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The Dating of the *Secret History of the Mongols* – A Re-interpretation*

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Abbreviations

ar.	=	Arabic	mo.	=	Written (Script) Mongolian
chin.	=	Chinese	pmo.	=	Preclassical Mongolian
lat.	=	Latin	tu.	=	Middle Turkic
mmo.	=	Middle Mongolian			

Professor Christopher P. Atwood's article 'The Date of the "Secret History of the Mongols" Reconsidered' which appeared in the *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 37: 2007, pp. 1–48, is the latest contribution to the investigation of one of the most vexing problems in both Mongolian historiography and literary history. The *Secret History* is not only one of the masterpieces of Mongol literature, unique in its genre, but it is also a priceless historical document on the life of Činggis Qan (r. 1206–27) and, to a lesser extent, on that of his son and successor Ögödei Qa'an (r. 1229–41).

The colophon forming § 282 of the *Secret History*, as handed down in Chinese phonetic transliteration and translation, informs us that the writing of the work was completed in the seventh month of the Year of the Rat, when the Great Assembly (*yeke qurilta*) was convened and when the 'Palaces' (*ordos*), i. e. the qan's encampment, were established at Deli'ün Boldaq of Köde'e Aral on the Kelüren (= Kerülen) River, between two localities called Šilginček and ? (the name of the second locality is missing in the text).[1]

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* I wish to thank my friend Thomas T. Allsen of Eugene, Oregon, for having kindly checked a reference in a text not available to me at present, and Prof. C. P. Atwood of Indiana University, Bloomington, for sending me a copy of his article on the date of the *Secret History* immediately after its publication.

N. B. In transcribing Mongol names and terms in the *Secret History* and other Middle Mongolian texts, I have used the system adopted in de Rachewiltz 2006. When necessary, the corresponding form in Written Mongolian is given within round brackets. The Wade-Giles transcription of Chinese has been used here in preference to the Pinyin system in view of the fact that the former is the one employed by the vast majority of scholars in the field of Sino-Mongolistics.

[1] For the Mongol text of the colophon see de Rachewiltz 1972, p. 174, lines 12009–12011. For the translation and commentary see Cleaves 1982, p. 228, de Rachewiltz

Since the second half of the 19th century, Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars have tried to identify the problematic Year of the Rat (*quluqana jil*) of the colophon, opting for one or the other of the following possible years: 1228, 1240, 1252, 1264 and 1324.[2] For a long time 1240 was the favourite choice, to be eventually challenged by 1228, 1252, 1264 and 1324, with 1228 finally prevailing. The Year of the Rat 1324 found few supporters being regarded, *inter alia*, as too late a date.

The main argument against the years of the Rat 1240 and 1264 was that a Great Assembly at Köde'e Aral in the seventh month of those years is not recorded in our sources and that, moreover, in the case of 1264 it could not have taken place simply because the emperor, i. e. Qubilai Qa'an (r. 1260–94) was elsewhere at the time.[3]

The Year of the Rat 1252 was first proposed by René Grousset in 1941 and promptly rejected by Paul Pelliot, mainly also on the ground that no Great Assembly was held in the seventh month (7 August – 5 September) of that year at Köde'e Aral.[4] In the following decades, the Year of the Rat 1228, first mooted by Ting Chien 丁謙 in 1901 and then strongly reproposed and defended by Uemura Seiji 植村清二, Gerhard Doerfer, Paul Ratchnevsky and myself in the 1960s, found general acceptance.

The adoption of 1228 rested on the assumption that the original text of the *Secret History*, the so-called *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur* (*The Origin of Činggis Qan*), ended with the death of Činggis Qan in 1227, as recorded in § 268, and that after the subsequent addition of the section on Ögödei Qa'an (§§ 269–281) the original colophon was transferred to the end of the chronicle.[5] However, we know that the Great Assembly that elected Činggis Qan's third son Ögödei (r. 1229–41) at Köde'e Aral was held in August-September of the Year of the Ox 1229 – Ögödei being enthroned on 13

2006, pp. 218, 1038–44, n. 282, and xxix–xxxiv. Cf. Mostaert 1953, pp. [258]–[265]. For the terms *qurilta* and *yeke qurilta* see the discussion further on. For the term *ordo*, pl. *ordos* 'the Palaces' = the qan's encampment, see below, n. 50. In the present instance, the plural form *ordos* is a plural of respect (on which see de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. 226, 951, 964) employed because the *ordo* in question at Köde'e (~ Ködö'e) Aral had been Činggis Qan's main encampment. Cf. nn. 50 and 57 below, and further on my comments on this site. Atwood 2007, p. 31, translates *ordos* with 'palace tents', thus equating *ordo* with *ordo ger* 'palace tent' (see the *Secret History*, §§ 123, 177, etc.; Haenisch 1962, p. 125) which I think is not the case here.

[2] Cf. de Rachewiltz 1965, pp. 185–9; de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. xxix–xxxiv; Atwood 2007, pp. 2 ff.

[3] See de Rachewiltz 1965, pp. 194–5; de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. xxxii–xxxiii, and lxxxv, n. 39.

[4] See de Rachewiltz 1965, p. 187, n. 12, and 188, n. 15; de Rachewiltz 2006, p. xxx.

[5] See *ibid.*, pp. xxxi–xxxii.

September - not in the previous Year of the Rat.[6] This one-year discrepancy was then accounted for as follows. The *SWCCL* has an entry to the effect that Ögödei, then still the Heir Apparent, went from his apanage at Qubaq, i. e. the region of the Qobaq and Emil rivers in present-day northern Sinkiang, to Köde'e Aral, where he 'held an assembly' (*hui* 會) in the autumn (12 August - 7 November) of 1228. It was perhaps on this occasion that the *Secret History* was put down in writing.[7] A more likely explanation, however, is that the 'Year of the Rat' of the colophon is a conflation of the Year of the Rat (1228) and the Year of the Ox (1229), as not only the *Secret History* but also the Persian historian J̌uvainī (? 1226-83), and even the later Mongol chronicler Saγang Sečen (1604-?) all place the election of Ögödei in 1228, not in 1229.[8] This blatant and curious error in chronology may have been due to the fact that the Great Assembly was called or convened (as custom required) for 1228, i. e. directly after Činggis' demise, allowing for all the princes, military commanders, etc., to proceed from wherever they happened to be to the meeting place on the Kerulen but, owing to internal dissentions and possibly other causes, the *yeke qurilta* was not actually held until 1229. Whatever the cause of the error (to which I shall return), UEMURA et al. take the Year of the Rat 1228 at its face value and ascribe the compilation of the *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur* to that year, regarding the section on Ögödei as a later addition.

The revival of the Year of the Rat 1252 was initiated by Professor Yü TA-CHÜN 余大鈞 (YU DAJUN) with an article published in 1982, the main thrust of the author's argument being that the *Secret History* contains anachronisms and politically motivated incidents which are obviously tendentious, and which could not have been written while Ögödei and his son and successor Güyük (Güyüg, r. 1246-48) were on the throne. With regard to the thorny problem that there is no recorded Great Assembly in the seventh month of 1252, Yü was forced to re-interpret the text of the colophon as meaning that the writing of the *Secret History* was completed 'after the great *qurilta* had been held' instead of 'at the time when the great *qurilta* was assembled'.[9]

As I pointed out in my review of Yü's article, this last point is crucial in so far as Yü's interpretation is linguistically unacceptable - the text cannot mean what he forces it to mean. Yü's theory must, therefore, be rejected, his argument being invalidated also by the fact that an important event

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[6] See *SWCCL*, 79b; *YS* 2, p. 29.

[7] See *SWCCL*, 79b. Cf. DE RACHEWILTZ 1986-87, p. 308 (where in line 9 add '1228' after 'December'); DE RACHEWILTZ 1993-94, pp. 4-5.

[8] See DE RACHEWILTZ 1986-87, p. 302.

[9] See Yü 1982.

relating to the Mongol campaign against the Solangqas, i. e. the Koreans, described in § 274 occurred in 1258. Furthermore, if the *Secret History* had been written in 1252, why is there no mention in it of Ögödei's death in 1241, and of the subsequent events *including* Möngke's own enthronement in 1251?[10]

Recently, however, Yü's old and quite discredited theory has been given a new lease of life by Professor Atwood in the above-mentioned article.

After a short introduction on the *Problematik* of the *Secret History* and its textual history (pp. 1-5), Atwood reconsiders the date of compilation of the work enlarging considerably on Yü's interpretation. This he does by listing many more instances of anachronisms in the text which are found in all the three parts into which Atwood has divided the work for the purpose. These are: Part I (§§ 1-246), Part II (§§ 247-268) and Part III (§§ 269-282). Part I covers the ancestors and the rise of Temüǰin/Činggis Qan up to ca. 1210; Part II, the foreign conquests of the Mongols and Činggis' death, i. e. from 1211 to 1227; Part III, Ögödei's reign from 1228 (!) to ca. 1240. His conclusions are that Part I must date to sometime after 1234-37; Part II was certainly not composed during Ögödei's lifetime, the earliest possible date being the accession of Möngke in 1251; and the absolute earliest possible date for Part III is likewise 1251. (Pp. 6-14.)

As the next step, Atwood attempts to show that the text of the *Secret History* in its entirety must be ascribed to the period before Qubilai Qa'an (1260-94), and that the text as handed down is a unified one, i. e. that there is a strong *continuity* between the different parts of the work which makes it unlikely that it was compiled over a period of decades. (Pp. 15-25.)

On the subject of the text of the *Secret History* incorporated in the 17th century Mongolian chronicle *Altan tobči* (*Golden Summary*) by Lubsangdanǰin (*fl.* 1700), Atwood rejects the claim by Louis Ligeti that the latter, in spite of numerous additions, deletions and interpolations *essentially* represents the original *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur*, and states that both versions (i. e. the *YCPS* and the *Altan tobči* version) were quite certainly written after Ögödei's death.[11] As for the absence in the *Altan tobči* of the entire section on Ögödei, i. e. §§ 269-281 of the *Secret History*, Atwood puts forth what he regards as the 'plausible' hypothesis that, owing to the Mongols' conversion to Buddhism in the 16th century, Lubsangdanǰin and other chroniclers of that and subsequent periods decided 'to omit superfluous quota-

[10] See de Rachewiltz 1986-87, especially p. 307.

[11] On the text of the *Secret History* in the *Altan tobči* and the *YCPS* see de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. liv-lix. For the *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur* (mmo. *Činggis Qan-u huǰa'ur*) see *ibid.*, pp. xliff., lviii. The reference to Ligeti is to Ligeti 1962 (pp. 196-200).

tions from a history that seemed filled with details both unedifying and uninteresting'. (Pp. 25–29.)

