

# POLICY ALTERNATIVES FOR LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT IN MONGOLIA (PALD)

A Research and Training Project



Research Report No. 4

## **The Social Context of Liberalisation of the Mongolian Pastoral Economy**

Report of Anthropological Fieldwork

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PASTORAL ECONOMY**

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## GLOSSARY OF MONGOLIAN TERMS

- aimag - a primary administrative unit ('province') in contemporary Mongolia, consisting of several sums.
- albatan - subjects of the state in pre-revolutionary Mongolia.
- arat - 'herder' in traditional and contemporary Mongolia.
- arkhi - Mongolian vodka prepared from milk.
- bag - the third and lowest level of administrative unit in contemporary Mongolia, reintroduced after 1990 to replace the brigade.
- bod - (pl.) bodo - a traditional Mongolian livestock unit. The values of animals in terms of bodo are: 1 horse - 1 bod; 1 camel - 1.5 bod; 1 cow or yak - 1 bod; 1 sheep - 0.14 (1/7) bod; 1 goat - 0.1 bod.
- brigade - the former primary production unit within the negdel.
- dzud - frozen snow-cover, which makes it difficult for animals to reach grass under the snow in winter.
- hamjilga - personal subjects of local feudal lords in pre-revolutionary Mongolia.
- heseg - the former secondary production unit within the negdel, often specialised in a given type of production.
- horshoo - voluntary cooperative formed by individuals, recently approved as a form of economic cooperation.
- hushuu - a province in pre-revolutionary Mongolia; a fief governed by a local feudal leader.
- idesh - traditional exchange of gifts of meat and consumer goods between close relatives living in the countryside and in towns.
- khotail - the group of households camping together and sharing labour. It also plays a social role as the smallest local community. It has a loose internal structure and flexible composition from year to year. In the pre-collectivisation period khotails were headed by (and named after) one of the eldest male members - hotyn ahlach.
- nair - traditional Mongol feast organised for a variety of reasons, combined with exchange of gifts.
- negdel - a pastoral state-controlled cooperative in the socialist period, territorially equal to the sum.
- nutag - a site or area of pasture used by a family or group of families (khotail).

- omch - animals given by parents and relatives to children, which become their individual property within the family herd.
- otor - rapid move of animals due to adverse local grazing conditions (over 15-20 km from the main camp) with only a few herders, without moving the main camp and leaving the family behind.
- ovoo - site where the community performs sacrifices (naadam) to the local deities. The term refers also to the small stone semi-altars marking the borders of a local community or special geographical place.
- sahalt - daily exchange of lambs between two or three households camping within a distance of around 1 km, in order to prevent them from suckling their mothers during the day. Mothers will not let other lambs suckle. Lambs join their mothers in the evening, and then suckle after the mother has been partly milked by the herder.
- shabinar - subjects of local monasteries in pre-revolutionary Mongolia.
- sum - secondary administrative unit ('district') in contemporary Mongolia, consisting of several bags.
- suur - the former tertiary, basic production unit in the negdel. Consisted of 1-3 families or households. Intended to replace the concept of khotail in peoples' consciousness and daily practice in the socialist period.
- tursun nutag - a site or pasture customarily used by a given family, inherited from earlier generations in the father's or mother's line. We do not use it in the recent parallel but narrower meaning of the birth place of a given person. Tursun nutag can refer either to one particular seasonal pasture or to the set of four seasonal pastures.

#### EXCHANGE RATE

At the time of field research in mid-1992, the official exchange rate was US\$ 1 = 100 tg; the unofficial rate was approximately US\$ 1 = 250 tg.

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## SUMMARY

The aim of this field research was to recognise and survey contemporary patterns of social relationships, groupings and economic cooperation among Mongolian pastoralists during the current process of economic and political liberalisation. We tried to establish how such relationships are related to traditional pre-revolutionary and pre-collectivisation patterns.

The first chapter deals with the general historical and ecological context of Mongolian pastoralism. The political history of 20th century Mongolia from the formation of the communist state to economic and political liberalisation is discussed in so far as it affected the organisation of pastoral production. For the pastoral sector, recent events mean mainly the dissolution of the state-controlled pastoral cooperatives (negdels) and the beginning of the end of centrally planned management and product marketing. Negdels have been replaced either by a commercialised version (companies), or by genuine pastoral cooperatives (horshoo). The process has been accompanied by large scale privatisation of negdel assets, primarily livestock.

In the same chapter we describe the Mongol pastoral economy and ecology using as an example Erdene district (sum) in Dornogobi province and Tariat district in Arhangai province, where the research was conducted. The analysis of natural constraints to pastoral production is of special significance. Analysing mortality statistics and individual herd histories in both districts we came to the conclusion, contrary to the popular opinion well grounded in the literature, that natural unavoidable calamities happen vary rarely (on average only once per decade) and even then do not have a particularly significant impact on the performance of the herds.

Chapter 2 deals with customary social structures in the pastoral sector and recent changes, in particular with patterns of division of labour at the family level, and kinship structures (including the all-Mongol patrilineal model and the unique Gobi matrifocal one). Detailed aspects of the Gobi 'kinship anomaly' are discussed in the appendices. The current revival of the khotail as a herding group is described. Finally the customary roles and current revival of local communities at different levels are analysed, using case studies.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the system of collective management of pastures in Mongolia, using the example of the Gobi and Hangai zones. We describe the dominant strategies of seasonal grazing movements, and show how these are coordinated within a larger local group. Variability of rainfall and snowfall in the desert zone results in a customary system of coordination of herding movements. We describe this system using a simple explanatory model. To explore the dynamics of this system we investigate conflict situations and ways of conflict-solving. Judging from field experience and other sources, the customary system of grazing arrangements in the desert-steppe zone (eg. Dornogobi) seems still to be an efficient tool, effectively preventing escalation of conflict and environmental degradation. In the Hangai steppe-forest zone, however, thanks to the especially high productivity of environment, there is no competition for resources. Therefore grazing movements are purely ecologically oriented. However, changing membership in local lower order communities, such as valleys, has recently become an issue as a side effect of the privatisation of winter shelters. These changes directly involved around 40 percent of families in a sample area within Tariat district. We elaborate on how this process was carried out and what its causes were. We also discuss the role of the

former negdel authorities in preserving customary rules of land tenure, despite obvious changes in the system. Finally, we discuss the potential dangers to the stability of customary land tenure coming from the increasing phenomenon of absentee-herdowners. So far the danger is negligible, but may not be so in the near future.

In Chapter 4 we analyse patterns of livestock ownership and management before and after privatisation. We discuss ownership and management at the level of the family (including the institutions of pre-inheritance and dowry). There is not much difference compared to the situation before collectivisation. This contrasts with the ownership and management of the former collective (negdel) herds, which have been gradually privatised. We describe the conduct of privatisation in both districts studied. Finally we analyse a range of herders' opinions about privatisation.

Following the dissolution of the negdels and the privatisation of animals, herders started to face such serious problems as inadequate or expensive services and the problem of marketing animal products. Most herders perceive a need to create other forms of economic cooperation which will enable them to cope effectively with the advantages and disadvantages of the market economy. Currently there exist, side by side, three parallel types of economic institution: the commercialised negdels, voluntary cooperatives of the new type (horshoo) and individual herders. We analyse their performance and perspectives for the immediate future, using case studies.

Chapter 5 deals with traditional and contemporary patterns of mutual assistance. Dissolution of the negdels, which had been an institutional safety net for poor families, combined with problems of product marketing and lack of services, has left Mongolian pastoralists in dire straights. We are interested in the extent to which customary safety nets existed, to what extent they survived till now, and whether they can replace the vanishing institutional one. To do this we analyse briefly pre-revolutionary patterns of mutual assistance, coming to the conclusion that the social assistance functions of the monasteries and feudal administration were taken over by district and negdel administration; since the latter institution has now disappeared, the institutional safety-net has more or less ceased to exist.

Patterns of mutual assistance between relatives and neighbours have always existed, but were secondary or only complementary to institutional patterns of assistance. In our opinion these kin- or neighbour-based networks can hardly cope alone with rising poverty in the pastoral areas. This will be especially difficult in situations, where, for a variety of reasons, even the conceptual category of poverty was absent during the negdel period and it will take time to reestablish it in the new situation. Redistributive mechanisms based on wider kin groups, however, have not existed for centuries, mostly due to the existence of institutionalised channels, partly also because the environment did not create serious dangers.

There are however other traditional quasi-redistributive mechanisms in operation, including the nair (traditional feasts combined with an exchange of gifts), idesh (exchange of meat for consumer goods between close relatives living in the countryside and in the towns). The distinctive Mongolian institution of 'brotherhood', and, with some reservations, adoption, can also contribute to re-creating a safety-net in the present situation, although probably not directly. The present operation of these institutions and possible scenarios for future development are discussed.

In Chapter 6 we summarise our observations and conclusions. Some of them are of an analytic nature, and some are aimed at informing current Mongolian government policy, especially with respect to land policy (particularly in regard to land and grazing fees), or with respect to the creation of a new institutional safety-net, based on district structures.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research aims and methods

The aim of the field research was to identify and survey contemporary patterns of social relationships, groupings and economic cooperation among Mongolian pastoralists during the process of economic liberalisation, and to establish how such relationships are related to traditional social organisation.

The main research issues were:

- a) traditional and contemporary patterns of social structure;
- b) the organisation of work in the negdels and recent post-privatisation 'grass-root' patterns of economic cooperation;
- c) effective rules of land tenure;
- d) traditional and contemporary rules of livestock ownership;
- e) traditional and contemporary patterns of mutual assistance among pastoralists.

Research was conducted in two districts (sum): Erdene (Dornogobi province or aimag) in the Gobi semidesert-steppe zone and in Tariat (Arhangai aimag) in the mountain-steppe ecological zone. The research team spent 22 days in the field in Dornogobi (23 August - 13 September) and 10 days in Arhangai (19-28 September), conducted over 120 semi-structured interviews of different length with herdsmen and members of their families, as well as with present and retired district, bag (sub-district administrative area) or horshoo (new voluntary cooperative) leaders. Official sum and bag statistics and documents on livestock productivity, mortality, marketing as well as population censuses were widely and critically used. Participant observation methods were used when the team lived with Mongol families. A number of research issues were discussed with members of other PALD research teams. Their comments and opinions were stimulating and useful, although the full responsibility for the final opinions presented in the report is the authors'. From the ethnographic point of view, data were collected in the areas inhabited by the Khalkha group which in numbers dominates in Mongolia (1989 census: 78.8 percent of the population) but according to our best knowledge the general conclusions (except some elements of social organisation or some customs) are also representative of other minority groups in Mongolia, excluding Kazakhs. The main differences concern the pattern of marriage and kinship structures in the Gobi.

### 1.2 Historical summary: Mongolian pastoralism in the 20th century

Since the beginning of the 20th century Mongolia has undergone several stages of political organisation, each having important consequences for pastoral economy and for social relationships.

#### Pre-Revolutionary ('Autonomous') period

The period between 1911 and 1919, after Mongolia regained independence from the Chinese Empire, called 'the autonomous', was marked by unsuccessful modernisation efforts using some patterns from Russia, the only western-type country in the area. The main achievement of the time was popularisation of the idea of independent nationhood within the wider society. The old feudal social and political structure was preserved and even reinforced, together with the extraordinarily influential position of the lamaist church, represented by the number of lamas or monks which early this century exceeded 30 percent of the population.

In 1919 China again invaded Mongolian territory, ending the short period of sovereignty. Resistance organised by secular and monasterial leaders was not effective enough to defend the country and only the 'popular revolution' of 1921 led by Russia-based communists and some local nationalists achieved full independence from China and gained power in the country, initiating a process of complete reorganisation of the state, economy and society.

The country was divided into about a hundred hushuus (provinces, a kind of fief governed by local feudal-type leaders), while large areas were under the control of numerous monasteries. Apart from the noble and monasterial strata, internally highly hierarchised, society was mainly composed of arats (herders), subdivided into three categories:

- 1) albatan - the most numerous, free from feudal serfdom, were subjects of the state, obliged to pay state taxes and serve in the army;
- 2) hamjilga - personal subjects, or practically serfs of a local feudal lord or an average nobleman, obliged to pay taxes to him and contribute their products and labour, but free from any obligations towards the state;
- 3) shabinar - subjects of local monasteries, with similar obligations, especially labour, and privileges as the former, but addressed to monasteries.

A centuries old stratification within the pastoral population has no contemporary relevance except for one important point relating to land tenure. Customary rules of grazing on lasting nutags, (sites and pastures habitually used by a family or a khotail, a coresiding small community), referred to the albatans and partly to the hamjilgas, or rather their masters. Ordinary herdsman and nobles nomadised within traditional areas, though hushuu rulers and some dignitaries had the right to go beyond and appropriate more convenient pasturages, which often caused discontent among the population. The shabinar, on the other hand, were expected to use fields indicated by a local ruler, i.e. apportioned to a monastery. Instead, they used to wander across the hushuu to the detriment of other herders, thus becoming wholesale trespassers on customary grazing rights. The rulers intervened with monastery principals, who preferred to protect their people and continued to exact the usufruct of lands used by others. Periodic trespassing by nobles was not as serious as the constant license taken by the monasterial estates, but both became slogans for the revolutionary movement of 1921 and for later charges against the lay and clergy feudals. Thus, traditional rules of grazing became a political issue.

### The Communist revolution

Between 1921 and 1932 the communist government abolished all debts to foreign tradesmen and all privileges of the feudal and church hierarchy, confiscating their property and distributing the stock between poor arats; it consequently eliminated the upper strata, often by use of force. The monasteries, more resistant to external influence, survived till 1932 before finally falling victim to bloody persecution. Nevertheless, a significant part of the monks survived and, after a period of life in hiding, joined secular life. The subsequent process of total secularisation of social and family life has strongly reduced integration of local communities and family groupings, generated formerly by ritual means. The ban on religion and religious ceremonial brought about a serious destruction of communal bonds, since monasteries were the only settled centres for trade, administration and social life. Besides, the integrative function of religious ritual was vital for social continuity. Therefore new communal bonds had to be built. The recent restoration of religious life has had rather superficial effect on social structures (more details in Chapter 2). It is currently inspired by active individuals and the older generation, though passively accepted by the wider society. Similarly, many elements of traditional culture which have been forgotten or went into hiding under the pressure of 'modernising' ideology still wait for verification before they are revitalised.

In its economic policy towards pastoralism, the new government did not introduce any significant changes between 1921 and 1959 (despite the distribution of feudal property to the arats), and individual pastoral family households continued as the basic units of production. The government concentrated instead on creating an administrative infrastructure as well as initiating small industry and small trade networks in the towns, while agricultural cooperatives were not made a development priority till the end of the 1950s. Creating small pastoral cooperatives was always encouraged, sometimes successfully, by the authorities but without direct discrimination against individual family households. Rich households were affected by heavy taxation. There were no essential changes in the methods of herding and nomadising, nor in herd structure, though the wealth structure changed in favour of poor households and a general pauperisation of society was evident.

Shortly after the revolution (in 1924) arat households with no animals were 5.3 percent of total households, while households owing herds of 1-50 bodo amounted to 69.7 percent.<sup>1</sup> The remaining 21.3 percent were the households ranging from 51 to 200 bodo, and 3.7 percent those over 200 bodo.<sup>2</sup> Redistribution of feudal and monasterial stock cut the number of stockless households down to 1.2 percent (census of 1939), while medium and smallholders (up to 100 bodo) reached 94.5 percent, and the affluent were only 4.3 percent. After the 1940s wealth differentiation increased but still the share of households owning over 100 bodo reached only 13 percent in 1954. Assuming that the number of 100 bodo marked the lower level of economically and ecologically viable production units,<sup>3</sup> the overwhelming majority were the economically fragile, low-productivity smallholders, unable to raise the productivity of the whole pastoral

1 bod (s.), bodo (pl.), a traditional Mongolian livestock unit, with the following values: 1 horse = 1 bod; 1 camel = 1.5 bod; 1 cow, yak or khainag = 1 bod; 1 sheep = 0.14 bod; 1 goat = 0.1 bod.

2 c.f. Szykiewicz (1981: 26), own calculations based on Botvinnik (1929: 20).

3 c.f. Botvinnik (1921: 21), Jagvaral (1974: 62), Amuga (1926: 4).

economy.

#### Collectivisation of herds

The latter factor along with ideological arguments resulted in the decision by the communist government in 1959 to collectivise private herds and to form negdels or pastoral cooperatives. Herders were allowed to keep a private herd of not more than 2 bodo per person. As a result, roughly 25 percent of all herds remained in private hands and 75 percent became collectivised. Initially pastoralists passively resisted this new property order but have accepted it with time. The acceptance was a combined result of several factors, mainly the pragmatism of the negdel organisation which secured the most essential needs of pastoral families, also giving them access to basic social and economic services, including education. Another reason for accepting the new order was cultural. Mongol culture has incorporated the idea of obedience to authority since medieval times at least. The hierarchical nature of society and the resulting notion of allegiance or subjection have persisted to our times. It had its ideological basis in the heavenly mandate (in the early period) or the moral order (after the introduction of lamaism) which kept man in his due place and status.

The pragmatism which created a bridge between the authorities and the wider society was paralleled by strict control over the movement of all negdel members. They were not allowed to change jobs or leave the area without the approval of the authorities. Identification documents were not issued to arats, tying them to the soil. This law operated till the late 1970s. Despite the totalitarian character of the system, it was, at least since the 1970s, and with many reservations, a pragmatic and accepted case of socialism 'with human face'. Much of its success was due to the specific Mongol mentality determined to find compromises, which was mostly true of both sides, the administration included. Both in old and modern Mongolia, the arats were legally bound to their residence. In traditional society, there were always outlets including changing lord, moving to a monastery or becoming a displaced vagrant person. In the modern period, young pastoralists have found ways to move to towns, mainly to the building industry. Besides, both status and residence could be legally changed through education, or status only through local political activity.

The negdel authorities successfully intensified pastoral production by introducing narrow specialisation in herding, which reduced the labour burden. (More details on the organisation of production are in Chapter 4.2). Zootechnicians, who were responsible for organising pastoral production on behalf of the negdel authorities, in general tried to combine their theoretical knowledge with traditional herding techniques. They rarely got into conflict with the pastoralists, although this was not always true in the early negdel period. With time, an efficient veterinary service was created which effectively prevented the spread of dangerous diseases.

Nevertheless, being a negdel member did not mean an easy individual life, nor an undisturbed continuity of social or cultural values. At the start of collectivisation, relatives were prevented from close economic cooperation. There was a ban on traditional elements of culture, such as religious and family rituals, feasts of social character or the display of jewellery, which were regarded as 'relics of feudalism'. Control over this kind of behaviour was especially strong during the first five years of collectivisation. At the same time, the state tended to introduce 'modern' life into the pastoral environment and accordingly to reform people's mentality. It meant a sort of westernisation in the Russian style, the only known and admissible in

Mongolia. It brought about several important changes, including sedentarisation of sum centres (the sum is the administrative unit equivalent territorially to a negdel). Thus urbanized agglomerations have been introduced into the pastoral areas, giving a focus to many economic and social activities of the herders.

Dependance on the administration increased, thus reducing the spatial distance between a herder and his administrative sum centre. The herder received his earnings in the centre, he spent them there, his children attended the sum school, while each year more and more of his relatives and friends moved to the centre looking for an easier, settled life. Though some administrative and economic power was delegated from the sum centre to brigades, the centre nevertheless retained its attraction, becoming not only an urban village drawing in the nomads, but also a focus for a new type of local community.

#### **Economic liberalisation and privatisation of the negdels**

In the late 1980s political changes in the Eastern block resulted in a fundamental shift in the Mongolian political system (the introduction of a multiparty parliamentary democracy) and in economic policy, which has been changed to a market-oriented economy based on private ownership of the means of production. In 1991-92 the negdels were dissolved and the process of privatisation began. Negdel and state property has been privatised in two stages, the first called the small privatisation and the second the big privatisation. Coupons of a nominal value of 10,000 tugrigs (3,000 tugrigs for the 'small' and 7,000 for the 'big' privatisation) were issued to all citizens. The privatisation process in the two sample sums is described in Chapter 4.3. The first phase of privatisation of livestock and other negdel property has already been completed in all of Mongolia. As much as 30 percent of negdel animals and some elements of infrastructure such as winter/spring shelters have been distributed; the remaining 70 percent has been transferred to the newly established companies.

The latter were planned to be the intermediate stage in the process of privatisation. According to government assumptions, the company herd should not grow, but its yearly surplus in the form of new-born animals should be transferred to company members, who look after the animals as in negdel times. The company is supposed to provide all the services previously offered by the negdel (although some are now charged for), to pay salaries and pensions, and additionally it offers increased possibilities of individual profits. In fact the company is a commercial version of the negdel. In a political sense it is a good compromise between the new political ideas and the interests of the negdel bureaucracy and establishment. Companies were planned to last 5 years, but in many sums were already dissolved after 6-10 months; in others they continue but their future is uncertain.

In the meantime, Parliament passed a bill on forms of property in Mongolia which provided for limited state property in addition to private property (which was preferred) as well as the new institution of horshoo, a cooperative formed freely by private owners. This created new perspectives which have already been taken up by individual or group entrepreneurs. There is now widespread dissatisfaction with company performance resulting from the clash between high expectations and limited possibilities of meeting them in the crisis-stricken Mongolian economy. But when their dissolution was proposed, many herders voted to keep them, from a fear that private herding cannot survive the risky environment. There were numerous cases where administrative pressure was brought in

favour of the official policy. Only entrepreneurial individuals were confident and in favour of fully private ownership (e.g. in Erdene sum in the Gobi) or of horshoo cooperation (e.g. in Tariat sum in Arhangai). In both cases (analysed in detail in Chapter 4.5), the second phase of 'big' privatisation has been undertaken, which is currently the case of most sums in Mongolia. In general, ordinary herders, while appreciating the idea of private animals, do not feel that full privatisation is their own idea, but are conscious that it came 'from above, from Ulaanbaatar, from the aimag, from active entrepreneurial groups, etc'. Facing rising problems with services and product marketing, they would be happy either to return under the safe wing of the negdel/company or to form or join the horshoo, which is perceived by the average herder as a small version of the company with a reduced and more effective administration.

The research was conducted in the middle of this transition, when neither short-term political and economic goals or scenarios were certain (unlike long-term ones), nor were forms of economic cooperation at the local level finally established. The situation is still fluid, as new social and economic processes gain momentum; some new patterns of social behaviour (described later in this report), which have recently emerged, may predominate in near future, but the final result of these processes is difficult to predict.

### 1.3 Characteristics of pastoral economies in the Gobi and Hangai

#### The pastoral economy and its constraints

Mongolian pastoralists keep five types of animal: camels (mainly in the desert and steppe zones), horses (in all zones), cattle (in all zones) with varieties known as yaks and khainags (mainly in the mountain zone, instead of cattle), sheep and goats (in all zones). All species have different food requirements and ideally should be grazed on different pastures: large stock in general need areas with medium-height grass with high green mass and soft stems (although camels can eat grasses and shrubs with hard stems), while small stock, which eat only the upper parts of stems and leaves, should ideally be grazed on short grasses. Each species has a wide range of preferred, edible and nutritionally valuable species of grasses, many but not all of which overlap and can be used by different animal species. Herders know them well, but in practice their choices is often severely limited by the presence of other herders and lack of any grass at all, so compromises are necessary. Herders move from one pasture to another at least four times a year, and so we can speak about spring, summer, autumn and winter pastures. Ideally these seasonal pastures differ significantly with respect to types of grass and their productivity (long standing and drought/frost resistant high grasses as well as less edible shrubs for winter, and shorter, more palatable but fragile grasses in summer). In practice, sometimes a lack of proper winter grasses results in the use of the same grasses as in summer/autumn but in another place, reserved for winter.

During each season herders move their animals very often around the pastures in a radius of 5-10 km from the camp which is quite stable and is rarely moved from the place chosen for the season; in fact such a decision depends only on the availability of grass in neighbourhood. Nevertheless the frequency of camp movements declined during the negdel period and especially quite recently. This was caused by:

- the introduction of specialisation in herding, which resulted in a reduced need for the long movements characteristic of multi-species households;
- the construction of an adequate number of permanent winter/spring shelters;
- a tendency of the negdel/brigade administration to keep their members under control (i.e. in one area);
- the introduction of tractors to move camps (tents, belongings, furniture), which made people in less mentally and technically prepared to move on their own using camels or carts; currently a lack of fuel and spare parts for vehicles, and a need to pay for these services, makes moving with tractors more difficult than ever;
- as important is a tendency for herders to stay close to the sum centre where their children attend school and medical services are available.

In pre-negdel times animals commonly spent the winter and spring without any shelter, or in temporary structures made of dung bricks. In recent decades negdels built solid wooden shelters for animals in the sites formerly used by herders for that purpose. Pastoral tents are put up close to these shelters and are usually not moved at all until the end of the season. In case of extra harsh weather (such as drought in summer or autumn, dzud (frozen snowcover) in winter, or simply heavy snowfalls which prevent animals from grazing grass under the snow), an emergency strategy known as otor is applied. This term strictly means a rapid move of animals (over 15-20 km from the main camp) with only a few herders, without moving the main camp and leaving the family behind. The term is often misused to describe planned, far-reaching grazing movements made with the whole family. Otor can also be organised for a short period in other seasons, if a herder cannot fatten his animals on their usual pastures.

Emergency otors are often directed to refuge areas. Each ecologically viable territory has its own refuge area, with a specially mild microclimate or more often with different vegetation. These areas are usually not widely used as they may have some deficiencies under normal conditions, such as a lack of adequate water sources in summer and autumn, but well preserved high dry grasses which stick out above the snow and can be grazed during dzud when water is obtained from snow, or grasses which in summer/autumn are less palatable than others, but in a critical situation in winter or snowy spring allow animals to survive. Rules of access to pastures are discussed in Chapter 3.

Large and small stock need to be watered every day in summer and autumn, and not less than once every two days in winter and spring. If watered less often, animals lose weight which undermines their survival ability in the following season. In Arhangai there is no problem with water availability, but in the Gobi it is a serious limiting factor.

All species provide herders with the full range of livestock products, including wool/hair, meat, milk, fat and hides, which are either processed on the spot (milk into milk products such as fat, butter, cheese and airaq-kefir), or remain raw (such as meat, wool/hair and hides), and are sold or delivered to the state trading agency as well as being used for domestic

consumption. Animals are used for riding, and to pull and carry loads. Dried manure is utilized as floor-covering for animals, but mainly as fuel (for heating and cooking), although in the mountains it is now being superseded by firewood, which contributes to deforestation in mountain zones.

Herders regulate the time females are covered in order that most births take place in early spring (March to May), when new grass is available for the newborn animals.

Animal diseases, once an important limiting factor in the pastoral economy, are now well controlled by the veterinary service and do not seem to be a serious problem any more. The threat from animal disease is traditionally higher in the mountain zone, where high moist grasses provide a better micro-environment for ticks and other organisms than in the steppe and especially semi-desert zones. Vaccination is well developed and still continues, although dissolution of the negdels and wide privatisation combined with cost recovery for veterinary services may endanger this record in the coming years. So far infectious diseases are rare; all epidemics are immediately treated by the veterinary service and suspected areas are closed for quarantine.

The main animal diseases in the Gobi area are related to cold (hatga) and infections of the udder (delen ovdoh); both can be successfully treated with veterinary drugs. Infectious epidemic diseases are not known there. In Arhangai the list is enlarged by infectious diseases such as brucellosis, and (shulhi), both well controlled by the veterinary service. Tick-borne diseases (hachig tah) were reported as affecting mostly horses and were not dangerous. Another serious problem is bloat (covhrog) caused by eating poisonous grass in the spring but this can be prevented or successfully treated. Finally, rare cases of foot-and-mouth diseases (zoos) were reported, but not recently.

Animal mortality rates are in general low, as is the ratio of mortality caused by diseases compared to other causes. These issues were not our main research subject and we analysed them only in general terms in order to understand the ecological framework within which people take economic and social decisions.

In the Gobi (Erdene sum) the reported rate of natural losses (including new-born animals) for the whole sum (company and private animals) in 1991 was 2.8 percent, and for private herds only 1.4 percent. Among lost animals (in real terms, 2011 cases in the whole sum and only 419 in the private herd) the causes of death in 1991 in the whole sum herd (private herd in brackets) were as follows: frost and lack of food due to frozen snowcover 14 percent (36 percent), recognised diseases 36 percent (33 percent), lost and not found 20 percent (15 percent), probably diseases but unrecognised 30 percent (16 percent). We have not analysed mortality statistics for recent decades, but we surveyed people's memories of disastrous natural calamities; the cross-checked list shows only 4 years (1944, 1964, 1986, 1990) with very heavy dzud which caused high mortality, although in none of these years did more than 10 percent of the total sum herd die, and those that did were mostly new-born animals. More information on peoples' perception of dangers from natural calamities can be found in Chapter 5.1

For Arhangai (Tariat sum) the official sum mortality data are presented in table 1.



Table 1: Livestock mortality in Tariat sum, Arhangai

	Mortality (percent)			
	average for 1960s	average for 1970s	average for 1980s	1991
<u>sum</u> herd ( <u>negdel</u> +private):				
a) adult animals	5.5	3.6	2.5	3.2
b) new-born	5.8	5.0	2.5	0.9
private herd only:				
a) adult animals	2.1	1.6	0.8	<0.1
b) new-born	3.0	2.8	0.3	<0.1

This table suggests several comments:

- a) The average yearly mortality in the 1960s was higher than in the 1970s and 1980s. The reason for this trend is still open: perhaps the veterinary service had not yet been efficiently organized in the 1960s;
- b) In the 1980s, average mortality fluctuated between 2-6 percent without a significant difference between species (2-5 percent for small stock and 3-6 percent for large stock);<sup>4</sup>
- c) The causes of death in general are approximately: 70 percent disease and 30 percent non-disease (snow, wolves, lost, etc.);<sup>5</sup>
- d) Reported mortality of privately owned animals has steadily decreased since the 1970s from several hundreds to nearly nothing.

These data are confirmed by our field data. Only a few of our informants had lost animals in recent years at all, especially due to diseases. Nevertheless it is not clear why herders often reported zero losses to the sum authorities. Perhaps it is a result of a cultural mechanism which says that performance of private herd speaks about the herder's professional abilities, so if losses are low among the majority of herders, the minority also underreported losses to keep in line with majority.

Another unrecognized issue is whether new-born animals which died shortly after delivery are counted in above mortality statistics or not. According to our informants from the sum administration they are included and if so, then the mortality statistics are very low indeed. This issue needs further explanation and confirmation.

In the beginning of the 20th century much higher mortality was reported for the whole of Mongolia (Majski 1921: 80 of appendix): yearly natural losses approximated 23.7 percent. This is the highest known figure, and contrasts with data not long after given by Roszin (1929: 33) who

<sup>4</sup> Based on J. Swift's analysis of local statistics (Tariat 24.09.92)

<sup>5</sup> op. cit.

reported natural mortality of 7 percent for large stock and 6 percent for small stock).

The contrast can be explained tentatively by two factors. One is the harsh times Mongolia lived in the early 1920s, torn by domestic wars which decimated transport animals (by requisitions) leading to increasing immobility of households. Reduced resistance of the herds was also due to a declining number of men who usually took care of the animals and knew folk veterinary cures. Another reason for the high level of reported losses was that the census concerned was combined with taxation. On the other hand negdel statistics on losses are also biased downward to some extent by state planning which set limits for reasonable death rates.

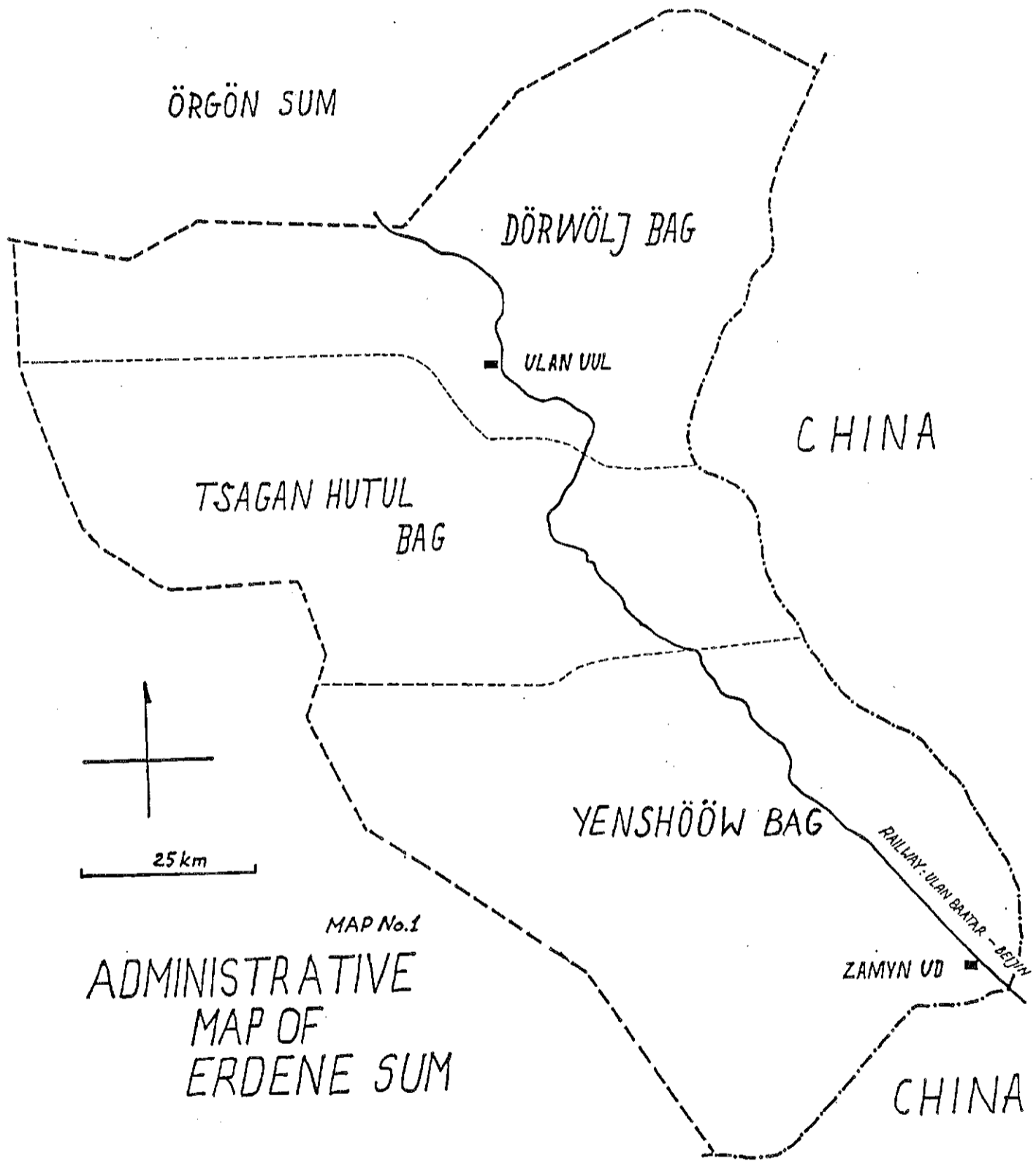
These data, despite their many shortcomings, allow us to form the general conclusion that although climatic conditions are still one of the main constraints to the Mongol pastoral economy, the danger from natural calamities and diseases is not as high as is commonly thought by outsiders. This conclusion is important for the later analysis, especially in Chapter 5.

