HOW THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS WAS WRITTEN

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What is history writing? At least in its traditional narrative form, history may be defined as a lengthy account of events considered as important either for understanding how a particular community came to be what it now is or for understanding how human affairs work. But how can history, as a species of long narratives, be distinguished from the other members of that genus: the epic, the romance, the novel? History's distinctiveness has been seen as residing in its truthfulness or facticity. But such definitions run afoul of the widely recognized concept of "poetic truth" as well as of the fact that in many traditions epic poets, for example, routinely insist that what they are telling is the truth—about Troy, or Manas, or Geser. A more useful distinction would be in how history is composed: unlike the novel or the epic, history is necessarily based on data external to itself, either written materials (documents, or other histories) or else more or less exact notes or transcripts of interviews. Thus history is a narrative related to the past mediated by sources. As Rashīd al-Dīn wrote:

It is absolutely true that no historian has ever witnessed with his own eyes the events and things of which he writes and reports. Furthermore, those who deal with events and incidents, which are the stuff of history, have not heard of these things directly but write and speak of them through the tradition of transmitters (Rashiduddin 1998: 7).

In this process of relying on "the tradition of transmitters," the historian uses the written word to create a new fixed version of the tradition. Epics are also based on a tradition of transmitters, but their typical features are a result of an extemporaneous oral recreation from oral sources (Lord 1960). Thus particularly in the Mongolian tradition, history may be called that genre of long narrative that is itself written and draws, partly or wholly, on written texts and deals with those texts either partly or wholly through verbatim citation.

By common consent the *Secret History of the Mongols* (*SHM*) is the masterpiece of Mongolian narrative art. Occupying the same formative position in Mongolian literature and history that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* occupy in Greek literature, like them the *SHM* presents the surprising picture of a masterpiece emerging full-blown without any precursor. Without any other writings clearly surviving from the period except for some inscriptions and documents, and a few fragmentary narratives,[1] the *SHM* seems to stand alone. As a result, the question of how it was written has peculiar difficulties and peculiar significance. Before we can answer the question "How Was the *SHM* Written?" we need to understand what can be called the "pre-history" of Mongolian history-writing, history writing in a period in Mongolian writing from

[1] See for example the fascinating fragment edited and translated in Kara (2003: 5-7) with wise sayings from Bo'orchu and Quyildar.

which no works have been transmitted, at least in their original forms. However, it has been the object of my research for the last decade to see if the techniques of source criticism can shed light on this "pre-history" of Mongolian history writing and if this light can in turn clarify what the Secret Historian (as I call the *SHM*'s author) did with these sources. And that question, how the Secret Historian handled the historical sources, is crucial to understanding whether the Secret Historian was indeed a historian. Today I would like to share with you some of the preliminary results of this research.

What Is the Secret History of the Mongols?

Answering the question of what is the *Secret History of the Mongols* may seem a mere formality. There certainly are many volumes in Mongolian, Chinese, Russian, English, Japanese, German, French, and other languages all bearing the name *Mongġol-un Ni'uca Tobciyan* or a translated variant thereof. They are, obviously, the "Secret History of the Mongols." And histories of the transmission of the book called the "Secret History of the Mongols" (cf. Hung 1951; Cleaves 1982; de Rachewiltz 2004: xl-liii) discuss the history of the text that was transcribed into Chinese in the early Ming dynasty. In practice all the translations have taken this text, as found in Chinese transcription and translation as their base text. Similarly references to "the *Secret History* language" frequently treat that language as being embodied not only in the text as it was written in the Uyghur-Mongolian script, but also in the numerous dialectal features (such as *k* > *g* initially, as in for example, *küregen* > *güregen* "son in law" and the oronym *kürelgü* > *gürelgü*).

As is well-known, however, there is another textual source of the *SHM*, which is the *SHM* as incorporated into the text of the Lubsang-Danzin's 17th century *Altan tobci* (*LAT*; on this text see Vietze and Lubsang 1992; Choimaa 2002; and Choimaa 2011b). A few years ago this text was supplemented by another set of pages from a text, likely dating to the 16th century, preserved in Toling Monastery in western Tibet (Wulan 2010; Sarengaowa 2013). The Inner Mongolia scholar Ulaan likewise identified a few fragments from the Olan Süme in the territory of Darkhan Banner in western Inner Mongolia may be identified as stemming from a version of the *SHM*, but whether embedded in a larger text or a separate text alone is unknowable (Wulan 2010). As shown by Ulaan's preliminary analysis from a few pages of the Toling Monastery MS that had previously been published and confirmed by the publication of many pages more, these incomplete texts are something fairly close to the original text that was copied into the *LAT*. They show both occasional features of modernization, such as where Temüjin is replaced by *Ejen boġda* (§§90, 92; Sarengaowa 2013: 58, 61) or Cinggis Qa'an is prefixed with *Sutu Boġda* (e.g. §266; Choimaa 2002: 182), or where Aša Gambu is made into Esen Gambu (§256; Choimaa 2002: 173), but also places where clearly obsolete Middle Mongolian orthography or vocabulary has been preserved.

To these examples of *SHM* texts one could also add those parallels to the *SHM* found in other 17th century chronicles apart from the *LAT*, in particular the various versions of the "brief" or "anonymous" *Altan tobci*, but also including the parallel passages of Saghang Sechen's *Erdeni-yin tobci* and the *Sira tu'uji*. The parallels are

all found exclusively for the early period of Chinggis Khan's life, up through his friendship with Bo'orchu (*SHM* §93) in the *Erdeni-yin tobci* (Morikawa 2008: 219) and the Batmend copy of the "brief" *Altan tobci* (Choimaa 2011a: 82b) or up to Chinggis Khan's offer of the sable jacket he had received as a dowry to Ong Qa'an (*SHM* §§96-97) in the other "brief" *Altan tobci* texts (Bawden 1955: §21).

The discovery and publication of the *Cinggis Qa'an-u Altan tobci* text recovered from the Qasar shrine in Muu-Minggan territory in western Inner Mongolia shows that alongside these hybrid versions of Chinggis Khan's life, mixing *SHM* and non-SHM elements, there was also a complete (and completely) legendary account of Chinggis Khan's life (Kápolnás, 2015; Rogers 2009; Dorongġ-a 1998). In this narrative every single episode is substantially different from that of the *SHM* and no verbatim citation from the *SHM* may be found. But in the 17th century chronicles the earlier parts of this complete legend-cycle, beginning with Yisükei's abduction of Mother Ö'elün, are complete missing, instead being replaced by material that is closely parallel to what is found in the *SHM* text.

As I discussed before (Atwood 2006), the simplest explanation for this situation is that for a certain period of time, the *SHM* text was effectively unknown to the Mongols. In its absence (including the 15th and 16th centuries), the various legends embodied in the *Cinggis Qa'an-u Altan tobci* and similar texts replaced the account of the *SHM*. At some point (and my discussion of this point in 2006 has become more or less obsolete due to the identification and discovery of the Olan Süme and Toling texts) the *SHM* was rediscovered. Its lengthy opening genealogy made it attractive perhaps, so the early parts were incorporated into what became the 17th century chronicle tradition. A few early episodes of the legend cycle were completely replaced by the *SHM* and then lost until the rediscovery of the *Cinggis Qa'an-u Altan tobci.* But for the period of Chinggis Khan as ruler, the legendary accounts were ultimately preferred, as a result of which all of the 17th century chronicles omit greater or lesser parts of their copied *SHM* text. As a result, we may conclude that those parts of the 17th century chronicles which contain narratives of, for example, the killing of Begter, the capture by the Tayichi'ud, or his recovery with Bo'orchu of stolen horses, must be treated as deriving fairly proximately from an *SHM* text and thus constitutes evidence on the *SHM*'s text as it had been rediscovered sometime in the 16th-17th centuries.

There thus exists a substantial body of texts parallel to the *SHM* entirely apart from the Chinese transcribed one, ones that despite their modernizations and corruptions in the process of transmission up to the 16th-17th century still preserve significant important readings of the *SHM* text. The existence of these versions compels a somewhat more abstract conception of what the *SHM* really is. In short, it is the latest common ancestor of these five descendant texts: 1) the Chinese transcribed text; 2) the Chinese translated text (which has certain small variants from the transcribed text); 3) the Toling MS text; 4) the parallel *LAT* text; and 5) the parallel texts in the other 17th century chronicles. Thus as with all texts found in more than one MS, the *SHM* cannot be reduced to any single text artifact,[2] but is an abstract entity which can only be understood as the text or family of minimally variant texts ancestral

[2] I adopt this term from Silverstein and Urban 1996. I would like to thank Prof. Kate Graber (Indiana University) for bringing this article to my attention.

to all of those discussed so far. The *SHM* text is thus an abstract entity whose precise words are attested to by these descendant texts, all of which thus serve as witnesses to the absent *SHM*.

Among these five witnesses, the Chinese transcribed and translated texts stand out as having considerable material not found in the others, particularly the *LAT* witness, which is by far the longest of the non-Chinese transmitted ones. This situation where some witnesses have material not found in others is quite common in the transmission of narrative texts, such as Rashīd al-Dīn, Marco Polo, and Homer. The question in all of these textual traditions is whether this discrepancy among the witnesses are the result of addition to a core text, or subtraction from a complete text or a combination of the two.[3] In the case of Homer, verses found only in some witnesses and not in others are called "plus verses," a term chosen to avoid prejudgment of whether the verses were "added" or "subtracted"; I adopt this useful term here and speak of "plus passages" or "plus sections" in the *SHM*.

