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▶ **To cite this version:**

Isabelle Charleux. Chinggis Khan: Ancestor, Buddha or Shaman?: On the uses and abuses of the portrait of Chinggis Khan. Mongolian studies, 2009, 31, pp.207-258. halshs-00613828

HAL Id: halshs-00613828
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00613828

Submitted on 6 Aug 2011

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Isabelle Charleux, «Chinggis Khan: Ancestor, Buddha or Shaman? »
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Please see the published version, *Mongolian Studies*, 31 (2009), 207-258

Chinggis Khan: Ancestor, Buddha or Shaman?
On the uses and abuses of the portrait of Chinggis Khan[1]

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The perception of Chinggis Khan by Mongols, Chinese, Central Asians and Europeans has already been discussed by several scholars, [2] but the visual representations corresponding to the different narratives developed by them have not yet attracted much attention. However, studying the visual images of Chinggis Khan can tell us much about the nature of his cult and the messages the various authorities that manipulated it aimed to convey. Chinggis' descendants, the Buddhist clergy, the Nationalists, the pro-Japanese, the Communists, and the present lay and religious authorities all selected different facets of his personality and produced a great variety of portraits to convey their messages.

The visual representation of Chinggis Khan has long been characterized by a high degree of plasticity in different historical contexts. The contemporary visual reinventions (themselves multivocal and ambiguous) are rooted in a long historical tradition. Unfortunately, because only a few paintings and no ancient statues survived the destructions of the twentieth century, our knowledge of the portraits of Chinggis Khan is only partial, and trying to sketch the developments of Mongolian art from a few existing portraits and ancient descriptions may seem a bold initiative. I nevertheless propose to inventory and study the existing material in order to explore

[1] I would like to thank Roberte Hamayon, Marie-Dominique Even, Christopher Atwood, and Vincent Goossaert for their insightful suggestions and corrections.
[2] In particular Aubin 1993 and 1996; Aubin and Hamayon 2002: 91-4; Kaplonski 2005; Campi 2006; Biran 2006.

how religious and lay authorities manipulated and distorted Chinggis Khan's image to make it serve ritual purposes that bolstered their power. I call this process 'iconization', that is, changing an image so as to make it serve a specific, historically defined, representation of power. Iconization drew on many different techniques, from Buddhist consecration of icons to political imposition of orthodox iconography to enshrinement in ancestral halls.

This article is part of a larger study on the representation of power in Mongolia. There, as in other cultures, images of power produced by a power-holding authority may vary with the context, with the addressee, or with a specific operation. A new government will either ensure the continuity of power by using traditional representations so as to root its legitimacy in as ancient times as possible, thus make itself more familiar to people and affirm itself as well-established. On the contrary, it can also create completely new representations in order to make it obvious that the power represented is a new, regenerated one. Keeping subjects obedient (for a political power) or converted (for a religious power) may involve a re-shaping of the old representations. From the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries, Chinggis Khan's effigies were created by his descendants, reshaped under the Qing dynasty, appropriated by the Buddhist authorities,[3] then hijacked by the Nationalist Chinese and Japanese governments in the first half of the twentieth century, and they are now reinvested by Buddhists and neo-shamans. Several questions arise for each of these appropriations:

First, what are the material supports of Chinggis Khan's portraits (statue, painting, coin, manuscript…), and what is the importance of effigies compared to other symbols of authority and embodiment of the Khan's soul such as the standards? How do these various supports lend themselves to iconization?

Second, what are the aims of the representations and what message do they convey? Some images of Chinggis Khan were used to receive the homage of foreigners, rally Mongolian groups outside the sphere of influence of the ruling power, please the Mongols with their ethnic hero, but also to appropriate the powerful deity of one's competitor, give the Mongol herders a powerful martial protector, benefit from the prestige associated with the renowned ancestor… Iconization worked in many directions as it targeted various audiences, and as a result, Chinggis Khan's portraits were more or less public and available. Indeed, it is a key question whether there was in pre-modern times an important diffusion of portraits such as coins with his effigies or public images in the streets, or whether the sight of the portraits was restricted to his descendants.

Third, I will present the different styles and sources of representations to answer the following questions: how did Buddhism, known for its hijacking of indigenous gods at the bottom of its pantheon, reshaped the image of Chinggis Khan? Can we observe differences between portraits produced by the Mongols themselves and portraits

[3] And even by Muslims of the Ilkhanid Empire: Biran 2007.

hijacked or created by foreign rulers; between portraits made by his descendants and portraits produced by political institutions and religious institutions; between Buddhist and Shamanist portraits? Why do some power-holding authorities use personalized portraits—and even lifelike portraits—with ethnic characteristics, representing a personalized ruler in his historic context; and why do other ones produce de-personalized, de-historicized, de-contextualized portraits or even a portrait looking like a Western ruler or a generic Buddhist deity? What are the implications of portraying Chinggis Khan as a warrior, carrying weapons and riding a horse, or as a peaceful patriarch? Art historical elements (such as personalization / de-personalization, traditional / Westernized portrait, portrait as a warrior / as a patriarch) are key to understanding the adoption and use of Chinggis Khan's portraits by various types of power.

This paper will follow a chronological plan and focus on several important examples. I will first present portraits produced by Chinggis Khan's descendants from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, and then study his new image of a warrior protecting Buddhism and of a Cakravartin ruler and territorial lord promoted by the Buddhist authorities, and its reception by his people. The following part will focus on the early twentieth century, when the portrait of Chinggis Khan, who had then become the secularized ancestor of all Mongols, circulated in Mongolia and was reshaped by the Japanese.[4] The last part of this paper will rather focus on Chinggis Khan's recuperation by contemporary Buddhists and neo-shamans, and on the portraits that eventually gained preference among modern Mongols.

1. The portrait of Chinggis Khan used in the ancestral cult of the royal Mongolian family

Before the twentieth century, Chinggis Khan was worshipped by his descendants as a revered ancestor. The main objects of worship were statues of the great Khan, the black and white standards (or banners) embodying his *sülde*,[5] and the 'relics'—objects having belonged to the Khan. The oldest known portraits of Chinggis Khan are statues recorded by two European travellers about twenty years after his death: Benedict the Pole at Batu (r. 1237-1256)'s camp on the lower Volga in 1246, and Plano Carpini at Güyüg's camp in Central Mongolia in 1247. (Dawson 1955: 80; Plan Carpin/Becquet and Hambis 1965: 36-7) The statue described by Plano Carpini stood on a cart, in front of the imperial tent, and was worshipped everyday at noon. Foreigners who refused to bow to the statue were killed.

Later sources mention statues of the Khan and of his descendants being worshipped until the fourteenth or fifteenth century in memorial temples that were sedentary or

[4] The modern portraits of Chinggis Khan by the Mongolian and Inner Mongolian political authorities will be studied in another article. (Charleux Forthcoming 3)
[5] Protective ancestral spirit/soul of Chinggis Khan which resides in the standard.

nomad structures, such as the temple located near the Yeke Qoriγ, the cemetery for the Chinggisid nobility in the Hentii mountain range. (Charleux Forthcoming 1)

During the Yuan dynasty, Emperor Qubilai, who used the cult of Chinggis as a major source of legitimization, and his successors worshipped their ancestors in Dadu (Beijing) and Shangdu. They adopted an ancestor cult modeled along Confucian lines, conferring on Chinggis the title of Taizu 太祖, the 'supreme ancestor,' and built an Ancestors' Temple (Taimiao 太廟) in the capital in which to keep the tablets of the deceased emperors and empresses. The ceremonies in the Taimiao were performed every year by male and female shamans who invited the ancestor's soul to take part in the sacrifice. Besides, in the early fourteenth century, ancestral shrines called Halls of Imperial Portraiture were erected within the main imperial Tibetan Buddhist monasteries of Dadu, and the rituals to worship imperial ancestors underwent a partial Buddhicization.[6] The Halls of Imperial Portraiture enshrined 2.5m high silk tapestries depicting full-length portraits of the emperors and their empresses, together with mandalas of the same size displayed to the left and right of the portraits, and funerary name tablets placed on an altar. The famous half-length portraits of the *qan* and *qatun* in the *Yuandai dihou xiang* 元代帝后像 album (hereafter the 'Taipei portrait,' see **fig. 8**),[7] which now provide a basis for most of the modern portraits, may have served as the models for the enlarged full-length portraits;[8] we therefore have to imagine the well-known bust painting of Chinggis in a full-length painting or embroidery, where he would be dressed in a white robe and probably sitting on a chair, hanging in a monastery hall. It is not known whether or not these portraits received any kind of Buddhist consecration[9], but their location in a monastery and the rites performed in front of them show that they were considered as being something between Buddhist icons and Chinese ancestor paintings. Rites and practices around these portraits seem to have ended with the fall of the dynasty in 1368. The half-length portraits were remounted in 1748 in album format and were kept inside the Beijing palace; except for

[6] References: Charleux Forthcoming 1. Temples dedicated to Chinggis Khan (Taizu), or to Chinggis and Ögedei, were built in Xingjiaosi 興教寺, Puqingsi 普慶寺, and Shifosi 石佛寺 (*Yuan shi*, "benji" 本紀, *juan* 28, "Yingzong" 英宗 2, p. 624; *juan* 29, "Taidingdi" 泰定帝 1 p. 650; *juan* 40, "Shundi" 順帝 3 p. 853).

[7] Formerly preserved in the imperial collections of the Manchu dynasty, now in the Taipei Palace Museum. For a discussion of the date of these paintings: Charleux Forthcoming 1. Another bust portrait of Chinggis Khan, from the residence of a Mongolian prince, was bought by the Beijing History Museum in 1953. It is almost identical to the portrait of the Taipei album (Dong Tang 1962). Chinese experts believe this portrait is older than the 'Taipei portrait' and could be the portrait commissioned in 1278 by Qubilai to the Mongolian court painter Qorγosun (Ch. Heli Huosun 和禮霍孫) for the Hanlin Academy 翰林院 (*Yuan shi*, "zhi" 志, *juan* 75, "jisi 祭祀 4—Shenyu dian 神御殿", p. 1876): http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1120 ('Base Juniper' is an electronic database including a collection of more than 300 portraits of Chinggis Khan, created in 2008).

[8] Since Mongols tended to worship whole figures, these half-length portraits preserved in the Taipei album and in Beijing were not paintings for worship.

[9] Buddhist statues and paintings require a ritual of consecration before they are fit for worship. This would generally be a sacred formula, written on the back of a painting or on a slip of paper kept inside a statue.

one or two copies kept in princely residences, they remained unknown up to the early twentieth century when they were published (see below). No other portrait was known of that gave so much importance to verisimilitude. As a consequence, all depictions of Chinggis Khan between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries are images of a generic ruler identified by his attributes and surroundings.

After the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the main focus of the cult of Chinggis Khan was at the Eight White Tents that sheltered his 'relics,' in front of which the Khans used to come to be enthroned. The Eight White Tents played an important role in the legitimization of rulers,[10] and were the major place for post-Yuan rituals of political authority. As stressed by Elisabetta Chiodo, the ceremonies revering Chinggis Khan were at the same time private ceremonies performed by the ruling *qaγan* to the ancestor spirit of the Borjigid, and official ceremonies performed by the *qaγan* on behalf of the whole Mongolian people, ensuring the continuity and prosperity of the Mongolian nation and of the Mongolian people. (Chiodo 1989-91: 97 and 1992-93) At that period, Chinggis Khan seems to have been 'made present', i.e. perceptible, visible[11] not only through his relics but also through a statue: seventeenth century chronicles mention a fifteenth century statue of Chinggis Khan in the Eight White Tents shown carrying a bow, a golden quiver and arrows. The statue was made responsible for the inexplicable sudden death of the Western Mongol leader Toγon Taisi, who had verbally provoked and defied Chinggis Khan in front of it.[12]

After the death of Ligdan (r. 1604-1634), the last Mongolian Khan, the Manchu emperors presented themselves as legitimate heirs of Chinggis Khan by claiming they were in possession of the seal of the Mongolian empire. The Qing emperors later deprived the Eight White Tents of their potentiality of giving legitimacy—the transmission of power now emanating from the Holy Buddhist Manchu emperor. (Elverskog 2006: 87) The rituals devoted to Chinggis Khan and his family at the Eight White Tents were reshaped and controlled. According to E. Chiodo (1999: 58), although Chinggis Khan was integrated into the Buddhist pantheon as a protector of religion (see below), at the same time the ceremonies performed in his honor at the Eight White Tents showed a strong resistance to Buddhicization and were "an expression of traditional popular beliefs and practices."[13] The cult of Chinggis Khan

[10] I. e. Chinggis Khan's direct descendents—such as the great Khan, the princes of the Eastern Mongols (who from 1368 until the twentieth century were almost all of direct Chinggisid descent), but also rulers outside the Golden lineage such as Khans of the Western Mongols.

