RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND THE MONGOLIAN EMPIRE

The Mongolian Empire emerged in the 12th century Central Asia. By the time, in the West, the Catholic Church had finalised its centralisation; the Crusades had begun; the Catholics were persecuting the Protestants; France and England were fighting the Hundred Years War. In the Muslim world, the Abbasid Caliph had entered the stage of decline wary of the Crusades; heterodox Shiite sects were persecuted; an intense capitalised monetary economy had come about in the Middle East; Baghdad, Samarkand, Damascus and Cairo had emerged as leading commercial, scientific and artistic centres; studies by Arab scientists and thinkers were advancing the fields of medicine, astronomy, mathematics and philosophy; of the vacuum left by the Seldjuk Empire, the Khwarazm were trying to take over leadership in the Middle East, and the Anatolian Seldjuki state.[1] The rise of the Mongols in the Central Asia redrew the political and geographical landscape. Conquering lands from China to Europe, they subjugated some long established civilisations.

The word 'Mongol' evokes Cenghis Khan and vandalism. The civilisations that yielded to the Mongol rule in the Middle Ages blamed the latter for dooming, if not arresting, their progress.[2] On the other hand, a recent literature has oppugned the dark image of the medieval Mongolians; highlighting their tolerant, cosmopolitan style of ruling when compared to their coevals. (Hoang: 1990; Weatherford: 2004, Lane: 2004) Weatherford went to the extent of naming Cenghis Khan as the 'maker of the modern world'. Other scholars have tempered this approach, pointing at the limits and the arbitrariness of religious toleration. (Khazanov: 1993; Atwood: 2004) On the whole, the recent scholarship has agreed that the Mongolian legacy in the Asian, Muslim and Christian populations is more than destruction. The Mongols furthered commerce; increased the cultural, artistic and scientific flows between Asian, Middle Eastern and European civilisations, and allowed freedom of faith.

Religious tolerance certainly is the most unusual practice of the medieval Mongolian Empire. Cenghis Khan established liberty of faith, and recognised privileges to some religious communities. There is a scholarly consensus on the arbitrary and patchy character of Cenghis Khan's tolerance, which hints at some pragmatic reasons behind the policy practice. If the

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[1] Lombard, Maurice. (1975) *The Golden Age of Islam*. New York : American Elsevier.
[2] Lewis, Bernard. (1968), *The Mongols, the Turks and the Muslim Polity*. Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series, Vol. 18. p.49.

pragmatism explanation is correct, the preferential treatment would follow from cost/benefit rationale; which suggests the Mongolian rulers granted freedom as they saw benefits in it. Explaining the remainder cases however, is much harder a task. What does the denial of religious privileges imply? Is it the lack of profit or the perception of cost? The definition of cost is crucial; what does cost mean for a medieval Mongolian ruler who affords to destroy any entity within the range of his might? Does it derive from some threat perception? How does it relate to the type of allegiances upholding the imperial polity? This paper is an attempt to reflect on the uneven nature of the religious policy in relation to the type of allegiances and the perception of threat in the tribal politics under Cenghis Khan. The objective is to identify under what conditions the rulers defined some religious community as being 'worth recognising', 'not worth recognising' or a 'threat'. The paper deliberately restrains the time interval to Cenghis Khan's reign; because following his death, the Mongolian Empire divided between his sons. The sons ruled different states; converted to different religions; and in time some were assimilated into different cultures. In other worlds, the Mongolian empire no longer was the one Cenghis Khan crafted. The paper starts by analysing the type of allegiances before centralisation. The first section explains the foundations and patterns of loyalty in the tribal society of the Medieval Central Asia. It looks at the components of identity (ethnicity, religion and language) and the structural causes (physical conditions, nomadic economy, and tribal and intertribal politics) that conditioned political structure. The second part examines the transformations of allegiances, if any, during the state and empire building processes. The objective is to identify the role of religion and religious diversity in state administration.

I. THE CONTEXT OF EMERGENCE

In the 12th century, the tribes of the Central Asia were highly dispersed. Occasionally they entered coalitions against an enemy or for a specific purpose; and such formations would dismiss once the underlying objective was attained. Accordingly, the steppe society remained highly decentralised until Cenghis Khan's rise to power. How did he manage to unite and maintain the unyielding tribes? This section examines the ideational and structural factors that helped Cenghis Khan to succeed with the unification. It elaborates on the foundations of allegiances, identity and social norms in the medieval tribal society. It also analyses the

impacts of the historical and natural conditions, as well as (inter)tribal politics on the socio-political structure.

I.I. BELLICOSITY AND ALLEGIANCES IN THE TRIBAL SOCIETY

The Mongolian nomadic tribes showed highly belligerent, dynamic and independent behaviour. Of the various peoples they fought, sedentary populations constructed a negative image of the Mongolians. The Chinese depicted them as (raw or cooked) barbarians.[3] The Russians portrayed them as God's punishment for people's sins.[4] In contrast, the Mongolians constantly fought the Turkic tribes over gazing land, women or flocks.[5] Yet, the non Mongolian tribes did not have a tarnished image of the Mongolians. What generates this discrepancy? Is the perception of bellicosity by the sedentary populations an indicator of ethnic or religious affinity within the tribes, or was bellicosity a trait of the nomadic lifestyle? The answer to the first question relates to the concept of identity and social bonds in the Mongolian society. The second question requires examining the structural factors; i.e. physical conditions, nomadic economy, land ownership etc.

I.I.I. Identity, Loyalty and Social Bonds

The nomadic tribes of the 12th century lived in the northern steppes above the Aral Sea in the Central Asia.[6] The steppes spanned from Manchuria in the east to Lake Balkash in the west.[7] The Mongolians shared these lands with the Tatars, the Naiman, the Kereyid, the Merkit, the Manchus, the Tungus, the Khitans, and the Uighurs.[8] The scholarship is divided on the origins of the Mongolians due to the ambiguity in the Chinese archives, the linguistic and ethnologic similarities and insufficient archaeological and historical evidence. Preoccupied with the nomadic threat from the northern steppes, the Chinese sources regrouped all tribal ethnics

[3] Morgan, David. (1986) *The Mongols*. Cambridge, MA : Blackwell, 1993, p.35.
[4] Ekonomtsev, Ioann, (2001) "The Role of the Orthodox Church in the Formation of the Russian Self-Consciousness", in Ed. Mlfliet, Katlijn and Verpoest, Lien. *Russia and Europe in a changing international environment*. Leuven : Leuven University Press. p.134.
[5] Curtin, Jeremiah. (1907) (1972)*The Mongols: A History*, Westport: Greenwood Press, p.3.
[6] Canfield, Robert. L. (2002) *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.60.
[7] Hoang, Michel, (1990) *Genghis Khan*, tr. Cranfield Ingrid, London: Saqi Books, 2000, p.77.
[8] Hoang, *op.cit*., p.81-82; Weatherford, Jack (2004) *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World,* New York: Three Rivers Press, p. 14.

speaking some similar language and displaying belligerent attitude within a unique category.[9] Accordingly, the Mongolians have often been confused with the Tatars, the Turkmens, the Tungus and alike. Some European visitors however, underlined the physical and moral varieties between the tribes in the 10th century.[10] Mainly, the nomads derived from three origins; the Tungus, the Mongols and the Turks. In time, this differentiation blurred due to exogamy, high mobility and linguistic fluidity. The resulting subgroups displayed such varied characteristics that it was no longer practical to distinguish between the Turkic and Mongol groups of the 12th and 13th century steppes.[11] However, the common heritage and intermixing would not prevent the tribes from building alliances with the Chinese against other tribes.[12] On the other hand, the Mongolians claimed to a distinct identity. They insisted to be the direct descendants of the Huns; the first steppe empire founded in the 3rd century, known by the famous emperor Attila, and whose lands spanned from India to Rome.[13] What does this claim convey about the Mongolian identity? Why did direct lineage matter?

By definition, "in the traditional Mongolian society, the descendents of the same bones (*yasun*), meaning ancestors, were members of a same clan; every family, be it nuclear or extended, represented a clan subgroup."[14] The father transmitted the 'bone' to the offspring, while the mother provided the 'meat' and 'blood'. Since bones defined a patrilineal kinship, intermarriages would not adulterate the purity of the bone. In effect, marriage was forbidden between members of the same clan. The practice aimed to prevent marriage alliances that would empower some tribal groupings versus others, hence augmenting the likelihood of feuds.[15] Hence, power politics shaped the translation of a norm into social practice.

Familial relationships showed further complications. A cousin (such as Jamuka to Cenghis Khan) could be redefined as a brother or could be relegated to a non-relative of the latter failed to conform to mutual obligations and responsibilities. Hence, familial relationship adjusted to the turn of the mutual relationship. On the other hand, sub-lineages crosscut the

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[9] Hoang, *op.cit*., p.77. Bold, Bat-Ochir, (2001). *Mongolian Nomadic Society: A Reconstruction of the 'Medieval History of Mongolia*, Richmond: Curzon Press. pp.4-6.; Lattimore, Owen. "Mongolia". *Encyclopedia Britannica*. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389335/Mongolia#
[10] Mayne Reid, in Hoang, *op.cit*., pp.77-78.
[11] Weatherford, Jack. E-mail message, 04.12.2009.
[12] Morgan, *op.cit*., p.56.
[13] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.14.
[14] Hoang, *op.cit.*, p.104.
[15] Lattimore, Owen. "Mongolia". *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389335/Mongolia#

homogeneity of the bones. Due to the abduction of women, often times, children were literally not from the father; or their legitimacy was questioned. Genghis Khan's son Jochi illustrates the case. Not being a direct descendant of the bones did not prevent social integration. One proof is that the origin of Cenghis Khan's first child, Joshi (guest), did not receive different treatment although his biological origins were questioned.[16] Another argument is adoption was encouraged in the medieval Mongolian society. The adopted child would receive equal treatment as the real offspring. Being raised by a family would make the person a member of the family, hence of the bone, since the person in question would share the same tent, the same food and the same smells etc. The concept of bones did not posit a caste like system where individuals were born into a caste and died in it.[17] Finally, family operated as an agent of social control and an instance of jurisdiction. The mother would admonish her son in front of everyone even if the son was Cenghis Khan.[18] In sum, family ingrained a communitarian sense of social cooperation and hierarchy. Although lineage had a clear definition at the conceptual level it adjusted to the conditions. Such pragmatism followed from the nomadic lifestyle. More importantly however, kinship relied on social bonds, interpersonal trust and mutual recognition that begot from human interactions, developed, declined or broke off over time as to the tide and intensity of the relationship. Hence, loyalties and kinship were constantly redefined, although the underlying idea remained the same.

Clans bore the name of the supposed ancestor who founded it.[19] As clans grew, they merged into tribes. The dominant clan or family would give its name to the tribe. The nuclear family controlled the tribal territory by virtue of being the "direct" descendants of the founding bone. The ruled families would use ancestry in its tribal sense.[20] It is noteworthy that the name of the ruling clan defined the tribe; and not the composing units. As a result, the tribal name did not produce a lasting cognitive effect on clan identity. The proof is, in case of tribe splits, the subunits would abandon the name of the defunct tribe, and adopt new names.[21] In sum, the dominant family would impose its rule; the ruled clans would bear the latter's name as a sign

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[16] Cenghis Khan's wife was abducted by the Merkit. After Cenghis Khan rescued her, they found out that she was pregnant.

