This is the thirty-first issue of *East Asian History*, printed in October 2007, in the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*. This externally refereed journal is published twice a year.
CONTENTS

1 Building Warrior Legitimacy in Medieval Kyoto
   Matthew Stavros

29 Building a Dharma Transmission Monastery in Seventeenth-Century China: The Case of
   Mount Huangbo
   Jiang Wu

53 The Genesis of the Name “Yeke Mongol Ulus”
   Igor de Rachewiltz

57 Confucius in Mongolian: Some Remarks on the Mongol Exegesis of the Analects
   Igor de Rachewiltz

65 A Note on Yelü Zhu 耶律鈞 and His Family
   Igor de Rachewiltz

75 Exhibiting Meiji Modernity: Japanese Art at the Columbian Exposition
   Judith Snodgrass

101 Turning Historians into Party Scholar-Bureaucrats: North Korean Historiography, 1955-58
   Leonid Petrov
Cover calligraphy  Yan Zhenqing 顔真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

THE GENESIS OF THE NAME “YEKE MONGOL ULUS”

Igor de Rachewiltz

In 1952, A. Mostaert and F.W. Cleaves conclusively demonstrated that the Mongol expression Yeke Mongol Uulus corresponds to the Chinese expression Ta Meng-ku kuo 大蒙古國 which appears in the Chinese sources of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.1 (We shall leave aside, for the time being, the question of whether Yeke Mongol Uulus means The Great Mongol Nation or The Nation of the Great Mongols.)

Modern Mongol scholars have reasonably assumed that even if this fact is not mentioned in any source (whether Mongol, Persian or Chinese), the name Yeke Mongol Uulus was given by Činggis Qan to his tribal confederation in 1206 when he was elected (or, rather, re-elected) qan at the great qurilta held at the sources of the Onon River. It was on this momentous occasion that he assumed, or was conferred also the epithet Činggis, as is well known.2 At first sight, these events—election and assumption of a suitable appellation for himself and for the newly established nation—seem to go well together, and I too was of this opinion until ten years ago, but a subsequent closer investigation of the Mongol and Chinese sources has compelled me to reconsider the position.3

The designation Ta Meng-ku kuo for the Mongol nation is found in the earliest Chinese detailed account of the Mongols, Chao Hung's 趙珙 Meng-Ta pei-lu 蒙鞑備錄 [A Complete Account of the Meng-Ta (= Mongol-


In 1206, Temüjin was recognized as the supreme tribal leader in Mongolia, but we must not forget that he was still a vassal of the mighty Ch'in kingdom in the south. It is, therefore, most unlikely that still being in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the Ch'in, he would have named his tribal confederation Yeke Mongöl ulus, The Great Mongol Nation, on the very model of the name of the Ch'in state, called Ta Ch'in kuo 大金國, that is, The Great Ch'in Nation. That this was not, in fact, the case is indirectly confirmed by the Secret History of the Mongols, which says in §202 that upon his election in 1206, Činggis Qan “appointed the commanders of a thousand of the Mongol ulus”,12 not of the Yeke Mongol ulus. However, things changed rapidly. Two years later, in 1208, when the Ch'in court sent an envoy to Činggis Qan to exact tribute and receive obeisance, Činggis refused to comply. In 1210, another envoy was sent to him to request that he acknowledge with the customary kowtow the Ch'in ruler who had since been enthroned. Činggis turned his face south, spat and dismissed the envoy with insulting words directed at the Ch'in sovereign.13 Činggis

/hereafter YS), p.15.


12 SH, p.134.

13 YS, p.15; Tu Chi 居寄, Meng-wu-urh shib-uchi 蒙兀兒史記, 1934, reprint (Taipei: Shih-


5 MTP, 4a; Munkuev, Mén-da bê-i-hu, p.51; Mongkejayaya, Mongyol-Tatar-un tuqai, p.18. Both Munkuev's and Mongkejayaya's versions are misleading because neither translator had access to the full text of Li Hsin-ch'uan (see below, n.7), which is only partially quoted by Wang Kuow-wei. The 31 characters omitted by Wang gave, in fact, the exact time reference, i.e., the Mongols' invasion of the Ch'in kingdom.


