AGE OF MONGOLIAN EMPIRE: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

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There is an enormous literature on the age of Mongolian Empire, that period extending from approximately the late 13th century, as prequel, through much of the 14th century, later in Russia, in which Mongols, their states, and successor states dominated the stage in much of the Old World. Unfortunately it is very uneven in quality, much of it in less common languages, and marred by an excessive concern for philological detail. There is also a notable lack of useful overviews, those available either being too popular, and inaccurate, or just plain silly, or so ponderous in detail as to be virtually unreadable by a general audience. Unfortunately, given the complexity of the field, with sources in so many languages, some of them still unpublished, and the decline that Mongolian studies has undergone in recent decades, in the United States in particular, this situation is unlikely to change any time soon.

The bibliographical survey of the field that follows is not even remotely complete, nor could it be given the limited space available for this article. My purpose in providing it is rather to offer a useful guide to what is available, including some items in less common languages, either because these items are extremely important, or because they are the only literature available in major areas of interest. Nonetheless, the main emphasis is on those works that are the most easily read and understood by the non-specialist.

History of the Field

Despite the obvious interest of the topic, since the Mongols touched so many cultures in creating their empire, and in many ways brought Europe, in particular, out of its shell, serious scholarly study of the history of the age of Mongolian Empire and of its successor states only dates back a little over 300 years. The early works included a first biography of Chinggis-qaan,1 of which there are now a large number. It was written by Petis de la Croix (Histoire du Grand Genghizcan) and published in 1710 in Paris. Like most works from this first age of study of the topic, based as they were upon only a most limited sampling of primary source material, it is little read today. One early examiner of this area was E. Quatremere, who is read today are the relevant chapters of Edward Gibbon's monumental Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (various editions). Gibbon was the first to advance a social interpretation of the rise of Chinggis-qaan that is still in vogue today.

Not long after Gibbon's time, a more serious study of the age of Mongolian Empire began, in Russia, where the great Russian orientalist school began to study all things Mongolian as a cooperative effort. It had the advantage of a ready access to documents in the original Mongolian as well as in other Asian languages, including, as time went on, Chinese. The influence of this school is still felt today, both within Russia, and without, thanks to many émigré scholars such as the late Nicholas Poppe who lived and taught in Seattle, Washington, for many years. The present author was among his students.

Outside Russia, the first truly comprehensive history of the Mongols and their age appeared in 1824, that of French-Armenian Constantine d'Ohsson (Histoire des Mongols, 4 volumes, various editions, original published in Paris). It is still useful today because of d'Ohsson's masterful use of the Persian sources. In the years after d'Ohsson, a concerted effort was made, it is still continuing, to publish, translate and annotate these sources to make them available to the non-specialists. Among the earliest efforts in this line was Quatremère's edition and translation of a portion of the text of Rashid al-Din's history (Histoire des Mongols de la Perse, Paris, 1836). Shortly thereafter, the Russians also began to publish translations of Chinese sources, in most cases making them available for the first time to a European audience. Of special note in this regard, were the translations published by E. Bretschneider, in his still useful Medieval Researches, From Eastern Asiatic Sources, first published in 1888. Another major milestone was Henry Yule's annotated edition of Marco Polo, appearing in 1876, later updated by Cordier and republished in 1903. Their combined effort is still the most usable translation of Marco Polo, and the notes are a gold mine for scholars.

As more sources became available, specialized studies began appearing as well. These included Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's histories of the Mongols in Russia, and in Iran (1840 and 1841-1843), only fully superseded in recent decades. Less successful was a general history in English, by Henry H. Howorth (History of the Mongols from the 9th to the 19th Century, London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1876-1927), since Howorth was unable to read his primary sources in the original languages.

In the 20th century, various national schools of Mongolian studies flourished. The most important of these, as might be expected, was the Russian school, which continued strong throughout the late Czarian and Soviet periods. Two of its most important exponents were V. V. Barthold, whose work straddled the Czarist and Soviet periods, and B. Y. Vladimirtsov, who produced many works including a biography of Chinggis-qaan and an important examination of early Mongolian society from a Marxist perspective, the first based upon the most important Mongolian sources including the Secret History of the Mongols. Also important within the Russian schools, not only for his own work, but for many scholars that he trained, was Nicholas Poppe. Among his many works, his study of the Mongolian documents in the A'pha-pa Script is still the standard work on the topic. More recently working in Russia was the Buryat Ts. Munkuyev, a leading interpreter of early Mongolian society and politics from a Marxist perspective.

