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***From ongon to icon:  
Legitimization, glorification and divinization of power in some  
examples of Mongol portraits<sup>1</sup>***

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Due to the dramatic destruction of the Mongol artistic heritage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, coupled with a natural difficulty of preservation of art objects in a nomadic context, the history of Mongol art can only be patchily reconstituted on the basis of a few scattered works. Although it is not possible to elaborate a stylistic study and a chronological evolution of Mongol portraits, the few examples of religious portraits from the Mongol Empire to the Qing dynasty, preserved or known about through textual descriptions I have gathered here allow me to present some of the choices made by the Mongols in the uses and representations of their sovereigns' portraits in both sculpture and painting. I will try to understand what was their symbolic role in state ideology compared to other material representations of power, and to underline some common features of Mongol portraits.

### **Statues of great Mongol ancestors**

The medieval Mongols worshipped portrait statues, and seem to have believed in an anthropomorphic survival of their former rulers. The oldest known representations of Mongol rulers were portrait statues of Chinggis Khan, recorded about 20 years after his death by 13<sup>th</sup> century travellers in the Mongol Empire. When Benedict the Pole encountered Batu (r. 1237-1256) at his camp on the lower Volga in 1246, he relates: 'beyond the (purifying) fires there stood a chariot bearing a golden statue of the Emperor, which also it is their custom to worship' (Dawson 1955: 80). Further east, in 1247, Plano Carpini describes an 'idol' (*idolum*) representing Chinggis Khan at Güyüg's camp in

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Christopher Atwood, Françoise Aubin, Roberte Hamayon, Grégory Delaplace and Vincent Goossaert for their insightful suggestions and corrections.

Central Mongolia. It stood on a cart, in front of the imperial tent, received numerous offerings of food, and was worshipped everyday at noon as their 'god'; horses were also consecrated to the effigy. Foreigners who refused to bow to the statue were killed (Plan Carpin/Becquet and Hambis 1965: 36-37).

Literary accounts give us other examples of emperors' statues kept in shrines. According to the Persian historian Rashīd ad-Dīn, images of the deceased *qans* were also worshipped in the 'Great Forbidden Sanctuary' (Yeke Qoriγ), the cemetery for Chinggisid nobility in the Hentii mountain range and incense was constantly burnt before them (Rashīd ad-Dīn/Thackston 1998-99: 464). Until the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, rituals were performed up in a memorial temple at or near Burqan Qaldun built by Qammala (1263-1302), the grandson of Qubilai, maybe on the right bank of the Avarga river (Delgerhaan sum, Hentii province) where ruins of a settlement with a temple and a palace have been identified (Rachewiltz 1997: 241-242, 252 n. 38; Atwood 2004, 26-27). The images mentioned by Rashīd ad-Dīn could have been located in that same temple, or were kept in the late *qan*'s *ordo*<sup>2</sup> (Barthold 1970: 214-215) that some archaeologist believe to have been located at the same place (Shiraishi Noriyuki 2006).

Temples with statues of great ancestors still existed at a later period. A statue of Chinggis Khan with a golden quiver containing arrows is also mentioned in the *Erdeni-yin tobci* and the *Altan tobci* at the Eight White Tents in Ordos about Toyon Taisi's death in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The great academician Rinčen mentions two temples in Mongolia that existed till 1937, dedicated to the *sülde*, 'the Spirit of the Banner of Činggis Qan, where were performed sacrifices and Shamanist rites resembling those performed at the temple of Činggis Qan at Ejen Qoriy-a in Ordos.' They enshrined 'remarkable statues of Činggis Qan, his celebrated marshals, of the chiefs of vanquished peoples [...].'<sup>4</sup>

No statues of Mongol rulers have survived but hundreds of 13-14<sup>th</sup> (and perhaps also 15<sup>th</sup>) century stone statues still stand in the vicinity of tombs, especially in Shilingol league (Sili-yin γool league: Zhenglan and Abaya banners) in Inner Mongolia, and in Sühbaatar (Dariganga sum), Dorngov', and Dornod provinces in Mongolia.<sup>5</sup> The Mongol stone men (*hiin čuluu*) belong to the same genre of funerary art as the stone figures of the Turks (552-742) and early Uyighurs (744-840) still standing on the Eurasian steppe.

The Mongol statues are life-size figures of men and women, with usually one hand holding a stemmed cup, and the other resting on the left knee (**fig. 1**). Some of them hold a

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<sup>2</sup> The dead *qan*'s encampments were classified as *qoriγ* (forbidden [sanctuary]), kept by the late *qan*'s wives who continued to give a share of the presents to the deceased ruler.

<sup>3</sup> Sayang Secen [1662] 1990, fol. 53 v<sup>o</sup>-54 r<sup>o</sup>; *Altan tobci*, 17<sup>th</sup> century, transl. Bawden 1955: 171.

<sup>4</sup> Rinchen 1959a: 11 and 1959b; see also Sagaster 1966. Barthold mentions two other statues which have sometimes been said to represent Chinggis Khan (1979: 220-221 and note 124). Under the Qing dynasty, an 'ongon portrait' of Tolui was kept in his shrine in Ordos, at the border of Otoγ and Qanggin banners (Atwood 2004: 162). Other references to portraits of Chinggis Khan: Heissig [1970] 1973: 421-422.

<sup>5</sup> Bayar ([1994] 2002) for a study of 69 statues in Mongolia; Ge Shanlin (1999: 323-355) for a study of 19 statues in Shilingol league; Amuer Batu 1997: 245-246; Dašnyam 1999: 93-138.

rosary in their left hand, others hold the cup with both hands. Their face generally looks towards the southeast. Their clothes and hats are comparable to those of Yuan tomb mural paintings' figures such as that of Yuanbaoshan 元寶山 (fig. 18), to real robes and hats found in tombs, and also fit with the section on costume in the official *Yuan History*:<sup>6</sup> male robes fastened to the right, sleeves tight-fitting at the wrist, belt from which are suspended personal accessories, boots, caps or turbans.<sup>7</sup> The majority of them are sitting on a folding chair (*jiaoyi* 交椅) with a round back, armrests, and feet-support.



**Fig. 1.** Stone marble statue, 13<sup>th</sup> century, Sühbaatar province, Dariganga sum. Tsultem 1989: n°56.

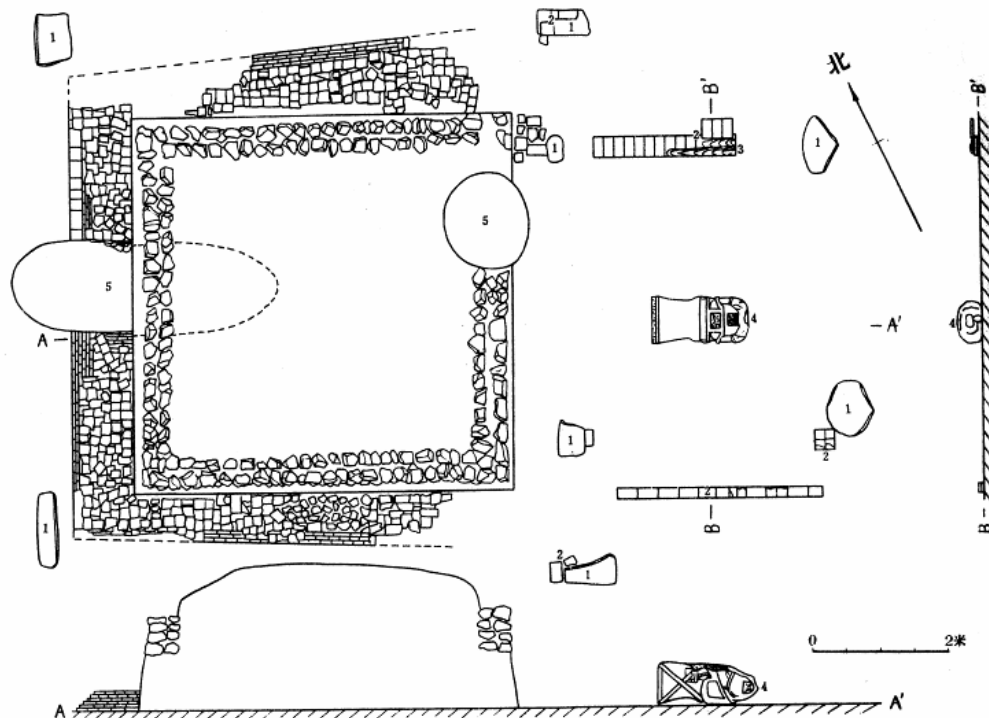
The Mongol stone men and funerary monuments in honour of dead nobles were not erected on the grave itself but at some distance from it, in funerary enclosures that were much simpler than the ancient Turkic funerary complexes.<sup>8</sup> They are not tomb-markers but their proximity to burial sites contrasts with what we know of the secret tombs of the Mongol aristocracy that were kept secret. In East Mongolia, the statues are usually found southeast of round stone platforms, ranging about 3 to 12m in diameter and from 0.4 to 1m in height (Bayar [1994] 2002: Chap. 2). At Yangqunmiao 羊群廟, 35km northwest of

<sup>6</sup> *Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 78, 'Yufu zhi 輿服志 1': 1929-44. See Bayar [1994] 2002: Chap. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Other statues are naked and/or androgynous with prominent male genitalia and breasts. I will not evoke here the assumptions that have been made about the nudity of Turkic and Mongol statues.

<sup>8</sup> See Kül Tegin's funerary enclosure, which comprised a temple to which led an alley, anthropomorphic statues, steles, and animals' statues (Esin 1970: 90-91).

Shangdu in Inner Mongolia,<sup>9</sup> four 14<sup>th</sup> century sacrificial platforms made of rammed earth are lined up at the foot of a hill oriented northeast-southwest, each surrounded by a wall made of piled rocks (about 30m per side). Each compound has one marble statue standing from about 3m at the southeast of the platform, and protected by a ruined temple-like structure (**fig. 2**). Beside, four tombs are located to the west, at 500m of the first sacrificial platform (other statues near Shangdu stand south of tombs). The robes of two of the stone statues decorated with five-claws dragons, clouds, and flowers make Chinese scholars think that the sacrificial platforms were destined to emperors or to members of the imperial family.<sup>10</sup> Yangqunmiao could have been an important religious site for the Mongol elite, perhaps the main sacrificial and burial site also mentioned northwest of Shangdu in the *Yuan shi*, where the emperors sacrificed to the Sky and to their ancestors at particular dates of the calendar.<sup>11</sup>



**Fig. 2.** Yangqunmiao, sacrificial platform, n°2. From *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Zhenglan qi wenwu guanlisuo* (eds) 1994: 614, fig. 5.

