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The Reception and Management of Gifts in the Imperial Court of the Mongol Great Khan, from the early thirteenth century to 1368

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

Central European University

Budapest

May 2020

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by

Ya Ning

(China)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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External Supervisor

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I, the undersigned, **Ya Ning**, candidate for the MA degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 25 May 2020

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Signature

Abstract

This thesis investigates a pivotal aspect of Mongol court culture, the reception and management of gifts. The spatial and temporal framework is set within the imperial court of the great khans residing in Karakorum and Khanbaliq from the early thirteenth century to 1368. Based on the critical analysis of multilingual written primary sources, Chinese and Latin in original, Persian, Mongolian, and others in translations, as well as visual materials, this thesis presents an inner view of the mechanism and performance of gift-giving in the Mongol imperial court. Methodologically, inspired by the concept "social life of things" and "object biography" developed by cultural anthropologists Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, this thesis sketches three major stages of the biographies of gifts: 1) from where, by whom and what kinds of gifts were sent to the Mongol imperial court, viz. the network of gifts; 2) under what ritual and spatial context, these gifts were presented in the court; 3) after the reception, in what place and under by whom these gifts were kept, based on what rules they were distributed, and in what way there were consumed, in other words, the afterlives of gifts.

In contrast to the traditional scholarship stressing the avarice and excess of the Mongols in demanding gifts, this thesis argues the Mongols practiced a well-set protocol regarding the reception and management of gifts in the imperial court. This protocol was applied in the diplomatic encounters, further embodied in the ritual occasions such as the enthronement of great khan, the birthday celebration of the great khan as well as the New Year's celebration, and attested in the repository, (re-) distribution, and consumption of gifts. Additionally the Mongol *khatuns* notably participated in the reception, distribution and consumption of gifts. Overall, the Mongol court practices of give-giving is a continuation of the centuries-long Central Eurasian court traditions, in terms of power mechanisms, essentially no alien to their counterparts.

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Introduction

In the *History of the World Conqueror*, Juvaini tirelessly told the readers about the generosity and beneficence of Ögedei Khan.[1] Among these records, gift-giving was usually placed on the very center. One of such stories took place as follows:

> When he was on his hunting ground someone brought him two or three water-melons. None of his attendants had any balish or garments available, but Moge Khatun, who was present, had two pearls in her ears like the two bright stars of the Lesser bear when rendered auspicious by conjunction with the radiant moon. Qa'an ordered these pearls to be given to the man. But as they were very precious she said: " This man does not know their worth and value it is like giving saffron to a donkey. if he is commanded to come to the *ordu* tomorrow he will there receive *balis* and clothing". "He is a poor man," said Qa'an, and cannot bear to wait till tomorrow. And whither should these pearls go? They too will return to us in the end." At Qa'an's command she gave the pearls to the poor man, and he went away rejoicing and sold them for a small sum, round about two thousand dinars. The buyer was very pleased and thought to himself: I have acquired two fine jewels fit for a present to the Emperor. He is rarely brought such gifts as these. He accordingly took the pearls to the Emperor, and at that time Moge Khatun was with him. Qa'an took the pearls and said did we not say that they would come back to us? The poor man did not leave us disappointed but gained his end, and the pearls too have come back to us. And he distinguished the bearer with all kinds of favours.[2]

The anecdote itself is of interest on several levels. First, it tells a life biography of a gift, a pair of pearls. Originally as the personal jewelry of the Mongol empress, the pearls were rewarded by the great khan to a certain poor gift-giver for his melons, the latter however sold it, probably to a merchant who tactfully identified the value of the pearls. In the end, the pearls were reused as a gift and sent to the great khan, who returned the jewelry to his beloved wife and gave an even more valuable reward to the merchant. Secondly, several social actors are mentioned, the great khan, the *khatun* (wife of the khan), a poor peasant and

[1] These stories of Ögedei Khan are also inherited and adapted by Rashīd al-Dīn in his *Compendium of Chronicles*. See Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Jami't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles. A History of the Mongols*, Part II, trans. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 334-45. On the pre-Chinggisid inner Asian traditions of wisdom, see Robert Dankoff, "Inner Asian Wisdom Traditions in the Pre-Mongol Period," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101, no. 1, (1981): 87-95.

[2] Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, trans. J. A. Boyle with a new introduction and bibliography by David O. Morgan (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 211-12.

a cunning merchant. There was obviously social distinction and hierarchy among these actors, but the gender aspect can neither be neglected in the gift-giving process. The great khan had the power to dispose but respected the personal belongings of his wives. Finally yet importantly, it reveals some kind of protocol or at least custom of gift-giving in the Mongol court society. Gold and garments usually played the role of rewards while the jewelries were much highly valued. The prediction of the great khan and the speculation of the merchant also signify that the rank of gifts and the custom of gift-giving were perceived and performed in the society. Moreover, the overly excessive rewards from the great khan remind of us that he must have sense of the functions of publicity, propaganda and symbolic competitions in the gift-giving. After all, the virtue of generosity of the ruler was highly praised not only in the Mongol court culture but also shared by the Turkic, Chinese and Islamic courts.[3]

This thesis aims to investigate a pivotal aspect of Mongol court culture, namely, the reception and management of gifts. The spatial and temporal framework of this thesis is set within the court of great khans in Karakorum and Khanbaliq from the early thirteenth century to 1368, from the rising of the Mongols in the Mongolian Plateau to the fall of Yuan dynasty in China. Thus, except for a few cases illustrating a common Mongolian cultural background, the court life in the three western khanates, i.e. the Golden Horde, the Chagataid Khanate and the Ilkhanate, will not be dealt with in this thesis. Generally, studies of gifts and gift-giving can follow three approaches: 1) the materiality of gifts, 2) the ritual of gift-giving, and 3) the power relation and symbolic idea behind the gift-giving practices. What is preferable in this thesis is to integrate the materiality, ritualization and cultural meanings of gifts into the

[3] See the section "*Gifts and Gift-giving in the Traditions of Central Eurasian Court Culture*" below. For the gifts in Islamic contexts, see Ghada Hijjawi Qaddumi trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities: Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuḥaf*, with a foreword by Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Fahmida Suleman, "Gifts and Gift Giving," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia, Volume I*, ed. Josef W. Meri (New York: Routledge, 2005), 295-96; Multiple Authors, "Gift Giving," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gift-giving (accessed on 30 April 2020); Linda Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011); Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London: I. B. Tauris 2016).

narration of their biographies and trace the general pattern of their life cycles in the Mongol imperial court.

Three stages of the biography of gifts will be sketched: 1) from where, by whom and what kinds of gifts were sent to the Mongol imperial court, viz. the network of gifts; 2) under what ritual and spatial context, these gifts were presented in the court; 3) after the reception, in what place and under by whom these gifts were kept, based on what rules they were distributed, and in what way there were consumed, in other words, the afterlives of gifts. This thesis argues, as the dominant Eurasian power in thirteenth and fourteenth century, the Mongols built an extensive exchange network including almost all the political powers at that time, through this network, gifts flows into the imperial court. This protocol was applied in the diplomatic encounters, further embodied in the ritual occasions such as the enthronement of great khan, the birthday celebration of the great khan as well as the New Year's celebration, and attested in the repository, (re-) distribution, and consumption of gifts. The Mongol court practices of give-giving is a continuation of the centuries-long Central Eurasian court traditions, in terms of power mechanisms, essentially no alien to their counterparts. In this Introduction, three issues will be addressed: 1) the scholarship of the studies of gifts and gift-giving; 2) gifts and gift-giving in the traditions of medieval Central Eurasian court culture; and 3) literature review, methodology and sources applied in this thesis.

Studies of Gifts and Gift-giving

Gifts and gift-giving as a research theme in social science, largely owes to the contribution of Marcel Mauss in 1923-1924. In his classic work *Essai sur le don*, by making comparative analysis of potlatch in Northwest America and gift exchange in Melanesia, Mauss formulates his theory of the gift exchange in a way like this: gift exchange is one of the fundamental social principles of archaic societies; the underpinning idea is the reciprocity

which arises from the intermingled character of persons and things in gifts; and since gift contains within itself a part of its giver, this attribute of inalienability also makes gifts distinguished from commodities and gift-giving from other forms of exchange; as a result, the community members have to fulfill the obligations to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. [4] Mauss's work has generated heated discussions among sociologists and anthropologists ever since its publication. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Marshall Sahlins, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jacques Derrida respond to Mauss's thesis from various perspectives. [5] However, it is the works of Annette Weiner that significantly open up new space for gift studies. According to her, gifts and gift exchange should not be merely understood as norms of reciprocity, but be situated within a large social production system in which "the reproduction and regeneration of persons, objects, and relationships are integrated and encapsulated."[6] Hence, gift giving is more and more widely examined as a process of social production, transaction and communication. The boundaries between gifts and commodities, the materiality of objects, gender and gifts, gifts and colonialism, ceremonial performance of gift exchange, and the relations of things and persons become the recent popular themes among sociologists and anthropologists.[7]

[4] Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *L'Année Sociologique* n.s., 1 (1923-24): 30-186; and *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, foreword by Mary Douglas (New York: Routledge, 1990), esp. 3-39.

[5] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), and *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge, 1987); Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," in *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 149-84; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 4-6; Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[6] Annette B. Weiner, "Reproduction: A Replacement for Reciprocity," *American Ethnologist* 7, no. 1 (1980): 71-85, esp. 71; See also Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[7] C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982); Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); James G. Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism Since 1700* (London: Routledge, 1995); Aafke E. Komter, ed., *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); Mark Osteen, ed., *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2002) ; Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Olli Pyyhtinen, *The Gift and Its Paradoxes: Beyond Mauss* (London: Ashgate, 2014).

Historians especially Medievalists discovery Mauss rather lately. According to Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, three decades after the work of Mauss, Philip Grieron firstly explicitly cited Mauss in his commercial history article published in 1959.[8] In 1970s, Aaron Gurevich, Joel T. Rosenthal and Georges Duby were the pioneers in dealing with gifts topics in their studies on medieval social and cultural history.[9] In the past two decades, medievalist's works on gifts have significantly broadened and deepened our understanding of the political, social and religious relations in medieval Europe. The interestingly relevant topics they have developed include: gifts, fiefs and feudalism, donations to religious institutes, prayers as spiritual gifts, gifts and dispute settlement, gifts in the relationship between the living and the dead, gifts and public city life, as indicated by the articles in the three widely cited collections on gifts: *Medieval Transformations. Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context* (2001)[10], *Negotiating the Gift. Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (2003)[11], and *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (2010)[12]. Together with historians working on other period, Medievalists now become a thriving research forces in the gift studies. [13]

[8] Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, "The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach," in *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context*, ed. Esther Cohen and Mayke de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 124-56; Philip Grieron, "Commerce in the Dark Ages: A Critique of the Evidence," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1959): 123-40.

[9] Aaron Gurevich, 'Wealth and Gift-Bestowal among the Ancient Scandinavians," *Scandinavica* 7 (1968): 126–38; Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: Gift Giving and the Aristocracy, 1307-1485* (London: Routledge, 1972); Georges Duby, "Taking, Giving and Consecrating," in *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, trans. H. B. Clarke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 48-57.

[10] Esther Cohen and Mayke De Jong, eds., *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[11] Gadi Algazi et al., eds., *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

[12] Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, eds., *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

[13] See Michael Satlow, ed., *The Gift in Antiquity* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Cecily J. Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Anthony Cutler, *The Empire of Things: Gifts and Gift Exchange between Byzantium, the Islamic World, and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Lars Kjaer, *The Medieval Gift and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Gerd Althoff and Claudia Garnier, eds., "Die Sprache der Gaben. Die Regeln der symbolischen Kommunikation in Europa 1000-1700," Special issue, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 63 (2015); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Meanwhile, scholars begin to reflect the uses and misuses of this originally anthropological concept tools in historical research, and in what ways the works of historians can influence anthropologists in return. In his usually thought-provoking way, Patrick J. Geary brilliantly bridges the disciplinary gaps between anthropology and history. Geary reminds the readers of the intellectual background in which Mauss conceived his theory: Mauss was essentially an "armchair ethnographer", a scholar working on secondary literature in library, without any field experiences either in Northwest America or in Melanesia.[14] Meanwhile, he unveils the underpinning model Mauss, as a European scholar, used to compare with the non-European primitive societies, that is, the role of gifts in Germanic law and literature.[15] These footnotes of Mauss's scholarship are however neglected or at least misread by most of his critics and pros. Thus, Geary exposes a paradox in front of anthropologists and historians: "are they [gift exchange and other social science modeling] rather anthropologists' mental constructs derived from the very European cultural tradition we seek to illuminate, but projected by the anthropologists onto other cultures? Are we really using the other to understand our own tradition, or are we deceiving ourselves with an 'other' that was really us all along?"[16] As we will see below, this paradox also appeared among the earlier quasi-anthropological observations of Latin visitors, who could not or were not willing to understand the Mongol courtly practice of gift giving in its own tradition.

Gifts and Gift-giving in the Traditions of Central Eurasian Court Culture

Gift-giving as an integrated part of the Medieval Central Eurasian court life was meticulously arranged as a scene of the courtly theatres. The materiality of the gifts was interweaved and supplemented with the carefully prepared vocal speech, spatial designation

[14] Patrick. J. Geary, "Gift Exchange and the Social Science Modelling: the Limitations of a Construct," in *Negotiating the Gift*, 131.
[15] Geary, "Gift Exchange," 131.
[16] Geary, "Gift Exchange," 131.

and acts of performance. This theatricality of gift-giving is especially represented in the diplomatic occasions. In order to get better understands of the Mongol court practices of gifts and gift-giving, it is necessary to retrospect the traditions of pre-Chinggisid Eurasian court culture. Among these traditions, two of them should be highlighted: one is the Central Eurasian[17] or Altaic tradition, in which the polity and society of the Mongols conceived and developed in the Mongolian Plateau; another is the Chinese tradition, which the Mongols modeled and inherited after their conquest of the Jurchen Jin and the Southern Song dynasty and established their own one. Meanwhile, the two traditions, as we will see below, are interacted, co-evolved and shared in many aspects.

Scholars working on Central Eurasia tend to argue that pre-Chinggisid Central Eurasian court culture shared notable similarities. After extensively investigated the cases from Xiongnu, the European Huns, Avars and Hephthalites, the Türks, the Uighurs, the Qarluqs, the Oghuz, the Kimeks, the Qïrghïz, the Khazars, and the Volga Bulghārs, the outstanding Turkologist Peter Golden convincingly reveals that: these rulers similarly held court in large tents or wooden halls in which there were conspicuous decoration with gold; a rigid seating order existed both for subjects and visitors; conspicuous consumption of food and alcohols; royal women enjoyed relatively high status; and envoys must undergo purification rituals before being admitted to the imperial court.[18]

[17] "Central Eurasia" is a term elaborated by the renowned Hungarian scholar Denis Sinor first in 1940s and 1950s. According to him, "Central Eurasia" refers to the immense areas surrounded by Europe, the Semitic civilization, Iran, India and China, which in spite of heterogeneity in natural, social and economic, linguistic and cultural conditions, remains a convergent historical unit in the course of time, therefore presents a basic distinction with its sedentary neighbors. See Denis Sinor, "Central Eurasia," *Orientalism, and History*, ed. Denis Sinor, 2nd edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 93-119; reprinted in *Inner Asia and its Contacts with Medieval Europe* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977). Currently, "Central Eurasia" and "Inner Asia" are interchangeably used by scholars, as the titles of the prestigious Cambridge volumes *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (1990) and *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: the Chinggisid Age* (2009) indicate.

[18] Peter Golden, "Courts and Court Culture in the Proto-urban and Urban Developments among the Pre-Činggisid Turkic Peoples," in *Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life*, ed. D. Durand-Guedy (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 21–73, esp. 58-59.

As for the medieval Chinese dynasties, the gift exchanges with foreign political entities were formally included into the so-called Chinese tribute system. The common exchanged gifts in this system were horses, gemstones and exotica from the nomads in return of silks and other precious textiles, and these gift-exchanges often acted as a prelude to the larger scale commercial activities, the so-called silk/tea-horse trade.[19] This system, as Zhaoguang Ge rightfully points out, was ideologically based on the Confucius word view of All-under-Heaven (*Tianxia* 天下): China was held to be situated at the center of the world, and due to this consciousness of the Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo* 中國), all the diplomatic corps from foreign political entities were regarded as paying tribute and were received in meticulously designed courtly rituals.[20] This China-centered model of interpretation was furtherly elaborated by the prominent Sinologist John King Fairbank in 1960, in a way that for decades the paradigm of Sinicization dominated the western scholarly understanding of relations of China and the steppe world.[21] Only in the past two or three decades, with the rediscovery of the work of Owen Lattimore, the Inner Asian dimensions of Chinese history were gradually revealed. The initiative of the nomads is gradually acknowledged that two alternative models take into shapes. As Nicola Di Cosmo summarizes, one is the functionalist approach that stresses the lack of self-sufficiency of nomadic economy and its dependency on the agricultural zones, for the nomads plunder, tribute, and trade all acted as the forms of extortion to meet this economic need; the other is the co-evolutionist model, which states that the social organization and political cohesion of the nomads and Chinese were developed

[19] On the horse-silk/tea trade in Chinese history, see Christopher I. Beckwith, "The Impact of the Horse and Silk Trade on the Economies of T'ang China and the Uighur Empire: On the Importance of International Commerce in the Early Middle Ages," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 34, no. 3 (1991): 183-98; Morris Rossabi, "The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia during the Ming," *Journal of Asian History* 4, no. 2 (1970): 136-68; James A. Millward, "Qing Silk-Horse Trade with the Qazaqs in Yili and Tarbaghatai, 1758-1853," *Central and Inner Asian Studies* 7 (1992): 1–42.

[20] Zhaoguang Ge, *What is China: Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, trans. Michael Gibbs Hill (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2018), 19-20.

[21] John King Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. J. K. Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 1-19; J. K. Fairbank and S. Y. Têng, "On the Ch'ing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6, no. 2 (1941): 135-246.

in a co-evolved manner, and they acted as separate yet competing systems to obtain a higher economic and military position. [22] In this line, the former received wisdom of the domination of Chinese dynasties in gift exchanges with the nomads are reconsidered.

In recent years, Jonathan Karam Skaff challenges the China-centered paradigm in an even more thoroughly way. In his pioneering studies on the connected history of Sui-Tang China and Turko-Mongol people, Skaff argues that "the Sinic zone of Chinese textual culture was nested inside a broader 'Eastern Eurasian' region of political and diplomatic uniformities, which in turn was contained within a wider 'Eurasian' sphere via links with South Asia, West Asia, and Byzantium."[23] According to him, a similar protocol of diplomatic rituals was astonishingly shared among Tang China, Turkic Khanate, Byzantine and Sasanian Persia. The protocol includes: 1) gift and correspondence exchanges, 2) creation of splendidly decorated courts, in which audiences, meetings and banquets took place, 3) display of status ranking of courtiers and diplomats in seating arrangements, 4) paying obedience to the monarch, and 5) lavish feasts. [24]

This tendency to emphasize the general uniformity of diplomatic ritual across the medieval Eurasian world, get positive echoes from scholars working on the western Eurasian part. Walter Pohl studies the court culture of Huns and Avars, the Western Turkic Khanate, and the Mongols based on Greek and Latin diplomatic reports.[25] He argues that these descriptions did not emphasize the exotic, bewildering or incomprehensible aspects of the barbarian court life, rather the intense interaction between the Barbarian rulers and the envoys within words, gestures, symbols, gifts, threats, and commands were quite familiar to them.[26]

[22] On scholarship of the theories of ancient China-Steppe relations, see Nicola Di Cosmo, "China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective," in *Complexity and Interaction along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millennium CE*, ed. Jan Bemmann and Michael Schmauder (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2015): 49-72.
[23] Jonathan Karam Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power and Connections, 580-800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2012), 7.
[24] Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors*, 148-55.
[25] Walter Pohl, "The *Regia* and the *Hring*: Barbarian Places of Power," in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. M. de Jong, F. Theuws and C. van Rijn (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 439-466.
[26] Ibid., 464-66.

In the multi-authored chapter titled "courtly cultures" in the fifth volume of *The Cambridge World History* (2015), Patrick J. Geary and his colleagues stressed equally the shared classic tradition and the evolving convergence of court practices across Eurasia.[27] They first establish a genealogy of the various court traditions: Han China and the Roman Empire were the paradigmatic court traditions for East Asia and Western Eurasia separately. The former set the model for Japan and others, the latter influenced Byzantine court, the papal court, and the courts of Western barbarian successor kingdoms, while the Islamic courts inherited from the Roman tradition, the Sasanian Persia as well as Ancient India.[28] Then they furtherly demonstrate that the Medieval Eurasian courts were involved in a Eurasian system of exercising and representing of power, in which the courts play various roles: centers of intense competition, stages of practicing courtly etiquette, and sites of cultural production, consumption and ritual.[29] According to them, these Eurasian courts were never isolated from each other, but rather keeping borrowing practices and values from other court cultures, the reception of ambassadors, and the circulations of precious gifts and commodities were the pivotal links to these courts.[30]

In sum, whether focusing on shared classic traditions, or the evolving convergence due to the exchanges of envoys and gifts, more and more scholars have agreed that the medieval Eurasian courts were connected and engaged. Gift exchange formed an integrated part and well embodied in a largely shared Eurasian diplomatic ritual system, which also included the parts of arranging seating order, paying submission and holding feasts. Meanwhile, gifts and tributes were often intermingled and not easily to be differentiated, their distinctions more depended on the mutual perceptions of the giver and recipient. These

[27] Patrick J. Geary et al. , "Courtly Cultures: Western Europe, Byzantium, the Islamic World, India, China, and Japan, 500-1500," in *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 5*: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500 CE–1500 CE*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar, Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 179-205.
[28] Ibid., 179.
[29] Ibid., 201.
[30] Ibid., 201.

connected Eurasian court traditions as we will see deeply influenced the Mongol court practices.

Literature Review, Methodology and Sources

Gifts and gift-giving in Mongol imperial court culture is a research field under development. To date, no comprehensive monographs has been dedicated to this specific topic.[31] The previous researches either focus on the perception of gift-giving culture of the Mongol court society by the western visitors, or regard the Mongol court practices as a unique Asiatic and nomadic phenomenon of gift economy, which is essentially alien to other societies. A.J. Watson argues that the success of William of Rubruck was largely owing to his good understanding of the Mongol and Inner Asian customs of gift-giving, thus the status of Rubruck was elevated by his appropriate gifts.[32] On the contrary, John of Carpini, the protagonist in the article of Adriano Duque, prepared not quite well for his mission. When he finally arrived at the court of Güyük, Carpini brought no presents for the great khan. Instead, complaints about the avarice of Mongols frequently recurred under his pens.[33] Geraldine Heng conceptualizes the gift-giving in Mongol court society as a part of Asiatic gift economy. According to her, gift-giving was the fundamental principle to maintain the unity of different clans in the Mongolian society. Meanwhile, the social hierarchy was represented and negotiated through the deeds of gift-giving.[34] Claudia Garnier makes an excellent overview of the intercultural gift exchanges between Europeans and Mongols in the thirteenth century.

