SOME REMARKS ON THE DATING OF THE
SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS

IGOR de RACHEWILTZ
The Australian National University, Canberra

The year in which the Mongolian text of the so-called Secret History of the Mongols was written is still a moot point. The colophon (§282) of the Secret History reads as follows:

Yeke qurult quriju, quluyana jil yuran sara-da, Kelüren-ü Kode’e-aran-ulan Dulo’an-bolda-a, Šilginėg qojar ja’ura, ordos ba’uju bükü-tür bičiij da’usba. “[We] have finished writing at the time when the Great Diet was assembled and when, in the year of the Rat, in the month of the Roebuck, the imperial palaces (ordos) were established at Dolo’an-bolda; of Kode’e-aran of the Kelüren, between the two [localities called] Šilginėg and…”

As shown by the Reverend Antoine Mostaert, there is a lacuna in the text immediately after the word Šilginėg which obliterates the name of the second place. The month of the Roebuck (yuran sara) corresponds to the seventh month of the lunar calendar, but to which year of the Rat (quluyana jil) does the colophon refer? Various theories have been put forward at different times and the years proposed so far are 1228, 1240, 1252 and 1264. Let us briefly review these theories.

A. Year of the Rat 1228. This is the year after the death of Chinggis Qan, when the court was assembled for the Great

Note: Unless otherwise specified, the editions used are Po-na for the standard histories, and Ssu-pu ta’ung-k’an for literary texts.
1) Yün-ch’ao pi-shih 元朝秘史 (hereafter YCPS), Hsu-chi 2,58a-b.
Diet which elected his successor, Ögödei Qa'ān, a year later (13 September 1229). Since the diet was held at Köde'ô-aral of the Kelüren (=Kerulen) river, Ting Ch’ien stated in 1901 that the Secret History was written on that occasion. Ting claimed that T'o-ch’â-an, the presumed author of the Secret History, subsequently added some events of the reign of Ögödei to his narrative, but forgot to correct the date of the colophon. Ting’s theory, marred in part by the identification of the author with T'o-ch’â-an (a misinterpretation of the book’s later Mongolian title), has found few supporters.

B. Year of the Rat 1240. This is the year before Ögödei’s death (11 December 1241). Since the Secret History contains a brief account of Ögödei (§§ 269–281) but does not mention his death, the assignment of 1240 as the year of the Rat of the colophon has found almost general acceptance among scholars in China, Japan and Europe since the second half of last century. They include Palladius, Li Wen-t’ien 李文田, Naka Michiyô 那珂通世, T’u Chi 屠客, E. Haenishch, S.A. Koizin and, more recently, Professors Ts. Damdinsüre, P. Poucha, A. Temir and Iwamura Shinobu 吉村信博.

---

3) On Ögödei’s enthronement see below, n.39.
4) On the location of Köde’ô-aral see below, n.39.
6) The identification of the author of the Secret History with “T'o-ch’â-an” was first proposed by Ku Kuang-ch’i 虎光祈 in 1805. See Hung, 439–440. Recently, Dr. Wei Kwei Sun adopted Ting’s date in his work The Secret History of the Mongol Dynasty (Yuan-Chao-Pi-Shi) (Aligarh, 1957), 5 and 180, n.4. See also below, n. 25.
7) On Ögödei’s death see the Yuan-shih 元史 2.7b–8a and 146.10a (Biography of Yeh-lü Ch’u-ts’ai 耶律楚材). Cf. N.C. Munkuev, Kitaiskii istoricheskie o porevakh mongolskikh khanakh (Moscow, 1955), 199–200.
8) YCPS, Hsi-chi 2.13b–58a.
9) See Li Wen-t’ien 李文田, Yuan-ch’ou pi-shih ch’u 元朝祕史初 (1963 ed. of the Shang-hai Wen-yu-hou 上海文語會) 15.50b; Naka Michiyô 那珂通世, Chingissan kan jitsuroku 成吉思汗實錄 (Tokyo, 1907), Jorin 3, 2–3; T’u Chi 屠客, Mengwu-erh shih-chi 蒙元兒史記 (1934 ed.) 4.14b–15a; P. Pelliot, “Deux lacunes dans
Most of the investigators of the Secret History are of the opinion that the colophon applies to the whole book. Two notable exceptions are, however, Naka Michiyō and Ishihama Juntarō. These scholars claim that the original book, consisting of ten chüan, was composed in Činggis Qan's time (Naka) or, at any rate, before 1240 (Ishihama), and that the Continuation (hsü-chi 繼集) in 2 chüan was added in 1240, the year to which — they both agree — the colophon refers.

C. Year of the Rat 1252. In 1941 René Grousset questioned the validity of the B theory and suggested the year of the Rat one duodenary cycle later, i.e. 1252. He contended that one passage in § 255 of the Secret History hints at the succession to the khanship of the line of Tolui, an event which took place with the election of Môngke in 1251. He also pointed out that § 281 reads very much like a posthumous appraisal.
of Ögödei. Pelliot was impressed but not convinced by Grousset's observations and held to the view that the year of the Rat refers to 1240. His counter-arguments were: a) The ambitions of Tolui's house must have been known before the death of Ögödei in 1241, and b) in the Yüan-shih no Great Diet at Köde'e-arál is recorded s.a. 1240 and 1252. The sketchy nature of the "Annals of T'ai-tsung 太宗" (Ögödei) in the Yüan-shih may account for the silence on a great diet held in 1240; however, from 1251 onward the imperial annals are more precise and such an important event as this in 1252 would have no doubt been mentioned.  

