

student:
Ulrike Halbertsma-Herold (0670448)

mentor:
Professor Willem van Gulik

second reader:
Professor Wilfried van Damme

01/08/2008



Clothing Authority:
Mongol attire and textiles in the socio-political complex

رسم من قبل
دعوى حمد
رسمه

**Clothing Authority:
Mongol attire and textiles in the socio-political complex¹**

Introduction-----	3
1. The establishment of Mongol power (1160-1368) -----	8
1.1 The rise of the Mongol Empire (1160-1271) -----	8
1.2 The Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) -----	10
1.3 Foundations of Mongol society -----	12
1.4 The Mongolian elite of the Yeke Mongol Ulus (1206-1271) -----	17
1.5 Qa'ananship and its ideology -----	22
1.6 Political organization and administration of the Yeke Mongol Ulus-----	23
1.7 The China conquest and Yuan dynasty structures -----	27
1.8 Administration in the Yuan dynasty -----	28
1.9 The military in the Yuan dynasty -----	30
1.10 Chinese inroads on Mongol practices of state -----	30
2. Mongol attire -----	33
2.1 The deel -----	37
2.1.1 Short-sleeved overcoats -----	43
2.1.2 Female garments -----	44
2.1.3 Children's wear -----	47
2.2 Hats and headdresses -----	48
2.3 Belts and girdles -----	53
2.4 Footwear -----	54
2.5 Hairstyles -----	54
2.6 Jewellery -----	57
2.7 Make-up and beauty ideals -----	59
3. Mongol society and attire -----	61
3.1 Metaphors of authority -----	61
3.2 Signifiers of rank and status -----	66
3.2.1 Badges -----	73
3.2.2 The status of the Mongol dragon robe -----	75

¹ I would like to thank Dambajaviin Altan-Od, Byambagiin Oyunchimeg and Duncan Patterson (Institute of Sinology, Leiden University) for their generous help with Mongolian and Chinese translations.

3.2.3 Yuan developments -----	78
3.3 Accessories of power -----	82
3.3.1 Tablets of authority -----	82
3.3.2 The <i>sukur</i> or stately canopy -----	90
3.3.3 Quivers and arrows -----	91
3.3.4 The banner or <i>tuq</i> -----	93
3.3.5 Horses and harnesses -----	95
4. Political role of clothing and textiles: ritual and symbolism -----	98
4.1 The jisün robe and geopolitics -----	98
4.2 Tokens of alliances -----	104
4.3 <i>Tügel</i> -----	110
4.4 Clothing relics -----	115
4.5 Social welfare -----	117
4.6 Funeral gifts -----	118
5. Legislation -----	119
6. Traditions -----	123
7. Materials of attire -----	126
5.1 Leather and skins -----	126
5.2 Wool and felt -----	127
5.3 Silken stuffs -----	130
5.3.1 Golden brocade or <i>nasiq</i> -----	133
5.4 Cotton -----	139
8. Attributes -----	141
6.1 Colours -----	141
6.2 Ornamentation -----	153
9. Production and acquisition -----	159
7.1 Sources of supply -----	159
7.2 Imperial workshops -----	165
7.3 Trade -----	173
Conclusion -----	181
Bibliography -----	185
Appendix -----	193

Introduction

Recognized as one of the four basic needs of human existence, the primary objective of clothing is to offer protection against the elements. Varying with climatic zones and altitudes, costume changes. Even in modern times, where dress is largely a matter of personal choice and in many societies no longer subject to sumptuary laws this holds true to a large extent.

Mongolia, situated on the Asian high plateau, is characterized by extremes of temperature. Fierce winds on the treeless steppe, temperatures of -50°C degrees, freak snow or hail showers in summer, sandstorms issuing from the Gobi desert, and 40°C degrees under a cloudless sky in the summer, all have to be equally endured. This fact traditional Mongolian dress has been constructed around and thus allows the wearer comfort in all his daily endeavours. The importance of weather is heightened in a nomadic culture. Even if climatic conditions have at times allowed an extensive agriculture to flourish, for most of its habituated history Mongolia has been characterized by its nomadic extensive pastoralism. The economic activities of its inhabitants, thus, have been depending heavily on weather conditions, especially since the herds of livestock are pastured throughout winter. If weather was a major issue in regards to costume design, the physical requirements of nomadic pastoralism had an equally great impact.

Clothing, though, has always been more than simply a second layer of skin adapted to the rigours of life. Creativity, an innate aspect of mankind, added fashion to functionality. The result is dress that celebrates native aesthetic values, visible in the cut, colour, and decoration of any given garment. This individuality of clothing, just as distinctive other cultural markers, make it an important component of material culture. The specifics of Mongolian material culture, again, are that shaped by a nomadic existence. Seasonal relocation, whether of an individual family or large-scale movements of a complete population group, is a feature of nomadic society. Therefore property, functional as well as decorative, in nomadic society is restricted to objects that are easily moveable. Importantly, Mongolia has no long native tradition of architecture, since the moveable *ger* tent of the herder was perfectly adapted to the nomadic way of life. The limited scope of material culture in nomadic society places therefore an exponentially greater value on the status of clothing.

Clothing, as a central component of attire, was the highest visible article of material culture and therefore it offered itself to be used as an agent of social and political information; a function that lies at the core of this paper. Traditionally, clothing has been rather marginalized in academic cultural studies, but the inattention accorded to Mongolian clothing, given its central position, is rather astonishing. Studies so far have been fragmentary and mostly restricted to so-called ethnic dress of the 20th century (Martha, Henning) or to even more specific attributes, for

example the role of felt. The only exception is Professor Thomas Allsen's fascinating study on Islamic textiles in the Mongol political context, to whom I am much indebted for inspiration. This paper therefore attempts to attract scholarly attention to this beautiful, complex, sometimes contradictory and frequently astonishing element of Mongol culture by surveying its historical role.

Before starting out on analyzing historical materials to investigate instances of early Mongol attire, I attempt to create a basis for understanding the surrounding socio-political context. It commences hence with an overview of historical events that formed the Mongol Empire.

When the unification of clan-like societies resulted in a nomadic confederation the basis was created for an emerging regional power. Its expansion resulted in the biggest ever empire that has yet existed. This historical development effected not only changes on the political and administrative level, but also were central in the evolution of Mongol society. The dynamics of this development, especially the contact with foreign cultures, are certain to have impacted on the Mongol society with regards to its make-up and identity. The cultural confrontation that the Mongols faced by their move of court into China and eventual declaration of the Yuan dynasty in 1271 embodies the challenge that the Mongol Empire faced in its external as well as internal structures. The first chapter therefore is dedicated to the question of how the emergence of the Mongol Empire shaped its society and what kind of society it emerged from. Thereby the long-established notion of a tribal society is being re-examined and the structures of Mongol rule investigated. The current debate on the nature of mediaeval nomadic societies is reforming the picture of clan-based society, a trend that applies as much to European history as it does to Asian societies. Apart from the social make-up the governmental structures are explored to allow identifying the elite in the imperial adventure of the Mongols.

The second chapter attempts to recreate the basic attire of Mongols in the Great Mongol State and Yuan periods. The topic is approached by defining a set of design parameters that influenced the design of Mongol clothing. The further investigation, as to the actual structure and appearance of attire, is based primarily on historical sources such as travel accounts of contemporary eyewitnesses, chronicles, and other textual information. Of prominent importance is the thirteenth-century Mongol chronicle *The Secret History of the Mongols* (hereafter referred to as the *Secret History*). Its early creation (possibly 1228 with an addition in 1246) renders it an insider's account of cultural practises at the inception of the Mongol Empire. As illustrations are often tempered by the artist's personal interpretation and cultural understanding of reality, depictions featuring Mongols are only used as evidence if other sources detail the same point in

question. The great rarity of excavated pieces of attire makes this a rather philological exploration, but wherever possible physical evidence has been included. Based on the culturally elevated position of visible components of attire this paper is restricted to such. Discussed in detail is the central article of clothing, the *deel*,² or coat, other upper-body garments, footwear, belts, hats and headdresses, jewellery, hairstyles and finally make-up. Armour and other specialized dress left aside, even if they are equally important subjects of research. The objective of this chapter is to enable the reader to visualize basic Mongol attire before discussing its role in the socio-political context.

The third chapter focuses on the relation of attire to its social environment. From the overview of clothing articles discussed above, the chapter heads out by asking how the Mongols viewed clothing and what attributes of attire they saw connected to power, authority or leadership. This relation is often represented by associations alluded to in sayings, metaphors or other linguistic tools, which will be analyzed to that end. Next, the paper charts features of attire that pertained to status and rank. Referring back to the hierarchal structure examined in the first chapter, the elite of Mongol society is surveyed to possible corresponding indicators of rank. As will be shown, such indicators developed over time and by the Yuan dynasty decrees regulated the increasingly elaborate appearance of the Mongol elite.

The great contrast between the rudimentary administration at the outset of the Mongol Empire and the highly sophisticated bureaucracy of the Yuan dynasty is mirrored in the changes of attire, even if the exact development between these two phases proves elusive. Ambiguity is also attached to the appearance of badges that developed in the Qing dynasty to signifiers of rank *per se*. Their origin and development under Mongol auspices is traced and placed in the context of social identification. Court attire of the Yuan dynasty visualizes the culmination of the social developments. The *Yuan shih*, the official dynastic record of the Yuan dynasty, which was compiled by the subsequent Ming dynasty, records the stipulations of official court attire. The source will be analyzed as to what Mongol practices were continued and to what extent Chinese elements entered the Mongol wardrobe.

Chapter four takes up on this theme but concentrates on ritual and formal procedures concerning clothing and textiles in the political realm. In this section it is argued that the history of Mongolia is greatly connected to the presence or absence of clothing and textiles, which

² Note on transliteration: In the absence of an internationally followed system of transliteration for Mongolian I have followed Igor de Rachewiltz' system found in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, published by Brill, Leiden, in 2006. For Chinese words I have used the system of Wade-Giles. For both languages I have adhered to the original transliteration in quotes given.

functioned as a primary political currency in forging alliances and federations. Examples of the early Mongol period are examined and are projected onto a wider historical perspective.

The function of these two commodities as a political currency is further explored in a fundamental practice of Mongol leadership, the *tügel*. *Tügel* refers to the awarding of honours and rewards for services rendered to the state, where articles of clothing played a most central role. As the receipt of personal articles of clothing of a ruler was the highest distinction possibly attainable, the preservation of Činggis Qan's belongings and wardrobe is at the core of a cult surrounding his person. The auspicious powers attributed to his personal holdings are perceived as protecting the Mongol nation and all individuals involved in this endeavour. Činggis Qan's relics therefore contributed to creating a political continuity of which the Mongol elite still partook after the empire's demise.

Another aspect in the political arena regards the public welfare programs that saw segments of the population provided with food and clothing. Clothing here is not circling the circuit of power, but helps to maintain it: A mass of destitute people is always a threat to a nation's inner stability, a fact that the Mongol rulers were well aware of. The welfare programs of the Yuan dynasty will be cited here as an example of clothing's power to influence history at grass root level.

Concluding this chapter is the instance of a state funeral, where it seems to have been the custom to present the grieving party with costly items of clothing.

Considering these various forms of political intercourse, the central argument investigated in this chapter is that attire and textiles were one of the main ingredients in the political arena.

The following chapter (chapter five) is a research into legislation regarding attire. Mongol rule has often been portrayed as a rather open institution that led to the conclusion by some scholars that attire was mostly open to personal choice since rule was based on interpersonal structures. This assumption is subject to examination in terms of a search for sumptuary laws.

The fabled *Great Yasa* of Činggis Qan is supposed to have contained statutes of Mongol customary law. Yet, it has never surfaced. Mediaeval authors though all mention it in their writings. Some claim to transmit parts of it and where these passages regard clothing they are investigated here to their implications. Other statements also contain hints of possible sumptuary laws in the early Mongol period and are related here.

A complementary notion to law is that of tradition and taboos which form two principles that govern society as efficiently, if not more so, as does legislation. Travel narratives mention

specific behaviour regarding attire and are in chapter six collected to illustrate that clothing was a factor in cultural practices.

The remaining part of the paper deals with the nature of materials that were used in Mongol attire. Chapter seven introduces the various materials, their functions and origin. Special attention is paid to the occurrence of golden brocades that were especially valued by the Mongols. Their fame spread throughout the Mongol Empire and has come to stand symbolically for the Mongol enterprise. The image of rulers clad in richly brocaded garments did even inspire European notions of expressions of power.

Chapter eight analyses the design elements of those textiles, with concerns to ornamentation, colours and numbers. These attributes are being evaluated according to their inferences to native philosophies, religion, and more generally a Mongol worldview. The central elements of ornamentation are traditionally animals and flowers. Mongol textiles are no exception, but do show some culturally inspired preferences as to what and how it is portrayed.

Colours were for a long time subject to technological standards as the availability of dyes realized a specific colour palette that characterized clothing. Availability might have been the condition for the development of specific association with particular colours, but generally the culturally determined outlook on life and death equally influenced such associations. Based on such conceptions, the universe of the Mongols is in large part, literally as well as metaphorically, white and black; which formulates a theme that has been encountered throughout this paper regarding clothing.

The last chapter (chapter nine) discusses the production and acquisition of textiles and clothing. Given that both commodities played such a crucial role as political currencies, access to them was a political concern. Various forms of sources that yielded the coveted resources are examined. A trend emerges that points from sporadic acquisition to the development of a large scale industry, in which the imperial workshops played a fundamental role. This industry was supplemented by trade, which had been a major concern to the Mongols starting with the very beginning of the empire. Trade, as will be shown, was not a simple matter of demand and supply, but Mongol politics actively influenced trade by creating many incentives. The argument goes that trade had to flourish in order to supply the elite with the necessary political capital.

1. The establishment of Mongol power and the Yuan dynasty (1160-1368)

This chapter discusses the history of the rise of the Mongol empire to the fall of the later Yuan dynasty based in China. It will address the social make-up of Mongol society and changes in it that took place during the rapid expansion of the empire and the subsequent reign from within China.

1.1 The rise of the Mongol Empire (1160-1271)

In 1162 Temüjin was born into the clan of the Borjigin³ and was therefore a member of the aristocratic Mongol⁴ establishment of the steppe. The death of his father at the hand of enemies and the subsequent abandonment of his remaining family from the clan, though, regaled them to a life in poverty and even slavery.

Temüjin managed to turn fate around with the help of friends and soon attracted a fellowship of warriors. When later the established steppe aristocracy rallied around him, he and his comrades went on to subjugate neighbouring communities. After the conclusion of the unification of these peoples, Temüjin was promoted to qan⁵ in 1190 of the newly established federation, referred to as Qamuq Mongolia. His prominent position was once more recognized in 1206 when in a general assembly Temüjin was enthroned as Činggis Qan, or ‘universal ruler’. This event represents the founding of the Mongol Empire, known in Mongolian as the Yeke Mongol Ulus.⁶

Before the establishment of the Mongol Empire a string of nomadic empires had predated Činggis Qan’s arrival, establishing a political tradition that Činggis Qan resumed. Many times

³ The royal house of Činggis Qan is referred to as the house of the Borjigin. The term Borjigid (plural of Borjigin) refers to all members of this imperial clan.

⁴ The term ‘Mongol’ can not be clearly traced and its meaning is to this day uncertain. It is thought to have been the name of a lesser tribe [Sanders (1987) 7]. According to Rockhill, as quoted by Cordier, the first mention of the word dates back to Chinese sources of the After Tang period (923-934 CE) [Yule and Cordier (1993) 294]. The ethnonym “Mongol” developed into a political designation, which later became associated even with peoples who had no actual ethnic affiliations with the Mongols [Golden (1982) 72]. The word Mongol was thus not a socio-ethnic designation of the general populace of the Mongol realm, but denoted exclusively the ethnicity of the ruling house. The notion attached to the term Mongol became very much related to Borjigin rule [Sneath (2007) 168, 171, 173].

⁵ The term *qan* had been used in the earlier Turkish steppe empires to denote a king and had also been used among Mongolian tribes. This practise was continued up to the establishment of the Communist government in 1924, which abolished all ranks and titles.

The term *qa’an* denotes the ‘great emperor’, the qan of qans, the supreme head of state, whereas the term *qan* is in the league of ‘king’. This distinction is only been categorically adhered to with the ascension of Ögödei Khaan. De Rachewiltz explains this change by the Uighur influence in Ögödei’s administration. Turkic people promoted the Turkic traditions of statehood and distinguished between qan and qa’an from early times [De Rachewiltz (1973) 35].

⁶ This he had achieved in face of stiff competition with his former sworn comrade-in-arm, Jamuqa⁶ of the Jairat, who established himself as *gur qan* but was later defeated.

before, a leader of military virtue had managed to partly unify the various surrounding tribes and established a realm of influence. These attempts however were mostly short-lived and of rather localized character in contrast to the extensive empire created by Činggis Qan, his generals and allies. The initial alliances and conquests were not only at the core of the rapid expanding Mongol Empire but also the foundation of a process that later led to a supra-tribal Mongol identity.

In 1209 the Uighur kingdom peacefully submitted to Činggis Qan's budding empire. The Western Liao empire pre-empted a forceful defeat by submitting in 1211, a fate that awaited the Kwarazhm kingdom by neglecting to establish peaceful relations with Činggis Qan in 1219 and was defeated finally in 1231. The campaigns in the northern regions of China saw Beijing fall to the Mongols in 1215 and followed on the submission of the Jin in 1211. The campaigns in northern China were motivated by the objective to militarily secure the east before concentrating military attention to the west. The northern China conquest was followed by Bukhara and Samarkand in 1220, the Russian knights on the Qalqa River were beaten in 1223 and the Tibetan territories were added in 1225.⁷

When Činggis Qan passed away in 1227, the empire was partitioned into *ulus* and given over to rule by his sons.⁸ These appanages bequeathed to his senior sons became later semi-independent realms of influence and were known as qanates. The Ilqanate in Persia and Iraq, the Kipčaq Qanate in Siberia and other Russian territories and the Ča'adai Qanate in Transoxiana and Turkestan (between the Oxus and Iaxartes) were thus formed. The youngest son, according to Mongol custom, inherited the Mongolian steppe zone, the *qo-lun ulus*, or "hearth".⁹

Under Ögödei Qa'an, who was elected according to Činggis Qan's wishes as Great Qa'an at a council (*quriltai*) in 1228, the Mongol Empire's capital Qara Qorum was completed in 1235. A renewed military drive in the east achieved the annexation of all of North China (1234) and Korea (1238) and towards the west, the absorption of Persia and the Caucasus. A milestone was the subjugation of Kiev in 1240 from where the troops continued on to Poland,

⁷ The motivation of this expansion is still disputed. A change of climatic conditions with a drop of the mean temperature in the late twelfth and early thirteen century led to a shortage of grazing for the nomads' herds of cattle and horses. This might have been the reason for the Mongols to expand outwards in search for new pastures. Moreover, to keep his generals and armies content and interested in their alliance with Činggis Qan, he needed to provide them with spoils and the prospect of further booty. The fact that Činggis Qan thought of himself as a divine ruler with a divine mission might have aided an ideology of military expansion [Rossabi (1995) 27].

⁸ The senior sons of his chief wife were Jochi, Ča'adai, Ögödei, Tolui. Since Jochi had already passed away at the time of Činggis Qan's own death, Batu, Jochi's eldest son, inherited Jochi's ulus.

⁹ The territory of the Kipčaq Qanate was ruled by the house of Jochi, the Ča'adai Qanate by descendants of Ča'adai, the Ilqanate by the line of Hülegü and the Mongolian homeland remained in the line of Qubilai Khaan [Jackson (1999) 14].

Hungary and Moldavia. The death of Ögödei in 1241 had all generals return home for the ensuing quriltai and the rest of Europe was therefore spared from the destructive military might of the Mongols.

In the following five years factions and parties of the royal family debated the question of succession. Ögödei Qa'an's widow Toragana headed the interregnum, a practice owing to political steppe traditions. Güyük Qa'an, Ögödei's son, was agreed upon as the successor and ascended the throne in 1246. The succession though sparked internal power struggles which threatened to erupt in to open hostilities. The death of Güyük Qa'an 1248 came just in time to stall the conflict.

After Güyük's death the internal power-struggle placed the house of Tolui and Jöchi, Činggis Qan's youngest and oldest son respectively, in opposition. At the khuraltai of 1252, Tolui's eldest son, Möngke, emerged victorious.¹⁰ He and his supporters crushed Ögödei and Ča'adai and persecuted many members of the family who had supported them. Their dominions were for the most part redistributed. Möngke Qa'an installed his brothers Qubilai in China and Hülegü in Persia, from where Hülegü in 1258 sacked Baghdad. Under Möngke a centralized administration and government was initiated to oversee the extensive areas of conquest.

When Möngke passed away in 1259 Qubilai declared himself Great Qa'an at a quriltai at Changtu in northern China, but without consultation of the whole clan. Arigh Böke, Möngke's younger brother and rightful heir to the throne, instigated a quriltai at Qara Qorum, but the backing of the Chinese army on Qubilai's side decided the issue. Qubilai Qa'an's recognition put to rest four years of struggle, but created a rift in the family that isolated Khubilai from the support of the Ilqans and the Kipčaq Qanate by way of a hostile Ča'adai Qanate.

1.2 The Yuan dynasty (1271-1368)

Qubilai Qa'an chose to rule the steppe zone from within China and to be in greater proximity to the Empire's dominion with the greatest resources, rather than to rule the vast Chinese holdings from the remote Mongolian heartland. Therefore he moved the capital in 1259 from Qara Qorum to Dadu¹¹, modern Beijing. In 1271, ten years after his ascension, he proclaimed the Yuan dynasty ("origin", "beginning")¹², giving the Mongol conquest the appearance of a Chinese

¹⁰ During the interval of Ögödei's death up to Möngke's ascension, the Mongol Empire had anew a capable female leader at his helm. Soghatani Beki was the wife of Tolui and mother of Khubilai and Möngke Khaan, both of whom went on to dominate Mongolian politics in their lifetimes.

¹¹ Dadu translates into 'great capital'. Qanbalik is the Mongolian equivalent.

¹² The choice of the phrase *tai Yuan* (beginning, origin) was innovative in that it did not refer to the founder's geographical origin. *Yuan* was instead taken from Chinese classic *I-ching*, the "Book of

dynasty. He was still five years away from ruling over the whole of China. Only in 1276 his armies finally managed to defeat the Southern Song, the residual former government of China. Japan escaped the Mongols' grasp¹³, but the Mongols extended their domain towards South East Asia.¹⁴ Annam (1288), the Thai states (1294) and Burma (1297) yielded to their military might. The reign of Qubilai Qa'an with his expansive military conquests were by the Mongols viewed as the continuation and consolidation of Činggis Qan's achievements. Qubilai Qa'an's political efforts later came to be viewed as having come close to the ideal of state, which centred on the pacification of the world under Mongol rule.¹⁵

More so than external expansion, the Yuan dynasty was defined by the internal struggle to rule a settled and sophisticated culture with a large population by a nomadic minority. While Chinese unity was anew achieved under the Mongol Yuan, the exclusion of Chinese in the government bred internal hostility. Surrounded by Chinese institutions and culture the Mongol elite in China split into factions regarding the proposed style of government. One faction favoured an approach to government based on Chinese traditions in order to facilitate effective administration; the other diametrically opposed it, seeing a weakening of the Mongol identity a threat to their power.

After Qubilai's death in 1294 his grandson Öljait Qa'an continued the rule. The subsequent rulers¹⁶ politically weakened with each succession. Uprisings and local rebellions plagued the last decades of the Yuan. These were mainly based on general discontent with the dynasty's economic decline, which resulted from failed economic policies and was magnified by draughts, floods and other natural disasters. The tradition of allowing personal armies created powerful warlords who only nominally were under the authority of Yuan rule. Mongol rule tattered on another 70 years before finally being overthrown by Ming armies in 1368. The Mongols were expelled from Beijing and had to retreat to the steppe.

The rapid decline of Mongol power, at least in the eastern part of the empire, was made dramatically visible by the Mongols' forced return to their homeland, which introduced an era of fragmentation and internecine wars.

Changes", and with that had a certain prestige of great symbolic value attached to it [Morgan (1987) 121; Kwanten (1979) 203].

¹³ The Mongols tried to invade Japan in 1274 and again in 1281 but were both times unsuccessful.

¹⁴ Annam (1288), the Thai states (1294) and Burma (1297) yielded to the Mongols' military might.

¹⁵ Sagaster (1976) 390

¹⁶ Olchit Khaan reigned from 1294 to 1307, Hüleg Khaan from 1307 to 1311, Buyant from 1311 to 1320, Gegeen Khaan from 1321 to 1323, Yesüntümür between 1324 and 1328, Yesülen in 1329, Tögstümür from 1329 to 32 and Rinchinbal who reigned in 1332 was followed by the last Yuan emperor Togoontümür from 1333 until 1368.

1.3 Foundations of Mongol society

The society that the young Temüjin was born into was a traditional nomadic one. That society was structured by the principle of the *aristogenic order*, which implies that the society's kin-based aristocracy is emphatically distinguished from the governed populace.¹⁷ Thus, not only relations within the family, but also rule of the clan were to a certain extent decided by kinship structures.

The overwhelmingly important structural element of the nomadic society was the patrilineal agnatic descent. This principle worked on every level: from family to nomadic federation, and reached even further to qanates and empires.¹⁸ The particulars of patrilineal descent decided whether somebody belonged to the superior or inferior line, his relative position within the extended family and last but not least formed the basis for one's ethnic identity.

Ethnic identity was based on membership to a particular *obog*.¹⁹ The *obog* is a nomadic institution that has conventionally been rendered in English as clan, emphasizing kinship as the foundation of society. This translation of *obog*, combined with a particular anthropological approach to the subject, led to the convention to view early nomadic societies primarily in terms of kinship, namely familistic tribes, excluding the possibility of a more sophisticated stratification. Kinship was admittedly a structuring principle, but the tribe was not necessarily the social building block once proposed²⁰.

Even if a precise definition of the structure of an *obog* is elusive, there are a number of characteristics that describe aspects of this nomadic unit.

One of these characteristics pertains indeed to patrilineal descent. Said to be common to all members of an *obog* is a single forefather, whether fictional or factual and members might be highly aware of their genealogical position to him.²¹ Thus, the ethnic identity of Temüjin as a member of the Borjigin *obog* was determined by his descent from his father's line, in which all

¹⁷ The term *aristogenic order* has been coined by Brook and has been taken up by Dardess [Sneath (2007) 102].

¹⁸ Krader (1963) 318

¹⁹ Synonyms for *obog* are *omog* and *yasas töröl* [Krader (1963) 330; Bold (2001) 80].

²⁰ For a discussion of the academic history of nomadic society and its terminology see Sneath (2007) 39-71.

²¹ Vreeland notes a marked difference between the genealogical knowledge of nobles and commoners in the 1950s. While the aristocracy has carefully kept genealogical records, a commoner could trace his descent to at most six generations back [Vreeland (1957) 59]. Atwood attest this for the genealogical knowledge of both Outer and Inner Mongols in the nineteenth century when ancestors beyond the third or fourth generation were generally not known (Atwood (2004) 314). The progressively earlier date that scholars give of a decline of genealogical knowledge lends itself to the suggestion that it might have never played the central role that has been claimed by earlier researchers to have had (Sneath (2007) 98).

male members understood themselves as issued from the same founding father, Bodonchar.²² Genealogical knowledge, however, concerned perhaps exclusively the nomadic aristocracy, who used the principle of patrilineal descent to legitimize their position of authority and to produce a system of succession.²³ Descent, in the Mongol case limited to patrilineal descent, then, is an ‘enduring technique of power and an aspect of stratification’.²⁴ The term *ijagurtan* (“with origin”) indicated the nobility, since only they “possessed origins” in the form of well-known genealogical descent²⁵.

Kinship though did not constitute the only criterion of membership to the obog. Marriage partners of unrelated obogs, for example, who lived with the community they had married into, were considered members of the obog. The ethnic homogeneity of the obog as a co-residing group, thus, was broken down by the practise of exogamy, that is marriage only with members of obogs of distantly related lineages. Moreover, marriage into an obog resulted in the adjunction of slaves, which were brought into the community with the retinue of an aristocratic bride (*injes*).²⁶ Not applying to all obogs and at all times, the practice of exogamy has nevertheless been recorded as an important regulation. Even between distantly interrelated obogs, that is obogs that were connected only in sublineages to the same forefather, marriage among members might not have been not allowed.²⁷ Apart from the contested exogamy, other features of an obog are its patronymic, a specific brand mark for its livestock (*tamaga*) and its battle cry.²⁸ Bat-Ochir Bold further includes the commonality of language, the region of pasturage, the tribe’s council (*ey-e*, *eyedeqüi*, and later *quriltai*), a common moral code, specific offerings, the *süld* (genius) and *tuq* (banner), and assumes that every *obog* had its own seal.²⁹

More than just a kinship-based community, the obog seems more of a political institution and organizational structure, which constituted the basic entity in which nomadic organization

²² The tribe of the *khiad-borjigin* was founded by Bodonchar of which Činggis Qan was a descendant in the eleventh generation [Bold (2001) 175]. Bodonchar himself is said to have come forth of a union between the ancestress Alan-goia and a heavenly being which took the form of a “golden man” [De Rachewiltz 1973] 27].

²³ Sneath (2007) 171, 189

²⁴ Sneath (2007) 195

²⁵ Sneath (2007) 170

²⁶ This openness Morgan sees aided by strict exogamy, that made for intimate connections to other neighbouring tribes [Morgan (1987) 38]. See also Sneath (2007) 196.

²⁷ See Kwanten (1979) 189. Sneath, quoting Atwood, recounts the marriage of early Borjigid, who married to other clans such as the Barulas, Baarin, and Mangghud, who belonged to the Borjigin *obog*. This record is clear evidence of endogamic practises [Sneath (2007) 108].

²⁸ Krader (1963) 330

²⁹ See Bold (2001) 80. For the Borjigin clan Bold lists the offering of white falcons, a black *süld* genius and a nine-pointed white banner *tsagaan tuq*, which was the symbol both of the welfare of the clan and its decent and its nobility and chieftainship [Bold (2001) 170].

was coordinated.³⁰ The term *obog* might have also used more exclusively, denoting the aristocratic decent line of an *obog*'s founder, therefore being more of a socio-political term.³¹

Taking all the above-mentioned characteristics into account, I view the *obog* as a nomadic communal entity based on affiliation, political and economic, as well as descent, which was of major importance at least to the aristocratic stratum of an *obog*. The *obog* might therefore well be defined as an affilio-genetical entity. I have decided to use the term *ethnoi* when referring to the *obog*, which has conventionally and misleadingly been translated with tribe or clan.³²

Genealogical descent is conceptualized by the term *yasun*, “bone”, the patrilineal sublineage, expressing in a literal way the nomads' notion that the father's line is followed through the bone.³³ This concept of *yasun* constitutes not only a genealogical device but is a complex socio-political marker.³⁴ In this dimension the term *yasun* applies further to the social station of members of the *obog*.

The families of an *obog* belong to either the white (*čaqa'an yasun*) or the black bone (*qara yasun*), which denotes a noble versus a commoner respectively. The bone, in contrast to the more inclusive term of the *obog*, exclusively refers to the patriline.³⁵ The creation of a hereditary aristocracy has been the nexus of government in steppe societies. A stratification of society into a governing nobility and a governed populace might have existed for nearly all of steppe history. David Sneath formulates the importance of an aristocracy with its potential of central governance as follows: “The political relations of aristocrats determined the size, scale, and degree of centralization of political power, and these varied in historical times.³⁶” Lawrence Krader's analysis puts this stratification similarly at the base of the evolution of nomadic state and empire,

³⁰ See Sneath (2007) 108; Bold (2001) 56, 57, 80. Morgan similarly emphasizes the openness of membership of a clan. He sees the tribe much more as a political entity when he claims that “[...] the tribe was a rather ‘open’ institution, its membership created more by shared political interests than by descent from a common ancestor [Morgan (1987) 37].”

³¹ Sneath refers here to Rykin [Sneath (2007) 110].

³² The discussion of ethnic and cultural identities in mediaeval societies is equally under discussion for the European area. Sebastian Brather's article on ethnic identity uses the term *ethnoi* to denote small groups that are distinguished by only a few characteristics in material culture [Brather (2002) 149-175]. That this is the case for *obogs* I cannot prove, but given Bold's enumeration of characteristic markers, I choose to employ *ethnoi* for such a population group.

³³ See Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 257. The father's side is actually not only continued through the bone, but also by way of brain and sinews that are considered transmitted through the semen, while the mother's side is passed on in the flesh and blood [Vreeland (1957) 58].

³⁴ See Krader (1963) 322. Krader notes that the specifics of a *yasun* as opposed to an *obog* are not clearly distinguishable and are still subject of research [Krader (1963) 324].

³⁵ Sneath (2007) 110

³⁶ Sneath (2007) 4

as it created a basic governing mechanism through the establishment of a hereditary aristocracy.³⁷ Wherever such a distinct difference in social position occurred, the establishment of a state was the natural conclusion. Noteworthy in this respect are the enterprises of the eastern Mongols: the Ordos, Čaqar and Khalkha societies.³⁸ Earlier examples of hereditary aristocratic governance are the Khitan Liao state, the Jurchen Jin (1115-1234), the Turkic empires of the seven and eighth century and the Xiongnu state of the third century BCE.³⁹

This fundamental classification is further elaborated on by the principle of ranking by birth.⁴⁰ The system of agnatic patrilineal descent places the greatest importance on the oldest son. He is superior by birth to his brothers in that only he inherits the paternal social standing with all titles and honours and is the principal legatee.⁴¹ Ranking by birth does not only regard the individual progeny, but is the ordering principles of the forthcoming patriline. Krader explains that “Of the various collateral patriline, the senior in order of descent from the founding ancestor, the line of the eldest sons, is the most noble, and eventually became the noble line *par excellence*.” According to the principle of descent, the junior branch can only attain superiority if the eldest son was without or only female progeny.⁴²

The status of women is related to that very issue. A woman’s primary role is to enable the son of the family she is married to, to continue the male line. Marriage, not an individual affair but viewed as a contract between families, is seen as an obligation to procreate the male line. A woman’s social position thus is based on her ability to fulfil this obligation. Her social career can be traced with the increase of rights and privileges that are accorded to her on betrothal, marriage and culminate with the advent of male progeny. Her station, although appearing limited is vital, and her prestigious role makes her object of great respect and honour. Krader emphasizes this divide of function and recognition in the different spheres of the society: “We distinguish between biological fact and social fact. The biological role of the woman in procreation is one thing; her exclusion from the corporate structure of the extended family is another.”⁴³

³⁷ In contrast to Sneath, however, he sees kinship relations as a building block of the steppe society. Sneath views the aristocratic governance as based on kinship, but not the steppe society in its entirety [Sneath (2007) 113].

³⁸ Krader (1963) 324, 325

³⁹ Sneath (2007) 195; Grousset (1970) 3-66

⁴⁰ In that respect the bone is a concept that unifies as well as divides: It unifies the clan along the patrilineal descent, but also divides it into estates through ranks according to birth (Krader (1963) 326].

⁴¹ See Krader (1963) 349, 350. An older brother has also authority over a younger sibling coming close to that of a parent, as he is supposed to act in parents’ stead in the case of death, especially in noble families [Krader (1963) 350]. Vreeland supports this by observations of elder brothers rightfully punishing younger ones as severe as their parents [Vreeland (1957) 56].

⁴² Krader (1963) 322

⁴³ Krader (1963) 339, 346, 347

If the exclusion of women from the corporate structure was a principle that applied generally, institutionalized exceptions did occur. Mongol history proves that women were accepted as political leaders under special circumstances. When a qa'an passed away, his senior wife replaced her deceased husband as ruling qa'an to the dynasty. This exception of female state authority only applied to the senior wife of a qa'an and was limited to the period of her sons' minority. Historic sources further illustrate that wives or consorts, regardless of rank, were consulted on matters of regency if the ruler trusted and appreciated the political acumen of a particular woman. Such a relationship is for example detailed for Činggis Qan and his senior wife Börte. Moreover, indirect political influence was a given, since the education of potential successors to the throne was a personal matter of the individual mothers. It was further the mothers who generally instigated and directed the political manoeuvring that was necessary to effect a crown prince's actual ascension. Another aspect of the political involvement, and in this case political value, accrued to women is the practice of polygyny⁴⁴, widely practised among the nobility. Marriage to a woman of another polity had a political and military value attached. The thus established familial connection acted as an alliance between the two parties. Marriage to a number of women from a wide array of local powerhouses then magnified the political network of a leader. This strategy can be discerned among Mongol elite society until up to the fourteenth century, while slightly favouring groups that had established marriage ties with the house of the Borjigin in Činggis Qan's times.⁴⁵

With polygyny occurring when resources allowed for it⁴⁶, wives had to be given a rank in order to allow the principle of seniority to function among the various progeny. The ranking of the wives followed the same principle as that of sons, in that the first wife was considered superior and all others junior. Only her children were considered as heirs to the paterfamilias honour and titles.⁴⁷ And again only if this marriage remained childless were children from other wives considered as rightful heirs, which was often pre-empted by adopting a son, favourably of close kin.⁴⁸

All children were eligible to inherit in equal parts the tangible properties of the line, whether adopted, born to a lesser wife, or juniors to the eldest son.⁴⁹ The only exception to this

⁴⁴ Marriage of a man to a number of wives.

⁴⁵ Holmgren (1986) 136-141

⁴⁶ Krader (1963) 345; Holmgren (1986) 147

⁴⁷ Holmgren contends that this practise was an innovation of the thirteenth century, adapted from the Khitan elite [Holmgren (1986) 147].

⁴⁸ Krader (1963) 342

⁴⁹ See Krader (1963) 349. The inheritance was received on reaching maturity, as maturity coincided generally with marriage, and not post-mortem with regards to the parents. Marriage was nevertheless not a

egalitarian conduct regards the inheritance of the youngest son. Exclusively the youngest son inherited the residential property of the father, a custom common to all steppe nomads, and still adhered to today. The youngest son was regarded as the “master of the hearth” or “prince of the fire”, the hearth being an important religio-magical component of great spiritual significance.⁵⁰

Usually a woman was allotted property through her dowry that she was the sole owner of. Women inherited from their husbands, but not from their parents. Exceptions to this rule were an unmarried daughter without brothers, a daughter who had chosen to remain with her parents, or a daughter who was married to a hired son-in-law.⁵¹ Although, in wealthy families women inherited equally with the sons, and the bridewealth often equalled a son’s share of inheritance.⁵²

1.4 The Mongolian elite of the Yeke Mongol Ulus (1206-1271)

The elite of the early Mongol empire was based on the social organization of the nomads that resulted in two tiers of society: the čaqa’an yasun as opposed to the qara yasun. With the emergence of the Mongol Empire this system remained intact, only the influence of the military-aristocracy increased.

The qa’an held not only the highest office but held the highest rank of the nobility. Činggis Qan himself was of minor aristocratic descent, a great-grandson to the qan of the earlier Qamuk Empire that disintegrated with Jin interests in the region.⁵³ His ancestry from a younger brother of the qa’an’s lineage meant that he had no legitimate claim to become qa’an. That the above-mentioned governing social principles were tempered by other steppe traditions is manifested by Temüjin’s rise to ultimate leadership. The prerequisite to be the qa’an’s eldest son to claim leadership was always extended by the steppe tradition that demanded this claim to be backed by a powerful personality and military acumen. In reality succession was often contested by military means and violent power struggles within clan-federations. This system has been

condition to receive one’s inheritance. The mother retained the position of the father in case of his early death and administered all property until the eldest son reached maturity. See Krader (1963) 351; Holmgren (1986) 146; Vreeland (1957) 83.

⁵⁰ See Krader (1963) 351. Jagchid and Hyer stress the fire’s symbolic value of the family’s integrity and continuation [Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 150].

⁵¹ Vreeland (1957) 83

⁵² Krader (1963) 349

⁵³ Činggis Qan is the son of Qabul Qan’s younger brother, Yisügei. (Moses (2007) [http](http://www.ambagai.com)) Ambagai Qan and Qotul Qan continued the line of the powerful Qaidu Qan, to which Qabul Qan succeeded, in Temüjin’s lifetime [Bold (2001) 170]. Holmgren argues plausibly that passages in the *Secret History of the Mongols* contradict this traditional view on Temüjin’s origin. He claims that the specifics of Temüjin’s wedding arrangements, the fact that his father had only two wives and their fate at his death point to membership of the lower stratum of Mongol society [Holmgren (1986) 127-135].

labelled “tanistry”, a phrase coined by Professor Fletcher.⁵⁴ An inference of this is that the nobility was based on military competence and members of the nobility displayed outstanding military prowess⁵⁵. With this in mind, the ascension of Temüjin, who managed to attract powerful allies, especially of the politically important aristocracy, to Činggis Qan becomes a logical conclusion.

This *modus operandi* of succession was further tempered by the consultative powers of the council and the wishes of the deceased. The principle of succession on grounds of primogeniture only gained pre-eminence with the establishment of the line of the Borjigin.⁵⁶ On achieving supremacy Činggis Qan’s family became the senior family and his tribe in relation to others highly elevated. His family was referred to as the *altan urug*⁵⁷, the “golden family” or “golden tribe”, and its descendants were considered the only source of legitimate rule.⁵⁸ His obog’s noble status was signalled by the use of the white-pointed standard, symbolising the čaqa’an yasun. Apart from the title of qan, applied to the sons of the qa’an, close relatives who ruled qanates in the west were referred to as *ežen*, or lord.⁵⁹ Territorial claims to areas conquered were a privilege of the altan urug. Činggis Qan applied this practice when he divided the Empire into *ulus* (“dominion”) to be governed by the royal recipients.⁶⁰ The division of the Mongol Empire into the Ča’adai qanate, the Kipčaq Qanate, the Ilqanate and the Mongol steppe-based domain was a result of this tradition.⁶¹

With conquests outside the Mongol realm, stratification along ethnic origin applied to the whole of the population. The Borjigid were elevated above all other obogs and ethnicities. Membership of the altan urug guaranteed the privilege of unconditional access to governing positions, exemption from taxation, corvée duties and the application of a milder penal code.⁶² Obogs that were interrelated to the Borjigid were elevated in rank compared to the unrelated

⁵⁴ Morgan (1987) 39

⁵⁵ Kwanten (1979) 188

⁵⁶ Holmgren (1986) 149

⁵⁷ The term *urug* is a synonym for *obog* or *omog* [Bold (2001) 79].

⁵⁸ See Bold (2001) 112. This rule, based on tribal structures, might have been laid down in the *jasagh*, the Mongol legislation. Many contemporaries of the Mongol Empire refer to it, but the text has so far not been found [Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 267].

⁵⁹ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 266

⁶⁰ See Kwanten (1979) 190. Not only territories but also people were included in these holdings. The term *omču* applies to holdings of both land and people, while the term *qubi* is restricted to people alone [Jagchid and Hyer [1979) 268].

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of this practise and its political consequences, see Jackson (1999), “From *ulus* to qanate: the making of the Mongol states c. 1220-c. 1290”, 12-37.

⁶² Sneath (2007) 128

obogs and populations, which were reduced to slave status.⁶³ Even if opposition to Činggis Qan's rule always reduced the defeated peoples' position, there was a clear distinction between originally hostile Mongol clans and peoples of non-Mongol ethnicity, where the former were accorded preferential treatment in comparison to the latter. The stratification of society that applied to an obog internally was now applied to the structure of the confederation⁶⁴ and was the basis of the resulting nomadic feudalism.⁶⁵

The common descent within this obog corporation also allowed for a limited egalitarian aspect, which allowed for a relatively great social mobility. Especially the military was an institute that offered commoner, slave and noble alike the chance of promotion into important offices and with that to become part of the Mongolian elite.⁶⁶ With time however ancestry became the dominant factor, so that by the time of Mōngke's reign inter-stratic mobility had decreased to a minimum. From then on obog affiliation and descent determined the individual's social position.⁶⁷

There are other social groups that are not members of the Borjigid and with that of čaqa'an yasun, but constitute the aristocracy.

Advisors and close associates of the qan were the *nökör*.⁶⁸ Personal merit, not social standing was crucial in attaining this position, but among them were also Činggisic descendants. They were also considered vassals⁶⁹ and had common interest with the leadership.⁷⁰ Close

⁶³ Relationships between obogs were of three categories. Apart from the obog, in which members shared a specific set of denominators, obogs that were related to each other through marriage referred to each other as *quda*. If clans did not share any familial relationships, but were co-operating in economic activities or other specific functions, they referred to each other as *jad*, or "outsider"obog [Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 257].

⁶⁴ A federation of obogs was generally structured into a socio-political pyramid, the top of which comprised the khaan and his tribe. Under him are the "inner tribes", tribes, which joined at the formation of the federation. Considered as belonging to the "inner tribes" are also the tribes of in-laws of the ruling line. These tribes were often accorded the privilege to retain their leaders, but their nobility was supplanted by the house of the khaan. "Outer tribes" had been forcibly made to join the federation and only tribute-paying vassals were still lower in rank. Leaders of the latter were as a rule replaced, while members of the latter often were from sedentary civilizations and were important in commerce and diplomacy [Golden (1982) 50, 51].

⁶⁵ See Kwanten (1979) 188. Whether the term feudalism can be applied to nomadic societies has been a matter of wide scholarly discussion. For want of a better term I apply the term feudalism to the structure of dominance of one clan over others. For more detail on this discussion see Bold (2001) 48-51; Kwanten (1979) 190.

⁶⁶ Kwanten thus interprets the society in this context as being made up of three strata: the Borjigin aristocracy, members of the Mongol confederation and finally the subjugated people, serfs and slaves, of no relation to the victors [Kwanten (1979) 188].

⁶⁷ Kwanten (1979) 189

⁶⁸ See Bold (2001) 110. This term in modern Mongolian is used as "close friend".

⁶⁹ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 286

⁷⁰ Bold (2001) 110

proximity to the leader was a marker of social position. Unconditional access to the qan's living quarters was part of this ranking system.⁷¹ Therefore to be considered for the imperial guard service (*kešig*) was deemed a supreme honour, but it also served as a means of honourable hostage taking to secure the loyalty of newly subjugated rulers and dynasties.⁷² Nökör were therefore also found among personal guards, which enlarged the role of advisor to that of bodyguard.⁷³ But nökör were also found attached to other offices such as the commands of a thousand or of a hundred. Summing up these diverse roles and functions, the main quality seems to have been a high degree of loyalty, seeing nökör in service wherever sensitive physical or political interests were involved.

The pre-eminence of military attributes as desirables in the society, also featuring in the political organization, illustrates the martial nature of Mongol culture. The highest rank of the military aristocracy was that of *gui-ong*, a king, who had served the army so outstandingly that he obtained the right to govern a certain dominion, comparable with the land-owning rights of the altan urug. This title was a very rare instance, but once achieved, it was hereditary.⁷⁴ Additionally, generals who had performed extraordinarily on campaigns constituted part of the military aristocracy and were called *ba'aturs*, or "heroes". They were a second group that, like the nökör, had unlimited access to the qan.⁷⁵ Commanders of a thousand troops or bigger units were called *noyan*⁷⁶, which later came to be a general term for an aristocrat and the aristocracy in general, *noyad* (plural of noyan).⁷⁷ The title was a hereditary one and the establishment of the title created for the first time in the history of social organization of the steppe a political hereditary aristocracy.⁷⁸

The last group that were clearly part of the Mongolian aristocracy were the *qürged*, the son- or brother-in-law. They were usually men of aristocratic descent and married strategically into powerful and important families. On ground of their social positioning they later assumed the

⁷¹ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 285, 287; Allsen (1997) 53

⁷² Morgan (1987) 90

⁷³ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 286; Bold (2001) 110

⁷⁴ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 266

⁷⁵ Barthold (1977) 3

⁷⁶ The commander of a thousand was called *minqan u noyan* [Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 265, 285]. Leaders of ten men, the *arantu*, were in early times also considered as belonging to the aristocracy as testified by the *Secret History of the Mongols*. Later sources, such as the *White History*, show that they were later referred to as "older brother" (*aqqa*), a term signalling that the *aanrut* were no longer considered aristocracy [Sagaster (1976) 302].

⁷⁷ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 285, 287

⁷⁸ Barkmann (1999) 274; Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 266

role of intermediaries between different obogs within the political confederation.⁷⁹ Later they were referred to as *tabunang*.⁸⁰

A more ambiguous group are the *darqan*. A *darqan* was allowed to keep any war booty amassed on campaigns and any people subjugated; a privilege exceeding that of the nobility. The group was not considered nobility however.⁸¹ Some scholars assume that it was customary to first become a *darqan* before being promoted to the aristocratic rank of *noyan*.⁸²

Another distinct position, yet not constituting the aristocracy, was that of the *čerbi*. The *čerbi* had specific duties depending on conditions of war or peace. In peacetimes they oversaw the royal household and herds, while in battles they performed as leaders. The office of the *čerbi* was retained after 1368, after it had been modified under the Yuan organizational setup. Its establishment predates the Mongol Empire.⁸³

The remaining population were simply referred to as *qarši* or *qarachu*, and the *qara yasun* included free commoners, slaves and captives of war.⁸⁴ Members of the *qarši* were differentiated according to their social and ethnic origin. *Arad* (*aran*, *haran*) denotes the regular populace of the steppe in their function of low menial jobs as warriors or guards. *Irged* translates as “simple people”. This term is employed to describe a livestock-keeping family who busies itself with pastoral activities.⁸⁵ *Ütü dürü-yin gü’ün* were actually “persons of simple standing”, but were as such referred to mainly as general troops of the military⁸⁶. According to de Rachwiltz this group was differentiated from the *kharac* population and, differing from Bold, he defines this population group as not having been in the service of the *qaan*.⁸⁷

It is unclear whether *bo’ol* were actually slaves or simply vassal-servants that retained fundamental rights to their persons. Generally they were members of a defeated population that had to perform certain duties for the victors, such as tending herds, and beating drums during a hunt.⁸⁸ Whether a person was considered serf or slave might have been based on a common patrilineal descent with the victor.⁸⁹ *Bo’ol* were also children of families of other tribes, whether

⁷⁹ Bold (2001) 111; Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 285

⁸⁰ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 273

⁸¹ Barthold contradicts this by referring to Juwayni and lists *darqan* expressively as members of the military aristocracy [Barthold (1977) 385].

⁸² Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 287; 288; Bold (2001) 110

⁸³ Bold (2001) 110

⁸⁴ See Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 283. Other terms applied to commoners were *irgen* and *aran* [Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 287; Bold (2001) 113].

⁸⁵ Bold (2001) 113

⁸⁶ Bold (2001) 111

⁸⁷ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 692

⁸⁸ Bold (2001) 114

⁸⁹ Kwanten (1979) 190

subjugated or not, offered to serve in princely households, often with the motivation to allow them to make career by connection with the aristocracy.⁹⁰

1.5 Qa'anSHIP and its ideology

If one is to understand the ideological motivation driving Činggis Qan, one needs to take into account his view of the world, especially his religious outlook. One's fate, success as well as failure, is determined by the protection of the shamanistic deity *mönkh khökh tenggri*, or Eternal Blue Sky.⁹¹ In this worldview already Temüjin's birth is an event in which Heaven intervenes. He is supposed to have been descended from a blue wolf, Börte Cino, and was born "at the order of Heaven Above".⁹²

Činggis Qan and his Mongol contemporaries understood his fate as a personal concern of the divinity and his actions as performed in the interest of the divine. His invading other countries is not a matter of choice but of divine principle. To achieve victory, strength and protection are necessary and are the pre-requisites of qa'anSHIP. Prerogatives that are divinely accosted to the legitimate qa'an. Through the institution of a heavenly-ordained charisma, the elective principle concerning leadership was stringently limited to the chosen line, in Činggis Qan's case, the line of the Borjigid.⁹³ According to Mongol conception, heaven had destined that the line of Činggis Qan was to rule over the whole world and any opposition to Mongol rule was opposition to the divine principle. Rebellion against the Mongols thus merited punishment, explaining in part the destructive violence of the Mongol conquests. This shamanistic view sanctified the supreme leader's actions and authority in the face of his nomadic subjects and was simultaneously an instrument for the throne to promote ambitions to world hegemony.

The shamanistic element of the sky as a supreme divinity was shared by the Mongols and the Turkic peoples of Central Asia. The function of the sky divinity to bestow an imperial mandate to the throne hints at an obvious Chinese influence in the Turco-Mongol world. This culturally characteristic formula, a "heaven-sanctioned kingship, is a concept borrowed from a sedentary society." Early contact with the Chinese civilization through influential members of the aristocracy that had Chinese education or through sinicized advisors brought Chinese imperial attitudes with them into the Turkish empires. The "Mandate of Heaven" fused with the

⁹⁰ Bold (2001) 114, 115

⁹¹ This shamanistic deity is shared with other Turkic peoples. Additional shared supernatural powers are the "Mother-goddess" and the "Earth-water", all of which became closely related to the charisma of the ruling line [Golden (1982) 44].

⁹² De Rachewiltz (1973) 26

⁹³ Golden (1982) 45

shamanistic sky as highest godly power, turning into a Sino-Turkic amalgam of imperial ideology to which Činggis Qan and his successors were heirs. This ideological foundation is expressed in the frequently occurring formulas of imperial authority: the Mongol Empire was then based on the “power of the Eternal Heaven” (*mōngke tngri-yin küčün-dür*), the “protection of the Great Blessing” (*yeke suu jail-yin ibegel-iyer*), and the “mercy of the holy and blessed Činggis Qan” (*sutu boyda činggis qayan-u soyurqal-iyar*).⁹⁴

1.6 Political organization and administration of the Yeke Mongol Ulus

The emergence of a new leader, a new qan, was based on a number of factors. Apart from charisma and noble background, custom demanded an accord of a council in the matter of ascension of a new qa’an. The succession to the throne was therefore depending on the consultation of the *ey-e*, the council of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The *ey-e* was a council that originally selected a leader who decided about migratory moves concerning pasture and in military matters. Bold does not elaborate on the make-up of the council, but I assume, given the principle of seniority, that it was made up by the elder members of the *obog*. With the growth of the Mongol federation, the council was no longer simply a body that took care of matters related to the livelihood of its nomadic members, but grew into an institute with strong political dimensions. The qa’an and the nobility chaired the council, in the thirteenth century called *quriltai*, but other houses and all social backgrounds were represented. For example the imperial sons-in-law, the *khürged*, were systematically invited to participate.

