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CHINGGIS KHAN IN CHINA AND IN THE MUSLIM WORLD:
BETWEEN HERO AND ANTI-HERO¹

Michal Biran*

Chinggis Khan is celebrated as the founding father of the Mongolian people. Yet due to the phenomenal scope of his career and the magnitude of his achievements he is also very much alive in the world's collective memory. This study will not discuss the historical Chinggis Khan, but will follow the evolution of his image in two of the realms he began to conquer- China and the Muslim World – analyzing how it has been shaped and reshaped between the thirteenth and the twenty first centuries. In both realms the image of Chinggis Khan shifts between the conflicting poles of a super hero and an arch enemy. Chinggis remains a powerful political symbol, often with strong religious and cultural overtones, who has been invoked not only for justifying conquests but mainly for legitimizing political power in its different forms. My main argument is that Chinggis's various images in China, the Muslim world and elsewhere were determined mainly due to his changing value for constructing collective political identities of different kinds- universal, dynastic, tribal, and national.

In both China and the Muslim world the arch enemy was soon appropriated as the revered father of local dynasties, acquiring also a religious dimension, Buddhist or quasi Islamic. In the modern period, however, when nationalism replaced dynastic order as the main political ideology, Chinggis Khan became a celebrated national hero in China (and Mongolia) but came back to the villain part, and quite a marginal one, in the world of Islam.

China

Chinggis Khan started the conquest of China, by far the Mongols' most important front. After nearly seventy years of fierce struggle, at least its first stages accompanied by colossal massacres and devastation, his heirs completed the task. The Mongol conquest had been the first time in which the whole Middle Kingdom fell into foreign hands, and several Song loyalists prefer to

* The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

¹ This article is based on my book *Chinggis Khan*, that appeared on the series *The Makers of the Muslim World* (Oxford: Oneworld publications, 2007).

commit suicide rather than serve the barbarian conquerors. But while in certain periods Mongol rule was conceived as a huge trauma, the appropriation of the Mongols in China began very early and in a way is still continuing: due to the incorporation of Inner Mongolia, the most populated part of Chinggis's homeland, into the Chinese polity beginning in the seventeenth century, and further, since more Mongols now live in China than in Mongolia, Chinggis Khan remained a highly relevant symbol in modern and contemporary China, in contrast to his lot in the contemporary Muslim world,

Already in 1263 Chinggis posthumously acquired an imperial status in China. On the eve of the establishment of the Yuan dynasty and the final conquest of south China, Chinggis's grandson, Qubilai Khan, declared himself to be a Chinese emperor and conferred on his grandfather the title of Taizu, the "Supreme Ancestor." Chinggis therefore became the revered father of the western Yuan dynasty, and was placed at the apex of the Chinese world order, as the recipient of the Heavenly Mandate. Chinggis's unprecedented conquests and Qubilai's eventual reunification of China were interpreted as definite proof of their firm grasp of the mandate. Chinggis's political prominence was reinforced by religious belief and practice: Yuan emperors, performed a special ancestral cult for Chinggis Khan and, with the adoption of Tibetan Buddhism, also declared him an incarnation of a Chakravartin (the king who turns the wheel of the Buddhist law), a position he later re-assumed in Mongolia as well.

The Ming dynasty that succeeded the Yuan in 1368, confirmed Chinggis's position as the Yuan founding father, when it wrote the history of the Yuan dynasty (the *Yuanshi*), the first chapter of which deals with Chinggis Khan. It retains Chinggis's Buddhist titles, but stresses his military genius. The chapter is, however, very laconic in the description of the conquests, and mostly ignores the devastation that accompanied them. Its typical Sinocentric point of view also gives more space to the events in China than to the western campaigns. The Ming authors therefore relegated Chinggis from a world conqueror to another non-Chinese who established a Chinese-like dynasty (like the Liao or Jin founders), that ruled for a relatively short period, serving most importantly as a precursor to the Ming. In late Ming, after a series of setbacks inflicted by the Mongols on the Chinese, the Yuan was reinterpreted as a traumatic experience, a historical aberration, when China was ruled by barbarians instead of ruling them, and Chinggis remained in the margins of Chinese historical consciousness.

