



**Great personalities in the history of the Black
Sea during the Middle Ages:
the case of Genghis Khan**

Balasa Argyroula

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Student Name: Balasa Argyroula
SID: 2201130005

Supervisor: Prof. Eleni Tounta
Examiner A: Dr. Giannis Smarnakis
Examiner B: Dr. Dimitrios Kontogeorgis

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MA in Black Sea Cultural Studies at the International Hellenic University. Genghis Khan was one of the most interesting personalities who went through the Black Sea area during the Middle Ages.

The aim of this dissertation is to provide a detailed presentation and description of Genghis Khan, one of the most significant people in History and one of the most influential figures of all time. The main core of this thesis is the investigation of this unique personality who managed to change Asia and Europe, through his campaigns.

The core of the present inquiry contains a description of the main sources about the Mongols, how the Mongol society was before Genghis Khan and the daily life of the nomadic tribes in Asia. Information about Genghis Khan's efforts to rise and become a leader (*khan*) as well as the way he managed to organize the new Empire, are also provided. Additionally, the Mongol influence to the European and Asian world has been approached.

The principal issue though, apart from his conquests, especially those in the Black Sea area, is the description of his origin, his first and late years which formed his character and made him an immortal individual.

Keywords: Mongols, steppes, Temujin, Genghis Khan, *Eternal Blue Sky*, *Anda*, *Pax Mongolica*, nomadic tribes.

Argyroula Balasa
January 2016

Preface

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I want to thank all my professors of the MA in Black Sea Cultural Studies, of the International Hellenic University who introduced us the students of the MA, to the unknown field of the Black Sea region, the tribes and the cultures from the ancient times until now.

I would also like to thank my family members for their patience and my friends, who supported and encouraged me even if they were far away.

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Introduction

«The Mongol explosion, which shook the globe, was not the effect of a religious stimulus or traceable to climatic change which set the nomads looking for better pastures: its origin is still obscure, but it owed most to the military and organizing ability of Jingiz Khan, the Napoleon of the steppes and a far greater man than Attila».¹

J.J. Saunders



The Mongol Empire, the largest contiguous empire in history, existed during the 13th and 14th century. Originating in the steppes of Central Asia the empire eventually stretched from Central Europe to Japan, extending northwards into Siberia, eastwards and southwards into India and Iran and westwards as far as Arabia. This

¹ Saunders, 1965, 176

nomadic people irrupt into sedentary civilizations and in a few years they reduced the population of the Chinese, Iranian and Caucasian world. The Mongols were nomads of the Eurasian steppes during the Middle Ages who managed to change the life of millions of people. They are considered to be significant historically not only because of their empire- the biggest empire in History- but because of the pressure of their movements and campaigns in China, Persia, India and Europe, which influenced the development of the above lands.

The early history of the Mongols is covered with obscurity and old legends which met the history quite late. The Mongols first realized the significance of the written history after their contact with civilized cultures, which have and use written histories. The world is interested in these “barbaric” peoples and the information is abundant but the linguistic difficulties and the interpretation is difficult. The specialized monographs about them are impressive in number, while the general works concerning the many disciplines of their culture or works with the extended history of these people are extremely rare. The most significant sources about the Mongols are from the eastern and the western world, written by people who met the Mongols and, in some cases, they lived with them. The Europeans were (and still are) mostly informed about the Mongols, by the narrations of the Venetian traveler Marco Polo as well as the Franciscan William of Rubruck, who both traveled as far as Mongolia during the Middle Ages. The basis of all the current books about the Mongols is the *Secret History of the Mongols*, the only native Mongolian work about Genghis Khan, which is the oldest literary work, written after his death. The original work, which is lost, was in the Mongolian language (the Mongols used the Uighur script) though the only remained copies of this work are in Chinese language.

The actual founder and most significant leader of the empire, as well as the most interesting personality in the Mongolian history is Genghis Khan, who unified nomadic tribes and was proclaimed ruler of all Mongols in 1206. This powerful man though lived as an orphanage and outcast at a very early age. It could be these difficulties, the injustice and the betrayal he felt in his own clan, the hostile environment along with his willingness and ambition for dominion which made him to discover the world. Having faith in his self, this poor boy managed to conquer every country was near Mongolia, reaching even Europe. With the title of Khan he started great invasions in China, Persia and in Caucasus lands. The empire grew promptly under his rule and later under his descendants.

It was not only the campaigns though. Genghis Khan evolved the Mongol Empire by practicing the meritocracy, by adopting the Uighur script, by developing the trade, by opening and insuring the Eurasian highways. The communication and the cultural exchange between Europe and Asia expanded, while the Mongols adopted elements from the west and the east.

With this thesis an effort has been made to be investigated the personality of Genghis Khan and the socio-political environment in which he was acting: what was the reason and the way, a poor boy from the steppes became the leader who managed to change the world and whether the environment, the way of life and personal belief can lift or devastate the personal will power. Additionally, the present thesis examines

Genghis Khan's achievements mainly in the Black Sea region, in order to estimate his influence on the Mongol nomads and the others Asian and European political entities.

In Chapter 1 there is an overview of the first eastern and western sources about the Mongols. Emphasis is given to the best known sources: *The Secret History of the Mongols*, Marco Polo's and William of Rubruck's works.

In Chapter 2, the historical background of the Mongols before the appearance of Genghis Khan is presented: what was their relationship and the relation with the Tatars and other Mongol/Turkic tribes of the Middle Ages in Eurasian plateau.

In Chapter 3, there is an overview of Temujin's (future Genghis Khan) life, the origin of his parents and his first years which defined his future life and his character.

In Chapter 4, the Emperor Genghis Khan and the constitution/state organization of the new Mongol Empire are presented. How was he as a ruler? How did his character affect every aspect of his achievement and the life of the Mongol tribe?

In Chapter 5, a description has been given about the state and army of the new Empire. What were his efforts to organize the state and the army, what are the characteristics which separate the Mongol warriors from the other warriors of that time?

In Chapter 6, there is a presentation of the rise and the conquests of the Mongol Empire. What were his campaigns, especially in the Black Sea area?

In Chapter 7, the death of Genghis Khan, as it has been recorded from many scholars, especially in medieval sources. What were the burial customs for an emperor and the importance of the secrecy concerning Genghis Khan's death.

In Chapter 8, Genghis Khan's successors are presented: who were his four sons and how did he share the vast Mongol territory? There is also a presentation of their main conquests and the Golden Horde.

In Chapter 9, there is an examination of what the Mongol influence on the West and East was, what the positive and the negative aspects of the Mongol Empire were and what the main opinion about Genghis Khan was. Also there is an overview of *Pax Mongolica* and the changes that had been occurred in the world of trade and exploration in the Eurasian plateau.

1. The first sources about the Mongols

Even though the Mongol conquests changed the world in Asia and Europe, from Germany to Korea, the literature about these enormous events and great personalities is meager or deal extremely rapidly with them. J.J. Saunders considers that the main reasons for this fact are the extent of the subject and the intimidating linguistic problem: someone who attempts to write a history about this subject should speak fluently Mongol, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Arabic, Armenian, Russian, Georgian, Latin and forms of Turkish, as the sources are in all the above languages.²

The western sources, which sometimes were fictional, helped the Europeans to get acquainted with the distant world of the Mongols, but the main sources of information about these people, were the eastern/muslim ones.³

The most known sources which influenced many scholars are: the work of William of Rubruck, *Interarium fratris Willelm de Rubruquis de ordine fratrum minorum*, the memories of Marco Polo in the work *The travels of Marco Polo* and the most significant Mongol book, *The Secret History of the Mongols*.

The eastern sources

Many historiographers mentioned the appearance and the invasions of the Mongols: among them, one of the most important historiographer of the medieval era was the Arab **Ibn al-Athir** (1160- 1232/1233). Other important eastern historiographers were the Persian **Ata-Malik Juvayni** (1226-1283), who wrote an account with the title *History of the World Conqueror*, also known as *History of the Mongol Invasions (Tarikh-i Jahan-Gusha)*,⁴ the Persian too, **Rashid-al-Din Hamadani** (1247-1318)⁵ who wrote about the Mongols in his work *Compendium of Chronicles*.⁶

The work *Seljuq Sultanate of Rum (Seljukname)*, of the Persian dignitary in Konya and chronicler **Ibn Bibi** (died c. 1284/85) it is also a very important source of information about the relations between the Mongols and the Seljuk Turks.⁷ Another important source for the Mongol invasions in Central Asia and the Middle East is the chronicle of **Shihad al-Din Muhammad al-Nasawi** (died c. 1250) who was a witness of the Mongol invasion of Khorasan in Central Asia.⁸

² Saunders, 2001, 1

³ Σαββίδης, 2004, 13

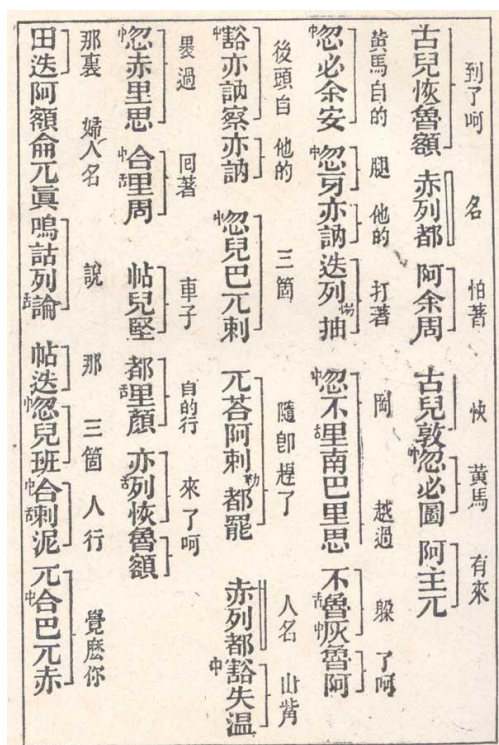
⁴ Boyle, 1971, 342-345

⁵ Morgan, 1986, 18-22

⁶ Σαββίδης, 2004, 14

⁷ Bartusis, 1992, 263

⁸ Levi-Sela, 2010, 125



Layout of a Chinese edition of the *Secret History of the Mongols*, of 1908

This document was the “*Secret History of the Mongols*”. It was written in 1240 AD in Mongolian script and the author remains anonymous. The adaptation of this work was made during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and is with Chinese characters. The main theme of this project is the struggles that led to the foundation of the Mongol Empire in the late 12th-early 13th century, with the appearance of the undisputed leader Genghis Khan.⁹

The *Secret History of the Mongols* is an important source of information about the migrations of the race, the Mongolian language and literature, law, morals and generally about the culture of the Mongols.¹⁰ After the collapse of the empire the *Secret History* was lost and over time scholars believed that this document was probably another myth and essentially, never existed.¹¹

In the 19th century, a copy of the *Secret History* was discovered in Beijing, in Chinese characters. While the document could be read by scholars, however the words did not make any sense because they were recorded in a code with Mongolian sounds of the 13th century. In the 20th century *The Secret History of the Mongols* was decoded, giving a lot of information about the life of Genghis Khan. During the centuries there were many scholars who say that occasionally the valuable manuscript appeared, but this appearance always caused distrust instead of desire for study.¹²

⁹ Σαββίδης, 2004, 15

¹⁰ Morgan, 1986, 6-7

¹¹ Weatherford, 2005, 27

¹² Weatherford, 2005, 29-30

Christian Eastern Sources

Five Christian sources from the East provide significant data about the Mongols of that time: the Syrian historiographer **Bar Hebraeus** or **Ibn al-Ibri** (1225-1286) who mentions the Mongols in his work *Chronicon*,¹³ the Armenian scholar **Vardan Vardapet** (1208-1271) in his work *Havakumn Patsutsyun, History of Armenia*, makes an attempt to record the history of the world around Armenia, including the Mongols whom he met personally as a negotiator between Mongols and Armenians.¹⁴ **Kyriakos** or **Kyrakos ex Ganzack** (1200/10-1271/72) who wrote *The Compendium World History*¹⁵, **Sebath the Commander** or **Kontostaulos** (1208-1276) of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia who gives many information about the Mongols in his *Chronograph*¹⁶ as well as **Gregory of Akner** (c.1250-1335)¹⁷, an 13th century Armenian historian and author, who noted the appearance and the ferocity of the Mongols in his work *History of the Nation of the Archers*:

“The Tatars [...] had not the look of people. Their figure was terrible and indescribable, with huge heads like those of oxen, narrow eyes like chicks and tipped truncated as of cats, protruding noses like dogs, narrow loins like ants, short legs like pigs and by nature with no beard. Strong like lions, have voices more penetrating than and eagle and they appeared suddenly, when there's nobody is waiting for them.”¹⁸

The secrecy around the Mongol leader, made the work of the biographers and historians, extremely difficult as they had little information in order to write about Genghis Khan. The dates of his conquests were known, but the information about his origin, his personality and his personal life, was insignificant. According to rumors, a person from his close environment recorded information about him just after his death, in a secret text. Chinese and Persian scholars claimed that this secret document did exist and that during the zenith of the Mongol Empire, they even saw it. Rashid al-Din, the Persian historiographer said that this document was an “*authentic chronicle*” written in “Mongolian idiom and writing [...] hidden from the easy of the foreigners”.¹⁹

The western sources

The most known chronicle to the European world was **Marco Polo's** book which actually is his memories, written down by Rustichello da Pisa (late 13th

¹³ Oxford dictionary of Byzantium, 1991, 878-879

¹⁴ Lane, 2003, 13

¹⁵ Σαββίδης, 2004, 14

¹⁶ Σαββίδης, 2004, 14

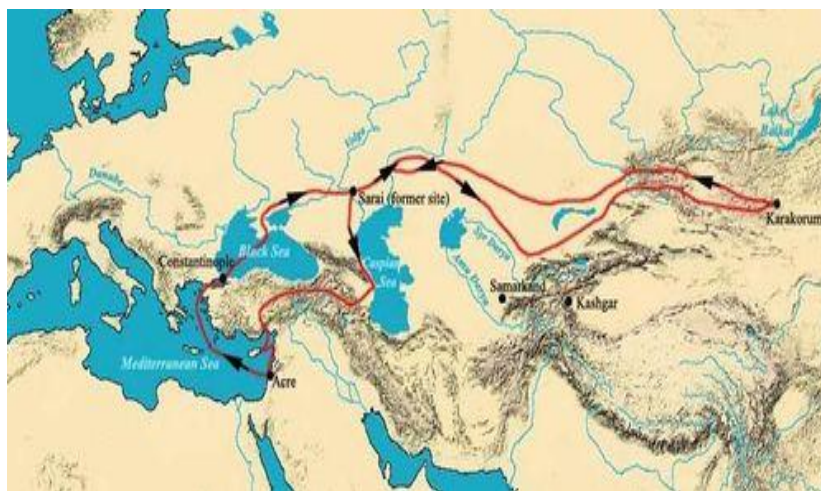
¹⁷ Σαββίδης, 2004, 10

¹⁸ Marshal- Lang, 1980, 205

¹⁹ Allsen, 2004, 88

century), with the title *Devisement du monde*, commonly known as *The travels of Marco Polo*. Europeans began to learn about the world of the Mongols through narratives (according to many scholars there were fiction and not real)²⁰ of the Venetian traveler (c. 1254 – 1324) and his precursors during the 13th century A.D: the Franciscans **Giovanni da Pian del Carpine** (1180/1185/1187-1252) with his work *Ystoria Mongolorum* and **William of Rubruck** (1215-1295), who wrote the *Interarium fratris Willelm de Rubruquis de ordine fratrum minorum*, the Dominican **Simon de Saint Quentin** (1198-1247)²¹, whose work has been lost in its original form and parts have been preserved in Vincent of Beauvais's (1190-1264), with the title *Speculum Historial*, **Vincent du Beauvais** (1189/90 –c.1264) and Benedictine **Matthew of Paris** (1195/1200 – after 1257)²². Also the Roman historian and soldier **Ammianus Marcellinus** (c. 330 A.D.-391 A.D.), in his book *Res Gestae*, which reminds enough the work of Gregory of Akner *History of the Nation of Archers*.²³

William of Rubruck's journey



After Genghis Khan and during Mongka's reign (1251-1259) Louis IX of France sent the Franciscan William of Rubruck on a mission to the Mongol Empire. Rubruck left Constantinople on May 7, 1253 and crossed the Black Sea and Sudak, on May 21st. When he arrived at the Kipchak Khanate, he had the impression that he had entered into another world, as he narrates. The nomad world was extremely different from Europe of that time: a desolate grassy desert and the Mongol cavalry patrols were the only things that Rubruck saw: "And when I found myself among the Tatars, it seemed to me truly that I had been carried into another time, another world." He also adds about the Mongol hordes: "They have no permanent abode, for they have divided amongst themselves the whole of Scythia, which stretches from the Danube to

²⁰ Σαββίδης, 2000, 13

²¹ Σαββίδης, 2000, 13

²² Σαββίδης, 2000, 13

²³ Σαββίδης, 2000, 18-19

the Far East and each captain, according to the number of men under his command, knows the limits of his pasture land and where he must abide at one season or another. At the approach of winter they go down to the warmer countries of the south; in summer they return toward the north." About the appearance of the Mongols he wrote "The men shave a little square on the top of their heads, and what is left of their hair they braid into plaits which hang down each side as far as their ears."²⁴

On July 31 Rubruck arrived at the camp of Sartaq, Batu's son, near the lower Volga and few days later, crossing the Volga, he reached Batu's *ordu*, on the east bank of the river: "Batu was seated on a high gilt chair or throne the size of a bed, approached by three steps. Near him was one of his wives. The other men were seated to the right or left of this lady." Later he crossed the Yaik or Ural River and from there he arrived at the Asiatic steppe: "This vast solitude which resembles a great sea." There he met the Persian speaking Tadhiks, who might have been identical with the Iki-ögüz of Kashgaria. From Rubruck's letter to Louis IX, it is known that from the Uighur "the Tatars (Mongols) have taken their letters and their alphabet, [...] their letters are written in the Mongol language but in Uighur characters."²⁵

