately imported by the Mongols. The agriculture of the nomads probably *declined* during the period of the Mongol empire, since they were able to obtain grain by trade and tribute; it rose again with the disintegration of the state and the sacking of the agricultural settlements in the steppe. This same factor, the possibility of obtaining grain by trade, is the reason why agriculture was less practised among nomads living near areas of

Chinese settlement (at least, until the late nineteenth century). Thus, paradoxically, it was amongst the most "barbaric" of the nomads that agriculture and irrigation construction were most in evidence.

The conditions of pastoral nomadism itself were the determining factors in the extent to which agriculture was practised (i.e. distance from pastures to fields, availability of human labour, presence of working oxen, etc.). And, during periods of unrest or war, when it was difficult to return regularly to the fields, the nomads were forced to attempt to open markets with settled peoples, or to raid them.

There was no tendency in nomadic economies in Inner Asia towards the settling down of a certain part of the population as farmers. In Tuva poor herdsmen did not resort on a large scale to agriculture, unlike the Basseri of Iran described by Barth, since they had neither the transport animals to migrate to the fields, nor the working animals and seed-grain to set the operation going. Nor was it the case that rich herdsmen used their wealth in herds to obtain agricultural land and set up as farmers, as Barth again describes for the Basseri.[28] In Tuva, on the contrary, rich herdsmen had only middling-sized agricultural operations, since they could obtain grain from the poorer households to whom they had lent working oxen and seed-grain. Some wealthy families did no agricultural work at all, but regularly received a supply of grain nevertheless. Thus the moderately prosperous herdsmen, with from 10 to 30 units of herds (i.e. animals counted as equivalent to one adult head of cattle), were the section of the population with the largest fields. But in general no one had a very large area, since agriculture was practised virtually exclusively for consumption and grain was not a large part of the Tuvinian diet.

All of this supports Vainshtein's view that in this part of Asia, agriculture, of an archaic and limited kind, was an integral part of nomadic pastoralism itself, and was subordinated to its values. This is significant in that Tuva is precisely one of those "marginal zones" which Lattimore suggested gave rise to modifications of the economy and hence to social change (however impermanent):

> I am sure that there was one factor which time after time set a limit to the possibilities of social change: the extent of the area which favoured the life of the steppe-herdsman was so much greater than any of the areas favouring a modification of economy, within or at the edge of the steppe zone, that the steppe-nomadic society never permanently lost its ascendancy over other forms. The marginal areas permitted or favoured change and development away from the steppe-nomadic norm and thus kept up the ferment necessary to prevent history from stagnating. Their importance was immense. It is quite probable that the impulses governing the cycle of nomad dispersion and concentration, the rise and fall of dynasties and kingdoms, originated more often in these marginal areas than in the typical steppe because of the perpetual effort to change and adapt political power to economic changes and the resulting changes in the structure

of society . . . Yet at the same time the special kind of power that could be asserted by control over the steppe-nomads, in the typical steppe terrain, reasserted itself each time in a fresh convergence of tribes and peoples (of the most diverse origin) on the line that led to a new ascendancy of the pure steppe-nomadic society, even though the hypothetically pure condition of steppe-nomadism was probably never attained.[29]

Lattimore here sees social and political change arising directly from ecological and hence economic differences. All of Vainshtein's evidence points on the contrary to the *non-development* by the nomads of economic possibilities open to them, such as the adoption of intensive techniques of agriculture, even in relatively fertile "marginal" zones such as Tuva. Iron-plough agriculture came into existence here, according to his theory, as a result of the emergence of states, not as a pre-condition of such states. Comparative Buryat material suggests that the presence of a great amount of agriculture *per se*, within an economy dominated by pastoral values, does not necessarily lead to a greater differentiation of property. The Eastern Buryat aristocracy in the eighteenth century, living exclusively from complex steppe pastoralism, managed to amass and retain in its hands far greater wealth than the leaders of the Western Buryat, whose domestic economies were to a large extent, sometimes even predominantly, based on agriculture. The reason for this may be that with low technology, poor soils, non-use of fertilisers such as manure, and uncertain weather conditions, agriculture becomes actually more precarious than herding; in particular since the land was quickly exhausted and the best yields could be got from ploughing up virgin territory, the emphasis was not so much on accumulating and retaining ownership of valuable land as on the availability of human labour and working animals to exploit new territory. The ever-increasing acreage under the plough diminished the land available for pasture and hay-cutting. In the uniquely pastoral areas, on the other hand, herding of different kinds of animals and the distribution of property in herds amongst several scattered client households (which will be discussed later in more detail) had the effect of minimising risk, and wealthy owners were able to increase their herds to enormous proportions. In the nineteenth century the penetration of money (roubles) did, however, alter the relative positions of Western and Eastern Buryats, since the former were able to sell grain and were in any case geographically closer to Russian markets. In this situation a class of wealthy market-oriented farmers emerged even more quickly in the west than in the pastoralist east. Nevertheless, I would suggest, in an extension of Vainshtein's thesis with which he might not agree, that it was not the presence of agriculture which was the determining factor in the formation of classes here, but the introduction of a money economy.[30]

Crafts and commodity production

Vainshtein's argument here is parallel to his ideas on agriculture. Mining, smelting, forging and other metal-work techniques, leather-work, felt-making, and the use of softened bark, were all techniques which had been in existence as long as the nomadic pastoral way of life itself, but their extension and elaboration were held back because the craftsmen themselves had to migrate with the nomads and were unable to develop large or complicated machinery. Crafts such as pottery had been known in the steppes but were gradually dropped as nomadism established itself during the first millennium B.C. Nevertheless, much of the nomad work was of a very high standard, particularly in metal; the Huns made fine weapons which were assumed by early archaeologists to have been imported from China, but chemical analysis has shown that this could not have been so. The technology of nomad craftsmen was sufficient to make virtually everything required in the economy, even guns and gunpowder copied early on from the Chinese, but the peoples living near settled populations came to acquire high-quality and luxury goods by trade. In recent centuries Chinese artisans began to manufacture articles especially for the nomads and established trading companies with posts in Mongolia. This meant that, as with agriculture, it was the steppe peoples furthest from civilisation who developed the most sophisticated techniques.

