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The Japanese Origin of the Chinggis Khan Legends¹

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ABSTRACT

Most members of the Japanese public today, when hearing the words Mongols or Mongolia, immediately think of three different tales: 1) That the forefathers of the Japanese Imperial Family were the horsemen of the Mongolian Plateau, who came through the Korean Peninsula to conquer Japan; 2) that Chinggis Khan, the founder of the Mongol Empire, was really Minamoto no Yoshitsune, a Japanese general; and 3) that the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century failed because of a typhoon caused by a Divine Wind (*kamikaze*), which saved Japan from Mongolian subjugation. Each of these three stories emerged to fill the psychological requirements of national pride in the times after Japan experienced the modernisation process launched by the Meiji Restoration in 1868. These can be seen as a Japanese version of *The Invention of Tradition* famously described by Hobsbawm and Ranger. The second of these tales was also born in England. Kenchō Suyematsu, 1855–1920, was ordered to study in England at national expense in 1878–86. He wrote a book in English, *The Identity of the great conqueror Genghis Khan with the Japanese hero Yoshitsune, An historical thesis*, and published it in London in 1879. Suyematsu's arguments for the identity of Chinggis Khan with Minamoto no Yoshitsune are all absurd. Nevertheless, in 1924 after the Japanese dispatch of troops to Siberia, there appeared a study by Mataichirō Oyabe entitled, *Genghis Khan is Gen Gi-kei (Jingisu Kan wa Gen Gi-kei nari)* packed with the abundant results of numerous field surveys, which became a runaway best seller. This paper aims to explain why the Japanese became so particularly interested in the Mongols, among the many Asian nations of the Asian Continent, and why they displayed such enthusiasm about the Mongols, but not the Chinese, in relating connections with the history of the past.

Keywords: *The Invention of Tradition*, Chinggis Khan legend, Minamoto no Yoshitsune, Gen Gikei, Kenchō Suyematsu, Mataichirō Oyabe, Japanese hero.

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INTRODUCTION

Most members of the Japanese public today, when hearing the words Mongols or Mongolia, immediately think of three different tales: 1) that the forefathers of the Japanese Imperial Family were the horsemen of the Mongolian Plateau, who came through the Korean Peninsula to conquer Japan; 2) that Chinggis Khan, the founder of the Mongol Empire, was really Minamoto no Yoshitsune, a Japanese general; and 3) that the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century failed because of a typhoon caused by a Divine Wind (*kamikaze*), which saved Japan from Mongolian subjugation.

At first glance these three stories appear to be thoroughly historical narratives, each standing independently in the broader history of Japan. However, closer inspection shows that all three are the products of psychological necessity required in the times after Japan went through the modernisation by the Meiji Restoration in 1868. They are a Japanese version of the famous thesis of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger on *The Invention of Tradition* (1983).

If I may refer to my major field, it is history. In the past thirty years I studied the history of the Mongol nomads and their polities, always trying to regard what was known from the Mongolians' own point of view, using critically sources produced by the peoples surrounding them. In the meantime, to answer questions from the Japanese public, I have studied in detail *The Invention of Tradition* of Japan and Mongolia, how they were formed and at what time this took place.

THE THEORY OF THE HORSEMEN CONQUERING JAPAN

The first tale is the theory that the forefathers of the Japanese Imperial Family were horsemen from the Mongolian Plateau, who came and conquered Japan to found a dynasty. This is called the 'Horsemen Theory' or the 'Horsemen conquering the Japanese Archipelago Theory'. According to this account, in about the fourth century a band of powerful horsemen came from the Asian Continent by way of the Korean Peninsula, conquering the native Wo-jei and ruling by military force. The Yamato Court in Japan, the story goes, descends directly from these Horsemen of Northeast Asia.

