

# Mongols, Arabs, Kurds, and Franks: Rashīd al-Dīn's Comparative Ethnography of Tribal Society\*

Christopher P. Atwood

Rashīd al-Dīn's works continue to fascinate. Apart from the sheer usefulness of his histories that cover in accessible prose so many events dealt with nowhere else, he is unique among medieval historians in his openness to religious and cultural Others. In his preface (*dībācha*) to the final edition of the *Compendium of Chronicles*, presented to Kharbanda Öljeitü Khan, he expressed his willingness to retell the story of non-Islamic lands in their own words and based on their own sources, with their own miraculous and or polytheistic elements intact.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Rashīd al-Dīn's *Tanqūq-nāma*, an annotated adaption of the versified manual of diagnosis by pulse written by the tenth-century doctor Gao Yangsheng 高陽生, also presented in translation and without comment the Neo-Confucian cosmology of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–73) and his *Taiji tu shuo* 太極圖說 (Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate).<sup>2</sup> In the presentation of Indian 'prophets' and religions in his *History of India*, the Hindu gods do come in for criticism – but largely from the Buddhist point of view of his source material.<sup>3</sup> In his *Ghāzānīd History*, completed in 705/1304–5 and the core around which the *Compendium of*

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<sup>1</sup> Rashiduddin Fazlullah's *Jamī'u't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles. A History of the Mongols*, transl. W. M. Thackston, 3 vols, Cambridge, 1998–9, I, pp. 7–9; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, transl. L. A. Khetagurov, I, 1, Moscow, 1952, pp. 48–50. In quoting from Rashīd al-Dīn, I have generally followed Thackston, but where it seemed appropriate I have modified the translation according to the interpretation found in the Russian translation by Khetagurov, Smirnova, and others, or according to other sources. I would like to thank Robert W. Dunbar, PhD candidate in the Central Eurasian Studies Department at Indiana University, for the assistance he has given me, as a Persian-less Mongolist, in getting a sense of Rashīd al-Dīn's Persian usage and controlling, to a certain degree, the translations I have used.

<sup>2</sup> See the contribution by Vivienne Lo and Wang Yidan in this volume; Wang Yidan 王丹丹, Bosi Lashite "Shiji: Zhongguo shi" yanjiu yu wenben fanyi 波斯拉施特“史集中国史”研究<sup>1</sup>与文本翻译, Beijing, 2006, pp. 40–41. Following his sources, Rashīd al-Dīn calls Zhou Dunyi by his respectful title as Zhouzi 周子 'Master Zhou'.

<sup>3</sup> See the contributions by Anna Akasoy and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim in this volume.

*Chronicles* was later spun, he was already following this methodology.<sup>4</sup> Mongol history was presented by collecting and presenting Mongolian written sources and oral narratives in Persian translation with glosses, explanations, and only the occasional interjection of his personal opinion or expression of doubt.

This precocious multiculturalism is a large part of Rashīd al-Dīn's high reputation today. Although operating with texts, not field work (a point that will come up later), he does share with anthropologists and ethnographers today a belief that anyone wishing to understand the full experience of humanity must at some level accept on their own terms the account other cultures give of themselves. This acceptance gives his work unique value among all other foreign accounts of the Mongol Empire. Certainly no other historian writing in Persian or Arabic gave us so much 'unfiltered' material from Mongolian sources. As a result, the modern reader approaches Rashīd al-Dīn with his guard down, so to speak, willing to take him at his word, precisely because he seems so contemporary and attractive a figure.

Despite the uniqueness of Rashīd al-Dīn's catholic interests in the Mongols, in this paper I will have to respectfully disagree with him, and even more with the use that has been made of him by modern social historians of the Mongols. Rashīd al-Dīn emphasized the importance of 'clans' and genealogical knowledge among the Mongols, and this has generally been taken as documenting a process in which a kin-based tribal society gives way to the state, as seen in much 'state formation' literature. Precisely because at points he uses a comparative approach to make social-historical generalizations, these generalizations have exercised a powerful attraction on modern historians. A writer of the fourteenth century seems to be groping towards the same theory of lineages and feuds among nomadic pastoralists set forth by so many classics of modern anthropology. Surely this independent creation of the same theory confirms the truth of both. I believe, however, that, far from confirming the truth of both, it shows rather that both Rashīd al-Dīn and modern anthropology have been subject to the same optical illusion involved in tracing the history of pre-state and 'prehistory' from sources and data derived in the last analysis from those already involved in the state's power to allocate rewards and status to families. In other words, Rashīd al-Dīn's Mongol clans were not something that had existed once and were now

<sup>4</sup> Following Satoko Shimo, I prefer to distinguish between the *Ta'rikh-i Ghāzānī* or 'Ghāzānīd History' as a history purely of the Mongol empire completed under Ghāzān Khan, and the *Jāmi' al-tawārikh* 'Compendium of Chronicles' as the world history completed under Kharbanda Öljeitü Khan. See her 'Ghāzān Khan and the *Ta'rikh-i Ghāzānī* — Concerning its Relationship to the "Mongol History" of the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*', *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko*, 54, 1996, pp. 93–110. I feel, however, she exaggerates the role of Ghāzān Khan in its composition, and I do not agree with her in the question of the manuscript priority.

fading away in the imperial state; rather, they were noble houses which had been created in the founding of the empire and were sustained by the belief that such noble houses were important for the stability of Mongol rule.

#### RASHĪD AL-DĪN AND BORIS IAKOVLEVICH VLADIMIRTSOV

The influence of Rashīd al-Dīn's *Ghāzānīd History* on the modern view of Mongol social history can hardly be overestimated. In his seminal *Obshchestvennyi stroi Mongolov: Mongol'skii kochevoi feodalizm* (Social Structure of the Mongols: Mongolian Nomadic Feudalism), Boris Iakovlevich Vladimirtsov gave it first place in his survey of the sources on the Mongol empire, placing the *Secret History of the Mongols* second to it as only 'another very important source'.<sup>5</sup> Since he believed that the Mongol Empire sources were 'greater (in number) and their quality infinitely superior to those of the sources concerning the following period' (that is, the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries), it would be fair to say from his survey of the sources that Rashīd al-Dīn's history of the Mongols was his primary source for pre-modern Mongol social history, with the *Secret History* only a close second.

This impression is borne out by the actual text of Vladimirtsov's work. He organizes his social history around a number of basic concepts: *oi-yin irgen* 'peoples of the forest' vs. *ke'er-ün irgen* 'peoples of the steppe', nomadizing in *küriyen* (large corrals of a hundred or more yurts), vs. nomadizing in *ayil* (isolated yurts), the clan or *oboq*, the hereditary serf-vassal or *unaghan boghol*, the tribe or *irgen*, and so on. In each case, it is Rashīd al-Dīn's *Ghāzānīd History* that provides both the definition and the illustration, while the *Secret History* provides only illustration.<sup>6</sup> Some concepts, such as that of the old hereditary serf-vassal, are attested only in the *Ghāzānīd History* (in which, following the majority of Persian texts, he misread *unaghan boghol* 'hereditary slave' rather than the correct *ötögü boghol* 'old slave').<sup>7</sup> One may thus say

<sup>5</sup> B. Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social des Mongols: Le féodalisme nomade*, transl. M. Carsow, Paris, 1948, pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), pp. 39, 44, 56-7, 79-80.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), pp. 79-80; P. Pelliot and L. Hambis, *Histoire des Campagnes de Gengis Khan*, I, Leiden, 1951, pp. 85-6. Pelliot and Hambis's reading, based on comparison of the Persian manuscripts, was confirmed by the appearance of this phrase, in the plural form *ötögü boghod* in line 23 of the memorial inscription of Jigünteï; see F. W. Cleaves, 'The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1338 in Memory of Jigünteï', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 14, 1951, pp. 1-104, and in particular, pp. 55, 70, 95 n. 112. The connection of this passage with Rashīd al-Dīn's text was first drawn by Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer Geschichtsquellen, vor allem der Mongolen- und Timuridenzeit*, Wiesbaden, 1963, I, pp. 160-61

that Vladimirtsov's conception of Mongolian society is fundamentally that of Rashīd al-Dīn.

Vladimirtsov summarized his thesis as 'nomadic feudalism'. Assuming that the state (of which 'feudalism' was only one form) and the clan are incompatible regimes, he believed that the pre-Chinggisid *oboq* or clan regime was broken up both by the rise of the Chinggisid empire and even more by its fall.<sup>8</sup> Later historians, particularly in the West, were even more dogmatic than Vladimirtsov about seeing 'tribalism' and 'feudalism' as two incompatible stages in social history. They generally drew from Vladimirtsov's version of Rashīd al-Dīn a classic illustration of pre-state, genuinely 'tribal' society, which in the pre-Chinggisid period had begun to develop the hierarchy that in the empire would eventually bring about a transition into 'feudalism' and non-tribal society.<sup>9</sup> The fundamental continuity of thought was obscured by Vladimirtsov's Western students' habit of replacing 'feudalism' with 'the state' and 'state-formation'; in fact, this was a distinction without much difference. In any case, the kin-based, 'clan-tribal' side of the equation was left unchanged, terminologically and conceptually.

Since this 'classic case' of kin-based society in Inner Asia was constructed by Vladimirtsov on the basis of Rashīd al-Dīn's text, any re-examination of the question of tribes, tribalism, and kin-based society, such as I have been pursuing for over six years now, must begin with Rashīd al-Dīn. Beginning with Rashīd al-Dīn should mean, however, more than simply choosing particular statements about what the Mongols 'do' and investing them with oracular authority. It must involve placing Rashīd al-Dīn's statements about the Mongols themselves within the context of his time and purposes in writing. It has become a standard procedure in describing medieval Mongolian society to begin with an exposition of the social structure of the pre-Chinggisid period and then briefly touch on the rise of the empire as somehow modifying or disintegrating this ideal type of Mongol nomadic society.<sup>10</sup> Yet the sources for describing this pre-Chinggisid period were all

(n. 40). The most recent examination of the interpretive issues connected with this term is that of Kazuhiko Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Boğol* in the *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh* of Rashīd al-Dīn', *Acta Orientalia* (Copenhagen), 47, 1986, pp. 27-31.