Certain specifically "nomadic" objects (saddles, pack-carriers, bows, trivets, felt roofing, etc.) were essential and yet were never made by the settled peoples. The tools used, the process of work, and the products were all inseparable from the pastoral way of life "during the whole length of the existence of nomadism". Vainshtein therefore maintains that the two currently held – and diametrically opposed – theories on the commodity production of nomads are both wrong. The first states that Inner Asian peoples, even those as numerous and powerful as the Kazakhs, acquired what they needed by trade and only started craft production of their own in the nineteenth century under the influence of the development of capitalism in Russia.[31] This is so clearly untrue that it need not be further discussed. The second theory maintains that the nomads did have their own craft production and that the process of its development and differentiation – the separating off from the herdsmen of both artisans working for feudal lords and free craftsmen producing for the market – was analogous to the historical development of commodity production in Europe. The parallel between these two arguments and those advanced with regard to agriculture is clear. Vainshtein answers by saying that, while nomads did have both domestic and professional crafts, these never separated from a nomadic pastoral way of life and hence were never able to develop in an urban market-orientated context. The nomadic empire of the

Mongols was created without any change in the technology of commodity production. The settlements of artisans and farmers were set up only after the empire was established and settled peoples could be drafted to live in them. The technology of the artisans in these towns was not local (it included ceramics and beads, for example, of southern-oasis type) and disappeared when the settlements themselves were destroyed. It is true however, although Vainshtein does not mention this, that highly specialised artisans, having left the herding environment, built and decorated the monasteries and temples which appeared in great numbers after the seventeenth century. But this was not really analogous to the European process, since here the artisans were not paid for their knowledge and labour – they were the lamas of the monasteries themselves.

Vainshtein's material adds up to the following conclusion: there were no transformations in the technology of herding, nor of agriculture, nor of craft and commodity production, which "account for" the rise and fall of the steppe empires. If we then ask how the nomadic states did arise, Vainshtein's answer is that it was by military means. He cites Marx and Engels's formulation that Mongol society in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries was an "Asiatic military system". He does not develop this statement, since the matter is outside the scope of a book on the Tuvinian economy, but nevertheless it raises an extremely important question which relates to the underlying theory behind his work. This is the question of the relation between an "economic–cultural type" and the particular society in which it occurs.

VI

In what sense can we say that Mongol society in the thirteenth century, which was increasingly dominated by a military organisation, had the "same" "economic–cultural type" as the steppe-pastoralist Tuvinians of the 1930s? It appears that there is a certain lack of articulation between the economy and the military organisation, in that it is not changes in the former which give rise to, or produce changes in, the latter. Nevertheless, if the military or political organisation is dominant, we should expect that this dominance would be manifest at all levels, even in the smallest social groups and including the primary producing units. Another way of putting this would be to say that we might expect the structures of dominance and subordination to be themselves produced and reproduced in all units of society. But the implications of Vainshtein's work are that this was not so in Inner Asia: the "economic–cultural type" was manifest as social organisation within the units of economic production and consumption, but this organisation was not identified with structures of dominance, i.e. political, military, and administrative relations, and these latter consequently appeared in other social forms.

I may have misunderstood or overstated Vainshtein's ideas by putting them in this way. In his book the evidence for these views is scattered throughout the text, and although he obviously has such concerns in mind (he summarises other general theories at the beginning of chapter 7), he never explicitly sets out his own theory as such. Nevertheless, his materials do seem to add up to the conclusions I have stated above, and this should be discussed in detail, because these ideas are completely at odds with the orthodox view of Tuvinian society.

The main exponent of the orthodox approach is L. P. Potapov, a highly respected authority on Tuva and Siberian ethnography in general who has carried out several large-scale archaeological and anthropological expeditions in Tuva.[32]

Potapov's argument goes as follows: the initial premise is that Tuva had a feudal, i.e. a class-based, society at least from the time of the Mongol conquest. In a feudal society land, and land only, is the basic means of production. He quotes Marx, "The monopoly of landed property is the historical precondition and remains the permanent base of the capitalist mode of production, *as it does of all the previous modes of production founded on the exploitation of the masses in one form or another.*"[33] Potapov claims that in Tuva the monopoly of property in land did not take the form of power to buy and sell land, since the economy was not penetrated by money; but the form it took was the right of the feudal lords, headed in the Ch'ing period by the *bogdo-khan* in Mongolia and the princes of each division (*khoshun*), to direct the movements of ordinary herdsmen under their control. He recognises that the *khoshun* was essentially a military fief, but the emphasis of his argument is on its landed character. The *bogdo-khan* could at any time take away a prince's fief, could change its boundaries, or send him away with his subjects to some other place outside Tuva. Nevertheless, the local princes and lords thought of their fiefs as their own property, only bowing to the Manchus because of the military power of the empire. The ordinary herdsmen had no landed property but simply used the common pasture of the *khoshun*, and such rights were subject to the will of the feudal lord. The exception to this was agricultural land, which was owned by the individuals who had cleared it and their descendants.

