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## Europeans and the Steppe: Russian lands under the Mongol Rule

Chapter for Yongjin Zhang, Shogo Suzuki & Joel Quirk (eds.) *International orders in the Early Modern World: Before the Rise of the West* London: Routledge.

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It was endemic on the medieval religious frontier not to admit consciously that one had borrowed institutions from conquered or conquering peoples of a different religion. This was true of Crusader Valencian 13<sup>th</sup>-century Spain about Islamic Moorish institutions, of the Arab Umayyad dynasty from the 7<sup>th</sup> century or the Ottoman empire from the 14<sup>th</sup> century about Byzantine institutions, and of the French Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem from the 12<sup>th</sup> century about Islamic institutions (Halperin 2000: 238).

### *Introduction*

The editors write in their introduction to this volume that it was only from around 1750 onwards that European powers acquired sufficient capacities regularly to dictate terms to political communities in many parts of the world. It took that long to muster the capacity to project force across the distances in question. Where relations with non-European political communities are concerned, however, the turning point came 250 years before, in the final decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This was when the Moors, as well as the Sephardic Jews, were suborned and forced to leave Spain (1492). It was also the decade when Russians threw off what they in retrospect chose to name the 'Tatar Yoke'. By 1750, Russia was only decades away from annexing the Crimean Khanate, the last of the other successor polities of what has anachronistically been called the Golden Horde, but that was known at the time as the Khipchak Khanate (Halperin 2000; Morgan 1986: 141).<sup>1</sup> The annexation followed a victorious Russian war against the Ottoman empire. At the end of the period covered by this book (1492-1792), then, Russia's relation with non-European polities such as the Ottoman Empire and Persia, not to mention relations with indigenous peoples throughout Siberia, mirrored the hierarchical relations between European and non-European polities discussed in the other chapters. At the beginning of the period, however, Russia was emerging from a clearly subaltern relationship with a non-European polity, namely the Khipchak Khanate, to which Russian cities were suzerain.

The first part of this chapter is basically a reminder of the importance of the steppe not only to Russian history, but to European history at large. The Khipchak Khanate was the polity – the empire, really (comp. Nexon & Wright 2007) -- to last the longest of those that came out of the great Mongol empire which ruled most of the known world in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Mongol empire was one – it should turn out to be the last one -- of a succession of polities that, beginning at the end of the third century of our era, began its life cycle in the Altai area in the extreme north-east of the Eurasian continent, only to

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<sup>1</sup> The ruler of Muscovy, who had taken the title of tsar in 1547, annexed the successor polity of the Khanate of Kazan' in 1552 and the Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556.

absorb a number of other Mongol and Turkic nomadic elements. These were to be found throughout the steppe which stretched from the Pacific in the south to the forested areas at the Dnepr in the west, and being delineated by the taiga in the north and by sedentary cultures to the south (principally China, Persia and (West and East) Rome (Barfield 1989). The second part of the chapter fastens on how Russian cities experienced being part of a Mongol polity, and the third part on how the consequent hybridization fed into Russia's entry into international society. The theme of this chapter, then, is the experience by a specific sub-set of Christians (we cannot in good faith call them Europeans, because this was a concept that was in use briefly during Charlemagne's reign and did not pop up again in the first half of the fifteenth century) of being dominated by "non-Europeans", and how this experience was, in the period of key interest to this volume (1429-1792) somehow seen as contaminating by other Europeans .

Note that, as seen from the Khipchak Khanate, the key point of interest was not Russia or Europe, but, first, the Mongol imperial centre at Karakorum, and when the centre lost its hold towards the end of the thirteenth century, another of the Mongol empire's successor states, namely the Il-khan empire to their south-east, with which it quarreled continuously about tribute-taking in and trade routes through the Caucasus (more below). Mongols were past masters of many things, one of them being to provincialise Russia.

### *The Mongols*

The size of the Mongol population at the time of Chinggis Khan has been estimated at 700,000 (Allsen 1987: 5). Although the Mongol made eminent use of heavy wooden saddles and composite bows, their key advantage in warfare was their strategy. The Mongols emphasized protracted training, advance planning, multi-strand coordination and tight discipline. Alone at the time, they concentrated their thinking not on the single combatant or on a small group of soldiers, but on the *tümen*, (Russian: *t'ma*), a unit ideally composed of ten thousand men. It was officially recognized that actual *tümen* would be undermanned, for an 'upper *tümen*' was stipulated as having a minimum of 7000 troops, a middle 5000, and a lower only 3000 (Allsen 1987: 193). The land needed to man a *tümen* was also used by the Mongols as the basic administrative unit.<sup>2</sup>

In Europe, Mongols are sometimes (and in Russia, always) referred to as Tatars. We do not quite know why this is so. According to Matthew Paris, a contemporary who wrote interesting about how Europeans reacted to Mongols, it was the French king, Louis XI, who punned that the Mongols, who had almost exterminated a neighbouring tribe called the Tartars, emanated from hell (Lat. *Tartarus*), hence Tatars. (Morgan 1986: 57).

The key models on which Chinggis Khan organized his Mongol (or Tatar) empire were those of the Uigurs and the Khitans. The Uigurs, a neighbouring people that was first to be enrolled in the burgeoning empire, was a nomadic turned sedentary people which had

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<sup>2</sup> In Russia, George Vernadsky (1953: 215-219) has estimated the number of tumens around 1760 to have been 27 in the eastern principalities, and an additional 16 in the western ones. These territorial units later came to be known as *volosti*.

considerable experience in ruling sedentary populations and cities. The Mongols borrowed their alphabet (and used it until about a century ago), their way of setting up a chancery and the concept of scribes. The Khitans were a semi-nomadic Turko-Mongolian people that had conquered the Chinese in the ninth century, established the Liao dynasty, been displaced, and returned as a key steppe force of the twelfth century. The Khitans, which were brought into the Mongol fold in 1218, had administered a loose and non-confessional steppe empire based on tribute extracted by decimally organized cavalry (Morgan 1986: 49).<sup>3</sup> For this, they had used intermediaries, and these are the direct predecessors of the *darugh*a used by the Mongols, the Turkish concept for which is *basqaq* (Morgan 1986: 109). The Mongol intermediaries that ran the Khipchak Khanate in Russia in the early decades were locally known as the *baskaki*. Chinggis's key tool was his imperial guard, which had at its core his classificatory brothers (*anda*) and people who had chose to leave their tribe to follow him personally (*nöker*). The guard, which included representatives of all the Mongolian tribes ('a useful form of hostage-taking', Morgan 1986: 90 comments), and which was in effect Chinggis's household, numbered around 10.000 at the outset of his conquests.<sup>4</sup>

The Mongols themselves were almost uniformly illiterate, but they kept written records which were usually penned by personnel taken from conquered peoples. Except for their famous "Secret History", though, there is very little by way of Mongol historiography. For obvious reasons, the sedentaries that they conquered have tended to treat them as the Other and give them a bad press. One case in point is the Russian standard work on the Khipchap Khanate (the Golden Horde of which the Russian lands were part; Grekov and Yakubovskiy 1950). It paints a picture of the invasion and the rule which accentuates the bloody-mindedness of the Mongols and the sufferings of the inhabitants.

