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CHAPTER 3. THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND FAMILY RELATIONS

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CHAPTER 3. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND FAMILY RELATIONS

Nomadic Group - *Khoton (Khot Ail)* and Seasonal migrations

The social system of the Mongols late XIX - early XX centuries. remained feudal, but different from the feudalism of the inherent agricultural peoples. However, it was very close to the feudal system of other nations, the basis of economy of those was nomadic herding, but its specificity, expressed in various areas of industrial relations, especially in the field of land relations and forms of exploitation, as well as the intertwining of feudal relations with respects of patriarchy, clan, and community relations.

From the middle of the XVII century, Mongolia became a vassal of the Qing Empire. Dividing the steppe to *khoshuns* and appointing the head of their rulers from among local Uriankhains, Qing Emperor secured for them the whole population. Each *khoshun* belonged to the nomadic territory fully administered by a local ruler. Qing emperor, as the sole owner of the land could at any time deprive *khoshun* prince of his appanage and transfer it to another. However, within its nomadic feud *khoshun* prince was virtually unchallenged manager of nomadic grazing, as well as for the appanage of the population attached to it. He single-handedly pointed out, to whom, when and where to roam, to judge, impose natural extortion in its favor, besides the fact that he was collecting for the Qing government. Thus, the rulers of the *Altai khoshuns* of the *Uriankhains* dependent on Qing authorities and were a local feudal nobility with its hierarchical structure.

Representatives of the nomadic herders and hunters did not have ownership on the land, and on any nomadic area or pasture. They only use those lands on which lived, roamed, grazed their cattle, sowed grain, or hunted, and enjoyed, as a rule, not alone but together with other nomads as long as it wished by *khoshun* ruler.

In the late XIX – early XX century, the vast majority of the *Altai Uriankhains* wandered not alone, not by individual households and small groups of a few yurts. They, like all other Mongolians, have had a kind of nomadic groups – small communities, which was called “*Khoton*”, or “*Khot Ail*.” It played an extremely important role in their lives.

The word “*Khoton*” Uriankhains designated cluster of yurts, farms, whose number has reached 6–8 or more. Small groups of 1–3 yurts called “*Ail*”. “*Ail*” is practically a farm. Over time, the word “*Khoton*” has changed and it became somewhat vague, sometimes coinciding with the meaning of the word “*Ail*”. In all

cases, the word “*Khoton*” signified not just a yurt, or a group of gers, namely agriculture, or group of farms. The word “*Khoton*” was still set to “corral”, so this term does not apply to village, town and monastery, yurts, which were commonly used for other words – “ger” or “*Ail*”.

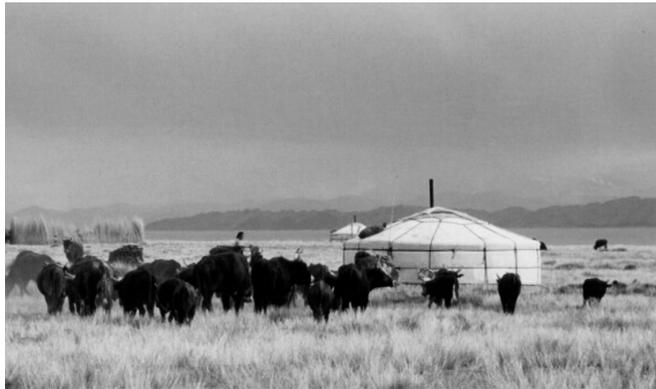


PHOTO 10 *KHOTON* – on the spring stand

Nomadic group *Khoton* was a very ancient form of Mongolian society. B.J. Vladimirtsov wrote that there were “... two types of nomadic Mongols from XI-XII century. On the one hand, lived and roamed more or less large groups, on the other hand, the opposite phenomenon is observed: some families migrate alone, isolated or small units that occur in modern Mongols of Khalkh and Khovd Aimag, for example, where you rarely see a cluster in one place for more than 2-3 yurts – *Ails* (Vladimirtsov 1934: 36-37). In his view, the larger groups have been beneficial in respect of defense against attacks, but inconvenient for cattle grazing. Therefore, the Mongols sought a way to combine the two migrations, or in case of external security, all go to the first method.