D. Year of the Rat 1264. In 1951 Professor William Hung published an important study on the transmission of the Secret History. In it he discussed the theories of his predecessors and formulated new conclusions. Hung agrees with Grousset's views regarding §§ 255 and 281, but he feels that "the colophon might refer to a Rat year, a duodenary cycle still later than 1252." His case rests chiefly on one puzzling geographical name occurring in § 247 of the Secret History. In this paragraph, Hsüan-te fu 宣德府 is mentioned twice in this form. Hung points out that the area in question was called Hsüan-te chou 宣德州 in Chin times and continued to be known as such under the Mongols. On 7 September 1263 it was renamed Hsüan-te fu, hence a document referring to it by the new designation must be later than 7 September 1263. Hung suggests 1264 as the year in which the Secret History was written. He discards 1276, the next year of the Rat after 1264, on the ground that the author of the book, a man obviously well acquainted with Činggis Qan's early years, must have already been very old in 1264 and in all likelihood was no longer alive in 1276. Furthermore, if he referred in 1276 to Hsüan-te chou as Hsüan-te fu, he would have certainly referred to Chung-tu 中都 as Ta-tu 大都.

15) "Deux lacunes," 1-2, n.1.
16) See above, n.5.
17) Hung, 488.
18) YCPS, Hsü-chi 1.1a.
which is not the case. In partial support of his theory, Hung adduces some external evidence: this, however, is very circumstantial and adds but little strength to the main argument. Commenting in 1952 on Hung’s interpretation, Mostaert pointed out that this leaves unanswered the question of why the author of the Secret History, writing in 1264, was silent on Ögedei’s death and did not mention any of the many important events that took place between the end of Ögedei’s reign and 1264. Mostaert, therefore, does not regard the problem as having been solved satisfactorily. This is also the opinion of Professor B.I. Pankratov.

In recent years, however, there have been new developments which tend to corroborate Hung’s interpretation. I refer to two articles by Arthur Waley and Doctor Gari Ledyard, which appeared in 1960 and 1964 respectively. In his article, Waley drew attention to some early remarks by Naka Michiyo to the effect that §274 of the Secret History describes events relating to the Mongol military activity in Korea in 1258. Naka regarded the passage in question as a later interpolation. Waley, on the other

19) Hung, 489-490.
20) Ibid., 490-491. Hung refers to Wang O’s 王磐 appeal to Qubilai in 1263 for the collection of historical material relating to Genghis Qan and intimates that the Secret History may have been compiled in response to this appeal. On Wang O cf. also ibid., 472.
22) B.I. Pankratov, Yuan-zuo hi-shi (Sekretuaya istoriya mongolov) (Moscow, 1962). Predistorie, 5. A good critical review of the three main theories, with excerpts from the original texts, is found in Professor Kobayashi Takashiro’s 小林高四郎 Gencho hishi no kenkyu 朝鮮史史の研究 (Tokyo, 1950), 172-210.
25) Chingisun ban jitsuroku zokuhen 成吉思汗實錄續編, 62 and 64, in Naka Michiyo ibai 那珂邁通世書 (Tokyo, 1915). More recently, Uemura Seiji 梅村清二 claimed on the same evidence that the Secret History was not compiled at one time. According to him the year of the Rat of the colophon is, as for Ting Ch’ien, 1228; the colophon was probably copied into the book from an earlier text at the time of the final compilation. See Tohokukoku kikai 10 (April 1955), 108-113 and p. 6 of the English summary.
hand, thought this unlikely and suggested a date for the composition of the *Secret History* "well after the middle of the thirteenth century."

Ledyard pursued the investigation of the events described in § 274 in greater detail, showing conclusively, in my opinion, that the account in the *Secret History* could not have been written before 1258. For him too, 1264 is the earliest possible date for the composition of this work. His transposition of events relating to the reign of Möngke to the reign Ögüdei occurred, according to Ledyard, by mistake in a written source used by the compiler of the *Secret History*.

Professor L. Ligeti’s Hungarian translation of the *Secret History* appeared in 1962, i.e. after Waley’s article but before Ledyard’s study. Although Waley’s paper was available to him, Ligeti seems to have missed the reference to Naka’s remarks contained in it. His position with regard to the dating of the *Secret History* is the following. He agrees with Mostaert’s criticism of Hung and, on the strength that no diet is recorded s.a. 1264, rules out the year 1264 as the year of the Rat of the colophon. However, he maintains with Grouset that certain passages show an ex post facto knowledge of events, but regards these as later interpolations and additions. Ligeti believes that, in its present form, the *Secret History* dates from the time of Möngke’s election; he regards this work, however, as an enlargement of an earlier version containing the account of Činggis’ life. Therefore, he concludes, if the colophon refers to the whole work, the year of the Rat must correspond to 1252; if, on the other hand, the colophon refers to the earlier version, it must correspond to the year 1228. The problem is still unsolved. Since Ligeti