[11] According to the expression of Ernst Kantorowicz (1957), who shows the pivotal importance of representation in the exercise of power in his study of English medieval monarchies.

[12] Saγang Secen 1990 [1662], fol. 53 v°-54 r°; *Altan tobci*, seventeenth century, trad. Bawden 1955: 171.

[13] Chiodo 1989-91: 97 and 1992-93; Hurcha 1999. However, the Darqad sent their sons to the monastery, lamas were invited to take part in the ritual and a Buddhist monastery named Biligtü erkimlegci süme was founded nearby in 1821 for the Darqad "to reinforce the ten thousand blessings of the Holy Lord [Chinggis Khan]." (Nasan Bayar 2007: 204) See also Sayinjirγal and Sharaldai 1983. Besides, during the sixteenth century, the Eight White Tents were enshrined in the Yeke Juu, the main monastery of Ordos, located in Dalad banner.

was thus "downgraded from the worship to an overall possessor and distributor of political power, to a seasonal rite to a local god." (Aubin Forthcoming) With the division of the Mongolian territory into banners, the ruling princes were disconnected from each other and Chinggis Khan's cult thus became more local. However, the academician B. Rinchen tells us that the rites and sacrifices performed up until 1937 in two memorial temples dedicated to Chinggis and to his standards in Qalqa Mongolia—a temple of the White *sülde* (in Lu gung banner, East Mongolia) and a temple of the relics (Cinggis-ün sitügen-ü süme, in Bayan erketü, West Mongolia)—resembled those performed at the Eight White Tents. (Rinchen 1959a; Sagaster 1966)

The Cinggis-ün sitügen-ü süme in Qalqa Mongolia enshrined statues of Chinggis Qan, his older consort, his nine marshals and the kneeling representatives of subjugated peoples. (Rinchen 1959a; Sagaster 1966) However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was apparently no cult statue in the Eight White Tents, fixed at Ejen Qoriya / Ejen Horoo in Ordos since the early nineteenth century and now called Cinggis qaγan-u ongγon. The most holy objects of the Eight White Tents were the 'relics,' and in particular those enshrined in a silver reliquary that according to the Darqad contained the remains of the Khan. During the Qing dynasty the Ordos banner princes were said to gather at the Eight White Tents 'in front of Chinggis Khan.' Travelers who visited the tents, such as G.N. Potanin at the end of the nineteenth century, Jamcarano, Rinchen, Dylykov and O. Lattimore in the early twentieth century do not describe any statues or paintings. However, according to descriptions of the 1910s, two paintings were enshrined in the main tent dedicated to Chinggis and Börte: a painting of "Chinggis Khan with his nine *örlög* (paladins, marshals)" was preserved within the silver chest that was said to contain his remains; and in front of the chest there was a written biography of Chinggis Khan and a 'portrait.' In Qulan Qatun's tent, a chest contained a portrait of Chinggis Khan and Qulan surrounded by nine dragons. It was said that this portrait was painted using a mixture of Qulan's blood taken in her dying moments and the ashes of her burnt coffin. (Sayinjirγal and Sharaldai 1983: 11)[14] The painting preserved in the modern Chinese 'mausoleum' that shelters reconstitutions of the Eight White Tents at Ejen Qoriya does not correspond to these descriptions: it is a vertical painting of the imperial family, depicting Chinggis Khan with one of his wives, surrounded by sons or paladins. **(fig. 1)** The painting is mounted as a thangka[15] and covered by a cloth. But in spite of the obvious Buddhist influences (the thangka format, the general style, the Buddhist halos, the Buddhist-style offerings such as jewels), this painting follows old Turkic conventions and can be related to Ilkhanid paintings, more particularly, the 'Diez Albums' of the *Jami 'al-tavarikh* by Rashīd ad-Dīn.[16]

[14] To my knowledge, these paintings have not been preserved.
[15] Tib. *thang ka*, Buddhist painting or appliqué with a religious theme.
[16] This painting is discussed in Charleux Forthcoming 1. Some have claimed it to be a Yuan painting, but it was more likely produced under the Qing dynasty.



Fig. 1. *Sacrificial image, representing Chinggis Khan, his main consort and his sons. Copy of a 'Yuan dynasty painting' preserved in the 'mausoleum of Chinggis Khan,' Ejen Qoriya banner, Ordos, Inner Mongolia (probably Qing dynasty). Drawing from Heissig 1973 [1970]: 421, fig. 11 (for a black and white picture see Qurcabaγatur 1999.) The cup of the* qatun *has been omitted in the drawing but is present in the painting.*

The painted, embroidered or sculpted portrait of Chinggis Khan therefore appeared to be one of the several possible supports for the soul (*sülde*), along with his standards, his 'relics,' his tomb, his funerary tablet etc… These supports of *sülde* protected the state against its enemies and their possession gave legitimacy and authority to the ruling Khan. (Skrynnikova 1992-93) Worship of the standards, relics, or portraits may be seen as different facets of Chinggis Khan's worship, corresponding to different occasions or different audiences. Therefore, sculpted icons may have been as important as the Khan's standards, but in other circumstances. The ancient tradition of portraying dead emperors was perpetuated under the Yuan dynasty, but painted and embroidered portraits have partially replaced the statues of the Khan and were exhibited within Buddhist monasteries. Two-dimensional portraits certainly had not the same status, presence, and impact as three-dimensional statues, however these images of a new type that emphasized verisimilitude received a state cult with Buddhist, Shamanistic and Confucian influences.

In China, before the Qing dynasty, portraits of past emperors were first of all objects of private worship, following mainstream practice of reserving portraits of

ancestors only to kin and close friends. On the contrary, the Mongols seem to have publicly exposed to non-kin the imperial portraits of living rulers. The statue of Chinggis Khan in front of which even the foreigners had to bow, and the fifteenth-century statue said to have killed Toγon Taisi in the Eight White Tents re-presented the dead Khan, made him present before his subjects. The woven or painted portraits exposed within several Buddhist monasteries during the Yuan dynasty probably had less impact, but were also relatively public objects, which served to expose the *qan*'s power, dominion and privilege to the eyes of visitors. In a similar way, the luxurious illustrated manuscripts of the Ilkhanids, such as the *Jami 'al-tavarikh*, publicly exalted the Mongols and their history. (Hillenbrand 2002) The public state cult performed in front of visual images that represented the state and legitimized it was superimposed to the private ancestors' cult performed by Chinggis Khan's descendants.

No statue or relic had the power to legitimize a new Khan under the Qing dynasty; however the twentieth century struggle between various powers to seize the relics of the Eight White Tents shows that they had not completely lost their political impact.

2. Chinggis as a fierce protector of the Dharma

Although Chinggis Khan's cult showed Buddhist influence as early as the thirteenth century, it was during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that his image was really Buddhicized. Chinggis Khan was integrated into the lower level of the pantheon, as a protector of the Dharma (*dharmapāla*, Tib. *chos skyong*, Mong. *nom-un sakiγulsun*): an emanation of the *dharmapāla* Vajrapāni (Mong. Vcirbani, Ocirvani, Tib. Phyag na rdo rje)—a martial figure deriving from Indra, the Indian god of thunder.[17] On a thangka depicting Chinggis Khan, Vajrapāni would logically be represented above him, as the head of his spiritual lineage. Vajrapāni is one of the most worshipped protectors in Mongolia. Abatai Qan (1554-1588) of the Qalqa and Gushri Qan (1582-1654) of the Khoshud were also considered to be emanations of this deity. Chinggis Khan was also sometimes said to be an emanation of Indra (Tib. brGya byin), or Brahmā (Tib. Tshangs pa dkar po)—two Indian gods turned into protectors of the Dharma—, or, in older sources, a son or emanation of Qormuzda (i. e. Ahura Mazda). (Sagaster 1976: 256; Franke 1994 [1978]: 67)

However, despite being included in the pantheon, Chinggis was not included in the official compilations of icons published in the Qing Dynasty (such as the pantheon of the Mongolian *Kanjur* or the "Three Hundred Icons"), and remained a 'local' guardian-

[17] This identification appears in chronicles such as the *Caγan teüke* ('White History'), a text that is supposed to have been composed from 1271-1280, but that was certainly edited with modifications and perhaps written in the sixteenth century, (Sagaster 1976: 84, 256) in nineteenth century Mongolian chronicles such as the *Erdeni-yin erike*, and in Mongolian and Tibetan prayers to Chinggis. (Serruys 1985; Hurcha 1999: 50-6) On the association between the blue Mongols and blue Vajrapāni: Sagaster 1976: 315.

deity from the point of view of pan-Asian Tibetan Buddhism.[18] As a *dharmapāla*, he is generally classified among the *dgra lha chen po* (Mong. Yeke dayisun tngri, litt. 'enemy-god') or *yul lha* (mountain deity) of Ordos. (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956]: 243) Along with wealth gods and indigenous nature gods, he belongs to the class of worldly protectors *('jig rten pa'i srung ma)* who have not yet reached Enlightenment and remain in *samsara*: these oath-bound protectors help ensure health, wealth and happiness by delivering people from 'outer enemies,' visible and invisible (invasion and pestilence, poisonous snake-bites and illness, etc.). (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956]: 3-5) He therefore should have the appearance of a 'heroic protector' (Mong. *baγatur bayidaltai*, Tib. *dpa' bo*), modeled, as those of Gesar, the Five Kings emanating from Pehar, and the mountain deities, on the Central Asian and Tibetan figure of the warrior king: he should wear armor, a helmet, high Mongolian boots, and be carrying a bow and a quiver. (See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956]: 8)

Although Chinggis Khan was seen as a local god, several high-ranking lamas such as the First lCang skya qutuγtu and the Seventh Panchen Lama wrote prayers to him. The Seventh Panchen Lama also drew and consecrated portraits of Chinggis Khan. (Hurcha 1999: 52) But Chinggis Khan continued to be a dangerous god requiring special precautions, like the other oath-bound deities of Buddhism. C. Jamcarano tells us that the Third Dalai Lama and the Fifth Panchen Lama had tried to ban sacrificing sheep, but Chinggis became very angry so they agreed to keep the ritual intact: the lamas were not influential enough to ban the blood sacrifice. (Quoted by Hurcha 1999: 49)[19] In 1652, the Fifth Dalai Lama is said to have stopped at the Eight White Tents of Ejen Qoriya en route to Beijing and forced Chinggis Khan to reiterate his vow of protecting the Dharma. (Hurcha 1999: 48) The Fifth Dalai Lama stated that a thangka portrait of Chinggis Khan kept in the palace of the *jinong* was said to kill if shown or if denied proper sacrifices.[20] This, as well as the precautions and prohibitions surrounding the making of painted human figures in Mongolia,[21] can partially explain why we have so few thangkas depicting him—the other main reason being the twentieth century destruction of the Mongolian religious heritage.

[18] His image as a *dharmapāla* was displayed in monasteries of Mongolia or Inner Mongolia. (Sagaster 1966: 109)

[19] Potanin also mentions a dangerous form of Chinggis that requires blood-offerings in Ordos. Local Mongols recount that a Panchen Lama succeeded in preventing Chinggis to require human offerings, but could not turn him into a milder god or a *dharmapāla*: this blood-thirsty deity resembles Shamanist spirits that need to be calmed through sacrifices (references and discussion on *doγsin* forms of deities in Sagaster 1966: 207-8).