#### **Dornogobi: The pastoral economy in a desert-steppe zone**

##### (i) Basic data on Erdene sum

Erdene sum where we conducted research lies in eastern part of Dornogobi aimag, bordering with China. Its total area is 7823 km<sup>2</sup>. Erdene is sparsely populated: it has 2550 inhabitants, of whom 1250 are herders living in the countryside and 300 are members of the sum and company administration living in the sum centre. Another 1000 people are employees of the railway and army with their families living in several encampments. The average number of persons per household is around 4. Comparing these records with Simukow's data of 1934 we can observe no significant change since the 1930s: as the pastoralists and administration then amounted to 1700 people, and the average household had 3.8 persons (for details see Simukow data in Appendix 1). In the 1940s Erdene was divided into two sum-negdels (Tsagaan-Hütül and Yenshööw), but shortly after was reunited into one which was until 1990 only sub-divided into two lower administrative units (bags) equal to productive units (brigades) with the same names. In May 1991, after the dissolution of the negdel and brigades, the sum territory was divided into 3 bags (Tsagaan Hütül, Dörvölj and Yenshööw). Borders were changed and some people changed their administrative affiliation (there are now about 100 families in each bag). This had no practical implication other than for administrative censuses. The administrative divisions of Erdene sum are shown in map 1.

The total sum herd (negdel/company and private) in December 1990 was 65,000 animals and in December 1991, 71,000 animals. Of these 28 percent were private in 1990 and 43 percent in 1991 after the first round of privatisation. The biological structure of herd is as follows: camels 5 percent, horses 10 percent, cattle 9 percent, sheep 53 percent and goats 23 percent. Breeding stock in the total sum herd amounts to 42 percent (35,300 female animals of all species) and in private herds only 32.4 percent (10,000 animals). This disparity is caused by the fact that most animals distributed to herders during the first round of privatisation were males. On average, in 1991 reproductive rates (births per 100 females of breeding age) were as follows: camels 37 percent, horses 75 percent, cattle 75 percent, sheep 95 percent and goats 90 percent.



MAP No.1  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
MAP OF  
ERDENE SUM

(ii) Ecology

The dominating Dornogobi landscapes are wide shallow valleys separated by grass-covered, sometimes rocky, low ranges 50-100 m above the valley floor. The vegetation is mainly short (5-20 cm) and thin steppe grasses interspersed with small pockets of higher (20-50 cm) grasses and shrubs of different species, usually with thicker and harder stems.

There are no significant differences between ecological conditions in the three bags, but rainfall differs slightly. The zone of 150-200 mm (the mean for the 1980s) covers the north-east of the sum (Dörvölj bag). The medium rainfall zone (100-150 mm) stretches from north west to south east, covering most of Tsagaan-Hütül and Yenshööw bags. The zone of lowest rainfall (less than 100 mm) covers the western part of Tsagaan Hütül and the north west part of Yenshööw bags.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless in the latter area grass conditions in autumn 1992 were as good as in north east Dörvölj where the rainfall should be theoretically highest, which is a simple illustration of variability of distribution of rainfalls in semi-desert zone.

Rainfall in a given year might vary somewhat from above patterns (based on mean rainfall in the 1980s) influencing local patterns of seasonal herd migration. Such variability is shown by actual total rainfalls in recent years at the sum centre (1987 - 38.9 mm; 1988 - 123.3 mm; 1989 - 38.9 mm; 1990 - 160.4 mm; 1991 - 94.4 mm).<sup>7</sup> Within one bag (around 3000 km<sup>2</sup>) grass conditions and availability of water pools may vary significantly from one place to another and may also change within one season, further influencing herders' decisions.

Availability of water is the main limiting factor for a successful pastoral economy in the Gobi environment. In the pre-negdel period there were only a few shallow hand-operated wells made by local communities. Their number rose during the negdel period, hand pumps have been improved, and several diesel pumps were built. Nevertheless local lack of watering-points is still the main obstacle for rational and efficient grass utilisation in the whole sum throughout the year. This is especially true in the summer/autumn, but also in winter/spring. The snow-cover in the Gobi is at best very shallow (2-5 cm), and often non-existent, which force herders to build winter/spring shelters close to permanent wells, often not far enough away from summer/autumn pastures. This leaves unused large tracts of grass throughout the year, especially at higher altitudes, and creates additionally potential conflict situations in the crowded valleys (see Chapter 3). As has been already said, large and small stock need watering every day in summer and every second day in winter/spring. Typical hand wells can serve no more than 2-5 families, so availability of water is the main constraint in such valleys; in valleys where engine-run wells are installed, grass availability generally limits the number of resident families.

(iii) Land Use

Typical patterns of herd and pasture management in the Gobi assume the need for migration between four seasonal types of pastures as in the rest of Mongolia. In the Gobi neither the altitude of pastures nor the types of grass utilized in all seasons differ significantly (although ideally short palatable grasses are grazed in late spring/summer/early autumn and higher grasses and shrubs during the remaining seasons). In practice,

6 Based on data from The Dornogobi Aimag Atlas, Ulanbaatar, 1990.

7 We warmly acknowledge Louise Cooper's assistance in collecting data on rainfall in Tariat and Erdene sums.

summer and winter pastures interlock, and one household's winter shelters and pastures borders with another's summer pastures in the same valley. Taking into account present availability of water (and the lack of new investments or maintenance of old ones), the ecological capacity in Dornogobi is probably reaching its upper limits. A graphical picture of the seasonal migrations of 25 sample herders from Dörvölj and Yenshöow bags is presented in map 2.

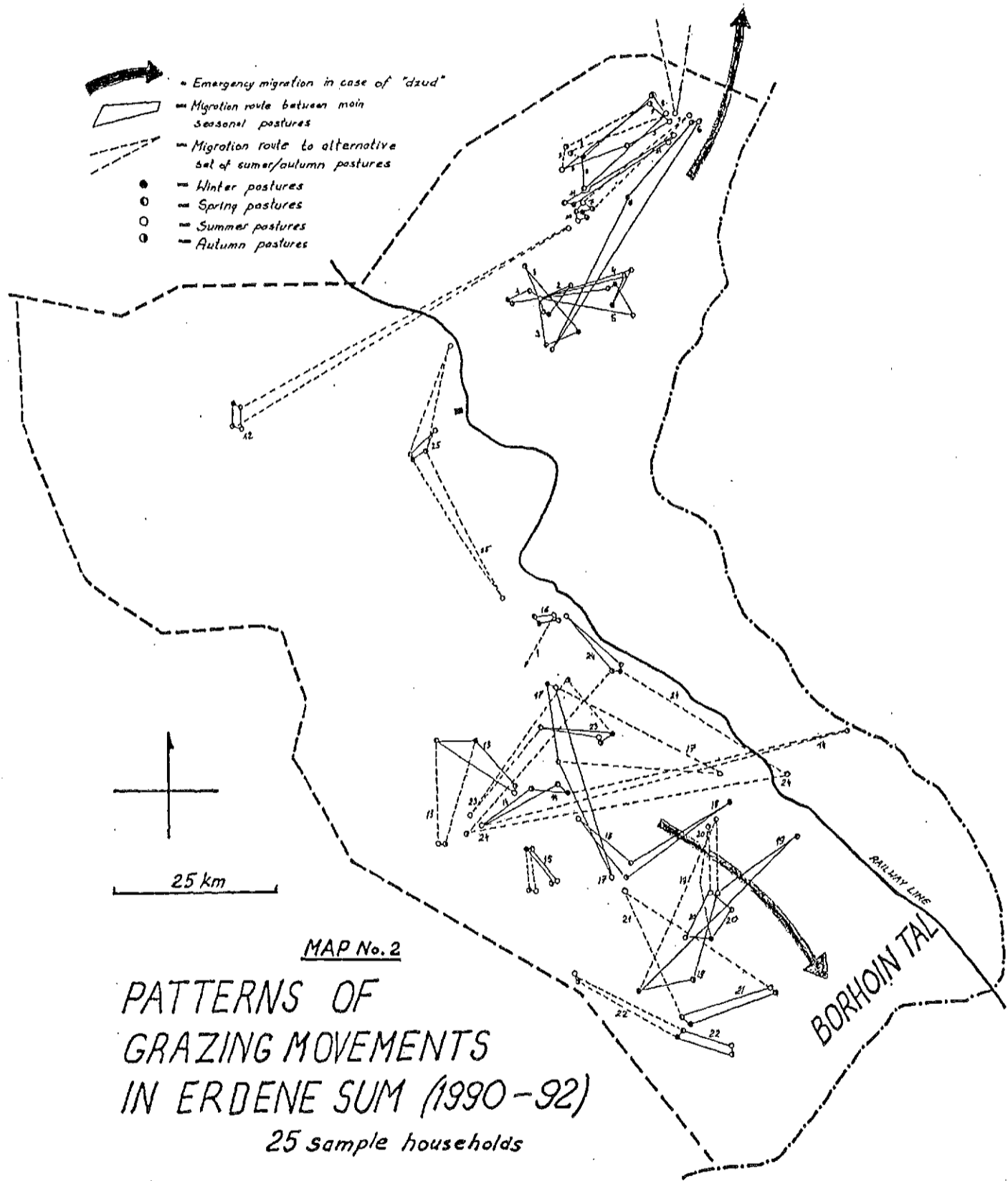
Two general conclusions can be drawn from this schema:

- a) Lines representing movements of individual households interweave extensively, which confirms the assertion that division into seasonal pastures in Gobi has a more customary than ecological character. There is no clear division into ecological zones although there are two refuge areas available for sum inhabitants, one called Borhoin Tal in the southern part of Yenshöow bag, serving the southern and central part of the sum and a second called Argalin in neighbouring Urgun sum, which serves all the inhabitants from the northern part of the sum. In negdel times large scale border crossings always had to be subject to the approval of the authorities of both sums, although this was often sought after the event.
- b) The observable picture is the result of individual decisions by herders over the last 3-4 years. Analysing them we recognize two slightly different models: one (D) in Dörvölj, and the second (Y) in the whole of Yenshöow and southern Tsagaan Hütül. We did not visit central and northern Tsagaan Hütül bag and, having only indirect and unconfirmed data on the precise migration patterns of its inhabitants, we decided not to classify them in a definitive way, although logically they should comply with the (Y) model.

Model (D) assumes that each household has one basic set of four seasonal pastures, customarily used by that family and highly valued by its members, plus one set kept in reserve and utilised rarely, when the need occurs. Model (Y) assumes that each household has 2-3 equally important, alternatively utilized, sets of pastures.

It seems that these slight differences in preference come from different rainfall patterns in the two areas covered by research. In Dörvölj, rainfall is more stable and predictable, grass is available each year with higher probability in the same places, and one basic set of pastures is enough. In untypical years (seasonal drought or serious dzud), all households have one reserve set. In Yenshöow bag, where rainfall is more random, having two or three sets of pastures, equally valued and utilized alternately according to grass availability, is a more rational strategy. Decision making processes in choosing between these sets is discussed in Chapter 3.

The average range of seasonal migrations, that is the distance between the four main seasonal pastures, does not exceed 10-15 km, although in drier years and especially in Yenshöow it might be significantly larger. In the pre-revolutionary period some herders, in anticipation of a lack of grass in winter due to autumn drought, decided to migrate to the north in winter, reaching as far as the Hentei mountains (300 km away). Such a migration took months. In Erdene, according to herders' memories and interviews with retired officials, such a migration happened most recently in 1944 and never during the negdel period, when organised emergency migrations were restricted to the aimag territory.



On the other hand, during the negdel period hay was brought to Erdene from other aimags by rail; in years of heavy snowfall, transport and clearing equipment, as well as labour, were brought from other sums and neighbouring aimags. Erdene is totally dependent on external hay production. Low and thin Gobi grasses do not provide much prospect for hay, but even the small existing possibilities were not utilized by the negdel. In 1992 we noted the first attempts at organising local hay-harvesting, which had been practiced in a limited way before collectivisation in several small areas in the sum.

Contrary to the notion of the severity and unpredictability of the Gobi climate, well established in the literature, we have not recorded such a picture either from statistics or from herders themselves. Climatic calamities like seasonal drought (gan) or heavy snow (dzud) certainly happen, but rather seldom and are limited in space; therefore emergency migrations (otor) usually satisfactorily cope with the situation. As a result, herders feel relatively secure,<sup>8</sup> especially since during recent decades they were receiving large scale assistance from the negdel (building of shelters, provision of hay to negdel and private animals on the spot, free transport, veterinary service, additional labour in time of labour shortage). All these resulted in a relatively high level of self-confidence and a certain 'demobilisation' on the part of a significant number of herders. Such people may now feel helpless in the new market conditions following dissolution of the negdels.

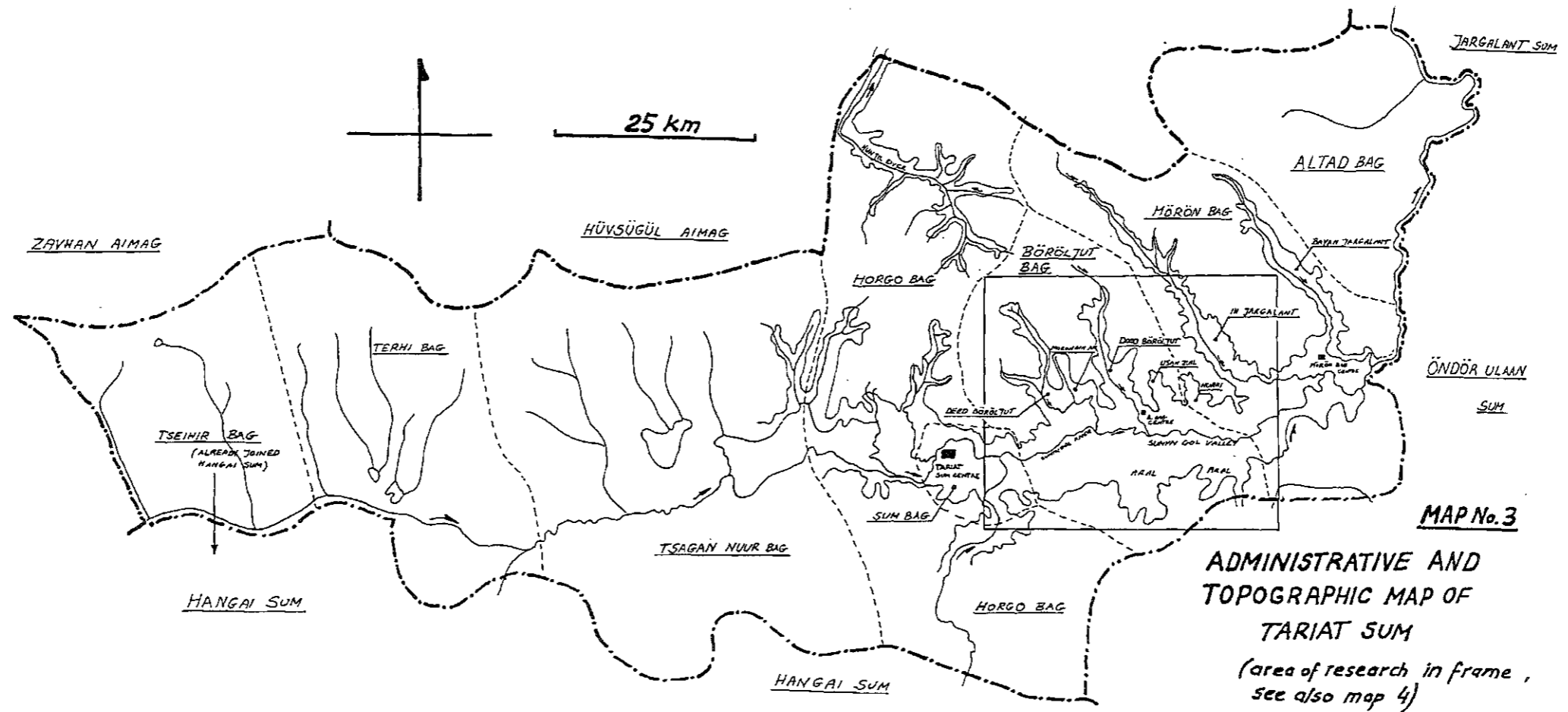
#### **Arhangai: The pastoral economy in a mountain-steppe zone**

##### **(i) Basic data on Tariat sum**

The second sum in which we conducted research was Tariat in Arhangai aimag. Its total area is 4653 km<sup>2</sup>. Tariat is inhabited by 5400 people living in 7 bags (see map). Most of them work as herders, some (around 1500) in the sum centre are employed in the sum and company/horshoo (formerly negdel) administration. After dissolution of the negdel a significant number of families (16.6 percent in our sample), formerly employed in administration at sum and brigade centres, came back to pastoral occupations. The administrative and topographic features of Tariat sum are shown in map 3, and the research area in more detail in map 4.

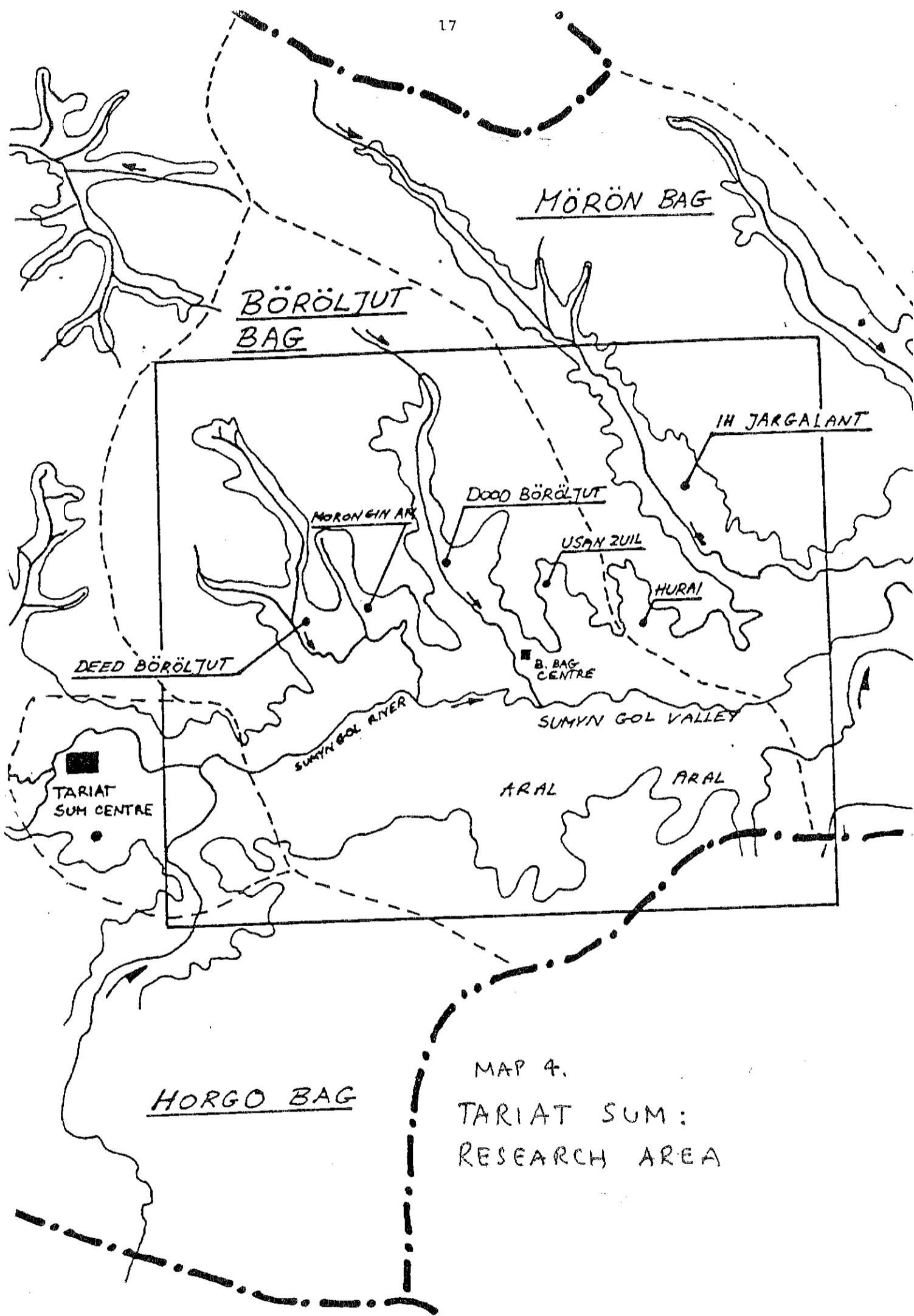
We arrived a week after the reorganisation of the sum administrative structure, enlarging the number of bags from 5 to 7. (The changing borders in Tariat sum will be analysed in Chapter 2.3). Here it is important to say only that we worked in two bags: Böröljüt (in Dood Böröljüt, Möröngin am, Deed Böröljüt, Usan Zuil valleys), and Mörön (in one of its valleys called Ih Jargalant, not reaching the second one called Bayan Jargalant). Until September 1992 Ih Jargalant valley still belonged to Böröljüt bag, while Mörön bag stretched from Bayan Jargalant valley to the east (see map). In a real sense a change of bag structure (the official aim of which is to limit the number of bag members in order to facilitate more effective administration) does not mean re-drawing physical

8 In the Gobi, people do not eat carrion and do not even collect hides, which they were supposed until recently to deliver to the negdel, and preferred to pay fines instead. There are two separate explanations although perhaps the second is conditioned by the first: (i) food security is not endangered and there is no rational reason to eat such meat, or (ii) customary belief is that the sudden death of an animal protects people against other greater evils which they had not expected, and they prefer not to touch such an animal.



**MAP No. 3**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE AND TOPOGRAPHIC MAP OF TARIAT SUM**  
*(area of research in frame, see also map 4)*





MAP 4.  
TARIAT SUM:  
RESEARCH AREA

borders but just changes peoples' official affiliation in sum documents. It does not directly influence peoples' everyday lives. Nevertheless it has a significant importance for local politics, as the new administrative division reflects pre-revolutionary and pre-negdel divisions into local communities of the higher order.

The total number of animals in Tariat is 96,000 (December 1991) which is 12 percent less than in December 1990, but at the same level as in the second half of the 1980s. The species structure of total sum herd is as follows: horses 9 percent; cattle (mostly yaks) 27 percent; sheep 57 percent; goats 7 percent. Breeding females amounted on average to 40 percent of the herd (slightly less for large stock at around 35 percent, and slightly higher, around 45 percent, in small stock).

After the first round of privatisation in August 1991, 71 percent of the whole sum herd was private, and after the second round in June 1992 only a few hundred animals remained undistributed.

The number of animals in Tariat sum is slightly larger than in Erdene, but taking into account the difference in population size the animal:human ratio is significantly higher in Erdene (desert steppe zone) - 45 animals per person (excluding railway staff and soldiers with families) - than in Tariat (mountain steppe zone) with 17.8 animals per person. Standardizing the Erdene and Tariat herds (which have a different species structure) into bodo units, the difference is only slightly smaller: in Erdene 16.7 bodo per capita, in Tariat 8 bodo per capita. This observation reflects important economic differences between the two areas and explains why people in Dornogobi gained relatively more during privatisation than people in Khangai.

(ii) Ecology

The dominant landscape forms are deep, long valleys separating high (up to 3000 m above sea level) mountain ranges. The geographical axis of the eastern part of Tariat sum, covered by our research, is the main, 8-10 km wide and nearly 100 km long valley, which stretches from the centre of the sum to its eastern border. Along this valley flows the main river of the area, Sumyn Gol, which has many tributaries flowing from smaller side-valleys. People live mainly in these side valleys which cut deeply into the mountain massifs north and south of the Sumyn Gol valley, although the main valley is also temporarily utilised in spring and summer. Each side valley forms one ecologically sustainable unit, a micro-environment used by a given local community.

The vegetation is quite diversified: on the open valley floor low, thin grasses (preferred by small stock but also good for large stock) predominate, while on the slopes and upper parts of the side valleys grow mainly thicker and higher grasses (preferred by large stock as they contain more green mass). Both types winter well under the snow but the higher grasses are easier to graze during that season as they reach out above the snow-cover. In general there is no problem of lack of grass throughout the year in Tariat and if this does happen it is limited to places where many families graze their herds. Usually large tracts of undergrazed grass remain till the following year.

Typical snow cover in Tariat and the rest of Arhangai is 10-20 cm, although 5-10 cm is not uncommon. There are valleys which are known to have deeper snow cover (e.g. the lower part of Usan Zuil, Aral and Dood Böröjüt valleys) and less snow (as in upper Usan Zuil, Ih Jargalant, and

Deed Böröljüt valleys).

Typical rainfall in the Khangai zone is 250-350 mm, with higher precipitation in mountains and less in valleys. Rainfall is concentrated mostly (80 percent of the yearly total) in the period between May and September. Total rainfall recorded (in the sum centre situated in a wide valley) for the whole of Tariat sum during the last six years (1985-91) was: 1985 - 193.7 mm; 1986 - 137 mm; 1987 - 290.8 mm; 1988 - 81.2 mm; 1989 - 246.3 mm; 1990 - 205.6 mm; 1991 - 213.5 mm. This does not show significant variability.

There are no typical refuge areas in Tariat. In the case of deeper snow cover, herders usually move to another part of the same valley or to a neighbouring valley. An area in neighbouring Ondor-Ulan sum has the reputation of having always thinner snow cover and in cases of higher snowfall it is always possible to move temporarily there (otor). The former negdel authorities (through an agreement with the Ondor-Ulan sum-negdel) sent large herds of horses and cattle there each year and there were herders, specialised in such winter migrations, who did it each year.

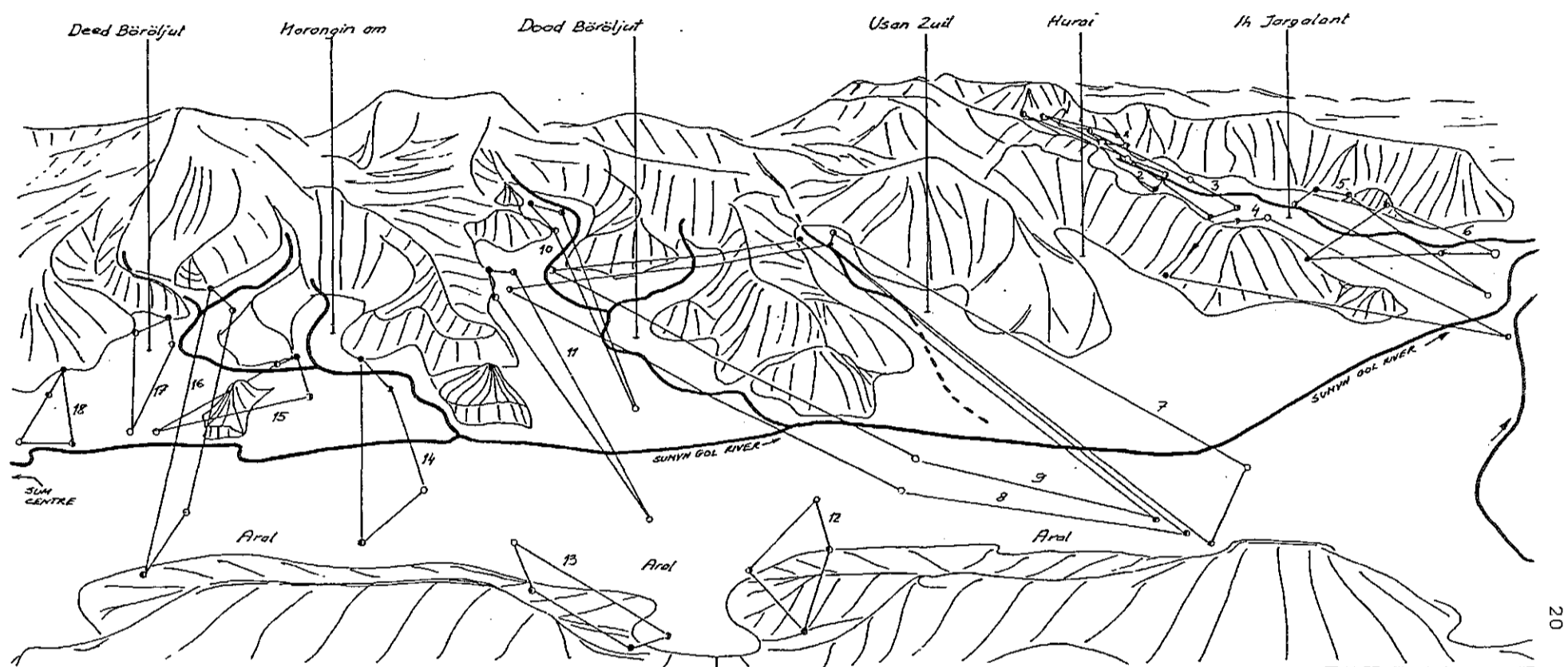
Availability of water is not a problem in Tariat. In the area covered by the research only in one minor valley called Hoorai (literally: 'dry') is there neither stream nor river, and even this valley can be utilized in winter when water is available from snow.

Hay is widely used in Khangai as the reserve fodder for adult animals and the main fodder for new-born and young. Most of the demand is met by hay-making within Tariat itself. In the negdel period hay was made by a specialised team and distributed free to winter camps according to expected need. In 1992 hay was cut by herder families themselves in higher areas although many of them informed us that they collected less hay than usual and that it may not be enough.

### (iii) Land use

Each side-valley joining the Sumyn Gol valley forms one ecologically-sustainable unit, a micro-environment utilized in principle by a given local community. Map 5 shows, using the example of Ih Jargalant, the general model of pasture utilisation in these side-valleys. Winter shelters are usually placed at the foot of the slopes or very close to it, preferably in the mouth of a smaller side-valleys or in hollows in the slope. Animals in winter are grazed on the slopes where the snow cover is thinner and old high grass is easily accessible. Animals grazed on the leeward side of the slopes are better protected against a strong wind with snow than on the valley-floor. Places around winter shelters are customarily reserved from grazing in other seasons.

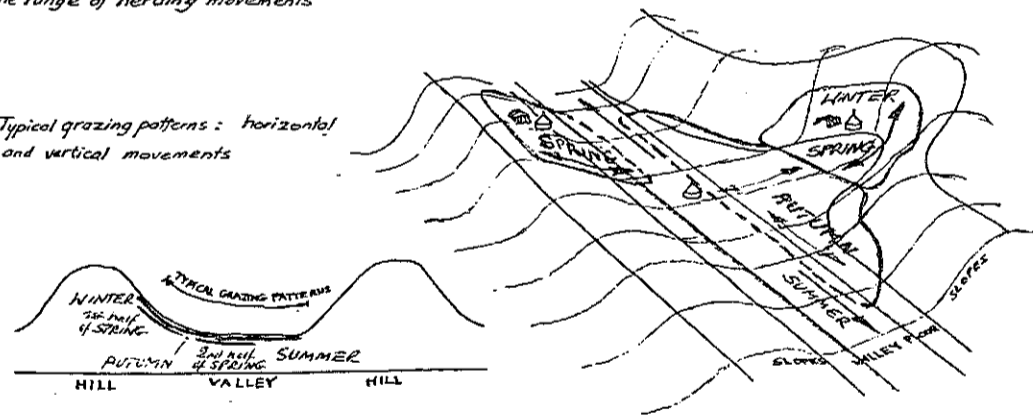
In spring most herders stay in their shelter and graze their animals in another sector of the same adjacent territory. A minority which have built a separate spring shelter in another suitable place, where snow thaws quickly (e.g. in the Ih Jargalant valley, in its upper part and on southern slopes), move there with their families and animals which graze old grass till the appearance of the new. (Such separate spring shelters are usually built by families themselves, not by the negdel). In late spring herders usually move down the slope to the valley floor and horizontally to the



Operational view showing the range of herding movements

Map 5  
**PATTERNS AND RANGE  
 OF SEASONAL GRAZING  
 MOVEMENTS IN BÖRÖLJÜT  
 BAG (TARIAT SUM)**

Typical grazing patterns: horizontal  
 and vertical movements



lower, flatter and wider part of the valley where the new short grass grows most intensively; they also stay in this area for summer. In autumn (August-September) herders come back closer to their winter shelters but do not approach too close in order to save the grass for the coming seasons. Another reason is that the short grasses in the lower part of valley have already dried up, while to get fat before winter, animals have to eat the more succulent taller grass up the valley. In the Ih Jargalant valley, which is the largest in the research area, nearly all movements are made within its borders and are more vertical than horizontal (see map 5: animals graze at the foot of the slopes in autumn, slightly up slopes in winter and early spring, and down on the valley floor in late spring and summer, each time searching for the best and still unused grass). However, horizontal movements also exist. In other smaller valleys, such as Deed and Dood Böröljüt, horizontal movements predominate. The small areas involved limit the productive potential of the pastures and therefore most of the herders move in summer out of the valley, crossing the Sumyn Gol river and staying on the other side in the area called Aral, which is known for its first class summer grass. Some herders even have their own spring shelters there. Permanent residents of Aral, however move mainly vertically: in spring and summer, down the slopes to the valley floor, and in autumn/winter up the slopes of the mountains south of the Sumyn Gol river.

Usan Zuil is a special case in this system. This short but wide valley has limited water (one small stream disappearing into the grass) but in winter has exceptionally little snow-cover (except in the lower part). It has been traditionally utilized as winter pasture by many families, while only a few stayed in this area in autumn. In spring and summer they all move to Aral on the other side of the Sumyn Gol river. Other smaller valleys also have their own seasonal specialisation, and only Ih Jargalant and Bayan Jargalant are generally ecologically self-sufficient throughout the year. Hoorai valley is used only in winter (it lacks water but has good high grass). Dood Böröljüt, with the exception of 5 families who spend all four seasons there (two in the northernmost part and three closer to the former brigade centre), is utilized as good autumn pasture for most of herders (18 families) who winter in Usan Zuil. Dood Böröljüt does not have a good reputation as winter place due to its usually thick snow-cover. Deed Böröljüt and Möröngin am are utilised mostly as autumn/winter pastures, families ideally should move from there in spring and summer to save the grass for the next two seasons. The proper functioning of this system is seriously threatened, we were told by the permanent inhabitants, by the arrival of several families from the sum centre after the dissolution of the negdel and the privatisation of herds and shelters. These families do not have their own spring shelters either in Aral or on the western side of Deed Böröljüt valley in the way the permanent inhabitants do, and will therefore be forced to stay in their winter shelters during spring, utilizing the grass reserved for the coming autumn/winter. This potential conflict may develop into a real one in coming years, we were told.<sup>9</sup> Due to the size of the population, the inhabitants of Deed, Dood Böröljüt, Usan Zuil and Aral are now functionally interdependent and would have problems if forbidden to move from one valley to another. Nevertheless in the distant past such ecological autarky was probably possible. These ecological and

9 Herders say that since specialisation was abandoned, the local environment is less rationally utilized and can nowadays sustain a smaller number of animals of all species, compared to the negdel period when upper Deed Böröljüt specialised in cattle because of the abundance of medium to high grasses.

economic interrelations extend, as we will see, into the social sphere, and contribute to forming a local community of a higher order, comparable to the unit formed by the inhabitants of Ih Jargalant and Hoorai.

Typical seasonal migrations in the Böröljüt area, presented in map 5, show the variability in individual decisions. Although in principle herders are free to change pasture, usually they do not do this unless driven by external forces, so this is a stabilising characteristic of the whole system. Serious changes took place just after privatisation, when families changed winter shelters, although usually within the borders of the same valley (local community). The system of effective land tenure is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

One more issue needs elaboration. For historical reasons the present borders of Tariat sum were drawn in the 1950s without taking the ecological situation seriously into account. As a result, the northern part of Böröljüt bag as well as the northern part of Tsagaan Nuur and Tsheihir bags were often visited by herders from a neighbouring sum of Hubsugul aimag, in theory illegally but in practice with the silent approval of the Tariat authorities. The reason was that those areas were not interesting for Tariat herders, as they form part of the ecological system of the neighbouring sum and are not easily accessible for them. In case of dzud, Tariat herders move east to the neighbouring area of Ondor Ulaan sum.

Analysing sum statistics, we see that once per decade there is a year with mortality significantly higher than usual: 1968 - mortality in the total sum herd 12.9 percent of new-born animals and 10.9 percent of adults; 1977 - respectively 9.7 percent and 9.3 percent; 1983 - 6.6 percent and 4.7 percent. In private herds mortality was half this or less. We are not sure of the reasons, especially since in people's memories these years are not recorded as disastrous or significantly different from others. Despite this all our informants felt respect for the environment, understood the need to prepare for winter, although at the same time they all felt relatively secure. Nobody knew of a single family (in living memory) which had lost everything or even a significant part of the herd due to natural calamities, and when families had lost animals, others attributed this to lack of professional herding abilities rather than to unavoidable natural calamities.