ATWOOD then discusses the arguments in favour and against the date of the colophon being 1228, and the meaning of *yeke qurilta* 'great assembly' and of *qurilta* 'assembly' *tout court*. His conclusions are that the Year of the Rat 1228 is a possible date, and that there was no rigid distinction at the time between a *yeke qurilta* and a *qurilta*. If the year 1228 for a *yeke qurilta* is a theoretically possible date, so is 1252 for an (unrecorded) *qurilta* held by Möngke at Köde'e Aral, in view of the fact that the *YS* records in the seventh month of that year some important military decisions made by the emperor, such as dispatching his brother Qubilai to campaign in China and other princes to India and the West, which would normally have called for a *qurilta*. However, on the strength of all the arguments put forth in the previous sections, 1252 is for ATWOOD the best, in fact the only possible candidate for the Year of the Rat of the colophon. The only snag is the inclusion in § 274 of the *Secret History* of an entry regarding the Mongol campaign against Korea which is definitely of 1258, i. e. post-1252. ATWOOD seeks to explain this anachronism in terms of a confusion of personal and place names which led a Qubilai-era copyist to 'correct' the text of the *Secret History*. (Pp. 30–43.)

ATWOOD concludes his article by stating that the *Secret History* 'appears in this light as a manifesto of a nativist revival under Möngke's reign, one that embraced the cult of Chinggis Qan with new fervor, turned back to the Mongol traditions, and rejected the two previous khans' patronage of Kitan and Turkic Christian advisors'. Also, 'Up until that time, we hear of the wise sayings of the imperial family being recorded by court scribes, but not of connected narrative histories..., but the 1250s seem to have formed the cusp at which the Mongolian historical narratives, previously preserved orally as stories explaining well-known judgments, wise sayings, or verses, were first reduced to writing'. (Pp. 43–44.)

ATWOOD's article is fully annotated and contains an essential bibliography ('References') comprising sixty-five titles. (Pp. 44–48.)

Professor ATWOOD's challenging paper is an impressive contribution which invites, indeed compels us to rethink the now widely accepted dating of the *Secret History* colophon, i. e. 1228. It deserves, in turn, to be critically examined. The following remarks contain the essence of a fuller discussion of the problem which I am preparing for inclusion in the forthcoming *Supplement* volume to my 2004 translation of the *Secret History*.

Before approaching the central question of the real date of the colophon, I wish to comment on the main portion of ATWOOD's thesis.

Of the fourteen 'anachronisms' cited by ATWOOD in Part I and Part II

(covering §§ 1-268 of the *Secret History*) only three, possibly four, viz. nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Part II, can in my view be retained as *genuine* anachronisms, since all the others are merely subjective inferences and interpretations, or conclusions based on an argument *a silentio* which is notoriously an unsatisfactory one.[12]

The reference in § 260 to Čormaqan's expedition (Atwood's Part II, 2) is definitely an anachronism; the account in § 251 (Part II, 3) is a conflation of events that took place in 1214-16 and 1231-32, hence also an obvious anachronism; and the statements in § 263 concerning Mahmūd Yalavač's appointment as chief administrator of North China (Part II, 4) is also completely anachronistic. However, the place names Hsüan-te fu and Tung-chang in § 247 (Part II, 7) may actually not be anachronisms for there are alternative explanations for both.[13]

All the above anachronisms (and several others not mentioned by Atwood) have been pointed out by previous investigators.[14] They can be easily explained as simple interpolations by a later hand, since the Mongol text of the *Secret History* was never published and the original manuscript, and manuscript copies[15] of it, remained 'open', as it were, for many decades and were thus liable, like all manuscripts, to intentional alterations as well as to copyist's errors and misreadings. When the manuscript was copied, the editorial changes together with the interpolations and deletions became, of course, an integral part of the new text and could no longer be recognized as such, except in the case of a 'slip' on the part of the copyist. A good example is the name/title Činggis Qan in the original manuscript of the *Secret History* which was changed to Činggis Qaγan throughout in Qubilai's time, but the copyist made a slip in § 255, where he left the origi-

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[12] Part I, 1: the different dates are simply due to the confusion between duodenary cycles. The same error in recording occurs in the case cited in Part I, 2. Part I, 3, 4 and 5: these are purely speculative inferences; furthermore, no. 5 is based on an argument *a silentio*. Part I, 6 and 7: the cases cited are irrelevant; for no. 6 see my discussion further on on *Qan* → *Qaγan* (mmo. *Qa'an*). Part II, 1: again speculative. Part II, 5: the famous ditty in § 255 quoted by Atwood presents problems that I shall discuss further on in the context of the *Altan tobči*.

[13] See de Rachewiltz 1965, p. 196, and Hung 1951, p. 489. The *Altan tobči* of Lubsangdanǰin does not help us with the name Tung-chang because its reading in the Ulan Bator ms. (*AT*, 110b16) is corrupt: Dungǰu for either Dungǰang or Dungǰing.

[14] See, for instance, the commentaries to the relevant paragraphs of the *Secret History* in M. Murakami's, L. Ligeti's and I. de Rachewiltz's translations.

[15] We know that the Ming transcribers and translators of the *Secret History*, i. e. the compilers of the *YCPS*, used at least *two* different manuscripts. See de Rachewiltz 2006, p. xlv. At least one other manuscript found its way to Mongolia and it, or a copy of it, was used by Lubsangdanǰin for his *Altan tobči*. In all likelihood all or most of these manuscripts were manuscript copies of no longer extant originals.

nal form Činggis Qan unaltered. This explains the 'anachronism' no. 6 of ATWOOD's Part I; what ATWOOD fails to mention, however, is that the substitution of the title could not have been made in the manuscript(s) under Möngke since during Möngke's reign Činggis Qan was still called as such, and not Činggis Qaγan (Qa'an).[16] Since the anachronisms in question are all found in the *Altan tobči*, we can deduce that the manuscript copy used by Lubsangdanǰin, although more complete and much closer to the original text, had also at some stage been interfered with. Unfortunately, we are completely ignorant of the state, location, (mis)handling, revising and supplementing of the *Secret History* text during the 13th and 14th centuries, but the very numerous discrepancies between the *Altan tobči* version and the *YCPS* is a clear indication of the vicissitudes the *Urtext* went through before it turned up, almost miraculously, in Mongolia in a single 17th century manuscript copy.[17]

For the present discussion I do not take into account the anachronisms listed in ATWOOD's Part III, since they concern the section on Ögödei which I regard as a later addition for reasons that will become apparent later on when I shall deal with the date of the colophon. I should add, however, that there are many divergences between the account of events in the *Secret History* and those in the *SWCCL*, Rašīd al-Dīn's *J̌āmi'al-Tavārīx* and the *YS*, and that there are, of course, also considerable divergences between these last three sources. Such discrepancies have already been noted by GROUSSET,[18] and LOUIS HAMBIS made a detailed comparative study of the same sources in a work which is still unpublished.[19] ATWOOD's Part I

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[16] As shown by J̌uvainī's *Ta'rīx-i J̌ahān-Gušā*, written between 1252 and 1260, i. e. exactly during Möngke's reign, where Činggis' name invariably appears in the form Činggiz Qān (not Qā'ān), whereas the names of both Ögödei and Möngke are followed by the title Qā'ān. The same nomenclature is adopted by Rašīd al-Dīn who, for the part of his chronicle concerning Činggis Qan, relies heavily on J̌uvainī's work and (indirectly) on the lost *Altan debter*. See below, n. 27.

[17] For a comparison of the two texts (up to § 268) see ČOǏMAA 2002, where *all* the discrepancies have been noted and which is also enriched by a splendid commentary. This work is an indispensable tool for any further research on the *Secret History* and the *Altan tobči*: at a glance one can see all the *lacunae* in the former and the original readings preserved in the latter. Cf., for example, DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, p. 324, n. 60, and ČOǏMAA 2002, p. 26

[18] See GROUSSET 1941, p. 54, n. 3 *et passim*. *Ibid.*, pp. 565–80, contains the very useful appendix 'L'ordre des faits dans le Cheng wou ts'in tcheng lou', where the differences between this text, the *Secret History*, Rašīd al-Dīn's chronicle and the *YS* are also noted.

[19] The manuscript of Hambis' comparative tables in which the author provides parallel French translations of all the relevant passages was kept in 1982 in the archives of the Centre de Recherches sur l'Asie Centrale et la Haute Asie, Instituts d'Asie, Collège de France, Paris. I do not know its present whereabouts.

and II could have been considerably improved (and revised at the same time) had he been able to consult these works, and to make fuller use of the invaluable *HCG* for §§ 59–153 of the *Secret History*.

Thus, no firm conclusion can be made from the examination of such a small selection of passages, except that the text of the *Secret History* underwent a process of revision which certainly continued well into Qubilai's reign in the second half of the 13th century and, possibly into that of his successor Temür Öljeitü (r. 1295–1307). Thanks to William Hung's painstaking research we know that from September 1262,[20] soon after Qubilai's enthronement, until 1303 there was an intense historiographical activity, involving both Chinese and Mongol scholars, and entailing 1. the search and gathering of oral and written records of the previous reigns, i. e. from Činggis to Möngke, 2. the drafting of the history of Činggis and Ögödei in Mongolian followed by the translation of the same into Chinese (the *SWCCL*, ca. 1290), and 3. the compilation of *the first part* of the Mongolian text of the history from Činggis to Möngke – the so-called *Tobčiyan* or *History* (1303) – and the Chinese translation of *the first two parts* of the *Veritable Records* of Činggis' and Ögödei's reigns (1303). The original text of the *Tobčiyan* in Mongolian and its Chinese translation are lost, but their contents was one of the main sources for the 'Basic Annals' (*pen-chi* 本紀) of Činggis (T'ai-tsu 太祖) and Ögödei (T'ai-tsung 太宗) in the *YS*.[21] We also know that the *Secret History* or, to be more precise, the revised *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur*, i. e. the *Činggis Qaγan-u uǰaγur* (mmo. *Činggis Qa'an-u huǰa'ur*), with its sequel on Ögödei's reign, were used in the preparation of 1. the Mongolian draft of the history of Činggis and Ögödei ca. 1290, and 2. the Mongolian *Tobčiyan*, the compilers of which drew heavily on it.[22]

Now, both the *Secret History* and the *SWCCL* cover the two reigns of Činggis and Ögödei,[23] but whereas the *SWCCL* ends with Ögödei's death, in the *Secret History* there is no mention of it. Why? I do not think that the *Secret History*'s silence on Ögödei's demise is due to his over-indulgence in wine (which largely accounted for it), but rather to the fact that the author of the sequel for some reason did not complete his task and left his narrative of Ögödei's reign sadly *inachevé*, as evidenced also by the brevity of the section, its poor presentation as a record of events, and its

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[20] See Hung 1951, pp. 478 and n. 105, 490–91. In fact, this activity began in 1260–61, *immediately* after Qubilai's accession, with Wang E's 王鶚 (1190–1273) recommendations for the establishment of the Department of National History (Kuo-shih yüan 國史院) within the Han-lin Academy. See *ISK*, pp. 306 ff.