From the other side, this definition of the *SHM* as the text or set of closely allied texts that gave rise to the five extant versions requires us to see any previous version of the *SHM* that differs majorly from the latest common ancestor of the five witnesses as being not in fact, the *SHM*, but a previous text which in turn gave rise to the *SHM* through some process of expansion, diminution, or rearrangement. If for example, there was, as has been hypothesized, a purely poetic *SHM*, then it would certainly be not the actual *SHM* but an ancestor of it. While it is very unlikely that any such pre-*SHM* will ever be discovered, they have been hypothesized through literary-critical investigation. Thus Igor de Rachewiltz (2004: xli-xlv) hypothesized three stages of pre-*SHM* texts: 1) the *Cinggis Qan-u uja'ur* (not including the Ögödei sections, possibly in verse) > 2) the *Cinggis Qa'an-u uja'ur* (post-dating the beginning of Qubilai Qa'an's reign, with various pro-Toluid interpolations, but still without the Ögödeid sections) > 3) the *SHM* (early Ming, in which the Ögödei section has been attached to the original Chinggis Khan text).While I disagree considerably with this

[3] Japanese scholars have debated this question with regard to the MSS of Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles*, particular the Tehran Majlis MS and the Topkapı MS in Istanbul. Shimo Hirotoshi and Shimo Satoko (1996) argued for an "addition" hypothesis, while Shiraiwa Kazuhiko (2013) and Uno Nobuhiro (2011) argued for an addition hypothesis, one that is now generally accepted. In a "wild" text like Marco Polo, the issues arise in a more complex form. On the one hand, there are series of "plus passages" found only in the Franco-Italian version, and not found in others. But there are also "plus narratives" found only in the Toledo MS and the Ramusio edition of Marco Polo. The great editor Luigi Benedetto argued for a consistent "subtraction" hypothesis, speaking of a general "impoverishment" of the text as time went on. Frances Wood, hoping to impugn the reliability of Marco Polo's text, has argued on the other hand for an "addition" hypothesis, claiming that all of the "plus passages" were added by later copyists based on later accounts (see the account of this debate in Vogel [2013: 291-95], with references). In fact, the most convincing explanation is that while there was a general process of "subtraction" or impoverishment going on (as is common with non-canonical texts dealing with obscure topics), there were also episodes of "addition" in which material was added. While some of these additions are also clearly expansionistic editorial additions, in other cases (as with the Toledo MS and Ramusio edition "plus passages") I agree with Haw (2006: 44-45) that they are surely Polo's own additions.

scenario, Prof. de Rachewiltz's use of separate names for versions that precede the latest common ancestor of the various descendant-texts is appropriate.

Is the *Secret History of the Mongols* a Unitary Document?

This problem, perhaps the crux around which all other views of the *SHM* revolve is the question of to what degree the work can be considered a more or less unitary document. Given the presence of "plus sections" found in the Chinese transcribed and translated versions, but not in any other witness of the *SHM* text, one way to approach this question is to ask whether these plus sections were added or subtracted. In practice this question revolves around the relationship of the *LAT* witness to the Chinese transcribed and translated witnesses, since all the other witnesses are too manifestly fragmentary to have their absences count as significant lacunae.

A second question is the significance of the division into ten integral chapters and two chapters of "continuation" a break that occurs after §246 in the original Chinese transcription, before it was copied into the Yongle encyclopedia, around 1408. The implication of this division is that roughly one-sixth of the *SHM* is a later addition to an earlier core text. But is this division reliable? And if so, how much later was that addition made and was it added by the same person or persons responsible for the made body or by a different person?

Apart from different lengths as found in the witnesses and the internal division in at least one of the Chinese transcribed witness, internal analysis offers the possibility of finding differences in style, grammar, fact, or viewpoint between different parts of the work, or on the other hand, demonstrating how the whole work is pervaded by a single style, theme, set of concerns, or leitmotifs. It is important, though, to keep in mind that any inconsistency or discontinuity can be explained theoretically in two different ways: either as a case of diverse source documents being copied verbatim previous to the *SHM* achieving a fixed form or else secondary additions following the *SHM* achieving a fixed form. In the first case we may refer to source documents, in the second to editorial interpolations or alterations.

Since these three methods are independent of each other, agreement in conclusions drawn from two or more methods (comparison of different witnesses, the core text-continuation discontinuity or internal analysis) can be called particularly robust. Conversely, when the conclusions drawn from the three different methods do not form a consistent picture, then the conclusions are not robust.

On this point I have taken a position rather different from that of many other scholars. My position is that the *SHM* as I have defined it is pretty much a unitary document and that the plus passages were not *added* to a previously existing core, represented more or less by the *LAT* witness, but *subtracted* from an already completed text quite similar to the Chinese transcribed text now extant. This position is based primarily on the complete lack of agreement between the three different indications of potential disunity. In other words, 1) all but one of the Chinese transcribed witness's supposedly later, pro-Toluid interpolations are also found in the *LAT* text as well. Thus the *LAT* text does not witness a pre-Toluid version of the *SHM* [4]; 2) while many scholars have deduced that the Öködei material is secondary,

[4] This is confirmed by the fact that the *LAT* witness also contains the reference to Chinggis

the division in core text and added text found in the Chinese transcribed text does not occur at the death of Chinggis Khan, but rather between the killing of Teb Tenggeri and the beginning of the conquest of North China in 1211.[5] 3) And while this break does correspond to a general sense of the critics that the latter one-sixth of the *SHM* covering the period from 1211 to c. 1240 is of lower literary quality than the previous five-sixths, this lower literary quality does not preclude the reality of a deep stylistic, grammatical, and thematic unity between the supposed "core" text and the supposed "addition." In other words, the impression is not of a core text written by one author and then supplemented by another, but rather of a text written by a single author who was perhaps losing inspiration, or turning to a topic of less interest.[6]

Finally, it should be noted that there is a significant possibility that some of the current lacunae in the 16th-17th century versions of the *SHM* might be filled by new material in the future. It is said that there may be more Mongolian MS from the Toling Monastery, some of which may be part of the same *SHM* MSS parts of which have already been published. If there are new leaves of the Toling MS and if they do contain text which was omitted in the *LAT* witness to the *SHM*, then the case would be further weakened for treating the plus passages found in the Chinese transcription but not in the *LAT* as later additions to the *SHM*.

Because of the importance of this point, I would like to dwell at a bit greater length on the literary and stylistic parallels that link together the supposed "core" section (pre-1211, up to §246) with the late Chinggis sections (1211-1227, §§247-68), and the Öködei sections (1229-c. 1240; §§269-281). In the following material these three sections will be marked by I, II, and III. The connections include the following sorts:

Khan appointing Yalavach and Masqud as overseers of North China and Central Asia respectively (§263; Choimaa 2002:179).. Since this appointment actually took place in 1241, and did not become more or less permanent until 1246, this passage cannot possibly antedate the earlier date and is unlikely before the latter date. It also contains the passage according to which Chinggis Khan's uncle, Da'aritai, was spared (§242; Choimaa 2002: 156-57). As Funada Yoshiyuki has recently argued (2014), this passage appears to presume the post-1262 rehabilitation of the Da'aritaid house, due to its contribution in the suppression of the Li Tan rebellion. This passage's common presence in both the LAT and Chinese transcribed witness would thus push their latest common ancestor into the Qubilaid period.

[5] The break between the core text and continuation in one of the Chinese transcribed text witnesses does correspond to a section break in the *LAT* witness, with the non-*SHM* material added in between the sections §§246-247 and with a new line for the material beginning in §47 (see Choimaa 2002:163-64). But there are many such new sections in the *LAT* witness and they would not by themselves mark a major division within the text.

[6] There are many cases of indubitably single-authored works in which the final portion shows markedly less literary quality than the preceding text. In history, one can mention Thucydides's Book VIII, and in novels one can mention the very disappointing ending of the *Brothers Karamazov,* and what appears to have been a likewise very disappointing ending to Gogol's *Dead Souls*. And readers of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* usually find very little memorable in the material that follows the death of Zhuge Liang, despite the undoubted unity in composition of that material with what follows.

1. Certain alliterative tags that attached to persons or themes
   a. *hünji'ü bayitala daruca-/kidu* - 'crushing/slaying [them] till they stood like rotted trees' (§§196 [!], 247, 251 [II], 272 [III]: said of total victory against massed armies
   b. *[edür] üjekü-yin [minu] nidün [söni] sonosqu-yin [minu] cikin* "[My] eyes for seeing [by day], [my] ears for hearing [by night]" (§§138, 203 [I], 252 [II]): said of Shiki Qutughu
   c. *ösöl ösön kisal kisan* "avenging the avengement, requiting the requital" (§§58, 214 [I], 254 [II]): said of taking vengeance on the Jin, the Tatars, and the Sarta'ul
   d. *ne'üle metü beye cinu negüs odu'asu netkel metü ulus cinu/iyan ken-e mede'ülkün/gemü [tede], tulu metü beye cinu tulbas odu'asu tuyal metü ulus cinu/iyan ken-e mede'ülkün/gemü [tede]* "When your body like a bole has bent down, to whom will go/will do you give your kingdom like a clotted hemp? When your person like a plinth lies prone, to whom will go/will do you give your kingdom like a flock of birds? (§§245 [I], 254 [II]): said of the approaching death of Chinggis Khan
   e. *Ukitala boqtalaju ho'ojitala büselejü* "[She] tightened her bogta till it was taught and tucked up her skirt till it was tight" and *horaitala boqtalaju ho'ojitala büselejü niyitaitala boqtolaju niduratala büselejü* ""[She] fastened her bogta till it was fast and tucked up her skirt till it was tight. She fastened on her bogta till it was firm and tucked up her skirt till it was tight." (§§74 [I], 254 [II]): said of a mother (Ö'elün or Börte) energetically raising her children
   f. *Küjü'ün-ece tanu tataju kü'ün-lü'e saca'un bolġaju egem-ece tanu tataju ere-lü'e saca'u bolġaju* "She tugged on their necks and made them equal to the people. She tugged on their shoulders and made him equal to a man" and *egem-ece tanu tataju ere-lü'e saca'un ken-e bolġaqu küjü'ün-ece tanu tataju kü'ün-lü'e saca'un ken-e bolġaqu* "She tugged on their shoulder and made them equal to any man, she tugged on their necks and made them equal to anyone (§§214 [I], 254 [II]): said of a mother (again Ö'elün or Börte) raising children.
   g. *umartaqsan-iyan/-i duratqalduju/duratqaju, untaraqsan-iyan/-i seri'ülülcejü/seri'üljü* "Bringing to mind what our memory has missed, shaking awake the sleeper in deep sleep" (§§200 [I], 255 [II], 272 [III]): said of a good younger brother (Jamugha or Tolui).
   h. *Qa'ucin üges qadalun ötögüs üges orkidun* "Citing ancient words and quoting old words" and *ötögüs üges orkitcu qa'ucin üges qadalju* "Quoting old words and citing ancient words" (§§78 [I], 260 {II}), said when quarrelers are reproved by a wise person.
   i. *tabun quru'ud-iyan kimul tamutala harban quru'ud-iyan ha'uttala* "till you file away the nails of your five fingers and till you rub your ten fingers away to the roots" *harban quru'ud-un kimul inu ha'uttala . . . tabun quru'ud-un kimul inu tamutala* "till you rub your ten fingers away to the roots and till you file away the nails of your five fingers" (§§53 {I}, 276 [III]), said of fighting in China.