1. Stone platform; 2. bricks; 3. timber; 4. stone statue; 5. pit.

<sup>9</sup> Modern Zhenglan 正藍 banner, Sili-yin γoul league. See *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Zhenglan qi wenwu guanlisuo* 1994; Wei Jian and Chen Yongzhi 1994; Ding Xueyun 1994.

<sup>10</sup> Ge Shanlin 1999: 330; Wei Jian and Chen Yongzhi 1994: 624.

<sup>11</sup> They poured alcohol of mare milk, bowed to the Sky, called the imperial name of Chinggis Khan and prayed (*Yuan shi*, *juan* 72, 'jisi 祭祀 1 – jiaosi 郊祀': 1781; *juan* 77, 'jisi 6 – Guosu jiuli 國俗舊禮': 1924).

The Mongol stone men are believed to represent dead noble Mongols but their ethnic identity is still under discussion. Bayar ([1994] 2002) believes that because of their regional origin and dates, they were erected by the Önggüd or by the Qonggirad.<sup>12</sup> In the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, the Jalair, the Qonggirad and the Uruyud, enfeoded by Chinggis Khan, had their cemeteries in Huanzhou 桓州, Fuzhou 撫州 and Changzhou 昌州 pastures (Shangdu and Abaya). But Qubilai also established on these rich pastures the Shangdu city with sacrificial and burial sites for the Mongol imperial family and nobility.<sup>13</sup> So indeed, these statues could be specific to certain tribes, but they could just as well be a mostly Chinggisid trait, or a practice shared among several tribes.

### Feeding the ancestors, feeding the ongons

These statues were worshipped during sacrificial rituals and were fed with meat and milky products. The statue of Chinggis Khan mentioned by Plano Carpini received offerings of food. The Yuan dynasty stone statues generally hold a cup, like the Turkic statues, which would contain food or an alcoholic offering. They were also given offerings such as porcelains, cattle bones, cereal in urns, sapeques, and milky products that were buried in small pits by the statues' side from the Yuan dynasty up to 1949. Beside, a Yuan dynasty Chinese poem mentions a ritual during which the powerful imperial legate (*quanchen qincharen* 權臣欽差人) Temür 鐵木爾 from Yan 燕 (Hebei province) offers a sacrifice to the marble statue of a deceased Great Preceptor (*xiantaishi* 先太師) at 70 *li* northwest of Luandu 涿都 (i. e. Shangdu). The statue had wine poured in its mouth and its body coated with fat while a horse was cut up in front of the statue as the sacrificial meat, and the officiant sang and beat time with his feet.<sup>14</sup> The Chinese archaeologists believe that because of the localization it mentions, the poem could refer to one of the preserved statues, and therefore supports the assertion that Yangqunmiao could have been the sacrificial site mentioned northwest of Shangdu in the *The Yuan history*.

The two effigies of Chinggis Khan as well as the life-size stone statues<sup>15</sup> were fed like the small portable ongons [*ongγun*], these roughly zoomorphic or anthropomorphic supports made of various materials (such as felt, wood, metal etc.) allowing spirits to be fed and therefore tamed and controlled. Horses were consecrated to the effigy of Chinggis Khan described by Plano Carpini, a practice that is also closely linked to ongons.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Atwood (2003: 520) assumes that the stone men 'show the gradual transformation of funerary beliefs during the Yuan under Buddhist and Confucianist influence.' But the above mentioned effigies of Chinggis Khan as well as the Turkic heritage seem to be a better explanation for the presence of stone figures near Yuan tombs.

<sup>13</sup> Ge Shanlin 1999: 346, quoting the *Shengwu qinzheng lu* 聖武親徵錄: 166.

<sup>14</sup> Xu Youren 許有任, *Zhizheng ji* 至正集, *juan* 6: 'Pei you taifu taiping wang ji xian taishi shixiang' 陪右太夫太平王祭先太師石像, quoted by Ge Shanlin 1999: 335.

<sup>15</sup> In the open steppe, up to now, the Mongols generally consider stone figures, petroglyphs and deer stones as sacred images of ancestors and feed them like ongons (Zélénine [1936] 1952: 29, 177).

<sup>16</sup> These horses were allowed to wander freely and never be ridden. Consecrating an animal was originally called *ongγula-*, 'to make into an ongon, or sacred vessel,' and later renamed *seterle-* under Buddhist influence (Zélénine ([1936] 1952: Chap. 5).

The Mongols used to feed their *ongons* by smearing their mouth and sometimes the whole face with fat and cooked meat before each meal, by sprinkling, and fumigation.<sup>17</sup> In exchange, the spirit was thought to commit itself to respecting a contract, whereby he would protect the household or clan and the sheep and cattle, bestow prosperity, prevent sickness, and ensure success in hunting, otherwise he could expect reprisals. An important feature in the definition of an *ongon* is the food that maintains a spirit into the support: the spirit remains within it as long as it is fed. As Roberte Hamayon (1990: 404) noted for 19<sup>th</sup> century Buryats, 'c'est la nourriture qui maintient un esprit dans son support et [...] un esprit a besoin de son support pour être nourri; base du traitement rituel des *ongon*, elle est leur principal sinon unique élément commun fondamental, car varient formes et matières, procédés de genèse et de fabrication, modalités de culte et d'appartenance, esprits hébergés (animaux ou humains) [...].' Human spirits that could dwell in an *ongon* were either angry and potentially dangerous human spirits, or great ancestors.<sup>18</sup> The stone human statues and the effigies of Chinggis Khan, being material supports allowing the dead to be fed, can therefore be included in the large category of *ongons*. The stone statues holding a cup can be compared to small bronze *ongons* dating from the Mongol Empire holding a cup in their hand (**fig. 3**).



**Fig. 3.** Three *ongons*, bronze (5cm, 4,8cm and 4,3cm) excavated in Tongliao Municipality, Mongol Empire, Inner Mongolia (*Nei Menggu bowuyuan and Zhonghua shijitan yishuguan* (eds) 2004: 310-311).

<sup>17</sup> On different categories of *ongons* and their function: Zélénine [1936] 1952; Beffa and Delaby 1999; Hamayon 1990: 403-425; Roux 1963: 124-131. For 13<sup>th</sup> century descriptions: Plano Carpin (Plano Carpin/Becquet and Hambis 1965: 36-37), and Rubrouck (Rubrouck/Rockhill 1900: 148-149). Considered by the Buddhist missionaries as the tutelary spirits of shamanism, the *ongons* were systematically destroyed in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century, but were preserved by non-Buddhist Mongol groups. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Mongolia, they were often replaced by tablets modeled on the Chinese ancestor's cult (Heissig [1970] 1973: 420).

<sup>18</sup> The commoners did not represent individually their dead, who received a collective cult.

## Inhabited portraits

Mongol stone statues and ongons generally belong to the category of 'inhabited portraits' or 'animated portraits,' that is, images serving as a support for the soul. The human representation in Mongolia was strongly linked to death and worship, and was restricted to a few powerful personalities, particularly the divinized ancestors who protected the clan, the shamans, and potentially dangerous human spirits.<sup>19</sup> The human representation was therefore the object of a certain number of precautions and prohibitions. As late as the 1930s, the great ethnographer-cum-missionary Antoine Mostaert (1956: 293), who collected Ordos traditions, noticed that drawing a human figure was a sin (*maγu*, unfavourable). A man's representation was an effective means of action on the man himself. 'To get hold of a drawing/a photograph of someone would give magic power over him' (Mostaert 1941-44: 220b), and up to now, Mongols never throw away photographs of human beings but prefer burning them (Delaplace and Micoud 2007: 23). Effigies used as a substitute for the ill person, or for the spirit of the illness, were manufactured for healing rituals in connection with a ceremony for ransoming from death (Bawden 1994 [1961]: 237; Sarközi 1989: 316-318). Human figures were too respected to be used in less important contexts, such as decoration (Chabros 1987: 274).

An animated statue is held to be able to act by itself and even kill. According to a 17<sup>th</sup> century description, a *thangka*<sup>20</sup> portrait of Chinggis Khan was said to kill if exposed or if denied proper sacrifices.<sup>21</sup> The *Erdeni-yin tobci* and the *Altan tobci* tell us that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Western Mongol leader Toyon Taisi orally provoked and defied Chinggis Khan in front of his statue at the Eight White Tents in Ordos, and was inexplicably struck down. An arrow of the statue's golden quiver was found stained with blood and a wound looking like an arrow wound was discovered in his back.<sup>22</sup>

To sum up, the Chinggisid family worshipped portraits of their ancestors by offering them sacrifices, usually on their death days. The portraits of Chinggis Khan, unlike ongons, were also images of a divinized ruler that served to legitimize and sacralize the ruling power,<sup>23</sup> and were worshipped as gods. It is not known how far these statues were lifelike, but it is important to notice that Chinggis Khan's statue at Batu's court was gilded or made of gold, the color of power par excellence in the nomadic world.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> On religious and magical functions of portraits in East Asia: Seckel 1999: 82 *sq.*

<sup>20</sup> Tib. *thang ka*, Buddhist painting or appliqué with a religious theme.

<sup>21</sup> The Fifth Dalai Lama visiting the palace of the *jinong* in Ordos relates: 'In the palace of the *jinong* was a *thangka* portrait of Chinggis Khan. I was told that if the portrait was revealed, people would die, so it had had to be offered blood sacrifices. Later that secret stuff (i.e. the portrait) was enveloped and left there within a case by Phagpa' ('Record of the Vth Dalai Lama visit to the capital,' in *Zhongguo Xizang* 中國西藏 1993/1, quoted by Hurcha 1999: 47).

<sup>22</sup> See above, note 3.

<sup>23</sup> In that respect they are comparable to the French medieval meaning of the term 'representation': Giesey (1987) showed that in the French Medieval monarchy the verb 'représenter' meant 'rendre à nouveau présent' during the funerals. The dead king was 'represented' by an effigy, a litter, a coffin, etc. so that the royal power would not remain vacant. On portrait as a substitute for and considered as a person: Schneider 2002: 26; Belting 1998: 17 *sq.*

<sup>24</sup> Serruys 1962; Allsen 1997: 60-70; statues in gold are also mentioned for Kitan kings: Roux 1963: 124.



The effigy was not the only support where the *qan*'s spirit could dwell and was worshipped: the same term *ongon* can also refer to the spirit of the dead itself, and to any material thing within which dwells the spirit of the dead, the grave, the coffin, the burial (*ongγula-*, 'to bury'), sacred places or animals dedicated to a spirit...<sup>25</sup> The *sülde* (usually translated by soul or vital energy) of the Mongol sovereign could dwell in other supports such as the standard, the relics (objects that once belonged to the *qan*), the burial place, a tree etc. These objects protected the state and helped to defeat its enemies. The possession of these *sülde* supports (including the statues) and the ability to perform rites for them give legitimacy and authority to the living ruler (Skrynnikova 1992-93).