[21] See Hung 1951, p. 481.

[22] See *ibid.*, pp. 479, 482. Cf. de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. xlii-xliv.

[23] See *SWCCL*, 86b–87a.

disappointing chronology.[24] This may well have happened during the two decades between Ögödei's death and the accession of Qubilai - a politically troubled time not conducive to literary activity. The anachronisms and omissions that we find in both the *Činggis Qaγan-u uǰaγur* and its sequel could in part be due to changes to the text made already in that period as indeed suggested by ATWOOD. Because of the very close correspondence between certain sections of the main text and the sequel, there is no doubt in my mind that the author of the latter was either the same person who had previously written the *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur*, or someone who had the text of this work in front of him. This would account *inter alia* for the uniformity in style and presentation in the work as a whole, as also noted by ATWOOD. I shall return to this question later.

The fact that the text of the *Secret History* underwent revisions during Qubilai's reign should not mean, as ATWOOD seems to imply,[25] that in such a case it would have necessarily been contaminated by Buddhism. Qubilai's predilection for Buddhism was not such as to induce the scholar-officials in the Department of National History to introduce Buddhist elements into the *Secret History* narrative. I regard such a suggestion as quite extraordinary: we are dealing with the 13th century and a semi-literate Mongol ruler who still remained essentially a shamanist, not with the 16th or 17th centuries when Tibetan culture and historiography permeated Mongolian society and historical writing.[26]

In the period we are concerned with - the first half of the 13th century - the Mongols had no historiographical tradition, having just acquired a script the knowledge and use of which was confined to a limited number of people, mostly secretaries and scribes (*bičečis*), the majority of whom were non-Mongols. The earlier-mentioned *Altan debter* (*Golden Book*), jealously guarded in the court archives of the Ilkhans of Persia, may have been a contemporary production or a somewhat later compilation. In any event, it appears to have been more of a genealogical history, largely concerned with the tribes and clans of Mongolia. A good deal of information drawn from it is found in Rašīd al-Dīn's work.[27] Whereas genealogy is of paramount importance for the early Mongols, chronology plays a secondary role. It is significant, in this respect, that the first date occurring in the *Secret History*

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[24] As also pointed out by Atwood in Part III, 5. See below, n. 104.

[25] ATWOOD 2007, p. 21.

[26] There is no trace of Buddhist influence in the *SWCCL* which, we must not forget, is *the translation of a Mongol chronicle into Chinese*, not a genuine Chinese composition. Both the original Mongolian work and the Chinese version were written in the middle/end of Qubilai's reign.

[27] See BARTHOLD 1968, pp. 44-5, BIRA 2002, pp. 99-101.

(§ 141) is the Year of the Hen 1201: the account of the previous thirty-five years of Činggis Qan's life, and the entire history of the Mongqol tribe before Činggis, do not contain a single date.[28] The reason for such glaring absence of a chronological framework is simple. Before the early years of the 13th century the Mongols had no writing system, hence no written records. T'a-t'a T'ung-a 塔塔統阿 (*Tata[r] Toŋa?), the Uighur seal-keeper of Tayang Qan of the Naiman, passed into Činggis Qan's service in 1204 and, in all probability, was the one who introduced the Uighur script to the Mongols.[29] By 1206 written records were kept at Činggis' *ordo*.[30] Recording events with actual dates attached to them must have started in the first decade of the 13th century, but deep-rooted oral tradition remained predominant, and the Mongols took time to convert to dating consistently, and this only under Chinese and (later) Tibetan influence. I think that the rather casual, not to say careless, attitude of the author of the *Secret History* towards chronology is only matched by his lack of interest for anything 'outside' the confines of his varied, geographically broad but still rather narrow, tribal world – the tribal world of Mongolia – including the external military campaigns and conquests. In all these matters the record is invariably sketchy and inaccurate. Therefore, we must come to the conclusion that the *Secret History*, so lacking in historicity and yet so rich and vivid as an *histoire romancée*, with its wealth of concrete details, such as proper and place names, and its total lack of magico-fantastic elements, cannot have been written primarily for 'historical' reasons, nor for mere entertainment. There is no counterpart of this genre in the oral and written literature of other nomadic people in Asia or elsewhere. What was then the author's real aim in writing it?

In Atwood's opinion, the *Secret History* appears to be 'a manifesto of a nativist revival in Möngke's reign', i. e. of a return to Mongol traditional values with a concomitant opposition to the employment (which had taken place under the previous qans) of non-Mongol advisors. A revival which also 'embraced the cult of Chinggis Qan with a new fervor'.[31]

It would be interesting, I think, to compare Atwood's conclusion with those reached many years ago on a closely related subject by two Russian historians during the Soviet period. I refer to the Sino-Mongolist Nikolaĭ C. Munkuev (a native Buriat; 1922–85) and the well-known writer Lev N. Gumilev (1912–92).[32]

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[28] Cf. Bira 2002, p. 32.

[29] See *ISK*, p. 96; de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

[30] See *ibid.*, pp. 772–3.

[31] Atwood 2007, p. 44.

[32] For these two writers see Miliband 1995, II, pp. 107b–108a, and I, pp. 349a–350a,

In the introduction to his masterly book on the inscription on the funerary stele of Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai 耶律楚材 (1189-1243) by Sung Tzu-chen 宋子貞 (1187-1267) published in 1965, MUNKUEV mentions, albeit cursorily, the tension present in Ögödei's time between the two opposing factions at the Mongol court, one represented by members of the military aristocracy upholding Mongolian traditional values and practices, i. e. the conservative, mongolocentric section of the ruling elite; the other by pragmatic officials from 'outside' mainly Kitan, Jurchen and 'Westerners' from North China and Central Asia in the service of the Mongols. The latter group, which formed a sort of braintrust of administrators and financial advisors, advocated a more rational exploitation of the conquered territories and the consequent adoption of 'alien' practices and policies.[33] This theme had already been developed by MUNKUEV in an article of 1962 which unfortunately attracted little notice outside the Soviet Union since it appeared at the height of the Cold War.[34]

Whereas MUNKUEV is chiefly concerned with the antagonism between the two parties or 'tendencies' (as he calls them) at the Mongol court in the first half of the 13th century from a political and socio-economic perspective, GUMILEV, almost certainly inspired by MUNKUEV's perceptive analysis of this phenomenon, used the latter to provide the cultural background to the formulation of his new interpretation of the genesis of the *Secret History*.[35]

In an early article published in 1970, GUMILEV expounded his theory on the 'secret' and the 'official' histories of the Mongols, claiming that the former, represented by the Mongol text preserved in the *YCPS* (in contrast to the official history represented by the *Altan debter* and the *YS*), is a politically tendentious writing. For him the *Secret History* was intended as a 'political pamphlet' (cf. ATWOOD's 'manifesto'), the aim of which was 'to put across in 1240 a particular slant on the history of the Mongols and convert his readers to a particular political concept.'[36] Analyzing the events

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respectively. (The correct spelling of the name of the second author is, of course, Gumilyov.)

[33] See MUNKUEV 1965, pp. 18, 22.

[34] See MUNKUEV 1962.

[35] I *assume* that Gumilev was influenced by Munkuev's work. Although Munkuev is not mentioned in his article of 1970 nor in its 1977 reprint (see below, n. 36), Munkuev's book on Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai (MUNKUEV 1965) is listed in the bibliography of Gumilev's book on Prester John and the *Secret History* originally published also in 1970. See GUMILEV 1987, p. 383; and p. 141, n. 21, where the author thanks Munkuev for having personally communicated to him some information concerning the Tatar-Jurchen alliance.

[36] Gumilev's 1970 article which appeared in the first edition of *TMAE* was reprinted in 1977 in the second edition of this work. The English translation was published, always in

in Mongolia in the 1230s and 1240s and, in particular, the role of the leading foreign advisors and administrators at the Mongol court, such as the Sinicized Kitan Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, the Central Asian Muslims 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Maḥmūd Yalavač, and the Nestorian Uighurs Činqai (Čingqai) and Qadaq,[37] and the absence of any reference to them but one[38] in the *Secret History*, GUMILEV draws certain conclusions with regard to the author of the *Secret History* and his aims. The author (says GUMILEV) must have been a member of the Old Mongolian Party, a man upholding 'the old Mongolian valour and hoary traditions'. For him the army and the military tradition of the Mongols were more important than the actual personality of the qan. His omission of any mention of most of the 'civil' officials in the Mongol administration who were opposed by the military faction indicates beyond doubt his party affiliations. His 'pamphlet' was written when the literati, i. e. the scholar-officials, 'encouraged by the Khan, were belittling the veterans. It was meant as propaganda for these same belittled officers. It assured them that they were the real salt of the earth, that the empire owed its existence to them. And so it had to be a secret history, for no Mongol government would ever tolerate open propaganda of such ideas'.[39]

GUMILEV's conclusions are based on a shrewd analysis of 1. the characterization of leading figures like Temüǰin/Činggis Qan, J̌amuqa, Sübe'etei Ba'atur and Ong Qan, 2. the biases in the *Secret History* narrative of events, with deliberate omissions and distortions, and 3. the style of the narrative, with its use of the pronoun 'we' replacing 'they' from § 120 (actually § 119) on, thus indicating that the author was thereafter a participant in the events. His observations lead him to interpretations which, as in the case of Činggis Qan's role and personality, are exactly the opposite of ATWOOD's conclusions.[40]

The reworked thesis put forth in GUMILEV's article forms a major section of his stimulating book on the legend of the Kingdom of Prester John published in 1970 and translated into English in 1987.[41] This need not concern us, however, because his conclusions are essentially the same as regards the political bias of the author of the *Secret History*, the date 1240 for its com-

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Moscow, in 1974. See GUMILEV 1974. My quotations are from the English translation, p. 202.

[37] On all these personages see *ISK*, 'General Index', *s.vv.*

[38] I. e., Maḥmūd Yalavač. See the *Secret History*, § 263.

[39] See GUMILEV 1974, pp. 205–6.

[40] Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 198–9, 206, and ATWOOD 2007, p. 44: 'a manifesto ... that embraced the cult of Chinggis Qan with new fervor'.

[41] See GUMILEV 1987, pp. 221–60.

position, and (as a corollary) the supposedly venerable age of the author, who must have participated in the events he relates from 1182, or more likely 1183/84.[42]

For my part, while fully acknowledging the importance of MUNKUEV's contribution to the understanding of conflicting interests among the Mongol ruling elite in the latter part of Činggis' rule and under his immediate successors,[43] I refrained from accepting GUMILEV's interpretation[44] and after having detailed my reasons, I summed up in 2004 my views on the nature of the *Secret History* as follows: 'We can safely state, I think, that the *Secret History* is, indeed, an epic chronicle rather than an heroic epic, aimed at recording not only the deeds and pronouncements of Činggis Qan, but also those of his faithful companions in a language and style that reflect the attitudes and values of contemporary Mongols. It is at the same time a glorification of the conqueror's clan for the sake of posterity, especially for his immediate successors, and the mere fact that it was *put down in writing* so soon after his death (in the form which it still largely retains) indicates, in my view, that it was also meant to serve as guide and instructions, not just as a plain record or for entertainment'.[45] As I will show later, there was also an immediate, pragmatic reason for this document being 'produced' at that particular time, and that such a pressing reason may have been the true cause of its being put down in writing.

