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### Specifics of State Structures of the Mongol Empire

*Detalles de las estructuras estatales del imperio Mongol*

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#### RESUMEN

En el curso del estudio, se determinó que las principales razones que contribuyeron al surgimiento del imperio Mongol están relacionadas con su desarrollo dinámico y progresivo, que al mismo tiempo dependía de las instituciones tradicionales de pueblos nómadas. Cabe señalar que las características del poder supremo del imperio y las formas de su implementación a menudo se asocian con las características de su estructura territorial, la naturaleza de las relaciones entre el poder imperial central y las periferias de diferente estatus; esto enfatiza la especificidad de la organización del imperio Mongol.

**Palabras clave:** Genghis Khan Kurultai, imperio Mongol, impuestos, uluses.

#### ABSTRACT

In the course of the study, it has been determined that the main reasons that contributed to the emergence of the Mongol empire are related to its rather dynamic and progressive development, which at the same time relied on the traditional institutions of nomadic people. It should be noted that the features of the supreme power of the empire and the ways of its implementation are often associated with the features of its territorial structure, the nature of relations between the central imperial power and peripheries of different status; this emphasizes the specificity of the organization of the Mongol empire.

**Keywords:** Genghis Khan, governors, Kurultai, Mongol empire, taxes.

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## INTRODUCTION

Researchers have always been interested in the study of nomadic tribes; there are various approaches and discussions associated with the topic. It is commonly known that for a long time, almost until the 20th century, the Eurocentric approach was dominant in scientific research, in particular in the field of humanities; thus, the laws, stages and categories characteristic of Western states were often automatically transferred to other parts of the world, including the East. Local conditions, traditions, specific historical time and other most important factors were not considered. As a result, this led to the fact that the contribution of non-European civilizations to the history of mankind was diminished and many myths and legends arose in the study of eastern societies. Nomadic empires were no exception (Smirnova & Nabokina: 2019). For example, F. Hegel, I. Kant, A. Toynbee had a completely negative attitude to nomadic empires; their point of view was supported by all European countries (Chaliand: 2017). Nowadays, most scientists hold the opposite point of view and study the problems of the political development of nomads and their empires; these issues are discussed in the works by Kradin (2015), Skrynnikova (Kradin & Skrynnikova: 2006), Chibilev and Bogdanov (2009) and others. The researchers confirm that the nomads contributed to the development of world civilization. The study of the Mongol Empire is a popular research line and includes a variety of aspects ranging from the analysis of the psychology and behaviour of the Mongols to the analysis of their cultural heritage. For example, Shultz and Costopoulos (2019) based on computer modelling have shown a correlation between the creation of a nomadic empire and positive environmental conditions; they argue that the internal dynamics of nomadic societies causes a high degree of inequality and hierarchical structure of society.

Rogers (2019) describes the Mongol Empire as an example of strong statehood, which managed to unite various Eurasian peoples. The need for effective interaction with more organized settled neighbours is also one of the reasons for the formation of nomadic empires (Kradin: 2019; Malysheva: 2014, 2018). The concept of "empire" is the most important concept in the present study, which requires a lot of attention. The main features of the empire should be determined in order to show the peculiarities of its formation.

According to Sh. Eisenstadt, an "empire" is a large and relatively highly centralized territory, where the centre, embodied both in the person of the emperor and in the central political institutions, forms an autonomous unit (Eisenstadt: 1968). Basic conditions for the formation of imperial systems include: 1) the availability of universal components (for example, cultural) in the imperial state system; 2) a stable tendency towards territorial expansion; 3) the limited assimilation of the territories newly included in the state; the preservation of their ethnocultural characteristics (Gevorgyan et al.: 2016; Pokotilova et al.: 2019; Raeff: 2019).

According to M. Beissinger, an empire is a form of organization of the largest state. There is a fundamental difference between an empire and a nation-state which involves the empire's multinational composition or the presence of an ideological system of representations that reveal its supranational and universal essence (Beissinger: 2005). A. Rieber believes that an empire is a state system in which one ethnic group establishes and maintains control over other ethnic groups within a certain territory (Rieber: 2004).

