

# THE MONGOLS AND TIBET

A Historical Assessment of Relations  
Between the Mongol Empire and Tibet





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**Cover: An ancient mural depicting Khubilai Khan receiving the first cycle of tantric initiations from Drogon Choegyäl Phagpa. This painting dates to sometime between 1368 and 1644.**

# Introduction

The Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) claims that Tibet is an integral part of China. For a long time, it based this claim on the wedding of Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo, in the seventh century, to the Chinese Tang imperial princess Wen Cheng. Following China's invasion of Tibet, in 1949/50, China claimed that this wedding marked the union of Tibet with China, and that since then Tibet had remained an integral part of China. This line of argument proved untenable, because the Tibetan emperor also married the Nepalese royal princess, Brikuti Devi. Since Princess Brikuti Devi was the Emperor's senior queen, following China's argument Nepal would today have a much better claim to Tibet than China would; Wen Cheng was her junior and, according to the social and political norms of that period, a senior bride commanded greater respect than a junior one.

Relations between Tibet and China in the early period of Tibetan history were set out in the form of a peace treaty concluded between these two major powers of Asia in 821. The two empires vowed to honour this treaty in oath-taking ceremonies held in the Chinese capital, Chang-an (present day Xian), in 821 and in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, in 822. A year later stone pillars bearing the text of the treaty were erected in both capitals and on the border between Tibet and China. The pillar in Lhasa still stands to this day. The treaty makes the solemn pledge:

Tibet and China shall guard the present border and the territory over which they each hold sway. All to the east of the present boundary is the domain of Great China. All to the west is totally the domain of Great Tibet. ...Tibetans shall be happy in the land of Tibet, Chinese shall be happy in the land of China.

Because China's argument that Tibet became a part of China in the seventh century was shown to have no base in history, the Chinese authorities have changed their argument. Today, Beijing claims that Tibet became a part of China as a result of Mongol conquests in the thirteenth century. Arguing that Tibet came under the domination of the Yuan empire some 700 years ago, China claims that it has inherited the right to rule Tibet from the Yuans. China also uses the bestowal of titles on Tibetan religious and lay leaders by

the Yuan, Ming and Qing emperors to show that Tibet was subordinate to China not only during the Yuan dynasty, but also since then, during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse these Chinese arguments. This the authors do by looking at the history of the rise and fall of the Mongol empire, of which the Yuan formed a part, and the relationship which existed between the Mongol rulers and Tibet. The paper reviews the rise and expansion of the Mongol Empire under Chinggis Khan, his four sons and some of their descendants.

The paper also looks at the meaning of the bestowal of titles by Mongol, Chinese and Manchu emperors. It contains a list of some of the honorific titles given or exchanged by the Yuan, Ming, and Qing emperors, on the one hand, and the rulers and spiritual masters of neighbouring countries, on the other.

The paper is based primarily on the study of Chinese sources, both historical texts and contemporary commentary. In some places original Tibetan texts have been used also. It reviews the history as reflected in those sources and then analyses the nature of Tibet's relations with the Mongol rulers, including the Yuan.

Following an analysis of these Chinese and other writings, the paper concludes that Mongol-Tibetan relations before, during and after the Yuan dynastic period were unique in the Mongol empire. Tibet was, in fact, not incorporated into the empire in the way other parts of Asia or Europe were, and from 1253 rule over Tibet was actually fully restored to Tibetans.

Two important conclusions emerge from this study: Tibet was not incorporated in any way into China or considered a part of China under the Yuan empire; and there is no base whatsoever for China to claim that it inherited any authority over Tibet from the Mongols.

The brief review and analysis of titles and seals bestowed or exchanged by emperors of China in past centuries reveals that the bestowal of such honorific titles did not entail submission to the Emperor and cannot serve as evidence of Chinese overlordship over Tibet. Titles were bestowed upon — or exchanged with — rulers and spiritual leaders of many countries, including Korea, Vietnam, Burma and Japan as well as Tibet. The only conclusion that can be deduced from the practice is that it constituted a mark of respect and recognition.

The fact that the Tibetan state existed for centuries before the creation of the Mongol empire by Chengghis Khan is not in question.

For China to claim that Tibet ceased to exist as an independent state and was conquered, annexed or otherwise incorporated into China, it is for China to show the precise point in time and the event which led to the extinction of Tibet and its incorporation into China. Stated differently, China has the burden of proof in this case; because under international law there is a strong presumption of the continued existence of states, which can only be disproved by convincing evidence to the contrary.

China today chooses to claim that Tibet became a part of China during the Yuan dynasty, as a result of Tibet's incorporation into the Yuan empire. The importance of this paper is that it shows that even according to Chinese historical sources this claim cannot be sustained.

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# PART I

## Rise and expansion of the Mongol empire

Chinggis Khan was born Temüchin in 1162 to Mongol tribal chief Yesügei Baatur. His tribe inhabited high lands on the banks of the Onon and Kerulen rivers in the north-western part of present-day outer Mongolia. When Temüchin was thirteen years old, the Tatars murdered his father. Temüchin vowed to wipe out the entire Tatar tribe to avenge the death of his father. He then took his own tribe to the lush, green hills of Burkhan Khadun, where his people and herds multiplied.<sup>1</sup>

In 1197 Temüchin forged an alliance with Ong Khan, the chief of the Kereyid tribe. Supported by this alliance, he subjugated the Tatars. In 1199 the joint forces of Temüchin and Ong Khan attacked the Naiman tribe, who inhabited the steppe near the Altai range. Subsequently, in 1203, differences arose between Temüchin and Ong Khan. In the ensuing battle, Ong Khan and his son were defeated. They fled to the territories of their arch rival, the Naimans. The Naimans slew them both.

In recognition of Temüchin's increasing military prowess, the Mongol tribes of the area acclaimed him as their supreme leader. Temüchin then subjugated the southern Naimans and marched into the northern Naiman territory. Naiman general Korisu Beshi escaped to the Tangut kingdom (Xi-Xia). The Tanguts, a Tibetan tribe, gave him asylum, inadvertently inviting a Mongol expedition into their kingdom in 1205. As a result of this expedition, the Naiman chieftain, Taibuqa Khan, his subordinates and all the remaining Mongol tribes came under Temüchin's subjugation.<sup>2</sup>

In 1206 Temüchin summoned the nobles of his kingdom to an assembly on the bank of the Onon and formalized the establishment of the Great Mongol Nation with Karakoram as its capital. Temüchin then assumed the title and name of Chinggis Khan. He was now the Great Khan of all the Mongol tribes. He appointed Bo'urchu as the

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1 The New Yuan-shih

2 *ibid*

right commander; Mukhali as the left commander; Naya'a as the central commander; and Khoa Tri was entrusted with the responsibility of conveying the Khan's edicts.<sup>3</sup> (See Map 1, which shows the extent of the Mongol state at this time).

The new Mongol state was bordered by the Jin empire of the early Manchus in the south-east, the Tangut empire in the south-west, the eastern regions of Russia in the north-west and Western Liao (Kara Kitai) to the west. Sung China was located to the south of Jin. To the west of Jin was the Tangut empire which, in turn, was bordered by Tibet to the south-west. (See Map 2).

In 1208 the Mongols marched into Western Liao in pursuit of Taibuqa's son, Küchlüg. During this march, Chinggis Khan conquered several tribes in Siberia.

In 1207 and 1209 the Mongols attacked the Tanguts once again and brought them to submission.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, chieftains of the Choney and Thebo tribes in Amdo, on the border of the Tangut empire, went to General Prince Kötön Khan to declare their allegiance to the Mongol Khan. In return for their allegiance, the chieftains were given the title of tripons, heads of 10,000 households.<sup>5</sup> At the time Tibet had politically fragmented and many of the local chiefs and princes had set up their own semi-autonomous kingdoms, such as those of Chone and Thebo. Consequently, acts of submission by individual chiefs did not imply the submission of the whole region of Tibet to the Mongols.

From 1209 to 1210 Chinggis Khan launched an expedition into the Jin kingdom and annexed the northern part of Jin to his empire. Deputing General Muqali to conduct the final stages of the war against Jin, Chinggis Khan turned his own attention to the western kingdoms.

In 1218 Pu-Xian Wan-Hu, a rebellious general of Eastern Liao, fled to Korea and seized Changtung city. The Mongols pursued him there and crushed his army. Now that the Mongol army was already in his kingdom, the Korean monarch, Chun, requested the Khan for the title of minister. The request was granted and henceforth the Koreans paid annual taxes to the Mongols.

In 1218 Chinggis Khan was informed of a Western Liao plan to attack him. He sent an expedition under General Jebe, who seized

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3 *ibid*

4 *ibid*

5 Yuan-shih, chapter 121-123

Western Liao and the adjoining territory to the south of the Tianshan range.

Chinggis Khan was now poised to send a punitive expedition to the Khwarazm Sultanate, where a caravan of traders from Mongolia had been robbed earlier that year. The Khan launched a four-pronged attack on the Sultanate. Chaghatai and Ögedei, the Khan's second and third sons respectively, led one unit of the army. The eldest son, Jochi, led another unit and attacked Jand. Generals Alaq Noyan, Subeetei and Jebe moved southwards. The Khan, accompanied by his youngest son, Tolui, moved with the main force and reached Bukhara in 1220, after crossing the Syr Darya (river). They crushed the 20,000-man force of Khwarazm near Amu Darya and secured the surrender of the Khwarazm populace.

Generals Jebe and Subeetei pursued the Khwarazm sultan up to the Caspian Sea in the west of Samarkand, thus effectively invading and taking Samarkand.

In 1221 Chinggis Khan sent an expedition against the Qipchaqs, a Russian principality. A large number of defeated Qipchaq populace relocated in the neighbouring Russian princedoms. The Russians gave them refuge, declining the Mongol request for their repatriation. The following year Mongols crossed the Sea of Azov and engaged the joint forces of six Russian princedoms, totalling 82,000 men. This battle took place on both the northern and southern coasts of the Black Sea. Seventy European princes and ministers, along with nine-tenths of their troops, were slaughtered in the fighting.

While his two generals were fighting in the north and west, Chinggis Khan himself completed the invasion of Khwarazm by conquering Ghazna, Bamia, Persia and Turkey. One Khwarazm prince fled towards India and was pursued by the Mongols up to the southern region of the Indus River.

Chinggis Khan's empire now extended from Bo Hai Bay in south-eastern China to the Caspian Sea in the west.<sup>6</sup> In 1225 Chinggis Khan divided his conquests among his four sons.<sup>7</sup> (See Map 3).

a) The eldest son, Jochi, received the Qipchaq steppe and territory on the Aral and Caspian Seas. The name of the territory remained Qipchaq.

b) The second son, Chaghatai, received territory on the banks of

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6 *ibid*

7 The New Yuan-shih

the Onan River and those stretching to the south-western part of the Ili River. He also received the territory along the Pamir Ranges. His inheritance was named the Chaghatai Khanate.

c) The third son, Ögedei, was given the territories stretching along the eastern and western sides of the Altai Range and those along the Emil River. To this was added the Naiman territory. His inheritance was named the Ögedei Khanate.

d) As was the tradition, the youngest son, Tolui, received the Great Mongol homeland.