Furthermore, I could not, and cannot agree with GUMILEV's acceptance of the date 1240 for the composition of the *Secret History* and maintained

[42] See *ibid.*, pp. 240–53. Cf. DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, pp. 443–4, n. 119.

[43] See *ISK*, pp. 159–61.

[44] See DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, p. xxxix, where I cited Gumilev's thesis as another hypothesis concerning the author of the *Secret History*. My reason for rejecting Gumilev's overall assessment, which I did not discuss in my book, was (and still is) that I do not share Gumilev's criticism of Činggis Qan. The standards of morality, decency, etc., which Gumilev applies to the Mongol conqueror, presenting him as a cruel, mean, cowardly, vindictive and quarrelsome man, as well as being untalented as a military leader, cannot be applied to 12th–13th century Mongolia. Survival in the highly mobile tribal society of the time, in a very (often extremely) harsh physical environment, was chiefly by means of *arγa* (pmo. and mo.; mmo. *arqa* = chin. *chi-ts'e* 計策 'scheme'), i. e. expediency, hence 'wisdom' in pre-Buddhist Mongol society was pragmatic wisdom, one not concerned with morality, but rather with skill and adaptability in solving immediate life-threatening situations. One of the best examples of this attitude to life is the story of Temüǰin's camp being attacked by the dreaded Tayiči'ut and the entire family fleeing the camp leaving behind Börte, Temüǰin's young wife, since there was no horse left for her (§§ 98–99). Expediency was, in the steppe, a virtue by necessity. Cf. the similar attitude exemplified in the Old Testament by the story of Abraham, also a nomad, pretending to be the brother of his wife Sarai (Sarah) and letting her thus become Pharaoh's concubine so as to insure his own survival (Gen. 12. 11–15; cf. also *ibid.* 20.2). Many more examples can be cited.

[45] See DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, pp. lxi–lxiv, lxix.

that the original document (without its sequel) was recorded very soon after Činggis' death, i. e. in the Year of the Rat 1228, as explained above.[46]

The date of the colophon is, in fact, crucial for any serious discussion on the subject since it is directly linked to the author's aim or aims in writing the *Secret History*, a point on which both Atwood and I completely agree. It is, therefore, essential to determine whether Atwood's re-proposed date of 1252 can withstand close scrutiny. Beside the obvious question, already raised in the context of my criticism of Professor Yü's article of 1982, of why a text presenting such 'unity' and continuity throughout, and compiled in one go, as it were, one year after Möngke's election, should not mention Ögödei's death and say next to nothing about Möngke himself (ignoring even the major event of his enthronement which the author would undoubtedly have witnessed),[47] we must consider the more immediate problem of whether a Great Assembly (*yeke qurilta*) *could* have actually been held at Köde'e Aral in the seventh month (7 August - 5 September) of 1252.

Before we discuss this point, however, we must clarify and emphasize certain facts that have a direct bearing on the issue, viz.:

1. A *yeke qurilta* (chin. *ta-hui* 大會) - one of the most important early Mongol institutions - was by definition a supreme council or assembly convoked by the qan or by a regent (during an interregnum)[48] with the participation of the royal princes and all the noblemen - high dignitaries like the *čerbis* or chamberlains, and military leaders - for the purpose of deliberating on grave matters of state, such as the election of a new qan, the resolution of internal family and court disputes, the launching of major military campaigns and the related organization of the army, with the appointment of military leaders, the assignment of territories and domains, etc. The epithet *yeke* 'great' which differentiated these diets from an ordinary *qurilta* or *quriltai*,[49] is a pregnant word. It implied at the same time i.

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[46] Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

[47] See the *Secret History*, §§ 270 (Möngke's name is mentioned twice as one of the princes 'supporting' Sübe'etei Ba'atur in the campaign against the West), 274 (Möngke's name is mentioned once in the same context), and 277 (where Möngke gives some advice to Ögödei).

[48] The regency could be held either by the youngest son of the deceased qan as the 'guardian of the hearth', i. e. of the family domain (as in the case of Tolui, r. 1227-29), or by the qan's widow, formerly his principal wife (as in the case of Töregene, r. 1242-45, and Oγul Qaimiš, r. 1249-51).

[49] For the mmo. term *qurilta* 'assembly, gathering' and its alternative form *quriltai* (< *quri-* 'to assemble, to gather') see Doerfer 1963-75, no. 305. The latter form was popular in Western mmo. In the present paper, except in the case of quotations from other works, I

general attendance, ii. the gravity of the matters to be deliberated upon, and iii. the presence of the supreme authority (qan or regent).[50] It was, therefore, an 'extraordinary' gathering of the ruling elite. Ordinary assemblies could be held for the purpose of consultation among the Mongol princes and military leaders, for seasonal gatherings and victory celebrations accompanied by regular battues, archery contexts, feasting, etc.[51]

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shall use the Eastern mmo. form *qurilta* found in the *Secret History*, and will refer to a *yeke qurilta* as such or as a Great Assembly.

[50] *Yeke* 'great' has also the connotation of 'royal, pertaining to the qan'. Cf. the pmo. expressions *qoriγ* (< tu. *qorïγ*) 'forbidden (reserved) precinct or enclosure', and *yeke qoriγ* 'great forbidden precinct', i. e. 'royal burial ground' (cf. DOERFER 1963–75, no. 1462; PELLIOT 1959, pp. 335–36, 338–39); *oro(n)* 'place, seat', and *yeke oro(n)* 'throne'. For the expression *yeke ordos* 'Great Palaces' = 'the royal encampment', see the *Secret History*, § 272, and DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, p. 993, n. 271. The *yeke ordos* originally refer, of course, to the four great *ordos* first established by Činggis Qan which appear repeatedly in our sources. According to Pelliot, after Činggis' death, 'his four main *ordos* were probably installed at a place not far from his tomb and, although Rubrouck never visited them, he knew that they were in the region of the "Onan Kerule", i. e. of the Onon and Kerulen (Wy, 208, 268). It must have been there that T'ai-tsung went in 1232 and Möngke in 1257 when they visited the *hsing-kung* (= *ordo*) of T'ai-tsu (= Chingiz-khan); there too that Yäsün Tämür (T'ai-ting) published his edict of amnesty in 1323' (PELLIOT 1959, p. 343). However, in another passage of the same work (p. 328), Pelliot acknowledged that the 'Great Ordo' of Činggis Qan where the above events took place may well be – as indeed suggested by Naka Michiyo and Yanai Watari (see NAKA 1943, p. 587, and YANAI 1966, p. 672) – the one at Köde'e Aral. In view of all the evidence, I have no doubt that this was so and that the other three *ordos* must have been in the same general area, i. e. within the great bend of the Kerulen. See below, n. 65. For the principal and secondary wives residing in the 'Great Ordo' and the other *ordos* see the *YS* 106, pp. 2693–7. For the term *ordo* see also below, n. 57, and Pelliot in *T'oung Pao* 27: 1930, pp. 208–10. It should be emphasized, however, that the *yeke ordos* we are concerned with do not refer to the original four *ordos* of Činggis Qan, but to the main *ordo* or encampment pitched at Köde'e Aral, the plural form in this case being only a plural of respect. See above, n. 1. For a Western example of the use of the attribute 'great' in the sense of supreme power and royalty, cf. lat. *majestas* 'majesty' from lat. *magnus* 'great'.

[51] Among these we may mention Činggis Qan's gathering of 'the noblemen of the entire Mongol nation' at Buqa (?) Sočiγai in the summer of 1224 upon completion of the Western Campaign. At the archery contest held on this occasion, Činggis' nephew Yisüngge (ca. 1190- ca. 1270) distinguished himself, and the event was recorded in the famous inscription of the so-called 'Stone of Chingis'. See DE RACHEWILTZ 1976. The gathering is recorded by Rašīd al-Dīn (SMIRNOVA 1952, p. 230), but not as a 'great *quriltai*', *pace* THACKSTON 1998–99, p. 258, where the expression 'ordered to set up a large golden *ordo*' of the original is rendered 'a large *quriltai* was held'. For the 'golden *ordo*', i. e. the golden palace or 'yurt' of the qan, see SMIRNOVA 1952, p. 230, n. 3. (For the term *yurt* see below, n. 61.) Another example of a *qurilta* arranged for feasting and hunting – Ögödei's favourite pasttimes – was that held on the Orkhon River in the spring of 1234. See *YS* 2, p. 33.

Unfortunately, our sources occasionally shorten *yeke qurilta* to *qurilta*[52] and, to complicate matters further, the *Secret History*, instead of referring to a *yeke qurilta* or a *qurilta* being held at such and such a place, normally uses a paraphrase with the verb *quri-* 'to assemble, to gather', like 'all the Mongols and Tayiči'ut gathered in...', 'they (all) gathered at...', or 'they all assembled in full force at...'.[53] In most instances, however, we can determine whether the gathering in question was a *yeke qurilta* or a simple *qurilta* because of the context, as well as by specific references in the Chinese and Persian sources which, in the case of the former, would describe it as a *ta-hui* or *qūrīltāyi buzurg* 'great *quriltai*'.[54] For a comprehensive, albeit somewhat outdated review of the institution of the *qurilta*(*i*), Yanai's study can still be read with profit; it should, however, be complemented with the excellent survey by E. Endicott-West.[55]

2. Köde'e Aral or 'Barren Island' on, or by, the Kerulen (Kėrlėn) River is a well-known locality. *Sensu lato* it comprised the entire region between the Kerulen and Senggür (Cėnxėr) rivers and the Bayan Mountains (Bayan Uul). *Sensu stricto* it has been identified with a plain some 60 km west of the confluence of the two rivers and within sight of the Kerulen, directly south south-west of present-day Dėlgėrxaan (Sum). It is now called Bayan (Ulaan-)ny Tal. The 'Seven Solitary Hills' of Köde'e Aral (Deli'ün Bolda'ut) have also been identified and their generic name (they have also individual names) is still Dolood, i. e. 'The Seven'.[56]

It was in this beautiful plain, with its abundant supply of water and pasture, and dotted with hills, that Činggis Qan established his principal encampment or Great *Ordo* (chin. *t'ai-kung* 太宮 'Grand Palace') in the lat-

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[52] For instance, Juvainī calls also simply *quriltai* the *yeke quriltai*s that elected Ögödei and Möngke. See Boyle 1958, pp. 183, 566. Cf. below, nn. 54 and 74.

[53] See §§ 57, 202, 269.