Prominent within the German school were B. Spuler, who wrote highly detailed histories, several times updated, on Mongol Russia and Iran (replacing those of Hammer-Purgstall), and Erich Haenisch. Haenisch, although not the first to reconstruct the Mongolian text of the Secret History of the Mongols from Chinese transcription (he was proceeded by Paul Pelliot in France), still produced a valuable edition of the text and a dictionary of the Mongolian words occurring in it, among many works. Also important German scholars, both still living at the time of writing, are Herbert Franke, although more of a Sinologist than Mongolist, and the Turkologist and linguist G. Doerfer. Doerfer's voluminous dictionary of Mongolian and Turkish loan words found in Modern Persian is a major resource for anyone working in the field since key concepts are accompanied by detailed essays that put each into a cultural and historical context.

Even more important than the German school, in terms of total output, was the
French school long dominated by Paul Pelliot (1878-1945). In addition to major articles and collections of notes (he never wrote an actual book) published during his life time, his posthumous works, some of major importance for the field, continued to appear for several decades after his death. His masterpiece, incomplete, he never got past the letter "C", is his massive *Notes to Marco Polo*, including full discussions of such topics as "Cinggis-qan" and "cotton", although much of it is philological, making the text, poorly organized in any case, difficult to get through. As noted, Pelliot was also the first to reconstruct the Mongolian text of the *Secret History of the Mongols*.

Pelliot had many students, including Louis Hamois, who was actively involved in producing the series of posthumous works of Pelliot, as well as major translations of primary sources on his own, and the German Paul Ratchnevsky, whose contributions to the field of Mongolian studies are many. They include a highly usable life of Cinggis-qan based primarily upon Mongolian and Chinese sources (but not Persian, since Ratchnevsky does not read Persian). Also a student of Pelliot was the American, F.W. Cleaves, who in turn had many important students himself. Over several decades, nearly all published in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Cleaves produced a series of profusely documented (even with notes on notes) examinations of source material, above all inscriptions. Cleaves was also the author of a translation of the *Secret History of the Mongols*, although it is in a particularly obscure language and is difficult to read and lacks a promised volume of notes. Continuing the Cleaves, and thus Pelliot tradition, although he is somewhat more interpretive, in the United States was David Fanqihar (who was also a student of Poppe). His magnum opus is a detailed edition, produced posthumously, of the government of Mongol China as it appears in the *Yuanshi*, "Official History of the Yuan" (various editions), that is, of China's Mongol dynasty.

Another extremely important national school is that of the Japanese which has concentrated its efforts on the history of the Mongols in East Asia in particular. Since the Japanese, before 1945, were in physical contact with the Mongols, and closely allied with them (an advantage of the Russian school as well), and have always had maximum access to East Asian sources, the work of this school has often been far in advance of anything being produced in the Western world. Leading scholars of the Japanese school include Yana Wateru, who more or less invented the field in Japan, Hóchiku Toró, Iwamura Shinbo, who produced valuable work on Mongolian social and economic history, and Maeda Naonori, who produced valuable work on Mongolian social and economic history, and Maeda Naonori, who produced valuable work on Mongolian social and economic history. Maeda's life was cut short but his ideas on imperial Mongolian government remain vital to this day.

Although the age of the Mongolian Empire is less directly studied in China, except so far as it impinged on China, and then rarely in comparative terms, Chinese scholarship in the field has continued to be important. Most useful of Chinese publications in the general area are numerous high-quality editions of source material. Recently such publications included two separate editions, one with a dictionary of the text's Arabic and Persian terminology, of the surviving chapters of the *Huhu yaoaofang* (Tiberius, "Muslim Medicinal Recipes*). This was once part of a large encyclopedia of Islamic medicine prepared, apparently, for the Mongol rulers of China. The text is unique not only in including Arabic script entries for Arabic and Persian terms otherwise given in Chinese transcription, but also as the only Chinese text to quote Galen and other Western authorities.

Also major contributions of Modern China to the field is a new version (by Ke Shaoqin of *Yuanshi* (the Yuan period), called *Xinyuanshi* (the new Yuan period, several editions), and the unexplored *Mong fueron shi* (the Mongolian period) *Historical Record of the Mongols*, of Tu Ji (various editions). Tu Ji's history is, without doubt, one of the finest works ever produced on the Mongols of the imperial period (and somewhat after), but little known since it is written in Chinese. Among Chinese specializing in the field was Wang Guowei, (1690-1730), whose life was also cut short before he could realize his full potential. He produced annotated editions of early Chinese sources that remain highly useful. Foremost among younger scholars devoting themselves to the study of the Mongol age is Hsiao Chi-ch'ing. He has produced many other valuable works. Hsiao is the author of the best available essay on late qanate China in the *Cambridge History of China*.