Other kinds of 'inhabited portraits' were used in the Inner Asian world, such as iconic portraits (the painting or statue of a holy monk or an ancestor), Kitan manikins containing the ashes of the deceased,<sup>26</sup> and portrait-statues containing the relics (*šaril*, <sanskrit *śarīra*, residue of the cremation) of a holy monk.<sup>27</sup> The statues of Buddhist monks are believed to be alive thanks to a consecration ritual of eye-opening, and are not directly fed but are presented offerings on a table. Yet modern lay Mongols also smear butter-offerings on Buddhist statues as they used to nourish their *ongons*. The Yuan Mongols also occasionally buried in their tombs Chinese-style human substitutes (*mingqi* 明器 or *ouren* 偶人, 'body doubles,' 'statues,' 'idols') in clay:<sup>28</sup> these also belong to the category of 'inhabited portraits,' but do not represent a specific person.<sup>29</sup>

Contrarily to common Westerners' approach to portraits and the very definition of the term in European languages since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Pommier 1998: 16-17: 'image de l'homme faite à sa ressemblance'), it will not be the physiognomic likeness or verisimilitude that will interest us here, but the destination, roles, codes and meanings of the 'personal images/effigies' of Mongol rulers. In the great majority of cases, the statues or paintings of *qan* and *qatun* are typical representations of rulers conforming to exemplary models, giving the identity by iconographic signs (emblems of rank, costume, position, attributes) or by an inscription. Klimkeit (1990: 193) showed that Buddhist donors are

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<sup>25</sup> Even 1999: 188, note 2, quoting examples from Ordos, and Tomka 1965: 165 and n. 25.

<sup>26</sup> The manikins found in the Xuanhua tombs were understood as a body where the deceased was believed to be permanently present, and received a burial that was not different from one a real corpse would have received (Shen 2005). They were in the tradition of the *mingqi* with movable limbs.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Seckel's general survey on portraiture in East Asian art: 1997, introductory chapter and 1999. For the history of the terms 'portrait', 'image' and 'effigy' in Western art: Pommier 1998; Schneider 2002: 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Mingqi* dressed as Mongols have been found in the 14<sup>th</sup> century tomb of the He 和 family, Hu 戶 district, Shaanxi (Steinhardt 1990-91: 209). Ten terracotta *mingqi* (between 25 and 33cm high) are preserved in the Museum of Inner Mongolia in Hohhot: a cart with a tent-like roof, a camel with a packsaddle, a horse with a packsaddle, a saddled horse, two women and four men (three dressed as Mongols, one dressed as a Chinese). Nei Menggu bowuyuan and Zhonghua shijitan yishuguan (eds) 2004: 314. *Mingqi* do not seem to have been a common practice among Mongols. Besides, human sacrifices to serve the dead in the next world are occasionally mentioned for nobles' burials up to the late sixteenth century, and were then abolished as a result of the struggle of the Buddhist missionaries.

<sup>29</sup> In China, the substitutes of humans (concubines, servants, soldiers, dancers...), animals, and objects that followed the deceased in the otherworld replaced the tradition of blood sacrifices during the last centuries B.C.E., and were 'believed to function among the dead and to embody a vital spirit' (Berger 1998: 49).

often depicted as a type because their 'portrait' is a representation of their mind in a 'Buddha Land,' remote in time and space from earthly places. Even if a certain degree of physiognomic likeness is achieved for Yuan court portraits, images are idealized because the ancestors are depicted in a supramundane level of existence, as shown by Stuart and Rawski (2001: 52, 58) for Chinese ancestors' paintings.

## **Two-dimensional portraits of emperors kept in temples during the Yuan dynasty**

Paintings of rulers obviously do not have the same function as stone or metal effigies. Because they are not directly fed, they cannot be called *ongons*, but they are also considered to be a support for an ancestor's soul ('inhabited portrait').

During the Yuan dynasty, the emperors adopted an ancestor cult based on Confucian lines, and built Ancestors' temples (*Tai miao* 太廟) in the capital to keep the tablets of the deceased emperors as well as two-dimensional portraits.<sup>30</sup> Painted portraits of Mongol emperors were also placed in the Hanlin Academy 翰林院. The earliest recorded portraits were commissioned by Qubilai Qan, who commissioned in 1278 and 1279 to the court Mongolian painter Qoryosun / Heli Huosun 和禮霍孫 portraits of Chinggis Khan and his sons Ögedei and Tolui (Qubilai's father), to be placed in the Hanlin Academy.<sup>31</sup> In 1279, Qubilai Qan ordered the court painter Liu Guandao 劉貫道 (fl. 1279-1300) to make a portrait of his son and heir Jingim / Zhenjin 真金 (Yuzong 裕宗, d. 1285). He was satisfied with the likeness and rewarded the artist with a position in the Imperial Clothing Office.<sup>32</sup>

During the reign of Temür (emperor Chengzong 成宗, r. 1294-1307), ancestral shrines called Halls of Imperial Portraiture (first called *Yingtang* 影堂, and then *Shenyudian* 神御殿 or *Yurongdian* 御容殿) were also erected not as independent temples, but as buildings within the main imperial Tibetan Buddhist monasteries of Beijing.<sup>33</sup> Temür had a Hall of Imperial Portraiture built for Qubilai (his deceased grand-father) and Jingim in the White Stupa monastery of Beijing (*Da Shengshou wan'ansi* 大聖壽萬安寺), and in the *Da Huguo renwangsi* 大護國仁王寺, in which their portraits were enshrined. These temples hence fell under the jurisdiction of the Office of Imperial Ancestral Worship. After an emperor died, his own portrait hall was installed for him and his ancestors in the temple he had built.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 74, 'jisi 3 – Zongmiao shang 宗廟上': 1831 *sq.* See Ratchnevsky 1970: 418, 423-424; Atwood (present volume). Franke ([1978] 1994: 30-31) showed the Mongols' reluctance towards the adoption of an ancestor cult organized along Chinese lines, and the Buddhicisation of the emperors' worship as early as 1268.

<sup>31</sup> *Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 75, 'jisi 4 – Shenyu dian': 1876.

<sup>32</sup> Xia Wenyan [preface 1365] 1914, *juan* 5: 4a; Weidner 1989: 39.

<sup>33</sup> *Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 75, 'jisi 4 – Shenyu dian': 1875. Tang emperors also had their images installed in Buddhist and Taoist temples.

<sup>34</sup> Temür and his empress' *Yingtang* was in the *Da Tianshou wan'ansi* 大天壽萬寧寺; Qaišan (r. 1307-1311, Wuzong 武宗) and his two empresses' *Yingtang* was in the *Da Chong'en Fuyuansi* 大崇恩福元寺; Toyān Temür (Shundi 順帝, r. 1333-1368) and his empress' *Yingtang* as well as Ayurbarwada (r. 1311-1320,

Funerary tablets, as well as the portraits, called *yurong* 御容, of the past emperors and their consorts were kept in the Yingtang – no statues are mentioned. These portraits had a particularity: they were silk tapestries (*kesi* 刻絲) of large dimensions: approximately 245x210cm (9 1/2x8ft in Yuan measure).<sup>35</sup> These woven images, which were extremely costly and difficult to make, were thought to exhibit greater skill than painted ones.<sup>36</sup> Qubilai's posthumous woven portrait, commissioned by Temür in 1294 is the earliest recorded order. Supervised by the Minister of Works in person, a Uyighur by the sinicized name of Tang Renzu 唐仁祖 (1249-1301), it took more than three years to complete in 1297.<sup>37</sup> It served as a model for later portraits. The chapter on paintings and sculpture in the *Jingshi dadian* 經世大典<sup>38</sup> records several orders for portraits of the emperors and empresses to be painted and converted to woven silk.<sup>39</sup>

The large portraits of emperors and empresses have not been preserved, but the famous painted album called *Yuandai dihou xiang* 元代帝后像 of the collections of the Nanxun dian 南薰殿 in the Imperial Palace (now kept in the National Palace Museum in Taipei), gives us an idea of what the portraits looked like. Measuring roughly 60cm in height and 47cm in width, these half-length painted portraits were obviously not designed for public use (**fig. 4AB**).<sup>40</sup> It is believed that they could have served as the models for enlarged portraits in both painting and textile.

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Renzong 仁宗) and his empress' Yingtang were in the Da Puqingsi 大普慶寺, etc. (*Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 75, 'jisi 4 – Shenyu dian': 1875); Šudibala (Yingzong 英宗, r. 1320-1323) also built a Yingtang for Taizu 太祖 (Chinggis Khan) in the Xingjiao si 興教寺 (*Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 28, 'ben ji – Yingzong 英宗 2': 624). Portraits of Chinggis Khan and Ögedei Qan (Taizong 太宗) were displayed in the Da Puqingsi under Yesün Temür (Taiding 泰定, r. 1323-1328), etc. (*Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 29, 'ben ji – Taiding di 泰定帝 1': 650; *Yuan shi* [1370] 1976, *juan* 40, 'ben ji – Shundi 順帝 3': 853-854; see also *Yuandai huasu ji* [Yuan] 1964: 1).

<sup>35</sup> See for instance the order given on January 15, 1321 for the double portrait of Ayurbarwada and his consort, together with mandalas on the left and right sides, which specified that the portrait (in triplicate) should conform to the style of Qubilai's portrait, and that each copy should measure 9 1/2x8 feet (*Jingshi dadian*, quoted by Watt and Wardell 1997: 96). These dimensions are the same as the dimensions of the Vajrabhairava mandala (see below).

<sup>36</sup> In an early version of the preface to the chapter on paintings and sculpture in the *Jingshi dadian*, it is said: 'to weave an image so that it seems to come alive is not something that can be equaled by the application of colors [in painting]. To make an image of clay is even more inferior. Thus human skill can match the wonder of nature' (Su Tianjue [late Yuan period] 1958: *juan* 42: 618, passage translated by Watt and Wardell 1997: 60-61). On the importance of textile in the Mongolian world: Allsen 1997.

<sup>37</sup> *Yuan shi*, *juan* 134, 'liezhuan 列傳 – Tang Renzu 唐仁祖': 3253-3254.

<sup>38</sup> A great Yuan dynasty administrative encyclopedia, ed. by Yu Ji 虞集 and Zhao Shiyan 趙世延, compiled by order of emperor Tuy Temür in 1329.

<sup>39</sup> In some of these, it is specified that woven portraits were to be made immediately upon the completion of the painted portraits. On these detailed orders and the officers and workshops in charge for their supervision and execution, see Watt and Wardell 1997: 60-61.

