

THE MONGOLIAN GREAT KHANS IN MONGOLIAN MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE

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For a study of the mythological and religious role of historical persons of the Mongolian ethnic groups a large amount of different sources can be utilised. In addition to the data in contemporary and earlier historical sources, primarily in the chronicles, a considerable quantity of folklore material of different genres contains information on this topic. Historical persons appear in different mythological and ritual roles in the folk religion and the folk belief system. In the toponymic myths and legends (Khal. *domog*) usually the most venerated historical heroes of a region are connected to a certain place name, and in the aetiological myths they act as the creators of certain customs. The present article surveys only the mythological and religious role of the Mongolian great khans. It offers a typology of the main motives connected to the above-mentioned aspects of the worship of a historical person.

Key words: Great Mongol Empire, mythological motives, Mongolian folklore, fire cult, toponymy.

The cult of historical persons in Mongolian folk religion and mythology has been investigated by several authors, such as Heissig (1980), Rinčen (1975), and Bira (1994).¹

The present article aims to show the different mythological and religious roles of the members of the ruling Chingisid clan, first of all those of the great khans, and to demonstrate the various aspects of their worship and cult. This study is part of a larger research project intended to study various aspects of Mongolian mythology on the broadest basis of sources.² Numerous texts of various genres from the folklore of different Mongolian ethnic groups have been chosen for the text corpus of investigation. The main source for a mythology study is the genre *domaγ* (Mong.), *domog*

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¹ A couple of weeks after the present study had been completed and read at the conference *Medieval Nomads* in Szeged, a new study appeared on this topic, written by A. D. Cendina (2004) who used similar folklore source material and in some respects had similar results as the author of these lines.

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(Khal.)³ that is traditionally considered to be the myth and legend in Mongolian folklore and also in written literature. We do not want to discuss here what the phenomenon of 'myth' in the nomadic context means. There is no doubt that theoretically the myth among the Inner Asian nomads or the taiga hunters and fishermen should be treated differently from the mythology of sedentary civilisations with the tradition of writing. What we call a myth is the Mongolian genre *domog* (Khal.) that represents an aetiological plot, in numerous cases with fewer connections to a religious or ritualistic background. Because of this specific nature of the *domog* there are theoretical studies on Mongolian mythology, concerning even the *raison d'être* of this phenomenon.⁴ Nonetheless, owing to careful studies of historical and folklore records, and not the least as a result of the vivid fieldwork activities of the past decades, more and more mythological plots have got into the focus of attention and offered rich source material for further studies.

Concerning the origin of the *domogs*, sometimes it is hard to identify whether the mythologems are of native origin (by native we understand the common heritage of nomadic and hunting/fishing societies) or they are borrowings from the neighbouring civilisations. But these plots have constituted the mythology of the Mongols and form even nowadays their mythological consciousness.

Historical persons in the mythology

Numerous *domogs* have originated from the worship and cult of different historical persons of the Mongols since the 13th century. Until the 15th century there was one mainstream of historical persons' worship, namely the Chingisid tradition which survived till now in almost all the territories where Mongols live. Since the 15th century another determinative region appeared in Western Mongolia, where one can find the traces of the Chingisid tradition, but the worship of leaders and prominent persons of the Oirad ruling clans is prevailing. In our previous studies we tried to investigate the different mythological traditions of the Oirads, and the cult of Oirad historical persons.⁵ The present paper is devoted to the aspects of worship of the Chingisid great khans from the period of the Great Mongolian Empire (13th–14th centuries) that survived in the Mongolian mythology, folk beliefs, and folk religion. The veneration of historical persons, and principally of Chingis Khan, is rooted in ancestor worship,

³ The following abbreviations, customary in the academic writings of Mongolian studies, are used: Mong. = Written Mongolian, Khal. = Khalkha (*xalx*), Bur. = Buriad, Oir. = Oirad (Khal. *oird*, Oir. *ōrd*), W.Oir = Written Oirad.

