



INTRODUCTION

In the modern social sciences and history, there are four groups of theories that variously explain basic principles of origin, further change and, sometimes, collapse of complex human social systems. The first of these groups is the various unilinear theories of development or evolution (Marxism, neoevolutionism, modernization theories etc.). They show how humanity has evolved from local groups of primitive hunters to the modern post-industrial world society. The second ones are theories of civilizations. The proponents of these theories argue that there is no unified world history. Rather there are separate clusters of cultural activity that constitute qualitatively different civilizations. The civilizations, like living organisms, are born, live and die (Spengler 1918; Toynbee 1934 etc.).

The world-systems perspective and multilinear theories of social evolution are intermediate between these poles. The world-system approach (Wallerstein 1974 etc.; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997; Sanderson 1999 etc.), like unilinear theories of development distinguish three models of society: mini-systems, world-empires and world-economies. But they are considered in space rather than in time. This makes the conceptualisation of history more complete. The modern multilinear theories (Bondarenko and Korotayev 2000; Korotayev, Kradin, de Munk, Lynsha 2000 etc.) suppose that there are several possible paths of socio-political transformation. Some of these can lead to complexity, e.g. from a chiefdom to a true state; while others suppose the existence of the supercomplex community without a bureaucracy (e.g. Greek polises); while a third group preserves the tribal system under particular ecological conditions. I propose to call this school *multievolutionism*.

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the problem of categorizing the polities and social formations of steppe pastoral nomads in Central Asia in comparative and civilizational perspective and placing complex pastoral society within a general scheme of cultural evolution. It also discusses the role that these societies played in the emergence of a larger Eurasian world-system.

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In this paper I will consider the prospects of various methodologies in studying the nomadic societies. I begin with the theories of historical stages.

SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Social evolution among pastoral nomads has not been well conceptualised. In general essays on cultural evolution nomads are only touched upon indirectly. The emphasis in these books is on the evolution of agrarian cultures and civilizations (Sahlins 1968; Service 1971; Adams 1975; Johnson and Earle 1987; Earle 1997 etc.). Some attention to this problem has been given by Marxist anthropologists (see details on this discussion in: Khazanov 1975; 1984; Markov 1976; Kogan 1980; Halil Ismail 1983; Gellner 1988; Bonte 1990; Kradin 1992; Masanov 1995 etc.). The prolonged debate about the essence of nomadic societies (including the concept of “nomadic feudalism”) did not lead to the emergence of a generally accepted theory. But some theories have been discarded, especially the orthodox Marxist scheme of five formations. Other viewpoints (e.g. *pre-class* society of nomads, *early state*, different interpretations of *feudalism* among nomads, conceptions of *nomadic mode of production*) continue to contend up to present (see Kradin 1992).

For years in anthropology there has been a tradition of following Herbert Spencer in his understanding of social evolution as “change from a relatively indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a relatively definite, coherent heterogeneity, through successive differentiation and integrations” (Carneiro 1973: 90). As H.J.M. Claessen (2000) showed in his brilliant review of neoevolutionism, the current concepts of social evolution are much more flexible. It is apparent that social evolution has no single line of development. Many channels of evolution do not lead to the development of complexity. The obstacles in the way of increasing complexity are vast, and stagnation, decline and even collapse are just as typical of the evolutionary process as any progressive increase in complexity or structural differentiation. One can agree with Claessen’s characterization of social evolution as a qualitative reorganization of society from one structural state into another.

Nomadic societies are a good confirmation of these ideas. A cyclical movement among pastoral cultures has predominated over the development of complexity (but this is a feature not only of nomadic societies [see Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997; Hall 2001]). Nomads have many times united into large political formations and created great empires that have subsequently disintegrated. The “xenocratic” empires of nomads (based on conquest or extraction of surplus from agrarian societies) represent the upper limits of complexity reached by pastoral societies (Barfield 1991; 1992; Hall 1998). Central Asian steppe nomads did not

independently evolve beyond this stage of integration. There was an insuperable barrier determined by the rigid ecological conditions of the arid steppe environment. This view of nomadic societies is shared by the majority of nomadologists of different countries (Lattimore 1940; Bacon 1958; Krader 1963; Khazanov 1975; 1984; Markov 1976; Kradin 1992; Masanov 1995 etc.).

Regarding the problem of general evolution, I think that three levels of cultural integration of pastoral nomads are revealed, falling into an order of increasing political complexity as follows:

1. acephalous segmentary clan and tribal formations;
2. ‘secondary’ tribe and chiefdom;
3. nomadic empires and ‘quasi-imperial’ pastoral polities of smaller sizes.

