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Where Did the Mongol Empire Come From? Medieval Mongol Ideas of People, State and Empire

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ABSTRACT

The Medieval Mongol *ulus* was a category of government that was turned into a ‘community of the realm’ and as such it was assumed to be ‘a natural, inherited community of tradition, custom, law and descent’, a ‘people’ or *irgen*. According to Mongolian language sources of the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, ‘Mongol’ was the only *contemporary ulus* and *irgen* while all the other *contemporary* categories such as Kitat, Tang’ut and so on were described only as *irgen*. Analysing this usage convention, this paper reconstructs medieval Mongol concepts of *ulus*, *irgen* and *yeke ulus*. The idea of *ulus* congruent with the Chinggisid state of 1206 was well established in pre-Chinggisid Mongolia. Indeed, the Mongol *ulus* of 1206 was a realisation and an embodiment of that idea, and was built upon the Kereyid state and her sphere of hegemony. As such, the Mongol *ulus* of 1206 was different and distinct from the *Yeke Mongqol Ulus*, the Mongol Empire. This finding not only renders the idea of the tribal origin of the Chinggisid state untenable, but also suggests that we must look at the legacies of previous state formations for the origin of the Chinggisid state.

Keywords: ulus, irgen, yeke ulus, people, state and empire

INTRODUCTION

While medieval Europe was a feudal mosaic, pre-modern Inner Asia was tribal anarchy, according to conventional scholarship, rooted in nineteenth-century evolutionary thinking. Recently, this view has increasingly been challenged. Susan Reynolds has not only shown that feudalism was a post-medieval construct, but has also compellingly argued that kingdom was ‘the highest, most honourable, and most perfect of all secular communities’ and ‘it comprised and corresponded to a “people” (*gens, natio, populus*), which was assumed to be natural, inherited community of tradition, custom, law and descent’ (Reynolds 1997: 250–331). Equally, David Sneath has also incisively argued that representations

of Inner Asian societies as ‘organized by the principles of prestate kinship society into clans and tribes’ are colonial-era misrepresentations, rooted in nineteenth-century Eurocentric evolutionist theory (Sneath 2007: 1): ‘The colonial-era notions of tribalism had powerfully distorted representations of steppe societies and their past. On closer inspection, it was not “kinship society” but aristocratic power and statelike processes of administration that emerged as the more significant features of the wider organization of life on the steppe’, he maintains (2007: 1).

However, Peter Golden, who believes ‘clans and tribes’ to be the ‘building blocks’ of the pre-Chinggisid Eurasia, finds Sneath’s aristocratic orders useless ‘for assessing the pre-Chinggisid steppe polities’ (2009: 295–6). Thus, he answers in the negative his own perceptive question, which is indeed critical to the understanding of medieval Eurasian polities: ‘Are we to posit “administrative units” as developing first (implying the existence of a state) and then their transformation into tribes or aristocracy-led named groups?’ (2009: 295; see also Golden 1991: 43–4). As Golden relegates pre-Chinggisid Eurasia to the tribal world, the Chinggisid state appears as a watershed in Eurasian social and political transformation as it divides the state and the tribal periods of Eurasian history. Golden is by no means alone in this opinion (Allsen 1994: 321; 1997: 5; Barfield 1989: 8; Biran 2004: 339–61; Endicott-West 1994: 608, 614; Vladimirtsov 1934). Hence we have two radically different positions on the origin of the Chinggisid state: the revisionist claims that it rises from aristocratic orders, while the conventional view maintains it emerges out of the tribal world.

As the positions of scholars are based on their readings of the sources, which in turn are rooted in their respective theoretical orientations, the debates evolve around readings of terms such as *oboq* and *ayimaq*. While Golden maintains the conventional reading of *oboq* and *ayimaq* as clan and tribe respectively, Sneath revises the reading of *oboq* as family, lineage, and line and *ayimaq* as division and group (Sneath 2007: 62). Joining the debate with his recent archaeology of the terms *oboq* and *ayimaq*, Christopher Atwood (2010) persuasively demonstrates that these terms had no tribal meanings whatsoever in medieval Mongolia. Instead, *ayimaq* referred to ‘units or divisions within a single category’, ‘while *oboq* refer[red] simply to surnames’ (Atwood 2010: 74). Thus, the Chinggisid state appears to have arisen from aristocratic orders.

In fact, if we look at the world through the eyes of the medieval Mongol scribes, we find a world of *uluses* and *irgens* rather than a world of *oboqs* and *ayimaqs*. The sources abound with *uluses* and *irgens*.¹ For example, we locate *ulus* 106 times and *irgen* nearly 200 times in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (hereafter *SHM*) alone, throughout the text. On the contrary, *oboqtu* and *obogtan* (but not *oboq*) appear twenty-two times and twenty of these appear only in the section of the Chinggisid genealogy. *Ayimaq* also appears only in two episodes. Most significantly, as Atwood (2010: 69) notes, none of the medieval Mongol sources designate the numerous named units that appear in the sources as *ayimaq* or even refer to them as *ayimaq*. Instead, almost all of the named units are directly desig-

nated as *irgen*, such as Mongol *irgen* or Kitat *irgen* or Tang'ut *irgen*, while a few of them are designated *ulus* (see below). The importance of *ulus* and *irgen* in the medieval Mongolian political lexicon is manifest.

Thus, upon a comprehensive examination of the known medieval Mongolian sources, this paper reconstructs the medieval Mongolian principal concepts of political or societal collectivity (or association) *ulus* and *irgen* by analysing one specific usage convention of these terms. Then, scrutinising the presumptions and the concepts that medieval Mongols took for granted in their actions, the paper looks at how they understood the political environment and communities in which they operated and belonged. Ultimately, the paper seeks an answer to the question, from where did the Chinggisid state arise: out of the tribal world, or aristocratic order, or something else?

NAMED *ULUSES* AND *IRGENS*: CONTINGENCY OR CONVENTION?

In Mongolian language sources of the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, the words *ulus* and *irgen* are used in a variety of ways and senses.² Here, however, I will examine *one specific usage convention* of the two words: the convention that appears to use these terms to designate or describe certain named categories, polities and communities such as *yeke mongqol ulus*, *mongqol ulus* and *süing ulus* or *mongqol irgen*, *kitat irgen*, *tang'ud irgen*, and so on.

The examination covers nearly all the known Mongolian language sources³ of the period, the earliest being the Stele of Yesüingge (better known as Chinggis's Stone), c. 1224/5; the most comprehensive being the *Secret History of the Mongols*; and the latest being the Mongolian documents incorporated into *Hua-i i-yu* or the Sino-Barbarian Glossary (hereafter, *SBG*) published in 1389.⁴ The sources include historiographical works, inscriptions, letters, edicts, Buddhist texts and the like, albeit often in a fragmentary condition.

The examination found the term *ulus* twenty-eight times in the sources, designating three groups of named categories, namely, Mongol (fifteen times); defunct Chinese dynasties of Zhou (twice), Shang and Song (each once); Indian historical and mythical realms of Sukhavati and Magadha (each twice), and Baqiragal, Čuta, Kan si, Gödir-e and Galab (each once).⁵ While all of the Indian realms appear only in Buddhist literary texts⁶, the Chinese Zhou dynasty appears once in the 'Book of Filial Piety' (*Hsiao ching*) and once in the Mongolian documents incorporated in the *SBG*, where Shang and Song dynasties were also designated as *ulus* (Ligeti 1972b: 137, 146).

In contrast, Mongol *ulus* appears in several different phrases/forms: once as *qamuq mongqol ulus* (in the Stele of Yesüingge, c. 1224/5);⁷ eight times as *yeke mongqol ulus* (once in a 1246 impression of Güyüg Khan's seal,⁸ once in a 1335 Sino-Mongolian inscription to Chang Ying-jui,⁹ once in a 1338 Sino-Mongolian inscription to Jigünteï,¹⁰ twice in a 1346 Mongolian inscription of Qara Qorum,¹¹ three times in 1362 Sino-Mongolian inscriptions to prince Hindu),¹² and twice as

olon mongqol ulus (once in the *SHM*¹³ and once in a Ming edict to Anda Naqachu¹⁴); four times as *mongqol ulus* (once in the *SHM*,¹⁵ once in Il-khan Gazan's (1295–1304) edict found in Rashid al-Din,¹⁶ once in an unknown Turfan document,¹⁷ and once in a 1388 memorandum of Namun *güregen* and Engke-tura bātur of Chaghataid *ulus*¹⁸); and, finally, once as *mongqoljin ulus* in the *SHM*.¹⁹ In contrast to the Indian realms and Chinese dynasties, the majority of the sources where Mongol *ulus* appear are documents contemporary with the historical developments, while many of them, including seal, letter, edicts and inscriptions, can be considered actual governmental documents. The most remarkable pattern that the examination reveals is that none of the numerous *contemporary* named categories, other than the Mongol, that appear on the sources multiple times are ever denoted by the term *ulus*. Only the Mongol is *ulus*.

On the other hand, the term *irgen* designates almost every named category, including the Mongol. In the *SHM* alone, the term *irgen*²⁰ denotes thirty-one named categories on 126 occasions: the most numerous being Kitat (Northern Chinese?) and Tang'ut (Xi-xia) (each seventeen times), followed by Tatar (fourteen times), Sarta'ul (Khwarezm Empire) (twelve times), Merkit (ten times), and so on, and the fewest being Hindus, Madasari, Mongol, Dörben, Kiyat, Jürkin and Uru'ut, each once. In addition we find *sarta'ul irge[n]* in the Stele of Yesüingge,²¹ *kiristan* [Christian] *irgen* in Il-khan Argun's 1290 letter to Pope Nicolas IV, *virangud* [Franks] *irgen* in Il-khan Öljeitü's 1305 letter to Philippe the Fair,²² Mongol (and) Tövd [Tibetan] *irgen* in 1324 edict of Yesüntemür,²³ Ardabil *irgen* in a 1325 edict of Il-khan Abū-Sa'īd,²⁴ *mongqol irgen* in a 1338 Sino-Mongolian inscription to Jigüntei,²⁵ and *olon mongqol irgen* at the colophon of the *Twelve Deeds of Buddha*.²⁶ The earliest appearance of the term *irgen* in association with the named categories is that of *Sarta'ul irge[n]*, found in the Stele of Yesüingge alongside *qamuq mongqol ulus*, and the latest is that of the Jigüntei inscription of 1338.

