

THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL POSITION OF THE MONGOLS*

by LAWRENCE KRADER

I

In respect to the cultural and historical position of the Mongols among the peoples and societies of Asia, four separate factors must be brought together: their relation to North China and to China as a whole, their status relative to the rest of the pastoral peoples of Asia, their economic specialization, and their self-consciousness as a people. It will here be the thesis that despite the ethnic distinctiveness of the Mongols, standing as they do apart from the Chinese, and despite their economic specialization in a field of production which is foreign to the Chinese, they were in an institutionally marginal relation to the latter. This relation obtained down to the close of the Manchu dynasty, and only came to an end under the impact of forces which have smashed and remodelled Asia in the twentieth century.

The Mongols must in certain aspects of their life be regarded as marginal to the Chinese. But they cannot be regarded as marginal to the latter in their culture as a whole, which would imply membership of the two in a great common culture area. The sectors of social existence and structures which they reflect in a marginal fashion are largely limited to their institutions. There is a current literature on the culture areas of Asia which has discussed among other questions the relations of the Mongols to the Chinese. However, this problem must be clarified by distinguishing between institutions specifically and culture generally. Moreover, there is the matter of economic exchange which can be solved neither by the special institutional nor the general cultural category.

Profound dissimilarities exist between the Mongols and the Chinese, most strikingly as between herding and farming specialists respectively. Their specialization on the other hand has enforced a certain exchange relationship between them. Despite the differences, and within the sphere of their economic interdependence, a politico-military system has gone out in various ways, directly and indirectly, from the Chinese to the Mongols.

*I wish to thank both the Russian Research Centre, Harvard University and the Far Eastern Institute, University of Washington for the opportunity to undertake studies which underlie the writing of this paper.

The precise position of the Mongols in the culture areas of Asia must be solved in another way; I shall return to this problem. The nature of Mongol institutional marginality is properly understood only when it is contrasted with relations of cultural marginality elsewhere in the world. Marginality is not an absolute, substantive status of a people, it is a relationship among peoples. Where a number of peoples combine to form a culture area, a given people will form the nucleus of the area. This people is the highest exponent of the culture pattern. Around the nuclear group are lesser exponents of that same culture pattern. These are the marginal peoples. The margin is on a lower level quantitatively and qualitatively; both in amount and in refinement of its functional and artistic production; usually in spatial and temporal scope; and in the intensity of internal development, than the nucleus.

The relationship of marginality is distinct both from diffusion and acculturation. Diffusion relates, as defined, to the passage of a single trait or complex of traits from one people to another. The Sino-Mongol relationship is far too involved and the influence far too profound to be satisfied by this term. Acculturation on the other hand implies a disorganizing force that a more powerful culture exerts on a less powerful one. The Mongols, and their steppe neighbours, however, have had a long-lasting relationship with the Chinese. The time factor is too great to permit of such characterization. Moreover, it was a series of influences external to the relations of the two peoples that disrupted Mongol life.

The culture area concept has proved its usefulness, in my opinion, in historical analysis and reconstruction, as opposed to a synchronous description. With its aid we may segregate underlying and superadded factors in the structure of a society. This mode of analysis is especially valuable when dealing, as we are now, with a culture which cannot be described in a direct manner as either primitive or advanced. The Mongols have elements of both. Their earlier features, such as the clan and shamanism, have quite different relations in space and time from their later-added features, such as the court or the tax-structure. Two different levels of analysis must be pursued simultaneously in regard to the Mongols, the first bearing on their earlier survivals, the other on their later achievements. For the one, the specification of where the Mongols fit into the cultural picture of Asia must be solved; for the other, techniques of institutional analysis must be applied.

The research technique involved in establishing a culture area is that of comparison of features of one society with those of another. Especially on the preliterate level is this necessary, where no explicit records exist. The preliterate level coincides in Inner Asia with the underlying level, the original culture that the peoples had. This must be studied together with the more evolved layers of culture the Mongols later gained, in order to understand Mongol society and culture as a whole.