Quite apart from the inconsistency of the idea of a *hierarchy* of land-ownership which was nevertheless thought of as private property at each level, the historical facts do not seem to bear out Potapov's interpretation. Vainshtein, and other sources such as the official history of Tuva, make it clear that the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy were not strictly territorial units (i.e. the *sumon* and the *arban*) even in the nineteenth century, and although the *khoshun* did have landed boundaries by this time, it was also originally a military–fiscal unit attached to a

particular prince. Ordinary herdsmen in a *khoshun* were not allowed to leave, but it is clear from Vainshtein that this was a matter of payment of tax and other dues rather than confinement to particular pastures; under the Manchus whole *khoshuns* were frequently sent from one part of Mongolia to another.[34]

Potapov goes on, however, to develop his theory in a slightly different direction. It was not rights to particular tracts of land that were important so much as the power to use as much land, any land, as one needed. All herdsmen, including the feudal lords, desired to increase their flocks as well as merely to maintain their families. Quoting Osipova he states: to feed a family of four it was necessary to have 4 to 5 cows, to kill 15 to 17 sheep a year (which with a loss rate of 30 to 35 per cent meant that a family should maintain a flock of 50 to 60 head), and to keep 2 to 3 horses; a household of this size would therefore have to have access to over 60 hectares of winter pasture to feed the cattle and horses alone and about 90 hectares for the sheep (estimated at the rate given by Tuvinian kolkhoz workers of 6 hectares per cow or horse, and 1.5 hectares per sheep). Winter pasture alone would therefore demand 150 hectares per household, and the rest of the year, when the grass was growing, would add another 50 hectares. And this was reckoning without any increase to the herds. Potapov is of the opinion that the ordinary herdsman could not conceivably have access to so much land, and that this was the reason why so many of the poor households could barely support themselves.[35] The feudal lords, on the other hand, were able to increase their herds by the fact of the access to unlimited land. It was not that the princes had huge personally owned pastures at their disposal; rather, because of the *saun* "client" relationship, in which herds were given out by the wealthy to poorer herdsmen in return for use of the milk and wool, the lords could have access to scattered pastures used by many individual households. The feudal lords could direct the migration routes of such herdsmen. The pressures which they used to induce people to take on their flocks were non-economic (i.e. political), but the result was that the feudal herds could increase enormously.

This thesis is persuasive, but there are some qualifications which should be made. First, even if we accept Osipova's estimate of the food needs of a household (and Potapov himself says that the average family killed 3 to 4 sheep per winter and lived mainly on milk products in summer, making Osipova's figure of 15 to 17 sheep killed each year rather unlikely),[36] the author at no point tells us how much usable pasture did exist per head of population in any part of Tuva, and he is therefore unable to give concrete evidence of scarcity of land. Vainshtein's point that pastures were used simply according to family traditions, and there were virtually no disputes about land, suggests the contrary. Secondly, as Vainshtein mentions, the

initiation of a *saun* relationship was not restricted to feudal lords or to the rich; 70 per cent of all herdsmen gave out animals to be pastured by others, including a number of the very poor. This figure thus encompasses not only a certain amount of "exploitative" relations of the kind mentioned by Potapov, but also a hidden economic specialisation, by which one household would take sheep only for a season, taking on sheep from other people, but would simultaneously give out their cattle, which needed different pastures.

It is clear that the *saun* relationship was of economic advantage to the rich, and indeed was their main means of increasing their herds. But the question is: was it scarcity of land, or scarcity of labour, which the *saun* relation served to counteract? Obviously in practice the *saun* relation performed both functions, since it was impossible to use available pasture without a herdsman to take the flock, and difficult to feed the herds well on a restricted single pasture. But as there does not seem in fact to have been a general shortage of pasture and there was considerable flexibility in the migrations people chose from year to year, it seems apparent that in the main the crucial factor was the availability of labour. If so, this vitally affects Potapov's theory. The *saun* relation, instead of constituting *the* mode of feudal exploitation, based on the legally backed "ownership" of land by feudal lords, becomes simply the means by which non-availability of labour was counteracted wherever it occurred in Tuvinian society.

Despite Potapov's statement that non-economic forms of coercion were used to enforce participation in *saun* relations, both his own and Vainshtein's field material makes it clear that this was in practice rare. If the *saun* relation was not in essence a "feudal" one, even taking this term in its widest sense, then one of the main arguments for the dominance of "feudal" relations in Tuvinian society collapses.

Potapov half-recognised the basis in fact of this conclusion. He observed that the most important productive unit, the *aal* (a small group of households working together, often on the basis of *saun* relations), was not in fact determined either in its composition or its functioning by "feudal" economic relations (until recently, when these had a belated effect). He describes the *aal* as "patriarchal", and then has to ask, "Why did the *aal* survive in class society?" Put in this form the question forces Potapov to reply that the *aal* in feudal times was different from the "nomadic community", i.e the *aal* in classless society, but now he does not say that it was feudal landed property, or even the *saun* relation, which constituted the difference; "feudalism" meant that all members of all *aals* had to pay tax and perform certain dues to the *khoshun* administration.[37]

The trouble with this whole argument is that Potapov does not define the terms "feudalism", "patriarchal", or "class", and although these may have accepted connotations within Soviet ethnography they are far

from clear to the general reader. Vainshtein wisely avoids such terms on the whole, but his material does shed light on many of the questions raised. I shall attempt to summarise this briefly here, bearing in mind that he himself might not agree with some of the conclusions I draw. It seems to me that he suggests, using straightforward institutional criteria, that Tuvinian society can be seen as consisting of three sets of relations; kinship relations, economic relations, and political–administrative relations, and that these are linked to one another, but also separate from one another, in certain crucial ways. In piecing together the modes of articulation of these three sets of relations we are able to discover what it is that Vainshtein thinks in relation to the questions raised by Potapov.