Motyl (2018) highlights the presence of a certain empire and periphery core as a condition for the formation and functioning of the empire. The author's assessment of the relationship between these elements is of interest: dictatorial relations between the core and the periphery can turn an ethno-territorial federation into an empire, and vice versa, the decline of such relations can turn an empire into an ethno-territorial federation.

Thus, there are obvious differences in the definitions of empire; nevertheless, despite completely different interpretations, the following most important features can be singled out:

- 1) The conquest of foreign territories;
- 2) The regime;
- 3) Asymmetric domination and subordination relationship between the centre and the periphery;

- 4) The presence of an ideology of power;
- 5) The unification of nationalities of different ethnic and cultural characteristics.

Currently, there is a reassessment of the world systems, the place and the role of nation-states previously included in various empires, as well as their importance in the development of the world civilization as a whole. This emphasizes the relevance of the present research. We believe that it is necessary to reconsider the role of the Mongol Empire in the history of mankind and make a departure from the long-prevailing biased methodology. There are still many long-standing and well-established stereotypes on this issue. Currently available studies on nomadic civilization allow us to reemphasize the problem. Therefore, the purpose of the present research is to study the specifics of the organizational structures of the Mongol Empire, the features of its formation and functioning. Thus, the following tasks have been set:

- To analyze the most important mechanisms for the formation of this policy;
- To consider the Mongol empire from the perspective of the most important empire features;
- To identify the features of the empire.

## **METHODS**

The methodological basis of the study is primarily the dialectical understanding of the historical nomadic society development. We rely on the historicism principle, which does not allow the modernization of historical processes and events but considers them in a real and specific period of time in conjunction with the outside world. The study is also based on the principle of objectivity, which directs the researcher to a comprehensive and adequate analysis and assessment of historical events in each specific period of time. The typological method makes it possible to present the results of comparative studies as the models of political and social systems that were common among the nomads of Central Eurasia. Special historical research methods have also been used, namely, problem-chronological method, system analysis, comparative-historical method, etc.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As a result of our research, we concluded that the Mongol empire undoubtedly had the basic characteristics of an empire along with its own features. The following specific features can be distinguished:

- 1) Reliance on the experience of already-existing nomadic empires
- 2) The military administrative system as the basis of the Mongol state;
- 3) A special form of economic relations;
- 4) The use of governance experience of settled peoples;
- 5) Top-down approach to building power based on the trust in the ruler - the "father of the empire";
- 6) Weak autonomy of the political centre; the availability of the political centre in each territorial segment;
- 7) The availability of various political and cultural segments;
- 8) Governorship independent of religious and ethical affiliation;
- 9) Internal reason for the collapse of the empire;
- 10) Contribution to the formation of a trade corridor;
- 11) A huge impact on subsequent events in subservient territories.

Thus, the administration and governance system of the Mongol Empire was a unique synthesis of features of various regimes. Let us consider them in more detail.

### **The conquest of foreign territories**

Since ancient times, the territory of Central Asia was inhabited by different people having their own language and culture; it was the habitat of many nomadic civilizations. Central Asia also consists of desert-steppe landscapes, and the Karakum and Kyzylkum deserts, which are adjacent to fertile oases irrigated by the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers and their tributaries. In this diverse natural and climatic conditions characterized by significant contrasts of natural zones and temperatures, cultures of different appearance and ways of ménage and exploitation of resources have occurred (Syzykova et al.: 2020).

Even before Genghis Khan came to power, the territory of modern Mongolia was inhabited by the Mongol tribes.

The Mongol Empire was formed in 1206. Genghis Khan, who united the diverse steppe tribes of Central Eurasia and created the world-famous Mongol empire, is generally considered as the central figure that played a key role in the formation of the Mongol Empire. His success was determined by a clearly defined internal structure of the state and the military-administrative system, which played a crucial role in the implementation of aggressive campaigns. For example, in the winter of 1207-1208, the Mongols subjugated the tribes of the south of Siberia, the Tangut state of the Xi Xia. The Uyghurs, who lived in the territory of modern Xinjiang, were also subjugated; Genghis Khan borrowed writing from them, which subsequently greatly contributed to the solution of the most important state tasks. After the conquest of China (the state of Zhongdu (Beijing)), Genghis Khan adopted all the advanced military and technical achievements of that time, in particular, the equipment for the siege of city walls and fortresses, which facilitated the further movement of the Mongol troops.