<sup>8</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), pp. 169-71.

<sup>9</sup> In the 'Foundations of Modern Anthropology' series, Lawrence Krader, in his *Formation of the State* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968), used the 'Tatar State' of the Turks and Mongols as one of his four case studies (pp. 82-103). Marshall D. Sahlins, in his volume *Tribesmen* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968), in the same series, used 'the nomads of Central Asia' as classic examples of 'chieftainship' and the 'conical clan', social forms intermediate between the purely kin-based tribe, and the state (pp. 24-5).

<sup>10</sup> See for example E. D. Phillips, *The Mongols*, New York, 1969, pp. 26-35, where we have a description of Mongol society introduced with the sentence 'The basis of society in any

of them, without exception, written under the Mongol empire. Hence this two-stage 'tribalism to feudalism' or 'tribe to state' narrative is not the result of comparing two independently documented historical situations and making hypotheses about how one evolved into the other. Rather it is a matter of taking the imperial period retrospective descriptions of the pre-Chinggisid stage more or less at face value, and then rephrasing them in the jargon of social science.<sup>11</sup>

#### CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON IN RASHĪD AL-DĪN

Vladimirtsov was able to base his concepts so closely on those of Rashīd al-Dīn because the Persian historian used cross-cultural comparisons to analyse Mongol society in ways that seem, like the better known case of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), remarkably precocious. Like Ibn Khaldūn, he set out many of his most influential ideas in a non-narrative prolegomenon, entitled in his case as 'A History of the Emergence of the Turkic Peoples (*aqwām*) and How they Divided into Branches (*shu'ba*)' which included those we would call Turkic and Mongolian peoples, as well as others, such as the Tanguts.<sup>12</sup> This section was divided in turn into

Mongol people was the patrilinear clan or *obok*', and then a description of 'The New Mongol State and Army' on pp. 40–50, introduced thus: 'Chingis now organized his enlarged Mongol state on feudal lines under himself and his kin. Tribal arrangements were abolished ...' David Morgan's *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1986) opens his description of the pre-Chinggisid situation with the question of 'the nature of the nomadic clan and tribe' (p. 37). Although he speaks of the tribal system being possibly more 'open' than its kin-based nature would imply, he comments that the membership of nomadic tribes being determined by blood is 'no doubt the explanation of the plethora of patently spurious genealogies that litter the contemporary and later literature' (p. 37). After the conquests in the chapter on 'The Nature and Institutions of the Mongol Empire', he covers the breakup of the 'old tribal identities' and the creation of a new 'artificial tribal system' of military loyalties (pp. 89–90). Paul Buell's *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire* (Lanham, MD, 2003) likewise gives a description of pre-Chinggisid society based first on kinship, secondarily on territorial tribes, and thirdly on military leaders, before discussing how the rise of Chinggis reorganized Mongolian society for war and conquest into thousands of 'highly heterogeneous' origins (pp. 5–7 and 13–16). Most recently in Michal Biran's new biography *Chinggis Khan* (Oxford, 2007), in the 'Makers of the Muslim World' series, the sub-heading 'The Tribal Composition of Mongolia', pp. 28–32, with the requisite long genealogy, is separated by 'Temüjin's Youth and Rise to Power' (pp. 32–40) from the 'Institutional Change: Mongolia in Transition' chapter (pp. 41–6) in which, as usual, the decimal organization breaks up tribal affiliations.

<sup>11</sup> Thus, although Vladimirtsov describes great changes in economy and camping-style among the Mongols in the empire (see *Le Régime social* [n. 5 above], pp. 53–6), he does not consider in a systematic way the possible influence of these changes on his reading of the sources.

<sup>12</sup> The terminology used by Rashīd al-Dīn for these units has engendered a discussion lately. David Sneath argued that Rashīd al-Dīn used a single term *qawm* (pl. *aqwām*) for sub-divisions among the Mongols, and that this term does not have the implication of

four chapters: 1) the general history of the Turks, centered on the Oghuz in the West; 2) the non-monarchic nations of eastern Inner Asia, who came to be called Mongols after Chinggis Khan; 3) monarchic nations of eastern Inner Asia, who came to be called Mongols after Chinggis Khan (in point of fact, only one of those in this section, the Kereyid,<sup>13</sup> are likely to have been Mongolic speaking); and 4) the pre-conquest Mongols, subdivided into two sections on the Dürlükün or 'common' lineages and the Niru'un or 'backbone' lineages.

Within the four chapters, he uses racial, historical, political, linguistic, and ethnographic features to distinguish and classify their branches. Thus he separates out the western Oghuz who had long been in contact with Iran, from the eastern 'Turks' who 'are close to (the Mongols) in physiognomy and language'.<sup>14</sup> He divides the latter by distinguishing changes of identity (those 'anciently styled Mongol' vs. those 'now called Mongols') and political structure (those 'peoples that have also had separate monarchs and leaders' vs. 'those nations without such leaders').<sup>15</sup> Among the old Mongols, he uses physiognomy, dialect, and vocabulary to distinguish the leading Niru'un, 'who are pure Mongols', from the common Dürlükün. In one case he gives the particular dialect form for 'knife' in Oyirad, while in another he cites a Mongolian proverb in the original language.<sup>16</sup>

'tribe' or 'lineage', while Peter Golden has contended that Rashīd al-Dīn uses a variety of terms all of which strongly imply a concept of clan-tribal lineage. See D. Sneath, *Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia*, New York, 2007, p. 107, and the review of this book by Peter B. Golden in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, 68, 2009, pp. 293–6 (294). While no comprehensive study of Rashīd al-Dīn's terminology for social groups exists, to my knowledge, it is my impression gained in the course of research for this article that the truth lies somewhere between the two assertions. *Qawm* seems to be Rashīd al-Dīn's regular term for any Turco-Mongolian social group, whether as big as the Tanguts or as small as the sub-branches of particular lineages among the Mongols proper. Other terms, such as *qabīla* (pl. *qabā'il*), usually translated as 'tribe', are used mostly in contexts where Rashīd al-Dīn is expatiating on Mongol social structure in comparison with that of the Arabs and other peoples. But there are cases (see e.g., Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* [n. 1 above], I, p. 117; *Sbornik letopisei*, transl. O. I. Smirnova, I, 2, Moscow, 1952, p. 16), where he speaks of 'every Mongol tribe (*qabīla*) and nation'. In this paper, I have given the terms Rashīd al-Dīn uses where I could, both to illustrate his usage and in the hopes that I might stimulate a study of his terminology from someone qualified to undertake it.

<sup>13</sup> The traditional spelling 'Kerait', derived from a reading of the Persian, is a distortion of the correct Kereyid as found in all Mongolian sources.

<sup>14</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 61; cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), p. 126.

<sup>15</sup> See the chapter headings in Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, pp. 21–79, and other classificatory passages, such as on pp. 24, 44, and 79–80; cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), pp. 73–152, 77, 102–3, 153.

<sup>16</sup> See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles*, I (n. 1 above), pp. 43, 55; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), pp. 102, 118. Later manuscript copies eliminated the Mongolian of the proverb

Not surprisingly, given this sort of data and Rashīd al-Dīn's overall reputation, Vladimirtsov treated the historian's *magnum opus* as transcending its own intellectual background:

This remarkable work is a veritable historical encyclopedia, of which no other people in the Middle Ages of Europe or Asia could boast ... Rashīd al-Dīn has illustrated the nomadic life of the Mongol tribes in remarkable detail. He based himself on the numerous testimonies of the Mongol chiefs ...<sup>17</sup>

Thus he saw the work as fundamentally modern, not medieval, in spirit and basically ethnographic and anthropological in inspiration; Rashīd al-Dīn collected oral testimonies in order to set out for his fellow Persians the nomadic life of the Mongol tribes and reveal to them (and us) their social structure.

Certainly Rashīd al-Dīn shows the generalizing and comparative interests of a proto-anthropologist. At the very beginning of his Turkic prolegomenon, he divides ways of life of humanity and discusses the two great areas of nomadism:

First it should be known that in every clime of the world there have been and are people who dwell in cities, people who dwell in villages, and people who inhabit the wilderness [*saḥarā-nishīn*]. The wilderness dwellers are particularly numerous in territories that are grass lands, have fodder for many animals, and are also far from civilization and agricultural lands. For example, within the borders of the land of Iran, the land of the Arabs, a waterless desert full of grass, is fit for camels because they eat a lot of fodder and drink little water; consequently Arab tribes [*qabā'il*] and clans [*'ashā'ir*] in numbers beyond enumeration have established their residence throughout the deserts and wilderness from the farther west to the shores of the Indian Ocean. And so too have the peoples [*aqwām*] which, from ancient times to the present, have been called and are still called 'Turk,' dwelt with all their tribes [*qabā'il*] and branches [*shu'ab*] in the wilderness, mountains and forests ...<sup>18</sup>

Here Rashīd al-Dīn sets forth a threefold distinction of urban, village, and wilderness (i.e., pastoral nomadic) life, which can be compared to Ibn Khal-

and left only the Persian; see A. Zeki Validi Togan, 'The Composition of the History of the Mongols by Rashīd al-Dīn', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 7, 1962, pp. 60-72 (65-6). On 'knife' (*madagha*), see Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen* (n. 7 above), I, p. 496 (n. 362).