[20] The Fifth Dalai Lama visiting the palace of the *jinong* (the prince who was responsible for the cult at the Eight White Tents) in Ordos recounts: "In the palace of the *jinong* was a thangka portrait of Chinggis Khan. I was told that if the portrait was revealed, people would die, so it had had to be offered blood sacrifices. Later that secret stuff (i.e. the portrait) was enveloped and left there within a case by Phagpa." ("Record of the Fifth Dalai Lama visit to the capital," in *Zhongguo Xizang* 中國西藏 1993/1, quoted by Hurcha 1999: 47)

[21] Charleux Forthcoming 1.

A Mongolian manuscript from Üüsin banner in Ordos (Inner Mongolia), the "[Book] called rite to perform prayers and offerings to Chinggis Khan, and speedy achiever of affairs"[22] describes him as a wrathful god, armed and fighting his enemies: 'the heavenly lay-disciple (*tngri-yin ubasika*)' has a red body, three eyes and prominent fangs, a yellow beard and brows. In his right hand he brandishes a red spear; in his left, which is making a threatening gesture (*tarjanī mudrā*), he holds a lasso in front of his heart. He wears a helmet and a leather breastplate, a green silk cloth, and a silk cape. He has a flame halo and is surrounded by red mountains and submerged in a sea of blood. In addition, he is accompanied by two acolytes: his descendants Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji (1540-86) and Saγang Secen (1604-?), of a red color, both turning prayer wheels full of 'relics of *dharmakāya*' and holding crystal rosaries. (Serruys 1985: 23-4) The prayer depicts Chinggis as a protector of the religion and suppressor of the three companies of *simnus* (a kind of flesh-eating demon); he is requested to grant magical favors, purify all impurities and uncleanness, and destroy enemies by "reducing their souls to dust." The prayer is also addressed to the [Spirit of] the Flag (*sülde*) with a spear, "sitting with open mouth and staring eyes […] and with a lasso." (Serruys 1985: 27)

E. Chiodo (1999) believes that although this prayer is entirely imbued with Buddhist concepts, "It is clear, however, that the major purpose of such a prayer is to worship the ancestors." This prayer was written by a monk at the behest of the *tusalaγci* (minister) Todoi of the Üüsin banner, a descendant of Saγang Secen. We know from another source that Todoi went to Kumbum Monastery in 1821, and having made an offering to the Panchen Lama, had a book of prayers written to worship his ancestors:[23] Todoi may have brought back the Tibetan prayer to Üüsin and had it translated into Mongolian. E. Chiodo (1999: 58) believes this prayer was recited only in Sasa (the ancestor shrine in Üüsin), not in the Eight White Tents. But a similar prayer written in Tibetan coming from the Kukunor region (Qinghai, China) shows that Chinggis Khan was also worshipped in a similar fashion by Mongols living around the Blue Lake.[24] It may also have been adapted to other famous descendants of Chinggis.[25] To sum up, in contrast to the rituals at the Eight White Tents and in Qalqa Mongolia, the descendants of Chinggis Khan living in south Ordos and Kukunor preferred to worship their ancestor with Buddhist prayers and iconography.

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[22] *Cinggis qaγan-u öcög takil üiledküi yosun üiles türgen-e bütüγci kemegdekü orosibai*, transl. Serruys 1985; previously partially translated by Mostaert 1957: 539 n. 19.

[23] Chiodo 1999: 57-8, quoting Cayidar and Qasbaγatur, "Sasa kemekü γajar-taki saγang secen qung taiyji-yin ongγon sitügen tayilγ-a-yin tuqai," *Altan γandari* 1986/6, p. 53.

[24] This prayer to 'Jing gir rgyal po' entitled *Yul lha gzhi bdag sogs kyi mchod 'phrin gyi rim pa rnams phyogs gcig tu bsdebs pa bzhugs so*—translated into English by Nebesky-Wojkowitz ([1956] 1996: 242-3, 599 no 161)—is obviously a translation or an adaptation of the Üüsin manuscript text or vice-versa.

[25] A prayer to Chinggis Khan preserved in the Academy of Social Sciences of Inner Mongolia quoted by Hurcha (1999: 47) starts like the Üüsin manuscript.



Fig. 2. *Thangka worshipped at Sasa (ancient Yeke ongγon caidam, Ch. Dafentan 大墳灘), Üüsin banner, Ordos league, Inner Mongolia, Qing dynasty. It represents Chinggis Khan as a* dharmapāla*, and below, Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji and Saγang Secen. Qasbiligtü C. and Qasbaγan-a 1987: facing p. 180.*

The thangka which is the main object of worship in the temple dedicated to Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji and Saγang Secen in the Ordos [26] follows this iconographical description **(fig. 2)**.[27] Chinggis Khan appears as a ferocious protective deity surrounded by a flame halo, in a mountainous setting, and topped by three Gelugpa lamas (with Tsongkhapa in the middle). Brandishing a short sword in his right hand and holding a lasso in his left, he wears a helmet topped by a trident, a leopard skin over his armor, silk scarves, and boots. Two black-haired attendants hold prayer wheels, and carry bows, quivers and arrows. Below him, Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji looks like an ancestor in a Sino-Manchu ancestor portrait: he is dressed in a Manchu official court robe (with water design at the bottom), is holding a rosary, and sits on a chair with a leopard-skin on the back and a foot-stand in front. Either side of him, two standing attendants present him with cups full of jewels. On the right, breaking the general symmetry, sits Saγang Secen, in a three-quarter view, smaller than his grandfather, holding a prayer-wheel and a rosary. The heads of Chinggis, Qutuγtai Secen and Saγang Secen are surrounded by halos. Below Qutuγtai Secen are depicted

[26] At Yeke Bodong (previously Yeke ongγon cayidam, Ch. Dafentan 大墳灘), Sharliγ sumu, Üüsin banner. It can probably be dated nineteenth or early twentieth century.
[27] It is published in black and white and I do not know the colors of the figures.

his bow, quiver and arrows, and on the left, in an enclosure (*qoriya*), are four standards topped by spears surrounding a central one on a high pedestal: this is probably the black standard of Chinggis Khan (the four smaller ones were carried in procession by the Darqad in the seven Ordos banner to represent the main one as ambassadors).[28]



Fig. 3. *Detail of the main deity, Nine Dayicing Tngri (Tib. dGra lha), thangka, painting on silk, Mongolia, nineteenth century, 51x34 cm. © Ferenc Hopp Museum, Budapest, Inv. No. 72.16.*

The trident on top of Chinggis Khan's helmet has several possible meanings. In Buddhist iconography, the trident (*sesum*, < Tib. *rtse gsum*) symbolizes the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha), but was later interpreted by Mongols as the symbol of fire (*erdeni γal, γurvan üjügürtei γal*).[29] Modern artists depicting Chinggis with this symbol above his head obviously refer to fire, not to the Three Jewels. But the trident is also an obvious reference to the top of Chinggis Khan's white standard. A trident is visible on top of the topknot or helmet of several warrior deities in the Mongolian world, such as the Nine Dayicing Tngri (Tib. dGra lha),[30] who are connected with the *sülde* (soul) of Chinggis Khan.[31] In **fig. 3** for instance, the trident with horse-tail is clearly seen on top of the deity's helmet.[32] This attributed will be repeated in some modern portraits. **(fig. 12)**

[28] Since Saγang Secen's standard is topped by a trident, (Mostaert 1957: 548-50 n. 37) the banners depicted here are more probably Chinggis Khan's black standard.
[29] Since the 'fire motive' was found on old rock carvings, Mongols now believe that it is a very ancient Mongol symbol, and its Buddhist origin was forgotten: the three flames are said to represent the past, the present and the future.
[30] Medieval helmets were often topped by a pointed pike and decorated with horse-tail. See a fourteenth century helmet in the National Museum of Mongolian History, Ulaanbaatar.
[31] On the confusion between the warrior deities Sülde Tngri, Dayicing Tngri and Dayisun Tngri: Heissig 1973 [1970]: 458-9.
[32] See also the peaceful old portrait of Qasar, Chinggis' brother, found in Muu-Mingγan banner, Inner Mongolia, (Möngkedelger 1998: 38-47) and the painting preserved in Leiden: **fig. 8**.

In the thangka, Chinggis Khan as a fierce *dharmapāla* surrounded by flames is unrecognizable without the iconographical text and could be mistaken with, for example, a form of Begtse. The representation of the great Khan contrasts strikingly with that of his two famous descendants depicted as human-like ancestors. This painting breaks many conventions of Buddhist painting, since here the main object of worship is Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji in the lower half of the thangka, who shares with Chinggis the same size and frontal view. The vertical central line clearly identifies the lineage (spiritual lineage between Tsongkhapa and Chinggis, and blood lineage between Chinggis and Qutuγtai Secen). The lateral position of Saγang Secen could indicate that this painting, or, more probably, its original, was executed at the beginning of Saγang Secen's cult (since Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji and Saγang Secen were later worshipped on the same level).[33] In Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji and Saγang Secen's shrine of Ordos, there was therefore negotiation and accommodation between Buddhism and ancestor cult.

Another depiction, that of Sülde Tngri, the equestrian deity, personifying Chinggis Khan's soul as a warlord, can sometimes be mistaken with that of Chinggis: Sülde Tngri wears armor and a helmet decorated with triangular flags (like the heroic protectors of Tibetan Buddhism) and rides a yellow horse held by a small white attendant.[34] He brandishes a club, holds a captured naked demon at the end of his snare, and is surrounded by flames.[35] An iconographic description in Tibetan compares Sülde Tngri, with a brilliant white body, dressed in white silk, wearing boots, riding a white horse, brandishing a spear and a lance, to Tshangs pa dkar po (Brahmā). (See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956]: 243) The white horse may also be a reference to the deified white steed of Chinggis which is 'incarnated' in a living horse at the Eight White Tents (there was a painted portrait of the steed enshrined in the Eight White Tents). On two thangkas known to us thanks to photographs taken by Henning Haslund-Christensen in 1938-39 and discussed by Walther Heissig (1984), Sülde Tngri rides a horse and is accompanied by a spear with a flag. (Heissig 1984: 24) **(fig. 4)**[36] These thangkas were carried on portative altars by itinerant Darqad from Ordos who traveled in the Caqar banners in the 1930s for collecting contributions. (Heissig 1984: 20-3)[37] This leads one

[33] Mostaert (1957) showed that the two figures are merged in the same cult, which is associated with that of Chinggis, whose name always appears before them in prayers: "le culte qui leur est rendu a l'air d'être un prolongement et un complément de celui dont on honore le grand empereur." (p. 538) But one of the two texts he translates does not mention Saγang Secen and could originate in a period when his cult was not yet practiced. (p. 543)

[34] See a drawing in Heissig 1973 [1970]: 454, fig. 13. Sülde Tngri personifies at the same time Chinggis Khan's soul and his soul embodied in his white and black standards, it is therefore also the deity of the standard.

[35] For an iconographic description in literary sources: Rintchen 1959b, XXXVIII: 83, quoted by Skrynnikova 1992-93: 57.

[36] Walther Heissig (1984) discusses the possibility that one of these paintings could represent Chinggis Khan but concludes that both are probably representations of Sülde Tngri.

[37] On the trips for collecting contributions, the Darqad brought a portrait of Chinggis Khan, a small sword, and one of Chinggis' relics. Upon arrival at a Mongolian household, they chanted the *Ejen sang*

to believe that the representation of Chinggis at the Eight White Tents was perhaps more Buddhicized than is generally assumed.