Finally, there is the native Mongolian (people's republic) school, perhaps the most important of all since the Mongols are closest to their own traditions and its output has been voluminous, although much Mongolian scholarship has gone forward isolated from what is being done elsewhere. This has either been for political reasons, during the period of Soviet influence, or simply because of the physical isolation of Mongolia from the larger research libraries and the limited foreign language skills of many Mongolian scholars (this is changing rapidly). Mongolian contributions are particularly important in the area of social history, since they know their own culture best, in material culture, for the same reason, and in archaeology. Although the first tentative out fieldwork specifically devoted to sites associated with the Mongol imperial period were Russian archaeologists, including S. V. Kiselev, who carried out the first excavations at one the site of the Mongol capital of Qaraquor, the Mongols are the ones doing most of the digging today, although Chinese archaeologists are much involved too, in Inner Mongolia and adjacent areas, as well as at many sites in China proper relating to the Mongol era, and efforts by Russians continue. Unfortunately, while excavation reports published by Chinese, Russian, and other scholars are relatively accessible and thus well known, those published by Mongolian scholars in Mongolia are not. Few libraries located outside Mongolian-speaking areas have any Mongolian books at all, not to mention excavation reports, reports collected outside of Mongolian libraries. In the United States, only the Wilson Library of Western Washington University, in Bellingham, Washington, has large holdings of such material, both from the Ulaanbaatar and Inner Mongolian side.

Among the many Mongolian scholars concerned with the early history of their country, before and during the Mongol age, and immediately after, are N. Ishijamts, Kh. Periee, Sh. Bira, the latter still very active, Sh. Naksagdorj, B. Sumiyabazar, and Ch. Dolsby. Particularly important is the work of Dalay whose study of Mongolia in the Mongol age presents a thesis that strongly counters that of John Dardess that the Mongols became Confucianized as Mongolia became, in essence, a part of China. Also an important Mongolian scholar is D. Gongor. His two-volume *Khalkh Tovchoon*, "Short History of the Khalkha,* offers the fullest social history of the Mongols, including those of the period of empire, ever written, in any language. Also an achievement of Mongolian scholarship is the only full translation of the *Yuanshi* into Mongolian by Dandaa (pen name of Ch. Demchigdor).

In addition to the national schools, there are also a great many scholars working in various countries more or less independently, only loosely associated with anything that might be considered a school. Among them, still living, but already having had a long career, is Igor de Rachewitz. He was born in Italy but is currently living in Australia. The contributions of Igor de Rachewitz to so many areas of the field are too numerous to list here, but perhaps his greatest contribution of all will be his translation of the *Secret History of the Mongols*, with full apparatus, to appear in 2003; the product of decades of work. Igor de Rachewitz has also worked extensively with Chinese biographical materials connected with major figures of the Mongol Yuan dynasty. He and his associates have not only produced a large biographical dictionary relating to the first period of Mongol control in China, but also have published several reference works aimed at making Chinese literary sources more accessible to scholars.
Another scholar making a strong individual contribution was the great Turkish historian Ismail Hakki Uzunçarşılı. Although he was primarily interested in the history of Turkey and its origins, institutionally, the relevant chapters of his Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilatına Tıraş ("Overview of the Organization of the Ottoman Government") remains the best institutional history of any of the successor sultanates, in this case, Mongol Iran. Uzunçarşılı's work is particularly valuable in that it provides substantial information regarding the context in which liqanate institutions existed and developed. Unfortunately, Turkish, outside of Turkish studies, is not a commonly read language and Uzunçarşılı's work, including his many other contributions, and those of Turkish scholars in general, remain largely unappreciated.

Most scholars in the United States also work in isolation and are not really part of a national school since the field of Mongol studies is largely unrecognized there and most of those devoting all or part of their scholarly energy to the Mongol age do so as part of other fields. On example is Thomas Allen. Allen is one of those few scholars knowing both Chinese and Persian well, although based in Iranian studies. Allen has produced a number of important institutional studies, including the standard work on the era of Mongke qan (1251-1259), but has recently devoted himself to the issue of cultural exchanges between the Islamic and Chinese worlds during the Mongol Age. Another example is the present author, more a Mongolist but still based in Chinese studies, but also knowing some Persian, a number of other important source languages, including Western ones, and very strong on the Altai side. Like Allen he has produced a number of institutional-based studies and like Allen he has now turned to the cultural history of the Mongol age, focusing on the history of food and comparative medical history.