By 1224, Genghis Khan managed to conquer almost the whole region between the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, Khwarazm, Khorasan, Afghanistan and Northern India, Northern Iran, the Caucasus, and then the south of Russia, East Desht-i Kipchak. These conquests opened the path to Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Mongols also invaded Eastern Europe. Thus, in 1260, due to large-scale successful military campaigns, a powerful empire, which was the largest state in the world and stretched from the Yellow Sea in the east to the Danube and the Euphrates in the west, was formed.

As the empire expanded, there were various borrowings from settled peoples, including new forms of governing. The Yam system creation was an important point of the administration and governance system. It should be noted that large cattle farms needed a huge pasture territory; therefore, the nomadic society elite sought to acquire new pastures, which inevitably led to conquests. Along with the conquest of new territories, the war brought wealth, that is, military booty that was also part of production activity. For the elite, military booty was a means of weakening social contradictions, and therefore, only an aggressive policy could ensure the elite loyalty to the khan, keep them from arguments, and preserve the empire.

### **The system of state power**

As it has already been noted, the Mongol state was based on the military administrative system. In order to avoid internal wars, it was necessary to disperse the descendants of Genghis Khan across several political and geographical zones (Mongolia, China, Central Asia, Persia, and Eastern Europe) and to increase the income of the Chingissids by introducing regular taxes. The direct descendants of Genghis Khan (the Golden clan) had the right to reign. Geographically, the empire consisted of two parts: eastern and western. They were separated along the border of the Chagatai and Ugadei uluses, which divided the empire into two halves.

The empire consisted of uluses, named after the direct descendants of Genghis Khan, who were given control over to the occupied territories. Uluses also grew along with the expansion of the Mongol empire. It is an interesting fact that uluses were divided into parts based on the established local traditions: for example, there were provinces in China and Persia, and the Russian lands, the Caucasus, and Eastern Mongolia were split into principalities. These territorial units were divided into districts led by cities, which, in turn, were

subdivided into smaller territorial entities - community districts. The ulus administrative apparatus is almost a reflection of the imperial administration, that is, each ruler had a vizier, bureaucratic and fiscal apparatus, etc.

To effectively rule and further strengthen and develop the Mongol Empire, it was necessary to introduce and adopt common laws and regulations applicable across the whole territory. To achieve the goal set, first of all, the Mongols should have considered the available customary law in order to newly codify and change it with due regard to the new conditions (BUBNOVA et al.: 2019). This could have helped them solve an urgent and difficult task.

The code of laws and regulations sanctioned by Genghis Khan is historically known as "Great Yassa." The Mongol Empire law was mainly focused on national issues and resolved disputes between the representatives of various cultural traditions. The Mongol code of laws was meant to be a new form of imperial legislation; it included international, state administrative (principles of supreme power and the role of democracy, civil service charter and management principles, military charter, hunting charter, tax charter), criminal, private (family and inheritance), commercial and judicial laws, as well as regulations containing special domestic norms and steppe customs (Vernadskiy: 2005)

The responsibilities of administrative and military governors were clearly defined in 1230: administrative governors were subordinate only to the imperial or ulus secretariat; the military - to their superior leadership. The judiciary was also independent. In general, the Mongol Empire in the middle of the 13th century was a rather advanced form of early statehood, which can be conditionally referred to as a nomadic super empire (Tashtemkhanova et al.: 2019).

### **Justification of the supreme power in an ideological sense**

The idea that Genghis Khan had the Mandate of Heaven to rule an earthly empire without borders became an official ideology. According to the legend, Genghis Khan's dynasty came from the youngest son of Alan Gua (who conceived from a ray that penetrated the yurt through a smoke hole) and Bodonchar and was marked with a seal of divine origin. An important role in the institutionalization of the power of nomadic rulers was played by their functions of sacred intermediaries between a Socium and Heaven, which ensured the favour of otherworldly forces. According to the nomadic religious beliefs, the khan personified the centre of society and could provide society with prosperity by virtue of his divine abilities, that is, there was a belief in the magical power of the sacred ruler. Ideological justification of the supreme power was associated with a specific political practice, which is evidenced by the data on the need for a central authority. Mongol leaders regarded the empire as an instrument of God for establishing order on the earth.