The Mongols were distinctively and profoundly influenced by the

Chinese in such matters as statecraft and court organization, tax and *corvée* structure, the calendar and the census; they have retained a mode of subsistence which is as specialized in its pastoralism as the Chinese is in its agriculture.

As a marginal people, the Mongols exhibit a far lesser degree of complexity in the structure and function of the institutions which they have taken over, compared with the Chinese. Their imperial ministry structure was simpler, as was their system of chronology and their political ideology. And as an added feature in respect to the structures taken over, these were totally lacking in stability and continuity, in view of the recipient's mode of subsistence: pastoralism is in its nature an unstable economy, subject to extinction through a whim of nature, bringing down with it the rest of the social institutions. As pastoralists and nomads, the Mongols are fixed in their herding way of life, in so far as the instabilities of that life can be spoken of as fixed. In other spheres, the political and the religious, etc., Chinese and other foreign influences predominate; but they have been transformed by the Mongols, and lowered to their own level.

A corollary to the combined proposition of Mongol institutional marginality and specialization in subsistence techniques is that of the commodity exchange relations of the Mongols with the Chinese. The Mongols need not only the grain and tea of the farmers, since they do not produce these themselves, they also need products of a higher technological art than they themselves are capable of achieving, technology and art arising only on a stable and long-lived base: textiles and sumptuary goods and wares for the Mongol upper strata and lamaseries. The Mongols had already developed techniques of metallurgy, felt-making, leather- and wood-working. But the more deeply they entered into exchange relations with the Chinese, the more the latter took over these fields of production for them. Equally, the Northern Chinese required those products from the herders which they themselves were historically committed to non-producing: animals for draft and transport; hides, skins, pelts, wool, and hair; a significant part of the protein content of their diet; and certain products of an incidental nature emanating from the steppe and wilderness, as medicinal herbs, condiments, etc. The Mongols were North China's herders.

The vast exchange relation acted as a framework holding together the otherwise ethnically and economically divergent peoples. Arising from the differentiation in the respective modes of subsistence, this exchange relation endowed their interrelation with one of its reasons for being. Thus, from the viewpoint of institutions, the Mongols have been moulded by the Chinese pattern as a whole. From the viewpoint of their commodity exchange relations, they are in a symbiotic relation with the Northern Chinese.

The question of reason for being must not be confused with the problem of origins. I do not wish to stir up the question whether herding preceded

farming in time or the converse. Here I will bring in only typology: the relationship of herding to farming gives to herding its historical significance.

The geographic distribution of farmers and herders affords another perspective to the relation of marginality. Mongols and Chinese live side by side, and their proximity and symbiosis has underwritten the institutional nexus from the Chinese outward. Their respective specialization has been canalized by the natural substratum and climate. The Inner Asian steppe has an arid soil and atmosphere, sparse vegetation, and a highland and mountain topography; it is far from the sea, and is lacking in natural drainage to the sea. On the other hand, the North China plain, with its rich loess formation, river system, and monsoon climate has proved conducive, under the great Chinese development of hydro-technology, to intensive cultivation, among the highest of its type in the world.

Despite their proximity, cultural and geographic, to the Chinese, their borrowings, political, spiritual, and material, and their economic exchange with the Chinese, the Mongols have nevertheless retained their ethnic unity and independence, held in place, once again by their specialized mode of subsistence and their habitat. Their small-scale social structures, in encampments and nomadic villages, their seasonal movements, their customs and lore, their law, their character as a people, derive from their life as nomadic herders, and not at all from the Chinese. On the other hand, they are close to the other Altaic peoples in these respects.

The Mongol village may find certain parallels in China, but its earliest formation is probably a more generalized feature, antedating both these two and a number of other cultures. Given the independence of ethnic unity, the Mongols were able to move as a political body, whose higher structures were ultimately derived from China, it is true, but a political body which moved independently of the Chinese on the conquest of unrelated empires and peoples, unrelated either to themselves or to China, such as Turkestan, Iran, Russia, etc., under Chingis Khan.

