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# Were the historical Oirats “Western Mongols”? An examination of their uniqueness in relation to the Mongols

*Les Oïrats historiques étaient-ils des “Mongols occidentaux”? Un examen de leur singularité par rapport aux Mongols*

Joo-Yup Lee

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## Introduction

- 1 The Kalmyks, a Buddhist Mongolic people residing in the Republic of Kalmykia (Khalmg Tangch), a constituent republic of the Russian Federation<sup>1</sup>, the Torghud (Cl. Mo. Toryuud, Oirat Mo. Toroyoud)<sup>2</sup> living in Xinjiang, China, and the Dörböd (Cl. Mo. Dörbed), Jaqačin, and Öölöd (Cl. Mo. Ögeled) residing in western Mongolia, all descend from a nomadic people historically known as the Oirats (Cl. Mo. and Oirat Mo. Oyirad). Although their modern descendants are now scattered in Russia, China, and Mongolia, the Oirats were once the most powerful nomadic horsemen in the steppes of Inner Asia during the post-Mongol period. Led by such charismatic leaders as Esen Taisi (r. 1439-1455) and Galdan Bošugtu (r. 1671-1697), they established formidable, albeit short-lived, nomadic empires, which harassed their neighboring Chinggisid states, that is the Northern Yuan (1368-1691)<sup>3</sup>, the Moghul Khanate (ca. 1347-1680s, and the Uzbek (1501-1747) and Qazaq (1450s-1848) khanates. The Oirats of the Volga region, i.e., the Kalmyks, alone menaced their nomadic neighbors, including the Noghay Tatars, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century onwards in such a way that an 18<sup>th</sup>-century commentary on the

English translation of Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan (r. 1644-1663)’s *Šejere-i Türk*, a history of the Chinggisids up to the Arabshāhid Uzbek dynasty, states that the Crimean Tatars “are the best disciplined of all the Tatars, tho the *Callmaks* are infinitely braver than they” (Abu’l Ghāzi Bahāder 1729, p. 602). If the Manchu Qing state (1644-1911) had not destroyed the Zunghar (Cl. Mo. J̄egün Far, Oirat Mo. Zöün Far) Khanate in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps Kazakhstan might be called “Kalmakia” today<sup>4</sup>. To use René Grousset’s term for the Turko-Mongols (1939, p. 10), the Oirats were arguably the last of “the governing races, imperial nations” (*les races de commandement, les nations impériales*) of Inner Asian origin.

- 2 In modern literature, the Oirats and their offshoot, the Kalmyks, who share the Mongolic language, parts of their history, some culture, and religion (Tibetan Buddhism) with the Mongols, are often referred to as “Western Mongols.” For instance, René Grousset calls them “Western Mongols” (*les Mongols occidentaux*) (1939, p. 599)<sup>5</sup>. However, the Oirats and the Mongols not only had separate origins, but also formed distinct identities during the post-Mongol period as will be discussed below. In this article, I examine in detail the uniqueness of the historical Oirats in relation to the Mongols in order to reappraise the practice of designating them as “Western Mongols”<sup>6</sup>. For this purpose, I will first examine the separate origin of the early Oirats and demonstrate the uniqueness of the nomadic confederation they later developed into, i.e. the Dörbön Oyirad<sup>7</sup> (Cl. Mo. Dörben Oyirad, Four Oirats) in relation to the Mongols. I will then investigate the question of how the Oirats were viewed by the neighboring Manchus, Northern Yuan Mongols, and Turkicized Chinggisid *ulus*<sup>8</sup>, or peoples, and also how the Oirats viewed themselves.
- 3 This article suggests that the historical Oirats should be treated by historians as a separate Inner Asian nomadic people, or confederation, such as the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Kök Türks, Uighurs, Qirghiz, and Mongols rather than merely as “Western Mongols.”

## The separate origins of the Oirats and the Mongols

### The Early Oirats: non-Mongols

- 4 When Chinggis Khan founded the Mongol *ulus* in 1206, the Oirats, inhabiting the forest region of northwestern Mongolia, and the Mongols, originating in northeastern Mongolia, did not form one nomadic people. In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Mongol history of Chinggis Khan and his ancestors, the Oirats, called the People of the Forest (*oy-yin irgen*) (Ligeti 1971, p. 168; *hoi-yin irgen* in de Rachewiltz 2004, 1, p. 849), are not included among the branches that constituted the Mongols, many of which are described as being descended from Alan Qo’a, the mythical ancestress of Chinggis Khan (de Rachewiltz 2004, pp. 2-3, 7-10). Instead, the Oirats are described as a non-Mongol people like the Kereyid and Naiman. They are rather briefly mentioned in this history as one of the forest peoples that submitted to Joči, son of Chinggis Khan, in 1207 (*ibid.*, 1, p. 164).
- 5 The separate origins, or “pre-conquest” division, of the Oirats and the Mongols are also noted in the *Jāmi’ al-tavārīkh*, the universal history written by Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318) for his Mongol overlords. In his work, Rashīd al-Dīn classifies the Inner Asian nomadic peoples into four different groups<sup>9</sup>. The first group is called “the peoples of Oghuz” (*aqvām-i ūghūz*) and includes the twenty four branches of the Oghuz and other Turkic

peoples (Rashīd al-Dīn 1988, p. 29; 1998-1999, 1, p. 27). The second group is called “the peoples of the Turks that are now called Mongol” (*aqvāmī az atrāk ki īshān-rā īn zamān mughūl mī-gūyand*) but each people in this group had its own specific name prior to being called Mongol (1988, p. 47; 1998-1999, 1, p. 37). The third group is called “the Turkic khanates or peoples that have also had separate monarchs and leaders” (*aqvāmī az atrāk ki īshān nīz ‘alā-ḥidda, pādshāhī va muqaddamī dāshta-and*) and the peoples in this group were not related to the second group or the Mongols (1988, p. 87; 1998-1999, 1, p. 61). The khanates or peoples, such as the Önggüt, Naiman, Kereyid, Qırghiz, Tangut, as well as the Uighur and Qipchaq, are included in this group (1988, pp. 87-110; 1998-1999, 1, pp. 61-78). The Mongols formed the fourth group called “the Turkic peoples that were anciently styled Mongol” (*aqvāmī az atrāk ki dar zamān-i qadīm laqab-i īshān mughūl būda...*) (1988, p. 111; 1998-1999, 1, p. 79). This Mongol group was divided into the Dürükün Mongols, who constitute the commoner Mongols, and the Niru’un Mongols, who are descended from Alan Qo’a. The peoples, such as the Qunqirat and Mangqut, belonged to the former Mongol group, while the peoples such as the Barlas belonged to the latter Mongol group (1988, pp. 111-162; 1998-1999, 1, pp. 79-112)<sup>10</sup>.

- 6 Importantly, in Rashīd al-Dīn’s classification of Inner Asian nomadic peoples, the Oirats are not included in the Mongol groups. Instead, they are included in the second group along with the nomadic peoples, such as the Jalayir and Tatar even though Rashīd al-Dīn was aware that the Oirats spoke a variant of the Mongol language (1988, pp. 76-80; 1998-1999, 1, pp. 55-57). Furthermore, while Rashīd al-Dīn writes that the Merkit “are a sort of the Mongols” (*ṣanfī az mughūl-and*) (1988, p. 71), and that the Kereyid “are a Mongol stock” (*nau’ī az mughūl-and*) (1988, p. 87), he does not describe the Oirats similarly. Rashīd al-Dīn also remarks that the Oirat commanders in Iran and Turan “know their origin and lineage that were not known to others” (1988, p. 79; 1998-1999, 1, p. 57), which indicates that the Oirats and the Mongols had separate genealogies and origins.

