

Jamuqa and the Education of Chinggis Khan*

Timothy May

/North Georgia College and State University/

Most scholars view Chinggis Khan as a military and organizational genius, however, one must question whether he possessed these innate abilities or did he gain these talents through the process of learning. Whatever the case, Chinggis Khan certainly needed the opportunity to refine his skills and thus was involved in some educational experiences. This study examines the education and development of Chinggis Khan as a leader, as well as the influence of an individual who may have played a significant part in his education as a military leader. The individual in question is the ever enigmatic Jamuqa who was the *anda* or blood brother, a comrade, and a rival of Chinggis Khan.

Before Jamuqa, Temüjin, as Chinggis Khan was known before receiving that title, had another influence in molding his career. After years of hardship, Temüjin became a *nökör* of Toghril, Khan of the Kereit in 1182-83. Like other warlords of the medieval period, tribal leaders surrounded themselves with an assembly of warriors that formed the nucleus of his army, among the steppe nomads of Mongolia these were known as *nököd* (plural).¹ A *nökör* could and did switch his allegiances, always in search of a more profitable relationship.² For

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 5th Central Eurasians Studies Society Annual Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, October 14-17, 2004. I would like to thank Professors David Morgan, Michael Chamberlain, and Uli Schamiloglu of the University of Wisconsin for their comments on an earlier version of this article as well as Dr. Shawn Lyons of the University of Virginia for his comments during the course of the conference.

¹ Paul D. Buell, *Tribes, Qan, and Ulus*, 28. According to Paul Buell, the *nökör* were free warriors who attached themselves to a "powerful steppe hegemon. For him they constituted both a small but reliable personal army and valuable leadership cadres for the expansion and fortification of hegemonic power".

² *The Secret History of the Mongols*, translated and edited by Francis W. Cleaves, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 54-58. Henceforth, *SHM-C*. This occurs in § 123-126. Also see *The Secret History of the Mongols*, v.1, translated and edited by Igor de Rachewiltz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 48-52. Henceforth, *SHM-R*. As they joined a new leader, their oaths of loyalty were exaggerated and often symbolic in their exact terms including promises of punishment should they not obey him, but nevertheless, they were essentially contracts promising service to a leader.

many it may have been a more equitable share of booty, or perhaps a higher rank, or even the potential for more power.

Toghril's involvement in Temüjin's life started simply as accepting Temüjin's offering of loyalty. In truth, it appears to have been done simply out of respect for Temüjin's father, Yesügei, an old ally of Toghril's. Militarily and economically, Temüjin had little to offer the Kereit ruler. Toghril, who received a magnificent sable coat as a gift may have determined that it was a low risk endeavor. If nothing else, he demonstrated that he took care of familial obligations by taking his *anda*'s son into his service as a *nökör*. For Temüjin, the benefit was immense as he now had a protector.

Despite Temüjin's status as a *nökör* in Toghril's retinue, after the abduction of Temüjin's wife Börte by the Merkits, one may wonder why Toghril felt such an obligation to assist Temüjin in recovering her as Temüjin's own following in 1183-84. Indeed, on several occasions the *Secret History of the Mongols* describes Temüjin's family as possessing only a shadow for a friend.³ It also seems strange that Toghril would risk two *tümens* of his own army as well as two *tümens* of a vassal, Jamuqa, simply to regain the wife of a destitute patriarch with no following, regardless of past ties to that individual's father. While the prospect of plunder may have been enticing, considerable risk still existed. Events after Börte's return, however, indicate that Temüjin was not simply a destitute youth relying on obligations to his father.

Indeed, even before this, Bo'orchu, the son of Naqu Bayan entered his service.⁴ Considering Naqu's epithet of "Bayan" means rich and that Naqu and Bo'orchu came from the Arulat Mongol tribe, which was aristocratic, it is likely that Bo'orchu came with his own following, albeit perhaps one smaller than Temüjin's retinue which consisted of his three brothers and his half-brother Belgütei.⁵ Jelme, who also became a leading figure in the early Mongol state, also entered Temüjin's service. Unlike Bo'orchu, Jelme initially did not serve as a *nökör*, but rather as a servant as Jelme's father, Jarchi'udai, had promised his son to Yesügei when he reached maturation.⁶ As such, and being a member of the *kara yasun* or black boned commoners, Jelme did not possess a retinue. Nevertheless, Temüjin's power must have been more than a handful of family and friends. Something other than a promise made in the woods with no witnesses must have compelled Jarchi'udai to make his son a servant to a poverty-stricken leader. However, if Temüjin did possess some followers, even of a modest size, then perhaps he could attract some more followers or enforce promises made to his father. Thus, while not quite as destitute as *The Secret History of the Mongols* implies, Temüjin nonetheless possessed a small following. This however grew.

³ SHM-C, 22-24; SHM-R, 20-22. This occurs in § 77-78. Hö'elün uttered this once after Temüjin and Jochi Qasar complained to her that their half brother Begter he stole a fish they caught. A second occurrence of the phrase was spoken by Begter shortly before his murder over the stolen fish and other grievances. Hö'elün said it again upon learning of Begter's death. Essentially, the phrase indicates the poverty of Temüjin's family. To guide and goad their horses, the nomads of Mongolia used whip rather than spurs. Thus only possessing a horse's tail as a whip demonstrates the indigence of Temüjin's family.