⁴ For a brief summary of theories, the pros and contras, cf. Lőrincz (1973), Birtalan (2001, pp. 893–906).

⁵ In an article dedicated to Ligeti Lajos's 100th birthday we tried to demonstrate the difference between the Chingisid and Oirad traditions of ancestry, and the different background between their legitimisation endeavours. The Western-Mongolian Oirads found the legitimisation of their rule in other mythological background than the Eastern-Mongolian tradition, though in not less important mythologems than the Chingisid wolf, deer, sun beam: in the swan, owl, birch, as transformed celestial spirits representing the whole world conception (Birtalan 2002a).

according to which the soul of the deceased can become the protector (or also the enemy) of his clan and the soul of the clan chief (in our case of the khan) becomes the protector of a larger community, i.e. the whole Mongolian population. The cult of the progenitors of the ruling Borjigid clan roots in the pre-Buddhist concept of protector spirit (Mong. *ongyon*, Khal. *ongon*) worship⁶ but it also came under the influence of the Chinese ancestor cult. This complex Sino-Mongolian syncretic worship developed into the official cult of the Mongolian elite during and after the Yuan period in Eastern and Southern Mongolia (Bira 1994). We will not go into further details of the official cult of the ruling clan; it has been extensively investigated recently by a number of leading researchers, such as Solongyod Qurčabayatur (1999), Sayinžiryal – Šaraldai (1983), Klaus Sagaster (1992–1993 and others), Elisabetta Chiodo (1989–1991, 1992–1993 and others), Sh. Bira (1994) and Tatjana D. Skrynnikova (1993, 1995, 1997). In the present paper the following four major fields of mythology and folk religion will be examined:

1. Evidences of toponymy, aetiological motives in the *domogs* concerning the origin of place names.
2. Motives of *domogs* referring to the activity of a cultural hero (invention of objects, customs, first performance of rituals) significant from the point of view of nomadic civilisation.
3. Mythological motives of rituals, fire worship and smith cult on the basis of shamanic and other ritual texts (invocations and fire ritual texts of different genres).
4. Mythological and folklore motives in which the name of a historical person is used for the legitimization of the hero or sometimes of the antagonist, without any real connection to the name's holder.

Toponymy connected to historical persons

A considerable amount of *domogs* (aetiological myths) involves plots explaining the origin of different place names throughout the territories inhabited by Mongols. Names of historical persons and also mythical beings are closely connected to the toponymy of particular places; local inhabitants try to emphasise the importance of certain places with their usually pseudo-relation to a famous person (or mythical being). From the members of the ruling Chingisid clan, Chingis appears in most cases as a historical person who is connected to a particular place. Other members of his family also appear in a few stories, but they usually only play a secondary role. In the few examples Chingis' mother Hö'elün (see below) and his brothers (who actually do not belong to the ruling clan) Qasar (Khal. Xasar) and Belgütei (Khal. Belgüdei, see below) or later descendants, as Toyon Temür (1320–1370) figure in *domogs* (Sodnomdaš 1993, p. 24). Qasar, who is considered to be the progenitor of the Oirad ruling clan, the Čoros, is represented as the sharpshooter, who makes Chingis Khan angry and jealous with his shots. Chingis Khan's younger brother Belgüdei appeared in a *domog* as a person with supernatural power. He was caught by Chingis Khan (the story

⁶ On the *ongon* worship, cf. Birtalan (2001, pp. 1020–1022).

does not explain the reason why he was caught) and tied up to a cart carrying *cegē* “kumis”. He wished to escape, lifted up the cart with its burden and ran away. While escaping he spilt the kumis and so was the whitish *Cegēn nūr* “Kumis lake” created in Khentei (Khal. Xentī) province, Binder district (Sampildendew 1992, p. 26).