[17] Raheja, Gloria. G. "Caste System", in Ed. Stearns, Peter, N. (1994) *Encyclopedia of Social History*, New York : Garland, p.94.

[18] *The History and the Life of Chinggis Khan : The Secret History of the Mongols*, tr. Onon Urgunge. Leiden. New York : E.J. Brill, 1990. p.154.

[19] Clauson, Gerard. (1891) *Studies in Turkic and Mongolic linguistics*. London : Routledge Curzon, 2nd ed. 2002. p.11.

[20] Lattimore, *op.cit.*

[21] Clauson, p.11.

of submission. Naming did not aim at assimilation, but at the promotion of some collective identity. Name would legitimise the rule of the dominant class. To make sense of this complex set of arrangements, one needs to consider the underlying social belief and its political implications.

By definition, the founding ancestor was a notable warrior who, by demonstrating his skills, got a 'name'. This practice goes back to the Oghuz Turks, a Central Asian Turkic people of the 9th century. The Dede Korkut epopee narrating twelve epic Oghuz tales conveys how heroic performance constituted the basis of identity and social standing within the society. To deserve a 'name', a major male person had to accomplish a tough glorious task, such as overcoming an opponent in the battlefield, or overpowering a bull, a horse… Otherwise, he never was recognised as a 'man'.[22] This social norm elucidates why naming acquired such a prominent social and political significance. Direct lineage of a notable person with proven abilities constituted a symbolic capital; which explains why the Mongolians claimed to be the direct descendants of the Huns. On the other hand, not all ruling clans inherited noble bones. In such cases, the nucleus family would invent a fictitious ancestor.[23] This pattern substantiates how crucial naming was for social and political legitimacy. The epopee further communicates the interdependence between power and prestige. Like the hero who is distinguished for overpowering some opponent, the more powerful lineages of an area enjoyed higher prestige, and constituted the upper 'class'. This 'class' formed the white bone. The less powerful clans would constitute the black bone. Hence being the definition, the clans would disagree on who was black and who was white. In practice, the bones linked to each other by virtue of belonging to the same tribe. Black bones usually comprised people who were incorporated in the dominant clan because of a war defeat, captivation or voluntary admission. The abovementioned rules of kinship applied to black bones who originally came from a different clan. In this context, loyalty lay with the ruler.

To recap, at the normative level, identity was clearly defined by bones. Father would pass the bone on to the offspring. The patrilineal lineage stabilised the social system; because in the context of intermarriages, mobility and abduction of women, father constituted the only constant and somewhat authentic parameter. In practice, lineage was fluid and constantly

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22 Meeker, Michael. (1992) "The Dede Korkut Ethic", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, p.397.
23 Lattimore, *op.cit.*

revised as to the political and interpersonal dynamics. Descendants of the same bone could become more or less intimate, while people from other bones could integrate into the clan. Admission or exit depended on the extent of mutual sharing. Hence, social bonds and identity were relational. Beyond the clan level, politics conditioned identity. By definition, the white bone referred to the superior and dominant lineage that subdued the black bone. Given the value of this symbolic capital, all dominant clans claimed to be the white bone. Besides, the ruling clan would give its name to the ruled. Taking the other's name equalled submission, though not assimilation. Thus, identity politics was utterly fluid and pragmatic. This pragmatism arrested the transformation of the bone-based socio-political structure into a caste-like rigid system. The resulting tribal society became more permeable to social mobility, but also to instability. On the whole, the Mongolians developed loyalty to the ruling clan, and not to some higher level and/or larger ethnic community. In other words, the notion of common ancestry did not comprise all Mongolians, nor did it encompass the ethnic 'brothers', i.e. Turkic tribes, inheriting the same lineage (the Huns) and sharing the same geographical area, the northern steppes of the Central Asia.

Another criterion the Chinese used to define a tribe as 'Mongolian' was language. In the Medieval Central Asia, three language groups existed among the tribes; Tungusic, Mongol and Turkic, each deriving from the Altaic root. Each linguistic family divided into dialects. After the 8th century, Turkic became prevalent in line with the rise of the Turkic clans, such that Turkic constituted the first language in any tribe in the 12th century.[24] The *Secret History* substantiates that Turkic had already furnished Mongolian with various words to describe nature, agriculture, horticulture, seasons, cloths, food and drinks, human affairs and numerals.[25] On the other hand, the distribution of the language groups did not follow ethnic lines. The *Secret History* recounts how the (steppe) peoples of 'the Nine Tongues' gathered around Cenghis Khan.[26] Of the Mongolian tribes, the Naiman spoke Mongol dialects; while the Kereyid spoke Turkic. In contrast, the Merkid were Turkic but spoke Mongol dialect. To make sense of the proximity of the languages, it is sufficient to note that the Mongolians recruited interpreters to communicate with tribes, and with the sedentary Turkic populations,

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[24] Lane, George, (2004) *Cenghis Khan and Mongol Rule*. Westport: Greenwood Press, p.2.
[25] Clauson, *op.cit.*, pp.220-228.
[26] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, *op.cit.*, p.137.

such as the Khitans and the Ruzhens.[27] That is to say, neither the 12th century nomadic society nor the Mongolians did speak one common language. Language was not a unifying factor until the 12th century.

What is the role of religion in building identity, loyalty and social bonds? From the 8th century onwards, the bulk of the Turkic populations, the Kazaks, the Kirghiz, the Bashkirs and the Tatars had converted to Islam; and Shamanism no longer played a prominent role in the belief system.[28] The Uighur, which ruled the Mongol tribes in the 9th century, practiced Buddhism since the 8th century.[29] Of the Mongol tribes, the Qara Khitai were Christian since the 8th century, and the majority of the Naimar, the Kereyid followed Nestorian Christianity since the 5th century.[30] Yet, most Mongolians believed in Shamanism or Tengrianism in the 12th century. Although they subdued the Buddhist Uighur rule, and were in constant contact the Christian Kereyid and the Muslim Turkic tribes, the Mongolian nobility developed interest in neither of these religions. Conversion to Islam, Buddhism and Christianity among the Mongolians did not start before the 14th century. Religion crosscut ethnic divisions, and did not propel neither Mongolian nor tribal unification up to the 12th century. One would wonder why Tengrianist Mongolians did not convert to one of the three predominant faiths of the era; but especially to Islam, since the Muslim Turkic tribes dominated the Central Asia and Turkic penetrated the Mongolian language. One possible explanation is religious tolerance in the tribes. However, this policy varied as to the ruler and the tribe. Cenghis Khan's tribe respected religious freedom; i.e. Cenghis Khan's mother was a Nestorian Christian, some of Cenghis Khan's wives followed Christianity; whereas some tribes did persecution under some rulers, such as the Buddhist Qara Khitai.[31] Religious tolerance was more frequent in decentralised states that ruled over religious and ethnic diversities.[32] The alternative explanation is that Tengrianism upheld social bonds and common identity among the Mongolians. To evaluate the alternative hypothesis, one needs to examine the belief structure.

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[27] Brose, Micheal, (2005) "Uyghur Technologists Of Writing And Literacy in Mongol China", Leiden: Brill, http://www.tc.umn.edu/~cmedst/gmap/uploaded/UYGHUR%20TECHNOLOGISTS%20OF%20WRITING%20AND.pdf, p.397. Hoang, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-84.
[28] Walter, Mariko, N. (2004) *Shamanism*: *An Encyclopedia of World Beliefs, Practices and Culture.* Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, p.602.
[29] Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.47.
[30] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, *op.cit.*, p.xxi.; Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.49.
[31] Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.49; p.60.
[32] Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.49.

Tengrianism builds up on a single almighty god called *Tengri*, which refers to Eternal Blue Sky. The creed roots back to the Gokturk (Gok means Sky or Celestial), a Turkic empire that ruled from 6th to 8th century in the Inner Asia, descendants of the Huns.[33] Tengri detains absolute control over human fate. The Orkhon stone inscriptions (recounting the history of the Gokturk Empire) assert 'all human sons are born to die in time, as determined by Tengri'. Tengri gives man his soul and takes it back after death.[34] In Tengrianism, God is not an absentee landlord. Tengri punishes and rewards human beings, and sends them signs of destiny by conveying its energy to the 'lower world'. Its energy manifests itself in cosmic forces; that is, in cataclysmic phenomena, through animals.[35] Considering how harsh natural conditions could become in the 12th century Central Asia, one conjectures how miraculous survival would seem to the tribes in some circumstances. Often times, overcoming the vicissitudes of life would grant as much prestige as overpowering an invincible opponent. The Tengrianist Mongolians were firm believers; but religiosity had more to do with individual well being than bringing about a sense of community (except for the cases where a group of people together were granted survival and miracle; such as Cenghis Khan's and his companions survival of the surprise attack by Ong Khan).[36] The prominence of the signs and miracles in tribal society partly elucidates why Cenghis Khan's life impressed the Mongolians so much. The other pieces of the puzzle lie in another cluster of beliefs.

Tengrianism preaches that God grants wisdom and authority to a specific ruler.[37] As carved in the Orkhon stones, Bilge Khan (Bilge means Wise) relates that Tengri chose himself to become Khan after his father's death, so that the Gokturks did not disappear.[38] Tengri did not give blessing to every generation of khans; hence the rare value. The signs for Tengri's blessing were military success and shamanic omen.[39] Tengri's blessing and protection lasted as long as the Khan conformas to its wishes.[40] Thus, the khan drew legitimacy from divine

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[33] Olson, James, S. (1998) *An Ethnohistorical Dictionary of China*, Westport, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, p.342.

[34] Naberezhnye, Chelny. (2000) *Tengrianizm: Religion of Turks and Mongols.* in Bezertinov, Rafael, "Old Turkic Deities", *The Tatar Gazete*, Archive of Turkish Oral Narratives, Turkish Tech University, http://aton.ttu.edu/OLD_TURK_DEITIES.asp

[35] Hoang, *op.cit.*, pp. 156-158.

[36] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, pp.56-58.

[37] Allsen, Thomas, T. (1996) "Spiritual Geography and Political Legitimacy in the Eastern Steppe", in ed. Claessen, Henri J.M. and Oosten, Jarich G. New York : E. J. Brill, p.116.

[38] Naberezhnye, *op.cit.*

[39] Biran, Michal, (2004) "The Mongol Transformation: From the Steppe to Eurasian Empire", *Medieval Encounters*d, Vol.10, No: 1-3, p.341.

[40] Naberezhnye, *op.cit.*

power. This belief ties in the doctrine of complete obedience to a single, legitimate political authority, (legitimate connotes approved by Tengri). The Orkhon inscriptions narrate that Tengri punishes crimes or offences against the Khan. One should colligate this belief with the idea of world domination in the medieval Turks.