The very existence of such nomadic groups or small communities, as *Khoton* of the Mongols, including in the *Altai Uriankhains* not an exception. The presence of various forms of community in the nomadic pastoralists established for a number of nationalities, the social system which was a feudal (Tuva, *Altai*, the Kirghiz, Kazakhs, etc.).

The researchers note that such a small community is the bearer of patriarchal relations in their lives. Indeed, that was the main breeding ground, which supported the existence of the various patriarchal remnants used in exploiting for their feudal rulers (Potapov, 1969: 115).

According to surveys of informants, the *Altai Uriankhains* in late XIX – early XX century, there were various khotons by its composition:

- a) *Khoton*, fully or almost fully connected relationship. This is the most

common type of khotons. For example, together roamed his father and married sons, brothers or sisters, father and their families, brothers, sisters, mothers and some of their connexion with the families, etc.;

b) *Khoton*, unrelated half. This is also one of the most common types in which there were two or three separate family groups, with little or no interconnected relationship. In these farms, there were 3 to 5 yurts;

c) *Khoton*, unrelated. This is the most rare type of *Khoton*, which is the union households, totally unrelated kin. In this case, adherence to to this type of khotons creates the desire to get experienced in one respect or another from person with production skills of livestock breeding, hunting, crafts, etc. There were examples of adherence to *Khoton*, is a member of a good hunter, to hunt through the joint groups, to learn the subtleties of this type of subsistence. On-site hunter could be a good stockman, carpenter, etc. For wealthy households the most important incentive associations in khotons of this type is the need for working hands, and for poor households – the complexity of self-existence, etc. Number of holdings, economically more or less independent, not-associated with relatives lineage, was small.

d) *Khotons* – loners. According to our informants, *Khoton* singles were a rare exception. Sometimes alone roamed only the rich farming, for which clustering in one place for a large number of cattle created a shortage of pasture.

Thus, the composition of khotons is largely determined by the relationship of its members. It is clearly dominated by those of unrelated *khotons*. For fully or partly related *khotons*, joining to them, as a rule, were free to all comers, and for unrelated *Khotons*, joining them were required a preliminary agreements.

Someone else's household, has acceded to one or another *Khoton*, in the event of failure to migrate to another location, sometimes that household subjected to a boycott against the joint work (grazing of animals), but nevertheless denying one or another farm to join the chosen khoton was impossible. Quite interesting issue is the question of constancy of khotons. Generally speaking, a separate *Khoton* is not a permanent union. Having been around today, it could disappear tomorrow if any of the components of its economy, for any reason will disperse. Number of *khotons* would be constantly changing, albeit in a well-known, but fairly narrow limits. Period of existence of a separate *khotons* has been measured from the time of their parking lot (week, fortnight, month, 4–6 months) to several, and sometimes, many years. The conclusion is that the constancy of *khotons* to a large extent depended on family connections within it. *Khoton* had no settled place of settlements and put their yurts in different seasons in different places depending on where they have been *herding their* cattle. Movements of *khotons* were relatively constant, although the order from Soum and more from the *khoshun's* Governor those *khoton* rules for

nomadic movements could change at any time.

