

- TS2 Tsoloo J., *Arwan gurwan xülgiin duun*. Ulaanbaatar, 1987.
 TU Tsültem N., *Mongol zurag*. Ulaanbaatar, 1986.
 YA Yadamsüren Ü., *BNMAU-yn ardyn xuwtsas*. Ulaanbaatar, 1967.

Abbreviations

St. Eth.	Studia Ethnographica
St. Hist.	Studia Historica
St. Mong.	Studia Mongolica
St. Mus.	Studia Museologica

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SÜLDE — THE BASIC IDEA OF THE CHINGGIS-KHAN CULT

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The article deals with the sacral attribute which in the European tradition is called "charisma". Charisma is a natural gift (divine grace — *gratia infusa*) specific to an object or person. Charisma is the attribute of magician, prophets, military leaders, and rulers. To my mind, an understanding of the Mongol ideas of charisma is fundamental both to the concrete historical study of Mongolia and a typology of Mongolian history, the charismatic type of the "supremacy — submission" relationship being one of the two types distinguished by Max Weber as specific to archaic and traditional cultures.¹ It is absurd to search in reality for "pure" types of the "supremacy — submission", but it is possible to mark out their distinguishing features and to describe their functions in concrete historical conditions.

In my previous works I wrote about the existence of various terms for "charisma" such as: *sülde*, *suu jali*, *gegegen sünesün*.² Analyzing the terms *suu jali*³ and *gegegen sünesün*⁴ in Mongolian original sources, I investigated the functions of "charisma" in the charismatic's life as mediator between nature (the cosmos) and society. In accordance with Pelliot's opinion, the origin of the term *suu* was explained as Chinese. Its appearance in the texts was connected with the names of Chinggis-khan's successors from Ögödei. I ex-

¹ The second is the traditional type. The two types are correlated: in periods of stability, traditional values and "absolute truths" prevail; whereas in periods of change, the sphere regulated by traditions requires new norms of right and wrong. These new norms are introduced by the charismatic person, and give rise to new types of relations. After in innovator's death, there is the problem of the successor. The rules of succession formulated to solve the problem are what eventually end up as the new "tradition".

² Скрынникова, Т. Д. Терминологическое обозначение сакральности в монгольских исторических сочинениях XIII—XVIII вв. *История и культура монголоязычных народов. Источники и традиция*. Международный „круглый стол“ монголоведов. Улан-Удэ. Окт. 1989. Тезисы докладов и сообщений. Улан-Удэ. 1989. С. 56—58.

³ Скрынникова, Т. Д. Сакральность правителя в представлениях монголов XIII в. *Народы Азии и Африки*. № I, 1989. С. 67—75.

⁴ Скрынникова, Т. Д. *Термины сакральности: тибето-монгольские параллели*. XX научная конференция „Общество и государство в Китае“. Тезисы докладов. М., 1989. Ч. I. С. 181—185.

tracted the second term from historical sources of the 12th and 13th centuries, and gave a number of notions connected with it. These Mongolian terms with Tibetan parallels are the following:

<i>γoul</i>	<i>gegebči-yin irmeḡ</i>	<i>gegegen sünesün</i>
<i>srog-rca</i>	<i>chaṅs bug-gi rca</i>	<i>rnam-ṣes 'od-dkar-po</i>
vital vascular	Brahma's hole	light-soul (charisma)

The use of various terms to denote the same quality was the result of ethno-cultural process, which also led to the change⁵ in the meaning of *sülde* — the first Mongolian word designating “charisma” known from the *Secret History of the Mongols* (hereafter: SHM). This paper aims to show the initial meaning of the term *sülde* as it appears in the SHM, and its transformation and expression in the Chinggis-khan cult as reflected in ritual texts.