[54] Thus, with regard to § 57, we know that Qutula was elected *qa'an* (read *qan*!) by only two tribes, i. e. the Mongqol and Tayiči'ut, not by *all* the tribes of Mongolia. Hence, even in retrospective, that elective assembly cannot be considered a *yeke qurilta*, a fact confirmed by Rašīd al-Dīn (Smirnova 1952, p. 41). However, in the case of Činggis Qan's (second) election in 1206 (§ 202), and that of Ögödei's of 1229 (§ 269, but see below about the interpretation of the date given in this paragraph), as well as that of Möngke's of 1251, the Chinese and Persian sources confirm that they were all *yeke qurilta*(*i*)s. See Smirnova 1952, p. 150; *SWCCL*, 57a, 79b; *YS* 1, p. 13, 2, p. 29, and 3, p. 44; see below, n. 71. In any event, I believe that the expression *yeke qurilta*(*i*) came into use only *after* Činggis' unification of the tribes and his election as *qan* of 1206, and that its use must likewise be related to the establishment of the Yeke Mongqol Ulus, or Great Mongol Nation, which (in my opinion) was 'formalized' ca. 1211. See de Rachewiltz 2006a.

[55] Yanai 1966, pp. 361–449; Endicott-West 1986, pp. 525–41. Cf. also de Rachewiltz 2006, p. 1039, n. 282, for further references.

[56] See *ibid.*, pp. 501–2, n. 136; Endicott-West 1986, p. 532, n. 28.

ter part of his life.[57] The choice was most appropriate, Köde'e Aral being also in the Mongol heartland *par excellence*, the region of ancestral origins comprised between the Onon and Kerulen rivers, and including the sacred mountain Burqan Qaldun (= Khentei Khan) which Činggis had chosen as his final resting place.

During the two years of Tolui's regency, from the second half of 1227 to September 1229, his residence, hence the Mongol court, was at Činggis' *ordo* and it was here, at Köde'e Aral, that the *yeke qurilta* of 1229 was held.[58]

Even after Ögödei's establishment in 1235 of Qara Qorum further west as the capital of the Mongol empire and seat of the court,[59] Köde'e Aral did not lose its importance, for it was in Činggis' former *ordo* that Möngke was elected in 1251 (see below), and that Yisün Temür (T'ai-ting) was enthroned in 1323.[60]

Thus, after Činggis Qan and indeed by virtue of its close association with him and, more broadly, with Mongol tribal origins, Köde'e Aral retained its prestige as a special, quasi-sacred place where the Mongol ruling clan and the grandees of the empire met *exclusively* to settle the issue of succession to the throne, in other words, to hold there the most important *yeke qurilta* of all.[61] Significantly, the Great Assembly convoked by Ögödei in the Year of the Sheep 1235/36 to launch the greatest war of conquest the world had ever seen, was not held at Köde'e Aral, but at Dalan

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[57] See *SWCCL*, 79b; cf. PELLIOT 1959, pp. 322–5. For the term *ordo*, pl. *ordos*, see DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, p. 454, n. 123. When used in the plural form (*ordos*), this term may be 1. a simple plural; 2. the same as *ordo* 'the qan's encampment' (with the plural of respect because it refers to Činggis' or Ögödei's encampment, wherever this may be; cf. the *Secret History*, §§ 264, 271, and above, n. 1); and 3. the qan's four great *ordos*, on which see above, n. 50.

[58] See DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, p. 435, n. 115.

[59] See DE RACHEWILTZ, p. 502, n. 136. For Qara Qorum see *ibid.*, pp. 988, n. 269, 1004–7, n. 273.

[60] See BOYLE 1958, pp. 557–62 (esp. p. 562); BOYLE 1971, 210; *YS* 3, p. 44, 29, p. 638 (where 'Kerulen River' = Köde'e Aral). Cf. *MWESC* 13, 1b; PELLIOT 1959, p. 322; and above, n. 50.

[61] This is confirmed by the statements of 'the sons of Ögetei Qa'an, Güyük Khan, and Chaghatai' refusing to hold the (*yeke*) *quriltai* to elect Güyük's successor in Batu's *ulus* in the Qïpčaq Steppe on the grounds that 'the original *yurt* and residence of Chingiz-Khan is [the region] of the Onan and Kelüren'. See BOYLE 1971, p. 200. Cf. also DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, p. lxxxiii, n. 19. The tu. term *yurt* designates *sensu stricto* the tent (pmo. *ger*), or complex of tents, hence the encampment (pmo. *ordo*), and, *sensu lato*, the native territory or nomad grounds (pmo. *nuntuq* ~ *nutuq*), thus also a domain or apanage (pmo. *ulus*). See DOERFER 1963–75, no. 1914.

Dabān.[62] The choice of a particular 'sacral' place for the crowning or installing of a king in the West (such as the kings of the Picts at Scone, the High Kings of the Irish at Tara, those of Germany at Aachen, etc., etc.) is so well-known that it requires no further elucidation. Returning now to the question of whether there *could* have been a Great Assembly in the seventh month (7 August - 5 September) of 1252 at Köde'e Aral, it is essential first of all to trace Möngke's movements from the time of his election the previous year according to the Chinese and Persian sources.

As is known, Möngke's election as successor to Ögödei's son Güyük, with the line of succession shifting from the Ögödeids to the Toluids (Möngke being Tolui's eldest son by his wife Sorqaqtani Beki), was accomplished against a background of suspicion, rivalry and outright opposition. There were delays and tergiversations in the response of the princes of the blood to the summons of the court presided *ad interim* by the qatun Oγul Qaimiš, and the history of the *yeke qurilta* which eventually elevated Möngke as qa'an in July 1251 is, therefore, rather confused. This *yeke qurilta* was, in fact, preceded by a 'great assembly' presided by Batu, Činggis' grandson and elder cousin of Möngke, who was then the senior prince of the Činggisid line. Batu supported Möngke's candidature against the claims of the Ögödeids. At this assembly, Möngke, after repeated refusals (as the custom required), finally accepted the supreme dignity.[63] Rašīd al-Dīn follows J̌uvainī's account regarding the 'preliminary' assembly and Möngke's election.[64] J̌uvainī mentions twice that the assembly took place at 'Alaqmaq' (= Ālā Qamāq), a locality a week's distance from Qayalïq, present-day Kopal in southern Kazakhstan.[65] The *YS* gives its version of the same event locating this assembly 'in the region of *Ala Toγra'u (?)', which is presumably the same site.[66] Our sources indicate - and the *YS* is quite

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[62] See Boyle 1971, p. 54; *YS* 2, p. 33. For the locality Dalan Dabān ('The Seventy Ridges') in the Altai Mts. region see *HCG*, p. 244; Endicott-West 1986, p. 537, n. 48.

[63] See Boyle 1958, pp. 557-61. The expression used by J̌uvainī for 'great assembly' is *jam'iyatī buzurg*, see Qazwīnī 1958, p. 17, l. 4. Cf. below, n. 64.

[64] See Boyle 1971, pp. 200-202. On p. 200, Rašīd al-Dīn correctly refers to the first assembly convoked by Batu as a '*quriltai*', and on p. 202 to the great assembly that was to set Möngke upon the throne as a 'great *quriltai*'. For the former, J̌uvainī employs instead the word *jam'iyat* 'assembly' (< ar. *jama'* 'to gather, assemble, convoke').

[65] See Boyle 1958, pp. 263-4 and n. 3, 557.

[66] See *YS* 3, p. 44. Cf. Boyle 1958, p. 263, n. 3; and Allsen 1986, p. 497, who gives the date 1249 for the first assembly. As suggested by Boyle (*loc. cit.*), Ālā Qamāq is probably a variant or corruption of Ālā Qavāq, *qavaq* (*kavak*) being the Ottoman and Azerbaijani word for 'poplar'. According to Pelliot (see *ibid.*), *Ala Toγra'u is probably a corruption of *Ala Toγraq, *toγraq* meaning also 'poplar' in tu. The name of the locality in question would then mean 'Spotted Poplar'. Note, however, that the '[190]' in the second line of n. 3 in Boyle, *loc. cit.*, is a misprint for '[199]'.

specific - that the meeting took place soon after Güyük's death (in April 1248), i. e. still in 1248.[67] At this meeting it was also decided to hold 'the great *quriltai*' in the Onan-Kerulen territory the following year, i. e. 1249, to confirm ('consecrate' would be more accurate) Möngke's elevation in the former residence of Činggis Qan with the participation of all the princes.[68] Although the first assembly of 1248 was clearly a *qurilta*, it was not 'the great (*yeke*) *qurilta*' required for the occasion, since 1. not all the princes of the blood and grandees had participated in it, and 2. there had been strong dissenting voices among those present.[69]

It was, in fact, because of dissention among the factions at court and the various branches of the royal family that the *yeke qurilta* could not be convened until 1 July 1251 (the auspicious day chosen by the astrologers), when all the participants finally gathered at Činggis Qan's *ordo* at Köde'e Aral and duly elected, or rather re-elected, Möngke as qa'an.[70] The Persian and Chinese sources give quite a detailed account of the events leading to the Great Assembly of 1251, the assembly itself and the participants who had come from all corners of the Mongol empire. The more succinct *YS* account relates how 'In the sixth month of summer of *hsin-hai*, the first year [of Hsien-tsung's reign] (21 June - 20 July 1251), the royal princes of the Western Region Berge (= Berke) and Toγa Temür, the royal princes of the Eastern Region Yegü Toqu (= Toγu), Yisünge (= Yisüngge), Aljidai (= Alčidai), Tačar and Belgüdei (= Belgütei), the generals of the Western Region Balliči (?) and others, the generals of the Eastern Region Yesü Buqa and others again held a Great Assembly in the region of Kote'ü Aral (= Köde'ü Aral)'.[71] The word 'again' (*fu* 復) which has puzzled Professor

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[67] See *YS* 3, p. 44.

[68] See BOYLE 1958, p. 562; BOYLE 1971, p. 202. Cf. Qazwíní, p. 21 (esp. l. 9). In Rašīd al-Dīn's account, instead of 'Onan-Kelüren' we find 'the Kelüren'. This indicates that the expression 'Onan-Kelüren (= Kerülen)' was used at the time to designate *sensu lato* the region of Köde'e Aral rather than the area at the sources of the two rivers further north, where Burqan Qaldun/Khentei Khan is situated. For Kelüren = Köde'e Aral see above, n. 60, and below, n. 74.

[69] See *YS* 3, p. 44, and the events following the 1248 meeting. Cf. D'OHSSON 1940, II, pp. 246 ff.; ALLSEN 1986, pp. 497-8; ENDICOTT-WEST 1986, p. 533-4.