Several new fieldwork results have appeared in the past decades concerning toponymy: collections of *domogs* from Inner Mongolia (such as the series published by Ünenči) as well as from the Mongolian Republic (Sampildendew 1992, Sodnomdaš 1993, Süxbātar 2001). The most common motives of toponymic *domogs* are connected to typical nomadic objects used or activities carried out by a historical or mythical person, in most cases by Chingis Khan. Shapes, forms of natural phenomena preserve the memory of his visits. The name of a historical person can appear in the place name, e.g. Čingisīn ūl “Chingis’ mountain” or he is only referred to – in numerous cases – in the *domog* recorded about its origin, e.g. Namarjā “Autumn camp” i.e. “Autumn camp [of Chingis Khan]”.

Concerning the Western-Mongolian territories, the Oirad rulers and heroes – first of all Galdan Khan (W. Oir. Γaldan Bošoqtu) figure mostly in toponymic *domogs*.⁷ Although Potanin, while travelling in Western Mongolia (also in the Altai, a typical Oirad territory), recorded some similar stories (that will follow below), the hero of which is Chingis Khan, his informants were not native Oirads, but immigrants from Khalkha and Buriad regions (Potanin 1883, pp. 211, 228–233).

Further we would like to offer a typology of surveyed toponymic *domogs*, according to their main motives.

1. Toponymy connected to the natural forms of the surface.

1.1. Hollow cliff of a mountain shaped as if it had been shot by an arrow. Such a hollow cliff called Čingis ūl “Chingis’ mountain” is near Nalaikh city (Khal. Nalaix) not far away from Ulaanbaatar, and also the mountains called Čingisīn gurwan conj “Chingis’ three towers” in northern Mongolia, Khöwsgöl (Khal. Xöwsgöl) province, Cecerleg district. Both places are said to be originated from Chingis Khan’s arrow shot, who having rested for a while tried his sharpshooter’s abilities and shot through a cliff (Süxbātar 2001, pp. 247, 248; Sampildendew 1992, p. 23, Seres manuscript).

1.2. Stones, lying smoothly in the steppe, lonely, spearing natural stone columns or the famous deer stones (Khal. *bugan čulū*) suggest similarity to certain objects used by the nomads in their everyday life. The several hundred metre rows of natural white stone columns in Khentei (Khal. Xentī) province, Galšar (Khal. Galšar) district, are called by the community Chingisīn gūnī jel the “Tether for Chingis’ mare” (Süxbātar 2001, pp. 247–248; cf. also Potanin 1883, p. 230). The Great Khan had a rest at this place and wishing to drink some fresh kumis he ordered to tie and milk some mares here. Süxbātar pointed out that the motive of tying horse(s) to tether (in the landscape a row of stones) or a hitching post (lonely rocks, stones) is wide spread throughout Mongolia. In Bayankhongor (Khal. Bayanxongor) province, Bömbögör district there is a mountain that is called in a similar way, as *xadas* “pale”

⁷ Galdan, as one of the last fighters for the freedom of the Mongols (against the Manchu conquerors) has a cult among the Khalkhas as well. A sacred tree, supposedly fertility tree is named after him in the Gobi. Personal communication by Zs. Szilágyi.