## 2 CUSTOMARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN THE PASTORAL ECONOMY

### 2.1 Family and kin groups

The trivial observation that the family is the basic form of social organisation and production unit is true for Mongolia only until two or more families start to live together. At that moment, many family functions become shared between families in clusters, irrespective of whether they are related or not. In such cases the family loses a part of its independence, becoming part and parcel of a wider group which takes responsibility for its own functioning. Paradoxically, this is a result of the fact that the pastoral family's close interrelation with the nomadic economy imposes a particular type of organisation, no matter what kind of group undertakes the task. Since families unite almost exclusively for economic reasons the interrelation becomes evident. In old Mongolia, clusters were composed of families related by descent, patrilineal as a rule. Descent groups, corporate in character, might have been represented in one such cluster, or in several cooperating ones. The Khalkha clusters, however, did not represent kin units but emerged from among related families according to the size of herds, ecological conditions or reasons of security. With time, descent groups disintegrated, beginning in central Mongolia, so that in the 19th century practically no traces of them were left there. Nomadizing groups were still composed of related families, often controlling a combined herd, though this was already no longer a corporate asset and therefore was easily divided. Such a picture was true for much of Mongolia at the start of this century and continued in a diluted form till the 1950s. Nomadizing clusters were not necessarily composed of relatives, but in most cases clusters were necessary for pastoral management. Such clusters are commonly called khotails and we will use the word throughout the text.

#### The Pastoral family in its economic aspect

Herders live predominantly in nuclear families with joint relatives of ascending generations or with collaterals. Relationships with members of younger generations is not easily discernible due to the widespread practice of adoption, whether formal or informal. Most families are now composed of linear relatives, though in the 1930s population records show that a majority included collaterals. According to 1925 records from two Arhangai hushuus, almost a quarter of families included male collaterals with their offspring. This is explainable in terms of kin assistance towards orphans, disabled or destitute relatives. The latter category probably predominated in this particular case, though it also included children of the former category since dependants were not able to procure property and left their progeny in poverty. Destitution is rather rare now due to many job opportunities in a newly urbanizing country, though the disabled are often maintained by their kin.

An average family consists of five members, three of whom are usually capable of working, while child labour is also very common. Single persons are quite often reported (5.4 percent of families in 1925 and 7.4 percent in 1969, both in pastoral samples), but this is an account of official population records, while in practice such people live jointly with their kin, even if in a separate yurt. Statistically the category of incomplete or inadequate families, lacking one spouse, is also numerous. Disregarding unmarried women, it consists of single widows or widowers who adopt a child or two according to the belief that it is a child who

makes the family. Besides, each yurt is synonymous with the family and consequently requires continuity: adoption meets this requirement.

The concept of hearth continuity is important for the Mongol family. Its sacral meaning notwithstanding, it has also an economic aspect. Generally it is the youngest son who is supposed to stay with his parents, inherit the yurt, their herd and other assets. Therefore his share is usually bigger than that of his brothers (sisters do not inherit, but are endowed with a dowry which does not necessarily mean a lesser share). In a patrilineal society like the Mongol one, it is normal that boys become heirs, but paradoxically they are not necessarily patrilineal descendants. It quite often happens that parents adopt, rather informally, the natural children of their daughters when the latter get married. Such grandchildren enjoy full rights of children and become heirs, which usually does not involve conflicts, though sporadically conflicts occurred in the period of private economy. Conflicts are also unlikely in the future due to the customarily accepted bonus in the emotional attitude towards the adopted.

Customary rules of inheritance were not uniform and differed from place to place or were even subject to the individual choice of a family head. The general pattern was and remained that of pre-inheritance, with shares allotted to children on marriage (for more on inheritance see Chapter 4.1). Prior to collectivisation there were cases resembling joint families when a father kept his married sons together, all commonly exploiting an undivided herd. Such a situation might continue after the father's death, in which case there was a khotail of brothers with an aggregate herd. Usually this did not continue for long, but in such cases the main motivation was to keep a viable herd, preserving a structure adapted to the needs of a rationally organised household. Similar situations may arise in the future. They can be detrimental to the position of a widow after the death of one of the brothers, who could be left without any property due to an unsettled inheritance. This in turn could produce indigent dependants from among the widow's offspring. A solution might depend on taxation; progressive taxation would be an incentive for prompt herd division, but this would also result in many poor households. This was the case in the early 1950s, when a progressive taxation policy favoured premature dividing up of the stock. The process was stopped by a 1954 law providing for combined taxation of herds even after their natural separation. Neither measure, however, is to be recommended taking into account their harshness and the strong dissatisfaction they produced.

The division of labour has remained stable for decades. Men's jobs include the organisation of grazing and of nomadizing, care of large stock including during otors, that is long distance grazing of horses and perhaps camels away from the household, the search for lost animals, breaking in horses and camels, castration and veterinary care, slaughtering, shearing, and building the yurt or shelter, making implements and harness, all sorts of repairs, hunting, transport and organising caravans. Women tend children, prepare meat and milk products, except arkhi which is usually a man's responsibility, cook, collect dung, milk animals, care for small stock, carry water, sew clothes and interior and exterior yurt coverings. Common responsibilities include animal births, care of newborn animals, collecting dung in enclosures, putting winter camps in order, striking camps and dismantling and reassembling yurts, nomadizing, making felt, tanning hides, plaiting cords, making shoes, haymaking, curing people, gathering edible plants, and many others. Children take part in all lighter chores, especially those done by women. Generally, men's activities take place outside the yurt



and with the stock of large or 'long-legged' animals, while women's work is the opposite. This division has a long historical tradition and has undergone little change. The most spectacular changes were milking mares and shearing, formerly done by men and now by women, the latter activity shared by both sexes. This fits with the general rules of labour division, however ambiguous, that milking and small stock are women's domain, though the former allocation complied with the rule that horses and shearing are under men's control. Most probably this additional women's burden has not been compensated by a reduction in other labour.

Women's tasks are more constant, regular and done daily as opposite to seasonal, unsystematic and itinerant duties of men. The latter are often absent and are not expected to act promptly or punctually. The discrepancy in performance results in varying attitudes to responsibility and accountability, both between genders and within the male population. Adding men's liking for social life and pastimes, a stereotype has been created about Mongol men's laziness, already known from ancient Chinese chronicles. This is not entirely fair, though the Mongols themselves acknowledge the fact by differentiating residents of the Gobi and Hangai along the same lines. Men are also apt to take less physically demanding positions; quite often one can see them in white collar jobs in administrative institutions in small towns, excluding perhaps the Gobi, while women are engaged in construction for example. There are also differences in time allocated to work according to gender, as research done in the early 1950s shows (table 2).

Table 2: Daily Work of Mongolian Herders in Different Seasons

	Daily work (hours and minutes)		
	Men	Women	Youth both sexes
January	8'25	11'28	4'36
March/April	9'02	11'50	9'22

Source: S. Jadamba, Basic problems of contemporary pastoral collectives in Mongolia (in Russian), unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The State Institute of Economy, Moscow, 1954, p.179.

Two contrasting periods in terms of pastoral activity have been chosen for comparison: least busy (January) and most busy (spring). Women work more than men in both seasons; young people work at household production for more hours than adult men in spring. The problem of child labour will become important soon, as already shown by news about households withdrawing children from school, reported last year. Exploiting children's work, or rather their spare time, has always been a feature of the private pastoral economy. It became less acute during recent decades due to the development of boarding schools in sum centres, which in turn created a new problem: the alienation of young people from the pastoral skills and a drastic change in values in favour of urban life and non-pastoral activities. Now, it seems, it will be difficult to reconcile the need for

education with the need for spare hands on the family farm. The attractions of towns should, however, lessen as a result of future unemployment which will keep young people in the countryside and perhaps create there local pockets of hidden unemployment, as in the past.

A relaxed attitude to work is part of a general outlook and philosophy of life, and cannot be changed overnight or even over a decade. The existing system of values demands that children are socialised by household work, that adults work to support others and are supported in their turn by others, while elders enjoy respect. This system can accommodate some unemployment, though the term is not accurate in the present situation in pastoral areas. It is a common knowledge that such areas have been depopulated for decades during the negdel period and the age structure is now unbalanced, with a shortage of middle-aged people. At the same time there is a flow of town dwellers back to the privatised herds, and this trend is likely to increase.

Overpopulation is not an obvious word for Mongolia, but this was the real situation, particularly in the Hangai in the 1930s, where many people would have been idle if they had not been drawn into a khotail with a big herd. Hangai families were larger than those in the steppe or Gobi regions and a lower proportion of people found refuge in monasteries in spite of their great number. According to our calculations the average number of stock per Gobi family exceeds that in Hangay, though the latter has more people. The question of the economic efficiency of a household is confused. Perhaps it was well calculated by negdel managers when allocating collective herds to each family or suur (a basic unit tending a herd, usually made up of one or two households). People considered the negdel herds too big a burden, but most of them managed to cope. They still have this opinion and say this was the reason why the frequency and distance of nomadic movement decline under the collectives. At the same time they believe there was a decline in husbandry over the period of collectivisation and a decline in stock numbers. The statistics do not support this opinion: in the Gobi in Erdene sum we noted for 1991 an average herd 43 bodo per family prior to full privatisation, while in the 1930s it was only 29 (see Appendices 1 and 2). This suggests that half a century ago the sum was overpopulated in relation to its resource base.

We should not expect the same level of efficiency when a private herd has replaced the negdel one, unless the previous services are restored. Even this condition may not be sufficient, since collective herds were organised on the principle of a specialised division of labour which will not be repeated in the private economy. However, the notion of collectivity is not alien to the Mongol herder, as it draws from the two cornerstones of social organisation, the kinship system and the khotail institution.

#### **Kinship relations**

Patrilineal kinship still remains the basic, though idealised, pattern. In Hangai, as in most of Mongolia, no descent groups are discernible, but some very weak traces of lineages can be found. They are not so evident as among the Oyrats of western Mongolia, the Darhats of the north, or even in the Gobi. Nevertheless the kin network had been important throughout the country as the basic matrix for cooperation. Therefore negdel organisers took care to create unrelated production teams (suurs) out of a conviction that kin interests would otherwise take precedence over collective ones. This was an ideological choice in the struggle to create a new society built in the national interest, instead of one based on kinship groups, which were considered as units of a closed system, outdated and

associated with feudalism. There was also a practical wish to avoid nepotism and corrupt practices to the detriment of the collective, and of state property. Interestingly, the same anxiety is spelled out by sum administrators now in anticipation of privately managed services (such as transport or veterinary care). The argument about possible nepotism in distribution of scarce resources is used to support the idea of services controlled by the administration, in theory free of kin involvement.

The initial ban on kin networks in production was relaxed with time, following a change in kinship interests, reoriented now towards closer ties with kin based outside the pastoral economy and thus having access to different types of goods and services. The reorientation was of an earlier date, but its importance increased with the economic deterioration paralleling the process of collectivisation. It served to create a network of accompanying goods exchange between unequally supplied areas, the countryside and the town. Thus evolved the idea of idesh (or yidesh), that is of redistribution of goods between individuals living in two economically distinct areas, described in more detail in Chapter 5.4. Two aspects of the exchange were equally important: first, assistance extended to kin, and second, making up for the shortcomings of the state-owned trading companies. The latter were unresponsive to demand from the countryside, and besides, had few resources. Their efforts had to be supplemented by private initiative. Since the latter was more or less forbidden, informal goods exchange took the innocent form of assistance to kin.

Some observers believe kin assistance is less important in this context, and is merely a channel for clandestine private trade. They are right to the extent that idesh exchange links up even distant relatives or friends if close kin are absent at key points in the chain, but still close kin take precedence. On the other hand, it is also true that Mongol culture is a culture of gift exchange, not limited to kin. Nevertheless, kin relations provided a ready network, and this particular channel for supplementary goods exchange is well adapted. In spite of the fact that it is sometimes exploited by non-relatives, the opposite is more normal and proves the effectiveness of kin links, even if they operate selectively, and sometimes to the detriment of relatives in the local neighbourhood. The services exchanged include not only commodities and food, but also accommodation for young people studying in towns, support in applying to a school, and maintenance of elderly relatives pensioned from the country.

Along with the relationships, the very notion of kin has also changed. Kin networks do not form a structured kinship system any longer. There are no communities composed of descent groups and no ceremonial functions involving representatives of such groups. They survived early this century only on the fringes of Mongolia. Some minimal lineages of descendants of an ancestor four generations removed are left. These are not corporate groups, do not control any assets of economic or symbolic value, and no organisational functions are vested in them. Even exogamy is ensured by a simple account of the kin in between, and has lost a group character. The once famous genealogical memory of the Mongols has been reduced to three generations, and further tracing is exceptional. The emotional functions of kin relations are now practically the only uniting power. In such circumstances, descent has lost its importance and kinship becomes a generalised pattern. In the past, kin were strictly divided into the paternal (avga) and maternal (nagats) groups, supplemented by descendants of females from the avga group called zee. It was an Omaha type of kinship system, but which now remains in kin

terminology only. In addition to these three groups, there were also affines, and the four groups created a system, within which the game of kinship rights and duties was played. This was true even after descent groups disintegrated, and one has been able to observe the game till recently.

To an increasing degree, it has been played by individuals, who have themselves shaped the kindred groups they preferred to cooperate with, instead of yielding to an inherited pattern. The kindred are composed of chosen relatives from any of the above four essential kin categories. The transition from descent to kindred groups most probably introduced a vacuum in the kinship-oriented society, so that kinship became a universal model of organisation. This thesis is supported by the fact that kinship terms are used in addressing strangers even in towns. It suggests that such a generalised kinship is a way of behaving rather than an institution. Therefore interpretations in terms of kinship structure must be done very carefully. The kindred who replaced the patrikin in structuring kinship relations can be composed of both filiations in addition to affines and nephews. This has moved the pattern towards bilaterality in most of the country. At the same time kin rights and obligations within the patriline, which still dominated in the pre-collectivisation period, have been loosened or abandoned in favour of close links with the members of the family of origin in which the spouses have been born. This situation prevails in most of Mongolia, including Hangai.

A different model exists in the Gobi. In the late 19th century the family there underwent a transformation caused by the surplus of marriageable women over men. The reason was the large number of monks, who in the Eastern Gobi reached over half of all adult men, the highest proportion for all Mongolia (see Appendix 1). Most were celibate. Marriage became unstable and mostly at a distance (dislocal), with individual cases of polyandry. Families were composed mainly of women, their children and brothers. Contrary to the custom in the rest of Mongolia, men left the parental (or rather maternal) yurt, and a daughter or two remained to become hearth keepers. If there were no daughters among the children, one would be adopted to continue the hearth. The practice of adoption into a hearth continued till recently, and we met women in their 30s perpetuating a line they were not born into. If there was no brother left with the sister she would take a husband, usually for a period, or would cooperate with one living separately. In such circumstances a great proportion of men had neither real home nor hearth. They were nomads in two senses (see the case of fivefold residence in Appendix 4; also the less dramatic case of Naydan in Appendix 3).

According to some reports, people in Erdene sum have some three spouses over their lifespan. The only stable element has been the mother and her children, one of which may be adopted by its father. This was the origin of the matrifocal family, which transformed the kinship system into a matrilateral one (not yet matrilineal, rather bilateral with distinctive marks of matriliney). An unstable matrifocal family brought about the atrophy of the patriline and the disappearance of patrikin. Most people do not know the name of their father, and those who do know cannot identify his parents. Till recently patrikin have not taken part in family ceremonies; the biological father was seldom invited for the ritual attending a child's birth, and on a whole there was indifference about him, unless he was a socially recognised father. The Gobi is the only place we found the expression 'etseg metseg': the first word means 'father', while the second is a derogative transformation of it.

Consequently, there was also a changed attitude to matrikin and nephews (zee) for whom Mongol culture provided very specific and ritualised duties and obligations. The attitude lost its specificity, since matrikin became the main, if not the only, relatives replacing the whole body of kin. The nephews were included, for there was no longer any need to discriminate a particular subgroup of matrikin. In the genuine Mongol kinship system, the zee constitute what anthropologists label as supplementary filiation. In Mongolia, as elsewhere, there has been an institution of ceremonial redistribution between both the main and supplementary filiations. This is, however, unknown in the Gobi.

The Gobi family is returning now to the general Mongol pattern under pressure of the formally accepted patrilineal ideal. The change started in the sum centre and proceeded to herding camps. Now over a half of pastoral families are of the complete nuclear type (a couple with children, though perhaps of different fathers), while truly maternal families constitute 20 percent of a sample in Erdene sum. There are still temporary marriages and some couples live separately. Even nuclear families embrace lineal or collateral kin on the woman's side (18 percent) while those on husband's side can be found in 3.5 percent of families only.

In the Gobi, contrary to the process in other Khalkha regions, descent groups developed, and matrilineages organised as corporations around a common herd. The latter development has been temporary, and the trend has now reversed: we have been able to trace only one such lineage still persisting, though perhaps not functioning (see Appendix 3). In such circumstances the Gobi rules of inheritance differ from all-Mongolian ones. In general in the Gobi, equal shares are preferred with a possible larger share for daughters. In the case of lineages, the inheritance might have been withdrawn. Many lineages were organised around a large extended family with communal, undivided corporate property. In this century, however, they rather represented overgrown families with delayed inheritance, as in the case described in Appendix 3. (More on inheritance in the Gobi in Chapter 4.1).

In spite of the disintegration of the traditional unilineal kinship system, kin bonds remain strong. Paradoxically, effective relatives are chosen now according to individual interests from among the kindred, instead of strictly following lineal principles. This does not mean that relatives are arbitrarily chosen, but the circle of those kin to whom one has rights and obligations becomes limited. Only obligations towards parents and children remain unchanged. Elderly people are always found either living with their children or nomadising in the same khotail. Obligations to other kin have been relaxed. It is to be expected that lonely and disabled people without close relatives would be taken care of by distant kin according to an old pattern of safety nets. This is not, however, a moral obligation any longer, which points to the need to develop social services at the sum level.

The present transitional period has introduced anxiety about the future, and has reinforced kinship ties as a natural resort in a situation where other familiar institutions cease to operate. In Arhangai a reintegration of kin in khotails is going on (see data on the composition of khotail members in Hangai, in Chapter 3.4), while natural kin ties are being supplemented with fictitious ones (see 'brotherhood', Chapter 5.5). In the Gobi we have noted a great number of small khotails composed of related families, perhaps more than in previous years. But this observation needs to be checked because there are no reliable data on the average composition of

noted a great number of small khotails composed of related families, perhaps more than in previous years. But this observation needs to be checked because there are no reliable data on the average composition of camps in the past.

## 2.2 Khotail herding groups

Most herding families in Mongolia live singly for some time in winter, and in groups in other seasons. Single families are also commoner in the Gobi than in other regions. The expression gants govi ger - 'a solitary Gobi yurt' - is a popular saying pointing to the rather unusual, and uneasy, specificity of the region, an extreme case for the Mongol style of life in general, but in fact, for the Gobi itself also. We will see that Gobi herders also tend to unite in groups, at least nowadays.

We have already stated that in Mongolia the family is a basic social and production unit only if it nomadises solitarily. However, people mainly live in groups of two to over a dozen families, depending on the region. These more or less permanent groupings, the khotails, constitute a micro-society, commonly responsible for socialisation of children, for performing familial rites and other observances or feasts, for economic activities and for leisure. The group takes up functions of each particular family and acts as a corporate kin group. Even unrelated families camping together produce kin-type relations, common to all group members. This can be compared to what we know from elsewhere as 'village' or generalised kinship.

Economic activities within the khotail are focused on a combined herd of the animals of member families, although this is in no sense a common herd. Economic factors, as well as ecological conditions, affect the choice between solitary and group nomadising and determine the khotail's size. The impoverished knowledge about traditional herd maintenance and pastoral strategies, inherited from the negdel period, has adversely influenced people's ability to cooperate in khotails for livestock management. Only the practice of sahalt - where two or three households, camped at around 1 km from each other, exchange their lambs among themselves in order to prevent them from suckling their mothers during the day - has survived as a form of cooperation. The basic functions of the former khotails, those of uniting the family herds for easier supervision and labour saving as well as for organised use of pastures, are being reconsidered now by some herdsmen constrained by the temporary shortage of labour in their families. Others prefer to be in a khotail purely for social reasons, to be in the company of kin and friends. Not many know that traditional khotails used to be formed to use a given ecological potential effectively, that is to fill a niche with a herd of an optimal size, and therefore should consist of grouped individual herds, or of a herd with a set of herding personnel around it.

Labour sharing, too, was an essential reason for living in khotails in the past. Households tended to pool manpower so that it could be available in emergency situations or at times of particularly heavy work. For most of the time, however, there was surplus labour, a sort of hidden unemployment. This was less obvious in the Gobi, where khotails were smaller, compared to the Hangai, and contributed to the stereotype of a laborious Gobi herder compared to a life-enjoying Hangai man. Gobi khotails in the past rarely provided a basis for cooperation in tasks calling

such work.

Even the Gobi inhabitants themselves maintain that camping alone has been the only, or basic way of nomadising in that region. Very few remember cases to the contrary. Sum officials say the same about local herding in the negdel period and at present. Neither negdel nor company have been interested in promoting group management within the khotail structure, relying instead on individual allotment of tasks and moving people around brigades or bags to where additional help was needed. Interviews with older people suggests however that perhaps more than half the Gobi nomads used to live in groups during the warm seasons. More than that used to form a sahalt for the exchange of lambs. In fact, only the latter has been a well established traditional institution in Gobi negdel herding, as judged by the frequent use of the term.

The word khotail is rarely used in the Gobi and has several meanings, as elsewhere in Mongolia. The minor importance of the khotail is indicated by the absence of a term for group leader, either the titular one or the one organising team work, an equivalent of the Hangai ahlagch or hotyn ah. Confusion about the proper customary placement of a leading person's yurt within a camp also indicates a serious decline in the khotail's importance for work organisation.

Now Gobi herders unite in summer and autumn in groups of two or three families mainly for kinship reasons, to care for elderly relatives and children. In this case the groupings may also survive beyond winter, depending on where the winter shelters are. Care of the elderly is not the only reason kinsmen agglomerate, however. Anxiety about the economic situation and the future of the negdel created tension even before privatisation began. It may be a coincidence, but people who used to nomadise solitarily began to join khotails around 1990. We noted the case of Tsogdog from Erdene's Yenshööw bag who started to live next to his son and son's father in law. Also some families who now constitute a khotail of seven households in Dalay valley, Dörvölj bag, were living alone previously. Some 60 percent of families in Yenshööw bag of Erdene sum were observed in the summer of 1992 to camp together in groups, which suggests this cooperation will be maintained. For relationships between khotail members see Appendix 5.

Camps of more than two families in the Gobi usually occupy an extended space, so that yurts at each end are 500 yards or more distant from each other. This is a much larger area than that occupied by an Arhangai khotail, but they remain khotails by definition since the inner area between the yurts is a khot, i.e. devoted to keeping flocks and calves overnight and for other purposes. At the same time they incorporate the functions of a sahalt. A local invention, the double sahalt (consisting of three groups of yurts), also creates a dispersed form of khotail.

The revival of khotails and their adaptation to new conditions is likely to be natural and spontaneous in the Hangai due to persisting traditions and to the fact that in practice they survived through the negdel period in form if not in essence. In the Gobi, however, it should be expected that organised team cooperation will draw on local community sources, while khotails will continue as a means of protection within a family group or close relatives. In the near future khotails will not provide a large reservoir of manpower, because of general labour shortages in herding areas; wider local communities will be called on for help if necessary.

Labour will be provided by poor families with small herds. This will result from the inevitable process of wealth differentiation. Candidates for the future class of small herders can already be predicted on the basis of interviews about short and long range economic planning within households, and about concepts of a good herder (see Chapter 5.3) or of spending strategies (see Appendix 2). Many herdsmen, irrespective of age, would qualify for the group of those lacking any spirit of entrepreneurship, any vision of private activity or even knowledge of pastoral techniques and herd management. Passive attitudes towards household economic activity developed during the *negdel* period when many people adopted the easy way of following expert advice (by a zootechnician), limiting their own interests to the results, instead of the purposes, of technical instructions.

Poor herdsmen are likely in the future to provide hired non-waged labour for rich herders who will tend to pool their own herds with small stock owners within a *khotail*. At the same time, *khotails* could become a sort of school for inexperienced herders, who can study the techniques of a *khotail* leader. Some would then have a chance to start herding on their own, provided that they learn more actively than they did from the zootechnicians. Extensive learning by demonstration cannot however substitute for intensive vocational training for young herders. Poor people in a *khotail* are equivalent to labourers, which is what they were in traditional society, and most probably will be in the future. Employing the destitute was the lowest level of support extended to kin and non-kin alike, and the most frustrating one. Inferior herdsmen known for their inability to raise their own stock would not reach the next level, that of tenant.

In the past herders who cared for leased herds (absentee herding) were recruited mainly from among (good herders) having lost a part of their stock due to external reasons. Confidence in the personal abilities of a herder was the essential condition for entrusting him a herd, especially in the case of monastery herd managers. At the same time a tenant had the possibility of recovering his losses and starting full business again. Effective tenants tended to keep an optimal herd in size and structure as allowed by family manpower. Therefore they often remained outside the *khotail* structure, having already met the requirement of an ecologically balanced total herd. With some hired labour they created an independent *khotail* of their own. Looking at the situation in private herding in the last decade we can identify candidates for tenants, at least from among those who got too few animals from privatisation, but also from those who were careless about consumption and spending. However, the supply of herds to be leased out will be limited to owners with other primary occupations, in *sum* centres for example, and to the monasterial estates which are already reviving.

A brief discussion is necessary about the relation between *khotails* and land tenure. The absence of land ownership is well established in Mongol culture as a value essential for other aspects of life. This is so in spite of the constitutional provisions for land nationalisation, and in spite of earlier titular control by *hushuu* rulers. Each family and each *khotail* feels free to use convenient pastures within the administrative borders of what they consider to be their local community of the highest order (at present the *sum*), and often beyond this. This freedom is however limited by customary usage, which ascribes to each family a traditionally available set of pastures of which it has had the use. In the Gobi, such a basic set is supplemented by substitute pastures used alternatively. Only



refuge pastures, common to many people, are nobody's particular usufruct. Family lands are often subordinated to khotail pastures, if khotail membership is not stabilised. Most often the khotail is the largest group having rights of usufruct in the Hangai, while in the Gobi such rights are interchangeable within the local community of one valley.

Large single valley communities and communities of a higher order can be perceived as having the aggregated rights of particular families or khotails, though in traditional society they were never conceived as a single unit, rather as a sum of particular rights. Therefore a free-rider or trespasser would not be able to excuse himself with an argument of belonging to a bag/brigade or to a sum, while a member of same valley community would not be seen as a trespasser. This, however, is a margin of freedom extended to community members, while the basic rights are with khotails and their member families. Therefore they live within particular borders delimiting an ascribed area, only going beyond them in exceptional cases. Thus the word meaning 'to nomadise' (both in the sense of moving camp and the process of changing pastures in the seasonal sequence) should be restricted to moves within predominantly the same area, habitually used by a family or a khotail.

### 2.3 Local communities

The large Hangai khotails often correspond to the definition of the smallest local community (community of lower order) neg nutgiin-han, especially if they consist of over six families. The term means 'people of one place, territory or valley'. The term neg usny-han is used interchangeably, that is 'people of one water, river, lake or well'. They are known by the name of the territory, or water source, which they use in summer or autumn, that is during the period of most active social contacts, which is the essential point in discerning a local community. They are also committed to the idea of using that territory as their genuine family area jinken törsön nutag, with a tradition going back to the family of origin. No real importance is attached to laterality in that tradition, that is whether it rests on the husband's or wife's side. Nevertheless, in the past it had to be his and his father's nutag, though because of local endogamy it was usually a territory common to both parents.

Membership in such a community is often by individual ascription since more people are usually born in a territory than it is able to accommodate, together with their dependants. This contributes to the relative instability of the group in the long run and to a certain lack of definition of the territory itself. Each set of local community members in a nomadic society comprises a margin of people changing their affiliation every year or two. There is also seasonal circulation as a result of pasture structure and personal preferences, or private relations with neighbours. Changes of that sort are specific to lower order communities and very rare in higher order ones.

The resulting fluctuations are regular and are included in the indigenous understanding of local community. Nutgiyn-han or usny-han are collective words for people attributed to an area, and can be substituted by a more specific term X-han, for example Dolodyn-han, meaning people living in Dolodyn territory. The name is the topographical equivalent to a personal identifier of the same structure N-han, for example Baataryn-han, or people living together with Mr. Baatar.

The local community does not have many functions and never has had. In the early 20th century it provided a framework for more intense social activities, given the transport difficulties resulting from the small number of horses. It also provided the first level of support in individual calamities or disasters, and it took common responsibility for the proper use of neighbouring pastures (though such a responsibility was also often the khotail's function), and in ceremonial life. The latter was very weak in the Gobi compared to other regions. Such local communities often had legal accountability, as the smallest administrative unit. The local community has never acted on behalf of its members in cases of climatic disaster, seldom in aid assistance, and never had any corporate features except the most generally understood care for pastures used commonly, although these were usually exploited and cared for by individual khotails.

Contemporary local communities of a lower order have lost all their functions, except the social ones, because of competition by negdels. The latter created communities of a higher order, mostly brigades or bags, which had many formal rights and facilities. Privatisation changed little in this picture, except that it introduced instability in community membership resulting from the wish of some people to change their pastures, either returning to areas they had occupied earlier or moving closer to newly acquired winter or spring shelters. The number of unattached people wandering around good pastures currently rested by their customary users, also increased such behaviour, which was condemned in the past by the negdel authorities, as well as by pre-collectivisation communities, and adds to present instability in the process of formation of integrated new local communities. At the same time, the inability of bureaucratic sum institutions to discipline trespassers reduces the chance that the sum will become an accepted community of the highest order.

#### **Erdene sum communities**

During field work in the Gobi we came across several groups defined as local communities by topography and by most of the families themselves. Changes in membership did not prevent those leaving from identification with the group. Some other camps seemed to stay outside such communities in terms of spatial distance, although their inhabitants declared their membership in a wider agglomeration called by a valley name. Only one well defined community was observed, which had a long tradition of collective movement between the same commonly used summer and autumn pastures and relatively close cold season areas. This community was made up of the only well preserved lineage of Erdene sum.

Local communities of the higher order in Erdene are now represented by three bags, one of them recently created. There have been frequent administrative changes in Erdene sum: brigades abandoned and reestablished, hesegs changing in number and existing only between 1980 and 1990, brigades renamed as bags and reshuffled. These levelled former communities represented by the ovoo mountain sacrificing territorial groups which grouped several nutgiyn-han, and united in turn into wider communities focused around local monasteries, serving as religious and trading centres, the small quasi-urban places of the time.

Today there is one well-defined local community of a higher order, Yenshöw bag of about 65 families. It has a long tradition of unified existence around its sacred centres, within stable borders and with its own administration run during the whole negdel period by local people of authority. At one time it was even claimed to deserve the status of a separate sum, despite its small population. Recent reforms which

established a third bag have resulted in the administrative transfer of several Yenshööw families to the new bag and caused protests by the people involved, thus proving the solidarity of bag members. In practice this made no difference to their herding organisation.

Two years ago ovoo sacrifices were restored after a long period during which they were not practiced for political reasons. This has always been a communal event consisting of blood offerings and prayers for autumn rains, and consequently for a mild winter for the sacrificing community. The latter usually consisted of one or several basic nutgiyn-han, but recently became a ceremony for bag members, combined with a sports festival (naadam) which attracts people from afar. The former meaning of the sacrifice has been preserved only in Yenshööw, where the sacrifice was held in the interests of the community, while the other two bags had a common ceremony with the accent on sporting events.

The level of integration of the two other bags is weak as indicated by the fact that, in contrast to Yenshööw, not all their inhabitants know the others by name, family relationships, and present whereabouts. The only integrated communities are the basic 'one valley' ones. These function as the main units of social contact in warm seasons, within which are celebrated family or more general occasions. The most frequent occasion which unites members of a community and kin from afar is childbirth. Only births in warm seasons are celebrated widely enough to deserve the title of social event. These may even take the form of a ceremonial feast (nair). In winter and spring camps, births are marked more modestly, and nairs do not take place. The difference in the form of observance is not a result of frequency of births since they are distributed evenly through the year (there were on the average 43 births for each year between 1980 and 1991 in the whole sum, of which 18 were during the five summer and autumn months). Eighteen occasions for celebration for the whole sum each year, not counting other causes than births, is a substantial integrating factor for communities within the sum.

The type of ceremony, whether a dinner or a feast (tavogtay or nair) depends on the level of community it is addressed to. In the first case it would be a khotail or one valley community, in the second, the whole bag at least. A particular kind of ceremony called naadam, a sporting competition, is open to the whole sum and to people from outside. It is therefore extracommunal, although its competitive qualities work for sum integration, helping make the sum the widest local community. Lately there has been another external factor working, partly at least, in favour of integration of the sum as a local community. This is petty brokery at the frontier railway station where Chinese and Mongols from Inner Mongolia come to sell or exchange merchandise. Middle-men from Erdene earn money by reselling the goods further on. This business increases the affluence of Erdene people, which in turn most probably increases the number and ostentation of ceremonial social occasions in the sum, adding to the intensification of local bonds.

At present there are communities of three orders whose sense of integration decreases as their size grows. These are one valley communities, bag communities, and finally the whole sum. The second two have replaced one former ovoo community, as well as a 'parish' one, i.e. clients of a particular monastery. Equivalents of ovoo and monastery communities are being revived in various sums, but usually they are identical to the bag/brigade and sum communities respectively. The equivalence (ovoo - bag, monastery - sum) needs some qualification. In

fact there usually were several ovoo communities in one bag and several monasteries in one sum's territory. In practice, one ovoo community covered two or three valleys, or in administrative terms a heseg (a unit which no longer exists). However, the fact that at present people are spontaneously reviving only one ovoo for each bag suggests this is adequate. Again, in former hushuu, which were loose equivalents of the present sums, there was a central monastery and a hushuu ruler who organised a main ovoo sacrifice for the benefit of the whole hushuu territory. It makes it possible to draw a parallel between the two units and their ceremonial practices. The spatial dimensions are different, but the functions remain the same.

In the new conditions, the best prospects for continuity are at the level of basic one valley communities because they are best prepared to cooperate in the difficult circumstances to come (for example, the idea of a horseshoe would suit them well). Herders will be left alone to cope with many important tasks performed till recently by the negdel. These are: providing transport facilities for moving camp, veterinary services, supplying labour at peak times, haymaking or preventing strangers from grazing on somebody else's grasslands. Coping with these new demands will mean mobilising groups of people of the most effective size and with long experience of social and business contacts, which probably means single valley communities. An equivalent to such a community may appear, for example, a business firm or a company of producers and traders, possibly identical with, or cutting across several such communities.

The present changes in bag boundaries in Dornogobi (and Arhangai) revive in most cases (consciously or not) old divisions into local communities of a higher order with all their symbolic and sacrificial functions. Present bags, especially in Hangai, are in principle ecologically sustainable areas, although only in good years. Other bag communities, which are not ecologically self-sufficient, may lose their importance and become purely administrative units, devoid of economic functions. Their possible disintegration can be prevented by the increasing involvement of a bag population in communal sacrificial activities. The sum will perhaps remain the widest sort of local community. Along with its administrative functions, its trade and service centre role, an important urbanising factor, will continue. There remains also its symbolic integrative function, well expressed in the competitive side of Mongol culture, as demonstrated by sportive naadams and prestige-earning nairs.