The concept of power was confirmed in the ancient Mongol tradition: the supreme power was concentrated in the person of the khan and was hereditary. The khan's authority was absolute; he took on the role of the commander-in-chief and the judge. He was the only source of imperial power; most imperial resources (military booty, tributes, taxes, duties), imperial territories and possessions of the Golden Family were managed by the khan. All subjects of the khan were obliged to serve and obey him implicitly.

The power was based on the top-down approach through the trust in the ruler - the "father of the empire", which was the main way of legitimation. Social contradictions were removed by conquering new territories and pushing out opposing social forces to the newly included areas.

The Mongols subjugated nomadic tribes in a harsh manner (forced resettlement, liquidation of the elite of other nomadic associations, tribe administrators), which ensured the unquestioning loyalty of the nomads to the great khan. The power of the "Golden clan" was directly expressed by the Great Kurultai - a meeting of princes and the elite. The Kurultai was mainly convened in order to elect a new khan of the Mongol Empire, as well as to make highly important decisions, which included the issues related to the reorganization of the administrative division of the empire, the adoption of new tax legislation, sending of troops, etc.

The army and the greatest military power of the ruler became the main institution for the integration of nomads. Supratribal power was maintained as membership in the "imperial confederation" ensured political independence of the tribes from neighbours, and, on the other hand, the ruler of the nomadic empire was able

to guarantee certain internal autonomy of the tribes. Apparently, the organization of political power in the Mongol empire was of a class and strictly hierarchical nature. There was also a mechanism connecting the "government" of the Steppe Empire and tribal leaders called "Zhongshu Sheng"; it was the great imperial secretariat (the prototype of the government) which promoted the development of the civil bureaucracy in the empire.

Thus, the new legal system created by Genghis Khan met the needs and requirements of all segments of the new Mongol society; amendments were made based on current realities. At the beginning of the 13th century, the Mongol state created a system of power that encouraged nomadism and invasive war, which allowed the formation of an empire.

### **Institutes of a prestigious economy**

It is a sustainable economy that contributes to the recognition of rulers. By lavishing comrades-in-arms and tribal leaders with various types of gifts, the ruler of a nomadic empire, first of all, sought to strengthen his prestige and expand political influence; he also expected those who received gifts to give him something in return later. On the one hand, of course, having received gifts, the leaders of the tribes satisfied their personal interests, and on the other, gift-giving ceremonies increased their status within the tribe.

As a result, a symbolic exchange of gifts at the horizontal (between peers) and vertical (between the lord and vassals) level allowed the transformation of material resources into psychological dependence and prestige, which, in turn, made it possible to receive new resources and further increase prestige by giving them away.

Thus, social status was increased through the prestigious economy mechanism. It should be noted that in Western Europe, the medieval society was also built on the prestigious economy relations. For example, in the ballads about King Arthur and his knights, generosity is extolled as one of his main traits. The economic factor was one of the main factors that led to the revival of the cities of Northern China, Central Asia, Russia, Transcaucasia and Iran, which were destroyed by the army.

The tax law equalized all residents of the empire regardless of nationality, religion, and social status - all of them had to pay taxes. The main types of taxes were a land tax, per capita property tax, tamga trade tax, tagar, the collection of grain and cattle to support the troops. It is an interesting fact that there were no established tax standards, and in each region, the taxes collected depended on a combination of many different factors specific to a particular territory. For example, in case of military or natural disasters, the region was exempted from taxes for the period of time it needed for restoration. The funds came from the imperial and ulus treasury. The clearly differentiated nature of tax collection can be traced in the following example. Thus, the inhabitants of Mongolia and the restored regions of Central Asia had to pay a capitation tax while the North Chinese provinces and other lands ravaged by the army paid a smaller household tax. Capitation tax was paid only by men; the elderly and young persons were exempted from it. Land tax was determined by the yield, quality and quantity of land. It was supposed to be paid by landowners. The taxes paid by tenants were determined by the number of cattle and agricultural implements (Buell: 2016).