At the outset the Mongol Empire was a confederation of *obogs*. This type of confederation, of which membership was generally not voluntarily but was coerced, is in literature referred to as an *aimag*. *Obogs* within a federation that had mutually friendly relations were considered *anda*, just as any individual’s sworn friendship with a member of another *obog* was described as *anda*. This relation did not envisage any common political or social structure, apart from the guarantee to support each other militarily in the face of aggression or on mutual raids and conquests. Although military aspects were the basis of tribal federations, the pre-Činggis federations did not have a common standing army.^{95, 96} With the Mongol Empire it was however the army that was its binding political institution as well as the means to organize the resulting growing population. In short, the military was its socio-political foundation and

⁹⁴ Sagaster (1976) 389

⁹⁵ Bold (2001) 80-84, 111

⁹⁶ A hostile relationship was referred to as *ösh*, the antonym to *anda*. The Tatars were the enemies of the Borjigin clan and henceforth their *ösh*. Bold (2001) 81

remained so throughout its history, only to be superimposed and enlarged by other institutions deemed necessary to rule sedentary peoples.

The army's added dimension as an administrative tool makes it necessary to discuss its structure in greater detail.

The army, which was generally drafted from the whole of the population, was composed on a decimal basis. The smallest unit was made up of ten soldiers and was called *aran*. A commander of a centurion, a *ja'un u noyan* (*ja'untu*), was leading ten *aran*. Heading a unit of ten *ja'un* was the commander of a thousand, the *minqan u noyan* of the *minqantu*. This unit was the most important element of the military establishment. Attached to this office were political dimensions, based on the semi-administrative nature of the military unit and the command structure that had the qa'an directly consult with the *minqad un noyad* (pl.). The *minqan* were again grouped into units of 10 thousand troops called *tümen*, which were divided into western, eastern and central units, of which the central division was especially important. Since orders were given to the commanders of a *minqan*, the *tümen* constituted rather an administrative unit.⁹⁷ The existence of a commando over 100 thousand troops, or over ten *tümen*, is not entirely certain, though some sources explicitly mention the *tuq tümen*. A subunit that is less frequently mentioned in sources comprised 50 soldiers, half a centurion, which is referred to as *tabin*. Units with 500 and 5 thousand seem to have also existed, and there noyan therefore also members of the military aristocracy.⁹⁸ All commanders of the various contingents, except for the *arantu*, where of obogs that had taken part in early conquests and were therefore part of the Mongol conquest aristocracy.⁹⁹

Činggis Qan's army steadily increased with the inclusion of additional populations and in 1206 comprised 109 myangan, translating into roughly 109 thousand troops. At the inception of the myangan ethnic origin was being taken into account.¹⁰⁰ Members of an ethnicity were kept together unless a tribe had shown hostility and was feared as a continued military threat. Just as the civilians of such populations were often relocated to other areas and dispersed by allocating them to various members of the royal family, the troops were not allowed to exist as homogeneous military units.¹⁰¹ This applied even more so to non-Mongol troops, of sedentary cultures, even though they were vital in allowing the Mongol army to improve by acquiring

⁹⁷ Bold (2001) 85, 86

⁹⁸ Sagaster (1976) 300, 301

⁹⁹ Kwanten (1979) 192

¹⁰⁰ The *minqan* whose composition was based on homogeneous ethnic membership was referred to as *yazagur minqan* [Bold (2001) 85].

¹⁰¹ Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 265; Bold (2001) 85

military strategies of sedentary warfare.¹⁰² The terms *aran*, *ja'un*, and *minqan* indicate not strictly military units, but groups of the population that were responsible to recruit ten, a hundred, or a thousand troops respectively.¹⁰³ Commanders of such units were therefore local administrative powers.¹⁰⁴ The tradition of administering the populace in decimal units seems to have been a governing principle common to steppe empires reaching back to at least, as documented in historical documents, the Xiongnu (3rd century BCE).¹⁰⁵

A military unit that had no social component was the institution of the *kešikten*¹⁰⁶ (singular *kešik*), the elite royal guard. This *tümen*, of which all members were of Činggisic descent¹⁰⁷ was made up of 8 thousand *torgut* or strong men, who fought in the front of a battle and 2 thousand guards (*kepte 'ül* night guards, and *turqa 'ut*, dayguards) and archers (*qorč'in*), responsible for the personal safety of the qa'an and only answerable to his person.¹⁰⁸

The foreign elite found at the court of Činggis Qan was comprised of *bičigeči*, which were member of the guard. The term *bičigeči* applied not only to secretaries, the term mostly given in translation, but applied to archivists, scribes, administrative and fiscal consultants, as well as calendar and divination experts and ministers, all taken into service to establish administrative practises unknown to their nomadic masters. This elite was mostly made up of Uighurs, Khitan and Jurchen.¹⁰⁹ The early Uighur influence is manifested by the introduction of the Uighur writing system, adapted to Mongolian, under Činggis Qan's personal Uighur advisor Tata Tunga in 1204.¹¹⁰

With the expansion of the Mongol Empire, especially into sedentary areas, the need to initiate a system of efficient state organization became apparent and the very rudimentary administration of the early empire had to be adjusted.¹¹¹ The *minqan u noyan* and the *jarquči*, the

¹⁰² Kwanten (1979) 193

¹⁰³ Bold (2001) 85

¹⁰⁴ Sagaster (1976) 127

¹⁰⁵ Grousset (1970) 21; Sneath (2007) 114; *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 689

¹⁰⁶ Barthold points out that an imperial combatant guard outranked a commander of a *myangan*, and a non-combatant guard outranked a leader of a *ja'un* division (Barthold (1977) 384).

¹⁰⁷ Kwanten claims that all members were of Činggisic descent, but recruiting methods described by Barthold contradict that [Kwanten (1979) 192; Barthold (1977) 384]. Barthold describes the recruitment practices as follows: "On the method by which the guard was recruited we are told that each son of a leader of a thousand [...] had to bring with him one kinsman and ten companions, the son of a leader of ten and free men in general one kinsman and three companions [Barthold (1977) 384]." This would also qualify Morgan conclusion that the guard functioned as a guarantee of foreign loyalties.

¹⁰⁸ Kwanten (1979) 192; Bold (2001) 86

¹⁰⁹ De Rachewiltz (1966) 101

¹¹⁰ De Rachewiltz (1966) 100

¹¹¹ Early recorded offices established by Činggis Qan are enumerated by Barthold, drawing on the *Yuan chao bi shi*, and read as follows:

"(1) Four men whose duty it was 'to carry the bow and arrows;' in later times the office of *korchi* (archers).

judge in civil and criminal matters, a position mostly held by Uighurs, were not sufficient anymore to control the conquered lands and efficiently exact tribute. Thus the office of the *daruqači*¹¹², the governor of a province, was created; an office that remained exclusively a Mongol privilege. In 1230 the office of the Central Chancellery was established to co-ordinate the subdivisions of the Mongol Empire. This office remained active until Qaidu's surrender who battled Qubilai's investiture.¹¹³ These early efforts at building administration were under the auspices of Uighur, Khitan and defected Chin officials. Uighurs, Jurchen and Khitans all shared the nomadic background of the Mongols and this nomadic pedigree proved sufficient to gain the trust of the Mongols who relied on them to provide the missing skills in statecraft.¹¹⁴ Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, a sinicized Khitan advisor to Činggis Qan and Ögödei Qa'an, tried to combine the nomadic institutions with those of China and promoted a compromise that saw the administration of each area follow pre-existing patterns, but placed the Mongol capital under a centralistic

(2) Three 'overseers of food and drink;' the Mongol text distinguishes morning and evening overseers; in alter times the office of bukawul or bawurchi.

(3) One 'overseer of sheep pasturage;' in Rasid ad-Din the same official is called equerry (akhtachi) of the Court stud.

(4) One 'overseer of the preparation of carts' (tergen); in later times the office of yurtchi; according to Rashid ad-Din also this man was appointed captain of a thousand and looked after the mares; at the end of his life he became bukawal and bawurchi.

(5) Once cherbi, 'overseer of domestic staff.'

(6) Four men whose duty it was to 'carry the swords in one place;' the head of these was Taumchin's [Temüjin's, U.H.] brother, Juchi-Qasar.

(7) Two 'overseers of training horses'(akhta, in later times the office of akhtachi); one of these was Tamuchin's brother Bilgutay.

(8) Three 'overseers of horse pasturage.'

(9) Four 'far and near arrows' (in Chinese Yüan-tsien and Kin-tsien, on Mongolian Khola and Oira); in all probability these refer to persons who carried out the personal behests of the Khans, chiefly as envoys. The custom of sending 'messenger arrows' existed in the Kin [Chin, U.H.] empire, and in later times there was a special term in the Mongol empire to designate the arrows in which secret letters were enclosed.

(10) Of two nobles it is said that they were made elders, or, according to Mongol text, 'guardians' of the assembly, without any more detailed explanation of their duties. Very likely, as chief advisors of the Khan, the duty of maintaining order in the meetings devolved upon them. Both of the persons who are mentioned here always occupied one of the most honourable posts at Chingiz-Khan's court; Bughurji-noyon sat on his right, above the military leaders; the other, Jelme, was one of his captains of the guard (khehik), and we are told that 'not more than two or three were senior to him'."(Barthold (1977) 382, 384)

Obviously, these offices then, except for the last two positions of envoys and advisors, did not in any way retain to governance or administration, but solely regarded the maintenance of the imperial family and its livelihood. That this structure needed to be modified to effect administration of conquered domains is self-explanatory.

¹¹² Morgan relates that this position is based on Khitan governance traditions and refers to Buell who shows that 'from the Khitan, above all, the Mongols borrowed conceptions, vocabulary and institutions. [Morgan (1987) 109].'

¹¹³ Kwanten (1979) 198

¹¹⁴ Buell terms this group of early administrators and advisors the "steppe intelligentsia", and describes them as a product of cultural interaction of the nomadic steppe and the sedentary Chinese civilization that come into contact at the Sino-Mongolian frontier. They possessed literary traditions, were competent long-range traders and were intermediaries between the two civilizations [Buell (1981) 134, 136].

organization based on Chinese precepts. The in 1235 newly established Mongol capital Qara Qorum, answered the need of a fixed location of communications.¹¹⁵ In the conquest of northern China the most influential group were the Khitans, whose traditions encouraged older forms of Chinese government, reaching back to the Tang government (618-907CE).¹¹⁶

1.7 The China conquest and Yuan dynasty structures

Each Mongol domain developed its own political structure, a turn of events that originated with the end of Möngke's reign. His rule had introduced a highly centralized government and administration, but was discontinued afterwards.¹¹⁷ Attempts at creating a centralized empire might also have been futile as distances to the political centre of Mongol power proved too great.¹¹⁸ The total scope of change relates to which degree the nomadic feudal foundations were adhered to or altered. The Ča'adai qanate ruling over mainly nomadic peoples maintained Mongol rule with its steppe traditions in almost unaltered fashion. This domain remained in opposition to Qubilai's rule, which was not based on the principle of descent and a univocal decision of the quriltai, but plainly on military dominance. The Kipčaq Qanate having to deal with both nomadic and sedentary cultures adapted by promoting a dual system that saw territorial feudalism coexisting with nomadic feudalism¹¹⁹. The rulers of the Ilqanate faced a large sedentary population, just as the Yuan rulers did, and on basis of this similarity, their respective adjustments to governance equally deviated from early Mongol practises.

With the acquisition of China, the Mongol elite was faced with the task of overseeing a large homogeneous sedentary population with a strong bureaucratic tradition. Just as the military for the Mongols, the bureaucracy was not only a political instrument but also a social concept for the Chinese¹²⁰. Concerning this distinction, it was important to maintain it under Mongol auspices in order not to completely alienate the Chinese population. The outcome was a dual society, divided along ethnic descent.

¹¹⁵ Kwanten (1979) 196, 198

¹¹⁶ Among other features the Khitans reintroduced the use of *paizahs*; tablets of gold and silver indicating ranks [Morgan (1987) 107; Kwanten (1979) 197; de Rachewiltz (1966) 113].

¹¹⁷ Kwanten (1979) 199

¹¹⁸ Dardess ascribes the loss of Central Asia to supervision of the central Mongol domain to the increased distance of the empire's capital. This rendered administration of the areas now outside the crucial 300-kilometre radius unattainable. For Dardess' conclusive analysis of this point, see Dardess (1972) "From Mongol Empire to Yuan Dynasty: changing forms of imperial rule in Mongolia and Central Asia", 117-165.

¹¹⁹ Kwanten (1979) 191

¹²⁰ Kwanten (1979) 200

Before examining the changes in political structures during the Yuan, it has to be emphasized that all Mongol efforts in China as in other areas of conquest, whether political or social, are to be understood as an attempt to maximize economic gain, while staying in complete control over the administration and the population at large¹²¹. Legitimation of Mongol power and the creation of conditions affording stability were subordinated to these objectives.

1.8 Administration in the Yuan dynasty

With the move of the capital from Qara Qorum to Qanbalik, or Dadu, in 1259 (modern Beijing), Mongolia's political significance declined as it became subordinated to the Chinese administrative structure and became one of the twelve provinces *hsing-sheng*. In 1312 it was renamed *ling-pei hsing chung-shu sheng* ("itinerant administrative office north of the mountains") more commonly simply referred to as *ling-pei*.¹²² The crown prince, his position titled *jinvang* or *jinong*, was required to reside at Qara Qorum for a number of years and administer this province before being eligible to ascend the throne in Qanbalik. The country was divided into *aimaks*. An *aimak* under the Yuan no longer designated a conglomerate of *ails*, a group of related families and *obogs* that is, but an administrative unit governed by Činggisic princes. The *Yuan shi*, the official Chinese records of the Yuan era compiled under the subsequent Ming dynasty, records 60 of these princes, who are referred to as *olon vang* and were classified into three ranks. The *aimaks* were attributed according to rank and were named after its ruling prince.

Governance of the Mongolian steppe transpired an irregular venture as Mongol princes clashed with each other and succession struggles interrupted efficient administration.¹²³

The administration of the remaining dominions was entrusted to Uighurs, Khitans, to a lesser degree Jurchen Chin defectors and in northern China to Chinese, as the Mongols did not possess a bureaucratic or administrative tradition themselves. These members of the Mongol establishment were trusted in high offices; a practise that was continued after the conquest of the whole of China. Their administrative traditions, then again, were themselves often inspired by Chinese customs. On the one hand did this facilitate the integration of early Mongol structures, but also aided sinicization¹²⁴, a consequence that was much disputed among Mongol factions. This process was felt within the military as well as the administration.

¹²¹ Kwanten (1979) 203

¹²² Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 269; Bold (2001) 90

¹²³ Bold (2001) 90-92

¹²⁴ This term has inspired a wide-ranging debate. I will use the term in this paper to describe exclusively the acculturation of the Mongols in China. That this process was mutual and that there was an adoption of Mongol cultural practices on the Chinese side I will take as granted, but not discuss further.

The highest office established was the Central Secretariat, which was under the direct control of the emperor and oversaw the six ministries (War, Justice, Public Works, Rites, Personnel, Revenue), a traditional Chinese institution, as well as the office for Provincial Administration and the Pacification Office. Similarly were the Bureau of Military Affairs and the Censorate under the supervision of the Central Secretariat, but just as the other offices named above, all were in effect under the direct regulation of the emperor. The greatest change to Chinese administrative practises was exactly this overwhelming personal control of the emperor over all crucial offices. Even the Censorate, a body that monitored provincial officials and additionally balanced the otherwise omnipotent power of Chinese monarchs, was reduced to a tool of control over the Chinese population and the remaining Chinese officials. This manipulation of existing structures was most important as it allowed the Mongol elite minority to stay in control over a vast Chinese majority. These alterations were not implemented over a long period, but the process was virtually completed by the time Khubilai Q'aan proclaimed the Yuan dynasty.¹²⁵

Just as the basic administrative structures were taken over from the Chinese, even if manipulated fundamentally, so was the body of bureaucrats.¹²⁶ The quintessential Chinese scholar-officials were statistically the greater component of the bureaucracy and were continually recruited into it, mostly on personal merit and proven contributions. The literary exams to attain official positions were discontinued in 1271, evidencing the Mongols' high esteem of practical competence rather than literary virtues¹²⁷, but reinstated after 1329. Even though the Chinese officials constituted the majority, they were not longer the most significant constituents of the administrative apparatus. Important offices with any policy-making authority were the exclusive domain of the conquest elite.¹²⁸ The rough socio-political distinction of Mongol and non-Mongol ethnicity was differentiated into a Mongol elite that worked with their trusted supra-national partners in order to control the inevitable Chinese officials and more so the least appreciated southern Chinese. The establishment was differentiated into various classes: first came the Mongols followed by the *sartaq*, persons of Central Asian or Middle Eastern descent, a rank below these were the northern Chinese who were joined in their

¹²⁵ Kwanten (1979) 196-202

¹²⁶ Legitimation of Mongol rule included the use of existing structures and was enhanced by the use of a Chinese-style dynasty name and the adoption of Confucian rituals, which were fundamental to Chinese political concepts [Kwanten (1979) 203].

¹²⁷ In the course of increasing sinicization exams were re-introduced, but only for a brief period in 1315. Quotas limiting candidatures with respect to ethnicity guaranteed Mongols and non-Chinese a numerical advantage (Kwanten (1979) 203).

¹²⁸ Kwanten (1979) 202

rank by Jurchen, Khitans and Koreans and the lowest rank comprised the southern Chinese.¹²⁹ All offices were attributed accordingly and led to a profoundly stratified populace. This society did not only exhibit its stratification in matters of governance, but the Mongols also consciously retained cultural differences, distancing themselves as an ethnically distinguished elite.¹³⁰

1.9 The military under the Yuan

The stratification of the civil corps found its parallel in the army, based on similar considerations. The enormous Chinese army if simply dissolved and not absorbed into the Mongol forces formed a potential threat to Mongol hegemony.

In order to accommodate the vast numbers of soldiers and yet stay in control of them, elite forces were created. These *tammachi* troops, which also supplied the guards at the capital, were made up of Mongols and assimilated peoples. Below them were troops made up of northern Chinese, which also included Jurchen elements. And at the bottom level were Southern Sung troops. To prevent patriotic notions from translating into sabotage and open rebellion no unit was ever stationed near its home base.

The *kheshikten*, the personal elite guard of the emperor was retained in its form throughout the Yuan, but after 1312 it increased in size to include non-Mongols, even Chinese.¹³¹

1.10 Chinese inroads on Mongol practices of state

The many Chinese institutions may mislead one into thinking that the Mongols adapted Chinese institutions and culture entirely, but this is not so. The Mongols, whether politically or socially, always remained the socially dominant conquest elite that kept its distance to the Chinese majority.

The Mongols' involvement with China comprises two distinct phases. The first phase covers the period from the first incursions into the Jin Empire to the Khubilai's enthronement and subsequent move of capital (1211-1260).¹³² During this phase Chinese concepts of power and administration had not been completely unknown to the Mongols. Among the poly-ethnic bureaucracy formalized under Möngke were a great number of sinicized Khitans and Jurchen who brought certain Chinese traditions with them, when they established the administration of the

¹²⁹ See Dardess (1973) 32; Sneath (2007) 170. The weight of any given ethnic group within the government varied from period to period, but the poly-ethnic character was maintained throughout [De Rachewiltz, Chan, Hsiao and Geier (1993) xiii].

¹³⁰ Kwanten (1979) 202, 203

¹³¹ Kwanten (1979) 192-194

¹³² De Rachewiltz, Chan, Hsiao and Geier (1993), xi-xiii

Empire, as mentioned earlier. The situation changed with the Mongols' move to China, which brought them into direct contact with Chinese culture and customs.

Confucian ideology and literary erudition greatly shaped the Chinese political landscape and acted as a political currency as regards access to positions within the government. This tradition of scholarly pursuit stood in stark contrast to the Mongol notion of military prowess as a fundamental requirement for positions of leadership. The civilizing influence on the Mongol militocracy was felt only in the end in the increasing bureaucracy, not in the diminishing of military principles.¹³³

While in the early years of the Yuan dynasty Mongol traditions were supplanting Chinese ones, residence of the Mongol elite in China necessarily impacted on its habits and conceptions. Qubilai Q'aan, as a pragmatic statesman, and often portrayed as a Sinophile, had many Chinese advisors, who were partly responsible to create the basic institutions of the Yuan dynasty and assisted in legitimating his rule.¹³⁴ This involvement of Chinese advisors proved however short-lived, as their interests diverged greatly from those of the Mongol elite. In succeeding governments, culturally increasingly removed from the steppe traditions, some members of the establishment turned into proponents of Chinese practices. Factions arose that either supported the sinicization of the government, viewing it as a superior system to rule the Chinese dominion, or opposed it, fearing sinicization and the resulting loss of a martial identity to threaten Mongol domination.

These factions first clashed violently at the ascension of Qaishan to Qa'an in 1307. Qaishan had been successful in putting down Ögödei's line by way of defeating Qaidu, heading the Ča'adai opposition to the house of Qubilai. This military achievement secured his ascension to the imperial throne. With the installation of the traditional steppe warrior Qaishan, though, Mongol institutions were continued and the already increasing sinicization, personified by his opponent Ayurbawada, another of Khubilai's great grandsons, averted.

Another violent succession struggle in 1328 had a different outcome. Now Qaishan's sons Qoshila and Tuq Temür were pitched against each other. Tuq Temür was much supported by the Confucian establishment at court, so when he in 1329 ascended the throne, the faction, that favoured sinicization of Mongol practises, came to the fore¹³⁵. Tuq Temür's investiture proved a pivotal point in Yuan history: Up to this date the emperor of the Yuan had been the Great Qa'an

¹³³ Kwanten (1979) 194, 195, 199

¹³⁴ See de Rachewiltz, Chan, Hsiao and Geier (1993) xxv, xxx. They helped to fashion his dual supremacy as a Mongol Qa'an as well as a Chinese emperor, installed by the "Mandate of Heaven"[De Rachewiltz, Chan, Hsiao and Geier (1993), xxxv].

¹³⁵ Dardess (1973) 11-17

of the entire Empire. His hegemony over other imperial members was acknowledged, whether voluntarily or through coercion, by the various branches of the royal house. The various lines had made their political influence felt in matters of succession through the institution of the quriltai¹³⁶. With Tuq Temür's ascension after the civil war of 1328 this was no longer the case. After 1329 ascension became an internal Chinese affair without influence from outside. The emperor was now a leader principally ruling China and dependent solely on Chinese politics based on Confucian ideology¹³⁷. The steppe zone's importance diminished to all but negligible influence on Mongol politics in China¹³⁸.

¹³⁶ Dardess (1973) 7-9

¹³⁷ Dardess (1973) 29-32

¹³⁸ Bold (2001) 91

2. Mongol Attire

It is generally assumed that traditional Mongolian attire has not changed much over the centuries since the beginning of the Mongol period in the twelfth century.¹³⁹ Taking this questionable assumption as a point of departure, the following chapter researches historical accounts, Chinese official records, portrayals in painting and mentions in Mongolian chronicles in order to visualize Mongol attire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Apart from attempting to chart the basic components of Mongolian attire, gender differences, applied materials and seasonal variations will be paid attention to. Another central element of clothing is its function as a status symbol and social and political identifier. The core of this study, as the title suggests, is elite clothing and therefore the argued stratification of nomadic society will be investigated in terms of attire and accessories of power.

Before analyzing the actual textual accounts I want to consider the basic design dependencies that Mongol attire would have been subject to.

Clothing's primary function to protect its wearer against the elements is a condition that its design universally adheres to. The extreme continental climate that humans faced living on the East Asian steppes was one such decisive parameter in the design of Mongol dress. The fundamental function of its design was to offer protection against the severe cold that lasts at least half of the year, but it had to equally protect against blistering heat in the summer. Lifestyle conditions are another limiting factor and the specialized lifestyle of pastoral nomads put particular demands to the garments' functionality. Since the modern Mongolian herders' technical standards are essentially the same as centuries ago, assumptions can be made regarding the activities a mediaeval herder would have engaged in. Based on this inference certain requirements of its functions can be assumed: attire needed to allow easy mounting of horses, afford comfortable long horse rides and agility of the rider when catching livestock or in the occasional battle. It moreover has to serve other multiple functions since it contains the entire household a herder has access to during his or her work. Such secondary function of Mongolian clothing is that of a bag. Any kind of utensil and even livestock is carried in a pouch that is formed by the upper part of the garment by being tied tightly around the waist. Its use as bedding is essential for the nomadic herders out searching for lost livestock; a function that was similarly important for relentless Mongol statesmen as transpires from *The Secret History*. In a highly dramatic paragraph Činggis Qan emphasizes his toiling and his perseverance for the benefit of his sons.

¹³⁹ Turner (1996) 876-878

‘[...] When your father the Qan
Established the whole nation
His black head was bound to the saddle,
His black blood was poured
Into a large leather bucket.¹⁴⁰
His black eyes did not wink,
His flat ear he did not rest on a pillow:
Of his sleeve he made a pillow and
He spread his robe for a mattress. [...]’¹⁴¹

The same chronicle offers a number of mentions regarding clothing, mostly in passing manner, since the chronicle deals predominantly with matters of war and peace. Eyewitness reports from foreigners should therefore be able to shed more light on the state of Mongol clothing, but a cultural bias has to be taken into account when analyzing them. This is obvious where the Mongols’ enemy, the Naiman, consider a campaign against Činggis Qan as narrated in the *Secret History*. They were obviously not aware of the military might of the Mongols, and considered thus subjugating them. The Naiman Queen Gurbüsü, mother of Tayan Qan, disapproved of this plan, arguing that:

What could we do with them? The Mongol people have always smelt bad and wore grimy clothes. They live apart, and far away. Let them stay there. But we might perhaps have their fine daughters and daughters-in-law brought here and, making them wash their hands, perhaps just let them milk our cows and sheep.¹⁴²

We deal here with a remark of an opponent whose views most probably were dictated by cultural and political arrogance and cannot be taken as historical fact. Western accounts have a similar tendency to generalize on Mongol clothing, stressing the “barbarian” stereotype that was as much alive in Europe as it was in China. An example is the derogative description offered by the nineteenth-century archaeologist Wasili van Tiesenhausen. He draws on thirteenth-century Arabic sources and depicts the Mongols as not more than dogs when he remarks “*Denn die Tataren*

¹⁴⁰ De Rachewiltz translates this as “He was in constant danger of loosing his life.”

¹⁴¹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 184, 185

¹⁴² *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 111, 112

*kennen keine Kleidung und haben keinen Anstand. Sie leben wegen des Hungers, der Dürre, der schlechten Kleider, dem wenigen fruchtbaren Land und den wenigen (Feld)früchten wie Hunde.*¹⁴³ Taken at face value this might simply point to the very limited resources of the Mongols, but the phrasing of it suggests otherwise. That the early Mongol dress was limited in applied materials is a recurring theme. So notes Li Zhichang (1193-1278), a member of the entourage travelling with the Taoist Great Master Zhang Chun to Činggis Qan’s court that “their clothes are made of hides and fur; they live on meat and curdled milk.”¹⁴⁴ This reference is repeated in Al Umari’s encyclopaedic work on the empire of the Mongols¹⁴⁵, which professes otherwise a rather approving tone of Mongol culture. Al Umari, an Egyptian official placed highly in the local Mongol government, noted:

Wie mir der Kaufmann Sadr Gamal ad-Din ‘Abd Allah al-Hisni berichtete, gehen die Nomaden [der Turk-Stämme im äußersten Norden des Reiches] dort meist in Felle gekleidet, ohne darauf zu achten ob diese von Tieren stammten, die (nach muslimischer Vorschrift) geschlachtet wurden oder einfach verwendet sind, ob das Fell geegerbt oder ungeegerbt ist, oder ob das Tier rein oder unrein war.¹⁴⁶

Whether these early narrations are oversimplifications or attest historical fact remains questionable. The quote of the trader Sadr Gamal ad-Din ‘Abd Allah al-Hisni leaves the possibility open that variations of dress were indeed used, since furs and skins are here only mentioned as being worn “mostly” (*meist*).

A complete change of textiles in course of the emergence of the Mongol might is recorded by Ata-Malik Juvaini (1226-1265) who began writing his *History of a World Conqueror* during his residency at Qara Qorum between 1252 and 1253 and continued writing on it when he later served as governor of Baghdad under Hülegü. So relates Juvaini not only vividly the change of available fabrics but also gives a sense of the appreciation of the nomads regarding certain textiles.

¹⁴³ This quote is given by Lech. See Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 299.

¹⁴⁴ After Arthur Waley, see Li/Waley (1224) 67. Brettschneider renders this passage as “They dress in furs and skins, and live upon milk and flesh-meat.” [Li/Brettschneider (1224) 53].

¹⁴⁵ Al Umari’s work comprises a number of scriptures. At the core of his work on the Mongols is the volume entitled *-Bab at-tani fi mamalik bait Ginkiz Han*, from which this and the following quotes stem.

¹⁴⁶ Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 138

Their clothing was of the skins of dogs and mice, and their food was the flesh of those animals and other dead things; [...] the sign of a great emir amongst them was that his stirrups were of iron; from which one can form a picture of their other luxuries. And they continued in this indigence, privation and misfortune until the banner of Chingiz-khan's fortune was raised and they issued forth from the straits of hardship into the amplitude of well-being, from a prison into a garden, from the desert of poverty onto a palace of delight and from abiding torment into reposeful pleasancess; their raiment being of silk and brocade, [...] and their everyday garments are studded with jewels and are embroidered with gold.¹⁴⁷

Another account that narrates of this drastic change is recorded in the *Roman History*, authored by the Byzantine historian Nicephorus Gregoras (1295-1360):

The Scythians [i.e. in the absurd Byzantine pedantry, Tartars, Yule] from converse with the Assyrians, Persians, and Chaldaeans, in time acquired their manners and adopted their religion, casting off their ancestral atheism... And to such a degree were they changed, that though in former days they had been wont to cover the head with nothing better than a loose felt cap, and for clothing had thought themselves well off with the skins of wild beasts or ill-dressed leather, and had for weapons only clubs and slings, or spears, arrows, and bows extemporised from the oaks and other trees of their mountains and forests, now, foresooth, they will have no meaner clothing than brocades of silk and gold! And their luxury and delicate living came to such a pitch that they stood far as the poles asunder from their original habits.¹⁴⁸

These accounts hint at a development in attire that took place with the rising power of the Mongols.

The notion of diversification in terms of materials based on the Mongols' rise to power is a logical conclusion of the empire's expansion, which allowed access to non-native textiles and materials. Someone who makes a connection between these varying materials and seasonal attire is John of Plano Carpini, as quoted below. Apart from fur and skins, silk, velvet and brocade is

¹⁴⁷ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 21, 22

¹⁴⁸ After Yule, see Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 266.

mentioned by him as central materials for Mongol attire, qualifying the earlier statements as pertaining mainly to winter clothing when other materials were available. His observations also introduce the discussion of the composition of Mongol attire. The single most important garment according to his and other narrations is a wide belted coat, the Mongol *deel* (mediaeval form: *debel*) that will be the subject of research in the following heading.

2.1 The deel

John of Plano Carpini (c.1180-1252), a Dominican monk sent to spread the gospel and to establish a diplomatic dialogue, reached the court of the Mongols in 1247. His vivid account of his journey and residence in the east notes the habits and customs of the Mongols, often with a candid eye for details. His description of Mongol dress is therefore worth quoting here in full.

The clothes of both the men and the women are made in the same style. They do not use capes, cloaks or hoods, but wear tunics of buckram, velvet or brocade [*burcarano purpura vel baldakino*] made in the following fashion: they are open from top to bottom and are folded over the breast; they are fastened on the left with one tie, on the right with three, on the left side also they are open as far as the waist. Garments of all kinds of fur are made in the same style; the upper one however has the hairy part outside and is open at the back; it also has a tail at the back reaching to the knees.

The married women have very full tunic, open to the ground in front. [...] It is hard to tell unmarried women and young girls from men, for they are dressed in every respect like them.¹⁴⁹

Carpini's account addresses the design of the deel and describes it as a wide coat with a lapel that covers the right side of the wearer and is closed with three buttons. The split on the right side results from the opening of the coat that reaches from top to bottom. An artificial split on the left mirrors the one on the right. This construction of the deel is illustrated by the only secular statue unearthed so far at the Mongol capital Qara Qorum that dates to the thirteenth or fourteenth century (figure 50).¹⁵⁰ The hip-high slit is also depicted in a Persian miniature reproduced in figure 73. The statue corroborates Carpini's description in nearly all its details but also adds

¹⁴⁹ Carpini/Dawson (c.1247) 7, 8

¹⁵⁰ These excavations were carried out from 2000 to 2004 and were a joint venture of the Deutsche Archäologische Institut and the faculty of archaeology of the National University of Mongolia.

features not narrated about. Clearly visible is the trimming of the hem that runs down the right side and back up on the left indicating the by Carpini mentioned splits on both sides. The tail mentioned by Carpini is not mentioned by any other author and is neither featured on any known depiction. A depiction of a Mongol hunter in a Persian miniature has a peculiar addition of a tail to the back of the rider. I would assume that the here depicted tail of a cat (tiger or leopard) is not attached to the clothing but issues from an animal that is fastened somehow to the side of the horse (figure 88), since hunting with trained beasts is a much related topic in contemporary accounts. One wonders whether Carpini has been subject to this kind of delusion. Riders accompanied by hunting cats actually seated behind them on the horse are seen in figure 76 and 83a. On other depictions it seems that tails were tied to the quiver case (figure 66). Carpini's statement remains curious given that he spent considerable time among the Mongols.

William of Rubruck (c. 1220-c.1293), another Dominican missionary, reached the Mongol court only a few years later in 1253 and stayed there until 1255. His report, commissioned by King Louis IX of France, gives an account of the attire he witnessed commonly among the Mongols, substantiating and complementing Carpini's observations.

As regards their clothing and appearance, you should know that cloth of silk, of gold and of cotton reaches them from Cataia [China] and other regions in the east, and from Persia and other southern parts in addition, and these they wear in the summer. [...] They always make at least two skin garments in the winter, one with the fur against the body, the other with the fur exposed to the wind and snow- often the pelt of a wolf or fox or lynx [papiro]. For these external [garments] the poor use dog or goat.¹⁵¹

[...] The girls' dress does not differ from the men's, except that it is a trifle longer. [...] She has a tunic as wide as a nun's cowl, but with an altogether broader and longer opening at the front, and tied on the right

Rubruck's central point regarding the cutting is the unisex dimension of the coat. Rubruck, contradicting Carpini, though, notes a slightly longer cut of the female deel, apparently the only detailed that differed between the female and the male version. He focuses on describing the seasonal change of materials, being a matter that seems to have impressed on him much more.

¹⁵¹ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 85, 86

His description of the various uses of furs and silk for the facing as well as lining indicates a more differentiated use of these materials as Carpini discerned. He continues this description:

The wealthy, moreover, line their garments with silk stuffing [*de stupa sete*], which is extremely soft and light and warm; the poor line theirs with cotton cloth and with the softer wool which they can pick out from the coarser.¹⁵²

From Rubruck's description it becomes evident that clear distinctions between rich and poor, probably referring to noble and commoner, did exist. Different materials classified different social stations. The earlier mentioned statements with regards to Mongols exclusively dressing in skins and hides obscure the fact that specific furs were more valued than others, and that with that differentiated clothing existed even if Mongol attire should have been limited to animal skins alone. The gift of a black sable coat as a wedding present from Temüjin's mother-in-law to his own mother receives particular mention in the *Secret History*, a chronicle primarily concerned with war and peace, and therefore must have been a rare occurrence and very prestigious gift.¹⁵³ A "ragged sheepskin coat" is also mentioned, in the context emphasizing the poor appearance of the concerned.¹⁵⁴ The differentiation of clothing is carried further, qualified by the remark on the varying materials used for lining the garment by Rubruck.

Chinese envoys of the Southern Song give by far the most detailed account on early Mongol dress. Xu Tingshu and Peng Daya left the Chinese 'civilization' behind to venture far into the 'barbarian' region with the objective to report on the newly established Mongol power in begin of the 13th century (1237-1240). These Chinese envoys noted many more details that were of no significance to western eyes. They evaluated Mongol attire on a comparative Chinese basis, associating the observed with a deviating form of Chinese dress. Peng Daya described Mongol dress as follows:

¹⁵² Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 86

¹⁵³ Cotan, Börte' mother, accompanied her daughter to Temüjin's camp for the wedding ceremonies. As a wedding gift for Temüjin's mother she brought a black sable coat. Temüjin and his brothers, however, take it away [*Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 29, 30].

¹⁵⁴ The Merkit Belgetü is visiting his mother, but unawares that it is her son, she quickly leaves her dwelling, when she hears someone approaching: "Belgetü went there to fetch his mother, but when he entered her tent by the right-hand door, his mother, in a ragged sheepskin coat, went out by the left-hand door [*Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 42].

Ihre Kleidung ist nach rechts umgeschlagen und hat einen eckigen Kragen. Früher war sie aus Filz, Wolle oder Leder; neuerdings ist sie aus Hanfseide oder aus goldgestickten (Stoffen).¹⁵⁵

His colleague Xu Tingshu complements this observation:

Ich, T'ing, habe mir (ihre Kleidung) einmal näher angesehen. Sie ist genau so geschnitten wie unser altes Kultgewand. Eigentlich gibt es nur einen unteren Kragen. Er ist genau wie der Kragen des Taoistengewandes bei uns in China. Wenn (P'eng Ta-ya) mit dem, was er den eckigen Kragen nennt, den viereckigen oberen Kragen gemeint hat, so wird dieser doch (nur) von den Chinesen hergestellt. Der Tatan-Herrscher, seine Minister und andere höher gestellte Personen haben ihn nie getragen. An den Hüften legt man das Kleid ganz dicht in unzählige feine Falten. Vom chinesischen Kultgewand, das nur zwölf Falten hat, (unterscheidet sich das Gewand) der Tatan lediglich darin, daß es viel mehr Falten hat. Außerdem nehmen sie rote und purpurne Seide, drehen daraus Schnüre und binden sie um die Hüften. Sie nennen sie Hüftschnüre. Damit wollen sie nämlich, daß beim Reiten durch das feste Umwickeln der Hüften (das Gewand) weit absteht. Das ist überaus prächtig anzusehen.¹⁵⁶

The here mentioned upper square collar might refer to the necklet that is attested by its frequent occurrence in paintings. These collars, often referred to as cloud collars, were made up of four scalloped segments arranged in a circle and were worn so that one ornamental section each was covering chest and back, while the other two each covered a shoulder. Examples of in paintings this collar design are shown in figures 77, 79, and 80. Another painting proves that this sort of decorative collar also applied to women (figure 93). A graphical representation of this construction is given in figure 26. An archaeological find of yardage with a brocaded cloud collar confirms its actual use (figure 161).

But Peng Daya might actually refer to another form of square collar. His phrase might be an allusion to the cut of the collar as seen in the portrait of Ögödei Qa'an, one in a series of imperial portraits of Mongol rulers in the collection of the Taiwan National Palace Museum

¹⁵⁵ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 121

¹⁵⁶ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 121

Taipei, Taiwan (figure 3). The singular occurrence of it in the series of portraits lends credit to Xu Tingshu's claim that such collar was generally unheard of among the Mongols.

Peng Daya's mention to the side of closure of the *deel* is as illuminating with regards to Chinese culture as it is to Mongolian clothing. That a Chinese envoy would note among the first things on which side the garment of the Mongols' fastened is no coincidence, since the Chinese traditionally characterize the barbarians as "fastening their coats on the left and wearing their hair long," even if the actual practice of the Mongols was otherwise.¹⁵⁷ The cultural divide of left and right fastening garments, however, never really absolute in geopolitical terms, appears to have been more situated to the west. Among the Turkic nomadic tribes left-fastening coats seem to have been more common.¹⁵⁸ Rubruck notes the same, attesting that the side of a garments' closure, and by implication the appearance of clothing more generally, was widely accepted as an ethnic marker Turkic and Mongol peoples. He writes, "The Tartars differ here from the Turks, in that the Turks tie their tunics on the left and the Tartars always on the right."¹⁵⁹

The strings mentioned by Xu Tingshu that were attached to the waist and made the coat spread out at the hips in many small plaits and is nowhere else mentioned in written sources and as such were acknowledged to be no further understood by the translators and editors of Xu Tingshu's account. These "hip strings", though, are an actual feature of the Mongol coat as images and archaeological evidence prove. Olbricht and Pinks point out that the reference to the old Chinese ceremonial garment should be understood as an indication to the Mongol *deel*'s width and not to the style. This Chinese garment was made from a short upper piece to which was attached a wide skirt with twelve panels (representing months), whereas the usual dress consisted of two separated garments.¹⁶⁰ The greater width of the garments lower part is either taken in by plaits worn on the outside or the inside, so that a tailored silhouette is a common feature. My research has come across four extant *deels* in various sources, which interestingly all feature such waist construction (figure 36, 38, 39, 40). Another *deel* with cloud collar that has recently (2007) been found in a thirteenth-century grave in Outer Mongolia also displayed these hip-strings, here made from gold brocade.¹⁶¹ All *deels* display a different technique in achieving an appearance of a ribbed surfaced in the characteristic waist section, which allows to conclude that the execution was either subject to personal taste or governed by regional traditions. The Yuan painting

¹⁵⁷ Müller, Wenzel, Oyunbileg (2006) 167

¹⁵⁸ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 12

¹⁵⁹ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 88

¹⁶⁰ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 121, 122

¹⁶¹ This *deel* is owned by the National Museum of Mongolian History, Ulaanbaatar. Images are as yet unavailable, pending local publication.

Hunting Wild Geese portrays two archers who sport such deels, one of them turned with the back to the viewer affording a backside view of the garment (figure 85). A graphic representation of this garment's structure is given in figure 25. From a paragraph in the *Yuan shih* where a description of a particular garment stipulates a profusion of cords on the waist, the garment's name can be inferred as *tsegdeg*.¹⁶² How the deel and the *tsegdeg* correlated to each other remains to be investigated, though Badrakh assumes that the *tsegdeg* was generally worn inside the deel.¹⁶³ Women are generally not featured in this garment.

Just as as the waist-construction, the construction of the sleeves in those four *tsegdegs* does not follow one established principle. All four differ slightly but noticeably in technical detail. Long straight sleeves without a wristband are found, as are sleeves that are wide but narrow shortly before the wrist and where a separate band is added to fit closely around the wrist. They generally appear to have been very long and could be pulled over the hands when needed. An example sleeves worn extended is seen in Yuan painting depicting a hunting party. The Qa'an, presumably Qubilai Qa'an has pulled down his sleeves for protection (figure 85). If the weather allowed the wearer would simply take one or two arms out of the garment as depicted in a painting showing a common horseman (figure 92). The only instance of a Mongol-period deel reveals a unique construction, which the Chinese textile expert Zhao Feng attributes to "western" (Persian?) models (figure 41a).¹⁶⁴ The sleeves feature a slot at shoulder-height through which the arms could be exerted and the sleeves tied to a button at the back. This unique construction is shown in figure 41b; a construction that throws serious doubts on Badrakh's assumption that the *tsegdeg* was only worn as underwear. An instance of such sleeves is found in a Persian miniature featuring a ruler who has taken off his deel on one side, but appears to have exerted his other arm through a slit in the garment (figure 77).

With regards to the buttoning of the *tsegdeg*, the archaeological finds suggest that the overlapping lapel was secured with ribbons that were tied or silk loops of material that were hooked around silk knotted buttons.¹⁶⁵ This technique also applied for the deel, and a miniature, reproduced in figure 95, affords a good view on the ribbons that hold together the sides of the deel.

A modern Mongolian scholar, G. Badrakh, adds to this basic description of the deel that the early deels featured a special shoulder pad that was referred to as a 'shoulder strap'.¹⁶⁶ He

¹⁶² Badrakh (1976) 52

¹⁶³ Badrakh (1976) 53

¹⁶⁴ Feng (2004)

¹⁶⁵ Feng (2004) <http://www.asianart.com/rossi/intro.html>

¹⁶⁶ Badrakh (1976) 38

does not stipulate the function of this particularity nor whether it is found on garments of both genders. From Persian miniatures I assume that Badrakh refers to a decorative element that ran around the circumference of the tsegdegs sleeves, of which an example is seen in figure 74.

2.1.1 Short-sleeved overcoats

Curiously none of the written accounts explicitly mention a second coat that the Mongols are frequently depicted in on paintings. Even if paintings are often inspired by the painters' native understanding of dress and have to be used with a lot of caution as historical evidence, the profusion of images with this set of robes makes it difficult to dismiss them as foreign misinterpretations of Mongol dress. That this is not the case is further proven by the garment's depiction in Chinese paintings of Mongols (figure 73, 81a, b; 82a, b; 83, 84, 85). This attire features two robes, of which the outer coat is cut identically to the inner but features sleeves that reach to above the elbow. The long inner coat, the *deel* or perhaps also the *tsegdeg*, professes sleeves that come down over the hand. The two coats were girdled together around the waist with a belt. These garments were generally made from silk or brocade, but also from fur (77). I have not found any mention of the name of the short-sleeved garment. In modern Mongolian usage garments without sleeves that were worn by women atop their *deels* in the sixteenth to twentieth century are referred to as *uuji*. This term might have been applied to these short-sleeved overcoats as well. However, no females are depicted wearing the short-sleeved *uuji* of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The fact that the discussed western and Chinese missions have not noted on this typical Mongol attire is difficult to understand. Schuyler Cammann, an expert in the material culture of the Mongols, considers in his revision of Henny Harald Hanses's catalogue of the Mongol dress collection kept at the Danish National Museum these half-sleeved overcoats as well as a central component of early Mongol attire- unfortunately without any more explanation of their appearance, and especially their later disappearance. He notes that the Persians continued the use of this attire through the Central Asian Timurid period (1370-1405) together with the Mongol-style belts and that this ensemble was extended by a third sleeveless coat.¹⁶⁷ Examples of this attire in paintings are shown in figure 65, 67, 73, 81a, 81b, 82a, 82b, 83a, and 84. A graphic reconstruction is seen in figure 27. A shorter version of this outer coat, indeed making up a short jacket, has been found in excavations in Inner Mongolia. The make of the three excavated garments is identical, their decorations, though, vary greatly (figure 33, 34, 35).

¹⁶⁷ Cammann (1962) 160

2.1.2 Female garments

Even if Rubruck and Carpini have noted the similarity of the male and female attire, others have made a point in describing the Mongol ladies' coat separately. The *Meng-Ta Pei-Lu*, which was written by the Song envoy Chao Hung who was at the Mongol general Muqali's court in 1221, contains more information on a particular coat.

Ihre Kleidung hat Ähnlichkeit mit dem Gewand der chinesischen Taoisten. [...] Weiter haben sie [the Mongol ladies] einen Mantel mit weiten Ärmeln, der dem chinesischen Kranichmantel gleicht; er ist breit und lang und schleppt auf der Erde. Wenn sie gehen wird er von zwei Dienerinnen getragen.¹⁶⁸

Olbricht and Pinks describe the Taoist robe here mentioned as a hoodless caftan with a broad collar, which should refer to the general deel. The instance of the “crane coat”(Kranichmantel) points to an alternative form of coat. This type of coat is said to have been a Chinese garment that was made from fine feathers.¹⁶⁹ I can only assume that this implies that Mongol women wore a garment that resembled an innovative Tang dynastic (618-907 CE) piece of attire. During the Tang dynasty a skirt was made from the feathers of the kingfisher. The fashion took on in the circle of officials and commoners alike. Since hunting birds for those skirts became an economic sideline for many, this lead almost to the extermination of all extraordinary fowl in the Yangtze River valley and the southeast.¹⁷⁰ Due to this reason the garment became forbidden by imperial decree in due course.¹⁷¹ One wonders if the Khitan, partly basing themselves on old Chinese traditions, especially on Tang practices, introduced this garment to the imperial catalogue of clothing at the Mongol court. That feathers were applied in Mongol attire is proven by the tsegdeg that features trimmed borders. The now remaining plain silk tabby of the trimming was originally interwoven with feathers (figure 39).¹⁷² A reference from the Yuan dynasty to a silk brocade interwoven with feathers that had been commissioned as a prestigious gift further evidences the Mongols acquaintance with such fabrics, but also their special status.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 79

¹⁶⁹ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 80, 81

¹⁷⁰ Benn (2002) 98 Benn (2004)

¹⁷¹ Zhou and Gao (1984) 88

¹⁷² Feng (2004) <http://www.asianart.com/rossi/gallery5/11.html>

¹⁷³ See Franke (1956) 36:

8. Das Prunkgewand

This long dress' singular appearance in literature qualifies it in my eyes as extraordinary attire, probably for ceremonial use. Moreover, its unusual length, compared to that mentioned by Rubruck and Carpini, renders it impractical for daily wear and contributes, in my estimation, to the conclusion that this garment is of festive or ceremonial character. Depictions of Uighur dress on murals at Dunhuang, by Chao Hung related as having been fashionable at the Mongol court, show that the hem was trailing behind the wearer. Probably the here described Mongol coat originated in the Tang, was propagated by the Uighur constituency and then was passed on to the Mongols. Chao Hung's comment regarding female court attire substantiates this conclusion to some extent, but is equally intriguing in its further implications.

Die (von mir) als Hofdamen bezeichneten (acht fu-jen) sind alle glänzend weiß und schön von Angesicht. Vier von ihnen sind wahrscheinlich vornehme Konkubinen der Kin-Barbaren, und vier sind Tatan-Frauen. Die vierte von diesen fu-jen ist eine besondere Schönheit und steht am höchsten in der Gunst des Landesfürsten. Sie alle tragen nur Kleider und Mützen der Hu-Barbaren.¹⁷⁴

What makes this note so intriguing is the fact that Chao Hung here explicitly mentions different ethnicities and simultaneously makes it clear that they wore garments of identical style. This signifies a dress culture at court that overruled any ethnic connotation that dress might have had. Elite dress was hence removed from local practises and might have been consciously employed to disrupt older, unwanted allegiances and was aimed at creating new loyalties.

Chao Hung's remark that all women were wearing Uighur dress, however, is less easy to place. The Uighur elite who was so influential and active at court might have indeed introduced their clothing style at court. Depictions and textual mentions of actual Mongols wearing turbans (see heading "hats") demonstrate this influence. Chao Hung's observation might equally, however, be based on the misunderstanding that the tall hats of the Mongols were a unique fashion of the Uighurs and thus misinterpreted them as Uighur dress. The prominent Sinologist Henri Cordier investigated the origin of the tall hats of the Mongols, the *boqtaq*, and mentions that a number of Asiatic peoples featured high heads for royal ladies. Japanese historian Namio

Im Jahre des chi-yüan (1338) befahl die Kaiserinwitwe T' ein-li [des Kaisers Wenzong's] den Beamten der Palastwerkstatt, aus purpurnem Samt, Goldfäden, Eisvogelgefieder und Pfauenfedern einen Gewandstoff herzustellen, mit welchem sie den Großlehrer (*t'ai-shi*) bayan beschenkte. Der Preis betrug 1300 ting. Dies kann man wohl ein Wunderwerk von einem Gewand nennen! Der Direktor (*tsung-kuan*) Lo Kuo-k'i hat seinerzeit diese Arbeit geleitet, wie es heißt.

¹⁷⁴ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 79

Egami's research on this topic shows that the custom of wearing high hats for married women was a widely established tradition among the peoples of Central and East Asia. This tradition can be followed back in time to the Han dynasty (206 BCE-25CE) and even beyond.¹⁷⁵ Cordier traces the origin back to the Yen-ta, a Turkic people, accounts of which have been given by Wei shu and Yuan-chuang, two Chinese envoys (no dates given). This high hat was adorned with horns, the number of which depended on the number of brothers the husband had. That Chao Hung, probably heir to this traditional knowledge, would interpret the tall hats of the Mongols as Uighur seems therefore reasonable, especially since sumptuary laws were still in effect prohibiting the use of 'Western Barbarians'' fashion.¹⁷⁶ The fact that Chao Hung here especially mentions hats makes a basic misinterpretation more likely, since all other contemporaries comment on these hats for court ladies in detail and commonly ascribe them to Mongol dress culture. The reference to Uighur dress might also be explained by the great influence Khitan Liao (907-1125 CE) precedents had on Mongol court practices, a theme that we will revisit in other facets of attire, fabrics and their ornamentation. As the Liao were politically indebted to the Tang dynasty, which was heavily influenced by Uighur and generally Central Asian tastes, this heritage might have been evident to a Song envoy.

A further detail concerning female dress is mentioned in the *Secret History*. After the victorious campaign against the Tang'ut in 1226, Činggis Qan's commanders Bo'orcu and Muqali are rewarded for their role in the conquest:

Since I did not give you a share of the Kitat people, the two of you take and divide equally between yourselves the Jüyin of the Kitat people. Go and make their fine sons follow you, holding your falcons. Bring up their fine daughters and make them arrange the hem of your wives' skirts.¹⁷⁷

This mention could allude to the practise of taking in the hem of the deel, a practise described by early German ethnograph Peter Simon Pallas in the 18th century, but that was later discontinued. Pallas describes this method in the following way: “[...] unten [um den deel] herum aber, etwa eine Spanne vom Saum, [wird er] mit Stichen etwas in Falten zusammen gezogen; welches auch mit allen Weiberpelzen nicht nur bei den Mongolen und Buräten, sondern auch bei den

¹⁷⁵ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 80

¹⁷⁶ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 223, 224

¹⁷⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 198

sibirischen Tataren gewöhnlich ist.”¹⁷⁸ The statement could equally refer to the long form of coat mentioned by Chao Hung and suggest that these female servants were destined to carry the trailing hem of the coat.

Another detail regarding the make of ladies’ deels can be inferred from the series of imperial portraits, of which another series portrays the empresses and wives of the rulers and their family (figure 10-24). The portraits reveal the cut of the collar and show it edged with a triple border as against two for the collars of men. This small detail might indicate that the statue found at Qara Qorum is of a female figure as the still discernible upper right portion of the collar shows a triple edging. The remaining collar does not clearly portray a tripartite partition, but the sufficient width of the collar indicates that wear might be the reason for its absence. In Persian miniatures women are consistently portrayed in full-length deels with contrasting double-bordered edgings. This design detail is repeated in the narrow cuffs (figure 81b, 82b). A graphic reconstruction of the entire coat based on these portraits features in figure 28.