Chinggis came back into the limelight in China when China was once more conquered from Inner Asia, this time by the Manchus, who overthrew the Ming and established the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The Manchus had spent much of their pre-dynastic period in close proximity to the Mongols, and borrowed from them most of their political culture, including the Chinggisid principle (i.e. the notion that only descendants of Chinggis deserve to be Khans). After subduing the Mongol Chahars, Chinggis's direct descendants, in 1634, the Manchus appropriated their symbols of authority, such as the Chinggisid seal. They married Chinggisid princesses and portrayed themselves as Chinggis's legitimate heirs. The Manchus also adopted Tibetan Buddhism and were therefore able to fashion another type of bond with Chinggis. The Manchu forefathers, Nurgachi (d. 1626) and Hong Taiji (d. 1643), followed by the Qing emperors in Beijing, presented themselves as Buddhist incarnations of Chinggis and Qubilai, thereby stressing their position as Chinggis's true heirs. This Chinggisid facet of Qing complex legitimation was instrumental in facilitating Qing systematic conquest of

Mongolia, which in the mid eighteenth century enabled it to achieve what many Chinese dynasties attempted to do in vain throughout history - to subdue the nomads of Mongolia. The Mongols became part of the five peoples who made up the bulk of the subjects of the Qing dynasty, the others being the Manchus, the Chinese, the Tibetans and the Muslims.

For the Manchus, Chinggis was useful not only for ruling the Mongols but also for governing their Chinese subjects. From the beginning of their imperial enterprise, Nurgachi and Hong Taiji showed great interest in the history of former Inner Asian rulers of China, that they saw as a reservoir of historical lessons. Therefore they especially encouraged the study of the Yuan dynasty, from Chinggis onwards, by both Manchus and Chinese. In the nineteenth century this field was given a boost when Chinese diplomats stationed in Europe acquired second or third hand access to Muslim sources on the Mongols, which they were quick to translate into Chinese and include in later works, thereby broadening the global dimensions of Chinggis's career.

The intense Chinese nationalism of the early twentieth century, initially directed against the Manchus but hostile to any non-Chinese domination, caused the Mongol conquest and the Yuan period once again to be perceived as a first class Chinese trauma, and later to serve as a popular analogy for the Japanese occupation of the 1930s-40s. The very right of the Yuan to rule was questioned, and some historians even suggested that it should be deleted from the Chinese dynastic circle, which should pass directly from the Song dynasty to the Ming.

Ironically, however, at the very time when he was being ousted from his position as Chinese emperor, Chinggis Khan once more became a useful political symbol in China. This was because in the early twentieth century Chinese nationalists were trying hard "to pull on the nation's skin on the imperial body", that is to say, to retain Chinese control over non-Chinese territories occupied by the Qing, which included Inner Mongolia and to which the nationalists also hoped to add Outer Mongolia. The resurrection of Chinggis Khan commenced in the 1930s, during the increasing competition for the control of Inner Mongolia among Chinese nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek and his Nation's Party (the Guomingdang, GMD), Mao Zedong's Communist Party (CCP) and the Japanese occupation forces. In 1935 Chiang Kai-shek was the first to declare Chinggis a Chinese national hero, the first Chinese to conquer Russia; his heirs' long domination over Moscow was taken as a historical precedent for Chiang Kai-shek's ultimate victory over Moscow local extension, the Chinese communist party. In the same year, however, Mao Zedong, told the Mongols of Inner Mongolia that only by fighting together with the communists could the Inner Mongolian nation preserve its glorious Chinggisid heritage. In marked contrast to Soviet communist rhetoric, in which Chinggis Khan was depicted in extremely negative terms, that of the Chinese communist party incorporated Chinggis Khan as a hero.