Thereafter, in 1226, Chinggis Khan counselled his third and fourth sons: "It will take a whole year to travel between the eastern and western extremities of my empire. You should defend it well. If you are united, you will enjoy happiness for a long time to come. Ögedei should succeed me as the Great Khan."<sup>8</sup>

Although the Tangut empire had been made a vassal of the Mongols in 1209, the Tanguts rose in minor rebellions from time to time. Therefore, in 1226 Chinggis Khan led a punitive expedition against the Tanguts and put them under complete subjugation. Their ruler finally surrendered to the Mongols in 1227. This marked the end of the Tangut empire.<sup>9</sup> A large number of the Tangut population fled to Domed, north-eastern Tibet. Even today, there is a place called Minyak (a Tibetan word for the Tanguts) in Domed where the descendants of the Tangut people live.

At the time of Chinggis Khan's death, on August 18, 1227, Ögedei, his successor-designate, was away in his own Khanate. In the interregnum, Tolui governed as regent.<sup>10</sup>

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8 *ibid*

9 Chinese-Tibetan Encyclopaedia, p.3228

10 Ci Hai, Chinese Encyclopaedia

# The Mongol empire under Chinggis Khan's sons

## JOCHI, CHINGGIS KHAN'S ELDEST SON

Jochi had seven sons, including Orda and Batu. In 1225 Jochi ruled the western Qipchaq and the territories on the Aral and Caspian Seas. The Qipchaq dynasty developed from here.

In 1235 Ögedei summoned an assembly of Mongol princes in Karakoram in order to discuss the further expansion of the empire to Sung China, Korea and westwards in Europe. It was decided that the westward campaign would be led by Jochi's four elder sons, Chaghatai's son Baidar and grandson Büri, Ögedei's two sons Güyük and Kötön, and Tolui's two sons Möngke and Arigh-bukha. Jochi's second son, Batu, would be the commander-in-chief. Generals Subeetei and Ataturk would serve as his deputies.<sup>11</sup>

The following year, the Mongol princes, leading their respective troops, converged on Bulgar. In 1237 Subeetei reached the Russian border and invaded Bronx, Belgorod, etc.<sup>12</sup> Prince Yuri of Riazan and his younger brother Roman resisted the Mongol invaders in the town of Kolomna. But they were defeated and slayed with their family members. The town of Kolomna was razed to the ground. The Asiatic invaders then marched on Vladimir (present-day Moscow) and plundered the city. It is said that the Mongols cut off the ears of all the people killed by them. When they counted the ears, they discovered that they had killed 270,000 people.<sup>13</sup> The Ukrainian city of Kiev was also burnt down.

The Mongol army now split into several detachments for further advances. The western detachment attacked Hungary, the northern Poland, and the southern Romania. Batu himself marched in the centre and assaulted Budapest, precipitating the flight of Hungarian monarch, Bela IV. Batu then led his troops into Austria and Italy in 1241. At that stage, the news reached the Mongol invaders that their Great Khan, Ögedei, had died in Mongolia. This prevented Batu from operating further west. He then annexed his western conquests to the Qipchaq Khanate.

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11 Duosang Mongol History, Vol. 1, chapter 2, 1939

12 History of Zhong-gou Border Nationalities

13 Zhong-gou Tong-shih, Vol. 2

Batu divided parts of his western conquests between his elder and younger brothers. According to oral traditions, the territories ruled by his two brothers were known as the White Horde and the Blue Horde. The Qipchaq Khanate, ruled directly by Batu, was referred to as the Golden Horde. The White and Blue Hordes were not independent entities but, rather, appanages of the Golden Horde. Sarai became the capital of the Golden Horde.<sup>14</sup>

In 1253 Möngke Khan deputed his cousin Berke (Batu's younger brother) to conduct a fresh census of the Russian population in order to facilitate the collection of poll taxes.<sup>15</sup> The rulers of various Russian principalities were obliged to pay regular respect and taxes to the Mongol Khans in the form of animal pelts. The Khans of the Golden Horde appointed the rulers of Russian principalities and arbitrated whenever discord arose among these Russian rulers. As a sign of respect, whenever Mongol resident officials read imperial edicts, the Russian princes were obliged to kneel down.<sup>16</sup>

In the early fifteenth century the Mongols became engaged in internecine strife which eroded the might of the Qipchaq Khanate. The Russian principalities gradually revolted against the Mongols. Moscow seceded in 1480, when the Qipchaq Khanate was completely destroyed. By then, fifteen generations of Batu's dynasty had ruled the Russian principalities for 243 years (1237-1480).

## CHAGHATAI, CHINGGIS KHAN'S SECOND SON

In 1225 Chaghatai retained his inheritance, consisting of the territory on the banks of the Onan River and to the south-western part of the Ili River and the territory along the Pamir Ranges. In 1310 Chaghatai annexed the territories of his deceased brother Ögedei. Chaghatai's dynasty ruled this vast empire until it fell to Timurlane in 1369. Timurlane was a descendant of Kantchar-Noyan, Chinggis Khan's half-brother (from a different mother). He ruled his empire from Samarkand.

For some years, Timurlane exchanged gifts and compliments with the Ming emperor. However, in 1394 Timur detained a Ming

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14 The New Yuan-shih; Ci Hai

15 Duosang Mongol History, Vol. 1

16 Ibid



emissary, who had come bearing gifts for him from the emperor. The emissary was sent back in 1405 with the message that there would be no more relationship with the Ming, and that Timur would soon meet the Mings to avenge the overthrow of Yuan rule. In February of the same year, Timurlane led 200,000 troops against the Ming empire. But the expedition was not completed as he died on the journey.

Timurlane had expanded his empire by annexing the Ilkhanate empire, founded by Heluge. Six generations of Timurlane's dynasty ruled this empire from Samarkand until 1526.<sup>17</sup>

## ÖGEDEI, CHINGGIS KHAN'S THIRD SON

In 1225 Ögedei ruled his inheritance comprising the Naiman territory, and the territory stretching along the eastern and western sides of the Altai Range, as well as that along the Emil River. Ögedei also held the throne of the Great Mongol homeland from 1229 to 1241.

On ascending the throne of the Great Khan, Ögedei launched an expedition into the Jin Empire in 1235. While he himself led a campaign to Fenghsing and Tungkuan in the north-western region of the Yellow River; his younger brother, Tolui, marched from the south-western front and besieged the Jin capital of K'ai-feng. The Jin emperor, Wanyan Shouxu, fled and committed suicide to escape the pursuing Mongols. With this, the whole of the Jin empire came under Mongol rule.

The Mongols were now on the borders of the Sung empire. In conducting the Jin campaign, the Mongols were supported by the Sung, who nursed grievances against its northern neighbour for seizing some of its territories. However, when the Mongols became the master of the Jin, they declined the Sung request to return territories lost to the Jin. This sparked off animosity between the two former allies.<sup>18</sup>

As stated earlier, in 1235 Ögedei called an assembly in Karakoram for a month to discuss sending military expeditions to the southern

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17 The History of Zhong-gou Border Nationalities, Vol. 2; Ci Hai;  
The History of Timur

18 Zhong-gou Tongshi

Sung area of China, Korea and western areas, including Europe.<sup>19</sup>

The Korean expedition was to be a punitive incursion. In 1218 the Mongols had given the title of minister to the Korean king. However, in 1231 Ögedei's imperial representative was assassinated while *en route* to Korea. In the following year, Ögedei sent another representative — this time a minister with a rank of *darughachi* — accompanied by seventy two officials. The Koreans had killed them as well.

To avenge these killings, the Mongol forces reached Korea and plundered about forty Korean towns and cities in 1235. Subsequently, the Korean king travelled to the Mongol capital, bearing sumptuous gifts and a five-point apology letter. In 1241 Korean Prince Wang Chun was obliged to stay as a hostage in the Mongol court. From that time, Korea came under direct Mongol rule.

After the death of Ögedei in 1241, there followed a long interregnum as his five sons could not come to an agreement on the issue of succession. His widow undertook the regency from 1242 until Ögedei's eldest son, Güyük, ascended the throne in 1246. Güyük's younger brother, Kötön, became the king of Ningxia and Gansu.<sup>20</sup>

In 1240 Kötön, governor of the Mongol territory of Ningxia and Gansu, launched a military campaign into Tibet under the command of Generals Lichi and Dhordha. The marauding Mongols burned down Tibetan monuments such as the Reting monastery and the Gyal temple. At Reting, they massacred 500 monks. When Drigung Gompa Shakya Rinchen tried to resist the Mongols they arrested him and were about to kill him when a Tibetan spiritual master, Drigung Chen-nga Rinpoche, managed to placate the Mongols by negotiating peace and agreeing to pay tribute to Kötön.<sup>21</sup> At that time the most powerful and wealthiest aristocrat in the whole of Central Tibet was the scion of the Drigungpa family. He submitted to the Mongols, setting the stage for others to do likewise.

At this time, the chieftains of Central Tibet began to ingratiate themselves with Mongol princes: the Drigungpas aligned themselves with Möngke, the Tselpas with Khubilai, the Taklungpas with Arighbukha and the Phagdrupas with Heluge.

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19 Duosang Mongol History, Vol.1; Zhong-gou Tong-shi; The History of Zhong-gou Border Nationalities; The New Yuan-shih

20 Zhong-gou Tong-shi, Vol 2

21 Yuan-shih; Chinese-Tibetan Encyclopaedia, p.3229

Following his military expedition into Tibet, Prince Kötön decided to seek a spiritual teacher to lead the Mongolians in a desirable moral direction. In his search he found that in Tibet the Kadhampa sect had the largest number of monks, the Taklungpas were the most adept at public relations, Drigung Chenga was the most glorious lama, and Sakya Pandita the most learned.

Prince Kötön was convinced that no power in the world exceeded the might of the Mongols. However, he believed that religion was necessary in the interests of the next life. Thus he invited Sakya Pandita to Mongolia. In his letter of invitation, dated 1244, Kötön wrote:

This is the command of me, the heavenly king, fortunate and mighty.

Let these words be heard by Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen. In order to repay my debt of gratitude to my parents, the earth and the sky,

I need a lama to guide me in the right moral direction.

After investigation I found you.

You must come regardless of travelling inconvenience.

If you say you are old,

Then what about the countless incarnations the Lord Buddha sacrificed in the past for other sentient beings?

Does this (Lord Buddha's example) go against your spiritual precepts?

I have established my own code of law.

Are you not afraid of the destruction my huge army can wreak on your people and animals?

You must come soon in the interest of sentient beings and Buddhism.

The monks in the West revere and acknowledge your wisdom.

I send you five *drechen* of silver as a gift.

I am sending Dhorsigon and Pon Jodharma for this purpose.

*Written on the Eve of the Eighth Month, the Year of the Dragon*<sup>22</sup>

This invitation had been prophesied by Sakyapa Jetsun Dakpa Gyaltsen, the uncle of Sakya Pandita, who told him that, during the last years of his life, Mongolians would come calling for him and that he must accept the invitation in the interests of all sentient beings and Buddhism. Although Sakya Pandita was sixty three years old, he decided to go in deference to his uncle's wish and in order to protect

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22 The Sakya Genealogy, p.67

the kingdom of Tibet from a possible Mongol onslaught. He set out for Mongolia in the same year, accompanied by his two nephews Phagpa Lodroe, aged ten, and Chagna Dorji, aged six. They reached Liangzhou, in the present-day Parig region of Amdo, north-eastern Tibet, two years later. There, in 1247, they met Prince Kötön. The Mongol prince received teachings on “Refuge-taking”, the “Law of Karma” and “Generating Bodhisattva Mind” from Sakya Pandita. This marked his conversion to Buddhism.<sup>23</sup>

Prince Kötön was impressed by Sakya Pandita’s teachings. He ordered, “From now on Akawun (the leading shaman) and Lhapa tso (the oracle) may not sit at the head of rows of monks during religious ceremonies. Instead the ‘Supreme Lama’ (Sakya Pandita) will be seated at the head of rows. The Buddhist monks should lead the prayers.” With this, Kötön established for Buddhism a prestigious position in his principedom. Prince Kötön became even more devoted to Buddhism and his teacher when Sakya Pandita cured him of leukaemia. He sought many more teachings on “Generating Bodhisattva Mind” and other subjects from Sakya Pandita.