2.1.3 Children’s wear

Two descriptions of children’s clothing are given in the *Secret History*. Both regard children of noble origin who were collected in the ravaged camps of enemies of the Mongols and brought up in the Činggisic family. The detention of a Merkit boy who is eventually presented to Lady Hö’elün is narrated as follows:

At the time when the Uduyit Merkit were fleeing in haste, our soldiers found a little boy of five with fire in his eyes who had been left behind in the camp and whose name was Kücū. He had a sable cap, boots made from the skin of a doe’s forelegs, and a dress of otter skins cleared of hair and sewn together.¹⁷⁹

The other boy is a member of the Tatar tribe, similarly taken from the abandoned camp of the devastated enemy and brought to the Mongols’ abode.

At the time when our troops were plundering the camp at Naratu Sitü’en where the Tatars had halted and barricaded themselves, they happened to find in the camp a little boy who had been abandoned. Taking the little boy, who had as

¹⁷⁸ Pallas (1776) 173

¹⁷⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 43

nose-ring a golden loop and who wore a gold-stitched silken waistcoat lined with sable, Činggis Khaan gave him as a present to Mother Hö'elün.

These descriptions do not offer any clue as to differences in style and cut of the garments, but attest that the same range of materials was applied to children's wear. Apart from these two narrations one miniature depicts the son of Ghazan Qan, ruler of the Ilqanate (1271-1304). His attire appears to be a copy of adult dress in smaller size, not displaying any discernable difference at all. Another depiction of a Mongol boy is found in embroidery of the Yuan era. The boy portrayed sports a deel featuring a Yuan badge, again pointing to the fact that adult and children wore basically the same attire (figure 158). The latter portrayal's curiosity lies in its depiction of a central frontal opening, a detail often depicted in Middle Eastern or Central Asian illustrations, but not generally in Chinese ones. This might point to the existence of such garments after the Mongols exposure to western culture, or to the work of a Middle Eastern/Central Asian embroiderer who interpreted Mongol dress based on his own attire, as seen repeatedly in Iranian miniatures. A second piece of embroidery depicts a noble boy mounted on a camel. The sideview limits one's view, but no discernable difference can be spotted with adult clothing (figure 159).

2.2 Hats and headdresses

Peng Daya states that in winter Mongols wore a hat and in the summer a rain hat fashioned from bamboo. From depictions of Mongols a much wider range of hats appears than described by Peng Daya. The here mentioned hat made from bamboo might have been required to be worn by the Chinese population before 1297, as proposed in an introduction to Chinese dress.¹⁸⁰ A stone statue of the Yuan dynasty found in eastern Mongolia (Dornod province) at a location called Tavan Tolgoi sports this type of hat (figure 50). Professor Cammann adds that the wide brim of these hats was sometimes split at the side, so that the front and back could be turned up or lowered as a shade separately. This feature can be seen in figure 84, 82a, and especially well in figure 90. At the apex a jewel was affixed, probably indicating rank. Such ranking system can be attested for earlier Uighur hats, and Uighur as well as Mongol hats are the forerunner of the Qing dynastic hats that used to identify the rank of the wearer. The series of imperial portraits only attests this feature for after the reign of Qubilai Qa'an. In his portrait the shape of the golden base of the finial depicts abstract lotus flowers, hinting at Buddhist influence regarding its design principles.

¹⁸⁰ Yang (2004) 6

This type of hat could also feature an extending shade at the neck, as documented in the series of imperial portraits of Mongol rulers. An example of this type of hat has been excavated at Cagaan Chanan in the Gobi desert from the fourteenth century (figure 32). The hat was faced with gold brocade and a second type of material, which runs along the outer edges of the shade at the back. On the top is left the base for the finial made from precious stone as seen in the imperial portraits (figure 5-9). Apart from bamboo, then, gold brocade was used to fashion this hat. To same hat style fur was added for winter wear (see figure 85, 89, 91).

In the series of imperial portraits Činggis Qan's hat is of the same style, but has a broader brim or edging of the cap, and not a frontal shade as in the case of the later rulers here featured. This type of hat is seen in depictions of Mongol rulers in Iran from the early fourteenth century as featuring a diadem affixed to the forehead as well as a number of long feathers. The profile view afforded in figure 65 indicates that the brim of the cap was of the same material as the edging of the shade at the back, which is also still discernable on the excavated specimen. The feathers are arranged in specific numbers and therefore indicate that feathers played a crucial role in the Ilqanate's system of ranks (figure 65, 67, 81a, 82a, 82b). Similar feathers are seen in paintings depicting the Yuan dynasty elite (figure 85). The feathers shown in these paintings are eagle and owl feather. Owl feathers are known to have been used as rank indicators in the Mongol army in Yuan China, indicating that feather were as important in China as they were in the Ilqanate to denote rank.¹⁸¹

A red tassel or ribbon could be attached to the top instead of a jewel, probably indicating a relatively lower rank. The fact that this is found on a member of the court carrying the imperial standard indicates, however, that this must have been found on hats of high officials (figure 83a). The use of this hat is detailed in the *Yuan shih* where its usage is convened mandatory in combination with specific deeds (see chapter "Yuan developments").

The basic shape of this hat was also found in winter hats. The use of soft furs makes it appear less strictly round in shape, but the use of four triangles to create the basic shape show its connection with the above-described hat. They were either faced and/or the roll brim trimmed with fur. These hats too featured jewels as finials.¹⁸²

Another type of hat frequently encountered in depictions is a low-domed hat with affixed jewel that features four raised panels of rectangular shape on forehead, back and the sides. The panels are consistently depicted in black or white. An example is shown in figure 71.

¹⁸¹ *Cayan teiike/Sagaster* (1272?) 162

¹⁸² Cammann (1962) 160, 161

A hat in a tent-shape and lavish gold applications is crowning the head of a Mongol prince in 84 figure and participants of a royal banquet in 81a and b. Zhou and Gao mention that this hat was made from rattan. A clay figure found in a Jin dynasty tomb at Jiazuo, Henan province sports this hat (figure 51). This hat also features a finial, a development that might have occurred under the Mongols as the Jin dynastic (1115-1234 CE) example here given, does not show this feature, though it might have also broken off.

G. Badrakh does also mention the use of silk and felt for male hats, but does not elaborate on the shape.¹⁸³ The latter hat here discussed resembles the high conical hats of the Kazak and other western peoples, which were made of felt and are often depicted in Tang clay figures and depictions. Perhaps a second material apart from rattan to produce these hats was thus felt.

Regarding female hat fashions, Peng Daya mentions that “*Die Frauen tragen auf dem Kopf den Gugu.*”¹⁸⁴ Among all items of attire especially the *gugu* finds copious mention in contemporary travel narratives. From detailed descriptions of early travellers it becomes clear that the *gugu* was a hat that featured a cap from which rose a slender column that ended in a voluminous end, either of a rounded or square shape. I take this hat to be the headdress that Chao Hung mentions as the Uighur fashion. Temüjin’s mother of noble background is recorded as wearing this type of hat in the *Secret History*. The paragraph recounts the efforts of Lady Hö’elün, mother of Temüjin, to bring up her sons:

Lady Hö’elün was born
 A clever woman
 And she nourished her small sons thus:
 Pulling firmly her tall hat
 Over her head,
 Tying tightly her belt
 To shorten her skirt,
 Along the Onan River [...]”¹⁸⁵

The term *gugu* for this hat, or variously *ku-ku* and *ku-ku kuan*, appears to be the Chinese form of the Mongolian *boqtaq*. The origin of the Chinese term is not certain. Apart from the hypothesis that it is derived from a Khitan term, some scholars see it as being based on the Mongolian term

¹⁸³ Badrakh (1967) 38

¹⁸⁴ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 119

¹⁸⁵ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 19

kegül (developed from its earlier form *kügül*), which can be among other meanings translated as “ornaments pour la chevelure”. Given that the boqtaq indeed showcased strings of pearls at the side of the hat resembling tresses, this might have been the origin of the term.¹⁸⁶

More so than other pieces of attire, the continuous detailed description of the boqtaq enables us to trace the rapid change of applied textiles and materials in early Mongol clothing. The constant in all these narrations is the fact that only married ladies of high rank wore this type of hat. The earliest description is that of Li Zhichang who reports the use of black woollen cloth or red silk for this headgear, the application depending on the owner’s wealth. The height of the hat is noted as two feet and the frame said to have been made from the bark of trees. At its top is attached a long “tail” not described in more detail.¹⁸⁷ Brettschneider completes this description with the account of Meng Hung, a Chinese general and a contemporary of Činggis Qan. He quotes Meng Hung: “The wives of the chieftains (princes) wear a cap which they call *gu-gu*. It is made from wire, about three feet high, and has the appearance of a bamboo (?) [basket]. The whole is covered with purple velvet.”¹⁸⁸

The description in the *Meng-Ta Pei-Lu* reveals a further development in the style of the boqtaq. Chao Hung mentions red and blue brocade, additional pearls and gold and an increased height of three feet. The “tail” Chao Hung describes as an iron rod protruding from its top, which was wrapped in red or blue cloth.¹⁸⁹

Interestingly Xu Tingshu reports on the manufacture of the boqtaq and notes the following:

Ich, T’ing, habe die Anfertigung des Gugu gesehen. Man nimmt gespaltene Holz als Gestell und umwickelt es mit roter Seidengaze oder Goldbrokat. Oben auf dem Scheitel bringt man eine vier bis fünf Fuß lange Weidenrute an oder

¹⁸⁶ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 353

¹⁸⁷ “The married women put on their head a thing made of the bark of trees, two feet high, which they sometimes cover with woollen cloth, or, as the rich used to do, with red silk stuff. This cap is provided by a long tail, which they call *gu-gu*, and which resembles a goose or duck.” See Brettschneider (1910), 52. Another translation has more details regarding the hat: “The married women wear a head-dress of birch-bark, some two feet high. This they generally cover with a black woollen stuff; but some of the richer women use red silk. The end (of this head-dress) is like a duck; they call it *ku-ku*. They are in constant fear of people knocking against it, and are obliged to go backwards and crouching through the doorways of the tents.” [Li Chi Ch’ang (1221-24), 67].

¹⁸⁸ Brettschneider (1910), 53

¹⁸⁹ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 79. “Die Frauen der Stammeshäuptlinge tragen alle die *Gugu*-Kopfbedeckung. Ihr (Gestell) wird aus Eisendraht geflochten; es sieht so ähnlich aus wie eine “Bambusfrau”. Es ist etwa drei Fuß lang, mit rot- und blaugewirktem Brokat überzogen und mit Perlen und Gold geschmückt. Oben ist noch ein Stab, den man zum Schmuck mit rotem und blauem Stickgarn (umwickelt) hat.”

einen aus Eisen geschlagenen Stab und umwickelt diese mit blauen Filz. Die Vornehmen unter ihnen befestigen daran unsern chinesischen Eisvogelfederschmuck oder bunte Seidenstoffe und lassen sie flattern. Die Einfacheren nehmen Fasanenfedern.¹⁹⁰

Here then gold brocade enters the picture and social distinction of the wearer is no longer discerned by the use of woollens and silk, but by the use of kingfisher feathers and colourful silk streamers whereas less well-off ladies would opt for feathers of the pheasant. Carpini's description (1247) notes not a rod of iron but of gold, silver or wood, surely another signal of the increasing wealth of the Mongols:

On their head they have a round thing made of twigs or bark, which is an ell in height and ends on top in a square; it gradually increases in circumference from the bottom to the top, and on the top there is a long and slender cane of gold and silver or wood, or even a feather, and it is sewn on to a cap which reaches to the shoulders. The cap as well as this object is covered with buckram, velvet or brocade, and without this headgear they never go into the presence of men and by it they are distinguished from other women. [...] The caps they have are different from those of other nations, but I am unable to describe what they are like in such way that you would understand.¹⁹¹

Rubruck (1253) too describes the hat. He mentions again different materials for decoration, namely peacock feathers and quails from mallards that were affixed the top a sheaf of thin reeds or quills. The column of the boqtaq was occasionally decorated with precious stones. He notes especially that the cap holding the sheaft-like construction was made from fur, probably indicating the winter version of this particular female hat fashion.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 119

¹⁹¹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 7, 8

¹⁹² See Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 88, 89:

In addition they have a head-dress called bocca and made of tree-bark or some lighter material if they can find it. It is thick and round, two hands in circumference and one cubit or more high, and square at the top like the capital of a column. They cover this bocca with expensive silk cloth: it is hollow inside, and on the capital in the middle, or on the square part, they put a sheaf of quills or of thin reeds, again a cubit or more in length. And they decorate this sheaf at the top with peacock's feathers and around its shaft with the little feathers from a mallard's tail and even precious stones. This decoration is worn on top of the head by rich ladies: they fasten it on securely with a fur hood which has a hole at the top made for this purpose, and in it they put up their hair, gathering it from the back onto the top of the head in a kind of knot and placing over

An archaeological example of a boqtaq has been unearthed in the Mongolian province Qenti, of which the upper shaft had been preserved (figure 29). The boqtaq with long extensions and unidentified additions at the top are frequently seen in Persian miniatures (figure 81b, 82b).

2.3 Belts and girdles

Belts were an important feature of nomad dress. Their importance was derived from its primary function to keep the riders' organs supported during long rides and to warm the person by protecting against the cold creeping up from below. From its utilization as a stabilizer when horseriding the belt has developed into a cultural metaphor that is in more detail explored below. Belts are mentioned by Carpini as "silk threaded with gold"¹⁹³, by Odoric of Pordenone as "a golden girdle of a half span in breadth"¹⁹⁴, whereas Marco Polo described the belts as "crimson cunningly worked with threads of gold and silver, very rich and very beautiful and of great value."¹⁹⁵ The appearance of the women's girdle is mentioned by Rubruck: "All the women sit astride their horses like men. They tie their gowns with blue-coloured [sky-blue, Dawson] silk cloth at the waist, binding their breasts with another strip, and fasten a white piece below the eyes which hangs down to breast level."¹⁹⁶ A blue girdle is seen wrapped around the waist of the male members of a hunting party (figure 90). Archaeological remains of such girdles made from textiles have not been discovered, but a type of belt made from leather that also frequently features in paintings has well been preserved. An archaeological find of the thirteenth-century Yeke Mongol Ulus features metal rings threaded onto the main strap in addition to plaques (figure 96). The Uighur king who petitioned Gengis Qan for submission alludes to rings on the qan's belt, indicating that this type was worn by the Mongol elite.¹⁹⁷ Another set of thirteenth-century golden buckles and plaques is finely worked to portrait deers, dragons or floral motifs (figure 97). The set also includes the personal seal of the wearer and a pendant. Further incomplete sets of buckles and belt ornaments are shown in figures 98 and 99. The figure of Qubilai Qa'an in a Yuan painting appears to sport a jewel-studded belt (figure 83b).

it the bocca, which is then tied firmly at the throat. Consequently, when a number of ladies together are out riding and are seen from a distance, they resemble knights [soldiers, UH] with helmets on their heads and raised lances: for this bocca looks like a helmet and the sheaf [protruding] above like a lance.

¹⁹³ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 64

¹⁹⁴ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 237

¹⁹⁵ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 225

¹⁹⁶ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 89

¹⁹⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 163:

If through your favour, O Činggis Qa'an, I were to obtain
But a ring from your golden belt,
But a thread from your crimson coat,
I will become your fifth son and will serve you.'

Belts were also important because they allowed the wearer to carry any number of utensils with him by attaching it to the girdle. Most importantly the quivercase, knives and swords were affixed with leather straps to the loops of the buckles. A drinking cup was another of such compulsory items, since it featured in important rituals of welcoming, departure and at court ceremonies. The material and decoration on these instruments was a matter of wealth and standing. The richly ornamented golden cup and the ladle fashioned from shell featured in figures 43 and 44 are examples of the level of craftsmanship that was aspired to. The ladies are reported to have carried sewing kits on them. A comb has been found whose metal casing sports a metal loop allowing the owner to tie it to a belt (figure 42). Purses were another frequent addition. An archaeological find of such is shown in figure 45, whereas a gold-applied example is shown in a painting featuring a nobleman's groom (figure 91).

2.4 Footwear

Footwear is a little remarked upon item of attire and a singular mention of Mongol footwear concludes this survey of adult clothing. Rubruck remarks very generally without any elaboration on shape or other attributes that “They [the Mongols] make very fine shoes from the hind parts of the horse's hide.”¹⁹⁸ A little more can be deduced from his description of the native shoes that he and his companions were presented as gifts among other items of attire. He lists “[...] boots, - or buskins made in their style with leggings – of felt and fur hoods after their fashion.”¹⁹⁹ Paintings in general show knee-high boots of brown or black colour, without much more detail (see figure 65-85). The Yuan painting *Qubilai Qa'an on a hunt* shows the emperor adorned with multi-coloured, richly decorated boots (figure 83b). An actual boot of a female was found in a tomb with other offerings (figure 30). This boot appears to be a funerary offering, since it seems to never have been worn. Given the realistic renderings of other implements this boot should be representative of the general shape and make of female boots.

2.5 Hairstyles

The earliest description of Mongol hairdo of this era is found in the *Secret History*. When Yisüge Ba'atur and his companions have chased away Yeke Cildü, the betrothed of Lady Hö'elün, and capture her, she complains about her husband's fate.

My good lord Čiledü is one

¹⁹⁸ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 79

¹⁹⁹ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 136

Whose tuft has never blown
Against the wind,
Whose belly has never hungered
In the steppe
But how is it now? How fares he, with his two plaits tossing sometimes over his
back, sometimes over his breast, now forward, now backward?²⁰⁰

Li Zhichang who too describes the Mongol haircut corroborates the simple hairstyle of two plaits: “The men and unmarried women plait their hair so that it hangs down over their ears.”²⁰¹ Peng Daya attests that two plaits were made that hung down but that these were additionally looped back onto the head.²⁰²

Chao Hung elaborates on this by adding a description of the hair cut regarding the hair crown and clarifies that not the entire hair was plaited:

Hinauf bis zu Cinggis und herab bis zu den Leuten seines Volkes haben sie alle (den Kopf) zur p’o-tsiao-Frisur rasiert. Sie hat Ähnlichkeit mit den drei Haarbüscheln, die man bei den chinesischen Kindern auf dem Kopf stehen läßt. Den (Haarbüschel) über der Stirn schneidet man, wenn er etwas länger geworden ist kürzer; die (Haarbüschel) an beiden Seiten faßt man zu kleinen Zöpfen (“Hörnern”) zusammen und läßt sie bis auf die Schultern herabhängen.²⁰³

The hair was obviously shaven off except for three patches of hair that remained. The hair of the patch in the middle on the forehead was kept loose and it hung down covering the forehead. The hair of the patches remaining at the sides of the head was each plaited into a plait and bound above the ears.²⁰⁴ Rubruck’s description confirms this account in all details.²⁰⁵ This hairstyle, concerning Chao Hung, was obviously not an indicator of rank, given that all male Mongols

²⁰⁰ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 12

²⁰¹ See Bretschneider (1910), 52. The translation by XXX again deviates: “The men wear their hair in two plaits that hang behind the ears.” [Li Chi Ch’ang (1221-24), 67].

²⁰² See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 119. “Ihre Kopfbedeckung: Man läßt das Haar (in zwei Zöpfen) hängen und knotet sie dann hoch.”

²⁰³ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 69

²⁰⁴ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 70, see notes.

²⁰⁵ “The men shave a square on top of the head, and continue to shave from the two front corners round both sides of the head down to the temples. They also shave the temples, the neck up to the top of the cervical cavity, and in front the forehead up to the crown, on which they leave a tuft of hair hanging down to the eyebrows. At the rear corners of the head they leave the hair and make it into plaits, which they braid up round to the ears.” Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 88

sported this hairdo. Since all accounts agree on the style, there is no reason to assume that this should have been otherwise. The imperial portraits show the plaits coming down at the ears, but also indicate that the men sported actually three such plaits on each side of the head (figure 4-9). The portrait of Činggis Qan and Ögödei Qa'an both do not show any plaits at all (figure 2, 3). One wonders whether this change in style designates a point in time where the Mongols switched from two loose hanging plaits to the style with tucked up ones. Another inconsistency is detectable regarding the tassel of hair hanging down on the forehead. Only three of the eight portraits do depict this feature, the remainder is shown without any fringe. Probably Rubruck, Chao Hung and Carpini found themselves at a time in Mongolia when a fringe was fashionable. Carpini mentions among other details again this patch of hair.

Hardly any of them grow beards, although some have a little hair on the upper lip and chin and this they do not trim. On the top of the head they have a tonsure like clerics, and as a general rule all shave from one ear to the other to the breadth of three fingers, and this shaving joins on to the aforementioned tonsure. Above the forehead also they all likewise shave to two fingers' breadth, but the hair between this shaving and tonsure they allow to grow until it reaches their eyebrows, and, cutting more from each side of the forehead than in the middle, they make the hair in the middle long; the rest of the hair they allow to grow like women, and they make it into two braids which they bind, one behind each ear.²⁰⁶

Battle scenes of defeated Mongol soldiers having lost their helmets tally in all details with Rubruck, Chao Hung and Carpini's descriptions (figure 86a, 86b, 87a, 87b). In these images the fringe on the forehead is clearly visible.

The lack of facial hair in Mongol men here alluded to is acutely rendered in the imperial portraits that depict the beards as so thin that one can look through them. Only the occasional ruler has an extraordinary thick beard hair growth. From the historic incidence of the arrest of the Mongol caravan in the Khwarazm sultanate in 1218 it can be deduced that beards were a frequent occurrence. While, according to the historian Vasily Barthold (1869-1930), the envoy was killed, the remainder of the group was released after their beards had been shaven off.²⁰⁷ This can be read to mean that beards were generally esteemed in the Central Asian realm and a subject to fines or punishment as attested by the treatment of the Mongol caravan at the hands of the

²⁰⁶ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 6, 7

²⁰⁷ Barthold (1928) 399

Khwarazm officials. It has to be mentioned, though, that this caravan was made up also of Central Asian traders who worked on the behalf of the Mongol court. The conclusion that beards were common among Mongols is therefore only partially tenable. Clearer is Marco Polo's reference to the common sight of bearded Mongols. In connection with a rebellion against the Mongol overlordship, he recounts that the Chinese had planned 'to massacre the bearded men' and clarifies this regarded the Tartars [Mongols], Saracens [Central Asians and Middle Easterners], and Christians.²⁰⁸ Frequent depictions of Mongols with beards in Yuan paintings as well as Perisan illuminations substantiate this statement.

Carpini's description also suggests that women generally let their hair grow and pleated them into two plaits. The general lack of information on the female hairdo is possibly explained by it being hidden by hats. It is known that at least the boqtaq asked for the hair to be piled up on the head. It was then placed into the boqtaq's central column as mentioned by Rubruck above. He also notes the different hairdos of girls and married women and recounts of girls that "[...] the day after she is married, [a girl] shaves her head from the middle towards the forehead."²⁰⁹ This would in essence resemble a negative of the male hairdo where exactly this patch of hair remains intact. Whether this tonsure was only a singular event after the wedding remains uncertain. Golden hairpins of the Yuan dynasty found in Inner Mongolia indicate that the hair was held up with richly ornamented pins, at least regarding a related people, the Önggüt, who had settled in this region (figure 64).

2.6 Jewellery

I am not aware of any descriptions as to the kind of jewellery that Mongol women wore in literary sources, even when the use of copious amounts is generally referred to. Frequently mentioned items are earrings of women. In the series of Yuan portraits (figure 10-24) two different styles of earrings can be perceived. One sort of earring is made up of a single large pearl only featuring a much smaller green stone (jade?) on top of it. A variation of this style has two medium sized pearls, while the green stone remains in the make of the earring. Only one woman has this style of earring with six pearls strung up and terminated by a red stone (coral or ruby). The second style

²⁰⁸ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 418:

The reason why they [the Chinese trying to overthrow the government] spoke of massacring the bearded men was that the Cathayans [Chinese] naturally have no beard, whilst beards are worn by the Tartars, Saracens, and Christians. And you should know that all the Cathayans detested the Grand Kaan's rule because he set over them governors who were Tartars, or still more frequently Saracens, and these they could not endure, for they were treated by them just like slaves.

²⁰⁹ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 88

is made up of a central teardrop-shaped golden disc, which is inlaid with pearls around its periphery. From there extend three strings of pearls that end in a bigger precious stones held by a golden lobe attached to it. These three stones are either all coral/ruby or the central one is made from it while the outer ones are made from jade. The tomb of a female thought to be a member of the Borjigid yielded a golden earring inlaid with precious stones, a style reminiscent of Central Asian styles and comes close to the last discussed style.²¹⁰ A pendant in this style has been found in Iran (figure 58). Further is the chinstrap of the boqtaq heavily decorated with pearls, as is the shaft of the headdress. Pordenone reports of the vast numbers and superb qualities of stones used for the boqtaq, avowing “that if there be in the whole world any fine and large pearls they are to be found in the decorations of those ladies”.²¹¹ The headdress ornaments in figure 63 probably decorated boqtaqs of female nobles. Archaeological finds of solid gold or gilded bracelets with precious stones attest that these were another common item of jewellery (figure 60, 61, 62). The similarity of design with regards to the various geographical origins of the specimens is noteworthy. Necklaces are represented by an example of a solid silver necklace portrayed in figure 57.

That jewellery constituted a large part of a woman’s personal wealth is a common feature of nomadic culture, but it also acted as a treasury in times of need. Rashi al-Din narrates that Ögödei Qa’an out on a hunt received three melons from a passer-by, in return for which, “having neither gold nor garments available, he told Möge Khatun to give the man two pearls she had in her ear.”²¹² That women’s earrings were a financial stock is attested by Juvaini also of culturally related peoples of Central Asia. He recounts that the people of Nur, inhabitants of the oases in area of Samarkand and Bukhara, were asked to pay taxes to Činggis Qan as a sign of their submission. This was agreed to but in want of other instantly available funds, the people of Nur used their women’s earrings to pay off this duty.²¹³

Males might have also worn earrings but they only feature on the portraits of the Yuan emperors after the reign of Qubilai Qa’an. The ears of Ölĵeyitü, Buyantu, Külüg, Tuq Temür and Irincenbal Qa’an display a single pearl encapsulated by a golden base (figure 4-9). Similarly, these portraits show the men wearing a necklace that is made up from two different stones beaded alternatively on some sort of string. In some cases the centre-piece is made up from a golden ornament of a size not much bigger than the other stones. A like example has been excavated at a tomb site at Tavan Tolgoi (figure 59). The golden element at the centre of the necklace shown on

²¹⁰ Navaan (2004) http://www.silkroad.com/newsletter/vo14num1/srnewsletter_v4n1.pdf

²¹¹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 222

²¹² Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 81

²¹³ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 102

the portrait of Külüg Qa'an shows features an engraving that might indicate that this was the personal seal of the wearer. The size and make of a seal found on a Mongol belt agrees with the one on the necklace (cf. figure 97).

2.7 Make-up and beauty ideals

Beautification of the face is a near universal occurrence not missing in Mongolian culture. Chao Hung mentions that “*Die Frauen schminken sich oft die Stirn mit Gelbpuder. Das ist ebenfalls eine alte chinesische Schönheitspflege, die sie übernommen und bis heute noch nicht gändert haben.*”²¹⁴ Chao Hung's interpretation that the make-up style was an old Chinese practise points to his familiarity with Tang dynasty practices where similar make-up styles were fashionable. Accounts of the sixteenth century equally refer to this styling and add that the applied powder was made from Zinnober *chu* and powder *fen*.²¹⁵ Xu Tingshu mentions a different style where the women are described as making up their faces with wolf excrement.²¹⁶ Rubruck mentions only a black ointment as make-up, without stipulating what it was made from. Whether this ointment was indeed made from scat of wolves, as Xu Tingshu claims, cannot be ascertained. Rubruck continues his description of the Mongol beauty ideal: “The women are astonishingly fat. The less nose one has, the more beautiful she is considered; and they disfigure themselves horribly, moreover, by painting their faces.”²¹⁷ Another passage describes an individual noble lady, remarking upon the extremes of the Mongol ideal of beauty:

He [Scacatai] [commander of a territory, probably Chingis Khan's second son, notes of the editor] was seated on a couch with a guitar in his hand and his wife was beside him. I was really under the impression that she had amputated the bridge of her nose so as to be more snub-nosed, for she had no trace of a nose there, and she had smeared that spot and her eyebrows as well with some black ointment, which to us looked thoroughly dreadful.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 69

²¹⁵ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 70, see notes.

²¹⁶ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 119: “*Die Frauen machen sich schön und schminken sich das Gesicht mit Wolfskot.*”

²¹⁷ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 89

²¹⁸ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 100

Mongol Attire

An attempt to explain this custom of styling is offered by Rockhill who claims that this was done to protect the face from the effects of the wind.²¹⁹ An element of practicality is not impossible, but, as mentioned earlier, this specific use of make-up indicates to me both an indirect continuation (probably by way of cultural contact with the Khitan) and local adaptation, or simply shared aesthetics of Tang style practises. A seemingly similar practice is recounted of the nineteenth-century Tibetans, where a black pigment was introduced to disfigure their women's faces with the intention to hide their seductive beauty.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 89

²²⁰ Huc and Gabet were two missionaries that were sent in 1840 to Mongolia by the Lazarist order. Their official itinerary did instruct them to travel on to Tibet, but for unknown reasons they went on to Tibet and recorded Tibetan habits and customs. This has to be taken with caution though, as the travel itinerary was limited and the noted habits might have referred to small population groups encountered. See Huc and Gabet (1928), Evariste-Régis Huc and Joseph Gabet, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, 1844-1846*, [Dover Publications: New York], 1987.

3. Mongol society and attire

Mongol attire, as in any other culture, served other purposes than the mere fulfilment of basic human needs and practicality. The social phenomenon of attire is a universal manifestation that describes the human need for social identification and delineation of social entities, be that another social division or an outside community. The following chapter outlines how attire was culturally perceived as signalling authority and power. Attire is further investigated as to what features corresponded to certain rank and status, and what secondary attributes of attire were employed as socio-political markers.

3.1 Metaphors of authority

In historical records hat and belt are frequently mentioned in the context of rituals, thereby illustrating that these two items of attire had a metaphorical significance in ceremonies. When Temüjin is fleeing the Merkit, he hides on the mountain Burqan Qaldun. After his pursuers have called the chase off, he worships the mountain and the highest Shamanistic divinity, *khökh mönkk tenggri* (Eternal Blue Sky), who has offered him protection and safety. The *Secret History* renumerates the details of this ceremony:

‘Every morning I will sacrifice to Burqan Qaldun, everyday I will pray to it: the offspring of my offspring shall be mindful of this and do likewise!’ He spoke and facing the sun, hung his belt around his neck, put his hat over his hand, beat his breast with his fist, and nine times kneeling down towards the sun, he offered a libation and prayer.²²¹

Rashid al-Din narrates the ascension ceremony of Ögödei Qa’an where a similar ritual takes place.

They all doffed their hats and slung their belts across their backs; and in the *hüker yil*, that is, the Year of the Ox, falling in the months of the year 626/1228-1229, Ča’adai taking his right hand, Tolui Khan his left, and his uncle Otchigin his belt, they set him upon the throne of the Khanate. Tolui Khan held a cup, and

²²¹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 33

all present inside and outside the Court knelt in turn and said: “May the realm be blessed by his being Khan!”²²²

Juvaini corroborates this account by narrating that “In accordance with their ancient custom they removed their hats and slung their belts across their backs [...]”.²²³ That this was the usual ritual accompanying the investiture of a new emperor is evidenced by the repetition of it at other ascensions. So also for the investiture of Güyük Qa’an:

Then, the science of the qams [shamans] having been practised, all the princes took off their hats, loosened their belts, and set him [Güyük Qa’an] upon the throne of the Khanate, in the morin yil, that is, the Year of the Horse, corresponding to Rabi II of the year 346 [16th September – 13th October, 1245].²²⁴

Möngke Qa’an’s investiture resembles that of his predecessors in all its details. The participating audience, as recounted here, encompassed also troops, generals and local leaders.

It so happened at the hour that at the hour selected by the astrologers when they wished to observe the heavens, the world-illuminating sun suddenly appeared from behind the clouds and the sky was sufficiently cleared to reveal its disc, so that the astrologers were able to take the altitude with ease. All those present – the aforementioned princes, the great and important emirs, the leaders of every people, and troops beyond measure- took off their hats, slung their belts over their shoulders and, it being the qaqa yil, that is the Year of the Pig, falling in Dhu’h-Hija of the year 648 [February – March 1251], set Möngke Qa’an upon the throne of command and the seat of kingship in the neighborhood of Qara-Qorum, which is the residence of Chingiz-Khan.²²⁵

Another element regarding the belt enters is recorded at the ascension of Qubilai Qa’an.

“When the Qa’an had set his mind at rest regarding the rebellion of Ariq Bökö, all the princes had girded the belt of obedience to him except Qaidu, the son of Qashi, the son of Ögedei Qa’an, and

²²² Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 31

²²³ Juviani, 187

²²⁴ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 182

²²⁵ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 205

some of the descendants of Ča'adai.²²⁶ The ritualist element of “girding the belt of obedience” refers to a custom that has been established for the Persian cultural realm. Thomas Allsen cites from Ibn al-Balkhi who mentions that whoever had an audience with the Persian king Kai Kuvās of the early twelfth century “went before the padshah the custom was this, that each of them fastened a girdle over their robe and this they call the girdle of servitude.”²²⁷ Hence the fastening of once belt in the context of imperial command was a demonstration of personal allegiance. Whether this ritual was performed at earlier investitures of the Mongols but went unreported cannot be determined. If it was only introduced at this stage, this extracurricular ceremony might have been intended to force all representatives to openly and definitely declare their support of the imperial successor. This pledge of allegiance was probably a political ruse to halt internal fragmentation, which threatened the house of the Borjigid with Qubilai's untraditional declaration of leadership.

The act of removing hat and belt was obviously a sign of submission and renunciation of one's own power, therefore indicating that these items were symbols of power and authority. As De Rachewiltz explains, removing one's hat was an act of ‘putting oneself entirely at the mercy of the worshipped’²²⁸, be that divinity or emperor. The identical nature of worship concerning emperor and god, also points to the appraisal of an emperor as a divine being, not merely a human with wideranging powers. The connection of qanship with the divine element, the will of Heaven, is made evident when at Ögödei's ascension the wider audience make their obeisances to the sun. “And they named him Qa'an and in accordance with the usual custom all the princes, in service and obeisance to Qa'an, knelt three times to the sun outside the *ordu*”.²²⁹ Jean-Paul Roux elaborates the concept of submission inherent in the removal of hat and belt to mean an acknowledgement that all privileges and benefits obtained from the new authority are conditional and dependent on his or her grace. Allsen expresses the wider implication of this ritual summarily as ‘an act of political reorientation’ that serves to ‘fit one's self into a new regime, a new reign, and thereby acquire or reacquire position and status in the new order’.²³⁰

The *White History*, the semi-legislative work on the ideal Buddhist state worked out under the auspices of Qubilai in presumably 1272, lists the belt as one of the “Nine Great Markers” of governance, addressing hereby the positive symbolism of the belt.²³¹ While

²²⁶ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 266

²²⁷ Allsen (1997) 85

²²⁸ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 407

²²⁹ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 187

²³⁰ Allsen (1997) 49

²³¹ See above for complete list of “Nine Great Markers”[*Caγan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?) 127].

removing it alludes to submission, the belt worn by the emperor signifies consolidation and stability. The chronicle reports that ‘someone who dons a heavy and simple belt is being kept steady and stable’. The belt therefore is a metaphor of one of the primary tasks of imperial rule, which is to bring stability to the realm and the consolidation of areas that are not yet favoured by destiny to partake in the Mongol imperial effort.²³²

The hat possessed an extended metaphor in that it also related to protection, which is based on its function as a head cover. The chief shaman at Činggis Qa’an’s court, Teb Tengeri, loses his hat before a duel, a bad omen understood by all present predicting his timely end.²³³ As the art historian Luntengiin Batchuluun explained in an interview the hat carried also a cosmic or universal connotation, connecting the human to the divine.²³⁴ This connection explains the pre-eminence of the hat as a symbol of imperial power, given that an emperor was regarded as a divine being, favoured by Heaven and destined to rule by it.

The hat as connected to leadership is most expressively mentioned in the *Secret History* in connection with Ögödei’s forthcoming election to Great Qan. Joci is quoted to propose Ögödei as new qa’an, claiming that ‘if the Qan [Činggis Qan] instructs him on the great array of the “teachings of the hat”, this will be fine.’²³⁵ While the exact origin of the term “teachings of the hat” is not attested, it implies general instructions on governance, proving the hat’s direct connection to concepts of rule and authority.

The collar is another part of clothing that is traditionally strongly connected to leadership. It is made use of as an image in sayings and figures of speech. The *Secret History* contains a number of such mentions. The first regards Bodoncar, an ancestor of Činggis Qan, who tries to convince his older brother to jointly raid a group of people. “Bodončar who was trotting behind his elder brother Buqu Qatagi, said on the way, ‘Elder brother, elder brother, it is right for a body to have a head, and for a coat to have a collar.’²³⁶ This saying translates the collar of a garment into the principal component of a garment, symbolizing the leadership of a chief over a group of people, for which the head and the body are metaphors. In the *Altan Tobci*, a seventeenth-century Mongol chronicle that in parts reproduces the *Secret History*, this passage presents a variation of the proverb: “It is said: ‘A man has an elder brother; a coat has a collar.’” Charles Bawden refers to Mostaert’s research that details another two versions of this saying among Ordos tribes, where

²³² *Cayan teüke/Sagaster* (1272?) 298

²³³ See *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 874. See for the passage regarding Teb Tengri’s demise *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 172.

²³⁴ Interview with the author in May 2007, Ulaan Baatar

²³⁵ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 187

²³⁶ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 7

he documented its continued use for the early twenty century: ‘*A une robe il-y-a un collet. Dans une maison il-y-a un chef*’ as well as ‘*Quand deux homes sont en route, l’un des deux est l’aîné. Quand un homme est seul en route, c’est son chapeau qui est l’aîné.*’ Mostaert also claims that this proverb was used in ancient chronicles.²³⁷

Yisügei Ba’atur, Temüjin’s father, also alludes to the “collar of leadership”. When Temüjin was for the first time proclaimed Qan (1195) his father concludes the ascension with the following words:

‘To make my son Temüjin qan is indeed right. How can the Mongols be without a qan? In future
Do not break this, your agreement,
Do not dissolve your bond,
Do not tear off your collar!’²³⁸

Another instance of a reference to the collar as a symbol of rule is found in the *Secret History*. Jamuqa, the formerly ally now turned enemy, is led in front of Činggis Qan, captured after being defeated in the final confrontation of Činggis Qan with the Naimans. He is asking to be executed and reasons against a pardon proposed by Činggis Qan as follows:

‘[...] I would intrude into your dreams in the dark nights,
I would trouble your heart in the bright day,
I would be a louse in your collar,
I would be a thorn in the inner lapel of your coat.’²³⁹

Yisügei Ba’atur’s warning to the participants at Temüjin’s installation as qan not to tear off the collar is an allusion not to topple or otherwise make away with Činggis Qan, their newly crowned leader. Jamuqa uses this metaphor in a very vivid way to describe the political unrest and personal anxiety his continued existence would provoke. The collar thus is a metaphor for rule or leadership. The difference between the collar and hat or belt seems to be in the specific use of the belt and hat in rituals, where specifically imperial authority is referred to, whereas the collar demotes a more general notion of leadership and does have no ritual component attached.

²³⁷ *Altan Tobci*, Bawden (1955), 117

²³⁸ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 52

²³⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 131

3.2 Signifiers of rank and status

That there were distinctions in dress, social and probably ethnical, is made clear by the following quotes. When Rashid al-Din recounts the generosity of Ögödei Qa'an, he unconsciously testifies that Mongol dress also functioned as a capital investment. "He [Ögödei Qa'an] went into the treasury, called the woman and told her to take as many garments of every kind as she could lift. She took as many *nasiq* [gold brocade] garments as might be the capital of a wealthy man."²⁴⁰ Al Umari recounts how eager the Mongols were to be seen in their finest and that the Mongols left no opportunity out to showcase their wealth in public, of which their clothing was the primary status symbol.²⁴¹

This points to a culture in which clothing figured as a major item of somebody's assets and this is not the least surprising since a nomadic culture limits property to anything moveable and portable. Rashid al-Din's remark attests to the stratification of nomadic society. Given that the governing elite of a nomadic society had an advantageous economic position, their dress must have been discernably different from that of their relatively less prosperous subjects.

That rich dress was not only a manifestation of wealth but was a crucial component in the political context is borne out by the *White History*. Even if Qubilai Qa'an was introducing many governmental changes due to the China conquest, his understanding of the role of an emperor was based on the political tradition of the Mongols. With this in mind, the *White History* discusses the virtues and responsibilities of a king and categorizes rulers into the Four Kings. They are classified according to which degree they can fulfil the ideal of a ruler with Buddhist motivations. The list is opened with the perfect Buddhist ruler, the "überaus erhabener Cakravatin-König" (*chakravatin* king), to which Činggis Qan is counted. The second of the Four Kings is described as follows:

Wer Mütze, Gewand, Gürtel und Stiefel von schönem Aussehen anlegt und ohne zu straucheln und ohne sich zu stützen, auf einen schönen Thron steigt, wer das ganze große Volk mit Milde und Majestät regiert und den Regeln der Welt, den beiden Ordnungen Frieden und Leichtigkeit, jeder für sich und ohne sie

²⁴⁰ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 85

²⁴¹ "Die Bewohner erweisen sich als höchst stolze Menschen, die ihr Vermögen wie keine anderen zur Schau tragen. Sie verfügen über ausgedehnten Besitz und großen Reichtum, verabscheuen gemeine Handlungen und entfalten nach außen hin, an der Tafel, in ihrer Kleidung und beim Erscheinen in der Öffentlichkeit (den größten Luxus)." See Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 150.

durcheinanderzumengen, Geltung verschafft, wer dies vermag, heißt “strenger, erhabener König der Regierung.”²⁴²

This theme is evident at the ascension scene of Ögödei as recounted in the *Blue History*. Vanchinbaliin Injinashi, author of the *Blue History*, a Mongolian chronicle of the nineteenth century that is supposed to have been written using older historical sources, recounts of Ögödei’s ascension ceremony that on his installation a group of influential individuals readied his imperial outfit:

At Taizung Qa’an Ögödei’s ascension ceremony at Qödö on the Qerlen river²⁴³ on the first day of the 8th month of autumn, the heir to the throne, Tsöj, bowed to the Qa’an’s throne and held the Qa’an’s hat with golden dragon, the Second Taiši Ča’adai held the Qa’an’s deel with golden dragons. The paternal uncle Belgütei held the Qa’an’s belt and a rosary. The Second *Qasar* (military rank) held the Qa’an’s necklet and the ear jewellery. While the two, Uit Ujig and Uran Gatjig, held the oil candle and prayed, they took off Ögödei’s deel and hat and put it on Mönqöd who was brought up by Ögödei. Then Ča’adai dressed Ögödei in the Qa’an’s deel²⁴⁴, Tsöj put on the Qa’an’s hat, Belgütei put on the belt and handed over the rosary, the Second Qasar buttoned up the necklet and put on the jewellery. And Taiši Mönkh put on the shoes, the grandson Qubilai lit the incense and the oil candle and prayed once more until the Qa’an had climbed the pedestal. Taiši Töl held the seal and brought it to the Qa’an, bowing to it (holding it to the forehead in respect), and the Qa’an received it with a bow to the seal (held it to the forehead in respect), accepted it and sat on the Qa’an’s pedestal. Ögödei bowed to the mountain, the sky and the ancestors and sat on Chingis Qa’an’s throne.²⁴⁵

This passage as well as the paragraph from the *White History* illuminates in the most specific terms how central rich clothing as an element of stately authority was. This principle, which is rather a universal occurrence than a native Mongolian tradition, applied similarly to personnel

²⁴² *Cayan teüke/Sagaster* (1272?) 118

²⁴³ For references to the exact locality see Bold (2001)166.

²⁴⁴ Inferred from the text this should be Činggis Qan’s deel.

²⁴⁵ Nyambuu (1962) 47, translation by Dambajaviin Altan-Od, May 2008.

who were members of this conquest elite. Gifting personnel, referred to in Mongolian as *tügel*, was a basic principal of leadership. Titles together with (corresponding) clothing received as an honour conveyed superior authority of the wearer and distinguished him from the masses. An instance of this custom illustrates this interplay of clothing, status and political powers. Qubilai Qa'an was of the opinion that

‘All the [other] ministers and emirs are concerned for themselves [only], but Bayan Finjan is concerned for the realm and the people.’ He [Qubilai Qa'an] showed him great favor, had him dressed in jewel-studded clothing, and entrusted all affairs to him.²⁴⁶

There is no piece of legislation or other written material as yet discovered that contains sumptuary laws stipulating the exact clothing attributes of various ranks in the period of the early Mongol Empire, but from a number of mentions some inferences can be drawn.

Whether Činggis Qa'an with his rise to power wore increasingly rich attire is not attested. In the exchange of letters between his Majesty and the Taoist Grand Master Zhang Chun, Činggis Qan portrays himself as a humble ruler, interested in the skills of the Taoist sage and more precisely in the elixir of life. What extravagant attire Činggis Qan sported is nowhere described, but I take the following passage as a political statement that assures the Taoist Master Zhang Chun of Činggis Qan's sober and spiritual mindset and advertises his humbleness.

The *Si Yu Ki*, the travel diary of Zang Chun's journey to the court of Činggis Qan at the beginning of the thirteenth century, is contained in Brettschneider's *Mediaeval Researches* and contains the exchange of letters between the two parties prior to Zang Chun's departure.

Heaven has abandoned China owing to its haughtiness and extravagant luxury. But I, living in the northern wilderness, have not inordinate passions. I hate luxury and exercise moderation. I have only one coat and one food. I eat the same food and am dressed in the same tatters as my humble herdsmen.²⁴⁷

Intriguingly, Brettschneider adds that Palladius found a statement in a Chinese source detailing as well that Činggis Qan's robe was made from simple material and that it was kept by his

²⁴⁶ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 300, 301

²⁴⁷ Li Chi Ch'ang (1221-24), 37

successors as a relic.²⁴⁸ To elaborate on this it would be necessary to ascertain the Chinese source. It might well have been a document of the Yuan era, where this description might have been noted by the Mongols themselves to import the humbleness and outstanding virtues of their nation's founding father to their subjects. Unfortunately, the *Secret History* remains silent on the attire of Činggis Qan. That Činggis Qan actually dressed in the 'tatters of his herdsmen' seems unlikely, as his family belonged to the minor nobility of the Mongols. The *Secret History* attests to a tradition of differences in attire distinguishing between commoner and noblemen; distinctions that Temüjin given his plight in his youth must have been highly conscious of. The relevant passage recounts another child of the enemy being brought back to the Mongol camp. The young boy that the Mongols came by in the camp of the Tatars is described as having "a nose-ring a golden loop and who wore a gold-stitched silken waistcoat lined with sable"²⁴⁹. When Činggis Qan presents this child to his mother she exclaims on first sight that, "He must be a the son of a man of rank; surely he is the off-spring of a man of noble origins!"²⁵⁰

Gold and sable fur then indicated a wealthy, if not noble background. The distinction between wealthy and noble must be made, but might have been largely congruent. Marco Polo who comments from a slightly later period of the Mongol nation indicates the continuation of this custom and elaborates on the particular furs esteemed: "The clothes of the wealthy Tartars are for the most part of gold and silk stuffs, lined with costly furs, such as sable and ermine, vair and fox-skin, in the richest fashion."²⁵¹

The colour of the skins was an additional signifier of status. The *Secret History* lists a passage where the brothers of Ong Qan are dissatisfied with his leadership. Their resentment is aired, mocking him and his achievements. The sarcastic tone of the passage implies an obscured meaning.

‘Our elder brother the Qan
Has a miserable nature; he goes on
Harbouring a rotten liver.
He has destroyed his brothers and has even submitted to the Qara Kidat - and he
makes his people suffer. Now, what shall we do with him? To speak of his early
days, when he was seven years old the Merkit carried him off; they gave him a

²⁴⁸ Li Chi Ch'ang (1221-24), 37

²⁴⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 58

²⁵⁰ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 58

²⁵¹ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 276

kidskin coat with black spots to wear, and in the Bu'ura Steppe by the Selenge River he pounded grain in a Merkit's mortar.²⁵²

My reading of the passage is based on the distinction between the čaqa'an yasun and qara yasun that is based on the Mongol-Turkic association of black with common and white with nobility.²⁵³ Obviously, when Ong Qan was a child he had been captured by the Merkit and been made to work as a captive. The allusion that the Merkit dressed him in a kidskin coat with black spots is then a metaphor that his noble origin was reduced to that of a commoner, in this case probably even to mean slave, if Temüjin's personal history were precedence. Whether the Merkit did indeed make him wear the said attire or whether his brothers / the author use it merely as a figure of speech does not matter as the image of a spotted kidskin coat must have been easily understood by the chronicle's readers.

At the pinnacle of esteem concerning valuable furs stood the skin of the snow leopard, being deemed suitable for imperial use and appropriate for the royalty. Rubruck describes his encounter with Möngke Qa'an and mentions the startling appearance of his fur coat, which he could not identify.

The interior of the dwelling [Möngke Qa'an's] was completely covered in cloth of gold, and in a little hearth in the middle there was a fire burning [...]. He [the Chan] was sitting on a couch, dressed in a fur which was spotted and very glossy like a sealskin.²⁵⁴

The description indicates that Rubruck witnessed Möngke Qa'an dressed in a coat of snow-leopard fur, given the white colour that he refers to. The painting by Liu Guantao that depicts Qubilai Qa'an out hunting shows him in a coat that is equally white in colour but misses the characteristic pattern of the snow leopard. A miniature that depicts Činggis Qan and notables shows the three main figures dressed in white fur deers of wild cats (figure 94). The ruler is sporting the skins of an albino Siberian tiger, which in its extreme rarity might have the value of the snow leopard. The appearance of white furs in the closest environs of the ruler indicates that these specific skins were a privilege of the ruling elite and nobility.

²⁵² *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 74

²⁵³ See for a detailed discussion of the significance of colours the chapter "Attributes".

²⁵⁴ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 177, 178

Apart from a range of furs attributed to high status and wealth in the Mongol society, there were explicit signifiers of rank.

Members of the court of a Mongol *Qa'an* were distinguished by the practice of occasionally dressing all in garments of one colour, the *jisün* robe. Rashid al-Din recounts the practice in operation for the seasonal move of the imperial headquarters of Ögödei *Qa'an*.

In short, his spring quarters in the neighbourhood of Qara-Qorum, his summer quarters in the meadows of Örmügetü, his autumn quarters between Köke-Na-ur and Usun-Qol, a day's journey away from Qara-Qorum, and his winter quarters at Ongqin. And when he was on his way to Qara-Qorum, there was a tall pavilion which he had built 2 parasangs from the town named Tuzghu-Baliq; here he would eat tuzghu [offering of food to a traveller, see glossary] from the town and make merry for one day. Then on the next day the people would don garments of one color, and he would proceed from thence to Qarshi, where tender youths would stand before him and for the space of a month he would devote himself to pleasure.²⁵⁵

There are a number of occasions mentioned in narratives where the court is being distinguished in this fashion, but no undisputable schedule of festivities celebrated in this manner emerges. As this imperial ritual has additional political implications the practice is in more detail discussed below under the heading "The *jisün* robe and geopolitics".

After his ascension Činggis Qan rewarded his followers with positions and thus created the governing apparatus of the early Mongol Empire. Among the narration of many promotions, unfortunately, only one mention points to the fact that different positions were signalled by dress. Činggis Qan here addresses Old Üsün, a longtime companion:

In the Mongol tradition it is customary for a senior ranking personage to become a beki. You are a descendant of Elder Brother the Ba'arin. As to the rank of beki, you Old Üsün, who are from among us and senior to Us, shall become a beki.
When one has been raised to the rank of beki,
He shall wear a white dress
And ride a white gelding;

²⁵⁵ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 64

He shall sit on a high seat
And be waited upon.
Furthermore, yearly and monthly I shall hold discussions with you to seek your
advice. Let it be so!²⁵⁶

The privileged position of a *beki* granted such a person the privilege to display a set of symbols of authority, here clearly enumerated as white clothing, white geldings and an elevated seat. As mentioned above with regards to skin, here again white garments, apparently regardless of the material, indicate a senior rank and a distinction.

The *White History* details a system of promotion into higher positions and the attached privileges so attained. The system appears to be based on the number of times and the quality of the service a person has rendered to the qa'an, whether in the military or administrative forces. Among the highest ranks obtainable is the *qasar*, which was based on extraordinary military assistance. This rank was accorded on the following basis: "*Wer neunmal einen Banner geführt und mutig und willensstark seine besten Kräfte geliehen hat, dem stecke man die Eulenfeder auf und verleihe ihm den Titel "Herr der Drei Provinzen, Qasa"*".²⁵⁷ Wearing the feather of an owl consequently indicated this military rank, which simultaneously included administrative authority. A possible, though not necessary, conclusion of this passage would be that ranks, at least in the military, were probably signalled by specific feathers. Feathers of the owl, which the Mongols regarded as an angel of God, are also mentioned to have been the privilege of nobles and "great men" as narrated by the Dominican missionary Ricoldo of Montecroce (1243-1320).²⁵⁸ B. Vladimirtsov in his work *Le Régime Social Des Mongols* refers to the continued tradition among the Činggisic princes to adorn their hats with feathers (*örbälgä*) in the seventeenth century. This he concludes from mentions by the author Sagan Secen in his work *Eerdenii Tobci* and in the near contemporary *Altan Tobci*, both Mongol chronicles of the seventeenth century.²⁵⁹ Persian miniatures and Yuan paintings show these feathers as part of actual Mongol attire (see "Hats and headdresses"). The use of a variation of feathers as indicators of standing is attested for the boqtaq, as noted above. Feathers of the peacock, kingfisher, mallard, and phasant all indicated distinct social positions, and probably rank, rendering a parallel system for male attire highly likely.

²⁵⁶ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 148

²⁵⁷ *Cayan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?) 162

²⁵⁸ As cited by Boyle (1978) 185.

²⁵⁹ Vladimirtsov (1948) 235

Throughout literature the high hat of the Mongol ladies is being remarked upon as a symbol of high standing. As already noted above, the boqtaq was restricted to married women of nobility, whether of Borjigin descent or otherwise. Details of this formal headdress, such as application of decorative materials, constituted a refined mechanism of displaying the individual's position, among which feathers had a central place. Whether these features were subject to sumptuary laws that regulated materials and patterns according to rank, remains unresolved as yet. The formal headdress that the boqtaq is, just as the belt, symbolizes power and authority. When Lady Hö'elün is abandoned by her clan, she reaffirms her position by taking care to be seen with the boqtaq and belt.