2. Broader narrative complexes that link particular episodes as examples of a single theme
   a. As I have already discussed at length in two articles (Atwood 2008/9 and 2015), the theme of a "sacrificed (or really, murdered) brother" is found in three places: Begter's killing in §§76-77 [I], Jamugha's death in §§200-01 [I], and Tolui's sacrifice in §272 [III]. These themes are held together not just by similarity in theme, but also by resonances of language, including the kinds of alliterative tags referred to earlier.
   b. Another such recurring narrative complex is that of the mother's sacrifice not appreciated by her fratricidal (really or potentially) sons. This theme, which is likewise held together by clear literary resonances, including in one case an explicit reference to a previous case. The four cases are: Alan Gho'a and her sons in §§18-22 [I], Ö'elün Üjin and her sons in §§74-78 [I], Chinggis Khan's covert support of Teb Tenggeri's attacks on his brothers in §§245-46 [I] , and the dispute between Chinggis Khan's sons over the succession §§254-55 [II].
3. Similar tendencies to historical structure and explanation
   a. As Yoshida Jun'ichi (2005) has already noticed, the *SHM* has a very distinctive mode of treating conquests. What other sources treat as complex, multi-stage, drawn out military operations are usually treated by the *SHM* author as a single, massive military campaign. Thus a serious of campaigns that in the Qubilai Qa'an-era *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* (as witnessed by the *Shengwu qinzheng lu*, Rashīd al-Dīn's "History of Chinggiz Khan," and the *Yuan shi*, chapter 1)[7] are treated as three separate events are treated by the *SHM* as one massive confrontation in §§141-49 [I]. A campaign against the Tatars that other sources treat as taking two separate campaigns in the *SHM* is reduced to one in §§153-56 [I]. What these other sources all treat as five separate campaigns against the Tangut in the *SHM*, two of which preceded the attack on the Jin in 1211, is reduced to two in §§249 and 265-68 [II]. And the unspeakably complex, violent, lengthy, and seemingly unending war on the Jin dynasty is reduced to three lightning campaigns in §§247-48, 251 [II], and 271-72 [III].
   b. The "chronotope" (Bakhtin 1981) of the *SHM* is throughout centered on Mongolia. Thus events that take place in Mongolia are given vivid, geographical, and scene-placing description. Events that take place out of Mongolia are, however, not so described. Thus in the debate on the succession [II] or the death of Tolui [III], there is no sense of exactly in what type of building or setting the events take place, while such setting

[7] This work was compiled at Qubilai Qa'an's court in a bilingual Mongolian-Chinese edition around 1276-79. The Chinese edition was presented to the court in 1287. Rashīd al-Dīn made the Mongolian version the base text for this "History of Chinggiz Khan" completed around 1304. The Chinese texts of the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* and the *Veritable Record of Ögödei Qa'an* were combined and slightly abridged to form the *Shengwu qinzheng lu*, by a scribe at the court of Ayushiridara Buyantu Qa'an around 1317-20.

is beautifully set for the capture of Chinggis Khan by the Tayichi'ud [I], of Börte Üjin by the Merkid [I], or the confrontation of Chinggis Khan with his mother and brothers over Teb Tenggeri [I]. This could be explainable as a change from I to II-III, except that the explanation simply as a by-product of a Mongolia-centered writer having to describe foreign conquests tracks the facts equally well. It is notable that in the battle narratives of sections II and III there is not a single narrative that provides any detail whatsoever of a siege and storming of a city.

c. Many other such highly idiosyncratic historical view found in more than one section have been documented previously (Atwood 2007a). Here I would just like to add that the statement by Chinggis Khan in §243 [I] that Chaghadai as "difficult" (*kece'ü*) and "narrow-minded" (*narin aburitu*), and hence specially in need of a good adviser is fulfilled in §254 [II], when Chaghadai accuses his brother of illegitimacy and hence his mother of infidelity, and it is that same advisor appointed in §243, Köke Chos, who steps in calms him down. Here we have a clear case of what Chekhov would call a gun on the set in Act I and it being fired in Act II—and the two sides of the action here straddle the supposed line between the "core" and the "continuation" as well as the supposed discrepancy between passages found in and not in the *LAT* witness (cf. Choimaa 2002: 157).

d. Finally, there are two passages, one short and one long where section III contains lengthy verbatim repetition of one passage from section II and one from section I. The first case occurs in the passage on the invasion of North China. When treating the final conquest of the Jin dynasty, the *SHM* opens with a passage that appears to be a pastiche of sentences from the previous invasion of North China under Chinggis Khan.

§247	§272
Cinggis Qa'an qonin jil kitat irgen-tür morilaba ... Jebe Küikünek Ba'atur qoyar-i manglai ile'ebe... kitad-un ... ceri'üd-i daruju Cabciyal-a kürtele hünji'ü bayitala kiduju cabciyal-un qa'alqa Jebe abcu daba'at buliju dabaju Cinggis Qa'an Sira-Dektür ba'uba	Taulai jil Öködei Qa'an kitat irgen-tür morilaju Jebe-yi manglai ile'eba tedüi kitad-un ceri'üd-i daruju hünji'ü bayitala kidu'at Cabciyal-i dabaju jük jük qotot balaqat anu e'ere'ülün ceri'üt yabu'ulju Öködei Qa'an Sira Dektür ba'uba

One can certainly acknowledge that this kind of repetition shows a great slackening of interest and inspiration in the sections on Öködei Qa'an. But at the same time it is highly unlikely that an anonymous continuator would the gall to simple take part of the already circulating main text and repeat it largely verbatim. The second passage verbatim passage, on the *keshigtan*, is much longer and will be analyzed later. Suffice it to see here that it must derive from a single separate source that is actually on the *keshigten* under Öködei and which was then partly assigned in the *SHM* to

Chinggis Khan's reign, and partly assigned to the reign of Öködei.

In light of this clear and pervasive pattern of continuity, I do not see how either the idea of Chapters 1-10 being a previously written core, and Chapter 11-12 being a supplement, or the idea of a work initially purely about Chinggis Khan with the Öködei Qa'an section being added later, can be sustained. The accounts of the deaths of Begter, Jamugha, and Tolui were all written with a single plan, just as were the appeals to the motherly self-sacrifice of in the episodes of Alan Gho'a, Mother Ö'elün and the killing of Begter, the Teb Tenggeri, and the succession debate. The numerous alliterative tags may have been to some extent traditional, but they are used as leitmotifs to hold together the work with a single narrative.

Where then did the division between core and continuation text in the early Chinese transcription come from? Given the complete absence of any sign of it elsewhere in the text, I would argue that it was a guess of the transcribers themselves. It is notable that the Yongle encyclopedia, when copying the *SHM* transcription, rejected the twelve chapter division and replaced it with a fifteen chapter division, treating all the text as equally integral. Such a rejection of the previous transcription's division into core and continuation indicates that the Yongle encyclopedia's compilers did not believe this division to be a fundamental feature of the text. Since the Mongolian original was probably still accessible, this indicate that the division could not be confirmed in the Mongolian original. The widely recognized difficulty of the *SHM*'s author in dealing with conquests outside of Mongolia, together with the initial title of the work *Cinggis Qa'an-u huja'ur* may have provoked the Chinese editors to make the literary judgment that the material from §247 on was of lower quality and hence was a "continuation" and not the core text. In other words, the division was the literary judgment of the compilers, not something explicitly indicated in the Mongolian text itself.

Likewise, the omissions of text in the *LAT* cannot be explained as wintessing a stage of composition prior to the *SHM* as found in Chinese transcription. One large omission, that from §176 to §208 is widely recognized as being purely mechanical and of no significance for the early history of the *SHM*. But the omission of the passage in §255 has been interpreted as a witness to an earlier stage of the text in which the succession debate did not exist. Yet as I have shown through reference to themes and narrative motifs, the succession debate is closely linked to a wide range of earlier passages on Ö'elün, Chaghadai, and Chinggis Khan's aging, all of which are found in the *LAT*. To assume that all of these contributing themes were once found in the text, but without the succession debate drawing them all together, is tantamount to declaring that an earlier writer constructed a stately arch but left out the capstone, which was then supplied by an anonymous later editor who perfectly divined the original author's literary plan. This is hardly plausible. And if all of these, and other lengthy omissions, are recognized to be secondary, the omission of the Öködei may likewise be seen as secondary.

How the Secret History of the Mongols Was Written

Having thus argued that the *SHM* was written principally by a single person with a single broad plan in mind, I would like to give you my broad, sweeping answer to

the question in the title, before diving into some of the details. Most importantly, the *SHM* was not the first narrative history of the rise of Chinggis Khan. In fact there were several such histories which the Secret Historian (as I will designate the author of the work) used. In using these narrative histories of the rise of Chinggis Khan, the Secret Historian frequently followed the common practice of medieval historians and copied them verbatim. However, the Secret Historian also felt free to make major changes in the sources as they were copied into the work, moving items around, occasionally changing names, and changing the chronology. Always these changes were intended to heighten and concentrate the narrative, taking for example an interesting episode ascribed to an otherwise unknown person and transferring it to a well-known person, taking an incident attached to an obscure battle and transferring it to a much bigger one. The result is that in comparison with other histories of the founding of the Mongol empire, most notably the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan*, the *SHM* is much less episodic, and built out of a much smaller number of lengthier and more complex narrative units.

But copying and rearranging already written material was by no means the only method the Secret Historian used to compile the *SHM*. Rather the *SHM* was compiled with two different processes. On one hand the Secret Historian collected a wide range of documents of various types: narratives, biographies, genealogies, lists, and descriptions of institutions. These were then sewn together as part of a narrative with a good deal of verbatim citation but also with a free handling that did not balk at moving items from one year to another, changing names, or merging separate episodes into one. On top of this, however, the Secret Historian also did a considerable amount of original research interviewing elder *noyad* and *qatud* to turn the largely public and impersonal record found in the written sources into the narrative of family discord and obligation that makes the *SHM* such gripping reading. The Secret Historian appears to have been most inspired when cut loose from the tedious labor of sewing together source documents that judging from the historian's frequent emendation, seem to have been viewed with considerable skepticism. These themes were amplified by a considerable amount of poetry which the Secret Historian undoubtedly took in large part from contemporary oral genres, but much of which was probably original to the work and in any case were deployed skillfully to amplify the author's intended meaning.