[31] There are several studies in the context of Islamic Ilkhanate, see Donald P. Little, "Diplomatic Missions and Gifts Exchanged by Mamluks and Ilkhans," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 30-42; Leon Volfovsky, "*Animals in the Gift Exchange Diplomacy of the Ilkhanate (1260-1335)*"(MA thesis, University of Hebrew, 2019).

[32] A. J. Watson, "Mongol Inhospitality, or How to do More with Less: Gift Giving in William of Rubruck's Itinerarium," *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011): 90–101.

[33] Adriano Duque, "Gift Giving in the Carpini Expedition to Mongolia, 1246-1248," in *Remapping Travel Narratives, 1000-1700: To the East and Back Again*, ed. Montserrat Piera (Arc Humanities Press, 2018), 187-200.

[34] Geraldine Heng, "Mongol Women, the Asiatic Gift Economy, and Mongol Political Alterity," in *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 298-311.

She identifies three forms of gifts in the Mongol court, namely, payment, tribute and the diplomatic gifts in a narrow sense. Her conclusion is that although Carpini and Rubruck could not fully sense the social-political meanings and importance of gifts in the Mongol court, gifts function quite well during their intercultural contacts with the Mongols.[35]

A noticeable feature of these studies is that they concentrate on the Latin reports of John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck. The travelogue of Marco Polo has not been fully used, let alone the related Mongolian, Persian and Chinese sources which can provide an internal view of the Mongol courtly practice. It turns out that the readers cannot get an internal view of the gifts and gift-giving practices in the Mongol imperial court. Some basic issues, for instance, the components of the gifts, the identifications of the gift presenters, and the procedures of transportation and reception of the gifts, have not been adequately discussed. Meanwhile, these studies are insufficient in critical reading of the western missionary reports and situating them both in the context of gift-giving culture of the observers and the observed. That is, the context of medieval European and Central Eurasian courtly practices of gift-giving. The general practice of gift-giving in Central Eurasian court can be especially useful both as reference points and analogies when dealing with the Mongol courtly practice. Therefore, a balanced perspective based on critical analysis of multilingual sources and a comparative perspective of Eurasian courtly practices, are needed for understanding of the inner mechanism and external performance of gift-giving in the Mongol imperial court. I hope that my thesis could partly move forward into that direction.

The main methodology adopted in this thesis is the biographical research of objects, i.e. sketching the "social life of things" from their production, circulation to consumption.[36]

[35] Claudia Garnier, "Gabe, Macht und Ehre: Zu Formen und Funktionen des Gabentauschs in den Beziehungen zwischen Mongolen und Europäern im 13. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbücher fur Geschichte Osteuropas* 63 (2015): 47-68.

[36] For useful theoretical surveys, see Angela M. O'Rand and Margaret L. Krecker, "Concepts of the Life Cycle: Their History, Meanings, and Uses in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 16 (1990): 241-62; Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects," *World Archaeology* 31, no.2 (1999):

The idea that objects have a social life, was first proposed by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in his edited volume *The Social Life of Things* in 1986. Based on critical reflections of the theory of Karl Max and Georg Simmel, Appadurai argues in a manner of syllogism: "economic exchange creates value; value embodied in the commodities that are exchanged; the broadly construed politics creates the link between exchange and value and enlivens commodities."[37] Then he furtherly points out that things at different points of their social lives can be situationally characterized as commodity. This commodity situation includes three ingredients: commodity phase, commodity candidacy, and commodity context.[38] By focusing on the things in exchange rather than the forms or functions of exchange as the earlier generation of anthropologist like Mauss did, Appadurai provides a new agenda to engage persons with things and the social interactions during these transactions. In the same collection, Igor Kopytoff approaches the same issue from a slightly different angle. If Appadurai reminds us of the long neglected things themselves, then Kopytoff's emphasis is on the cultural contexts and meanings that the things experience and are endowed with during their different stages of biography. As Kopytoff proposes, the production, exchange and consumption of the things should be examined as a whole within the chain of events that shape them. [39]

Inspired by the theory of Appadurai and Kopytoff, my thesis will particularly pay attention on the materiality of objects, and the politics or cultural contexts of exchange when analyzes gifts and gift-giving in the Mongol imperial court. It should be noted that not every stage of a specific gift can be equally traced, instead three general stages of their biography

169-78; Janet Hoskins, "Agency, Biography and Objects," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, eds. Christopher Tilley et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 74-84; Karin Dannehl, "Object Biographies: from Production to Consumption," in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), 123-38.

[37] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 3.

[38] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction," 13.

[39] Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things*, 66-67.

will be sketched. In the first place, the origins and varieties of gifts in the Mongol imperial court will be investigated through the establishment of gift network in the Mongol empire. The analysis of the presenting of gifts and its spatial and ritual environment come thereupon in the second chapter. After the reception of gifts, the agency and mechanism of the repository, distributing, and consumption of the gifts will be in discussion in the last chapter. Meanwhile, since this thesis deals with gifts, a politically and culturally heavy-loaded type of objects, whose role of negotiating status and hierarchy, communicating homage and reciprocity, and expressing prestige and identity will be addressed when drawing their biographies.

The primary sources used in the thesis include both written and visual materials. The written sources can be classified into two categories. The first type is the reports and travelogues produced by the emissaries and merchants who visited the court of Mongol great khan. These foreign visitors were particularly attentive on their same-kind of embassies and the gifts presented to the Khan. Many of them, such as John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck, Marco Polo, and Odoric of Pordenone were even luckily enough to witness great ceremonies in the Mongol court, wherein gift-giving constituted as a great part. Moreover, some of these visitors themselves carried gifts for the great khan. Some of the gifts, for instance, from Andrew of Longjumeau and from John of Marignolli are well recorded in multiple written and visual sources. Therefore, it is possible to trace their nearly whole life stages in case studies. The second kind of sources was compiled either by Mongols themselves or based on the information of the inner circles of the Mongol court. The *Secret History of the Mongols*, *History of the World Conqueror* by Juvaini, the *Jami't-Tawarikh* of Rashīd al-Dīn, and the Chinese official dynastic history *Yuan Shi* are among them. These inner perspectives are much more detailed in the attitudes towards the gifts from the Mongol side as well as the afterlives of gifts received in the Mongol imperial court. Chinese sources

are especially vital that provide the main information of the biographies of Mongol great khans and Yuan Chinese emperors as well as their diplomatic records with other Mongol khanates and vassal polities. They facilitate us tracing both the diachronic changes and the synchronic diversities of Mongol courtly gift-giving practices in dealing with different diplomatic partners. By making full use of Chinese sources as well as western and other oriental sources, I hope my thesis can present a more balanced image of Mongol court practices of gift-giving to the readers.

Chapter 1 – Network of Gifts

The chapter one situates the gifts and gift-giving within the Mongol imperial diplomatic network. Since Temüjin was acknowledged as "Genghis Khan" in the *quriltai* (or council of notables) of 1206, within half a century, the Mongols built the largest contiguous empire in world history. Although the united Empire was somehow dissolved after the death of Möngke Khan in 1259, the great khan, who also acted as emperor of the Yuan dynasty since 1271 held the nominal suzerainty over the other Mongol western khanates. The communications among these Mongol khanates and with those adjoining non-Mongol powers were never totally interrupted. Meanwhile, along with the overland expansion, the Mongol empire linked several maritime areas. This maritime attribute is well represented by those marine products such as walrus, narwhal ivories and pearls circulated as gifts in the Mongol imperial court.[40] In this regard, the court of Great Khan not only acted as the center of Eurasian political and diplomatic activities but also the hub of material exchanges network. Within the Mongol imperial network, two levels of gifts exchange can be identified: the exchanges between Mongol empire and its neighboring entities, and the gift-giving between the great khan and the khans from three brotherly yet subordinated western khanates. After tracing the building process of the Mongol imperial gift network and its levels, the varieties of gifts and their symbolic meanings will be briefly presented in this chapter.

[40] On walrus and narwal ivory as commodities and gifts in the Central Eurasia, see Berthold Laufer and Paul Pelliot, "Arabic and Chinese Trade in Walrus and Narwhal Ivory," *T'oung-Pao* 14, (1913): 315-70; [Yihao Qiu] 邱軼皓, "骨咄新考: 對內陸亞洲物質交流的一個考察" [A new study on *Guduo*: an aspect of the material exchanges across the Central Eurasian world], *Shehui Kexue Zhanxian* 2 (2018): 129-42. On the role of pearls in the socioeconomic and political culture of the Mongol empires, see Thomas T. Allsen, *The Steppe and the Sea: Pearls in the Mongol Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

Expansion

The rising and expansion of Mongol Empire in the thirteenth century is a key event that shape the main course of Eurasian and world history. For the first time, from the Western Pacific ocean to the East Mediterranean Sea, from the South Chinese Sea to the Siberian forest area, a united administrative, communicative and commercial network took shape. The process of the Mongol expansion can be roughly divided into three stages:[41]

1) The first stage covers from 1206 to 1220, from Genghis Khan found the Mongol state to the conquest of Khwarezmia in 1220. The latter event is significant in the sense that it was the first Islamic state the Mongols had conquered, and the follow-up armies led by Sübe'etei and Jebe crossed over the Caucasus Mountains and defeat Russian-Qipchaq force at the battle of Kalka River in 1223. The door with the Islamic world and the far west was opening in front of the Mongols. Meanwhile, as it will be discussed below, the Mongol ideology of world-domination took shape after it.

2) The second stage of expansion covers from 1221 to 1259, the reign of Ögedei Khan (r. 1229–41) and Möngke Khan (r. 1251–59) witness the heyday of Mongol conquest. Under Ögedei Khan, in the east, the Jin dynasty was conquered in 1234, and the Koryŏ Korea was forced to make peace in 1239. In the west, the great western campaign led by Batu subjugated Volga Bulgaria and the Rus', ravaged Poland and Hungary, and penetrated into the Balkans. In the Middle East, a full-scale conquest of the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia began in 1236. Under Möngke Khan, the war with the Song dynasty entered into a new stage, with its neighboring states Tibet and Dali were conquered one after another. In the Middle East, Hülegü overthrew the Abbasid Caliphate at Baghdad in 1258.

3) The third stage lasts from the death of Möngke Khan in 1259. After the succession struggle between Kublai and Ariq Böke (1260-64), the Berke–Hulagu war (1262), and the

[41] On the history of Mongol conquest, see J. J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

Kaidu–Kublai war (1268-1301), the united Mongol empire dissolved. Yet the expansion in each Mongol khanates continued. Kublai sent armies to attack Japan and Southeast Asia, the Golden Horde kept intervening in the East European and the Balkan issues, and the Ilkhanate waged wars with the Mamluk Egypt.

Various scholarly explanations have been given for the initiation of the continuous Mongol expansion. Some scholars focus on the lack of self-sufficiency of nomadic economy, their wars with the agricultural zones aimed to acquire booties and tributes.[42] Other scholars suggest that the rise of the steppe empires and the Mongol empire in particular, was the response to the power growth of the adjourning sedentary polities.[43] Recently, Nicolas di Cosmo and his colleagues analyze the historical climatological data and reveal that dry climatic conditions from the 1180s to the early thirteenth century accelerated the political instability in Mongolia and facilitated the rise of Genghis Khan.[44] Nevertheless, the consequences from the Mongol expansion are much clearer: the largest contiguous empire in world history appeared in the middle of the thirteenth century. Due to its unique system of appanages, soldier recruitment, spoil distribution, as well as the favorable attitudes of Mongols towards commercial activities and tolerance in religious practices, enormous flows of personnel, species, commodities, and ideas were through the Mongol imperial network.[45] Such an exchange, as Timothy May puts it, is comparable to the *Columbian Exchange* between the Old Continent and newly discovered America after the 1492 voyage of

[42] Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 187-228.
[43] Peter Turchin, "A Theory for Formation of Large Empires," *Journal of Global History* 4, no.2 (2009): 191-217.
[44] Neil Pedersona, et al., "Pluvials, Droughts, the Mongol Empire and Modern Mongolia," *PNAS* March 25, 2014 111 (12): 4375-79, accessed May 10, 2020, doi: 10.1073/pnas.1318677111.
[45] Michal Biran, "The Mongol Transformation: From the Steppe to Eurasian Empire," in *Eurasian Transformations, Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries: Crystallizations, Divergences, Renaissances*, ed. Johann P. Arnason and Bjorn Wittrock (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 339-61; and "The Mongol Empire and Inter- civilizational Exchange," in *Cambridge World History*, V. *Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500 CE – 1500 CE*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry E. Wiesner- Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 534-58.

Christopher Columbus, and it can be coined as the *Chinggis Exchange*.[46] Our discussion of the gift exchanges in the Mongol imperial court must be situated within this grand picture.

Behind the expansion lies the unique Mongol ideology of word-dominion. Scholars from earlier generations propose that the Mongol rulers instinctively believed that they ruled in the strength from *Tenggeri* (or Heaven) and were endowed with the mandate to dominate the whole world.[47] This stagnant image has been challenged in recent decades. Scholars like David Morgan and Peter Jackson suggest that the Mongol rules came to believe in this mandate of world-dominion only after the conquest of Khwarezmia in 1220, while its open expression as imperial ideology would be twenty years later in 1240s.[48] In practice, the Mongols were much more pragmatic than acknowledged. Military conquest was not the only method to reach their goals. The Mongols possessed various tool kits to deal with different counterparts. For instance, the Mongol was once in alliance with the Song dynasty during the wars against the Jurchens.[49] Another notable example is the relationship between the Yuan dynasty and the Koryŏ Korea. The Kings of the latter were the only non- Turco-Mongol rulers who enjoyed the privilege to marry the daughters of the great khan.[50] Additionally, as

[46] Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), Part II: The Chinggis Exchange; and "The Chinggis Exchange: the Mongol Empire and Global Impact on Warfare," *World History Connected* 12, no. 1 (2015), accessed May 10, 2020, https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/12.1/forum_may.html.

[47] Igor de Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks on the Ideological Foundations of Chingis Khan's Empire," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 7 (1973): 21-36; Klaus Sagaster, "Herrschaftsideologie und Friedensgedanke bei den Mongolen," *Central Asiatic Journal* 17 (1973): 223-42; Anatoly M. Khazanov, "Muhammad and Jenghiz Khan Compared: The Religious Factor in World Empire Building," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 3 (1993): 461-79.

[48] David O. Morgan, "The Mongols and the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. Benjamin Arbel et al. (London: Routledge, 1989), 198-211; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 45–47. An updated discussion, see Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6-63.

[49] The mission sent from the Song dynasty to Mongols includes Zhao Gong in 1221, Peng Daya in 1232, and Xu Ting in 1235-36. Their diplomatic reports see Peter Olbricht and Elisabeth Pinks, ed. and trans. *Meng- Ta pei- lu und Hei Ta shih- lueh: Chinesische Gesandtenberichte uber die fruhen Mongolen 1221 und 1237* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1980).

[50] See George Qingzhi Zhao, *Marriage as Political Strategy and Cultural Expression: Mongolian Royal Marriages from World Empire to Yuan Dynasty* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 179-208.

the next section will show, gift exchange is also one of the tools to maintain the Mongol imperial order.

Consolidation

As with the territorial expansion, set of rules regarding the status and mutual obligations between the Mongols and their conquered states took shape. Essentially, the Mongols took different measures to govern these lands depending on their relations with the central government. Scholars have well studied the hierarchical nature of the Mongol imperial network. Byong-ik Koh addresses that there were three patterns of conquest and rule by the Mongols, namely the direct rule on the lands conquered from the Jurchen, the Song dynasty, Uyghurs, and Khwarezmia by the central government, the indirect rule on the lands which were later conferred to the members of the Chinggisid house, and the tributary subordinate nations.[51] Ch'i-ch'ing Hsiao provides a more nuanced fourfold classification based on the historical sociology of Max Webber. According to him, the Mongol domination in Jurchen, the Song dynasty, Uyghurs, and Khwarezmia was a centralized bureaucratic rule; the lands of the Chinggisid family was a form of patrimonial-feudal rule; the indirect rule was applied in the Goryeo Korea and the lands of Uyghurs before the rising of Qaidu; and those lands submitted to the Mongols before the military conquest can be counted as tributary states.[52] In fact, Hsiao makes a more nuanced division of the lands submitted to the Mongols peacefully or not, yet regarding their status after incorporated into the Mongol diplomatic network, such an epistemological division is not very relevant for us. Therefore, in this section, the diplomatic network of Great Khanate with the tributary states and with the other three Mongol khanates will be under investigation.

[51] Byong-ik Koh, "Patterns of Conquest and Control by the Mongols of the 13th Century," in *Proceedings of the Third East Asian Altaistic Conference, August 17-24, 1969, Taipei, China*, ed. Chieh-hsien Ch'en and Jagchid Sechin (Taipei: The Third East Asian Altaistic Conference, 1970), 154-63.

[52] [Ch'i-ch'ing Hsiao] 蕭啟慶, 內北國而外中國: 蒙元史研究 [Studies on Mongol-Yuan history] (Bejing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 769, footnote 3.

The Mongols issued the conditions of submission first and most in their ultimatums. The Mongol ideology of world conquest, the causes of offense, and several specific articles of submission are the conventional components of these edicts.[53] These ultimatums are expected to be strictly observed by the addressees, otherwise, they would face bloody conquest and punishment. The first recorded ultimatum sent by a Mongol Great Khan, according to Peter Jackson, was from Ögödei to the Saljuq sultan of Rūm in 1236. In this letter, the Mongols claim that the whole earth's face is granted to the Mongols by God, anyone who violates this and resist to surrender peacefully shall be severely punished by the impending Mongol armies.[54] In Europe, Dominican Julian of Hungary obtained the first precise information on the Mongols in 1237. He was then on a mission of seeking for the *Magna Hungaria*, homeland of the Magyars. In this ultimatum, the Mongol ruler blames the Hungarians for killing their envoys and providing asylum for the Cuman refugees.[55] The most widely circulated letter from the Mongol Great Khan in Europe was the ultimatum carried back by John of Plano Carpini in 1247, as reply to the letters from Pope Innocent IV. Güyük Khan demands the submission of Pope, the head of all European princes as understood by the

[53] For the ultimatums of the Mongol empire, see Eric Voegelin, "The Mongol Orders of Submission to European Powers, 1245–1255," *Byzantion* 15 (1940-1941): 378-413; Jean Richard, "Ultimatums mongols et lettres apocryphes: l'Occident et les motifs de guerre des Tartares," *Central Asiatic Journal* 17 (1973): 212-22; Peter Jackson, "World-Conquest and Local Accommodation: Threat and Blandishment in Mongol Diplomacy," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honour of John E. Woods*, ed. J. Pfeiffer and Sh. A. Quinn, in collaboration with E. Tucker (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 2006), 3-22; Denise Aigle, "From Non-Negotiation to an Abortive Alliance: Thoughts on the Diplomatic Exchanges between the Mongols and the Latin West," in *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality. Studies in Anthropological History* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 159-98.

[54] Jackson, "World-Conquest and Local Accommodation," 6–7; Herbert W. Duda, *Die Seltschukengeschichte des Ibn Bībī* (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1959): 194-95.

[55] Scholars have not reached consent with the authorship of this letter. Denis Sinor argues for Batu, Peter Jacskon considers Ögödei, while Denise Aigle holds that it was promulgated by Ögödei but relayed by Batu, see the discussion in Denise Aigle, "From Non-Negotiation to an Abortive Alliance," 162. Latin text of the letter in Heinrich Dörrie, " Drei Texte zur Geschichte der Ungarn und Mongolen: Die Missionsreisen des fr. Julian OP. ins Uralgebiet (1234/5) und nach Rutland (1237) und der Bericht des Erzbischofs Peter über die Tartaren," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* 6 (1956): 178. English translation in Denis Sinor, "Diplomatic Practices in Medieval Inner Asia," in *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times. Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, eds. C.E. Bosworth, Ch. Issawi and R. Savory (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1989), 344; and Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 60–61.

Mongols, by personally coming and serving in the imperial court.[56] In a letter carried back by Andrew of Longjumeau in 1251, Oghul Qaimish, the regent and wife of the late Güyük, likewise ordered Louis IX to send gold and silver as tribute annually. [57]

The obligations imposed by the Mongols on their vassal polities are most explicitly expressed in the ultimatum issued by Kublai in 1267 to Annam, a state based on today's Vietnam. These articles are: (1) the ruler must come personally to the Mongol imperial court, (2) sons or younger brothers must be offered as hostages in the court, (3) the population must be registered, (4) military units are to be raised, (5) taxes must be sent in, and (6) a Mongol *darughachi* (or governor) must be appointed to take charge of all affairs.[58] If the first two demands should be better understood as obligation of political subordination, then last four demands are definitely the core of the Mongol client system. As Thomas Allsen rightfully points out, what the Mongols desired is not only an acknowledgement of military defeat and political subordination, but also to put all the sources of client states at their disposal for further expansion.[59] All of the polities entering into the Mongol system have to fulfill all the obligations. The leaders of the vassal polities had to visit the court of the Great Khan regularly with tributes or gifts, and the succession in these client states had to be confirmed by the Great Khan. Meanwhile, when the Mongol Khan waged wars against new lands, these rulers must led their own troops in aid. There are plentiful of examples to illustrate this military obligation. In the East Asia, the solders of the surrendered armies of Jurchen Jin, a lot of them were ethnically Chinese, took part into the wars against the Goryeo Korea and

[56] Latin translation of this letter was transmitted by Benedict the Pole, the companion of Carpini, see A. Van den Wyngaert ed., *Sinica Franciscana*, vol. 1*: Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV* (Florence: Collegium Sancti Bonaventurae, 1929), 142-43. English translation in *The Mission to Asia*, trans. Christopher Dawson (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 85-86. Persian copy was identified by the famous French Orientalist Paul Pelliot in the Vatican archives in 1920, see Paul Pelliot, "Les Mongols et la Papauté," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 23 (1922-3): 3-30.

[57] The original text is preserved in fragmentary in Jean de Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. Jacques Monfrin (Paris: Garnier, 1995), 425. English translation in Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality*, 179.

[58] [Lian Song] 宋濂, ed., 元史 [Yuan Shi: official history of the Yuan dynasty] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1976), 2196; Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251-1259* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 114.

[59] Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 124.