The juxtaposition of this usage of *ulus* and *irgen* shows not only that no categories *contemporary* to the period named, other than the Mongol, were ever denoted by the term *ulus*, but also that the defunct Chinese dynasties of Zhou, Shang and Song, and the Indian historical or mythical realms of Magadha, Sukhavati and so on occur as *ulus* only. The Mongol alone is both *ulus* and *irgen*. This leads us to ask whether this apparent pattern is a result of contingency or convention. In other words, do all the present textual evidences present a result of the loss of texts that would attest otherwise? Or is the evidence showing us a well-established usage convention?

A closer analysis of the sources suggests that this usage of *ulus* and *irgen* is, indeed, evidence of a well-established convention. A total of thirty-six contemporary named categories other than the Mongol, in a total of 130 occurrences in six different sources that spread chronologically from 1224/5 to 1325 and geographically from Mongolia to Persia are denoted consistently as *irgen*. It is true that the great bulk of this evidence comes solely from the *SHM*. Still, five other different sources (one inscription preceding the *SHM*, three of Il-khan's communications

and an edict of a Grand Khan that were produced well after the *SHM*) are in agreement with the *SHM*. Also, the *Compendium of Chronicles* (Thackston 1998, 1999) (hereafter *CC*), where numerous Mongol words, including *ulus* and *irgen*,²⁷ appear, is in agreement with the Mongolian language sources. None of the many named categories, which appear in the work well over a hundred times, are ever denoted as *ulus*, except for the Mongol.

Furthermore, on four occasions Mongol *ulus* appears parallel to other named *irgens* in three different sources. This also suggests that Mongols had a reason to designate Mongol as *ulus* and other categories as *irgen*. The first parallel appears in the Stele of Yesüingge, where *sarta'ul irge[n]* and *qamuq mongqol ulus* appear in the same and the only sentence of the inscription (Ligeti 1972a: 17). The second and third parallels, the 'Forest People' and the 'Mongol *ulus*', and 'the numerous Mongol *ulus*' and the 'Kitat *irgen*' appear in the *SHM* (Rachewiltz 1972: 114, 164). And lastly, *yeke mongqol ulus* is found along with *il bulqa irgen* [submitted and rebellious people] in a 1246 impression of Güyüg Khan's seal (Ligeti 1972a: 20). In addition, just as the impression of Güyüg Khan's seal demonstrates, Mongolian khans are addressed as *yeke mongqol ulus-un qan*²⁸ [Khan of the Mongol Empire], while the rulers of the others are addressed as *irgen-ü qan* [khan of *irgen*] or *irgen-ü soltan* [sultan of *irgen*].²⁹ On no occasion do we find *mongqol irgen-ü qan*, i.e. khan of the Mongol *irgen*.

All of these examples lead us to conclude that the writers had good reason to designate Mongol as *ulus* and other categories as *irgen*. Since all of the sources under examination belong to the post-1206 period, it is safe to assume that this particular usage convention and the language of the sources reflect the perspective of that period. Nonetheless, why was Mongol both *ulus* and *irgen*, while other categories were either *irgen* or *ulus*? What did *ulus* and *irgen* in this particular usage convention mean? In the following section, I seek answers to these questions.

MONGOL *ULUS*: CATEGORY OF GOVERNMENT AS COMMUNITY OF REALM

If we assume the Zhou, Shang and Song dynasties and Magadha etc. kingdoms as states, we can infer that *ulus* stands for state. Indeed, we know that *yeke mongqol ulus* is the appellation of the Mongol Empire. On the other hand, we find no *yeke mongqol*, Zhou, Shang, Song or Magadha *irgen* in the sources, which strengthens our inference that *ulus* stands for state. Yet, what do we make of expressions such as *qamuq mongqol ulus*, *olon mongqol ulus*, *mongqol ulus*, and *mongqoljin ulus*?

The reading of the expression *qamuq mongqol ulus*, which appears in the Stele of Yesüingge, has been a debated issue. Some believe it to be an appellation of the Mongolian state, while others reject the idea (Rachewiltz 2004: 295–9). However, paragraph 202 of the *SHM*, where *mongqoljin ulus* and *mongqol ulus* appear, provides critical information that sheds light on the nature of *ulus* in this

usage convention. The paragraph not only gives us an insight into what the author understood *mongqoljin ulus* and *mongqol ulus* to be, but also, most importantly, it furnishes critical information on *ulus* as it relates to the phenomenon it stands for, from which we can roughly construe the term's conceptual meaning.

In paragraph 202, the author, while recounting the events that took place during the 1206 assembly, by which he clearly marks the establishment of the Mongolian state, denotes those who came under Chinggis Khan's rule as a whole in three different ways; first as 'felt-tent *ulus*' (*sisgei to'urqatu ulus*), then as 'Mongolic *ulus*' (*mongqoljin ulus*) and finally as 'Mongol *ulus*' (*mongqol ulus*) (Rachewiltz 1972: 113–14). While 'felt-tent *ulus*' and 'Mongolic *ulus*' are used as though they were synonyms, Mongol *ulus* denotes the same body of people after they were administratively organised. Why did the author need these three different expressions for one and the same people? In particular, if the same body of people was the 'Mongol *ulus*' then why did the author need the expressions 'felt-tent *ulus*' and 'Mongolic *ulus*'?

Mongqoljin (Mongolic) indicates items either pertinent to, or intrinsic to a Mongol property or quality. Thus we find expressions like 'Mongol custom' (*mongqoljin dura*) (Ligeti 1972A: 248) and 'Mongol language/tongue' (*mongqoljin kele*), and 'Mongol-speaking people/people who speak Mongolian' (*mongqoljin keleten*) (Cleaves 1954: 85, 54). There is a subtle difference of degree between *mongqol* and *mongqoljin*; while *mongqol* is stricter, *mongqoljin* is broader. Thus, here, I render *mongqoljin* as Mongolic, taking the sense of pertinent to or relevant to, Mongol. The *SHM* categorises peoples by their lifestyle, such as 'those who live under the felt-tent' (*isgei tu'urqatan*) and 'those who live in wooden door' (*qabdasun e'üdeten*), denoting nomadic and sedentary peoples respectively (Rachewiltz 1972: 115). And 'sisgei to'urqatu ulus' is nothing but a version of 'isgei tu'urqatan' [those who live under the felt-tent]. Thus, 'felt-tent *ulus*' means 'felt-tent people' or 'nomadic people'. As such, 'felt-tent *ulus*' or 'nomadic people' must have been the most generic and the all-embracing of the expressions possible to designate the population of the Mongolian plateau. Consequently, not only did 'sisgei to'urqatu ulus' and 'mongqoljin ulus' mean 'felt-tent people' and 'Mongolic people', but both of them appear to be broader categories than Mongol.

Why, then, did the author need these broader expressions for the Mongol *ulus*? Clearly, the Mongol *ulus* was too narrow for the author to directly embrace the conglomeration of the peoples who came under the Chinggisid state by 1206, though they, in fact, constituted the 'Mongol *ulus*'. Certainly, before 1206 the name Mongol must have been the name of the category or people who we could identify as the 'original' Mongols,³⁰ and as such the name then must have been identical with them. Thus the author, in order to convey the idea that the population which came under the Chinggisid state by 1206 was much larger than the 'original' Mongols, resorted to the 'felt-tent *ulus*'. Consequently, after successfully conveying his idea, the author extends the name of the 'original' Mongols over the 'new Mongols', yet still signifying that they were Mongolic, meaning

larger than, and similar to, the 'original' Mongols. Obviously, the name Mongol was extended over the entire 'felt-tent *ulus*' in 1206 as the name of the Chinggisid state. However, at the time of writing of the *SHM*, Mongol must have been the established common designation of the post-1206 Mongols. Thus, finally, at the end of paragraph 202 of the *SHM*, the author, after appointing ninety-five commanders who would govern those who live under the felt-tent, firmly identifies the same body of population as Mongol *ulus*.

Indeed, when we follow the order of the narrative, the 'felt-tent *ulus*' or the 'Mongolic *ulus*' became the 'Mongol *ulus*' after they were administratively organised into ninety-five *minqat* [lit. thousand] with defined territories (*nuntuq*) that make up several territorial *tümens*³¹ [lit. ten thousand] within the territory of the Chinggisid state. The boundary of the Mongol *ulus* is revealed by the author's statement 'Beside the Forest People, the *noyad* [lords] of the Mongol *ulus* named by Chinggis Khan were ninety-five' (Rachewiltz 1972: 114).³² The phrase 'Beside the Forest People' (*hoi-yin irgen-ece anggida*) signifies the boundary of the Mongol *ulus*. The author knew that by 1206 the 'Forest People', who were actually incorporated into the Mongolian state around 1217, were yet to be integrated into the Mongol *ulus* and he also knew that by the time of writing the incorporation of the 'Forest People' into the Mongol *ulus* was complete. The 'Forest People' was the territorial and demographic limit of the Mongol *ulus*, and consequently, the Mongol *ulus* was a bounded body of population with a definite territory.