It is generally known that the term *sülde* is mentioned in the SHM three times. The first mention is by Dei Sečen, who dreamt of a white gyrfalcon and called it a *sülde* of the Kiyats. Precisely who was possessed of *sülde* was not mentioned. But one can suppose that it was Yesügei, the chief of the Kiyats, because Dei Sečen said to Yesügei: § 63 *Ta kiyat irgen-ü sülder irejü*.⁶

The two other mentions of *sülde* are in connection with Chinggis-khan:

a) Jamuqa emphasized that he was conquered by the *sülde* (charisma) of his sworn-brother (§ 201 *bi hüle'ü törelhitü anda-yin sülder-e dariḡdaba je bi*),

b) it was the *sülde* of Chinggis-khan that frightened the Tangguts and led to the victory of the Mongols (§ 249 *Chinggis qa'an-u nere aldar sonascu ayuḡju ala't ba edo'e süldeṯü beye cinu ḡücü irekdejü sülde-ece ayuba*).⁸

It is evident that the term *sülde* denoted an attribute protecting the society possessed of it, and frightening and defeating strangers. The gyrfalcon was the iconographical image of *sülde* at this time. These examples indicate that of possessor of the charisma was the chief of a clan/tribe, that is, primarily Yesügei, and after his death, Temüjin. Besides practical activities aimed at biological and social survival, the chief's function was to perform magical actions establishing contact with the other world.

⁵ Various interpretations of the Mongolian term *sülde* are known: protecting genius (deity), soul, flag, good fortune (see C. R. Bawden, *Vitality and Death in the Mongolian Epic. Fragen der mongolischen Heldendichtung* Teil III, Vorträge des 4. Epensymposium des Sonderforschungsbericht 12, Bonn 1983. *Asiatische Forschungen*. Bd. 91, Wiesbaden 1985, pp. 11–12).

⁶ I. de Rachewiltz, *Index to the Secret History of the Mongols*, Bloomington 1972, p. 25.

⁷ Ibid., p. 113.

⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

As to Chinggis-khan in the SHM, there is a description of two rituals: sun worship⁹ and flag worship. To my mind it is necessary to pay special attention to the rites connected with the flag: the sprinkling of the flag, and the raising of the flag. The text of the SHM contains the following information:

a) After the death of Yesügei, when Temüjin was still a child, his mother Höelün raised the flag (§ 73 — *tuylaqu*) and took the field against the Tayiči'uds to gather the tribe's scattered people.

b) When Chinggis-khan was at war with Jamuqa and Ong-khan, his supporters — the Uru'uts and the Mangu'uts — had their own black parti-coloured flag (§ 170 *qaraqči'ut alagči'ut tuḡ*).

c) The “sprinkling of the flag” rite is performed by the chiefs of the clans/tribes. It is mentioned three times in the text of the SHM: before taking the field against the Merkits, Jamuqa sprinkled the flag (§ 106 *qara'atu tuḡ-ıyan sacuba*); Chinggis-khan sprinkled the flag (§ 193 *tuḡsacu'at*) before the battle with the Naimans; Ong-khan sprinkled the white flag (§ 167 *caḡa'an-a sacu'asu*).

d) Two supporters of Sangγum — Ong-khan's son — Bilge-beki and Todoyon — raised the flag before taking the field against Chinggis-khan (§ 181 *qatḡulduḡi tuḡ bosḡaḡtu*).

e) A nine footed white flag was raised at the meeting where Temüjin was given the title “Chinggis-khan” after his victory over various tribes (§ 202 *yisün költü caḡa'an tuḡ bayı'ulu'at*).

According to the data presented above, flag worship is connected with power: all the persons performing the rite possessed the title *khan* as a mark of high authority, or the title *beki* designating a senior of the clan.

I would like to draw attention to § 106 of the SHM. I believe that this paragraph contains a concrete description of the “sprinkling of the flag” rite. Until now, the actions of Jamuqa were understood as the usual actions performed by a warrior; the truth is, however, that the episode depicts a priest's practice of flag worship.

I sprinkled my flag with a top,
I beat my drum (bellows) made of black ox skin,
I straddled my black fast horse,
I put on my hard clothes,
I took my fearless spear into my hands,
I put my stinging arrow to bow-string.
(And now) I shall gallop into battle with the Qa'at-Merkits . . .”