It was written at a time when Soviet historiography went through a particularly nationalistic phase, but is still fairly representative of the literature in Russian, which is strong on facts but weak on interpretation (Franklin 2001). Western historians, who may build on the facts excavated by Russian colleagues and add their own workmanship, are to be preferred. The standard work on the Khipchak Chanate remains Spuler (1965). It is a good illustration of the general Russian attitude to the world and to historians both that when the first edition of this path-breaking work emerged, it was officially criticized by the Soviet Union for marginalizing Russians. As Spuler (1963: XIII) dryly responded in the preface to the second edition, that was indeed one of the points of writing a history of the Mongol state formation of which Russian lands were only one part.

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3 Beyond the Khitans, there is an uninterrupted tradition of steppe empires reaching back for at least a fifteen hundred years. From the perspective of their neighbours to the south, the rise of the Mongol empire was a working accident: 'There was a standard imperial Chinese policy for dealing with them. They would be carefully watched, and if one nomadic chief seemed to be gaining power and influence at the expense of others, Chinese subsidies, recognition and titles would be offered to one of his rivals, who would be encouraged to cut the upstart down to size. Should the new protégé in his turn seem to be becoming dangerously powerful, the process would be repeated.' (Morgan 1986: 35).

4 'The imperial administration was [...] essentially an extension of the prince's household establishment in terms of organization, function, and personnel. It is for this reason that the Mongol Empire in general, and Möngke's reign in particular, have a pronounced patrimonial flavor' (Allsen 1987: 100).

Throughout the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Mongols had a very clear and explicit political ideology, complete with scrupulous rules for how to deal with other political entities.<sup>5</sup> The key idea was that of a heavenly mandate. Knowing that all the steppe empires, from the Hsiung-nu (Huns) in the second century BC and onwards, had adhered to the same principle of legitimacy, and given that the Hiung-nu evolved it concurrently with Chinese imperial ideology (Barfield 1989; de Rachewiltz 1971: 104), we already have the outline of the principle's genealogy. Nothing has only one origin, however, and in this case, too, there may have been a fair amount of hybridization. As Spuler (1969: 5) puts it,

Some contribution was no doubt also made by Christian theories of an oecumenical church under a single central leadership, since certain Mongol tribes had for about two centuries been firm adherents of Nestorian Christianity and had thus had access to Christian thought. Insofar as inferences can be drawn when direct evidence of contemporary political ideas is lacking, it would seem that a peculiar metamorphosis of Christian doctrinal theories into political notions had considerable importance in the development of the Mongol concept of world empire.

The *locus classicus* for this discussion is Voegelin (1941: 402), who analysed the preambles to extant orders of submission from Mongol khans to European powers as 'legal instruments [...] attached to the orders of submission in order that the addressees might not plead ignorance of Mongol law when they did not obey the orders received'. Voegelin (1941: 378) extracted from this material 'the principal ideas underlying Mongol constitutional law, as well as the framework of Mongol political theory'. The key idea is the isomorphism between heaven and earth; the former is ruled by God, and the latter should be ruled by his servant, the Mongol Khagan. There was, however, a temporal problem, for

The true essence of world government is not yet in an actual but only in a potential state, and it is bound to materialize itself in the course of history by turning the real world of political facts into a true picture of the ideal and essential state as visualized by the Order of God [...] the Mongols, therefore, cannot simply make war on foreign powers, since any legal title is lacking for an

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<sup>5</sup> The break came in the late 1250s, when the Khipchak Khan, Berke, broke ranks. The Great Khan in Karakorum had assigned the Caucasus to Batu's Khipchak Chanate. The Great Möngke reversed this decision, giving it to the rivaling Mongol polity of the Persia-based Il-khans instead. The Caucasus remained a bone of contention between the Khipchak Chanate and the Il-khans (and also to their successors, the first of whom was Timur-lenk) and *mutatis mutandis* down to the present era. When Möngke died, the struggle over the Caucasus became the main factor in determining the Khipchak Khanate's and the Il-khan's positioning in the succession struggle. The Il-khan candidate (Hülagü) won. The leader of the Khipchak Khanate (Berke) answered by taking a step unprecedented in Mongol imperial history, namely to forge an alliance with Mamluk Egypt against his fellow Mongols, the Il-khans. The 1261 alliance was followed up by a commercial treaty which opened up for trade which proved lucrative to both sides (basically slaves for luxury goods). This trade was of utmost importance for the Golden Horde until, in 1354, the Ottoman Turks took over control of the Dardanelles from the Byzantines. The Ottoman Turks effectively put an end to the Golden Horde's Egyptian trade (Spuler 1969).

enterprise of this sort. The proper mode of procedure for the Imperial Government is to send embassies in due form to the powers in question, giving them all the necessary information on the principles of Mongol World-Empire law in order that they may know that the moment of passing from potential to actual membership has come, and to enable them to take this step in accordance with the legal rules which govern it (Voegelin 1041: 403, 405).

In other words, the Khagan was fully aware that there were rulers who did not yet know of his existence, but these were nonetheless classified as being in rebellion against the Mongol empire to be, under Chingis Khan's successors, known as the Golden Kin. Allsen writes about these political ideas that they

can be traced back to the Türk quaghanate, were in all likelihood transmitted to the Mongols by the Uighur Turks. In the Mongol adaptation of this ideological system it was held that Eternal Heaven (*Möngke Tenggeri*), the sky god and the chief deity of the [Shamanistic] steppe nomads, bestowed upon Chinggis Qan a mandate to bring the entire world under his sway. This grant of universal sovereignty gave the Mongols the right, or perhaps more accurately, placed upon them the obligation, to subjugate and chastise any nation or people refusing to join the Empire of the Great Mongols on a voluntary basis (Allsen 1987: 42).

Chingis Khan had four sons who all left descendants: Jochi, Chaghadai, Ögödei and Tolui. Relations between these four lineages were at the centre of Mongol politics. The key principle of organization was kinship, both biological kinship and classificatory kinship. The language of the fights over succession was the one of the *jasagh*, the rules of the ancestors, which were supposed to be upheld and to which respect should be paid, not least when these used were used creatively. Although the custom was for the youngest son to follow in his father, when it came to being the khan of khans (khagan), there was no automatic succession involved. The candidates built alliances which felt one another out until one candidate emerged as the stronger one and called a *kurultai* where the leading Chingisid successors were to consecrate him (Allsen 1987: 34). After Chingis Khan died in 1227, his youngest son Tolui took over as regent, but in 1229 it was Ögödei who made khagan. When he died in 1241, a protracted fight between the Toluids and the Ögödeians ended when Tolui's oldest son Möngke made khagan in 1251.<sup>6</sup> This protracted fight was of key importance to European history, and I will return to it below.

Centralization of the empire peaked under Möngke. Within his central administration, he established regional secretariats for China, Turkestan, Persia and, although this is not altogether clear, Rus' (Allsen 1987: 101). He recalled all the imperial seals, insignia and orders from the court (*jarligh*) and issued new ones. This gave him a chance to screen all the empire's middle men and all his own residents. He then restricted the availability of the vital postal system to these people only. 'A third measure was intended to circumscribe the power of the imperial princes within the confines of their own appanages (*fen-ti*). Thenceforth, these princes could neither summon their subjects on

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<sup>6</sup> He was followed by his brother Qubilai (Kublai Khan, 1260-1294). Qubilai concentrated on China, and was not much of a presence in other parts of what was now increasingly the former Mongol empire.

their own authority nor issue any orders concerning financial matters without first conferring with officials of the imperial court.’ (Allsen 1987: 80-81)

Möngke dispatched his own people to do the actual tax collection. The local middle man was allowed to have his own representative on the spot, but he was not allowed to receive the actual taxes. Allsen (1987: 46) notes that

Of particular importance was the qaghan’s right to appoint the Mongol residents, called *darughachi* or *basqaq*, who were stationed in all major population centers and at the courts of all local dynasts. These officials, who commanded wide administrative, police, and military powers, were key figures in the control and exploitation of the subject populations (Allsen 1987: 46).