for Chingis' mare (Süxbātar 2001, p. 248, also Potanin 1883, p. 230). In Sükhbaatar province there is a hollowed rock called Gadas čulū "Pale stone" or Senjītīn gūnī jelnī gadas "Hollowed pale of mare's tether" or Čingisīn gūnī jel "Chingis' mare tether" considered the lying place of colts (Seres manuscript). The folk tradition strictly differentiates the stones resembling the form of a tether for a mare (Khal. *gūnī jel*) and the hitching post (Khal. *morinī uyā* or *morinī šon*), or pale (Khal. *xadas*) of Chingis' mount: a hollowed natural stone column in Tōw province, Mōngōnmorit district, or in Bayankhongor province, Gurwanbulag district, etc. is considered as the hitching post of Chingis (Süxbātar 2001, p. 250). The stones might also recall the form of a *tulga* "brazier" (originally the nomadic fire place of the Mongols consisted of tree stones). In Bayankhongor province, Galuut (Khal. Galūt) district when the khan had tea made for his ten thousand warriors, he is supposed to have left his "brazier" at that place, where three huge rocks stand now (Süxbātar 2001, pp. 250–251, for similar motives cf. Potanin 1883, p. 230). In Tōw province, Bayandsürkh (Khal. Bayan jürx) district a rocky mountain is considered the huge brazier of Chingis Khan, and is called Tulgat gacā "Rocky mountain with brazier". Chingis Khan prepared his food and tea using these mountains as brazier (Sampildendew 1992, p. 23). A rock row in Sükhbaatar province, Bayandelger district is considered to be the pathway that remained after the gallop of Chingis' horse (*Čingisīn dawxiĭ ōngörsön mör*, Seres manuscript).

1.3. Group of stones, pebbles scattered in the steppe are considered as the resting soldiers of Chingis Khan, the place called Šarnūdīn xad "Rock of Sharnuud" in Sükhbaatar province, Ongon district (Süxbātar 2001, p. 249). A territory covered with pebbles of smaller size suggesting the droppings of a horse, is called "Droppings of Chingis Khan's horse" and local people explain the place name Bāwxain gow' from the similarly sounding Bāsan gow' "Dropping gobi", with reference to the determinative surface formation of the territory (Süxbātar 2001, p. 249). Similar plot recorded Potanin: black pebbles (coal?) scattered on the ground are considered the droppings of Chingis flock of sheep (collected from a Khalkha informant by Potanin 1883, p. 231). In Khentei province, Delgerkhan (Khal. Delgerxan) district Chingis' burden camel dropped the stones loaded on his back, that is why there are scattered rocks in the flat place (Sampildendew 1992, p. 25).

1.4. A flat mountain, without a peak could suggest several images: such a mountain is Döš ūl "Anvil mountain" near to the Gangīn cagān owō in the Dariganga territory in Sükhbaatar province (Khal. Sükhbātar) which is considered the anvil of Chingis Khan. The *domog* explains that the mountain used to be peaked, but because of the smiting of the sword it became flat. Chingis put his heated sword into the nearest lake that almost dried up and since then it was called Gan nūr "Drought lake", to-day Ganga nūr (Süxbātar 2001, p. 247; Sampildendew 1992, pp. 23–24, Seres manuscript). The Döš širē ūl "Anvil altar mountain" in Tōw province, Bayandelger district is also regarded as a smith's anvil used by Chingis when he edged his blunt sword. There is a peakless mountain in Tōw province Khishig öndör (Khal. Xišig öndör) district which is supposed to be "beheaded" by Chingis Khan, because he lost the tag of his tinder-pouch and broke the peak off to replace it (Sampildendew 1992, p. 24).

1.5. A natural pathway can be imagined as an artificial route, the way of a marching army, the pathway crossing through the mountains, cliffs. There is one in Khöwsgöl province, Bayandsürkh (Khal. Bayanjürx) district called Čingisīn jam “Route of Chingis”. Local people explain that Chingis Khan marching on his campaign to the Northwest could not pass through this territory that is why his soldiers broke a way here (Süxbātar 2001, p. 249; Sampildendew 1992, p. 52). In the Dariganga territory Sükhbaatar province, Bayandelger district, a pathway, similar to a camel cart’s trails is called Čingisīn teregnī mör “Trails of Chingis’ cart” (Süxbātar 2001, p. 251). A shorter wide path than the previous ones has been considered as Čingisīn ūrga “Horse-catching pole of Chingis” in Bayakhongor province, Erdenecogt district, where a white pathway goes over the mountain (Süxbātar 2001, p. 251).