[70] See BOYLE 1958, pp. 562-8; BOYLE 1971, pp. 202-5; *YS* 3, pp. 44-5; D'OHSSON 1940, II, pp. 250-4; BARTHOLD 1968, pp. 478-9; GROUSSET 1941, pp. 306-8. In the case of Činggis Qan and Möngke the final, formal enthronement was preceded by a preliminary election: in 1203 in the case of Činggis and in 1248 in that of Möngke. The assembly that convened at Köde'e Aral with the participation of Ögödei in autumn 1228 may have been such a preliminary election meeting as I have already suggested. This practice was discontinued after Möngke.

[71] *YS* 3, p. 44. Cf. *MWESC* 6, 3a-b.

Atwood[72] refers to the previous *qurilta* of 1248 – as indeed correctly surmised by him – to which reference is made only a few lines before in the *YS* account.[73] There, the text mentions the event stating that the royal princes, etc., 'all assembled in the region of *Ala Toγra'u (?)' (咸會于阿剌脫忽剌兀之地, see above). This was the first *qurilta*. Then the princes, etc., assembled 'again' in 1251 for the second *qurilta* which, this time, was a 'great *qurilta*' (大會). For the Chinese reader this is perfectly clear from the context, and the compiler of the account obviously did not consider it necessary to elaborate further explaining that while the first meeting was a *qurilta*, the second one was a *yeke qurilta*. The formal election that consecrated Möngke as supreme ruler of the Mongol empire *had perforce to be a yeke qurilta at Köde'e Aral*, and the fine distinction between the two ('great assembly' v. 'great *quriltai*') is, indeed, observed also in J̌uvainī's account, a fact that Atwood has apparently overlooked.[74]

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[72] See Atwood 2007, p. 36.

[73] Exactly twelve lines before in the Po-na edition of the *YS* (3, 2a1–2b2).

[74] See Boyle 1958, pp. 558 and 562. After having referred to the second *quriltai* as 'the great *quriltai*' on p. 562, J̌uvainī calls it simply 'the *quriltai*' (pp. 566 [twice], 597). With regard to Güyük's election on 24 August 1246, it is worth noting that 1. none of our sources speak of the assembly that elected him as a *yeke qurilta(i)*, and 2. the assembly convoked by the regent Töregene Qatun was not held at Köde'e Aral, but at Köke Na'ur, not far from Qara Qorum. I think that this is a further indication (i. e. apart from the rejection of Prince Širemün, the eldest son of Ögödei's second son Köčü, as Heir Apparent) that this *qurilta* was subsequently regarded as not only irregular, but actually invalid. This would explain the fact that Güyük was the only one among Činggis Qan's successors not to be designated as *qa'an* (*qaγan*) by the historians of the Mongol period. With regard to the locality of Möngke's election, the *YS* 3, p. 44, adds that after the princes and noblemen had assembled at Köde'e Aral, 'they all pushed the Emperor to ascend the imperial throne at the Onan River'. Rašīd al-Dīn, for his part, claims that they 'sat Möngke Qa'an upon the throne of command and the seat of kingship in the neighbourhood of Qara-Qorum, which is the residence of Chingiz-Khan' (Boyle 1971, p. 205). I think that these errors can be explained as follows. We know from *YS* 3, p. 45, that with the election and post-election business concluded, and before moving the court back to Qara Qorum, Möngke visited (lit. 'favoured') the region of Šiqui (mo. Siγui 'The Thicket'), a locality mentioned only once in the *YS* and, as T'u Chi rightly says, otherwise unknown. See *MWESC* 6, 5a. Šiqui may be identified, however, with the Tergüne Ündür-ün šiqui, or 'thicket of the Tergüne Heights' of the *Secret History*, § 79, which occupies a prominent place in the story of Činggis Qan's early life (cf. *ibid.*, §§ 80, 102, 112). It was in this wooded area of the upper Onon and due north of Köde'e Aral that young Temüǰin had sought shelter from Tarqutai Kiriltuq and the murderous Tayiči'ut. See de Rachewiltz 2006, p. 373. n. 79. Some confusion may have occurred in the sources used by the Ming compilers of the *YS* between Möngke's visit to the area of Šiqui 'on the Onan River', which occurred after the *yeke qurilta* , with a supposed journey to the Onan for the actual enthronement. This is rather speculative, but it is all I can offer at present. Rašīd al-Dīn, on the other hand, confuses (as he does elsewhere) the Mongol capital Qara Qorum with Činggis Qan's residence or capital. The error

After his enthronement on 1 July 1251, and in the following months, Möngke was busy at the *ordo* attending to important state matters, chiefly the wide-ranging political 'purges' ruthlessly carried out by his chief judge Mengeser Noyan, the appointments of army commanders (including that of his younger brother Qubilai 'to govern the households of Mongolia and North China')[75] and religious leaders, and the promulgation of decrees and administrative regulations. In this respect our sources are well informed. Möngke did not leave Köde'e Aral until the first month of spring (12 February - 9 May) of 1252, when he 'favoured' (= visited) the area of Šiqui (Siγui).[76] The reason for his long stay at Köde'e Aral is provided, I think, by a short entry in the *YS* to the effect that 1,500 corvée labourers engaged in the construction of the wall of Qara Qorum were to be dismissed.[77] This entry is immediately followed by the first entry for the winter of 1251; therefore, one may surmise that the dismissal order was issued in the autumn (21 July - 16 October). Thus, major construction and fortification work at the capital was going on while the court was at Köde'e Aral.[78]

In any event, we know for certain that Möngke returned to Qara Qorum in the summer (10 May - 6 August) of 1252, and that it was *from the capital* that, according to the *YS*, 'he distributively moved the royal princes to various places: Qadan to the Beš Balïq region, Melig to the Erdis (= Erdiš, i. e. the Irtysh) River, Qaidu to the Qayalïq region', etc.[79] Further punishments were meted out, and orders of banishment for members of Ögödei's family issued; and, always during his stay at Qara Qorum, in the seventh month (7 August - 5 September) in the autumn of the Year of the Rat 1252, Möngke 'commanded Qubilai to go on an expedition against Ta-li (in

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must be ascribed to the fact that Rašīd al-Dīn knew from J̌uvainī that Möngke's election in 1251 had taken place at Činggis' *ordo*, and he also knew that before the Western Campaign Činggis had set up his *ordo* in the area of the future capital, hence the correlation between the latter site and that of Möngke's election. Cf. PELLIOT 1959, p. 167. J̌uvainī, who himself was on his way to Köde'e Aral at the time, recorded in his work information gathered from actual participants in these events. In his account he does not make any reference to the formal enthronement of Möngke as having been carried out in a different locality, and relates the events as having all taken place at Činggis' *ordo*, not at Qara Qorum. And, for J̌uvainī, the *ordo* of Činggis Qan was 'in the region of the Kelüren', i. e. at Köde'e Aral. See BOYLE 1958, p. 184 and n. 23.

[75] See *YS* 3, p. 44; cf. ALLSEN 1986, pp. 498-9.

[76] See above, n. 74.

[77] See *YS* 3, p. 45.

[78] The first wall of Qara Qorum was built in 1235, i. e. more than fifteen years earlier. See PELLIOT 1959, p. 165. Given the number of conscript workers recruited for the 'reconstruction' of the wall, it must have been a substantial enterprise. Current archaeological work on the site might provide further details on this wall.

[79] See *YS* 3, p. 45-6.

Yunnan), the royal princes Turγa[q] and Sali (?) to go on an expedition against Sindhu (= India), Ked Buqa to go on an expedition against the Mulaḥid (i. e. the Isma'ilis) and Hüle (= Hüle'ü) to go on an expedition against the countries of the Sultan in the Western Region. [The Emperor] decreed that one should persuade the Sung garrison commanders in Ching-nan, Hsiang-hsiang, Fan-ch'eng and Chün-chou, *and cause* [*them*] *to come to give allegiance* (*i. e. to submit*) (使來附). In the eighth month (6 September–4 October), Qubilai halted at Lin-chao...'.[80] Always in the eighth month, on the eighth day (13 September), so the *YS* informs us elsewhere,[81] Möngke for the first time sacrificed to Heaven at the Jih-yüeh shan 日月山 (? Naran Sara A'ula), a mountain west of Kökö Na'ur, a lake south-east of Qara Qorum.[82] In the tenth month (4 November – 2 December), in winter, Möngke 'ordered the royal prince Yegü to go on an expedition against Koryŏ. The Emperor halted in the region of Ötegü Qulan. On that occasion the Emperor fell off his horse while hunting and hurt [his] shoulder, and he did not hold Court audiences for more than a hundred days'.[83] Möngke's presence 'in the region of Qara-Qorum, in a place called Ongqïn (= Onggin, i. e. the Ongin River)' is duly noted by Rašīd al-Dīn for the winter of 1252, although the text is here chronologically confused.[84] Nevertheless, the Ötegü Qulan of the *YS* and the 'Ongqïn' of Rašīd al-Dīn must refer to the same locality.[85]

It is now abundantly clear, I believe, that, on the basis of the available source material, the suggestion put forth by Professor Atwood that there was an unrecorded but, nevertheless, real *yeke qurilta* – and *yeke qurilta* is

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[80] See *ibid.*, p. 46.

[81] See *YS* 72, p. 1781.

[82] For the situation of this mountain west of Kökö (= Köke) Na'ur ('Blue Lake') see *YS* 3, p. 48; and for that of this particular lake (several by the same name are known) cf. Boyle 1971, pp. 63–4, n. 280 (and p. 63, n. 277, for Örmügetü, the mountainous region where the lake was situated). The lake in question was '4 days' journey from Qara Qorum' (*ibid.*, p. 63).

[83] See *YS* 3, p. 46. Ötegü Qulan was a favourite hunting ground and winter residence of the Mongol qans, and the very place where Ögödei died on 11 December 1241. Originally it was one of the winter camps of Ong Qan of the Kereyit. See Khetagurov 1952, p. 127. I think that it was the locality which Rašīd al-Dīn and the *YS* also refer to simply as 'Ongqïn' and 'Onggi[n]', i. e. the Ongin River in the proximity of which Ötegü Qulan must be situated. See Boyle 1971, p. 222; *YS* 3, p. 47. Cf. Pelliot 1959–73, I, pp. 320–1. Again, we are dealing with an area broadly around present-day Arbai Kheere (Arvaïxėėr), i. e. due south of Qara Qorum.

[84] See Boyle 1971, p. 222. The year in question must be also 1252 since this is the year mentioned in the previous section and the one immediately before the Year of the Ox (= 1253) mentioned on p. 223.