Most older and experienced man is considered as head-*ahlagch* of this *khoton*. On his behalf the given *khoton* was called, and he played a leading role in the life of farming, which represented the community. Its degree of respect depended mainly on the property he owned, relatives relationships, production skills and personal qualities. His power and influence were not absolute, and ranks varied greatly in different *khotons*. Basically, he served as as counselor in the affairs of the collective and individual economy, the relationship between members of *khotons* and family affairs. After consulting with his *khotons*, he appointed time migrations to seasonal pastures, date of sowing, date of harvesting for hay for feeding livestock in winter, etc. As the senior in *Khoton*, his advice was followed not only on economic but also on various family and household affairs. Together with him it was addressed the advice of *Khoton* prayers. Often, despite the presence of older, economic affairs led by the younger and more active members of the association who is the most prosperous in this sector. *Khoton* is not an administrative unit. Participation of *khotons* chapter in the relations of members of this association with the authorities sometimes expressed in the advice and guidance to these members for their position before the authorities, in giving a kind of installations on one or another issues, each owner would contact with representatives *khoshuns* administration directly, without the direct involvement of senior *khotons*.

According to surveys of informants, social and economic structure of *khotons* was not uniform. Often within it lived and roamed the family together with different material prosperity. Among them were both rich and poor.

Some *khotons* in fact were no longer *Khoton* community, but a mere nomad settlement of the wealthy, which included, besides his family, dependent relatives and the poor in-law, who worked on it for free, and operated them under the guise of kinship care. According to the story of our informants, among such *Khotons* stood out richer *Khotons*: it was bigger and seemingly stronger than the others. Huddled near itself three or four, rarely more yurts of poor people who use horse and cattle of rich owner, and who are as service-maids-*zarts* for pastoralists and they would need as appropriate. Such a system reflects the basic trend of economic structure of *khotons* for that time, but that is not exhaustive. Along with the described *khotons* were quite a few where people are economically not very different from each other. Such as *Khoton* certainly was, depending on whether a rich man or a ruler (carrying various feudal taxes in kind, and was subjected to cruel exploitation), but inside it flowed own life, in which significant quantities of community-based orders.

The main cause of establishment of *khotons* was, according to the unanimous approval of our informants, common grazing in any season. Particular attention

was paid to the composition of pasture grass, which was known to be uneven. Each type of cattle demanded a certain type of pasture. Therefore it was necessary to choose a pasture grass which structure best suits to a particular type of livestock. This method of selection of pastures has long been known to the Mongols. He confirmed the well-known episodes of “Secret History” (Sokrovennoe skazanie 1941, §118). Also in connection with the traditional division of the season on a favorable summer-autumn and adverse winter-spring periods, respectively, divided and seasonal pastures: winter – *uvulzuu*, spring–*khavarjaa*, summer – *zuslan* and autumn – *namarjaa*. Also differ in the nearby – *oiryn*, and far – *kholyn* pastures.

Distant pastures are usually used in the clear, fine days, and nearby ones – during the rainy, windy and snowy days. In clear and windless days, the herding cattle usually would take place in open places, and on windy days – the pastures with natural shelter from strong winds. We can not say that the migrations among the *Altai Uriankhains* migrations take place not in an organized and spontaneous way although migrations were caused by the very nature of agriculture and all depended on climatic conditions. The reasons for the seasonal migrations of the *Altai Uriankhains* include the following: 1. inadequate capacity, inappropriate vegetation structure and lack of drinking water for livestock, 2. need to be cool in the heat in summer and a warm place for grazing cattle in winter; 3. need for joint farming with other farms. These mostly natural factors encourage them to frequent nomadic in seasons. Behind them was the main reason such as economic interest in the multiplication of cattle.

Each nomadic group *Khoton*, given its capabilities (labor and draft power) wandered the certain area according to the strict route, knowing where and how many days can graze cattle. The larger the economy, the greater care needed for cattle consequently, the shorter period of next migrations would be required. In the year-round pasture feeding of livestock to clearly distinguish between two periods: summer-autumn (May-October) and winter-spring (November-February). The task of the summer-autumn grazing period was reduced to ensure that as soon as possible after the winter lead to better nutritional status of cattle. Our informants have argued that a good fattening cattle in this period was achieved at the expense of frequent change of pasture, and providing the livestock of good drinking water, and choice of pasture with specific composition of plants, visit with cattle the salt flats for at least 3–4 times per month, besides organization of protection livestock from predators.