A changeover from one level to another could occur in either direction (Kradin 1994; 1996b). It is the critical peculiarity of nomadic social evolution that transformation of the political systems did not correlate with other criteria of social complexity. The political system of nomads could easily evolve from the acephalous level to more complicated organizations of power and *vice versa*, but such formal indicators as increase in population density, complex technologies, increase in structural differentiation and functional specialization did not occur. When transforming from tribal pastoral systems to nomadic empires only a growth in the total population (due to the addition of conquered populations) takes place. The political system becomes more complex and the total number of hierarchical levels increases.

From the viewpoint of anthropological theories of social evolution, the key problem is whether or not the nomads could create their own statehood? How should the nomadic empires be classified in anthropological theories of evolution? These questions are currently discussed by researchers of different countries and, especially, by Marxist anthropologists. It should be noted that for the Marxist theory of historical progress, nomadism has become a stumbling block similar to the ‘Asiatic mode of production.’ How could unchanging or cyclical nomadic societies be interpreted within a framework of the common march of the production modes? A unilinear Marxist theory of social progress assumed, primordially, changes from lowest economical forms to the highest ones. However, the economic ‘basis’ of pastoral societies has remained unchanged: the similarities among the modern Masai and Arabs with the ancient Hsiung-nu is very great. Thus, nomadism drops out of a unilinear Marxist dialectic of history. On the other hand, if the economic ‘basis’ of society did not change, then the ‘superstructure’ should be unchanged. But the ‘superstructure’ of the pastoral nomads varied greatly. The nomads created giant steppe empires, which later disintegrated to separate Khanates or acephalous lineage societies and all of this

contradicts the principles of a unilinear Marxist theory of historical evolution (Gellner 1988:93–97, 114).

The advocates of the concept of nomadic feudalism and the Engels/Stalin scheme of five modes of production emphasized the difference in economical and cultural development between nomads and agrarian civilizations, thereby overestimating the level of the economic 'basis' of pastoralism. In these theoretical schemes, many facts were falsified and fitted to the Procrustean bed of the dogmatic Marxism of the Soviet Union. So, the erroneous division into 'early' (pre-feudal and slave-owning societies in ancient Eurasia) and 'late' (medieval feudal) nomads has arisen.

Advocates of the concept of the pre-class development of nomads subjected the concept of 'nomad feudalism' to criticism (Markov 1976 etc.). As 'true' Marxists, they concentrated on the development level of the economic 'basis' of pastoralists. If the 'basis' of ancient nomads was not a class one, then the 'basis' of the later pastoralists must not be based on class either. On the other hand, primitive 'superstructure' should be adjusted to primitive 'basis'. Therefore, nomads in this approach to social evolution have only approached the late primitive (pre-class, pre-feudal etc.) stage.

This development in the discussions of Russian nomadologists was already obvious. For example, analysis of the samples from the *Ethnographic Atlas* of George Murdock (1967) indicates that almost all ethnohistorical known nomads have not approached the state level and nor have they had class stratification (see Korotayev 1991:157, table XI). But the conclusion relative to the pre-state nature of all nomads led to underestimating the development level of the 'superstructure' for a number of pastoral societies – the great steppe empires. These empires were also declared pre-state, but were their political organizations really of the same type as that of the Nuer, Hottentots or Kazaks and Kalmyks?

At present there are two popular groups of theories explaining the origin and essence of the early state. The *conflict* or *control* theories show the origin of statehood and its internal nature in the context of the relations between exploitation, class struggle, war and interethnic predominance. The *integrative* theories were largely oriented to explaining the phenomenon of the state as a higher stage of economic and public integration (Fried 1967; Service 1975; Claessen and Skalnik 1978; 1981; Cohen and Service 1978; Haas 1982; 1995; Gailey and Patterson 1988; Pavlenko 1989 etc.).

However the majority of nomadic empires cannot be unambiguously interpreted as either chiefdoms or states from the viewpoint of either the conflict or the integrationist approaches. The similarity of the steppe empires to true states clearly manifests itself in relations with the outer world only (military-hierarchi-

cal structure of the nomadic society to confiscate prestigious goods from adjacent societies and international sovereignty.

With respect to internal relations the 'state-like' empires of nomads (apart from some quite explainable exceptions) were based on non-forcible (consensual and gift-exchange) relations and they existed at the expense of the external sources without establishment of taxation on the live stockbreeders. All basic economic processes in the stockbreeding society were realized within the limits of individual households. For this reason, there was no need for specialized bureaucratic machinery engaged in the administration-distribution activities. On the other hand, all social contradictions were solved within the framework of traditional institutions of maintenance of internal political stability. A strong pressure upon nomads could cause a decampment or use of retaliatory violence because each free nomad was a warrior at the same time.