The funds received were spent, first of all, to support the army, state apparatus, and the courtyard. Great attention was paid to the implementation of projects that were of major economic importance, for example, construction of tracts and caravanserais, restoration of the regions affected by military operations or natural disasters. A certain amount of money was spent on various social needs, such as the creation of grain stocks in the steppe regions; the impoverished population segments received assistance: livestock, seeds and agricultural equipment were allocated for them. There was expenditure on education and culture, the maintenance and construction of schools, academies, madrasas and temples of various faiths.

It should be noted that there were payments of pensions to soldiers, as well as allowances for the families of the fallen. It was believed that this was favoured by otherworldly forces. Obviously, the Mongol Empire had a well-developed economic system

### **The unification of many nations and nationalities that had different ethnic and cultural characteristics**

Multinational is one of the features of an empire; thus, this aspect should be considered in the Mongol empire. It is a common fact that Before Christ there were two powerful ethnoses on the territory of Central Asia - the Scythians and the Huns. Previously, the Mongol tribes were part of various Turkic empires (Kok Turks, Uighurs, Khitans). In the Mongol Empire, since the days of Genghis Khan, the leading positions were occupied by non-Mongols loyal to the Great Khan. This proves that the general imperial culture was formed as a result of the creative activity of almost all peoples.

The experience of China was actively introduced into the governance practice by the advisers of the Great Imperial Secretariat. There were several dozens of calligraphers and translators who translated all the decrees into the languages of the regions they were sent to.

The calligraphers and translators came from various parts of the empire. The people who sought to get into the government apparatus were selected based on special exams. In the apparatus of the Great Mongol Empire, there were representatives of Central and Western Asia, Iranians, Tajiks, Uighurs, Chinese and other peoples. The great khans unified regions of different economic specializations, which ultimately ensured multilateral trade relations on the Eurasian continent. Thus, despite its enormous scale, the Mongol Empire created by Genghis Khan managed to build a new organizational structure that met the needs and requirements of all segments of the new Mongol society.

Cribb and Narangoa (2016) consider the Mongol Empire as a successful attempt to institutionalize the steppe civilization in the global space. According to Findlay and Lundahl (2017), the Mongol empire was "too small" in terms of military power, but "too big" in terms of the ability to control it. We believe that the Mongol empire had a strong military and control potential; it also had a significant impact on both the internal development and the development of neighboring territories. For example, geographical conditions of the region and its historical specialization promoted the development of the domestic market, the growth of commodity exchange, and the rise in handicraft production. An important fact is that from the perspective of neighbors such nomadic societies were treated as independent entities of international political relations. Nomads and farmers exchanged products and thus maintained the economic balance. Before the empire, this process was extremely complicated. First of all, this was associated with a big number of various small state formations, which implied the existence of borders, customs points, high duties, etc. The wars between the states of the region and a large number of robbers seeking fortune on caravan roads were a constant obstacle. The emergence of the Mongol Empire contributed to road safety and the development of caravan trade between different uluses; the borders were eliminated. International trade became a network of land and sea routes.

### **CONCLUSION**

Having analyzed the Mongol empire by various factors, we have determined that the military administrative system was a certain basis for the Mongol empire formation. The following features of the empire can be distinguished: the use of the experience of other nomadic empires, settled and conquered peoples; a special form of economic relations (prestigious economy); a top-down approach to power based on the trust in the ruler - the "father of the empire"; a solid ideology accepted by all the people of the empire. As a result, the administration and governance system of the Mongol empire was a unique synthesis of features of various regimes.

It should be highlighted that a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the empire requires further investigation of the problems related, first of all, to imperial ideology and the historical documentation of imperial achievements, as well as the justification of imperial consciousness, which would undoubtedly

contribute to revealing the specific features of not only the Mongol Empire, but the whole nomadic civilization. The importance and role of the Mongol Empire in world history have not yet been properly analyzed. China's announcement of the mega project "One Belt, One Road" has made the problem of restoring the Great Silk Road more relevant than ever.

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