The Mongols have taken over culture complexes from other culture areas. To the extent that they are Buddhists, they have been influenced by the Indic sphere of culture, religious elements and traits having been passed to them from the ultimate source indirectly, by means of the Uigurs, Tibetans and others. But the adoption of complexes from more than one area is often the case among marginal peoples. The Sinitic pattern far outweighs in its importance for the Mongols the influence of the Indic or any other.

II

Viewed in a different perspective, this time not in their position among the peoples of Eastern Asia, the Mongols take their place as a specially developed, variant type of pastoralism in the Old World. They then contrast

very sharply with the reindeer herding peoples of Eurasia; less sharply, but in a theoretically more significant manner with the herding complexes of Central and Western Asia; and further, with the herders of Europe, Africa, etc.

As opposed to the herders of the Eurasian tundra the Mongols, together with the other herding peoples of Inner, Central and Western Asia, stand forth by virtue of raising not one animal but many, and not the reindeer, but the horse, cattle, sheep, the goat, and the camel; by virtue of a vastly richer and more complex material, social, political, and generally cultural level of existence; and by virtue of close connection and interdependence with farming communities or peoples.

By way of contrast, the Turkic peoples west of the Altai, and to an even greater extent, the Iranians and Arabs, are not segregated ethnic units, pursuing agriculture or pastoralism exclusively, but perform both simultaneously, in small complexes of productive cells, each productive unit of which is in intimate conjunction with the other. Often these herders raise their own crops off season on a modest scale. Typically for these bodies of the producing world of Asia, their imperial drives were not fashioned out of the purely pastoral or agricultural segment of Turan, Iran, or Islam, but out of the combined political, social, and economic force of the two, pastoral and agricultural, a phenomenon which is out of the question for the Mongols, since they have no agricultural component.

An important corroboration is Barthold's summary of Turkic history: the Turkic peoples adopted agriculture as they moved westward in the first millenium A.D.; this was a move away from China's orbit. Stated differently, the move westward freed them for the definitive transition from pastoralism to a mixed economy of pastoralism plus agriculture. The development of agriculture in China acted as an inhibiting factor upon the development of agriculture among the inhabitants of the northern steppe. Although the steppe is in general a forbidding region for crop raising, it is not so always and everywhere. Certain parts of the steppe favour agriculture more than others; there have been sporadic agricultural *régimes* in the steppe, both on the part of the Chinese, and on the part of the Altaic peoples. But the two together have been involved for thousands of years in a vast relation of economic exchange which has imposed its own laws of development on the pastoral as well as on the agricultural components, requiring specialized processes of production and the supply of the needed wants from the neighbouring people.

Turkic groups have sought from time to time to compose by fiat their agricultural *régimes* while they still remained in China's orbit. But these attempts have been overridden by economic, political, and natural factors operating upon the relationships within the region. The economic factors were those of the age-old exchange relations comprised through tribute,

diplomatic gifts, and raiding, and later, trade; the political were the alternating conquests of each other by herders and farmers, these conquests operating to enforce the respective economic specialization; the natural factors consist in the geography and climate of the steppe. It was easier for the Mongols and Turks to follow the path of least resistance: once they were committed to pastoralism, they could acquire grain, etc., by exacting tribute if temporarily stronger, or by raiding. The tribute relations between China and the steppe peoples were, moreover, not one-way affairs, but actual exchanges, in vast quantities, in order to supply one another's needs.

As for the Turks, once they had moved to Central Asia, and beyond, they adhered to the indigenous pattern of small-scale herding-farming relations which they found there, adding some modifications. The Turkic area of today, with the Turks as latecomers, has a degree of ethnic diversity greater than that of Iran or the Arabic world generally. They found prior inhabitants in Central Asia—Tadjiks and other Iranians, the subjects of the old Khoresmian empire. Thus the Turks are a more complex phenomenon; they are a transitional type, fundamentally looking east, but with later western overlays.

