

RULERS & ELITES • VOLUME 15



# PRINCE, PEN, AND SWORD

EURASIAN PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY MAAIKE VAN BERKEL AND JEROEN DUINDAM



Prince, Pen, and Sword

# Rulers & Elites

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# Prince, Pen, and Sword

*Eurasian Perspectives*

*Edited by*

Maaïke van Berkel  
Jeroen Duindam



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## Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a long process supported by several institutions and many colleagues. In August 2009, three applicants, Jeroen Duindam, Jos Gommans, and Peter Rietbergen, submitted a short research prospectus on 'Eurasian empires: integration processes and identity formations' to the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). NWO gave us the opportunity to develop our ideas, a process soon facilitated by Maaïke van Berkel, who joined our ranks in the autumn of 2009. Thanks, perhaps, to the candles offered by Peter Rietbergen in Roman Churches, our proposal was accepted. NWO liberally supported our research plans as part of its 'horizon programme' geared to stimulating research in the humanities. We brought together a group of researchers, operating under the aegis of four project leaders and sustained by the advice of numerous external experts. Three Dutch universities supported our initiative: Leiden (UL), Amsterdam (UvA) and Nijmegen (RU). They helped to make our ambitions possible in various ways: Leiden hosted our researchers for a full year; Amsterdam organized a summer school, and Nijmegen supported our stay at the Royal Dutch Institute in Rome (KNIR)—another institution we should thank here for its hospitality.

Our first challenge was the selection of young researchers trained as specialists, but eager to benefit from and contribute to the comparative horizon of the team. A roughly equal distribution of these researchers over the various macro-regions of Eurasia—East Asia, West-South Asia, and Europe—was imperative for a balanced combination of language expertise and area knowledge. We invited researchers to propose their own regional research themes along the lines of themes defined in our application. While the final arrangement of PhD projects covered all major regions, it necessarily comprised only a select number of the themes outlined in our application.

We were lucky to find a group of talented and devoted researchers. They made this research project into a success socially and intellectually—some of the most relevant ideas of this book were developed in permanent contact with the researchers, and could not have come to fruition without them. Their own works, moreover, a key next step in the project, will be published in the coming years. Moving (roughly) from East to West the following diverse panorama of researchers evolved. Barend Noordam investigated the making of a new military culture under Qi Jiguang, the successful sixteenth-century Ming general and follower of the neo-Confucianist thinker Wang Yangming. On the basis mostly of Dutch East India Company sources, Lennart Bes compared the courtly traditions of the Nayaka successor states of the Vijayanagara Empire



in South India. Hans Voeten analysed imperial Russia's methods of controlling the Altai frontier region, notably its rich resources. Cumhur Bekar traced the rise to power of the Köprülü dynasty of grand viziers by examining their relationship with the dynasty and their household connections. Willem Flinterman reconstructed the royal image of the Qalawunid Mamluk sultans by examining epigraphy, architecture, heraldic signs, and *waqf* (religious foundation) deeds of royal mausoleums in Cairo (1250 to 1350). Kim Ragetli considered the position of fifteenth-century Burgundian duchesses as mediators between the dukes and leading cities, on the basis of city accounts and a variety of other materials, including chronicles.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these six PhD candidates, three postdoctoral researchers contributed to the project. Liesbeth Geevers, a specialist in European history, considered the position of the extended dynastic family in the context mostly of the Habsburg and Safavid dynasties. In the course of the project, Geevers learned Persian—and published on Safavid history for an audience of specialists.<sup>2</sup> Marie Favereau Doumenjou, a specialist in Jochid/Golden Horde history, scrutinized Jochid forms of governance as well as their regional connections. In this volume, Favereau Doumenjou and Geevers compare the construction of the Jochid and Habsburg dynasties—exemplary cases for Europe and West-Central Asia respectively. Finally, Richard van Leeuwen joined our team as a specialist in Arabic literature with a long-time interest in stories about rulers, which he pursues now in a comparative Eurasian perspective. His chapter in this volume presents some of the main findings of his monograph, also part of our project: *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires, 1300–1800*.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Dissertations were/will be defended in the course of 2017 and 2018. References throughout this book are to the provisional titles of these dissertations: Cumhur Bekar, 'The Rise of the Köprülü Family. The Reconfiguration of the Vizierial Power in the Seventeenth Century'; Lennart Bes, 'Imperial Servants on Local Thrones. Dynastic Politics in the Vijayanagara Successor States'; Willem Flinterman, 'The Cult of Qalāwūn: Waqf, Memoria, and Dynasty in the Early Mamluk Sultanate, ca. 1280–1340'; Barend Noordam, 'Military Identity, Empire and Frontier in the Late Ming Dynasty: Qi Jiguang (1528–1588) and His Service on Two Frontiers'; Kim Ragetli, 'Duchess between Prince and People. A Thematic Approach to the Lives, Influence and Actions of the Duchesses of Burgundy (1430–1530)'; Hans Voeten, 'The Kolyvan-Voskresensk Plants and the Russian Integration of Southern Siberia, 1725–1783'.

2 Liesbeth Geevers, 'Safavid Cousins on the Verge of Extinction: Dynastic Centralization in Central Asia and the Bahrāmī Collateral Line (1517–1593)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 3 (2015) 293–326.

3 Richard van Leeuwen, *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires, 1300–1800* (Leiden and Boston, 2017), also available in open access, see <http://www.brill.com/products/book/narratives-kingship-eurasian-empires-1300-1800>.

Our researchers asked qualitative research questions related to the project's main theme, but needed to adapt to the availability and nature of their sources as well as to the priorities within their specialized historiographies. Local sources and languages, safeguarding the connection with specialized scholarship in regional studies, were crucial for the project's success. From the beginning, this goal required the active support of a group of experts. The project leaders' language capabilities were limited to their respective fields: Europe for Duindam and Rietbergen, the Arabic world for Maaïke van Berkel, and Central- and South Asia for Jos Gommans. Others stepped in to advise our group on East Asia, where the applicants lacked language expertise, as well as on many other territories. During the numerous meetings (regular seminars, summer schools, conferences) of our group, many leading historians proved willing to share their knowledge with us and contribute to our project aims; others stepped in to critically review our work. We thank these colleagues for their advice, support, and criticism: Tracy Adams, Ilya Afanasyev, Thomas Allsen, Reuven Amitai, Gabrielle van den Berg, Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, Wim Blockmans, Leonard Blussé, Maurits van den Boogert, Wim Boot, Remco Breuker, Malika Dekkiche, Nicola di Cosmo, Luc Duerloo, Serena Ferente, Jorge Flores, Anna Grasskamp, Alexander de Groot, R. Kent Guy, Olivier Hekster, Charles Jeurgens, Julien Loiseau, Cemal Kafadar, Jérôme Kerlouégan, Nancy Kollmann, I. Metin Kunt, Corinne Lefèvre, Luk Yu-ping, Charles Melville, Cédric Michon, Luit Mols, Bruno Naarden, Gülru Necipoglu, Jürgen Osterhammel, Koen Ottenheim, Elif Özgen, David Parrott, Elena Paskaleva, Carl Petry, Walter Pohl, Maarten Prak, David Robinson, Tunc Sen, Petra Sijpesteijn, Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, Vasileios Syros, Hans Theunissen, Hilde de Weerd, Ines Zupanov, Erik-Jan Zürcher, Harriet Zurndorfer.

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Without the practical support of the Leiden Humanities Faculty financial staff, notably Alex van der Meer and Stanley Bruins, we would surely have lost track of the details involved in accounting. In the final episode of the project, our research assistant Josephine van den Bent, herself a PhD researcher, proved enormously reliable, pleasant, and efficient in organizing meetings, the website, and the final conference of the project. Brill's Ivo Romein and Arjan van Dijk invariably have been congenial company as well as effective editors. Peer

Vries and Richard van Leeuwen critically reviewed the entire book typescript and made many important suggestions for improvement. Three anonymous reviewers provided more comments. Kate Delaney meticulously and rapidly corrected all texts now published in this volume. David Claszen stepped in for proofreading, compiled the index, and performed numerous other services.

First and foremost, the four project leaders owe a lasting debt of gratitude to all researchers in the project—they made this a highly agreeable experience. We owe a particular thanks to our long-standing research assistant Rebecca Wensma, who was the heart and soul of the project in its first years, and remained closely involved even after she became the Leiden University Institute for History's manager.

*The Editors*

Leiden, September 2017

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## Notes on Contributors

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is professor emeritus of Cultural History at Radboud University, Nijmegen. He has published some fourteen monographs, and some three hundred scholarly articles. He wrote extensively on the history of the early modern papacy, as well as on the relations between Europe and, specifically, India, and Japan. His *Europe: A Cultural History* (London, 1998), has gone through two revised editions, and a third one has been commissioned. It has been translated in Chinese, Korean and Polish. His *Short History of The Netherlands* has seen twelve revised editions, and has been translated into German as well. A Japanese translation will appear in autumn 2017.



# Rulers and Elites in Global History: Introductory Observations

*Jeroen Duindam*

## Introduction

What persuades people to accept the authority of elites and governments? Coercion, inevitably is part of the answer: disobedience may be punished. Unsurprisingly, most definitions of the ‘state’ underline the monopoly of violence.<sup>1</sup> However, violence and coercion are never the whole story: people are persuaded by the expectation of material advantages and charmed by the cultural allure or ideological appeal of political leadership.<sup>2</sup> The balance between the ingredients of compliance—forced, instrumental, ideological—has been discussed throughout history.<sup>3</sup> Confucius, Mencius, and their literati followers throughout Chinese history contrasted the way of the sage-king, ruling through moral example and righteousness, with the way of the hegemon, relying on punishments and rewards. Montesquieu related the ingredients of compliance to his three types of government: republic, monarchy, and despotism. Despotism, he argued, was held together only by fear, while monarchy depended on

- 
- 1 Classic definitions in Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen, 1972) 29; authoritative modern variants can be found in Michael Mann, ‘The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results’, in: *States, War, and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford and New York, 1988) 109–136, definition on 112; Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Volume 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge, 1986) 26–27, 37; Gianfranco Poggi, *The State: Its Nature, Development, and Prospects* (Stanford, 1990) 9.
  - 2 See the definitions and forms of ‘Herrschaft’ in Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*; Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, I, distinguishes four sources of social power ‘ideological, economic, military, and political relationships’ and presents these in a figure on 29; see an alternative view in David Cannadine, ‘Introduction’, in: David Cannadine and Simon Price, eds., *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremony in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987) 1–19 with a powerful definition of politics on 19.
  - 3 See a careful analysis by David Held, ‘Power and Legitimacy’, *Political Theory and the Modern State* (Cambridge, 1989) 99–157, note at 101–102 the continuum between coercion and ideal normative agreement, simplified to a threefold format here.



honour—not only on the principles of honour and prestige, but also on the distribution of honours or benefits. The republic, finally, was animated by virtue—an ideal that Montesquieu, after his disappointing visits to Europe's republics, situated in antiquity rather than in his own age. Ibn Khaldun's examination of the waxing and waning of dynasties likewise concentrates on the shifting mixture of willing adherence, violence, and interests among the followers of the dynasty. In each of these views, moreover, a cyclical alternation between types of rulers and governments was seen as distinctly possible or even as inevitable.<sup>4</sup>

Montesquieu placed his governments and their principles in a global view of climate and territory. He cautioned against the despotic tendencies of European rulers, but, in principle, located despotism in the East. His work is one of the stepping stones in the stereotyped European perception of 'Oriental despotism' stretching from Aristotle to the contemporary world.<sup>5</sup> This book considers how coercion, interests, and ideology shaped the relationship between rulers and elites—the groups serving as their eyes, ears, and arms. It rejects the axiom that the admixture of coercion, interests and ideology differed necessarily either between East and West or between pre-modern and modern polities. Since the French Revolution, it has become common to view pre-revolutionary dynastic polities as relying primarily on the use of force to keep in check exploited populations. Undoubtedly force was a conspicuous presence in pre-modern kingdoms and empires; nevertheless, infrastructural constraints seriously limited the ability of rulers to exercise their power. Even bullying rulers could use their coercive powers only intermittently and rarely throughout the entire realm. The conspicuous use of force by rulers' agents and the fear of retribution among the populace, always present, were not sufficient to integrate large territories around dynastic rulers.

This set of circumstances has been obscured because the ideological underpinnings of power changed fundamentally from the later eighteenth century onwards. Post-revolutionary states developed representative institutions, defined individual rights in written constitutions, and were characterized by an increasingly vocal public discussion. Understandably, they looked back with

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4 See e.g. *Mencius*, P.J. Ivanhoe, ed., trans. Irene Bloom (New York, 2009) 33; Montesquieu, 'Des principes des trois gouvernements', *De l'Esprit des Lois*, in: *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1964) 536–540; Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, Franz Rosenthal, ed. (Princeton and Oxford, 1967).

5 Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven and London, 1957); see also the far more sophisticated notion of a 'high-level equilibrium trap' as developed in Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past: A Social and Economic Interpretation* (Stanford, 1973).

aversion on the political regimes of the earlier age. In their enthusiasm, they wildly overstated the powers of premodern rulers. We tend to forget that the instruments of control in the hands of ruling elites have been strengthening throughout the modern age. Consequently, pre-modern and modern cannot be seen simply in terms of a comprehensive contrast between enforced or voluntary compliance.<sup>6</sup>

Our joint study of dynastic centres throughout Eurasia questions the image of pre-modern polities as relying solely on coercion. It also leaves aside age-old images of the stagnant despotic East and dynamic and free West. We consider Eurasia as a zone of contact, characterized by a continuum of interaction and adaptation rather than as a continent sharply divided in unchanging extremes of East and West. States in early modern Europe have traditionally been understood by historians as bureaucracies and representative bodies gradually acquiring autonomous status and finally emancipating themselves from dynastic leadership. In the same tradition, Asian empires have been seen as 'palace polities' governed by the quirks of individual despots and liable to abrupt regime change, yet without the capability to generate profound and lasting reform.<sup>7</sup> We leave aside these overstated contrasts, and zoom in on categories common to most polities in world history before 1800: a dynastic ruler at the centre, supported by a household comprising relatives, domestics, administrators, and soldiers, together forming the conspicuous heart of relatively loosely governed realms.

We examine rulership and elite identity in Eurasian polities, from Japan to Spain and from Muscovite Russia to the Vijayanagara empire, between ca. 1300 and 1800. This was an interconnected area long before the process of globalization encompassed other parts of the world. The period between the Mongol conquests and the rise of European global hegemony, moreover, coincides with increasingly dense contacts in this area as well as, more gradually, on the global scale. In most of the polities discussed, a relatively rich legacy of local sources is available; moreover, intensifying contacts gave rise to numerous outside perceptions supplementing these local sources. Major kingdoms and empires on

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6 The work of Antonio Gramsci suggests strongly how power in any context depends on force as well as on 'manufactured' consent, see e.g. Steven J. Jones, *Antonio Gramsci* (London, 2006).

7 See Samuel E. Finer's impressive *The History of Government from the Earliest Times* (Oxford and New York, 1997) I, 34–58 with four forms of government (palace, forum, nobility and church) and their intermediate mixed forms. Although Finer uses the label 'palace polities' for European as well as Asian examples, there is a strong residue of this classic view, stressing the persistence of the palace-polity pattern in Asia while underlining reform and modernization in European monarchies.

the Eurasian continent experienced heightened interaction, but only towards the end of this period did competing European powers gradually become the dominant presence everywhere, whether as conquerors and rulers, or as bullying traders. From the nineteenth century onwards, no major polity anywhere could arrange its internal affairs without considering 'Western' examples and interventions.

Early modern polities were loosely structured in comparison with the nation states emerging in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, dynastic polities could show remarkable resilience over time and appear to have provided a strong focus for the numerous groups under their rule. Traditional historiography attributed 'absolute' power to these princes, yet this view has been undermined by revisionist research. Since the 1970s an increasing number of studies have shifted focus from the multiple laws and decrees generated by power centres to the responses at local levels. Without openly challenging central dynastic rule, local elites tended to bend the rules to fit their own interests. Providing local knowledge to the agents sent from the centre, they acted at the same time as middlemen advancing local interests at court.<sup>8</sup> Allying with the distant ruler was one of the strategies elites used to outdo their local rivals. Conversely, appeasing and rewarding local leaders was a manoeuvre commonly employed by rulers, who well knew that their force was limited and that inconclusive military action was likely to aggravate conflict.

Intermediaries were essential in holding together the dynastic venture—and their support was always in one way or another conditional. Ibn Khaldun outlined the evolving connections between rulers and their followers wielding sword or pen from generation to generation. Chinese literati stipulated the inevitable decline and fall of rulers no longer following the way of righteousness and forgetting the interests of their peoples—but they, too, knew that

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8 Among the numerous titles revising the classic view of absolutism in Europe, see e.g. R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550–1700. An Interpretation* (Oxford, 1979); William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France. State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge, 1985); Roger C. Mettam, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford and New York, 1988); on the roles of elites in Qing China see e.g. Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship. Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2002); Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley, 1990); on the Ottoman empire see e.g. Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, 2008); Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2010).

popular rebellion would bring dynastic change only if it coalesced with elite discontent. While Montesquieu connected the presence of ‘corps intermédiaires’ specifically to European-style monarchy, we accept it as a necessity for all pre-modern polities. Our research concentrates on attempts of rulers and their advisors to create an exemplary centre based on redistribution and cultural-religious allure.<sup>9</sup> This focus on dynasties and their connections among elites means that the population at large will be visible only through the lens of intermediary groups. The local connections of these elites and the wider perception of empire in the periphery do not form part of our project. Popular views of rulership and individual rulers will be considered at the level of literary traditions, but not through detailed study of local sources. This restriction is dictated by the need to maintain the focus of our wide-ranging comparative effort.

Our examination of the various interconnections of dynasties and intermediary elites will follow different points of departure: rulers with their relatives and servants at the heart of power; the admixture and conflict of worldly and spiritual leadership; power groups of clerks and soldiers mediating between the court and the provinces. A clash of interests occurred in and among these groups at many levels. Indeed, violent contestation was a frequent and inevitable element of dynastic power. We do not underplay these consistent conflicts, but use them as an opportunity to examine the recurring cycles of breakdown and consolidation, so dominant in political practice as well as in the political thinking of the pre-modern world.

With this jointly written study on dynastic rule and elites across Eurasia, we subscribe to the widely shared effort to make history more global in scope and perspectives. A powerful first generation of historians dealing with ‘Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons’ and relying predominantly on English-language secondary literature was instrumental in creating a more unified view of world history.<sup>10</sup> In recent decades, the global interest among faculty and students in history departments has given rise to numerous world history courses and world history textbooks. These overviews perform a very useful

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9 In terms of Michael Doyle’s epoch-making study of British imperialism, *Empires* (Ithaca and London, 1986): passing the ‘Augustan threshold’ and moving from conquest and military power to a consolidated stage of empire; see the discussion of Marlene Kurz, ‘Gracious Sultan, Grateful Subjects: Spreading Ottoman Imperial “Ideology” throughout the Empire’, *Studia Islamica* 3 (2012) 119–148.

10 The phrase is taken from Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984); in addition to Tilly himself, William H. McNeill, J.R. McNeill, and Jared Diamond can be mentioned as leading ‘Big History’ authors.

service and are often written by teams of acknowledged regional experts, yet their ambitions are related to teaching rather than to research.<sup>11</sup> World history textbooks expand the classic formula geographically, discussing political entities on a case-by-case level in every period, now including examples on a global scale.<sup>12</sup> The experiences in various parts of the globe are usually integrated consistently only in terms of the process of globalization. Globalization, moreover, is typically related to the rising preponderance of Europe from the sixteenth century onwards.

The categories of sweeping synoptic world histories and overview-type textbooks provide a basis for undergraduate teaching. Many scholars embrace the wish to move to a more nuanced, empirical, and connected global perspective. Specialized scholarship, however, demands language competence and a careful contextual reading of primary sources in their original languages. Researchers who want to reach beyond regional and national perspectives need to learn more languages. While this can be achieved on a limited scale, the requirement prohibits a global perspective. No single scholar can master the key languages of the Eurasian continent, let alone of the world. Global history, therefore, appears to be a contradiction in terms: history can be global only if it

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- 11 Diego Olstein, *Thinking History Globally* (Houndmills, 2015) connects world history primarily to 'big history' using the world as its unit, and to the effort to make history teaching more comprehensive by integrating the entire globe in introductory courses. He sees global history as examining the interconnections and issues related to the process of comparison, and hence not necessarily encompassing the entire world. See the more powerfully phrased, often cited, but somewhat partisan earlier statement by Bruce Mazlish, 'Comparing Global History to World History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 28 (1998) 385–395, and the sensible discussion in Kenneth Pomeranz and Daniel Segal, 'World History. Departures and Variations', in: Douglas Northrop, ed., *A Companion to World History* (Malden and Oxford, 2012) 15–31. Comparative history, like world history and global history, has its own journals and book series: e.g. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* at <http://cssh.lsa.umich.edu/>; *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*; <http://research.uni-leipzig.de/comparativ/>; *Journal of World History* at <http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/t-journal-of-world-history.aspx>; *Journal of Global History* at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=JGH>. In these publications, numerous studies of varying breadth and impact can be found. A brief look at the contents suggests that Mazlish's clear separation no longer applies: both world and global history predominantly fit the paradigm of connected or entangled history, to be discussed at some length below.
- 12 However, see more recent attempts to provide coherent and analytical overviews of world history, Stephen Morillo, *Frameworks of World History. Networks, Hierarchies, Culture* (Oxford, 2013); Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *A Concise History of the World* (Cambridge, 2015).

disrespects one its most fundamental tenets. Conferences offer a way out of the predicament by bringing together specialists who collectively address questions on the basis of first-hand knowledge of materials. Conference volumes, however, tend to conform to the format of a general introduction briefly indicating comparative themes, followed by a series of individual contributions outlining a single case.

Which methods and perspectives can help to bridge the gap between the requirement of language competence and the pursuit of global themes in history? Two very different approaches have dominated global history since the 1990s: the debate about the timing and nature of worldwide economic divergences and the history of increased global interactions.<sup>13</sup> How does our book relate to these examples?

## 1 Connections and Comparisons

An enduring paradigm was created by Fernand Braudel, who presented the Mediterranean as a zone of contact rather than as a maritime boundary separating cultures. Other such marine zones of contact have since been defined: the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, and more recently also river deltas.<sup>14</sup> The same reasoning has been applied to landmasses, notably the steppe zone at the heart of the Eurasian continent. The interest in these frontier zones leads naturally to the instruments, vessels, and protagonists of contact: trade routes, maps, ships, horses, traders, soldiers, artists, and interpreters. The artefacts moving along these corridors have likewise been studied: seeds, plants, germs, feathers, weapons, ceramics, silver, paintings. Finally, the movement of ideas, artistic styles, and religious creeds has been charted.<sup>15</sup> Mobility and

13 See on the latter recently Jeremy Adelman, 'Global History or the History of Globalization? (Review)', *Journal of World History* 27 (2016) 701–708.

14 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1949); André Wink, 'From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean: Medieval History in Geographic Perspective', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 3 (2002) 416–445; Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (Oxford and New York, 2013); David Christian, 'Silk Roads or Steppe Roads? The Silk Roads in World History', *Journal of World History* 11, no. 1 (2000) 1–26; Michael Adas, 'Continuity and Transformation: Colonial Rice Frontiers and Their Environmental Impact on the Great River Deltas of Mainland Southeast Asia', in: Edmund Burke and Kenneth Pomeranz, eds., *The Environment and World History* (Berkeley, 2009) 191–207.

15 See e.g. many publications by Ebba Koch on cultural-artistic connections between Europe

contact entail actions, responses, misperceptions, and adaptations: this notion, often present in the history of global contacts, has been expanded by *histoire croisée* to include not only the objects of study, but also the views developed by researchers.<sup>16</sup> The reflection engendered by the interlacing of concepts derived from different cultures, it is suggested, will help scholars to critically review their categories of thought and comparison.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Serge Gruzinski pioneered an empirically rich global branch of ‘connected history’, zooming in on the trajectories, meeting points, agents, and objects of exchange. Their approach neatly fits the current interests in materiality, networks, subjectivity and individual agency, microhistory and life-writing. It stresses the processes of exchange: encounters, perceptions, learning, and translation. This actor-based perspective traces the impact of encounters on all participants involved, and thus effectively circumvents the traditional focus on the national state.<sup>17</sup> Rather than concentrating on interacting states, the analysis leaves room for local, peripheral, and metropolitan actors in all ranks and positions. Cultures and politics are seen as the result of ongoing interaction rather than as unchanging building blocks. Subrahmanyam has argued that among groups with different social modes and cultural standards a middle ground was created. ‘Commensurability’ took shape at particular locations and was furthered by specific actors, who themselves changed in the process—a process described as *métissage* by Gruzinski.<sup>18</sup> By

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and West Asia and in West Asia; Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York, 2008); on religion recently Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (Oxford, 2014).

- 16 Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, ‘Penser l’histoire croisée: entre empirie et réflexivité’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58, no. 1 (2003) 7–36 at 17, developed in the final part of the article.
- 17 Still the main focus in Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2003–2010); see Ramya Sreenivasan, ‘A South Asianist’s Response to Lieberman’s Strange Parallels’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 4 (2011) 983–993.
- 18 Serge Gruzinski, ‘Faire de l’histoire dans un monde globalisé’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 66, no. 4 (2011) 1081–1091; Gruzinski, ‘Les mondes mêlés de la monarchie catholique et autres “connected histories”’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56, no. 1 (2001) 85–117; in the same volume Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Du Tage au Gange au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: une conjoncture millénariste à l’échelle eurasiatique’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 56, no. 1 (2001) 51–84; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia’, *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997) 735–762; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *From Tagus to the Ganges: Explorations in Connected History* (Oxford, 2011); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and*

charting in detail the trajectories and experiences of actors and objects, connected history shows at close range where the global and the local met, and how this process affected all concerned. Globalization never was a simple uni-directional process.

The contextual depth of global connected history has been possible only through the mastery of languages. The logic of contiguity and exchange limits the number of languages required, but these will still present a challenge. The history of connections can adopt a long-term and global perspective, yet its most successful examples focus on a specific connection in a limited time frame.<sup>19</sup> Hence they also raise the issue of synchronicity and ‘time’ in history.<sup>20</sup> Does the fifteenth century have a global meaning?<sup>21</sup> Can we discern a global ‘early modernity’?<sup>22</sup> Was there any affinity between the heterodox worlds of

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- Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge Mass., 2012); on métissage and related terms see Philippe Delisle, ‘Introduction au dossier: “Acculturation, syncrétisme, métissage, créolisation: Amérique, Océanie, xvie – xvie siècles”’, *Histoire et missions chrétiennes* 5 (2008) 9–13, and the other contributions to this issue. The notion of a ‘middle ground’ was introduced by Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991); see a recent different view: Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York, 2015).
- 19 See examples from the brief and powerful comprehensive overview by J.R. McNeill and W.H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird’s-Eye View of World History* (New York, 2003) to the focused seventeenth-century story based on six Vermeer paintings by Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat*.
- 20 Gruzinski, ‘Les mondes mêlés de la monarchie catholique’, 97.
- 21 Conversely, see publications focusing on a moment in time bringing together geographically unconnected examples: Patrick Boucheron, Julien Loiseau, Pierre Monnet, and Yann Potin, *Histoire du monde au xve siècle* (Paris, 2009); Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (New York, 1986); see a critical appraisal by Antony Black, ‘The “Axial Period”: What Was It and What Does It Signify?’, *The Review of Politics* 70 (2008) 23–39.
- 22 See a recent statement by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Waiting for the Simorgh: Comparisons, Connections, and the Early Modern’, in: Sven Trakulhun and Ralph Weber, eds., *Delimiting Modernities: Conceptual Challenges and Regional Responses* (Lanham, 2015) 99–121; Jeroen Duindam, ‘Early Modern Europe: Beyond the Strictures of Modernization and National Historiography’, *European History Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2010) 606–623; Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter, ‘Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities: A Comparative View’, *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998) 1–18; Jack Goldstone, ‘The Problem of the “Early Modern” World’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 3 (1998) 249–284; Timothy Brook, ‘Medievality and the Chinese Sense of History’, *The Medieval History Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998) 145–164; On-Cho Ng, ‘The Epochal Concept of “Early Modernity” and the



Rudolf II, Akbar, and their contemporaries, or between the well-ordered universes of Louis XIV and the Kangxi Emperor?<sup>23</sup> Did the crises striking the world in the course of the seventeenth century reflect global causes?<sup>24</sup> Was the wave of disturbances and intellectual ferment in the later eighteenth century more than a European or Atlantic export product?<sup>25</sup>

Connected history has been a prime mover in global history, but its very success highlights some limitations inherent in the method. Key views introduced by leading connected historians about the construction of contacts and commensurability as a multilateral process have been widely accepted, and the multiplication of studies now mostly adds colour and detail to an accepted formula. New books zooming in on globetrotters, places of contact, artefacts or ideas moving across the globe can no longer have the freshness, vigour, and impact of the pioneering first studies. The current proliferation of examples suggests the appeal of connected history as well as its limited potential for innovation.

The 'Rise of the West' and its more balanced comparative offshoots have formed a rival and equally influential approach in the global history spectrum.<sup>26</sup> The 'great divergence' is an incontestable fact at least from the later eighteenth century onwards, and this phenomenon has rightly been singled

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Intellectual History of Late Imperial China', *Journal of World History* 14, no. 1 (2003) 37–61; Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories'; Craig Clunas, 'Review Essay: Modernity Global and Local: Consumption and the Rise of the West', *American Historical Review* 104, no. 5 (1999) 1497–1511. See also Clunas's *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368–1644* (Honolulu, 2007) 7–9, offering a description that perfectly seems to match contemporary Europe.

23 Joachim Bouvet, *Histoire de l'empereur de la Chine: présentée au roy* (The Hague, 1699) in his preface compares Louis and his Chinese fellow-ruler; on connections and movements of ideas about governance see Antje Flüchter and Susan Richter, ed., *Structures on the Move. Technologies of Governance in Transcultural Encounter* (Heidelberg, 2012).

24 Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, 2013).

25 David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (Houndmills, 2010).

26 Many titles can be cited. William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (Chicago, 1963) and the author's retrospective view 'World History and the Rise and Fall of the West', *Journal of World History* 9, no. 2 (1998) 215–236; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, 2000); see a recent contribution by Peer Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s* (London and New York, 2015); an institutional-economic approach in J.L. van Zanden, *The Long Road to the Industrial Revolution. The European Economy in a Global Perspective, 1000–1800* (Leiden and Boston,

out for research. However, while this debate is indubitably global in its relevance, the question it seeks to answer imposes a concentration of research efforts on successful cases. Within Europe the Dutch Republic and England get more attention than Spain or France, while Central and Eastern Europe remain largely invisible. In Asia, the Jiangnan area and the Southeastern seaboard of China occupy centre stage. The Mughal and Ottoman empires are only marginally included, as ranking below the benchmark set by Europe and China, commonly seen as the two major contenders. Most other parts of the world are included only as component parts of the emerging worldwide Europe-dominated trade network.

Recently, scholars have reinvigorated the ‘great divergence’ approach by infusing it with the vocabulary of ‘New Institutional Economics’ and by extending it to political and military change. The institutional and military angles make clear that the gradual ascent of Europe cannot be understood only as an economic process. Was European military organization the main factor in the ‘Rise of the West’? Or was European military success itself the consequence of larger social, institutional, cultural, and economic divergences between Europe and other parts of the globe?<sup>27</sup> Such thorny questions may remain insoluble. Explaining voyages of discovery and military expansion is easier than defining structural differences in mentality or social structure between the ‘East’ and ‘West’—categories that upon further inspection break down into myriads of smaller entities with highly differentiated social and cultural patterns. Explaining success entails explaining failure elsewhere and risks repeating clichés about the unchanging East versus European dynamism. Often it adopts as a starting point criteria inferred from European success: civic corporations, representative institutions, bustling markets, entrepreneurial acumen. The current economic format of the debate has the benefit of consistency and methodological rigour, but the reduced scope engendered by the concentration on economic success stories limits the potential of the divergence paradigm for global history.

Which other models for global comparative history can be found? The most influential comparative historian with a global view in the 1950s undoubtedly was Arnold Toynbee, whose multi-volume *Study of History* reached wide

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2009), and in Philip T. Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* (Princeton, 2015); a wide-ranging succinct statement by Wolfgang Reinhard, *Staatsmacht und Staatskredit. Kulturelle Tradition und politische Moderne* (Heidelberg, 2017).

27 The question of divergence and breakthrough can be pursued in relation to mentalities, reformation, scientific revolution, and so on, see e.g. H. Floris Cohen, *The Rise of Modern Science Explained* (Cambridge, 2015).

audiences in its abridged edition.<sup>28</sup> Toynbee considered the cyclical rise and fall of ‘civilizations’ rather than the rise of the modern state or the linear cultural evolution of mankind. Following the lead of Max Weber’s global typologies of power and religion, sociologists were equally ambitious, although they were interested primarily in the rise of modernity. S.N. Eisenstadt published a wide-ranging comparison of empires, which, however, failed to integrate primary sources and adhered to a classic evolutionist stance.<sup>29</sup> The volume edited two decades later by the same author on the ‘Axial age’ did include focused contributions by regional specialists dealing with the breakthroughs in thinking occurring between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE in polities across the globe. The Harvard sociologist Barrington Moore published an influential comparative examination of modernization and the rise of totalitarianism; his pupils Charles Tilly and Theda Skocpol continued carrying the torch of comparative historical sociology.<sup>30</sup> In the early post-war years, many anthropologists were intent on gathering information on ‘primitive’ societies worldwide that would allow systematic cross-cultural analysis. George P. Murdock’s ‘Human Relation Area Files’ and the *Anthropological Atlas* underline the remarkable ambitions of this project.<sup>31</sup> In addition to these attempts to lay the groundwork for global anthropological comparison, elaborate regional typologies of kinship and political systems were published for Africa.<sup>32</sup> In an equally systematic, less evolutionary, and more focused style, Jack Goody brought together

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- 28 Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford and London, 1934–1961) twelve vols.
- 29 Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires. The Rise and Fall of the Historical Bureaucratic Societies* (New York, 1963); see the critical review by Eric Wolf in the *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965) 172–176.
- 30 Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, 1966); Charles Tilly, *The Vendée: A Sociological Analysis of the Counterrevolution of 1793* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964) followed by an impressive series of comparative and conceptually influential works; Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge, 1979).
- 31 George P. Murdock, *Ethnographic Atlas: A Summary* (Pittsburgh, 1967); G.P. Murdock, ‘Feasibility and Implementation of Comparative Community Research: With Special Reference to the Human Relations Area Files’, *American Sociological Review* 15 (1950) 713–720, and an updated version and presentation of these files at <http://www.bu.edu/library/guide/hraf/>.
- 32 M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (London, New York, Toronto, 1940); A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London, New York, Toronto, 1950); see Caroline B. Brettell, ‘Anthropology, Migration, and Comparative Consciousness’, in: Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, eds., *Compar-*

contributions on succession to high office in Africa, adding an introduction of remarkable acuity and global relevance.<sup>33</sup>

Political centralization, stability, and breakdown—always present to some extent in the institutional economists' explanation of global divergence—have been fruitfully examined in several comparative works of near-global dimension.<sup>34</sup> Jack Goldstone's analysis of cases of 'state breakdown' in Europe and Asia defines demography as the single universal cause, but explains in detail how numerous other characteristics of state breakdown derived from this first cause. Moreover, Goldstone's model does not aim to explain either the rise of modernity or the head start of any specific region: it explains the process of state breakdown in several roughly comparable polities and can be tested by examining cases in other periods and regions. In an even more ambitious endeavour, Victor Lieberman postulates six 'convergences' in the political development of Eurasian polities between 800 and 1800.<sup>35</sup> All underwent roughly synchronic phases of expansion, consolidation, centralization, cultural integration, and commercialization. The world, or in any case Eurasia, apparently followed a parallel rhythm. Lieberman, in addition, distinguishes between the Eurasian polities profoundly influenced by nomadic steppe peoples' conquests (the 'exposed' zone) and those less structurally vulnerable in this respect (the 'protected' zone). His comparison of largely unconnected 'strange parallels' focused on the state rather than on the actors and objects figuring prominently in connected history, yet it stays within the perspective of contiguity, by stipulating an overarching relationship across the Eurasian continent, and by excluding areas outside of this admittedly huge perimeter.

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- ison: Theories, Approaches, Uses* (Baltimore, 2013) 292–314 at 294–196 on Murdock and 'British structural functionalism' and their demise after the 1960s.
- 33 Jack Goody, ed., *Succession to High Office* (Cambridge, 1966); see the adaptation of Goody's model to China by Patricia B. Ebrey, 'Succession to High Office: The Chinese Case', in: David R. Olson and Michael Cole, eds., *Technology, Literacy, and the Evolution of Society: Implications of the Work of Jack Goody* (Mahwah, 2006) 49–71.
- 34 Finer, *History of Government*; Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, see also more recently Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2005).
- 35 Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991); Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*; also see his 'What "Strange Parallels" Sought to Accomplish', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 4 (2011) 931–938 and Goldstone on Lieberman: 'New Patterns in Global History: A Review Essay on Strange Parallels by Victor Lieberman', *Clodynamics: The Journal of Theoretical and Mathematical History* 1, no. 1 (2010) 92–102.

Neither positivist evolutionary anthropology, nor Weberian sociological typology, or Toynbee's particular style of comparing civilizations survived the 1960s and 1970s unscathed. The aspirations and style of comparative research repelled adherents of the cultural turn, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and post-colonialism. Not without reason, early anthropology and comparison practised in the colonial age have been described as the intellectual auxiliaries of European hegemony, academic offshoots of imperial 'othering'.<sup>36</sup> Modern critics have presented state- or civilization-based comparison in similar terms, as rephrasing ethnic and national clichés and, in its worst form, as serving as an 'intellectually refurbished form of eurocentrism'.<sup>37</sup> Anthropologists, at the forefront of the cultural turn and abhorring evolutionism, broadly rejected the goal of systematic comparison held by their predecessors.<sup>38</sup> Exceptional among these critics, Clifford Geertz developed his own form of smaller-scale comparison. On the basis of his close familiarity with Morocco and Indonesia Geertz disentangled the varieties of Islam in these different cultures and combined comparison with a densely textured description of cultural practices.<sup>39</sup> Geertz's intelligent middle way suggests that comparison should not be discarded without careful consideration; the models presented by Goldstone and Lieberman, too, underline the strength of the comparative perspective.

Many characteristics attributed to comparative history, such as the concentration on national states, or the facile evolutionary contrast between different societies, can be seen as typical for an entire generation of historians. The problems of 'othering' and hegemony, too, are not peculiar to comparison. We need to take a more careful look at the objectives, problems, and promises of comparison.<sup>40</sup> First of all, it should be made clear that there is no single dominant paradigm of comparison.<sup>41</sup> Comparison comes in many forms and does not appear to have a single, broadly accepted method. At one extreme, current

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36 See a modern restatement of this verdict in Micol Seigel, 'Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn', *Radical History Review* 91 (2005) 62–90.

37 Gruzinski, 'Les mondes mêlés de la monarchie catholique', 86; Seigel, 'Beyond Compare'.

38 Aram A. Yengoyan, 'Comparison and Its Discontents', in: Aram A. Yengoyan, ed., *Modes of Comparison: Theory & Practice* (Ann Arbor, 2006) 137–157.

39 Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago, 1971).

40 Eisenstadt, *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*; See critique in Robert N. Bellah, 'What Is Axial about the Axial Age?', *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46, no. 1 (2005) 69–89, and Eisenstadt's response: 'The Axial Conundrum between Transcendental Visions and Vicissitudes of Their Institutionalizations: Constructive and Destructive Possibilities', *Análise Social* 46, no. 199 (2011) 201–217.

41 Raymond Grew, 'The Case for Comparing Histories', *The American Historical Review* 85,

comparatists can adopt a highly systemic social science approach, by rigidly defining causal factors and tabulating their absence or presence in different cases.<sup>42</sup> This ‘Boolean minimization’ suggests a laboratory-like precision, an impression strengthened by graphs, tables, and mathematical formulae. The critical issue here is the designation of isolated variables and the decision whether these variables were relevant in the cases under scrutiny. This operation, presupposing clear and distinct social processes, leaves little room for the quirks and incidents so prominent in human interaction and motivation.

At the other end of the spectrum, comparisons can be found that stay close to the empirical orientation of history, with the full panoply of literature, published and unpublished sources. They zoom in on local contexts with multiple and unpredictable actors, hesitate before postulating sweeping outcomes, and would never venture to make predictions. Their results, less crispy-clear than those of the Boolean school, reflect a profoundly different attitude. The one point of agreement among the extended and ill-disciplined family of comparatists seems to be the aspiration to break free of the restrictive framework of the development over time of a single state or region. Beyond this shared aim, purposes and methods of the contrasting forms of comparison differ widely. Surely, the more empirical comparative historians are far closer in mentality to the family of connected historians than to their Boolean brethren.<sup>43</sup>

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- no. 4 (1980) 763–778; Grew, ‘On Rereading an Earlier Essay’, in: Aram A. Yengoyan, ed., *Modes of Comparison: Theory & Practice* (Ann Arbor, 2006) 118–136.
- 42 Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Oakland, 1989); Alrik Thiem, ‘Unifying Configurational Comparative Methods. Generalized-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis’, *Sociological Methods & Research* 43, no. 2 (2014) 313–337; see an overview of current comparative approaches in sociology: Masamichi Sasaki, Jack Goldstone, Ekkart Zimmermann, and Stephen K. Sanderson, eds., *Concise Encyclopedia of Comparative Sociology* (Leiden and Boston, 2014).
- 43 Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, ‘The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980) 174–197; Michael Hanagan, ‘“Shall I Compare Thee ...?” Problems of Comparative Historical Analysis’, *International Review of Social History* 56, no. 1 (2011) 133–146; Philippa Levine, ‘Is Comparative History Possible?’, *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014) 331–347; see a sceptical assessment of scientific-style comparison and its ‘false precision’ in Linda Gordon, ‘A Meditation on Comparison in Historical Scholarship’, in: Felski and Friedman, eds., *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 315–335 at 318–319; Victor de Munck, ‘Introduction: Units for Describing and Analyzing Culture and Society’, *Ethnology* 39, no. 4 (2000) 279–292 underlines the differences between comparison and cross-cultural analysis, discerns the approaches in ethnology and ethnography, and defends a reinvigorated cross-cultural analysis.

The lack of unity in inspiration, methods, and purposes of comparative history is hardly new. There was little consistency in the outlook of early prophets and critics of comparison, from John Stuart Mill, James Frazer, and Émile Durkheim to Franz Boas, Max Weber, or Marc Bloch. Those interested in comparison usually stressed the need to explain rather than to understand, but they shared this attitude with many others. In an 1896 lecture, Boas distinguished comparative and historical methods in a way that seems particularly relevant for the current state of global and connected histories.<sup>44</sup> He warned against assuming without further evidence a shared origin of habits found in distant areas. However, he also cautioned his audience that remarkable similarities should not be construed unthinkingly as reflecting universal human patterns. Boas's argument distinguishing comparative and historical methods was reiterated in 1951 by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. Typically, both authors ended their talks on a critical note. In 1896 Boas stated that 'The solid work is still all before us'; in 1951 Radcliffe-Brown was equally modest:

It will be only in an integrated and organized study in which historical studies and sociological studies are combined that we shall be able to reach a real understanding of the development of human society, and this we do not yet have.<sup>45</sup>

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44 Franz Boas, 'The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology', *Science* 4, no. 103 (1896) 901–908. See a similar discussion based on Ferdinand de Saussure and linguistics in the work of Marc Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', *Revue de synthèse historique* 46 (1928) 15–50, taken up in William H. Sewell, 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', *History and Theory* 6, no. 2 (1967) 208–218; Alette Olin Hill and Boyd H. Hill, 'Marc Bloch and Comparative History', *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (1980) 828–846 with the ensuing heated debate printed in the same volume 847–857.

45 Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, *Method in Social Anthropology; Selected Essays* (Chicago, 1958) 129. While Radcliffe-Brown's aspiration to arrive at universal laws of human behaviour reflects the ambitions of his nineteenth-century predecessors and fits awkwardly modern (postmodern?) academic orientations, his statement rings true. Jack Goody, Audrey Richards, Max Gluckman, and other practitioners of comparison in the 1950s and 1960s still show the intellectual vigour and rigour of this approach. On the anthropological paradigm of comparison and its demise see Yengoyan, 'Comparison and Its Discontents', 137–156; Richard Handler, 'The Uses of Incommensurability in Anthropology', in: Felski and Friedman, eds., *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 271–291, and Caroline B. Brettell, 'Anthropology, Migration, and Comparative Consciousness' in the same volume at 292–314.

Writing in 2017, much the same can be said: the variety of approaches and perspectives has multiplied, but the same basic tension between a painstaking reconstruction of the local and the allure of wider comparative vistas persists. The discrepancies in methods between historians, area specialists, and social scientists appear larger than ever. Partisans of computer modelling develop high-tech visualizations and predictions of human behaviour while most historians observe these feats with bewildered scepticism and stress the naivety of the ambition to harness the myriad variables dictating individual and social behaviour in this way. Neither did historians among themselves develop consistent and widely accepted models of comparison. Leading authorities from Marc Bloch (1928) to John Elliott (1991) have asserted the imperative need to transgress the limitations of national and regional histories, pleading for broader comparative frameworks. Both authors actively contributed to the field with major works, combining detailed observation with a wide horizon. Their pleas for comparative history, however, ended on the same modest note their anthropologist-colleagues had voiced a generation or so earlier: this is a necessary and important ambition rather than a project within easy reach.<sup>46</sup>

Comparison is an essential aspect of human cognition; it is a permanent presence in our daily lives.<sup>47</sup> All historians are comparatists: they implicitly compare their own age with the worlds they study. Particularly for scholars examining areas distant from their place of residence, comparison is always present. Yet the implicit form of comparative reflection inherent in history usually remains invisible to the reader. Once comparison is voiced explicitly, it often takes an unequal or asymmetrical form: powerful and knowledgeable statements about one period or region are placed in a wider perspective that betrays limited or outdated knowledge about the other cases cited. The main

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46 Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes'; Marc Bloch, *Les Rois Thaumaturges* (Paris, 1924); Marc Bloch, *La société féodale* (Paris, 1939); John H. Elliott, *National and Comparative History. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 10 May 1991* (Oxford, 1991) and by the same author *Richelieu and Olivares* (Cambridge, 1984); *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven, 2006). Also see Hanagan, "‘Shall I Compare Thee ...?’" and Levine, 'Is Comparative History Possible?' for further discussion and examples of recent work. See the lucid discussion of empire by Susan Reynolds, 'Empires: A Problem of Comparative History', *Historical Research* 79, no. 204 (2006) 151–165 at 165 stating that: 'The real argument against comparison is that it is such hard work, especially when it goes over different periods and demands a range of different skills ...'; see a similar statement with different conclusions by Gordon, 'A Meditation on Comparison in Historical Scholarship', at 314, 317.

47 A point well made in Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Why not compare?', in: Felski and Friedman, eds., *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, 34–45, at 36–37.



object of research is framed in a regional or global *tour d'horizon*, yet comparison is not pursued either systematically or symmetrically.<sup>48</sup> Asymmetrical comparison tends to reconfirm clichés (French ‘absolutism’, the Prussian *Beamtenstaat*, Sultanic omnipotence) because it mostly relies on outdated scholarship. Ideally comparison is symmetrical: it should rely on the equal or near-equal knowledge of all components entering into the examination.<sup>49</sup> The requirement of equal knowledge, however, is not accomplished easily. It is further complicated by the need to define criteria of comparison that do not reflect the experiences of one region only. These challenges help to explain why comparison remains unfinished business; however, they should not dissuade us from engaging in this important endeavour.

Modern comparatists no longer follow Murdock or Radcliffe-Brown in their quest for fixed ‘laws’ of human behaviour. Nevertheless, comparison challenges us to explain how different responses to equivalent circumstances arose across the globe, and how and why these changed over time. The balanced answer to the global challenge developed by practitioners of connected history has great cogency and appeal. It effectively supersedes older expansion history, yet it cannot, and does not aim to, answer the questions raised by comparative history. Rather than pursuing connections, the authors of this volume accept the ambitious comparative project stipulated by Radcliffe-Brown, seeking patterns and explanations in human behaviour—in our case in the changing relationships between rulers and elites in Eurasian polities.<sup>50</sup>

## 2 The Imperial Turn—A Conceptual Muddle?

This leaves us with the question of scale and units of comparison. There is a long tradition of comparing ‘civilizations’ or ‘cultures’, of which Arnold Toynbee’s works are a relatively recent specimen. Toynbee reckoned among his examples the works of Ibn Khaldun, with whom he shared an interest in the

48 See for instance the comparative observations on France by two leading Qing historians, Mark C. Elliott, *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New York and San Francisco, 2009) 38, 40; R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle, 2010) 360–361.

49 See, however, the stress on ‘light’ and unequal comparison in Gordon, ‘A Meditation on Comparison in Historical Scholarship’, 321 and 333.

50 Christopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, 2009).

rise and fall of polities.<sup>51</sup> Toynbee's work, highly influential and popular at the time of its composition, has been all but forgotten.<sup>52</sup> The definition of 'civilizations' and 'cultures' is highly contested; boundaries of these somewhat elusive concepts cannot be drawn on the map without hesitation. Ideal types representing 'essential characteristics' stand at the beginning as well as at the end of comparisons of civilizations. While Toynbee's achievement was considerable and introduced many lucid ideas, it seems ill-advised to build comparison on civilizations or cultures, fuzzy entities with contested definitions. National history, as has become clear, has been an impediment rather than a support for comparative history. The modern concept of the state, moreover, more often than not gives rise to misunderstandings when applied to pre-modern history. Empires and kingdoms appear as more historical and are explicitly related to dynastic power—polities governed by emperors or kings. Nevertheless, the cultural connotations of these European terms raise the question whether they can be used elsewhere. And what exactly is empire?

Global developments in the last three decades, and particularly after 1989, have restored an old theme to research agendas and public interest: the rise and fall of empires. The increasing importance of transnational phenomena, including multinationals and NGOs as well as problems such as global warming, contagious diseases, and the emerging terrorist threat made clear that the nation state no longer occupied the key position it could claim in the two centuries following the French Revolution. European laws and economic arrangements had reached a point where they undercut the sovereignty of member states. In addition to these gradual processes, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union suddenly promoted the USA to global hegemony. Was this 'unipolar moment', coinciding with the global dominance of liberal capitalism, a brief interlude, or would it last? This question was hotly debated in policy circles and in academia.<sup>53</sup>

The decline of one world power not only allowed the hegemony of another: it also gave room to new conflicts and movements across the globe. Former communist leaders and their adversaries in Yugoslavia and elsewhere kindled

51 Robert Irwin, 'Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun', *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 3 (1997) 461–479.

52 Krishan Kumar, 'The Return of Civilization—and of Arnold Toynbee?', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 4 (2014) 815–843.

53 See e.g. Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment', *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990) 23–33; and the same author, 'The Unipolar Moment Revisited', *The National Interest* 70 (2002) 5–18; discussion of unipolarity, hegemony, and empire as typologies in Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, 'What's at Stake in the American Empire Debate', *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007) 253–271.

the powers of nationalism to acquire legitimacy. Religious and national antagonisms, contained and used instrumentally under the umbrella of Cold War contestation, re-emerged with the erosion of the overarching imperial structures.

The ‘unipolar moment’ of American preponderance invited policy makers and scholars to consider the question how empires in history consolidated and maintained their position—or how they had failed to do so. The post-Cold War flaring of conflicts raised the question how far-flung empires had managed ethnic and religious diversity. The divided sovereignty and the federal forms of law emerging in the European Union changed the perspective of scholars on earlier polities. The Holy Roman Empire, long considered a painful anachronism by German national historians, a *Nachzügler* in the formation of national states, could now be re-evaluated as a *Vorreiter* of European federalism and supranational law-making.<sup>54</sup> These multiple stimuli gave rise to an explosion of literature on empire, ranging from arcane academic discussions to popular books and political debates.<sup>55</sup> In this process, many forms of rule were grouped together under the flexible label of ‘empire’. In the 1990s the study of empires became so popular that it has been labelled the ‘imperial turn’.<sup>56</sup> Some of the complications of this renewed interest in empire will be discussed below.

The term empire, or *imperium*, originally referred primarily to the military command granted by the Roman senate to leading magistrates. The practice of styling a commander as *imperator* ended with the rise of Augustus, when the term became restricted to the Roman *princeps*. Following the demise of the Roman Empire in the West, Charlemagne’s coronation in 800 restored the title. After a brief respite, it was to be used for the suzerain of the Holy Roman Empire from 962 to 1806. During almost the entire period, the Empire held the

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54 Johannes Burkhardt, ‘Europäischer Nachzügler oder institutioneller Vorreiter? Plädoyer für einen neuen Entwicklungsdiskurs zur konstruktiven Doppelstaatlichkeit des frühmodernen Reiches’, in: Matthias Schnettger, ed., *Imperium Romanum—Irregulare Corpus—Teutscher Reichs-Staat: das Alte Reich im Verständnis der Zeitgenossen und der Historiographie* (Mainz, 2002) 297–316; a positive reappraisal of the late nineteenth-century Danube monarchy can be found in Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge Mass., 2016) and Judson, “Where Our Commonality Is Necessary ...”: Rethinking the End of the Habsburg Monarchy’, *Austrian History Yearbook* 48 (2017) 1–21.

55 See the digression of Barroso on empire in the European Parliament on July 10 2007: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-I8M1T-GgRU>.

56 See e.g. Alan Mikhail and Christine M. Philliou, ‘The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012) 721–745; see Mazlish, ‘Comparing Global History to World History’ using the term on 395.

only accepted imperial title of Europe, until the Russian Czar, Napoleon, and the Austrian Habsburgs claimed the honour—an initiative followed by others in Europe and elsewhere in the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup> The shared dominion of pope and emperor was never unchallenged; neither did it ever encompass Europe as a whole. Nevertheless, it held a universal ambition related intimately to Christianity. Other imperial leaders, more powerful than the European pope and emperor, cherished a similarly exalted and unique status. In the margins of Europe, Byzantine emperors maintained their presence in Constantinople while the imperial dignity in the West disappeared. Their legacy was taken over by the Ottomans after Mehmed II's conquest of the Second Rome. Subsequently Selim I's conquest of Cairo in 1517 also brought the mantle of the prophet to Ottoman Istanbul. While the Ottoman Sultans did not consistently use the title of Caliph in these centuries, they did in practice act as kings of kings, and henceforth would not think of accepting other princes as equals. Neither did the Chinese emperor, who was seen as ruling 'all under heaven' (*tianxia*). Emperors thus underlined their special status as the single supreme lord ruling over multiple kings. This was the assertion made in 221 BC by the King of Qin, who upon subjecting the Chinese kingdoms added the title of *huangdi* (emperor) to the title *tianzi* (son of heaven) introduced by the preceding Zhou dynasty. Charlemagne, too, claimed to rule over kings. This idea of the supreme ruler as a king of kings is reflected in the Persian titles *shahanshah* and *padishah*, adopted by later Islamic rulers. Emperors presented their dominion as unlimited and universal.<sup>58</sup> They ruled over kings and included numerous peoples in their domains.

This view of emperors as kings-of-kings, combining various peoples under their rule, returns in most modern typologies of empires. In one sentence, Stephen Howe provides a definition of empire that comprises elements recurring in almost all modern definitions:

... a large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational political unit, usually created by conquest, and divided between a dominant centre and subordinate, sometimes far distant, peripheries.<sup>59</sup>

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57 See Reynolds, 'Empires: A Problem of Comparative History' for a sensible overview and discussion, typically written by a relative outsider.

58 See Peter Fibiger Bang and Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, eds., *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History* (Cambridge, 2012).

59 Stephen Howe, *Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2002) 30.

The large area, mixed populations, and centre-periphery structure appear as the elements common to all empires. Conquest, clearly, cannot be seen as a trait characterizing all empires in every stage of their existence. Many long-lasting empires would disappear from the list should we accept as empires only polities at the time of their rise to power when they actively vanquished their neighbours. The centre-periphery relationship, moreover, has been understood in contradictory ways. Charles Tilly stresses the indirect nature of imperial rule, the inevitable presence of intermediary elites, and the relative autonomy of some of these groups. In his view, imperial rule tends to be flexible and diverse, taking different shapes in core lands, contiguous provinces, and more distant areas. Finally at the frontier, tributary allies can become provinces—and vice versa. The levels of allegiance and the forms of governance vary from the heart of the empire to its outlying regions.<sup>60</sup> Tilly's stress on indirect rule, differentiation, and negotiation is not universally accepted. Alexander Motyl, mostly examining nineteenth-century empires, stresses the 'absolutist' nature of imperial rule.<sup>61</sup>

Are empires necessarily characterized by a specific form of government? The only polity that was formally known as an empire in Europe before Napoleon's coronation in 1804, the Holy Roman or German Empire, developed into a federation of princes approaching sovereign status, under the suzerainty of a prestigious elected emperor. Much the same can be said about the political structure closest to an empire in medieval West Asia. Following the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate in the tenth century, a 'Muslim Commonwealth' appeared in which a variety of dynasties still formally recognized the overlordship of the Caliph.<sup>62</sup> Other examples show that military-commercial empires did not even necessarily have a royal or imperial leader. The Dutch and Venetian seaborne empires cultivated a form of elite self-government. The Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English polities were ruled by kings rather than by emperors, yet they did acquire overseas empires. Can the European seaborne empires, themselves a mixed gathering, be compared with Asian land-based empires under the sultan, the shah, or the son of heaven? And can this heterogeneous selection of pre-modern empires be grouped into one category with nineteenth-

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60 Charles Tilly, 'How Empires End', in: Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, eds., *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder, 1997) 1–12, definition at 3–4.

61 Alexander Motyl, 'Thinking about Empires', in: Barkey and Hagen, *After Empire*, 19–29.

62 Hugh N. Kennedy, 'The Structure of Politics in the Muslim Commonwealth', *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (Harlow, London, New York, 2004) 198–209.

century ‘imperialist’ powers dominating the world with the instruments created by the Industrial and French Revolutions? Or with twentieth-century empires based on the threat of nuclear retaliation? In terms of scale, contiguity, political organization, and economic basis, the differences surely are more striking than the similarities. Within a more limited region and period, the question of scale needs to be asked. In what ways, if any, did scale make a difference? Managing distance and diversity were challenges in particular for large-scale empires, whereas a smaller scale has been related to representative institutions.<sup>63</sup>

The literature on empires in global history displays a lack of precision. The term ‘Habsburg Empire’, for example, can be related to several distinct political entities. It may refer to the Habsburg kings of Spain (1516–1713) under whose authority an overseas world empire was conquered—governed by Bourbon princes after 1713. Yet sometimes it points to the junior Austrian branch of the Habsburgs, successors of Charles V’s younger brother Ferdinand, who ruled their own hereditary duchies and crowns in Central Europe. After the senior Spanish branch became extinct, the Austrian Habsburgs pushed back the Ottomans in South-eastern Europe: their expanded territory was redefined as the *Kaiserthum Österreich* which existed from 1804 until 1867. The last Habsburgs from 1867 onwards ruled the Danube Monarchy as king of Hungary and emperor of Austria. Additionally, the Habsburgs famously held the elective imperial dignity of the Holy Roman Empire for almost the entire period between 1440 and 1806. Most authors use the term Habsburg Empire when they refer either to the Spanish World Empire or to the Danube monarchy, the first as specimen of emerging European global empires, the second as an empire often perceived as doomed because of its anachronistic multinational structure.<sup>64</sup> The only polity that was formally labelled an empire in Europe has systematically been sidelined in the recent academic vogue for empire.

Which polities do we accept as empires? Once we follow the terms (empire or its equivalents) or concepts (kings of kings, unbounded universal authority) used by contemporaries, only a limited number of polities qualify. The varying and inconsistent criteria provided by modern scholarship, conversely, include empires without dynastic rulers or universal missions. Empires have been defined in so many ways to fit very different discussions: the remarkable story of conquests throughout history, the rise, fall, and sometimes remark-

63 See e.g. David Stasavage, *States of Credit: Size, Power, and the Development of European Polities* (Princeton, 2011).

64 See a more positive view in Judson, *Habsburg Empire*.

able persistence of Asian land empires, the rise of Europe's global hegemony, European competition in Africa and Asia, the 'End of Empire' and the concomitant rise of nation-states from the early twentieth century onwards, the rise of expansionist dictatorships in the twentieth century, various deaths and resuscitations of empire in our own age.<sup>65</sup> Clearly it is essential to limit the context of discussion before moving forward.

### 3 Eurasian Rulers and Elites

The 'imperial turn', coinciding with a waxing public interest in histories of rising and declining powers, cannot be reduced to a single coherent formula. Several elements of the muddled debate about empire need to be sorted out first. First of all, we need to ascertain whether Eurasian polities shared certain specific characteristics. Does the label 'Eurasian' imply more than geographical scope? Secondly, choices regarding the scale and units of comparison will be clarified.

Great Asian continental empires share most characteristics listed in Howe's definition: a large territory, multi-ethnicity and a plurality of religions, a conspicuous centre ruling over peripheral provinces. In addition, however, these empires were all in one way or another connected to the steppe heartlands of the continent. They originated in the conquests of nomads moving outwards from Inner Asia, they were shaped in response to such conquests, or they reflected a combination of these influences over time. From Istanbul to Beijing, and from Moscow to Delhi, the legacies of steppe peoples, most prominently the Mongols, can be traced. Great empires tended to arise in the areas labelled by Lieberman as the 'exposed zone' rather than in the 'protected zone' more distant from the Mongol onslaught.<sup>66</sup> A Turco-Mongol stamp united empires across the Asian continent; the ways in which nomadic empires adopted the administrative techniques of sedentary empires and, alternatively, the persistence of the nomadic legacies in such sedentary empires, have been discussed in numerous publications.<sup>67</sup>

65 Joseph Esherick, 'How the Qing Became China', in: Joseph Esherick, Hasan Kayali, and Eric Van Young, eds., *Empire to Nation. Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World* (Lanham, 2006) 229–259.

66 Victor Lieberman, 'Protected Rimlands and Exposed Zones: Reconfiguring Premodern Eurasia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (2008) 692–723.

67 See e.g. J.F. Fletcher, 'Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire', *Harvard Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 3–4 (1979–1980) 236–251; J.F. Fletcher, 'The Mongols:

This view of Eurasia is centred on the connections between Inner Asian nomads and the great continental empires. Alternatively, Eurasia can be understood simply as the entirety of Europe and Asia, from the British Isles to Japan and from the Northern fringes of Russia to South India. In this open geographic sense, the area encompasses both 'European sea nomads' and 'Inner Asian land nomads'.<sup>68</sup> More generally, it comprehends at least three overlapping and interacting worlds that looked upon themselves as the heart of civilization as they knew and defined it: the 'Sinosphere' of 'all under heaven' governed by the Chinese emperor or at least under the umbrella of Chinese culture; the multipolar world of Arabic-Persianate-Islamicate empires in West and South Asia; the splintered universe of Christian Europe.<sup>69</sup> None of these worlds was lastingly brought under the control of a single imperial centre; yet in each of these worlds a shared cultural-religious vocabulary facilitated communication and understanding. Points and routes of contact between the zones were numerous—moving from one extreme of Eurasia to another, however, was more difficult in terms of travel and communication than moving between contiguous zones. We exclude the European seaborne empires from our examination; they are the subject of a separate tradition of scholarship integrating other zones of the globe. While Central Asia certainly forms part of our initiative, only Jos Gommans focuses on the nomadic legacy *per se*. Our common challenge has been to study the changing relationships between rulers and elites in Europe, West and South Asia, and East Asia, the three interconnected Eurasian macro-regions centred around their own universalist creeds.

This leaves open the question of scale, and the units of comparison. The macro-regions were never consolidated under the authority of a single political centre. Which political entities would qualify as units of analysis? Should we define them on the basis of territory, population, levels of administrative

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Ecological and Social Perspectives', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 1 (1986) 11–50; Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*; more recently and with a focus on periodization and fiscal-administrative techniques: Nicola Di Cosmo, 'State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History', *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999) 1–40; see David Robinson on the Mongol legacy in Ming China: David M. Robinson, ed., *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368–1644)* (Cambridge Mass., 2008); Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge Mass., 2013). Forthcoming: Nicola Di Cosmo and Michael Maas, *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppes ca. 250–750 CE* (Cambridge, 2018).

68 Lieberman, 'Protected Rimlands and Exposed Zones', 721.

69 In this sense, Eurasia coincides with the 'old web' as outlined in McNeill and McNeill, *The Human Web*.



expertise or economic development? Conversely, contemporary perceptions could have been used to single out the truly imperial centres in each of the macro-regions. In the end we decided to leave aside such criteria and concentrate on the complications of governance in polities of diverse scale and nature.<sup>70</sup> Pre-modern empires, kingdoms, and even duchies shared many characteristics. The modern nation state, with its universal rights and duties for a population perceived as uniform and unified, contrasts not only with most definitions of empire, but more generally also with the practice of rule in pre-modern polities.<sup>71</sup> Limited infrastructures and means of communication dictated relatively loose forms of government. Diversity was accepted pragmatically and grudgingly rather than embraced as an ideal, yet the notion of governing many peoples, demonstrated through the accumulation of titles and dignities, was universally appreciated. Even a relatively small European dynastic polity, such as the Burgundian state, combined under its authority a series of smaller entities ruled under different titles and with diverse rights and privileges. Until the seventeenth century, personal unions, combining several principalities under one ruler, were common in Europe. Louis XIV, ruling a kingdom most often pictured as highly unified, explicitly addressed subjects in the plural as *mes peuples*. Negotiating with different groups and regions and granting them a variety of special rights was the standard practice, at times experienced as the curse, of most European states until the later eighteenth century.<sup>72</sup>

Daniel Nexon, one among the many voices in the current discussion on Empire, noticed the parallel between European composite states and the imperial style of relatively loose government.<sup>73</sup> He suggested the relevance of a 'dynastic-imperial pathway' for European as well as Asian polities. Expanding on Tilly's definition of empire and Elliott's understanding of European

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70 See a similar line of reasoning recently expressed by Giuseppe Marcocci, 'Too Much to Rule: States and Empires across the Early Modern World', *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 6 (2016) 511–525.

71 Pamela Crossley, 'Nationality and Difference in China: The Post-Imperial Dilemma', in: Joshua Fogel, ed., *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China* (Philadelphia, 2005) 138–158.

72 England is the exception here, with its national parliament not based as elsewhere on the delegates from regional assemblies.

73 Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, 2009) combines ideas from Tilly with the work of historians such as Koenigsberger and Elliott, e.g. J.H. Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', *Past & Present* 137, no. 1 (1992) 48–71; H.G. Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi. Essays in Early Modern History* (London, 1986).

'composite monarchies', Nexon underlined the presence of intermediary elites, the differentiated forms of indirect rule, and the primary orientation of each region on the centre rather than laterally on other regions. In empires as well as in dynastic composite monarchies, the political centre functioned as a hub, a meeting point for the realm as a whole. Nexon suggests that the dynastic centre could speak with many voices, if necessary adopting a different register for every region, because of the sparse lateral contacts among regional elites. The Manchu rulers of Qing China offer an example of this practice: they addressed China proper with the well-established language of Confucianism and literati culture, but engaged the peoples in the periphery on the basis of shared Manchu-Mongol cultural legacies. Yet even the Austrian Habsburgs, in their far smaller portfolio of Central European territories, adapted to the different traditions of their subjects. In addition, most dynastic centres did adopt and broadcast an overarching artistic-cultural-religious style as the hallmark of their authority, in architecture, dress, or speech, which allowed locals to adopt the central style without forfeiting their own idioms and agendas.<sup>74</sup>

Global historians who focus on connections and zones of contact have expressed serious misgivings about comparative history. Comparative historians, on the other hand, do not necessarily endorse the need for global history. Globalists who focus on economic divergence, finally, do not always integrate primary sources in the languages from the areas they study. We hope to combine the best of two worlds: the cultural nuance and proximity to contemporaries' experiences foregrounded by the connected history paradigm, and the power of the bird's eye view that can only come with comparison. Our questions privilege comparison rather than contact. Without the benefit of contextual knowledge, best acquired through language competences, primary sources, and a focus on actors and their worldviews, global history remains an empty shell; without the questions emerging only as a result of a distanced comparative perspective, global history is reduced to an accumulation of individual cases. Our challenge will be to persistently combine these perspectives.

This book can be read as a coherent statement on our theme, yet it combines contrasting choices and methods. Every contribution, written against the background of the author's specialized knowledge and in view of the specific themes discussed, chooses a different emphasis and varies in terms of

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74 See examples in Kurz, 'Gracious Sultan, Grateful Subjects'; Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton, 2012).

geographical scope or period. These themes, choices, and perspectives of the chapters will be outlined below.

The first chapter flows from Jeroen Duindam's earlier work on the court.<sup>75</sup> How could this conspicuous centre attract diverse audiences and attach them lastingly to the dynastic endeavour? Who could control this process, and who profited from it? Duindam selectively adopts a wider comparative perspective. African examples show that some aspects of the court, such as redistribution and ritual, can be found anywhere. Moreover, they reveal that comparison disregarding contiguity, scale, and development can lead to relevant outcomes. The responsibility for rain and cosmic phenomena and the taboo on meeting the ruler's gaze or using his name can be found in the Chinese empire as well as in African kingship. Yet wholly different patterns of governance existed here: imperial China with its multi-tiered hierarchy of office-holders operating at distance through written communication versus African smaller-scale interactive and oral 'open-air government'. The chapter on courts, moreover, aims to move comparison beyond establishing similarities and differences: contrasting practises are reassessed as functional equivalents, similarities inspected to reveal profound particularities. At this second level of examination comparison renders more powerful results. Duindam's chapter uses examples from the whole period, but there is a preponderance of the centuries after 1500.

In the second chapter, Peter Rietbergen, whose early research dealt with the papal bureaucracy, traces the all-important relationship between religious power and imperial rule.<sup>76</sup> Supreme rule was always, in one way or another, related to religious worldviews. Moreover, this nexus was an essential ingredient both in the representation of rulership and in the willingness of the populace to abide by their prince's wishes. Rietbergen questions modern *Trennungsdenken*: religion cannot easily be separated from other human pursuits. Modern attitudes towards religion, moreover, can complicate global comparison. Secular scholars may be tempted to downplay the impact of religion, or

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75 See e.g. Jeroen Duindam, 'Royal Courts', in: Hamish Scott, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History. 1350–1750. Volume 11: Cultures and Power* (Oxford, 2015) 440–477; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals 1550–1780* (Cambridge, 2003); Duindam, *Dynasties. A Global History of Power 1300–1800* (Cambridge, 2016) and at <http://www.brill.com/publications/rulers-elites> titles in the Brill series Rulers & Elites.

76 See e.g. P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, *Pausen, prelaten, bureaucraten: geschiedenis van het pausschap en de Pauselijke Staat in de zeventiende eeuw* (Nijmegen, 1983); Rietbergen, *Religion and Culture in Baroque Rome: Barberini Propaganda Policies* (Leiden, 2005).

see it largely in instrumental terms. Conversely, scholars who identify strongly with certain religious positions in past and present may find it difficult to treat holy writ with academic distance. These diverging attitudes, furthermore, sometimes overlap with the contrast between ‘the West and the Rest’. While Rietbergen follows the geographical scope and period of the project, he views his theme through the actions and attitudes of specific powerholders. His cast of personalities is concentrated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Jos Gommans, who wrote extensively on warfare and soldiery in the frontier area between India, Iran, and Central Asia, in the third chapter considers the ‘people of the sword’.<sup>77</sup> This elite was essential for all major pre-modern polities to secure compliance through the threat of violence. Gommans’s chapter provides a counterpoint to the project’s comparative priority: it moves closer to the connected paradigm. He charts the rise, spread, and concomitant change of the particularly successful Chinggisid warband during its march through Eurasia. How did the encounters of the Chinggisid warband with sedentary polities on the margins of the Central Eurasian steppe change the relationship between rulers and warriors? Gommans takes into account the self-perception of the groups he examines, and uses terms that were meaningful for contemporaries. Also, his chapter maintains the centrality of one region: the Inner Asian military experience is the lens through which other regions are perceived—a procedure more often used implicitly for the European example.

The ‘people of the pen’, the administrators supporting princely power, are examined by Maaïke van Berkel, whose published work deals with the Abbasid administration as well as with the Mamluks.<sup>78</sup> Together, the chapters of Gommans and Van Berkel cover the two most essential *corps intermédiaires*.<sup>79</sup> Van

77 See e.g. Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire: c. 1710–1780* (Leiden, 1995); Jos J.L. Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and Highroads to Empire 1500–1700* (London, 2002); Jos J.L. Gommans and D.H.A. Kolff, eds., *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia 1000–1800* (Oxford, 2001).

78 Maaïke van Berkel, ‘Accountants and Men of Letters. Status and Position of Civil Servants in Early Tenth Century Baghdad’ (PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2003); Maaïke van Berkel, Nadia El Cheikh, Hugh Kennedy and Letizia Osti, *Crisis and Continuity at the ‘Abbāsīd Court. Formal and Informal Politics in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–932)* (Leiden, 2013); see also on the Mamluks e.g. Maaïke van Berkel, ‘Opening up a World of Knowledge. Mamluk Encyclopaedias and their Readers’, in: J. König, ed., *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2013) 357–378.