Turan describes how the *Oghuzname*, an epic of Oghuz Khan, ancestor of the Huns and Gokturks, who conquered China, India, Persia, Syria, the Byzantine Empire and Russia, recounts that God endowed the Oghuz, domination over the world.[41] Turan evidences the Turkic belief in the celestial origin of sovereignty and of world domination in the Chinese sources. He traces the idea also in the Ottomans.[42] Tengrianism confirms that divine mandate to Khan encompasses (at least) the entire steppe.[43] This doctrine evokes the role of human agency in progressing history in Hegel's philosophy of history. The chosen hero 'realises' history (*Geist*).[44] The Turkic belief further entailed that the chosen khan must take care of the material needs of the populace, also to raise the greatness and glory of the lineage. As such, the khan bears a fatherly responsibility towards the people. The ruled return the favour by obedience, loyalty and recognition. This pattern strengthens the instrumentalist explanation that Cenghis Khan pursued his conquests to satisfy the needs and greed of the tribes. In sum, Tengrianism and the Turkic idea of the world domination coalesce to form the Mongolian conviction that their people and the ruler are chosen by God. To put it differently, religion defines some distinct identity and a source of self esteem for the Mongolians. The ruler comes from a celestial origin, therefore possesses superhuman attributes.[45] As such, the khan enjoys what Weber calls 'charismatic authority'.

What follows from this cluster of beliefs is the assertion that the state can only be destroyed from within (by disobedience), and not by foreigners.[46] According to the Orkhon inscriptions, the Turkic empires dissolved when the Chinese provoked the Turks to revolt against the central authority. Had the Turkic empire not divided between the claimants to independent

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[41] Turan. Osman, "The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turks". *Studia Islamica*. No. 4 (1955), p.78.
[42] Turan. *op.,cit.*, pp.78-80.
[43] Allsen, *op.cit.*, p.116.
[44] Hegel, Georg, W.H. (1857). *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Tr. by Nisbet. H. B.. Vol. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1975. pp.62-63.
[45] Allsen, *op.cit.*, p.116.
[46] Turan. *op.,cit.*, p.79.

rule, the state would have survived, because Tengri blesses and protects the chosen people.[47] Thus, disobedience stands out as the crucial problem for the tribes. The preaching of submission to the ruler, divine mandate and world domination sharply contrast to the dispersed nature of the nomadic society in the 12th century. It is likely that the social norms with regards to prestige and naming inspired some overambitious people to challenge the established authority. It is equally likely that the conviction as to which Tengri helps and rewards those it favours renders political authority more vulnerable to challenges. In that, the defeat of the ruler by some opponent(s) cost him his legitimacy since loss implicates Tengri's disfavour. This hypothesis explicates why Cenghis Khan's successive victories strengthened his authority and legitimacy amongst the tribes. It also elucidates why the tribes revered the Mongolians as opposed to the Chinese, the Russians and the Arabs.

To give a fuller account of the ways in which the doctrine of divine signs complements political power, one needs to dwell upon the role of the shaman. In the Middle Ages, as in today, Shaman decoded Tengri's signs and communicated with Tengri. By intermediating between the lower and upper world, shaman would defend clan interests. He equally fulfilled the role of the priest, the physician and the sorcerer.[48] Given his control over what Durkheim calls the 'sacred', shaman stands out as an eminent personality.[49] His word would be executed without delay. Shaman would come from an ordinary family as well as a family of shaman.[50] In both cases, their talent had to be discovered and approved by other shamans. Upon designation, they would undergo a diligent period of apprenticeship. In sum, shaman was a merit-based elite occupation with high prestige. It should be noted that Tengrianism was not an identifier in the way Muslim, Christian or white bone was.[51] The Tengrianist Mongolians were firm believers; and yet, they did not qualify individuals as to their religious identity.[52] For the Tengrianist Mongolians, the adjectives "Christian" or "Muslim" or "shamanist"

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[47] Lococo, Paul. 1954. (2008), *Cenghis Khan: History's Greatest Empire Builder*, Virginia: Potomac Books, p.2.
[48] Oesterreich, Traugott K. (1999) *Possession, Demoniacal and Other among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern*, London: Routledge, p.294
[49] Juvaini, *History of the World-Conqueror II*, (141-142), in Spuler, Bertold, *History of the Mongols: Based on Eastern and Western Account of the Thirteen and Fourteen Centuries*, (1972) tr. Drummond, Helga and Stuart, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press. p.110. Durkheim differentiates between sacred and profane. Sacred defines the spiritual or religious realm, i.e. rites, objects of reverence, religious behaviour. Profane pertains to the worldly life. Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Oxford, New York : Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.36-37.
[50] Hoang, *op.cit.*, p. 158.
[51] Weatherford, Jack. E-mail message, 04.12.2009.
[52] Juvaini, [83-85], *op.cit.*, Spuler, p.72.

pertained to the clergy.[53] The European envoy Juvaini, describing the Mongolia at the beginning of the 13th century around the time Cenghis Khan was gaining power, affirmed that the Mongolians did not force anybody to deny his religion. He yet noted his uncertainty about the future of the tolerance policy when the Mongolians would take control over the continent.[54] This report substantiates the Mongolians tolerance towards other faiths. The social perception of the clergy as a profession, rather than an identity, affirms why the Mongolians from different creeds still recognised each other as Mongolian; why religious tolerance caused no social instability, and why religion failed to unify the Mongolian people.

As mentioned earlier, shaman interacted with political authority. Since he would interpret Tengri's signs, his word could legitimise or de-legitimise the ruler's position. He could report forebodings or auspices about the ruler family as well as their challengers. On the other hand, the political authority did not subdue to the clergy; it detained the competence to designate the great shaman. Teb-Tengri, a leading shaman famous for his rare skills such as mastery over fire, magical flight etc., facilitated Cenghis Khan's rise to power by reporting auspices and conferring upon him the title Cenghis (the ruler of the world).[55] In contrast, Cenghis Khan executed the great shaman Kokochu for challenging his authority; and replaced him by an old sage.[56] Hence, the relationship between the temporal power and the spiritual power was one of mutual interdependence. It often yielded to power conflicts. In the case of mutual support, the great shaman reinforced the khan's rule.

In sum, Tengrianism entangles in power and identity politics. The idea of chosen people gives a distinct identity to the Mongolians. This identity differs from what Islam and Christianity foster. It merges with ethnicity whereas Islam and Christianity melt ethnicity into the religious community. It is probable that this pattern forestalled conversion until Cenghis Khan's era. In addition, the idea of divine sign and benediction introduces the supernatural into the socio-political sphere. Accordingly, in addition to the divine right of the ruler, charismatic authority comes into play. Charismatic authority as being the source of legitimacy augments instability, if ambitious and self-confident members of the tribe challenge, individually or through alliance, the established authority. The Orkhon inscriptions narrate how the Chinese by

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[53] Weatherford, Jack. E-mail message, 04.12.2009.
[54] Juvaini, *op.cit.*, Spuler, p.72.
[55] Boyle, John, A. (1972) "Turkish and Mongol Shamanism in the Middle Ages", *Folklore*, Vol. 83. p181.
[56] Hoang, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

conniving or bribing the rising challengers drove Turkic empires to dissolution. That is to say, it is likely that the existing social norms, belief scheme and patterns of legitimacy impeded tribal unification. On the other hand, Tengrianism reinforces political authority if the ruler is charismatic and powerful enough. In such cases, the doctrine of absolute obedience, God-chosen Khan and world domination not only enhances the ruler's legitimacy but also deters the rising challengers. This implication of the creed may explicate why Cenghis Khan maintained Tengrianism although his empire constantly interacted with other religions.

To recap, religion and language crosscut ethnic divisions in the Central Asian tribal society. Language does not suffice to construct a Mongolian or tribal identity, and intertribal bonds. Religion gives a distinct identity to the Mongolians as the 'chosen people'. However, both fall short to promote Mongolian or any tribal unification. They do not define an 'enemy' either. Identity, defined by bones at the normative level, had fluid boundaries in practice. Therefore, its scope did not extend to all Mongolians. Identity embedded in politics. In the context of mobility and power politics, loyalty lay with the tribe ruler. The social norms and Tengrianism produced both centrifugal and centripetal impacts on political authority. The criteria for gaining prestige and naming sometimes undercut the doctrine of divine favour and of absolute obedience. The proof is tribes often fought for their name or to revenge for abducted women, stolen flocks etc. On the other hand, the idea of world domination and of divine signs enhanced the temporal power, when the latter was strong and in control of the spiritual power. In building loyalty and drawing legitimacy, Cenghis Khan profited from the social norms for prestige and name, the religious doctrine of divine signs and the chosen ruler and people, the clan based identity and loyalty defined by the ruler. In sum, the socio-political and ideational structure remained rigid and little permissive for tribal unification until a strong agency such as Cenghis Khan emerged and imposed his rule.

I.II. THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE MONGOLIAN LIFESTYLE

The 12th century nomads were at the mercy of the physical conditions of the Central Asian steppes. How did the physical conditions shape the behaviour of the Mongolian tribes? Is there a relationship between bellicosity and nomadic lifestyle in the 12th century Central Asia?

Some studies explained Mongolian bellicosity by the adverse effect of climatic change. One explanation underlined the impact of deteriorating weather conditions on livestock keeping. (Lenk: 1974; Taskin: 1984; Fang: 1990) Another pointed at the accretion of tribal invasions in Northern China after some period of the worsening climatic and ecological conditions in Inner Asia.[57] Natural conditions played prominent role in the shaping of nomadic life. Yet, such explanations provide broad answers and exclude political factors from the framework of analysis. For a more specific answer, one needs to examine the impacts of the physical conditions on economy and the socio-political structure.

The climate and the flora of the period brought about a nomadic economy that relied mainly on livestock keeping and hunting. The physical conditions restricted the quantity and quality of livestock and pastoral lands.[58] Given the scarcity of the goods and resources, access to land and its control were a matter of constant competition and conflict.[59] Land served for hunting, agriculture, feeding livestock, recreation, socialisation and military training.[60] The manifold purposes in the given physical conditions hint at how dependent populations were on land and how strategic its control was. By definition, land belonged to a tribe. When a tribe conquered another tribe, it gained access to its lands. Thus, land ownership existed, and offered material gains. Yet, one should not reduce the motivation behind conquests to economic benefits. Independent producers and to nobility that administered the area had right to free access and usufruct. In other words, tribe chiefs did not hold exclusive property rights on the land. Given the non exclusive character of the good, access to land could not constitute *casus belli* by itself. The victory of one tribe over another subjugated all blood relatives of the losing tribe to the winner.[61] Hence, military success increased man power. The more the soldiers the greater power the stronger defence the greater chances of not subduing to another tribe. Often times, the tribes conquered lands to recruit soldiers, rather than using the captives as labour force.