The pastoral-agricultural relations of China with her northern steppe neighbours represent a vast deviation from the typical pattern in the division of labour between herder and farmer. The typical pattern is so called by the force of its greater antiquity, and its greater number of representatives among cultures with similar internal relations. It is exemplified in the ancient Near East, Egypt and the Mesopotamian cultures. The pattern is small-scale formation of a herding-farming economic unit within a single valley, oasis or district. As the formation of the high culture arose in the Far East, it developed two spatially vast and economically differentiated wings, the agricultural on the plain of North China and the pastoral in the steppes of Highland Asia. These wings, together with the regular sedentary peoples to the east and south who are culturally marginal to China in the proper sense of the term have all been united at one time or another within the wavering limits of the age-old Chinese Empire; they included at times the culture area of the Chinese as well: Korea, Tongking, and other bordering states and peoples.

To speak of the integration of herding and farming is possible only if the specific forms of relationship within a symbiotic zone, such as the Northern Chinese, are understood. Such an integration is at best a defective one, the mode of interrelationship is unstable, mutually aggressive, in the form of raid, tribute, feuds and wars, an integration which is characteristic of the Iranian, Arabic, Turkic worlds, as well as the Chinese. War, for example, is a kind of relationship, a mark of the extent of a given cultural world. A people must have developed a considerable degree of articulation from within a given cultural sphere to break loose from it and make war elsewhere.

On the economic level here under discussion, that is, among the great Eastern Mediterranean and Asiatic peoples, international trade is a late phenomenon. A smooth distribution of commodities does not exist here typologically yet. The values of goods were determined not exclusively by the intrinsic worth of the goods themselves, but also by momentary and political considerations, often more significantly by the latter. A truly effective international market did not yet exist; even the internal market of the various empires was still in embryo form. And the exchange relations broke down frequently, to be replaced by military means to the same end, the acquisition through raiding, war and conquest of needed goods from the neighbour across the border. Thus economically, the distributive integration was a defective one.

The Mongols are still in the mass not a trading people. The Chinese in the past five hundred years have sought to trade with them, motivated first by reasons of conciliation and pacification along with economic reasons. Later, under the Manchus, they were able to impose their trade upon them, taking over the manufacture for trade among the Mongols of many goods which formerly the Mongols had made for themselves. Native industry has been destroyed in certain branches, bringing with it the ruin of the privileged stratum of smiths, and the attendant diminution in the total power, wealth, and influence of the princes. The latter had meanwhile come to assign greater prestige to Chinese goods than to native ones. Through the development of trade, the Chinese made Mongolia into a colony during the Manchu dynasty. But the Mongols are still not a trading people!

Before this era, the nomads would, under favourable conditions, develop a raid or local war into a conquest over China and thence into the establishment of a conquering dynasty. Briefly, such favourable conditions were twofold: externally, great accession of strength by the nomads relative to the agricultural nucleus, while the latter were, for example, in a period of dynastic decline, faced with rebellion among the border peasants; and internally, the crystallization of the pastoral world around one nomadic group. This group through a stroke of fortune, seven fat years of herd-raising, or a series of successful raids, would create a mighty Khan, subdue, absorb and gather unto itself other nomadic groups, and embark on conquest.

III

The concept of a culture area can be applied to the Turks and Mongols, possibly to the bulk of the Altaic-speaking peoples, with the exception of the Koreans. The patrilineal, exogamic clan is common to most of these peoples, in addition to their unity of linguistic stock. They all have some form of herding, whether as a specialization or as part of a mixed economy. They all have a number of animals herded, and roughly the same kinds: cattle, horses,

sheep, goats and camels, and in about the same proportions. The Yakuts, a northern spear-head of this culture area into the north Siberian forest, have developed a few local characteristics, as the growing of domestic hay. They are also more trade-minded than the Mongols, possibly under Tsarist Russian influence. They no longer have as small stock, sheep and goats.

Chinese Turkestan represents a complex problem, both in respect to ecological patterning and culture composition. It is an area of oasis-type farming, of pastoral specialization on the grand scale—*à la Mongole*—and of Tibetan settlement as well. It has been for the Mongols a region for expansion when they were strong and of refuge when they were weak. Viewed from the perspective of the Turkic world, it is a backwash region, of secondary development after great Turkic movements had passed through and beyond the province. Its ecological and economic pattern is one of fractionalization and interweaving of three culture areas, all neighbouring, which is an explanation of its complexity: the Turko-Mongol or Altaic, the Tibetan, and the Sinitic.