This tale about the early period of Japan's history was in fact the latest of the three '*inventions of tradition*' and emerged immediately after the Second World War. The Japanese historian Namio Egami, presented this theory in a discussion in 1948, published it in 1949 and subsequently the theory grew tremendously in popularity:

The Japanese period of ancient burial mounds can be divided into two, the former period from the late third or the early fourth century to the middle of

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the late fourth century, and the latter period from the middle of the late fourth century to the latter half of the seventh century. The culture of the former period shows close relations to that of more primitive late Yayoi culture, while that of the latter period produced the large constructions like the Nintoku Mausoleum and wooden and stone coffins to be identified as Continental-Chinese. Also burial accessories were later almost the same kind as the remains of the Northern tribes active in North China in the third to the fifth centuries. (Egami 1992)

He goes on to claim that: 'Almost exactly the same things as found in the culture of Sinified horsemen characterises the Japanese latter period of ancient burial mounds; the armory and harnesses found in great numbers in the Japanese mounds of the latter period, are factual evidence of the mounted military men freely active in Japan.' Thus he concludes: 'Some powerful horsemen came from the Continent down the Korean Peninsula and directly invaded Japan conquering and ruling the Wo-jen, militarily putting the Archipelago under their control.' (Egami [1967] 1991: 158–70).

In reality however, the technique of castrating domestic animals was not known until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The grasslands of the Asian continent, were almost entirely populated by nomadic horsemen, who most certainly knew how to castrate sheep, goats and horses. It is inconceivable that a group of horsemen, without accompanying sheep and goats, could invade Japan. Certainly there are saddles, bits, stirrups and other trappings found in ancient burial mounds in Western Japan, but they are the same as those found in North China dating from the third to fifth centuries. We are tempted to think that those harnesses, once in the farmlands of North China, were introduced to the Japanese Archipelago by the Chinese traders of the day. Specialists of various fields are in agreement that the 'conquering horsemen' theory cannot constitute historical fact.

Nevertheless, this tale remains popular to the Japanese even today. There are three reasons why this tale became very popular. Firstly, after Japan lost the war in 1945, the American Occupational Army saw to it that Japanese schools denied and excluded the old mythology of the eighth century *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan). Instead, archaeology was introduced to describe ancient history, leaving a sense of historical loss. The 'Horsemen Theory', in contrast, was a story that lifted the Japanese spirit at that time and was thus ardently welcomed. Secondly, this 'Horsemen Theory' became known to the Japanese people, just prior to the start of the Korean War in 1950. It became plausible in those days that a great army of horsemen had come from North Asia, travelled through the Korean Peninsula, crossed the Korean Strait and then conquered Japan. Thirdly, the Japanese regarded the constitution of the Imperial State as a unique accomplishment. It was felt that the Japanese

ruling class could have had nothing to do with the Chinese but were rather the brethren of the victorious Mongols of the North who had invaded Europe and repeatedly ruled China.

THE TALE OF THE DIVINE WIND (*KAMIKAZE*) SAVING JAPAN

The second tale is the main topic of this paper, and will be dealt with later. But to move to the third tale – this is the story of the Divine Wind which demonstrated heavenly protection for Japan. Each time the Mongols attacked in 1274 and 1281, the tempests blew and a great number of the assailants drowned.

The Mongols did indeed attack Japan. Historically, the Yüan Dynasty established by Khubilai the grandson of Chinggis Khan, who had pushed the Mongol conquest of China further and vastly extended the empire, ordered his army to attack Japan during the Kamakura period.

The Japanese of the time called the incident ‘the Mongol invasion’ (*Mōko Shūrai*), while in 1890 in the middle of the Meiji era, a new term ‘the Yüan piracy’ (*Genkō*) appeared. This raises the question as to why the concept of ‘piracy’ applied indicated by the non-Japanese sounding term *Genkō*? The reason was that the Japanese, pressed to study world history after the Meiji Restoration, were surprised to find that *Wakō* or Wo-k’ou (pirates, the majority being Japanese) had been rampant along the Korean Peninsula and the Chinese coast in the Ming period after the Yüan Dynasty. It was then a national necessity to stress that a Chinese enemy had made an earlier attempt to invade their Japanese islands. So, the term ‘the Yüan piracy’ can be seen to have emerged in opposition to the Wo-k’ou piracy of the Ming period. .