79 It should be noted that neither in these two contributions, nor in Rietbergen’s chap-

Berkel pursues Gommans's focus on self-perception and identity by looking at the people of the pen through a *Quellengattung*: advice literature. Do these literary emanations of elite administrators in our various macro-regions reveal similar ideals? How did elite clerks position themselves vis-à-vis the prince and other elite groupings? And, finally, how can these self-perceptions be placed in the social constellations from which they emerged, and what do they tell us about legitimacy and compliance? Van Berkel highlights the strong position of literate elite clerks throughout Asia and notes the tardy and hesitant arrival of their compeers in Europe. In line with her previous research expertise, she restricts her comparative analysis to the centuries before 1600, ending at the point where Europe was entering a phase of accelerated state building and government by paper.

Our collective work, starting with the central dynastic establishment and its relationship with spiritual power, before moving to the intermediaries of sword and pen, ends with two shorter chapters: a focused comparison of two dynasties and an examination of kingship narratives. Marie Favereau and Liesbeth Geevers outline the 'construction' of two dynasties with profoundly different reputations: the Habsburgs and the Jochids (Chinggis Khan's Golden Horde descendants). Can we view these two lines of rulers as variants of a single concept, or do they reflect incommensurable ideas and practises? The sustained co-operative effort allows the chapter to stay close to primary sources in the relevant languages, while at the same time it raises several relevant comparative observations. Finally, Richard van Leeuwen's comparative chapter on narratives involving royalty shows how many themes of this book recur in fiction.<sup>80</sup> Van Leeuwen's comprehensive view of narratives reflects to some extent the popular perception of rulership. Moreover, his chapter on princes, heroes, viziers, and concubines in narratives moves beyond the comparative: it unveils connections between the geographical regions of our project. Similar themes recur in many places in a variety of shapes—a fact that could be established with relative ease, but remains more difficult to explain in detail.

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ter, do religious intermediary elites occupy centre stage. This reflects practical reasons rather than any sound methodological consideration: we regret the absence of a chapter devoted to this group. This conclusion became clear in the course of our project, when we encountered major differences in function and status of religious specialists in the macro-regions of Eurasia. Clearly, these positions shifted too, see e.g. A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign. Sacred Kingship & Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012) on the Mongol impact on the relations between rulers and 'ulama'.

80 See van Leeuwen's *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires 1300–1800* (Leiden and Boston, 2017) also published in the context of our joint research programme.

Van Leeuwen's chapter appropriately brings together themes discussed throughout the book and prepares the ground for the conclusion. Which shared aspects of rulership can be traced across Eurasia, which divergences strike the eye, and what can they tell us about relations between rulers and elites? The conclusion provides answers and reviews the relevance of our experiment for current paradigms in global history.

# The Court as a Meeting Point: Cohesion, Competition, Control

*Jeroen Duindam*

## Introduction: Emerging Bureaucratic States versus Stagnant Palace Polities?

In the grand narrative of European modernization the court was seen as a relic of the past. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians gave pride of place to specialized institutions of government and to representative bodies limiting the powers of the ruler, appreciated as the heralds of modernity. The rise of powerful 'absolutist' kings figured in traditional historiography as a necessary but transient phase that reduced restive nobilities to obedience, providing the foundation for a rational state apparatus that would soon get rid of its monarchical topping.<sup>1</sup>

Norbert Elias's *The Court Society*, largely written in the early 1930s but first published in 1969, inserted the court into this classic view of state-formation.<sup>2</sup> Elias's powerful interpretation of the French court under Louis XIV soon became the standard for scholarship on the court in many periods and regions, yet at the same time, its empirical basis and main conclusions were questioned by specialists of the French court.<sup>3</sup> A comparative digression on the court, therefore, needs to start with this influential work. Elias outlined how a variety of mechanisms in French court life helped the ruler to gradually humble the great nobles, making them dependent on royal largesse and isolating them

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1 See a recent statement of this view in Martin Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge, 1999) many passages, but a particularly relevant statement on 130 (cited later in this chapter on 118).

2 Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford, 1983 [1969]).

3 See discussion and bibliography in Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power. Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam, 1995); studies of the court taking Elias as point of orientation: A.J.S. Spawforth, *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge, 2007); David Potter and Richard Talbert, eds., *American Journal of Philology* 132, no. 1 (2011) *Special Issue Classical Courts and Courtiers*; Lloyd Llewellyn, *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559–331 BCE* (Edinburgh, 2013).

from positions of power. This view of the court as a gilded cage for nobles was the key example of a mechanism postulated by Elias in his *Civilizing Process*.<sup>4</sup> The expanding powers of state and king ‘domesticated’ nobles at court (*Fremdzwang*, external pressures), where they gradually embraced the norms of behaviour imposed on them (*Selbstzwang*, internalised pressure). Court nobles lost political power but became champions of social mores soon to be emulated by other groups.

The assumption that court office was largely apolitical would quickly be exposed as an anachronism.<sup>5</sup> Most nobles serving their prince as privileged domestics combined high rank with political office. Access to the figure at the heart of the dynastic edifice was a prime opportunity: even lower-ranking domestics could use their intimacy with the prince to recommend their friends for benefits. The inner sphere of the court was a political domain because it entailed proximity to the redistribution of the wealth and perks accumulated at the centre.<sup>6</sup> Scholarship on the early modern European court in the last two decades has made abundantly clear that political history needs to reintegrate the domestic setting of monarchy, adding relatives, spouses, and servants to its analytical palette.

This critical response to Elias’s position immediately clarifies the relevance of wider comparison. Classic orientalist views inflated powers of Asian princes and pointed to the pervasive influence of their inner court favourites. Conversely, classic views of the European state disregarded the domestic setting of rulership and concentrated their attention on clerks, councils, and assemblies. Surely, however, in all realms, the inner component played a role, whereas ‘outer court’ bodies of advisors were present in Asia as well as in Europe.<sup>7</sup> In his wide-ranging and erudite *History of Government*, Samuel Finer classifies Asian dynastic courts under the rubric of ‘palace polities’, where ‘decision-making

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4 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford, 1994 [1939]).

5 This point was made by David Starkey in several influential contributions challenging Geoffrey Elton’s view of the ‘Tudor Revolution in Government’, see Starkey, ‘Representation Through Intimacy. A Study in the Symbolism of Monarchy and Court Office in Early-Modern England’, in: Ioan Lewis, ed., *Symbols and Sentiments. Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism* (London, 1977) 187–224; Starkey, *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London and New York, 1987).

6 See the powerful and provocative analysis by Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Die Nase der Kleopatra. Geschichte im Lichte mikropolitischer Forschung. Ein Versuch’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 293, no. 3 (2011) 633–666 and recently the synthesis by Jens Ivo Engels, *Die Geschichte der Korruption* (Frankfurt, 2014).

7 See, in this volume: Maaïke van Berkel, ‘The People of the Pen: Self-Perceptions of Status and Role in the Administration of Empires and Polities’.



rests with one individual', influenced by domestics and consorts. Finer subsumes European absolute monarchies under the same heading, yet points to the rule of law and the presence of intermediate bodies as setting these courts apart from the Asian examples.<sup>8</sup> It remains to be seen whether government institutions around the prince were invariably less independent in Asian polities. Chinese administrators were highly deferential in their dealings with the Son of Heaven and always remained subject to severe punishments, yet as a group they dominated government and held a much-respected place in society. Elsewhere in this volume, Maaïke van Berkel shows that all other major Asian polities included differentiated government services outside of the domestic sphere, most of them with a longer historical pedigree than their European counterparts.

Another aspect of Elias's model needs to be mentioned. Founding emperors in the style of Zhu Yuanzhang or Napoleon Bonaparte inevitably were strong figures: they fought and manipulated to reach and secure their leading positions. Once dynasties were established and accepted, however, they could never count on the strength and wisdom of individual scions. By fixing rules of succession, they prevented bloody interregna, but risked putting weaklings on the throne.<sup>9</sup> Elias raised a fundamental question: how can mediocre characters ascending to power through hereditary succession rule effectively? His examination of the French court can be read as an elaboration of Max Weber's concept of *Veralltäglichung*: a study of power in routine settings, the reverse image of charismatic personal rule in phases of turbulent change.<sup>10</sup> Elias pointed to a number of subtle mechanisms related to the competition among elites at court, and to the potential of princes to rule by manipulating rivalries and balances of power and prestige. Paradoxically, however, these

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8 Samuel E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times* (Oxford and New York, 1997) vol. 1, quote on 38, typology developed 34–58 with palace, forum, nobility, and church polities and their hybrid forms. A more marked contrast is developed in vol. II and III between European modernizing states and Asian palace polities, see e.g. III, 1455–1460, where the rule of law and the presence of intermediate bodies are defined as main differences between Asian and European forms of absolutism, and III, 1567 on the reduced variants after the French Revolution.

9 See the mirror image of this argument in Munis D. Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719* (Cambridge, 2012) who suggests that the fierce succession struggles in the Mughal empire, if not repeated too frequently, reinvigorated imperial power; see below on Ottoman and Safavid practices.

10 Weber, 'Die Veralltäglichung des Charisma und ihre Wirkung', *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 144–148.

mechanisms work only with mastermind-kings, versatile and perspicacious princes who manipulated friend and foe in a continuous, polite battle of gestures and phrases. By definition, rulers were the lynchpins of their courts, yet many among them proved unwilling or unable to exert the authority attributed to them. Fixed succession could never consistently produce conquering heroes or mastermind-kings: in fact many reigning kings left the business of ruling to their advisors and domestics. Even formidable characters were vulnerable in youth and old age.

The heavy and contradictory demands placed on the shoulders of kings, inculcated by their tutors with the expectations of tradition, were enough to intimidate talented youngsters into frightened passivity, or, conversely, to stir others to rebel violently against the constraints inherent in kingship. In his depiction of the Balinese 'icon king' Clifford Geertz may have exaggerated the passivity of the ritual king at the silent core of a whirlwind of power and competition.<sup>11</sup> His view, however, helps us to take distance from the common overstatement of royal power, in its classic 'absolutist' form or in Elias's more nuanced variant of divide-and-rule. While the position of the king, sultan, or emperor could be unassailable at least in theory, the person on the throne was never necessarily the mover and shaker of his realm. The power of kings, therefore, should never be taken for granted. Neither can it be inferred from official sources generated by the court, presenting ideals rather than practices. The task of finding out who, in practice, wielded power behind the smoke screen of royal omnipotence is perplexing but essential.

This essay examines courts across Eurasia as meeting points, as the hubs of pre-modern polities, where diverse elites converged and interacted with the prince. Did the interaction among these elite groups and their interplay with the ruler help to maintain cohesion in the realm? Did the ritual occasions tied to court life implicate the wider population? How can we understand the position of the ruler, always at the centre, but not necessarily in control?

Comparison often starts with establishing certain similarities; it then tends to notice marked differences, and finally tries to offer an explanation for these observations. This essay aims to push the process of comparative examination a bit further. The first section, 'Establishing similarities', recapitulates some common features of court life on a global scale that provide a basis for comparison. After this general outline, a second section on 'Examining divergences'

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11 Clifford Geertz, *Negara. The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980) 130; see a thoughtful critique in Stanley J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge Mass., 1985) 319–321.

considers with greater precision four aspects setting apart courts in Europe, West and South Asia, and East Asia. While these divergences show that courtly establishments in Eurasia cannot be forced into a uniform mould, the examination suggests that, notwithstanding the variety of forms, certain shared patterns can be recognized. The third section moves to the main purpose of this essay: 'Identifying functional equivalents' of courts globally. The questions asked have a universal ring: they are relevant for most pre-modern polities and numerous examples can be found in the world-historical record.<sup>12</sup> I consciously include African examples outside of our Eurasian perimeter and disconnected from most shared experiences. African chiefdoms, usually smaller in scale, with a limited role at best for script and print, and a marked variety of kinship systems including matrilineal descent, help to make explicit the consequences of literacy, scale, and descent. Moreover, African examples allow me to put into perspective clichés looming in the background of all East-West comparisons. The three themes singled out for discussion in the third section are all equally relevant for our book's central question: how, if at all, did these inflated households bring together the elites of extended empires and composite monarchies?

To be sure, courts never approached in practice the dominance they proclaimed in word, image, and performance. Yet in most cases, as will become clear, the court was the pivot of a world, by functioning as a meeting place, as a hub of distribution, as a stage for the ritual performance of legitimate power, and as an arena of political contestation. This essay makes explicit which functions can be found at all courts, notwithstanding the different shapes they took in various parts of Eurasia and elsewhere. Conversely, it shows that power balances at court cannot be captured in a single formula. Regional-cultural diversity, political contingency, and the huge variation in personalities on the throne forbid rigid model-making. Astute princes wielding power were succeeded by 'icon-kings' who were at the mercy of their environment—and vice versa. Contemporaries defined the alternation of integration and devolution, strength and weakness, as the essence of dynasty—and they may have a point. The rising ruler's dependents tended to turn into vested elites acting as local bosses, protected by distance and the limited means of communication. It is hardly surprising that most pre-modern political thinkers adopted a cyclical model. Their views were based on practical observation as well as on profoundly normative expectations.

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<sup>12</sup> See Duindam, *Dynasties*.

## 1 Establishing Similarities

Looking back on millennia of world history the ubiquity of dynastic rule strikes the eye. Most larger and socially differentiated polities pledged obedience to a single, usually male, figure. These leaders more often than not were able to transfer their status to close relatives: rule tended to become a family business. Heredity was one among many factors determining accession to high office, and where it prevailed, it could be organized in multiple ways.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, in most cases a single kin group, or a limited number of alternating groups, proved able to monopolize paramount rulership for several generations. The predominance of power arrangements based on dynastic rule raises the question what, if anything, was shared by these very diverse polities. One common denominator of all dynastic polities was the domestic establishment comprised of the ruler with his spouses, relatives, followers, servants, and advisors. In languages across the world, we find terms for this extended household and its abode. Often, the terms indicating the dwelling and retinue of the ruler, were, by extension, also used for supreme government and sovereign power.<sup>14</sup>

Several groups can be found around all dynastic rulers: consorts, kin and children, domestic servants, soldiers, and administrators. The court, a household organized around a paramount prince, was a consistent presence in dynastic rule. Its defining element was the constant entanglement of domestic life with government, both centred on the ruler and hence necessarily overlapping in one way or another.<sup>15</sup> Across Eurasia the domestic setup around

13 Duindam, *Dynasties*, chapter 2; Jack Goody, ed., *Succession to High Office* (Cambridge, 1966); Robbins Burling, *The Passage of Power. Studies in Political Succession* (New York and London, 1974).

14 See terms indicating both the spatial and social dimension: English-French *cour(t)*, German *Hof*, Russian *dvor* and Persian *saray*; other terms refer primarily to space: castle-gate-threshold-curtain-throne: Arabic *dar*, *qasr*, *qal'a*; Persian *darbar*, *sara parda*, Ottoman *bab-ı Hümayun*, *kapı*, Persian *ta(k)ht*, or, conversely, to the retinue: Arabic *bayt*, *hashiya*, *khassakiya*. See also terms referring to specific occasions, used as pars pro toto for court life: Chinese *chao* (morning audience; court, dynasty); Persian *dīwan-i am*; *dīwan-i khass* (private-public audience hall, audience). In many court traditions terms can be found that indicate the inner and outer domains of the court, Chinese: *nei-wai*; Ottoman: *enderun-birun*; Persian: *bargah-dargah*. Many terms used for the court hold strong associations with sovereignty, justice, high culture, vanity, and ambition. On Abbasid terminology see Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'Court and Courtiers: A Preliminary Investigation of Abbasid Terminology', in: Albrecht Fuess, Jan-Peter Hartung, eds., *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (London and New York, 2011) 80–90.

15 See the recent overview of courts in the period 500–1500 by Patrick J. Geary, et al., 'Courtly

the ruler shared several characteristics. These establishments catered for common human needs, organizing activities familiar for any household: sleeping and reproduction; provisioning, eating and hospitality; devotion and ritual; mobility, security, entertainment and hunting. Princely households pursued such common activities in styles from modest to gargantuan, fitting the status of their lord and the expectations of their environments. Staffs reflecting these activities can be found at all courts, and there is some resonance even at the level of individual officeholders—doorkeepers, chamberlains, cupbearers, food tasters, physicians, tutors, bodyguards, swordbearers, quartermasters. Specific terms for staffs and officers overlap more strongly within each of the three macro-regions examined in this book: Europe, Islamicate West and South Asia, and East Asia.

All European courts included three staffs led by high noble dignitaries responsible for the chamber, the table, and the stables, with auxiliary departments catering for devotion, hunt, security, and mobility.<sup>16</sup> All court staffs were overseen by high-placed domestic officers, the chamberlain, the steward (majordomo), and the marshal (master of the horse). These dignitaries prided themselves on their proximity to the ruler in their respective spheres of competence: the chamber, the hall, and outing beyond the perimeter of the palace. They jealously guarded the boundaries of their domains against their colleagues' infringements. While the steward in most instances developed hierarchical pre-eminence, the chamberlain and the master of the horse would never easily acknowledge his supremacy, viewing themselves as subject only to royal command. The domains of the chamberlain, steward, and marshal to some extent match the topography of other courts, with each office relating to certain spaces and responsibilities. Chamberlains watched over the inner sanctum of the ruler's bedroom, more secluded than other parts of the court, and associated with the presence of women as well as movable riches. Stewards managed the outer courtyards and halls of the palace that accommodated administrative institutions and included spaces for conspicuous hospitality as well as ritual celebrations. By extension they played a role as senior advisors and held responsibility for the logistics or 'economy' of the court. Marshals, finally,

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Cultures: Western Europe, Byzantium, the Islamic world, India, China, and Japan', in: Benjamin Z. Kedar, Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *The Cambridge World History. Volume 5: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500 CE–1500 CE* (Cambridge, 2015) chapter 7, 179–205, at 182–189.

16 Duindam, 'Royal Courts', in: Hamish Scott, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History. 1350–1750. Volume II: Cultures and Power* (Oxford, 2015) 440–477.

supervised the mobility of the court: stables, horses, movement, and accommodation during travel. The marshal represented the military character of the court.

These three domains—sleeping quarters, women and wealth; hospitality and government; mobility and the military—can be found elsewhere in very different institutional settings, mostly with a range of other services attached.<sup>17</sup> Households shared many of the characteristics of the ‘warband’ discussed elsewhere in this book.<sup>18</sup> The retainers following their prince could form the heart of armies, and easily shifted from the domestic to the military mode, from the palace to the tent encampment, from the banqueting hall to the battlefield. Turco-Mongol dynasties across Eurasia, whether or not they had relocated to palace compounds in urban capitals, cultivated the martial style of their nomadic forebears. European courts, into the seventeenth century, were accommodated during travels and campaigns through quartering, as was typical for armies in the same period. These were largely male and quite mobile establishments.<sup>19</sup> Discipline and hierarchy were equally relevant in the army and at court; in Europe marshals and provosts served in both domains. However, the court can also bring to mind the well-ordered, regular rhythms and the productive capacity of the monastery rather than the dynamism of a mobile army. All courts followed a seasonal calendar of ritual-liturgical activities, and many were centres of production as well as consumption. The court tradition of the ‘Sinosphere’ resembled the monastic model more closely than did most West Asian, South Asian, or European traditions.<sup>20</sup>

Repeated processes of consolidation and institutionalization changed mobile households into more differentiated and sedentary establishments in all parts of Eurasia, with the possible exception of the Central Asian Steppe. Yet notwithstanding these tendencies, courts across the continent retained a fluid character, changing in numbers, composition, and often location in

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17 See Geary, ‘Courtly Cultures’, 188 for a different division, listing *aula*, *cubiculum*, and *capella*—and omitting stables. The chapter contrasts the small and mobile European courts with the bigger, more differentiated and mostly sedentary establishments in Asia, a situation no longer equally valid in the period discussed here, characterized by consolidation in Europe and the rise of post-nomadic empires in West and South Asia.

18 In this volume: Jos Gommans, ‘The Warband in the Making of Eurasian Empires’.

19 See Duindam, ‘Royal Courts’.

20 In this volume, Peter Rietbergen, ‘Not of this World ...? Religious Power and Imperial Rule in Eurasia, ca Thirteenth – ca Eighteenth Century’; Joshua E. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere. Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge and London, 2009).

the course of every year according to seasonal-ritual calendars.<sup>21</sup> The seasonal and occasional movement of people to the court contributed to its frequent transformations. All groups keen to further their interests at the heart of power were likely to come to court: to join hunting parties, banquets, and rituals; to present reports to their superiors and await appointment to new offices according to settled administrative routines; to contact other elites to forge alliances; or to seek redress and support from the ruler and his advisors. Great ephemeral solemn or festive shows recurred in the annual rhythm of the court and attracted numerous participants and onlookers. Everywhere court staffs prepared special occasions, during which the shape and the composition of the court would change substantially. The court was a magnet attracting numerous groups for a variety of reasons, a core establishment that arranged its own metamorphoses, a permanent institution creating ephemeral occasions.

## 2 Examining Divergences

Courts across Eurasia fit the format of the household writ large and hence show a certain consistency in organization and personnel. Despite great variation, moreover, they all share two defining characteristics: firstly, the presence and intermingling around the court of domestic, administrative, and military elites; secondly, the persistence of ephemeral occasions alongside institutionalized routines. Moving beyond these general, initial observations, however, marked differences strike the eye—some of these will be elaborated on below.

### 2.1 *Inner and Outer: The Impact of Polygyny*

European travellers visiting courts in Asia thought they recognized familiar staffs and offices, and indeed often used European terminology to describe officeholders.<sup>22</sup> Yet wherever they went, they noted with dismay or fascination the presence of numerous dynastic spouses and concubines. Nowhere did they

21 Michael G. Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring & the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785* (Cambridge Mass., 2007).

22 See Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum exoticarum politico-physico-mediciarum fasciculi v* (Lemgo, 1712) 78–88 with the *nasir* translated as grand master and the *mehter* as chamberlain, see also Walther Hinz, ed., *Engelbert Kaempfer am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs 1684–1685* (Leipzig, 1940) 79–87 using German titles; Engelbert Kaempfer, *De beschryving van Japan, behelsende een verhaal van den ouden en tegenwoordigen staat en regeering van dat ryk ... en van hunnen koophandel met de Nederlanders en de Chineesen. Benevens eene beschryving van het koningryk Siam* (Amsterdam, 1729) 371–385, courtiers at 379.

find a match for the European-Christian practice of monogamous marriage. Polygyny was the rule among dynasties globally, and monogamous marriage occurred only as a temporary exception based on the preferences of individual rulers. As a consistent practice required by tradition, monogamous marriage in ruling families did not extend beyond Byzantium and Russia, at least not before the worldwide exportation of Christian beliefs and practices. The Solomonids of Ethiopia offer the remarkable example of a Christian dynasty openly practicing polygyny. The spread of monogamy did not proceed placidly. The abolition of concubinage by the king of Congo during the conversion to Catholicism in the 1490s was hotly contested, not least by the women in the king's household—and in practice combinations of marriage and concubinage seem to have persisted here.<sup>23</sup> Most dynasties combined concubinage with marriage: differentiating between a single empress and various levels of consorts was common in China and Japan, whereas most West and South Asian Islamicate rulers would have several higher-ranking favourites in addition to more numerous concubines.<sup>24</sup> To be sure, European princes were not necessarily more virtuous or chaste than their Asian counterparts: the normative canon of Christianity did not in practice prevent them from engaging in extramarital liaisons. The offspring of such encounters prohibited by the church, however, as a rule were ineligible for succession.<sup>25</sup>

The combinations of polygynous marriage and concubinage at courts from Istanbul to Edo witnessed by European visitors elicited moral censure as well as sensual daydreams. Harems and odalisques figured prominently in European fantasies about the Orient, and contributed to common views of Asian courts as stagnant 'palace politics', often contrasted with dynamic European states inexorably moving towards modernity.<sup>26</sup> These overstated contrasts have not been helpful, yet the fact remains that polygynous dynastic reproduction affected

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23 John K. Thornton, 'Elite Women in the Kingdom of Kongo: Historical Perspectives on Women's Political Power', *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 3 (2006) 437–460, at 441–442; John K. Thornton, 'The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491–1750', *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 2 (1984) 147–167, at 158–159.

24 See Keith McMahon's two volumes on women throughout Chinese dynastic history, providing rich detail and outlining gradual changes over time: *Women Shall Not Rule: Imperial Wives and Concubines in China from Han to Liao* (Lanham, 2013) and *Celestial Women: Imperial Wives and Concubines in China from Song to Qing* (Lanham, 2016).

25 See Georges Duby, *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre. Le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris, 1981), particularly 27–59 on the clash between priests and warriors in the imposition of monogamy in France. Note the rise of the Iberian bastard-dynasties of Avis and Trastámara.

26 See Finer, *History of Government*, vol. 1, 38 for his first brief description of the 'palace



the spatial and institutional structures of the court. The presence at court of either a single ruling lady, or a multitude of women had a powerful impact on succession as well as on the organization of the court.

The households of male rulers in Europe included few if any women—a handful of washerwomen and sometimes singers. Women were present only in the households of female members of the ruling house: queens-regnant, spouses, dowagers, and princesses.<sup>27</sup> In their chambers, these ladies were served by a few dozen maids, ladies-in-waiting, and senior female officeholders. However, even these queens' and princesses' households included a majority of men in all other staffs: only the chamber remained a strictly female domain. The queen's household was usually located in the same palace, with the bedrooms of king and queen meeting at the centre of two separate apartments.<sup>28</sup> The women serving the queen would mingle with their male counterparts, gentleman-servants or chamberlains in the royal household. Levels of separation and interaction vary strongly in Europe. In the German context, and also at the Spanish-Habsburg court, the female household remained relatively secluded in its own compartment of the palace, guarded by female officeholders chaperoning all contacts with males. The repeated issuing of regulations for the *Frauenzimmer*, a German term indicating both the women and their location, suggests that the ladies at times refused to comply. The Burgundian-French-Italian court styles allowed more movement to women and did not drastically curtail the contact between men and women. Visiting the Burgundian court in 1477, the Habsburg heir and future emperor Maximilian noted to his surprise that: '... Women were not confined during day or night, and the whole house is full of young ladies ... who are allowed to walk around everywhere.'<sup>29</sup> While there were marked differences in tradition, at all courts women and men were allowed to mix at certain moments; also, queens and their female following formed part of court ceremony and public activity. The *Frauenzim-*

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polity' under which he also grouped 'absolutist' European kingdoms, including Louis XIV's France.

27 Katrin Keller, *Hofdamen: Amtsträgerinnen im Wiener Hofstaat des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 2005); Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben, eds., *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting across Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston, 2013); Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini, eds., *Das Frauenzimmer: Die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 2000).

28 Dowagers more often lived in separate residences.

29 Victor Felix von Kraus, ed., *Maximilians I vertraulicher Briefwechsel mit Sigmund Prüschenk Freiherr zu Stettenberg nebst einer Anzahl zeitgenössischer Briefe* (Innsbruck, 1875) 28. I thank Kim Ragetli for bringing this quote to my attention.

*mer* was never wholly isolated, and it was increasingly integrated into court life during the early modern age. Numbers of women at court, moreover, remained limited.

Wherever dynastic reproduction was based on polygyny, many women were present—although harems rarely reached the astronomical figures cited by some contemporaries and recurring in the literature.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, these women were almost always kept in seclusion, in the innermost part of the palace. This separate female division could be quite substantial. Like the European *Frauenzimmer*, the harem would include a hierarchy of women. Motherhood was the best claim to female authority anywhere: yet high status was shared either with the ruler's spouses where concubinage was combined with marriage, or with the most favoured concubine in the absence of marriage—as was common in the Ottoman case.<sup>31</sup> Female relatives of the dynasty as a rule occupied the same quarters. Below these high-ranking ladies stood a more numerous group of maids, among whom only a minority were groomed for intimate relations with the prince. The number of sexually active favourites could rise to several tens during the reign of one ruler; the number of maids reached hundreds, and in exceptional cases thousands. They performed menial work and were trained in a variety of pursuits, pertaining to the tasks at hand, and related only marginally to the distant possibility of pleasing the prince. Training could include household chores, needlework, music, literature, and sometimes martial arts.<sup>32</sup>

What consequences did the presence of a harem have for the structure of the court? It required a rigidly gendered separation between the female inner court, where the prince was the only adult male who could enter, and the male outer court. At the European court the ruler's chamber was an integral part of the court's daily activities; councils met here, and guests would be received if

30 See Patricia Ebrey on this question, 'Rethinking the Imperial Harem. Why were there so many palace women?', in: *Women and the Family in Chinese History* (London, 2002) 177–193; overstatements in Laura Betzig, 'Eusociality: From the First Foragers to the First States', *Human Nature* 25, no. 1 (2014) 1–5 and Betzig, 'Despotism and Differential Reproduction: A Cross-Cultural Correlation of Conflict Asymmetry, Hierarchy, and Degree of Polygyny', *Ethology and Sociobiology* 3, no. 4 (1982) 209–221; on the Mughal Harem see Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge, 2005) 166 and Mubarak Ali Khan, 'The Court of the Great Mughuls: Based on Persian Sources' (PhD dissertation, Bochum, 1976) 98–104.

31 Anne Walthall, ed., *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2008); Bao Hua Hsieh, *Concubinage and Servitude in Late Imperial China* (London, 2014).

32 Engelbert Kaempfer am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs, 183; on women hunting, see Thomas Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia, 2006) 129–130.

not in the bedchamber, as was common at the French court, then in any case in the preceding rooms of the apartment. While women had their own spatial domain here too, they took part in many mixed social activities and formal ceremonies. The presence of the princely apartment in the secluded harem section of the court made it easier for princes to withdraw among women and eunuchs, unapproachable for their male companions and advisors.<sup>33</sup> The sharp divide between male and female zones at harem-based courts was most commonly guarded by ‘unbearded’ males: eunuchs. This castrated ‘third sex’ was a frequent presence at courts in Asia and Africa, where it almost always served in the capacity of harem supervisor. Following the practices of imperial Rome, monogamous Christian Byzantium, too, included eunuchs. They served not only at court, but also in the army and even in the church. Among Byzantine court eunuchs, the palace chamberlain or *cubicularius* came closest to the position held by eunuchs elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> Conversely, in polygynous Japan, eunuchs were absent, and the inner-outer divide was guarded by male and female monks (*bozu*).<sup>35</sup>

Eunuch guardians gained a reputation for poisonous intrigue—a cliché of court histories worldwide. One Byzantine chronicler stated that ‘When a viper bit a eunuch, it was the viper that died’.<sup>36</sup> The strongly negative view of the inner court also implicated the women present. Gender bias played

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- 33 Pal Fodor, ‘Sultan, Imperial Council, Grand Vizier: Changes in the Ottoman Ruling Elite and the Formation of the Grand Vizierial Telhis’, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47, no. 1/2 (1994) 67–85; Günhan Börekcı and Şefik Peksevgen, ‘Court and Favorites’, in: Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Alan Masters, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2009) 151–154; see also Börekcı’s unpublished PhD dissertation ‘Factions and Favorites at the Court of Sultan Ahmed I and His Immediate Predecessors’ (Ohio State University, 2010).
- 34 On eunuchs, see Jane Hathaway, *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (London, 2005); Shaun Tougher, *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond* (London, 2002); Shaun Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (London, 2008); Kathryn M. Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant, Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in the Byzantine Empire* (Chicago, 2003); Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty* (New York, 1996); Keith Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge, 1981) with a lucid chapter on the ‘political power of eunuchs’.
- 35 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 197 (personal communication from Anne Walthall); on Tokugawa staffs, see Conrad D. Totman, *Politics in the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1600–1843* (Cambridge Mass., 1967) appendix B, 270–277.
- 36 Constantine Manasses cited by Paul Magdalino, ‘In Search of the Byzantine Courtier: Leo Chiroisphaktes and Constantine Manasses’, in: H. Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, D.C., 1997) 141–165 at 163; on a notorious Ming eunuch, see

a powerful role here, but in addition there was frustration among leading advisors who found themselves unable to enter, let alone control, this inner domain. Chinese literati dignitaries pointed to the dangers inherent in the ruler's presence among the eunuchs and women, and typically attributed the decline of dynasties or the debility of individual emperors to the corrupting agency of the inner court.<sup>37</sup> Male court literati elsewhere complained about the 'meddling' of inner court agents; a blend of high-handed moral superiority, social prejudice, gender bias, and exasperation can be found among advisors in Europe whenever mistresses or lowly male servants rose to power as royal favourites.<sup>38</sup> Yet here the high nobles serving the ruler in his domestic quarters at the same time held seats in the council or commanded armies: inner and outer were never sharply separated either in space or in personnel.

The boundaries between the domestic inner sphere of the court and its administrative outer sphere were far more emphatic from Topkapı to the Forbidden City and the shogun's castle in Edo than at any European court.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, it is a commonplace of European court history to point to the gradual move of legal, financial, and more generally administrative institutions away from the domestic core of the court. These bodies, relying on record-keeping and fixed administrative routines, became sedentary while the domestic core of the court still moved around. They 'went out of court', obtaining their own buildings usually in the capital city, a situation that stimulated the formation of a separate *esprit de corps*, which could differ sharply from that of the typically noble courtier. In monogamous Europe the process separating the domestic and the administrative institutions of dynastic rule has been understood largely as an aspect of the consolidation and professionalization of specialized state institutions, coinciding with the emergence of a group of *homines novi* who never entirely mixed with the nobles dominating high court office.<sup>40</sup>

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Keith McMahon, 'The Potent Eunuch: The Story of Wei Zhongxian', *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 1 (2014) 1–28.

37 See e.g. McMahon, 'The Potent Eunuch'; Benjamin Elman, 'Imperial Politics and Confucian Societies in Late Imperial China: The Hanlin and Donglin Academies', *Modern China* 15, no. 4 (1989) 379–418.

38 For a marked example of the latter category, see Friedrich Hurter, *Philipp Lang, Kammerdiener Kaiser Rudolfs II. Eine Criminal-geschichte aus dem Anfang des siebenzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Schaffhausen, 1852).

39 See Duindam, *Dynasties*, for palace ground plans indicating inner and outer spheres (Topkapı, Forbidden City, and others); see note 14 above for examples of inner-outer terminology.

40 See a discussion of the European *Robe Épée* divide in J.H.M. Salmon, 'Storm over the

Elsewhere, a similar process can be explained in part by the fact that men dominating the institutions of government could not enter the inner domestic-female-eunuch zone of the court.

Between the fourteenth and the early nineteenth century most polities studied in this book underwent one or more phases of 'state formation', which tended to strengthen the divide between the domestic inner core and the administrative outer perimeter of the court.<sup>41</sup> At the Chinese court, the boards and ministries had long since moved to areas clearly separated from, though adjacent to, the domestic core of the court. The remarkable clockwork of Chinese administration remained exceptional on a world scale until the innovations introduced in Europe in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nevertheless, all bigger polities between Tokugawa Japan and England depended on government-by-paper and a group of clerks usually specializing in different tasks. Viziers (*wazirs*) occupied leading positions throughout West and South Asia. While they could double as army commander, they rarely if ever served simultaneously as supervisors of the inner court. Indeed, more often than not, access into this closed domain was impossible or very difficult for them. Once Ottoman Sultan Murad III had withdrawn his quarters into the Topkapı harem, he only rarely communicated with his grand viziers in person, preferring to deal with them through written reports (*telhis*).<sup>42</sup> While the 'High Qing' emperors are known for their dynamic leadership and mobility, the Kangxi emperor withdrew his sleeping quarters into the inner court, allowed marginal access only to a reduced number of mostly Manchu advisors, and dealt with government in part individually, by adding comments to memorials.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the Qing emperors reduced the number of eunuchs and restricted their managerial responsibilities, which were taken over by unfree servants from the banner elite.

The growth and differentiation of state institutions did not take away the political relevance of the domestic establishment. The domestic core neces-

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Noblesse', *Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 2 (1981) 242–257; on the more prestigious sword families who held high court office, see Leonhard Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones: Machtstrukturen und Karrieremechanismen am Hof von Frankreich 1661–1789* (Stuttgart, 2012).

41 Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2003) stresses convergence rather than divergence.

42 Fodor, 'Sultan, Imperial Council, Grand Vizier'.

43 Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley and London, 1998) 31; Jonathan Spence, *Emperor of China: Self-Portrait of K'ang-Hsi* (New York, 1974).

sarily retained its political relevance until the dynastic leader himself became politically marginalized. Only from the late-eighteenth century onwards were households relegated to the margins of political life in several European countries in a drawn-out and irregular process that gradually transferred political activity to councils and representative assemblies.

The rigid boundary surrounding a female inner sphere that also included—or bordered on—the princely sleeping quarters changed the dynamics of access. All courts knew rules restricting entry into the inner quarters, often set out in great detail tying rights of access to status. Approaching the prince in person, particularly during moments of leisure and in the intimacy of a smaller setting, not only confirmed prestige, it also brought the possibility of influencing patronage and policy decisions. Any political system predicated on the control of a single person over resources and nominations will put great emphasis on access to this person. While access did not necessarily lead to actual power, it was widely perceived to do so.<sup>44</sup> This universal mechanism operated differently in harem-based courts, because access, and most particularly confidential access, was necessarily more restricted here. Rulers were expected to deal in one way or another with their outer-court officeholders, but it was easier for them to restrict these contacts and, at times, to evade the officeholders altogether. This conclusion should not be read as a restatement of orientalist views of ‘Eastern seclusion’, with sex-crazed and intoxicated despots blindly following their every whim, easy prey for eunuch servants and female consorts. There is little reason to view Asian rulers categorically as more driven by sexual appetite and erratic impulses than were their European counterparts. Mistresses were a powerful presence at many European courts, and they did have an impact on the distribution of honours as well as on decision-making.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the sensible and highly personal views of the Kangxi emperor, carefully pieced together by Jonathan Spence, show a perspicacity that matches or surpasses the statements left by Louis XIV and his fellow-monarchs in their

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44 Forms of power as discussed in Robert D. Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood Cliffs NJ, 1976) 6–8; see also Reinhard, ‘Die Nase der Kleopatra’; Engels, *Geschichte der Korruption*.

45 Leonhard Horowski, ‘Das Erbe des Favoriten. Minister, Mätressen und Günstlinge am Hof Ludwigs XIV’, in: Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini, eds., *Der Fall des Günstlings. Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert. 8. Symposium der Residenzenkommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Ostfildern, 2004) 77–125; Christine Adams, ‘“Belle comme le jour”: Beauty, Power, and the King’s Mistress’, *French History* 29, no. 2 (2015) 161–181; Mark Bryant, *Sharing the Burdens of Monarchy: Louis XIV & Mme de Maintenon, 1669–1715* (Forthcoming, Boydell & Brewer).

political testaments.<sup>46</sup> Inner-court favourites can be found at many courts in Europe and Asia. Rulers at harem-based courts did not consistently withdraw in the secluded space available to them. Yet polygyny with its typically gendered palace structures made more likely the seclusion of rulers and hence tended to strengthen the position of the female confidante and the eunuch chamber servant, much to the chagrin of high officials barred from access to the inner court.

The harem underlined the male ruler's potency and fertility and had several other functions. Maids and potential concubines, whose training as a rule included needlework, served as a workforce, particularly for luxury textile production. Courts in Asia were known for their workshops and luxury production, partly in the hands of women.<sup>47</sup> The presence of a large number of women indicated not only male prowess and dynastic power, but also represented and created wealth.

Did polygyny prevent women from holding paramount power? Between 1400 and 1800 queens regnant seem to have been an exception found mostly in Europe—several times in England, Iberia, Scandinavia, Central Europe, and Russia, and incidentally elsewhere. In the Holy Roman Empire and in France women were barred from the throne—they were present as queen-consorts and empress-consorts, but never as full sovereigns. The same can be said for the Ottomans, Mughals, and Safavids, where paramount power was male in principle, and only in case of the absence of mature male successors temporarily left in the hands of women. In China, apart from the reign of Tang Empress Wu Zetian, no woman ever formally was the sovereign ruler, whereas Korea

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46 Spence, *Emperor of China*. See lifewriting by other rulers: Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (New York and Oxford, 1996); David O'Connell, *The Teachings of Saint Louis: A Critical Text* (Chapel Hill, 1972); Louis XIV, *Mémoires, suivis de Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles*, Joël Cornette, ed. (Paris, 2007); Heinz Duchhardt, ed., *Politische Testamente und andere Quellen zum Fürstenethos der frühen Neuzeit* (Darmstadt, 1987).

47 See several contributions in Walthall, *Servants of the Dynasty*; Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639–1739* (Cambridge, 1991) in many places including the conclusion where it is generalized to include Ottoman, Safavid, Chinese, and Japanese examples. See on the relatively great importance of workshops or *karkhanas* in the Mughal context, S.A.A. Rizvi, *The Wonder that was India. Vol. 11: A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub-Continent from the Coming of the Muslims to the British Conquest 1200–1700* (London, 1987) 169–170 and Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 107–108*; Engelbert Kaempfer *am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs*, 117–125.

and particularly Japan in the same period were ruled more often by women. In Tokugawa Japan two empresses reigned, under the auspices of the invariably male Shogun.

All literary traditions of rulership in Eurasia presented the rule of men as natural and preferable; where women are discussed as active rulers, they are portrayed as an aberration. Women ascended to the throne only in the absence of plausible male alternatives. Ideally their role was that of the virtuous and deferential consort, active in arranging marriage alliances for her offspring or as a merciful advocate interceding for the people with her stern companion.<sup>48</sup> Women holding supreme power most commonly emerged as temporary *traits d'union* between male rulers, as dowagers representing the dynasty in the name of their minor son. Female regents occurred in most major Eurasian polities, even in staunchly patrilineal China and in the Ottoman empire, where a series of slave concubines ruled as queen-mothers (*valide sultans*) from the late-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. These queen-mothers wielded power formally and showed it to the outside world through their patronage of the arts and beneficence.<sup>49</sup> Conversely inner-court women could rise to prominence through the ruler's favour. Male outer-court officials reviled women in power; female rivals in the inner court were keen to replace them once the prince's interest started to fade.

The presence of women on the throne in Europe may have been facilitated by monogamy and dynastic intermarriage. Monogamy increased the frequency of succession crises; at the same time, the bloodline of women was important for dynastic legitimacy. In the absence of sons, dynastic daughters could be preferred over more distant male contenders: they represented the 'purest' blood. These considerations were irrelevant in the context of slave concubinage where women were of indifferent background.

The mixed form of descent in Europe, where the male line was predominant but the female line was always important, complicated the position of sons sired by a king and his mistress: they were disadvantaged by their contaminated blood, but at times came to power by ousting more legitimate female contenders. In the most insistently patrilineal-polygynous settings, only the bloodline of the father mattered, and the notion of bastardry was irrel-

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48 For an extended study of these themes, focusing on Burgundian duchesses and their connections with cities, see Kim Ragetli's dissertation, 'Duchess between Prince and People. A Thematic Approach to the Lives, Influence and Actions of the Duchesses of Burgundy (1430–1530)' (PhD dissertation).

49 Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1993).



evant. In combined forms of marriage and concubinage, the status of sons, and particularly their eligibility for succession, could be differentiated. Tensions between a formal queen or empress and favourite concubines, or among concubines eagerly protecting their offspring, surfaced at most polygynous courts. Dynastic princesses in Europe were of key importance for the web of intermarrying dynasties. Yet because of their alliances with princes in distant countries, queen-consorts were often seen as potentially representing the interests, mores, and wiles of foreigners. Marie-Antoinette's pejorative nickname, *l'Autrichienne*, emerging soon after her arrival in Versailles, reflected a common prejudice against 'foreign' queens before it acquired strong personal connotations. A marked tension surrounded princesses from the patriline elsewhere in Eurasia: it was difficult to find evenly matched mates for these women, whose supreme birth status clashed sharply with the meekness expected of a good spouse.

Polygyny and monogamy, probably the most outspoken and incontestable contrast between Asian and European courts, created different courtly set-ups. It is not easy, however, to accurately assess the consequences of this divergence among numerous other variables. Inner-outer divisions were more blurred in the European case, and it was less easy for rulers to withdraw into a closed inner circle. Dynastic intermarriage implied the presence of high-status women, yet it did not usually grant these prestigious ladies an active political role. The overall resonance in normative judgements on women and their appropriate roles suggests we should not overrate the impact of this difference.

## 2.2 *The Dynasty: Succession, Competition, and Collaterals*

Contrasting modes of reproduction had a major impact on the forms of succession, the place of younger brothers and their descendants (collateral lines), and the form of dynasties. In China, collateral descendants of the staunchly patrilineal ruling houses formed a reservoir of princes who could be adopted into the main line to maintain dynastic continuity.<sup>50</sup> The same strategy was adopted by the Japanese emperors as well as by the Tokugawa shoguns. These collaterals and their descendants, however, were not as a rule close to power, and although there are examples of rebellion and cases of successful usurpation, circulation of the supreme dignity was never the intention or common practice. A group

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50 John W. Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven: A History of the Imperial Clan of Sung China* (Cambridge Mass., 1999); specifically on the crises generated by adoption under the Ming: Carney T. Fisher, *The Chosen One. Succession and Adoption in the Court of Ming Shizong* (Sydney etc., 1990).

of collateral descendants of the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang lived in miniature copies of the imperial palace in their own fiefs, located in a wide swathe around the twin capitals of Beijing and Nanjing. Initially the princes served as the supreme layer of military nobility, but Zhu Yuanzhang became increasingly wary and introduced some restrictions.<sup>51</sup> The Yongle emperor, one of the founder's sons who grabbed power by dethroning the founder's ruling grandson, initiated a policy of control and reduction of the princes that would be intensified by his successors. A huge number of Ming princes lost their position upon the Qing conquest. Qing emperors allowed the princes of the Manchu imperial lineage (Aisin Gioro) a share in government and military command, but required their residence in Beijing and closely monitored their behaviour. The early Qing show signs of the Mongol tradition of shared sovereignty, group acclamation of the new ruler by the assembled elites, and even the possibility of competition. With the support of his grandmother, Great Dowager Empress Xiaozhuang ('Bumbutai'), the Kangxi emperor forcefully ended a regency of Manchu grandees before he consolidated power in his hands.<sup>52</sup> Subsequently he followed Han Chinese precedent by appointing his eldest surviving son as heir apparent. After a distressing sequence of conflicts with this son, he took away the honour and changed the process of designation of an heir. Succession henceforth became flexible and secret: the ruling emperor decided which son would succeed, but confided his choice only to one or two confidants. In addition, he put the name of the successor on a piece of paper stashed in a wooden casket placed some thirty feet above the throne in the audience hall at Qianqing palace.<sup>53</sup> Dynastic marriage, in the Qing case, mostly consolidated the strong connections within the conquest clan—which in addition to the Manchu and Mongol core included Han-Chinese loyalists.

Royals eligible for succession competed fiercely in the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman empires, a habit often attributed to the steppe background of these dynasties.<sup>54</sup> In the Ottoman and Mughal contexts, fratricide decimated the

51 Richard Wang, *The Ming Prince and Daoism: Institutional Patronage of an Elite* (Oxford, 2012) 4–8 map and list of localities of princely fiefs.

52 McMahon, *Celestial Women*, 170–173.

53 Mark C. Elliott, *Qianlong. Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New York, San Francisco, and Boston, 2009) 2; Chia Ning, 'Qingchao Huangwei Jicheng Zhidu; The Institution of Qing Throne Succession (review)', *China Review International* 14, no. 1 (2007) 280–288; Patricia B. Ebrey, 'Succession to High Office: The Chinese Case', in: David Olson and Michael Cole, eds., *Technology, Literacy, and the Evolution of Society: Implications of the Work of Jack Goody* (Mahwah, 2006) 49–71.

54 See my critical discussion of the notion of 'bloody tanistry' in *Dynasties*, 138–139.

collateral lines that had become so plentiful in China and Japan. In every generation the battle started anew, and it tended to leave few or no male collaterals. Daughters from the patriline could not rule, nor were their sons eligible for succession.<sup>55</sup> These princesses hence could escape the bloodbath, and their marriages were important for the dynasty. The Safavids were equally combative, and in addition practiced the blinding of princes to make them ineligible for the throne. In their case, succession through the female line does not seem to have been excluded, which the sons of princesses found out to their dismay upon being blinded. Yet Safavid collaterals who eluded conflict were at times active in regional government, and one branch finally moved to serve the Mughals when the situation became too heated for them in Persia.<sup>56</sup> Remarkably, the bloody contestation among brothers, keystone of succession in the Ottoman and Mughal cases, and frequent in Safavid Iran, gradually disappeared. Ottoman and Safavid princes were no longer sent out to govern and acquire experience: from the early decades of the seventeenth century onwards, they were kept under surveillance at court, and succession was determined by a mixture of seniority and elite kingmaking in both cases.<sup>57</sup> The Mughals moved in the same direction a century later. The princes incarcerated at court were neutralized as a political factor, at least until they ascended the throne. This momentous change in succession practices, synchronous in the Ottoman and Safavid cases and followed a century later by the Mughals, appears to reflect primarily the consolidation of kingmaking-elites around the throne.<sup>58</sup>

Even without resorting systematically to mutual killing, royal families in monogamous Europe remained very small—a far cry from the Ming imperial lineage, estimated between 100,000–200,000 in the last years of the dynasty.<sup>59</sup> From the later Middle Ages onwards, ruling houses intermarried rather than

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55 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 104–105 and note 67.

56 Liesbeth Gevers, 'Safavid Cousins on the Verge of Extinction: Dynastic Centralization in Central Asia and the Bahrāmī Collateral Line (1517–1593)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 3 (2015) 293–326.

57 See p. 112 below, on the interregnum before the reign of Suleiman I of Persia.

58 Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 22, 91, 109 connects the changeover to the consolidation of the Ottoman empire, but this doesn't fit Mughal timing, and seems somewhat mechanical for the Ottoman and Safavid cases, where the changeover was gradual; Duindam, *Dynasties*, 133–137.

59 Rawski, *Last Emperors*, on the Qing princes as a 'lean aristocracy' and their more numerous Ming predecessors, 91–95, also note 117 on 328–329; see Chaffee, *Branches of Heaven*, 271–275.

seeking alliances among their noble elites: increasingly only scions from sovereign houses were accepted as suitable marriage partners. This entailed not only the frequent admixture of a limited number of bloodlines, but also a progressively more intricate pattern of overlapping rights of succession. Constant intermarriage combined with the incidental extinction of senior lines made succession disputes inevitable. The Spanish succession overshadowed Europe during the unexpectedly long reign of the debilitated boy-king Charles II of Spain a product of dynastic inbreeding whose capability to reproduce was rightly questioned. A sickly sole heir without offspring formed the object of constant intrigues to influence his testament: this was the nightmare of dynastic power. It was imperative to have candidates for succession at home: ideally sons, if necessary younger brothers, or collaterals—the offspring of previous generations of younger brothers—and sometimes daughters or their sons. The collaterals acting as reserves for succession could, at times, turn into rebel-princes. Yet they were necessary: in the absence of local royal reserves entitled to succeed, external candidates would press their ambitions. Most European *ancien régime* wars were triggered by succession conflict. Dynastic claimants were located in different polities, whereas elsewhere in Eurasia they most often surfaced as internal contestants, plentiful in dynasties based on polygynous reproduction. The increasingly fixed pattern of dynastic succession in Europe may have reduced internal contestation; combined with the practice of monogamous dynastic intermarriage, it contributed actively to the semi-permanence of large-scale warfare. More than elsewhere in Eurasia, dynasty in Europe was inevitably a network of interconnected sovereign and leading noble houses.

Monogamy, dynastic intermarriage, and the proliferation of succession rights across the patchwork of smaller polities led to the rise of ‘composite monarchies’: one prince ruled multiple principalities, sometimes contiguous, sometimes dispersed. Rulers who obtained new territories through succession were usually bound by solemn agreements to respect regionally differentiated rights and exemptions. The Burgundian assemblage of counties and duchies was as typical for this tendency as the more impressive domains the Habsburgs acquired throughout Europe or the *Mehrfachherrschaft* of the Hohenzollern electors of Brandenburg. Even a nominally uniform monarchy such as France at closer inspection appears as a series of provinces integrated at different points and holding differentiated rights defining their connection to the conspicuous monarchical centre. Typically, representation took form at the level of cities and provinces before it moved to the central level. Only in England, following the Norman Conquest probably the most uniform larger polity of Europe, do we find a parliament that did not consist of representatives of regional assemblies. The problems of ‘managing diversity’ and differentiated rights observable for

large-scale Asian land empires were also markedly present at the more modest scale of European composite monarchies.<sup>60</sup>

Partitions and co-rule of junior branches were far from exceptional in Europe, but primogeniture gradually became the dominant mode of succession in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Dynastic collaterals in Europe were ideal candidates for governorships in composite monarchies, ruling in the name of their house. As elsewhere, this practice entailed the risk of devolution and rebellion. Dynastic blood, in particular when it was combined with rights of succession, was a grave concern for all rulers. No parallel for the densely woven web of European dynastic alliances and enmities can be found in the greater empires of Eurasia. Yet everywhere, two options appear to have been available for dealing with the problem of princes: send them out to govern or command armies, or alternatively, maintain them close to the centre of power, under surveillance.<sup>61</sup> The Ottomans, Mughals, and Safavids moved from the first to the second option; Ming China and Tokugawa Japan adopted a variant that can be seen as provincial domestication: allowing princely houses their own fiefs while restricting their freedom of manoeuvre. The Qing emperors required the imperial clan to reside around Beijing, but were willing to grant higher responsibilities to loyal princes—a policy surely more feasible because of Manchu minority rule. In Europe all variants existed. The Ottoman ‘cage’, used by Elias and others as a general metaphor for the position of nobles at court, was more relevant for dynastic successors than for the nobility at large.<sup>62</sup> The French *Dauphin*, after the succession of two minors to the royal dignity in the seventeenth century, no longer had his own household.<sup>63</sup> Louis XIV’s brother Philippe paid for the repeated defiance of his namesake Gaston D’Orléans: notwithstanding his dignified position and wealth he did not hold leading political or military office. During the revolution and its

60 Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, 2009).

61 Ebrej, ‘Succession to High Office: The Chinese Case’, 68; Pierre Mounier, ‘La Dynamique des Interrelations Politiques: Le Cas du Sultanat de Zinder (Niger)’, *Cahiers d’études africaines* 39, no. 154 (1999) 367–386 summarising on 374 Claude Tardits’ introduction to *Princes & serviteurs*, 9–21; see Jeroen Duindam, ‘Dynasty and Elites: from Early Modern Europe to Late Imperial China’, in: Liesbeth Geevers and Mirella Marini, eds., *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: The Dynamics of Aristocratic Identity Formation in Comparative Perspective* (London and New York, 2015) 59–84.

62 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 152, 210, 292.

63 This was primarily the consequence of dynastic demography, but the situation was maintained after Louis XIV for dauphins who reached maturity.

aftermath in the nineteenth century, the Orléans were again conspicuously present, with Philippe Égalité voting for the execution of Louis XVI and Louis-Philippe taking the place of Bourbon king Charles X in 1830. Louis XVI's brothers Provence and Artois, moreover, were prestigious as well as politically active, a permanent challenge for the shaky regime of their ruling sibling in the early years of the revolution. Under the Habsburgs, dynastic siblings were more often used as viceroys, governors, and commanders, a choice that can be explained in part by the emphatically 'composite' character of the Habsburg portfolio.<sup>64</sup> At most European courts, princes with their households would form a ring of subsidiary courts around the court of their leading relative, depending to some extent on stipends provided by the state.

Polygyny and monogamy engendered different palace structures and changed the dynamics of access. Polygyny led to a very different concept of dynasty, with numerous princes growing up under the protection of their mothers. The collaterals were decimated in West and South Asia through competitive succession; they were maintained by the state coffers in surprising numbers in East Asia, though usually at a distance from political leadership. In Europe, the practice of monogamous dynastic intermarriage reduced fertility, increased mortality and hence enhanced the hazards of extinction. The European web of succession rights turned extinction into a prime cause for warfare. The familiar statement that European kingdoms were inherited whereas Asian empires were conquered is a half-truth because it underplays succession warfare in Europe. However, the fact that wars were based on succession claims presented as legitimate, did put successors under some pressure to respect the rights and privileges of their recently acquired subjects. This may have contributed to the remarkable persistence of hereditary elites in many European polities.

### 2.3 *The Nature of Elites: Nobles, Scholars, Slaves, and Disciples*

European royal families formed the uppermost echelon of a group characterized by hereditary status, landownership, and military service: the nobility. We commonly assume that no close parallel for this group exists in Asian polities, with the exception of Japan. Undoubtedly, recruitment and succession to high office were determined by heredity to a larger extent in Europe than in any of the other domains discussed here. Hereditary wealth and power were present

64 See ongoing work by Liesbeth Geevers, below in chapter 6 written with Marie Favereau-Doumenjou, and in her 'Dynasty and State Building in the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy: The Career of Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy (1588–1624)', *Journal of Early Modern History* 20, no. 3 (2016) 267–292.

everywhere, but only here was hereditary status proclaimed as the ideal basis for power and social pre-eminence—a view that was never uncontested, but dominated in practice. Men rising through commercial wealth and government office designed fancy genealogies to conform to the standard of hereditary power. The church presented a separate structure of offices more open to the rise of commoners. However, the upper echelons of prelates were dominated by nobles, and worldly rulers gradually extended their grip on important church nominations—leaving the cardinals to papal discretion, and the lower-level clergy to local prelates. Pedigree surely was never enough to maintain power or acquire high office, but it made it easier to obtain benefits of all kinds: power and money tended to follow hereditary rank. From the later Middle Ages onwards, in all major European polities a noble upper echelon came into being that mixed old nobles, successful soldiers, and newly risen state servants, with the richest financiers. This new upper level of aristocrats, rising in tandem with the powers of the early modern prince, was strongly present at all courts.<sup>65</sup> Commoners could enter the lower echelons of nobility through wealth, state service, marriage alliance, and lifestyle; yet only the extraordinarily successful could enter the upper layers of the court aristocracy.

The ca. 200–250 hereditary daimyo lords in Tokugawa Japan ruled in their own domains, yet these magnates were bound to the shogun's court in Edo through an intricate system of enforced regular presence (*sankin kotai*). The court-elite connection here originated in coercion and involved the permanent residence at Edo of daimyo relatives and retainers. The ongoing movement of daimyo lords with their convoys from their fiefs to Edo and back, as well as the frequent presence of these groups at Edo, had major economic and cultural consequences; it contributed to the increasing cohesion of the country.<sup>66</sup> The Tokugawa elite was restricted to the warrior class: a rather big group with a relatively open lower echelon. Competing echelons and networks can be found within this single overarching category, rather than between different social groups or functional elites. Even in the inner court, where eunuchs were absent, lower-level members of the warrior class could rise to power as favourites.<sup>67</sup>

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65 See the important forthcoming synthesis substantiating this point, Hamish Scott, *Forming Aristocracy: The Reconfiguration of Europe's Nobilities, c. 1300–1750* (Forthcoming, Oxford University Press).

66 Constantine N. Vaporis, *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu, 2008).

67 Totman, *Politics in the Tokugawa Bakufu*, 99–103; 214–217; Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey, *The Dog Shogun: The Personality and Policies of Tokugawa Tsunayoshi* (Honolulu, 2006) 103–127.

The centrality of the shogun's castle in Edo was made conspicuously clear by the progressions of the daimyo; yet the imperial court in Kyoto remained the untouchable coperstone of the political edifice. The first shoguns, however, made sure that imperial patronage would be distributed through their hands only.

Following the Tang-Song changeover, the civil service examinations served as the main conduit to administrative office in China, and more generally as the main form of elite recruitment. In Late Imperial China huge numbers took the exams, yet most failed or proved unable to move to the critical second-level degree which gave access to office, let alone to the top-level third degree of the three-tiered system.<sup>68</sup> Literati monopolized high office, and their culture permeated society. Government through the literati magistrates entailed a system of frequent movement and re-appointment based on regional reports and central evaluations. In their headquarters, the magistrates not only governed and administered justice; they also performed state rituals, following the practice of the central court. The literati magistrates were the predominant, but never the only, extensions of imperial power in the regions. The Ming empowered hereditary local chiefs in the periphery before they integrated these regions into the regular system of government. The military, too, had a strong component of heredity, with military families responsible for the defence of certain territories, particularly along the Mongol frontier.<sup>69</sup> Under the Qing, the hereditary Manchu banners became the predominant military organization; at the same time the outer territories conquered by the dynasty were governed through a

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68 Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000) and the same author's 'Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991) 7–28.

69 Barend Noordam, 'Military Identity, Empire and Frontier in the Late Ming Dynasty: Qi Jiguang (1528–1588) and His Service on Two Frontiers' (PhD dissertation). See Kenneth M. Swope, 'A Few Good Men: The Li family and China's Northern Frontier in the Late Ming', *Ming Studies* 49 (2005) 34–81, at 64, 69 underlines that other frontiers knew similar families; he criticizes the standard view that such families had been 'domesticated' (p. 68: note the familiar terminology) under and after the Yongle emperor, stressing their persistence and post-1550 strengthening. See also Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Great Enterprise. The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1986) 23–86; on the Qing in Central Asia see Nicola Di Cosmo, 'Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia', *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998) 287–309; on the gradual incorporation of local hereditary chiefs in the Chinese structure, see John E. Herman, 'Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (1997) 47–74.



special board (*Lifanyuan*) granting some leeway to Mongol, Uygur, and Tibetan hereditary elites.<sup>70</sup> In China proper civil government was organized along Han-Chinese traditions, now topped with a strong presence of Manchus at the highest levels.<sup>71</sup> Heredity in office and power was present in the margins of the Ming polity; under the Qing the conquest elite and its allies held hereditary power. Yet the civil service examinations retained their primacy: recruitment through heredity was marginal in China, whereas it was dominant in Japan and Europe.<sup>72</sup>

The greater polities of West and South Asia were all governed by dynasties cultivating a Turco-Mongol background, mixing Arabic, Islamic, and Persian images in their repositories. This hotchpotch of legacies obtained a different stamp in the Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires; each of these polities, moreover, changed over time. The staunchly Sunnite Ottomans combated the 'heresy' of Shi'ism cultivated by Safavid Shah Ismail and his successors. The Mughals, conquering a subcontinent with a strong Hindu presence, under Akbar developed a heterodox and personal religious creed that only under Aurangzeb conformed more closely to Islamic doctrine. Each of these empires needed to define its relationship to religious authorities; they usually controlled the appointment of judges, but they could never supervise all roles and offices held by the wider group of Islamic scholars, the '*ulama*'.

Major differences marked the recruitment of political and military leadership. From the fourteenth century onwards, the Ottomans relied increasingly on the enforced 'collecting' (*devshirme*) of Christian slave boys in the peripheries of their empire and during military campaigns. They developed the common Islamic practice of slave-soldiery to its most systematic form and extended it to encompass all leading military-political offices at court and in the empire at large.<sup>73</sup> Only in the course of the seventeenth century

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70 A good summary of these multiple institutions can be found online: Chia Ning, 'Lifanyuan and the Management of Population Diversity in Early Qing (1636–1795)', *Max-Planck-Institut für ethnologische Forschung Working Papers* 139 (2012) [www.eth.mpg.de/cms/de/publications/working\\_papers/wp0139.html](http://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/de/publications/working_papers/wp0139.html).

71 R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle, 2010).

72 Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley, 1990) differentiate in their conclusion between the social continuity of certain elites and the absence of heredity in office. They also point to strategies individual families could use to maintain their status, see a conspicuous example in Joseph Esherick, *Ancestral Leaves: A Family Journey Through Chinese History* (London, Berkeley, and Los Angeles, 2011).

73 Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: the Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980);

did this system gradually come to an end: appointees from the households of leading pashas and viziers infused the state apparatus, and locals could rise to prominence from the unprivileged 'flock' (*re'aya*) through tax farming and military entrepreneurship.<sup>74</sup> The other two major polities with Turco-Mongol roots moved in different ways from their relatively egalitarian and dynamic warbands to more institutionalized and hierarchical structures. The Safavids, starting with Ismail I, attracted numerous disciples through their Shi'ite charismatic religious leadership, organizing these devotee forces in artificial Qizilbash (redhat) tribes that bring to mind the Qing banners.<sup>75</sup> Shah 'Abbas I, however, turned his back on these increasingly ambitious and querulous elites, and henceforth relied also on slave-soldiers and administrators. This new mixture did not prevent the devolution of the Safavid Shah's power in the second half of the seventeenth century. The Mughals, remarkably, never employed huge numbers of slaves for their military or administration. Competing local elites and their military forces were willing to be coopted into the successful Mughal venture, transformed by Akbar into an oiled carrousel of office (*mansab*), movement, and reward. The newly recruited *mansabdars* formed a mixed group in terms of ethnicity, religion, and status, but were all equally connected to the ruler's bounty. Akbar, like Ismail, also acted as the charismatic leader of his own brotherhood of religious disciples. Ottoman *ümera*, Safavid Qizilbash, and Mughal *mansabdars* were all rewarded for their services by the usufruct of lands temporarily granted to them.

Domestics, soldiers, and administrators can be found at all courts, but the recruitment of these functional groups and their status at court differed greatly. In Japan all servants of the shogunal establishment were recruited from the warrior class, yet the innermost circles of domestic servants and confidants

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Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven, 2006).

74 Cumhur Bekar, 'The Rise of the Köprülü Family. The Reconfiguration of the Vizierial Power in the Seventeenth Century' (PhD dissertation); Metin Kunt, *The Sultan's Servants: The Transformation of Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York, 1983) with graphs of rise to high office around 1550 (34) and around 1650 (68). On the A'yan see Robert W. Zens, 'Provincial Powers: The Rise of Ottoman Local Notables (Ayan)', *History Studies* 3, no. 3 (2011) 433–447. The land allocation system of revenue for officeholders gradually changed form because of the introduction of tax farming (*iltizame*) and particularly the tax farms granted for life (*malikane*), introduced in 1695; see Canay Şahin, 'The Rise and Fall of an *Ayân* Family in Eighteenth-Century Anatolia: The Caniklizâdes (1737–1808)' (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Bilkent University), with the general background discussed in chapter 1.

75 See chapter 4 in this volume, Gommans, 'The Warband in the Making of Eurasian Empires'.

were as a rule taken from the lower echelons, whereas leading daimyo lords enjoyed ceremonial access and supreme rank without holding important central office. The daimyo held substantial power in their own fiefs, but their position at the shogun's court has been compared to that of European nobles, maintaining social exclusivity (*grandeur*) but not as a rule wielding power (*pouvoir*). This comparison underrates the persistent power of noble elites in Europe, but it is not altogether wrong. Nobles held the highest social status and dominated in domestic service as well as in the army. Increasingly, however, they were forced to accept the presence of legal and financial specialists in the upper layers of government. Within a few generations, the minister or secretary changed from a servant doing the paperwork for noble executives to a principal executive in government—a leader in his own right, who, by that stage, was invariably ennobled and frequently intermarried with prominent noble houses. Nobility remained in place as the inevitable mark of elite distinction, but within the nobility many groups competed.

How did these leading groups fit into the inner-outer divide? In the Ottoman empire, slave elites dominated in the inner court as well as in the outer services, in military command, provincial government, and the central council (*divan*). Concubines and eunuchs were likewise commonly recruited as slaves—apparently, talented *devshirme* boys were sometimes selected and castrated to serve as white eunuchs overseeing the palace school.<sup>76</sup> The principle of slave recruitment ruled all services with the exception of the Islamic scholars trained in *madrasas*, represented in the *divan* by the chief jurisconsult. Notwithstanding the shared background of the ‘Sultan’s slaves’, the functional and spatial divide between inner and outer courts was quite unequivocal: leading outer-court servants could not enter the inner court, and depended on the intervention of their allies among the women and eunuchs of the inner court. The palace school increasingly incorporated local elites as well as slaves, and recruitment for high office also bypassed the palace by choosing candidates from among those serving in the households of leading viziers and pashas. These groups developed their power bases and gradually established a position as *de facto* hereditary elites.<sup>77</sup> A sharp clash between status and actual power cannot structurally be seen at the Ottoman court, where eunuchs enjoyed a higher status than in East Asia, and all in government presented themselves as the Sultan’s ‘slaves’.

76 Ezgi Dikici, ‘The Making of Ottoman Court Eunuchs: Origins, Recruitment Paths, Family Ties, and “Domestic Production”’, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 30 (2013) 105–136.

77 Bekar, ‘The Rise of the Köprülü Family’; Kunt, *Sultan’s Servants*.

In Ming China the literati elite outdid the military elite in status as well as in political power, at least in periods of relative stability. They combined the moral high ground of European clergy or Islamic *'ulama'* with a monopoly on leading state offices. While the dominance of literary refinement (*wen*) in Chinese culture may have been overestimated because of the powerful literati grip on history-writing, it is clear that under the Ming it was stronger than the ideal of martial excellence (*wu*).<sup>78</sup> This offers a powerful contrast with the supremacy of pedigree and prowess typical for Europe, offset only to some extent by the presence of religious and administrative elites. Literati combined the moral suasion of the clergy with the power of leading administrators, and formed an undisputed upper echelon. However, at the heart of the imperial Chinese polity, they could still be outmanoeuvred by eunuchs, the archetypical low-status insiders. The Qing reduced the numbers and political power of the eunuchs, and raised unfree servants from the conquest elite to power in the imperial household.<sup>79</sup> Notwithstanding the strong Manchu position in the upper layers of government and the pervasive role of the conquest elite in the military, Han literati retained a powerful presence in Chinese culture and government.

Slaves, exam licentiates, and religious disciples all stepped in as non-hereditary power elites. Hereditary power remained the dominant mode in Europe, but this did not prevent the rise of outsiders. However, these social climbers hid their modest backgrounds behind impressive genealogies. In Japan, too, heredity remained a key aspect of elite legitimacy. Elsewhere in Eurasia elites did stress their qualities and their service to the ruler rather than the hereditary status of their families. This fundamental difference, however, was surely stronger in the cultural representation of these groups than in practical terms: families everywhere sought and found ways to consolidate their lineages.<sup>80</sup> More often than not, elites starting out as the ruler's dependents were able to strengthen their position over time and acquire hereditary status. Conversely, rulers could again turn to other groups to offset the power of consolidated

78 Noordam, 'Military Identity, Empire and Frontier'.

79 Rawski, *Last Emperors*, 166–171; on the gradual return of eunuchs in positions of trust see Norman A. Kutcher, 'Unspoken Collusions: The Empowerment of Yuanming yuan Eunuchs in the Qianlong Period', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 70, no. 2 (2010) 449–495.

80 See Duindam, 'Dynasty and Elites'; Duindam, 'Pre-modern Power Elites: Princes, Courts, Intermediaries', in: John Higley, et al., eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Political Elites* (London, 2017) 161–179.

elites. In the final part of the third section of this essay common patterns in this ongoing contest will be examined.

#### 2.4 *Ruler and Realm: Withdrawal versus Interaction?*

Rulers were surrounded by walls and guards—security was a grave concern, and outings demanded precautions. Yet at the same time, projecting the image of kingship was vital for most, if not for all, dynasties. How did the balance between protection and projection take shape in different parts of Eurasia? It is common to contrast ‘Oriental seclusion’ with European-style accessible royalty. The location of rulers’ sleeping quarters in or close to harems does provide some justification for this view in terms of palace layout and access to inner quarters. Many observers have pointed out that princes in different parts of Eurasia did not show themselves in equal measure to their subjects. East Asian rulers, moreover, travelled less frequently than their peers elsewhere, and while on the road they were not usually visible to their subjects. Their route was swept clean, and any bystanders were expected to evade the view of the sovereign by bowing to the ground. In China and Japan alike, princes moved preferably in closed palanquins, if they moved at all.<sup>81</sup> Dynastic power was present through stylized invisibility. The walls of the Forbidden City proclaimed the power of the emperor, but did not allow the wider public a view of this august person. The shogun’s Chiyoda castle in Edo did not even have a big open space or wide urban alley directly leading up to its imposing gates. The emperor in Kyoto, the embodiment of hierarchical supremacy and ritual purity, was shielded from view to an even greater extent. This ‘iconography of absence’ was easier to implement for rulers who were not expected to act as military commanders.<sup>82</sup> In Japan, the withdrawn and invisible emperor, uncontaminated by political activity or martial action, and the actively ruling Tokugawa

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81 Anne Walthall, ‘Hiding the Shoguns. Secrecy and the Nature of Political Authority in Tokugawa Japan’, in: Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (London, 2013) 332–356; see a more varied appraisal of the Song, Ming and Qing cases, Patricia Ebrey, ‘Taking Out the Grand Carriage: Imperial Spectacle and the Visual Culture of Northern Song Kaifeng’, *Asia Major* 12, no. 1 (1999) 33–65; David Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); Michael Chang, ‘Historical Narratives of the Kangxi Emperor’s Inaugural Visit to Suzhou, 1684’, in: Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus, eds., *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces. Agents and Interactions* (Leiden and Boston, 2014) 203–224.