<sup>40</sup> The album is described in the imperial catalogues such as the 18<sup>th</sup> century *Shiqu baoji* 石渠寶笈 (*juan* 3). Mostaert (1927) gives one of the earliest descriptions of the portraits based on photographs of the Gugong portraits sold by a Beijing printing house. Dong Tang (1962), who lists the mentions of this album in Qing dynasty imperial catalogues, together with other specialists, believes that these portraits are Ming copies. Modern scholars seem now to agree on a Yuan date (Weidner 1989: 41; Jing 1994; Yu Hui 2000: 32; Shi



**Fig. 4A.** Portrait of Qubilai Qan (Shizu 世祖), album leaf, ink and color on silk, 59,4x47cm, China, Yuan dynasty, from *Yuandai di banshen xiang* 元代帝半身像, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.  
**Fig. 4B.** Portrait of Cabui, album leaf, ink and color on silk, 61,5x48cm, China, Yuan dynasty, from *Yuandai dihou banshen xiang* 元代帝后半身像, Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei.

If the general stylistic models for the portraits are obviously the earlier Chinese imperial portraits kept in the imperial collections and highly valued by the Yuan emperors, technical and stylistic features such as the method of describing highlights on the jewels of the portrait of Cabui (d. 1281) (**fig. 4B**), and the thick coat of painting, show an Himalayan influence.<sup>41</sup> The album portraits of later emperors have been done by Chinese artists of the imperial workshops such as Li Xiaoyan 李肖岩 (for the faces) and lesser craftsmen (for the hats, hair and robes) in 1332 in a similar style. The costumes, hats and the hair braided into a few loops hanging behind the ears are all characteristic of Mongol portraiture.<sup>42</sup>

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Shouqian and Ge Wanzhang ed. 2001: 288, Wang Yao-t'ing 2005: 298-301). The album format is 18<sup>th</sup> century, the paintings having been remounted in 1748.

<sup>41</sup> In his article based on Anige's official epitaph (Cheng Jufu 程鉅夫, 1249-1318, *Liangguo minhui gong shendao bei* 涼國敏慧公神道碑, written under Ayurbarwada's order of 1316), Jing (1994) argues that the portraits of Qubilai and Cabui in the painted album are original works by Anige 阿尼哥 (Arniko, 1245-1306). In 1301, Anige also made posthumous textile portraits of Temür's parents (the late heir apparent Jingim and his wife).

<sup>42</sup> The costume and hat of Qubilai (**fig. 4A**) are comparable to that of the Yuanbaoshan man (**fig. 17**).

Other isolated half-length portraits that have been preserved include a portrait of Chinggis Khan bought by the Beijing Museum of History in 1953,<sup>43</sup> which is nearly identical to his portrait in the album, and a portrait of Qubilai from a 13<sup>th</sup> century original preserved in the Confucius temple at Qufu 曲阜 (Shandong province).<sup>44</sup>

These paintings, as well as the figure of Qubilai in the hanging scroll *Qubilai Qan Hunting*, kept in the Palace Museum (attributed to Liu Guandao), where the emperor looks much younger,<sup>45</sup> allow us to say that the likeness of the portrait was relatively important.

It is not known if the emperor's two-dimensional large portraits received or not a kind of consecration, but their location in a monastery and the rites performed in front of them show that they were considered as something between Buddhist icons and Chinese ancestors painting. The portraits in painting were always produced in triplicate or (more rarely) in duplicate and distributed to Buddhist monasteries across China as formal displays of the sovereign's image. There was therefore a multiplication of two-dimensional images of deceased emperors, sculpture being apparently excluded.

The Halls of Imperial Portraiture also displayed mandalas with imperial portraits, the same size as the individual imperial portraits, in *kesi*, and woven in the same imperial workshops.<sup>46</sup> One of these mandalas – the Vajrabhairava (or Yamāntaka) mandala is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (ca. 1328-1329) (**fig. 5**).<sup>47</sup> In the bottom left and right corners of the *thangka*, two small groups of worshippers are identified by Tibetan inscriptions as emperor Tuy Temür (emperor Wenzong 文宗, r. 1329-1332), and his elder brother Qosila who reigned briefly in 1329 as emperor Mingzong 明宗 (**fig. 6A**), and their respective consorts, Budasiri and Babuša wearing rich costumes and hats (**fig. 6B**). The portrait of Tuy Temür seems indeed to be based on his portrait kept in the Taipei album.

Although the album paintings are half-length, the enlarged, finished portraits hung in the Hall of Imperial Portraiture were certainly full figures, probably in a seated position (on a chair?) – in the Chinese ancestors paintings and in the Buddhist tradition, one never worship partial portraits.<sup>48</sup> We can imagine the interior of the Hall of Imperial Portraiture

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<sup>43</sup> Dong Tang 1962, quoting an expertise of the portrait, believes it could be the above-mentioned portrait painted by Qoryosun. It comes from a Mongol princely residence. The album portrait of Chinggis Khan could be a copy of the earlier portrait by Qoryosun, or derive from the same model.

<sup>44</sup> Waley 1923, pl. XXX. Qubilai was a great benefactor of the Confucian temple, which he restored in 1278.

<sup>45</sup> This famous equestrian composition bears Liu Guandao's signature and the date 1280; yet Weidner (1989: 40) demonstrates that it could have been painted at a later date.

<sup>46</sup> The *Yuandai huasu ji* ([Yuan] 1964: 1) and the *Jingshi dadian* (see note 35) mentions imperial portraits together with mandalas. Also Weidner 1989: 41; Watt and Wardell 1997: 98.

<sup>47</sup> Watt and Wardell (1997: 95-100, cat. n°25) assume that the *kesi* was commissioned before 1330, and completed after 1332; Stoddard (1995: 209) and Ge Wanzhang (2001: 256; 264 n. 95-97) propose 1328 or 1328-1329.

<sup>48</sup> Jing Anning (1994: 75) asserts that they 'must have been painted in seated position on Buddhist platforms, as is indicated in literary sources,' and quotes only one source, the *Yuandai huasu ji* ([Yuan] 1964: 1), that mentions three imperial portraits, together with three 'fotan' 佛壇. He concludes saying 'obviously, each imperial portrait was matched with one Buddhist platform' (his note 171). I disagree with Jing's translation,

of a large imperial monastery: 2,5m high woven portraits of deceased emperors and empresses were hung together with woven mandalas of the same size (to the left and right of the portraits) and their name tablets were placed on an altar.



**Fig. 5.** Mandala of Vajrabhairava, silk tapestry (*kesi*), 246,1x208,3cm, China, ca. 1328-1329 or after 1332, Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1992 (1992.54).



**Fig. 6A.** Detail: two emperors, *TuγTemür* and his elder brother *Qosila*, on the lower left of the thangka...

**Fig. 6B.** ... and their respective consorts *Budasiri* and *Babuša* on the lower right.

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because *fotan* ('Buddhist altar') designates here a mandala (like **fig. 5**), and not 'Buddhist platforms' where a figure would be sitting.

## Two-dimensional portraits of princes during the Northern Yuan dynasty (1368-1634)

Temples preserving two-dimensional portraits of Mongol *qan* are known after the fall of the Yuan dynasty. The fortified Mayidari monastery (Mayidari-yin Juu, Ch. Meidai zhao 美岱召), 70km west of Hohhot (Kökeqota), preserves in the rear part of its main temple a large 17<sup>th</sup> century mural painting<sup>49</sup> of donors where the Chinggisid nobility is represented below a 7-meter high painting of Tsongkhapa (Charleux 1999) (**fig. 7**). The painting represents the two princesses who patronized this monastery – one of the oldest of the Buddhist revival: on the right side on Tsongkhapa's throne, Jönggen Qatun (known in Chinese as Sanniangzi), Altan Qan's famous Third wife (ca. 1550-1612) faces her third husband Cürüke, who bends towards her in a respectful attitude (**fig. 8A, 8B**).<sup>50</sup> On the other side of the painting, the princess Maciy Qatun (ca. 1546-1625) faces the Mayidari Qutuγtu (1592-1635), a Tibetan reincarnation recognized as an emanation of Maitreya and sent to Hohhot in 1604. Fifty-eight laymen and monks of much smaller size, turned towards the central characters, most of them sitting in *padmāsana* in a worshipping attitude and two divinities complete the scene. The painting is laden with Buddhist symbols such as piles of jewels, the Eight auspicious symbols, etc.



**Fig. 7.** Mural painting representing Buddhist lay donors and monks of Altan Qan's family, main temple of Mayidari-yin Juu, lower part of the western wall of the back shrine, H. 2m, L. 16m long, 17<sup>th</sup> century (drawing by Wang Leiyi, in Jin Shen 1980: 176).

<sup>49</sup> The painting can be dated of the temple restoration in 1606, but has probably been restored after 1632-1634 following a fire.

<sup>50</sup> Both of them patronised the translation of the *Kanjur* into Mongolian from 1602 to 1607.



**Fig. 8A.** Cürüke (Altan Qan's grandson and Jönggen Qatun third husband), detail of the right part of the donors' painting (see fig. 7). © Jin Shen

**Fig. 8B.** Jönggen Qatun, detail of the right part of the donors' painting (see fig. 7). © Jean-Claude Poncin

Jönggen Qatun was also depicted on eight large hanging scrolls in the Mayidari monastery, now lost, as an old woman sitting on a throne, and receiving the homage of courtiers or surrounded by scenes of travels or entertainments.<sup>51</sup> The Mayidari-yin Juu paintings provide evidence of the incontestable authority of Jönggen Qatun and her legitimacy to rule the Tümed. The mural painting is at the same time a painting of Buddhist donors, a painting of the adoration of Jönggen Qatun, and a commemorative painting (Charleux 1999). The Mayidari-yin Juu had become by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the funerary temple of Altan Qan's family, whose members were buried in the Qarayuna mountains north of the monastery. The monastery also preserved the sandalwood funerary stupa of one of the two princesses, maybe Jönggen Qatun, worshipped together with the eight large scrolls in the Empress temple (Taihou miao 太后廟, or Lingta dian 靈塔殿, Hall of the Miraculous Stupa). The stupa contained ten human tresses and two small chests containing bones, ashes, turbans, hats, shoes, combs, and knives (all of which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution). The monks perpetuated the cult of Altan Qan's family ancestors up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: every year after the Mongolian New Year, they performed rituals for the Empress and members of Altan Qan's family in the Taihou miao, which was open only five days a year.

<sup>51</sup> Each was 1 *zhang* long, 2 *chi* large, that is, 3,2x0,64m. These were still preserved 70 years ago, before having been purchased by a 'foreign monk' (Rong Xiang [1957] 1979: 227; Amuer Batu 1997: 278).



A second example is a series of three paintings of Abatai Qan (1554-1588), the Tüsiyetü Qan of the Qalqa, and his family decorating a wall at Erdeni Juu monastery (in present-day Mongolia). They are known from copies made by the painter Dendev in 1950: the originals have not been preserved and I do not know their former localisation in the monastery. The Tüsiyetü Qan is depicted sitting cross-legged on a cushion or carpet, in a frontal position, alone or with his wife, and receiving the homage of monks and laymen (fig. 9).