Finally, in the nomadic empires, the main sign of statehood was absent. According to many current theories of the state, the main distinction between statehood and pre-state forms lies in the fact that a chiefdom's ruler has only consensual power i.e., in essence authority, whereas, in the state, the government can apply sanctions with the use of legitimated force (Service 1975:16, 296–307; Claessen and Skalnik 1978:21–22, 630, 639–40 etc.). The power character of the rulers of the steppe empires was mainly consensual and prevented a monopoly of legal organs. The Shan-yu, Khan or Khagan was primarily a redistributor, and his power was provided by personal abilities and ability to obtain prestige goods from the outside and to redistribute them among subjects.

It is beyond question that this political system cannot be considered as a true state. However, this is not to say that the nomadic administration structure was primitive. The complex societies that Gordon Childe called *civilization* could appear without the bureaucratic organization of administration. The extensive investigations by specialists in the field of ancient history show that the Greek polis was not a true state. Statehood, with its intrinsic bureaucracy, appears fairly late - in the epoch of post-Alexandrian Hellenistic states and in the Roman Empire (Staerman 1989; Berent 2000). However, what term should be used to describe the polities of nomads? Considering their non-state features I prefer to characterize the nomadic polities as "**supercomplex chiefdoms**" (Kradin 1992; 2000; Trepavlov 1995; Skrynnikova 1997; 2000).

The nomadic empires, as supercomplex chiefdoms, provide a real prototype of a particular kind of early state. The population of typical complex chiefdoms is usually estimated in tens of thousands of people (see, for example: Johnson and Earle 1987: 314) and they are typically ethnically homogenous. But the population of a multi-national supercomplex chiefdom of nomads may have hundreds

of thousands of people, or more. Some of the nomadic confederacies of Central Asia have had as many as one and half million pastoral nomads. And their territory was several orders greater than areas needed for simple and complex chiefdoms. Nomads need a great area of land for pastures!

From the viewpoint of neighboring agricultural civilizations (developed preindustrial states), such nomadic societies have sometimes been perceived as independent subjects of international political relations and, quite often, as equal in status to the agrarian empires. These chiefdoms had a complex system of titles of chiefs and functionaries, held diplomatic correspondence with neighboring countries, contracted dynastic marriages with agricultural states, neighboring nomadic empires and 'quasi-imperial' polities of nomads.

With regard to their settlement systems and urban constructions the nomadic societies had more than temporary camps. Already the Hsiung-nu began to erect fortified settlements, while the 'headquarters' of the empires of the Uighur and the Mongols were true towns. The construction of splendid burial-vaults and funeral temples for representatives of the steppe elite (e.g. the Pazyryksky burial mounds at al Altai, the Scythian burial mounds in Northern Black Sea Area, the burials located in Mongolian Noin-Ula, the burial mounds of the Saks time in Kazakhstan, the statues of Turkish and Uighur Khagans in Mongolia etc.) were monumental achievements. In several supercomplex chiefdoms the elite attempted to introduce written records (e.g. Hsiung-nu and Turks), while there is a temptation to call some of the nomadic empires (especially the Mongolian Ulus of the first decades of thirteenth century) true states. This is supported by the existence of a system of laws (*Yasa*, the so-called Blue Book - *Koko Defter Bichik*), as well as legal organs of power, written clerical work and efforts to introduce taxation under Ogodei (Kradin 1995b).

NOMADIC EMPIRES AND MULTILINEAR EVOLUTION

The empire is one of the forms of the state. Specific signs of empires are: (1) the presence of large territories; and (2) the presence of a "metropolis" of the empire and peripheral subsystems dependent on the metropolis (Eisenstadt 1963; Thapar 1981; Kradin 1992; Barfield 2000). The fundamental difference between the nomadic empires was that their "centers" were highly developed only in the military aspect, while they were less developed than the exploited or conquered territories in socio-economic complexity and other attributes of civilization. They were actually "peripheries" in themselves. In this case, the nomadic empire can be defined as nomadic society organized on the military-hierarchical principle, occupying a quite large space and exploiting the nearby territories, as a rule, by external forms of exploitation (robbery, war and indemnity, extortion

of "presents," non-equivalent trade and tribute). One can identify the following attributes of nomadic empires: (1) multistage hierarchical character of the social organization penetrated at all levels by tribal and super-tribal genealogical ties; (2) dualistic organization (into 'wings') or triadic organization (into the 'wings' and center) as the principle of administrative division of the empire; (3) military-hierarchical character of the social organization of the center of the empire, more often, on the 'decimal principle'; (4) coachman service (*yam*) as a specific way of organizing the administrative infrastructure; (5) a specific system of power inheritance (empire as the property of the whole khan clan, the institution of co-government—'*kuriltai*'); and (6) specific character of relations with the agricultural world (Kradin 1992; 1995a; 1996a; 2000).