⁴ SHM-C, 32; SHM-R, 29; § 95.

⁵ Igor de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, v.1. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 386. Rachewiltz mentions that Arulat were an aristocratic tribe.

⁶ SHM-C, 33-34; SHM-R, 30-31; § 97.

Indeed when Toghril, Temüjin, and Jamuqa plan to assemble their forces to fight the Merkit, Temüjin suddenly has an army of his own. When discussing their plans, Jamuqa states, "When I set out from here, upstream along the Onan river where my sworn friend's people are—with one unit of ten thousand taken from his people and I with one from here making two units of ten thousand—going up along the Onan River we shall join forces at the appointed meeting place in Botoqan Bo'orji".⁷

Although Rachewiltz, in his notes concerning §106, views this ascribing of a *tümen* to Temüjin as anachronistic and a later addition to *The Secret History of the Mongols*, it may not be so far off.⁸ He is quite right that it would be impossible for Temüjin to gain ten thousand men when he is allegedly destitute. However, having noted that Bo'orchu joined him, and that Jarchi'udai gave Temüjin his son Jelme, it is likely that Temüjin possessed a modest yet sizeable following. Even with his status of serving as a *nökör* to the powerful Toghril, it is unlikely that Temüjin's retinue consisted of more than a few hundred people. Yet, this is considerably more than *The Secret History of the Mongols* would indicate otherwise.

After the defeat of the Merkit, Temüjin and his family stayed with Jamuqa's camp for approximately a year and half. During this time, it he gained a sizeable following. This situation seems rather odd considering that prior to this, other than one individual, Bo'orchu, Temüjin's only supporters of note were his brothers. After this period of one and a half years Temüjin and Jamuqa abruptly separated, with several groups and individuals departing Jamuqa's following and joining Temüjin.⁹

This period of a year and half should be viewed as an apprenticeship for Temüjin. Temüjin not only joined Jamuqa as a renewing of their *anda* relationship, but because Jamuqa served as Toghril's war-chief. In doing so, Temüjin could then be of more service to Toghril by gaining more military skills. Jamuqa's status as the commander of the Kereit military forces is demonstrated in several instances.

Against the Merkit, Toghril and Jamuqa both provided two *tümen*, or supposedly 20,000 troops each. Regardless of actual number of troops, there is more to this than the actions of a vassal responding to the request of his suzerain; however, the interaction between Jamuqa and Toghril indicates a slightly different relationship. Jamuqa referred to Toghril as his "older brother" or *aqā*.¹⁰ Certainly, while they were not tied by real kinship, such terminology was often used in the steppe for a fictive kinship. Typically, the terminology between a suzerain and his vassal was one of father and son. The use of *aqā* indicates that Jamuqa viewed Toghril as an elder, but at the same time, they were on more equal terms as brothers. This is further demonstrated by the fact that when Toghril and Temüjin arrived late at the agreed-upon rendez-vous point to organize their forces, Jamuqa berated both of them. Jamuqa said to Temüjin and Toghril:

⁷ SHM-R, 38; SHM-C, 42-43: §106.

⁸ Rachewiltz, ed., *The Secret History of the Mongols*, 417.

⁹ SHM-R, 46-47; SHM-C, 51-52: §120.

¹⁰ SHM-C, 42. SHM-R, 37: Igor de Rachewiltz, *Index to the Secret History of the Mongols*, Uralic and Altaic Series (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1972), 42: §106.

“Did we not agree that we won’t be late
 At the appointed meeting,
 Even if there be a blizzard;
 At the gathering,
 Even if there be rain?
 Are we not Mongols, for whom a ‘yes’ is the same as being
 bound by oath? We did agree that
 We shall reject from our ranks
 Whoever is remiss in his ‘yes’.”¹¹

Toghril responded, “As we are three days late at the meeting place, it is up to brother Jamuqa to punish and lay blame on us!”¹²

Typically a vassal, even in the relatively egalitarian nomadic society, would not be able to castigate his suzerain for such a matter. Neither Toghril nor Temüjin questioned or challenged Jamuqa on this matter. Furthermore, Jamuqa selected the meeting point and the time of the meeting at the source of the Onan River indicating that he planned the campaign. Indeed, in his reply to Temüjin’s request to aid him, Jamuqa provides details on how the campaign should proceed.¹³ This particular episode suggests that Jamuqa was not simply a vassal of Toghril. Indeed, he came with an equal force to that of Toghril. Furthermore, while pastoral nomadic society tended to be more egalitarian than sedentary societies of the time, one may wonder whether Toghril would have accepted such criticism from an ordinary chieftain. Considering Jamuqa’s insistence on military protocol when organizing a campaign and his later career in which he appeared as a leader or counselor for others, Jamuqa served as Toghril’s war-leader or general, perhaps the equivalent of a marshal or war chief in other societies.