#### **Erdene sum: community organisation**

The sum was created during the administrative reform of 1927. Till then its territory was included in Goviin Mereg Vangiin hushuu which covered large areas of the present Eastern Gobi aimag, parts of Central and South Gobi aimags, as well as a small portion of south Hentey. From 1956 to 1960 Erdene was two sums, but was then reunited. In 1984 there were two brigades, Tsagaan Hötöl and Yenshööw, which were restructured into bags in 1992 when a third bag was created, called Dörvölj. The territory of Yenshööw consisted of three hesegs: Yenshööw, Bürdene and Dersen us. The latter belongs now to Dörvölj bag, while Bürdene was, and still is, a valley community consisting of some ten families.

The territory of each of the present bags used to accommodate one or several small monasteries; Dörvölj: Modongiyn; Tsagaan Hötöl: Dalain and Hamaryn; Yenshööw: Bürdene, Hashatyn and Yenshööw (some informants add also Mogootyn though it is not clear whether its location is in the present bag or the neighbouring sum Ulaan Badrah). Some 20 to 60 lamas

resided in the monasteries, and there were also a number of 'steppe lamas' living with their families. Altogether there were some three hundred lamas in Erdene in the early 1930s (see Appendix 1).

Ovoo sacrifice sites existed in each bag: one each for Dörvölj (Tsantyn) and for Tsagaan Hötöl (Tsagaan), with two for Yenshööw (Büülen and Dugantyn Hongoryn). The latter bag had two smaller ovoos of local importance: Mogootyn and Shandyn, most probably serving particular lineages. After being banned for sixty years ovoo sacrifices are now performed again. They started at Dugantyn in 1990 on the initiative of two local elders. Lamas from the aimag town who were invited have introduced two novelties into the ceremonies. The first was to forbid the blood offering of sheep (previously the Lamaist Church was not able to eradicate this shamanistic custom), the second to let women participate in the main ceremony close to the altar. The offerings appeared however to fail, since their main goal - to bring rain - was not achieved. The discouraged community members therefore missed the next ceremony in 1991; they tried once more in 1992, this time at Büülen with women kept apart. But again the summer and autumn were dry, and people were anxious about a future drought. The future of ovoo sacrifices may seem doubtful then, though the community need for integrative ceremonies undoubtedly persists.

Offerings were also held at Tsantyn ovoo (Dörvölj bag) in 1992 and were attended by the people from Tsagaan Hötöl, since it had been theirs prior to the creation of Dörvölj bag. Thus, the only two communal ceremonies were held at bag level and ignored the administrative creation of one more bag. Perhaps in the future, when the latter has achieved a certain coherence, which is still possible, Erdene sum will have three ovoo offerings for its three higher order communities.

#### **Tariat sum**

In Tariat we were able to observe the revival of an important role for local communities in local political and socio-economical life as a result of political and economic liberalisation. Before the revolution, the area of the present Tariat sum belonged to Dalai Vangin hushuu, which covered a considerable part of the present Hubsugul and Arhangai aimags. At that time the division into higher order local communities was strongly marked. The present bags of Mörön, Böröljüt, Horgo, Tsagan Nuur, Terhi and Tseiher were distinctive local communities, each with its own local ovoo site and a larger or smaller local monastery. In the present Tariat sum centre, the monastery (Gandanchoilon) was one of the largest and best known in the hushuu, and on days of special prayers more than 1500 monks visited for sacrifices for the benefit of the whole hushuu. The group of resident monks was around 300-400, as reported by one of old monks who survived the persecutions of the 1930s.

The monastery in Bayan Jargalant valley, a centre of the then Mörön local community, was also quite large (around 200 resident monks). Monasteries in Ih Jargalant (Dashchilan) and in Dood Böröljüt valleys were smaller and the number of resident monks never reached more than 100. The local community of Böröljüt, which is the area of the present research, included by that time the inhabitants of Deed and Dood Böröljüt valleys, Möröngin am valley, Usan Zuil valley, as well as Aral on the opposite side of the Sumyn Gol river (see map 4), which is equal to the present bag territory. This area was a self-sufficient ecological unit. It has two sacrificial sites, a less important one in Dood Böröljüt and a more important one in Aral, which served the whole community for naadam, and continue to do so

today.

After the revolution, the eastern part of the present Tariat sum, today covered by Böröljüt, Mörön and Altad bags, formed one administrative unit known as Uizen. Between 1950 and 1960 this unit was called Mörön sum, after the name of the most numerous local community. After collectivisation the central and western administrative units (Horgo, Tsagan Nuur, Terhi, Tseihir) were incorporated and one large Tariat sum was formed with an administrative centre in Tariat, while the negdel organised on its territory was named Yalalt. An important role in local politics and administration was played by people from the old Mörön sum, which annoyed people from other local communities.

The first opportunity to show this dissatisfaction appeared after the dissolution of the negdel structures in May/June 1991. Yalalt negdel broke down into two separate production units, called Yalalt (the eastern bags including Mörön and Böröljüt) and Gerelt Zam (formed by the central and western bags). An important role in this separation was probably played by influential local politicians, who mobilized popular support based on pre-negdel patterns of affiliation. The new organisational structure suggested by the government was the company (a commercial version of the negdel). Gerelt Zam, where the interests of post-negdel administration prevailed, followed that pattern, while Yalalt, under the influence of new ideas brought from the capital, finally chose the form of horshoo (a voluntary cooperative of private owners of means of production). Both versions, especially the latter, have been made possible by the privatisation process, which started in August 1991 and resulted in the distribution of as much as 70 percent of animals and all winter/spring shelters in Tariat sum.

In June 1991 the authorities of both Gerelt Zam company and Yalalt horshoo decided to privatise the remaining 30 percent of animals and other assets (the 'big privatisation') and this was swiftly completed without problems. Shortly afterwards another re-shuffle took place within Yalalt horshoo. Roughly one third of its members, almost entirely inhabitants of Böröljüt bag, decided during the open meeting of Yalalt horshoo members to abandon the horshoo structure and became 'fully private and independent' herders. This was not caused by any significant conflict with the horshoo authorities, nor was it well organized in advance.

It seems that this was a spontaneous decision by a few people, immediately followed by the other inhabitants of Böröljüt bag (currently equivalent to the Böröljüt local community). Most people were unable to give any rational explanation for this decision. They said that they had followed each other, and were unable to give any other justification or even to evaluate the expected benefits of the decision. Some gave an insight into the underlying ideology, saying that they 'decided to live like their ancestors in pre-negdel times. Those ancestors successfully managed to live independently and they hoped they would manage the same'. A negdel official at the sum centre, not a member of that community, also explained that 'they were fed up with the domination of representatives of the Mörön community in their own affairs which had lasted since the time of Mörön sum'.

At the same time, Tseihir bag (with the approval of the sum and aimag authorities), left Tariat sum and joined Hangai sum, of which it had been a part before collectivisation. Ecological arguments supported that move. The final (although small) re-shuffle took place in early September, when

the number of bags (not counting Tseihir) was enlarged from 5 to 7, adding Altad in the eastern part of the sum and Terhi in the western. Other bag borders were slightly shifted to give place to the new ones, and now present bag borders closely reflect the pre-revolutionary and immediately post-revolutionary borders between local communities of the higher order. The present Tariat bags are, with some limitations, separate, ecologically sustainable areas. To what extent this coincidence (traditional boundaries - present boundaries - ecology) was accidental, is difficult to judge without additional information. Officially, the aim of these changes (which took place in the whole country) was to eliminate drastic differences between the population of different bags in order to reduce administrative problems.

This case study describes, using the example of Tariat sum, the evolution of the role of local communities and the previous patterns of administrative division. There are good reasons to believe that this process is perhaps representative for the whole of Mongolia, although in the case of Dornogobi this is not certain. The process is a natural reaction of the social system in places where local communities felt they did not have adequate representation, and is probably unthreatening unless the scale or conduct of reforms destabilize the local socio-political system. The latter could effectively reduce the chances for successful economic transformation in the countryside.

### 3 LAND TENURE: TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY GRAZING ARRANGEMENTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this section we elaborate on how the system of grazing arrangements works in Gobi and Hangai zones, and how herders coordinate their movements, so that open conflicts do not emerge in practice. The following analysis is based on data from Dornogobi (Erdene sum) and Arhangai (Tariat sum) and refers only to those two sums. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge this system of land tenure (actual grazing arrangements) is representative for other areas in semi-desert steppe and mountain zones as well, perhaps with only minor changes.

The typical strategy of herding movements assumes migration between four seasonal pastures. In reality, herders may change the position of their camp more often (especially in the steppe and desert zones), but mainly within those four areas, so this does not change the rules of functioning of the system analysed.

Winter and spring pastures for each family are usually the same each year. In both Gobi and Hangai, pastoral families used to move to the same places each year for the cold seasons, unless there was a natural disaster. The reason for this regularity was that the places were carefully chosen for wind protection and both animal shelters and stores for household belongings were built. During the last two decades, negdels have built an adequate number of timber winter shelters for all families to replace the old dung ones. Negdels have also encouraged herders to build their own spring shelters to diminish livestock birth losses, and supplies of timber and transport have been provided for this purpose. As a result, both winter and spring pastures have become permanent, while summer and autumn ones continue to be more flexible. In some areas this is more a potential for flexibility not in fact exercised by most individuals (this is the case in Hangai), while in others it is a regular pattern (e.g. in the Gobi). How nomadic practice fits the pattern is the subject of Chapter 3.3.

#### 3.2 Ecological conditions and patterns of land tenure

##### Dornogobi

In Dornogobi the amount of grass is adequate to the needs of all animals, although reserves are very limited and localised, but water is the seriously limiting factor. Each family, or sometimes two closely related ones, has a stable winter shelter, sometimes also used in the spring. In addition they have one or two, sometimes even three, sets of summer and autumn pastures. With respect to the latter a silent competition takes place, although in general everyone sticks to his customary set of pastures.

The present picture of grazing arrangements, or the distribution of users' rights, is the result of a family's history and of the aggregate outcome of individual choices: roughly a third of households use family nutags (sets of pastures) inherited from parents on either side (türsün nutag), while the remainder use different sets of pastures which they have chosen over the years and to which they and their animals have grown accustomed.



For a Gobi herder, the fact that his or his wife's parents lived there also is an additional psychological argument, not decisive but strong. During the cooperative period this was a question of the herder's own choice, in most cases simply sanctioned by the negdel authorities. The role of the negdel authorities in this process will be discussed below.

#### **Arhangai**

In Arhangai water and grass are in good supply; moreover there are no significant ecological differences between valleys and all of them are nearly equally suitable for the pastoral economy. The decision on which nutag to live in does not depend on 'in which is survival better secured', as is to some extent the case in the Gobi, but on 'where the herder wants to live and with whom'. The intervention of the negdel authorities in the allocation of pastures was much wider in Arhangai than in Gobi.

By allocating a particular family to a given khotail, the negdel authorities also indirectly assigned it to a particular winter pasture and shelter, which in turn determined the remaining three seasonal pastures. Two examples illustrate this. If family X was assigned to a khotail spending the winter in Ih Jargalant valley, then the likely spring pastures were also in Ih Jargalant, summer would also be spent there but closer to Sumyn Gol river (alternatively, on the other side, in Aral), and autumn would for sure be spent in Ih Jargalant close to the winter shelter, because this pattern complied with the logic of a pastoral strategy based on local ecological conditions, combined with the informal division of land between local communities. If family Y had been assigned to the khotail spending the winter in Deed Böröljüt valley (in the northern part of it), then most likely the spring shelter utilised by this family was situated in Aral, then its summer pastures were in Aral and autumn pastures in the middle part of Deed Böröljüt, not reaching the northern part reserved for winter pastures.

This allocation of pastures additionally determined the type of animal in which given khotails (or suurs) were specialised. For the Ih Jargalant, upper Deed and Dood Böröljüt, as well as Usan Zuil valleys, specialised large stock production has been introduced, while Aral and the lower parts of all valleys specialised in small stock, best adapted to the types of grass prevailing there.

Not all families were moved by the negdel from their family nutags. The idea of uprooting for its own sake was alien to the negdel authorities (at least from the end of the 1960s), and any reallocations were rather an outcome of the local version of a planned economy, even if particular choices were random in practice. More stress was put on ensuring that close relatives did not live in the same khotail (which of course indirectly contributed to distributing people far from their family nutag), although economically active parents were not deprived of the company of one son at least. Hangai herders assigned to a given khotail and a new set of pastures had no ecological but only sentimental incentives to act against these administrative arrangements, though after a short period the latter could be renegotiated.

Due to the high productivity of the Hangai ecosystem, there was no competition for better pastures each season. Therefore the need to coordinate choices between actors was in general quite limited and concerned grazing movements within each given area (e.g. Aral, Usan Zuil or Dood Böröljüt valleys). We were told that conflicts do not emerge because people heed the principles of customary user's rights (as in the

Gobi) to a given strip of land, combined flexibly with priority to the first to arrive. An abundance of grass prevents conflicts, and the second to arrive can graze his animals side by side with the first. A radical change in these stable arrangements occurred only in 1991-1992 after dissolution of the negdels and particularly as a direct outcome of privatisation of winter/spring shelters. In order to understand this better, we will analyse first the Gobi model of decision-making resulting in the coordination of grazing.

### 3.3 The Gobi model: Collective management of range; A multi-actor game in a non-equilibrium environment

Natural calamities do not happen in Dornogobi each year and do not have disastrous consequences for herds in general, but variability in rainfall and snowfall is a persistent feature of the climate, directly influencing availability of fodder in particular places. The first goal of each herder in these conditions is to gain access to good pastures each season and especially in summer and autumn when animals are being fattened to survive the cold winter; the second goal is to secure untouched grass in his own customary winter and spring pastures.

The problem of access is analytically complicated. At the ideological level all herders know they can move with herds everywhere because 'the land belongs to everybody'. Nevertheless herders we met in different places during our research (in early autumn), if they complained about grass conditions in that place, were asked why they did not move immediately to another place where we had seen wonderful green grass the day before. They usually answered:

"Yes we can, but:

- a) a proposed place is too close to somebody else's winter/spring shelter; or
- b) there are too many potential users/competitors even if they have not come yet; or
- c) it is too far from our own winter shelter where we have to go within the next two months; or
- d) our animals are not used to this area, so may easily get lost;

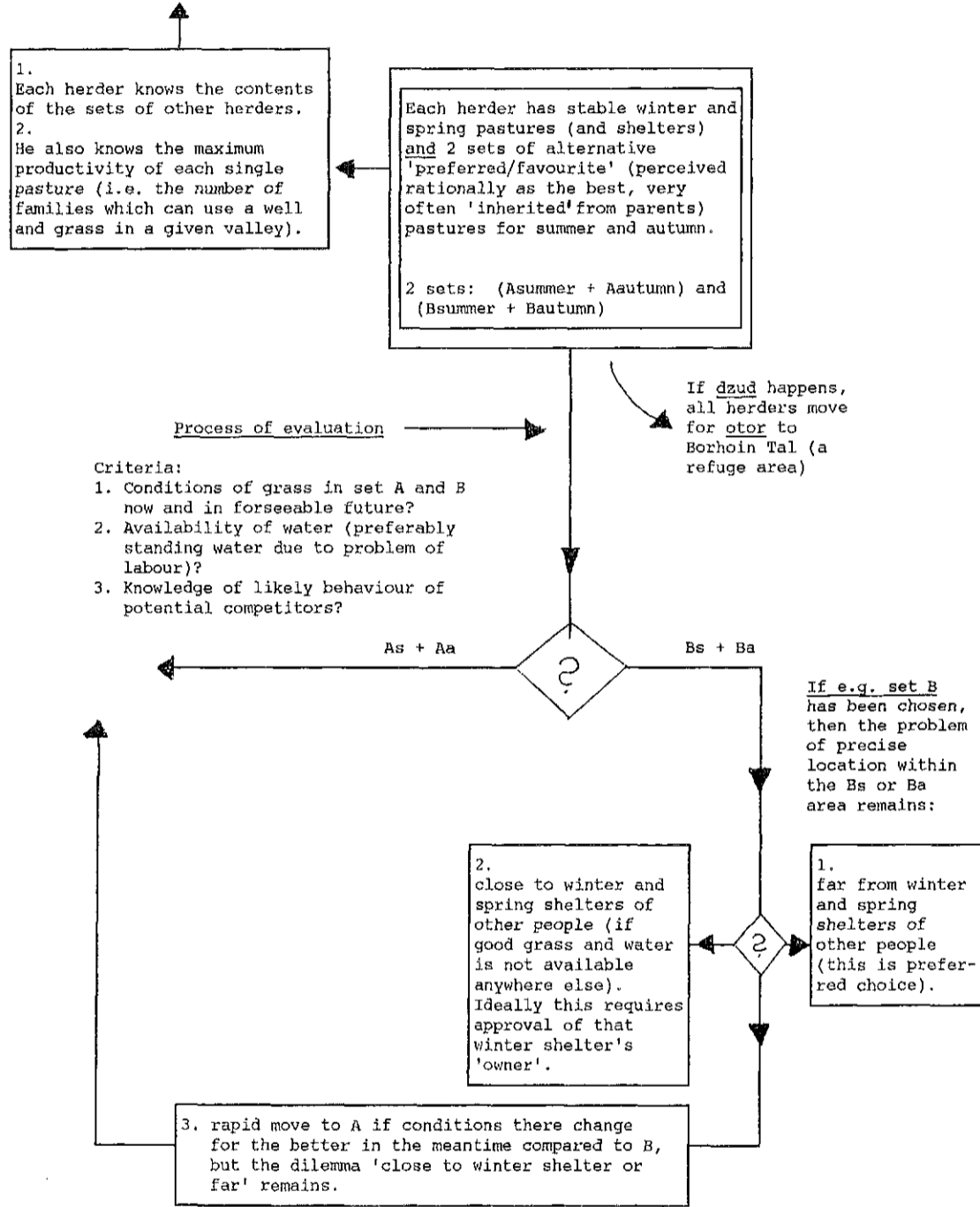
or finally and simply:

- e) we never go there."

These reactions show that there is a certain, practical level of coordination in herders' choices. To understand how it works we have developed a simple explanatory, generative model which explains both the process of decision making employed by herders and its aggregate outcomes observed during field research (see figure 1). In our opinion this model reflects the existing relationships between herders' decisions and creates a coherent conceptual system which offers each individual herder relative security with respect to his pastures (i.e. those usually utilized by him), and gives him an opportunity to use other pastures sporadically in times of special need. Note that figure 1 portrays what might be called the

FIGURE 1: MODEL OF DECISION-MAKING FOR SUMMER AND AUTUMN PASTURES IN GOBI

Those herders whose sets most often overlap form in Gobi conditions a local community of the lower order



'Yenshööw model', where herders have two sets of alternative preferred summer/autumn pastures. The 'Dörvölj model', where there is one main set of summer/autumn pastures, which another set in reserve, is only a simplified variant of this.

The dynamics and the rules of the system can be best observed in conflict situations and we give some case studies of conflicts below. It is important to remember the predilection, already mentioned, of Mongolian culture for non-violence; this is expressed in passive acceptance of decisions or moves which are against the immediate interest of a given individual, even if a verbal protest would be sufficient to change the decision.

In the first three examples of conflicts, the informant is Cogdog, whose son from his first marriage is Dovchindorj. Chagdag and Cedevdorj are neighbours from the same local community. We visited them all but only Cogdog, the last to talk, informed us about the incidents and gave other examples.

#### Case 1

During the rains in autumn 1992 a temporary surface pool formed close to Chagdag's winter shelter. Autumn is always a dry period, and was especially so in 1992. Dovchindorj, whose animals were suffering from poor grass, moved to the area close to Chagdag's winter shelter and pastures (Chagdag had not yet arrived), and allowed his animals to graze there. Chagdag was informed about the intrusion but did not react. There was neither open conflict nor even a discussion. After several days, Dovchindorj left this area and went back to his usual autumn pasture.

#### Case 2

Summer 1990 was dry. Cogdog moved with his herd (around 1000 animals, mostly belonging to the negdel) to the vicinity of Cedevdorj's spring shelter and his animals were grazing there. Cedevdorj learned about this, quickly arrived and angrily chased them away. On the next day when situation was repeated Cedevdorj's son chased them off again. After several days Cogdog moved with his herd to another location. Shortly afterwards both men, Cogdog and Cedevdorj came to an agreement, and now they are as friendly as before.

#### Case 3

In autumn 1989, after a long expected short rain, a surface pool formed close to Cogdog's winter shelter. Pastures were poor that autumn everywhere in Yenshööw, but around that pool they were quite satisfactory. Many families from Yenshööw gathered with their stock around this pool. Cogdog joined the intruders but kept silent, knowing that they had no other choice. In early spring he had to go elsewhere because no grass remained in his usual place.

These were only three out of several cases recorded about people who did not obey the basic rule of cooperative behaviour forbidding herders to steal grass from somebody else's winter/spring pastures, i.e. to graze there without the habitual user's consent. We brought from the field an impression that this was quite a widespread phenomenon although very few people complained about it. The number of cases had increased rapidly in the two years. We ourselves witnessed some ten cases of undoubtedly improper use of winter and spring pastures by people other than the owners of those pastures.

There are two probable explanations for the fact that those who suffer damage do not complain:

- (i) The scale of the phenomenon does not endanger the stability of the system, or observed cases are a part of the system (a kind of safety valve, well understood in a non-equilibrium environment).
- (ii) People tend to present these cases as isolated and caused by individuals known as notorious rule-breakers, denying at the same time our suggestions about punishing or ostracising the offenders.

This interesting issue needs further investigation, especially since the present changes in the economy seem to stimulate this sort of breaking of customary rules. The following case illustrates these principles in more detail.

#### Case 4

Uhna lives in a khotail with his three sons. He is known to change pastures each year. Last year during privatisation he was allocated a winter shelter, and decided to spend the whole year nearby, moving his animals around the wide flat valley. In the vicinity there was also the winter shelter of Gombosuren and his son in law Damdinjav. These two used to graze their animals in summer quite far from this place and come back to autumn pastures closer to the winter shelter as late as possible in order to save grass. There is no strict reservation of autumn pastures by a family for its exclusive use in local (or all Mongolian) custom, but for the last few years Gombosuren and Damdinjav had grazed there alone, being perceived by other herders as the primary customary users. This year Uhna and his sons (having more than 1000 animals of all species) used the pastures in the valley (including part of their own winter pastures), and in August entered the area which Gombosuren used to graze in late autumn. This itself was not an offence - he was simply the first one to arrive - so Gombosuren started to graze his own animals along with Uhna making no protest. With time it changed into a race about who would use more grass. When the autumn pastures were grazed off, Uhna moved his animals into the neighbouring area, reserved for the winter, around Gombosuren's winter shelter. The latter, having no more autumn grass either, did the same and immediately visited Uhna (their khotails were at a distance of 500 m) with his son in law and asked why Uhna broke the traditional law. "Think, what will we eat in winter" he said. There was no answer. Uhna kept silent (as he did during our visit when asked the same question), so Gombosuren went back. Uhna did not move his animals. Gombosuren visited him angrily once more, receiving no answer again. By the time of our visit (10 September), both men were grazing their animals side by side on Gombosuren's winter pastures. We asked Gombosuren and Damdinjav why did not they ask the sum authorities to intervene. They answered that it would be useless because the sum authorities could do nothing nowadays. "This democracy, you see, means that nobody obeys any authorities" he said. "Why did not you quarrel, or chase his animals away from your area, why are you so passive?" we asked provokingly. "I did not because we Mongols never behave like that; it is not accepted in our ways" he replied quietly. The day after we approached the sum chairman (darga) to ask about the case. He answered that he knew about it but he could do nothing until he received a private but formal complaint from Gombosuren. He could not fine Uhna by himself as had been possible during the negdel period. He also thought that both men

were interested in staying in this area because it was close to the sum centre and both had children in the local school. He was also of the opinion that the number of such cases is not large, but he was ready (in words at least) to react if officially informed.

We are not sure whether the number of cases is indeed low (we recorded ten), but there is certainly no fuss around this issue among herders and the authorities. Uhna's case is probably typical of a certain category of herder whose behaviour could be best described as a combination of laziness, thoughtlessness and low professional herding skills, resulting often in both helplessness and deliberate violation of the rules of coexistence. Such individuals are present in all societies; unfortunately the negdels unconsciously favoured such behaviour and attitudes by advocating effectiveness and distributing medals for good performance among those whose results could not be achieved without some trespass on other people's grazing areas. On the other hand, it was confirmed in our interviews that there are people in each bag known for being fined for violating winter/spring pastures during the negdel period (a minimum fine of 250 tugrig and a maximum of 1000 tugrig in 1990). Nowadays with the dissolution of the negdels and the diminishing power of the sum authorities, 'free-riding' will be more widespread due to lower opportunity costs. There are two reasons contributing to this increase: the disorganisation of state institutions and the possible influx of new people from towns to pastoralism, people who are mostly unskilled in herding or who represent values alien to pastoralism. Such free-riders were always a small proportion of the whole system, but now can effectively disorganise it by institutionalising trespassing behaviour.

One herder gave us a simple explanation why is it profitable to obey the rules. "It is better to use your own (i.e. customary) pastures than those of others, because otherwise the other man will come and graze on yours. So it is wise to keep to your own pastures. This is usually a profitable way and people violate the rule only when struck by serious drought". This is still the credo of a majority of herders. Future laws and organisational arrangements should support it.

To summarise, there are three important questions: (i) Why are no sanctions imposed by the group on free-riders in traditional and contemporary practice? (ii) What are the reasons for the conscious passivity towards free-riders and how important are they for the system? (iii) What and how far-reaching legal instruments should be offered to the sum administration to enable it prevent violation of the rules?

All these questions should be addressed in future research because the answers we have provided are far from satisfactory or explanatory. The last question should be especially addressed to Mongolian policy makers as the key element in the future policy on sustainable land use.

#### **3.4 The Arhangai model: New distribution of nutags following dissolution of negdels and privatisation of winter shelters**

The Gobi dilemmas do not exist in Arhangai, mostly because of the relative abundance of resources. However, each herder or khotail does always face a problem, especially in spring and autumn when good grass is rarely found. The temptation to graze in areas 'reserved' (i.e. customarily used) by somebody else is high at that time. Though trespassing happened

during the negdel period, it was not perceived as a serious problem, because private interest were not endangered. Nowadays the situation is otherwise, the more so since the number of cases is increasing significantly in the Gobi and will do also perhaps in Arhangai, as herders themselves mentioned such a possibility.

Therefore in Arhangai the crucial issue is the new distribution of nutags (sets of 4 seasonal pastures) following the dissolution of the negdels and privatisation. For the time being, the question of trespass or of permanence of grazing rights is rather irrelevant.

After the dissolution of the negdels and the creation of companies, the decision was taken to privatise winter shelters (spring shelters were less numerous and were mostly privately built and owned). Before privatisation each family was assigned to one existing shelter in one valley. The privatisation of winter shelters brought about a serious reshuffle in their users and consequently in the allocation of nutags. The problem has already been mentioned in Chapter 2.2, but here will be described in more detail. We have already written about the change in composition of khotails but in fact this is a result of the redistribution of pastures in the new conditions. These conditions mean mainly the privatisation of winter shelters, and in practice also winter pastures, through a process which, in a strict sense, means only reinforcing users' rights. Actually, in the following remarks attention is concentrated on the new distribution of pastures rather than shelters, because in Arhangai it is possible to take the existing shelter to pieces and rebuild it at a new site; we have seen this several times (5-7 cases) during the field research.

In order to describe the two-year social process we concentrate first on its course and results, leaving aside for the moment its origins.

As table 3 shows, in our sample of 169 families (all inhabitants of the present Böröljüt bag and a part of Mörön bag), 66 of them (39 percent) had changed nutag (and khotail to which they belonged). Similarly, out of existing 33 khotails, 11 (33 percent) have been created from nothing in a previously empty place, or have totally replaced other khotails which moved elsewhere. Another trend in Arhangai on a quite large scale (and in the Gobi as well, but at a slightly smaller scale) is the movement to the countryside, after the dissolution of the negdel, of households whose heads were previously employed in the negdel or sum administration at sum, bag, or brigade centres. There were two main reasons for this: they lost their job, so came back to pastoral employment anyway, but this was made easier given that most of them obtained animals during privatisation. In our sample this was the case of 28 families, or 17 percent.

As a result, a new allocation of nutags took place. Out of the 169 surveyed families, 18 percent are now in their türsün nutag traced in the fathers' line (referring to the head of each family), 17 percent in türsün nutag traced in the mother's line; 18 percent of families are associates of those for whom it is türsün nutag (out of them 13 percent were affines, 3 percent other kin and 3 percent friends); 35 percent of families justified themselves by having long-standing rights of occupation (a legacy of negdel allocations) and 13 percent of families have recently joined those with long-standing rights of occupation (8 percent were affines, 4 percent other kin and 1 percent friends).

In a strict sense this reshuffle was only an aggregate outcome of the process of bidding for rights where individual users' rights were

TABLE 3. COMPOSITION OF KHOTALS IN BÜRÖLJUT BAG WITH RESPECT TO CUSTOMARY RIGHTS TO CURRENTLY OCCUPIED NUTAG, RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FAMILIES IN KHOTALS, AND SCALE OF CHANGES AFTER PRIVATISATION OF SHELTERS

Valley	Total number of families	Total number of khotalis	Families which arrived from <u>sonon</u> center after privatisation		Families which changed khotal after privatisation		Khotalis which totally changed <u>nutag</u> after privatisation		Families for whom present <u>nutag</u> is <u>tursun nutag</u> in:				Families who joined kin which have <u>tursun nutag</u> right and were:				Families which have long-standing rights of occupation in present <u>nutag</u>		Families which joined kin who have long-standing rights of occupation, and were their:											
			no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%						
1. Ih Jergalant	52	13	(6)	11.5	(17)	32.6	(5)	38.4	(9)	17.3	(15)	28.8	(8)	15.4	(7)	13.5	(0)	0.0	(1)	1.9	(20)	38.5	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0
2. Usan Zuil	36	6	(7)	19.4	(18)	50.0	(2)	33.3	(8)	22.2	(6)	16.7	(5)	13.9	(2)	5.5	(2)	5.5	(1)	2.8	(10)	27.8	(7)	19.4	(1)	2.8	(4)	1.1	(2)	5.8
3. Dood Bërsiljut	20	5	(1)	5.0	(7)	35.0	(2)	40.0	(3)	15.0	(0)	0.0	(3)	15.0	(3)	15.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(11)	55.0	(8)	15.0	(3)	15.0	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0
4. Höröngin am	12	2	(3)	25.0	(6)	50.0	(1)	50.0	(0)	0.0	(1)	8.3	(4)	33.3	(0)	0.0	(4)	33.3	(0)	0.0	(6)	50.0	(1)	8.3	(0)	0.0	(1)	8.3	(0)	0.0
5. Dood Bërsiljut	30	5	(9)	30.0	(10)	33.3	(1)	20.0	(3)	10.0	(4)	13.3	(4)	13.3	(3)	10.0	(0)	0.0	(1)	3.3	(9)	30.0	(10)	33.3	(10)	33.3	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0
6. Arel	19	2	(2)	10.5	(8)	42.1	(0)	0.0	(5)	26.4	(3)	15.8	(7)	36.8	(7)	36.8	(0)	0.0	(0)	0.0	(3)	15.8	(1)	5.3	(0)	0.0	(1)	5.3	(0)	0.0
Total:	169	33	(28)	-	(66)	-	(11)	-	(28)	-	(29)	-	(31)	-	(22)	-	(6)	-	(3)	-	(59)	-	(22)	-	(14)	-	(6)	-	(2)	-
Mean value of 1-6	-	-	-	16.6	-	39.0	-	33.3	-	16.6	-	17.2	-	18.3	-	13.0	-	3.5	-	1.8	-	34.9	-	13.0	-	8.3	-	3.5	-	1.2



challenged in order to establish a new order after the withdrawal of the old structure. Renewed customary users' rights were built along two patterns of affiliation: either legitimacy was provided by 'türsün nutag-like' ties of a family head, or through long-standing rights of occupation. The first category of people had primary rights, because of the assumed preference for türsün nutag affiliations. It was followed by a large group of relatives and associates of those with established türsün nutag rights (including affines, other kin, friends) and a group of relatives of those who had long-standing rights of occupation.

The functioning of this system of bidding for users' rights can be seen in the example of a conflict:

#### Case 5

A man named Mavgan had worked as a negdel tractor driver and lived in the sum centre. In the course of privatisation he bought a share in a shelter in Usan Zuil valley and moved there with his son in law. For Mavgan, that part of Usan Zuil was his türsün nutag through the family of his wife (a weak relationship). In this place he joined Galbadrah who had lived there in the negdel period, and for whom that place was a 'strong' türsün nutag. Last spring they were joined by two families closely related to Galbadrah (a brother and an uncle) who came with a large number of animals. Mavgan had a large family; several grown up sons and the family of his daughter. After few months he started to think about leaving the place which had become overcrowded already, a problem which would only increase in the future. He knew that his rights to this place were rather weak and his group formed a minority in the khotail. As a result, Mavgan decided to move to a neighbouring location called Höh Hütül which was nobody's türsün nutag as there had never been any winter shelters there. By the time of our research he was moving his part of the shelter there. This was not an expensive operation as Mavgan was still the driver of a tractor bought by a group of families from Usan Zuil. Our informants stressed that there were no quarrels between the Mavgan and Galbadrah groups; there were simply too many people and Mavgan's weaker user rights encouraged him to move to another place.

A similar logic of 'user's rights bidding' (or silent auction) was employed in all other conflict and potential conflict cases. Usually people do not decide to leave even if place is overcrowded, but with time we may witness a new wave of such secondary moves of the Mavgan type. We heard about three similar cases. This subject needs further monitoring.

So far this mechanism has worked in the direction of creating a new membership of khotail/nutags. People with several affiliations chose the one currently preferred. Quite often türsün nutags were still occupied by users from the negdel period, so people felt pressed to use other types of affiliation. Nevertheless, the situation is far from stable, and people will not live with relatives only, although this has many direct advantages. In fact kin-based khotails might be hampered by problems of effectiveness versus continuity, so in future we may expect a growing number of changes in membership, which itself is well known from traditional behaviour. The latter point is important: in 1991/92 the Mongol pastoral social structure to a certain extent was turning back to customary patterns.

Why did all this happen? What was the reason for these large scale movements? There was no intervention by the administration, which

accepted personal preferences during privatisation of the winter shelters, which in turn resulted in the redistribution of nutags. We should rather understand it as an adaptive reaction of the social system to the disappearance of stabilising elements in local politics and the economic system, leaving disoriented and to some extent also isolated people. They were simply looking for a safe place. Our informants referred to this in the following way: "we decided to live as our ancestors did, in the place where they had been living. We wanted to live in the place from which nobody can send us away, in a place of our own". The process was started by the most active individuals who moved to 'their' nutags, displacing others, who in turn displaced others, and so on. It is important to stress that in practice the whole rearrangement of nutags, which lasted two years and involved directly 39 percent of families and indirectly all, has been completely peaceful. Good organisation of the formal distribution of shelters contributed a lot to that. It is possible to conceptualize the process as a reaction of the formerly rigid social system to the rapid and virtually total lifting of all administrative rules and constraints represented by the negdel type of organisation. People used to patterns imposed from outside found themselves in a legal and administrative vacuum and, feeling unsafe, switched to kinship patterns of groupings and of affiliation to land. In parallel, many look back for protection to disappearing administrative structures. It has not all been a conscious process but rather a spontaneous one, whose equivalent in the Gobi is often lacking the changes in nutag.

In the Gobi, the overwhelming majority of people live in the same places as before privatisation of shelters. An exception are those who used both winter and spring shelters belonging to the negdel and were obliged to give back the latter to be assigned (formally sold) to another pastoral family. In most cases people now own only one shelter for both winter and spring. Some plan to build in future a new spring shelter in a new place, which is now extremely expensive as timber has to be brought from Hangai or Hentel. Nevertheless the scale of the phenomenon is not comparable to that in Arhangai, which is a result of the different structure of Gobi khotails, usually composed of one to two closely related families, who live in a place chosen by themselves.