Shamanism is a common feature throughout the Turko-Mongol area, but occurs only sporadically in China. Future research may show that the former is indeed the classic area of shamanism, the centre, or one of the centres of its spread.

However, another feature joins the Turks, specifically the Eastern Turks, and the Mongols, as well as the Tungus and other Altaic peoples, as the Liao and Kin: their institutional structure. Without developing the point in detail, it may be said that the entire steppe area, largely Altaic in its composition, bore the same relation to China in respect to higher politico-military institutions as did the Mongols.

In regard to ecological patterns, I wish to emphasize that we are here dealing with three zones of interrelationship: the loess plain of agricultural specialization, the highland steppe of pastoral specialization and the forest north, of hunting and reindeer breeding. All three must be taken into account in the economic history of the Mongols. They moved from the forest to the steppe and adopted pastoralism in the form we associate historically with them. And as a people of the steppe, they entered into symbiotic relations with the loess plain of North China.

In the matter of the Mongol economic specialization, they occupy a peculiar position. They specialize exclusively in herding. Thus they are like the more primitive herders to the north. However, they herd numerous kinds of animals. In this respect they belong among the great pastoral peoples. Almost alone among them, they have no agriculture. But this is so because they occupy the steppe north of China.

The place of this steppe, north of the loess plain, south of the forest, has acted at once as a limiting and a liberating condition on its inhabitants. The Mongols came down from the northern forest according to their own

tradition. The movement on to the steppe freed them for the transition from hunting to a higher form of activity, pastoralism, a *régime* already fully developed by previous dwellers in their new land. But the proximity to China, the trade and military relations with China, limited them to one form of subsistence. Why this is so may be speculated on. The nature of the terrain has been proposed as one answer. But the steppe is not always and everywhere inhospitable to agriculture. It is however less hospitable than the loess plain is.

The ecological selectivity when coupled with the economic relations may supply a fuller explanation. Each factor encouraged the other in the direction of full specialization. It is easier to raid a granary already stocked than to grow one's own grain, particularly if agriculture on the steppe is difficult to initiate and to maintain.

That the Mongols are highly conscious of their unity as a people needs little elaboration. Their folklore points to a glorious past when they ruled almost the entire known world. It points to a mighty ruler, Chingis Khan. It points to a hatred of the Chinese. The folklore is borne out by historical reality. The Mongols have been able to move as an independent body on conquest away from the Chinese sphere. They were able to move in the case of the Kalmuks, from Mongolia to the Volga in the seventeenth century. Their hatred of the Chinese took the form of a ferocious bloodletting in 1911 and after, directed against all the Chinese in Outer Mongolia.

Nevertheless they have repeated references in their own histories to the Emperor of China as the supreme ruler, the bearer of the highest political title they have. This anomalous situation can only be accounted for by the fact that their own higher institutions come from the Chinese. The recognition of this fact has taken the form of giving the Chinese Emperors of many dynasties the title Khagan, while they assigned to their own lesser rulers a lesser title, except, be it said, for the period when they themselves ruled China. But their historical references to the Chinese Emperors refer to dynasties both preceding and following the Yüan, as the Kin and the Ming.

IV

The social and political structure of the pastoral peoples of Asia in its higher levels, *e.g.* Mongols and Turks, has been called feudal, especially by the Soviet School. Superficially there is an analogy. The retinue of Chingis Khan looks at first glance like the retinue of a feudal baron, his *auxilium*. There is a distinct noble estate among both types of society, the Mongol and Turk, and the medieval European. The council of nobles in Europe finds its parallel in the nomadic princely assemblies. But this characterization ignores two basic conditions of European feudal social life; one, the identity of the economic and the political unit within the barony: the feudal lord was the

head of both; and two, the elimination of kinship as the basic social tie in the barony as the political and economic unit, where it was replaced by the relationship of lord to serf. These are the formative patterns of society. On the contrary, the steppe nomads of Inner Asia combined within one political unit a number of economic cells, largely independent of one another; thus the political and the economic units were not the same. Within the economic unit, kinship was the dominant factor.