From this composite character derives many of the distinctive features of the *SHM*. The tendency to combine multiple accounts of to amplify a single episode from the relatively skeletal account found in the sources into a more detailed one often resulted in a picture that was impressive when read or heard, but upon close examination has numerous redundant or contradictory details. For example, in the description of the beginning of the great battle of Naqu Qun in *SHM* §§193-94, there are repeated conversations and stratagems making a full and satisfying narrative. But examining the geography there seem to be two sets of places: Qanggharqan and the Sa'ari Steppe and the Qangghai and the Qachir Usun River. The Mongol forces are under Qubilai Noyan and Jebe, but it is not them but Dodai Cherbi who gives Chinggis Khan the key bit of advice. Similarly, the Mongols seem to confuse the Naiman by two different happenings simultaneously. One is that the Mongols, on the advice of

Dodai, make their numbers look larger by lighting many fires intimidating the Naiman khan. The other is that a gelding from the Mongol camp escaped into the Naiman camp letting them know that the Mongols' mounts were tired and lean. When Tayang Qa'an proposes to retreat. Again there are two reasons for this proposed retreat: either because the Mongols seem so many, or because he wishes to tire out their mounts even more. When he proposes this retreat, first Küchülüg Qa'an berates him for cowardice, and then the general Qori Sübechi berates him again. Whether it be the places, the events, or the Naiman side's reactions the narrative gives an impression of richness of detail that is, however, not exactly clear on detailed examination.

Comparison with the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* (as witnessed by the *Shengwu qinzheng lu*, Rashīd al-Dīs "History of Chinggiz Khan," and chapter 1 of the *Yuan shi*) shows that this impression of slightly confusing detail is due to the account having been sewn together from two separate accounts. In the *Veritable Record* Qubilai and Jebe Noyan are the commanders, the Naiman camp at Qachir Usun of the Qangghai, a tired gelding bolts into the Naiman lines, Tayang Qa'an concludes they are exhausted and proposes to further exhaust the Mongols by retreating. Finally Qori Sübechi berates him for cowardice. One may note that this account, derived from a non-biographical narrative source does not have a clear hero. If we subtract all the parallel material from *SHM* §§193-94, we get another, equally coherent, but quite different story: The Mongols camp at Sa'ari Steppe near the Qanggharqan Range, Dodai advises Chinggis Khan to light fires to intimidate the Naiman, Tayang Qa'an sends news of the Mongols' numbers to Küchülüg who berates him for cowardice. While no extant work has a parallel to this second story, it is not unlikely that it derives from a biography of Dodai who appears as the figure giving the good advice. Once the introduction to the Naiman battle is divided in this way, it offers an explanation for the two similar oronyms, Qanggharqan and Qangghai, which are dialectal variations of the same name for today's Khangai Range, one with and one without the honorific suffix *–qan* "sovereign."

The *SHM's* extremely confusing account of the Sarta'ul campaign can also be explained by division into sources. The *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* has a much more coherent account of the Sarta'ul campaign, indeed one that is, apart from a strangely consistent one year post-dating of all events (1220 for 1219 and so on), probably the most coherent brief account of the campaign in any source. As I will discuss below, the *Veritable Record's* account of the campaign was itself sewn together from two accounts. Linking up these two sources correctly, the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* constructed a geographically literate and historically sound account.

But the Secret Historian while using the same sources put material from the S Source, focused on Jebe, Sübe'edei, and Toquchar, first in the narrative and then added in material from the C Source, focused on Chinggis Khan's movements, afterwards. The *SHM* may have guessed that since Jebe and others were vanguards they should have gone first. But the result was a series of grotesque geographical and chronological errors, with the force led by Jebe chasing the Sultan through Iran before Chinggis Khan has even arrived at Otrar, Bukhara, and Samarqand. While the later editors of the *Veritable Recods* were both more conservative, simply copying their

sources wherever possible, and also simply better informed, the Secret History was poorly informed about anything outside Mongolia, but also willing to freely alter the material—a dangerous combination.

One implication of this method is that commentators should be wary of too easily attributing all unexpected variations or seeming errors to "copyist's errors" or "later editors." The distinctive feature of documents sewn together from disparate sources by verbatim quotation is, in all but the most skillful hands, a certain amount of inconsistent usage, contradictions, redundancies (often called doublets), and unexplained allusions. As any study of a copying tradition will show, later copyists generally tend to smooth out such differences and contradictions, trying to create consistency, while creating in their own errors more often simply nonsense, rather than possible dialectal alternations. Thus when we see Semisgab for Semiskent in the *SHM*, this nonsense is the result of a copyist's error. But when we find a name in three forms, all equally valid in Mongolian then that variation is much more likely due to the Secret Historian's use of three different source documents than the mistakes of a copyist or later editor. Thus when Yisükei appears not as Ba'atur but as Yisükei Qan or Qa'an, this is not the kind of error a later scribe makes. Rather a later scribe would tend to change the unfamiliar to the familiar, and hence replace Yisükei Qan or Qa'an with the more familiar Yisükei Ba'atur, or else to keep the Qa'an and drop the Ba'atur. Indeed the *LAT* witness changes *Yisükei Qan~Qa'an* to *Yisükei Ba'atur* six times, and simplifies *Yisükei Qan ecige* to simply *Qa'an ecige* once.[8] And indeed, as I have shown elsewhere this unusual use of Yisükei Qa'an is found once also in Rashīd al-Dīn where it is specifically attributed to a Mongolian book that can be identified with one of the common sources used by both the Secret Historian and the committee that later compiled the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan.* Thus such unexpected spellings, facts, or terms should be carefully noted, and not too easily attributed to the later copyists we love to blame for everything that seems to mar a great work. In many cases, such discrepancies result not from later editing, but from the Secret Historian copying without change what was found in the source documents being used.[9]

The Narrative Skeleton of the *Secret History of the Mongols*

When the *SHM* is compared with the Qubilai Qa'an-era *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* a common narrative core emerges, one that begins with the

[8] See §§150, 151, 164 (Choimaa 2002: 100-01, 111) and §96 (Choimaa 2002: 48). In the last case, we have a witness in the new Toling MS, which shows that the *LAT*'s simplification is late, since the Toling MS has Yisükei Qan ecige, just like the Chinese transcribed text (Sarengaowa 2013: 69)

[9] I show a similar case where the unexpected genealogy of Bartan Ba'atur in *SHM* §179, previously explained as the result of an erroneous copying, preserves an alternative genealogy (see Atwood 2012). A similar example may be seen with the three forms of the name Ögele, Ögölei, and Ögelen, This has been explained as the result of scribal error, but the correlation of the terms with particular environments suggests rather usage reflecting different source documents. Thus the form Ögele appears in all passages connected with the *keshigten* (§§191, 226, 230, 234), while the variants Ögölei (§24) and Ögelen (§120) appear in material that appears to be partly the Secret Historian's free creation and partly based on summarizing biographies

Chinggis Khan's alliance with Ong Khan. This story culminates in Chinggis Khan's long indictment of Ong Khan and the following defeat of Ong Khan, and Chinggis Khan's assumption of the throne of his kingdom in 1203. A second parallel narrative covers how the Naiman kingdom challenged Chinggis Khan, the Mongol response and conquest and the flight of the Naiman prince Küchülüg and Toqto'a Beki to the West and their final destruction. Together these two narratives constitute the skeleton of dated core of Chinggis Khan's rise from just before the year of the dog [1202] to the final unification of Mongolia in the autumn of 1204 and following. As I have explained elsewhere both in Mongolia and in a forthcoming paper, this narrative core consists of three separate documents, which appear to have circulated sometimes together, and sometimes separately. These are 1) the "Indictment of Ong Qa'an," a text spoken placed in the mouth of Chinggis Khan as a speech, detailing all the ways in which Chinggis Khan aided Ong Qa'an and Ong Qa'an's ingratitude. 2) Accompanying this speech is a third-person narrative, which begins with the previous history of the Kereyid kingdom and Ong Qa'an's father, then details the alliance his alliance with Chinggis Khan, their break, and Chinggis Khan's conquest of the Kereyid. 3) Thirdly there is a "Indictment Narrative Continuation," tracing the previous history of the Naiman and then how Chinggis Khan conquered them, and eventually chased down Küchülüg Qa'an and his ally Toqto'a Beki of the Merkid. The *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* quoted the text of the "Indictment" probably in full, and the bulk of the two narratives. As a where the *Veritable Record* differs from the *SHM* in citations, the *Veritable Record* is more faithful to the original. In the later version of his *Compendium of Chronicles* witnessed by the Istanbul and Tashkent MSS, Rashīd al-Dīn also translates the introductions to both the Indictment narrative and the Indictment narrative continuation, prefacing the first passage with the valuable note that they come from a "different Mongolian book" thus proving that the Indictment narratives did exist and circulate as Mongolian language books.

Although these three works were probably written by different authors, they share some distinctive features. Stylistically, they can be told by their use of *qa'an* for pre-Chinggisid rulers, such as Ong Qa'an and Tayang Qa'an, as well as by their designation of Yisükei not as a *ba'atur* but as *qa'an*. The Indictment Narrative, at least, seems to be the source for the numerous obscure Turkic words found in the sections of the *SHM* dealing with the fall of the Kereyid kingdom. The narrative is also extremely careful about designating events by season and by place in Mongolia—it preserves numerous toponyms in central Mongolia found nowhere else. Finally, both the narrative and its continuation portray Chinggis Khan not as a ruler of the Onon-Kherlen Mongols who then conquers the Kereyid, but rather as a general in service of the Kereyid dynasty who is finally forced, due to that dynasty's internecine conflicts, incompetence, and treachery, to seize power and replace the Kereyid dynasty with a new Mongol dynasty. The conquest of the Naiman kingdom is likewise seen as just desserts for that dynasty's superstitions and incompetence. Of interest in light of the *SHM*'s high role assigned to women, both narratives treat female influence in politics as manifestly bad, and a main cause of the fall of the Kereyid and Naiman kingdoms.

The Secret Historian also made use of two Mongolian sources on the conquests in the West, ones that are also found not just in the *Veritable Record of Chinggis*

Khan, but were also used by the Persian historians Juwaynī and Rashīd al-Dīn. That the *Veritable Record's* account of the campaign against Khorazm was sewn together from two accounts emerges from the fact that account gives the name of Nishapur once as *Niša'ur* and once, in very close proximity to the other, as *Ničа'ur*. When a single source has two different versions of the same name, it is a likely hypothesis that the variation result from linking up two different sources on the same event. Let us call these then the S (for *š*) Source and the C (for *č*) source. Further investigation shows that the C Source appears to have also been used as one of his sources by the Persian historian Juwaynī, while the S Source also appears to have been used by Rashīd al-Dīn. Linking up these two sources judiciously, the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* constructed a geographically literate and historically sound account. As I have mentioned, however, the Secret Historian made much less coherent use of these sources.