82 On the ‘iconography of absence’ in Japan see Timon Screech, *Shogun’s Painted Culture: Fear and Creativity in the Japanese States, 1760–1829* (London, 2000).

shoguns, represented the two roles clashing in many other traditions of rulership: monastic withdrawal and ritual propriety versus activism and prowess. This 'dual kingship', based on the long-standing presence of regents and generals usurping active rule, made possible the deification and distancing of the Japanese emperor and helps to explain the remarkable continuity in office of the imperial lineage.<sup>83</sup>

In China as well as in Japan, rituals and sacrifices took place in relative seclusion, with the emperor performing in a small circle of magistrates and servants, invisible to a wider public.<sup>84</sup> Neither was the march of the emperor from the Forbidden City to the various altars in the city to be watched by spectators.<sup>85</sup> Qing emperors showed themselves only incidentally to wider audiences, during special festivities and tours—yet their interaction with the public during their numerous movements may have been underemphasized in the official court records, bending reporting to conform to cultural standards.<sup>86</sup> The dynamic Qing emperors, however, could still expect to be censured at times by remonstrating officials urging them to stay within the boundaries dictated by tradition.<sup>87</sup> Images of the Chinese emperor did not circulate and were not intended to be made except at the behest of the emperor; the Ming code stipulated a punishment of '100 strokes of beating with the heavy stick' for anybody possessing images of the ruler.<sup>88</sup> Coins never showed the ruler's profile, and the characters of the imperial name were forbidden. Here was a

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83 Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Above the Clouds: Status Culture of the Modern Japanese Nobility* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995) 51; Ben-Ami Shillony, *Enigma of the Emperors: Sacred Subsistence in Japanese History* (Folkestone, 2005) 60–62; see a recent analysis by Kiri Paramore, 'Confucian Ritual and Sacred Kingship: Why the Emperors Did Not Rule Japan', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58, no. 3 (2016) 694–716.

84 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 260.

85 On the more accessible grand occasions in Song Kaifeng, see Ebrey, 'Taking out the Grand Carriage'; particularly in the later Ming, emperors tended to withdraw, yet the Qing to some extent reversed the tendency. Geary, 'Courtly Cultures', at 196–197 seems to overstate the visibility of the Chinese emperors; the absence of the general public is underlined in James Laidlaw, 'On Theatre and Theory: Reflections on Ritual in Imperial Chinese Politics', in: Joseph Peter McDermott, ed., *State and Court Ritual in China* (Cambridge, 1999) 399–416.

86 Chang, 'Historical Narratives'.

87 Robinson, *Martial spectacles of the Ming Court*; Patricia Ebrey, 'Remonstrating against Royal Extravagance in Imperial China', in: Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus, eds., *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces. Agents and Interactions* (Leiden and Boston, 2014) 127–149; Chang, *Court on Horseback*.

88 Jiang Jonglin, *The Great Ming Code* (Seattle and London, 2005) article 184, 114.

tradition by no means intent on broadcasting the ruler's face and fame in ways familiar to many other early modern dynasties.<sup>89</sup>

Confucian ideals of rulership underlined ritual propriety, self-improvement, and learning rather than prowess and interaction. Just rule was a consequence of personal moral rectitude rather than contact with the world. Moral righteousness and ritual propriety were safeguarded by a withdrawn style of rulership. In Christian Europe and Islamicate West and South Asia religion and justice were intertwined; the ideal of a humble and accessible ruler, far removed from daily practice at most courts, was always present in the background.<sup>90</sup> The image of the prophet Muhammad, allowing all to approach him in the vicinity of the mosque, retained great power throughout Islamic history.<sup>91</sup> Mughals showed the 'chain of justice' in their court paintings, suggesting the possibility of all to implore the ruler's mercy and justice. From the Abbasid to the Mamluk court, a tradition of personal princely justice, protecting simple subjects against the wrongdoings of officeholders, was cultivated. These *mazalim*-courts bring to mind the image of Saint Louis under the oak in the forest of Vincennes, freely communicating with commoners seeking justice. In Europe as well as in West and South Asia religious observations stressed the humility of all before god and hence were often the occasion for interaction between the prince and his subjects.<sup>92</sup> Petitions typically were presented to kings during processions from palace to church, or to sultans during the procession to the Friday prayer.

Religious festivals combined dynastic representation with hospitality, exchange of gifts, and frequently also the awarding of new ranks and offices. The circumcisions of Ottoman princes and the Mughal viewing ceremony included, and even depended on, a notable popular participation or at least presence; the

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89 There were other forms, however: stelae erected by literati, placards posted on walls by literati, and the 'village lectures' introduced by the Ming founder and continued by the Qing, see e.g. Sarah Schneewind, 'Visions and Revisions: Village Policies of the Ming Founder in Seven Phases', *Young Pao* 87, no. 4 (2001) 317–359.

90 Willem Flinterman, 'The Cult of Qalāwūn: Waqf, Memoria, and Dynasty in the Early Mamluk Sultanate, ca. 1280–1340' (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2017).

91 Michael Cook, 'Did the Prophet Muhammad Keep Court?', in: Albrecht Fuess, and Jan-Peter Hartung, eds., *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (London and New York, 2011) 23–29.

92 Qiang Fang, 'Hot Potatoes: Chinese Complaint Systems from Early Times to the Late Qing (1898)', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68, no. 4 (2009) 1105–1135; Maaïke van Berkel, 'Abbasid Mazālim between Theory and Practice', *Bulletin d'études orientales* 63, *Le pluralisme judiciaire dans l'Islam prémoderne* (2014) 229–242; on legal pluralism in several 'imperial' traditions, see Jeroen Duindam, Jill Harries, Caroline Humfress, and Nimrod Hurvitz, eds., *Law and Empire: Ideas, Practices, Actors* (Leiden and Boston, 2013).

same can be said about the outdoor Safavid festivals. In this respect they seem close to the urban processions and entries that took place in the European context. Many could watch the ruler and his retinue, usually from a distance and behind rows of guards. City corporations took an active part in performances, and the urban poor were allowed a share in the bounty. There are major differences here between individual rulers and between different periods; nevertheless there seems to be a shared logic and expectation of at least some exchange and visibility. The inner courts were never accessible to the wider public, but usually open places in front of the palace, or a first open court within the palace compound, did have a public function. The martial aspects of kingship were a necessary part of royal legitimacy in most European and West and South Asian polities. Martial duties underlined movement and connections—a military commander cannot stay behind high walls in the capital. Rulers were expected to show courage and martial skills. ‘Battle luck’ was the supreme sign of divine favour, present in the legends surrounding founding emperors, alongside stories about special signs on the body and remarkable celestial or natural omens.<sup>93</sup> This powerful martial image, however, could clash

93 Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang, *History and Legend: Ideas and Images in the Ming Historical Novels* (Ann Arbor, 1990) on birth myths, 41–43, 170, on charisma 193; see Sarah Schneewind, *A Tale of Two Melons: Emperor and Subject in Ming China* (Cambridge Mass., 2006). In the Safavid context *farr-i Izadi* (divine spark, divine effulgence) is often mentioned, see Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge Mass., 2002) xxx, xxxiii, 21, 26, 132, 211; on a divine blessing or charisma (*barakat*) as being hereditary see 214, 295; both terms can also be found in Colin P. Mitchell, ‘Am I my Brother’s Keeper? Negotiating Corporate Sovereignty and Divine Absolutism in 16th-Century Turco-Iranian Politics’, in: Colin P. Mitchell, ed., *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society* (New York, 2011) 33–58, at 45–47. Persian *farr* was taken up by the Mughal and connected to Akbar’s special religious position by Abu l-Fazl, see his *Ain i Akbari*, H. Blochmann, ed. (Calcutta, 1874) I, 170–175. A Turco-Mongol variant can be found in Turkish *kut*, fortune or battle luck, see Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty: Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household, 1400–1800* (London and New York, 2008) 57; Mongol *Qutlug* was included in the titles of many rulers. *Wahyu* (divine inspiration or consent) mentioned in Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century* (Cornell, 1963) 60–61; *tuah* (fortune), in Leonard Y. Andaya, ‘“A Very Good-Natured but Awe-Inspiring Government”. The Reign of a Successful Queen in Seventeenth-Century Aceh’, in: Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, eds., *Hof en Handel: Aziatische Vorsten en de VOC 1620–1720* (Leiden, 2004) 59–84, at 63; *wahyu* and *perwaba* are discussed in J.J. Ras, ‘Geschiedschrijving en de legitimiteit van het koningschap op Java’, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 150, no. 3 (1994) 518–538 at 536. These terms all appear related to the



with the equally strong ideal of the righteous and just king, emulating his wisest forebears and steering clear of unnecessary bellicosity. No 'dual kingship' as practiced in Japan developed here, although some sultans would leave the battlefield to their viziers. In the course of the early modern age commander-kings became less common among European royalty, yet the connection never disappeared entirely.

Personalities complicate any straightforward typology. Demure kings and sultans can be found in Europe as well as in South and West Asia, whilst activist emperors can be found in Ming and Qing China. All Chinese first emperors, by definition, were generals and men of action. Did sultans consistently stay more distant from the urban crowd than European kings? The literary cliché of the ruler roaming through his capital, present in the *Thousand and One Nights*, recurred in later stories, depicting kings and emperors freely moving among their peoples.<sup>94</sup> Safavid Shah 'Abbas I made an intriguing remark during one of his apparently frequent nocturnal excursions in Isfahan, exclaiming to a European friar: '... I am a king after my own will, and to go about in this way is to be king: not like yours, who is always sitting indoors!'<sup>95</sup> A few decades later, the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV, known for his military activism and violent disposition, appears to have inspected Istanbul at night, disciplining and punishing his people.<sup>96</sup>

Notwithstanding great diversity in personalities and regional styles, European kings and West and South Asian sultans appear to have been more visible than their East Asian fellow-rulers.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, the reduction of the emperor's mobility and visibility that became common early in Chinese history

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European concept of charisma, with its double meaning of divine election and personal magnetism.

94 Richard van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, 2004) vol. 1, 201–206, vol. 2, 487–489, 585–587; on Charles V, Martina Fuchs, *Karl v. Eine populäre Figur? Zur Rezeption des Kaisers in deutschsprachiger Belletristik* (Münster, 2002); Harlinde Lox, *Van Stropdraggers En de Pot Van Olen: Verhalen Over Keizer Karel* (Leuven, 1999); Joan de Griek, *De heereycke ende vrolycke daeden van keyser Carel den V.* (Brussels, 1674).

95 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 179.

96 Nicholas Rolamb, 'A Relation of a Journey to Constantinople', translated from the Swedish and printed in Awnsham Churchill and John Churchill, eds., *A Collection of Voyages and Travels: Some Now First Printed from Original Manuscripts, Others Now First Published in English: In Six Volumes with a General Preface Giving an Account of the Progress of Navigation from Its First Beginning* (London, 1732) vol. 5 at 669–716, cites Murad IV's violent wanderings on 690 and mentions Mehmed IV as imitating his illustrious forebear on 701.

97 See chapter 3 in this volume, Rietbergen, 'Not of this World ...?'

gradually may have taken shape elsewhere in the course of the centuries studied here. The urban interactions common in late medieval European monarchy have been contrasted with seventeenth-century monarchs moving to rural hunting lodges, abandoning their tours through the country and their urban entries. Versailles is most often cited as the example of this development. Did all courts become more secluded over time, in a general process of consolidation, institutionalization, and distancing?

In the late sixteenth century, several princes were notorious indoor-types: Murad III, Emperor Rudolf II, and to some extent Henry III of France. Their seventeenth-century successors, Murad IV, Ferdinand II, and Henry IV respectively, were again far more outgoing. Late-seventeenth-century baroque piety entailed endless processions and rituals in which royalty mixed with the populace, though at Protestant courts the interactions may have become more subdued. Louis XIV prided himself on the accessibility of French monarchs and performed all basic rites of royalty in the early decades of his reign. The Versailles court struck visitors not because of its ceremonial aloofness: on the contrary, they were shocked by the exceptional accessibility of royals in the palace. The observation that ritual interaction with the realm declined under Louis XIV is in part simply a consequence of his remarkably long reign: the occasions for ceremonial tours were concentrated in the first decade or so of reigns. Ageing rulers, moreover, were much less drawn to mobility and frequent changes of locale. In the eighteenth century European royals abandoned many of the traditional religious ceremonies, but they respected the logic of interaction by creating new secular meeting points for somewhat broadened audiences.<sup>98</sup>

In the early eighteenth century the Ottoman sultans, after a long phase of residence in Edirne, returned to the old capital and engaged in a series of urban festivities and processions.<sup>99</sup> The withdrawal of Safavid Shahs in the

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98 Jeroen Duindam, 'The Dynastic Court in an Age of Change', in: *Friedrich300 Colloquien, Friedrich der Große und der Hof, Perspectivia* (2009) [http://www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/friedrich300-colloquien/friedrich-hof/Duindam\\_Court](http://www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/friedrich300-colloquien/friedrich-hof/Duindam_Court); Derek Beales, 'Joseph II, petitions and the public sphere', in: Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms, eds., *Cultures of Power in Europe During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007) 249–268.

99 Tülay Artan, 'Royal Weddings and the Grand Vezirate: Institutional and Symbolic Change in the Early Eighteenth Century', in: Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan, and Metin Kunt, eds., *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective* (Leiden and Boston, 2011) 339–399.

later seventeenth century does not seem to have continued under their Qajar successors.<sup>100</sup>

Styles of interaction frequently changed, depending on the individual temperament and age of rulers, on political constellations, and on gradually changing cultural precepts. One conclusion emerges clearly: in East Asia withdrawal was the predominant cultural mode of rulership, an alternative form of representation that was built on the idea of the ruler as a moral exemplar as well as on a division of labour between the paramount ruler and his more active agents. Individuals on the throne would stretch and sometimes disregard rules, but they were all constrained by these cultural expectations. In Europe as well as in West and South Asia, the ideals of rulership entailed miscellaneous but on the whole more active, interactive, and mobile styles. I see no consistent and ongoing process of withdrawal either in Europe or in West and South Asia.

### 3 Identifying Functional Equivalents: Distribution, Ritual, Contestation

The preceding paragraphs have outlined major variations among courts in East Asia, West and South Asia, and Europe. Monogamy and polygyny gave rise to different palace structures and patterns of access to the ruler. To some extent they defined the conditions of succession, succession strife, female power, and the understanding of dynasty. However, fratricide and contestation prevented the formation of collateral lines in West and South Asia, whereas collaterals inflated rapidly in East Asia: polygyny, apparently, was only one factor among many. From London to Edo, moreover, a tendency towards concentration of power in a single main line can be identified—collaterals were increasingly pushed aside, eliminated, or reduced to a role as passive reserve. Nevertheless, dynastic scions remained a matter of concern everywhere: they shared the ruler's special status and can be found as commanders and governors on the frontier; alternatively they were kept in check by some form of confinement at the centre. The recruitment of elites differed sharply across Eurasia, with a marked preponderance of hereditary noble-martial elites in Europe and Japan,

100 On the gradual restriction of access and movement, see *Engelbert Kaempfer am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs*, 31, 63, 186–188; Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London and New York, 2012) 57–59. See lively interactions described in Robert Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia ... during the Years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820* (London, 1821) 316–336.

mixed forms of recruitment through family ties, slavery, and religious vocation in West and South Asia, and a remarkably strong position for the civil service examinations in China, with a touch of heredity under the Ming, strengthened under the Qing conquest dynasty. In the long run the self-representation of these groups seems to have diverged more conspicuously than social practices: in each of these polities intermediary elites occupied key positions between the dynastic centre and locals. Slaves and disciples tended to turn into vested semi-hereditary power holders. Deferential literati magistrates exerted great powers under marginal control of the central state; while they could not transmit their office to their offspring, their lineages were able to maintain status through the centuries. In Europe, moreover, the emerging aristocracy was a mixture of old nobles and specialists who had risen in state service. Finally, the seclusion of rulers in East Asia contrasts strongly with the more interactive forms of rulership in the other parts of Eurasia, notwithstanding major regional and personal variations. Yet their absence from public view, combined with the busy traffic to the court and with their pervasive presence in culture, underlined their awesome powers.

The divergences examined in the previous paragraphs show that courts, dynasties, elites, and styles of rulership in Eurasia cannot be subsumed easily under a single, uniform category. Yet did courts in these different Eurasian settings, by and large, fulfil similar functions? Does variety of form hide functional equivalents, specific for Eurasia or perhaps even relevant for courtly setting in all continents? In this third section I include African examples to support my contention that several functions were indeed common to all courts: first, they were centres of redistribution; second they were the hub of rituals and festivities; third, they were arenas of political contestation. These functions point immediately to the centripetal potential of the court: many shared in the court's bounty, participated in its 'effervescences collectives', and moved there to obtain advantages. Did these functions strengthen the cohesion of the realm? Could the court, a household inflated to extraordinary proportions, help to bring together groups and regions under the loose umbrella of dynastic rule?

### 3.1 *Hospitality, Circulation, and Distribution*

Courts overstate every aspect of the household that suggests strength and wealth. The size and splendour of the royal compound or palace; the numbers of its guards and servants; the hospitality of the court's tables; the military trophies, dynastic regalia, and treasures on show or in hiding; the numbers of women: they all proclaim the special status of the ruler. However, these riches also display the court's potential for sharing and redistribution. This distributive nature of dynastic households is particularly clear in the African

context.<sup>101</sup> Many kingdoms can be found here where huge royal establishments maintained close connections with relatively small populations. A selection of examples, moving from West to East and South Africa, will highlight themes that can be re-examined in the Eurasian context. In the Asante federation, numerous women in the harem were given in marriage to chiefly lineages, connecting these to the ruling establishment. When King (*asantehene*) Prempeh returned from exile to re-establish his kingdom under British colonial control, his first measure was to restore the harem, not for his personal indulgence, but as the essential foundation for alliances and marriage exchanges.<sup>102</sup> In Benin the three court staffs catering for the king employed people from almost every village.<sup>103</sup> In the outer court of the palace compound of Bamoum all chiefs were entitled to food and drink.<sup>104</sup> In Bunyoro, all crafts were represented in the palace, while court offices were vested hereditarily in particular clans.<sup>105</sup> The harem of the Lovedu 'rain queen', a woman seen as masculine, served as a basis for wife-giving to district heads and noblemen. These sons-in-law of the queen, moreover, were expected to send their daughters to the harem, perpetuating a cycle of wife-exchange organized around the queen.<sup>106</sup> African patterns of succession show a marked presence of contestation and diffusion. In a sizeable minority of polities, succession through the female line prohibited the accession of kings' sons, and privileged the kings' uterine brothers or sisters' sons. This 'sideways' rather than 'downwards' succession was also practised in patrilineal regions where powerful 'kingmakers' prevented the concentration of power in male primogeniture by prohibiting the succession of ruling kings' sons. The eligibles competing in 'sideways' succession needed to acquire the support of these elites, who were thus able to continuously reconfirm their kingmaking powers. In some cases, succession even circulated among a number of clans, usually sharing a single ancestor. Popular acclamation played a role; in some polities popular influence was not restricted to interregna. In the

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101 Duindam, *Dynasties*, integrates African cases more systematically than this discussion, and includes examples from the Americas, Southeast Asia, and Polynesia.

102 Emmanuel Akyeampong, in Prempeh I, *The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself and Other Writings by Otumfuo, Nana Agyeman Prempeh I*, Emmanuel Akyeampong, et al., eds. (Oxford, 2003) 51–52.

103 Robert E. Bradbury, 'The Kingdom of Benin', in: Peter Morton-Williams, ed., *Benin Studies* (London and New York, 1973) 44–75.

104 Claude Tardits, *Le royaume Bamoum* (Paris, 1980) 580, 601, 592.

105 John Beattie, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom* (New York, 1960) 32.

106 E. Jensen Krige and J.D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain-queen: A Study of the Pattern of Lovedu Society* (Oxford, 1943) 174–185.

Asante federation, rulers who were seen as debauched or incompetent could face 'destoolment' (dethronement). The disturbances inherent in contested and circulating dynastic succession wreaked havoc, yet they also broadened the reach of royalty and offered an opportunity to attach elites to the throne.

These African examples suggest the impact a dynastic household could have on society through large-scale hospitality, the presence of numerous groups at court, wife exchange, and open succession. Were these patterns relevant for the larger and socially more differentiated Eurasian polities? Scale is a complicating factor here. With sparse and unreliable information in most cases, a calculation of numbers of people at court as a share of the entire population is a reasoned guess at best. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that a remarkable number of servants and consorts lived in and around the royal compounds in Dahomey and Bamoum. The estimated five to eight thousand mostly female servants of the Leopard King of Dahomey surely comprised more than one percent of the population, and for the one thousand wives and two thousand servants at court in less populous Bamoum the same can be said. In smaller African polities the percentages were probably even higher.<sup>107</sup> Similar proportions cannot be found in the larger polities of Eurasia. At around twenty thousand persons, the late Ming court was at least three times the size of the court of the Leopard King, but as a share of a population of one hundred million, it dwindled into insignificance. Under the Qing, the reduced court and the rapidly growing population grew further apart in numerical terms. Proportions in Europe and West and South Asia stood between these extremes, but remained way below the African standards. The personal household of French king Louis XIV in 1699 numbered ca. two thousand persons; with all the households of other members of the dynasty, the totals rose to ca. five thousand. Including the military elite units connected to the household an aggregate number of ca. fifteen thousand can be accepted.<sup>108</sup> This biggest of all European court establishments added up to less than 0.1 percent of France's population of twenty million or so. The proportions in the Ottoman empire, with an estimated eleven thousand in the outer and two thousand in the inner service of Topkapı palace for a population of around twenty-five million, are roughly equivalent.<sup>109</sup>

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107 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 193.

108 Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*; Duindam, 'Vienna and Versailles. Materials For Further Comparison and Some Conclusions', *Zeitenblicke* 4, no. 3 (2005) <http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2005/3/Duindam/index.html>.

109 Murphey, *Ottoman Sovereignty*, tables on 167, 171–174; on harem women see Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 122.

In none of the larger polities did the share of the household in the population approach the African examples mentioned. The scale of most polities in Eurasia changed the nature of the interactions between the population at large and the dynastic centre. No direct connections were possible with the entire realm: across Eurasia there was at least one intermediate layer between local dignitaries and the court. Distance demanded the presence of intermediary elites to bridge the gap between centre and periphery. They commuted between the political heart and the provinces, as administrators involved in a carousel of regional appointments, or as regional grandees combining local rule with sojourns at court. Also, the development of separate administrative hierarchies around the court in all major Eurasian polities appears to make the African examples less relevant. At the centre, specialized administrative services had developed and moved out of the court. Did these clerks and magistrates diminish the impact of the household? These institutions had become vital in preparing and filing paperwork for deliberation. Increasingly, their desks took over functions performed earlier by household officials, such as the handling of petitions. However, while the differentiated agencies of government were becoming more important, households still were the cockpit of political decision-making and high-level nominations.

How did the numbers of those involved in central administrative services compare to those in the households? The aggregate of local and central magistrates in Ming and Qing China has been estimated at twenty-five to thirty-five thousand, surprisingly few for the huge territory and population under imperial control.<sup>110</sup> The magistrates together outnumbered the court, but the central

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110 On numbers of magistrates see Benjamin A. Elman, 'The Social Roles of Literati in Early to Mid-Ch'ing', in: Willard J. Peterson, ed., *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 9, Part 1: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800* (Cambridge, 2002) 360–427, at 384 citing 20,400 positions for licentiates in 1500 expanding to 24,680 in 1625; William Skinner, 'Introduction: Urban Development in Imperial China', in: G.W. Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 1977) 3–31, at 21 underlined the gradual decrease of magistrates as a proportion of the population since Han times; Guy, *Qing Governors*, stresses the strengthening of the structures of administration under the Qing (35, 43) but also points to the Qing emperors' efforts to weed out redundant positions (52, 56). An estimated 100,000 'Clerks and runners' supported the magistrates in their tasks, see Charles O. Hucker, 'Governmental Organization of The Ming Dynasty', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 21 (1958) 1–66 at 18; the presence of other intermediaries, such as notaries or litigation masters, in far higher numbers was underlined in a paper given by Hilde de Weerd at the KNIR in spring 2015. These higher numbers can also be found in Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven and London, 1957) 307, 'The underlings', suggesting

boards in the capital were certainly less numerous than their domestic inner court counterparts. The central 'bureaucracy' in Ludovician France, the 'six ministries', together numbered only seven to eight hundred persons, fewer than the household of the king's brother, and less than half of the royal household. Likewise the clerks servicing the *divan* (council) and its offices at the Ottoman court never approached in number the household staffs.<sup>111</sup> Local officeholders and their staffs were far more numerous—yet many of these were not in the direct service of the dynasty and hence pursued different interests. Only the army, consistently employing more people than any other institution, dwarfed the numbers of the dynastic household as well as the administrative agencies, bearing witness to the lasting relevance of coercion. The relatively high numbers of the domestic setting of rule vis-à-vis the numbers of central administrators suggest that the household's potential for representation and sharing still played a role.

Most Eurasian polities were bigger and more populous than the African kingdoms mentioned here, yet in these larger-scale realms, succession, hospitality, supernumeraries in court service, and alliances through marriage and concubinage still were relevant for social cohesion. Acclamation, election, competition, and circulation occurred in Europe as well as among Turco-Mongol dynasties. A new khan needed to be acclaimed by the Mongol council (*quriltai*); competition, we have seen, was long the rule in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. Munis Faruqi recently pointed out that succession strife among Mughal princes could reinvigorate Mughal powers, as long as these bloody interregna did not occur too often.<sup>112</sup> Russian tsars, mediating between Mongol, European, and Byzantine traditions, combined hereditary succession with acclamation and designation—a mixture that remained unstable into the late eighteenth century.<sup>113</sup> The two highest dignities in Europe, the pope and the emperor, were elective at least in theory. The imperial title circulated among a small number of houses before it became a Habsburg semi-monopoly. After 1519 elections gave rise to negotiations confirming the rights of the electors-kingmakers on paper (*Wahlkapitulationen*) strengthening the

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40,000 magistrates, 1,200,000 clerks and 500,000 runners. See also Peer Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s* (London and New York, 2015) 144.

111 Murphey, *Ottoman Sovereignty*; Duindam, 'Materials'.

112 Faruqi, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*.

113 Richard Wortman, 'The Representation of Dynasty and "Fundamental Laws" in the Evolution of Russian Monarchy', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 2 (2012) 265–300.



view of the empire as a shared endeavour notwithstanding the Habsburg semi-monopoly.<sup>114</sup> The brief tenure of a Wittelsbach emperor in 1742–1745, moreover, showed that there could still be a choice. Popes were elected by cardinals from among their own midst—and although Europe’s leading dynasties were a potent influence during elections, they never pushed forward their own scions for the chair of St. Peter.<sup>115</sup> Machiavelli compared papal elections to Mamluk practice, where a slave-soldier was selected from among his equals to perform the paramount role—although the Mamluks, too, at times tended towards the formation of dynasties.<sup>116</sup> Acclamation by peers formed part of most monarchical traditions, and election remained important in Scandinavian monarchy until the sixteenth century and in Central Europe until the Habsburgs enforced heredity there. Poland, often remembered as the sole example of elective monarchy, was special because of the persistence of election into the eighteenth century and because of the huge numbers of electors present at the open-air meetings. Circulation of supreme office among a limited number of candidates was also practised in republics, most notably the Venetian and Dutch republics—the latter, at several moments in the seventeenth century, and more lastingly in the second half of the eighteenth century, moved closer to monarchical practice. However, we have seen that succession in most parts of Eurasia increasingly conformed to fixed patrilineal rules (male seniority or primogeniture).

The Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk underlined in his advice to the prince that: ‘Kings have always paid attention to having well-supplied tables in the mornings, so that those who come to the royal presence may find something to eat there’.<sup>117</sup> Rulers who lacked ‘magnanimity and generosity’ would not only risk losing the respect of their subjects, but also invited the scorn of their fellow-rulers. While this maxim pertained to visiting elites rather than to the urban rabble, rulers could not evade cultural and religious expectations of

114 See also Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Des Kaisers alte Kleider: Verfassungsgeschichte und Symbolsprache im Alten Reich* (Munich, 2008).

115 See chapter 3 in this volume, Rietbergen, ‘Not of this World ...?’.

116 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford, 2005) 70–71. On changing Mamluk succession practices, see Amalia Levanoni, ‘The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 3 (1994) 373–392 and more recently Angus Stewart, ‘Between Baybars and Qalāwūn: Under-Age Rulers and Succession in the Early Mamlūk Sultanate’, *Al-Masaq* 19, no. 1 (2007) 47–54; Flinterman, ‘The Cult of Qalāwūn’.

117 Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings: The Siyar Al-Muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam Al-Mulk*, Hubert Darke, ed. (New York, 1960) 126–127.

hospitality and almsgiving without jeopardizing their prestige. Servants at European courts were fed and clothed by their master; in addition, outsiders were invited to eat at the court's tables. Court staffs ate in hierarchically ordered shifts, with the dishes left by the higher tables being served to lesser staff, and the leftovers, finally, to be given to the urban poor. Most courts between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries replaced board by monetary payments, which ended the widespread hospitality in the lower echelons of the household. Hospitality now was mostly restricted to prestigious groups, and charity left to the court's almoners. Only during special occasions, mostly related to religious festivals, would the urban poor be feasted by their sovereigns, in Europe as well as in West and South Asia. In Late Imperial China, the court did not accept hospitality as one of its regular responsibilities. Nevertheless, a system of granaries, soup kitchens, and tax remits operated to assuage poverty particularly after natural disasters—measures that went far beyond the potential of most rulers elsewhere in Eurasia.

The direct connections between villages and the court, cited for Benin, were possible only for courts in miniature polities—in Europe smaller German and Italian principalities come to mind, where urban shopkeepers doubled as court purveyors.<sup>118</sup> Elsewhere, this direct nexus was important for the immediate environment of the main residence, usually the capital city, where numerous labourers and retailers depended on the court.<sup>119</sup> Many observers connected urban wealth to the presence of a dynastic court. In the later fourteenth century the North African sage Ibn Khaldun noted that: 'Towns and cities are secondary products of royal authority ... dynasties and royal authority are absolutely necessary for the building of cities and the planning of towns ...'<sup>120</sup> Two centuries later, Giovanni Botero claimed that: '... it is of immeasurable assistance in making a city great and magnificent if the prince resides there.'<sup>121</sup>

118 Lennart Bes, 'Imperial Servants on Local Thrones. Dynastic Politics in the Vijayanagara Successor States' (PhD dissertation) shows multiple connections around smaller South-Indian Courts, but it is not possible to quantify these.

119 On these lower echelons of court staff see Herbert Haupt, *Das Hof- und hofbefreite Handwerk im barocken Wien, 1620 bis 1770. Ein Handbuch* (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bozen, 2007); Irene Kubiska-Scharl and Michael Pölzl, *Die Karrieren des Wiener Hofpersonals 1711–1765. Eine Darstellung anhand der Hofkalender und Hofparteiprotokolle* (Innsbruck, Vienna, and Bozen, 2013); William Ritchey Newton, *Dans l'ombre de la cour. Les baraques autour du château de Versailles. Le nouveau marché. L'hôtel de Limoges* (Paris, 2015).

120 Giovanni Botero, *On the Causes of the Greatness and Magnificence of Cities*, Geoffrey Symcox, ed. (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 2012) book II, chapter 12.

121 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, Franz Rosenthal, ed. (Prince-

Many urban centres throughout Eurasia thrived because of trade and manufacture rather than through the presence of a court; however, even in a bustling commercial centre such as London the presence of this demanding employer and avaricious consumer had major consequences.<sup>122</sup> Other towns arose almost entirely in consequence of the ruler's presence. Madrid, Vienna, Turin, and many smaller German towns owed their position to royal courts. Metropolises such as Istanbul, Delhi, Isfahan, and Beijing were defined to a large extent by palace compounds and the ongoing traffic these attracted. In the course of the seventeenth century, the Janissaries attached to Topkapı palace became ever more involved in the guilds of Istanbul, sometimes acting as mafia-style 'protectors' of the guilds, but also serving as intermediaries voicing the complaints of the populace in the palace.<sup>123</sup> At the French court, traditional court offices served as patrons for the Parisian trades they represented: the *panetier* (pantler) for bakers, the *échanson* (cupbearer) for wine merchants and taverners.<sup>124</sup> Court-city relations, however, were rarely free from conflicts. In Europe, the royal household was a separate corporation, subject to its own officers only, and exempt from regular urban fiscal and judicial rules. Court staff were liable to abuse these rights to undersell local traders and publicans, a grave concern for the urban authorities.<sup>125</sup> The presence of the court in the city, inevitably, proved a disaster for some, and a blessing for others.

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ton and Oxford, 1967) 263; see Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City*, 69 on Mughal financial support of the city.

- 122 Robert Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London. A Social and Cultural History 1550–1750* (Cambridge, 2012) 101–131.
- 123 Cemal Kafadar, 'Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels Without a Cause?', in: Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir, eds., *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz* (Madison, 2007) 113–134; Eunjeong Yi, *Guild Dynamics in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Fluidity and Leverage* (Leiden and Boston, 2004); Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge, 2005) 136–139.
- 124 Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 32–33, 38; on the imperial *Erzämter* see Duindam, 'The Habsburg Court in Vienna: Kaiserhof or Reichshof?' in: Robert Evans and Peter H. Wilson, eds., *The Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806: A European Perspective* (Boston and Leiden, 2012) 91–119.
- 125 Werner Paravicini and Jörg Wettlaufer, eds., *Der Hof und die Stadt. Konfrontation, Koexistenz und Integration im Verhältnis von Hof und Stadt in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Ostfildern, 2006); Susanne Claudine Pils and Jan Paul Niederkorn, eds., *Ein zweigeteilter Ort? Hof und Stadt in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Innsbruck, 2005); Malcolm Smuts and George Gorse, eds., *The Politics of Space: Courts in Europe c. 1500–1750* (Rome, 2009). For a more

Youngsters often spent a few years at court as a stage in their education. Pages can be found at many courts. These young boys were sent by noble clients to their royal patron or by distant princes to their overlord to learn courtly manners as well as military skills. They came to court voluntarily or, alternatively, under duress as hostages ensuring the loyalty of their kin—common practice in the relations between the Russian Tsar and his Steppe tributaries.<sup>126</sup> Noble boys in their early teens spent a few years at European courts, usually in the stable service where they were trained in horsemanship, martial exercises, and a school curriculum in addition to receiving on-the-job training as court servants. Novices competed for entry into court service, their family backgrounds evaluated by a genealogist in the prince's service. After a few years' service, pages could hope for nominations in the army, at court, or in administrative services. The pages in the Ottoman Palace School were recruited through *devshirme* and hence fall into a different category; yet their careers can be compared to those of pages at other courts. In the seventeenth century, with the demise of the system, local elite boys appear to have entered into the Sultan's *cursus honorum* from the outside, approximating the role of pages elsewhere. At the most exclusive level, young boys could serve as foster brothers of princes educated in the household, sharing the services of one wet nurse and becoming playmates—they often developed powerful friendships, undisturbed by the tensions at work between brothers within the dynasty.

Women in the harem likewise could be recruited voluntarily or through force, and as a safeguard preventing their families from rebelling. Mughal rulers married Persian and Rajput princesses, and included others as concubines in their harem without ever touching them. Akbar's harem included eleven women given in marriage by Rajput princes, underpinning their alliance with the emperor.<sup>127</sup> In 1581 the Spanish Jesuit Father Monserrate, traveling to the Khyber Pass in a Mughal military convoy, reported the presence of several

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general background see Peter Clark and Bernard Lepetit, eds., *Capital Cities and their Hinterlands in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1996).

- 126 The oath (*shert*), the practice of sending hostages (*amanat*), and the payment of tribute (*yasak*) were the common attributes of this relationship, see Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington, 2004) chapter 2, 46–74; Hans Voeten, 'The Kolyvan-Voskresensk Plants and the Russian Integration of Southern Siberia, 1725–1783' (PhD dissertation).
- 127 Frances H. Taft, 'Honor and Alliance: Reconsidering Mughal Rajput Marriages', in: Karine Schomer, Joan L. Erdman, and Deryck O. Lodrick, eds., *The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity* (Manohar, 1994) 217–241, tables at 218–220.

women in this group. He explained that Akbar took the women ‘... with him in honourable custody, both as a reminder and proof of his own victorious glory, and as hostage in order to prevent any insurrection ...’<sup>128</sup> Marriage alliances worked in two directions: Mughal princesses married ‘exalted lineages’ of the realm, houses worthy of a lasting connection with the Mughal overlords.<sup>129</sup> These included Uzbek and Safavid princes, as well as members of prestigious religious families. Ottoman concubines were recruited as slaves and did not commonly represent any specific alliance or group. However, the princesses borne out of their union with the sultan consolidated the ties of the Ottoman ruling house with leading officeholders: young sultanas wedded experienced pashas and viziers, who now became sultanic in-laws (*damads*). The age difference and the frequency of executions among leading Ottoman state servants could lead to numerous subsequent remarriages by sultanas.<sup>130</sup> The Qing system of recruitment of maids and women from the ‘banners’ organizing the military power of the conquest clan confirmed the supremacy of this small ruling elite and strengthened mutual loyalties.<sup>131</sup> Maids recruited for the Qing harem, moreover, could expect to return to their banners after ten years of service or upon reaching their twenty-fifth year.<sup>132</sup> Qing recruitment and retirement of maids in palace service, most of whom would never have been intimate with the emperor, approximates European practice. Here, ladies-in-waiting, or more accurately damsels-in-waiting, served the queen or princess in her chamber, before seeking to conclude a marriage alliance at court and under the patronage of the dynasty—often finding a partner among the young nobles groomed at court. While these damsels clearly did not form part of a harem, many rulers found mistresses in their ranks. This apparently motivated the 1674

128 Antonio Monserrate, *The Commentary of Father Monserrate, S.J. on his Journey to the Court of Akbar*, S.N. Banerjee, ed. (Oxford, 1922) 143.

129 Abu l-Fazl, *The Akbar Nama of Abu-l-Fazl (History of the Reign of Akbar Including an Account of His Predecessors)*, H. Beveridge, ed. (New Delhi, 1973) three volumes, vol. 3, 677–678; on the princesses’ alliances, Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 169–170; Stephen P. Blake, ‘Returning the Household to the Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire: Gender, Succession, and Ritual in the Mughal, Safavid and Ottoman Empires’, in: Peter Fibiger Bang and C.A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Basingstoke, 2011) 214–226, at 224.

130 Juliette Dumas, ‘Les perles de nacre du sultanat. Les princesses ottomanes (mi-XVe – mi-XVIIIe siècle)’ (Dissertation EHESS, Paris 2013) 125–194.

131 Rawski, *Last Emperors*, 131; Bao Hua Hsieh, *Concubinage and Servitude in Late Imperial China*.

132 Rawski, *Last Emperors*, 170–171, mentioning as age of entry thirteen to fifteen years. The age of retirement was lowered from thirty to twenty-five by the Yongzheng emperor.

replacement of the young unmarried *filles d'honneur* at the French court by married *dames du palais*—a measure that did little to stop the practice.<sup>133</sup>

Servants active at courts elsewhere embodied connections with the city as well as with outlying regions. Slaves in the Palace School of Topkapı palace are now no longer seen as rootless: they cultivated their ties with home villages and families, particularly upon their graduation to office in the outer-court service. Conversely, locals could hope to crown their social ascent by obtaining a court title, a practice that seems to be reflected in the numbers of falconers (*doğancı*) and doorkeepers (*kapucubaşı*).<sup>134</sup> Most courts knew phases of inflation of offices, with numbers of servants and officeholders expanding rapidly. Such offices tended to become honours only loosely connected to actual service. In Tokugawa Japan the old offices of the imperial palace were used as titles; in Ming and Qing China a complicated and varied system of lofty honorary titles was added to the differentiated hierarchies of soldiers and magistrates. Numbers of Mughal *mansabdars* multiplied from fewer than two thousand at the end of the sixteenth century to almost fifteen thousand a century later, surely another case of inflation of honours.<sup>135</sup> In Europe court offices existed at three levels: a single, high-ranking officeholder responsible for the entire staff; a small number of servants who actually performed the daily tasks around the ruler in the chamber and at the table; and, finally, a third far more numerous layer of honorary servants who held court rank but performed service only incidentally. At the lower levels of the court hierarchy, this honorary status was awarded to labourers and purveyors, as a perk compensating for their modest wages that, moreover, often went unpaid. At higher levels of the social ladder noble honorary supernumeraries served as chamberlains, gentleman-carvers, and esquires: they could exercise responsibilities on the basis of regular job rotation, every semester or quarter, or alternatively their presence and service was required only during special occasions. These noble honorary servants did have the right to enter the court and participate in its activities.<sup>136</sup> In their ranks, inflation was usually more rapid than among the 'actual' servants. Honorary membership was not limited to the court: financial and legal institutions of the state likewise developed a tendency to appoint 'honorary' councillors and supernumerary administrators—a pattern that would continue after the

133 See Pierre Clément, *Madame de Montespan et Louis XIV: étude historique* (Paris, 1868) 44; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 94.

134 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 243–244 and literature cited there.

135 Abraham Eraly, *The Mughal World: Life in India's Last Golden Age* (New Delhi and New York, 2007) 249.

136 Duindam, 'Royal Courts'.

demise of monarchy. In addition, most European monarchies developed special distinctions for their leading servants in all domains: orders of chivalry that ideally maintained exclusivity by restricting the number of knighthoods.

These honorary extensions of the European court were defined by a combination that does not seem to have been present elsewhere. On the one hand, their high rank was reflected in the right of proximity to the ruler: they had access to the court, into the royal apartment. On the other hand, they were not necessarily often at court and were expected to perform services in the provinces and in the army. These honorary officers used their court rank as a trump card to outdo local rivals. The 'economy of honour' based on the court was a vital instrument for elites who used it to increase their status, while, at the same time, they heralded the power and glory of the court. Honorary officers did not necessarily double as administrative agents of the centre in the periphery: social and administrative hierarchies did not always overlap. Chinese literati, Mughal *mansabdars*, or Ottoman pashas do not seem to match this group: they could not, as a rule, enter into the ruler's inner domains, and their ranks were primarily defined by the administrative and military functions they performed. The daimyo in the Japanese case, holding ranks of the imperial court conferred by the shogun, and serving as local lords in their fiefs, come closer, but still seem different if only because of their limited numbers. European honorary officers formed a sizeable group at court and a dispersed but far more numerous court 'connection' in the provinces. More than the numbers of lesser servants at court, or the upper layer of leading officeholders, these extended noble connections of the court can be seen as the 'court society'. They were the typical courtiers, the social group that claimed membership of the court and enjoyed rights of access, but was mostly absent, living in city palaces or landed estates throughout the realm. They disseminated court culture and court style because it enhanced their status. By extension, the courtier was seen as the embodiment of culture *per se*—in Castiglione's spirited discussions and in later French and English tracts on the *honnête homme* and the gentleman. An exact parallel for this group cannot be found elsewhere. For two reasons, the term courtier should not be used as a universal label for any person active at court. First of all the term does not fit the lower levels of service personnel, who worked at court but were never part of 'court society'. Secondly, there is no close parallel in other regions for the European elites who held court rank and could incidentally act as domestic servitors in the ruler's presence, but were not usually at court.

There was more than honour to be distributed. Offices in government, army commands, and certain religious dignities were in the gift of the supreme ruler. Other bodies or individuals could have a say in these matters, but decisions for

the upper-level nominations were rarely made without the consultation of the prince. At set points in the annual calendar, appointments, promotions, and relocations would be decided and announced. For many this was the moment of truth: would their assiduous orbiting of the court and its officeholders be rewarded? In her study of the small West African Mamprusi kingdom, Susan Drucker-Brown notes that 'Acquisition of royal chiefship entails long periods ... of competition during which the rival candidates regularly come from all parts of the kingdom to the capital bringing gifts to the king and elders.' The battle for preference took a polite, 'courtly' form which notably included the exchange of gifts and compliments.<sup>137</sup> Distribution of offices and benefices forms a consistent focus of all governments; in the early modern period, it took shape primarily at court, where domestic and administrative spheres met, and access to the ruler was a key advantage. The process could attract aspirants from far beyond the perimeter of the palace and the capital.

The machinery of distributing offices, benefits, and status was as important in the Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires as it was in European polities. The Ottoman system of promotions was based first on the 'graduation' of pages from the palace school, moving to offices in the inner or outer services of the palace, or to provincial government. Having exited the palace school, they could not re-enter; outer servants were barred from access into the inner court. All officeholders, however, would frequently return to the court to await evaluation and re-appointment, a process that could take months.<sup>138</sup> The most successful could hope to become viziers or even to reach the supreme position as grand vizier. Pashas moving between their provincial assignments and the palace thus were a common feature. Much the same can be said about the Mughal *mansabdars* who were frequently reassigned to new places and whose rankings were subject to permanent re-evaluation, ideally in the hands of the emperor himself. The greatest *mansabdars* and pashas shared a Persianate court culture and were connoisseurs of music, poetry, or learning. They surely were 'courtiers' in this cultural sense, and much like the European honorary servants, they moved between centre and periphery. However, the Safavid Qizilbash, Ottoman pashas, and the Mughal *mansabdars* did not share the formally hereditary status of European nobles; neither did they serve as honorary domestic court officers holding the right to enter into the ruler's apartment. Like some of the grander magnates in Europe, these officeholders depending

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137 S. Drucker-Brown, 'King House: The Mobile Polity in Northern Ghana', in: D. Quigley ed., *The Character of Kingship* (Oxford, 2005) 171–186, at 178.

138 Murphey, *Ottoman Sovereignty*, 131–137.



on royal largesse were themselves the lords of major households, miniature courts representing their own power as well as that of their overlords.

For rulers and their advisors, the key challenge was to keep fluid and at their discretion the nominations to leading offices in government and army. The inflation of honours, so common at many courts, should not without further thought be understood as the ruler's intention and initiative. European rulers, more often than not, were keen to reduce the numbers at court, a policy that would save money and reinforce the exclusivity and status of court office. Statements about reduction abound in royal edicts; yet they proved very difficult to implement—a situation that matches the frequent calls by governments from the nineteenth century onwards for reductions of 'bureaucracy' coupled with the actual expansion of state administrations in most of this period. Many instances of rapid growth of courts in Europe—under Emperor Rudolf II, Charles I of England, Henry III, and during the regency of Anne of Austria in France in the 1640s—can be seen as a consequence of crisis rather than of strength. In some cases, it is possible to show that competing officeholders initiated the inflation: they usurped the sovereign's rights of nomination and attracted their followers to the court.<sup>139</sup> Richelieu and Mazarin built their careers on their roles as trusted advisors as well as on their grip on the distribution of honours. These two succeeding cardinal-ministers monopolized Louis XIII's patronage and used it to construct their own networks of followers. Louis XIV broke this trend in the 1660s by sharply reducing the numbers of the court; moreover, he decided to rely on several advisors rather than on a single, foremost favourite. In his reign, however, competing leading ministers were able to promote their kin and kith to lucrative offices at court and in the state apparatus. Dynasties of high noble courtiers intermarried with the upper layers of the ministerial dynasties: this mixed group dominated office holding and the distribution of honours at the French court in the eighteenth century.<sup>140</sup> Officeholders everywhere strove to consolidate their position and to transfer it to their offspring.

West and South Asian empires can be viewed as pyramids of households, held together by the distribution of offices and wealth from the imperial centre. The households and abodes of the great dignitaries formed miniature replicas of the paramount ruler's court. Elites were recruited, as we have seen above, in very different ways; yet they all depended not only on their performance in office, but also on their ability to act as intermediaries in the distribution of

139 On the causes of 'inflation' see Duindam, 'Royal Courts'.

140 Horowski, *Belagerung des Thrones*.

honours. The potential to promote followers to high office was vital for leading groups in all polities discussed here. At times, their success at the dynastic centre or in the periphery overshadowed the powers of the ruler: Sokollu Mehmed Pasha served three sultans and himself became the *de facto* leader of the Ottoman empire before he was eliminated under Murad III. A century later Köprülü Mehmed Pasha was able not only to usurp the powers of the Valide Sultan and young Mehmed IV; he also achieved the remarkable feat of arranging the succession of his son as grand vizier. The successes of these two grand viziers were based on the consistent use of preferment to establish a network of followers throughout the Ottoman polity.<sup>141</sup> Interestingly, however, these powerful men stopped short of seizing the sultanic powers for themselves: they styled themselves as servants of the realm. In the Ottoman and Safavid empires, governors residing at some distance from the capital emerged as semi-independent players. From the later years of Aurangzeb onwards, a few noble family networks dominated Mughal revenue allocation; they became the arbiters of power after Aurangzeb.

The Chinese empire with exam licentiates holding office and a numerous but marginalized dynastic clan cannot be pictured as a hierarchy of households. Princes lived in palaces and were served by households, but played no leading role as political-military leaders under the Ming and were kept on a short leash during the Qing. 'Bureaucratic' patterns of government, with a smattering and a fair share of hereditary elite power under the Ming and Qing respectively, could not operate without a substructure of friendship, loyalty, service, recommendation, and rivalry. The presence of networks of officeholders can be surmised from the literary correspondence surviving in printed compilations from the Song onwards, but the details of this pyramid of loyalty and patronage, and the way it related to competition at court, await further study.<sup>142</sup> Even the great Qing emperors at times relied on their favourites, a process most pronounced under the Qianlong emperor, who in his final decades heaped favours and honours on his Manchu guardsman and advisor Heshen.<sup>143</sup>

141 Bekar, 'The Rise of the Köprülü Family'.

142 Beverly Bossler kindly allowed me to read two unpublished conference papers on the correspondence network of Yao Mian, suggesting patronage connections in the Song: 'Patronage and Principle in Late Southern Song: Yao Mian's Letters to Court Officials' (Conference on Middle Period History, Harvard University, June 5–8, 2014) and 'Yao Mian's Letters: The Epistolary Networks of a Late Song Literatus' (Political Communication in the Medieval World, 800–1600, Rome, 27–29 May 2015).

143 On the role of favourites under High Qing emperors see Yingcong Dai, 'Broken Passage to the Summit: Nayancheng's Botched Mission in the White Lotus War', in: Jeroen Duindam

At the same time, leading commanders and magistrates in their distant posts engaged in large-scale self-enrichment and patronized their proximates, under the cover of deference and unimpeachable integrity.<sup>144</sup>

Personal connections and loyalties, *intisab* and *fidélités*, were a necessary glue for all premodern polities. The inner cohesion of patronage networks, and even the competition among these networks, was an inescapable part of the cohesion of the realm as a whole. Yet there always lurked a critical point beyond which the tensions between competing networks at the centre or in the margins would escalate to open violence, disintegration, or even the creation of independent polities. The ‘breathing’ of empires, with tributaries developing into subject provinces before moving out of the empire and turning into independent polities, was a consequence of distance, limited means of communication and coercion, and the strength of regional-personal networks of loyalty. In Southeast Asia the same pattern would lead to shifting balances of power in an overarching ‘galactic polity’ consisting of numerous competing centres.<sup>145</sup> Similar remarks can be made about the tendency of African ‘segmentary states’ to disintegrate and re-unite, or about this recurring process in the Eurasian steppe. Compared to these examples, the relative persistence of the greater empires in Eurasia as well as the smaller-scale interactive web of European dynasties attracts attention—apparently some of these consolidated polities were able to postpone the pressures of disintegration.<sup>146</sup>

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and Sabine Dabringhaus, eds., *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces. Agents & Interactions* (Leiden and Boston, 2014) 49–73.

- 144 On the precarious balance between the lofty ideals of Chinese magistrates and the common reality of collusion see Etienne Balazs, *Political Theory and Administrative Reality in Traditional China* (London, 1965); on ‘laws of avoidance’ and offices intended to prevent collusion see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (reprint; Beijing, 2008) 263 nr. 2887; 397–397 nr. 4862.
- 145 Stanley J. Tambiah, ‘The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia’, in: Stanley A. Freed, ed., *Anthropology and the Climate of Opinion* (New York, 1977) 69–97. On fusion and fission, see Barbara Watson Andaya, ‘Political Development between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, in: Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia. Volume 1: From Early Times to c. 1800* (Cambridge, 1992) 402–459, at 403; and Sunait Chutintaranond, ‘Mandala, Segmentary State and Politics of Centralization in Medieval Ayudhya’, *Journal of the Siam Society* 78, no. 1 (1990) 89–100; Claude Tardits, *Princes et serviteurs du royaume* (Paris, 1987) 20; Jan Vansina, ‘A Comparison of African Kingdoms’, *Africa* 32, no. 4 (1962) 324–335 at 329; Aidan Southall, ‘The Segmentary State in Africa and Asia’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 1 (1988) 52–82 at 61–63.
- 146 One of the problems here is that information about losers will be more difficult to trace;

At court all elites were permanently challenged by the possibility of favourites rising to power.<sup>147</sup> Princes were able to promote their male and female companions through the ranks with remarkable speed. Inconspicuous, low-ranking servants attracted favour more easily than noble grandees or haughty advisors whose high rank and marked position complicated trust and friendship. Youth companions, foster brothers, wet nurses, tutors, and soldiers sharing first campaigns were likely favourites for young princes; mistresses or favourite concubines and lower servants were always potential candidates for favour. The quicker and more extreme the rise in status and influence of these favourites, the more likely was their sudden downfall.<sup>148</sup>

Established bureaucratic procedure could reduce somewhat the impact of personal loyalties; yet in the politics and period studied here, there was no consistent changeover from 'patrimonialism' to a type of government founded on equitable and straightforward procedures. Extended administrative services dealing with nominations and petitions were common in post-Tang China, were present in Tokugawa Japan, reinvigorated on the basis of older examples under the founding figures of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires, and rapidly moved forward on the basis of late medieval practice in early modern Europe. Nowhere, however, did they displace from power the domestic circle around the ruler.<sup>149</sup> Finally, the emerging bureaucracies, as Emperor Joseph II complained, were disposed to continue the faults of the *ancien régime* court: inflation and supernumeraries, competition for rank and preference, preoc-

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the 'vanished kingdoms' of history are far more numerous than the handful of lasting successful competitors, and their history often remains unwritten, see Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London, 2012).

147 See among European studies: Jean Bérenger, 'Pour une enquête européenne: le problème du ministériat au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 29, no. 1 (1974) 166–192; J.H. Elliott and L.W.B. Brockliss, eds., *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven and London, 1999); Michael Kaiser and Andreas Pečar, eds., *Der zweite Mann im Staat: oberste Amtsträger und Favoriten im Umkreis der Reichsfürsten in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2003); Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini, eds., *Der Fall des Günstlings. Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert. 8. Symposium der Residenzenkommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Ostfildern, 2004).

148 Hirschbiegel and Paravicini, *Fall des Günstlings*, with Fall referring both to 'case' and to 'downfall'.

149 Certain sectors of government could adopt a more modern style of administrative efficiency, while others, often more prestigious and closer to the throne, retained a strongly patrimonial style, see e.g. the relative modernity of the English customs and excise from the 1670s onwards, G.E. Aylmer, *The Crown's Servants. Government and Civil Service Under Charles II, 1660–1685* (Oxford, 2002); Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence*, 147.

cupation with protocol, and *Vielschreiberey*.<sup>150</sup> Rulers were the fountain of honour—prestige, offices, perks. Later we shall return to the question whether they could consistently use this formidable instrument to emerge as the arbiters of conflict at court and to act as conscious manipulators of social mobility.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.2 *Ritual*

The term ritual is notoriously vague. It can include all sorts of performances, from activities repeated daily by individuals in seclusion to exceptional moments bringing together people in shared semi-religious experiences.<sup>152</sup> Cultural connotations of terms such as rite, ceremony, or *li* (Confucian ritual propriety), moreover, vary widely. Ritual can be connected to violent popular practices as well as to sedate elite protocol in the settings of a palace or church. In 1817, Edward Bowdich described the Asante Yam custom, an extended festival bringing together the elites of the Asante federation. The traveller and official noted with dismay the lawlessness and licence in the capital Kumasi: ‘neither theft, intrigue, nor assault are punishable ... but the grossest liberty prevails, and each sex abandons itself to its passions’. Bowdich also pointed to the ferocious demonstration of royal power: numerous executioners paraded ‘... the heads of the Kings and caboceers [headmen] whose kingdoms had been conquered’.<sup>153</sup> At the other extreme, we find the stately annual grand sacrifices at the altars of Beijing, proceeding with solemn dignity and attended only by officeholders.<sup>154</sup> What did these very different occasions have in common?

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150 See Joseph II's 1765 ‘Denkschrift’ in Alfred von Arneth, *Maria Theresia und Joseph II.: Ihre Correspondenz sammt Briefen Joseph's an seinen Bruder Leopold* (Vienna, 1868) III, 335–361; Peter G.M. Dickson, ‘Monarchy and Bureaucracy in Late Eighteenth-Century Austria’, *English Historical Review* 110, no. 436 (1995) 323–367, at 324 on inflation, see Joseph's ‘Hirtenbrief’ arguing strongly against personal preferences and conflict over rank, Harm Klueting, ed., *Der Josephinismus. Ausgewählte Quellen zur Geschichte der thesesianisch-josephinischen Reformen* (Darmstadt, 1995) 334.

151 See below, ‘The Court as Arena’.

152 Jack Goody, ‘Religion and Ritual: The Definitional Problem’, *British Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 2 (1961) 141–164; and ‘Against “Ritual”’: Loosely Structured Thoughts on a Loosely Defined Topic,’ in: Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, eds., *Secular Ritual* (Assen, 1977) 25–35.

153 Thomas Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee: With a Descriptive Account of that Kingdom* (London, 1873) the customs described at 226–253, quote at 226–227.

154 Laidlaw, ‘On Theatre and Theory’; see also the somewhat impenetrable study by Angela

In modern academic usage, ritual is more often used for popular practice, ceremony for court or church conventions—but in the early modern age, this distinction was absent, and I will use the terms as synonyms.<sup>155</sup> Three aspects can be seen as typical for ritual in any context. Repetition is a necessary element. Rites are organized on the basis of a set pattern of rules or habits, and they recur regularly. Familiar, returning situations—the death of a ruler, the onset of carnival, the consecration of the host in mass, the announcement of a new election—set in movement a well-known sequence of events. These fixed patterns, in addition, have to be enacted by people: one can read about a ritual and discuss its parameters at length beforehand, but its only true measure lies in the actual performance of certain actions—whether in a trance-engendering Sufi whirling dance or in the decorous proceedings of a law court. Ritual is about performing rather than about thinking; it necessarily involves physical action and influences participants and spectators primarily through the body and the senses. The three elements of repetition, set rules, and physical enactment characterize ritual behaviour in all settings. Rituals performed by rulers share with other rituals the idea that only the correct performance will lead to the results anticipated, whereas inappropriate action can have inauspicious consequences. Rituals, in one way or another, are thought to reflect and impact relations at a higher level: between heaven and earth, between the living and the dead, between rulers, elites, and subjects. Rites can be seen as vain

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Zito, *Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Eighteenth-Century China* (Chicago, 1997). It is important to note that blood sacrifice played a role both in African and Chinese rituals; likewise the responsibility for rain, fertility, and harvests was crucial for Chinese emperors as well as for African kings.

155 Definitions of ritual and ceremony in early modern as well as modern dictionaries show roughly the same two core meanings. A rite or *ritus*, the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us, is ‘... a prescribed act or observance in a religious or other solemn ceremony’. This description neatly matches Johann Heinrich Zedler’s eighteenth-century phrase on *ritus* as ‘the order and ceremony, in religious services or other solemn occasions’, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexikon*, 64 vols. (Leipzig, 1732–1750) XXXII, 1832, see <http://www.zedler-lexikon.de/>. Zedler and the *OED* proceed with the second meaning, the *rituale* as a book containing rules for ceremonies. Both mention as example the 1614 Catholic *Rituale Romanum*. Zedler elsewhere cites the same book as *Ceremoniale Romanum*, underlining the interchangeability of the terms. Rite and ceremony are synonymous, as are *rituale* and *ceremoniale*. Beyond these two concrete primary meanings, however, differences emerge between early modern and modern usage. Early modern authors use ceremony in a more abstract and generalized way than they use ritual, covering dress, deportment, and manners. Modern authors, conversely, tend to use ritual more easily in an abstract way than ceremony.

punctilio or as the heart of the matter. They have been understood as transforming the status of the performers or objects: turning a novice into a king, a child into an adolescent, an ordinary person into a vessel of divine grace. Finally, the performance of rites can create an overpowering sense of belonging, of finding one's place in an overarching harmonious and hierarchical order. Rites define and demonstrate hierarchies, and at the same time present a coherent and orderly whole.

All courts performed rituals, adhering to instructions transmitted from generation to generation by specialists. Rituals were prescribed in detail in learned writings, depicted in images, or simply remembered by frequently repeated performances. All courts cherished repositories of ritual objects—royal insignia, objects related to ancestors, relics, vessels, and substances with religious-magical significance. Palaces included special spaces for the performance of rituals. Many court rituals adhered closely to the rhythms of everyday life: they were the embellished and expanded versions of family practices, following the seasonal calendar (summer and winter solstices, autumn and spring equinoxes), the agricultural year (ploughing, sowing, harvesting) and the liturgical calendar (religious cycles and festivals). In addition to these eminently recognizable cultural moments, all courts celebrated rituals related to dynastic events: death, burial, succession, birth, rites of passage (baptism, reaching majority, circumcision, capping), marriage, birthdays. These lifecycle markers, too, matched common experiences. Finally, ceremonies involved the establishment and confirmation of connections between rulers and peoples—election, acclamation, or coronation; urban entries, assemblies with elites of various kinds, and tours of the realm; the nomination or enfeoffment of officeholders. Diplomatic ceremonial can be seen as an extension of connection ritual: here, relationships with tributaries or distant sovereigns were confirmed. Domestic routines in the palace, and particularly the entry of outsiders into the palace compound, were usually subjected to a ritual choreography. Finally, a varying set of other habits connected to the court—civil service examinations, adjudication, hunting parties, and military parades—showed strong ritual elements.

Most court rituals combined solemn and festive occasions, religious celebrations or sacrifices with banquets, theatrical shows, fireworks, and the like. Palaces were connected to the outer world through a sequence of gates linking inner secluded and outer courtyards to a more accessible interface between palace and city. From this point several processional routes led to altars, shrines, and tombs in the urban context or further away. Religious and cosmological models were important for the layout and orientation of palaces and processional routes: inner-outer, upper-lower, north-south, east-west, left-right, male-

female, safety-danger, pure-corrupt, divine-human, noble-commoner, stranger-local, warrior-scholar, administration-household, old-young, work-relaxation.<sup>156</sup> These normative and cosmological binaries cannot be compressed into the modern concepts of public and private, which tend to read the inner as private, domestic, and female, disconnected from the public, typically male political domain—a distortion that misses the essence of dynastic power, where family was crucial and the inner was the heart of power.

Court ritual has been interpreted in profoundly different ways. A pragmatic-political view understands it primarily as an instrument of power in the hands of the ruler and his advisors. Scholars have traditionally stressed the political potential of ritual, as one among many forms of *repraesentatio maiestatis*. This was the ruler's chance to overawe audiences, to enthrall subjects, and convince them to bow before his authority. Kingship was 'fabricated' through ephemeral shows, performed on a stage of imposing monuments, and broadcast widely by images and artefacts. Consent and compliance were obtained by appealing to the senses and to widely shared religious-hierarchical ideals. Contemporaries well understood the power of spectacle. Louis XIV famously stated in his memoirs that:

The peoples we rule, unable to penetrate the essence of matters, usually found their judgements on what they can see at the surface ... people enjoy spectacle ... this is how we capture their hearts and minds.<sup>157</sup>

An early-eighteenth-century Lutheran German scholar reiterated the Sun King's view:

Most people ... are roused by sensual experience rather than by their wits or common sense; therefore, they are moved more by things that tickle the senses and strike the eye than by succinct and convincing reasoning ... Wonder and astonishment engender respect and awe, which lead to subjection and obedience.<sup>158</sup>

156 See e.g. Jianfei Zhu, *Chinese Spatial Strategies: Imperial Beijing, 1420–1911* (London, 2012).

157 Louis XIV, *Mémoires de Louis XIV pour l'instruction du Dauphin*, Charles Dreyss, ed., 1–11 (Paris, 1860) II, 15, 368.

158 Johann Christian Lünig, *Theatrum ceremoniale historico-politicum, oder Historisch- und politischer Schau-Platz aller Ceremonien, welche so wohl an europäischen Höfen als auch sonst bey vielen illustren Fällen beobachtet worden* (Leipzig, 1719–1720) I, 5.



Masters of ceremony carefully considered the impact of colours, positions, and sounds on the spectators.<sup>159</sup> These statements appear to leave no doubt about the insights and motives of key participants in ceremony at least in the European context. But they do not tell the whole story. Frits Staal, in his work on Vedic rites, stated: 'ritual is pure activity, without meaning or goal'.<sup>160</sup> Clifford Geertz famously reversed the priorities of the traditional interpretation, by arguing that 'power served pomp, not pomp power'.<sup>161</sup> The ritual performance, Geertz contends, was far more than a trick to enthral subjects. He underlined the shared mentalities of performers and audiences, and the priority of the ritual performance over mundane political concerns.<sup>162</sup>

These contradictory views should not be seen as mutually exclusive: they represent two sides of the same coin. Rulers who deeply believed in their God-given role could still have a keen sense of the impact of ceremonial shows. The alternation or even unpremeditated amalgamation of these positions can be inferred from sources found throughout Eurasia. The fact that Akbar carefully timed his morning 'viewing' with sunrise, using the rays of the morning sun to increase his aura of 'divine effulgence' does not necessarily mean he did not take his exalted position seriously. 'Fabrication' could go together with engrained hierarchical mentalities and a profound belief in the semi-magical properties of kingship. This double awareness of the impact of ritual and festive cycles only augmented the burden on the king's shoulders as slips in this serious game could have major consequences in two directions: heavens and subjects.

A strictly instrumental view of ritual fails to take into account contemporaries' understanding of kingship. Rulers stood at the apex of society, at the intersection of hierarchies terrestrial and celestial. In some cases they themselves were seen as divine or as the offspring of divinity; in most cases a relationship with the supernatural and a special responsibility for the well-being of the realm were attributed to them.<sup>163</sup> Their ritual was performed to safeguard harmony among their peoples and maintain concord between the living and their ancestors. The proper execution of ceremonies and sacrifices secured

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159 Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 183, citing a document from the Bibliothèque de L'Institut, Paris, collection Godefroy. 481: fol. 72–73.

160 Quote from Frits Staal, *Ritual and Mantras: Rules Without Meaning* (Delhi, 1996) 131; see also Staal, 'The Meaninglessness of Ritual', *Numen* 26, no. 1 (1979) 2–22.

161 Geertz, *Negara*, 132.

162 See for related assessments Peter Burke, 'The Performative Turn in Recent Cultural History', *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean* 20 (2014) 541–561; among many works by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger particularly, *Des Kaisers alte Kleider*.

163 See chapter 3 in this volume, Rietbergen, 'Not of this World ...?'

the benevolence of celestial powers. The weight of this responsibility must have been felt to some extent by all dynastic rulers, yet it varied over time and regionally, mixing in different proportions with other ideals and practices of leadership.

The burden on the shoulders of ruling kings becomes painfully clear in descriptions of African royalty. The king's ominous powers needed to be shielded with great care: nobody should meet his gaze directly; the king's feet were never to touch the ground; kings could move only within a restricted area, transported by their dignitaries; often they spoke to others only indirectly, through a special intermediary. Harvests would be ruined, weather, seasons, and heavenly bodies put out of joint, should these rules be transgressed.<sup>164</sup> Elements of this 'ritual kingship' can be found throughout Eurasia, but, surprisingly, the highly differentiated and large-scale Chinese empire offers the closest parallel. The ritual performances of Chinese emperors, notably the Grand Sacrifices performed at the altars of Beijing during the winter-summer solstices and the spring-autumn equinoxes, were seen as absolutely essential for the balance between heaven and earth. The emperor's ritual propriety and moral purity secured harmony, yet, conversely, the misdemeanours of the emperor, his kin, or magistrates ruling in his name could wreak havoc. They were punished by natural disasters sent by heaven—signs that could lead to as well as legitimize social upheaval.

This towering responsibility formed a key aspect of royal legitimacy and at the same time a major burden on the shoulders of rulers. After fighting his way to the throne, the Ming founder Zhu Yuanzhang feared losing the mandate because of the violence perpetrated by his sons:

People are the mandate of Heaven. He who has virtue Heaven will give it to him and people will follow. If he does not have [virtue], Heaven will withdraw [the mandate] and people will leave him. Now Zhou, Qi, Tan and Lu [Ming princes] have indiscriminately bullied and humiliated the soldiers and the people in their fiefs, will Heaven take away the mandate from them?<sup>165</sup>

The Kangxi emperor, seen as utterly sensible by most observers, was likewise imbued with a grave sense of responsibility:

164 Suzanne Preston Blier, *The Royal Arts of Africa: The Majesty of Form* (London, 1998) 29.

165 Hok-lam Chan, 'Ming Taizu's Problem with His Sons: Prince Qin's Criminality and Early-Ming Politics', *Asia Major*, Third Series 20, no. 1 (2007) 45–103.

From ancient times when there is error in human affairs the harmony of Heaven is affected. Perhaps there has been error in governance; I may have been found wanting in my personnel appointments ...<sup>166</sup>

Elsewhere, Kangxi argued that his ‘... careless handling of one item might bring harm to the whole world, a moment’s carelessness damage all future generations.’<sup>167</sup> Into the nineteenth century, Qing emperors were disposed to read natural disasters as a sign of their malfeasance, and they anxiously performed rites to secure rainfall during exceptional droughts.<sup>168</sup> Throughout the Sinosphere the mandate was taken seriously. The view that the ruler’s personal behaviour was connected to the well-being of his realm, however, was also present elsewhere. Natural disasters and strange movements of heavenly bodies everywhere gave rise to uneasy questions about the moral state of the ruler and those who did his bidding. With the correct performance of rites, rulers may have tried to convince themselves before they considered the impact on others.

It is necessary to take seriously the fundamental value contemporaries attributed to ritual as well as the instrumental uses they understood so well. Only rarely, however, do we find explicit statements of rulers and their close advisors about their ulterior motives: most sources mainly prescribe or describe at length the order of ceremonies and sacrifices.<sup>169</sup> While it is thus difficult to establish the intentions of the main actors, it is even trickier to determine exactly how elite and more distant popular audiences perceived the performances enacted at court. Were they overawed, impressed, entertained, indifferent, critical, or maybe even hostile? Answers are problematic here, and they can be reached only by first establishing in some detail which audiences were present at specific ritual occasions—a task not feasible in this overview, and possible only in a few cases on the basis of the existing literature.

The regional differentiation described above provides a starting point. In East Asia dynastic visibility and popular interaction were limited. Notwithstanding variation over time, and from person to person, this typology can be accepted. Yet it needs to be refined, first by verifying the main actors, extras, and spectators present during any ritual. Who performed, who assisted, who watched at close range or from a distance? Inevitably, the cast varied according to the occasion, and this may have affected the style and tone of the ritual.

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166 Rawski, *Last Emperors*, 225.

167 Spence, *Emperor of China*, 147.

168 Rawski, *Last Emperors*, 227.

169 See descriptions and interpretation in Zito, *Body and Brush*.

Song festivities in Kaifeng were livelier and more interactive than the solemnities practised by most Ming emperors.<sup>170</sup> Qing emperors engaged in inspection tours and organized public entries in Beijing as well as banquets for elders. In 1713 the Kangxi emperor initiated the custom of 'Thousand Elders' Banquets', inviting more than a thousand greybeards to dine in his company in the old summer palace (Yuanming Yuan) garden. In 1722 the old emperor repeated this show of hospitality, now inviting the elders to the inner sanctum: his inner-court Qianqing palace. The Qianlong emperor, always keen to show his respect for his grandfather, imitated Kangxi's initiative in 1785 and 1795. More than three thousand elders attended the first banquet in and around Qianqing palace, while the latter was celebrated with more than five thousand elders in the imperial garden in the northernmost inner part of the Forbidden City.<sup>171</sup> The classic rites performed in the Forbidden City and at the altars of Beijing, moreover, were not the only solemn or festive activities performed by Ming and Qing emperors. The laureates of the triennial metropolitan examinations held in the palace were also feted with a banquet. Dynastic occasions indirectly involved a wider public. Enthronements gave rise to the proclamation of amnesties: rulers started their reign with a clean slate. However, rites were not usually styled as meeting points or as moments of redistribution: they related first and foremost to the emperor's role as a sacrificer and moral exemplar. No synchronicity can be detected between the ritual cycle and the evaluation and relocation of officeholders: the ritual and administrative calendars followed separate patterns.

Qing emperors were known for the different roles they performed for different audiences: Han literati, Manchu bannermen, Mongol allies, and more distant Uyghur and Tibetan tributaries. Their ritual orientation varied from the classic Chinese rites, to Manchu shamanist rites performed in the inner court, to great hunting parties executed with Mongol allies, to Tibetan Buddhist observations with the same Mongol allies. This diversity was underlined by the use of different languages: Manchu and Chinese in the Forbidden City, complemented by Mongol, Uyghur, and Tibetan in the summer palace beyond the wall at Chengde.<sup>172</sup> The 'multivocal' ritual styles of the Qing underscore

170 Ebrey, 'Taking Out the Grand Carriage'; Geary, 'Courtly Cultures', 196–197.

171 Zhang Min, 'Brief Discussion of the Banquets of the Qing Court', *Proceedings of the Denver Museum of Natural History*, series 3, no. 15 (1998) 67–71.

172 Nicola Di Cosmo, 'Manchu Shamanic Ceremonies at the Qing Court', in: Joseph P. McDermott, ed., *State and Court Ritual in China* (Cambridge, 1999) 352–398; also Faure and Laidlaw in the same volume; Rawski, *Last Emperors*, 231–263; James L. Hevia, 'Rulership and Tibetan Buddhism in Eighteenth-Century China: Qing Emperors, Lamas and Audience

the need to look at specific contexts before making general statements about audiences and interactions.