More responsible and difficult is the winter-spring period. During this period, cattle systematically undernourished, because forage was of poor quality and insufficient quantity on the winter pasture. Nevertheless, winter subsistence for the cattle plays a decisive role, since it depended on the welfare of animals in general.

Feature of the nomadic *Altai Uriankhains* was that winter and autumn parkings were in the river valleys, and summer and spring parkings were high in the mountains. This type of nomadic migrations A.D. Simukov called as “alpine” (Simukov 2007: 445). These specific migrations were due primarily to climatic and landscape conditions Mongol *Altai*.

Deep snow and high winds forced the shepherds in the mountains in winter to descend from the mountains and wander into the valley of the rivers and lakes. Relatively high summer temperatures forced them to look for parking in the mountains. Between them there are spring and fall sites. Pasture areas are located alongside with the path of migrations, do not meet the needs of the herd, and used them as transient and passing. They have served as a preparatory stage for the summer and winter. *Altai Uriankhains*, usually with the onset of summer, i.e., from mid-May, began to roam for summer sites. They would change the place 1–2 times, and sometimes, depending on the weather and grass, would do from 3 to 4 migrations. Migrations for the autumn park began around mid-August. It, as usual, was close to winter parking site, during his stay in the autumn park, they would correct fences for sheep and goats, or build new farm buildings at winter as to preparation for the winter. Migrations to winter parking begin in late October and sometimes November. They would stay at winter site until mid-February. Starting mid-February, and sometimes early March they would begin migrations toward spring parking. They spend there the period of offspring of all species of livestock. The distance between summer and winter parking *khotons* ranged from 20–30 to 60–80 miles in one direction, while large farms, with prevalence in the herds of yaks and cattle were doing migrations to a distance ranging from 120 to 140 km (Lkhagvasuren 1988: 250). Predominance in the herd of yaks and cattle made it possible to travel the long distance, although migrations involved small cattle.

The number of intermediate stops at the far migrations ranged from 5 to 8. Those families, who have had a large number of cattle, would leave the spring parking lot before the others they left with their herds, and did more than any other sites.

Large herd moves very slowly, stopping at each parking for 2–4 days to rest in order to gain strength for emaciated cattle during the winter, and they could proceed farther. Therefore, households with such animals moved slowly for a period of 7–13 days. Gaps between the parking lots ranged from 10 to 15 km, depending on the state of vegetation and terrain. For example, parking in the open did not last long, cool spring breeze acted negatively on the cattle, and in places protected from the wind (at the foot of the mountains or valley), animals stood a little longer. In this context, of particular interest is the constancy of sites and routes of migrations of *khotons*. The significant changes would occur in the usual

route of migrations of *khotons* during the years of the adverse climatic conditions with the abundant snowfall – *dzud* or drought-*gan*, which were repeated often enough. As a rule, number of migrations and the length of nomadic ways would sharply increase. According to our informants, despite of the long journey of migrations, and the large number of cattle and farms, nomads never had any cases of arguments and fight over the parking sites and pastures between different farms. *Khoton* in the field of their summer-autumn pastures would often jointly build the common wooden fence (*khashaa*) for sheep and goats. Animals were kept together in this open-fence. They also have built the corrals (*khashaa*) and for lambs and kids. For feeding livestock, especially females and young, they would jointly prepare the hay. The combining of multiple farms in one *khoton* at the winter parking lot was of great significance for the cattle. The skillful arrangement of the yurts and building of individual fences have them given the greater protection from wind and cold, and besides protecting animals of the attacks of wolves. The hay harvested together those living in one *khoton* only for feeding calves. From mid-August the grass was cut with a knife or just pulled his hands. Then they let a little dry to it, twist in long braids, hung on trees or on the platform, where it was stored until required. Some *khotons* work together and spread on the processing of arable land. In such cases, each family plot plowed together.