1.6. Smaller natural hollows are considered as Čingisīn morinī mör “Hoof prints of Chingis’ horse” (Süxbātar 2001, pp. 249–250), as in the hillside of the Bogdo ūl near Ulaanbaatar. A *domog* says that when Chingis Khan watered his horse at the Tuul river (Khal. Tül) he looked around and wished to get up the mountain Bogdo ūl, and the hoof prints of his horse remained in the rocks. Similar *domogs* have been collected from Bayankhongor and Süxbātar provinces, from two quite distant territories of Mongolia (Süxbātar 2001, pp. 249–250). In Sükhbaatar province near to the mountain Šilīn bogd there are seven holes in a plane rock considered to be the horse watering place of Chingis Khan (or according to a later tradition that of the famous Dariganga outlaw, Toroi bandi, cf. Seres manuscript).

2. Place names that preserve reminiscences of left or forgotten objects of a historical person or an action carried out by him at that place.

2.1. Forgotten objects and things left behind.

The Gurwan nūr “Three lakes” in Khentiy province are called the round base of the *ger* “felt tent” of Chingis, his wife (no closer identification), and his son (no closer identification), or his mother, Hö’elün (Sampildendew 1992, p. 19). The base of Chingis’ yurt is still appreciable in Dornod province, where a round place is always hot and is comprehended as the fireplace of Chingis’ tent. Local people ascribe healing power to this place (Sampildendew 1992, p. 22). Prevalent are the plots about the typical nomadic paraphernalia, left behind by a historical person, most of them connected to Chingis Khan. In Khöwsgöl province, Cecerleg district he is supposed to have left behind his *xürem* “frock”, so the place is called Xüremt tolgoi “Barrow with frock”, preserving the reminiscence of the event when Chingis Khan crossing this place forgot his garment (Sampildendew 1992, p. 21). Large teapots used earlier in monasteries by monks are often found in the Mongolian landscape, where a destroyed monastery was situated in the past. Some of these teapots are considered as Čingisīn togō “Teapot of Chingis”. One famous teapot is still in the Dariganga territory (Sükhbaatar province, Bayandelger district) and it is said to have been dropped by Chingis Khan accidentally from his saddle thongs (Khal. *ganjaḡin togō*). (Süxbātar 2001, p. 250, Seres manuscript). Cf. also the motive of the left brazier No. 1.2.

2.2. Customary actions, deeds, sudden happenings.

2.2.1. The recent custom of the first washing of a newborn infant carried out in memory of the newborn Chingis Khan’s first washing, gave the name to one of the

lakes Gurwan nūr “Three lakes” in Khentei province. Local inhabitants explain that is why it is called *Boldog nūr*: the infant had been washed here, and it is explained from the Khalkha *ugāj bolgoson* “(he) became washed” (Sampildendew 1992, pp. 19–20).

2.2.2. Sudden happenings. In Khöwsgöl province, Chandamaniöndör (Khal. Čandaman’ öndör) district Chingis killed his bull of burden, because it dropped the load from its back, so the place is called Bux bulgigč “Killing the bull”. (Sampildendew 1992, p. 22). Near this place there is a pass called Xöwön *dawā* “Cotton-wool pass”, because Chingis Khan falling off his horse did not feel any pain (Sampildendew 1992, p. 22).

Place names connected to historical or mythical persons could be given after the form of the surface analogous to objects or phenomena of the nomadic way of life. The hero in such plots appears either in his natural size or in numerous cases as a giant of supernatural size, in accordance with the conception of the historical hero as a supernatural, mythical being. Numerous, presumably non-Mongolian place names were “Mongolised” in a distorted form, their alleged etymologies being based on similarly sounding Mongolian expressions and a historical person’s name was used only to legitimate the explanation.

Historical person as a cultural hero

Predominantly regionally respected historical personalities appear in the role of a cultural hero: in Western-Mongolia Amarsanā, Šuna, in the Khöwsgöl area Dayan Dērx,⁸ among the Gansu Mongols Čoytu tayiji (Jebšig – Sarangerel 1986, pp. 65–76), etc. However, from among the great khans Chingis Khan of the Borjigid clan is also commonly respected as the creator of numerous economic objects used in the everyday life of the nomads, and as the inventor of various customs, habits in the sacral life of the Mongols.