The Biographies and the Secret History of the Mongols

Thus by quoting and somewhat rearranging preexisting source, the Secret Historian already had a basic narrative of at least §§150-199 (from the campaigns with Ong Khan to the final destruction of Toqto'a Beki of the Merkid and Küchülüg Qa'an of the Naiman), and of the campaign against the Sarta'ul in §§257-64. Since 1252 at least, there was also a narrative of Tolui's life and death which the Secret Historian drew on for §253 and §272. But while the Tolui narrative had poetic elements, these narratives were for the most part rather dry and factual—how could they be made to show more of the reality of the rise of Chinggis Khan? An important source for vivid narratives came from interweaving the growing genre of Mongolian-language biographies of Chinggis Khan's companions into the narrative framework. None of these biographies have survived in Mongolian, but from the time of Öködei onward we can see that having such a biography, in a language the qa'an could understand, was crucial to that figure's descendants protecting their power and privilege (Atwood 2015: 169-70). Thus, every powerful family needed a biography telling in the best possible terms how their father or grandfather or great-grandfather helped Chinggis Khan during his time of need, and they were rewarded for it. As I showed in a recent publication (Atwood 2015: 167-69), the *Yuan shi*'s Chinese-language biography of Jürchedei is actually a translated abridgment of a Mongolian-language biography which was used by the Secret Historian to add details about Jürchedei's role in the battle of Qala'aljid Sands, and the conquest of the Kereyid. Jürchedei's biography also contained a recapitulation of his career placed in the mouth of Chinggis Khan, recounting his achievements and how he would reward them (*Yuan shi* 1976: 120.2962). This recapitulation is found complete and unabridged in *SHM* §208, in the original Mongolian.

We can also document how the Secret Historian also made use of similar biographies that have survived in Chinese and/or Persian translation, for example those of Je'üiyedei Cha'ur (*Yuan shi* 1976: 123.3022), Botu of the Ikires (*Yuan shi* 1976: 2921-22), and of the Uyghur *Iduqut* or king (Atwood 2013b). Other historians made use of biographies of other persons who were ignored by the Secret Historian, such as the Tangut Chaghān (*Yuan shi* 1976: 120.2955-57), the Kitan Shimo

Mingghan (*Yuan shi* 1976: 150.3555-57), or Ala-Qus *Digid-Quri* and the rulers of the Öng'üt (Atwood 2014).[10] It is this uneven use of biographical material which helps explain why some persons are very prominent in the *SHM*, while others who in other histories were equally well-known are virtually ignored. Through these biographies, the Secret Historian was also able to extend the narrative back from the year 1202, the first date mentioned in the known early narratives into 1201 and beyond. Thus the Secret Historian's account of the battle of thirteen *küre'ens* (*SHM* §129) was probably drawn at least partially from the biography of Botu, while the great battle with Jamugha after he was raised as Gür-Qan was synthesized from the biography of Je'üriyedei Cha'ur and other biographies and narrative sources, each contributing names of the members of the coalition against Chinggis Khan which thus grew to an unrealistically vast roster of virtually every significant figure in the Mongolian plateau at the time.

Finally, as I have mentioned, these biographies seem to have frequently contained speeches or third person statements summarizing the person's achievements and describing how they were honored. These statements were taken by the Secret Historian and strung together after the list of commanders of a thousand to form the lengthy account of the rewards given to meritorious vassals or "old slaves" (*ötögü bo'ol*)[11] of Chinggis Khan in *SHM* §§203-23.

Genealogies and the Secret History of the Mongols

But the biographies of the meritorious vassals contained little or nothing about their subjects' ancestors and actions before Chinggis Khan, since only those actions that assisted the dynastic founder would become the basis for family privilege. For the period from Chinggis Khan's remotest ancestor to his own family, the Secret Historian could pick from a number of genealogies. In a 2012 paper, I documented that at least five other genealogies of Chinggis Khan's ancestors are known to have circulated in addition to Chinggis Khan's one, genealogies that had from seven to ten generations between him and Bodonchar—who was sometimes title Bodonchar the Fool and sometimes Bodonchar Qa'an. Among these genealogies was the famous *Altan debter* which as Kim Hodong and I independently demonstrated was not a history, still less as Rashīd al-Dīn misleading claimed a major source for the rise of the Mongols, but merely a genealogy going from Alan Gho'a and her husband Dobun Mergen down to Chinggis Khan and his brothers (Kim 2013: 95-96; Atwood 2012: 29-33). At least one other genealogy existed as well which included an "antediluvian" genealogy preceding Dobun Mergen taking the line back to Grey Wolf and Fallow Doe. The *SHM*'s genealogy is clearly composite, combining directly or indirectly three precursor genealogies, each with their own eponymous apical ancestors—Grey Wolf and Fallow Dow (§1), Borjigidai Mergen and Monggholjin Gho'a (§3)), and Alan Gho'a and the Yellow Dog who impregnated her (§§17-22).

[10] The Mongolian original of Chaghān's *Yuan shi* biography was also used by Rashīd al-Dīn, while Shimo Mingghan's biography was used in the compilation of the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan.*

[11] On this term, and its relevance to Mongolian-language biographical literature, see Atwood 2013a: 236-43.

Constructing a satisfying narrative from a mere genealogical chart might seem impossible but the surviving Chinese and Persian genealogies of the Mongol imperial family add a number of narrative notes to the names in the genealogy (Atwood 2012).[12] Since these notes are found in both Chinese and Persian versions of the genealogies, it is not unlikely that they derived this feature from the Mongolian originals from which they were assembled. From such narrative notes, these notes a narrative type history could be, and evidently was, constructed by the Secret Historian; other genealogists and historians constructed such narratives as well independently.[13]

The Keshigten Section and the Secret History of the Mongols

Another element in the SHM are documents outlining the new government. Of these at least three separate documents may be identified. One is the list of commanders of a thousand. Kim Hodong (2013) has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that Rashīn al-Dīn's similar such list was compiled by the historian from his own data. As a result it is consistent with the rest of his history and contains numerous parallels. But comparison of the *SHM*'s list in §202 with the history's main narrative and the rewards for the meritorious vassals following shows that this list is clearly independent from the main line of the *SHM's* narrative, differing radically in implicit sequence of importance from that advocated by the rest of the history, and including numerous figures, including important imperial sons-in-law, who are never mentioned in the history.

Another separate source is the list of cities in *SHM* §263. In the first half, the appointment of "overseers" for the cities of the West in noted, with the term for "overseers" given as *daruġačin*, while in the second half of the passage, Yalavach and Masqud are mentioned by name with a list of the cities in the Central Asian area. In this part of the passage, the term for "overseer" is given as *daruġas*, an alternate plural form. The beginning of §263 is closely paralleled in the *Veritable Record* in a passage that seems to derive from the S Source, which was also used by the Secret Historian (see above). The use of a different form of the same term *daruġa* shows that what we are dealing with is not just the *Veritable Record* giving an abbreviated summary of the *SHM*, but rather the *SHM* stitching together two sources on the same topic, one of which was also known to and cited later by the compilers of the *Veritable Record*, and the other of which was only used by the Secret Historian. This second source is of interest as it appears to have been focused on Central Asia and may have been written in the Chaghadaid Khanate.[14]

The statutes of the *keshigten* found in *SHM* §§224-29, 230-34, and with largely verbatim repetition in §278, are another case of an independent document which must

[12] See the *Yuan shi* 1976: 107.2705-10, and the *Shu'āb-I Panjgāneh* of Rashīd al-Dīn.

[13] I attempt a tentative reconstruction of how these notes might have produced the pre-Chinggisid narrative of the *Yuan shi* (1976: 1: 1-3), in Atwood 2012: 44-48.

[14] One might associate this text with the history written by Wazir, Chaghadai's advisor, whom Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 154-55) says wrote a detailed history of Chinggis Khan's conquests. However, the passage in the *SHM* elevates the status of Yalavach and Masqud by pushing their appointment back to the days of Chinggis Khan (falsely, in fact). Since Wazir had very bad relations with Yalavach (Rashīd al-Dīn 1971: 156), this would be unlikely in a work he authored.

have been incorporated into the text as it developed. The reference to two otherwise unknown incidents, the seizure of Eljigidai for walking behind the imperial *ordo* (§§229, 278; Choimaa 2002: 147) and the previous selection of 400 quiverbearers (*SHM* §225; Choimaa 2002: 142) is a classic sign of a source block that has been removed from its original context. The fact that one of these same allusions (that of Eljigidei) appears in the annals of Chinggis Khan in §229 and in those of Öködei in §278, indicates that a single source was used to provide material on the *keshigten* rules and commanders for both Chinggis Khan and for Öködei Qa'an. If that is the case, then since this source block provides information both on earlier sets of commanders under Chinggis, and later ones under Öködei, then it can only be a document pertaining to Öködei's reign that also described the previous dispositions under Chinggis Khan. This is confirmed by the fact that Eljigidei is made supreme commander of the guards under Öködei Qa'an. This fact would explain why Eljigidei's previous delict was worth mentioning as a warning to the night guards—but the Secret Historian committed an anachronism, by assigning one of those references to that episode to Chinggis Khan's reign. Such a document on the organization of the *keshigten* appears to be one of many such legislative documents that were attributed to Öködei's reign. Others appear in *SHM* §§279-80, and in the *Yuan shi* (1976: 2.29, 33). That a single document, originally pertaining to Öködei, was split up and partly assigned to Chinggis Khan and partly to Öködei demonstrates clearly the untenability of the idea that the account of the reign of Öködei was a secondary addition.

Poetry in the Secret History of the Mongols

This review of the documentary sources shows that while most of the *SHM* probably had some written precursor, there was nothing like a proto-*SHM,* that is, a precursor text covered more or less the same period and topics as the *SHM.* None of the reconstructed sources had anything like its sweep and scope. There are also large sections which appear to have no parallel in the attested sources, except where those sources seem to rely directly or indirectly on the *SHM* itself. These include some of the most vivid and striking of the *SHM*'s narratives, including virtually the entire story of Temüjin's early family life, the campaign to recover Börte from the Merkid, the most characteristic parts of the Jamugha story, the death of Teb Tenggeri, the succession debate, and the quarrels between Batu and his cousins during the great Western campaign.