On 4th January 1254, after two months route among the southern foothills of the Altai, Rubruck arrived at the *ordu* of *Mongka*: "We were led into the palace, and when the felt before the doorway was raised we entered, chanting the hymn *A solis ortu*. This place was all hung with cloth of gold. In the middle stood a brazier in which burned a fire of thorns, wormwood roots, and cattle dung. The grand khan was seated on a little bed, dressed in a rich furred robe which glistened like the skin of a seal. He was a man of middle height, aged about forty-five, with a somewhat flattened nose. The khan ordered us to be served with *cerasine*, made of rice, as clear and sweet as white wine. He then sent for many kinds of birds of prey, which are set upon his fist and viewed attentively for some time. After that he ordered us to speak. He had a Nestorian as his interpreter."²⁶

During the Mongol era people moved from Europe to the steppes, for a better life. At *Mongka's ordu* Rubruck met a woman from Lorraine whose name was Paquette and was in the service of one of the prince's wives, while at the Karakorum court he found a goldsmith from Paris named Guillaume Boucher, who was employed by *Mongka's* youngest brother *Ariq-bögä*. He received him "with great joy. His wife was the daughter of a Saracen and was born in Hungary. She spoke good French and Cumanian. We found there also a man named Basil, the son of an Englishman, likewise born in Hungary and speaking the same languages."²⁷

The Mongols were tolerant towards other religions as Rubruck narrated: at the great court festivals the Nestorian priests were entered first to bless the grand khan's cup, and then followed the Muslim clergy and Buddhists and Taoists monks. Even *Mongka* himself sometimes went with his Nestorian wife to the services of this church. At Easter of 1254, Rubruck freely celebrated in the Nestorian church of

²⁴ Grousset, 1970, 275-276

²⁵ Grousset, 1970, 276

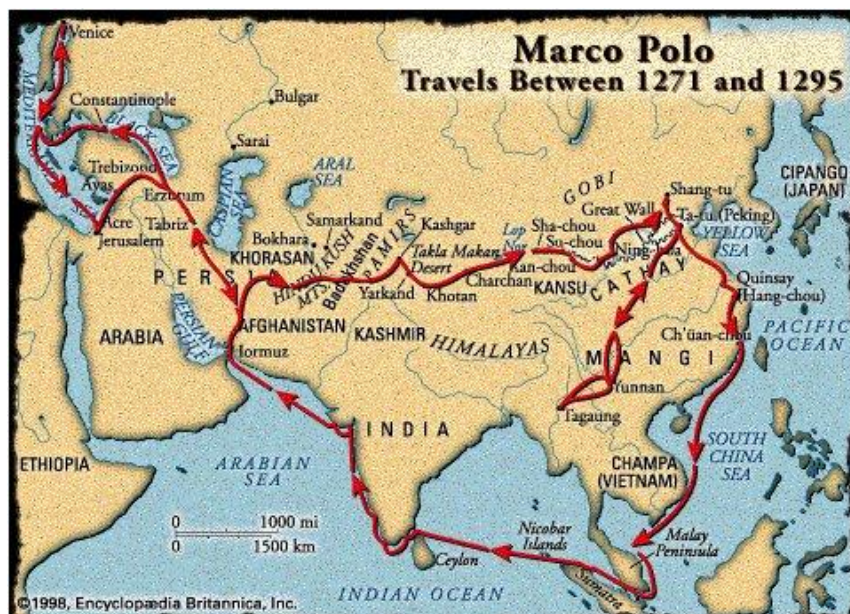
²⁶ Grousset, 1970, 279

²⁷ Grousset, 1970, 279

Karakorum (which had two mosques and twelve pagodas or other temples of "idolaters"), where "Guillaume the goldsmith had caused an image of the Virgin to be made, in sculpture, after the fashion of France." Rubruck accompanied Ariq-bögä at divine services and admitted that he was quite sympathetic toward Christianity "he extended his hand to us, making the sign of the cross in the manner of our bishops." One day, when Muslims and Christians argued in front of Rubruck and Ariq-bögä, the second sided with the Christians. On 30 of May 1254, at the eve of Pentecost, Rubruck held a religious debate in public in the presence of three arbiters appointed by Mongka, a fact which also shows the open-minded Mongols as far as the matter of religion, a rare permissiveness for an empire.²⁸

On 18 August 1254 Rubruck left Karakorum carrying Mongka's reply to Louis IX: "This is the commandment of Eternal Heaven. There is but one God in heaven, and on earth one sovereign: Genghis Khan, son of God." In the name of Eternal Heaven and of the *qaan*, his earthly deputy, Mongka commanded the king Louis IX to recognize himself vassal.²⁹ After two months and six days Rubruck arrived at Volga river, on the return journey, he reached Cilicia and then he sailed to Cyprus, on 29 of June he went to Antioch and at the end in Tripoli on 15 August 1255.³⁰

Marco Polo's journey



Marco Polo, his father Niccolo and his uncle Maffeo Polo were merchants from Venice, who traveled to the Mongol Khanate of Persia by the Sivas route through the Asia Minor and Khurasan, "the country of the Dry Tree" or of "the Lone

²⁸ Grousset, 1970, 279-280

²⁹ Grousset, 1970, 281

³⁰ Ρουμπρούκ, 1991, 197

Tree", as Marco Polo called this city.³¹ By the old Silk Road (*Tash Kurghan*), they came down into *Kashgar (Cascar)* and then *Kanchow (Campiciu)*, an important trading center where they stayed for a year, waiting instructions from the Mongol court. They penetrated the *Öngüt* country, then they entered northern China (*Cathay* according to Marco Polo, from the *Khitan* or *Khitai*) and in May of 1275 they reached Kublai Khan's summer residence in *Cyandu* or *Chandu*.³²

Marco Polo delivered a letter from Pope Gregory X to Kublai Khan, who took Marco with him to his winter court at *Khanbaligh*, (today Beijing). According to Marco Polo's own testimony, Kublai found a place in the government for him and trusted him with many confidential consignments. Many scholars though believe that Marco Polo exaggerated in many of his narrations, as it is for example, the reference about the role of his father and uncle in the siege of Siangyang in 1268-73 which does not correspond to the Chinese sources.³³

Marco Polo in his book describes two itineraries: one from Beijing to Yunnan and from Beijing to Fukien. He gives details of the Mongol wars in Burma or the Mien country (Mongol expeditions of 1277, 1283-84, and 1287) and indicates that he may have gone as far as the borders of that country in the wake of the Mongol army. In the spring of 1291, Marco Polo and his relatives had the opportunity to sail back to Europe but the Central Asian routes were dammed because of the war between Kublai and Qaidu. Kublai gave them letters for the Pope and for the kings of France, England, and Castile. From China they arrived at the coast of the Deccan plateau and then they traveled into Persia. For three months they remained in Azerbaijan, after which they reached Trebizond and later Constantinople. They arrived in Venice in 1295.³⁴

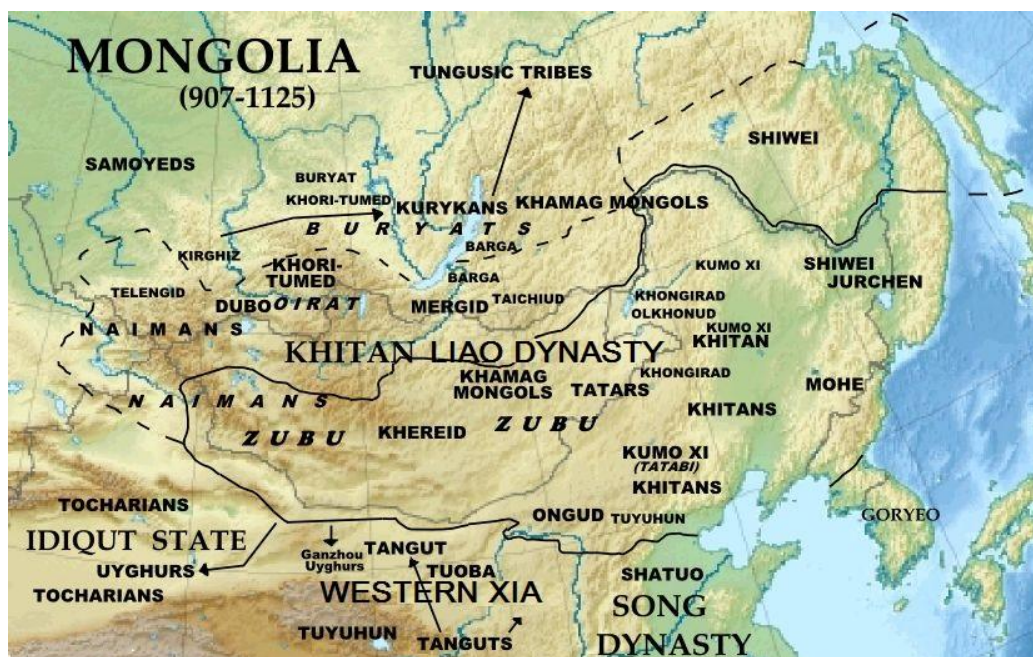
³¹ Grousset, 1970, 304

³² Grousset, 1970, 305-306

³³ Grousset, 1970, 306

³⁴ Grousset, 1970, 307-308

2. The Mongols before Genghis Khan



Mongolia was an unknown place to the most Europeans, before Genghis Khan. Since the 8th century and the deportation of the Uighurs (a Turkic ethnic group), this inhospitable land inhabited by Mongol speaking tribes, (Khitan, Manchu, and Tatars to the East and Turkic tribes in the central Asia, who were the Mongols' closest relatives³⁵). Scholar A. Savvides claims that the Mongols belong to the Ural-Altai racial type of the "yellow race", in contrast to the Turkish-speaking tribes who have Turanian origin and belong to the Finno-Hungarian branch.³⁶ All these tribes had similar cultures and languages to some Siberian clans. The language of the Mongols is called Altaic, from the Altai Mountains in Mongolia and resembled with the Korean and Japanese language but not with the Chinese.³⁷

According to the Mongolian legends, the first ancestors of the Mongols were a wolf and a doe.³⁸ The true Mongols came from the Siberian forests, named *taiga*, from the mountains north of the Vaikali lake or from Mantzouria.³⁹ According to many Mongol legends which Rashid al-Din managed to collect, the Mongol people conquered by the Turks, in the 9th century and took refuge in the Erkene-qun mountains.⁴⁰

During the next centuries the Mongols were divided into *ulus*, a word which means both tribe and small nation according to scholar Boris Vadimirtsov.⁴¹ The true

³⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 57

³⁶ Σαββίδης, 1995, 137

³⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 57

³⁸ Man, 2006, 64

³⁹ Man, 2006, 64

⁴⁰ Grousset, 1970, 192

⁴¹ Grousset, 1970, 192

Mongols came from the Siberian forests, named *taiga*, they were warlike, as many peoples from the steppe and they were permanently in conflicts with the Tatars.⁴² They claimed that they differed from the other tribes of the steppes: as far as their origin is concerned, they claimed that they originate from the Huns, the first founders of a great empire in the steppes during the 3rd century A.D. They called their ancestors *Hun-nu*, which means “*people of the sun*”.⁴³ The first reference of the name Mongol as something unique, exist in a Chinese chronicle, long ago the deportation of the natives.⁴⁴

In many primary sources the confusion between Mongols and Tatars was permanent. The Tatars were semi nomadic tribe who spoke a Mongolian dialect, but they were not Mongols. The first mention about them was in the old Turkish hegemonic runic inscriptions of Mongolia in 732 AD. In 1202 they were defeated by Genghis Khan and because of the reputation of their name across Europe, the Mongols appropriated the term Tatar which was associated with the Cummanic steppes-Crimea for example- and with the areas of the Mongols in Russia.⁴⁵

Scholar J. Saunders mentions that “The Mongols, destined to be a name of terror to most of the inhabitants of the globe for a hundred years, had their home in the forest land of the upper Onon and Kerulen rivers, east of Lake Baikal; to their east, in the region of Buir-Nor, lived the Tatars, probably Mongolized Turks, whose name was to be forever associated with them and which in Europe received its second ‘r’ from a supposed identification with *Tartarus*,⁴⁶ the Classical Hell”.⁴⁷

In Byzantine sources however, the Mongols referred as “*Mougoulioi*”, “*Skythai*”, (=Skythians), “*Tatars*” and “*Tocharians*” and never as Mongols. Specifically the Byzantine historian Nicephorus Gregoras (c.1295-1360), call them “*Scythians*” and their leader “*Sitzischan*” (=Genghis Khan).⁴⁸

The main rivals of the Mongols were the Merkit tribe to the north, the Tangut tribe to the south, the Jin tribe to the east and the Naiman tribe to the west. The Naiman were principal Turco-Mongol people, about whom scholars believe that “Although their name seems Mongol (*naiiman* means eight in Mongolian), their system of titles is Turkic and the Naiman may well be Mongolized Turks.”⁴⁹ The years 1203 and 1205 Genghis Khan managed to subjugate the Naimans⁵⁰ and the Khereid, who usually considered as Turks.⁵¹

⁴² Saunders, 2001, 45-46

⁴³ Weatherford, 2005, 58

⁴⁴ Saunders, 2001, 45

⁴⁵ Σαββίδης, 2004, 21

⁴⁶ King, 2006, 88

⁴⁷ Saunders, 1965, 175-176

⁴⁸ Σαββίδης, 2004, 21

⁴⁹ Grousset, 1970, 189

⁵⁰ Σαββίδης, 2004, 23

⁵¹ Grousset, 1970, 190

As all the nomadic tribes of the Eurasian steppe, the Mongols survived as hunters and stock breeders, since the land was unsuitable for agriculture, due to the severe climate.⁵² They lived quite northernmost of the trading routes, the *Silk Road* as it later became, which connected China with the western societies and it was passing south of the Gobi. Sometimes when goods penetrated further north, the Mongols were informed about the treasures⁵³ other people reap. The historian Ata-Malik Juvayni wrote about them:

“Before the appearance of Ghingiz-Khan they had no chief or ruler. Each tribe or two tribes lived separately; they were not united with one another, and there was constant fighting and hostility between them. Some of them regarded robbery and violence, immorality and debauchery as deeds of manliness and excellence. The Khan of Khitai used to demand and seize goods from them. Their clothing was of the skins of dogs and mice, and their food was the flesh of those animals and other dead things. Their wine was mare's milk”.⁵⁴

As far as their religion is concerned, the Mongols, like all the other people of Central Asia, were shamans, who since the old times used to believe in the sacredness of natural phenomena and objects as were the rivers, thunders, the rain, the snow, the fire, the sun, while the supreme power was considered to be the *Eternal Blue Sky*. The word *Tengker* (or *Tingkri*, *Tangkra*, *Tengkri*) means heaven and it represented the god for the Turkish tribes of the 6th century, who migrated in the west and took the name Bulgars.⁵⁵

Grousset writes that there was a first attempt among the Mongols to found an organized nation (*ulus-irgen*), even before the 12th century. A Mongol chief with the name *Qaidu* began campaigns against rival tribes and managed to reckon among his clientele. His grandson *Qabul*, honored with the royal title of Khan in 1140,⁵⁶ became the first sovereign who “ruled all the Mongols” and the one who took the title of Khan⁵⁷ and the first who dared to refute the Jin dynasty of the northern China.⁵⁸ His authority unified many Mongol tribes and for the first time he led the Mongols into the world of the Asiatic political stage. Qabul was the great grandfather of Genghis Khan.⁵⁹

After 1160, when the Jin won the Mongols, they returned to anarchy and they were no longer united.⁶⁰ According to the *Secret History* this was the worst era for the

⁵² Saunders, 2001, 44

⁵³ Weatherford, 2005, 59

⁵⁴ Juvaini, 1997, 21

⁵⁵ Man, 2006, 77-78

⁵⁶ Grousset, 1970, 196

⁵⁷ Man, 2006, 80

⁵⁸ Grousset, 1970, 196

⁵⁹ Man, 2006, 80

⁶⁰ Ratchnevsky, 1991, 187

Mongols: “The surface of the earth turned over and the entire nation was in dispute.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Man, 2006, 88

3. Temujin before being proclaimed Genghis Khan

Origin and first years

The precise date of Genghis Khan's birth is unknown. According to some versions it would be the year 1155, 1162 or 1167.⁶² Rashid al-Din contents that he was born in 1155, while P. Ratchnevsky, claims that, accepting this date, would imply that he was 72 years old during the campaign against the Tangut tribe. Scholar Jack Weatherford claims it was the spring of 1162, the year of the Horse by the Asian calendar, when *Hoelun*, his mother, a young woman at the age of sixteen, gave birth to him, while she was away from her place and her family.⁶³ He was born near Onon river, in a place with the name *Deluun Boldntog*, according to the *Secret History*.⁶⁴ A well-known story tells that when the baby was born, he was holding a black clot of blood, which he had ripped from his mother's womb. It was a mystery-or a sign of power⁶⁵-and scope for many questions for the future biographers.⁶⁶

Hoelun belonged to the *Olkhunuund* tribe, known for the beauty of its women and was the wife of *Chiledu*, a warrior from the *Merkit* tribe, who crossed the eastern steppes to find her. After their marriage, they started the long journey of the return to the territories of Merkit. During the journey, a horseman with his brother who happened to see them attacked them in order to kidnap Hoelun. Chiledu tried to get them away, but when Hoelun realized that they would kill Chiledu if he resisted, she decided to surrender. From the *Secret History* we learn that Hoelun said to her husband in order to convince him: "If you but live, there will be maidens for you on every front and every cart. You can find another woman to be your bride, and you can call her Hoelun in place of me". She then took off her blouse and impelled it to his face saying: "Take this with you so that you may have the smell of me with you as you go". The smell was a very important sense for the peoples of the steppe. The unique smell of every human being, considered to be a part of their soul. Thus the act of Hoelun was a reminder of love towards her husband.⁶⁷