Southern Song since 1230s.[60] The soldiers of Song and Korea were in turn sent to conquer Japan by sea in 1274 and 1281.[61] In the Middle East, the Armenian kings were involved in the joint military actions with the Ilkhanid armies against Ayyubids and Mamluks in the second half of the thirteenth century.[62] In Eastern Europe, the Russian princes participated in the invasions of the Golden Horde into Poland and Hungary in the 1280s.[63] In Balkan, Bulgaria took part in the expeditions of the Golden Horde against Byzantine in 1264-65 and 1271-72.[64]

Meanwhile, preparing proper tribute or gifts are vital for the success of missions and maintaining the peaceful yet subordinated relation with the Mongols. There are several illustrative examples to clarify this. The first case comes from the papal missions in 1245. On the eve of the First Council of Lyons, Innocent IV dispatched four diplomatic corps to the Mongols led by John of Plano Carpini, Ascelin of Lombardy, Andrew of Longjumeau, and Lawrence of Portugal separately.[65] Since they were the first envoys sent by Pope to the Mongols, very limited information of the Mongols and their diplomatic protocols was available for them. Carpini was more luckily in the sense that he chose the northeast way of passing Poland and Russia, the princesses of these countries had already some experience with the Mongols. At the court of Duke Konrad I of Masovia (r. 1194-1247), Carpini met Vasilko Romanovich, Prince of Volhynia (r. 1231-69), who had already sent envoys to Batu Khan. Advised by Vasilko Romanovich, Carpi bought beaver pelts and other furs as gifts for the Mongols. Meanwhile, Duke Konrad, his Duchess and the Bishop of Cracow also

[60] William E. Henthorn, *Korea: The Mongol Invasions* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 61-149; Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 76-114.
[61] Stephen Turnbull, *The Mongol Invasions of Japan 1274 and 1281* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010), 32-79.
[62] Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220-1335)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 143-91.
[63] Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 204-206.
[64] István Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185-1365* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 72-79.
[65] The first two missions were recorded well by Carpini himself and Simon of Saint-Quentin separately, see Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 87-92; Gregory G. Guzman, "Simon of Saint-Quentin and the Dominican Mission to the Mongol Baiju: A Reappraisal," *Speculum* 46, no. 2 (1971): 232-49.

sponsored Carpini with the same kind of gifts.[66] Finally, Carpini succeeded in arriving at Karakorum and met Güyük Khan there.

In contrast, Ascelin and his companions who bypassed the route of the Near East prepared no gifts. They encountered huge difficulties at the Mongol camp in Asia Minor. According to Simon of Saint-Quentin, the companion of Ascelin, Ascelin not only refused to give gifts but also gave reasons why he should do this:

> Assuredly, we bring nothing to him on behalf of the lord pope for it is not customary for him to send *exennia* to anyone, especially infidels and unknowns. In fact, it is better the case that his believing children, namely Christians, and also many infidels often send him presents and offer *exennia*.[67]

In addition, when the Mongol principal counsellor and interpreters refuted that giving gifts is indispensable when delivering diplomatic letters,[68] Ascelin responded as follows:

> Though it is customary anywhere and especially among Christians that any envoy bearing the letter of his lord should come before the one to whom he was sent to deliver it, see him, and deliver it to him with one's own hands, if it is not permitted to come before your lord without presents and this is not pleasing to you, we will commit the letter of the lord pope to all of you, if it is pleasing, to hand it over to your lord, Baiju Noyan, on his behalf.[69]

This arrogance of not respecting the Mongol protocol and treating them equally irrigated the Mongols greatly. After refusing to give gifts, Ascelin of Lombardy and his companions were in further conflicts with the Mongols. They were at odds in the issues of showing reverence to the Mongol lord by kneeling, the methods of adoration, and Ascelin of Lombardy even refused to present himself at the imperial court of the Great Khan in the East. In the end,

[66] John of Plano Carpini, "History of the Mongols," in *The Mission to Asia*, trans. Christopher Dawson (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 50-51.
[67] This English translation is taken from Stephen Pow et al., *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, XXXII, 41, accessed at: www.simonofstquentin.org, April 15, 2020.
[68] Cf. the traditions of gift-giving in Eurasian diplomatic protocols discussed in the section "*Gifts and Gift-giving in the Traditions of Central Eurasian Court Culture*" of Introduction.
[69] Pow et al., *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, XXXII, 41, accessed at: www.simonofstquentin.org, April 15, 2020

predictably, they were not granted audience by the Mongol general Baiju, and their own life were barely spared partly thanks to the persuasion from one of the wives of Baiju.[70]

Those submissive kings to the Mongols also encountered the issue of preparing gifts. The Christian King of Lesser Armenia Hetʿum I (r. 1226-70) served a good example. As early as in 1246, Hetʿum I had sent his brother Sempad the Constable (d. 1276) with gifts to Karakorum and conveyed submission to Güyük Khan. In 1254, Hetʿum I decided to visit the court of Möngke Khan personally. His story of preparing gifts during this journey was recorded by the contemporary Armenian historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi:

> And fearing him [Batu Khan] he set out in secret having disguised himself for dread of the Turks,who were his neighbours because they bore a grudgea gainst him for his having given aid to the Taťar. And hurrying through his territory he came in twelve days to the town of Kars […] he halted in Aragacotn opposite Mount Aray in a village called Vardenis […][Here he remained] until there were brought him from his house the goods to be used as gifts and presents, which were sent by his father the prince of princes Kostandin,then an old man, and his sons Leon and Toros, whom he had left as his vice-gerent.[71]

In case that the neighboring Saljuqs would loot their corps, Hetʿum I decided to depart first, until arrived at a safe place he ordered the gifts to be sent to him. No information of the content of this gift package was provided, but from the same source we know that these gifts and the personal presence of Hetʿum I pleased Möngke Khan, and the great khan granted rare privileges to Hetʿum I.[72] In the later period, these privileges were repeatedly referred by the Medieval Armenian kings to boost the status of Armenia on the grand chessboard of Middle East.[73] Hetʿum I also kept good relationships with other Mongol Khans. In 1259, he and his

[70] Ibid., XXXII, 44, accessed at: www.simonofstquentin.org, April 15, 2020.
[71] J. A. Boyle, "The Journey of Hetʿum I, King of Little Armenia, to the Court of the Great Khan Mongke," *Central Asiatic Journal* 9 (1964): 175–89, here 178-79. On the life and activities of Kirakos Gandzaketsi, see Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan, "Kirakos Gandzaketsʿi, as a Mongol Prisoner," *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 22 (2018): 155–63.
[72] Boyle, "The Journey of Hetʿum I," 181. Peter Jackson believes that these privileges even included the relief of obligation of quartering Mongol garrison forces, see Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 253.
[73] See David D. Bundy, "Hetʿum's *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient*: A Study in Medieval Armenian Historiography and Propaganda," *Revue des Etudes Armeniennes* 20 (1986–7): 223-35.

son-in-law Prince of Antioch Bohemond VI went together to the court of Ilkhan Hülegü (r. 1256-65) to express their submission.[74] Then after, the father and son-in-law participated in the Mongol conquest of Syria and received abundant rewards including territories after the battle of Ain Jalut in 1260.[75]

Hetʿum I was definitely a sophisticated ruler who knew how to handle their Mongol overlords well. If his experience demonstrates that carefully prepared gifts could promote one's own status before the Mongol Great Khan, then our next case will show that those princes who brought no gifts would very likely end in misfortune. That is the case of Sultan al-Nāṣir Yūsuf, the principal Ayyubid ruler of Syria, and his conflicts with Hülegü.[76] As early as in 1244, al-Nāṣir had contacted the Mongol civil governor of Persia Arghun Aqa and paid tributes to him since the following year. In 1245-46 and 1250, al-Nāṣir dispatched diplomatic corps twice to Karakorum where audience was granted by Güyük Khan and Möngke Khan separately, and his vassal status with the Mongol empire was confirmed formally. Meanwhile, al-Nāṣir kept offering tributes to Baiju, the Mongol military leader in Near East. However, when Hülegü authorized by his brother Möngke Khan commanded a great army for a new western campaign in 1253, al-Nāṣir swayed his mind. Until the fall of Baghdad in 1258, he had never shown himself in front of either the Great Khan, or now his highest representative Hülegü, al-Nāṣir even did not send an envoy and proper gifts to the latter. According to the Ayyubid chronicler Ibn al-ʿAmīd, the misbehavior that al-Nāṣir did not prepared gifts for Hülegü yet kept sending to Baiju made Hülegü furious.[77] Although al-Nāṣir made several

[74] Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye trans., "History of the Nation of the Archers (the Mongols) by Grigor of Akanc," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12 (1949): 269-399, here 341.
[75] Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 257.
[76] The case has been discussed in R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 333-363; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Īlkhānid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19-24; Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 130-31.
[77] Al-Makīn Ibn al-'Amīd, *Chronique des Ayyoubides (602-658/1205-6-1259-60)*, trans. Anne-Marie Eddé and Françoise Micheau (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1994), 163, 167-68, quoted from Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 21.

attempts after 1258 to reconcile the relationship, it was already too late. He was taken prisoner by the Mongols, and died at their hands shortly after the battle of Ain Jalut.

The relationships between the Mongol khans in the west and the great khan in the east were different, especially in the sense that all the four khanates regarded themselves as brothers in the family of Genghis Khan and kept the notion of imperial unity even after the disintegration of the united empire.[78] A frequently cited source by historians is the letter sent by the Ilkhan Öljeitü to the European Christian princes in 1305, in which Öljeitü proudly declared that after decades of discords and disputes, all the brothers in the Chinggisid family had reached a mutual accord, their lands was joined together and the postal systems was connected again.[79] This brotherly relationship is reflected in the mutual military assistance and sharing of the conquered lands.[80] A notable example of mutual military assistance took place in 1270s between the Yuan dynasty and Ilkhanate, when the armies of Kublai were stuck under the walls of Xiangyang. Xiangyang was highly fortified and had a strategic location at the bank of Hanshui, the north tributary of the Yangtze River. Before this, Xiangyang had already survived twice from the attacks during the reign of Ögedei and Möngke. In 1271 after five years of siege, Kublai decided to seek assistance from Abaqa, who ruled Ilkhanate succeeding his father Hülegü. Abaqa sent his military engineers Ismail and Al al-Din to China to build siege machines for Kublai.[81] According to *Yuan Shi*, Ismail set the mangonels in a strategic location to southeast from the city. The stone the machine threw weighted around 150 catties (or 75 kilograms), they were so powerful that the sky and

[78] See Hodong Kim, "The Unity of the Mongol Empire and Continental Exchanges over Eurasia," *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 1 (2009): 15–42.
[79] The original letter is preserved in Mongolian and published by Francis W. Cleaves and Antoine Mostaert, *Les lettres de 1289 et 1305 des ilkhan Arγun et Öljeitü à Philippe le Bel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 55-56; English translation see Aigle, "From Non-Negotiation to an Abortive Alliance," 194.
[80] The sharing of conquered lands or economic relations among Chinggisid family members, see the section "*(Re-)Distribution*" in chapter 3.
[81] Rashīd al-Dīn gave different names of these Muslim engineers in his *Compendium of Chronicles*: Talib and his sons Abubakr, Ibrahim, and Muhammad, see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami't-Tawarikh,* Part II, 450.

grounds trembled, and every shot left crater in depth of 3 Chinese feet (or 1 meter). Shocked by this machine, the Song general of Xiangyang decided to turn in his city. [82]

In addition to mutual military assistance, there were extensively diplomatic communications between these Mongol khans. Even during the civil wars in the later decades of the thirteenth century, when Yuan and Ilkhanate formed some kind of alliance against the Golden horde and Chagataid Khanate, these communications had never been terminated. Michal Biran masterfully studies the diplomacy and chancellery practices in the Chagataid Khanate, which were largely shared by other Mongol khanates. As Biran states, these diplomatic had two main functions, political and formal: "the political embassies were sent primarily to discuss alliances or submission, ask for military help, and pray; the formal embassies were sent to pay honors and express friendship or submission and to facilitate trade relations between states." [83] The envoy sent to Ilkhanate by Kublai before the siege of Xiangyang is certainly the political one, and it was mostly applicable between the Mongol khans in friendly relationships. The formal embassies sent between the great khan and the Mongol khans, otherwise overall functioned identically to those of the foreign submissive states. The succession in the three western khanates had to be acknowledged by the great khan, and the latter would confirm this by holding a formal investiture. The only distinction is that these western Mongol Khans had no need to present themselves in the court of great khan personally. Their envoys undertook this obligation and the investitures were held in the court of these western Mongol khans as well. The previously mentioned Ilkhan Abaqa was enthroned in 1265 after the death of his father Hülegü, but his formal investiture took place five years later. In November of 1270, the representatives of Kublai arrived at Persia and

[82] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 4544.
[83] Michal Biran, "Diplomacy and Chancellery Practices in the Chagataid Khanate: Some Preliminary Remarks," *Oriente Moderno* 88, no. 2 (2008): 369-93, here 373.

brought a writ, crown, and robe of honor for Abaqa, and Abaqa had his second enthronement soon after.[84]

These diplomatic embassies shuttled among different Mongol khanates naturally carried gifts. The gift package the Mongol khans prepared usually serve the purpose to indicate his sphere of influence, and the contents of package are adjusted to meet the specific needs of the recipients. Most of the gifts in package are the local rarities but the objects from afar are also highly valued. In the case of Chagataid Khanate, as Biran shows, the most common Chagataid gifts includes animals (horses, camels, panthers, tigers and gyrfalcons), precious stones (especially jade and rubies), wine, clothes (especially Chinese silk), hides, slaves, tents etc. The Chinese silk, which was naturally obtained either as commodities or gifts from the Yuan dynasty were reused as gifts for the Ilkhans in Iran, the wine was prepared for the Yuan dynasty, and the slaves were specifically sent to Iran and Egypt.[85] A well-studied case is the diplomatically mission initiated by Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1295-1304) to Mongol great khan and Yuan emperor Temür Öljeitü (r. 1294-1307) in 1298. According to the 14th-century Persian historian Vassaf, the gifts these Ilkhanid envoys brought included cloths, jewels, costly garments, and hunting leopards (or rather cheetahs).[86] Meanwhile, Chinese source *Yuan Shi* is abundant in the records of the gifts the great khans received, the contents of these gift packages are usually provided, sometimes the identities of the envoys too. The return gifts from the great khan are normally golds, silvers, paper money and Chinese silk. For instance, in 1322 and 1323, Yuan emperor Shidebala (r. 1320–23) received cheetahs, gyrfalcons and wine from the Chagataid Khan Kebek (r. 1309-10, 1318-25). [87]

[84] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami't-Tawarikh*, Part III, 535. Thomas T. Allsen states that these envoys of Kublai arrived at October of 1270, see Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.
[85] Biran, "Diplomacy and Chancellery Practices," 382.
[86] Waṣṣāf ʾAbdu-llah, "Tazjiyatu-l Amsār wa Tajriyatu-l A'sār," in *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians*, trans. Henry Miers Elliot and ed. John Dowson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 45; Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, 34.
[87] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 620,

Yesün Temür (r. 1323–28) was enthroned as the great khan and Yuan emperor in October of 1323, and he received gifts from all the three western khanates: 1) In 1323, the Jochid Khan Uzbeg (r. 1313-41) sent an envoy named Kerait 怯烈 to Yesün Temür, the content of the gifts was not mentioned, but Uzberg was bestowed with golds and coins.[88] In addition, in 1326, Uzbeg sent Yesün Temür cheetahs and was bestowed golds, silvers, paper ingot and coins in return. 2) In 1323, the Chagataid Khan Kebek sent an embassy led by Temür Buqa 鐵木兒不花 with cheetahs and western horses to Yesün Temür,[89] in 1326 cheetahs were sent again.[90] 3) In 1324, the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id (r. 1316-35) likewise sent envoys with gifts to complement the enthronement of Yesün Temür, and was rewarded a gift package including to 20,000 ingots of paper money and 100 bolts of silk.[91] In the following years, Yesün Temür received Western horses, jades, Arabian camels (dromedaries), tigers, cheetahs, and lions from the six delegations dispatched by Abu Sa'id.[92]

Gifts in Diplomatic Network

After discussing the place of gifts in the Mongol diplomatic network, this section will be devoted to the gifts themselves. Owing to the great expansion and the subsequent establishment of the imperial networks, the gifts flew into the Mongol imperial court in a tremendous way, no matter in quantity or scale. Partly following the examples of Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Hedda Reindl-Kiel,[93] the gifts exchanged in the Mongol imperial court will be categorized as follows: textiles, animal gifts, slaves or human gifts, and religious gifts. It should be reminded that these categories are never exhaustive but heuristic. They simply

[88] Ibid., 641.
[89] Ibid., 648.
[90] Ibid., 669.
[91] Ibid., 645, 646, and 661.
[92] Ibid., 667, 671, 672, 674, 675, and 678.
[93] Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate*, 133-68; Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "Der Duft der Macht: Osmanen, islamische Tradition, muslimische Mächte und der Westen im Spiegel diplomatischer Geschenke," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 95 (2005): 195-258.

serve as a framework to present an overall picture of the gifts exchanged through the Mongol imperial network. The gifts listed in each category are likewise not exclusive.

Textiles especially brocades were the most representative gifts sent from the Mongol court. This specific kind of brocade woven of gold and silk threads was called *nasij*.[94] In Europe, they were also known as *Panni Tartarici*, i.e., the cloths from Tartary (or the place of the Mongols).[95] The robes of honor the great khan bestowed to the western Mongol khans and the vassal rulers were mostly made of *nasij*. The previously mentioned gifts from Kublai to Abaqa to conform his succession in 1270 included a robe of honour. In 1299, the king of Xianluo (modern Thailand) sent envoys to Yuan emperor Temür Öljeitü asking for harness, white horse and robe made of gold threads to confirm the vassal relationship.[96] The foreign envoys arrived at the imperial court could possibly receive *nasij*. William of Rubruck mentioned that the chief wife of Möngke Khan was going to distribute gifts to those were at present. A *nasij* was intended for Rubruck. Yet Rubruck was unwilling to accept this valuable gift, this *nasij* was then given to Rubruck's interpreter. Thanks to Rubruck, we happen to know the afterlife of this nasij: it was taken by the interpreter all the way to Cyprus and sold for eighty Cypriot besants.[97] Complementary evidences furtherly confirm that those Tatar cloths appeared in the European royal courts. Marco Polo mentioned that a napkin, albeit made out of asbestos rather than *nasij*, was sent to the Pope as a gift through the hands of the

[94] On the uses of *nasij* in the Mongol empire, see Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11-26 and "Robing in the Mongolian Empire," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Stewart Gordon (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 305-13.
[95] On the Tartar cloths circulated in Medieval Europe, see David Jacoby, "Oriental Silks Go West: A Declining Trade in the Later Middle Ages," in *Islamic Artifacts in the Mediterranean World: Trade, Gift Exchange and Artistic Transfer*, ed. Catarina Schmidt Arcangeli and Gerhard Wolf (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 71–88; and "Oriental Silks at the Time of the Mongols: Patterns of Trade and Distribution in the West," in *Oriental Silks in Medieval Europe*, ed. Juliane von Fricks and Regula Schorta (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2016), 93-123.
[96] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 4664.
[97] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Mongke, 1253-1255*, trans. Peter A. Jackson, and D. O. Morgan (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990), 190-91.

two brothers Niccolò and Maffeo Polo in 1259.[98] On the other side, in the inventory of the Papal treasury under Boniface VIII (r. 1294-1303) compiled in 1295, an individual category *LXIX: Frustra pannorum tataricum et allorum pannorum* was for Tatar cloths and others, under which fourteen entries were pertaining to the Tartar cloths.[99] Since the total amounts of Tatar cloths in the inventory was rather small, it is reasonable to deduce that these textiles were received as gifts either directly from the Mongol rulers or from those personages had contacts with the Mongols.

Animal gifts were definitely the liveliest and eye-catching gifts received in the Mongol imperial court. A great part of them was hunting animals, for instance, cheetahs and falcons. Cheetahs were originated in West Asia and North Africa, and falcons were native to the northern forest zones. Both of them had a long history to be used for hunting across Eurasia.[100] The cheetahs that appeared in the Mongol imperial court mostly came from the Ilkhanate in Iran, for instance, as in the gift lists from Ghazan Khan in 1298 and from Abu Sa'id in 1320s and 1330s. Sometimes the khans of Chagataid Khanate and the Golden Horde sent cheetahs too, as the gift lists from Kebek Khan in 1322 and Uzbeg Khan in 1325 indicated. An earlier source from William of Rubruck also mentioned that eight leopards (or cheetahs) and ten greyhounds were sent by a sultan of India as gifts for the enthronment of Möngke Khan in 1251.[101] Falcons otherwise were the representative rarities of the Golden Horde. These birds frequently appeared in their gifts package sent for the Mamuluk Egypt. For instance, three falcons and other gifts were sent from Uzbeg Khan to Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad (r. 1293-94, 1299-1309, and 1310-41) as return gifts to the former's embassy in

[98] Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Aldo Ricci and L. F. Benedetto, with an Introduction and Index by E. Denison Ross (London: Routledge, 2014), 73-74.
[99] Émile Molinier, "Inventaire du trésor du Saint-Siège sous Boniface VIII (1295) (suite)," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 47 (1886): 646-67, here 652-53.
[100] See Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 73-82 and 58-69.
[101] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 247.

1316.[102] For the great khans and Yuan emperors, their falcons were mainly gyrfalcons, which came from the northeastern Asian forests as tributes or taxations from the local people.[103] As early as in 1207, after Jochi (c. 1182-1227), the eldest son of Genghis Khan, conquered the forest peoples in Siberia, white gyrfalcons, white geldings and black sables were regularly sent from there as tributes.[104] In the later period, gyrfalcons was widely distributed as gifts to the generals serving the empire. A reference in *Yuan Shi* also indicates that gyrfalcons were sent to the western khans by the Yuan emperor. In 1329, Tugh Temür (r. 1328, 1329–32) sent two gyrfalcons to the Chagataid Khan Eljigidey (r. 1326-29).[105]

Pack animals like horses, elephants, and camels were likewise presented in the Mongol imperial court. Horses had a strategical place in the warfare of the Mongols and other nomadic people. The Mongol horses were well known for their tameness, great strength and excellent endurance of extreme weather. Those horses arrived at the imperial court were certainly not Mongol horses. In Chinese sources, they were called *xi ma* 西馬, literally the horse from the West and presumably Arabian horses. There were mainly originated as gifts from the western Mongol khans. These horses appeared in the above-mentioned gift lists from the Chagataid Khan Kebek in 1323 and the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id in 1326 to Yesün Temür. In 1332, Tugh Temür received western horses from the Chagataid Khan Tarmashirin (r. 1331-34).[106] Toghon Temür (r. 1332-70), the last emperor of the Yuan dynasty, received three western horses from the Chagataid Khan Yesün Temür (r. 1338-42), [107] and two white western horses from Jani Beg (r. 1342-57), the Khan of Golden Horde, in 1353.[108] Perhaps the most famous horse arrived at the imperial court was the one brought by the

[102] Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate*, 65.
[103] The use of cheetahs and gyrfalcons in Mongol royal hunting will be discussed in the section *Consumption*.
[104] *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 164.
[105] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 728.
[106] Ibid., 800-01.
[107] Ibid., 837.
[108] Ibid., 911.