East Asian dynastic rulers themselves were not as a rule exposed to public view, yet others constantly demonstrated their omnipresence. Chinese magistrates moved from the provinces to the centre to be evaluated and relocated; while Confucian precepts would censure overstated splendour, it is clear that the constant movement of great dignitaries to the palace reminded passers-by in the city about their distant overlord. The repeated progressions of daimyo lords from their fiefs to Edo and back likewise proclaimed the power of the shogun.<sup>173</sup> Diplomatic missions moved to the dynastic centres in Edo and Beijing with great pomp and spectacle, again underlining the prerogatives of the hidden prince. Diplomats' reminiscences about the Qing emperors, moreover, show rather more interaction and ease behind the walls than an outsider might have expected.<sup>174</sup>

The ritual rhythms performed by the dynasty in seclusion were shared by the population in other ways. They themselves performed similar rituals, related to the traditional Shinto rites in Japan or to a mixture of state sacrifices with other cults in China. Moreover, the magistrates in their headquarters (*yamen*) mimicked the emperor's ritual performance. They even performed rituals for rain-making, a responsibility that connects Chinese emperors with the kings and chiefs of smaller-scale, scriptless African polities.<sup>175</sup> Emperors were everywhere in folklore and religious practice, even if they were distant and untouchable as persons.<sup>176</sup> In East Asia, ritual may have strengthened cohesion because

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Rituals', in: Joëlle Rollo-Koster, ed., *Medieval and Early Modern Ritual: Formalized Behavior in Europe, China, and Japan* (Leiden and Boston, 2002) 279–302 at 280; David M. Farquhar, 'Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch'ing Empire', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978) 5–34; Natalie Köhle, 'Why Did the Kangxi Emperor Go to Wutai Shan? Patronage, Pilgrimage and the Place of Tibetan Buddhism at the Early Qing Court', *Late Imperial China* 29, no. 1 (2008) 73–119.

173 Vaporis, *Tour of Duty*.

174 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 205.

175 On the intermingling of daoist and magical practices in the rain rituals at local levels, see Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke, *Dry Spells: State Rainmaking and Local Governance in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge Mass., 2009).

176 See chapter 7 below by Richard van Leeuwen and his monograph on *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires 1300–1800* (Leiden and Boston, 2017); Barend ter Haar, 'Divine Violence to Uphold Moral Values: The Casebook of an Emperor Guan Temple in Hunan Province in 1851–1852', in: Jeroen Duindam, Jill Harries, Caroline Humfress, and Nimrod Hurvitz, eds., *Law and Empire: Ideas, Practices, Actors* (Leiden and Boston, 2013) 314–338.

it reflected shared beliefs and practices, but it did not as a rule bring together the dynasty and the populace in a shared performance, actively creating a new connection.<sup>177</sup>

Moral-religious priorities shaped ritual in East Asia in a way that contrasts with patterns prevalent elsewhere in Eurasia, where rituals ranged from carnivalesque melées, carefully orchestrated tense meetings of contending groups, to sedate solemnities performed in seclusion. In West and South Asia interaction with the public occurred, at popular as well as at elite levels. The Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid rulers celebrated the breaking of the fast (*Id al-Fitr*), a festival gradually moving through the solar year because its timing followed the Islamic lunar calendar. Each dynasty cultivated other festivities. The circumcision ceremony (*sur*) of princes probably formed the most conspicuous meeting point of the dynasty and its subjects in the Ottoman context. Persian New Year (*nauruz*) took shape in a series of festivities in the Safavid realm. The Mughals were known for several ceremonial inventions, in particular the ‘viewing’ ceremony (*jharokha-i darshan*), which allowed the public a regular glimpse of their prince. In a more secluded setting, the ceremony of the birthday ‘weighing’ took place. Twice every year, following the lunar Islamic and the solar calendars, rulers were weighed. Precious articles were put in the scales, ranging from jewels and gold to iron, silks, and edibles.

Court rituals here could indeed form moments for sharing and mutual rejoicing. The circumcision festivals of Ottoman princes gave rise to large outdoor banquets, scrambles for food (*yaghma*), numerous diversions, and the scattering of coins. During these occasions, sultans paid for the circumcision of many other boys; the city guilds performed their skills and feats for the sultan. During the Mughal weighing ceremony ‘donations, or grants of pardon, are bestowed upon people of all ranks’, Abu l-Fazl reported. Seventeenth-century travellers noticed the remarkable riches heaped on the scales to weigh the emperor and mentioned five days of rejoicing in the palace and the city, with fireworks displays and battles of elephants.<sup>178</sup> The high points of the ritual calendar in West and South Asia attracted crowds, hoping to glimpse the ruler and partake in the distribution of food and the scattering of coins (*nithar*). This popular meeting coincided with the convergence of the leading elites around the ruler, offering their renewed statements of fealty and presenting their tribute and gifts (*piskes*). The great meeting points often also included the

177 Laidlaw, ‘On Theatre and Theory’.

178 Abu l-Fazl, *The Ain i Akbari*, H. Blochmann, ed. (Calcutta, 1873) 1, 276–277; Jean de Thévenot, *Voyages de Mr de Thévenot contenant la relation de l’Indostan, des nouveaux Mogols et des autres peuples & pays des Indes* (Paris, 1684) 138–140.

eagerly awaited moment of nominations and relocations. For the officeholders, this was a rite of passage in a very concrete sense, which could lead to elevated office or to punishment and exile.

The highlights of European courts included a roughly similar mixture. Many ceremonies featured forms of conspicuous hospitality and largesse: public banquets with wine-spouting fountains, the scattering of coins (*jetons*), and roasts left to the public. The Frankfurt coronation banquet following the election of a new emperor attracted many thousands of spectators. It traditionally ended in a wild scramble for the leftovers, a battle that usually produced more than a few casualties.<sup>179</sup> In several of the most striking interactions with the public, kingship's magical-religious aspect was visible. The Christmas and Easter cycles entailed numerous religious meeting points of rulers and subjects, particularly during Holy Week. The re-enactment of the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, with royalty washing the feet of twelve or thirteen poor and subsequently serving these paupers at the table turned into one of the prime ceremonies demonstrating sovereign power in Catholic Europe.<sup>180</sup> The pious processions performed by Habsburg rulers in Brussels, Vienna, and Madrid through the liturgical year, but concentrated in Holy Week, were a powerful expression of the connections between sovereigns and subjects.<sup>181</sup> These same customs could be found in France and in a somewhat subdued form in England.<sup>182</sup> In these two domains, the royal touch demonstrated the wondrous powers of kings, allowing divine grace to cure sufferers of scrofula through the king's hands. The custom fell into abeyance in England under William and Mary, but was restored by Queen Anne, who performed the ritual for thousands of people until 1712. Changing religious sensibilities led to the abolition of the practice under the Hanoverian kings of England. In France it lapsed under Louis xv of France, who gave two very different reasons for his reticence to perform the age-old custom: adultery prohibited him from taking communion and hence barred him from divine grace—and, on the other hand, modern medication made his intervention superfluous.<sup>183</sup> Louis xvi again touched several thousands

179 Duindam, 'The Habsburg Court in Vienna: Kaiserhof or Reichshof?'

180 Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 139–143.

181 Luc Duerloo, 'Pietas Albertina. Dynastieke vroomheid en herbouw van het vorstelijk gezag', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 112 (1997) 1–18; Ragetli, 'Duchess between Prince and People'.

182 Marc Bloch, *Les Rois Thaumaturges* (Paris, 1924); Stephen Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England. Politics, Medicine and Sin* (London, 2015).

183 Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 139; Philippe Amiguet, ed., *Lettres de Louis xv à son petit-fils l'infant Ferdinand de Parme* (Paris, 1938) 135–136.

following his Rheims *sacre* in 1775.<sup>184</sup> Monarchical practice, in Europe and elsewhere, was tied closely to magical-religious-moral beliefs. Without a doubt, the Reformation fundamentally changed views on sacraments and the divine; yet its direct impact on the perception of royalty should not be overrated. Only from the later seventeenth century onwards did, very gradually and mostly in higher social echelons, a secularized view of royalty gain sway.

In Europe the great ceremonial occasions attracted many part-time courtiers, who attended court mostly during the festive and ceremonial winter season, a time of leisure for soldiers because warfare was limited usually to the growing season. In the winter months, most European rulers would reside in their main urban residence, whereas from spring to autumn, they moved to hunting lodges and outdoor palaces—and sometimes to the battlefield. Ritual occasions were not only a moment for ceremonies and festivities; they usually coincided with the promotion of new honorary officers and knights in orders of chivalry. However, as in China, changes in the hierarchies of state servants were not primarily connected to celebrations. The season of rituals, concentrated in winter, from Christmas to Carnival and Lent and culminating in Holy Week, also formed the ideal opportunity for peripheral elites to meet at the centre. They might want to obtain luxury items, consider marriage candidates for their offspring, contract alliances, seek support for their litigations among central magistrates, or blacken their local adversaries. For the elites, the ritual calendar was necessarily also a social and a political calendar. When in the course of the eighteenth century the religious dimension of ritual, traditionally connected to interaction with a wider public, diminished, it did not leave a vacuum. Urban elites were increasingly integrated into the more secular festive cycles of court life, and several rulers, notably Joseph II of Austria, actively cultivated the connections with non-elite groups during their urban excursions and incognito travel. A popular image pictures Joseph II ploughing in Bohemia—at the same time, the French *Dauphin*, later Louis XVI, was also depicted ploughing. Did they mimic the Chinese emperor's 'ploughing the first furrow' at the Altar of Agriculture, a rite made famous by the Jesuits and commented favourably on by Montesquieu, who read it as an inducement for farmers?

The three elements of repetition, set rules, and physical enactment underlined above are relevant only in the context of physical presence and interaction. In the course of the centuries discussed here, the broadcasting of

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184 See the study by Anne Byrne, looking at Louis XVI and ceremony, to be published by Oxford University Press, *Marvellous Royalty: Kingship and Ceremony in France, 1774–1775*. I thank the author for sharing her typescript with me.



royalty increasingly proceeded through other media and reached audiences more distant in place and time—arguably it lost the immediacy of the ritual experience in the process. Monuments, insignia, coins, and inscriptions had long since been standard aspects of many court cultures.<sup>185</sup> Stelae erected by magistrates can be found throughout Chinese history. Print was common in Song China, though it became more widespread in Ming and Qing China. Placards with guidelines for the populace became an important form of communication in Song China.<sup>186</sup> The Ming founder initiated a policy of magistrates' 'village lectures' advising the locals about correct moral attitudes; the Qing emperors continued and expanded these practices. Emperors were present through the moral exhortations of their agents, although we should keep in mind the low numbers of magistrates.

West and South Asian courts employed all traditional means to show their splendour and power, but rulers could not uninhibitedly reproduce their images. Illustrated manuscripts were common across the region. In addition, the Mughals, Jahangir in particular, excelled in creating a rich, eclectic school of painting proclaiming their status as great and just rulers. Print, not much employed in the Islamic world, was eagerly embraced in Europe. Habsburg emperor Maximilian printed lavishly illustrated books in addition to his use of all other media available to broadcast his views of kingship.<sup>187</sup> Descriptions of court festivals, often depicting ideals rather than recording events, were published at many courts from the early sixteenth century onwards.<sup>188</sup> From the later seventeenth century, the growth of the periodical press and the reading public multiplied and diversified these tendencies. At the same time, painting and statues spread the image of the ruler, more often than not in heroic postures. In the course of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the loose 'court culture' centred on a radiant court orbited by elites close and distant became more institutionalized: academies brought together artists, writers,

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185 Flinterman, 'The Cult of Qalāwūn'.

186 Patricia Ebrey, 'Informing the Public by Posting Notices in Song China', paper in the conference: Political Communication in the Medieval World, 800–1600, Rome, 27–29 May 2015.

187 Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008); Eva Michel and Maria Luise Sternath, eds., *Kaiser Maximilian I. und die Kunst der Dürerzeit* (Vienna, 2012).

188 See a concise discussion by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, '“True and Historical Descriptions”? European Festivals and the Printed Record', in: Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus, eds., *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions* (Leiden and Boston, 2014) 150–159.

and scholars, conferring a badge of honour on them that underlined the role of the court as the arbiter of rank. Napoleon's pragmatic view of human nature and his keen eye for effective historical examples convinced him to merge these forms into a multimedia representation of power. At the same time, he restored and expanded the monarchical 'economy of honour', attaching elites to his court and restructuring social hierarchies through his intervention. Finally, during the long Indian summer of European monarchy, cinema and photography provided a view of royalty that, again, gave spectators a semblance of proximity.<sup>189</sup>

Neither the rituals of royalty nor the explosion and diversification of media necessarily convinced the populace. As far as our sources can help us ascertain popular attitudes, they suggest that princely 'propaganda' was never taken at face value. Royalty might be seen favourably in principle, much as modern-day citizens by and large accept democracy. Yet all rulers risked overstepping boundaries and thereby annoying or even infuriating their peoples. Bad rulers were as much present in popular culture as the ideal princes depicted in court paintings. It is very unlikely that subjects were ever persuaded to uncritically absorb the images of rulership created at the centre. Habsburg emperor Leopold I was appreciated by his distant subjects in Germany as a mild and somewhat hesitant figure, standing between the empire and the threats of the French and the Turks—yet nobody took seriously the heroic posture he adopted in court spectacle.<sup>190</sup>

In depicting a harmonious tableau of elite hierarchies, rituals made manifest the rank and status of the participants. Paradoxically, therefore, this show of harmony could give rise to contestations, mostly during the preparation of rituals, but sometimes during these solemn performances themselves. In diplomatic ritual, among participants who did not recognize a single arbiter or leading authority, conflict was endemic everywhere. Numerous diplomats of sovereign polities were in attendance daily at royal courts in Europe. Their presence compromised internal hierarchies in the domestic setting of court life, created many conflicts, and hence enforced a measure of codification of ceremonial conventions from the later seventeenth century onwards. However, the near-sovereign status of great nobles at many European courts, and the permanent altercations among these *grands*, also contributed to the high

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189 David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition,' c. 1820–1977', in: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983) 101–164.

190 Jutta Schumann, *Die andere Sonne: Kaiserbild und Medienstrategien im Zeitalter Leopolds I.* (Berlin, 2003).

incidence of ceremonial strife. European ceremonial records, on the one hand, express unshakable order and fixed hierarchy; on the other hand, they detail endless minor and major squabbles about rank and position. In other parts of Eurasia, descriptions of ambassadors' audiences and entries also often show contestation, muted or open. However, local elites do not seem to have been as openly contentious as their European compeers, although they must have competed in other respects. This difference may be exaggerated because of the asymmetrical availability and nature of sources, a theme that needs further research.

As in the case of distribution of honours, the question of agency arises here. Did rulers actively use the physical language of rank and position to enhance their position and reduce others, or to play off one leading servant against another? There is ample evidence for the manipulation in the case of ambassadors and tributaries, who were belittled, infuriated, and appeased through situational ceremonial details. Did rulers and their advisors extend this policy to manipulate their own *grandees* and servants?

### 3.3 *The Court as Arena: Power Groups and the Prince*

Princes stood at the heart of the machinery of distribution, ritual, and decision-making. These processes converged at the dynastic centre in the hands of the prince. The whole make-up of dynastic power suggested that the ruler held control in person, and this also seems to be a common assumption among students of history. The statement by *Finer* cited in the opening of this essay, that 'decision-making rests with one individual', was true in theory, although advisors across Eurasia pointed out that good rulers should always carefully consider their councillors' advice. Yet how did decision-making work in practice? Any historian can point to weaklings on the throne who allowed others to dominate them. These cases, however, have not led us to question the assumption that most figures on the throne reigned *and* ruled. I suggest we should never take for granted that princes who held supreme authority in name also wielded power in practice: this assumption should be tested in every single case.

The presentation of rulership in monuments, rituals, and proclamations underlined the power of the ruler, the loyal support of his advisors and servants, and the unwavering obedience of his subjects. The mere questioning of this stylized representation of harmony, hierarchy, and order was tantamount to treason. A similar remark can be made about decision-making. At court, councillors might disagree behind the closed doors of the council chamber, but they were expected never to voice their criticism elsewhere. No dissonant views or opinions were to be pronounced in public. *Francis Bacon*, in his *Essays*, argued that the success of empire lay in the secrecy of the council. Contrasting

opinions could be expressed with deference but freely at the council table, as long as decisions were broadcast unequivocally as the ruler's 'resolution and direction'.<sup>191</sup> In the *Analects*, Confucius stated: 'he who does not occupy the office does not discuss its policy'—one among a number of oft-cited passages outlining the high moral profile of literati.<sup>192</sup> Chinese imperial tradition did explicitly make room for certain officeholders to state their doubts: censors and high magistrates were allowed to remonstrate, deferentially voicing their moral concerns to the emperor in person. Princely mirrors from Europe to West and South Asia praised the honest advisor, who risked his life by telling his sovereign harsh truths, contradicting the golden-tongued phrases of his wily colleagues. Yet notwithstanding these songs of praise about honest advisors, overall the expectation was that criticism should not be voiced to a wider public.<sup>193</sup>

Neither was the formation of interest groups accepted: organizing opposition, too, was tantamount to fomenting strife, and approached *laesa maiestas*. Hence 'faction', a term often used to indicate competing groups at court, was mostly used as an accusation against rivals. Presenting oneself as member of a 'faction' was a highly unlikely course of action. The powerful tendency of Chinese literati to frame their activities in the language of exemplary morality forbade them from openly forming alliances and enmities. Confucius had stated: 'I have heard that the gentleman does not show partiality.'<sup>194</sup> Hence the followers of factions were to be found only among 'petty men'. In Europe it is quite clear that numerous groups and individuals contended for power around the court. They, too, shrouded their ambitions in deferential language; yet well-informed contemporaries were aware of animosities and intrigues. Sources complicate matters somewhat: court chronicles present an ideal of unruffled order, whereas outside observers focus on rivalry at court. In Europe the presence of numerous letters and diaries of courtiers helps to bridge the gap between idealized accounts and critical outside observations. Fewer materials of this nature are available for the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal courts, where the clash between court chronicles and outsiders' reports is more difficult to resolve.<sup>195</sup>

191 Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, John Pitcher, ed. (London, 1985) 'Of Counsel', Essays, 121.

192 Confucius, *Analects*, trans. William Edward Soothill (Edinburgh, 1910; repr. London, 1995) vol. v, book VIII, chapter XIV; see also vol. v, book VII, chapter XXX.

193 See chapter 5 in this volume, Maaïke van Berkel, 'The People of the Pen', on the self-perceptions and moral views of leading officials.

194 Benjamin Elman, 'Imperial Politics and Confucian Societies', quote at 395.

195 See similar discrepancies between court chronicles and reports by the agent of the Dutch East India Company, used effectively by Bes, 'Imperial Servants on Local Thrones'.

Competition at court tended to remain opaque until it flared out in the open. Where they are available, records of decision-making may register differing opinions of advisors, but they rarely provide details about the process between the expression of opinions and the recording of the final decisions. Once competition at court escalated into open conflict, groups and individuals involved can be defined more easily. Several times during the late Ming magistrates collectively protested against the infringement of time-honoured ritual precepts by the emperor, by crying, tearing their clothes and pulling out their hair in front of the Meridian palace gate.<sup>196</sup> Factions in China tended to become manifest only in cases of conspicuous machinations of eunuchs and concubines, the *bêtes noires* of the literati. However, we must assume that power groupings were present on a daily basis behind the veil of deference and moral propriety.<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, in his discussion of Ming decline, the Kangxi emperor blamed literati factions rather than eunuch power.<sup>198</sup> In the Ottoman empire Janisaries forcefully intervened in nominations and decisions with some regularity and could be a decisive factor in succession strife. During moments of crisis, sultans incidentally consulted the assembled elites on their policies, making explicit which offices and groups were seen as the leading stakeholders of dynastic power.<sup>199</sup> During Mughal, Safavid, and Ottoman succession struggles the competing candidates and their supporters necessarily stepped out in the open. In Europe, estates assemblies and urban corporations frequently quarrelled with rulers, most stridently in the century following the Reformation.

Somewhere between these outspoken clashes and the more common stress on order, obedience, and consensus, the everyday political trafficking at court took place. Who were the main players? Dynastic centres, sedentary or moving, were meeting places. Tributaries, leading office holders and grandees, petitioners and lobbyists moved to the centre to satisfy the demands of the ruler and to

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196 John W. Dardess, 'Protesting to the Death: The *Fuque* in Ming Political History', *Ming Studies* 47 (2003) 86–125; Li Jia, 'Conflicts Between Monarch and Ministers', *Chinese Studies in History* 44, no. 3 (2011) 72–89; Fisher, *The Chosen One. Succession and Adoption in the Court of Ming Shizong*.

197 See the paper by Bossler cited in note 139, and Balazs, *Political Theory and Administrative Reality*.

198 Spence, *Emperor of China*, 87, on 45–46 Kangxi underlines that he never involved eunuchs in government; on faction see Elman, 'Imperial Politics and Confucian Societies in Late Imperial China', at 395, 402–403; on eunuch power McMahan, 'The Potent Eunuch', and Kutcher, 'Unspoken Collusions'.

199 See the 'consultation', or *mesveret*, by the young Murad IV, reported in Bekar, 'The Rise of the Köprülü Family'.

accomplish their ambitions. Peripheral elites converging at the centre used the occasion to revive old friendships, remind clients and followers of their duties, and in veiled terms ask patrons for support. They all tried to define the key players in the machinery of power and distribution. The process can be retraced in primary sources to some extent. Ambassadors' reports usually include a cast of characters, describing the main officials and grandees around the throne, noting their formal functions, their friendships and rivalries, and their credit with the prince or other key figures in the dynasty. These eager observers tried to obtain such information through locals on their payroll. Like travellers, diplomats at times used the printed or manuscript stories compiled by colleagues and predecessors to fill in missing details. While these overviews are frequently unreliable, they suggest which criteria contemporaries considered relevant for positions of power: leading administrative, military, and domestic office; personality and abilities; connections and friendships; and, finally, proximity to the prince always ranked high. Pedigree, wealth, and learning were often added to the picture.

These multiple attempts to outline a hierarchy of power at court suggest that there were always several overlapping hierarchies, based on different principles. Groups eligible for succession by definition held high rank—yet this very position made it unlikely for them to act as close confidants. Numerous African examples underline the tension between rulers and their brothers and sons in patrilineal contexts: these dangerous male relatives were often sent away, or held in some form of captivity.<sup>200</sup> Affines, related to royalty through marriage but not entitled to succeed, were much preferred as allies and advisors. Conversely, in matrilineal contexts, tensions existed with potential successors through the female line, and sons and brothers turned into safe allies.<sup>201</sup> Potential successors were unlikely to turn into trusted confidants. Phrased in more general terms: high rank did not easily coincide with daily proximity and friendship. Once more elaborate forms of government and decision-making emerged another category came to the fore: membership of the leading councils where decisions were deliberated.

The figure below shows three criteria of status pictured in three hierarchies: a pyramid of rank, an organization chart of decision-making, and concentric circles indicating proximity to the ruler.

All courts knew a formal ranking: moving from the ruler and his kin at the top, via princes eligible for succession, to grandees or prime dignitaries. We have seen that rank, visually demonstrated during the great ceremonies

200 See numerous examples in Duindam, *Dynasties*.

201 Tardits, *Princes & Serviteurs*, 15, 17, 29–31, 114–117.

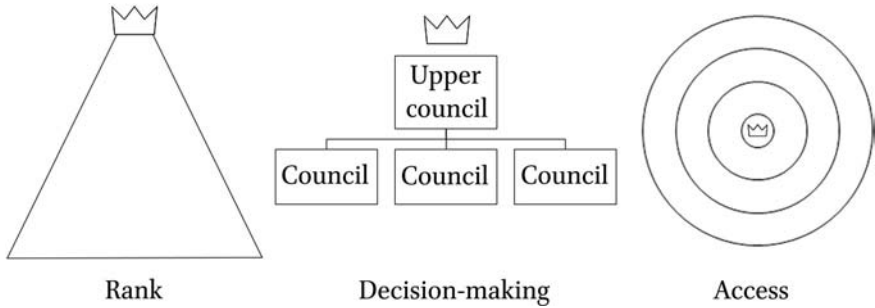


FIGURE 2.1 *Three contending and overlapping status hierarchies*

of the realm, took very different shapes in the three macroregions of Eurasia. Figures in the top layers of the pyramid were not invariably the leading cast in the formal process of decision-making. The organization chart of decision-making usually included an upper council where key policy decisions would be discussed. This could be done in the company of the prince; alternatively, the results of the deliberations could be communicated to the prince in writing, or in person by the chief minister. These variants occurred in most polities over time. Under the supreme council a number of lesser councils would deal with more specialized matters, usually without the prince. Finally, at all courts a series of concentric circles can be drawn around the ruler, highlighting an inner ring of servants and confidants who were most often in his company. High rank or a major role in decision-making did not guarantee access: on the contrary, lesser-ranking servants were often the preferred category for intimate service. Women, present in the pyramid of rank but not usually prominent in the organization chart of decision-making, were invariably important in this inner circle.

No single group could dominate in all three domains; sharp status dissonances caused conflict among these hierarchies. Supreme birth rank and eligibility for succession created potential for conflict with the incumbent ruler and called into question an individual's suitability for top positions in central government. Dynastic siblings across the globe were often under some form of surveillance; their relationship with the paramount ruler was rarely carefree. The situation of this group worldwide justifies to some extent the metaphor of the gilded cage, although it cannot be extended to include the nobility at large.<sup>202</sup> Tension among the hierarchies was not limited to the dynasty. Like

<sup>202</sup> On Amba Geshen, the 'royal mountain' of the Solomonids in Ethiopia, where members of the dynasty were confined, see Duindam, *Dynasties*, 152, 210, 292.

dynastic siblings in many regions, daimyo in Japan and high nobles in several European polities, did not as a rule hold executive powers in the highest councils. High-ranking grandees begrudged the rise to power of lesser-ranking specialists in the ruler's councils. Finally, neither leading administrators nor grandees were able to fully control the daily and nocturnal environment of the prince: they resented inner-court female, eunuch, or male confidants, who could undermine their position by influencing the sovereign. Prominent Chinese literati expressed their abhorrence of eunuchs and concubines. Upper daimyo were at times irritated by the powers of chamberlains and advisors from the lowest echelons of the warrior class.<sup>203</sup> Ottoman grand viziers needed to reckon with the eunuchs as well as with the most important harem women.

The inner-outer divide and the practice of withholding executive political power from the highest-ranking elites, especially those eligible for succession, can be found at many courts. This made the emergence of a single, uniform power group unlikely. While inner-outer tension can be documented for many courts throughout history, it was less consistent in Europe. European courtiers frequently complained about the power of mistresses and at times about lesser chamber servants. Perhaps the mistress, with a greater potential for domination than the legitimate dynastic spouse, comes closest to the form of inner-court power found at polygynous courts. Nevertheless, in Europe advisors were not rigidly barred from the ruler's apartments.<sup>204</sup> Noble honorary servants in the household could combine domestic service with a role as advisor or chair of the council. In some polities they were prominently present in all hierarchies: the high steward in Habsburg Vienna, invariably a high nobleman, also chaired the privy council in most of the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century. Conversely, from the start of Louis XIV's personal rule to the ascension of Louis XVI, there were protracted phases of greater social and functional separation between the council and leading office in the household.

The relevant question here is whether structural rifts in the make-up of courts determined conflict. Political contestation took various shapes depending on what was at stake. Status groups would protect their collective interests if these were under attack. Incidentally, foreign threats or religious upheavals changed the political landscape, creating unexpected enmities and alliances on the basis of conviction rather than rank or pragmatism. More often, however, those closest in rank and status competed for the same benefits. Mag-

203 On the rise of the chamberlain under the Tokugawa shoguns see Totman, *Politics in the Tokugawa Bakufu*, 99–103; 214–217; Bodart-Bailey, *The Dog Shogun*, 103–127.

204 See an assessment of high courtiers, ministers, and access in the French context, Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 101, 246.



istrates could hope for the same nominations to high office; they might also compete in recommending their protégés for office. Everywhere at least two aspects of ‘politics’ can be distinguished. Firstly, the ‘macropolitical’ domain of major policy decisions: war, peace, alliances, major government reforms, or religious choices. These choices would have consequences for the entire realm for decades to come. Secondly, the ‘micropolitical’ domain of nominations to office and grants of benefits in the hands of the ruler. At the highest level, the two domains overlapped: by appointing a leading grand secretary, grand vizier, or first minister the ruler set the course for policy decisions. In the absence of marked crises, competition over the distribution of benefits continued on a daily basis: this was the *basso continuo* of court politics.

The pervasiveness of ‘micropolitics’ at court inevitably turned peers into rivals: it was imperative for the main contestants to seek support in the other hierarchies against the proximate rivals in their own hierarchy. The chief white eunuch of the Topkapı palace school noticed with dismay the rise to power of the chief black eunuch in the harem and sought support among outer-court dignitaries. Sultan-Mothers and favourites in the harem were often at loggerheads—and the single instance where a grandmother as well as a mother was present ended in bloodshed. The household military of the outer court were consistently divided, with the *sipahi* cavalry regiments acting as the foremost rivals of the Janissaries. Prominent viziers hoping for the final promotion to the grand vizierate, obviously, would seek support in the inner court rather than among their competitors for this highest honour. At the same time, competing pashas and viziers would rely on their own households, bringing together kin, loyal servants, and clients. Typically, the asymmetrical loyalties of patronage tied together households in a single alliance more easily, and lastingly, if a clear priority of rank was acknowledged among the allies. The alliance of equals more often was fleeting and contingent upon special circumstances.

The same statement can be elaborated for French upper echelons. High nobles relied on networks of clients in the provinces or in the institutions they supervised, and sought support among ministers in the council—who, likewise, saw their direct colleagues as prime contenders. Princes and dukes in high domestic office were always competing, and the tension between the Louvois-Colbert ministerial clans lasted through most of Louis XIV’s reign. There are sufficient grounds to extend this view to Mughal and Safavid practice, where top *mansabdars* with their households or the increasingly vociferous former Qizilbash devotees also competed for status and power. The absence of detailed studies of patronage or recommendation and the strong cultural bias against faction in the Chinese case raises the question whether this model is valid for the Ming and Qing courts. Nevertheless, it seems safe to conclude

that socially and functionally diverse hierarchical alignments based on kinship and personal loyalties formed the most persistent and lasting power groups at court.

Who actually held control? This is a *question mal posée*. All attempts to capture conflict at court in one single formula necessarily fail because of the variability of political constellations and the diversity of persons on the throne. Talented kings had at their disposal numerous instruments to create order and submission at their courts. The histories of their predecessors, often a key part of their training, formed a repository of useful ruses as well as moral exhortations. Most practical guides to governing written by rulers expound on the subject of nominations, underlining first and foremost that the ruler should carefully guard this right. Han Feizi, criticising Confucius's moral stance as unrealistic, presents the emperor as a tiger, with punishments and rewards as his claws and teeth; leaving these to his ministers, he will be controlled by them.<sup>205</sup> The distribution of favours made it easy to acquire a following for the emperor as well as for his leading servants: 'Take warning when there are many men gathered at the gates of the high ministers!', Han Feizi warned the emperor.<sup>206</sup> This perspicacious caveat summarizes well Louis XIV's attitude vis-à-vis his most important servants at court and in the council. The Sun King time and again emphasized the importance of the distribution of honours in his memoirs and underscored the risks of relying on a sole principal advisor.<sup>207</sup>

Depictions of royal power thus rightly point to this huge potential in the hands of the ruler. The presence of many contenders around a single figure distributing boons made it easy to change group hierarchies and manipulate competitors. Rulers steadfastly and effectively concentrating on the adage to 'divide and rule' could expect to successfully maintain their position at least while they were strong and healthy. Acting as the arbiter between ambitious competitors, they could reduce those who had the best chances to turn into their rivals. All rulers of some calibre knew that they courted disaster when they allowed nominations to slip from their hands.

The balancing game could be played in many ways. Did rulers actively use the choreography of ritual to undermine overmighty subjects? Rituals of rulership were hardly a stress-free opportunity for manipulation. In the Chinese case, where ritual propriety towered above all other concerns, this observa-

205 *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*, Burton Watson, ed. (New York, 1964) 30–34.

206 *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*, 39.

207 Louis XIV, *Mémoires*, Dreyss, ed., II, 20–21; 42–43; 238–239; 341–342.

tion needs little further comment. Elsewhere, too, ceremonies were first and foremost a collective show of power and magnificence: open competition disturbed this performance, to no one's benefit. Only in the European context do we hear much about competition during ceremonies, and this mostly reflected negatively on the prince: how could he rule effectively if, even in this special and dignified setting, he could not secure proper proceedings? Open rivalry during ceremony strikes me as a sign of princely weakness rather than strength. The fact that it did occur during diplomatic meetings underlines the status of diplomats as the personal representatives of their ruler: by accepting forms of meeting and greeting that diminished their status, they would acknowledge, before all present, the inferiority of their sovereign—and this was intolerable. The most frequently cited examples of manipulation by Louis XIV are based on Saint-Simon's descriptions of morning and evening meetings at the king's bedside. Yet, here too, almost everything was carefully graded according to the rank of those present. Only one minor privilege, the presentation of the chandelier, was left to the king's discretion. Competition during these domestic traditions of 'open' French kingship, gradually becoming formalized under Henry III, could be downright humiliating. Louis XIV once had to wait glumly until his two quarrelling dignitaries had decided who would have the right to present the overcoat.<sup>208</sup> Surely there were better occasions for distribution, multiplication, and manipulation of honours.

Conceited, ambitious, and disrespectful grandees anywhere were easy prey for rulers, who punished them without resorting to the machinery of distribution of honours. Some rules of thumb must have been inculcated in the education of princes: never rely on one figure only, distribute graces evenly and with appreciation for loyalty as well as capability, beware of the strongest and most ambitious among your servants and prevent them from usurping your powers. Not all figures on the throne were able to play this game. Particularly in vulnerable phases of the lifecycle, the discomforts of the elevated royal position made it attractive for incumbents to rely on trusted intermediaries. Paradoxically, for them the most obvious escape route was the antithesis of the key principle of rulership: seeking shelter behind a single trusted favourite who would henceforth deal with the troublesome details of court life. Many kings understood that their confidence could be sought after for instrumental purposes; yet this did not make them impervious to friendship and confidence. Few kings consistently used the distribution of favours to their advantage, without ever losing

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208 Philippe de Courcillon Dangeau, *Journal du Marquis de Dangeau*, Eud. Soulié and L. Dusieux, eds., 19 vols. (Paris, 1854–1860) II, 123, 25–3–1688.

control. Enthusiastic manipulators, stimulating the competition between factions at their court, risked escalating the game to uncontrollable proportions, either in their lifetime or under their successors. In an attempt to achieve ‘grand harmony’ King Yongjo of Choson Korea tried to pacify the factional conflicts exacerbated by preceding kings. This effort played a part in the king’s increasingly hopeless relationship with his heir-apparent, who in the end was forced to commit suicide.<sup>209</sup> Playing this game and escaping unscathed demanded great discernment and force of character—a combination found more often among outsiders rising to power through their own actions than among princes formed by court education. This combination of strengths, moreover, could only very rarely be maintained during a lifetime on the throne.

The wars and regencies of the middle seventeenth century, of awesome magnitude in China and more modest but still disconcerting in France, stood at the beginning of the long and successful reigns of Kangxi and Louis XIV, two rulers rightly seen as builders. Both started out as infant kings under the control of regents and (grand)mothers; both found their way to effective rule—and both saw their hold on power weaken in their later years. Louis XIV in his memoirs articulated a policy to grant the great nobles all honours they deserved, without, however, giving them the right to sit in his council.<sup>210</sup> In addition he argued that relying on more ministers at the same time, rather than on a single, towering figure, would give him leeway, because ‘the jealousy of one would put a brake on the ambition of the other.’<sup>211</sup> After the deaths of Louis XIV’s leading ministers Colbert and Louvois, the period of easy successes had passed. A difficult European political constellation, less successful and changing ministries, the growing clout of the king’s morganatic spouse, Madame de Maintenon, and a series of deaths in the royal family left the king increasingly dependent and uncertain. Kangxi started his personal rule at an earlier age than did the Sun King. In his coup against the Manchu regency, Kangxi relied on competitors of the regents in Manchu circles as well as on Han Chinese advisors. The emperor,

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209 JaHyun Kim Haboush, *The Confucian Kingship in Korea. Yǒngjo and the Politics of Sagacity* (New York, 1988); Haboush, ed., *The Memoirs of Lady Hyegyong: The Autobiographical Writings of a Crown Princess of Eighteenth-Century Korea* (New York, 1996); Peter H. Lee, *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization: Volume Two: From the Seventeenth Century to the Modern Period* (New York, 2013) 39–43.

210 Louis XIV, *Mémoires*, Cornette, ed., 71. This statement has often been interpreted wrongly as an innovation: it actually *restored* a situation that was common in many other monarchies.

211 J.L.M. de Gain-Montagnac, ed., *Mémoires de Louis XIV écrits par lui-même* (Paris, 1806) I–II, I, 18.

who persisted longer on the throne than did his French contemporary, was shattered by the unrelenting conflicts with his heir-apparent, and ended his reign disheartened. Addressing his main officials in 1717 when he felt death approaching, Kangxi himself stated that:

After my serious illness in the forty-seventh year of my reign, my spirits had been too much wounded, and gradually I failed to regain my former state. Moreover, everyday there was my work, all requiring decisions; frequently I felt that my vitality was slipping away and my internal energy diminishing.<sup>212</sup>

Elsewhere in the same edict the emperor asked himself: ‘how can I attain the day when I will have no more burdens?’ Kangxi shed ‘tears of bitterness’ while he shared these thoughts with his officials. Typically, the edict was published posthumously without a trace of the emperor’s despondency. Older rulers everywhere expressed their uneasiness with the increasingly heavy burden of their daily tasks as well as with the impatience of their successors. The Qianlong emperor, who ruled as long as his grandfather, seems to have eluded the despondency of old age—yet a notorious favourite dominated the last decades of his reign. It is difficult to find examples of long-living rulers who remained in control throughout their lives.

These lifecycle events and attitudes, expressed with particular acuity in Kangxi’s own words, do not contradict the successes of these rulers. They do show, however, that even strong figures, in all stages of their career, depended on the advice and support of others. The balance of dependence changed over time in these relationships. Only in the decades of their greatest physical and intellectual vigour can they be seen as the dominant force; and even in these years they more often than not followed the advice of their councillors. Reconstructing this changing chemistry of advice, moral support, competition, and mutual manipulation is possible only in exceptional cases. At the heart of dynastic rule, agency is difficult to capture in detail—there is no ‘black box’ to be traced and interpreted here.

Moving from the lives of individual rulers and their servants to longer-term developments, it is easy to recognise patterns. A first impulse of many kings was to seek advice and intimate support beyond the circle of leading elites. Outsiders of all kinds, people with little or no previous connection to the power networks orbiting the court, were preferred candidates. Outsiders could

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<sup>212</sup> Spence, *Emperor of China*, quotes on 148, 150; the edict as published later on 169–175.

be found in less prestigious social groups. We have seen that shoguns were keen to control the daimyo closest to them in rank—particularly those who had not supported them during the decisive battle of Sekigahara (1600)—and hence looked for support in the lower echelons of the warrior class. Sometimes rulers went further and created new elites. The introduction of the civil service examinations in China can be understood as an attempt by the dynasty to reduce its reliance on a limited number of established families who still dominated in Tang China, but did not resurface under the Song. The introduction of *devshirme* and its gradual extension in the course of the fifteenth century marginalized previously powerful *Ghazi* frontier-warrior families and created a new ruling class of ‘slaves of the sultan’. The strong ties of religious disciples to their spiritual guide and master gave force and cohesion to the first phase of Safavid rule under Shah Ismail and contributed to Akbar’s comprehensive overhaul of the Mughal power structure.

Celibacy or the inability to procreate was an additional safeguard against advisors turning into overmighty subjects, which helps to explain the important role of clerics in European government and eunuchs in many other places. Clerics, obviously, also had the major advantage of literacy and learning; and among males, only eunuchs could guard the harem without compromising the patrilineal dynasty. Exiles or foreigners frequently served as advisors at court—in Europe this tendency was strengthened by the relocation of kings to distant regions following the vagaries of dynastic demography and succession: moving elsewhere, they brought companions from their homelands. On a different scale, a parallel process occurred when conquest clans captured huge empires and became dominant minorities there, most notably the Manchus in Qing China. The Qing emperors, moreover, ruled the peripheries of the empire with local elites, while they adopted Han Chinese customs for the core areas, albeit infused with a strong Manchu presence. These examples all underscore the potential powers of rulers, who could indeed act as balancers, and at times as social engineers in the style of Napoleon, planning the formation of elites and ensuring their loyalty with a mixture of rewards and punishments.

At least two qualifications need to be added, related to the degree of planning and to longer-term consequences. Most plans took shape in a series of *ad hoc* measures, gradually coalescing into a fixed policy, usually encompassing more than one reign, and sometimes more than one dynasty. A capacity to learn from previous examples was present in the dynastic memory, with its reasoned catalogue of vices and virtues of earlier rulers. These surely helped to establish basic policies vis-à-vis dynastic rivals and elites. It is difficult, however, to accept with confidence long-term ‘masterplans’ of rulers. Only during long and violent phases of changeover, when routines had almost disappeared

and a comprehensive reordering of the realm was inevitable, do we find clear signs of conscious social engineering. These crises did occur with some frequency in dynastic history. A second qualification pertains to the long-term consequences. In the centuries following dynastic builders, their successors failed to maintain their grip on power, and measures of the builder-founders usually had unforeseen consequences. Louis XIV's successful reform of the French court and his attempt to unite loyal elites under his rule by granting them all a *juste mesure* of power and prestige in the following century consolidated the semi-monopoly of French court nobles on high office.<sup>213</sup> Within forty years after the death of Shah 'Abbas I, the elites he had effectively reined in acted unashamedly as kingmakers and dominated the rule of Suleiman I. This shah was appointed thanks to the intervention of a court eunuch who vehemently opposed the council's choice of a younger prince, arguing that they were only aiming for a long period of elite rule. The eunuch's principled intervention did not prevent Suleiman's reign from turning into a permanent struggle between various elites manipulating their ruler. Engelbert Kaempfer reported the ongoing competition between the 'day council' and the 'night council' at the court of Safavid Shah Suleiman I (1647–1666–1694), with the women and eunuchs in the inner court undoing their rivals' daytime decisions.<sup>214</sup> The tug of war between inner and outer court, and between different groupings among the elites in the outer court, dominated Suleiman's rule. The shah, entertained, intoxicated, and manipulated, was the bone of contention, the object rather than the master of the game. The same can be said about several Ottoman sultans, who were put in power by their leading elites rather than through their own force—although the strength of the dynastic legacy among the population may have contributed to the kingmakers' reticence. The tendency of dependent service elites to become vested semi-hereditary elites, within two or three generations, is as striking as the innovations introduced by empire builders. The Chinese civil service examination, reproducing the gentry literati elite without allowing heredity in office, was a remarkably lasting compromise that provided legitimacy to emperor and magistrates alike. The loyalty of the Manchu banners appears to have lasted relatively long—this may in part be explained by the minority status of this ruling elite in Han China.

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213 Horowski, *Belagerung des Thrones*.

214 See a striking example of kingmakers choosing a boy-shah and a eunuch stepping in to defend the rights of an older son, Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 56–58; Engelbert Kaempfer *am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs*, 37–38; Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin*, vol. 9, with the eunuch's speech printed on 435–437.

An astute prince can rule by dividing his elites; yet he himself in old age, or his less talented successor, might be haunted by conflicts he could no longer control. Competition at court can be the result of princely manipulation, as well as the cause of princely impotence. Insecure kings could choose to leave most tasks to a favourite; others created new favourites to push aside those established in power by their predecessors.<sup>215</sup> No established group or individual at court wished to see a perennial gale of mutual destruction through faction; most were willing and eager to establish order, preferably with a vested position for themselves. Looking at the endless repetition of power games at many different courts, I see alternating and recurring patterns, but never one singular, universally valid mechanism. It is necessary, moreover, to correct the assumption that the ruler himself was advantaged by the structure of the court, which multiplied his potential as well as his vulnerability. Manipulation demanded rare qualities and was likely to turn against the ruler or his successors at some point. Not without reason, Chinese tradition censured overactive rulers. But no tradition could define a universally ideal balance between engagement and non-action, which varied according to the circumstances. In all forms of dynastic power, whether rulers styled themselves as first-among-equals or as unassailable autocrats, competing hierarchies surrounded the ruler. Most often these contending elites took care to respect the prerogatives and status of the ruler; yet as a rule they were able to tap the wealth and power accumulated at the centre. This fuelled the connections between central elites and their clients in the provinces and hence formed a key component of dynastic power. The ‘iron law of oligarchy’ uncovered by elite theorists, who in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century underlined the role of oligarchies in modern democracies, is equally relevant for all varieties of dynastic power, from the *primus inter pares* to the all-powerful autocrat.<sup>216</sup> There is

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215 Jeroen Duindam, ‘Der Günstling global? Favourites and Faction at Early Modern Courts’ (2015) <https://mittelalter.hypotheses.org/6524>; Börekci and Peksevgen, ‘Court and Favorites’; Börekci, ‘Factions and Favorites at the Court of Sultan Ahmed I and His Immediate Predecessors’; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2010); Bekar, ‘The Rise of the Köprülü Family’.

216 Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie: Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (Leipzig, 1911), ‘Die Demokratie und das ehernen Gesetz der Oligarchie’, 362. See also Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class* (New York, 1939) and a lucid discussion by Putnam, *Comparative Study*. See also Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939) 7: ‘In all ages, whatever the form and name of government, be it monarchy, republic, or democracy, an oligarchy lurks behind the façade; and Roman history, Republican or Imperial, is the history of the governing class’.



ample reason to restore initiative and agency to all groups at court, including to the echelons of servants who well knew how to reach their goals while creating a lasting image of royal omnipotence.

### **Conclusion: Courts, Legitimacy, and Change**

All courts considered here were organized primarily as households of male princes, with staffs catering for roughly equivalent tasks. Military and administrative services clustered around this domestic core. Court life followed a calendar alternating between everyday routines and great celebrations; numerous visitors joined the permanent staff during these special occasions. Notwithstanding the increasing differentiation and specialization of government services, the domestic core could not be disconnected from decision-making wherever the prince was sovereign.

Beyond this first rather crude overall equivalence, several major differences immediately spring to mind. Polygyny, whether or not combined with marriage, was common throughout the world, with the exception of Christian Europe, where monogamous marriage was the rule. The prevailing marriage practices shaped the arrangement of palace compounds and the rules for access to the ruler. The numerous women present in the harem, moreover, formed an important element in the circulations and connections between the dynasty and the realm, essential for several African kingdoms, but relevant for all Asian empires in one way or another. Polygyny ranked high among factors moulding the contours of dynastic alliances and the nature of the dynasty, but it could lead to very different constellations. Competition among brothers purged the dynasty of collaterals in every generation in West and South Asia; royalty here was a small group, comparable in numbers to European royal lineages. In polygynous East Asia, however, collaterals proliferated and served as a reservoir preventing extinction of the main line through adoption.

Polygyny led to secluded female inner quarters at court, often guarded by eunuchs. This reduced the facility of access, particularly if the male ruler resided in this inner female domain. The inner-outer divide was less rigid at European courts, where the same nobles could at times serve the ruler at his bedside and in the council—an accumulation of tasks unlikely in other parts of Eurasia. Princes could withdraw into their own quarters among a select group of favourites, but this was possible in Europe as well as in Asia, and nowhere did it become standard practice. The near-contemporaries Murad III, Rudolf II, and Wanli (the latter two in their later years) did this, and in the same

years Henry III of France reformed his court to create a more secluded inner sphere. Conversely, Murad IV, the Bourbon kings, and the Qing emperors were far more outgoing. On the whole, the harem did lead to a greater seclusion. Did the presence of the prince in this isolated female-eunuch domain fundamentally change the contours of decision-making and conflict at court? Was this factor the key contrast between European and Asian 'palace polities'? It is not easy to substantiate or disprove this statement because of the immense variation in personalities and circumstances. The effort to count and rate the wisdom or stupidity of rulers and their advisors, and relate the outcomes to the absence or presence of the harem, cannot effectively be undertaken as an academic exercise. Wisdom and perseverance, narrow-minded *ad hoc* policies, and dramatic incompetence can be found in all polities in Eurasia. Rulers like Charles II of Spain or the Safavid Shah Suleiman were at the mercy of elites orbiting their courts; their near-contemporaries Louis XIV and Kangxi fared better. The attitudes and experiences of rulers, the shared contours of competing hierarchies, and the recurring characteristics of power groups at court cast doubt on the assumption that polygyny and monogamy created a qualitatively different structure of decision-making and princely power. Overlapping hierarchies of rank, decision-making, and access were present at all courts, and likewise the rivalry among equals can also be accepted as a general phenomenon.

European dynasties were tied together in a web of succession rights. Male lines predominated, but alliances between dynasties were formed through marriage exchange. Women represented their houses and the 'purity' of their bloodline entitled them to dynastic succession, particularly in the absence of male candidates with equally strong claims. Women ruled as sovereigns in Europe more often than elsewhere in Eurasia.<sup>217</sup> Monogamous dynastic marriage, however, should not be equated with dynastic stability and the absence of violence. It heightened the chance of extinction as well as the incidence of physical or mental disabilities of incumbent kings caused by inbreeding. Monogamy and primogeniture relocated rather than prevented violence. Male primogeniture reduced internal succession strife, but extinction and the clash of pretenders based in other polities proved a familiar igniter of warfare in Europe. This is no firm ground for a straightforward contrast depicting European monarchies as developing in a more rational and peaceful way than their 'Eastern' rivals. It is possible, however, that kings triumphing in succession wars, more than in outright wars of conquest, were under the obligation to respect

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217 Duindam, *Dynasties*, 87–108.

corporate custom and privilege, particularly if local elites had supported their claims. In this sense, the dense dynastic web may have contributed to the persistence of hereditary and localized power groups in Europe.

Elite recruitment and the degree of hereditary power and autonomy held by elites mark another difference between the major polities of Eurasia. Disciples, slaves, scholars, and nobles presented their position and legitimacy in distinctly contrasting ways. They used different languages vis-à-vis their dynastic leaders, all imbued with loyalty and respect but nevertheless expressing profoundly dissimilar worldviews. The self-representations of these elites, however, seem to contrast more sharply than did their actual positions.<sup>218</sup> They all, in various ways, depended on the court as a centre of redistribution. In the long run, they were all able to secure social reproduction as a group, granting the downfall of some and the rise of others. Mobility was often overstated in the Chinese case, with the cliché of commoners rising from rags to riches, or conversely, prominent magistrates falling from power and leaving their offspring in rags. European social climbers adopted family heraldry, genealogy, a castle, and a noble lifestyle as soon as their position allowed this. The downfall and extinction of many noble families was silently compensated by the entry of social climbers. Slaves could act as masters once they had monopolized the highest echelons of the Ottoman apparatus and rendered hereditary many of their privileges. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the most successful among them, although never free from the risk of demotion, confiscation, and execution, formed a leading echelon.<sup>219</sup> The religious fervour and adoration of Qizilbash disciples for their charismatic Safavid Shah were less easily transferred to next generations than the privileges and power they assembled during their lives. Elites in most European polities had a more explicitly autonomous position, which they defended vociferously. Yet European fiscal-military states, negotiating endlessly with their stakeholders, were increasingly dominant in society. Conversely, Chinese elites showed great deference and formally enjoyed less leeway in their interactions with the imperial magistracy and the dynasty. Yet the magistrates formed a minute proportion of the population, and from the seventeenth century onwards the state was

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218 See, however, the consistency of self-representation among the people of the pen noted in Maaïke van Berkel's chapter below.

219 On the gradual increase of heredity among Ottoman officeholders, see Dror Ze'evi and Ilkim Buke, 'Banishment, Confiscation, and the Instability of the Ottoman Elite Household', in: Dror Ze'evi and Ehud R. Toledano, eds., *Society, Law, and Culture in the Middle East: 'Modernities' in the Making* (Berlin, 2015) 16–30, particularly 20 figure 1.2.

surely far more distant in China than in Europe. West and South Asian examples stand between these extremes. In each of these cases, the critical issue was whether the dynastic centre retained control of the instrument of distribution of honours. Overall, as Victor Lieberman points out in his comparative study, the centuries often grouped under the label 'early modern' seem to show the increasing presence of the dynastic centre in most Eurasian polities.<sup>220</sup> However, this leaves open the difficult question of who, at the centre, controlled the machinery of patronage.

Another major variation can be found in the styles of rulership. Interaction with the populace went together with an active martial ideal of rulership in Europe and in West and South Asia. In East Asia, the ruler primarily served as the ritual sacrificer and moral exemplar, whose self-improvement and propriety were far more important than visibility or martial action. Within this broad contrast, endless nuances can be added, between different Chinese dynasties, between China and Japan, where the roles were divided between the emperor and the shogun, between various West and South Asian examples, between differing European court styles, and between endless numbers of individuals on the throne. East Asian views of rulership entailed the reduced personal visibility of the East Asian emperor in ritual and in redistribution, but these two functions nevertheless remained essential. In Japan, the shogun took over redistribution and left to the emperor the hidden ritual tasks. In China, where the ritual responsibilities of emperors were equally daunting and likewise mostly performed in relative isolation, incumbent emperors could maintain more power and freedom of action.

A final question needs more thought. Is there an element of change over time here? Did all courts move towards consolidation, differentiation, increasing distance between the domestic core and government, growing restrictions on the personal agency of the ruler, and a tendency towards greater distance from the population at large?

In European historiography these changes have traditionally been presented as a gradual move towards modernity. Late-medieval monarchies separated household and government, a process that continued throughout the early modern age. The growth and differentiation of administrative institutions went together with a gradual reduction of the mobility of royal households. The interactive and mobile courts of the late Middle Ages became sedentary, and kings lived in outdoor palaces that curtailed the ritual connections with their

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220 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*.

realms. Mixed monarchies based on some power-sharing became 'absolute'. As the last stage of this process:

The household was swallowed by its own offspring, so to speak, it became simply one of a great many administrative departments whose responsibility happened to be looking after the monarch's person, his residences, his property, and the like.<sup>221</sup>

The metamorphosis was now complete, the court was subsumed under the state, and the whole constellation ready for the revolution and the rise of popular sovereignty. This view is comfortably linear and teleological—it is overstated rather than wrong and needs to be placed in the context of developments elsewhere.

Historical views of change in dynastic settings registered similar phenomena, yet connected these to decline rather than to a movement towards modernity. Such views, expressed with great force by Ibn Khaldun and reiterated in many forms throughout Chinese tradition, have a decidedly normative slant. Theirs is a story of inevitable decline, with strong founders whose palace-born successors lose robustness of character, discard moral restraints, start exploiting their populations, forfeit the loyalty of their adherents, and, finally, evoke the wrath of heaven and the rebellion of their peoples. Throughout Eurasia the domestic environment of rulers held a mixed reputation; it figured as the epitome of high culture and refinement, which at the same time was always perilously close to depravity and decadence. The voice of the honest advisor was rendered inaudible by the self-serving entreaties of more numerous sycophants. Rulers themselves were stereotyped as good or bad kings, as just rulers or bloody tyrants. Yet the ambition and intrigue of servants could undermine even the most sensible and docile ruler. Eunuchs, concubines, and meddling mothers were typecast as the agents and harbingers of decline. In China the literati elite viewed the inner court as morally and culturally deficient, rather than as a cultural model. *Ulama*' and priests censured the moral deficiencies of the court, but they connected these failings to its role as a centre of high culture: magnificence easily turned into extravagance, cultural sophistication into moral rot.

Cyclical views of dynastic power predicted change and made it acceptable, integrating rebellion into the overarching continuity of the mandate of heaven.

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<sup>221</sup> This restatement of a classic view can be found in Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State*, 130.

TABLE 2.1 *From personal valour to institutional consolidation: models, types or phases of rulership?*

Itinerant	Fixed
Personal activism	Institutional consolidation
Martial-style rulership	Moral exemplars, <i>wu wei</i>
Interactive	Withdrawn
Heterodox	Conformist
Charisma	<i>Veralltäglicbung</i>
Social mobility; unified new upper layer; <i>‘asabiyya</i> (group-feeling)	Social stasis; divided upper layer; <i>divide et impera</i>

Princes and their advisors responded to this moral model. The Ottoman elite around 1600 wondered whether the changes in their political environment indicated a downturn as prophesied by Ibn Khaldun.<sup>222</sup> The Qing, upon their rise to power, reduced the inflated court, purged the ranks of eunuchs, and restricted the role of the empress. When the Kangxi emperor froze the head tax at the 1711 level, he must have been considering his responsibilities towards people and heaven, quintessential for his reputation as a good ruler.<sup>223</sup> These traditional cyclical views bring to mind the contrast mentioned at the opening of this essay between charisma and *Veralltäglicbung*. Table 2.1 printed above brings together various characteristics of rulership in two opposed ‘idealtypes’. These types suggest tendencies rather than actual examples; moreover, they may refer to regional differences as well as to development over time.

Typically, founding emperors from Chinggis Khan, Zhu Yuanzhang, and Timur to Napoleon match many characteristics in the first column; successors in a long-established line acquired more traits listed in the second column. Most founders, however, were keen to obtain the sanction of tradition and tended to move towards conformity once in power. East Asia fits better the second column, whereas Europe, as well as West and South Asia, shows a more mixed pattern. Central Asia, with its repeated waves of unification and

222 Cornell H. Fleischer, ‘Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and “Ibn Khaldunism” in Sixteenth-century Ottoman Letters’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18 (1983) 198–220.

223 Jonathan Spence, ‘The K’ang-hsi Reign’, in: Willard J. Peterson, ed., *The Cambridge History of China Volume 9, Part 1: The Ch’ing Empire to 1800* (Cambridge, 2002) 120–182 at 124, 178; Madeleine Zelin, *The Magistrate’s Tael. Rationalizing Fiscal Reform in Eighteenth-Century Ch’ing China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1984) 12.

conquest, appears as the area connected most strongly to the first column. In this respect, it matches the dynamic history of African segmentary states and Southeast Asian 'galactic polities', with sharp oscillations between partitioning and reunification.

This contrast can be connected to the question posed at the beginning of this book: why do elites comply? We have seen that popular attitudes are notoriously difficult to gauge. There is information about the self-perception of rulers and ruling elites, and about the idealized attributes of power they underlined in their attempt to acquire legitimacy. Grudgingly accepting for the moment the difficulty of reconstructing the reception of dynasty among the population, I recapitulate the intended audiences of dynastic legitimacy, the ingredients of the dynastic mandate, and the forms and occasions of this effort in the overviews printed below. This will allow us to look at the court from a more distant perspective, examining the way it created an image of rulership and secured the loyalty of elites.

At or around court, a coercive apparatus was commanded—at least when and where the centre exerted control. Coercion was a precondition for consolidated power, but it was never a sufficient condition. Courts contributed to compliance in two fundamental ways. Firstly, they distributed wealth, offices, privileges, and prestige. The process of redistribution attracted intermediary elites eager for the royal bounty; in the hands of the ruler and his advisors, the control of nominations, rewards, and punishments was a formidable instrument. The population at large did not usually profit directly from the distribution of honours—although on special occasions those able to approach the ruler could partake in the dynastic bounty or benefit from clemency. Secondly, courts were theatres of dynastic legitimacy. Righteous and virtuous rulership was enacted here, in solemn seclusion or boisterous interaction, with religious deference, theatrical flair, or martial show. Was this a show of the ruler for all, of the ruler and the elites for the populace? Above, we have seen that this view is not necessarily wrong, but misses a vital aspect of ritual: its potential to affect participants as well as audiences, and its close connection to shared moral values. Rulers needed to persuade themselves; they were rarely wholly unaffected by the demands of the mandate of heaven—embodied by the people, their dynastic forebears, successors, and the all-seeing eye of higher powers.

Religious sanction, dynastic mythology and lineage, just rulership and the protection of the weak, personal bravery of the ruling princes, and charisma or divine election can be found in dynastic mandates across the globe in differing proportions. While bravery and charisma could be intensely personal, religious sanction, genealogy, and just, harmonious rulership were more institutional.

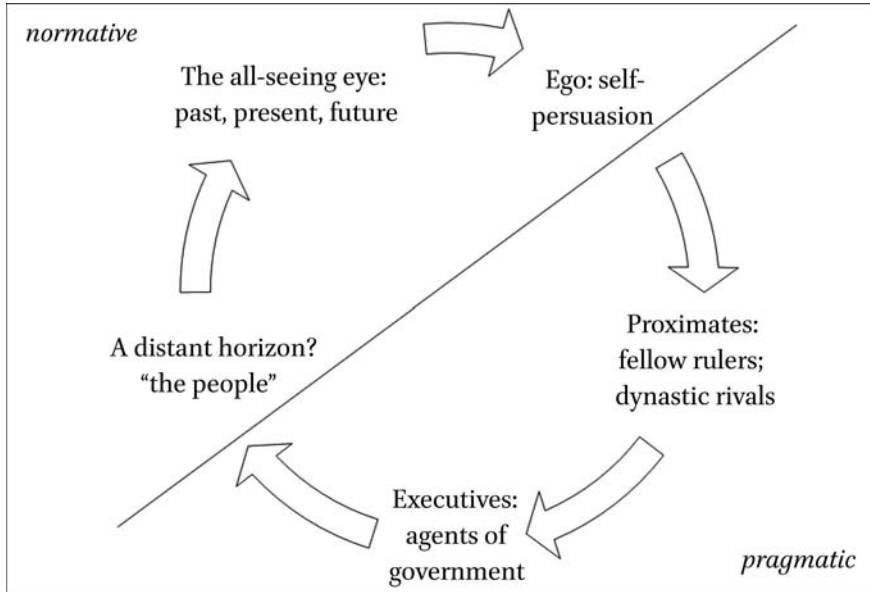


FIGURE 2.2 Top-down: forms of compliance and intended audiences

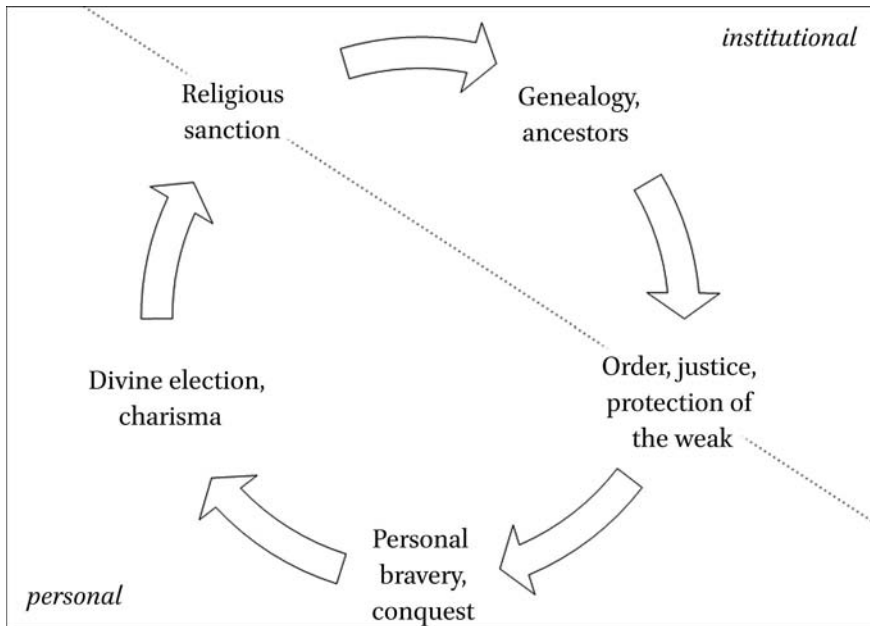


FIGURE 2.3 Common ingredients of the dynastic mandate



The distribution of honours, rewards—and punishments—affected strongly the central and intermediary elites who formed the backbone of power everywhere. Ensuring their pragmatic compliance through redistribution, as always backed in the last instance by coercion, was a key function of all courts discussed here. The rituals performed at court, important in West and South Asia because they provided a meeting point for distribution and an occasion for interaction with wider social groups, were related everywhere to the religious-moral-normative mandate of rulership. People and heaven are often used almost interchangeably in sources, explicitly so in the Chinese case, elsewhere mostly via religious humility and the moral requirement of just rule. Finally, the court offered a meeting point and an arena for all eager to gain access to decision-making: this was a game with great risks and few easy successes, but it attracted many. The challenge to chart the competition for power around the ruler can be addressed effectively only at the level of detailed case studies—where these are available, we can conclude that there were always more stakeholders involved, even under professed and exalted autocrats.

Founders by definition grab power as generals; from coercion they move to securing recognition among equals and obedience among followers and agents. Booty is conspicuously present in the history of conquerors, from Chinggis's 'warband' elaborated in this volume by Jos Gommans to Napoleon's articulate European 'spoils system' sustaining his imperial elite.<sup>224</sup> Satisfying followers does not assuage heavenly powers, neither does it bring the loyalty of conquered masses, nor, finally, does it necessarily convince the usurper himself. Conquerors could point to their battlefield success as evidence of divine support but desperately needed confirmation by tradition. Mamluk sultans used the Abbasid heir and nominal caliph in justification of their power; Timur cultivated a male Chinggisid 'puppet-khan' at his court, and used marriage alliances to strengthen his connection to Chinggis.<sup>225</sup> Napoleon not only introduced a mixture of French royal and Habsburg imperial court traditions; he also tried to obtain the 'Carolingian' coronation relics of the Holy Roman Empire, and in the end he married a Habsburg heiress. The astonishing bric-à-brac of historic examples in his representation notably included Roman imperial and Merovin-

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224 See e.g. Geoffrey Ellis, *Napoleon* (London and New York, 1997) chapter 5: The Social Accretions of Power: The Imperial Notables, Nobility, and 'Spoils System'.

225 See Jeroen Duindam, 'Dynasties', *Medieval Worlds. Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies* 2 (2015) 59–78: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1553/medievalworlds\\_no2\\_2015s59](http://dx.doi.org/10.1553/medievalworlds_no2_2015s59) and the literature cited there.

gian motifs. Other moves by this latter-day conqueror-emperor fit the attempts of earlier conquerors-founders moving towards order and conformity, perhaps most notably the 1801 concordat with the pope and the latter's subdued presence at the 1804 imperial coronation (in the role of spectator rather than as the officiating dignitary).

Populations, undoubtedly, were never fooled by the proud shows of rulers—they must have followed their own precepts and criteria, emanating from the same worldview, but with differing emphases. Whether the court was effective as a conspicuous centre or overplayed its hand and turned into a caricature, it was the focal point for intermediary elites and an inescapable but distant horizon for the population. Elites in Eurasia were on the lookout for portents of decline and sought to respond effectively to this threat. The Ottomans, a term used here to indicate the ruling dynasty as well as its leading supporters, reinvented the basis of their power several times, in phases of crisis and adaptation from the late sixteenth century onwards, with an increasing role for local elites as tax farmers and military entrepreneurs. European states, locked in a semi-permanent internecine battle gradually implicating the whole world, were able to establish collective global hegemony. A closer look at the polities succeeding in this process shows miniature 'dynastic cycles'. Spanish *arbitristas* pondered decline as seriously as did their Ottoman colleagues in the decades following 1600.<sup>226</sup> Everywhere, apparently, the central state first waxed before it gave more room to local and regional elites during phases of acute financial crisis. France, the next most successful European semi-hegemonic state, reached this limit by the end of Louis XIV's reign. The Sun King's redefinition of court-elite relations provided the groundwork for resurgent elite dominance in the eighteenth century. In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the compact between rulers and elites was severely tested in all major countries involved: the American War of Independence and the French Revolution both originated in the reforms triggered by war expenditure and towering deficits. The protracted political-military crisis from the 1780s onwards changed the European constellation and confirmed the global dominance of the main players, with Britain emerging as the leading power.

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226 A parallel discussed at a conference on the *Arbitristas* organised by Christian Windler (Bern) and Sina Rauschenbach (Konstanz), see a conference report at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/index.asp?id=4853&view=pdf&pn=tagungsberichte&type=tagungsberichte> (consulted 24 July 2015).

The cycles of integration and devolution did not necessarily coincide with dynastic change here or elsewhere. The Ottomans and the Habsburgs weathered several heavy storms, but persisted into the twentieth century—although the Habsburgs changed titles and domains several times and the Ottomans ended with a rump empire. The Safavids experienced invasions and rebellions before Iran saw the meteoric rise of Nader Shah, whose short-lived dynasty was succeeded by the Qajars by the end of the eighteenth century. Mughal decline coincided with the increasing presence and competition of European powers on Indian soil—notably the French and the British. The final decades of the Qianlong emperor display a marked incidence of rebellions and self-serving attitudes of military and civil elites. The Qing, however, persisted into the twentieth century, under increasingly difficult conditions with internal breakdown and European intervention rapidly undermining the coherence of their empire.

What explains the alternation of centripetal and centrifugal phases? Scholars have proffered exogenous and endogenous explanations, with the notion of ‘imperial overstretch’ emerging as a solution combining elements from both. The financial-military pressure of external challenges triggered internal crisis, or, conversely, internal stalemate between competing powers undermined effective responses against external challenges. Jack Goldstone suggested a neo-Malthusian model based on demography.<sup>227</sup> The growth of populations, straining agricultural production to its limits, led to an impoverished peasantry, reduced state incomes, and increasing numbers of elite competitors: a highly combustible mixture particularly in a setting of international rivalry. These models all include important clues to the oscillations so obvious in world political history.

Classic cyclical views, particularly Ibn Khaldun’s perspective of gradually eroding elite cohesion, add a relevant ingredient. By idealizing the coherence of desert tribes before the adoption of urban luxury, Ibn Khaldun downplayed the element of distribution of spoils so strongly present in most conquests. The disaffection of the old military core group depicted by Ibn Khaldun as a consequence of consolidation, urban amenities, and the ruler’s reliance on elites of the pen in fact matches a process we have seen depicted here several times. Dependent and loyal elites themselves change character while consolidating their position; they acquire hereditary rights, become a challenge for the central ruler, and thus incite him to find support among rival groups. Stripped of its

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227 Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, 1991); see also Peter Turchin and Sergey A. Nefedov, *Secular Cycles* (Princeton, 2009).

moral overtones, the dynastic cycle can be understood as a neutral description of an oft-repeated process related structurally to the management of distance in large-scale polities and the inevitable presence of intermediary elites. The precision added by Ibn Khaldun, that the sword predominates in the early phase as well as in the downturn of the cycle, is a factual description of the predominance of coercion in phases of political changeover. In China, too, the cultural partiality for literary accomplishment over martial excellence was reversed in bloody phases of changeover. All rulers were subject to the tyranny of distance, and no pre-modern ruler held the means to effectively and lastingly control his agents. The representation of shared ideals and the distribution of rewards for loyal supporters, both concentrated on the court, formed the unavoidable recipe for all, and the successful operation of these processes tended to come to a standstill every few generations because of entrenched elite power, incompetency at court, and external threats.

### Outlook: Towards Modernity

Dynastic power was dominant in the pre-modern world. It rapidly lost ground in the last two centuries. From the eighteenth century onwards, the magical-religious underpinning of European monarchy eroded among the elites, notably including rulers and courtiers. The reforms and revolutions of the late eighteenth century transformed the political culture of Europe. In the century between 1750 and 1850, coinciding with this phase of profound internal change, the competing states of Europe became the arbiters of the world. All the empires and states discussed here came under severe pressure caused at least in part by the undeniable military, political, and economic ascendancy of Europe.

In Europe, dynastic power persisted. From Napoleon's reconstruction to the shows of royalty in the age of nationalism and imperialism, the politically withdrawing royalty retained a surprisingly strong grip on the popular mind. Constitutional monarchies in modern Europe persist in the margins of the political system, but apparently still have the power to enthrall many and gravely annoy others. The resurgence and resilience of dynastic constellations in the Arabic world and in Southeast Asia raises the question whether here the religious underpinning of dynastic power was less severely eroded.

Everywhere patrimonial tendencies can still lead to next-of-kin succession in office. Family businesses, recently, have undergone a positive re-evaluation: according to several recent publications, these companies thanks to their semi-dynastic structures are better able to survive and flourish in certain condi-

tions.<sup>228</sup> Finally, autocrats of all political persuasions, with powers far beyond those of pre-modern tyrants, have tended to make their office hereditary in their clan.

Several questions arise about the wider implications of our examination of dynastic power structures. First of all, do they have an impact on the 'great divergence' debate? Was there a fundamental difference in rulership styles that helps to explain the sudden rise of Europe? This question tends to reduce comparison to the most successful contestants for economic efficiency: usually defined as China's south-eastern seaboard and England, sometimes joined by the Dutch Republic and France. From a comparative Eurasian political perspective, arguably the most marked difference lies in the remarkable military competition of European polities on their own continent and around the globe, which persistently increased financial pressures, and necessitated comprehensive reforms.<sup>229</sup> This competition was triggered in part by the interweaving of dynastic succession rights, but this cannot be seen as the only or prime mover. When by the end of the Seven Years' War, most European states needed to implement major changes in the relationship with leading elites, to pay their debts and continue competing with their rivals, they were crossing a critical threshold. They did so in an age where elites were challenging, or at least critically examining, received wisdom *en bloc*. This is a world far removed from the mindset that convinced the Kangxi emperor to freeze the head tax in 1711. The Ottomans were more closely integrated in the European military revolution, and tried their hand at innovations and political reforms many times. Yet their serious military losses and the economic interests also convinced them to accept integration in the European political system. Ottoman ambassadors were present in European capitals long before China would even consider reciprocity with European leaders.<sup>230</sup> The practices of rule at the dynastic court, it seems to me, did not necessarily give Europe an advantage over all polities in West, South, or East Asia. It followed rather than initiated changes that were related primarily to military competition and global expansion.<sup>231</sup>

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228 David S. Landes, *Dynasties: Fortunes and Misfortunes of the World's Great Family Businesses* (New York, 2006); see also Stephen Hess, *America's Political Dynasties. From Adams to Clinton* (Washington, 2015).