A final point that needs underlining in our regard is that ‘The grand qan had exclusive right to conduct relations with others on behalf of the empire’ (Allsen 1987: 45). I have dwelt on Mongol administration and its historical precondition first, in order to demonstrate that the Mongols stood in a long political steppe tradition and second, because this was the blueprint for how the Mongols that settled on the Volga from the 1240s on ruled the Rus’ lands.

### *The Mongols’ Western campaign*

When Chinggis Khan died in 1227, he had not only instructed his sons to conquer the world, he had allotted parts that were not yet conquered.<sup>7</sup> The extreme West of the Mongol empire was the preserve of Jochi, who was also bequeathed 4000 soldiers (Tolui inherited the lion’s share, 101.000 men). Jochi had already reconnoitered the lands, and established a fledgling polity called the White Horde somewhere north of the Caspian Sea. Indeed, in his work on Mongol imperialism, Thomas Allsen maintains that the 1237-1240 expedition which established the Mongols in the Rus’ lands ‘was designed primarily to carve out a territory for the family of Jochi’ (Allsen 1987: 28, comp. 45).

Jochi’s reconnoitering in 1223 had also resulted in first contact between Mongols and the Rus’. On their way westward, in 1222, the Mongol reconnoitering party met opposition from an alliance of Alan and Khipchak troops.<sup>8</sup> When the Mongols proclaimed themselves the blood brothers of the Khipchaks, this was enough to break the alliance. The Mongols proceeded to massacre the Alans while the Khipchaks stood idly by. Once the job was done, the Mongols massacred the Khipchaks. The Khipchak Khan Kotyan passed words of what had happened back to his son-in law prince Mstislav of Galicia

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<sup>7</sup> A correspondence is often assumed between the four sons and the subsequent Mongol-led polities in China, Persia, Central Asia and Russia, but as pointed out by Jackson 1999, this is too neat.

<sup>8</sup> The Alans were a Farsi-speaking people (and so by the lights of the day arguably further removed from the Mongols than Turkic-speaking peoples like the Khipchaks). Eventually, a large number of them settled in Khanbaliq (now Beijing) where they were converted to Christianity by archbishop John of Montecorvino. They became a mainstay of the Mongol army. Kagan Toghon Temür sent an embassy to the Pope in 1338, asking the Pope to send a new pastor as well as for his blessing. De Rachewiltz (1971: 188) sees the key reason for this as being the kagan’s ‘desire to please the military chiefs on whom depended the security of the state and the emperor’s own safety’.

(note the marriage alliance), who called a council in Kiev. Three princes decided to raise an army and engage them on foreign territory. The army marched east, where they were met by Mongol envoys whose message was that their real quarrel was with the Khipchaks. The Rus' princes recognized the tactic that they had heard about from the Khipchaks themselves, and proceeded to kill the envoys. This move guaranteed that there would be war. When it broke, the three Rus' princes were neither willing nor able to coordinate their efforts (which also meant that they could not coordinate very well with their Khipchak allies).

The importance of Mongol superior strategy is in evidence already during this first clash between the Rus' and Mongols, which took place at the Kalka river (now in southern Ukraine) in 1223, when two of Chengis Khan's four key generals, Jebe and Subudai, outmanoeuvred a badly organized assemblage of Rus' and Khipchak forces which actually outnumbered the Mongols (Allsen 1987: 6). Note that the Western reconnoitering played out according to standard Mongol operating procedures:

Prior to the commencement of hostilities with a foreign state (*qari-irgen* [i.e. polity]) the Mongols always issued orders of submission that offered its ruler physical and institutional survival in return for acknowledging the suzerainty [sic] of the qaghan. Even if the ruler did not in the end surrender, such offers were still a valuable means of weakening an enemy's resolve and a diplomatic tool for detaching his clients and allies. [...] Another and perhaps more compelling reason for the toleration of dependent states was the Mongols' lack of experienced administrative personnel. Inasmuch as very few of the Mongols' estimated population of seven hundred thousand were literate and still fewer were familiar with the "customs and laws of cities," retention of a local dynasty and its attendant administrative apparatus was frequently the most practical method of controlling and exploiting the population and resources of a newly surrendered territory (Allsen 1987: 64-65).

The Rus' princes, seemingly reckoning that the Mongols were simply another steppe nuisance, paid no more heed to steppe affairs than before. That was a key mistake. In 1238, the Mongols returned with a vengeance. For the next two years, they effectively overcame all military oppositions from Bolgars, Khipchaks, the Rus', Poles and Hungarians. They established themselves in the Rus' and Hungarian lands, and had scouting parties as far west as Venice and Vienna. Once again, the campaign went according to plan. Cities which did not offer resistance were spared, cities that did were more or less destroyed. The result, here as elsewhere in the empire, was patchy destruction of the conquered areas (Morgan 1986: 82).

There is no reason whatsoever to assume that, if they had forged ahead, the Mongols would not have subdued all of what we may anachronistically refer to as Europe and made it into part of the Mongol order in one way or the other. As it happened, however, news of Ögödei's death reached the extreme west of the empire in 1241. At this time, not only Batu, who was Jochi's oldest son, but also Ögödei's oldest son Gülüg and Tolui's oldest son Möngke were there. The presence of three out of four Chingisid lineages was



not by chance; the Western front was at this time the key area of new conquest, which meant that representatives of the different lineages were there to keep an eye on one another. Now, however, it became more important to keep an eye on one another in the Mongol heartland around Kharakhorum, where the succession would be decided. In the upshot, both Gülüg and Möngke left the Western frontier for the steppes. The focus of imperial politics turned away from the fairly narrow strip of land that remained to be conquered, namely Europe. This left the Jochids, led by Batu, alone in the West with his newly won Rus' possessions.

Although he was no longer in the thick of imperial politics, as head of one of the four Chingisid lineages Batu was a key player in Mongol politics.<sup>9</sup> When khagan Ögödei's widow Törege, who was regent 1241-1246, called a *kurultai* to consecrate Gülüg as new khagan, Batu refused to attend, and when she went on anyway, Batu refused to acknowledge the new khagan. This was instrumental in forcing the khaganate off Ögödeian hands and usher in the Toluids, and this happened at a *kurultai* which was actually called by Batu. Furthermore, Batu had more leeway vis-à-vis the imperial centre than had other regional middle men (Allsen 1987: 61, comp Nexon & Wright 2007). Actually, from Möngke's accession in 1251, 'Batu was conceded virtual autonomy in his own *ulus* [patronage] of the Golden Horde' (Morgan 1986: 117).

Note, however, that the first *darughachi* or governor to the Khipchak Khanate or Golden Horde, a Mongol by the name of Kitai, was sent from Kharakhorum in 1257 (Allsen 1987: 104). Furthermore, Batu and his immediate successors sometimes sent Rus' princes to the Mongol capital of Kharakorum to have their patents of rule confirmed there.<sup>10</sup> Also, under Möngke,

Hostages were an additional measure designed to assure the fidelity of the Mongols' dependent rulers. Carpini reports that all tributaries were required to send sons or brothers to the imperial court [at Kharakorum]. As examples, he notes that Yaroslav of Vladimir, the chieftain of the Alans, and the Korean king had sent relatives as a pledge of their good behavior. [...] it was not always the possibility of the hostage's execution that kept a dependent ruler in line, but rather the threat of being deposed and replaced by the hostage at the first sign of disloyalty (Allsen 1987: 73-74).