Today, with centuries of scholarship to draw on, and nearly all of the important sources published and readily available, we would anticipate the dawn of a golden age of Mongol studies, the study of the age of Mongol Empire in particular, since interest in that period in other fields is now at a high level. As for Mongol studies in the United States is not likely to be so for two very good reasons. One is an acute shortage of true specialists in the field, that dying breed, very rare to begin with, comprised of those with the necessary linguistic and other skills to study the period broadly with a maximum use of primary sources in all the many languages that have to be dealt with. The other is that most scholars in this field today, and some are very competent, are based in some other area to the exclusion of Mongol studies and tend to view the Mongol age through the rose-colored glasses of their own particular regional hobby-horses. Most important, few know any Mongolian at all and thus are unable to gain a feeling for the insider's view of events and people. A second reason for pessimism is the almost complete past failure to support the field as a legitimate area of scholarly inquiry, outside of a few, very rare institutions, some of those dying. This is particularly true in the United States. The key element is, if the proper specialists emerge, who will employ them? The example of the present author who works entirely on his own, enjoys no institutional support whatever, and, most important, has no students, with the result that no contribution to the future, is not that atypical. Can we really afford to have an important field of scholarly inquiry that is, for all practical purposes, "out of the loop," especially today when the strategic importance of Central Asia grows by the day.

Bibliographical listings

The bibliographical listings provided below are highly selective and have been chosen either because the present author finds them particularly useful or because they provide virtually unique coverage. The listing is under the following somewhat arbitrary categories:

1. General Works, Collections
2. Reference
3. Historiography
4. Translations of Primary Sources
5. Cinggis-qan
6. Mongolia to 1266
7. Mongol Empire
8. Mongol China
9. Golden Horde
10. Chagatay Ulus, Qaidu, and Turkestan
11. Mongol Iran
12. Military
13. Food, Medicine
14. Diplomats, International Relations, Cultural Exchanges
15. Trade, Economic History
16. Art, Architecture, and Textiles
17. Religion
18. Archaeology
19. Black Death

Following most sections is a short commentary on works listed that the present author has found particularly useful. Works discussed in the introduction are usually not discussed again.

1. General Works, Collections


Buell, Paul D. Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire, Lanham, Md., and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. (Historical Dictionaries of Ancient Civilizations and Historical Eras, No. 8), 2003


There is a real shortage of useful general works on the Mongols. The best of the general surveys are those by J. J. Saunders, David Morgan, and Michael Weiers, in German. My new Dictionary is intended to replace all three of these works. Also essential for any attempt to gain an overview of the topic are the works of Owen Lattimore. Franke and Twitchett, although concentrating on China, provide useful background information not only on the Mongols, but on their steppe predecessors including the influential Kitan.

2. Reference


3. Historiography


Poucha's work on the *Secret History of the Mongols* in German is highly recommended to anyone interested in the subject as is Gumilev's compelling look at competing historiographic traditions in early Mongol sources.

4. Translations of Primary Sources


Chinese material is mostly fairly technical but Wailey's *The Travels of an Alchemist* is particularly readable, and the translation of some early Chinese eyewitness accounts by Hanihara, Yao, and Ibrighi, Pinks is highly useful. Pellet and Hambis provide a good translation of part of another early Chinese source, the *Shengwu shengjingshu* (Shengwu Shengjing), "Record of the Personal Campaigns of the Sagely Mathematician," which may be based upon a now-lost Mongolian chronicle. Containing mostly notices from the European side, Yule's *Cathay and the Way Thither* is worth thorough examination. For those interested in cultural history, food and medicine in particular, I recommend our *A Soup for the Qan*. This is supplemented by the recipes translated by Teresa Wang and Eugene N. Anderson.

5. **Genggis-Qan**


Vladimirov, B. I. *Genghis Khan: Translated From the Russian by Adrien-Maisonmune, 1948.*

Ratchnevsky's *Life* still remains the best. A new biography utilizing the Persian sources too is urgently needed.

6. **Mongolia to 1206**


Mongol's pre-imperial history is very poorly covered. My own work is summarized and expanded in my *Dictionary.* Vladimirtov remains indispensable.

7. **Mongolian Empire**


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There is a rich literature, only sampled here, on Mongolian Empire, much of it highly technical. Particularly important are the works of Thomas Ailsen. His *Mongol Imperialism* remains the best monograph on the era of Mongke (r. 1251-1259) and one of the best monographs in the entire field. Unfortunately out-of-print, but highly readable, is Igor de Rachewiltz's *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*. See also the relevant biographies, including my own work, in Igors de Rachewiltz, Chan Hok-lam, Hsiao Chi-ch'ing, and Peter W. Geier's *In the Service of the Khan*. My own *Chinqui* (1169-1252): Architect of Mongolian Empire, is a corrected expansion of the biographical article found there with substantially more context provided. The works of Smith are always recommended, whatever the topic since they are very well thought out and extremely well documented.