229 See a recent work stressing multipolarity and permanent military competition Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?*

230 Russia, with the 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk, appears to be the exception here; on Kangxi and the Russian ambassador Ismailov in 1721, see John Bell, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Peking, 1719–1722*, J.L. Stevenson, ed. (Edinburgh, 1966).

231 Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence*.

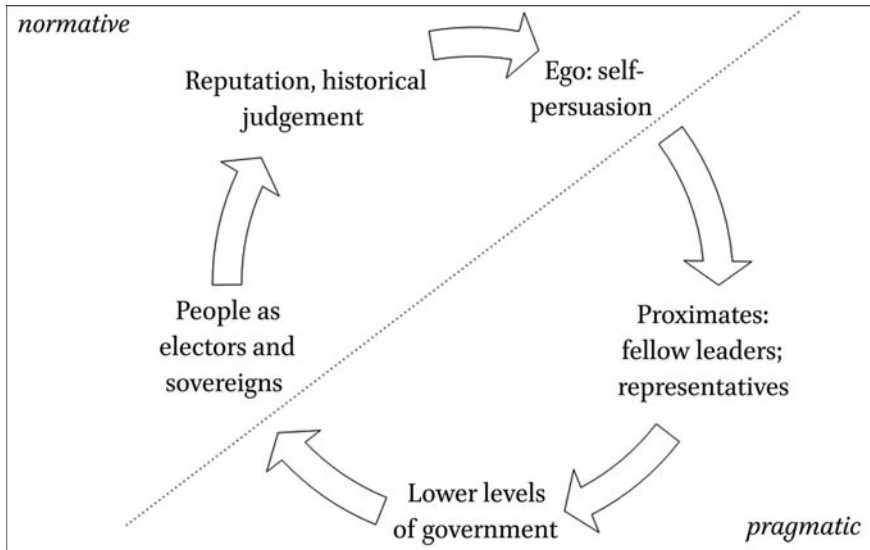


FIGURE 2.4 *Top-down: forms of compliance and modern intended audiences*

Forms of compliance changed fundamentally in the centuries following the French Revolution. The mandate of heaven was now transformed in one stroke into a people’s mandate. This breakthrough at the same time led to a restatement in secular terms of a notion that had always been present in the mandate of heaven: the well-being of the people had always been of prime importance, at least in theory. The coercive apparatus of modern states is far more powerful; yet on the whole, states no longer invest the biggest share of their revenue in war debts and armed forces, as was the case in most pre-modern polities. States have taken on numerous and diverse responsibilities, organizing in a highly institutionalized way the redistribution that took shape around courts. Surely, moreover, popular approval is now, at least in most states, a key issue: polls can change policies overnight. Leaders have at their disposal a multimedia circus to broadcast their views and, possibly, to create the sense of belonging that might earlier have taken shape during ritual meeting points. However, in democracies with a free press, other voices and views will have access to the same instruments. One tantalizing question reaches far beyond the constraints and possibilities of this chapter: can the differences observed here between centres of power in Eurasia be extended to the modern world? Do familiar older contrasts persist in the modern world, as part of lasting regional-cultural differences? Or are current political divergences the consequence primarily of modern dynamics, the long-lasting hegemony of Europe, the unequal spread of wealth and opportunities, and political contingencies in every region? While

there is no easy answer to this question it is clear that regional cultural-political specificities do have a role to play.

Finally, does the modern world still follow the cyclical pattern so persistently present in previous centuries? States may no longer 'breathe' in the style of empires with diffuse frontier zones: well-defined borders and highly articulate views of sovereignty prevent this. However, it may still be possible to ascertain a waxing and waning of political cohesion within states. The disruptions caused by warfare and pandemics may give rise to phases of greater social cohesion.<sup>232</sup> Social groups and outlying regions experience moments of commitment to the centre, as well as phases of disaffection. Peter Bol, examining Chinese history in a long-term overview, establishes a steady alternation between central and local forces from imperial China into PRC times.<sup>233</sup> The common tendency to think in terms of generations, moving from 'builders' to 'consumers', from commitment and hard work to pleasure and entitlement, is still with us.

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232 See a plausible but crude statement, Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton, 2017).

233 Peter Bol, 'The "Localist Turn" and "Local Identity" in Later Imperial China', *Late Imperial China* 24, no. 2 (2003) 1–50.

## Not of This World ...? Religious Power and Imperial Rule in Eurasia, ca. Thirteenth – ca. Eighteenth Century\*

*Peter Rietbergen*

Eine politisch-religiöse Feierlichkeit hat einen unendlichen Reiz. Wir sehen die irdische Majestät vor Augen, umgeben von allen Symbolen ihrer Macht. Aber indem sie sich vor der himmlischen beugt, bringt sie uns die Gemeinschaft beider vor die Sinne. Denn auch der einzelne vermag seine Verwandtschaft mit der Gottheit nur dadurch zu betätigen, dass er sich unterwirft und anbetet.

Or:

A political-religious ceremony is hugely attractive. We watch the Majesty that rules on this earth, surrounded by all the symbols of its power. But as it bows before the heavenly Majesty, it reminds us of the relationship between the two. For everyone only can show his relationship with the Divine if he subjects himself to it and adores it.

J. VON GOETHE, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book 5—  
synthesizing (his) impressions of various imperial coronations in eighteenth-century Frankfurt.



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## Introduction: On the Relationship between Religious and Secular Power

Before, as I will do below, explaining the choices that have structured this contribution, I need to explain some of the, not to everyone unproblematic, concepts that I propose to use, viz. the notion of religion, the relationship between religion and (secular) power, and the various types of rulership that, over time, have sought to combine these two.

### *Religion*

Increasingly, Eurasians have difficulty in understanding (or making others understand) religion(s)—certainly deistic-fideistic religion(s)—as a central element in man's thinking and acting. Yet, back in 1912, in his *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Emile Durkheim reiterated the notion he had expressed earlier, viz. that religion was the prime motor of societal integration, concluding that most if not all representations of society will, on closer study, show the significance of religious culture.<sup>1</sup> But it was, a few years later, Rudolf Otto who defined religion as the 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans', the mystery of the forces that a given society feels are beyond its understanding and control.<sup>2</sup> It materializes in sacred places, sacred objects, and sacred acts, and in people who, by their association therewith, also become sacred.

What is sacred is what a society feels it wants to remember, preserve, and transmit, including from one generation to another. Thus, the 'sacred', in its multifarious, mostly visualized forms, becomes the condensation of a prevailing, dominant societal order, showing and prescribing what people are supposed to know,<sup>3</sup> to 'believe' as true, as normal. Therefore, religion is neither an eminently individual and, even, solitudinal state-of-mind, nor a solely collective one, but a complex mixture of both. It always expresses itself in sacred, i.e.

1 Cfr. also the short summary of Durkheim's ideas in: G. Pickel, *Religionssoziologie: Eine Einführung in zentrale Themenbereiche* (Wiesbaden, 2011) 75–87.

2 R. Otto, *Das Heilige* (Munich, 1917). Of course, Otto's work then influenced the thoughts of M. Eliade as, e.g., in his: *Traité d'Histoire des Religions* (Paris, 1949), and its partial reworking in: *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York, 1959), of which a German version had already appeared in 1957. Also: W. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* (Boston, 1994). For an up-to-date survey of the problems involved, see: R. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge, 1999).

3 E.g., T. Holert, 'Bildfähigkeiten. Visuelle Kultur, Repräsentationskritik und Politik der Sichtbarkeit', in: idem, ed., *Imagineering. Visuelle Kultur und Politik der Sichtbarkeit* (Cologne, 2000) 14–33.

ceremonial or ritual acts, often performed by, or with the help of, sacred men, or women, in sacred spaces and centring on sacred objects though it need not necessarily address concrete 'gods'.<sup>4</sup>

Although ceremony and ritual are not, strictly speaking, the same, I will use the words rather indiscriminately. They both are, I feel, forms of specialized behaviour meant to constitute—rather than only represent—hierarchical relations and thus to create power. Ritual, to be understood as the more encompassing concept, is a mechanism, mostly in the form of dramatized cultural performance, that integrates thought—beliefs, ideas—and actions. Persons in power or seeking power will always try to use ritual to affect views within society, thus, inevitably, limiting individual autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Ceremonies and rituals constantly serve to (re-) connect the (collective) emotions needed to create the permanence of a community, a society, or, even, a state by, amongst other things, taking care of and control over collective prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

Many feel that in our 'modern' world, non-religious, so-called rational or civic arguments—often presented as ingrained and indeed universally human—rightly and logically have replaced (older) belief systems as foundations of culture in general, and of power and politics in particular. In Europe, and, indeed, the West, this process started, slowly, in the eighteenth century, first among parts of the educated elites, and became more widespread in the second half of the twentieth century. In South and East Asia it started later, but, again, became more general in the late twentieth century. In the worlds of Islam it started, hesitatingly, in the twentieth century, but yet has not become mainstream ideology. As part of this development, in academia the majority of students now are ignorant of even the basics of the history of Eurasian religious cultures other than their own. Moreover, most of those scholars who do study religious cultures do so from a disciplinary perspective.

In short, the millennial realities of religious culture have become hard to grasp: we are in the throes of a process of forgetting that religion has been the driving force in human culture since time immemorial. This is the more strange since, to explore but two poles of contemporary culture, the world's evermore booming tourist industry insofar as it is geared towards 'visiting the past'—the larger part of this search for alternative experiences?—often directs our gaze at what, in the widest sense, I would call 'sacred spaces', i.e. churches,

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4 E.g. S. Benoist, *When Action is Faith. The Sacrificial Rituals of the Romans* (Paris, 2006).

5 I follow C. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford, 2009) especially chapter 9, though the post-modern jargon is, I feel, not always convincing.

6 J. Russ, *Les theories du pouvoir* (Paris, 1994).

temples, mosques, monasteries, holy mountains, pilgrim roads, or at ‘sacred objects’, either remaining in situ or exhibited in museums. Indeed, many—mostly Western—people want to ‘(re-) live’ the sacred, participating in all kinds of sacred rituals both from the various Christian traditions and from other (world) religions. Conversely, many of yesterday’s and today’s (re-) current wars have been and still are being waged, at least partly, under the flag of religion, thus disproving predictions about the worldwide secularizing trend in cultural and societal developments.<sup>7</sup>

### *Religion and Power*

In view of the above, I feel that, certainly scholarly speaking, we shall have to continue to try to come to grips with the role of religion as an element that structures the larger society, giving cohesion to it, and, hence, as a tool of power that could and still can be manipulated by those in power or seeking power. Separating the political or social order from the religious, cosmic order is dangerous, since it tends to obscure their essential interdependence.

From the beginning, human societies somehow have sought and still seek to harness the primordial forces of nature to their needs for basic survival: food, clothing, and shelter. Consequently, rulership, the ability to control a polity and give it order and cohesion, most often has been claimed successfully by those who were able to convince their fellow men they were uniquely qualified to achieve the cosmological balance that facilitates the fulfilment of those needs—in short, men (or women) who pretend(-ed) to be able to somehow manage the ‘super-natural’, that ‘fascinating and terrifying mystery’. When people decide to follow such leaders and the alleged powers invoked by them, ‘religion’ is born, expressed in faith, in belief (systems).<sup>8</sup>

To be sure, the systemic relationship between religion and power is not a scholarly, modern construct, only.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, according to some of Eurasia’s most eminent ‘pre-modern’ political theorists, religion is a necessary element in the wielding of, especially, political power. In the sixth century BCE, Confucius, whose, partly alleged, teachings Chinese rulers have used for more than two thousand years, stated no leader would ever be great, successful unless

7 M. Burleigh, *Earthly Powers. Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War* (London, 2005) and: Idem, *Sacred Causes. Religion and Politics from the European dictators to Al Qaeda* (London, 2006).

8 E.g., L. de Heusch, *Le Pouvoir et le Sacré* (Brussels, 1962).

9 R. Bendix, *Kings or People? Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley, 1978) esp. Part 1, and: A. Porterfield, *The Power of Religion: A Comparative Introduction* (New York, 1997). Also: D. Martin, *Religion and Power: No Logos Without Mythos* (Farnham, 2014).

he obeyed the command of *tian*, 'Heaven'; only by adopting virtue, his actions would correspond to 'Heaven'; he would then bring his people the moral order that supposedly was embodied in the cosmos and to help them to actually realize it.<sup>10</sup> In the Islamic world, the less ethically minded fourteenth-century author Ibn Khaldun suggested that no new dynasty could take and claim power without using religious propaganda. Moreover, the soldiers they would have to rely on would not show the necessary *'asabiyya*, or solidarity, were they not tied together by bonds of faith. Two centuries later, in the world of Christendom Niccolò Machiavelli, sometimes characterized as an atheist, cynically—or realistically?—argued that 'the prince' always should at least appear to be a pious, religious man. Moreover, the soldiers without whom he could not hope to rule would only be victorious if they were united by a strong religion.<sup>11</sup> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, at least two major philosophers commented on the intricate relationship between religion and power. Voltaire, not known for his philo-Islamic attitudes, still wrote about Muhammad—both admiringly and perceptively—that he was 'a very great man ... conqueror, law-giver, monarch and priest at the same time, thus playing the greatest role a man can play in the eyes of the common people.'<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, however, Baruch de Spinoza in his 1670 *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, had analysed the power of religion in more general and critical terms, denouncing the persistent use made of religion by (political) leaders to manipulate society for their own ends.<sup>13</sup>

In this context, I should, perhaps, qualify my use of the terms propaganda and representation. Though one might argue that they should be differentiated—the one, perhaps, indicating a conscious action, the other referring to more structural manifestations of, in this case, religious power—I will employ them more ad lib.

10 J. Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1, The Confucian Analects* (Oxford, 1893) Analects VIII, xix. Cfr. for the notion that each individual owes moral behavior to 'Heaven': II, 14; VI, xxviii; XIV, xxxv. Obviously, such recent translations and interpretations of the accretional nature and complex context of the Analects, while of great scholarly importance—see, e.g.: E. Bruce Brooks and T. Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York, 1998)—should not necessarily change our interpretation of the understanding contemporary readers may have had of the text.

11 Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, F. Rosenthal, ed. (Princeton, 1981) 126; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, A. Grafton, ed. (New York, 2003) 57; 58.

12 Voltaire made this statement in his *Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, in 1753, and repeated it in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* of 1764.

13 E.g. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chapter IV, par. 10.

*Divine Kings, Priests, Kings, Priest-Kings,—and Other Variants?*

Obviously, in most pre-modern societies, rulers who claimed divinity were the best positioned to ensure success and, thus, power. Yet, this ‘type’ is not as common as one might perhaps expect.<sup>14</sup> Certainly, both the sources and, far more, the interpretive scholarly literature are deeply ambiguous about the meaning of such concepts as ‘deity’ and ‘deification’. If only therefore, some scholars would argue that the distinction between ‘human’ and ‘divine’ is not helpful at all, and that, rather, we should see rulers who sanctified themselves or were sanctified as embodying and exemplifying ‘prototypes’.

Though China’s early kings were turned into ‘gods’, most people realized that the divine ‘founding emperors’ were mythical constructions, only.<sup>15</sup> In another cultural context, the early Mesopotamian states, kings sometimes deified themselves as well. Yet, in the better part of Eurasia, most monarchs did not. However, they yet might help create a discourse that presented their ancestors as ‘sacred founders’, the men, and women, who had founded the land as if by divine mission.<sup>16</sup>

Japan is, of course, the longest-lasting exception, for precisely the imperial line from Jimmu up until Hirohito did have divine status, as already stated in the country’s earliest histories, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*<sup>17</sup>—although in an animistic/holistic culture like the Japanese, divinity should be interpreted differently from the (monotheistic-) deistic concepts used elsewhere. All in all, there seems to have been a decided cultural—also political?—hesitancy thus to exalt the ruler, though I have not been able to ascertain why.

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14 Divine kingship as a scholarly category helping us understand forms of kingship worldwide was first coined, anthropologically, by J. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (London, 1911–1915). Cfr.: A. Richards, ‘Keeping the King Divine’, *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (1968) 23–35, which deals mainly with sub-Saharan Africa. See, also, the essays in: D. Quigley, ed., *The Character of Kings* (Oxford, 2005). Some scholars have argued that, in historical reality, divine kingship either did not exist at all, or certainly is not universally applicable; see: G. Feeley-Harnik, ‘Issues in Divine Kingship’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14 (1985) 273–313, and B. Ray, *Myth, Ritual and Kingship in Buganda* (Oxford, 1991) 22–53. I am not convinced by their arguments.

15 M. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

16 E.g.: D. Angelova, *Sacred Founders. Women, Men and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding. Rome through Early Byzantium* (Berkeley, 2015).

17 Cfr. J. Brownlee, *Japanese Historians and the National Myths. The Age of the Gods and Emperor Jimmu* (Tokyo, 1997); B.-A. Shillony, *Divinity and Gender: The Riddle of the Japanese Emperors*. Nissan Institute Occasional Papers 30 (Oxford, 1999).

I would like to suggest that two other 'ideal types', in the Weberian sense, can be distinguished. These were 'the priest' and 'the king', representing the realms of 'the sacred' and 'the profane', even though, in the actual exercise of power over the ages, these realms overlapped and, consequently, these men mostly functioned in complex, ever changing interaction. Nevertheless, given the obvious advantage of 'total control', it was not uncommon for men to try and combine the two positions of power—priestly, or shamanic, and kingly—in one and the same person.

Where forms of secular might did exist—or arose—alongside a powerful priesthood, those who wielded it sometimes would attempt to usurp priestly, sacred functions and thus rid themselves of an independent, meddling, and rivalling clergy. The most famous example probably is Pharaoh Akhn-Aten's 'religious revolution', directed against the power of the caste of the Amun priests of Thebes.<sup>18</sup> Of course, his reign as pharaoh and, at the same time, high priest—or, even, semi-divine mediator?<sup>19</sup>—did not last long. But one should not forget that from the beginning the emperors of Rome also held the symbolically important function of *pontifex maximus*.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, men who, originally, had been religious leaders, high priests, pontiffs, sometimes did become kings. In Egypt the founder of the twenty-first pharaonic dynasty stemmed from the family of the—themselves hereditary—high priests of Amun. Interestingly, to fill its coffers, the new government did not hesitate to commit state-sanctioned 'sacrilege', systematically plundering the tombs of the preceding pharaohs.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, members of the twenty-second dynasty ruled the Nile delta, while a relative, as pontiff, controlled Upper Egypt.<sup>22</sup> In ancient Judea, the Hasmonean family of (high)

18 H. Schlögl, *Echnaton* (Munich, 2008).

19 The discussion about the politics of Akhn-Aten is, actually, on-going.

20 K. Galinsky, 'Continuity and Change: Religion in the Augustan Semi-Century', in: J. Rüpke, ed., *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Malden, 2007) 71–82; S. Benoist, 'Du pontifex maximus à l'élú de Dieu: l'Empereur et les sacra', in: O. Hekster, S. Schmidt-Hofner, and C. Witschel, eds., *Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2009) 32–52; cfr. also: E. Wilsey, *Roman World Philosophy: The Unity of Empire, Religion and Law in the Conception of a System of the World* (New York, 1930); J. Pollini, *From Republic to Empire: Rhetoric, Religion and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome* (Norman, 2012).

21 R. Wilkinson and K. Weeks, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Valley of the Kings* (Oxford, 2015) 360; 448.

22 K. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 BC)* (Warminster, 1995) although the chronology and interaction of the rulers of the twenty-first dynasty has been and still is disputed.

priests asserted themselves during the first century BCE and after a revolt actually did assume the kingship.<sup>23</sup>

In both cases, the result was, one might argue, a theocracy—though the term is much debated,<sup>24</sup> basically, it means that the sacred and the profane merge(d) in a single power system.

Yet, far more widespread than the divine monarchs, the king-priests, and the priest-kings was the type of those who, in a culturally and politically complex society, operated in and acted as managers of what people still felt to be an essentially religious, sacred universe—in short, as priests.<sup>25</sup> Following a ‘vocation’ or, as in many communities, an often hereditary family tradition, religious leaders would try to arrogate as much power as possible. Obviously and inevitably, these male (and, sometimes, female) shamans, these priests and priestesses, found themselves in constant opposition to the men—indeed, with very few exceptions only men—who stated they were equally able and, actually, called upon to rule, viz. on the basis of their exceptional physical strength and their prowess in the use of arms. These, of course, were the men who would be chiefs, or kings, and, eventually, emperors.

If, as most often, the priesthood was not successful in establishing a theocracy, they at least sought to retain or gain a hold over the kings who competed with them—by convincing the people that no one could be a lawful ruler unless he had somehow been blessed by the gods, through their priestly hands. Thus, the Biblical high priests and their latter-day successors, the Roman popes, claimed the right to anoint and divinely sanction the secular prince.

In their turn, kings, in order to strengthen their bid for (sole) rule, would use the charisma their role as successful warrior gave them as proof of their own link to the forces that moved the universe. Often, myths of divine descent—not necessarily resulting in claims of personal divinity—would be devised further to legitimize their position. To enforce this argument, ancestors sometimes were posthumously deified, as, e.g., in imperial Rome.

Whatever the mixture of religious and secular power embodied in actual rulers, inevitably both ‘types’—the kingly and the priestly—would use in addition to

23 E. Regev, *The Hasmoneans. Ideology, Archaeology and Identity* (Göttingen, 2013) esp. 103–128.

24 E.g. J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt* (New York, 2002) 203; 299–302 seems to me not really to clarify it.

25 For the complexity of the term: L. Sabourin, *Priesthood: A Comparative Study* (Leiden, 1973).

such myths other strategic narratives to bolster their position, even in oral-culture societies, when no manuscript texts were (yet) available. There were kingly tales such as the *Iliad*, attributed to Homer, but also the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, as well as some of the books of the Jewish Bible—the Old Testament—and, in later ages across the Eurasian world from Ireland to Japan, an endless series of royal chronicles. On the other hand, the *Vedas*, the Old Testament books *Deuteronomy* and *Leviticus*, the various *Jataka* of Buddhism as well as some sutras and, of course, the *Buddhacarita*,<sup>26</sup> but also the Christian gospels, the *Liber Pontificalis*, and, finally, the early *sira* literature and the later *hadith* about the life of Muhammad all exalt the position and roles of religious leaders—and so do, in a manner, even the *Analects* of Confucius.

With the help of these discourses, both priests and kings—and the learned elites surrounding and serving them—created ideologies that, with the accompanying ceremonies, rituals, (im- or explicit) rules, and institutions, professed to bring peace and stability to the community. Actually, of course, for many millennia and, indeed, in some parts of this world up to the present, states, including imperial states, have been disrupted by the often bloody struggles between the representatives of these two powers. Consequently, the order produced by shared visions was and still is destroyed, and legitimacy crises ensue.<sup>27</sup>

As indicated above, in historical reality the three ‘ideal types’—the rare one of the ruler striving to be a god, and the more common ones of the high priest aspiring after secular power and the king who needed to be a sacred sacrificer—mostly were not that clear-cut. Even if either a high priest or a king was the supreme ruler, the one could not do without the other.

Thus, for example, in ancient Israel the original leaders, the high priests, simply had to create a military arm. Soon, these generals became kings. For nearly a millennium the ensuing relationship would be an uneasy and often troubled one, but the kings prevailed. In the pre-imperial Chinese polity of Shang, the original rulers slowly seem to have changed into ‘ritual’ kings, occupying themselves with ancestor worship and divination only,<sup>28</sup> while real power rested with regional magnates, who then became kings themselves, resulting in the age of the ‘Warring States’. A comparable development occurred in early medieval Gaul. There, the kings of the Merovingian dynasty—descending from the tribal chief Clovis who had been anointed king by Bishop Remigius to gain

26 C. Willemen, ed., trans., *Buddhacarita: In Praise of Buddha's Acts* (Berkeley, 2009).

27 A. Phillips, *War, Religion and Empire* (Cambridge, 2011).

28 D. Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.)* (Berkeley, 2000).



the support of the papacy while at the same time asking to be given control over the Christian Church in his state<sup>29</sup>—slowly lost their power. They, too, became ceremonial leaders, *rois thaumaturges*, only; actual power rested with the great landholders, headed by the king's major officer, the marshal. In medieval Japan, the increasingly powerless emperors had to accept the strong arm of a shogun, a military commander, if only to curb the power of, again, the landed families. Indeed, from the twelfth to the mid-nineteenth century, shogunal dynasties such as the Minamoto, Ashikaga, and Tokugawa actually ruled the country.<sup>30</sup> No wonder that, from the late sixteenth century onwards, foreign observers decided that Japan was governed by two men: the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal' emperor, the latter being the shogun. Interestingly, the agents of the Dutch East India Company used such terms as 'den groten paep', and 'aerdtsgodt'—'high priest' and 'god on earth'—to describe and stress the priestly, sacred position of the 'dairo', the actual emperor.<sup>31</sup>

Leaving typology aside, and viewing Eurasia's past in perspective, it seems clear that in most cases kings did not choose to become either divine rulers or priestly religious leaders. Indeed, the 'ideal type' not only of the divine king but also of the priest-king was increasingly rare. But even when kings remained largely within what we nowadays would call the secular sphere and, moreover, reigned and ruled alone, they still needed the sanctification a high priest alone could give them: only thus could the 'Dieu et Mon Droit'-construction, inherent in Divine Right monarchy, become a reality.

Moreover, almost without exception kings definitely tried to control the religious culture of their polity, preferably through the appointment of family members to the highest functions in the priesthood. Many pharaohs named their male and female relatives priests and priestesses of Egypt's most important cults, and so did the kings of ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>32</sup> In papal Rome where, due to the elective character of the papacy, one never could be certain

29 W. von den Steinen, 'Chlodwigs Übergang zum Christentum. Eine quellenkritische Studie', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, Ergänzungsband 12 (1932) 417–501.

30 I do not go into the details of such (partly parallel) functions as *sessho*, *shikken*, and *kampaku*. They complicate the analysis without adding much to the general argument.

31 P. Rietbergen, *Japan Verwoord. Nihon door Nederlandse Ogen* (Amsterdam, 2003) 54–64; cfr. also: C. Powles, 'The Myth of the Two Emperors: A Study in Misunderstanding', *Pacific Historical Review* 37, no. 1 (1968) 35–50.

32 S. Melville, 'Royal Women and the Exercise of Power in the Ancient Near East', in: D. Snell, ed., *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (Malden, 2005) 220–228, esp. 226–228.

of success in manoeuvring one's relatives into the highest position in Christendom, the Medici rulers of Florence still managed to do so three times. On the other hand, precisely not to upset the balance of power in the multi-state world that was Christian Europe, no major ruling family ever tried to get one of its scions elected to the chair of St. Peter. Nor, of course, would they have succeeded in doing so. However, when direct appointment was not possible, and/or no family members were available for the major religious functions, imperial rulers did keep a close watch over the higher echelons of the clergy. Charles v had his teacher and trusted friend Adriaan Boeyens nominated primate of Spain and, soon after, forced his election to the papacy. In the Ottoman empire, the grand *mufti*, the most important religious scholar and preacher, usually also styled *shaykh ul-Islam*, often was appointed by the sultan. Perhaps surprisingly, there seems to have been no tendency to recruit the men for this function from the House of Osman itself: to prevent the dangerous combination of religious power and a claim to the throne?

In any case, rulers would make sure that the clergy would not counteract but, rather, support royal rule and, indeed, positively stimulate it through religious propaganda or, even more effective, sacred legislation. In most states, precisely the existence of a body of religious legal texts—whether or not culled from the sacred books—resulted in a situation wherein the precedence claimed by the people who promulgated and upheld 'divine' laws was contested by those who argued that state legislation superseded all.

At the same time, secular rulers wanted to make sure that the often vast economic resources held by religious institutions—monasteries, temples, pious endowments—would not fall into the wrong hands. Charlemagne, for example, continued a Merovingian tradition of naming royal princesses abbesses of the monastery at Chelles when he sent his sister Gisela there.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, in medieval Japan, the Buddhist nunneries that, from the thirteenth century onwards, were established in increasing number, usually were headed by princesses from the imperial family.<sup>34</sup> Amongst other things, the women in these monasteries, both in Francia and in Japan, produced magnificent manuscripts, mostly of a religious nature: cultural products that obviously served as symbols of power as well.

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33 P. Rietbergen, *Karel de Grote: vader van Europa?* (Amersfoort, 2009) 71; 91–104.

34 S. Yamamoto, 'Visual and Material Culture at Hokyōji Imperial Convent: The Significance of "Women's Art" in Early Modern Japan' (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2010) 22–58; P. Pfister, *Art by Buddhist Nuns: Treasures from the Imperial Convents of Japan* (New York, 2007).

If state supervision or, even better, control of the realm of faith was unfeasible, kings would devise other means to ensure that religious leaders at least gave them the backing they needed. Taking the European states as a whole, during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries as many as fifteen prominent clerics were made chancellor, or ‘prime minister’, while, at the same time, serving as (titular) archbishop of one of their country’s major episcopal sees. To ensure their royal masters yet another form of hold over the Roman Catholic Church, they were put in the College of Cardinals as well, which gave them a vote in the election of a new pope.<sup>35</sup> Inevitably, however, the hoped-for collaboration did not always develop as expected. When Henry II of England appointed his most trusted collaborator, Chancellor Thomas Becket, to the archbishopric of Canterbury, he did not foresee that the new high priest would set himself up as a staunch defender of the rights of the Church vs. those of the State, which, in the end, led the monarch reputedly to exclaim: ‘Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?’

Though this particular case resulted in a memorable ‘murder in the cathedral’—that was, however, not unique, for in 1079 the Polish King Boleslaw had his country’s primate, Bishop Stanislaus, murdered in his church as well—, generally speaking it seems to have been difficult for secular princes fully to subjugate their religious rivals. To put it another way: the ubiquity of cosmological-religious connotations in the titles and designations used by rulers across Eurasia shows that any form of supreme power needed to continuously and closely associate itself with the sacred, the Divine: *tenno* (‘Heavenly Augustness’) but also: *kotei* (‘August Supreme Deity’) in Japan; *huanqdi* (‘Lord on High’) and *tianzi* (‘Son of Heaven’) in China but used in Japan as well. In the Sunni Islamic world: *al-Khalifat al-Rashidun* (‘Rightly Guided Caliph’) as well as *Amir al-Mu’minin* (‘Commander of the Faithful’), and, when the caliphal title was taken by the rulers of the Ottoman empire—themselves styled *pad(i)shah* like their Safavid and Mughal colleagues—, also: ‘Shadow of God on Earth’ and ‘Guardian of the Holy Cities’. In the Iran of Ismail I: ‘Absolute Truth’.<sup>36</sup> *Pontifex Maximus* and *Vicarius Christi* in the Roman Catholic world. In the German lands: Holy Roman Emperor,<sup>37</sup> and *Apostolische Majestät* in Habsburg-held Hungary. *Rey Católico*—but also *Rey Planeta*—in the Spanish empire and *Rex Fidelissimus*

35 P. Rietbergen, ‘Cardinal-Prime Ministers, ca. 1450 – ca. 1750: Careers Between Personal Choices and Cultural Life Scripts’, *Historical Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 39, no. 1 (2014) 48–75.

36 V. Minorsky, ‘The Poetry of Shāh Ismā’il I’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942) 1042a–1043a.

37 Actually, in German the epithet ‘holy’ was not used. See below.

in Portugal. In France: *Rex Christianissimus* or *Roy Tres-Chrétien*—but also *Roy Soleil*. And, last but not least: *Defensor Fidei*, Defender of the Faith, in England, but also ‘under Christ, supreme head on earth of the Church of England’ and variants thereof, later modified to ‘supreme governor of the Church of England’, still used today! Interestingly, however, while the Russian czars did rule their vast empire ‘By the Grace of God’, in their numerous titles no other reference to the sacred was included.

### *About the Structure of This Essay*

In this text, I will try to address the following issues and questions. In part I, I aim to determine, from a pan-Eurasian perspective, which religious systems—faiths, ideologies,<sup>38</sup> and, whenever applicable, their institutionalized forms—have tried to ally themselves with secular power, or even have appropriated it outright. The other side of the question is, of course, whether royal power, if it prevailed, was exercised ‘monarchically’, or if in some ways a diarchy continued to exist, wherein the leader(s) of the priesthood retained positions of significant and, indeed, independent power alongside king or emperor.

In pondering about the structure of this first part, I have assumed that the readers probably are a very diverse group indeed. There may be those who have a specialist interest in one of my three *oikoumenai*. And there will be those who are specialists in the history of Christianity, Islam or Confucianism. But there may also be scholars of comparative Eurasian history who yet do not study religion, and those who work in the field of comparative religion but have not delved into the wider cultural, including political history of the phenomenon. Therefore, I have opted for an in-depth, partly case-study presentation of the relationship between religion and power in each of these regions, to lay the foundations for the comparisons in the second part.

Though the first part will broadly adhere to the periodization stipulated for the volume of which it forms part—i.e. the thirteenth to the late eighteenth century—I will highlight a number of rulers chosen from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, to analyse not only their actual engagement with (the institutions of) religious power, but also their propagandistic use of it. This will allow me to rely on my specific knowledge rather than on more general reading, only, and, at the same time, show the peculiarities of and the differences between specific rulers. Inevitably, this approach will not reveal

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38 The concept is problematic, but as defined by: G. Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London, 1980) 2, I take it to mean thought forming conscious action; thus, it may resemble faith and, indeed, religion.

long-term historical changes, though, whenever I feel I can comment thereon, I will yet try to do so.

Obviously, since genus comes before species, differences arise from similarities: differences are specific, similarities generic. In part II, I will generalize those elements introduced in the first part that, I feel, are fundamental for a comparison. These are: religion, soteriology and economic power, ideological orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy, imperial expansion and religious mission, marital policies, (in-)visibility in life and death and the ways the various empires knew one another. In addressing this variety of topics, inevitably the same empirical data will reappear to illuminate a different perspective, resulting in some overlap. Yet, this approach will help me to show that, actually, similarities did exist between what may at first sight seem instances of power in relation to religion that originated in and were confined solely to their own cultural system, or *oikoumenè*. Looking for comparable situations, I may be able to construct, if not a typology at least a few cross-Eurasian types. At the same time I hope to indicate which cases truly can be termed unique.

#### *Methods and Sources*

Some remarks about methods and sources seem in place, for during my research into the relationship between religious and secular power in Eurasia—between, one might also say, a Church, or various Churches, and the ruler, or rulers of the State in which they functioned—I have encountered a set of closely related problems.

In post-medieval, Christian Europe, the study of history always has been based on the study of texts, first and foremost. To establish textual reliability and, even, veracity, the Humanist scholars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at a very early stage decided that comparing texts left by past generations was the only way to arrive at the interpretations and conclusions without which no *historia* was deemed valid. In a sense, this procedure was first tested in the study of the historical text par excellence, the Bible, the New but also the Old Testament. Not only comparing the various Latin versions, but, also, using the manuscripts in Greek and other Biblical languages, standard editions were, in the end, compiled for use by future generations both of (Biblical) historians and of theologians. No wonder that, in other fields of knowledge, too, comparison soon was introduced as a prime scientific method. Indeed, one might even argue that one of the first such fields was the comparative study of religion(s).<sup>39</sup> Given the fact that the Christian world was forced to deal with the Jewish

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39 W. Smith, 'Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?', in: M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, eds., *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology* (Chicago, 1959) 31–58.

religion as well as with the claims of Islam, such texts as, e.g., the ones relating the life of Muhammad were analysed to establish his stature as a prophet, a law-giver, or as the founder of a new superstition. Perhaps not surprisingly, it took the Christian world until the late eighteenth century before it started to deal with the life of its own prophet in a similarly detached, comparative way.

Since the fifteenth century also saw a huge increase in information about the civilizations of the non-European worlds and the role, if any, Europeans saw for themselves there, inevitably all kinds of questions now needed to be dealt with from a comparative point of view, if only to be able to arrive at the conclusion that Europe was the best of all possible worlds after all. Besides studies of comparative religion, books started appearing that addressed such (related) topics as the role of ritual in various cultures—how people married, how they were buried, et cetera—, but they also tried to establish what were the bases of the power of the world's monarchs and states, or to what extent the art of writing influenced the functioning of human societies. In fact, precisely the increasingly—often implicit—comparative approach to the analysis and interpretation of all aspects of the life of humankind helped to inculcate a spirit of scientific but, soon, also more general cultural criticism in the world of European scholarship; it certainly contributed to a growing—though not, of course, generally prevailing—attitude of relativism or, even, scepticism regarding the alleged superiority of Europe.

Nevertheless, the comparative method explicitly used has always met with criticism both within and without the scholarly world. Indeed, studying manifestations of religious (and) imperial power in a variety of cultural settings across the Eurasian continent, I need to address the criticism usually levelled against the comparative approach in historical research.

Is it enough to assume, or, rather, state that applying questions asked about—and, mostly, from within—one culture to another will enable us to see, through similarities and differences, some kind of universal essence in the realities thus observed? Or will we always be impotent facing the fact that any subject-observer who studies two or more different cultures, whether or not related to or influenced by one another, will implicitly hierarchize them, and, thus, distort their singularity and uniqueness? Unavoidably, any scholar starts his observations of any aspect of culture and—indeed—even nature from his own cultural point of view as well as from his own academic discipline, habitually without acknowledging these biases. Doing so, mostly implicitly, the resulting observations and interpretations will of necessity be subjective. As Max Weber already indicated, this will result in sometimes painful accusations about self vs. other, national vs. foreign, historian vs. anthropologist or sociolo-

gist, in short about all sorts of partisan preconceptions inherent in the specializations that now characterize the Humanities, and in related remarks about the impossibility of viable interdisciplinary research and about the incommensurability of cultures.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, many people argue that comparison is possible only through the construction of artificial unities that distort complex realities because they deny the individuality and specificity, even, of 'big structures'. Last, but not least, people will say it simply is impossible fruitfully to compare the individual experiences that are the basic forces in any history. Whether all difficulties are eliminated if one stresses 'shared' or, rather, 'entangled' histories, or takes recourse to a concept like that of *histoire croisée* remains, of course, to be seen. There is, I fear, the possibility that such abstract words will actually hide the real worlds they purport to describe and interpret.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, I intend to use the following working definition.

Of course, when we compare objects or, even, people in order to better understand them, we always need to prefer the concept over the individual case(s). We strive after a certain degree of generalization, which we achieve precisely through using concepts as heuristic devices. However, a generalization created in the Humanities never amounts to such a law as results from theories tested and proven in physics. Such laws are, after all, generalizations that hold true irrespective of time and place—at least in our cosmos. Historical generalizations refer to human constructions, i.e. to culture(s) that, once we return to the specific, always will show themselves as individual, unique. Yet, by applying the comparative method, we will discover not only the differences but also the similarities that characterize our cases and thus allow us to better know the human condition.

From a religious point of view, until the mid-sixteenth century (Western) Europe presented a unity perhaps more compact than that of the non-centralized worlds of Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism: for nearly a millenn-

40 Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, W. Mommsen, ed. (Tübingen, 1992) *passim*.

41 Even the terms used in the title of, e.g., A. Amelina, et al., eds., *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Research Methodologies for Cross-border Studies* (London, 2012) are jargonistic and do not, I feel, make real sense. For the interesting part: 1–22. See also: H. Kaelble, 'Historischer Vergleich', *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte* (14.08.2012); D. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge, 2011); M. Werner and B. Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006) 30–50; H. Kaelble and J. Schriewer, eds., *Vergleich und Transfer. Komparatistik in den Sozial-, Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt a. M., 2003); T. Bahti, 'Anacoluthon: On Cultural Studies', *Modern Language Notes* 112 (1997) 366–384.

ium it had been the world of Christianity, a world called Christendom, a world dominated, at least until the 1520s, by the papacy and the one, Roman Catholic Church. Yet, from the point of view of state formation for many centuries already 'Europe' had shown a degree of fragmentation and, hence, variety that complicates comparisons with the huge and at least outwardly uniform empires that up to the nineteenth century largely made up the political landscape of the regions we call the Near and Middle East, India, and the Far East.

Moreover, while 'doing' comparative history presupposes asking the same set of questions to disparate sources that reflect the situation in at least superficially non-associated regions or cultures, the state of the historiography about the various societies of Eurasia is, in many ways, so dissimilar as to preclude applying this method with any rigidity.

Particularly in the non-European parts of Eurasia—and, more to the point, in the Islamic and Hindu parts—there still is a tendency to study ancient texts, especially texts with a highly normative or, indeed, religious nature, with a great deal of circumspection and, indeed, reverence. Rather than contextualizing them in order to come to an analysis, interpretation, and understanding that serve our present scholarly requirements—which, needless to say, are of, albeit recent, Western origin—they are, often, presented in a purely descriptive, uncritical way or, rather, used to defend present-day religious-cultural positions.

Another problem specifically regards visual(-narrative) sources, whether in architecture, painting, or in sculpture, the study of which we nowadays feel is necessary to our understanding of the past. Whereas Christian Europe and, to a lesser extent, the Buddhist worlds offer the historian a wealth of material to analyse the (re-) presentation of power through religion, due to its ban on 'icons' the Islamic world by and large does not. In a more general sense, neither do the Confucian worlds—at least not in large-scale, and, more importantly, 'public' representations of visual, power-related stories.

Last but not least, in many Eurasian historiographical traditions one, vitally important element is missing. For whereas since the nineteenth century European scholars have delved deeply into the economic background of religious institutions—bishopsrics, monasteries, pious foundations, et cetera—and the way(s) these were integrated in the state economy and, indeed, in power politics, such research still is largely or, even, wholly lacking for other parts of Eurasia.<sup>42</sup> Maybe, given different bureaucratic traditions, the sources needed

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42 See, e.g., the perceptive remarks of: V. Goossaert, 'Counting the Monks: The 1736–1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy', *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 2 (2000) 40–85.



for such research never existed in the first place. In many cases the records that would enable such study simply have not survived: especially in South Asia climate and insects have wrought havoc with entire archives. Certainly, whatever remains does not (yet) allow us to undertake studies that yield results comparable to what has been achieved in Europe. Moreover, in this field, too, the historical profession in many non-European cultures often does not address religion and religious life and culture in a detached, 'materialist' way.

In short, regarding sources and historiography, the overall Eurasian situation does not facilitate analyses and interpretations that, in addition to the 'soft' side of the ruler-religion relation—specifically the cultures of ideology, representation, and propaganda—, also need to address the other side, that of economic and financial politics, of 'hard' power.

In the end, it is really up to the reader to judge the validity of the above considerations and, hence, of the following exercises. Moreover, as always when a historian has unravelled the tangled, complex, and essentially incomplete tissue of past human experience, it also is up to the reader to reconfigure the tapestry in his or her own mind to gain the 'complete' picture.

## 1 Religions, Regions and Royal Roles: Varieties across Eurasia

### 1.1 *The Three Worlds of Christian Europe—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant: Popes/Patriarchs and/vs. Kings/Emperors*

Though, nowadays, in many parts of the world Christmas is celebrated, relatively few Christians realize that the 25th of December is not the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ (? – 33 CE). Indeed, from a scholarly point of view one has to admit that we have no idea on which date or, for that matter, in which year he was born. There even have been people who argue that he is, entirely, a fabrication. Many more, though admitting that he may have been a historical figure, yet accept that we know very little about his life or ideas. He has not left a single word that scholarly can be proven his own. In fact, he lives entirely in a number of 'mytho-biographies', the so-called 'gospels', that, however, do little to help us understand who he was and what he may have wanted to do. Was he a Jewish rebel leader using religious arguments to create cohesion amongst his followers? Was he a shamanist healer?<sup>43</sup> Was he a prophet who also wanted to reform the current state of Judaism?

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43 B. Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter. Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum* (Göttingen, 1996).

One thing seems certain: he was not the founder of the religion that bears his name. Originating as a sect in the ancient Jewish world, only after Jesus's death did some of his followers constitute themselves into an institutionalized religion, a Church, in the course of the late first and early second centuries. This could happen precisely because the Roman empire in which they functioned was, also, a vast communication society that allowed the disciples of the Christ to travel widely and, in doing so, spread their religious ideas.

Christianity as we know it is both a theology, positing the existence of a transcendent, 'personal' god with supernatural powers, lord of all creation, and a soteriology, promising salvation to all humans who express their belief in him and his laws and act accordingly; consequently, it also is a metaphysics. Its relationship with the Roman empire and its culture, and with its later recreations and successor states was a complex one.

The Roman emperor Constantine (ca. 272–305–337 CE), who first chose Christianity as his favoured creed, considered himself no less than the equal of Jesus's original disciples, the twelve apostles. Moreover, he definitely felt that the Church should serve the needs of the State, rather than the other way round.<sup>44</sup> Five centuries later, Emperor Charlemagne (ca. 747–768–814 CE) sat in the gallery of his new palace church at Aachen and, from his throne, faced a fresco of the Christ himself. He, too, felt that the Church should obey him: he always was settling theological disputes and setting rules for the proper conduct of priests and monks, of the liturgy they performed, the teaching they should provide, et cetera.<sup>45</sup>

Priests and monks! It is easy to forget that, from the early ages of Christianity onwards, its believers divided into two groups. Those who lived 'in the world' were led by their parochial priests and their bishops, under the supreme rule of, finally, a, or the, patriarch/pope. The other group consisted of male and female monastics who lived 'outside the world', acknowledging the authority of the patriarch/pope, only. The interface between these two worlds was not only piety but, also, money, for monasteries, organized in religious Orders, developed into powerful networks spanning Christendom in its entirety, with each individual establishment often being a huge economic complex. Their increasing wealth was watched with covetous eyes both by secular rulers and by Church leaders themselves.

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44 T. Barnes, *Constantine: Dynasty, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Chichester, 2011).

45 Rietbergen, *Karel de Grote*, 71–72.

The problem of Church-State relations in the Christian world starts with the question whether, in the end, one of the bishops or patriarchs who headed the early, major Christian communities—in the Near East, Africa, and in Romanized Europe—could claim supremacy over all his colleagues. If that question were settled, he might claim to be the ultimate representative of Christianity in the empire and thus, as God's representative on earth, the man chosen to rule beside or, indeed, over the emperor. During the first centuries of the Christian era, there was no consensus over this issue—which gave the Christian Roman emperors the opportunity to try and determine Church policy themselves, as shown by the stance Constantine took during the Church council that, at his instigation, convened at Nicaea.

As long as Rome was considered the capital of an undivided empire, and, indeed, the seat of the emperor, the preeminent position of the town's bishop, or pope, was, in a sense, guaranteed, though by no means accepted by all other patriarchs/popes. When a second capital was founded, in Constantinople, and, subsequently, the empire actually was divided, not surprisingly the patriarch of that town, too, put forward his claims. With the fall of the empire 'of the West' in the fifth century, these became stronger.

The so-called 'Petrine' or 'apostolic' theory, i.e. the Roman bishops' argument that they were the successors of St. Peter, the disciple who according to tradition had been nominated Jesus's first and only representative on earth, and hence also should rule supreme in all human affairs, certainly did not receive general support. Nor did the document they presented in the eighth century as *Donatio Constantini*—purportedly written in the fourth century and stating that the emperor, departing for the East, had left the Roman pontiff both religious and secular leader of the West—gain universal acceptance or, even, credence.

Its claims were, indeed, huge. Allegedly, Constantine had granted Pope Sylvester 'supremacy over the four other principal sees', viz. those of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, and, indeed, 'over all the churches of God in the whole earth'. The pope also had been accorded 'power, and dignity of glory, and honour imperial', as well as such imperial insignia as the tiara, and was in the future to rule: 'the city of Rome, and all the provinces, places and cities of Italy and the western regions.'<sup>46</sup>

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46 See chapters 12, 16 and 17 of the (various) editions of the 'Constitutum Constantini'. Cfr. also: J. Fried, ed., *"Donation of Constantine" and "Constitutum Constantini": The Misinterpretation of a Fiction and its Original Meaning* (Berlin, 2007).

Given the continuous disputes over their position—which this eighth-century falsification sought to settle—, no wonder the Roman pontiffs decided that alliances with the most powerful new rulers of Western, Latin Christendom definitely were necessary. In their turn, these leaders were happy to accept the Roman Church's support since it helped them to gain legitimacy amongst their subjects and, whenever their rule was contested, use their position as anointed monarchs against their noble rivals. Specifically the Pippinid princes of Francia cemented the relationship with Rome. Consequently, in 800AD King Charlemagne, through whose assistance a reigning pontiff had been able to keep his power in his continuous struggles with the Roman aristocracy, was in a position to demand to be crowned emperor, thus recreating the old empire.

Meanwhile, for centuries already, in Constantinople, the hub of the Eastern, or Byzantine Empire, the man commonly referred to as *basileus* (toon *basiloon*, king of kings, from the Achaemenid term introduced into Greek by Alexander the Great) considered himself the emperor of all the 'Romans', i.e. all those who at one time had inhabited the undivided Roman Empire he continued to claim as his realm. His title was *Imperator Caesar*, followed by his name which then sometimes was adorned with the epithet *sebastos/augustus*. Also styled *autocrator*, or *sebastokrator*, he entertained an even closer relationship with the patriarch than did the emperor and the various other princes in the West with the pope, if only because the two men shared the same city.<sup>47</sup> However, though the Church did argue that the emperor and the patriarch/pope were equal, with the one ruling the state temporal and the other the state spiritual, the emperors did not subscribe to this interpretation. In 535 CE, Emperor Justinian had argued that:

There are two greatest gifts which God, in his love for man, has granted from On-high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity. The first serves divine things, while the latter directs and administers human affairs; both, however, proceed from the same origin and adorn the life of mankind. Hence, nothing should be such a source of care to the emperors as the dignity of the priests, since it is for their (imperial) welfare that they constantly implore God. For if the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably

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47 G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003).

and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, general harmony will result and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race.<sup>48</sup>

But since he also argued that only the emperor could issue the laws without which nothing in society was binding, in the end supreme power rested with him. Nevertheless, as in the West, in the East, too, this position never solved the even more fundamental question: who had the final say in matters of doctrine, in the definitions of faith?

Nor was this problem resolved in the visual representation of both men. Indeed, one might argue that in that field, the emperors held the day. Admittedly, the Eastern Empire's main church, the Hagia Sophia, was linked to the imperial palace—as, later, Charlemagne linked his chapel at Aachen to his admittedly far more modest dwelling. As indicated in the ninth-century treatise *De Caerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*, the church was the site of all imperial ceremonies that needed a sacred context.<sup>49</sup> But to present himself as God's representative on earth, the *basileus* did not have to leave his palace, which, actually, was considered *hieron*, or sacred, itself. In the 'golden reception room', a fresco above his throne showed the Christ enthroned, while on the opposite wall the Virgin Mary, flanked by the portrait of an emperor and a patriarch, looked down upon the incumbent *basileus*. Again one wonders whether Charlemagne's advisors knew of this decoration scheme, since parts of this disposition were used in his Aachen church. But then again, in these very years Pope Leo III used a comparable set-up in his Roman throne room, to visualize his own claims to supremacy over all the world under Heaven.

Other parts of the Byzantine sacred palace's main audience chamber were decked with religious symbols as well, suggesting that the emperor, though living on earth, actually was surrounded by the heavenly flock of angels and saints.<sup>50</sup>

48 F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy. Origins and Background*. Dumbarton Oaks Studies 9, 2 vols. (Washington, 1966) 815–819.

49 J. Featherstone, 'Emperor and Court', in: J. Shepard, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492* (Cambridge, 2009) 505–517.

50 R. Cormack, 'But is it Art?', in: E. Hoffman, ed., *Late Antique and Medieval Art of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 2007) 301–314; J. Kosteneč, 'Chrysotriklinos', in: *Encyclopedia of the Hellenic World* (Istanbul, 2008) <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=12440>, and: Idem, 'The Heart of the Empire. The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors Reconsidered', in: K. Dark, ed., *Secular Buildings and the Archaeology of Everyday Life in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 2004) 4–36.

Even after the 'Great Palace' which in the eighth and ninth centuries was perhaps the grandest in the world, had been largely destroyed in the twelfth century, the message proclaimed by the decorations of the throne room continued to determine the complex claims of the Byzantine emperors. The oft-used term caesaro-papism is, indeed, an apt one.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, however, both the physical splendour and the imperial pretence had fallen victim to the greed and the religious bigotry of Christian knights and soldiers who participated in the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204) and plundered Byzantium. Actually, the king of France, Louis IX, bought—at incredible cost—some of the 'Sacred Palace's' most revered relics, including the Crown of Thorns, and housed them in his newly-built 'Sainte-Chapelle', obviously to enhance his own power vis-à-vis the other Christian monarchs, including the emperor.<sup>52</sup>

That the Crusaders felt free thus to act against another Christian empire is explained by the rift between the two worlds of Christendom, the Latin- and the Greek-speaking. It had started building up during the second part of the first millennium CE and grew ever deeper until, in the eleventh century, a definite schism occurred. This left the Church of Rome still claiming to be 'catholic', i.e. 'all-encompassing', 'universal', and the Church of Constantinople taking the epithet 'orthodox'. For, admittedly, the discussions were not only about power, but also about theological issues, including the hotly debated acceptability and status of icons, of representations of the Divine; these, of course, were sacred objects themselves, objects of power, used to manipulate power.

The relationship between *basileus* and patriarch did not alter essentially until the end of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Though no prosopographic study seems to exist, my somewhat random research in the biographies of the patriarchs indicates that not only were they mostly nominated and, if he so decided, deposed by the emperor, they also, regularly, belonged to the imperial family; in some cases, these men were forced to become monks precisely in order to keep them from claiming the throne, if only because in Byzantium the first-born son did not automatically succeed his father in the imperial purple.

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51 C. Toumanoff, 'Caesaropapism in Byzantium and Russia', *Theological Studies* 7, no. 2 (1946) 213–243.

52 Cfr. P. Rietbergen, 'Sacralizing the Palace, Sacralizing the King. Sanctuaries and/in Royal Residences in Medieval Europe', in: M. Verhoeven, L. Bosman, and H. Van Asperen, eds., *Monuments & Memory: Christian Cult Buildings and Constructions of the Past* (Turnhout, 2016).

53 D. Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge, 2007).

Meanwhile, the situation in Western Christendom grew ever more complicated. Whereas the Byzantine Empire up to the end remained just that: a huge, but unified state, the empire created by Charlemagne was never meant to be transferred to his successors undivided. Following Frankish, i.e. originally Indo-European, nomadic custom, Charles apportioned his realm to his three sons, whose descendants then partitioned it amongst their own offspring. Thus, by the end of the ninth century, Western Christendom, while still a religious unity, yet consisted of a multitude of states great and small, each with its own sovereign ruler. The supreme authority of the man who happened to wear the imperial crown mostly was nominal, only. Actually, with the support of texts in the Old Testament about the God-given authority of kings, each monarch argued that he ruled by divine right and that, therefore, human opposition against his rule was against God's will. Since the Church of Rome, i.e. the papacy, claimed to be the sole guardian on earth of the execution of this will, it also claimed to be the only power on earth that actually could depose a king. Though, from the thirteenth century onwards, there were theologians who felt that kingly rule was not, in this sense, unconditional and that, if the Church did not carry out its role against a tyrannical prince, the people themselves might revolt, most Christians basically followed the old belief.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, each monarch in Latin Christendom had to create his own legitimacy especially amongst and against a mostly unruly aristocracy. It certainly was helpful to be ritually linked to God by an ordained representative of the Church. Indeed, like the kings of the Old Testament, to become rightful in the eyes of their subjects high and low the rulers of, e.g., England, France, and other states in Europe sought the blessing of the pope or, since he lived in faraway Rome, of the 'primate', the highest papal-appointed religious dignitary in their kingdom: the archbishop of Reims, the archbishop of Canterbury, et cetera, while the emperor, at least formally, could be anointed and crowned only by the pope himself.

This need, as well as their wish somehow to use the fiscal potential of the huge wealth amassed by local and regional churches and abbeys, also meant that each monarch wanted to control the Church within the boundaries of his own realm. Of course, the popes were the only ones who could actually confer the episcopal dignity on the men appointed to govern the many sees of the Latin Church. Increasingly, however, the secular rulers more or less demanded the right to nominate their own candidates for these positions, leaving the

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54 G. Burgess, 'The Divine Right of Kings Reconsidered', *The English Historical Review* 107 (1992) 837–861.

Roman pontiff the performance of the sacred ritual of ordination, only. From the eleventh century onwards, this resulted in endless bickering, acrimonious negotiations, and, sometimes, in outright war between Europe's various kings and the Roman Curia. Though there was no real winner, by the thirteenth century it had become clear that, on the one hand, an elective council in each bishopric and, on the other hand, the pope would decide who would occupy an episcopal throne—but never without tacit royal consent. If a government really insisted a candidate was unacceptable, Rome would have a hard time in forcing its hand.

By the thirteenth century, the slow evanescence of the Byzantine Empire had set in. However, when, in 1472, Sophia Palaiologina, daughter of the last claimant to the Byzantine throne, married the grand prince of Muscovy, Ivan III (1440–1462–1505), some of the empire's pretences were taken over by the Muscovite rulers as well.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, even before Ivan took power, in 1448 the metropolitans, or bishops, of Moscow, expecting the collapse of Constantinople at the hands of the Ottoman armies, had established themselves as patriarchs of an independent Russian-Orthodox Church. They continued the tradition of a very close alliance with Moscow's ruling family. Actually, even earlier, when the Mongol khans had claimed suzerainty over Muscovy, the Church of Muscovy had granted the request that they would pray not only for their Christian prince but also for the khan.<sup>56</sup>

In the fifteenth century, the patriarchs of Moscow proclaimed their town to be the 'third Rome', the heir of the two previous ones—the second one conquered by Islam, and the first one long since strayed from the path of orthodoxy. Not surprisingly, they started styling themselves 'patriarch of all Rus'. At the same time, Orthodox canonists, for obvious reasons of their own as well as, probably, prompted by the grand prince, began extolling Ivan as *czar*, the rightful heir of the imperial tradition once embodied in the rulers of Tzarigrad, the 'city of the caesars'—the Slavic name for Constantinople. I would argue that this was a policy the Roman pontiffs could not pursue nor, even, condone. Though they had hoped that arranging the marriage between the Palaiologos princess—who had been educated in Italy—and the Russian ruler would give them more power over the Church in Muscovy, creating another caesar obviously would have disturbed their relations with the one and only Roman Emperor.

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55 S. Bogatyrev, 'Reinventing the Russian Monarchy in the 1500s: Ivan the Terrible, the Dynasty, and the Church', *Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 2 (2007) 271–293.

56 M. Cherniavsky, 'Khan or Basileus: An aspect of Russian Mediaeval Political Theory', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 4 (1959) 459–476.



Inevitably, Ivan himself, too, began to use both the title of czar as well as all kinds of Byzantine imperial ritual,<sup>57</sup> to stress his claims as ruler not only of Muscovy but 'of all Rus', and to strengthen his relations with the states of Central and Western Europe. Significantly, he also had himself styled 'keeper of the Byzantine throne', which, certainly when seen in retrospect, boded ill for the future of the Balkans and the Black Sea region. Religion remained one of his weapons, e.g., when he conquered the powerful and economically vital republic of Novgorod under the pretext of a Holy War against its inhabitants, who, he argued, had deviated from the right religious way as well.<sup>58</sup>

In the Latin Christian world, the supremacy of the papacy, which always had been threatened by both secular and religious leaders—who variously would use theological and political-constitutional arguments—, was seriously and as turned out irrevocably undermined by the religious reform movements of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Though we should not doubt the beliefs of the reformers, we definitely should question whether the princes and, indeed, elites who chose to support them always were driven by a sincere wish to set Church matters straight again and return to some, albeit (re-)constructed orthodoxy. Many felt that the huge economic power represented in the consolidated wealth of the Roman Church was too tempting a plum not to be picked. In various states of Europe this resulted in sometimes large-scale expropriations of monastic properties. If, in the process, a State Church could be created, which not only would sever all links with Rome but, also, somehow give added power to the ruling prince, that opportunity, too, was too good to be missed. Whereas these were the states where, sooner or later, Protestantism in one of its many forms was adopted, in other polities governments sought to appropriate Church revenue—if not Church property—mostly with the albeit unwilling consent of the Curia, which thus hoped to retain the loyalty of these governments to the cause of papal Rome.

Meanwhile, the religious diversity that now came to characterize the already complex European state-system did serve to produce new arguments for, precisely, inter-state war. To augment one's dynastic power one now could mobilize one's people against other 'nations' because they held non-orthodox, or even heretical, views of the one, true religion.<sup>59</sup>

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57 D. Miller, 'Creating Legitimacy: Ritual, Ideology, and Power in Sixteenth-Century Russia', *Russian History* 21, no. 3 (1994) 289–315.

58 C. Toumanoff, 'Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea', *The Catholic Historical Review* 40, no. 4 (1955) 411–447.

59 D. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, 2009).

Soon, in one way or other, the principle of *cuius regio, illius et religio* became a powerful tool for all rulers in Europe, whether they turned Protestant—as in Scotland, England, Sweden, Denmark, and in many states in the German-speaking world—or stayed with Rome, as did the emperor, and many other German princes, as well as the rulers of Portugal, Spain, the states of the Italian peninsula, Poland, and Hungary. Perhaps surprisingly, whatever their allegiance, all princes still claimed to rule 'by the Grace of God'. On succeeding to the throne, they would be anointed by a representative of *the* Church, or, as in Protestant states, *their* Church. Only thus would the majority of their subjects accept their legitimacy. Failure to be sacralized always exposed them to claims from competitors.

Yet, precisely during the sixteenth century, this Divine Right concept was being challenged by Roman Catholic and Protestant legal thinkers and politicians alike. They now argued that the ruler-ruled relationship was a contract after all and that, hence, under certain conditions opposition against a tyrannical king was, indeed, allowed.

The new situation obviously altered both the image and the self-image of the Roman pope. For the European Protestants, he was the anti-Christ. For the Roman Catholics he remained the supreme pontiff, but his supremacy in non-religious issues increasingly was called into doubt. Hence, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the popes, though remaining the secular rulers of their own 'Papal States', concentrated on their spiritual leadership. The two major building projects in seventeenth-century Rome were designed to stress this point. In the 1640s, the construction of the Fountain of the Four Rivers, on Piazza Navona, represented Christianity and papal peace-making as the primary forces in all four worlds of the earth. A decade later, the colonnades of St. Peter's literally embraced all people who sought salvation through the one and only Church.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, to counterbalance the notion that in practising their beliefs Catholic Christians always followed one, orthodox way, only, I might point out that at least one pope, Urban VIII, seems to have indulged in what, in retrospect, we might term decidedly heterodox, divinatory rituals that his own inquisition surely would have denounced as black magic. It is an interesting instance of the underlying, shamanic side of the papal, priestly role.<sup>61</sup> Yet, for many centuries

60 P. Rietbergen, 'A Vision Come True. Pope Alexander VII (1655–1667), Gianlorenzo Bernini and the Colonnades of St. Peter's', *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 44–45, *Nova Series* 11 (1983) 11–163, 237–241.

61 P. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies* (Leiden, 2006) ch. 8.

comparable roles were taken by Christendom's secular monarchs, though these did not always sit easy with them. When William III of Orange, a confirmed Protestant, was crowned king of Great Britain and Ireland in 1689, he was asked to perform the age-old ritual of the 'Royal Touch', the laying on of hands that supposedly cured a person of scrofula. Reputedly he said to one supplicant: 'may God give you better health and more sense.' Does this point to a decrease in personal piety, or a decline in the personal beliefs of such more 'rationalist', Protestant monarchs? Not necessarily. William's immediate successor, Queen Anne, herself a Protestant too, re-instated the custom. Yet, it was abolished by the new, Hannoverian, more staunchly Lutheran English kings in the early eighteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Arguably, discontinuing this shamanistic ritual, which once had been an integral part and, indeed, proof of the idea of a monarch's God-given right to rule, points to a changing attitude towards the foundations of princely authority.

In Roman Catholic France, however, where the ceremony was performed both after a coronation and then often four times a year, the king sometimes touched as many as a thousand patients on every single occasion, saying 'Le Roy te touche et Dieu te guerit'—'the King touches you and God heals you'. The practice continued all during the *ancien régime*, although in the eighteenth century the formula was not insignificantly altered into 'Le Roy te touche et Dieu te guerisse'—'the King touches you and hopefully God heals you.'<sup>63</sup> Yet, the ritual cannot but have given a sense of royal legitimacy and of subject-ruler cohesion both to the participants and to the multitudes who witnessed it.

Meanwhile, the new situation of a divided Christendom also altered princely relations with the religious establishment, not only in the sense sketched above. Perhaps not surprisingly, in Protestant states the rulers and their entourage no longer indulged in the large-scale endowment of religious foundations; though their motives were, mostly, economic, publicly they argued that such actions did not please God, nor should they be expected by his priesthood.<sup>64</sup>

62 D. Sturdy, 'The Royal Touch in England', in: H. Durchardt, R. Jackson, and D. Sturdy, eds., *European Monarchy: Its Evolution and Practice from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Stuttgart, 1992) 169–184. Also: S. Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England* (London, 2015).

63 A. Finley-Crosswhite, 'Henry IV and the Diseased Body Politic', in: M. Gosman, A. MacDonal, and A. Vanderjagt, eds., *Princes and Princely Culture: 1450–1650* (Leiden, 2003) 131–146; also: A. Maral, *Le Roi-soleil et Dieu: essai sur la religion de Louis XIV* (Paris, 2012).

64 For the background, see also: D. Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 2003).

Whatever their private beliefs, the relationship, at least the public one, between rulers and religion was different in the Roman Catholic states of Europe. In the lands of the Austrian Habsburgs, the so-called Catholic Reform movement—primarily an effort undertaken by the new, Jesuit Order to (re-)convert the population to Roman Catholic Christianity—was actively supported by the emperor for obvious reasons of cultural homogeneity and, hence, political control. Both they and the imperial family—the empress and other females<sup>65</sup>—continued, as in pre-Reformation times, to establish monasteries and build churches. Increasingly, they also endowed educational institutions—universities and gymnasiums—, where, of course, religion would dictate all other aspects of culture that, therefore, could be dominated by both Church and State.

Interestingly, the monasteries remained largely independent, the monks electing their own abbots who ruled over sometimes enormous estates—mini-states, really, in which local culture and cohesion were determined by them. Yet, Roman Catholic kings would use these establishments to project their own power as well. In Habsburg Spain, the monarchs still favoured such older religious foundations as the Madrilene monastery of the ‘Descalzas reales’, the unshod, royal Carmelite nuns,<sup>66</sup> and the most venerated one, of the Virgin, in Guadeloupe—though the latter was, in a way, superseded by the monastery-palace that Philip II built at El Escorial. In Portugal, the grand ensemble of the medieval convent-palace at Tomár was added to until well into the sixteenth century, and so were the great convents of Alcobaca and Batalha. In the sixteenth century, with the aid of African gold and Asian spices a sumptuous new religious foundation was built at Belém—also to house the new royal mausoleum—and in the early eighteenth century the discovery of precious metals in Brazil helped to finance a stupendous monastery-palace at Mafra,<sup>67</sup> which sought to mirror the Escorial. Not coincidentally, in these very same years Emperor Charles VI decided to rebuild the ancient abbey of Klosterneuburg, in Lower Austria, turning it into a part-royal residence. Most of the grandiose scheme was left unfinished, but its imperial dimensions and

65 See: C. Ingraio and A. Thomas, ‘Piety and Patronage: The Empresses-Consort of the High Baroque’, *German History* 20, no. 1 (2002) 20–43.

66 B. von Barghahn, *Age of Gold, Age of Iron: Renaissance Spain and Symbols of Monarchy: The Imperial Legacy of Charles V and Philip II: Royal Castles, Palace-Monasteries, Princely Houses* (Washington, 1985); M. Hernandez, *Patronato regio y órdenes religiosas femeninas en el Madrid de los Austrias: Descalzas Reales, Encarnación y Santa Isabel* (Madrid, 1997).

67 A. Pimentel, ‘O Real Edifício de Mafra: Arquitectura e poder’ (PhD dissertation, Coimbra, 1992).

pretensions can be seen even now.<sup>68</sup> If anything, this very visible, almost pan-European competition in building royal monasteries showed the continuing link between princely rule and religious piety.

From the sixteenth century onwards until well into the nineteenth century, the European princes consolidated their relations with the Church, whether it was that of Rome, which necessitated negotiations with the papal Curia, or with the clergy of their 'own', State Church. Inevitably, the 'reform movements'—both the ones instigated against the papacy and the ones undertaken by the papacy itself—resulted in mostly bloody civil wars, now waged because of, or at least with an appeal to religious arguments, though, of course, political competition always was an important, not to say major element as well.

In Protestant states, Roman Catholics and, often, all other 'dissenters' were persecuted and either forced to convert or to practice their belief in secret. In many Roman Catholic states, all Protestants suffered the same fate though, perhaps, nowhere were they treated as harshly as in the realms of His Catholic Majesty and His Most Christian Majesty. In Spain, those Spaniards who were Muslims, Jews, or Protestants—the latter not a major group—faced forced conversion or exile; their alternative was to die for their faith. In France, after a century of fragile accommodation, in 1685 Louis XIV finally decided that his Protestant subjects detracted from the unity of power he sought. Those who did not bow to his wishes had to emigrate. For reasons of power and, perhaps, conviction, both he and his Spanish colleagues accepted the massive damage this policy did to the economy, though they may not have gauged the real and long-term consequences of their actions. Others, however, profited from this excessive religious-political zeal. At the opposite end of the Mediterranean, Sultan Bayezid II decided to welcome the Spanish Jews to his empire, telling his courtiers: 'You venture to call Ferdinand [king of Aragon] a wise ruler, he who has impoverished his own country and enriched mine?'<sup>69</sup> Still, in Spain and France the royal dream of one country, one religion, and one king to wield power over all slowly became a reality.

The situation that developed in the England of Henry VIII (1491–1509–1547) and his daughter Elizabeth I (1533–1558–1603) during the 'Anglican Reformation' was, and amazingly still is, the perhaps most obvious example of the genesis of a 'national' Church that became an integral part of the State. Yet, what

68 H. Weigl, 'Die Genese der Klosterresidenz Kaiser Karls VI. Zur Planungs- und Baugeschichte von Stift Klosterneuburg in den Jahren 1730–1740', *Jahrbuch des Stiftes Klosterneuburg*, Neue Folge 17 (1999) 279–363.

69 A. Danon, 'Bajazet', in: *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 2 (New York, 1902) 460.

happened at the other side of Christendom, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia is equally interesting.

First, a new dynasty was set up by Feodor Romanov (1553–1633). A powerful nobleman, he as well as his wife had been forced to enter a monastery by the ruling czar. Rising through the ranks, as Filaret he finally became patriarch ‘of Moscow and all Rus’. Meanwhile, his son had been appointed czar in 1609, but from 1619 onwards Filaret and his wife effectively ruled Russia for him, almost as a ‘holy family’. The patriarch took the reorganization of the Orthodox Church in hand, forcibly centralizing its structure, as well as allowing it to increase its landed wealth. Partly using the ‘model’ he thus created, he also centralized state bureaucracy, with the help of those nobles who were willing to support the czar; of course, they were rewarded with landed wealth as well.<sup>70</sup> Still, in a country with few cities—and those with mostly wooden, unimpressive buildings—the churches of Orthodoxy and the mystic rituals performed therein stood out as did, to a perhaps even greater degree of power representation, the huge, walled monasteries that dotted the countryside. If the czar’s authority was felt at all, it certainly always had to compete with the more visible presence of the Church.

The Romanovs remained in power. In 1703, Filaret’s great-grandson, Peter (1672–1682–1725), moved the capital to his newly-founded city of St. Petersburg: the name was a conscious, propagandistic effort to again stress Russia’s claim to be the heir of imperial and, indeed, also papal Rome. Significantly, he changed the title of czar to that of emperor. Though from the eighteenth century onwards, a Russian emperor spent his entire life in St. Petersburg, he first had to go to Moscow to be crowned in the cathedral of the Dormition. The ritual closely followed Byzantine precepts, and, contrary to custom in Latin, Catholic Christendom, prescribed that the czar/emperor, after receiving the patriarch’s blessing, crowned himself, for there was no one between him and God.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in the prayer that followed this self-coronation, the new czar directly addressed God. All through the ceremony, the patriarch confirmed the emperor’s ‘entire authority’ and his ‘autocratic power’. He also proclaimed him the guardian of the doctrines of the Church and, last but not least, the ‘saviour of our souls and bodies.’

Not surprisingly, Peter did away with one annual, very symbolic religious-political ceremony: the one whereby, on Palm Sunday, the czar, as a humble believer walking afoot, led the patriarch, representing Jesus and on horseback,

70 J. Keep, ‘The Régime of Filaret, 1619–1633’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 38, no. 91 (1960) 334–360.