3.2.1 Badges

An indicator of status, which was developed by the Mongols around the beginning of the Yuan dynasty were badges that were woven into the garments. Depictions show members of the court wearing robes that have square badges on chest and back (figure 71, 75, 80, 158). These badges are nowhere in textual sources described as regulated in appearance according to the specific rank of the wearer, but their Tang precursors were imbued with such function.

Empress Wu (625-705) of the Tang dynasty initiated the presentation of robes to chosen officials with robes that displayed patterns according to their rank: princes received robes featuring roundels with dragon or deer depictions, others roundels with floral designs.²⁶⁰ These robes were early precursors of later dragon robes, but equally of the badges sported by the Mongols. This theme was developed later by other Tang emperors. Emperor Gaozu (566-635) decreed that robes with purple damask or gauze featuring large roundels were the privilege of officials of the first three ranks, those of the fourth and fifth ranks were permitted the use of red *ling* or *luo* (specific fabrics) robes with small roundels. Emperor Wenzong (809-840) elaborated on this by declaring that the first three ranks were identified by the depiction of falcons holding auspicious branches, paired wild geese with ribbons in their beaks and paired peacocks. The fourth and fifth ranks were attributed robes patterned with the *dinhuang* plant, whereas the *ling* robes of officers of the sixth and seventh rank displayed small medallions. Hereby a first differentiation between civil and military officers was made by appointing the geese to the civil branch based on the animals' association with dignity and order, and the falcon as a symbol of ferocity and strength to the military. Information on restriction of designs under the Liao is sketchy, and the debate whether the medallions depicted on Liao robes in painting indicated wealth rather than

²⁶⁰ Chung (2005) 129

status is on-going. The painting *Nomads with a Tribute Horse*, executed by the ethnic Khitan prince Li Zanghua (899-936) of the Northern Song, portrays a tribute mission of the Khitan (figure 70). The leader of the group is distinguished by a higher hat, a richly patterned robe and a medallion on his chest that depicts confronted birds (geese?) surmounted on a lotus flower with a ribbon their beaks. Textile expert Young Yang Chung proposes that the Liao medallions were a preferred method of indicating status or wealth in a nomadic culture, where it offered an easy means of visually identifying a mounted rider. The general conclusion that the Liao roundels were not rank indicators I find not credible, even in the light of missing or thin textual and other evidence, for the following reasons. Silks, but also an almost intact robe patterned with confronted geese holding ribbons in their beaks has been found in tombs of high Khitan officials²⁶¹. The similarity of the design with Tang robes can well be interpreted as a familiarity with sumptuary regulations under the Tang and could mean that these patterns continued to symbolise rank in the Liao dynasty. Personally, I would find it surprising if eventually the occurrence of restricted Tang patterns turned out not to be based on Tang precedents. Especially since Tang influence is evident in many other facets of political and cultural life, and more specifically textiles and accessories.

Regardless of the status of Liao medallions, during the Yuan dynasty these roundels transformed into square badges applied to front and back. These were mostly woven into the material, but Chung also mentions detachable badges.²⁶² On the Mongol badges floral motifs feature predominantly, nonetheless, the whole variety of pictorial design elements are employed: badges with flowers and plants, animals, clouds and water have been found on textiles.²⁶³

A Yuan embroidery entitled *Welcoming Spring* shows a boy sporting a robe with a large badge depicting a floral design.²⁶⁴ Moreover, examples of badges have been excavated either as part of textiles or as part of entire garments. In the tomb of Li Yuan in Zoucheng in Shandong province a robe with damasked badges on front and back, depicting a magpie and prunus motif was discovered. Embroidered badges were also found in the Wang family tomb in Gansu province, Zhang County. Textiles featuring such squares in their design have been found at the Yuan tomb at Mingshui in Inner Mongolia.²⁶⁵ Another typical Mongol badge excavated is the central component of a patchwork piece. The deer depiction, brocaded in gold, is complemented by a *lingzhi* fungus and other floral elements (figure 162). A representation of a Mongol badge

²⁶¹ Chung (2005) 184, 186, 187, 190

²⁶² Zhao Feng (1999) 290, Chung (2005) 190

²⁶³ Zhao Feng (1999) 290

²⁶⁴ Chung (2005) 190

²⁶⁵ Zhao Feng (1999) 290

has also been found on a Yuan sculpture at Yangqunmiao, where the person modelled features a single square floral panel on the chest and two separate panels on the back, which are placed on top of each other.²⁶⁶

To conclude this excursion in the history of badges, the occurrence of badges inspired by Mongol precedents throughout the entire Mongol realm should be noted. Persian court costume began to incorporate roundels and panels on the front and back of robes. A painting from 1429, illustrating the “flying tortoise” scene from the book of tales *Kalilah Wa Dimnah*, four noblemen are depicted with insignia on their chests, portraying designs of rabbits, deer, birds, and possibly, ducks or swans.²⁶⁷

3.2.2 The status of the Mongol dragon robe

While the semantics of Mongol badges remain ambiguous, the development of dragon robes that were worn is better documented. They seem to have been a familiar item of attire already at the outset of the Mongol Empire. Peng Daya’s description of Mongol attire as cited above actually continues and mentions illustrative designs: “*An Farben nimmt man rot, violett, purpur und grün, als Muster Sonne und Mond, Drachen und Phönix. Es gibt dabei keine Unterscheidung für vornehm und gering.*”²⁶⁸ That noblemen and commoners alike were wearing deeds that featured dragon, phoenix, sun and moon, must have astonished a Chinese, in whose society the usage of these symbols were limited to an imperial context. Peng Daya’s remark that these symbols were applied without discrimination between nobleman and commoner does for me not indicate egalitarian dress, especially with evidence of sumptuary laws, fragmentary as it is, as discussed below (see chapter “laws”).²⁶⁹ I take this passage simply to mean that these symbols were not restricted to royal usage as it might have been in the Song China of Peng Daya’s time. An example of a woven dragon roundel attests that the dragon of the Great Mongol State retained the image of the Liao dragon that featured three claws (figures 109-112). Designs of dragons and phoenixes featured on textiles from the Yeke Mongol Ulus and Yuan dynasty evidence Central

²⁶⁶ Zhao Feng (1999) 290

²⁶⁷ Chung (2005) 190

²⁶⁸ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 121. An English translation of this passage given by Feng Zhao [Feng Zhao (2006) 45] reads as follows:

[...] dressed in garments with right opening flaps and square collars, which used to be decorated with wool or down feathers and sorts but are now being adorned with gold strips and ramie fibres coloured in red, purple, maroon and green, in such patterns as the sun, moon, dragon and phoenix, with no regard to any distinction of class or rank.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁹ I do not agree with Feng Zhao who interprets the unrestricted use of dragon and phoenix motifs as well as the use of *jisiin* robes (in detail discussed in the chapter “political complex”) as an indication of a classless society [see Feng Zhao (2006) 45].

Asian influence that resulted in twisting and writhing bodies with a vitality not found in previous Chinese design.²⁷⁰

The depiction of these legendary animals in the Mongol cultural realm itself attests to crosscultural influences pre-dating Qubilai's Chinese ambitions.²⁷¹ The usage of these motifs however entered a different cultural framework in which the Chinese associations and concepts connected with these icons did not endure.

In China, the dragon rather quickly became associated with imperial notions, even though if it is a matter of much scholarly debate when the dragon exactly became a symbol strictly reserved for royal use. For the Han dynasty (206BCE-220CE) Zhao mentions the dragon and the phoenix as an established duo as part of the Twelve Imperial Symbols, but also that these motifs were commonly worn by the general population: strict royal exclusivity seems to have been absent in this period,²⁷² even if they were certainly established in the context of leadership.²⁷³ The dragon alone appears to have been restricted to court circles by the Tang dynasty: a list of patterns from 694 details the pattern of coiled dragons as restricted for the use on robes of senior officials and princes.²⁷⁴ In 1077 the Khitan emperor forbade commoners and officials to wear patterns of the sun, moon, mountains or dragons. This is in indication that the dragon by that time came associated with imperial powers. A similar law was passed in China proper only in 1111, decreed by the Song emperor Huizong, which attests, according to Chung that it was the Tang-inspired northern territories that motivated such decrees.²⁷⁵ Textile researcher Shelagh Vainker contrasts the liberal use of the dragon in Liao society to Song practices, where it seems 'to have been restricted to high status objects with imperial associations'.²⁷⁶ Peng Daya's registered surprise at seeing the quartet of imperial symbols being worn by commoners proves the point in case that in the Southern Song the usage of these symbols was restricted. He would have felt more at home with legislation decreed in the Yuan dynasty. In 1270, at the dawn of the Yuan

²⁷⁰ Komaroff and Carboni (2002) 66

²⁷¹ A host of textile samples excavated from the Chu tombs at Mashan in Hubei province feature dragon and phoenix motifs, which dates from the Warring States period. The popularity of the design is evidenced by the frequency of this imagery [Feng Zhao (2006) 38].

²⁷² Feng Zhao (2006) 46

²⁷³ See Chung (2005) 122. Chung quotes a passage from the *Book of Documents* thought to be compiled by Confucius (551-479 BCE), where the mythical Emperor Shun describes his ideal of an imperial garment: I wish to see the emblematic figures of the ancients- the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountain, the dragon, and the flowerly fowl, which are depicted on the upper garment; the temple cup, the aquatic grass, the flames, the grains of rice, the hatchet, and the symbol of distinction [fufu], which are embroidered on the lower garment. I wish to see these displayed in the five colours, so as to form the official robes [from Chung (2005) 120].

²⁷⁴ Vollmer (1995) 23

²⁷⁵ Chung (2005) 132

²⁷⁶ Vainker (2004) 116

dynasty, Qubilai Qa'an is documented in the *Yuandianzhang* to have prohibited the production of textiles with motifs of the sun, moon, dragon and phoenix".²⁷⁷ The exact date of the occurrence of five-clawed dragon (figure 105, 115, 107), certainly a Mongol innovation, is not clear, but an even later sumptuary law of 1290, also retained in the *Yuandianzhan*, reserves the five-clawed dragon (*long*) strictly for imperial use and bans all civilian use of "double-horned, five-clawed dragons surrounding the collar, double-horned, five-clawed dragons running on sleeves, double-horned, five-clawed dragons in dot patterns and dragon with floral medallions".²⁷⁸ This restriction applied equally to officials in service of the court. They were required to restrict themselves to dragons with four claws, known as the *mang* dragon.²⁷⁹ The three- and four-clawed dragon continued to be produced commercially and remained popular motifs (figure 111-114).²⁸⁰

The development of the other three symbols, the phoenix, moon and sun, are another matter. The Twelve Imperial Symbols²⁸¹ are recorded in historic sources as a component of the Chinese concept of imperial power for pre-historic times. The combination of sun, moon, and the dragon as a conscious visualization of the Twelve Imperial Symbols is the first time portrayed on a lacquered screen containing a depiction of the King of Chu of the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534). Here dragons, as well as a sun and moon decorate his skirt and upper garment. Throughout the Tang this iconic trio, or an alternative that substitutes the dragon with stars, is shown on imperial robes. The textile expert Feng Zhao, though, is convinced that the actual occurrence of sun, moon, phoenix and dragon only dates to the Yuan dynasty. He points out, however, that no actual garment has been found to date with all four symbols appearing together. So far only garments with either the sun, moon and dragon or the sun, moon and phoenix are known to have existed, stirring doubts whether the quartet of symbols was actually employed in the Yuan and earlier periods.²⁸²

As pictorial testament of the early phase of the Yeke Mongol Ulus remains scarce the question remains if this type of robe existed early on or was created only at the dawn of the Yuan dynasty. Fact remains that the Mongol dragon robe was carrying on the tradition of the Liao dragon robe, but also innovated it to create something distinctly new. The Liao robes featured round medallions with dragons, as archaeological finds of Liao tombs show (cf. figure 109). Examples of Mongol dragon robes are illustrated in paintings of the Yuan dynasty. It displayed a

²⁷⁷ Feng Zhao (2006) 46

²⁷⁸ Feng Zhao (2006) 46

²⁷⁹ Chung (2005) 135

²⁸⁰ Zhao Feng (1999) 274: Confronted dragons and phoenixes (late 13th century)

²⁸¹ The Twelve Symbols are the sun, moon, constellation, mountain, dragon, phoenix, bronze vessel, seaweed, fire, grain, *fu* and *fiu*.

²⁸² Feng Zhao (2006) 41

variety of dragons on several places of the garment. The two principle frontal dragons that ran across the shoulders were depicted in four-petalled medallions and appeared on the front as well as the back of the wearer. Smaller dragons in profile decorated the sleeves and a separate band of similar design ran above the hem, on the height of the knees, around the coat. This dragon robe is shown in a split-tapestry piece depicting Činggis Qan as well the Yuan emperor Wenzong and his immediate family (see figure 102a, 102b, 103). The portrait of Činggis Qan dates from the 1330s and might be a late interpretation that has little in common with Činggis Qan's actual attire. Nonetheless, that dragon robes were worn in the middle of the thirteenth century is corroborated by the account of Peng Daya. The painting by Liu Guandao depicts Qubilai Qa'an in a dragon deel (83a, 83b). The historical recreation of Ögödei's investiture by Injinash, supposedly based on thirteenth-century records, mentions that he was dressed in a dragon robe inherited from Genghis Qan. This again makes it at least a possibility that the depicted robe, or a precursor of it, was an actual garment of Činggis Qan.

The tapestry depicting the royal family of Wenzong in such robes attests that women were equally wearing dragon robes, with only slight differences in detail that are typically found between female and male dress forms. According to Chinese records of the Yuan dynasty, the usage of the dragon had by Wenzong's time (r. 1328-1332) become subject of regulations and was no longer permitted to be worn by the general public. The Mongol creation of the dragon robe was continued unaltered at the Ming court.

Summarily, the dragon robe of the Mongols developed from a garment that was restricted by its value to a wealthy elite to a piece of attire that was legally limited to imperial environs.

3.2.3 Yuan developments

Many of the above mentioned articles of attire and markers of rank were continued throughout the Mongol period including the Yuan dynasty. Additional features emerged with the Mongol courts' move to China. With the proclamation of the Yuan dynasty in 1270, sumptuary laws increasingly regulated rank and status.

The *Yuan shih*, the official record of the Yuan dynasty compiled by the Ming in 1369/1370, contains the dress regulations of the Mongol court. The sumptuary laws contained herein testament that by the Yuan dynasty the rudimentary government of Činggis Qan had evolved into a highly stratified court culture. Distinguished in this document are the emperor and the heir apparent from officials of various ranks, the imperial guard, musicians and other personnel surrounding the imperial person. Proscribed attire is listed for all these functionaries and in many instances the entry includes several subsets of outfits such as ceremonial wear and

official attire. This should enable us to visualize and determine the exact appearance of courtly attire, but the usage of terms that are specific to the *Yuan shih* makes a reading extremely difficult. The ambiguities already start with colour terms, as certain characters can refer to a colour anywhere from green to blue or purple. The Mongolian scholars G. Badrakh and Kh. Nyambu have attempted to translate this chapter in full length, but their literal rendering of terms obscure often the exact meaning. Leaving aside the ceremonial wear, which is strictly modelled on Song and later Tang precedents, I will discuss only elements of court wear that is Mongolian of origin.

The emperor's wardrobe consisted besides ceremonial wear for traditional Chinese rituals of a wardrobe containing a number of elite deels, categorized according to winter and summer wear. All of the deels are stipulated to be worn with specific hats. The ten winter deels were mostly made from gold brocade but also from velvet and fur. Gold brocade deels generally went with gold brocade hats. If the emperor wore a deel that was constructed from two pieces joined at the waist (presumably a tsegdeg) in the colours red, pink (lilac), brown, blue and green he had to wear a two-domed hat to which "Seven Treasures" were applied. I take the "Seven Treasures" to be a subgroup of the nine treasures: gold, silver, iron, copper, mother-of-pearl, turquoise, coral, pearl, and lapis lazuli. Which of the nine made up the Seven Treasures I cannot determine. If the deel was of grey or white fur then the hat was a stiffly starched helmet decorated with whitegold. Deels made from white squirrel fur had to be accompanied by a hat made from the same kind of fur. With it came a cloak also manufactured from squirrel skins.

The summer wardrobe comprised fifteen versions. The nasiq deel was accompanied by a hat of a wide flat shape (similar to a gong, *tsan*) with precious stones and featured a golden phoenix. If a nasiq deel studded with pearls was worn the hat had to be an *uult* hat that was decorated with a spiral of pearls. If a pearl deel with red borders or an all-red deel was worn then a *tsan* hat with a border decorated with pearls was worn. A deel of a darker shade of brown camels dictated that a hat of a similar colour. If the emperor was wearing a thin felt deel with the colours blue and green, strong red, silverbrown, or pale brown with a golden embroidered dragon, then a hat with a golden phoenix depiction on the top was worn. A deel from black fine felt with a golden dragon was accompanied by a hat with yellow lametta (golden thread?) and a golden phoenix on top. The earlier discussed hat with a shade at the nape of the neck was worn, when a tsegdeg from black wollen cloth and a belt from black gauze, featuring the "Seven Treasures", clothed the emperor.

High officials are described as having received a similar elite wardrobe, consisting of nine types of winter deels and fourteen summer versions. The difference in numbers in comparison to the emperor's sets (ten and fifteen types respectively) is not explained. The officials' deels are explicitly mentioned as jisün robes, the similar deels of the emperor however not. The lack of description regarding the emperor's deels makes it impossible to conclude that those robes were the equivalent imperial jisün robes. The winter waderobe is enumerated as having comprised one deep red nasiq deel, one deel of red, tick velvet, one pink, one blue, one green, several grey silk deels, a red silk deel, a brown-yellowish one, and a dark blue deel.

For the summer officials received a straight (?) nasiq deel, one made from textured (collected threads) nasiq, one gold and plum coloured nasiq deel adorned with pearls, one deep red deel covered with many straight ribbons, one deep red deel with a pattern from pearls, one pink, one blue, one green, several silver-brown deels, one bluish-black deel with very wide sleeves made from thin Korean felt, a camel-brown one, a burgundy coloured deel, several white ones, and a bluish-black version with straight ribbon attached.

Many attributes mentioned in this list remain unclear. The ribbons mentioned might be portrayed on the fur deel worn by Qubilai Qa'an out on a hunt (figure 83b).

Aside from these deels for special occasions, officials were also provisioned with official wear, which was worn on duty. These costumes were made from thin felt, almost see-through, had very wide sleeves, a round collar and fastened on the right. Officials were classified into nine ranks, of which the upper three were considered first class officials. Certain features distinguished the nine ranks from each other. Most important appears to have been the patterning or design of the fabric. The highest rank's deel was made from brown felt with a depiction of a single flower spreading from one *hilum* (bot.). The size of this flower is five inches in radius. The second rank's textile sported a flower of three inches in radius, while the rank below has the same deel with a two-inch radius open flower without leaves. The fourth and fifth ranks have smaller flowers of 5 *fun*, whereas the sixth and seventh rank were allowed different small flowers of one inch in size. The two lowest ranks were distinguished by thin green felt without pattern. A different application is mentioned in the Yuan text *Tong shi tiao ge* (Compilation of Regulations). Here the use of undelineated shapes, whether of round, olive, or free outline, was a sign of lower rank in the Yuan dynasty, whereas third rank officials and wives of fourth rank officials are reported to have been identified by golden spots scattered over their gauze silk attire.²⁸³

²⁸³ Zhao Feng (1999) 183, 185

The hat that accompanied the official attire was taken over from Chinese precedents. This hat came with a broad rim, a raised part at the forehead, and extensions at the sides. Another marker of rank was the accompanying belt. The belt featured a number of jade buckles and the centrepiece different decorations and materials according to rank. The highest rank used jade with engravings or without. The second rank's centrepiece was made from Glaswort (Salicornia) horn, while the third and fourth ranks were fitted with golden medallion portraying a dragon's eye on it. From the fifth to ninth rank the central buckle was made from black Glaswort horn. The girdle of the belt that was attached to the centrepiece was made up from eight pieces of raw leather that could be adjusted in length by tying.²⁸⁴

The wholesale adoption of Chinese garments for the use at Chinese rituals under Qubilai Qa'an indicates the Mongol court's awareness of the need to legitimize their rule through a visual vocabulary understood by their Chinese subjects. On the other hand the Mongols needed to set themselves apart from their subject population; a conflict that was faced by all foreign dynasties attempting to rule China. The continuation of established Mongol practices, such as the *jisün* robe, the one-coloured garment, played an important political role, as it created an ethnical differentiation and visualized the elevated position of the ruling Mongol aristocracy. Whilst Chinese attire became a component of the imperial wardrobe, its appearance was complimented by highly ornamental native Mongol attire and their co-existence characteristic of the Yuan dynasty. In the consequence of this dual system of dress, Han attire became a symbol of the ruled masses.²⁸⁵ The opposition of Mongols and Chinese, often enough portrayed as the only operating principle during the Yuan, was never that rigid. The scholar who gladly collaborated with the Mongols to his own advancement compensated for the stereotypical sage who withdrew from Yuan society, even if real obstacles to a conventional career under the Mongols did exist. Serruys has shown that Chinese subjects, especially those in the service of the Yuan apparatus, were indeed embracing Mongol clothing and that in the early Ming dynasty a number of imperial decrees attempted to eliminate Mongol attire among the population, which proved rather difficult.²⁸⁶ A certain degree of tolerance could probably be proven even for the most conservative of reigns, and the Yuan dynasty with its practical approach to government, and with that attire, is an example of flexible, but conscious choices. That the scope of permissiveness in terms of foreign attire is limited, is indicated by the end of the Yuan dynasty. The last decades were characterized by mismanagement and an absence of coherent policies, something that to a

²⁸⁴ Nyambuu (1962) 38-40, Barakh (1976) 46-53

²⁸⁵ Wang (1989) 19

²⁸⁶ Serruys (1957) 157-167

certain extent can be perceived in court attire. Korean clothing began to be appreciated and clothing, boots and hats resembling those of Koreans were adopted at court.²⁸⁷ Given the political constraints of a minority rule, I understand the introduction of Korean style clothing as a sign of disengagement from political realities; a sign that the Mongols did no longer focused on a dialogue with their Chinese subject population.

Even if clothing can mirror the dissolution of an empire, dress in itself was only one aspect of Mongol attire that related to the social stratification of society. As in any culture, dress was complemented by other symbols of authority and the Mongols drew on a host of accessories to display rank and power.

3.3 Accessories of power

Attire has to be understood not only as a set of specific garments, but as the expression of somebody's individual, social and political identity, which goes far beyond the category of dress. Accessories have always been a complementary means to widen the scope of dress to display status and rank. Mongol attire included a host of accessories that were carried by the owner with just this function. Similar to certain features of dress, these items were not a matter of individual choice but were conferred on the distinguished subordinate, military and civilian alike. In the following chapter these accessories of power are discussed to their appearance, usage, occurrence, and symbolism.

3.3.1 Tablets of authority

Most frequently mentioned are tablets that were carried on the person and acted as passports of power. They are referred to as *paizah*, a corruption of the Chinese word for "tablet", *pai-tseu*.²⁸⁸ The earliest mention of it is made by Li Zhichang. He narrates that Genghiz Qan invested his minister with acting powers equal to that of his own person:

Not long afterwards the Mongol Emperor Chingiz Khan sent his personal
Minister Liu Wen with a golden tablet in the form of a tiger's head hung about

²⁸⁷ Yang (2004) 6

²⁸⁸ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?), 353. Cordier further notes that this term has survived in a corrupted form into modern times referring in Mongolia to a certain ornament on the horse aparison that entitled the rider to be furnished with provisions and fresh horses at relay stations. This ornament was referred to as the horse-*bai* [Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 353].

him. On it was written the message: “This man is empowered to act with the same freedom as I myself should exercise, had I come in person.”²⁸⁹

A similar mention is made by Chao Hung who elaborates on this description by distinguishing between three classes of tablets.

Von den goldenen Tafeln, die sie am Gürtel tragen, tragen die höchsten Beamten des ersten Ranges (eine Tafel) mit zwei Tigern, die einander gegenüberstehen; sie heißt “Tigerkampf-Goldtafel”. In chinesischer Schrift steht darauf: “Kaiserlicher Befehl des mit himmlischem Mandat herrschenden Kaisers Cinggis: Ermächtigt, in allen Angelegenheiten geeignete Maßnahmen zu ergreifen!”- Der zweite Rang trägt eine einfache goldene Tafel mit der Inschrift: “Kaiserlicher Befehl des mit himmlischem Mandat herrschenden Kaisers Cinggis: Dringend!” Weiter der nächste Rang (der dritte Rang) hat dann eine silberne Tafel mit derselben Aufschrift wie vorher.²⁹⁰

The tablets reported by Chao Hung as featuring fighting tigers are most probably wrongly described, based on a misunderstanding arising from ambiguities of the spoken Chinese language. The actual tablets are supposed to have shown tiger heads, as described by Li Zhichang; the discrepancy is being explained by Olbricht and Pinks as a case of mistaken phonetic identity of the Chinese “*hu-tou*” meaning “tiger fight”, and “*hu-t’ou*”, which translates into “tiger head”.²⁹¹

Chronologically the next report on this asseccory was documented by Friar Rubruck who refers to a tablet of Möngke Qa’an. “Mangu [Möngke] further gave the Mo’al [who was sent on a diplomatic mission to the King of France] his golden seal. It is a gold tablet the breadth of a palm and half a cubit long, on which his commission is engraved: anyone who carries it may issue what order he likes, and it is carried out instantly.”²⁹²

Möngke Qa’an also features in the narration known as “The Armenian history of the Orphelians”. The account relates the visit of Prince Sempad, brother of King Hayton (r.1226-1270), to the court of Möngke Qa’an and mentions the presentation of a tablet to the foreign visitor. “They gave him also a *P’haiza* of gold, *i.e.* a tablet whereon the name of God is written

²⁸⁹ Li/Waley (1224) 48

²⁹⁰ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 66

²⁹¹ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 66, 67

²⁹² Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 186

by the Great Qa'an himself; and this constitutes the greatest honour known among the Mongols. Farther, they drew up for him a sort of patent, which the Mongols call *Iarlekh*.”²⁹³

The manuscript narrating the diplomatic journey of Rabban Sauma and Mar Yaballaha, two Nestorian priests, to the west names another type of paizah, decorated with gerfalcons. “On one of these occasions he [King Arghon, 1284-91] bestowed on the Patriach [Mar Yahbh-Allaha] the greatest honour which he could give to a subject, namely, the Paiza of gold of the “Sunkor” class.”²⁹⁴ The word Sunkor given by Rabban Sauma is the Mongolian word for gerfalcon. This tablet thus did not display tiger heads but a bird of prey.

Rashid al-Din mentions the stately rewards for outstanding services to the empire by Bayan Finjan. The second time he receives a tablet for promotion: “And again he showed favor to Bayan Finjan and called him by the great name of his grandfather, the Saiyid Ajall. He gave robes of honour, *ā rliqs* [decree, see glossary], and piazzas both to him and to his seven brothers, who were all present, [...].”²⁹⁵

By far the most detailed description is offered by Marco Polo who details not only the physical appearance of these “Tablets of Authority”, but also relates to the function of them. Firstly he and his travel companions were presented with them on their return journey to Europe.

And when the Prince saw that the Two Brothers and Messer Marco were ready to set forth, he called them all three to his presence, and gave them two golden Tablets of Authority, which should secure them liberty of passage through all his dominions, and by means of which, withersoever they should go, all necessaries would be provided for them, and for all their company.²⁹⁶

Later in the narration he explains to the reader on the various appearances of a *paizah* and differences.

Now those tablets of Authority, of which I have spoken, are ordered in this way. The officer who is a captain of 100 hath a tablet of silver; the captain of 100 hath a tablet of gold or silver-gilt; the commander of 10,000 hath a tablet of gold, with a lion's head on it. And I will tell you the weight of the different tablets, and what they denote. The tablets of the captains of 100 and 1000 weigh each of them

²⁹³ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 352

²⁹⁴ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 75

²⁹⁵ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 300, 301

²⁹⁶ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 34 (Prologue)

120 saggi [1 saggi=1/6 of an ounce]; and the tablet with the lion's head engraven on it, which is that of the commander of 10,000 weighs 220 saggi. And on each of the tablets is inscribed a device, which runs: 'By the strength of the great God, and of the great grace which He hath accorded to our Emperor, may the name of the Khaan be blessed; and let all such as will not obey him be slain and be destroyed.' And I will tell you besides that all who hold these tablets likewise receive warrants in writing, declaring all their powers and privileges.

I should mention too that an officer who holds the chief command of 100,000 men, or who is general-in-chief of a great host, is entitled to a tablet that weighs 300 saggi. It has an inscription thereon to the same purport that I have told you already, and below the inscription there is the figure of a lion, and below the lion the sun and moon. They have warrants also of their high rank, command, and power. Every one, moreover, who holds a tablet of this exalted degree is entitled, whenever he goes abroad, to have a little golden canopy, such as is called an umbrella, carried on a spear over his head in token of his high command. And whenever he sits, he sits in a silver chair.

To certain very great lords also there is given a tablet with gerfalcons on it; this is only to the very greatest of the Kaan's barons, and it confers on them his full power and authority; so that if one of those chiefs wishes to send a messenger any whither, he can seize the horses of any man, be he even a king, and any other chattels at his pleasure.²⁹⁷

Palladius also notes the use of tablets and details that falcons symbolized superior authority.

Tiger's tablets – *Sinice Hu fu* and p'ai tsze in the common language. The Mongols had them of several kinds, which differed by the metal, of which they were made, as well as by the number of pearls (one, two, or three in number), which were incusted in the upper part of the tablet. Falcon's tablets with the figure of a falcon were round, and used to be given only to special couriers and envoys of the Khan [Yuen shi lui pien and Yuen ch'ao tien chang]. The use of the Hu-fu was adopted by the Mongols probably from the Kin.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 350, 351

²⁹⁸ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 352 (Palladius, l.c., p.39)

These tablets of authority then were passports of power that duplicated the authority of the Great Qa'an and allowed the owner to govern and order in the former's name. Olbricht and Pinks stipulate that they were given to envoys of a qa'an and successful generals and generally handed out at promotions and on the occasion of investiture.²⁹⁹

All early accounts only mention this specific function of the paizah, Marco Polo's narration, however, relates that these tablets were used by merchants on their trade journeys for provisions *en route*. This must have been a later development in course of the increased trade made possible by the *pax mongolica*, the largescale pacification of the area that stretched from the Mongolian steppe to China and to Europe. That early tablets though included the right to provisions becomes clear from Liao precedents (see below). This aspect of the *paizah* consequently regulated official provisions before the instigation of the postal relay stations, *jam* that only became effectively organized under Ögödei's reign. Henry Yule understands this development of the function of the tablet as a decline of its powers, arguing that the issuance of the tablets to merchants and other persons but the most powerful generals rendered them 'more frequent and conventional', dismantling their status as 'tokens of high favour and honour'.³⁰⁰ Ghazan Qan's regulations indicate that indeed a variety of paizahs was in use, whereby differing degrees were expressed by different kinds. Distinguished were between tablets held by governors and other highly placed officers of state, paizahs for minor officers and again a different type made from brass for 'persons travelling on state commissions with post-horses', which were accordingly devoid of political powers.³⁰¹ Whether these distinctions only applied to the paizahs of the Ilqanate or to Mongolian tablets generally needs verification. Only attested for the Persian tablets, moreover, is the use of lion heads whose quantity, ranging from one to five, indicated descending ranks. The standard two-tiger-head version mentioned by Chao Hung might be an earlier distinction of a time where administration and government of the empire was still little developed. The use of tiger- or lions heads nonetheless would point to a general theme, whether regarding the western regions or the Mongolian heartland, especially since Marco Polo refers to tablets with lions as well. Since the actual whereabouts of Marco Polo are a matter of much debate, I have to refrain from attributing the lion heads of Polo's tablets to any fixed geographical region. Nonetheless, the high probability of an actual residency in Mongolia might point to the use of lions also on eastern Mongol tablets. It also could simply be that the depiction of a cat-like creature was variously interpreted as a tiger or a lion. An example of a paizah featuring a beast's

²⁹⁹ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 66, 67

³⁰⁰ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 352

³⁰¹ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 352. Yule refers here to Hammer who translated Gazan's decree.

head is shown in figure 55. This type of round paizah was used in Yuan China from the time of Qubilai Qa'an onwards and reveals Tibetan influence in the tiger head's design.³⁰²

All accounts though agree that the tablet depicting a gerfalcon (*s'ingqor*) was the ultimate token of allotted power. The manuscript of Rabban Sauma has *sunkor* instead of *shonkar*, which is another term that appears in mediaeval manuscripts, and Budge details that 'the Sunkor Paiza was a gold tablet on which figures of gerfalcons were engraved in addition to the ordinary inscription'.³⁰³ The gerfalcon was a much-depicted imperial symbol also because it was a manifestation of the sülde of the Kiyat, who supplied the Kiyat-Borjigin imperial clan, of which Yisüge was a member.³⁰⁴

Rashid al-Din, Marco Polo and the Orphelian History mention that the issuing of a paizah coincided with a written decree regarding the particular tablet. These warrants were referred to as a *jarliq*, Mongolian for "decree, order".³⁰⁵ As only these later accounts mention this system I take it as a later development constituting a system of verification that, I imagine, was put into practise to curb abuse of faked paizah. That paizahs were exploited is evidenced by Ghazan's decree in which he warns governors to guard their tablets cautiously.³⁰⁶

The inscriptions on the tablets is supposedly based on an old Chinese formula, whereby the Mongolian *tengerri-yin ogguksan*, "by the might of the heavens", is based on the Chinese *pien-i hing-shih*. This inscription is also found on Liao tablets that are again based on Chinese precedents. Early paizahs of the Yuan dynasty were inscribed only in Phagspa, later, especially in the southern Chinese regions this was extended to include Persian and Chinese. In the western regions generally only the Uighur script was used.³⁰⁷ Archaeological finds of two such tablets proof these textually transmitted inscriptions.³⁰⁸ One of those was a simple golden tablet, the other find the upper part of a silver tablet, still showing the mentioned inscriptions. Both have been found in the Manchurian province Jehol and were stored in the National Museum of Mandchukuo in 1934.³⁰⁹ Yule describes a silver tablet that was found in 1846 in the Minusinsk circle of Government of Yenisei and at the time of his writing was kept at the Museum of the

³⁰² Komaroff and Carboni (2002) 68

³⁰³ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 75

³⁰⁴ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 328, 854

³⁰⁵ Yule notes on the *jarliq* the following: 'Most frequently the grant of this honour is coupled with *jarliq*; "to such one were granted *Yarligh* and *Paizah*," the former word [...] denoting the written patent which accompanies the grant of the tablet, just as the sovereign's warrant accompanies the badge of a modern Order.'" [Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 352].

³⁰⁶ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 352. Yule also refers to other, unspecified, contemporary notices.

³⁰⁷ Komaroff and Carboni (2002) 68

³⁰⁸ For a detailed discussion on *paizah* inscription see Toru Haneda's article "Une tablet du Décret Sacré de L'empereur Genghis".

³⁰⁹ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 67

Academy of St. Petersburg; now kept in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg (figure 54). He notes another one found in Eastern Siberia and one that was found near the Dnieper.³¹⁰ In the background of Persian miniatures merchants fitted out with paizahs occur as members of an official Mongol delegation (figure 53, 56).

That the Mongol tablets are a continuation of Liao practices is generally agreed on³¹¹ and made evident by the official history of the Liao dynasty, where silver tablets are mentioned that were handed to personal envoys of the emperor.³¹² The Khitan, themselves informed by Chinese customs, strongly influenced Mongol traditions through their influential position as tutors on sedentary statecraft. The use of *paizahs* is one of many instances of a transmission of cultural practices that saw Khitan and Chinese elements enter Mongolian institutions. Precursors of Khitan tablets are ascribed to the Nü-chên of whom Yule relates the use of wooden tablets that were tied to each horseman and horse to identify them.³¹³ An even earlier usage of tablets of authority is not implausible.³¹⁴

Another form of tablet is mentioned for the use at court. Rubruck recounts the audiences of an envoy at court where these tablets were used:

And whenever the principal envoy [of Longa] came to court he carried a highly-polished tablet of ivory about a cubit long and half a palm wide. Every time he spoke to the chan [qa'an] or some great personage, he always looked at that tablet as if he found there what he had to say, nor did he look to the right or the left, nor in the face of him with whom he was talking. Likewise, when coming

³¹⁰ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 353

³¹¹ Yule, Olbricht and Pinks, Palladius, and Krader all state this assumption.

³¹² Cordier adds Dr. S.W. Bushell's translation of the *Liao shi* (Actes XI. Cong. Int. Orient., Paris, p17): "The History tell us (Liao Shih, Bk. LVII. f.2) that the official silver tablets *p'ai tzu* of the period were 600 in number, about a foot in length, and that they were engraved with an inscription like the above ['Our imperial order for post horses. Urgent'] in national characters (*kuo tzu*), and that when there was important state business the emperor personally handed the tablet to the envoy, which entitled him to demand post horses at the post stations, and to be treated as if he were the Emperor himself travelling. When the tablet was marked 'Urgent', he had the right to take private horses, and was required to ride, night and day, 700 *li* in twenty-four hours. On his return he had to give back the tablet to the Emperor, who handed it to the prince who had the custody of the tablet and seals." [Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 353].

He moreover adds a description of Chavannes: "The Kin, in the thirteenth century, used badges of office made of silver. They were rectangle, bore the imperial seal, and an inscription indicative of the duty of the bearer." (Chavannes, *Voyageurs chez les Khitans*, 102) [Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 353].

³¹³ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 353. (*Ma Tuan-lin*, Bk. 327, 11. / Rockhill)

³¹⁴ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 353

into the presence of the Lord, and when leaving it, he never looked at anything but his tablet.³¹⁵

This originally Chinese custom was obviously introduced to the Mongol court long before the Yuan dynasty and continued throughout as the Franciscan monk Odoric of Pordenone mentions the tablets as well (1331). “And all these [the barons] have coronets on their heads, and each holds in his hand a white ivory tablet and wears a golden girdle of half a span in breadth; and so they remain standing and silent.”³¹⁶ Rockhill notes that these tablets were made of jade, ivory, bamboo, and other materials according to the rank of the owner, and estimates its length at ‘about three feet long’. These tablets, he relates, were called *hu* and were used originally used ‘to make memoranda on of the business to be submitted by the bearer to the Emperor or to write the answers to questions that he had submitted to them.’ They were used in China as well as in Korea.³¹⁷ These tablets were subject to sumptuary laws of the Yuan dynasty as stipulated in the *Yuan shih*’s chapter on dress regulations. In the *Yuan shih* the possession of such an (elephant) ivory tablet, here called *hu ban*, is obligatory but also restricted to officials of the first three ranks, including officials who are involved in court ceremonies.³¹⁸ Cordier adds that these tablets are an ancient Chinese etiquette that can be dated back to 2286 BCE in connection with a notable called Yu who is mentioned in the Chinese Annals.³¹⁹

A third type of certificate relating to identity and power are passes that were issued to the elite guards who were the crash forces and the personal bodyguards of the emperor. No description of how these passes looked like are known, nonetheless, that they constituted a central element of access and identity becomes evident from the following passage of the *Secret History*. “When the company is relieved, the incoming nightguards shall hand over their passes and only then come in and take their turn of duty; the outgoing nightguards when relieved shall likewise hand theirs over and depart.”³²⁰ These passes then regulated access to the emperor’s surroundings, which in itself was a crucial indication of rank.

³¹⁵ Rockhill (XXX) 153-154

³¹⁶ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 237, 238

³¹⁷ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 354

³¹⁸ Barakh (1967) 46

³¹⁹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 237

³²⁰ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 158

3.3.2 The *sukur* or stately canopy

Among the most prestigious items, and one that was restricted to the highest ranks was the use of a canopy that in a source is listed as a *sukur*. Carpini has noted the use of such for Batu Qan.

“When he [Batu] goes out riding a sunshade or little tent is carried over his head on a stick, and the same is done in the case of all the chief princes of the Tartars and also their wives.”³²¹ Carpini

further notes that among the many precious gifts presented to Güyük Qa’an at his ascension a canopy figured. “The Emperor was also given a sunshade or little awning such as is carried over his head, and it was all decorated with precious stones.”³²² These being the first mentions of this accessory, descriptions of the Yuan era more frequently refer to this tradition

The manuscript of Rabban Sauma evidences that this marker of high rank was also bestowed on other persons of political authority. In it is mentioned a grant of a canopy to Mar Yaballaha who was promoted to the Patriarch of the Nestorian church in Baghdad.

In April, 1294, three months after the death of Rabban Sauma, Mar Yahbh-Allaha went to visit the king in his camp at Ala Dagh, and received from him many valuable gifts, viz., a cloak, a couple of fine riding mules, a parasol to be held over his head on state occasions, and 60.000 *zuze*, or about £2,500.³²³

Mar Yaballaha received another parasol later when he met the Qan Kaikhato.

On the day of the great festival he set out and met the victorious King Kaikhato at Ala Tak, where the royal Camp was. And the king honoured him with many gifts, that is to say he gave him a cloak of great price, and two splendid riding mules, and he assigned to him a “Sukur,” that is to say, a parasol, and he gave him sixty thousand *zuze*.³²⁴

The same source also mentions that Ghazan Qan bestowed a parasol to the head of the Nestorian church who obviously had already been recognized in this manner. “The king [Ghazan Qan in 1297] showed him [the Patriarch] favour and gave him a new throne and a parasol, and the following winter he stayed in Arbil.”³²⁵

³²¹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 57

³²² Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 64

³²³ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 76

³²⁴ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 207, 208

³²⁵ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 83

Marco Polo expands his explanation of the *paizah* by adding that an individual onto whom was bestowed a *paizah* featuring a lion was simultaneously eligible to employ a canopy. “Every one, moreover, who holds a tablet of this exalted degree is entitled, whenever he goes abroad, to have a little golden canopy, such as is called an umbrella, carried on a spear over his head in token of his high command. And whenever he sits, he sits in a silver chair.”³²⁶ Since Marco Polo witnessed practices of a later era, one cannot conclude that this was also the practise of the early Yeke Mongol Ulus. Nevertheless, it is at least possible that he observed a continued practice. A Persian miniature depicts a Mongol ruler on an imperial inspection tour while an attendant holds a canopy above his head (figure 67). The canopy is also shown folded up in the style of an modern umbrella in figure 81a.

3.3.3 Quivers and arrows

Another personal belonging and indicator of rank, which was subject to regulations were quivers. Most explicitly they are mentioned as such in the *Secret History* where they are referred to as identifying freeman, or darqan. On defeating the enemy Kereyit Činggis Qaan rewarded the commanders and allies who had served him outstandingly. “You, Badai and Kišiliq, enjoy the privilege of being freemen to the offspring of your offspring, allowed to carry quivers and drink the ceremonial wine!”³²⁷ Činggis Qan issued a similar promotion, identically worded, to Sorqan Šira and his sons Čila’un and Čimbai.³²⁸ Apparently only with the promotion to darkhat, “freemen” the so favoured person was allowed to carry quivers and participate in formal drinking, unlike the common serfs and grooms attached to the royal household.³²⁹ Quivers thus elevated a person above the common masses. Whether sumptuary laws restricted the use of other weapons or martial utensils to certain ranks remains open and needs further investigation but a general line of approach can be inferred from references in Yuan sources. An imperial decree from 1263 retained in the Yuan document *Ta-Yüan sheng-cheng kuo-ch’ao tien-chang* permitted certain population groupings to carry arms. These were the Mongols, Uighurs, Muslims, *ortoy* merchants, as well as police and designated hunting households.³³⁰ Especially useful in establishing to what degree the right to carry weapons did correlate to ranks is the mention of the scholar-official Wang Yün (1227-1304) in a document on Yuan dynasty weapon regulations. He relates that civil provincial officials of the third rank and below feel defenseless in the face of

³²⁶ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 351

³²⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 108

³²⁸ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 150

³²⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) f672

³³⁰ Endicott-West (1989) 146

armed robbers on the trade routes. He further contrasts the prohibition of these official ranks with the legally armed military households, policew, hunters, and Muslim groups. He also stipulates that these groups were allowed to carry bows and arrows.³³¹

Odoric of Pordenone adds the observation that arrows carried markings that allowed identifying the individual owner. In the chapter titled “Concerning the Khan’s great hunting matches” Odoric describes the event of imperial battues that lasted for days.

And when they all [all the wild animals] have been driven together into that open glade, the Great Khan comes up on three elephants and shoots five arrows at the game. As soon as he has shot, the whole of his retinue do likewise. And when all have shot their arrows (each man’s arrows having a token by which they may be discerned), then the Great Emperor causeth to be called out ‘Syo!’ [...].³³²

The conclusion from these passages would be that quivers signalled rank, whereas arrows identified an individual. Whether all arrows were marked and thus used as a mark of identity is uncertain.

The Mongolist Henry Serruys raises this issue as well, but moreover investigates further usages of arrows. He shows that arrows played an important role in delivering messages to a remote party. The arrows of Mongol rulers were supplied to envoys as credentials, whether send on business to the Chinese court or to vassals to recruit troops. In Chinese records they are referred to as *ling chien*, or “arrows of command”. That these arrows bore distinctive marks is self-evident, since otherwise they would have not been able to function as credentials of a certain ruler. Serruys quotes from a passage of the epic *Geser Qan* which illustrates this point:

“Thereafter the Golden Dagibi, writing a letter with the white magic arrow of Bejeweled Jasa, sent an envoy to Geser Qayan. When the Saintly Lord of the Ten Countries [Geser Qa’an] saw the letter with the arrow he said: ‘Ah! Is not this the arrow of my Bejewelled Jasa..?’”³³³

Left behind in the hand of the visited counterpart an arrow was a remainder of a promise given. If the parties concerned were both present the breaking of an arrow was a ritual that accompanied the taking of an oath or a promise; a ritual that was known before the acendency of the Mongols and a gesture that continue to be understood long after the demise of the Mongol Empire and had been even taken into the Chinese repertory as a non-verbal, non-written sign of a

³³¹ Endicott-West (1989) 148

³³² Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 235, 236

³³³ Serruys (1958), 280, 281

contract entered into. The breaking of the arrow could very well symbolise the consequence that the break of a promise would have on a governmental level. Swift military action and the thorough destruction of the enemy is a much-noted policy of the Mongols. Arrows stuck into the ground or swapped by the involved parties could equally convey the making of a solemn promise. But an object that displayed an arrow also indicated ownership. Peng Daya explains that on despoiling conquered cities the Mongol commanders stuck arrows to the door of houses that they had taken possession of and no one else was allowed to enter them. A bow and arrows hung onto the outside of a *ger*, the Mongolian felt tent, were signs of permanent or temporary ownership. This tradition at least lived on in the wedding ceremonies noted by Mostaert in the Ordos region in begin of the 20th century: the party of the bridegroom hung his bow and arrows at the door that the bride is indicated to dwell in by the master of ceremonies.³³⁴

Another practice connected to the basic Mongol weapons of bow and arrow was the geomantical siting of buildings and structures to be erected. Quite a number of buildings in Qara Qorum are said to have been built on spots where a bowshot indicated the site as favourable and incurring good fortune.³³⁵

3.3.4 The banner or *tuq*

The tradition of the *sülder* is based on the Shamanistic belief of a ‘vital force or powerful spirit that animates, guards, and protects a being’, enabling a person to fulfil his destiny.³³⁶ A powerful *sülder* was a prerequisite to become a leader. This force later took on the role of a protective spirit for the entire family and clan attached to a favoured and powerful individual. De Rachewiltz phrases this concept as follows: “Thus *sülder*, as a force resulting in Heavenly-bestowed good fortune, and as a tutelary genius of the clan, was the very essence of the might and grandeur which a ruler and his family and descendants enjoyed.” It might have been already believed in Činggis Qan times that this force could animate objects, hence the offerings to Činggis Qan’s standard.³³⁷

Chao Hung relates that the court of Činggis Qan was indicated by a white flag, that is Činggis Qan’s white *tuq*. “Die Hofhaltung des Činggis ist durch eine aufgepflanzte große reinweiße Fahne gekennzeichnet. Sonst hat sie gar keine Flaggen noch Behänge.”³³⁸ The white

³³⁴ Serruys (1958), 279-88

³³⁵ Chan (1991) 53-78, Hok-Lam Chan, “Siting by Bowshot: A Mongolian Custom and its Sociopolitical and Cultural Implications”, *Asia Major* 4/2, (1991), 53-78

³³⁶ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 329

³³⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 329

³³⁸ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 72

banner of Činggis Qan was a set of nine rods to which a tuft of white yak- or horsehair is attached. A depiction of it is seen in a Persian miniature (figure 80).

The *White History* illustrates the importance of the imperial *tuq*, which later developed into a symbol of protection granted to all subjects of the heavenly destined emperor. Based on a survey of the frequency with which various markers of imperial authority are enumerated in Mongolian sources, Klaus Sagaster suggests that the flag, banner or standard was the principal signifier of majestic powers.

The original white standard was kept as a sacred relic at the mausoleum in the Ordos region of modern Inner Mongolia, just as Činggis Qan's black banner of war. A replica of this white standard is housed at the Mongolian Parliament in Ulaan Baatar and regularly displayed on state occasions. Rituals regarding these standards as part of the Činggis Qan cult were continued up to their disappearance in the general chaos of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The cult surrounding the black standard of Činggis Qan had been perpetuated through the centuries. Sacrifices of captives, especially their hearts, to it are narrated, as well as the custom to sprinkle it with mare's milk as an offering. The rituals involving the black standard revolve around it as a symbol of the capacity of the qa'an to sow fear and terror among the enemies.³³⁹ Given the emphasis on military matters, the importance of the black overshadowed that of the white *tuq*. Not surprisingly, the *White History* lists the black banner as one and as the primary of the nine markers of imperial authority. The imperial black banner is mentioned as possessing many vassals and as being a symbol of fear to enemies.³⁴⁰ For the polarity of black and white and associated concepts in Mongolian culture see the chapter "Attributes" below.

Carpini's account of Güyük Qa'an's ascension might add another ritual concerning the *tuq*. Carpini's "beautiful rods" might have been nothing else than *tuqs* with scarlet wool attached.

³³⁹ *Cayan teüke/Sagaster (1272?)* 296

³⁴⁰ The *White History* maintains that the role of a ruler comprises different dimensions that he has to fill in. The manuscript divides the imperial task into five categories. These are the "Three Great Works", the "Four Great Rules", the "Six Great Characteristics", the "Seven Great Performances", and the "Nine Great Markers". The "Nine Great Markers" of imperial authority were the:

"Erstens: Die viele Vasalle besitzende schwarze Fahne-das Kennzeichen dafür, anderen Furcht einzujagen. Zweitens: Die lauschallende rote Trompete - das Kennzeichen dafür, allen Respekt einzuflößen.

Drittens: Der großmächtige goldene Köcher - das Kennzeichen für den Schutz des Leibes.

Viertens: Die glohreiche gelbe Pauke - das Kennzeichen dafür, von vielen zum Herrscher erhoben zu werden.

Fünftens: Das sehr bedrohliche diamantene Schwert - das Kennzeichen für die Durchführung der Gesetze.

Sechstens: Der feste goldene Sattel - das Kennzeichen für das Verhalten.

Siebtens: Der sehr einfache schwere Gürtel - das Kennzeichen für die Stabilisierung.

Achtens: Das große Zelt mit der hohen Flagge - das Kennzeichen für die gewichtige Residenz.

Neuntens: Die Enkel der Recken mit den guten Aufgaben - das Kennzeichen für die Methoden und Handhaben."See *Cayan teüke/Sagaster (1272?)* 127.

I [John of Plano Carpini] think, if I remember rightly, that we had been there a good four weeks when, as I believe, the election [of Güyük Qa'an] took place; the result was however not made public at that time; the chief ground for my supposition was that whenever Cuyuc left the tent they sang before him and as long as he remained outside they dipped to him beautiful rods on the top of which was scarlet wool, which they did not do for any of the other chiefs.³⁴¹

The scarlet wool that was attached to the tips of the rods might have identified Güyük as a freshly elected qa'an. The construction of a rod with wool or hair attached to the top is reminiscent of the personal tuq of a Mongol warrior (figure 72). The possession of a tuq was common and yet personal, as it was the seat of one's tutelary spirit. The question remains as to whether these rods carried before Güyük Qa'an were his personal tuq, tuqs of the participants, or tuqs made especially for the occasion of ascensions. And basically the question whether Carpini witnessed tuqs or other implements of office is not certain after all. The use of a staff with wool or felt attached was in any case a cultural practice to indicate the election of a qa'an candidate. A similar heraldic use of staffs is described at the death of an emperor. An envoy is said to have been sent across the country with a staff to the tip of which a piece of felt was tied.³⁴²

There were also multicoloured banners in use, as is indicated by the *Secret History*. Two allied tribes of Temüjin, the Uru'ut and the Mangqut, are reported as using black as well as multicoloured standards. Of them are said: "Those people are accustomed to swords and spears from childhood. They have black and multicoloured standards - they are the people of whom we must be wary!"³⁴³ The exact meaning of these standards is not clear to me, but I infer from Khandyn Nyambuu's mention that the Khitan royalty was dressed in the colours of their respective regional standards that these banners probably related to ethnic origin and/or local territories.³⁴⁴

3.3.5 Horses and harnesses

Horses, the primary capital of a nomad, were valued greatly and far beyond the practical value they possessed by allowing superior military manoeuvres. How much attention was and is paid to the condition of a horse is expressed by the fact that the Mongolian language has over 200

³⁴¹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 62

³⁴² Olschki (1949) 8

³⁴³ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 90

³⁴⁴ Nyambuu (1962) 32

words describing shades of colours pertaining to horses. The *Secret History* is a monument to this custom in that the work lists frequently the exact colouring of a horse when referred to. The manuscript further substantiates that certain colours of horses were indicators of rank. The promotion of Old Üsün to beki details that he not only was privileged to wear white attire (see above) but to ride on white geldings when Činggis Qan decreed that “He shall wear a white dress, And ride a white gelding...”³⁴⁵ The specification of a beki being eligible to ride on geldings might further indicate that stallions were reserved for other ranks, probably for even higher ranks or members of the imperial family.