They have also helped each other during the harvest. Collective work of the residents of one *khotons* also referred to hunting, sheep shearing and manufacture of felt, on mutual assistance in the firewood, etc. etc. All the joint work being done to a neighbor (often at the same time, relatives) of mutual aid.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the economic basis of nomadic groups or communities in the *Altai Khoton Uriankhains* were a nomadic pastoral economy with private ownership of livestock, shelter (tent), and tools. Land, mainly pastures and grazing grounds, on which they ran the household, was owned by a feudal ruler of the *khoshun*. The land was allotted to *Khoton* community in general use. Given to them for the use of nomadic pastures all members of the *khotons* enjoyed together, without any conversion, and only the lands cultivated by tillage, as we saw above, were individually owned, while these lands were handled by one or the other member of the community. Low level of development of nomadic pastoralism and its natural character went a long way striving to *Altai Uriankhains* nomadic communities, because with this method increased the viability of pastoralist-commune in the struggle with nature, to facilitate the management of extensive cattle breeding in the particular natural environment, with a long and cold winter, and to provide personal safety and a minimum standard of living.

Form of the Family and its Structure

The subject of family and its structure among Mongolian nomads in the late XIX – early XX centuries has been as cause of much debate among researchers. Some thought that whole history of nomadic Mongols was characterized until the early XX century by a large patriarchal family, the second thought is that it was characterized by a small family in early stages, that then is replaced by an extended one. Third group of researchers believed that it was characterized by a large patriarchal family in early stage, and gradually with development of nomadic farming it has been replaced by a small one. Question of whether or not a large patriarchal family has existed in past among nomads remains open. However, our field material shows that in the late XIX – early XX century, a dominant form of family among the *Altai Uriankhains* was a small individual monogamous family. D.D. Shalkhakov specifically studied the problems of family relations among Kalmyk wrote that “a survey of numerous informants did not confirm the existence of large families in Kalmykia” (Shalkhakov 1982: 36).

G.G. Banchikov who has also dealt with issues of family relations among the Mongols, wrote that “a primary social unit of Mongolians has long been a small family consisting of husband, wife and their children” (Banchikov 1964: 3).

We did not find evidence of the existence of polygamy among *Altai Uriankhains*, a practice sometimes has seen with Khalkha and some Turkic-speaking neighbors. According to our field materials, the small family included other relatives – elderly parents of the husband and wife and their unmarried brothers, unmarried sisters and other relatives. K.D. Basayev, who studied the same problem among Buryat material, wrote that they “the shape and size of the family were closely linked to its structural features, i.e., relative’s composition. Buryat family consisted of several generations of blood relatives in its ascending and descending lines: two generations (parents and children) in a small family, and three or more generations (old people, parents, their married sons and grandchildren and sometimes great-grandchildren) in a large undivided family” (Basayeva 1980: 42). D.D. Shalhakov wrote that “Kalmykia – pastoralists in the XIX-early XX centuries, were characterized by a small monogamous family, which was included in family-related group” (Shalhakov 1982: 38).

Among *Altai Uriankhains*, genus – *ovog* was patriarchal. Kinship was considered by a lineage of father, though relatives on lineage of mother used to be at premium of honor. Nomadic Mongolians had characterized by the classification system of kinship: all individuals older-*uvug etseg* (grandfather), *emeg ekh* (my grandmother), all elderly, are older – *uvuu* (uncle), *emee* (aunt), every senior in age – *akh* (brother), junior – *duu* (younger brother), every senior in age – *egch* (sister), the youngest-*ohin duu* (younger sister).

In the field of kinship, a significant closer relationship was to the mother.

Relatives on the mother side belonged to group “*nagats*”. Subject himself to them is called to be as nephew – *zee*. When performing life-cycle rituals, especially the wedding ceremony and maternity, a significant role was reserved for the relatives “*nagats*”, with a special function during the rites performed nephew, termed “*zee*”.