**Fig. 9.** Paintings representing Abatai Qan and his family, copy by Dendev of a mural painting (not preserved) of Erdeni Juu, H. 150cm, L. 100cm, Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum, Ulaanbaatar

Abatai Qan, the founder of the monastery, was buried there: Erdeni Juu, like Mayidari-yin Juu, became, after the death of its founder, a funerary shrine where Chinggisid ancestors were worshipped (but also the largest of the Qalqa monasteries). The strange square-shaped stupa-tombs of Abatai Qan and his son Gombodorji stand directly in front of the Three Temples of Erdeni Juu. Abatai's large *ger* preserving his throne, weapons, and statues of 'fierce heroes' ('the fellow-champions of Abatai') was worshipped here before being moved to Da Kūriye (the future Urga) by the first Jebcündamba Qutuytu (Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 60-61 does not mention a statue of Abatai Qan). In the two examples of Mayidari-yin Juu and Erdeni Juu, we cannot assert that the *qan* and *qatun*'s paintings were realized before or after the death of the rulers, but they certainly served as commemorative and votive paintings for their descendants.

A third example comes from the Arjai caves in Otoγ banner in Ordos territory, Inner Mongolia. The caves were decorated since the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534), and were probably a Tanggut (Xia dynasty) monastery before the Mongol conquest. They have preserved paintings, stupas containing monks' ashes, and Mongolian, Tibetan and Sanskrit inscriptions identified as eulogies to Buddhist deities (cave 32). The cave monastery together with the Yuan dynasty temple above the cliff were destroyed at an unknown date (Batu Jirigala and Yang Haiying 2005).

The Chinese and Mongol archaeologists propose to see the temple above the caves as a shrine to perform rituals for Chinggis Khan,<sup>52</sup> and believe that Arjai was a major Chinggisid sacrificial and pilgrimage site under the Yuan dynasty (Batu Jirigala and Yang Haiying 2005: Conclusion), or even the foundation stone of the cult of the Eight White Tents and of the Chinggisid family (Solongyod 1999).

In cave 28, a painting (120x50cm) allegedly representing Chinggis Khan's family caused much ink to flow (**fig. 10**). A procession of a hundred people worship eight persons sitting on a large white platform under a dark tent or an architectural monument, in front of a table covered with offerings. Although there is no inscription, the archaeologists believe that the painting of cave 28 is a Yuan dynasty 'imperial portraiture' (*yurong*) for the sacrificial rites, and agree to identify the main characters as Chinggis Khan, surrounded by his main wife Börte Üjin (on his right) and his other two wives Qulan and Yisügen (on his left); farther on his left would be sitting his four sons (Joci, Cayadai, Ögedei, and Tolui); and the worshipping figure sitting below on the left and leading people offering camels and horses would be his fourth wife, Yisüi.<sup>53</sup>



**Fig. 10.** Drawing of the painting of donors, detail, south wall, lower register (120x50cm), right to the entrance, cave n°28 at Arjai (Otoy banner, Ordos). © Isabelle Charleux

This interpretation of the Arjai site seems to underestimate the entirely Buddhist character of the site. It is important to notice that the so-called painting of 'Chinggis Khan's family' covers only a small part in the lower register of the south wall, right to the entrance, under a large figure of Vaiśravaṇa sitting in royal ease.<sup>54</sup> Its localisation implies that 'Chinggis Khan' – if it is him – was not the main object of worship, but either a Buddhist lay donor or, because of his three-fold crown that recalls a lama's tiara, a Tantric

<sup>52</sup> In 1226, Chinggis Khan was wounded while he was hunting in what is identified to be the Arbas mountains (in Otoy banner, near Arjai). Batu Jirigala and Yang Haiying (2005: 42-46) and other scholars try hard to identify place names in the *Secret History* and in Rashīd ad-Dīn's account - Arbuqa, Coγurqad ('many caves'), Ongγon dalai qudduy - with modern place names and local legends.

<sup>53</sup> Batu Jirigala and Yang Haiying 2005: 81-82; Wang Dafang, Batu Jirigala and Zhang Wenfang 1994: 573-574.

<sup>54</sup> The main deities being represented on the north wall, the south wall is therefore the less honorific.

priest performing a ritual. The cave itself is dedicated to tutelary deities in sexual union, and to Tibetan masters on seats or meditating in caves: it may have functioned as a *mgon khang* (a shrine for the tutelary deities and wrathful protectors), and laymen were perhaps not even allowed inside. The conical hats, costumes, the general style and the composition suggest a much later date, Northern Yuan or Qing dynasty.

In cave 31 dedicated to Śākyamuni, also probably dated from the Northern Yuan or Qing dynasty, monks (some wearing Gelugpa hats) and laymen are depicted under a painting of Vaiśravaṇa located on the south wall to the left of the door (**fig. 11**). They also figure as Buddhist donors but here are represented in a narrative context.



**Fig. 11.** Painting of donors, south wall, lower register, left to the entrance, cave n°31 at Arjai (Otoy banner, Ordos). Batu Jirigala and Yang Haiying 2005: 147.

Arjai was above all a Buddhist monastery, where Chinggis Khan may also have been worshipped after his death. The assertions that the Arjai caves were a major site for the sacrifice and familial worship to Chinggis Khan are mostly supported by local legends and in the present state of research, lack supportive evidence. What we have here, instead, is a Buddhist site where representations of Mongol nobles combine the types of ancestor's icon for worship and portrait of small-scale worshipping donor, two genres that were already common, if not necessarily combined, during the high Yuan period. My interpretation is supported by the evidence of the other frontally sitting donor worshipping and being worshipped at the same time at Mayidari-yin Juu and Erdeni Juu.

Other lost paintings of 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century nobles are known thanks to literary sources, such as a portrait of Altan Qan with his standard, seen by Žamcarano in 1910 at Saraci.<sup>55</sup> A portrait of Chinggis Khan's brother's Qasar allegedly painted in blood was worshipped in his shrine in Muumingan (Mayumingyan) banner (Ulaanchab / Ulayancabu league) along with 16<sup>th</sup> century texts (Möngkedelger 1998: 38-47).<sup>56</sup> The shrine was re-opened in the

<sup>55</sup> Heissig 1954: 101, n. 2, quoting Žamcarano Ceveen 1913: 46.

<sup>56</sup> I thank Christopher Atwood and Marie-Dominique Even for this information.

1980s and his descendants perform rituals including blood sacrifice and performance of archery.

## Paintings of Mongol rulers in the Qing dynasty

Qing dynasty Mongol portraits came under the influence of Sino-Manchu and Buddhist arts. The portraits of religious figures in various materials (painting, appliqué, statue, embalmed corpse) underwent extraordinary developments, whereas the lay portraits were reduced to a few small donors at the bottom of the paintings. Formal portraits of monks show a particular interest in individual portraiture (see the portraits of the Jebcündamba Qutuγtus for instance, and particularly Zanabazar's self portraits). The influence of Western painting and photography in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to a particular style (portraits of the Eight Jebcündamba (1870-1824), his consort and others: Tsultem 1986: fig. 176-178).

Ancestor portraits did not disappear but portraits of *qan* and *qatun* were replaced by Sino-Manchu style individual ancestor portraits, such as the portraits of banner princes (*jasay*) lineages – without their wives – kept in the Ancestor Hall of their residence or within their family monastery. In the Moroi-yin Süme (Khorchin Darkhan Vang banner, Inner Mongolia) for instance, the Ancestors' hall for the ruling family – a seven-bay Chinese-style temple covered with green glazed tiles – preserved the full-length portrait paintings of twelve generations of princes which received offerings (Charleux 2006: [145]). New portraits reflect ancestors' cults that became more genealogical and patriarchal.

A few great ancestors were also depicted in thangka-like paintings. A late Qing dynasty portrait of Chinggis Khan, riding a horse and wearing an armor, a quiver with arrows, and brandishing a banner decorated with a swastika, was recently discovered at Badγar Coyiling Süme (Wudang zhao 五當召) in Inner Mongolia (see Wang Dafang, n. d.).<sup>57</sup> Chinggis Khan, who was incorporated in the Buddhist pantheon during the 17<sup>th</sup> century as an incarnation of Vajrapāni and a son of Buddhist deities, was also represented in the form of the deity Sülde tngri (Heissig [1970] 1973: 454, fig. 13) and of a peaceful *cakravartin* sovereign.

Three Qing dynasty thangkas or thangka-like paintings representing Chinggisid ancestors deserve a special mention. The first two examples are Buddhist paintings, the third is strongly influenced by thangkas. In **fig. 12**, Abatai Qan appears in an imaginary palace above his monastery, Erdeni Juu, and surrounded by miniature scenes from his life. The central figure and his attendants are in fact elements copied from three of the four paintings of Abatai Qan at Erdeni Juu – see the equerries holding unsaddled horses, the two wrestlers, the standard with bow, arrows and quiver on the *qan*'s left side, and the

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<sup>57</sup> A portrait of Chinggis Khan painted by Danjin Rabjai (Ravjaa, 1803-1856) can be seen in the Sainšand Museum dedicated to the great Noyan Qutuγtu. I thank Christopher Atwood for this information. See also a painting preserved at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden identified as a 'domestic god' (Heissig [1970] 1973: 419, fig. 10) or as Chinggis Khan (Eggebrecht *et al.* 1989: ill. p. 168).

same old man with a staff who seems to be pushed and helped by other attendants and try to present a cup on the left. But here, Abatai has a *vajra*-topped hat and holds lotuses carrying a sword and a *vajra*: the king is depicted alone, without his wife, with the attributes of a bodhisattva. His position, palace and courtiers mirror that of the king of Shambhala in 19<sup>th</sup> century thangkas.



**Fig. 12.** *Abatai Qan, cloth thangka, unknown painter, 62x86cm, Qing dynasty, Central Museum, Ulaanbaatar (Tsultem 1986: fig. 152).*

In a thangka that is the main object of worship in the ancestors' shrine of Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji (1540-1586) and Saγang Secen (1604-?) in Ordos, Chinggis Khan is depicted as a ferocious protective deity (*dharmapāla*), topped by three lamas (**fig. 13**). He brandishes a short sword in his right hand and holds a snare in his left hand; he wears a leopard skin above his armor. Below him stands Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji, and on the right, breaking the general symmetry, sits Saγang Secen, in a three-quarters view, smaller than his grandfather. The distinction between the fierce *dharmapāla* Chinggis Khan surrounded by flames – the far ancestor –, and his two famous descendants – the close ancestors – depicted as motionless and ceremonial human-like ancestors is striking.