When Batu died in 1256, he had built a tent capital in Sarai on the Volga (100 km north of today's Astrakhan) for his khanate, which came to be known locally as the Golde Horde. Batu was followed by his short-lived son (Sartaq, a Christian) and grandson, before his brother Berke (1257-1266) took over. Berke lost Georgia to another Chingisid line, the Il-khan of Persia, but the overall story of his reign was that he gained more room for manoeuvre within the Mongol empire, whose cohesion was now definitely loosening (Allsen 1987: 62-63).

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<sup>9</sup> Soviet historians like Bartol'd have suggested that Batu was co-ruler, but Allsen (1987: 54-59) and others have convincingly refuted the argument.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in 1256-57, Prince Gleb Vasil'kovich of Rostov journeyed to Kharakhorum, and returned with a wife, a Mongol princess. (Allsen 1987: 183-184).

We have little history writing on the Khipchak Khanate, among other things because its archives were destroyed together with most of its city life by Tamerlane's nomadic invading force (emanating from Samarkand) in 1390.<sup>11</sup> Since the steppe-dwelling Mongols lacked expertise in running administrative apparatuses, throughout the Mongol empire these were mostly staffed locally. In the case of the Khipchak Khanate, however, there was little by way of local administrative personnel to be found, and so the khagan relied on Khwarazm Turks (in Russian *Bessermyn*). Note that its key foreign opponent was the Mongol Ilkhans that ruled Persia, and that its key ally was the Egyptian Mamluks, who were at loggerheads with the Ilkhans (Vernadsky 1953: 131-132).<sup>12</sup> The Golden Horde's main foreign policy focus seems to have been Caucasus (especially Azerbaijan), not Russia. The tribute from Russia was important, but the European West remained a sideshow throughout the Horde's existence (Halperin 1983: 250-251). The Khipchak Khanate adopted Islam as its official religion under Özbek (1313-1341), in conjunction with which they also adopted the Persian administrative *diwan* system.

### *Mongols and Rus' Polities*

The Mongols destroyed Kiev and established a new layer of Mongol overlordship to what was now becoming a suzerain system of Rus' cities within an imperial structure – that of the Golden Horde. The Khipchak Khanate, which was itself still part of an imperial structure, continued to follow the standard operational procedures of Mongol rule. As summed up by Allsen, the basic demands that the Mongols imposed on all of their sedentary subjects were: '(1) the ruler must come personally to court, (2) sons and younger brothers are to be offered as hostages, (3) the population must be registered, (4) militia units are to be raised, (5) taxes are to be sent in, and (6) a *darughachi* is to take charge of all affairs' (Allsen 1987: 114). To the Mongols,

the surrender of a foreign state [i.e. polity] was not just an admission of military defeat and of political subordination, but a pledge that the surrendering state would actively support the Mongols in their plans for further conquest. To fulfill this pledge, the surrendered state had to place its entire resources at the disposal of the empire, and because a census was needed to identify and utilize these resources effectively, the Mongols came to consider submission and the acceptance of the census as synonymous acts (Allsen 1987: 124).

A census was made of Kiev in 1245 and of Novgorod in 1259.

Following Mongol standard procedures, the khan initially dispatched *baskaki*, personal representatives, to live in key Rus' cities. After some decades (how many is not exactly

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<sup>11</sup> The Golden Horde had been in dynastic crisis since the death of Khan Berdibeg in 1359, one reason being that swelling of the numbers of the Golden Kin; Spuler 1965: vol. II). The object of the invasion was Khan Tokhtamesh (1376-1395), a previous protégé of Tamerlane's who succeeded in uniting the Golden Horde with the White Horde to its east. The White Horde had been established by the same Mongol campaign that spied out the Russian lands in 1223.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, balance of power logic then suggested a potential for Ilkhanite alliances with Christian polities. Such prospects were tested out at a number of occasions, but remained fruitless.

known), the Mongols changed their policy and dispatched representatives who were based in the capital Saray on shorter inspections (*darugi*). The Rus' called these *posoli* (*posly* is still the term for ambassadors in Russian). When the *posoly* were not on missions, they worked in the administration in Saray (Halperin 1987: 33). In the degree that there remained a *primus inter pares* amongst the Rus' princes, it was the grand prince of Vladimir. His rule, like that of all princes, was dependent on a Mongol patent (*yarlik*). The principle of personal presence was replayed on the regional level, which meant that Rus' princes journeyed to Sarai in person to deliver their pledges of loyalty. The Rus' probably paid their taxes partly in coin, partly in furs.

In Rus' lands as elsewhere under the Mongols, there was one group that did not pay taxes. That was religious leaders, which in Christian areas meant the clergy. A precondition of this special treatment was Mongol eclectic religious tastes and general tolerance. Exemption from taxes were also a useful political tool which facilitated breaking in local religious elites to imperial rule. In Russia as elsewhere, this came in handy.<sup>13</sup> The clergy were, it will be remembered, a force in the squabbling between lineages in Russia, and this squabbling went on unabated after the Mongol invasion. As Fennell (1983: 97) puts it, 'the princes were able to squabble amongst themselves, to manage their own business, to defend themselves against enemies in the west, and even occasionally to interfere in the affairs of their old neighbours in the south'.

The 'Vsevolodskiys', whose struggles converged on the city of Vladimir and its hinterland (Suzdalia), were the main lineage in Russia after the Mongol invasion. After Kiev's fall, it was Vladimir which was the key Rus' city. The Vsevolodskliys were named after Yuriy Dolgorukiy's son Vsevolod III, whose son Yaroslav's sons included Aleksander Nevskiiy and Andrey. They were, not surprisingly, split on the key question of whether to cooperate with the Mongol invader or to cooperate with their neighbours to the West. This was a struggle for keeps, in the sense that the winner would maintain the throne for his direct descendants (primogeniture having become the key principle of succession in the years immediately preceding the Mongol invasion). Furthermore, since Galicia was already attempting to head Westwards and the southern cities were increasingly passive politically, it was also a struggle about the entire orientation of what remained the key areas of the Rus' lands and was increasingly becoming the only centre of political gravity between the Khipchak Khanate in the east and Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, the Germans and the Scandinavians in the west. It was a centre that was very aware of its dependence on their new Mongol overlords. Between 1242 and 1252, Suzdalian princes made nineteen visits to the Saray. Four of these visits ended with the princes being sent on to the Mongol capital Kharakorum (Fennell 1983: 99).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'For example, Cyril, the Metropolitan of Kiev, who at first supported the anti-Mongol princes of Galicia and Volynia, in the end (1252) threw his considerable weight behind Alexander Nevsky, the prince of Novgorod and champion of accomodation' (Allsen 1987: 122).

<sup>14</sup> Since one of the points I am trying to make is that Europe's Eastern frontier is a hybrid, it should be pointed out that the boundary just drawn is also in need of dedifferentiation. For example, Mongol power resulted in 'a revival of the old steppe traditions at the court of Hungary' in the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Vernadsky 1953: 180-181).