Then as Jamuqa was the war-chief for Toghril, Temüjin served as one of Jamuqa’s lieutenant. Under Jamuqa’s tutelage, Temüjin probably learned much of what later formed many of the statutes of the Mongol military system. There is ample evidence demonstrating that Jamuqa possibly served as the source for Temüjin’s military knowledge.

After the defeat of the Merkits, Temüjin joined Jamuqa and stayed with him for one and a half years. During this time, they renewed their *anda* relationship. In the course of this process they exchanged gifts, mainly booty from the attack on the Merkits. Jamuqa received the sash and a fawn-colored stallion that formerly belonged to the leading Merkit chieftain, Toqto’a-beki. The fawn-colored stallion was greatly prized as it could run one hundred miles in a day at the age of two. Meanwhile, Temüjin received the sash and mount of Dayir-usun, a subordinate chieftain of Toqto’a-beki.¹⁴ Thus, they received gifts befitting their status as senior and junior partners.

¹¹ *SHM-R*, 39; *SHM-C*, 43-44; §108. Translation from *SHM-R*.

¹² *SHM-R*, 39; *SHM-C*, 43-44; §108.

¹³ *SHM-C*, 40-42; *SHM-R*, 36-38; §§105-106..

¹⁴ *The Secret History of the Mongols*, edited and translated by Urgunge Onon. (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 95-96 (henceforth *SHM-O*); *SHM-C*, 49-50; *SHM-R*, 44-45; §117. For more on the fawn colored stallion, see footnote 241 in Onon’s translation of the *SHM*.

During this time, Temüjin learned the art of war from Jamuqa. While *The Secret History of the Mongols* does not indicate any raids or campaigns that occurred during this period, this is not to say that the transfer of knowledge did not occur. Indeed, the episode where Jamuqa becomes angry at Toghril and Temüjin for their tardiness is evocative of the later Mongols insistence on maintaining a strict time schedule for campaigns.¹⁵

Eventually however, Jamuqa and Temüjin's relationship soured. One day as they traveled, Jamuqa said to Temüjin:

"My sworn brother Temüjin,
Let us camp near the mountain,
A suitable place
For our horse-herders to pitch their bark tents.
Let us camp next to the river,
A suitable place
For our shepherds and the keepers of our lambs
To fill their gullets".¹⁶

Onon interprets this as Jamuqa wanting each to go their own way. This passage is a metaphor as horses and sheep do not pasture together well, since horses require long grass for pasture, and sheep tend to nibble the grass closer to the ground, causing it to be too short for the horses.¹⁷ Furthermore, Onon observed that Jamuqa and Temüjin were engaged in a power struggle. According to Onon, "Jamuqa (sic) was only too aware that Chinggis was adept at absorbing his potential rivals".¹⁸ However, this is anachronistic, as Temüjin has not yet absorbed any rivals or defeated anyone other than the Merkit, which was only accomplished due to Jamuqa's assistance in 1183/84.

In his biography of Chinggis Khan, Ratchnevsky viewed this exchange in terms of class struggle, citing Bartold and Vladimirtsov's examples. In their and presumably his view, Jamuqa represented the interests of the commoners, whereas Temüjin served as the advocate of the aristocracy.¹⁹ Ratchnevsky's opinion in this matter, however, should be dismissed as it follows more closely Marxist dogma on Chinggis Khan than evidence. There is another reason to dismiss Ratchnevsky's view which relates to Jamuqa's views on steppe society. A more full examination of Jamuqa and Temüjin's status will take place at the end of this study concerning the final unification of the Mongolian steppe and the efforts of Jamuqa, Toghril and Temujin. Rachewiltz differs from both Ratchnevsky and Onon. In his view, the Jamuqa's "riddle" had no real meaning and that all attempts to explain any ulterior motive

¹⁵ D. Sinor, "On Mongol Strategy", *Proceedings of the Fourth East Asian Altaistic Conference*, edited by Ch'en Chieh-hsien, Taipei, China, December, 197, 240.

¹⁶ *SHM-O*, 96.

¹⁷ *SHM-O*, 95-97. See footnote 245, 96-97 for more details. More precisely, horses, cows, and camels need long grass.

¹⁸ *SHM-O*, 97. See footnote 256, p. 97.

¹⁹ Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 37-38.

behind it serve only to justify Temüjin's abandonment of Jamuqa's camp.²⁰ This is as good an explanation as any. Considering the size of Jamuqa's following and the fact that rivers do often run near mountains, there may very well be nothing more to Jamuqa's proposition. However, as Rachewiltz concedes, tensions did grow between the two. Exactly what caused this we will never know, but in 1185, Börte, Temüjin's wife, advised him to separate from Jamuqa before he saw Temüjin as a rival.²¹ Whether Börte actually urged Temüjin or whether other actors, such as other Mongol leaders (Altan and Quchar), encouraged him as Jamuqa insinuates, it matters little, as Temüjin broke away from Jamuqa.²²