To clarify the meaning of this fragment, I should like to comment two attributions connected with Jamuqa: the bellows and the spear. These objects

⁹ For the meaning of this rite, see: Скрынникова, *Термины сакральности*. 1989.

are mentioned also in other fragments of the SHM. For instance: enthroned, Chinggis-khan assigned his posts and duties to his subjects; the *kebteüls* were made the guardians of the flag, of the bellows and of the spear made of peach tree (§ 232 *tuq, gü'ürge, dōro jida*). His son Ögödei, confirmed them in their duty (§ 278). In addition, it will be recalled that the SHM contains the episode about uriangqadai Jarciudai-ebügen, coming down from the mountain Burqan-Qaldun, carrying the bellows on his back (§ 97).

The Mongol word *ke'ürge/gü'ürge* has two meanings: the bellows (modern Mong. *xeeper*); and the whole skin filled with air (a means of crossing a river; modern Mong. *ryyp* "bridge" *ryypər* "viaduct"). The first meaning may be interpreted as an allusion to smithery;¹⁰ the second, as a means of transport to the other world (the function of the shaman's drum). The latter idea was underlined in § 106. I think that the phrase "I straddled my black fast horse" is the continuation of the previous one: "I beat my drum made of black ox skin". As for the different modern meanings, linguists explain the origin of both meanings from one ancient word.

The second point concerns the material of Chinggis-khan's spear, the peach tree. L. Ja. Sternberg has noted that the Manchurians called the peach tree (*toro*) "sun-tree", "life-tree". Among the Tungus it was known as a shaman tree, i.e. the shaman's way to heaven.¹¹ The personal possession of these two attributes, i.e. the performance of the above-mentioned rites, is evidence that charisma enables one person to simultaneously fulfill function of smith/priest and ruler. The interconnection between smith/shaman and ruler has been described by Masao Mori as typical of the Turkish Empire.¹²

On the direct evidence of the SHM, it can be supposed that Chinggis-khan was the only one to possess charisma. But the indirect evidence allows another interpretation. In addition to the above-mentioned rites performed only by persons possessing charisma, the author of the SHM gives information on the preservation of remains: the special burial of Jamuqa, and the rite performed on Ong-khan's skull. Jamuqa said to Chinggis-khan: "If you kill me without blood flowing out, then my skeleton being on high earth (mountain) will protect the descendants of your descendants" (§ 201 *cisu ulu qarqan ala'ul üküjü gebte'esü ölük yasun minu ündür etügen-tür e'ūra turuq uruq-un uruq-a cinu qürtele ihējü öksü hirü'er boluyu-je*).¹³ It is necessary to emphasize that the capacity to give protection (Mong. *ihēkü*) to the clan is a characteristic

¹⁰ Rashid-ad-din mentions Chinggis-khan's clan being smiths. (See Рашид-ад-дин, *Сборник летописей*. Т. I. Кн. I. М.—Л., 1952. С. 154—155.)

¹¹ Штернберг, Л. Я. *Культ орла у сибирских народов. Первобытная религия в свете этнографии*. Л., 1936. С. 124.

¹² Масео Мори, *Политическая структура древнего государства кочевников Монголии*. XIII Международный конгресс исторических наук. М., 1970. С. I.

¹³ I. de Rachewiltz, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

feature of charisma (*suu jali*).¹⁴ As for Ong-khan's skull, Gürbesü, naiman Tayang-khan's mother, said: "Let his head be brought. We'll make a sacrifice to it, if it really is his head" (§ 189 *Ong-qan erten-ü ötögü yeke qan büle's. teri'ü inu abciratqun mün bö'esü tayiya*).¹⁵