A passage in the *Secret History* evidences that bridles, reins and other horse caprisons were markers of identity, whether individual or also of rank is not discernable. Granted that under the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), which was founded by the Jurchen who had strong cultural ties with the Mongols, a horse’s riding equipment indeed displayed rank through colour coding and certain stipulated materials³⁴⁶, the probability that this system had been in place long before and was in use also in neighbouring societies is great. Börte certainly recognized Temüjin when he raided the camp where she was kept captive by his reins and his tether:

And so he came upon her, for Lady Börte was among those fleeing people. She heard the voice of Temüjin and, recognizing it, she got off the cart and came running towards him. Although it was still night, Lady Börte and Qo’aqčın both recognized Temüjin’s reins and tether and grabbed them.³⁴⁷

Chao Hung specifically mentions Činggis Qan’s crupper and saddle and notes that the applied materials and patterns indicated rank. He, though, does not refer to bridle and tether.

Was den Landesfürsten anbetrifft, so hat (sein Sitz) hier und da Silber- (Verzierungen); auf diese Weise wird ein Unterschied (zu Cinggis) gemacht. Auch sein (Cinggis’) Sattel und Pferdegurt sind mit goldenen gewundenen Drachen geschmückt. Bei dem Landesfürsten ist es ebenso.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 148

³⁴⁶ Onon Urgunge mentions the reward of a title of nobility together with corresponding reins. “[...] Damdinsüren was accorded the rank of hereditary Tüshee Duke, the title of Forefront Hero, and a brown-coloured rein, [...]”The application of a variety of precious stones as finals of the official Manchu hats related to a colour code of ranks. A brown jewel was the privilege of Manchu and Mongol dukes and princes. See Urgunge (1976) 116.

³⁴⁷ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 40

³⁴⁸ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 72

A golden saddle is also mentioned for the envoy of Ong Qan, the former ally of Činggis Qan. The envoy, Itürgen, is nevertheless not entitled to a white gelding as documented by the *Secret History*: “Čarqurqan’s horse was slower; at an arrow’s shot from the rear, he hit Itürgen’s gold-saddled black gelding on the tip of its rump, so that it sat on its haunches.”³⁴⁹ Examples of richly worked golden saddle decorations are shown in figure 46a and b, 47, 48, and a set of golden horse trappings in figure 49

Another item that seems to have been an indicator of rank is the tassel attached to the horse’s chest-strap. This tassel is already noted on paintings dating from the Liao dynasty (figure 69) but sketches of Mongolian riders equally display this article. I have not found any mention in literary sources on any practice or sumptuary laws connected with it, but from depictions it is evident that it was restricted to riders of the highest rank or noble background (see figure 83a, 85, 88, 91) and this item was attached also to other royal mounts such as camels (figure 159) and even donkeys.³⁵⁰ The retinue of such figures is in no instance shown with this item.

The only conclusion to be drawn from these references is that a person’s horse was a stage for expressions of wealth and status, either regulated by sumptuary laws or free to be explored based on personal taste.

³⁴⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 106

³⁵⁰ As seen in the Persian miniature *Iskander Emerging from the Gloom*, Book of Kings, Iran, 1330s.

4. Political role of clothing and textiles: ritual and symbolism

Clothing and textiles in Mongolian society reached beyond the basic functions of offering protection against the elements and being an indication of social rank. They often played crucial roles in historical events that shaped the history of Mongolia, while being at the core of a number of traditions and cultural concepts surrounding them. This chapter attempts to illuminate the various roles clothing and textiles were attributed and depicts the relationship Mongols had to attire, socially and politically.

4.1 The jisün robe and geopolitics

A very specific use of clothing is mentioned by nearly all western travellers who observed ascensions or other festivals at the Mongol court. They narrate that on special occasions the entire court was dressed in attire of a specific colour that would be provided by the emperor all participants. The earliest mention of this in western sources is found in Carpini's narration, referring to Güyük Qa'an's ascension.

By the time we got there a large pavilion had already been put up made of white velvet, and in my opinion it was so big that more than two thousand men could have got into it. Around it had been erected a wooden palisade, on which various designs were painted. On the second or third day we went with the Tartars who had been appointed to look after us and there all the chiefs were assembled and each one was riding with his followers among the hills and over the plains round about.

On the first day they were all clothed in white velvet, on the second in red-that day Cuyuc came to the tent-on the third day they were all in blue velvet and on the fourth in the finest brocade. [...] The chiefs went about everywhere armed and accompanied by a number of their men, but none, unless their group of ten was complete, could go as far as the horses; indeed those who attempted to do so were severely beaten. There were many of them who had, as far as I could judge, about twenty marks' worth of gold on their bits, breastplates, saddles and cruppers. The chiefs held their conference inside the tent and, so I believe, conducted the election.³⁵¹

³⁵¹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 61, 62

Carpini's companion and translator, Benedict the Pole, also relates this occasion, noting additional details of the process of election.

And the same Brother Benedict the Pole related to us by word of mouth how they had both, [Benedict and Carpini] seen about 5, 000 princes and great men who were all clad in cloth of gold on the first day when they assembled for the election of the king [Güyük Qa'an's, UH]. But neither on that day, nor on the next when they appeared in white samite, did they come to an agreement. But on the third day, when they wore red samite, they reached agreement and made the election.³⁵²

A narration agreeing with that of Carpini's is Rubruck's account of the Möngke Qa'an's return to Qara Qorum on sending out troops to continue the military conquest

In the meantime he [Möngke Qa'an] returned to Caracorum, and on the octave of Pentecost [7 June], to be precise, held his great formal reception. He wanted all the envoys to be present on the final day, and sent for us as well, but I had gone to the church to baptize the three sons of a poor German whom we met with there. Master William was the head butler at this feast, since the tree which pours the drink was his work. Everyone, rich and poor, was singing and dancing and clapping his hands in front of the Chan. Then he began to address them, and said: 'I have dismissed my brothers and have sent them to court danger among foreign peoples: now it will emerge how you will act when I wish to send you out for the extension of our state.' On each of the four days they would change their garments, of which they were all given a single colour to wear for each and every day, from footwear right up to their head-dress.³⁵³

Marco Polo reports the same tradition about the Great Qa'an's birthday celebration and mentions thirteen of such occasion where the participant sported attire of one communal colour.

³⁵² Benedict, *Mongol Missions*, 81

³⁵³ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 246

You must know that the Tartars keep high festival yearly on their birthdays. And the Great Kaan was born on the 28th day of the September moon, so on that day is held the greatest feast of the year at the Kaan's Court, always excepting that which he holds on New Year's Day, of which I shall tell you afterwards.

Now, on his birthday, the Great kaan dresses in the best of his robes, all wrought with beaten gold; and full 12,000 Barons and Knights on that day come forth dressed in robes of the same colour, and precisely like those of the Great Kaan, except that they are not so costly; but still they are all of the same colour as his, and are also of silk and gold. Every man so clothed has also a girdle of gold; and this as well as the dress is given him by the Sovereign. And I will aver that there are some of these suits decked with so many pearls and precious stones that a single suit shall be worth full 10,000 golden bezants.

And of such aiment there are several sets. For you must know that the Great Kaan, thirteen times in the year, presents to his Barons and Knights such suits of raiment as I am speaking of. And on each occasion they wear the same colour that he does, a different colour being assigned to each festival. Hence you may see what a huge business it is, and that there is no prince in the world but he alone who could keep up such customs as these.³⁵⁴

These specific ceremonial robes are referred to in historic sources as *jisün* robes, which has been translated in the *Yuan shih* as “a robe of one colour” and these were sported on occasions that are known as *chama* banquettes.³⁵⁵ The term of the later reveals the Persian origin of the term since *jamah* means as much as “clothing” or “coat” in Persian and came to be understood by the Mongols as “brocade”.³⁵⁶ The earliest instance of such a robe has been traced by Professor Thomas Allsen to the submission of the Uighurs in 1209. Činggis Qan rewards Bilge Buqa, an Uighur official, for his role in effecting this alliance by way of a *jisün* robe among other prestigious items, such as a *paizah*, seal, and silver ingots.³⁵⁷ Other occasions where *jisün* robes were bestowed on meritorious individuals are recorded, but the use of these robes as ceremonial courtwear is only attested with Ögödei's reign.³⁵⁸ The Chinese textile expert Zhao Feng states that there were eleven grades of *jisün* robes. The most prestigious robes were made from *nasiq* or gold

³⁵⁴ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 386, 387

³⁵⁵ Allsen (1997), 19

³⁵⁶ Wardwell and Watt (1997) 138, Allsen (1997) 76

³⁵⁷ Allsen (1997), 20

³⁵⁸ Allsen (1997), 21

brocade, second grade robes from velvet, while even lower graded ones were made of *baoli*, a textile that featured bands of woven or embroidered gold decoration. The material for jisün robes of the lowest quality is referred to as *fengpi*, a term that is only understood as far as the technique of printing gold onto the fabric is concerned.³⁵⁹

The described etiquette to dress the entire court in attire of a specific colour is surely not a matter of a sudden imperial fancy or fashion, but must serve some political function. I suggest that the significance of the eventual communal attire lies in its consequential elimination of distinct markers of rank, even if only temporary. The only exception to this is the robe of the emperor, which is a slightly more elaborate version than that of the retainer of the court. The uniform dresscode therefore makes for an aspect of egalitarianism, creating an instance of a political community based on equality. Jisün robes created a sense community, impressing on the participant the imperial favour and estimation of everyone contributing to the creation and consolidation of the empire. The honour and reward that was thought befitting this elite was expressed in the richness and value (actual and cultural) of this specific attire, which featured predominantly gold. Gold, in the nomadic tradition, was the ultimate symbol of imperial authority, illustrating that the wearer was a member and participant of the imperial endeavour. Since any sense of community is based on markers of boundaries to groups on the outside, the jisün robes functioned basically as such and in the same vein elevated members socially from the unadorned others.

Moreover, this thus distinguished political community was subsequently a symbol of the empire's unity, or rather the expression of the objective to construct a united empire. The communal attire covered political realities where certain ethnicities held more political influence than others. A favourable position was consistently assured for the related ethnics of the Mongols, but also the dominant Uighur and Khitan factions. The desire to create the illusion of unity, as expressed by communal attire, is founded on the Mongols' understanding that unity was the principle requirement of an invincible and lasting imperial effort.³⁶⁰

From the detailed account of Carpini and Benedict regarding the election procedure of Güyük Qa'an a further feature can be inferred. Both authors describe that the jisün robes worn displayed white, red and blue. Benedict mentions another set of golden jisün, whereas Carpini lists another questionable colour simply stipulated as "brocade". The narrations of the two do not match regarding the chronological order of the applied colours. Carpini notes for the first day of

³⁵⁹ Feng (2004) <http://www.asianart.com/rossi/intro.html>

³⁶⁰ This theme recurs in many chronicles and other written material in the form of a legend, where a mother, whose identity varies, asks her sons to each hand her one arrow. She then demonstrates that a single arrow can be easily broken, the whole bundle, expressing the sons' unity, however not.

the election procedure a white robe, Benedict a golden one. And whereas Carpini's account ends with brocade, Benedict's relates of red attire. Benedict does not mention blue robes.

Given that the application of colours in Mongol culture was not a matter of personal taste, but were subject to specific cultural associations, Rubruck's and Benedict's mention of a certain set of colours employed at Güyük Qa'an's election indicates political connotations. The specific colours here enumerated are in the Turko-Mongol and equally Central Asian convention signifiers of cardinal direction. Blue/green is attributed to the east, red to the south, while the west is white and the north black. In the seventeenth century specific nations were associated with a distinct colour, but whether this was the case already in the early period of the empire is doubtful.³⁶¹ I take the application of the colours as reported by Rubruck and Benedict to simply represent the four cardinal directions, of which the various sons were representatives in their function as governors of the realm. Substantiating such interpretation is Khara-Davan's mention, recounted by Boyle, that the wearing of white on the first day symbolized the participation of Joci's ulus in the election.³⁶²

This directional reference was, in my estimation, an allusion to the might and grandeur of the empire, displaying the expansion of the Mongols' power to all observers of the event. It will have simultaneously asserted the Mongol point of view that the heavenly-destined emperor was to bestow the grace of Mongol suzerainty on the world, which was understood as a natural implication of the favours of Heaven.³⁶³

Carpini's and Benedict's account both do not enumerate black, which might make this theory seem rather deficient. The presence of the colours blue, red, white and yellow, though, discounts any accidental application of colour, which is generally highly unlikely for court attire, especially ceremonial wear. The absence of black, at least in these accounts, can be explained in a number of ways. It might be as well that the court sported a black *jisün* robe, but that Carpini and Benedict perceived the black attire as casual court wear preceding the election process. Another possibility is that the brocade *jisün* mentioned by Carpini and the golden coats narrated by Benedict were indeed of the colour black, but that the golden applications so drew notice that the colour of the ground fabric receded to the background of the viewer's attention. This speculative interpretation requires further investigation, but it generally tallies with the consistent practise of colour usage based on political, religious and wider cultural associations.

³⁶¹ *Cayan teüke/Sagaster* (1272?) 313

³⁶² Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 186, see notes.

³⁶³ See also chapter "Qanship and its ideology".

With the discontinuance of election procedures to determine the next qa'an following Qubilai Qa'an's self-styled investiture this specific convention of the jisun robe naturally disappeared. The custom of dressing the entire court in jisun robes was however continued throughout the Yuan dynasty. Marco Polo relates that the Qa'an dressed twelve thousand barons in complete outfits of deel, boots, hat and belt for thirteen different annual occasions. Of the textiles that these robes were made from he mentions the addition of a profusion of gems and pearls and "other precious things." The golden belts were 'of great richness and value', while the accompanying boots were decorated with wrought silver. In keeping with tradition, the Qa'an's attire stood only out in terms of costly decorations but shared the uniform colour attribute.³⁶⁴ Whilst Marco Polo's account attests the continuation of this convention for the late thirteenth century Odoric of Pordenone relates that at four major festivals (anniversary of the qa'an's coronation, his personal birthday, and "others") at which the participants no longer sported jisun robes. He instead writes that participants sported attire coloured according to their respective ranks: the highest rank appeared in green silk, the second rank in crimson, and the third in yellow. A golden girdle decorated the attire and a "coronet" adorned their heads.³⁶⁵ In another passage he

³⁶⁴ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 394, 395:

Now you must know that the Great Kaan hath set apart 12,000 of his men who are distinguished by the name of *Keshican*, as I have told you before; and on each of these 12,000 Barons he bestows thirteen changes of raiment, which are all different from one another: I mean that in one set the 12,000 are all of one colour; the next 12,000 of another colour, and so on; so that they are of thirteen different colours. These robes are garnished with gems and pearls and other precious things in a very rich and costly manner. And along with each of these changes of raiment, *i.e.* 13 times in the year, he bestows on each of those 12,000 Barons a fine golden girdle of great richness and value, and likewise a pair of boot of *Camut*, that is to say of *Borgal*, curiously wrought with silver thread, insomuch that when they are clothed in these dresses every man of them looks like a king! And there is an established order as to which dress is to be worn at each of those thirteen feasts. The Emperor himself also has his thirteen suits corresponding to those of his Barons, in *colour*, I mean (though his are grander, richer, and costlier), so that he is always arrayed in the same colour as his Barons, who are, as it were his comrades. And you may see that all this costs an amount which it is scarcely possible to calculate.

Now I have told you of the thirteen changes of raiment received from the Prince by those 12,000 Barons, amounting in all to 156,000 suits of so great cost and value, to say nothing of the girdles and the boots which are also worth a great sum of money. All this the Great Lord hath ordered, that he may attach the more of grandeur and dignity to his festivals.

Cordier explains *camut* and *borgal* to be a term for "Russia-Leather". This type of leather was cured in a certain way, which had been invented by a people living on the Wolga. *Camut* is shown to have been understood to be camel-leather, *i.e.* "leather made from the back-skin of a camel", but it might also have been horse or ass-leather as derived from a Persian dictionary [Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 395].

³⁶⁵ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 327-329:

Every year that emperor keepeth four great feasts, to wit, the day of his birth, that of his circumcision [another version has, more likely, coronation], and so forth. To these

refers to robes as studded with pearls some fifteen thousand florins of worth, whether this refers to different ones or just those above mentioned cannot be discerned.³⁶⁶ Since Pordenone and Polo both are not precise which events they refer to, it is difficult to determine whether this change evidences a discontinuation of the jisün robe or rather a parallel custom of celebrating another four festivals. Given the high political content of coronation anniversaries and the obvious political role jisün robes had in manifesting and celebrating the political elite, one would expect jisün robes present at such an event. Their absence on this occasion as noted by Pordenone might attest the disappearance of a political tradition of the Mongols. Interesting in this context is the timing of this change. Pordenone narrates of events post-1329, the historical year in which an emperor rose to power who was strongly influenced by the Confucian faction at court. If the disappearance of the jisün robe can be definitely proven for this period a Sinification of court rituals could be concluded. Allsen, though, takes the mentions of bestowals of jisün robes that are documented in the *Yuan Shih* for even the period of the last Yuan emperor as an indication that the robes continued to exist.³⁶⁷

4.2 Tokens of alliances

Clothing and textiles have been recorded in Asian history as the primary commodity that alliances were based upon, peace bought with, and war was declared over; this holds especially true for the nomadic regions, where cloth was one of the principle commodities that lacked in the native economy.

A passage by Chao Hung concerning the preceding Mongolian confederation establishes that silk and gold were valued items, a supply of which kept the Mongols on friendly terms with the neighbour state of the Jin in the first half of the twelfth century.

festivals he summons all his barons and all his players, and all his kinfolk; and all these have their established places at the festival. But it is especially at the days of his birth and circumcision [coronation] that he expects all to attend. And when summoned to such a festival all the barons come with their coronets on, whilst the emperor is seated on his throne as has been described above, and all the barons are ranked in order in their appointed places. Now these barons are arranged in divers colours; for some, who are in the first order, wear green silk; the second are clothed in crimson; the third in yellow. And all these have coronets on their heads, and each holds in his hand a white ivory tablet and wears a golden girdle of half a span in breadth; and so they remain standing silent. And round about them stand the players with their banners and ensigns. [...] And there be also many officers to look diligently that none of the barons or of the players are absent. For any one of them who should be absent himself would incur heavy penalties.

³⁶⁶ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 225

³⁶⁷ Allsen (1997) 22

Früher gab es ein Reich Meng-ku-sze, das in der von den Kin-Leuten angemessenen Regierungsperiode t'ien-hui (1123-1137) schon den Kin-Barbaren arg zu schaffen machte. Die Kin-Barbaren hatten ständig mit ihm zu kämpfen. Schließlich hatten sie es dann mit viel Gold und Seide friedlich gestimmt.³⁶⁸

That this is no solitary incident prove historical records that document this practice already for Xiongnu times. The chance that political deals have been much earlier motivated and realized by said commodities is great, only the absence of written records makes this difficult to attest.

When tracing the history of the Mongol empire an early occurrence of this practice that had influence on subsequent events was the oath of brotherhood between Jamuqa and Temüjin. The *Secret History* narrates the consolidation of this *anda* relationship through the ritual exchange of tokens.³⁶⁹ Temüjin and Jamuqa present each other golden belts and affix the belt to the other. With the established custom of tying the “girdle of obedience”, the mutual absolute loyalty implied by this action is obvious.

The *anda* relation with Jamuqa surely helped Temüjin to establish himself as a more powerful local figure, but by Jamuqa subsequently neglecting this commitment, this advantage was shortlived. The presentation of valuable and valued items between individuals and nations have many times occurred with similar temporary effect, since alliances were negated as soon as a more favourable alliance was possible. Nonetheless, in a few instances this practise might as well prove as the hinge factor that has affected history ever after the historical event. In my view the *Secret History* narrates such an occasion; the fundamental event that enabled the emergence of the Mongol empire. Temüjin approaches Ong Qan with the prestigious black sable coat that was given to his mother by Čotan, his mother-in-law, as a wedding gift. Along with this item he extends the plea to perpetuate the alliance that existed under his father Yisüge Ba'atur.

When he came to Ong Qan, Temüjin said, ‘Since in earlier days you and my father declared yourselves sworn friends you are, indeed, like a father to me. I took a wife, and I have brought the wedding gift to you.’ Thereupon he gave him the black sable coat. Ong Qan was very pleased. He said,

³⁶⁸ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 16

³⁶⁹ Temüjin girdled his sworn friend Jamuqa with the golden belt taken as loot from Toqto'a of the Merkit. He also gave his sworn friend Jamuqa for a mount Toqto'a's yellowish white mare with a black tail and mane, a mare that had not foaled for several years. Jamuqa girdled his sworn friend Temüjin with the golden belt taken as loot from Dayir Usun of the U'as Merkit, and he gave Temüjin for a mount the kid-white horse with a horn, also of Dayir Usun [*Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 45].

In return for the black sable coat,
I shall bring together for you
Your divided people;
In return for the sable coat,
I shall unite for you
Your scattered people. Just as
The place of the kidneys must be in the back,
That of good faith must be in the breast!³⁷⁰

When Ong Qan receives Temüjin's black sable coat he is ultimately able to forge a new alliance with one of the most powerful local leaders. This alliance enabled him to break out of political isolation and was the starting point that allowed him to build up a military following, even if at first in the shadow of Ong Qan's authority. The successful common conquests established Temüjin as a very able military commander. The alliance with Ong Qan furthermore provided access to leadership of other ethnoid, whose appreciation of Temüjin's capability was eventually vital in establishing him as an independent force in the political landscape of the steppe.

Only shortly after his installation as Činggis Qan, the first foreign submission sees him on the receiving side of the political equation. The Uighurs petition him to be allowed to enter into an alliance with the Mongols. The idu'ut of the Ui'ut [ruler of the Uighurs] sent envoys to Činggis Qan. Through the envoys Atkaraq and Darbai he had the following petition conveyed to him:

As if one saw Mother Sun
When the clouds disperse;
As if one came upon the river water
When the ice disappears,
So I greatly rejoiced when I heard of the fame of Činggis Khaan. If through your
favour, O Činggis Khaan, I were to obtain
But a ring from your golden belt,
But a thread from your crimson coat,
I will become your fifth son and will serve you.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 30

³⁷¹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 163

The Uighurs were members of a similar culture who shared the custom of stately presents as tokens of alliances and understood very well the importance of receiving a memento, how symbolic it may be, that represented the commitment entered in. An alliance, unlike a forceful submission, implied obligations for both parties: an alliance with the Uighurs hence meant the obligation to assist the Uighurs militarily if need arose.

The exchange of presents did not only pertain to forging alliances, but was a custom that was adhered to even regarding low level diplomatic endeavours. Carpini's report establishes further that this cultural custom was not a matter of choice or open to alternative practices with regards to political entities unaccustomed to this culture.

We [the members of Carpini's mission] were favoured by the grace of God, for at that time the Lord Vasilko, Duke of Russia, was there [when they were visiting the Duke of Lenczy] and from him we did in fact learn a good deal about the Tartars, for he had sent envoys to them and they had returned to him and his brother Daniel, bringing a safe-conduct for the Lord Daniel to go to Bati. He told us that if we wished to go to them we ought to have valuable gifts to present to them, for they asked for such things with the most pressing importunity, and if they were not given them (as indeed is true) an envoy could not properly fulfil his mission, nay rather he would be held of no account.³⁷²

Carpini's mission was well advised and Benedict relates that they presented forty beaver skins and eighty badger skins to Batu; no mention is made of presents to Güyük Qa'an.³⁷³ Whilst Carpini's delegation obviously heeded the advice and adapted to Mongol expectations³⁷⁴ many accounts of interactions with western envoys show the potential of conflict that the custom of gifting involved. The duty to present a token of political goodwill to the Mongol leaders was mostly misunderstood as tribute of a vassal admitting submission, which consisted of basically the same material ingredients. The later Russian missions of the seventeenth century are a vivid example of the constant struggle in terms of etiquette, strained relations, misunderstandings, and frustrations on both sides. The fact that the Mongols would send long lists with items requested to be presented to them before negotiations would take place was experienced as an ultimate offence to the person of the Tsar.

³⁷² Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 51

³⁷³ Benedict, *Mongol Missions*, 80

³⁷⁴ The mission declined to bow to the golden statue of the emperor, a refusal that was finally accepted by the Mongol court.

But apart from having to present items of prestige, most envoys to the Mongol sphere of influence mention that they equally were bestowed gifts, mostly personal gifts as well as gifts addressed to their overlord. Mongol envoys similarly were fitted out with presents for the powers their mission was designated to reach.

Li Zhichang's first mention of such gifts includes "warm clothing and other comforts", which were, I gather, gladly accepted owing to the unforgiving climate.³⁷⁵ But he also enumerates that this master declined what was offered him on a later leg on their journey "The [Mongol] Governor [at Samarkand] gave a banquet in his [Zhang Chun's] honour, and sent ten pieces of gold brocade, but the Master would not receive them."³⁷⁶

Rubruck's account vividly describes the astonishment at this religiously inspired frugality, also concerning his own embassy. He writes, "[...] our guide took us by way of a great number of them [locations where members of Chingis' clan were lodging], and they were amazed beyond measure that we were unwilling to accept gold or silver or expensive garments."³⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the cold forces them, just like Li Zhichang's entourage, to make concessions and they accept warm clothing. "At that time the cold began to grow very severe, and Mangu Chan [Möngke Qan] sent us three fur coats made of the skin of the lynx, which they wear with the fur side out; these we accepted with expressions of thanks."³⁷⁸ On taking their final leave Rubruck's mission is being asked to yield to Mongol customs and receive the honours set apart for them "In front of us she [the lady] had them lay a *nasic*, which is a piece of cloth as broad as a bed-cover and extremely long, and a *buccaran*."³⁷⁹ As I would not accept these, they were sent to the interpreter, who kept them himself: he brought the *nasic* all the way to Cyprus, and sold it for eighty Cypriot *besants*, though it had suffered much wear and tear on the journey." Later his mission is again approached as to his preferences regarding presents. "He [Möngke Qa'an] thereupon enquired whether I wanted gold or silver or costly garments. 'We do not accept such things,' I said, 'but we have no provisions, and without your assistance we are in no position to leave your territory.'"³⁸⁰ Rubruck and his companions were finally obliged to accept each a simple tunic and

³⁷⁵ 'Both the "Chinese" and the Tangut princess sent us [Zhang Chun and his entourage] warm clothing and other comforts.' The notes stipulate that the text here refers to wives of Činggis Qan, one of whom was a "Kin Tartar", the other the daughter of a Tangut ruler. See Li Chi Ch'ang, 71.

³⁷⁶ Li Chi Ch'ang, 93, 94

³⁷⁷ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 142

³⁷⁸ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 188

³⁷⁹ *Nasic* was according to the *Codex Cumanicus* "a kind of gold brocade with pearls", whereas *buccaran* was a high quality cotton cloth. See for quote and note Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 190, 191.

³⁸⁰ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 238

he remarks on Mongol etiquette, “So we were obliged to accept them out of deference to him, since they take it very much amiss when their gifts are spurned.”³⁸¹

Carpini relates that his mission on receiving permission to leave each member received “a fox-skin cloak, which had the fur outside and was lined inside, and a length of velvet”, of which their Mongol minders pocketed a share.³⁸²

Many of the envoys faced difficulties in procuring sustenance and suffered hunger and cold during their stay at the Mongol court. Marignolli’s account from 1342 might hint to a change in attitude that generously supported missions to the court, probably explained by the slowly emerging change of political fortunes befalling the Yuan dynasty. Marignolli and his entourage stayed for four years at court, where they received everything they needed, including elite attire.

And so we were dismissed to one of the Imperial apartments which had been most elegantly fitted up for us; and two princes were appointed to attend to all our wants. And this they did in the most liberal manner, not merely as regards meat and drink, but even down to such things as paper for lanterns, whilst all necessary servants also were detached from the Court to wait upon us. And so they tended us for nearly four years, never failing to treat us with unbounded respect. And I should add that they kept us and all our establishment clothed in costly raiment.³⁸³

The re-occurring allusion to provisions of textiles and clothing but also demands thereof illustrates in which esteem these commodities were held. The portability but also visibility of clothing as a showcase of wealth and status caused it naturally to be the most coveted item in the political culture of the Mongols. This functional preference is not only noted for stately gifts of which the like of Rubruck, Carpini and many others were witnesses, but equally for the sphere of inner politics where rewards played a crucial role.

³⁸¹ See Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 251.

They [the secretaries] were holding three garments or tunics, and said to us: ‘You are not willing to accept gold or silver, and you have been here a long time praying for the Chan. He requests each one of you to accept at least a simple garment, so that you do not leave him empty-handed.’ So we were obliged to accept them out of deference to him, since they take it very much amiss when their gifts are spurned.

³⁸² See Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 69.

Two days later, that is to say on the feast of St. Brice [November 13th, Dawson], they gave us a permit to depart and a letter sealed with the emperor’s seal, and sent us to the Emperor’s mother. She gave each of us “a fox-skin cloak, which had the fur outside and was lined inside, and a length of velvet; our Tartars stole a good yard from each of the pieces of velvet and from the piece given to our servant they stole more than half.

³⁸³ Marignolli/Yule, Cordier (1342) 214, 215

4.3 *Tügel*

Distribution of rewards was considered one of the major obligations of a Mongol ruler.³⁸⁴ Every festival and banquet, never alone a secular affair but always accompanied by a religious aspect, was concluded by passing out rewards to the meritorious supporters of the empire's ambitions.³⁸⁵ This practise was known as *sang-un tügel*, the distribution of rewards, or simply Distribution (*tügel*). The first of those Distributions took place in 1206 at Činggis Qan's ascension. This event also constitutes the first staffing of the Mongol Empire since for the first time titles were rewarded to Činggis Qan's companions.³⁸⁶ Rewards consisted of presents, among which items of clothing were prevailing, as well as titles and official positions, but also clearly defined access to the court and participation in rituals.³⁸⁷ These rewards, most importantly, constituted the Mongol manner of payment for services, since a salary as such did not exist. Peng Daya narrates that in peaceful times no rewards were received for services rendered to the empire but that once a military victory had been won, horses, silver or golden tablets of authority, silken stuffs and atlas fabrics, as well as captured women and looted valuables were granted to all participants.³⁸⁸ The right to receive these rewards annually or monthly was stipulated by imperial decrees already in the time Činggis Qan's.³⁸⁹ In the phase of expansion these rewards were mostly collected from the riches of freshly conquered areas, which rendered everyone involved in the Mongol effort into a shareholder of imperial conquest. The more cities plundered and settlements vanquished, the more the personal wealth increased. But since paying the increasing multitude of the military relied on constantly finding new sources of supply, expansion was a means, indeed the only available solution, to compensate staff. Rubruck notes that twice a year, around Easter and in the summer, all nobles in a radius of a two-month journey came to Qara Qorum to receive their

³⁸⁴ The practice to reward outstanding service with costly garments is a general Asian custom. For China it has been documented for the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) in one of the earliest written sources extant, the *Sheijing*. Here it is written that

The marquis of Han came to court, with the large sceptre of his rank; he entered and appeared before the king. The king gave him a fine dragon-flag, with its feathery ornaments; a checkered bamboo screen, and an ornamental yoke; a dark-coloured robe with the dragons on it, and the red slippers..."[from Chung (2005) 128].

³⁸⁵ The practise to bestow silk onto guests at the end of rituals has been recorded in China for pre-Han times. The practice was to hand out a specified number of bales with stipulated design and colour. In the composite of secular and cosmic powers rituals had a prominent place [Lin (2006) 23].

³⁸⁶ The practice of *tügel* is being continued in the cult of Činggis Qan, were in a ceremony the early supporters of the Mongol imperial adventure are praised and afterwards the sacrifices in specific proportions distributed among the participants. See *Čayan teüke/Sagaster (1272?)* 364, 365.

³⁸⁷ *Čayan teüke/Sagaster (1272?)* 364, Weiers (2006) 88

³⁸⁸ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 161

³⁸⁹ Weiers (2006) 88

rewards.³⁹⁰ Apart from the seemingly twice annual occurrence of a *tügel* at Qara Qorum, Carpini relates that the ascension ceremony of Güyük Qa'an rewards were distributed, indicating that ascensions were another occasion were *tügel* figured predominantly. He gives additionally details on how this event was handled.

There up on a hill a good distance away from the tents were stationed more than five hundred carts, which were all filled with gold and silver and silken garments, and these things were shared out among the Emperor and the chiefs. Each chief divided his share among his men, but according to his own good pleasure.³⁹¹

Rashid al-Din also mentions this event and adds that the ceremony consisted of a week-long feast that climaxed with the distribution of rewards. He also specifically mentions the eligible parties of such rewards. "In accordance with their custom, they took their cups and feasted for a whole week. When they had finished, he [Güyük Qa'an] presented great quantities of goods to the *khatuns* [queens], princes, and commanders of *tümens*, thousands, hundreds and tens."³⁹² A depiction of such occasion shows the ruler of the Ilqanate handing out a belt to deserving staff (figure 68). While these occasions must have been fixed occurrences in the Mongol political calendar, Rashid al-Din proves that irregular conferences were likewise events of which *tügel* was a prominent component. He narrates of Ögödei holding a *quriltai*:

In this Year of the Sheep he wished to reassemble all the sons, kinsfolk, and emirs and cause them to listen once again to the *yasas* and ordinances. They all presented themselves in accordance with his command, and he distinguished them everyone with every sort of kindness and favor. For one continuous month, in unison with his kinsmen, he joined the morning [draught] to the evening draught in feasting, and in his wonted manner and according to his practice, he

³⁹⁰ See Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 209. "At Caracorom Mangu [Möngke Qa'an] has a large encampment, near the city walls and enclosed by a brick wall just as are the priories of our own monks. Here there is a great palace where he holds his drinking sessions twice a year, once at Eastern when he passes by there and once in summer when he is on his way back. The latter occasion is the more important, inasmuch as then there gather at his court all the nobles from any place up to two months' journey away; he then confers on them garments and presents, and parades his great grandeur."

³⁹¹ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 64

³⁹² Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 182

bestowed upon the assembly all the valuables that had been gathered together in the treasuries.³⁹³

There is another passage in which he lists all the items that were distributed among the crowd. It reads much like a reversal of the commonplace looting and details the destination of plunder that had been stored in the imperial treasury.

Qa'an ordered the show to be stopped and [commanded his attendants] to fetch from the treasury precious clothes and jewel-studded objects such as are brought from Baghdad and Bukhara, Arab horses, and other valuable things such as jewels, gold, silver, etc., which are found in these parts.³⁹⁴

Juvaini relates of a sharing out of treasures as part of the closing ceremony of Ögödei Qa'an's ascension.

Qa'an the ordered that they should open the deposits of the treasuries collected during so many years from the countries of the East and the West for the begood of Chingiz-Khan, the sum total of which could not be contained within the bellies of ledgers. He closed the mouths of the censorious with rejection of their advice and allotted his portion to each of his relatives and soldiers, his troops and kinsfolk, noble and base, lord and liege, master and slave, to each in accordance with his pretensions; and left in his treasuries for the morrow neither much nor little, neither great nor small.³⁹⁵

Instances of *tügel* that were not imbedded in a communal gathering but were the distribution regards the spontaneous gifting of individuals finds equally frequent mention in sources. The *Annals of Möngke Khaan*, a chapter of the *Yuan Shih*, relate of an imperial tour of inspection cum conquest on which the general Tienko is rewarded on several occasions. Firstly, he successfully constructs a bridge over a river, for which he receives gold and silk. Then, shortly later, he is mentioned in connection with the successful subjugation of Ku-chu-yai, for which he receives a pearl-studded belt. A local Chinese officer who collaborated with the Mongols had also made the

³⁹³ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 54

³⁹⁴ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 78

³⁹⁵ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 189

victory possible. This Chao-Chung together with his family was spared and distinguished by receiving a garment and a hat from the emperor.³⁹⁶ An example of a civilian receiving distinctions is the case of the Nepali artist Anige who worked for Qubilai Qa'an and built many famous Buddhist architectural structures under the Yuan. He was an equally respected painter and sculptor and endeavoured to produce the imperial portrait as a *kesi* piece, which has been preserved (cf. figure 102a and b, 103). Anige is recorded to have received 'jade and gold belts, brocade garments, ceremonial robes, twenty-four sets of full banquet robes, marten coats and hats, horses, chariots and saddles.'³⁹⁷

Tügel also applied to authorities of religious groups. A number of such instances is enumerated by Rabban Sauma with concerns to the high clergy of the Nestorian church. Mar Yaballaha received from Ghazan Qan, camped at Ala Dagh, "many valuable gifts, viz., a cloak, a couple of fine riding mules, a parasol to be held over his head on state occasions, and 60.000 *zuze*, or about £ 2,500."³⁹⁸ King Abhgha bestowed on Mar Yahbh-Allaha another *paizah* on the occasion of his election as Catholicus of Baghdad.³⁹⁹ On a later occasion Mar Yahbh-Allaha receives another canopy together with 'a cloak of great price, two splendid riding mules and sixty thousand *zuze*'.⁴⁰⁰ Rashid al-Din recounts an identical approach in regards to Möngke Qa'an who

³⁹⁶ See Möngke's Annalen, Abramowski (1979) 29, 30:

Im Winter im 10. Monat am Tag jen-wu kam der Kaiser nach Pao-feng. Am Tag kuei-wei erreichte er Li-chou. Er inspizierte die Stadtmauern und die Befestigungsgräben; obwohl sie keineswegs fest bzw. tief waren, meinte er [dennoch], Wang T'ien-ko sei in der Lage, [Li-chou] zu verteidigen und [die Leute] in Shu würden nicht wagen, sich aufzulehnen. [Der Kaiser] schenkte [T'ien-ko] ein Faß Wein und sprach ihm sein Lob aus. Nachdem der Kaiser den Chia-ling Fluss überquert und den Pai-shui-Fluss erreicht hatte, befahl er dem T'ien-ko eine schwimmende Brücke zu bauen, um herüber zu gelangen. Als die Brücke fertig war, beschenkte [der Kaiser] T'ien-ko und die anderen mit Gold und Seide, je nach ihren Verdiensten. [Danach] machte der Kaiser in Chien-men halt. Am Tag mou-tzu griff er Ku-chu-yai an. Der Unteroffizier (p'i-chiang) Chao-Chung hatte [den Mongolen] heimlich das südöstliche Tor übergeben. So drang das Heer [in die Stadt] ein, kämpfte mit dem verteidigenden Kommandanten (shou-chiang) Yang Li und besiegte ihn. Li wurde getötet und seine Leute gerieten in grosse Verwirrung. [Der Kaiser] befahl, den Familienangehörigen von Chao Chung nichts anzutun und darüber hinaus schenkte er dem Chung ein Gewand und eine Kappe. [Der Kaiser] begab sich [dann] nach Lung-ch'ing.

Am Tag chi-hai ergriff man den Chang Shih, und er wurde [zur Strafe] zerstückelt. [Der Kaiser] schenkte dem T'ien-ko einen Perlengürt und belohnte [auch] dessen Soldaten.

³⁹⁷ Jing (1994) 49

³⁹⁸ See Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 76.

In April, 1294, three months after the death of Rabban Sawma, Mar Yahbh-Allaha went to visit the king in his camp at Ala Dagh, and received from him many valuable gifts, viz., a cloak, a couple of fine riding mules, a parasol to be held over his head on state occasions, and 60.000 *zuze*, or about £ 2,500."

³⁹⁹ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 154, 155

⁴⁰⁰ Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 207, 208:

On the day of the great festival he set out and met the victorious King Kaikhato at Ala Tak, where the royal Camp. And the king honoured him with many gifts, that is to say he

ordered ‘gold, silver and costly clothing’ to be given to a mosque, where his person had been included in Friday prayers and his name had been praised. Everything received was distributed among the population.⁴⁰¹ And lastly the Catholicus of Baghdad, the head of the Nestorian church, receives special distinction:

The king [Ghazan Khan in 1297] showed him [the Patriach] favour and gave him a new throne and a parasol, and the following winter he stayed in Arbil. [...] In 1302 the king bestowed a Paiza upon the Patriach, and gave him many rich vestments. [...,] He [the Patriach] returned to Maraghah [after his journey to Baghdad in 1303], where the king went to visit him, and gave the royal cloak which he was wearing to the Patriach as a mark of affection.⁴⁰²

These grants to religious leaders are not a sign of personal preferences in matters of faith on side of the Mongol rulers⁴⁰³, but they illustrate the system of Mongol government. The Mongol practice of relying on existing local structures of hierarchy to govern by allowed religious establishments to become part of the Mongol administration. Religious figureheads were therefore simultaneously also political leaders, who required careful attention. All available tokens of authority were bestowed on them, together with generous grants and the ubiquitous sets of rich clothing or textiles.

The last cited example moreover introduces another form of *tügel*. While the bestowal of rewards onto an individual already carried a connotation of a personal affiliation, this specific form of *tügel* improved on this. In this ritual the personal clothing of the authority in question, *qa’an* or prince, was rewarded to a favoured individual. The bodily vapours of exalted persons were held in high esteem, so that the grant of personal attire of the elite was a token of the highest

gave him a cloak of great price, and two splendid riding mules, and he assigned to him a “Sukur,” that is to say, a parasol, and he gave him sixty thousand *zuze*.

⁴⁰¹ See Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 220:

The *cadi* delivered the sermon and led the prayers, adorning the *khutba* [Friday prayer at the mosque] with the titles of the Caliph. He likewise prayed for Mōngke Qa’an and uttered praises of him. [Mōngke] ordered them to be given wagon-loads of gold and silver *balish* and costly clothing as a present for the festival, and the greater mankind had their share thereof.

⁴⁰² Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288) 83

⁴⁰³ It was indeed Ghazan Qan who first officially converted to Islam in 1295, therewith distancing himself from the general practice of religious tolerance of the Mongol court. After a period of persecutions against Christians and especially Buddhists, Ghazan managed to reinstate religious tolerance.

honour.⁴⁰⁴ This was generally valid for all physical contact with the imperial person, exemplified by the privileged position of the personal attendants and the grant to participate in ritual drinking ceremonies that entailed the right to drink from the cup of the emperor.⁴⁰⁵ The bestowal of personal clothing signalled therefore intimate access to the highest authority. Allsen's research brings other instances of this form of *tügel* to light. He mentions that Abagha in Iran rewarded the son of the lesser king of Armenia in like manner, as did Abu Sa'id the qadi of Shiraz. The *Yuan shih* narrates that the son of Güyük removed his own golden belt and presented it to an official.⁴⁰⁶

Tügel was thus a manner of officially rewarding services for the state that could be expanded into a highly personal relationship based on honour but also loyalty between the parties involved. This form of rewarding someone's services was based on the Turko-Mongol concept of rule that emphasized a patrimonial relationship of ruler to the ruled. A successful ruler was expected to be able to provide for his followers' basic needs, of which food and clothing were fundamentals. Yusuf Khass Hajib, the Qarakhanid ruler of Turkestan in the eleventh century, stipulated "a prince must give good reward for service, clothing the naked and feeding the hungry."⁴⁰⁷ If a nomadic ruler failed to do so or was unable to, his rule was bound to collapse shortly. This then illustrates how central clothing as a political currency functioned in the ritual context of *tügel* but also beyond.

4.4 Clothing relics

To preserve the golden charisma of sacred Činggis Qan his personal belongings were kept in a mausoleum, the *čaqa'an ordo*, which gave the Ordos region its name. The mausoleum of Činggis Qan in the Ordos in modern Inner Mongolia does not contain physical remains of him, as a corps in Mongolian Shamanistic belief is held to possess dangerous qualities. The relics that are kept there are generally utensils and clothing items of Činggis Qan. His personal belongings possess his *altan gegen*, or "Golden Glow", a quality that sees the divine powers of the dead endure in eternity. With this they are believed to possess the eternal power to bestow blessings, which is central to the cult of Chingis Qan. This cult developed historically from Shamanistic rites honouring Činggis Qan to a predominantly Chinese form of ancestor worship under Qubilai Qa'an. From Ögödei to Möngke Qa'an the ceremonies were celebrated at the four by Činggis Qan established *ordo*, a term which stipulates the palace tent of the emperor but also the entire

⁴⁰⁴ In modern Mongolia this tradition lives on in lunar New Year celebrations where the elders of an extended family are privileged to smell younger members in the greeting ceremony.

⁴⁰⁵ Weiers (2006) 88

⁴⁰⁶ Allsen (1997) 50

⁴⁰⁷ Allsen (1997) 55

complex of the imperial site or of the camping army.⁴⁰⁸ Qubiali Qa'an erected an ancestral temple on Chinese models where in eight chambers rites were held for the previous emperors, but also the father of Činggis Qan, Činggis Qan's sons and the principal wives.⁴⁰⁹ These two movements seem to have co-existed and might have finally merged in the cult's relocation to the Ordos region, which received this name through the establishment of an imperial (*ejen*) compound in connection with the cult. The Mongols who were responsible for guarding it were equally referred to as Ordos Mongols. The current locality of the Činggis Qan cult in the Ordos at *Ejen Horo-Chi*, which is historically known as the "Eight White Tents" (*naiman c'ayan ger*), seems to have been established only in the period shortly before Dayan Qa'an (1467/70-1543). The study of texts connected to rituals of the Činggis Qan cult shows that there was no permanent or consistent body of liturgy, just as the items stored there vary with the times.⁴¹⁰

An exact list of items that used to be kept there is not available, but a number of relics have been documented over times. Commonly mentioned are a silver shrine, a three-legged stool, a shirt of Činggis Qan, his bow and arrows, saddles, knives, and forks. To the *sang*, the treasure, belong his silver dishes, a wooden vassal to make coumis (fermented horsemilk) in, his black standard, his Big and Small Whistle, and his drum of war. It further contains two sacks, covered by silk cloth that have been wrapped by a leather strap, together symbolising the bedding of Činggis Qan's cradle. Traditionally a sack filled with cereals was placed into the cradle to absorb the baby's urine. More unlikely, the sacks might otherwise also be a symbol for the sable fur swaddling cloth that was presented to Temüjin by □arči'udai of the Uriankhai at his birth. These two sacks kept at the mausoleum are believed to contain personal clothing: one of the sacks a shirt⁴¹¹ and hair of Činggis Qan, the other the dress or perhaps also the shirt of his senior wife Börte. Popular but also cultic tradition attaches special importance to these relics.⁴¹²

Činggis Qan is believed to be the first child that was placed into a hanging cradle, said to have been invented by □arči'udai who recognized Temüjin's genius at his birth. The underlying belief that Temüjin as a divine being should not come into contact with the impure ground informed this invention. From this history of Temüjin's cradle the popular tradition derives to attach highly auspicious powers to a hanging cradle and the custom to place children of whom

⁴⁰⁸ From this Mongolian term the Russians took their title for the Kipčaq Qanate (= *orda*).

⁴⁰⁹ The rooms were dedicated to Yisügei, Činggis Qan, Jochi, Ögödei, Tolui, Ča'adai, Güyük, and Möngke Qa'an [Weiers (2006) 129].

⁴¹⁰ Weiers (2006) 128-138

⁴¹¹ The shirt as an article of clothing is considered a garment solely worn by the nobility, and not generally by commoners. See Olschki (1947) 55.

⁴¹² It might be these relics that the Chinese sources refer to. See above the subheading "Political role of clothing and textiles: ritual and symbolism".

great accomplishments are expected into such cradles. Even nowadays Mongolians avoid placing anything of value, such as a handbag, on the ground.

In the Činggis Qan cult this bedding plays a central role in one of the four major rituals that are held in the four seasons. The winter festival, which is held on the third day of the first winter month, celebrates the name-giving ceremony of Temüjin. On this day the infant is taken from his mother's breast and placed into the cradle⁴¹³. The infant is tightly wrapped into a piece of fur and the whole fastened with a leather string, a method which is basically still practised today. At the cult's winter festival the relic of Temüjin's cradle was taken out and the leather strings removed. The straps were then cut into small pieces and distributed as talismans to the participants. The cradle with all its components was believed to possess special auspicious powers that are passed on through the dispersion of these leather straps. New straps were then placed around the sacks again. From this practise is drawn the festival's name "Winter Banquet of the Straps" (*miliyad-un qurim*).⁴¹⁴

The ritual activities at the Winter Banquet thus created a political continuity that was based on the sacred person of Činggis Qan and centred on the divine charisma represented by his cradle and personal garments. The participants in this ritual were assured of being blessed by Činggis Qan's spirit, the Golden Glow, and of carrying on his divine mission.

4.5 Social welfare

Marco Polo narrates that the Qa'an provided all means of living for a select number of impoverished households, and ran a general dispensation of bread for the general population.

You see he [the Great Kaan] causes selection to be made of a number of families in the city which are in a state of indigence, and of such families some may consist of six in the house, some of eight, some of ten, more or fewer in each as it may hap, but the whole number being very great. And each family he causes annually to be supplied with wheat and other corn sufficient for the whole year. And this he never fails to do every year. Moreover, all those who choose to go to the daily dole at the Court receive a great loaf apiece, hot from the baking, and nobody is denied; for so the lord hath ordered. And some 30,000 people go for it

⁴¹³ Describing the birthing traditions of the Calmyck Mongols, Pallas notes that the third day is generally the day that the umbilical cord falls off. It will then be kept as a talsiman and is supposed to have beneficial powers [Pallas (1776) 166].

⁴¹⁴ *Cayan teiike/Sagaster* (1272?) 202, 203, 359-364

every day from year's end to year's end. Now this is a great goodness in the Emperor to take pity of his poor people thus! And they benefit so much by it that they worship him as he were God.

[He also provides the poor with clothes. For he lays a tithe upon all wool, silk, hemp, and the like, from which clothing can be made; and he has these woven and laid up in a building set apart for the purpose; and as all artisans are bound to give a day's labour weekly, in this way the Kaan has these stuffs made into clothing for the poor families, suitable for summer or winter, according to the time of year. He also provides the clothing for his troops, and has woollens woven for them in every city, the material for which is furnished by the tithe aforesaid.⁴¹⁵

This program of social welfare was certainly a means to keep the poor and destitute on favourable politically turns. A large mass of disgruntled people always threaten to become a source of social unrest and rebellion, and the marginal minority of the governing Mongol elite was even more under pressure to keep the vast majority of their Chinese subjects from conspiring against their leadership. Charity of the Yuan ruler(s?) was therefore surely based mainly on political self-interest but also ties in with the concept of authority as discussed above. Similar funds were set aside for impoverished Mongol populations whom the court supported throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with shipments of grain and clothing to the steppe regions.⁴¹⁶

4.6 Funeral gifts

Interpersonal gifts of clothing are also registered for a state funeral, the symbolism of which is uncertain. That the present made to the fresh widow was a socially mandatory item can be deduced from the fact that Sorqoqtani Beki and Ogul Qaimish were contesting to supply the successor to the throne from their respective branches of the Borjigin clan.

And at Oghul-Qaimish's [Güyük Khan's widow] command, Güyük Khan's tomb was transferred to the Emil, where his ordo was. Sorqoqtani Beki, as is the custom, offered her words of advice and consolation and sent her clothing and a boqtaq. And Batu consoled and comforted her in the like manner [...].⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 445

⁴¹⁶ Allsen (1997) 56

⁴¹⁷ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 185; Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 262

5. Legislature

Since the so much cited *Great Yasa*, the legislation based on Činggis Qan, has not been transmitted to us, little is known about laws of the early Mongol period.⁴¹⁸ Parts of the *Great Yasa*, or at least paragraphs that are said to have been part of it, are however mentioned in historical sources and occasionally we are able to infer some relevant information regarding sumptuary laws from them.

The earliest mention of Mongol sumptuary laws that I have come across so far regards the rule of Ögödei Qa'an. The *Annals of Ögödei Khaan*, included in the *Yuan Shih*, contain the regulation to punish married women who manufactured jisün robes that did not conform to regulations. This decree can be dated to 1234 and must have been pronounced with an eye to a shortly later held conference of the princes.

Alle verheirateten Frauen, die beim Schneidern der einfachen Kleidung oder der Festkleidung, sich nicht an die Vorschriften halten, sowie diejenigen, die eifersüchtig sind, werden als Strafe auf einer ungesattelten Kuh im Stamm herumgeführt. Danach sollen alle Güter gesammelt werden, damit [der Ehemann] sich erneut eine Frau nehmen kann.⁴¹⁹

Other pieces of evidence of about the same period point to sumptuary laws regarding the general population. Xu Tingshu recounts the status of officials of the former Jin dynasty (1115-1234) who held great political sway in the early conquered Chinese territories. According to him they were able to disregard common sumptuary laws that stipulated that the Chinese population *en large* had to follow Mongol customs regarding hairdo and clothing.⁴²⁰ Pinks and Olbricht elaborate that the compulsory adaptation of the hairstyle of the ruling ethnicity was a general

⁴¹⁸ The *Great Yasa* might have never existed as a written legal text, and many regulation and customs that are reported as having been contained in the Great Yasa might have as well been part of Geghis Qan's *bilig*, that is Činggis Qan's oral instructions on how to conduct the business of state.

⁴¹⁹ See Ögödei's Annalen, Abramowski (1976) 130. Allsen has the English translation of this legal paragraph:

All women making for the *jisün* [chih-sun] feast not conforming to regulations as well as those who are jealous [of others attire?], will be made to ride around the center of the district on an unsaddled cow as punishment and then have [their] valuables collected so that [their husbands have the bride rice] to remarry [Allsen (1997), 21].

⁴²⁰ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 155:

Weiter sind da die Großwürdenträger des untergegangenen Kin-Staates.[...]Im (Taoisten-) Tempel Ch'ang-ch'un-kung sind eine Menge Hofbeamte der untergegangenen Kin-Dynastie, die sich nicht nur dem Schneiden der Haare nach mongolischer Sitte, sowie Abgaben und Dienstleistungen entzogen haben, sondern auch noch Kleidung und Nahrung erhalten.

practise since the twelfth century. The Chinese population in the Jin dynasty was accordingly forced to wear a plait, the traditional hairstyle of the Tungusic Jurchen, as did later the Manchus in the Qing dynasty sport this hairstyle and imposed it on the general population.⁴²¹ An introduction to Chinese clothing mentions in passing that scholars (officials?) and civilians at the Mongol court were first required to wear Mongol style clothing including bamboo hats, but that after 1297 everyone was freed from these restrictions.⁴²²

That the elite was somewhat excepted from sumptuary laws is also indicated by Chao Hung's short biography of Muqali, one of Činggis Qan's most trusted generals who had the command over the left wing of the army. He was entrusted with the conquest of the Jin dynasty and later given the rule over the conquered territories. Chao Hung relates that he adopted Chinese dress and etiquettes of the court; a change of habits surely inspired by his residence in the Chinese cultural realm.⁴²³ His son named Bo'ol had a very different personal taste and is reported to have worn the fashion of the western territories: a turban crowned his head, covering his hair that he did not shave to the standard Mongol *p'o-tsaio* haircut and his attire was body-hugging, a feature of Central Asian dress.⁴²⁴ This Central Asian influence has been also mentioned for the Mongol ladies who are reported to have been only wearing *hu* attire. This statement by Chao Hung of a general adoption of foreign dress at the Mongol court, however, appears dubious.