In 1939, when the Chinese feared a Japanese occupation of all Inner Mongolia, the GMD transferred Chinggis's "relics" from their Ordos shrine eastward, into the province of Gansu. The Communists, however, eventually secured Mongol support, mainly since they promised autonomy to Inner Mongolia, a policy implemented already in 1947 before the Communists' final victory in

1949, which was greatly facilitated by the Mongols' support.²

After the communists' victory, Chinggis's position in the People Republic of China was modified according to the PRC's ideological shifts and its nationalities policy. It began with a honeymoon in the early 1950s when the state reestablished Chinggis's mausoleum in the Ordos, where his relics were stored. Just like the Qing dynasty beforehand, the PRC appropriated the Mongols' cultural capital, and freely manipulated the character of the Chinggis ritual for its needs. This communists' bear hug, which was accompanied by a vast Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia, was unwelcome for many of the Mongols in China, yet even they had to admit that Chinggis's lot was by then much better in China than in outer Mongolia, where his cult was completely forbidden.

Chinggis Khan was briefly relegated to his classical Soviet position of tyrant-warlord in the late 1950s, but his fortunes were restored when the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s turned him into a useful political weapon. Articles in leading Chinese academic journals, while still condemning Chinggis's campaigns in north China, praised his progressive role as the unifier of the Mongolian tribes, the founder of Mongolian statehood, promoter of East-West relations and the one who initiated the reunification of China, and the conquest of Russia. Chinggis's 800th birthday in 1962 was therefore celebrated with great pomp in China- and even in Taiwan- in sharp contrast to its suppression in the People Republic of Mongolia and despite Soviet protests.

Chinggis Khan's restoration in China, however, suffered a new setback during the vicissitudes of the Cultural Revolution (1967-76). The traditional heritage of the Mongols (just like those of the Chinese) was severely attacked, and myriad Mongols who refused to integrate into Han culture were put to death. The Ordos mausoleum was pillaged, some of its relics destroyed. This violence ended, however, with the beginning of reform policy in 1978, under Deng Xiaoping.

The new shift in the minorities policy since the early 1980s, brought about the restoration of Chinggis Khan's mausoleum and the renewal of the annual celebrations there under the banner of "Mongols and Han are one family." Chinese new policy which emphasizes China as a common homeland of all of its 56 nationalities, had a dramatic effect on the re-conceptualization of Chinggis Khan and his heirs. The Mongol conquest is no longer considered as traumatic, or even as foreign rule, but rather as a time during which the Mongolian "minority" ruled over the whole country. Moreover, thanks to its inclusion of Tibetan, Uighurs and Muslims (all of whom are important - and sometimes turbulent- parts of China's contemporary mosaics of nationalities), the Yuan is seen as a key period in the development of China's multi-ethnic identity, a period which contributed decisively to the cohesiveness of the Chinese nation. This new interpretation of history has paved the way for a huge increase in Chinggis Khan's popularity in China since the 1990s, a phenomenon encouraged by his growing fame in Mongolia and the West. This in turn results in a China-Mongolia competition on appropriating Chinggis, manifested, for example, in the race to discover the Khan's tomb or in the Chinese (unsuccessful) attempts to enlarge the Ordos mausoleum.

² Interestingly, the Japanese also took part in the race for appropriating Chinggis. Japanese tradition identified Chinggis Khan with a tragic Samurai, Minamoto Yoshitsune (1158-1189), whose elder brother Yoritomo ordered him to commit suicide, fearing his popularity. The legend says that Yoshitsune let his vassal die for him, while he escaped northward, managed to get into the continent and into Mongolia, where he appeared as Temüjin and eventually became Chinggis Khan.