Given Mongolian superior military force, the temptation to embrace the inevitable and collaborate must have been very strong indeed. The key bandwagoner was Aleksander Nevskiy. Already in the early years of the Mongol invasion, Aleksander had spent the time successfully fighting Swedish detachments (1240, earning his moniker) and German Knights (1242). These fights were part of a protracted struggle for mastery over the lands lying between them. When Yaroslav died in 1248, Aleksander was next in line of succession, but it was his younger brother Andrey who seized the throne. Andrey was one of the few Rus' princes to advocate resistance to the Mongols. Nonetheless, in order to hang on to the throne, he needed the patent from the Khan, so both he, and eventually his brother Alexander, made their way first to Saray, and then onwards to Kharakorum, where Andrey was confirmed in Vladimir and Alexander in Kiev. Since Vladimir had been the main prize since the Tatar invasion, Aleksander did not rest content with this decision, and in 1252 he went to the Horde and obtained their help to oust Andrey. Andrey fled to Sweden. Aleksander had managed to put paid not only to his brother Andrey, but to organized opposition to the Mongols as such. As Fennell (1983: 108) puts it,

this was the end of any form of organized opposition to the Tatars by the rulers of Russia for a long time to come. It was the beginning of Russia's real subservience to the Golden Horde [...] the so-called 'Tatar Yoke' began not so much with Baty's [i.e. Batu's] invasion of Russia as with Aleksander's betrayal of his brothers.

From this time on, the enrollment of Mongol backing became a routine part of internecine struggles. There was nothing new about this: first the nomadic Pechenegs and then the Khipchaks had been drawn on in similar fashion by the Rus' princes before. Now, once more, the appeal to steppe forces became a key factor in the intensification of direct Mongol control with Rus' political life. There is a causal link between this development and the period of intensified Mongol raids and invasions towards the end of the thirteenth century. At this point, not only were Mongols from the Khipchak Khanate brought in, Rus' princes who were up against other Rus' princes with Horde backing actually ventured further field to bring in the backing of Mongols insurgents from the Nogay further south.<sup>15</sup> Rus' princes stood against Rus' princes, each backed by a Mongol ally.

In 1304, the grand prince of Vladimir died. Three developments brought about a change in politics. First, the princes of Moscow and Tver' emerged as the key players in Rus' politics, among other things as a result of their population increase in the wake of the Mongol invasion, which was again to do with nice strategic location (with Moscow in particular being something of a hub of the river system).<sup>16</sup> Secondly, among other things

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<sup>15</sup> The Nogay, named after the Mongol Nogay Khan, based in the Caucasus around present-day Kalmykia and harbouring a number of Khipchaks, were at loggerheads with the rest of the Golden Horde in the 1290s, and established themselves as a khanate in 1319. They 'built a power base in the Crimea and the Balkans and contested with the khans of the lower Volga for control of the Golden Horde' (Halperin 1987: 18).

<sup>16</sup> The two other cities to be ruled by Grand Dukes, Nizjniy Novgorod and Riazan, came up short on both counts.

because of the now firmly established principle of primogeniture, these princes headed more clearly organized families, which served as a firm power base. Thirdly, the firm wedding between families and cities meant that the territoriality of this power base was now assured in a much higher degree than before.<sup>17</sup> Following decades of struggle between Moscow and Tver', Moscow emerged victorious and Ivan I was granted the title of grand prince of Vladimir by the Mongols in 1328. From Ivan I onwards, Moscow was the emergent centre of gravity of Rus' politics, and the home both of the great prince (who underlined his success by adding 'and of all Russia' to his princely title) and of the Metropolitan. Moscow remained completely dependent on the Mongols, however, to the point that brothers appealed to Saray and even traveled there in order to settle their succession struggles (Halperin 1987: 58). Moscow took its time fighting down Tver' competition. In 1353, Novgorod supported the Tver' bid for the grand principality of Vladimir over the Moscow one by sending envoys to Saray to plead for Tver's case (Halperin 1987: 51).

The grand princes of Moscow kept up their brilliance in playing the alliance game. Whereas Tver' looked West, to the rising power of Lithuania. Moscow stuck to the Mongols of the Khipchak Khanate. This served them well, for they were able to stave off three attacks by Lithuania and Tver' between 1368 and 1372. As summed up by Halperin (1987: 54; for details, see Vernadsky 1953: 207),

the special relationship between the Golden Horde and Moscow was strengthened in the middle of the fourteenth century, when the Mongols faced a new challenge to their hegemony. Grand prince Olgerd of Lithuania struck deep into the Tatar orbit by bringing both Tver' and Riazan' into his sphere of influence and applying pressure to Novgorod.<sup>18</sup> Olgerd's opposition to Moscow was not rooted in principle, and he played politics by the same rules as everyone else. Thus, with the eye on Moscow, he sent a delegation to the Golden Horde to negotiate a rapprochement. The Mongols, however, had decided, logically, to use Moscow as a counterweight to the growing power of Lithuania. The Muscovites were therefore successful in their attempts to undermine the Lithuanian embassy, and the Mongols, in a fine display of political delicacy, arrested the Lithuanian envoys and handed them over to Moscow. Olgerd was compelled to ransom his emissaries from his enemies.

The decisive Moscow victory over Tver' occurred in 1375.<sup>19</sup> In 1478, Ivan III subdued Novgorod. Moscow owed its victory to the superior way in which they had played the

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<sup>17</sup> Vernadsky (1953: 167), whose major thesis throughout his multi-volume history is the rise of Russian nationhood (preceded by a 'federal' Kievan state period), nonetheless stresses how Alexander's brothers' and sons' failing to settle in Vladimir upon becoming its Grand Duke constituted 'the temporary victory of the apanage (*udel*) principle over that of the nation state'.

<sup>18</sup> From the 1250s onwards Galicia and Kiev came ever closer to the Lithuanian kingdom, and were eventually absorbed by it. The Russian aristocracy asserted themselves strongly, however, to the point that a variant of Russian (White Russian) became the kingdom's official language. A number of nobles eventually gravitated back to Muscovy, cf. Backus 1957.

<sup>19</sup> Tver' did not give up, though. In 1382, it allied with Khan Tokhtamesh of the Golden Horde against Moscow.

alliance game *vis-à-vis* the Mongols compared to other Rus' polities. From this time on, in order to underline how Moscow was changing the suzerain system of Rus' lineages into a polity centred on Moscow, it is customary to refer to this polity as Muscovy. Muscovy was still subservient to the Khipchak Khanate, and would remain so for another hundred years.

In terms of systems logic, the arrival of Lithuania was a major event, since it challenged the suzerain system by adding another possible centre of gravity for Rus' princes. It is true that Lithuania was at first sucked into the suzerain system centering on the Khipchak Khanate's ambit, in the degree that the Khipchak Khanate certainly saw Lithuania as a vassal, and Lithuania itself at some point probably did (comp. Vernadsky 1953: 264). It is also true that the Khipchak Khanate backed Moscow in its war with Lithuania in 1406, and also at subsequent occasions. As the Khipchak Khanate weakened and Moscow as well as Lithuania emerged ever stronger, however, diplomatic relations between the Khipchak Khanate and Lithuania became closer and also less lop-sided. Despite certain temporary set-backs such as the Moscow-Lithuanian treaty of friendship of 1449 (a short-lived affair anyway), the Khipchak Khanate and Lithuania were more often than not at one on opposing the rise of Moscow.<sup>20</sup> It was an alliance that did not fulfil the goal for which it was formed, however, for Moscow (which could in turn draw on its good relations with the emergent Crimean khanate)<sup>21</sup> emerged triumphant, whereas the Khipchak Khanate fell apart. Note, and this is crucial in our context, that the patterns of alliance do not follow religious or cultural lines. The same may be said about the alliance Muscovy and what was left of the Khipchak Khanate formed in 1502, against the Great Horde, i.e. the polity of nomadic Mongol-led forces on the steppe.