<sup>17</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 21; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), p. 73.

dūn's twofold distinction of Bedouin and sedentary life.<sup>19</sup> 'Arab' here, as usual in medieval literature, means the Arab Bedouin or nomads, not the Arabic speakers of the cities and villages.<sup>20</sup> It might seem strange to have 'the land of the Arabs' treated as 'within the borders of the land of Iran', but the Mongol conquest revived the older definition of Iran as including virtually all of the Middle East. The Mongols' definition of the Ilkhanate as stretching from the 'Amu Darya to the farthest reaches of Egypt' was fused with the *Shāhnāma's* traditional division of the world into three great realms: Rome (i.e., the Franks and Greeks), Turan (i.e., the lands of China and the Turks), and Iran, including 'Persia and the land of the Arabs'.<sup>21</sup> 'Rome' has no nomads, but the Turks and the Arabs are the typical nomads of Turan and Iran, respectively.

Rashīd al-Dīn twice compares the Tatars and Mongols to people famous for their battle prowess and internecine conflicts. About the Tatars, he writes:

They are especially known for wielding knives, and at the slightest provocation they stab each other and use their swords without remorse, like the Kurds, the Shūl,<sup>22</sup> and the Franks. The law that exists among the Mongols now did not exist in their time, and vengeance, wrath, and envy were dominant in their natures. With their great numbers, if they had agreed with one another and not fought, neither the Khitayans nor any other creature could have withstood them ...<sup>23</sup>

The same idea of what an anthropologist would call 'complementary opposition' (i.e., the pattern in which groups in conflict combine and recombine according to real or fictive genealogical nearness)<sup>24</sup> is illuminated by a comparison with the Arabs elsewhere:

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Khaldūn sometimes opposes urbanism to village life in general and sometimes to pastoral nomadism. See Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, transl. F. Rosenthal, ed. N. J. Dawood, Princeton, 1967, pp. 91ff.

<sup>20</sup> Reuven Amitai stressed this point in his comments on the earlier version of this paper presented at the conference 'Rashīd al-Dīn as an Agent and Mediator of Crosspollinations in Religion, Medicine, Science and Art', London, 8–9 November 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), II, pp. 478–9; T. Kowalski, 'The Turks in the Shāh-Nāma', in *The Turks in the Early Islamic World*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, Aldershot, 2007, pp. 121–34 (124); A. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, transl. D. Davis, New York, 2006, p. 36. The Ilkhanid historian Baydāwī defines Iran as 'from the Arab lands to the borders of Khojand'. C. Melville, 'From Adam to Abaqa: Qādī Baidāwī's Rearrangement of History', *Studia Iranica*, 30, 2001, pp. 67–86, and in particular p. 76, cf. p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> The Shūl were the southernmost of the three divisions of the nomadic Lurs.

<sup>23</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, pp. 43–4; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> See P. C. Salzman, 'Does Complementary Opposition Exist?', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 80, 1, 1978, pp. 53–70.



One should bear in mind that the Turkic peoples [*aqwām*] and various types [*aṣnāf*] of Mongols that have been dealt with never, as a whole, had a mighty monarch to rule over all the peoples. Each people had its own monarch and leader, but most of the time they were at war and at odds with each other – like the Arabs who dwell in this realm, each tribe [*qabīla*] of which has its own separate leader who refuses to follow any other.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, Rashīd al-Dīn expected his readers to finish the sentence for themselves: they never had a mighty monarch – until Chinggis Khan. Thus, Rashīd al-Dīn placed his data implicitly within a framework of ‘state formation’ in which the violent stability of complementary opposition gave way to the imperial expansion of the state.

Of all these ethnographic comparative passages it was those on clan reckoning and lineage knowledge which Vladimirtsov cited and hence had the most influence. The two main passages are as follows:

The many branches [*shaʿb*] and peoples [*aqwām*] descended from Alan Qoʿa are so numerous that if one were to count the individuals they would be more than a hundred *tūmens*, yet each one of them has a clear and unambiguous family tree [*shajara*], for it is a Mongolian custom to preserve one’s relationship to one’s father and forefathers, and every child born is taught and inculcated with his genealogy [*nasab*] like all others in that nation. There is not one among them who does not know his tribe [*qabīla*] and lineage [*intisāb*]. Peoples [*aqwām*] other than the Mongols do not have such a custom – except for the Arabs, who also keep their genealogy.<sup>26</sup>

In the other passage he refers to one of Alan Ghoʿa’s<sup>27</sup> descendants, that is, a sub-set of the previous descendants said to exceed a million:

Tumina Khan ... had nine intelligent and competent sons, from each of whom a branch [*shuʿba*] and people [*qawmī*] branched off to become important and

<sup>25</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 113; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 116; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Particularly in the word-initial position, Persian sources do not distinguish Mongolian q and gh, transcribing both with -q-. Since these are clearly distinct phonemes in Mongolian, however, I distinguish them in my transcription according to the Mongolian. Thus words transcribed in Persian as *qol*, *abāqa*, and *qoʿa* correspond to Mongolian *ghol* ‘centre’, *abaghia* ‘uncle’, and *ghoʿa* ‘fair woman’, respectively, while words like *qabchal* ‘canyon’ and *qorchī* ‘quiver bearer’ are correct as is in Mongolian. In citations from Rashīd al-Dīn, however, I have left the transcriptions as they are in Persian.

well known. Now each of those clans numbers twenty to thirty thousand households and the number of men and women may reach a hundred thousand individuals. This must not be attributed to exaggeration, for it has been the Mongols' custom from ancient times on to keep their origin [*aşl*] and genealogy [*nasab*], and as there is not a religious community [*millatî*] or a religion [*dînî*] among them in which to instruct as others do, fathers and mothers inculcate into every child that is born their tribe [*qabîla*] and genealogy [*nasab*]. They have maintained this as a constant rule, and even now the rule is of great importance for them. The Arabs also do this. It is well-established what name and epithet each of the nine branches has acquired, and now their sons and grandsons are called by that name.<sup>28</sup>

Its presence in both of these passages indicates that the analogy with the Arabs was an important part of how Rashîd al-Dîn understood the Mongols. As we have just seen, the Turks and Mongols resembled the Arabs also in being nomads and in being divided into warring units. Now he shows that they are similar in being organized into tribes and clans. In short, all the material is there to interpret these passages as a general account of tribal and nomadic society. The lineage passages speak to the concept of kin-based society, and segmentary lineages, while the others adumbrate the concept of state formation breaking down complementary opposition and the law of blood vengeance to establish the state's monopoly on legitimate violence. At some level, Rashîd al-Dîn is certainly drawing attention to regularities of human existence, just as Ibn Khaldûn would do later. But is he implying that a society formed on a kin basis, like the law of vengeance, is part of a disappearing tribal past? And if he is, can we follow him in this account of the trajectory of Mongol society?

As I mentioned, the two passages above from Rashîd al-Dîn's account of the Mongol lineage-consciousness were both cited prominently by Vladimirtsov as the groundwork of his account of the Mongol clan-structure.<sup>29</sup> As we have seen, Vladimirtsov held that clans were broken up by the Chinggisid state's decimal organization, military campaigns, and deportation of Mongols as garrisons in the far-flung empire. As a result, although Rashîd al-Dîn is ambiguous about whether lineage consciousness was still vivid among the Mongols of his time (a point we will return to), these passages on lineage knowledge have been usually read as applying particularly to the pre-Chinggisid period as a kin-based stage of society. A closer analysis of Rashîd

<sup>28</sup> Rashîd al-Dîn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 124; Rashîd al-Dîn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), pp. 28–9.

<sup>29</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), pp. 56–7.

al-Dīn's data suggests, however, that, whatever the Persian historian himself may have meant, his material is best read as showing that the importance of lineage was not a feature of the pre-imperial society that was broken up by the imperial conquests. Rather, it was a feature preserved, accentuated, and extended in imperial society. In other words, extensive genealogical knowledge was not some tribal feature *opposed* to the state, but a mode of organization *nurtured* by the state.

#### THE MONGOL-ARAB ANALOGY: ETHNOGRAPHIC OR HISTORICAL?

Let us first take a look at the main people with whom Rashīd al-Dīn compares the Mongols: the Arabs. In an Islamic context comparing some people to the Arabs was more than a mere neutral fact of comparative ethnography; it also pointed up that peoples' role as divinely predestined imperial conquerors. Thus it is not surprising that in the first passage on lineage, the comparison with the Arabs moves directly from the issue of lineage into a praise of Chinggis Khan and his descendant Ghāzān Khan as a 'priceless pearl' and purifier of the customs of Islam. Likewise it is not coincidental that, while the Mongols' political divisions and internecine strife are compared to those of the Arabs, the same traits among the Mongols' subjugated Tatar enemies are compared to Kurds, Shūl, and Franks – certainly a negative comparison by contrast.

In referring to the Arabs in his own realm (that is, the Ilkhanate) Rashīd al-Dīn may have been thinking about the Arabs of Iraq, then under Mongol rule. But in speaking of Arabs from the 'further west to the shores of the Indian Ocean', he seems to allude to the Arabs less from personal observation, and more from what he knew of their history. Genealogies, embedded in the classic histories of the rise of Islam, were a well-known feature of the historic Arab image, and it is this image which is just as likely – if not more so – to be the source for his comparative data. And, as Paul Dresch has pointed out, the Arab genealogy was a model not just for Rashīd al-Dīn, but for the British anthropologists who created the model of segmentary lineage societies, particularly E. E. Evans-Pritchard.<sup>30</sup> One of the reasons, then, that the Mongols in Rashīd al-Dīn's account fit the model of segmentary lineages so well is that both Rashīd al-Dīn and modern social anthropologists were modelling them on the classic image of the Bedouin as seen in Islamic history.