The usually short *domogs* about the process and result of creation and invention have been inserted into the Mongolian chronicles since the 17th–19th centuries⁹ and are told even today in the Eastern and Southern Mongolian territories; still they constitute a living part of Mongolian folklore. The creation of the world is ascribed to Chingis as the creator (Potanin’s data collected from a shamaness in Western Mon-

⁸ Dayan Dērx was the first or the most powerful Mongolian shaman, whose cult is still alive in the northern Khöwsgöl province. He is worshipped as shamanic protector spirit, fertility spirit, and he became canonised into the Buddhist pantheon as the warrior protector of the Teaching. In numerous *domogs* connected to him a motive of escaping is recurring. He ran away from Chingis Khan because he had stolen his youngest wife (*var.*: youngest daughter). While escaping he left behind several of his necessary objects that are preserved in the toponymy. For similar motives, cf. in the motive typology No. 2.1. For Dayan Dērx in Mongolian folk religion, cf. Birtalan (2001, pp. 967–969).

⁹ In details cf. Heissig (1980, pp. 65–68). He quoted several *domog* fragments from the chronicles, such as the Bolur erike, Bolur toli, Erdeni-yin erike, Altan tobči.

golia, 1883, p. 231), the invention of tobacco¹⁰ (Khal. *tamxi*), the kumis (Khal. *airag*), and also the first performance of some habitual actions of nomadic life, such as the striking of the stirrup when the horse urinates, or the first performance of bloodless offering, the so called *seter* (Heissig 1980, p. 68). The explanation of the reason why the Mongols bang their stirrups when their horses urinate seemed to be a very intriguing problem. There are several versions explaining its origin, and all of them are connected to Chingis Khan. A common element of the stories is that a warrior was lost because he stopped for a short time while his horse was urinating. The further destiny of the lost hero is given differently in the variants: (1) he was lost for three months, (2) he was killed by the enemies, (3) he was drowned in a river. Since then, add the stories, the Great Khan ordered to give signal to others while someone's horse urinated (Sampildendew 1992, pp. 35–36; Heissig 1980, p. 68). In the Inner Mongolian folklore sources different sacral actions are also legitimised with the Great Khan's name, even if they were not performed by himself but usually by a member of his retinue such as asking the name and age of the bride during the wedding ceremony (Heissig 1980, pp. 66–67), or inquiring at the bride-groom about his family and his purpose before letting him into the ceremonial tent (Khal. *ūden darlagīn üg* "saying during the pressing of the door"). This last ritual was supposed to be invented by a member of Chingis' suite, namely Čindaγa sečen, in order to uncover the fake suitor of the Great Khan's bride (Heissig 1999).

The consecration rituals for the saddle thongs before hunting (Heissig 1980, pp. 67–68), and performing libation with the first mare-milk and first kumis (Heissig 1980, p. 65) are also ascribed to Chingis Khan. Other Great Khans of the Borjigid lineage figure very rarely, if at all in such roles.

An appellation on the first performance of a sacral action appears usually at the beginning of ritual texts of different genres; from the numerous examples here only one fragment will be quoted. In later eulogies based on folk poetry but written by famous performers of rituals there are also similar motives. Gelegbalsang (1846–1923) a professional blessing performer wrote the following blessing: *Gegū-yin sang-un irügel* "Segens zur Stutenweihe" (translation of Heissig 1972, pp. 465, 496). The fragment describes the first performance of pulling the tethering-line for the colts which is a significant part of the feast of the first kumis.