It is necessary to distinguish the classical steppe nomadic empires from (1) the similarly mixed agricultural/ pastoral empires in which the nomadic element played a great role (the Arabian caliphates, the states of Seljuks, Dunai and Volga Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire) and (2) the 'quasi-imperial' nomadic state formations which were smaller than empires (European Huns, Avars, Hungarians, Priazov Bulgaria, Kara-kitans, and the Tatar khanates after the collapse of the Golden Horde).

Nomadic empires were organized in the form of 'imperial confederations' (Barfield 1981; 1991; 1992; 2000). The confederations had an autocratic and state-like look from the outside. They were created to bring the surplus products of agrarian peasants to the steppe nomads. Their inner structure was consultative and tribal in form. The stability of steppe empires directly depended on the ability of the imperial confederation to extract silk, agricultural products, handicraft articles and delicate jewels from the settled territories. As these products could not be produced under conditions of a stockbreeding economy, obtaining them by use of force and extortion was the priority task of the ruler of nomadic society. By becoming the sole intermediary between China and the Steppe, the ruler of a nomadic society endeavored to control the redistribution of plunder obtained from China and, thereby to strengthen his own power. This organized accumulation allowed him to maintain the existence of an empire that could not have existed on the basis of the extensive pastoral economy.

The chiefs of the tribes that made up a steppe empire were incorporated into a military hierarchy of the 'hundreds' and 'thousands.' However, their internal policy was to a certain degree independent of the policy of the center. This peculiarity has been thoroughly analyzed by Thomas Barfield using the example of the Hsiung-nu Empire (1981, 1991; 1992: 32–84). A certain degree of autonomy of the pastoral tribes was promoted by the following factors: (1) economic independence made them potentially independent of the center; (2) basic sources of power (predatory wars, redistribution of tribute and other external subsidies,

external trade) were quite unstable and involved relations outside the steppe world; (3) general armament restricted the possibility of political pressure upon tribes; (4) for the tribal groupings displeased by a policy of a Khan, the opportunity of moving to new places, desertion under the protection of the agricultural civilization or revolt with the aim of overthrowing the disagreeable ruler were feasible alternatives.

A mechanism connecting the 'government' of the steppe empire and pastoral tribes was the institution of the gift economy. By manipulating gifts and distributing them among comrades-in-arms and tribal chiefs, the ruler of the steppe empire strengthened his potential influence and prestige as the 'generous khan'. Simultaneously, he bound the persons receiving gifts by the 'liability' of the return gift. Tribal chiefs receiving gifts might, on the one hand, satisfy their personal appetites and might on the other hand, strengthen their intratribal status by a distribution of gifts to fellow tribesmen or by organizing ceremonial feasts. In addition to receiving a gift from the ruler, the tribal chief felt as if he also received some part of the ruler's supernatural charisma and that contributed additionally to rise of his own prestige. The integration of tribes into the imperial confederation was also achieved by inclusion in the genealogical kindred of different stockbreeding groups, diverse collective arrangements and ceremonies (seasonal meetings of chiefs and festivals, battles, erection of monumental funeral structures etc.).

A certain role in the institutionalization of the power of the rulers of nomadic societies was played by their performance of the functions of a sacred intermediary between the society and Heaven (*Tenggeri*). Subject to the religious conceptions of nomads, a ruler of a steppe society (Shan-yu, Khaghan, Khan) personified the society's center and, in virtue of his divine abilities, performed rituals that were thought to provide prosperity and stability to the society. These functions were deemed to be of colossal importance for the society. Therefore, in the case of natural stress or disease and loss of livestock, an unlucky Khan could weaken or lose his charisma. The unlucky Khan or chief could be replaced in some nomadic societies or even killed. But ideology was never a predominant variable in power among the nomads. The life of the steppe society was filled with real alarms and dangers that required quick action from the leader. The power of rulers of the steppe empires of Central Asia was mainly based on their ability to extract external surplus product (Kradin 1992, 1996a).

The most interesting and novel feature of the steppe empires was their dual structure. From outside they appeared to be despotic aggressive state-like societies because they were formed to extract surplus product from outside the steppe. But from within the nomadic empires remained based on the tribal relations without the establishment of taxation and exploitation of the stockbreeders. The

force of power of the steppe society's ruler was, as a rule, based on his ability to redistribute earnings of trade, tribute and raids from neighboring countries.