So the two separated and afterwards Temüjin's ranks swelled with former followers of Jamuqa.²³ The break proved to be propitious for Temüjin. Among those who joined him came many who became high ranking generals: Qubilai of the Barulas clan and Sübedei of the Uriangqai. Furthermore, Altan, Quchar, and Sacha-Beki, all three senior members among the Mongol aristocracy, joined Temüjin. Once joining Temüjin, they raised the young Mongol to the throne and made him khan, giving him the title of Chinggis Khan in 1185.²⁴ This ascension acknowledged Temüjin as ruler of the Borjigid Mongols. Jamuqa still led another faction, which may or may not have included suzerainty over the Tayichi'ud Mongols and a number of other tribes. Thus, at this time Chinggis Khan, despite the lofty title, was only khan of the Borjigids. Despite his title, Temüjin's ascension may have had less to do with Altan, Sacha-Beki, and Quchar's confidence in his leadership than with their search for a more malleable khan than Jamuqa. At this time, Temüjin was approximately 20 years in age, while the three who nominated him were much older and experienced, but without Temüjin's charisma. In paragraph 123 of the *Secret History of the Mongols*, these three swore highly stylized oaths, and made outlandish promises should they ever fail Temüjin.²⁵ Their oaths may have been made simply to flatter Temüjin as they never intended to keep them.

Eventually the Temüjin and Jamuqa clashed in war, with Jamuqa leading thirteen tribes against Chinggis Khan who somehow also led thirteen tribes allegedly totaling 30,000 men in his army. Thus at this point, Jamuqa was a confederation leader in addition to being a lieutenant and military leader for Toghril Ong Khan. It should be pointed out that Jamuqa was the only steppe leader who decisively defeated Temüjin, which he did at Dalan-baljut in 1187. Yet, although he won the battle, he essentially lost the war as several more of his followers deserted to Temüjin in spite of the latter's defeat. Indeed, one individual who actually joined before the battle, Qorchi, prophesized that Temüjin and not Jamuqa would be the leader of the Mongol people. Thus, their struggle was possibly for the leadership of the

²⁰ Rachewiltz, 441-442. Rachewiltz also includes a host of citations relating to a variety of ideological and other interpretations of this event.

²¹ *SHM-O*, 97; *SHM-R*, 45-46; *SHM-C*, 50-51; §118.

²² *SHM-R*, 53; *SHM-C*, 59; §127.

²³ *SHM-R*, 46-50; *SHM-C*, 51-54; §120-123.

²⁴ *SHM-R*, 46-50; *SHM-C*, 51-54; §120-124. Chinggis Khan did not incorporate the Tayichi'ud Mongols into his following until 1201.

²⁵ *SHM-C*, 54-55; *SHM-R*, 49-50; §123. The three swore that if they violated their oaths, then Chinggis Khan should strip them of their possessions and abandon them. As events occurred, Temüjin did not forget their oath, and did indeed strip them of their goods after plundering during the battle against the Tatars.

Mongols, and although Jamuqa was a gifted general, his handling of politics and subordinates left much to be desired. Qorchi, in a vision, saw prophecy in cow butting Jamuqa and bellowing that Temüjin would lead Mongols and not Jamuqa.²⁶

After his victory, Jamuqa boiled alive the princes of the Chinos and also executed Chaqa'an-u'a of the Ne'üdeis. According to Onon in footnote 276, the Chinos belonged to the Tayichi'ud at one point. Because of this, according to Onon, Jamuqa feared that they might assist Temüjin. Onon's reasoning on this is a bit flawed, as the Tayichi'ud were Temüjin's greatest enemy until he defeated them. It seems unlikely that a sub-group of the Tayichi'ud would seek to assist the person who destroyed their paramountcy over the Mongols.²⁷

As the next event in Temüjin's life after his defeat at Dalan-baljut was the alliance with the Jin against the Tatars, it appears that Temüjin remained in Toghril's favor, whereas Jamuqa is not mentioned. It is odd that Jamuqa, a vassal of Toghril and possibly his military leader, did not take part in the campaign. The reason behind this is that Jamuqa apparently left the service of Toghril as a *nökör* could.

Jamuqa then appears as the Gur-Khan of a confederation aligned against Toghril and Temüjin in 1201. Considering that the tribes involved consisted of the Ikires, Dörben, Tatars, Onggirats, Qadagin, Saliji'ud, Qorolas, Naiman, and Oyirat and Tayichi'ud, it is not surprising that Jamuqa became the leader.²⁸ As possibly the most talented military commander in the steppe, he was a natural choice. However, as stated earlier, he did not possess the leadership abilities to maintain the cohesion of a confederation for a long term. In essence, other than the leadership to remove an enemy, Jamuqa provided little to tribal structure. Furthermore, by choosing Jamuqa as a leader, smaller tribes such as the Ikires or Qorolas would not have to come under the aegis of a larger confederation such as the Naiman. Thus they could still maintain their independence, yet act in conjunction with a larger tribe against an enemy that otherwise outmatched them.

As mentioned earlier, this confederation met defeat. If it was Jamuqa's bid for domination of the steppe, he failed miserably. However, this did not end his career. After the defeat of his confederation, Toghril pursued him. Apparently Jamuqa submitted to him again, although *The Secret History of the Mongols* does not mention anything regarding this. Nonetheless, Jamuqa reappears by Toghril's side when Toghril and Temüjin encountered the forces of one of the Naiman khans, Kökse'ü-sabraq, in 1202. Jamuqa appears here as an advisor to Toghril. Faced with the prospect of facing the Naiman in battle Toghril turned to Jamuqa for advice. Jamuqa suggested that Temüjin probably had formed an alliance with the Naiman, and it would be better to leave under the cover of night.²⁹

²⁶ SHM-C, 52-53; SHM-R, 47-48; §121.