<sup>30</sup> P. Dresch, 'Segmentation: its Roots in Arabia and its Flowering Elsewhere', *Cultural Anthropology*, 3, 1988, pp. 50–67. I would like to thank Leigh Chipman for her assistance in surveying the literature on genealogy in the Islamic world.

This very image, however, relied crucially on retrojection into the pre-Islamic past of practices and genealogical models of the Arab empire, a fact visible on many levels. As has been long known, the earliest genealogical records of the Arabs all post-date the conquests and were directly stimulated by the need of the Arab soldiers to document their eligibility for pensions.<sup>31</sup> More broadly, genealogical science (*‘ilm al-ansāb*) in medieval Arab society was a particular discipline, similar to, for example, poetics or grammar. These disciplines did valorize the pre-Islamic Bedouin roots as most authentic, yet their urban practitioners adapted these Bedouin raw materials for use in a wide variety of Muslim social milieus. Despite their basis in Bedouin knowledge, these sciences shared the scholastic and universalizing tendencies of medieval Islamic scholarship.<sup>32</sup> In short, digging under the soil of the various genealogical traditions unearths not tribesmen but rather bookmen in an imperial society, seeking prestige in patrilineal descent from participants in a dynastic founding. Can this be said of the Mongol genealogies Rashīd al-Dīn cites?

The analogy between the two sets of genealogies is deepened by the fact that Rashīd al-Dīn's figures for the number of descendants may be based, very indirectly, on records of imperial disbursements, just as were the Arab genealogies. When he numbers the descendants of Tumina Khan at 20–30,000, Rashīd al-Dīn calls to mind the previous numbering of the descendants of Chinggis Khan given by the earlier historian ‘Aṭā’ Malik ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Juwaynī (1226–83), who numbered the descendants of Chinggis Khan ‘now living in the comfort of wealth and affluence (at) more than 20,000’.<sup>33</sup> If the Chinggisid *uruq* had reached 20,000 under Möngke (a big ‘if’), then one might guess that by Rashīd al-Dīn's time, the much broader lineage of the sons of Chinggis's ancestor Tumina Khan reached 100,000. Probably Rashīd al-Dīn based this figure for Tumina's descendants on Juwaynī's number,

<sup>31</sup> Dresch, ‘Segmentation’ (n. 30 above), pp. 52–8; Z. Szombathy, ‘The *Nassābah*: Anthropological Fieldwork in Medieval Islam’, *Islamic Culture*, 73, 1999, pp. 61–108 (98–9). David Sneath has also drawn attention to this point in his important study, *The Headless State* (n. 12 above), pp. 132–4.

<sup>32</sup> Szombathy, ‘The *Nassābah*’ (n. 31 above) and ‘Genealogy in Medieval Muslim Societies’, *Studia Islamica*, 95, 2002, pp. 5–35. See also F. Rosenthal, ‘*Nasab*’, in *IE²*. I would like to thank Patricia Crone of the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton) for drawing my attention to these articles. It was the genealogy of Muhammad, itself undoubtedly a textual creation and presenting him as the culmination in a line of prophets, which became the paradigm of Arab tribal structure; see D. M. Varisco, ‘Metaphors and Sacred History: The Genealogy of Muhammad and the Arab “Tribe”’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68, 1995, pp. 139–56. On the role of Biblical genealogies in Arab genealogical tradition, see Szombathy, ‘The *Nassābah*’ (n. 31 above), pp. 100–101.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Aṭā’ Malik Juwaynī, *The History of the World Conqueror*, transl. J. A. Boyle, Cambridge, 1958, II, p. 594.

multiplied to take account of the greater number of lineages. In any case, the number is likely to be derived directly or indirectly from figures of disbursements under the Mongol empire.

Where did Juwaynī get his figure? Most likely from Mongol genealogical records. Such figures for the total number of members of the imperial family (including their hereditary slaves) are recorded for the preceding Jin 金 dynasty, and were regularly kept by the Mongols.<sup>34</sup> Under the Mongol Yuan 元 dynasty, a record of all the annual stipends paid to the kinsmen of the imperial family, the sons-in-law, and the meritorious vassals was compiled as a chapter in the fourteenth-century administrative compendium, *Jingshi dadian* 經世大典 (*Great Statutes for the Administration of the Era*, compiled 1329–31). As the preface to this record says, the record of such disbursements was first composed under Ögedei and then expanded under Möngke.<sup>35</sup> Analysis of the records, preserved in abridged form in the *Yuan shi* 元史 (*History of the Yuan Dynasty*, compiled 1370), shows that the data stems particularly from the census and apportionment of lands and salaries in 1236 under Ögedei and in 1252 and 1257 under Möngke.<sup>36</sup> The written records produced in these

<sup>34</sup> The Jin's imperial clan residing in the capital was counted at 28,790 persons (982 free and 27,808 slave) distributed into 170 households in 1183; see *Jin shi* 金史, ed. Tuotuo 脫脫 [Toqto'a], Beijing, 1975, p. 46/1034. The figure also includes data on fields and oxen owned by these imperial clan households. The following story from Rashīd al-Dīn suggests a regular census of the 'Golden Clan' (*altan uruq*): 'Qubilai Qa'an had [Ja'utu's] *uruq* [seed or offspring] counted, and they numbered eight hundred individuals. 'How is it,' he asked, 'that from the offspring of Jochi Qasar's sons, who were forty persons, eight hundred have been born, while from the sons of Belgütei and Ja'utu, who were a hundred, only eight hundred individuals and no more have been born?' The reply was given that Jochi Qasar's *uruq* were wealthy and rich, while Belgütei Noyan's *uruq* were poor'; see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 138, and Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), p. 57. Rather than being the result of a spur-of-the-moment count, it is more likely that the count from which Qubilai took his query was part of the official record of the imperial family, maintained for genealogical and disbursement purposes. Note that *uruq* is the spelling in Turkish, where final -gh and -q are phonemically distinct; *uruq* is the Mongolian, where there is only one final velar stop in words of 'back' vocal harmony (that is, containing a, o, u vs. e, ö, ü).

<sup>35</sup> The preface is preserved in the Yuan literary anthology, *Yuan wen lei* 元文類, ed. Su Tianjue 蘇天爵, Taipei, 1962, p. 40/23b; cf. *Yuan shi* 元史, ed. Song Lian 宋廉, Beijing, 1976, p. 95/2411.

<sup>36</sup> All the data on annual disbursements in chapter 95 of the *Yuan shi*, are linked to particular years when those amounts were fixed. Of the years from 1229 to 1260 referred to, the vast majority are from 1236 and 1252, with a smaller peak in 1257. (The years and number of data points referenced to them are as follows: 1236: 41; 1238: 2; 1252: 47; 1253: 2; 1255: 1; 1257: 18; 1258: 2.) If we restrict ourselves to the imperial family (princes, *ordos*, and princesses) as opposed to 'meritorious vassals', then the pattern changes, with 1236 and 1257 being the main years (1236: 16; 1252: 4; and 1257: 11). See *Yuan shi*, 95/2411–44 (The other data points are all for meritorious vassals.) On the appanage system as a whole, see T. T. Allsen, 'Sharing out the Empire: Apportioned Land under the Mongols', in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, eds A. M. Khazanov and A. Wink, Richmond, 2001, pp. 172–90.

censuses, which amounted to a listing of the imperial family, and presumably of their dependents, may well be the source for Juwaynī's figure of over 20,000 for the 'race and lineage (*urugh*) of Chingiz-Khan'.<sup>37</sup>

A more certain indication of the contemporary importance of lineage in Rashīd al-Dīn's time is the unexpectedly biographical nature of his account of the Mongol tribes. For the western Turks or Oghuz, long familiar to the Iranian world, he recorded classic 'ethnographic' material, such as ancestor legends and tribal *tamghas* or cattle brands. Along with the Mongol Kiyad-Borjigid ancestor legend of Alan Gho'a, these are the parts of Rashīd al-Dīn's account which retained the most enduring popularity among the Turkic successor realms of the post-Mongol Turkic writers, such as Abū 'l-Ghāzī (r. 1642–64).<sup>38</sup> But as Rashīd al-Dīn moves closer to the Mongols proper, his account of each tribe or lineage became quite different: more and more a set of pocket biographies, strung together by genealogy and extending from the pre-Chinggisid period down to Rashīd al-Dīn's own time in the Ilkhanate or (less often) the Yuan dynasty. Thus, what is advertised as a 'tribal' account comes to look more and more like a peerage of the great families of Ghāzān Khan's time with their pedigrees duly established. As a result of this arrangement, lineages with no prominent members are given little attention in Rashīd al-Dīn; indeed, if the lineage was sufficiently undistinguished one would guess that it would not be included at all. Moreover, Rashīd al-Dīn's 'tribal'-style biographical dictionary implicitly stated a key point about the Ilkhanid ruling class: that the Mongols in it participated in leadership by virtue of their lineages' past merits, while the 'Muslims' (i.e., non-Mongols) in it could rely only on their current achievements.<sup>39</sup> Thus the antiquarian data served very contemporary status concerns.

#### BIOGRAPHIES AND THE 'MERITORIOUS VASSALS'

Where did Rashīd al-Dīn get the idea for this collection of 'tribal' biographies? Nothing similar exists in the Islamic historiographical tradition. Likewise, pre-Mongol legends relating to the origins of the western Turkic peoples were obviously not its inspiration, as can be seen in the contrast between

<sup>37</sup> Juwaynī, *The History of the World Conqueror* (n. 33 above), II, p. 594.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the contribution by Ron Sela in this volume.