Medieval Mongol *nuntuq* [territory] was an area where people lived and which they possessed, inherited and identified with (Rachewiltz 1972: 25, 139). Each *minqat* and each *tümen* had their own defined *nuntuq* and each *minqat* had an official (*nuntu'ucin*) to delineate and distribute the *nuntuq* (Rachewiltz 1972: 171). The territory of the Mongols as a whole was also considered as *nuntuq*, as implied by Chinggis Khan's order to his quarrelling sons, Jochi and Chagadai, 'Mother Earth is wide ... [Hence I shall] separate you [making each of you] to govern aliens by expanding [our] *nuntuq*' (Rachewiltz 1972: 152). While 'expanding *nuntuq*' presupposes the boundedness of the *nuntuq*, 'to govern aliens' presupposes the expansion of the *nuntuq* at the expense of alien territories. Indeed, Jochi and Chagadai were made to rule the conquered 'alien' territories farthest from Mongolia (see Boyle 1997: 42–3).

Later sources such as the *History of the World Conqueror* (Boyle 1997) the *CC* and John of Plano Carpini (Dawson 1980) also distinguish Mongolia 'proper' from the Mongol Empire and their descriptions of the territory and demography of Mongolia proper are identical to that of the *SHM*. Indeed, both John of Plano Carpini and Ata-Malik Juvaini, two of the foreign eyewitnesses to come to Mongolia proper, 'demarcate' Mongolia's territory almost identically with the *SHM*. 'To the east of it lies the country of Kitayans [North China] and also that of the Solangi [Korea]; to the South the land of the Saracens; to the south west there is the territory of the Uigurs; to the West the province of the Naimans; on the north it is bounded by the ocean' is Carpini's demarcation of Mongolia's

territory (Dawson 1980: 5). Juvaini demarcates also: 'In the east it marches with the land of Khitai, in the west with the country of the Uighur, in the north with the Qirqiz and the river Selengei and in the south with the Tangut and the Tibetans' (Boyle 1997: 20–21).

In terms of population, the *CC* fully supports the *SHM*. Our 'original' Mongols or the 'Mongol *irgen*' of the *SHM* (see below) appear in the *CC* as the 'original' or *Dürlükün* Mongols. On the other hand, the 'felt-tent *ulus*' or the 'Mongolic *ulus*' or the 'Mongol *ulus*' of the *SHM* appear in the *CC* as the Mongols who, in addition to the original or *Dürlükün* Mongols, include those whose 'feature and language resembled those of the Mongols' and those who were 'close to [the Mongols] in physiognomy and language' (Thackston 1998: 24–6, 37–112). Indeed, as the Mongolic of the *SHM*, the *CC* also identifies the future new Mongols as 'a type of Mongol', 'a sort of Mongol', or 'resemble the Mongols' or 'their customs [are] like those of the Mongols' (Thackston 1998: 52, 61, 58, 68). 'Since they were close to one another in terms of shape, form, vocabulary, dialect, customs and manners, regardless of the difference in dialect and customs that had existed in ancient times', they all were Mongolic (Thackston 1998: 44). This was the boundary and the limit of the felt-tent or the Mongolic people and it largely coincides with the 1206 boundary of the Chinggisid state, the Mongol *ulus*.

Now, we can see that 'felt-tent people' or 'Mongolic people' were the Mongol *ulus*, yet only after they were administratively organised under the rule of Chinggis Khan within the clearly bounded territory. Thus, the Mongol *ulus* was a population, yet administratively organised under the rule of a khan within a given territory, a category of government or the state. As such, Mongol *ulus* strikingly parallels what Reynolds maintains for the medieval European kingdoms as she argues, 'A kingdom was never thought of merely as the territory which happened to be ruled by a king. It comprised and corresponded to a "people"' (1997: 250).³³ Indeed, we can render Mongol *ulus* as a category of government or a 'community of the realm', that is, a political community formed by the state.³⁴

A phrase in the paragraph 272 of the *SHM* that says, 'if my elder brother the Qahan (Grand Khan) deceases the many Mongol *ulus* would be orphaned',³⁵ clearly shows that Mongol *ulus*, indeed, was then perceived or projected as a community of the state. The khan appears as a father to the Mongols, since orphaning means loss of either or both parents. It is needless to say that a state as a community needs unity and solidarity, and 'kinship as idiom emphasizes and reinforces unity' to the community 'by adding fictional blood ties onto shared interests' (Lindner 1982: 697). Thus, in this kinship metaphor, monarchs often appear as though they were the fathers of their people.

In later sources, we have three more occasions where Mongol *ulus* was used to denote a certain group of Mongols. One of them is found in Il-khan Gazan's edict in Rashid al-Din that reads '... in times of our good fathers, the Mongol *ulus* was called upon to endure every sort of demand and hardship, like *gubchur* on livestock, keeping large post stations, carrying the burden of the strict *Yasaq*, and

qalans' (Thackston 1999: 732). The Mongol *ulus* unambiguously referred to the Mongols whose descendants, the Mongol troops, were the beneficiaries of the preferential treatments outlined in the edict. Likewise, in the Mongolian documents found in the *SBG*, we find two occasions where Mongol *ulus* is used to refer to some parts of the Mongols. In a Ming edict addressed to the Mongol prince, Naqachu, we find a line 'In the twentieth and twenty-first years of Hongwu, troops were dispatched [to Mongolia] twice in sequence. [They] reached the Mongolian land and pacified many Mongol *ulus* bringing them back [to China]' (Ligeti 1972b: 147).³⁶ On the other hand, in their 1388 memorandum to the Ming court, Namun and Engke-tura wrote that they were governing 'The Mongol *ulus* who had been separated [from the rest of the Mongols] to follow Lord Chagatai Qahan' (Ligeti 1972b: 151).³⁷ On both occasions Mongol *ulus* refers to some group of Mongols. These passages, though fragmentary, show the transformation of Mongol *ulus* as category of government to Mongol *ulus* as a community or a group. Thus, one generation's category of government was evolving into a community or a group of the later generation, what we might now describe as ethnic or cultural.

Yet the reconstruction of the conceptual meaning of *ulus* alone does not lead to understanding why the writers denoted Mongol as *ulus* while they consistently identified contemporary other categories as *irgen*. Thus, *irgen*, the other part of the pair, has to be conceptually recovered also.

MONGOL *IRGEN*: COMMUNITY OF REALM AS COMMUNITY OF DESCENT

Unlike *ulus*, *irgen* denotes almost every named category that appears in the sources, irrespective of their sizes, social organisations and complexities. Indeed, Kiyat, Uru'ut, Jürkin and Onggirat, the parts of the 'original' Mongols, and Merkid, Kereyid, Naiman, and Mongol, the parts of the 1206 Mongol *ulus*, and Kitat, Sarta'ul, Tang'ut, Virangut, Hindus, and Kiristan all are equally denoted as *irgen*. Therefore, *irgen* is clearly a generic concept.

Language, religion, custom and way of life, etc., are the common traits used to identify *irgens*. While we find '*irgen* of nine tongues'³⁸ in the *SHM*, at the colophon of the *Twelve Deeds of Buddha* we read, 'To let the numerous Mongol *irgen* comprehend the wondrous *Twelve Deeds of Buddha* ... the Tibetan original was translated ... into Mongolian' (Poppe 1967: 162, 68).³⁹ The *Twelve Deeds of Buddha* was originally written in Tibetan by Čosgi-Odsir, who also authored *Bodhicaryāvatara* in 1312. At the end of the *Bodhicaryāvatara*, Čosgi-Odsir addressed his projected readers as 'all those who speak the Mongolian tongue' (Cleaves 1954: 85, 54).⁴⁰ Likewise, while 'every *irgen* pray by their own doctrine [lit. book and letter]', some are designated as 'Christian *irgen*',⁴¹ 'Hindus *irgen*' and 'Sarta'ul *irgen*' (Muslims) after their religious denominations. We also find 'Forest *irgen*' (*hoi-yin irgen*) and 'city *irgen*' (*balaqad-un irgen*) that identify

irgens by their way of living. In the *SHM*, Tang'ut *irgen* is described as the 'ones who have towns with pounded-earth walls, are ones who live in permanent camps' (Rachewiltz 1972: 158; 2004: 198).⁴² Furthermore, while some of these *irgens* have their own emblem, such as the gyrfalcon of the 'Kiyad *irgen*',⁴³ others appear to have masters or lords that protect their homeland.⁴⁴ Indeed, *irgen* appears as a community of common 'shape, form, vocabulary, dialect, customs and manners' (Thackston 1998: 44).