Fig. 4. *Drawing of two warrior deities: Sülde Tngri (?). Reproduced in Heissig 1984: 25, from a photograph by Henning Haslund-Christensen taken in 1938 or 1939 in the Caqar banners of Inner Mongolia (National Museum, Denmark). See the black and white pictures in Heissig 1984: 23-4.*

There is obviously some confusion between Chinggis Khan and Sülde Tngri, the latter being probably more often portrayed than the great ancestor. An equestrian portrait of Chinggis Khan recently discovered at Badγar Coyiling süme (Wudang zhao 五當召) in Inner Mongolia is inscribed with his name in order to avoid any possible confusion. [38] On this painting dated from the 'late Qing Dynasty' but probably of a later date, he wears armor, carries a quiver with arrows, and brandishes a banner decorated with a swastika. (Wang Dafang, n. d.) **(fig. 5)**

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and *Sülde sang* while the family were offering their contributions and kowtowing to the portrait of Chinggis. (Su 1994: 148)

[38] Modern Mongols easily confuse any unidentified rider with Chinggis Khan: on a thangka attributed to Noyan Qutuγtu Danjin Rabjai (Danzanravjaa, 1803-56), "Chinggis Khan" (according to the caption in the Sainshand Museum, province of East Gobi, Mongolia) rides a red horse. This effigy can be more probably identified with Guandi, lord of war (i. e. the Chinese general Guan Yu, 160-219 A.D.). I thank Christopher Atwood for having sent me a picture of this painting.



Fig. 5. *Chinggis Khan riding a white horse, 28,5x21 cm, 'nineteenth century' (probably later), Badʒar Coyiling süme (Wudang zhao 五當召) , Inner Mongolia.*

J. Gombojab Hangin went so far as to state that due to this "entanglement with Lama-Buddhism, Cinggis has lost his historical reality in the minds of his people and became nothing but a Lama-Buddhist deity." (Hangin 1971: 199) I fully concur with E. Chiodo (1999: 58) who believes that this statement is "not completely correct."[39] The history of his cult and his representations show that Chinggis Khan's image under the Qing dynasty was multi-faceted, fluctuating between the Borjigid ancestor, the Buddhist protector and the Shamanist spirits that need to be calmed through sacrifices, the local deity of Ordos and the encompassing protector of all the Mongols.

The process of Buddhicization of indigenous gods generally has two consequences: first the original deities were generally ambivalent, benevolent and dangerous at the same time, and needed special rituals to be propitiated. Once Buddhicized and tamed, although they keep their wrathful appearance, they become protectors of the Dharma (but they need to renew periodically their oath). In theory one should not give blood offerings anymore to them. Second, they are given a generic Buddhist name or their original name is hidden behind honorific Buddhist titles. They are assimilated to deities of the pantheon or emanation of deities, and are depicted like other heroic protectors: they therefore loose some of their specific personality, and their influence is weakened as they are diluted into the all-encompassing Tibeto-Mongolian pantheon. This is only

[39] On Chinggis' syncretic image in a Qing document, between Buddhism and popular cult: Sagaster 1966: 206.

partially what happened to Chinggis, who was merged among other warrior deities but apparently kept his blood-thirsty nature.

Whether the Mongols widely accepted the reshaping of their great ancestor as a wrathful blood-thirsty spirit by the Buddhist authorities remains an open question; at least some aristocrats did. This new iconography probably contributed to downgrade his image from a universal emperor to a local protector. Even if Mongols got accustomed to Buddhist *dharmapāla* when they adopted Mahākāla and Begtse as their protectors, the coexistence in the thangka of the wrathful Chinggis surrounded by flames and the two human-like Ordos ancestors, much closer to the usual depiction of ancestors according to Mongolian criteria, remains striking. But this is not the way Chinggis Khan is described in folk prayers.

3. Chinggis Khan as a lay Buddhist and a Cakravartin king

A peaceful form of Chinggis Khan depicts him as a lay Buddhist ruler. This representation is not opposed to that of the fierce protector, since in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon many peaceful deities also have a wrathful form. But this ambivalence is also a characteristic of Mongolian indigenous deities such as the land masters or Lords of the places (*γajar-un ejen*, Cyr. *gazaryn ezen*), who often have several identities and belong to different registers. **(fig. 6)** The coexistence of contradictory narratives about them is frequent. For instance the deity Sülde Tngri of Muna mountain is worshipped as the main deity of the local community, and is recognized at the same time as a mere cook of a monastery in Tibet.[40] This ambivalence is also found in portrait of Chinggis Khan's brother, Qasar. Two paintings of Qasar were worshipped on the altar of the yurt-temple dedicated to him, which was discovered in 1958 in Muu-Mingγan banner, Inner Mongolia[41]: one depicts Qasar in a peaceful form, wearing a Yuan-style costume and a helmet crowned with a trident; and the other one depicts him in a grossly executed *doγsid* (terrible) form with round eyes, in a brownish color said to be Qasar's own blood.

From the sixteenth century on, Chinggis Khan was identified as a Cakravartin, the universal monarch who turns the wheel of the Dharma, modeled after the Indian king Aśoka. Changes in his biographies were made in the Mongolian chronicles (generally written by high-ranking lamas)[42] in order to make him better suited for his new Buddhist role. His name was inserted into a long genealogy of Cakravartin kings in Mongolian historiography from the mid-seventeenth century on, since he was said to be the descendant of the first (mythical) kings of India and Tibet. Later he was also said to

[40] Caroline Humphrey, personal communication, February 2009.

[41] Bulaγ-un köndei, near Bayan oboγa, north-west of Baotou. (Möngkedelger 1998: 38-47) In a nearby cache were discovered manuscripts in Tibetan and Mongolian, including the *Altan tobci* nova.

[42] Such as the seventeenth century *Erdeni-yin tobci* written by Saγang Secen or the *Caγan teüke*. See Franke 1994 [1978]: 64-69.

belong to the Śākya clan and thus to be connected genealogically to the Buddha himself. (Heissig 1973 [1970]: 423-4; Hurcha 1999) Qing dynasty Mongolian chronicles do not begin with the birth of Chinggis Khan as the starting point, but with the history of Buddhism and Borjigin's genealogy in India. Börte Cino, the 'Blue Wolf', Chinggis' first ancestor according to the *Secret History*, was humanized and transformed into a Tibetan prince. Johan Elverskog (2006: 90-9) studied the insertion of Mongolian Buddhism within a long continuum of world Buddhist history culminating with the Mongols conception as being one part of the Qing, that led them to believe they had always been Buddhist. Chinggis Khan's birth was ordained by the Buddha; he was born not with a clot of blood but with a seal in his hand—the symbol of political leadership, not of violence. And to prove that Chinggis was converted to Buddhism and was the first to propagate the religion of the Buddha in Mongolia, an artificial link was also made between Chinggis and the great Sakya master Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158) (although modern scholarship has demonstrated that the latter probably died before Chinggis was born).



Fig. 6. *Two representations of land masters (γajar-un ejen) personifying mountains on a painting of the Hoshuu naadam festival, Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum, Ulaanbaatar. © Isabelle Charleux*

In prayers, he is sometimes called 'the great virtuous Bodhisattva,'[43] but more frequently, an *upāsaka* (Mong. *ubasi*),[44] a lay Buddhist, such as in the Üüsin prayer. These prayers belong to the folk religion influenced by Buddhist elements; some were also written by famous lamas to be used by lay Mongols in ordinary contexts. The Third Mergen Gegeen Lubsangdambijalsan (1717-66) wrote a famous prayer in Mongolian, called *Ejen sang* which was diffused widely among the Mongols—even among the nineteenth century Qalqa Mongols—and was still being printed in Eastern

[43] Hurcha 1999: 46, quoting a ritual song from the Chinggis shrine in Ordos.
[44] Hurcha 1999: 49 believes it is the Fifth Dalai Lama who conferred the initiation of *upāsaka* to Chinggis Khan in order to pacify him.

Inner Mongolia in the 1930s.[45] Lubsangdambijalsan gives a peaceful image of Chinggis Khan, presented as a Cakravartin King, who received the initiation given to laymen:

> On the throne made of incomparable treasures
> On the carpet decorated with eight lotus flowers
> Deign to rest here joyfully
> The harmonious guardian deity, great white *upāsaka*
> And all the companions, ministers and deities.[46]

And in another prayer by Lubsangdambijalsan:

> Chinggis Khan, who has the power of three thousand people
> His body was wrapped by the ten thousand white moon rays.
> He has one face, two arms, and three eyes.
> He was smiling wryly,
> Brandishing to the center of the sky a white spear in his right hand.
> In his left hand he was holding close to his heart a plate full of treasures.
> He got rid of poverty in the samsara and nirvana.
> His white garment was fluttering in front of his chest.[47]

Again, Chinggis is associated with the color white, the most sacred color signifying purity and good fortune for Mongols, and which prevails in the rituals (white animals, offerings of dairy products).[48] Besides, this prayer connects Chinggis with the white Brahmā, and with Vaiśravana (Mong. Namsarai), the deity of wealth who is very popular in Mongolia. Chinggis Khan is depicted in other Buddhist prayers as bestowing wealth, spreading treasures, or holding a plate full of treasures, like Vaiśravana.[49] This attribution is repeated in popular prayers where he is said to multiply the flocks and herds, rain, crops, and to dispense treasures. The white color, the bestowing of wealth, multiplication of flocks and herds and the ambivalent identity also connect him to the White Old Man and with the land masters; he is the *γajar-un ejen* of the whole country.[50] **(fig. 6)**

I am not aware of any pre-twentieth century illustration following this iconography of Chinggis as a Cakravartin or an *upāsaka*, but this form will be retained in Buddhist-inspired contemporary imagery. A good illustration of Chinggis as a wealth-bestowing Cakravartin can be found in a painting kept at the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts: Chinggis Khan dressed in white is sitting between his two standards, surrounded by his

[45] Heissig 1973 [1970]: 423. The prayer is reproduced in Rintchen 1959b*:* 66. See Hurcha 1999: 57 n. 27 for details on this text.
[46] Translation in Hurcha 1999: 49 from a hand-written copy in the library of the Inner Mongolian Academy of Social Sciences—see also a translation of this stanza in Heissig 1973 [1970]: 423.
[47] Mergen Gegeen, *Ejen cinggis qaγan-u öcig takil* ('Prayer to the Lord Chinggis Khan'), *cf.* translation in Hurcha 1999: 50.
[48] Other examples of white Chinggis: Heissig 1973 [1970]: 422 (quoting prayers in Rintchen 1959a). The White Old Man and many Mongolian deities *(γajar-un ejen, caγan burqan* and *tngri*, etc.) are described as white in folk prayers.
[49] See a nineteenth century prayer written by Lhungrub bandida of Ordos. (Hurcha 1999: 52)
[50] The White Old Man is sometimes viewed as equivalent to a land master or as their chief (Hamayon 1990: 710).

paladins and wives. Below, a smaller Chinggis Khan sits on a lion throne, above the wheel of Dharma, in the midst of horses and pastures.[51]

The general image of Chinggis evolved from an exclusive symbol of imperial legitimacy through kinship, to that of a protector for all Mongols. Only two-dimensional Buddhist icons of Chinggis are known,[52] and no Buddhist temple or shrine dedicated to Chinggis is documented, while at the same period Chinggis was portrayed in three dimensions in memorial temples where his descendants worshipped him. His image as a wrathful Buddhist deity at the bottom of the pantheon competed with that of a white and wealth-bestowing Cakravartin king, the later being apparently much spread in folk prayers. Chinggis was therefore integrated but marginalized in the Buddhist pantheon, while he remained at the center of ancestral and domestic worship.

4. Chinggis Khan in the modern era: the secularized ancestor of all Mongols

Recent scholarship has argued that the general image of Chinggis Khan changed in the late nineteenth century, when he was de-Buddhicized and turned into the ancestor of all Mongols, founder of the Mongolian nation, people and customs—the best example being Injannasi's "Blue Chronicle" (*Köke sudur*),[53] the first Mongolian historical novel, published in 1871. (Munkh-Erdene 2006: 91; Elverskog 2008) In the writings of some Qing intellectuals his secularized image became more Confucian, and embodied Chinese ethical principles.

The Buddhist appropriation of Chinggis Khan had certainly already contributed to his popularization not only among his descendants but also among commoners, who came to pray him as a demiurge, a creator of the Mongolian material civilization, and an inventor of customs (especially marriage), as seen in ritual texts. (Heissig 1973 [1970]: 423-30; Aubin and Hamayon 2002: 87) But although the xylographic technique would have permitted a large circulation of his portraits among the herders, commoners do not seem to have possessed icons of Chinggis Khan on their domestic altar, unlike today. (Yuki Konagaya 2006) There may have been some exceptions: in the 1950s a portable shrine of Chinggis Khan was reported among the nomadic Üjümucin Mongols. It consisted of a small individual tent on a cart, containing the Khan's objects of cult.[54]

[51] http://www.mongolia-travel-hostel-zaya.com/images2/Chinggis.gif, January 12th, 2009.