## The Four Oirat: a separate nomadic confederation

- 7 Over the course of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Inner Asian nomadic peoples that had been incorporated into the Mongol Empire amalgamated into several Chinggisid *uluses*, or peoples, such as the Chaghatays (Moghuls, Timurids)<sup>11</sup>, Jočid *ulus* (Uzbeks, Qazaqs, Tatars), and Northern Yuan Mongols. However, the Oirats, centered in western Mongolia, were an important exception to this phenomenon since they developed into a major non-Chinggisid *ulus*. From the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Oirats began to challenge the Mongols led by Chinggisid khans, who had been ousted from China by the Ming Dynasty (on the Mongol-Oirat rivalry, see Jamsran 2010, pp. 497-507; Miyawaki 1984, pp. 136-173; for a brief history of the Oirats, see Miyawaki 2003, pp. 141-151). Unlike their 13<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Oirats formed a tribal confederation known as the Dörbön Oyirad, or Four Oirat, mostly made up of the original Oirat peoples and other non-Mongol peoples. This new Oirat confederation showed a markedly different composition from the Chinggisid *uluses* of the post-Mongol world. The latter were typically made up of the original Mongol peoples, that is, the branches named as the Dürükün Mongols and the Niru’un Mongols in the *Jāmi’ al-tavārīkh*, and the non-Mongol peoples from both the Mongolian and Qipchaq steppes. The modern-day Mongols are thus made up of the original Mongol groups, such as the Mangqut, Qonggirat, Baya’ut, Üüsin/Ü’üšin, Ba’arin, Besüt, Eljigin and

Qatagin, and the nomadic peoples of non-Mongol origin, such as the Jalayir, Uighur, Naiman, Kereyid, Tangut, Önggüt (Enggüd), Qaračin (partly Qipchaq) (for the Qaračin, see Okada 1984, p. 150; Atwood 2004, p. 456), and Alan (Asud), the last two being from the Qipchaq Steppe (for the modern-day Mongols, see Badamhatan 1987, pp. 26-52)<sup>12</sup>. Similarly, the Chaghatays, Uzbeks, Qazaqs, and (Crimean) Tatars consisted of the original Mongol groups, such as the Barlas, Barin, Dughlat, Manghit, Qunghrat, and Uyshun (Üüsin), and the non-Mongol peoples, such as the Jalayir, Kereyid, Naiman, Önggüt, Tangut, Tatar, and Uighur, that were the peoples of eastern Inner Asian origin, and the Arghin, Qipchaq, Qanqli, and Alan (Shirin)<sup>13</sup>, that were the peoples of the Qipchaq Steppe origin (for the Qazaqs and Uzbeks, see Sultanov 1982, pp. 7-51; for the Timurids, see Manz 1989, pp. 154-165 and Ando 1992, pp. 66-217; for the Moghuls, see Mano 1978, pp. 49-52 and Yudin 2001, pp. 72-82; for the Crimean Tatars, see İnalçık 1955, p. 753 and Fisher 1978, p. 22).

- 8 In contrast, the major Dörbön Oyirad groups, such as the Torghud, Dörböd (Cl. Mo. Dörbed), and Xoyid (Cl. Mo. Qoyid), among others, were non-Mongols by origin<sup>14</sup>. An exception was the Xoşoud (Cl. Mo. Qoşud), who joined the Dörbön Oyirad in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. According to a number of Mongolian, Oirat, and Chinese sources, they were originally Mongols led by the descendants of Qasar, brother of Chinggis Khan (Okada 1987, pp. 203-207; Wu 1941, pp. 185-186). The Xoyid were descended from the original Oirats (Okada 1987, p. 196), while the Torghud were descended from the Kereyid<sup>15</sup>. With regard to the Dörböd, Hidehiro Okada argues that they descend from the Naiman on the basis that the Dörböd foundation myth, which relates that their founder was born of a tree, was similar to that of the Uighurs from whom, he believes, the Naiman probably branched off and that the territory of the Dörböd was the old home of the Naiman (1987, pp. 197-201)<sup>16</sup>. As a matter of fact, the Naiman may also have had a similar founding legend. Rashīd al-Dīn relates that “Bugu Khan [the Naiman ruler] held a great importance among the Uyghur and many peoples. They say he was born of a tree” (1988, p. 98; 1998-1999, 1, p. 69). In sum, unlike the Chinggisid *ulus*es that were made up of the original Mongol peoples and the non-Mongol peoples from both the Mongolian and Qipchaq steppes, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Oirats were mostly made up of the non-Mongol peoples from the western half of modern-day Mongolia<sup>17</sup>.

Tables 1. The composition of the Chinggisid *Uluses*

	Chaghatays (Timurid/Moghuls)	Qazaqs	Uzbeks	Crimean Tatars	Northern Yuan Mongols
<b>Original Mongol groups</b>	Arlat, Barin, Barlas, Besüt, Dughlat, Qunghrat, Suldus, etc.	Dughlat, Manghit, Qunghrat, Uyshun, etc.	Arlat, Barin, Barlas, Durman, Manghit, Qunghrat, Uyshun, etc.	Barin, Cijivut, Manghit, etc.	Ba'arin, Baya'ut, Besüt, Eljigin, Qatagin, Mangqut, Qonggirat, Ü'üşin, etc.
<b>Non-Mongol groups (Mongolian Steppe)</b>	Jalayir, Kereyid, etc.	Jalayir, Kereyid, Merkit, Naiman, etc.	Jalayir, Kereyid, Naiman, Oyirad, Önggüt, Tangut, Tatar, Uighur, etc.		Jalayir, Kereyid, Naiman, Önggüt (Enggüd), Tangut, Uighur, etc.
<b>Non-Mongol groups (Qipchaq Steppe)</b>	Arghin, Qangli, Qipchaq, etc.	Arghin, Qangli, Qipchaq, etc.	Arghin, Qangli, Qipchaq, etc.	Arghin, Qipchaq, Shirin (Alan), etc.	Asud (Alan), Qaračın (Qipchaq), etc.

Table 2. The composition of the Dörbön Oyirad

	Dörbön Oyirad
<b>Original Mongol groups</b>	Xošoud
<b>Non-Mongol groups (Mongolian Steppe)</b>	Buraad (Buryat), Dörböd (Naiman), Xoyid (Oyirad), Torghud (Kereyid), etc.
<b>Non-Mongol groups (Qipchaq Steppe)</b>	

## Y-DNA Studies of the Kalmyks and the Mongols

- 9 Naturally, according to recent Y-chromosome DNA testings, the Kalmyks and the modern Mongols are, although close to each other, genetically distinguishable. More specifically, the Kalmyks, made up of the Dörböd, Torghud, and Xoşoud, are characterized by the high frequency (38.7%) of the Y-chromosome haplogroup C2b1a2 (formerly known as C3c1), which is also the most widespread haplogroup among the Qazaqs (Kazakhs) (see Table 1 in Malyarchuk *et al.* 2013, p. 3)<sup>18</sup>. The Ĵaqačın, an Oirat group residing in western Mongolia, are also characterized by the high frequency of the Y-DNA chromosome haplogroup C2b1a2 (30%), which shows that C2b1a2 can be considered the genetic marker of the Oirat groups in relation to (Qalqa) Mongols (see Table 1 in Katoh *et al.* 2005, p. 66; C3c in this table corresponds to C2b1a2)<sup>19</sup>. Significantly, the frequency of Y-chromosome haplogroup C2b1a2 (15-20%) of the

“Eastern” Mongols is considerably lower than that of the Oirat groups. The modern-day Mongols are characterized by the high frequency (34%) of C2 (formerly known as C3) that excludes C2b1a2 (see Table 3 in Zerjal *et al.* 2002, p. 474; haplogroup 10 in Table 3 corresponds to haplogroup C2). Furthermore, the widespread Y-chromosome haplotype dubbed “star cluster,” which is associated with Chinggis Khan’s lineage and found at a high frequency among the Mongols (34.78%) (Zerjal *et al.* 2003, pp. 717-721; “Star cluster” also belongs to C2), is rare (1.67%) among the Kalmyks (Derenko *et al.* 2007, p. 335)<sup>20</sup>. This “star cluster” is found at a high frequency (over 30%) among the Qazaqs (Kazakhs) (see Table 4 in Abilev *et al.* 2012, pp. 79-89), many of whose major branches, such as the Uyshun<sup>21</sup>, Manghit, Qunghrat, among others, are of Mongol origin. Whether the “star cluster” belongs to the Chinggisid lineage or not, its disproportionate distribution among the Oirats, made up of non-Mongol groups on the one hand, and the Qazaqs (Kazakhs) and Mongols, who share the Chinggisid dynasty and several “original Mongol” groups on the other, shows that the Oirats and the Mongols are genetically distinguishable. In other words, the Y-chromosome DNA test results strongly suggest that the Dörbön Oyirad and the Northern Yuan Mongols had (at least regionally) separate patrilineal ancestors.

- 10 Therefore, the three centuries-long warfare between the Oirats and the Chinggisid Mongols after the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty should be viewed as a conflict between two separate nomadic peoples rather than as an internecine struggle between “Western Mongols” and “Eastern Mongols”.

Table 3. Y-chromosome haplogroup distribution

Haplogroup / Groups	C2b1a2	C2 (excluding C2b1a2)	Star cluster haplotype
Dörböd (Oirat)	33.3%	5.5% / 24.3%	N/A
Torghud (Oirat)	46%	10.7% / 19.4%	N/A
Xošoud	37.8%	1.2%	N/A
Kalmyks (total)	38.7%	17.4%	1.67%
Ĵaqacın (Oirat)	30%	16.6%	N/A
Uriyangqai (Oirat/Turkic)	33.34%	25%	N/A
Qalqa (Mongols)	15.3%	41.18%	34.78%

## How were the Oirats viewed by their contemporaries?

### The Chinese Ming and Manchu Qing view of the Oirats: a Mongol stock

- 11 Despite their distinct origins, the Oirats were viewed as a Mongol-affiliated people by their Chinese and Manchu neighbors<sup>22</sup>. In the *Mingshi* [History of the Ming Dynasty], an official Chinese history (*zhengshi*) that contains a detailed account of the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols, the Oirats (*wala*) are defined as a Mongol “tribe” (*buluo*) (Zhang Tingyu 1974, 328.8497), while the Northern Yuan Mongols, referred to as *Dada*, or Tatar, are defined as “Mongols, the descendants of the former Yuan” (*ibid.*,



327.8463). It is not clear whether or not defining the Oirats as a Mongol-affiliated people reflects the medieval Chinese practice of attributing the origins of specific nomadic peoples to their predecessors in the Mongolian steppes<sup>23</sup>.