Relatives on the father’s side belonged to the group “*avga*”. Subject to them will be as nephew – *ach*. Thus, and grandchildren from his daughter would be termed as “*zee*”, and her son – “*ach*”. Differentiation of kinship implied relationship by blood and marriage: Relatives of his wife – *khud*, matchmakers, relatives of the wife of the son – *khadam*. Blood-peculiar relationship evolved by husbands of sisters: husbands of two sisters – *baz khurgun*, wives of two brothers – *bazuud*, children of sisters – *buluud*, children of brothers – *ueluud*, grandchildren of sisters – *bulentseruud*, grandchildren of brothers – *hayalanuud* etc.

After the conclusion of marriage suitor for his wife became as *khurgen*. All of daughters, who arrived in whatever clan, would become as *beruud*. All married women (*beruud*) – representatives of different clans that make up after the conclusion of the second half of the marital union of one clan, perform basic functions of the commission of a wedding ritual complex. Their role becomes especially important if they were having many children, since the main purpose of marriage was considered continuation of reproduction.

Patriarchal tradition defines the rights and position of each member in a small family. The father is the head of the family – *urkhiyn terguulegch*. He was, one might say, the absolute master of all movable and immovable property and this determines his position in the family. He directed all the chores associated primarily with the nomadic pastoralists, distributing responsibilities among its members. Willingness of the father is a law for all. He could keep in obedience for his sons for 35–40 years, although an adult age for men has already occurred in 16–18 years for the society of *Altai Uriankhains*. The father had the right to decide the question of marriage of their daughters, often against their will. Argument with him was considered as unacceptable. Even overgrown sons did not dare to object to it. Nevertheless, stories of our informants, families of the *Altai Uriankhains*, as they do in families of Mongolian peoples, there were no cases of gross tyranny or arbitrariness on the part of the household head. When dealing with important economic and the other family issues the father would usually consult primarily with older sons. In important economic matters elderly or disabled who lost his father usually replaced by the sons of seniority.

After the father’s death the head of household was considered to become the married eldest son, but sometimes, in very rare cases, the rule passed to anyone of the following sons, who was considered the most energetic and able to be the best way to organize and run the economy of the household.

In any family, the great respect and honor enjoyed the woman, mistress – *geriyn ezegtey*. Husband – *nukhur* treated very well with his wife in a family. Poll of informants showed that the beating, humiliation and brutal despotism by a husband to his wife were an exceptional phenomenon in the life of *Altai Uriankhains*. If such a phenomenon has occurred, it is deeply condemned in the society. When dealing with important family matters husband usually consulted with his wife, without neglecting its views and proposals. But the gentle treatment of his wife, particularly when outsiders were, was quite rare. It was considered totally unacceptable disobedience, disrespectful or rude attitude on the part of children (*huhduud*) toward the mother – *eej*. Apart from the fact that mother had all the cares of child-rearing, subsistence of nomadic herders among *Altai Uriankhains* has laid on woman a multiple of roles: she had to cook food, milk cattle, process dairy products, to observe cleanliness in the yurt, sew clothes and bedding for all family members, etc. Especially a lot of time, energy and labor she spent for processing sheepskins, leather, ropes of bestial hair, wallow felt for the needs of their families.

According to the stories of older people, there was some kind of seasonality in the performing of chores: during the spring and summer, women were busy milking cows, mares and manufacturing stocks of dairy products for the winter. Tanning hides, leather, and felt making were usually carried out in the fall. Women were mainly engaged with embroidered clothing, headgear, footwear, and felt manufacturing for bedding during the period of autumn and winter. A woman acted completely independently in the household of *Altai Uriankhains*. W. Erdniev as an example for Kalmyk women wrote that “despite the fact that Kalmyk woman was in complete subjection to men and under his control, but she enjoyed a certain of freedom and autonomy in the household and daily life” (Erdniev, Maksimov, 2007: 300).

It is well known that women of Mongolian-speaking peoples, including the *Altai Uriankhains*, were unaware of seclusion, which existed among neighboring Kazakhs who profess Islam. According to our field material, she enjoyed full freedom of interaction with men: she participated on an equal footing with men in all family and public holidays and all mass entertainment, she could sit with guests from all walks at the same table, etc. However, according to our field materials for women of *Altai Uriankhains* as for women of all Mongolian nomads, characterized by respect for fidelity for married women, and chastity for unmarried girls.