[52] In the instructions of the Üüsin prayer, Serruys (1985: 23) translates *sitügen* by 'statue' ("if there is a statue [for worship], that [will be sufficient]" (*sitügen bui bolbasu tere kiged*). I think here s*itügen* more generally refers to a material 'support' (Tib. *rten*) for the cult, and can be a painting or a statue.

[53] The novel, based on the *Secret History* and Chinese sources for Chinggis' biography, presents him as a realistic hero, not as a Buddhist saint.

[54] A picture was published in Kapitolina Viatkina's description of Mongolian traditional culture ("Votočno-aziatskii etnografičeskii sbornik" [Collection of studies on East Asia], in *Works of the Institute of Ethnography - Trudy Instituta etnografii*, Moskva – Leningrad 1960, volume LX). When Professor Kara visited the Üjümücin Mongols in 1958, he did not see the tent mentioned by Viatkina: the

Quoting an invocation text found by Rinchen in the Ordos that was used in offering ceremonies to Chinggis Khan ("My holy [lord] represented on an image with the whiteness of jade"), Walther Heissig (1984: 19) assumes that portative icons of the Khan were found in Mongols' homes for offering ceremonies at home, but at the same time stresses that we know of no such effigy of Chinggis, except maybe for a painting preserved at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. This painting depicts either a "domestic god"[55] or "Chinggis Khan"[56] on a throne, flanked by two soldiers brandishing weapons, and two horses. **(fig. 7)** Its peculiar hat topped by a trident or a flame leads me to believe that it represents Chinggis Khan.

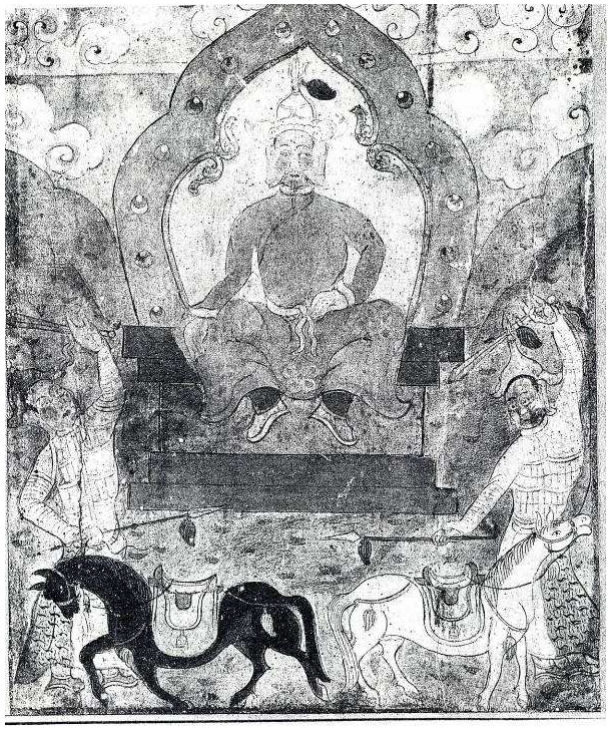


Fig. 7. *Painting of "A domestic god" (according to Heissig) or "Chinggis Khan." National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden. Drawing from Heissig 1973 [1970]: 419, fig. 10 (for a black and white picture: Eggebrecht et al. 1989: ill. p. 168).*

Whatever the possibility that Mongolian families possessed non-Buddhist portraits of Chinggis Khan in their homes before the mid-twentieth century, we know that printed portraits of Chinggis Khan were in circulation in Mongolia at the end of the 1920s. The Yuan Dynasty album was rediscovered in the Beijing imperial palace when it was turned into a museum in 1924. Before 1925, a Mongolian printing house in Beijing sold a booklet with photographs of the half-length portraits of emperors and

Üjümücin had lost almost all of their belongings in a fire. Professor György Kara, email, January 30rd, 2009.

[55] Heissig 1973 [1970]: 419, fig. 10.

[56] Eggebrecht et al. 1989: ill. p. 168.

empresses from the album, several being accompanied with a biographical note in Mongolian (on the left) and Chinese (on the right). (Mostaert 1927 and **fig. 8**) This portrait quickly spread throughout China and Mongolia and wins recognition as the portrait of reference. In 1927 the Buriat scholar Gombojab Tsybikov saw a little book in Ulaanbaatar presenting the collection of portraits of Yuan emperors and empresses with the portrait of Chinggis on the cover—probably the same as the booklet mentioned by Antoine Mostaert.[57] During the same period, portraits of Chinggis Khan were published in the second edition of the *Cinggis qaγan-u cadig* (which mostly consists in a recension of the short version of *Altan tobci*, published in 1927 or 1929). (Krueger 1966: 110) As noted by Tristra Newyear, at that time "contemporary artists around the Mongol world chose the great khan as their subject. For example, Buryat teacher, playwright, and painter I. Daduev finished an oil painting titled 'Chinggis Khan' in 1928, though it is not clear if and when the work was exhibited publicly." (Newyear 2008)



Fig. 8*. Reproduction of the album's portraits kept in the Qing imperial palace (*Yuandai dihou xiang*) with a bibliographical note, published shortly before 1925 by a Mongolian printing house in Beijing. For Chinggis' portrait, the caption reads "Boγda Cinggis qaγan-u körüg" (portrait of the Saint Emperor Chinggis) / "Yuan Taizu huangdi" (Emperor Taizu of the Yuan). Original preserved in the archives of Inner Mongolia, Hohhot (see Guan Guangyao and Wu Jianhui (ed), 1999: 16). From Werner 1925: facing p. 80; text and translation of the Mongolian note: Mostaert 1927: 155-6.*

[57] Newyear 2009 quoting G. Ts. Tsybikov, *Izbrannye trudy, tom II*, Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1991: 136.

Chinggis' figure was appropriated by the competing Chinese Nationalist, Japanese and Mongolian governments. During the Manchukuo period (1931-45), his portrait was widely spread by the Japanese in the eastern part of Mongolia, to win Mongols' hearts and attract those Mongols living outside the Japanese sphere by supporting (separately) both Buddhism and Chinggis Khan. Chinggis Khan was worshipped in schools: incense was burnt, and cheese and fresh fruits were offered before his portrait. Instructions were published in textbooks to worship him—see a school book published in 1936 for use in primary schools, mostly translated from the Chinese, in which were added the instruction to worship Chinggis as well as the Manchurian flag. (Li Narangoa 2003) A great sacrifice was held every year on March 23rd before the portrait of the great Khan in the most important centers of Manchukuo (Harbin, Changchun, Shenyang, Wangyemiao). (Hyer 2006: 61) According to the memoirs of a Japanese staying in Abaγa Banner, Shilingol League (Sili-yin γool, Inner Mongolia), in 1943, Mongols were surprised to see portraits of Chinggis Khan in schools and reacted thus: "I heard your schools hang pictures of Chinggis Khan and make the students pray to him every day. I don't see what sort of benefit will come out of it. Isn't it more auspicious to put up the picture of the Living Buddha?"[58]

The Chinggis Khan 'mausoleum' built by Mongolian initiative[59] from 1942 to 1944 on a hill north of Wangyemiao (Vang-un süme, Manchukuo's administrative center, modern Ulanhot), in Manchukuo territory, was destined to enshrine the Eight White Tents and their relics that the Japanese planned to move from Ordos to Manchukuo—however, the Chinese Nationalist Government did not give them the opportunity and moved the relics to Gansu Province. (Hyer 2006) Mongolian students and intellectuals contributed to the construction as volunteers, and the Mongols were generally pleased with this shrine. (ibid.) In 1944, the commission managing the Chinggis Khan mausoleum published a Mongolian translation of a biography of Chinggis Khan which had originally been written by a Japanese writer, Yamamoto. (Li Narangoa 2003)

What kinds of portraits were made to support such new nation-building projects? Thanks to a picture taken in the 1920s, we know of a portrait kept in the Eight White Tents, but it was later destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.[60] Chinggis Khan is painted sitting in a three-quarter view in a characteristic posture of European kings and tsars: it is said to be modeled on the nineteenth century painting of a French ruler.

[58] Yuki Konagaya, quoting Kimura Tetsuyuki, "Sainshinga's family on the Mongolian Steppes" (in Japanese), Tokyo: Ashi Shobo, 1994: 47-8.

[59] Mongolian narratives recorded by Hyer (2006: 62) emphasize the Mongolian contribution to the construction and tend to play down the role of the Japanese. The project was supported by Wan Rong, the Daur wife of Pu Yi, and by the Daur general Guo Wenling.

[60] The painting was preserved in the 'Cinggis qaγan-u ongγon' (the Eight White Tents). The photograph was secretly taken in the 1920s by a participant at a conference on Chinese geography, and later published in the proceedings. The inscriptions on the painting read: "Yeke mergen Cinggis Qaγan" ('Great sage Chinggis Khan') in Mongolian, on the right, and "Chengjisihan" in Chinese characters, on the left. See Sayinsiyal 1991 [1987]: vol. I, fig 20 and http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1125.

(Sayinsiyal 1991 [1987], vol. II: 1208, fig. 20) His thick white beard and peaceful appearance give him the attitude of a venerable old man, but his intense look, his arched eyebrows, the high helmet topped with a horsetail[61] and the handle of his sword visible behind him recall his martial character. The long beard could be a reference to Chinese emperors, to Confucius and thus to wisdom and morality. In a recent article about a modern Buriat version of this portrait reproduced in color on a calendar, Roberte Hamayon (Forthcoming) highlighted the peaceful appearance of the sovereign—but a sovereign carrying a weapon. A similar painting with a different legend ('民族英雄', 'hero of (our) nationality') was published in 1940 or 1941 in the periodical *Köke tuγ*, "The Blue Standard." **(fig. 9)**[62] This second portrait may be a copy by a Japanese artist who was looking for an alternative portrait of Chinggis Khan: modern, de-Buddhicized,[63] de-historicized and even de-Mongolized.



Fig. 9. *Painting or chromo representing Chinggis Khan, with a legend "Hero of (our) nationality", known about thanks to a photograph taken in the 1930s, published in 1940 or 1941 in the periodical* Köke tuγ. *According to Yang Haiying, this portrait "was transmitted to the peoples of Inner Mongolia. Some think it may have been created by the Japanese army in the 1930s. But for the Mongols themselves, there is no need to raise the question of who painted this portrait." (Yang Haiying 2005: 21)*

[61] Similar to helmets of the Mongolian empire (see a silver helmet in Wang Dafang and Xu Xianglin 2005: 28), and of the Russian empire.
[62] Compare with the contemporaneous portrait painted in Mongolia by U. Yadamsüren (1905-1986): http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1413.
[63] During the short episode when the Jebcündamba Qutuγtu was king of Mongolia (1911-21), embodying Buddhist incarnation and royalty in the same person, we can imagine that Chinggis could have been represented in an innovative way, but no known portrait can be dated from this period.

Walther Heissig asserts that this same portrait was spread by the Japanese in order to replace the previous images of Chinggis Khan. (Heissig 1973 [1970]: 422) But Li Narangoa maintains that the "pamphlet sheet of the (Wangyemiao) Mausoleum plan", as well as the portraits of Chinggis hanging in schools, always represented the 'conventional portrait'—the one based on the 'Taipei album' portrait that had circulated in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia in the 1920s. (Li Narangoa, email, October 23rd, 2008) Besides, we know that the main icon of Chinggis Khan in the Japanese Mausoleum was realized by a Japanese artist named Nagahama Torao, who had used a Mongolian Nationalist leader and officer in the army, Asgan, as a model—but it is not known if this effigy was painted or sculpted.[64]

In this war-time context, Buddhism and Chinggis generally appear as completely distinct 'cultural markers'—the two known portraits of Chinggis Khan circulating during that period had no Buddhist character and the Wangyemiao Chinggis Khan mausoleum was dedicated to a cult with no connection to Buddhism. Chinggis Khan was seen by the Japanese as a kind of Mongolian Confucius, a paragon of moral discipline and of respect towards elders—and therefore loyalty towards the Japanese empire. By stimulating Mongolian nationalism through the use of the figure of Chinggis Khan, the Japanese wanted to "re-establish(ing) their (the Mongols') glorious past, as it had been in the time of Chinggis Khan." (Li Narangoa 2003) However, Buddhists may have continued to represent Chinggis as a *dharmapāla*, even if no painting can be definitively dated from this period **(fig. 5)**.

