

**Between Heaven and History: Zoomorphic Intercession in the *Secret History of the Mongols*
Animals in Mongol Eurasia Workshop**

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Momentous events in the *Secret History of the Mongols* are frequently augured by zoomorphic signs, the barking of dogs, the bellowing of an ox, the alighting of a bird of prey, and so on. Scholars have tended to take the animals that make these signs for tokens of Turko-Mongolian animism (and/or totemism), an aspect of an indigenous, tribal shamanism. This animism, they hold, bears an antiquity so great as to appear timeless. Whereas elsewhere in Eurasia the dictates of evolving civilization have moved peoples away from it, apart from the Mongols and other like peoples in Siberian Northern Asia, animism remains, scholars maintain, among tribal peoples on other continents, and it is with such tribes that Mongolian examples ought to be compared. Integral to such a view is the assumption that zoomorphic signs reflect an ontology comprised wholly of belief, devoid of fact, science, or history. My paper will present an epistemology whereby these animal signs are to be understood in terms wholly scientific, devoid of belief. This science is the science of orientation in space and time, manifest as symmetry between heaven and earth, expressed as allegory, and essential for promulgating government. My paper will demonstrate that, as expressions of Mongolian science, zoomorphic signs do not exist in a vacuum but, rather, manifest a syncretism derived from prevailing orders upon which the Mongols build their own and so bear history.