²⁷ SHM-O, 99, 106; SHM-R, 54; SHM-C, 60; §129.

²⁸ SHM-O, 115-116; SHM-C, 68-69; SHM-R, 62-63; §141. Qoridai of the Qorolas sent an emissary and informed Chinggis Khan of their decision. It is unclear whether this served as a declaration of war, or Qoridai acted independently. Also see RD/Karimî, 422; RD/Thackston, Vol. 2, 287.

²⁹ SHM-O, 133; SHM-C, 86; SHM-R, 80-81; §160.

In the end, Temüjin discovers that Toghril abandoned him and makes the astute decision not to fight the Naiman on his own. Despite Toghril's actions, Temüjin still comes to Toghril's aid upon receiving word that the Naiman caught Toghril's force and defeated it. Even after Temüjin rescued Toghril's forces from the Naiman, Jamuqa still appeared to be an advisor of Toghril in some capacity, although his favor waned as Toghril sought the advice of others as well. In 1203, after Ong Khan rejects Temüjin's proposed marriage between Cha'ur beki and Jochi, Jamuqa slandered Temüjin. He then stated he would lead an attack against the Mongols. Although Ong Khan listened to his plans, Toghril appeared to be a bit distrustful.³⁰

Jamuqa provided Ong Khan information concerning the military units of Chinggis Khan. This should not be too surprising as many had been among his camp prior to joining Temüjin. In addition, Jamuqa was to draw up Ong Khan's battle lines. In essence, Jamuqa had become Ong Khan's war leader again. According to *The Secret History of the Mongols*, however, Jamuqa thought, "The Ong Khan has told me to array [his] soldiers. I could never defeat my sworn brother, yet the Ong Khan tells me to array these soldiers, [for] he is less capable than I".³¹ He then sent messages to Chinggis Khan telling him of these plans and the Kereit battle orders.

If *The Secret History of the Mongols* provides a reasonable, albeit highly stylized, portrayal of events, apparently, Jamuqa began to have misgivings about fighting Temüjin, perhaps sensing that Temüjin's star was now ascending and that the dominate force on the steppes had shifted eastward. In my estimation, Jamuqa decided that he should now seek service with a new leader.

Chinggis Khan, however, determined that his education with Jamuqa had ended. Indeed, he also insinuated that the rift between the two arose because Jamuqa became jealous of Temüjin's close relationship and important ranking, with Toghril Ong Khan. While this may have simply been due to Temüjin's father, Yesügei's prior relationship with Toghril, Temüjin may have also surpassed Jamuqa as a war leader, thus threatening his position.

Nevertheless, after Temüjin's victory over Toghril Ong Khan, Jamuqa successfully found service elsewhere. During the Mongols' war against the Naiman, Jamuqa appears in the company of Tayang Khan, ruler of the Naiman. Again, he appears to be serving as a general or advisor.³² His effectiveness, however, was suspect, as he gave exaggerated accounts of Mongol ferocity, which unnerved Tayang Khan. This of course was most likely a literary necessity to glorify Chinggis Khan and his *nököd*.³³ The real importance of the event is not the words placed in Jamuqa's mouth, but rather that much like Mongol commanders during the conquests, Jamuqa remained behind the lines from a vantage point where he could view the battlefield, and direct the flow of battle.

³⁰ *SHM-O*, 137-138; *SHM-R*, 84-87; *SHM-C*, 90-92; §164-168. Jamuqa's plan is in paragraph 166 while evidence of Toghril's distrust is in paragraph 167. Jamuqa, Altan, Quchar, Qardakidai Ebügejin, Noyakin, To'oril, of the Söge'en treibe and Qachi'un-beki talked to Nilqa Senggüm and convinced him and Ong Khan to attack Chinggis Khan.

³¹ *SHM-O*, 144-145; *SHM-R*, 90-91; *SHM-C*, 96-97; §170.

³² *SHM-O*, 173; *SHM-C*, 125-128; *SHM-R*, 118-122; §195.

³³ *SHM-C*, 125-128; *SHM-O*, 173; *SHM-R*, 118-122; §195.

Although Chinggis Khan must be considered a military and organizational genius, there should be little doubt that whatever innate ability he possessed, it was also molded. His period with Jamuqa, albeit relatively brief, served him well. Not only was he tutored in the arts of war, but it also served him well in learning how to lead. It is important to remember that while we may learn from the success of others, Temüjin perhaps also learned how to lead by not following Jamuqa's example.

This is best illustrated by examining Chinggis Khan's rise. In many ways, Chinggis Khan is a rags to riches story. His father, assassinated while Chinggis Khan was a child, left their family deserted and rather impoverished. Overtime Chinggis Khan eventually became an important leader on the steppe. However, this meant several years of serving others and slowly building a following. His followers came from a variety of tribes and social levels. Indeed, the majority of his supporters were *khara yasun* or black bone origins, that is to say commoners. Ultimately, for him, merit and not birth status was the major factor in selecting leaders and companions. Eventually, this allowed him to unite the steppe under his rule.