At Wutai Mountain (the abode of Lord Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom), Sakya Pandita gave initiations and Mahamudra teachings to Tokdhen Gyanpo (an important Chinese lama in the area), leading him to salvation. While Sakya Pandita was in Liangzhou, many people — who were about to set out on pilgrimage to Wutai Mountain — dreamt that Lord Manjushri was not at Wutai Mountain, but that he was giving teachings in Liangzhou. All the people then went to Liangzhou and received teachings on “Generating Bodhisattva Mind” from Sakya Pandita.

In a letter to Tibetan leaders, Sakya Pandita wrote from the Mongol Court:

This is a letter to all the Buddhist teachers and patrons in U-Tsang and Ngari. I have come to Mongolia with the view to benefiting the Buddha dharma and sentient beings, particularly the Tibetophones.

The Great Patron is very happy with me. He said to me: ‘You have come here for me, bringing with you such a young relation in the person of Phagpa. I have invited you. Others come here out of fear ... You should give teachings with your mind at peace. I will give you

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23 Gem Treasure House of the Sakya Geneology, p.67; Chinese-Tibetan Encyclopaedia, p.3230

whatever you want. I know what is in your interests.'

The point I wish to convey at this time is that the Mongol army is unlimited in numerical strength. It appears as if the whole world is under its sway. Being mischievous and stubborn, our people might think that they can get away by escaping. Or that the distance will discourage (the Mongols) from coming. Or that they can overcome by fighting. Or that they can succeed by means of deceit, subterfuge and cunningness.

Although many Tibetans have submitted (to Mongols), it will be difficult to satisfy the Mongol officials with paltry tributes. People think that the Mongols impose lower taxes and corvee labour. In reality, they impose higher taxes and corvee labour than others. Compared to them, those (taxes and corvee labour) of others are lower.

Make a careful record of the names of chiefs, the population and the amounts of tribute in three copies. Send one copy to me. Leave the second copy at Sakya. The third copy must be retained by respective chiefs. Also make a proper record of those who have and those who have not submitted (to the Mongols). If a clear-cut division is not made, it poses a risk of suffering to those who have submitted, along with those who have not.

The Sakya couriers authorized with the gold tablet should hold discussions with local chiefs and work for the welfare of sentient beings. They should not abuse their authority. The local chiefs must not act on their own without consulting the gold-tablet couriers of Sakya. It is very difficult to explain here if a mistake is made (in Tibet). As soon as a gold-tablet courier arrives here, the first questions he is asked (by the Khan) are: 'Did they run away? Did they resist? Did they give a proper reception to the gold-tablet couriers? Did you get corvee service? Are those who have submitted reliable?'

If you do not obey the gold-tablet couriers, it is difficult to give any explanation. If you are interested in manifesting good conduct, then you must give lavish tributes and come with the Sakya personnel. I will also hold discussions here. Later on you should not complain that you have not benefited from the visit of the Sakyapa to Mongolia. In the spirit of putting others before self, I have come to Mongolia to benefit all Tibetans. You must listen to me. You should not have any misunderstanding

regarding this. It is very difficult to believe what one hears. Therefore, if one thinks that one can fight, one's happiness will be destroyed in the same way a ghost smothers a sleeping man. I fear that such an eventuality will lead to U-Tsang's children and people being taken to Mongolia. I do not worry about myself. The king likes me more than anyone else. Therefore, the diverse teachers and powerful figures of China, Tibet, Uighur, Tangut, etc. listen to my teachings with great appreciation. They respect me greatly. Have no concerns about how the Mongols will treat us here. All may keep these words in mind and stay at peace."<sup>24</sup>

The Great Khan, Güyük, died in 1249, leading to another interregnum, which, like that of Ögedei, was filled by his widow for one year.<sup>25</sup> By 1310 Ögedei's kingdom was merged with Chagatai's, ending the reign of the Ögedei dynasty. The Ögedei dynasty ruled the khanate for eighty four years (1226-1310), giving way to Chaghatai Khanate which, in 1369, fell to Timurlane whose descendants ruled it till 1526.

## TOLUI, CHINGGIS KHAN'S FOURTH SON

In 1225 Tolui ruled the Mongol heartland. Tolui was the progenitor of the Yuan and Ilkhanate empires. Tolui had four sons: Möngke Khan, Khubilai Khan, Heluge and Arigh-bukha.

In 1251 Tolui's elder son Möngke became the fourth Great Khan. In 1252 he dispatched an expedition to Dali (present-day Yunnan) under the command of Khubilai Khan. At the same time, Heluge marched against Persia, Iraq and Assyria. Khubilai captured Dali in 1253.<sup>26</sup>

As Khubilai was returning from his Dali expedition, Sakya Pandita died. Khubilai then invited Drogon Choegyal Phagpa, Sakya Pandita's nephew, from Liangzhou to his capital Shangdu in Inner Mongolia. Phagpa accepted the invitation and went to Khubilai's court. Kubilai asked the lama many questions. He asked whether Tibet had any great historical figures, to which Phagpa replied that there were three

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24 Gem Treasure House of Sakya Geneology

25 Zhong-gou Tong-shi, Vol. 2

26 Ibid

great kings: Songtsen Gampo, who was the earthly manifestation of Avalokitesvara; Trisong Deutsen the manifestation of Manjushri; and Tri Ralpachen the manifestation of Vajrapani. Asked if Tibet had an able man, Phagpa replied that Tibet had Milarepa who had vanquished his enemies during the early part of his life and attained enlightenment during the latter half of his life. Asked if Tibet had any learned person, Phagpa replied that his teacher Sakya Pandita had been one such example. Questioned about the wisdom of Sakya Pandita and how much of it Phagpa himself had learned, Phagpa equated his teacher Sakya Pandita's wisdom to an ocean and said that he had acquired only a cupful of that wisdom.

When Kubilai spoke about the need to collect tributes and war tax from Tibet, Phagpa argued that Tibet was remote, small and poor, and that it should, therefore, be exempted from taxation. Kubilai disagreed. Phagpa reacted by stating that if such was the case there was no point for a monk from Tibet to stay at his court. He told Khubilai that he was returning home. The Mongol Prince replied to Phagpa that he was free to leave. But Queen Chabu, Khubilai's wife and queen, intervened. She persuaded Khubilai not to let Phagpa return to Tibet.

Further discussions between Khubilai and Phagpa followed, during which Khubilai asked many more spiritual questions. In the course of these contacts, Phagpa conducted himself in a proud manner, provoking Khubilai to question Phagpa's behaviour. He asked Phagpa to explain the basis of his pride. Phagpa replied that although his knowledge was little, he had, in the past, been a king and spiritual teacher in China, in the Tangut empire, India, Mon (now in Arunachal Pradesh, India), Tibet, and other places and had thus experienced privileged positions. Khubilai asked, "When did you become the king of Tibet and who made you the king? Who received initiations from you? It is unseemly for a monk to lie." Phagpa replied, "I was king of Tibet. I fought a war against China and won it. Then, Tibet and China became friends." Phagpa went on to recount how Chinese Princess Weng Chen came to Tibet, bringing with her the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha.

But Kubilai was not convinced and demanded to see written accounts of such events. When he was shown ancient Chinese historical records in which all those events were recounted precisely as Phagpa had stated, Kubilai was very impressed.

The queen then said, "The decision not to let Phagpa return to Tibet was a good one. The Sakyapas possess a unique and rich

tradition of tantric initiations which we must receive.” Khubilai replied, “You receive the teachings first. If they are good enough, I will receive them too.”

Queen Chabu received the Hévajra tantra initiations from Phagpa and was very impressed. The queen counselled Khubilai to receive the same initiation, stating that this was a very unique and sublime teaching. Khubilai agreed and requested Phagpa for the initiation. Phagpa replied that Khubilai would not be able to fulfill the conditions required for receiving this initiation: “If you receive the initiation, the lama will have to sit at the head, you will have to prostrate to him physically, you will have to listen to whatever the lama says, and you should never go against the wish of the lama.” “That is not possible,” Khubilai replied. The queen once again intervened and proposed the following principles to govern the relative position and relations of the two paramount leaders:

During meditations, teachings and at small gatherings, the lama can sit at the head. During large gatherings, consisting of royal families, their bridegrooms, chieftains and the general populace, Khubilai will sit at the head to maintain the decorum necessary to rule his subjects. On matters regarding Tibet, Khubilai will follow the wishes of Phagpa. Khubilai will not issue orders without consulting the lama. But with regards to other matters, Phagpa should not allow himself to be used as a conduit to Khubilai since his compassionate nature would not make for strong rule. The lama should not interfere in these matters.

Having agreed to this formula, Khubilai, accompanied by twenty five members of his retinue, received three stages of the Hévajra tantra initiation. In return for the first stage of the initiation, Khubilai offered Phagpa rule over the thirteen *trikhors* of Tibet. On the completion of the second stage, Khubilai offered Phagpa a white dharma conch shell and rule over all the three provinces of Tibet. The third stage of the initiation was followed by Khubilai taking a vow to renounce the yearly mass sacrifices of his Chinese subjects. The sacrifices involved an annual ritual of throwing a large number of Chinese subjects into Lake Miyou to check the growth of the Chinese population in his empire. Phagpa was so pleased with Khubilai Khan taking this vow that he composed the following verse:

The colour of the sky is red like blood,



Under the feet is the ocean of corpses.  
The forsaking of such a practice is for  
The fulfillment of Lord Manjushri's wish,  
And for the spread of the wholesome dharma.  
It is a dedication to the long-life of the Emperor.<sup>27</sup>

It was thus that Tibet once again began to be ruled independently and by its own leaders from 1253. The relationship which emerged from these teachings between Lama Phagpa and the Mongol Khan also formed the basis for the unique Mongol-Tibetan *Chö-Yön* (priest-patron) relationship, which was later also established between the Manchu Emperors and the Tibetan Dalai Lamas.

Khubilai did not succeed to the Great Mongol Throne until 1260, after the Great Khan Möngke died. Before his death, Möngke Khan had extended his empire to the west and to the east.

As stated earlier, under Möngke Khan's orders, Heluge launched an expedition to the west and occupied Persia and its northern Muslim sheikdom of Mulai and Baghdad in 1253.<sup>28</sup> Only the news of Möngke Khan's death saved Egypt from a Mongol invasion. Heluge's dynasty established the Ilkhanate empire and ruled the eastern region of Amu Darya river, Persia, Iraq and Asia Minor for about eighty years (1256-1338). The western border of this empire touched the Mediterranean Sea.