[85] See above, n. 83.

exactly how the *Secret History* colophon describes it - at Köde'e Aral in the seventh month of 1252 cannot stand. To strengthen his argument, ATWOOD claims that 'the presence of foreign envoys would add to the importance of the occasion'.[86] This statement is based on a misunderstanding of the relevant Chinese text in the *YS* (see above, in italics): in fact, there were no envoys dispatched on that occasion. In the seventh month (August-September) of 1252 Möngke was in Qara Qorum, and *before* (in May-August) and *after* (November - December) the seventh month he took other major policy decisions in the capital. There is no mention anywhere that at any time that year he held another *yeke qurilta* at Činggis' *ordo* at Köde'e Aral which would have automatically required the attendance of all the princes and grandees, particularly since most of them had been 'redeployed' on various missions in the previous months. Such a move in the circumstances, i. e. a year only after the *yeke qurilta* at Köde'e Aral that elected him, with the following months spent still at Činggis' *ordo* to settle domestic and state matters, is not only improbable and unlikely, but simply unrealistic, not least in terms of sheer logistics.

ATWOOD's lengthy and rather convoluted discussion on the meaning of *qurilta(i)* and *yeke qurilta(i)*[87] is likewise unconvincing and does not provide a sound basis for what is textually and historically an untenable thesis, knowing also what we do about the role of Köde'e Aral in the enthronement procedure.

We can, therefore, safely dismiss the imaginary *yeke qurilta* of 1252 and turn again to the 1228 hypothesis, the only one which, *faute de mieux*, presents itself as the more likely candidate. I say 'likely' advisedly, for the issue is by no means settled as one would wish it to be. I entirely agree with ATWOOD's statement that 'there is no *perfect* solution to the date of the SHM.'[88] As a matter of fact, after having re-examined the problem from various angles and perspectives, I have been compelled to reconsider it, and for this I am grateful to Professor ATWOOD without whose stimulating paper I would have not reopened the case.

At the beginning of this paper I gave the gist of the pro-1228 argument, the proponents of which defend their thesis largely on the grounds that although the *yeke qurilta* that elected Ögödei was definitely held in 1229, the author of the *Secret History* colophon conflated the Year of the Rat 1228 with the Year of the Ox 1229, thus assimilating the latter to the former, because 1. it was for the Year of the Rat that the *yeke qurilta* had been called or convened by the regent Tolui upon Činggis' demise in August

[86] ATWOOD 2007, p. 39.
[87] See *ibid.*, pp. 35-9.
[88] See *ibid.*, p. 6.

1227, and 2. there had actually been a preliminary *qurilta* at Köde'e Aral in the autumn (12 August - 7 November) of 1228 attended by the Heir Apparent Ögödei.[89] The explanation as given is plausible, but the Achilles' heel of the argument remains the indisputable fact that *no yeke qurilta was held in 1228*. It is true, as already noted, that the *Secret History* (§ 269) and other sources, like J̌uvainī and Saγang Sečen, mistakenly place Ögödei's election *s.a.* 1228 instead of 1229, but this has been regarded as a chronological error due to the above-mentioned 'conflation' of the two years in question. One cannot, of course, exclude the possibility that whoever recorded the *Secret History* wished to ignore (and obliterate) the two-years' interregnum, i. e. Tolui's regency in 1228-29, thus presenting to the reader a smooth, conflict-free continuum in the royal succession. This may well be the case and I, for one, am of the opinion that such an interpretation is more than plausible: how else can one explain so widespread an error, one that cannot certainly be put down to a mere clerical or scribal fault?[90]

Unfortunately, we have not pursued the issue of the chronological error far enough, being distracted by other matters. Given that the Year of the Rat 1228 in § 269 of the *Secret History* for the election of Ögödei is a *definite mistake* for the Year of the Ox 1229, the answer to our problem has been staring at us from the very beginning, almost begging for attention, but perhaps because it was so obvious, we did not see it. *Since the 'Year of the Rat' for the yeke qurilta at Köde'e Aral in § 269 is an error for the 'Year of the Ox', it is reasonable and legitimate to assume that, in the same work, the 'Year of the Rat', with its yeke qurilta at Köde'e Aral, of the colophon is ipso facto an error for the 'Year of the Ox', both dates (in §§ 269 and 282) referring to the same event.* In other words, the same, identical mistake is repeated *twice* in the *Secret History*. If so, the date for the completion of writing of the *Secret History* would no longer be the seventh month of the Year of the Rat, but the seventh month of the following Year of the Ox, i. e. 22 July - 20 August 1229.

The immediate outcome of the proposed revision is of crucial significance: the writing of the *Secret History* was not completed in the middle of Tolui's regency, but *just before* Ögödei's enthronement on 11 or 13 September 1229.[91] Beside giving us a neater solution to the problem of the colo-

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[89] See Boyle 1958, p. 183, and above, n. 7.

[90] Eighty years ago Wang Kuo-wei 王國維 (1877-1927) pointed out the same one-year discrepancy in the chronology of the *SWCCL* and the 'Basic Annals of T'ai-tsu' in the *YS* for the period 1220-23 which has not yet been satisfactorily explained. See the *HNWHSIS, ts'e* 32, 'Yeh-lü Wen-cheng kung nien-p'u yü-chi' 耶律文正公年譜餘記, 5b. (Wang's remarks had already appeared in the first edition of his collected works [1927], see Pelliot 1929, p. 161.) The problem deserves further study.

[91] According to the *YS* 2, p. 29, Ögödei was enthroned on 13 September 1229, the date

phon date, the revised year can, I think, provide us at the same time with the reason why it may have been written and, presumably, circulated and read at the *yeke qurilta*, viz. its true purpose.

If my new dating is correct, the original text of the *Secret History* must have been compiled in the period between the death of Činggis Qan in August 1227 and July - August 1229. In these two years, the royal encampment - the *Secret History's ordos* - with Tolui in charge of it as regent, was (as we have seen) pitched at Köde'e Aral; therefore, we can assume that this *Urtext* was compiled there. In the autumn of 1228 (as we have also seen), Ögödei journeyed to the royal camp all the way from his *ulus* in the region of the Qobaq and Emil rivers in Central Asia to attend a *qurilta*, and he stayed there at least until the end of November.[92] The issue of succession and the problems inherent in it must clearly have figured prominently at this meeting, witness the brief passage in the *SWCCL* (79b) in which Ögödei, the designated qan, appears as the leading personage, i. e. the one who actually held the meeting. He is already (retrospectively) called Emperor T'ai-tsung (太宗皇帝), and the text, just as in the *Secret History*, makes no mention of Tolui as regent, although the latter was no doubt present. Whatever the outcome of the consultations held at the 1228 *qurilta*, it is my firm conviction that one of the results of the intense political activity of the two-years' interregnum was the production of the *Secret History*. What had begun, ostensibly, as the story of 'the origins' of Činggis Qan and the Mongqol tribe turned into a saga of epic proportions on the conqueror and his paladins for which collective memories were obviously tapped. As we would expect, the work was composed in a form that reflects the narrative tradition of the Mongols, with large use being made of alliteration and rhyme not only for emphasis and poetic effect, but also as a mnemonic device.[93]

The *yeke qurilta* had to be reconvened for the autumn of 1229, the seventh month of which began on 22 July. We know from both the Chinese and Persian sources that there was disagreement in the assembly and that factional strife delayed the proceedings until almost mid-September. The whole month of August must, therefore, have been taken by debates and controversy on the succession. The revised date of the colophon of the *Secret History* (22 July - 20 August 1229) would coincide exactly with the decisive first month of the *yeke qurilta*.[94] The recitation of this document at

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given also by the *SWCCL*, 79b. However, the date found in Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai's epitaph (*mu-chih* 墓誌) by Li Wei 李微 is 11 September. See *YCMCSL* 5, 3a.

[92] See above, n. 7.

[93] For examples of this technique see Čoimaa 2007, pp. 8 ff.

[94] Although, as is known, Ögödei had been designated heir and successor to Činggis

the Great Assembly would have certainly strengthened the hand of the 'conservative' element at court which supported Ögödei's candidature in accordance with Činggis Qan's will. Eventually, as we know, the pro-Ögödei party won the day, but the Toluids came out on top at the end with the election of Möngke in 1251.

As for the earlier-mentioned § 255 of the *Secret History*, it is true that while confirming the legitimacy of Ögödei's inheritance of the throne it leaves the door open to a change in the line of succession. The relevant passage - an old saying in form of a quatrain - is perfectly clear but, according to Rašīd al-Dīn, writing several decades after these events, it was cleverly rephrased and twisted by Güyük at his enthronement in August 1246 to ensure that his line, i. e. the Ögödeids, would continue to rule. J̌uvainī does not mention this fact,[95] and I doubt the genuineness of Rašīd's account which I regard as a later elaboration; however, the meaning of the 'story' in the overall context of § 255 is unambiguous and can be summed up as follows: 1. Ögödei expresses his concern that one of his descendants (and successor to the throne) may be inept and unfit to rule; 2. in reply, Činggis points out that if this were to occur and even if all of Ögödei's offspring were worthless, there would still be some of *Činggis' descendants* who will be fit to rule. The inescapable conclusion is that should Ögödei's line fail, the line of another son of Činggis Qan's was bound to produce a suitable ruler. (Činggis' statement to this effect is made in form of a negative rhetorical question for emphasis.)[96]

Ögödei's prophecy and Činggis' pronouncement were soon realized by Güyük's 'unfitness' and by the election of Möngke - almost too good to be true. This evident interpolation of the entire declamative episode (including the background narrative in § 254) is missing *in toto* in the *Altan tobči*,

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Qan, after the latter's death in 1227 there was by no means general consensus among the members of his family, succession to the qan-ship among the Mongols being always a tricky affair. This was essentially due to the perennial conflict between the party of those at court who supported the successor designated by the deceased qan, and the upholders of the traditional custom which favoured the younger son, even if in theory 'this rule applied only in the inheritance of personal property and not in that of political primacy' (Barthold 1968, p. 479). Other factors, such as seniority and acknowledged ability, also played a part, thus further clouding the issue of succession. Cf. Holmgren 1995, III, pp. 146-67. The Chinese sources are quite specific about the rivalry between the pro-Ögödei and pro-Tolui factions at the *yeke qurilta* of 1229, and even J̌uvainī mentions Ögödei's qualms on this score and his hesitation in accepting the throne. See *YS* 146, p. 3457 (biography of Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai); *YCMCSL* 5, 3a (*idem*); Munkuev 1965, pp. 72, 188; Boyle 1958, p. 186; D'Ohsson 1940, II, pp. 9-10.

[95] See Boyle 1971, pp. 181-2 and n. 18.