Rather than simply conquer other tribes and then maintain them in their regular form, the tribes he defeated no longer existed after the conquest. Chinggis Khan incorporated the defeated nomads into tribes and military units loyal to him under an inclusive banner of the *Xamag Monggol Ulus* or All Mongol Nation.³⁴ This new formation was not so much a greater Mongol tribe, but rather a new state that no longer operated under the traditional tribal structure of Mongolia

A new order emerged that was inexorably linked to the *altan uruy* or the family of Chinggis Khan. All other tribal elites lost importance. The establishment of an actual dynasty in the steppe aided in the construction of an empire as it removed geographical position as the basis of legitimacy and moved it to familial ties. Furthermore, with power centralized in the family of Chinggis Khan and one identity in the *Xamag Mongol Ulus*, a sense of "citizenry" developed.³⁵ As Chinggis Khan took to create a true military organization rather than relying on tribal units, the nascent empire had a few basic structures upon which to build. Nonetheless, the importance an imperial dynasty cannot be overlooked.

While kinship had always been a major source of leadership among the Mongols, any leading figure among the steppe tribes had the possibility --if not the reality-- of forming a tribal confederation. The membership of a tribe remained fluid and open to any and all who would accept the political and economic leadership of its khan.³⁶ Yet, in Mongolia, the key to actually controlling it and gaining recognition as the legitimate dominate force in the region was to control geography. Typically, in discussing nomads, the key to power is controlling households of people rather than a specific territory; however, in Inner Asian history, the most successful tribal confederations dominated one area of Mongolia: the Orkhon Valley, or *Ötüken-yish*.

³⁴ *SHM-R* (1980), 18-19.

³⁵ Lawrence Krader, "Qan-Qagan and the Beginnings of Mongol Kingship," *CAJ* 1 (1955): 95.

³⁶ R. P. Lindner, "What Was a Nomadic Tribe?", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24/4 (1982): 701.

The reasons behind the importance of the Orkhon Valley remains unclear, but the Orkhon had "acquired a political and spiritual focus that gave legitimacy to the tribe that held it".³⁷ The Uighurs, Hsiung-nu, and Turks all held it. Without controlling the Ötüken, typically a leader failed to establish firm control over Mongolia. Neither the Kereit, Tatars, nor Jamuqa could control it³⁸.

According to Larry Moses, control of the Ötüken was essential for two reasons. First, its ruler often automatically received the allegiance of local and surrounding tribes because of the political and spiritual importance the region gained from previous eras. Second, other tribes accepted vassal status to the ruler of that area.³⁹ While these two seem similar, there are subtle differences. It is one thing to offer allegiance to another leader, but typically tribal leaders rarely accepted a lesser standing. Thus to give another a higher standing at the loss of one's own position was significant. Yet, control of the Ötüken also had some inherent risks. Quite simply loss of it invalidated the legitimacy of the ruler.

This is demonstrated throughout the course of Chinggis Khan's rise to power. Initially Toghril Ong-Qan controlled the region, but internal struggles prevented him from permanently ruling the region. When Ong-Qan lost a family power struggle, he immediately was exiled. Losing control of the Orkhon created a loss of status. Yet when he returned to power and controlled the region he automatically resumed a high status in the steppe. At the same time Jamuqa sought to challenge Ong-Qan for control of the Ötüken in 1201 when he was elected Gur-Khan. Having lost the battle and thus his challenge to control the Ötüken, Jamuqa was never in position to lead a major confederation of tribes again. Chinggis Khan, however, defeated Ong-Qan and successfully took control of the Ötüken, thus positioning himself as the legitimate power in the steppes.

Indeed, despite his victories over the Tatars, the Merkits, and even earlier battles with the Naiman, Chinggis Khan did not achieve a high status in the steppe until he defeated Ong-Qan and took possession of the Orkhon Valley. Afterwards, with the exception of a few Merkit and Naiman elites, the rest of the tribes in Mongolia submitted to him. Furthermore, the Forest tribes submitted to him after he established control of the Orkhon valley.

For Chinggis Khan's successors, control of the Orkhon, while still important as Karakorum was later built in the region, the importance of geography declined. Because he invested his own bloodline with power and removed other tribal elites, Chinggis Khan, perhaps subconsciously, eliminated the Ötüken factor in steppe politics. Yet, while he elevated the importance of direct descent, Chinggis Khan also limited the overall power of the *Altan Uruy*, thus preventing it from being the sole basis of power and leadership in the steppe. In an attempt to counter the importance of his own family, Chinggis Khan created another

³⁷ Larry Moses, "A Theoretical Approach to the Process of Inner Asian Confederation," *Etude Mongol* 5 (1974): 115-16. One environmental reason was that with the Orkhon, Tula, and Selenge Rivers in the area, it offered well-watered pastures, ideal for any nomadic ruler. It should be noted that the Khitans did not, but although they controlled part of Mongolia, their focus was always northern China, while the other listed confederations sought to dominate the steppes of Mongolia.