8. Mongol China


Mangold, Gunther. *Das Militärvesen in China unter der Mongolenherrschaft.*


Serruys, Henry. "Remnants of Mongol Customs during the Early Ming," *Monumenta Serica,* 16 (1957), 137-190.


The literature on Mongol China is vast, although not always readable. The best overview can be found in the relevant chapters of *The Cambridge History of China* by Allsen, Hsiao, Rossabi, Dardeis, and Mote, although the last two see Mongol China as more of a Chinese entity than this writer. Still, essential for the earliest period of Mongol rule in China is Igor de Rachewiltz's "Personnel and Personalities in North China in the Early Mongol Period" and the biographies in de Rachewiltz, *The Early Period,* 1962, 189-216.


There is no fully adequate survey of the Golden Horde currently available. The best remains Spuler, which is difficult to read. For those reading Russian, Fedorov-Davydov is highly recommended as is the new survey of historical geography by Yegorov.

10. *Ca'adai Ulus, Qaidu, and Turkistan*


The standard work is now Biran and thanks to her the field is now well covered. Barthold's *Turkestan* is still recommended.
for the earlier period, not directly covered by Biran.

11. Mongol Iran


The relevant chapters of the Cambridge History of Iran, particularly the chapter by J. A. Boyle, provide the best coverage, but the articles by J. M. Smith are extremely important, particularly his "Mongol Manpower and Persian Population," which argues that there really were hordes of Mongols and not just a few, as is generally argued. On Uzunçarşılı see above.

12. Military


This is a popular book but is extremely well done although the narrative does contain errors. The illustrations are excellent. On Mongol China, see also Hsiao's The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty above.

13. Food, Medicine


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Works by Sabbah are highly recommended for those interested in the history of food as it relates to the Mongol era. She sees the food of the time as more Chinese than I myself do, for example, but see my examination of early Mongol foodways in "Pleasing the Palate of the Qan: Changing Foodways of the Imperial Mongols." The same material is reviewed in more detail in A Soup for the Qan cited above, but see also my "Mongolian Empire and Turkicization," published after A Soup for the Qan and incorporating later research. Smith's "Mongol Campaign Rations: Milk, Marmots and Blood?" represents first class detective work.

14. Diplomats, International Relations, Cultural Exchanges


Franke, Herbert. "Sino-Western Contacts under the Mongol Empire." Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 6 (1966), 49-72.


The best work in this category is unquestionably that by Thomas Allen, but see also the relevant sections of a "Soup for the Qan" which looks at some of the same traditions in the perspective of food and medicine. John Carswell below also provides an excellent survey although focusing on art, namely blue and white porcelain. Kotwik and Franke remain classics and Skelton, Marston, and Painter offer a highly useful survey of early Western relations with the Mongols. See also de Rachewiltz, Papal Envoys to the Great Khans cited above.

15. Trade, Economic History


Both Allen and Phillips are highly recommended. Phillips is particularly readable. It is one of the few books related to the period in question that is broadly interpretive.

16. Art, Architecture, Textiles


Carswell's beautiful book is now a classic. It is highly recommended.

17. Religion


Pelissier's profusely documented dissertation (Micro Bibliotheca Anthropos) on native Mongolian religion in the era of Mongolian Empire is still most useful but it should now be read with the relevant sections of work by Roux in mind. Pelliot's posthumous Recherches is dense but excellent. Touching on the same Christian culture of East Asia is Roux's highly readable study of Rabban Sauma.

18. Archaeology


Perlee, Kh. Khyatan Nar, Teddy N. Mongolchiidtoy Khobogdson n'. Ulaanbaatar: Ulsyn Khevel (Studia Historica Institute Historia Comitum Scientiarum Republicae Populi Mongol, Tomus 1, Fasc. 1), 1959.

Pending a full publication of new Mongolian excavations, Kiselev, for those reading Russian, remains essential.

19. Black Death


—. "Plague and Leprosy in the Middle Ages: A Paradoxical Cross-Immunology?" International Journal of Leprosy and Other Mycobacterial Diseases 55, 2 (June 1987), 345-350.


There is a huge literature on the Black Death and the works listed above are only a very limited selection of it. Gottfried is a useful introduction but see also new work by Scott and Duncan.

Notes

1. This bibliographical essay is a much expanded and updated version of that appearing in my forthcoming Historical Dictionary of the Mongolian World Empire.

2. This is the correct, Mongolian spelling of his name.


About the Author

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