### 3.5 Role of the sum-negdel authorities in preserving customary land tenure and use

The literature, including original sources like the 13th century Secret History of the Mongols or the 18th century Khalkha Jirum, and analytic descriptions, especially Mayski (1921), Vladimirtsov (1934) or Jagvaral (1974), do not give details of the legal relationship between households and pastures. Generally it is accepted that land has traditionally been imperial or state property, delegated formally and in practice to feudal lords and lately to negdels. In the popular understanding, however, the land was a free asset of hushuu/sum inhabitants with customary patterns of grazing arrangements. There are no records of conflicts between herders over grazing rights in pre-negdel times, e.g. there were no sanctions for such an offence in the Khalkha Jirum legal code, and formally the same is true nowadays. A lack of conflicts in the recent past has usually been attributed to negdel control.

In the negdels, land use organisation was based on local ecological characteristics, disregarding family usufruct rights if they were not

compatible with herd specialisation. The role of the negdel authorities in directing herd movements and preventing conflicts was dominant. Consequently the early years of the negdels witnessed many conflicts between family traditions and negdel interests. Their basic source was the initial reallocation of grazing lands at the creation of the negdels. Specialised livestock units had to follow different routes than they were used to, with their private multi-species herds. For many, this meant the necessity of breaking with their türsün nutags. This process took a different form in Hangai and the Gobi. After a decade, most herders were used to the new constraints and accepted them. The new element of herd specialisation became a part of the traditional land tenure system. Consequently, in the practice of the last decade at least, zootechnicians who were directly responsible on behalf of the negdel for coordination of pastoral production and its outcomes, were ready to accept herders' wishes with respect to grazing routine combined with their desire to nomadise in friendly company. Zootechnicians and the authorities in general retained of course the ultimate right to decide in case of disagreement, but usually there was no reason to do so. Additionally, negdel officials solved potential conflicts between herders, sometimes imposing fines on culprits.

Despite its controlling functions, the negdel played a secondary management role in this system, merely administratively sanctioning customary collective usufruct rights in rangeland within which herders' rights to use their customary (family or allocated by negdel) pastures were secured. These rights did not exclude other people's rights in case of need. In this sense, the role of the administration was secondary, although positive and stabilising. In a sense, the negdel continued the controlling role played previously by hushuu authorities, and as such was a replica of the old system, a more innovative one and therefore triggering conflicts at an earlier stage. Relaxation of this control lowered the costs of free-riding, as we recorded in the Gobi. Now the participation of the sum authorities in solving conflicts between pastoralists and monitoring the application of customary rules is an urgent need.

### 3.6 Absentee herd-owners: A threat to continuity of existing grazing arrangements

We have found this phenomenon better developed in Dornogobi than in Arhangai although it exists everywhere. To describe it in detail we use the Dornogobi example.

The scale of this phenomenon in Erdene sum is increasing, although slowly. At the end of 1991 (after the first phase of privatisation) members of the sum and company administration owned 12 percent of the total private herd in the sum (3,700 out of 30,800 animals). The average herd in the hands of administration employees was 40 animals (mostly small stock) comparing to an average herd of 114 kept by pastoralists. These animals belonging to administrators are taken care of mostly by relatives and friends in the countryside within the sum. On average more than half the sum administration employees are of local origin, so they have relatives locally. There are no fixed rules or conditions of agreement between the two parties with respect to their rights and duties. The practice follows the traditional pattern of gift/service exchange, therefore no regulations have been yet established about the flow of information or initiating a tenant system. The habit of assigning stock to others for grazing is not a novelty in Mongolia; it has existed perhaps for centuries, even in the

negdel in a latent form void of market connotations. On the basis of case studies we recognize the following established patterns:

- (i) animals kept with relatives: there is no cash payment for herding; new-born animals belong to their (absentee) owner; part of the product (mostly milk) belongs to the herding family while wool/hides/meat/processed milk belongs to the (absentee) owner; it is expected that the absentee owner will contribute his labour in months of highest labour demand.
- (ii) animals kept with friends: a small cash payment is common although there are no fixed prices (always a matter of negotiation, since there is no market for these services); a negotiable share of new-born animals and animal products goes to the receiving herder family; there is no expectation of labour input, although this may happen spontaneously.

In Arhangai, administration employees owned (after the first privatisation) 5,900 animals of all species which was roughly 7 percent of the total private herd (74,000), so the relative scale of the phenomenon is smaller than in the Gobi. All animals owned by town dwellers are permanently kept by relatives and friends and agreements are similar to the Gobi patterns. Nevertheless most informants strongly denied the existence of cash payments, and only two or three persons confirmed that; it is likely that exchange of information on this issue is not extensive and people still perceive it in the old categories of kin or friends' assistance or services.

It is likely that the proportion of animals owned by sum centre dwellers and people living in the countryside will change in favour of the inhabitants of sum centres. Nevertheless the likely scale of this phenomenon does not suggest any danger to the stability of land tenure arrangements. A more disastrous outcome could occur if town-based businessmen invested part of their profits in livestock for purely commercial purposes, and make them available for herding in the countryside against cash payment or just for the opportunity to use the milk. By doing this they would revive the tenant system introduced in old Mongolia by the large monasterial estates. The ecological and organisational consequences of such a practice are well known from other countries. They could be more serious in the Hangai than in the Gobi; in the latter, small family khotails would bear the main burden of a higher number of animals to feed, and negative consequences would probably not arise. Perhaps only the problem of a higher number of free-riders would emerge.

In the Hangai zone, on the contrary, khotails are much bigger and consist of many families. For one member to accept a number of animals from an absentee owner would directly endanger the interests of other members. The problem is, however, speculative because most probably the khotail would split according to the old rule that it can hold only a manageable herd. However, the consequences for neighbouring khotails in the same valley (say Usan Zuil or Deed Böröljüt where respectively 6 and 5 very large khotails are already squeezed into a relatively small area in winter) might be very serious. The existing customary system of grazing arrangements might be destabilized if natural selection of an excessive animal population did not intervene.

During the socialist period such a situation could not have occurred, not only because entrepreneurial businessmen did not exist, but also due to

the low limits on private animals. The limits (50 animals of all species in the steppe and 75 in the Gobi, of which only a third could be large stock), although often not reached, were sufficient only for family consumption and for simple reproduction.

The rise of absentee herding would depend on the profitability of livestock production in Mongolia compared to other sectors of the economy. It may become a real danger sooner or later for some regions, but it is not inevitable in the predictable future. The authors of the report diverge on this point, however. African analogies, contrary to most Asiatic ones, would lead to the conclusion that negative consequences will undoubtedly arise. The imminence of such an event should make policy planners in Mongolia turn attention to this issue in due time. It could happen that environmentally-destructive absentee herders will be presented by some political lobbys as a leading and positive examples of the entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, it is suggested, early introduction of a law setting limits to absenteeism should make the issue politically safe. Any regulations passed in advance, however, may cause resistance in the countryside in defence of a traditional institution.

Ideally, this danger would not occur in a well-organised society of professional and skilled herdsman, aware of the productive capacity of their ecological niches. Some Mongolian intellectuals maintain that such an optimistic version is the reality, driven by an ideological attempt at creating an image of a traditional pastoral society void of abuse. In any socio-economic system destabilising forces are always present as an integral part, though their activation depends on other factors. In fact, during the research, we came across many herders lacking a positive idea of how to behave in a crisis and they may open the way to new dangers, including absentee herding. Certainly, it is not a permanent situation of risk, but it will take time and effort to reverse the lack of professionalism in herding. Any social system, on the other hand, has some inbuilt defence mechanisms, protecting it from possible abuse. The centuries-old moderating routine in the khotail-herds-ecosystem relationship provides such a mechanism. It can be relied upon if supported by legal measures and due administrative supervision.

## 4 LIVESTOCK OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT BEFORE AND AFTER PRIVATISATION

### 4.1 Livestock ownership and management within the family

#### Developmental cycle and individual livestock ownership

The developmental cycle of the family herd in Mongolia assumes that the newly married couple are allocated a herd from the herds of their families of origin (through the pre-inheritance and dowry described in the following section). The bridewealth payments once characteristic of Mongol society disappeared at the start of this century as a result of a prolonged and spontaneous process. Both wife and husband remember the number of animals they brought into the new family herd (as the proportion is important in case of divorce), but the precise animal lines or strict affiliation of the progeny are rarely counted or remembered.

From the initial nucleus received after marriage, the family herd grows naturally each year; it can also grow as a result of gifts from relatives and friends to the husband and wife (see Chapter 5.4 on nair) but also from gifts to particular children on special social and family occasions, such as that child's birth or the ceremony of his first hair cutting. A child can be given an animal (usually female) of any species outside any special occasion or even at the child's request. Animals given to individual children, which are their individual property within the family herd, are known as ömch. Besides their psychological role (the child feels an accepted member of a family with ownership rights), these gifts play an important educational role. Young boys or girls have special responsibility for such animals and learn herding routines in the form of play. As the animals grow, the child learns the biology of particular species, its grass requirements, and traditional health techniques. With time, children lose the close relationship with particular animals and their responsibilities as herders become broadened to the whole family herd.

The progeny of animals from ömch is usually counted and identified. This is not the case in the Gobi where most informants (parents and children) were not able to recognise precisely the progeny of all ömch animals, contrary to Arhangai. The average Mongolian pastoral family is perhaps somewhere between these two extremes. According to our research data, the average proportion of animals belonging to all children in the family is between 20 and 60 percent of the whole family herd (around 7-15 percent for each child), higher in the Gobi and slightly lower in Arhangai. In practice, each child usually has several animals (large and small stock) and their progeny. Children do not have the right to withdraw ömch animals from the family herd before their marriage if they leave the pastoral way of life and move to town.

The ultimate manager of the herd is the family head. He has the right to dispose of any family animals, but in Arhangai, and less frequently in Gobi, it was stressed that animals for sale or slaughter should never be taken from the children's ömch, or only on condition they are replaced in the future. We were told in Arhangai that idesh (a gift of meat, described in Chapter 5.4) sent to a child living in town should be taken from that child's ömch. Only if that child's ömch is small, and would be significantly diminished by this, may parents slaughter their own animals for the purpose. This was not stressed in Gobi, where the institution of ömch seemed to play a more symbolical role. This issue needs further

comparative research.

Theoretically the ömch animals of each child (or rather their progeny) should be the nucleus of the herd handed over to that child after marriage. This seems to be the rule in Arhangai, while in the Gobi we found that allocating precisely those animals which were the child's ömch is less important and not generally observed.

#### **Pre-inheritance and dowry**

According to Mongolian tradition, shortly after the wedding ceremony the newly married couple receive their share of both families' herds. In the case of the husband, this is pre-inheritance of part of the family herd (also called ömch). The herd allocated to wife by her parents also plays a stabilizing role in family life because the dowry animals (inj) although in practice a part of the family herd managed by the husband, formally remain the wife's property, and can be withdrawn in case of divorce.

According to our case studies in Gobi and Arhangai the share of sons and daughters tends to be equal. The herd allocated to them should consist of all species of animals present in the parents' herd, preferably females, to ensure quick growth of the new family herd. Typically the number of allocated animals varies between 20 and 30 percent of the family herd. This proportion is not fixed but depends on the father's (or widowed mother's) decision. In practice it is assumed that parents divide the whole family herd by the number of unmarried children (plus those who have moved to town without collecting their share), and each child receives his or her part at marriage. The size of allocated shares can differ according to fluctuations in the family herd between allocations. The last child in the family, who continues the hearth and stays with his spouse in the parental yurt, usually receives more than the others since the herd has to sustain not only his family but also the parents. The youngest son is the main heir to the family property, not only in animals, but he (in the Gobi daughters can also play this role) does not receive it formally until the older generation steps down from economic activity, including management of the family herds.

In principle, among the animals received on marriage there should be particularly those which were the child's ömch and their progeny. The number of ömch animals is often smaller than the total number of animals allocated to a child on marriage, and they are usually supplemented from the parent's herd. This was the pattern recorded during field work and on this basis we can generalise about the size of the ömch given to a child by its parents: it should not be higher than the minimal expected size of that child's ömch/inj on marriage. Therefore, it has in practice been a mechanism limiting the size of the children's share in the family herd, which itself during the negdel period could not have been more than 50-75 animals of all species per household.

This same developmental cycle of the family herd was a characteristic of social life and property relationships both in post-revolutionary Mongolia and during the negdel period. No major change has occurred; only the actual size of the average family herd has changed, mostly due first to collectivization and now privatisation. The only essential change was the abolition of bridewealth, but this had already started before the revolution.

#### 4.2 Negdel versus private management patterns

Before the negdel period pastoral households were in principle independent economic units, and pursued individual herd management strategies depending on their resources. With collectivization an individual household became a sub-unit of a large negdel organisation with its autonomy limited to its own private herd and to some extent to decisions about the grazing patterns of the household (private and collective) herd. Each family was allocated a negdel herd according to available family manpower, based on coefficients of how many animals of each species could be cared for by one adult person. Negdel officials, together with the herders themselves, decided on household specialisations. Each family was supposed to produce and deliver to the negdel, on a yearly basis, a given quota of young animals and animal products. Production targets were based on mean coefficients of productivity for each species and the size of allocated herd. Members of the negdel were paid monthly salaries on the basis of anticipated annual income.

Herders who failed to meet production targets had to make up the shortfall from their private animals, or by buying them from other households and delivering to the negdel. Sometimes compensation in money was accepted. We were told by the Erdene sum authorities that in the recent decade, old debts to the negdel were usually abolished after a few years; decisions on this were taken by meetings of brigade members, so the system provided protection for losers. If a negdel member delivered products over the plan, he or she received a yearly bonus in cash or in animals. Very often household consumption needs (especially in the case of idesh in a large family) were met by acquiring animals from the negdel herd at low prices, conserving private animals.

Members of the negdel over 60 years old (men) and 55 years old (women) received pensions. The size of the pension depended on the average salary of the herder from the most recent years of employment and was around 25-30 percent of that amount. The negdel insured its members and their families as well as all animals, including private ones, and was responsible for delivering each year an adequate amount of hay for negdel and private animals to the winter shelter, also built by or with the assistance of the negdel. The negdel assisted herders to move their seasonal camps with tractors and lorries. Veterinary services were well organized, and schooling, health and other social services were developed better than anywhere else in the world in a pastoral nomadic community. No charge was collected for private insurance, for hay consumed by private livestock, for transport or for other services.

This system brought about a situation where household livelihood depended on both private and negdel herds, more precisely on the monthly salary and on the animal products which each herder could use directly or indirectly. One of the main features of the system was the fact that the negdel herd in the hands of each herder was a kind of easily accessible insurance. In case of sickness or death of a private animal, it might be presented as a negdel one, though such an abuse was prevented by special marking of animals. In case of a temporary shortage of the right private animal for home consumption or social purposes (for example, a gift to other people), a herder could use negdel animals and repay them at the reduced price. The freedom of manoeuvre provided by the system was one of the reasons for its attractiveness, serving as an additional safety-net.

The paradigm of a centrally planned economy employed by the Mongolian



authorities at the negdel level favoured stable, undisturbed and costly production supported by the state through subsidies. It discouraged individual entrepreneurship or development of more intensive methods, and a significant number of herders accepted this type of economic mentality. By setting limits on the household's individual herd, the system gave incentives to higher household consumption at the expense of herd growth. The gradual and informal lifting of these limits (which were more or less observed) resulted in some growth in wealth differentiation. This has increased with the first stage of privatisation, along with the start of contrasting individual economic strategies. These are analysed in Appendix 2, using the example of Yenshööw bag of Erdene sum.

#### 4.3 The privatisation of negdel herds

##### The herding company as a commercialised negdel

In early 1991 the Mongolian government introduced a new system of organizing negdel production, that of leasing negdel animals to individual families or suurs (groups of 2-3 families) against delivery of animal products according to agreed production targets. These arrangements became institutionalised at the end of 1991 when 'companies' replaced the old negdels. The main innovation was the lease which allowed herders to retain all new-born animals and other products from the leased herds on condition they delivered a quota of meat and other products to the company (the former negdel) at state prices, while wages remained as before. The company, which was selling part of the products in the open market (at auction) promised to return the difference between the two prices at the end of the year in money or in scarce goods. These arrangements created new production incentives, in contrast to delivering new-born animals and other products against the basic wage for herding duties in the negdel. In the new situation, herders continued to be paid but became owners of their product, although an agreed quota had to be sold to the company at fixed, low, prices. This arrangement was exceptionally profitable for herders, and all our informants from Erdene sum expected that after selling the agreed quota of meat to the company they would be able to retain slightly over half of all new-born animals, plus wages and payment for delivered products. The company was also obliged to provide winter fodder, veterinary drugs and transport facilities to each member of the company, but these services were charged for. Nevertheless, in 1991 these charges were still low and were therefore not perceived as a serious burden. These new regulations were followed by the abrogation of private herd limits to enable herders legally to keep their enlarged private herds.

The formation of companies in 1991 was a compromise move by the government and should be perceived as a success for reformers within the former government. The company was pragmatically invented as an intermediate step towards future full privatisation. The assumption was that the company herd would not grow but newly born animals would be directly transferred to private herders. At the negdel level, it was an acceptable compromise between the interests of old cadres who preserved their positions in the company administration, and the interests of the herders who were offered the prospect of quick individual profits. Consequently both sides readily accepted the idea, knowing that it came from above.

If the idea was so good, and companies were planned to last several years,

why then were they abandoned after only a few months in favour of full privatisation? There were two main reasons. The first was political. The policy of the new government in 1992 clearly pointed in the direction of full privatisation and this was understood by the company administration, who wanted to be in line with directives and find as soon as possible a new place in the system; at the same time dissatisfaction with company performance on the part of herders was rising. The latter, after a period of enthusiasm, realised that the promised services were not always available, payments to them were high due to inflation, prices for products delivered to the company were low comparing to free market ones, and nothing could be bought with the money earned. It is our impression from talks with herders in Gobi and Arhangai that they blamed the company for the general crisis in the Mongolian economy.

The atmosphere of political liberalisation in the country and direct agitation by the administration and entrepreneurial individuals (who expected, both in Erdene and Tariat sums, higher profits from a fully private pastoral economy) effectively influenced the decision taken by members of companies to dissolve them and fully privatise herds and other company property. The government sensibly left this decision to the members of each company. In Tariat the second phase of privatisation was conducted in June 1992 and all sums in Arhangai underwent full privatisation, while in Dornogobi Erdene sum was among the two (out of twelve) leading sums which decided to dissolve their company and move to full privatisation in September 1992.

Resolutions on the dissolution of the negdel and then the company had to be taken by the assembly of members. It is interesting that votes were not unanimous and sometimes had to be repeated to secure the desired effect. We do not have precise data, but according to interviews in the Gobi a substantial proportion of young people, some 70 percent in the first vote, insisted on maintaining the company. This perhaps should be attributed to their anxiety about the future of services provided under the collective system, especially technical and veterinary ones. Young herders are concerned about an effective pastoral economy, and are afraid that individual herding will revert to conditions of the past: primitive means of production, extensive herding strategies, difficulties with the product marketing, and defensive and non-market attitudes by older herders. Such a fear is well-grounded: negdels had extensive state support, which individual herding will not.

#### **First privatisation in Erdene sum**

The first (or 'small') privatisation in Erdene sum was conducted in autumn 1991. In accordance with the law, 30 percent of company assets were privatised, including 30 percent of herds (but a small number of females), all winter and spring shelters, as well as several buildings in the sum centre. All company members were eligible to receive privatised animals, both herders and administrators. Sum administrators did not directly benefit but this did not create any tension, contrary to the situation in Tariat. The general rules of privatisation were set by parliamentary act, but in practice each aimag and even sums were allowed to adjust the rules to the local situation (and interests of company members). According to the privatisation bill, each citizen of Mongolia had a right (during the first privatisation) to receive assets of the value of 3000 tg. City dwellers and workers living in town centres in Mongolia were eligible to get shares in factories, trading organisations, or to buy shops, houses, apartments, etc. Company employees were eligible for animals and other company assets. The initial share in property worth 3000 tg was increased for former

negdel members by several bonuses for long employment amounting to 6000 tg maximum. Animals and other assets were distributed between families, not directly to individuals. The company herd of 12,000 animals was put up for privatisation. The prices for these animals were lower than the market ones and depended on age (camels 300-3000 tg; horses 200-1400 tg; cattle 300-3000 tg; sheep 100-500 tg; goats 90- 300 tg).

The company administration counted the total 'privatisation capital' of each family, and allocated them animals of all species in the same proportion as in the company herd, taking into account prices of animals of different age in order to make up the total value of 'privatisation coupons' of each family. In one sense the distribution of animals was random, since all herders received animals of all species and of random ages, not taking into account the preferences of particular herders. The main factor contributing to the size of each family's portion was the number of household members and the length of their employment in negdel and company.

After the formal distribution on paper, a second phase, of practical allocation, took place. Herders usually did not have all the right animals in the portion of the company herd they were looking after, so exchanged with others for the necessary animals. Thus complicated process was supervised in the field by company and sum officials and was undertaken without serious conflict, although it was reported that in a few areas there was a lack of animals of a given species and sometimes herders received animals of a different species but of equal total value (using bodo coefficients). In several cases allocation of animals to households was delayed until the second privatisation.

Winter and spring shelters were also privatised, again at low prices under the rule that a shelter was allocated (formally sold) to its permanent user. In the sum centre all staff houses belonging to the company administration were sold to the families living there.

#### **Second privatisation in Erdene sum**

We did not witness the second privatisation in Erdene but were present during the decisive phase of its preparation. The rules were similar to those employed a year earlier, but the company herd to be distributed amounted to some 30,000 animals, which was roughly the remaining 70 percent of the former company herd. In principle the proportion of different species in the herd was retained while allocating animals to each household. Interesting decisions were made on other assets. As a result of long and open, though often stage-managed discussions, the company authorities decided to withdraw the transport facilities (lorries, tractors and garages) from open privatisation and retain them as commercialised state property supervised by the sum authorities. We did not get an intelligible answer to why the sum authorities, who are not a part of privatisation, got control over a part of private property.

This is similar to the endless discussions in all post-socialist countries about the scale of privatisation and the interests of different pressure groups. The sum authorities' arguments were as follows: privatisation of transport facilities would take this important element of economic infrastructure out of any control and that might lead to a drastic rise in transport costs, or preferential allocation; in case of inadequate demand in Erdene itself, the lorries could be sent by the new private owners away from the sum, especially since the new owners would most probably be rich people from outside the sum. In addition to these reasons it seems that

sum (and former company) administrators wanted to keep their influence and preserve their own place in the system. Another important discussion at the time of our visit to Erdene concerned possible privatisation of at least part of the wells, especially hand operated ones. The consequences of such a move are difficult to estimate in advance, but it would undoubtedly limit the flexibility of grazing movements in the semi-desert environment.

#### **Privatisation in Tariat sum**

In Tariat sum, which is perhaps representative of the Arhangai situation, the first privatisation was officially organised on a similar basis, but the precise rules of animal distribution were slightly different; this was the result of local peculiarities. In Tariat the number of people eligible to receive animals from privatisation was three times higher than in Erdene, while the number of animals to be privatised was only 30 percent higher. The real value of Tariat negdel/company assets was lower than the privatisation capital in the hands of the inhabitants. In this situation the authorities of both Gerelt Zam and Yalalt companies decided during the first phase to privatise 70 percent of all animals.

These were distributed according to the following rules: all eligible individual members of companies and of the former negdel were divided into four categories: (i) long-standing negdel employees, including pensioners; (ii) medium and short term negdel employees; (iii) negdel administrators; (iv) all children of former negdel employees regardless of occupation. Individual members of each family belonging to the first category received 2 adult cattle, plus 2 heifers/calves, plus 5 one-year calves, plus 5 sheep/goats. People belonging to the second category received the same, except the 5 one-year calves, and the number of sheep/goats was 3 not 5. People of the third category received 1 cow/ox, plus 1 calf and one sheep/goat with 2 lambs/kids. People of the fourth category received only one cow/ox, plus 3 sheep/goats, plus 3 lambs/kids. The herd allocated to a given family was the sum of animals for which each family member was eligible. Present and former sum administrators were excluded from the distribution of animals and their resentment was very strong. The official explanation was that they had received state salaries or pensions, so there was no need to give them animals.

Beside animals, all winter and spring shelters were also distributed at low prices and a part of the transport pool was also privatised. During the second privatisation in June 1992 almost all the remaining 30 percent of animals of both Gerelt Zam company and Mörön horshoo were privatised. In this case the disputed division into four categories was abandoned and each eligible person, regardless of age and length of employment, received 1 cow/ox, plus 1 calf, plus 2 sheep/goats with 2 lambs/kids, supplemented by a horse for each two persons. This was a rather mechanical pattern of distribution. According to our data, only 13 persons born and formerly working in the negdel came from other towns and were accepted as eligible for privatised animals. Several others were denied this right and left Tariat. Only several hundred animals remained deliberately undistributed, forming a reserve in the hands of the Gerelt Zam company and Yalalt horshoo authorities. After the distribution of nearly all stock the Gerelt Zam company has had to change its legal status to horshoo also (that is, a cooperative of individual herders). During the second phase of privatisation the transport facilities and former negdel/company houses were privatised.

Both in Tariat and in Erdene sums we often came across the view that

herd specialisation is not desired by herders, at least in the near future, and that they are satisfied having all species of animals. Nevertheless, we indirectly recorded cases of exchange of animals between herders after privatisation, although the purpose of the exchange was to improve the species proportion in the herd.

#### **Herders opinions about privatisation**

The overwhelming majority of herders we interviewed in Tariat sum regretted the dissolution of negdels. The decision to abolish the negdels was thought to have been taken in the capital and sent from there, which is true. Dissatisfaction was highest among herders in Böröljüt and less strong among members of Yalalt horshoo in Mörön bag. In Erdene sum these proportions were more even as problems of marketing animal products in autumn 1992 were not so acute. Erdene people sell their animals quite well to buyers from the north, due to the convenient railway connection.

When expressing their opinions, herders usually pointed to both negative and positive consequences. The main negative effect of privatisation and the dissolution of the negdels was said to be the lack of services once provided by the negdel. On the other hand herders agreed that people now took much better care of their private animals than they did formerly with negdel animals. They of course appreciated having full control over the animals but their opinions were full of critical reflection. More active and entrepreneurial individuals were more optimistic and in their perception could see new opportunities. More passive herders, who were the majority, concentrated on lost privileges and services as well as on the lack of supervision by a large organisation, agreeing at the same time that animals are better managed nowadays. In a ranking of opinions about desirable forms of organisation, the overwhelming majority of herders gave first place to the negdel, second to the individual pastoral economy, or alternatively voluntary cooperation in the framework of a horshoo. The last choice was the company, of which nobody had a good opinion. The company was perceived as a weak structure, unable to fulfil its obligations and responsible for the current crisis in the pastoral economy. As far as perspectives and participation in new developments is concerned, herders clearly realise that the situation will not be reversed; some of them look for a new role in a market-oriented pastoral economy, while most helplessly and passively follow the course of developments.

#### **4.4 The pastoral economy in a market environment**

Mongolian pastoralists now face several serious problems. These include: inadequate or expensive services necessary for efficient pastoral production, like hay provision, especially in the Gobi; inadequate availability of transport; problems with acquisition of consumer goods; problems with marketing animal products, especially in Arhangai. Herders also regret not having access to emergency assistance of the negdel type nowadays. Herders clearly perceive that individual households cannot survive alone in the market environment and they desire to cooperate with others, but the question of how to do it, and with whom, remains in most cases open.

In the present situation in Mongolia, the preferred organisation for rural cooperation is the voluntary herding cooperative or horshoo. We analyse here three cases of present or planned horshoo in both sample sums, in order to show the range of problems these new structures currently face.

#### Horshoo in Erdene sum

In Erdene sum the company, although formally dissolved on 1 September 1992, in practice will continue to operate until the end of the year. Herders have to deliver products, which the company will sell in town, paying for delivered products as well as both wages and pensions. In practice therefore, herders faced no problems selling animal products in autumn 1992 when we conducted this research. People in all bags expressed their worries about future developments but the danger was not yet strong enough to press them to action, especially since former negdel and company officials declared themselves ready to continue as brokers between herders and the market, although now on a private basis. We found only one group of people who decided to register as a horshoo. The initiative came from a few of the most entrepreneurial herders from Tsagaan Hudag valley in Dörvölj bag, who were dissatisfied with the company performance and in addition to meeting their company obligations sold part of their products at full market price directly to three factories in Sainshaind, the aimag capital. A group of 16 persons wrote in July 1992 two applications to the sum and aimag authorities to register themselves as a horshoo. This was before the dissolution of the company, so their initiative should be treated as a deliberate innovation, not a rescue action by producers who had lost marketing opportunities. Among the sixteen families who signed the application, nine live in one local community (Tsagaan Hudag valley, forming half of its permanent inhabitants in summer and autumn).<sup>10</sup> All permanent residents of the valley were offered membership, but half refused, not believing in the success of such a venture, although they knew the company was to be dissolved and they would be left alone as individual herders. They were simply disoriented and distrustful. Some did not exclude joining in future when the horshoo had proved to be successful. Seven families from outside Tsagaan Hudag valley also joined. They live in the same bag, not far from the valley, but in different local communities; none of their customary seasonal pastures, especially in summer or autumn, overlap with the Tsagaan Hudag valley. Therefore membership in the horshoo was neither exclusively based on local community ties nor on friendship (close friends and even families took opposite decisions), but depended on individual character and ability, and on the evaluation individual herders made of the problems of the new market environment.

Personal wealth was not a criteria of access to the new horshoo. Within the group, rich, medium and poor herders are represented, with a majority of mediumly wealthy ones. One member, elected president, is a retired army officer who is said to have good contacts in the town markets. He has been chosen to be responsible for produce marketing. Nevertheless the real moving spirit of the group is an active man in his 50s called Erdene. He is the local man of authority, and is responsible for contacts with the sum/aimag authorities and for planning and accounting. At the time of our visit in late August registration was expected within days. Our informants mentioned two main purposes in creating the horshoo: (i) to become independent from the sum/aimag authorities with respect to economic decisions, and (ii) to improve the effectiveness of pastoral production by eliminating redundant administration and selling products directly to consumers or at auction, by-passing all intermediate stages.

The horshoo prepared a simple business plan. They aim to produce a wide

10 In winter and spring all families disperse to their winter/spring shelters, situated in different places outside the wide, shallow Tsagaan Hudag valley.

range of animal products and to sell them in unprocessed form to old and new clients in town. They plan to collect most of the necessary hay themselves nearby, and to buy the remaining part from outside (this year from the company). They plan to buy a lorry from the company during the second privatisation, or hire it for a long period. They estimated horshoo yearly income, expenditure (including taxes), and profits. The value of this document is limited in a situation of rising inflation and an unstable tax system, but proves that they are treating the idea seriously. It will be interesting to compare the financial results of the horshoo with their estimates. One deficiency is a lack of initial capital.

From an organisational point of view, horshoo members will continue to live in separate households and local communities, and will graze their herds individually, working together only when necessary (for example, hay-making, transport, slaughtering, product marketing and traditional milk processing). They also declare their firm intention to assist each other in case of need or misfortune, including labour shortage; this is, in our opinion, along with marketing the main aim of the horshoo. Cooperation would be easier if they lived at least for the two warm seasons together in one valley, even though in winter and spring they have separate and dispersed shelters. We were told that the seven families from outside the community would move to Tsagaan Hudag valley in summer 1993, if grass and water is available to them. The organisers do not expect serious conflicts with other permanent users, as the area is large and newcomers are also members of the local community of the higher order. On the contrary, Erdene expects neighbours to join the cooperative. It would be extremely interesting to follow the developments in Tsagaan Hudag valley in future research, both from a socio-economic point of view and because it will illuminate the dynamics of the land tenure system.

Neighbours who did not join the Dörvölj horshoo expressed neutral and passive attitudes. They were disappointed by the record of the negdel and company, and prefer to wait to see the results of this new form of organisation. The members of neighbouring Yenshöw bag, when asked for opinions, either had not heard about the initiative or expressed reservations towards the professional qualifications (with respect to marketing) of some key members of the horshoo. There are no similar initiatives in Yenshöw bag, although we know people who think that such economic cooperation is indispensable in the new market situation. It is possible then, that if the first horshoo is a success others will soon be created. We have heard about a similar initiative in Tsagaan Hütül bag but have no confirmation. All herders interviewed pointed to the fact that the key elements for a horshoo are the availability of permanent transport and a good broker who will sell products in towns; both of these are apparently lacking.

#### **Horshoo in Tariat sum**

In Tariat sum the marketing situation for pastoral products is more complicated, as the Gerelt Zam company, Yalalt horshoo and a group of 130 individual herders from Böröljüt bag currently coexist. Individual herders live at the margin of the economic life of the sum, though they try to organize themselves or alternatively try to utilise the first two structures. The history of the formation of Yalalt horshoo was described in Chapter 2.3 so here we will concentrate on its functioning.

As a result of the partition of the negdel in mid 1991, the Yalalt company (later horshoo) inherited the organisational structure, cadres and resources (buildings, tractors, etc.) of the Mörön and Böröljüt brigades.

Local community sentiment, and a need to limiting the spatial scale of economic cooperation in order to raise productivity, were the main reasons for forming the Yalalt horshoo. After the first privatisation in August 1991, some two thousand animals remained in the possession of the horshoo; after the second, only a few hundred. The latter were left as capital - an incentive for medical personnel and teachers for the prospective hospital and school, which are to be built in Mörön bag centre, where there are already 20-30 other brick buildings. There are good reasons for this plan, since the school and hospital in Tariat sum centre are 80 km away. It can also be understood as the expression of a desire to be self-sufficient and independent from other structures. Some 500 families were initially members of the horshoo but in July 1992 130 families departed, having decided to become individual herders. They were mainly inhabitants of Böröljüt local community, now equivalent to Böröljüt bag. This changed nothing in the plans and activities of Yalalt horshoo, despite limiting its activity to Mörön local community members, though some ten Böröljüt families remained members of the horshoo. There is no tension between Mörön and Böröljüt communities.

The main statutory aim of the horshoo is to act as broker, by collecting animal products and selling them at distant markets. In 1991 the horshoo bought all animal products from the members and resold them to the state or on the free market. In 1992 by early September the horshoo managed to buy all products as well (except hides/skins, since it was too early for tanning), and sold most of them on the free market in towns. The horshoo paid its members in cash and delivered wheat flour and potatoes which members could buy at close to cost price. In its role as broker, the horshoo added only a small percentage for running costs (including administration). Apart from these marketing functions, Yalalt horshoo plans to continue at least some of the social welfare functions of the negdel. It is planned to collect money to assist needy families. Nothing more precise can be said, since there were so far no such cases, we were told. The horshoo has its own transport, available to members for their private needs. No discount rate for these services is available, except in emergency cases. Non-members can also hire tractors or lorries.

The way the horshoo tractors are managed is worth describing. After the dissolution of the negdel, Yalalt and Gerelt Zam divided the negdel's tractors between them in proportion to their members. After the second privatisation a small reshuffle again took place, with around 5 tractors left in hands of Yalalt horshoo, and around 10 in Gerelt Zam company; two were sold to groups of individual herders of Böröljüt community. Tractors belonging to Yalalt horshoo, after an initial trial period, were leased to tractor drivers on condition that 40 percent of payments collected by the drivers went to the horshoo; 60 percent remained in their hands. The drivers in turn are responsible for maintenance and for covering all running costs, but not major expenses. Buying scarce fuel is also the drivers' job. This very pragmatic approach is evidence that Yalalt horshoo managers understand the rules of the market economy and can operate it in practice.

When interviewed, members of the horshoo had a very positive opinion about horshoo performance, especially with respect to marketing of animal products. A comparison with the negdel just before its dissolution was often applied. The professional and personal qualifications of the horshoo leadership, especially its director, were also highly rated. It seems that Yalalt horshoo has gained the herders acceptance, and that its future position seems stable, at least from this point of view.