Franciscan John of Marignolli who acted as the legate of Pope Benedict XII.[109] This horse aroused great interests of Toghon Temür and his courtiers, and was recorded and represented in many contemporary Chinese written and visual sources.[110] The Elephants in the imperial court were Asian elephants, which were native to Southwest China, Southeast Asia and Indian subcontinent. The Mongols first came across elephants in central Asia. During Genghis Khan's campaign of Khwarezmia in 1219-21, the Khwarizmian Shah 'Ala-ud-Din attempted to use elephants to release of the siege of Samarqand from the Mongols, which were obtained by the Shah from his southern Indian neighbors.[111] In the later decades of the thirteenth century, the Mongol frequently encountered with these huge animals in their wars in Southeast Asia with Dali (modern Yunnan province of China), Annam and Burma.[112] The elephants in the Mongol imperial court were earlier booties and later tributes from these countries. In 1278, the king of Annam sent two elephants and other local rarities to Kublai.[113] In 1297, the king of Burma sent his son to Beijing and paid submission to the Yuan emperor Temür Öljeitü (r. 1294–1307), agreed that an annual tribute included 2,500 taels of silver, 1,000 bolts of silk, 20 elephants, and 10,000 Chinese stones of grain would be sent.[114] Camels were not very peculiar to the Mongol great Khan, since they were native to the Mongolian Plateau and central Asia. Yet these native camels were the sort of Bactrian camels rather than dromedaries or Arabian camels. The dromedaries appeared in the above-mentioned gift lists from the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id in 1326 to Yesün Temür. John of Carpini also mentioned that a number of camels were brought from a certain governor of a province as gifts for the

[109] Ibid., 864; Henry Yule, trans. and ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither, Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. 3 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1914), 213-16.
[110] The afterlife of this horse, see the section *Consumption*.
[111] Juvaini, *The History of the World Conqueror*, 119; Ch'ang-Ch'un', "Si Yu Ki," in *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources: Geography and History of Central and Western Asia from the 13th to the 17th Century*, vol.1, trans. Emil Bretschneider (London: Kegan Paul, 1910), 35-108, here 79.
[112] For the relationship between the Mongol empire and Southeast Asia, see Francesca Fiaschetti, "Mongol Imperialism in the Southeast: Uriyangqadai (1201–1272) and Aju (1127–1287)," *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques*, 71, no. 4 (2017): 1119–35.
[113] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 4639.
[114] The use of elephants in the Mongol imperial court, see the section *Consumption*.

enthronement of Güyük Khan in 1246. No information of the type of these camels was provided, yet we are told that they were lavishly decked with brocade and saddles.[115] In addition, there were some ornamental animals in the imperial court. The Yuan emperors received parrots, peacocks, gibbons, tigers, lions, and rhinoceros for several times, mostly from the Southeast Asian countries.[116]

Slaves received or sent as diplomatic gifts were not very common practiced in the imperial court of the great khan. A main reason was that, unlike the Mamluk Egypt or other states in the Islamic world, the Mongols did not rely on a military slavery system to recruit their soldiers.[117] This is not to say that the Mongols did not use slaves in military actions, household management or manufactures. For Mongols, these slaves were mainly obtained from captives rather than purchases or gift exchanges.[118] Yet, an early source from *The Secret History of the Mongols* indicated that in 1227, the last emperor of Tanguts Li Xian or Shidurghu presented himself with gifts in the camp of Genghis Khan. The gifts he brought included golden images of Buddha, golden and silver bowls and vessels, boys and girls, geldings and camels, each kind in the number of nine.[119] Human gifts appeared in the records of Ibn Battuta on the gift exchange between the Yuan dynasty and the Delhi Sultanate in his famous travelogue. In 1342, in the imperial court of Delhi Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq, Battuta met the envoys sent by the "King of China"[120]. They brought the Sultan valuable gifts including a hundred slaves of both sexes, five hundred pieces of velvet and silk cloth, musk, jeweled garments and weapons. As a return, the Sultan sent an even richer gift package: a

[115] Carpini, "History of the Mongols," 64.
[116] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 214, 226, 232, 233, 245, 267, 269, 350, 351, 402, 510, 554, 678, 683, and 733.
[117] For the military slavery system or Mamluk Institution, see Reuven Amitai, "The Mamlūk Institution, or One Thousand Years of Military Slavery in the Islamic World," in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 40-78.
[118] On captives in the Mongol empire, see Michal Biran, "Encounters among Enemies: Preliminary Remarks on Captives in Mongol Eurasia," *Archivum Eurasia Medii Aevi*, 21 (2015): 27-42; Gregory G. Guzman, "European Captives and Craftsmen among the Mongols, 1231 – 1255," *The Historian* 72, no. 1 (2010): 122-150.
[119] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz, 199.
[120] Namely, the Mongol great khan and Yuan emperor Toghon Temür (r. 1332–70).

hundred thoroughbred horses, a hundred white slaves, a hundred Hindu dancing-and singing-girls, twelve hundred pieces of various kinds of cloth, gold and silver candelabra and basins, brocade robes, caps, quivers, swords, gloves embroidered with pearls, and fifteen eunuchs.[121] If this record can be trusted, we may conclude that the Yuan emperor knew well to meet the expectation of Muslim monarchies. For the western khanates, human gifts were more commonly prepared, especially among their gift exchanges with the Mamluk Egypt. For instance, in 1304, Toqta Khan (r. 1291-1312) of the Golden Horde sent 200 slave girls and 400 mamluks to the Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad, although most of died during the trip. In 1313, Toqta sent another 80 mamluks and 20 slave girls to Cairo. [122]

Religious gifts possess more distinctive transcultural features in the imperial court of the Mongol great khan, most of which were brought by the western missionaries and merchants. These gifts could be the Bible, Cross, and tent-chapel in their material forms. Perhaps the most well known gift package of such a kind was sent by Louis IX to the Mongol rulers in 1250, which included a lavishly ornamented portable chapel and many other religious items.[123] Sometimes, the Mongol rulers would initiatively ask for such kind of blessed gifts. Marco Polo mentioned that in 1266 Kublai Khan asked the two brothers Niccolò and Maffeo Polo to bring holy oil from the lamp at Jesus' tomb in Jerusalem for him, for Kublai's mother Sorghaghtani was a Christian, and the Great Khan rejoiced very much over this gift when he finally revived it in 1274.[124] The similar scene played decades ago during the journey of William of Rubruck. From the outset, he carried with himself many

[121] Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa: 1325-1354*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb (Routledge: London, 2013), 214.
[122] Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate*, 64. For general surveys on the diplomatic relationship between the Golden Horde and Mamuluk Egypt, see Marie Favereau, "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks," in *The Golden Horde in World History*, ed. Rafael Khakimov and Marie Favereau (Kazan: Sh.Marjani Institute of History of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 2017), 329-46, and "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks: The Birth of a Diplomatic Set-Up (660-5/1261-7)," in *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies: Studies on Diplomacy and Diplomatics*, ed. Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 302-24.
[123] Jean de Joinville, *The History of Saint Louis*, trans. Joan Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 40, 142. This tent-chapel was refered several times in later sources, whose afterlife will be discussed in detail in the section "*Repository*" of chapter 3.
[124] Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 7-12.

books including a Bible presented as gift from Louis IX of France and a beautifully illuminated psalter from his queen. When Rubruck arrived at the camp of Sartaq, the son of Batu, in July of 1253, these Christian objects interested Sartaq who himself was a Christian a lot. Upon departure for Batu's headquarters, many belongings of Rubruck were forced to leave behind, the psalter was among them. One year later during the return journey, Rubruck came to Sartaq again and claimed most of his belongings, except the Queen's psalter, which Sartaq had been very much taken with it. Rubruck decided to give it as a gift to Sartaq.[125] In addition to these substantial objects, the abstractive prayers were similarly perceived and received as gifts by the great khan. As it will be shown in the chapter 2, the praying and blessing from various religious groups was an eventful part of the ceremonies held in the imperial court on the birthday of great khan and other occasions. For the western khanates, after their conversion to Islam, the Ilkhanate in 1295, the Golden Horde and Chagatai Khanate in the next decades, Islamic items appeared frequently in their gift packages.[126] For instance, in the famous gift package sent from the Mamluk Sultan Baybar (r. 1270-77) to the Golden Horde Khan Berke (r. 1257-66) in 1263, a Qur'an manuscript penned by the caliph 'Utman ibn 'Affan, lavishly wrapped and covered, and carefully placed in a similar dedicately decorated box was the most conspicuous ones.[127] A Qur'an manuscript in 60

[125] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 41, 116-18, 120, and 258. Also see Marianna Shreve Simpson, "Manuscripts and Mongols: Some Documented and Speculative Moments in East-West/Muslim-Christian Relations," *French Historical Studies* 30, no. 3 (2007): 351-94, esp. 361-67.

[126] On the conversion to Islam of the western Mongol Khanates, see Charles Melville, "*Pādshāh-i Islām*: The Conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khan," *Pembroke Papers* 1 (1990): 159-77; Michal Biran, "The Chaghadaids and Islam: The Conversion of Tarmashirin Khan (1331-34)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122 (2002): 742-52; Devin DeWeese, "Islamization in the Mongol Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, ed. N. Di Cosmo, A. J. Frank and P. B. Golden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 120-34; Roman Hautala, "Comparing the Islamisation of the Jochid and Hülegüid Uluses," *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 143 (2018): 65-80; Peter Jackson, "Reflections on the Islamization of Mongol Khans in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62 (2019): 356-87.

[127] Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate*, 62.

volumes likewise appeared in the gift package sent from the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id to the Mamluk Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad in 1320.[128]

In sum, gifts have an indispensable place in the Mongol diplomatic network. During the first diplomatic encounters with the Mongols, gift-giving was an essential part of the protocols. Rather than an expression of avarice and rudeness repeatedly complained by the western missionary reports, gift-giving was common practiced across the pre-Chinggisid Eurasian world. For those countries submissive to the Mongols, giving gifts or paying tributes were regarded as obligation. Yet at the same, it is an effective way to maintain the peaceful relationships with the Mongols, and the Mongol would give rewards for the loyalty as well. The relationship between the great khan and the western Mongol khans are more intimate and equal. Their mutual gift exchanges were much more extensive, it could be in mutual military assistance but also in local rarities and exotic animals, in the last case, the great khan was usually the recipient and would return the courtesy with precious metals, cashes and Chinese silk. On the one hand, the various kinds of gifts arrived at the court are the consequence of the expansion and consolidation of the Mongol imperial system. On the other hand, the gifts materialize the royal power of the great khan, and the imperial hierarchy is reconfirmed through these acts of gift-giving.

[128] Ibid., 66.

Chapter 2 – Presenting of Gifts: Ritual and Spatial Dimensions

This chapter focuses on the ritual and spatial aspects of presenting and receiving of gifts in the Mongol court. In essence, there are two typical occasions during which gift-giving took place. The first one is the political or diplomatic occasion when the gifts were brought along with the legates discussing alliance and in most case submission to the Mongols. The second are the ritual occasions when the Mongol khan held ceremonies for specific purposes. These political and ritual occasions were generally intermingled, since after the confirmation of alliance and submission, legates were required to attend important court ritual occasions. Even those countries that had not yet entered into a formal relationship with the Mongol empire would take these chances to obtain intelligence from the Mongols. This chapter analyzes three key ceremonies, which also aroused the interests of western visitors, namely, the enthronement of great khan, the birthday celebration of the great khan, and the New Year's celebration. As part of the ceremony, the gift presenters and the gifts were assigned to a specific space, and arranged by the special procedure of the ceremony. The varieties and rarity of the gift, the geographic extensiveness of the presenters, and the majestic celebration and banquet associated with it all signified the dominant power of the great khan.

Enthronement of the Great Khan

The enthronement of great khan was the most important moment in the political life of the steppe. The continuation of a steppe empire heavily depended on the personality and capacity of the great khan. As Joseph Fletcher notes, the candidate for khanship was expected

to have the statecraft to maintain the different tribal clans and to satisfy them by keeping, obtaining, and distributing wealth.[129] The election entailed a series of events. The first phase was the convening of *quriltai* where the Mongol nobility attended and nominated their new ruler. Then the nominee ceremoniously refused the nomination several times until he is confirmed by the nobilities that he is the only rightful choice. Then the nobilities took their oath and pledged loyalty to the new khan by kneeling down three times and praying for his long-lasting happiness. All of these ceremonies took place in the royal tent of the great khan and were only accessible for the Mongol nobility. After that, public ceremonies followed. The khan and the nobilities prayed to the sun, kneeling down three times. At the end, a grand banquet was held for days and the khan rewarded the nobilities for their services. [130]

The inauguration of the Mongol great khan was a grand diplomatic event during which foreign envoys from afar assembled in the Mongol capital for various purposes. Owing to the journeys of John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck to Karakorum—the former witnessed the enthronement of Güyük (r. 1246-48) in 1246 and the latter was granted an audience by the newly-elected Khan Möngke in 1254—we have relatively good understanding of the reception of envoys and their gifts in the Mongol imperial court.[131]

The official reception of ambassadors and their gifts took place after the enthronement ceremonies. However, the protocol set for the envoys applied as soon as they crossed the

[129] Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 1 (1986): 11-50, esp. 21-28.

[130] On the *quriltai* and the inauguration of the Mongol Great Khan, see Elizabeth Endicott-West, "Imperial Governance in Yüan Times," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 2 (1986): 523-49, esp. 525-41; Michael Hope, "The Transmission of Authority through the Quriltais of the Early Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanate of Iran (1227-1335)," *Mongolian Studies* 34 (2012): 87-115; [Liangxiao Zhou] 周良霄, "蒙古選汗儀制與元朝皇位繼承問題" [The enthronement ceremony of Mongol Khan and the issue of succession in the Yuan dynasty], *Yuanshi Luncong* 3 (1986): 31-46. The election of the khan in broader Eurasian context, see Denis Sinor, "The Making of a Great Khan," in Denis Sinor, *Studies in Medieval Inner Asia* (London: Ashgate, 1997), 241-58; Ron Sela, *Ritual and Authority in Central Asia: The Khan's Inauguration Ceremony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2003); [Xin Luo] 羅新, 黑氈上的北魏皇帝[The emperors of northern Wei on black felt] (Beijing: Dolphin, 2014).

[131] Juvaini and Rashid-al-Din likewise recorded the enthronement ceremony of the Mongol great khans in their works, but their focuses were not on the reception of envoys and their gifts. Therefore, the reports of Carpini and Rubruck will be the main sources used in this section.

border of the Mongol empire. No later than the reign of Ögedei Khan, the Mongols built a postal system to facilitate the communications across the empire.[132] Once entering the territory of the Mongols, the envoys bearing tributes would be provided horses, carts and supplies at these postal stations. In contrast, those envoys with purposes other than submission were poorly treated with little food and worse clothing provisions. Carpini, who was not regarded either by himself or by the Mongols as messenger of a tributary, frequently complained of the inadequate food he received.[133] The different provision standard is also attested by C. de Bridia (fl. c. 1245) in his *Historia Tatarorum* (now more familiarly known as *Tartar Relation*), whose principal source was Benedict the Pole, the companion of Carpini during the mission.[134] C. de Bridia states that the foreign envoys had access to the horses provided by the postal system, yet they had limited rights to access other provisions so that the five of them were only given food rations for three.[135] The situation of Ascelin of Lombardy and his companions in the camp of Baiju was even worse. Since they repeatedly disobeyed the Mongols protocols, their provision was significantly affected, for several times they returned to their tent without having eaten or had to drink animal milk to get rid of hunger.[136]

After a long journey of hardships and dangers, if they were lucky, the envoys and their gifts would safely arrive at the camp of the Mongol khan. Before entering the camp, the envoys were required to dismount and wait within bowshot, while their Mongol guides went

[132] On the origin, operation and function of the postal system in the Mongol empire, see Adam Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 141-64; Márton Vér, "The Origins of the Postal System of the Mongol Empire," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 22 (2016): 227-39, and *Old Uyghur Documents Concerning the Postal System of the Mongol Empire* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019); [Baohai Dang] 黨寶海, 蒙元驛站交通研究[Studies on the postal system of the Mongol-Yuan period] (Beijing: Kunlun, 2006).
[133] Carpini, "History of the Mongols," 27.
[134] Short biographies of Benedict the Pole and C. de Bridia, see Gregory G. Guzman, "Benedict the Pole," in *Trade, Travel, and Exploration in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. John Block Friedman and Kristen Mossler (Routledge: New York, 2000), 57-58 and Charles W. Connell, "C. de Bridia," ibid, 74-75.
[135] R. A. Skelton, et al., *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 96.
[136] Pow et al., *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*. XXXII, 48 & 49. Accessed at: www.simonofstquentin.org, April 15, 2020.

to report to their master. [137] Then, a special ritual would be held for the guests, that is, the ritual of purification by passing between two fires (see Figure 1). John of Plano Carpini, Benedict the Pole, and William of Rubruck all left vivid descriptions of this religious practice. Their accounts have minor differences. Carpini did not bring any gifts from the pope but was asked to pass between the fires in case of he might bring harm or poison the khan. [138] Benedict the Pole adds more details. As he notes, both the gifts and the gifts presenters had to be purified. In addition, worship paid to the Mongol royal ancestry (perhaps the image of Genghis Khan) was also part of the first reception:[139]

> The attendants of Bati [Batu] having asked for and received presents, consisting of forty beaver skins and eighty badger skins, these presents were carried between two consecrated fires; and the Friars were obliged to follow the presents, for it is a custom among the Tartars to purify ambassadors and gifts by fire. Beyond the fires there was a cart with a golden statue of the Emperor, which it is likewise customary to worship. But the Friars refusing positively to worship it, were nevertheless obliged to bow their heads (before it).[140]

William of Rubruck gives an insight into the motives behind the ritual. He believes it is the gifts that make the purification necessary. Since the gifts had been prepared for the late Great Khan Güyük, they had to be purified before being brought to the new Great Khan Möngke:

> This constituted, therefore, a twofold reason why Friar Andrew and his colleagues had to pass between fires: firstly, inasmuch as they were bringing gifts and, in the second place, because these were destined for someone who was already dead, namely Keu Chan. No such requirement was made of me, because I brought nothing. If some creature, or anything else, drops to the ground while they are being taken between the fires like this, it is the property of the soothsayers.[141]

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[137] Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, 56; Rubruck was similarly demanded to wait one bowshot distance from the camp of Möngke, see *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 172. On the custom and implication of bowshot distance in Mongol society, see Hok-lam Chan, "Siting by Bowshot: A Mongolian Custom and Its Sociopolitical and Cultural Implications," *Asia Major*, Third Series 4, no. 2 (1991): 53-78.

[138] Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, 56.

[139] For the studies of the iconographic worship of Genghis Khan, see Isabelle Charleux, "Chinggis Khan: Ancestor, Buddha or Shaman? On the Uses and Abuses of the Portrait of Chinggis Khan," *Mongolian Studies* 31 (2009): 207-58.

[140] Benedict the Pole, "History of the Mongols," in *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Plan de Carpine*, ed. and trans. W. W. Rockhill (London: Hakluyt Society, 1900), 35.

[141] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 241.

In fact, this purification ritual is never exclusive to the Mongols. On the other side of Eurasian Steppes, the Byzantine historian Menander describes the reception of Zemarchus, the ambassador from Constantinople in the imperial court of the Turkic Khan Sizabul in the year of 569. Zemarchus was led to through the fire after some shamanic rituals had been performed, with chants, bells and drums, and sorcerer's dance to drive away the evil spirits.[142] Fire was also used for purification in the Khazar Khanate. According to the 10th-century Arab traveler Ibn Faḍlān, the deputy of *Khagan* (or great khan) could only enter into the presence of the *Khagan* being barefoot and with a piece of firewood in hands, he could not sit by the side of the Khagan until the firewood burned up.[143] In all, this shamanic ritual with fire is shared by Turkic-Mongolian nomadic societies and reflects their animist beliefs. Any objects including the gifts are believed to have spirits and fire has the very power to purify them.[144]

The envoys usually were not granted an audience with the great khan immediately. On this occasion, the envoys with their gifts would be hosted in individual tents and wait for further indications. Since during the enthronement ceremony many envoys were waiting, it took a long time before they could finally reach the khan. Carpini for instance was waiting

[142] Roger C. Blockley, ed. and trans., *The History of Menander the Guardsman* (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1985), 119.
[143] Ibn Faḍlān, *Mission to the Volga*, ed. and trans. James E. Montgomery (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 255.
[144] J. A. Boyle, "Turkish and Mongol Shamanism in the Middle Ages," *Folklore* 83, no. 3 (1972): 182-84; Sinor, "Diplomatic Practices in Medieval Inner Asia," 344; Pohl, "The *Regia* and the *Hring*: Barbarian Places of Power," 439-66.

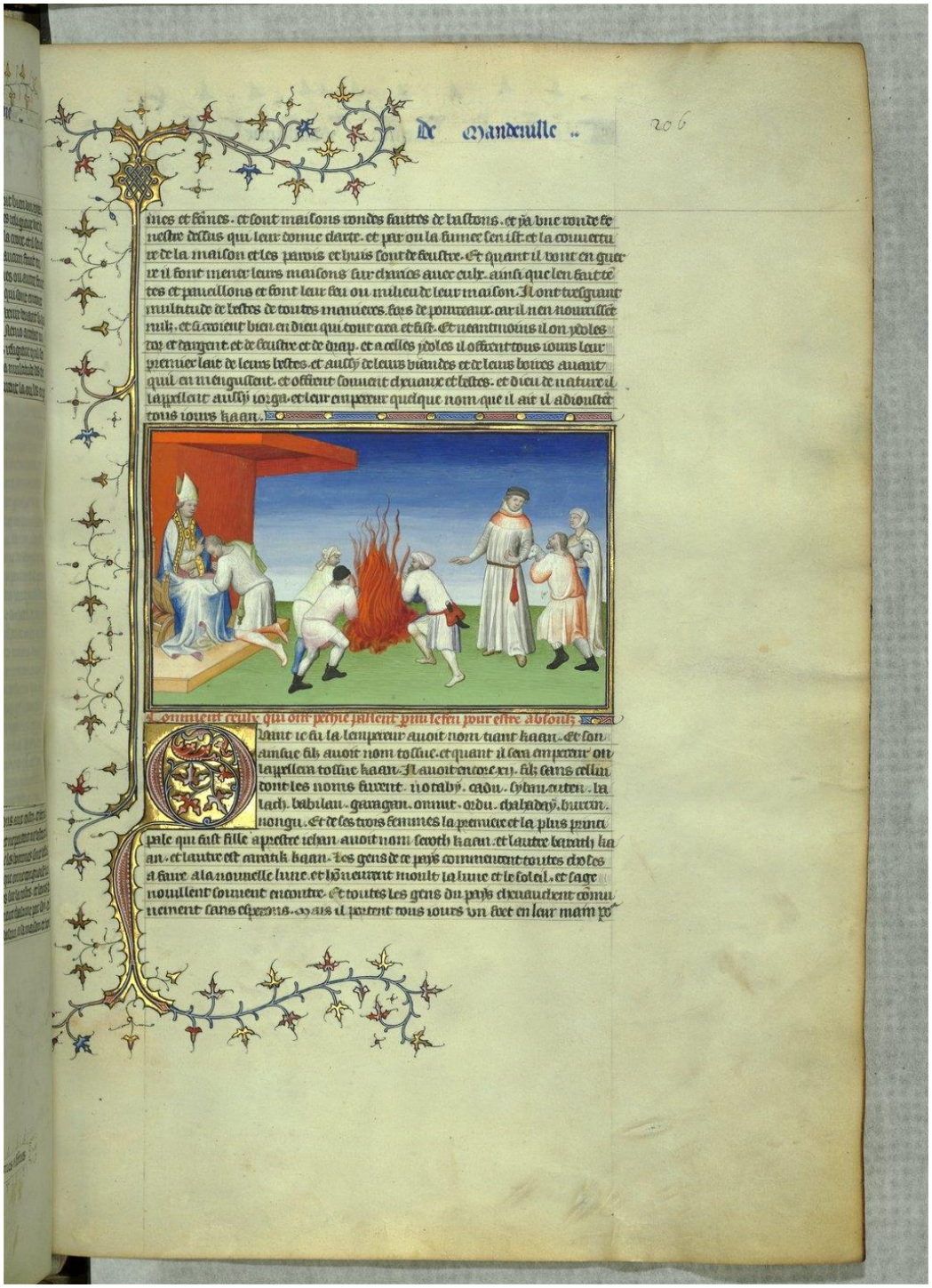


Figure 1 Ritual of Purification in the Mongol Imperial Court, from Marco Polo, *Livre des merveilles*. France, dated 1410-1412. Ink, colors, and gold on paper. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Français 2810 (BNF Fr2810, fol. 206r). Available at: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52000858n/f415.item, accessed April 30, 2020.

for at least four weeks. For Carpini, another cause for his long waiting was that Güyük was not yet officially enthroned as the great khan. Therefore, he was first led to the tent of the Queen Mother, Töregene Khatun, the regent of the Mongol empire.[145] During his stay, Carpini had the opportunity to observe the details of Mongol court life. He describes the space designated for envoys and their gifts, the procedure by which the envoys were called into the pavilion of the khan, and the various kinds of gifts.