The man-and father of Genghis Khan-who kidnapped Hoelun was called *Yesugei*, he belonged to the *Borijin* clan (*oboq*),⁶⁸ one of the five clans (extended families according to John Man⁶⁹), which constituted the first years of the Mongol nation, within a history of 150 years.⁷⁰ Even though-according to the *Secret History*-Yesugei originated from the ancient kings (Qabul Khan), he never figured as Khan but only as a chieftain of his clan (*baatur* or *baghatur*).⁷¹ Yesugei had already a wife,

⁶² Weatherford, 2005, 53

⁶³ Weatherford, 2005, 53-54

⁶⁴ Man, 2006, 95

⁶⁵ Man, 2006, 93

⁶⁶ Weatherford, 2005, 57

⁶⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 55-56

⁶⁸ Grousset, 1970, 192

⁶⁹ Man, 2006, 89

⁷⁰ Man, 2006, 89

⁷¹ Grousset, 1970, 197

Sochigel and a son with her. With Hoelun, Yesugei had three more sons and a daughter, apart from Temujin.⁷² Yesugei gave the Tatar name⁷³ *Temujin* to his first child with Hoelun, which meant blacksmith.⁷⁴ According to William de Rubruck, this name means “sound of iron”.⁷⁵ Temujin was the name of a Tatar warrior (he was called *Temujin Uge*), that Yesugei had killed shortly before the birth of his son. The choice of the name for the peoples of the steppe was an important process because it determines the fate, the destination and the character of the child. The Mongols selected only one name, which had a common root with the names of the other children of the family. The other children of Yesugei and Hoelun called *Temüge* and *Temulun*. These names had the root of the Mongolian verb *-temoul* which means rush, making creative thoughts, feeling attraction. The precise meaning in Mongolian language is “The gaze eye of a horse running towards where it wants, no matter what the rider wants.”⁷⁶

The details that have been preserved from Temujin’s childhood are minimal. Some of them testify that Genghis Khan lived a difficult childhood and teenage years after the death of his father and his family often lacked even food. As Jack Weatherford mentions in his book *Genghis Khan*, the little boy grew up in tribal violence, murder, enslavement and kidnapping. At a very young age he was afraid of dogs and he cried quite often.⁷⁷

Temujin had not special value for his father, according to some facts of their common life: when some time both met another camp on their way, randomly his father left him behind. He was found by *Targutai*, the leader of the clan *Tayichigud*, who took him and kept him there for a while. According to the *Secret History* (§ 149), Targutai boasted that he trained Temujin with care and loving discipline, just as he would have done with a colt, the most precious acquisition for a Mongol shepherd. That, according to Targutai, gave power to Temujin when he became an adult. Later, Temujin was reunited with his family, either because they went to live in the camp of Targutai or because he returned back their son.⁷⁸

A second episode was about Temujin’s future wife: Yesugei took him to find Hoelun’s family at the east, either because Hoelun wanted her son to meet her family or because she wanted to marry a woman from the same tribe with hers or, as a third version, Yesugei wanted to get rid of Temujin because he might sense the conflict and the rivalry that would erupted between Temujin and Behter, his eldest son from *Sochigel*. Instead of finding Hoelun’s tribe, they stayed with a family which they found in the way. This family had a daughter, *Börte*, who was few years older than Temujin. The two families agreed to engage their children,⁷⁹ as they saw attraction between them and Yesugei left his son with *Börte*’s family. As Yesugei was leaving

⁷² Saunders, 2001, 47

⁷³ Man, 2006, 93

⁷⁴ Σαββίδης, 2004, 22

⁷⁵ Ρουμπρούκ, 1991, 177

⁷⁶ Weatherford, 2005, 58-59

⁷⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 15

⁷⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 62

⁷⁹ Weatherford, 2005, 63

he said to Börte's father: "I leave my son as a son-in-law, but he is afraid of dogs. Do not allow my boy to be frightened by dogs".⁸⁰ This fact is written in the *Secret History* which tries for the first time to give a human dimension to the "divine" profile (as the *Secret History* presented him) of Genghis Khan.⁸¹

Temujin was then 8 years old according to the Western way of measuring and 9 according to a measurement of the Mongols. According to the Mongolian calendar, the beginning of the year was the beginning of the spring and the greening of the steppe. Consequently the age of a child was calculated according to the number of the greening of the steppe. Therefore, as Temujin was born early in spring, he was considered to be one year old while he was living only for one month.⁸²

Yesugei's death

According to the Mongol tradition, in the wedding theme, the prospective groom had to work in return, for some years, to his future wife's family. After this period of probation, her parents would decide whether to give her to him or not. Furthermore, the groom should give them some gifts with special value for the people of the steppe, as for example were horses. So, Temujin stayed with Börte's family and his father returned back to his tribe. The *Secret History* reports that Yesugei, during the return trip, met a Tatar camp where the people celebrated and he decided to stop in order to participate to the festivity. Unfortunately a Tatar recognized him as the one who killed their relative, Temujin Uge, eight years ago and he secretly poisoned him. Despite his poisoning Yesugei managed to return to his family and apprised to his son to return immediately.⁸³

Temujin left Börte behind and returned home but his father had been already dead, leaving behind two wives and seven children. Since the clan had lost one of his hunters, it found it very difficult to feed so many people. According to the tradition of the steppe, one of Yesugei's brothers or even Yesugei's and Sochigel's son should marry Hoelun who was then about 25 years old.⁸⁴ The female Mongols, who had lost their husbands, often married younger men from the same family.⁸⁵

The Europeans Marco Polo, del Carpine and William of Rubruck characterized this custom as "shameful" as their in culture this was something immoral.⁸⁶ The Mongols who had lost their spouse often married younger men from the same family. The son, with the patrimony inherited the wives of his father. He could get married with them except from his own mother.⁸⁷ In the case of Hoelun this

⁸⁰ *The Secret History of the Mongols*, 2001, 61

⁸¹ Man, 2006, 99

⁸² Weatherford, 2005, 62

⁸³ Weatherford, 2005, 63-64

⁸⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 64

⁸⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 64

⁸⁶ Rubruck, 2004, 23

⁸⁷ Ρουμπρούκ, 1991, 39

did not happen because she had many children and no one could maintain her family.⁸⁸

Hoelun and her children were now outside the family and this message was given by the tribe when they were cut off from the food supply, a symbolism of close relationships in the Mongol culture. At a ceremonial dinner which was organized by the widows of former khan, Hoelun and her family were not invited and this essentially meant that they should find the way to have their own food.⁸⁹

When spring arrived, the clan decided to go south taking all the animals. The leaders of the clan determined to leave behind the two widows with their children. This decision actually condemned them to death especially with the arrival of the difficult winter steppe.⁹⁰ The only who objected to this decision was an old man from a lower family. Then someone from an upper family shouted at him that he had no right to judge the decisions of the superiors and then he killed him with his lance. This fact, which is referred to the *Secret History*, had a profound influence on the small Temujin, who ran to help the old man but, as he was not able to do anything, he heartbroken, burst out crying.⁹¹ Nevertheless, this family was meant to live despite the difficulties. From the *Secret History* is known that Hoelun did whatever she could to find food for her children. Temujin helped his mother catching rats in the steppes and when the children grew up, they hunt more and larger animals, making their survival easier.⁹²

Behter's murder and the capture from the Tayichigud tribe

In this harsh environment Temujin learned the cruelty, the ambition and the desire. As a young age he faced many problems with his older brother (son of Sochigel) because he always oppressed and fooled him and year by year the competition between them was more intense. In the Mongol society, the absolute hierarchy was forced and children blindly obeyed their parents. If the father was absent, either for a few hours or he was dead, which meant a perennial absence, the eldest son of the family was undertaking the role of the father and he was exercising the absolute power over the other members of the family. When Yesugei died, Behter, Sochigel's son, slowly began to have all the rights of his father. This meant that when he would come to the appropriate age he could have sexual relations with Temujin's mother. This would place him on the head of the family, something that Temujin would not accept in any way.⁹³

After a disagreement, Temujin with the help of his younger brother Hasar killed Behter, using his bow, with the same way that he would set up an ambush to an

⁸⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 64

⁸⁹ Weatherford, 2005, 65

⁹⁰ Weatherford, 2005, 66

⁹¹ Weatherford, 2005, 65

⁹² Weatherford, 2005, 66

⁹³ Weatherford, 2005, 69-70

animal. Temujin, even when he became the great Genghis Khan, used successfully hunting methods that he had learned as a child. Although Behter realized that he was in danger, he refused to show fear in front of younger siblings and run to be saved. He just said to them: "I'm not an eyelash in your eye, an obstacle in your mouth. Without me you have no other partner than your shadow".⁹⁴

The slightest mention of the blood or death was taboo to Mongolian tradition, but the *Secret History* makes detailed reference to this killing because it was very important for the life and career of Temujin. Behter left to die and decompose at that point and until any trace of his body was eliminated, nobody approached.⁹⁵

In a lengthy monologue in *Secret History*, there is a detailed description of Hoelun's anger, when she found out the murder of Behter by her two sons: "Destroyer! Destroyer! You came out of my hot womb holding a lump of blood in your hand" (§78), said Hoelun to Temujin and continued shouting comparing him with an animal: "like an attacker panther, like a lion out of control, like a monster which swallows its prey alive", while finishing repeated the same phrase as that of Behter: "Now you don't have another partner apart from your shadow".⁹⁶

With this act Temujin determined his fate, just because he decided to become the leader of his family. He put his family in great danger and more unfavorable position than it was already. The persecution of Temujin was certain as there was no one who can protect him or even ally with him. This murder had changed the way the other clans saw Hoelun's family and from social outcasts who were till then, turned into criminals. This gave the right to anyone to attack them even for no reason.⁹⁷

The clan of Tayichigud, in which Hoelun's faction belonged, considered themselves as aristocrats of the river Onon and decided to send a group of warriors to punish Temujin for committing murder into their area. Temujin fled to the mountains to avoid them, but the warriors found him, captured him and took him to their camp where every day a family of lower origin which acted as servants, assumed the responsibility for his care and custody. While Tagitsiount behaved with contempt, these families stood by him and in many cases, secretly from Tagitsiount, shared their food with him.⁹⁸

Specifically, the family of *Sorkan-shira*, with the risk to be punished by the Tayichigud, helped him when he attempted to escape, hiding him and giving him food for the way back. The *Secret History* records this fact with every detail, saying that the night of Temujin's escape was full moon, *Red Circle Day*, according to the Mongols. Temujin was hiding in the woods when Sorkan-shira found him and said to him: "No wonder they say there's fire in your eyes and light in your face! No wonder they're jealous of you! You just lie there, and I won't say a thing."⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 71

⁹⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 72, 73

⁹⁶ Weatherford, 2005, 72

⁹⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 73

⁹⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 74

⁹⁹ Man, 2006, 77

According to J. Weatherford, Temujin must have had some special attraction, a personal charm for a family to risk so much for a stranger. This made him skeptical towards people of higher social classes and positions and seemed to trust more and more people depending on how it was to him and not on the degree of affinity which possibly linking them. Years ago, Tayichigud who were his relatives, abandoned his family helpless and now again tried to punish and kill him. The indifference to family ties was itself a revolutionary principle for the traditions of the peoples of the steppe.¹⁰⁰

The period of Temujin's captivity, according to the *Secret History*, lasted for a short while, but a contemporary Chinese chronicler claims that Temujin remained captive for over 10 years.¹⁰¹ The insistence on the target, the powerful instinct of survival and self-preservation, regardless of the captivity period, showed a strong and decisive character that had decided to lead, not follow, even if towards him was much stronger people.¹⁰²

Temujin lived in these difficult and marginal circumstances and because of *these*, the Great Khan of the Mongols came and started with virtually no asset. The character of Temujin was marked by these early traumatic events which described in the *Secret History* and were those that shaped his character. The difficult way that his family lived made him to defy the social structures and to trust his followers rather than his own family.¹⁰³

Anda - Börte –Wang Khan

In these conditions, Temujin developed a very important relationship in childhood and teenage years with an older boy who was also not relative, Jamukha, whose family was camping near the river and near Temujin's family¹⁰⁴ The company and the games with this boy was the only recorded entertainment that Temujin had.

When he was 11 years old, the two boys took an oath of eternal brotherhood initially exchanging some game¹⁰⁵ while when they got older, in a second inauguration, they swallowed a little blood from each other so exchanged part of their soul. According to the *Secret History* (in Jamukha's narration), they said words that could not be forgotten and ate the unmentionable "food that cannot be digested" (§ 201). This process made the two boys to be *anda*, a bond stronger from relatives by blood, since it was a matter of free choice. For Temujin, Jamukha was the only *anda* that had in his life.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Weatherford, 2005, 74-75

¹⁰¹ Weatherford, 2005, 75

¹⁰² Weatherford, 2005, 15, 73

¹⁰³ Weatherford, 2005, 66-67

¹⁰⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 67

¹⁰⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 68

¹⁰⁶ Weatherford, 2005, 69

In 1178 Temujin was sixteen and started with his half brother *Belgutei* a trip along the river Cheroulen to meet again Börte, who had not seen for seven years, since the death of his father. She was 17 to 18 years, which meant that she was rather old for marriage according to the traditions of the Mongols, but Temujin was glad when he saw that she awaited him. Her father, *Dei-setsen*, although he had been informed of the murder that Temujin had committed and of his captivity, continued to want him as a groom, so without a second thought he gave his daughter to Temujin.¹⁰⁷

The newlywed woman donates according to custom a cloth to her parents-in-law at the first arrival in her new home. Börte donated a coat of black sable fur, which was considered rare and precious in the steppes. Temujin, since his father did not live to become a recipient of the prize, decided to give it to *Toghrul* (falcon in Turkish) or *Ong Han* (or *Wang-khan*=Chinese title for king or prince¹⁰⁸), the ruler of Khereid clan,¹⁰⁹ relative and *anda* of Yesugei, with whom he had collaborated in many battles. The decision of Temujin to give the wedding gift to Ong Khan meant that he recognized him as a father, since Yesugei and Wang Khan was twinned. If Wang Khan accepted the gift, this would mean that he recognized him as a son and protect him. The protection of a powerful ally, which was missing from the life of Temujin, did not come through biological relatives, but through a kind of ritual kinship and changed many things in the later course.¹¹⁰

Wang Khan accepted the gift and decided to make Temujin local leader of young warriors, but Temujin was really interested in the protection of his family and after ensuring this protection he left for the camp. The alliance that he had concluded was a smart move that testified his insightful nature.¹¹¹

Börte's kidnapping

The contradictions among the tribes of the steppe were daily affairs and any reason could cause agitate, even if decades had passed from any offense. The breed of Merkit, in which Hoelun belonged, decided after 18 years to take revenge for her kidnapping from Yesugei. They no longer interested in Hoelun but in young Börte that her own kidnapping would repay the insult caused by the abduction of Hoelun.¹¹²

When the Merkit arrived at the camp, easily found Borte, while Temujin along with the other men were hiding in the forest mountain *Burkhan Khaldun*, (which was sacred to the Mongols), in order to find time to devise a plan of counterattack. The small group that Temujin belonged could not compete with an entire race. According to the *Secret History*, Temujin began to pray for three days in the spirit of the mountain where he was hiding, by saying: "The seed of my seed shall observe this." All mountains were sacred for the Mongols but this one was for Temujin the place of

¹⁰⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 75-76

¹⁰⁸ Grousset, 203

¹⁰⁹ Grousset, 199

¹¹⁰ Weatherford, 2005, 76-77

¹¹¹ Weatherford, 2005, 78

¹¹² Weatherford, 2005, 79

his deliverance.¹¹³ He believed that this mountain saved him from certain death and since then Temoutzin had believed that Burkhan Khaldun protected him in what he did and that it was the source of his power. To thank the other spirits around him, sprinkled milk in the air and the ground and then fell to the ground nine times to pray to the sun.¹¹⁴ Later in his life he said about this experience:

“On Sacred Khaldun
I was a louse
But I escaped,
And my life was spared.
With a single horse,
Following elk-traits,
Making a tent of bark,
I climbed Khaldun.
On Sacred Khaldun
I was a swallow
But I was protected.”¹¹⁵

The Mongols were animist by religion and believed in spirits of nature that surrounded them. The natural world was for them divided in two parts: the Heaven and the Earth, whose soul was in the water.¹¹⁶ The *Eternal Blue Sky* was for the Mongols the one and only God that stretched towards the four cardinal points. The first sentence of the *Secret History* God could not be enclosed in a building and His words could not to be captured in a book. According to Genghis Khan he often felt God’s presence and heard His voice talking to him in the open air of Mongolia’s mountains. This affected Genghis Khan who-as he claimed-followed God’s words and became this great conqueror and leader.¹¹⁷ It is obvious in the *Secret History* the belief that his charisma had been given to me by the *Eternal Sky* that he was “born with his destiny ordained by Heaven above”, as the first sentence of the book declare¹¹⁸ For the tribes of the steppe, mundane power was identical to the supernatural and came from the Eternal Bly Sky. The world of the spirits gave to someone a supernatural force so he could dominate the other people.¹¹⁹

It was there that he decided to get back Börte. If he was afraid to act immediately, he was claimed as a social waste at the mercy of any aggressor. His position in the hierarchy of the steppe was something he could define with his attitude. He decided to seek the help of Wang Khan as his legitimate son. Wang Khan was offered willingly:

¹¹³ Man, 2006, 85

¹¹⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 82-83

¹¹⁵ Man, 2006, 84

¹¹⁶ Weatherford, 2005, 82

¹¹⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 47

¹¹⁸ Man, 2006, 85

¹¹⁹ Weatherford, 2005, 84

“In return for the coat of black sable
I will crush the whole Merkit tribe,
And bring Lady Borte back to you.”¹²⁰