That no other charismatic persons are mentioned by name can be explained by author's intention of providing, in the SHM, the ideological grounds on which Chinggis-khan's clan had sole right to supreme authority: in Mongolia, charisma was the prerogative of Chinggis-khan and his clan. The term *sülde*, designating charisma, came to be connected only with his name; in the SHM, however, it was Ögödei's personal charisma that was designated by the term *suu jali*. The latter designates the charisma of a living ruler, whereas *sülde* became the term denoting the sacral quality inherent in various objects first connected with Chinggis-khan. For seven centuries, Chinggis-khan's clan ruled Mongolia, and the cult of its founder became a national cult. It was Chinggis-khan's charisma that guaranteed the existence of the Mongolian ethno-cultural community and state. The cult of Chinggis-khan took various forms, because charisma can be embodied in any object: burial place, hair in Ejen-Qoro (real or alleged), flags (black and white), the idol of Chinggis-khan in Batu's court. To understand the form and content of these cults of charisma worship, it is necessary to study their names, which contain the term *sülde*: *Cinggis-qayan-u sülde*, *Süldetngri*, *tuy sülde*. Scholars believe that these cults were three separate ones.¹⁶

The Mongols of the 13th century used the Turkish loan-word *tuy* to designate the flag. The author of the SHM distinguished two terms: *sülde(r)* "charisma" and *tuy* "flag". Later, the flag received an other designation: it was *tuy sülde* or simply *sülde*. In any case, scholars have translated the term *sülde* as "flag". The reason for confusing the notions was that the flag, as an object possessing charisma, was easy to identify with charisma itself. From the prayer books, we find that the believers address both the flag (*tuy*) and the charisma (*sülde*) in asking that a wish be granted. But the mediator of cosmological act was not the flag itself, but the charisma embodied in it. The flag cult is universal, and functionally the flag is equivalent to the

¹⁴ See: Скрынникова, Сакральность правителя...

¹⁵ I. de Rachewiltz, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁶ For example, W. Heissig describes these cults as independent (see: W. Heissig, *Die Religionen der Mongolei*, Stuttgart, Köln, Mainz, 1970, p. 392 ff); T. Žamtsarano, describing the Chinggis-khan cult, has pointed out the flag cult (*qara sülde*). He concludes that Chinggis-khan worshipped the genies of the black flag, and that the Ordos region's *qara sülde* was the same flag. This flag is represented by the lance (spear), with the black stallion's mane hanging down from the top. In Ts. Žamtsarano's opinion, both are dedicated to the victory deity. *Sülde-tengri* (See: Жамцарано Ц., *Культ Чингиса в Ордосе. Из пумешествия в Южные Монголию в 1910 г.* САЖ VI, 3 (1961), p. 196). The general and particular traits of these cults will be discussed below.

world (life) tree. As already mentioned, the latter is analogous to the spear. The flag — world tree analogy was known to the Mongols: the rite of the khan's election was connected both to the tree of many branches (§ 57 of the SHM) and to the nine-footed flag (§ 202 of the SHM).

As for the term *tuy* "flag", it designated a group of several flags: the nine-footed (sometimes called 8-footed) white flag consisting of one big and 8 small flags (1 + 8), and the 4-footed black, i.e. one big and 4 small flags (1 + 4). The numerical symbolism expresses a horizontal scheme of the universe, with the 1 indicating the center, and two types of designation (4 or 8) for the cardinal points. The addition of small flags to the big one symbolizes the fact that from the moment of his enthronement, the ruler becomes a mediator not only for his own society (the center of the universe), but also for the peoples of the whole world.

The *Sülde-tnгри* cult is known as a cult of the horseman-deity. W. Heissig dedicated a special part of his book to *Sülde-tnгри*.¹⁷ He writes: "Dieser Sülde-Genius des Herrschers, die Personifizierung des herrscherlichen Charisma, insbesondere Činggis Khans, wurde demgemäß auch als einer der Tengri des volksreligiösen Pantheons angesehen, in dem er als *Sülde tnгри* auftritt."¹⁸

However, we cannot agree with his interpretation that the soul (*sünesün*) became the genius-protector (*sülde*). As W. Heissig saw it, the iconography and protecting function of this deity relate it to the Tibetan *dGra lha*¹⁹ owing to the Lamaistic adaptation of the Mongolian religion. To be precise, however, it is necessary to underline that this relationship was of a typological nature and not a genetic one. As has already been mentioned, *Sülde tnгри* was connected to indigenous Mongolian ideas of *sülde* expressed in various forms.