- 12 The Manchu Qing state also regarded the Oirats as belonging to the larger Mongol group (on the Manchu Qing notion or re-creation of “Mongol” identity, see Crossley 2006, pp. 64-79). For instance, the Oirats that submitted to the Qing were organized under the category of “Outer Jasay Mongol” (*wai zhasake Menggu* 外札萨克蒙古), one of the two components of “Mongol Outer Vassals” (*waifan Menggu* 外藩蒙古)<sup>24</sup>. Notably, the poem written by Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735-1796) in celebration of the return of the Oirats (Torghud) from the Volga region in 1771 shows that the Manchu dynasty regarded the Oirats as Mongols<sup>25</sup>. The poem includes the following lines: “(Out of) all who belong to the Mongol stock, none are not the subject of our Great Qing State”<sup>26</sup>.

## The Oirats and the term Qalmaq

- 13 During the post-Mongol period, some Central Asian<sup>27</sup> writers designated the nomads of the Mongolian steppes as Qalmaqs, without clearly distinguishing between the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols<sup>28</sup>. For instance, to denote the state and people from which Tāizhī Oghlan, a Chinggisid contender to the throne of the Northern Yuan, came in order to take refuge with Temür (r. 1370-1405), the Timurid historian Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī uses the names *Ulugh Yūrt* (Great Yurt)<sup>29</sup> and *Qalmāq* in his *Ẓafarnāma* (1957, 2, p. 33)<sup>30</sup>. Muḥammad Ḥaidar Dughlāt Mīrzā, the author of the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī*, the mid-16<sup>th</sup>-century history of the Moghul Khanate, refers to “the original seat” (*maqarr-i aṣlī*) of Chinggis Khan, that is, modern-day Mongolia as Qara qorum (Qarāqurūm) and Qalmaq (Qālīmāq) (2004, p. 426; 1996, p. 188)<sup>31</sup>. Muḥammad Yūsuf Munshī makes mention of “the Qalmaq sultans” (*salāṭīn-i qalmāq*) who, he writes, are descended from Ögödei Khan (r. 1229-1241) in his *Tazkira-i Muqīm Khānī*, a history of the Shibanid and Toqay-Timurid Uzbeks written in 1704 (2001, p. 78)<sup>32</sup>. Perhaps following the Central Asian practice, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman historian Seyfī Çelebi refers to the nomads of the Mongolian steppes and their Chinggisid ruler Altūn Khan as *Qalmaḵ* (1968, p. 70)<sup>33</sup>.
- 14 However, although the nomads of the Mongolian steppes were designated as *Qalmaq* by some Central Asian writers during the post-Mongol period, this does not imply that the Oirats were identified with the Mongols. One should note that *Qalmaq*, a term generally understood as the Muslim Turkic designation for the Oirats (for instance, see Boyle & Wheeler 2016, Kalmuk), was not synonymous with *Oyirad*. One of the earliest explanations of the meaning of *Qalmaq* is given by the anonymous author of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century *Shajarat al-atrāk*, an abridgement of the *Tārīkh-i arba‘ ulūs* by Ulugh Beg (1394-1449):
- When Sulṭān Muḥammad Uzbek Khan, along with his own *il* and *ulūs*, attained the blessing and favor of God, his Excellency Sayyid ‘Aṭā brought all of them to the region of Transoxiana and those who stayed behind without the blessing of Sayyid ‘Aṭā were designated *Qalmāq*, which means “those who remained behind.” The people who left in the company of Sayyid ‘Aṭā and Sulṭān Muḥammad Uzbek Khan took the name of their commander and pādshāh, which was Uzbek, whenever anyone asked “Who is this newcomer?” For this reason, from that time, the men who came were called *Uzbek* and the men who stayed behind became known as *Qalmāq*<sup>34</sup>.
- 15 ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Qırımlı (1924) also provides an explanation of the origin of the Qalmaqs in his *‘Umdat al-aḥbār*, a Crimean Tatar chronicle written in Ottoman Turkish in 1744:



A number of peoples from this Mongol and Tatar people had to remain without the benefit of Islam, he said, and in reality, the group that is called Qalmaq from among the Tatars, who were known as Torghud, was left without becoming Muslim<sup>35</sup>.

- 16 Another explanation of the origin of the Qalmaqs is offered in the *Majmū‘ at-tavārikh*, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Uzbek history (for more on this history, see Romodin 1973, pp. 200-203), which provides a pseudo-historical account of the origin of the ninety-two branches that constituted the Uzbeks. According to this account, the Qalmaqs are descended from the sons who deviated from Islam after the death of their father Qalmaq, one of the ninety-two “Ghuz” men, who had converted to Islam during the Prophet’s time<sup>36</sup>.
- 17 In sum, in post-Mongol Central Asia, the Qalmaqs were thought to be the Uzbeks or Tatars<sup>37</sup> who had not converted to Islam<sup>38</sup>. What this signifies is that *Qalmaq* was not a name reserved for the Oirats. It could encompass the Northern Yuan Mongols as well as other Mongolic and Turkic nomads, who were non-Muslims. For instance, in another pseudo-historical account given in the *Majmū‘ at-tavārikh*, *Qalmaq* is used to denote the Qara Khitai who warred against Bartan Khan, the grandfather of Chinggis Khan (Saif ad-din 1996, p. 31)<sup>39</sup>. The name *Qalmaq* was also used by the Qazaqs to designate not only the Oirats but also the Shamanist Turkic Altai-khizi and Telengits (Kara 2010, pp. 170-171)<sup>40</sup>.
- 18 Furthermore, the fact that the Qalmaqs are described as a branch of Uzbeks or Tatars in the above-cited Uzbek and Crimean Tatar histories demonstrates that in post-Mongol Central Asia and the Islamic world, the Oirats, the Northern Yuan Mongols, and the Turkic Uzbeks or Tatars were generally viewed as kindred peoples<sup>41</sup>. Notably, Evliya Çelebi (1611-ca.1687), the famous Ottoman traveler, depicts the Oirats, Crimean Tatars, Timurids, and Chinggis Khan’s Mongols as kindred peoples, designating them collectively as *Tatar*. For instance, describing the Crimean Tatar city Eski Kırım, Evliya Çelebi writes:
 

Because of Eski Kırım, the Tatars of Hülegü, the Tatars of Chinggis Khan, the Tatars of Temür, and the Tatars of Toqtamış Khan came to Crimea and left after assaulting and plundering<sup>42</sup>.
- 19 In his work, Evliya Çelebi also describes the Oirats as “Qalmaq Tatar (*Kalmık Tatarı*), who are world travellers” (2000, p. 309, 329). He even remarks that the Ottomans are a branch of Tatars: “Even the Ottoman Dynasty and all Turkmen peoples are from the Tatar people” (*hattā Āl-i Osmān ve cumle kavm-i türkmān dahi kavm-i tatar’dır*) (*ibid.*, p. 194). As a matter of fact, Muslim writers in general shared a similar view with Evliya Çelebi and regarded various Turkic and Mongolic groups as kindred peoples although they used the term *Türk* instead of *Tatar* as a collective name (Lee 2016, pp. 108-111, 118-121).
- 20 Therefore, even though the term *Qalmaq* was used to denote the nomads of the Mongolian steppes that included the Northern Yuan Mongols by some Central Asian writers during the post-Mongol period, this does not mean that the Oirats were identified with the Mongols. *Qalmaq* was not synonymous with *Oyirad*. That is, it was a broader term applied to non-Muslim nomads of Inner Asia, which included not only the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols, but also other non-Muslim Mongolic and Turkic peoples. One should note that, from the perspective of the post-Mongol Central Asians, the Oirats, as well as the Northern Yuan Mongols, were a non-Muslim branch of a larger Inner Asian entity (also called Uzbeks or Tatars). In other words, to their Central Asian contemporaries, the Oirats were Qalmaqs not “Western Mongols.”

## The turkicized Chinggisid and Timurid view of the Oirats and the Mongols

- 21 Evliya Çelebi, who visited the Oirats of the Volga region, the forebears of modern-day Kalmyks<sup>43</sup>, in 1666, differentiates between the Oirats and the Mongols. Specifically, he reserves the term *Qalmaq* for the Oirats and when referring to Chinggis Khan and the Mongols, he uses the terms *Tatar* and *Mongol (Moğul)*<sup>44</sup>. In addition, he does not use the term *Mongol* for the Oirats. One should note that, to Evliya Çelebi, the Crimean Tatars, not the Oirats (Kalmyks), were the true heirs of Chinggis Khan.
  