Wang Han had a long feud with the Merkit tribe and through Temujin an opportunity was given to him, to attack them. At the side of Temujin, after the urging of Wang Khan, another worthy warrior would fight, who had gathered a large number of fans around, the *anda* of Temujin, Jamoukha.¹²¹

The alliance between Temujin and the Wang-khan seems to have benefited both sides. At first the Wang-khan's protection helped Temujin to escape his enemies, in the future though, Temujin (at that time he was already Khan), provided similar service to him. The Wang-khan dispossessed by his brother, *Erke-qara* (*Secret History*, §.36, 48), who was supported by *Inanch-bilgä*, king of the Naiman. He left to the southwest and wandered in the Gobi, when sought refuge with Temujin, who helped him to reconquer the Khereid throne. Later Temujin in his rough and naive way of speech reminded Wang Khan: "Weakened by hunger, you came on like a dying fire. I gave you sheep, horses, goods. You were thin. Within fifteen days I had fattened you again."¹²²

This was the first time that Temujin would take part in actual raid, the outcome of which would prove its worth as a warrior. The plunder of the camp of the Merkits was easy and Temujin finally regained Börte, who was given as a wife to an elderly warrior. The discovery of pregnancy is a chapter that is shrugged in *Secret History*, because the paternity of the child could not be elucidated. Börte gave birth to her first son in 1179 to whom Temujin gave the name *Jochi* meaning "guest, visitor," a proof that Temoutzin did not believe that the child was his. A second version says that perhaps this name has been given because at the time that the child was born, the family was Jamukha's visitors.¹²³

Rift with Jamukha and Temujin's rise

After Börte's rescue, Temujin joined his small group of warriors with the greatest group of Jamukha and moved from the mountain areas to the steppe. From hunter who was until then, he became pastor, and having a steady supply of food, as it was the meat and the milk, he began to enjoy a higher standard of living. The conflicts in the steppe, however, was persistent and the life of a warrior never abandoned by him.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Man, 2006, 86

¹²¹ Weatherford, 2005, 85

¹²² Grousset, 203

¹²³ Weatherford, 2005, 86-87

¹²⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 88

The *Secret History* records that Temujin was satisfied with his living next to Jamukha and he was willing to follow his order. After some time, however, Jamukha allegedly began to treat Temujin like he was his younger brother, not as an *anda*, while emphasizing that his clan was superior. Perhaps, the great popularity that Temujin had within the group was what bothered Jamukha and began to act differently. For a man like Temujin, however, when some years ago killed his older brother because he did not accept anyone to treat himself as a lower, the situation with Jamukha would not be tolerated. So, in the summer of 1181, the rupture finalized and at age of 19, Temujin decided that he was the only leader and had to create his own independent group.¹²⁵

Jamukha camped by the river, while Temujin in the mountains¹²⁶ He managed to gather clans from the Mongolian aristocracy like the Merkits, the Oirat, the Naiman, and the Tatars, while Temujin followed by the lower class mostly,¹²⁷ families of lower class, such as the Targut, Bayout, Baroula, Mangut, Aroulat, Uriangai, Besund, Suldus, Jalair. Temujin offered dedication to those who trust him and a hope to those who would have no prospect as they were inferiors in the Mongol society.¹²⁸

Among the Mongol tribes there was a rumor that Temujin was the chosen one and this gave motivation to many clans to follow him. The Tzenigk, Sakagit, Tzirkin clans went to Temujin's part and erected their tents into his camp. Some who originally belonged to the group of Jamuka, as the Tzarantan, preferred to follow Temujin. He managed to collect followers of the heirs of the last Mongol kings, who additionally, were his relatives,¹²⁹ such as his cousins Kusari, Altana and Sasha, Kabul's great grandson. These relatives were superior to him in the Mongol society, but they went to his part as they were sure that they found the man who their tribe need: a capable and brave man who could reunite the Mongols.¹³⁰ According to the *Secret History*, the ancient royalty chose Temujin in the end as they believed that he was more traditional in outlook and more obedient while the innovative trends of Jamukha raised their fears for the future and made them feel insecure.¹³¹

Altan, Kusar and Sasa first proclaimed Temujin *khan* of the Mongols (king or leader) of his tribe and since then he was assumed to be equal to other tribal leaders.¹³² The electors and relatives of Temujin gave a significant oath to the new khan, as the *Secret History* reported: "We have resolved to proclaim thee khan. We will march in the van into battle. If we carry off women and girls, it will be to give them to thee. We will be foremost in the hunt. If we catch game, it will be to give it to thee."¹³³

¹²⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 90-91

¹²⁶ Grousset, 1970, 200

¹²⁷ Hildinger, 1997, 113

¹²⁸ Man, 2006, 117

¹²⁹ Grousset, 1970, 201

¹³⁰ Man, 2006, 117

¹³¹ Grousset, 1970, 201

¹³² Lange, 2003, 47

¹³³ Grousset, 1970, 202

In 1186 one of Temujin's men murdered Jamukha's brother and the rival began officially.¹³⁴ According to Erik Hildinger a Mongol killed a tribesman during a horse-theft. Jamukha invaded Temujin's camp to take revenge but he managed to escape, trying to gather his men in order to attack as well.¹³⁵ This episode led to the battle of Dalan Balzhut,¹³⁶ where Jamukha cut the head of one of the captured leaders of Temujin and boiled alive in cauldrons, 70 of Temujin's men¹³⁷ (the number of 7 was considered unlucky number for the Mongols). According to the *Secret History*, Jamukha harmed his image with these abusive acts and gradually began to lose his power, since he caused terror by the unjustified cruelty. Temujin won the sympathy of the Mongols and the public support after this event.¹³⁸ Once again, life showed to Temujin that inherited power from old aristocratic factions, from which Jamukha came from, was not able to stop people who were inferior in origin but had ability and personal faith.¹³⁹

In this duel, Temujin had the advantages of persistence, political cleverness, the ability of getting right on his side and, in the beginning, the support of Wang-khan. Jamukha had remarkable but discursive energy and a lively mind but he was an unreliable ally and did not hesitate to sack the tribes of his own party, while Temujin have been a loyal protector of those who had given him their faith.¹⁴⁰

Marco Polo described in his book *The Journeys*, the initial prevalence of Genghis Khan among the other Mongolian tribes:¹⁴¹

“It happened now and in the 1187th year of the incarnation of Christ [...] the Tartars to choose a king to govern them. His name in their language: Genghis Khan. This was a man with great ability and wisdom, he was a gifted orator and brilliant military. After his election, all the Tartars, as they were dispersed in foreign countries, came unto him and recognized his sovereignty. And he practiced it well and with honor. The number of Tartars who rallied around him was incredible. When Genghis Khan saw how many followers he had, he provided all of them with bows and with their usual weapons and created opportunities for a number of successive conquests for them. And I assure you that at least eight provinces joined. Genghis Khan did not harm the inhabitants nor rob their possessions-he only guided them with him to conquer other nations. With this way he conquered so many nations, for which he had heard... Finally, when he gathered such a crowd, which covered the face of the earth, then he considered to conquer a large part of the world...”¹⁴²

¹³⁴ Lange, 2003, 48

¹³⁵ Hildinger, 1997, 114

¹³⁶ Lane, 2004, 27

¹³⁷ Lange, 2003, 48

¹³⁸ Hildinger, 1997, 114

¹³⁹ Weatherford, 2005, 93-94

¹⁴⁰ Grousset, 1970, 206

¹⁴¹ Μάρκο Πόλο, 80-81

¹⁴² Σαββίδης, 2004, 23-24

According to the *Secret History* Jamukha won in this battle, while al-Rashid claimed that the victory was Temujin's. It is more possible that the winner was Jamukha because after this period there is a gap of 10 years in *Secret History*, concerning Temujin's life, which according to Ratchnevky might be a period of his captivity in China, as a slave of the Jin Dynasty,¹⁴³ an embarrassing fact even for the author of the *Secret History*.¹⁴⁴ Toghrol (Wang Khan) was exiled to Qara-Khitai as Temujin's protector.¹⁴⁵ This hostility between Temujin and Jamukha generated a twenty-year war, which led to a civil war between the Mongol tribes. The two former *andas* struggled over twenty years to impose on each other and to gain the leadership of the Mongols.¹⁴⁶

Rift with Wang Khan

In 1197 Temujin with Toghrol fought against the Tatars when the Jin emperor asked for their help. They agreed to help and after their win, the emperor gave the title of the "Keeper" or the "Frontier" (*Ja'utquri*) to Temujin and the title of Wang (in Chinese=king, prince¹⁴⁷ or royal¹⁴⁸) Khan to Toghrol. Temujin continued to fight with Wang Khan who became after a while, the most powerful leader in Mongolia. The alliance of Temujin and Wang Khan was very strong and therefore caused fear to the other Mongol tribes.¹⁴⁹ Year by year though, the alliance between the two men have been mostly to the Wang Khan's advantage. When the Wang Khan dispossessed by his brother Erke-qara, with the help of the Naiman, he wandered in the Gobi desert before he sought refuge with Temujin, who helped him to dethrone his brother and take the Khereid country back.¹⁵⁰ During the next years Wang Khan showed little thankfulness for everything Temujin have done for him: When they attacked and defeated the Merkits though, Wang Khan did not give Temujin his quota of the loot. In 1199 when Wang Khan and Temujin attacked Naiman, right before the battle Wang Khan pulled back leaving Temujin alone. The Naiman were defeated and Temujin saved Wang Khan from captivity.¹⁵¹ Temujin continued to be loyal to his "father" and later he asked his help to fight Jamukha in reprisal of the 70 men he boiled. Jamukha in 1201 at a great *quriltai*, he proclaimed himself *Gur-khan* (=universal leader) highlighted himself as Emperor of Mongolia.¹⁵² Wang Khan agreed to attack Jamukha but the battle was stopped because of the bad weather.¹⁵³

¹⁴³ Ratchnevsky, 1991, 50

¹⁴⁴ Lane, 2004, 23

¹⁴⁵ Lane, 2004, 23

¹⁴⁶ Weatherford, 2005, 90-91

¹⁴⁷ Grousset, 1970, 203

¹⁴⁸ Man, 2006, 132

¹⁴⁹ Lange, 2003, 49

¹⁵⁰ Grousset, 1970, 203

¹⁵¹ Grousset, 1970, 204

¹⁵² Grousset, 1970, 206

¹⁵³ Lange, 2003, 51

The son of Wang Khan, *Sängün*, feeling jealous of Temujin's power and his relationship with his father, planned the assassination of Temujin.¹⁵⁴ Despite Temujin's help and loyalty, Wang Khan gave in to his son's will. Temujin found out Senggum's plan and defeated him. These incidents led to distrust and their alliance eventually fell out.¹⁵⁵

The most humiliating thing in the Mongol culture, of all the above facts, happened when Temujin proposed to Wang Khan to give his daughter to Temujin's son Jochi and he refused. The rupture was total and definitive this time: Wang Khan allied with Jamukha who accepted to fight again with his old enemy. But the internal conflict between Wang Khan and Jamukha and the ratting of many allies to Temujin, led to Wang Khan's defeat and the decline of the Kerait tribe.¹⁵⁶

The last obstructions

Temujin had to face two obstacles which prevented him of being the sovereign of all the Mongols: Jamukha who was a chief of many hostile to Temujin clans and Wang Khan, an unstable and selfish ally.¹⁵⁷ Wang Khan was old enough and felt insecure but Temujin still counted him as his father (*khan echige*)¹⁵⁸ and he wished to forget Khan's betrayals. He sent him a verbal message where he reminded him of their friendship and of the services he had offered him: "My father, why have you turned against me? Don't you remember that we vowed dedication? We were like oxen pulling a trolley. Yesugei, my father did not help you? You had sworn brotherhood. Didn't you say that you would "return the favor to the children of your children"? When the Naimans kidnapped you, didn't I send four of my best men to help you and save your son? So, my father, why do you turn against me?"¹⁵⁹

Morally Temujin was right, he had always a correct attitude but Wang Khan could not turn his back to his own son, who was Temujin's foe.¹⁶⁰ At the same time many Mongol chiefs-Daritai, Quchar, Altan and Jamukha made plans for Wang Khan's assassination. He discovered the conspiracy against him and the plotters sought refuge with the Naiman.¹⁶¹ In 1203 Temujin with his brother Hasar marched against the Khereid tribe, as the previous ally had dissolved. Temujin won and the Wang Khan with his son *Sängün* fled to the Naiman land. Wang Khan was killed by a Naiman officer who could not manage to recognize him. His son obscurely lost his life in the land of the Uighurs near the west China.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ Grousset, 1970, 208

¹⁵⁵ Man, 2006, 130

¹⁵⁶ Saunders, 2001, 51

¹⁵⁷ Man, 2006, 124

¹⁵⁸ Grousset, 1970, 210

¹⁵⁹ Man, 2006, 127

¹⁶⁰ Grousset, 1970, 210

¹⁶¹ Man, 2006, 127-128

¹⁶² Grousset, 1970, 211

The Khereid people serve him since then. The Naiman remained independent and provided immunity to Jamukha. Tribes like the Dörben, Qatakin, Salji'ut, Tatars and the Khereid, prepared to make war upon Temujin. In May 1204, near the Kalka river Temujin summoned a *quriltai* where the tribe organized the campaign and set off the land of the Naiman country. The *Secret History* mentions a dialogue between Jamukha and the Naiman leader, *Tayang*, who asked: "Who are these who pursue us as wolves pursue a flock?" and Jamukha replied: "They are the four hunting dogs of my brother Temujin. They are fed on human flesh and leashed with an iron chain, their skulls are of brass, their teeth are hewn from rock, their tongues are like swords, and their hearts are of iron. Instead of whips they have curved sabers, they quench their thirst with dew and gallop with the wind. In battle they devour human flesh. Now here they are unchained, their jaws slaver, they rejoice. These four hounds are Jebei, Kublai, Jelme, Subutai!" *Tayang* asked again: "Who is that in the rear, speeding forward like a hungry hawk?" "It is my *anda* Temujin, wearing a coat of iron. You said that when the Mongol came you would devour him as you would devour a lamb, and leave no rag of flesh."¹⁶³

The Mongols won. Jamukha sought refuge to Merkit but he delivered by his own people into Temujin. According to the *Secret History* Temujin gave him the opportunity to rectify and reminded him their old oaths. Jamukha knew that this was his end as had drawn the Khereid and the Naiman into war against his enemy,¹⁶⁴ he was a traitor and hypocrite. Jamukha sentenced to strangulation and his body was buried as a prince.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Grousset, 1970, 213

¹⁶⁴ Grousset, 1970, 215

¹⁶⁵ Man, 2006, 131-132

4. Genghis Khan

“In the year of the tiger they all gathered [= 1206 AD] at the head of the river Onon. [...] And there was the place where they gave the title of the great Khan or Emperor to Genghis Khan.”¹⁶⁶

Since the fall of the Uighurs in 840, the steppes, which were possessed in turn by the Turks (the Hsiung-nu), then by the Mongols, then by the Turks again (T'u-chüeh and Uighur), remained without inheritors. In the *quriltai* (general assembly or council) of 1206 he was crowned as the *Khaghan* of the *Yekhe Mongol Ulus* (=Great Mongolian Nation). It was then, when he assumed the title of *Genghis Khan* or *Jinggis Qan*, which means universal leader, “The Most Great”,¹⁶⁷ marking the beginning of the Mongol Empire.¹⁶⁸

The word “Genghis” was a title which was invented. It might be related to the Mongolian word *tengis* which means sea. The sea, the oceans and the lakes were venerable elements for the Mongols. Maybe the word “Genghis” related to the word *tenger* which means the sky. It could be related to an old Uighur sovereign whose name was *Dengis* or Attila's son who had the name *Dengizik*, similar to the Mongolian word *tengis-ik* (=big sea).¹⁶⁹

Genghis Khan, proclaiming himself khan of "all those who live in felt tents," announced that the empire, was now permanently returned to the Mongols. Both Turks and Mongols were embodied within the new Mongol “nation” (*Monghol ulus*, *Mongholjin ulus*), and since then it was by the name of Mongol that both victors and defeated were to be known—Khereid, Naiman and Borjigin—“all generations dwelling in felt tents,” and under this name that they were to win glory.¹⁷⁰ The Mongols of Genghis Khan used to call themselves *Blue Mongols* (*Kökd Mongol*), as the epithet blue symbolized the Eternal Blue Sky of which Genghis Khan and his ancestors believed they were the representatives and agents on earth (*jayagatu* or *jaya'atu* in Mongolian).¹⁷¹

The ruler

Genghis Khan could easily handle people and technology, a capacity which was built during 40 years of battles and wars. He inspired loyalty to his followers and he had unique organizational abilities which did not result from some kind of apprenticeship, but from the observation of the facts, the discipline and the focused will. He was an innovator in fighting techniques, he used the speed and surprise attacks in battle. The Mongolian army learned under his guidance, how to fight for

¹⁶⁶ Spuler, 1972, 23-24

¹⁶⁷ Marco Polo, 1845, 46

¹⁶⁸ Σαββίδης, 2002, 425-437

¹⁶⁹ Man, 2006, 133

¹⁷⁰ Grousset, 1970, 215-216

¹⁷¹ Grousset, 1970, 584

years, decades and finally more than three generations without intervals.¹⁷² In each battle he gained more followers and learn new martial techniques. Combining these techniques, new strategies and new weapons with what he already knew, he managed something pioneering: he never fought the same way.¹⁷³

He forbade looting of his enemies without permission and he used to share the loots with his warriors and their families instead of giving them all to the aristocrats. He did not collect wealth and treasures but he delivered the goods obtained in battles. He believed that the law was above all the people and he never took advantage of his principality. He canceled tortures but he organized campaigns to locate the raiding robbers and terrorists murderers.¹⁷⁴