[96] See de Rachewiltz 2006, p. 188.

and I regard such absence as further proof that the text of the *Secret History* in Lubsangdanǰin's work represents the original *Činggis Qan-u uǰaγur*.[97]

Professor ATWOOD, on the other hand, claims that the missing section was purposely deleted by Lubsangdanǰin because it was regarded as 'scandalous' and 'deeply embarrassing' by the 17th century Mongol chroniclers.[98] In § 254 (*not* § 255) we have, in fact, Ča'adai's outburst against J̌oči, whom he calls 'a bastard offspring of the Merkit', thus referring to the well-known episode of Börte's capture by the Merkit and consequent doubts about J̌oči's paternity.[99]

I do not think that we can apply such moral concerns to 17th century Mongol scribes or chroniclers. First of all, the passage in question occupies only § 254 of the *Secret History*: if, for whatever reason, its contents bothered Lubsangdanǰin, he could have easily left out the offending section and still retained the really important section (in § 255) dealing with Ögödei and Činggis Qan's will regarding the succession. Why, indeed, expurgate also § 255? The embellished and implausible account found in Rašīd al-Dīn[100] is due to the fact that the Persian historian was writing for a largely Muslim audience, and that he obviously wished to stay clear of scabrous issues which may reflect badly on his masters' family. ATWOOD's explanation fails to take into account cultural differences and circumstances which cannot be ignored. Had Lubsangdanǰin been so morally sensitive about the supposed misbehaviour of early Mongol royalty, he would have expurgated several other unedifying passages in the *Secret History*, beginning with the one in § 77 describing Temüǰin's and Qasar's callous and premeditated murder of their half-brother Begter.[101] The story is told with the usual candid directness in the *Secret History* and is recorded in the *Altan tobči* in a fuller version[102] but, significantly, it is totally ignored by the Persian historians who do not even mention Begter's name or existence.

Regarding the sequel of the *Secret History*, i. e. the final section on Ögödei to which I have already referred in the earlier portion of this paper, my position is still basically the same as that expressed in the introduction to my 2004 translation, where I gave also an explanation for the anomalous beginning of the 'Supplement' (*hsü-chi* 續集) with § 247 instead of § 269,

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[97] See *ibid.*, pp. 930–1, 935–7, n. 255. Recently, the role of Güyük has been reappraised by Hodong Kim. See KIM 2005. In view of its political relevance and literary value as an excellent specimen of a particular epic theme – the contending sons – I have discussed the 'piece' in §§ 254 and 255 in detail in my forthcoming *Supplement*.

[98] See ATWOOD 2007, pp. 27–9.

[99] See DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, pp. 183 and 926–7, n. 254.

[100] See BOYLE 1971, p. 98; cf. ATWOOD 2007, p. 27.

[101] See DE RACHEWILTZ 2006, pp. 20–1.

[102] See *AT*, 17b8–27; Šastina 1973, pp. 73–4; ČOĬMAA 2002, pp. 34–5.

the anomaly being due, in my opinion, to the 'format' requirements of the Ming editors.[103]

As already pointed out, the sequel ends without mentioning Ögödei's death, but it records his near-fatal illness (§ 272), as well as a curious 'confession' (§ 281) which (as others have often remarked upon) sounds very much like a posthumous appraisal, especially as it comes at the very end of the work. Apart, of course, from the obvious interpolations to which reference has been made, this section could have been written from ca. 1240/41 onward and, given the close similarity in style and, in parts, also of contents, it may well have been compiled by the same author as a continuation of the story of Činggis Qan.[104] However, *pace* Atwood, it does lack cohesion and bears obvious characteristics of an unfinished (or mutilated) 'piece', considering that Ögödei's reign spanned over eleven years and that for this whole period only one date (= 1231, in § 272) is actually noted, in marked contrast with the later section on Činggis Qan where eight dates are recorded between § 239 and 268.[105]

Of great significance, in my view, is the epic account of Ögödei's illness caused by the angry and powerful nature deities of North China, and Tolui's selfless sacrifice of his own life to save that of his royal brother. This epic theme was well-known at the time and it is interesting that the author of the sequel should have included it in his story.[106] It is possible that the message he wishes to convey is the symbolic sacrifice or 'abdication' of the (rival) line of Tolui in favour of that of the legitimate house of Ögödei, which must be preserved. This is, however, speculative and other interpretations are also possible.[107]

The manuscript of the sequel was probably left unfinished and its vicissitudes are unknown. We are fortunate that even in its 'imperfect' form the text has been preserved for us by the 14th century Ming editors, since that entire section was certainly lost in Mongolia, which (as I believe) it may have never reached, the only surviving copy being probably the one recov-

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[103] See de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. xxxii, xlv.

[104] Cf. the new regulations on the Guard (*kešik*) in § 278 with those previously enacted by Činggis Qan (§§ 225–233). Most of the new regulations are, in fact, verbatim or almost verbatim repetitions of those found in §§ 227, 228, 229 and 232. See de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. 154–61. 209–13. Cf. also the beginning of § 272 which is nothing but a rephrasing of the beginning of § 247 and totally anachronistic. See *ibid.*, pp. 174, 202, 993–4, n. 272.

[105] See §§ 239, 247, 250, 251, 257, 264, 265 and 268, covering the period 1207–27.

[106] See de Rachewiltz 2006, pp. 203–5, 994, n. 272.

[107] See *ibid.*, pp. 999–1000, n. 272. Most probably the story belongs to a well-known body of legends about self-sacrifice, of which Antinous' death in Egypt (in AD 130) is surely the most notable example in the West.

ered from the Mongol archives in Daidu and edited - as an *addendum* to the *Secret History* - by the Ming scholars.[108]

Professor ATWOOD, who is in favour of the unitarian structure of the *Secret History*, believes that there was no separate sequel in the text handed down, and that the original text, covering both Činggis' and Ögödei's reigns, formed a whole. According to him, this work was rediscovered in Mongolia in the 17th century and it was utilized, albeit selectively, on a large scale by Lubsangdanǰin, and on a much lesser scale by other chroniclers, notably Byamba.[109] ATWOOD explains the rather unusual fact that, although the *Secret History* text was then available in its entirety, i. e. with the section on Ögödei being *an integral part of it* (not a separate chapter), no contemporary Mongol chronicler quoted a single passage, or even sentence, from this section on the, admittedly hypothetical, assumption that it was due to the chroniclers' propensity for Buddhist-focused accounts, such as those provided by the Tibetan sources.[110] No such propensity, however, was shown by Lubsangdanǰin when he incorporated into the *Altan tobči* those large chunks of the *Secret History* dealing with the life of Činggis Qan, and so rich in colourful but certainly 'unedifying' episodes. Did Lubsangdanǰin suddenly feel revulsion and decide to reject the entire final section on Ögödei? And did Byamba also take a dislike to the account on Ögödei on moral grounds or because it lacked interest? Even as a hypothesis I find ATWOOD's argument very implausible, indeed, hardly credible. To me, the most obvious reason for those 17th century chroniclers totally 'ignoring' the sequel of the *Secret History* is because it was not available to

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[108] Whereas odd passages from the main text of the *Secret History* are quoted in later Mongol chroniclers (i. e. beside Lubsangdanǰin's *Altan tobči*), such as Byamba's *Asaraγči neretü-yin teüke*, no portion, large or small, of the sequel is quoted by any 17th century chronicler. See KÄMPFE 1983, pp. 27–9, 47 ff. In ATWOOD 2006, p. 399, we read that 'Despite certain scribal corruptions in the names, the manuscript [of the *Secret History* - I. R.] must have been continuously copied through the "dark ages" of Mongolian intellectual life, from the 1350s to the 1570s'. I do not think that Professor Atwood can produce any evidence to support the above statement. In fact, I am of the opinion that the Mongol text of the *Secret History* was 'lost' in Mongolia until the 17th century. This seems also to be Atwood's more recent opinion as expressed in ATWOOD 2007, p. 28. Moreover, judging by the sizable *lacuna* between §§ 186 and 197, it appears that the text of the *Secret History* used by Lubsangdanǰin was incomplete. As for Byamba's chronicle, it is not at all certain that Byamba had *direct* access to a manuscript copy of the *Secret History*, since the relationship between his chronicle, Lubsangdanǰin's *Altan tobči* and the *Secret History* is not yet very clear, and it looks as if Byamba may have actually extracted those passages of the *Secret History* from an intermediate text. See KÄMPFE 1983, pp. 33–4. What is certain is that the *Secret History* text was not available to their great contemporary Saγang Sečen.

[109] See ATWOOD 2007, p. 28. Cf. above, n. 8.

[110] See ATWOOD 2007, pp. 28–9.

them, and it was not available to them simply because it was not there in the first place.

Furthermore, I should stress that any discussion on the unitarian structure of the *Secret History* must take into account also the internal structure of the *YCPS*, i. e. the division of the *YCPS* into continuous chapters, and a separate 'Supplement' within which the two chapters devoted to Ögödei's reign fall. I have already referred to the anomalous breaking up of the chapters (*chüan* 卷) for the sake of length by the Ming editors. The differentiation between the two parts of the *YCPS* indicates that the 'Supplement' was a later addition. Since in China colophons by definition always come at the end of the work, it would have been unusual to leave the original colophon at the end of the story of Činggis Qan and then add the supplementary section on Ögödei, thus interrupting the continuity of the text. The Ming editors were not interested in the dating, and possible anachronisms, of the two parts of the work they had put together; they were, however, conscientious enough to differentiate them because they came from two separate sources which were obviously related. To transfer the colophon to the end of the composite work would have been for them a perfectly natural editorial operation. They were oblivious of the consequences, since they were not in the least concerned with the *Secret History* as a historical text or with historiographical problems. They regarded the text they had collated as, primarily, a language tool – a textbook for learning spoken Mongolian – and, only as a secondary consideration, a useful source on Mongolian mores. Hence, they concentrated all their care and attention in producing an accurate phonetic transliteration, a word by word interlinear translation and free sectional summaries in vernacular Chinese of this (for them) unusual text, which they aptly called a '*Secret History*'.

In spite of their limitations and the technical and textual difficulties they encountered, the Ming editors did a very good job. Hence, the formal separation of the main text from the 'Supplement' was not due to mere whim: ***had the manuscripts in their possession been those of a single, unitarian work, they would have continued to divide their transcription and translation into regular chapters following Chinese editorial practice.*** The fact that they did not indicates that they were dealing with two separate texts, one of which, the shorter one, was however regarded by them as a sequel of the other.

Finally, a note of caution for scholars dealing with texts like the *Secret History*. The contradictions, anachronisms and mistakes that we find in them, some no doubt present in the original, some due to later hands and the normal process of copying and editing (such as interpolations, omissions and scribal errors) should not surprise us. Also, we should not, because of them, indulge in far-fetched interpretations, making mountains out of molehills. The textual history of the original Mongol manuscript

and of the manuscript copies of the *Secret History* is almost totally unknown to us, and this for a period of several centuries. We have only to think of how still imperfect is our knowledge of the textual history of the original recension of a famous Western mediaeval work like Marco Polo's *Description of the World* in spite of the mass of information available to us.

In the present essay I have opened a new line of enquiry, fully conscious, however, that we are still labouring in the realm of reasonable assumptions and educated guesses, and that the discussion on the dating (as well as other aspects) of the *Secret History* will not end here, but will continue to the delight of specialists and the despair of the general reader for a long time to come.

In conclusion, I wish to dedicate this paper to my old and dear friends Hidehiro Okada and Junko Miyawaki-Okada of Tokyo who, together, have done so much to elucidate many grey areas of Mongol history and culture.

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