Nowadays, Chinggis Khan is enjoying the government's favor and is starring as one of China's most prominent national heroes. Chinggis's wax sculpture stands in the National History Museum in Beijing next to the most prominent emperors in Chinese history; he is praised as the first Chinese who conquered Europe, and many books, films and TV series celebrate his achievements, mainly his positive role in unifying the Mongols and enlarging Chinese territories. This successful Chinese appropriation of Chinggis is an impressive testimony to the remarkable ability of Chinese nationalism to transform a national trauma into a national triumph.

The Muslim World:

Chinggis Khan's invasion of the Muslim world was also traumatic, as was the subsequent annihilation of the Abbasid Caliphate, the nominal ruler of the Muslim world for more than 500 years by his grandson Hülegü. Chinggis Khan's first depiction in Muslim literature was that of an arch enemy of Islam, often called the accursed (Arabic: al-mal'un). Grisly descriptions of mass killing and destruction by his troops abound in both contemporary and later Muslim sources, including those written by subjects of his descendants. However, with the islamization of the Mongols in Iran and later in south Russia and Central Asia, and the incorporation of the Chinggisid principle into Muslim political culture, Chinggis Khan also became the revered father of, and a source of political legitimacy to, several Muslim dynasties in the Turco-Iranian world.

The endurance of Chinggisid rulers and concepts in the Muslim world meant that Chinggis Khan did not vanish from the historical literature after the thirteenth century. On the contrary, like Alexander the Great or the Sassanid rulers of pre-Islamic Iran, Chinggis Khan became an integral part of Muslim history, even though he was not a Muslim. Sections devoted to Chinggis Khan and his heirs appear in a large variety of Muslim literary genres from the thirteenth century onward, especially in universal histories but also in many dynastic chronicles, geographical and administrative encyclopedias, religious literature, mirrors for princes, biographical dictionaries and, especially in Central Asia, in epic and popular literature. For this reason Chinggis Khan is also one of the most illustrated figures in Muslim painting, mainly in scenes of either war or enthronement ceremonies.

Moreover, as in the case of the prophet Muhammad, there was a huge increase in "knowledge" about the hero after his death, and the political and religious needs of Chinggisid and even some non-Chinggisid rulers therefore influenced the way Chinggis Khan was depicted in different Muslim contexts.

Chinggis Khan's biography was changed mainly in two directions: a. for explaining the presence of a non Muslim at the apex of Muslim politics; and b. for legitimating the political rule of several dynasties in the Turco-Iranian world.

Unlike Buddhist manipulations, the Muslims did not make Chinggis Khan a Muslim in retrospect. Instead they describe him as either God's tool or as an early monotheist. As god's tool, Chinggis Khan's conquests and the devastation that accompanied them were seen as part of a grand divine plan meant to uplift Islam in the long range, as proved in Islamic expansion under the Mongols. The greatest historian of the Mongols in Persia, Rashid al-Din (d. 1318), beautifully explained this by saying: "The reason God wanted to elevate the might and glory of Chinggis Khan, his

forefathers and ancestors, and his children and offspring and to raise the condition of that family was to strengthen the religion of Islam and propagate the law." (Rashid/Thackston 1998-9: 1:16)

Another means of monotheising Chinggis Khan was to portray him as an early monotheist (hannu) God's friend who naturally grasps the principles of monotheism but was not yet Jewish, Christian or Muslim. To reinforce this image, motives from the biography of the prophet Muhammad were added to Chinggis Khan's biography- and this is probably the origin of the episode, studied by Reuven Amitai, about the Jewish teacher of Chinggis Khan. According to this tradition, retained in the encyclopedia of the Mamluk writer al-Nuwayri (d. 1333) but probably originating in Ilkhanid circles, Chinggis Khan became an ascetic and isolated himself in the mountains. The reason for his asceticism was that he asked a Jew: "What gave Moses, Jesus and Muhammad their exalted position and spread their fame?" The Jew answered that they loved god and devoted themselves to him. When Chinggis Khan asked if the same means would work for him too, the Jew answered positively, adding that the Jewish books predicted that Chinggis Khan would have a victorious dynasty. Hence Chinggis Khan left his iron work and his family and became an ascetic in the mountains. Nuwayri describes him dancing, spinning and receiving pilgrims who came to adore him. He adds that at the same time he did not obey any religion and did not belong to any religious community. He just had love for god, and this was the beginning of his rise (Nuwayri 1984: 27:302; Amitai 2004: 691-705). There were not many Jews in thirteenth century Mongolia, but since the Jews prospected the rise of Muhammad (and Jesus), Chinggis Khan also got his own Jewish teacher.