The noted Central Asian fashion might also be an indication that the Uighurs were generally exempted from forced introduction of Mongol attributes in attire and appearance. If such preferential treatment could be substantiated for the Uighurs, it would signify that voluntary allies were not subject to sumptuary laws, which applied to forcefully conquered areas. Local elites of these areas might have been exempted (see above) in order to have a pool of local able administrators who were not provoked by such stances into antagonistic views of Mongol rule.

⁴²¹ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 156, 157. The Manchus were also Jurchen but formed an unrelated branch of the Chin Jurchen.

⁴²² Yang (2004) 6

⁴²³ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 35:

Höchster Wuerdentraeger ist ihr Großpräzeptor und Landesfuerst. Muqali ist sein Rufname. [...] Gegenwärtig bekleidet er dir Posten als obersten Heerfuehrer des Reiches, als Gouverneur und als Großpräzeptor und Landesfürst. Er ist ein Schwarzer Tatan. In den letzten zehn Jahren haben seine Eroberungszüge nach Osten und seine Kriegszüge nach Westen geführt und Barbaren und Chinesen in Furcht erbeben lassen. In allen militärischen Unternehmungen und wichtigen Staatsangelegenheiten entscheidet er persönlich. Daher nennt man ihn den Regenten-kaiser. In Kleidung und Hofhaltung richtet er sich ganz nach der Etikette der chinesischen Kaiser.

⁴²⁴ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 35: "Er [Muqali, ullii] hat nur einen Sohn mit Namen Bo'ol. Er ist von schöner Erscheinung und laeßt sich den Kopf nicht zur *p'o-tsaio*- Frisur rasieren, sondern umwickelt ihn mit einem Turban; er trägt enge Kleidung und kann die Sprachen vieler Länder."

The seemingly casual approach to elite dress could have been restricted to appearances outside the direct imperial environs. It does not seem feasible that the court would allow a participant at jisün festivals to sport anything else, after issuing specifications with regards to the details of such robes. Benedict the Pole explicitly states that attire at court was subject to strict directives, even applying to foreign envoys and their entourage. He relates of his embassy's participation at Güyük Qa'an's election, that "... among them [the 3,000 ambassadors] were the aforesaid Friars who wore brocade over their habit as needs must, for no envoy is allowed to see the face of the elect and crowned king, unless he is correctly dressed."⁴²⁵ A similar mention is made by Yu Ji for the Yuan dynasty with regards to the practice concerning officials entering the presence of the emperor in his work *Daoyuan xuegu lu*.⁴²⁶

Al Umari records another stipulation regarding clothing and mentions that this was one of the statues of the *Great Yasa*, of which he quotes a dozen decrees. He writes that, "*Wer den Gefangenen irgendeines Stammes ohne dessen [des Stammes] Erlaubnis mit Speise, Trank oder Kleidung versieht, wird hingerichtet.*"⁴²⁷ The possible implications of this curious passage are not entirely clear to me, especially concerning the provision of food and drink. That one was not allowed to clothe captives according to one's free will, though, might indicate that clothing identified captured peoples. Given that all members of such populations were regarded as slaves if they had been forcefully subjugated, their attire was an indication to others of their ethnic or cultural membership and therefore social status. This interpretation does however not tally with the conclusion above, where I construe that just such populations were made to wear Mongol clothing. In want of a better explanation, I will leave the issue to be explored in the future.

Clothing appears further to have been a customary item of fines meted out according to the Mongol legal codex. Marco Polo recounts that anyone who happened mistakenly or otherwise to step on the treshold of the imperial palace tent was fined on the spot all the clothes he was wearing, which could be redeemed by paying a stipulated sum.⁴²⁸ Not only clothes but also all horse equipment and the horse itself were withheld as punishment for daring to inquire after the multitude of the qa'an's guards. Činggis Qan decreed that "[...] the nightguards – with regard to any person who shall have asked their number – the nightguards shall seize the gelding that that

⁴²⁵ Benedict, *Mongol Missions*, 82

⁴²⁶ Feng Zhao (1999) 181

⁴²⁷ Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 96

⁴²⁸ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 382, 382:

At every door of the hall (or, indeed, where the emperor may be) p382 there stand a couple of big men like giants, one on each side, armed with staves. Their business is to see that no one steps upon the treshold in entering, and if this does happen, they strip the offender of his clothes, and he must pay a forfeit to have them back again; or in lieu of taking his clothes, they give him a certain number of blows.

person was riding that very day, with saddle and bridle, together with the clothes that he was wearing.”⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 158, also 210.

6. Traditions

In the daily life of a thirteenth-century Mongol customs and taboos concerning clothing were just as manifest as in the limited arena of politics.

A routine regarding the *boqtaq* is recorded by Li Zhichang. He notes that the Mongol ladies “[...] are always in fear that somebody might inadvertently run against this cap. Therefore, when entering a tent, they are accustomed to go backward, inclining their heads.”⁴³⁰ The great caution is explained by that fact that such impressively high hats were cumbersome to wear and might have been easily made to fall off. But in connection to the passage that Mongol ladies never appear in male company without these hats points to the fact that *boqtaqs* were considered very important social markers and a matter of personal dignity. This habit then, apart from illustrating the practical difficulties of the *boqtaq*, depicts with what esteem and respect hats were regarded.

The most commonly remarked habit alludes to the hygienic conditions in mediaeval Mongolia. Chao Hung already remarks upon the custom to not wash clothing.

Es ist bei ihnen zumeist nicht üblich, sich die Hände zu waschen; wenn sie den Fisch und das Fleisch damit ergreifen und ihre Hände dabei fettig geworden sind, wischen sie sie an den langen Oberkleidern ab. Ihre Kleider tragen sie, bis sie völlig zerlumpt sind, und sie ziehen sie nie aus zum Waschen.⁴³¹

The next to note this tradition is Carpini and he adds important information. “They do not wash their clothes nor allow them to be washed, especially from the time when thunderstorms begin until the weather changes.”⁴³² And Rubruck finally relates the underlying belief that restricted the cleaning of attire.

They never wash clothes, for they claim that this makes God angry and that if they were to hung out to dry it would thunder: in fact, they trash anyone doing laundry and confiscate it. (They are extraordinarily afraid of thunder. In that event they turn out of their dwellings all strangers, and wrap themselves up in black felt, in which they hide until it has passed.)⁴³³

⁴³⁰ Brettschneider (1910), 52, 53

⁴³¹ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 69

⁴³² Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 17

⁴³³ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 90, 91

Rashid al-Din even recounts that this prohibition was an item of the *Great Yasa*.

It is the yasa and yosun [Mongol customary law as distinct by Gingham's codex, see glossary] of the Mongols that in spring and summer no one may sit in water by day, nor wash his hands in a stream, nor draw water in gold and silver vessels, nor lay out washed garments upon the plain; it being their belief that such actions increase the thunder and lightning, which they greatly dread and shun.⁴³⁴

This passage is annotated by Lech who refers to a certain Maqrizi who complements this statement by adding that “Sie tragen sie [die Kleider] daher, bis sie abgenutzt sind (Hitat, Bd. II, S.221: 1).”⁴³⁵ This tradition is basically rooted in the Mongols' view on water. Water was considered a cosmological element since it touches upon the divine sky, either as rain pouring from the sky or by mirroring the sky as a lake or river. Washing clothing or dishes was therefore considered as polluting a sacred substance as was therefore to be avoided.⁴³⁶ If someone did not adhere to this fundamental law, the wrath of the *tenggri*, the divine sky, was to be expected. The Shamanistic worldview of the Mongols saw lightning as a form of vengeance of an angered Heaven, which had the potential to destroy one's livelihood. A steppe fire started by lightning could in one instant destroy the entire livestock of the misfortunate herder. Washing therefore was experienced as life-threatening endeavour and was to be avoided at the threat of capital punishment.

Finally, the remark of the Naiman Queen Gurbüsü who detested the Mongols among others on hygienic grounds might have been not so very far from truth and the Mongols after all a splendidly dressed people with unfortunately rather bad odours. But it was just the personal odour that was so treasured among the Mongols. Not only the practice of the personal tügel tells of this but a mention in the Secret History corroborates the positive connotations smell had.

Yisüge Ba'atur, the future Temüjin's father, out on a hunt, robbed a bride for himself from the Merkit Yeke Cildü, who was just leading his betrothed home to be married. The lady in question, Hö'elün, sees Yisüge Ba'atur approaching and advises Yeke Cildü to escape.

“If only you are spared, you will always find a girl or a woman like me. If her name is different, name her also Hö'elün. Save your life! Never forget to breathe my scent!’ She took off her shirt

⁴³⁴ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 77

⁴³⁵ Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307) 198

⁴³⁶ Allsen (1997) 89

and he, on horseback, seized it with his outstretched hand.”⁴³⁷ In a similar dramatic event Father Mönqlik treasures the hat of his son Teb Tenggeri: Teb Tenggeri loses his hat in a duel with Temüğe Otcigin. Father Mönqlik, then picks it up, inhales its smell and keepsakes it in his deel, aware that this omen foretells his son’s impending death.⁴³⁸ This gesture is ‘a symbolic act of remembrance and love’ as De Rachewilts interprets.⁴³⁹ In a world without photography, portrait painting or other means of preserving a person’s individual characteristics, smell must have been a powerful medium that evoked the presence of the deceased. And still nowadays smell cannot be reproduced and universally remains a main ingredient of courtship and remembrance.

⁴³⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 11, 12

⁴³⁸ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 172

⁴³⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 884

7. Materials of attire

This part of the paper investigates in more detail what sort of materials Mongol attire was made from and discusses their function, technical specialties and traditions as well as their origins.

Rubruck's description of Mongol garments can be utilized as a catalogue of materials found in thirteenth-century attire:

As regards their clothing and appearance, you should know that cloth of silk, of gold and of cotton reaches them from Cataia and other regions in the east, and from Persia and other southern parts in addition, and these they wear in the summer. From Russia, the Moxel [one section of Finnish Mordva people, see notes], Great Bulgaria, Pascatu (namely Greater Hungary) and the Kerkis [Kirghiz, see notes]- all of them regions in the north and heavily forested- and from many other northerly tracts which are subject to them, they are brought many kinds of valuable furs which I have never seen in our part of the world, and which they don in winter.⁴⁴⁰

Hides, valuable furs, cotton, silk, and golden stuffs hence all featured in Mongol garments. The only aspects Rubruck does not enumerate are leather, felt, wool and precious metals as well as stones. G. Badrakh, author of a Mongolian book on national dress, draws on archaeological artefacts of dress kept at the Mongolian Institute of Science and mentions further feathers, brass, and iron.⁴⁴¹ Textual references and descriptions of their characteristics as well as their traditional usage and regional sources are discussed.

7.1 Leather and skins

The basic material featuring in Mongol attire are skins and furs, since they were native to the Mongolian homeland. Deels, helmets and hats, but also breeches and shoes were made from either leather or furs.⁴⁴² Mentioned in accounts are coats made from dog- and sheepskins as materials mostly used by commoners and others less wealthy.⁴⁴³ Fox, lynx, beaver, squirrel, but especially black sable furs were highly valued and were luxury items; the recluse of the wealthy and noble. That the Mongol court explicitly requested black sable skins as tribute illustrates how

⁴⁴⁰ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 85, 86

⁴⁴¹ Badrakh (1976) 38

⁴⁴² See Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 86, 87: "From pelts they also make breeches."

⁴⁴³ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 85, 86

coveted an item they were, since generally tribute consisted of the most desirable items.⁴⁴⁴

Another rare skin that ostensibly was worn exclusively by rulers was the fur of the snow leopard and other wild cats with white furs (cf. figure 77, 83b, 94).

7.2 Wool and felt

The absence of any locally woven textiles in Monolian culture is to date not fully explained. Complicated drawlooms are surely a matter of sedentary civilizations, but portable handheld looms could have been used in the Mongols' nomadic culture. The only technique actually applied to produce textiles of very limited scope was a braiding technique, where weighted strings of yarn were plaited in a variety of ways to produce braids. How long this technique has been employed by the Mongols is uncertain and it can only be ascertained for the nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁴⁴⁵

The fact remains that weaving in whatever form remained a foreign domain and that the Mongols used felting to fashion textiles from wool. Woollens, though, were still an item of import and were, similarly to silk, obtained through tribute and conquest. The *Secret History* mentions wool explicitly in the context of the Tang'ut Empire. The realm of the Tang'ut submitted to Činggis Qan after protracted struggles finally in 1211. A petition was sent that depicted how the Tang'ut would be of service to Činggis Qan.

[...] In waging a swift campaign,
In fighting a deadly combat,
We shall not be able to hasten into a swift campaign,
We shall not be able to fight a deadly combat.
But if Činggis Khaan shows favour to us, we the Tang'ut people
We shall bring forth many camels
Reared in the shelter of the tall feather-grass:
We shall turn them into government property
And we shall give them to you,
And we shall weave woollen material and make satins,
And we shall give them to you
Training falcons to fly loose at game,
We shall gather them

⁴⁴⁴ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 848

⁴⁴⁵ Chabros and Batchuluun (1993) 20-24

And all the best ones we shall send to you.⁴⁴⁶

Not long afterwards a leader of the Tang'ut, who were not as trustworthy an ally as supposed to, mocked the Mongols, thus inviting another military campaign against them.

'As for now, if you Mongols, who are used to fighting, say, "Let us fight!", then turn towards the Alašai and come to me, for I have an encampment in the Alašai, I have tents of thin woollen cloth,
I have camels laden with goods.
Let us fight there! If you need gold, silver, satin and other goods, turn toward Eriqaya und Eri□e'ü.⁴⁴⁷

Marco Polo corroborates this and further connects the above mentioned camels directly to the production of wool and woollen garments. He refers to the camel wool of the Tang'ut kingdom Egrigaia (supposed to be Alashan) and of the local specialty of wool from white camels, "They make in this city great quantities of camlets of camel's wool, the finest in the world; and some of the camlets that they have are white, for they have white camels, and these are the best of all. Merchants purchase these stuffs here, and carry them over the world for sale."⁴⁴⁸

The "camlets" of Marco Polo are not *per se* textiles made from camel wool. The mediaeval term of *cammellotti* describes 'fine woollen textures', but was sometimes wrongly associated with the exclusive use of camel's wool. *Cammelotti* rather referred to the earlier mentioned velvets, the Mongolian *kharmalag*, which were made from silk and wool mixtures. This is corroborated by F. Johnson's Dictionary where *Khamalat* is defined: "Camelot, silk and camel's hair; also all silk or velvet, especially pily and plushy."⁴⁴⁹

Apart from these woollen materials or woollen mixtures of the Tang'ut realm, other centres of production are recorded. The *Yuan Shih* records a woollen textile that is referred to as *su-fu* and is explained as 'a pure type of Muslim woollen cloth'. The term suggests that it was produced in the western regions, either in Central Asia or the Persian region. Already the term *su-fu* indicates this region as it is derived from the Arabic *suf*, "wool".⁴⁵⁰ A particular type of

⁴⁴⁶ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 177,178

⁴⁴⁷ *Secret History/De Rachewiltz* (1228/46?) 197

⁴⁴⁸ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 281

⁴⁴⁹ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 283

⁴⁵⁰ Allsen (1997) 72

woollen fabric is mentioned by Al Umari who refers to the white wool of Maridin, which was most highly valued; another indication that the west was an important producer of woollens.⁴⁵¹

Rubruck who mentions its consumption among the Mongols attests that wool in general was a coveted material:

The wealthy, moreover, line their garments with silk stuffing [de stupa sete], which is extremely soft and light and warm; the poor line theirs with cotton cloth and with the softer wool which they can pick out from the coarser. From the coarser sort is made felt for covering their dwellings and coffers and also for bedding. They further use wool mixed with a third part horse hair to make their ropes. And from felt they make in addition covers to go beneath the saddle, and rain-capes, with the result that they use up a great deal of wool.⁴⁵²

Felt, as recounted here, was used for making clothing, such as rain capes (figure 89) but also boots and deels are mentioned made from it by Nyambu. While silken materials became a favourite and substituted felt in garments, it remained a much used material for the traditional interior of the *ger*. Even in the imperial context felt remained the material of choice for carpeting. Rubruck's list of items made from wool and felt only misses the use of these felt carpets. An early example has been excavated at the tombs at Noyon Uul, showing the application of intricate designs and quilting patterns on felt. This carpet dates to 1000 BCE, a time when the Mongol homeland was home to the Xiongnu, the ancestors of the Mongols (figure 160). Juvaini recounts that the "Yellow Palace" of Ögödei, the *shira ordu*, was a Khitan-style wooden pavilion with lattice work, "while its ceiling was of gold-embroidered cloth, and it was covered all over with white felt".⁴⁵³ Apart from the practical value of felt's heat preserving properties, Allsen proposes the conscious choice to apply felt in elite Mongol dwellings as an attempt to 'evoke the cultural past while the gold brocade evoked the political present'.⁴⁵⁴ Felt's continued application in investiture ceremonies of Mongol rulers points to its sacrosanct value in Mongolian culture, something that gave felt a special place among a number of fabrics.⁴⁵⁵

Felt itself is not a very durable material and embroidery is applied to make it wear-resistant. Hence, embroidery of felt is a structural necessity, whereas embroidery on cloth or

⁴⁵¹ See Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 156. See also Lech's notes on page 338.

⁴⁵² Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 86/87

⁴⁵³ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 239

⁴⁵⁴ Allsen (1997) 52

⁴⁵⁵ Olschki (1949) 22-25, 30-35

leather is always ornamental. Felt is strengthened and stiffened by quilting and this technique generally is applied to the whole surface. The decorated felt hangings over the entrances of the mediaeval *gers* that Rubruck reports of are an example of the technique, a technique that is equally noticeable on the carpet fragment of Xiognu times.

7.3 Silken stuffs

That silk and silken stuffs were the most coveted textile all over Asia has been so many times propagated that the underlying reason for this demand is mostly overlooked and goes unmentioned. The reason why everyone was fond of silk was not so much based on superior aesthetics, but on the practicality that lice, fleas and other vermin do not find silk a suitable living environment. Silk then was valued for hygienic reasons, allowing its wearer a noticeably more comfortable existence. Given that the close vicinity of the Mongols to livestock made them prime subjects of vermin infestation, silk might have been even higher valued in Mongol culture than in the neighbouring sedentary areas.

Its initial restricted production, a guarded Chinese state secret, made it become a symbol of royal conspicuous consumption and featured in elite garment ever since. The Mongols had been long acquainted with it through contacts with the Chinese civilization and a certain amount was either obtained as political gifts presented to appease the “Northern Barbarians”, through raids, or through trade. The Liao dynasty held large tracts of Mongol territory in which Chinese traditions intermediated by the Liao impacted on the Mongols, thereby reinforcing the cultural role that silk already played in Mongol culture.⁴⁵⁶ A secondary sphere of Khitan influence, and even more important, was the Qara Khitans of the Western Liao that actively contributed to the building of the Mongol Empire. Forms of government exemplified by the Khitans certainly came with the necessary forms and symbols of representation. The elite garments of silk and, since the twelfth century preferably, brocades certainly affected imperial notions of the Mongols, if by consolidating existing conceptions that were shared across the nomadic or semi-nomadic northern regions. The shift in materials from locally produced skins and furs to exotic silken stuffs is therefore more a story of newly acquired access than a process of civilization of the primitive nomads, as earlier studies tend to view the changes in material culture.

How profusely silk was used in the following decades and centuries by the Mongols is described by the Dominican John de Cora in his narration on the Mongol lifestyle in the 1330s.

⁴⁵⁶ Buell (1981) 38-49

The emperor's people are very worthily arrayed, and live in a rich and liberal manner. And though silk and gold and silver are in great plenty, they have very little linen, wherefore all have shirts of silk; and their clothes are of Tartary cloth, and damask silk, and other rich stuffs, oft-times adorned with gold and silver and precious stones.⁴⁵⁷

De Cora's description reveals the excitement and wonder that Europeans felt at the vast quantities of silk and the absence of other basic fabrics, such as cotton and especially linen. If the presence of vast quantities of silk and brocade says something about the textiles' esteem, the range of silken fabrics used also reveals something about the Mongol aesthetic tastes. Ögödei put Chinese silks to shame when he publicly ordered silks and other valuables of China and the western regions to be exhibited side by side. The products of the Islamic world compared favourably to those Chinese "garments inferior to the others", as he judged.⁴⁵⁸

Damask mentioned by De Cora was one of a variety of silken textiles in use. The monochromatic patterned silks that damasks are were much refined in technique in the Song dynasty (960-1279). During this Chinese dynasty the emphasis on Confucian learning contributed to an aesthetic sense that preferred subtle colours and patterns rendered by texturing rather than by colouring.⁴⁵⁹ The result were very refined damasked silks and satins that were to some extent used by the Mongols.

Brocades, silks that were woven to depict multicoloured patterned designs, were even more preferred by the Mongols who shared the love of glamorous colours and showy designs with other northern people. The Liao and Jin had perfected the technique of brocading silks and in the early twelfth century these brocades had become increasingly popular, a trend that was continued by the Mongols. Brocades that were enriched by using supplementary golden threads became the lore of wealthy Mongols. The love of gold that the Mongols professed made gilded brocades become the ultimate symbolic textile of Mongol rule. This aspect of Mongol dress was much noted and reported about in Europe, where these fabrics also sporadically occurred. Since golden brocades played such a central role in the Mongol empire they will be discussed in more detail below.

Silken velvets were another common fabric at the time, copiously featuring in trade reports with Europe. These fabrics were known variously as *camucca*, *camucha* and *camocato*

⁴⁵⁷ De Cora/Yule, Cordier (1330) 98, 99

⁴⁵⁸ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 207

⁴⁵⁹ Vollmer (1995) V

and *camocan*.⁴⁶⁰ Marco Polo lists these velvets as *craimosy*, of which Yule remarks that this term initially only referred to crimson velvet, later however to velvets of all colours. The term *craimosy* and *quermis* was derived from the Kermes insect, which was used for dyeing the velvet crimson. *Khima* was another term that was used to describe the fabric, a term that comes closest to the Mongolian *kharmalag* for the same stuff. A passage in Al Umari's encyclopaedia records them as "Khitan fabrics", which I take to mean that they were produced in the former Central Asian realm of the Qara Khitai or by Khitan weavers employed in the imperial Mongol workshops who transmitted the native techniques to their stipulated localities of service. A passage in Al Umari's work also indicates that they were so popular that forgery of these fabrics occurred.

Ferner berichtete er [der Kaufmann Sadr Badr ad-Din Hasan al Is'irdi] mir: Ein Meister stellte Textilien aus Papier her und verkaufte sie, ohne Verdacht zu erregen, den Händlern als khitai'sche khimha-Stoffe. Als sie hereingefallen waren, machten er sie zu ihrer großen Verwunderung auf die tatsächliche Beschaffenheit des Materials aufmerksam.⁴⁶¹

Satins were a staple silken fabric, but in its manufacture also silk and cotton mixtures were used. Silk and cotton mixtures are listed in trade reports as *atabi* cloth. *Atabi* was a neighbourhood in Baghdad and seems to indicate the origin of these textiles. They were a development of the Middle East, where in the course of Islamization, the wearing of pure silk, at least for men, conflicted with the ideals of personal austerity inherent in the belief system.⁴⁶²

Kesi, a relatively new technique of weaving attracted much attention at that time. *Kesi* is a slit silk tapestry weave that was used to create unique pieces of weaving with pictorial qualities. The technique is said to have originated from wool tapestry weaving in Central Asia. The first literary mention in Chinese sources is recorded for 1005, when the Liao sent envoys to the Song with gifts. Among others a silk shirt made of *kesi* is mentioned.⁴⁶³ Liao and Jin weavers passed *kesi* technology on to the Song court, but the Yuan equally valued the painterly pieces thus created.⁴⁶⁴ Examples of *kesi* pieces produced in the Mongol period are shown in figures 104 to 108. Apart from production in the western areas, China produced locally *kesi* in Dingzhou,

⁴⁶⁰ Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 248; Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155

⁴⁶¹ Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 110

⁴⁶² Thompson (2004) 10

⁴⁶³ L.S.Y (1950) 220

⁴⁶⁴ Vollmer (1995) VII

Hebei province, during the Northern Song, and later in Hangzhou, in Zhejiang province.⁴⁶⁵
 Rubruck and Marco Polo both detail the origin of silks reaching Mongol consumers as China and to an equal extent Persia.⁴⁶⁶

7.3.1 Gold brocade or *nasiq*

The gold brocades of the Mongol period stunned European contemporaries and almost all accounts on the Mongols refer to the abundance of this specific silken textile. Since gold was an ultimate expression of imperial power in the Turko-Mongol cultural realm, (cf. the chapter “Attributes” below) the golden brocades that originated in Persia were perceived widely as indicators of wealth and status. The first wide scale appearance of these fabrics is attested for the Tang dynasty that was greatly influenced by Central Asian fashions, where they were greatly valued and had become established as elite textiles.⁴⁶⁷ The Liao, but also the Jin, propagated this tradition; a tradition that had simultaneously become established among the Mongols. That the golden stuffs were not solely a later addition to the Mongol wardrobe is confirmed by a passage of the *Secret History* where the defeat of Ong Qan sees his son Sengüm struggling to survive as a refugee. A last companion decides to abandon him as well, but his wife objects.

His wife said,
 ‘When you wore gold-embroidered⁴⁶⁸ clothes,
 and ate tasty dishes,
 He called you “my Kököcü.” How can you go away now, forsaking and
 abandoning in this way your lord Sengüm?’⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁵ Brown (2000) 17

⁴⁶⁶ See Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 85: “As regards their clothing and appearance, you should know that cloth of silk, of gold and of cotton reaches them from Cataia and other regions in the east, and from Persia and other southern parts in addition, and these they wear in the summer.”

Marco Polo mentions a lot of localities in China as silk producing areas, but describes the eight kingdoms of Persia as follows: “In the cities there are traders and artisans who live by their labour and crafts, weaving cloths of gold, and silk stuffs of sundry kinds. They have plenty of cotton produced in the country;” See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) (1298), 84.

⁴⁶⁷ That the golden brocades were unknown in China before the Daye reign of the Sui dynasty (605-617 CE) can be inferred from an account of a Persian embassy who brought this novel material to the Chinese court. In the *Beishi* it is written that the Persian mission presented “[...] a cotton gown of gold brocade of exquisitely elaborate design as tribute, and the emperor ordered He Chou to make one similar. When He Chaou’s gown was completed, it surpassed that presented to the court by the Persians.” Chung (2005) 102

⁴⁶⁸ The term embroidered is an interpretation of the Mongol term by Igor De Rachewiltz.

⁴⁶⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 109, 110

That not only the enemies of the Mongols used to identify golden fabrics as desirables is proven by the following remark attributed to Činggis Qan. According to this statement Činggis Qan himself viewed his political ambitions in terms of securing a comfortable life amidst luxuries for his kin and subordinates, among which gold brocade is explicitly mentioned.

Once when Chinggis Qan had settled down in an upland, the name of which is the Altai, he glanced about his retinue, relations and the environs of the camps and made [the following] observations: “As my quiver bearers are black like a thick forest and [my] wives, spouses and daughters glitter and sparkle like a red hot fire, my desire and intention for all is such; to delight their mouths with the sweetness of the sugar of benevolence, to adorn them front and back, top and bottom, with garments of gold brocade, to sit them on fluid paced mounts, to give them pure and delicious water to drink, to provide verdant pastures for their herds...”⁴⁷⁰

Apart from textual instances that refer to the Mongols’ preference of golden silk, this specific cultural choice has been established in the wider context of the steppe cultures. The northern regions, home to nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples have been recorded to most highly esteem textiles, which centrally featured gold. Surveying paintings of the Song, the depiction of those ethnic groups generally coincides with the depiction of gold brocades, to the extent that the sole portrayal of these silks might have signalled these “border peoples”.⁴⁷¹ Gold brocaded tabbies were common in all of these dynasties; only the favoured motifs they depicted were specific to each reign. Swan motifs were a Liao favourite, the oxen a typical Jin motif and the hare an often depicted icon in the Yuan.⁴⁷² While the Jin and Liao preferred to spread their small scale golden designs neatly across the surface of the textiles, the Mongols upped this by using the gold thread over the entire surface.⁴⁷³ The addition of pearls to these brocades is frequently mentioned, rendering them even more valuable.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Allsen (1999) 12

⁴⁷¹ Brown (2000) 24

⁴⁷² Vainker (2004) 135

⁴⁷³ Thompson (2004) 72

⁴⁷⁴ According to Paget Toynbee, author of the earliest piece on *panni tartarica*, Europeans associated with this term especially gold brocades that were embellished by any number of pearls, just as is mentioned in Dante’s stanza.

In this context the frequent mention of two terms to describe golden brocades deserves attention. The mentioning of two terms, *nakh* and *nasij*, is so consistent in documents that it can be assumed that these terms did not describe an identical fabric. Yule notes that mediaeval authors used these terms not in

Gold brocades were the Mongols choice for stately attire after having become established as a measure of imperial success. While in many instances the whole garment was made from *nasiq* Qubilai's order to have artisans at the imperial workshop at Besh Baliq "weave *na-shi-shi* [*nasiq*] for collars and cuffs for imperial use"⁴⁷⁵, reveals that this material was also used more sparingly for only certain features of attire. This is certainly attested for female dress by the series of imperial portraits (see figures 10-24). Many Persian miniatures attempt to depict the splendour of *nasiq* robes by goldleaf application (figures 65, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79). These depictions show that commonly the entire robe was tailored from *nasiq*, but that additional applications in the shoulder areas were also common. Other depicted individuals sport robes that only have gold applications in the shoulder, chest and back area. An additional line below the knees is another design element that similarly features in the Mongol dragon robe.

But the choice material equally applied to tents, cushions, and other furnishings. Striking examples of gold brocade panels that transformed a Mongol ruler's humble tent into a sophisticated environment can be seen in figure 100 and 101.

These golden brocades have been recorded as *nasiq/nasij* or variously as *nasici*⁴⁷⁶, *nasich* and *nac*⁴⁷⁷, or almost identically *nakh* and *nasij*⁴⁷⁸, *nakhut* and *nachidut*⁴⁷⁹. The Chinese rendition of *nasiq* is given as *kin kin* in the *Yuan shih*⁴⁸⁰. They seem to also have been known under the terms *maramati*, *maramanto* or *maramoto* to European traders.⁴⁸¹ In mediaeval literary sources they are referred to with the name *panni tartarica*, or "Mongol cloth". It was known that these were not actually produced by the Mongols but as contemporary descriptions referred to the Mongols as being clothed in these fabrics the name explains itself since the Mongols were

variation of each other, proving that they designated two different textiles (see Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155). The official encyclopaedic identification in the *Yuan shih* does not illuminate what the differences were. Both are described in terms that imply gold brocade. Peter Jackson who annotated Rubruck's account explains *nasic* to be "a kind of gold brocade with pearls" according to the *Codex Cumanicus* entry for *nasici*.⁴⁷⁴ Based on the frequent mentioning of pearls that featured on golden brocades, I am inclined to believe that one term designated golden brocades, the other golden brocades that were embellished by pearls or other precious stones, as also mentioned by De Cora. In the absence of more substantiating evidence this question, though, has to remain unanswered.

⁴⁷⁵ Cited by Komaroff and Carboni (2002) 70

⁴⁷⁶ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 191

⁴⁷⁷ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 63

⁴⁷⁸ Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155

⁴⁷⁹ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 66. Cordier refers here back to Brettschneiders translation of a part of the *Yuan shih*.

⁴⁸⁰ This is noted by Yule in Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155.

⁴⁸¹ See Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155. Additionally *nac*, *nacques*, *nachiz*, *naciz*, *nasis* appear in accounts and inventories of the 14th century, French and English, as recorded by Yule. See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 65.

generally known as the Tartars.⁴⁸² The reason why they were known under a name originally designating an enemy clan of the Mongols is not certain, but it might have been that this name came to them in the form of second hand information. The western addition of a second ‘r’ to the original name of the Tatars, indicates the horror and fright that the Mongol conquests incited in the west: The Mongols, the Tartars, were by phonetic association pictured as coming forth from *tartarus*, or “hell”, which were therefore near synonyms in the mediaeval mindset. The tales of massive destruction and mass slaughter committed by the Mongols were experienced as an impeding punishment by God for a sinful existence.

After the first wave of panic, following the rapid conquests in the 1240s, had faded away with the absence of further advances, the virtually unknown Mongols began to inspire the imagination of the Europeans in less spiritual ways. The increase of religious and trade missions increased the knowledge about this foreign people and certain aspects of their culture came to be appreciated. Foremost among those were the richly brocaded textiles they wore, the *panni tartarica*. Those fabrics were soon after their appearance in mediaeval Europe equally coveted by the western elites and became an indication of rank and status here as much as in the Mongol realm. A reference to this is the following French poem, written towards the end of the thirteenth century that discusses the appearance of ‘persons of consequence’.⁴⁸³

Bien avisai
 Qu’il estoient de grant affaire,
 Car de samit ou de tartaire
 Ou de drap d’or de grant value
 Avoit chascuns robe vestue⁴⁸⁴

But not only the French proved their unmistakable fashion sense in the thirteenth century - the same textiles were valued to the same extent in England as evident in the poem by Chaucer who imagines the appearance of ‘the grete Enetreus, the king of Inde’.

Upon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
 Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel,

⁴⁸² Chinese sources also refer to Mongols as Tatans, whereby they are classified into “Water Tatans” and “Black tatans”, both with the respective Mongol attribute *uus* and *khar*. The black Tatans are said to be the Mongols of Činggis Qan. See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 4.

⁴⁸³ Toynbee (1900) 562

⁴⁸⁴ Toynbee (1900) 562

Cam ridynge, lyk the god of armes, Mars.
His cote armure was clooth of Tars,
Couched with perles, white and rounde and grete.⁴⁸⁵

That Italy was also exposed to these pearl-studded brocades can be deferred from Dante's *Inferno*, in which he describes the monster Geryon's body as patterned with designs that outshines all known brocades of 'Tartary and Turkey'.⁴⁸⁶

This type of textile most probably became known to Europeans by trade⁴⁸⁷ but also due to the custom to bestow valuable gifts onto envoys on their return journey. Most accounts of western travellers relate that they were offered such prestigious items on their taking leave from the Mongol court. Rubruck has to decline but his interpreter takes up the offer who is reported to have brought the piece of gold brocade all the way back to Cyprus and to have sold it there for profit.⁴⁸⁸

The origin and production of golden brocades is generally attributed to Central Asia and the Iranian world.⁴⁸⁹ Yule reports that King Attalus is said to have invented the intertexture of cloth with gold, but that the weaving of a variety of colours was perfected at Babylon. To him this fabric was known as Babylonian.⁴⁹⁰ In the Tang dynasty weaving technology and production spread out towards the east and in the eleventh and twelfth century Jin and Liao weavers had expanded their native silk repertoire by incorporating and experimenting with the Middle Eastern techniques of brocading silk with golden threads. Even though *nasīq* technology moved to the east, traditional centres of production remained active. Al Umari mentions that "*Im Ilkhanat stellt man kostbare Textilien her: Brokate, Samte und Damaste, attabi [silk mixed with cotton]-und nasafi- Stoffe sowie weiße maridinische Wolle [made in Maridin], die beste in ihrer Art.*"⁴⁹¹ Marco Polo recounts, "In Baudas [Baghdad] they weave many different kinds of silk stuffs and gold brocades, such as *nasich*, and *nac*, and *cramoisy*, and many other beautiful tissue richly wrought with figures of beasts and birds."⁴⁹² That Baghdad was a centre of production is attested

⁴⁸⁵ Toynbee (1900) 563

⁴⁸⁶ Toynbee (1900) 559

⁴⁸⁷ For a discussion of trade of eastern silks in the Mongol period, see "China Silk in the Yuan Period" by Robert Sabatino Lopez in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1952, Vol. 72, pp 72-76.

⁴⁸⁸ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 190, 191

⁴⁸⁹ Vollmer (1995) VII, VIII

⁴⁹⁰ See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 66

⁴⁹¹ See Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 156. See also Lech's notes on page 338.

⁴⁹² See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 63. Yule and Cordier add on the topic that "From Baudas, or Baldac, *i.e.* Baghdad, certain of these rich silk and gold brocades were called *Baldachini*, or in English *Baudekins*. From their use in the state canopies and umbrellas of Italian dignitaries, the word *baldacchino* has come to

by the *Secret History*. When Čormaqan Qorci subjugated Baghdad, Ögödei Qa'an ordered the delivery of the following coveted items:

‘Čormaqan Qorči shall reside at that very place as commander of the garrison troops. Every year he shall make people deliver yellow gold, naq-fabrics, brocades and damasks with gilded thread, small and big pearls, fine Westren horses with long necks and tall legs, dark brown Bactrian camels and one-humped Arabian dromedaries, pack-mules and riding mules, and he shall send them to Us.’⁴⁹³

The *Yuan shih* records that among the items of tribute received from Baghdad were indeed quantities of *nasiq*.⁴⁹⁴ Other centres of production were Herat, Mosul, Sultaniya, Shiraz, Yazd, Isfahan, Kashan, Nishapur, Urganj, Samarkand, Tabriz, and generally in Chinese Turkestan.⁴⁹⁵

Examples of *nasiq* fabrics dating to the Mongol period have been found in the present Inner Mongolian region in Mingshui at Damouqi. Another tomb that yielded textiles from this period was found in the Gansu province in Zhang County, belonging to the Wang family. But Yuan *nasiq* has also been found in Tibetan collections.⁴⁹⁶ The best preserved *nasiq* coat comes from a cave found in 1978 in the vicinity of Ching Chou (figure 36).

These archaeological finds allow a technical discussion of *nasiq* with a basic classification into two types.⁴⁹⁷ In both types the gold thread that was produced by gilted fine animal stratum (membrane, leather, vellum or parchment), fine twisted paper strings or a fibre core (silk, cotton). Instances of brocades in which strings of pure gold or gilted silver were used are extant. The first group has a weave structure that also features in Liao and Jin gold brocades and that has come forth of native Chinese techniques. Flat golden wefts supplement the simple tabby or twill weave of the silken background fabric.⁴⁹⁸ The second group and by far more characteristic of *nasiq* is a lampas structure, whereby two sets of warps are used. While the first

mean a canopy, even when architectural. [Baldekino, baldacchino, was at first entirely made of silk, but afterwards silk was mixed (*sericum mixtum*) with cotton or thread.” See Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 65.

⁴⁹³ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 205

⁴⁹⁴ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 65

⁴⁹⁵ See Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155, but also Wardwell (1989) 95

⁴⁹⁶ Feng Zhao (1999) 183

⁴⁹⁷ For a detailed technical analysis of gold brocades and their regional characteristics (western, Central Asian and Chinese) see Anne E. Wardwell's article “Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks woven with Gold and Silver” in: *Islamic Art*, No.3, 1988-1989, pp 95-173

⁴⁹⁸ Examples of this type have been found in the tomb of the Marquis Wei as well as Jin examples in an excavation at Acheng, Helongjiang and the Wei family tomb in Zhang County in Gansu province [Feng Zhao (1999) 183].

set builds the foundation weave, the additional warp is used to bind the supplementary weft of golden thread to the fabric and fixes it in position. Another variety is a compound weave that was popular in the Tang and Song dynasty and was obviously continued in the Yuan dynasty, along with some variations of the basic structure. The particularity of this weave is its strict weft-faced make-up of the design on the front of the fabric, a particularity that indicates that the weavers possessed Central Asian techniques.⁴⁹⁹

The application of gold to a ground fabric was of major importance, relegating the employed technique to a secondary matter of concern, even if woven *nasiq* brocades were valued for their durable splendours. An alternative to silken materials interwoven with gold were fabrics that featured gold printed or stencilled onto them (figure 33). Even a unique find of a woven horsehair item features golden threads throughout the design.⁵⁰⁰

Another method to apply gold was the use of embroidery, especially the technique of needle-looping that was probably invented in the Jin dynasty. The rendered image had an almost three-dimensional texture, which was dramatized by underlying gold paper, given Mongol aesthetic and cultural preferences. This application is also used in the earliest piece found to date coming down to us from the Jin dynasty. A fine example of early Jin craftsmanship, here shown as an example of the technique, is seen in (figure 155). A Yuan example of needle-looping is a cover decorated with a floral motif (figure 156) the pair of knee pads that were worn during prostrations at rituals in figure 157. A similar piece was found at a cache of Yuan textiles at Dove Cave, Longhua, Hebei province, which dates this pair to the late thirteenth or fourteenth century (figure 154). Gold embroidered silk was known in Europe as *dardas*, as an entry in Pegalotti's trading manual reports.⁵⁰¹

7.4 Cotton

Cotton was used at the Mongol courts, but this product was one of the few that was almost exclusively restricted to western production centres. Li Zhichang (1193-1278) attests to the unfamiliarity of cotton in China by referring to the then widespread explanation of the material's origin. "It is here that they make the stuff called "tu-lu-ma" [cotton]" he mentions about the western regions and narrates the popular belief that the fabric was derived from 'sheep's wool

⁴⁹⁹ See Feng Zhao (1999) 183. Additionally, mentioned here are founds of lampas fabrics of which the earliest example (early 13th century) was discovered in the tomb at Mingshui. Others were discovered in a tomb near Salt Lake in Xinjiang and in the Wei family tomb in Gansu province.

⁵⁰⁰ Vainker (2004) 140

⁵⁰¹ Pegalotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155

planted in the ground'.⁵⁰² He continues: "We now procured seven pieces of it to make into winter clothes. In appearance and texture it is like Chinese willow-down, very fine, soft and clean. Out of it they make thread, ropes, cloth and wadding."⁵⁰³ Marco Polo who notes that Persia 'produces plenty of cotton' substantiates this centre of production.⁵⁰⁴

These, though, were only the last decades before China developed its own centres of cotton production, which became feasible by cotton plants that grew under China's climatic conditions. Cotton started to become a vastly available material in thirteenth-century China with Hainan's newly established and very successful cotton production. Cotton replaced from then on ramie and hemp as basic textiles. A side effect, but nevertheless important in its implications, was that the increased demand for this new product freed silk volumes to be traded in export.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² The Chinese believed cotton was won by a lamb that was buried in the ground, producing a crop of fresh lambs the following year. See Li/Waley (1224), 86.

⁵⁰³ Li/Waley (1224) 86

⁵⁰⁴ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 84

⁵⁰⁵ Lin (2006) 29

8. Attributes

The presence or absence of certain items of attire indicated rank and status of the wearer. The make of these articles was another facet that contributed to the expression of social standing. Aside from these social implications, the crafting of these articles also formulates aesthetic preferences of the Mongols. The specifics of ornamentation therefore relate of the wider cultural position of the Mongols, especially because ornamentation contains culturally specific semantic representations. Colours, figures and shapes found on fabrics of garments, as well as in jewellery, outline thus cultural concepts and spiritual traditions uniquely Mongolian. In order to be able to comprehend the semantics of attire, and generally all aspects of material culture, an understanding of those underlying principles governing the application of colour and ornamentation is crucial. This chapter therefore presents a survey of depictions and colours found on Mongol attire, and conveys the inherent cultural concepts attached to them.

8.1 Colours

Dyes of the Great Mongol State and thereafter were successors to the great expansion of the original colour palette in the Tang dynasty due to a variety of new mordants. The restriction of early dyes (before the 3rd century BCE) to black, red, yellow, blue and white was the basis of the Chinese practice to refer to these as “all colours” and to base their philosophical worldview on them, a restriction that equally influenced Mongol philosophy. While technologies and the naturally occurring colours limited the colour palette available, the great philosophical differences attached to specific colours quite clearly demarcate the Turkic inspired civilizations from the Chinese realm of influence.

The academic Laude-Cirtautas studied the names of colour in the Turk dialects, a study that has been extended by the Mongolist Nikolas Poppe to Mongolian terms, and has found that white, black, blue, yellow, and red form a group of colours that are consistently used as symbols of cultural values and never simply as neutral colour attributes. The Mongols, just as the Turks, illustrate a cultural preference for this group of colours with a wide scope of cosmological, mythological, philosophical and figurative associations. It is therefore especially this cluster that deserves closer attention.

The only textual reference to colour is found in Peng Daya’s narration. He writes, “*An Farben nimmt man rot, violet, purpur und grün, als Muster Sonne und Mond, Drachen und Phönix. Es gibt dabei keine Unterscheidung für vornehm und gering.*”⁵⁰⁶ Whether the colours

⁵⁰⁶ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 121

enumerated by Peng Daya represented different ranks or simply signify a cultural preference is not clear. This uncertainty results from his remark's structure, at least in its translated form. His statement does not clarify what exactly is employed uniformly by high and low: were there no differentiation in application of the patterns, or of patterns and colours together?

The testimony of green by Peng Daya surprises me, since I would expect blue to have more resonances in Mongolian culture. As I am not familiar with the Chinese original of Peng Daya's description I can only conditionally argue for blue since green and blue are rendered by the same word/character, making the translation of the colour term a matter of personal and contextual interpretation. Persian miniature paintings often, if not predominantly, feature a combination of red and blue in garments, whereby women are mostly featured in red or reddish colours (figures 65, 66, 67, 68, 81 a + b, 82a + b). The general depiction of large members of the population in such robes, though, provokes suspicion as to whether the application of these colours was restricted by the colour palette available to the painter. The Mongolian academic C. Badral bases his discussion of blue as a main colour of early Mongolian clothing in a recent article on colour symbolism on the rendition of these miniatures. He proposes that the invitation of twenty Mongol families to Tabriz to illustrate Rashid al-Din's encyclopaedia safeguarded a native interpretation of attire in these miniatures. Badral establishes that blue and red were applied in certain set combinations: When the deel is blue or dark blue then the *uu*j, or overcoat, is red, yellowish, black or green. These deels are lined with light or dark blue material. If, however, the deel is faced with red or orange material then the lining appears blue.

The application of red and blue is also noted in seals of the Mongol period. According to Barthold two kinds of seals were used. The red seal or *al-tamgha* (Turk.) was used on regular correspondence, the blue seal, the *qöq-tamgha*, only on documents pertaining to most solemn affairs and mainly in documents that were addressed to member of the imperial family.⁵⁰⁷

The semantic content of blue relates to the Shamanist religion of the Mongols. The highest divinity, the Eternal Blue Sky (*qöq möngke tenggri*), is worshipped as an everlasting principle that all life is subject to. The Shamanistic connotation gives blue a spiritual character that includes notions of eternity and sacredness. Badral notes in this context that the eternal blue sky is a symbol of eternity, wisdom, dreams and wishes, or ambition, but also space, air, wind, and water. He adds to the sky other natural forces that tie in with this concept such as the spark of fire and lightning, wind and rain. The Buddhist paintings of the Uighurs portraying blue Buddhas, Badral interprets as a having a similar religious connotation. I would argue that Shamanist

⁵⁰⁷ Barthold (1928) 387

heritage has probably inspired the use of blue in the Buddhist religious context, but further research is necessary to ascertain such a connection.

The usage of the self-referencing term *qöq mongγol*, or “Blue Mongol(s)” has to my knowledge not yet been dated but is referred to by Klaus Sagaster as an early term that certainly predates the seventeenth-century chronicles.⁵⁰⁸ The Secret History does not contain this term however. The Hungarian Mongolist Omeljan Pritsak has explained the origin of the term with the Central Asian tradition to divide the central but also subjugated peoples into a right and left wing, whereby the left wing was of a higher, elevated position, and the right of an inferior. This connects back to blue since the east in the Sino-Mongol cosmological schema is represented by blue.⁵⁰⁹ Pritsak’s explanation seems plausible, but given that a geographical order is universally based on an ethno-centric view this construction seems slightly artificial. Any ethnicity experiences itself as at the centre of a mental socio-political and geographical map, which should in the Sino-Mongol context result in a yellow attribute, since yellow correlates with the centre, being one of the five cardinal directions. Pritsak does take this into account, but the absence of any historical mention of another wing, a western wing, of the Mongols makes his interpretation highly hypothetical. The Mongolist Henry Serruys claims that the Mongols did indeed view blue as the colour that is identified with the centre, a claim that he bases on Walter Heissig’s commentary in the *Familien- und Kirchengeschichte der Mongolen*.⁵¹⁰

I prefer to put forward another possible interpretation. Instead of trying to fit the designation of the Blue Mongols into some geosymbolic colour scheme or other I favour a look at the origin of the Mongols. The attachment of the attribute blue to the Mongols as an ethnicity could well be a result of the Khiad-Borjigin creation myth. The descent of Činggis Qan is traced back mythologically to the union of a blue wolf and a fallow doe. These names could have been the actual names of the Mongols’ forebears since it was a widespread practice to use names from the animal world for persons,⁵¹¹ but the addition of the characteristic colour seems ideologically inspired. The Mongols imagine the blue wolf as having been ‘endowed with destiny’ (*j^aya’atu*), just as the subsequent Mongol rulers were.⁵¹² And this destiny is understood as granted by the Shamanistic deities, especially the *qöq möngke tenggri*, conferring an extraordinary fate onto the elected. Blue as a colour here acts therefore not as a simple colour attribute but also has a figurative meaning. That the colour term and the Mongol word for the sky is one and the same

⁵⁰⁸ *Cayan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?) 315

⁵⁰⁹ *Cayan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?) 315

⁵¹⁰ Serruys (1962) 377

⁵¹¹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 224

⁵¹² *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 2006, 225

word, *qöq*, underlines the connection of colour and the element of the divine. I would argue the notion of blue contained in a passage recounted by Rashid al-Din in which Temüjin compares himself to a blue gerfalcon is used in a parallel manner.⁵¹³ The Shamanist basis of the concept surrounding blue implies a divine and sacred subtext in the creation myth and might hint that the Mongols understood themselves as the chosen people, the *qöq mongγol*. A Mongol saying cited by Badral creates a connection between the Shamanistic deity, the by destiny inspired rule of the Mongols and the attribute blue: “Above every being, above life, is *qöq mongγol*.”

Further, the presence of a blue birthmark on the lower back of the Mongols might add to the special position of blue in the Mongol worldview. Badral adds in connection with the birthmark that the colour was therefore also a colour of respect; an interpretation that I logically cannot follow. He does not offer an explanation of this conclusion and I can only surmise that the birthmark might be viewed as a sign of heavenly intervention and as constituting a divine favour that demands respect for the wearer of such a bodily distinction.

The range of colours cited by Peng Daya attests a fundamental preference for colours that are red or off-reds. The Mongol partiality for red is partly substantiated by a short notice in the *Secret History*. Here is mentioned an encounter of Činggis Qan with a woman clad in red.⁵¹⁴ The Uighur ruler also refers to Činggis Qan’s crimson robe, and De Cora reports that Wenzong appeared before the crowd on New Years Day “dressed out in purple and gold.”⁵¹⁵ The Mongols’ preference for red and reddish tones is explained by the association with fire. Just like in the Turkic dialects, the Mongolian *ula’an* is derived from the verb *ulikh*, to become red, which refers to an object starting to glow when engulfed by fire. Due to this common linguistical background it can be argued that the Mongolian connotations and associations of the colour red follow that of the shared nomadic Turkic-Mongol culture. Red therefore implies a strong component of sacredness, arrived at from its connection with fire. Fire was and is considered a local deity who

⁵¹³ Boyle (1978) 184. The passage is cited by Boyle and reads as follows:

Furthermore, O khan, my father, I flew like a gerfalcon to Mount Chiququ, and crossed the Bui Nor, and caught for thee the cranes whose feet are blue and grey. If thou say “Who are they?” they are the Dörben and Tatar peoples. Again I became a blue gerfalcon and crossed the Kulun Nor, and caught the blue-footed cranes for thee, and gave them to thee. If thou say “Who are they?” they are the Qataghiin, Salji’ut and Qonqiran peoples.”