- 22 Likewise, the histories produced in the Chinggisid and Timurid states of Central Asia do not identify the Oirats, to whom they refer as “Qalmaqs”, and the Mongols<sup>45</sup>. In the above-cited *Majmū‘ at-tavārikh*, the Oirats (Qalmaqs) appear as the enemies of Chinggis Khan’s son Tuluy, who defeats the former with the Mongol army led by Ong Khan (Saif ad-din 1996, pp. 40-41)<sup>46</sup>. Similarly, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī does not refer to the Mongols or Chinggis Khan as *Qalmaq*. Neither does Muḥammad Ḥaidar Dughlāt Mīrzā, a Moghul himself belonging to the Mongol Dughlat, designate the Oirats (Qalmaqs) as *Mongol (Mughūl)*. He applies *Mongol* only to the members of the former Chaghatayid Khanate, that is, the Moghuls (eastern Chaghatays) and the Timurids (western Chaghatays) as can be seen in his following words: “The *Moghul* has become divided into two branches. One is the *Moghul* and the other is the *Chaghatay*”<sup>47</sup>. His maternal cousin Ṣāḥir al-Dīn Muḥammad Babur (r. 1526-1530), the founder of the Timurid Mughal Empire, does not designate the Oirats (Qalmaqs) as *Mongol (Moğul)* in his memoirs, while being aware that they spoke a Mongol language<sup>48</sup>. He reserves *Mongol* for the eastern Chaghatays, whom he never calls *Qalmaq*. Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan (r. 1644-1663), a Chinggisid himself, also differentiates the Oirats (Qalmaqs), more specifically, the Torghud, and the Mongols in his *Şejere-i Türk*. In his account of the Inner Asian nomadic peoples, Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan describes the Torghud as belonging to the Oirats and does not associate them with the Mongol branches (1970, pp. 45-46 [text & trans.]). Accordingly, although Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan knew that the Oirats spoke a Mongol language<sup>49</sup>, he neither uses *Mongol* for the Oirats (Qalmaqs), nor does he use *Qalmaq* for the Mongols and the Chinggisids. The *Dāftār-i Čingiz-nāmā*, a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century history of the Chinggisids, based on the oral traditions of the Volga Tatars, differentiates the Oirats (Qalmaqs) from the Chinggisids. According to the pseudo-historical account of Chinggis Khan given in this history, the Chinggisids are descended from Alan Qo’a, who gave birth to Chinggis Khan after the death of her husband Duyin Bayan (Usmanov & Ivanics (eds.) 2002, p. 45). With regard to the Oirats (Qalmaqs), it just mentions that their royalty (*törä*) is descended from Chinggis Khan’s uncles, who were sent to the Qalmaq land by Chinggis Khan’s grandfather Tumaul Märgän Khan (*ibid.*, pp. 37-38).
  
- 23 Importantly, the Turkicized Chinggisids and the Timurids identified themselves with the early Mongols although they did not do so with the Oirats (Qalmaqs). For instance, the *Mu‘izz al-ansāb fī shajarat al-ansāb*, a genealogy of the Chinggisids and the Timurids, describes Temür as Mongol. Mentioning the ancestors and the people of Temür, it states that “all the Mongol branches descend from two persons who had gone to Ergüne Qun”<sup>50</sup>. Abū al-Faḍl (d. 1602), the court historian of the Timurid Mughal empire, also relates that the Timurids belong to the Mongol people (*sha‘b-i mughul*) and refers to

their ancestors as the Mongol people (*ulūs-i mughul* or *qaum-i mughul*) (2015, p. 198, 200, 212 [text], p. 199, 201, 213 [trans.]). The Crimean khan Meḥmet Girey (r. 1514-1523) also styled himself as the sovereign of the Mongols in a letter sent to the Polish king in the following manner: “the great khan of the Great Horde, the Qipchaq Steppe, and all the Mongols, pādshāh Meḥmed Girāy Khan”<sup>51</sup>. The Uzbek conqueror Muḥammad Shībānī Khan identifies himself as a Mongol in a *ghazal*, a genre of lyric poem, he wrote: “all the people are contained in me, but I am not contained in this people. The good and the evil are contained in me, but I am not contained among the Mongols”<sup>52</sup>. Shīr Muḥammad Mīrāb Mūnīs, the author of the *Firdaws al-Iqbāl*, a history of the Qunghrat Uzbek dynasty or the Khiva Khanate, describes the Qunghrat, to which his overlord belonged, as being one of “the Mongol peoples” (*aqvām-i moḡul*) (1988, p. 193; 1999, p. 82). Maḥmūd b. Amīr Valī Balkhī refers to his master Naẓr Muḥammad Khan (r. 1606-1642, 1648-1651), a Toqay-Timurid Uzbek ruler of Balkh, and the Uzbek dynasty itself as *Mongol* in his *Baḥr al-asrār fī manāqib al-akhyār*, naming the section dealing with the Uzbek khans as follows:

On the description of the conditions of the Mongol khans from the appearance of the dawn of the blessed existence of Japheth, son of Noah, peace be upon them both, to the happy days of his Excellency who has the rank of caliph, Naẓr Muḥammad Khan ...<sup>53</sup>

- 24 Faẓlullāh b. Rūzbihān Khunjī, the court historian of Muḥammad Shībānī Khan, also describes the Qazaqs as being of Mongol (*Tātār*) descent in his *Mihmān-nāma-i Bukhārā* as follows:

The terrible ferocity and violence of the army of the Qazaqs, who, previously, at the time of the appearance of Chinggis Khan, were called the army of the *Tātārs*, are well known and mentioned by the Arabs and the Persians<sup>54</sup>.

- 25 A Qazaq named Sultan Qanayev also told the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian ethnographer N. I. Grodekov that the Qazaqs descend from three hundred Mongols as follows: “There were two brothers: Moghul and Tatar. From the former originate the Qazaqs. The Mongols fought against the Tatars and were defeated by them. Three hundred men escaped from the battle and began to call themselves the Three Hundred” (Grodekov 1889, p. 2). Similarly, the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Qazaq historian Qurbān-‘Alī Khālīdī argues in his *Tavārikh-i khamṣa-i sharqī* that the Qazaqs are descended from the Mongols and Tatars who converted to Islam (Qūrbānḡali Halid 2006, pp. 44-45, 209).
- 26 In sum, the Timurid, Uzbek, Tatar, and Qazaq historians often described themselves as descending from the Mongols, while differentiating themselves from their contemporary Qalmaqs.

## The Northern Yuan Mongol view of the Oirats: aliens and enemies

- 27 The Northern Yuan Mongols viewed the Oirats as foreign enemies (*qari daisun*) (Atwood 2004, p. 420)<sup>55</sup>. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century Buddhist Mongolian chronicles, such as the *Erdeni-yin tobči* by Sayang Sečen and the *Altan tobči* by Lubsangdanjin, describe the Oirats, with whom the Mongols were engaged in constant warfare between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as a distinct people from the Mongols<sup>56</sup>. Notably, the words of an Oirat commander in service of Esen Taisi (d. 1455) recorded in the *Erdeni-yin tobči* attest to the separate identity of the two groups. This Oirat commander named Abdula Sečen, according to Sayang Sečen, described the Northern Yuan Mongols as being shortsighted (*nidün mayutu bolai*), referring to them as “the Mongol people” (*mongyol ulus*) (Sayang

Sečen 1990, p. 109). He also remarked that the Oirats are *qari daisun*, or foreign enemy, of the Mongols. More specifically, Abdula Sečen persuaded Esen Taisi to kill Aybarji jinong, a usurper Mongol prince, since the latter would not get along well with the Oirats, who are to him *qari daisun* (*ibid.*, p. 111). According to Lubsangdanjin, the Oirats described this prince as a man who would be a threat to the Oirat people and state since he had betrayed his own kin (*töröl*) and country (*törü*), which also shows that the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols were viewed as two distinct groups (Bawden 1955, p. 77 [text], p. 166 [trans.]). The *Altan tobči* provides a genealogical account of the Mongols, according to which the Chinggisids are descended from Alan Qo'a's son, Bodončar, who was fathered by a yellow being after the death of Alan Qo'a's husband Dobun Mergen (*ibid.*, p. 38 [text], p. 115 [trans.]). However, the *Altan tobči* does not mention the Oirats in its Mongol genealogy<sup>57</sup>. Accordingly, the *Altan tobči* describes the Oirats as aliens and enemies in the following manner:

After [Adai Qayan] Toyen Taysi of the Oyirad took over the government of the Mongols. After him Tayisung Qayan. Again Esen Tayisi of the Oyirad took over the government of the Mongols (*ibid.*, p. 37 [text], p. 113 [trans.])