Migration affected the use of land. Tribes moved to find warmer and more arid lands with better pasturage. Till the end of the 12th century, tribal groups migrated in scattered groups. By the 13th century however, Turkish speaking tribes began to form larger groupings, which

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[57] Fang Jin-Qi, and Liu Guo, (1992). "Relationship between climatic change and the nomadic southward migrations in eastern Asia during historical times", in *Climatic Change*, Vol. 22, No:2. pp.154-156.
[58] Bold, *op.cit.*, pp.24-26; and pp.39-42.
[59] Lococo, *op.cit.*, p.4.
[60] Lane, *op.cit.*, p.3.
[61] Bold, Bat-Ochir, p.48, p.110.

resulted in the federation of tribes. The relatively larger federations (i.e. the Mongols, Naiman, Jalair etc.) displayed a heterogeneous composition. Each group possessed some pasturage. Lands were not delimitated by bordering; customs and social norms of friendship and respect governed their use.[62] The absence of formal regulation or enforcement mechanisms with regards to land ownership and usufruct inescapably propelled competition and struggle among the steppe people. The constellation of power explicates the propensity to build alliances in the form of federations. Entering in federations helped the tribes secure their belongings and withstand external attacks. However, the cost was tribal independence and name.[63] On the whole, the intertribal relations were not some state of nature. A 'regime' governed the relations between the tribes; long established traditions and 'gentlemen's agreement' regulated the enjoyment of goods.[64] Violations occurred frequently in the absence of a central authority or a hegemon; but the balance of power between the larger federations increased regime stability.

The smallest unit of the tribal society was family. From an economic perspective, family was characterised by the ownership of common property. It constituted the basic unit for the social division of labour. The administrative, military and territorial regulations built upon this structure.[65] Family, as the transmitter of the bone, formed the basis of identity. Nevertheless, its unity was frequently challenged by wars and economic problems. Wars divided families, caused abandonment of poor relatives and separated the tribes; whereas material concerns led families to join some landholding clan with considerable human resources and livestock.[66] The incorporated families expected to gain protection, welfare and sometimes position from integration.[67] Such formations would survive as long as material benefits sustained. On the other hand, one should remember that identity and kinship depended on the scope and magnitude of interpersonal sharing. Accordingly, tribal partnerships also fostered mutual trust, solidarity and loyalty. Relationships would be revised if one of the parties defected or failed to fulfil its familial responsibilities, in the very same way the familial bonds were. Consequently, human factor did not remain constant at the family, clan or tribe levels.

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[62] Bold, Bat-Ochir, p.57.
[63] Lane, *op.cit.*, p.5.
[64] Krasner, Stephen. D. (1982) "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables", *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2, p.186.
[65] Bold, Bat-Ochir, pp.69-70.
[66] Di Cosmo, Nicola. (1999) "State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.14-15.
[67] Hoang, p.105.

Fluidity exacerbated conflicts, augmented instability; but also favoured ethnic tolerance given that identity and loyalty based on clan.

The concentration around landownership formed large heterogeneous tribes. If the number of dependent households passed beyond some thousands of people, the landholder class was considered to be an aristocracy.[68] It follows that wealth constituted an alternative to valour in obtaining aristocratic entitlement. The social justification derived from the responsibility of the chief to meet material needs of his people. In reality, the two sources coincided. The aristocracy had to detain military and economic capabilities as well as social prestige to sustain the rule in the competitive environment. It is noteworthy that aristocratic authority in the nomadic society differed from European feudalism. In contrast to the seigneur who detained exclusive ownership of the land, the nomadic aristocracy's right limited to control and usufruct. Besides, the tribal aristocracy could not exclude independent producers from free access to land. This legal design demonstrates that land was not the priority. Land was valuable to the extent that it created political, military and economic capabilities. For the nomad society, livestock constituted the essential asset; hence the primacy of animal ownership.[69] This pattern explains why animal theft provoked revenge between the tribes; and why ad hoc and informal rules sufficed to regulate the use of land.

The executive power lay with the khans. Between the 10th to 12th century, tribes, the assembly (kurultay) or tribe chiefs designated khans to lead military expeditions and hunts, and to provide the clan with livestock. In line with the norms for nobility, the selection based on personal authority, charisma and proven military skills. Hunting and warring performance substantiated the eligibility requirements. The executive mandate had no fixed duration. The person would hold the position as long as his authority remained unchallenged and he sustained the provision of benefits in terms of security, welfare, livestock and access to land. The output legitimacy condition opened this mandate to negotiation with the tribe elite, if not the whole populace. Sometimes, certain tribes elected more than one khan at the same time. Hence, the political structure became permissive to rebellions and power seizures.[70] On the other hand, output legitimacy was a necessary but not sufficient condition. The khan needed recognition and approval by the assembly. The assembly gathered the aristocracy and family

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[68] Hoang, p.105.
[69] Bold, pp.48-49.
[70] Hoang, *op.cit.*, p.104.

representatives. In addition to designating the khan, the assembly debated war strategies, decided the fate of the rebels and the distribution of booties.[71] The khan often asked support from the assembly for military campaigns.

The intertribal level displayed the same patterns of legitimacy and division of power as the tribal level. Tribes united in confederations to fulfil a single goal; i.e. winning concession from China, plundering northern China or Turkistan.[72] The confederations would be ruled by the khan that the steppe assembly would designate. Upon achievement of the goal, the union would dissolve. The unity would sustain only if a charismatic leader, called the great khan, established central authority. The great khan would merit this position upon successive victories in intertribal wars. The investiture took place at the steppe assembly gathering tribal chiefs, and the leading commanders. The steppe assembly had the same functions and competences as the tribe assembly. Similar to the tribal khan, the great khan held his mandate as long as the output flow continued and his authority remained unchallenged. The potential risk of having rising challengers in the system gave rulers the incentive to brutally suppress the opponents and rebels, and to play the tribes one another so as to prevent the formation of a counter-alliance. The ethnic and religious differences did not matter when choosing the ally or the foe. Often times, the Tatar would enter alliances with the Chinese against the Mongolians.[73] This pattern remained unaltered even after the unification. Cenghis Khan fought the Merkid, the Tatar, the Christian Naiman, the Buddhist Qara Khitai, the Chinese and the Khwar; that is to say, tribes from different ethnics and religions, and sedentary populations from different religions and ethnics. The intertribal structure constitutes one dimension of tribal bellicosity.

The thus far presented factors explain bellicosity between the tribes; but not the belligerent behaviour towards the sedentary populations. The missing link is the economic dependency of the nomads on settled societies. Nomadic economy produced primary goods. The tribes lacked metals for weapons and tools, textile for tents and clothing, grains for bread, gems and luxury items for the aristocrats and ladies, gold and silk for brocade. The shortage of manufactured products propelled trade, especially with the Chinese. The tribes would sell meat, horse wool and hides. Yet, the demand for nomadic products was far more elastic than

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[71] Lane, *op.cit.*, p.8.
[72] Lococo, *op.cit.*, p.4.
[73] Morgan, *op.cit.,* p.56.

the demand for Chinese products.[74] Also, the terms of the trade were unequal given the higher market price of manufactured goods. Trade dependency instigated plunders and wars; aroused hostility, which explains the Chinese animosity towards the Mongolians.[75] In effect, the incessant Khitan (a Mongolian tribe) invasions from the north compelled the Chinese to build the Great Wall in the 10th century.[76] From 1209 till his death, several times Cenghis Khan invaded China. One immediate cause behind invasions is the decision by the Tungut and Jin dynasties to increase the tariffs and to curtail trade with the nomads. The decision was accompanied by strict regulations and control.[77] Trade dependency incited hostility among the Mongolians towards the Chinese. However, there is no evidence suggesting that the former's enmity toward the Chinese was grounded in ethnic motivations; given the fluid concept of Mongolian identity and their neglect of ethnicity in selecting the target for invasion.[78] In effect, Cenghis Khan personally launched campaigns in Central Asia because of trade disputes.[79] Hence, economic reasons might have greater explanatory power. The nomads sought to obtain the goods in shortage. When trade failed, they did not refrain from attacking sedentary populations. It is worth remembering that the patterns of legitimacy and the contingency of political mandate on the sustainable provision of material gains gave sufficient incentive for bellicosity. These traits distinguish nomadic rulers from feudal seigneurs. Where the latter organised conquests to expand political power or in the name of holy war the Mongolian khans depended on conquests for physical and political survival.[80]

In sum, bellicosity had its foundations in the nomadic economy, tribal and intertribal politics, patterns of ownership and natural conditions. There is not much evidence suggesting that bellicosity had ethnic origins. Vengeance, intra and intertribal rivalries and output legitimacy codetermine Mongolians attacks on other tribes, whereas invasions on sedentary populations root in trade dependency. The tribes adopted nomadic lifestyle and livestock economy as the most feasible strategy for survival in the floral and climatic conditions of the Central Asia.

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[74] Morgan, *op.cit.,* pp.33-34.
[75] Allsen, Thomas. "The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in Northern China" in Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States (907-1368) ed. Twitchett and Franke, p.351.
[76] Morgan, *op.cit.,* p.47.
[77] Franke, Herbert and Chan, Hoklam. (2009). "China". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved November 26, 2009, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/111803/China/71723/China-under-the-Mongols
[78] It was not uncommon that the tribes invented reasons to attack other nomads, like reviving some past offense, attack or defection. In the same way, the Mongolians attacked other ethnics.
[79] Allsen, Thomas, (1989) "*Mongolian Princes* and Their Merchant Partners: 1200-1260" *Asia Major*, II, pp.92-93.
[80] Bold, p.150.

Livestock economy prioritised animal ownership over landownership. Hence, rather than being a valuable commodity by itself, land mattered to the extent that it provided man power, livestock and political influence. The control over land provoked intra and intertribal conflicts, since political mandate depended on sustainable output flow. The ensuant political structure became porous to rising challengers, hence instability. To most families, benefits from land gave strong incentive for joining other clans, regardless of religion or ethnicity. Accordingly, the norms of loyalty, trust and kinship happened to be interpersonal, pragmatic and flexible. The nomadic society displayed informal and ad hoc regulations as well as high levels of fluidity in terms of human resources and alliances. In sum, ideational, ideological or material factors in themselves do not account for the perception of animosity or alliance. These factors coalesced and reinforced each other in the context of the 12th century. In a nutshell, bellicosity was not an indicator of some kinship or enmity; conquests were instrumental; allegiances were fluid, so were the perception of friend and foe.

II. BUILDING THE EMPIRE: RULING 'DIVERSITY'

Cenghis Khan was born into a tribal society with fluid identity, loyalty and alliances. In contrast to the preceding khans who inherited similar cultural, political and social capital, Cenghis Khan managed to unify the clans, subjugate the long established civilisations and powerful states under the nomad rule. His unusual ascension to power has to do with charisma and 'fortuna'.[81] More stupefying yet is the way in which Cenghis Khan maintained his empire. It is worth remembering that the major problem of the steppe empires was not to craft a state but to inhibit disobedience. It thus seems amazing the way Cenghis Khan consolidated his rule over both the nomads and sedentary populations that do not share the tribal norms and perceptions of valour, prestige, ethnicity, religion, kinship and loyalty. How could Cenghis Khan build and maintain his empire; and what part did religious tolerance play in it? This part examines the processes of state building and expansion. The objective is to see how economic, ideological and political constraints affected state building; and how state building and conquests mutually reinforced each other.