26) "Notes on the *Yuan-ch’ao pi-shih*," 529.
27) "The Mongol Campaigns," 10. In n. 44 on p. 10 Ledyard points out, however, that although he favours the date of 1264, the evidence presented in his paper does not exclude 1276 or even 1288.
28) *Ibid.*, 15-16. This is purely conjectural of course, since there is no evidence that the author, or authors, of the *Secret History* used anything but oral tradition.
29) See *A mongolok története*, 210. However, Naka Michiyo’s *Činggis kan jitejü hűzés* is listed in the bibliography, *ibid.*, 257.
30) *A mongolok*, 210-213; cf. also *Ibid.*, 5 and 189-190. On pp. 212-213, Ligeti notes certain names and data in the *Secret History* which seem to indicate that the work was not completed in 1240. The most important evidence concerns the
THE DATING OF THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS

ignored Naka’s important discovery, his rejection of the year 1264 cannot be readily accepted. The fact remains that whoever wrote the passage on Korea in § 274 must have done so after 1258, and the next year of the Rat after this date is 1264. As matters stand at present, 1264 appears to be the only candidate for the year of the Rat of the colophon. Unfortunately, this solution still leaves several important questions unanswered. They are:

1) Why—to echo Mostaert’s criticism of Hung’s theory—does the Secret History, written in 1264, end without mentioning at least the death of Ögödei? 2) Why was this work entitled simply

references to Ögödei and Tolui which I shall discuss later. The other data are, in my view, not conclusive. It is certainly strange to find the name “Kerel” in §§ 262 (YCPS, Hsū-chi 1.49b gives the faulty reading “Raral”) and 270 (ibid., Hsū-chi 2.21b) applied to the Hungarians before 1240. But does it apply to them, as Ligeti claims, and is it to be related to Bélá IV’s royal title (Kiraly, “King”? Pelliot, who devoted a long notice to “Kárl–Kálár” in his Notes sur L’histoire de la Horde d’Or (Paris, 1950), 115–162, stated with regard to the identity of this people: “la mention de «Corola» [of Plano Carpini—I.R.] parmi les peuples soumis par les Mongols me semble rendre possible qu’un peuple ait été désigné par les Mongols sous le nom de Kárál, et c’est de ce peuple qu’il pourrait s’agir originellement dans le couple «Kárl (=Kálár) et Bašjríd», appliqué ensuite aux Hongrois parce qu’on considérait que ceux-ci étaient identiques aux Bašjríd et qu’en Hongrie il y avait un kárl, le kiraly ou roi.” (Ibid., 141.) The Bašjríd are the Bajgit of the Secret History mentioned in the same passages with Kerel and also in §§ 239 and 274 (YCPS 10.15a and Hsū-chi 2.27b). As Pelliott, op. cit., 141–142, points out, the Mongols under Joči had already before the Western Campaign of 1221–1225 come in contact with people like the Bašjríd of the Urals (see the Secret History, § 236). Whether it was on this occasion that they also first came in contact with the “Kerel” people or learned about them it is impossible to say; they certainly did during the 1223 raid, when Jebe and Subotei, having crossed the Volga, beat the Bulgars of the Kama and the Qangli Turks (both these people are mentioned in §§ 262 and 270). Unfortunately, Pelliott did not elaborate on the identity of the original “Kerel” people. From his previous discussion he seems to relate them to the “Corola” (or “Korola,” see R.A. Skelton, T.E. Marston and G. Painter, The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation (New Haven and London, 1965), 104, 105) of Plano Carpini. But, as he himself says, it is difficult to see in the Corola any other people than the Karelians. It is perhaps under Pelliot’s influence that P. Pouca, Die Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen (Prag, 1956), 78, suggests that the “Kerel” of the Secret History may in fact be the Karelians. Clearly this problem calls for further research; however, we can safely assume that the Kerel, whatever their identity, together with the Bulgars and the Bašjríd, were known to the Mongols in Činggis Qan’s time and pose, therefore, no serious chronological problem. The other point raised by Ligeti is Činggis Qan’s appoint-
Činggis-qahan-u hujar ur or The Origin of Činggis Qahan 31—a
title appropriate only to the first part of the book? 3) Why is
the Great Diet at Köde’-aral not recorded in the "Annals of
Shih-tsu 世祖" (Qubilai) in the Yüan-shih, s.a. 1264?

In his article, Ledyard has dealt with the first question.32 In
reply to Mostaert’s objections, Ledyard states that the author of
the Secret History intended to confine himself only to the reigns
of Činggis and Ögödei; since he was going to end his narrative
with Ögödei’s reign, there was no compelling reason for him to
mention his death. Ledyard suggests an additional factor that
may account for the author’s silence on this point. There is a
passage in the Sheng-wu ch’ìn-cheng lu 聖武親征録 where the
mention of Činggis’ death s.a. 1227 appears to have been deleted;
only an indirect allusion to it is found in the entry on Ögödei’s
enthronement.33 This seems to confirm that the subject of Činggis’
death was taboo. Ledyard infers from it that Ögödei’s death
may have also been regarded as such, hence the lack of any re-

31 On the original title of the Secret History see N. Poppe in ZDMG 99
(1950), 276-277; Hung, 466-467. 484-485: Mostaert, ix-xii.
33 Sheng-wu ch’ìn-cheng lu 聖武親征録 (Hai-nung Wang Ching-an hsien-cheng
št-shu 項寧王靜安先生遺著 ed.), 79a.
ference to it in the *Secret History*. I cannot accept Ledyard's argument. Činggis' death was undoubtedly taboo, this is why the *Secret History* (§ 268) uses the euphemism *tenggeri-tür parbo* "he ascended to Heaven." If Ögödei’s death were also taboo, as it almost certainly was, we would expect to find it mentioned in the same way and with the date prefixed to it as in the case of Činggis'. The fact that any reference to Ögödei's death is absent in the *Secret History* is even more puzzling, in my opinion, if we assume, as Ledyard does, that the author intended to close its narrative with an account of Ögödei's reign. The reference to the *Sheng-wu ch’in-cheng lu* is not relevant.