9 SH, pp.58 (§134), 102 (§179), 492-5, 647-8.

10 Sung Lien 宋濂 et al., eds, Yüan-shib 元史 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chi 中華書局, 1976, Tatar) of 1221. However, in his commentary to the Meng-Ta pei-lu, Wang Kuow-wei 王國維 (1877–1927) has pointed out that an earlier Southern Sung source, the Chien-yen i-tai chai-yu-yeb ts'a-chi by Li Hsin-ch'uan 李心傳 (1167–1244) which was completed in 1216/17,6 records the same designation in connection with the Mongols. Li Hsin-ch'uan a reliable contemporary historian with access to Sung official documents, states that the Mongols designated themselves as Ta Meng-kü kuo at the time of the invasion of Ch'in, that is, in or after 1211, not before.7 The year 1211 is specifically mentioned also by a later Sung writer, Huang Chen (fl. 1255), as the year in which the Mongols began calling their nation Ta Meng-kü kuo by “combining their name and appellation”—their name having been until then, as both Li and Huang (after him) say, simply Meng-kü kuo, that is Mongyol Ulus, and the appellation or epithet being, of course, “Great” (Ta/Yeke).8 I now believe that Li Hsin-ch'uan is right. Until Činggis Qan attacked Ch'in he was a nominal subject of the Ch'in state. We know that c. 1196 he had been given a Jurchen minor military title, ja'ut quri (something like an honorary captain or commander), which he used with reference to himself,9 and that he paid, or was supposed to pay, an annual tribute in kind to the Ch'in court.10 This is specifically stated in the Yüan History (Yüan-shib) in a section which derives from Mongol sources compiled under Qubilai.11

In 1206, Temüjin was recognized as the supreme tribal leader in Mongolia, but we must not forget that he was still a vassal of the mighty Ch'in kingdom in the south. It is, therefore, most unlikely that still being in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the Ch'in, he would have named his tribal confederation Yeke Mongyol Uulus, The Great Mongol Nation, on the very model of the name of the Ch'in state, called Ta Ch'in kuo 大金國, that is, The Great Ch'in Nation. That this was not, in fact, the case is indirectly confirmed by the Secret History of the Mongols, which says in §202 that upon his election in 1206, Činggis Qan “appointed the commanders of a thousand of the Mongol Uulus”,12 not of the Yeke Mongqol Uulus. However, things changed rapidly. Two years later, in 1208, when the Ch'in court sent an envoy to Činggis Qan to exact tribute and receive obeisance, Činggis refused to comply. In 1210, another envoy was sent to him to request that he acknowledge with the customary kowtow the Ch'in ruler who had since been enthroned. Činggis turned his face south, spat and dismissed the envoy with insulting words directed at the Ch'in sovereign.13 Činggis
Qan had, in fact, decided to expand southwards and, after the successful campaign against Hsi Hsia just concluded, was set to invade the Jurchen kingdom.

The invasion, as we know, was launched early the following year (1211) and within three years the position was totally reversed, with the Ch'in court offering a princess, 500 slaves and precious gifts to Činggis Qan to buy peace, or at least time.\(^{14}\)

Činggis's open rebellion in 1210–11 had freed him of any remaining ties of subordination (even if nominal), and from then on he could legitimately challenge Ch'in suzerainty. It was, no doubt, following the advice of the Ch'in defectors who had been joining his camp since 1206\(^{15}\) that Činggis only then—and all the evidence points to it—assumed for his "nation" the same terminology employed by the Jurchens (and, before them, by the Khitans) for their nation. It is from 1211 on that in his dealings with China Činggis Qan referred to his tribal confederation as Ta Meng-ku kuo. Thus, Yeke Mongqol Ulus must no longer be regarded as an original Mongol expression, but as the Mongol literal translation of a Chinese expression calqued on the official name of the Ch'in state. (Mutatis mutandis, the process is the same as the one later applied to the book title Mongqol ni'üča toba'ča'an, which is the Mongol rendering of the Chinese title Yüan-ch'ao pi-shib [The Secret History of the Yüan Dynasty], and not the reverse.)\(^{16}\) Chao Hung, writing in 1221, was well aware of this. Describing the "National Designation and Year Title" (Kuo-bao nien-bao 国号年號) of the Mongols, he says that they—the Mongols—regarding their nation as a powerful one, designated it as Ta Meng-ku kuo, and "that too is something the fugitive officials of the Jurchen taught them."\(^{17}\) There is nothing surprising in this, of course, since we know that in 1217/18 Činggis personally conferred on Muqali (1170–1223), his commander-in-chief in North China, not one but two Chinese titles—kuo-wang 國王 (Prince of State: mong. gui-ong) and t'ai-sibib 太師 (Grand Preceptor or Instructor: mong. tašš)—not in order to increase his prestige in Mongolia but to enhance his authority in China.\(^{18}\)