According to Carpini, the pavilion of the khan was heavily fenced and guarded with two gates in the palisade. The western gate was reserved for the use of the khan only. The eastern gate was for those who were granted admittance. The envoys had to wait a long way away outside the palisade. Anyone who stepped over the fixed limits was to be severely punished.[146] In that designated area, Carpini met his fellow ambassadors with their gifts from Russia, China, Georgia, Abbasid Caliphate and other countries:

> Outside were Duke Jerozlaus of Susdal in Russia and several chiefs of the Kitayans and Solangi, also two sons of the King of Georgia, the ambassador of the Caliph of Baghdad, who was a Sultan, and more than ten other Sultans of the Saracens, so I believe and so we were told by the stewards. There were more than four thousand envoys there, counting those who were carrying tribute, those who were bringing gifts, the Sultans and other chiefs who were coming to submit to them, those summoned by the Tartars and the governors of territories. All these were put together outside the palisade.[147]

In the meantime, some personnel would be sent by the Khan to take care of the envoys waiting outside the palisade. They got foods and drinks. A more important protocol was for the chief secretary of the khan to register the name of the envoys, the name of their sender, and probably also the list of the gifts.[148] Then, the chief secretary read out the names

[145] Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, 61. Anne F. Broadbridge suggests that this hospitality of their home for guest was acctually the responsibility for the Mongol royal females to promote the public reputation of their husband or son, especially when they are not available, see Anne F. Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 24-25.
[146] Ibid., 61-62.
[147] Ibid., 61-62.
[148] Carpini did not mention that gifts should be registered, but he was asked by the Mongolian officer what kind of gifts he could offer. In Chinese sources, especially the biographies of the Mongol great khans and Yuan emperors in *Yuan Shi*, the content of the gift packages were often registered. See the section "*Gifts in Diplomatic Network*" of chapter 1.

aloud and the envoys were required to go down on the left knee four times. After security check again, they were led into the palisade through the eastern gate.[149] Not everyone had the honor to get inside the imperial tent. Carpini and Rubruck were definitely among the luckiest, who met the Mongol Khan Güyük and Möngke, respectively. Their granted audience also proves that the Mongols valued the possible diplomatic contacts with Europe.

The gifts presented to the newly elected khan were enormous and highly valuable. Carpini and Rubruck marveled at the treasures they saw in the camp without completely understanding their symbolic meaning:

> [Carpini:] So many gifts were bestowed by the envoys there that it was marvelous to behold gifts of silk, samite, velvet, brocade, girdles of silk threaded with gold, choice furs and other presents. The Emperor was also given a sunshade or little awning such as is carried over his head, and it was all decorated with precious stones. A certain governor of a province brought a number of camels for him, decked with brocade and with saddles on them having some kind of contrivance inside which men could sit, and there were, I should think, forty or fifty of them; he also brought many horses and mules covered with trappings or armour made of leather or of iron.[150]

> [Rubruck:] At this time I saw there the ambassador of the Caliph of Baldach: he used to have himself carried to court in a litter between two mules, and caused some to claim that he had made peace with them [the Mo'als] on the basis that they be furnished with ten thousand horsemen for their army. I also saw there the envoys of a sultan of India, who had brought eight leopards and ten greyhounds which had been trained to sit on a horse's back just like leopards do... I saw there as well envoys from the sultan of Turkia, who brought him [the Chan] costly gifts: he told them in response, so I heard, that what he needed was not gold or silver but men, by which he meant that they should furnish him with troops.[151]

The observation of Carpini and Rubruck reveal that the Mongols inherited and practiced several prevailing patterns of gift-giving in the Eurasian court customs. First, fabrics, costume, weapons and armors, gems, precious metals, and animals are the typical gifts in the Eurasian diplomatic missions. Animals as gifts have different functions: horses for warfare, mules and camels as beasts of burden, leopards, cheetahs and greyhounds as hunting

[149] Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, 63-64.
[150] Ibid., 63-64.
[151] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 246-47.

animals, exotic animals for display and pleasure.[152] Secondly, the gifts had to correspond both to the status of the giver and recipient, and to the status of their relationship. The gift-presenters also had to behave in a proper way. Thirdly, the gift-giving process is also the very occasion to communicate diplomatic messages. The troops Möngke asked from the Abbasid Caliphate and the Sultanate of Rum should be regarded as a demand of submission, at that time (1254), the total conquest of the Mongols in West Asia has not been accomplished yet. The gifts and gift-giving process are always highly symbolic, as well in the Mongol imperial court as in other courts.

The ceremony took place in meticulously arranged space. As Carpini observes, there were at least three circle layers before finally reaching the great khan. The first circle is in a bowshot distance from the imperial camp where the envoys had to dismount and wait for further indications, the second circle is outside of the fence of the great khan's palisade, and those envoys who would be granted audience had to wait at the eastern gate of the palisade. The third circle is in the royal palisade. Carpini gives a vivid description on the grand tent where the great khan hosted the banquet:

> A lofty platform of boards had been erected, on which the Emperor's throne was placed. The throne, which was of ivory, was wonderfully carved and there was also gold on it, and precious stones, if I remember rightly, and pearls. Steps led up to it and it was rounded behind. Benches were also placed round the throne, and here the ladies sat in their seats on the left; nobody, however, sat on the right, but the chiefs were on benches in the middle and the rest of the people sat beyond them.[153]

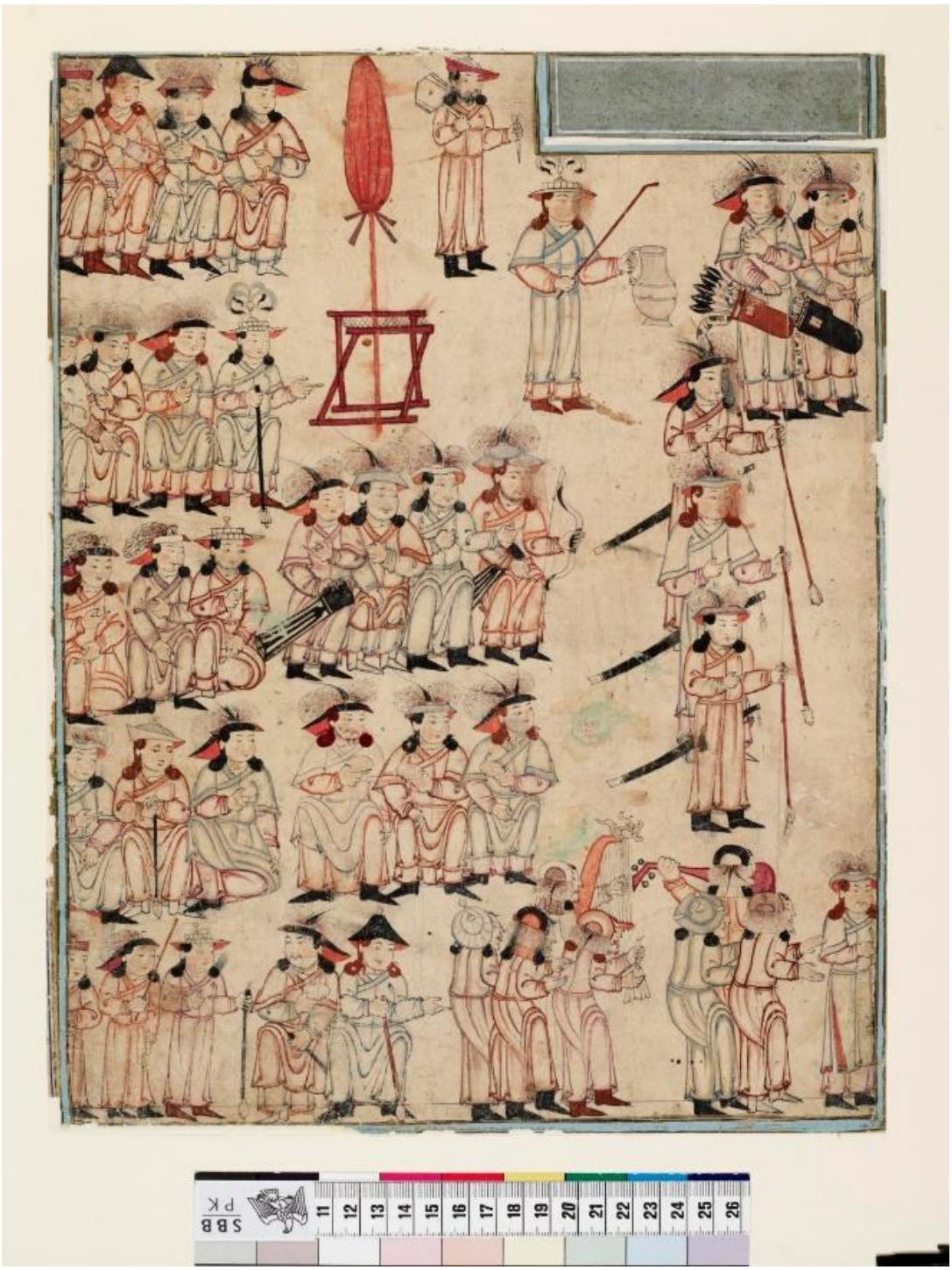
This rigid rule of seating orders, as discussed in the Introduction, is a shared practice of many Central Eurasian polities. For instance, in 449, the Roman diplomat Priscus noticed that in the court of Attila, Attila sat on a couch in the middle with his two sides full of seats for others and those on his right hand were for the honorable persons.[154] The spatial

[152] Cf. Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate*, 17-25.
[153] Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, 64-65.
[154] Roger C. Blockley, ed. and trans., *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol. 2 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983), 284-85.

arrangement of the Mongol enthronement ceremony is well presented in contemporary visual sources. In the famous Diez Albums preserved at the Oriental Department of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, several illustrations depict the enthronement ceremony of the Mongol great Khan. It is generally considered that these illustrations were detached from the manuscripts of *Jami' al-tawarikh* made under the Rashid al-Din's supervision in the early of fourteenth century.[155] In two of these illustrations, we can see that the Khan and his chief *Khatun* sit on the throne in the middle; to the left hand of the chief *Khatun* are other wives of the Khan seated in senior rank, and the scribes and falconers; to the right hand of the Khan are the quiver bearers, sword bearers, parasol bearers, tent master, and other noblemen; in front of the royal couple are the food servers, musicians, and perhaps the envoys who are waiting for audience (see Figure 2). As Charles Melville notes, these scenes demonstrate that formal spatial arrangements in Mongol court were highly hierarchical.[156]

In all, as the most magnificent political event of the steppe world, the enthronement of the Mongol Great Khan was surrounded by intensive diplomatic communications and negotiations. The symbolism of the gifts and the ritualized process of gift-giving occupied a central place in these contacts. The set protocol regarding the reception of envoys and diplomatic gifts is well attested in the Mongol empire. This protocol includes the differentiated boarding standard based on the status of the mutual relationship, the purification of the envoys and gifts through fire, and the etiquettes of the eventual meeting. All of these events during the ceremony took places in meticulously arranged space. The Mongol royal women played a recognizable role in these official receptions. Overall, these Mongol court practices were not alien to visitors from afar.

[155] Sheila S. Blair, "Jāmeʿ al-Tawārik̲, ii. Illustrations," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jame-tawarikh-ii (accessed on 30 April 2020).
[156] Charles Melville, "The Illustration of the Turko-Mongol Era in the Berlin Diez Albums," in *The Diez Albums: Contexts and Contents*, ed. Julia Gonnella et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 221-42, here, 232-33. The article of Yuka Kadoi in the same volume studies these enthronement images from the perspective of iconography and codicology, see Yuka Kadoi, "The Mongols Enthroned," in ibid., 243-75.



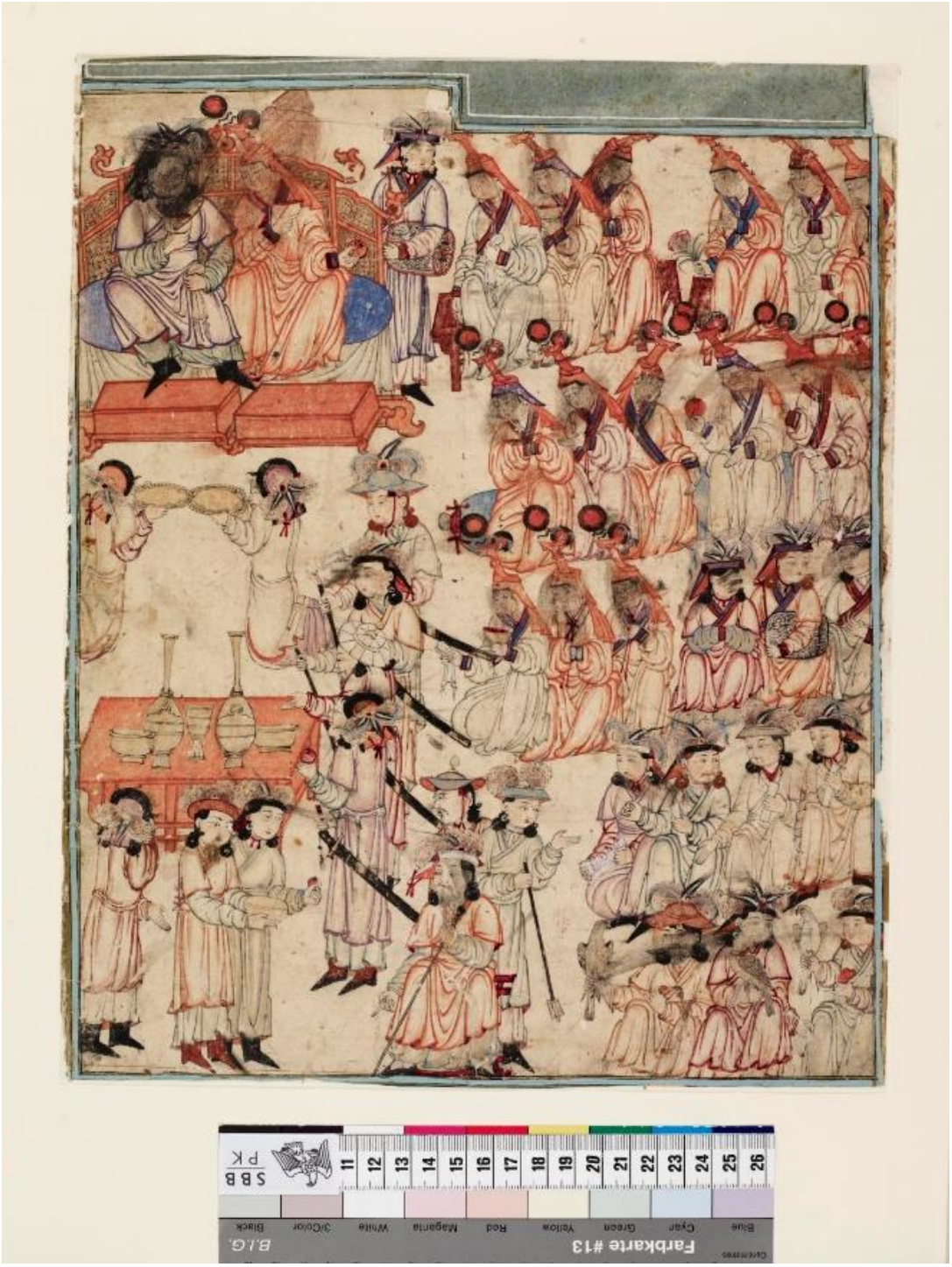


Figure 2 Enthronement Scene in the Mongol Imperial Court, illustration from the Diez Albums, Iran, early fourteenth century, Ink, colors, and gold on paper, 39.7 × 30. 6–30.7 cm (above) and 36.0 × 29.5 cm (below). Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A, fol. 70, S. 20 and S. 21). Available at: https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN73601313X&PHYSID=PHYS_0094&view=picture-download and https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN73601313X&PHYSID=PHYS_0095&view=picture-download, accessed April 30, 2020.

Birthday celebration of the Great Khan

Unlike the enthronement ceremony, celebrating the birthday of the great khan as a public event is mainly influenced by Chinese political culture.[157] In the early stages of Mongol society, the months and days were not widely recorded either in public or private life. Genghis Khan's date of birth is unknown, even the year of his birth is debated among scholars.[158] In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, the sole surviving source compiled by the Mongols themselves, only three specific dates are mentioned throughout the whole text.[159] This suggests that it is highly unlikely that the royal birthday would be observed as a public event.

The turning point came in the year of 1260 when Kublai (r. 1260-94) founded the Yuan dynasty and adapted the Chinese administrative system. In the year of 1261, 1262, and 1263, following the convention with the Song dynasty, the Korean Goryeo king sent envoys to Beijing to felicitate the birthday of Kublai.[160] In an imperial edict issued by Kublai in 1264, two days' leave was granted for imperial officers on the birthday of the khan and the

[157] Bertold Spuler otherwise suggests that at least during the reign of Ilkhan Ghazan of Iran (r. 1295-1304), Ghazan's birthday was celebrated. Spuler's source for this is a manuscript of *Jami' al-tawarikh* preserved in Vienna. Considering the Islamization of the Ilkhanate and the celebration of birthday in Medieval Islamic society was only applicable to *Mawlid*, i.e. the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, the conclusion of Spuler that Ghazan must follow the old Mongol tradition "in der alten Weise" seems justified. See Bertold Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran: Politik, Verwaltung und Kultur der Ilchanzeit 1220 – 1350*, 2nd (Berlin: Academie Verlag, 1955), 264-265. Spuler's viewpoint is adopted by the authors in the standard reference book *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, see A.K.S. Lambton, "Marāsim," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, vol. 6: *Mahk-Mid*, ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 524. Judith Kolbas furtherly points out that the celebration of Ghazan's thirtieth birthday used so much precious metals that in the area of 'Iraqi-i 'Ajam not a single silvery coin was struck for a year. Yet her reference for this is somehow ambiguous, see Judith Kolbas, *The Mongols in Iran: Chingiz Khan to Uljaytu, 1220-1309* (London: Routledge, 2006), 344. At present I am not in a position to check the manuscript Spuler used, meanwhile I find no relevant information of Ghazan's birthday celebration in the English translation of *Jami' al-tawarikh* by W. M. Thackston. Hence, currently I am prone to the viewpoint that the birthday celebration of the great khan as a public festival mainly reflects the influence of Chinese political culture.

[158] [Xiaolin Ma] 馬曉林, "馬可波羅、鄂多立克所記元朝天壽聖節" [The festival of the imperial birthday in the Yuan dynasty according to Marco Polo and Odoric of Pordenone], in 楊志玖教授百年誕辰紀念文集 [Festschrift in honor of the 100th birthday of Professor Zhijiu Yang] (Tianjin: Tianjin Guji, 2017), 409-24, here 410.

[159] [Hsu Cheng-hung] 許正弘, "元朝皇帝天壽節考" [A study on the festival of the imperial birthday in the Yuan dynasty], *Cheng Kung Journal of Historical Studies* 44, (2013): 109-44, here 114; *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz, 23 and 115.

[160] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 107, 112, and 115.

winter solstice festival, respectively.[161] In 1269, court ritual reform was initiated upon the suggestion of Bingzhong Liu 劉秉忠, one of the most intimate court advisers to Kublai. The reform was mainly intended to regulate the court etiquette and vestments in a traditional Chinese manner.[162] In 1271, Kublai furtherly issued an edict to establish a new department Shiyi Si 侍儀司 to manage all the ceremonies regarding the New Year, the birthday of emperor, and the reception of envoys.[163] In August of 1271 in Chinese calendar (September in Julian calendar), Kublai celebrated his first birthday in Chinese courtly manner.[164] Hereafter, the royal birthday as one of the court rituals formally became a public festival in the Yuan dynasty. Besides granting a two days' leave for the bureaucrats, prohibition of animal slaughter, keeping of vegetarian diet, amnesty of prisoners and public charity were performed during the festival period.[165]

In the imperial court, the main ceremonies were focused on benedictions, gift-giving, and feasts. Marco Polo, who served in the court of Kublai for almost two decades, is one of the most important contemporary eyewitnesses. As an adept merchant and diplomat, Polo was particularly interested in the material aspects of the ceremony and was well acquainted with the logic of power negotiation behind the scenes:

> On his birthday, the Great Kaan[*sic*] dresses in wondrous robes of beaten gold, and twelve thousand barons and knights also dress in the same colour and after the same fashion. But though their robes are of the same colour and fashion, yet they are not so costly; but all the same they are of silk and gold. And all of them have great golden belts. This raiment is given them by the Great Kaan…And you must know that thirteen times a year does the Great Kaan

[161] [Gaohua Chen] 陳高華, et al. ed., 元典章:大元聖政國朝典章 [*Statutes and Precedents of the Yuan dynasty*] Vol. 1 (Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Press, 2011), 385; [Xiaolin Ma] 馬曉林, "馬可波羅、鄂多立克所記元朝天壽聖節" [The festival of the imperial birthday in the Yuan dynasty according to Marco Polo and Odoric of Pordenone], 410.
[162] The biography of Bingzhong Liu, see Hok-lam Chan, Liu Ping-Chung, in *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yüan Period, 1200-130*0, ed. Igor de Rachewiltz et al. (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1993): 245-69.
[163] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 134.
[164] Ibid., 1666. Xiaolin Ma otherwise suggests the first celebration of Kublai's birthday was no later than 1264, see [Xiaolin Ma] 馬曉林, "馬可波羅、鄂多立克所記元朝天壽聖節" [The festival of the imperial birthday in the Yuan dynasty according to Marco Polo and Odoric of Pordenone], 410.
[165] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 588, 722, 860, and 2474.