Again, however, whereas the feudal unit was self-sufficient, specializing neither in agriculture nor in herding alone, but combining both together in one, the nomads needed the agricultural produce of China to round out their subsistence. These are the most general differences between the two societies.

Specific relationships among the herders of Inner Asia, such as the *corvée*, find their pattern not in Europe of the tenth century, where it was of a single type, that owed to the lord alone, but in China, where it was twofold. The European type of *corvée* derived from the fact that there was but one level of economic integration, the level of the barony, which was simultaneously the level of political integration. In the Orient, the *corvée* was on two levels, corresponding to the levels of economic integration: the local community (village or village complex) on the one hand, and on the other, the service which alone of the two is on the scale of the political unit, the service to the state or empire. Among the Mongols there was a distinction between the service of the simple herder to his noble, and that to the state.

To these broad differences between Mongol and feudal structures we may add others. The western barony in consequence of its agricultural basis was more spatially stable than the Mongol principality. The degree of craft specialization was more highly developed in the European unit. The Mongols had a special social group of smiths but no other craft-status. (The role of the shamans is a problem of a different order: the shamans can be regarded as a substratum. Shamanism is a primitive, non-hierarchized religion, but more significantly, it developed among the Mongols in their prehistoric period and continued into the era of their cultural advance.)

In the case of agricultural China, the *corvée* system was more complex than in feudal Europe, and vaster in scope, reflecting a more complex political and economic development on the uppermost levels. The *corvée* is labour service by the peasant, the immediate producer, in payment of rent or tax. In China the unit of economic organization was not identical with the political, a situation which was reflected closely in the area of the pastoral margin. Therefore, the payment to a private person, a landowner, whether in kind or in labour service, in the form of rent, could not coincide with that payment in kind or labour service to the state or state-functionary in the form of tax.

Among the Mongols there was a less developed form of the Chinese pattern. The Mongol herder performed two kinds of service, to a person, his

noble lord, and to the state. But it must be understood that the distinction between rent and tax, and the relation between the two, does not apply to the Mongols, who have never evolved the conception of private property in land. This is of necessity so since private property in land would be meaningful only to an agricultural régime. Their property structure in general never had the form which it achieved in China. Here is a clear case where an institution, the tax structure, was projected from the nuclear to the marginal area, despite the difference in mode of subsistence which obtained; and the differences between forms of the institution in both cases are determined by the differences in mode of subsistence and the property relations involved in them.

There is an analogy between thickly settled China with its contiguous thinly settled steppe on the one side, and the American continent of the nineteenth century, with its thickly settled eastern seaboard and thinly settled plains, on the other. Moreover, the Inner Asian steppe as well as the American plains were both inhabited by other peoples than the Chinese or Europeans, as the case may be. Or one might take northern Siberia as an example, in the course of the Russian drive to the Pacific during the past three centuries. In both the Russian and the American instances, the frontier was settled through economic and political motives, it was a normal expansion of the *oikos*, the known world. The indigenous peoples were brushed aside, and the space beyond the settlement or pale was regarded as limitless. Chinese imperial ideology in the past two thousand years may have liked to regard the northern marches not as pastoral steppe, but as wilderness, the frontier, as a solution for the land question. In fact, however, the nomads were already there, ineluctably and necessarily, and in sufficient force if not density to hold the Chinese. The categories of western history are not applicable here, and a conception derived from the purely Chinese point of view is one-sided.

The anthropo-geographic type of analysis has presented the natural environment, soil, vegetation and climate, as intrinsically predisposed to a certain régime, whether pastoralism or agriculture. To this we oppose the conception of the interacting combining of man and his environment through his works, an interaction spatially distributed and synthesized on a vaster level. The transitional zone from pastoral steppe to sown plain does not impose its demands on its human occupants; on the contrary, nomadic herders, that is, men in a given relationship to their environment, together with sedentary farmers, combine to form a zone of transition between them, a zone which acts as a limiting condition to the extension in space of either mode of subsistence. The transitional zone is a derived factor of this relationship, it is not a formative one.