It is interesting that the third group of texts dealing specifically with the charisma of Chinggis-khan — *altan sülde* or *gegegen sülde* — have received no separate treatment from scholars. W. Heissig, describing the Chinggis-khan cult, has failed to mention even the sacral attribute that made for his divine nature.

I think that these cults were various forms of the same worship — namely, charisma worship. It seems that initially, the above-mentioned objects, i.e. Chinggis-khan's *sülde* itself indicates their common character. My point of view is also supported by the content of the ritual texts dealing with these cults. In the texts of prayers,²⁰ the light of Chinggis-khan, his gold, white, black, parti-coloured *sülde*, *sülde*-sovereign, *Sülde-tnгри* and Chinggis-khan

¹⁷ W. Heissig, *op. cit.* pp. 392–398.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

¹⁹ W. Heissig, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

²⁰ B. Rinchen, *Les Matériaux pour l'étude du chamanisme mongol: Source littéraires*. Wiesbaden 1959.

himself are mentioned. In spite of the formal dissimilarity of these objects of worship, I treat these texts as one due to their inherent meaning.

First of all, it is necessary to note the iconography of the objects, which is syncretic in ritual texts. Three kinds of the iconography can be distinguished in the ritual: anthropomorphous images, ornithoid images, and the flag. Each text dealing with an object alludes to two or three of the images. For example, *Sülde-tnгри* is a deity with an anthropomorphous image: (All quotations will be given from Rinchen's work): "XXXVIII. (It is) a white-coloured deity decorated with a hard helmet emanating light. His body is dressed in a precious coat of gold mail (armour); he wears on his legs the moon's high boots. (The deity) holding the light sword in one hand and the spear made of white reed in the other straddles a horse with a beautiful saddle and stirrup, and has a tiger skin quiver with sharp hard arrows on the right, and a leopard skin quiver with a tight arc on the left" (p. 83) (My translation).

In addition to this description, it is interesting to cite the beginning of this prayer: "(We) pray to *Sülde-tnгри*, worshipping the flag of white horse tail." What we have, in short, is two images of one object — *Sülde-tnгри* — but not of two objects, or two cults.

Analogous anthropomorphous description is contained in the prayer to the 8-footed white flag: "XXXV. Having a devil body and an enormous head, a *huur* (a musical instrument)-head, a body able to incarnate"; thus, the object of worship is the flag. It is mainly the top of the flag and the staff that is being described in this text. The enormous proportions of the head were especially underlined. The anthropomorphous image of the head is marked in the text "Prayer to the particoloured flag" in allusion XXXV "Guarding the hair and the cap" (p. 101).

The anthropomorphous image is inherent in the sunny attribute — Chinggis-khan's charisma (Mong. *Činggis qayan-u sitiügen altan sülde*): "Making an offering, I worship You, young Saintly Flag, with youthful mien and face, who have loosed your hair done in a knot (on top of the head) . . . Making an offering, I worship You, Saintly Flag, with a circular ornament on your face; who, because you have a thousand eyes in your face, are not ignorant of even one concealed (evil deed)."²¹

The birds of prey has never been the worship's objects by itself, but ornithoid image was inherent to the all three phenomena: the light, the flag, the deity (*Sülde tnгри*). It is known from the text of the SHM the gyrfalcon was the personification of the charisma. In the prayer of particoloured flag's incense its ornithoid nature was expressed by the following words: "XXXV. When the enemies would approach (you (*sülde* — T.S.)) has to catch (them),

²¹ H. Serruys, A mongol prayer to the spirit of Chinggis-kan's flag. *Mongolian Studies*, edited by Louis Ligeti (Budapest, 1970), pp. 531–32.

when the enemies would approach (you) as a tearing eagle has to catch (them)" (p. 100).

The ornithoid image appears often both in the prayers and on the icons devoted to *Sülde-tngri*-deity. The bird soaring above the horseman is depicted on the icon of this deity. The above-quoted prayer to *Sülde-tngri* (XXXVIII) combining the anthropomorphic image with the flag's image, contains such a detail: "the iron sharp-clawed hawk is soaring above the horseman".