³⁸ Moses, "A Theoretical Approach to the Process of Inner Asian Confederation," 115-16.

³⁹ Moses, "A Theoretical Approach to the Process of Inner Asian Confederation," 116.

elite group among his military commanders. Although the *noyad* (s. *noyan*) served the *altan uruy*, ultimately they obeyed and advised a single individual, the *qayan*, specifically Chinggis Khan, but later his successors.

Isenbike Togan viewed Chinggis Khan's actions as revolutionary by establishing a new order on the steppe. In her opinion, three of the principle actors in the steppe, Ong-Qan, Jamuqa, and Temüjin represented different interests. Contrary to the Ratchnevsky's view, as presented earlier, Isenbike saw Jamuqa represented the traditional steppe clan leader, wanting to maintain their own interests over that of a wider confederation. Ong-Qan, the primary power in the steppe prior to 1200, unlike Jamuqa was also a bit of a revolutionary. Like previous leaders who strove for empire, Ong-Qan attempted to build an empire albeit he did not attempt simply to build a great confederation of tribes. Ong-Qan presided as suzerain over his vassals, such as Temüjin and Jamuqa, but also gradually attempted to increase his power over them. Temüjin, however, rather than dictating terms through force, although he did do this at times, attempted to build relations beyond merely clan and tribal levels. He established new forms of power relationships that allowed social mobility among members of junior clans and tribes. Temüjin elevated individuals based on merit and loyalty rather than solely on kinship or social status.⁴⁰

Among the chief beneficiaries of the restructuring of the steppe were the *noyad*. The *noyad* initially began as a different class or group of individuals: the *nökör*. The transformation of the *nököd* to *noyad* also marks another stage of centralization of power.

Although Temüjin did not rule all of Mongolia until 1206, Chinggis Khan's supporters, among them many of his uncles and other relatives, named him khan of the Mongols much earlier in 1199. There is a strong possibility that they nominated him as khan because of his youth and inexperience. In particular, his uncles Altan, Daritai, and Qucha may have viewed him as a malleable instrument that they could use rather than risk a conflict among themselves for sole leadership of the Mongols.⁴¹ During this time Chinggis Khan unconsciously undermined tribal ties as people joined him as individuals or small groups on a voluntary basis as *nököd*. Slowly, the numbers in his following increased as large groups joined him.⁴² Chinggis Khan, compared to Ong-Qan and Jamuqa, was very liberal, as he gave booty not only to the elites but also all who participated in his campaigns. Initially, most of those who joined him came not from the upper levels of pastoral nomadic society but rather as commoners.⁴³

⁴⁰ Isenbike Togan, *Flexibility and Limitation in Steppe Formations: The Kerait Khanate and Chinggis Khan*. (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 102-103. Temüjin elevated individuals based on merit and loyalty rather than solely on kinship or social status.

⁴¹ Boris I. Vladimirtsov, *The Life of Genghis Khan*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 33; Indeed, Jamuqa specifically blamed Altan and Qucha for turning Temüjin against him, indicating that Altan and Quchar saw better opportunities by having an independent Temüjin rather than remaining *nökörs* of Jamuqa.

⁴² Togan, 131. *Küriye* were the predecessors of the later *minqan* units of organization. Originally it was a grouping of *gers* or *yurts* and their wagons that essentially formed a political or social unit that, as Buell refers to, as a fortified camp. See Buell, *Tribe, Qan, Ulus*, 26-28.

⁴³ Ratchnevsky, 39-40. They emerged as individuals and groups including *ötegü boyul* as well as groups from Jamuqa's forces that once were aligned with Yesugei before his death.

Temüjin also suffered from the wavering loyalties of his *nökör*. The traditional custom of the steppe was not to distribute booty except to those who participated in a raid. Ong-Qan and Temüjin had a few conflicts over this policy. "Temüjin's new policies of redistribution were met with strong opposition even by his own clansmen who in disgust joined Jamuqa".⁴⁴

Chinggis Khan went from being Temüjin, "who used to rule by the consent of his *nököd*, to Chinggis Khan, who ruled by the consent of his *noyad*. While the *nököd* were 'companions', the *noyad* were commanders who would take their command from Chinggis Khan".⁴⁵ Throughout his rise to power, we see development as well as the transition of Chinggis Khan's *nökör* into the *noyad*. The transition of their roles is exemplified best in the conflict between Chinggis Khan and the shaman Teb-Tengri of the Qongqotan. Furthermore, this incident serves as a good examination of the existing ties and structures of the early hierarchy immediately after the unification of the Mongolian steppe.