Other manipulations of Chinggis Khan's biography derive from his role as legitimating the political rule of several dynasties in the Turco-Iranian world. Thus he is described preferring this or that grandson (Hülegü, Qubilai, Shiban, the Uzbek's ancestor). More creative manipulations of Chinggis Khan's biography were required for legitimating non-Chinggisid rulers. Like in the Manchu case, marrying his descendants was a common technique, and instead of Buddhist incarnations, the Muslim used genealogical means, creating a common ancestor somewhere among Chinggis's forefathers, or adding episodes that stress Chinggis's special favor towards (the otherwise marginal) forefather of the current non-Chinggisids ruler. The most famous example for such manipulations is that of Tamerlane in the 14th century, but the same tactics were used even in the 19th century by the Qongirat dynasty which replaced the Chinggisid Uzbeks in Central Asia.

Unlike China, that incorporated Chinggis Khan into its dynastic circle, in the Turco Iranian world the rise of Chinggis Khan was taken as a turning point in Muslim history, second only to the rise of the Prophet Muhammad. Indeed, in term of the prestige of his descendants and his role as the origin of law Chinggis Khan was second only to Muhammad in the post classical Turco-Iranian world. In most of the Arabic world, however, the accursed paradigm was more apparent, although even the Khan's worst critics could not but admire his achievements.

Chinggis retained an especially prominent position in realms in which universal histories were the common historiographical format (e.g. the Timurid realm) or where history was explained in terms of genealogy (e.g. Uzbek and post-Uzbek Central Asia). The shift from universal to strictly dynastic or regional histories led to a decrease in his prominence. Yet the main change in his position came with the rise of nationalism which replaced the dynastic order as the main focus of

identity. While in China (and Mongolia) nationalism made Chinggis Khan a hero, in the Muslim world it marginalized him, taking him back into the villain position: when territory and language replaced dynastic loyalty as major identity makers, Chinggis Khan's position of the revered father was no longer meaningful in the Muslim world. By the new nationalist criteria, he was a complete outsider, a foreigner from far away Mongolia who did not speak any Muslim language, an infidel invader. He was therefore depicted as outsider who wrought havoc and vanished, his impact on the late-medieval Muslim world and the islamization of his heirs utterly denied. He returned to his position of the accursed enemy.

Chinggis Khan's demonization was fuelled also by the fact that Muslim historians were gaining greater access to Occidental - Western European, Russian, Marxist - concepts of Chinggis Khan, which were particularly negative in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and could easily be supported by the medieval Muslim sources, which stressed the great fear that Chinggis Khan's subjects had for him.

The revival of the accursed paradigm and the modern appropriation of Chinggis Khan took a somewhat different form in different Muslim contexts. In the Arab lands the Mongols were grouped together with "the other" Turks, (from the Abbasid Mamluks of the ninth century to the Ottomans) as those who bore responsibility for the Arab's lagging behind the west. The fall of the Abbasid Caliphate signified the beginning of the Arab decline, and Chinggis Khan, Hülegü's grandfather, was condemned as a barbarian savage. Moreover, even as enemies of Islam the Mongols were marginalized vis a vis the Crusaders, whom 19th century Arab writers depicted as the main enemies of Islam, in complete contrast to the medieval reality. The Mongols came back to the frontline of the enemies of Arabs and Islam due to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. The American siege on Baghdad invoked the memory of 13th century atrocities. Accordingly, Arabic internet sites and articles compared George W. Bush with Hülegü, his brother Möngke and with Chinggis Khan himself, and generally compared the Mongols to the Americans, both nations without history who paved their way to world leadership with heaps of skulls and who aspire to annihilate Islamic culture. The American invasion made the Mongols relevant to Islamic conflict with the west, a connection that unlike the crusaders they did not have beforehand.