The kinship system, i.e. relations governed by the rules of marriage, filiation, and descent, was strongly patrilineal in the past, but its larger units, the clans and lineages, lost many of their functions to the administrative institutions set up by the Manchus in the early eighteenth century. By the 1930s the main kinship groups were the nuclear family (man, wife or wives, and children), and the patronymic group (a group of agnatically related men with their wives and children). The patronymic group was based on a section of the lineage of four to five generations' depth, but it differed from the latter in that it appears to have been defined essentially by interaction between members, and thus also included incoming wives. The functions of this group included mutual help in times of trouble, common kinship rituals (weddings, hair-cutting rites, funerals, etc.), and a certain amount of economic exchange (payment of marriage expenses, common sacrifices). Larger kinship-based units, the lineage and clan (*sëëk*), had lost almost all of their functions, including exogamy, except among the Todjan reindeer-herders and hunters, where we know from other publications that they gave rights to use of hunting territories and were the basis for cults of ancestor- and mountain-spirits.[38]

Economic relations were based on the household, the unit of property ownership in herds and agricultural land. The household was also the fundamental unit of consumption, although meat and milk products were shared in a symbolic way with other households of the *aal*, and many productive tasks were also carried on within it. But the household did not exactly coincide with the nuclear family; in some cases it was smaller, a woman living alone, in others larger (a nuclear family plus dependent elderly or sick relatives). If the household was mainly concerned with property and consumption, the *aal*, a group of households migrating together, was the basic productive unit. The most important productive tasks in the economy were conducted by members of the *aal* working co-operatively. In summer, since the pastures were richer and could maintain larger herds in one place, the *aal* joined with one or two other *aals* to form a more inclusive summer *aal*. Sometimes these latter would

group in communities of up to twenty households which would exchange products and help one another with migration tasks, hunting, and felt-making. But the individual *aals* within such a community were always distinct, each being defined by the existence of a common pen for the combined flocks of sheep and goats of the member households. Though the summer community could sometimes coincide with the patronymic group, this became rare by the 1930s and such groups did not necessarily reconstitute themselves each year. In general the summer community was very fluid and its size depended on local conditions.

The administrative–political system was a direct extension into Tuva of the hierarchical Manchu state. Its head (i.e. of the Northern Mongolian section) was the *ambyn-noyon*, who lived in the Mongolian garrison town of Uliasutai. Under him were five *khoshuns* of Tuvinians with hereditary princes, each of them having a certain number of households (*örege*, meaning literally "smoke-holes") varying from 150 to 2209 in the beginning of the nineteenth-century. Another four *khoshuns* were under Mongolian princes, and a further seven that migrated in the Altai region were under the rule of the Manchu administration in Kobdo.[39] Each *khoshun* was divided into sections (*sumon*) with elected officials, and these were further divided into *arban*. The system was a military–fiscal one, each official being responsible for the mobilisation of a certain number of soldiers and the extraction of a stated tax in furs (*alban*) from the individual households under him. By the twentieth century both *khoshuns* and *sumons* had agreed territorial boundaries.

It is not entirely clear how the tax system operated. Some sources say that the *alban* tax was a levy of three sables per year from each household,[40] but Vainshtein indicates that not every *örega* had to pay this amount. In the early nineteenth century the 2765 households of five Tuvinian *khoshuns* were due to pay only 1258 sables to Uliasutai.[41] It appears that the amount to be paid by each household was decided upon each year at a meeting of the men of a *khoshun* and depended on the number of units of livestock (*bodo*) which each household owned. Poor households joined together to make one tax unit and each paid considerably less than three sables, but it is not clear whether rich households paid more than three sables (or the equivalent in other furs and cattle). If Tuva was like other regions of the Manchu empire there were astonishing differences between the amount due per household from the various *khoshuns*.[42]

By the twentieth century the military service in fact meant guard duty on the borders of Tuva; this was to prevent people crossing into the Russian territories where tax was less and there was no military call up. Each *khoshun* sent a certain number of households, together with families and herds, every year. Other regular duties were the maintenance of the messenger service and guarding the officials. In theory all households took

their turn to perform these duties, but officials did exercise leniency with households with few adult workers and with families who had performed personal services for them.

Besides this, each hereditary official was entitled to take a maximum number of animals from each household every year according to the size of the herd (one sheep from 20, two sheep from 40, but no more, and this fell more heavily on the poor than on the rich). This was for the upkeep of the official's establishment, entertainment of visiting dignitaries, etc. Further sums were extracted from the ordinary people to pay bribes to ensure that the collected *alban* furs actually reached their destination at the top of the hierarchy in Uliasutai. The official history of Tuva implies that the amount paid out by ordinary people in *alban* and other dues rose greatly between about 1850 and 1914; the value in roubles of the furs and cattle rendered multiplied by eight, but it is difficult to estimate if this represented an equivalent rise in real value.[43] Some authors mention an average figure of one-third of the annual income of the household going in taxes and dues. But even if this were so, we need not assume that the fiscal system affected economic organisation; most of the tax was paid in furs which were obtained on hunting expeditions during slack periods of the year. Expertise in hunting was a factor in choosing households to join the *aal*,[44] in that a poor family with a good huntsman might be taken on in preference to a more wealthy family, but it did not alter the fact that production was in any case organised by *aals*.