Needless to say, *sülde* in the true sense of the word is not limited to designating physical images. *Sülde* as mentioned in the ritual texts of the three presented groups can be interpreted as "charisma" according to its content. What, then, is the meaning of *sülde* in the ritual texts? The gyrfalcon, hawk, and eagle as sun symbols, as well as the face with a thousand eyes which can burn enemies to ashes, mentioned in the above passages clearly indicate the solar nature of *sülde* whose essence, from the viewpoint of its reference, is light, the aureole. This idea is supported by concrete information in the texts. In the title of one ritual text, Chinggis-khan's gold charisma is a synonym for light (*altan sülde* — *gegegen*) (XXIX. p. 59).

The texts of the prayer books answer the question as to the nature of this light. These are a great number of examples: "XXXIV. 8-footed white flag with the moon's and sun's light and with a long staff" (p. 70). "XXXV. The great white charisma of the sovereign of the state of holiness with the golden light of the sun" (p. 71). Sometimes the origin of the charisma is specially emphasized: "XXXVI. The holy charisma originated from the light" (p. 75). The reason for such emphasis on the nature of the light lies in the text being quoted from the prayer of the black flag (*qara sülde*). The text contains the following definition: "The holy charisma originated from the moon and sun with the staff."²²

In the prayer of the parti-coloured flag one may read: "XXXV. Flaming charisma" (p. 99). The following words are addressed to it: "Light of the gold charisma, please lead us to our salvation... Light of the sacred parti-coloured flag, please help us" (p. 101). The above-quoted passages of the prayer can be regarded as an explanation of the nature of *sülde*: light as the essence of charisma. The effect of the gold charisma can be intensified by sacrifice performed around *obo* on the summit of the mountain on definite days (XXX. p. 52).

As indicated by the passages quoted above, charisma is characterized by ambivalence. For example, the charisma of the black flag (XXXVI) originates from the light of the moon and the sun and possesses this light. The

²² The interchangeability in the text of the notions of "charisma" and of the "staff/flag" wherein the charisma resides creates difficulties with the reference, but it is necessary to keep in mind the combination of the two senses in the one expression.

golden charisma (*altan sülde*) is not only synonymic to the black one, but the two are attributed simultaneously "gold-black charisma" (XXX. Mong. *altan qara sülde* p. 62).

My last point concerns the above-mentioned interchangeability of the location of charisma: an icon of *Sülde-tngri*, a flag, or bird. From the viewpoint of its reference, I regard *sülde* (charisma) to be the essence of the Chinggis-khan cult, and these objects as its formal expression. "Charisma" forms the basis of these kinds of worship, not the soul or spirit.

The first to introduce this idea was Ch. Bawden, who divided the Mongolian terms denoting sacral attributes into two groups: those referring to the soul (*amin*, *sünesün*) and those to vitality (*sülde*, *suu žali*, *čoy žali*, *čoy sülde*, *sür žabqlang*, *kii morin*). The latter group is connected to light. It is interesting to recall that the Latin Greek *θεος* and the Indian *deva* derive from the common root *div* — "to shine". Even after the death of its possessor, charisma, embodied in some object, continues as a sacral organizing principle and to regulate the social environment of the object.

Thirteenth century Mongolian society was probably divided into two parts: the plebs and the aristocracy. It was not trifunctional, because the Mongols, I believe, had neither temples nor a special caste of priests (*Üsün-ebügen/beki* and *Kököčü Teb Tenggeri*, considered to be shamans/magis by some scholars were temporal rulers pretending to the supreme authority of Chinggis-khan, and fight with him for the power). As the above quotations show, the ruler had the power and the insignia of a priest. Besides fortune-telling, the performance of religious rites was the duty of the chiefs — from the emperor down to the head of the family — who were thought capable of making contact with the other world by means of the charisma of an ancestor ("the spirit of the dead", or the spirit of the father, as some scholars would have it) embodied in some object. Rites of social importance were performed with objects connected with Chinggis-khan, the founder of the Mongolian state.