**Fig. 13.** Thangka worshipped at Sasa (ancient Yeke *ongyon* caidam, Ch. Dafentan 大墳灘), Üüsin banner. It represents Chinggis Khan as a dharmapāla, below are Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji and Saγang Secen, Qing dynasty. Qasbiligtü C. and Qasbaγan-a 1987: face p. 180.



**Fig. 14.** Sacrificial image, representing Chinggis Khan, his main consort and his sons. Copy of a 'Yuan dynasty painting' preserved in the 'mausoleum of Chinggis Khan,' Ejen Qoriya banner, Ordos (probably Qing dynasty). Drawing from Heissig 1973 [1970]: 421, fig. 11 (from Dylykov, S. D., *Edzen-choro*, Moscow: *Filologija i istorija mongol'skich narodov*, 1959; see a reproduction in Solongγod 1999: fig. 13). The cup of the qatun has been omitted in the drawing but is present on the painting

A vertical painting of the imperial family said to be a Yuan painting, preserved in the 'mausoleum' of Chinggis Khan at Ejen Qoriya (in Ordos), represents Chinggis Khan with his main wife surrounded by sons or courtiers (**fig. 14**). Because of the *thangka* format, the general style, the individual thrones with headboards, the Buddhist halo, the Buddhist style offerings such as jewels, and the hats and costumes so different from Yuan models but close to the Arjai painting of 'Chinggis Khan's family,' the painting can be dated from the Qing dynasty.

### **Between worshipped ancestors and worshippers**

Throughout time, the Mongols sovereigns were depicted in three different roles. First, as the main subjects of the painting, the deceased emperors and other Chinggisid ancestors were worshipped through portraits where they appeared alone (**fig. 4A, 4B**); surrounded by courtiers, servants or sons presenting offerings (**fig. 14**); or in the middle of a complex *thangka* (**fig. 12**). This last example shows that Buddhism played a prominent role in legitimizing Mongol rule: Abatai Qan is explicitly depicted with the specific attributes of a bodhisattva, and recalls the *thangkas* of emperor Qianlong depicted as an emanation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

Secondly, the same sovereigns can be depicted as humble Buddhist lay donors, in a three-quarters view, turned towards a larger painting of Buddha. They are of small size, often at the bottom of votive paintings. This classical subject was common in Buddhist painting long before the Mongols appeared, as seen for instance in Dunhuang 敦煌 and Yulin 榆林 cave mural paintings.<sup>58</sup> Continuing this tradition, in cave n°332 at Mogao 莫高 (Dunhuang), Yuan dynasty Mongol donors are painted on the two sides of the entrance, lined up behind each other, and facing the main Buddha image.<sup>59</sup> These portraits were commissioned first to multiply merits for themselves or for family members, but also to commemorate their donations as a token of their generosity to the public.

In the mandala of Vajrabhairava, the emperors are represented as very small-scale worshippers, joining their hands in the worshipping gesture (*añjali*), and sitting in the lower corners, on the same level as the protectors of the Dharma (*dharmapāla*), under a large Buddhist figure, while twelve Tibetan lamas are depicted at the top of the *thangka* (**fig. 4A, 4B**). The emperors face their empresses in a three-quarters view. This representation of worshipping emperors strikingly contrasts with the large imperial portraits that were hung in the same hall.

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<sup>58</sup> Soymié 1999; Russel-Smith 2005: 193-197; Wiercimok 1990; Klimkeit 1990. This is also a classical subject in Christian art: see the conventional portrait of Richard II (1367-1400) of England kneeling before a Madonna and Child in the 'Wilton Diptych' (National Gallery, London).

<sup>59</sup> Tonkō bunbutsu kenkyūjo hen 1980-82, vol. V, fig. 161-162. In cave n°2 at Yulin, Mongol male donors are painted on the south wall, female donors on the north wall.

In a third type of portrait, the Mongol *qan* and/or *qatun* appear as Buddhist donor in the bottom of a larger Buddha image, and at the same time as an ancestor worshipped by smaller figures. He/she adopts the frontal position of the *cakravartin* king,<sup>60</sup> and the monks are in a position of inferiority in relation to the Chinggisid aristocracy (**fig. 7**). In the Mayidari-yin Juu painting, the Tümed princess Jönggen Qatun sits in a frontal position. Her jewellery, the yellow color of her robe, her large earlobes, the *amrita* (ambrosia) vase she holds, evoke a bodhisattva or a Buddha (**fig. 8A**). The two small Indian-style monks on each side who bow towards her recall Śākyamuni's disciples. Jönggen Qatun was identified with an emanation of Tārā in the colophons of sutras' translations. The lower position of the Mayidari Qutuγtu and of the other monks illustrates the unequal relationship between the lay donor and the lama.

As Hans-Joachim Klimkeit (1990: 191) stresses about Turfan donors in frescoes, 'the position of their images within the sanctuary' is 'of decisive importance in the self-understanding of the donors.' In Mayidari-yin Juu, the location of the painting on the western side of the entrance at the same level as the viewer's eyes, as well as its large size (16x2m), show the donors' importance – they are no more small humble figures on a side as in the mandala of Vajrabhairava (the painting is much larger than Arjai's painting of 'Chinggis Khan's family').

In the same category of ancestors-cum-donors, the main characters of the Arjai paintings in caves 28 and 31 sit frontally, the others, slightly turned towards him, make the worshipping gesture, and in both cases they are located under a larger Buddhist icon (**fig. 10, 11**). The painting of Abatai Qan at Erdeni Juu was probably also located under or at the side of a larger Buddhist deity: in one of the scenes, ten men, sitting or kneeling in a respectful attitude and presenting cups full of offerings pay homage to what was probably a Buddha or a divinity. Abatai and his wife are the only frontal characters. In **fig. 13**, Qutuγtai Secen is depicted as a divinized ancestor but his location below the divinized Chinggis Khan makes him a kind of emanation or incarnation of Chinggis Khan, while Sayang Secen stays discreetly in the background. Although they have obviously a different status in the painting, the sacrifices and prayers made in their shrine were addressed to the three ancestors at the same time.

The iconic frontal representation and size of Mongol donors after the Yuan dynasty seems to be an innovation in Buddhist painting, and contrasts with the usual three-quarters posture of Central Asian, Chinese and Tibetan worshippers as seen in the Dunhuang (Soyumié 1999; Russel-Smith 2005, Wiercimok 1990) and Turfan caves (Klimkeit 1990), the Tibetan temples of Western Tibet (temples and caves of Guge)<sup>61</sup>, and in Tibetan thangkas.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> In Buddhist paintings, the lay persons adopting a frontal position are kings: the universal monarch (*cakravartin* king), the king of Shambhala.

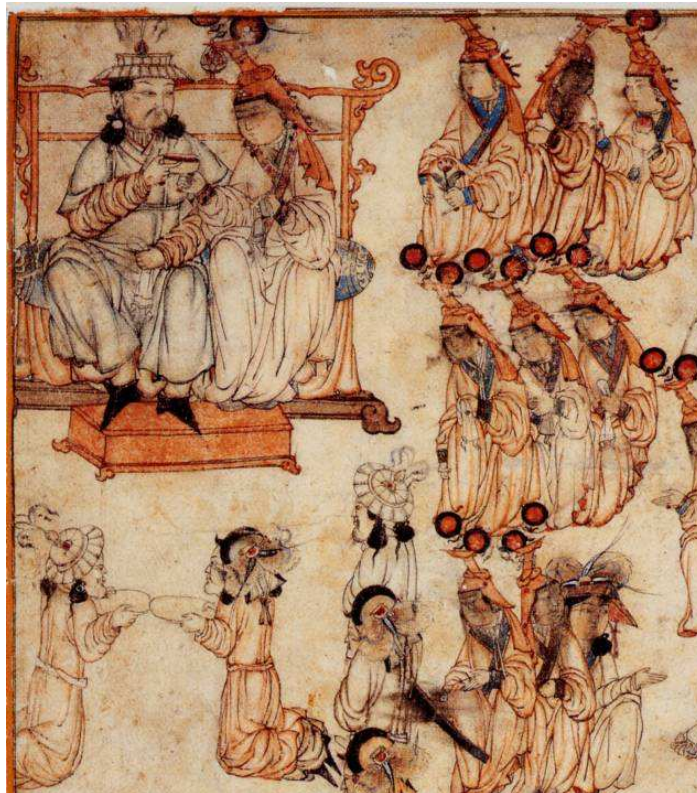
<sup>61</sup> Cf. a painting of cave 126, district 4 showing the royal family – two men and two women – sitting in front of three offering tables and attended by servants (Jin Weinuo 1991, fig. 177).

<sup>62</sup> See the donors at the bottom of a thangka of Vajradhārā, Eastern Tibet, late 17th century, private collection Robert Hatfield Ellsworth (in Rhie and Thurman 1991: 360, cat. 148).



## The enthroned couple

The Mongols made eclectic choices when representing their rulers, borrowing themes from the Chinese, Turkic, Uyighur and other traditions, and rejecting others. A major difference with previous Inner Asian portraits of kings in regalia is that in paintings the Mongol ruler is often depicted with his main wife (fig. 9, 11, 14, 19).<sup>63</sup> The *qatun* is the same size and sits on an equal footing with the *qan*. A similar arrangement, found in Ilkhanid manuscript paintings, shows the enthroned king with his queen in an open air courtly reception, especially in the *Jami 'al-tavarikh* (Compendium of chronicles) by Rashīd ad-Dīn, painted in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 15 and 16) – it is particularly noteworthy that when books from the same milieu (e. g. the Great Mongol *Shahnama*, the Book of Kings) represented the ancient kings of the past, pre-Mongol conventions were followed.



**Fig. 15.** Enthronement scene depicting the ruler and his consort surrounded by members of the court, detail, *Jami 'al-tavarikh* by Rashīd ad-Dīn, illustration from the *Diez Albums*, ink, colors and gold on paper, Iran (possibly Tabriz), early 14<sup>th</sup> century, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung (Diez A fol. 70, S. 10).

<sup>63</sup> The Turkic stone figures sometimes also stand in couple (see the tomb of Bilge Kaghan), but in the old Turkic world, the monarch is represented sitting alone on the throne (Esin 1970: 79).



**Fig. 16.** Tolui and his court, *Jami 'al-tavarikh*, 14<sup>th</sup> century, by Rashīd ad-Dīn, Ms Sup persan 1113, folio 164v, Bnf, Paris.

In Qing dynasty Mongol paintings of the universal monarch (*cakravartin*)'s Seven Jewels, the queen and the minister are depicted on an equal footing, on the right and left (or left and right) of the wish granting jewel and the *cakra*, a disposition which is not seen in Tibetan painting.<sup>64</sup> Even when the universal monarch himself is not depicted, the symmetrical arrangement of the queen and the minister is an obvious reference to the enthroned royal couple.