If we consider Tuvinian society as a whole, two questions concerning the articulation of the different institutional systems arise. The first concerns the effect of the administrative–political system on kinship structure, and the second follows from this: if the hierarchy of *khoshun*, *sumon*, and *arban* set up by the Manchus had the effect of destroying the patrilineal clans and lineages, or causing people to confuse the two, as Vainshtein suggests, then how did this influence economic organisation, specifically the formation of the main productive group (*aal*) and the summer community engaging in reciprocity and exchange? If it were to be shown that the economic organisation was significantly affected, even if indirectly, by the specific political hierarchy of the Manchus, then Vainshtein's analysis in terms of "economic–cultural types" would be of limited value.

It is apparent that the military administration of the Ch'ing did have the effect all through the Manchu empire of destroying, to a great extent, the clan system, and in fact the process was initiated long before by the Mongol Khagans. Lattimore wrote:

> Among the Mongols, lineages were broken up by assigning men and their descendants to military-territorial units, as the result of repeated conquests of "tribes" by other tribes – centralisation, decentralisation, re-centralisation –

century after century. Hence the same clan name is found in many Banners [*khoshuns*], but at the same time the importance of the clan name weakened as a man became known as "X, of Y Banner", instead of "A, of B lineage". Among the Manchus, originally lineages were "brigaded" into Banners. With the dispersion of the Manchus into garrisons, after the conquest of China, there was much confusion between lineage-heredity and Banner-heredity. The Dagors [a northern group of Mongols living in Manchuria] were least affected. They were outlying auxiliaries from the Manchu point of view; hence their manpower was "brigaded" into a military organisation, but *without detachment from their traditional territory*, permitting strong survival of the lineage *in situ*.[45]

Lattimore does not mention that the Dagors were primarily agriculturalists, which may have contributed towards the maintenance of the link between lineages and territory. Vainshtein observes that among other Tuvinians, the kinship groups were also closely linked with traditional territories, although these were hunting grounds rather than agricultural fields. Among the steppe-pastoralist Tuvinians, as Potapov's excellent and intriguing material shows, the distribution of clan members (often spread far amongst other neighbouring peoples of the Altai and Mongolia, the Tofalars, Teleuts, Kumandins, Tubalars, Khakass, and Western Mongolians) could more or less be traced by enquiry among kolkhozniks of the older generation, but the function of the local divisions of such clans was limited to religious cults of "clan" mountain-spirits. The total membership never now met together for any purpose.[46] Originally some "clans", for example the Ondar, were probably not even kinsmen but administratively formed groups (the word *ondar* means "some tens", and the smallest unit of the hierarchy, *arban*, means "ten" in Mongolian). Therefore, although more in evidence than in other parts of Mongolia, the Tuvinian clans and lineages more or less disappeared in the Manchu period (mid-eighteenth to twentieth centuries) as functioning units in society.

What is interesting, however, is the precise mode of this disappearance, since patrilineal kinship seems to have remained as an ideology. The name of the dominant lineage in a district was frequently used for the *arban* and the *sumon*, and Western Tuvinians commonly confused the administrative units with genealogical ones. In other words, something which was not a lineage (*sëëk*) was referred to as though it was one. In his book on Mongol bureaucracy David Aberle makes the point that even where clan and lineage affiliation of individuals was virtually forgotten, as among the Chahar Mongols of Inner Mongolia, a kinship idiom was nevertheless used in political relations. He writes:

> In this part-time bureaucracy [i.e. where officials retained their own herding economies as well as government posts], in spite of the elaboration of bureaucratic office . . . bureaucratic relationships were not perfectly maintained. Official and personal affairs of the *amban* were not fully segregated, and a kinship ideology

permeated the dealings of the *amban* with his people...The *amban* was a "father" to his people.[47]

Among the Chahar, political and kinship relations (even if only of a fictive kind) were interwoven in this way, but they were separate from the economic and productive groupings in which people lived and worked. A family could live in the territory of the "wrong" banner (*khoshun*), but its political and civic obligations remained with its "home" banner to which it was liable for tax, corvée labour, etc. It was not pressed for taxes or labour in the banner in which it resided. Aberle further adds that kinship groupings, "the small units of families under the *darag* (headman) did not operate in a territorially demarcated sub-section of a banner or an arrow (*sumon*). The population aggregated in villages and hamlets which were neither political nor kinship units."[48] It appears thus that there was much in common between the Chahar and the steppe-pastoralist Tuvinians, despite the fact that they were at opposite ends of the vast Manchu empire: in both cases political groupings were given a fictive kinship status (and in the Tuva case political units were normally *confused* with kin groups), while real kinship units were limited to small unions of a few families; both of these were separate from the economically defined co-operative groups in which people lived and worked. The question now at issue is whether this situation was the result of the general disappearance of the lineage in one degree or another throughout the Manchu empire.

Potapov argues that in Tuva the *aal* had been originally essentially a kinship group (*törel*), a section of a lineage, and that the atrophy of agnatic kinship at the clan and lineage level had the effect of changing the nature of the economic relations within it. Even if we have already concluded that Potapov's view of Tuvinian society as based on feudal landed property is misleading, it is nevertheless worth considering this second idea in more detail since it is at the core of an understanding of Inner Asian pastoralist society.

