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HEAVEN, EARTH AND THE MONGOLS IN THE TIME OF
ČINGGIS QAN AND HIS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS
(ca. 1160-1260) – A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Igor de Rachewiltz

Abbreviations
ar. = Arabic  mo. = Written (Script) Mongolian
chin. = Chinese  pers. = Persian
eng. = English  pmo. = Preclassical Mongolian
lat. = Latin  tu. = Old Turkic
mmno. = Middle Mongolian

The religious beliefs of the 'steppe' Mongols in the 12th-13th century, i.e. before a large number of them settled in their vast dominions in Western and Central Asia, and in China, have so far not been the subject of a thorough, in-depth investigation.1 The reason is that for a comprehensive survey it would be necessary to collect data scattered in a large number of sources (Mongol, Chinese, Persian, Armenian and Latin) requiring close scrutiny and much interpretation. In the present paper I shall only deal with the conception of Heaven (Tengri) and Earth (Tujar, Elügen ~ Öögen) as held by Činggis Qan (? 1162-1227) and his three immediate successors, viz. Öögelei (r. 1229-41), Güyüg (1246-48) and Möngke (1251-59).2

* For assistance in obtaining source material not available in Canberra I am much obliged to my friends John R. Krueger of Bloomington, Indiana, and Yuan-Chu Lam of Wellesley College, Mass. I wish to express my sincere thanks also to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, and the late Professor Mario Geut for supplying new photographs of the letter of Güyüg to Pope Innocent IV, and for the kind permission to publish them.

1 Cf., e.g., W. Heissig, The Religions of Mongolia, translated by G. Samuel (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 6-23, devoted to a brief and rather unsatisfactory survey of Mongol shamanism from the 12th and 13th centuries to modern times; and P. Ratchnevsky, Činggis-khan. Sein Leben und Wirken (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1983), pp. 137-142. See the English translation by Th. N. Haiming: Genghis Khan. His Life and Legacy (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991) [CK], pp. 154-159. Ratchnevsky presents a perceptive sketch of Činggis' religious beliefs as an important facet and integral part of his personality and behaviour without, however, elaborating the subject. See also below, n. 75, for further studies.

2 For the concept of Heaven among the early Mongols see the references contained in J.-P. Roux, "Tängri. Essai sur le ciel-dieu des peuples altaïques", Revue...
In the case of Чингис Qan we have two important contemporary sources. The so-called Secret History of the Mongols (Mongol-im n'uča tobičyan) [MNT], a native epic chronicle mostly devoted to the life and gesta of the conqueror, compiled soon after his death, is of course a document of prime importance. There is also a short Chinese account of the Mongols and their customs written in 1221 by the Southern Sung envoy Chao Hung 趙弘, who was charged with an official mission to Muqali (1170-1223), the Mongol commander-in-chief and governor general in North China. His report, entitled Meng-Ta pei-lu 蒙顚備錄 [A Full Account of the Mongol-Tatars] [MTPL], is a collection of brief notices on various aspects of Mongol life, culture and personalities based on information gathered during Chao Hung’s stay in Peking from Chinese-speaking members of Muqali’s entourage. Although much of the information is thus second-hand, the account as a whole is still a valuable source.

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3 See The Secret History of the Mongols For the First Time Done into English out of the Original Tongsue and Provided with an Exegetical Commentary by Francis Woodman Cleaves, I (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1982) [SHMC], and SHMR.

4 For this important personage see I. de Rachewiltz, Hok-lam Chan, Hsiao Chi-ch’ing and P.W. Geier, eds, In the Service of the Khan. Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yan Period (1290-1300), Asiatische Forschungen 121 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1993) [LSK], pp. 3-8.


Of the two leading Persian sources, Juvaini’s Ta’rikh-i Jâhân-Gulâ‘î [History of the World-Conqueror] and Rašîd al-Dîn’s Ğami‘ al-tavarîk [Collection of Chronicles], the former was written some thirty years after Chinggis’ death, and the latter (i.e. the section concerned with the conqueror’s life) about seventy years after his death. Rašîd al-Dîn (ca. 1247-1317) had access to early Mongol sources that were not available to Juvaini (1226-83), but Juvaini had the advantage of having lived much closer to the events he describes and, in many instances, having been an eye-witness. Discounting certain obvious biases and omissions in his work both sources are of immense value to the historian.6

For Öögen Qayan, beside the relevant sections in the MNT, HWC and CC, there is a Chinese source of prime importance, viz. the Heti-Ta shih-lüeh 黑顚事略 [A Summary of Matters (Relating to) the Black Tatars] [HTSL] by the Sung envoy Peng Ta-ya 彭大雅, who carried out a diplomatic mission to the Mongol court in 1232, with additional notes by another Sung envoy, Hûi Tîng 徽庭, who went to the Mongol on an analogous mission in 1235-36. The latter is responsible for the final editing of the text (in 1237) as we have it today. His valuable comments enrich Peng’s informative notices on numerous aspects of the government, customs, and the material and spiritual life of the Mongols. The topographical arrangement is similar to that of the MTPL. It is a precious source.

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6 Juvaini’s work has been translated into English by J.A. Boyle: The History of the World-Conqueror by Ala-ad-Din Aṭa-Malik Juvaini, I-II (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956) [HWC]. Rašîd al-Dîn’s history of Chinggis Qan and his ancestors, which is Part 2 of Volume I of the Collection of Chronicles, is available in two Russian versions published in 1888 and 1952 respectively (see HWC, p. xliv), and in the recent English translation of W.M. Thackston: Rashidaddin Farshid, Jami‘u’t-tawarik: Compendium of Chronicles, I-III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1998-99), II [CC].

7 On the HTSL see Pelliot 1929, pp. 167-169. It is known that N.C. Munkuev completed his annotated translation of the HTSL before his death in 1985; however, its present whereabouts are unknown. The German translation by E. Haenisch et al., richly annotated, is found in CG, pp. 85-226. Cleaves’ English translation of the HTSL is also unpublished. See Wright 1998, p. 289. As for the HTSL, references to the original Chinese text are to the critical edition by Wang Kuo-wei, op. cit., ts’e 37, and to CC.
For Gūyīg Qayän we are served even better. Beside the relevant sections of HWC and CC, we have the report on the Mongols (Historia Mongalorum) by the Franciscan friar John of Pian di Carpine (d. 1252) who went on a mission to Gūyīg’s court in 1245-47. His mission elicited a reply from Gūyīg to Pope Innocent IV, written in Persian in November 1246 and sealed (twice) with the imperial seal; there is a Latin version of the text. All these documents contain important information relevant to our enquiry.

As for Gūyīg’s successor Mūŋke Qayän, we are truly fortunate: not only do we have the accounts in HWC and CC as with the previous qan, but we also possess the exhaustive relation of Friar John’s Flemish confèrre William of Rubruck, whose eventual journey to the Mongol court and back (1253-55) is recorded in his Itinerarium. This, a detailed report for King Louis IX of France (St. Louis), is a true mine of information on the Mongols; for wealth of data and ac-

8 For Raﬁd al-Dīn see also The Successors of Genghis Khan, translated from the Persian of Rashīd al-Dīn by J.A. Boyle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) [SGK], which covers the reigns of Ogödei to Qubilai (inclusive). On Friar John and his report see now Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, Storia dei Mongoli, a cura di P. Daffinà, C. Leonardi, M.C. Lungarotti, E. Menestò, L. Petech (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, 1989) [SMF]. Regarding the parallel account of Friar John’s companion Benedict the Pole edited by C. de Brida, i.e. the Historia Tartarorum or Tartar Relation, I have not referred to it since it does not offer anything new to our investigation. See R.A. Shelton, Th. E. Marston, G.D. Painter, The Velindan Map and the Tartar Relation (New Haven: London: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 54-101 (Latin text and English translation by G.D. Painter). Constant references to it are found in P. Daffinà’s commentary to SMF.