- 28 Other Northern Yuan Mongol chronicles also depict the Oirats and the Mongols as distinct peoples. In the *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur* [Sūtra called jewel-like translucent], a history of Altan Khan and his descendants, the Mongols are referred to as “Forty Tümen of the Mongols” (*döcin tümen mongγol*) (Elverskog 2003, p. 287 [text], p. 179 [trans.]) or “the entire Great Nation” (*qamuy yeke ulus*), whereas the Oirats are called “Oyirad subjects” (*oyirad-un irgen*) (*ibid.*, p. 242 [text], p. 116 [trans.])

- 29 The *Menggu shixi pu*, a Qing-era genealogy of the Northern Yuan Chinggisids<sup>58</sup>, also describes the Oirats as a separate entity. The *Menggu shixi pu* includes the Oirats among the twelve kingdoms that Chinggis Khan conquered, including some Turkic peoples such as the Qarluq, Naiman, and Uighur and other non-Mongol peoples such as the Manchu Jurchen (Lomi 1957, pp. 101-102: 6a-6b; for a French translation, see Hambis 1969, pp. 172-174):

At this time, there were twelve kingdoms that unreservedly harmed their people [...] the lord of the Qarluq was called Arslan. The lord of the Oirat was called Quduqa Beki [...] the lord of the Uighur was called Idiqt. The lord of the Naiman was called Taiyang [...] The lord of the Jurchen was called Xiangzong [...] They were all violent, tyrannical, and immoral. The people could not bear the suffering.

- 30 On the other hand, the Northern Yuan Mongols appear to have regarded their Turkicized Chinggisid neighbors as kindred. For instance, according to the *Erdeni-yin tobči*, a Chinggisid prince and his Naiman retainer escaping from the Oirats ruler Esen Taisi fled to the Jočid Ulus, then called *Toymay* among the Mongols, saying: “The Toymay khans, who are the descendants of Joči, are our kindred (*töröl*)” (Sayang Sečen 1990, p. 113)<sup>59</sup>. In addition, as mentioned above, the *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur* relates that Altan Khan's messengers reminded the Moghuls of their Chinggisid descent to appease them, which shows that Altan Khan viewed the Moghul rulers as kindred (Elverskog 2003, p. 239, 278 [text], pp. 109-110, 168-169 [trans.])<sup>60</sup>

## The Oirat view of themselves: a separate Mongolic people

- 31 The Oirat writers in general describe in their works the Northern Yuan Mongols and themselves as separate entities while they also seem to have viewed themselves as part of a larger Mongolic-speaking group. For instance, in the *Sarayin gerel* [Light of the

moon], the biography of the Oirat Buddhist scholar Zaya Pandita written in Zungharia around 1690, the Oirats and the Mongols are called by their respective names. However, the Oirats and the Mongols are, in their entirety, called “those who speak Mongolian” (*mongyol keleten*) (see Tsooloo & Rinchen (eds.) 1967, pp. 3-4)<sup>61</sup>. Similarly, the *Great Code of the Forty and Four* issued in 1640 as a Mongol-Oirat alliance treaty<sup>62</sup> designates the Oirats and the Mongols by their respective names, while it uses the term “Great Aimag Ulus” perhaps to denote the Mongol-Oirat state as opposed to the Manchu state (Taupier 2014, p. 104). The *Dörbön oyirodiyin töüke* [Four Oirat history] written by Gabang Šarab in 1737, which narrates the origin and history of the Oirats, treats the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols as separate groups, for instance, referring to the former as *Dörbön Oyirad* (Four Oirat) and the latter as *Döčing Mongyol* (Forty Mongol) (1967, p. 74)<sup>63</sup>. The *Dörbön oyirodiyin töüke* also relates that the Dörböd and Zunghar originated from a common ancestor, an infant created or nourished by a sacred tree (*ibid.*, p. 77). Importantly, such origin myth was absent among the Mongols. The Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols are also described as separate peoples in the *Dörbön oyirad mongyolyigi daruqsan tuuji* [The tale of how the Four Oirat defeated the Mongols], a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Oirat history that describes the 1623 Mongol-Oirat battle, which resulted in the rise of the Zunghars (on this history, see Sukhbaatar 2014, p. 115). For instance, the author begins his account of the battle by relating that the 80 000 strong Mongols attacked “the alien Four Oirats” (*qari dörbön oyirad*) and sums it up by stating that “this is the way the Four Oirat defeated the Mongols” (*dörbön oyirad mongyoli daruqsan ene*) (Gomboyev 1858, p. 198, 210 [text], p. 213, 224 [trans.]) The separate Oirat identity is also attested to in the Buryat oral traditions recorded by Sergey Baldaev in 1937. In their legends depicting the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Qalqa Mongol invasion of the Buryats, who formed one of the Dörbön Oyirad branches, the Mongol nobles are described as foreign invaders (Natsagdorj 2015, p. 6; Baldaev 2012, pp. 317-318).

- 32 In the realpolitik world of diplomacy, the Kalmyk khan Ayuki (1669-1724) and the Zunghar rulers Galdan Bošugtu (r. 1671-1697) and Galdan Čering (r. 1727-1745) held somewhat different views of the Chinggisids. An Ottoman document reports that Ayuki Khan, the Kalmyk ruler whose reign marked the peak of Oirat power in the Volga region, claimed descent from Chinggis Khan. According to this document, Ayuki Khan’s envoys delivered the following oral message to the Ottoman grand vizier:

We even said [to the Russians] that all of us [the Oirats, Ishteks, Qara Kalpaks, and Qazaqs] are from the Chinggisid dynasty and we belong to the same clan. We are in unity with each other<sup>64</sup>.

- 33 Here, Ayuki Khan was probably pretending to be a Chinggisid in order to boost his legitimacy in the eyes of the Russians and Ottomans. The other peoples that Ayuki Khan mentioned as belonging to the same clan as the Kalmyks in this message were the Ishteks (*İştekte*), the Qara Kalpaks, and the Qazaqs (*Qırğız Qazağı*) (*Başbakanlık arşivi Name-i hümayûn defteri* 6, p. 201; for the Ishteks, see Khodarkovsky 1992, p. 146, note 47). That is, they were Turkic peoples and, with the exception of the Qazaqs, non-Chinggisids. Therefore, Ayuki Khan’s remarks likely reflected a broader Inner Asian steppe identity rather than a pan-Mongol identity.
- 34 The Zunghar rulers Galdan Bošugtu and Galdan Čering expressed a non-Mongol, separate Oirat identity in their diplomatic letters. For instance, in a letter he wrote to the Russian tsar in 1691, Galdan Bošugtu calls the Northern Yuan Mongols “enemies”: “Because the Mongols are indeed enemies to us and to you, I have requested that you

issue an order [...]” (Krueger 1969, p. 293 [text], p. 294 [trans.]) Similarly, Galdan Čering does not express a feeling of shared identity with the Northern Yuan Mongols in a message he sent to the latter in order to form a military alliance against the Manchus:

We had originally lived in one place, being very amicable towards each other. Because Galdan Bošugtu Khan was not on good terms with you all, we lived scattered. Later, you all submitted to the Middle Kingdom (China), rendering service and paying tribute, which is deeply regrettable. You all are the descendants of Chinggis Khan, and are not people’s subordinates. Why not move your pastoral nomadic [activities] to the Altai again, join us to live in one place, and enjoy peace and happiness together, so that the former friendship may be reinstated? If war occurs, we shall join forces to resist<sup>65</sup>.

- 35 In another message, Galdan Čering remarks that “the Qalqas and the Oirats have the same religion and were originally on good terms, and lost harmony during Galdan Bošugtu’s time [...]”<sup>66</sup> In sum, in these messages, Galdan Čering only emphasizes their common religion, past friendship, and geographic proximity, without mentioning some sort of common Mongol identity between the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols. It may therefore be inferred that the Zunghar leaders did not identify themselves with the Northern Yuan Mongols.