The representation of couples is also found in several Yuan tomb paintings uncovered in northern China and Inner Mongolia (**fig. 17** and **18**).<sup>65</sup> These portraits follow a Kitan-Liao (907-1125) and Jürchen-Jin (1115-1234) tradition of tomb decoration, itself modelled on a Chinese tradition reaching back to the Han dynasty. Usually covering the north wall, the portraits of the tomb occupants are flanked by smaller male and female servants. The man and his wife face inward in a three-quarters pose and sit on stools or on a folding chair. In the Pucheng tomb, the tomb mistress is a Sino-Mongol wearing the elaborate *boḡay* (Ch. *gugu* 姑姑) headdress. In the other tombs the women all look Chinese by their garments, headdress and pose. These couples are probably partly sinicised Mongols, Sino-Mongol

<sup>64</sup> Tsultem 1986: fig. 125, top right; and three other paintings of the Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum: n°50809, 50817, 50818 on the 'Himalayan Art Resources' website: <http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=1176>.

<sup>65</sup> In Inner Mongolia: Yuanbaoshan (30km east of Chifeng city: Xiang Chunsong 1983); Sanyanjing 三眼井 (Chifeng municipality: Xiang Chunsong and Wang Jianguo 1982); Houdesheng 後德勝, Liangcheng county, Hohhot municipality (Nei Menggu zizhiqu wenhuating wenwuchu and Wulanchabu meng wenwu gongzuozhan 1994); in Shaanxi province: Pucheng 蒲城 (**fig. 16**); in Shanxi province: Beiyukou 北峪口 (Wenshui 文水 district, late Yuan or early Ming: Shanxi sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 1961). The tombs' architecture is that of standard simple Chinese tombs (Steinhardt 1990-91).

couples, or Mongols who chose to be depicted in the Chinese fashion, with Chinese furniture and vessels. The other elements in these portraits, such as the architectures, screens, back curtain, and tables rendering the domestic atmosphere, are not seen in sovereign's ancestors' statues and paintings, and are proper to the genre of Chinese tomb paintings. They show that the tomb occupants have a comfortable life, surrounded by servitors.<sup>66</sup>



**Fig. 17.** Portrait of the tomb couple on the north wall, Pucheng tomb, Donger village, Pucheng district, Shaanxi province, northeast of Xi'an, 1269 (Liu Hengwu 2000; Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 2000)



**Fig. 18.** Painting of the tomb occupants, detail, Yuanbaoshan tomb, north wall (width 2,43m, height 0,94m), Chifeng municipality. From Xiang Chunsong, 1983, color pl. 1.

<sup>66</sup> The interpretation of these paintings is still under discussion: life of the wealthy on earth or in the other world, scene of worship, homage to the deceased, funeral banquet offered by the descendants after the death...

At court as well as in the yurt, Mongolian women traditionally sat to their husband's left, the right being the honorific place in the Mongolian world. In the Taipei album, the emperors' faces are slightly turned to the right and the empresses' faces to the left, so we can assume that the emperors and empresses portraits were hung side by side or facing each other, forming an equal pair, the wife seated to her husband's left (**fig. 3A, 3B**). The same arrangement is found in tomb paintings such as Yuanbaoshan tomb (**fig. 18**), where the coffins also adopt the same disposition.

The reverse, seen in two tomb murals (Beiyukou and Sanyanjing), seems to be an 'anomaly,' probably a Chinese influence. In a unique political document dated 1580 depicting Altan Qan and his wife, the *qatun* sits on the *qan*'s right (**fig. 19**).<sup>67</sup> In this case, the switched position might have been intended to fit with Chinese customs, and to please the Ming emperor to whom it was destined. Or else, the letter was rewritten and redrawn by the Ming officials in order to present a formatted document to satisfy the requirements of the Ming court, a usual practice for this kind of document. Except for this detail, the representation of the *qan* and his wife remarkably fits with the Mongol conventions: they sit cross-legged under a yurt, holding rosaries, and receive offerings from kneeling courtiers and servants. The *qatun*, probably Jönggen Qatun, is slightly smaller than Altan Qan.



**Fig. 19.** Altan Qan and his wife, drawing of the painting which accompanied a letter written on a horizontal scroll, dated August 17, 1580, addressed to the Ming emperor. Institute of Eastern studies, attached to the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg (from Pozdneev, 1895). © Isabelle Charleux

<sup>67</sup> This horizontal scroll now preserved in the Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg is a Chinese-style painting accompanying a letter addressed by Altan Qan to the Ming emperor with the horse tribute. It is not described here in detail because it is not a religious painting: see Pozdneev 1895: 367-381; Chavannes 1896; Charleux 2006: 48-49.

In other cases, the position of power of a woman such as Jönggen Qatun, or her great age, can reverse the usual gender position. A related question is the fastening of garments on the right that served as a basic ethnic marker distinguishing Mongols from Chinese. Only the male occupant of the Pucheng tomb painting, who comes from Hebei, has a garment fastened to the left, as well as his attendant.

But why choose to paint the couple to represent the Qan's power? One could argue that the tombs' couple portraits modelled on Kitan and Jürchen tomb painting had influenced Mongol representations of power. But the tomb portraits were realized by provincial artists, seen by the living only on the funeral days, and are localized on a small geographical area, in Northern China and Inner Mongolia. The explanation should rather be searched in the role of women in Mongol society and in the Mongolian conception of power. The *qatun* of the Mongol Empire up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century enjoyed a certain authority, independence and privileges, appeared in public with the ruler, participated in feasts and took part in the *quriltai*.<sup>68</sup> They had their own residence (*ordo*) which was sometimes large and wealthy. Their influence was 'personal and not institutionalized' (Lambton 1988: 290 about women of the imperial Ilkhanid household). Their intervention in public affairs was nevertheless often effective. A few 'remarkable women' of the imperial family, especially widows, played a decisive role in Mongol politics: they arranged marriages, promoted their sons' careers, participated in major decision-making, or even ruled the imperial or royal domain as Regent (such as Töregene Qatun, Ögedei's widow, r. 1241 to 1246, and, later, Jönggen Qatun). Their representation on the throne could be the recognition of their political influence as well as a mere representation of their public apparition together with the *qan*.<sup>69</sup> A description of the enthronement ceremony of Güyük in 1246 even describes the *qan* enthroned together with his *qatun*. It must be noted that although the majority of Mongol rulers were polygamous, only one spouse is usually depicted: the first wife had the precedence in official banquets where she sat on the throne with her husband (Ratchnevsky 1976: 516). Only the Arjai cave 28 and the Houdesheng tomb paintings show the *qan* with several wives.

The second possible interpretation is that a double, diarchic principle, male and female, is inherent to the representation of power in the Mongolian world, as it is in the supernatural world (see the binary figures of deities, such as the two complementary ancestors Bulagat and Ehirit of the Buryats, or the Gods of the left and right wings in the old pantheon: Hamayon 1990: 202, 615-22). Caroline Humphrey has suggested during the conference that the presence of the woman enhanced the prestige of the man and was a symbol of his sexual power, of his capacity to perpetuate the lineage: a sovereign, and above all an ancestor, must have descendants as numerous as possible. The disappearance of the portrait of couples after Mongolia is incorporated within the Sino-Manchu Empire

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<sup>68</sup> The status and political role of the *qatun* in Mongolia has been studied by Ratchnevsky 1976, Rossabi 1979 (Yuan dynasty), Lambton 1988: 272-296 (Ilkhans), Serruys 1975 (Jönggen Qatun and Maciy Qatun).

<sup>69</sup> In Simon de Saint-Quentin's description, the *qatun* sits down on the felt blanket beside the *qan*, they are both lifted high off the ground and proclaimed Emperor and Empress (Sela 2005: 28-29).

would therefore reflect the loss of Mongolian independence and the princes' taste for Sino-Manchu representations of power.

### **From the three-quarters view to the frontal view**

In the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century portraits, the ruling couple is depicted in a slight three-quarters view, looking at each other (Yuan official portraits, Yuan tomb murals, **fig. 15-18**). They often adopt a relaxed position, asymmetric and nonchalant, that conveys familiarity and humanity. Their hands rest on their knees, or one arm rests on the armchair; legs are open, or one of the legs is slightly folded (fig. 15), a posture close to the 'royal ease posture' from Buddhist paintings of kings, princes and bodhisattvas,<sup>70</sup> and is reminiscent of Chinese portrait tradition.<sup>71</sup> They generally sit on an easily transportable folding chair (*jiaoyi*) – a symbol of prestige and power in Chinese society – praised by the Mongol nomadic elite.

This relaxed posture strongly contrasts with the rigid iconic posture and frontal view of post-Yuan portraits. The frontal view is certainly an influence of Buddhist painting, because it appears along with a profusion of Buddhist attributes and objects (halos, ritual scarves, jewels, eight auspicious symbols, wish-granting jewels...). But the frontal hieratic posture also characterizes former Inner Asian nomad kings (especially the Turks and Uyighurs) and Central Asian monarchs such as the Ottomans: flanked by symmetrical figures, the king may not turn to any side to maintain the equilibrium of the world (Esin 1970: 107, 114). It was also commonly adopted by Chinese ancestor portraits from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Stuart and Rawski 2001: 84-86). Frontality creates a centre of attraction, catches attention – as shown by Schapiro (2005), the dichotomy between frontality and profile conveys two complementary forms of discourse (Schapiro 2005). As in Buddhist icons or in later Chinese ancestor portraits, the frontal posture shows that the main characters are worshipped as Buddhas (especially when they have a halo: **fig. 14**) or/and as ancestors. Power then seems to be more impersonal and strict. They generally sit cross-legged (*jabilaju sayuqu*) on a throne (**fig. 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 19**): in Buddhist Mongolia, the cross-legged position was the most honorific posture, adopted by lamas, and persons of a high status invited in a yurt (Hamayon 1970: 136).

Secondary figures, depicted in small dimensions following the principle of 'hieratic scale' in Buddhist art, can either be sons, courtiers, servants, and/or worshippers. They are disposed symmetrically beside and in front of the enthroned royal couple, and are sitting cross-legged, or adopt a posture of humility expressing deference or subordination, in a three-quarters view: standing (**fig. 14**), or kneeling and resting on both knees (*sökürejü*

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<sup>70</sup> See the tomb occupant enjoying music painted on the eastern wall of the Fujiatun tomb (Lingyuan district, Liaoning province: Liaoning sheng bowuguan and Lingyuan xian wenhua guan 1985), as well as the wood-block printed illustrations of the illustrated encyclopaedia *Shilin guangji* by Chen Yuanjing [1330-1333] 1963, vol. 2, 'Yili lei' 儀禮類 (see a reproduction in Steinhart 1990-91: 213).

<sup>71</sup> We know that traditions from the Mongolian court of China may have made their way to Central Asia through book-printing.