In the east, Möngke Khan had dispatched his general, Ouriang Codai, to launch an expedition into Jiao Zhi (Northern Vietnam) in 1257. In December of that year, the Mongols seized Jiao Zhi's capital city. The next year the king of Annam (Southern Vietnam) sent his son-in-law to offer his surrender and gifts to the Mongol general, Ouriang Codai. In return, the Mongols allowed the king to retain his title but obliged him to pay tribute every three years. The Vietnamese region then consisted of four kingdoms, Jiao Zhi (northern Vietnam), Annam (southern Vietnam), Chen Zhen (central Vietnam) and Chenla (Cambodia).<sup>29</sup>

In 1259 Möngke Khan himself had led an army against the Sung empire. But he died in July of that year near the fortress of Diao-yu Shan in present-day Sichuan.<sup>30</sup>

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27 Gem Treasure House of the Sakya Geneology, p.71 and 88

28 Zhong-gou Tong-shi, Vol.2

29 The History of Zhong-gou Border Nationalities, p.555

30 Ibid

In 1260, the Vietnamese king, Chen Guangbin, sent gifts to Khubilai Khan. In return, the Khan bestowed on him the title of the King of Annam.<sup>31</sup> Despite his submission to the Mongols, the central Vietnamese king rose in revolt from time to time. Khubilai Khan, therefore, occupied central Vietnam in 1282 with the help of his naval and infantry forces.<sup>32</sup>

In 1264 Khubilai Khan moved his capital from Shangdu (now in Inner Mongolia) to Dadu (Beijing).<sup>33</sup> It was seven years later that he adopted the dynastic title of Yuan.<sup>34</sup> In 1279 he launched a final conquest of Sung China and annexed it to his empire.<sup>35</sup>

During Khubilai's Dali expedition in 1253, he also annexed two Burmese principalities on the border, and this precipitated a war with the rest of Burma. In 1271 the whole of Burma surrendered to the Khan. Afterwards the Mongols marched into Burma to quell internal strife and in 1283 Khubilai Khan sent a fresh expedition to Burma to quash a rebellion against his overlordship. The rebels surrendered in 1285. Two years later, Khubilai Khan established an administrative bureaucracy and a garrison in the Burmese capital of Kenmen.<sup>36</sup>

In 1274 Khubilai Khan despatched an amphibious expedition to Japan from his Korean base. This expedition was prompted by Japan's refusal to submit to Mongol overlordship. A flotilla of 900 ships carrying 15,000 Mongol and several thousand Korean troops reached Japan. Four Japanese cities were plundered by this army but the Mongols failed to occupy Japan. The Khan repeated his incursion into Japan in 1281, this time despatching 100,000 troops from his bases in Korea and South China. This expedition was overwhelmed by a typhoon, which killed a large number of Mongol troops. The remaining troops fell victim to the Japanese mopping-up operation.<sup>37</sup>

In 1283 the East Military-civilian Administrative Bureaucracy was established in Korea to deal with occasional rebellions on the

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31 Chinese-Tibetan Encyclopaedia, p.3231; Ci Hai

32 The History of Zhong-gou Borders

33 Ci Hai; Chinese-Tibetan Encyclopaedia, p.2931

34 Chinese-Tibetan Encyclopaedia, 3232

35 Ibid, p.3233

36 The History of Zhong-gou Border Nationalities

37 Zhong-gou Tongshi, chapter 3; Zizhi Tong-jing

peninsula. With the establishment of this office, the Mongols assumed complete control over Korean internal and foreign policy.<sup>38</sup>

In the latter part of Khubilai Khan's life, the South-east Asian kingdoms such as Siam, Malacca and Sumatra sent gifts to the court of Khubilai Khan. In 1292 Khubilai Khan mounted expeditions into Java and the neighbouring kingdom of Kolang.

Mongol power was at its height during Khubilai Khan's reign. The empire then extended from Korea in the east to the Mediterranean Sea and eastern Rome in the west.<sup>39</sup> From the establishment of the Ilkhanate empire by Heluge in 1256, to the merger of Ögedei and Chaghatai khanates in 1310, the Mongol empire was divided into the following five khanates (see Map 4):

- ◆ The principal Mongol territory, including Mongolia, Korea, Manchuria, China, Burma and a small part of the north-east Amdo province of Tibet, was under the direct rule of Khubilai Khan (see Map 4). Vietnam, Siam, Malacca, Sumatra, Kolang and Java, etc. were vassals to the Mongol Khan.
- ◆ The Qipchaq Khanate, under the rule of Batu. This consisted of Poland and the Russian territories inherited by Jochi.
- ◆ The eastern Qipchaq Khanate ruled by Ögedei.
- ◆ The Karakitai Khanate (Western Liao), or Eastern Turkestan, ruled by Chaghatai.
- ◆ The Ilkhanate empire ruled by Heluge.

With the annexation of Sung China, Khubilai Khan began the work of organizing the territories under his direct rule into provinces. This was completed in 1321 by Yuan Emperor Shidebala. He divided the Yuan Mongol empire into the following twelve provinces<sup>40</sup>: (see Map 5)

1. Zhongshu Xing with its capital in Zhongdu. Present-day Hebei, Shandong, Shanxi, the south-eastern part of present-day Inner Mongolia and the Henan areas to the north of the Yellow River came under this province.
2. Lingbei Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Karakoram as its capital. Under this province came the rest of Mongolia and Southern Siberia.

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38 Shi Zi, the History of Korea; Zizhi Tong-jing

39 Duosang Mongol History, chapter 4, p.342

40 The New Yuan-shi, chapter 58

3. Liaoyang Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with present-day Liaoyang District in Liaoning Province as its capital. Under this came north-east China and the northern part of Korea.
4. Shaanxi Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Xian as its capital. Under this came the whole of Shaanxi Province, the south-western part of Inner Mongolia, south-eastern Gansu, north-western Sichuan, and a small part of Amdo.
5. Gansu Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Zhang Ye District as its capital. Under this came the whole of the Tangut territory (present-day Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Prefecture), south-eastern Gansu, and part of north-eastern Amdo. (Zhang Ye is in Parig in the northern region of Amdo. The ancient Chinese name for it is Kan Chou. Tibetans call it Kar or Kayul).
6. Henan Jiangbei Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Kaifeng District of Henan as its capital. Under this came the Henan areas to the south of the Yellow River, Jiangu, Fujian and the north-eastern part of Jiangxi.
7. Zhejiang Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Hangzhou as its capital. Under this came Jiangu and Anhui areas to the south of the Yangtze River, Zhejiang, Fujian, and a small area in the north-east of Jiangxi.
8. Jiangxi Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Nanchang as its capital. Under this came Jiangxi and Guangdong.
9. Huguang Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Wuhan of the present-day Hubei as its capital. Under this came a part of south-east Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, most of Guizhou, and parts of south-western Guangdong.
10. Sichuan Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Chengdu at its capital. Under this came most of Sichuan and parts of south-western Shaanxi.
11. Yunnan Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Kunming as its capital. Under this came Yunnan and parts of western Guizhou.
12. Zhendong Xing Zhong Shu Sheng with Kao Cheng of present-day Korea as its capital. The whole of Korea came under this.<sup>41</sup>

To summarize, from the establishment of the Mongol state by Chinggis Khan in 1206 to the death of the last Yuan emperor, Toghon Temur, in 1402, the Mongol emperors and princes expanded their

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41 Dousang Mongol History; Zhong-gou Tong-shi

empire in Asia (as they had done in Europe) for 196 years. The Mongol expansion in the eastern kingdoms was achieved in the following manner:

In 1210 Chinggis Khan invaded and annexed the northern parts of the Jin kingdom. The Mongols ruled this territory for 158 years (1210-1368). The remaining part of Jin, occupied by Ögedei in 1268, remained under Mongol rule for 135 years (1268-1368).

Korea remained under direct Mongol administration for 150 years—from the time the Korean monarch, Chun, surrendered to Chinggis Khan in 1218, until the fall of the Yuan empire in 1368.

For thirteen years—from the time of Kötön's invasion of Tibet in 1240 to the assumption of rule over Tibet by the Sakyas in 1253—Tibetan rulers owed allegiance to the Mongol Prince Kötön. From 1253 Tibet once again ruled itself, not as part of the Mongol empire, but under a unique form of protection pledged by the Mongol khan, Kubilai, and his successors to their spiritual teachers, Phagpa and his successors.

Vietnam remained under Mongol rule for 111 years (1257-1368)—since Möngke Khan's general, Ouriang Codai, seized its capital.

Siam and the South-east Asian sultanates of Malacca, Sumatra and Java remained Mongol vassals for over ninety years.

Burma remained under direct Mongol rule for ninety seven years (1271-1368), from the time of the surrender of the Burmese king in 1271.

In 1271 Khubilai Khan annexed northern China, which the Mongol emperors ruled for ninety seven years (1271-1368). In the same year, Kubilai Khan assumed the dynastic title of Yuan. In 1279 Sung China also fell under Mongol conquest, and remained a part of the Mongol empire for eighty nine years (1279-1368).

Finally, in 1402, the Yuan dynasty came to an end and the Mongol state disintegrated in the east. Some Mongol princes, however, continued to reign for many years in other kingdoms. For example:

1. Fifteen generations of Batu's dynasty continued to rule Moscow, Russian princedoms and neighbouring kingdoms until 1480.

2. The Ilkhanate empire built by Heluge—grandson of Chinggis Khan from his third son, Tolui—was annexed by Timurlane, son of Chinggis Khan's half-brother, Kantchar-Noyan. Timurlane also seized the joint territories of Ögedei and Chaghatai. In 1369 he made Samarkand his capital, from where six generations of his dynasty ruled the Middle East till 1526.

3. Babar, the sixth generation descendant of Timur, invaded India in 1526 and established the Mughal Dynasty. His grandson, Akbar, occupied and reigned over most of north, west and central India. In 1632 Shah Jahan, the fifth generation descendant of Babar, built the tomb of Taj Mahal in Agra; in 1648 he added the Red Fort in Delhi. The Mughals ruled India for over 200 years till the middle of the eighteenth century.

4. Altan Khan—who invited the Third Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso to his court in 1578—ruled over present-day Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Northern Shanxi. He harassed Ming China with frequent military incursions. The Third Dalai Lama dissuaded him from continuing his acts of violence. This advice from the Dalai Lama may probably have saved China from falling, once again, under Mongol rule.

5. Gushri Khan led his Oriat Mongol troops from his base in Eastern Turkestan and crushed the Mongol troops of Choktu and Kokonor, the Beri tribe of Kham, and Desi Tsangpa of U-Tsang, in Tibet. Thereafter, in 1642, the Fifth Dalai Lama assumed rule over Tibet with the help of his Patron, Gushri Khan, who vowed to become the protector of the Dalai Lama's rule. Gushri Khan and his troops settled on the Dham steppe to the north of Lhasa.

Today, the political centre of Mongolian civilization is the independent state of Mongolia, with Ulan Bator as its capital. The largest Mongol population is in Inner Mongolia, under Chinese rule. Mongols continue to live in many areas of the former Western Mongol Empire, such as Buriatia, Kazakhstan, Kalmykia, Aginsky, and Tuva, and additionally there are many Mongols in East Turkestan and in the Tibetan province of Amdo.

## **PART II**

### **Analysis of the position and status of Tibet in relation to the Mongol empire**

An analysis of the nature of the Mongolian empire and of relations between Tibetans and the Mongols reveals the uniqueness of the relationship that developed between the Mongol Khans and Tibetan spiritual leaders. It also refutes any contention that the Tibeto-Mongolian relationship could in any way be interpreted as being a relationship between China and Tibet, much less that it constituted an annexation of Tibet by China.