His vast empire connected the East with the West, allowing trade, culture, technologies, and ideas to be spread across Eurasia. He united all the Turko-Mongol tribes into a single empire, by dictating iron discipline from China until the Caspian sea, as a result he suppressed the unfinished wars between the peoples of the steppe and disposed the caravans a pioneering security.¹⁷⁵ Abu'l Ghazi Bahadur khan wrote in his work *Histoire des Mongols et des Tatares* (p.104): "Under the reign of Genghis Khan, all the country between Iran and Turan [the lands of the Turks] enjoyed such peace that a man might have journeyed from the land of sunrise to the land of sunset with a golden platter upon his head without suffering the least violence from anyone."¹⁷⁶

He encouraged literacy, adopting the Uyghur script, which would form the Mongolian script. He forbade the fighting between the Mongols, the selling of women, theft of other's properties and the hunting of animals during the breeding season. He also established the religious freedom and he exempted the clergy and the poor from taxation.¹⁷⁷

Genghis Khan knew very well the value of domestic and international trade, which brought significant revenues to the Mongol treasury and at the same time it could bind together, in an economic network, so many different regions. The Mongols made the highways of Asia safer than they had ever been. He resurrected the Silk Road and the town which located along it and organized them into the biggest free trade zone of the world. He reduced taxes for everyone- he exempted the priests, doctors, teachers and educational institutions from the taxation- and he founded the first international postal system.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Weatherford, 2005, 16

¹⁷³ Weatherford, 2005, 51

¹⁷⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 19

¹⁷⁵ Grousset, 1970, 250

¹⁷⁶ Grousset, 1970, 250

¹⁷⁷ Grousset, 1970, 250-251

¹⁷⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 19

The character behind the soldier

Genghis Khan was a strong man from the beginning of his life and not only when he became the great leader. His tough life, his orphan hood, the absence of the father which made him grew up as an outcast, without any help, made him so determined. Also, the resistance to extreme weather conditions, the disregard for the wounds and the disease, show the vitality of his nature and the strength of his body. His spirit had been tested by the beginning of his life, learning formerly the momentum and sometimes restraint. These experiences made him a man of iron, who astounded the world.¹⁷⁹ His ferocity was the result of the roughness of his milieu and not from a natural cruelty. The nomadic way of life with thousand years of raids, uncertainty and hostility made Genghis Khan saying with joy: "[I enjoy] cutting my enemies to pieces, drive them before me, seize their possessions, witness the tears of those dear to them, and embrace their wives and daughters!"¹⁸⁰

Many things are known about this legendary personality and about the way he ruled: His personal magnetism attracted young warriors similar to his own standard. His strategic capacity and his imposing character that cause awe and respect to its citizens and fear to his opponents, include him among the largest world leaders. Giovanni da Pian del Caprine in his work *The History of the Mongols*, says that Genghis Khan used to sign as "Emperor of all people, by the power of God"¹⁸¹

The opinion he had about himself and what he had in mind, it is recorded in a surviving letter that was sent by Genghis Khan to Li Chih-ch'ang, a Taoist monk in China, in 1219. A copy of that letter was made by the followers of the monk and the English translation of the letter can be found in E. Bretschneider's book *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources*.¹⁸² Despite his successes, he showed no arrogance but on the contrary, he had great self-awareness and sense of his mission. He believed that he had come to carry out "a great achievement " and to "unite the whole world in one empire." He wanted his leadership to be extended from where the sun rises, to where goes down.

While his actions and his words have been recorded in the *Secret History*, in that letter analyzes himself on his own, with no interference. He writes that the defeat of his enemies did not happen because of his own virtuosity, but because of their own incompetence: "I don't have special abilities," he confessed. He believed that firstly the *Eternal Blue Sky* had condemned the cultures and then he defeated them:

"Heaven is weary of the inordinate luxury of China. I remain in the wild region of the north; I return to simplicity and seek moderation once more. As for the garments that I wear and the meals that I eat, I have the same rags and the same food as cowherds and grooms, and I treat the soldiers as my brothers. In a hundred battles I have been in the forefront. Within the space of seven years I have performed a great

¹⁷⁹ Grousset, 1970, 198

¹⁸⁰ Grousset, 1970, 248

¹⁸¹ Σαββίδης, 2004, 98

¹⁸² Bretschneider, 1967, 37-39

work, and in the six directions of space everything is subject to a single rule!"¹⁸³ He was aware that he did better with the war topics than with the matters of peace: "I am afraid that something is missing from the way I govern" and generally he could easily admit his disadvantages.¹⁸⁴

He believed in the value and the achievements of the individual, so he abolished the aristocratic privilege of birth and he created a new system based on the person. He was well-balanced, good listener and used the common sense. He was also constant in friendship and despite his austerity, bountiful and affectionate. He was a good administrator, suitable for the nomadic peoples and not for sedentary societies, where the needs and the economy were totally different. Along with his barbarian nature there was lordship and grandiosity of mind. He abhorred the betrayal even if it was beneficial for him. He executed those who squealed their masters in order to favor themselves, while he took into his service the people who were loyal to their lord, even if this lord was his enemy. Rashid al-Din noted the moral principle of his sway and his admiration to courage. He used to protect people with weaker characters with exemplary loyalty, for the rest of their lives.¹⁸⁵

According to scholar John Man, Genghis Khan followed the ten rules for the "divine" leadership skills, rules which were derived from the *Eternal Blue Sky*. What Genghis Khan believed about the leadership and the exercise of the power, it is indicative of the quality of his character and the kind of leader he wanted to be:

1. Reward dedication

Genghis Khan had never forgotten all those who helped him. When he became a leader, he said to the man who helped him to escape when he was captive of the Merkit: "In my dreams in the dark of night and in my chest in the light of the day I was remembering the good you have done to me." He honored those who were brave and dedicated to their leader, even if they were on his opponent side.

2. Be strict

Despite of his glory and his wealth he remained a nomad who despised the luxury of himself. He was tough throughout his life and continued fighting until the end of his life.

3. Show restraint

He could control his anger and allowed others saying their opinion.

4. Find your talent wherever you can and use it

Aside from every prejudice he admired and rewarded the talent, as long as someone would indicate dedication. Some of his generals were shepherds and some of his

¹⁸³ Grousset, 1970, 248

¹⁸⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 206-207

¹⁸⁵ Grousset, 1970, 249

officers were former enemies. He was behaving with the same generosity to those who were in his service, either they were Mongolians or not.

5. Kill your enemies without hesitation

He showed no mercy to anyone who was not on his side, even though he was his relative or his friend. He had never forgotten any unfair offence and violation against him and he always took revenge. "They dissolved until no one left behind" he said about the Merkit who once kidnapped Borte. He said about the Tayichigud who captured him "They were scattered to the wind like ashes" and about the Tatars who killed his father: "We must take revenge for our ancestors. Let's kill them! ". If an enemy would not obey immediately, he had to be destroyed without mercy.

6. Combat violent behavior

Genghis Khan never derived joy from the suffering of others. In some cases ordered restraint and while other leaders went down in history as torturers, he never showed aggressive sadism.

7. Be adaptive and open to new ways of governance

Even though Genghis Khan was an illiterate shepherd-warrior and represented the absolute barbarian for the most of the people, he was a wise leader who was able to glimpse the benefits of writing and bureaucracy. He organized the state administration, and he gave orders to the government officials to keep records. As his force was growing, his stature as a leader was growing back. From the clan he passed to the race, then to the nation, and last, to the empire, marking a remarkable progress as a leader and a personality, taking lessons from his enemies.

8. Be aware that you receive the divine assistance

He felt and he declared that he had received the divine assistance to what he did. Having this belief and faith, he was progressing with more confidence in every victory and what he believed it came true.

9. Make all those who follow you and your successors to share your beliefs.

His descendants and the common people were convinced that Genghis Khan had order from the sky to rule the world and every time he had a new succession, they convinced even more about it. Aside from his words his actions spoke louder.

10. Respect the freedom of belief

If a leader showed great tolerance in the matter of faith, he was Genghis Khan. He never fought other peoples in order to change their faith. He had absolute respect for

every "divinity" a man had chosen to believe in, exactly as he felt for the eternal blue sky in which he believed.¹⁸⁶

Even though Genghis Khan was- for the civilized world- the stereotype of the barbarian, the bloodthirsty savage who enjoyed destroying, the positive influence on many fields of culture was obvious.¹⁸⁷ He was interested in the civilized world, even though he was inflexible in his policy. He had many foreign advisers in order to understand and follow the sedentary societies: the Uighur *Ta-t'a-t'ung-a*, who became his chancellor and his tutor in Uighur writing, the Muslim *Mahmud Yalavach*, who was his deputy, and Khitan *Ye-lü Ch'u-ts-ai* who introduced him to the Chinese culture. He cared about the precious texts from the places he sacked and tried to rescue them, as well as he investigated for medical preparations in order to combat the illnesses. Despite his roughness he could not hide his sensitivity when someone was begging for mercy. It is referred that Ögedei asked him "Are you going to weep for the people again?" Prudent interference on his part stopped the damage.¹⁸⁸ According to Rémusat in his work "*Vie de Yeliu Thsoutsai*," in *Nouveaux mélanges asiatiques, II*, "he was the natural intermediary between oppressors and oppressed".¹⁸⁹ He tried to prove that the indulgence was a good tactic, showing to the people that the barbarity of his tribe was born of unawareness.¹⁹⁰

The Persian chronicler Minhāl al-Juzjani described Genghis Khan as "cursed" and described his death as a "descent into hell".¹⁹¹ He also adds about him:

"A man of tall stature, of vigorous build, robust in body, the hair on his face scanty and turned white, with cats' eyes, possessed of dedicated energy, discernment, genius, and understanding, awe-striking, a butcher, just, resolute, an over-thrasher of enemies, intrepid, sanguinary, and cruel", as well as "adept at magic and deception, and some of the devils were his friends".¹⁹²

Many of his contemporaries though judged differently this personality. Marco Polo wrote in his book: "He died, and this was a great pity, for he was a just man and a wise one" and Joinville added "He kept the people at peace", pointed the controversy that he caused between the biographers.¹⁹³

At the end of the 18th century, during the Enlightenment, Voltaire in his play about the Mongol conquest of China, with the name "*The orphans of China*", wrote about Genghis Khan: "He is called King of kings; the irascible Genghis Khan who destroys the fields of Asia", "This destructive tyrant who proudly steps on the necks of the kings" and "nevertheless he is nothing more than a fierce Scythian soldiers

¹⁸⁶ Man, 2006, 291-295

¹⁸⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 27

¹⁸⁸ Grousset, 1970, 250

¹⁸⁹ Rémusat, 64

¹⁹⁰ Grousset, 1970, 250

¹⁹¹ Juzjani, 1970, 1041-1042

¹⁹² Juzjani, 1970, 1077

¹⁹³ Grousset, 1970, 250

who was raised to keep weapons and to pursue his bloodthirsty profession" (Act I, scene I). According to Voltaire, Genghis Khan destroyed whatever he could not understand. Scholars though clarify that Voltaire perceived the Mongol conquests through the Enlightenment mental horizons and thus he presented Genghis Khan as a tyrant.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 27-28

5. Mongol Empire: State and Army

The Mongol State

The new empire preserved its religious principle which was the ancient Turko-Mongol animism mixed to Chinese elements. The divinity was still *Tängri*, “Heaven or the god of Heaven”, similar to the Chinese *Tien*, and to the Iranian *Ormazd* and all the descendants of Genghis Khan were the earthly representatives of *Tängri*: “their commands were his commands; rebellion against them was a rebellion against him”.¹⁹⁵

The Mongol state used the writing and the official language from the Uighurs. In 1204, Genghis Khan took into his service the Uighur *T'a-t'a t'unga*, who worked as a teacher of Genghis Khan's sons. They learned how to write Mongolian in Uighur characters. Through the Uighur advisers emerged the Mongol administration and through the Khitan advisers, whom Genghis Khan had in his service, the Mongols met the Chinese culture. The administration of the new empire was a mix of Genghis Khan discipline and an Uighur operation system.¹⁹⁶

Since 1206 Genghis Khan placed *Shigi-qutuqu*, a Tatar whom had adopted as a baby, in the position of the great judge. He was recording judicial decisions and sentences in Uighur characters and in the Mongol tongue and he was keeping registers known as "*blue books*" (*kökö däbtär*) showing the allocation of population among the Mongol nobles.¹⁹⁷

The regulations, the laws of the new empire, the *yasaq*, (*Jasaq* or *jasa* in Mongolian, *yasaq* or *yasa* in Turkic: "to regulate"¹⁹⁸) were enacted for the first time at the *quriltai* of 1206. Through the *yasaq*, Genghis Khan enforced strict discipline on society and the army which “ordained by Heaven”. It was completed by the "wisdom" or "sayings" (*bilik*) of Genghis Khan. This code of laws was severe as imposed the death penalty for murder, major theft, for mendacity, adultery, sodomy, spiteful witchcraft and receiving of stolen goods. Civil or military disobedience was equated with crimes under common law.¹⁹⁹

The Mongol discipline astounds the western travelers. The Franciscan del Carpini, forty years after the *quriltai* of 1206, mentioned: "The Tartars, that is, the Mongols, are the most obedient people in the world in regard to their leaders, more so even than our own clergy to their superiors. They bold them in the greatest reverence and never tell them a lie. There is no wrangling among them, no disputes, no murders. Only petty thefts occur. Should one of them lose any of his animals, the finder never keeps them, and may even return them to their owner. Their wives are very chaste, even when they make merry." If one compares this picture with that of the anarchy prevailing in Mongol territory on the eve of the Genghis-Khanate conquest, or with

¹⁹⁵ Grousset, 1970, 218

¹⁹⁶ Grousset, 1970, 250-251

¹⁹⁷ Grousset, 1970, 219

¹⁹⁸ Grousset, 1970, 585

¹⁹⁹ Grousset, 1970, 220

the moral level of the Mongols of today, one may appreciate the profound change which Genghis Khan *yasaq* brought about in Mongol society.²⁰⁰

The social structure of the Mongol Empire contained Genghis Khan and his family (the *golden family*=*altan uruk* in Mongolian) with the princes, the grand khan's sons (*köbegün*), who were at the apex. The family had rights of property over their vast domain of conquered lands while the grazing lands (*nutuq, yurt*) assigned to the four sons of Genghis Khan and the future four khanates. Since Genghis Khan the Mongol society, which absorbed many Turkic tribes from the Altai, was considered from the other tribes as a superior one, as the Mongols were the founders of the Empire. They called the Mongols "aristocracy of the steppes, aristocracy of the brave (*ba'atur*), and of the chiefs (*noyan*).” Next in social structure were the warriors (*nökur*), the commoners or plebeians (*arad, qarachu*), and the serfs (*unaghan boghul*), who theoretically were non-Mongols.²⁰¹

Church and State

In the quriltai of 1206 the shaman Kökchü, who had been an important figure for Genghis Khan, announced that the Eternal Blue Sky had designate Temujin to be universal khagan. This celestial ordination was the divine privilege upon which the new emperor uphold his authority. He received the title of khagan (*qân, qaan*) by the power and order of the *Eternal Heaven (mongka tängri-yin küchün-dür)* and that was the protocol that was preserved under his succeeds.²⁰²

This shaman also helped Genghis Khan to establish the "religious" base of his power. Considering himself inviolate, because of his “magical gifts” his behavior soon became arrogant and he was trying to control the emperor. When he argued with Hasar, Genghis Khan’s brother, he tried to get rid of him by announcing to the khan a strangely revelation: "The Spirit has revealed to me a command from Eternal Heaven. Temujin will reign at first, and after him Hasar, unless you remove Hasar, you will be in danger!"²⁰³

Genghis Khan suspected Hasar and arrested him. According to *Secret History* when Hoelun learned this bared her breasts and said: "These are the breasts that suckled you. What crime has Hasar committed that you should desire to destroy your own flesh? You, Temujin, sucked this one and your brothers Qachi'un and Ochigin the other. Hasar alone has fed from both. Temujin has genius, but Hasar strength, and he is the better archer. Each time the tribes have risen, his bow and his arrows have tamed them. But now that our enemies have all been removed, he is no longer wanted!" After that Genghis Khan let Hasar free.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Grousset, 1970, 220

²⁰¹ Grousset, 1970, 220-221

²⁰² Grousset, 1970, 216

²⁰³ Grousset, 1970, 216-217

²⁰⁴ Grousset, 1970, 217

However the shaman continued his efforts to control the imperial family, by insulting Genghis Khan's youngest brother publicly. Börte realized the situation and warned her husband: "If even during your lifetime your brothers are open to insult, after your death the people will rise against your sons!" Genghis Khan understood what the shaman was doing and allowed Temüge to kill the shaman. When Kōkchū arrived with his father Manglik to visit Genghis Khan, Temüge snatched him by his throat and three guards posted by Temüge broke his spine "without shedding his blood." For the future generations though, he was known as "a great and tranquil shaman."²⁰⁵

The Mongol Army

In the army the personal loyalty united the captains of tens (*arban*), of hundreds (*jagung*), of thousands (*meghan*), and those of ten thousands (*tumen*). The centurions, the millenaries and commanders of myriads came from the high aristocracy. Beneath them, the main body of the army was by the minor nobility of free men, who had the Turkic title of *tarkhan* or *darkhan* in Mongolian and who had the privilege of retaining their individual plunder in war. Many *tarkhat*, for their bravery, were promoted to the aristocracy.²⁰⁶

As Vladimirtsov described in his book *The Life of Jinghis-Khan*, the Mongol army was "aristocratically organized," and had its own elite: the guards, about ten thousand men²⁰⁷ of the grand khan, *kāshik*, who were divided into day guards (*tughlaq*) and night guards (*kābtāü*), who both numbered from 800 to 1.000.²⁰⁸ Only nobles and privileged freemen, the *tarkhat* or *darqat*, could take part in these corps from which Genghis Khan used to select his personal guards.²⁰⁹