From the viewpoint of multilineal evolution the steppe empires were rather different from other early states as well as from most complex chiefdoms. This observation provides justification for telling the story of the particular independent way of evolution of pastoral nomads.

NOMADIC CIVILIZATION

I refer now to the comparative civilizations approach developed by Sorokin, Toynbee and others. In 1934 Toynbee suggested that pastoral nomads could constitute a special form of solidified civilization. It is beyond question that pastoral nomadism is a special world that stands in opposition to the world of agrarian civilizations. But *nomadic civilization* is a metaphor rather than a scientific definition. If the culture of nomads is defined as a civilization then why not also the "civilizations" of hunter-gatherers or horticulturalists? In other words, all types of human cultures could be characterized as civilizations.

Can the attributes specific to *pastoral nomadic civilization* be identified? The majority of similar attributes (specific relation to time and space, hospitality custom, developed system of fictive kin relationships, modest needs, unpretentiousness, powers of endurance, militarization of society etc.) can also be found in other types of societies. Perhaps, only the special cult relation to the live-stock, main source of subsistence of nomads, distinguishes them from all other societies. In the thinking of Toynbee each civilization is based on a particular psycho-cultural unity and goes through the stages of growth, prosperity and collapse. Nomadism is something other than civilization. Its prosperity occurred during the very long period from the First millennium BCE to the middle of the Second millennium CE. During this period a number of settled-agricultural civilizations appeared and collapsed. The same fate was met for many nomadic societies during the period of nomadic steppe empires. It is not likely that the nomads thought of themselves as a unified cultural group standing in opposition to other nations and civilizations. Hyksos and Hsiung-nu, medieval Arabian and Mongolian Kereyid, Nuer from Sudan and reindeer-breeder from Arctic have been assigned not only to different ethnic groups, but belonged to different cultural communities. Of course some pastoral nomadic societies could contribute to the core of an emergent civilization (e.g. Arabians), while others could play the role of "barbarian" periphery of an agrarian civilization (Hyksos before the conquest of Egypt) while others could appear beyond the civilizational process prior to the beginning of modern Western colonialism (e.g. Nuers, Chukchi).

It is more accurate to tell about the separate large nomadic patterns rather

than to try to erect a large general category based on the notion of pastoral nomadic civilization. The Russian historian Lev Gumilev (1989) has associated the processes of the origin and development of civilization with particular geographical zones. From this viewpoint, the Arabian Peninsula was such an area where in seventh century CE the Arabian civilization emerged. Inner Asia was also a specific geographical zone. In opinion of a number of authors, the unified steppe civilization has been here in existence beginning with the Hsiung-nu time (or even earlier) (Perlee 1978; Urbanaeva 1994 etc.). These scientists identified the following characteristic signs of the civilization under consideration: administrative division into wings, decimal numeration, ideas of power, enthronization ceremonies, love for horse and camel races, a particular world outlook, etc. It is easy to note that many of these signs are among the attributes of pastoral nomadic empires mentioned above. Nevertheless, of all versions of the civilization approach, only this is worthy of notice as applied to the history of nomadic stockbreeders.

A further popular idea is the theory of the *nomadic mode of production* (Markov 1967; Bonte 1990). This discourse has emerged in Marxist anthropology. The nomadic mode of production is conceived as a technological mode of production rather than a social one. It is thus compared with hunting, fishing, and agriculture rather than with primitive, Asiatic, feudal and other social modes of production. On the basis of one technological mode of production, different social modes of production could exist. The model of the nomadic mode of production is a too generalized pattern. All possible political formations of nomadic societies fall into the framework of this unified model. But African Nuers live in the separate lineages and are only united by very complicated genealogical ties. The same social organization was probably characteristic of ancient Ukhians roaming from place to place on the Inner Mongolia steppe. Tuaregs, Kalmyks and Kazakhs had a developed inner property and social stratification. They were consolidated in tribal confederations that included several tens of thousands of people. Hsiung-nu, Turks, and Mongols organized steppe empires that included many hundreds of thousands (even up to million and more) nomads (Barfield, 1992; Kradin, 1996a etc.). The differences in the complexity of social political system between Nuers and Ukhians, on the one hand, and Hsiung-nu and Mongols, on the other, are considerable. For this reason, I reject the use of the notion of a nomadic mode of production.