In the first place, the Mongols were and are a race distinct from the Chinese; and their empire was a Mongol empire, not a Chinese empire. As the brief review of the history of the rise and expansion of the Mongol empire, first created by Chinggis Khan, shows, northern and southern China did become parts of this Mongol empire after their conquest in 1271 and 1279, respectively. But these conquests, and the submission of the Chinese to the Mongols, never turned the empire into a Chinese one, as China claims today. In fact the Chinese finally overthrew the Mongol emperor Toghon Timur Khan and drove him and his army out of China and back to Mongolia in 1368, reclaiming the independence of China and establishing a Chinese empire under the Ming dynasty. China can hardly claim credit for the conquests of the Mongols in Europe or Asia.

Relations established between Mongol rulers and Tibetans pre-dated those established between the Mongols and the Chinese by the conquest of the latter, and were entirely unrelated. This, the review of history contained in this paper also conclusively demonstrates. One might say that the first contacts of Tibetans with the Mongol empire took place in 1209 when Chinggis Khan launched a military expedition into the Tangut empire, bordering Tibet. But substantive contacts were only established in 1240, following Prince Kötön's attack on Tibet. The submission of Tibetan rulers to the Mongol prince, which lasted for thirteen years, brought Tibet into the fold of the Mongol empire, without fully integrating the country into it. But this relationship was established and ended long before

the Mongols conquered China or assumed, in that part of the empire, the dynastic name of Yuan.

Khubilai Khan invited Phagpa to his court before he became the Great Khan of the Mongols. At the time he established a firm relationship of Patron and Priest with Phagpa (in 1253), Khubilai Khan was one of the military commanders under Möngke Khan, the fourth Great Khan of the Mongols. Thus, their relationship pre-dated Khubilai's ascendance to the Mongol throne (in 1260), and much pre-dated his conquest of China which started in 1271 and was only completed with the defeat of Sung China in 1279. So, when Khubilai Khan gave the rule of the three provinces of Tibet to Phagpa, China was known as Southern Sung and had its capital in present day Huang Zhu. Zhao Ji (Emperor Du-Dzong 1265-1274) was then the ruler of Sung China, and had no ties to the Mongol Empire or to Tibet.<sup>42</sup>

The relationship between the Mongols and Tibet was a very unique one and was very different from that of other nations that had come under Mongol rule or influence. The other nations were ruled directly by the Mongols through the permanent presence of Mongol princes, ministers or generals. The rule of Tibet, on the other hand, was given to the Sakyas by Khubilai Khan. The Sakyas ruled Tibet independently and there were no permanent Mongol officials stationed there.

## NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP

The nature of the relationship between Tibet and the Mongols was that of *Chö-Yön*, or Priest-Patron. This unique Central Asian symbiosis entailed the protection and making of offerings by the secular patron to his spiritual teacher and master, in return for religious teachings and the bestowal of spiritual protection and blessings by the lama to his patron. This was in no way a relationship between a ruler and his subject.

Kubilai Khan's 'gift' to Phagpa of the thirteen *trikhors* and then of all three provinces of Tibet (i.e. all of Tibet) in 1253, must be seen in the context of the *Chö-Yön* relationship as an offering by the patron to his priest. The same occurred when Gushri Khan, the Fifth Dalai Lama's patron, offered his teacher temporal sovereignty

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42 Ci Hai



over the whole of Tibet almost 400 years later in 1642 after he defeated the rulers of Choktu and Kokonor, the Beri tribe of Kham and the Desi Tsangpa of U-Tsang. Gushri Khan's action, although of a somewhat different nature, also was seen as an offering to his spiritual master.

The Mongol support for the Sakyas in uniting Tibet, appointing officials, devising the legal code, a postal service etc., was also part of the protection and assistance which the patron offered to the priest. It did not entail or imply Mongol rule of Tibet. This view is illustrated by the texts of *Bhendey Sheykeyma* and *Mutikma*<sup>43</sup>, the two letters issued by Khubilai Khan in 1254 and 1264 respectively. By virtue these two letters, Tibet's monasteries were offered special exemptions in terms of taxation, military service and corvee labour.

The initial exemption from taxes and corvee duties for the monks and their monasteries is described in terms of the patron's offering to Phagpa and the Buddhist faith. In the *Bhendhey Sheykeyma*, Kubilai Khan states:

Like the sun, the Buddha Shakaymuni's splendour vanquished the darkness of ignorance and its environs. Like a lion, king of the jungle, he vanquished all the demons and non-Buddhists.

His characteristics, virtuous deeds and teachings have won the perpetual belief of me and Chabu (queen). Because of this, I became the patron of Buddhism and its monks in the past. Even now, I have faith in the Lord Sakyapa and Master Phagpa.

Believing in the Buddha dharma, I took initiations in the Water Ox year.

I have received many other teachings as well. I have a special desire to become the patron of the Buddha dharma and its monks.

Therefore, as an offering to Master Phagpa, I issue this wholesome Yasa which orders the protection of Tibet's religion and monks.

The text of *Mutikma* states:

Enjoying the divine protection of heavenly devas and the splendour of great merits, I, the ruler, call on the monks and lay people with this injunction. For complete prosperity in this life, it is fine to enforce the legal code of Lord Chinggis Khan. However, future lives must depend on

spirituality. Therefore, after investigating various religions, I have found Buddha Shakyamuni's path to be the most wholesome. Master Phagpa is the one who has achieved realization and shown the true path to others. Therefore, I received initiations from him and gave him the title of Gushri. I call upon the master to serve the cause of the Buddha dharma, lead the monasteries and the tradition of teaching, learning and practice. Likewise, I call upon the monks not to waver from the teachings of the master since they are the roots of the Buddha dharma. Those proficient in the Buddha dharma should teach while the young ones with firm minds should learn. Those cognizant of the significance of the dharma, but unable to teach or learn, should meditate. This practice of the Buddha dharma will help consummate my accumulation of merits as a patron, as indeed it will be a service to the Triple Gems.

The monks following this path shall not be bothered by military generals, ordinary soldiers, powerful persons, Darugachis, and runners of the gold-letter mail. Such monks shall not be conscripted into the army or asked to pay taxes and perform corvee labour.

I issue this yasa to urge that they be allowed to follow the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni, to worship the heaven and to pray for me. The gold-letter mail runner may not be allowed to descend on the monasteries and the homes of monks. Food and corvee labour may not be extracted from them. Water and water-mills may not be taken away from them. They may not be browbeaten against the convention.

After Khubilai Khan ascended the Great Mongol throne in 1260, Drogon Choegyal Phagpa persuaded the Khan to exempt the lay Tibetan populace from paying taxes and offering gifts. In both the Tibetan and Chinese contemporary document, it is stated that because of the grace of this lama, the Tibetan plateau, surrounded by snow-clad mountains, did not have to contribute tributes, taxes, military service and corvee labour to the imperial Mongolian coffers. The decision of Khubilai Khan was made in the very same spirit of the *Chö-Yön* relationship. Khubilai Khan recognized Phagpa as the head of the Buddhist church in the entire empire of which he now was emperor, not just of Tibet. He honoured Phagpa with the title of Imperial Preceptor. Once Khubilai conquered China, the Tibetan lama's authority extended to that part of the empire also.

The reverence shown to Phagpa by Khubilai Khan was matched by his successors. For example, the twelfth Yuan emperor, Yingzong, ordered that temples, dedicated to Drogon Choegyal Phagpa, be built in every province and prefecture. Similarly, his successor, Taiding, commissioned statues of Phagpa and had them installed in these temples. He also commissioned eleven *thangka* paintings, depicting Drogon Choegyal Phagpa, to be hung in each of the temples. He ordered that offerings be made in these temples to honour the service of the Tibetan lama.<sup>44</sup>

As was explained above, the Yuan empire was divided into twelve provinces and Tibet was not included in these provinces of the empire. This exclusion of Tibet from the Mongolian Yuan Empire is evident also from historical maps, even those published officially in China in 1914, and which have been reproduced in this paper.

At the same time, the special closeness of the emperor to the Tibetans, and especially to Phagpa was evidenced also by royal marriages. The Sakya hierarchs of the Khon families were offered four Mongol princesses in marriage. They were also offered four "Bailan Wang" titles and one "Ri-Zing Wang" title. The elevation of the relatives of Drogon Choegyal Phagpa to the status, respect and power equal to any powerful Mongol prince was unprecedented in the history of the Mongol empire and not a single Chinese was offered a Mongol royal princess in marriage or given the title of Bailan Wang.

Tibet, therefore, had a unique relationship with the Mongol emperors. On the one hand, it was, in political terms, much looser than any other territory over which Mongols had established influence. On the other hand, the bond between the Great Khan (later also referred to as the Yuan Emperor) and Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader was a very strong one. Because that bond was based on the respect and devotion of the emperor for the Tibetan Master, and not on the authority of the emperor over his subject, Tibet was never treated as an integral part of the Mongol Empire, and was consequently also not ruled by Mongol officials. Tibet was also never regarded as part of the Yuan empire (i.e. the eastern part of the Mongolian empire).

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44 The New Yuan-shih

## PART III

### Inheritance of authority from the Mongols by China

Besides claiming that Tibet became a part of China because of its alleged annexation by the Yuan empire, the present Chinese Government also holds the view that China inherited authority over Tibet from that same Yuan empire.

Having reviewed and analyzed the history of Tibetan-Mongolian relations, it should be clear that the Chinese Ming empire, which was created in China when the Mongol rulers were overthrown and expelled from that country, had no basis to make any claims on Tibet, any more than it could make claims on parts of Russia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe or other parts of Central Asia, all of which had been part of the great Mongol empire. China would have had a better argument if it claimed Korea, Burma and other parts of South-east Asia, which, unlike Tibet, did come under direct Mongol rule also during the period of the Yuan dynasty. Yet there, too, China cannot claim that it inherited sovereignty or any other authority from the Mongol Khans, since the empire was a Mongolian and not a Chinese one, and China only constituted one part of that empire for less than half of the empire's duration.

During the Ming Dynasty in China (1368 to 1644), the kings and princes of Phagmodrup, Rimpung and Tsang ruled Tibet. The Phagmodrup rulers usurped the throne of Tibet from the Sakya, but lost it to the princes of Rimpung. The Rimpung, in turn, lost power to the princes of Tsang. This was a period of great political upheaval in Tibet. But throughout this era, Tibetans remained firmly in control of their own country. The Ming emperors of China played no role in Tibet.

In 1594 Wang Fen, a Chinese legal officer under the Ming drew a map of the then Chinese Empire. It contains a note explaining that the map includes the **whole of the Chinese territory**. The names and sizes of the Chinese regions are clearly spelled out in Chinese. This map includes no region of Tibet, not even the easternmost regions of Amdo.

In fact, Tibet's relationship with the Ming emperors was confined

to the exchange of gifts and complimentary titles between Tibetan chieftains and high lamas, on the one hand, and the Ming court, on the other.

Many Tibetans travelled to China ostensibly to receive gifts from the Ming court, but trade was the real purpose of those visits. At one time, Tibetans visited China twice a year under this pretext. In 1536, when over 4,000 Tibetans went to China, the Ming ministers complained at the large influx of Tibetan visitors and stated that gifts should not be given to them on any second visit.

These visits by Tibetans to the Ming court was a ritual which suited the interests of both parties: while allowing Tibetans to buy Chinese merchandise, it satisfied Ming vanity and self-aggrandisement. This relationship, however, never signified the rule of China over Tibet.