⁵¹⁴ ‘As he was bringing back the fugitives, Činggis Khaan, himself heard a woman in a red coat who, standing on top of a ridge, was wailing loudly, crying ‘Temüjin!’ See *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 67

⁵¹⁵ De Cora/Yule, Cordier (1330) 90, 91:

Once a year, on the first day of the new moon of March, which is the first day of their year, the emperor shows himself to his people dressed out in purple and gold and silver and precious stones. Then all the folk drop on their knees before him, and adore him, and say, “Lo this is our God upon earth, who giveth us in lieu of scarcity plenty and great riches, who giveth us peace and maintaineth justice!

rules over the affairs of a household and who is connected to the ancestors. Members of the household regularly sacrificed to the dwelling's fire, the "Lord of the Hearth". Based on this, fire was treated with great respect and customary law prohibited any impure things (waste) to be placed into it. It was also forbidden to give away fire to strangers, which was considered as giving away one own's good fortune. In connection with this fire is associated with the continuity of a people and welfare of the family, clan, and in a wider framework that of an empire.⁵¹⁶

Laude–Cirtautas reports that the Kazakh, a related nomadic people, used red *gers*, the felt-covered yurts of the nomads. These red *gers* were as highly esteemed, as were white *gers*. A historic narration that makes use of this association is cited: "At the Irtysh a whole forest of red cloth was constructed," which Laude-Cirtautas interprets as 'a great number of rich *gers*'.⁵¹⁷ I know of no accounts of red *gers* among the Mongols however. That red might have been a colour restricted to high status among Turkic nomads indicates another historic source where a revolt of slaves against their lords is accompanied by complaints that 'We never dared dressing in red, and never did we attempt to mount a fierce steed.'⁵¹⁸ Given that the series of imperial Yuan portraits depicts the empresses in red robes might well be an indication that red was subject to sumptuary laws among the Mongols as well, but definite proof does not exist. The request of the Uighur qan to be given a thread of Činggis Qan's crimson robe might be an indication that at that time crimson was indeed a colour connected to imperial ambitions. Whether this choice was a native one or, as so many other attributes, influenced by foreign manipulation, is not certain. Allsen attributes the nomadic connection to this western shade of royalty to the spread of Manichaeism to the east. When the to Manichaeism converted Uighur ruler Bögö ascended the throne he did so in a red robe.⁵¹⁹ The Khitan, with their Tang inspired governmental conceptions, might as well have proposed to adopt this specific colour. It is attested that in the Tang dynasty crimson (*dahong*) was the imperial shade.⁵²⁰ Officials commonly dressed in black, non-governmental scholars in white and commoners in non-silk attire.⁵²¹ Allsen concludes that red, *al*, penetrated the steppe but never came close to the estimation that the nomads accorded gold, since the latter contained a much longer established imperial association.⁵²²

Aside its connection to fire and its status, red as an emotional status is the expression of joy. All colours that have correlating emotions and moral principles are also represented by an

⁵¹⁶ See Krader (1963) 351; Jagchid and Hyer (1979) 150

⁵¹⁷ Laude–Cirtautas (1961) 54

⁵¹⁸ Laude–Cirtautas (1961) 53, 54

⁵¹⁹ Allsen (1997) 64

⁵²⁰ Lin (2006) 20

⁵²¹ Lin (2006) 21

⁵²² Allsen (1997) 65

equivalent stone or precious metal. Red corresponds to coral and ruby, blue is represented by steel and turquoise, white by pearl and silver, yellow by gold and amber, while black, probably based on its negative aspects, is not contained in this group.⁵²³ However, red together with black and white forms a triad of colours that found much application in pre-modern Mongol society. But even more frequently are white and black used alone as binary poles. These poles correspond to the binary division of the universe into good and evil, beginning and end, noble and common.⁵²⁴

The pole characterized by the colour black, *khara*, denotes all that is low, common, unlucky, dark, terrible and all evil. These characteristics of black accompany a range of categories to a varying degree. So is the *qara yasun*, the class of the commoners, low and common but has no element of evil or terrible. The black banner of Činggis Qan was an expression of the terrible and terrifying aspect of black. This is also expressed in the *White History*, where the quality of the Black Banner is described as the ability of the qa'an to intimidate his enemies in battle. Shukovskaja detects another connotation in the name of Činggis Qan's capital Qara Qorum. This city's black attribute should be understood as the Northern Capital rather than the Black Capital, since black corresponds to the north in the geopolitical worldview of the Mongols. It could also allude to a "Main capital" or "Mighty Capital", based on the secondary meanings of *khara* as "strong", "big", "mighty" or "terrible."⁵²⁵

The connotation of evil, gruesome, can be found back in the designation of evil spirits who are perceived as dwelling in the earth. This belief is another shared trait of the Turko-Mongol Shamanistic heritage, which is made evident by the consistent usage of black in connection with evil spirits. Evil are also the enemies who are planning the destruction of one's peoples, and these are therefore also referred to as black. Every outsider is perceived as different and all that is different is estimated as evil.⁵²⁶ Therefore is the term foreigner a homophone of the colour *khara*, black, just as "blue" is a homophone of "sky". Black in Mongolian culture is therefore also an epitheton of hostility, malic, dishonesty and evil deeds.⁵²⁷ Black features consequently in a host of curses and swear words.⁵²⁸

Regarding the use of black in Mongol clothing nothing detailed is known. Only the use of black felt in *gers* of common people and the assessment of black clothing as poor and

⁵²³ Shukovskaja (1996) 147

⁵²⁴ Shukovskaja (1996) 139

⁵²⁵ Shukovskaja (1996) 146

⁵²⁶ Laude-Cirtautas (1961) 25

⁵²⁷ Poppe (1977) 120

⁵²⁸ Poppe (1977) 121

inadequate in the wider Mongol-Turkic cultural framework is proven by Laude-Cirtautas.⁵²⁹ The black of the poor man's *ger* could have the much simpler reason of insufficient funds to replace the felt cover regularly, which turns black after years of use.

Mongols view black's oppositional colour white as the mother of all colours, as a colour from which all other colours are derived. Contrasting black, white symbolizes happiness, good fortune, purity, a noble spirit, respect, prestige, justice and the good. The Mongolist Nikolaus Poppe extends this list by adding associations with the immaculate, uncontaminated, honest, and good-natured.⁵³⁰ All objects that have been colored white by using the best natural ingredients, pigments or dyes, are considered endowed with highly regarded qualities.⁵³¹ The association of good fortune and wealth with the color white resonates from the specifics of a pastoral nomadic society. Food in general was classified according to colour. Dairy products are referred to as *tsagaan idege*, or "White Food", meat is described as red, butter as yellow, condiments as green, whereas tea and soup are black.⁵³² Milk as the basis of many dairy products was considered a life-supporting liquid whose fundamental position in the pastoral culture gained thereby a sacred connotation. Because of its sacred qualities milk was and is used profusely in rituals. The use of the fermented mares' milk of the herd of Qubilai Qa'an's ten thousand white mares in rituals, as recounted by Marco Polo, combines the pastoral esteem of milk as a sacred substance and the value of white as a colour of good omen. Milk, fermented or other, is used in rituals at sacrifices and ceremonies concerning the cycle of life (marriage, funeral, the first haircut, the interment of the placenta, choice of grave's site, etc.), but also the calendrical cycle (first milking of the mares, shearing of the sheep, making of felt, start of the production of *coumis*, etc.). The common association of white with wealth in all Turkic dialects (to which the Mongolian language is related) might also have its base in the common pastoral lifestyle of the Inner Asian nomads.⁵³³

Laude-Cirtautas cites a number of examples in which white objects are indicators of wealth and therefore relate to nobility, as she infers. Especially white *gers* and white clothing are in this context relevant.⁵³⁴ Moreover, the traditions in the Turko-Mongol cultural sphere to erect a

⁵²⁹ Laude-Cirtautas (1961) 31

⁵³⁰ Poppe (1977) 123

⁵³¹ Shukowskaja (1996) 143

⁵³² Shukowskaja (1996) 145

⁵³³ If taking the latter explanation as the foundation for the concept white, its use among the Turkic peoples is a natural ethnic demarcation from the Chinese civilization. Even if mixed economies always existed, the difference between sedentary, agricultural populations and pastoral nomadic people then becomes manifest in the cultural concepts surrounding white. The colour of good luck, a happy destiny and auspicious omens I supposed to the Chinese understanding of white as a colour of death, mourning and all that is common, unlucky and vulgar.

⁵³⁴ See Laude-Cirtautas (1961) 47:

white *ger* for a highly respected visitor and to ask such guest to be seated on a white felt carpet are cited in this context. Additionally, she relates of a sumptuary law decreed by Sultan Orchan (1326-1362) of the Kipchak Qanate, according to which, all members of the court were obliged to wear white felt hats and deducts the use of term *čaqa'an yasun* as based on the use of white objects among the nobility.⁵³⁵ For the Mongols the use of white clothing for high ranks (*beki*), the restricted use of white geldings as mounts for officials and the presentation of white animals, especially *gerfalcons* and camels, to Mongol rulers is attested.⁵³⁶ De Rachewiltz on the other hand speculates that the high value accorded to white and its designation of nobility derives from the fact that the skin colour of a common herder out on the steppe from exposure to the sun must have visibly darker than that of his noble lord. He adds that the Russian language has an equivalent construction of black and white based on this principle.⁵³⁷ The modern estimation all over Asia of a darker skin colour as base, common, poor, and uneducated or peasant would then be the continuation of a millennia-old tradition.

Whatever the origin of this concept, this juxtaposition is used to great poetic effect in the passage in the *Secret History* where the Merkit *Čilger Bökö* admits to wrongful intercourse with *Börte*, who had been entrusted to him when captured from *Temüjin*.

‘To feed on scraps of skin
Is the black crow’s lot – yet
It was goose and crane
It aspired to eat.
I, brutal and base *Čilger*, who laid my hand
On the noble lady,
Have brought disaster

Konnten wir in #10 Beispiele dafür bringen, daß schwarze Kleidung, Zelte u. ä. Von der Armut ihrer Besitzer Zeugnis geben, so weisen solche von weißer Farbe auf das Gegenteil hin. Vgl. *aq tondû kir*. [...] wrtl.: mit weißem Pelz, d.h. ‘reich’ (*zengin*); *aq üy kir*. [...] wrtl.: weißes, d.h. ‘reiches, prächtiges Zelt’ (*zengin, muhtesem oba*), daher *aq öylük otü*. [...] wrtl.: mit einem weißen Zelt versehen, d.h. ‘in Wohlstand lebend’. S.a. *aq tütün kir*. [...] wrtl.: weißer Rauch, d.h. ‘reiches Haus, wohlhabender Mann’ (*zengin ev, zegin adam*).

Weiß, d.h. kostbar sind auch die Zelte der Helden in den Erzählungen und Liedern der asiatischen Türken. Als weißes Zelt (Haus) wird das Paradies, *kaz*. [...] *aq saray*, gedacht. Vgl. hierzu *kir*. [...] *aq saray* wrtl.: weißes Haus, d.i. ‘das Schloß eines Herrschers’, also: ein reiches Haus.

⁵³⁵ Laude–Cirtautas (1961) 47

⁵³⁶ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 328

⁵³⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 265

On all the Merkit

[...]’⁵³⁸

The “black” Čilger Bökö, the miserable crow, is here put into opposition to the ”white” crane, a metaphor for the noble lady Börte. This metaphor employs the established use of black as denoting all common and mean things, here especially the association with a low standing. White in contrast denotes “all that is noble, aristocratic, and good, hence a symbol of good luck.”⁵³⁹ De Rachewiltz agrees with Laude-Cirtautas that the connection of white with luck and a happy destiny is a borrowed or shared heritage with the Inner Asian Turks.⁵⁴⁰ The donning of white garments at the Mongol New Year celebrations as Marco Polo’s mention expresses the Mongols view that “they may thrive all through the year, for they deem that white clothing is lucky.”⁵⁴¹ Good fortune is also associated with the nine-tailed white tuq of Činggis Qan that Juvaini describes as “the banner of Chinggis Qan’s fortune.”⁵⁴² The use of white on a political level does not surprise since a heavenly sanctioned good fortune is at the basis of nomadic leadership. White’s political ambitions are however amplified in gold.

Gold then, the Mongol *altan*, is the most important colour and substance in the political context. Rashid al-Din describes the use of gold among the Mongols and alludes to cultural specifics surrounding it:

They [the Onggirad, a Mongol subgroup] recount that their origin is such: Three sons were born of a golden vessel. These words ought certainly be [seen as] portents and allusions. The meaning of this was that the person who had brought these sons into the world was inherently intelligent, accomplished, very refined and well-bred. They likened him [or her] to a golden vessel primarily because this usage is current among the Mongols, for they have a costum upon seeing the emperor to exclaim, “we saw the golden face of the emperor,” [by which] is understood his [heart] of gold. And this very same metaphor and phraseology is

⁵³⁸ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 41

⁵³⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 427

⁵⁴⁰ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 328

⁵⁴¹ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 390. Allsen also quotes this passage but he uses the translation by A. C. Moule and Paul Pelliot who render it slightly different: “[...] white dress seems to them lucky and good, [...] so that they may take their good and have joy and comfort all day.[Polo/Moule, Pelliot (1298?) 222, (1938)]”

⁵⁴² Juvaini/Boyle (1958) 22

in use among the tribes, for gold is a noble and much needed substance and extremely pure and immaculate.⁵⁴³

Rashid al-Din establishes with this passage that the use of gold was based on certain cultural concepts, which occurred among all branches of the Mongols. He outlines that gold was an indication of high birth and a fortunate destiny. Rashid al-Din relates here the legendary descent of the Onggirad, but creation myths of other Mongol groups show similarities in their evocation of gold. Bodoncar, the founding father of the Borjigin line, is reported as issuing from a union with a golden man who travelled on the golden beams of sunlight. In the Mongol creation myth of the world a bird rises from the depth of the oceans to the golden earth, where thereupon nature begins to unfold. The sun and the heavens that are represented by gold stand for the primordial and the male concept as opposed to silver, the female principle represented by the earth and moon. Mythologically, therefore gold is equated with the beginning of all beginnings, as a substance that never loses its sparkle and gleam and therefore is of the highest value and importance.⁵⁴⁴ This connection is also expressed in the sun's attribute of being "golden yellow". Sparkling as gold might be, this significance is surpassed by the direct connection of gold to the solar theme.⁵⁴⁵ The sun itself is another main deity in the Shamanistic worldview of the Mongols, therefore adding a layer of spiritual meaning to the mythological one. The consistent usage of the attribute golden-yellow, in connection with the sun, or yellow-golden in regards with the earth, shows the interchangeability of gold and yellow. Yellow is rather the actual colour of gold, whereas gold is more of a concept than a colour.

While yellow combines with gold conceptually, the Mongolian *altan* is actually arrived at from red, *al*. Gold is therefore also connected to the sacrosanct image of fire, since the etymological root of *altan* is the Turkic *al*⁵⁴⁶, red, that contains connotations of continuity and stability as discussed above.

The implied cosmological concepts of gold see it therefore in the political context designating everything that has any connection to Činggis Qan, the supreme heaven-destined ruler. The clan of the Borjigid is referred to as the *altan urug*, the Golden Family. Golden attributes are being ascribed to all possessions of Činggis Qan, but especially his bow, shield, helmet, and reins, but also doorsill and a golden tether, where the last item is a figurative expression for Činggis Qan's government. In a similar metaphorical sense Činggis Qan is

⁵⁴³ As cited by Allsen (1997) 69.

⁵⁴⁴ Shukowskaja (1996) 147

⁵⁴⁵ Allsen (1997) 60

⁵⁴⁶ Laude-Cirtautas (1961) 57

reported to have had a golden face, body and corpse, family, posterity and throne. Serruys has studied the epitaph altan in the political context and concludes that altan is in many instances a synonym for “imperial”⁵⁴⁷ and stands for ‘supreme power, leadership and royal authority’.⁵⁴⁸ The designation Golden *Ordo* of the qa’an can therefore be read as the Imperial Palace. In retrospect the Mongol Empire is also referred to as the Golden Age, which evidences the continuation of the perception of gold as having superior value.

Sergei Nekliudov sums up the nomadic preoccupation with gold by establishing two fundamental ideas arrived at from a mythological angle: ‘eternity (indestructibility, agelessness) and value (initiating principle, essence).’⁵⁴⁹ These basic ideas he describes as forming four semantic categories: “the golden source, golden principles, golden center, and golden essence (the very highest degree of quality).”⁵⁵⁰ Gold has to be understood as ‘a universal and cosmological symbol that contains the creation of the earth and the first human, the ancestors of the ruler and the ruler himself, the concept of eternity, continuity, stability, and truthfulness’.⁵⁵¹

Being endowed with such a range of deep cosmological and mythological values, it is no wonder that Ammianus Marcellinus reports of the Huns as ‘burning with an infinite thirst for gold,’ a statement that can be applied to the Mongols without modification.⁵⁵² The connection of gold and imperial authority was however not restricted to the nomadic cultures. In many other cultures, such as the ancient Iranian, ancient Egyptian, early Byzantine, the Inca, and other cultures, gold is a fixed component of a mutually inclusive tetragram comprised from gold, imperial power, the sun, and fire.⁵⁵³

Another premise of colour symbolism is the geopolitical connotation of colour. Even if in the case of the Mongols a number of different systems are suggested by scholars, all agree that such a system was known to the Mongols in the Yeke Mongol Ulus period and at later times. It is commonly asserted that the Mongols adhered to the Sino-Mongol concept of black for the north, red for the south, white for the west, blue for the east, and yellow for the centre. Confusion only arrives when one observes that the Mongols referred to themselves as the Blue Mongols, *qöq mongyol*. As elaborated above, I prefer to arrive at a blue epitaph for the Mongols on ideological grounds rather than the geopolitical principle. The Russian academic Kononow, as cited by Shukowskaja, prefers to suggest that the Mongols instead were using a Turkic colour

⁵⁴⁷ Serruys (1962) 357-378

⁵⁴⁸ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 263

⁵⁴⁹ Allsen (1997) 60

⁵⁵⁰ Allsen (1997) 61

⁵⁵¹ Shukowskaja (1996) 148

⁵⁵² As cited by Allsen (1997) 61.

⁵⁵³ Shukowskaja (1996) 147-149

representation, in which blue details the centre. Somebody who discusses the problematic use of colours in this context is Klaus Sagaster in his commentary to the *White History*. Mongol chronicles refer to the people of the Five Colours (*tabun öngge*), the Nine Great Peoples (*visün yeke ulus*), and the Four Vassal Peoples (*dörben qari*). Of interest here are especially the Five Colours. The *Secret History* does not contain this term, and for the first time the Five Colours appear in the *White History* where the term refers to the Mongols, Koreans, Chinese, Tibetans, and the population of Turkestan. Here the Mongols are placed at the centre of the political map, the Koreans in the east and the Chinese in the south. As to the positioning of the Tibetans and the Central Asians, chronicles already differ in interpretation. The *White History* accords the west to the Central Asians and the north to the Tibetans, while in the later *Altan kürdün mingyan kegesütü bicig*, a chronicle of 1739, the Tibetans are placed in the west and the Central Asians to the north.⁵⁵⁴ With the addition of other peoples the assignment of cardinal directions for all subject populations proved increasingly difficult, resulting in some cases in geographical paradoxes. The colour palette remained restricted to five colours, which were applied to the four cardinal directions and the centre. The *White History* as the earliest source only indicates that blue applied to the Mongols and red to the Chinese. The cosmological concept of the Mongols seems to only have been systematized in the seventeenth century. The *Šira tuyuji* of the mid-seventeenth century extends this assignment to incorporate the Central Asians as yellow, the Tibetans as black, and the Koreans as white, while the Mongols and Chinese as blue and red respectively are continued. In the *Altan Tobci*, another chronicle also of the mid-seventeenth century (1655), introduces a new tradition. Here all colour designations have been moved about to fit in with the Chinese philosophy: the Mongols are no longer blue but yellow, while the Koreans appear as blue, the Chinese remain red, the Tibetans black and the Indians are white.⁵⁵⁵ While these chronicles describe the colour assignment in correlation with certain peoples, no such distinct ascription is known for the early Mongols. For that period a colour correlation can only be proven for the western regions. Generally, the Kipchak qanate of Jochi was divided after his demise among his sons and the two wings are commonly known as the White Horde of the west and the Blue Horde of the east. This division is described differently in a fourteenth-century Khwarazam chronicle. In this chronicle, *Tschinggis-name*, which was authored by Utemisch-hadshi ibn Maulan Muhammad Dosti, on the death of Jochi his sons are related as having approached Činggis Qan to address the issue of inheritance. Činggis Qan divides the *ulus* of Jochi among only

⁵⁵⁴ *Cayan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?) 309

⁵⁵⁵ *Cayan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?) 313, 314

three of Jochi's eighteen sons. To the second son of Jochi, Batu, Činggis Qan awards the western territories and a white *ger* with a golden entrance, the fifth son, Schyban, receives the border territories to the west of Batu's domain together with a grey *ger* featuring a steel door, and the oldest son, Orda, is given the eastern territories with a blue *ger* of a silver frame. These territories were from then on referred to as the White Horde, Blue Horde and Grey Horde. Shukowskaja refers to Tkatschew, who argues that these colours were equally applied as indicators of social standing.⁵⁵⁶

8.2 Ornamentation

Apart from the dragon, whose specific Mongol use has been discussed above, a dragon-inspired creature is found on Mongol designs. The flying fish (*feiyu*), or *makara*, is characterized by the dominant fish tail its body ends in. The creature originated in India and was first used on textiles in the Tang dynasty. It was widely used on Liao textiles and has been found on Mongol brocades as well. In the Ming dynasty, fabrics featuring the *makara* or the ox-dragon were given by the emperor as rewards to deserving individuals. An example of a Mongol *makara* is seen in figure 118. An equally mythical beast, the Chinese unicorn, or *qilin*, featured on a blue background, arranged in pairs that turn their heads to each other (figure 117). The depiction of these animals is woven with silver thread and not in gold. The animals are framed by a border, which is a dedication rendered in Nashki Duktus. A small silken fragment found at Qara Qorum depicts the *qilin* in roundels on a lonzenge background (figure 116). A mythical beast that is not known in either Chinese or Central Asian traditions is seen in figure 119. The beast shares features of a camel, a fish, bird, and dragon.

Another popular motif on textiles that has been consistently depicted throughout the Mongol period is the lion. The lion, though essential Byzantine-Sasanian in origin, entered the Chinese and Far Eastern visual repertoire in connection with Buddhist iconography. Succeeding the Six Dynasties (420-589) and the Sui dynasty (581-618), the Tang dynasty elevated the lion to a very popular image.⁵⁵⁷ Tang examples evidence the origin of this Mongol fashion. Nonetheless, the image of the lion has been severely edited under Mongol auspices. The most commonly found design has a pair of lions depicted back-to-back, who turn their heads back towards the other. A distinct Mongol feature is the tail that feeds through the hindlegs and twirls around one of them.⁵⁵⁸ An example of a roundel with such a pair of lions is shown in figure 120. Another example of

⁵⁵⁶ Shukowskaja (1996) 140, 141

⁵⁵⁷ White and Bunker (1994) 135

⁵⁵⁸ Zhao Feng (1999) 192

paired lions is seen on a fabric that was used to cover the front inner lapel of a Mongolian robe excavated at Mingshui, Inner Mongolia (figure 37). Paired lions in elongated roundels on a green background are depicted in figure 121.

The deer is another frequent motive among four-legged beasts. This animal was even more common under the Jin and Liao, but on grounds of a common cultural emphasis on the hunt the Mongols also esteemed deer. The deer possesses the connotation of longevity and its depiction therefore carried a symbolic value.⁵⁵⁹ Činggis Qan's mythological descent from a blue wold and a deer might have added extra weight to the deer's symbolical value. An example of a deer depiction is seen in the Yuan badge in figure 162. A textile with resting deer in staggered rows, brocaded in gold, against a red background is variously attributed to the Jin or Mongol period (figure 123). Deer depictions are also seen on the saddle cover in figure 47.

The intricate feline design as seen in figure 122 expands the scope of animals portrayed on Mongol brocades to ones that have less heraldic character.

Hares are very frequently found on Yuan textiles, rendering this animal a characteristic depiction of the Yuan. Why this should be so, is not yet well understood. The only mention of the hare in a mythological framework I have come across, is a reference by Ricoldo, who narrates that the Mongols reasoned their quest by explaining "that God called them from the mountains and desert places and sent before them his messengers, the beast and the bird of the desert, i.e. the hare and the owl." In further stories related to Ricoldo the hare and owl serve the Mongols as scouts and guides.⁵⁶⁰

The staggered roundels of paired hares as seen in figure 139 are a characteristic Mongol design with its gridline design. Another hare depiction that reminds of Jin styles is depicted in figure 140. That the rabbit in the Mongol period was also imbued with traditional Chinese lore can be seen from the embroidered hare that pounds the elixir of life on the moon (figure 141). A gold-couched example of a moon-with-hare theme supports this cultural transmission (figure 142).

It is however not the owl of this legendary duo that is featured abundantly but the falcon. Just as the lion, the falcon is depicted paired, facing each other. Facing falcons, but also other birds, are a central Middle Eastern motif that must have found much favour with the Mongols due to their totemic background. Not known is whether the falcon was subject to sumptuary laws, as a symbol of the Borjigin. A tomb discovered at Tavan Tolgoi in Sukhbaatar Aimag in Outer Mongolia dates to the early Mongol period. The Mongolian archaeologist Dorjpagma Navaan

⁵⁵⁹ Shukowskaja (1996) 144

⁵⁶⁰ Boyle (1978) 185

concludes from the fact that the buried female wore a golden ring with a hidden white falcon on the inside that she belonged to the Činggisic family.⁵⁶¹ If the gerfalcon was indeed an image signalling royal descent, certainly specific features, such as the colour white, would have presumably be reserved for the blood-related nobility. The shell for a hood featuring falcons completely woven with gold, outlined with brown floss and featuring contrasting green eyes, was excavated in the Mingshui tomb in Inner Mongolia. The falcons shown in figure 31 are typical of the thirteenth century, were the birds were most popularly portayed without a gridlined background. Another fragment, part of the Hecksher collection, shows the falcon in combination with the typical Mongol period lion.⁵⁶² Double-headed falcons decorated the nasiq the tsegdeg in figure 38 was made from (figure 124). Another brocade fragment portrays falcons that resemble the design in figure 124 in nearly all details (figure 126). The reconstruction of the woven image is reproduced in figure 127. A roundel featuring a more statically designed facing pair of falcon rendered in black on gold is shown in figure 125.

The genre of avarian creatures is enriched by confronted griffins in roundels of a hanging (figure 133) and eagles (as featured among the roundels in figure 122). A piece of brocade depicting a slender double-headed eagle might have been produced in Europe in imitation of the Mongol designs (132). Phoenixes are found on many of the extant Mongol silk fragments. A very dense design of flying phoenixes is seen in the green-golden brocade of figure 128. An abstract and static design of the phoenix image reminiscent of Jin styles is portrayed in figure 129. A canopy was embroidered with golden phoenixes with beak to tail. These birds differ in appearance. The emergence of a male and female phoenix has been attributed to the Mongol period and is attested by this textile article (figure 130). A very different style of phoenixes is seen in figure 131. These chubby little birds are far removed from the swirling elegant creatures of figure 130. A typical Mongol technique is to delineate a design by the absence of the supplementary golden weft. The result is a purely golden surface on which the unfilled spaces of groundfabric achieve the effect of a linedrawing. This technique has been employed to create the phoenix design in figure 137.

Exotic birds are encountered on two further pieces of brocade. Paired parrots brocaded in gold on a green groundfabric are featured in 134, and a golden parrot on a black background achieves a dramatic effect (figure 135). A cock in a roundel decorates the brocade tentpanels designate the place of origin as being the Middle East, where the cock is a frequently depicted image (figure 136). A bird of unknown kind is placed at the centre of a undelineated roundel,

⁵⁶¹ Navaan (2005) http://www.silk-road.com/newsletter/vo14num1/srnewsletter_v4n1.pdf

⁵⁶² Zhao Feng (1999) 196: Double headed falcon and confronted lions (13th to early 14th century)

which dates to the early Mongol period (figure 138). Cranes, a Chinese-originated symbol of longevity, as well as ducks featured regularly on many Chinese brocades that were readily available to the Mongols. Garments from the grave of Huang Sheng, which presumably contained her bridal trousseau, depict these birds.⁵⁶³

Floral depictions are a frequent design element of backgrounds, as filler of borders (figure 147), or in their own right. The lotus is a frequently found motif depicted in a variety of styles and arrangements. The teardrop-shaped roundel containing a lotus flower reminds on the Liao and Jin aesthetics of spacing golden images sparingly over the surface (figure 143). A fragment that contains lotus flowers placed on a gridline background appears more in the line with Mongol tastes (figure 146). Inspired by Chinese concepts is a brown-reddish textile that portrays the ‘Three Friends’, the bamboo with pine branches and prunus blossoms (145). The shape of the *ruyi* fungus informed the design of the cloud collar. This plant’s image is moreover frequently found as an element in floral design (figure 144). The example of a Mongol fabric shown in figure 144 displays the *ruyi* border in connection with peonies in frontal view on a background of peonies in profile, mallow and another unspecified sort. The Yuan dynasty text *Shu Jin Pu* (Records of Sichuan Brocades) contains an entry “*ruyi* and peony”, probably referring to this or a similar design.⁵⁶⁴

Tiny flowers and leaves scrolled across the entire surface of textiles in other Mongol period brocades, creating a rich and dense impression (figures 151, 152, 153). Unspecified flowers and leaves as a filling to other designs are seen in figures 147, 148, and 149. The geometrical aspects of these background designs were a characteristic Mongol aesthetic.

Among geometric ornamentation, roundels feature prominent on Mongol garments and are another feature that is shared with Liao precedents. The roundel entered East Asian visual arts in the Tang, where it had been received with much enthusiasm from Persia.⁵⁶⁵ But in the Mongol era the basic shape developed into a number of variations that have been in use ever since. The scalloped roundel with four lobes was extended to eight, twelve, and even twentyfour lobes, but a three lobed shape was also developed. Apart from these, a leaf-shaped medallion, an elliptical medallion with offset pointed tips, referred to as a shuttle-shape, as well as the flaming tear or pearl design, whose silhouette is that of a waterdrop surrounded by flames, was used in the designs. The composition of these roundrels over the textile departs from Tang and Liao practices of arranging them in neatly aligned groups of four. In the Mongol period, staggered groups of

⁵⁶³ Crowe (1991) 154

⁵⁶⁴ Zhao Feng (1999) 202

⁵⁶⁵ Chung (2005) 102

roundrels were preferred creating hexagonal elements. Later the background to these featured straight lines and diagonals that connected them, forming geometrical lattices. Nasiq textiles with horizontal bands are registered commonly in European church inventories. A brown fabric with horizontal lines containing abstract flowers, as an example of this style, is seen in figure 150. The overt use of clear geometrical lines might be put down to Islamic influence.

Moreover, the hexagonal-diaper pattern, a pattern with a manifest history, has been in used Mongol fabrics as can be shown by the fragment in figure 116, 112, and 133. This pattern, commonly referred to as ‘tortoise-shell design’, can be traced back to the Tang dynasty. Apart from its depiction in paintings of this period, one of a few samples extant is a piece of such patterned silk that was originally presented to the Horyu-ji Temple in Kyoto by the royal household in the eighth century. The inventory titles this piece of fabric *Shokkokin*, the Japanese term designating the Shu district of Sichuan province. Tang decrees profess how highly valued this design was. In 771 such fabrics were banned from commercial production. The pattern was regarded as a luxury item and its wide circulation in the later half of the dynasty was considered a sign of an increasingly decadent society.⁵⁶⁶ Badrakh confirms the depiction on garments held at Ulaan Baatar’s National History Museum and adds that this pattern was frequently used as well on boots and overcoats, *uuji*.⁵⁶⁷

The inventories of European churches, where nasiq fabrics were frequently used for wrapping sacred scriptures, but also for vestments, generally note their design. They do not stipulate the country of origin (an acquisition from Italy or Spain can therefore not be excluded), but a host of these fabrics must have been available to the Mongols as well. Among the great variety of pictorial elements of animals and plants, their arrangement frequently seems to have been in horizontal bands running over the width of the textile. If the dates of these entries are any indication, this ornamentation appears starting from the early decades of the fourteenth century. An inventory listing of such design is for i.a. the following from 1311 of Clement V: *Item, unum pannum Tartaricum integrum subtilem ad modum sindonis, quasi rubeum; et habet multas virgas per traversum de auro et de serico viridi et aliis pluribus coloribus...* (Red Tartar cloth with many stripes running horizontally of gold and green silk and many other colours...).⁵⁶⁸

Obviously, apart from woven designs, fabrics were also embellished by embroidery. Needle-looping, as mentioned above, was a much employed technique but others found equally application. Yuan embroidery had large-scale patterns, bold colour schemes and are characterized

⁵⁶⁶ Chang (1992) 99, 100

⁵⁶⁷ Badrakh (1976) 38

⁵⁶⁸ Wardwall (1989) 136, Appendix II, item no. 20

by showy technical execution. A combination of stitches was used to create dramatic effects in contouring, padding and shading. The effect was richly textured materials surfaces on contrasting ground fabrics.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Vollmer (1995) VIII

9. Production and Acquisition

Textiles and clothing were used in state transactions as well in private circles as gifts, donations, rewards or salaries, as an expression of gratitude, and as a currency before being substituted by paper money. Based on the central socio-political function of these two commodities their acquisition was of central concern to the Mongol elite.

Access to textiles has therefore always been one of the main ingredients of nomadic politics. If not available to them through trade with sedentary neighbours the carefully balanced foreign politics were upset and raids would replace the formerly peaceful co-existence. The Mongols as the dominating force in the region faced a vastly different situation than the loosely allied groups predating the Mongol Empire, but the problem of acquisition remained a pivotal interest, or even increased in importance due to the Mongol elite culture thriving on gold brocades.

Apart from the frequent mentions of tribute and stately gifts rendered in textiles or clothing items, travel accounts frequently mention centres of production in various areas, and thus this chapter touches upon the development of the textile industry and accounts for the political approach to it. The multifaceted compound of trade, tribute, conquest and taxation is a complex topic that illuminates the central position of clothing and textiles in Mongol culture, but, given the scope of this paper, can be dealt with here only in an abridged manner.

9.1 Sources of supply

Many travellers note on the home industry among the Mongols and the role their women played in garment manufacture. Carpini enumerates a whole list of female duties:

Their women make everything, leather garments, tunics, shoes, leggings and everything made of leather; they also drive the carts and repair them, they load the camels, and in all their tasks they are very swift and energetic. All the woman wear breeches and some of them shoot like the men.⁵⁷⁰

Rubruck equally narrates of the great industriousness of Mongol women and mentions handicrafts as their field of occupation, moreover adding detail to the way garments were made. Apart from ‘making felt and covers for their dwellings’, they tailor ‘shoes, socks and other garments’. And it is the womens’ task “[...] to dress the skins and stitch them together, which they do with a thread

⁵⁷⁰ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 18

made from sinew. They divide the sinew into tiny strands, and then twist them into a single long thread.”⁵⁷¹ To make the leather and skins required for the clothing “They dress skins with the sour mill of ewes, thickened and salted.”⁵⁷²

What becomes obvious from these observations is that the home industry supplied the average Mongol household with the basic materials and manufactured clothing needed. The fact that weaving was not one of the crafts practised by them is also established by these narrations. To obtain those coveted golden brocades then, other sources had to be found, either of textiles or of ready garments.

Surveying contemporary accounts the impression that forms is that the battlefield was the primary source of such items. Not only accounts of the destruction and devastation of formerly glorious cities by their conquered inhabitants are numerous, but also the removal of the enemy’s wealth and possessions by Mongol troops in the aftermath of a campaign is often narrated. The mention in the *Secret History* of Mongol soldiers despoiling the defeated Kereyit troops slain in battle illustrates the practice:

They distributed the Tümen Tübe’en and they all took of them until they had plenty. They despoiled the Olon Dongqayit in less than a day. As for the brave Jirgin who used to strip the blood-stained clothing and possessions from the enemy, they divided and apportioned them, but could not give some to everybody.”⁵⁷³

According to this account the slain enemy was a welcome source of garments and other valuables to the Mongols soldiers. The act of removing the clothing of enemy soldiers killed in battle, however, indicates another motivation for doing so. I view this exploit more in terms of procurement. Here the actual battlefield serves as a source of armour and weaponry that the soldiers had to provide for themselves, rather than a source of (elite) clothing, since soldiers obviously would be sporting battle dress instead of casual clothes.

That it was common practice to reward the individual soldier for his service and to refill the state treasuries’ coffers by spoils is attested by the *Secret History*. On conclusion of the campaign against the Jin dynasty in 1211 Činggis Qan moved to retrieve great quantities of

⁵⁷¹ Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 90

⁵⁷² Rubruck/Dawson (1955), 103

⁵⁷³ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 109

satin⁵⁷⁴, and Ögödei acted in the same manner when on campaign in northern China, where he is recorded to have taken “gold, silver, gold-embroidered and patterned satins, possessions, piebald horses and young slaves.”⁵⁷⁵ When Činggis Qan’s troops sacked the Jin capital Jungdu the Mongol stewards Önggür, Arqai Qasar and Šigi Qutuqu were sent to take stock of the Jin imperial treasury.

When Činggis Qa’an had the inventory taken of the gold, silver, goods, satin and other things gathered in Jungdu, he sent the steward Önggür, Arqai Qasar and Šigi Qutuqu to do it. As these three were approaching, Qada [the treasurer installed by the fleeing Jin emperor] went ahead to greet them, taking with him gold-embroidered and patterned satins. He came out of Jungdu and welcomed them.

Šigi Qutuqu said to Qada, ‘Formerly, the goods of this Jungdu, and the very city of Jungdu, did belong to the Altan Qan [Chinese emperor]. Now Jungdu surely belongs to Činggis Qa’an. How can you give us the goods and satins of Činggis Qa’an, stealing them and bringing them here behind his back? I shall not take them.’ Thus spoke Šigi Qutuqu and did not take them, but the steward Önggür and Arqai took them.⁵⁷⁶

This episode reveals an established procedure regarding the taking of booty and a rudimentary form of management in the form of accountants. It also demonstrates that all possessions captured in war were deemed the personal property of the emperor. Only his person had the right, and obligation, to distribute the spoils among the deserving members of his conquest retinue. Another passage details that the prospect of booty might have been occasionally the underlying reason for further campaigns; the allure of fresh conquests was based on future prospects of tribute. In a passage of the *Secret History* Činggis Qan is enraged by his sons’ behaviour and his *confidants* try to calm him by a scenario of loot, which he readily succumbs to: “If you incite us-you Tibetan

⁵⁷⁴ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 178: “On that campaign [1211] Činggis Khaan obtained the submission of the Altan Qaan of the Kitat people and took a large quantity of satin.”

⁵⁷⁵ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 205: “[Then] Ögödei Khaan destroyed the Altan Qan and gave him the name Seüse [Little Slave]. He despoiled him of his gold, silver, gold-embroidered and patterned satins, possessions, piebald horses and young slaves.”

⁵⁷⁶ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 180

dogs- and send us on a mission, with our strength increased by Heaven and Earth we shall bring back for you enemy people, gold, silver, satin, goods and subjects.’⁵⁷⁷

Conquest was evidently a general source of attire and other articles that complemented and supplanted the home industry of the Mongols.⁵⁷⁸ The acquisition of textiles and garments as booty in conquests, though, only preceded the customary tribute the subjugated were obliged to pay, which was frequently to be rendered in these two commodities. The submission of the very same Tibetans, the Tang’uts, was accepted after ‘gold, silver, satin and goods in abundance’ had been offered to Činggis Qan, whose troops are reported to have taken as much tribute as possible by finally using gold brocades to fasten the loads to their horses.⁵⁷⁹ While the Tang’uts offered said tribute without specific Mongol demands Baghdad’s tribute was well premeditated, since even before Baghdad had been taken, the fame of its golden brocades had already been established in the Mongol realm by trade. As soon as victory was assured Ögödei Qa’an ordered the delivery of the following coveted items, first among which features nasiq textiles:

‘Čormaqañ Qorči shall reside at that very place as commander of the garrison troops. Every year he shall make people deliver yellow gold, naq-fabrics, brocades and damasks with gilded thread, small and big pearls, fine Western horses with long necks and tall legs, dark brown Bactrian camels and one-humped Arabian dromedaries, pack-mules and riding mules, and he shall send them to Us.’⁵⁸⁰

Whether the order to collect these items was meant as an instruction to simply seize the stipulated items or to retrieve them by a system of taxation is not apparent from the text. Seemingly,

⁵⁷⁷ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 193

⁵⁷⁸ The military campaigns, besides constituting a source for textiles and garments, had a noted effect on the textile industry as a whole, regarding the destruction of established centres of production.

After the fall of the Jin the Mongols tried to revive the destroyed traditional centres of silk production in northern China, namely the industries of Henen, Hebei and Shandong, from where heavy gold brocades were ordered. The fame though, that Sichuan had gained with masterly executed brocades waned in this period and its industry declined to a low point.⁵⁷⁸ The conquest of China led to a general shift of silk producing centres. Traditionally, the north was the centre of silk production but with large demographic movements to the south in the face of Mongol conquests, new centres were established especially in Hangzhou, Nanjing and Suzhou that were to endure ever after.⁵⁷⁸ The coastal regions, especially in Fujian province, became very productive centres of manufacture but also of seaborne international trade. Ports such as Hangzhou, Ningbo, Wenzhou, Quanzhou and Gangzhou played a crucial role in the increase of Chinese export of silken stuffs to Asia, but also the Middle East and northern Africa. This development aided the development in export wares of silks with design most likely appreciated by the foreign customer. See Wilson (2005) 22.

⁵⁷⁹ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 176, 177

⁵⁸⁰ *Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?) 205

systematic taxation was only initiated under Mōngke Qa'an's reign. In the early years taxes were collected on an *ad hoc* basis, goods simply seized where and whenever possible and tithes extracted from fresh subject population.⁵⁸¹ Taxation as a relatively late administrative practice served to supplement the irregular income through spoils and supported the court's lavish living style, but also funded the state and military in large measure. The secretaries in charge of the conquered areas were instructed to collect revenue most of all in the form of silk and precious metal.⁵⁸² The first, however, to implement such tax policy the Mongols were not. The practice to have commoners pay their taxes in silk had been instigated by the Tang dynasty, where all duties, whether land tax or corvée labour, were payable with this commodity.⁵⁸³ Being familiar with Tang policies the Mongol tax system could well have been initiated by their Khitan advisors. The influence of the Khitan advisor Yeh-lü Chu-t'sai in matters of financial administration and taxation is well known.⁵⁸⁴

The absence of accounts in the early years and the loss of the official bookkeeping for the years running up to 1329 unfortunately allows only a fragmentary estimate of tax incomes rendered in silk. Only for the early years of Qubilai Qa'an's reign numbers are available for the northern Chinese population of roughly four to five million people. In the years from 1263 to 1267 the income increased from 712.171 pounds (450.8 tonnes) of silk to 1.096.489 pounds (694.1 tonnes). For the years 1263 and 1265 the *Yuan Shih* mentions different numbers: here are listed 716.401 pounds (453.5 tonnes) of taxed raw silk and 988.280 pounds (625.6 tonnes) respectively.⁵⁸⁵ The numbers for the period after the fall of the Southern Song must have increased exponentially, since a population census of 1290 registered 89,3% of the total population in ex-Southern Song territories.⁵⁸⁶ Peng Daya and Xu Tingshu's narration both indicate the differences in taxes and services to be rendered by the Mongols and the peoples in former Chinese territories. These differences were clearly based on the differing forms of economy. The Mongols were requested to supply pastoral

⁵⁸¹ Allsen (1989) 100

⁵⁸² See Dardess (72) 118. These secretaries were stationed under Ögödei's rule in Yanjing, the former Middle Capital of the Jin dynasty, Besh Baliq, and in various places in Transoxania, from where the rich cities of Bukhara and Samarkand were supervised.

⁵⁸³ See Lin (2006) 23. This move and the government's practise to use silk as an article of financial transactions resulted in silk becoming a secondary currency.

⁵⁸⁴ Allsen (1989) 101, 102

⁵⁸⁵ See Franke (1949) 132. Figures given for the years 1263, 1265, 1266, and 1267 are 712.171 pounds, 986.912 pounds, 1.053.226 and 1.096.489 pounds respectively. Since Franke's article "Geld und Wirtschaft in China unter der Mongolen-Herrschaft" concentrates on monetary taxes, his approach to sources differs from the focus of this paper. A thorough investigation of contemporary sources regarding silk as a taxed commodity would be essential in order to clarify the scope of taxation as a source of textile revenue.

⁵⁸⁶ Franke (1949) 130

products and manpower (livestock, horses, carts, weapons, mutton and servants⁵⁸⁷) and the levy was limited in scope to one tenth of the herd and a taxable minimum of a hundred head regarding sheep, as can be attested for the period of Ögödei's reign.⁵⁸⁸ The agrarian Chinese however had to pay according to Peng Daya annually 'in the cities, except for the artisans, 25 ounces of silk per adult and an additional 50 ounces of silk for every cow or goat, whereas in the countryside a person had to pay 100 ounces of silk, and each family four stones of rice, without regards to the size of the cultivated land.' Peng Daya estimated that the annual volume of silver, paid in lieu of the stipulated natural resources, that reached the court as tax was around 20 thousand bars.⁵⁸⁹ Xu Tingshu adds to these rather regular taxes and services, referred to as *alban*, the extraordinary taxes and services that the population was forced to contribute. These expenditures, or *qubciri*, concerned mainly the provision of food and equipment to troops and couriers everytime they passed by⁵⁹⁰, which could reach prohibitive amounts, crushing the local economy.

The quota to be met by the secretaries was not collected by them personally but was farmed out to merchants and other individuals.⁵⁹¹ The involvement in tax collection of the mostly Central Asian merchants made them a detested social group who were also engaged in cutthroat usury practices and competitive trade, partly on behalf of the Mongol nobility.

Less regular income of textiles or clothing was received at the court on state events, such as ascensions or imperial birthdays. Carpini recounts of the vast quantities of clothing and textiles presented to the new emperor at Güyük Qa'an's investiture:

There were more than four thousand envoys there, counting those who were carrying tribute, those who were bringing gifts, the Sultans and other chiefs who

⁵⁸⁷ Xu Tingshu lists the following items: "[...] Rinder und Pferde, Karren, Waffen und Knechte, Schafffleisch und Pferdemilch [...] / [...] cows and horses, carts, weapons and serfs, mutton and horsemilk[...].” See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 142.

⁵⁸⁸ Smith (1970) 69, 70

⁵⁸⁹ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 145:

Die chinesische Bevölkerung, ausgenommen die Handwerker, hat neuerdings, gleich ob Mann oder Frau, jährlich an Steuern zu zahlen: in den Städten pro Erwachsener 25 Unzen Seide und pro Rind oder Hammel 50 Unzen Seide; auf dem Lande pro Person 100 Unzen Seide und an Reis, ohne Rücksicht auf den Umfang des Ackerbaus, pro Familie jährlich 4 Stein. Die Transporte an Silber aus allen Provinzen (nach der Zentrale) belaufen jährlich auf 20 000 Barren.

⁵⁹⁰ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 142:

In den chinesischen Gebieten sind an Abgaben zu leisten von jedem Erwachsenen einer jeden Familie – abgesehen von der Seide und Seidenstoffen umgerechnet in Silber – Verpflegung und Ausrüstung, jedesmal wenn Kuriere durchreisen und wenn Truppen verlegt werden.

⁵⁹¹ Dardess (1973) 121, 122

were coming to submit to them, those summoned by the Tartars and the governors of the territories.⁵⁹²

[...] So many gifts were bestowed by the envoys there that it was marvellous to behold-gifts of silk, samite, velvet, brocade, girdles of silk threaded with gold, choice furs and other presents. The Emperor was also given a sunshade or little awning such as is carried over his head, and it was all decorated with precious stones. A certain governor of a province brought a number of camels for him, decked with brocade and with saddles on them having some kind of contrivance inside which men could sit, and there were, I should think, forty or fifty of them; he also brought many horses and mules covered with trappings or armour made of leather or of iron.⁵⁹³

Marco Polo recounts the enormous quantities of tribute or gifts bestowed onto the qa'an at the New Year celebrations and mentions "[...] great presents of gold and silver, and pearls and gems, and rich textures of divers kinds," as well as "more than 100,000 white horses, beautiful animals, and richly caparisoned."⁵⁹⁴ Taken the vast amounts stated by Carpini and Polo, these occasions, irregular as certain occasions were, were a substantial source of revenue. The presentation of gifts to a ruler, moreover, was a mandatory gesture, as can be deduced by the frequent mentions of gifts bestowed on Mongol rulers.⁵⁹⁵ This was fundamentally based on reciprocity, since the ruler was equally required to supply his subjects with all necessities (see tügel).

9.2 Imperial workshops

The increasing demand of luxury garments that arose with the growing number of the Borjigid and the expanding aristocracy required different means of guaranteeing a steady supply to satisfy it. Already Činggis Qan had realized the value of foreign specialists and had started to recruit them into government offices. The governing elite of the Uighurs, well versed in sedentary administration, was the first strata of foreign experts to contribute to the Mongol efforts. Not much later the procurement of artisans, including weavers, began. If initially the acquirement of weaponry experts must have been the primary objective, with them other artisans were similarly

⁵⁹² Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 62

⁵⁹³ Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331) 64

⁵⁹⁴ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 390

⁵⁹⁵ Though this convention is a general occurrence, occasionally the term "gift" in sources hides the practice of merchants presenting costly items as gifts to the court, which then had to be paid for. See Allsen (1989) 119, 120.

put to use for Mongol purposes. The general rule was to spare artisans along with scholars and physicians from being killed in military action and special commissioners (*shih-che*) were employed to pool local experts for further use by the Mongols. Juvaini narrates the fall of Samarkand and the great number of artisan captives that had been taken there.

When the town and citadel equalled each other in ruin and desolation...the people who had escaped from beneath the sword were numbered; thirty thousand of them were chosen for their craftsmanship, and these Chingiz-Khan distributed amongst his sons and kinsmen [...].⁵⁹⁶

The fall of Urgandj, the capital of the Khwarazm sultanate, is described in very similar terms:

To be brief, when the Mongols had ended the battle of Khorazm and had done with leading captive, plundering, slaughter and bloodshed, such of the inhabitants as were artisans were divided up and sent to the countries of the East. To-day there are many places in those parts that are cultivated and peopled by the inhabitants of Khorazm.⁵⁹⁷

After the event these captives were distributed as valued possessions to the various members of the imperial household.⁵⁹⁸ The descendants of such households were retained in service and were mostly required to carry on the craft of their elders. Artisans generally were held in great esteem and were accorded privileges, such as tax exemption; a fact that was widely known and invited incompetents to try to be registered as artisans.⁵⁹⁹ Apart from their practical value in supplying the coveted materials, the Mongol court intended the glorification of its rule and majesty by attracting foreign experts; an established theme that was used throughout history as shown by Allsen.⁶⁰⁰ The numbers of foreign experts employed at court, as slaves or on their own free will, thus added to the image of an all-powerful and wise reign that was supported by the best brains in its sphere and beyond. A further aspect of this political augmentation was the perceived connection to the mystical, sacred or supernatural which was used much to legitimize Mongol rule. On first sight the production of textiles does not inspire such connection, but Mary W.

⁵⁹⁶ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 122

⁵⁹⁷ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 128

⁵⁹⁸ Allsen (2001) 199

⁵⁹⁹ Allsen (1997) 32

⁶⁰⁰ Allsen (2001) 200, 201

Helms points out that in pre-industrial societies the transformation of raw materials into sophisticated products of culture was viewed as a divine process. The craftsman had not only to possess pure technical skills but also the guidance of spiritual forces in this magical transformation.⁶⁰¹ The commandation of weavers who employed their divine inspiration in the service of the Mongols therefore added celestial powers to the rulers' already Heavenly sponsored vocation.

On the economic level the employment of captive artisans to meet the imperial demands finalized the early Mongol command economy that had so far been characterized by dominating the collection and distribution of foreign capital in conquest.⁶⁰²

The organization of the artisans was started with a general population census in the 1230s and 1240s. From Carpini's references regarding the 1240s three categories of artisans can be distinguished: Artisans that were assigned to the military apparatus, those that worked independently but had to render taxes in form of a part of their production, and another group that was attached to the private households of princes and nobles. Yuan sources equally distinguish artisans according to those categories and label them Military Artisans (*chün-chiang*), Civil Artisans (*jen- or min-chiang*) and Government artisans (*kuan-chiang*). While historic sources indicate that the civilian category might well have been the most numerous, they equally indicate that the best artisans were put to governmental use. The latter category was at that time designated to the imperial workshops that had been established in various locations. The government imposed quotas on articles to be delivered from these workshops, and demanded the delivery of high-quality raw materials to be processed at high technical standards, and to that end provided subsidies. The quality of textiles produced at those production centres was measured by weight of the yarn or thread used to produce a square foot of fabric.⁶⁰³

Under Činggis Qan and Ögödei Qa'an the primary imperial workshops were housed in the capital of Qara Qorum. Here worked artisans taken as slaves from conquered territories, especially Muslim weavers but also Chinese experts, to create silks with Central Asian features. Qara Qorum also acted as a central point of expenditure and redistribution of the acquired materials, whether through trade, taxation or procured from the imperial workshops.⁶⁰⁴ Qara Qorum drew its importance from the permanent presence of the court, to which the existence of imperial workshop contributed. The city of Chinqai located southwest to the modern town of Uliastai is reported as another production centre within the steppe region. Again, Zhang Chun

⁶⁰¹ For this interpretation I am indebted to Allsen. See Allsen (2001) 201.

⁶⁰² Dardess (1973) 161

⁶⁰³ Allsen (1997) 32-34.

⁶⁰⁴ Dardess (1973) 118

noted a large population of Chinese artisans at this location.⁶⁰⁵ Besides Qara Qorum centres of textile production were established in the extramural regions, based on their position at the interstices of the sedentary areas and the steppe. These Mongol towns received raw materials from the sedentary areas and forwarded the finished luxury fabrics to Qara Qorum or other temporary important princely locations, linking in this way the two areas economically.⁶⁰⁶ Marco Polo noted the concentration of weavers in this region on his journey (fictional or other) to Qanbalik, a claim that has been corroborated by historical records. He recounts that

[...] when you have ridden seven days eastward through this province you get near the provinces of Cathay. You find throughout those seven days' journey plenty of towns and villages, the inhabitants of which are Mahometans, but with a mixture also of Idolaters and Nestorian Christians. They get their living by trade and manufactures; weaving those fine cloths of gold which are called Naich and Naques, besides silk stuffs of many other kinds. For just as we have cloths of wool in our country, manufactured in a great variety of kinds, so in those regions they have stuffs of silk and gold in like variety.⁶⁰⁷ To these imperial workshops, located namely at Besh Baliq and Xunmalin, Central Asian weavers were equally moved and worked alongside Chinese counterparts. All imperial workshops were supervised by the Office for Weaving and Dying (*zhi ran ju*).