Russian social science has, in recent decades, devoted a lot of attention to producing a synthesis between the theories of *social stages* and *civilizational approaches*. It is fundamentally impossible to do this completely on the basis of orthodox Marxism. At the same time, another powerful theoretical line has emerged—the world-systems approach. Within this framework the meth-

odological synthesis between the evolutionary approach to history (from the lineage reciprocity mini-systems to the capitalist world-system based on the commodity-money relations) and the perspective of history as a totality of different large regional systems (e.g. world-empires, world-economies) has been successfully combined.

NOMADIC SOCIETIES AND WORLD-EMPIRE DYNAMICS

In accordance with the world-systems approach, the main unit of development is a great system which includes groups of polities rather than a single country. In this group, the 'center' (core) is identified, which exploits a 'periphery'. The core has a higher level of technology and production and more complex internal structure and gets maximum profit. The core societies pump out the resources of the periphery, organize financial and trade flows, and arrange the economic space of the system (Wallerstein 1974; 1980; 1984; Ekholm and Friedman 1979; Santley and Alexander 1982; Rowlands, Larsen, and Kristiansen 1987 etc.; Frank, Gills 1994; Hall 1996; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997; 2000; Chase-Dunn 1998; Sanderson 1999 etc.).

I. Wallerstein identifies three modes of production: (1) mini-systems based on reciprocity, (2) redistributive world-empires, (3) capitalist world-system (world-economy) based on the commodity and money relations (1984: 160ff).

The world-empires exist to exact tributes and taxes from provinces and captured colonies that are redistributed by the bureaucratic government. The distinctive feature of world-empires is administrative centralization and the predominance of the polity over the economy, according to Wallerstein.

However, such an approach to the evolution of preindustrial systems is incomplete. It is necessary to note two important circumstances. First, in addition to the hierarchical world-empires, there were also peer-polity systems (Frank 1992; Frank, Gills 1994; Chase-Dunn, Hall 1997). Ancient Greece and medieval Europe served as examples of the coexistence of multi-polity systems (see Renfrew and Cherry 1986). Andrey Korotayev has shown that the West was no exception. In ancient Arabia, several centers and peripheral systems have coexisted in what he calls a 'multipolity' (Korotayev 1995; 1996). Therefore, in the preindustrial period, a division of labor between separate elements of regional systems could be performed on the basis of different models of interaction.

Secondly, it is necessary to clarify how many such models and preindustrial modes of production (I use here this term so as it is understood by Wallerstein) there could, in principle, be? This question was formulated by Andrey Fursov who moved an emphasis from the traditional Marxist problem 'how many modes of production have existed in history' to another plane (1989:298).

Two models of interaction are known: redistributive “World-empires” and polycentric “World-economies” (Chase-Dunn 1988; Frank, Gills 1994). As to the modes of production, it is more complex. Fursov has created a solid social philosophical theory in which all the main present-day theories were synthesized. In this opinion, living labor manifests itself in two forms—individual and collective. The more developed is production, the more independent is collective labor. In preindustrial systems, a relationship of collective (C) and individual (I) is fixed in the social organization (*Gemeinwesen*). Only three types of relationship are possible: $C > I$, $C = I$, $C < I$. They correspond to the ‘Asiatic’, ‘Ancient’, and ‘Germanic’ forms of *Gemeinwesen* identified by Marx.

I would like to add something to Fursov’s classification. His classification lacks an important type: $C > C$, when one collective exploits another one. The pastoral nomadic empires occupy this place. They were also redistributive societies. But they differed from the agrarian empires and the ‘Asiatic’ mode of production (where a government levied a tribute and taxes on its subjects) On the steppes the pastoral economy of nomads was carried out within the family-related and lineage groups and based on mutual aid and reciprocity. Redistribution only affected the external sources of the empire’s income: plunder, tribute, trading duties and gifts. The nomads, in a given situation, took the part of ‘class-society’ and ‘state-society’, rising as a building over the settled-agrarian foundation. For this, the nomad elite performed the functions of bureaucracy and commanders, while the ordinary pastoralists were the soldiers of expansion and repressions. Such a society might be called **xenocratic** (Kradin 1992; 1993; 1995a; 1996a; 1996b; 2000).

There is some similarity between the **xenocratic** pastoral polity and ‘African’ mode of production of K. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1969) as well ‘tribute-paying’ formation S. Amin (1976:13–19; 1991). They are made similar by a dependence of the government on the external sources of subsistence as well as by the semiperipheral position in the international division of labor. The concept of semiperiphery was introduced by Wallerstein to designate the intermediate zone between the center and periphery. The semiperiphery is exploited by the core but itself exploits a periphery as well as being an important stabilizing element in the world division of labor. I. Wallerstein argues that the three tiered structure is characteristic of many organizations. The intermediate tier provides flexibility and elasticity of the whole system (e.g. centrist parties, middle classes, etc.).