The Mongol army was consisted of three wards, developed according to the Mongol orientation, which facing south. This formation was facing toward to the Mongol targets, the "southern" countries such as China to the left, Turkestan and eastern Iran in the center, the Russian steppe on the right. The left ward (*jegün-ghar*) to the east was led by *Jelair Muqali*, the central (*qöl*) was commanded by the *Ba'arin Naya*, and *Chagan*, a young Tangut whom Genghis Khan had adopted and the right ward (*baraghun-ghar*) was commanded by *Arulat Bo'orchu*, or *Bogurji*. After Genghis Khan's death the army contained 129000 men. The left ward consisted of 62.000 men, the right ward had 38.000, and the remainder was shared between center and reserves.²¹⁰

The Mongolian army moved from one place to another without supplies. The Mongols did not take heavy equipment with them but they take mechanical

²⁰⁵ Barthold, 1977, 391

²⁰⁶ Grousset, 1970, 221

²⁰⁷ Barthold, 1977, 384

²⁰⁸ Barthold, 1977, 338

²⁰⁹ Grousset, 1970, 221

²¹⁰ Grousset, 1970, 222

manufacturers to construct on the spot, what it was needed with the materials they found. During the colder months, the horses needed less water, so the army used to cross the steppes. The army crossed the steppes during the colder months in order its horses to require less water. At the same time of the year the rime covered everything and helped the development of the grass which was the main diet of horses.²¹¹

The Mongol warrior and the Mongol war tactic



According to Chinese painters and mainly according to the description of Fernand Grenard (1866-1942) a French author, explorer and historian of Genghis Khan, who traveled in Mongolia, described the Mongol warriors: "In camp the soldier wears a fur cap with ear flaps, felt stockings, boots, and a pelisse reaching below his knees. In battle he dons a leather helmet covering the nape of his neck and a strong, flexible cuirass made of strips of leather lacquered black. His offensive weapons consist of two bows and two quivers, a curved saber, a hatchet, and an iron mace suspended from his saddle, a lance furnished with a hook for unseating enemy horsemen, and a horsehair rope with a running noose."²¹²

The cavalry men wore sheepskin coats over their clothes, also recent archaeological finds have shown that the horsemen had a lamellar armor in common Asiatic style: small iron or leather flakes were sewn together with leather straps,

²¹¹ Weatherford, 2005, 44-45

²¹² Grousset, 1970, 222

which made a strong armor plate and leather boots on feet. Alternatively, a coat amplified with metal plates and was worn under the uniform of the armor. The helmet was made of larger iron segments and it was conical in shape. Their main weapons were the swords, the bows and the maces.²¹³

The Mongol was united with his horse and they were identical in many cases. Both they were short, without grace, stubby, big-boned with thick neck and legs, with heavy frame, enormous valence, fortitude, resistance and stability. Many aspects of their life related with the horses: they used to eat in the saddle, soften their meat by putting it between the saddle and the horse, they even sleep in the saddle.²¹⁴

The Mongol tactics, which was developed after continuous battles, imitated the methods used once by the Hsiung-nu (or Hun-nu-the Huns and T'u-chüeh. According to tradition Genghis Khan said: "In daylight, watch with the vigilance of an old wolf, at night with the eyes of the raven. In battle, fall upon the enemy like a falcon." Stalking the herds of deer had taught the nomads to send silently, invisible detectors to observe the enemy. The Mongol cavalry used the method of surprise and ubiquity which cause fear and destroyed any opponent. If someone pursuing the Mongol horsemen in their retreat, they led his away from his base and kill him.²¹⁵

The light cavalry was set in the in the vanguard and was throwing arrows which shredded the range of the enemy. The mounted archers were very experienced- they learn archery since childhood- and, like the Huns, could kill someone who was even 400 yards away. The heavy cavalry took action when the enemy was closer and discouraged enough because of the long battle. Then the cavalry surrounded and destroy the enemy. According to Grousset the Mongols used their physical appearance, their ugliness and fetidness in order to terrorize any foe. They used to appear suddenly and arrayed, compassing the horizon. They walked forward silently and after a while they charged uttering "diabolical shrieks and yells."²¹⁶

The Mongols with their horses hunted other steppe tribes, the Persian, the Russian, the Chinese and the Hungarian in the same way they chased the animals. They complicated the opponent, they exhausted, surrounded and slaughter him. Carpini described the Mongol tactic, which caused more fear to the Europeans:

"As soon as they discover the enemy, they charge, each man shooting off three or four arrows. If they perceived that the opposing force is unbroken, they withdraw among their own people; but this is merely to invite pursuit and to entice the enemy into some ambush prepared beforehand. Should they find that the opposing army is too strong, they ride away, halting at the end of a day or two to ravage the districts in their path. [...] Or else they pitch camp at some well-chosen spot and, when the enemy forces start to file past, they spring out and take them by surprise. [...] Their tricks of war are many. They meet the first cavalry onset with a front consisting of prisoners and foreign auxiliaries, while the bulk of their own men take up their positions on the

²¹³ Turnbull, 2003, 17

²¹⁴ Turnbull, 2003, 18

²¹⁵ Grousset, 1970, 223

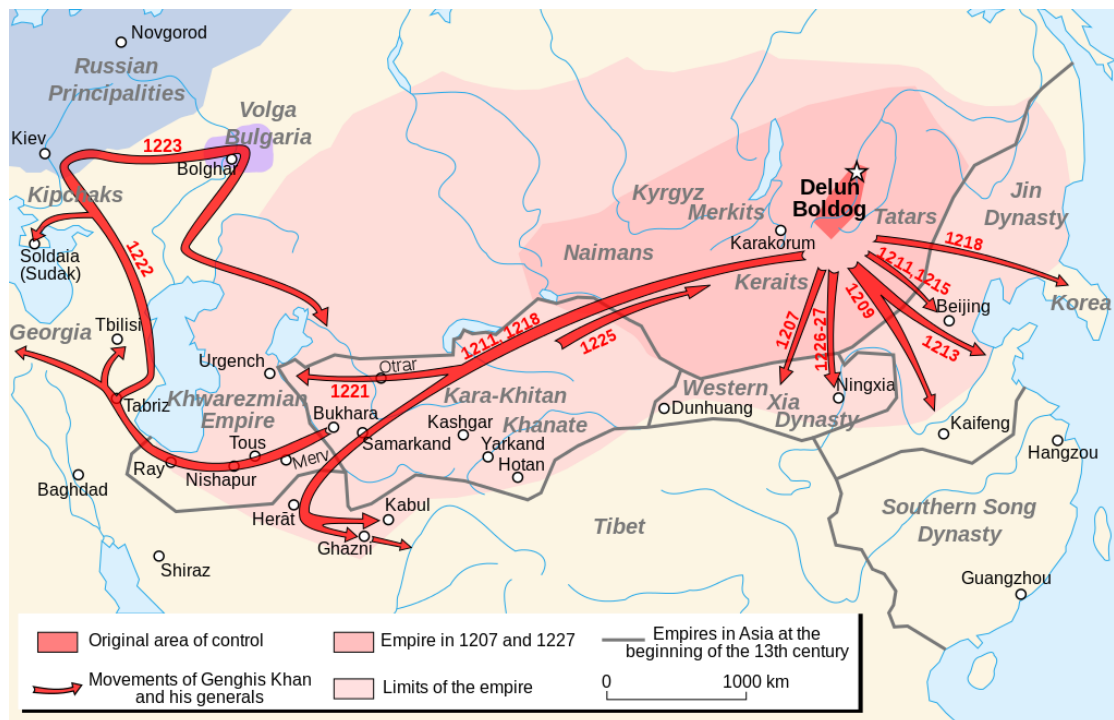
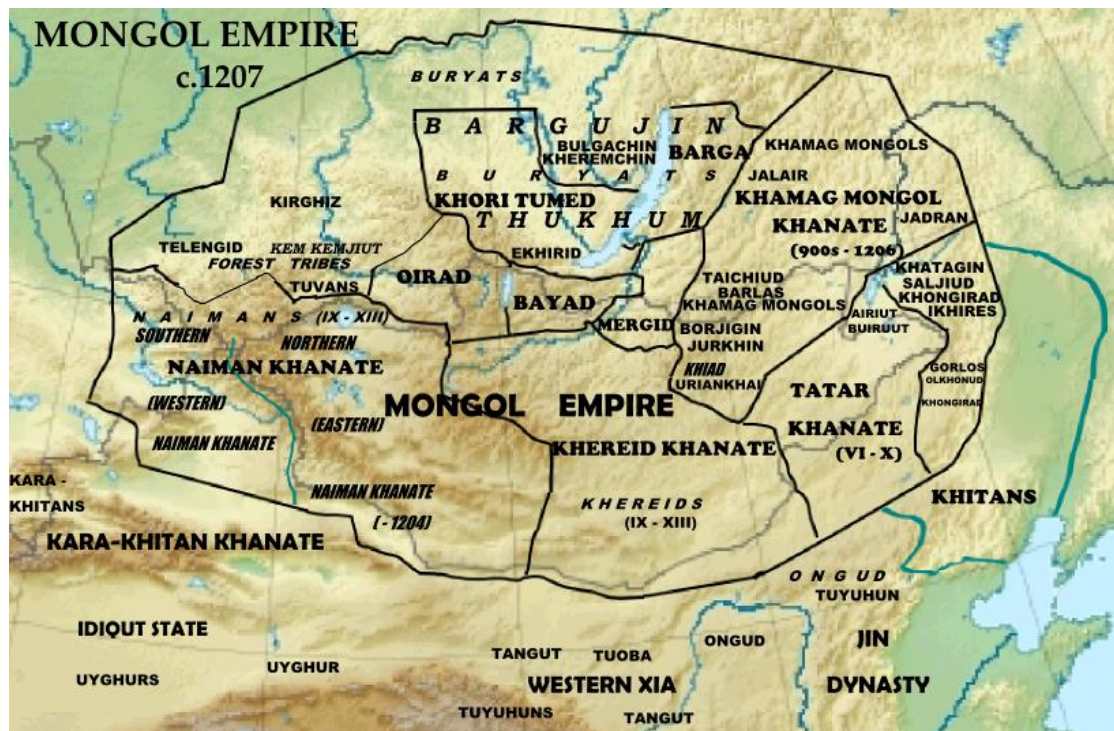
²¹⁶ Altumian, 1911, 74

wings in order to encompass the enemy. They do this so effectively that he fancies them far more numerous than they are. If the adversary defends himself stoutly, they open their ranks and allow him to escape, whereupon they dash in pursuit and slay as many of the fugitives as they can. But they engage in hand-to-hand struggles as seldom as possible, their object being merely to wound men and horses with their arrows." About the same topic Rubruck writes: "When they desire to hunt, they gather in great numbers about the place where they know wild beasts to be, and little by little advance upon them, enclosing them as in a net, in order to shoot them down with their arrows."²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Grousset, 1970, 224-225

6. Mongol Empire's rise and conquests

*The empires extended for as long as they have the strength to do so.*²¹⁸



²¹⁸ Man, 2006, 219

Military Campaigns

Genghis Khan seemed to believe that the victory did not follow the one who played by the rules, but the one who made the rules and imposed them to the opponent. This meant the extended usage of terror and surprise attack.²¹⁹ The Mongol army was undefeated and strong but not as rapid as it is assumed. During the campaigns in China the army travelled only 23km a day, because the horses had to have time to crop.²²⁰ Scholar John Man though, claims that the Mongol army was capable to cover 600km per day, a unique speed which could be covered only when the railways appeared in history.²²¹

Year by year Genghis Khan conquer anyone who could be more powerful than he was and at the age of fifty, when other leaders retreat, he began to confront the civilized world in the East and West. His power spread from the Great Wall as far as Siberia and included thirty-two tribes, which were broken into three large groups.²²²

His cavalry formed the borders of the world from the beginning. Genghis Khan integrated small countries in order to create bigger ones. Many Slavic principalities in Eastern Europe united into one large Russian state, while in eastern Asia the Mongols created China, by assembling the leftovers of the Sung dynasty. This empire connected and merged the civilizations which were around Mongolia and made a new world order. By the date of his birth, the world consisted of tribes and civilizations who knew only their neighbor. China did not know Europe or the way around. By the date of his death, he managed to connect them in a commercial and diplomatic way, which is still present.²²³

The Mongolian invasions of the 13th century sowed terror in the Christian and Islamic world. The British scholar of Mongol history John Andrew Boyle described the Mongols as the "last barbarian invaders" while the scholar J.J. Saunders wrote that "the thirteenth century was the age of the Mongol conquests, the last and most dreadful of all the nomadic assaults on civilization. China, Europe and Islam were all to suffer, but the appalling avalanche of destruction which rolled over a vast segment of the globe from Korea to Germany nearly engulfed Islam completely".²²⁴

During the Medieval times the Mongols appeared as super humans. There is also considerable evidence that the Mongols deliberately fostered this superhuman image to help their campaigns along, until the cumulative effect of their unstoppable reputation led some cities to surrender without putting up any resistance.²²⁵

The Mongol Empire at its zenith covered 11-12 millions adjacent square miles. Shortly before his death in 1227, Genghis Khan ruled from the Pacific Ocean to the Caspian Sea. The empire was four times as large as the empire of Alexander the Great and twice as the Roman Empire. By 1300 the Mongols doubled the conquests

²¹⁹ Weatherford, 2005, 50

²²⁰ Turnbull, 2003, 19

²²¹ Man, 2006, 225

²²² Σαββίδης, 2004, 25

²²³ Weatherford, 2005, 18

²²⁴ Saunders, 1965, 171

²²⁵ Turnbull, 2004, 18

of Genghis Khan adding parts of China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Pakistan, Iran, the bulk of Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the largest part of Russia and Ukraine as well as the half of Poland and Egypt. The leader of this vast land was Kublai Khan and grandson of Genghis Khan.²²⁶ In twenty-five years the Mongols conquered more lands than the Romans did in four hundred years and more than twice as much as any other man worldwide. On the contemporary map he conquered thirty countries with an army of just hundred thousand warriors.²²⁷

Genghis Khan's conquests



Xi-Xia (1209)

Having unified the Mongols and having well-organized his army, Genghis Khan invaded into the northern China. He first attacked the Buddhist kingdom Xi-Xia or His-Hsia (they were known as Dangsian to the Chinese and Tangut to the Mongols²²⁸) a first campaign against a sedentary society and civilized people.²²⁹

Temujin used Sengum's refuge in the country of Xi-Xia as an excuse for his first raids in 1205.²³⁰ Since then he led many raids against Xi-Xia who were rich and

²²⁶ Man, 2006, 302-303

²²⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 17

²²⁸ Man, 2006, 147

²²⁹ Grousset, 1970, 225

²³⁰ May, 2012, 1211

vulnerable.²³¹ He gained a new source for paying taxes as well as the control of the caravans along the Silk Road, which was another great income for the new empire.²³² Also through the Xi-Xia he could launch invasions into the much more opulent, Jin Dynasty in the east.²³³

In 1209 Genghis Khan invade again in Xi-Xia land. It was a larger scale campaign, this time which made the leader of Xi-Xia to ask for help from the Jin dynasty. The prince Wei refused any aid, saying that “It is to our advantage when our enemies attack each other. Where exactly lies the danger to us?”²³⁴

The capital *Yinchuan* was difficult to be defeated as it was well fortified and it possessed 150.000 soldiers, twice than the Mongol army.²³⁵ Five months later the city was still impregnable.²³⁶ The ruler of the Xi-Xia gave his daughter in marriage to Genghis Khan²³⁷ and agreed to pay taxes in order to achieve the Mongols’ retreat.²³⁸

In the second invasion in 1225 Genghis Khan attacked with 180.000 soldiers.²³⁹ The Mongols destroyed one city after another²⁴⁰ and in the battle near the Yellow River the Mongols killed about 300.000 Xi-Xia men.²⁴¹ In 1227 Genghis Khan was ready to invade the Jin dynasty but unexpectedly he died. The Mongols continued to siege the capital Yinchuan and annihilated the Xi-Xia state.²⁴²

Jin Dynasty (1211)

The conquest of the Jin dynasty began in 1211 and ended in 1234, after Genghis Khan’s death.²⁴³ The Mongols were very capable in the conquest of the steppe and the open town, but they could not capture defended and fortified cities.²⁴⁴ In 1213 though the Mongol army conquered Zhongdu (Beijing) and the Jin agreed to become vassals to the Mongols. They gave a Jin princess, young men and girls, gold, silk and three thousand horses to Genghis Khan, who took the road back to Mongolia.²⁴⁵ The capital moved from Beijing to Kaifeng in 1214, something that to Genghis Khan’s mind was a desertion and he decided to break the truce and besieged again Beijing. He massacred the citizens, destroyed the houses and set the city on fire.