Undoubtedly, some additional information may be found in the works of other Persian authors such as Jūzjānī, and in Chinese sources such as the surviving texts of funerary inscriptions (shen-tao pi) 神道碑, etc.). However, for the purpose of our preliminary inquiry the above sources may be deemed sufficient.

The information on the early Mongol rulers’ concept of Heaven and Earth obtained from the sources listed above has led to certain conclusions which are summarized below. Even though the picture may not be complete, insofar as Heaven is concerned I think we can feel reasonably confident that it reflects the true state of beliefs at the time.

We should point out at the outset that, as with other peoples and cultures, the Mongols used the word ‘heaven’ to designate also the physical heaven, i.e. the sky, as well as the supreme power identified with it, even though they had another term for ‘sky’ (pno. oytary(š)); mno. hoqtary(š); mno. oytary(š)). Since we are concerned here only with Heaven as a supranatural entity, we have not taken the firmament into consideration. When specifically referring to Heaven and Earth regarded as supranatural entities, the Mongol terms are capitalized.

I. Heaven

1. The Name of Heaven

The name of Heaven as it appears in the earliest native source, the Secret History of the Mongols, is Tenggeri ~ Tenggiri, which represents the Middle Mongolian pronunciation of the word written tegri (= tengri) in

kaho 宗力學報 (Journal of Oriental Studies) 26 (1956), pp. 186-228, for a critical review of Ts'ao's contribution. For the legend of Gökül's seal see above, p. 9.

13 For this word see I. de Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks on Written Mongolian", in Chang Chün-I 張鈞逸 (ed.), International Symposium on Mongolian Culture (Taipei: 許tatus未tian-hui 總署委員會, 1993), pp. 123-136; SFM(AR), p. 412. According to N. Poppe, 'in Middle Mongolian the word skyri or tegri did not denote the sky or firmament over the earth. Sky in the primary sense of the word is denoted by the word köte, corresponding to the Turkic kök; as, for example, in the Dictionary Mukaddimat al-Adab' (The Mongolian Monuments in kFags-pa Script, second edition translated and edited by John R. Krueger, Götinger Asiatische Forschungen 8 [Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1957] [MM], p. 69). Poppe ignores mno. hoqtary(š), and the fact that the word köte 'sky' in the Mukaddimat al-Adab is simply an isolated borrowing from Turkic, the regular meaning of the word in Middle Mongolian being 'blue'. For tu. kök 'sky', see G. Doerfer, Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen, 1-IV (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1963-75) [TMEN], II, pp. 578-579.

Uighur-Mongol script, i.e. in Preclassical Mongolian. It is, of course, the same word as tu. tegri 'the physical sky; the deified sky: Heaven as an impersonal deity’. Much has been written on this word and its possible etymology, and we need not go into it.14 In Classical and Modern Literary Mongolian we find the two forms tegri and tegrii, of which the former is, strictly speaking, the only correct one, the latter being a misreading of tegri (the letter n read as e) consecrated by usage or, rather, misusage.15

2. The Attributes of Heaven

i. Above or On High (mno. de'ere; pno., mno. degere), to be understood also as Supreme, of course, by being above us and being all-encompassing. Cf. tu. izaš tegri 'heaven on high' (ED, p. 280b) - definitely a supreme power since it 'decreed' (yarlqadi); chin. shang-tien 上天 ‘supreme Heaven’.16 The MNT, § 1, opens with a mention of de'ree Tenggeri, glossed in Chinese as shang-tien, the same expression occurring again in § 177, 199. In the first instance, it is associated with the decreing or pre-ordaining of destiny (yaya, see below, 3.1); in the other two, with the bestowing of protection (he'tel, see below, 3.11). In § 177, Heaven is mentioned jointly with Earth (Qatar); and another key expression, medetigel 'let them decide', is applied to both powers. Interestingly enough, for the period under investigation the designation Above or On High for Heaven, so common in Old Turkic texts, is virtually lim-


half of the formula opens the legend on Güyük's seal (lines 1-2), the content of which is itself an order of submission: (1) mongke Tengri-yin (2) käčändür yeke Monggol (3) tulas-an dalai-yin (4) gany jearly yi bulya (5) iring-dür türbēst (6) böstrettüü ayunpəy 'By the strength of Eternal Heaven, Order of the ruler of the Great Mongol Nation and of [all within] the seas (= the whole world). When it (i.e. the Order) reaches the subject and the rebel (=- not yet submitted) people, let them respect and fear it' 19 In the text of the very letter to which the seal is affixed, the 'strength of (Eternal) Heaven' is referred to twice, the 'order of Heaven' six times, and 'Eternal Heaven' and 'Heaven's court three times.20 For the period with which we are concerned, besides the above two documents, the Latin version of Güyük's letter, and other official communications from the Mongol authorities to the Papacy (also in their Latin translations) containing the invocatio, the texts of at least nine documents have survived which contain the same full or partial formula in its Chinese version.21 Many more are extant in both Mongolian (in 'Phags-pa script) and Chinese dating from the period of Qubilai Qayan (r. 1260-94) to the end of the Yuan dynasty, the last one being issued in 1363.22 as

16 (1953), pp. 23, 44, n. 6. The Chinese expression fu-yin (福祿) is usually taken as a binome meaning simply 'Fortune' or 'Good Fortune', however, the literal meaning of this expression is actually 'Good Fortune (and) Protection', or 'Fortunate Protection' (protection bienheureuse). Cf. A. Mostaert and F.W. Cleaves, Les Lettres de 1289 et 1305 des liens de Arjun et Oseïà à Philippe le Bel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962) [LAI], pp. 21-22, Chavannes 1908, pp. 369, 373, 376. I think that this expression was coined for the express purpose of rendering the two concepts implicit in the Mongolian term su(u), and to translate it simply as '(Good) Fortune' diminishes its force.


20 Cf. MP, pp. 16-21; Boyle in PE, pp. 213-214.

21 I.e., in the Chinese vernacular (pái-hua 白話) employed by the Mongol chancellors. See YBPY, nos. 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19; fu-hu 12. Arjun 1, no. 3; Chavannes 1904, nos. 5, 6; 1908, no. 40. For the Latin version of Güyük's letter and the other documents in Latin see above, n. 9.