Kenshi Nagai, who served in the Japanese national military band composing numerous war songs, published a song entitled ‘*Genkō*’ in 1892, directly prior to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. In this song, the lyrics included statements such as, ‘the Mongol army totalling more than hundred thousand’, ‘a national crisis to be witnessed’, and ‘the Japanese spirit which the gods knew’. However, the term *kamikaze* (Divine Wind) does not appear. Even the history textbooks for school children which note that the invading Mongol army met ‘great storms’, do not refer to a ‘Divine Wind’ at all before 1933.

While it is true that the storms came twice, they were not referred to as ‘Divine Winds’ in school history textbooks until 1934, three years after Manchoukuo was born, and before Japan went to war with China. During the last days of the Pacific War, when Japan was desperately battling with the Americans, again the popular words surfaced, e.g. ‘Japan has never lost a war to outside enemies . . . it will be saved by a Divine Wind at the last moment.’

The surrender of Japan in 1945 was the first defeat by a foreign enemy

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since the founding of the country more than 1300 years ago in the seventh century. After sixty years, the Japanese have recovered from the shock of defeat. A prominent intellectual (Yamamuro [1993] 2004: 309) has even gone on record as saying that the Japanese state collapsed at this time because Japan had historically rather few struggles against foreign enemies and that it eventually was bound to suffer an inevitable defeat.

The founding of Japan was the joint result of the elevation of 'the Japanese Emperor (*Nippon Tennō*)' by the Wo-jen, and the uniting of the Chinese residing in the Japanese Islands, after the T'ang army, that had already had China under its rule, destroyed the Wo army at Paekch'eongang in 663. The seclusionist character of the Japanese civilisation, which made for a closed-door, fixed national policy was born out of the international situation surrounding the founding of the kingdom and as a defence against a possible invasion by the Chinese (Okada, H. 1992, 2001). Therefore, the national character remained passive and unskilled in international relations and foreign policy even after the conclusion of the peace treaty and the opening of the islands, under American military pressure, in 1854.

The Japanese expectation that the gods will somehow solve pressing difficulties remains alive even today. The words 'Divine Wind' are alive, too. For example, at the Soccer World Cup in 2002, a Japanese TV announcer reportedly exclaimed: 'The Divine Winds may blow at this moment!'

THE BACKGROUND OF THE TALE OF CHINGGIS KHAN BEING MINAMOTO NO YOSHITSUNE

At lectures about Mongolia and the Mongols, an ordinary Japanese person will often ask the question: 'Is it not true that Minamoto no Yoshitsune became Chinggis Khan?' There is an understanding that the response will be a negative one, but there is real disappointment nevertheless when we have to tell them that the story is a myth.

Minamoto no Yoshitsune, or Gen Gikei as his name is in Sino-Japanese pronunciation, was born in 1159 as a half brother of Minamoto no Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura Shogunate of Japan. He was called Ushiwakamaru in his childhood, also known as Kurō Onzōshi, meaning the ninth son. Soon after he was born, his father was killed in the civil war which broke out in the Japanese capital Kyoto, and his elder half brother Yoritomo, who was the rightful heir, was banished to the Izu Province. It was a warlike time in Japan. The father of Yoshitsune was the head of the Minamoto Clan or Genji, but he was defeated and killed by Kiyomori, of the opposing Taira Clan or Heishi.

Yoshitsune was placed in the care of the Kurama Monastery in Kyoto during his childhood. When he grew up, he moved to Northeastern Japan,

where he was under the shelter of Fujiwara no Hidehira, the General whose base of power was at Hiraizumi, the modern Iwate Prefecture. In 1180 he joined in the revolt of his elder half-brother Yoritomo, and represented his brother in Kyoto at the head of Kantō warriors in expeditions against Minamoto no Yoshinaka and the Taira Clan. He made himself famous as a strategic genius in victorious battles against the Tairas, but had a falling out with his brother. He fled again to Hiraizumi, and in 1189 he was killed there at a mere thirty-one years of age in the hands of Fujiwara no Yasuhira, the son of Hidehira, on the orders of Yoritomo.