*saṃqu*: **fig. 9, 19**) to offer a gift or a cup, or in *comcujiu saṃqu* (a knee down, the hind-quarters resting on the heel of the horizontal leg: the second wives at Arjai, **fig. 10**).<sup>72</sup> They join their hands in the worshipping gesture (*añjali mudrā*, **fig. 7, 8A**), present a cup (**fig. 14, 7, 9**) or a jewel (**fig. 7, 9, 19**) to the monarch, hold Buddhist symbols (rosaries, Skt. *cintāmaṇi* [wish-granting jewel] at Mayidari-yin Juu **fig. 7, 8A**), or play music (**fig. 7, 19**).

## The old symbols of royal power

The standard, one of the main symbols of power in the Mongolian world believed to embody the soul of a chief warrior, is seen in one of Abatai Qan's painting in Erdeni Juu<sup>73</sup> and in the painting of Chinggis Khan and Qutuγtai Secen Qong tayiji (see bottom left, where four standards surround a fifth one, **fig. 13**).

In the paintings of Erdeni Juu and Ejen Qoriya (**fig. 9, 14**), attendants who hold a quiver with arrows, a bow, a horse (also in Altan Qan's letter), or a jug are reminiscent of the weapon bearer ('companion of the quiver'), the equerry leading the unmounted saddled horse, and the jug-bearer attending the wise king of ancient Turkic compositions.<sup>74</sup> Bows, arrows and quivers were symbols of royal power in the Turkic world (Barthold 1970: 202, 216-217, 223). Because they include motifs that are characteristic of ancient Turkic representations of power, these three paintings seem to be representative of an ancient style. These ancient symbols are mixed with Buddhist symbols in Buddhist or thangka-like paintings.

But in contrast to inner Asian traditions, in the majority of the Mongol portraits the *qan* carries no weapons<sup>75</sup> and is shown enthroned, peacefully ruling his empire. Unlike the Turkic stone men, the Mongol stone figures are unarmed. The Mongols of East Asia chose not to represent their monarch on horseback, in contrast to the investiture ride or the formal hunt of the Turkic king, – a theme taken over by the Ilkhanid rulers as can be seen in the book-paintings from the Ilkhanid period (Esin 1970: 109).

## The cup, a symbol of royal rite and funeral sacrifice

The Mongol sovereign often holds a cup, a bowl or a glass at breast level (**fig. 1, 9**), raises the cup to drink it (while the *qatun* drinks her own: **fig. 14**), or offers it to his *qatun* (**fig. 15**). The cup seems to be the most characteristic non-Buddhist attribute. It is linked with the fact that the couple receives a cult and is fed.

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<sup>72</sup> This posture is a 'sign of attention towards the elders and of being at their disposal' (Hamayon 1970: 136).

<sup>73</sup> Reproduced in Müller and Pleiger (eds) 2005: cat. 413.

<sup>74</sup> Esin 1970: 101, 107-109. See for instance the panel of stucco relief found at Rayy preserved at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art (Esin 1970: 103-104 and fig. 19). Servants also carry bows, quiver and arrows on Dunhuang scrolls: 'Mandala of Guanyin', 10<sup>th</sup> century, EO 3579, Fond Pelliot, Guimet Museum, Paris.

<sup>75</sup> Except for the portrait of Qabutu Qasar, the statue of Chinggis Khan mentioned in the *Erdeni-yin tobci* and the Badγar Coyiling Süme's thangka of Chinggis Khan, that show the *qan* carrying a bow and a quiver with arrows in their back.

The stone men's cup belongs to a funerary context and is obviously a heritage of the Turk period. Corpses were also found with a cup near their hand in tombs.<sup>76</sup> The stone men's cup is thought to contain (symbolically or materially) alcohol, water, and perhaps offerings of fat, or burnt meat (or, according to some archaeologists, tobacco, the soul of the dead, or his ashes). It has sometimes been explained as an allusion to the funerary banquet given to the deceased: in any case, the ritual function is very likely.<sup>77</sup>

Alcohol is a fundamental element of Mongol rituals. Liquid offerings of milky products by libation (offerings in cups) and sprinklings (*saculi*), are offered to feed the spirits, gods, and ancestors and therefore honouring them by giving their share of the first milk (Serruys 1974; Ge Shanlin 1999: 336). Sprinklings made towards the Heaven and the four cardinal points were performed at the early Mongol and Yuan court (*cf.* note 11) and remain a daily gesture of rural Mongols. At the end of each sacrifice, the alcohol and meat offered to the ancestors are shared and consumed by the participants. In the sacrifice to Chinggis Khan at Ejen Qoriya for instance, 'only when meat and drink are consumed by the participants the sacrifice [to Chinggis Khan] can be considered accomplished. Receiving a share of meat and drink after a sacrifice means to the participants that they are securing the blessing of the ancestors or of the divinity in whose honor the sacrifice was performed' (Chiodo 1992: 111).

The cup in the hands of a monarch in regalia also evokes the 'cup-rite' performed in enthronement ceremonies, investiture of a vassal (oath of allegiance), *and* (Mong. *anda*, sworn brotherhood of unrelated men in an equal relationship), and wedding rituals in the Inner-Asian nomadic world since the beginning of the first millennium. The 'communion' (drinking the same beverage at the same time) seals a contract between two parties (alliance, marriage), or between a king and his subjects.<sup>78</sup> Beside, drinking was central to any formal and ritual occasion, and Mongol kings and queens used to drink together.<sup>79</sup>

In Mongol paintings, cups are also raised by courtiers paying homage to the monarch (**fig. 7, 9, 14**). The gesture of offering a cup and the kneeling posture meant servitude, acceptance of vassalage, and worship (as in the Mayidari-yin Juu painting, **fig. 7**). Cups were also presented to the Buddha about to be enthroned by the Kings of the Four Directions in Uyighur paintings (Esin 1969: 225).

As in the ancient Turkic world, the offering of milky products in a cup (along with sacrificial meat) to the monarch reflects the libation to the deities and ancestors offered by

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<sup>76</sup> In the first tomb of Yangqunmiao, near the right arm of the deceased was found a cup of pure gold and silver, enveloped in a piece of silk. For Oguz Turks buried with a vessel, a cup in their hand: Boyle 1965: 149; Esin 1969: 243.

<sup>77</sup> *Cf.* Ge Shanlin 1999: 333 quoting sources on funerary customs of the Turks and summarizing previous studies.

<sup>78</sup> Esin (1969) studied the origins of the cup-rites and its meaning in Xiongnu, Turkic, Uyighur, Ilkhanid, Ottoman and Timurid art and culture, and Bleichsteiner (1951-52: 192 *sq.*) discusses drinking ceremonies in the Mongolian world. See the description of an enthronement ritual (Esin 1970: 102-103). During the enthronement ceremony of Mongol *qan*, the *qan* is led to the throne by members of his family; the participants remove their hats, sling their belt across their backs, kneel three times to the sun, distribute gifts and pass the wine goblet (see Sela 2005: 25-29).

<sup>79</sup> *Secret History of the Mongols*, §156 (transl. Even and Pop 1994: 116).



the devotee. Funerary rites and worshipping rites (as well as wedding rites, which are also a metaphor of the government)<sup>80</sup> paralleled the cup-rite of royal ceremonies; these distinct ceremonies visually converge in commemorative paintings (**fig. 7, 9, 14**), where enthroned kings and queens are worshipped as ancestors.

But with the 16<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist renaissance, the cup, at least in the *qan* and the *qatun*'s hands, is often replaced by a Buddhist attribute such as a *qataγ*, a rosary or a wish-granting jewel for Abatai Qan at Erdeni Juu (**fig. 9**), an *amṛita* vase (vase for lustral water) and a wish-granting jewel for Jönggen qatun (**fig. 8B**).

## Conclusion

As in medieval Europe, the Mongol portrait developed from funerary statues to a political and religious symbol linking the past sovereign to the present ruler. Political ideology and ancestor worship are closely interwoven. During the earliest period, sculpted portraits serving as supports for the soul, used to feed and revere the ancestors, were worshipped in tents and temples. We underlined the major distinction between ancestors' statues that can be assimilated to *ongons* because they are directly fed, and two-dimensional 'inhabited portraits.' Under the Buddhist influence of Qubilai's reign, woven portraits of past rulers were hung in ancestors' temples along with mandalas, and painted and woven images of the rulers became increasingly common. After the 16<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist renaissance, statues were reserved for Buddhas, holy lamas and for the divinized Chinggis Khan, while the representation of dead and living rulers was expressed through other media such as wall-paintings or *thangka*-like painting.

In Mongol representations of *qan* and *qatun*, the belief in the deceased protector ancestors, and in the importance of family and lineage, sometimes converged with Chinese style ancestor worship and Buddhist ideas of a *cakravartin* ruler. Chinggis Khan was worshipped first as an ancestor, then as a deity, and later forcibly integrated into the Buddhist pantheon. Other Mongol rulers were represented as a *cakravartin* ruler or evoking a *bodhisattva*, and as donors at the same time (**fig. 8B**). The various politico-religious aims of the rulers' portraits – commemoration, veneration of a divinized ancestor, legitimization of a living ruler through his ancestors' portraits, and exaltation of the devotion of Buddhist donors – were therefore often interwoven. Portraits made for ancestors' worship can be privately venerated in a closed place by a few descendants and effigies used by the deceased in the otherworld can be kept in a closed tomb; on the contrary portraits (also) made for legitimization through the glorification of a past ruler, and for exhibition of the devotion, wealth, and merits of Buddhist donors were not hidden. The statue of Chinggis Khan in front of which even the foreigners had to bow and the woven or painted portraits exposed within Buddhist monasteries during the Yuan and Northern Yuan dynasties were relatively public objects exposing the *qan*'s power,

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<sup>80</sup> The men sit on the right and the women on the left, homage is expressed by kneeling down before the senior and improvising a song while offering the cup. Rodica Pop, present volume.

domination and privileges to visitors' eyes.<sup>81</sup> The luxury Ilkhanid illustrated manuscripts exalting the history of the Mongols, such as the *Jami 'al-tavarikh* also had political and propagandist aims (Hillenbrand 2002).

The ancient Inner Asian heritage of frontal representation and cup-rites had to compete with three-quarters and relaxed postures as well as with Buddhist attributes, but in any case the Mongols chose a pacific representation of the sovereign, with his main wife and often his whole family. These portraits also give us much information on self-representation, costume, gender status, ancestor worship, and conventions, reflecting the highly personalized nature of politics for Mongols.

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<sup>81</sup> Even to foreign visitors: the Ming scholar Shen Defu ([1606] 1997: 680) describes a portrait he himself saw of Jönggen Qatun telling her rosary; he may have seen one of the Mayidari-yin Juu's portraits of the *qatun*.

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