71 S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, 2006).

through the Moscow Kremlin and, moreover, through the city, showing, for all to see, the subordination of secular to religious power.<sup>72</sup>

The other annually recurring imperial-political-religious ceremony took place in the capital itself—first in Moscow, later in St. Petersburg—, on January, 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany. A tent was set up on the frozen Neva River, and a hole bored in the thick ice. Inside the Winter Palace, down the symbolically called ‘Jordan Staircase’ came the czar, bareheaded and, despite the intense cold, without a coat, followed by the entire imperial family. Outside, they joined the procession of the archbishop and his clergy, to participate in the ceremony of the ‘blessing of the waters’, during which a cross was dipped in the river, and the holy water then distributed among the believers. It seems that, from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, the ritual changed: while, initially, the patriarch sat on a throne and the czar stood before him, later the roles were reversed.<sup>73</sup> However, according to travelogues from the early nineteenth century, maybe both men stood: a new balance in a complex ritual competition?

Despite the continued importance of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, Peter the Great decided that his State would no longer tolerate the albeit feeble independence of the Church. Therefore, in 1718 he decreed that henceforth a government bureau, the ‘Ecclesiastical College’, housed in the new capital, would be the highest authority in all Church matters not strictly related to faith and theology. Though the patriarch, whose seat remained Moscow, was one of the twelve members, he did not preside over it. Peter’s plans became abundantly clear when, in 1721, the College was renamed ‘Most Holy All-Ruling Synod’ of the Church, and collectively given ‘patriarchal power, honour, and authority’.<sup>74</sup> In the process, czarist bureaucracy also gained control over a significant part of the Orthodox Church’s vast possessions.

Elsewhere in Europe, a comparable development towards if not personal at least institutional caesaro-papism or *Staatskirchentum*—that, if anything, made the Church into a tool of royal government and of state-controlled cultural policy—, did not occur until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, by that time, the period in which—in a sense following the Russian example—all over Europe the various Christian Churches had become instruments of the State, used to maintain cohesion amongst the people and doing so, at least partly, by sacralizing the ruler, was drawing to a close.

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72 P. Bushkovitch, ‘The Epiphany Ceremony of the Russian Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, *Russian Review* 49, no. 1 (1990) 3–4.

73 Bushkovitch, ‘The Epiphany’, 1 sqq.

74 J. Cracraft, *The Church reform of Peter the Great* (Stanford, 1971) 114 sqq.

Indeed, already by the end of the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic theologian and cardinal, Robert Bellarmine, in his treatise *De Laicis*, had used Biblical, theological, and rational-philosophical arguments to defend the position that:

... political power considered in general, not descending in particular to Monarchy, Aristocracy, or Democracy, comes directly from God alone; for this follows of necessity from the nature of man, since that nature comes from Him Who made it; besides, this power derives from the natural law, since it does not depend upon the consent of men; for, willing or unwilling, they must be ruled over by someone, unless they wish the human race to perish, which is against a primary instinct of nature. But natural law is Divine law, therefore, government was instituted by Divine law ...

He then went on to state:

that this power resides, as in its subject, immediately in the whole state, for this power is by Divine law, but Divine law gives this power to no particular man, therefore Divine law gives this power to the collected body. Furthermore, in the absence of positive law, there is no good reason why, in a multitude of equals, one rather than another should dominate. Therefore, power belongs to the collected body.

Ultimately, the people themselves should decide whether they wanted a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a democracy. If legitimate causes existed to rebel against the chosen government, they could change it.<sup>75</sup>

Comparable arguments were used, increasingly, during the seventeenth century.<sup>76</sup> Obviously, these elicited counter-tracts defending both the monarchical system and the Divine Right of Kings.<sup>77</sup> With ever greater vehemence, the discussion persisted into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Now,

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75 The treatise is part of a larger one, *De Controversiis*, published by Bellarmine in three volumes from 1587 onwards. The quotes are from chapter vi: K. Murphy, ed., trans., *De Laicis* (New York, 1928) 24.

76 R. Zaller, 'Breaking the Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 3 (1998) 757–778.

77 E.g. J. Filmer, *Patriarcha: The Naturall Power of Kinges Defended Against the Unnatural Liberty of the People, By Arguments, Theological, Rational, Historical and Legall* (Cambridge, 1992 [1680]).



non-religious, legal, so-called rational arguments were used as foundations for an ideology of state integrity, of state authority, and of 'constitutional' rather than 'Droit Divin'-kingship. Moreover, a formal separation of Church and State was on its way.

## 1.2 *Monarchs in Search of Total Control*

### 1.2.1 Emperor Charles V (1500–1515–1555–1558)<sup>78</sup>

Surely, Charles of Habsburg was unlike any emperor who had ever existed. First of all, he neither inherited the imperial crown and title, nor did he gain them by conquest—rather, he bought them. And whereas the early Chinese and Indian empires and, later, the Safavid and Ottoman states, too, had been created by previous conquest starting from an original centre and stretching out the imperial boundaries until they reached limits of geography or power, the lands that constituted Charles's empire(s) were not contiguous at all, precisely because he inherited them from a number of relatives. Actually, the genesis of the imperial power finally acquired by Charles I/V represents a unique combination of coincidence and cunning.

Yet, the famous phrase coined at the time: 'Bella gerant alii, tu, felix Austria, nube'—'Let others achieve their goals through war! You, happy Austria, will do so though marriage'—is, of course, a distortion of historical reality. Admittedly, the Habsburgs did acquire a number of kingdoms through marriage: first the duchy of Burgundy, when, in 1477, Maximilian of Habsburg-Austria wed Duchess Mary, and a generation later Aragon and Castile, when, in 1498, Mary's and Maximilian's son Duke Philip wed the Princess Joanna of Trastámara and the boy's sister Margaret was given to Joanna's only brother, John. These marriages, of course, were the result of power politics, certainly also directed against France. Nevertheless, two other factors explain the consequences. In Spain, a series of unforeseen deaths left Joanna the sole heiress of the two Iberian dynasties, which finally devolved upon her and Philip's son Charles. But the situation both in most Burgundian states and in Spain shows the effects of the more important fact: Salic law did not prevail there, and hence women actually could inherit the throne. To put it otherwise: dynastic

78 R. Boone, *Mercurino di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire* (London, 2014); F. Herre, *Die Fugger in ihrer Zeit* (Augsburg, 2000); A. Kohler, "'Tu felix Austria nube ...". Vom Klischee zur Neubewertung dynastischer Politik in der neueren Geschichte Europas', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 21 (1994) 461–482; S. Perrone, *Charles V and the Castilian Assembly of the Clergy* (Leiden, 2009); M. Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Habsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven, 1993) esp. ch. 5.

planning would be different if no princesses were available who, through the death of male relatives, might be(-come) heiresses not only of their family but also of the state. This introduces an interesting point in the study of the origin and growth of empires. In most Eurasian states, women were not able to succeed; therefore, covetous foreign princes could not extend their power by marrying the female heir or ruler of another state. Europe was relatively special in that at least in some states this gender bias did not exist. Nevertheless, almost always an heiress was supposed to marry and the man chosen would, *iure uxoris*, by his right as a husband, rule with or even for her. Moreover, the happy Habsburgs—both Maximilian and Philip—, though lawfully ruling in their wife's name, yet constantly had to wage war to hold on to their newly gained possessions. Nor did the heir of all these states, Charles, possess his variegated territories in uninterrupted peace. Rather, he faced rebellion right and left.

Last but not least, in Christendom the imperial dignity, acknowledged in the states of the Holy Roman Empire, was, at least formally, an elective office. If the felicitous financial deal between Charles, as the Habsburg candidate, and the plutocrat Augsburg Fugger family had not brought him the money to bribe the seven electors during the 1519 negotiations over succession to the vacant throne, the outcome might well have been different: Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England were candidates as well. Indeed, Jakob Fugger, whose huge loans already had enabled Maximilian successfully to pursue his policies, was not boasting when, confronted with political opposition against his near-monopoly of a series of important European and American businesses, he candidly reminded Charles: 'Es ist auch wissentlich und liegt am Tage, dass Eure Kaiserliche Majestät die römische Krone ohne mein Zutun nicht hätte Erlangen können'—'everybody knows that Your Imperial Majesty would not have gained the Roman crown without my doing.'

Whereas this very mundane interpretation of the crowning moment of Charles's life definitely was realistic, Charles's trusted advisor in the 1520s, Chancellor Mercurino Gattinara, wrote to his master after the election in an entirely different vein:

Sire, God has been very merciful to you: he has raised you above all the kings and princes of Christendom to a power such as no sovereign has enjoyed since your ancestor Charles the Great. He has set you on the way towards a world monarchy, towards the uniting of all Christendom under a single shepherd.

Even more interestingly, Gattinara may well have used the term 'shepherd' to refer not to the pope, as tradition would have dictated, but to the emperor

himself. Indeed, when Charles had defeated Francis I in the battle of Pavia, in 1525, Gattinara's secretary, Alfonso de Valdes, wrote eulogistically:

It appears God has bestowed this victory on the Emperor in a wonderful manner, so that he might defend Christendom and fight the Turks and Moors on their own ground, so that the whole world receives our Holy Faith under this Christian Prince and the words of Our Saviour fulfilled: 'Fiet unum ovile et unus pastor' ('let there be one flock and one shepherd').

Again, I wonder whether the 'pastor' here refers to the emperor, rather than the pope?

We cannot simply assume that Charles himself interiorized the image such men as Gattinara and Valdes projected for him, though many historians do suggest as much. But even if he did, one must conclude that Charles's actions often contradicted the message expressed in these flights of grand rhetoric. He used the three 'gracias', the subsidies that the papacy allowed him to ask from—levy on—the Spanish clergy in order to finance a crusade against the Moors, almost exclusively to wage war on another Catholic prince, the French king. And when the imperial soldiers sacked the sacred city, Rome, in 1527—they were there to enforce Charles's policy to gain dominion over the states of the Italian peninsula—, any remaining chances to put forward a believable claim for the recreation of a unified, 'universal' Christian empire surely must have vanished, if not in the emperor's own eyes at least in those of most men in Christendom. Yet, the Sack of Rome did have momentous consequences. Pope Clement VII, deciding he would no longer antagonize the Emperor, ceded him the temporality of the bishopric of Utrecht, which Charles had long coveted to round-off the complex of his seventeen Netherlandish states. The Pope also, perhaps, felt his hands bound in the question of the divorce sought by Henry VIII of England: Queen Catherine was Charles's aunt. Last, but not least, with the balance of power in the Italian peninsula now altered, the Emperor himself was free to direct his energy and his armies against those princes in the Germanic lands who used Protestantism as a tool to further their own power, both in their own state and in the Holy Roman Empire at large. So what was Charles's imperial policy, and what use did he make of the Church of Rome in the three conglomerates that mainly constituted his empire: the Austrian lands, the Netherlands, and Spain with its vast overseas territories?

Though his lands were a complex amalgam of territories big and small straddling the better part of Western and Central Europe as well as Central and South America, Charles's policy seems to have been simple: he always used

the Church to consolidate or even strengthen the power of his government. That power was contested everywhere, from Spain to the Netherlands and Bohemia, by two groups. Many nobles were unwilling to give up any of their privileges to the central bureaucracies Charles was building in all his states to gain greater fiscal and legal-administrative power. The elites of the towns increasingly sought economic freedom and were willing to compromise with their ruler if the local aristocracy tried to limit their influence. This left Charles with the question which of these groups to favour. Inevitably, the situation resulted in constantly shifting alliances.

Whenever, as was often the case, either—or both—groups felt dissatisfied with Charles's rule, they tended to consider the potential of the new religious ideas put forward by a number of men who, like others in the millennium before them, argued that the Church of Rome no longer was the keeper of the true faith. Thus, all over Charles's states, a variety of religious protest or 'reform' movements united with, or even were led by, rebellious nobles and/or townsmen. Charles, both from an innate adherence to Catholicism and because he felt that allowing any kind of religious heterodoxy would disrupt the fragile cultural and political unity of his already politically complex dominions, became a staunch adversary of these 'protestantisms', in which, of course, he found himself in unison with the Curia. However, he also realized that Rome's fears for the future were even greater than his. Therefore he did not hesitate to use these as leverage to—often successfully—force a succession of popes to concede to him increased power over Church matters in his states. That situation certainly was part of the inheritance he left to his son Philip, who succeeded him in Spain, the Italian states, and the Americas, and to his brother Ferdinand, who received the Habsburg 'House lands' as well as, in the end, the imperial dignity.

### 1.2.2 King Henry VIII of England (1491–1509–1547)<sup>79</sup>

He was the king who consecutively married six wives. Countless romantic novels, films, and, even, scholarly studies have been dedicated to the man who almost seems the personification of the legendary, cruel 'King Bluebeard'.

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79 This section is based on: G. Bernard, 'The Making of Religious Policy, 1533–1546: Henry VIII and the Search for the Middle Way', *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 2 (1998) 321–349; G. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven, 2005); T. Betteridge and T. Freeman, eds., *Henry VIII and History* (London, 2012); A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1989); J. Cornwall, *Wealth and Society in Early Sixteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1988); G. Elton, *Reform and Reformation:*

Often, Pope Clement VII's refusal to grant Henry's request to be allowed to divorce his first wife since she was unable to produce a living male heir is quoted as the beginning of a process that resulted in the schism between the Church of Rome and what, in the course of some three decades, became the Church of England: an institution that theologically and, also, organizationally differed very little from its mother-Church but gave the kings of England far greater power over the religious life of their subjects than the popes ever would have allowed them.

Yet, even recent historiography has not made clear whether what happened in England actually diverged that much from the actions taken by other rulers. The situation is the more complex since many scholars studying the Henrician period doubt whether the King, though he was an intelligent man, really directed the religious policy pursued in his name. Indeed, many find Henry to have been increasingly unstable in his thoughts and deeds in the course of his reign, which, of course, poses the question which persons and for what reasons actually undertook the 'reformation' of the Church in England, always in the king's name, and, on another level, whether the final outcome actually was foreseen in the beginning.

We must realize that Henry acceded to a throne without a long dynastic tradition to legitimize him. His father had been the first Tudor king, with feeble claims, to say the least. No wonder Henry, too, ruthlessly executed a number of possible pretenders. Also, the need for a male heir to continue the line was imperative—for though a female could inherit the English crown, most men associated with the new regime feared that the daughter born to Henry and his wife Catherine would never be able to hold her own in a country still rife by partisan strife. A new civil war might well put an end to their own rising power and fortunes.

Henry's domestic policy was spendthrift. And his foreign policy was as expensive as it was ambitious. Mostly, it was directed against France, for the king

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*England 1509–1558* (London, 1977); O. Grell, *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform* (Cambridge, 1995); B. Heal and O. Grell, eds., *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Aldershot, 2008); W. Hoskins, *The Age of Plunder: King Henry's England 1500–1547* (London, 1976); D. Loades, *Henry VIII: Court, Church and Conflict* (London, 2009); D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (New Haven, 1996); J. Ridley, *Thomas Cranmer* (Oxford, 1962); J. Schofield, *The Rise and Fall of Thomas Cromwell* (Stroud, 2008); A. Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and his Court* (London, 2002).

of England continued the notion that the better part of the continental kingdom actually belonged to him. In joining the so-called Holy League—with the emperor, the pope, and the king of Spain—Henry secured the promise that he would be titled ‘Most Christian King of France’ and, indeed, be crowned by the pope himself in Paris if and when the French king was defeated. Nothing came of it, and over the years Henry learned to co-exist with the French monarchs, though he did not give up his claims and, on several occasions, waged costly wars on them again. These, and his wish to create a truly splendid court, constantly brought England to the verge of bankruptcy. In all this the man who, according to many, actually governed England and greatly contributed to the increase of royal power and finance through all kinds of bureaucratic and legislative measures was Thomas Wolsey, who combined the functions of prime minister, archbishop of York, and cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. He also helped his master gain the title of ‘Defender of the Faith’, given to him by the pope in acknowledgement of Henry’s anti-Protestant policy.

In the mid-1520s, Henry’s impatience over Catherine’s inability to give birth to a son increased. Also, he faced the demands of his mistress, Anne Boleyn, that he divorce the queen. Out of a number of possibilities to secure the succession, he chose marriage to Anne—pleasing himself as well as expecting her to provide him with a male heir. This meant he had to ask the pope for an annulment of his marriage. Whether Henry believed the argument he proffered—viz. that Biblical laws made sleeping with Catherine, his deceased elder brother’s widowed wife, a sin and therefore illegal—is not certain. Certainly, Pope Clement did not accept it, both for canonical arguments, and, probably, because the queen’s nephew, Emperor Charles, forbade him to. Over this—the ‘King’s Great Matter’—the all-powerful prime minister Wolsey fell from royal grace and a year later died. In May 1533, with a new chief administrator, Thomas Cromwell, at court and a new archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, in Canterbury—a man, moreover, who held heterodox doctrinal ideas and hoped for support from Anne, who seems to have been in favour of Church reform as well—Henry’s marriage was declared null and void. Subsequently, the king married his mistress and had her crowned. A few months later, Anne gave birth—to a daughter. Within a few years, various factors caused the king to decide she, too, needed to be removed. Unlike Queen Catherine, who died in a convent, Anne was sent to the scaffold, making way for yet another royal wife, who finally did produce a son who lived.

The larger context of this old-fashioned ‘royal history’ is equally important and, indeed, revealing. In the first years of his reign, Henry spent much of the enormous fortune he had inherited from his frugal father on his court and his foreign policy. By the early 1530s he discovered that his steady revenue—

provided by the Crown lands—was not sufficient to cover running expenses. No wonder he and his counsellors cast a greedy look at the riches controlled by the Church.

For years, both in England and on the Continent, voices had been raised asking for the redress of a multitude of abuses—real, imagined or, indeed, trumped-up and theological and moral as well as practical—in the daily life of the Church. Several parties, including the religious Orders, tried to achieve this within the existing structure of Canon Law and other Church regulations. However, men in Church and State government—both religious die-hards and ruthless power seekers—urged greater speed and zeal. In 1532, this party successfully had Parliament enact a law forbidding people who objected to such reforms from appealing to Rome and forbidding papal bulls from being introduced in England without the king's consent. The pope retaliated, excommunicating the king and his chief agent in all this, Cranmer—whose motives have been much discussed ever since. In 1534, Parliament recognized Henry as 'the only supreme head in Earth of the Church in England', which, basically, meant that from now on State laws would always supersede Church laws. Typically, Parliament re-introduced the king's title 'Defender of the Faith', which, of course, the pope had revoked. Later, Parliament again confirmed that in England there was 'no superior under God' but the king. Though part of the clergy was appalled, many were not; they simply thought such a construction would at least give them independence from Rome and, perhaps, even more power. Thus, a political theology of obedience to the Crown was created. Meanwhile, Church taxes once payable to Rome now filled the king's always near-empty coffers.

In fact, reform-mindedness of sorts—within the flexible limits set by the Church of Rome or without it—extended through all classes of English society, from the lowest farmers to, indeed, the king's own mistresses/wives, and, more importantly, to their relatives who, either from personal conviction or for political reasons and financial gain, would support or oppose the reforms, building factions to increase their leverage. But whereas reforming zeal was growing fast in urban milieus, it certainly did not do so as quickly in the countryside. There, opposition against the king's religious policy increased. There were dissenting monks and people in all walks of life who felt their deepest beliefs affronted. Several were punished—the first 'martyrs' died for their stance. With economic conditions deteriorating, some of the government's actions were bound to incite even greater opposition. In 1536, Cromwell ordered the visitation and dissolution of a number of lesser monasteries: those that were found to lack the property to finance their customary roles, religious as well as social. To

contextualize this decision—which heralded the first phase of what caused at least one historian to label this period of English history ‘the Age of Plunder’—, one needs to look beyond England to what happened elsewhere in Europe.

On the Continent, too, princes profited from or simply made good use of the changing religious sentiments prevalent in Christendom from the late fifteenth century onwards. In France, the royal government convinced the Curia in Rome to reconfirm and, indeed, make general and legal a practice that had existed since the twelfth century. In 1516, the pope authorized the king’s right to nominate the majority of abbots and conventual priors without demanding that they take Holy Orders, and, more importantly, to allow these men the use of part of their institution’s income—often, obviously, the better part. Within a few decades, nearly 75 % of the French abbeys and convents were controlled by the state and half their income could be disposed of by the Crown. This created an immensely effective means of patronage for the king, who thus could reward hundreds of loyal servants by making them lay abbots.

In 1527, King Gustav Vasa of Sweden—a new man, too, for he had taken power only in 1523—demanded that the Diet pass an edict that empowered him to confiscate any monastic lands he needed to increase royal revenue. He also was allowed to order monasteries to return property donated to them in the past to the descendants of the original patrons. The effect was threefold. Royal government realized a huge increase in spending power—the *Reduktion* seems to have trebled the king’s annual income. The—mostly noble—families now newly enriched remained or became the king’s loyal friends. Last, but not least, by the 1580s all Swedish monasteries had disappeared.<sup>80</sup>

Following this example, from 1528 onwards Frederick I of Denmark and his successor forced the country’s monasteries and friaries to transfer their possessions to the Crown, which doled them out to supportive aristocrats. In Denmark, too, monastic life vanished during the sixteenth century.

In short, the policy proposed by Cromwell to his master in the 1530s was not without precedent, to say the least. Yet, it created an outrage, also because precisely in the English countryside the monasteries did have huge religious and social importance: they often provided the only support for a growing number of impoverished, landless people. Inevitably, anti-Tudor feelings mingled with all this opposition. One of the most dangerous manifestations of dissent was the so-called ‘Pilgrimage of Grace’, a massive upheaval in northern England in 1536. Despite promising the rebels, who numbered some thirty thousand, that

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80 M. Berntson, *Klostren och reformationen: Upplösningen av kloster och konvent i Sverige 1523–1596* (Stockholm, 2003).



he would heed their grievances, the king reneged, and the leaders of the revolt were executed.

After the first dissolution, a second, far more comprehensive one was sanctioned by Henry in 1542. The confiscation of Church property—in the end some 900 religious houses were dispossessed—greatly enlarged the king's wealth. He used some of it to arm the country against the eventuality of an invasion from a Catholic, French-German/imperial alliance. However, the Crown, always short of ready money, soon decided to use the ecclesiastical property it had appropriated—approximately a fifth of the country's landed wealth—to reward those bankers, merchants, and nobles whose services it needed. A vast economic redistribution took place that not only altered the situation in rural England but, also, created a group of men, and, of course, families who, at least for the time being, would loyally support the king, thus strengthening the kingdom's cohesion. While not originally foreseen, this development was of great consequence nevertheless.

Whereas this part of the government's 'religious' policy plainly was financially motivated, it had other implications and consequences as well. Also in 1542, the abbots of the kingdom's remaining monasteries lost their seats in the House of Lords; only the (arch-)bishops retained their political positions. This decreased their power as a group, for now they were outnumbered by the Lords Temporal. However, it increased their power in and over the Church, for the dissolutions—and the dislodgement from power of the monastic leaders—ended the ongoing dissension between the regular clergy and the religious Orders. As many monasteries had been exempted from episcopal oversight and reported directly to Rome, a constant battle was fought over authority and power within the Church's institutions, also involving the right to levy religious taxes or impose religious fines and spend the moneys they yielded. Of course, this battle was not specific to England, only. It had been waged all over Roman Catholic Europe for many centuries. In England, however, it was won by the men who remained the country's sole Lords Spiritual. Now, however, they were wholly dependent on the Crown: the king, his government, his favourites. These men held the right to nominate candidates for the country's bishoprics, candidates whom the formal electors, the chapters of the various sees, were forced to accept.

After Henry's death, his only son succeeded him, nine years old. He died before he came of age and was followed by his elder half-sister, who had remained a staunch Catholic. During her reign, she and her advisers tried to turn back the reforms Henry and his government had introduced. However, many measures could not be undone, if only because by then part of the ruling elite had become dependent on the new political-religious and, even more

important, economic order. When Queen Mary died, her half-sister Elizabeth, Henry's last surviving child, ascended the throne. She wisely decided that it was in her own best interest to preserve the Henrician inheritance and the power it gave her. Also wisely, in 1558 she accepted an Act of Supremacy that confirmed the royal person as 'Supreme Governor of the Church of England'—a suitably equivocal title that made her head of the Church without saying she was.

My conclusion is twofold. On the one hand, if England had not been an island, Henry would perhaps not have succeeded in pursuing his policy, for his wife's nephew, Emperor Charles v, might well have tried to stop him, for various political and, indeed, ideological reasons even beyond family feeling. The kings of France, from quite other motives, might have done so, too. On the other hand, we should not forget that the English case was far from unique. Some princes on the continent, too, chose to abandon their allegiance to Rome altogether, founding their own, national Churches, either along Lutheran, egalitarian lines or, because that allowed them greater control, installing a hierarchical, episcopal order not unlike the 'Anglican' model. Others rulers decided that siding with Rome remained to their advantage, but succeeded in bargaining a hefty price for their support of the papacy, agreed upon in the so-called concordats. These contracts between, e.g., the monarchs of France and Spain and the Roman Curia gave them far more extended and, also, formalized power over the Church in their state than their predecessors ever had had, though none ever claimed the grandiose titles Henry had conferred on himself.

### 1.3 *The Two Worlds of Islam—Sunni and Shia: Caliphs/Sultans, Shah-in-Shahs, Imams, and Sufi Leaders*

Even nowadays, the Day of Ashura commemorates the battle of Karbala, which was fought in present-day Iraq on 10 October 680 CE. All over the world, Shia communities engage in ceremonies that show their sorrow over the death of the Prophet's younger grandson Husayn (626–680 CE)—his, according to them, only legitimate successor—, at the hands of his rival, the Umayyad caliph Yazid. This day exacerbated a controversy that had started some decades earlier over a mixture of religious-theological and political issues, all related to the ultimate question of leadership over the entire *al-Umma al-islamiya*, the 'community' of those who 'submit' themselves to the one, true god. It finalized the greatest schism Islam ever experienced, dividing it into what, slowly, became a Sunni world and a Shia world that continue their antagonism up to today.<sup>81</sup>

81 W. Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1997); also: P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986) especially chapter 2.

It seems this fateful rift had not been foreseen by the man who is credited with founding Islam, Muhammad (c. 560–632 CE), ‘the Messenger of Allah/God’, or ‘the Prophet’. But then, we know very little about his life, and even less about his ideas and the reasons behind his actions: all texts concerning him, including the Qur’an, the holy book transmitted by him to his followers, were recorded or codified after his death. As with Jesus of Nazareth, studying the sources critically shows one thing only: writing a reliable biography is impossible. Was Muhammad a man who assembled a war band amongst the nomadic inhabitants of the interior of the Arabic peninsula, using religion, and then went on to conquer the rich agricultural and trading communities on the coast? Was he a religious reformer who, slowly, created something approaching a coherent belief-system, which, however, was written down only later and, hence, should be understood not as his own words but as the creed of his followers—a situation that obviously mirrors the one in which Christianity developed?<sup>82</sup> However this may be, undeniably, Islam is a deistic as well as monotheistic religion. It also is a soteriology, promising salvation to those who follow the right way. And, indeed, it is a metaphysics.

During the last months of his life, Muhammad supposedly gave a sermon in which he urged his audience to honour his nephew and son-in-law, ‘Ali. This much seems undisputed.<sup>83</sup> However, those who later were called Sunni<sup>84</sup> argue(d) that he did not name ‘Ali the leader of the faithful, who, they felt, should be elected by the believers—reflecting, in a sense, older, tribal customs of power transfer in the nomadic Arab world. Contrarily, ‘Ali’s adher-

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82 Rather than referring to any of the numerous recent biographies of Muhammad, I suggest: J. Brockopp, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad* (Cambridge, 2010).

83 L. Veccia Vaglieri, ‘Ghadir Khumm’, in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_2439](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2439).

84 Discussions about the question whether the opposition between Sunnism and Shi’ism dates from the seventh and eighth centuries or is, rather, a (much) later construct. Since I deal with the period from the thirteenth century onwards, I assume that forms of both then did exist and, moreover, were used in internal as well as external politics, especially between the Safavid and Ottoman states but also in Central Asia and Mughal India. Obviously, over the past decades, the concepts of Shi’ism and Sunnism have changed (again). Cfr.: O. Bengio and M. Litvak, eds., *The Sunni and Shi’a in History: Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East* (New York, 2011); cfr. also: M. Dressler, ‘Inventing Orthodoxy: Competing Claims for Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict’, in: H. Karateke and M. Reinkowski, eds., *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden, 2005) 151–173.

ents claimed that both the sermon and the undeniable family ties made him the rightful successor. While a large (?) group of Muslims chose the Prophet's trusted friend Abu Bakr as the first caliph, within a few decades after Muhammad's death a smaller group proclaimed 'Ali and, later, his descendants, to be the *imam*, the one person on earth who possessed true knowledge of the Divine.

Both the elective position of *khalifat rasul Allah*, i.e. 'successor of the Messenger of God', or *amir al-mu'minin*, the 'leader of the believers', in the Sunni world, and the hereditary character of the imamate through Muhammad's bloodline in the Shia world were discontinued, or, one might say, transformed from the seventh century onwards. On the one hand, there were those who felt that, no matter his personal or public piety, any and every ruler actually usurped God's prerogative as sole owner and hence monarch of the universe.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, those who did accept the necessity of rulership, already in 634 CE witnessed the demise of the idea and, certainly, practice of election by the community of the believers. For even the so-called Rashidun caliphs, they who were supposed to 'walk in the right way',<sup>86</sup> were not chosen by the faithful. Soon, fully blown hereditary dynasties took over power in the Islamic world, which, by then, had lost not only its religious unity but also its political integrity, fragmenting into an ever greater number of independent states. Yet, all dynasties—whether of Sunni or Shia persuasion—tried to legitimize supremacy through often far-fetched or indeed spurious links to Muhammad's family. The caliphate was claimed by such men as the Umayyads, who belonged to the Quraysh-clan of which Muhammad had been a member, and, later, by the Abbasids—descending from an uncle of the prophet.

Inevitably, Islamic rulers tried to regain the combined political and religious authority that once had belonged to Muhammad. The second Abbasid, al-Mansur—'he who receives victory from God'—described himself as 'the Power of God on Earth'. The third one was called al-Mahdi, 'he whom God leads in the right way', and so on. Actually, the first caliphs did exercise a number of religious functions: ensuring the proper observation of the law, which, essentially, was *shari'a*, Islamic religious, or 'canon' law; for though they did not usually make it themselves, they did nominate the *qadis*, the judges, and served as last

85 H. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974) I, 281 and *passim*.

86 D. Sourdel et al., 'Khalifa', in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0486](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0486); cfr. also: Th. Arnold, *The Caliphate* (Oxford, 1965).

arbitrator in unresolved disputes. They also conducted the Friday Prayer in the capital's main mosque and, often personally, performed the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

Especially the seventh Abbasid, al-Ma'mun (786–813–833 CE),<sup>87</sup> and his two successors reasserted their hold over the interpretation of religious doctrine. al-Ma'mun took power from his brother in a bloody civil war. Later, he faced severe, mostly Shia-inspired rebellions. He told his provincial governors and those of the *'ulama'*—the religious-legal establishment—who held important judicial functions, that as caliph he was the guardian of God's words and laws. In this, he seems to have been inspired by the Shi'ite notion that on earth the caliph, or, rather, imam was closest to the Divine. He instituted an inquisition, the *mihna*, in order to wrestle authority over the interpretation of religious doctrine from the *'ulama'* and, even, arrogate to himself the quality of infallibility.<sup>88</sup> Obviously, the main motive behind these efforts was to strengthen his power in the face of disturbing and, indeed, disruptive opposition and thus recreate cohesion, also by somehow reconciling various Sunni and Shia theological and political ideas. Yet, this policy failed, and caliphal authority was damaged severely in favour of, precisely, the *'ulama'*.<sup>89</sup>

In the early centuries of Islam, other rulers, too, tried to maintain an undivided religious/political power. In 909 CE, the Fatimid sultans, who traced their origin to the offspring of the Prophet's favourite daughter, occupied Egypt. They were of a Shia bent and claimed to be imams, without sins, infallible, and, hence, supreme interpreters of the law. No wonder an Umayyad descendant decided to set up a rivalling, Sunni-inspired caliphate in Muslim-conquered Spain, in 928 CE. Indeed, from the tenth century onwards, sometimes for relatively shorter periods other, competing dynasties in the Islamic outer worlds arrogated the caliphate as well: in the Maghreb, in al-Andalus, but, also, in present-day Iraq and Iran, where the Shia Buyids took power.<sup>90</sup> Even rulers in Central and South Asia took the title. In short, the erosion of the institution was inevitable, despite the efforts of a few individual caliphs to heal the rifts

87 M. Cooperson, *Al-Ma'mun* (Oxford, 2005).

88 J. Nawass, 'A Reexamination of Three Current Explanations for al-Ma'mun's introduction of the Mihna', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 4 (1994) 615–629.

89 M. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden, 1997) esp. 70–119.

90 H. Busse, 'Iran under the Buyids', in: N. Frye, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1975) 250–304.

and restore unity. People increasingly felt that, effectively, the caliphate of the East was reduced to nothing, as the famous historian Ibn Khaldun later noted. Basically, the caliphal title was used by any Muslim prince—amir, sultan, et cetera—who felt he had a right to it and wanted to create additional legitimacy through it.

Thus, already from the tenth century onwards, unlike Christendom the 'House of Islam' lacked a supreme religious authority. The word of the popes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, functioning within an as yet undivided Christian world, might be disputed but nevertheless carried great weight. They could and actually did call for a holy war, a crusade—at least partly to enhance their own power; moreover, they succeeded in moving many believers to 'take the Cross', but also convinced the sometimes less willing Christian princes that it was in their own—also political—interest to at least publicly pay lip service to that ideal.

In the Islamic world, resistance against the Christian onslaught had to come from various secular rulers who did appeal to a common religious need for *jihad* but whose internecine wars did not help to create this common cause precisely because their *oikoumenè* lacked an undisputed religious leader.

Yet, by the twelfth century the spread of Christianity came to a halt: the Crusades did not have a lasting effect. Church imperialism was resumed only, and then on a global scale, in the fifteenth century. Meanwhile, Islam still was expanding. Though in the West—on the Iberian Peninsula—, Muslim conquerors no longer were successful, south- and eastward they were, both through trade and through military expeditions. By the thirteenth century, the world of Sunni Islam did reach from al-Andalus and Western Africa to the southern shores of China, as the Islamic globetrotter, Ibn Battuta (1304–1369 CE)—Marco Polo's near contemporary—, complacently noted during his voyages, which brought him, reputedly, not only as far as the Middle Kingdom but, also, to Mali.

Obviously, in each polity that became Islamicized, the rulers tried to use the new religion to their own ends, always fusing it with older, indigenous traditions and concepts of religious kingship. Below, I will concentrate on the period from the late fourteenth century onward, i.e. on the Ottoman and Safavid worlds, and the Indo-Turco-Persian empire of the Moghuls—or, rather, of the family who designated itself *Bayt-i Timur*, the House of Timur.

Actually, in a complex way, all three dynasties derived political-ideological ideas and practices from three sources: from Islam, from their Turkic-Timurid background—historical or fictive—, and from their Persian past, the latter definitely conducive to notions of divine kingship. In all these empires the cult of the sovereign pioneered by Timur was developed further, presenting him

as an object of veneration both in a general political and, sometimes, more specifically religious way.<sup>91</sup>

Unless the rulers united religious and secular power in their own hands, in the absence of a hierarchically led and centrally organized Church they as well as the *'ulama'* felt the need for an institution that somehow represented the religious sphere at court. Therefore, the office of *sadr* was instituted.<sup>92</sup> He was ostensibly chosen from the ranks of, but certainly not by, the clerical establishment. At times, he may have appeared to and sometimes actually did reach the position of supreme religious leader and often was given the honorific of *shaykh ul-Islam*: a man functioning independently from but respected and consulted by the ruler. His *fatwa*, legal-doctrinal pronouncements, always were to be obeyed. However, mostly this 'office' became just that: a high office of state held by an appointee of the sultan, shah, or emperor himself.

In Safavid Iran as well as in Mughal India, the *sadr* also oversaw the execution of the state's main religious duty towards deserving (Islamic) subjects: charity, in the form of gifts in kind, in money, and, last but certainly not least, of land and labour.<sup>93</sup> It gave him power as well as abundant means of corruption. One of the most important religious instruments Islamic rulers used to establish and enhance their power was the *waqf*, a pious endowment that, mostly, served as a memorial monument to its founder, and, at the same time, was a major economic and, therefore, also socio-political institution. The innumerable *awqaf* reflected the Qur'anic precept that one of the principal religious duties at least of those who could afford to—the exemplary, virtuous prince first and foremost—was to support the indigent. Endowing a mosque, a school, a hospital, a fountain—often these would be combined in one, grand complex—the founders also created dependency: prayer leaders, Qur'an readers, scholars and students, doctors but also the menial staff attached to such establishments all became part of an intricate network of power, as did the poor who often benefitted from the food and the clothing doled out there. No wonder both the rulers and the elite invested in *awqaf*: it enhanced their authority in many ways. But though the Safavids and their Ottoman and Mughal colleagues tried to establish some form of central control over all *awqaf* in their state,

91 D. Streusand, *The Formation of the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi, 1989) 23 sqq.

92 J. Calmard, et al., 'Sadr', in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0961](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0961), is, alas, not very illuminating.

93 Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire and Its Practical Working Up to the Year 1657* (Oxford, 1967) 254–266.

to actually administer these endowments they, or rather, their *sadr*, appointed members of the clergy.<sup>94</sup>

### 1.3.1 The State of the Safavids

In the ninth century, the disappearance—or rather ‘going into hiding’—of the twelfth imam from ‘Ali’s line left the Shia communities of the Islamic world, which mainly though not exclusively existed in present-day Iraq and Northern Iran,<sup>95</sup> free to develop a great variety of interpretations of religion and of rulership.<sup>96</sup> Specifically Twelver Shi’ism gained wider influence due to the tolerance habitually practised by the so-called Ilkhanate, the state founded by Turco-Mongol conquerors in what is now Iraq and Iran, though they themselves converted to (Sunni) Islam. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they extended their rule over the entire region between eastern Anatolia and present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, all through the Islamic *oikoumenè*, both religious and political life sometimes were complicated by the phenomenon called Sufism—perhaps from *sufa*, ‘purity’, though the origin of the term is disputed. It variously is considered a series of notions and practices relating to the possibility of reaching a mystic, inner knowledge of—and connection with—God specific to Islam, or an already pre-Islamic set of metaphysical ideas that, in a way, characterizes many religions, including Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>97</sup>

However this may be, in Islamic culture forms of Sufism had been present right from the beginning, showing a tendency towards monasticism and asceticism but, also, religious practices not favoured by the Qur’an. It soon branched out in numerous Sufi Orders, often organized around local or regional holy men. These Orders, besides being centres of religious heterodoxy, often also were quite powerful economically, since they were the recipients of the wealth donated to them by their followers, institutionalized in a *waqf*. Thus, though not uniquely attached to either Sunni or Shia Islam, varieties of Sufism became part of the already variegated religious cultures of the Ilkhanate polity as well.

94 R. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980) 185; cfr. also: G. Kozłowski, ‘Imperial Authority, Benefactions and Endowments (*awqaf*) in Mughal India’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, no. 3 (1995) 355–370.

95 For a time, there were Shia dynasties in Egypt and Morocco, too.

96 See: M. Dakake, *The Charismatic Community: Shi’ite Identity in Early Islam* (Albany, 2007) and: L. Takim, *The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi’ite Islam* (Albany, 2012).

97 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1983). See, also: N. Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford, 2012).



When, in the late fifteenth century, the leader of a Sufi Order gained power in present-day Iran, he found a population still largely Sunni. Yet Ismail I (1487–1501–1524) and his successors effectively tried to convert them to a Shia variant, if only to distinguish their new state from its powerful Sunni neighbour, the Ottoman Empire, and from the less staunchly Sunni rulers of north-western India. However, the main reason may well have been that Ismail understood the power of religion as a factor of cohesion in society and wanted to give a specific ‘identity’ to the peoples in what was now his state, greater Iran. To achieve all this, the empire’s founder successfully used precisely the influence he wielded as a Sufi leader over a warrior group who embraced a religious, almost ecstatic master-pupil relationship. Indeed, when, in 1979, Iran became an Islamic ‘theocracy’, with a ‘revolutionary guard’, many observers felt that an understanding of the policy of Shah Ismail helped them to come to grips with the new situation,<sup>98</sup> though, obviously, there is some danger of unwarranted hindsight in such analyses.

To further strengthen their power, Ismail and his successors also took on the imamate, the role of supreme religious leader, by claiming descent from the eighth imam, ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Reza (765–818 CE), also named Imam Reza. This resulted in the generous patronage of the two shrines involved, the one of the first shaykh of their line at Ardabil and the other of this purported ancestor, at Mashhad. Especially ‘Abbas I (1571–1588–1624) made sure that his subjects knew of his devotion: before a military expedition, he always went on pilgrimage to these sites, to offer prayer and supplication, even sitting or bending down to perform the most menial tasks at these sanctuaries. In 1601, he travelled to Mashhad on foot, a pilgrimage that took him four weeks. Actually, I wonder if, in all this, he did not follow his Mughal colleague Akbar’s noted examples. He certainly liked to publicize them.

In the late 1590s, ‘Abbas, hailed as ‘the world-adorning creator’,<sup>99</sup> started constructing his new capital at Isfahan on the plan of an enormous square divided into four rectangles representing the four quarters of the earth—

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98 R. Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London, 2004); cfr. A. Ashtiani, ‘Cultural Formation in a Theocratic State: The Institutionalization of Shi’ism in Safavid Iran’, *Social Compass* 36, no. 4 (1989) 481–492. There is, however, a ‘revisionist’ interpretation that sets out to downplay the religious element in the founding of the Safavid empire: A. Anooshahr, ‘The Rise of the Safavids According to their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi’s *Futuhāt-e Shahī*’, *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014) 249–267.

99 This and the next quote are from a seventeenth-century description of ‘Abbas’s projects edited by: R. McChesney, ‘Four Sources on Shah Abbas’s Building of Isfahan’, *Muqarnas* 5 (1988) 103–134; the quotes on 112.

thus denoting his domination. The town's central piazza was the magnificent *maydan*. The vast number of commercial establishments surrounding it all paid their rent into a *waqf* created by 'Abbas in the name of the 'Fourteen Infallibles': the twelve Shia-imams, Muhammad's daughter Fatima, and, ultimately, the Prophet himself.<sup>100</sup> His architects gave the town a series of grand ceremonial buildings, including both the congregational Masjid-i Shah, or Imam mosque, and the more private, court-oriented Shaykh Lutf Allah mosque, respectively on the south and west sides of the *maydan*, adorned with huge inscriptions extolling the dynasty's descent from 'Ali and their special role as protectors of Shi'ism.<sup>101</sup> Yet, I would argue that this splendid calligraphy was understood only by the highly initiated. Inside the Masjid, under a cupola that pretended to recreate on earth the 'nine-vaulted dome of heaven', a gilt cupboard above the *mihrab* holds a relic of great sanctity: the blood-stained robe of the dynasty's martyred ancestor, the third imam, Husayn, supposed to be especially effective in battle. Unlike comparable relics in the possession of the pope, the emperor, and the other princes of Europe—and they possessed them by the thousands—apparently it was never shown to the faithful gathered below. From the *maydan*, people entered the palace compound through the 'Ali Qapu—sometimes translated as imperial gate, but, obviously, also: 'Ali's Gate, since its central ornament was a sacred stone brought to Isfahan from 'Ali's tomb at Najaf. After his installation, each Safavid ruler had to cross it without touching it.

However, to create a powerful state, a powerful government, a powerful dynasty, more was needed than rhetoric and ritual, only. A major problem was, inevitably, the role of the shari'a. It is debatable whether it applied only to what we call private law or should be considered as ruling public law as well. To have supreme authority, the shahs needed to somehow fuse the two into one, overriding 'political' institution that they could control. In the end, supreme judicial power was given to the *divanbagi*, an officer appointed by the emperor and a member of the council of state.

Another problem was finance. The Safavid shahs took a number of measures that converted state lands into crown lands and, partly as a follow-up, concentrated trade and, also, industry—especially silk-production and weaving—in the hands of the imperial family. Moreover, Iran's rulers chose to expropriate a

100 R. McChesney, 'Waqf and Public Policy: The waqfs of Shah Abbas I', *Asian and African Studies* 15 (1981) 165–190.

101 S. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, 1999) 143–144, as well as the very critical review by S. Babaie, *Iranian Studies* 33, no. 3/4 (2000) 479–482. Also: S. Canby, *Shah Abbas. The Remaking of Iran* (London, 2009) 285sq.

number of older pious endowments; the income thus freed was given to new, state-sponsored ones, significantly also schools where the Shia version of Islam was taught.<sup>102</sup> Subsequently, through the office of the *sadr*, they also arrogated supreme power over the country's remaining, numerous and wealthy *awqaf*, which helped them weaken the erstwhile more independent position of the '*ulama*'.

Undeniably, Ismail I and his son, Tahmasp (1514–1524–1576), succeeded in making their empire into a Shia state and its subjects into at least nominally devout Shi'ites. Also undeniably, they used considerable violence in converting them, but then so did their European counterparts during the various Reformations. Tahmasp, however, and even more his grandson 'Abbas realized the potential danger in using a heterodox version of Islam that was abhorrent to many. Nor did they relish the continued military and, due to the previous policy of granting them lands and other riches, political-economic power of the warrior groups who had first enabled them to take power. Soon, the more heterodox Shia- and Sufi-characteristics of Safavid authority were modified—also under pressure from the conservative Shia '*ulama*'—to accommodate more moderate views and, moreover, at the same time not entirely alienate the polity's remaining Sunni subjects. When, in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the power of the Safavid dynasty waned and, finally, was broken, their ultimate successor, Nader Shah (1688–1736–1747), reversed their religious policy precisely to strengthen his own position. Acknowledging that the Shia majority would not, perhaps, support him wholeheartedly, and, at the same time, that most of the troops he relied on for his conquests hailed from Central Asia and were of a Sunni persuasion, he (re-) introduced Sunnism. Though Nader himself seems to have held no observable religious ideas, he still tried to create a new brand of Islam that bridged the differences between Shi'ism and Sunnism. This also helped him to placate his empire's traditional enemies, the Ottoman rulers, which was a decided necessity if only because he could not hope to hold them at bay while, at the same time, combating the forces of imperial Russia that now tried to reach south beyond the Caucasus; in this policy he partly succeeded. Another reason Nader wanted to create a more nuanced Islam was economic: accommodating Sunnism again allowed Iranians to go to Mecca—dominated by the Ottomans—, which, of course, enabled the new shah to profit from the highly lucrative pilgrim trade.<sup>103</sup>

102 Kozłowski, 'Imperial Authority', 362.

103 M. Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant*

### 1.3.2 The Ottoman Empire

Obviously, the Sunni sultans of the House of Osman could not claim the imamate. Nor did they take the title of *amir al-mu'minin*, which might have suggested they felt themselves to be the rightful rulers of the entire Islamic world. Interestingly, some historians argue that the Ottomans, despite the capture of Constantinople, did not officially adopt the title of caliph, either. However, when the Ottoman Turks first started their conquests in Anatolia and the adjacent regions, Murad I (1326–1362–1389) was addressed as 'chosen Khalifa of the Creator'<sup>104</sup> and 'Shadow of God on Earth', which obviously took religious pretences a step further, since this designation no longer involved succession to the Prophet, only. Bayezid I (1360–1389–1403) applied to himself the 26th verse of sura 38 of the Qur'an: 'we have made of you a Khalifa on earth'.

By that time, a complex mixture of pre-Islamic religious notions, (Sunni) Islam, and Sufi ideas—which spread along the axis of Central Asia via Iran/Iraq to Anatolia—had come to characterize the Ottoman religious-imperial makeup, which also retained elements of the Seljuk-Byzantine alliance of the previous centuries. By the time Mehmed II (1432–1444–1481) conquered Constantinople, this mixture reinforced Ottoman imperial ambitions which, interestingly, also appeared from their decision to preserve the city's name: Kostantiniyye—Istanbul being a late-nineteenth-century usage that, moreover, was formally adopted only in 1925.

Showing that they really were the *sultan-i Rum*, the successors of the Byzantine emperors, the Ottoman monarchs ingeniously adopted and adapted the old, imperial cityscape to their new needs. Perhaps most surprising was one of Mehmed's first deeds: he converted the Hagia Sophia into the Aya Sofya: it became the pre-eminent imperial mosque. Admonishing his learned advisers to create an ideology that legitimized this, to many of Islam's faithful, abhorrent act, he constructed a tradition that traced the history of the building to Biblical notions of world power and Solomon's connection with the church, via Muhammad's supposed prophesy that Islam would conquer Constantinople to, finally, his own victory.<sup>105</sup> To ensure the church's conservation, he endowed it with an enormous *waqf*, in which he put nearly all the spoils he

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(London, 2006) *passim*; see also: E. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville, 2006).

104 D. Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden, 1972) 107.

105 G. Necipoglu, 'The Life of an Imperial Monument: Hagia Sophia after Byzantium', in: R. Mark and A. Çakmak, eds., *Hagia Sophia from the Age of Justinian to the Present* (Cambridge, 1992) 195–225; cfr. also: G. Veinstein, 'Le rôle des tombes sacrées dans la conquête Ottomane', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 4 (2005) 509–528.

personally had gained from the town's conquest.<sup>106</sup> Continuing this policy, Mehmed constructed his 'new palace' atop the remains of the huge Byzantine imperial compound and, in many significant elements, replicated its forms. In Byzantine days, one entered the palace through the famous Chalke, the Brazen Gate. It showed, on the outside, an image of the Christ and an inscription telling the visitor it was one of the wonders of the world. On the inside, it was covered by a cupola—an architectural form that, traditionally, was interpreted as a symbolic, world-encompassing structure only to be used by royals. On top of the gate, a little chapel again proclaimed this the entrance to the palace of a Christian monarch. Now, the Topkapı Saray was entered through the 'imperial gate', which, on the outside, showed an inscription stating this was the entrance to a world like the original Garden of Eden. Another inscription stated:

By the Grace of God, and by His approval, the foundations of this auspicious castle were laid, and its parts were solidly joined together to strengthen peace and tranquillity. This blessed castle, with the aim of ensuring safety of Allah's support and the consent of the son of Sultan Mehmed, son of Sultan Murad, sultan of the land, and ruler of the seas, the shadow of Allah on the people and demons, God's deputy in the east and west, the hero of water and soil, the conqueror of Constantinople and the father of its conquest, Sultan Mehmed Khan. May Allah make eternal his empire, and exalt his residence above the most lucid stars of the firmament.

On the inside, a cupola resembled heaven. And it was topped by a little mosque. Beyond the second gate, the 'Gate of Salutation', the palace's ceremonial layout mirrored essential elements of the former Byzantine complex as well. Last but not least, Mehmed also used the Byzantine model when he built a new mosque on the site where the church of the Apostles had once stood. The choice certainly was deliberate and, indeed, hugely symbolic: his mausoleum was to be attached to this 'mosque of victory', just like the mausoleum of the city's founder, Constantine 'the Great', had been attached to the church.

By the early sixteenth century, during the reign of Süleyman 'the Lawgiver' (1494–1520–1566), liberal imperial religious attitudes had changed. Süleyman called himself *Padishah-i Islam* and argued that God had given him the caliphate.<sup>107</sup> Both he and subsequent emperors subscribed more strictly to Hanafite

106 T. ÖZ, ed., *Zwei Stiftungsurkunden des Sultans Mehmed II. Fatih* (Istanbul, 1935).

107 B. Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman, 1963) 145; cfr.

rules, at least publicly. This may have been caused by several factors, including the threat posed by the Shia state of the Safavids but also, I assume, the very fact that, from their base in Anatolia, a variety of Sufist sects had gained great influence in the capital, both amongst the populace and amongst parts of the elite. In view of Sufist tendencies towards mystical insight into God's will and the great reverence Sufis held for all kinds of saints, there always was the possibility of some politically vocal leader rising from these groups. Significantly, the grand complex of religious-civic buildings surrounding the Süleymaniye mosque—built by Sinan, a former Christian—had no hostels for Sufi scholars, but, on the other hand, did accommodate the four branches of traditional Sunni legal scholarship.<sup>108</sup> According to the original *waqf*-document, these were meant 'to elevate matters of religion and religious sciences *in order to strengthen the mechanism of world sovereignty ...*' (italics added).<sup>109</sup> Precisely because the sultans did not want to antagonize the more rigid but widely influential groups amongst the '*ulama*', they could not yield overmuch to the various Sufi Orders such as the Bektasi, the Halveti, and the Naqshbandi—the latter coming from India—that were popular amongst certain strata of Ottoman society, especially in Anatolia but, also, in the big towns.<sup>110</sup> Basically, both in the late fifteenth and, again, from the late sixteenth century onwards, they tried to steer a middle course—with the exception of, perhaps strangely, Süleyman. He was the first who, though he did not formally persecute the varied, partly heterodox leanings of his Islamic subjects, was fully aware of the tendencies in Sufism that could prove dangerous to centralized authority. Maybe, he also felt forced to give in to the constant pressure of the more orthodox Sunni '*ulama*'. For the Ottomans, too, faced the power of the clergy. To control the empire's learned hierarchy, the *mufti* of the capital was given precedence over all others, as well as the honorific title *shaykh ul-Islam*, embodying, as it were, religious authority alongside secular rule. Interestingly, though mistakenly in many respects, a Burgundian visitor and other European observers equalled him to the pope. His main task was to reconcile the requirements of the shari'a with those of government and civil administration. By the sixteenth century,

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C. Fleischer, 'The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman', in: G. Veinstein, ed., *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps* (Paris, 1992) 159–177; and: H. Inalcik and C. Kafadar, eds., *Süleyman the Second and his Time* (Istanbul, 1993).

108 G. Necipoglu, 'The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul: An Interpretation', *Muqarnas* 3 (1985) 92–117; cfr. Idem, 'Challenging the Past. Sinan and the Competitive Discourse of Early Modern Islamic Architecture', *Muqarnas* 10 (1997) 172–173.

109 The document is given in: Necipoglu, 'The Süleymaniye Complex', 96.

110 A. Ocak, ed., *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society* (Ankara, 2005).

the *sadr* definitely was one of the high officers of state, appointed by the sultan<sup>111</sup> and second in rank, only, after the grand vizier.

Certainly, the Ottoman conquest of the Arabian Peninsula in the early years of the sixteenth century made a difference as well: it gave Süleyman and his successors added prestige precisely because, as guardians of the two holy cities, the sultans now controlled places revered by the entire Sunni world, places moreover that, because of the annual hajj, were of great economic importance to the Near and Middle East. But with it came, also, a closer alliance with the Sunni strand of Islam. Quite symbolically, it can be seen from the progressive 'Islamization' of the Hagia Sophia during the seventeenth century: the remaining Christian elements—mostly the enormous mosaics—were covered with plaster, and the mosaic of the Pantokrator was replaced with a Qur'anic verse praising Allah as the light of creation. Other Islamic symbols were introduced as well, such as the roundels surrounding the *mihrab* inscribed with the names of Allah, Muhammad, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and, interestingly, the Shia ancestors Hasan and Husayn. Also, in the eighteenth century the entirely apocryphal story was spread that, actually, it was the place where the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil had handed the Prophet's mantle to the Ottoman emperor Selim I, in 1517—thus transferring to him the caliphate.<sup>112</sup>

Shadow of God on Earth, *Padishah-i Islam*, and, also, Caliph: for, certainly by the eighteenth century, the Ottoman rulers did officially claim the caliphate and, indeed, even more. When, in 1774, Sultan 'Abdul Hamid I concluded a treaty with Catherine of Russia, he had himself signed 'the imam of the believers and the caliph of those who profess the divine unity'. Though one might argue that this was rhetoric directed at the Muslims remaining in Russia—and at their non-Muslim rulers—rather than at his own subjects, it nevertheless again indicated a change in the perception and use of the titles involved. It is difficult to gauge the exact political effect of the Ottoman emperors' self-descriptions. Perhaps these titles did not carry the original, almost caesaro-papist weight but only wanted to convey the notion that the sultans ruled by Divine Right, as lieutenants of God.

Undeniably, the sultans set great store on a number of sacred objects that supposedly had belonged to the first caliph, Muhammad. Thus, in 1517 they

111 R. Repp, 'Shaykh al-islam', in: P. Bearman, et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_1052](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1052).

112 Necipoglu, 'The Life of an Imperial Monument', 213, 218–220. Cfr. however, also: G. Veinstein, 'Les origines du Califat ottoman', *La Question du Califat, Les Annales de l'Autre Islam* 2 (1994) 25–36.

transferred the major relics of the Prophet—the *Khirkā-yi Sherif* and the *Lihya-yi Sherif*, his mantle and the hair of his head—to the Topkapı Saray.<sup>113</sup> There, they were kept in a special room, or chapel, in the *Khass Oda*, or private quarters of the sultan, and highly venerated. If the monarch had to leave the capital, he often took the holy mantle with him, especially on military campaigns, where it was deemed a very effective charm—a custom similar to the carrying of the holy banner in France, which, however, precisely in those centuries was discontinued.<sup>114</sup> The ‘mantle of happiness’ also was used to sanctify water, drops of which were then distributed by the sultan to persons meriting this special favour.<sup>115</sup>

The Prophet’s sword had even greater importance: it was essential in the initiation of a new emperor,<sup>116</sup> during the *taklid-i seyf*—or ‘girding of the sword’-ceremony, performed at the Eyüp mosque, built by Mehmed, ‘the Conqueror’, on a site where, according to legend, a devoted disciple of the Prophet had died taking part in the first Islamic assault on Constantinople. Actually, this ceremony followed what might be termed a coronation and had taken place in, precisely, the *Khass Oda*: there, the new sultan had donned the cap of the prophet Joseph, and the grand vizier and the *shaykh ul-Islam*—the heads of the civil and religious arms of sultanic power—had taken the oath. On the subsequent Friday, the sultan, accompanied by the entire court, went to Eyüp by boat, over the Golden Horn, and, after the girding ritual, returned to the Topkapı Saray in a sumptuous cortege that proceeded along the ancient—Byzantine-imperial!—processional route through town. To honour the deceased Ottoman emperors, it stopped at all major mosques—eventually including the great funerary complexes of Mehmed II, of Selim I, and of Süleyman.

But whereas this was, of course, a unique occasion, one of the annually recurring major religious-political ceremonies in the imperial capital was the

113 The function(s) of the ‘Khass Oda’ are contradictorily described in the articles in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* devoted to the organization of the Topkapı Saray and the Prophet’s mantle.

114 A. Lombard-Jourdan, *Fleur-de-Lys et oriflamme: signes celestas du royaume de France* (Paris, 1991).

115 N. Atasoy, ‘Khirkā-yi Sherif’ and ‘Lihya-yi Sherif’, in: P. Bearman, et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Leiden, 2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_4294](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4294) and [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_4667](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4667). On the earliest history of these and other relics: J. Meri, ‘Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam’, *Past & Present* 206, no. 5 (2010) 97–120.

116 B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago, 2006) gives a, not altogether convincing analysis of the earliest stages of Mohammed-relic veneration and its various meanings.



so-called *Surre* cavalcade, in which a purse, filled with gold by the sultan, and accompanied by other costly gifts contributed by the entire court, including the ladies of the harem, was carried through the streets on the first leg of a journey that would bring it, on camelback, to the Hejaz, thus to symbolize the sultan's legitimizing role as hereditary keeper of Mecca and Medina.<sup>117</sup>

As to religious policy *largo sensu*, of course, the Ottoman Empire always has been described as relatively tolerant towards its minorities: the Jews, first and foremost, and the various Christian denominations, including the Maronites and, in a way, the Druze and the Alawites. Both Jews and Christians were important mainly for economic reasons. Living in the port cities of Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt, they did not threaten to destabilize the vast, agrarian, and, hence, more traditional interior of the empire. Specifically the foreign, i.e. European-Christian communities—but also the Lebanese Christians—sought the protection of the rulers of the trading nations whence they came. Given their importance, the Ottoman authorities accorded them a series of privileges, 'capitulations', that regulated these peoples' lives. Consequently, these communities were allowed to have their own jurisdiction in cases not involving other religious groups, capital offences, or threats to public order. Moreover, the Greek Orthodox Church, which retained its patriarch in Constantinople, was largely left alone, although closely scrutinized by the sultanic government.

Part of the explanation for this 'liberal' policy is that, except for the mainly Orthodox Christians in the Balkans—who, however, often converted voluntarily or, if rebellious, were compelled to do so—, and the Armenians on the eastern frontier, these very diverse Christian communities did not constitute a large part of the empire's population. Also, precisely their diversity precluded the genesis of a unified movement that might have threatened to overthrow the regime in Istanbul. In short, the Ottoman government did not feel any necessity to grant these minority groups a place amongst the empire's elite, and, thus, a voice in state matters.

Nevertheless, the so-called *devshirme*, which forcibly recruited young boys from, mainly, Christian households to serve the sultan, sometimes did propel them to leading positions both in the military elite corps of the empire, the Janissaries, and in the imperial administration. Actually, out of the seventy-eight grand viziers who governed the empire between the mid-fifteenth and the late seventeenth century, only eleven were Turkish. The great majority of the

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117 S. Wasti, 'The Ottoman Ceremony of the Royal Purse', *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 2 (2005) 193–200.

others were of some Christian background, having been introduced into the imperial bureaucracy via, precisely, the *devshirme*-system.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, many women in the imperial harem who mothered a sultan were of non-Turkish and, indeed, probably of Christian origin, too. Recent computations set their number at almost three-quarters of all nineteen *valide-sultans* between ca. 1400 and 1700.<sup>119</sup> Whether, as has been suggested, their cultural-religious origins influenced their sons, e.g. in deciding not to engage in military conflicts with neighbouring Christian regions and states is, I feel, debatable, but deserves further research.<sup>120</sup>

### 1.3.3 The Realm of the Mughals

Inheriting traditions forged by earlier Muslim rulers of Northern India, in whose name Sunni, Shia, and Sufi notions already had been welded together,<sup>121</sup> the Mughals, especially the first real Indian Mughal, Akbar (1542–1556–1605), and his successors, claimed to be both sultan and caliph. But the question is whether, and to what extent, these titles were really factors of cohesion. It has been argued that their vast empire that, by the end of the seventeenth century, comprised some sixty to seventy million people, actually was governed by a military aristocracy of *mansabdars*, whose number is estimated between some one thousand and seven thousand ‘nobles’, only; they were the emperor’s first and, indeed sole direct layer of loyalty.<sup>122</sup> They themselves were the top of an immense pyramid of patron-client relations that in the end reached down to the local level where many of the emperor’s subjects were Hindu, living in villages and organized in (sub-) castes.

Since the fourteenth century, the Muslim rulers had started incorporating members of the Hindu aristocracy into the state apparatus. Soon, these men, commonly referred to as *zamindar*, adopted parts of and otherwise adapted

118 Emrah Safa Gürkan, ‘Christian Allies of the Ottoman Empire’, *European History Online (EGO)* (12 march 2010) <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/gurkane-2010-en>, 4 and note 7.

119 The data can be culled from: L. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem. Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 1993).

120 M. Iyigun, ‘Lessons from the Ottoman Harem (on Ethnicity, Religion and War)’, *IZA Discussion Papers*, No. 3556, <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/34957>.

121 B. Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: Religion and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate* (London, 2012) esp. ch. 3–6.

122 M. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: Awards of Ranks, Offices and Titles to the Mughal Nobility (1574–1658)* (Oxford, 1985) and his: *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (New Delhi, 1997); M. Pearson, ‘Shivaji and the Decline of the Mughal Empire’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 2 (1976) 221–235.

themselves to the Perso-Islamic culture of the conquerors. Consequently, the 'ethnic', or in a wider sense cultural and certainly religious, make-up of the ruling elite was highly variegated—foreign and native, Muslim and Hindu, et cetera. E.g. when Shah Jahan (1594–1627–1666) became the fifth Mughal emperor, to be followed by Aurangzeb (1618–1658–1707), the situation was one in which Hindu nobles as well as Shia Persians served a Sunni ruler.

It has been said that though the third and fourth Mughal emperors, Akbar and Jahangir (1569–1605–1629) had been overtly liberal both in their own beliefs and in their policy regarding the various religions in their empire, their successors returned to Sunni orthodoxy. Yet, the situation seems to have been far more complex. Certainly, they continued the vision that the royalty of kings was a light emanating directly from God, without any intermediate assistance, as Akbar's court chronicler had already noted.<sup>123</sup> As another sign of this, many Mughal emperors had themselves depicted with a halo around their head. And precisely Jahan, who allegedly inaugurated the reversal to Islamic orthodoxy, seems to have held decidedly specific, not to say heterodox notions about his position as the 'perfect man', the instrument of God's creation, the embodiment of the Divine Pen, as part of his role as caliph, vice-regent of God. Indeed, amongst his titles he named himself not only 'Shadow of God' but, also 'august representative on earth of the divinity.'<sup>124</sup>

Admittedly, by the second half of the seventeenth century, a different wind was blowing at court. Domestic political motives may have played a part here. The heir to Shah Jahan's throne, Prince Dara Shikoh, very much wanted to continue his grandfather Akbar's policy. His rival half-brother, Aurangzeb, in order to gain the throne, needed to differentiate himself from his sibling. It seems that, soon, the tolerant and syncretic views of Akbar were replaced by another, more orthodox Sunni form of Sufi thought, mainly preached by the leaders of the Naqshbandi brotherhood, to which Aurangzeb belonged. But religion was an argument in foreign policy as well. Aurangzeb's attacks on the southern kingdom of Bijapur, though meant to satisfy the economic needs of the Mughal nobility, were presented as necessary to stamp out heterodoxy, there—the Bijapur-rulers were, to a large extent, adherents of Shi'ism. Since these men, as well as other Deccan princes, also were influenced by the more aggressive policy pursued on the subcontinent by Iran's Shia rulers, Aurangzeb may well have modified his own religious stance accordingly.

123 Abu l-Fazl, *The A-in-I Akbari*, D. Phillott and J. Sarkar, eds., 3 vols. (New Delhi, 1989) I, 163.

124 About the 'perfect man'-idea: R. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1967 [1921]) esp. 77–142. About Shah Jahan's views: W. Begley, 'The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning', *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 1 (1979) 7–37, esp. 30 sqq.

The interesting fact remains that both the sultan of Bijapur and the Mughal emperor were Sufis. And the role of Sufism in Mughal rule is both fascinating and complex. Its influence has become more obvious since, recently, attention has been drawn to a factor that at least partly explains the surprising fusion between various elements that characterized Mughal politico-religious culture but has long been overlooked: the significance of Chinggisid-Timurid, i.e. Central-Asian, traditions in Mughal state building.<sup>125</sup>

Given the multi-religious nature of the polities they created, already in pre-Mughal times the Muslim dynasties of India tried to combine the tenets of true Islam, which did not allow worldly rule, with the necessities of empire. According to the influential treatise *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, the 'Ethics of Nasir', written in 1235 by the Shia-Sufi scholar Khwaja—or Nasir—, Tusi, a 'philosopher king' should achieve a balance between the constituent parts of his variegated state.<sup>126</sup> In short, a non-sectarian approach would promote the wellbeing also of subjects other than Muslims. Since it—as well as a strong belief in saints and shrines—was considered part of Timur's legacy, these notions entered India and became an important element in the ideology ascribed to and, indeed, practised by the first Mughal emperors, Babur and Humayun.<sup>127</sup> Both Babur and Humayun converted from Sunnism to Shi'ism at certain stages of their (political) life and showed definite Sufi-tendencies. The mixture they created tended to show them almost as saints, who, through their God-given dreams, were called upon to realize their empire in the way dictated by Allah.<sup>128</sup> The third Mughal, Akbar, followed in their wake. Being, apparently, illiterate, he had the *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* recited to him regularly and ordered his officials to study it as well. Only by being just rulers and administrators would they ensure cooperation amongst the empire's peoples, whether Muslim or infidel—Hindu, Jain, Zoroastrian, Christian even. Apparently, this also meant that, though the shari'a remained part of state law, it needed to be interpreted in a general rather than a narrow legalistic sense. It also meant that, at least during Akbar's reign, the state's charity to its subjects was extended to non-Muslims as well.

All this was in a way reinforced by the influence, throughout the empire, of the slow merging of devotionalist tendencies in Hinduism with elements

125 E.g. M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State* (New Delhi, 1997) introduction, and: M. Alam, 'State Building under the Mughals: Religion, Culture and Politics', *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 3/4 (1997) 105–128.

126 Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G. Wickens (London, 1964).

127 Alam, 'State Building', *passim*.

128 A. Afzar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012).

of Vedantic philosophy and with the ideas of Sufi saints and their followers, many of whom stressed the individual's road to divinity rather than adherence to a specific and often formalistic creed.<sup>129</sup> A line in the famous *Masnavi* of the Persian poet Jalal al-Din Rumi became a favourite of Akbar: 'Thou hast come to unite, not to separate. For the people of Hind, the idiom of Hindi is praiseworthy, for the people of Sind, their own is to be praised.' Thus, too, Islamic mysticism could, at least in the view of some, be reconciled with similar notions in Hinduism. And, conversely, the first Muslim emperors introduced Hindu rituals at court. Last but not least, they identified with Vishnu, with the Sun, the major deity of the Rajput rulers of Northern India.<sup>130</sup>

Analysing these trends in Mughal policy, it is interesting to note that the emperors themselves only infrequently publicized their power by building mosques. Rather, huge tombs were built by or for them—Humayun, Akbar, Jahan, Jahangir—, as if to say that not their piety but their greatness as sovereign proved their right to rule.<sup>131</sup> Insofar as they spent money on religious institutions, they did so—on a fairly large scale—to endow the shrines of saints, both living and dead. Interestingly again, they did not favour traditional holy men but, rather, Sufis.<sup>132</sup> Thus, the Mughals ensured the loyalty of these men and their often very large following.

The extent to which the non-sectarianism of the first Mughal emperors was practised beyond the court and the ruling elite is difficult to gauge. Indeed, even at court this policy had its adversaries. It was, for example, deplored by Akbar's adviser Badauni. But when he wrote: 'Hindustan is a wide place, where there is an open field for all licentiousness and no one interferes with another's business, so that everyone can do as he pleases',<sup>133</sup> he obviously suggested that the various creeds actually did co-exist. A few decades later, the French traveller François Bernier visited India during Aurangzeb's reign, and noted: 'their policy (is) to leave the idolatrous population, which is so much more numerous than

129 Cfr. also: K. Nizami, 'Early Indo-Muslim Mystics and Their Attitude Toward the State', *Islamic Culture* 22 (1948) 387–398; 23 (1949) 13–21, 162–170, 312–324; 24 (1950) 60–71.

130 J. Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir', in: J. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Madison, 1978) 215–251.

131 Cfr. C. Asher, 'Legacy and Legitimacy', in: K. Ewing, ed., *Shariat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley, 1988) 79–97.

132 C. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India* (New Delhi, 1989) 48sq.; also: Kozłowski, 'Imperial Authority', 363–365.

133 Quoted by: Alam, 'State Building', note 55.

their own, in the free exercise of its religion; but the practice is checked by indirect means ...'<sup>134</sup>

In short, though the later Mughals did not profess their Sufi variant of Islam as publicly as Akbar, giving preference to a more obviously traditional, Sunni Islamic regime,<sup>135</sup> they did not revert to the kind of (Sunni) Islamic fanaticism they usually are credited with. Admittedly, on the one hand, some Hindu temples were destroyed—but others were given grants by the *sadr*. And yes, the Islamic religious tax was re-imposed on the Hindu population, but Hindu nobles seem to have entered imperial service at an increasing rate.<sup>136</sup> Maybe, the Mughals' complex, Timurid-Persian inheritance continued to determine their policy: without the cohesion it created, their empire would have collapsed. To put it another way: no single ideological system propagated by the Mughal emperors would ever have bound together the diverse elite that remained essential to their rule. Actually, the emperor's aura of success was defined as a martial mandate of heaven rather than an ethical or religious one. Conversely, if such success and its concrete rewards for the elite failed to materialize, cultural differences might disrupt imperial cohesion after all.

#### 1.4 *Emperors Who Wanted to be the Word of God on Earth*

##### 1.4.1 Shah-in-Shah Ismail I (1487–1501–1524)<sup>137</sup>

In Europe, where his rise to power was followed with keen interest—though for a variety of reasons and with varied, often contradictory interpretations—Shah Ismail I was known as 'the Grand Sophy', probably referring to *safi*, or, indeed, *safavi*, the name of the Sufi-order of the Safaviyya, the brotherhood he

134 Fr. Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire* (New Delhi 1972 [Paris, 1670]) 306.

135 Cfr. G. Graham, 'Akbar and Aurangzeb—Syncretism and Separatism in Mughal India. A Re-examination', *The Muslim World* 59 (1969) 106–126.

136 Graham, 'Akbar and Aurangzeb', 119sq.

137 This section is based on: Abisaab, *Converting Persia*; S. Babaie, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London, 2004); S. Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh, 2008); K. Babayan, 'The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism', *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994) 135–161; Idem, *Monarchs, Mystics and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, 2002); W. Floor and E. Herzig, eds., *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age* (London, 2012); C. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London, 2009); R. Gleave, 'Imamate', in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam and the Muslim World* (London, 2004) 1; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (Yale, 1985); A. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London, 2009); B. Rahimi, 'Between Chieftaincy and Knighthood: A Comparative Study of Ottoman and Safavid Origins', *Thesis Eleven* 76, no. 1 (2004) 85–102;

belonged to that also was given to the dynasty he founded. However, as one sixteenth-century European observer noted, one should not thus address him in Persian, since in that language *sophy* meant ‘dog’. Of course, his subjects would have called Ismail ‘shah’, or *padishah(-i Iran)*, ‘great king (of Persia)’, or even *shah-in-shah*, ‘king of kings’—the title he used when, in 1501, he was crowned in Tabriz, after his conquest of Azerbaijan—or, as it seems, crowned himself, like his latter-day ‘successor’ Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi did, in 1967, which does, of course, make a huge difference. Yet, Ismail thought of himself as a being even more unique and, therefore, more powerful.