To sum up, the key political fact in the Rus' lands from 1240 to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was the suzerainty of the Mongols, based in Saray. Rus' princes fought one another, and used Mongol backing as the key power resource in their internecine struggles. The Mongols lent their support to various princes with a view to upholding tribute. They also followed the same policy towards the Rus' princes that they themselves and other steppe peoples had experienced from the Chinese side: they played the Rus' princes off one another so that no one of them should emerge as a uniting force that could

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<sup>20</sup> The fifteenth-century political cabal in these parts turned on a familiar alliance pattern. In the East, the Golden Horde strove to hang onto its suzerainty in Russian lands, which were increasingly dominated by Muscovy. In the South, the Crimean Khanate tried to stem the increasing influence of the Russians on the Golden Horde. In the west, the Lithuanians tried to encroach on Russian lands. Logically, an basic alliance pattern emerged whereby the Golden Horde and Muscovy paired up against Lithuania and the Crimean Khanate. Once the Golden Horde unraveled, there was elite integration. During Russia's Time of Troubles, the Tatar aristocracy rallied to the Russian cause against the Poles. The Tatar aristocracy was placed side by side with the Russian one in 1784 (Spuler 1969: 91). The Crimean Tatars was had a rather different end of it. Their final raid on Moscow, in 1571, ended with them actually being able to the Muscovites assenting to paying tribute, but that tribute never seems to have been paid. Once the hetman Bogdan Khielnitski transferred his loyalties from Poland to Russia in 1654, the Poles and the Crimean Tatars once again made common cause against Russia. The Crimean Tatars remained a potential ally for Russia's opponents until they was incorporated into Russia after the Russian victory over the Ottomans in 1774.

<sup>21</sup> This is not to say that the relationship between Muscovy and this second most long-lived of the Golden Horde's successor states was not volatile. The Crimean Tatars burnt Moscow to the ground as late as in 1571.

challenge Mongol rule. As the Khipchak Khanate started to fall apart from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, however, Moscow was nonetheless able to emerge as the key political centre, which proceeded to relativise Mongol suzerainty and, using techniques lent from the Mongols, unite first the Rus' lands and then the old lands of the Khipchak Khanate (Kappeler 2001). Muscovy seems to have stopped paying tribute to the Khipchak Khanate some time around 1470, and made an alliance with the Eastern part of what was left of it in 1502. Muscovy effectively swallowed its partner, and in 1507, Sigismund of Poland-Lithuania was 'granted' the Western part from its last Khan. The Khipchak Khanate was no more.

Although the fact that the Khipchak Khanate turned to Islam in the first half of the fourteenth century could not fail to delineate them clearly from a population who was consistently referred to by its writing layer as 'the Christians', a number of hybridizing practices were in evidence. There was intermarriage, but it was in a high degree an elite phenomenon. Spuler (1969: 86) sums it up as follows in the fashion of high modernity: 'A fair measure of Finnish blood was absorbed into the veins of the Tatar nation, and Russian and Polish captives of both sexes added a certain Slavic element, though the Russian contribution was in all probability still very small in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century'. More importantly, after more than 250 years of Mongol influences, there was widespread hybridization on the institutional and practical levels. How widespread is a matter of debate, most recently around the publication of a book by Donald Ostrowski (1998). Halperin (2000) lays out the broad consensus as follows:

Despite the objections of hypersensitive Russian historians, there is a compelling case that Muscovy did indeed borrow a variety of Mongol political and administrative institutions, including the *tamga*, the seal for the customs tax as well as the tax itself; the *kazna*, the treasury; the *iam*, the postal system; *tarkhan*, grants of fiscal or juridical immunity; and *den'ga* for money. Muscovite bureaucratic practices, including the use of *stolbtsy*, scrolls to preserve documents, and perhaps some feature of Muscovite bureaucratic jargon, may also derive from the Qipchaq Khanate, as well as selective legal practices such as *pravezh*, beating on the shins. Certainly Muscovite diplomatic norms for dealing with steppe states and peoples were modeled on Tatar ways. Finally, the Muscovites had no choice but to study Tatar military tactics and strategies, if only to survive by countering them in battle, but the Muscovites also copied Mongol weapons, armaments, horse equipage, and formations.

The consensus does not extend to the administrative system as such. Ostrowski (1998, 2000) sees the major aristocratic organ, the Boyar Duma, as being formatted on the major aristocratic organ of the Khipchak Khanate, and also sees a number of detailed similarities between the lower ranks, but has not been able to garnish much support for this view (Halperin 2000, Goldfrank 2000). Be that as it may, the pride that Russians took in being the key successor of the Khipchak Khanate was evident in the sixteenth century aristocratic fashion for tracing one's ancestry back to Mongols (Halperin 1987: 113). Goldfrank (2000: 261) is also bordering on scholarly consensus when he agrees with

Ostrowski that ‘the continuous influx of Tatars into Muscovy, the service of Mongol *tsarevichi* in the high political posts, and the marriages between elite Mongols and Muscovites Vasilii III and Ivan IV provide sufficient indication of a favorable secular orientation towards friendly Tatars’ and reminds us of the importance of Tatar farmer immigration to the Novgorod area. As we shall see, this Russian identification with its former sovereigns proved to be detrimental to its relations with its European neighbours.

### *Relevance for Russian-European Relations*

Throughout the Mongol period in Russian history, relations with Western Christendom continued. The Khipchak Khanate cherished trade, and gave privileges to a number of traders. Most of the trade went through the Black Sea, and was handled by non-Mongol servants of the Khan. The Mongols were generally very good at acknowledging their limited knowledge of city ways, seafaring and other pursuits foreign to the steppe. Seeing the advantages of trade with the known world, they therefore employed foreign subjects as customs officers, and allowed colonies of Genoese and also Venetian traders along the Northern coast of the Black Sea (seeing to it that some ports remained in Tatar hands). From 1365 to 1475, when the Crimean Turks put an end to their presence, the Genoese dominated heavily (Meyerdorff 1961). In the early years, the Khipchak Khanate demanded tribute of the Venetians, but, presumably finding this to be counter-productive, soon rescinded the practice (Spuler 1963: 399). Trading included a whole gamut of goods, and also slaves.

In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, and despite Aleksander Nevskiy’s skepticism to Western powers and to Catholicism, pope Innocent IV nonetheless forwarded a Bull to him in 1248 (Fennell 1983: 122n15). Rome followed what was going on in the Rus’ lands. Note also that Alexander’s ally, Metropolitan Kirill, established a bishopric in Saray in 1261. The church’s presence in Saray secured, among other things, a channel from the Rus’ clergy and princes to the Byzantine empire, which had diplomatic relations with the Khipchak Khanate (the Byzantine emperor married off his daughter to Khan Uzbek of the Golden Kin around 1330; Vernadsky 1953: 196). The Khipchak Khanate also received diplomatic envoys from Rome. Even in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, ‘trade with the West, either from or via Novgorod and Smolensk, both of which suffered no damage from the Tatars, seems to have been relatively unaffected’ (Fennell 1983: 89). Furthermore, the Khipchak Khanate granted tax exemptions to the Hanseatic League, which continued its brisk trade with Rus’ lands via Novgorod (Halperin 1987: 81).