22 See YBPY, nos. 21 (no. 20)-97 (no. 93); fu-hu 1, no. 4, 5, 8; fu-hu 2, no. 4, 5; iryan 1956, pp. 225-226; Chavannes 1904, nos. 7, 9, 10, 13; 1905, p. 40; 1908, nos. 41, 46-47, 50, 52, 54-55, 57-58; G. Devéria, "Notes d'épigraphie mongolino-chinoise", Journal Asiatique 8 (1896), pp. 396 (no. 3), 441 (no. 5); MM, Texts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; E. Haenisch, Steuergerechtsgesetze der chinischen Klöster unter der Mongolenherrschaft (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1940), pp. 58, 59, 60 (cf. MM, p. 137, no. 52); P. Pelliot, "Un resert mongol en écriture 'phags-pa', in G. Tucci, Tibeten Painted Scrolls, I-II (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949), I, pp. 623; L. Lisetti, Monuments in écriture 'phags-pa', Pièces de chancellerie en transcription chinoise, Monumenta linguae Mongolicae collecta 3 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kauda, 1972) [MEL], p. 21 et passim; Chao-na-su-su 趟絡斯 (1009), Po-su-su tao ho Mong-kü yii wen-hiien 八思巴字和蒙古古文 [Documents in 'Phags-pa Script and Mongol Language], I-II (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1990-91), II: Wen-hiien hui-chi 文獻叢集 [Collection of Documents], p. 8 et passim; D. Tumurtaghh with the collaboration of G. Cegeduari, eds., The Mongolian Monuments in 'Phags-pa Script, Transliter
well as three in Uighur-Mongol script issued by the Mongol rulers of Iran and by a Mongol prince in China. To these we must add the inscribed tablets of authority or pai'tas (mmo. gere'e; pmo. gereg; chin. p'ai-tsa 項牌) in Phags-pa script and in Uighur-Mongolian script in which the initial formulae 'By the strength of Heven' and 'By the strength of Eternal Heven' are also employed. This initial formula and its variations have been the subject of much investigation.

Both môngke and kicçi(n) are Mongol borrowsings from tu. bānggī ~ mônggū and kicçī respectively;25 and the Mongol expression Trngrī-yin kicçiñ-dūr is a calque of tu. Tāngrī kicçiñ (or, better, kicçin) 'grâce au pouvoir du Ciel';26 however, Tāngrī is seldom qualified as 'Eternal' in genuine Turkic texts, in which the other epithet used, besides izzā, is kōk 'Blue'.27 On the

scripture, Word-Index and Bibliography with an Introduction, Monuments in Mongolian Language 2 (Ulan Bator: Anxzdugar Xevêlê, 2002), p. 1 and passim, Yêshi Mei-piao in Yüan shrih lun-trang 元史論斷 3 (1986), p. 232; etc. Further occurrences of the initial formula in Chinese may be found in the great administrative compendia and other texts of the Yuan period; however, for our purpose the above references will suffice.


28 See TEMEN, nos. 1744, 1662.


28 The epithet m(t)'üngg'ü qualifying t'üngg'i appears in the opening line of Güyög's letter to the Pope, written in Arabic-Persian script but in the Turkic language. However, the initial formula of this document is nothing but a literal Turkic rendering of that found in the first four lines of Güyög's seal appended on it. See MP, pp. 22-23. Cf. de Rachewiltz 1985, pp. 274-275. As for kōk, it is a specifically Turkish designation of Heaven, the word signifying in Turkish both 'sky' and 'blue' (see TEMEN, no. 1677), eventually extended to the Turks themselves (Kōk Türk, see T. Tekin, A Grammar of Orkhan Türkic, Uralic and Altaic Series 69 [Bloom-

other hand, the concept of 'strength' (kicçī) is central to the Weltanschauung of the ancient Turks. See below, 3.ii.

iii. Powerful or Mighty (mmo., pmo., mo. erkeñ). This is a rare epithet occurring only once (§ 113) in the MNT. However, the expression Erkeñ Trngri (cf. eng. 'Almighty God') is found in other ancient texts.29

3. The Roles of Heaven

i. Heaven as Maker of Destiny. All individual creatures have a destiny (mmo. jayañ[a]); pmo., mo. jaya[a][n])29 which is determined by Heaven, and no one (whether an animal or a human being) can escape it. This is clearly enunciated in the first paragraph of the MNT where it is stated that the blue-grey wolf (börte činöö), the totemic ancestor of the Mongols, was 'born with a destiny (ordained) by Heaven Above', and it is reiterated in §§ 65, 111, 113, 197, 201 (where Čeggis Qan's 'destiny from Heaven' is confirmed), 194 and 248 (where the 'destiny of the Mongols' is mentioned),


30 In the MNT, the term jaya[a]n(i) is regularly rendered into Chinese as mìng 要 the 'will of Heaven'; fate and only once as chī-yín 氣運 'luck, fate' - both definitions expressing the concept of 'destiny', but the former more specifically a destiny ordained from Above rather than mere luck. See E. Haezisch, Wörterbuch zu Mongol un Nüce Tobečan (Yüan-chüan pi-shih). Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1939; repr. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1962) [WMT], p. 87. For a perceptive discussion on the Chinese concept of mìng see M. Granet, La pensée chtoun (Paris: A. Michel, 1934), p. 404ff. (see also ibid., p. 605 [Index]).

31 As shown by other investigators, and as clearly demonstrated by the MNT, the early Mongols firmly believed that to be endowed with a destiny preordained by Heaven (and Earth) was not the prerogative of single individuals, but a quality shared by all creatures. See SHMR, p. 225.
and 281. In § 111, the destiny of birds is mentioned twice, and in § 281 that of wild animals that are ‘born with (their) destiny from Heaven and Earth (Tenggeri Qajar). This point is worth noting. Although Heaven has a pre-eminent position in determining destiny, Earth is involved too; indeed, in §§ 113 and 248 both powers are mentioned with regard to Činggis and to the Mongols. We shall have more to say about the role of Earth later on. In §§ 19-22 of the MNT we encounter the much-discussed story of Alan Qo’a and her supernatural conception of three of her five children, one of whom, Bodoncar, will become the direct ancestor of Temujin, the future Činggis Qan. Alan Qo’a calls these three supernaturally-born children ‘the sons of Heaven’ (Tenggeri-yin k’o’öi). Thus, the story would seem to indicate that Heaven’s participation in the affairs of man is so close that in exceptional circumstances it can intervene personally, as it were, rather than act on them as an impersonal force. This reminds us, of course, of the miraculous births of heroes in the legends and myths of other cultures. The entire anecdote, which includes the episode of the five arrow-shafts (§ 22), smacks of cultural contamination and I would not draw general conclusions from it. However, I think that the expression ‘son(s) of Heaven’ used by Alan Qo’a should be understood in the sense of ‘divine’, like tu. ṭuŋri tāg ‘Heaven-like’ and ṭuŋri ṭolmīs ‘Heaven-born’, and chin. ṭu-čen ‘son of Heaven’ – all regular designations of a Heaven-appointed ruler. Alan Qo’a herself states further on in the poetical passage in § 21 that when they (i.e. the three sons in question) become the rulers (qut) of all, then the common people will understand.32 This entire episode can simply be taken as another example of Heaven’s role in determining the future course of events, hence of destiny-making (of which the kingsmaker’s function is an integral part), without further elaboration. It follows that the ruler thus appointed can only be the executor of Heaven’s will or command, and that no one can act except in accordance with Heaven’s order. Güyük’s famous letter to Innocent IV puts this article of faith in unequivocal terms. I shall quote the relevant passages, rendering pers. xuddāi ‘God (= Allāh)’ as ‘Heaven’ throughout since, as rightly pointed out by Pelliot, the Persian term is ‘une traduction un peu infidèle à l’original mongol qui avait certainement tāngri, le Ciel (divinisé).’

1. ‘You (= the great Pope) have sent words (saying): “Thou hast taken all the lands of the Mājar and the Christians; I am astonished. What was their crime? Tell us.” These words of thine We have not understood ei-

32 See SHMK(R), pp. 4-5, 263-264.
33 MP, p. 20, n. 4. In translating the passages of Güyük’s letter, I follow on the whole J.A. Boyle’s English version (PE, pp. 213-214), taking into account, however, Pelliot’s interpretation and comments (MP, pp. 16-21). For ar. Allāh = pers. xuddāi = tu. ṭuŋri = mo. tengeri see below, n. 69.