#### Attempts at cooperation between individual herders in Böröljüt bag

As mentioned earlier, over a hundred families left Yalalt horshoo. Our informants had serious difficulties explaining the reasons (see Chapter 2.3). Nevertheless they shared a common opinion, that they should not continue as individual herders but should form another horshoo of their own. Some suggested that the horshoo should not have a large administration, just two or three paid employees, who would be the brokers responsible for marketing animal products. All the opinions we heard about the future Böröljüt horshoo were individual ones, and the question was never discussed more widely. No meeting with such an agenda had been held, although the idea was known to everybody.

We noted two cases of collective action in the Böröljüt community: an initiative to acquire a collective tractor in the course of the second privatisation, and the milk processing groups (tasag).

A group of 30 families from Dood Böröljüt and Usan Zuil valleys decided collectively to buy a tractor (worth 145,000 tg) during the second privatisation, each paying around 5,000 tg from their privatisation coupons. The co-owners can use the tractor at cost, and it is also hired out at the market price. Some of our informants, shareholders in the tractor, were certain that it was to be part of the initial horshoo capital, while others denied this. Currently the tractor driver, Mavgan, who was one of the initiators, was trying to repay 5,000 tg to each family in order to become a sole owner of the tractor, which goes contrary to the idea of horshoo ownership and is the evidence of the inability of the whole group to organise collective action.

The case of milk processing teams is much more promising. Since the negdel period, the processing of milk to fat by several specialised families working together has been a well known practice. After separation from Yalalt horshoo the Böröljüt community members organised two such teams. We will concentrate on the first example. In 1991, a former member of the negdel organised a milk processing plant for Yalalt horshoo. In 1992, just after the separation of Böröljüt community from Yalalt horshoo, he again took five other herders for the team. They collected milk from 50 families, with whom the six organisers agreed that for producing 1 tonne of fat they would receive a total of 8,000 tg, or around 1,400 tg per person. The team kept accounts of all products delivered and sold, and paid for the delivered milk at the end of the period according to market sales price. Over a period of six weeks 70 families delivered 16,326 litres of milk from which 1145 kg of fat was produced. Each family received back 7 litres out of each 10 litres delivered of processed low fat milk still good for preparing airaq. The fat was sold to the factory in Kharhorin and to factories in Ulaanbaatar for cash. In addition, the Kharhorin factory sold the herders scarce wheat flour; this is a usual practice. The financial results of the operation are outstanding. For each litre of milk delivered the Böröljüt herders received 11.7 tg; at the same time Yalalt horshoo and Gerelt Zam company paid herders for delivered milk only 5 tg/lt; they were selling them the fat in a similar way, having also their own transport. The only explanation is the existence of extended administration costs in the latter enterprises. The negdel price, valid until last year was 0.8 tg/lt, so the difference is significant, despite inflation. The Böröljüt team plans to organise the same operation in 1993.

The initiators of both actions seemed doubtful about the prospects of successful cooperation within the framework of a future Böröljüt horshoo, although in principle they were in favour of the idea. Neither of them

wants to take on the burden of organising such a venture. In the case of the tractor driver, we even found efforts tending towards individual ownership of the tractor, which is a move in the opposite direction.

To summarise, we found in Böröljüt several persons with initiative, among them the organisers of the milk processing team and the initiators of the scheme to buy the collective tractor. However, none of them is a charismatic leader as in the Erdene or Yalalt cases, one who can mobilise community members, despite the lack of clear grass-roots participation in customary social practice. There is agreement on the need for cooperation between individual families in Böröljüt, but the lack of a strong personality has been, in our opinion, the main obstacle to forming a Böröljüt horshoo. Perhaps also the scale of problems faced so far has not pushed them in this direction.

Apart from local milk processing, the Böröljüt herders faced very serious difficulties with selling animal products. Those who did not participate in milk processing teams produced unusually high amounts of cheese and other dairy products. Some ten individual herders delivered milk to the Yalalt horshoo and it was accepted. Hides, skins, wool and meat were not sold in 1992 by the Böröljüt herders at all (including state procurement). Only a few families from Deed Böröljüt managed to sell part of their wool to the Gerelt Zam company. Both Yalalt and Gerelt Zam bought these limited amounts of products because they had found a high demand for them in the towns. If the profitability of these transactions changed, these sales by individual herders would be the first to be abandoned. The position of individual pastoral households in the market economy is therefore extremely fragile.

In the course of this research we recorded several attempts at different stages to create horshoo, some of them based on local community ties, some on relationships between entrepreneurial individuals, all regardless of wealth. Future social and economic practice will clarify these patterns. They will be either replaced locally or new local patterns will emerge. From a macro-economic perspective, and drawing on herders' experience, it seems necessary to fill the organisational vacuum created by the dissolution of negdels and companies. The most likely and most acceptable model is that of the horshoo since it is compatible with the present legal, political and economic framework, and is also flexible enough to accommodate local variations. The horshoo, like the former negdel, serves mainly economic purposes, but also plays limited social and political roles. The main difference is that access to the horshoo is voluntary, and that they are more or less grass-roots structures.

## 5 TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY PATTERNS OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

### 5.1 Introduction

As the point of departure for this discussion we refer to the conclusions of Chapter 1 about the ecologies and pastoral economy of Arhangai and Gobi. We argued that, contrary to the well established notion of the severity of the Mongolian climate, the immediate dangers for household existence are quite small, at least nowadays. Livestock mortality is lower than in past decades and there are no significant dangers to a household's existence from either climate or disease. The main identified risk in this respect is the commercialisation of veterinary services, which could result in increased losses. Despite this generally optimistic picture, it appears quite clearly from our data that serious climatic calamities happen, and over the adult life of a herder a very bad year is to be expected at least once, and a quite bad year twice. This is often enough for herders to respect nature and to prepare carefully for each winter. At the same time, people feel relatively secure and most animal losses which have occurred in living memory are attributed to the owners' lack of herding abilities rather than to unavoidable natural calamities. Our thesis is that the lack of unavoidable dangers to survival, and the continuous existence of institutional, though narrow, channels of assistance through the hushuu and negdel administration has resulted in the lack of clear, specialised redistribution, or mutual assistance, mechanisms within the social system. In other pastoral societies of the world, where state or religious institutions did not exist or did not provide assistance, such redistributive mechanisms usually emerged. In modern Mongolia, even the kinship system did not contribute much to risk avoiding or relief methods.

This does not mean that people in need are left alone by their kin, but that the necessary assistance is not institutionalised, at least since descent groups have disappeared from the social organisation. According to historical sources, the traditional culture imposed the duty of taking care of poor and disabled individuals and families upon their relatives. The hushuu administration intervened in cases where that duty was not fulfilled or instructed others to do the job. This tradition has been taken over by the post-revolutionary sums, at least in the case of lone people. It is still remembered that in the 1950s, the sum administration organised auctions of property left by kinless individuals to cover their funeral expenses. Nevertheless a significant number of homeless, vagrant people in pre-revolutionary times proved that this kin-based assistance network was not very efficient.

Poor people could also get part-time employment in or around monasteries, or less frequently join the shabinar class. In some places there persists to this day a view that in the past monasteries were a source of emergency as well as long-term assistance, which perhaps means that some monasteries really did act in this way. It may, however, point to an idealised picture of the past. This assistance probably operated privately, since most monastery lamas came from poor herding sections, and assistance flowed in both directions between the lamas and their kin. The main assistance mechanism worked as a form of long term insurance. Lamas were relatively well off, especially those of middle and high rank, and therefore were able to help their family and close kin. Practically every family sent a young

boy to a monastery, secretly expecting his assistance in the future. Therefore this practice can be best understood as an extension of a kin-oriented safety net. Such assistance was mostly unofficial, as charity was not among the statutory aims of monasteries.

In both pre- and post-revolutionary times, administrative units were obliged to organise help for poor people or emergency cases. There were no social funds for that purpose, but if close kin were absent, the hushuu, monasterial otog, or sum administration tried to put each needy person under somebody's responsibility. As a rule however, close kin were the first resort of the needy. With collectivisation, such assistance became a statutory duty of the collective. A certain division of responsibilities emerged. Extreme cases of poverty or misfortune were in principle the responsibility of the negdel, while minor cases were left to close kin and neighbours. This responsibility was one of the reasons why the negdel system became accepted by people. On the other hand, many negdels neglected these obligations. We can also note the historical continuity: a new institution continues to play and even extend the social assistance role played by the previous one. A similar continuity is expected now by the herders and the lack of it is clearly perceived as a disadvantage of privatisation.

## 5.2 Safety nets during the negdel period

How did the social assistance mechanisms work during the negdel period? We will concentrate on cases of serious emergency, such as those caused either by natural calamities, fire (a burnt yurt), or serious sickness. In daily practice the routine was as follows: immediate help was given by neighbours and close relatives; at the same time the negdel/brigade authorities were informed and joined the action, taking on the main burden. The sum medical service was involved, the state insurance system paid for lost animals (both collective and private), and the negdel allocated new animals to the family and gave it the chance to buy new private animals from the collective herd for family needs. In recent years households with fewer than 30 head of private animals were getting free allocations from the negdel herd to bring the number up to 30. If a tent burnt down, the negdel bought a new one, either directly using its social fund or by collecting money from brigade members. Relatives and neighbours were only responsible for contributing new furniture, cloth and other necessities. If somebody was hurt or died in an accident, the state insurance paid compensation, though low, to the family (negdel members were insured automatically).

In addition to the negdel, the sum also had a social fund which could be used to assist inhabitants of the sum who were not negdel members (for example, sum centre employees). We did not find a single case where a family which had lost animals due to a calamity was offered new animals by kin as emergency assistance. This confirms the assertion either that such redistribution has not existed in the present century, or that the needs have not been serious. The latter is the more probable, taking into consideration the few calamities recorded by our informants, as already discussed.

As an illustration we may take a very typical answer from a female informant in the Tsagaan Hudag valley close to Chinese border in the Gobi. Arhangai cases would be similar.

"We have never during our lifetime heard of a family which lost all or even half its herd, perhaps with the exception of animals which, while grazing, crossed the Chinese border, were captured by their soldiers and never returned. Even my family lost 40 horses in 1970 that way, but it was an exception. We knew a family whose tent burnt down. It happened 1975 and by that time we were members of the collective. The negdel bought the new tent with money collected from all of us, while we neighbours brought beds, bedding and other necessities. Those who offered that assistance were not their kin because those people had no relatives in the area. But when their relatives learnt about the case they also arrived bringing something."

The negdel bought the yurt, paid by the members, because yurts are scarce: the negdel would have ordered one, perhaps contributing to the fund.

Another interesting institution at work as a part of the safety-net may be termed 'institutionalised reciprocity'. Each brigade (now bag) is linked to one or two institutions in the sum centre and vice versa; they are committed to assist each others members in case of need. In the Gobi sample, Doorvolj bag is linked in this way to the sum school and the veterinary station. In case of an emergency or accident in one institution, members of the other partner institution are supposed to collect money for the persons in need. This is a typical socialist idea of creating cross-cutting institutionalised links between different groups in order to create 'a cooperative society'. This institution, if it survives, may be one of only two remaining, formal mutual support mechanisms which will be so important in the new market economy. (The other will be the social services at the sum level).

Assistance from kin and neighbours has been the main form of support in less serious cases or when state institutions are helpless. This includes bringing up orphans, providing poor relatives with basic necessities, assisting households lacking labour for short peak periods, looking after the sick, taking care of old people. These tasks are among the reasons khotails are organised and provide an important justification for them to continue. This channel of mutual assistance is however too narrow to work effectively in a larger arena and is customarily extended only to the local community.

In order to give a more complete picture of mutual assistance we will describe some indirect forms of it, working through quasi-redistributional mechanisms, as well as the institutions of adoption and brotherhood, which serve a similar purpose. This is preceded however by some remarks on the problem of economic awareness and the concept of poverty.

### 5.3 Concepts of poverty

To understand why people assist or do not assist each other we tried to penetrate the herders' concepts of poverty, in the hope that this would enlighten observed reality. In many other traditional pastoral societies, members have precise concepts about poverty or a typology of poor people according to the reason for poverty. Only some categories of poor are usually eligible for community assistance.

Both in the Gobi and Arhangai we found that nothing of this type exists, though most probably it had existed previously. People did not understand direct questions about the levels of poverty although at the same time they are well aware of wealth differentiation. This is because the concept of poverty in the negdel economy means something different from the market economy, where producers are not assisted by any parental organisation. We wanted to know what number of animals in a family herd (and of which species) makes the household economically and ecologically viable, that is, how many animals an average family should have in order to survive a typical winter and to be able afterwards to satisfy nutritional needs, while the remaining herd is able to grow.

Answers were so different that no coherent picture emerges. In the Gobi, people tend to place the economically unviable level of poverty below 40-50 head (but some say 150-200), a middle group is defined between 50 and 150-200 head, while the rich group starts at around 150-200 head. The ideal biological structure of this minimum private herd is said to be roughly 50-70 percent of small stock and 50-30 percent of large stock, which makes a minimum viable herd of 50 head, represented by c. 20-25 bodo accounting units. (Appendix 2 shows how many herders are below this level). In Arhangai, differences were even larger and are influenced either by old fashioned thinking (particularly that the negdel will provide help in case of need), or an attempt at anticipation of market forces. It should be said that the authors do not share the opinion that 50 heads is an adequate number.

This shows that people used to the negdel economy find it difficult to come to an accurate economic calculation about this sort of question. Most of the herders were guessing, not being able to base an answer on real experience. Some more reflective individuals tried to answer from a newly acquired market economy perspective, but their answers placed the poverty line so high that very few in the sum or bag met the conditions (e.g. a minimal herd of 200 with a proportion of large to small stock of 1:3, which gives around 70 bodo; this corresponds well with estimates of the minimum viable herd, found in the literature half a century ago).<sup>11</sup> In conditions of rising inflation, with new patterns of product marketing not yet established, and considering their very uncertain knowledge of current terms of trade, our informants were unable to find a conceptual framework within which poverty means anything in practice. This conceptual chaos is a characteristic feature of economic consciousness in all societies undergoing transition from one socio-economic and political system to another. Some years of living in the conditions of the market economy are necessary for a more precise concept of a viable herd to appear. Before this happens, many households are condemned to fail.

#### 5.4 Traditional quasi-redistribution

Contemporary Mongolian society has not yet established any typical redistributive (or levelling) mechanisms, most probably because there has so far been no such a need, either because these functions have been partially fulfilled by other institutions, or by small-scale assistance from kin and neighbours. In the 19th century Mongolia knew two forms of redistribution: bridewealth and various feasts given by a ruling prince or the most affluent community members. Several traditional quasi-

11 Erdeni, (1929: 48).

redistributional institutions survived up to now, through which goods, services, obligations and prestige are exchanged, serving the purpose of social integration.

### **Nair**

Nair is the institution of a ceremonial feast organised to commemorate certain family or social events, for example building a new yurt, a wedding, the ceremony of first washing child and clipping his hair, the ceremony of the 70th, 75th and 80th anniversary of somebody's birth; such feasts may also accompany communal occasions like offerings at the ovoo altar. Public nairs on the National Day, the anniversary of the revolution, were also organised in some sums at the negdel's expence; these were a continuation of former hushuu feasts. Nairs serve many social and integrative functions, and are also the expression of a man's affluence. They also serve the purpose of gaining or confirming a higher position or status in a given group. Our interest in nairs is related to the flow of goods and services between members of a given local community, in an expectation of finding in the nair institution a hidden redistributive mechanism between rich and poor.

National Day and ovoo feasts are not nairs in the true sense of the word, since they do not involve a flow of goods between people, unless a family is ready to give a nair attached to the event. Traditional society recognised a particular set of occasions warranting a nair, while nowadays the occasion is defined by the particular interests of a host family. New motives have been added to the list, such as a son's conscription or decoration with a state award, including the maternity medal. The latter is the only case where a woman is the hero of the nair, which is the latest development.

The scale of a nair depends on the donor's affluence and purpose. Recurrent occasions (for example, childbirth or conscription) can be celebrated less sumptuously, just enough to renew the host's prestige. Exceptional cases (for example, a wedding, award, particular birth anniversary) are a good reason for prestige and status seeking, and may be the only occasion for a family to organise such a feast.

The typical nair scenario demands that the host/organiser prepares the feast, investing much in different kinds of food (mutton, whole sheep carcasses, various milk products, sweets, beverages) and gift, and invites the guests or simply informs the group of people usually kin and members of the local community (including representatives of the local administration). The invitation can also be general with free admittance. The number of guests ranges from 100-300 over two or three days. Guests arrive with gifts (live animals such as sheep and horses, boiled mutton and sheep carcasses, other types of food and beverages, as well as consumer goods and lengths of fabric for the traditional costume known as deel). The host reciprocates with similar gifts. For the host, the net balance of income over expenditure is usually positive, mostly in the category of live animals which are reciprocated by symbolically important portions of mutton or the traditionally highly valued cooked carcasses of sheep, beverages and consumer goods; other gifts have to be balanced by gifts of the same kind, though not exactly the same as those received. The main gain to the host besides live animals, is the social prestige he achieves through organising the nair.

This institution somewhat resembles the potlach; however, valuables are not destroyed, nor distributed among the guests, but simply change

owners with only a certain surplus, which has recently been high, remaining in hands of the host. All these gifts fall into the category of ostensible, demonstrative consumption; even if they are not openly presented in public at the main forum (with exception of animals and meat, gifts are carefully packed and named), the facts are known to all.

In Dornogobi we found that the biggest and most splendid nairs are those of the new yurt (shine ger nair), supplanting the wedding nair of other regions, for the historical reasons explained in Chapter 2.1. The most interesting feature for our socio-economic analysis is the sharp rise in nair prestations in the late 1980s and 1990s.

In ten recorded cases, the average prestation offered to the host amounted to 4 horses and 15 sheep (ranging from 0 to 9 horses and from 5 to 27 sheep), mostly from maternal kin and also paternal kin and best friends. These gifts were reciprocated with large portions of cooked meat and beverages or, exceptionally, with live animals to close kin. Other categories, such as gifts of food, beverages and consumer goods, were reciprocated by similar gifts of comparable or slightly smaller value. One case of nair prestations is described in detail in Appendix 6.

We do not have data on nair prestations in the pre-negdel period though the general pattern was certainly similar, except for the rise in value of goods exchanged. On the basis of contemporary feasts we can conclude that nairs retain all the traditional social functions and additionally have become a system of circulation of animals and prestigious consumer goods, though among people of homogeneous class. There is a strictly observed rule that large gifts (for example animals) have to be reciprocated by large returns. The exchange of goods takes place on several levels of affluence; the host adjusts his return gifts to the sort and quality he has himself received, unless other obligations interfere.

In this sense the institution has social and even socio-political rather than purely economic importance. We recorded a case where an ordinary herder having given two nairs, gained a prestigious administrative position to which he was freely elected. This is a kind of investment in individual position, from which wealth can result. A handsome nair needs investment of a significant capital input at the beginning. This takes the form of meat of several of the host's own animals, which will only be reciprocated with live animals if many guests arrive. The food and drink consumed by the crowd of guests are not reciprocated. To attract a large number of guests, the organiser should already have an established individual position in society, though not necessarily an above average one. At the same time, giving a nair is not limited to a few individuals; there can be minor or middle level feasts, organised by people of lesser wealth to meet the pressure of expectations of their own kin or of their immediate neighbours. We met people who had bought a new yurt lately and decided to wait till the following year for a nair, collecting funds in the meantime.

Almost everybody tries to take part in this competition for prestige, though it is located at various levels of affluence. We were told that in 1991 in Yenshööw bag there were around 10 shine ger nairs, a large number for a population of less than a hundred families. It is not necessary to give a nair to take part in the game. Participants play a minor role, but it is their gifts which are seen and commented upon, so they attend for their own advancement also. Newly institutionalised elites have not yet appeared in the new local communities, which does not mean that no social criteria are at work. A constant battle for prestige and for



position in an established status stratification is going on. It can be seen as a kind of popular voting in which no restrictions are imposed on attendance. Nair remain a democratic communal institution and it is likely to remain such for some time. The only sign of stratification likely to appear belonging to the pre-collectivisation pattern, will be a reluctance of the rich or those with higher status to participate in small nairs of limited prestige.

The final interesting question is the reason for the increase in nair prestations in the last few years, which has occurred in the Gobi but not in Arhangai. The working hypothesis is that the average level of prosperity has risen so that people can now afford it. This contradicts the stereotype of Hangai men enjoying life and ready to live beyond their means, as opposed to the rational inhabitants of the Gobi. It is probable, however, that the search for prestige is very rational for the latter. The market economy may change the wealth structure along with the scale of preferred social choices and goals.

In Arhangai, nairs were not reported by our informants as a spectacular social event of the type described here, though they are also typical in the traditional culture of the Hangai itself. Instead, the New Year festivities Tsagaan Sar, also known in the Gobi, were said to be the most ceremonial social occasion involving many people. The term nair is applied to them by extension, though improperly. They consist of a series of visits paid and received over the month which follows the New Year. During this period, relatives and neighbours from the same and neighbouring local communities visit each other, bringing small gifts of food, beverages and consumer goods and receiving similar gifts. The total number of guests can reach or exceed 200 during the month. Large quantities of food are consumed (some informants in Tariat reported that for this month one household produced over 5000 budz, local dumplings with mutton). Nevertheless the food does not belong to the category of nair ceremonial dishes, gifts are not sumptuous and animals are not given.

At New Year parties in Arhangai the scale of conspicuous consumption is much smaller than at a nair. Conspicuous consumption occurs at nairs proper, during weddings and first hair cutting ceremonies, though we do not have data to reach a conclusion about its rise or decline. Some of our informants said there had been a suggested rise in recent years. Even if this is true, the reasons are not clear; it could for example be caused by problems with marketing pastoral products in last two years, which resulted in higher meat and milk product consumption than before. It is also explainable by the shortages of flour, which now has to be imported. But the rise in consumption is probably at the expense of capital accumulation among those who cannot adapt to a growing private herd. We came across the opinion that after privatisation younger herders feel more secure and consume more. This is a reasonable hypothesis about uncontrolled spending and our data partly support it, though the age factor does not seem relevant.

A rise in consumption, whether conspicuous or not, can be attributed to the accumulation of wealth. There are good reasons for it, including the difficulties with marketing already mentioned, the growth of private capital (in animals) due to privatisation, the opportunities for informal trade with China (in the Gobi area). If we add the poor level of economic awareness, and lack of ideas on viable herd sizes and on strategies for the near future, one should not wonder that many herders inexperienced with the market economy feel giddy and spend more capital on consumption than

they save in the form of herd growth. The situation is already critical, and can worsen in the next one or two years, bringing about a radical differentiation in economic status among herders.

### **Idesh**

Idesh is a traditional institution of exchange of goods and services between close relatives living in towns or sum centres and in the countryside.

This institution emerged in the 1930s with the failure of the Mongolian version of the New Economic Policy and the resulting break-down of the trading companies which resulted in goods shortages, first of all in the countryside. Thus began a prolonged contrast in consumer goods supply between towns and pastoral areas. The institution of idesh was developed to alleviate the effects of this. Large-scale urbanization froze the situation, so idesh became well entrenched in contemporary Mongolian culture. An inefficient centrally planned distribution system resulted in the permanent situation that city dwellers cannot get enough fresh meat and milk products, while people in the countryside have always had problems acquiring basic consumer goods. Kinship channels between town and countryside have been adapted to act as a parallel system of distribution.

The term idesh (meaning 'meat for the winter') covers meat for household consumption prepared in early winter as well as the gift of meat to relatives in towns. Here we discuss the latter aspect only. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the average idesh was composed of 1 cow (alternatively though rarely a horse) and 2 sheep sent to town-based relatives (parents, children, siblings) in winter - December and January - as well as the meat of 2-3 sheep offered to them when they visited the family in the countryside during summer holidays. In return, town relatives brought clothes, beverages, prestigious consumer goods, and also offered their labour during that time, as well as help in getting access to town based services (such as health or administrative promotion). This made an equivalent and balanced exchange.

In the early 1990s, as a result of the worsening economic situation in Mongolia, the availability of consumer goods in towns has become as limited as in countryside and the exchange has lost its balanced character. Now town-based relatives, who are unable to buy anything interesting, offer only money (as a gift), with which almost nothing can be bought either in towns or in the countryside. The availability of consumer goods changed for the better in late 1992, but these were mainly imported foreign goods at very high prices, which were usually inaccessible to ordinary people.

This situation has not yet undermined the flow of meat to the towns. Herders who were interviewed still perceive it as a kinship obligation to assist family members living far away in towns without access to fresh foods. In an analytical sense this is an obligation in terms of pure devotion to close kin and the need to assist each other. It also can be understood as paying off the family herd. Most kin receiving idesh are the donor's own children or siblings, and some meat reaching them comes from animals which are their inheritance (ömch) grazed in the common herd. This is supplemented by meat from other family animals only if that ömch is very small. Even if their share is informal, their moral right to part of the family herd remains unquestionable. At the same time this right is translated into the customary rules of gift exchange.

The equivalence of idesh obligations with delayed inheritance rights was

recorded in Arhangai while in the Gobi informants stressed the pure kinship obligation to assist each other. In addition, according to Arhangai informants, further relatives (for example, in-laws) can also be offered symbolic gifts (for example, a portion of meat) freely, but if they want more they have to pay or offer another comparable gift, so the latter seemed to be a consciously balanced reciprocity. Generally speaking, the relationship between idesh and ömch is not clear, since in the case of close kin idesh is reciprocated as well, and more generously than the ömch itself would require. The idea of kinship obligations towards close relatives prevails over 'rights' as far as local interpretation is concerned.

### 5.5 Adoption and 'brotherhood' as quasi-redistribution

#### Adoption

The phenomenon of adoption is well grounded in Mongolian culture and social practice. Adopted children are treated in everyday life the same as those born in the family, and also have the same rights to inherit household property.

The main reason for adoption is culturally based. The traditional pastoral family tends to have many children, and this custom apart, the quest for proper social status is also practical: there is a need to satisfy the household's labour requirements, take care of elderly parents, and guarantee hearth continuity. Sometimes, due to health reasons or simply the harsh conditions of life, pastoral families find this cultural ideal difficult to fulfill and can either have no children at all or not enough. In these cases, adoption is widely resorted to. One cultural reason is the common belief that if a new couple remains childless for a long time and barrenness is suspected, the first child has to be adopted to open the way for the couples own procreation. This is coupled with the belief that giving the first child away in adoption prevents the influence of evil forces on further progeny. Both beliefs create a cultural framework for the custom of adoption.

Barrenness was an acute problem in the past. There were regions where almost half the women were childless. Preventing barrenness, ensuring pregnancy and the security of small children were the main priority of the whole magical complex in Mongolia. Adoption was also a part of this complex. Families who wanted to adopt a child most often turned to near or far relatives who had many children; they might also approach unrelated families. In the past there was a particular ritual of adoption, with an exchange of gifts, but this is now being forgotten. The original parents retain a right to maintain contact and meet the child, and very often there develops a quasi-kinship relationship between the original parents and the new ones. All formal parental rights are vested however with the adopting parents. It often happens that the biological parents receive idesh from the foster family if they live in town. Other relatives of the biological parents may also get into the category of quasi-kin with the new ones.

An important aspect of this institution is that the initiative of adoption has always been from the receiving parents. Our informants often stressed that poor families with many children never looked for prosperous receiving parents, and that adoption was never considered an economic deal in which the gain was on the side of giving family or the child itself. Instead, the notion of gift exchange was applied, with the child being the most precious gift. The exchange is understood as unbalanced and therefore is usually

kept within the circle of relatives or friends. Adoption partners of different economic or social standing are very unusual.

The scale of adoption is numerically significant in the whole of Mongolia and the recorded frequency in Arhangai (around 5-10 percent of all parent-children relationships) is probably representative for the whole country now. In the Gobi, where the social system is marked by high instability of the family, the ratio is exceptionally high and in the older generation reached on average some 30 percent of all child-parent relationships recorded during our research. In this respect the Gobi is an exceptional case, though data from the 1930s from Arhangai also show a very high incidence. Recently the rate of adoptions has been significantly reduced due to a decline in barrenness.

For our purpose, we concentrate on the indirect, unintended redistributive functions of adoption. As has been already said, families with many children have never tried to alleviate their situation by giving children away. In the old days there was another way of meeting such a need in a hidden way: to give a child to a monastery as a pupil to one of lamas, with the prospect for becoming himself a lama in the future, after a period of serving the tutor, often in very bad conditions. Although adoption is not an intentional levelling mechanism in an economic sense, in practice the exchange involves on the donor side mostly families with numerous children. In this way adoption indirectly serves as a quasi-redistribution mechanism between families, alleviating to some extent the subsistence problems of those with many children. The basic gain of this redistribution of children, however, was an improvement in the social, psychological and also subsistence status of the childless. Adoption has been part of a very private, intimate net of insurance having nothing in common with economic services. Such an institution has little future when the previous social safety-net organised by state or negdel finally ceases to exist and wealth differences increase.

#### 'Brotherhood'

Brotherhood (anda, tal boloh) is an institution of fictitious kinship, deeply rooted in Mongolian culture for many centuries (it was already reported in the 13th century). In different parts of Mongolia it has different names (andlah, and bololcoh, lit. 'to become a specific friend', tal boloh 'to be a side (of relationships)' used in Arhangai, ah duu boloh - 'to become brothers'. Such 'brotherhood' relationships are initiated between people who are not related by blood and usually are of equal age, although this is not a rule. Those engaging in such relationship may be teenagers, but mostly are in their 20s or older, as they should be conscious of the obligations this union imposes. Most cases reported in the field involve people of middle or old age of the same or different sexes.

If both sides are young people, the initiative to establish 'brotherhood' may come both from them or from their parents, who all have to accept the choice and take the burden of organising the ceremony. The main possible types of brotherhood are as follows:

- (i) Two young boys or two girls (usually of school age) may like each other as friends and can have the idea of institutionalizing that friendship. This happens very rarely; we did not record any case of this kind and were only informed that such a possibility existed;
- (ii) If both sides are young people it is generally their parents who take the initiative of 'brotherhood', especially parents who have few

children and few siblings of their own, and are afraid that their children may be left alone without adequate family assistance in the future. In this case the purpose is to place the child in a quasi-kinship network in order to secure his survival in case of unexpected future hardship. We noted a few cases of this kind;

- (iii) Most often, according to our research, the relationship of 'brotherhood' is established by adult people of the same or sometimes the opposite sex, neither of whom have many siblings nor big family and feel unsecure about future. The relationship may be initiated by one side, and only the people concerned decide, although both families are consulted and asked for advice. Usually the scenario is that one person requests the other to become his/her 'brother/sister'. Rapid agreement is not expected. The solicited person may hesitate before an answer is given, for one year or more, and tries to collect indirect information about the partner. Both sides bear the costs of organising the ceremony.

Once the link is established, the relationship between 'brothers' or 'brother and sister', is as close as between real siblings; both sides have an even stronger obligation to assist each other than real kin because brotherhood is established mainly to institutionalise obligations of mutual assistance. These include economic cooperation, for example in a local community, but are stronger than that and cannot be refused. The range of help mentioned by those involved in brotherhood include: mutual assistance in sheep-shearing, preparing and cleaning winter shelters, hay-making, slaughtering animals and preparing meat for winter, as well as assistance in bringing up children and taking care of each other in case of sickness or any other need. In the case of 'brotherhood' between a man and a woman (usually one is widowed), it is expected that the woman will sew cloth for him and his children. All these kinds of assistance are obligatory when a need occurs.

The customary rules governing this custom assume that one person cannot be engaged in more than two or three such relationships. This level is practically never achieved but its existence confirms the very pragmatic idea of the institution: having more 'brothers' would undermine the ability to fulfil the obligations in the proper way. Children of 'brothers' address each other in daily practice using kinship terminology and cannot intermarry as if they were real kin.

Symbolically this institution resembles marriage. Traditionally at least one, and sometimes even three nairs were organised for the event (we noted this in Öndor Úlaan sum). One may be held in each yurts simultaneously and one half way between the households. According to some informants, both persons symbolically drink the blood of the opposite side and exchange shirts, fabrics or deel and other items symbolizing the indissoluble character of the relationship. The repertoire of these symbolic actions differs from one local tradition to another. Parents on both sides also receive a valuable gift of a hadaq (a symbolic scarf) and beverages. During the nair large quantities of food are consumed and local alcohol drunk. In Tariat sum we noted the custom of organising one nair only, compared to three in Öndor Úlaan. In recent years the scale of consumption has been significantly reduced and only very close relatives and neighbours are invited. Very often in our sample we met people who had established 'brotherhood' at quite a late age.

The typical practice of establishing 'brotherhood' is exemplified by the

following case of a widower Badmadorj and Munhbayar (a wife of Enhbayar), who established tal boloh in 1991. We interviewed them both simultaneously in two neighbouring yurts; they came to live in one khotail quite recently (this fact is exceptional; usually 'brothers/sisters' live in the same local community of the lower order, often in the vicinity of each other but rarely in the same khotail). The detailed forms of cooperation are, however, typical for Tariat sum.

Badmadorj's description: He had been working for years as an accountant in Mörön brigade centre and after the dissolution of the negdel and privatization of herds in 1991 came back to a purely pastoral occupation. His wife died two years ago, leaving him with three young children (5-18 years old). He had neither sisters nor brothers. He had known Munhbayar and Enhbayar for years. When Munhbayar offered to be his 'sister' (tal egch) he enthusiastically agreed, hoping that she would help him take care of his children. They organized (in winter 1991) a small nair and only a few relatives and neighbours were invited (mostly because this was winter and communication was difficult). They gave each other as a gift a ewe and such other traditional gifts as deel and fabrics for deel, as well as modern shoes. After privatisation he moved from Mörön bag centre to Ih Jargalant valley and joined her khotail partly to have his children close to her family, partly because that was his türsüu nutag. She assisted him in different ways, sewing cloth and taking care of his children when he was away. He considered that that kind of relationship is mostly practical and is sometimes even stronger than the real kinship. He was satisfied with his 'brotherhood'.

Munhbayar's description: She proposed to Badmadorj to establish tal boloh in August 1991 and they organized a nair in winter 1991. She decided to do this because Badmadorj had no other close relatives, since his wife had died in 1990, and she also had only one younger brother. She asked other people for their opinion of him. They described Badmadorj as a serious, calm man who had only one deficiency which was that he drank alcohol. When she had suggested to him to establish tal boloh he enthusiastically agreed as did their families. They assist each other in daily life; for example she was currently preparing a deel for Badmadorj's eldest son's marriage, which was to take place soon. She was satisfied with her choice.

The contemporary scale of this phenomenon in Tariat is not significant. Different informants mentioned a total of about 25 pairs living in Böröljüt, Mörön and sum bags, which is not high, but the number is stable since some pairs die naturally, but new ones are being established. All people interviewed suggested that the phenomenon had come for the first time in the 1940s and 1950s either from neighbouring Öndoor Ülaan sum or from Hubsugul aimag to the north.

This means that the quasi-kinship institution of 'brotherhood' is still alive and attractive for some people and, as has been stressed, is practically oriented for mutual assistance. People tend now to limit the costs and scale of nairs, even sometimes only inviting friends and not families in the case of sum centre dwellers. Most people do not know much about this institution but at least know that it does exist and can be used by individuals who do not have sufficient family ties. This contributes an additional safety-net which, in case of increasing rural poverty, can be effectively used in parallel to real kinship obligations and assistance.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Contemporary patterns of social organisation and economic cooperation

The negdel period brought about an individualisation of the family, previously involved both socially and economically in kin and khotail interdependencies. Pre-negdel wealth differentiation, alleviated to some extent by kin and khotail structures, was levelled by the collectives. Most families became independent herding units, or rather exchanged old limitations for new ones in a state-controlled system. The system did not favour initiative or entrepreneurship, so few herders pursued effective individual strategies, which resulted in great contrasts in the size of private herds, even within legally imposed limits. This has contributed to the diversity in economic status of ex-members of negdels, thus reinforcing the situation the collectives had been supposed to abolish. All, however, had equal access to negdel services, including transport and health.