The most prominent idiom used to describe *irgen* is kinship metaphor. The *SHM* says that the four sons of Duwa-Soqor became the ancestors of the Dörben *oboqtan* (surname,⁴⁵ clan, family or lineage), which is said to have become the Dörben *irgen* (Rachewiltz 1972: 14). From among the *oboqtans*, which are presented in the *SHM* as related to Chinggis Khan's ancestors, we find Jürkin and Uru'ut being referred as *irgen* (Rachewiltz 1972: 60, 120). Also, in paragraph 266 of the *SHM*, Chinggis Khan blames Qara Kitat's Jüyin⁴⁶ *irgen* for 'annihilating the grandfathers and fathers of the Mongols'⁴⁷ while apportioning them to Muqali and Bo'orchu. Indeed, as the *SHM* reports, the Jüyin *irgen* captured Ambaqai Khan and handed him over to Chinese Altan Khan (Emperor of the Jin Dynasty), who put Ambaqai to death (Rachewiltz 1972: 22). According to the *CC*, not only Ambaqai Khan but also Ökin Barqaq suffered at the hands of the Tatars, who also took him to Altan Khan to be nailed to a wooden donkey, an ordeal that Ambaqai Khan had suffered earlier (Thackston 1992: 126–31). Thus, Ambaqai Khan and Ökin Barqaq were the above-mentioned slain 'grandfathers and fathers of the Mongols'. In addition, the *SHM* reports Chinggis Khan's order to 'exterminate the Tangu't *irgen*'s mothers and fathers down to the offspring of their offspring' (Rachewiltz 1972: 161).⁴⁸

Thus, according to this idiom, all of these *irgens* appear as descent units. The manner in which Dörben *oboqtan* (who were said to descend from the four sons of Duwa-Soqor) became Dörben *irgen* leads us to assume Dörben *irgen* to be the result of the multiplication or growth of the Dörben *oboqtan*, and especially in the absence of additional information as to how the Dörben *oboqtan* became the Dörben *irgen*. Thus, scholars cannot help but take Dörben *irgen* to be a kinship-based unit, the tribe, with Dörben *oboqtan* as clan. However, as Sneath meticulously observed, Jürkin, another *irgen*, which apparently grew out of Jürkin *oboqtan* (*yürki oboqtan* in paragraph 49 of the *SHM*), was in fact an administrative or special-purpose category or division specifically created by Qabul Khan and commanded by his grandson Sorqatu-Jürki (*Qutuqtu Yürki* in paragraph 49 of the *SHM*). Obviously, Sorqatu or Qutuqtu was identified as Sorqatu of Jürkin, meaning he is the ruler or commander of the division, and eventually Sorqatu's house or lineage became known as the Jürkin *oboqtan*, that is, the ruling house of the Jürkin. Thus, Jürkin, once the name of a division, transformed into the name of a ruling house (see Sneath 2007: 61–2). Also, Tayichi'ut *oboqtan*⁴⁹ was another ruling lineage/house, since Chinggis Khan 'exterminated the men of Tayichi'ut lineage such as the Tayichi'ut A'uchu Ba'atur, Qotan Örcheng and Qudu'udar down to the offspring of their offspring like blowing

their hearth-ashes in wind' and brought their subjects under his control (Rachewiltz 1972: 67).⁵⁰ Here, the *SHM* makes it clear that Tayichi'ut consisted of the 'men of Tayichi'ut lineage' (*tayici'utai yasutu gu'un*) and their 'subjects' (*ulus irgen*). Likewise, Borjigin *oboqtan*, the most prominent and one of the longest-existing *oboqtans* of the *SHM* (paragraph 42), was never reported as Borjigin *irgen* in any of the Mongol sources. If *oboqtans* were clans evolving into tribes, we might expect this development first of all among the Borjigin. But it did not take place. The Borjigin was the royal house or lineage which ruled the Mongols. Thus, clearly, *oboqtan* was not a unit of tribal society, but a house or lineage, while the word *oboqtan* conveyed a notion of surname (see also Atwood 2010).

Furthermore, if the Mongols and the Tang'ut *irgen* were the populaces of Mongolia and the kingdom of Xi Xia respectively, as they appear in the sources, they certainly were not descent units but the entire populations of these two state formations. And the supposed 'grandfathers and fathers of the Mongols' or 'fathers and mothers of the Tanguts' were, in fact, the ancestors of the rulers of Mongolia and the ruling royal family of Xi Xia respectively. Yet this kinship metaphor depicts the rulers and their ancestors as the fathers and ancestors of the peoples that they ruled and their genealogy as that of their subject populations. Thus, what we read here is a use of kinship rhetoric 'designed to enhance political unity, not authentic descriptions of biological relationships' (Allsen 1994: 325).

Indeed, most of these *irgens* were communities of rulership projects of various sizes, ranging from minor lordships to major state formations. Probably, some significant cultural markers such as religious affiliation mattered, yet clearly their political affiliations mattered most in categorising them into various named *irgens*, because most of the named *irgens* correspond to then-existing polities and state formations, as is shown by the 'Altan khan of Kitat *irgen*' (Jin Dynasty, 1115–1234), 'Sultan of Sarta'ul *irgen*' (Khwarezm Empire, 1077–1231) or 'Caliphate Sultan of the Baghdad *irgen*' (Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad, 750–1258). Indeed, the expression 'sultans of all peoples' presupposes the coexistence of kingdoms and peoples. As was the case in Europe, the Mongols 'seem to have thought of the inhabitants of the kingdom as a single people of common descent', as is demonstrated by 'the grandfathers and fathers of the Mongols' and 'the Tangu't *irgen*'s mothers and fathers'. Thus, any named *irgen*, for instance Mongol *irgen*, does not appear different from the Mongol *ulus*; indeed, they appear to be two different conceptualisations of one and the same body of population.

According to our reconstruction, Mongol *ulus* is a community of the realm, a community of the political entity, while Mongol or any other *irgen* is a community of language, custom and descent, an 'ethno-cultural' entity in modern terms, though, in fact, it was also a community of the realm. Thus, Mongol *ulus* and Mongol *irgen* were two different, political and 'ethno-cultural', conceptualisations of one and the same body. This conceptual distinction, in all probability, must have underlain the consistency of the usage convention of the named *ulus*

and the named *irgen*. However, if the *ulus* and *irgen* were two different conceptualisations of one and the same body, why were the non-Mongols consistently designated *irgen* but not *ulus*? Furthermore, if *ulus* was a community of the state, then why was the Mongol *ulus* confined to the 1206 boundary? Why did it exclude the rest of the Empire? Does this mean that the Mongol *ulus* and the *yeke mongqol ulus* were different political entities?

THE MONGOL EMPIRE AND THE IMPERIAL FRAMEWORK

The phrases Mongol *ulus* and *yeke mongqol ulus* conveyed different concepts in medieval Mongolia. However, the existing renderings of *yeke mongqol ulus* as Great Mongol State, Great Mongol Empire, State of the Great Mongols (Allsen 1997: 5), The Great Mongol Nation or ‘The Nation of the Great Mongols’ (Rachewiltz 2004: 296) rather obfuscate this crucial conceptual distinction made by the medieval Mongols between *ulus* and *yeke ulus*, since most authors assume *yeke* to modify *mongqol*. In fact, *yeke* [great] of the *yeke mongqol ulus* [lit. Great Mongol State] does not modify *mongqol* [Mongol]; instead, it modifies *ulus* [state]. The proper reading, therefore, has to be *yeke ulus* or *mongqol yeke ulus* [Mongol(ian) Great State], which is syntactically impossible in Mongolian, but has to be understood as such. Consequently, it is not that Mongol is great, but that the state is, i.e. great state or empire. Hence, the accurate rendering of *yeke mongqol ulus* has to be ‘Mongol Great State’, that is, the Mongol Empire.⁵¹

Indeed, *yeke ulus* is used twice to refer to the Ming dynasty in Namun and Engke-tura’s 1388 memorandum alongside Mongol *ulus*, and once in Nekelei’s memorandum (Ligeti 1972b: 151, 158). Similar later appellations are *yeke ching ulus* and *yeke oros ulus*, standing for the Qing and the Russian Empires respectively. A more recent, syntactically similar example is *bügd nairamdah mongol ard uls* [People’s Republic of Mongolia], where *bügd nairamdah* modifies not Mongol but *ulus*, which is *bügd nairamdah uls*, that is, republic.

We know that *yeke mongqol ulus* was the appellation of the Mongol Empire until the very end of the Empire, as *yeke mongqol ulus*, *dai ön yeke mongqol ulus* [Great Yuan Mongol Empire] or *dai ön keme:kü yeke mongqol ulus* [Mongol Empire so-called Great Yuan] (大元 Ta Yüan) repeatedly appear in the Sino-Mongolian inscriptions of 1335, 1338, 1346 and 1362 (Cleaves 1949: 62; 1950: 71; 1951: 27, 53; 1952: 71).⁵² But we do not know when this appellation was adopted. Neither the Stele of Yesüingge nor the *SHM* contains this appellation. The earliest appearance of the appellation *yeke mongqol ulus* is found in the impression of Güyük Khan’s seal on his 1246 letter to Pope Innocent IV; however, a Turkic rendering of it, *ulugh manqul ulus*, was inscribed in a coin minted in Transcaucasia around 1244/5 (Allsen 2001: 18). Yet Zhao Hong, a Song envoy to the Mongols, learned in 1221 that the name of the Mongolian state was *da menggu guo* (大蒙古國) (Munkuev 1975: 53, 249). Also, Li Xinchuan, another Song author, claims that the Mongols named their state *da menggu guo* in 1211

(Munkuev 1975: 249). Thus, scholars believing *da menggu guo* to be the Chinese rendering of *yeke mongqol ulus*⁵³ date the adoption of the appellation as early as 1211, while the popular view dates it as 1206. In fact, by 1211, with the submission of the Uighurs and the Qarlucs and the subordination of the Tangud kingdom of Xi Xia, the Chinggisid state already extended over non-Mongol peoples and territories, thus becoming an empire in its own right. Consequently, in 1211 the Mongols might have adopted the *yeke mongqol ulus* appellation as a reflection of the reality and a project of much greater scale.

As Peter Jackson meticulously argues, the four Chinggisid *uluses* 'corresponded more to the realities of the early fourteenth century than to those of Chinggis Khan's own era' (Jackson 1999: 15). In fact, before the transformation that brought the four Chinggisid *uluses* into being, the Mongolian state had already been transformed into an empire.⁵⁴ The transformation itself, certainly, must have been an ongoing, untidy business and the sources certainly omitted a great deal of it. Still, the imperial framework that came out of this transformation can be gleaned from the sources.