> give rich robes to these twelve thousand barons and knights; and all these robes are similar to his own, and of great value... You must further know that on his birthday all the Tartars in the world, all provinces and all lands subject to him, give him great presents, varying according to the rank of the giver, and to the established custom. Great gifts are brought him by many others, too, namely those who wish to ask for some office… And on that day all idolaters, and all Christians, and all Saracens, and all other kinds of people, utter solemn prayers to their idols and gods, with much singing and burning of incense, and great illuminations, to preserve their Lord for them and grant him long life and joy and health. [166]

On that day, both the Great Khan and his courtiers were in dressed luxurious costumes. These costumes called *jisun* in Mongolian and *zhisun* 質孫 in Chinese are made out of the famous *nasij*. The costumes worn by the courtiers, in spite of their inferior quality, share the same color with that of the great khan. The fact that the costumes were provided by the great khan, suggests that only those who held these robes were entitled to enter the royal event. Meanwhile, the imperial birthday was never just a personal court event in the Mongol court but rather a political occasion, during which the powerful subjects of the great khan were obligated to attend. Polo rightfully discerned the network of gifts in the Mongol court, namely, the gifts from the other three Mongol khanates, from the provinces under the rule of the Yuan dynasty and from the countries subordinate to the Mongol empire.[167] These gifts were naturally prepared according to their established power relation with the great khan. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the benison from various religious communities was also regarded as a special kind of gift in the Mongol court. For the great khan, the prayers by all kinds of monks and blessings of various gods were held to be able to increase his charismatic power.

Another court visitor, Odoric of Pordenone, completes the picture with more details. The Franciscan friar was lucky enough to witness the birthday celebration of Yuan emperor

[166] Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 133.
[167] A reference in *Yuan Shi* likewise indicated that in 1323 on the birthday of Yuan emperor Shidebala (r. 1320–23), the kings of Bintan (an island in modern Indonesia), Java and other countries sent their envoys and gifts, see Song, *Yuan Shi*, 628.

Yesün Temür (r. 1323-28) during his mission in China in 1320s. Unlike the Polos, Odoric took the maritime route and arrived at the southeastern Chinese coast first. From there he headed north and finally reached the great khan's court in Khanbaliq. Odoric lived in the capital for three years and was quite familiar with the imperial court festivals:

> Every year that emperor keepeth four great feasts, to wit, the day of his birth, that of his circumcision and so forth. To these festivals he summons all his barons and all his players, and all his kinsfolk; and all these have their established places at the festival. But it is especially at the days of his birth and circumcision that he expects all to attend. And when summoned to such a festival all the barons come with their coronets on, whilst the emperor is seated on his throne as has been described above, and all the barons are ranged in order in their appointed places. Now these barons are arrayed in divers colors; for some, who are the first in order, wear green silk; the second are clothed in crimson: the third in yellow.…And there be also many officers to look diligently that none of the barons or of the players are absent. For any one of them who should absent himself would incur heavy penalties…one of them calls out with a loud voice, saying: " Prostrate yourselves before the emperor our mighty lord! " And immediately all the barons touch the ground three times with their heads. Then he will call out again: "Rise all of you!" and immediately they get up again… And after this all those of the famous princely families parade with white horses. And a voice is heard calling: "Such an one of such a family to present so many hundreds of white horses to the lord "; and then some of them come forward saying that they bring two hundred horses (say) to offer to the lord, which are ready before the palace. And 'tis something incredible the number of white horses which are presented to the lord on such an occasion. And then come barons to offer presents of different kinds on behalf of the other barons of the empire; and all the superiors of the monasteries likewise come with presents to the Khan, and are in duty bound to give him their benison. And this also do we Minor Friars.[168]

Odoric's passage is generally held to be authentic except for the misconception of circumcision practice. It is well known that the Yuan emperors were never followers of Islam like the khans of the western Mongol khanates. Nevertheless, the rigid code of official court dress and the seating order of the courtiers, as well as the obligation to attend the court ceremony, and the benison from various religious communities, are well attested in the previous text of Marco Polo. In addition, Odoric offers several insights into the rituals of gift-giving and the gifts themselves.

[168] Odoric of Pordenone, "The Travels of Friar Odoric of Pordenone," in *Cathay and the Way Thither, Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, vol. 2, trans. and ed. Henry Yule (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1913), 237-39.

One the one hand, before presenting the gifts, the attendees were required to prostrate for several times before the great khan to pay homage. Unlike Carpini and other envoys who were required to go down on the left knee four times during the enthronement ceremony, this ritual of prostration is a typical Chinese court etiquette. On the other hand, the typical birthday gifts for the great khan, as Odoric reports, were white horses. Horses as diplomatic gift were widely accepted across the Central Eurasian world. Symbolizing obedience and loyalty, they frequently appeared on the gift lists from the western Mongol khanates to the great khan.[169] The color of white had a special symbolic meaning in the Mongol empire. As Thomas T. Allsen shows, white color had already been associated with good fortunes and political charisma in the pre-Chinggisid Central Eurasia.[170] For the Mongol, in the year of 1206 when Temüjin united the whole Mongolian tribes, a white standard with nine tails were hoisted to award him the title of Genghis Khan. Juvanyi also metaphorically called the entrapment of Genghis Khan as the banner of fortunes was raised.[171] In the following period, white color kept acting as a crucial symbol to represent and display the Chinggisid charismatic kingship. As we will see in the next chapter, the white color and white things were also conspicuous elements of the New Year's ceremony in the Mongol imperial court.

In all, the birthday of the Mongol great khan was never just a personal event but a highly politicized occasion. To celebrate the birthday of the great khan as a public festival is a product of the influence of Chinese political culture especially after the 1260s. However, the culture of gift-giving still had a wider Central Eurasian background, the horses and especial white horses are the most typical birthday gifts for the Mongol great khan. It is

[169] See the discussion in the section "*Gifts in Diplomatic Network*" of chapter 1.
[170] Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire*, 57-70.
[171] Ibid., 59; *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz, 133; Juvaini, *The History of the World Conqueror*, 22. On the colour symbolism in the wider Central Eurasia context, see Omeljan Pritsak, "Orientierung und Farbsymbolik: Zu den Farbenbezeichnungen in den altaischen Völkernamen," *Saeculum* 5 (1954): 376-83; Timothy May, "Color Symbolism in the Turko-Mongolian World," in *The Use of Color in History, Politics, and Art*, ed. Sungshin Kim (Dahlonega, GA: University Press of North Georgia, 2016), 51-78.

through this ritualized ceremony that the status of the great khan and his subjects are acknowledged and furtherly confirmed in its material form—the gifts.

New Year's celebration

The Mongol empire applied the so-called Chinese-Uighur animal calendar system, which uses twelve animals as a cycle to denote the name of each year. As its name indicates, this calendar represents a cultural fusion of the Chinese and steppe world.[172] Originally invented by the Chinese, the calendar was adopted by their Turkic-speaking northern neighbors no later than the eighth century. In turn, after conquering the Uighurs in the late twelfth century, the Mongols inherited the Uighur calendar and many other cultural legacies, out of which the Uighur script and bureaucratic system were the most influential ones. With the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, the Mongols remodified their calendar based on the Chinese model. This Chinese-Uighur animal calendar influences many parts of the Eurasian world due to the expansion of the Mongol Empire.[173] According to this calendar, the New Year usually falls on a day in February, as it is known in the Julian calendar.

Compared to the ceremony of enthronement, there were relatively less sources of the New Year's celebration. Among the various foreign visitors, Marco Polo is the only one who witnessed this ceremony. Therefore, his passage will be quoted at length:

> You must know that their New Year's Day comes in February…It is the custom that the Great Kaan and all his subjects, both men and women, old and young, should on that day dress in white robes, if they have but the means to do so. This they do because white clothes seem to them an excellent thing and of good omen. So they dress in white on New Year's Day, that they maybe lucky and happy all the year. And on that day, all peoples, and provinces, and lands, and kingdoms, subject to the Great Kaan, send him great gifts of gold,

[172] On the Chinese-Uighur animal calendar system, see Louis Bazin, *Les systèmes chronologiques dans le monde turc ancien*. Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica, XXXIV (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991); Brian Baumann, "Calendar," in *The Mongol Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Timothy May (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2017), 124-27.

[173] Charles Melville, "The Chinese-Uighur Animal Calendar in Persian Historiography of the Mongol Period," *Iran*, 32 (1994): 83-98; Peter Golden, "The Twelve-Year Animal Cycle Calendar in Georgian Sources," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 36, no. 1/3 (1982):197-206.

> and silver, and pearls, and precious stones, and many splendid white cloths. This they do in order that their Lord may during the whole year, have treasure in abundance, and be happy and joyful. And I tell you, too, that the barons and knights, and all the people, exchange presents of white things, and they embrace and greet one another with joy and mirth. And they say to one another, as we also do: " Mayall that you do this year be lucky and fortunate." And this they do in order to enjoy prosperity and good fortune all the year.
>
> And you must also know that on that day more than a hundred thousand splendid white horses are given to the Great Kaan; and if they are not absolutely white all over, they are at least almost completely white. Of white horses there is great abundance in those parts. When they make gifts to the Great Kaan, it is their custom that the giver should, if he can, follow this observance, namely give nine times nine units of the thing given. Thus, if the present is one of horses, nine times nine horses are given, namely eighty-one; if it is gold, then nine times nine pieces of gold; if it is cloth, nine times nine pieces of cloth; and so on for all things.
>
> On that day, too, his elephants are taken out, which amount to no less than 5000, fine cloths, bearing figures of birds and beasts. Each of them bears on its back two surpassingly beautiful and richly-wrought coffers, full of the Lord's plate, and of other precious things necessary for the White Court. Then there follows an immense number of camels, also covered with rich cloths, and loaded with the things necessary for this feast. And all file past the Great Lord; it is the finest sight that ever was seen.
>
> I must add, too, that, on the morning of that feast, before the tables are set out, all the kings and all the dukes, marquesses, counts, barons, knights, astrologers, leeches, and falconers, together with many more officers and rulers of peoples, lands, and armies, all gather gether in the presence of the Great Kaan… And this is how they are disposed. First there are the Kaan's sons, his grandsons, and his kinsfolk of the Imperial lineage. Then there are the kings; then the dukes; then all the other ranks, one after the other, in the proper order…When all have done so, then they give the gifts I have told you of, that are so immensely precious and so splendid. When all the gifts have been given, and the Great Kaan has seen everything, then the tables are laid out…[174]

First, in contrast to the previous two ceremonies, the main color in the New Year's celebration is white. On that day, the great khan and his subjects not only worn white costumes, but also exchanged gifts in white color. As discussed, white color is associated with good fortunes and political charisma in the Mongol empire, which Marco Polo rightfully discerned. Second, Marco Polo relates that the Mongols had a custom to give gifts at the

[174] Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 134-37.

number of nine or its multiples, all the horses, gold, clothes, and other things were prepared in this way. This custom was well perceived by the contemporaries of Mongols. According to *The Secret History of the Mongols*, in 1227, the last emperor of Tanguts Li Xian or Shidurghu presented himself with gifts in the camp of Genghis Khan. He prepared the gifts partly in the manner of the Mongols, which included golden images of Buddha, silver bowls and vessels, boys and girls, geldings and camels, each kind in the number of nine.[175] Third, many animals took part in this ceremony. The horses were presented as gifts, while the elephants and camels had double roles of displaying and conveyance. As indicated in chapter 1, the elephants and some of the camels arrived at the Mongol imperial court as tributes and gifts too. Furthermore, as it is in other court ceremonies, the New Year's celebration was arranged in hierarchy. The royal sons, grandsons, and other kinsfolk of the imperial lineage, noblemen, courtiers, and rulers of foreign lands were deposed in senior rank to express good wishes to the Kublai Khan.

The observation of Marco Polo can be complemented by Chinese sources. In the chapter *liyue* 禮樂 (or etiquette and music) of *Yuan Shi*, several details are provided. First, some preparatory works need to be done before the New Year's celebration. Two days before the ceremony, the courtiers should rehearse the etiquettes at a Buddhist temple in Khanbaliq. The day before, all the facilities for the ceremony should be installed in place at the court. [176] Second, the order of felicitation recorded in *Yuan Shi* is slightly different than that of Marco Polo, as it is narrated in the sequence of royal wives, sons, son-in-laws, grand chancellor and other officers, monks, and finally the foreign guests.[177] Third, there is a procedure for presenting gifts. The gifts are taken by officers of the Ministry of Rites in front of the emperor, while the officer in charge of receiving gifts read out the lists to the public. Then the

[175] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz, 199.
[176] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 1666.
[177] Ibid., 1667-68.

officer is led out by the director of Shiyi Si 侍儀司 from the right side of the palace, and the gifts are taken out from the left side of the palace and handed over to the imperial treasury.[178]

Overall, the New Year's celebration in the Mongol imperial court shares some similarities with the Birthday celebration of the great khan, in term of the basic units of benedictions, gift-giving, and feasts. Yet the New Year's celebration distinguishes itself in its white color theme and more grandiose spectacle. For Marco Polo, this celebration is the greatest feast held in the khan's court.[179]

In addition to these three major ceremonies, there were certainly other ceremonial occasions during which gift exchanges took place. In the above-quoted passage from Odoric, he actually mentions four festivals, though the other two names except the birthday and circumcision are not provided.[180] Henry Yule supplements that the four feasts of the Yuan emperor could be his birthday, his coronation, his marriage with a queen, and the birthday of his first-born son.[181] Chinese source confirmed that the birthday of queens and crown princes were celebrated in the Mongol imperial court, yet the details of gifts were usually not provided.[182] For the wedding gifts, perhaps the most famous one in the history of Mongol empire was the black sable coat brought by Börte for Temüjin's mother Hoelun, her mother-in-law. This gift also had an interesting afterlife. We know from *The Secret History of the Mongols* that it was sent by Temüjin to Ong Khan, the leader of the Kereit tribe and sworn brother of his father Yesügei, in exchange for military support. [183] In the early Mongol society, gift-exchange was also part of the rituals of sworn brotherhood, *anda* in Mongolian. Temüjin

[178] Ibid., 1668.
[179] Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 133.
[180] The original Latin text in critical edition, see A. Van den Wyngaert ed., *Sinica Franciscana*, vol. 1: *Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, 479-80: "Et cum habet plures uxores, illa cum qua dormit in nocte sedet iuxta eum in die, et oportet quod omnes alie veniant ad domum illam illa die ad bibendum, et ibi tenetur curia die illa, et exenia que deferuntur illa die domino, deponuntur in thesauris illius domine."
[181] Henry Yule, trans. and ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 2, 237, footnote one.
[182] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 976, 1680; [Hsu Cheng-hung] 許正弘, "元朝皇帝天壽節考" [A study on the festival of the imperial birthday in the Yuan dynasty], 136-37.
[183] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz, 30.

and Jamukha picked up two things from their own booties for each other. Temüjin sent a golden belt and a yellowish white mare with a black tail and mane, Jamukha otherwise sent a golden belt and a kid-white horse.[184]

To conclude, as the grandest events in the Mongol imperial court, the enthronement of the great khan, the birthday celebration of the great khan and the New Year's celebration share overall identical patterns, which include benediction, gift-giving and banquets. These ceremonies are well arranged both in procedures of rituals and space. More or less, all of them experienced changes after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty in 1271. As *Yuan Shi* states, since then the rituals of enthronement, New Year's celebration, birthday celebration of the great khan, etc., more followed the Chinese tradition, while the Mongol traditions were applied in the banquets.[185] This chapter furtherly demonstrates that the traditions of gift-giving continues in the Yuan dynasty. The network of gifts built in the united period of the Mongol empire functions in the Yuan dynasty as well. Regardless of being textile fabrics, costume, weapons, gems, precious metals or animals, all these gifts were prepared on the established customs to comply with the power hierarchy. The preference for white color and the number of nine also belong to these traditions. Through the court ceremonies, the primary function of gifts have been fulfilled. Yet, as the next chapter will show, the life of them usually do not end. These gifts are deposited, consumed, displayed, and even recycled and redistributed for next circles.

[184] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol. 1, trans., Igor de Rachewiltz, 44-45. Also see Ágnes Birtalan, "Rituals of Sworn Brotherhood (Mong. *anda bol-*, *Oir.* and, *ax düü bol-*) in Mongol Historic and Epic Tradition," *Chronica* 7 (2007): 44-56.
[185] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 1664.

Chapter 3 – The Afterlives of Gifts

The present chapter discusses the afterlives the gifts. The first question is that of the repository of the gifts. This agency and institutional issue will be examined from the perspective of the Mongol imperial treasury system and the role of Mongol *khatuns* of the great khan. The second question is the mechanism of distribution. In the idea world of the Mongols, the empire and its resources were regarded as shared property of the whole golden family. The head of the family, the great khan had the right to distribute them based on the Chinggisid tradition. However, unlike the spoils as well as newly conquered lands and peoples, the gifts were more personal and at the discretion of the khan. These treasures were frequently granted as gifts to Mongol dignitaries in exchange for their loyalty especially during the period of succession competitions as well as in routine investitures. Furthermore, the consumption and display of the gifts very much depended on the nature of gifts, for instance, an exotic animal and an object for daily use, their afterlives are different. Several case studies will be discussed in the last part of this chapter.

Repository

The issue of gift management must be examined within the context of Mongol court management, especially its treasury system. At present, scholars have not reached an agreement concerning the origins and functions of the Mongol imperial treasury. Timothy May points out that the Mongol treasury as an institution did not come into being until the founding of the Mongol capital Karakorum in 1230s.[186] It was under the command of the Great Khan Ögödei that a specific governmental branch was set and guards were selected to

[186] May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History*, 116.

take care of the imperial treasuries.[187] Michael Hope elsewhere remarks that there was no formal treasure house at Karakorum and the system of treasury keeping in the early period of the Mongol empire was rather primitive, since there was no need for a fixed treasure storage due to the seasonal movement of the imperial court.[188] Both views are valid and drawn from primary Mongolian (*Secret History of the Mongols*) and Persian (*History of the World Conqueror*) sources, respectively. In fact, the formation of the Mongol treasury system was a long process and cannot be fully understood without the context of the Mongol imperial court management and the idea of imperial property.

In order to trace the origin of the gift-keeping system, we need to turn to the earliest source of the Mongols, *The Secret History of the Mongols*. In 1206, right after being elected as the great khan, Genghis Khan laid out the imperial blueprint. The first thing he designed is the administrative system. He appointed his servants to take different positions: quivers carrier (*qorchi*), stewards (*baurchi*), sheep keeper (*qonichi*), tent-carts manager (*ulachi*), swords carrier (*ulduchi*), gelding officer (*kodolchi*), equerry (*qulaqachi*) and parasol bearers (*sukurchi*).[189] According to the prominent German Orientalist Gerhard Doerfer, parasol has a symbolic meaning for ruling and domination in many Eurasian courts.[190] Meanwhile, based on the Ghazan Khan's testament, Charles Melville demonstrates that parasol bearers ranked the top position of the imperial household due to their closest proximity to the Khan.[191] It is reasonable to deduce that *Sukurchi* who was in charge of the servants of the imperial household could also possibly be responsible for the Khan's treasures.

[187] Ibid., 116.
[188] Michael Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanate of Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 60-61.
[189] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, vol.1, trans. Igor de Rachewiltz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 50-52.
[190] Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen, Band I: Mongolische Elemente im Neupersische*n (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963), 357-58.
[191] Charles Melville, "Ghazan Khan's Political Will and Testament: Further Light on the Mongol Household," *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 22 (2018): 164–90, esp. 167.

A source from *Yuan Shi* gives us a further clue how this household system functioned in terms of gifts management. In 1215, Yelu Liuge 耶律留哥, a Khitan royal descendant serving for the Jin dynasty, was forced to rebel the emperor of Jin. In the end, Yelu fled to the court of Genghis Khan and brought him ninety carts of gold coins, as well as five hundred gold and silver plates.[192] These gifts were highly cherished by Genghis Khan not for their monetary value, but rather because Yelu, who was of royal blood, broke away from a heavy siege and sought him for shelter. Thus, the great khan held a solemn ceremony for these gifts by placing them on white felt for seven days. Only after this were these gifts taken into the treasury.[193] Certainly not every gift and gift presenters enjoyed such a highly courteous reception. This in itself indicates that the Mongols undoubtedly had an institution and some kind of custom to handle gifts.

Nevertheless, the Mongol imperial treasury during this early period functioned differently than the khan's contemporaries.[194] Some research even suggests that is no evidence proving that register lists of treasury have ever existed in the Mongol court before the end of thirteenth century.[195] In the early fourteenth century, Rashīd al-Dīn still complained about the chaos of the Mongol imperial treasury in his *Jami't-Tawarikh*:

> Prior to now it was not customary for anyone to maintain written accounts of the Mongol Emperors treasuries or to keep track of additions and outlays. They used to appoint a few *khizanachis* [treasurers] to receive whatever was brought in. Together they placed things in the treasury and gave out what was expended. When nothing was left, they would say so. A few custodians also maintained the treasury, and they did the loading and unloading. The whole thing was so disorganized that there was not even a tent: they simply piled things in the open and covered them with felt. From this one can deduce what the situation was like.[196]

[192] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 3512-13.
[193] Ibid., 3512-13.
[194] On the household and treasury management of the medieval European court, for instance, in England, see James F. Willard and William Alfred Morris, eds., *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336*, vol. 1: *Central and Prerogative Administration* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1940), 206-49.
[195] Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition*, 173.
[196] Rashīd, *Jami't-Tawarikh*, 746.

One might wonder why such a great empire had not developed an effective or at least rational system to preserve their wealth, especially considering the huge exchange and circulation of personnel and objects moving through the imperial court. The previous chapters have shown that the Mongol imperial court acted as the very hub of an extensive Eurasian network of gifts especially during the seasons of imperial court ceremonies. Then in what explains the inefficiency of the gift repository? From my opinion of view, several notable aspects resulted that the imperial treasury system was not highly institutionalized. First, the Mongol rulers kept the seasonal movement of their court even after the establishment of a fixed capital.[197] The Yuan dynasty had a formal capital Dadu or Khanbaliq (modern Beijing) and a summer capital Shangdu or Xanadu. The Ilkhan in Iran had two capitals Tabriz and Sulṭāniyya, and other seasonal camps. And the khans of Golden horde made seasonal movements along the Volga River. At least some parts of the imperial treasury would be moved annually with these khans. Second, the Mongol imperial family held the attitude that the imperial property was the public wealth in circulation. The whole empire was regarded as the shared properties of the Chinggisid family, and the great khan was rather readily to be praised for his generosity. As Marie Favereau in a recent publication reveals, in the Mongol ideological world, "the circle of redistribution brought happiness", and "the ultimate purpose of the Mongol Great Khan was not to retain but to circulate wealth." [198] Finally yet importantly, the patrimonial nature of the Mongol imperial administration made the division between government funds and family wealth very unclearly.