<sup>39</sup> The *Ghāzānīd History* commonly defines Ilkhanate society in terms of a dualism of 'Muslims and Mongols'; see for example Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), III, pp. 519, 741, 751, 758. This alliteration succeeds the earlier 'Turk and Tazik' as seen in Juwaynī, *The History of the World Conqueror* (n. 33 above), I, pp. 116–17, 121, 199, 318, 337, and II, pp. 615, 621, 638. In the same volume, we also see a non-alliterating opposition of 'Mongol and Tazik', pp. 713, 721.

the first sub-section on the 'Turks', which treats of the Oghuz and has no biographical data, and the later subsections which treat the new and old Mongols, and is replete with it. For this reason, one might suspect East Asian influences here as well. Since the *liezhuan* 列傳 or ordered biography genre of Chinese historiography are likewise organized by ethno-legal status, lineage, and time, it shows certain parallels to Rashīd al-Dīn's section on the tribes. These parallels are highlighted by that fact that at least one biography in Rashīd al-Dīn's tribal section can be demonstrated to have a common origin with one of the *Yuan shi*'s *liezhuan* in a Mongolian text.<sup>40</sup> Such East Asian influence on Rashīd al-Dīn's texts and formats should not be surprising. East Asian influence on the art and intellectual life of the Ilkhanate is pervasive, and, as Thomas Allsen first proposed, and my own research has confirmed, Rashīd al-Dīn's historiography was heavily influenced by Chinese models transmitted through Mongolian-language texts.<sup>41</sup>

It is thus significant that, under the Yuan dynasty, the genre of 'Ordered Biographies of Meritorious Subjects' (*gongchen liezhuan* 功臣列傳) was given a higher level of autonomy and importance in official historiography than in preceding Chinese dynasties.<sup>42</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn's tribal section looks something like an adaption of this genre, with the major difference that, unlike the *liezhuan* in the *Yuan shi* or any other Chinese history of a 'barbarian' dynasty, it includes only what the Chinese would call the *guozu* 國族 or dynastic race, and their helpers, and excludes the native officials and literati completely. As already mentioned, the effect of this was to establish lineage organization as a point of ethnic difference and privilege: the ruling Mongols had it, but the subject Persian Muslims did not.

In East Asian political theory, however, the importance of lineage building for the stability of the state was a common concern, not restricted by eth-

<sup>40</sup> Compare the biography of Chaghan (originally named Beide 盍德, whose characters have been corrupted to Yide 益德 in current texts of the *Yuan shi*), the Tangut, in Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 74 (cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 [n. 1 above], p. 145), with *Yuan shi*, 120/2955. The anecdote about worshipping one's hat is found, transferred to Chinggis Khan himself, in Lubsang-Danzin's *Altan tobchi*; see Ertnei khaadyn ündeslesen tör yosny zokhiolyg towchlon khuraasan Altan towch khuraakh khemeckh orshwoi, Ulaanbaatar, 1990, p. 93b, and *Altan tobchi: Eine mongolische Chronik des XVII. Jahrhunderts von Blo bzañ bstan 'jin. Text und Index*, eds H. P. Vietze and Gendeng Lubsang, Tokyo, 1992, pp. 66–7. I am currently preparing an article on this and other passages where common use of Mongolian sources by Rashīd al-Dīn and the editors of the *Yuan shi* can be demonstrated.

<sup>41</sup> T. T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 93–100. Many striking examples of East Asian influence on Persian art under the Mongols are given in Leo Jungeun Oh's paper 'The Visualization of East Asian Culture in the World History of Rashid al-Din', presented at the conference 'Rashid al-Din as an Agent and Mediator of Crosspollinations in Religion, Medicine, Science and Art', London, November 8, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> See my forthcoming study of Yuan-era historiography.

nicity. The Uyghur Confucian Sevinch-Qaya (Xiaoyunshi-Haiya 小雲石海涯, or Guan Yunshi 貫雲石 in Chinese), in his six-point reform plan presented to the Emperor Ayurbarwada (r. 1311–20) of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, once proposed as point 4: ‘Publicize surnames in order to bring meritorious descendants to light.’<sup>43</sup> In other words, the Mongols should begin to use their lineage names as part of their regular address, as the Chinese already did, in order to preserve the tradition of hereditary service among the major non-imperial families of the dynasty. Here Sevinch-Qaya is exhorting the Mongols to fall in line with the long tradition of Chinese political thought that saw strong lineages as the seed bed for generation after generation of able officials. As Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–77), a pioneer in genealogical study under the Song dynasty, wrote:

Now that genealogical writing has also decayed, people do not know where they come from; there are no hundred year families... Moreover, without the establishment of the system of differentiated descent lines, the court can have no hereditary officials. For instance, a minister can rise up in a day from a poor and humble position. If he does not set up a *tsung* [宗 *宗*] system, once he dies his agnates [zu 族] will scatter and his house [jia 家] will not continue... In this way, they cannot preserve their houses. How can they preserve the state?<sup>44</sup>

The Northern Song historian Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72) had noted with scorn how the absence of long-standing patrilineages marked by a common surname rendered the history of nomadic peoples almost completely obscure;<sup>45</sup> Sevinch-Qaya hoped to inoculate the Mongols from ill-informed charges of lacking the institution, proper for any self-respecting centralized state, of lineages enjoying hereditary status.

The relevance of this concern to Rashīd al-Dīn’s account of the Mongols is highlighted by Sevinch-Qaya’s phrase ‘meritorious descendants’ (*xunzhou* 勳州). The character *xun* 勳 links the phrase to a series of terms designating the ‘meritorious servants’ (most commonly *gongchen* 功臣), that is, the early helpers of the dynastic founder who in Chinese dynasties were generally given an important institutional role. Even though the Mongols did not use family names as terms of address, which was the problem Sevinch-Qaya

<sup>43</sup> *Yuan shi*, 143/3422.

<sup>44</sup> P. Buckley Ebrey, ‘Early Stages in the Development of Descent Group Organization’, in *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000–1940*, eds P. Buckley Ebrey and J. L. Watson, Berkeley, 1986, pp. 16–61 (37–8).

<sup>45</sup> See my ‘The Notion of Tribe in Medieval China: Ouyang Xiu and the Shatuo Dynastic Myth’, in *Miscellanea Asiatica: Festschrift in Honour of Françoise Aubin*, eds D. Aigle et al., Sankt Augustin, 2010, pp. 593–621.



hoped to reform, the Yuan dynasty still gave an unusually prominent role to the descendants of such 'meritorious servants'.

Strikingly, the first character of the binome *xunzhou* is part of a four character phrase (*yuanxun shichen* 元勳世臣) which is the Chinese translation of the phrase 'old slaves' (*ötegü boghol*) in its only attested Mongol usage.<sup>46</sup> This phrase and the passage in which it is found was a crucial part of Vladimirtsov's picture of how the clan regime coexisted with nomadic feudalism in the pre-Chinggisid period.<sup>47</sup> Yet this phrase which Rashīd al-Dīn places chronologically in his account of the 'tribes' and the 'pre-Chinggisid' phase is attested in Mongolian only as a term for the post-Chinggisid descendants of the 'meritorious servants' of Chinggis Khan. A careful reading of Rashīd al-Dīn's main passage on them, which had been cited *in extenso* by Vladimirtsov, confirms that the imperial period was its real context. Here I cite Rashīd al-Dīn's text again:

The people [*qawmī*] of the Mongols that they currently call *ötegü boghol* received this name during Chinggis Khan's time. *Ötegü boghol* means that they are hereditary slaves of Chinggis Khan's fathers and forefathers. Some of them [i.e., of such hereditary slaves] are those who performed pleasing services during Chinggis Khan's time and established their rights, and that is why they are called *ötegü boghol*. Those who maintain their status as *ötegü boghol* will be mentioned individually in the proper places.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> F. W. Cleaves, 'Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1338' (n. 7 above), p. 30 (translation of Chinese), plates VIII-IX (Chinese text), p. 55 (Mongolian text), p. 70 (translation of Mongolian). The actual Mongolian spelling here is *ötögü boghod*, a plural form in the eastern dialect spelling.

<sup>47</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), pp. 79ff. As I mentioned in note 8, Vladimirtsov used translations of Rashīd al-Dīn which read *ötegü boghol* 'old slave' as *unaghan boghol* 'hereditary slave'. This error is important but, I argue, perhaps less important than his failure to observe that Rashīd al-Dīn was conflating different institutions from different periods in Mongolian imperial history.