## Conclusion

- 36 In this article, I have demonstrated that the Oirats and the Mongols had separate tribal origins and history: first, when Chinggis Khan established the Mongol *ulus*, or state, in 1206, the Oirats, who had been inhabiting the forest region of northwestern Mongolia, did not constitute the original Mongol tribes, who were made up of the Dürükün Mongols and the Niru’un Mongols according to Rashīd al-Dīn’s classification; second, after the breakup of the Mongol Empire, the Oirats transformed into a nomadic confederation, the Dörbön Oyirad, or Four Oirat, which was mostly made up of the tribes of non-Mongol origin. Importantly, the Y-chromosome DNA testings of the Kalmyks and the modern Mongols show that the two are genetically distinguishable.
- 37 Concerning the practice of designating the Oirats as “Western Mongols” in modern literature, it is true that this has a certain historical basis. The Manchu Qing treated the Oirats as a Mongol “tribe”. In addition, the Oirat writers tended to view the Oirats as belonging to the larger Mongolic-speaking people. However, they also regarded the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols as two distinct groups. In the real political world, the Zunghar rulers Galdan Bošugtu and Galdan Tsering demonstrated a non-Mongol identity. Similarly, the Northern Yuan Mongols viewed the Oirats as foreign enemies (*qari daisun*). Furthermore, the various historians of the Chinggisid and Timurid states in post-Mongol Central Asia differentiated between the Oirats and the Mongols, while identifying the Chinggisids and the Timurids with the latter.
- 38 Consequently, the present author maintains that the three-century-long warfare between the Oirats and the Northern Yuan Mongols following the break-up of the Yuan Dynasty should be regarded as a conflict between two separate nomadic peoples, not as an internecine struggle between “Western Mongols” and “Eastern Mongols”. This is not to say that the Oirat tribes that now reside in the Mongolian People’s Republic and those modern-day Kalmyks who possess a Mongol identity may not be regarded as Mongols. The historical Oirats may also be classified as a Mongolic people. However, one should bear in mind that the Oirats undermined the Chinggisid supremacy in the



Mongolian and Qipchaq steppes during the post-Mongol period as Oirats, not as Mongols. From the standpoint of Inner Asian history, the Oirats would have become a new dominant nomadic people of Inner Asia, supplanting both the Qazaqs and the Mongols, were it not for the Manchu intervention, just as the Xianbei and the Uighurs had supplanted the Xiongnu and the Kōk Türks, respectively. I suggest that specialists in Inner Asian history should recognize the historical Oirats as a separate Inner Asian people or nomadic confederation like the Xiongnu, the Xianbei, the Kōk Türks, the Uighurs, the Qirghiz, and the Mongols since characterizing them merely as “Western Mongols” may be tantamount to defining the Uighurs or the Qirghiz as “Northern Kōk Türks” or the Ukrainians as “Southern Russians”.

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## NOTES

1. The Kalmyks have inhabited the northwestern Caspian region from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.
2. This article uses several different systems of transliteration. For Persian and Ottoman Turkish words, it follows the English transliteration system of the *International Journal of the Middle East Studies*, with the following exceptions for Ottoman Turkish : ṣ for ص, ḥ for ح, z for ذ, and ġ for غ. For Chaghatay Turkic, it generally follows János Eckmann. The *pinyin* system for romanizing Chinese and the modified Hepburn system for Japanese have been employed in this work. For Classical Mongolian and medieval Mongolian, it generally follows Antoine Mostaert's and Igor de Rachewiltz's transcription systems, respectively. For Oirat script, it uses the following transcription system, accessed August 27, 2016, <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/kalmyk.htm>. Some names of peoples are used in their widely accepted Anglicized spellings such as Oirat, Zunghar, and Torghut with their Classical Mongolian and/or Oirat forms in Latin transcriptions in bracket.
3. I use the name Northern Yuan to refer to the Chinggisid state that, after the fall of the Yuan Dynasty in 1368, continued to rule the Mongolian Plateau before being incorporated into the Manchu Qing dynasty over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
4. It should be noted that several maps of Asia produced in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe describe the Kazakh steppes as the land of “the Qalmaqs,” which was the contemporary Turkic name for the Oirats.
5. In Mongolian scholarship, the term Western Mongol (Baruun Mongol) is often applied to the historical Oirats (for instance, see Jamsran 2003, p. 31, 33, 42, 119).
6. The present author is not concerned with theories of ethnicity. I approach the identity of the historical Oirats from the perspective of their contemporaries. My interest is not whether or not the historical Oirats and the Mongols were the same “nation” in the modern scholarly sense but whether they were viewed by themselves and others as Mongols or non-Mongols. While I do not

intend to define ethnicity or identity in this article, I attempt to demonstrate all potential markers of difference between the two Mongolic groups. Other approaches may exist. To those who believe that ethnicity is situational, the Oirats and the Mongols might be one people in one context, and two peoples in another. And these contexts might change over time.

7. Dörbön Oyirad is transcribed from Oirat script.

8. The Mongolian term *ulus* means “people (subject to a certain ruler)” or “state” (Haenisch [1937] 1962, p. 163).

9. I translate *qaum* (pl. *aqvām*) in the *Jāmi‘ al-tavārikh* as “khanate” or “people” not “tribe,” following Christopher P. Atwood. For his understanding of the socio-political units of the pre-Mongol Mongolian steppes as “peoples” not “tribes,” see Atwood 2013 and 2015. David Sneath, who argues that Inner Asian nomadic societies were organized around “aristocratic orders” that formed “headless states” (for their definitions, see Sneath 2007, pp. 2-5), also views the polities of the Mongolian steppes on the eve of the Mongol conquests as “steppe powers” or “khanates” not “tribes” (*ibid.*, pp. 29-30).

10. The members of the Barlas, Qunqirat, and Mangqut founded the Timurids, the Qunghrats of Khiva, and the Manghits of Bukhara, respectively, in post-Mongol Central Asia.

11. I included the Timurids among the Chinggisid *ulus*, or people, since they belonged to the Chaghatayid *ulus*. The designation *ulūs-i Jaghatāy*, or Chaghatay’s *ulus*, encompassed the Timurids and the Moghuls, who descended from the nomadic subjects of Chaghatay Khan. For instance, the Timurid historian Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī refers to Temür’s people as “the whole Chaghatayid *ulus*” (*tamāmi-i ulūs-i Jaghatāy*), as opposed to “all the Jočid *ulus*” (*tamām-i ulūs-i Jūchī*) (1957, p. 206).

12. Therefore, the “Mongols” of the Northern Yuan had become a more heterogeneous group when compared to the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Mongols (on this point, see Crossley 2006, pp. 59-66).

13. For the origin of the (Crimean) Shirin, ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Qirīmī, a Shirin nobleman, states in his Crimean Tatar history that it is “a branch of the As” (*Āş kabilesinden şu ‘be olan*) (1924, p. 46).

14. There is no consensus concerning the identity of the original Four Oirat groups. For instance, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Mongolian chronicle *Erdeni-yin tobci* mentions the Ögeled (Oirat Mo. Öölöd), Bayatud (Oirat Mo. Baatud), Qoyid (Oirat Mo. Xoyid), and Kerenügüd/Kergüd (Qirghiz or, more likely, Kereyid) as the Four Oirat groups (see Sayang Sečen 1990, p. 47). The 18<sup>th</sup>-century Oirat history *Dörbön oyirodiyin töüke* [Four Oirat history] states that the Dörbön Oyirad are made up of the Dörböd, Zunghar, Xoşoud, and Torghud along with the Öölöd, Xoyid, Baatud, Baryu, and Buraad (Buryat) (see Gavang Sharav 1967, p. 74). The Manchu Qing sources usually make mention of the Čoros (Zunghar), Dörböd, Xoşoud, and Xoyid (or Torghud instead) (for a detailed study of the tribal composition of the Dörbön Oyirad and their origins, see Okada 1987, pp. 181-211).

15. The Torghud are regarded as being originally Kereyid since their royal lineage derived from Ong Khan, the ruler of the Kereyid (Okada 1987, pp. 208-209; Wu 1941, pp. 188-189; Howorth 1876, p. 558).

16. On the same basis, Atwood suggests that the Čoros clan, which ruled the Dörböd, were of Uighur descent (2004, p. 420).

17. Therefore, arguing that several Oirat groups descend from the Turkic Tiele and that the Kereyid were Turkic, Wu Ch’i-yu even concludes that the Oirats were a Turkic people (1941, pp. 217-219). The present author does not agree with such reasoning but shares the view with Wu that the Dörbön Oyirad were non-Mongols by origin.

18. C2b1a2 is also the major Y-DNA chromosome haplogroup of the Qazaqs (Kazakhs), including the Altai Qazaqs. The fact that the Altai Qazaqs, who are mostly made up of the Naiman and Kereyid, are characterized by C2b1a2 may be considered as an indirect proof that the Oirats descend from the Naiman and Kereyid (for the Kazakh C2b1a2 (40-63 %), see Table 1 and Table 2 in Dulik *et al.* 2011, pp. 2-3; Table 3 in Zerjal *et al.* 2002, p. 474. Haplogroup 36 in Table 3 corresponds to haplogroup C2b1a2).