Over the past decades, scholars have been studying the surviving—manuscript—poems written by, attributed to, or (later) associated with Ismail. They reveal an astonishing world of religious-mythical images with clear political implications. Indeed, no other Eurasian monarch ever seems to have written a corpus of ‘autobiographical’ texts even remotely comparable to this in both extent and ideological significance. However, since I have been unable to find any answer to the paramount question to what extent this poetry functioned within a wider circle—even of the shah’s family, or of his courtiers—it is hard to link an analysis of the self-image and the pretensions contained therein with Ismail’s actual politics, which, obviously, were dictated by a great many other, external issues and, moreover, changed with the incorporation of ever greater territories in his polity.

Undeniably, Ismail’s sense of uniqueness stemmed from his family background. He was born the son of, and, eventually, heir to the hereditary leader of the Safaviyya. This Sufi-brotherhood had been founded in the fourteenth century in Ardabil, then the capital of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, by his ancestor Safi al-Din (1252–1334), he himself the heir and son-in-law of a famous Sufi teacher. Ismail’s mother was the daughter of the leader of the Turkmen tribe of the Ac Quyunlu—a Sunni federation<sup>138</sup>—and a princess from the Christian, imperial Comnenos family who ruled Trabzon. Being caught up in the turmoil of leadership struggles within the Ac Quyunlu, which resulted in

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C. Turner, *Islam without Allah? The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Richmond, 2000); S.M. Sabzavari, *Islamic Political and Juristic Thought in Safavid Iran* (Tehran, 1989); R. Savory, ‘Esmail I Safawi’, in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2012) <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/esmail-i-safawi>; P. Sayas, *Die religiöse Entwicklung der Safawiden von Scheich Safi bis Shah Ismail* (Munich, 2002); J. Allan, S. Canby, and J. Thompson, *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran (1501–1576)* (New York, 2003); E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City, 1999).

138 Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, cfr. also: J. Smith, ‘Turanian Nomadism and Iranian Politics’, *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978) 57–81.

the death of his father and brother—who, shortly before he died, ‘crowned’ Ismail with the turban of the Sufi-Safavid order, thus making him its leader<sup>139</sup>—Ismail spent much of his youth in hiding or on the run until, in 1499, he managed to regroup the Qizilbash, or ‘Red Hats’, the Turkmen warriors traditionally allied to his family’s brotherhood. With their help, or, more precisely, using their Sufist devotion to him as their master, he defeated the then ruler of the Ac Quyunlu. Ismail soon conquered parts of modern Iraq, and felt he now had re-established the ancient Iranian Empire, after centuries of foreign dominion—by Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. Indeed, he considered himself the heir of the Achaemenid and Sassanid emperors: ‘I am Faridun’, he claimed, referring to a legendary Persian king, thus setting out to create a new Persophone world.<sup>140</sup>

Obviously, Ismail had to overcome the major obstacle to kingship in a Muslim state, i.e. that, ultimately, only the Church could rule an Islamic community. The seventeenth-century French traveller Jean Chardin identified the problem: ‘Les gens d’Église et tous les dévots de la Perse tiennent que la domination de laïques est un établissement violent et usurpé, et que le gouvernement civil appartient de droit au Sedre [the *sadr*] et à l’Église.’<sup>141</sup> Therefore, to really cement his authority, Ismail concocted a brew consisting of a variety of religious and other cultural elements.

On the one hand, he exploited the so-called *murshid-murid* relationship that, within Sufi brotherhoods, existed between a (saintly) master and his disciple: the *murshid* was supposed to be perfect, and, hence, the *murid* had to obey his every command. This notion was interwoven with, and extended to, the master-servant relationship between the Qizilbash and Ismail’s family, a concept originally founded on Turco-Mongol kinship ties of authority and allegiance. This religious-spiritual ideology and the rhetoric that went with it was combined very effectively with the prestige and power or, one might also say: the absolute authority, Ismail gained from his genealogically fabricated descent—through Hamza, the son of the seventh infallible imam, Musa—from the Prophet’s son-in-law, ‘Ali. Thus, he created a fundamental identity: he presented himself and the dynasty as the *al-i Muhammad*, the ‘family of Muhammad’. In the still largely Sunni world that was then ‘Greater Iran’, it also meant veering towards Shi’ism, which always had given greater importance to Alid imperial pretences. In the intitulation of his firmans, Ismail consistently noted

139 S. Quinn, ‘Coronation Narratives’, in: J. Pfeiffer and S.A. Quinn, eds., *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden, 2006) 311–331.

140 Newman, *Safavid Iran*.

141 For this and the following quotes: J. Chardin, *Voyages* (Amsterdam, 1711) vol. VI, 249–250.



his relationship with 'Ali, and on his official seals, the names of Muhammad, Fatima, and the twelve imams were given as proof of his direct line of descent and, hence, authority. Indeed, this construction enabled Ismail to use the Shia concept of the imamate, wherein the imam, though perhaps not the beneficiary of divine revelation—after all, Muhammad had said he was the last one to be so blessed, the 'seal of the prophets'—, yet was the closest person to God in his day and age and, hence, the man chosen by God to guide the people in every field of life.<sup>142</sup> It gave Ismail power and prestige far beyond his own realm: even with the peoples of Central Asia and the sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda in the Indian Deccan. Finally, as self-proclaimed *padishah-i Iran*, he also used the pre-Islamic, ancient Persian notion of the divine right of kings.

All this needed the re-writing of Iran's political and religious history, even to the extent that the Iranians were told that Husayn, 'Ali's second son and the ancestor of the imamate line, had married a daughter of the last Sassanid king. Moreover, the ancient Persian poetical tradition now was geared to the needs of the new theocracy as well: ever more poets felt forced to expend all their creativity in writing long epics about the twelve Shia imams, the Sufi shaykhs, and the major religious events of Islamic Iran.<sup>143</sup>

Yet, rhetoric alone—however powerfully worded—does not create cohesion and compliance. Obviously, Ismail's background and, indeed, his entire cultural make-up was Shia, with a definite leaning towards the mystic universalist ideas developed by Sufi sects. This, of course, posed a problem since his conquest of Iran and what is now Iraq made these mostly Sunni regions the heartland of his empire.

Historians disagree about the policy he actually pursued and the ruthlessness with which he did so. How many Persians were forced to convert and with what means is, even now, debated since the sources and, also, modern literature tend to be propagandistic, given the continuing opposition between authors not only within Shi'ism but, also, between (Sunni) Muslims writing about the past of these regions. Yet, despite all problems relating to a proper evaluation of Ismail's policies, it does seem true that, in order to overcome the resistance of a largely Sunni population, the shah did order the destruction of many Sunni mosques; evidence is provided by the narrative of a Portuguese traveller as well as by the urgent request of Ismail's Ottoman colleague, Bayezid II, to refrain

142 This position is taken by Savory and also Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, esp. 71sqq.

143 E. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1928) vol. IV, holds a very negative view of the value of Persian poetry in the Safavid age and blames the religious policy of the early Safavids.

from harrowing his Sunni subjects that way. Ismail also attracted Shia clergymen from neighbouring regions—the Lebanon, the Arabian Peninsula—to his empire who, eventually, did succeed in slowly altering the common people's religious make-up. Of course, the policy was not without its dangers. In doing so, Ismail created a new clerical estate, a new, Shi'ite hierarchy. Inevitably, however, the group developed its own power dynamics, which Ismail and his successors then sought to control by appointing the successive *sadr* from—in the end—three families closely related to the imperial dynasty.<sup>144</sup> They oversaw both the economy of the country's *awqaf* and all related institutions, including the madrasas which, of course, were a powerful instrument in the education and re-conversion of the populace. Yet the clergy at large tended towards an Islamic, Shi'ite orthodoxy not always pleasing to the emperor himself.

Judging the complex process of Safavid state building, it also is difficult to measure the effect of the apparently large-scale introduction of (hundreds of) thousands of families from the various regions of the Caucasus who, originally Christian, either had converted to Islam in the past or were now induced to do so with the promise of military and other jobs and, inevitably, became loyal to the shah and his faith.

During his first years, Ismail had set up a polity and created a society that were divided along ethnic lines: the 'men of the sword', the Qizilbash, were of Turkic descent, the 'men of the pen' mostly were of Persian background. Organized in artificial tribes, the former became the political-military and, through the rewards they gained, also socio-economic elite of the early Safavid state.

However, soon Ismail himself, as well as his son and successor, Tahmasp, decided that the Qizilbash tended to become an over-mighty group. They started gradually replacing them with a 'third force', neither Turkic nor Persian: the descendants of the captives taken from the subjugated Caucasian states. Part of this group, the so-called 'slaves of the royal household', soon became an important element of the military and the civil bureaucracy, just like the Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the Caucasus states seem to have been a 'reservoir' that infused both the Safavid and the Ottoman Empires with new blood, through the many men and women of Armenian and Circassian background who entered the imperial bureaucracy and harem.

The ideological instruments used by Ismail as well as the actual policies he and his successors pursued led Chardin to note: 'le gouvernement de Perse

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144 S. Arjomand, 'The Clerical Estate and the Emergence of a Shi'ite Hierocracy in Safavid Iran', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 28, no. 2 (1985) 169–219.

est monarchique, despotique et absolu, tant pour le spirituel, que pour le temporel.' Such was the emperor's power, especially over the nobility and the court but also over the clergy, the 'mujtaheed', that in Iran the condition of the common people '... est beaucoup plus assurée et plus douce qu'en divers Etats Chrétiens.' Last, but not least, Chardin concluded that in Iran 'le spirituel est aujourd' hui tout-à-fait soumis au temporel.' Actually, however, in the end, Ismail apotheosed himself. In one of his poems he exclaims: 'I am very God, very God, very God! Come now, o blind man who has lost the path: behold the truth.'<sup>145</sup> The shah-in-shah had become God's word.

Yet, in the long run Ismail's successors chose no longer to stress their divinity: continuing this policy probably would have embarrassed or, even, angered less mystically fervent, more orthodox Shi'ites and, certainly, have alienated those who, though they had (been forcefully) converted, still held Sunni views. They may also have chosen to alter their course since, as early as the last years of Ismail's reign, the Ottoman sultans had started a series of wars that Iran had not been able to win. Obviously, the rulers in Istanbul in this were guided by religious preoccupations as well: not only were they afraid their own Shi'ite subjects would become rebellious if the Safavids were successful, they also wanted to show themselves the defenders of Sunni orthodoxy. Consequently, Iran's rulers were forced to adopt a more moderate stance.

1.4.2 Abu l-Fath Jalal Al-Din Muhammad, Commonly Named:  
Akbar 'the Great' (1542–1556–1605)<sup>146</sup>

Present-day India, although the largest democracy in the world is, of course, not a society without its problems, some of them created by religious differences and, given the huge economic inequality, the ensuing religious intoler-

145 Minorsky, 'The Poetry of Shāh Ismā'il I', 1047a.

146 This section is based on: Abu l-Fazl, *Akbar-nama* and *A-in-I Akbari*; C. Asher, 'The Age of Akbar', in: *Architecture of Mughal India*. The New Cambridge History of India, vol. 1.4 (Cambridge, 1992) 39–98; R. Choudhury, *The Din-i-Ilahi, or, the Religion of Akbar* (New Delhi, 1997); H. Franke, *Akbar und Gahangir. Untersuchungen zur politischen und religiösen Legitimation in Wort und Bild* (Schnefeld, 2007); G. Grobbel, *Der Dichter Faiddi und die Religion Akbars* (Berlin, 2001); N. Hasan, *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 2007); A. Hottinger, *Akbar der Grosse (1542–1605). Herrscher über Indien durch Ver-söhnung der Religionen* (Munich, 1998); S. Mehta, 'Akbar as Reflected in the Contemporary Jain Literature in Gujarat', *Social Scientist* 20, no. 9/10 (1992) 54–60; A. Rezavi, 'Religious Disputations and Imperial Ideology: The Purpose and Location of Akbar's *Ibadatkhana*', *Studies in History* 24, no. 2 (2008) 195–209; R. Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors* (New Delhi, 1988).

ance and, even persecution. No wonder that Amartya Sen, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for economics, tried to find a major Indian historical figure to serve as his country's symbol of tolerance and unity. He found him in the person of Emperor Akbar.<sup>147</sup> Alas, Sen is, essentially, a man in need of a hero. Therefore, he chose not to acknowledge the vast historiography that has grown around Akbar to explain—or, at least, describe—the complexity and time-specificity of the emperor's actions and thoughts. Nor does Sen acknowledge that what we know of Akbar is, by and large, the idealized version created by his biographer and trusted adviser, Abu l-Fazl! Precisely the intentions and effects of Akbar's religious ideas, which became manifest in the inter-faith debates he organized and, later, in what has been called his 'new religion' and the ceremonies surrounding it, continue to be hotly debated. The problem is compounded since it seems that neither Indo-Islamic texts nor Hindu ones offer us all the information we seek; actually, it is the European sources that allow us to narrow our interpretations. Using all these, I propose the following analysis.

First of all, we have to consider that Akbar, on gaining the throne, immediately realized he needed to re-conquer the better part of what he considered his father's and grandfather's rightful inheritance: Hindustan and the Punjab, the heartlands of the Mughal's Turco-Afghan power. Secondly, he also wanted to further extend what formerly had been the Mughal Empire not only on the Indian subcontinent, especially in the Gangetic plains and the states of the Rajputs, even down to the Arab Sea in Gujarat, but also to the north-west, in the region of Kandahar—which led to disputes with the Safavid rulers of Iran—and the north where, beyond Kabul, the Uzbek tribes challenged him. Thirdly, he therefore was a man much on the move—which not only gave him a better idea of the variegated peoples and cultures he ruled over but also may have convinced him that cohesion and stability could be had only through some sort of cultural accommodation, of syncretism, even.

Introducing military reforms—both organizational and technological—he created what has been called a 'gunpowder empire'. By the 1570s and 1580s, his far-flung state was inhabited by Muslims both of the Shia and the Sunni persuasion as well as by a vast majority of Hindus. Indeed, with the conquest of large parts of Rajasthan—that in the early 1570s led Akbar to found a new capital, Fatehabad, or Fatehpur, the 'City of Victory'—, he faced the necessity to pacify his Hindu subjects and turn them into loyal allies.

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147 A. Sen, *The Argumentative Indian* (London, 2005) xiii and *passim*.

Marrying daughters of the Rajput royal houses was a known expedient amongst the Mughals, and Akbar took a Rajput wife, too. However, to overcome the continuing political and religious-cultural animosity, he decided that rather than insist on their conversion, both the ladies and their families should be allowed to keep their faith and, moreover, were to be treated on an equal footing with the Muslim members of his harem and court. Akbar thus finalized the policy of his ancestors that had Hindus introduced also into the higher echelons of Mughal bureaucracy, which, of course, tied them to the interests of the new state. Moreover, one may assume that Akbar also hoped to somehow counterbalance the until then overwhelming influence of the Mughal nobility that in a sense always was a threat to his own supremacy: favouring the Hindu Rajputs, he ensured their personal allegiance as well.

Thus, by the late sixteenth century, Muslim and Hindu culture started merging on the highest level, and Hindu princes now were able to articulate the opinions and needs of their part of the population vis-à-vis the Mughal government. Already, Akbar had abolished the traditional Islamic *jizya*, the poll tax that burdened all non-Islamic subjects of an Islamic ruler—in Akbar's case mostly Hindus—and, consequently, had created much ill-will. He now allowed Hindus who had been forced to convert to Islam—if only to avoid paying this tax—to return to their own faith as well. He even forbade the slaughter of cows, which not only endeared him to the Hindus, but also to the smaller but economically influential group of the Jain, in whose views of god and creation Akbar showed great interest, too. To even more openly show his intentions, Akbar asked Brahmin priests to conduct their ceremonies at court, and he personally participated in the major Hindu feast of Divali. At least publicly he renounced the consumption of beef, allowed solely vegetarian dishes on certain weekdays, and drank water from the holy Ganges, only.

Obviously, we cannot judge the extent to which these actions were meant for the public eye or reflected new-found convictions. Much of what we do know about Akbar's life, life-style, and supposed thoughts is, actually, what he himself wanted the public to know, through the words of his biography. Indeed, if anything this *Akbar-nama* was a piece of splendid propaganda.

Accommodating the Hindu population did not mean Akbar forgot his own, Muslim, background. However, this part of his cultural make-up was complex, to say the least. Though his family is believed to have been Sunni, amongst his childhood tutors were two Irani Shia scholars, for his mother had been the daughter of a Persian shaykh.

Precisely because he was fully aware of the dangers of Muslim sectarian dissension in an empire as complex as his, Akbar declared he would no longer tolerate sectarian disputes disrupting the public order. In 1578 he proclaimed

himself to be 'Emperor of Islam, Emir of the Faithful, Shadow of God on Earth', indicating that at least for him there was one Islam, only. But it was a rather specific form of Islam that said goodbye to the *taqlid*, which urged the believers always to follow a scholar competent in interpreting the shari'a, and, instead, promoted *ijtihad*, the independent reasoning about religious and religion-related issues. Aided by a liberal Shia-Sufi scholar—Shaykh Mubarak, the father of Abu l-Fazl—in 1579 Akbar forced all major 'ulama' to sign a *mahzar*, in this case a declaration that he alone was the caliph and that, consequently, his opinion in religious matters prevailed. Since religion was an element in almost all legislation, in this way Akbar made sure that state legislation took precedence over or at least never was contravened by Islamic law as interpreted by the 'ulama'—if only because he may well have felt that religious tradition simply did not suffice to solve contemporary problems, especially in a multi-religious state. Obviously, this piece of legislation—also termed an infallibility decree<sup>148</sup>—greatly diminished the power of the religious-legal establishment in favour of secular government and, indeed, Akbar himself. While this policy certainly helped to somewhat stabilize the (religious) situation in the empire, the more traditional Sunni circles inevitably argued that the emperor veered towards heresy.

Meanwhile, Akbar's caliphal pretension also set him up against the Ottoman sultan, who claimed that role as well. As part of this policy, between 1576 and 1580 Akbar annually sent large contingents of pilgrims to Mecca and Medina, headed by members of the imperial family carrying sumptuous gifts—a policy continued by his successors. In order to do so, he needed the help of the Portuguese who, though the Mughals now dominated inland Gujarat, had captured its major seaports. His financial support of the *sheriff*, the 'guardian of the holy cities', was, of course, much appreciated, because it made that dignitary less dependent on Ottoman goodwill. Akbar, on the other hand, thus could increase his standing among the wider Muslim community, both in India and abroad.

It is not easy to evaluate what one might term Akbar's 'religious' policy stricto sensu, especially if one wants to determine the real reasons underlying it. The emperor certainly made an effort not only to defuse the tensions in the Muslim community but also to reduce inter-religious strife—between Muslims and Hindus. He certainly felt that, specifically amongst his Hindu subjects, grave social and emotional issues were at stake, too: consequently, he prohibited sut-

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148 Cfr. also: F. Buckler, 'A New Interpretation of Akbar's Infallibility Decree of 1579', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4, no. 4 (1924) 591–608.

tee, legalized the remarriage of widows, and raised the age at which boys and girls could marry. Akbar definitely also wanted to diminish religious influences in politics, as shown, for example, in the suppression of Mahdavidism—a militant and at times millennialist movement whose leaders claimed caliphal and imamite status—in the 1570s.

Yet, Akbar seems to have had a genuine interest in the pretensions put forward by various religions: Sunni and Shia Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and, also, Sikhism that, precisely in these decades, was gaining influence. He even wanted to know what Christianity had to offer. Thus, not only did the emperor order one of his—orthodox!—Muslim courtiers, Badauni, to translate the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* into Persian, the court language, but also asked him to translate the Christian gospels; whether Akbar knew that his trusted collaborator secretly wrote a frank and sometimes, especially about religious matters, extremely critical history of his master's reign and beliefs we do not know.

Famously, Akbar's religious curiosity resulted in his staging debates between 1578 and 1580, mostly in his new capital where, it is said, a special building, the Ibadatkhana—called by Abu l-Fazl the 'Mansion founded upon Truth'—was erected to allow the emperor and his guests to listen to the harangues of the spokesmen of the various creeds. Quite perceptively, Badauni wrote about his master as follows:

From his earliest childhood to his manhood, and from his manhood to old age, his Majesty passed through the most diverse phases and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs, and collected everything which people can find in books, with a talent of selection peculiar to him and *a spirit of inquiry opposed to every Islamic principle* [italics added].

Whereas modern observers may applaud Akbar's attitude, obviously believers at that time did and indeed could not. Interestingly, many contemporary texts indicate that the men representing the different faiths during the, sometimes weekly, gatherings really thought Akbar was leaning towards their specific interpretation of the Divine, or God, and of its/his laws. Consequently, for example the pious Jains—mostly based in Gujarat—eulogized Akbar's virtues in numerous poems; reading them, I conclude that they did their utmost to tickle the emperor's vanity. On the other hand, I suggest that pandering to the Jain leaders did help Akbar to improve his hold over their economically important part of his empire.

Though sources do not agree about the actual statements made during the debates, it yet seems that the bitter words and, indeed, invectives the various

priests and scholars used against each other soon convinced Akbar that no easy reconciliation was possible. On the other hand, these discourses may have given him a better idea of his own religious preferences. From the late 1570s onwards, Akbar proclaimed the so-called *Din-i Ilahi*, or 'Religion of God', over which controversy, starting in his own time, continues up to today. The two basic positions seem to be that it either was a genuinely new religion or a re-working of notions available in the many traditions of Islam, both orthodox and heterodox. Obviously, this is a false opposition. No religion ever is really 'new'. What seems new is, mostly, the result of a process of conscious or subconscious syncretism and of the changed political or propagandistic use of old elements. To be sure, it is not clear whether Akbar held a deistic view—of Allah as a 'personal' god—, or, rather, pan-theistic notion of the cosmos as the ultimately divine. He certainly incorporated the celebration of the Sun into the *Din-i Ilahi*—a very old element also in Hinduism and, even, partly pre-Vedic—, and told his courtiers that its light was the emanation and, indeed, beginning of everything that existed, of creation. Badauni significantly writes that the emperor sometimes wore a veil, to hide his 'light'. When he lifted it, the courtiers exclaimed: 'light has shined forth'. As part of that notion, Akbar re-established the old Iranian feast of Nowruz that celebrated the evening of night and day in Spring, and was held in high regard as perhaps the most venerable moment in the relationship between the Divine and Man—by Shia Muslims and, specifically, Sufis.

However, the far more interesting and, indeed, most important question obviously is what role Akbar saw for himself in this complex of older religious ideas and metaphors? I suggest a clue is given in his use of the old Hindu custom of *darshan*, 'auspicious sight(ing)', as experienced in the morning appearance of the ruler on a palace balcony, to be greeted by his assembled subjects. Significantly, the origin of the ritual lay in the showing of divine images to the believers during temple ceremonies.<sup>149</sup> Yet, it is difficult to decide whether in this complex mixture of theophany and hierophany Akbar meant to present himself as, and be seen as, a priest-king—which seems to have been his role in the ceremonies he organized to venerate the Sun—or, even, as divine or at least as an emanation of the Divine himself. Maybe we will never know: the details of these ceremonies and of the *Din-i Ilahi* in general are presented in the sources—mostly the texts written by Abu l-Fazl and, but with a critical

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149 Cfr. R. Inden, 'Ritual, Authority and Cyclical Time in Hindu kingship', in: J. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Madison, 1978) 28–73; also: D. Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg, 1985).



undertone, by Badauni—in flowery, but not very clear words. Meanwhile it is, of course, quite significant that Akbar never seems to have contemplated making the *Din-i Ilahi* into a public, let alone a preferred or even compulsory cult. Only a handful of noblemen, courtiers seem to have participated in the rituals. This also explains why, on his death, the cult seems to have lost any import it may have had. Maybe interpreting the set-up of the *Din-i Ilahi* as a Sufi brotherhood comes nearest to what Akbar had in mind. Yet, as always in this culturally mixed world, one also thinks about the Hindu concept of a teacher and his *chela*, his devoted disciple: it was a terminology actually employed by Akbar as well.<sup>150</sup>

At least publicly, Islam remained Akbar's religion, as is shown in a piece of propaganda of a rather spectacular visual nature: the building of Fatehabad. Tradition has it that Akbar founded the city because on its site used to live the Sufi saint Salim Chishti, who had foretold the emperor that he yet would have a son; indeed, soon after, the much-longed for heir was born and named Salim—the later emperor Jahangir. The town, which stands on a high ridge overlooking the plain of the Gambhir River, presents itself as a beacon of faith: of Islamic faith, to be sure, for every visitor first sees the stupendous archway of the huge Jama Masjid, i.e. the 'mosque of assembly' or Friday Mosque, that towers at the top of the grand flight of stairs that connects the plain with the plateau. Its architecture, though, is a decided mixture of Islamic and indigenous Indian elements. In the mosque's grand quadrangle sits the mausoleum that Akbar built to enshrine the remains of his venerated Sufi master. The adjoining palace pavilions, too, show an eclectic use of Persian-Islamic and Hindu architectural elements—as did, later, Akbar's palace in Agra's Red Fort. The message that seems to emanate from the entire complex surprisingly mirrors that which one sees in Rome's St Peter's basilica and the Vatican Palace, and in Lhasa's Jokhang temple and Potala Palace: in the imperial capital and, indeed, the imperial residence, Church and State go hand in hand.

Last but not least, combining what we do seem to know about the emperor's more 'private' actions with his public policies, especially the proclamation of the *mahzar*, suggests that whatever Akbar may have believed, or felt about himself, he certainly did arrogate the right to be his state's supreme lawgiver and judge both in matters temporal and spiritual. This extreme stance, however, was not continued by his successors, who seem to have taken a more moderate position, though they certainly did try to retain the centralized political power Akbar had helped create for the Mughal imperial institution.

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150 Abu l-Fazl, *The A-in-I Akbari*, I, 263.

### 1.5 *The 'Sinosphere'<sup>151</sup> or the Confucian and Buddhist Worlds of East Asia*

The role of the ideology commonly called Confucianism in China, Korea, Japan, and, indeed, also parts of South-East Asia has been both long and, to some extent, lasting. However, it is all too easy to conflate these worlds with the culture of Confucianism, alone. It became intertwined with a religion and, moreover, one originally alien to the Sinosphere: Buddhism, which was introduced from India. Though the two came to constitute a complex whole, for the sake of analysis I will have to present them separately, though this will cause some overlap.

Current historiography seems divided over the question whether, during the Ming and the Qing eras, China's three 'official' religions—Confucianism, Buddhism, and, to complicate matters, Qing shamanism; I am leaving out Daoism—actually co-existed without much political trouble and, indeed, merged into a somewhat syncretic religious culture, or whether the situation was more complicated than this idealized vision suggests. The same question should be asked about the situation in medieval and early modern Japan, where Buddhism merged with older—indigenous—notions of holistic, or animistic sacrality that go under the name of Shinto and were partly embodied in the emperor's person.

#### 1.5.1 China, Mongolia, and Tibet

Though up till the present 'Master Kong', known in the West as Confucius (551–479 BCE), was and is revered throughout the Sinic world—even, again, in the People's Republic—, many scholars argue that he did not preach a religion, certainly not one in the deistic-fideistic sense. Yet, one might feel that the 'order' he defended implied a 'civic' or a 'political religion'.

Actually, we know as little about Confucius as we do about Jesus of Nazareth and Muhammad: his life is almost as legendary as theirs. Nor can we be sure that (all) the words attributed to him were, in fact, ever spoken by him.<sup>152</sup> As with the New Testament and the Qur'an, what Confucian texts there are—primarily the *Lunyu*, the 'collected conversations', called the *Analects* in Europe—, have been assembled in later times, specifically by order of rulers who felt that reference to a collection of semi-sacred books would help them create legitimacy as well as stability.

151 For the concept, see: J. Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

152 For a survey of old and new opinions, see: Brooks and Brooks, *The Original Analects*.

Basically, 'Confucianism' is not a creed, and does not promise any mundane, individual, concrete rewards to be gained by prayer and sacrifice; nor does it hold out hope for salvation in an eternally blissful afterlife to be obtained with the help of divine grace—nor, indeed, does it give reassuring, faith-based answers to the great existential questions. Reading the words Confucius allegedly spoke, we do know that the Chinese sage who, certainly, did revive and reassemble a number of older moral and political notions partly going back to the first millennium BCE., did not primarily stress the search for self-awareness through self-reflection, but, rather, concentrated on man's responsibility to his family, his community, and to society at large.

But though, essentially, the core ideas of Confucius constitute an intellectually and, indeed, sociologically interesting, but also rather abstract, though non-metaphysical, ethical vision, yet, within this context, the Chinese emperor's first and foremost public role was as sacrificer. For while, admittedly, the Master's teachings did not centre around a god, or the gods, those who codified his sayings did introduce references to the world's divine order, summarized as 'Heaven': the model, cosmic order that should be implemented on earth by man's virtue, embodied, first and foremost, by the ruler. While he was not an 'ordained priest' in any Judaeo-Christian sense, by his ideal purity and by the rituals he was able, indeed chosen to perform, he could balance the forces of heaven and earth. This central function of the emperor definitely dated to a pre-Confucian, indigenous shamanist culture wherein the ruler himself had been a shaman.<sup>153</sup> Performing the rites properly was of the essence; what the emperor or, in this vision of world and cosmos, anyone else believed, e.g. about life, death, salvation, afterlife, and so on, was quite another matter and basically unimportant.<sup>154</sup> This primeval role—another part of the ideas attributed to Confucius that long predate the sixth/fifth century BCE—later was integrated into the Confucian-imperial ideology. Moreover, the corpus of his teachings was heavily reworked and, subsequently, canonized by 'scholars', i.e. educated bureaucrats only during the first decades of the Han dynasty and constantly elaborated throughout the first millennium CE, until, finally, during the Sung era, it resulted in what now is termed neo-Confucianism,<sup>155</sup> a complex

153 J. Ching, 'Son of Heaven: Sacral Kingship in Ancient China', *Young Pao* 83, no. 1 (1997) 3–41. Also: K. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

154 Cfr. S. Feuchtwang, *Popular Religion in China: The Imperial Metaphor* (Richmond, 2001) 1–66.

155 A. Wood, *Limits to Autocracy. From Sung Neo-Confucianism to a Doctrine of Political Rights* (Honolulu, 1995) esp. 25 sqq., and 81 sqq.

of notions and practices that, by some, has been compared to the Humanist renaissance and Protestantism in Europe.

By that time, it had amongst other things, been more specifically geared to the needs of political, imperial power: it was used to strengthen any dynasty's position by stressing the fact that the cosmic order of society and of the state—a hierarchical and, also, strongly paternalistic order—had to be respected and that, hence, not only should children honour their parents but also, ultimately, any subject should obey the prince, the 'Son of Heaven'. Civility, duty, human-relatedness were still part of this form of Confucianism, but all these were to be guaranteed by the imperial government and, of course, the emperor. However, this re-working of earlier ideas did help give the elite who actually upheld the state, recruited through the rigorous system of state examinations, a tighter grip on society and, indeed, even on imperial power.<sup>156</sup>

After the Ming dynasty had captured the 'dragon throne', this complex world-view was reflected in the lay-out of Beijing. In the early fifteenth century, just beyond the walls of the Forbidden City with its multitude of palace halls and pavilions, on both sides of the town's central axis the imperial ancestral temple and the altar of soil and grain were constructed, as well as the temple of heaven, with its outside altar.<sup>157</sup> Some hundred years later, this ceremonial/ritual complex was expanded by the construction, also beyond the palace walls, of an even greater number of altars, sometimes with temples, where the classic imperial rituals had to be performed as well: the altars of the heaven spirits, the earth spirits—to celebrate the summer solstice—, the sun, the moon, and of the first farmer, also named the god of agriculture.<sup>158</sup>

As to the other major influence on Chinese life and culture, like Confucianism Buddhism, too, at least in its earliest stages, was not a religion. It did not stipulate a trans-human reality and a divine grace people might invoke to achieve salvation—if their own efforts, too, were geared to that end. The life and ideas of the man whose name is attached to Buddhism, Siddharta Gautama (563–483 BCE),<sup>159</sup> are as shrouded in mystery and controversy as, again, those

156 See also: J. Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China* (New York, 1985) and: P. Bol, 'The Sung Examination System and the Shih', *Asia Major* 3, no. 2 (1990) 149–171.

157 J. Zhu, *Chinese Spatial Strategies: Imperial Beijing, 1420–1911* (London, 2004). Also: N. Steinhart, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu, 1999) esp. 17 sqq.; J. Meyer, *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City* (Charlotte, 1991); P. Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Chicago, 1971).

158 E. Armstrong, 'The Ritual of the Plough', *Folklore* 54, no. 1 (1943) 250–257.

159 Recently, the chronology of Siddharta Gautama's life has been discussed, and his death is

of Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad. What seems certain is that he warned his disciples that a deistic-fideistic view of the supernatural powers that were supposed to rule the world—and, hence, a belief in the words of the Brahmin priests who pretended they could interpret the will of these powers—detracted from their prime responsibility as human beings towards themselves and that world. But whereas, consequently, Buddhism is not a metaphysics, it yet is both a philosophy of life and a technology to achieve liberation from life's misery. Following the path suggested by the Buddha without believing in him as a, or the, saviour, will lead to salvation, though not as an existence to be lived in an otherworldly afterlife, such as the Christian and Islamic heavens; in that sense, Buddhism is a soteriology, too.

However, that is certainly not the way most of the Buddha's followers interpreted either him or his teachings. Perhaps because the latter were far too difficult to practise for the common man and, also, because of the continued power of the Brahmin clergy, Buddhism largely disappeared from the Indian subcontinent. It continued to flourish both beyond the Himalayas and beyond the Indian Ocean, but in most cultures was received, or re-interpreted as, precisely, a religion, wherein the 'historical' Buddha, the Buddha Sakyamuni, was considered a god. Soon, in most cultures where Buddhism was introduced, he merged with, or became part of a pantheon of earlier gods and, indeed, goddesses—the goddess of mercy prominent among them.

This situation also has influenced the ways rulers of Buddhist states have used him to legitimize their own power, resulting in a great many varieties of Buddhist political ideas. Soon, Buddhist thinkers did develop a decided 'theory' of kingship. It did not emphasize the ruler's role as a sacrificer, an intermediary between humankind and the gods—that being one of the Vedic concepts Buddhism abhorred. Rather, it stressed the monarch's high morality that should be the guiding spirit behind the state and, indeed, was the one reason for the creation of the state: as the answer to man's need for a moral social order, to combat anarchy. This ruler, the *c(h)akk(r)avati*, took care of the temporal realm, while a *bodhisattva*, a person who, through his general compassion, had attained buddhahood in his own lifetime, would be the leader in matters spiritual. Ideally, the two should reinforce one another.<sup>160</sup> Interestingly, in some ways this notion mirrors the tenet of the 'two swords' created in Christian Europe to both explain and uphold the duality of pope and emperor.

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now dated between ca. 411 and 400 BCE; obviously this significantly alters ideas about the year of his birth as well.

160 B. Gokhale, 'Early Buddhist Kingship', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1966) 15–22.

Inevitably, of course, this notion caused rivalry between men who claimed to be the one or the other. Often, a ruler or a bodhisattva—self-proclaimed or revered as such by his followers—might argue that he combined the two powers in his one person, a situation that did not develop in Europe—although it was the basis of the pope's position as ruler of the Papal States—, nor, with rare exceptions, in the Islamic world.

Probably in the first century BCE, Buddhism came to China, preached by monks travelling along the Silk Road that linked China and Central Asia to Northern India, the heartland of Buddhism. It soon became a religion that was practised widely by the general population. Given the rather abstract, highly moral, and in many ways aristocratic tone of Confucianism, it was not at all surprising that many of its (nominal) followers also needed a belief in a god, or, rather, multiple gods—and, indeed, goddesses and were willing to accept priests who would intercede for them. Thus, peoples in East Asia began adopting the deistic views of the historical Buddha, and of bodhisattvas already developed elsewhere, too. Alternatively, many held on to certain older, popular notions of man, nature, and cosmos such as, in China, the one dubbed Daoism<sup>161</sup> or, in Japan, Shintoism.

In China, members of the imperial court were attracted to it as well. The spread of Buddhism actually was fostered both for reasons of power and prestige and because the various imperial governments felt that the Buddha's teachings positively impacted on the morality of the common people. However, the imperial authorities also adopted it for another reason: they wished to regulate and contain this new and influential creed.<sup>162</sup> Soon, Buddhist monasteries proliferated. Thousands of temples dotted the country, tens of thousands of men and, to a lesser extent, women sought ordination. Though many may have done so to express their piety, it is quite obvious most professed a vocation because entering a monastery gave them a secure existence: during many periods of China's history, the extensive landholdings of the Buddhist Church were tax-exempted, and food for monks and nuns was free; nor could the men be called up for military service! Consequently, by the eighth and early ninth centuries, some of the Tang emperors decided the power of Buddhism had grown too great—also economically—and needed to be curbed. Though they did not extirpate it, they definitely reduced its might. Yet it grew again, especially during the Mongol—and Buddhist—Yuan dynasty. Indeed, Buddhism had come to

161 For brevity's sake and because of its complex relation/fusion with Chinese Buddhism I have chosen not to deal with Daoism.

162 E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden, 1972) a.o. 104, sqq., 147 sqq.

stay. Over the centuries, it merged with or at least took over elements from both Confucianism and from folk religion, which has led many scholars to speak of a tripartite religious situation.<sup>163</sup> Even part of the staunch Confucian bureaucratic elite began to practise Buddhism, mostly of the Chan (in Japan: Zen) variety.<sup>164</sup>

Obviously, a ruler always fears the competition of other charismatic men who will use the religious power they claim and which their followers attribute to them to challenge the authority of government, of the Crown. In this, China was no different from any other Eurasian state. One might argue that precisely to contain and, perhaps, even prevent this from happening, the political and societal notions that go by the name of Confucianism had been first developed. Nevertheless, the emperor was not divine, nor did he rule unconditionally. Whenever, in thought and deed, he showed that, in his own person, he did not exemplify the virtue and hence harmony that constituted the cosmic order, his subjects might rebel. Although this notion never was stated in so many, unequivocal words, it yet can be culled from the *Lunyu*. Combined with strongly legalistic notions of government, this vision of rightful rule has proven an abiding element in Chinese society and politics. However, on another level imperial power could be strengthened beyond the sacrality given to it by 'pure', Confucian concepts also by the more obviously religious systems of Buddhism and Daoism. The resulting mixture both served and was made to serve the imperial position.

However, since this syncretism occurred on all levels of society, it led to a proliferation of religious sects, mostly with Buddhist overtones; especially in times of economic and political problems, this process always threatened the existing order by presenting alternative solutions. Actually, Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1368–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty, himself had risen to power as the leader of the so-called Red Turban organization, which opposed the Yuan. The son of a poor farmer, he learned to read and write only when he entered a Buddhist monastery. Later, he joined and subsequently led a rebel group who associated with the Buddhist-heterodox movement of the White Lotus. The Red Turban soldiers provided it with a military arm and, by capitalizing on anti-foreign feelings among wider strata of Han Chinese society, eventually helped him to gain power in 1368 CE. Not surprisingly, however, once he had ascended the throne as Emperor Hongwu, he shed his heterodox ideas

163 T. Brook, 'Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and Their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China', *Journal of Chinese Religions* 21, no. 1 (1993) 13–44.

164 A. Welter, *Monks, Rulers and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism* (Oxford, 2006).

for the (neo-) Confucian notions that promised societal and political stability and tried to forbid all (potentially) dissident sects.<sup>165</sup> Interestingly, the first Ming emperor sought to control the rampant growth of the Buddhist Church, specifically by ordering the amalgamation of smaller monasteries with larger ones and allowing ordination only after proper examination.

However, this policy failed. By the end of the fifteenth century, the number of monks, which he had set at some 37,000, had grown to ca. 400,000. Largely, this unwanted development was of the government's own making: to finance its military policy, and to provide for the population during a series of climatic-economic disasters, Beijing had started selling certificates of ordination.<sup>166</sup> For the above-mentioned reasons, these were highly sought after, especially in times of economic need. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of people—men and women—had contrived to be 'privately' ordained, i.e. by men who had no real authority to do so, also to enjoy the benefits of monkhood. Beijing's efforts to have them demoted either to pressed labourers or to guardians of the empire's frontiers were to no avail.<sup>167</sup>

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a group of senior level bureaucrats convinced the Ming emperor Jiajing (1507–1521–1567) there could be but one 'state religion': 'When Monks [i.e. Buddhists] and Daoists flourish, the government will decline', they argued and, significantly, added: 'Monks and Daoists are not agriculturalists; they are good at magical arts and cheat ignorant people.' Particularly, they singled out Buddhist nuns and female Daoists as persons who injured public morality. In a nutshell, these reproofs seem to reflect the traditional views of society held by staunch Confucianists.<sup>168</sup> I would argue that besides a number of ideological and political issues, this episode also suggests that, at various times, the imperial court, or groups within it, sought to re-appropriate the riches that over the centuries had accrued to Buddhist establishments, as well as, of course, ending their very problematic tax-exempt status.

Interestingly, however, in the specific case of the nunneries, the dowager-empress and other members of the inner court were able to withstand the

165 J. Dardess, 'The Transformation of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming dynasty', *Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970) 539–558.

166 T. Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society* (London, 2005) 152; Y. He, 'Buddhism in the Economic History of China' (MA-thesis, McMaster University, 2011) esp. 69 sqq.

167 Cfr. K. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton, 1974) 86 sqq., and *passim*.

168 T. Li and S. Naquin, 'The Baoming Temple: Religion and the Throne in Ming and Qing China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48, no. 1 (1988) 131–188, esp. 136–137.



clique who opposed their continuation. During the very long reign of the last powerful Ming emperor, Wanli (1563–1572–1620), the then empress-dowager actively sponsored Buddhism too, financing the reprint of the Buddhist canon and the (re-) building, both in Beijing and in the region surrounding it, of many temples—aided therein by her son.<sup>169</sup> Even Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit who visited Beijing in the first years of the seventeenth century, was surprised to see the Emperor's female relatives supporting these Buddhist institutions<sup>170</sup> where, of course, besides the historical Buddha himself, his female counterpart, the Goddess Guanyin would be revered, sometimes alongside other goddesses or saints who came from older religious traditions.<sup>171</sup> But whereas these mostly represented orthodox, albeit Chinese Buddhism, some of the temples protected by the ladies of the imperial family also were or became associated with new sects that, from the late fifteenth century onwards, gained influence amongst people low and high. Specifically a revival of sectarianism under the old label of the White Lotus,<sup>172</sup> which promised enlightenment and salvation to all those who followed the 'Venerable' or 'Eternal Mother', became very popular—not surprisingly also amongst women.<sup>173</sup>

This created a complex discrepancy, for the Ming government increasingly grew concerned about the power of such groups,<sup>174</sup> especially if there were any prophesies of the 'future Buddha', the Buddha Maitreya's rebirth in a particular person or family, which, of course, might pose a real threat to the emperor's authority and to state security. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the presence of Buddhism in Chinese society reached a peak, the more so because by then all over the empire local aristocratic families started building or rebuilding monasteries to convert their own status into

169 Cfr. R. Huang, *1587: A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven, 1981) esp. chapters 1 and 2.

170 See: L. Gallagher, ed., *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci* (New York, 1953) 105.

171 Cfr. also: J. Paper, 'The Persistence of Female Deities in Patriarchal China', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 6, no. 1 (1990) 25–40.

172 B. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden, 1992).

173 D. Overmeyer, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976); cfr. also: J. Dardess, 'The Late Ming Rebellions: Peasants and Problems of Interpretation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3 (1972) 103–117.

174 Li and Naquin, 'The Baoming Temple', 166 sqq.; cfr. also: R. Weller, 'Ideology, Organisation and Rebellion in Chinese Sectarian Religion', in: J. Bak and G. Benecke, eds., *Religion and Rural Revolt* (Manchester, 1984) 390 sqq.

(even more) power vis-à-vis a weakening central government.<sup>175</sup> No wonder, the Ming emperors themselves wanted their ancestors to be revered as reincarnations of the Bodhisattva Manjusri.

From the 1630s and 1640s onwards, the Qing amalgamation of China and its northern and western neighbours—all to some extent and in their own way Buddhist societies—once more increased the power of Buddhism. The Qing not only felt Buddhism to be part of their own legacy, they definitely saw its cultural-political importance, its potential for creating cohesion, within the wider, Mongol world. Consequently, they presented themselves as heirs to the long-standing policy of Mongol patronage of Lamaist Buddhism that had started with the relationship between Chinggis's grandson Kublai and the monk Phagpa. It seems that both at court—but in restricted circles, only—and in the Buddhist worlds of Mongolia and Tibet, the emperors of the (non-Han) Yuan dynasty and, much later, of the (equally non-Han) Qing not only were portrayed—in texts as well as visually—but also revered as mortals in whom bodhisattva metempsychosis had occurred. Already Abahai, or Hong Taiji (1592–1626–1636), the first Manchu ruler to conquer parts of China, started constructing Buddhist temple complexes and, moreover, like Kublai, was identified as a reincarnation of the bodhisattva Manjusri—thus, in a sense, setting himself up as an equal of the major Lamaist-Buddhist monk in Tibet, who was considered a reincarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.<sup>176</sup> A few decades later, for political reasons of his own, this widely revered leader of Tibetan, Gelugpa- or Yellow Hat-Buddhism was anxious formally to bestow bodhisattvahood on the Manchu emperor. His influence allowed this image to be widely spread both in Tibet and Mongolia.

This, of course, was precisely what the Qing rulers wanted: to impress the Mongols. Thus, they could counter the increasing number of potentially rebellious monk reincarnations in Buddhist Mongolia, for an emperor-bodhisattva was, indeed, almost unbeatable. They endowed monasteries, sometimes on a grand scale,<sup>177</sup> and subsidized the printing of Buddhist texts, also on a grand scale. They frequently visited the huge complex of—largely Tibetan—Buddhist

175 T. Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).

176 S. Grupper, 'The Manchu Imperial Cult of the Early Ch'ing Dynasty' (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1980) and D. Farquhar, 'Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Qing Empire', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, no. 1 (1978) 5–34.

177 W. Eberhard, 'Temple-Building Activities in Medieval and Modern China', *Monumenta Serica* 23 (1964) 264–318.

sanctuaries on holy Mount Wu.<sup>178</sup> Yet, they did not fully exploit this more-than-human position, if only because at least in China it did not sit very well with the Confucian elite. Moreover, they were very critical of certain aspects of the Lamaist Buddhist clergy, who they felt to be worldly, avaricious, and, even, a danger to their military power, viz. when large groups of, especially, Mongols became monks and were no longer available for the military. Thus, while almost surreptitiously spreading the idea of their bodhisattva state, the early Qing emperors still developed a decidedly anti-clerical policy towards institutionalized Buddhism.<sup>179</sup>

It is necessary to understand that precisely the advent of the Manchu created a world that differed from the traditional 'sinosphere'.<sup>180</sup> For the Qing, Han or Confucian China was not the centre of their empire, but part of a far greater and complex dominion that, beginning in their home territory, Manchuria, in addition to the state of the Han also included Inner Asia, i.e. Tibet, and the worlds of Mongolia and Eastern Turkestan, now called Xinjiang—'new territories'.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, eight years before entering Beijing, Hong Taiji made clear he wanted to create an empire that would encompass far more than his homelands. China was only part of his prospective conquests. Nearly four centuries later, the leaders of the present People's Republic of China are the heirs of the state created by the Manchu, who doubled the territory of Han China. Battling against disruptive ethnic-political tendencies, they are obviously doing their very best to undo again this 'de-centring' of Han, Confucian China, despite their propagandistic promises of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state.

The Manchu felt their heritage—I deliberately do not go into the question whether originally they were an ethnic group or a conglomerate of tribes, or whether their 'ethnic' identity was a later, imperial construction<sup>182</sup>—to be Chinggisid-Mongolian. Their conquests resulted in a Qing Empire that was

178 R. Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia* (Wiesbaden, 1959) 82–84.

179 Farquhar, 'Emperor as Bodhisattva', 29–34.

180 The debate is ongoing. Cfr. Ho Ping-ti, 'The Significance of the Ch'ing Period in Chinese history', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1967) 189–195, and: E. Rawski, 'Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996) 829–850.

181 P. Crossley, H. Siu, and Donald Sutton, eds., *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley, 2006); cfr. M. Tamanoi, ed., *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire* (Honolulu, 2005).

182 M. Elliott, *The Manchu Way. The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2001); see, however, also: P. Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley, 1999).

multicultural and, indeed, multi-lingual. While Manchu and Chinese were the preferred languages and a necessary skill for any person who wanted to serve the emperor, Mongol, Tibetan, Uighur, and even Arabic were spoken as well by, sometimes, very large groups indeed.<sup>183</sup> Manchu awareness of the complexity of empire, combined, perhaps, with their background in an albeit perhaps partly invented nomadic culture, may explain why the new emperors moved around far more than their Ming predecessors had done, travelling the length and the breadth of their realm.<sup>184</sup> By the early eighteenth century, the Qing understood 'China'—*Zhongguo*—as something different from 'the state of the Han', China 'proper': it was the empire they had created, as a territory, a state, and a dynasty. It no longer could be equated with a Confucian *oikoumenè* and with the Han language, only. Moreover, it would continue to grow as long as the Eight Banners—the core of the Manchu's socio-military system—were victorious. Last, but not least, those who were conquered and entered the empire no longer were barbarians, but Qing subjects.<sup>185</sup> This was perhaps most forcefully expressed by the establishment, in 1638, of the 'ministry ruling the outer provinces', by the new Manchu government and the introduction of the annual *chaojin*, or 'pilgrimage'—apparently a translation of the Arabic term *hajj* and, indeed, carrying religious as well as political connotations: it ordered the empire's new, Inner Asian peoples to come to Beijing and pay their respect to their sovereign.<sup>186</sup>

In short, the Qing drew upon and combined two traditions, Confucian-Han and Buddhist Inner Asian Mongol, each with their own cosmological notions. From a religious point of view, the latter also included the fiction that the Imperial House, the Aisin Gioro-clan, descended from a virgin deity.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, it also included the notion that religion should be subordinate to political power. However, the imperial family's specific Manchu background did complicate the situation, for they retained their traditional, shamanistic,

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183 J. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford, 1997).

184 M. Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring & the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007).

185 G. Zhao, 'Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century', *Modern China* 32, no. 1 (2006) 3–30.

186 N. Chia, 'The Lifanyuan and the Inner Asian Rituals in the Early Qing (1644–1795)', *Late Imperial China* 14, no. 1 (1993) 60–92, esp. 64sqq., and note 17.

187 P. Crossley, 'An Introduction to the Qing Foundation Myth', *Late Imperial China* 6, no. 2 (1985) 13–24; cfr. also: Idem, *The Manchus* (Cambridge, 1997).

largely non-deistic practices.<sup>188</sup> Shamanism can be understood as a complex of inspirational rituals, performed to influence the divine forces—the earth and sky spirits—that control agriculture and fertility; they include divination, sacrifice, and prayer.<sup>189</sup> Not only had it, long ago, become incorporated into Tibetan, Lamaist Buddhism, it also was part of the Manchu's nomadic heritage. Converting to Buddhism, later, they created a complex amalgam of the two cosmologies.<sup>190</sup>

When the Qing conquered China proper and took up residence in Beijing's Forbidden City, the so-called Palace of Earthly Harmony was converted for use as a shamanist temple by members of the imperial family and their Manchu courtiers. Of course, it was located in the palace's 'private', inner court: the rites conducted there could not be reconciled with official and, hence, public state Confucianism. Thus, this oldest part of the Qing tripartite ideological make-up remained hidden to the public eye, which accepted only Buddhism and Confucianism. Yet, persist it did, though in intricate, ever changing forms. Partly, the nomads' sky spirits were deified, partly they were infused with references to the Buddha, partly, they merged with the cult of the ancestral spirits of the imperial clan, celebrated by shamans during the sumptuous Spring and Autumn ceremonies.<sup>191</sup>

In short, forms of syncretism developed, fusing Confucian, Buddhist, and shamanist rituals. At times, each of these was performed within its own, cultural context, a separate element of the threefold Qing identity. Yet, they also began permeating one another, resulting in a more complex, unitary form, the more powerful because of its multiple meanings.<sup>192</sup> Soon, these rituals filled a space that, at least up and until Kangxi's reign (1661–1722) was not centred on Beijing, only. The early Qing court was peripatetic and incorporated, far more than under the Ming, not only the sacred sites of the Confucian world but also those holy to the other traditions the emperors wanted to embody. Indeed, ritual and space/territory merged in a synthesis that represented both a Han/Confucian cosmology and the realities of imperial conquest when Kangxi

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188 E. Rawski, *The Last Emperors* (Berkeley, 1998) esp. chapters 7 and 8.

189 See: N. Thomas and C. Humphrey, eds., *Shamanism, History and the State* (Michigan, 1996).

190 F. Yuguang, 'The Worldview of the Manchu Shamanism', in: M. Hoppal and K. Howard, eds., *Shamans and Cultures* (Budapest, 1993) 240–248.

191 N. di Cosmo, 'Manchu Shamanic Ceremonies at the Qing Court', in: J. McDermott, ed., *State and Ritual in China* (Cambridge, 1998) 351–396.

192 A. Zito, *Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Early Modern China* (Chicago, 1997); also: Rawski, *The Last Emperors*.

proudly proclaimed he had travelled seven hundred miles in each of the cardinal directions.<sup>193</sup>

Arguably, this complex religious-political nexus was made visible in the construction of the imperial residence in Jehol/Chengde, which took almost the entire eighteenth century. The vast 'mountain resort for enjoying the summer' contained a number of palaces where the emperors received their courtiers, their highest officers of state, and the envoys sent by the empire's minority peoples. That all this splendour was contained in a net of 'outlying temples' cannot be a coincidence. They all were Buddhist, and they all mirrored famous shrines from all over the empire. Even more interesting, all these structures had been subtly altered to denote Qing supremacy: whatever their style, the entrance buildings always were 'Chinese'.<sup>194</sup> With the various landscapes they were embedded in—including a plain resembling the Manchus' ancestral, sacred grasslands—the entire ensemble metaphorically expressed Qing domination over the conquered territories, over the empire they had created. Indeed, precisely the 'steppe' laid out at Jehol was the scene of an important Qing rather than Han ritual: the annual imperial hunt. From the late 1680s onwards, the leaders of the newly-subdued tribes of Mongolia were ordered to assemble there: no longer as tribute-bearing foreigners, barbarians, but as subjects.<sup>195</sup> What better way to show everyone present that the Qing preserved not only the Han-Chinese, Confucian culture that was rooted in the agricultural tradition, but, also, their nomadic heritage. They finally had married the steppe to the sown. Moreover, they had created a 'microcosm' of their vast and variegated empire that, as far as I know, has no parallel in world history—unless one would want to liken it to Emperor Hadrian's villa at Tivoli; constructed between 118 and 131AD, it does not seem to have had the specifically imperial-religious connotation that made the Chinese summer capital such a powerful symbol.

### 1.5.2 Japan

In Japan, the position of the emperor was different from the conditional one accorded by the Mandate of Heaven concept to the Sons of Heaven. The origins of the Japanese rulers lie in their role, probably originating in the first centuries of the Christian Era, as political leaders who also were magico-religious shamans: their power depended on their ability to perform the rituals that solicited the forces of the supernatural to ensure a good rice crop. But the

193 J. Spence, *Emperor of China* (New York, 1988) xiii.

194 Ph. Foret, *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu, 2000).

195 Chia, 'The Lifanyuan', 66–68.

emperors also are deemed to be the descendants of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu omikami—interestingly, in Japan the Sun, that brings growth, is female, unlike in many other cultures. All this is considered part of the way of thinking inherent in Shinto—‘the way(s) of the gods’—that is considered, though also debated, as being peculiar to Japan: its so-called ‘animistic’ religion before the arrival of Buddhism and, indeed, in many ways its religion alongside and in connection with Buddhism ever since.<sup>196</sup> Shinto seems to have exalted the role of woman as the embodiment of the sacred and, hence, also as shamaness, until a more definite separation of religion and secular government occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries CE<sup>197</sup>—concluding a period in which a number of empresses actually or nominally had ruled the country and, also, functioned as high priestess of Amaterasu’s chief sanctuary at Ise.

Much of this is reflected in the *Daijosai*, the age-old imperial accession ceremony which, due to its sacrality and the secrecy surrounding it, even now is not scholarly analysed. As far as we know, the present emperor, too, may have lain down, as did his forebears, on a sacred bed and, in one way or another, have communed with the Sun Goddess. Originally, he may have done so using a court lady as his vessel, to effectuate the transfer of the previous emperor’s soul into his own body.<sup>198</sup> Following the ‘rejuvenation’ ritual, the new emperor offered the deity cooked rice and sake, rice wine, harvested from two fields, southeast and northwest of the capital, Heian-kyo, Kyoto, and then consumed these offerings with the goddess. Last, but symbolically not least, a banquet followed, during which the new emperor and his guests ate together.

In a sense, the Japanese emperors did supremely embody the Divine that according to traditional belief permeated every form of creation on earth or, at least, in the land created by the gods, Japan.<sup>199</sup> Formally, therefore, they could

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196 Over the past decades, the originality and uniqueness of Shinto have been questioned, and it has been argued that both Daoism and Buddhism, coming from China, were, really, Japan’s main religions, with Shinto a manifestation of both that only in the nineteenth century was constituted as a separate and, moreover, indigenous religion. See: T. Breen and M. Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami* (Abingdon, 2000) esp. 1–8. Also: T. Barrett, ‘Shinto and Daoism in Early Japan’, in: Idem, Idem, eds., o.c., 13–31.

197 M. Yusa, ‘Women in Shinto: Images Remembered’, in: A. Shamar, ed., *Religion and Women* (New York, 1994) 93sq., esp. 95. Cfr. also: K. Smyers, ‘Women and Shinto’, *Japanese Religions* 12, no. 4 (1983).

198 E. Ohnuki-Tierney, ‘Japanese Monarchy in Historical and Comparative Perspective’, in: D. Quigley, ed., *The Character of Kingship* (Oxford, 2005) 209–231, is a bit verbose but nevertheless illuminating.

199 M. Waida, ‘Conceptions of State and Kingship in Early Japan’, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 28, no. 1 (1976) 97–112.

never not be perfect. Consequently—and again: formally—their subjects could not rebel against them. This does not mean that the Japanese people believed the emperor to be a god in the Western sense of possessing powers of control over natural phenomena or, even, superior human qualities.<sup>200</sup> Indeed, as an individual the emperor obviously was a mortal man. He was not, therefore, worshipped. However, in his official capacity as emperor-priest/sacrificer he was the ultimate symbol of authority, spiritual as well as temporal. Therefore, he was uniquely sacred, and more of a god than any other man.<sup>201</sup>

In short, though Japan was hugely indebted to Chinese culture, this did not influence the traditional roles of the Son of Heaven. While Heian-kyo followed the urbanistic-cosmological design of Chinese imperial capitals,<sup>202</sup> it was not encased in a grid of temples of heaven and earth, or altars for the sun, the moon, and the harvest, nor did the emperors engage in the attendant ceremonies and rituals such as the imperial ploughing that, throughout the year, played such a dominant part in the lives of their Chinese counterparts—though, admittedly, even nowadays the Japanese emperor does plant as well as harvest rice, but within the confines of Tokyo's imperial palace. Both the mysterious union, or, if one wants, sacramental communion with the Sun Goddess that constituted the central element in the imperial initiation<sup>203</sup> and included remnants of a shamanistic fertility ritual, and the periodic food and renewal ceremonies at Ise were conducted beyond the public eye.<sup>204</sup> So were the *mi-kagura*: performances of sacred dance and song that repeated the mythical moment Amaterasu, answering the pleas of the lesser gods, had come out of her cave to give light to the earth, a ritual wherein, originally, the emperor himself would participate.<sup>205</sup>

200 E. Ohnuki-Tierney, 'The Emperor of Japan as Deity (*Kami*). An Anthropology of the Imperial System in Historical Perspective', *Ethnology* 30, no. 3 (1991) 1–17.

201 Though going beyond the scope of this essay, it needs to be said that the cult of the emperor did change during the second half of the nineteenth century, when, during the so-called Meiji 'restoration', the shogunate that for nearly a thousand years had ruled Japan was abolished. It was then that the emperor's divinity was much more stressed than it used to be.

202 N. Fiévé and P. Waley, eds., *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective: Place, Power and Memory in Kyoto, Edo and Tokyo* (London, 2013).

203 R. Ellwood, *The Feast of Kingship: Accession Ceremonies in Ancient Japan*. Monumenta Nipponica Monographs 50 (Tokyo, 1973).

204 Cfr. N. Naumann, 'The State Cult of the Nara and Early Heian Periods', in: Breen and Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History*, 47–67.

205 R. Garfias, 'The Sacred Mi-Kagura Ritual of the Japanese Imperial Court', *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology* 1, no. 2 (1968) 149–178.



In the following centuries, the link between Ise, Japan's central 'food shrine', and the imperial family was strengthened. Virginal daughters of the emperor would be appointed to the position of *saigu*, or 'consecrated imperial princess', with the title of *saio*, 'sacred queen', and preside over the ceremonies to honour both the Sun Goddess, to whom one of the two main sanctuaries was dedicated, and the Food Goddess, who commanded the second shrine.<sup>206</sup> However, and quite strangely, this relationship between the ruling house and the country's most holy sanctum was discontinued in the fourteenth century, only to be taken up again after the Meiji restoration of the nineteenth century, when the divinity of the imperial house was stressed even more than in the preceding centuries.<sup>207</sup> None of the literature I have consulted gives an explanation for this situation, though I assume the gradual impoverishment of the imperial house may be one of the reasons: these rituals were very expensive. However, the imperial family even now continues to provide a *saio* to Ise.

At the end of the seventh century, the powerful noble family of the Fujiwara cleverly started marrying into the imperial family, launching a tradition that lasted into the early twentieth century. For a long time, they dominated the imperial house, and Japan, as 'regents', until their power waned, and actual rule fell to successive dynasties of military dictators or shoguns. The imperial role increasingly became a ceremonial and ritual one, only. The emperor symbolized what we would now term the cultural identity of Japan—which inevitably meant: what was constructed as such—, and by that very token could confer legitimacy on the (secular) power of the elites who ruled the country. Few emperors actually tried to rule themselves. Arguably, it was precisely the strange combination of sanctity and (relative) passivity that explains the continuity of the imperial house.<sup>208</sup> But also, precisely because of the country's fundamental dependence on rice—both real and symbolic—, the shoguns, though they took military and political control, could not take over the emperor's role as officiant in the sacred rituals that ensured abundance.

Japanese culture owed much to China, not least through the introduction, from the mid-sixth century onwards, of at least some elements of the complex ideology of Confucianism.<sup>209</sup> Buddhism, however, seems to have come by way

206 R. Ellwood, 'The Saigu: Princess and Priestess', *History of Religions* 7, no. 1 (1967) 35–60.

207 F. Bock, 'The Rites of Renewal at Ise', *Monumenta Nipponica* 29, no. 1 (1974) 55–68.

208 B.-A. Shillony, *Enigma of the Emperors: Sacred Subservience in Japanese History* (Folkestone, 2005) esp. 17; 19; also 273.

209 S. Eisenstadt, 'The Transformation of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan', in his *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* (Chicago, 1996) 219–262, is a muddled, largely useless contribution.

of Korea. One of the peninsula's three kings, newly converted himself, did send Buddhist monks to the island empire to spread the new faith there. During the reign of the first female emperor, Suiko (554–593–628)—who, significantly, had become a Buddhist nun before she ascended the throne—and her nephew, the strong regent Shotoku, Buddhism began to flourish.<sup>210</sup> Interestingly, though, at the very same time the rulers of Japan, indeed, Suiko herself, began to style themselves, specifically in their correspondence with China, as the 'emperor—*tenno*, *tianhuang*—of the East' vis-à-vis the 'emperor of the West'. Moreover, the direct genealogical descent of the imperial line from the heavenly domain was increasingly stressed, as well as the name of the state as 'Nihon'—in Chinese *Riben*, hence Japan—as 'the Source of the Sun'.<sup>211</sup>

Despite their divine status and inviolability, the emperors of Japan—mostly though not exclusively male since the eighth century—, realized that their position was not uncontested. The aristocratic clans who possessed the land always posed a real and constant threat. If only for that reason, during the eighth century developments set in which in many ways mirrored what happened in Europe at the same time. Though, obviously, coevality is irrelevant to explain the similarities between Europe and Japan, the conditions yet were comparable. Just as in Europe the Pippinids began to use the papacy and the servants of the Church to deal with the exigencies and the problems attendant on the formation of their state, so the imperial house in Japan started using the dominant religious institution in their realm.

The Yamato emperors decided that what by then had become the Buddhist Church, with its many temples and monasteries, might be turned into a very useful ally, since, assumedly, the priests would not harbour imperial aspirations. Shinto could not fulfil this function because, essentially, it was not a Church, not an organization easily harnessed to imperial needs.

Soon, Buddhist clerics came to counterbalance power-seeking aristocrats. Indeed, the warriors, samurai, who served the empire's magnates, the *daimyo*, or 'great names', were in a sense mirrored by the *sohei*, the 'warrior-monks', who served the abbots of the great monasteries and temples—complexes that often resembled the feudal castles.<sup>212</sup> At the imperial court, factions and, even, the emperors themselves used the *sohei* whenever it politically suited them.

210 K. Carr, *Plotting the Prince: Shotoku Cults and the Mapping of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu, 2012).

211 See, e.g., M. Waida, 'Sacred Kingship in Early Japan: A Historical Introduction', *History of Religions* 15, no. 4 (1976) 329–331.

212 M. Adolphson, *The Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu, 2000).

Again as in Europe, the Buddhist priesthood provided the imperial government with the educated men it needed to create an effective bureaucracy. Last, but not least, in Japan, too, the Buddhist Church was seen as an instrument of cultural and, hence, political cohesion.

Thus, given all its potential uses, no wonder the Church was economically favoured, by the imperial family as well as by many other believers. Consequently, it acquired great riches.

Buddhism remained in favour all through Japan's 'middle ages'. Moreover, it became an instrument in the hands of the country's actual rulers as well. For precisely in these centuries, the emperors, gradually losing their power to rule, appointed shoguns to do so in their stead. When, in 1603 CE, the Tokugawa family took shogunal power, they, too, began using Buddhism—or, rather, the Buddhist Church, with its many sects or schools, including those of the Zen variety—to bring or restore cohesion to Japan, but only after they had finally curbed the power of the warrior-monks. Since the seventeenth century, every Japanese family had to belong to the Buddhist Church, and its clergy presided over—and were paid for—every funeral up to the nineteenth century. Also, the Tokugawa shoguns and their advisers and clients developed an eclectic cultural context to strengthen their rule to an extent no previous shogunal dynasty ever had. It fused their military might, which had brought them dominion, with the sacred—culling elements from both Buddhism and Shinto—as well as with more general ideas from neo-Confucianism, also introduced from China, to achieve political authority with religious characteristics.<sup>213</sup> Indeed, the deification of the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, was both a significant and a determined step towards the creation of a new kind of shogunal religious-political identity;<sup>214</sup> inevitably, at the same time the cult of previously deified military leaders—e.g. Toyotomi Hideyoshi—was, to say the least, discouraged. One of the more 'visible' activities of the Tokugawa political ritual henceforth became the 'Nikko Pilgrimage' to honour Ieyasu's shrine there. I would argue that, in a certain sense, this meant that the shogun created an ideology alongside the notions that still upheld the authority of the emperor—thus mirroring the situation in Europe, where papal and imperial ideologies existed side by side as well, with the one 'borrowing' persuasive identity markers from the other, and vice versa.

<sup>213</sup> H. Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology* (Princeton, 1985) esp. ch. 2.

<sup>214</sup> Cfr. W. Boot, 'The Religious Background of the Deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu', in: A. Boscaro, et al., eds., *Rethinking Japan. Vol. 2: Social Sciences, Ideology and Thought* (Sandgate, 1990) 331–337.

Meanwhile, those emperors who tried to break out of the 'gilded cage' of their secluded court in Kyoto, continued to look to Buddhism, too, to regain some power, though they might continue to suspect the Buddhist Church precisely because it also was favoured by the shogun. They certainly did use the monastic system to provide for their offspring. As far as I have been able to ascertain, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often as many as a third of the imperial sons in a given generation became monks or priests. This policy may also have been dictated by the fact that the gilding of their cage had worn off: the economic situation of the imperial house deteriorated, specifically from the sixteenth century onwards. Trying to gain access to monastic wealth by making their sons and daughters abbots and abbesses of the country's richer abbeys may have been one way to ease their financial difficulties. Buddhist monasteries, especially the ones attached to the Zen and the Pure Land groups, had become amongst the greatest and also most innovative landowners and, hence, traders of Japan, in the process creating an economic ethic and a concept of property law that were more universally applied.<sup>215</sup> During the Tokugawa period, this monastic economy was one of the motors that drove a more general economic growth and gave the state added strength.

## 1.6 'Sons of Heaven'

### 1.6.1 Emperor Qianlong (1711–1735–1796 CE)

The man born Hongli Aisin Gioro, who in 1735 acceded to the Chinese throne as Emperor Qianlong, has received a varied press, if only because he cannot escape the comparison with his grandfather, Kangxi, whose favourite grandson he had been. Kangxi, of course, both in his own time and later has been judged the greatest of Qing emperors. The two of them were part of, and largely shaped, what has been termed China's 'long eighteenth century', stretching from 1683 to 1820.<sup>216</sup>

Some feel that Qianlong was, by many standards, a ruthless as well as a hypocritical despot.<sup>217</sup> These, of course, are characteristics many political theorists—Machiavelli for one—would have thought necessary to simply be an

<sup>215</sup> R. Collins, 'An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan', *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 6 (1997) 843–865, esp. 847sq.; 851, and *passim*.

<sup>216</sup> S. Mann, *Precious Records. Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, 1997).

<sup>217</sup> For a 'biography': H. Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes: Image and Reality in the Ch'ien-lung Reign* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971) as well as: M. Elliott, *Emperor Qianlong. Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New York, 2009).

effective ruler. He definitely tried to weld together the various parts of his empire and, hence, the various roles he felt he needed to fulfil.

To start with, he consistently publicized himself as a prime example of the prime Confucian and, hence, imperial duty, that of filial piety: all his life, he revered his mother, to the extent that one might almost argue he used her to present himself to the court and, indeed, the country in this most virtuous and hence affirmative of imperial guises. He showered poems on her, which, of course, were publicly read in the Forbidden City. He built her whatever pleasure palaces she wanted. Most significantly, he took her on his numerous and lengthy trips to the south of China, the rich Yangtze region, at immense extra cost to the treasury and, also, the local population. Thus, he flaunted his filiality amongst a wider audience and, hence, constantly re-established his right to rule.<sup>218</sup>

However, unlike his revered grandfather, Qianlong never travelled as much as he did, and certainly did not venture out, as Kangxi had, to lead a Manchu army against the rebels of the south or the tribal barbarians of the west. Yet, the military situation was not perfect. Admittedly, by the time of Qianlong's accession, the Qing regime had achieved relative stability in China proper—certainly after Kangxi's successful campaigns against the remaining Ming loyalists and, as part of those, the suppression of the so-called 'rebellion of the three feudatories'. However, the frontier towards the steppe remained, as always, a weak point, not only in the empire's defence policy but, also, in its internal cohesion, since the century-long interaction with the Mongol tribes also affected Confucian Chinese society and culture as such and, indeed, presented a threat because, as shown by the above rebellion, they sometimes united with Han Chinese anti-Qing groups.

From the beginning, the Manchu dynasty—starting with emperor Shunzhi (1638–1644–1661 CE)—had tried to control the Mongols by courting Tibetan Buddhism. To turn the various, competing Mongol groups into obedient Qing subjects seemed the most important Manchu project, both for Kangxi and for his successors, Yongzheng (1678–1722–1735 CE) and, from the start of his reign, for Qianlong.

Yongzheng famously had written: 'Since our dynasty began to rule China, the Mongols and other tribes living in extremely remote regions have been integrated into our territory. This is the expansion of China's territory.'<sup>219</sup> Yet, he

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218 H. Kahn, 'The Politics of Filiality: Justification for Imperial Action in Eighteenth Century China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1967) 197–203.