Generally used in Mongolian society illicit relations between the sexes are deeply condemned by public opinion and the Mongolian law provides for very severe penalties for committing adultery. In the Mongolian-Oirat statute books in 1640 said about the following: “... if a woman, bound to a stranger, and the

mutual desire, maintains self-fornication, then with the women for four (cattle), and men take five (cattle). ... If a girl goes to bed (with men) against wishes, then take (with men), two dozen, and if it was out and her wish, then take the nines” (Golstunsky 1880: 49).

Each nuclear family had its pastoral economy apart from the others. Typically, a family of parents lived in a separate tent. Family married sons roamed nearby, also having his own farm, creating a nomadic group, which was called “*Khoton*”, as mentioned earlier.

Forms of Marriage

Now let's discuss a few of words on the forms of marriage. Marriage in *Altai Uriankhains* considered obligatory for every person. Old maids and bachelors are not respected. In the marriage rules, there are not preserved such an ancient way of buying his wife such as the exchanging of two family groups of brides. Our informants could not remember any such cases in their *khoshuns*. During the fieldwork, we found no data on crosscousin marriage between children of sisters and brothers and levirate, i.e., marrying the widow of the younger brother of the deceased spouse, even though researchers say on the existence of such marriages among the other Mongolian nomads (Galdanova 1986: 132, Erdniev, Maksimov, 2007: 305).

However, marriages with relatives on the maternal line, i.e., with his cousin, second cousin and fourth-relative sisters from the mother, apparently, were very rare. Our informants do not remember such marriages, although sources indicate about their existence among Mongols in ancient times. For example, in “Secret History of Mongols,” says: “Esugaja-Batur was going to make a match for his bride from his uncle on his mother's Oelun, her relatives from Olhonut clan, where, and went along with his son Temuchjin” (Sokrovennoe skazanie 1941 § 61). But according to our field materials, marriages of two brothers to the girls who are sisters, were quite common. We found a variety of materials evidencing of such marriage (Lkhagvasuren 1987: 20). In addition, *Altai Uriankhains* had no prohibition on marriage to infidels, such as Muslims, although our informants did not remember a single of such case. *Altai Uriankhains* themselves could not explain this fact, but marriages with other Mongolian nationalities were unhindered.

In our time, among *Altai Uriankhains* has existed an institute for preparation of son-in-laws – *hurgen oroh*. When the family had no sons, he was taken into the household son-in-law – *hurgen*. In such marriages, and a daughter given to him became as heir to property of the father. It could have taken a son-in-law to the household in early childhood of the boy. In such cases, when growing up the boy, the heir to his father's farm, the daughter with the son-in-law would stand as an

independent family with its own economy. Becoming as son-in-law, i.e., going to live in a yurt of wife, which is a stranger's home for a man, would be regarded as undesirable, and humiliating. It was mainly practiced for the poor people. The Mongols had a common proverb: to become a son-in-law means to become a farmhand – *khurgen hoo huchtey*, which basically mean as son-in-law is power. In addition to a purely moral side of the matters, it had a place for a legal consideration. Once becoming as son-in-law, a man has to be under wife, and she was as owner the property. Still parents of the wife alive, they would remain as masters. The arrived son-in-law had no right to dispose of this property and could not get an inheritance. By the end of the XIX century, the other type of marriages, which is called as secret marriages – *nuutsaar gerleh* had become as common forms of marriage. These marriages were arranged by the kidnapping of bride – *ber khulgailakh*. There were two types of conclusion of such a marriage:

1. Marriage escape – escape of bride – *ber orguulah*.
2. Abduction of bride – *ber khulgailakh*.

Both are considered a violation of established norms of marriage and met with any resistance. Abduction of bride without her consent was a rare occurrence. Our informants knew about it only by hearsay.