<i>Ögkümjitei sayin жүг-теген</i> <i>Öni urtu jel-iyen tataju</i> <i>Qayan Činggis-un (sic!) toγtaγaysan</i> <i>Qalqa mongγol-un yangsil-un (sic!) dayaju ...</i>	In der angegebenen Richtung hat man Die sehr langen Leinen gespannt. Dem von Chingis Khan festgesetzten Brauch der Khalkha-Mongolen folgend ...
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Particularly numerous motives are connected to the invention of the milk brandy and to the drinking habits and customs. The milk brandy (Khal. *šimīn arxi*)

¹⁰ According to another tradition the tobacco is the result of a demon's creation (Cerensodnom 1989, p. 165).

occupies an important role both in the sacral and in the everyday life of the Mongols.¹¹ The Mongols consume it when guests arrive, and also for festivities and libation (Khal. *cacal*, Mong. *sačuli*, *čačuli*). Even contemporaneous sources from the time of the Great Mongolian Empire report about the troubles of heavy drinking of the khans and the ruling elite, and it has been a serious problem among common people too. According to some myths milk brandy was the invention of the mythical demonic being Rāhu (Potanin 1883, p. 212).

Chingis Khan is said to have made a bow before drinking alcohol, thereby giving an air of solemnity to it and emphasising the necessity of temperance, especially to the younger people. Cf. e.g. the motive in which Chingis remained clear-headed while his younger brothers got drunk (Sampildendew 1992, p. 34).

A group of *domogs*, however, stress the necessary presence of milk brandy in a nomadic society: when Chingis Khan tried to save the Mongol society from the harm of alcoholic beverage and prohibited the preparation of milk brandy, no substance remained for offerings in the libations, therefore *lus*, the spirits of waters and earth,¹² became offended and stopped the waters and rain, and a drought threatened the whole land. Only an old couple, who despite the prohibition continued distilling milk brandy and offered it to the spirits, had abundant pastures and well-fed cattle. Being confronted with these facts, Chingis Khan allowed again the distillation of milk brandy (Sampildendew 1992, pp. 42–43).

Chingis Khan is regarded in some *domogs* of ethnogenetic context as the denominator of Mongolian clans, such as the Mayu mingyan in Inner Mongolia and others (Mostaert 1937, pp. 126–131; Sampildendew 1992, p. 47), and also as progenitor of the Kazaks (Sampildendew 1992, pp. 29–30).

Historical person in the rituals

Shamanic and other ritual texts contain mythologems, motives of the fire worship and cult of smithery protected in numerous cases by the great khans of the Borjigid clan. From the very rich repertoire of shamanic texts¹³ usually the Mong. *yal-un sudur* “fire history” and the shamanic invocation (Khal. *dūdlag*) contain motives of the fire myth in accordance with the creation process which started with the lighting of the fire or other motives that promoted the fire to the rank of the most important elements of the origin of the world.¹⁴ From the point of view of our study the most important motives in the fire mythology are the following: (i) the origin of fire, (ii) the nature of the connection between the fire and its lord spirit/god, (iii) the motives of lighting and perpetuation of the fire by the spirits/gods/spiritualised historical persons.

¹¹ In details, cf. Birtalan (2005).

¹² On the role and nature of the spirit-world in Mongolian mythology and the origin and worship of the khtonic beings, the *lus*, cf. Birtalan (2001, pp. 1006–1007).

¹³ For the typology of Mongolian ritual texts, in particular the shamanic texts, cf. Birtalan (2002b); for the typology of fire ritual texts, see Dumas (1987), Barta (2001).

¹⁴ For the mythologems of creation and the origin (without creation) of the world, cf. Birtalan (2001, pp. 1062–1065).