34 As noted by Pelliot (op. cit., p. 20, n. 4), xuddāi qadim corresponds to pmo. mōngke tenger ‘Eternal Heaven’.
35 In the original Mongol text of the letter, this expression was undoubtedly mōngke tengerin kūčin-dūr. Cf. ibid., p. 21, nn. 2, 4. Pers. qovvat = pmo. kūčin[n] = lat. fortitudo. Cf. the Latin version of the Güyük’s letter, ibid., pp. 11-12. The term potestas is used in the letter of Eljigidei to Louis IX, see Voegelin 1940-41, p. 390.
36 Tu. jarly. For this word see TMEN, nos. 1292, 1889. It is another Mongol borrowing from Turkic.
The *HTSL*, 11a, reports that 'with regard to things that they (= the Mongols) wish to carry out, they say, "Heaven has caused it to be so (i.e., has willed it)." As for things that have already been done by other men, they say, "Heaven knows it." There is not a single thing which they do not attribute to Heaven. From the Mongol ruler (down) to his people, there is none who is not so.' Ten years before this, Chao Hung (*MTPL, 17a*) had already remarked that with the Mongols 'every undertaking must be in the name of Heaven.' Describing the Mongols' beliefs, John of Pian di Carpine declares that 'they believe in one God (unum Deum), Whom they believe to be the maker of all things visible and invisible; and they believe Him to be the dispenser of all good things in this world, as well as the hardships.'

In his simple 'profession of faith', Môngke (as reported by Friar William) states that 'We Mongols believe that there is but one God (unus Deus) by Whom (per quem) we live and by Whom we die, and towards Him we have an upright heart (rectum cor). The 'one God' is, of course, Heaven — the 'maker of all things' and master of one's destiny (by Whom we live and by Whom we die').

Turning now to the religious beliefs of the ancient Turks, Heaven's will/command/decree (yarly) is well attested in their inscriptions where, 'owing to some connotations of graciousness,' it acquires the meaning of 'grace' — retaining, however, all its original force and significance. It is, indeed, 'by the grace (= will) of Heaven (täпр yarlī[a]q[a]day qātān)' that the great events in history and in the life of individuals take place, from the appointment of high officials, the elevation of a qawan and the governing of the nation, to the conquering of enemy lands, founding an empire and gaining the means of overcoming all difficulties on the way to success.

... from all these early references we can gain a fairly clear picture of this particular role of Heaven. The premise is that single individuals may have strength, but not enough to achieve success in war and in other great enterprises. Hence, their strength and power must be increased (nemekdey) by Heaven and Earth or, more precisely, *by the strength of Heaven and Earth*. In § 224 of the *MNT* Cīnggis Qan says, 'By the strength of Eternal Heaven, (my) strength and power (gūt' uqwa) have been increased by Heaven and Earth.' The 'increase of one's strength (and power)' through the agency of Heaven and Earth — one of the recurrent themes in the *MNT* — is a *sine qua non* for success, but the acquisition of this indispensable additional...
strength is only possible if one is fortunate enough 'to be protected' (ihe'ekde-) by Heaven and Earth. The individual who has thus been favoured by them is regarded and, indeed, referred to as 'fortunate' (mm. sutu, suati; pmo., no. suatu, suati), insofar as he is endowed with Good Fortune (mm. xatu, pmo., no. suwu). The measure of success achieved is the best indication of the extent of one's Good Fortune. There is, of course, no greater Good Fortune in the Mongol society of that time than that which enables a clan or tribal chief to conquer other tribes and peoples and to become the supreme leader (qan, qa'an).

Although it is nowhere specified in the MNT, we may assume by inference that such Good Fortune is part and parcel of one's destiny (laj'a') which, as we have seen, is duly preordained by Heaven Above. With regard to Činggis Qan and his Kiyat-Dorjgin line there is no doubt that this is the case, starting with the earlier-mentioned Alan Qo'a legend, and De Sečen's prophetic dream (§ 63), to the even more specific dream of Qorqı of the Ba'arin (§ 121) in which the prophecy is: 'Together Heaven and Earth have agreed: Temüjin shall be lord of the people!', and including Činggis Qan's statement in § 208 that Eternal Heaven had 'opened the door and loosened the reins' for him, i.e. Heaven had opened the way to Činggis' success.

However, the MNT uses the terms 'fortunate' and 'Good Fortune' sparingly and advisedly. Mother Höré'e's sons and Temüjin's wife Börte are called 'fortunate' (§§ 74, 111), Činggis Qan is called 'fortunate' (§ 272), and in § 275 we find the following words uttered by Ögödei's nephew Batu: 'By the strength of Eternal Heaven and the Good Fortune of (my) uncle the Qa'an (= Ögödei). As noted earlier, this is the first occurrence of the standard opening formula of decrees and letters issued by the Mongol chancellery. In the Chinese version of some of these, the other element which we have reviewed, viz. 'protection', is also mentioned, resulting in a formula already attested in Ögödei's time, in which the concepts of Good Fortune and protection are combined (see above, 2.i and n. 18). The Good Fortune of the Mongol world-ruling house has now become itself a 'protective'

47 For these terms and the literature on the subject see TMEN, no. 217; MM, pp. 72-76, Note 1 (d); and LAO, pp. 19-22. For käč(r) and suwu cf. also T.D. Skrynnikova, Kharizma i vlast v epokhu Čingis-khana (Moscow: Vostočnaya literatura, 1997), p. 100ff. One must distinguish the term 'fortunate' = 'protected by Heaven' (satu, suatu) from 'fortunate' in the ordinary sense (i.e. lucky), the Mongol term for which is oljeitü.

48 For a good example of the combination of 'Heaven's strength' and 'Protection of Heaven' in a later document (the letter of Oljeitü to Philip the Fair of 1305) see LAO, p. 56.

quality, given the fact that the Qa'an is Heaven-appointed and his command reflects the will of Heaven. The phraseology of Gūyūg's letter makes this perfectly clear: The command (= will) of Heaven, Činggis Qan and the Qa'an, both of them, sent it to cause it to be heard.' By the strength of Heaven, (from) the going up of the sun to (his) going down, (He) has delivered all the lands to Us', and 'If you do not accept Heaven's command and act contrary to Our command We shall regard you as enemies'. (Ibid., 3.1.)

As with the other aspects of the ancient Mongols' concept of Heaven, that of 'strength' is not only well attested among the ancient Turks, but it plays an identical role. As already noted, the Mongol expression tngri-yin káč-su is a slavish calque of tu. tärgi kičündü. The Turkic inscriptions also ascribe the victories on the battlefield to Heaven's 'granting strength' (kič bir-) to their leaders. Equally the 'fortune' (gut = mo. suwu) that accompanies them in their enterprises is attributed to Heaven. We are dealing with the same belief.