All the Japanese loved him, and by the fifteenth century or so the legend had spread that he had not in fact been killed but had escaped northward. In the fifteenth century Edo period, as the Japanese reached Yezo or Hokkaido, the story expanded further to claim that Yoshitsune had in fact gone from Yezo to Sakhalin, from where he crossed the Straits to the Asian Continent.

Sawada Gennai of Ōmi Province, forged genealogies in the mid-seventeenth century and authored a pseudo-history, *Chin-shih pieh-pen* in Chinese, in which a fanciful story was told that Minamoto no Yoshitsune crossed from Yezo to reach the Chin Dynasty, and that his grandson also named Minamoto no Yoshishizu, became a Grand General commanding the Chin horsemen, and attacked China. This book was discovered to be a forgery by authoritative scholars of Japan in the same period. Nevertheless, Mori Sukeyemon, a Japanese classical scholar of the Tsushima Province, later publicly announced that none other than the Emperor Ch'ien-lung had written an Imperial preface to volume 130 of *T'u-shu Chi-k'an-lu* in *Ch'in-ting Ku-chin T'u-shu Chi-ch'eng*, the encyclopaedia compiled in the Ch'ien-lung era of the Ch'ing Dynasty, which included the lines: 'Our clan-name is Yüan (Minamoto), being a descendant of Yi-ching (Yoshitsune), whose ancestor was derived from Ch'ing-ho (Seiwa). This is why our empire is called Ch'ing.' Needless to say, no *T'u-shu Chi-k'an-lu* existed in the whole *Ch'in-ting Ku-chin T'u-shu Chi-ch'eng*, and the alleged Imperial preface was itself spurious. Still, amateur historians liked this sort of tale and secretly told it amongst themselves.

Mamiya Rinzō, who was dispatched on a Northern expedition by the Edo Shogunate, visited Karafuto (Sakhalin) in 1808, and confirmed it to be an island. Then he crossed the Straits alone to reach the Asian Continent. In 1809–10 he went upstream along the Amur River until he reached Deren, where he found a temporary seat of government of the Manchus. In his travel report *Tōtatsu Chihō Kikō*, he stated the purpose of his expedition included, along with the description of local products and the settlement of territories, historical investigation into the crossing to the Continent through Yezo by the descendents of Yoshitsune. He reported that the natives of the Continent stated: 'It is traditionally said that the Emperor of China is a descendant of the Japanese.'

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It was in this manner that the story flourished, even in the Yedo period. Minamoto no Yoshitsune, or Gen Gikei, was Chinggis Khan himself.

‘GENGHIS KHAN IS GEN GIKEI’

This story began in England. Kenchō Suyematsu, 1855–1920, was dispatched by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Great Britain from 1878 to 1886. He studied at St John’s College of the University of Cambridge on a national grant from 1880 to 1884. He wrote a book in English and published it in London, which in turn became the primary source for books written on the same topic in Japanese. He was one of the Japanese elite, who obtained Bachelor of Arts and Master of Law degrees in Cambridge.

He was well versed in English, familiar with Japanese classics and at home in European history, as is clearly expressed in his works. He was a diplomat first and a statesman later, but also a *littérateur* who was the first to translate *Genji Monogatari* into a European language. The book, *Genji Monogatari, the Most Celebrated of the Classical Japanese Romances* (1882) was translated by him in Cambridge, working in a foreign country with few reference books. It was an abridged translation totalling seventeen volumes of the whole forty-eight. Still, it was a translation completed forty-three years earlier than the famous version by Arthur David Waley, *The tales of Genji*, 1923–1933. Suyematsu’s translation was a long-standing masterpiece again published as a pocket edition to commemorate its centenary by the Charles Tuttle Company in 1975.