By the time of Ögedei's reign, the imperial framework had already replaced the initial 1206 arrangement and the Mongol Empire comprised the 'core/main *ulus*' (*qol-un ulus*),⁵⁵ the imperial metropolis and other princely domains (*uluses*), of which the heads were clearly distinguished as 'princes in charge of *ulus*' in contrast to 'princes not in charge of *ulus*'.⁵⁶ Indeed, if the Mongol *ulus* was arranged into central (*tüb-ün*), right (*bara'un qar-un*) and left (*jewün qar-un*) *tümens* in 1206, the Mongol Empire, in similar fashion, comprised 'core/main *ulus*' and right (*bara'un qar-un*), and left (*jewün qar-un*) wings. As Juvaini reports, Chinggis Khan apportioned the western conquest territories to his elder sons and the eastern conquest territories to his brothers, leaving Mongolia proper undivided, which neatly fits with this tripartite arrangement of the empire (Juvaini 1997: 42–3). Thus, at Ögedei's enthronement⁵⁷ we see 'the princes of the right wing headed by Chagadai and Batu, and the princes of the left wing headed by Otchigin-noyan, Yegü, and Yesünge, and the princes of the core headed by Tolui' and others assembling (Rachewiltz 1972: 161).

The 'core/main *ulus*' was nothing other than Mongolia. The conquest and the subsequent partitioning of the conquest territories to the Chinggisid princes⁵⁸ made Mongolia the political and geographical centre of the Empire, until it was reduced to a province with the rise of Qubilai and the subsequent division of the Empire.⁵⁹ Because the '*qol-un ulus*' was the imperial metropolis, Ögedei took it over when he became the khan, displacing Tolui, the regent (Rachewiltz 1972: 161–2). Moreover, in the 1235–42 westward campaigns, because of the significance and the weight of the '*qol-un ulus*' Ögedei put his eldest son Güyük in charge of 'those from the core' (*qol-aca qaruqsad-i*) alongside Batu, who was in charge of all the campaigning princes, which probably led Güyük to quarrel with Batu over superiority (Rachewiltz 1972: 162, 165–6).

Yet, starting from 1260s, the Mongol Empire experienced another transformation and the Mongols, as a community of the realm and as a people, had to

situate themselves within the empire once more: this time, they ended up claiming the most privileged status within it. Thus, we read in Il-khan Gazan's (1295–1304) edict that the Mongol *ulus* is a privileged category⁶⁰ over the other communities of the Il-khanate, while in the Sino-Mongolian inscription of 1338 in memory of Jigüntei we find 'Mongol *irgen*' (*mongqol irgen*) as a rendering of the 'people of the state' (國人 *kuo-jên*), which stands for the Mongols who now have been depicted as having been born by the mandate of the heaven (Cleaves 1951: 27, 30, 36, 56). The expression 'people of the state' and its Mongolian rendering, the term Mongol *irgen*, unerringly reflect the transformation undergone by the Mongols. The Mongol *ulus*, the 'community of the state', was now reincarnated as the 'people of the state', which is something akin to what Mark Elliott calls the 'ethnic sovereign' (2001: 2–13). Yet, they were conceptually separated from the state, and the Mongol *irgen* became just one, albeit a privileged one, of the peoples of the Empire. Nevertheless, the Mongols, as a 'community of the state' or as the 'people of the state', or out of tradition, continued to designate themselves as Mongol *ulus*. Thus, we read Mongol *ulus* in the edicts of Il-khan Gazan and the Ming Emperor Hongwu, as well as in Namun and Engke-tura's 1388 memorandum exclusively referring to the Mongols. However, within the Empire, where many non-Mongol analogous communities existed alongside the Mongols, the Mongol community must have crystallized; and eventually the Mongol *ulus*, once a 'community of the state', transformed into a 'community of culture and custom', the Mongol *irgen*. Thus, we read Mongol *irgen* in a 1324 edict of Yesüntemür and in the 1338 Sino-Mongolian inscription to Jigüntei, and 'many Mongol *irgen*' (*olon mongqol irgen*) at the colophon of the *Twelve Deeds of Buddha*, referring to the post-1206 Mongols.

The imperial transformation applies to the conquered peoples as well. The conquered peoples were to be incorporated within the Empire and the Mongols appropriated them as *irgen*. In the *SHM*, *irgen* is allotted as a share (*qubi irgen*) and owned as a property (*emcü irgen*) and is under someone's authority (*qariy-atan irgen*) (Rachewiltz 1972: 60, 115, 141). The *SHM* refers to the population of the Chinggisid state as the 'entire *ulus*' (*gür ulus*) (Rachewiltz 1972: 115, 128, 150), 'entire *irgen*' (*gür irgen*) (Rachewiltz 1972: 116, 118) and '*ulus irgen*' (Rachewiltz 1972: 25, 67, 171–3). Also, the fourteenth-century sources say 'Khans amass wealth and *irgen*',⁶¹ 'heaven produces all the *irgen* and then bestows a khan to rule [them]'⁶² or 'if [one] aims to govern *irgen* nothing is better than to pursue law'.⁶³ Thus, besides its cultural and kinship descriptions, *irgen* was a people distinct from, and subordinate to, rulers or sovereigns, that is, subjects governed by law. Certainly, the submitted and conquered peoples of the Empire were now the subjects and subordinates of the Mongolian state. They no longer constituted states in themselves, for their states were destroyed. Thus, the Mongols reduced them to *irgen*. Moreover, the Mongol imperial doctrine reduced all the known polities/peoples into *irgen*. Since the Mongols were determined 'to bring all nations (or whole world) into subjection', it obviously was unacceptable for them to designate their immediate or eventual subjects as states,

that is, *ulus* (Dawson 1980: 25, 38). Perhaps, thus, we should read ‘*il bulga irgen*’ in Güyük Khan’s seal in contrast to *yeke mongqol ulus* (Ligeti 1972a: 20). This probably was one of the reasons for the consistent designation of non-Mongol polities as *irgen*, in addition to the conceptual distinction of *ulus* and *irgen* that generated the usage consistency.

All in all, the Mongol Empire consisted of the Mongol *ulus*, which was transformed from the Mongolian state to ‘the core *ulus*’ to the ‘people of the state’, and other *irgens*. Thus, medieval Mongols distinguished the Mongol *ulus* from the Mongol Empire, just as medieval Germans distinguished Germany proper from the Holy Roman Empire (Reynolds 1997: 292–7).

This, certainly, is the perspective of the imperial Mongols upon their imperial world. Therefore, what we read in the sources, including the *SHM*, is the imperial reconstruction or *ex post facto* imposition of the Mongol imperial framework on to its historical past. As has already been mentioned earlier, all the sources belong to the post 1206 period, and indeed to the Mongol imperial period, since the earliest source dates to 1225/6. Therefore the usage of *irgen*, *ulus* and *yeke ulus* and the whole conceptual framework are those of the imperial Mongols. Indeed, the author of the *SHM*, looking through the imperial framework and speaking through the then current language, unwittingly made a systematic revision of the past. Thus, all the non-Mongol polities were reduced to *irgen* because they were *irgens*/peoples of the Empire at the time of his writing. Likewise, he also reduced all the pre-1206 polities of Mongolia, including the pre-1206 Mongols,⁶⁴ to *irgen* as well, because they were already an integral part of the Mongol *ulus*. The Mongol *ulus*, which obviously was the name of the pre-1206 Mongols, expanded with the expansion of the Chinggisid state to embrace the ‘felt-tent *ulus*’ and remained as the name of the community of the state.⁶⁵

However, the community of the state did not expand like the Chinggisid state; it stopped around 1206 while the Chinggisid state was still ever-expanding. Why did the Mongol *ulus* stop expanding? Why did it do so up until 1206, but not beyond? Does this mean that the boundary of the Mongol *ulus*, as a community of the realm, was envisaged? Otherwise, did the pre-1206 Mongols, or rather the ‘felt-tent *ulus*’ of the Mongolian plateau, see themselves with their own territories as forming a state, and consequently a community of the realm, before the establishment of the Chinggisid state? If so, where did this idea come from? Who could possibly command such a ‘seeing like a state’ vision?

THE MONGOL *ULUS*: AN EMBODIMENT OF THE PRE-EXISTING IDEA OF REALM

According to the *SHM*, in 1201, on the bank of Ergüne River, the assembly of the leading lords of almost all of the major polities of the Mongolian plateau enthroned Jamuqa as the Universal Khan (*gür-qan*). Buirug Khan of the Naiman, Quduqa-beki of the Oyirad, Jali-buqa of the Tatar, Qutu, the son of Togto’a-beki

of the Merkid, and Tarqutai-Qiriltuq of the Taichiud were among many others who enthroned the Universal Khan.⁶⁶ The Universal Khan declared war on Ong Khan and Temüjin and immediately set out to bring them under his rule. However, his campaign was ill fated. Not only did the Universal Khan lose the battle, but also his forces were scattered, which effectively ended his reign. However ill fated the Universal Khan's reign was, this undertaking reveals one very important political idea universally shared by the aristocracies of the 'felt-tent *ulus*'. There was to be a single universal ruler all over the 'felt-tent *ulus*', which means all of the 'felt-tent *ulus*' were to form a single realm. Certainly, both Ong Khan and Temüjin shared this idea: however, Jamuqa was not the universal khan for them.

In fact, the universal khan or the legitimate khan of the realm seems to have been Ong Khan, while Jamuqa appears to have been enthroned to displace him. Furthermore, it is quite possible that Jamuqa was enthroned as the Universal Khan, not in 1201, but much earlier, probably some time after Ong Khan's flight to Qara-Kitai, which occurred several years prior to his return to Mongolia after 1196 (see Rachnevsky 1991: 50–52). Therefore, 1201 might be the year of the Universal Khan's demise rather than his enthronement.