The Herati historian Sayfi independently confirms Marco Polo's account of an imperial workshop at Besh Baliq, the capital of the former Uighur kingdom and present day Beiting. He narrates that Prince Tolui, youngest son of Činggis Qan, sent one thousand weavers from Herat to Besh Baliq. The Chinese courier Chang De who was dispatched by Möngke Qa'an to Hülegü in 1259 noted in the same location a populace of Chinese. In 1276 an office was created at Besh Baliq that supervised the production of gold brocades and garments for the Yuan court. Xunmalin, in the vicinity of presentday Zhangjiakou, is in Chinese sources mentioned as having housed three thousand workers originally from Samarkand and Bukhara. This workshop was an important centre of imperial *nasiqi* production and was supervised by a Kerait named Hasanna who had fought with Činggis Qan in Central Asia. Rashi al-Din mentions the same workshop as populated

⁶⁰⁵ Dardess (1973) 153

⁶⁰⁶ Dardess (1973) 121

⁶⁰⁷ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 285

by weavers mostly from Samarkand.⁶⁰⁸ Chang De further noted that Muslims and Chinese lived together at Almalik, and in another city south to Almalik he relates of a large population of Chinese from the Shanxi Province.⁶⁰⁹ He does not report explicitly that these were weavers or artisans, but the fact that Almalik was the capital of the Ča’adai Qanate makes this highly likely.⁶¹⁰ Another important centre was situated in the upper Yenisei area, where a budding craft production centre had been established by the Western Liao and had been taken over by the Mongols. Zhang Chun had been told about its existence on his travels in the 1220s and he relates the employment of about a thousand Chinese in textile manufacture there.⁶¹¹ He also notes that these Chinese were “occupied in weaving fine silks, gauze, brocade, and damask.”⁶¹² The production in imperial workshops as noted by Polo concentrated on *nasiq*, but not exclusively, and the fabric continued to receive great emphasis in production until the late Yuan dynasty.⁶¹³

Not all artisans were moved east to centres of production in China or in the steppe region. The sole survivors of the massacre at Nishapur, a sole four hundred artisans, were sent to Turkestan⁶¹⁴, which attests that imperial workshops were not only a feature of the eastern Mongol domains, but existed throughout the empire. Baghdad, a traditional production centre of textiles and renowned *nasiq* fabrics, is also known to have housed the ‘Paradise Workshop’, where “rare clothing” was produced.⁶¹⁵ And once moved to a certain workshop the artisans’ stay was not necessary permanent. The *Yuan shih* records that in 1229, shortly before the ascension of Ögödei Qa’an, over three hundred families of weavers of silk and *nasiq* were relocated from the “Western Region” to Hongzhou, a city about 180 kilometres west of Beijing. At this location also worked three hundred households of weavers from Bianjing, that were added to the existing work force that is reported to have been gathered “from all over the empire”.⁶¹⁶ With the reconstruction of Herat Ögödei allowed the master weaver ‘Izz al-Din and fifty or one hundred Herati weavers to return to their place of origin. Another two hundred weavers were allowed to return a few years later. And in 1265 Qubilai Qa’an moved artisans formerly established at Chinqai and the region of Kem-Kemchi’üd to Beijing.⁶¹⁷

⁶⁰⁸ Wardwell (1992) 366

⁶⁰⁹ Wardwell (1992) 364, 365

⁶¹⁰ I am indebted to Wardwell’s interpretation of this circumstance. See Wardwell (1992) 364.

⁶¹¹ Dardess (1973) 121, 123

⁶¹² Wardwell (1992) 366

⁶¹³ Feng Zhao (1999) 181

⁶¹⁴ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 177

⁶¹⁵ Allsen (1997) 33

⁶¹⁶ Komaroff and Carboni (2002) 63, 65

⁶¹⁷ Wardwell (1992) 366

The greatest effect the movement of artisans throughout the empire had, apart from satisfying imperial demand of textiles and clothing, is seen in the resulting pieces they wove: they are a blend of local practices on which experts with differing technical traditions had been made to co-operate and influenced each other. Local techniques were expanded, improved, and temporarily or permanently altered in course of this exchange, forced though it might have been. The move of Central Asian weavers into China, of Chinese into other realms and the return of dislocated weavers to their respective homelands, all effected a mixture of styles and technologies. Archaeological finds of silken fragments or garments from the Yuan dynasty feature for a great part weave structures that are hybrid, which attest to this technological exchange.⁶¹⁸ In consequence it is often very difficult to attribute an exact location of origin to a specific piece.⁶¹⁹ But not only technologies were exchanged, patterns and designs are for the greater part a mixture of Chinese and Iranian elements to varying degree.

Already under Möngke's reign the politics of the Great Qa'an concentrated more on the governance of China, a tendency that culminated in Qubilai Qa'an's transfer to Qanbalik. This reorientation together with the unorthodox claim to qa'anhip by Qubilai partly consequented and partly amplified the centrifugal tendencies within the political structure. The fragmentation of the Mongol empire from which the Yuan dynasty emerged led to increasingly limited acquisition of foreign expert personnel. This change occurred at a point where the eastern Mongol sphere encountered different economic conditions to draw upon than in pre-Yuan times. The inclusion of southern Chinese dominions allowed for access to a local concentrated pool of textiles as well as artisans, reducing the importance of the previous established pattern of trade and tribute. This development towards self-subsistence in terms of textile production was re-inforced by other political developments. The previously all-important long-distance exchange of goods was now only limited feasible since a hostile Ča'adai qanate hindered such movement and made communication more difficult. The increased distance of those regions to the new court in Dadu additionally aided this trend, which equally sponsored the consolidation of virtually independent spheres of influence of the Mongol empire. The distance that wares were on the road from the western regions had doubled with the capital's move to China and made trade but for the most coveted items with an imperial destination too expensive.⁶²⁰ Nonetheless, cultural exchange did not cease entirely due to the fact that the Yuan and the Ilqanate remained closely connected and

⁶¹⁸ Wilson (2005) 21

⁶¹⁹ Wardwall (1992) 370-73

⁶²⁰ Dardess (1973) 125, 126

supportive of each other.⁶²¹ But more importantly when the court moved to Dadu it placed itself within an economical environment where luxury textiles were available at short distances.

The already great quantities of silk and silver received earlier from the northern territories multiplied a manifold with the inclusion of the Southern Song. The tighter fiscal control, administrative measures and effective taxation guaranteed access to China's textile resources.⁶²² From this later period Marco Polo relates of cartloads silk reaching the capital everyday.

To this city [Dadu] also are brought articles of greater cost and rarity, and in greater abundance of all kinds, than to any other city in the world. For people of every description, and from every region, bring things (including all the costly wares of India, as well as the fine and precious goods of Cathay itself with its provinces), some for the sovereign, some for the court, some for the city which is so great, some for the crowds of Barons and Knights, some for the great hosts of the Emperor which are quartered round about; and thus between court and city the quantity brought in is endless.

As a sample, I tell you, no day in the year passes that there do not enter the city 1000 cart-loads of silk alone, from which are made quantities of cloth of silk and gold, and of other goods. And this is not to be wondered at; for in all the countries round about there is no flux, so that everything has to be made of silk. It is true, indeed, that in some parts of the country there is cotton and hemp, but not sufficient for their wants. This, however, is not of much consequence, because silk is so abundant and cheap, and is a more valuable substance than either flax or cotton.⁶²³

Besides assuring a steady supply of raw material through the tax system, the manufacturing process in the imperial workshop became part of the governmental institutions. At the start of this process in 1260 Qubilai had ordered all artisans employed in imperial workshops to be examined and in the course many were transferred to the new capital.⁶²⁴ The standing of the artisans improved with the administrative reforms of Qubilai Qa'an. They were now recognized as official artisans and ceased to be personal property or slaves.⁶²⁵ In 1261 the Office of Rare Textiles was

⁶²¹ Allsen (2001) 194

⁶²² Dardess (1973) 121, 127, 128

⁶²³ Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?) 414, 415

⁶²⁴ Jing (1994) 45

⁶²⁵ Jing (1994) 45

created but this was later incorporated into a supervisory agency, the Imperial Manufactories Commission. It dealt with articles of everyday use made of precious materials for the imperial household and also supervised the production of imperial portraits and religious images. This institution was responsible to supply luxury daily goods, rare textile fabrics and rare textile products, which included the imperial wardrobe. To that end it oversaw three offices that had functioned independently in the early Yuan government. Its subordinate offices were the Supervisorate-in-chief for Goldsmiths and Jade Workers in all Circuits, the above-mentioned Supervisorate-in-chief of Rare Textiles, as well as the Supervisorate-in-chief of Civilian Artisans of Dadu and Other Routes. These offices organized in total more than ten thousand artisan households. This commission then centrally organized the imperial workshops in the various locations and regulated supplies and production.⁶²⁶ When the administration of the Chinese realm in 1274 had been sufficiently organized, each administrative circuit (*lu*) was assigned an office that oversaw the artisans locally, who had been assembled at court and redistributed to the various lokales. The personnel at the workshops at Xunmalin and Hongzhou, which had been established under Ögödei, was so reduced in numbers that an imperial decree sought to refill the ranks by local recruits of “the unemployed and vagrants” in 1278. These so enlisted would then be taught to weave.⁶²⁷

Official production in the Yuan dynasty was categorized in three types. Firstly, the court in Qanbalik was supplied with silk from imperial workshops in Zhongshu, northern China, and additional centres in Xinjiang that had been established earlier. Elaborate silks were produced at departments located at court, where embroideries, brocades, gauzes, twills, and gold fabrics were manufactured on royal demand. Secondly, the Mongol nobility owned private family workshops to the same end. These workshops had Chinese weavers and artisans execute garments from raw silk, which was presented to the families as tax as well as gifts. These workshops were mostly located in the lower Yangzi region, in cities such as Zhenjiang and Nanjing. Appointed officials administered the private run workshops of nobles. The third category, a host of small-scale independent workshops, was the result of this policy.⁶²⁸

The continued attachment of the Mongolian steppe to the Yuan dynasty was largely a matter of economics. Wealth gathered in China was redistributed to the steppe aristocracy to buy political loyalty and the indispensable shipments of grain served successfully as political leverage. The supply of imperial relatives in the steppe region with basics such as grain, but also

⁶²⁶ Jing (1994) 69

⁶²⁷ Komaroff and Carboni (2002) 71

⁶²⁸ Vainker (2004) 138, Jing (1994) 44

clothing and textiles, relied on the management at the court in Dadu. Nonetheless, Qara Qorum remained an important local centre of production.⁶²⁹ Of this Al Umari accounts when he describes the city in the early fourteenth century, attesting the continuous importance of the imported artisan populations.

Qaraqurum [Qara Qorum] ist eine prächtige Stadt, Garnison größtenteils der kaiserlichen Truppen und Produktions(zentrum) für feine, kostbare Textilien und Luxusartikel. Der Bedarf des Hofes wird fast ausschließlich von ihr gedeckt, gilt sie doch als (kaiserliche) Manufakturstadt und hat unter ihrer Bevölkerung vortreffliche Künstler und Handwerker.⁶³⁰

The former important production centre in the Yenisei region had been repeatedly raided by anti-Qubilai forces under Qaidu and afterwards ceased to play any role in the provision of textiles and clothing or any other wares.⁶³¹ The great amount of textiles and garments that reached the court either as tribute, taxes, gifts or by way of trade, was not only kept at the sole disposal of the emperor. According to Mongol practice he or she was obliged to share out these political currencies among the leading strata of the conquest elite.⁶³²

9.3 Trade

Trade had been a central activity on the steppes preceding the Mongol period for millennia. Chinese sources narrate of exchanges of goods between the Meng-wu, ancestral Mongols, and the Liao, Jin, and Xi Xia dynasties.⁶³³ The necessity to trade and barter was a dominating factor in nomadic and sedentary politics, whereby the nomads' need for grain, iron and silk was met by supplying horses. The Chinese historian Ying-shih Yü concludes from Han records that "The exchange trade between Chinese silk and barbarian horses... was probably the most important type of transaction... carried on at both state and personal levels, thus characterizing much of the Sino-barbarian economic intercourse not only in Han China but also in later times..."⁶³⁴ Peng Daya mentions this basic exchange when he writes: "*Ihren Tauschhandel betreiben sie mit*

⁶²⁹ Dardess (1973) 143, 144, 155

⁶³⁰ Al Umari/Lech (c.1349) 112

⁶³¹ Dardess (1973) 150, 151

⁶³² Dardess (1973) 118

⁶³³ Allsen (1989) 86

⁶³⁴ Cited by Sinor (1972) 175

*Schafen und Pferden gegen Gold, Silber und Seidenstoffe.*⁶³⁵ Xu Tingshu does not add much to this nomadic shopping list when he notes that: “*Im allgemeinen begehren die Tatan nur Wirkereien aus Hanf und Seide, eiserne Dreifuße und allerlei Hoelzer. Ihre taeglichen Beduerfnisse gehen nicht ueber Kleidung und Nahrung hinaus.*”⁶³⁶ The repeated opposition of horses and silk as exchange commodities, though fitting for the topic of this paper, needs to be expanded. Furs and skins were other articles of export from the steppe territories and while luxury articles such as silk, precious stones, jewelry were central to the exchange pattern, grain and iron for arms production were even more important commodities. Prices paid in this trade is hard to come by, but Francis Balducci Pegolotti, a Florentine merchant, composed a handbook for Far Eastern traders in which he recorded some details of the silk trade:

And you may reckon that you can buy for one *sommo* of silver nineteen or twenty pounds of Cathay silk, when reduced to Genoese weight, and that the *sommo* should weigh eight and a half ounces of Genoa, and should be of the alloy of eleven ounces and seventeen deniers to the pound.

You may reckon also that in Cathay you should get three our three and a half pieces of damasked silk for a *sommo*; and from three and a half to five pieces of *nacchetti* of silk and gold, likewise for a *sommo* of silver.⁶³⁷

Apart from the prices for Chinese silk Pegolotti mentions that silk was traded by the (little) pound, cloths of silk and gold in contrast were sold by the piece.⁶³⁸ Which silk was actually sold by weight is elaborated on in another chapter: Pegolotti lists raw silk, silk-gauze, and dressed silk among things like camel’s hay, rhubarb and pounded pearls.⁶³⁹ By the piece were sold silk velvets, damasks, *maramati* (gold brocade), gold cloth of every kind and all cloths of silk and gold except gauzes.⁶⁴⁰

Whilst Pegolotti was a member of the corps of Far Eastern traders that seem so characteristic for the historical epoch to Europeans, trade under the Mongols was conducted through another channel, which is an even more distinctive phenomenon. So reports Chao Hung that goods were not brought to the Mongols by Chinese traders but by Middle Easterners and

⁶³⁵ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 151

⁶³⁶ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 152

⁶³⁷ Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 155

⁶³⁸ Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 157

⁶³⁹ Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 157

⁶⁴⁰ Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335) 169

Central Asians, often simply referred to as Muslims, and especially Uighurs,⁶⁴¹ who acted as middlemen: “*Da ihre Lebensgewohnheiten primitiv sind, so haben die Uiguren, welche ihnen benachbart wohnen, immer mit dem was sie in China eingehandelt hatten, einen ausgedehnten Tauschhandel in ihrem Land betrieben.*”⁶⁴² Traders are noted already for Činggis Qan’s retinue before his enthronement in 1206.⁶⁴³ These traders appear in sources not only as independent agents but as members of the Mongol elite. Their presence in courtly circles should not astonish since their business skills afforded the Mongols access to all necessities. While not only merchants employed by the Mongol elite but also private traders supplied the court with coveted textiles, as well as other luxuries and necessities, their singular position in the political setting illustrates the on many levels connected spheres of politics, economics and textiles in the Mongol realm.

The role these merchants played reaches far beyond supplying the court with the customary bales of golden silks. Allsen infers from sources that the instable income situation that initially solely relied on war booty dictated the need to become involved in trading to supplement income at court.⁶⁴⁴ Merchants were therefore sought out to conduct trade for the benefit of the court. This relationship is described in more detail in the *Hei-Ta Shih-Lüeh*. Peng Daya writes that from the emperor down everybody supplied Uighurs with silver who then would obtain profit by usury, profit on the sale of wares or by exploiting a law that held the entire population responsible in case of theft.⁶⁴⁵ Xu Tingshu elaborates on this by supplementing that an interest on the sum invested had to be paid back to the original investor.⁶⁴⁶ The *Yuan Shih* contains a paragraph that details this commercial contract, but other forms are known to have existed.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴¹ Especially Chinese sources of the thirteenth century employ the designations *hui-hui* and *hui-hu*, Muslim and Uighur respectively, often in a casual manner, making it difficult to ascertain the ethnic background of known individual traders. See Allsen (1989) 113.

⁶⁴² Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 16 Allsen cites this passage in English where it reads slightly different: “Inasmuch as their (the Tartars’) customs are simple, their neighbors, the Hui-hu, whenever they trade in the Two Hos (Hopei and Honan), they sell (these goods) in their (the Tartars’) country.” See Allsen (1989) 93.

⁶⁴³ Allsen (1989) 87

⁶⁴⁴ Allsen (1989) 111

⁶⁴⁵ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 151:

Was ihre Handelsgeschäfte anlangt, so geben vom Tatan-Herrscher bis zu den sogenannten Fürsten, den sogenannten Prinzen und den sogenannten Prinzessinnen usw. alle ihr Silber an die Uiguren. (Diese) leihen es entweder an die Bevölkerung aus und nehmen hohe Zinsen [...] oder sie kaufen für dieses Geld alle möglichen Waren auf und verkaufen sie anderswo weiter, oder sie erzwingen unter der Behauptung nachts bestohlen worden zu sein, von der Bevölkerung Entschädigung.

⁶⁴⁶ See Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 152:

Vom Tatan-Herrscher abwärts geben alle einfach ihr Silber an die Uiguren und lassen sie nach Belieben damit Handel treiben und sich dafür dann Zinsen zahlen. Die Uiguren

The government itself, providing ships and capital, selected individuals to go abroad to trade for sundry goods. As for the profits so obtained, the government, calculating on the basis of ten parts, took as its [share] seven [parts], whereas the trader received three.⁶⁴⁸

These traders who worked on behalf of Mongol nobility are referred to as *ortoy*, or with Allsen “merchant partners”, and it is these that made up the caravan of 1218 that was sent to trade in the Khwarazm sultanate. The often-encountered description of the massacre of envoys of Činggis Qan refers to nothing else than this group of *ortoy* of this specific caravan. The frequent mention of ambassadors or envoys in this context illustrates the official status that was accorded *ortoy* and their dual function of merchants and diplomats.⁶⁴⁹ The massacre at the hand of Khwarazm officials of those roughly 450 members of the caravan included perhaps close to one hundred merchant partners. Činggis Qan’s response was an attempt to regain a lost investment that is described as ‘500 camels laden with gold, silver, Chinese silk, *targhu* stuffs [textiles as stately presents], beaver-skins, sables, and other articles’⁶⁵⁰. This investment was made by Činggis Qan’s close family on his personal instruction, as Juvaini reports.⁶⁵¹ Only when attempts to recover the loss failed did military action follow. This incident illustrates the Mongols’ central concern with trade, which is also especially noticeable in the run-up to the caravan massacre when Činggis Qan repeatedly exchanges envoys to negotiate trade relations between the two polities.⁶⁵² With Chinese territories at the Mongols’ disposal economic patterns shifted slightly. Rubruck witnessed this trend when he refers to the family estates that were managed in Chinese territories for the Mongol elite, as discussed already in connection with textile manufacture, from which resources were drawn and sent on to the steppe but mentions trade as the only option for less affluent members of Mongol society to obtain those required goods.⁶⁵³ But he equally attests that

ihrerseits leihen (das Geld) dann entweder an andere weiter oder sie treiben damit selbst in vielen Gegenden Handel, oder sie behaupten faelschlich, man habe es ihnen geraubt und erzwingen dafuer Entschaeddigung von der Bevoelkerung der jeweiligen Praefekturen und Kreise.

⁶⁴⁷ Allsen (1989) 118, 119

⁶⁴⁸ Schurmann (1967) 231

⁶⁴⁹ Allsen (1989) 91

⁶⁵⁰ Barthold (1928) 398

⁶⁵¹ Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252) 59, 60

⁶⁵² Allsen (1989) 87-90

⁶⁵³ See Rubruck/Jackson (1255) 84. “The great lords own villages to the south, from which millet and flour are brought to them for the winter. The poor provide for themselves by dealing in sheep and skins.”

international trade continued to prosper parallel to these developments. He relates of traders bringing textiles from Persia and China and furs from Siberia to the Mongol court.⁶⁵⁴

Trade needed to be stimulated by political practices, since the nomadic ruling stratum preferred to remain living on the steppe but strove to attain ever more luxury articles and necessities. Traders from Činggis Qan times onwards were therefore guaranteed safe conduct and access to the Mongols' innovative infrastructure, the *jam*.⁶⁵⁵ Traders *en route* were requisitioned with accommodation, horses and food, similar to military and civilian officials who were the original motive for the establishment of this communication system. Only when they encountered each other at *jam* stations did the merchants have to forgo any resources to the officials.⁶⁵⁶ To attract even more traffic and wares to the court on the steppe, artificially high prices were paid for commodities. Ögödei is reported to have ordered payment for wares to be set ten percent higher than prices asked, which were naturally already inflated. Apart from selling wares, traders reached the court in many instances without wares but to petition capital to trade with, which was most often consented to in such liberal manner that it not infrequently upset the qa'an's imperial accountants and advisors.⁶⁵⁷ Another issue was the presentation of luxury items, such as gold brocades or pearls, stipulated as gifts, which actually had to be purchased at a multiple of the original price. This drained governmental coffers repeatedly, especially since payment was often deferred and interests accumulated. All finances for purchases made by members of the imperial household were drawn from the governmental budget, as a separate budget for private acquisitions of the royalty did not exist.⁶⁵⁸ Yuan sources show such accrued governmental debts to have been up to three times the annual tax income.⁶⁵⁹

A further incentive for traders was a piece of legislation that required the theft or damage of wares of official merchants to be replaced by the local population where the incident had occurred. This unique law Allsen attributes to the nomadic practice of reciprocity, where neighbouring herding families were required to collect lost livestock and to return it to the owner. Such customary law was then actively applied to traders to encourage safe conduct who without this official protection would have been unable to forward goods without being hassled and robbed of their wares.⁶⁶⁰ Even if this law of collective responsibility effected safe passage it also presented the *ortoy* with a legal loophole that they readily used to their own advantage. False

⁶⁵⁴ Allsen (1989) 105, 109

⁶⁵⁵ Allsen (1989) 88

⁶⁵⁶ Allsen (1989) 97

⁶⁵⁷ Allsen (1989) 95, 96

⁶⁵⁸ Endicott-West (1989) 152

⁶⁵⁹ Endicott-West (1989) 151

⁶⁶⁰ Allsen (1989) 99

claims of theft were common, which infuriated the helpless local populations. This negative interaction was only enforced by the widespread usury practices of the traders as also mentioned in the *Hei-Ta Shih-Lüeh* with interest rates of one hundred percent annually.⁶⁶¹ Tax farming was therefore a second, even more lucrative field of occupation for the merchant partners of the Mongols. The population was required to pay taxes but also to provision passing envoys and whole armies.⁶⁶² To that end they had to borrow money from traders, setting of a cycle of eternal debt. Many afflicted had to hand over their properties, sell wives and children, if they not sought protection by entering monastic life. Pinks and Olbricht mention that in 1241 temporarily a quarter of the population had sought refuge in temples to evade slavery in the face of debts, though they do not stipulate the exact region, which I assume to be northern China.⁶⁶³ Since the court received interest on their investments with the *ortoy* the widespread suffering and economic destruction this practice created was not being given much consideration. Only sporadically advisors, especially Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, would successfully point out that this routine threatened the very economic basis the Mongols' relied on and measures were taken to curb these practices. But before Möngke's reign the lobby of the *ortoy* was too strong as to yield any changes in the system. Möngke's reforms in administration and government meant a new approach to the *ortoy* in which they lost their privileges of free provision of horses and tax exemption. The merchants further had to return their *paizahs*, which they used to coerce the population into additional payments.⁶⁶⁴ These measures were effective enough to curb tax farming, so widespread in the previous decades, permanently. Excesses were halted but the measures were generally not aimed at hurting the business of the merchants because of the strong Mongol involvement.

In Qubilai Qa'an's reign similar restrictions were levied on the *ortoy*'s privileges, especially regarding taxation of merchants, but only to be abolished by his successors.⁶⁶⁵ The prohibition on "harmonious purchases", the customary term for paying exorbitant prices for gifts presented at court, was singularly ignored.⁶⁶⁶ Policy decisions regarding the *ortoy* were mainly based on the changing influence of political factions at court.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶¹ In the notes Olbricht and Pinks refer to these annual interest rates as "lamb interest rates", or *yang-kaoli*, which probably relates to the fact that a sheep reproduces itself annually. Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 153.

⁶⁶² Allsen (1989) 100

⁶⁶³ Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237) 153.

⁶⁶⁴ Allsen (1989) 105, 106

⁶⁶⁵ Endicott-West (1989) 142, 143, 149

⁶⁶⁶ Endicott-West (1989) 145

⁶⁶⁷ Endicott-West (1989) 138

With the Yuan dynasty not only economic policies were altered, but also external factors played a crucial role in changing thus far established trading patterns. The internecine wars that enveloped the Ča’adai Qanate and the surrounding steppe arising with the political opposition to Qubilai Qa’an’s ascension hampered trade with the western sphere, creating very different economic circumstances in the Yuan dynasty. Having successfully conquered the Southern Song and thereby gained access to oversea ports, maritime trade began to dominate trading patterns. Ortoγs now relocated and plied their trade in the international harbours on China’s southern coast. Marco Polo’s mode of travel aboard a ship on his departure is in that sense a manifestation of the changed political and connected economic landscape of the Yuan dynasty.

Notwithstanding these external influences the importance of trade to the support of the court remained intact and with that the merchants’ position. Their continued influence at court is also based on their involvement in administrative matters. Since early times traders, with their skills in accounting and bookkeeping, had the basic skills sought after to help administer the growing empire. Their industriousness and knowledge astuteness was made into an example to be followed by the prestigious military establishment, as is recorded by Rahid al-Din who quotes a maxim of Činggis Qan:

Just as the ortogs, who come with garments of gold brocade expecting to make a profit, become very knowledgeable about these goods and wares, so ought the military commanders train their sons to shoot arrows, ride and wrestle well, and so install in them these arts of war that they will become as daring and brave as the ortogs are vigorous and knowledgeable [in pursuit] of their own line of work.⁶⁶⁸

Literate, possessing of geographical and economic information, and acquainted with foreign languages, merchants were highly valuable in the empire’s service.⁶⁶⁹ Apart from their role as traders they were simultaneously employed as “diplomatic envoys, spies, tax collectors, and civil officials”⁶⁷⁰. They therefore gained entry to the powerful ruling elite and were considered part of the establishment, in the period of the Yeke Mongol Ulus as well as throughout the Yuan dynasty, were they retained their elevated position in the field of governance.

⁶⁶⁸ As cited by Allsen (1989) 125

⁶⁶⁹ Allsen (1989) 124, 125

⁶⁷⁰ Allsen (1989) 124

A very different aspect of trade, though nevertheless intimately related to silken textiles, are the pecuniary measures taken by the Yuan government.

Payment was mostly made in silver that acted as a widely accepted currency before the introduction of paper money in 1260 with the commencement of Qubilai Qa'an's rule. The mandatory use of paper money as a national currency touches on the secondary function of silk as another form of currency, similarly extensively accepted as silver and later tea. This informal function was institutionalized when the first issue of papermoney encompassed three varieties, of which one was guaranteed by silk deposits and not by precious metals. The three issues stood in a certain relation to each other, where 1 *liang* (ounce) of the silk-currency *kiao-tsch'ao* was an equivalent for 1 *kuan* of a higher notated currency referred to as *yüan-pao-tsch'ao* and where 100 *liang* (ounces) of the silk-currency equalled 50 *liang* of silver.⁶⁷¹ The third currency, referred to as silver-notes, or *yin-huo*, was denoted as 1 *liang* of *yin-huo* equalling 1 *liang* of pure silver. The corresponding value was obviously at the base of the name of this currency. But more importantly, this currency was made from woven silks, its brocaded design presumably featuring among ornamentation the value of each note. The *Yuan shih* reports the following on the issue of the notes: "*Auch wurden aus buntem Seidenstoffen t'schung-t'ung-Silberscheine gewebt. Hiervon gab es 5 Werte: 1, 2, 3, 5, und 10 liang. Je 1 liang galt gleich 1 liang blanken Silbers.*"⁶⁷² However, this silken silver-currency was planned to be introduced after the release of the *kiao-tsch'ao* and the *yüan-pao-tsch'ao*, which proved so successful that it was never actually issued. A small quantity reached circulation but was withdrawn from the market by dispensing the other currencies on turning in the *yin-huo* silken notes at banks or offices.⁶⁷³ No reasons are given for the late introduction of the silver-currency, but I assume that weaving notes must have been very labour-intensive and I would suggest that this might have been one reason to not continue the currency's launch.

⁶⁷¹ Franke (1949) 38

⁶⁷² Franke (1949) 40

⁶⁷³ Franke (1949) 41

Conclusion

Having investigated Mongol attire and related socio-political issues in some detail I conclude this paper by presenting three major points of outcome.

Firstly, by having established the various components, make and style of Mongol attire in the Mongol period big differences to traditional Mongol clothing of the nineteenth and twentieth century become apparent. The general assumption that Mongol attire has not changed much over the centuries, the point from which this investigation into medieval costume departed, I find not supported by historical evidence. Characteristic garments of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries such as the short-sleeved overcoat and the tsegdeg have been discarded from the Mongol wardrobe.

More important differences that relate to our current understanding of mediaeval society regard the variety, or the absence thereof, of design styles. Whereas differing details in cut and decoration in nineteenth and twentieth-century attire is attributed to strictly delineated differences between the various ethnic group of the Mongols, no such differences are detectable in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Based on the universal rule that clothing acts as a marker of ethnic and social boundaries this absence of variety in mediaeval costume has a number of possible meanings. If the society of the Mongol period was made up of strictly kinship-based communities, namely clans or tribes, we could expect to find differences in their respective clothing styles to differentiate themselves from each other. It appears that neither foreign observers nor any other historical evidence report any clothing differences based on obog affiliations, pointing to an absence of great variations between ethnois. It follows that these communities felt no need or desire to express their “otherness” through clothing, which points to the fact that these Mongol communities felt sufficiently ethnically related to not differentiate their dress along obog affiliations. This in consequence throws doubt on the conventional perception that these communities were ordered along purely ethnic lines as defined by patrilineal decent. Seemingly, from the emergence of the Mongols to the decline of traditional Mongol society at the end of the twentieth century, a sharpening of divisions between the ethnois materialized in clothing. This development deserves further investigation as to its social and political implications. A better understanding of this change would contribute to an insight into the Mongols’ perceptions of ethnicity and politics.

In a wider ethnical context court attire holds further clues to the political reality of the Mongols’ multi-ethnic government and court. Regarding narratives and depiction of court life of the Borjigid I further propose that the Mongols created stately attire that members of the court adhered to regardless of their respective place of origin. The court attire of the Mongols thereby

Conclusion

created a uniform that I assume intended to achieve a sense of shared community and political destiny. The stately attire of the Mongols was not only advertising the political ambitions of the Mongols by employing gold in copious amounts but in its uniformity equally managed to conceal differing political interests of the subjugated peoples. The Mongols seem to have been acutely aware that positive affiliation or association with the ruling strata effected political loyalty. The motivation to create political unity is exemplified and emphasized by the *jisün* robe, the unique Mongol dress for special occasions. The Mongol banquettes celebrated in the uniform *jisün* robes are an expression of an artificially created unity. The continuity of this practice throughout the Yuan dynasty hints at the success this political tool was considered to have had.

Secondly, Mongol attire, displayed rank and status of the wearer. The occurrence of the *jisün* robe has been interpreted to indicate a classless or egalitarian society, which I think is not justified. This notion is primarily based on the convention to view mediaeval Mongol society as one where the principle of kinship functioned as the only ordering aspect. In that sense clearly defined ranks are felt to have been an unnecessary sophisticated institution not congruent with tribal society. Sources suggest that even before the emergence of the Mongols as an international power differences in stations were apparent: there is an observable stratification of Mongol society into a noble elite and a class of commoners and slaves. This stratification is expressed in attire by the colour coding inherent in Mongol culture. The polarity of white and black is applied to the division of high and low status. It hence inspired the accompanying set of clothing materials, creating a parallel material system of stratification. Especially the classification of furs follows this principal and can be viewed as the indigenous classification of Mongol attire, which was only extended by access to exotic fabrics. Already in the early years of the Mongol empire ranks are explicitly mentioned in the case of the *beki*, the married noblewomen, and the *qasa* to have corresponded to specific insignia and attributes of clothing. This suggests that the early elite was generally governed by sumptuary laws. The emergence of an increasingly sophisticated apparatus of governance that culminated in the Yuan dynasty, consequently affected an increasingly complex system of rank and status. With the Yuan dynasty, official records document sumptuary laws that clearly distinguish between ranks in civil as well as military functions. By summation, instead of displaying divisions on a horizontal ethnic level, Mongol attire was organized in a vertical hierarchal manner. A vertical organization of attire does not necessarily indicate a static class society. Mongol society indeed featured a great extend of upward social mobility.

There are however articles of dress, namely the Mongol badge and dragon robe, that remain ambiguous in their role as rank or status indicators. Further investigation into their

emergence, development and continuity, together with that of the *jisün* robe, would be highly valuable in determining possible changes in the Mongols' perceptions on and approaches to leadership and authority. That such investigation can be very rewarding is made evident by the recent surge of publications re-evaluating the Manchus and their cultural and political position. A review of matters relating to Mongol government might equally lead to a revision of the Mongols' historical role. Further research though needed to entail an approach of the subject matter across a number of disciplines - archaeology, art history and history, language studies, anthropology. An added difficulty in dealing with issues related to the Mongol period is the wide range of languages encountered in sources. Russian, Arabic, Uighur, Chinese, Mongolian linguists need to contribute in order to be able to evaluate events as completely as possible and to filter out cultural bias of the sources.

Thirdly, attire and textiles were a core element of Mongol politics. On a foreign political level gifts of clothing and textiles forged or reinforced alliances. This practice had been a long established political tool in the constantly shifting political landscape of the steppe. The rise of Temüjin to prominence was based on such a forged military partnership. It could consequently be argued that the status of clothing in the political arena was a factor that decisively contributed to the emergence of the Mongol empire. On the inner political level dress and textiles played an equally central role. As a political currency these two commodities might have had an even greater impact on the internal apparatus given its consistent and all-pervading presence. Functioning as a form of payment articles of clothing kept the large numbers of the official establishment, civilian and military, supplied and content. To keep the military apparatus satisfied was certainly a major if not the utmost concern of the Mongol leadership: any shortcomings in this respect would have meant rebellion and potentially the end of Mongol hegemony. Regardless of the specifics of textiles and clothing, these commodities handed out on occasions of *tügel* ceremonies therefore funded political cohesion and sponsored loyalty. The distribution of rewards and honours, namely clothing, textiles and titles, was the chief mechanism to build a committed workforce that maintained the Mongol organization on a day-to-day basis.

The economic activities of the Mongols were therefore geared towards amassing vast amounts of textiles and pieces of clothing. Importantly, the expansion of the empire might have been principally driven by concerns to fulfil this requirement, since booty and tribute were initially primary sources of revenue. Only with the changed political landscape of the Yuan dynasty did a textile command economy and systematic taxation substitute these sources. Trade was an important complimentary source of income and therefore constituted a political instrument, which placed it at the central attention of the court. The position of the merchant

Conclusion

partners, the *ortoy*, especially illustrates the interconnectedness of politics, economics and textiles. Disregarding the state's merchants' obvious involvement in politics as envoys and informants, their official role as tax collectors was in itself a highly political one. In this function they were fundamentally guarantors of the crucial supply of fabrics, which was relied upon to sustain the political machinery.

To sum up the position of clothing in the Mongol period, attire was at the centre of a complex made up of economics, culture, politics, and religion. Clothing and textiles were the defining element that connected all these diverse spheres in the imperial context.

Bibliography

- Abramowski (1976), Waltraut Abramowski, "Die Chinesischen Annalen Von Ögödei Und Güyük", in: *Zentral-Asiatische Studien des Seminars für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens der Universität Bonn*, Band 10, 1976
- Abramowski (1979), Waltraut Abramowski, "Die Chinesischen Annalen Des Mönge", in : *Zentral-Asiatische Studien des Seminars für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens der Universität Bonn*, Band 13, 1979
- Al-Din/Boyle (c.1307), Rashid Al-Din Fadhlullah Hamadani, John Andrew Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1971)
- Allsen (1989), Thomas T. Allsen, "Mongolian Princes and Their Merchant Partners, 1200-1260", in: *Asia Major*, third series, volume II, part 2, 1989
- Allsen (1997), Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol empire. A cultural history of Islamic textiles*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, paperback edition 2002)
- Allsen (2001), Thomas T. Allsen, *Conquest and Culture in Mongol Eurasia*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004)
- Al Umari/Lech (c.1349), Lech Klaus, *Das Mongolische Weltreich. Al-'Umari's Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masalik al-absar fi mamalik al-amsar*, (Otto Harrassowitz, Asiatische Forschungen, Band 22: Wiesbaden, 1968)
- Atwood (2004), C. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, (Facts on File: New York, 2004)
- Badrakh (1976), G. Badrakh, *Article about Mongolian ancient clothes*, (Ulaan Baatar, 1976)
- Badral (2008), C. Badral,
<http://www.olloo.mn/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=86270>, (consulted 01/28/2008)
- Bar Sauma/Budge (c.1288), Rabban Bar Sauma, E.A. Wallis Budge (trans.), *The Monks of Kubilai Khan Emperor of China*, (The Religious Tract Society: London, 1928)
- Barkmann (1999), Udo Barkmann, "Some comments on the consequences of the decline of the Mongol Empire on the social development of the Mongols", in: Amitai-Preiss and Morgan, Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (eds.), *The Mongol Empire and its legacy*, (Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, 1999)
- Barthold (1977), Vasily Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion*, (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust: London, 1928)
- Benn (2002), Charles Benn, *China's Golden Age*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 2004)

- Bold (2001), Bat-Ochir Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society. A reconstruction of the 'mediaeval' history of Mongolia*, (Curzon: Richmond, 2001)
- Boyle (1978), John Andrew Boyle, "The Attitude Of The Thirteenth-Century Mongols Towards Nature", in: *Central Asiatic Journal*, volume XXII, 1978
- Brather (2002), Sebastian Brather, "Ethnic Identities as Constructions of Archaeology: The case of the *Alamanni*", in: Gillet (2002), Andrew Gillet (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity; critical approaches to ethnicity in the early middle ages*, (Brepols Publishers: Turnhout, 2002)
- Brent (1976), Peter Brent, *The Mongol Empire*, (Book Club Associates: London, 1976)
- Buell (1981), Paul D. Buell, "Steppe perspectives on the mediaeval history of China: modern Mongol scholarship on the Liao, Chin, and Yüan periods", in: *Zentralasiatische Studien*, No. 15, 1981
- Brown (2000), Claudia Brown, *Wearing China's Past. The Amy S. Clague Collection of Chinese Textiles*, (Phoenix Art Museum: Arizona, 2000)
- Cayan teüke*/Sagaster (1272?), Klaus Sagaster (ed., trans., anno.), *Die Weisse Geschichte (Cayan teüke). Eine mongolische Quelle zur Lehre von den Beiden Ordnungen Religion und Staat in Tibet und der Mongolei*, (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1976)
- Cammann (1962), Schuyler Cammann, "Mongol Costume-Historical and Recent", in: Sinor (1962), Denis Sinor, *Aspects of Altaic Civilization*, (Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series, Vol. 23: Bloomington, 1962)
- Carpini/Dawson (c.1247), John of Plano Carpini, Christopher Dawson (ed.), *The Makers of Christendom. The Mongol Mission*, (Sheed and Ward: London, 1955)
- Chang (1992), Hsiang-wen Chang, "Chinese Art Viewed Through Figure Paintings of the T'ang and Sung Dynasties", in: *Asian Culture (Asian-Pacific Culture Quarterly)*, volume XX, No.3, 1992
- Chabros and Batchuluun (1993), Krystyna Chabros and Luntegiin Batchuluun, "Mongol Examples of Proto-Weaving", in: *Central Asiatic Journal*, volume 37, 1993
- Chao and Peng, Xu/Olbricht, Pinks (1221 and 1237), Chao Hung, Peng Daya, Xu Tingshu, Erich Haenisch and Yao Tsungwu (trans.), Peter Olbricht and Elisabeth Pinks (trans., anno.), *Meng-Ta Pei-Lu Und Hei-Ta Shih-Lüeh*, Asiatische Forschungen, Band 56, 1980
- Chung (2005), Young Yang Chung, *Silken Threads: a history of embroidery in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam*, (Harry N. Abrams Inc.: New York, 2005)
- Crowe (1991), Yolande Crowe, "Late Thirteenth-Century Persian Tilework and Chinese Textiles", in: *Bulletin of the Asian Institute*, volume 5, 1991

- Dardess (1972), John W. Dardess, "From Mongol Empire To Yuan Dynasty: Changing Forms Of Imperial Rule In Mongolia And Central Asia", in: *Monumenta Serica, Journal of Oriental Studies*, Vol. XXX, 1972-1973
- Dardess (1973), John W. Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1973)
- De Cora/Yule, Cordier (1330), "No. VIII. The book of the estate of the Great Caan, set forth by the archbishop of Soltania, circa 1330 (supposed to be the Dominican John de Cora)", in: Yule and Cordier (1916), Henry Yule (rev., anno.), and Henri Cordier (trans., ed.) *Cathay and the Way tither, III*, (Munshiram Manoharlal: New Dehli, 1998)
- De Rachewiltz (1966), Igor de Rachewiltz, "Personnel And Personalities in North China In The Early Mongol Period", in: *Journal Of The Economic And Social History Of The Orient*, Vol. IX, 1966
- De Rachewiltz (1973), Igor de Rachewiltz, "The ideological foundations of Chingis Khan's empire", in: *Papers on Far Eastern History*, No.7, March 1973 (The Australian National University: Canberra, 1973)
- De Rachewiltz, Chan, Hsiao and Geier (1993), Igor de Rachewiltz, Hok-lam Chan, Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing and Peter W. Geier (eds.), *In the service of the Khan. Eminent personalities of the early Mongol-Yüan period (1200-1300)*, (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1993)
- Endicott-West (1989), Elizabeth Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations in Yüan China: The *Ortoγ*", in: *Asia Major*, third series, volume II, part 2, 1989
- Farquhar (1990), David M. Farquhar, *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule. A Reference Guide*, (Franz Steiner Verlag: Stuttgrat, 1990)
- Feddersen (1941), Martin Feddersen, "Kunst und Kunstgewerbe Ostasiens in den europäischen Reiseberichten der Mongolenzeit", in: *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, JRG 17, 1941
- Feng (1999), Zhao Feng, June Lee (trans.), *Treasures in Silk*, (ISAT, Costume Squad Ltd.: Hong Kong, 1999)
- Feng (2004), Zhao Feng, "Silk Dresses with Gold Threads: Costumes from Liao and Yuan Periods (10th –13th century)", <http://www.asianart.com/rossi/intro.html>, (consulted 12/07/2008)
- Feng (2006), Zhao Feng, "Symbols of Power and Prestige: Sun, Moon, Dragon and Phoenix Motifs on Silk Textiles, in: Lian and Tan (2006), Wong Hwei Lian and Szan Tan (eds.), *Power Dressing. Textiles for Rulers and Priests from the Chris Hall Collection*, (Asian Civilizations Museum: Singapore, 2006)

- Franke (1949), Herbert Franke, *Geld und Wirtschaft unter der Mongolen-Herrschaft. Beiträge zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Yüan-Zeit*, (Otto Harrassowitz: Leipzig, 1949)
- Franke (1956), Herbert Franke, *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Chinas unter der Mongolenherrschaft. Das Shan-kü sin-hua des Yang Yü*, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Band XXXII, 2: Wiesbaden, 1956
- Turner's Dictionary of Art,
- Golden (1982), Peter B. Golden, "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity amongst the Pre-Chinggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia", in: *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, Volume 2, (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1982)
- Grousset (1970), René Grousset, Naomi Walford (trans.), *The Empire of the Steppes. A History of Central Asia*, (Rutgers Univeristy Press: New Brunswick, 1970)
- Haneda (1936), Toru Haneda, "Une Tablette du Décet Sacré de L'empereur Genghis", in: *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko (The Oriental Library)*, No.8, (The Toyo Bunko: Tokyo, 1936)
- Holmgren (1986), J. Holmgren, "Observations on marriage and inheritance practises", in: *Journal of Asian History*, Volume 20, (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1986)
- Ipsiroglu (1965), Mazahar Serket Ipsiroglu, *Malerei der Mongolen*, (Hirmer: München, 1965)
- Jackson (1999), Peter Jackson, "From *Ulus* to Khanate", in: Amitai-Preiss and Morgan (eds.), Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan (eds.), *The Mongol Empire & its Legacy*, (Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, 1999)
- Jagchid and Hyer (1979), Sechin Jagchid and Paul Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture and Society*, (Westview Press: Colorado, 1979)
- Jing (1994), Anning Jing, "The Portraits of Kubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245-1306), A Nepali Artist at the Yuan Court", in: *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. LIV, 1/2, 1994
- Juvaini/Boyle (c.1252), 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, John Andrew Boyle (trans., ed.), *Gengis Khan. The History of the World-Conqueror*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1997)
- Kessler (1993), Adam T. Kessler, *Empires beyond the Great Wall: The Heritage of Genghis Khan*, (Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County: Los Angeles, 1993)
- Komaroff and Carboni (2002), Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (eds.), *The Legacy Of Genghis Khan*, (The Metropolitan Museum of Art: New York, Yale University Press: London, 2002)
- Krader (1953), Lawrence Krader, "The Cultural And Historical Position Of The Mongols",

- in: *Asia Major*, volume III, 1953
- Krader (1963), Lawrence Krader, *Social Organization of the Mongol-Turkic pastoral nomads*, Indiana University Publications, Uralic and Altaic Series, Vol.20, (Mouton & Co.: The Hague, 1963)
- Kwanten (1979), Luc Kwanten, *Imperial Nomads*, (Leicester University Press: Leicester, 1979)
- Laude–Cirtautas (1961), Ilse Laude –Cirtautas, *Der Gebrauch der Farbbezeichnungen in den Türkdialekten*, (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1961)
- Li/Brettschneider (1224), Zhichang Li, E. Brettschneider (trans.), *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources*, (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & CO.: London, 1910)
- Li/Waley (1224), Zhichang Li, Arthur Waley (trans.), *The Travels of an Alchemist. The Journey of the Taoist Ch'ang-Ch'un from China to the Hindukush at the summons of Chingiz Khan*, (Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut, 1976)
- Lin (2006), Lee Chor Lin, “A Gift from Heaven”, in: Lian and Tan (2006), Wong Hwei Lian and Szan Tan (eds.), *Power Dressing. Textiles for Rulers and Priests from the Chris Hall Collection*, (Asian Civilizations Museum: Singapore, 2006)
- Lopez (1952), Robert Sabatino Lopez, “China Silk In The Yuan Period”, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, volume 72, 1952
- L.S.Y (1950), L.S.Y., Review of “History of Chinese Society, Liao (907-1125)”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1/2, (Jun.), 1950
- Marignolli/Yule, Cordier (1342), Marignolli of San Lorenzo, “Recollections Of Travel In The East”, in: Yule and Cordier (1916), Henry Yule (rev., anno.), and Henri Cordier (trans., ed.) *Cathay and the Way thither, III*, (Munshiram Manoharlal: New Dehli, 1998)
- Morgan (1987), David Morgan, *The Mongols*, (Basil Blackwell Ltd: Oxford, 1960)
- Moses (2007), Larry William Moses (ed.), “Mongolia” Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 29 07 2007
- Mostaert (1927), Albert Mostaert, “A Propos De Quelques Portraits D’Empereurs Mongols”, in: *Asia Major*, volume IV, 1927
- Müller, Wenzel, Oyunbileg (2006), *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben*, (Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Bonn, 2006)
- Navaan (2005), Dorjpagma Navaan, http://www.silkroad.com/newsletter/vo14num1/srnewsletter_v4n1.pdf, (consulted on 12/03/08)
- Nyambuu (1962), Khandyn Nyambuu, *History of Mongolian Dress (Mongol Khuvtasni*

- Tuukh*), (Ulaanbaatar, 2002)
- Olschki (1947), Leonardo Olschki, “Olun’s Chemise. An Episode from the “Secret History of the Mongols”, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1947, Vol. 67, No.1 (Jan.-Mar.)
- Olschki (1949), Leonardo Olschki, *The Myth Of Felt*, (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1949)
- Onon (1976), Urgunge Onon (ed., trans.), *Mongolian Heroes of the Twentieth Century*, (AMS Press: New York, 1976)
- Pegolotti/Yule, Cordier (1335), Francis Balducci Pegolotti, “Notices Of The Land Route To Cathay And Of The Asiatic Trade In The First Half Of The Fourteenth Century”, in: Yule and Cordier (1916), Henry Yule (rev., anno.), and Henri Cordier (trans., ed.) *Cathay and the Way tither, III*, (Munshiram Manoharlal: New Dehli, 1998)
- Polo/Yule, Cordier (1298?), Marco Polo, Henri Cordier (trans., anno.), Henry Yule (rev.), *The Travels of Marco Polo*, I and II, (Dover Publications: New York, 1993)
- Pordenone/Yule, Cordier (1331), Odoric of Pordenone, “The Travels of Friar Ordoric of Pordenone”, in: Yule and Cordier (1916), Henry Yule (trans., ed.) and Henri Cordier (rev., anno.), *Cathay and the Way tither, II*, (Munshiram Manoharlal: New Dehli, 1998)
- Rawson (1984), Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: the lotus and the dragon*, (British Museum Publications: London, 1984)
- Rashiduddin/Yule, Cordier (c.1307), “Contemporary Notices Of Cathay Under The Mongols.Extracted from the Historical Cyclopaedia of Rashiduddin”, in: Yule and Cordier (1916), Henry Yule (trans., ed.) and Henri Cordier (rev., anno.), *Cathay and the Way tither, III*, (Munshiram Manoharlal: New Dehli, 1998)
- Rossabi (1995), Morris Rossabi, “Mongolia: From Chinggis Khan to Independence”, in: Simpson and Eber, Fronia W. Simpson and Jessica A. Eber, *Mongolia: The Legacy of Chinggis Khan*, [Asian Art Museum of San Francisco: San Francisco], 1995
- Rubruck/Jackson (1255), William of Rubruck/Peter Jackson (trans.), *The Mission of William of Rubruck. His journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253-1255*, (Cambridge University Press: The Hakluyt Society, London, 1990)
- Sanders (1987), Alan J. K. Sanders, *Mongolia: politics, economics and society*, (Frances Pinter: London, 1987)
- Secret History*/De Rachewiltz (1228/46?), Igor de Rachewitz (trans., anno.), *The Secret History of the Mongols. A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, (Koninklijke Brill: Leiden, 2006)

- Schubert (1986), Gabriella Schubert, "Kopfbedeckungen als Statussymbole bei den Balkanvölkern, unter der besonderen Berücksichtigung der Verhältnisse der Osmanenherrschaft", in: *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 30, 1986
- Schurmann (1967), H. Franz Sachurmann, *The Economic Structure of the Yüan Dynasty*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967)
- Serruys (1957), 137-90 Henry Serruys, "Remains of Mongol Costums in China during the Early Ming", in; *Monumenta Serica*, no.16, 1957
- Serruys (1962), Henry Serruys, "Mongol *Altan* 'Gold'= 'Imperial'", in; *Monumenta Serica*, no.21, 1962
- Serruys (1987), Henry Serruys, "A Note on Arrows and Oaths among the Mongols", in: Serruys (1987), Henry Serruys, *The Mongols and Ming China: Customs and History*, (Variorum Reprints: London, 1987)
- Shen (2006), Hsueh-man Shen (ed.), *Gilded Splendor, Treasures of China's Liao Empire (907-1125)*, (Asia Society and Museum: New York, 2006)
- Shukowskaja (1996), N.L. Shukowskaja, *Kategorien Und Symbolik In Der Traditionellen Kultur Der Mongolen*, (Reinhold Schletzer Verlag, Studia Eurasia: Berlin, 1996)
- Sinor (1972), Denis Sinor, "Horse and pasture in Inner Asian history", in: *Oriens Extremus*, JRG 19, 1972
- Sneath (2007), David Sneath, *The Headless State*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007)
- Smith (1970), John Masson Smith Jr., "Mongol and Nomadic Taxation", in: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, volume 30, 1970
- Thompson (2004), John Thompson, *Silk and Ivory, 8th to 18th Centuries, Treasures from the Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar*, (National Council; for Vulture, Arts and Heritage: Doha, 2004)
- Toynbee (1900), Paget Toynbee, "Tartar Cloths", in: *Romania*, 1900
- Turner (1996), Jane Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, (Macmillan Publishers: London, 1996)
- Vollmer (1995), John E. Vollmer, *Silks for Thrones and Altars. Chinese Costumes and Textiles. From the Liao through the Qing dynasty*. (Myrna Myers: New York, 1995)
- Vainker (2004), Shelagh Vainker, *Chinese Silk. A Cultural History*, (The British Museum Press, Rutgers University Press: London, New Jersey, 2004)
- Vreeland (1957), Herbert Harold Vreeland (III), *Mongol Community and Kinship Structure*, (Human Relations Area Files: New Haven, 1957)

- Vladimirtsov (1948), B. Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime Social Des Mongols. Le Féodalisme Nomade*, (Ministere de la Jeunesse, des Arts et des Lettres, Publications du Musée Guimet: Paris, 1948)
- Wang (1989), Wang Yu-Ching, Andrew Morton (trs.), “The Formal System of Chinese Traditional Dress and Its Evolution”, in: *Asian Culture (Asian-Pacific Culture Quarterly)*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, (Summer 1989)
- Wardwell (1989), Anne E. Wardwell, “*Panni Tartarici: Eastern Islamic Silks Woven With Gold And Silver (13th and 14th centuries)*”, in: *Islamic Art*, Vol. III, 1988-89
- Wardwell (1992), Anne E. Wardwell, “Two Silk and Gold Textiles of the Early Mongol Period”, in: *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol. 79, No. 10, (December), 1992
- Wardwell and Watt (1997), Anne E. Wardwell, James C.Y. Watt, *When Silk Was Gold*, (Metropolitan Museum of Art: New York, 1997)
- Weiers (2006), Michael Weiers, *Zweitausend Jahre Krieg und Drangsal und Tschingis Khans Vermächtnis*, [Otto Harrassowitz (Tunguso Sibirica 21): Wiesbaden, 2006]
- White and Bunker (1994), Julia M. White and Emma C. Bunker, *Adornment For Eternity; Status and Rank in Chinese Ornaments*, (Denver Art Museum: Denver, 1994)
- Wilson (2005), Verity Wilson, *Chinese Textiles*, (Victoria and Albert Museum, Far Eastern Series: London, 2005)
- Yang (2004), Shaorong Yang, *Chinese Clothing: costumes, adornments, culture*, (Long River Press: San Francisco, 2004)
- Zhou and Gao (1984), Zhou Xun and Gao Chunming, *5000 Years of Chinese Clothing*, (The Commercial Press: Hong Kong, 1984), I worked with a German translation of this volume: Oehring, Kelterborn, Müller, Stier, Teoh (1985), Korinna Oehring, Maya Kelterborn, Beate Müller, Andreas Stier, Ingrid Teoh, *Fünftausend Jahre Chinesische Mode. Kleidung, Kopfputz, Schuhwerk, Schmuck*, (Ernst Wasmuth Tübingen, Office du Libre: Freiburg, Tübingen, 1985)