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[81] Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*, tr. by Thomson, Ninian, H. London: Paul, 1882, pp.167-170.

II.I. THE MONGOLIAN STATE-ARMY

In 1206, the assembly elected Cenghis Khan as the great khan for achieving tribal unification, and granted him the title Cenghis, the ruler of the world. The *Secret History* recounts this assembly meeting in detail, because this incident signals the emergence of a new state.[82] Cenghis Khan knew that the success of the unification would soon become mundane, and people would disperse unless he defined new targets. However, the Mongolian tribes did not have a centralised army until the 12th century. Therefore, Cenghis Khan set about transforming the tribal structure into a military structure. He needed military reforms. He was yet constrained by the long established tribal tendency to defect and disobey the cooperative system. To solve the defection and free riding problems, he devised up a hierarchical military system. The military system brought in new types of loyalty and allegiances, and helped inculcate the subjects.

Cenghis Khan restructured the tribes, clans and aristocracy within a strictly numerical and militarised system. He divided the grand tribes while merging the smaller ones so as to form units of equal strength.[83] Splitting the bigger clans also aimed to 'divide and rule' potential rival clans. Cenghis Khan carefully incorporated the long established aristocrat families into the military. He abolished hereditary titles *per se*. All right to entitlement exclusively belonged to the state as opposed to the previous system where they lay with the clans or families; and entitlements were military.[84] In practice however, the aristocracy (given that they also possessed military skills) became commanders in the military structure.[85] To dilute aristocratic influence, he dispersed members of the same clan, family and tribe under different units.[86] The aristocrats often served as senior officer corps; and were charged of serving the khan when the latter wanted; which meant, in practice, on a quasi-permanent basis. Cenghis Khan substituted the bone based system with recruitment according to meritocracy and loyalty. He rewarded those who proved their military skills in battle and strictly maintained their loyalty. He was quite generous when distributing rewards; rewards spanned from pure material benefits to the control of 'everything' plus material benefits. Meritocracy assured him the support of the lower classes, the black bones. The latter finally held some real chances to prosper and to climb up the ladder in society. The feeling of gratitude would

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[82] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, *op.cit.*, pp.140-171.
[83] Hoang, *op.cit.*, p.148.
[84] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.65.
[85] Hoang, *op.cit.*, p.148.
[86] Lococo, *op.cit.*, p.26.

buttress the sense of belonging and loyalties. In sum, the new militarised system not only equalised opportunities but also occluded the formation of aristocratic or family-based opposition coalition.

Cenghis Khan organised the army in decimal system.[87] According to Juvaini's report, "one man (would be) in charge of every ten soldiers, and in charge of ten such units there (would be) a commander of a hundred, in charge of ten of these a commander of a thousand, and in charge of ten of these (there would be) a high commander. At the head of the whole army are two or three dukes, but again one of them (had) the supreme command".[88] Commanders at each level were responsible to the commander at the superior level and to Cenghis Khan himself. Cenghis Khan would appoint the commanders of even lower ranks himself.[89] Moreover, Cenghis Khan assigned his close companions to supervise the logistics, to arrange the equipment and to maintain the discipline.[90] The companions were devoted valorous men mostly from the black bone. They reached this position over time, by proving their military skills and loyalty to Cenghis Khan. Cenghis Khan would revere and trust them; he would delegate them all powers when he did not join the fights. They were often closer to him than his family.[91] His past deceptions by and disappointments with his family members had led him to form an entourage of companions. It is not therefore surprising that these people stood at the top of the military hierarchy.

Cohesion and discipline minutely applied to all levels of the military hierarchy. The unit of ten men constituted the core of the system. It was strictly forbidden to make transfers between units and to have more than ten men in a unit. Each soldier was responsible of his own equipment, as well as the propriety of his mates' behaviour.[92] Juvaini accounts that harsh personal and collective punishments applied to desertion and disobedience. If one man fled, the whole unit would be condemned to death; if a unit of ten men fled, the unit of one hundred would be decapitated. In sum, unless everybody deserted all people who fled would be punished by death. Similar rules applied in battle. If some members of a unit threw

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[87] Turnbull, Stephen R. (2004) *Genghis Khan and the Mongol conquests, 1190-1400,* New York: Routledge, p.17.
[88] Juvaini, (161) in Spuler, p.84.
[89] Lococo, *op.cit.*, p.26.
[90] Martin, Desmond, H. (1943), "The Mongol Army", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1., p.54.
[91] Hoang, *op.cit.*, pp.146-147.
[92] Lane, *op.cit.*, p.31.

themselves boldly in fight and the rest did not follow, the latter would be punished by death. If one or more of the ten soldiers were taken prisoner, the rest should free them if they did not want to pay the human loss by their lives.[93] Death penalty applied also to incompetent commanders for they bore the responsibility of the lives of the soldiers under their supervision.[94] It should be noted that these rules were enforced. The collective punishment procedure with harsh penalties posited a situation of interdependence and mutual responsibilities, which in turn fostered, although forcibly, collective control, cooperation thereby the sense of community. Meritocracy together with monitoring and sanctioning explain the cost-benefit side of collective action. However, what Cenghis Khan achieved was to transform the existing decentralised and fluid forms of social bonds into a centralised and more stable type of loyalty. Building on the existing social norms of sharing, soldiers would develop some sense of belonging and kinship within the units, whereby a mechanical solidarity, as Durkheim put it, would come about.[95] Given that their fate was tied to one another in units of heterogeneous composition, unit based mutual commitments transcended ethnicity, religion and kinship.

The thus far explained measures demonstrate that state building relied on militarization.[96] Further to the army, Cenghis Khan formed a personal bodyguard unit of one thousand men of his own. He also established a close elite unit of personal day and night guard to permanently watch over and guard his person, and to organise social life in the camps. They would control the servants of the court; administer the movement of the camps and the distribution of food, the herds.[97] In short, the guards were charged of all economic, administrative and political regulations and security. Finally, Cenghis Khan revised the extant hostage system. In that, each of the commanders of the units of one thousand and ten thousand would send their sons or their best friend's sons as hostage. Instead of threatening the commanders by the life of the hostages as was the case in the old practice, Cenghis Khan raised the children to employ them later in state administration. The children would replace the officers that underperformed, disobeyed or defected. In doing so, Cenghis Khan maintained bureaucratic efficiency,

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[93] Juvaini, (161) in Spuler, *op.cit*., p.84.
[94] Lococo, *op.cit*., p.27.
[95] Mechanical solidarity defines a system where individuals being exposed to similar work, lifestyle and living conditions would feel connected to one another whereby cohesion, integration, hence solidarity would come about. Durkheim, Emile. *De la Division du Travail Social: Etudes sur l'Organisation des Societes Superieures*, Paris: Felix Lacan, pp.73-75.
[96] Di Cosmo, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.
[97] Martin, *op.cit*., pp.55-57.

incorporated families into the state and assured that each family had a personal link in the royal court. This policy stands out among harsh punishments and rigid discipline. Cenghis Khan did not build his state solely on terror. By creating bonds he sought to evoke long term trust among subjects.

Cenghis Khan reorganised the socioeconomic life in a way to prepare people for military service. Every able man between the age of 15 and 61 was automatically enlisted.[98] To prevent defection, he established a regular census. According to Juvaini, military training would start at the age of three when children were taught to ride ponies. At five, children who mastered pony riding would move on to learning using arrow and bows. Women were equally skilful in riding horse and using arrow and bows as men.[99] Highly organised and regulated hunting, *nerge*, would keep soldiers fit for battle. During hunts, tribe members would practice and improve their communication skills, horsemanship and coordination.[100] Hunts served as a mock war session where hunters would obey strict rules, procedures for catching and killing animals and would be punished if they did not. In terms of logistics, Cenghis Khan would oblige each town and city that subdued the Mongol rule to provide armies with supplies, i.e. weapons, clothing, carts, workers and alike.[101] The soldiers called *fast riders* would ensure fast, secure and effective communication. The towns and cities would serve as stations to fast riders.[102] The alternative to military service was working for the postal system, *Yam*. Yam operated on a vast network of postal stations (one in every 20-30 miles) with logistic supply for information and intelligence gathering. The network enabled travels of envoys going to and from the Mongol courts, the transportation of goods and the transmission of decrees.[103] Yam was of strategic importance to the expansionist state; therefore, was minutely regulated. As understood from Marco Polo's account, the system was renowned for its efficacy.[104] In sum, the state encapsulated the individuals by means of education, socialisation and profession whereby the entire population contributed to the maintenance of the army.

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[98] Martin, *op.cit.*, p.53.
[99] Juvaini, (105-106) in Spuler, *op.cit.*, p.80.
[100] Lane, *op.cit.*, p.32.
[101] Lococo, *op.cit.*, p.29.
[102] Weatherford. *op.cit.*, p.73.
[103] Morgan, *op.cit.*, p.103.
[104] Polo, Marco, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Ricci, Aldo, (2001), New Delhi : Asian Educational Services, pp.152-157.

Enhanced military power augmented the odds of winning in battle. However, capturing lands and subduing populations were perishable victories in the long run (especially thinking that he was constantly on a conquest) unless complemented by measures to consolidate the rule. Cenghis Khan needed a universal legal structure; he developed the *Great Yasa* (law). As mentioned earlier, the nomadic society had long established customary law inherited from the Turkic empires. What Cenghis Khan did was to recapitulate and codify the existing norms. Yasa can be classified under seven categories; international law, public law (comprises the executive power, the people, immunity privileges, hunting statute, taxation, administration and administrative ordinances, the statute of bound service and military statutes), criminal law, private law, commercial law, judiciary law and codification of law.[105] The extracts pertaining to the international law demonstrate that declaration of war, entry in war and the immunity of ambassadors were codified in detail. One novelty was the Yasa instituted the practice of diplomatic immunity. These parts also reflect the Mongolian self-assurance deriving from the idea of 'chosen people'. According to Juvaini, the Mongolians would ask them to surrender, 'if not God knew what would happen'.[106] With regards to public law, Cenghis Khan preserved the divine right of the ruler and the role and the existing competences of the assembly. All subjects and properties belonged to the khan.[107] However, he introduced the succession rule; all rulers should be descendants of Cenghis Khan's family. Yasa limited the 'nation' of the empire to the Mongolians.[108] It imposed on all subjects, bound service in tasks that most befitted them. However, Cenghis Khan exempted some groups from bound service; the religious groups, technicians and artisans from sedentary populations. The eligibility criteria for the exemption will be elaborated in the next section.