Potapov suggests, though not very explicitly, that reciprocal equalitarian work relations of the kin-based *aal* should be contrasted sharply with the exploitative relations which emerged when agnatic kinship was no longer the basis on which the *aal* was recuited. The theory is that although both of these types of *aal* were to be found in Tuva in the 1920s and 30s there was a general, historical change in process by which the kin-based type was being succeeded by the "feudal" type. He describes how co-operation in work takes place in the two types, and I give some examples below:

1. Harvesting in an *aal* of the equalitarian type, central Tuva, *c.* 1920s:

The inhabitants of the *aal* helped each other with their harvests in order to complete the work in a short time. The *aal* at this time of year was situated a long way from the fields, so that the herds should not spoil the crops. Harvest

was conducted as follows: on the eve of the day selected, the men and boys prepared the horses for the journey to the fields. The owner of the field to be harvested meanwhile prepared food [meat, curds and cheeses, and necessarily *arak* – spirits]. They all [men and boys] set out at dawn for the fields which were 20–30 km away. They rode cheerfully and fast, making jokes. On the way, the owner cut willow branches to tie up the stooks of corn. At the field, they built a temporary shelter of branches, put all the baggage in it, unsaddled and hobbled the horses, and immediately all except the owner set to work harvesting with sickles. The owner made a fireplace, gathered wood, lit the fire and put on the cooking pot.

The harvesters crossed the field in a row, the men in front and the boys behind. The men cut the corn and the boys gathered it into bundles. A third man behind tied the bundles together and set them upright as stooks. Meanwhile the owner of the field made his way into the centre with a pot of *arak* and waited for the first harvester to reach him. He poured out a bowl, offered some drops to the surrounding mountain spirits, and offered the bowl to the first-comer. The harvester took the bowl, raised it to his lips, but did not drink, and returned it to the owner; the latter took a mouthful and gave the bowl back to the harvester, who this time drank it all and then returned to work. The owner waited for the next man to come and entertained him in the same way. This was called *khöl tynzydar* – "Give the hand strength". It was repeated three times for each worker, but not more in case the harvesters should get drunk. If an old or highly respected man was harvesting, the owner would not wait for him to come up but would walk down the field towards him with the bowl when it was his turn.

The owner then cooked dinner...After dinner and a short rest all the men went back to the harvest. They worked hard, trying to get the whole field cut before twilight. After the corn was cut, the stooks were baled and taken to a wooden enclosure where they were left until the whole *aal* migrated to the field for winnowing and autumn pasturing. Then they rode home. On the way some people dashed ahead, trying to find pots of *arak* which the owner of the field had hidden on the way out; whoever found one of these pots had an extra share of *arak*. On the next day, or the one after, all the men and boys set out again to harvest the field of another member of the *aal*, and this went on until everyone's fields were done. The practice of mutual help was called *temnejir*.[49]

2. Pasturing in an *aal* with members of different wealth, south Tuva, *c.* 1920s:

The members of the *aal* do in fact pasture their animals "in turns". However, the poor man with no herds of his own, or almost none, also goes herding "in turn", i.e. he really pastures other people's herds. During this he drinks *khoitpak* (the offering of the owner) and also receives some milk which he takes home. In fact, the poor man of the *aal* had to pasture all the herds all the time, because the rich owner never went out to work but ordered him to do it instead. Nor did the middling rich owner do any herding. Old men told me [i.e. Potapov] that they sent the poor man or his children instead. If there were no children, he and his wife had to do it all.

The idea of "turns" was kept up simply so that it should be known when it was the rich, and when the middling, owners' turn to feed the poor herdsman.

In summer the poor man's family was fed by the different owners, and the children were sent each to a different yurt to receive *khoitpak*, the basic food of the poor. At home they had only tea. In winter the poor family was given the liver, lights, stomach, feet, head, and udder of animals killed by the richer families.

Thus in this case it was in fact the poor family which pastured the herds all the time, obtaining only a miserable payment in natural products, the whole operation being masked by the idea of a communal custom.[50]

Potapov is right to emphasise that economic co-operation in *aals* composed of unequals, rather than in *aals* made up of people of equal wealth, had the effect of making "communal" traditions work to the benefit of those with more property. And the way that the hospitality of the owner to those working for him is transformed into a subsistence wage in the case of the non-equal *aal* is very significant. But I see no reason to conclude that this is due to the absence of patrilineal kinship in these *aals*.

It is interesting here to compare the Tuvinian case with the Eastern Buryats, who had a somewhat similar nomadic pastoral–agricultural economy, but whose patrilineal clan system remained the basis of political organisation during the whole period of Tsarist indirect rule. First, the Buryat equivalent of the Tuvinian *aal* was not necessarily composed of agnates, even in a society with identifiable clans, lineage, lineage-sections, etc., and carefully kept written genealogies. In an interesting article Asalkhanov points out that while the political–administrative system was identical all over the region, the composition of economic co-operative groups varied considerably: in places where there was little agriculture and the population was engaged in highly mobile and profitable pastoralism the *aal*-equivalent tended to have a non-kin-based composition, but in the pockets where agriculture was predominant it was more likely to be based on a sub-section of a lineage. In other words, the extent to which *economic* groupings were composed of kin was dependent on something other than the continued existence of kinship groups as such; in this case Asalkhanov is able to show that while virtually all Buryat *aals* started off as groups of kin when they migrated into a new region, after some generations this pattern was disturbed by the fact that individual pastoral households frequently split off to go to areas where they heard the grass was good and formed new *aals* with people already there. The fiscal units of people from one clan thus came to be scattered all over the Eastern Buryat lands.[51]