The concept of the semiperiphery was developed mainly to describe processes in the present-day capitalist world-system. In the preindustrial period, some functions of the semiperiphery could be performed by the trading city-states of ancient times and the middle ages (Tyre, Carthage, Venice, Genoa, Malacca). Marcher states that conquered core regions to form larger empires

were often also originally located in semiperipheral regions (e.g. Akkad in Mesopotamia, Macedonia, Rome) (Chase-Dunn 1988; Chase-Dunn, Hall 1997). The Central Asian steppe empires of nomads were also the militarist “satellites” of agrarian civilizations as this process was figuratively pictured by O. Lattimore (1962)—“barbarism is a result of civilization.” However, the nomads also performed important intermediary functions between distant core regions. Similar to seafarers, they provided the connections for flows of goods, finances, technological and cultural information and epidemic diseases between the islands of the settled economy and urban civilization.

However, it would be an error to consider the nomadic empires as representing the semiperiphery. The semiperiphery is often exploited by the core, whereas the nomadic empires were never exploited by agrarian civilizations. Any society of the semiperiphery aspires to technological and production growth. The mobile mode of life of pastoral nomads did not provide the opportunity to make great accumulations (livestock could be accumulated but the quantities were limited by the productivity of the pastures and this natural ‘bank’ could at any instant go bankrupt due to drought or snowstorm) and their society was based on the gift economy. All plunder was distributed by the rulers of the steppe empires between the tribal chiefs and stockbreeders and consumed during mass festive occasions. The nomadic societies were doomed to remain peripheral. Only conquest of the core allowed them to become a ‘center’. But for this purpose it was necessary to cease to be a nomad. The Great Yeh-lu Ch’u-ts’ai realized this: “Although you inherited the Chinese Empire on horseback, you cannot rule it from that position.”

There is a close temporal relationship between the prosperity of the agrarian core state and the power of the nomadic empires. It was most usually the case that the steppe empires arose and were sustained during periods in which the imperial agrarian state was also strong and prosperous. In Inner Asia this correlation is especially clear for here there are many areas of pasture that made possible the formation of a large steppe empire from tribes and chiefdoms. The Han dynasty and Hsiung-nu Empire arose during the same decade. The Turkish Khaganate arose just as China was united under the power of the dynasties of Sui and, later, T’ang. And, in contrast, the periods of crisis in the fourth, fifth and tenth centuries in China led to political entropy in the steppe areas.

This phenomenon gave ground to the Japanese historian J. Tamura’s identification of two long cycles in the history of Northern Eurasia: (1) the cycle of ancient nomadic empires within the arid zone of Inner Asia (second century BCE – ninth century CE): Hsiung-nu, Hsien-pi, Jou-jan, Turks, Uighurs; (2) the cycle of the medieval conquest dynasties coming from the forest (Jurchen,

Manchurians) or steppe (Khitans, Mongols) zones (tenth century - beginning twentieth century): Liao, Chin, Yuan, Ch'ing. The societies of the first cycle interacted with China at a distance whereas the states of the second conquered the agricultural South and established symbiotic state structures with dual management systems and new forms of culture and ideology (1974).

The concept of T. Barfield is more complex. He not only established a synchrony between the growth and decline of the nomadic empires and similar processes in China, but noted also that the conquest of China was, as a rule, a business of the Manchurian people. The breakdown of centralized power in China and on the steppes released the forest-dwelling tribes in Manchuria from pressure from both of these adjacent powers. Manchuria's people established their state formations and conquered the agricultural areas on the South when both of their neighboring competitors were weak. The Khitan, Jurchen, and Manchu succeeded in conquest. In Barfield's opinion, a cyclical process of synchronous state formation among the peoples of China and Central Asia was repeated three times over a period of two thousand years (Barfield 1991; 1992:13 table 1.1).

The theories of Tamura and Barfield complement each other. The relations among migrations and crises of agrarian empires and the activities of nomads is evident. In this paper, I pointed out already that the formation of early nomadic empires (Scythia, Parthia, Hsiung-nu etc.) fell within the final period of the axial age when the powerful agrarian empires (Ch'in and Han in China, Persia and Hellenistic states in Asia Minor etc.) were established. The first global demographic crisis of our millennium (third through fifth centuries) occurred at nearly the same time in different parts of Eurasia (Biraben 1979: 13–24). It was not only a coincidence that this was also the epoch of the 'great migration of peoples'. Contrary to popular opinion the nomads did not at all desire to conquer the agrarian territories. In order to rule an agrarian society, the nomads would necessarily have to give up their nomadism and their horses. This they were ill disposed to do. It was only during periods of crisis and collapse of the settled societies that the steppe nomads were forced to enter into closer relations with the farmers and townspeople. As R.Grousset (1939) has vividly written, "vacuum has sucked in them inside the agrarian society."