²³¹ Man, 2006, 161

²³² Kohn, 2007, 205

²³³ Man, 2006, 161

²³⁴ Man, 2006, 163

²³⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 85

²³⁶ May, 2012, 1211

²³⁷ Grousset, 1970, 226

²³⁸ Man, 2006, 164

²³⁹ Emmons, 2012, 139

²⁴⁰ Kohn, 2007, 205

²⁴¹ Tucker, 2010, 276

²⁴² Mote, 1999, 256

²⁴³ Grousset, 1970, 227

²⁴⁴ Grousset, 1970, 227

²⁴⁵ Grousset, 1970, 229

The sack lasted a whole month.²⁴⁶ After this victory the Mongols managed to take control of the whole northern China.²⁴⁷

After 1215 Genghis Khan was interested mostly in Persia and Central Asia, but he assigned the operations in Jin dynasty to *Muguli* or *Mugali*, one of his commanders who seized many towns, among them the old capital Changan. Mugali died in 1223 and the Mongols retreated. Later Ögedei Khan besieged the capital once more but the fall of the Jin dynasty occurred in 1234 after the persistent siege of the Mongols. The rulers of the powerful dynasty preferred to commit suicide than to give in to Mongols.²⁴⁸

Qara- Khitai (1218)

After China Genghis Khan turned to the conquest of Mesopotamia, reaching as far as the Indus River. His contemporary Arab historian Ibn al-Athir described the Mongol invasions in Islamic countries as “the biggest destruction of humanity”,²⁴⁹ scholar John Man described them as “The Muslim holocaust”.²⁵⁰

The son of the last Naiman king, *Küchlüg*, escaped to the Qara-Khitai empire in Central Asia and became lord in his new land. The aristocracy of this empire was of Mongol origin and Chinese culture, while the locals were ethnically Turkic and Muslim in religion.²⁵¹ Genghis Khan could not allow his enemy to remain unpunished and decided to conquer the empire. After ten years of continual rivals in China (Xi-Xia and Jin dynasty), the Mongol army was exhausted, so in 1218 Genghis Khan sent only 20.000 men under the general Jebei (=arrow).²⁵²

Küchlüg had left the Qara-Khitai to Kashgaria, a trade center on the Silk Road and from there he fled again but Jebei’s army found and executed him near Sarikol river.²⁵³ The Mongols for the first time got in touch with the south Silk Road, the world of Islam and their Muslim neighbors. After the campaign in Qara-Khitai, the eastern Turkestan was now part of the Mongol Empire.²⁵⁴

Kwarezmian Empire (1219)

The rich Khwarezmian Empire, which was extended from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, now bordered with the Mongol Empire. The Kwarezmian Empire controlled the big trade centers along the Silk Road such as Samarkand, Bukhara,

²⁴⁶ Grousset, 1970, 229

²⁴⁷ Man, 2006, 175

²⁴⁸ Man, 2006, 180

²⁴⁹ Brockelmann, 1980, 240

²⁵⁰ Man, 2006, 181

²⁵¹ Grousset, 1970, 232

²⁵² Man, 2006, 183

²⁵³ Grousset, 1970, 235

²⁵⁴ Man, 2006, 185

Urgent, Merv, Nisapur.²⁵⁵ The population of the empire was of Iranian origin but the army was constituted of Turks, as this land was part of the Seljuk Empire.²⁵⁶

Genghis Khan tried to establish political relations with the empire but the answer of the Shah Ala ad-Din Muhammad, was negative. Genghis Khan insisted that he was interested only in trading and in 1217 he sent a delegation of Muslim men to persuade the Shah. Inalchuq, the governor of the Kwarezmian frontier Ortar attacked and robbed the caravan while he killed the members of the delegation. Genghis Khan demanded compensation and when the Shah refused it. Genghis Khan sent again three ambassadors to the Shah this time, who killed them in an insulting way.²⁵⁷

In the summer of 1219, 150.000 Mongol soldiers, with the most capable generals and three of Genghis Khan's sons (Chagatai, Ögedei and Tolui), attacked Kwarezmian Empire. They seized the Otrar city and killed Inalchuq as a punishment for the looting of the Mongol caravan.²⁵⁸ The conquest of the cities of the empire was extremely brutal. Ibn al-Athir writes in his work *The Complete History*, in the excerpt *On the Tatars*:

“O would that my mother had never borne me, that I had died before and that I were forgotten [so] tremendous disaster such as had never happened before, and which struck all the world, though the Muslims above all . . . Dadjjal [Muslim Anti-Christ] will at least spare those who adhere to him, and will only destroy his adversaries. These [Mongols], however, spared none. They killed women, men, and children, ripped open the bodies of the pregnant and slaughtered the unborn.”²⁵⁹

The citizens of Bukhara were robbed and outraged in every way, while a great fire completed the destruction of the city. A well-known story states that when Genghis Khan entered the city of Bukhara, he came into a big mosque and invited 280 rich men of the city. There, with the help of an interpreter he told them about the crimes and offenses that the rich committed against the poor people by saying: “It is the great ones among you who have committed these sins. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you.” It is in this way that the author legitimizes Khan's violent conquests.²⁶⁰

Samarkand capitulated according to Juvaini, after five days. Genghis Khan's contemporary Arab historian Ibn al-Athir described the Mongol invasions in Islamic countries as the biggest destruction of humanity.²⁶¹ Scholar John Man described them as “The Muslim holocaust”²⁶² and scholar Grousset gives a characteristic description about the siege of the Kwarezmian empire which shows the size of the destruction: “The massacre had been on so huge a scale that barely enough inhabitants were left to

²⁵⁵ Man 2006, 185

²⁵⁶ Grousset, 1970, 236

²⁵⁷ Man, 2006, 188

²⁵⁸ Grousset, 1970, 237

²⁵⁹ Spuler, 1972, 290

²⁶⁰ Weatherford, 2005, 48

²⁶¹ Brockelmann, 1980, 240

²⁶² Man, 2006, 181

populate a single quarter."²⁶³ The method of "Mongol terror" was applied pitilessly: "In vain the inhabitants hid in mountains and caves to escape the Mongol might. The fields were covered with human bones."²⁶⁴

In the spring of 1221 Genghis Khan marched to Afghanistan and the city of Khurasan. He massacred the inhabitants and burned many cities in Transoxiana and eastern Iran, repeating the destruction of the Kwarezmian empire. He returned to Mongolia in 1225 considering the treasures he could find in the western world.²⁶⁵

Georgia, Armenia, Crimea, Kievan Rus, Volga Bulgaria

In early 1221 the generals Jebei and Subutai, were seeking new challenges after the campaign in Islam. As they turned to the Volga river, they ascended the river for 700 kilometers and there they met the Bulgars. The main target of the whole mission was the two Bulgarian cities, the Vulgar and the Souvar. The Mongols lost and retreated but they came back stronger 15 years later.²⁶⁶

A Muslim tribe, the Bulgars, who lived in north-west of the Mongol Empire, seemed to be rich enough: they were initially hunters and fishermen and subsequently fur traders. The Mongols considered the Bulgars as an easy target and the reward from the campaign against them would be great in loot and information. Thus, the first campaign of the Mongols to the Christian world began in 1222-1223 with a cavalcade which had to cover 7.500 kilometers. It was the first time that Europe heard what was happening in Central Asia.²⁶⁷

The first kingdom that the Mongols met on their way was the Christian Georgia, which stretched from the Black Sea and the Caucasus to the current Azerbaijan which then it was at the height of its power because of the capable Queen Tamar.²⁶⁸ The Mongols defeated Tbilisi, then they withdraw to the north Iran and attacked to Baghdad. They returned to north Georgia and at the end, they moved beyond Caucasus. North of Caucasus, where today's Chechnya is, the Mongols met the Cumans (*Kipchak* in Turkish), a Turkic nomadic tribe which occupied the lands from the northern Black Sea to the borders of the Russian state and Kiev, its capital.²⁶⁹ Initially, the two generals of Genghis Khan lost from the Cumans, but later the Mongols trapped them and they began to fall back. The Cumans who survived fled to Russia to escape and the Mongols conquered the steppes north of Crimea.²⁷⁰

Jebei created a basis at the Don River, while Subutai headed to the southern Crimea. At this point, the Mongols came again into contact with Europeans and specifically with Venetian merchants who were active in Crimea and they drove them

²⁶³ Grousset, 1970, 238

²⁶⁴ Grousset, 1970, 247

²⁶⁵ Grousset, 1970, 243

²⁶⁶ Man, 2006, 227

²⁶⁷ Man, 2006, 220-221

²⁶⁸ Man, 2006, 220

²⁶⁹ Man, 2006, 222

²⁷⁰ Man, 2006, 223

away. In 1222 they occupied the defenseless steppes of the river Dniester while their main target since then, was the Bulgars. In the spring of 1223 Princes of Russian provinces, such as Volynia, Kursk, Kiev, Chernigov, Suzdal and Rostov gathered on the west bank of the Dniester river and allied with the Cumans in order to confront the Mongol threat. This action caused fear to the Mongols and they decided to send a delegation proposing peace to the Russian princes: "We did not quarrel with you but with the Cumans", said the Mongols "All we want is a promise that you will not help our enemies." The Russian princes refused to come to an agreement with the Mongols and considered their representatives to be traitors, they killed them. This was an insult for the Mongols for which they decided to take revenge.²⁷¹

The army of the Russian princes composed of 80.000 men, horseback Cuman archers, infantrymen from Galicia and Russian horsemen. This army looked frightening enough, but it was a troop which knew the European style of fighting, that is to say, defending themselves behind the castles and fortifications. Time was scarce for any administrative or strategic organization. On the contrary, the Mongols had common target and rigid discipline, despite the fact that they were only 20.000-25.000 men.²⁷²

The Russians scorned the outnumbered opponents. Their forces rapidly penetrated a small contingent of soldiers and they captured and executed the Mongol governor. The Mongol army retreated, leaving behind the local captives who took back their territories. On 31 May the Russians with the Cumans reached the river Kalka at the north of the Azov Sea, where the Mongols fought back, vanquishing the enemy. The Mongols chasing the Russian army arrived in the Dnieper River where it stopped.²⁷³

Six Russian princes, seventy nobles and seventy thousand men fell in battle, while the main part of the army began to fall back running in the vast steppes or they captured from the Mongols and kept as prisoners. The only leader who managed to escape and to return back to his home was Mistislav the Terrible from Galicia (the border area of today's Hungary-Ukraine). The leaders who survived, among them Mistislav Romanovits of Kiev, surrendered to the Mongols.²⁷⁴

Indicative of the disruption and destruction caused by the Mongols was the anonymous Chronicle of Russian Novgorod, referring to the year 1224, which claims that only God knew from where the Tatars came and how they disappeared after the destruction and looting caused.²⁷⁵ The crash of the Russian principality of Kiev in the Battle of Kalka River was attributed to the wrath of God by the Russians who believed that they had been abandoned because of their sins. Objectively, the Russians underestimated their opponents, lacked coordination with the Cumans and poor organization at the same time, events that led to defeat. William of Rubruck

²⁷¹ Man, 2006, 224-225

²⁷² Man, 2006, 225

²⁷³ Μαλιγκούδη, 1999, 129-130

²⁷⁴ Man, 2006, 226-227

²⁷⁵ Morgan, 1986, 136

wrote about the Mongol expansion: “All the land east of the mouth of the Tanai and up the Danube rivers is conquests of the Tartars. Also across the Danube to Constantinople, Wallachia [...] and the Little Bulgaria by Slavonia, pay taxes to the Tatars...”²⁷⁶

The continuing victories of the Mongols respectively prove the defensive inability and the poor communication between the rulers of eastern and central Europe. After the campaigns against Russians, the Mongols crossed the steppes as “Devil's horsemen” caused more fear to the tribes they met.²⁷⁷ These large raids in Russia and the Kalka river, gave important information to the Mongols about the land and the peoples of these places. They realized that the Russian were not easy opponents, that greater capacity and power would be needed and the only way to conquer them would be the division of every province and the looting of the Russian cities. From the Cuman captives the Mongols learned that beyond these territories, in the west, there were richer places to conquer.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Ρουμπρούκ, 1991, 19-20

²⁷⁷ Morgan, 1986, 139-141

²⁷⁸ Man, 2006, 228

7. The death of an Emperor

Most of the great conquerors had terrible deaths, but Genghis Khan died in his bed, surrounded by his family, his friends and some devoted soldiers. The secrecy about the circumstances of his death provoked and inspired legends: Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, the first European emissary to the Mongols, wrote that Genghis Khan had died by a lightning. Marco Polo related that Genghis Khan had died because of an infection of an arrow sore to his knee during his final expedition,²⁷⁹ while others scholars claim that he had been poisoned by his enemies.²⁸⁰

Another version says that Genghis Khan had been killed by the daughter of the Tangut king, on the first night of their marriage. According to the legend, the king secretly said to his daughter: "Here is a knife, tiny and sharp. Hide it in your clothes when the time comes and then you know what to do." When the couple went in bed, the bride castrated him. His men rushed in when they heard his screaming but he told them: "Take out the girl. I want to sleep." Genghis Khan never woke up from this bed, but according to the legend, the hero will wake up one day, he will be healed and he will save the people.²⁸¹

The above legend, having undergone many variations since the middle Ages, is known to all the Mongolians. The bad and foreign queen who harmed Genghis Khan, immediately after her act, fell and drawn into the Yellow River, which the Mongols call even today "The "Queen's River", keeping the myth alive.²⁸²

According to the *Secret History*, in the winter of 1226-1227 shortly before his death, he began campaigns against the country of Tangut in today's Tibet, with military force equals to 180.000 men. During his route in the Gobi desert, he stopped to chase wild horses. As the wild animals rushed straight towards him, his horse startled and threw him to the ground. Internal injuries caused fever, but he refused to listen to the advice of his wife *Yesui* who urging him to return to their homeland. He continued his campaign against Tangut, who they manage to defeat, despite his weakness. Before he killed the king of the tribe, he changed king's name as it meant something very sacred for him: the king was named *Burhkan* (= God), like the sacred mountain Burkhan Khaldun.²⁸³

Six months after this fact, Genghis Khan died. According to the *Secret History* he died at the end of summer, on 18 August of 1227. John Man mentions that he died after a week of illness, on the 25th of August, in the year of Pig, according to the Chinese zodiac circle, the twelfth day of the seventh lunar month.²⁸⁴ He died at the age of sixty-five (according to other scholars at the age of sixty).²⁸⁵ Paul Ratchnevsky says that he certainly died in August 1227, but "only in specifying the actual day of

²⁷⁹ Lange, 2003, 71

²⁸⁰ Weatherford, 2005, 20

²⁸¹ Man, 2006, 289

²⁸² Man, 2006, 289

²⁸³ Weatherford, 2005, 204-205

²⁸⁴ Man, 2006, 286

²⁸⁵ Σαββίδης, 2004, 28

his death do our sources disagree".²⁸⁶ There are also different aspects about the way that Genghis Khan died: the scholars John Man²⁸⁷ and Hart-Davis²⁸⁸ agree with the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle, a historical record of the years 1201-1292, which claims that he was killed during the raid against the Xi- Xia Dynasty.²⁸⁹

While the *Secret History* reports various detailed aspects of his life, suddenly it kept silent about the circumstances of his death. It simply states that he "ascended into heaven", a simple phrase as he detested the reference of the words *illness* and *death*, which although is indicative of the circumstances of his death: the place, the way, the time, should remain secret.²⁹⁰

According to other sources, Yesui along with his followers and in accordance with the Mongolian burial customs,²⁹¹ cleaned his body and dressed it in a white tunic, felt boots and a hat. She wrapped it in a blanket of felt which was filled with sandalwood to remove insects and she put it in a woolen coffin, which was tied with three gold straps. On the third day the coffin with Genghis Khan's body was loaded into a single carriage and the procession marched for Mongolia. His *Spirit Banner* (a sacred object to the Mongol warriors), the mourners, a female shaman and his horse with his empty saddle, followed behind. His burial was disproportionate to his personality, but it was as simple, as he had lived until then and as he wished for.²⁹²

Rashid al-Din narrates that "On their way to Mongolia, the soldiers killed every living creature that they met." Scholars believe that this might be an exaggerated description, but almost the same information is given by Marco Polo: "When the [the Mongols] carry the dead body of an emperor to his grave, the procession which follows the dead emperor, kills by the sword those who encounters on the way, saying, " Go and wait for your Lord to the Otherworld!", because they believe that all who die in this way, they serve their lord after death."²⁹³

Genghis Khan's body was buried near Burkhan Khaldun and the rivers Onon and Kerulen, where his children offered sacrifices in his honor, in 1229:

"He commanded that for three days dishes should be offered, according to custom, to the manes of his father. He chose from among the families of *noyans* and generals the loveliest girls, to the number of forty; they were adorned with rich garments, and jewels of great price, and, in Rashid ad-Din's phrase, they were sent to serve Genghis Khan in the next world. In addition to this barbaric homage, splendid horses were sacrificed."²⁹⁴

The most accurate description of his death, without personal prejudices and disposal criticism, gave the British historian and scholar Edward Gibbon in the 18th century: 'He died in a good old age, full of days and glory and with his last breath he

²⁸⁶ Ratchnevsky, 1991, 142

²⁸⁷ Man, 2006, 280

²⁸⁸ Hart-Davis, 2007, 165

²⁸⁹ Man, 2006, 280-281

²⁹⁰ Man, 2006, 286-287

²⁹¹ Barthold, 1970, 195-227

²⁹² Weatherford, 2005, 205

²⁹³ Man, 2006, 297-298

²⁹⁴ D' Ohsson, 2006, 12-13

was motivating and advising his sons to conquer the Chinese empire."²⁹⁵ Rashid al-Din narrates the same fact in his work and mentions that Genghis Khan said before he die: "Do not reveal my death to anyone. Do not grieve in any way so the enemy would not learn anything. When the leader of the Tangut and the people leave the city, at the specified time, destroy them all."²⁹⁶

Genghis Khan left an empire with so solid foundation that it continued to grow for another 150years, while residues of the empire remained under the domination of his descendants for 700 years. According to scholar Paul Ratchnevsky, he told his sons before he died: "My sickness is too serious to cure and one of you will have to defend the throne and the power of the state and expand this structure which has been given such firm foundations".²⁹⁷

The dead leader buried in Mongolia secretly. There was no mausoleum, no temple or a tombstone to show the place of his burial. According to Mongol doctrines the dead body should be left in peace and there was no need of a monument, as the soul was not there anymore. His successors did not want to indicate where his grave was, so they refused to build any kind of monument. After the secret burial in Mongolia the access was forbidden by the soldiers. Only his family members could enter in this sealed area of hundred square miles, which had the name *Ikh Khorig*, the "Great Taboo" and had been closed for 800 years.²⁹⁸ His exact place of burial remains unknown until today.²⁹⁹

After Genghis Khan's death many depictions came off, but there is no one which was made during his life. Genghis Khan never allowed the depiction of his image or the engraving of his name on a coin, as many others world leaders did. According to Juzjani and Chinese sources, "He was tall, with a sturdy frame, broad forehead, "cat's eyes" and-at the end of his life-a long beard."³⁰⁰ A contemporary Mongolian song says about it: "we imagined your appearance but our minds were blank".³⁰¹