In 1270, the Khipchak Khanate also made a trade agreement with Riga Germans and other Germans, and saw to it that Russian princes did not interfere with it. The main route for this trade followed the “Tatar road” from Kiev to Lemberg. Kiev, the main Russian town, was “teeming with Tatar, German, Armenian and Moscow merchants (Spuler 1963: 403). In the context of this book, the main point here is that the boot was firmly on the Tatar foot when it came to settle the conditions for and terms of trade here, much as they were where the other European-non-European relations discussed in this book are



concerned. Note here that Genovese and also particularly Venetian merchants were able to draw on these experiences when it came to evolving trade with the Ottoman Empire.

If the existence of and human status of Russian-speakers were known to most Europeans, the same could not be said about the steppe-dwelling peoples to their East. Ever since Pope Alexander III's personal physician Master Philip has set sail Eastward from Venice in 1177 on his mission to find the alleged Christian kingdom of Prester John, attempts to establish contact had rested on 'a strange combination of Christian and pagan elements [...built on] the legends and myths inherited from the classical world' (de Rachewiltz 1971: 29). When the Pope had word of the Mongol invasion some sixty-odd years later, his reaction was to send friars with letters asking the Khans to mend his ways and convert to Christendom. The Mongol answers mirrored these messages by insisting that the Pope should come and pay his respect to the Great Khan. Universal claim stood against universal claim (Dawson 1955, Bowden 2009). The envoys to the Great Khans brought back new information which made for much more detailed representations in the West of people and life in the East.<sup>22</sup> However, when both the Ilhanite state and the Khipchak Khanate first converted to Islam and then, later in the fourteenth century, went through periods of internal strife, it affected the possibility for European missionaries and merchants to take the land route through these areas in order to reach destinations further East. As a result, direct contacts between the European Continent and the East suffered, and European Continental representations of the East were once again dominated by 'dreaming and speculation', as de Rachewiltz (1971: 207) puts it. What this meant was that, when Muscovy emerged, Western rulers did not know what to expect. Already in 1481, Emperor Frederick III addressed an appeal on behalf of the Germans in Livonia to Poland and Lithuania, Sweden and the Hanseatic Cities about this noted but known entity (Halecki 1952: 8). Direct contacts between Muscovy and the Holy Roman Emperor ensued in 1486, after two and a half centuries of Mongol rule.

In the early 1500s, Russians themselves were far from certain about what to make of their Mongol connection. There was a duality in the Russian knowledge production about these relations which goes to the heart of how Russo-Mongol relations are relevant to Russia's entry into the European state system. On the one hand, as has been demonstrated convincingly by Charles Halperin, Russian contemporary sources, both the chronicles paid for by princes as well as literary genres such as the *byliny* (folk songs), finessed a technique of not touching on the fact of Mongol suzerainty directly. As Halperin (1987: 8, comp. 63) puts it,

The Russian 'bookmen' (writers, redactors, scribes, copyists) of the Kievan past were accustomed to explaining Russian victories and defeats in skirmishes with nomads as signs of God's pleasure or displeasure with his people. They had never

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<sup>22</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod's interesting attempt to theorise the world system before European hegemony is marred by her specious readings of these reports. Although she herself notes that their use of imagery is of the same kind (and frequently even parading the same specific ideas about monsters and strange humanoids) as contemporary Chinese texts about Western lands, she does not hesitate to heap scorn on leading European scholars of the period like William of Rubruck (Abu-Lughod 1989: 162, comp. Rubruquis 1990).

been called upon, however, to rationalize absolute conquest. Instead of confronting the ideologically awkward fact of utter defeat, the bookmen finessed the fact of Mongol conquest by presenting Russo-Tatar relations as merely a continuation of Kievan relations with the steppe with no change of suzerainty involved. Thus the Russian bookmen raised the ideology of silence to a higher level and threw a veil over the intellectual implications of Mongol hegemony.

However, once the Mongols seemed to be a spent force, there was a need to tell a story about Russia's history as having some kind of continuity. A solution that lay close to hand was to forge a new role for the Russian leader as being not only a great prince, but a tsar. The problem was that the term tsar was a translation into Russian not only of the Greek term *basileus* (i.e. Byzantine emperor), but also of *khan*. The implication of these eponymous translations was that these two entities were treated on a par. Note that the fall of Constantinople is at this point half a century back. There was no longer a *basileus* in Constantinople. The hegemon to live down was the khan in Saray. Vassilian, bishop of Rostov and a close advisor of Ivan III, came up with an answer to this problem, namely to raise the status of Ivan III to that of tsar and so live down the very idea that there was ever such a thing as a tsar in Saray. The link should be that of *basileus* to tsar, and the khan should be treated as nothing but an impostor (see Cherniavsky [1959] 1970).

However, there is an interesting split in representations of Muscovite rule here, for as I have tried to demonstrate above, once the domestic work of establishing the basic continuation of Russia's legitimacy as a Christian power was done, Muscovy actually started propping up its claims to being an imperial power on a par with the Holy Roman Empire by invoking its conquests of the successor states of the Khipchak Khanate, notably Kazan' and Astrakhan.<sup>23</sup> In a situation where Europeans knew little of Mongol or even Asian ways (little, not nothing: there had, after all, been continuous contacts), Russia chose to base its claims for recognition partly on its Mongol connection. This move flowed from hybridization, and the self-evident way in which Muscovites performed the move goes to show how this hybridization had become doxic (not least, one would suspect, because there was now little to fear from the former overlords). Muscovy's opting for a Mongol *translation imperii* was clearly detrimental to the Russian polity's relations with Europe, where Mongols were remembered as clear-cut barbarians. Even as late as in the early 1800s, when Napoleon's propaganda machine needed anti-Russian slurs, one of those that really caught on was '*Grattez le russe et vous trouverez le tatar!*' (Scratch a Russian and find a Tatar; Halperin 1987: ix). This saying is not without substance, however. An example from everyday life may be the Russian taboo against shaking hands across thresholds. A ritual example of the lingering importance of hybridization today may be found in that key object of anthropological inquiry, burial rites. In addition to the standard funeral, Russians come together 40 days. The religious explanation for this is to do with shadowing the Ascension; the deceased dear ones congregate to ease the soul's passing to heaven. Note that this is a common practice amongst Muslims, but not so amongst other Christians. An example which is key to International relations concerns the restrictions imposed on movements by diplomats

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<sup>23</sup> As late as the seventeenth century, the emigré Muscovite bureaucrat Gregorii Kotoshikin explained that the ruler of Muscovy was a *tsar*' by virtue of Ivan IV's conquest of Kazan''; Halperin 1987: 100.

which was in evidence continuously from the Mongol period and until the fall of the Soviet Union, a shadow of which remains even today.

### *Conclusion*

Rus' should be categorized as a suzerain system of polities centered on Kiev, rather than as a single polity. The polities were lineages led by princes. Neighbouring powers, including steppe-dwelling peoples, were brought into the fight between lineages on a regular basis. Once the Mongols destroyed Kiev in 1240 and established a new layer of Mongol overlordship, this loose suzerain system of lineage-based polities characterized by a high level of conflict and open lines to allies from the adjacent steppe became part of an imperial structure – that of the Golde Horde. For some decades afterwards, the Khipchak Khanate was itself still part of an imperial structure. The Khipchak Khanate ruled Rus' according to standard operational Mongol procedures. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, two lineages, now thoroughly territorialized in the cities of Moscow and Tver', fought for predominance amongst the Rus'. Moscow owed its victory to the superior way in which they had played the alliance game *vis-à-vis* the Mongols compared to other Rus' polities. From the 1370s on, in order to underline how Moscow was changing the suzerain system of Rus' lineages into a polity centred on Moscow, it is customary to refer to this polity as Muscovy. Muscovy was still subservient to the Khipchak Khanate, and would remain so for another hundred years, until the Golde Horde fell apart in the first decade of the 1500s.