Certainly, historians have noticed the centrality of the Kereyid kingdom in pre-Chinggisid Mongolia (see Rachnevsky 1991; Atwood 2004: 295–6). Paul Rachnevsky even maintained that Temüjin mounted the Kereyid throne by destroying the 'Kerait Empire' (1991: 78–83). Indeed, a careful examination of the sources not only clearly shows that the idea of a single realm of the 'felt-tent *ulus*' was well established in pre-Chinggisid Mongolia, but also allows us to argue that pre-Chinggisid Mongolia formed a single, yet de-centralised and fragmented realm under the Kereyid throne.

No contemporary ruler of the 'felt-tent *ulus*', other than the ill-fated Gür Khan, surpassed Ong Khan (Wang Khan) by title. Although his deposed predecessor held the title of Gür Khan; his heir apparent was called 'Sangun, which means prince in the Cathaian language' (Thackston 1998: 175). The closest title that Tayang Khan of the Naiman held was Tai Wang or 'khan's son' or prince (Thackston 1998: 69).⁶⁷ The title of Wang or King, or 'ruler of kingdom or country' and *ja'ut quri* [centurion] that the Kereyid ruler and Temüjin received respectively from the Jin dynasty, indicates their relative status within the realm (Rachewiltz 1972: 57; 2006: 57–8; Thackston 1998: 165). Furthermore, while Tayang Khan's blame of Temüjin for usurping Ong Khan's throne 'to become the khan' clearly presumes Ong Khan to be the overarching ruler, his haughty questioning of 'How can there be two khans on Earth?'⁶⁸ not only presupposes a single, overarching ruler but also discloses Tayang Khan's own aspiration for the throne of Ong Khan.⁶⁹ This clearly shows that Ong Khan was not just a ruler who happened to have a very senior title but was the commonly recognised overarching ruler of the realm, albeit a nominal one.

Moreover, while the *SHM* narrows the political field down to Jamuqa as the principal pretender, and Teb-Tenggeri and Qasar as minor troubles to Temüjin's

bid for the rule of the *ulus*, the *CC* depicts Jamuqa, Qasar, Sacha Beki and Alag-Udur of Merkid as contenders for the rule of the *ulus*, along with Temüjin (Thackston 1998: 181).⁷⁰ However, none of the sources mention Ong Khan as contending for the rule of the *ulus*. This telling evidence suggests that Ong Khan was the *de jure* sovereign of 'Mongolia', for whose throne these junior lords vied. Also, the *CC* does not include Senggüm, the crown prince,⁷¹ as contender in the above list, though it reports Senggüm as declaring to Temüjin that 'We will do battle, and whichever of us emerges will be khan' (Thackston 1998: 190).⁷² Certainly, Senggüm as crown prince was not a contender for the throne, but the legitimate heir to it. If Ong Khan and Senggüm were not the legitimate ruler and his heir apparent, they would have led the list of the aspirants.

While Tayang Khan was contending for Ong Khan's throne, both Jamuqa and Temüjin, the two ultimate challengers of the supremacy of Ong Khan, not only started on their road to power as subordinates⁷³ to the Kereyid Khan but also were brought up in his court (Rachewiltz 1972: 90; 2004: 101).⁷⁴ To be sure, it was Ong Khan who authorized Temüjin as the ruler of the 'original' Mongols over and against Jamuqa (Rachewiltz 1972: 53; 2004: 52). Enraged, Jamuqa devastated Temüjin, forcing him to seek protection within the Jin frontier for about a decade (Rachnevsky 1991: 49–50). Meantime, Inanch Khan of Naiman, in the name of helping Erke-Qara, unseated Ong Khan from the throne, which led to Naiman's prominence. Exploiting the turmoil, Jamuqa proceeded to claim supremacy over the felt-tent *ulus*, thus overshadowing the inexperienced Tayang Khan. However, a recovered Temüjin engineered Ong Khan's return to Mongolia in order to depose Jamuqa and re-install Ong Khan as the legitimate ruler (Rachnevsky 1991: 50–52). Aware of this scheme, the Gür Khan gave decisive battle against Ong Khan and Temüjin in 1201. The battle abruptly ended Gür Khan's reign, reducing him to a captive to Ong Khan and reinstating Ong Khan as the legitimate ruler. Thus, the Kereyid throne was the ultimate prize that all these men vied for.

Even Ong Khan's remains were capitalised upon to legitimate Tayang Khan's claim for the rulership (Rachewiltz 1972: 97–8; Thackston 1998: 192). Tayang Khan, on the one hand charging Temüjin with the death of Ong Khan and the usurpation of his throne, and on the other, he had Ong Khan's head silver-plated and enshrined 'it over his throne as a mark of respect'. He tried to depict Temüjin as a bloody usurper, while portraying himself as the lawful and respectful avenger of Ong Khan, and thus more legitimate than Temüjin. Furthermore, Tayang might have hoped that the possession and enshrining of the remains of the deceased ruler would give him more legitimacy as his successor.

In addition, the Chinggisid state was directly built upon the Kereyid state, and many of its institutions were modelled on it. It was only after his seizure of the Kereyid throne that Temüjin started to build permanent state institutions. As the *SHM* makes clear, the takeover of the Kereyid state was not a matter of subjugation of another polity but, as Temüjin himself reportedly admitted, of 'achieving the high throne by deposing the Kereyid people by being blessed by the eternal

heaven'⁷⁵ (Rachewiltz 1972: 96). Thus, for Temüjin, it entailed overthrowing the ruling monarch and succeeding in his place, thus 'achieving the high throne'. As might have been expected, Temüjin, as succeeding monarch, re-organised or confirmed his subjects in their decimal organisation of *minqad* [thousand], *ja'ud* [hundred] and *harban* [ten], and created institutions such as the office of six *cherbi* [stewards] and *kesikten* [guards] consisting of 80 *kebte'ül* [night guards] and 70 *turqa'ut* [day guards], and a vanguard force of 1000 *ba'atut* [heroes], and so on (Rachewiltz 1972: 99–100; see also Atwood 2004: 297). Among these institutions, *turqa'ut* and *ba'atut* were clearly Kereyid institutions (Rachewiltz 1972: 81–2). In fact, Ong Khan had a much larger force of *turqa'ut* (1000 *turqa'ud*) and 'presumably a corresponding number of sentries, or night guards' (Atwood 2004: 297). Probably, his force of *ba'atut* was larger too (Rachewiltz 1972: 81–82). In addition, since Ong Khan had forces of *minqan turqa'ud* and *tümen-tübege* [ten thousand *tübege*], his forces probably had decimal organisations too. Thus, there is solid evidence that the Chinggisid state was built upon the Kereyid state, while many of its institutions were directly modelled after it. As such, the Chinggisid state was a successor to the Kereyid state.

All in all, the sources clearly show that the idea that the people of Mongolian plateau were to constitute a single realm under a sole rule was widely held by the aristocracies of the Mongolic people before the establishment of the Chinggisid state. Furthermore, the sources suggest that, while the Kereyid throne embodied the idea of the single overarching ruler, the Kereyid hegemony epitomised the idea of a single realm, albeit an extremely de-centralised and fragmented one. The sources also make it clear that the Chinggisid state succeeded the Kereyid state by building on it, replacing it with a highly centralised unified state, yet still within the Kereyid sphere of hegemony. Thus, the boundary of the Mongol *ulus* was envisaged long before 1206 when it actually came into existence. Hence, the Mongol *ulus*, as a community of the realm, did not expand to embrace the conquered peoples and territories of the Mongol Empire, and so the *SHM* closed the boundary of the Mongol community of the state by the 'Forest People.' The idea that the people of the Mongolian plateau were to form a single realm came from pre-Chinggisid Mongolia's political order, and the Kereyid state and its hegemony over the 'felt-tent *ulus*' substantiated the idea. All in all, we can firmly say that the idea that the people of the Mongolian plateau were to constitute a single realm was already well established in Mongolia before 1206, and the Chinggisid state was a realisation and an embodiment of this idea.

Then, if indeed the pre-1206 peoples of Mongolia saw Mongolia as forming a single realm, who or what were the intra-Mongol *irgens*? This is an important question, but not one that can properly be addressed within the scope of this paper. There is no doubt that dubbing them *irgen* along with the other non-Mongol polities/peoples is retrospective imperial appropriation. As they had their own rulers, defined territories and internal subdivisions (Thackston 1998: 37, 61), in all probability they were kingdoms and principalities or, perhaps, lordships of various sizes.⁷⁶ However, as together they were presumed to form the

Mongol *ulus* of 1206 well before it actually happened, they must have been parts of the realm in the past. This means that they must have been provinces of one generation that became lordships of later generation (Reynolds 1997: 221). During the rise of Chinggis Khan, they were clearly presenting lordships under the hegemony of the Kereyid throne, yet with varying degrees of autonomy. Indeed, in a situation where most of the administrative offices were hereditary, office holders tended to become independent rulers in themselves unless kings or central governments took action to prevent it. This must have been especially true when central authority was very weak and ‘the entire *ulus* was in turmoil’, as it was appropriately described in the *SHM* (Rachewiltz 1972: 150).

To be sure, this was the case of the Dayan Khanid Mongolia or Northern Yuan around the 1600s, where *tümens* became *uluses* in their own right (Munkh-Erdene 2010). The Chinggisid princes were still ruling the Mongols and the memory of the *Yeke Mongqol Ulus* was still alive and well. If this was the case of the Dayan Khanid Mongolia, how different could the situation have been in pre-Chinggisid Mongolia? Indeed, the Chinggisid sources description of Ong Khan of Kereyid may well have been another example of the last legitimate ruler of a waning power reduced by history, as was the case with the last Great Khan of Mongolia who was disparaged as the ‘Khan of Chakhar’ (Munkh-Erdene 2010).