The margin is formed by the transmission of institutions from a higher and at once more stable to lower and less stable cultural level. In the case of

the herding-farming complex, the transmission progressed within a sphere of differentiated productive modes, and within the formation of a supervening circulation process. The participants remained ethnically distinct.

V

The categories here set up have a bearing on the discussion of the culture areas of Asia which has taken place both in the past and in recent years.

The Mongols, as I have sought to show, are in a symbiotic relationship with North China, from the viewpoint of the circulation of goods. The symbiosis, together with the conquest pattern, the specific cultural and institutional traits that have come over the Great Wall, have made the various steppe peoples, including the Mongols, into lesser components of the Sinitic institutional complex.

The Turks on the other hand, save for the remnants now in Sinkiang and neighbouring provinces of the Chinese Northwest, broke away many centuries ago. Nevertheless, they share with the Mongols historically, linguistically and culturally. The specific relations of the Turks to the Mongols, of both to the Chinese, and conversely the Chinese to the former, are complicated; and various factors, ecological, as well as cultural and historical, are needed to explain them.

It is known that the Uigurs, a leading Turkic people of the sixth-ninth centuries A.D., at that time occupied what is today the region of Outer Mongolia, the Mongolian People's Republic. They stood in the same relation to the T'ang Chinese as the successive occupants of the Mongolian steppe have stood to succeeding dynasties: they were a source of needed goods in peace and a menace in war; the raid, trade, and tribute pattern held then as it did both before and after. The political structure of Khan, court, aristocracy, commoners and slaves bore not only a generalized resemblance to the Mongols, but had special features in common with the latter, for instance, the composition of the nomadic court; the participation in the fluctuating international relations of the steppe; the role of the Khan, and so on.

It has been proposed that the pastoral peoples of Asia form one culture area. Factors in favour of such a conception are the ecological pattern which is a constant, and correlative with it, a political-military potential against the sedentary agricultural symbiotes which was constantly being formed by the nomads.

But specific features argue against a culture area hypothesis that includes all the Asiatic pastoral peoples. The exogamic, patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal clan of the nomads of eastern origin, Mongols and Turks, is not a feature of the western, the Arabs, for instance, whose marriage unit is endogamic. The Islamic overlay has even further magnified the

differences between east and west. The Turks, occupying a transitional place geographically, in Central Asia, occupy an intermediate place culturally as well. Certain features, as balanced pastoralism-agriculture on a small, oasis-wide, or valley-wide scale, within the same group, or closely co-operating groups, are western in their type. Other features are eastern. The law among the less developed Turkic peoples, as the Kirghiz-Kazakh, is of eastern origin, close to the Mongol, with much specific borrowing. The latter group occupy the north-eastern zone of the Turkic world, antipodal to the Osmanli. They are among the closest to the Mongols in space and culture.

The Turks of Turkestan thus share with the Mongols cultural elements which are attributable to a common origin and history, dating from before the Christian era; to prolonged subsequent contiguity and contact; and to a common ecological sphere and basic economy in their successive occupation of the Inner Asian steppe.

That they have departed from this fundamental unity is explained by a historic movement, entry into a new ecological pattern and contact with a new cultural world, Islam.

On several occasions, A. L. Kroeber spoke of the pastoralists as part- or half-cultures, analogous to the castes of India. I understand this to be a provisional formulation. Man has in fact bred half-lions, half-tigers, and the centaur is a well-known mythological beast. The essential idea is that pastoralists join with farmers to form a larger bloc. While agreeing with this conception, nevertheless, I feel that it requires further working out, and a more *operational* term.

The conception has value in that it argues against a single pastoral cultural area for all of Asia. A given pastoral society forms instead one cultural facies, centred around an agricultural nucleus, each pastoral group or region relating with its agricultural centre, according to Kroeber. The cultural area interrelated with this economic complex would have as its focal zone, the agricultural component. In my conception, areas of economic interdependence and culture areas should be distinguished. The two economic components are in a symbiotic relationship with each other, unless, of course, it is one and the same group which carries on both activities. Where it is not the case that one and the same group has this division of labour, then we are faced with either small or large (region-wide) scale specialization and symbiosis. And the pastoral peoples in this case are institutionally marginal to the agricultural. Moreover, since the pastoralists are also on a different level culturally, they likewise retain certain primitive features in their social structure which are not to be found, or when found, are in a more evolved form among their focal, agricultural symbiotes.