<sup>48</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 117; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisci*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), p. 15; compare the translation in Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Bojol*' (n. 7 above), p. 29. Shiraiwa does not cite the first sentence of this passage, however. This passage is cited in Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), p. 77. Spelling variations of *ötögü boghod*-*ötegü boghol*-*ötögü bo'ol* are related to both dialectical and transcriptional factors. In *ötegü* vs. *ötögü*, the issue is one of dialect; the western dialects of Mongolian generally derounded short non-initial vowels, thus changing *nökör* to *nöker*, *ortoq* to *ortaq*, *bo'ol* to *bo'ul* and so on. In *boghod*-*boghol*-*bo'ol*, two issues are involved. First the word in the written form contains a -gh- which was already silent in the actual spoken pronunciation of Middle Mongolian. This silent -g/-gh- is conventionally written with an apostrophe in transcriptions of Middle Mongolian (the actual pronunciation was usually a glide). It was, however, generally pronounced in Mongolian names and words found in the heavily Mongolized Turkish which Rashīd al-Dīn and others spoke at the Ilkhanid court. Thus, what in Mongolian was Cha'adai and Hüle'ü became in the Turco-Mongolian of the Persian historians Chaghatai and Hüle'gü. What was pronounced by the Mongols as *bo'ol* was thus written (and may well have been

The attentive reader can observe Rashīd al-Dīn jumping freely between three chronological periods in this passage. First he states that the term *ötegü boghol* refers to those who were slaves of Chinggis's family in pre-Chinggisid times. Secondly, he refers to them 'establishing their rights' by giving meritorious service under Chinggis Khan when, as he states, the term was actually coined. Finally, he implies that only those who maintain that status in the present are mentioned as such in his account. As Kazuhiko Shiraiwa pointed out in his review of all Rashīd al-Dīn's passages on the *ötegü boghol*, the status 'consisted of two elements, namely the hereditary servants of the Chingizid family and those people who had rendered distinguished service to Chingiz Khan'.<sup>49</sup>

The evidence clearly indicates, however, that only the second of these elements belonged properly to the term *ötegü boghol*, while the first element is a speculative connection drawn by Rashīd al-Dīn himself. This can be seen in two other passages cited by Shiraiwa. Of the Tatars we read that, despite their annihilation by Chinggis Khan, later on many became great commanders. He adds: 'To them the custom of *ötegü boghol* was applied.' Again the passage on Sorqan of the Baya'ud says that he was 'allowed to join the *ötegü boghol*' by Chinggis Khan.<sup>50</sup> Here we see figures who were not in the hereditary service of Chinggis Khan's ancestors (e.g. Sorqan Shira) or of anyone else (e.g. the Tatars), yet they are still called *ötegü boghol* because they participated in the imperial founding. Likewise, even though Rashīd al-Dīn refers to the Jalayir as having been Chinggis Khan's 'hereditary property inherited from father to son', and that 'for this reason, this tribe became his *ötegü boghol*', we still have the requisite reference to status in the Mongol empire: 'In the time (of him) and his family, (many of them) were made emirs and men worthy of reverence and honor, each for (particular) reasons, as it will be explained (below).'<sup>51</sup> The connection which Shiraiwa makes between the status of *ötegü boghol* and *quda* of the Chinggisid lineage<sup>52</sup> only strengthens

pronounced by Rashīd al-Dīn) as *boghol*. Finally, *boghod* (pronounced *bo'od*) is the plural form, unattested elsewhere, of the singular *boghol-bo'ol*. To avoid confusion, however, I have used *boghol* throughout.

<sup>49</sup> Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Boğol*' (n. 7 above), p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Boğol*' (n. 7 above), p. 30; compare Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, pp. 47, 97; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), pp. 107, 177.

<sup>51</sup> Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Boğol*' (n. 7 above), p. 30; compare Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 37; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), p. 93. This passage is largely repeated in Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 119 (cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 [n. 12 above], p. 19), but with *ötegü bo'ol* given in Persian translation as *banda-yi khānādān* 'hereditary slaves'.

<sup>52</sup> Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Boğol*' (n. 7 above), pp. 30–31, based on passages about Udachi of the Uriangqad and the Tatars in Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, pp. 84, 46; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), pp. 159, 106.

this point; the status of *quda* of the Borjigin-Kiyan was likewise something that was created in a particular time in the imperial founding, and not simply inherited from the past.<sup>53</sup>

In all of these passages, the central fact emerges that *ötegü boghol* is a status or right created under Chinggis Khan. Moreover this status was a continuing one that applies only to those who could claim descent from the 'meritorious servants' of the imperial founding under Chinggis Khan – if that claim were to be forgotten, the status would be lost. This is exactly the danger which Sevinch-Qaya sought to eliminate in the Yuan dynasty by enforcing the daily use of the lineage names: that a junior or collateral descendant of a distinguished family might lose his membership in that family and eligibility for state service. Any application of this status to the pre-Chinggisid period is thus, strictly speaking, anachronistic.

Vladimirtsov's treatment of the *ötegü boghol* commits just such an anachronism. He discusses it at length as a status in pre-Chinggisid Mongolian clan society, defining it in general terms as 'the vassals from time immemorial of a clan or a house, attached hereditarily to its service', and speaking of this or that person in the early Chinggisid period being 'incontestably' an *ötegü boghol*.<sup>54</sup> Vladimirtsov's application of this passage to the pre-Chinggisid period was encouraged, however, by Rashīd al-Dīn's own desire to link this term *ötegü boghol* with the pre-Chinggisid status distinction of Negüs or Dürlükīn ('common') Mongols. These two terms form part of a dual classification of the pre-Chinggisid Mongol lineages whose traces can be found in other sources, such as the *Secret History of the Mongols*. Rashīd al-Dīn explains that all the Mongols (in the original and narrower pre-Chinggisid sense) fall into two groups which he designates at times by the surnames Negüs and Qiyad (also called the Borjigid) and elsewhere by the conceptual names Dürlükīn ('common') and Niru'un ('backbone'). The Qiyad-Borjigid/Niru'un are the ruling group, descended by miraculous

<sup>53</sup> *Quda* ties with Qonggirad, Ikires, Önggüd, Oyirats, Uyghurs, and Qarluqs are all initiated at particular points in the imperial founding; see *Secret History of the Mongols*, transl. F. W. Cleaves, Cambridge, 1982, and I. de Rachewiltz, *Index to the Secret History of the Mongols*, Bloomington, 1972, §§62–6, 176, 235, 238, 239; Yuan shi, 110/2915–27, 122/2999–3002. As I have pointed out elsewhere, one should not draw too automatic an equation between the various privileged statuses among the non-Borjigin-Kiyan families of the empire: such as *keshig* (imperial bodyguard) elders and *quda*. These categories were sometimes merged and sometimes kept separate, and the same is true for *ötegü boghol* and *quda*; see C. P. Atwood, 'Ulus Emirs, Keshig Elders, Signatures, and Marriage Partners: The Evolution of a Classic Mongol Institution', in *Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques Of Governance In Inner Asia, Sixth-Twentieth Centuries*, ed. D. Sneath, Bellingham, WA, 2006, pp. 141–73 (160–63).

<sup>54</sup> Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime social* (n. 5 above), pp. 80, 84.

conception from Alan Gho'a, while by the Negüs/Dürlükün 'is meant the Mongols generally'.<sup>55</sup>

Read carefully, however, it seems that Rashīd al-Dīn based his link between the two statuses of Negüs and *ötegü boghol* only on the fact that these families had no pre-Chinggisid tradition of political leadership. Both therefore differed from the Niru'un or 'backbone' groups of the pre-Chinggisid Mongols who did have such a tradition of rule, were rivals of Chinggis Khan, and did not become slaves until he defeated his rivals and founded the Mongol empire.<sup>56</sup> But the Negüs and *ötegü boghol* are not equivalent concepts, simply because they both can be contrasted with the ruling group. One predates the founding of the empire under Chinggis Khan, while the other post-dates it.

Rashīd al-Dīn links the two statuses, *dürlükün* and *ötegü boghol*, but leaves it unclear whether this link is his own attempt to understand the two terms or rather something he found in his sources. All that we can say for certain is that, while hereditary status and lineage may have been important before the founding, this importance was amplified and given sharp legal boundaries only during and after the founding, something which we may infer created in turn the need for historical accounts to transmit and legitimate this status.

This amplification of the importance of lineage was, of course, initiated by the great founder Chinggis Khan himself, by his policy of assuring a hereditary share in government authority and revenues to all his 90 to 120 captains of a thousand and all his Baljuna covenanters.<sup>57</sup> Once again in Rashīd al-Dīn's explanation of the term *ötegü boghol*, as in the structure of his tribal/biographical section, we find the same tripartite chronological template: the meritorious subject who aided Chinggis Khan and was given rule over a thousand, this subject's ancestors in the past (often nameless), and his

<sup>55</sup> See particularly Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, pp. 26, 79–82, 98, 112; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), pp. 78–9, 152–6, 178, 197.

<sup>56</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 117–18; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> That the captains of a thousand and ten-thousand were hereditary has long been known; that the thousands as units had far greater institutional power and continuity than any other level in the empire's decimal hierarchy was argued by me in my paper, 'Mongol Society's Basic Unit: What It Was and Wasn't', given at Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Institute Brownbag Lecture, New York, 15 February 2007 (to be published as the a chapter in a book to be published with Indiana University Press, titled *Nomadic Peasants: Khans, Pastures, and Families on China's Inner Asian Frontier*). That the Baljuna Covenanters, those who shared with him the muddy water of the Baljuna River during the nadir of Chinggis Khan's fortunes in the summer of 1203, were promised a hereditary share in the offices of the empire is stated in the *Yuan shi*, 122/3016, the biography of Hasan 哈散納.

(usually named) descendants in the Ilkhanate and the Yuan dynasty.<sup>58</sup> Thus the upshot of his comments on the *ötegü boghol* is that only in the imperial period, ironically, can we be sure we are dealing with a defined lineage with a recognized hereditary status. In the pre-Chinggisid period, by contrast, the significance of the persons mentioned lies in that they would give rise to a 'meritorious subject' – it would be anachronistic to assume that they necessarily formed a continuous descent group already having defined rights.

#### WAS GENEALOGICAL KNOWLEDGE FADING?

I have thus suggested that we need to read Rashīd al-Dīn's genealogical material as primarily a by-product of the need of the Mongol peerage to document their status and only secondarily as a result of his comparative ethnography. This implies that genealogical interest was alive and well among his Mongol contemporaries. Our historian gives, however, contradictory indications about how widespread interest in genealogy was in his time. At times he describes this interest in genealogy as a living custom among the Mongols:

... it is a Mongolian custom to preserve one's relationship to one's father and forefathers, and every child born is taught and inculcated with his genealogy like all others in that nation. There is not one among them who does not know his tribe and lineage. [Emphasis added]<sup>59</sup>

Note that this description is all in the present tense. Elsewhere he writes how

it has been the Mongols' custom from ancient times on to keep their origin and genealogy, and ... fathers and mothers *inculcate* into every child that is born their tribe and genealogy. They have maintained this as a constant rule, and *even now* the rule is of great importance for them. [Emphasis added]<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Hodong Kim's contribution in this volume demonstrates brilliantly how the list of the captains of a thousand was derived by Rashīd al-Dīn from the captains serving at his time in the Ilkhanate and then traced backward by following their lineage into the time of Chinggis Khan. Since, as he shows, much of this material in the 'Register of Chiliarchie' (or captaincies of a thousand) is found verbatim in the 'Tribal Section' of Rashīd al-Dīn's history, this strongly implies that the tribal section itself was composed in this fashion.