Indeed, if Qorci did really foretell to Temüjin that he would become the ‘lord of the *ulus*’, and Temüjin, in response, did really promise that he would make Qorci a ‘*noyan* of *tümen*’, then we cannot but accept that there was an *ulus* in their mind and that that *ulus* was divided into *tümens*. At any rate, Temüjin was installed as Chinggis Khan over the ‘felt-tent *ulus*’ in 1206 after his capture of Kereyid throne; and he did make Qorci a ‘*noyan* of *tümen*’, citing that he had given his word to Qorci if his prophecy was fulfilled (Rachewiltz 1972: 50–51, 118). All in all, the Kereyid throne, however weak it was, still commanded the ‘seeing like a state’ vision.

CONCLUSION

The medieval Mongols conceptualised themselves as *ulus* and *irgen*. As an *ulus*, the Mongols were a community of the realm, the state, and as an *irgen* they were assumed to be a community of tradition, custom, law and descent, ‘the people’. Thus, the Mongols perceived *ulus* and *irgen* as coexistent and the Mongol *ulus* and the Mongol *irgen* were, indeed, parallel conceptualisations of the same body. Both conceptualisations are akin to what Reynolds found in medieval Europe with regard to kingdoms and communities (Reynolds 1997: 250–331).

Because ‘the idea of a people as a community of tradition, custom, law and descent was already well entrenched’, and because ‘peoples were presumed to coincide with political units’, describing both *ulus* and *irgen* by kinship metaphors seem to have been the usual practice. In this kinship idiom, khans appear as fathers of their peoples, while their ancestors appear as the ancestors of

their peoples, just as ‘Kings, as Thomas Aquinas said, are sometimes called the fathers of their peoples’ (Reynolds 1997: 331).

Furthermore, the idea that the peoples of the Mongolian plateau were to form a single realm was already well established in pre-1206 Mongolia. And the Mongol *ulus* of 1206 was an embodiment of this idea. Because of this, *Mongol ulus* and *Yeke Mongol Ulus*, that is, Mongolia proper and the Mongol Empire, were clearly two distinct concepts and realities, just as Germany and the Holy Roman Empire were two distinct realities for Germans (Reynolds 1997: 292–7).

Moreover, because the Mongol *ulus* of 1206 was not only an embodiment of the well-established idea of the single realm of ‘the felt-tent *ulus*’, the pre-1206 polities of Mongolia must have formed part of that realm in the past and as such they must have been the offshoots of it. In all probability, the pre-Chinggisid polities of Mongolia were provinces which turned into lordships. This explains both the centrality of the Kereyid throne within the ‘felt-tent *ulus*’ and the existence of the very idea of a single realm of the ‘felt-tent *ulus*’.

Thus, ideationally, the Chinggisid state arose from a well-established idea of a single realm congruent with and corresponding to 1206 Mongolia. In reality, it was built upon the Kereyid state and her hegemony over the realm of ‘felt-tent *ulus*’, a realm of de-centralised and fragmented political order. In this sense, the origin of the Chinggisid state can be said to lie in an aristocratic order. However, again ideationally, this aristocratic order clearly had a single ruler, while, in reality, the Kereyid throne seems to have been unable to effectively embody and exercise this power.

Of course, these must have been the legacies of previous states; after all, since the Xiongnu there had been series of states over the same area.⁷⁷ Indeed, the Song envoy Zhao Hung’s statement that the Tatars call their state *Da Meng-gu guo* (大蒙古國 да мэн-гу го, lit. Great Mongol State)⁷⁸ after a long-collapsed empire, and that they called themselves Tatars⁷⁹ (which can be corroborated by Rashid al-Din, who says Tatar was the pre-Mongol common name of the Mongols⁸⁰), alludes to the presence of the legacies of earlier state formations among the Mongols.⁸¹ Certainly, the pre-Chinggisid period was full of dynamic struggle for supremacy on the Mongolian plateau, and successive hegemonies such as the Meng-ku Empire and the Kereyid state all seem to have laid foundations for the rise of the Chinggisid state.⁸²

Unfortunately, while a worm’s-eye view of sources on the period necessarily limits the available optic, the Chinggisid bias greatly distorts what is already very limited. Indeed, the chronicles’ narrow genealogical framing and primary objective of glorifying the ruling lineage not only necessarily omits this legacy, but also by its kinship rhetoric misleads our proper understanding of the socio-political organisation of the Mongols. In addition, both the evolutionary tribal vision of nomadic Inner Asia and the conceptualisation of the state as centralised and bureaucratised in the manner of modern nation-states have effectively precluded scholars from the possibility of looking at the pre-Chinggisid Mongolia as a de-centralised and fragmented realm.

NOTES

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¹ We were able to locate *ulus* on more than 230 occasions and *irgen* on more than 360 in a variety of forms and combinations in the Mongolian sources alone.

² For etymology of the *ulus* see Clauson (1972: 152).

³ In addition to the *SHM*, these consist of Uighur-Mongolian (16 inscriptions, numerous xylographs, manuscripts and other letters, often fragmentary) and hP'agspa script (39 decrees and letters, 2 inscriptions, 5 *paiza* [tablet of authority], a seal impression and few miscellaneous excerpts) documents.

⁴ See Serruys (1954) for the date of the documents in *Hua-i i-yu*.

⁵ More than 230 mentions of *ulus* in a variety of forms and combinations are found in the Mongolian sources alone.

⁶ *Bodhicaryāvatara* (*Sugavadi ulus*) (Tumurtogoo 2006: 52); *Twelve Deeds of Buddha* (*Magada ulus*) (Tumurtogoo 2006: 126, 128); *Praise of Tara* (*Galab ulus and Sukavadi ulus*) (Tumurtogoo 2006: 205, 208); *Subhasitaratnanidhi* (*Baqiragal ulus, Čuta ulus, Kan si ulus, and Gödir-e ulus*) (Bosson 1969: 134, 145, 156, 169; Tumurtogoo 2006: 228, 234, 240, 247).

⁷ Ligeti 1972a: 17.

⁸ Ligeti 1972a: 20.

⁹ Cleaves 1950: 71.

¹⁰ Cleaves 1951: 53.

¹¹ Tumurtogoo 2006: 26.

¹² Cleaves 1949: 62.

¹³ Rachewiltz 1972: 164.

¹⁴ Ligeti 1972b: 147.

¹⁵ Rachewiltz 1972: 114.

¹⁶ Thackston 1999: 732.

¹⁷ Tumurtogoo 2006: 171.

¹⁸ Ligeti 1972b: 151.

¹⁹ Rachewiltz 1972: 114.

²⁰ More than 360 mentioning of *irgen* found in variety of forms and combinations in the Mongolian sources alone.

²¹ Ligeti 1972a: 17.

²² Ligeti 1972a: 248, 252.

²³ Janchiv 2002: 84.

²⁴ Tumurtogoo 2006: 188.

²⁵ Cleaves 1951: 54.

²⁶ Poppe 1967: 68.

²⁷ The term *irgen* appears few times in *CC* as *Hoyun irgän* (Thackston, 1998: 31).

²⁸ Expressions like *ulus-un qan*, *ulus-un ejen* and *ulus-un ejen qahan* (Rachewiltz 1972: 22, 50, 173; Ligeti 1972b: 92, 96, 152; Tumurtogoo 2006: 58, 240, 247, 252) are also found a number of times.

²⁹ In the *SHM*, we find six references to *kitat irgen-ü altan qan* [Altan khan of the Kitat *irgen*], three references to a *tang'ud irgen-ü burqan* [Burqan of the Tangut *irgen*]; and *keriyit irgen-ü ong-qan* [Ong Khan of the Kereyid *irgen*], *merkit irgen-ü toqto'a-beki* [Toqto'a beki of the Merkit *irgen*], *sarta'ul irgen-ü soltan* [Sultan of the Sarta'ul *irgen*]

and *baqtat irgen-u qalibai-soltan* [Caliphate Sultan of the Baghdad *irgen*]) once each. Furthermore, Il-khan Öljeitü, in his letter to Philippe the Fair, addresses rulers of the Franks as *Virangud irgen-ü soltad*, that is, Sultans of the Frank *irgen*, while he terms the Mongol Empire *ulus* (Ligeti 1972a: 252–4). Il-khan Gazan also uses the expression *irgen irgen-ü soltad*, that is, sultans of different *irgens* (Ligeti 1972a: 250).

³⁰ It appears in the CC as *Dürlükün* Mongols. *Dürlükün* is in most probability a corruption of Mongolian *törüleki-yin*, meaning ‘original’ (Thackston 1998: 79–82). The SHM uses the word *törülki* and *törülkitü* to mean ‘originally’ and ‘origin’, respectively (Rachewiltz 1972: 112–13).

³¹ Four *tümens*, the right wing (*bara’un qar-un tümen*) around Altai region under Bo’orchu, the left wing (*jewün qar-un tümen*) around Qara’un Jidün under Muqali, and Central (*tüb-ün tümen*) under Naya and a *tümen* around the region of Erdiṣ qudus under Qorchī, are listed in the SHM (Rachewiltz 1972: 116–27).

³² ‘*hoi-yin irgen-ece anggida mongqol ulus-un minqad-un noyad-i chinggis-qahan-nu nereyidüksen yeren tabun minqad-un noyat bolba.*’

³³ In fact, in Max Weber’s definition, ‘*State is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory*’ [italics added] (Weber 1991: 78).

³⁴ Boris Vladimirtsov also thought that *ulus* was a ‘people-state’ (*народ-государство*), people who form state-domain (*государство-владение*), and the state (*государство*) (1934: 97).