The question of the inadequate title has so far been explained, rather unsatisfactorily, as the extension of the name of one section to the whole book. While this may be so, it seems unlikely that the author would have stretched the word *huja'ur* "origin" to such an extent as to cover also the reign of Ögödei. To overcome this difficulty, Ishihama Juntarō put forth the ingenious theory that the title *Činggis-qahon-u huja'ur* covered only the original book in 10 *chüan* and did not apply to the *Continuation* in 2 *chüan* containing the account of Ögödei, which, according to him, was added later. In his criticism of Ishihama, Hung correctly points out that the story of Činggis Qan extends well into the *Continuation*. Clearly the division of the book into chapters and sections was the work of the Ming editors and has nothing to do with the form of the original text. Ishihama's theory must be discarded, but the problem of the title remains.

The above two questions are important but not decisive; the third question, however, is. It is inconceivable, knowing what

---

341) YCPS, Hiro-chū 2.13a. In *Notes on Marco Polo*, I (Paris, 1959), 305. Pelliot points out that the *Secret History* and the *Sheng-wu ch’in-cheng lu* do not mention the death of Činggis Qan certainly because of a taboo and not, as claimed by Wang Kuo-wei, because there is a lacuna in our mss.

35) Hung, 484. Mostaert, xii, says: "Vraisemblablement, le chroniqueur mongol, au moment où il acheva sa chronique, n’a pas cru nécessaire de donner à son ouvrage un titre qui le couvrait en entier."

36) See Hung, 466-467, 468.

37) Ibid., 468.

38) Ibid., 453.
we know about Mongol customs in the thirteenth century, that a Yeke Qurilja, the convocation and business of which would have taken at least several months and required the participation of the emperor and the Mongolian elite, is not mentioned at all in the Yuan-shih, nor in any other source. This was, as we have seen, one of Pelliot’s major objections to Grousset’s thesis, as well as Ligeti’s argument against Hung’s. The objection becomes in fact overriding in the case of a Great Diet held in 1264, since the Annals of Kubilai are detailed and quite accurate. Moreover, we must not overlook the fact that the Great Diet of the year of the Rat was held at Köde’e-ral. This was the area where Čingiss Qan had his principal ordos and where the Great Diet that elected his successor was convoked. Any other diet held at Köde’e-ral, a locality consecrated as it were by its special associations with Čingiss Qan, would have no doubt been of a most solemn nature. 39 Not only are our sources completely silent on a Great Diet in 1264, they also indicate that Kubilai was in Shang-tu, his summer residence, between 27 March and 22 September, i.e. during the very period when the diet is supposed to have been held. 40 Hung, who noted this fact, claimed that Kubilai may still have attended an “unrecorded conference” in the seventh month (25 July–22 August) and suggested a “reconciliation” meeting at Köde’e-ral between the emperor and his rebel brother Ari Böge. 41 This is, however, excluded since in the imperial edict

39) On the 1227–1229 diet and the election of Ögedei see the Secret History, §269 (YCHS, Huk-chi 2.13b–14a); Sheng-wu, ch’iin-cheng tu, 79b: The History of the World-Conqueror by ’Ala’-ad-Din ’Ala’-Malik Juwayni, tr. by J.A. Boyle (Manchester, 1958), 178–191; Shari‘i, letopisi, II, tr. by Yu. P. Verkhovskii (Moscow-Leningrad, 1960), 18; Yuan-shih 2.1a-b and 146.3a. Cf. Munkuev, 72 and 188. It is from Rašid al-Din that we learn that the assembly was convened on the Kerülen at the place where Čingiss had his main camp. The other diet held at Köde’e-ral was the famous one that elected Möngke in July 1251. See the Yuan-shih 3.1b; L’Empire Mongol, 308. Cf. Yanai Wataru 永井周一, Mokushik enkyû 蒙古史研究 (Tokyo, 1930), 391–392, 408–416, 672. According to Yanai, 594, and Pelliot, Notes on Marco Polo, I, 322, Köde’e-ral (“Barren Island”) was situated at the confluence of the Senggür and the Kerülen. The Senggür (Senkur, Cenkir or Tsenkhir Gol) originates in the Kentei range and flows from north to south into the great bend of the Kerülen; it is now lost in sands and swamps.

40) Yuan-shih 5.18b–22b.

41) Hung, 491–492.
of 7 September 1264, issued a fortnight after the return and submission of Ari; Böge and his followers. Qubilai specifically refers to the reconciliation meeting as having taken place in Shang-tu.42

These three unsolved problems are together sufficient to cast serious doubts on the validity of the theories so far proposed, including the latest interpretations by Hung and Ledyard. On the basis of what precedes and after a further analysis of the available evidence, I have come to the following conclusions: a) no Great Diet is recorded in the Yüan-shih s.a. 1240, 1252 and 1264 simply because none was held in these years; b) the Great Diet at Kôde'-er'aral in the year of the Rat is the well-known diet that elected Ögödei, hence the date of the colophon must be, as Ting Ch'ien stated long ago, the 7th month of 1228; c) the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur, to which the colophon belonged, covered only the ancestry and life of Činggis Qan, and ended with his "ascension to Heaven" in the year of the Pig 1227 (i.e. with § 268 of the Secret History); d) the remaining portion of the book, consisting of a short account of Ögödei's life (§§ 269–281), was written after 1258 and was added to the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur in the early Ming period; e) the colophon was transposed on that occasion from the end of the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur to the end of the complete book (§ 282).