4. The Worship of Heaven

Our sources do not mention any formal cult of Heaven; the only type of worship of Heaven was, apparently, prayer of which there is but a single reference in the MNT. In § 240 we read that in the course of his campaign against the Qori Tumat – one of the People of the Forest (hox-yin irgen) – in 1207 (corr. 1217), Činggis Qan said to Dörbéi Doqšin of the Dörbet, 'Set the army in strict order, pray to Eternal Heaven and strive to subdue the Tumat people! The verb for 'to pray' is jalbari (pmo., mo. id.). Always for the period of Činggis Qan we have the testimony of the Hsi-yu chi which is, unfortunately, rather vague. According to Li Chih-ch'ang, Činggis Qan speaking to his sons and dignitaries at the end of January 1222 said with reference to the Taoist patriarch Ch'i Yu Ch'u-chi that 'the Chinese rev-


50 See GOT, pp. 262 (S9), 268 (E29), etc. The most perceptive discussion of gut as conceived by the ancient Turks is in Mon 1981, pp. 58-69, 71-75. Mon's conclusion is that gut was 'the heavenly charismatic power (dignity)' through which the Turkish qıyans ruled their state – a gift sent by Heaven containing the element of regality (ibid., p. 74). Cf. Since 1981, p. 249.

51 See SHMER, p. 165.

52 On this word see TMEN, no. 1808.
erence (tsun-chung 尊重) the Holy Immortal (i.e. Ch'iu Ch'u-chi) just as you revere (ching 敬) Heaven. Soon after Činggis issued an edict exempting from all taxes the monasteries depending from Ch'iu Ch'u-chi where monks spent their days reciting holy scriptures, invoking Heaven (kao tien 告天) and praying for the longevity of the Emperor. The injunction for all monks in China to invoke Heaven and 'pray for the Good Fortune and longevity' of the Emperor is found in subsequent edicts issued in 1235, 1243 and 1244, i.e. before Qubilai's accession to the throne, as well as after his accession.55

In 1221, Chao Hung had already noted in his report that 'Following their custom, they (= the Mongols) reverence mostly Heaven and Earth.'56 In the Historia Mongolorum, John of Pian di Carpine states that they do not worship Heaven 'with prayers, or praises or any kind of ceremony', meaning simply that he saw no outward form of cult or worship of Heaven during his stay among the Mongols. As for his confrère William of Rubruck, we have already cited his account of Möngke's profession of faith. In another section of the Itinerarium he relates that a Nestorian monk named Sergius used to tell him that Möngke 'only believes in the Christians; however, he wishes them all to come and pray for him.'58 While the first statement is an obvious exaggeration on the monk's part, the second is no doubt true, as evident from the general policy of the Mongol rulers.59

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53 See HYC, B, 6b; TA, p. 116.
55 See YTHPCLU, pp. 3 (no. 3), 8 (no. 7), 9 (no. 8); Chavannes 1908, pp. 308-309; MM, pp. 46-47, 49, 52, 54-55; etc. Cf. HWC, p. 599. In the later edicts in Phags-pa script, the members of the clergy (Buddhist, Christian, Taoist and Muslim) exempted from taxes are enjoined to pray to Heaven and pronounce benedictions (dengyi jiafa zhi huai'er 仏). For this expression see MM, pp. 46-47, 85; Note 11.
56 MTP, 17a; cf. CG, p. 77.
58 See SF, p. 256; TMM, p. 160.
59 Cf. MF, p. 187, n. 5, 24. Besides the documents already cited in Chinese and Latin, several of the official documents in Uighur-Mongol script issued by the imperial chancellories include references to 'praying to Eternal Heaven'. See Mostaert et Cleaves 1952, pp. 452, 471; LAO, p. 18. For the Mongol rulers' attitude and policies towards other religions, see the important contribution of Peter Jackson, 'The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered', in R. Amutai and M. Biran (eds), Mongols, Turks, and Others. Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005) [MTO], pp. 245-290.

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It is apparent from the above that the Mongols or, at any rate, the ruling elite believed in the importance and efficacy of praying to Heaven, and that, irrespective of religion. As for the way the Mongols themselves carried out this type of worship, i.e. in their own traditional fashion, we are fortunately rather well informed. The MNT provides information on the worship of the sacred mountain Burgan Qaldun which is described as a morning sacrifice consisting of facing the sun with the belt hanging around the neck, the hat off and over the hand, beating the breast with the fist, kneeling nine times towards the sun, and offering a libation and a prayer.60 We learn also about the communal (clan) ritual of ancestor worship – a ceremony called Qafjaru 伊斯蘭 consisting of an offering of burnt food and of a sacrificial meal shared by the participants.61 Finally a tantalizingly short invocation (Abbi babar) is mentioned, possibly the beginning of a prayer, recited by a Kereyit chief to obtain a son, and accompanied by the making of 'magic strips'.62 The information thus provided is very interesting but cannot be specifically related to a prayer or invocation to Heaven. This is where Juwaini and Raṣīd al-Dīn come to our assistance. Juwaini informs us that immediately after hearing of the 'massacre' of his envoys at Otrar – the famous 'Otrar incident' of 1218 that led to the invasion of Khwarazm – Činggis Qan was so angered that he went up alone to the summit of a hill, bared his head, turned his face towards the earth and for three days and nights offered up prayer, saying: 'I was not the author of this trouble; grant me strength to exact vengeance.' Juwaini also relates how, just before the crucial battle against the Hungarians at Mohi in April 1241, Činggis' nephew Batu (Joči's son) went up to a hilltop; and for one day and night he spoke to no one but prayed and lamented; and he bade the Moslems also to assemble together and offer up prayers.63

As for Raṣīd al-Dīn, his account is just as interesting. In the last section on Činggis Qan where various episodes are gathered which are not included in the previous sections, the great Persian historian relates how just before launching his campaign against the Jurchen Chìn 金 state in north China in 1211, 'as was his custom he (i.e. Činggis Qan – I.R.) went up alone on a hill, unloosed his belt and threw it over his neck, opened the ties of his tunic, knelt and said, 'O God (= Heaven – I.R.), you know all from long ago. You know that the Altan Khan (i.e. the Chin ruler – I.R.) initiated hostilities and began our enmity. Ökin Baruq and Hambaqai Qan were abducted by the Tatars and sent before the Altan Khan, who killed them, my elders and ancestors,
though they were innocent of any crime. [If you consider me right in what I think,] I ask for vengeance and retaliation for their blood. I want you to let men, fairies, and demons help and assist me." He prayed thus in all humility, and afterwards he arose and departed.46

In my opinion, the rituals described by both Juвaini and Rašid al-Dîn faithfully portray the personal, solemn, entreaties to Heaven and, possibly, Earth on the part of the Mongol sovereign and of a prince of the blood. The importance of such occasions – in all cases decisive military engagements – required, besides 'prayers', i.e. a request for strength and help accompanied by an invocation and/or lamentation, also an act of complete submission to the supreme power which was carried out in the traditional way (beating of the breast, hanging the belt over the neck, removal of the hat, etc.), all elements already present in Cînggis' worship of Bûrqa'n Qâldûn.55 Now, the same section (§ 103) of the MNT also records, in poetical form, the words of gratitude – a sort of 'lamentation' in fact – uttered by Cînggis while he performed his act of submission. 56 We may then regard these words, like those recorded by the two Persian historians, as examples of the utterances that were such an integral part of the Mongols' worship of Heaven. In view of what we know of the popular worship of the Mongols

46 CG, p. 298. Cf. C. D'Ohsso, Histoire des Mongols, depuis Tchinguis-khan jusqu'à Timour Bey ou Tamerlan, I-IV (La Haye et Amsterdam: Les Frères Van Cleef, 1834-5; repr. Tien-chin, 1940), I, pp. 122-124. A rather embellished version of the episode is found in B. Vladimirtsov, Gengis-khan, translated by M. Carsow (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1948), pp. 75-76, and has been adopted by subsequent authors (among them Roux 1956, p. 181). Cf. also H.D. Martin, The Rise of Chingis Khan and His Conquest of North China (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press: 1950; repr. New York: Octagon Books, 1977), p. 121. The KS does not mention the event; however, we find a faint echo of it in the SWCCL, 61b, where we read that 'in the autumn of (1211), the Emperor (= Cînggis Qân) for the first time made a solemn pledge with the army on the occasion of (his) campaign in the South (i.e. against Chin).'