³⁵ ‘*qahan aqa minu jö[b] ese bolu’asu olon mongqol ulus öncirekün kitat irgen kibqangqun*’ (Rachewiltz 1972: 164).

³⁶ ‘*Hung-u qori[n] duwar hon qorin nike[n]tü’er hon qoyar-ta üyelen çerik yabu’ulju Mongqol qajar-a gürjü olon Mongqol ulus-i abu’at qari’ulju ire’üljü amurli’ulbai.*’

³⁷ ‘*’ejen Ca’adai qahan-na daqan sa[l]qadaqsan Mongqol ulus.*’

³⁸ ‘*yisün keleten irgen*’ (Rachewiltz 1972: 141).

³⁹ ‘*yayiqamsıy burqan-u arban qoyar jokiangyui kemegdekü üiles-i inu olan mongqol irgen uqaqu turulqu boltuqai kemen ... töbedcün yool biçig-i ...mongqolcılan orçiyulju.*’

⁴⁰ ‘*qamur Mongyoljin keleten.*’

⁴¹ ‘*ali be irgen öber-ün nom biçig-iyer jalbiran*’ ... ‘*kiristan irgen*’ (Ligeti 1972a: 248).

⁴² ‘*tang’ut irgen nödüksen balagasutan nünji nuntuqtan nödüksen balaqasu-ban ü’ürcü ülü otqun tede nünji nuntug-ıyan gējü ülü otqun tede.*’

⁴³ ‘*kıyat irgen-ü sıld*’ (Rachewiltz 1972: 25).

⁴⁴ ‘*kitat irgen-ü gajar usun-u ejer*’ (Rachewiltz 1972: 164).

⁴⁵ See Atwood (2010) for the treatment of middle Mongolian *oboq* as surname.

⁴⁶ For Jüyin, see Buell (1977: 23–62).

⁴⁷ ‘*mongqol-un ebüges eciges-i baraqsan*’ (Rachewiltz 1972: 160).

⁴⁸ ‘*tang’ut irgen-ü eke ecige-üi uruq-un uruq-a qürtele muquli musquli ügei bolqan.*’

⁴⁹ ‘*caraqai-lingqu-yin ko’un senggum-bilge ambaqai-tan tayici’ut oboqtan bolu’ba*’ (Rachewiltz 1972: 21).

⁵⁰ ‘*tayici’utai yasutu gu’un-i a’ucu-ba’atur qoton-örceng qudu’udar-tan tayici’ud-i uruq-un uruq-a gürtele hünüsü-’er keyisgen kiduba ulus irgen-i anu gödölgejü irejü cinggis-qahan quba-qaya übüljeba.*’

⁵¹ If there was no conceptual distinction between the Mongol Empire and the Mongol *ulus*, why would Mongols have needed to depict Mongol *ulus* as being bounded by 1206 boundary excluding conquered peoples and territories? Thus, was not only there a distinction between *ulus* and *yeke ulus*, but also this conceptual distinction probably prevented

the author of the *SHM* from retrospectively applying the *yeke mongqol ulus* to 1206. Also, the same conceptual distinction must have been one of the reasons for the adoption of the appellation *yeke mongqol ulus* as the Mongolian state expanded over non-Mongol peoples and territories.

⁵² See also Kim (2009) for the name of the Mongol Empire.

⁵³ Indeed, Qubilai Khan in his 1268 letter to the Japanese emperor refers to himself as the Emperor of *da menggu guo* (大蒙古國) (*Dschingis Khan ...* 2005: 333).

⁵⁴ Jackson exactly outlines this transformation. The Mongol *ulus* prior to 1260s was divided into a number of appanages (*uluses*) around the '*ulus* of the center'. The later four *uluses* or khanates emerged after Möngke's reign (Jackson 1999: 12–37).

⁵⁵ It must be noted that it is '*qol-un ulus*', that is, 'core or main *ulus*' but not '*tüb-tün*' (like the central *tümen* alongside the right and the left wings) or '*ulus* of the center'. Thus, 'core or main' (*qol-un*) signifies the importance and the weight of this *ulus*. In short, this *ulus* is not just in the centre, but also, more importantly, it is the main or the core *ulus* (Rachewiltz 1972: 127).

⁵⁶ '*ulus medekün kö'üt ... ulus ba ülü medekün kö'üt*' (Rachewiltz 1972: 162).

⁵⁷ The transformation of the Mongol rulers' titles from Khan (*qan*) to Grand khan or Emperor (*qa'an*) also reflects this transformation (Krader 1955: 35).

⁵⁸ This policy was formulated as 'to govern the aliens by expanding the territory' (*nuntuq a'utkin qari daru'ulun*) (Rachewiltz 1972: 152).

⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the physical separation of the state from the Mongols and Mongol territory seems to have led to a conceptual separation of the state from its embeddedness with the Mongols and the Mongol territory as well. The word *törü*, which at the time of composition of the *SHM* conveyed an idea of law, rule and principle, seems to have been used to refer to the state as an embodiment of the idea of rule and ruling principle. Thus we read in a 1362 inscription a phrase 'rendering great service to the great state/government' (*yeke törü-yin emüne kücü öggün*) (Cleaves 1949: 64).

⁶⁰ See also Allsen (1983; 2001), Ch'en Yüan (1966), Endicott-West (1994) and Funada (2010) for Mongol categorisation of the Empire's population into hierarchical categories.

⁶¹ '*ed-i irgen-i qad kü quriyayu*' (Bosson 1969: 48, 166).

⁶² '*tenggiri qamuq irgen-i töre'üljü qala'ar qahan gü'ün-ni jayāju ejenle'ü'üyü*' (Mostaert 1977: 4).

⁶³ '*irgen-i jasasu kemebesu törü:er yabuquya-aca sayin ügei*' (Ligeti 1972a: 94).

⁶⁴ 'There are a few Mongols yonder in the east. These people (*irgen*) with their quivers terrified the great old Ong Qan of former days ... Those Mongol *irgen* have bad odor and grimy clothing' (Rachewiltz 1972: 98). This is the only paragraph where the *SHM* refers to Mongols as *irgen* and it applies to the pre-1206 Mongols and emphasises how insignificant the Mongols were in terms of number.

⁶⁵ Because of this expansion of the designation, its original bearers distinguished themselves from the new 'converts' as the 'original' or 'dürlükün' Mongols, while their pre-1206 past was relegated to *irgen*-hood.

⁶⁶ Qadagin (led by Baqu-corogi), Salji'ut (led by Cigridai-ba'atur), Dörben (led by Qaji'un beki), Alci-tatar (led by Jalin-buqa), Ikeres, (led by Tüge-maqa), Onggired (led by Dergek emel alqui-tan), Qorolas (led by Coyoq-caqa'an), Naiman (led by Gücü'üt and Buyiruc-qan) Merkid (Qutu the son of Toqto'a-beki), Oyirad (led by Quduqa-beki), and Tayici'ut (led by Tarqutai-Kiriltuq, Qodun-örceng, and A'ucu-ba'atur) (Rachewiltz 1972: 61).

⁶⁷ After Inancha-khan drove out Ong Khan to Qara-Kitai, the Naiman kingdom seems to

have achieved a considerable prominence, and Tayang Khan's title is an obvious reflection of that prominence.

⁶⁸ The CC has it as 'On the earth how can there be two monarchs in one Kingdom?' (Thackston 1998: 201).

⁶⁹ 'ötögü yeke erten-ü ong-qan-ni qor-iyar-ıyan ayu 'ulju ükü 'ülba edö'e mün qan bolsu ke'en aqun-u ... qajar de'ere qoyar qat ker bolqu' (Rachewiltz 1972: 98).

⁷⁰ See also Rachewiltz (1972: 50, 139–40) for Jamuqa and Qasar respectively. Alag Udur does not appear in the *SHM* at all.

⁷¹ The CC reports that 'Ong Khan had two sons. The elder was Sangun, which means prince in the Cathaian language ...' (Thackston 1998: 175).

⁷² The passage is clearly aimed at legitimating Temüjin's accession to the Kereyid throne as the winner of the battle.

⁷³ For Jamuqa, Ong Khan was *qan aqa* [lit. khan uncle] while for Temüjin he was *qan ecige* [lit. khan father] while they were *de'ü* [lit. younger brother] and *kö'ün* [lit. son] to Ong Khan respectively (see, for example, Rachewiltz 1972: 42–3, 46).

⁷⁴ In fact, the 'original' Mongols, and, possibly, Merkids and Tatars seem to have been subject to the Kereyid kingdom (see Thackston 1998: 50–53 and also Rachnevsky 1991: 4).

⁷⁵ 'möngke tenggeri-de ihe'ekdejü kereyit irge doraida 'ulju ündür-ün oron-tur gürba-je' (Rachewiltz 1972: 96).

⁷⁶ See Bisson (2009) for lordship.

⁷⁷ On the succession and shared traditions of these states, see Barfield (1989); Cosmo (1999); Golden (1982; 1991).

⁷⁸ Rachnevsky calls it 'Meng-ku Empire' (1991: 1–15).

⁷⁹ Munkuev 1975: 53, 249.

⁸⁰ Thackston 1998: 44–52.

⁸¹ Sneath's recent questioning of the vision of 'wandering peoples' more accurately captures the Inner Asian political and societal development (2007: 159–67). Also, Paul Rachnevsky believed that 'Mastery of the steppe changed, but some of the conquered races remained in their old homelands, forming the substratum in the confederations of the conquerors and adopting the name of the victorious races; ethnic and linguistic dividing lines became increasingly blurred' (1991: 1).

⁸² Leading to the Chinggisid state, it is also possible that the Kereyid state displaced the Meng-ku Empire, while both Naiman and Gür Khan unsuccessfully tried to replace the Kereyid state.

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