A question that will be immediately raised by the reader is: if the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur, i.e. §§ 1–268 of the present text of the Secret History, was written in 1228, how is it that two passages in it indicate, as shown by Grousset and Hung, a much later date for its composition? The question is very pertinent, since all the theories that favour a post-1228 year of the Rat are based on material and information found in the portion of the Secret History concerning Ögödei and, in two instances only (§§ 247 and 255), on data found in the part of the book dealing with Činggis Qan.43 Since we assume that the part concerning Ögödei

43) In a few instances in the section of the Secret History preceding Ögödei's enthronement, his name is followed by the titles qan (§ 255; YCPS, Hsü-chi 1.22a) or qahan (§ 198; YCPS 8.1a). Elsewhere in this section it is given correctly without epithets. As in the case of Činggis' name, these epithets were added after
is of a later date — certainly post-1258 — we must still dispose of §§ 247 and 255. If we subject the information contained in these two paragraphs to close scrutiny, we shall see, however, that they pose no problem.

The case of the occurrence of Hsüan-te fu in § 247, on which Hung's argument is based, is not conclusive. There is definite evidence showing that the area in question was popularly known as Hsüan-te fu already in the early 1230's, although its official elevation to this rank did not take place till much later. The name Hsüan-te fu occurs in fact in P'eng Ta-ya's 彭大雅 account in the Hei-Ta shih-lüeh 黑鞑事略." Now P'eng's mission to Mongol-occupied North China took place in 1232, but the present text of the Hei-Ta shih-lüeh, which includes also Hsü T'ing's 徐霆 account, was completed in 1237. Since there was no reason for Hsü T'ing to amend P'eng's text on this point, we can safely assume that Hsüan-te fu was a current name of this area in 1232.

As for § 255, to which Grousset drew attention, I agree that, while it records Chinggis' choice of Ögödei as his successor, it hints at the same time at the aspirations to leadership of the other sons' lineages. However, as Pelliot pointed out, it is not necessary to see in this an ex post facto knowledge of events. As a matter of fact, Tolu's ambitions to the throne were manifest already during the Great Diet of 1227-29. From both the Chinese and Persian sources we learn that at the time there was disagreement in the assembly, a section of which supported the

the compilation and must, in all likelihood, be ascribed to later copyists. See Notes on Marco Polo, I, 392. Cf. also L. Hambis in Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, II (Paris, 1960), 149.

44) Hei-Ta shih-lüeh 黑鞑事略 (Hai-nieng Wang Ching-an hsien-sheng i-shu ed.), 23a; cf. ibid. (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng 萬卷集成 ed.), 18. The "Hsüan-te chou 翰端州" in Wang Kuo-wei's commentary to the Hsi-yu chi 西遊記 (Hai-nieng Wang Ching-an hsien-sheng i-shu ed.), A, 10a-9-10, is therefore an error for "Hsüan-te fu 翰端府." I think that Hsüan-te chou was called Hsüan-te fu as early as 1228 because it was then the administrative headquarters (fsu) of Yeh-lu T'u-hua's 羽羅 誕花 army. See Meng-wu-erh shih-chi 49.2b-3a. This point, however, requires further investigation.

candidature of Tolui (then regent of the empire) against Ögödei's.\textsuperscript{46} This is not surprising, since the Mongol law of succession favoured, at least in principle, the youngest son.\textsuperscript{47} Tolui, as we know, was not elected, but his family re-asserted its claim after the death of Güyük and won the succession.\textsuperscript{48}

In view of this, the data in §§ 247 and 255 can no longer be used to support the theory that the Secret History was composed in 1252 or later. However, the removal of this obstacle does not, of course, prove automatically that in §§ 1–268 of the Secret History we have the original Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur. Is there any positive evidence to this effect? I think there is. It is a well-known fact that the Altan tobéi of bLo-bzān bšTan-'jin incorporates a large portion of the Secret History. We do not know how this text reached bLo-bzān bšTan-'jin, but evidently a copy of it (or of another work embodying it) still circulated in Mongolia in the second half of the fourteenth century. bLo-bzān bšTan-'jin used it extensively in compiling his chronicle: 233 of the 282 paragraphs of the Secret History are found in it.\textsuperscript{49} How-


\textsuperscript{48} Ligeti, 212, thinks that the section dealing with the problem of succession, which occupies most of §§ 56 and all of §§ 255 (YCPS, Hsiu-chi 1.20b–24b), is a later interpolation to justify the rise of the Tolui branch. He points out that a) this section is out of context; b) it is not found in the corresponding part of Rashid al-Din’s work; and c) it is missing altogether from the text of the Secret History preserved in the Altan tobéi of bLo-bzān bšTan-'jin. Ligeti is probably right. Assuming, however, that this section is not an interpolation, its contents are still plausible within the context of the 1228 Diet. Ligeti’s further remarks that the Secret History’s exaltation of Tolui and its portrayal of Ögödei as a weak personality, subordinated to Chagatai and indulging in a self-criticism unbecoming to a Great Khan, could hardly have been tolerated during Ögödei’s lifetime, are irresistible. This not only confirms that the section dealing with Ögödei’s reign is a post-1241 production, but also that both parts of the work issue from the pre-Tolui faction of the court.