The reason Suyematsu published the treatise entitled ‘Genghis Khan was Minamoto no Yoshitsune or Gen Gikei’ is interpreted by Yasuo Nagayama, a modern critic of Japan, thus: ‘Suyematsu was paid a considerable sum of money by the Japanese Government, but not enough to live in Cambridge where the sons of the British upper class were educated. Though it was merely enough simply to go to college, it was insufficient to live in a style equal to his classmates. It was made worse that in those days, and I think it is still true today, one tended to be judged by the strength of the state of one’s birth. A student from Japan, a small and weak country far away, was often discriminated against. Suyematsu, a person of great self-respect, was irate and gnawed his lips every time this occurred. He began to think that the British should know the greatness and high cultural level of the Japanese. Then he hit upon the Yoshitsune legend that he once read about in some short account in Japan. He mobilised his learning of Chinese documents and Japanese legends of the Yedo period, and concocted the theory that Yoshitsune was no other than Genghis Khan.’ (Nagayama 1998)

His work, *The Identity of the great conqueror Genghis Khan with the Japanese hero Yoshitsune, An historical thesis*, by K. Suyematsu, London,

printed for the author by W. H. And L. Collingridge, Aldersgate Street, E.C., 1879, is now in the National Diet Library in Japan, and can be perused by microfiche. Suyematsu was well versed in European history, and explained who Yoshitsune was, as well as the Genji and the Heishi thus:

Now it may be scarcely necessary to mention how Yoshitsuné is as well known among the Japanese, as Wellington or Nelson is in England, that it would be difficult to find anyone who does not know something about him, or how there was fierce rivalry waged between the families of Gen or Minamoto, and Hei or Taira, resembling that conflict between the Burgundians and Orleanists in French history; or in another aspect, from their use of red and white banners, the wars of the Roses in England, occupying a most interesting portion of Japanese history.

Suyematsu relates Japanese history with such a good command of English, and explains in his thesis that Yoshitsune did not die in 1189 but escaped with his life thus:

Dai-Nihon-Shi ('History of Great Japan'), which was composed under the personal superintendence of Prince of Mito, grandson of Iyeyasu, in the seventeenth century, who had collected all possible authorities and records, and also had assembled almost all the distinguished scholars and *literati* of his day for the prosecution of this great task. The work is written in the style of the dynastic histories of China, and in the compositions of this style it is especially considered the author's duty to rely as much as possible on the evidence of the public records; consequently, in the principal references to the life and career of Yoshitsuné which are to be found in that history, his death is simply stated as if it were a fact; but in its reflections on this head it says, 'The general opinion, however, is that he did not die at Koromogawa, but escaped to Yezo,' and after mentioning that some ambiguity was attached to the story of Yasuhira's sending out the supposed head of Yoshitsuné, and its arrival at Kamakura, to be examined, it goes on to remark, 'Forty-three days had elapsed between the supposed death of Yoshitsuné and its examination by Yoritomo's mission, and this took place in the very hottest time of the year. How could it possibly remain for so long a time, exposed to such great heat, without undergoing the alterations of decay, although it is said to have been preserved in pure *saké*, and who could certainly distinguish whether it was real or supposititious? Was then the story of his death a deception, and did he really escape? Up to the present time the aborigines of the island (Yezo) deify and still worship him. Can we refuse the evidence of such facts?'

Then Suyematsu moves on to the Mongolian history, about which he uses English books like *History of the Mongols* by H. H. Howorth (1876–1928), but his arguments as to the identity of Chinggis Khan as Minamoto no Yoshitsune are all absurd; for example: that there were no written records of

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the first half of his life; that his name read in Chinese characters, Gen Gikei, was comparable to Genghis Khan; that the Japanese name of a god, *tenjin*, was turned into Temüjin; that Genghis Khan was a cultural hero far removed from the nomads living on the Mongolian Plateau, revealing an experience of education in his youthful days; that the Mongolian custom of valuing the number nine was the fact that Yoshitsune was Kurō or the ninth son, and so on.