19. As a matter of fact, C2b1a2 also appears at high frequency among several Tungusic peoples of Siberia such as the Evenks.
20. The Altai Qazaqs (Kazakhs) (8.3 %), Altaians (3.4 %), Buryats (2.3 %), and Tuvans (1.9 %) show higher frequencies of this haplotypes than the Kalmyks.
21. Chokan Valikhanov identifies the Uyshun as the Mongol Üüsin (Valikhanov 2009, p. 455). Like Valikhanov, Beimbet Baktievich Irmukhanov, a modern Kazakh historian, argues that the modern Kazakh Uyshun descend from the Mongol Üüsin, not from the ancient Wusun (Irmukhanov 2006, pp. 95-101).
22. The Tibetans designated the Oirats as *Sog* and the Mongols as *Hor* (for instance, see Ñag-dBañ Blo-bZaṅ rGya-mTSHo 2008, p. 151). *Hor* had also been the Tibetan designation for the Uighurs and the Yuan Mongols (Stein 1959, p. 189).
23. In the official Chinese dynastic histories, for instance, the Kōk Türks, Tiele, and Uighurs, who were the Turkic-speaking groups that occupied the Mongolian steppes, are mostly classified as being of Xiongnu origin (for the Türk and the Tiele, see Li Yangshou 2003, 99.3285, 3303. For the Uighur, see Liu Xu 2002, 195.5195 ; Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi 2003, 217a.6111). The Khitan and Qay, the Para-Mongolic-speaking nomadic peoples that inhabited the former land of the Dong Hu (“Eastern Barbarian”), eastern Inner Mongolia, are classified as being of Dong Hu origin (for the Qay, see Wei Zheng 2008, 84.1881 ; Ouyang Xiu & Song Qi 2003, 219.6173. For the Khitan, see *ibid.*, 219.6167).
24. The “Outer Jasay Mongol” included the Qalqa and Oirat “tribes,” among others. The “Inner Jasay Mongol” denoted the Mongol banners of Inner Mongolia. *Jasays* (Chinese *zhasake* 札萨克) were hereditary leaders of the Mongol banners in the Qing state.
25. The Oirats who remained in the Volgar region are the ancestors of the modern-day Kalmyks.
26. “蒙古之族，無不爲我大清国之臣。” See “Tuerhute bu guishun jishibei 土尔扈特部归顺记石碑 [土爾扈特部歸順記石碑] [The stone inscription commemorating the submission of the Torghud “tribe”] [online, URL : <http://baike.baidu.com/view/1641511.htm>, consulted 12 March 2016.
27. The term Central Asia is used in this article to indicate the interior region stretching from the Caspian Sea in the west to Xinjiang, China in the east and from Kazakhstan in the north to Afghanistan in the south. Inner Asia is used for the Eurasian steppe region.
28. In contrast, the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Kazakh historian Qurbān-‘Alī Khālīdī (1846-1913) applies the term *Qalmāq* to both the Oirats and the Mongols unequivocally. In his *Tavārīkh-i khamsa-i sharqī*, a Turkic history of Central Asia, he uses *Qalmāq* both narrowly to refer to the Oirats and broadly to refer to the Tibetan Buddhist peoples, including the Mongols and Tibetans (Frank 2009, pp. 329-332).
29. *Ulugh Yūrt* (Great Yurt) denotes the principal *ulus* of the Mongol Empire that ruled over Mongolia and China. It was first led by the family of Ögödei Khan and later by the descendants of Tolui (1192-1232).
30. Reporting on Tāizhī Oghlan, Nizām al-Dīn Shāmī refers to the Northern Yuan as *mamlakat-i Khitāi*, which he also calls *Ūlūgh Yūrt* elsewhere without mentioning the name *Qalmāq* (1937, p. 12, 172). According to Paul Pelliot, the earliest source that uses the term *Qalmaq* is Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s *Ẓafarnāma*, not the *Kharīdat al-‘Ajā’ib*, a mid-14<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic work attributed to Ibn al-Wardī (1960, p. 3).
31. Qarāqurūm was the capital of the Mongol Empire. Perhaps, here Qarāqurūm and Qālīmāq denote central Mongolia and western Mongolia, respectively.
32. Muḥammad Yūsuf Munshī may simply have mistaken the Zunghar Oirat rulers as Chinggisids or have referred to the Northern Yuan Mongols as *Qalmaq*. However, one should note that when Munshī compiled his work in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Northern Yuan Dynasty had ceased to exist. Although there were some Ögödeid khans in the Northern Yuan in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, it is highly unlikely that Munshī was aware of this fact since Munshī’s knowledge of the Chinggisid



genealogy seems to have been limited. For instance, he writes in his work that Joči had four sons, which is historically inaccurate. A different manuscript of his *Tazkira-i Muqīm Khānī* relates that Joči had two sons, Urus Khan and Shibānī Khan, which is also inaccurate (see Munshī 2001, p. 79, 79 note 14). One should also note that Timurid historians regarded Ögödei Qa'an as the first khan of the *Ulugh Yūrt* (for instance, see Nizām al-Dīn Shāmī 1937, p. 12). Therefore, I am inclined to think that Munshī simply mistook the Zunghar Oirat rulers as Ögödeids.

33. It is unclear if Altūn Khan here is Altan Khan (1508-1582), the actual ruler of the Northern Yuan in the second half of the 16th century.

34. “*chūn Sulṭān Muḥammad Uzbek Khān bā hamrāhī-i il va ulūs-i khūd vāṣil-i sa'ādat va faẓl-i ilāhī gardīda-and ḥazrat-i Sayyid 'Aṭā tamāmī-i īshān-rā bi-jānib-i diyār-i māvarā' al-nahr āvard va az ānchi bī sa'ādatānī ki [...] ḥazrat-i Sayyid 'Aṭā [...] dar ānjā māndand mausūm bi-qalmāq shudand ki bi-ma'nī-i māndānī bāshad va az āncha mardumī ki bi-rifāqat-i [...]. Sulṭān Muḥammad Uzbek Khān 'āzīm shuda mī-āmadand har kasī ki az īshān mī pursīda-and ki īn āyanda kīst nām-i sardār va pādshāh-i khūd rā ki Uzbek būd mīgiriftand bidān sabab az ān zamān mardum-i āmada mausūm bi-uzbak shuda-and va mardumī ki mānda-and qalmāq gardīda-and*” (Tizengauzen 1941, p. 266 [text], pp. 206-207 [trans.])

35. “*işbu kavm-i moğul ve tātār-dan bir mīqdār kavm islām-dan bī-behre qalmağ gerek dedi ve nefsi'l-emr-de tūrğāūt ta'bīr olunan tātār-dan qālmāğ dedikleri tā'ife musulmān olmayup kaldı*” (‘Abd al-Ghaffār Qırīmī 1924, p. 38).

36. I was unable to obtain the original Persian manuscript and thus have relied on the following Kyrgyz translation (Saif ad-din 1996, pp. 23-26).

37. The designations *Tatar* and *Uzbek* were two different names attached to the same nomadic population of the Jočid Ulus and its successor states. The term *Uzbek* was commonly used by Central Asian writers after the reign of Uzbek Khan while the term *Tatar* that had been used for the Mongols was favored by the Muscovites and Ottomans.

38. The *Tārīkh-i Dūst Sulṭān* or *Chingiz-nāma*, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Uzbek history by Ötämiş Hājī, also uses *Qalmaq* in the sense of “non-Muslim.” In this history, the funeral ritual of Uzbek Khan (r. 1313-1341)’s father, which took place prior to the conversion of the “Uzbeks,” is described as being held in accordance with “the Qalmaq custom” (*Qalmaqning qā'idasi*) (2008, p. 25, 82 [text]).

39. Their being a non-Turkic or a Para-Mongolic people is not the reason why the Qara Khitai are called Qalmaqs in the *Majmū' at-tavārīkh*. In the Islamic world, the Qara Khitai were viewed as a branch of Turks anyway. For instance, in his *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Jūzjānī (b. 1193) refers to the Qara Khitai simply as “Turks” (1970, p. 900 ; 1963, p. 94).

40. Temür is also referred to as a *Kalmak* in a Nogay epic (Kara 2010, p. 172).

41. In the above-cited *Majmū' at-tavārīkh*, the Qalmaqs (the Qara Khitai and Oirats), the Ghuz, the Qirghiz, and the Mongols, among others, are also described as kindred. They all descend from Mongol Khan, son of Oghuz Khan, grandson of Japheth (see Saif ad-din 1996, pp. 22-26, 30-31). It is therefore natural that the Safavids in the 17<sup>th</sup> century probably viewed the Oirats as a branch of the Uzbeks (Rota 2006, p. 194).

42. “*bu Eski Kırım sebebiyle Hulāgū tatarı ve Cingiz Hān tatarı ve Timur Leng tatarı ve Tohtamış Hān tatarları Kırım'a gelüp nehb [ü] gāretler edüp gitimişlerdir*” (Evliya Çelebi 2000, p. 251).

43. *Kalmyk* is the Russianized form of *Qalmaq*.

44. For instance, Evliya Çelebi calls Chinggis Khan “the ancestors of the Tatars” (*kavm-i tatarın ecdādı*) (2000, p. 309). He also refers to the Mongols proper as “Mongol nation” (*moğol kavmi*) (pp. 239, 299, 310).

45. It remains unclear how they viewed their contemporary Northern Yuan Mongols in relation to the early Mongols since they do not provide information on the former. But, according to the *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur*, a Mongolian history of Altan Khan, the Turkicized Chinggisids of Moghulistan recognized the Northern Yuan Chinggisids as their kindred. The *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur* relates that when Altan Khan’s learned messenger described the Chaghatayid genealogy to Shah Khan, the ruler of the Moghuls (eastern Chaghatays) (r. 1543-1570), the latter

became pleased and presented tribute to Altan Khan. Similarly, ‘Abd al-Karīm (r. 1566-1594), another Moghul ruler, regarded Altan Khan as his older brother and told Altan Khan’s messengers: “Let us unify our states!” (Elverskog 2003, p. 239, 278 [text], pp. 109-110, 168-169 [trans.]).