Unlike in the toponymic *domogs*, in the mythology of fire other members of the Borjigid clan have a more important share than Chingis Khan. The most frequently mentioned historical person in fire striking is Chingis' third son, Čayadai and in guarding and keeping the fire his spouse, called in the texts Čangqulang. Čayadai is a beloved figure of the literary genre "Wise sayings of Chingis Khan", he is mostly depicted as a candid, fair ruler, but he must accept his father's decisions (Heissig 1976). Besides them, the Yuan emperor Kubilai (Mong. Qubilai) as the *cakravartin* (from Sanskrit) "King of the Buddhist Faith" and his wife called in the texts Čambui or Ĵambui, Chingis' parents Yisügei–Hö'elün, Chingis himself with his wife Börte, and also his four sons (Ĵoči, Ögedei, Čayadai, Tolui) appear in the role of fire lighting and guarding.

Suutu boyda-yin suryal Suutai qatun-un üliger bölüge.	It has been the teaching of his celebrated holiness and the case of the celebrated queen.
Čagarwardi-yin qayan Čambui qatun qoyar-un Ĵiyayaysan Ĵim-a, suryaysan sudur bolai.	This has been the postulated way and the taught teaching of the Čakravartin Khan and Čambui queen.

Čayadai and Čangqulang are the most important fire spirits among the Buriads too under the name Saxyāдай and Sanxalan (Rinčen 1975, pp. 84–85; Birtalan 2001, pp. 1029–1030). On the basis of his role as fire spirit/god Čayadai and his spouse became also respected – now separately from their connection to the fire – as the general shamanic protectors and are invoked either among other spirits, gods in a longer list of protectors or also individually. The Darkhads in Khöwsgöl dedicate special texts to them (Rinčen 1975, pp. 84–85).

Chingis Khan himself appears hidden in the 1st person, who carries out the offering, he refers to his parents as the creators of the fire and also lists his sons by name and calls them kindlers of the fire.¹⁵

Yisükei bayatur ečige minu čakiysan Yeke Ögelen eke minu üliyegsen ... Ĵöb buyan-iyar učiraysan Ĵöči, Čayadai, Ögedei, Tolui Dörben boyda öskegsen.	My father Yisügei has lit [the fire], My great mother Hö'elün has blown it. The four holy [sons] Ĵöči, Čayadai, Ögedei, Tolui, who appeared with the befitting virtue have kindled [the fire].
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¹⁵ *Altan uruy-un Odqan Talayiqan eke-yin takily-a* (Rinčen 1975, pp. 32–33).

Historical person as eponym of heroes in narratives

There is a heroic epic entitled *Xān Činggis* (Rintchen 1963, pp. 32–88) but the protagonist is not Chingis Khan as the title of the epic would suggest, but a khan's daughter, whose secret name is the great khan's name (title). The use of the name of Čingis Khan emphasises only the valiance of the khan's daughter. The epos *Xān Čingis* contains a story of a brave woman, a khan's daughter who has been pursued by a transforming demon. The demon appears as a begging monk that chases the girl through the world layers (upper world and under world). The heroic woman overcomes him with the help of animal-shaped helpers: her horse, the animal-shaped spirits of the horse (red fox, blue fox, cat), the messenger crows, the two dogs Asar-Basar.¹⁶

Conclusions

It is not surprising that among the great khans of the Mongolian Empire Chingis Khan appears most frequently in different mythological and folk religious plots. By placing the figure of a historical person in aetiological myths (*domog*) the community aims to legitimise their habitat (toponymy), different – mostly sacral – actions, deeds, and also important objects (role of a cultural hero), ascribing them to a historical person, in the surveyed material mostly to Chingis Khan as their creator or first performer. Alongside with Chingis Khan, other historical personalities of regional importance also appear in the same role. Other great khans, Chingis' parents, descendants with their spouses figure quite frequently in a more limited group of myths, myths fragments, the fire ritual texts, as the creators or protectors. What is more, Chingis' second son Čayadai (with his spouse, Čangqulang) got a superior role to Chingis Khan. Through their importance in fire myths Čayadai and Čangqulang became respected as shamanic protector gods and spirits.

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¹⁶ The zoomorphic helpers listed here are types of shamanic helping spirits, see Birtalan (2001).

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