We do not know how widely this book by Suyematsu was accepted in England in those days. The Japanese writer Yahachi Uchida, who read it in London, was greatly impressed by the book and published it as a Japanese translation *Yoshitsune Saikō Ki* (*Yoshitsune Rises Again*) in 1885 (Uchida 1885). Uchida's book created a great sensation in the Japanese public, and *Tsūzoku Yoshitsune Saikō Ki* (*Popular Yoshitsune Rises Again*), its popularised version by Ichijirō Shimizu, was published and became a best seller in 1886.

The story did not stop there. In 1924, after Japan had dispatched troops to Siberia, Mataichirō Oyabe published *Jingisu Kan wa Minamoto no Yoshitsune nari* (*Genghis Khan was Minamoto no Yoshitsune*) and this also became a runaway best seller (Mataichirō Oyabe 1924).

Oyabe was born a grandson of the warrior class but was adopted as the son of a merchant. His father ran away from home leaving him alone after the Meiji Restoration. After he grew up, he joined his father but they did not get on well with each other. He ran away from home, struggling to reach Hokkaido, where he was taken in by the Ainu people. He was impressed by the kindness of the Ainus, and with the aim of rewarding them in return, he worked hard to get to America, obtain a Ph.D. from Yale to be a pastor, and then came home. Along with his pastoral duties, he built a school for the Ainus in Hokkaido and engaged himself in political activities for the improvement of their labour conditions. His later life was dedicated to the verification of the Yoshitsune-Chinggis Khan theory.

Oyabe investigated all the places that Minamoto no Yoshitsune was supposed to have visited. In 1920, he went to the region of Siberia occupied by the Japanese Army, visited Vladivostok and Nikolsk, as well as Tsitsihar and Mergen in Manchuria. He continued his investigations in the vicinity of those places where there were said to be sites of the Chinggis Khan legends, until he reached Man-chou-li beyond the Great Khingan Mountains, the Onon River, and Chita and Aginskii Datsan in Buryatia, explaining to the Japanese reader that in each case the customs of the Mongols he met closely resembled Japanese ones, with the final aim of establishing his theory that Chinggis Khan was Minamoto no Yoshitsune.

Japan was in the middle of the so-called Dispatch of Troops to Siberia policy of 1918–22 after the Russian Revolution in 1917. 72,000 troops entered Siberia, and about two divisions of 25,000 or 26,000 stayed after-

wards. It can easily be imagined how important the book by Oyabe was for the people left at home having sent their family members to a faraway place, and to the ordinary Japanese soldier whose duties lay with an army without any stated purpose. The soldiers must have found some comfort believing that the place they were now in had been settled by Yoshitsune long, long ago.

Japan lost the Pacific War to the Americans in 1945, and the Japanese dominion was limited to the Japanese Archipelago. Six million, six hundred thousand Japanese citizens repatriated to the islands. With this, *Man-Mō* (Manchuria and Mongolia) became nostalgic words denoting the place to which one was denied access again. At the same time, any mention of Japanese activity on the Asian Continent was forbidden. In the resulting diminution of the Japanese spirit, the Chinggis Khan-Yoshitsune legend was nevertheless kept alive. Akimitsu Takagi, a detective story writer widely popular in Japan, published a mystery titled, *Jingisu Kan no Himitsu* (*The Genghis Khan Mystery*) in 1958 using Mataichiro Oyabe. It was a huge success, and made into a pocket-sized edition still sold today (Takagi 1958).

LIFE OF KENCHŌ SUYEMATSU

Before closing this discussion of on Kenchō Suyematsu, who wrote about Chinggis Khan being the same person as Minamoto no Yoshitsune for the first time, let me provide a short description of his life. He returned to Cambridge in 1904 at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, over a century ago, and gave at least four major lectures, as well as publishing twenty treatises in Great Britain and France.