The responsibility for safety-nets was shifted from the kin and communal domain to the state and the negdel. The change resulted in nuclearisation of the family; the latter does not accommodate distant collaterals any longer, at least to the extent it did some decades ago. The serious anomaly in the structure of the Gobi family was rectified to a large degree. The matrifocal family and the predominance of matrilineal filiation are in recession now, though they continue to impregnate social relations, less in their economic aspect than in the defining roles of both genders.

Kin relations became looser, retaining their emotional significance, but with declining economic significance. Instead, economic links with kin in towns have been activated, taking on the attributes of a redistribution mechanism. In spite of the recently declining goods exchange between country and town-based kinsmen, the links are preserved in anticipation of their revival. Now, in the atmosphere of uncertainty and imminent change, relatives begin to integrate again, as demonstrated by their spatial distribution (Erdene) or the intensification of bonds (fictitious kinship in Tariat).

It is plausible then to expect that the individualised nuclear family will continue, though cooperation between related families will increase, continuing the pattern of kindred bonds instead of lineal ones. The same is beginning in the Gobi, though matrilineal kin still prevail there. Kin and local community cooperation will be called upon to replace disappearing negdel services. Wealth differentiation will also increase across kin and khotail relationships, and diverse levels of managerial ability will be responsible for great variations even between the richest. This will create greater demand for kin-based safety nets; the kinship system, however, is too narrow and weakened to be able to provide an adequate supply of the necessary services. Nevertheless, it is still capable of choosing between such traditional instruments as adoption, fictitious kinship, quasi-lineage groups, or supplementary filiation, and perhaps others. Soon we will witness attempts at their intensification.

Many families have lost their traditional roots in ecologically and socially defined space, that is their inherited pastures called törsön nutag, which protected their usufruct rights. They were abandoned because of reallocation within the negdel. Instead, protection was provided by the sum and negdel. Now, the social system of the negdel community,

organised along territorial and production units, has lost its reason and strength with the sudden change in ownership rights and title deeds. These rights, being individualised, need a new assurance system, other than the administratively imposed negdel/state system. Existing civil law is inefficient in this respect, and anyway there is not much confidence in it, and consequently no knowledge about it. The vacuum is being filled by spontaneous residential affiliations with kin. Also, protection is sought in customary law by claims to traditional family pastures taken often by other negdel members. These törsön nutags should sanction, as in the pre-negdel economy, the right of land occupation and usufruct.

Waning kinship bonds may get another lease of life with a proliferation of absentee herding. This survived through the negdel period on a very reduced scale, and now will expand since privatisation included some town residents. Their herds are being given to relatives to manage in the first place, though non-kin bonds are also exploited. In the beginning, this sort of absentee herding is not likely to be based on true tenancy relations and will perhaps function as a form of redistribution, as an exchange of services and gifts. The introduction of a market type of absentee herding, as a paid service, would require an essential change in social relations, that is their depersonalisation. The latter is not likely to happen soon, as the current trend is in the other direction to revitalise kin and community links. Some observers expect ecological dangers to arise from absentee herding. If it is going to develop along traditional lines, the danger is rather small: the stock will be given to experienced herders rather than to inexperienced ones; we have already seen this in Erdene. The danger would become real if the herds were entrusted to kin unskilled in herding, in an attempt to let them survive. Even in such cases, customary rules of pasture use, if still in force, and the moderating influence of the khotail-herds-ecological niche system should compel them to behave appropriately.

The khotail seems to be regaining its economic integrative function performed in the pre-negdel period but reduced to a residential one when the collective economy prevailed. It has survived as a basic settlement pattern in Arhangai, while in the Gobi it was reported for the distant past only. Now there are residential arrangements in the Gobi which are a dispersed version of a khotail. Their function is rather socially integrative, and seldom economic, while those in Arhangai are able to form several vehicles for economic cooperation, including small horshoo, a pattern rising in popularity now.

Local communities continue to play an important role, though their economic obligations, especially mutual help, were seriously limited in the negdel system by the centralised distribution of tasks, and by free manpower and resources (at brigade or negdel level). Now valley communities will add economic functions to their basic social ones. Communities at this level will be able to establish production and marketing units, when economizing on transport costs becomes inevitable (their compactness and small size being an advantage). Besides, their members are well integrated, much better than in the case of bags or sums. Therefore communal control of grazing and water resources along customary lines will most probably be carried out at that level, supported by communities of the higher order holding administrative power.

Valley communities are especially suited to develop a better adapted instrument of economic security than kinship forms of integration. In the course of research in Dornogobi and Arhangai we recorded several attempts



at creating horshoo. Some are based on local community ties, some on relationships between individual entrepreneurs, all regardless of wealth status. Future social and economic practice will probably follow this seemingly promising pattern. It will be either replicated at the neighbourhood level, perhaps improved, or new local patterns will emerge. However, macro-economic needs and the herders' own experience make it necessary to fill the organisational vacuum created by the dissolution of negdels and companies. The most likely and acceptable model is the horshoo as it is compatible with the present legal, political and economic framework. It is also flexible enough to accommodate various local variants. The horshoo, as opposed to the negdel, serves mainly economic purposes, but it can also develop limited social and political functions. The main distinguishing factor is that membership of the horshoo is voluntary, and they are close to being grass-root structures following to some degree the old patterns of extended khotails or joint families.

The communities of a higher order (bags, sums) are generally unable to develop such patterns of cooperation in production and trading, though attempts at the revitalisation of companies cannot be excluded. These communities will perform ceremonial and ritual functions, lately revived, in addition to economically and socially integrative ones. With the forthcoming greater wealth differentiation, there is likely to be a search for social status, already existing in the form of prestige-seeking conspicuous consumption and ceremonial spending, such as feasts of the nair type, or possibly competition for the best stud animals and camel herds. Such demonstrations need wider communities to be addressed to, and bags and sums would fit the purpose.

In this connection it is likely that some relatively affluent herdsmen may adopt a model of extravagant spending or shape their herd structure according to cultural demands rather than market demands (Appendix 3 describes a case of this sort). Wealth differentiation promises to expand due to both cultural factors and misunderstanding of market laws, as well as to the consequence of both: an inability to cope in the new conditions. This process should be carefully monitored for the next few years and corrective measures recommended.

The importance of the sum also increases due to several new factors. The dismantled safety nets will have to be replaced by social services at this particular level, which best achieves the objective. Another factor derives from the process of collectivisation which has created sum centres as small urban settlements provided with social facilities and infrastructure useful for product marketing. They are more or less integrated into local transport networks and may take up the role of trading centres, thus reinforcing the sums' role as local communities of the highest order. Low level of economic productivity and entrepreneurship among many herders makes necessary educational measures. Vocational and managerial training at a basic level can also be organised in sum centres, so as not to disturb household economic operations and to keep students relatively close to their herds. Such training would contribute to the integration of more dynamic local people, which in turn should result in an increasing number of economic projects involving sum inhabitants.

Some cultural features based in the Mongol tradition are relevant to the future condition of the society. Both thesaurisation and ostentation are well incorporated into the Mongol system of values. The first would work towards capital growth in herds, reducing marketing. The latter may result in purely social striving for prestige, putting aside more distant

economic goals. Temptations of this sort would be more characteristic of individual private herders than those engaged in horshoo and other organisations where market thinking should prevail. The performance of such organisations will be important in spreading new methods since demonstration is more effective than simple instruction, this trivial observation being especially true for Mongolia. Any activity aimed at changing people's mentality and educating them for effective and more intensive performance will be constrained by long established age-status considerations. It is unfeasible to exert pressure, including educational pressure, on older and even middle-aged generations since tradition prevents this; indeed, the only right to instruct is vested in people of that age. At the same time, Mongols are receptive to external influence, since the authority of leaders and even administrators is high. This is paralleled by an almost ritual positive perception of foreigners and strangers, fixed in traditional culture and which still continues, though much weakened. For example, the unexpected participation of a stranger in a family ritual is much welcomed as it brings a blessing. This opens the way for practical use of influence by people of high standing.

## 6.2 Customary land tenure arrangements and future land policy

The customary system of land tenure is based on the shared expectation that the overwhelming majority of users follow the traditional grazing rules and do not occupy somebody else's nutag unless compelled to do so by a specific event. Based on field data, we conclude that the system is still efficient enough to be the basis for future policy. It is flexible and compatible with the idea of sustainable land use, effectively limiting land degradation. However, the introduction of the market economy will undoubtedly bring about commercialisation of pastoralism and will increase absentee herding as well as spreading free-riding or trespassing behaviour. The former is not a threat in the short run; widespread trespass however could disorganise the system of grazing arrangements and cause localised over use. Absentee herding is perhaps not so dangerous, because it is known from the past and can be accommodated into traditional arrangements. It is highly likely that herders facing a high incidence of trespassing may lose confidence in the viability of the customary system. This could turn into a chaotic defense of customary rights, including annexation of certain areas by local communities or cooperatives. Exclusive rights or private ownership of pasture are alien to the Mongol concept of land tenure and would endanger the flexibility of the whole system.

There are two possible levels of these dangers and different responses have to be employed.

At the moment, there are only a limited number of cases of **internal** (i.e. within the local community) **free-rider** behaviour (according to our research in the Gobi, see the case studies). The danger can be effectively limited by group sanctions and administrative control. Group sanctions have not existed, mostly because the problem was not serious, but also due to the fines applied by the negdel administration. It is important to start serious discussions between herders who, if they decided this problem was a real one, would undoubtedly develop appropriate means of bringing social pressure to bear on abusers (i.e. those who utilise somebody else's nutag, without overwhelming climatic reasons).

All this points to a need for the active participation of the sum authorities

in raising herders' consciousness about the problem, and in monitoring and controlling conformity to customary rules of pasture use. Such participation is needed in resolving conflicts between herders. Certainly, some legal powers and penalties should be vested in the sum administration to enable them to police the observation of customary rules. The aim should be to prevent the administration having a monopolistic position vis a vis herders, which may lead to corruption and abuse. It would be advisable to return to graded fines (as negdel used to do) by the sum administration after consulting in each case with the respective local community. Given the present limited extent of danger these measures should allow the phenomenon to be brought under control; further escalation of legal means seems at present unjustified, except perhaps for a government instruction to sum authorities. Such a document should underline the government's commitment to customary rules of land tenure.

If not controlled, abuse of grazing rights may expand. The issue of **external free-riders**, i.e. those who come from a neighbouring local community, or from outside of the particular ecological unit, could be especially dangerous. In time, there could be a chaos of retaliatory moves, leading to the disorganisation of customary grazing systems and land degradation.

At the first sign of such a situation, more complex legal regulations safeguarding the integrity of local community territories should be enacted. One possible option currently discussed is the idea of land leases to local groups which although inefficient and risky could serve these purposes. In discussions among policy planners in Mongolia the land lease is sometimes coupled with a separate idea of a land/grazing fee paid by local communities or members of other territorial units for using the resources.

We would like to comment on both ideas separately from the position of anthropologists, and citizens of a country undergoing radical socio-economic transformations of a similar type.

#### **Land leases**

It is proposed to lease a defined territory to a defined local group. The idea is to make a local group economically and legally responsible for efficient and effective use of resources. This has both positive and negative aspects.

The main positive aspect is that in principle the idea of a land lease is designed to be an instrument of legal pressure on local communities to preserve the environment, that is to promote sustainable utilisation of pasture and water. In this sense it is an attempt at transferring the premises of customary law into normative state law, adding only the elements of legal and financial liability. This is useful. In view of the commercialisation of the pastoral economy, reformulating old premises in new language might strengthen the existing system, especially in expectation that the lease will strengthen the control of a local group over its territory. The possibilities of emergency reciprocal access to the territory of neighbouring units should be legally protected.

This would create a legal collective responsibility of all members of a given local group towards the state of the group's resources. This may generate positive group sanctions on internal abusers, although the process would not be free of conflict.

The main problem of land leases will be to define the size of the leased

area. Field data from Arhangai and Dornogobi suggest that this should not be a unit smaller than a bag territory, and sometimes two bags. For historical reasons bags have been the ecologically sustainable areas in years of normal rain and snowfall, but the validity of this observation needs to be cross-checked throughout Mongolia. Nonetheless bags nowadays rarely have defined borders, nor is there (apart from the first horshoos) any official form of the economic cooperation or coordination which would be necessary for the above purposes. For administrative and ecological reasons, defining this area at the level of whole sum would be more advisable. From a psychological point of view, however, the level of personal identification of several hundred or even thousand inhabitants with the interests of the whole sum, and the concept of responsibility for the sum's obligations, would be equally weak. There is no good choice in this situation, and each option has inevitable deficiencies and side effects. Perhaps it could be left to a decision by sum inhabitants, but this could create further problems.

There would be a need to assure reciprocal access to the territory of a neighbouring unit in case of climatic calamities, in order to safeguard the flexibility of the whole system, necessary in the conditions of a non-equilibrium environment. Detailed suggestions cannot be made before the size of basic leasing units is defined.

The last group of problems concerns the methodology for assessing environmental degradation and the creation of a monitoring system. Building a professional monitoring system at the aimag level is an interesting proposal, and will in future perhaps be necessary. It could even exist independently of land leases, but the legal instruments at its disposal should be well thought out to prevent favouritism and corruption. The necessary condition for its successful operation is stability in land tenure arrangements, and stability in patterns of social structure and economic cooperation (either individual pastoralism or horshoo). Otherwise legal confusion will make a successful monitoring system very difficult and most probably this institution will unconsciously become a part in local political struggles. This is why it would be better to wait at least three years before implementing the idea. This time would be devoted to studying processes and changes in the pastoral economy as well as to designing a legal framework to fit well into Mongolian reality. Training professional cadres for a monitoring system would also take time.

In conclusion, we suggest supporting present flexible customary land tenure arrangements by giving the sum authorities an effective conflict-resolving role and giving them the necessary legal powers and penalties. In longer perspective, if it becomes clear that the situation cannot be controlled by such customary means, a land lease act could be passed. It should combine the idea of territorial integrity of local groups, with sanctions against damaging the environment, perhaps paid in animals plus restoration of damages. Emergency reciprocal access to neighbours' territory should be legally secured. Such a procedure will have several negative side effects so should not be implemented earlier than is really necessary. In any case, it will be extremely difficult to measure individual responsibilities, and in this situation sanctions can victimize people and create disrespect for the law.

**Land and grazing fees**

Land or grazing fees serve two purposes:

- they impose upon herders the idea of the value of land as productive capital and of effective land use, (i.e. neither under- nor overutilisation);
- they collect (additional) taxes from producers.

The first purpose is educational. Building a new economic consciousness is a basic condition for a successful economic transformation from a centrally planned to a market system. Legal and especially financial means, however, do not alone ensure the goal. In non-equilibrium ecosystems, the productivity of the environment depends more on biotic elements than on human actions, and there is a serious risk that people will not see the correlation between land taxation and observed economic and ecological results (this does not apply to the horshoo, but even this structure will have members, not an exclusive territory). The conclusion is that the educative role of such legal and fiscal regulations would be less important than its policing function.

The argument about the need to collect taxes is currently a strong one in view of the deep budgetary crisis in Mongolia. Privatisation assumes that the means of production are transferred at more or less no cost from the state to private owners in the expectation of greater revenues in the future. In the meantime, state revenues are drastically reduced while the government faces great pressure from a society used to comprehensive social services and substantial investment in the pastoral economy. The Mongol economy in the pre-collective and early negdel years was built on resources extracted from the pastoral sector, and it is about to repeat this process. This would be a great, though inevitable shock to herders who had got accustomed to indirect taxation applied through negdels, rather than to them individually. In present conditions, rapid growth in the pastoral sector is very unlikely. The only source for it is likely to be lower birth losses. Expected difficulties with marketing the products, a probable trend towards thesaurisation of stock, difficulties with transport, uncontrolled (and untaxed) activity by go-betweens, would all lower growth rather than raising it. This creates conditions for the pauperisation of a great part of the herders. Therefore taxes, though undoubtedly an economic necessity, are likely to cause not only resentment but active opposition to reforms, and in practice against the government.

Several serious problems could rapidly emerge as a result of the introduction of grazing fees, especially wide ranging free-rider behaviour on the territory of a neighbouring bag or sum, depending on the scale of basic unit chosen. Permanent conflicts will emerge and tension in the countryside may rise. Emergency access to pastures of a neighbouring local unit will be offered only on condition of cash payment, while discussion on the amount to be paid between units could be endless due to the difficulty in assessing the value of the resources consumed. The ideal of a barter approach would in (financial) practice rarely be feasible because different areas have different productivity and frequency of need of reciprocal assistance.

The main problem is therefore a conceptual one. Herders do not have the idea of a land tax, as opposed to a tax on animals, in their conceptual system. Consequently they will accuse the new government of all possible evils, will feel cheated by the idea of economic reforms, and may vent

their rage first on neighbours who dare to ask for access or steal grass, and finally in one way or another on the authorities. All this may simply result in conceptual and organizational chaos. Even if there are strong economic arguments (for example, taxes on land are encourage production while taxing animals or income does not), the likely negative side-effects in political and even economic terms will be overwhelming. Herders' dissatisfaction can easily be channelled by political parties opposed to reforms just to gain political support. Experience of other post-socialist countries shows that without popular acceptance of the need for painful reforms, neither political nor economical goals can be achieved. Taxation is inevitable, and can be introduced openly, as long as it is not under the name of grazing fee.

It is recommended that the government give up of the idea of a land or grazing fee for cultural, economic and political reasons and, instead, levy the necessary revenue through a joint tax collected in principle on the basis of the number of animals or net cash income plus perhaps some coefficient related to the productivity of pastures. This would be preferable and more efficient than switching from one extreme economic ideology to another.

### 6.3 Existing and future mutual assistance mechanisms

In traditional Mongolian culture and social practice, specialised mutual assistance institutions (redistributive mechanisms) have never existed at the level of local community or descent group. This has perhaps been caused by the limited scale of immediate risk to pastoral households. Besides, the burden of assistance was carried partly by the hushuu, and in recent decades by the negdel.

Mutual assistance within narrow kin groups always existed but has not been institutionalised, playing only a complementary role to official channels. Neighbours and kin always offered assistance first, and were followed by the negdel. In the negdel period wealth differentiation existed but was not significant. An assistance network is possible where there are clear conceptual categories of wealth differentiation, allowing people to distinguish who is poor enough, and thus eligible for assistance by the local community or kin group.<sup>12</sup> Such conceptual categories of poverty were absent during the negdel period and it will take some time to reestablish them. A combination of negel, kin and neighbour assistance was sufficient till recently, but current the dissolution of the negdels has already destabilised the system, while at the same time the number of poor households will undoubtedly grow. The newly emerging modern grass roots cooperatives, horshoo, based on local community ties, plan to fill the gap, but they may face financial and organisational difficulties, at least in the near future.

Despite the lack of specialised and institutionalised patterns of mutual assistance there are several latent ones which, though used mainly by the rich, also somehow enable poorer people to survive. In this group we may

12 Descent groups (four or more generation lineages) disappeared from social practice in the areas inhabited by Khalha Mongols in the 18th and 19th centuries.

point to the quasi-redistribution mechanisms of nairs and idesh, as well as adoption. The kinship assistance network is also extended by fictitious-kinship relationships in the form of 'brotherhood'. None of these institutions exists directly to alleviate poverty. Nevertheless, being present in the traditional background and in the popular conceptual system, they can channel at least part of the future mutual assistance efforts, though their likely efficiency is limited.

The most probable scenario is that with the dissolution of the negdels and given the current budgetary deficit of the state administration, the major burden of assisting the poor will be carried by relatives and local communities. There are two possibilities: either local communities (or horshoos or similar institutions) will effectively take upon themselves new and enlarged duties in this respect, or they will leave them to close relatives and neighbours. The first scenario would be preferable, but cannot happen rapidly everywhere. The second possibility will not be sufficient to deal with rising poverty in the new economic situation. Therefore we see an urgent need for a new social safety net institution, created on the basis of the sum administration, which would operate on revenues from local taxes. This seems feasible, since at least a part of the unemployed post-negdel staff, usually well educated, would be able to organise such a service after an additional training. Sometimes even a simple mobilisation of the local community to assist a given individual, as the hushuu authorities used to do a century ago, would be worthwhile, especially if sum funds are in short supply. Judging from the experience of other post-socialist countries in their transitional period, the state apparatus tries to grab most of the taxes collected in the countryside to fight the budgetary gap. If this happens also in Mongolia, then conflicting interests might kill the plan or make it financially unable to serve the purposes for which it had been set up. If this happens, it will again arouse popular feelings of dissatisfaction with the market reforms, which would be dangerous for political stability. These dangers must be taken seriously into account by policy planners.

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## APPENDIX 1

## STATISTICAL DATA ON ERDENE SUM, DORNOGOBI IN THE 1930S

The earliest known statistical data on Erdene sum were collected by A. Simukov shortly after the sum had been established, and relate to the early 1930s. We quote them in relation to the whole Dornogobi aimag and its regions, including Central region where Erdene belongs.

Simukov differentiated three regions in the aimag - northern, central and southern - and included five sums in the central region. The data are published here for the first time from an archive manuscript. We have extracted figures for population (children are excluded in the original) and households in table 1, and livestock in table 2.

TABLE 1. Erdene sum, Dornogobi, 1930s: Population over six years old

	Total Pop. ( <sup>'000</sup> )	Male ( <sup>'000</sup> )	Female ( <sup>'000</sup> )	Households ( <sup>'000</sup> )	Persons/ Household ( <sup>'000</sup> )
Dornogobi <u>aimag</u> Total	26.2	12.3	13.9	7,808	3.4
Regions:					
- Northern	11.9	na	na	3,757	3.2
- Central	7.1	na	na	1,955	3.6
- Southern	7.2	na	na	2,096	3.4
Erdene <u>sum</u>	1.7	0.8	0.9	447	3.8

Source: Simukov 1934: 253-264.

TABLE 2. Animals belonging to the lay population (in thousand except two last lines)

Species	Aimag total	Northern region	Central region	Southern region	Erdene sum
Camels	69.2	30.1	19.9	19.2	4.3
Horses	55.5	38.4	10.2	6.9	2.2
Cattle	17.9	11.7	2.1	4.1	0.8
Sheep	425.3	309.5	67.0	48.8	18.0
Goats	165.1	60.0	46.8	58.3	10.3
<u>Bodo total</u>	254.5	145.6	56.3	52.6	13.1
<u>Bodo/family</u>	32.6	38.7	28.8	25.1	29.2
<u>Bodo/person</u>	9.7	12.2	7.9	7.3	7.7

Note: For definition of bodo, see Glossary at start of report.  
Source: As in previous table.

The figures show that the aimag was strongly ecologically differentiated. The northern part was most densely populated (45 percent of total population), had more than half the stock and was the richest in animals both per household and capita. In fact, its ecology belongs to the steppe, changing gradually towards the south. This is well shown in Erdene itself, the ecology of which changes from a steppe strip in the north to real rocky gobi in the very south. Along the same north-south axis in the aimag density of population changes, so that the southern region, covering some half of the territory is peopled by 27.5 percent of the aimag inhabitants. This is reflected in Erdene, whose southernmost bag is the largest, though population is low. The structure of the herds follows ecological conditions. The share of camels and goats increases in the Gobi environment, while that of other species decreases. According to Simukov, agriculture and haymaking were not practiced in Dornogobi in those times, though these have been introduced since then. The most striking data concern the population of monks, which for this aimag amounted to 5,000 men, or 52 percent of males over 17 years old, the highest figure in Mongolia. From other sources we know that average for the country was at that time some 37 percent.

Erdene sum is very much average for its region, as far as human and animal populations are concerned. Relative wealth measured in animals is also close to mean values. Families are slightly larger than the average, though less than nowadays. The male population shown in table 1 included some 300 lamas living in several small monasteries in the sum. Women exceeded men, monks included. The population of the sum centre has decreased compared to the early 1930s, deducting railway and army personnel. At that time there were 1,700 people (excluding children up to 7 years old) as compared to 1,550 now.

## APPENDIX 2

WEALTH DISTRIBUTION AND HERD OFFTAKE IN ERDENE SUM,  
DORNOGOBI, 1991

The data presented in the following tables are extracted from Erdene company's accounting office reports, and pertain to the beginning of property stratification, as well as offtake from family herds. Indirectly, they point also to a preference for investment. The herds have been created from private stock left over from the negdel period and supplemented by the first distribution from among the negdel property carried out in August 1991. The offtake in question includes consumption in the family and all other sorts of offtake. The purpose of the latter has not been specified, and therefore it is impossible to distinguish market offtake from kin and social obligations, since both sorts are included under the same heading. They can only be guessed at. Nevertheless, the data are very instructive about processes in pastoral Mongolia shortly after privatisation started, and for the future shape they may take. At the same time they pose some new questions to be examined in future research.

The following presentation is based on materials containing each particular herd structure by species for households identified by the owner's name. They are limited to one bag (with some additions), but with a sample of 129 households adequate representation is secured. The basic data can be obtained on request to the authors.

TABLE 1. Herds of Yenshöow bag, Erdene sum, Dornogobi aimag in 1991 including animals received after the first stage of privatisation

Category of wealth (herd size in <u>bodo</u> )	Families		Initial herd		<u>bodo/</u> family
	No	%	Total ( <u>bodo</u> )	%	
1 - 10	15	11.6	74.5	1.3	5.0
10.1 - 25	36	27.9	636.6	11.5	17.7
25.1 - 50	25	19.4	946.5	17.0	37.9
50.1 - 100	48	37.2	3286.7	59.1	68.5
over 100	5	3.9	616.7	11.1	123.3
Total	129	100.0	5561.0	100.0	43.1
( <u>Bag</u> administrative personnel:	13	-	116.6	2.1	- )

## Notes:

- (i) Bodo counted as follows: camels - 1.5 bodo, horses and cattle - 1 bod, sheep - 7 per 1 bod, goats - 10 per 1 bod.
- (ii) Initial herd stands for the stock prior to deducting all offtake shown in tables 2 and 3.
- (iii) Total sample of 129 families includes 14 now belonging to Tsagaan Hötöl bag.

TABLE 2. Animal offtake per family, Yenshöow bag, Erdene sum, 1991

Category of wealth (herd in <u>bodo</u> )	Consumed within the family		Sold or given away		Total offtake of herd %
	<u>bodo</u>	% of herd	<u>bodo</u>	% of herd	
1 - 10	0.2	4.7	0.07	1.3	6.0
10.1 - 25	2.1	12.1	1.1	6.3	18.4
25.1 - 50	3.2	8.5	2.5	6.5	15.0
50.1 - 100	6.4	9.3	8.5	12.4	21.7
over 100	7.1	5.8	4.6	3.7	9.5
Mean	3.9	9.0	4.3	9.9	18.9
( <u>Bag</u> administrative personnel:	1.6	12.1	1.5	16.5	28.6 )

TABLE 3. Range of values of animal offtake, Yenshöow bag, Erdene sum, 1991

Category of wealth (herd in <u>bodo</u> )	Consumed within the family		Sold or given away	
	<u>bodo</u>	% of herd	<u>bodo</u>	% of herd
1 - 10	0 - 1.2	0 - 15.6	1 (one case)	14.7
10.1 - 25	0 - 5.1	0 - 35.7	0 - 6.0	0 - 33.1*
25.1 - 50	0 - 6.8	0 - 16.9	0 - 10.0	0 - 20.8
50.1 - 100	1.4 - 11.9	2.8 - 22.2	0 - 35.7	0 - 49.2
over 100	5.2 - 9.0	4.4 - 7.2	0 - 12.0	0 - 9.2
<u>Bag administrative personnel:</u>	0 - 5.1	0 - 35.7	0 - 16.2	0 - 100.0

Note: \* Excluding one case of selling the whole herd.

The community studied shows a more even distribution of wealth than used to be the case in Mongol society prior to the 1959 collectivisation. This is obvious from the initial stage of the privatised economy, just after the allocation of herds. One should expect important changes in this picture in the next few years. There already exists the basis for future wealth differentiation: two fifths of families (39.5 percent) own only one eighth (12.8 percent) of animals, while a similarly sized group in the upper strata (41.1 percent of the families) own 70.2 percent of the stock: this amount to a difference in affluence of more than five times within the population. The second privatisation will reduce these inequalities for a while, but the trend to further differentiation will be preserved. Such a conclusion is evident from the economic behaviour of Yenshöow herders as shown in tables 2 and 3.

The preliminary phase of the second stage of privatisation fits these expectations. The richest strata (over a hundred bodo), making up 16 percent of sample families, own a quarter of the total herd, which is not such a large discrepancy compared to lower wealth categories. Again, it must be stressed that the results apply to the situation immediately after the formal privatisation proceedings, which gave relatively equal shares to each household. In table 4 we show figures for the sample of 62 households for which data were available (administration not included).

TABLE 4. Fully privatised herds of Yenshööw bag

Category of wealth (herd in <u>bodo</u> )	Families		Herds in <u>bodo</u> total	
	No	%		%
1 - 10	-	-	-	-
10 - 25	4	6.5	270	1.9
25 - 50	9	14.5	1081	7.6
50 - 100	39	62.9	9208	64.4
over 100	10	16.1	3736	26.1
Total	62	100.0	14298	100.0

The tables demonstrate very uneven rates of offtake both for consumption and for animals given away. The poorest families (up to 10 bodo) have very little offtake and sell almost nothing (just one bodo in the whole group, explained perhaps by a need of fate). Slaughtered animals remain well below the level of nutritional needs; that is perhaps compensated by provisions from the company or relatives. Half the families in this group live at the sum centre on outside earnings, while the other half include elders supported by their kin. The group of families next poorest in animals (up to 25 bodo) consume animals from their herds, though also not enough to feed themselves properly. The reason for the relatively high sales in this group are unclear; this does not conform to its economic standing. The 'Sold' column also includes exchange obligations such as gifts and idesh, and in most cases these outnumber real marketing of animals as far as the whole population is concerned. Still, the low wealth status of this group removes many social obligations from its members, so that animal sales are more likely in this case. Other herders who aim to build up their stock most probably buy animals from this group. The reasons for sales have not been studied, but probably the families sampled do not intend to rely on herding alone, but do it as a supplementary source of income. The latter observation also seems true for the bag administrative personnel, who have the highest offtakes, as shown in tables 2 and 3.

Offtake in the next wealth category (25 - 50 bodo) remains very much at the same level, though it seems to differ in quality. Consumption within the family is slightly higher, but takes a lower percentage of the stock, and is very close to a sustainable one. By the latter we understand a level of offtake lower than the natural growth of the herd, enabling numbers to rise. It seems that herders in this group have chosen the strategy of building up their herds, at the cost of low consumption. At the same time they meet their obligations towards kin living in towns, since their level of affluence calls for it. They refrain from selling anything, which can be deduced from the amount of animals given away. It is two and half bodo per an average family, which is no more than the value of

low idesh and gift obligations combined. Still, an average total offtake of 15 percent of the herd could be critical for many, endangering their economic strategy.

The most complex situation arises within the prosperous section of the Yenshööw population owning between 50 and 100 bodo. A herd of that size does not yet merit classification as a sound property able to grow, resist calamities and support the owner at a reasonable level. At present, however, when building herds is only starting, and in anticipation of the second stage of privatisation, households in this group can be considered as wealthy. This is a provisional conclusion to be confirmed in two or three years, but for many herders it is already convincing. Economic behaviour within this group is contradictory: some economize and follow the strategy adapted by the previous group, while others reveal some extravagance characterised by high offtake, including some conspicuous consumption and high sales. Average consumption within households is entirely adequate (6.4 bodo per family), but values range from 1.4 to 11.9 (see table 2), which suggests incompatible aims set by different owners. These aims, the reasons behind them and the results of the tactics adopted need further study, the sooner the better. Average offtake in this category of households totals 21.7 percent, which is beyond the critical threshold and suggests great changes in ownership in the near future.

The most affluent households, those with over a hundred bodo, are herders who are devoted to pastoral life and are purposeful in developing strong and prosperous estates. They are known as good herders and their strategy is a model, both for their neighbours and for students of the local economy. There are only five such herders in the bag now, but their number will increase significantly when privatisation is completed since it will be enlarged by households from the strata below who follow a similar strategy. Details of this strategy can already be studied as case examples in 1993, and publicised as an example to be followed by less inventive herders. Unstructured interviews and other data collected from these herders allow for a few comments.

It seems that these herders sell almost nothing, though since they give away an average of 4.6 bodo they are generous enough in kin and social obligations. The only family which gave nothing appeared to have no relatives in town, while they managed to attend local feasts or nairs with gifts other than animals. Total offtake in this group is under one tenth of the herd annually, which is less than mean offtake in other wealth categories, except the poorest. At the same time, the level of consumption is the highest, and perhaps optimal. The detailed pattern of consumption remains to be studied, though to our best knowledge it has not been changed this year by particular ceremonial occasions within the family which would have increased expenditures.

Another point worth exploring is the herd structure of the most prosperous households. In general, herd structures in 1991 have resulted mainly from administrative decision by the accountants during privatisation. Only the wealthiest herders had the possibility of purposefully shaping their herds by purchase of particular categories of animals; this they have done, although their herds do not entirely reflect this yet. However, herd structure can be analysed with caution within this group. The first feature to be stressed is how much attention they give to collecting a basic herd of camels. In present conditions people depend very much on unreliable administrative transport services while nomadizing. Many want to restore their own transport capability, using camels. For this a

household needs at least five trained adult camels, which means an effective herd of no less than ten. All the households surveyed owned between 11 and 18 camels.

Another characteristic feature is a relatively large household herd of horses; the largest was 44, the highest number in Yenshööw. This locality is the southernmost in the sum, very much Gobi in character, which would normally mean that horses are not much preferred (a comparison with northern bags would be enlightening). Yet this pattern can reflect the pattern of ostentatious keeping of large horse herds for prestige reasons, which is still alive in other regions of Mongolia despite the low economic value of the horse. Considering that in the 1930s camels were almost double the number of horses in Erdene (see Appendix 1), the fact that the situation has reversed among the richest households nowadays suggests the reasons lie outside economics proper. Also puzzling is the fact that horses much outnumber cattle in prosperous households. This was apparent in Erdene in the past also (see Appendix 1). Perhaps it was a specificity of this sum in old times, which, however, was abandoned in the negdel period when cattle came to dominate the herd. Affluent stock holders are expected to behave rationally and provide themselves with a fair amount of milk and milk products, which are very important in the diet. The herd structure in rich households does not support this objective, though cattle numbers are large enough. The question arises whether rational behaviour is superseded by an irrational desire to display horses, or whether some other reason is behind the high proportion of horses. Other parts of the country have reported a competition between genders within the family over the number of horses and cattle to breed when private herds were limited under collective rules. Since Erdene is known for the high social status of women, one might expect different horse/cattle proportions.

Aspects of culturally-biased economy should be studied in more detail since in tradition-oriented societies they can be used to understand behaviour. The importance of such a study increases given the widespread lack of economic awareness by average herders as demonstrated elsewhere in this report. In such conditions, economic decisions are likely to be decided by quite uneconomic factors. Other questions for further study in this area arise from the observations above on herd distribution. One is to analyse the strategy of building up stock in the average wealth category of up to 50 bodo, which we describe as ambitious but uncertain. The second concerns the wealthiest strata, especially those who recently joined the top category; what sort of calculation influences the species proportion in their herds, and whether a degree of specialisation is feasible under local conditions. The third is how social obligations and marketing principles are accommodated in the offtake strategy of various wealth categories. The last question is about the categories themselves: how does a new wealth stratification arise, and what are the factors responsible for its progress, its arrangements and for particular moves up or down within it. Data collected for the present report could be a good starting point for case research on such questions, since they include detailed figures for each of the 129 households in the sample.