In the Turco-Iranian world the demonization of Chinggis Khan was more ambiguous, but even in Central Asia where his descendants ruled till the 19th century, the Central Asian republics adopted Russian and Soviet concepts, which depicted Chinggis Khan as a barbarian tyrant and outside invader. As there was no Crusaders' competition in Soviet Central Asia, Chinggis remained the arch enemy of Islam and the cause for Central Asian stagnation. In post-Soviet Central Asia territorial nationalism became much more powerfully pronounced than in the USSR age, and Chinggis Khan therefore remained an outsider, unfit for the role of national hero, especially where local candidates were good enough. Thus Uzbekistan adopted Tamerlane as its hero, ignoring the latter's debt to Chinggis Khan, who is still demonized, while Kazakh's sporadic attempts to use Chinggis's legacy is built not on his genealogical relation to the Kazakh people but on territorial manipulations that claim that Chinggis' real homeland was in Kazakhstan.

Modern dilemmas and manipulations notwithstanding, one should not ignore the important and multi-faceted role of Chinggis in the pre modern Muslim world. The infidel who devastated

Muslim lands became God's intimate friend, the forefather of many Muslim dynasties, a source of legitimation for many others and the progenitor of the political and social order in Central Asia. It is hard to think of any other non-Muslim who won such prominence in the post-Muhammad world or who had received such extensive coverage in Muslim historical and epic literature.

In conclusion: In both China and the Muslim World Chinggis Khan, the cruel conqueror, became the revered father of dynasties and head of the political order, acquiring on the way certain religious overtones, Buddhist or quasi-Islamic. The rise of nationalism which replaced the dynastic order as the world leading political ideology made Chinggis Khan a superhero in China and a marginalized villain in most of the Muslim world. The rise of modern universal, supra-national, political concepts, mainly Communism and globalization, also in turn influenced Chinggis's image and his position as a national symbol, either for worse, in the case of Communism, or for better, in the globalization's case. The changing political circumstances will continue to shape and reshape Chinggis's image in different parts of the world and will keep the father of Mongolia a place of honor in the world's collective memory.

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NO FEAR – DIFFERENT IMAGES OF THE MONGOLS IN THREE MEDIAEVAL HEBREW TEXTS¹

Na'ama O. Arnon*

"Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth. Hear the word of the Lord . . . and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd guards his flock . . . And there is hope in your end, said the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their border." (Jeremiah, chap. 31, vv. 8, 10, 17).

In the sixth century BCE, the Kingdom of Judaea was conquered, the city of Jerusalem destroyed, and most of the Jewish people were exiled, to be scattered in many other lands. Hundreds of years later, in the thirteenth century, the Mongols thundered across the Eurasian steppe and into China and Europe, to create the largest land-based empire known to men. It was then that contact between these two different peoples was made.

In the wide scope of written sources related to Mongol history, the Hebrew sources – written by members of the Jewish communities spread across the lands, both in and out of the Mongols' dominion – form a tiny but unique part. Since these writers were not representatives of a certain ruler, they were less occupied by describing the Mongols as a monstrous enemy, or else by justifying the submission to Mongol rule. The Hebrew texts outline a somewhat unusual image of the riders that came from the steppe, and can therefore make an interesting contribution to the research of Mongol history. In this preliminary article I would like to touch upon one angle of the Mongol-Jewish connection – the Jewish developing view of the Mongols, as outlined by three exemplary Hebrew texts of the time. The first would be the one written where the Mongols had once galloped – in Jerusalem.

* Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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