See SHM(R), p. 103; cf. SHM(C), pp. 36-37. The 'lamentation' or ritualised lament is a well-known oral and literary device – usually in poetic form – to express a grudge resulting from a perceived injustice or offence suffered and, generally, for an emotional outpouring, several examples of which are found in the MNT and other works, such as 'Höjdin's Lament' and 'Toyon Temûr's Lament'. See SHM(R), p. 1279a (Index, s.v. 'lament'); H. Okada, 'An Analysis of the Lament of Tuyon Temur', Zentralasiatische Studien I (1967), pp. 55-78; C.R. Bawden, tr., Mongolian Traditional Literature (London, New York, Bahrain: Kegan Paul, 2003), pp. 47-48.


49 As shown by the letter of Gûyûk written in Persian (where Assertion is the Persian form for the Arabic Ǧûyûk) and its Latin counterpart, both versions being carried out at the Mongol court. See MP, pp. 9-12, 15-21. Mongolian türkî is also translated as 'Allâhi' in the Rusîdî Hexagram, see P.B. Golden (ed. and com.), The King's Dictionary. The Rusîdî Hexagram: Fourteenth Century Vocabularies in Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Greek, Armenian and Mongolian, translated by T. Halasi-Kun, P.B. Golden, L. Ligeti and E. Schütz (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000) (also for pers. ʒûyûk = Allâhi), pp. 198, no. 1, 61, no. 1.
In his letter to the Pope, Gıyūğ says: '... thou, who art the great Pope, together with all the kings, must come to do homage to Us. We shall then cause you to hear every command that there is of the Yāsā ("Law") ... Thou in person at the head of the kings, you must all together at once come to do homage to Us. We shall then recognize your submission. If you do not accept Heaven's command and act contrary to Our command We shall regard you as enemies.' And, with regard to the Mongol rulers' role as the chosen or, better, 'destined' agents and representatives of Heaven 'within the seas', the other, already cited passage from the same letter leaves us in no doubt: The command of Heaven, Čingiz Qan and the Qqan, both of them, sent it to cause it to be heard (= obeyed).

Success in warfare may have confirmed in the emperor’s mind his claim to suzerainty and his belief that the Mongol empire would extend over the entire world, but he himself was well aware that ultimately no one but Heaven knew.

...two expressions which in Mongolian are rendered by the single verb meke. The closing formula of Gıyūğ’s letter ‘If you act contrary (therefore), what do We know (of it), (it is) Heaven (who) knows’ really means: ‘If you disobey the command, it will not be Us who will decide your fate, Heaven will decide it.’ Heaven’s ultimate ‘decision’ is regularly referred to: we encountered it in the MNT and in Gıyūğ’s letter, and it also occurs in later documents like the letters of Arūn and Öljeyilti to Philip the Fair (1289 and 1305 respectively).

We may well ask then, how can one know apart from the post factum results, what Heaven has in store for us? This was a capital question also for the Mongol rulers who did their utmost to find out the will of the supernatural powers and their chances of success (or failure) ante factum. For this they had recourse to all sorts of prognostication and shamanistic techniques that are well documented because they were so prominent at the time. They are described, with a wealth of detail, in the MNT and in the reports of Chinese and Western travellers.

Description and analysis of these practices and the role of the shaman (mmn. boq; pmo, mo. bōge = tu. qam, pers. sikkīr, bōge = bōge < mmo, qam < tu) in early Mongol society are outside the scope of this paper. However, the following remarks are appropriate within the context of the present study.

Already in 1221 Chao Hung had observed the Mongols’ practice of scapulimancy, which was widespread among them as confirmed by Peng Ta-ya and Hsi Tung, as well as by William of Rubruck and other sources. From the MNT the ancient Turks see Mor 1981, pp. 57f, 68; O. Turan, "The Idea of World Domination Among the Medieval Turks", Novea Islamica 4 (1955), pp. 77-90.

74 See SM(R), pp. 624-625.

75 See LAO, pp. 18, 57.


76 See MTP, 17a; HTSL, 9b; SF, pp. 261-262. Cf. CG, pp. 77-78, 140; TMM, pp. 164; MFW, p. 193 and n. 2 (for further references). See also N.C. Munkwey, Ki-
we learn that the Mongols practiced various forms of prognostication deriving omens from dreams (oniromancy) and from the inspection of the entrails of an animal, and that they made use of shamans (büz gêr) and soothsayers (oñjîcën) for the purpose. 77 Signs (rnu. jâlar; pno. jàlar), i.e. portents, indicating the will of Heaven could be obtained and interpreted from accidents and unexpected occurrences. 78 From the Chinese sources we learn that the Mongols regarded thunder and summer snowstorms as portents, and that Činggis Qan was not averse to more sophisticated forms of Chinese divination. 79 The use of divination, magic and shamans by the Mongols is amply attested also in the Persian sources. 80 By all accounts, no important undertakings was started without the prior observation of omens. 81

Thus, the evidence from the primary sources summarized above shows that Činggis and his immediate successors had a profound reverence for Heaven. This, in turn, called for a constant need to interpret its will by any available divinatory means, and to pray in order to gain its favour, viz. strength and protection, the two indispensable ingredients of success. In the Mongol traditional way and in its more elaborate form (reserved for the ruling elite and special occasions), the prayer contained an invocatio and a lamento, and was accompanied by various ritual acts of submission. As for the prayers for the welfare of the ruler and his house, they were sought also from representatives of all the current faiths (Christians, Muslims, etc.) who could recite them in their own particular way. With regard to Christianity and Islam, the Mongol rulers had apparently no difficulty in identifying the Turco-Mongol Tengri with God Almighty and Allāh.

However, at this stage there was no official cult of Heaven.82 This was not the case of the Orkhan Turks whose qayns, as we know from the Chinese sources, held an official sacrifice to Heaven (lit. 'the Sky-god') every year, on a specific date (the second decade of the fifth month) and at a specific place (the unidentified river Ta-jen 大人 = *Tayan, *Tazin) 83-84, probably the Tes (tu. Tăz) River in northwestern Mongolia.85 This is one of the major differences between the attitude of the ancient Turkish rulers and the 12th-13th century Mongols towards Heaven-worship. The lack of a royal cult of Heaven on the part of the latter may be explained in both historical and cultural terms, such as the abrupt rise of Mongol power from a minor tribal grouping with a comparatively uncultivated background, but the problem is complex and deserves further study.