<sup>59</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 116; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 124; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 2 (n. 12 above), pp. 28–9.

Again, in this passage, interest in genealogy is said not to have declined but been maintained among the Mongols.

In the introduction to his *Ghāzānīd History*, however, Rashīd al-Dīn implies that interest in genealogy was declining. His history of the Mongols was necessary, he writes,

so that the unusual and great events and incidents that happened during the time of Mongol ascendance should not be effaced or erased with the passage of time ... for in this era no one is aware or informed of these things, and with the passage of time youthful and adolescent sons of lords grow unaware of the names and titles of their fathers, grandfathers, and uncles and of the events that occurred in times past. How can it be proper for the offspring and descendants of the great of every people [*qawm*] not to be aware or informed of the currents of events that enveloped their fathers, or of their genealogy and names? This is particularly true of those for whom God has decreed all sorts of favour.<sup>61</sup>

Assessing these contradictory indications on whether Mongol genealogical knowledge was continuing or in decline has to begin with Rashīd al-Dīn's purpose for making these points in his history. Neither his assertion of continued lineage knowledge nor his assertion that the Mongols were forgetting the past were made in a disinterested way. In the first two passages, Rashīd al-Dīn is defending the accuracy of his pre-Chinggisid account against the implicit accusation that such things were too far back in the past to ever be really known. Thus he argues that Mongols collectively preserve a sure knowledge of their genealogy. (In fact, however, the careful reader will note that there are very few links in his pre-Chinggisid genealogy for which one cannot find one or more alternative versions in his pages.)

On the other hand, in his introduction, Rashīd al-Dīn has to argue that his history fills a necessary need. Like many a historian frustrated by a lacklustre response, he has to find a practical reason to induce his potential readership to read his work. He does so by lamenting the lack of interest among the young lords in the great deeds of their ancestors, deeds which he implies are the basis behind their current position. Sevinch-Qaya's proposal for enforcing daily use of lineage names came from the same fear of social decay. A general trope of decline is certainly at work in the final passage, one that legitimates hereditary status, even as it laments the decay in the knowledge that buttresses it. The last passage suggests what Rashīd al-Dīn

<sup>61</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 19; *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), p. 68.

may have meant by the 'even now' highlighted in the passage just preceding it. In isolation, we might read it as an expression of continuing Mongol resistance to the grand social transition from tribal to state society, or of resistance to the shift from Mongol tradition to Islamic law. But it is just as likely – if not more so – to be a statement about how the Mongols resist the universal decay of social mores from noble fathers to degenerate sons, and so are fitted to rule. Given the wide currency of the language of decline used in the final passage, in contrast to the specificity of the language of continuing lineage knowledge, I would guess that the language of decline here is a conventional trope, and those passages emphasizing continuing genealogical knowledge depend more on actual observation. Still, the passage on declining knowledge is a salutary reminder that lineage knowledge, like any other 'custom', is not a thing handed off from person to person like a football, but a complex social practice that had to be continually nurtured – in large part by writing history.

Notice, moreover, that the history in which they are exhorted to take an interest is precisely in the lineage of the 'meritorious servants', the office holders whose ancestors assisted in the great founding. The explicit class language here contrasts sharply with its absence in the two previous passages, where only a general custom of 'the Mongols' seems to be at issue. Yet Rashīd al-Dīn deploys this genealogical knowledge among 'the Mongols' to defend the accuracy of genealogies which are overwhelmingly of the imperial family and its 'old slaves/meritorious servants'.

Yet it may be a mistake to draw too sharp a distinction between the consciousness of pedigree of the upper classes and the lower classes of the Mongols. The idea of pedigree, that is, of social rank based on family origin, was so pervasive in the documented imperial and upper classes of Mongol society that it is most unlikely to have given way even among the pettiest of officials to purely meritocratic criteria. Moreover, the very status of Mongol, which was still so important to separate them from the conquered Muslims, was also hereditary. If the captaincies of a thousand were strictly hereditary, the heads of a hundred or ten showed the same tendency to hereditary transmission. Thus in the Yuan dynasty, hereditary transmission, originally limited to captains of a thousand or ten-thousand, soon become widespread at all levels, high and low, in the decimal hierarchy.<sup>62</sup> There is

<sup>62</sup> *Yuan shi*, 98/3508. Under the Yuan dynasty the importance of hereditary status was accentuated at all levels of society, not just at the top or among the Mongols alone. The late Yuan writer Quan Heng 權衡 in his chronicle *Gengshen waishi* 庚申外史 wrote that 'Sadly, in employing officials, the law of the Yuan dynasty considers only "ancestry" (*genjiao* 根脚). Their ministers who drew up the major policies are all "ancestry" men, those who handle

no reason to believe the Ilkhanate would have been any different. Only in one passage, however, does Rashīd al-Dīn explicitly discuss class and genealogical knowledge, both at the level of the great *ötegü boghol* and of the Mongol 'middle class' soldier:

In the reign of Chinggis Khan and later, there were people [of the Tatars] who became great emirs and obtained high rank, and there were also those who became dignitaries of the kingdom [*mu'tamad al-mulk*] in the *ordo*. To them the custom of *ötegü boghol* was applied. From then on, down to the present, there have been great emirs in every *ordo* and every *ulus*. At times, daughters of Chinggis Khan's family are still given in marriage to them or brides are taken in marriage from among them. In every *ulus* there are also many people from among this tribe who have not become emirs, but still joined the Mongol army; every man among them knows to what branch of the Tatars he belongs.<sup>63</sup>

One may note first that this statement about genealogical knowledge among the Tatars is here placed firmly in the present tense and among the Mongols of the Ilkhanate.<sup>64</sup> Secondly, the Tatars were not a single localized kin-based group, but rather a category embracing families scattered among various courts, appanages, and military units. Finally, just as the great men pre-

censures and recommendations are "ancestry" men as well, and the top men among the officials are also "ancestry" men.' See Funada Yoshiaki 船田善之, trans. Chen Yiming 陈一鸣, 'Semuren yu Yuandai zhidu, shehui-chongxin tantao Menggu, Semu, Hanren, Nanren huafen de weizhi 色目人与元代制度, 社会—重新探讨蒙古, 色目, 汉人, 南人划分的位置', *Mengguxue xinxì* 蒙古学信息, 2, 2003, pp. 7–16 (11); the word for 'ancestry' here, *genjiao*, was a mixed phonetic-translated version of Mongolian *huja'ur* 'root, origin, lineage'. Modern scholars have concurred with Quan Heng's judgment. In his study of provincial Confucians in Fuzhou 撫州 county, Robert P. Hymes writes that 'the Yuan—unlike the Sung—expressly recognized descent as a permanent criterion of formal status: this was an important part of the meaning of the *ju-hu* [儒戶 Confucian households] system'. See his 'Marriage, Descent Groups, and the Localist Strategy in Sung and Yuan Fu-chou', in *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China* (n. 44 above), pp. 95–136, esp. p. 127. The tendency of minor officials in Mongol militia systems to become hereditary is evident also in the much later Mongol divisions of the Eight Banners garrisons in Qing 清 China. The position of company captain (*niru-i janggin* in Manchu; *zuoling* 佐領 in Chinese; *sumun-u janggi* in Mongolian), commanding 300 men, was handed down to direct or collateral male relatives in 69% of the Han Chinese 漢軍 companies, 87% of the Manchu companies, and virtually all of the Mongol ones. See J. D. Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor: Bondservant and Master*, New Haven, 1966, pp. 3–4.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), I, p. 47. Thackston's translation is quite free and I have followed that of Shiraiwa, 'On the *Ötegü Bogol*' (n. 7 above) for the first part and Rashīd al-Dīn, *Sbornik letopisei*, I, 1 (n. 1 above), p. 107, for the second.

<sup>64</sup> Among the successor khans of the Mongol empire, the Ilkhans and Jochids seem to have intermarried with the Tatars more than others; see Atwood, 'Ulus Emirs' (n. 53 above), pp. 170–73 (Tables 3–6) and Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, transl. J. A. Boyle, New York, 1971, pp. 110, 114.



served their hereditary status as *ötegü boghol* and *quda* (marriage partners) of the khans, the Mongol soldiers also remembered their status and origin.

If the various Tatar branches were not residential groups living together, what use did commoners see in remembering this genealogical identity? We can only speculate, based on the placement and context of this passage in Rashīd al-Dīn, that this information was their connection to the founding of Chinggis Khan, and also to their current status in their military units. Not just great commanders, but petty officers as well inherited their status, creating a society-wide need for genealogical memory. Even commoners found self-worth and dignity in their hereditary attachments to particular branches of the imperial family, as we see in this dialogue between the Ögedeid prince Qipchaq and the commoner Jalayirtai of the Jalayir family, in the hereditary service of the Cha'adaid prince Baraq:

"Who art thou, said Qipchaq, "to come between *aqā* and *ini* [elder and younger brothers, esp. Chinggisids]?"

"I am Baraq's servant," replied Jalayirtai, "and not thine for thee to ask me who I am."