\textsuperscript{49} See bLo-bzān bšTan-'jin, Altan tobéi: A Brief History of the Mongols, Scripta Mongolica I (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), xviii–xx; W. Heissig, Die Familien- und Kirchengeschichtsschreibung der Mongolen 1: 16.–18. Jahrhundert (Wiesbaden,
ever, they are all from the portion of the book dealing with Činggis' ancestry and life; not a single paragraph from the Secret History account of Ögödei is quoted in the Altan tobei. The last paragraph of the Secret History quoted in it is § 268. Had the account of Ögödei's reign been available to bLo-bzañ bsTan-'jin, he would no doubt have made use of it in the section of his chronicle devoted to Ögödei. Since he did not, we must conclude that the text used by him ended with the death of Činggis Qan. This fact was noticed by C. Z. Žamcarano who, in 1934, felt "compelled to assume that in Mongolia there was in circulation the complete text of the Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih, but possibly without the account of Ögödei's reign." We cannot discount the possibility that the text of the Secret History available to bLo-bzañ bsTan-'jin was a fragmentary one. The fact, however, that the section on Ögödei is missing in toto makes this unlikely. The more obvious explanation is that the work he used was a chronicle complete in itself, beginning with Činggis Qan's ancestry and ending with his "ascension to Heaven," in other words the Činggis-qahan-u hujā'ur.

Assuming this to be correct, I would propose the following reconstruction of events. I am well aware that this reconstruction is partly conjectural. However, I think that the relatively few well-documented facts at our disposal warrant a new interpretation along the lines suggested below.

1959), 57-60, 70-71; C. Z. Žamcarano, The Mongol Chronicles of the Seventeenth Century, tr. by R. Loewenthal (Wiesbaden, 1955), 57-88 (see, however, below, n.51); N. Poppe, "Stand und Aufgabe der Mongolistik", ZDMG 100 (1950), 69. For the transcription of the text of the Secret History found in the Altan tobei see Kozín, 321-367.

50) In the table of parallel passages p. 70 of Professor Heissig's work, the passage in Altan tobei, II, 77.9 (read 77.10) — 78.6, is listed as an adaptation of §273 of the Secret History. This is a lapsus, since the two passages are on entirely different topics. See Mostaert in Altan tobei, xvii-xviii.

51) The Mongol Chronicles, 88. Žamcarano, however, held the erroneous view that the text of the Secret History in the Altan tobei originated from a thirteenth century copy in Uighur script of the original text in the Chinese transcription. This theory has been criticized by Heissig, 57-58, and Ligeti, 197. Kozín's theory (Sukrovenno skazanie, 17-20), which is basically identical with Žamcarano's, that the Altan tobei text of the Secret History was reconstructed in the seventeenth century in Uighur script from the Chinese transcription, must likewise be dismissed. See Pelliot, "Deux lacunes," 4 ff.; Ligeti, 197-198.
The Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur was composed exactly one year after the death of Činggis Qan, in the seventh month (2 to 31 August) of the year of the Rat 1228, while all the Mongol princes and nobles were gathered at his former ordos to elect his successor. This would have been a most fitting occasion to evoke and record for posterity the dead khan's noble origins, his spectacular rise and magnificent achievements. At the Great Diet were present, of course, all the surviving companions and early followers of Činggis Qan: men intimately acquainted with him, who could be consulted on the minutest details concerning his family and career. Reciting and recording\(^52\) the imperial saga on such a momentous occasion must have been a solemn affair; and, once completed, the work could not fail to be regarded with awe and reverence, for therein were contained, together with the imperial genealogy and the record of Činggis' life, also many of his pronouncements and binding instructions.\(^53\) The story of Činggis Qan, as recorded in 1228, would begin with an account of the origins of his family and tribe, hence the words Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur prefixed to it. Upon completion of the work no new and comprehensive title was, apparently, considered necessary. Although by 1228 the Mongols had a script and, no doubt, some written records, this was a recent development. As they lacked a literary tradition, the concept of a suitable title for a book must have still been alien to them; therefore, to retain Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur as a label covering both the origin and life of Činggis Qan may not have struck them as inappropriate or inadequate.\(^54\) It is not even certain whether they actually referred

\(^52\) The epic was no doubt recited and sung before being committed to writing, and the numerous passages in alliterative, rhythmic prose (the oldest specimens of Mongolian "poetry") bear witness to this. Cf. Ligeti, 204, 209 and 213. It is, of course, hardly credible that, as Hung, 487, states, the writing of the book "might have taken only a few days."

\(^53\) For example, the detailed regulations concerning army organization and the duties of the Guard (§§ 202 ff.); and the instructions regarding warfare, hunting, rewards and punishments, and mutual responsibilities scattered throughout the work.

to the book by this title. The sacred chronicle of the Mongols kept in the treasury of the Il-khans was known as the Altan dehler or Golden (= Imperial) Book.55 The imperial chronicles in Mongolian compiled during the first half of the Yuan dynasty were called simply the Tobēiyan or History. The title Činggis-qahan-u huja’ur is not attested anywhere, except as the first line of our chronicle.