Secondly, on general principles we should beware of assuming that the presence of agnatic kinship in itself necessarily implies equalitarian behaviour or equality in property holdings. (As Maurice Bloch has pointed out, the "amity" of kin can promote a tolerance of long-lasting imbalances).[52] It is true that Inner Asian pastoralists used to divide herds and land equally between sons on inheritance, but after some years

brothers would rarely end up with equal property holdings, and the direction and management of economic tasks, in particular with respect to the amount of labour contributed, could sometimes be very unequal. In groups with a hierarchical ideology fathers and sons, or older brothers and younger brothers, might contribute very different amounts of labour to communal tasks such as herding, felt-making, or harvesting. Ethnographic accounts of both Western and Eastern Buryats and the Khalkha Mongols describe older or senior men as rarely participating in such activities, unless forced to by poverty, and these peoples in the early twentieth century appear to have been more conscious of status differentials than the Tuvinians. Vainshtein himself makes the point that the division of labour between men and women varied among the different Sayan and Altaian peoples, and also changed within one group from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries (e.g. in the participation of men in felt-making). There are thus two separate issues: (*a*) the different amounts of property owned by individual households in the *aal*, causing work for each in turn to be more advantageous to some than to others, and (*b*) the ideology which might prevent older or more senior people, however this is defined, from doing an equal share of work at certain tasks even if property holdings of the households of the group are balanced more or less equally.

Finally, there is no need to ascribe the presence of two types of *aal* among the Tuvinians (i.e. the *aal* based on equal holdings, and the *aal* with substantial differences in property) to a process of social change from the former to the latter. The precariousness of herding made it highly likely that individual households would on occasion move rapidly from riches to poverty, and a spell of luck combined with hard work could produce the reverse within an adult working life. Therefore, an *aal*, while always conducting its communal tasks on the basis of working in turns for each member, could move imperceptibly from the "equalitarian" to the "exploitative" type and back again within the space of a generation.

Both Potapov and Vainshtein say that the kinship links within an *aal*, if they existed at all, were not necessarily agnatic. This is an important point, since it was assumed by Potapov that the kin group forming the basis of the *aal* was a small cell of the patrilineal clan system, and consequently atrophied when the latter did. But his own ethnographic data contradicts this idea. In one of his examples of the kin-based *aal* not only were the households of daughters' husbands included, but the families of the brothers and sisters of sons' wives were also members.[53] This *aal* was specifically given as a typical example of the central Tuvinian nomadic pastoralists. The Buryats also used cognatic links in the formation of basic productive groups, despite the fact that in their case the clan and lineage system remained alive. In general, this is true of many nomadic pastoralists with patrilineal social structure in other parts of the world too – for

example, in a different way, the Nuer. Thus, until some additional evidence is given that the Tuvinian *aal* was formerly constituted *in principle* by agnates, it is reasonable to suppose that what existed in the 1920s–30s (i.e. a mixture of agnates, cognates, and non-kin) also existed before. If this was so, the disappearance of the upper levels of the Tuvinian clan–lineage system would have a minimal effect on the formation of *aals*.

Unfortunately we do not have enough information on this matter. It is possible that Potapov has more material at his disposal than the statements published in his book and that there is real evidence for the historical change from kin-based economic groups to non-kin-based groups in the nineteenth-twentieth-century period. But in this case, comparative material suggests that the change is more likely to have been due to economic forces operating at the level of households (e.g. shortage of pastures and consequent increase in new migrations as happened in some parts of Buryatia, or a general impoverishment causing a larger number of households to accept a dependent status in any *aal* which would take them in, as may have been the case among the Tuvinians) than to the very problematic substitution of a "feudal" system for a lineage system.

To conclude, it seems therefore that Vainshtein is justified in maintaining that the *aal* (and the summer nomadic community) were essentially *economic* groupings, whose purpose was to facilitate production by households, by means of adjusting the labour and the capital of the members of the group – or more precisely, by means of exchanging the one for the other. The existence of such groupings was a requirement of the nomadic pastoral way of life in these regions, given the complex labour relations dictated by maintenance of mixed herds and frequent nomadic shifts. But here much further research is needed. We still do not have enough information about the precise operations involved and the kind of labour required in looking after herds of a certain size and composition and in processing the products. I suggest that it was the variations in these working relations which explain the various shapes taken by the *aal* in different cases; but in order to talk about this we need to know how such relations were conceptualised by the people involved, starting with the basic understanding of the cultural definition of the tasks involved in the year's work. We also need to know how such tasks and relations were symbolised, since there was clearly some kind of hierarchy of work operations which was independent of mechanical criteria such as the amount of labour involved (e.g. among the Khalkha Mongols milking mares is "better" and hence more enjoyable than milking cows), and there was a sequence in which working operations took place which was not altogether determined by natural cycles (e.g. the Khalkhas culled the manes and tails of their herds for horsehair in the early spring for "religious" reasons). The way that the existence of such tasks creates

social relations can be seen from the example of the institution of the *saakhalt ail* (which is not mentioned by either Vainshtein or Potapov, but which in all probability existed among the Tuvinians as well as Mongolian and other steppe pastoralists). This was the relation established between two neighbouring *ails* if they both kept flocks of sheep and/or goats; its purpose was the exchanging of the lambs/kids in spring and summer, when the young still had to be given care and attention but also had to be kept at some distance from their own mothers which they would otherwise suckle. Each *ail* took the lambs of the other after the morning feed, kept them with their own ewes, which would refuse to give them milk, and returned them at dusk. In effect, Mongolian *ails* went around in twos, often the same pairing year after year. The *saakhalt ail* was the traditional place in which to look for a marriage partner, since it was the boys who took the flocks back and forth, and the girls would help with separating the lambs from the ewes.