Different independent sources confirm that there was no clear boundary between the Mongol imperial treasury and the households of the Great Khan and his wives. A somewhat

[197] For the seasonal capitals in the Mongol empire, see Tomoko Masuya, "Seasonal Capitals with Permanent Buildings in the Mongol Empire," in *Turko-Mongol Rulers, Cities and City Life*, ed. D. Durand-Guedy (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 223-56; J. A. Boyle, "The Seasonal Residences of the Great Khan Ogedei," *Central Asiatic Journal* 16 (1972): 125-131.

[198] Marie Favereau, "The Mongol Peace and Global Medieval Eurasia," *Comparativ: Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 28, no. 4 (2018): 49-70, here 57.

later case from the Ilkhanate is illustrative in this aspect. Every time the Il-Khan Abaqa (r. 1265–81) went to the treasury, he "brought out exquisite gems and precious things" and "secretly gave to his senior wife Bulughan."[199] Consider the received gifts for example, a notable part of them would not directly go into the imperial treasury but were distributed ad hoc upon the command of the great khan. Especially when he received the envoys and gifts in his wives' *Ordo*, the *khatuns* would have a right for these objects. William of Rubruck gave us a vivid account of one such reception in the Ordo of the *khatun*:

> As he has more than one wife, the one with whom he is sleeping at night sits by his side during the day, and all the rest must come that day to her dwelling to drink: there the court [curia] is held for that day, and the gifts presented to the master that day are stored in the lady's treasury.[200]

But matters were far more complex. The word "stored" (*deponuntur*) may cause some ambiguities. Were these gifts only temporarily deposited in the treasury of the *khatun* or were they transferred to the *khatun* permanently? Fortunately, Persian sources provide an answer. Those gifts would become the income of the *khatuns*, which constituted a significant proportion of the Ordo finance. In *Jami't-Tawarikh*, Rashīd al-Dīn lists the various financial sources of the Ordo:

> During the time of Hulagu Khan and Abaqa Khan, funds for meals in the *ordus* and for the ladies were in accordance with Mongol custom, and not too much expenditure was involved here. When booty was brought from enemy territory, a part of it was given to them. Each [of the ladies] also had an *ortaq*, and they brought in something in the name of *asigh* [profit], or someone would present a gift. They also had some herds and there were the profts from their increase. Funds for their meals and necessities came from those sources, and they were satisfied with that.[201]

[199] Rashīd, *Jami't-Tawarikh*, 848; Allsen, *The Steppe and the Sea*, 44-45.
[200] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 76. The original Latin text in critical edition, see A. Van den Wyngaert ed., *Sinica Franciscana*, vol. 1: *Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, 479-80: "Quatuor magna festa in anno iste Imperator facit, scilicet festum circumcisionis, eiusque nativitatis diem, et sic de aliis reliquis."
[201] Rashīd, *Jami't-Tawarikh*, 745-46.

Based on the records of William of Rubruck and Rashīd al-Dīn, it is not unreasonable to infer that these gifts were regarded as the compensation and benefits for the *khatuns* for hosting the reception of the khan's visitors. [202]

As for those gifts sent initially to the *khatun* rather than the khan, they certainly became the personal belongings of the *khatun*. There is a well-known but also debated case, the Christian tent-chapel sent by Louis IX to the Mongol rulers. In 1250, through the hands of the Dominican missionary Andrew of Longjumeau, the tent-chapel came to Oghul Qaimish, the widow of Güyük Khan.[203] It is arguable that three years later William of Rubruck saw it again near Karakorum.[204] In the letter written to Louis IX in 1262, Hülegü likewise referred a special chapel.[205] Some scholars disagree with this interpretation of provenance. According to Marianna Shreve Simpson, Louis IX's gifts were presented not to Güyük but to his widow Oghul Qaimish, then serving as regent after the death of Güyük, and may not have been passed on to Güyük's successor, Möngke.[206] It seems unlikely that the chapel in the court of Möngke was "the" one sent by Louis IX. Yet, we should not forget the great khan should have the absolute right to all the properties in his empire including those of the *khatun*. As the story of the pearls cited at the very beginning of this thesis shows, it was under the command of Ögedei Khan that Möge Khatun gave her pearls to the farmer, notwithstanding at the end of the story, the Khan got back the pearls for his wife. In this sense, the remark from Thomas T. Allsen is insightful indeed, "the imperial administration was essentially an extension of the prince's household establishment in terms of organization, function, and personnel", which

[202] In her recent groundbreaking monograph on the Mongol imperial women, Anne F. Broadbridge rightfully argues that the occasional gifts from the great khans in the form of spoils from warfare acted as an important source of the royal female household maintaining. Yet, she does not establish connections between the reception of envoys and the distribution of gifts, see Anne F. Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 23-24.
[203] Jean de Joinville, *The History of Saint Louis*, trans. Joan Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 40, 142.
[204] *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, 173-74.
[205] Paul Meyvaert, "An Unknown Letter of Hülagü, Il-Khan of Persia, to King Louis of France," *Viator* 11 (1980): 245–59, here 257–58; Simpson, "Manuscripts and Mongols," 351-94, here 360.
[206] Simpson, "Manuscripts and Mongols," 358-61.

makes the reign of Mongol emperors "have a pronounced patrimonial flavor." [207] The Mongol *khatuns* were certainly involved in the depository and circulation of the gifts, as result of the patrimonial nature of the Mongol imperial administration.

To summarize, during the period of Genghis Khan, the *sukurchi*, who was in charge of the domestics and servants in the khan's court was the *de facto* treasurer. The aforementioned case of Yelu shows that the imperial court also developed its customs to manage the received gifts. With the transformation of Mongol society from tribal union to empire, and the development of its governmental apparatus, a primitive yet more formal treasury system took shape during the reign of Ögödei, especially after the establishment of the capital Karakorum. Yet, it is noteworthy that not every gift was sent into the imperial treasury. Since the Ordo of the *khatuns* is usually the very place the khan received the envoys and gifts, these gifts will become the incomes of the Ordo of the *khatuns* acting as the compensations and benefits. This primitive and chaotic depository situation must be observed from the several perspectives: the seasonal movements of the imperial court, the idea of regarding the imperial property as public wealth in circulation, and perhaps most importantly the influence of the patrimonialism attached to the Mongol nomadic entity. That is, in the words of Allsen again, "Chinggisid rulers rarely made any distinction between government funds and family wealth."[208]

(Re-)Distribution

Many scholars have highlighted the importance of wealth distribution in the Mongol empire. Joseph Fletcher considers the ability of obtaining and distributing wealth as the most desirable qualification for a great khan candidate.[209] İsenbike Togan, one of the disciples of

[207] Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 100.
[208] Allsen, *The Steppe and the Sea*, 45.
[209] Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives," 23.

Fletcher, suggests that the act of redistribution corresponds to the Mongol tribal structure and is the key to understand the mechanism of the rising of the steppe empire.[210] Furthermore, Thomas T. Allsen points out that the Chinggisid practice of capturing, collecting, and redistributing reflects the demographic and ecological requirement of the Mongol pastoral nomadism, which is continuously preserved in its further imperial stage.[211] These excellent works serve as good basis for further analysis of the distribution of the received gifts in the Mongol imperial court. In the following, three dimensions of distribution will be examined, namely the distribution as the underpinning mechanism of the Mongol empire as a political entity, as a political tool to attract loyalty during succession intrigues, and as institutionalized ways to conform hierarchy during routine investitures.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, the Mongol great khan received most of his gifts during three major court ceremonies. Except those transmitted in the hands of the *khatun*, most of the gifts were stored in the imperial treasury. Gifts are certainly not the only sources of imperial finance: tax revenues, booty and tributes (the latter ones frequently in the guise of gifts) take up the more prominent parts.[212] However, as Favereau convincingly argues, diplomatic gifts comprised the majority of the redistributed items in the imperial court from the end of the thirteenth century onwards, since the storming period of the Mongol expansion almost ended and the income from booty significantly decreased.[213] The exotic and luxury attributes of the diplomatic gifts certainly also add to their popularity. In order to get a better understanding of the distribution mechanism in the imperial courts, the fundamental rule of

[210] İsenbike Togan, *Flexibility and Limitation in Steppe Formations: The Kerait Khanate and Chinggis Khan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 5-8, 14-16.
[211] Thomas T. Allsen, "Sharing out the Empire: Apportioned Lands under the Mongols," in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, ed. Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 172–90.
[212] A classical research on the financial system of Mongol empire, see H. F. Schurmann, "Mongolian Tributary Practices of the Thirteenth Century," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19, no. 3/4 (1956): 304-89. A discussion and response of Schurmann's thesis, see John Masson Smith, Jr., "Mongol and Nomadic Taxation," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 30 (1970): 46-85. A case study on the Mongol-dominated Iran, see A. K. S. Lambton, "Mongol Fiscal Administration in Persia," *Studia Islamica* 64 (1986): 79-99, and "Mongol Fiscal Administration in Persia (Part II)," *Studia Islamica* 65 (1987): 97-123.
[213] Favereau, "The Mongol Peace and Global Medieval Eurasia," 57.

the Mongol statecraft, the Chingisid principle, must be considered. The core of this principle is that the empire and its sovereign power are regarded as shared property of the descendants of Genghis Khan and only the male members of this Golden Family are eligible to rule as khans.[214] This principle took roots during the last years of Genghis Khan's reign when he allocated his extensive lands to his four sons. Based on it, Jochid received all the lands western to the Altai Mountains, Chaghadai got West Turkestan, Ögedei obtained the throne of central Mongolia and Dzungaria as his allocation, and the youngest son, Tolui, was awarded east Mongolia.[215] This plan eventually paved the road for the formation of the four individual khanates.[216]

In accordance with the territorial allocation, taxation, captives, spoils, ideas and technologies were also the subjects of distribution.[217] It was very common in the Mongol empire that the different ruling houses had apanages within the sphere of other khanates especially in Yuan China, which was among the first lands that the Mongols conquered. Their hereditary rights on these apanages were nevertheless largely respected and secured even during interwar periods. Generally, the income from these apanages would be registered and collected by the local administrative institutions and included in the state revenue. The Mongol khans would then dispatch their envoys to claim these benefits, albeit not regularly: for most, it was a side assignment while fulfilling other major diplomatic missions. There are good records of such appanage revenue transfer from Yuan China to Ilkhanid Iran and to the Golden Horde. In 1298, Ilkhan Ghazan sent a large embassy to China to collect his income dating back to the period of his grandfather Hülegü. The two heads of the embassy Malik

[214] On the Eurasian legacy of Chingisid principle, see Michal Biran, "The Mongol Transformation: From the Steppe to Eurasian Empire," *Medieval Encounters* 10, 1-3 (2014): 358-59.
[215] Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 42-43.
[216] However, it does not mean that the four individual khanates were the direct result from the allotment of Genghis Khan. As Peter Jackson suggests, these khanates of the later thirteenth century differentiated themselves from those of the first generation, and represented "an administrative rationalization, a consolidation and concentration of resources in the hands of fewer princes." See Peter Jackson, "From Ulus to Khanate: The making of the Mongol states c. 1220-c. 1290," in *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. R. Amitai-Preiss and D. O. Morgan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 31.
[217] Allsen, "Ever Closer Encounters," 6.

Fakhr al-Dın Ahmad and Noghai Elchi spent four years in China. The exact amount of the income was not preserved, but we know that the embassy returned with a great amount of gifts and a Chinese envoy named Yang Shu 楊樞 sent by the Mongol great khan and Yuan Emperor Temür, the grandson of Kublai.[218] In 1336, Özbeg Khan of the Golden Horde also sent an envoy to the imperial court of Toghon Temür at Beijing. This time Chinese sources relate that he received 2400 ingots of paper money from his apanages in Pingyang 平陽, Jinzhou 晉州 (both in Shanxi province) and Yonzhou 永州 (in Hunan province).[219] These apanages were awarded to the Jochid family in 1230s and 1280s after the conquering of Jurchen Jin and the Southern Song dynasty, respectively.[220]

If the apanage taxations were regarded as deserved share for the Mongol khans, other distributed wealth certainly meant more gifts to them. Gift-giving took up a great part in the policy toolkits of the great khan especially during the enthronement season. Since theoretically every male relative of the Chingisid imperial clans had the right to claim the throne, the competition was usually rather fierce and bloody. In these court struggles, gift-giving acted as an effective way to gain support and secure loyalty. Ögedei who was renowned for his generosity and beneficence was adept in using this tool. Ögedei faced no legitimate challenge for his own accession in 1229, since it was the founding father Genghis Khan who personally assigned the position for him. Nevertheless, after the enthronement ceremony and drinking feast, Ögedei ordered to open his treasuries and bestowed a great amount of gifts and presents:

> They should open the deposits of the treasuries collected during so many years from the countries of the East and the West for the behoof of Chingiz-Khan, the sum total of which could not be contained within the bellies of ledgers. He closed the mouths of the censorious with rejection of their advice and allotted

[218] Allsen, "Sharing out the Empire," 181; Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*, 34.
[219] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 2906; Allsen, "Sharing out the Empire," 179.
[220] A case study on the Jochid apanages in Yuan China, see Yihao Qiu, "Independent Ruler, Indefinable Role: Understanding the History of the Golden Horde from the Perspectives of the Yuan dynasty," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 143 (2018): 45-64.

> his portion to each of his relatives and soldiers, his troops and kinsfolk, noble and base, lord and liege, master and slave, to each in accordance with his pretensions; and left in his treasuries for the morrow neither much nor little, neither great nor small.[221]

These acts of gift-giving smoothed the transition from the reign of his father, the great world conqueror Genghis Khan, to himself. The empire continued its expansion under the rule of Ögedei, and in 1234, they finally ended the war with the Jurchen Jin and overthrew their previous master once for all. At this time, all the lands north to Yellow River came into the domination of the Mongols.

In 1235, Ögedei convened his second *quriltai* in the newly established imperial capital Karakorum. The principal agenda was to formulate a new campaign plan aimed at the then unconquered Southern Song, Russia, and East Europe. As an incentive to the commanders and soldiers, Ögedei distributed gifts to his followers:

> In his wonted manner and in accordance with his usual practice opened the doors of his treasuries, which no man had ever seen closed, and distributed amongst all present, kinsman and stranger, all the valuables that had been gathered together from every clime since the holding of the first *quriltai*, scattering them upon small and great as the spring cloud rains upon grass and trees.[222]

These rewards certainly boosted the morale and courage of the men on the eve of an expedition. It also promised a shining vision for receiving much more valuable rewards after the triumph of campaign. The ensuing military expedition was a great success in the western direction. Under the lead of Batu, the son of the Jochi, the Mongol subjugated almost of the all lands of the Rus' Principalities and penetrated into Central Europe and the Balkans.

Unlike his father, Güyük had struggled and overcame great challenges before ascended the throne. Even to his own father, Güyük was not the preferable candidate. It was largely due to the efforts of his mother Töregene Khatun that Güyük won.[223] Meanwhile, several incidents contributed to the mother and son's success. Köchü, the favored son of

[221] Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 188-89.
[222] Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 198.
[223] On the life and activities of Töregene, see Bruno De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran: The Khātūns, 1206–1335* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 66-72; Anne F. Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*, 164-94.

Ögedei, died prematurely in 1236 during the campaign against Southern Song. Although Shiremün, Köchü's then minor son, had the support of his grandfather, he was too young to be considered as a capable ruler of such a huge empire. As for Töregene, she herself was not the great *khatun* but the sixth, yet the great *khatun* Boraqchin passed away without an offspring. In the following five years, Töregene showed her outstanding political skill. She persuaded and gained the support of the imperial clans especially that of the Chaghadaid house and replaced Möge Khatun, the heroine of the above quoted pearl story, as the regent of the empire. Among her multifaceted tactics, Töregene was especially adept at giving gifts to win over supporters:

> And when Möge Khatun shortly followed in the wake of Qa'an, by means of finesse and cunning she [Töregene] obtained control of all affairs of state and won over the hearts of her relatives by all kinds of favours and kindness and by the sending of gifts and presents. And for the most part strangers and kindred, family and army inclined towards her, and submitted themselves obediently and gladly to her commands and prohibitions, and came under her sway.[224]

Having learned from his father and mother, Güyük frequently used gift-giving as part of his statecraft. In 1246, Güyük was elected as the new Mongol Great Khan during the *quriltai* convened by his mother. The first order he issued was to open the treasury and to distribute wealth as Ögedei had done many years ago:

> When they had done with feasting, he ordered the doors of the old and new treasuries to be opened and every sort of jewels money and clothes to be got ready and the direction of this business, that is, the distribution of these valuables he entrusted to the counsel and discretion of Sorgotani Beki, who had the greatest authority in that *quriltai*. The first to receive their share were the princes and princesses that were present of the race and lineage of Chingiz-Khan; as also all their servants and attendants, noble and base, greybeard and suckling; and then in due order the *noyans*, the commanders of *tümen*, thousands, hundreds and tens, according to the census, the sultans, *maliks*, scribes, officials and the dependents. And everyone else who was present, whoever he was, did not go portionless, nay everyone received his full share and appointed lot.[225]

[224] Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 240-41. Similar passage appeared under the pen of Rashid al-Din, see Rashid al-Din, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. J. A. Boyle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 176.
[225] Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 254-55.

The gifts distribution by Güyük reveals the rigid rule of social ranking in the Mongol imperial court, the sequence of distribution had to be strictly observed, ranging from the Chingisid imperial clans to Mongol military dignities, and then to the leaders of the client states. The identity of the distributor is pertinent here.[226] The person customarily in charge of distribution had to be the highest sovereign of the empire, i.e. the great khan himself but Güyük entrusted his right to Sorgotani Beki, the elderly female leader of the Toluid house.[227] This can be explained by the fact that the support of the Toluid house enabled the election of Güyük decisively. Güyük had been at odds with the Jochid house leader Batu since the western campaign of 1236 and the latter would be the last one to support Güyük's claim for throne. Meanwhile, Temüge Otchigin, the youngest brother of Genghis Khan and leader of the eastern realm of the empire posed the imminent and geographically proximate danger to Güyük. Right after the death of Ögedei, Otchigin marched to Karakorum with his huge army only to be persuaded by Töregene to retreat. It was the decision from Sorgotani Beki and Toluid house to stand by Güyük that change the course of this *quriltai*.[228]

As in many other place, gifts distribution also took place during the investitures of appointing positions in the Mongol imperial court. [229] The common distributed gifts in these investitures were gold, silver, silks, robes of honor, jade belts, weapons and armors. In some cases, prestigious hunting animals like cheetahs and gyrfalcons would be given to the generals who performed exceptionally meritorious service to the great khan. These vigorous yet tamed animals symbolized the valiance of these generals, but also delivered the message

[226] This ceremonious occasion of gifts distribution was also noticed by John of Carpini, yet as a foreigner, Carpini was not capable of discerning the inner rules of the Mongol distributions, let alone the role of the Tolui house in the enthronement of Güyük, see Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, 64.
[227] Sorgotani was similarly well known for using gifts to win over supporters, which turned to be very helpful in the succession of his son Möngke after the dealth of Güyük, see Rashid al-Din, *The successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. J. A. Boyle, 199-200.
[228] A revaluation of Güyüg Khan and his short-term reign, see Kim Hodong, "A Reappraisal of Güyüg Khan," in *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, ed. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 309-38.
[229] For the investiture practice in wider Eurasian context, see Stewart Gordon, ed., *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

of great khan that further loyal service were expected from them. In fact, in the early period of Mongol empire, the four heroic warriors by Genghis Khan's side, namely Jebe, Qubilai, Jelme and Sübe'etei, won the exact name "four hounds" for themselves.[230] Needless to say, these exotic animals were mostly gifts or tributes presented to the great khan, the great khan then redistributed them as gifts to his generals, which certainly displayed the power of the monarchy and gave great honor to the recipient.

In the first decades of the fourteenth century, the Qipchak originated family members of Tuq Tuq'a were the most powerful figures in the imperial court. Three generations of the family kept close relationships with the great khans and received prominent positions and enormous gifts. [231] Tuq Tuq'a (1237-97) made his big name first during the rebellion of Shiregi in 1276.[232] Shiregi was the son of Möngke Khan, he and other rebel generals marched into the central lands of the Mongols and took away the military tent once belonged to Genghis Khan. It was Tuq Tuq'a who chased up the rebels and get the tent back. Kublai was overjoyed and he rewarded Tuq Tuq'a a whole set of golden and silver wine vessel, 100 taels of silver, a whole set of luxurious *zhisun* costume, and a white gyrfalcon. The tent of Genghis Khan was also given to him as a supreme honor. [233] During his whole career, Tuq Tuq'a received amounts of gifts from the great khan, to name of a few, a piece of golden mink fur, a black gyrfalcon, leather cap embed with pearls, and five Arabian camels.[234] These royal favors continued for his offspring. His son Chong'ur (1260-1322) had an even more glorious military career in wars against Qaidu (c. 1230-1301) and Du'a (died 1307), the two rebellious Mongol princes in Central Asia. The precious gifts he received from the great khan included

[230] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, Vol.1, trans. Igor de Rachewiltz, 119.
[231] On the Tuq Tuq'a family, see [Yingsheng Liu] 劉迎勝, "床兀兒及其家族的活動"[Chong'ur and the activities of his family], *Xiyu Yanjiu* 3 (1993): 81-86; Michael Brose, "Qipchak Networks of Power in Mongol China," in *How Mongolia Matters: War, Law, and Society*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 69-86.
[232] For the rebellion of Shiregi, see Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (London: Curzon Press, 1997), 39-40.
[233] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 3132.
[234] Ibid., 3131-35.

one tiger or cheetah, the military tent, armor and sedan chair once used by Kublai Khan, and the ivories and golden sedan chair that originally came from Dali Kingdom as tributes.[235] The era of El Temür (1285-1333), son of Chong'ur, witnessed the heyday of Tuq Tuq'a family. He was the leader of the royal guard of Haishan (r. 1307–11), kingmaker of Tugh Temür (r. 1328, 1329–32), murder of Khoshila (r. 1328–29) and father-in-law of Toghon Temür (1332–70), the last Yuan emperor. In 1328, he was invested by Tugh Temür as King of Taiping 太平王, Supreme Grand Marshal 上柱國, and Grand chancellor of the Right Hand, and was bestowed with 100 taels of gold, 2,500 taels of platinum, 10,000 ingots of paper money, 2,000 bolts of various kinds of textile, a white gyrfalcon, 2 white gyrfalcons, a cheetah, and 500 hectares of lands.[236] In the same year, Tugh Temür rewarded El Temür enormously, for his deeds in releasing Dadu and Shangdu the two capitals of Yuan China from rebels. El Temür received the title of *Tarkhan*[237] , which can be inherited by his descendants, and two gowns embed with pearls, seven belts embed with gemstones, a platinum vase, 2 golden vases, a white gyrfalcon, 3 black gyrfalcons, a white hawk, and 20 cheetahs.[238]

Consumption

After examine the repository and (re-)distribution of gifts, another aspect of their afterlives will be investigated, namely consumption. As chapter 1 shows, various kinds of gifts were exchanged in the Mongol diplomatic network. In terms of afterlives, we can roughly categorize them into animate and inanimate gifts. For the inanimate objects, their afterlives mostly ended in the treasury or in the hands of the recipients through the process of

[235] Ibid., 3135-38.
[236] Ibid., 3328.
[237] *Tarkhan* was a high-ranking honorary title widely existed among Central Eurasian nomadic polities, the holders enjoyed the privileges of exempt from punishment for nine times. See Peter Golden, "Ṭarkhān," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, vol. 10: *T-U*, ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 303; Marie Favereau, "Tarkhan: A Nomad Institution in an Islamic Context," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 143 (2018), 165-90.
[238] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 3331.

redistribution.[239] For the animate objects, especially the animal gifts, their afterlives were much more colorful. Some of them were so exotic or impressive that they left traces both in the contemporary written and visual sources. In this section, the final stages of three kinds of animal gifts will be traced: horses, cheetahs and elephants.