The Sui and, subsequently, T'ang successes caused a new joining up of all tribes and chiefdoms of Inner Asia in the imperial confederation of Turks. It is possible that a particular effect on this process was exerted by regular periods of a moister climate on the Mongolian steppes (Ivanov and Vasiljev 1995: 205 table 25). The First Khaganate of the Turks became the first true Eurasian-wide empire. It connected, through trade routes, China, Byzantium and the Muslim World. But this unity was fragile. It quickly collapsed into western and eastern

parts. The Second Khaganate of the Turks and Uighurs was unable to restore unity in Eurasia. As a result of the next conflict in China and drought on the Mongolian steppes, the peoples of Manchuria - Khitans and Jurchen - began to play the leading part.

The Mongolian storm of the thirteenth century coincided with a new period of moistening in Mongolia and the steppes of Eastern Europe (Ivanov and Vasiljev 1995: 205 table 25) and with a demographic and economic upturn in all parts of the Old World. This brought the culmination of the history of preindustrial empires. The Mongols merged a chain of international trade into the united complex of land and sea routes. For the first time, all the great regional cores (Europe, Muslim area, India, China, Golden Horde) proved to be united in the first Eurasian-wide empire (Abu-Lughod 1989; Barfield 1991; Hall 1996; Wilkinson 1996; Chase-Dunn, Hall 1997). On the steppe, similar to fantastic mirages, there arose gigantic cities—centers of political power, transit trade, multinational culture and ideology (Karakorum, Sarai-Batu, Sarai-Berke). From this time, political and economical changes in some parts of the world began to play a much greater part in the history of distant other parts of the world.

The existence of the first Eurasian-wide empire did not last long. The plague, the ejection of the Mongols from China and the decline of the Golden Horde became the most important links of the chain of events that conditioned its downfall. Demographers mark the serious crisis in all its main sub-centers in the period of 1350–1450 (Biraben 1979). At the beginning of fifteenth century, the first Eurasia-wide empire disintegrated. Tamerlane's desperate efforts to restore the transcontinental trade met, in the end, with failure. The Ming resumed the traditional policy of opposing the nomads that resulted in the regeneration of an older policy of the Mongols to remotely exploit China (Pokotilov 1976). In the emerging Europe-centered capitalist world-system, the nomads were allotted quite another position. Machine technology, firearms and new sources of energy changed the balance of power to their disadvantage. Since that time, the steppe hinterland has ceased to play an important role in the dynamics of world-system processes.

CONCLUSION

In closing, one can draw several conclusions. More than two and half centuries ago, Montesquieu in *L'Esprit des lois* worked out the law of 'political gravitation'. He argued that democracy is a characteristic of small societies; monarchy—of middle-size ones, while the despotic empire is typical of large societies. I think we can apply this law to describe pastoral nomads. If the neighbors of pastoralists were acephalous segmentary societies (as Nuers in Africa and Ukhians in

Manchuria in the last centuries BCE) then the pastoralists themselves were at the level of tribal formations. In each local regional zone, the political structuration of the nomadic periphery was in direct proportion to the size of the core. That is the reason why, in order to trade with oases town or to attack them, the nomads of North Africa and the Near East have united into 'tribal confederations' of chiefdoms, nomads of the East European steppes living on the margins of the Ancient Rus established 'quasi-imperial' state-like structures, while in Inner Asia the 'nomadic empire' became such an important mode of adaptation. The imperial and 'quasi-imperial' organization of the nomads in Eurasia developed after the ending of the 'axial age' (Jaspers 1949), from the middle of the first millennium BCE at the time of the mighty agricultural empires (Ch'in in China, Mauryan in India, Hellenistic states in Asia Minor, Roman Empire in Europe).

The nomadic empire is a distinctive xenocratic form of mode of production. Inside, it was a supercomplex chiefdom. It was based on the redistribution by the khan (chief) of profits from war, extortion, and international trade. On the outside, it was a militaristic collective exploiter of agrarian states and civilizations. I think it is not only a special mode of production but also a unique path of cultural evolution.

One can agree with Thomas Barfield (2000) who referred to the steppe polities as "shadow empires." A.G. Frank has considered Eurasia as a common space that has long related the West to the East (1992) and a similar approach was developed in the works of the Russian Eurasianists of the 1920s. As the world became a single system the steppe was a 'pipe' between the 'vessels' that were the agrarian civilizations.

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