During the reporting period, marriages by “escape” were still common among *Altai Uriankhains*. To free themselves from the authority of their parents, the girl was forced to secretly marry the elect. Marriage by “escape” has existed not only among *Altai Uriankhains*, but also among the other nationalities, who have been in very close to *Altai Uriankhain* historical and cultural contexts. Regarding marriage by abduction of *Altai* Mountains, a Russian missionary V.I. Verbitsky at the end of the XIX century wrote: “In the northern Altai, for the most part, bride is stolen. Groom, persuaded the bride and obtaining her handkerchief in advance by mutual condition, comes for her at night, on a good upland horse, accompanied by unmarried young people. These young people are stealing a bride from their parents' home put her on his horse and prepared to rush to *Ulus* of the groom or immediate family” (Verbitsky 1893: 105). However, to get a wife to himself in this way might not all. Such an act could decide and choose only by the strong and clever guy who knows how to make a “kidnapping” of the bride with the help of his cronies and with the active assistance on the part of very girls.

Early marriages are quite common among Mongolian nomads (Basaeva 1980: 122, Shalkhakov 1982: 14). Betrothal of minors, of course, was dictated by different considerations, such as a desire to conclude a union between two families or to strengthen the existing links between them. In all cases, two families who choose to intermarry, after preliminary agreement of negotiations a marriage ceremony was fixed on the future of their children – *undugun sui tavikh* (Ethnography of Mongolia 1987: 261). Marriages between people of different

social groups were also allowed. However, affluent people tried to have marriages in common with each other and joining of people in affinity with the poor was considered as not very desirable for them. By the end of the XIX century, in connection with the further differentiation of society, this tendency becomes dominant among the wealthy *Uriankhains*. Marriage is often seen as a profitable economic transaction.

An accepted norm of marriage was a marriage of matchmaking for bride–*ber guikh*. We return to this theme later. Now, briefly about the bride and the bride’s dowry. The word “bride” is not in the Mongolian language, although the existence of dowry in the old institution of the nomadic Mongols written by many authors (Rubruck 1957: 101, Banchikov1964: 6). As our informants argued, during the cahoots courtship of the bride, there was not only haggling about the amount of dowry, but did not arise even talk about it. Many olds remember that put some demands, show the value and the value of bride price were not accepted.

However, the institution of dowry among the *Altai Uriankhains* at this time reached a fairly advanced form. As our informants argued, could only fiancée at their own discretion dispose of the dowry, the husband had no right to dispose of them. Therefore, she became the owner of a certain part of household goods, and this in turn provides to her a measure of independence in the family.

Bride could bring in their new yurt complex of different things as a dowry – *beriin khereglel*. According to the stories of our informants, the bride as a dowry brings with her first horse, necessarily, of a white suit, complete with horse-harness. This horse is a symbol of the horse on which she could return to his father’s yurt, if her fiancée would be bad to her. Sometimes her father gave a dowry of a quiver with arrows, bow with case–*horjogo*, the symbolic meaning of which lay in the fact that they protect newlyweds from the evil spirits. She also brought a full set of bedding, winter and summer clothing, wood and leather ware, and articles of furniture, etc. Compulsory subjects dowry considered headrests – *der*. Besides the bride’s parents must prepare a traditional jewelry set of a married woman and several heads of each livestock species – *inj*. In preparation of the dowry involved all family members, each of them contributes, bringing cloth, silk, skins, coral, etc.

Relatives need gifts to the bride during a bachelorette party – *chigee uuh*. Another part of the dowry that is necessarily included curtains – *beriin khushig*, by which dissociated a corner of the yurt, where there was a bed for the newlyweds. According to the norms prevailing in the marital relationship, ensuring the bride by the full dowry was required in the issuance of the girls married. In normal families, the dowry preparation began with his childhood of the future bride. Therefore, the betrothal of young or early collusion practiced, we can say to get a longer time for preparation of a dowry.