## APPENDIX 3

## DUGERIINHEN MATRILINEAGE IN ERDENE SUM, DORNOGOBI

Traces of small descent groups, remnants of the previously existing kinship system, can be observed in Erdene. The system operated according to rules characteristic for the Gobi, though different from those in the rest of Mongolia and therefore of special interest. The name of the lineage presented in this case study means 'people of/by Duger' and it brings together descendants of a man named Duger. According to various estimates Duger was born around 1840. The Dugers are the largest and among the best integrated lineage in Erdene, indeed practically the only discernible one. We recorded 13 more names of lineage groups, of which nothing is left but the name (listed here by ancestor's name, suffix omitted): Badrah, Baljir, Bat, Chultem, Dondog, Gerd, Gombo, Maydar, Nyam, Togoo, Tsedev, Tseren, Undrah. It is commonly believed that the whole population of the sum used to be composed at one time of lineage groups. Now most lineage names are reported from Yenshööw bag, which points to particularly well preserved traditions in this area.

In the 1950s an administrative regulation was adopted to register the newly born under both their name and ovog, a patronym after the father, or after the mother if the latter was not known. Prior to this, Erdene people were identified by personal and lineage names (for example, Tsevel of the Dugeriinhen). The new rule was generally adopted and lineage names began to disappear. The youngest person bearing the Duger ovog was born in 1955. Traditionally the Mongols do not pronounce the names of older kin, and consequently do not use them in naming the newborn. The taboo does not concern non-relatives, but in the Erdene case all lineage names are taboo, it seems. In the past at least they were not given to children, whatever the child's lineage identity was. In some lineages there was a person specialising in giving names to the newborn, and they perhaps watched over the avoidance of an unnecessary coincidence. In the Yenshööw bag population records we have found, however, four persons bearing names equivalent to lineage names used in other bags. This might result from barriers between local communities in the past, as all the four are over 60 years old.

The locally used term for lineage (deeduul) means people descending from an ancestor. The latter is not far removed, only four or five generations, which makes a minimal lineage in anthropological terminology. However, Erdene lineages do not keep to standards set by anthropologists, since ancestors are imprecise; some people doubt their real existence and are unable to quote a full genealogy of all an ancestor's descendants. This proves we are witnessing the final stage of the disorganisation of lineages. This conforms with what we know about the decay of descent system among the Khalkha Mongols in general, though even such remnants as the Gobi deeduuls are a rarity among the Khalkhas. The particular case of the Dugeriinhen deeduul is the first anthropological report of this sort.

A characteristic particularity of Erdene lineages is their inherent matrilineality in a formally bilateral pattern. In the general Mongol patrilineal model, the ancestor is always a male. All further links go practically through females, and even if there are no daughters in a family, one is adopted to continue the line. According to the main local pattern, sons disappear from the continuity scheme, join their wives or live separately (cf. Appendix 4). Some stay with their sisters to run a common household, according to the rule that a man is its head. Women of

a lineage have not until recently had permanent husbands, therefore the leading role was associated with their brother or brothers. We collected reports by members of several deeduuls about heads of combined households in the past and found that sometimes pairs of brothers were mentioned as leaders of a lineage khotail. This probably points to the fact that all brothers living with their sisters shared the competence and authority of a collective head. It is likely, though not yet certain, that a pattern of plural authority was emerging (this was not reported in the Duger case).

Marriage did not constitute a family, according to the Gobi pattern, and itself was often a transitory affair. In such circumstances it seems a rule that men from the same lineage had the status of group leader. We never came across an example to the opposite, and even difficult situations had been arranged in this way, as shown by the case of the Dugers' third generation. Sharav, the only man in the sibling group, was a lama residing in a monastery and holding a post of nyarav, or bookkeeper, there. He also administered his family affairs, for which he had to visit the family for long periods until his nephew Naydan grew up to take over the responsibility (in the absence of his older brothers who had left the family for a solitary life; all personal references can be consulted in Chart 1).

Thus emerges a situation characteristic of a joint family. According to our informants, the Dugers under the Naydan leadership consisted of more than 20 people and had a common herd of over a thousand heads. At the same time there was another Duger family, presumably of similar size, led by a certain Genden. The two families lived next to each other with some cooperation, but we were not able to obtain any details about Genden's group, except the names of some people. It is said that all their descendants migrated away from the sum. Genden himself most probably belonged to Sharav's generation and descended from one of Duger's daughters. The two large families did not constitute a khotail, for their combined herd would have been too big for sustainable management. Instead, they made up two khotails, termed so irrespective of whether a family lived in one or more yurts. A yurt master, or leader of a khotail, organised collective work, allotted duties, decided or suggested where to move the camp, but only if individual opinions diverged. He also settled external economic deals if larger purchases were planned (horses, camels, etc.), depending on the quality and price of the animal in question. There were few other subjects for a leader's consideration; even marriages were outside the lineage or family responsibility, since real marriages involving relations of the two families scarcely existed.

The joint Duger family under Naydan was reported for the 1930s and 1940s. Then it divided into two, and later on into several families, still being far from nuclear. The partition was probably enforced by progressive tax regulations which compelled people to break up their herds, though the Dugers remembered it as a sort of rebellion. It was led by Togoo, again a man, who held the position of authority in the newly established family. He has introduced a novelty: he brought in his wife. According to his version, this was the first virilocal marriage contracted in the sum, and as a matter of fact, the first which was contracted at all. Prior to this, and in many cases until the present, only temporary unions existed (which is perhaps an overstatement, since there were certainly couples of permanent standing). This particular union survived a lifetime. Their wedding, or in the Gobi appellation 'establishing a new yurt', took place in 1952. Since then, and especially after collectivisation, the Dugers

have fragmented into several matrifocal families of a nuclear type. Their basic structure has been: mother's mother, mother, children.

Togoo took his mother and her two sisters with their progeny to live in another joint family of a smaller size. On partition, Naydan divided the herd of over a thousand smallstock and some 70 large stock, passing to Togoo some 400 smallstock and 20 large animals. Naydan remained with a reduced family of another three sisters. Soon after the separation, Naydan left the Dugers and his place was taken by another brother, Choijants, who has returned to the family. Naydan joined his wife with whom he had cooperated loosely before, but mainly as her night guest. After that he lived with her and their children till his death. On partition, he left the main herd with the Dugers, taking for himself only a few heads which he allocated to his daughters. Interestingly enough, his two daughters who declare that they are continuing the hearth of their mother, aspire at the same time to belong to the Dugeriinhen community. One of them even uses the Duger ovog, though only the third daughter is entitled to the ovog as an adopted child of the Dugers.

Such an aspiration is understandable in terms of the prestigious position of the Dugers in the bag. We could not learn the precise reasons for its status, and especially whether the fact that the Dugers preserved their unity as a lineage was a contributing factor. Opinions focussed on their decency, good herdsmanship (one of the Dugers owns the most numerous herd in the bag), their activity (a Duger organised the first ovoo sacrifices of the new series, and another did it in secret when they had been barred), and their authority (two Dugers were consecutive bag leaders for many years and won popularity for good management). A certain amount of self-esteem can be detected in the group. When a collective interview with the Duger women was over we overheard them commenting on it for themselves: 'we have been important and prominent enough people to attract the attention of foreigners'.

In general, the Dugers are average herdsmen, do not give outstanding feasts of the nair type, nor do they lobby the sum administration. On the contrary, when one of them (a previous bag leader) had suffered a loss in grazing assets from a trespasser, he made no attempt to invoke an official reaction. Nevertheless, they do constitute a specific sort of community. Usually six of their families camp together in a double-sahalt khotail (cf. Appendix 5), constituting a sort of a small valley community. Interestingly, four of them are dominated by women while their sons, of 17 to 22 years old, are formally the household heads. At some distance, in a neighbouring nutag, there live two families of the lineage headed by its male members. According to their spontaneous opinion, psychologically they are in the same valley. Ready to cooperate? Yes, but no specific examples of cooperation are produced. Besides, there is a women-headed family elsewhere in Yenshöow bag and two families with married women. A Duger man is married to a woman in another bag and lives there. The general pattern is that women are residentially based in their own bag, while men can migrate. There are 12 Duger families in Erdene sum and some living in towns. Descendants in the male line bear different ovogs and are not included in the count, except one of Naydan's daughters.

The core of the lineage stay in the khotail mentioned above at a place called Doloodyn Höndii, which always has been Dugers' summer and autumn nutag. Doloodyn Höndii now accomodates some unrelated families, but it is said that in the past the place was occupied solely by the Dugers. Their winter camps were then located close to the western sum border, where

they had a small sacrificing ovoo Mogootyn only for themselves. According to some reports, the Dugers had also their own cemetery in the distant past. Mogootyn ovoo must have been forgotten a long time ago, as the Dugers are not sure whether it is located in Erdene or in the next sum.

The lineage had some symbols of their unity characteristic also of other Mongol families in the past. They include a tamga (branding iron) of a specific design, which however has become individualised lately and is used by two or three families only. The Dugers have a sahius, a representation of their tutelary god Jamsran, exhibited in the family altar and playing the role of a guardian spirit. It has not been used for years but now is being reestablished. Prior to the atheistic campaign after the Revolution many Mongol families had a seter, an animal consecrated to the tutelary god, neither used nor killed, with colourful ribbons tied to it. A bay horse was the Dugers' seter kept till the 1960s, though covertly, without ribbons. Members of the lineage used commonly to carry out family sacrificial rites to the hearth and pray for benefits, which were held in the main yurt inherited from Naydan. What is specific for the Dugers, is that they pass among themselves an old and spoiled stirrup adding a sort of ceremonial spell 'you will be the Nth generation of the Dugers'. The present owner of the stirrup got it from his mother's brother and will hand it over to his nephew. The pattern of inheritance in this case follows the Naydan's line: both owners had been consecutively the oldest men of each generation residing in the main family yurt. This yurt keeps the Dugers' ancestral hearth, as well as a chest including a picture of the tutelary deity, a tamga and accessories for family rites.

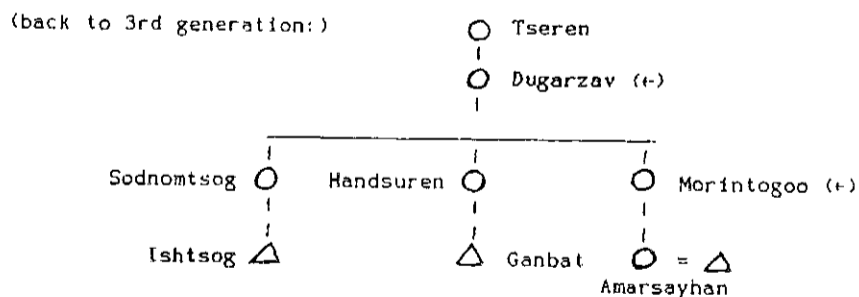
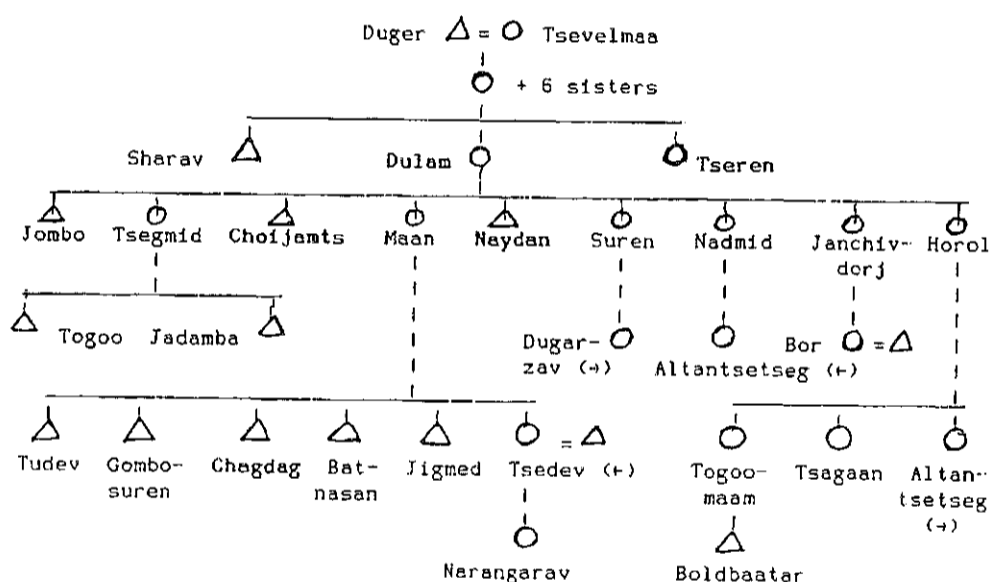
The yurt and family head was always a male, the eldest co-residing brother. Since Naydan left for his wife, his place was taken by his older brother Choijamts, who had just returned to his family after a period of cohabitation with his wife. Then Choijamts' nephew Chagdag became a master, but later on moved to his wife, and so was obliged to pass the duty and family symbols (except the stirrup) to his nephew Ishtsog. The latter is 17 years old now, the oldest man in the main yurt. A non-Duger man has never lived in this yurt, since females there continue the old habit of not contracting marriages. In this situation we do not know whether a stranger is eligible to become a yurt master in practice. Normatively, the Dugers deny such a possibility.

While men of the line are the titular transmitters of the Duger symbols, the privilege of continuing the hearth belongs to the women. Though the hearth is considered to belong to Duger the ancestor, he himself has been the only man in this hearth line. His granddaughter Dulam was the first known person to continue the hearth. The next on the list was her younger sister Tseren. The latter was childless, so she adopted Dulam's granddaughter Dugarzav who, in turn, adopted Naydan's daughter named Morintogoo, after her mother (Dugarzav had two daughters already and the adoption was just a measure of security). The adoptions had to assure an undisturbed succession to the position of hearth keeper. The latter position evidently goes through women, while transmission of the status of lineage symbols guardian is a male privilege. Both, however, are transmitted matrilineally because all persons entitled to each status position have to be born or adopted into the family.

Membership in the lineage is transmitted by females, which enables us to classify the group as a matrilineal one. There are, however, two bilateral features. The first is its founder, a male who has given his name to the group. The second is the belief of some people now that the children of

male members also belong there. This is rationalised by the all-Mongol patrilineal custom which apparently has been lately internalised in an attempt to get rid of the Gobi anomaly and to better fit it into the overall pattern. We noticed such an attitude with the Naydan and Gombosuren daughters, who aspire to follow their father's line, though emotionally they are certainly closer to their mothers. One of them still managed to adopt the Duger ovog. The second feature can be termed a wishful patrilineality and is not a structural quality of the Gobi lineages. When this has been validated customarily, the Gobi anomaly would be over and lineages would be extinct as descent groups. There is, however, a possibility that in the present conditions of instability, when kin are called upon for security, such quasi-lineages reappear. But in terms of the kinship system they would be bilateral groups.

Chart 1  
Genealogical tree of the Dugerlinhen



Females: ○ Males: △

Symbols for adoption:

+ into the family  
+ off the family

Marriages contracted by women of the lineage: =

Names in bold: persons in succession of authority (men) or of the status of hearth keeper (women)

## APPENDIX 4

## RESIDENTIAL LIFE HISTORY OF A GOBI MAN

The matrifocal family prevailing at one time in the Gobi, including Erdene sum, and the resulting matrilineality, have created considerable disturbances in social organisation. We have termed the situation the Gobi anomaly. It originated most probably in the 19th century from the unbalanced proportions between genders when marriageable women greatly outnumbered marriageable men. Some half of the latter were monks, supposed to be celibate. In such circumstances measures had to be adopted to provide for the continuity of the social system.

The basic measure was to put both genders on an equal footing as far as inheritance was concerned, that is to transform dowry into a regular inheritance. Girls were not given away in marriage. If they stayed in the natal yurt, which was the most popular choice, the whole coresident sibling group was in control of the family herd. Only those who decided to live apart got their shares as pre- or regular inheritance. Collected family histories prove that the latter choice most frequently was made by men, that is brothers moved away rather than sisters. At least one brother stayed with his sisters to help them run their household. Wherever he lived, independently or with his sibling group, a brother entered into loose marriage links with one or more women, usually without cohabitation and without establishing a common household.

Thus emerged a situation, characteristic of the first half of this century, in which women were based with their family of origin, in the natal yurt, or associated with it, while men wandered. By the end of his life a man living alone tended to join a woman, his sister or sisters, or a wife. In both cases he would unite his herd with the herd of the family he entered into. If it was his sisters' family, he might on his death apportion some animals (usually a small proportion) to particular children of his own. This was the rule if there were closer emotional ties between the father and a child, that is if he had had more prolonged conjugal ties. The majority of older people interviewed, however, did not remember either their fathers, or the animals received from them.

The unstable residential situation of a Gobi man depended very much on the composition of his sibling group and the level of its integration. If the latter created a sort of a fixed joint family, he might have been denied his share in preinheritance, except a few camels or horses, thus preventing his departure or making necessary an adventurous initiative in solitary living. Therefore there was a great range of individual cases, some of which were mentioned in the case of the Dugers (in Appendix 3). Below is another case of a man who preferred to stay in his family of origin or its offshoot, his position in which, by the end of his life, resembled that of a dependant relative. This was not, however, in Mongol conditions, necessarily a low or humble position.

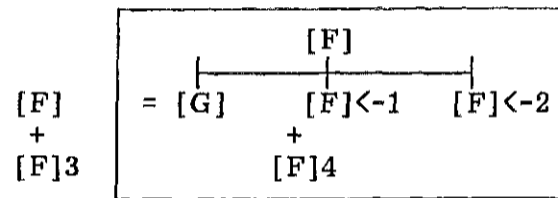
The man in this case was Gombojav of the Undrah lineage from Erdene sum, born around 1910 (symbolised in the figure below as [G]) whose story was recorded by his nephew Uhna, a male born 1931 (symbolised in the figure as [U]). He started as the only child of his mother who also adopted two girls for the purpose of continuing the line. He was attached (married) to a woman, with whom he had a daughter. The woman died and relations with the daughter were broken, so Gombojav continued to live with his adopted sister and her children (the other

sister had died). The sister had a male partner who resided separately, but her daughter has taken a husband to live with her. After the sister's death there was a short period of solitary living and then Gombojav moved to his niece, another sister's daughter who had already established a coresiding marriage. Later on he changed his domicile again to stay with a nephew, Uhna, who also took a wife and lived with her. This was the last stage of Gombojav's life history.

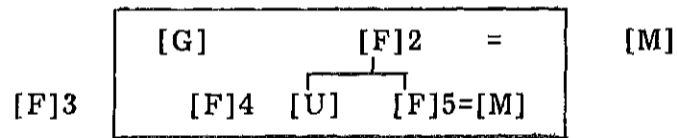
Symbols:

- [F] female
- [M] male
- + child of a person of ascending generation
- = marriage, irrespectively of residence
- <- adoption
- boxes enclose members of a household
- some persons are numbered for identification
- people are placed in their respective generations

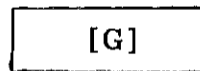
Stage 1:



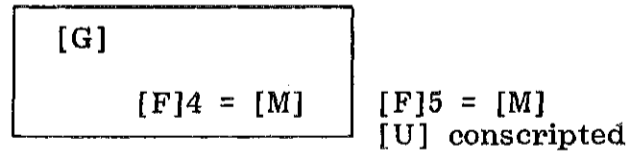
Stage 2:



Stage 3:



Stage 4:



Stage 5:



Residential life history of a Gobi man

## APPENDIX 5

## KHOTAIL MEMBERSHIP: TWO CASES FROM ERDENE SUM, DORNOGOBI

The following two cases describe in detail the composition of khotails in Erdene sum.

Case A: Tsagaan Hutag Valley, Dörvölj bag

The valley is inhabited by 18 families residing in groups which may be termed dispersed khotails. The distance between yurts is twenty to five hundred yards, which enables households to exchange lambs in the form of a sahalt. Sometimes there is a double sahalt within a khotail, which means that one family exchanges lambs with two others. On the basis of sahalt links we have identified four khotails, though it is open to doubt whether they are really agglomerations of that sort. In Hangai they would not be classed as khotails, but in the Gobi cooperative links take precedence over spatial considerations. Most of the inhabitants have occupied the valley for several years successively, and some were born in this nutag. Only one family has no relatives in the community. The following presentation includes khotails composition and description of kinship links within the valley community.

- 1
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| [1] | [2] |
| [3] | [4] |
| [5] |     |
- 1 a) Lhamsurengiin Gavuu  
b) Luvsandashiin Nyam, wife  
2 a) Sanzain Sugir  
b) Lhamsurengiin Erdenetsoo, wife  
3 a) Damchagiin Erdene  
b) Lhamsurengiin Tumendelger, wife  
4 a) Erdeniin Bayarmagnai  
b) Tuvdendorjiin Chimedtsee, wife  
5 a) Yamaatyn Bataa  
Relatives: 1a & 2b & 3b - siblings;  
4a son of 3ab, nephew of 1a & 2b & 3b;  
4b daughter of 1b;  
Three of the five families constitute three double sahalts in pairs: 1-2, 1-4, 2-4.
- 2
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| [6] | [7] |
| [8] | [9] |
- 6 a) Tsegmediin Bilegt  
b) Gundsambuugiin Norilmaa, wife  
7 a) Bandiin Batdorj  
b) Bilegtgiin Narantuya, wife  
8 a) Hovoongiin Byambadorj  
b) Purevgiin Lhamragchaa, mother  
9 a) Suheegiin Chuluunbaatar  
b) Hovoongiin Byambasuren, wife  
Relatives: 6a father of 7b;  
8a & 9b siblings;  
9a & 10b & 11a siblings, children of 10a;  
Again three families live in three double sahalts: 6-7, 6-8, 7-8.



- 3 

[10]	[11]
	[12]

 10 a) Uuniin Bud, mother  
b) Suheegiin Beeleg, son  
11 a) Suheegiin Tsogtbaatar  
b) Jamsyn Dorjhand, wife  
12 a) Jamsyn Davaanyam  
Relatives: 10b & 11a & 9a siblings;  
11b & 12a siblings, their mother: 13;  
There are two sahalts, doubled for one family:  
10-11, 11-12.
- 4 

[13]
------

 13 Balgangiin Myadag  
Relatives: 13 mother of 11b & 12a.
- 5 

[14]	[15]
------	------

 14 a) Maamyn Batzorig  
b) Hureltogoogiin Dorjdulam, wife  
15 a) Maam  
b) Boldoo, sister  
Relatives: 15a mother of 14a.
- 6 

[16]
------

 16 a) Purevgiin Tuvdendorj  
b) Sharavgiin Urtbayar, wife  
Relatives: 4b daughter.
- 7 

[17]
------

 17 a) Baldiryn Purevdash  
b) Bataagiin Mangay, wife  
Relatives: 17b & 18b sisters.
- 8 

[18]
------

 18 a) Sembeegiin Uhnaa  
b) Bataagiin Mandsuren, wife  
Relatives: 18b & 17b sisters.

Case B: A duger khotail in the valley of Doloodyn Höndiy, Yenshööw bag

Five families belonging to the Duger lineage (see Appendix 3) live dispersed at an extreme distance of some six hundred yards. They constitute three double sahalts which include all the households. The whole agglomeration is conceived by its members as an economic and social entity, performing in common the most important tasks, nomadising included. All the families are related. They are listed below and the kinship links between them are indicated.

- 1 a) Togoomaamyn Boldbaatar, formal head of the household  
b) Dugeriin Togoomaam, mother of a)  
c) Dugeriin Janchivdorj, mother's of b) sister  
d) Togoomaamyn Saranchimeg, daughter of b)  
e) Togoomaamyn Serchmaa, daughter of b)  
f) three children of d)

- 2 a) Yanjingiin Badam
- b) Dugeriin Bor, wife
- c) Badamgiin Dorjderem, their son
- 3 a) Dugeriin Morintogoo
- b) two daughters of a)
- 4 a) Gombogiin Mönhbat
- b) Morintogoogiin Amarsayhan, wife
- c) natural son of b)
- 5 a) Handsurengiin Ganbat
- b) Dugeriin Handsuren, mother of a)
- c) five other natural children of b)

3a & 5b are sisters by adoption and cousins once removed of 1b; 1c is mother of 2b; 3a is mother of 4b. All relations between the families are through a female line. Only two families result from the marriage of a coresident couple. The latter belong to the middle and younger generation (wives' age: 48, 22). An additional family is usually a member of the khotail (and also was this summer), that of Dugarzav, the mother of 3a and 5b. The latter household is considered focal to all the Dugers because it holds all the symbolic objects integrating the Duger kin group.

## APPENDIX 6

## A CASE OF NAIR PRESTATIONS IN THE GOBI

Tsedendorjiin Byamba and his wife Dashmaa had given a nair in 1983 to celebrate the initiation of a new yurt. The couple had been married for several years, so the nair was purely for the yurt celebration, not for the wedding, for which it often stands. The host was at that time a driver, his wife a vet surgeon assistant. Though the couple lived in the sum centre, they serviced essentially Yenshööw bag (termed 'brigade' at that time) and were well known there. Therefore the nair was thrown in the bag centre and was attended by bag people with many visitors from outside, mainly from the sum town. It lasted for three days. As we noted in the field, the event is kept in the memories of many Yenshööw inhabitants as one of the largest. The following list of gifts received from the guests is transcribed from the special notebook where gifts were recorded for the purpose of preparing adequate return gifts. Since that time the couple has given two other nairs, in 1985 on the occasion of their son's hair clipping (a smaller one, but including racing for 65 horses), and in 1989 to commemorate the maternity award to the hostess. The latter also included horse racing, in contrast to the 1983 nair. These nairs have increased the couple's popularity, and must have contributed to the election of Byamba to the post of bag head in 1992. The cost of the 1983 feast was six thousand tgr, while the others we have not recorded. They must have been bigger because of race expences including organisation and prizes. The gift records for the other two nairs were apparently lost or are difficult to discover.

There follows a list of gifts with the names of the donors (ovog initial was recorded in the case of similar names). We do not attempt to establish relationships between donors, since most of them are difficult to locate because they have moved or died. Their relative affluence is also difficult to assess during the period of the collective economy. Some guests who now belong to the top wealth category gave rather small presents. The couple has no close relatives in the bag, so the kin factor is irrelevant in this case.

All the gifts included traditional Mongol prestations of food. These are as follows:

- aaruul - dried sour cottage cheese;
- arhi - home made milk spirit, in litres;
- boov - decorated flat cake, in pieces;
- byaslag - a variety of soft cheese in large pieces;
- eeven - a delicate layer-cake, bought in bakeries;
- huruut - dry pressed cheese, in plates; there are various kinds of huruut, combined in our list into one;
- öröm - a delicate condensed cream obtained by boiling milk for a long time; one piece equals a cauldron's surface;
- sugar - stands for lump sugar in half kilogram packages;
- tea - green tea in bricks; vodka - other than arhi, pure vodka made at a distillery, a bottle;

We also shall add to the dictionary:

cloth - a length of silk of approximately 4 yards for one deel, separately reported are shorter pieces of child size, (in the original the quality and colour noted was precisely to avoid giving the same piece in return).

List of gifts at a 1983 nair in the Gobi

Amgalan	<u>arhi</u> 1, tea 1, sweets 1 (in kilograms, not further specified)
Amar-Jargal	<u>byaslag</u> 1, cloth 1, sheep 1;
Ayuur	<u>arhi</u> 1, tea 1, thermos bottle 1, quilt 1;
Baljir	<u>huruut</u> 15, sugar 1, brandy 1;
Banzaragch	<u>arhi</u> 4, vodka 1, <u>huruut</u> 35, <u>byaslag</u> 1, sugar 1, tea 1, a piece of satin 3 m, sheep 1;
Batölziy T.	<u>arhi</u> 5, vodka 1, <u>huruut</u> 10, <u>byaslag</u> 1, sugar 2, cloth 1;
Bayar	vodka 1, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 10;
Böndön	<u>arhi</u> 4, vodka 1, <u>huruut</u> 12, simple sugar 2 bags, tea 1;
Byamba B.	vodka 1, <u>huruut</u> 8, tea 1, mirror for 100 tgr, horse 1;
Byamba V.	<u>arhi</u> 3, <u>huruut</u> ?, sugar 1, tea 1;
Chagdag	<u>arhi</u> 10, <u>aaruul</u> 15, <u>huruut</u> 15;
Choymbal Chuluu	money 20 tgr, sheep 1;
Chuluu L.	vodka 1, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> ?, sugar 1, cloth 3m;
Chuluunbaatar	<u>arhi</u> 20, vodka 1, <u>boov</u> 20, <u>huruut</u> 20, sweets 2 kg, tea 1, canned halva 1, cloth 1, quilt 1, horse 1, sheep 1;
Dambiy	vodka 1, sugar 2, wafers 1 package;
Dashölziy D.	<u>arhi</u> 5, <u>boov</u> 20, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 15, tea 1, cloth 1, sheep 1;
Dorj Zh.	money 40 tgr, horse 1;
Dorjsuren B.	money 150 tgr, horse 1;
Dugerjav	<u>huruut</u> ?;
Edev	<u>arhi</u> 5, <u>huruut</u> 27, sheep 1;
Enhjargal	vodka 1, tea 1, horse 1;
Erdenebat Do.	vodka 1, sugar 2, cloth 5 m, sheep 1;
Gavuu	<u>huruut</u> 15, cloth 1, horse 1;
Gerel	<u>arhi</u> 10, <u>boov</u> 10, sugar 1, biscuits 1 package;
Gombojav	<u>boov</u> ? tea 1, sweets ? cloth 1, child shoes 2 pairs;
Luvsanbaldan	money 50 tgr, sheep 1;
Luvsanjamts	vodka 1, <u>boov</u> 10, <u>byaslag</u> 1, sugar 1, biscuits 1 pack;
Mijiddorj	<u>arhi</u> 5, sugar 2, tea 1, sweets ? biscuits 1 package;
Myadag D.	vodka 1, <u>huruut</u> 10, sugar 1, tea 1;
Myadag Do.	<u>arhi</u> 10, <u>boov</u> 20, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 16, sugar 2, biscuits 2 packages, cloth 1, sheep 1;
övgöön	<u>arhi</u> 2, <u>huruut</u> 6, sugar 1, tea 1, money 20 tgr;
Sandag Zh.	vodka 1, cloth 3 m;
Sanjmyatav	money 20 tgr, horse 1;
Sanzay	vodka 1, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 10, <u>öröm</u> 1, sugar 1;

Sembee	<u>arhi</u> 20, <u>huruut</u> 16, sugar 2, cloth 1, sheep 1;
Shagdar (a surgeon)	sheep 1;
Sharaa H.	<u>arhi</u> 10, vodka 1, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 23, <u>öröm</u> 1, sugar 1, cloth 1, bedding 1, horse 1, sheep 1;
Sosorbaram	<u>huruut</u> 20, tea 1, sweets ?;
Surenjav	<u>arhi</u> 4, <u>huruut</u> 18, sugar 2, cloth 3 m, sheep 1;
Togoo	tea 1, cloth 1, horse 1, sheep 1;
Tsedendorj	<u>arhi</u> 10, vodka 1, <u>boov</u> 20, <u>byaslag</u> 1, sugar 2, cloth 1, cooked sheep 1;
Tsedev	<u>arhi</u> 10, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 30, <u>öröm</u> 1, sheep 1;
Tsedevdorj	<u>arhi</u> 3, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 20;
Tsend A.	tea 1, suitcase 1;
Tsendehuu B.	vodka 2, sugar 1, suitcase 1;
Tserenchimed	vodka 1, tea 1, cloth 1;
Tserendulam	vodka 2, <u>huruut</u> 26, <u>öröm</u> 1, sugar 1, tea 1, biscuits 1, cloth 1, tulle, sheep 1;
Tsetseg	vodka 1, biscuits 2 packages, cloth 3 m, sheep 1;
Tsevel	<u>arhi</u> 4, <u>huruut</u> 33, sheep 1;
Tseyed G.	vodka 2, <u>boov</u> 20, <u>byaslag</u> 1, <u>huruut</u> 10, sugar 2, tea 1, sweets 1 kg, biscuits 4 packages, cloth 1, sheep 1;
Tsogdog	<u>arhi</u> 5, vodka 1, <u>boov</u> 20, <u>huruut</u> 32, sugar 2, tea 1, cloth 1 sheep 1;
Uhna (Shar)	<u>arhi</u> 4, <u>huruut</u> ? sugar 1, tea 1;
Yadamsuren D.	<u>arhi</u> 4, vodka 1, <u>huruut</u> 12, sugar 2, tea 1, cloth 1;
Yanjmaa	<u>arhi</u> 5, <u>huruut</u> 23, sugar 1, cloth 3 m;
Job associates 1st group	Cuban rum 1, sugar 1, tea 1, radioset 1, sheep 1;
Job associates 2nd group	vodka 1, tea 1, mirror 1, felt 1.

The main gifts are traditional: milk products and liquor. The former are obligatory while the latter are close to that. There are some people who dislike liquor by conviction (e.g. Togoo) and who exclude it from potential gifts. According to custom, money is a symbolic gift and can replace all others. Those who give live animals do this as a promise (mal amlah) to be fulfilled at a convenient date, but are still expected to bring at least a token gift. The only person not following custom is a surgeon from the sum town, who is somehow alienated from the traditional culture. Good-mannered people do not come with empty hands, though simple arithmetic (it is said that over a hundred people visited the nair) proves that trespassers are a plague not only of grazing fields. Dugerjav is a decent, though poor woman; she appeared with some huruut only, which was duly recorded. Friends and men of authority are the most generous, as Togoo and Chuluunbaatar show. The former was at that time head of Yenshööv brigade, and his position forced him into ostentation to retain prestige. The latter, Byambaa's friend but also a person striving for a higher status, got the position after Togoo, but nevertheless had to surrender it to Byamba in 1992. Thus, nairs are the scene of battles for respect and prominence not only for a host, though the latter receives more in this social competition.

There is not much merchandise among the gifts, which may be a result of both the persistence of traditional patterns and also serious difficulties with the supply of goods. Mirrors, suitcases, bedding, felt, a radio set

and a thermos, however, fit the occasion well and do not represent simply chaotic redistribution. They have been retained by the hosts, as were the animals received, while all the rest was carefully redistributed according to the rule of adequate reciprocity. Nineteen sheep and 9 horses were presented, reciprocated rather symbolically by the customarily required parts of meat. Deducting animals slaughtered as an investment in the nair, the hosts made a net gain of approximately half the number of animals received. They also invested a spirit of organisation, purely individual and not found in excess in the steppe areas. A decent reward in terms of stock and prestige from a nair is what customary entrepreneurial activity has been about among the Mongolian herdsmen.

## APPENDIX 7

## SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE MOVEMENTS WERE MAPPED IN ERDENE AND TARIAT

List of khotail heads, from Erdene sum, whose seasonal herding movements are presented in Map 2.

1 Bajaryn, G.	13 Sembee, T.
2 Sodnompilja, K.	14 Yadamsuren, D.
3 Bathurel, D.	15 Cedevdorj, D.
4 Batbayar, C.	16 Cedevsuren,
5 Batcengel, C.	17 Chagdag, D.
6 Erdene, D.	18 Togoo, D.
7 Myadag, B.	19 Morintogoo, D.
8 Gavoo, L.	20 Boldbaatar,
9 Sugar, S.	21 Lhagvasuren, D.
10 Dorjhand, G.	22 Bat-Olzii, D.
11 Bayarmagnai, E.	23 Cogdog, B.
12 Tuvdendorj, P.	24 Sugirbaatar, B.
	25 Damdindjav, C.

List of khotail heads, from Tariat sum, whose seasonal herding movements are presented in Map 5.

1 Naarbatar,	10 Lhagvasuren,
2 Dugerjav,	11 Nambarsaihan,
3 Adia-horol,	12 Ravjin,
4 Batjamsan,	13 Togtohbayar,
5 Batcengel,	14 Galbadrah,
6 Enhbayar,	15 Enabish,
7 Tuvdendagva,	16 Vaasanyam,
8 Enebish-Davaajav,	17 Sandalhundeov,
9 Gombosuren,	18 Cend-Ayush