The Yasa maintained its authoritarian tone with regards to the financial system. The state levied taxes on the tribes to finance the army, Yam and public expenditure; spending of the court, bureaucracy, banquets, ceremonies, festivals and wars etc. The Yasa preserved the two traditional types of taxation; tributes and services to the ruler (regular taxes on production, livestock, treasures, horses etc.) and tributes for commercial transactions and services (including prostitution). The state also collected taxes for extraordinary situations, such as

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[105] Vernadsky, George. *(1938) "*The Scope and Contents of Chingis Khan's Yasa"*, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 3/4. p. 344.
[106] Juvaini, in Vernadsky, *op.cit.*, p.345.
[107] Juvaini, (146) in Spuler, p.83.
[108] Vernadsky, *op.cit.*, pp.345-348.

war.[109] Rates did not depend on the annual earnings; they were fixed on the size of herds. In addition, households paid the expenditures of the local Yam to which they were attached.[110] Rates usually mounted as high to enable taxpayers to survive until the next payment.[111] The taxation network followed the decimal system in the army. The fiscal performance was not constant and uniformly efficient due to two reasons. Output in the nomadic economy would fluctuate according to the climate; and in the dearth of skilled personnel, state bureaucracy did not attain high efficiency.[112] Accordingly, at the onset, taxes did not constitute the main revenue. Juvaini's narration of poverty and deprivation in some tribes affirms the assertion.[113] Booties constituted one motor of the economy. Cenghis Khan minutely regulated distribution of goods to ensure fairness.[114] Often times, he would spare some share of the booty for the orphans, the poor and widows of defunct soldiers. In addition, commerce had legs in the economy; especially, following the expansion over sedentary populations. As the state gained control of the trade routes and trade revenues accrued, decrees proliferated. The Yasa regulated road safety, merchant rights and situations of bankruptcy. Concerned about revenues, Cenghis Khan attempted to minimise corruption and unfair trade through harsh punishments. As an example, the Yasa sentenced to death the merchant who took goods and went bankrupt three times.[115] Thus, the Yasa deterred merchants from fraud, free riding and non-compliance.

The criminal law contained equally severe punishments. The code defined three types of crimes; offenses against religion, morals and established customs (interfering with the freedom, false witnessing and ritualistic offenses); offenses against the khan and the state (violation of the bound statute, abuse of state authority by military officers, violation of Yasa, and breaking the military discipline); the offenses against the lives and interests of private persons (homicide, interference with somebody's captive or private property). The code condemned most crimes by death penalty or imprisonment, and misdemeanours by fines.[116] On the other hand, torture was abolished.[117] With regards to private law, the code recognised

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[109] Schurmann, H.F., (1956) "Mongolian Tributary Practices of the Thirteenth Century", in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3/4, pp.308-10.
[110] Schurmann, op.cit., p.317.
[111] Mongol, *op.cit.*, p.102.
[112] Di Cosmo, *op.cit.*, p.26.
[113] Juvaini, (92-93) in Spuler, *op.cit.*, p.104.
[114] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.98.
[115] Vernadsky, *op.cit.*, p.358.
[116] Juvaini, (22) in Spuler, *op.cit.*, pp.87-98. Vernadsky, *op.cit.*, pp.355-357.
[117] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.xix.

family as the legal person; individual was not recognised by law. Women's chastity had a central role, since abduction of women constituted *casus belli*, and the lineage was a source of prestige. Marriage with maids, women from the same kin in the first or second degree was strictly forbidden.[118] Children born from slaves had equal legitimacy as those born from the wives. In short, the criminal code was designed to evoke fear in the subjects thereby maintain social order. Cenghis Khan also incorporated the laws of sedentary populations that he deemed utile.

Laws would enter into force upon Cenghis Khan's approval. No law approbated by Cenghis Khan could be revised or challenged. In addition, he charged his son Jaghatay of protecting the Yasa, should the state collapse.[119] Cenghis Khan left law enforcement to the local authorities. Depending on the existing social structure and the type of dispute, elders, clergy, trade corporations or municipality councils would process the litigation. Jurisprudence played a prominent role. The interpretation of laws was flexible and liberal.[120] To sum, the promulgation of the Yasa constitutes a leap forward in the state building process, by substituting the 'law of the strongest' with codified law. The Yasa originated in the customary law. Cenghis Khan kept intact the rules pertaining to the clan and family order, i.e. family, inheritance etc. In so doing, he circumvented the social and political costs of inventing new laws. He modified the criminal code by defining harsher punishments for some crimes. Instead of regulating in detail, the laws posited general rules to avoid creating legal vacuums. Moreover, he promoted an evolutionary and liberal interpretation of laws. Thus, Cenghis Khan sought to make the Yasa the most efficient when applied to people from different legal traditions over time. His yielding the judiciary competences to the local level follows from this intention. His charging his son of protecting the Yasa is analogous to the personal unit of bodyguard. Both entities serve as back up measures should the structure break down. The overall spirit of the Yasa mirrors Cenghis Khan's perspective of empire building and establishing order and peace on the territories.[121]

Cenghis Khan balanced the oppressive side of the state by distributive practices. Banquets, drinking parties, hunting and bestowal of clothing and of some share of booties constituted

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[118] Juvaini, (21) in Spuler, *op.cit.*, p.97.
[119] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.71.
[120] Lane, *op.cit.*, pp.35-36.
[121] Di Cosmo, *op.cit.*, p.21.

redistributive policies. Cenghis Khan made ample use of solemn ceremonies and grand spectacles in maintaining social bonds and demonstrating the grandeur of his state and the generous side of his rule. Banquets, where people would drink from each others' cups, eat, sing and dance together, would prove the material benefits of the system.[122] On the other hand, the state often organised public ceremonies and spectacles, i.e. coronation or festivals where the subjects would carrying the khan on carpet to the throne and shamans would give blessings. These events taking place in the middle of the steppes concretised submission to Cenghis Khan and the divine approval to the system. Thus, ceremonies had strong symbolic significance. Whereas some regimes substantiated their grandeur in sumptuous architecture, the nomadic Mongolians organised mass gatherings and drew support through participation.

In sum, following his entitlement, Cenghis Khan began crafting a state to maintain unity. The existing social norms and power constellation urged him to pursue an expansionist policy. Believing in the doctrine of the chosen ruler, he envisioned building an empire. Accordingly, he set about reforming the army whereby he also transformed the extant power structures and the patterns of allegiances. Military reforms brought in high discipline which excelled efficiency. The order was maintained by tight supervision, social control and laws. Harsh punishments deterred defection, non compliance and free riding, while long term cooperation within units fostered mutual responsibilities, trust and loyalty. Cenghis Khan abolished hereditary titles, and introduced meritocracy. Meritocracy ameliorated social opportunities, hence gaining support of the lower strata. Thus, Cenghis Khan reoriented clan based loyalties towards the state. Military reforms also propelled socioeconomic transformation. He restructured town organisation to provide soldiers and messengers with resources and shelter; encapsulated people through military training, bound service and mass gatherings. As a result, the subjects served, produced and lived for the army and the state. The Yasa consolidated the khan's rule. The transition to the codified law normalised people's expectations while severe punishments compelled the ruled to norm compliance. Cenghis Khan's selectivity in incorporating customary laws (not touching regulations concerning the private sphere as opposed to defining new rules in criminal law and public law) imparts his objective to build allegiances, without having to bear the brunt of transforming social *habitus*. The resulting regime was authoritarian in the modern sense of the word. By its high level of militarization, the myth of state and the khan, the Mongolian state draws similarities to what Arendt

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[122] Juvaini, (12-13) in Spuler, *op.cit.*, pp.91-92.

describes as totalitarianism. Cenghis Khan used terror to maintain unity given the tribal proclivity to insubordination. In sum, through the army and the Yasa, Cenghis Khan created an unprecedentedly centralised empire in the steppes.[123]

II.II. EXPANSION FOR SURVIVAL

From his investiture as the great khan to his death, Cenghis Khan conquered Xia and Jin dynasties of Chinese origin, Qara Khitan Khanate, Khwarezm, Georgia and Volga Bulgaria. Before the 12th century, the khans raided or fought the sedentary societies.[124] Unlike his predecessors, Cenghis Khan subjugated the neighbouring states, profiting from the latter's conjectural decline. Military reforms, unusual warring tactics (i.e. barbaric destruction, surprise attack and propaganda and alike), and Cenghis Khan's outstanding leadership enabled expansion over sedentary population. The doctrines of the chosen people, World Empire and divine signs justified aggressive foreign policy. Hence, the Mongolians ended up ruling cultural, ethnic and religious diversities. How did the conquests impact state building?

Conquests over sedentary populations exposed the technical and administrative deficiencies of the Mongolian state, which Cenghis Khan remedied by 'borrowing' the best practices and human resources from the sedentary populations. The capture of walled cities revealed the Mongolians' incompetence in engineering. At the Tangus expedition, Cenghis Khan devised to reverse the current of the river; which his men achieved to do, but failed to reap the results; because the river flooded the Mongolian camps instead of the Tangus capital due to miscalculations.[125] Given such failures, when he conquered a town, Cenghis Khan selected out the people with technical and artisan skills among the captives; by offering position, wealth, and tax exemptions he incorporated those who accepted his rule into the engineering unit of the army.[126]

The Naiman conquest occasioned the adoption of the Uigur script. Cenghis Khan observed how the Naiman ruler inscribed his decrees, and sealed them with an official seal. However, the Mongolians were using translators to relay their decrees to the sedentary populations.

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[123] Di Cosmo, *op.cit*., p.33.

[124] Barfield, Thomas, J. (1989) *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp.49-51.

[125] Weatherford, *op.cit*., p.85.

[126] Weatherford, *op.cit*., p.97.

Translators would transcribe orders in the local language. This practice produced a bulk of texts in Chinese, Turkic, Tibetan, Persian, and Russian.[127] The proliferation of texts augmented the risk of confusions and falsification. Briefly, the Naiman conquest taught Cenghis Khan the utility of scribe.[128] The transition to the written system facilitated administration and keeping track of the laws.

Expansion transformed the relations between the Mongolians and the neighbouring states, by extending the part of tributes among state revenues. Under besiege, the Golden Khanate yielded to provide a considerable amount of treasure (gold, silver, silk, herds, horses etc.), young men and women, and to become a Mongol vassal. In return, the Mongolians forwent invasion, leaving the existing ruling dynasty and bureaucracy intact.[129] This phenomenon substantiates the role of economic incentives behind Mongol conquests. The erstwhile practice of intermittent raiding and warring supplied sporadic revenues to the nomadic economy. However, the Mongolian empire, on the brink of emergence, could not live on booties. Cenghis Khan saw greater and sustainable profits in tributes, trade and indirect rule as opposed to ravaging. Tributes defined "a formalised permanent payment of goods and rendering of services which symbolised and actualised the subjection of a given individual or social group".[130] Exaction relied on personal or group based servitude, i.e. the subordination of the Chinese dynasty and subjects to Cenghis Khan, which reflected the tribal understanding of the subjugation of the ruled to the ruler. Tax rates therefore, did not depend on per capita output; fixed quotas applied to populations. With the exception of artisans, each household paid a certain amount regardless of their annual production. The Yam officers collected the taxes.[131] The subdued states provided food and logistic supplies to the Yam tax collectors. Moreover, they paid extraordinary tributes to finance conquests. Permanent taxes were high already; extraordinary levies aggravated fiscal position of the households given the permanent state of war, hence producing disruptive impacts in the long run. In sum, taxation resulted in the economic exploitation of sedentary populations by the Mongolians.