The Chinese communists appropriated the Mongols' cultural capital. They housed the reconstituted relics in a mausoleum, and boldly reinvented the rituals associated with the relics and with Chinggis Khan in general, which became an entertaining event promoting the unity of the nationalities. Chinggis Khan's general image in modern Inner Mongolia, Qinghai and Xinjiang is a complex topic raising questions of the identity of a 'minority,' of the image China wants to give to the world, and of the benefits of the tourist industry. I analyze in detail the modern representations of Chinggis Khan in China in another article. (Charleux Forthcoming 3) I would like to turn now to the re-appropriation of the Chinggis symbol by democratic Mongolia and its recuperation by religious movements.

5. Chinggis Khan as the supreme reference in modern Mongolia

In 1990, the outstanding come-back of Chinggis Khan after the fall of the communist regime, after seventy years of being banned, showed that he had retained much of his reputation at a popular level as well as at the state level. The new democratic regime used the image of Chinggis-creator of a united Mongolian state, father of the nation and source of Mongolian civilization, as a symbol of political

[64] According to a Chinese report, it was a painting: Hyer 2006: 68.

legitimization. The Chinggisid Empire became the absolute reference of Mongolian authenticity.

The apex of the Chinggis Khan fever was reached in 2006 with the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Chinggisid state. This was accompanied by a plethora of new images of him: bronze and stone statues, paintings, etc. in a huge variety of contexts. The statues of Chinggis Khan together with two of his descendants, Ögedei and Qubilai, that were erected in a gigantic complex on the central square in Ulaanbaatar, replacing a mausoleum containing the remains of Sühbaatar and that of Marshall Choibalsan, and overshadowing the entrance of the Government Palace, fully illustrate the change that occurred in Mongolian power symbols in democratic Mongolia.

Chinggis' portrait appears on currency and postage stamps and now represents the nation: it is even offered to foreign countries as a diplomatic gift, and meetings between Mongolian and foreign presidents take place before his statue.[65] Placed in the Government Palace, ministries, administrative buildings, universities and schools, Chinggis Khan's effigy exalts the glory of the Mongolian nation, and serves as a model, a leader and a god for officials and students. A new state cult was invented to federate the nation as early as 1990, based on the Khan's symbols, and his effigy was used in state rituals. (Dulam 2006) The standards of Chinggis Khan were recreated and placed inside the Government Palace, but were not 'brought to life' through a ritual. (Dulam 2006: 143) This is what Caroline Humphrey (1992) called 'mimicry' (as opposed to 'embodiment'), i.e. the intention to reproduce selected events or objects of the past while being conscious that the present event is only a simulacrum. All these nationalist reenactments (such as the 2006 great commemoration, and the construction the Sühbaatar Square's complex) staged by the authorities and by some intellectuals arouse and at the same time are supported by popular adhesion. Besides, private firms and in particular tourist agencies fully exploit his effigy to attract tourists and make money out of it.

Most of the modern portraits of Chinggis Khan—the best example being the imposing sitting statue in front of the Government Palace—have no obvious religious connotation. Chinggis' face is based on the 'Taipei portrait,' but usually made younger and more 'Mongolian.' (Charleux Forthcoming 3) If he is depicted full-size, he is sitting on a throne, rather than on a horse. He is never armed, but accompanied by the other major symbols of the nation such as the black and white standards or the Soyombo, and sometimes holds an object symbolizing his role as law-giver and nation builder (a seal, a book). However, many modern visual images of Chinggis Khan have a Buddhist flavor and use the conventions of Buddhist art, such as the organization in three parts representing the upper realm (lamas), the main deity and the lower part (human donors, present world), the frontal view of the main figures, the halos, the

[65] A bust of Chinggis Khan has been set in the state *ger* palace for the reception of foreign delegates: http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1153. See Charleux Forthcoming 2.

symmetric composition and the symbolism. Besides, under the influence of nationalist intellectuals, several ancient Buddhist symbols such as the Soyombo [66] and its components have acquired a new secular interpretation, such as the fire symbol and the Buddhist trident/Three Jewels discussed above. Following the general trend, the religious authorities tried to (re-)appropriate the image of the great Khan.

6. Chinggis Khan Buddhist again

Modern Buddhists have to reconcile the iconography of Chinggis promoted by the government with their doctrine in order to reincorporate him into their pantheon. The lama artists completely abandoned his representation as a fierce *dharmapāla* among flames in a macabre surrounding, which does not fit with his new iconography as a peaceful emperor and law-giver, but retained the iconography of the Cakravartin king who rules his people in peace. Chinggis Khan now seems to rank much higher in the pantheon than in the pre-1920s era, among peaceful forms. Yet his representations in a Buddhist context are rare.

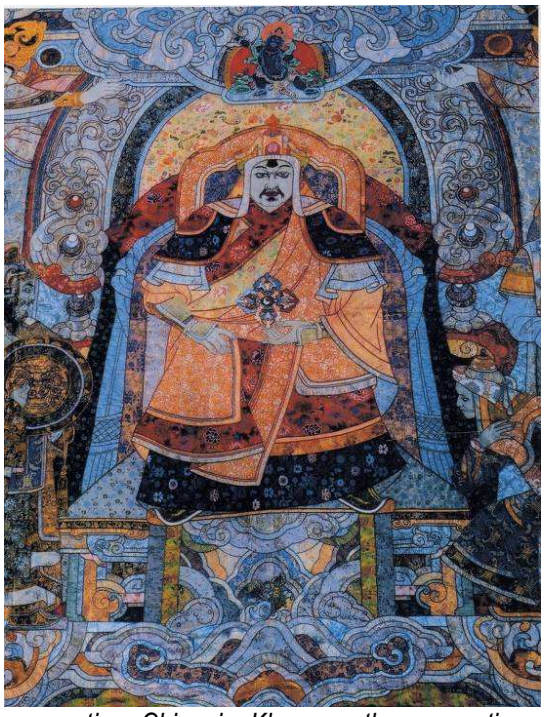


Fig. 10. *Tapestry representing Chinggis Khan as the emanation of Vajrapāni. Private collection, Ulaanbaatar. In Müller and Henriette Pleiger (ed), 2005: 18.*

[66] First letter of the eponymous alphabet created in the seventeenth century by Zanabazar, the First Jebcündamba Qutuγtu. It is viewed as a symbol of identity and independence, and appears on the coat of arms of the Mongolian state, on the flag, the seal, etc. (See Aubin Forthcoming) In 1945, Rinchen (1958) proposed a new nationalist interpretation of the Soyombo, completely devoid of its Buddhist symbolism (the fire meaning regeneration and perpetuation; the sun and moon, the father and mother of the people, etc.).

In contrast to Yuan Dynasty portraits and in particular to his official 'Taipei portrait,' the Buddhist artists depict Chinggis in a rigid iconic posture and in frontal view, alone or sometimes flanked by much smaller symmetrical figures.[67] In a Buddhist tapestry **(fig. 10)**, Chinggis is sitting as a Cakravartin sovereign on a sumptuous throne, holding a crossed *vajra* (*viśvajra*) and topped by a small dancing blue Vajrapāni. He wears a lama's hat topped by a *vajra* (a reference to the *vajra* lineage of Vajrapāni) above the white winter hat of the conventional portrait. He has a severe face but his eyes are half closed like a meditating Buddha. The luxurious cloths and throne are here devoid of any Chinese influence.



Fig. 11. *Lama G. Pürevbat, "Portrait of the great Chinggis Khaan", 178x117 cm, portrait commissioned by President Enhbayar, 2006, displayed in the Hall of Ceremonies. Aldartu 2007: 7.*

[67] The change from the relaxed posture and three-quarter view of Yuan dynasty portraits of rulers, to the hieratic frontal posture of post-Yuan portraits represents a shift in a power that has become more impersonal and strict. (Charleux Forthcoming 1)

N. Enhbayar, president of Mongolia from 2005 to 2009, and a fervent Buddhist, commissioned to the famous artist-monk G. Pürevbat, Director of the Mongolian Institute of Buddhist Art in Gandantegchinlen Monastery (Ulaanbaatar),[68] to paint a portrait of Chinggis for the Hall of State Ceremonies in the Government Palace in 2006. **(fig. 11)** The portrait was inaugurated during a ceremony, attended by President Enhbayar, the Prime Minister, and the abbot of Gandan, with Buddhist prayers and singing of the national anthem.[69] The vertical portrait has a modern Western frame but a ceremonial blue scarf is placed on it. This extremely delicate work by Pürevbat depicts Chinggis as a martial emperor-god in an uncommon and innovative way. I was told by several Mongols that it is now considered as 'the' official portrait of the Khan. Indeed, it is often this only portrait of Chinggis that is reproduced in official publications of the country, (for instance Chuluunbaatar et al. 2007: 3), and this is why it deserves a detailed analysis.

Pürevbat's painting is almost perfectly symmetrical in relation to a vertical axis; the only differences between the left and right parts are the color and shape of the standards and small details in the landscape. Chinggis Khan is sitting frontally on a throne, and although he wears a 'brigandine' armor,[70] he carries no weapon. The exact center of the painting is the mirror on his chest, a highly symbolic object carried particularly by oracle deities and heroic protectors. (On its symbolism: Humphrey 2007) The face of the Khan follows the basic features of the conventional 'Taipei portrait' (lock of hair on the forehead, long beard…: **fig. 8**). The painting superimposes Chinggis' imperial attributes (the black and white standards) with symbols of a martial Buddhist protector (the armor), of a Buddhist Cakravartin ruler (the halo, the parasol topped by the sun and the moon, the *cintāmani* or wish-granting jewel above the throne), and of Qing imperial and ancestors' iconography (he is dressed in a Chinese imperial dragon robe and sits frontally on a throne with a foot-stand). The blue background, very often seen in modern portraits of Chinggis Khan, refers to the Eternal Sky/Heaven which only recently became blue for Mongols.[71] The fantastic throne looks like a Mongolian piece of furniture with a Buddhist-style back decorated with gold and jewelled arabesques, lateral lions' heads, a *kīrtimukha* (monster's face) and a wish-granting jewel at the top. The very delicate ornamentation, and especially the arabesque and patterns of the throne and the carpets in different hues are reminiscent of thirteenth

[68] Mongoliin burhanii shashnii urlahuin uhaanii deed surguul'. See details on: http://www.purevbat.mn. Actually Pürevbat only did the drawing; the painting was done by his workshop.
[69] "Genghis Khan returns to Government in Mongolia" 2006.
[70] A similar type of armor was used by thirteenth century Mongols and was copied in Tibetan mural paintings after the thirteenth century, to depict particularly the fierce 'heroic protectors' of Tibetan Buddhism. This is why this type of armor can be said to be Mongolian and Tibetan Buddhist at the same time.
[71] Although the Mongols especially liked the *köke* (blue-green) color and saw themselves as blue among the 'Five coloured people and four foreigners,' the association of Sky/Heaven with the color blue is recent: Beffa 1993.

to fifteenth century Nepalese and Tibetan paintings. The standards are put up on typical Buddhist pole supports that are usually seen at the entrance of monasteries.