One might not typically consider a shaman to be a *nökör*; however, shamans played an important function in thirteenth-century Mongolia not only in their spiritual-religious functions, but also as advisors and even leaders. Teb-Tengri's importance to Chinggis Khan was double-fold not only for his traditional duties, but also because he had foretold Chinggis Khan's rise to power, and thus legitimized him. Joseph Fletcher wrote that Teb Tengri's later execution was due to Chinggis Khan's fear that he might revoke the divine right of conquest and endow it upon another, such as a brother. By executing him, Chinggis Khan removed that threat and also allowed himself to communicate directly with the spirit world and with *Kökö Möngke Tengri*.⁴⁶

Is this an accurate depiction of the motivations for Teb Tengri's execution? After the 1206 *quriltai*, Teb Tengri did attempt to expand his influence and power and that of the Qongqotan clan. Teb Tengri and his brothers intimidated Chinggis Khan's brothers and took some of their people. When they complained to Chinggis Khan, the ruler ignored the issue and instructed them to deal with it themselves.⁴⁷ Keeping in mind that Chinggis Khan's relationship with Qasar had been tenuous for several years, the idea that Chinggis Khan would support a non-family member over a relative is not surprising.

The situation grew worse until Börte, Chinggis Khan's primary wife, intervened. She admonished her husband and questioned what would remain of his empire for his sons should Chinggis Khan remain uninvolved. With that, Chinggis Khan summoned Teb Tengri to the *altan orda*. Teb Tengri came with his brothers, and probably with a sizeable force. The

⁴⁴ Togan, 90-91. This occurred in *SHM*, §166. Altan and Quchar rejoined Jamuqa after realizing that Temüjin was not a malleable puppet.

⁴⁵ Togan, 142.

⁴⁶ Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives". *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (1986): 34.

⁴⁷ Rashid al-Din, *Jami' al-tawarikh*, edited by B. Karimi. (Tehran: Iqbal, 1983), 432; Rashiduddin Fazullah, *Jami' u't Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, vol. 2 translated by W. M. Thackston. (Cambridge: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998), 295. One might be surprised by Chinggis Khan's attitude in this affair; however, we should consider that one of Chinggis Khan's maxims for his army was that any commander who could not keep his unit in order should be replaced by another more capable leader.

resulting encounter has been discussed enough elsewhere, with the final result being the execution of Teb-Tengri and the destruction of the Qongqotan power. After the execution, Chinggis Khan reasserted his authority and admonished Mönglik, a *nökör* of Chinggis Khan's father Yesügei, for the pride of his sons and their attempt to usurp his authority.⁴⁸

Despite this instance of favoritism towards the *noyad* over family members, the elevation of other elites to counter the *altan uruy* did serve its purpose. Chinggis Khan ruled his empire indirectly through his companions. Typically, in other nomadic empires, the *qayan* or *qan* and his family ruled directly, but by taking or reducing familial involvement the "state increased the magnitude of its responsibilities thereby while the family was diminished. Its degree of autonomy, a consequence of its Khan's rule in this regard was that the family ceased to be an empire within the empire".⁴⁹ By no means did the *altan uruy* become less important. Rather the elevation of the *noyad* served as a counter-weight and gave the *noyad* a vested interest in the success of the empire and not necessarily in the interests of particular princes.

Although tribal confederations arose in Mongolian steppes prior to Chinggis Khan's appearance, he derailed the confederation process. Previously, the steppe nomads formed tribal confederations, tied together by links of kinship, common interest or military force. Nevertheless, the tribes maintained their own identities. While outsiders often recognized the confederations by the tribal affiliation of the confederation leader, the tribes and clans that comprised the confederation did not view themselves as such. With the rise of the *Xamaq Monggol Ulus*, all tribes became part of the Mongols. While tribal and ethnicity remained distinct, the tribal component was extinguished as an independent political factor. The family of Chinggis Khan and his *noyad* supplanted tribal leadership. The commanders owed their fealty solely to the *qayan*.

Thus after the unification process, the world outside of Mongolia now contended not with a confederation of tribes, but a single entity. Furthermore, the new entity that emerged from the wars of unification came into existence with checks in place to prevent tribal conflict, as tribes that had vehemently opposed Chinggisid rule were dispersed into other units preventing opposition from coalescing at inopportune times.

Thus, Chinggis Khan completely altered the social structure of the steppe. In many ways he was a social revolutionary by completely dismantling previous conditions for leadership. Rather than maintaining control of a specific region for legitimacy, it was slowly shifted from the geographic region of the Orkhan River valley to a single family unit in the *altan urugh*. Although the Mongol capital remained in the region, the focus was on the family. Also, the old tribal structures vanished. While some tribal names continued, they were no longer different from the Mongols, but rather part of the larger Mongol nation.

⁴⁸ SHM-C, 182; SHM-R, 173-174; §246. It seems clear that Mönglik was not the primary actor in this, but considering the length of his service, he and as a result, his sons, felt neglected when Chinggis Khan distributed troops amongst his commanders.

⁴⁹ Krader, "Qan-Qagan and the Beginnings of Mongol Kingship," 91-92.

Furthermore, the role of the *nökör* vanished. The *nököd* had formerly been the base of a khan's power. With the transition from *nököd* to *noyad*, this aspect did not change, however the *noyad* now were fundamentally tied to the khan and served as a counterweight to the nobility. In addition, Chinggis Khan's emphasis on obedience, loyalty, and merit also opened the door to all regardless of status. Social mobility became much more fluid as even the most humble of commoners could conceivably become *noyad*. It also imposed limits on the old aristocracy. Lineage, while still important, no longer meant entitlement.