II. Earth

1. The Names of Earth

Like tengeri, yasar (rnu. qasar; pno. yo, yàjar) has both a physical meaning: 'earth, ground, land; distance', and the non-physical, numerous one of the deified earth, the Earth below as the counterpart of Heaven above. In the latter acceptation it occurs eleven times in the MNT.86 Yasar is a purely Mongolian word. In the MNT the Earth-deity appears also under the name Etiyên – Ötügen,87 which corresponds to the Ögiden, Ötügen of other texts in Preclassical and Middle Mongolian,88 and to the Bega (*Etugen[n] <

2. The Attributes of Earth

In the MNT, Qajar 'Earth' regularly occurs as the second element of the binome Tenggeri (~ Tenggeri) Qajar "Heaven and Earth" (see below, 3) and, as such, Earth has no attribute of her own, unlike the Turkish Yer/Yir in the expression idaq Yer Sih 'The Holy (idq) Earth and Water (Spirits) below'. However, Ötögen ~ 'Earth' in combination with Tenggeri is qualified by her pre-eminent epithet of eke (prn. m. id.) 'Mother.' This attribute occurs twice in the MNT (§§ 113, 255). In the first instance, eke Ötögen 'Mother Earth' is in combination with erketi Tenggeri 'Mighty Heaven' – both powers playing a vital role in helping Temüjin and his allies to defeat the Merkit. In the second instance, Ötögen eke clearly designates Mother Earth in its physical aspect: Ötögen eke a'ii bui, mürtet usat olon bui 'Mother Earth is wide: (her) rivers and waters are many.' This applies also to the other two attributes that we find in the MNT, viz. dayir (prn. id.) 'brown' (§ 245: dayir Ötögen) and köröștei (prn. id.; m. köröșstei) 'crusty,' lit. 'with epidermis' (§ 254: köröșstei Ötögen).

Thus, the term Qajar in the MNT seems to designate a more abstract power, one that does not require a qualifier insofar as it forms an inseparable unit with Heaven which, in the animistic conception of the Mongols, is also not qualified by any 'physical' attribute (like 'blue'). On the other hand, Earth, by its very nature, has a concrete aspect that cannot be ignored, and for this purpose Ötögen ~


See GOT, pp. 244 (E35), 252 (II. W3), 277 (E35), 288 (II. W3). For idaq 'holy', sacred see Mori 1981, pp. 69-71; TMEN, no. 1936; cf. Roux 1962, pp. 201-204. For idaq Ter Sub see loc. cit.

See SHM(R), p. 43, § 113. This passage, which is in alliterative poetry, eke is placed before Ötögen to match erketi qualifying Tenggeri. Eke 'Mother' as the regular appellation of Earth appears frequently in Mongol literature, from the pre-classical period to modern times. See the texts cited in n. 87 above and A. Mostart, "A propos d'une prière au feu", in N. Poppe (ed.), American Studies in Altaic Linguistics (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1962), pp. 194 (2r1), 197, 201, 218, n. 21.

See SHM(R), p. 187, § 255.

On these epithets see SHM(R), pp. 885, 928, where further references are given. In the text studied by Mostart (see Mostart 1962, p. 194), Mother Earth (Ötögen eke) is qualified as boro körösstei 'at epiderme bruin' (ibid., p. 197). In the Ötögen inscriptions we also find the colour attribute yaiye 'brown' (or reddish-brown) for Earth. See GOT, p. 263 (El).
3. The Roles of Earth

In the MNT, Qajar - the Earth-deity - is inseparably joined to Tenggeri - Tenggiri, the Heaven-deity, and has no autonomous function. Therefore, the bnomine Tenggeri (~ Tenggiri) Qajar also occurs eleven times, with Qajar sharing the main roles of her heavenly counterpart, as follows:

i. Earth as Maker of Destiny (jaya’an): MNT, §§ 121, 248 and 281. The first reference is a clear indication that both powers determine human events; the second, that they determine the existence of wild animals.

ii. Earth as Giver (lit. 'Increase' of Strength (gülü) and Power (auqa): MNT, §§ 113, 125, 208, 224 and 260 (twice).

iii. Earth as Giver of Protection (ihe’e): MNT, §§ 125, 163 and 177.

The complementary role of Earth is well illustrated in MNT, § 121, where the two powers are said to have jointly decided Temüjin's fate: Tenggiri Qajar eyetülджүү Temüjin-i ulus-un ejen buluqai Together Heaven and Earth have agreed: Temüjin shall be lord of the people (or nation).98

From the above references in the MNT it appears then that, for the Mongols, Heaven and Earth formed a 'dual unit' in playing those vital roles that are often ascribed to Heaven alone and that we have reviewed in 1.3. This can only mean that in all those instances when Heaven decides destiny; increases strength, etc., Earth is simply subsumed, Heaven being the supreme power, hence the principal player. However, the ultimate decision as to the granting of protection, i.e. of assuring victory, is left to both Heaven Above and Earth (below). See MNT, §§ 163, 177.

A similar phenomenon is observed in the texts of the Orkhon inscriptions, with Heaven playing the central role and the Earth and Water spirits a secondary one; nevertheless, Earth and Water grant favour in insuring success just as Heaven does: Táyri is, thus, primus inter pares.99

As for Mother Earth (Eke Ótügen) of MNT, § 113, her role is likewise linked with that of Mighty Heaven, the latter calling Temüjin from above, with Mother Earth helping him (and his allies Tooril Qan and Janma) to insure the success of the campaign to defeat the Merkit and rescue Temüjin's wife, Börte. Since, as the previous sentence of the passage in question informs us, Temüjin had his strength increased by Heaven and Earth (Tenggiri Qajar), one gains the impression that Mother Earth's role was a more practical one on the ground, reinforcing the view - already mooted - that Ótügen - Ótügen is a more 'concrete' manifestation of the Earth-deity. This may have a bearing on the next issue.

4. The Worship of Earth

In the MNT there is no mention either of the worship of Earth, or of prayers to Earth. Neither the Chinese nor the Persian sources for this period actually refer to Earth, nor is there any reference to Earth in Gilyüg's letter. However, we are luckier with the contemporary Western sources. There is a reference to a cult of Earth in the following somewhat confused account by John of Pian di Carpine in his Historia Mongalorum: They (i.e. the Mongols - I.R.) pay great attention to divination, auguries, sooth-sayings, sorceries and incantations, and when they receive an answer from the demons they believe that a god is speaking to them. This god they call Itoga - the Comans however call him Kam - and they have a wondrous fear and reverence for him and offer him many obligations and the first portion of their food and drink, and they do everythong according to the answers he gives. Friar John was not aware that his 'Itoga' was, in fact, our Ótügen, and that the deity to whom the Mongols paid their respect was not a male but a female. It is undeniable, however, that they did worship her and that her cult was not confined to the ruling family; on the contrary, it was a general one. Furthermore, it is clear from what Friar John says that 'Itoga' was an important deity, second only to 'God', i.e. Heaven; hence it could only be the Earth-deity. The fact that there existed at the time a popular cult of the Earth-deity is confirmed by Marco Polo, who relates that this deity, called Naciga, 'is a terrestrial god or god of the land who protects & cares for their wives and their sons and their cattle and their corn. And they do him great reverence and great honour, for each keeps him in an honourable place in his house. For they make this god of felt and of other cloth and they keep him in their houses; and they believe that this