He was born the fourth son of a land lord of the feudal clan of Kokura in Northern Kyushu in 1855, toward the end of the Edo period. He was admitted to a private school at eleven years of age. In 1871, or four years after the Meiji Restoration, he came to Tokyo at seventeen years of age, and was admitted to the newly opened Tokyo Normal School. However he failed to become enamoured of the school and soon left. He received an assignment as a reporter at the *Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbun* and used his journalism to set forth his arguments against the government of the day. He was soon discovered by Hirobumi Itō, the great statesman of Japan, and entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the age of twenty-one. He was sent to England in 1878, and studied in Cambridge on a national scholarship until 1886 (Tamae 1992).

Records kept at the Cambridge University show that in 1880 he entered Cambridge after two years in London. While in Cambridge he lived in St John's College, and passed the Law Tripos in 1884. It appears that he received the Master of Law in 1888 after he returned to Japan.²

Upon returning home in 1886, he was appointed secretary for the

Ministry of Home Affairs under Prime Minister Itō. In 1887 he was appointed the director of the Bureau of Prefectural Administration for the Ministry of Home Affairs and became, in 1888, the first Doctor of Literature in Japan. In 1889 he married the second daughter of Itō the Prime Minister. He became a statesman when he was successfully elected a member of the House of Representatives in its first election in 1890. He was appointed Director General of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau of the Second Itō Cabinet at the age of thirty-eight years in 1892. Next, he became a baron and a member of the House of Peers and in 1900 he assumed the office of the Minister of Home Affairs under the Fourth Itō Cabinet, with the nickname 'the fountain of wisdom for Itō'. At the time of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 and 1905, he was dispatched to Great Britain, with which his country had formed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and helped win support for Japan there. For distinguished service he was named Viscount in 1907, and then in 1918 a member of the Imperial Academy, and a Doctor of Law.

Suyematsu, a man of such high standing in the official and academic worlds, was at the same time translating a novel, *Dora Thorne*, by the British lady of letters Bertha M. Clay and published it in four volumes in 1890 under the title *Tanima no Hime-Yuri*. It became a sensation, and the wife of the Emperor Meiji, the Empress Dowager Shōken, was said to have asked Suyematsu for the next volume through a chamberlain. In his later years he studied Roman law, and is said to have introduced Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to the Japanese public probably as his first critic.

It was symbolic of the Meiji period that a man such as this wrote that Chinggis Khan had been Japanese. The medieval Mongols had advanced as far as Germany in the thirteenth century, and came to be seen as representing Asian peoples to the Europeans. This was why Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, 1752–1840, a German anthropologist, named the yellow race the 'Mongoloids'. Among the Japanese who learned this term in the Meiji era, many thought simply of the Mongolian Plateau as the home of their race. To the Japanese, raised in an insular nation, it was encouraging to think that their race had once spread as far as Europe.

Kenchō Suyematsu, the first translator of *Genji Monogatari* into a European language, later said that he was moved by patriotism to show how high the cultural standard of Japan was by introducing Japanese stories that were a thousand years old. The story he concocted of Genghis Khan being Gen Gikei also surely shows his patriotism. Contrary to the intent of the Suyematsu however, the fantasy inspired his fellow Japanese to visit the strange land of continental China. Moreover, this theory greatly enhanced a strong affinity felt towards the Mongol people by the Japanese.

NOTES

¹The present paper is a revision of the report to the 47th Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC) held at Queen's College in Cambridge on 31 July–4 August 2004. The PIAC is an assembly of researchers in linguistics, history and ethnology working in Central Eurasian studies. It was convened at Cambridge and I, who happened to be Japanese, selected a topic that related to Japan, Cambridge and the Mongols. That was the story that asserts Chinggis Khan to be Minamoto no Yoshitsune.

This tale is perhaps of greater interest to specialists of anthropology and sociology than historians such as myself. In this case I hope to engage the interest of English-speaking readers by presenting here a case of *The Invention of Tradition* in Japan.

²A Suyematsu family member looked into records in Cambridge and found that he was placed at the Third Class of Law Tripos in 1880 in *The Historical Register of the University of Cambridge to the year 1917* in the University Library, in the footnote which it is said 'Viscount Kencho Suematsu, Japanese Privy Councillor, formerly Minister of Communications and Minister of the Interior.'

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