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[127] Brose, *op.cit.*, p.397.
[128] Scribe penetrated the Central Asian steppes with the Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, the Mongolians did not learn to write for centuries.
[129] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.96.
[130] Schurmann, *op.cit.*, p.311.
[131] Schurmann, *op.cit.*, pp.312-13.

As expansions continued and tax revenues accrued, Cenghis Khan acquired greater goods than he needed to distribute. He thus constructed the Yellow Palace to preserve excess booty. Prosperity conduced to the emergence of a 'nouveau riches' class out of Mongolian nobility. The nomads, which previously had scarce purchasing power, developed interest in luxury goods coming from sedentary populations. Demand propelled trade, but also the diplomatic and military means to obtain the required items in cases where the first option failed.[132] Trade indeed entangled with foreign policy. Merchants served as the Khan's agents and advisors. As royal servants, the latter held representation at the court and actively participated in foreign affairs.[133] The Khwar conquest for instance, rooted in commercial interests. Cenghis Khan initially sent diplomats to the Khwarazm to strike a trade partnership.[134] Soon after the treaty entered into force, the Khwarshah renounced the bargain; whereupon Cenghis Khan sent troops and destroyed Khwar cities. It is noteworthy that the Khwar victory was a turning point for the tide of the Mongolian foreign policy. Following the conquest, Cenghis Khan began making explicit reference to world dominance.[135] Destruction was not crude barbarism, but a strategy. Cenghis Khan demolished the cities to divert trade on to the routes that fell under the control of his army.[136] The control of trade routes constituted almost an end in itself given tax revenues. The victory over the Qara Khitan granted Cenghis Khan this opportunity; the entire Silk Route between the Chinese and the Muslim populations yielded to the Mongolian rule. The army and the Yasa secured the previously disrupted trade routes. Moreover, the khan kept customs duties low for the merchants while he abolished them altogether for doctors, teachers, educational institutions and clergy. Accordingly, trade revived; merchants and the state thrived; while the commercial network intensified the circulation of peoples, ideas, scientific knowledge and goods. Eastern products, plants, fashions and workers entered Western markets and vice versa. The engineering unit combined the techniques and know-how of different civilisations to design new products; the cannon illustrates one of such innovations.[137] The Western envoys such as Juvaini, del Carpini and Rashid al-Din visiting the Central Asia relayed the Eastern lifestyles and ways of doing to the West; hence establishing contacts between civilisations. In sum, commercial interests played a prominent role in empire building, and shaped the Mongol foreign policy. Cenghis Khan himself,

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[132] Allsen, Thomas, (1989) "*Mongolian Princes* and Their Merchant Partners: 1200-1260", pp.92-93.
[133] Allsen, *op.cit.*, pp.87-91.
[134] Allsen, *op.cit.*, pp.89-91.
[135] Allsen, *op.cit.*, p.123.
[136] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, pp.118-19.
[137] Weatherford, *op.cit.*, p.xxiii.

worked hard to intensify trade through diplomacy, economic regulations and military power. The outcomes benefited to the Mongolians, the merchants and the scientists.

Tribute and trade based economy brought forth a decentralised empire. When he did not annihilate, Cenghis Khan maintained local bureaucracy and jurisdictions. The reason was the penury of both qualified and unqualified men in the nomadic society, compared to the sedentary populations under their rule; which is why human capital (as soldier, technician or bureaucrat) defined a type of booty. The top bureaucracy was occupied by Mongolian or foreign bureaucrats that represented Mongol interests and relay the khan's decrees. Middle rank civil servants intermediated between the top and the local level.[138] The subjugated dynasty operated as an agent of the Mongolian state. Cenghis Khan reinforced the ruling centre at the expense of nobility. On the other hand, he preserved property rights of the nobility and did not interfere with the extant socioeconomic hierarchies.[139] Thus, Cenghis Khan established an indirect rule by subordinating the ruling dynasty, instituting his representatives at the top of the bureaucracy and incorporating the existing administrative structures and bureaucrats into his empire. Indirect rule was not a random choice. The Mongolian population was far less populous than the sedentary populations, and they lacked bureaucratic and literary skills.[140] Hence, Cenghis Khan could neither populate nor administer the conquered lands by Mongolian citizens. On the other hand, preservation of the local structures bore the risk of maintaining obedience and order once Mongol forces moved away. Thus, the imperial centre needed to foster loyalty or offer benefits to the ruled. Allegiance building was hard to realise given the cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious disparities, the damages incurred to the local people and high taxation. The second option had greater likelihood. Cenghis Khan bestowed positions, wealth, and prestige, and annihilated the rivals of his agents. Still, elite support did not cancel out the possibility of a revolt by the lower strata. Religious tolerance aimed to pre-empt this eventuality.

Cenghis Khan recognised liberty of conscience in his territories; whereby, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, sects and alike freely practiced their faith. This policy seemed most unusual in its epoch given religious persecutions and wars in Europe and in the Middle East. Besides, it contrasted to the Mongolian bellicosity and destructiveness. However, it is equally possible to

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[138] Biran, *op.cit.*, p.307.
[139] Biran, *op.cit.*, p.307.
[140] Biran, *op.cit.*, p.348.

read it as a policy measure to consolidate the rule in the process of empire building. Religious tolerance appealed to public sensitivity, and gave people an incentive to support the regime given that the alternatives in other regimes were worse. As mentioned earlier, religious liberty among the tribes, the Mongolians and the Shamans pre-existed Cenghis Khan's reign.[141] However, it was neither common nor uniform. It is worth reminding that the missionaries had been operating in the Central Asia since the 5th century. That is to say, the religious market was not uncompetitive. Cenghis Khan's tribe tolerated religious differences; and his building upon this policy did not backlash in the Mongolian Empire. It is possible to explicate the lack of reaction by path dependency. However, as mentioned earlier, there are evidences of religious persecution in some tribes. Besides, the habituation with the liberty of faith in Cenghis Khan's tribe does not implicate that other tribes felt the same because they subjugated to Cenghis Khan. Alternatively, it can be argued that when Cenghis Khan dismantled rival power structures through military, social and political reforms, he undercut rebellious collective activism of any sort, thus the lack of reaction to religious tolerance. Both arguments seem plausible. Still, there is value in exploring the underlying belief structure. Tengrianism did not object to the coexistence of rival faiths, provided that they prayed to a single almighty God. In Tengrianism, God responded to men's prayers and especially to those of holy men; the objective of the religion was to gain divine blessing through prayers and ascetism; and (most important for our purposes) God did not limit its blessings to one cult or one place.[142] Accordingly, all creeds preaching one omnipresent God, but in their own ways, fell in line with the principles of Tengrianism, thus causing no legitimacy problems. The lack of interest in the creation of the world facilitated religious accommodation.[143] Hence, the generality of the definition criterion for faith enabled pacific coexistence.

Further to the freedom of faith, Cenghis Khan granted privileges to the Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Daoists in the form of exemption from taxation, some bound service, free access to postal service and other privileges that are required for the appropriate practice of the religion in question. With regards to the form, the decree granting religious liberty did not differ from commercial exemptions, with the exception that it provided justification for

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[141] Lane, *op.cit.*, p.2.
[142] Atwood, Christopher, P. (2004), "Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty: Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century", *The International History Review*, Vol. 26, No. 2. p.253.
[143] Atwood, *op.cit.*, p.253.

bestowing the privilege.[144] The state granted the privileges to a religious leader, and not to an institution or the overall religious community. Thus, the founding decree posited an exclusively personal relationship, as was the case for tributes. This method withheld the right to revise the status in case of succession by an unyielding religious leader. The religious motivation for the decrees stemmed from the Tengrianist teaching that blessings by some religious leaders were more efficient in reinforcing political authority.[145] Cenghis Khan, a firm believer, followed this doctrine. The proof is the decrees conditioned the privileges upon praying for his reign.[146] Also, Juvaini recounts that Cenghis Khan conversed with the clergy of the lands he conquered, sought to get their blessing and to benefit from their wisdom to prolong his life.[147] Nevertheless, it is possible to discern interest seeking motivations behind religious pretext. Cenghis Khan entitled *darqan* the clergy with a certain charisma, who believed in one God and effectively imposed this creed on their people. The darqan status defined an agent of the khan who, by virtue of delivering some special service, gained entitlement to exemptions from taxation and tributes, and judicial immunity to a certain limit.[148] Hence, the clergy with a darqan title became an agent of the Mongolian state who worked to maintain monotheist faith within the population. That Cenghis Khan granted this status only to charismatic leaders of the four orthodox religions which preached obedience, statehood and/or pacifism is not without signification. It implicates that Cenghis Khan envisioned controlling the population through its spiritual leader. Religious privileges also aimed to gain public support and enhance loyalty. A Confucian scholar narrates that preparing for the Khwar expedition, Cenghis Khan enlisted all able bodied monks. The Buddhist leader objected on the grounds that "as not killing was one of Buddha's strictest rules, monks willing to violate it would prove disloyal to their king".[149] Accepting the argument, the khan recognised exemption from military service to maintain loyalty. The control over the sacred (through religious privileges) complemented and reinforced the control over the political (through tributes).

Other arguments buttress interest seeking motives behind religious privileges. Cenghis Khan recognised privileges by a series of separate decisions released after each conquest. The

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[144] Atwood, *op.cit.*, p.238.
[145] Atwood, *op.cit.*, p.246.
[146] Atwood, *op.cit.*, p.238.
[147] Juvaini, (141-142), in Spuler, *op.cit.*, p.110.
[148] Schurmann, *op.cit.*, p.323.
[149] Atwood, *op.cit.*, p.245.

decrees addressed the religions that were predominant in the conquered society; the Tangut, the Chinese, the Uighur etc. In no decree, were the four faiths mentioned together, in a way to posit a general principle. Decrees did not distinguish Daoism from Buddhism either.[150] These characteristics implicate that the state disregarded the doctrinal side of religions and focused on the expected benefits. The benefits were defined in terms order, loyalty and public support.

To recap, religious tolerance policy had its roots in the tribal belief structure and in politics. Cenghis Khan recognised freedom of faith in his empire to win public support, and enhance his authority by getting blessings of the eminent clergymen. That no religion exempted this rule (provided that it did not evoke rebellion; but in case they did they would be oppressed as any other rebellious collective action; the religious element would not accrue or decrease the intensity of counter-reaction) implicates that Cenghis Khan did not perceive threat from religious differences. Rather than incurring cost, religious tolerance alleviated the burden of ruling diversity in the empire building process. In the context of persecutions, freedom of faith constituted a comparative advantage of the Mongolian regime. Religious freedom gave public an incentive to obey the regime. In other words, Cenghis Khan appealed to the unintelligible side of the human psyche from a cost-benefit approach. On the other hand, Cenghis Khan granted the privileged status to religious leaders of the four religions. He conditioned them upon support to the khan, maintaining order and obedience within the spiritual community under his control. Entitlement on the basis of personal relationship imparts that the practice did not define a mandate with a fixed period; it could be taken back. The eventuality of a revision urged the addressee to sustain rule compliance and obedience to the khan. In so doing, Cenghis Khan reiterated the cooperation between the shaman and the political authority with other orthodox monotheist religions. Moreover, distribution of religious privileges by decree, like economic privileges, ended up institutionalising favouritism. It can be concluded that Cenghis Khan granted privileges as he saw benefits in doing so; and neglected when he did not. Non recognition of privileges did not incur cost, since the Mongolian state established a baseline liberty of faith. Thus, religious differences did not affect the perception of threat.