98 See SHMR(R), p. 48.
99 See GOT, pp. 262 (S9), 265 (E10-12), 266 (E15), 267 (E25-26), 268 (E29), 277 (E33-35), 280 (N9), 283 (W6), 285 (S9), 288 (W3), 289 (E3). Cf. Roux 1962, p. 204.
100 See SHMR(R), p. 43.
102 This is an incorrect statement due to confusion on the nature of which see P. Daffn, ibid., p. 416, n. 9.
god of theirs has a wife and sons, and so they also make of cloth another feminine image & say that it is the wife of this god and they make other little images & say they are his sons ... And when they come to eat breakfast or supper, first they take some of the fat flesh and anoint the mouth of that god and also of his wife and his sons; ... 103 Here, again, the narrator claims that this terrestrial god was a male deity. Noting the discrepancy with what we know of Naćiyai/Ètigien – Oiggen, A. Mastaert expressed the opinion that 'il est évident que le culte de la Terre, tel qu'il est décrit par Marco Polo, n'était plus le culte primitif, mais une forme populaire de ce culte où la Terre, de déesse qu'elle avait été, était devenue dieu'. This may be so, but there is another possible explanation for the discrepancy which we must not ignore. All the Mongol sources of the 13th-14th centuries that mention this deity, from the MN to the Hua-i-i-yü of 1389, refer to her as 'Mother' (eke), hence as a goddess, not as a god. It is, in my view, very unlikely that in the very same period the Mongols would have worshipped her as a male deity, particularly in view of her explicit role as a 'terrestrial god' protecting their wives, sons and cattle – i.e. as a tutelary and fertility goddess. I think that it is much more likely that both Friar John and Marco were mistaken and that what they took to be a god was, in fact, a goddess. I am sure that neither author could have made the same confusion had they been describing a god or goddess of, say, the Indian or the Greco-Roman pantheon, who would normally be presented naked or semi-naked, or at any rate with clear physical attributes of their sex (hair, beard, obvious presence or absence of breasts, etc.). A Mongol felt doll would not present such distinctive marks, neither shape-wise nor dress-wise, and the sex of the image would be ambiguous to the outside uninformed observer. 104 I therefore doubt the correctness of John's and Marco's reports, particularly since the latter's description of the other images he refers to as being the wife and the children of the terrestrial goddess may, in fact, be those of the tutelary gnomi – the so-called ongyod – described by both Friar John and William of Rubruck. 106

Be that as it may, we can say with certainty that Earth as a supernatural force not only played a capital role as the second power in the dualistic system of the Mongols at the time of Chinggis Qan and his immediate successors, but that in its


106 See SM, pp. 236-237, 342-343; TMM, p. 9; SF, pp. 174, 232; MFW, pp. 75, 156 (cf. TMM, pp. 9; 95-96, 141).

107 See above, n. 91.

108 See GOT, pp. 235 (E31), 252 (II. W3); 268 (E38), 288 (II. W3). On Umay see Lot-Falck 1956, pp. 163, 168-170; Roux 1962, pp. 204-206; Mori 1981, p. 66 and n. 81.


Conclusion

The above preliminary survey will, I hope, contribute to a better understanding of the role played by Heaven and Earth in Mongol society in the second half of the 12th and the first half of the 13th century. It would be impossible to achieve such a task relying exclusively on the Secret History of the Mongols. This text, precious though it is and covering most of this period, is not a religious or quasi-religious treatise, or anything of the kind. It does not, nor is it meant to, provide a full answer to many vital questions, such as the religious beliefs and practices of the Mongols of that time. Fortunately, we have several genuine contemporary sources – the major ones dating from 1221, 1237, 1246, 1247 and 1255 – that help us to fill many of the gaps.

My general conclusion is that the Mongol ruling elite of the period under investigation held beliefs concerning Heaven and Earth – their two principal deities – that in spite of obvious formal differences, were in substance very similar to those of the ancient Turks. The relationship is so close, in fact, that we may regard the Mongols of Chinggis Qan as the true spiritual heirs of the Orkhon Turks. We find thus a further confirmation of the fact that in religious matters, as in other cultural areas, the Turks played vis-à-vis the Mongols a role similar to that of Greece vis-à-vis Rome. In the famous 'Stone of Chingis', i.e. the stele in honour of Yišàngge, regarded by many as the first written monument of the Mongols, the text is inscribed with letters newly borrowed from the Uighur Turks. 107 The first
two words of the inscription, 'Chinggis Qan', are both Turkic words.\footnote{See I. de Rachewiltz, "The Title Chinggis Qan/Qan Re-examined", in W. Heissig and K. Sagaster (eds.), Gedanke und Wirkung: Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag von Nikolaus Poppe (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), pp. 281-298.}

When the great conqueror died, his body was buried at Burqan Qaldun, in his ancestral land, but his soul, according to the Secret History, flew to Ten-
gri\footnote{Lit., 'ascended to Heaven' (tenggeri-tur garba). See MNT, § 268; SHMR, p. 200. The expression 'to fly (to Heaven)' (uc-) in Old Turkic is a euphemism for 'to pass away' - but only for exalted personages. See ibid., pp. 97-98; ET, p. 19b.} - no doubt to join those of Kul Tigin and Bilgä Qayan, whose golden crown and jewels were discovered only recently (2001) by a Mongolian-
Turkish archaeological expedition near the Qayan's monument, 45km north of Qara Qorum.\footnote{Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland GmbH (ed.), Dschingis Khan und seine Erben: Das Weltenreich der Mongolen (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2005) [DKSE], pp. 74-75.} And it is here, at Qara Qorum (tu. 'Red Boulder'), in the very heart of the 'Land of Ottukan' (Ottukan yir), that Ögedei was to build his palace in 1235 and establish his capital,\footnote{On Qara Qorum see SHMR(R), pp. 1004-1007; and, more recently, DKSE, pp. 126-195.} assuming for himself the Turkish title of Qayan (nomo. Qa’an) which will become his personal epithet and posthumous designation.\footnote{See de Rachewiltz 1983, pp. 273-274; P. Daffinà in SM, pp. 474-476, n. 4. Cf. also NMP, p. 302.} One of his chief ministers and head of the Imperial chancellery was Cingqai (ca. 1169-1252), a man of Turkish cultural background.\footnote{See P. Buell in ISK, pp. 95-111; Idem, "Chingqai (ca. 1169-1252): Architect of Mongolian Empire", in E.H. Kaplan, D.W. Whishunt (eds.), Opuscula Altaica: Essays Presented in Honor of Henry Schwarz (Bellingham: Western Washington, 1994), pp. 168-185. Regarding Cingqai's ethnic origin (still doubtful but, in my opinion, probably Uighur), see my remarks in ISK, p. 111.} He was one of the three chancellors who drafted Gühg's letter to the Pope, the first sentence of which (i.e. the earlier-mentioned 'opening formula') is - perhaps not surprisingly - written in Turkic, not in Mongolian or in Persian...\footnote{See above, n. 28. Much more can be said about the subject, but it cannot be beyond the scope of the present article. See, provisionally, A. Rüna-Tas, "Some Notes on the Terminology of Mongolian Writing", Acta Orientalia Hung 18 (1985), pp. 119-147; G. Kara, "L'ancien ouigour dans le lexique mongol", Journal Asiatique 269 (1981), pp. 317-323; Idem, Books of the Mongolian Nomads: More than Eight Centuries of Writing Mongolian. First English edition translated from the Russian by J.R. Kuenger (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2005), passim; T. Gülensoy, "İngilizce Gizli Tarih"ndeki Türkçe kelimeler üzerine bir deneme", Türkoloji Dergisi (Ankara) 5, 1 (1973), pp. 92-135 (to be used with caution); N. Poppe, "The Turkic Loan Words in Middle Mongolian", Central Asian Journal 1955, pp. 36-42; and my contribution "Turks in China Under the Mongols: A Preliminary Investigation of Turco-Mongol Relations in the 13th and 14th Centuries", in M. Rossabi (ed.), China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 281-310.}
Plate I. Letter of Gıyūg to Pope Innocent IV (1246) (Lines 1-6)

Plate II. Letter of Gıyūg to Pope Innocent IV (1246) (Lines 5-13)