As far as we can ascertain, no more chronicles in Mongolian were written during the reigns of Ögödei, Güyük and Möngke (1229-1259). The Mongol generals were busy with military campaigns in Europe and Asia, while the court at Qara-qorum was torn by internal dissension and bitter rivalries. The house of Ögödei was disgraced and the leadership was transferred to the line of Tolui. A native chronicler writing in this troubled period would have found his task beset with difficulties of all kinds. It is only with the accession of Qubilai and his establishment in China that conditions became favourable for the resumption of historiographical activity. Credit for this must go to a large extent to Qubilai’s Chinese advisers who, from the very beginning of his reign, urged him to collect historical data on his illustrious predecessors.56 Qubilai would have had in his possession a copy of the Činggis-qahan-u huja’ur, but this chronicle, as we have seen, did not go beyond 1227. From the Yuan-shih we infer that he gave instructions that veritable records of the reigns of Tolui, Ögödei, Güyük and Möngke be compiled. The presentation to the Throne of these records by Sarman is registered s.o. 1288 and 1290.57 It is worth noting that neither of these references men-

55) On the Altan dehler see Hung, 471 and n.86. Cf. Ligeti, 262, 263. Although the Altan dehler was in all likelihood a series of historical compilations similar to the Tobēiyan of the Yuan emperors (on which see Hung, 465 ff.), we cannot exclude the possibility that this title was first given to the chronicle of Činggis Qan and his ancestors, i.e. to the Činggis-qahan-u huja’ur, a copy of which was certainly in the possession of the Il-khans. That this “sacred” text concerned Činggis Qan is explicitly stated in the Mu’izz al-Ansāb, where it is referred to as “the Golden Book of Čingiz-khan.” See W. Barthold, Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion (London, 1928), 44-45.
57) Yuan-shih 15.3a; 16.7a-b, 11a-b. Cf. Hung, 473-474.
tions the veritable records of Činggis Qan. Since the Činggis-
qahan-u kuja’ur would already have been available, there would,
of course, be no need to ask Sarman and his colleagues to compile
new records on him. These chronicles in Mongolian, including
parts of the Činggis-qahan-u kuja’ur, were also translated and
revised by the Bureau of Dynastic History (Kuo-shih yün 国史
院) and used for the compilation of the Wu-ch’ao shih-lü 五朝
實録, the veritable records of the first five reigns in Chinese,
which were compiled and presented to Temür Qa’an (Ch’eng-
tsaung 成宗; r. 1295–1307) on 5 December 1303.58

Historiographical activity continued under the following
emperors. By the middle of the fourteenth century a considerable
body of historical records on the Mongol dynasty existed in both
languages. It is to be assumed that more than one copy of the
Činggis-qahan-u kuja’ur in Uighur script were kept in the palace
archives, and that they were placed in that section of the ar-
chives, which was accessible only to members of the imperial
family and a few high-ranking Mongol officials.59 The Činggis-
qahan-u kuja’ur was no doubt included in the historical records
collectively known as the Tobčiyan, and these, we know, were
regarded as “extremely secret” documents.60

When the dynasty was overthrown and the Mongols expelled
from China, the Činggis-qahan-u kuja’ur was, presumably, among

58) Yüan-shih 21.11a; Hung, ibid. We do not know when the Bureau of
Dynastic History began the compilation of the veritable records in Chinese. How-
ever, this work must have progressed pari passu with the compilation of the
Mongolian historical records. In the Yüan-shih 14.11b, under the date 11 January
1287, we find recorded the emperor’s approval to Sarman’s request that the veri-
table records from T’ai-tsu (Činggis Qan) down, which were being compiled
by the Bureau of Dynastic History, should be translated into Mongolian in the
Uighur script, and that they should be put into final from only after the emperor
had read them. See Hung, 470. I believe that this measure was designed to enable
Qubilai, who could not read Chinese, to check that the veritable records in
Chinese did not contain information which the court was unwilling to divulge.

59) See Pankratov, 11.

state unambiguously that this work contained historical accounts “from T’ai-tsu
down”. See W. Fuchs, “Analecta zur mongolischen Übersetzungsliteratur der
Yüan-Zeit”, MS II (1946), 59, 60.
the treasured possessions carried away by the fleeing court. This is only a conjecture, but it provides a reasonable clue to the existence and preservation of this text in Mongolia. Unfortunately, the vicissitudes of the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur in Mongolia are not known. One thing we know for certain: it survived several centuries of political and social turmoil, and thanks to the learned bLo-bzañ bsTan'-jin it has eventually come down to us. At least one manuscript copy of the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur was, however, left behind. The circumstances in which this copy came to light in the early Ming period are also not known. Pankratov has advanced the interesting theory that it was found by the officials who were processing the documents recovered from the palace archives, and that they may have registered it under the random title Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih, or Secret History of the Yüan Dynasty, since it was discovered in the “closed” section of these archives. I think that Pankratov is correct about the provenance, but, in my opinion, what the officials found in the Mongol archives was actually a copy of the Tobëiyän. The Chinese officials knew well that the Tobëiyän was a secret history of the Yüan, hence the appropriate title under which they registered it. The work may or may not have been a complete one; it certainly included the Činggis-qahan-u huja'ur and at least the record of Ögödei’s reign. However, from the words “Yüan-ch’ao” of the title we can infer that the copy that the officials examined probably covered several reigns.