Such functional patterns need to be investigated further, in their entirety if possible, and the information systematised so that it would become possible to make a structural model, even of such a flexible grouping as the *aal* (and other temporary but recurrent pastoralist communities). The idea of the structure of the *aal* is fully justified in my view by the fact, emphasised by Vainshtein, of its existence in one form or another for many centuries and amongst many different ethnic groups. This project could be entirely suitably carried out within the general framework of the "economic–cultural types" proposed by Vainshtein at the beginning of his book.

VII

Vainshtein's book is rich in material which has a far wider anthropological significance than mere regional interest. It is impossible to discuss all such implications in the present introduction, but I should here briefly point in conclusion to one area which deserves to be better known and understood; this is the structure and working of the Manchu empire, the other side of the coin, as it were, of the focus on "economic–cultural types". The peculiarity of this state formation was that it permitted the autonomy of the economic organisation of herding and agriculture – an organisation which appears to have continued in the same communal forms as in tribal times, or in the periods of existence of previous state-like formations – while taking over the control of individual households for the purposes of exaction of military and other services and a certain amount of productive labour which had formerly accrued to tribal chiefs. The Manchu state ruled by force of arms (garrisons in Western Mongolia were available for use in Tuva), but because its rulers were interested in obtaining furs and labour services from the population of this region, rather than the extraction of

necessary subsistence resources such as herds or grain, it thus by-passed the nomadic-pastoral economy almost entirely, taking for itself only a proportion of the labour time of each household. In a sense the state formed one pole of a continuum from pre-state clan-based society; it took the place of the local clan as the "owner" of the land and thus constituted for individual households a new community, superior to the tribal one by its unified range and power. A Buddhist organisation of monasteries associated with the local divisions (*khoshun*) of the state was consciously introduced in all regions under Manchu rule, and a certain number of households were set aside to perform labour service for the church rather than the state. The close association between the two can be seen from the fact that when the Manchu empire collapsed in 1911 the Mongols chose the head of the monastic organisation as head of state.

This kind of state structure has many ethnographic parallels, one example being the Inca empire, which was also characterised by the collective appropriation of land by the victorious representatives of the new state superimposed on a continuation of traditional communal forms of production; in both the Manchu and the Inca cases it could be said that surplus labour was transformed, by the existence of this type of military state, into forced labour which was directly due to the state or the church. The ideology represented service to the state as the duty or obligation of community members to their own community of origin, and hence it became both benevolent and compelling. What Godelier wrote about the Inca state also applies to the Manchu:

> We can immediately see the error in interpreting the Inca mode of production as a feudal-type society simply because a monarch, supported by an aristocracy, ruled, and because the peasant masses were subjected to forced labour. The state structure in the Inca mode of production in fact expressed the *concentration of land ownership* on the level of the whole society in the form of a unique, collective, direct or pre-eminent ownership by a superior community, the dominant ethnic-class. The structure of a feudal state, on the contrary, expresses the *hierarchistic association of multiple landlords*. In both cases the nature of the state is different as are the terms and conditions of power in the state as well as the domination of the ruling class; they are based on different ways of extracting direct producers' surplus labour.[54]

The final decline of the Manchu state is interesting in its sociological effects in Inner Asia. The increase in taxation and the substituion of taxes in herds for taxes in furs touched people's livelihood directly. It is possible that this may have contributed towards the creation of an increasing number of destitute herdsmen, who were now forced to "sell" their labour in *aals* of the non-equalitarian type. However, we cannot say that the change in taxation was the only direct cause of the large numbers of destitute or very poor herdsmen (Vainshtein estimates them as over 10 per

cent of the population in the early twentieth century); in fact, the reverse may have been the case, the impoverishment of the population causing a continual increase in taxation of those who could pay. Bawden mentions a decline in wealth of herdsmen in all of Mongolia right through the nineteenth century.[55] The reasons probably lie partly in regional conditions, such as over-grazing or cattle epidemics, partly in over-taxation, and partly in the extortionate prices exacted by Chinese merchants and small traders. Increasingly throughout the Manchu period the main appropriation of wealth from the populations of the empire was by a sophisticated trade organisation, which took herds in exchange for manufactured products, rather than by direct taxation. Money-lending (i.e. of silver in exchange for herds), not only to individuals but also to *khoshun* administrations, was also widespread, and interest of 36 per cent per annum was charged on loans in the 1911–21 period.[56] In these circumstances the Mongols regarded the numerous different kinds of labour service as at least as onerous as tax, and one motivation for becoming a lama was to avoid both of these; in one stroke a man becoming a lama moved from the status of provider of services and dues to the status of receiver of them. The number of monasteries and lamas continuously increased throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and we may see this as one direct effect of the peculiar organisation of the Manchu state.

But such arguments can only be resolved by a far greater knowledge than we yet have of the historical and ethnographic facts about this region. We know so little about Inner Asia, and what we do know is so uneven and unsystematic, that it has been difficult to see this region, whether in reference to nomadic herding, reindeer-breeding, kinship structures, or the form of the state, in any kind of comparative perspective. The data available in English simply has not been good enough to place alongside comparable systems studied by anthropologists in other parts of the world. Vainshtein's book gives us clear and reliable information which covers the whole range of herding practices in Tuva, and he consistently indicates the extent of the same practices among other Inner Asian societies. He avoids speculation, except in the interesting section on the development of reindeer-herding in Eurasia. In his chosen field he provides the factual groundwork which is needed in order for us to see the Inner Asian types of pastoralism not merely as regional singularities but as significant among the whole range of nomadic pastoral systems.

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