For example, in 1408 the great Lama Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, declined the Ming emperor's invitation to his court by stating that he had to prepare for the Monlam Festival due in Lhasa in the following year. The invitation was repeated in 1414, this time through a gold-letter mail runner. Once again, Tsongkhapa declined by saying that it would not do for him to meet too many people. Instead, Tsongkhapa sent his disciple, Shakya Yeshe, whom Emperor Yunglo adopted as his personal guru, giving him the title of "The incarnation of the Buddha dharma in the west, the Great Gushri".

If Tibet had then been a subject territory of the Ming emperor, Tsongkhapa would have had no choice but to accept the imperial invitation. The fact that Tsongkhapa refused the Ming invitation clearly shows that China had absolutely no control in Tibet during that period.

## THE BESTOWAL AND EXCHANGE OF TITLES

Throughout the periods of the Mongol empire, the Chinese Ming empire and, later, the Manchu empire of the Qing, titles were given by powerful rulers, princes and spiritual leaders. The Chinese Government today claims that the bestowal of such honorific titles as the Mongol, Chinese or Manchu emperors gave to Tibetans signifies the submission of those Tibetans and of the entire state to the emperors of the period. Today Chinese authorities interpret those titles as evidence that Tibet was part of the Chinese state.

In reality, the bestowal of titles was an expression of respect and, at times, recognition by the grantor of the title to the recipient. Within a principality, state or empire, titles could be given by the ruler to loyal or brave subjects as a reward or promotion. But mostly titles were given to foreign dignitaries as a mark of respect or recognition.

We have seen how Khubilai Khan gave titles to Phagpa family members that provided them with a standing equivalent to that of high Mongol nobility. This was more than anything an act of respect and a gift. But other Mongol rulers and princes granted titles to Tibetans, even after the fall of the Mongol empire. Thus it was Altan Khan who, in 1578, gave his teacher, Sonam Gyatso, the title of Talé (Dalai) Lama, meaning Ocean of Wisdom. Tibetan leaders similarly gave Mongol princes titles. The Fifth Dalai Lama, for example, granted his patron, Gushri Khan, the title of Dharma Raja. The Ming emperors gave complimentary titles to anyone requesting them.

The Manchu emperors gave titles to Tibetans, including to the Dalai Lamas. But the Tibetan Dalai Lamas likewise granted the Manchu emperors titles. Thus, for example, the Fifth Dalai Lama received the honorific title "The unifier in one religion of the people living under the sky of the Buddha's teachings in the extremely wholesome, tranquil and celestial land of the West, the Immutable Vajradhara, Oceanic Lama" from the Manchu emperor, Shunzhi, in 1653; and the Dalai Lama, in turn, bestowed upon that emperor the honorific title of "The Heavenly Lord Manjushri, the Great Heavenly Emperor".

**Appendix A** contains a list of complimentary titles, letters and seals given by or exchanged with the Mongol, Chinese and Manchu emperors. The list is by no means exhaustive, but it is sufficient to show that titles were given to, or exchanged with, secular and spiritual leaders in many countries. This exercise was a part of the diplomatic culture and practice prevailing in the region at the time. With the passage of time, China began to claim that the bestowers of such titles and seals had been placed in a superior political position by virtue of this act.

One need only look at the number of rulers and other dignitaries of countries of Asia that were recipients of such titles and seals to understand the untenability of China's argument that the bestowal of titles on Tibetans at different times in history serves as proof that Tibet was—and remained part of—China.

## Conclusion

The review and analysis of the history of Tibetan-Mongolian relations reveals the uniqueness of those relations. To this day Tibetans and Mongolians maintain a close cultural, religious and even political affinity. The relations developed by Mongolian emperors with Tibetan lamas in the thirteenth century did, of course, have political implications. But those ties did not result in the incorporation of Tibet into the Mongolian empire the way other nations and peoples were annexed.

More to the point with respect to China's claim, Tibet did not become part of the Yuan Mongolian empire (i.e. the eastern part of the empire), and was certainly never regarded by any of the parties during this period as a part of China. When Mongol overlordship was asserted over Tibet (between 1240 and 1253) most of China was not even part of the Mongol empire. And by the time the Mongols did conquer and annex China (completed in 1279 with the conquest of the Sung empire) Tibet had already been under Tibetan rule as an entirely separate entity for some twenty years.

The claim that the Chinese Ming empire which arose in China when the Mongol rulers were overthrown and expelled from that country, inherited the rights of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) with respect to Tibet has absolutely no basis. The Yuan empire's political ties to Tibet were minimal, and whatever did exist ended already in 1350, eighteen years before China regained its independence from Mongol rule.

The Chinese Ming rulers could make no better claims to Tibet than they could to parts of Russia, the Middle East or Eastern Europe, all of which had been part of the great Mongol empire. China would have had a better argument if it claimed Korea, Burma and other parts of South-east Asia which, unlike Tibet, did come under direct Mongol rule also during the period of the Yuan dynasty. Yet there, too, China cannot claim that it inherited sovereignty or any other authority from the Mongol Khans, since the empire was a **Mongolian** empire and **not** a Chinese one, and China only constituted one of the many conquered territories of that empire, and that for less than half of the empire's duration. Even the fact that Beijing (Dadu) was chosen as one of the capitals of part of this Mongol empire cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, transform the Mongol empire into a Chinese one.

The current Chinese allegation, therefore, that Mongol conquests—and the political influence this developed—could in any way give today's People's Republic of China **any** legitimate claims is nothing short of absurd. Equally unfounded is China's claim that the granting of titles or seals is sufficient evidence to prove its historical sovereignty over neighbouring countries and rulers. These allegations are tenable only if Beijing's thorough re-writing of history—in an attempt to legitimize its own aggression and political ambitions—is accepted. But such distortions of history can no longer go unchallenged. The present monogram is a humble contribution to the objective of setting the record straight, and doing so primarily using China's own historical sources.



# Appendix A

## **Titles, Complimentary Titles, Letters and Seals Issued or Exchanged by Rulers and Spiritual Leaders of Mongolia, Tibet, China, Manchuria, Vietnam, Korea and Neighbouring Regions**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Imperial Names</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Particulars</b>
1.	Empress Ogul Khaimish	1250	Adopted Namo, a Kashmiri spiritual master, as her imperial root-guru. Gave him a turquoise seal and the authority to protect Buddhism. Appointed Namo's monk brother as head of 10,000 households in Kashmir.
2.	Möngke Khan	1253	Khubilai Khan gave Drogon Choegyal Phakpa the title "Ti-shi" (imperial preceptor) and adopted him as his personal guru. The Tibetan lama was gifted a jewel-encrusted tablet with a Tibetan letter "Sa" engraved on it.
3.	Möngke Khan	1257	Bestowed the title "King of Annam" on Vietnamese Prince Kao Feng, and bound him to pay taxes every three years. Tentren was appointed king of another Vietnamese kingdom, Tentren Chingwang.
4.	Khubilai Khan	1261	Made Drogon Choegyal Phakpa the spiritual leader of all Buddhists and adopted him as the imperial guru. Gave him the title of "Dabao Fa Wang", meaning Dharmaraja, the Great Gem.
5.	Khubilai Khan	1263	Gave the title "Bailan Wang" to Chakna Dorje, a Tibetan lama of the Sakya school. The Mongol prince, Koton, gave his daughter, Mangala, to the Tibetan lama as his bride.

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| 6.  | Khubilai Khan     | 1270 | Gave a hexagonal crystal seal to Drogon Choegyal Phakpa. The Sakya lama was also given a special <i>yasa</i> , exalting him in the following words: "Below the sky\ Above the Earth\The son of the Indian deity\Emanation of the Buddha\Inventor of the written script\Harbinger of peace\Arya Ti-shi\Master of the Five Sciences." |
| 7.  | Khubilai Khan     | 1287 | Established an administrative office called "Pang Yang Shon-wu" in the Burmese city of Kanmen and stationed a military garrison there.  |
| 8.  | Khubilai Khan     | 1288 | Authorized the Korean prince, Wang Yuan, to ascend the throne of his kingdom by giving him a silver seal.   |
| 9.  | Chengzong of Yuan | 1295 | Gave complimentary titles and a silver seal to the Burmese king.  |
| 10. | Taiding of Yuan   | 1324 | Authorized the Korean king, who had been exiled to Tibet, to return home and gave him the royal seal.   |
| 11. | Huizong of Yuan   | 1354 | Gave the title "Ta'i Situ" (grand preceptor) to Tibetan lama Phagdrup Jangchub Gyaltsen.  |
| 12. | Hong Wu of Ming   | 1368 | Gave complimentary titles and a gold seal to the contemporary Korean king.  |
| 13. | Hong Wu of Ming   | 1372 | Gave titles like "Gushri", "Chanhua Wang", and "Dabao Fa Wang" to the successors of Karmapa Rolpai Dorjee.  |
| 14. | Yong-le of Ming   | 1405 | Gave a seal and a gift of fabrics to the ruler of Kalikoti, an Indonesian principality.   |
| 15. | Yong-le of Ming   | 1412 | Gave a seal and a gift of fabrics to Mahamasar, the King of Lampar, an Indonesian principality.   |

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| 16. | Altan Khan                  | 1578 | Invited the Third Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso, to Mongolia and gave him the title "Talé (Dalai) Lama, Vajradhara". The Dalai Lama was also given a gold seal with "Vajradhara, Talé Lama" incised on it.  |
| 17. | The Third Dalai Lama        | 1578 | Gave the title "Dharmaraja\ Brahma, the Lord of Devas" to Altan Khan.  |
| 18. | Wanli of Ming               | 1578 | Gave the title "Vajradhara" to the Third Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso.   |
| 19. | The Fifth Dalai Lama        | 1637 | Gave the complimentary title of "Tenzin Choekyi Gyalpo" (The Holder of the Dharma, the Dharmaraja) to Gushri Khan of Qosot Mongols.  |
| 20. | Gushri Khan                 | 1637 | Tibetan minister Sonam Rabten was given the title of "Dalai's Chief Attendant". Another minister Drongmeypa was given the title of "Jaisang Dehpa"   |
| 21. | Shunzhi of Manchu           | 1647 | Gave the Panchen Lobsang Choegyal the title "Guru Vajradhara".   |
| 22. | During the reign of Shunzhi |      | After the surrender of the Vietnamese king, Maojing, his son was given the rank of a Manchu general.   |
| 23. | Shunzhi of Manchu           | 1653 | Gave the following title to the Fifth Dalai Lama: "The unifier in one religion of the people living under the sky of the Buddha's teachings in the extremely wholesome, tranquil and celestial land of the West, the Immuttable Vajradhara, Oceanic Lama". |
| 24. | The Fifth Dalai Lama        | 1653 | Gave Manchu emperor Shunzi the following title: "The Heavenly Lord Manjushri, the Great Emperor".  |