"When," said Qipchaq, "has a *qarachū* [commoner] ever argued with the seed of Chingiz-Khan, for a dog like thee to give me an unmannerly answer?"

"If I am a dog," said Jalayirtai, "I am Baraq's, not thine. See to thine own honor and keep to thy place."<sup>65</sup>

## CONCLUSION

While Rashīd al-Dīn did have genuine comparative interests and an ethnographic eye, these interests are subordinate to his commitment to political history, and moreover to political history of a loyalist cast. In his description of the Mongol lineages and genealogical knowledge his first concern is to defend the validity of his own research. Like research on the Arab conquests, this research of Rashīd al-Dīn's depended fundamentally on the accuracy of the imperial race's genealogical memory of itself. As an historian, he had a vested interest in portraying such genealogies as well-preserved and consistent. Secondly, through his use of Mongol texts and his service in the Mongol court, he also adopted the Mongol imperial viewpoint in which all social status was legitimated by tracing the holder's line back to his ancestor's position won in the founding era under Chinggis Khan. His understanding of the Mongols as a league of *noyan* lineages (but para-

<sup>65</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan* (n. 64 above), p. 152; cf. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), III, p. 524.

doxically called *qarachu boghol* 'commoners and slaves', *boghol nekün* 'slaves and servants' or *ötegü boghol*, 'old slaves', etc.) all subordinated to the one imperial *uruq* lineage is not his own creation, but a Mongol vision which he adopted. Yet it is a vision that reflects not the pre-Chinggisid period, but rather the empire itself as it was founded and evolved under Chinggis Khan's successors.<sup>66</sup>

The parallel that Rashīd al-Dīn explicitly draws between the Arabs and the Turco-Mongols as lineage-proud nomads conquerors of Iran reflects a common strategy of subject literati in the Mongol empire, who all drew parallels between the Mongols and the archaic, normative past of their own civilization. As the 1338 inscription in the Yuan dynasty put it,

Even if the present-day Mongol people have not studied letters, every time they say but a word and every time they do a deed, it agrees with the deeds of the ancient sages and wise men [i.e., the writers of the Confucian classics and their commentaries]. If you ask what is the reason, surely it is that they were born by the destiny of Heaven!<sup>67</sup>

Rashīd al-Dīn described Sultan Öljeitü in virtually the same way, as an unlearned man who knew by instinct what the wise and devout knew only from learning.<sup>68</sup> Here in the post-conversion Iranian context, the parallel is not with ancient Confucian wisdom, but ancient Muslim wisdom. This instinctual grasp of the parallel between the Mongols and the early Arabs was adeptly used by Shiite polemicists to advance their cause in Öljeitü's reign as well, arguing that for a non-'Alid to usurp the Caliphate was just the same as a non-Chinggisid usurping the Khanate.<sup>69</sup>

The point of such statements was not merely to flatter the Mongol rulers, but to influence their behaviour. If the Mongol khans internalized this view

<sup>66</sup> This division is strikingly stated in Tazik Aqa's answer when scolded for not capturing the Ögedeid prince Chabat: 'Chabat is *urugh*. How could a commoner like me do battle with him?' See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), III, p. 525. Tatiana Skrynnikova's article, 'Relations of Dominance and Submission: Political Practice in the Mongol Empire of Chinggis Khan', in *Imperial Statecraft* (n. 53 above), pp. 85–115, highlights well how terms we often take as being indicative of lowly status, are really indicating not of slavery but vassalage, and are thus compatible with high powers and privilege. It is unfortunate that she preserves the erroneous readings of *unaghan bo'ol*, etc., taken from the earlier Russian translations of Rashīd al-Dīn, and long since exploded by scholarship (see n. 7 above).

<sup>67</sup> For the Mongolian text, see Cleaves, 'Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1338' (n. 7 above), p. 54 (lines 17–18); cf. pp. 69, 30, pls viii–ix. The word *tngrī* here translated Chinese *tian* 天 'Heaven', but is also routinely translated as the equivalent of 'God' (*allāh*, *theos*, *deus*, etc.) in western Eurasian languages.

<sup>68</sup> See the contribution by Hoffmann in this volume.

<sup>69</sup> See J. Pfeiffer, 'Conversion Versions: Sultan Öljeitü's Conversion to Shi'ism (709/1309) in Muslim Narrative Sources', *Mongolian Studies*, 22, 1999, pp. 35–67 (40–41); *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah*, transl. H. A. R. Gibb, II, Cambridge, 1962, p. 302.

of themselves as always following the ancient wisdom traditions of the subject peoples, then surely they would listen when those same traditions were drawn upon by their advisers for policy guidance.<sup>70</sup> The contrast between his contemporary Iranian Muslims and the ancient wisdom of the family conscious Mongols drawn by Rashīd al-Dīn reflects this same trope of legitimation, just as we see it in his and his predecessor Juwaynī's work: the Mongols, like the conquest-era Arabs, understand the importance of lineage, and hence are natural conquerors. The contrast Ghāzān Khan, and following him, Rashīd al-Dīn, draw elsewhere with the lineage-less Qipchaq rulers of the Mamluk Sultanate is sharp.<sup>71</sup>

In this context, one may say that it is not so much the comparisons with the Arabs which are new and unexpected as those comparisons – safely tucked away in the section on the Tatars – drawn with the Kurds, Shūl, and Franks. Rashīd al-Dīn's implication is that at least *some* Mongols are not the new Arabs, but merely savages. Even more subversive of the overall Arab-Mongol comparison is this line, which is worth quoting again:

It has been the Mongols' custom from ancient times on to keep their origin and genealogy, and *since they have no religious community or religion* in which to instruct as others do, fathers and mothers inculcate into every child that is born their tribe and genealogy. [Emphasis added]

With this passage he signals that, however much the Mongols of his own time may resemble the Arabs, such a resemblance does not extend to the heart of what made the Arab empire special: its religion. If we could be more

<sup>70</sup> See my 'Explaining Rituals and Writing History: Tactics against the Intermediate Class', in *Representing Power in Ancient Inner Asia: Legitimacy, Transmission and the Sacred*, eds I. Charleux, R. Hamayon and G. Delaplace, Bellingham, 2010, pp. 95–129.

<sup>71</sup> See Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium of Chronicles* (n. 1 above), III, p. 646, which reports the following dialogue of Ghāzān Khan with the town fathers of Damascus:

The Padishah of Islam [i.e., Ghāzān Khan] asked them, 'Who am I?' 'You are Shah Ghāzān, son of Arghūn Khan, son of Abāqā Khan, son of Hülegü Khan, son of Tolui Khan, son of Chingiz Khan,' they said. After that he asked, 'Who was Nasir's [i.e., the Mamluk Sultan's] father?' 'Alfi,' they replied. 'And who was Alfi's father?' he asked. All fell silent as they realized that those people had gained the sultanate by accident, not by merit, and they were all slaves of the renowned *urugh* of the Padishah of Islam's ancestor.

As Reuven Amitai has noted, this passage is typical of the hostility with which Rashīd al-Dīn treats the Mamluks; see his contribution in this volume. I would only add that this viewpoint, and the specific criteria upon which it is based, particularly the belief that hereditary status gives merit, and that the world is divided into two types of families, *urugh* or the imperial family, and slaves/vassals, should be sought as much in his internalization of Mongol views as in any individual peculiarity of his intellectual background.

sure about Rashīd al-Dīn's own attitude to Islam and religion, we could be more sure about his attitude to the Mongols' lack of such a distinctive religious revelation. Yet, as the other articles in this volume show, scholarly opinions about Rashīd al-Dīn's attitude to these topics differ dramatically.<sup>72</sup>

Be that as it may, while such a passage may reveal the Iranian historian's own attitude to the Mongols (and perhaps the Arabs as well), it cannot obscure the fact that Rashīd al-Dīn's sources, data, and organization parallel the way history and genealogy were gathered by previous histories of the Arab empire. These parallels, however, work against an interpretation of his material as ethnographic research into the pre-Chinggisid Mongols. Rather it was a by-product of the Mongols' own obsession with retrojecting all status to one's position in the imperial founding. Perhaps against his own views, but quite in accordance with his Mongol sources and informants, everything in his account emphasizes that the lineage-consciousness of the Mongols was not weakened, but on the contrary nurtured and strengthened by the institutions of the empire created by Chinggis Khan. Vladimirtsov described Mongol social history in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as undergoing a social revolution from 'clan-patriarchal relations' to 'feudalism', or as anthropologists like Marshall Sahlins would have put it, from 'tribal society' to 'the state'. But as I have attempted to show here, what he interpreted as pre-state clans were actually institutions integrally related to the state itself. The clan in its hierarchical form was an imperial institution, one only strengthened by the Mongols' adoption of Confucian and Islamic ideas.

<sup>72</sup> As Leigh Chipman has documented in her contribution to this volume, Rashīd al-Dīn in his own lifetime was widely regarded as either a rationalist or a crypto-Jew, or both. Mika Natif, in her contribution to this volume, has built a persuasive case that Rashīd al-Dīn's portrait of Moses bears unmistakable signs of an idealized self-portrait and drew out the implication for his continued Jewish loyalties. Yet Judith Pfeiffer, in her contribution, has emphasized the Islamic nature of his canonization of the Mongol past and Birgitt Hoffmann has cast doubt on the surface meaning of any self reference. The pervasive minimization in his *Ghāzānīd History* of the non-Islamic religious presence at the Mongol court, particularly after the official conversion of Ghāzān Khan in 1295, likewise speaks to his allegiance, at some level, to the principle of excluding non-Muslims from public political life. These apparently irreconcilable views indicate that scholarship has not yet penetrated the veils Rashīd al-Dīn has placed in the way of understanding his inmost beliefs.