The organization of the rural population of the agricultural domain, the folk society which is referred to here, is more advanced than that of the

pastoral peoples. Compare, for example, the total eradication of the clan in North China, to the great role which the clan plays or has played in Mongol and Turkic society.

The marginal and at once symbiotic relations of one of the pastoral societies of Asia, the Mongols, to one of the agricultural, the Chinese, is a variant on a general symbiosis that must be studied in all its variability everywhere in Asia.

The complexity of the issues involved makes any formulation a simplification. Nevertheless, I propose the following for Mongol cultural history and its setting: (1) Ethnically, the Mongols are a people conscious of their separate existence as such. (2) Economically, they are an extreme example of specialization in nomadic pastoralism, contrasting with all other pastoral peoples of Asia. (3) They have adjusted for this specialization by entering a distribution and exchange pattern with North China. (4) In terms of the culture area approach, the Mongols are closer to the Turks than to any other people, despite certain historical disruptions of this connection. (5) In their institutional patterns, the Mongols are marginal to the Chinese. Marginality is measured by the complexity and durability of the institutions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bacon, Elizabeth *A preliminary attempt to determine the culture areas of Asia*, Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 2, 1946.
- Barthold, W. *Histoire des Turcs d'Asie Centrale*, Paris, 1945. Adaptation française par Mme. M. Donskis.
- Barthold, W. *Die Historische Bedeutung der Alttürkischen Inschriften*. In Rüdloff, W., *Die Alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei*, Neue Folge, S.-Petersburg, 1897.
- Bernshtam, A. N. *Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskii Stroï Orkhono-Ieniseiskikh Tiurok VI-VIII vv.*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1946.
- Jettmar, Karl *Zur Herkunft der Türkischen Völkerschaften*, Archiv für Völkerkunde, Vol. 3, 1948.
- Kiselev, S. V. *Drevniaia Istoriia Iuzhnoi Sibiri*. Materialy i Issledovaniia po Arkheologii SSSR, No. 9, Moscow-Leningrad, 1949.
- Kiselev, S. V. Review, Bernshtam, *Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskii Stroï . . . Tiurok*. Vestnik Drevnei Istории, 1947, No. 1.
- Koz'min, N.P. *K Voprosu o Turetsko-Mongol'skom Feodalizme*, Moscow, 1934.
- Kroeber, A. L. *Anthropology*, New York, 1948.
- Kroeber, A. L. *Culture Groupings in Asia*, Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 3, 1947.
- Lattimore, Owen *Inner Asian Frontiers: Chinese and Russian Margins of Expansion*, Journal of Economic History, Vol. 7, 1947.
- Lattimore, Owen *An Inner Asian Approach to the Historical Geography of China*, The Geographic Journal, Vol. 110, 1947.

- Myres, J. L. *Nomadism*, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 71, 1941.
- Riasanovsky, V. A. *Fundamental Principles of Mongol Law*, Tientsin, 1937.
- Savitskii, P. N. *O Zadachakh o Kochevnikovedeniia*. In: Tol, N.P., *Skify i Gunny*, Prague, 1928.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm *Das Eigentum auf den ältesten Stufen der Menschheit*, Band II, *Das Eigentum im Primärkulturkreis der Herdenviehzüchter Asiens*, Münster, 1940.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, Vol. IX, *Die Primären Hirtenvölker*, Freiburg in der Schweiz, 1949.
- Schmidt, Wilhelm and Koppers, Wilhelm *Völker und Kulturen*, Erster Teil: *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft der Völker*. *Der Mensch aller Zeiten*, Band III, Regensburg, 1924.
- Vladimirtsov, B. Ia. *Obshchestvennyi Stroï Mongolov, Kochevoi Feodalizm*, Leningrad, 1934. (*Le Régime Social des Mongols, Féodalisme Nomade*, M. Carsow, tr., Paris, 1948.)

December 1950