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|-----|------------------------------|------|---|
| 25. | The Fifth Dalai Lama         | 1658 | Gave the title of "Dharma Holder, Vajra King" to the elder son of Gushri Khan.  |
| 26. | Early period of Manchu reign |      | The Manchu government gave complimentary titles to the king of the Japanese principality, Okinawa.  |
| 27. | Kangxi of Manchu             | 1665 | Gave a <i>yasa</i> and complimentary titles to the King of Annam, Vietnam.  |
| 28. | Kangxi of Manchu             | 1666 | Gave the title the "King of Annam" to the King of Vietnam   |
| 29. | Kangxi of Manchu             | 1683 | Gave complimentary titles inscribed on wood to the King of Annam (Vietnam). The King of Annam, in turn, pledged to send annual gifts to the Manchu court.   |
| 30. | Qian-long of Manchu          | 1781 | Gave the Eighth Dalai Lama a <i>yasa</i> and a seal inscribed with the following words of exaltation: "The Chief Buddha of the quintessentially wholesome western land/The holder of the Buddha's complete teachings on this earth\The All-knowing Vajradhara Dalai Lama. |
| 31. | Qian-long of Manchu          | 1786 | Gave a <i>yasa</i> and title to the King of Siam, who had sent his emissaries with taxes to the Manchu court for this very purpose.   |
| 32. | Qian-long of Manchu          | 1788 | The Manchu forces quelled an internecine strife in Vietnam and gave complimentary titles to the Vietnamese King and his descendants.  |
| 33. | Qian-long of Manchu          | 1790 | The Vietnamese King came to the Manchu court in Peking and received the title of the King of Annam.   |
| 34. | Qian-long of Manchu          | 1790 | Gave complimentary titles to the King of Burma and bound him to send tributes every decade.   |

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| 35. Qian-long of Manchu | 1793 | Bestowed a jewel and peacock feather denoting the rank of "Wang" on the Nepalese king, Rana Bahadur Shah, to mount on his crown.                                |
| 36. Jia-ting of Manchu  | 1802 | Bestowed the title "the King of Yunnan" on the Vietnamese king.   |
| 37. Yuan Shi-kai        | 1914 | Gave the title "Jetsun Dhampa Khutuktu" to Khelkha Jetsun Dhampa.   |
| 38. Nationalist China   | 1919 | Gave complimentary titles, inscribed on golden paper, to Jetsun Dhampa. Jetsun Dhampa was also given a gold seal with "Jetsun Dhampa Khutuktu" inscribed on it. |

The exchange of complimentary titles, letters and seals was a part of diplomatic culture prevailing in Central Asia in that period. With the passage of time, China began to claim that the bestowers of titles and seals had been placed in a superior position by virtue of this act.

# Appendix B

## Dynastic Table

No.	Monarchs	Reign Period
1.	Chinggis Khan	1206-1227
2.	Tolui	1228
3.	Ögedei	1229-1241
4.	Queen Naimanjin	1242-1245
5.	Güyük	1246-1248
6.	Queen Ogulhaimish	1249-1250
7.	Möngke Khan	1251-1259
8.	Khubilai Khan	1260-1294

**In 1271 the Mongols adopted the dynastic title of Yuan**

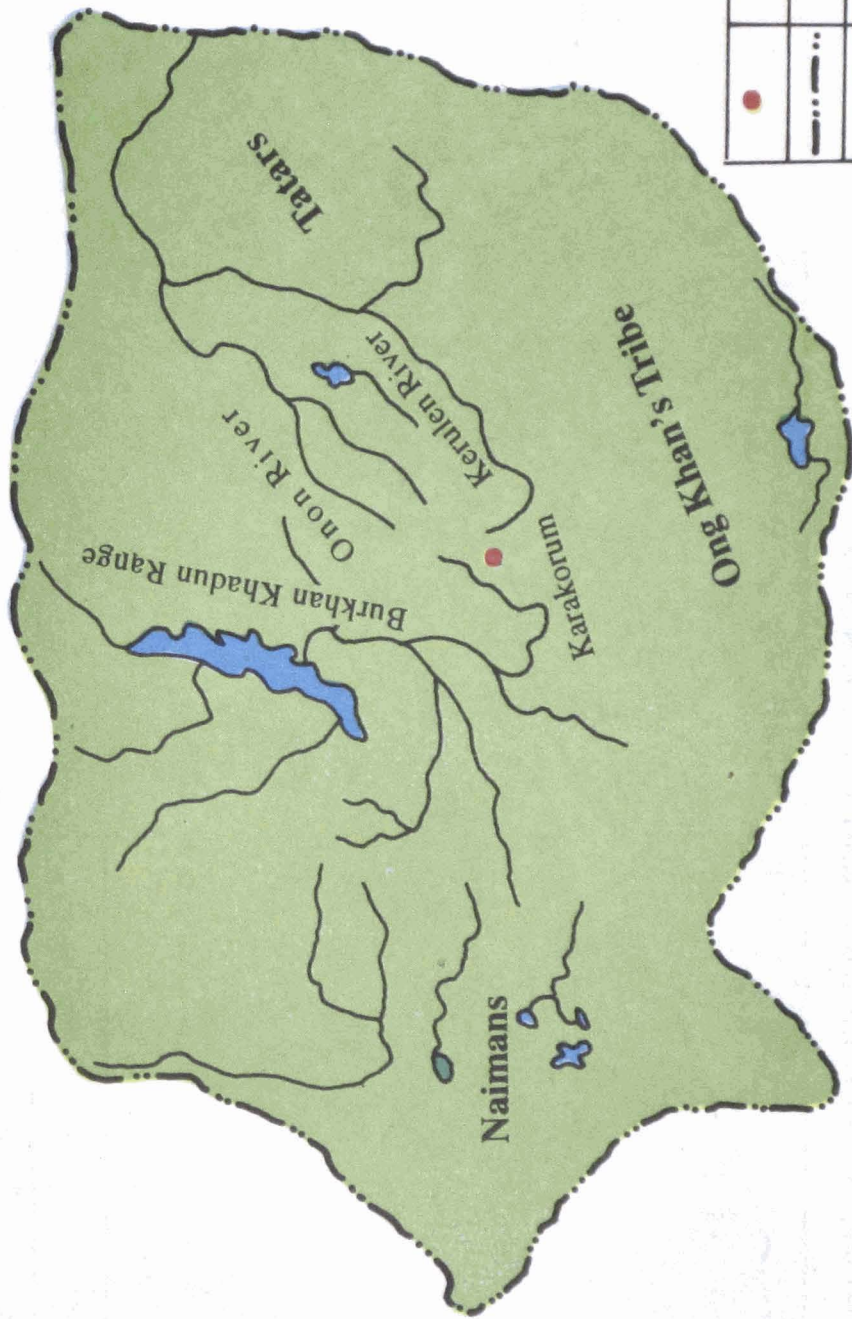
9.	Chengzong (Timur Oljeitu)	1295-1307
10.	Wuzong (Ha Khaisan)	1308-1311
11.	Renzong (Ayurbarwada)	1312-1320
12.	Yingzong (Shidebala)	1321-1323
13.	Taiding (Yesun Timur)	1324-1328
14.	Wenzong (Togh Temur)	1329-1331
15.	Ningzong (Irinjibal)	1332
16.	Huizong (Toghon Timur)	1333-1368