46. Interestingly, Ong Khan appears in this pseudo-history not just as the ruler of the Kereyid, but also as the father of Toqṭamış, the khan of the Jočid Ulus (r. ca. 1378-1395) (*ibid.*, p. 40, 45).

47. “az ulūs-i arba‘ yiki mughūl ast. Va mughūl bi-dū qism maqsūm shoda-ast. Yiki mughūl va digari chaghatāy” (Muḥammad Ḥaidar Dughlāt 2004, p. 190).

48. To explain why his maternal uncle Sulṭān-Aḥmad Khan was called Alacha Khan, Babur writes as follows: “They say that in the Qalmaq and Moghul language, alachi means killer; Because Sulṭān-Aḥmad Khan defeated the Qalmaqs several times and killed many people, he was called Alachi ...” (Babur 1995-1996, p. 17; 1993, p. 22).

49. He relates that he learned the Mongolian language while he spent a year among the Qalmaqs (Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan p. 37 [text]).

50. “tamāmat-i aqvām-i mughūl az nasl-i dau shakhṣand ki dar arkana qutūqūn rafta būdand” (Abuseitova 2006, fol. 3a).

51. “ulu ordanung ulu Ḥanī dešt-i kīpčāḳ barča moḡul pādšāhī Meḥmed Girāy Ḥan” (Veliaminof-Zernof 1864, p. 2).

52. “barča ulus mendā siḡar, men bu ulusa siḡmasam. Yaḡṣī yaman mendā siḡar, men bu moḡula siḡmasam.” (Karasoy 1998, p. 184, 795; Bodrogligeti 1993-1994, p. 99).

53. “dar tauzīḥ-i aḥvāl-i khavāqīn-i mughūl az badv-i zuḥūr-i ṣubḥ-i vujūd-i mas‘ūd-i Yāfīs ibn Nūḥ ‘alayhimā al-salām tā ayyām-i bā farjām-i ḥazrat-i khilāfat-rutbat Nazr Muḥammad Khān” (Maḥmūd b. Amīr Valī Balkhī 1984, p. 17 [text]).

54. “ṣaulat va ba’s-i shadīd-i ‘askar-i qazzāḳ ki dar zamānhā-i sābiq ki bi’ādī-i zuḥūr-i Chingīz Khān būd, īshān-rā lashkar-i tātār guftandī mashhūr va mazkūr-i alsina-i ‘arab va ‘ajam ast” (Faḡlallāh b. Rūzbihān Khunjī 1962, p. 213).

55. Junko Miyawaki, the Japanese specialist in Oirat history, also argues that the Mongols viewed the Oirats as aliens (*qari*) (2000, p. 322; 1995, p. 101).

56. In this article, I have not mentioned the role of Dayan Khan’s restoration of Chinggisid power in expelling the Oirats from their previously symbiotic relation with the Mongols. It should be noted that the Mongolic speakers not included in the Dayan Khanid synthesis — Buryats, Oirats, and Daurs, among others, ended up becoming separate entities. This indicates the Dayan Khanid restoration perhaps reaffirmed in a stronger way, the gap between Oirats and Mongols.

57. In the Chinggisid genealogy given in the *Erdeni-yin tobci*, the Four Oirat (Dörbön Oyirad) are described as being unrelated to Alan Qo’a. More specifically, they are described as the descendants of the four sons of Du’a Soqor, the elder brother of Alan Qo’a’s husband Dobun Mergen (see Sayang Sečen 1990, p. 47). This account is repeated in some other Northern Yuan sources (see Sukhbaatar 2014, p. 122). In fact, the *Secret History of the Mongols* relates that the four sons of Du’a Soqor became the ancestors of the Dörben, a Mongol tribe unrelated to the Oirats (see Rachewiltz 2004, p. 3). For the Dörben, see Rashīd al-Dīn 1988, p. 149; Rashiduddin 1998-1999, p. 104.

58. The *Menggu shixi pu* 蒙古世系譜 is believed to be a Chinese translation of the *Mongyol Borjigid oboy-un teüke*, a genealogy of the Northern Yuan Chinggisids written by Lomi, a Chinggisid himself, by 1735 originally in Manchurian and translated into Mongolian in 1839.

59. *Toymay* was the name used by the Mongols to denote the nomads of the Qipchaq Steppe.

60. The *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur* also relates that Altan Khan established *quda* (marriage ally) relations with the Oirat leaders (*ibid.*, p. 240 [text], p. 112 [trans.]) However, the Chinggisids had done so with many Turko-Mongol peoples such as the Qonggirat, Barlas, and Önggüt, among others, as well as with their sedentary vassal states such as the Qocho Uighur, Qarluq, and Koryō

(Korea). Therefore, I do not particularly see the formation of *quda* relationship, basically a political alliance, as being the result of, or cause for, a shared identity.

61. For an English translation of the biography of Zaya Pandita, see Taupier 2014, pp. 186-256.

62. For an English translation of the *Great Code of the Forty*, see Taupier 2014, pp. 149-185.

63. However, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century anonymous Kalmyk history known as the *History of the Kalmyk Khans* states that the Kalmyks are of “Mongol origin” (*mongyol izuur*) (Halkovic 1985, p. 104 [text]). This history was written after the Oirats of the Volga region began using “Kalmyk” (*xalimaq*) as a self-designation. *Mongyol izuur* and *xalimaq* are transcribed from Oirat script. According to Halkovic, this history is “the closest of any of the Oirat works to a western-style history” (*ibid.*, p. 25). For some other 19<sup>th</sup>-century Oirat histories that also refer to the Oirats as Mongols, see Sukhbaatar 2014, pp. 117-118.

64. “*cümlemiz al-i Cengiziden ve bir uruğdanımız birbirimizle ittifāk dahi eyledik*” (*Başbakanlık arşivi Name-i hümayûn defteri*, n° 6, p. 201).

65. “並云我等原在一處居住。甚相和好。因噶爾丹博碩克圖汗、與爾等不睦。各自散居。後爾等投順中國。當差納貢。深為爾等憾之。爾等系成吉思汗之後裔。並非人之屬下。何不將游牧、仍移於阿爾泰。與我會居一處。共享安樂。以聯舊好。如有兵戎。協力相距等語。今將原書呈覽。奏入。報聞。” This message appears in a Qing imperial decree (*yu 諭*) referencing Galdan Čering’s message to the Qalqa Mongols (see *Qing Shilu 8 : Shizong xian huangdi shilu 2*, 1985, p. 484).

66. “喀爾喀、厄魯特、法教相同，本屬和好。及噶爾丹博碩克圖時失睦” (*ibid.*, p. 491).

## ABSTRACTS

This article examines the uniqueness of the Oirats in relation to the Mongols to reappraise the practice of designating them as “Western Mongols”. After the breakup of the Mongol Empire, the Oirats, who had not been part of the original Mongols led by Chinggis Khan, transformed into the Dörben Oirat, a nomadic confederation mostly made up of non-Mongol groups. The Y-chromosome DNA testings of the Kalmyks and modern Mongols show that the two have heterogeneous origins. The Oirats, although they viewed themselves as a Mongolic people, regarded the Mongols as a separate entity. Likewise, the Mongols viewed the Oirats as foreign enemies (*qari daysun*). The Central Asian Chinggisid and Timurid histories also differentiated between the two. Therefore, this article suggests that historians should recognize the Oirats as a separate people like the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Kök Türks, Uighurs, and Qirghiz.

Cet article examine la singularité des Oïrats par rapport aux Mongols pour reconsidérer la pratique consistant à les désigner comme des “Mongols occidentaux”. Les Oïrats, qui ne faisaient pas partie des Mongols originels menés par Gengis Khan, sont devenus, après l’éclatement de l’empire mongol, les Dörben Oïrat, une confédération nomade principalement composée de groupes non-mongols. Les tests ADN portant sur le chromosome Y des Kalmouks et des Mongols modernes montrent que ceux-ci ont des origines hétérogènes. Les Oïrats, bien qu’ils se considéraient comme un peuple mongolique, considéraient les Mongols comme une entité distincte. De même, les Mongols voyaient les Oïrats comme des ennemis étrangers (*qari daysun*). Les histoires chinggiside et timouride d’Asie centrale font également la différence entre les deux. Par conséquent, je suggère que les historiens reconnaissent les Oïrats comme un peuple distinct, comme les Xiongnu, les Xianbei, les Kök Turcs, les Ouïghours et les Kirghizes.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Oirat, Dörbön Oirat, Mongols, Kalmyk, Qalmaq, Zunghar, Chinggisid, Timurid, Yuan, identity

**Mots-clés:** Oïrat, Dörbön Oïrat, Mongols, Kalmouks, Qalmaq, Dzoungar, Chinggiside, Timourides, Yuan, identité

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