In sum, expansion over sedentary populations transformed the Mongolian state apparatus and its relations with the neighbouring states. It increased population and expanded territories

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[150] Atwood, *op.cit.*, pp.243-46.

under the Mongol control; it brought prosperity and established contacts between civilisations. The Mongolians learned various techniques (engineering, script, administration etc.) from the established societies during the conquests. They incorporated qualified people into their bureaucracy. Integrating advanced techniques and qualified personnel, the state progressively turned into an empire. Hence, expansion ameliorated the Mongolian state structure. The imperial polity had a moving centre with limited men power. Therefore, as the conquests extended territories, the Mongolians remained a ruling minority relying on oppression. This constraint brought about indirect administration as to which the ruling dynasty accepted serfdom to the Mongolian state, paid tribute, and maintained order and loyalty to Cenghis Khan while the latter was away. In return, the Mongolians forwent destruction, enhanced the political centre by defeating its rivals and enhancing its rights, preserved the existing institutions, socioeconomic rights and hierarchies but appointed the Mongolians or loyal foreigners at the high bureaucratic positions. Hence, the Mongolian regime controlled the polity from the top, and left the control of the public to the ruling elite, which it monitored by its own officers. Accordingly, the ruling class of the conquered regime became Cenghis Khan's agents. To maintain loyalty, Cenghis Khan offered the higher strata wealth, position and political security. To gain public support, Cenghis Khan used religious freedoms. To enhance public order, he recognised privileges to eminent charismatic spiritual leaders. He conditioned privileges upon sustainable obedience, public order and loyalty. Thus, Cenghis Khan applied a multilayer system of control akin to the one in the army. That is, Cenghis Khan never confided the whole structure to one agent or to agents at one level. By empowering agents at different levels (the ruling dynasty, spiritual leaders, merchants, Yam, his appointed bureaucrats), he established multiple power centres, each of which checked and balanced the other. Thus, religious tolerance was one ratchet in the administrative mechanism.

CONCLUSION

This paper elaborated on the place of the religious tolerance policy in the Mongolian Empire. The research puzzle concerned the contrast between the context of religious persecution in the 12th and 13th centuries and the unusually tolerant policy practice in a people that is renowned for being barbarian. Solving the puzzle required identifying the underlying structural factors, the contextual meaning, objectives and implications of this policy practice. Therefore, this research explored the meaning of the cost and benefit of granting freedom of faith and privileges for Cenghis Khan, and tried to find out whether it related to some perception of

friend or foe. To this end, it looked at the behaviour of the Mongolian state towards other tribes and the neighbouring states.

The first part examined whether bellicosity of the Mongolian tribes was any indicator of identity, allegiance or animosity. Bellicosity was analysed in relation to two sets of variables. The first one comprised religiosity, ethnicity and language, and aimed to reveal the societal foundations of allegiances and identity. The research identified that at the normative level, identity had an ethnic definition based on bones. Bones were classified as noble (white) or not (black) depending on whether the ancestor at the origin was an eminent warrior with proven and recognised skills. Thus, bones defined a precious family heirloom providing prestige and legitimacy. Given that family was the transmitter of the bones, the society dwelled upon patrilineal relationships. On the other hand, bone based identity was fluid in practice; because the family unit would undergo transformations in time. Familial relationships down or upgraded in terms of proximity as to the intensity of interpersonal sharing; they permit the integration of people who are not literally of the same bone. Also, families would split into different clans or regrouped under a same clan as a result of wars, poverty and intertribal politics. The main factor affecting the fate of family was the clan, because both personal and familial relationships were contingent upon tribal politics. Accordingly, identity and loyalties based on clan. Religion and language crosscut ethnic divisions among the nomads. Therefore, although they linked to identity, they were neither necessary nor sufficient conditions to define it and/or to incite tribal unification. In short, identity embedded in clan politics.

Tengrianism had a distinct relationship with tribal politics. It posited an identity that differed from what Christianity, Islam or Buddhism offered. The doctrine of the chosen people merged religion with ethnicity, whereas Christianity, Islam or Buddhism transcended the latter. On the other hand, Tengrianism did not discriminate or attack believers of the monotheist religions. Hence, it posited a collective identity not in itself but when combined with ethnicity. In addition, the doctrine of the divine right to rule, the chosen khan and divine signs conduced to absolute obedience and legitimacy defined on the basis of divine support and charisma. The idea of world domination inherited from Turkic ancestors supported the chosen people and chosen khan doctrines, motivating powerful khans such as Cenghis Khan to realise unification and pursue an expansionist policy. In the resulting polity, shamans and charismatic authority played an important role; political power and religious power became mutually

interdependent. The polity had greater stability when the spiritual power and political authority reinforced each other. Instability augmented if the two challenged each other. Also, the doctrine of divine signs was a source of instability when it encouraged rising challengers to defy the political centre. Tengrianism propelled unity and stability when a charismatic leader emerged and utilised the idea of world domination. Thus, Tengrianism was an important component of tribal politics. Yet, it did not constitute in and by itself a cause of bellicosity or kinship. In sum, the medieval tribal society of the Central Asia featured highly instable politics, clan based identity and loyalties. Tribes aspiring power would fight each other regardless of kinship, religious or linguistic similarities. Hence, the three explanatory variables by themselves did not affect the perception of friend or foe, without politics intervening as an intermediary variable.

The second set of variables comprised the structural and physical conditions as external factors propelling bellicosity. The analysis identified that the nomadic economy, the patterns of ownership, and intertribal politics determined bellicosity. Nomadic economy constrained resources available to the tribes, whereby their acquisition caused competition and conflicts. Natural conditions led to high mobility; which stimulated the emergence of livestock economy, and prioritised animal ownership over landownership. Land mattered to the extent that it provided the tribes with men power, economic assets and political influence. Because livestock economy did not yield to sustainable output, sustainable provision of goods constituted the main criterion affecting political power and legitimacy. This pattern of legitimacy fuelled intertribal conflicts and instability. Instability and the scarcity of resources gave incentive to form intertribal federations. However, such cooperation remained unstable; the composing units would dissolve the federation soon after the underlying objective (fighting an enemy, obtaining some resource etc.) was attained.

Scarcity of resources and incapacity of the nomadic economy to produce manufactured goods stimulated trade between the tribes and sedentary populations. The tribes sold primary goods such as livestock or meat while they bought manufactured products. Given that manufactured goods had a less elastic demand; tribal economy was dependent on sedentary populations. Nomadic invasion augmented when trade volume shrank. However, there was no evidence suggesting that tribal animosity towards the established societies derived from ethnic and religious disparities, although the reverse is not straightforward. Hence, the nomadic economy

and the dynamics of intertribal politics triggered bellicosity among the tribes and between the tribes and sedentary populations regardless of kinship and religion. Conquests were instrumental. These findings fall in line with the fluidity of identity and allegiances. The perception of animosity and alliances was not correlated with ideational or ideological factors but with economic and political dynamics. Religion did not incite bellicosity or affected the shaping of intertribal politics; its impact limited to supporting tribal political authority in the period preceding unification. Hence, religious similarities and disparities did not incur costs nor gave benefits on the tribal rulers in administration and foreign policy.

The second part of the paper analysed the role of the religious policy in the Mongolian Empire. To evaluate its impact, the paper contextualised religious tolerance within the processes of state and empire building. The analysis identified that the tribal propensity to disunity and the output legitimacy constraint on the political authority underlay bellicosity after unification. To consolidate his reign, Cenghis Khan followed an expansionist policy. Expansionism required reforming the military structure, which triggered the transformation of the allegiances and the emergence of a centralised state. In this process, religious tolerance policy played no significant role. Rather, military reforms and the socioeconomic and political transformations shaped the polity and the perception of friend and foe, hence determining the costs and benefits to the ruler. The ally for Cenghis Khan was whoever devoted himself to the state and his rule; while foe depicted whoever that defied, disobeyed and cheated them. Accordingly, the friend category transcended tribal, ethnic, socioeconomic and religious particularities. The same was the case for foes. To the foes, Cenghis Khan showed no mercy; yet pitilessness was independent of personal background.

Cenghis Khan faced the long established problems of disunity and disobedience during his rule. Therefore, he built an oppressive and encapsulating state to minimise defection and insurrection. Output provision requirement urged him to constantly pursue conquests. However, these problems exacerbated as territories expanded and encompassed sedentary populations. Ethnic, religious, demographic and socioeconomic disparities accrued; and the subordination of the established societies exposed the weaknesses of the nomadic state. As a result, Cenghis Khan had to institute indirect rule, and to transform economic structures. The Mongolian empire became a moving political centre with established vassal states, while the foundations of its economy shifted from booties to trade and tributes. Cenghis Khan tried to

build allegiances by offering material benefits to the ruling elite. Religious tolerance was one policy measure that helped maintain order. Freedom of faith gave peoples incentive to support or at least not defy the Mongolian rule given the context of religious persecutions. The recognition of this liberty incurred no cost on Cenghis Khan since it had its foundations in the period of pre-unification; it fell in line with the Tengrianist principles concerning other religions, and the military and administrative reforms had already undercut the potentials for collective insurrection of any sort. On the other hand, tolerance offered benefits by alleviating the burden of ruling religious diversity. To preserve public order and enhance his authority, Cenghis Khan also instituted privileges to Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Daoist charismatic religious leaders. In so doing, he expected to reinforce his rule by getting their blessing; but more importantly, he envisaged controlling the population through its spiritual leader. In effect, the eligibility criterion was the recognition of and support to his authority, monotheist belief, charisma, and the potential to influence and manipulate people. The monotheism requirement had to do with the relatively higher compatibility of such beliefs with the divine, monarchical rule. Christianity, Daoism, Islam and Buddhism preach obedience, belief in fate, collective conscience and pacifism, all of which benefited his rule. On the other hand, Cenghis Khan granted privileges to the person of the religious leader and not to the community. He thus delimited privileges by the length and dynamics of the interpersonal relationship between the ruler and the spiritual leader. This pattern mirrors the rules of revision that apply to familial relationships. Besides, the decree establishing privileged status did not differ from those designed for merchants. These traits demonstrate that Cenghis Khan refrained from recognising a religion *per se*. He aimed to hedge the risk of facing an unyielding successor, or defection over time. Hence, the practice of granting privileged status was designed to curtail costs and increase benefits of ruling diversity. That is to say, the role of Tengrianism as a side-factor supporting politics remained unaltered during the transition from the pre-unification tribal society to the empire. Religious differences never laid a cause for fight or alliance by themselves. In this vein, religious tolerance was one of various measures that Cenghis Khan employed to maintain his empire.

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