**In 1368 the Ming seized power in China, precipitating the flight of Huizong to Mongol homeland**

16.	Huizong	1369-1370
17.	Zhaozong (Biligtu Khan)	1371-1378
18.	Thuksi Temurey	1378-1402

**The Yuan dynasty ends here, leading to the disintegration of the Mongolian state**

1. THE GREAT MONGOL HEARTLAND IN 1206

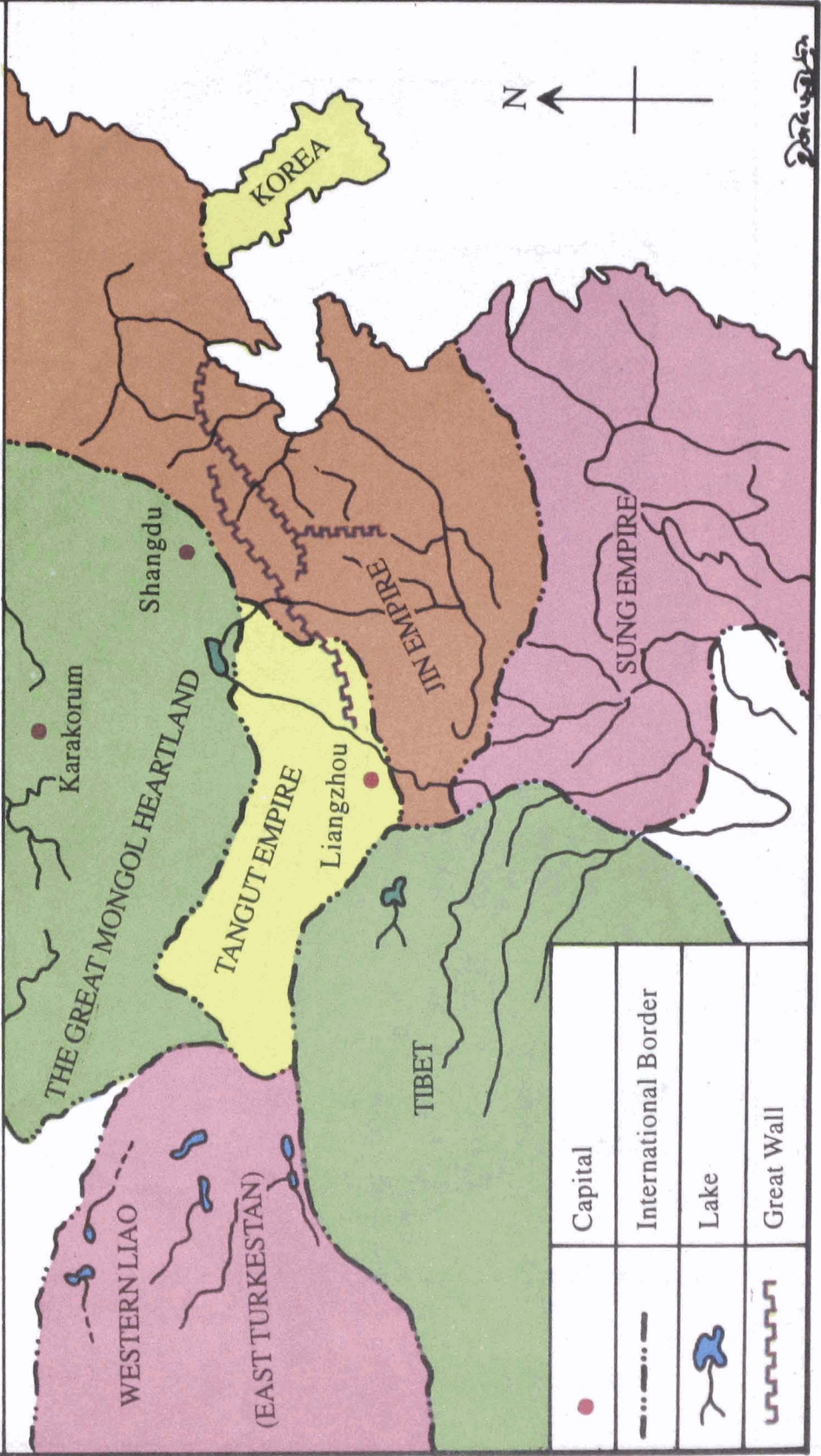


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Border

Lake

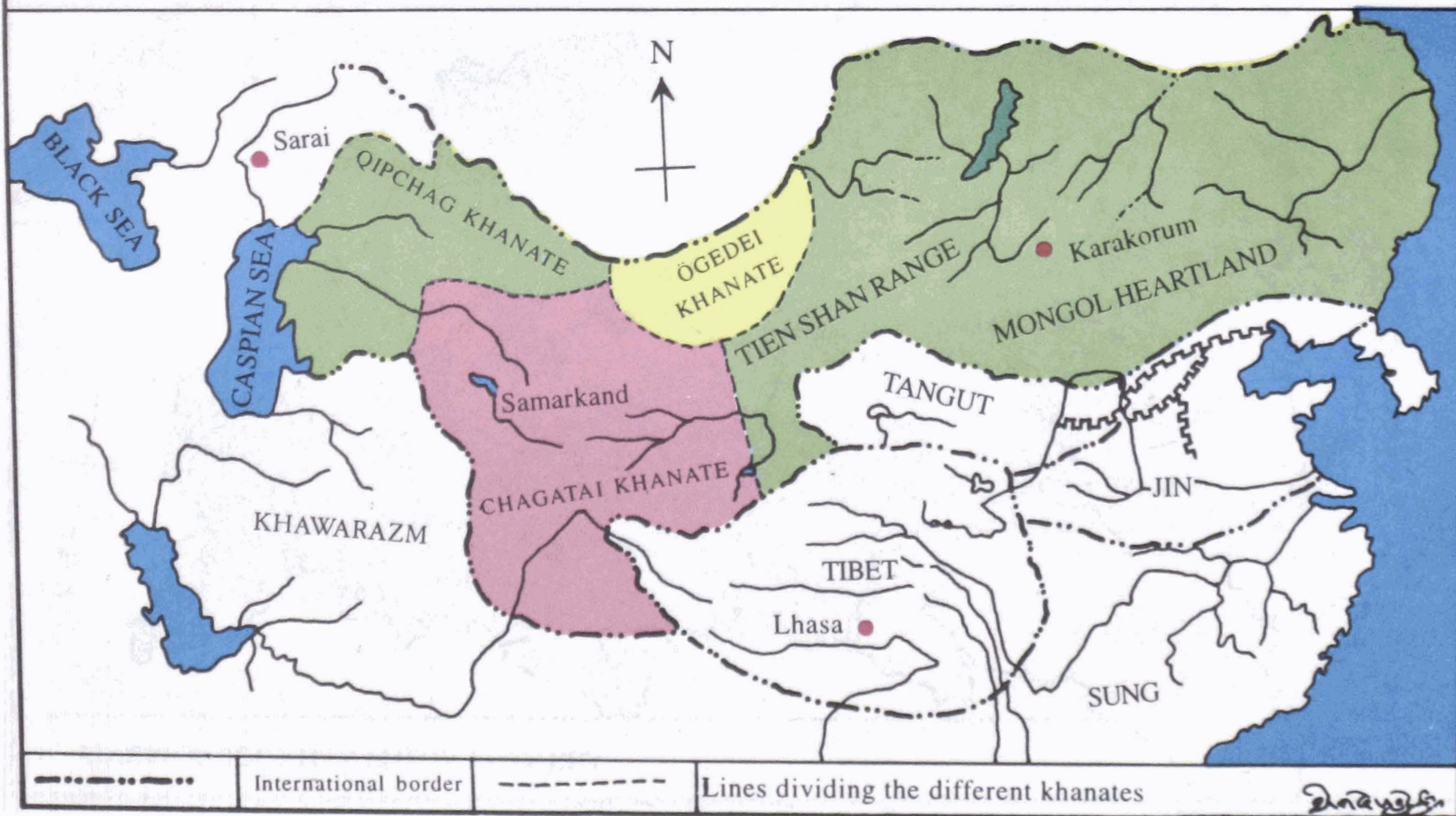
## 2. MONGOLIA AND NEIGHBOURING KINGDOMS IN 1206



●	Capital
- · - · -	International Border
⊕	Lake
⌚	Great Wall



### 3. THE TERRITORY DIVIDED AMONG CHINGGIS KHAN'S FOUR SONS IN 1225



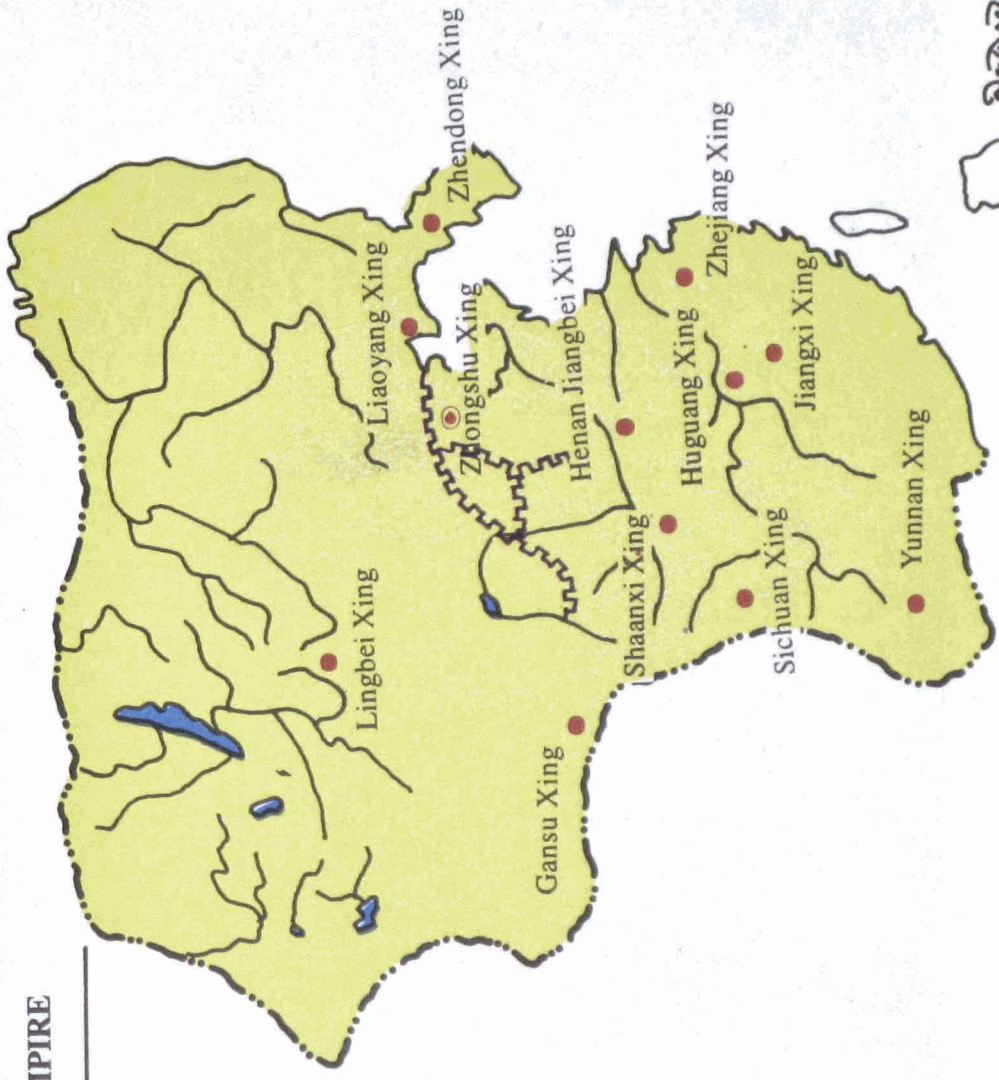
#### 4. FIVE MONGOL KHANATES IN YUAN ERA









Lines dividing the different Khanates



### 5. 12 PROVINCES OF THE YUAN EMPIRE



	Provincial centre
	Great Wall
	River
	Lake
	Capital
	Provincial border



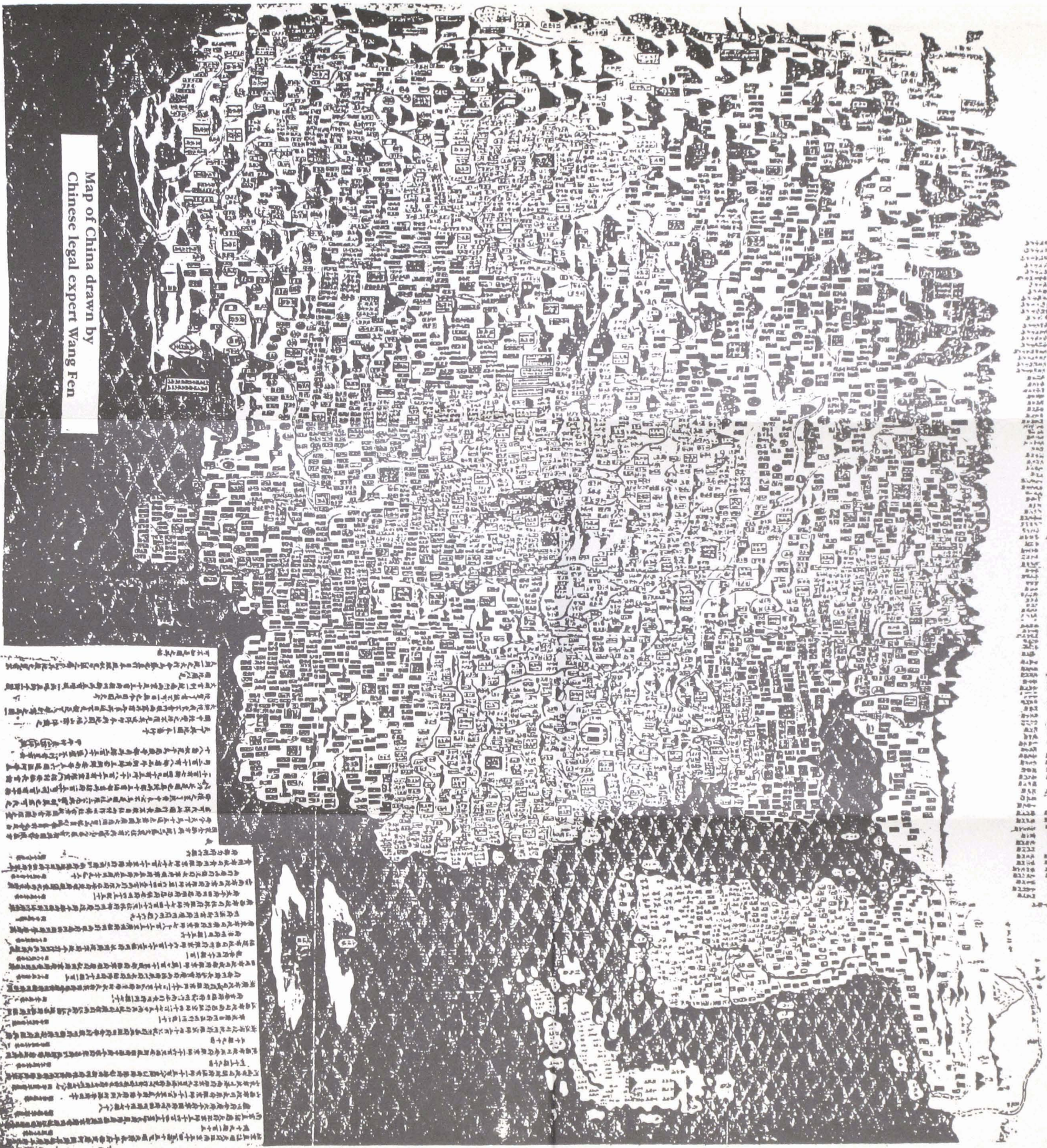


In gratitude to Drogon Choegyal Phapga for bestowing a cycle of tantric initiations, Khubilai Khan takes a vow to renounce the annual ritual of sacrificing Chinese citizens en masse by drowning. This Tibetan mural of the historic event dates to sometime between 1368 and 1644.



This map was drawn in 1994 by Wang Fen, a Ming Chinese Legal Officer. It contains a note stating that it includes the whole of China's territory. This map incorporates no region of Tibet, not even the eastern-most regions of Amdo.

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Map of China drawn by  
Chinese legal expert Wang Fen