The commission presided over by Sung Lien 宋濂, which hastily compiled the Yüan-shih in 1369, did not consult any of the historical documents in Mongolian rescued from the archives, with the exception perhaps of those concerning the reign of the last emperor Toyon Temür (Shun-ti 順帝; r. 1333–1367). These precious records were scattered, destroyed or otherwise lost in the few decades after the founding of the Ming. Only one or two escaped obliteration thanks to a lucky chance. After the national restoration the Ming court had still to cope with the Mongol menace on its northern borders. In order to deal more effective-

61) Pankratov, 11. See below, n.64.
ly with the troublesome Mongols, the government, early in the Hung-wu 洪武 period, felt the need of training a number of Chinese in their manners and customs, as well as in their language. Since no practical manual for the study of Mongolian was available (during the Yüan the Chinese were expressly forbidden to learn this language), a team of scholars of the College of Literature (Han-lin yüan 廉林院) was entrusted with the task of compiling one. While working on a Sino-Mongolian vocabulary (the Hua-i i-yü 华夷譯語) they looked for suitable texts to use as readers. Among the Mongolian books available to them was the Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih. Unfortunately, by this time (early 1380's) the manuscript had apparently suffered some damage. The extent of the damage cannot be ascertained since we do not know in what state it was originally found in the palace archives; it seems, however, that all that was left now of the former Toböyan consisted of A: the Činggis-qahan-u hujä'ur, parts of which were missing or out of order, and B: the incomplete record of Ögedei's reign. These two texts, nevertheless, formed a fairly continuous narrative; they contained a good deal of background material on Mongol history and customs, and were, above all, an extremely rich and valuable source from the linguistic point of view. The compilers of the College of Literature presumably decided, therefore, to piece them together into one book. There was, however, an obstacle: the colophon of A which, if retained in its place, obviously would have broken the continuity of the book. The idea of removing it altogether—the easiest way out—may have been repugnant to them; perhaps, not knowing to which year of the Yüan it referred to, they thought that it could apply also to B. Whatever the case, they chose to retain it, but since it was a colophon, they had to transpose it from the end of A to the


63: Cf. Hung, 483. As is known, the Altan tobö text of the Secret History (see above, n.49) gives often a more extensive version of the same event related in the Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih. It seems likely that at least part of this additional material was in the original Činggis-qahan-u hujä'ur. See Heissig, 57, and Ligeti, 196, 199 ff.
end of the book. For the latter they kept the title Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih, which they probably took to be the Chinese translation of the lost Mongolian title. They then prepared a free and summarized translation of the whole work into vernacular Chinese. They presumably also had one or more copies made of the Mongolian text (A+B) in Uighur script. In the following years the Mongolian text was transcribed with Chinese characters and provided with interlinear glosses. The team of transcribers and translators did not at this stage work on A and B but on the copy or copies of the unified text. There is definite evidence that the manuscript they used differed in a few instances—no doubt through copyists’ faults—from that used by the authors of the early summarized translation. The other textbook which was being compiled by the College of Literature, the Hua-i i-yü, consisting of a Sino-Mongolian glossary and twelve official documents to serve as reader, was completed and published first (1389). The Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih, a long and difficult text, kept transcribers and translators occupied for several more years. In the course of their work, these scholars developed a more sophisticated system of transcription than the one used in the Hua-i i-yü. We owe to Professor Ch'en Yüan 陈垣 a detailed description of these innovations in technique. They also divided the book, rather arbitrarily, into chapters and sections, adding at the end of each section the corresponding passages from the summarized translation. Furthermore, they rendered the title Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih into Mongolian (in Chinese transcription), thus unwittingly causing several later generations of scholars to believe that the original Mongolian title of the work was Mongyol-un ni'ua

64) Hung, 485, and Mostaert, xi, are of the opinion that the title Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih may have been given to the book by these early translators. Although I prefer Pankratov’s theory, both interpretations are equally possible.
65) See Pelliot, “Deux lacunes,” 6-7; Mostaert, viii-ix, n.4, xi. Although the differences between the summarized version and the text in transcription discussed by these scholars can be explained as omissions and mistakes due to scribes, a detailed comparison of the two texts still remains to be done. Cf. Ligeti, 196.
tobē'a'an. While all the Mongolian manuscripts were lost, either through negligence or destroyed because no longer needed, the Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih transcribed and translated into Chinese survived owing to its inclusion in the Yung-lo ta-tien. The subsequent history of the text is well known thanks to the painstaking work of Professor Hung, and we need not dwell on it.

One point which I have not taken up in my investigation is the problem of the stylistic unity of the Secret History. If this work is, as I maintain, composed of two distinct texts written by different authors and separated by a time gap of at least thirty years, there might be noticeable differences in language and literary style between the two parts, i.e., between §§ 1-268 and 269-281. This is a problem that can be tackled only by a competent Mongolist, which I cannot claim to be. An investigation of this kind may yield interesting results, but I doubt whether it will be conclusive one way or the other. There is always the possibility, not to say the likelihood, that each text was the outcome of a joint effort (this may explain why no author is mentioned in the colophon), and that its style reflects an ancient folk narrative tradition which was crystallized for the first time in writing with the Ćinggis-qahan-u huja'ur. This text may have then served as a model for later historical compilations, including of course the account of Ogödei. In this case even if stylistic differences were detected, it would be an extremely hazardous task to draw conclusions from them.

68) Hung, 483-485.
70) Pankratov, 6, has already suggested that the composition of the Secret History may be the work of several people. On the question of authorship see Ligeti, 206-209.