

## NOMADS OF SOUTHERN SIBERIA

[Review by Ian Whitaker\* of Sevyan Vaynshteyn's *Nomads of south Siberia: the pastoral economies of Tuva*, edited by Caroline Humphrey and translated by Michael Colenso. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980, 289 p, illus. Hardcover £20.00.]

The publication of a translation of a social anthropological study by a Soviet author is always an important event, but the appearance of a book on the indigenous population of the little known Tuvian ASSR is especially welcome. This book is a translation of *Istoricheskaya etnografiya tuvintsev*, which first appeared in Moscow in 1972. Vaynshteyn is, with L. P. Potapov, one of the foremost ethnographers of this region, which remained formally outside the Soviet Union until 1944. Locked away in the Sayan mountains, its people have been little studied by ethnographers in general, and particularly by those from the west.

Vaynshteyn has a command of the available literature dealing with the Tuva, also known in the past as Uryankhay or Soyots, although he makes little use of one of the major western students, the late Ørjan Olsen, who produced two books published in Norwegian dealing with his expedition just before World War I. This is regrettable. Fortunately some of the recent western discussion, especially that by the Hungarian scholar Diószegi—a much lamented student of shamanism—is mentioned in the very full introduction by the editor, Dr Caroline Humphrey (p 1–36). She seeks to place Vaynshteyn's work in the context of Soviet ethnography, which is an important service, since much of the book only becomes fully appreciated when it is seen in this setting. Thus Vaynshteyn's discussion of the historical development of reindeer husbandry in the Sayan mountains is part of an ongoing debate by Soviet scholars in which the perspectives of western anthropology are missing.

The study gives us, for the first time in English, detailed data on the traditional Tuvian economy in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as discussing other forms of pastoralism than the tending of reindeer, and the limited agriculture that is often pursued side by side with hunting or the care of livestock.

There is a special extra chapter written for this edition on 'Social relations' (p 233–48), but unfortunately it does not deal in the categories that are commonplace in such discussions in the west. In particular one looks in vain for any real discussion of shamanism, which the work of Diószegi demonstrates still survived—at least residually—in Tuva until the last ten years.

Another criticism of the book is that Vaynshteyn appears unwilling to document the survival of some of the cultural features recorded by earlier writers, into more recent times. Since he has engaged in ethnographic field work in Tuva himself since at least 1954, only ten years after the region's incorporation into the USSR, one might expect that he could document some of his discussion from his own observations. In general this is avoided, and one cannot but speculate whether it is more acceptable in contemporary Soviet academia to refer to 'safe' earlier observations, rather than admit that Tuvian society has not yet been totally transformed. In spite therefore of its essentially historical focus, Vaynshteyn's book is an excellent addition to the slender corpus of material that is accessible to us about the ethnic groups of southern Siberia.

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## A CURTAILED HOME RULE

[Review by Axel Kjaer Sørensen\* of Jens Brøsted's *Et beskåret hjemmestyre—et kritisk essay om den grønlandske hjemmestyre-ordning*. Rhodos Radius, København, 1979, 149 p. Softcover.]

The introduction of home rule in Greenland in 1979 can be seen for the time being as the culmination of a long development in Greenlandic participation in local administration. Participation began in the 1860s at a municipal level, increasing when twin councils were founded for the west coast in 1911. Later, in 1950 a directly elected single council was formed, which from the early '60s represented the whole island. Apart from direct administration of social welfare, these councils have played merely an

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