As Mongol suzerainty waned, relations with steppe polities nonetheless continued. When, in the early decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, rival Mongol khans were not able to maintain order amongst the local Tatar princes of the Dniepr steppes, some of which formed semi-independent detachments that became known as Cossacks. Vitautas of Lithuania hired some of them to man the steppe frontier. Slavs that were similarly employed also came to be known as Cossacks (Vernadsky 1953: 289). When, in the 1440s, Moscow decided to resettle the Tatars that had joined its Grand Duke's service, 'the best solution seemed to be to establish a network of advance posts along the southern border of Russia, close enough to the Tatar-controlled steppes so that Russia's military leaders could both watch the movements of the Tatars and repulse them when they came' (Vernadsky 1953: 331, comp. 320). A former khan's son, Kasim, had a claim on a particular stretch of the frontier around the town of Gorodets, and so in 1452-1453 Moscow created a separate polity for him there. Gorodets was renamed Kasimov upon Kasim's death in 1471, and went on to become a separate khanate which survived until 1681, and were Muscovy's vassals and served 'primarily as nomadic auxiliary troops' (Halperin 1987: 109). By then, Muscovy had annexed all the Khipchak Khanate's successor states. As was demonstrated most recently by the key role played by Russian federal subjects such as Tatarstan and Bashkortostan during the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Neumann 1999: 183-206), successors of those successor states are still a distinct presence in Russian politics. Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was fashionable for Russian aristocratic families to sport their Mongol connections. After Peter the Great's reforms, with the fading of the Crimean Khanate, which was the Khipchak Khanate's principal successor state in cultural terms, and with Russia's

increasing Siberian expansion, the Tatar experience took on a more and more subterranean role in Russian historiography. The role of the Tatar and also of other identities such as the Kalmyk (successors of a specific Mongolian tribe) to present Russian national identity awaits further study, but there has certainly been ample hybridization. Tatars, Kalmyks, Bashirs and other groups whose collective memory is tied up with having been part of the Khipchak Khanate remain liminal to Russian identity.

The Mongol connection and hybrid character of the polity of Muscovy coloured Russian entry into the European states system. Muscovy itself chose to seek recognition from the Continental European powers, with whom connections increased steadily in the fifteenth century and after the fall of the Mongol Khipchak Khanate, as successors to that Khanate. The bid for recognition was presented by dint of a number of practices that were taken directly from the Mongols. Continental European powers were therefore warranted in seeing Muscovy as a partly Asian polity.

It should also be clear, however, that the political logic of what was going on in the North, between Scandinavians, Lithuanians, Poles, Germans, the Rus', the Khipchaks *etc.* was one where confession had importance, but not necessarily overwhelming importance. It is simply not the case that an overarching polity, be that Christendom or its successor Europe, stood against other polities. Neither is it the case that the Continental European powers imposed a ready-made system of interaction on Muscovy (or on other Northerners, for that matter). It is very hard to identify a clear geographical, social or political boundary between Europe and non-Europe in the period under discussion here. Rus' politics before the Mongol intervention had interaction with steppe polities as one of their defining traits from the very beginnings in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

I have argued that the area called Rus' that the Mongol forces subdued at the end of the 1230s was a loose suzerain system of lineage-based polities characterized by a high level of conflict and open lines to allies from the adjacent steppe. I have also argued that the establishment of a Mongol imperial order centered on the Golden Horde and lasting for around 250 years meant that when Muscovy emerged as the Golden Horde's self-acknowledged successor polity, it was as a hybrid polity whose state institutions and diplomatic practices bore deep marks of its steppe heritage. Furthermore, Muscovy's emergence came among other things as a result of a century of alliance politics where the principal actors were the Golden Horde, Muscovy and Lithuania (Lithuania/Poland).

There are a couple of lessons to be drawn here. First, the editors are right to point out in their introduction that we should not think of the past as being culturally homogenous. From the 220s before our era, steppe relations were about building up multiethnic empires, which sustained themselves among other things by attacking sedentary polities to its south; China, Persia, the Byzantine Empire etc. If, as in the fourth century, a steppe empire had no luck in China, it could regroup and attempt a devastating attack on the Roma empire instead. As a result of all the ensuing hybridization, of which Russia is a key example, there simply is little or no cultural ground on which to found a division of the world into discrete civilizations (cf. Bowden 200).

A second lesson to be drawn concerns the status of nomadism in world history. Barry Hindess (2000: 1494) has noted about present-day migration discourse how

The assumption here is that, even if they move around within it, people will normally be settled in the society to which they belong [...] In fact, the historical record suggests a different story; namely, that large-scale population movement is as normal a feature of the human condition as is long-term territorial settlement... Nevertheless, the system of territorial states and the techniques of population management developed within it have turned the movement of people around the world into an exceptional activity, something that can and should be regulated by the states whose borders they threaten to cross (Hindess 2000: 1494).

This is certainly so. All European peoples (with a possible exception for the Basques) hail from the steppes, and it took millennia before there was any meaningful distinction to be made between the two. Let us not forget that the first occurrence of the concept of Europe in mediaeval history hails from the crowning of Charles the Great in the year 800. He crowned himself emperor amongst other things to celebrate his victory over the Avars, a steppe people. In a very real sense, the Russian experience with the steppe is an historical coda of the European experience with the steppe.

A third point goes to the core of this volume. In a European comparative perspective, with the exception of the Balkans, Russian experiences with non-Europeans were particularly long-lasting, and they included 250 years of suzerainty. In a global comparative perspective, if we juxtapose Russian-Mongol relations with the European-non-European relations which were to follow in the early modern period and which are the topic of the other chapters in this book, the similarities are overwhelming. Even more interestingly is the fact that Russians, the fact that they were Christian notwithstanding, in many ways came to be Othered in the very same way as (other?) non-Europeans in that period. I have discussed this topic at some length elsewhere (Neumann 1996, 1999). Suffice it to point out that the roots of critical development theory are to be found in the writings of a Russian Jew, namely Leo Trotsky. It was his reading of Russia's development as 'combined and uneven' in a world dominated by (Western) Europeans that formed the template on which intellectuals in other parts of the world began to theorise development. In the degree that there is a line to be drawn from critical development theory to post-colonial scholarship, and in the degree that this book embodies the former, the structural parallels between Russ-European relations on the one hand, and Chinese-European, African-European, Latin American-European etc. relations on the other have their counterparts in the knowledge production about these relations in Russia on the one hand, and other countries such as China, India, Turkey, Persia, Algeria, Brazil etc. on the other.

I noted above a propagandist put-down from the court of Napoleon: 'scratch a Russian and find a Tatar'. There is nothing empirically wrong with this statement. Russian culture is a thoroughly hybridised phenomenon. What is wrong with this slogan is the modernist preconditions that lend it its negative propagandistic force, namely that hybridisation is

bad. That value judgement was not predominant in the world before the arrival of the anarchical society. It is likely to be buried together with the modernity of which it was such a characteristic part.

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