The first case is the horse arriving at Khanbaliq in 1342, which was brought by the Franciscan John of Marignolli acting as the legate of Pope Benedict XII.[240] This embassy was a continuation of a century-long communications between the Mongol great khans and the popes. Yet the directly impetus was as a return visit for the envoys sent by the Yuan emperor Toghon Temür arrived at Avignon in 1338, the aim of which was to ask the Pope to send an new archbishop for the catholic archdiocese of Khanbaliq. This archdiocese was previously established by Pope Clement VI in 1307 with the Franciscan John of Montecorvino as its first archbishop, yet Montecorvino passed away in 1328 and the position remained vacant since then. [241] Pope Benedict XII readily prepared letters and gifts and appointed his legates, and John of Marignolli was one of them.

Marignolli and his companions arrived at Khanbaliq in 1342 and Toghon Temür welcomed them warmly. The emperor rejoiced greatly when he saw the horses brought for him, according to *Yuan Shi*, one of the horse was so special that it was 11 feet 6 inches in

[239] The pearls received in the Mongol imperial court are the one of those inanimate gifts which mainly serve the purpose for public display, either embed on clothing or on *boghta*, the head ornament of Mongol royal females, see the recently nice discussion in Allsen, *The Steppe and the Sea*, 50-68.

[240] On the mission of John of Marignolli and the horse gift, see Paul Pelliot, "Chrétiens d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême-Orient," *T'oung Pao* 15 (1914): 623-44; Herbert Franke, "Das ‚himmlische Pferd' des Johann von Marignola," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 50 (1968): 33-40; [Ting Wang] 王頲, "'天馬'詩文與馬黎諾里出使元廷" [The poems of the heavenly horse and the mission of John of Marignolli to Yuan court], in 駕澤摶雲: 中外關係史地研究[Historical and geographical studies of the Sino-foreign relations] (Haikou, 2003): 92-110. On the way to Khanbaliq, Marignolli stationed at the court of the Jochid Khan Uzbeg, see Denis Sinor, "Some Latin Sources on the Khanate of Uzbek," in *Essays on Uzbek History, Culture, and Language*, ed. Bakhtiyar A. Nazarov and Denis Sinor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 110-19. On the late life of Marignolli after the mission, see Irene Malfatto, "John of Marignolli and the Historiographical Project of Charles IV," *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis* 15 (2017): 131-40.

[241] Good introductions to these missionaries, see Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221-1410* (London: Routledge, 2005), 256-60; A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before the Year 1550* (London: 1930), 252-64. The letters written by John of Montecorvino during his tenure were published in A. Van den Wyngaert, ed., *Sinica Franciscana*, vol.1, 335-355; English translations in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 3, trans. and ed. Henry Yule (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1914), 3-27.

length, 6 feet 8 inches high, with a pure black color skin and two white hind hooves.[242] However, the exact provenance of this horse is not very clear. In the Marignolli's text, he did not refer clearly from where this horse was obtained or purchased. Instead, he said that the great khan received "the great horses and the Pope's presents."[243] Likewise, on the way to Khanbaliq, Marignolli stationed at the court of the Jochid Khan Uzbeg and brought him "certain pieces of cloth, a great war-horse, some strong liquor, and the Pope's presents."[244] Both of them suggest that these horses were not part of the original gift package brought from the Papal court in Avignon. They were purchased somewhere else presumably by using the money given by the Pope. The horses finally arrived at Khanbaliq could be purchased *en route* either in Europe, Russia or Central Asia.

In any case, Marignolli and his companions were quite well treated in the imperial court, as narrated by himself, "with the greatest honor."[245] The great khan accommodated Marignolli and his companions in one of his imperial apartment, sent servants from his court to wait upon them, additionally two princes were appointed to take care of their needs. Not only meat and drinks were provided endlessly as they wished, but also the Chinese paper. Marignolli and his companions enjoyed such bountiful treatments for nearly four years until they set out on a return journey.[246] The horse also enjoyed a shining afterlife. Toghon Temür order his courtiers and court painters to immortalize this horse in their works.[247]

[242] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 865.
[243] John of Marignolli, "John de' Marignolli's Recollections of Eastern Travel," in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 3, 213. Latin text see Van den Wyngaert ed., *Sinica Franciscana, vol. 1: Itinera et Relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, 528: "Maximus autem Kaam, visis dextrariis et donis Pape et litteris bullatis..."
[244] John of Marignolli, "John de' Marignolli's Recollections of Eastern Travel," in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 3, 211-12; Sinor, "Some Latin Sources on the Khanate of Uzbek," 117; Latin text see Van den Wyngaert ed., *Sinica Franciscana, vol. 1,* 527: "Inde ad prium Thartarorum Imperatorem Usbec pervenimus et obtulimus litteras, pannos, dextrarium, cytiaeam et dona pope."
[245] Marignolli, "John de' Marignolli's Recollections of Eastern Travel," 214.
[246] Ibid., 214-15.
[247] [Ting Wang] 王颋, "'天馬'詩文與馬黎諾里出使元廷" [The poems of the heavenly horse and the mission of John of Marignolli to Yuan court], 92-99. Herbert Franke translated one of these poems into German, see Herbert Franke, "Das ‚himmlische Pferd' des Johann von Marignola," 37-38.

The second case is the cheetahs and other hunting animals used in Kublai's imperial court. Hunting had multiple functions in the pre-modern Eurasian world. It was a considerable way to obtain good quality proteins. Meanwhile, commanders and soldiers could practice their military skills in these highly disciplined and coordinated activities. For the royal families, hunting was more of leisure than a need, yet it could also function as arena of symbolic communications to display and publicize the royal power. [248] The Mongol khans had a long reputation of their indulgence in hunting. The painting *Kublai Khan Hunting* created by the Yuan court artist Liu Guandao (fl. 13th c.) is one of the best visual presentations of the Mongol royal hunting culture (see Figure 3).[249]

This painting presents one of Kublai's hunting in later autumn. In the middle are Kublai khan and his *khatun*, Kublai wears a red robe covered with white fur, while the *khatun* is in bright white robe. Behind them are two retinues who carry bows and arrows, one of them is attempting to shoot the wild geese fly overhead. The persons who take care of the animal assistants surround them. A cheetah is sitting on the back of a horse, a white gyrfalcon and a golden eagle are stationing on the arms of two falconers, and a hound is running in the forefront. This is a highly hierarchical image, evidently both in the rank of costumes they worn and the decoration of their mounts. It is also embodied in the diverse origins of the animal assistants and the hunters. As discussed in chapter 1, these cheetahs mainly came from West Asia as gifts from the western Mongol khans, and the gyrfalcons were from the northern forest area. For the hound and the hunters with dark skin color, if we remember well the gifts sent from a sultan of India for the enthronement of Möngke Khan, the hound and the

[248] On the political culture of royal hunting in Central Eurasia, see Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, 119-85.

[249] On the Mongol royal hunting, see [Baohai Dang] 黨寶海, "蒙古帝國的獵豹與豹獵" [Cheetah and cheetah hunting in the Mongol empire], *Minzu Yanjiu* 4 (2004): 94-101; [Xinyuan Chen] 陳新元, "八兒赤與元代豹獵" [*Barsci* and cheetah hunting in the Yuan dynasty], *Xiyu Yanjiu* 2 (2016): 60-71.

hunters by Kublai's side could also possibly come from the Indian subcontinent.[250] Once again, we see how the network of gifts functioned in the Mongol empire.

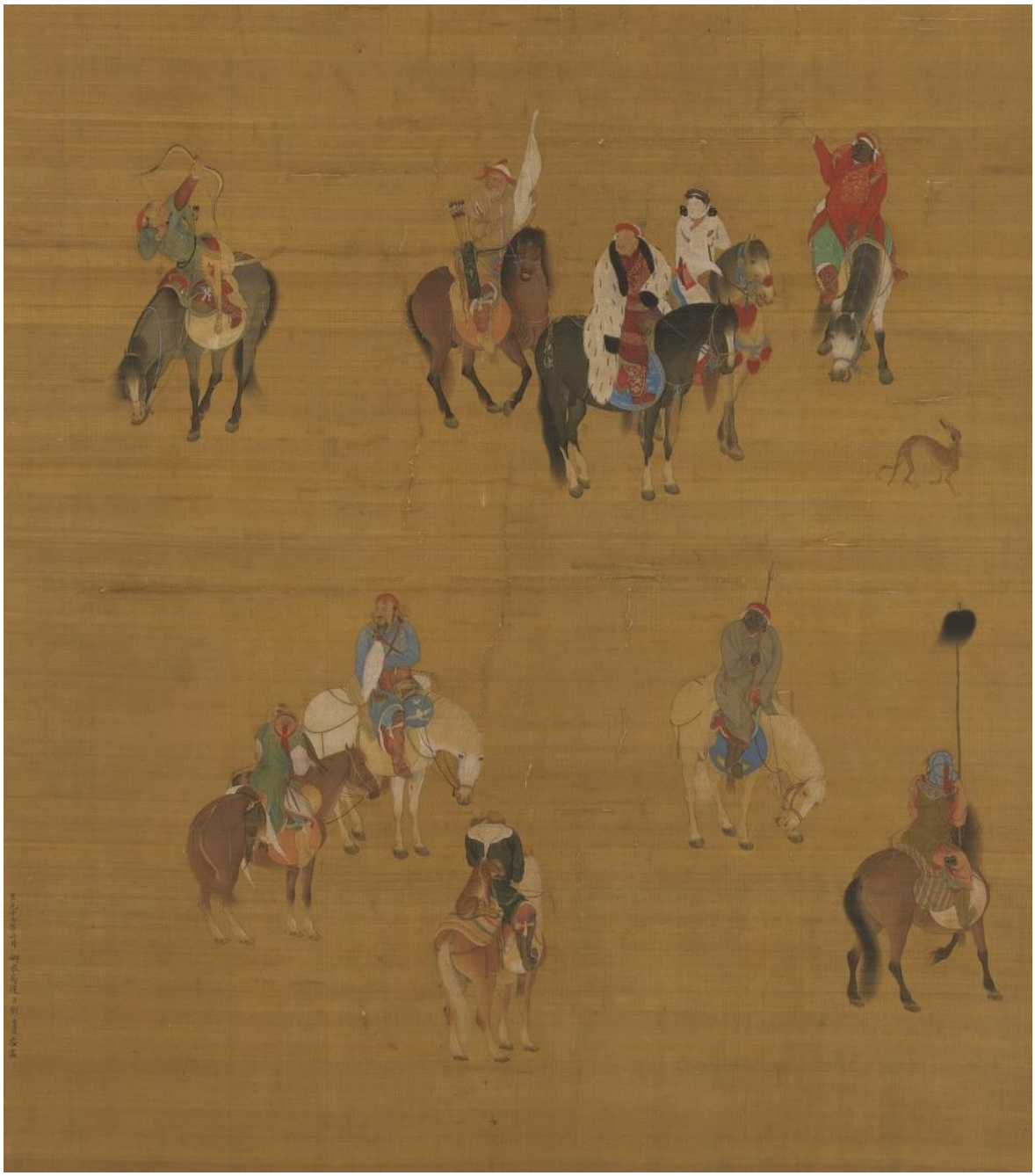


Figure 3 Liu Guandao, *Kublai Khan Hunting* (detail), dated 1280. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, 182.9 x 104.1cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei. Available at: https://theme.npm.edu.tw/khan/Article.aspx?sNo=03009149, accessed April 30, 2020.

[250] The gift package includes eight leopards and ten greyhounds which had been trained to sit on a horse's back, see the discussion in the sections *Gifts in Diplomatic Network* and *Enthronement of the Great Khan*.

The third case is the elephants observed by Marco Polo in the court of Kublai Khan.[251] As indicated in chapter 1, these huge animals came from Yunnan and Southeastern Asian countries as booties and tributes. The details of the means and routes of conveyance are not well recorded. After arriving the court, the elephants mainly served as travel tool of the great khan. Sometimes they appeared in ceremonies, hunting and warfare as well. Kublai was well known for his preference for elephants, elephant howdah was his most favorite travel tools during his imperial itineraries from Khanbaliq to Shangdu.[252] According to *Yuan Shi*, the first elephant howdah of Kublai was made in the year of 1280.[253] Yet since 1263, a department named Chengan Ju 成鞍局 with three staffs had been set in the Kublai's court to be in charge of the manufacture of bridles, saddles, and howdahs for royal uses.[254] Kublai's howdahs was rather luxurious and spectacular. As related by Marco Polo, it was upheld by four elephants, the howdahs was made of wood yet inside all lined with cloths of beaten gold and outside covered with lions' skins".[255]

Such an enormous and grandiose walking palace produced great visual impacts on the observers. During the New Year's celebration in the court, elephants were very convenient to display the royal power of the great khan. As Marco Polo observes, no less than 5000 elephants took part in the ceremonies: all of them were covered with fine cloths and burdened on its back with two surpassingly beautiful and richly wrought coffers, inside were the dinnerware and other supplies for the banquet.[256] The amounts of elephants may be exaggerated by Macro Polo, yet the grandiosity of the court ceremony definitely impressed

[251] On the uses of elephants in the Mongol empire, see William G. Clarence-Smith, "Elephants in Mongol History: From Military Obstacles to Symbols of Buddhist Power," in *Animals and Human Society in Asia: Historical, Cultural and Ethical Perspectives*, ed. Rotem Kowner et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 241-66; [Ting Wang] 王頲, "馬可波羅所記大汗乘象史實補釋" [Notes on the elephants of Kublai Khan recorded by Marco Polo], *Yuanshi Luncong* 8 (2001): 24-32.
[252] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 1953, 3925.
[253] Ibid., 227.
[254] Ibid., 2279.
[255] Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 142.
[256] Ibid., 135.

him. Kublai took elephant howdah in hunting as well. Marco Polo mentions that during the hunting Kublai was used to staying in his howdah with his best twelve gyrfalcons, for he was tortured by the gout.[257] This gloomy image is amazingly contradictory to the majestic figure represented in Liu Guandao's painting. Yet in elsewhere, Polo notes that the great khan bravely waged his elephants into wars. In the war with Nayan, a rebellious Mongol prince in northeast China, Kublai took his elephant howdah on a hill. This time, it was not the gyrfalcons that sat with him, but the crossbow-men and archers and his royal flags.[258]

Elephants could also be dangerous when they were irritated. In 1282, Liu Haoli 劉好禮, the Ministry of Personnel of Kublai sent a memorial to the throne warning of the danger of using elephants as travel tools. It seemed that Kublai did not take his advice. Soon after, accident took place and several retinues of the Khan were hurt by these animals.[259] After defeating the rebellion of Naiman in 1287, Kublai and his companions once went for hunting. On the way back Kublai took the elephant howdah. In the meanwhile, some entertainers were playing lion dances to greet the great khan by the roadside. The elephants were irritated by these noises and were out of control. A *kheshig* or imperial guard of Kublai named He Sheng 賀胜 bared the way of these elephants using his own body, he was seriously injured but the Great Khan became safe and awarded him generously.[260]

In sum, the gifts arrived at the Mongol imperial court had different afterlives. For the inanimate objects, their afterlives mostly ended in the treasury or in the hands of the recipients through the process of redistribution. For the animate objects, especially the animal gifts, they had much more colorful afterlives. A relatively systematic protocol regarding the

[257] Ibid., 142.
[258] Ibid., 106.
[259] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 3925-26; [Ting Wang] 王頲, "馬可波羅所記大汗乘象史實補釋" [Notes on the elephants of Kublai Khan recorded by Marco Polo], 76.
[260] Song, *Yuan Shi*, 4149; [Ting Wang] 王頲, "馬可波羅所記大汗乘象史實補釋" [Notes on the elephants of Kublai Khan recorded by Marco Polo], 76.

repository, (re-) distribution, and consumption of gifts functioned in the Mongol imperial court. Subject to the tradition of seasonal movement of imperial court, the unique idea of treating imperial property as public wealth in circulation, and the patrimonial nature of the Mongol imperial administration, the gift repository system functioned not very efficiently. The distribution of gifts otherwise is rather central to the operation of the Mongol empire, it functioned as the underpinning mechanism of the Mongol empire as a political entity, as a political tool to attract loyalty during succession intrigues, and as institutionalized ways to conform hierarchy during routine investitures. The consumption of gifts in the imperial court played double roles. It was a part of the royal leisure; meanwhile it displayed and publicized the royal power in these conspicuous consumptions, especially when the consumed gifts were likewise precious and exotic.

Conclusion

This thesis investigates a pivotal aspect of Mongol court culture, the reception and management of gifts. The spatial and temporal framework is set within the imperial court of the great khans residing in Karakorum and Khanbaliq from the early thirteenth century to 1368. Gifts and gift-giving in Mongol imperial court culture is a research field under development. The previous researches either focus on the perception of gift-giving culture of the Mongol court society by the western visitors, or regard the Mongol court practices as a unique Asiatic and nomadic phenomenon of gift economy, which is essentially alien to other societies. Based on the critical analysis of multilingual written primary sources, Chinese and Latin in original, Persian, Mongolian, and others in translations, as well as visual materials, this thesis presents an inner view of the mechanism and performance of gift-giving in the Mongol imperial court. Methodologically, inspired by the concept "social life of things" and "object biography" developed by cultural anthropologists Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, this thesis sketches three major stages of the biographies of gifts: 1) from where, by whom and what kinds of gifts were sent to the Mongol imperial court, viz. the network of gifts; 2) under what ritual and spatial context, these gifts were presented in the court; 3) after the reception, in what place and under by whom these gifts were kept, based on what rules they were distributed, and in what way there were consumed, in other words, the afterlives of gifts.

In contrast to the traditional scholarship stressing the avarice and excess of the Mongols in demanding gifts, my thesis argues the Mongol imperial court practiced a well-set protocol regarding the reception and management of gifts. First, during the first diplomatic encounters with the Mongols, gift-giving was an essential part of the protocols, which included the differentiated boarding standard based on the status of the mutual relationship,

the purification of the envoys and gifts through fire, and the etiquettes of the eventual meeting. Rather than an expression of avarice and rudeness repeatedly complained by the western missionary reports, these protocols of gift-giving were commonly practiced in the pre-Chinggisid Eurasian world. For those countries submissive to the Mongols, giving gifts or paying tributes were regarded as obligation. Meanwhile, it is an effective way to maintain the peaceful relationships with the Mongols, and the Mongol would give rewards for the loyalty as well. The relationship between the great khan and the western Mongol khans are more intimate and equal. Their mutual gift exchanges were much more extensive, it could be in mutual military assistance but also in the exchanges of local rarities and exotic animals. The gifts exchanged in the Mongol imperial court included but not limited to textiles, animal gifts, slaves or human gifts, and religious gifts.

Second, in the Mongol imperial court, gift-giving was usually associated with court ceremonies. The enthronement of great khan, the birthday celebration of the great khan, and the New Year's celebration were the grandest events. The reason foreign envoys and gifts appeared in these events is that they are not only ritual but also political occasions. For the rulers of the vassal states of Mongol empire, it is a requirement to attend these important Mongol court events and give gifts or pay tributes to the great khan. For those countries that have not yet entered into a formal relationship with the Mongols, they are the ideal occasions to obtain intelligence from the Mongols. The basic parts of theses ceremonies are identical, including benediction, gift-giving and banquets. The New Year's celebration, birthday celebration of the great khan more followed the Chinese political tradition after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, while in the banquets the Mongol traditions were applied. The preference for white color and the number of nine also belong to the Mongol or Central Eurasian tradition. In addition, gift-giving is an integrated part of the ceremonies of the birthday of Mongol queens and crown princesses, the royal weddings, and the rituals of

sworn brotherhood. All of these ceremonies took places in meticulously arranged space where symbolic communications take place. Through these court ceremonies, the primary function of gifts have been fulfilled, but the life stories of them usually do not end yet.

Third, a relatively systematic protocol regarding the repository, (re-) distribution, and consumption of gifts functioned in the Mongol imperial court. The gifts arrived at the Mongol imperial court had different afterlives. For the inanimate objects, their afterlives mostly ended in the treasury or in the hands of the recipients through the process of redistribution. For the animate objects, especially the animal gifts, they had much more colorful afterlives. The gift repository system functioned not very efficiently in the Mongol imperial court especially in the early period, subject to the tradition of seasonal movement of imperial court, the unique idea of treating imperial property as public wealth in circulation, and the patrimonial nature of the Mongol imperial administration. The distribution of gifts otherwise is rather central to the operation of the empire. It functions as the underpinning mechanism of the Mongol empire as a political entity, as a political tool to attract loyalty during succession intrigues, and as institutionalized ways to conform hierarchy during routine investitures. The consumption of gifts in the imperial court played double roles. It is a part of the royal leisure; meanwhile, it displayed and publicized the royal power in these conspicuous consumptions, especially when the consumed gifts were likewise precious and exotic. Furthermore, a noticed feature of the Mongol court practice is that the Mongol royal wives, the *khatuns* actively participate in the reception, distribution and consumption of gifts.

Overall, the various kinds of gifts arrived at the court are the consequence of the expansion and consolidation of the Mongol imperial system. Meanwhile, the gifts materialize the royal power of the great khan, and the imperial hierarchy is reconfirmed through these acts of gift-giving. The Mongol court practices of give-giving is a continuation of the

centuries-long Central Eurasian court tradition, in terms of power mechanisms, essentially no alien to their counterparts.

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Appendix: Rulers of the Mongol Empire and the Yuan Dynasty

GREAT KHANS AND REGENTS OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE

Chinggis Khan 1206–1227

Tolui (regent) 1227–1229

Ögedei Khan 1229–1241

Töregene (regent) 1242–1246

Güyük Khan 1246–1248

Oghul Qaimish (regent) 1248–1251

Möngke Khan 1251–1259

EMPERORS (GREAT KHANS) OF THE YUAN DYNASTY

Kublai Khan 1260–1294

Temür Öljeitü 1294–1307

Haishan 1307–1311

Ayurbarwada 1311–1320

Shidebala 1320–1323

Yesün Temür 1323–1328

Khoshila 1328–1329

Tugh Temür 1328, 1329–1332

Irinchinbal 1332

Toghon Temür 1332–1370

Source: Timothy May, ed., *The Mongol Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 2* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2017), 259; Christopher P. Atwood, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2004), 625.