***Fig. 12**. Mönglei, portrait of Chinggis Khan, Inner Mongolia. Sayinsiyal 1991 [1987], vol. I, fig. 26C (j-27).*

The bodhisattva diadem with five foils set with jewels holds tight a kind of red topknot topped by a *vajra*. The diadem, the headdress and the armor with the central mirror are obviously inspired by an older portrait of Chinggis, painted by a certain Mönglei from Badγar Coyiling süme. (Sayinsiyal 1991 [1987], vol. II: 1212) **(fig. 12)** Mönglei's portrait is well-known in Inner Mongolia and has been especially adopted by the Khoshud Mongols living in the Henan Autonomous District of Qinghai Province, east of the Kukunor Lake. In Mönglei's portrait, the diadem and the pointed helmet covered with red hair ending with a trident—that is, the trident and horse hair of Chinggis' white standard—are obviously inspired by a painting such as **fig. 3**. However, Pürevbat turned the trident into a *vajra*, and added lateral ear protection to the Bodhisattva diadem, so that the red hair is no longer understandable. Another source of inspiration may have been an oil painting entitled 'Heavenly-born Great Chinggis Khaan' realized by C. Ölzbaatar in 1996-98 (itself taking as a model the famous painting "Napoléon Ier sur le trône impérial en costume de sacre" by Ingres, 1806, Army Museum, Paris). **(fig. 13)** On top of the helmet of this martial portrait stands a falcon or eagle, almost hidden by a horsetail. Pürevbat retained the armor, the Chinese robe and the boots from this painting, but omitted the long sword, the falcon/eagle sceptre and the fierce look. A third source of inspiration may have been the portrait of Chinggis Khan by D. Manibadar painted in 1956.[72]

[72] Now in the Museum of Fine Arts Zanabazar. Cf. Tsultem 1986: n°81; http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1489.



Fig. 13. *Cerendorjiin Ölzbaatar, "Heavenly-born Great Chinggis Khaan", oil, canvas, 80x60 cm, 1996-98. Uranchimeg 2000: 104.*

In summer 2007, President Enhbayar commissioned Pürevbat to make a giant appliqué thangka of Vajrapāni. **(fig. 14)** It was made with silk and precious stones by a group of forty people, including women representing twenty-one Mongolia's provinces, and artists from Russian Tuva, Kalmykia and Buriatia, and from Chinese Inner Mongolia. According to Vesna Wallace (2008: 49), Vajrapāni "has been traditionally considered by the Mongols as a powerful guardian against the enemies of the state and Buddha-Dharma, as the one who not only crushes obstacles in the form of enemies, heretics, and demons but also enforces religious and state laws. Through the renewed ritual worship of Vajrapani Mountain, he has been reinstated by the Mongol government as the protector of the Mongol state […]." The commissioned image is to bring merit and security to the state and prosperity to the nation. (ibid.: 50) The thangka was completed in May 2008 and was displayed during an official ceremony opened by President Enhbayar in the Palace of Wrestling that attracted a huge crowd of believers. (Batceceg 2008) It is now kept behind the monumental statue in Megjidjanraisig Temple in Gandantegchilen Monastery, and will be displayed on the front side of Otgontenger Mountain (also called Vajrapāni Mountain, in Zavhan Aimag) during the 2010 sacrifice to the mountain.



Fig. 14a and 14b. *Giant silk thangka of Vajrapāni, May 19th, 2008. © Sue Byrne*

The giant thangka depicts the blue wrathful protector of the Dharma in a flame halo, topped by Avalokiteśvara on his right side and Mañjuśrī on his left. Below Vajrapāni, three great Mongolian khans— Ögedei, Chinggis, and Qubilai—are aligned. The figure of Chinggis Khan just below Vajrapāni, is copied from Pürevbat's portrait. **(fig. 11)** The major difference between the two is that Chinggis makes the gesture of turning the Wheel of the Dharma without touching a *dharmacakra* that seems to float at the same place as the central mirror.

The placing of the three Khans parallels that of the monument *Ih ezen Chinggis haany höshöö* inaugurated in 2006 in front of the Government Palace, on Sühbaatar Square: Chinggis' statue is in the middle and is bigger than that of his two successors. The third and fourth Khans, Güyük (r. 1246-48) and Möngke (r. 1251-59) are forgotten, probably because Qubilai, formerly seen as a Chinese emperor and usurper of the Mongolian throne, has been rehabilitated as the great Khan who converted Mongolia to Buddhism. V. Wallace (2008: 50) calls the new triad the "three paradigmatic figures of stately strength and power." The three Khans also refer to the Three Dharma Kings, Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po), Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lde btsan) and Ralpachen (Ral pa can) of the seventh to ninth century Tibetan empire, viewed as emanations of three bodhisattvas. Chinggis thus retains his human Cakravartin form but is still considered as an emanation of Vajrapāni, as is "emphasized in the writings of contemporary Mongol scholars and Buddhist authors." (ibid.) His position at the

bottom the thangka is reminiscent of the two emperors and empresses appearing as small-size donors on the Yuan Dynasty mandalas of the Halls of Imperial portraitures.[73]

The representatives of the Mongolian government have become increasingly involved in Buddhist affairs and even tried to re-instate the tradition of the dual principle (*qoyar yosu*), the two spheres of state and religion (not without raising some opposition among intellectuals).[74] Monks from Gandantegchenlin Monastery have on various occasions performed religious services sponsored by the state. (Wallace 2008: 48, 50) Chinggis is no longer a fierce *dharmapāla* but is viewed as a Cakravartin, protector of Buddhism and of the state. He is thus the ideal link between the two spheres, and therefore contributes to imposing Buddhism as the state religion.[75]

7. Shamanist Chinggis Khan and the Eternal Sky/Heaven

While Buddhists, courted by government officials, reshaped the figure of Chinggis Khan, various Neo-Shamanist centers were trying to reinvent a national religion, including Buddhist elements as well as the figure of Chinggis Khan. Neo-Shamanism, identified with the religion of the empire, greatly benefited from the Chinggis Khan fever and has been revalorized, acquiring at the same time a universal dimension. Its new role is not only to cure individuals but to 'repair the nation' and save the Mongolian culture. (Merli 2004) The University of Shamanism in Ulaanbaatar is also called Chinggis Khan University. The government uses shamans in several state rituals, where effigies of Chinggis Khan as well as the white standard are displayed. For example, on June 17th, 2000, in a great ritual to Chinggis Khan performed in the courtyard of the Ih Zasag Institute, the white standard was taken there from the Government Palace and a statue of Chinggis Khan was installed in front of an altar covered with offerings of meat and alcohol. (Merli 2004: chap. 16.3) The 'state shaman' (*töriin zairan*) Byambadorj— shaman of the official events, who belongs to the Mongolian Shamans' Association, associated with Professor Dulam as scientific advisor—called the spirit of Chinggis Khan and asked him to dispel all the misfortunes of the country. This ceremony was seen as a re-enactment of the ancestor worship carried out by Qubilai and Güyük in thirteenth century Qaraqorum. (ibid.) According to

[73] See the Mandala of Vajrabhairava, silk tapestry Yuan dynasty, Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1992: 1992.54).

[74] In July 2006, the newspaper *Ödriin sonin* reported that there was growing concern among historians and scholars that the Chinggis Monument opening ceremony "might turn out to become a Buddhist ceremony as it always happened before that politics and lamas go together hand and hand […]. Fortunately, despite Buddhist President Enkhbayar's presence, under pressure from well known historians and nationalist populists, the opening ceremony went on without any Buddhist activity. It was a purely Mongolian national ceremony representing Mongolian Statehood." Quoted in "Regarding Chinggis Pantheon."

[75] In principle, in the 1992 Mongolian constitution, religious freedom is guaranteed, and the state and the religion are two separate spheres, but Buddhism has a particular status among other religions.

Byambadorj, "it is thanks to Shamanism that Chinggis Khan conquered half of the planet." (Quoted by L. Merli 2004: chap. 2.1.)

Several portraits of Chinggis are displayed in the yurt where Byambadorj performed rituals in 2008. The main portrait, on the chest in the rear part of the yurt, is the conventional portrait of Chinggis Khan ('the Taipei portrait'), adorned with a ceremonial blue scarf. **(fig. 15)** A small ceramic figurine of Chinggis commonly found in stores in the capital is displayed on the chest, and two portraits painted on wooden boards, with the top of the *soyombo* (sun, moon and fire) and the *yin-yang* symbols are hung on posts: the first portrait depicts a martial Chinggis with a helmet and armor decorated with a falcon, holding a large sword; in the other his hair is braided into loops hanging behind his ears, he has the moustache of the 'Taipei portrait,' a fur hat, and is holding a book.[76] A reproduction of the white standard and numerous silk *ongon* can be seen in the yurt. **(fig. 15)**



Fig. 15. *Portrait of Chinggis Khan in the yurt of the shaman Byambadorj. © Grégory Delaplace.*

Other neo-shamans use the figure of Chinggis Khan by exploiting his old connections with Shamanism and the cult of Tngri. Bypassing an obvious contradiction—Chinggis Khan eliminated Teb Tngri, the noted shaman of the *Secret History*[77]—, modern shamans argue that Chinggis Khan himself was a shaman, because he directly communicated with Sky/Heaven (Tngri). The Everlasting Tngri ideology was used by Chinggis Khan and his successors as a legitimating tool that guaranteed their right to hold power, and its importance grew as the empire expanded. (Beffa 1993) Eternal Sky/Heaven now plays a central role in the definition of a Mongolian modernity and is the object of complex ritual and ideological elaborations.[78] Inspired

[76] http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1348; http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1349.
[77] Although Teb Tngri is not called 'shaman' in the *Secret History*.
[78] On the reinvention of a state cult to the Everlasting Sky/Heaven: Aubin 1993: 148.

by the Tengrist movements (Tengrianstvo) of Central Asia and Siberia, modern Mongolian intellectuals such as the academician Sh. Bira (a devout believer)[79] promote a reinvented 'national religion of the Eternal Sky/Heaven' allegedly inherited from Chinggis Khan. An example is the Center Mönh tengeriin shid böö ongon shüteenii töv, 'Temple of the Pure Doctrine of the Eternal Sky/Heaven,'[80] on Gandan Hill, studied by Laetitia Merli (2001 and 2004). The center, directed by B. Zorigtbaatar and his wife, organizes collective syncretic rituals to the Eternal Sky/Heaven, including sky worship, invocation of Chinggis Khan, sacrifices to mountains and fire, Shamanist dances, Buddhist prayers recited by lamas, and circumambulation of a large concrete altar evoking at the same time a several-storied mandala and an *ovoo*. Several different effigies of Chinggis are displayed during these ceremonies: on the large outdoor altar, a statue of Chinggis in a simple *deel*, with a large beard, sitting on a throne and holding a *moriin huur*; **(fig. 16)** a 1.50 meter high portrait on leather of Chinggis depicted as a standing warrior, with armor, a large chest mirror, a long fur hat and a sword; and a thangka (in the main *ger*-temple) depicting him as a Buddhist protector with a crown and halo, riding a horse, topped by lamas among clouds. Another thangka represents the *shüüten* (mo. *sitügen*, material support for worship) of the Eternal Sky/Heaven as a warrior riding a horse in the middle of orange flames, with his sword raised.[81] In addition, devotees buy small portraits of Chinggis—reproductions of the 'Taipei portrait' on paper—at the Department Store (which is often out of stock of the portrait) to be consecrated by Zorigtbaatar, who blows on the reproductions and on different objects that are brought to him while reciting prayers. When back home they place the blessed portrait on their domestic altar with offerings, to protect their family and the nation.