²⁹⁵ Gibbon, 1910, 280

²⁹⁶ Man, 2006, 281

²⁹⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 18

²⁹⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 21

²⁹⁹ Σαββίδης, 2004, 28

³⁰⁰ Grousset, 1970, 198

³⁰¹ Weatherford, 2005, 26

8. The successors of Genghis Khan

The four sons of Genghis Khan inherited a certain number of territory and tribes (known as *ulus* in Mongolian language), with a *yurt*, a donation of pasture, essential for the life of these tribes. These were accompanied by an *inju*, an income necessary to satisfy the needs of the members of their court and servants. In this income, the taxes-which were paid by the enslaved peoples who lived in China, Turkmenistan and Iran-were included. It is noteworthy that the only divisible asset was the Turko-Mongol prairie, consisted of the nomads' grassland. The sons of Genghis Khan had never thought of becoming emperors of China, khans of Turkmenistan and sultans of Persia. These thoughts then, were alien to them, but later, in 1260 and onwards, those considerations were proposed by their own sons, the Genghis Khan's grandsons. According to the nomadic law, despite the khagan's power, the state belonged mainly to the royal family as a whole and less to him.³⁰²

Apart from his sons, two of Genghis Khan's brothers, Hasar and Temüge, also received subventions. Hasar received the lands near Argun and Hailar and Temuge inherited territories at the eastern end of Mongolia.³⁰³

The sons and grandsons of Genghis Khan

Jochi

The eldest son of Genghis Khan, Jochi, died in February of 1227, six months before his father's death. The gap which separated him from Genghis Khan grew at the end of his life. More specifically, after the conquest of Urgench, in 1222-1227, in which Genghis Khan actively participated, Jochi remained inactive and did not help him in war operations. This fact obviously made Genghis Khan more suspicious and he started to wonder if his son was trying to conspire against him. The untimely death of Jochi in the steppes north of Arals put an end to these suspicions and prevented a possible domestic dispute. The lands occupied by the Mongols, which included southern Russia and Kazakhstan, were given to Jochi's eldest sons, Orda, who became the leader of the White Horde and Batu, the ruler of the Blue and later of the Golden Horde.³⁰⁴

▪ Batu

Batu was one of Jochi's sons, who inherited control of his father's subvention. He was given the nickname *Sain Khan*, "the good khan" by the Mongols and he was known as a wise and gentle prince, while he was a ruthless conqueror to the Russians. Later he played an important role as a chief of the Genghis Khan's family.³⁰⁵

³⁰² Grousset, 1970, 252

³⁰³ Grousset, 1970, 255

³⁰⁴ Grousset, 1970, 252

³⁰⁵ Grousset, 1970, 255

▪Batu and Subutai in Europe: The Golden Horde



The Golden Horde, also known as the *Kipchak Khanate* was founded in 13th century, specifically in 1222/23-1226, (according to William of Rubruck it was founded around 1250, in a region 100km. north of Astrakhan).³⁰⁶ The Golden Horde included the whole of ancient Scythia³⁰⁷ and constituted the northwestern sector of the Mongol Empire, the Kpchak steppe, which was also known as the *Ulus of Jochi* (“realm of Jochi” in Mongolian, or people in Jochi for the current scholars³⁰⁸). The European part of the Golden Horde was a vast territory consisting of the steppes in the northern Black sea area, the Ural basin, the lower Don and Dnieper river, the mouth of Dniester, the steppes in the north of Caucasus.³⁰⁹

The founder of the Golden Horde was Genghis Khan’s grandson and second son of Jochi, Batu. In 1235, Batu with the general Subutai began an invasion westwards, conquering the Bashkirs and then, in the autumn of 1236, (according to the Russian sources the date of these events was the autumn of 1237), they moved towards Volga and they destructed the Turkic kingdom of the Bulgars. General Subutai plundered the city of Bolgar, a trading center and the capital of the kingdom, which was situated near the Volga river.³¹⁰

During the next year Batu conquered the southern steppes of Ukraine, forcing the local Cummans (Iranian-speaking Alans), to retreat westward, in Transcaucasia, current Ossetia.³¹¹ By 1239 most of the Cummans were driven out of the peninsula of Crimea, which became one of the territories of the Mongol Empire. In the period of 1237-1240 Batu conquered the largest territories of Russia and he invaded in Eastern

³⁰⁶ Ρουμπρούκ, 1991, 186

³⁰⁷ Grousset, 1970, 391

³⁰⁸ Joo-Yup, 2015, 136

³⁰⁹ Grousset, 1970, 391

³¹⁰ Grousset, 1970, 263

³¹¹ Σαββίδης, 2003, 56-60

Europe.³¹² At the same time Subutai had arrived in Hungary and the Dalmatian coast.³¹³

During the 14th century Batu began an invasion to the former Kievan Rus territories and for three years he subjugated the principalities. The Mongols remained in the area and allowed the Russians to continue their own affairs, supervising them at the same time. The Russians tried to gain their independence and in 1380 the great Duke of Muscovy defeated the army of the Mongols in the battle of Kulikovo. The Ottomans who had already come to the fore, were surrounding the weakened Golden Horde and were constantly pushing its borders. Its dissolution began in the first half of the 15th century and its end occurred in 1502, when the Ottoman Khan Kuchuk Muhammad,³¹⁴ the founder of the Kazan and Crimea khanates, plundered the capital Sarai.³¹⁵

The last Khanate of the Mongols, the Crimean Khanate resisted until the annexation by Catherine the Great in 1783, reminding the vast passing of one of the most significant man in World History.³¹⁶

Chagatai

Genghis Khan's second son Chagatai (died in 1242), was a strict and fearful judge and a hardy soldier, whom his father had appointed to be in charge of the *yasaq* and be responsible for Mongol discipline.³¹⁷ He made no protest when his father placed his younger brother Ögedei in the upper position. According to scholars, Chagatai fulfilled the desire of his father and in a *quriltai* on 13 September 1229, (according to Grousset it was the spring of 1229)³¹⁸ he enthroned his brother Ögedei who became the second Khan of the Mongol Empire.³¹⁹ Chagatai received as his share the steppes of the former Qara-Khitai Empire, from the Uighur country to Bukhara and Samarkand in the west. He also received Kashgaria and Transoxiana, which were territories of sedentary peoples.³²⁰

Ögedei

Ögedei (or Ogädäi, from the Mongolian *ögädä*= on high)³²¹ Genghis Khan's third son, the most intelligent of all,³²² received the territories of northern China.³²³

³¹² Σαββίδης, 2004, 42

³¹³ Ρουμπρούκ, 1991, 202

³¹⁴ Grousset, 1970, 469

³¹⁵ Σαββίδης, 2004, 64

³¹⁶ Grousset, 1970, 470

³¹⁷ Man, 2006, 303

³¹⁸ Grousset, 1970, 255

³¹⁹ Spuler, 1972, 45-46

³²⁰ Grousset, 1970, 253-254

³²¹ Grousset, 1970, 591

³²² Grousset, 1970, 255

³²³ Man, 2006, 303

Ögedei continued the conquest of his father and the expansion of the Mongol Empire, having as centre, the city of Karakorum, the new Mongol capital, which was located near the river Orkhon. He built a defensive wall around the city, an action which, according to scholars, reminds a sedentary society rather than a nomadic tribe.³²⁴ He set up Chinese, Uighur, Tangut and Persian sections within the Mongol chancellery, in agreement with the Uighur literat.³²⁵ He opened schools in Beijing for the education of young Mongol lords and he enlisted into the Mongol civil service many Chinese. His way of life and thinking was quite different from the nomadic one as he used to say that "the Empire was created on horseback, but it cannot be governed on horseback." The influence of the sedentary cultures was visible in the case of Ögedei.³²⁶

In 1234 Ögedei Khan subjugated the Jin dynasty in northern China and later the Sung dynasty in the South, Persia, and southern Russia. In 1240-1241 he invaded Persia and Mesopotamia and then he plundered Kiev.³²⁷ The sudden death of Ögedei in 1241 in Karakorum by excessive drunkenness or possible poisoning, led the Mongol Empire in uncertainty until his son, Güyük Khan prevailed temporarily, from 1246 to 1248, as the third great Khan. Since 1251, the throne of the Khans belonged to the sons of Tolui, who was Genghis Khan's fourth son.³²⁸

Tolui

Tolui, the youngest son of Genghis Khan received the *ordus*, the tented palaces of his father and the pastures of Mongolia according to the Mongol law.³²⁹ He also received 101.000 men out of the 129.000 who were constituted the Mongol army in 1227. The remaining 28.000 soldiers had been distributed to Genghis Khan's brothers and to his mother.³³⁰ He is described as a bold soldier and a good general. His addiction to alcohol led him to death in October 1232 at the age of forty. He was married to an exceptionally intelligent woman, the princess Soyurghaqtani (or Sorghaqtani) of the Khereid royal family and niece of the Wang-khan. She was Nestorian in religion, like all the Khereid people and she managed to secure the empire for her sons, after Tolui's death.³³¹

³²⁴ Σαββίδης, 2004, 40

³²⁵ Grousset, 1970, 255

³²⁶ Grousset, 1970, 256

³²⁷ Σαββίδης, 2004, 42

³²⁸ Σαββίδης, 2004, 42

³²⁹ Man, 2006, 303

³³⁰ Grousset, 1970, 254-255

³³¹ Grousset, 1970, 254

9. The Mongol influence

The Mongols made no innovations in technology or culture, however through their conquests they transfer technological and cultural elements from one civilization to another. They facilitated the exchange of goods and ideas: they brought Chinese doctors to Persia, European engineers to teach them the technological innovations in Europe, (a Parisian metalworker to build a fountain), they diffused the use of carpets, of tea and noodles and they replot carrots and lemons from China to Persia. They did not built castles, cities or forts but they build the most bridges of any other army/conqueror in history, in order to accommodate their movement.³³² They financed the building of temples of other religions: Christian churches in China, Buddhist temples in Persia and Muslim schools in Russia.³³³

The Mongols entered each country as conquerors, thus they had been treated like a barbaric tribe, but soon the cultural communication and the trade of the conquered country raised and improved.³³⁴ The Mongols changed almost every aspect of the European life during the Renaissance: the raiment, the commerce, the warfare, the music, the literature, the art. The Europeans started to dress in pants and jackets instead of tunics and cloaks, they introduced the bow of Mongolia to music, they began to paint with new style. Even the widely known exclamation “*hurrah*” is nothing more than a Mongolian exclamation and an importation in the European culture.³³⁵ Through their conquests and the contact with the civilized world, did not change only other people’s life, they changed their own lives as well: their nomadic society became, after many years a sedentary one. Genghis Khan realizing the difficult life of the steppe, said that his grandsons would prefer the life of sedentary peoples: "After us, the people of our race will wear garments of gold; they will eat sweet, greasy food, ride splendid coursers, and hold in their arms the loveliest of women, and they will forget that they owe these things to us."³³⁶

Despite the positive influence of the Mongols, there was also “negative influence”, which is connected to the exploitation of their name and reputation: specifically, their name became synonym of cultural inferiority and they acquired a variety of names, such as *Tartar*, *Mougal*, *Moguland* *Moal*, suggesting always something like a curse. The scientists of the 19th century emphasizing the inferiority of Asians and American Indians called them Mongolian. When the doctors wanted to explain the birth of handicapped children from mothers of the white race, they claimed that one of his ancestors had been raped from a Mongol soldier.³³⁷

Gradually the name and the conquests of the Mongols used to demonstrate the disadvantages and failures of other nations, thus making them scapegoats. When Russia was technologically inferior compared to the advanced West and also

³³² Weatherford, 2005, 22-23

³³³ Weatherford, 2005, 23

³³⁴ Weatherford, 2005, 24

³³⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 25

³³⁶ Grousset, 1970, 248

³³⁷ Weatherford, 2005, 28

compared to the stronger military Japan, claimed that the blame was on the Mongol occupation. When Persia kept back while its neighbors developed rapidly, said that the Mongols had destroyed their irrigation system and that was the reason of this delay. When China stayed behind Europe and Japan, claimed that the cause was the oppression of the Mongols.³³⁸

The English scientist Roger Bacon claimed that the Mongols succeeded «*through science*» and not just because of their superiority in battle. He believes that even if they were warlike, they made such a progress because they were devoting, they study the principles of Philosophy.³³⁹ This idea could be seen as an exaggeration by many scholars, but Genghis Khan did have a philosophical maxim in his whole life: that the dedication to an idea, to a target, to a person or to a mission could overcome any obstacles.

Apart from all the terror the Mongols spread, they also brought peace, security and the exchange of culture and ideas between the peoples. This was a notion of *Pax Mongolica*.

Pax Mongolica



The Silk Roads

The term *Pax Mongolica* or *Pax Tatarica* (=Mongol Peace), which was inspired by the phrase *Pax Romana*, describes a period of time in the Eurasian territory of the 13th and 14th century, after the Mongol conquests. During Pax

³³⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 28

³³⁹ Bacon, 1928, vol.1 p. 416, vol.2 p.792

Mongolica, many aspects of the daily life had been stabilized and they developed in the hostile and extremely dangerous vast area of the Eurasian steppes: the communication between different cultures, the postal system and above all the commerce and the trade network. Instead of wild attacks, peaceful approaches had been promoted by Genghis Khan and the foundation of the northern Silkroad was an unexpected fact. The “barbarian” Genghis Khan sought to have commercial and diplomatic relations with peaceful way, an evidence of his capacity as a leader, his cleverness and his strategic ability in the financial area and his desire to benefit his own people.³⁴⁰

During Pax Mongolica the trade from China to Europe (with the Mongolian aid), reached its maximum. This period of time laid the foundations for the European trade and allowed many western travelers and explorers to cross Eurasia from the west to the east and meet new distant cultures.³⁴¹ A characteristic phrase of these times can prove the imminent circumstances: “A maiden bearing a nugget of gold on her head could wander safely throughout the realm”.³⁴²

Because of the controversies of Genghis Khan’s successors into the four khanates, peace was not always prevailed in the area and about the mid-1300 the empire had lost its momentum as one leader was trying to manipulate the other.³⁴³

Barthold noted in his book: "no doubt a terrible one in his own day, but one which under his successors became milder and rendered possible the achievements of the great travelers of the fourteenth century. In this respect Genghis Khan was a sort of barbarian Alexander, a pathfinder who opened up new roads to civilization."³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Weatherford, 2005, 325

³⁴¹ Man, 2006, 234

³⁴² Bergreen, 2007, 27

³⁴³ King, 2006, 90

³⁴⁴ Barthold, 1977, 396

Conclusions

The Mongol Empire was the last nomadic empire of the world, as the most of the societies were already sedentary during the Middle Ages. As Jack Weatherford claims, Genghis Khan was the heir of all the wars that went on for 10,000 years in the steppes of Asia between nomadic tribes and the civilized world, between the hunter (nomads) and the farmer (sedentary societies).

The Mongol Empire, one of the most significant empires in world history, had been founded by someone who was not educated, but he had strong personality, determination and charisma. This man managed to unite the peoples of the steppes, to create an alphabet and state organization for his tribe, to invent a new warfare system, to establish the religious freedom, to open the Eurasian roads for the commerce.³⁴⁵ He managed to make his vision a reality and worked to create something new and great for the people who surrounded him.

Genghis Khan was one of the most distinguished leaders in history. As John Mann writes, "the closer you were to him the more worthy of admiration he was." The first years of his life were crucial and help in understanding what kind of person he was in his adulthood. Living difficult situations he realized that if he wanted to survive he had to cultivate what he was missing: the power. Power to command, to fight, to defeat, to lead and create security in an uncertain universe that surrounded him.³⁴⁶

His personality developed through the certainty that the order to dominate the world was divine. Having personal charisma and faith both to him and to a higher power, breathed the confidence to others that the will of the *Eternal Blue Sky* was same as his. He maintained a balance between the evolution of his personality, the changing of conditions around him and his growing power, without losing his beliefs or committing a corruption: a unique phenomenon to such a great leader.³⁴⁷ His initial aim had always been the unification of all peoples under the *Eternal Blue Sky*. He was not interested in his personal promotion and glory. He wanted to promote and enrich his own tribe, to reach the unknown and succeed the unexpected in every aspect of peoples' lives.³⁴⁸ This man, who changed Europe and Asia with his campaigns and with *Pax Mongolica*, is a hero and an example in his own country, as he managed to give hope to the poor and unknown people of his time and to inspire them by his example: everything is possible if someone believes in him.

³⁴⁵ Weatherford, 2005, 17

³⁴⁶ Man, 2006, 290

³⁴⁷ Man, 2006, 290-291

³⁴⁸ Weatherford, 2005, 325

Timeline

- 1162/67: Temujin is born according to Chinese sources
- 1181: He is proclaiming *khan* from a great number of Mongol tribes
- 1199: The subjection of the Naiman tribe
- 1204: The subjection of the Khereid tribe
- 1206: The supreme Mongol board (*quriltai*) proclaimed Temujin “Genghis Khan”
- 1207: Subordination of the Turkic-speaking Kyrgyz to Genghis Khan
- 1209: Subordination of the Turkic-speaking Uighur to Genghis Khan
- 1209: The conquest of Xi-Xia dynasty
- 1211-1215: The conquest of the Jin dynasty. Fall of Zhongdu (Beijing) in 1214-1215
- 1218: The conquest of the Turkic-speaking Qara-Khitai Empire
- 1218/19-1221: The conquest of the Turko-Persian Kwarezmian Empire. Defeat of the Shah Muhamad B'. Siege of the cities Samarkand and Bukhara
- 1222-1223: The campaigns of the generals Jebei and Subutai in the area of Caucasus (Georgia), Volga River and Crimea. Defeat of the Russians in Kalka River.
- 1225-1226: Genghis Khan returns in Mongolia
- 1227: Death of Genghis Khan

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