The fact that the name Yeke Mongqol Ulus does not appear anywhere in the Secret History\(^{19}\) indicates in my view that although such a designation was undoubtedly employed in diplomatic and government business with China, it was not in current use among the Mongols in Činggis Qan's time, possibly because Činggis and his entourage were still in a tribal mind-frame and had no real sense of nationhood. The term ulus for them still meant "people", that is "tribe", understood as a rather loose nomadic tribal complex, rather than an organic settled state or nation, a concept traditionally alien and, indeed, unattractive to them. The situation changed dramatically with Čğödei and his successors: the Mongols adopted, albeit selectively, forms and modes of governance from China, Central and West-
See also “Trois documents” (see above, n.1), pp.488-90. As I pointed out in the SH, p.70, the expression Yeke Mongyol “The Great Mongols” is, in my opinion, simply an extrapolation from Yeke Mongyol Ulus; in other words, the members of the ruling ethnic group—the Mongol elite, as it were—became known as “The Great Mongols”. (I shall discuss this question in a forthcoming paper.) With regard to the fundamental changes that occurred within the fabric of Mongol society and in their political outlook, my earlier contribution, “The Ideological Foundations of Chingis Khan’s Empire,” in Papers on Far Eastern History 7 (1973): 21-36, requires thorough revision and updating. For the way some of these changes are reflected in post-Chinggis Qan official terminology, see my paper “Qan, Qa’an and the Seal of Gıyūg,” in Documenta Barbarorum: Festschrift für Walther Heissig zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. K. Sagaster and M. Weiers (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), pp.272-81. At present I do not wish to adduce the evidence from the famous “Stone of Chingis” in view of the fact that we do

ern Asia, their rulers (while still being qan, tribal chiefs or kings), also becoming qa’yans, that is emperors, and the former Mongyol Ulus formally and de facto becoming the Yeke Mongyol Ulus, The Great Mongol Nation or, more precisely, The Mongol Empire. But this is another story, like the use of the derivative expression Yeke Mongyol tout court (which has deceived us, from John of Pian di Carpine to Mostaert and Cleaves), and the whole concept of a Mongol oikoumene, which did not exist in Činggis’s time and the origin of which, I think, must now be approached from a completely different angle.

In conclusion, I wish to say that while we are fully entitled to celebrate in 2006 the 800th anniversary of the unification of Mongolia by Činggis Qan, we should perhaps also hold a celebration in 2011 for the anniversary of the genesis of the Yeke Mongyol Ulus.

I not know whether the text of the inscription was composed c. 1224 or c. 1270, which is more likely. See I. de Rachewiltz, “Some Remarks on the Stele of Yisiingge,” in Tractata Altaica: Denis Sinor, Sexagenario Optime de Rebus Altaicis Merito Dedicata, ed. W. Heissig et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976), pp.487-508, esp. p.491 ff. As stated in my article “Qan, Qa’an and the Seal of Gıyūg,” p.279, n.21, the expression qa’umuy Mongyol ulus in the second line of the inscription must be rendered “the entire Mongol Nation”; however, I am not certain now whether “Nation” should be capitalized—in other words, whether Mongyol ulus is a proper name or not.

Igor de Rachewiltz
Division of Pacific and Asian History
Research School of Pacific & Asian Studies
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia
ider@coombs.anu.edu.au