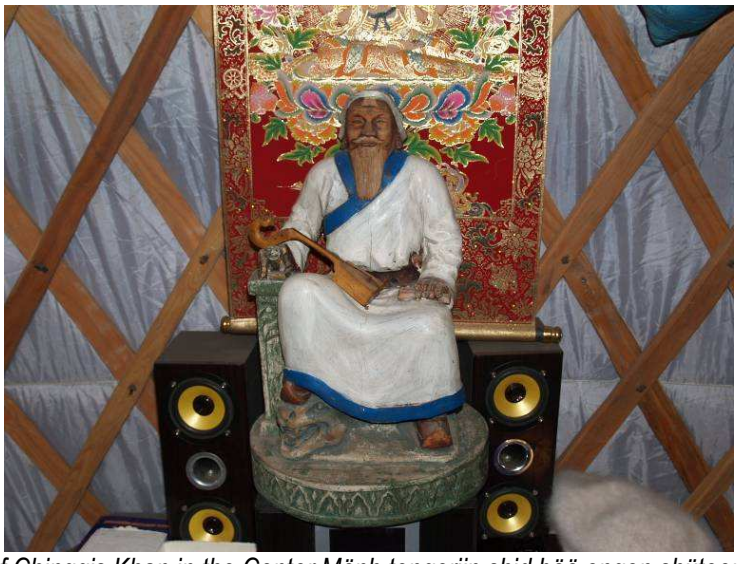


Fig. 16. *Statue of Chinggis Khan in the Center Mönh tengeriin shid böö ongon shüteenii töv. © Enhsaihan.*

[79] Bira 2004; Bira 2006. See Aubin 1993: 148; Aubin 1996.
[80] Translated as 'Center of Shaman Eternal Heavenly Sophistication.'
[81] http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1350; http://www.base-juniper.org/?q=node/1351.

Zorigtbaatar represents a Buddhicized, ideological, and pan-Mongolian neo-Shamanism influenced by telepathy, magnetism, and New Age. The universalist and monotheist cult of Eternal Sky aims at communicating with eternal celestial consciousness, far above the clans and lineages, the local gods and even Shamanism. In an ambiguous way, "Chinggis Khan and Eternal Heaven are sometimes confused, as if being only one entity, because Chinggis Khan 'divinized' as the founding ancestor becomes himself like a 'sky',[82] a superior *ongon* for all shamans and a spirit protector of the Mongolian nation." (Merli chap. 19 p. 146, my translation) Chinggis Khan therefore represents the abstract entity Eternal Sky/Heaven, because Sky/Heaven is incommensurable and cannot be depicted. The same is observed in Kirghizstan where Tengrists use the figure of Manas as the vehicle of their faith. (Laruelle and Biard Forthcoming)[83] In Tuva, Chinggis Khan was so closely associated with the Cult of Sky/Heaven that he is now called Tenger. (Stépanoff 2008) **(fig. 17)** For modern shamans, the personalized figure of Chinggis therefore stands for the abstract, eternal and incommensurable Sky/Heaven.



Fig. 17. *Chinggis Khan, yurt of a shaman, Tuva. © Charles Stépanoff.*

A deeper and broader study of the iconography used in shamans' houses and rituals is needed before concluding on their choices in representing Chinggis Khan. But from the few above-mentioned examples, it seems that although Mongolian artists compete in imagining new portraits of the Khan, the neo-shamans have not yet created original images of Chinggis Khan and do not agree on a coherent representation. The portraits they exhibit in their yurts are the same as those which are sold in the shops of the capital: a martial portrait on leather, the conventional 'Taipei portrait,' or a ceramic figure. While Chinggis Khan appears as one of their major gods, his representation is not yet the object of sophisticated elaborations.

[82] The auxiliary spirits of the shamans as well as individual protector deities are sometimes called *tngri* (*tngri saliɣulsu*, Cyr. *tenger sahius*.)
[83] These conclusions come from long discussions on the subject with Roberte Hamayon.

8. Modern private worship: Chinggis Khan on domestic altars

Popular icons of Chinggis displayed on domestic altars are either small statues, or reproductions based on the conventional 'Taipei portrait.' In 1990, porcelain statues made by a factory at Ulaanbaatar were personalized by an inscription on the icon. The statue represents Chinggis Khan as a law-giver, sitting cross-legged (like a lama), and holding a book. **(fig. 18)** The buyer would decide on the text to be inscribed—generally their name or the name of the person to whom they were going to give it, and the date. The buyer would also choose one of the maxims or moral injunctions attributed to Chinggis to inscribe it on the book he holds. The owner was thus linked to the statue through the inscription, which they often could not read, since it is in classical Mongolian. Humphrey (1992: 381) stressed the many different meanings of the Chinggis statue, a mass-product object which is individualized by the inscriptions, but "which represents the general meta-message: the personification of our nationhood (Chinggis) is the fount of the rule of law."



Fig. 18. *Chinggis Khan, ceramic statue. © Christopher Kaplonski.*

The portrait of Chinggis Khan has become an object of private worship. People burn small oil lamps and incense, bow before it and recite prayers. Humphrey (1992: 381) stressed the similarity with the cult of Buddhist icons placed on the altar of the

yurt, but also the fact that "the subjects (or actors) do not consider themselves to be engaging in religious worship, and in fact may think of themselves as atheists" (this may have changed since the early 1990s: **fig. 19**). Besides, in every Mongolian home and Buddhist temple, banknotes are deposited as offerings on altars (to Buddhist deities, to pictures of one's dead parents or of past communist leaders). Only the banknotes of 500 to 10 000 *tögrög* with Chinggis Khan's face are seen on the altars, while banknotes of 5 to 100 *tögrög* with Sühbaatar's, the revolutionary hero, are not: the representation of Chinggis Khan certainly arouses the symbolic value of the cash offering.



Fig. 19. *Stele in the shape of the white standard representing Chinggis Khan with* tamga *in the background, erected in 1990 for the commemoration of the 750th anniversary of the Secret History, here worshipped on the event of his 840th birthday celebration, Hödöö Aral, Delgerhaan sum © Don Croner. On the right, a painting by R. Lhamsüren entitled* Taliin duulal *shows Mongols being blessed by the stele-Chinggis. Aldartu 2007: 53.*

Conclusion

The different representations related to the cult of Chinggis Khan—as an ancestor deity and deified hero of the whole nation, as a fierce protector of Buddhist religion, as the 'Creator King' and the 'ethical ruler' (the Buddhist Cakravartin), to paraphrase Caroline Humphrey (2006), and as the material representation of the Eternal Heaven/Sky—are not simply expressions of different cults, but have obviously been used in different contexts, sometimes by the same actors, from ancient days up to now.

During the medieval period, the secret surrounding his burial place and the general taboo concerning ancestors' name had no incidence on the representation of Chinggis

Khan. Although they were not numerous, two and three dimensional portraits of Chinggis Khan were located in relatively public places.

Foreign powers as well as the Buddhist institution that exercised their authority on groups much larger than the sole Mongols tended to prefer depersonalized and de-Mongolized portraits of Chinggis Khan, depicted as a Western ruler or as a generic Tibeto-Mongol warrior who loses a part of his identity. These portraits were obviously not popular, and are now forgotten by the Mongols themselves. (With one exception: Hamayon Forthcoming) Post-1990 portraits reshape older portraits such as the 'Taipei painting' and present a demilitarized and re-Mongolized great Khan. The protector of the Borjigid lineage became the protector (and creator) of the whole Mongolian nation.

The typology of modern portraits reveals that different genres are obviously merging. Modern shamans incorporate Buddhist iconography, Buddhist icons borrow from ancestors' portraits and non-Buddhist symbols such as the standards, while many Mongols have forgotten the Buddhist origin of their symbols. The same conventional 'Taipei portrait' is worshipped on yurt altars or during Shamanist rituals, reproduced on vodka bottles and on banknotes. The instrumentalization and manipulation of the portrait of Chinggis Khan underline how the symbolic territories of Buddhism, Shamanism and the 'state cult' overlapped in the past and are still overlapping in their modern appropriation.

Pürevbat's new official portrait and the Vajrapāni thangka worshipped by government members show that Gandan Monastery appears as a centralizing force allied to the Mongolian state (at least under president Enhbayar's government), compared to the numerous more or less Buddhicized neo-Shamanist centers that failed to create a state Shamanism[84] and have not yet created their 'official' portrait of Chinggis.

But power, in Mongolia, always needs to be represented. Since shamans professing the cult of Sky/Heaven cannot represent this abstract entity, they fall back on the pan-Mongolian portrait of Chinggis Khan as the representative of Eternal Sky/Heaven on earth. And the supreme god of this universal religion cannot be a represented as a blood-thirsty warrior for he is viewed as a man of peace embodying the soul of the nation.

[84] Which according to Roberte Hamayon would be contradictory to the traditional absence of a political dimension of Shamanism.

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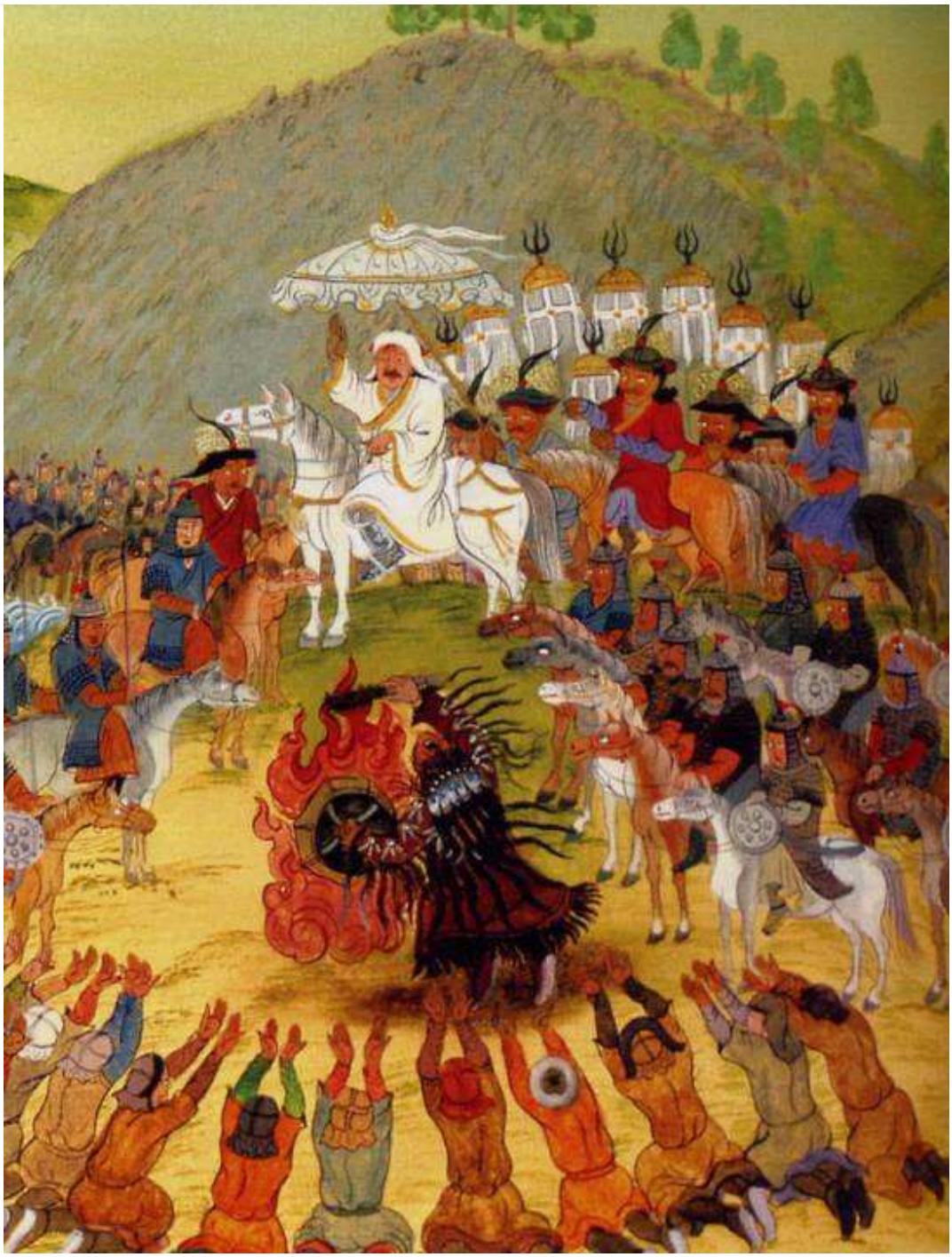


Fig. 20. *D. Badam,* Tengeriin tushial*, Mongolian National Modern Art Gallery, Ulaanbaatar. Aldartu 2007: 52. White Chinggis on a white horse, protected by the parasol of the Cakravartin, is blessing his people, and a shaman dances around a fire.*