Moreover with only two exceptions, the *SHM's* poetic passages cannot be paralleled in any other Mongol-empire era document. One exception is Tolui's parting poetic words in §272, which are found in a rather prosaic translation in Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 167). In Rashīd al-Dīn, this text is associated with an encomium of Tolui and his wife Sorghaqtani Beki that probably accompanied the granting of a posthumous title by his son Möngke Qa'an in 1252 (see Atwood, in press).[15]

Another poetic passage quoted elsewhere is that in *SHM* §238 (Choimaa 2002: 152), where they Uyghur Ïduqut uses this to describe his submission to Chinggis KhaN:

[15] I would like to thank my student Ms. Alice Seddon for pointing this out in a brilliant seminar paper on poetry in the Öködei section of the *SHM.*

E'ülen arilju	As when clouds melt,
Eke naran üjegsen metü	mother sun may shine
Mölsün arilju	As when ices melt,
Mören usu oluqsan metü	river water is found

The *SHM* passage on the submission of the Ïduqut is closely parallel to that found in three other texts: 1) *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan,* 2) the later service biography of the Uyghur royal house composed in Chinese by Yu Ji (Huang 1983), and 3) the *Yuan shi* biography of the Uyghur house (*Yuan shi* 1976: 122.2999-3002). All three derive from a single source, a Mongolian language biography of the house rewritten after the family was purged in the wake of Möngke Qa'an's ascension to the throne in 1251 (Atwood 2013b: 330-35). That this Mongolian-language biography had the poem is evidenced by its paraphrase in the parallel section of the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan*. But the couplet also appears in Chinese translation the *Yuan shi* biography of Botu (*Yuan shi* 1976: 118.2921), where Botu speaks it to Chinggis Khan to announce his pledging of allegiance. Clearly this couplet was associated with episodes where vassals find their true lord, and as such could be put in the mouth of more than one vassal.

Yet the poetry plays a crucial role in linking up, as I have demonstrated above, those repeated narrative episodes that concerned family dynamics of fratricide and matrifocal filiality that show no trace in any of the *SHM*'s sources. In other words, although the poetry was largely conventional it was employed to highlight precisely those themes that were most original with the Secret Historian. But since those original themes depart from and presuppose the existing narrative structure derived from the written sources incorporated largely verbatim into the work, the link of poetry to these themes indicates that contrary to the usual assumption the poetic portions are the last stratum added to the *SHM* not some original textual material. In other words, the prose was written first and the poetry added later.

If many of these sections on Chinggis Khan's family life were written by the Secret Historian without any written documents, where did they come from? Were they simply created out of the historian's imagination? While imagination certainly played a role, there is good circumstantial evidence that the Secret Historian interviewed at least persons, all of whom are said to have been alive during the reign of Möngke Qa'an: Naya'a, Shiki Qutughu, and one or more of the *qatud* (ladies) of Jochi Qasar, Chinggis Khan's younger brother (Atwood 2007b).[16] Naya'a in particular is said to have boasted that he remembered eating meat at Chinggis Khan's wedding feast with Börte. Naya'a, Shiki Qutughu, and Qasar are all given a quite favorable treatment, yet one which in the case of Shiki Qutughu coexisted with the most astounding errors of chronology, errors that are flatly incompatible with Shiki Qutughu having had any part in *writing* it himself. Evidently the Secret Historian collected stories and anecdotes from them, but at least in the case of Shiki Qutughu these elders never had a chance to correct the resulting narrative.

[16] See Rashiduddin 1998-99: 105, 162-63 (Naya'a), 47 (Shiki Qutughu), and 135 (Qasar's ladies), for the specific citations.

What Is the Genre of the Secret History of the Mongols?

In light of this composition process we can address the question, what was the genre of the *SHM*? Is it, as its name suggests, just a "history" (which in Middle Mongolian was *tobčiyan*)? Or is it an "epic chronicle" or some other form of mixture of history and epic? Or is it a "pseudo-historical novel"? The source-critical analysis I have summarized offers crucial evidence needed to illuminate this difficult question in the form of rich data on how the Secret Historian handled the historical source which were used in making the *SHM.*

From this data we have a very paradoxical picture of a writer making seemingly arbitrary use of what were undoubtedly historical sources. If a historian is someone who is in dialogue with and uses the work of other historians, the Secret Historian is undoubtedly a historian. Yet in comparing the Secret Historian's methodology to that of either the editors of the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* or to the compilers of the later Mongolian 17th century chronicles we see one very great difference, which is the willingness of the Secret Historian to simply alter the text. One example will suffice. In §158, the Secret Historian draws on the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* to record how Chinggis Khan and Ong Qa'an together waged war on Buyruq Qa'an, the ruler of the western half of the Naiman (the Küchügür Naiman) kingdom. This section repeats verbatim the account of the Naiman general Yedi Tobluq at Qïzïl-Bash. This account is found in identical words (taking into account the Chinese and Persian translations of our extant witnesses) and in identical position in the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan.* But in the first half of this account, the Secret Historian adds something else:

Uluġ Taġ-un Soġoġ Usun-a büküi-tür kürcü Buyruġ Qan bayildun yadaju Altai daban ködölbe Soġoġ-Usun-aca Buyruġ Qan-i nekejü Altai daba'ulun	... coming up when he was at Soghoq River of Ulugh Tagh, Buyruq Qan was unable to fight him and went over the Altai Range. From the Soghoq River he chased Buyruq Qan across the Altai Range ...

But in the *Veritable Record* the parallel passage is placed not around 1202 as here, but as part of the final conquest of the Naiman land in 1206—Buyruq Qa'an is captured but his nephew Küchülüg flees with Toqto'a to the Irtysh River. Now textually and geographically, this links up with a parallel passage in the *SHM* §198 where Küchülüg Qa'an and Toqto'a of the Merkid pass by the Buqtarma on the way to the Irtysh. Now, geographically, the Soghoq is the Sogoo of today and its tributary the Ikh Oigor River in modern Ulaankhus *Sum*, Bayan-Ölgii. Through the Ulaan Dawaa "Red Pass" this valley links to the headwaters of the Buqtarma. But the attack on Yedi Tobluq took place well to the south through Bulgan *Sum* into the Ürünggü valley of Xinjiang. Since the *Veritable Record* account fits into a coherent geography, while the *SHM* does not, we can conclude that the *Veritable Record* has preserved the original placement in what was the "Indictment Narrative Continuation," recording the fall of the Naiman kingdom.

So by following the Veritable Record we can reunite the pieces split up by the Secret Historian:

Uluġ Taġ-un Soġa'u Usun-a [siba'ulaju] bükü-tür kürcü Buyruġ Qan bayildun yadaju [bariqdalu'a] [Tere cak-tur,] Naiman-u Kücülük Qa'an ulus-iyan abqa'ulju tere dayijiju ġaruqsa'ar cö'en kü'ün Merkid-ün Toqto'a qoyar neyilejü Ertis-ün Buqdurma huja'ur-a qamtutcu cerig-iyen jasaju aju'ui	[Chinggis Khan] arrived when he was *hawking* at Sogha'u Usu. Buyruq Qa'an was unable to fight and *was captured. At that time*, Küchülüg Qa'an of the Naiman left his people to be captured. And as he left in revolt, he and a Toqto'a of the Merkid, just a few peple, met and joining together at the Irtysh river's Buqdurma mouth, dressed their army's ranks.

From this we can see how the Secret Historian modified the passage. First of all a single campaign was broken up into two references, and since the passage about Buyruq Qa'an was attached to a point where he had not yet disappeared from the scene, he could not be captured yet, but had to be allowed to flee. Finally, the falconing was eliminated. Why were these changes made? The main effect was to simplify the conquest of the Naiman and the roster of characters. Buyruq Qan was now made to appear only in §§141-158, well before Küchülüg appeared on the scene. He is conquered and done with. Then Küchülüg appears with his father Tayang Qa'an in §193-94; his father is killed and the Küshülüg is chased down. The confusing reality that the Naiman had two co-existing rulers—Tayang Qa'an in the east and Buyruq Qa'an in the west is eliminated. The brief account of Chinggis Khan and Ong Qa'an's campaign against Yedi Tobluq was fleshed out more details, although the new details did not add to the coherence for anyone familiar with the geography of the Altai region.

The procedure here is an extremely strange mix of textual fidelity and freedom. The Secret Historian made extensive use of existing source materials, usually citing them as a verbatim. To this extent, the Secret Historian's procedure resembled a historian within a culture where verbatim citation is accepted, indeed validated. For example, the editor of the *LAT* took the *SHM* text and simply added in material from the *Cinggis Qa'an-u Altan tobci* and other sources, but without altering the relative order of the pieces. If, as Sh. Choimaa and other scholars have done, you take the *SHM* passages out from the *LAT* and arrange them in the order in which they are found in the *LAT* then the order is exactly the same as it is in the Chinese transcribed version. Similarly with the passages in the *LAT* from the *Cinggis Qa'an-u Altan tobci.* Rashīd al-Dīn emphasized that the historian's job is to quote reliably transmitted documents; if the documents have errors then that is not the historian's responsibility but that of the original documents. There will be some rewriting and editing and organizing to make the potentially tedious material more interesting, but essentially to him, history was a matter of responsibly sewing together historical records. "If [the historian] makes any change therein according to his own imagination, it will become positively worthless and incorrect" (Rashiduddin 1998: 8). Likewise the great eleventh century Chinese historian Sima Guang "took pains to use as few words of his own as possible,

producing a mosaic of patches culled from all available sources" (Fang 1965: xviii).

But the Secret Historian, however, evidently disagreed. In culling material from various sources, the Secret Historian did not simply place the disparate material in order and interlard it with other material, but felt free to change the relative order and content of materials, apparently "according to his own imagination" as Rashīd al-Dīn disapproving put it. And then on top of that reorganization, the Secret Historian used interviews with figures like Naya'a who were widely seen as unreliable and both introduced their narratives into the written record[17] and even created episodes more or less out of whole cloth, such as the campaign to rescue Börte Üjin from the Merkid, an episode about which I agree with Yoshida Jun'ichi in seeing as more or less completely fictitious (Yosida 2005: 107-08).

Where did the Secret Historian learn this attitude towards the existing sources? Scholars from Pelliot onwards have suggest that the narrative of the *SHM* owes its freedom from historically documented fact to its epic qualities (Pelliot and Hambis 1951: 376; de Rachewiltz 2004; Fujii 2013), and while there are certainly aspects of the *SHM* that recall narrative poetry, the actual narrative stance of the *SHM* is not just non-epic, but may even termed anti-epic.

Of course, comparing the *SHM* to Mongolian or Turkic epics is very problematic anyway, since even the very existence of epics among the Altaic speaking peoples at this time is merely hypothetical. But the *SHM* shows a considerable number of motifs found in later Turco-Mongolian epics from the blood clot found in the hands of the hero to alliterative phrases found in later epics, for example that in §245: "Since the brown earth was the size of a soil clod/since the sea was the size of a stream." Yet such motifs and poetical formula could easily be derived from other folk poetical genres other than epic narratives, and indeed parallels to the §245 couplet are common in fire prayers and other forms of ritual literature (Atwood 1996: 125-26).

Yet comparison with epics, both in the classic Greek tradition and in the contemporary Turco-Mongolian one suggest several areas of sharp contrast between epic modes of narrative and the *SHM.* Working with concepts of the epic as defined by literary critics Erich Auerbach and Mikhail Bakhtin, the epic as found in the contemporary Turco-Mongolian tradition may be defined by the 1) exteriority; 2) the adventure chronotope, 3) absence of irony. By contrast, the *SHM* may be defined by its distinctive 1) interiority; 2) progressive chronotope; and 3) irony. I have dealt with these issues elsewhere in as yet unpublished papers, but I will summarize these distinctions here briefly.

Exteriority and interiority refer to the representative of the mental life of the protagonists. M.M. Bakhtin (1981: 133, 136, 143) identified exteriority as a particular characteristic of classical art and literature (which feature for him includes both Greek drama and epic). "For the classical Greek, every aspect of existence could be seen and heard... A mute internal life, a mute grief, mute thought, were completely foreign to the Greek" (Bakhtin 1981: 134). Similarly, in the famous chapter 1 of his *Mimesis*, Auerbach, like Bakhtin, emphasizes the exteriority of the Greek classical epic, in

[17] See for example, *SHM* §§197-98. The bulk of this account may be resolved into a small number of citations from source documents also quoted elsewhere. But the material on Naya'a has no parallel elsewhere and evidently derives from his own recollections.

this case the *Odyssey*, which he phrases in terms of absolute foreground. Despite the moving back and forth between vivid and extended similes and the equally vivid description of in the narrated time, and episodes reported in indirect speech, "any such ... procedure, creating a foreground and a background, resulting in the present lying open to the depths of the past, is entirely foreign to the Homeric style; the Homeric style knows only a foreground, only a uniformly illuminated, uniformly objective present" (Auerbach 2003: 7).

By contrast one can say that in the *Secret History*, the most important parts of life, the most important griefs, the most important thoughts are *always* expressed by silence. When Chinggis Khan's half-brother knows he is about to be killed, he speaks a warning and then "sat down with his legs crossed and waited" until he is shot dead by his half-brothers (§79). At key moments, Chinggis Khan is silent, leaving his thought processes only to be guessed at, if not completely opaque. In the wrestling match between Böri Böke and Belgütei, the climactic moment comes when Böri has thrown the match and Belgütei looks to his brother for guidance. Rather than speak, Chinggis Khan bits his lower lip (*ilükei-iyen ja'uba*)—Belgütei understands and breaks Böri's back (*SHM* §140; Choimaa 2002: 87). In the great confrontations over Teb Tenggeri, Chinggis Khan says to his enraged mother only that he shall back away (*icuya*), something he repeats after Teb Tenggeri is killed and his brothers menace the khan. To Börte's passionate plaint he says nothing but to tell his younger brother to do as much as he can. Throughout this crisis Chinggis Khan's thinking is nowhere directly expressed in words (*SHM* §§245-46; Choimaa 2002: 159-64). And in the great debate over the succession as Jochi and Cha'adai are about to attack each other in his presence, "Chinggis Khan was listening and sat speechless." (*Cinggis Qa'an sonoscu sem sa'un bui*; *SHM* §254) Just as striking are the cases where speech is given and no one understands, such as the enigmatic saying of Jamugha, which again reduces Chinggis Khan to silence before his wife Börte interprets the word as the beginning of a plot (§118; Choimaa 2002: 67). The *SHM* fits the pattern which Erich Auerbach discerned based on the narrative of the Hebrew Bible. In these works, unlike the classic Greek epic, the use of speech serves not "to externalize thought—on the contrary it serve to indicate thoughts which remain unexpressed" (Auerbach 2003:11). As a result, the characters show an interior "multilayerdness" (Auerbach's term) that is foreign to the epic genre.

This interiority is amplified by the sense of direction which is such a prominent part of the *SHM* chronotope. The concept of "chronotope," or the distinctive time and space emplacement of a narrative work, was explored by M.M. Bakhtin in his "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel (Bakhtin 1981: 84-258)." In this lengthy essay, Bakhtin characterizes particular relations of time and space and how they shape particular notions of the self. Of particular relevance here are the Adventure Chronotope and the Biographical Chronotope. The adventure chronotope is "a *technical, abstract connection between space and time*, by the *reversibility* of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their *interchangeability* in space." (Bakhtin 1981: 102). To this chronotope corresponds a particular self who "endures the game fate plays ... and emerges from this game, from all these turns and chance, with his *identity* absolutely unchanged" (Bakhtin 1981: 105).

In contrast to this Adventure Chronotope was the typical biographical chronotope, focused on the public square or *agora*. It was in writing and speech directed to this public square that the "examination of a citizen's whole life was accomplished, and received its public and civic stamp of approval" (Bakhtin 1981: 131-32). Growing out of this chronotope of the public square was a biographical literature characterized (although in a different way than the epic) by thoroughgoing exteriority, resulting in the impossibility of mute internal life, the identity of internal speech and external speech and of autobiography and biography. This exteriority was not isolated but existed for the public to which person belonged: "the unity of a man's externalized wholeness was of a *public* nature" (Bakhtin 1981: 132-35, quotation on p. 135) These works employ a biographic time that *discloses* character, but "becoming" or growth does not happen with that time. "Character itself does not grow, does not change, it is merely *filled in*: at the beginning it is incomplete, imperfectly disclosed, fragmentary; it becomes *full* and well-rounded only at the end" (Bakhtin 1981: 141). Regardless of the different type of biography, "From the very first strokes (the first manifestations of character) the firm contours of the whole are already predetermined, and everything that comes later distributes itself within these already existing contours..." (Bakhtin 1981: 142).

This chronotope was also characteristic of the Mongolian imperial biographies which were used by the Secret Historian. As service biographies organized by families, these biographies exemplify perhaps even better than the examples he had to hand what Bakhtin characterized as another chronotope of Greco-Roman biography, the "Roman patrician family" which "precisely as a family fuses directly with the state ... Self-consciousness organizes itself around the particularized memory of a clan and ancestors, while at the same time looking towards future descendants... This made even autobiographical consciousness public and historical, national" (Bakhtin 1981: 137, 138).

As we have them today, loosely translated and reworked into Chinese or Persian, these family biographies share a distinct chronotope. Since not merely the individual, but even the multi-generational family does not fundamentally change, specific chronology is, while being internally marked to some degree, inessential to the actual development of the characters. Their family's character unfolds as a development of their original attitude to Chinggis Khan. In both Persian and Chinese version, however, the chronotope includes an important component of spatial motion from "there," Mongolia, to "here" the court of the Mongols in either China or in Iran. This same chronotope involves the origin within an "ethnographic" context, amid customs and geographical features which might need explaining, into a purely historical context, in which everything is as the historian expects and hence needs no explaining.[18] The chronotope of the Mongolian imperial historical biographies are thus quite similar to what Bakhtin identified as characteristic of the Greco-Roman biographical literature, but with a different temporo-spatial movement, going from a distant, simple, dramatic

[18] Such ethnographic asides might be mostly due to the Persian and Chinese historians from whose hands we have received later more literary versions, but that Mongolian-language writers at the Yuan court did include such notes in their works I have already demonstrated with regard to the Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan.

and sometimes folkloric then and there to a fully historical but less dramatic here and now. But apart from this movement from Mongolia out to the present, the passage of time does not entail any dramatic sense of movement within any one person's life. As an emblem of this, titles like Chinggis Khan and Ong Khan, while given at particular points in time to mark particular moments of political change, are used in the histories throughout as if their bearers had always held that position.

In the *Secret History*, however, there is a very different chronotope, one in which temporal movement from family to clan to state coexists with spatial localization in zones emanating from the yurts and campsites in Mongolia through a "near abroad" of tributary states to a military frontier of conquered realms. This chronotope in the *SHM* is unique in Mongolian imperial historiography, setting it apart sharply from the family service biographies, and somewhat less sharply, but still clearly enough, from the annals that were sponsored under the reign of Qubilai Qa'an.

The temporal growth of the new state is emphasized by a diligent, although not fully successful, effort to avoid anachronistic terms. While other sources freely call the conqueror Chinggis Khan from the moment of his birth, the *SHM* is unique in calling him Temüjin only until his coronation (the exceptions of §§1 and 59 are undoubtedly intentional). Likewise Ong Khan is generally called To'oril Khan until granted the title *ong* in §134. (That this carefully non-anachronistic usage is not derived from the Secret Historian's sources, but was rather imposed on them by the Secret Historian is evident from his slips in the case of Ong Khan).

The *Secret History's* sharp chronotopic division between the "here" of the "those who have skirts of felt" (§§202, 203) and those who have "cities having walls of earth" (§203) is all the sharper since the history's equivalent of the public square, the "exterior real-life chronotope" of the political life being presented is the yurt and the campsite. In contrast to the extant biographical literature, which rarely if at all pictures the concrete reality of the nomadic life, in the *Secret History*, the crucial events are carefully placed in the interaction of the yurt and the camp space.

The final way in which the genre category of epic is less than helpful in reading the *Secret History*, is in the category of irony. To call the work "a glorification of the conqueror's clan for the sake of posterity,"[19] Since the time of Giambattista Vico, irony has been seen as the most civilized of the rhetorical tropes, something which the more naïve and less self-conscious epic genre does without. But irony is a key part of the *SHM*, forming another area of sharp contrast with the epic.

This difference in attitude is nicely exemplified by the treatment of athletic contests. In true epics, both Mongolian and Greek, the athletic contest, whether archery, wrestling, or horse racing, plays serves to reveal the true nature of the hero, often literally. A classic epic motif is the hero disguised as a beggar or stranger, who triumphs in the athletic competition, thus revealing both his original identity and his inherent prowess. The bow of Odysseus is a classic example of this motif in Greek epic, but it appears regularly in Mongolian epics as well.[20] Like an epic, the

[19] De Rachewiltz translation, pp. lxix

[20] See Bakhtin 1981: 104; Poppe 1979: 110, 119; Bawden 1980: 291-92. Examples from contemporary Mongolian examples include Khan Kharangui (Hangin 1998: 223 [disguise], 230-31 [victory]. 237 [hero's identity revealed], 244 [challenge], 258 [hero's victory]),

SHM has two athletic contests, both told in language seemingly original to the Secret Historian—but both of these competitions are rigged, with the stronger man being tricked by one or another of Chinggis Khan's brothers into throwing the match or lured into an ambush by stronger men and being summarily killed (§§140, 245; Choimaa 2002: 87, 162). It can hardly be coincidence that this corruption of sport precisely caps the moment of the final destruction of two hostile houses, the Yörkin and the Qongqotan. Likewise within the family, both Chinggis Khan's younger brother Jochi Qasar and his eldest son Jochi are both claimed to be superior as archers and athletes, yet both end up deprived of much of their rights by brothers who exceed them in intelligence or attention to detail (§§244, 254; Choimaa 2002: 157-59). Nor was this crude demonstration of the superiority of a calculating brain over simple and honest brawn compelled by the tradition. In all of these cases, the histories attest other, less cynical versions of how these members lost much of their rights, which the Secret Historian did not adopt. Thus Rashīd al-Dīn records a version of the killing of Teb Tenggeri in which Chinggis Khan explicitly orders Qasar to kill Teb Tenggeri and the latter uses his great strength to win a legitimate wrestling victory over his rival (Rashiduddin 1998: 90). This would be a truly epic rendering of the event—simple motivation, thought truly exteriorized as word, and physical strength congruent with moral righteousness. But the Secret Historian rejects this version and substitutes for it one where Chinggis Khan's motivation is opaque, where he never says what he wants, and where Teb Tenggeri's death is the result of the physically weak Odchigin tricking him into a carefully planned ambush by three of his bully boys. This telling is not just un-epic, it is a subversion of all epic values.

If we reject epic as the model of the *SHM*, what about the novel? Okada Hidehiro (1972) has called the *SHM* a "pseudo-historical novel." Prof. Okada's judgment, influenced by that of Yoshida Jun'ichi, was based primarily on the Secret Historian's willingness to "invent interesting episodes and to distort his materials for the sake of literary effect." Neither Prof. Okada nor Prof. Yoshida have placed this undoubted fact inn explicit literary-critical or genre-critical context, but there are grounds for linking the *SHM* to the works which may be called novels. As I have argued already (Atwood 2015), the final meeting of Chinggis Khan and Jamugha, presented as two rival blood brothers has many distinctive similarities with the final meeting of Alexander and Darius in the *Alexander Romance*, where they are presented as two half-brothers. Unlike the epic, for which evidence in the Mongolian of the thirteenth century is purely hypothetical, the *Alexander Romance* is attested in Mongolian translation (Cleaves 1959; Boyle 1979), as well as in Central Asian Turkic folklore (Boyle 1974, 1976).

The *Alexander Romance* (see Hägg 1983: 125-43) is a late development of what Bakhtin (1981: 259-422) calls in his "Discourse in the Novel" the "first stylistic line

Anaa Mergen Khaan (Bawden 1982: 21 [disguise], 25-29 [touching own weapons reveals hero's identity], Baldantewi Mergen Khaan (Bawden 1982: 77 [challenge], 81-83 [hero's victory], Khūrel Khaan (Bawden 1982: 99 [disguised] 113-15 [hero's victory and revelation of identity]), Altaisūmben Khūū (Bawden 1982: 153 [hero's archery defeats weakening influences, restores his strength]), Khatagardi Khaan (Bawden 1982: 185-87 [disguise, victory, revelation of identity].

of the novel" (admittedly not the more modern and classic representatives of the genre; cf. Bakhtin 1981: 375-76). This Greco-Roman novel took shape in a multilingual decentered environment, "born and shaped in the process of a free (that is reformulating) translation of others' works" (Bakhtin 1981: 378). Although such novels in the first stylistic line do not incorporate multiple languages directly, being produced in an environment without any one authoritative language, they reflect the multiplicity of language from the outside so to speak, in "a sideways glance at others' languages, at other points of view and other conceptual systems, each with its own set of objects and meanings" (Bakhtin 1981: 376). The *Alexander Romance* exemplifies this multilinguality, being found in more languages that perhaps any other ancient or medieval work that is not directly religious in nature.

The free translation and multilingual reformulating of others' works that Bakhtin saw as fundamental to the "first stylistic line" of the novel in its Greco-Roman birthplace was equally rampant in Mongol Imperial historiography. Most obviously are the cases of Persian or Chinese reformulating even of Mongol verses, such as Rashīd al-Dīn's paraphrase of Tolui's prayer to Heaven before drinking the shamanic drink, or the Chinese formulation of the couplet about the sun coming out and the ice melting put in the mouth of Botu. But there is good reason to believe that many of the initial documents on which parts of the *Secret History* were based were either written in bilingual versions, or else written in Mongolian by non-native speakers, such as the Khitayan (North Chinese) Wazir (Atwood 2007b).[21]

The *Alexander Romance* has another feature that recalls the Secret Historian as author, which is its nature as a "wild text." A "wild text" is a text which copyists feel free to alter, either by abridgment or enlargement or alteration. Through a process that is not clear but seems to involve copyists having familiarity with such a wide variety texts found in different MSS, they intuit that for this particular text strict accuracy is not expected. In other words, "wildness" is a meta-textual attribute of the text, indicating that this particular text, unlike many others, does not have a strict form. Experience with the *Alexander Romance* as a "wild text" that at least purported to be historical might possibly be the precedent for the Secret Historian's sense that the particular details of, for example, the "'Indictment' Narrative" need not be too rigidly followed. The Secret Historian would thus have precedent for feeling that if an account of Chinggis Khan and Jamugha face to face would illuminate the issues of fraternal strife then there was nothing preventing the creation of such a face to face account, even if the existing accounts precluded it..

Yet if there are clear lines of connection between novelistic works such as the *Alexander Romance* and the *SHM*, the differences are also sharp. Like many Greco-Roman novels, the *Alexander Romance* embodies the Adventure Chronotope as discussed by Bakhtin, one that differs sharply from the directional time and Mongolia-centric chronotope of the *SHM*.

And if the *SHM* was inspired by the textual freedom of "wild texts" it was itself treated by later scribes with impressive fidelity. Although the differences between

[21] As I have demonstrated the inconsistency of Chinese transcriptions in the *Shengwu qinzheng lu* is due to the work having been compiled by selecting from pre-existing bilingual Mongolian-Chinese versions of chronicle and biographical sources.

the Chinese transcribed and translated versions of the late fourteenth century and the Mongolian-transmitted versions of the text in the sixteenth-seventeenth century are significant, considering the great differences in language and historical imagination that separate the two historiographical worlds, it is clear the scribes did not treat the *SHM* itself as a "wild" text. In other words, the *SHM* was at least by some scribes seen as a fixed history, to be copied word for word. As such it was evidently being recognized as a different sort of text from the *Alexander Romance*.[22] Thus while the *SHM* was probably influenced by medieval versions of Bakhtin's "first stylistic line" of the novel, it was neither conceived of by its author, nor received by its audience as such a work. Despite all the peculiarities of the *SHM*, it appears to have been intended by its author and received by its audience as a kind of history.

What Makes the Secret History of the Mongols Special?

The SHM thus stands out from all other known works of the Mongol empire. The powerful sense of direction and destiny created by its distinctive chronotope has no parallel either in any epic or in any classical or medieval novel known to me. Moreover, the Secret Historian was in large part working against the grain of the available written sources, which did not place the family at the center of the empire, and did not draw the vivid picture of interregnum into which the "destined" line of rulers was reduced to a widow and her children on the steppe alone. The Secret Historian used the available sources extensively, but did not seem to agree with how they interpreted the history of the empire's rise.

It is this sense of a historian at war with the material which history provided that makes the *SHM* so special. Here I would like to parallel this work with Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Like the Secret Historian, Leo Tolstoy made extensive use of public documents and histories frequently cited verbatim, as he boasted in many footnotes and defenses of his work (Tolstoy 2008: 755-57, 1222). Yet he insisted that his work did not fit the existing genre categories: "What is *War and Peace*? It is not a novel, still less an epic poem, still less a historical chronicle."[23] But he broke with existing genres not out of a purely literary creativity, but from a deep dissatisfaction with how history (at least as he understood it) represented the past.

Tolstoy cited histories, but was motivated by a radical sense of the falsity of all the histories that he cited—they betrayed the true picture and, he argued, by their very nature could not avoid doing so, since they were originally written to further the illusion of great men like Napoleon being in control of events. Thus his aim was to use artistic methods, which he opposed to historical ones, to portray the true reality of the events from 1805 to 1812. Since he insisted his work based on a true and careful examination of the evidence, including, for example, a two day on-site inspection of the battle site of Borodino, he did not acknowledge that it was a novel. But since it

[22] What would a "wild" text version of the *SHM* look like? I would argue that the *Cinggis Qa'an-u Altan tobci* text is exactly such a "wild" text version of the *SHM*, bearing roughly the same relation to the *SHM* that the *Alexander Romance* does to the historical version of Alexander's life given by authors such as Arrian or Quintus Curtius.

[23] See the Appendix translating Tolstoy's 1868 article "A Few Words Apropos of the Book *War and Peace*" in Tolstoy 2008: 217.

rejected the idea of causality which Tolstoy thought implicit in all history—that great men do things that influence events—it was not a history. And since it was far from glorifying the supposedly great figures, indeed portraying them as more or less ridiculous figures pretending to command the waves they rode like flotsam, it was obviously not an epic poem either.

In the *SHM* I sense a similar struggle of the author with the material available. Works like the *Veritable Record of Chinggis Khan* treated Chinggis Khan's power and glory as simply a working out of what was inevitable from his birth. The Secret Historian was, on the contrary, committed to a distinctive vision of history in which family life, and especially women's words and brothers quarrels, constituted the central motor of history. Unlike Tolstoy, he did not doubt that ruling families truly exercised rule, but he did doubt that they did so through the kind of bureaucratic and public mechanism which historians have always tended to see as the real motors of history. But the available history did not cooperate with such a viewpoint. The Secret Historian was thus compelled to grapple with and wrestle with a set of materials produced from an entirely different point of view. In doing so the historian could not help but do violence at many points to the actual record given in the existing material. Yet the result was evidently neither intended to be, nor taken to be, a "novel," if by novel is meant a work which does not speak the truth about a situation in the historical past. Still less of course was it an epic.

The Secret Historian's aim was to show how the empire is rooted in a family, and particularly in the relations of mothers with their sons and sons with their brothers, and how it is the violence and impetuous demands of this triangular relationship of brother to brother and both to their mother that shaped the rise, fall, and regeneration of this destined empire. The available material could not serve this vision, so in the end in many of the work's most extraordinary scenes, the Secret Historian pushed the sources aside and painted the picture as in the historian's judgment it must have been. And the success of this vision is measured in the degree to which, just as today, no one can think of 1812 without thinking of Natasha Rostova, Prince Andre, or Pierre Bezukhov, so too, no one can think of Chinggis Khan without a picture of Temüjin and Qasar creeping up towards Begter as he sat on a hill watching their geldings or of Börte drawing up her quilt over her bosom as a tearful Otchigin bursts into the *ordo*. That these images have become part of history is a measure of the degree to which the explanatory genius of history cannot be rigorously distinguished from that of the novelist.

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