219 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 347.

wanted to retain Manchu culture as much as respect Confucianism. Moreover, he seems to have acknowledged that his empire was, in a sense, multi-religious when he wrote:

The Lord of Heaven is Heaven itself ... In the empire we have a temple for honouring Heaven and sacrificing to Him. We Manchus have Tiao Tchin. The first day of every year we burn incense and paper to honour Heaven. We Manchus have our own particular rites for honouring Heaven. The Mongols, Chinese, Russians, and Europeans also have their own particular rites for honouring Heaven ... everyone has his way of doing it.<sup>220</sup>

These conciliatory messages did not convince the Mongols. The civil war that erupted amongst the various tribal federations in 'Mongolia' in the late seventeenth century again posed a danger to the empire's stability. Specifically, it was disturbed by two groups of tribes: the Khalkha, on the one hand, and the Dzungarians, on the other. They both wanted to again unite the Mongolian polity and, hence, threatened the Manchu government in China that needed peace on and power over its western frontier.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, the Khalkha recreated the religious-political link with Buddhism that had existed in previous times and, in a way, had been usurped by the Manchu themselves since the mid-seventeenth century, when they sought an alliance with the *dalai lama*, 'the ocean of wisdom', the major Lamaist-Buddhist leader of Tibet. The situation shows the fluidity of Buddhist identities both amongst the Manchu and the Mongols.<sup>222</sup>

Searching for a solution, Qianlong continued a policy adopted by earlier Qing rulers, viz. trying to foster the notion that the Mongols belonged to a pan-Qing Empire, ruled by a Buddhist emperor.<sup>223</sup> As unrest increased, the Qing court decided to instil Gelugpa, or Yellow Hat, orthodoxy, which functioned under their protective umbrella, into the syncretic Mongol religion and, in a wider sense, culture, more specifically to replace older, local and regional varieties of Mongol Buddhism. The dalai lamas went along with this policy, not only to strengthen their own position amongst the Mongols but also because

220 Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 241.

221 P. Perdue, *China Marches West. The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (New Haven, 2009).

222 The situation is detailed in: J. Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism and the State in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2008).

223 Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*; cfr. D. Wright, 'The Weaving of a Buddhist Empire: Mandalas and Manjusri in the Reign of Qianlong' (PhD dissertation, the University of Colorado, Boulder, 2008).

they needed Qing support to extend their influence over those parts of Tibet that were dominated by their only serious competitors, the monks of the Red Hat Order.<sup>224</sup> The reigning dalai lama was invited to Beijing and a former imperial palace was reconstructed to be the most important Lamaist-Buddhist sanctuary of the empire.<sup>225</sup> What, however, it actually expressed was Qing hegemony over Tibetan Buddhism and, as soon appeared, Qianlong's wish to nominate any future dalai lama—his grandfather had done so already in 1717. However, the Khalkha found a reincarnation of a famous Tibetan scholar in, perhaps not surprisingly, the son of their khan. This first Jebtsundamba as well as his successor, another descendant of Chinggis, legitimized the Khalkha bid for power against the Qing. Only in the 1750s did Qianlong finally defeat both tribal federations, massively slaughtering their people.<sup>226</sup> Perhaps wisely, he sought to defuse this dangerous combination of religious and political power and decreed that a new Jebtsundamba could be searched for only in Tibetan Gelugpa circles where the government in Beijing might control the finding of a reincarnation. Interestingly, in 1911 the eighth Jebtsundamba became the theocratic ruler of newly independent Mongolia, governing till 1924, when the Communists took power.<sup>227</sup>

Meanwhile, the ideological implications of Qianlong's Tibetan-Mongolian policy had been represented on a magnificent scale in the lay-out of the imperial summer residence at Jehol/Chengde.<sup>228</sup> Significantly, the grandest structure, dominating the entire complex, was a temple-palace closely modelled on and almost equalling the size of the Potala palace at Lhasa; indeed, it, too, was coloured red, as was the palace where the dalai lama himself held court, that other reincarnation of a bodhisattva. Admittedly, the dalai lamas continued the notion that they were, at least spiritually, the superior of the emperor, since they were, in all matters Buddhist, his teachers. In short, both sides tried to repeat the pattern that once had been instituted between Kublai Khan and his revered 'teacher' Phagpa—a system however that Kublai Khan himself had abandoned after his friend's death because he did not favour such a pope-emperor construction. Actually, he had wanted to be seen as the supreme bodhisattva, Manjusri, and as such to dominate even the dalai lama. Now, Qianlong,

224 S. Grupper, 'Manchu Patronage and Tibetan Buddhism during the First Half of the Ch'ing Dynasty', *Journal of the Tibet Society* 4 (1984) 47–75.

225 Cfr. F. Lessing, *Yung-Ho-Kung: An Iconography of the Lamaist Cathedral in Peking* (Göteborg, 1942) as well as; Wright, 'The Weaving'.

226 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 287.

227 C. Bawden, *The Modern History of Mongolia* (New York, 1968) 261–263.

228 A. Chayet, *Les temples de Jehol et leurs modèles tibétaines* (New Delhi, 1985).

too, claimed precisely that bodhisattvahood. After all, Manjusri was the wise and kingly bodhisattva, whereas Avalokitesvara, claimed to be reincarnated in the dalai lamas, was only the compassionate one. Summing up, the Qing simply did not tolerate a powerful religion that had its centre outside their immediate sphere of influence.

This conclusion is reinforced by another element in Qianlong's imperial make-up: he set out to appropriate tantric, i.e. Lamaist-Buddhist magical power, wanting to monopolize contacts with the supernatural world, both to control potentially dangerous sects in China—where they did create a lot of unrest, also through inter-sect competition<sup>229</sup>—and to fight other enemies, such as those Tibetans who did not accept Qing suzerainty. Thus, one of his tantric teachers<sup>230</sup> helped his armies to confound their adversaries with magical fireballs and dust clouds.<sup>231</sup> At the same time, the emperor used the knowledge of the Jesuits at his court to gain better knowledge of battlefields and found better canons.<sup>232</sup> All this, rather than being contradictory, shows the clever ways in which specifically Qianlong managed to manipulate a varied religious repertoire, hoping that this flexible pluralism would stabilize China proper and also bring the Mongols under his sway. Thus, he continued the tolerant policy that the Qing emperors had pursued regarding the various religious views in their polity.<sup>233</sup>

However, in the course of Qianlong's reign, with economic problems increasing, the imperial government started clamping down on sectarian movements again; the combination of religious fervour and economic dissatisfaction simply was too dangerous. He put into force again the statutes outlawing heterodox religious groups that, after the collapse of the Ming dynasty in the 1640s, had been incorporated into the laws of the new, Manchu rulers, but that his grandfather had allowed to lapse. Indeed, a certain return to orthodoxy does seem to have set in. Qianlong had to show he was not only a devout son in the Confucian

229 B. Gaustad, 'Prophets and Pretenders: Inter-sect Competition in Qianlong China', *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 1 (2000) 1–40.

230 X. Wang, 'The Qing Court's Tibetan Connection: Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje and the Qianlong Emperor', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60, no. 1 (2000) 125–163.

231 J. Waley-Cohen, 'Religion, War and Empire-Building in Eighteenth-Century China', *The International History Review* 20, no. 2 (1998) 336–352, esp. 345 sqq.

232 J. Waley-Cohen, 'God and Guns in Eighteenth-Century China: Jesuit Missionaries and the Military Campaigns of the Qianlong Emperor', *Contacts Between Cultures: Eastern Asia: History and Social Sciences. Proceedings of the 33rd International Congress of Asian and North African Studies* 4 (Lewiston, 1992) 94–99.

233 J. de Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China* (Taipei, 1963) 153, 250.



sense, but, as should be all his servants, also a devout student of the Confucian classics that were the foundation and backbone of that part of Qing imperial ideology. Therefore, the emperor presented himself as the ultimate collector—and, hence, arbiter and censor—of the entire corpus of traditional Chinese texts when, from the 1770s onwards, he ordered the preservation and, indeed, codification of this literary heritage. This resulted in the ‘complete library of the four treasures.’<sup>234</sup> The scholar-censors involved were admonished to destroy all texts that somehow showed enmity to the peoples from the steppe, negatively compared the Qing to the Ming, and, generally, detracted from the achievements of the ruling dynasty. Precisely the vanquished Ming should be negatively portrayed, to impress all readers with the fact that the mandate of heaven had been legitimately transferred to the Qing, in order to counterbalance prevailing and potentially destabilizing notions that, unlike the Ming, the Qing were, after all, non-Han, foreign.

This return to tradition also showed when Qianlong reversed another of his grandfather’s policies. Whereas Kangxi had ‘modernized’ the age-old music so important to the proper execution of imperial sacrificial rites, interestingly accommodating Manchu ‘modes’ into these compositions, his grandson ordered the restoration of the ancient, Chinese forms.<sup>235</sup> Qianlong also felt that the influence of Christian missionaries at court and of Christianity across China at large had, perhaps, waxed too great. Thus, when the orthodox, non-accommodation policy towards the interactions between missionary Christendom and its non-Christian contexts adopted by Pope Benedict XIV in the 1740s was felt in China, too, Qianlong started to expel the Christian priests. Chinese Christians went underground.

Notwithstanding this tendency towards increasing religious-cultural conservatism, which also expressed itself in the numerous temples Qianlong built,<sup>236</sup> precisely during his reign several partly religiously motivated or at least charismatically led rebellions broke out again. In the 1770s, the Wang Lun revolt in Shandong represented the complex reactions of both dispossessed farmers and poor townspeople against the problems caused by population growth, tax increase, and food shortage. Against the Shandong rebels, too, the emperor let his generals use magic, in the form of magically endowed prostitutes. At the same time, he stated that, of course, a proper Chinese would not believe such

234 R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor’s Four Treasures: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch’ien-Lung Era* (Harvard, 1987).

235 L. Chiu, ‘From 1746 to 1786: The Continued Revision of the Imperial Music Treatise’, *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56, no. 3 (2009) 272–281.

236 S. Naquin, *Peking. Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley, 2000).

arts.<sup>237</sup> In the 1780s, on Tayouan the Tiandi group questioned Qing legitimacy, and Islamic minorities in the south-west mainland rebelled, too. Last, but not least, in the 1790s the White Lotus sect arose again as it had under the Ming, promising its adherents a messianic age, wherein the 'Eternal Mother' would rule and bring them salvation. Thus, the last years of Qianlong's reign seemed to announce new threats to the complex polity the Qing had been building since the 1640s. As always, religion played a significant part in the opposition against them, as much, perhaps, as they themselves had used religion to prevent or overcome such opposition.

#### 1.6.2 Emperor Go-Mizuno-O (1596–1611–1629–1680 CE) and His Successors

Whereas most Eurasian rulers have been given shorter or longer biographies, the majority of Japan's emperors have not, not even in Japanese. For a variety of reasons, Japanese and foreign scholars have felt that the role of the individual emperors, certainly after the thirteenth century, was unimportant: they still were sacred but otherwise were forced to remain *fainéants*.<sup>238</sup> Both the shogunal system, even before the rise of the Tokugawa, and the ways the imperial line was constructed within the imperial house seem to have precluded the emergence of strong men in the Goshō who might have tried to regain the power of their ancestors. Indeed, even the so-called Meiji restoration of the 1860s and 1870s was not orchestrated by the emperor himself, but by circles around him, mostly samurai and daimyo who were dissatisfied with the shogunal regime. Unable to counterbalance my sketches of individual Eurasian rulers with a single Japanese case, instead I analyse the actions of a small 'group' of successive emperors who all operated in the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, at least seemingly pursuing the same policy.

By and large, the sixteenth century had been a period of civil war, in which the emperors did not play a significant role. Indeed, the imperial court was so impoverished that funds were lacking even for the traditional enthronement ceremonies. Nevertheless, Generalissimo Oda Nobunaga, who, at the end of the century, seemed successful in re-uniting the country, did ask the reigning emperor Go-Yōzei (1571–1586–1611–1617) to address the feuding parties; yet, he definitely wanted the imperial system to work for his own power, rather than the other way round.<sup>239</sup> His death and the ensuing succession war leave

<sup>237</sup> S. Naquin, *Shantung Rebellion: The Wang Lun Uprising of 1774* (New Haven, 1981) 100–101.

<sup>238</sup> B. Wakabayashi, 'In Name Only: Imperial Sovereignty in Early Modern Japan', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 17, no. 1 (1991) 25; cfr. also: Shillony, *Enigma of the Emperors*.

<sup>239</sup> Cfr. E. Lillehoj, *Art and Palace Politics in Early Modern Japan, 1580s–1680s* (Leiden, 2011).

unanswered the question what might have been the future role of the imperial house under Nobunaga's aegis. Order, in fact, was restored only with the establishment of Tokugawa-rule. As tradition dictated, Tokugawa Ieyasu was formally appointed shogun by the reigning emperor; however, he took up residence in Edo, the capital of his own heartland.

This first Tokugawa, too, wanted somehow to dominate the imperial institution.<sup>240</sup> There were, of course, various ways to do so. Marriages always cement relations, and, not surprisingly, the Tokugawa used the instrument quite often. However, they did not force the imperial family to accept their daughters as brides.<sup>241</sup> What (early modern) European 'monarchy watchers' certainly would have expected to become a custom, occurred only once, in 1620, when Emperor Go-Mizuno-o had to marry Tokugawa Masako, who became *chugo*, empress-consort. The importance attached by the Tokugawa to the union with the divine dynasty may be gleaned from the fact that the costs were said to equal the amount of rice necessary to feed 700,000 people for a year. Masako's massive dowry helped the imperial family to uphold its sacred and ritual status for a number of years, e.g. through the building of new or restoration of old temples.<sup>242</sup> Yet, whether it was distasteful to the imperial family, or for other reasons, this marital policy did not continue, though this specific couple seems to have been 'happy'. On the other hand, the Tokugawa did 'ask' the imperial family to wed imperial (grand-) daughters to the ruling shogun, to become the *midaidokoro*.<sup>243</sup> Nevertheless, as far as I have been able to ascertain, none of the six or seven princesses who came to Edo during the seventeenth and early eighteenth century gave birth to a son who then became the next Tokugawa. And though Meisho, the daughter born to Go-Mizuno-o and Masako Tokugawa, became empress in her own right, she did not marry and bear any sons or daughters herself.<sup>244</sup> In short, it seems to have been impossible, or, rather,

240 Cfr. H. Webb, *The Japanese Imperial Institution in the Tokugawa Period* (New York, 1968); H. Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought, 1600-1901* (Tokyo, 2012) esp. chs. 2 and 3.

241 Suggestions to the contrary are not substantiated by the empirical data.

242 E. Lillehoj, 'Tofukumon'in: Empress, Patron and Artist', *Woman's Art Journal*, 17, no. 1 (1996) 28-34.

243 The 4th shogun married an imperial princess, and so did the 7th, the 8th, the 9th, the 12th, and the 13th. The 6th married an imperial granddaughter. Cfr. C. Seigle, 'The Shogun's Consort: Konoe Hiroko and Tokugawa Ienobu', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59, no. 2 (1999) 485-522; cfr. also her: *Ooku. The Secret World of the Shogun's Women* (Amherst, 2014).

244 I have culled the data from the lists in: R. Ponsoyby-Fane, *The Imperial House of Japan* (Kyoto, 1959) 111 sqq.

unthinkable, that the holiness of the imperial line should be diluted by the infusion of other than, as tradition had it, Fujiwara blood. Nor, apparently, did the Tokugawa envisage a situation wherein the son of an imperial princess would rule the country as shogun. Despite the complex intermarriage system, a unified religious-military dynasty that combined authority with power—and could then have dispensed with the shogunal office altogether<sup>245</sup>—was not created until the second half of the nineteenth century.

While the two spheres remained apart, the Tokugawa definitely kept a tight watch over the emperor and his entourage. Already in 1615, a year after he had won supremacy in the battle of Sekigahara, Ieyasu proclaimed the *kuge sho-hatto*, a seventeen-article ruling of every detail pertaining to the functions of the emperor, the imperial household, and the court aristocracy, who continued to reside in Kyoto. It seems to me it sought to reduce the possibility of an active political role that Go-Yozei may have envisaged: it insisted on the preservation of or, when necessary, return to the ancient cultural-exemplary role of the court, to the exclusion of other instruments of power, such as granting honorific titles to the military aristocracy. Stressing the emperor's ritual, i.e. religious role, the *bakufu*, the shogunal government separated the imperial house from the political potential embodied in the daimyo class.<sup>246</sup>

The *sho-hatto* were not the only restrictions imposed by Edo on the Kyoto court. In another edict, issued twice, the shogunate took control over the head temples of the main Buddhist sects, establishing a hierarchical, centralized Church that, ultimately, was governed by the state. At the same time—and, given the widespread abuse of the clerical status, certainly defensible—the shogun wanted the Buddhist community to enforce a stricter adherence to the values deemed necessary for a really devout monk and, ultimately, abbot. Actually, many men successfully entered the clergy for its privileged position, 'bribing' the always penurious imperial court where, notably, honorific titles for senior clerics as well as the much-coveted 'purple robes' were bestowed. These also had high economic value: all kinds of Buddhist ritual essential to the people's religious well-being—most of them paid for—could be performed only by men thus distinguished.

The new rules, asking not only for a thorough examination of the candidates but, also, for a prior screening by the shogunate, impinged on imperial power, economically as well. Not surprisingly, infringements occurred that allowed the

245 Such a policy would have replaced the Fujiwara as bride material with the Tokugawa.

246 I am not entirely convinced by the somewhat contradictory and also naive content of: L. Butler, 'Tokugawa Ieyasu's Regulations for the Court: A Reappraisal', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 2 (1994) 509–551.

bakufu to even further strengthen its authority. In 1627, the Edo government decided to strip more than 150 men who had been given the purple of their new dignity. Inevitably, Go-Mizuno-o was greatly offended by what also constituted the loss of imperial prestige. His abdication—which was not in itself unusual since most emperors did so during their lifetime, often to secure an unproblematic succession—was seen as a sign of public protest. Inevitably, the situation now forced all those in search of a purple-robed existence—and one should not forget there were many thousands of Buddhist temples, and many hundreds of monasteries—to apply to the shogunal court at Edo, first, before continuing to Kyoto; there, court nobles, still acting as ‘brokers’, would await them before they were granted the imperial permit. In short, the bakufu did tighten its power over the highest echelons of the Buddhist Church, thus increasing its own authority as well. And though the practice of buying less exalted robes from the imperial court continued,<sup>247</sup> the hold of the imperial house over the Buddhist Church was negatively affected, and, inevitably, its financial situation was considerably weakened.

It is difficult to say what, at this time, were the emperors’ sentiments about the Tokugawa’s wish to divert national religious ritual from the imperial house to their own, deified ancestor, a policy that started in 1615 as well and, from a ‘doctrinal’ point of view, combined Buddhist and Shinto elements.<sup>248</sup> Nor is it easy to determine if this situation finally caused the emperors to embark on a process of ideological re-orientation during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>249</sup>

Despite his early abdication, Go-Mizuno-o reigned for many decades as ‘cloistered emperor’—behind the screens, so to say—, while first his daughter and then three of his sons succeeded each other as titular emperors. The

247 D. Williams, ‘The Purple Robe Incident and the Formation of the Early Modern Sōtō Zen Institution’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 36, no. 1 (2009) 27–43; cfr. also: L. Butler, ‘Court and Bakufu in Early 17th-Century Japan’ (PhD dissertation, Princeton 1991) 201–206.

248 J. Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology: Discourse, Reform, and Insurrection in Late Tokugawa Japan, 1790–1864* (Berkeley, 1987) 8.

249 P. Nosco, ‘Kokugaku Critiques of Confucianism and Chinese Culture’, in: C. Huang and J. Tucker, eds., *Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 2014) 233–256; P. Nosco, ‘Intellectual Change in Tokugawa Japan’, in: W. Tsutsui, ed., *A Companion to Japanese History* (Oxford, 2007) 101–116; P. Nosco, *Remembering Paradise. Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); F. Miyazaki, ‘The Formation of Emperor Worship in the New Religions’, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 17, no. 2 (1990) 281–314, as well as: H. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley, 1970).

last of these, Reigen, who finally became emperor in his own right, apparently was self-willed and little inclined to cooperate with the bakufu. However, the next emperor, Higashiyama (1675–1687–1709–1710), was more pliant, which helped secure him funds from Edo to at least pay for the upkeep of important imperial buildings and thus regain some prestige. Far more interesting is that at his accession, and because the shogunate insisted,<sup>250</sup> the costly *Dajjosai*-ritual, which had not been celebrated for centuries, was revived. It was, significantly, a Shinto ritual, connecting the imperial house to Japan's pre-Buddhist past. It seems that the bakufu had come to recognize the importance of an albeit controlled and mainly ritual role for the emperor in their politics, shown by their willingness to provide the money for the restoration of the imperial mausoleums. Especially during the reign of Sakuramachi (1720–1735–1747) and the parallel shogunate of Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684–1716–1745–1751), relations improved markedly, with the revival of yet other ancient imperial rites again paid for by the shogun. Perhaps the fact that Yoshimune was no direct descendant of the first Tokugawa, as well as, on the other hand, an ambitious ruler, explains his willingness to include the imperial house in his policies.

By the end of the eighteenth century, a definite 'restoration mood' was apparent at the imperial court, especially during the reign of Kokaku (1780–1816–1840). I was intrigued by one of the *waku* he wrote—traditionally a poetic genre the emperor had to excel in. He described the country's three religions as follows:

(Shinto) The winds of heaven dispel the lowering clouds from the blue sky, and lo! The glorious moon shines with an undimmed lustre o'er the earth. (Confucianism) A truly glorious faith. But all its charm comes from our nation's garb wherein 'tis dressed. (Buddhism) A creed of emptiness, a lotus-plant in autumn-time, when flower and fruit are nought.<sup>251</sup>

It seems a clear expression of his idea that Japan needed to (re-)turn to its ancient traditions, obviously the ones thought to be embodied in the emperor. And indeed we do know that at the imperial court—as well as at the court of the learned daimyo of Mito—Japan's past was 'shinto-ized', though its so-called immemorial traditions were, in many ways, invented to serve contemporary politics.<sup>252</sup> While Confucianism and Buddhism might have their uses, they

250 The reigning shogun, Tsunayoshi Tokugawa, was married to an imperial princess.

251 I found the poems in: A. Lloyd, trans., 'Songs of Japan. Poems by Past Emperors', *The Open Court* 12, no. 4 (1911) 749.

252 Koschmann, *The Mito Ideology*.

were seen as less fundamental and, indeed, foreign—and, also, surreptitiously associated with the shogunal court at Edo rather than with the ‘pure’ court at Kyoto, which thus turned itself into the embodiment of old and new notions of Japan-ness—the new ones often presented as, precisely, dating back to time immemorial. In the nineteenth century, this policy, supported and elaborated by a group of nobles around the then emperor, came to fruition in the so-called Meiji restoration.

### 1.7 *Unique in Eurasia?*

Already in the ‘Middle Ages’, more specifically from the thirteenth century onwards, tales about a mythical, powerful ‘priest-king’ living far beyond Christendom’s eastern borders spread all over Europe. They seem to have been fed by all kinds of reports about rulers who in some way combined both religious and secular power, amongst them probably the kings of various Nestorian-Christian peoples in Central Asia, and may even have included rumours about the king-of-kings who ruled Abyssinia since the thirteenth century. These reports, mainly brought home by travellers who had visited the Near East, coagulated in the ‘Tale of Prester John’, that itself then branched out in many variants. Obviously, in Europe the priest-king was both a reality, in the person of the pope, and a concept of great antiquity, harking back to the high priests who, according to the Old Testament, once had led Israel. No wonder that any reference to a ruler who also performed sacred, priestly tasks—as understood in a Christian sense—would elicit comparisons. Thus when, in the sixteenth century, the first Christian missionaries encountered Lamaist Buddhism,<sup>253</sup> they could not but analyse it in terms of their own cultural context, the Church and the papacy.

If history teaches us one thing, it is that either everything is unique, or that few things occur that, somehow, do not have their parallel in other places or other times. Yet, certainly since the sixteenth century, the Papal States and Tibet make a good case for being two manifestations of a truly unique phenomenon that has shown remarkable longevity. Both were ruled by a monarch who was, also, its supreme religious leader. In both, the selection of the ruler was a process directed by the supernatural. During a conclave, the electors, the cardinals, supposedly were—and still are—guided by the ‘Holy Spirit’, though, of course, they simply engage in a power struggle and make their choice accordingly. After the death of a dalai lama, his incarnation is allegedly found by an inspired search party of high-placed monks who then will ‘recognize’ the candidate from

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253 Cfr. a.o. T. Pomplun, *Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri’s Mission to Eighteenth-Century Tibet* (Oxford, 2010) esp. 4 sqq.

a number of sacred signs, though, of course, the candidate mostly is selected for entirely political reasons by those in power, or seeking it. One even might argue that precisely in this important field of state continuity and cohesion there is yet another phenomenon common to both cultures. In Tibet, from the seventeenth century onwards, the 'state oracle', albeit a physical medium, was one of the primary forces in guiding the selection of the next dalai lama<sup>254</sup>—as was the 'Holy Spirit' in Roman Catholic Christianity. Moreover, he also was consulted in all matters of state policy when the advice of the realm of the spirit(s) was deemed necessary, just as the Holy Spirit was invoked when pope and cardinals convened to discuss pressing matters of Church or, indeed secular politics.

In both polities, the clergy rather than civilians provided the bureaucratic backbone of the state, including its judiciary. Both states also relied on an economy in which the Church, in its monastic guise, possessed (by far) most of the landed wealth. Both states existed within a wider world that did not necessarily leave them their independence because of their pretence of being superior through the semi-divine status of their rulers. The ensuing friction resulted in interstate conflicts, in a way testing the power of the rulers involved. Last, but not least, these priest-kings also claimed headship over a Church—Buddhist, Catholic—that extended far beyond the frontiers of their state because it effectively used its soteriological message for a universal appeal. Yet, one may argue that in both states the situation resulted in a certain traditionalism, manifestly also in the economic field, with few stimuli towards 'modernization', leaving these two states perhaps more backward than ones wherein power was more widely competed and shared between various groups in society.

One also is struck by a number of outward, visual similarities. In both states, the capital was dominated by a palace-temple complex that, through the relics enshrined there, proclaimed the sanctity of its rulers through an 'apostolic succession', claiming descent from the first, holy founder of religion and state. Also, from the seventeenth century onwards, the dalai lamas were embalmed and interred in grand monuments in chapels beside the public part of the Potala Palace, where pilgrims would file past them—just as the Christian visitors of Rome would gawk at the sumptuous tombs erected in St. Peter's for the popes since the late sixteenth century. To put it another way, Lhasa and Rome seem to be the only (spiritual) capitals where the entire sequence of past

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254 H. Sidky, 'The State Oracle of Tibet, Spirit Possession and Shamanism', *Numen* 58 (2011) 71–99; cfr. also: 'Nechung: The State Oracle of Tibet', <http://www.dorjeshugden.com/all-articles/features/nechung-the-state-oracle-of-tibet/>.



(religious) leaders was shown in a manifestly public, ceremonial space, obviously to help strengthen cohesion by visualizing the power of the deceased, and, hence, of the incumbent and, even, of his future successors. Making death and burial into more than a state event, indeed, allowing it to evolve into a popular cult-on-location, the authorities of the Lamaist and the Roman Catholic Church certainly enhanced its use as a tool of concentrated, centralized imperial integrity—as did, though less obviously so, the rulers of Christian Europe. Neither Ming or Qing China, nor pre-Meiji Japan or the Islamic empires availed themselves of this opportunity.

## 1.8 *Priest-Kings*

### 1.8.1 Pope Sixtus v (1521–1580–1585)<sup>255</sup>

It is debatable whether the central institutions of the Chinese government constitute the world's oldest surviving bureaucracy, or whether one should so designate the papal Curia in Rome. Certainly, at least on paper, the two organizations hold sway over more than a billion people. But whereas Beijing rules in China, only, the papacy still hopes it commands the allegiance of Roman Catholic men and women all over the world. It is, truly, both an international and a supranational organization. Moreover, it claims, or at least used to do so, to lead the only true religion, and one whose basic values were universal since God, in His creation, had inculcated them in all men, whether they were aware of it or not. To convert the latter, it was the Church of Rome's most important mission to 'go and teach all peoples'.

From the Church's foundation in the Roman Empire, in the first century CE, the head of this organization was—or so Church history has it—chosen by and mostly also from amongst the religious leaders in Rome: he was their bishop as well as the leader of the 'Universal Church'. Actually, as indicated above, the Roman *pontifex* was able to claim supremacy over—the Latin-speaking

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255 This section is based on: M. Caravale, *Lo Stato pontificio da Martino v a Pio IX* (Turin, 1978) 75–415; I. De Feo, *Sisto v. Un grande papa tra Rinascimento e Barocco* (Milan, 1987); J. von Hübner, *Sixte Quint* (Paris, 1870); I. Gatti, *Sisto v papa "Piceno": Le testimonianze e i documenti autentici* (Ripatransone, 1990); C. Mandel, *Sixtus v and the Lateran Palace* (Rome, 1994); L. von Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, x (Freiburg, 1926); P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna, 1982); P. Rietbergen, 'Pausen, prelaten, bureaucraten. Aspecten van de geschiedenis van het pausschap en de pauselijke staat in de zeventiende eeuw' (PhD dissertation, Nijmegen, 1983); Idem, 'A Vision Come True'; Idem, 'Absolutisme en Stadsplanning in pauselijk Rome, ca. 1450–1650', *Spiegel Historiae* xix (1984) 288–293.

part of—Christendom only since the seventh and eighth centuries. Nor would the popes ever have been able to present themselves as the ‘supreme pontiff’, ‘Christ’s Vicar on Earth’, had the rulers of Francia not helped them to establish their religious authority. Meanwhile, largely through the combined efforts of zealous missionary priests and princes all over Europe, Christianity and, with it, papal supremacy finally was acknowledged from Norway to Portugal and from Ireland to Poland.

The Frankish kings also helped the popes to create a papal principality, the *Patrimonium Petri*, which always included Rome but, depending on the political circumstances on the Italian peninsula, large tracts of Central Italy as well. Precisely because, from the ninth century onwards, power over the states of Italy increasingly had been sought by princes from beyond the Alps—most notably the kings of France, of Spain, and the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire—the popes had declared that in order to effectively exercise their spiritual function, they needed the political independence which only a state of their own could give them. Thus, the pope became a monarch in the two senses of the word: both spiritual and temporal.

The situation was complicated since the papacy remained an elective monarchy and, moreover, since the popes, from the eleventh century onwards, often were chosen from amongst the leading (arch-) bishops of the entire Christian Church who bore the cardinal title. Consequently, most conclaves were heavily politicized: the major Christian princes all tried to have their own candidate elevated to the papacy, if only to be able to play a role on the economically and strategically crucial Italian peninsula.

After many vicissitudes, including wars of conquest waged on the popes’ behalf and, indeed, sometimes led by a pope himself, by the early sixteenth century the papal temporality extended from the region north of Naples to the lands south of Tuscany and Venice, straddling the peninsula. However, though by now firmly entrenched in their Papal States, also by the sixteenth century the papacy had to face the fact that it no longer was the supreme power in all Christendom: the Reformations in North-West- and parts of Central Europe greatly reduced the territories where people lived who still accepted Rome’s authority and paid its taxes! However, at the same time the Roman Catholic variant of Christianity had spread far beyond its European borders: in the wake of Portuguese and Spanish expansion politics in the East and West Indies, from the 1520s and 1530s onwards most inhabitants of Central and South America as well as the Philippines had been converted. Meanwhile, missionaries were sent by Rome to sub-Saharan Africa, to the Near and Middle East, to India, to China and to Japan. This was the situation that confronted the man who, in 1585, was elected as the 226th successor of St. Peter.

Born Felice Peretti in 1521, to a poor farming family, at the age of thirteen he became a novice in the Order of the Friars Minor, the Franciscans, and later took his vows. Given his exceptional intellect, he was allowed to study, finally gaining the doctorate in 1548. Meanwhile, he also had become famous as a preacher, pleading for the reform of the Church. His zeal made him many friends, amongst them Philip Neri and Ignatius of Loyola, the leaders of two newly founded reforming Orders, the Oratorians and the Jesuits, as well as some influential cardinals. However, his zeal also made him enemies, as became clear when, after being sent by the Curia to the Republic of Venice to suppress all kinds of, according to Rome, heterodox ideas, the Republic's government asked for his recall, being angered by his stern actions.

In the 1560s and 1570s, Peretti's career took flight. He was made a bishop in 1566 and, more importantly, a cardinal in 1570, which ensured that he would be both an elector of a new pope and a potential candidate himself. Though certainly not all cardinals strove after the papacy, Peretti did: he seems to have felt that the policy pursued by Pope Gregory XIII during whose reign he kept a low profile—studying and, perhaps, making plans—was disastrous, and therefore lobbied for his own election after Gregory's death in 1585. Without the usual acrimonious and long negotiations, he actually was chosen unanimously, in record time. His energy seems to have been unbounded: during the barely five years of his pontificate he reformed both the Papal States and the Church. Soon, he was admired as well as hated. The foreign ambassadors in Rome and his subjects, too, felt he was impulsive and obstinate, harsh and authoritarian even. That he also was vigorous and, even, visionary, fewer people were willing to concede—but posterity has vindicated him.

First, Sixtus decided to redress the lawless situation in Rome and the *Patrimonium Petri*, which, he felt, scandalized the entire Christian world and, moreover, fuelled the anti-papal propaganda still waged in many Protestant countries. The bands of brigands who roamed the countryside and often the city streets as well were persecuted and, when caught, ruthlessly punished. The rights of the feudal nobles who lorded it over the countryside from their strongholds were restricted severely. Almost logically, men wearing arms—which often were used in open combat—were imprisoned, and the custom itself—obviously dangerous for any monarch whose task it was to provide public safety—forbidden. On the other hand, Sixtus sought to remedy the poverty of the landless by engaging in the drainage of the Pontine marshes between Rome and the sea, a project that not only created new farming areas but brought in more revenue as well and, not unimportantly, reduced the diseases formerly caused by the malarial region, also in Rome. In Rome itself he did what each ruler knew to be his first task: ensure an abundant water

supply for the population's daily needs. Sixtus had an old Roman aqueduct restored—renaming it, significantly, *Aqua Felice*. The great fountain where the people living near the papal summer residence could fetch their water was adorned with a huge statue of, again significantly, Moses who, after all, had been the first leader of the faithful and, in their moment of greatest need, with God's help had struck water out of the rock. Sixtus also decided that the Jews, often harshly treated by their fellow men all over Europe, in Rome and the other papal cities should be given the protection he felt they deserved.

Obviously, any policy aimed at normative harmonization is a great instrument for creating societal cohesion and, hence, power. Sixtus decided that public morality should return to the Papal States. He ordered severe punishment—as well as, often, excommunication, which is, of course, punishment of another sort and felt by many to be the more damning—for incest, adultery, homosexuality, and for abortion. In the last case, his stance was particularly severe, certainly when compared with previous, more moderate Church teaching; at least one reason is provided by the proliferation of prostitution in the streets of the Eternal City in the late sixteenth century: more than a third of the population consisted of males who, as monks and priests, were forced to live a celibate life but, by and large, did not heed that condition.

Piety and severity dictated Sixtus's more strictly religious policy as well. He demanded a renewed adherence to the vow of chastity by the members of the religious Orders and the priesthood. Among lay people, too, he tried to incite a new sense of godliness. One of his most iconic measures was the reconstruction, opposite the Lateran Palace, of the so-called *Scala sancta*, purportedly the marble stairs from the Roman headquarters in Jerusalem believed to have been climbed by Jesus of Nazareth on his way to trial before Pontius Pilate and which pilgrims were, and are, allowed to ascend only on their bare knees. The grand frescoes now surrounding it were commissioned by Sixtus, who had himself depicted as Sylvester I—the fourth-century pope to whom Constantine allegedly had given power over the entire Church, and over Rome and its region. Perhaps the project replaced Sixtus's vision of a new crusade—which he planned and propagated but never realized because no Christian prince was prepared to follow him to the Holy Land. Other reasons apart, they surely knew that it would have increased papal prestige in Europe, which was the last thing they wanted, though it obviously was one of the pope's main motives. The *Scala sancta* project also may have replaced the equally grandiose, but equally unrealistic idea of transporting the entire Holy Sepulchre from Jerusalem to Rome. Though nothing came of it, it yet was worthy of a pope and, moreover, made sense, for it would have liberated the most sacred place of Christianity from the

power of Islam and, at the same time, have cemented the supreme position in Christendom of the popes themselves, as guardians of this holiest of holies.

Given the popes' dual position—as monarchs of the Papal States and as rulers of the Church worldwide—one of Sixtus's most innovative decisions was to reorganize the College of Cardinals. Since the eleventh century, the number of its members had been variable. Sixtus decided to fix it at seventy—at which it remained until the late twentieth century. More importantly, he decided that he would staff it with well-trained priests, experienced in Canon and Roman law, in diplomacy, and, preferably, in public finance who, instead of governing a bishopric, would be given the cardinalate to serve as senior administrators both for the Papal States—as provincial governors, et cetera—and for the Church at large. To make the system really efficient, the pope set up fifteen congregations, or ministries, each headed by a cardinal-prefect who was assisted by a board of senior advisors, often cardinals as well, and a host of lower bureaucrats. Being one of the first princes to create such a centralized and, indeed, centralizing bureaucracy, Sixtus greatly increased the integration both of his temporal empire, the 'Lands of St. Peter', and of his spiritual empire, the Holy Roman Church.

Last, but not least, this pope, whom one might almost see as an exemplar of the 'new monarchy' of the sixteenth century, decided to reorganize the finances of the Church—which, in a complex way, also were related to the revenue and expenditure of the Papal States. The huge debt left by Gregory XIII was reduced and, soon, totally repaid by adopting severe financial and fiscal measures. In the end, instead of saddling his state with an almost insurmountable deficit, Sixtus filled the papal coffers, kept in the Castel Sant'Angelo, with a treasure of gold that made him one of Europe's wealthiest monarchs. The downside of this policy was, of course, that hoarding such a great store of bullion was not conducive to economic growth. If only therefore, Sixtus's advice to use it only in times of real calamity was not heeded by his successors.

Though he favoured a strict financial policy, Sixtus spent enormous amounts on the aggrandizement of Rome. Despite a number of urbanistic interventions by the popes of the Renaissance, the town retained its basically medieval, haphazard structure. This Sixtus sought to change. First of all, in 1586 he ordered that the new basilica of St. Peter should be finished—its huge cupola, designed by Michelangelo, had long remained a shell, only. He also decided that the square in front of the new, and indeed gigantic main church of Christendom should be worthy of it. Consequently, his court architect re-organized the space, focusing it on an ancient Egyptian obelisk that for nearly a thousand years had lain buried in the sand of the Vatican hill. In a triumphantly successful technical operation, the twenty-five-meter-high stone needle was

excavated, transferred to its new position, and re-erected, to be crowned with a bronze cross. The entire idea was part of a much grander scheme. Sixtus and his advisers imposed a grid-pattern of new streets on the old town, creating a network that allowed, or, rather, forced pilgrims and other visitors to follow a processional route that brought them to the seven main basilicas, culminating, of course, in St. Peter's. Wherever possible, the pope ordered ancient obelisks to be re-erected in front of these churches, all of them topped with a cross. The first one visitors saw when entering the city coming from the north—as most did—was the obelisk on the Piazza del Popolo. It carried the message: 'Behold the Cross of the Lord—flee, old enemies: the lion of the tribe of Juda [= the Christ] has vanquished you.' Thus, Rome was constructed as a triumph over paganism, as a heavenly city on earth. In another way, too, the Pope wanted to impress the world with the idea that Christianity had, finally, triumphed: the great columns of the Roman emperors Diocletian and Trajan now were used as pedestals for huge statues of the two most important apostles, Peter and Paul. The fact that both the obelisks and the columns once had been used by secular rulers, whilst now they were, visually, subjugated to the religious power of the Church obviously was not accidental.

Both the Vatican and the Lateran palace, the first the seat of the pope as head of the Church, the second of the pope as bishop of Rome, were rebuilt or in a grandiose manner added to. Indeed, the Vatican became the biggest palace of Europe. Moreover, the pope ordered that the main public rooms of the Lateran, too, be decorated with huge frescoes that, in a variety of ways, all reflected his policies outlined above—and the wishes he never came to realize. They exalted the supremacy of the Roman pontiff, both in matters spiritual and, more strikingly, in matters temporal. In a series of episodes, the history of the popes is presented as a struggle that, rightly, resulted in their 'dual monarchy' in the Papal States, but, even more importantly, also as a struggle between the popes and the secular rulers of Christendom—first and foremost the emperors.

Interestingly, upon Sixtus's death in 1590, the Count of Olivares wrote to his master, Philip III of Spain, about Cardinal Bellarmine, a possible candidate for the papal throne. It clearly shows what the Roman Catholic monarchs did not like about a future pope and what, implicitly, they had not liked about the late Pope: 'Bellarmine ... will not do for a pope, for he is mindful only of the interests of the Church and is unresponsive to the reasons of princes ... He will scruple to accept gifts ... I suggest that we exert no action in his favour.' Given the Spanish opposition, almost inevitably Bellarmine did not become pope; he did become a saint, though. Meanwhile, the three popes who did succeed Sixtus all died within slightly more than year. When, in 1592, Clement VIII ascended the papal throne, he chose to continue the vigorous policies first undertaken by Sixtus.

### 1.8.2 Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617–1622–1682)<sup>256</sup>

The present-day plight of Tibet has blinded many—mostly Western—observers to the fact that, far from being a peaceful Buddhist community, for most of its history it has been a violent society not unlike pre-modern Europe, dominated, on the one hand, by landowning noble families ruling from their castellated strongholds—some of who might, temporarily, become kings of part of the vast Tibetan plateau—and, on the other, by monasteries great and small. The latter often were presided over by abbots believed to be reincarnations of the Buddha or of one of the many bodhisattvas. Though they were either elected or, else, ‘found’ by a search party who would travel around the country in search of likely candidates—mostly young boys—and then select the new abbot through a complex process of religious divination, they often stemmed from or were otherwise related to the regional aristocracy. But not only did the noble houses war amongst themselves, so did the monasteries. Indeed, Buddhism, far from being a unifying force, was disrupting Tibet, certainly up to the mid-seventeenth century.

Of course, Buddhism was not original to the country. It had come from India and soon split up into numerous branches that held opposing views of the

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256 This section is based on: Z. Amad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Rome, 1970); Z. Amad, *Life of the Fifth Dalai lama* (New Delhi, 1999); C. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (Princeton, 1987); P. Bishop, ‘Reading the Potala’, in: T. Huber, ed., *Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places In Tibetan Culture* (Dharamsala, 1999) 367–388; A. Chayet, ‘Architectural Wonderland: An Empire of Fictions’, in: J. Millward, et al., eds., *New Qing Imperial History* (London, 2004) 33–52; I. Desideri, *Account of Tibet* (London, 1932) 205–206; S.G. Karmay, *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Gold Manuscript in the Fournier Collection* (London, 1988); S.G. Karmay, ‘The Fifth Dalai Lama and his Reunification of Tibet’, in: idem, *The Arrow and the Spindle. Studies in History, Myth, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu, 1998) 504–517; S.G. Karmay, *Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama* (London, 2014); Y. Ishihama, ‘On the Dissemination of the Belief in the Dalai Lama as a Manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara’, *Acta Asiatica* 64 (1993) 38–56; A. Kircher, *China Illustrata* (Amsterdam, 1667) 64; W. Rockhill, ‘The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and their Relations with the Manchu Emperors of China, 1644–1908’, *T’oung Pao* 11 (1910) 1–104; K. Schaeffer, ‘The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso’, in: M. Brauen, ed., *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual history* (London, 2005) 65–91; G. Tuttle, ‘A Tibetan Buddhist Mission to the East: the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Journey to Beijing, 1652–1653’, in: B. Cuevas and K. Schaeffer, eds., *Power, Politics and the Reinvention of Tradition* (Leiden, 2006) 65–87; R. Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London, 1990); Z. Yamaguchi, ‘The Sovereign Power of the Fifth Dalai Lama’, *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 53 (1995) 1–28.

way to salvation. The resulting sects, or schools, each commanding a number of monasteries, vied for sole power, allying themselves with, but also being actively courted by, the landowning families who thus sought to strengthen their own position and, in a more complex way, to avoid civil unrest, for the monasteries functioned as redistributive organizations in the sense that part of the produce of their estates was daily meted out to the poor of the region.

However, historiography has not yet produced an integral story about the ways in which, during the seventeenth century, spiritual and temporal power came to be united in a system that was both unified and monarchic. The following is an effort to do so.

Two of the major Tibetan-Buddhist sects were the Gelugpa, who belonged to the Yellow Hat group, and the older Kagyu, who were part of the Red Hat group; the first were allied with the kings of U, the second with the rulers of Tsang. The Gelugpa had been founded as a reform Order, by men who felt that because of its prevailing laxity the moral life of monastic Buddhism left much to be desired. This probably explains the Gelugpa's popularity: in Christian Europe, too, reform Orders at least initially always gained great support both amongst the common people and amongst the elite.

After the Tsang kings had conquered central Tibet, the Gelugpa were not allowed to choose a reincarnation for their deceased head, the (fourth) dalai lama—maybe because, quite exceptionally, he had been a foreigner, a Mongolian to be precise and, indeed, a great-grandson of Altan Khan (1507–1583), which, of course, should not really surprise us, given the Mongol khans' traditional interest in Tibet, which had started with Kublai. Actually, it was during Altan's reign that the ties between Tibet and the Mongolian leaders were re-established and that most Mongolians became Buddhists, following the Gelugpa line and its dalai lama leaders.

In 1622, Künga Nyingpo, a young boy born in 1617 into a noble family who had opposed the power of the Tsang, was identified as the fifth Dalai Lama—interestingly by the advisor/teacher of the previous one. In view of Tibet's internal troubles, he could not assume power immediately. To complicate matters, he also had been a candidate for the reincarnation of a high Kagyu-priest—which, I suggest, perhaps indicates the efforts of the two sects to secure the support of a powerful family? However this may be, when he was ten years old Künga was installed at Drepung Monastery, assuming the name of Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso. In his secret autobiography—which, of course, was in manuscript, and has not even been edited or published in its entirety up to now—the fifth Dalai Lama openly admits that in his case the selection, normally through a candidate's recognition of 'sacred' objects that had belonged to his predecessor, had been a sham, orchestrated by the man who wanted him



to succeed as head of the Gelugpa. It is a revealing statement, which may serve to warn those who even nowadays believe in the spiritual purity of the system.

Commencing his studies—in Buddhist philosophy and related tantric practices, but also in astrology, medicine, and poetry—Lobsang Gyatso soon emerged as an intellectually gifted man. His moment of real power, however, only came in 1637, when Gushri Khan (1582–1655), leader of the tribe of the Koshut Mongols who were part of the Dzungarian federation, appeared in Tibet with a retinue of several hundred soldiers. Ostensibly he came on pilgrimage but, of course, wanted to extend his authority by incorporating the native land of Mongolian Buddhism into his sphere of influence. Meeting with him, the Dalai Lama, now twenty years old, accepted his ‘patronage’ and cleverly bestowed upon him the honorific title Dharma King—upholder of the Buddhist teachings—which even more increased Gushri’s stature amongst his own, Buddhist subjects. Indeed, it may well be that Gushri sought to revive the tradition established by Kublai and Phagpa, during the thirteenth century, of a king-priest alliance that would strengthen the power of both, but, mostly, would help him combat the Manchu who precisely at this time had started their conquest of China.

Obviously, the newly forged bond had to work for both sides. Thus, in 1639, Gushri acted on the young Dalai Lama’s wish—others feel that Lobsang Gyatso still was guided by older advisers—to move his troops to the region of Kham, in eastern Tibet, to subjugate a local ruler who did not recognize the power of the Gelugpa monasteries but instead advocated a return to Tibet’s native Bon religion. Since this region also sided with Mongol tribes who rivalled Gushri’s power in Mongolia, this move made sense from Gushri’s perspective as well. Subsequently, Gushri also subjugated the ruling Tsang king. When the Khan and the High Priest met again, in 1642, the latter was proclaimed both religious and political leader of Tibet—or so the fifth Dalai Lama wrote in his autobiography, many years later. In reality, Gushri claimed kingship in Tibet, and allowed the Dalai Lama only his role as supreme religious leader. To finalize at least his spiritual power, Lobsang Gyatso, once more aided by Mongol troops, advanced on the stronghold of the Kagyu sect, slaughtering many monks. Not surprisingly, various revolts followed these brutal campaigns. In the end the king of Tsang was killed, and the Kagyu monasteries were forced to ‘convert’ to the Gelugpa doctrine of Buddhism, accepting the dalai lama’s authority.

Soon, Lobsang Gyatso set out to aggrandize and centralize his power. Naming himself an emanation, or even incarnation of, the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokitesjvara, or, in Tibetan, Chenrezi—considered the patron saint of Lamaist Buddhism—he moved his government to the old capital, Lhasa: a powerfully symbolic gesture for, in the seventh century, the famous founder of Tibet

as an independent kingdom, Songtsan Gampo, had ruled there. In 1645, the Dalai Lama started building a huge palace complex on the Red Hill, which towers over the city. That choice too, I feel, indicates a clear grasp of the power of symbols. For the hill was the site of the remains of a temple dedicated to the bodhisattva and also housed the cavern where Songtsan Gampo used to meditate. To create an even stronger link between kingship and the sacred, the Dalai Lama proclaimed the founder-king a reincarnation of Avalokitesvara as well. Thus, unwittingly, of course, Lobsang Gyatso replicated papal policy in Rome, where the popes had built their palace next to the tomb of St. Peter's to stress their apostolic succession. Interestingly, the construction of the palace itself is shown in great detail in a series of frescoes on the walls of the first gallery—as if to impress visitors with the magnitude of this enterprise and the power of the man who willed it. Interestingly, too, this mirrors Sixtus's policy, for he used frescoes to visualize his 'grand works' as well. In the North Chapel, the Dalai Lama himself is depicted on a throne—with, on the other wall, the Buddha Amitabha: not only of equal height, they also face each other as aureoled equals. Not incidentally, either, the palace dominates the square where Tibet's most venerated shrine, the Jokhang temple attracts pilgrims from all over the country as the Vatican on its hill dominates St. Peter's. Obviously aware of the power of public ritual, the Dalai Lama also revived the traditional celebration of the *mönlam*, the New Year Festival, at Lhasa. The gigantic banners that, embroidered with religious symbols, would then be hung on the palace's outer walls are still preserved there.

In the 1650s and 1660s, Lobsang Gyatso initiated a policy to eliminate all rivals of the prevailing Gelugpa teachings, banning the study of texts now condemned as heterodox and prohibiting their printing. Sixtus, too, had thus streamlined Catholic orthodoxy. The Dalai Lama re-interpreted the history of his predecessors as having been, also, reincarnations of Avalokitesvara. Moreover, he travelled the entire country to conduct rituals and give sermons, always presenting himself as the incarnation of the deity, bringing this message to sometimes huge audiences. Interestingly, however, he did not completely succumb to the pressure, which, apparently, the older Gelugpa leaders brought upon him. He continued to support the Red Hat sect of Nyingma, who favoured tantric rituals and the power of secret visions—but used that part of Buddhist culture for his own ends: he 'institutionalized' the role of the oracle that resided in Nechung monastery, making it the 'state oracle' of Tibet,<sup>257</sup> and, thus,

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257 R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 'Das tibetische Staatsorakel', *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 3 (1948) 136–155.

ensuring that it would not predict anything that contravened the orthodoxy now established by the dalai lama. He himself enriched Tibetan Buddhism with two volumes of scripture that were the result of visions he had received and, therefore, were presented as divine revelations. Thus, he put his own seal on the development of his country's religion. Maybe this allowed him, in later years, to show some signs of reconciliation towards the Kagyu sect: in 1674 he welcomed the then Karmapa, the sect's reincarnated head, to Lhasa.

Meanwhile, by the 1650s, Gushri Khan's power over Tibet had waned somewhat. Consequently, the Dalai Lama was able to appropriate ever more secular functions. Since he changed and improved both the administration and the fiscal system, Tibet flourished—again as Pope Sixtus had done in his state. This policy attracted the attention of the Chinese emperor Shunzhi (1638–1650–1661), the first of the Qing family actually to rule the Heavenly Kingdom. Having, recently, taken the reins of government in his own hands, in 1651 he invited the Dalai Lama to come to Beijing—certainly also because the Manchu rulers realized that their power in Central Asia partly depended on the ways other Mongol tribes like the Dzungarians tried to use Tibet, and Buddhism, to their own ends.

Interpretations of what happened when, in 1653, Lobsang Gyatso arrived in the imperial capital even now play an important role in the discussions over the status of Tibet as, either, a long-time protectorate of China or, alternatively, as a state that has been sovereign since times immemorial.<sup>258</sup> Sources vary as to the modus of the Dalai Lama's reception. He himself writes that, on his request, the emperor left Beijing to greet him, thus accepting him on equal terms as ruler of an independent state. This scene, actually, is represented on the series of frescoes commemorating the entire visit in the great hall of the White Palace of the Potala complex—obviously as an important element in the intricate visual propaganda shown throughout the public parts of the dalai lama's residence. In Rome's Lateran Palace, too, Pope Sixtus had himself and his predecessors depicted as the equal of emperors and other princes. Other sources indicate that no such reception was organized but, rather, that the visitor from Tibet came to the imperial palace, as behoved someone who accepted Chinese suzerainty. Though a temple was built to honour the Dalai

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258 I have chosen not to go into the huge and, also, controversial literature on this topic. It seems to me that the sources for what happened in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries are too meagre and contradictory to allow for a historically reliable analysis. Moreover, many people, some scholars included, indulge in dangerous, anachronistic interpretations by reasoning backward from their twentieth- and twenty-first-century political and religious convictions.

Lama as a living Buddha, and though he was housed in a specially constructed palace, on actually meeting with Shunzhi, the ruler of Tibet did, in fact, accept a lower throne.

During subsequent years Lobsang Gyatso tried, at least in his correspondence with Beijing, constantly to impress upon China the notion that he, in fact, was king of Tibet—a status that the Manchus, given their fear of their Dzungarian opponents in Central Asia, perhaps were willing to tacitly accept, without in any way formally acknowledging these claims. Interestingly, the seal given by the Chinese emperor to the fifth dalai lama describes him only as ‘the lord of Buddhist teachings in the world.’

This, in a way, corresponds to the way the dalai lama was seen in the West. Though it is not clear whether the two Jesuits who travelled from Beijing to Agra in 1661 and passed through Lhasa actually met Lobsang Gyatso, in a published report of their journey an illustration was included that purportedly showed the dalai lama and described him as ‘the Eternal Father’. Soon, however, Westerners, both Catholic missionaries and, later, non-Catholic scholars, started—the first often approvingly and, even, admiringly—comparing the organization of (Tibetan) Buddhism with the Roman Catholic Church—with its monasteries and sects/religious Orders, its ceremonies and rituals—and equalled the office of dalai lama with that of the pope. In 1717, the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri came to Lhasa. His analysis of the land, its history, and its culture is detailed and fascinating. While, rather surreptitiously, he stressed the similarities between the life of the Buddha as told in Tibet and the life of Jesus of Nazareth, he wrote about the dalai lama: ‘He is worshipped and sacrifices are made to him not as an ordinary man, but as Cen-ree-zij ... incarnated and reincarnated for long centuries for their guidance and benefit. He rules not only over religious but over temporal matters, as he is really the absolute master of Tibet.’<sup>259</sup>

Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso who, posthumously, was named ‘The Great Fifth’, died in 1682. However, the man who had acted as his right hand, or regent, decided to conceal the fact. Using substitutes to perform the holy rites, receive visitors et cetera, he actually succeeded in doing so for about fifteen years. Arguably, this shows the distance that must have existed between the Dalai Lama and even his most intimate surroundings. During this time, the regent went on to consolidate the rule of the Gelugpa. When, in 1697, he finally announced the death of Tibet’s divine ruler, he had made sure that he himself had controlled the selection of the deceased’s reincarnation. Meanwhile, in

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259 I. Desideri, *An Account of Tibet. The Travels of Ippolito Desideri (1712–1727)*, F. de Filippi, ed. (New Delhi, 1995) especially part three, *passim*; for the quote: 205–206.

the Potala's West Chapel a fifteen-meter-high golden stupa had been erected, studded with some 19,000 pearls and gems: the first in a series of eight tombs that contain the embalmed remains of the dalai lamas, meant to become a focus for pilgrimage and prayer and, of course, a symbol of the power of the man who happened to occupy the god-king's throne.

## 2 Similarities and Differences—Types and Singularities?

### 2.1 Introduction

Obviously, since genus comes before species, differences arise from similarities: differences are specific, similarities generic. In this section, I will generalize elements introduced in the first part, such as: religion and power, the specific relationship between soteriology and economic power, the use of ideological orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy, imperial expansion and religious mission, imperial sacrality, (in-)visibility in life and death, marital policies, et cetera. These perspectives—which, to be seen properly, sometimes will necessitate the repetition of information already given—definitely will help me to show that, actually, similarities did exist between what may at first sight seem instances of power in relation to religion that originated in and were confined to their own cultural system or *oikoumenè*. Looking for similarities and differences in the relationship between religion and power as a combined force creating imperial cohesion in the states of 'pre-modern' Eurasia, and trying to determine whether there are types or, rather, only singularities, I may be able to construct, if not a typology, at least a few cross-Eurasian types. At the same time I hope to indicate which cases truly can be termed unique.

However, one important caveat applies. Speaking of Europe, as I sometimes tend to do, and comparing it to other regions of Eurasia, one has to realize that there was no such thing as a geographically identifiable and politically unified Europe. It was an *oikoumenè* whose borders and frontiers were fluid.<sup>260</sup> It contained an empire, the Holy Roman one, which, however, certainly after 1648, was increasingly a non-empire. It also contained many other princely states, some of them tiny and mostly without any imperial characteristics, some of them fairly large and with obvious imperial pretensions. Also, the forms of Christianity practised in these states varied, and most polities had their own form of Church-State relationship, and, insofar as they remained within the

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260 Cfr. Peter Rietbergen, *Europe: A Cultural History* (London, third revised edition, 2014) Introduction.

Catholic fold, their own relationship with Rome. In short, on many levels of analysis, 'Europe' differed greatly from the three huge Islamic empires I have chosen to present here, as well as from China and Japan. By and large the latter were unified, often strongly centralized states of huge territorial size. Against this background, I propose the following observations.

## 2.2 *Church and State, Priest and King*

Due to the preponderance they gave to religion, and the power of religious leaders, from the beginning people both in Christendom and in the House of Islam—and in Buddhist societies at a later stage—have shown disquiet over and even fear of the nature and functions of secular kingship as instruments of—almost naked—power. Yet, in the face of reality, they saw no alternative to it; indeed, they knew that it was essential to prevent society from lapsing into anarchy. Therefore, whenever a theocracy was impossible to realize, people accepted the fact of monarchy and its essential role in ordering human existence while trying, always, to infuse it with a, to them, higher morality.

Conversely, almost from the beginning, two of Eurasia's four major ideological systems, Christianity and Islam, showed characteristics that made them into perfect tools for the (added) enforcement of secular power, as well as for creating state cohesion: they were religions in which a supernatural, all-powerful god could legitimize a ruler, sacralize him. Though neither Buddhism nor Confucianism started as religions, at least Buddhism soon developed in that direction as well, enabling rulers thus to use it, too. Moreover, the clergy of these three systems managed to acquire legal and judicial qualifications, which made them the perfect candidates to fulfil the role of state bureaucrats. Confucianism, China's dominant socio-political ideology even during its last non-Han imperial dynasty, always had been the foundation of state power, and, also, had stimulated the education and ethos of a strong bureaucracy that helped to create the state's institutional and administrative cohesion.

Yet, the interaction between religious and secular power was complex. In China, the Son of Heaven, the real ruler, also functioned as the chief ritualist, thus combining, in a sense, power over the State as well as over its ideological-cosmological foundations. But whereas many Chinese were—also—Buddhists, yet the Buddhist Church never was able to rival the imperial institution in this respect. Nor, actually, did Buddhism in China have a hierarchy that could be easily dominated by the State—except for the Tibetan and Tibetan/Mongolian variants. This, however, did not mean the authorities in Beijing did not often try to clamp down on the economic and hence cultural power of, especially, the Buddhist monasteries. Still, Buddhism's higher ecclesiastical reaches often moved close to the higher echelons of the state, especially the imperial

family and the court, who for reasons both pious and political tended to extend their patronage to these monasteries.

In Japan the links were even closer: on the one hand, because, over time, a number of the—usually many—imperial sons and daughters became Buddhist monks and nuns, often to profit from the accumulated monastic wealth through gaining power over the country's many Buddhist monasteries and temples,<sup>261</sup> on the other, because, from the seventeenth century onwards, the Tokugawa shoguns actually succeeded in making Buddhism into a state organization.

At a time when Christians did not accept papal infallibility, yet, in the world of Islam at times the caliphal or, for that matter, the imamal, role of the secular ruler tended towards an almost infallible position in religious matters—which, of course, greatly enhanced the ruler's position vis-à-vis the mostly non-hierarchized *'ulama'*.

Finally, in Christian Europe, no one person ever exercised such a combination of secular and religious power on an imperial scale. Though the first Christian emperor, Constantine, seems to have wanted to assume the role of governor of the Church as well, later developments enabled the bishops of Rome to acquire—mostly uncontested—religious supremacy but never to gain comparable power in matters secular. Soon, their Church tended towards ecclesiastical hierarchization. Indeed, becoming a Church helped the clergy to take a firm, uniform stance against the State, if necessary. But seemingly paradoxically, this also worked the other way round: wherever a strong, centralized Church was established, governments would more easily dominate the institution, if necessary. Indeed, to help the State gain more power over the Church certainly was one of the main reasons behind the many Reform movements in sixteenth-century Europe.

In the long run, all over Eurasia the relationship between secular and religious power remained uneasy. The two organizations, Church and State, always sought to use, or, rather, manipulate one another to increase their own power over society. This process shows itself particularly well with regard to the basic requirement that people, since time immemorial, have made of either organization: providing them with food. A cyclical notion of life, death, and

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261 S. Weinstein, 'Aristocratic Buddhism', in: D. Sively and W. McCullough, eds., *The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 2: Heian Japan* (Cambridge, 1999) 449–516; G. Cogan, 'Serving the Emperor by Serving the Buddha. Imperial Buddhist Monks and Nuns as Abbots, Abbesses and Adoptees in Early Modern Japan', in: L. Wilson, ed., *Family and Buddhism* (Albany, 2013) 21–42.

rebirth/rejuvenation permeates the food rituals that characterize Christianity—the rebirth of the Christ in the consecration during Eucharist, and the following meal, the ‘communion’—as well the imperial ploughing ceremony in China and, even more obviously, the rice sacrifice during the imperial accession in Japan, and the subsequent banquet. Both the Eucharist and the Japanese ritual are an exchange of gifts: the god/goddess offers himself/herself through his/her body—bread, wine, rice, sake—which has been produced by the humans. Thus, they empower each other, through the medium of the priest/shaman.

### 2.3 *Becoming Sacred. Religion and Imperial Accession Rituals in Eurasia*

As indicated above, in Christian Europe any ruler seeking legitimacy—whether after a regular succession or after he had taken the throne by force—had to somehow secure the backing of the Church: the pope himself, or the country’s primate or the episcopacy. In the eyes of the public—elites and masses—this meant the would-be monarch had to be anointed by a representative of the Church. The Holy Roman Emperors originally had to travel to Rome or any other town—in Italy—agreed upon by the pope for this ceremony, and in later times yet had to leave Vienna for Frankfurt, where they would be anointed in St. Bartholomew’s cathedral by the archbishop-elect of Mainz. Many countries had a church specifically sanctioned by tradition as ‘the coronation church’, stressing the importance of the link between the origins of a state and its earliest, Christian foundations, the beginning of the relationship between kingship and religion: Westminster Abbey in London, built from 1042 onwards by England’s last Anglo-Saxon king, Edward the Confessor as his burial mausoleum, and also used, a year after his death, by the first Norman king, William the Conqueror for his coronation by the archbishop of Canterbury; Reims cathedral in France, where the first Christian king, Clovis, had been baptized—which later meant the kings of France had to leave Paris and travel to the east of their country. Meanwhile, in Sweden, a new monarch would journey to Uppsala to be crowned by the Lutheran archbishop-primate; the location was the cathedral that had been built to replace a church that itself had been raised on the site of a pagan temple in what was, then, Sweden’s capital, and used, later, to keep the remains of the country’s patron saint, King Erik. And notwithstanding the transfer of their capital to St. Petersburg, the Russian czars journeyed to their old capital, Moscow, to be blessed by the Church in the Kremlin’s cathedral and, then, to crown themselves there.

Thus, in Europe, the ‘coronation’ or, where this did not apply, the investiture or inauguration, always was heavily laden with religious ritual and symbolism. Also, it was a hugely public moment, witnessed by the royal family, the main



officers of state, the lords spiritual and temporal of the realm, and as many other politically important people as could be packed into the church, while outside thousands of commoners thronged the streets and, indeed, saw their new ruler when he showed himself on a balcony and, usually, in a procession.

The situation was different in most other parts of Eurasia. To start with, in the Islamic empires the imperial accession did not (necessarily) take place in a 'religious' building—the exception being, perhaps, that the Ottoman sultan girded himself with the sword of the Prophet in the mosque of Eyup and put on the turban of the Prophet Joseph in the Pavilion of the Holy Mantle—but, rather, in a palace, as in Safavid Iran. Nor, indeed, was it presided over by a 'priest'—though in Istanbul it was the *shaykh ul-Islam* who administered the oath to the sultan. In those states where 'self-coronation' or, as often was the case, a 'seating on the throne' was the major element of the ritual, the implication was clear: though members of the clergy would be present, there was no Church that successfully claimed to be the necessary—and only—intermediary between the ruler and the Divine. And though there might be a public procession—as in Istanbul—it had no religious overtones, either, as it had in Christendom where the new ruler went through town under a canopy, which always would remind the public of the religious icons that passed through the streets on far more numerous occasions.

As to the Sinosphere, in Japan, the emperor remained entirely invisible to the larger public. The accession ceremonies, in the imperial palace in Kyoto, involved a number of acts—such as the receiving of the three sacred jewels, one of which travelled from the shrine of Ise to the capital, and an actual enthronement; all of these were performed by the emperor himself with, perhaps a few Shinto-priests in attendance, only.<sup>262</sup> Indeed, the most sacred moment, the union of the *tenno* with the Sun Goddess, was conducted without any witness, unless one subscribes to the idea that the new emperor coupled with a court lady, as a 'sacred woman'. In China, however, the enthronement ritual did not entail elements we would denote as 'religious' at all.<sup>263</sup> It took place in the Forbidden City. The actual act of taking the throne and the imperial seal, in the Taihedian, the Hall of Supreme Harmony, was witnessed by a very small group, only, though thousands of 'privileged' men would stand in silence in the vast marble square outside.

262 F. Bock, 'The Great Feast of the Enthronement', *Monumenta Nipponica* 45, no. 1 (1990) 27–38. Cfr. Waida, 'Conceptions', 100 sqq., and Ellwood, *Feast of Kingship*, *passim*.

263 Ching, 'Son of Heaven', 22.

#### 2.4 *Soteriology, the Economy, and Imperial Power*

Amongst other things, the soteriological character of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism meant that believers were willing to endow the Churches institutionalized within these religions with worldly goods, which gave them huge economic power as well as added authority. Also, the resulting establishments—almshouses, soup kitchens, orphanages, hospitals, schools—were the only social institutions catering to the needs of the indigent part of the population. Comparing the economic policies of Buddhist monasteries in medieval China<sup>264</sup> and Japan with those followed by Christian monasteries in medieval Europe, the similarities are, indeed, striking: the tax-exempted position—which was one of the reasons people were donating land to monastic communities in the first place—was combined with the reclamation and exploitation of poor lands, the marketing of the produce, banking activities et cetera. And though *awqaf* and other institutionalized forms of distribution of wealth through religious channels were not monasteries in the Buddhist/Christian sense of the word—though one might characterize Sufi communities as such—the link between religious piety and large-scale charity hugely influenced the economy of Islamic societies as well.

Precisely the soteriology of these religions may have appealed to ‘imperial women’, which might seem to prove the notion that women generally are considered more religion-conscious, more ‘pious’, than men. It is certainly striking that all over Eurasia the female members of ruling houses engaged in patronage of religious institutions and establishments such as abbeys, convents, and temples but, also, charitable foundations and schools, often endowing them on a large scale which, if anything, ensured huge public visibility and, hence, connotations of royal power. We see it in the states of Roman Catholic Europe, but also in the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, as well as in China and, though perhaps to a lesser degree, in Japan.<sup>265</sup>

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264 Specifically as studied by: J. Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du ve au xe siècle* (Saigon, 1956).

265 E.g.: C. Lawrence, ed., *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe. Patrons, Collectors and Connoisseurs* (University Park, 1992); L. Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders: The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan* (London, 2007); the various contributions to: D. Fairchild Ruggles, ed., *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies* (Albany, 2000); M. Weidner, ‘Imperial Engagements with Buddhist Art and Architecture’, in: M. Weidner, ed., *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu, 2001) 117–144, as well as: G. Cogan, *The Princess Nun: Bunchi, Buddhist Reform, and Gender in Early Edo Japan* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014).

Sooner or later the combined religious authority and socio-economic might of the Church caused rulers to try to re-possess the wealth, which, they piously argued, should not accrue to institutions whose members professed a sober, virtuous, and thus morally exemplary way of life. There were two ways of accomplishing this goal, designed to (re-) create imperial supremacy.

The one was to nominate members of the ruling family to those positions in the Church that actually controlled ecclesiastical wealth. In imperial Japan, this was done almost consistently from generation to generation. However, in such European states as Habsburg Austria and Spain, and Bourbon France, though the opportunity did exist and younger siblings sometimes did become (arch-) bishops and, even, cardinals, surprisingly this policy does not seem to have been as systematic as one might have thought. Nor did the Romanov dynasty, for example, consider appointing its siblings as patriarchs. Of course, the number of (male) children available for such functions might be limited in a given generation or, indeed, in a succession of dynastic generations—as was, precisely, the case with said Romanovs. Yet, at various times European monarchs, rather than establishing collateral branches of the dynasty, with the always present danger of creating succession problems, did decide to thus ‘emasculate’ their younger sons—certainly a more humane way of doing so than imprisoning imperial princes in the harem, blinding them, or practising outright fratricide as was long prevalent in the Ottoman world. Moreover, whenever younger sons were appointed prince-bishops, they also helped strengthen the grip of their royal relatives on the state’s Church. Yet, in the worlds of Islam, appointing imperial princes to the office of *sadr* was not customary, perhaps, as I suggested above, to avoid dangerous accumulation of religious and secular power.

As far as I know, no comparative study exists of the extent of the other instrument, the forced re-appropriations of Church property during Europe’s Protestant Reformations or of the ways in which these benefitted the increase of royal power. Nor has such a study been made of the obviously comparable policies pursued by the Roman Catholic princes of Spain in the late fifteenth and again in the late sixteenth century, and by the French kings though, as indicated above, perhaps even a third of the estates of the Gallican Church were eventually controlled by, though not in the possession of the State.

The question remains whether the other polities of Eurasia adopted similar measures to resume ownership of Church wealth to enlarge their means of economic-financial patronage and, thus, power. Though less-well studied than the European ‘reductions’, it does seem that the Ming emperors tried to regain the economic capacity of the lands belonging to Buddhist monasteries and so did Oda Nobunaga in Japan. Both in Safavid Iran and, better documented,

in Mughal India comparable developments actually did take place: Ismail and his successors re-distributed the wealth of the *awqaf* to better control these organizations and their role in the wider society. Akbar both reduced the power of his *sadr* to dole out state property and, on the other hand, confiscated what had been donated already during previous reigns. However, since most of the data come from Akbar's court historiographer Abu l-Fazl, and no administrative archives are preserved, it is, I feel, hard to determine the extent to which this policy was pursued. Significantly, though, his successors, while subscribing to greater Islamic piety, did not really reverse his policy.<sup>266</sup>

### 2.5 *Imperial Power between Ideological Idiosyncrasy and Religious Conformity*

Though I do not claim the following to be a universal pattern, it seems that ambitious rulers—from established dynasties but far more often from new ones—often were willing to use religion as a tool: to increase or gain power, and/or to introduce far-reaching reforms in their states. In China, oftentimes political and economic instability led to rebellions that, somehow, were ideologically or religiously motivated as well and, sometimes, resulted in a change of dynasty.

In late Roman Europe, Christianity was chosen for that very purpose by Constantine the Great when he adopted the Cross as his legions' emblem, and a century later Theodosius the Great used a similar form of religious symbolism to empower his troops against Eugenius. One might argue that the Crusading leaders did the same to unite a motley collection of knights and peasants into one slightly more effective army. In China and Japan, Buddhism fulfilled that role. In fourteenth-century China, the first Ming emperor used religious fervour to consolidate the unity of the warband he led in his campaign to conquer the throne.<sup>267</sup> Indeed, oftentimes it was, precisely, a group of religiously motivated warriors who, as Ibn Khaldun remarked, helped an aspiring dynast to gain—or, in the case of insurrection against his rule: keep—the throne.<sup>268</sup> In Iran at the turn of the sixteenth century, the first Safavid shah took advantage of heterodox religious ideas—again presented as a return to a pure, orthodox past—as well as of prevalent economic and social discontent to energize the military Order of the Qizilbash, establish his rule, and create his empire.

<sup>266</sup> Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure*, 267–288.

<sup>267</sup> Dardess, 'The Transformation of Messianic Revolt'.

<sup>268</sup> See the case(s) presented in Gommans' contribution to this volume.

Though such ideology-driven warbands were not always the means to gain power, from the sixteenth century onwards Europe's 'new' monarchs—the Tudors and the Vasas, but also the Hohenzollerns, in Prussia—used existing religious discontent to establish themselves. They embraced varieties of Protestantism, presented theses as the 'new orthodoxy', and, finally, founded 'reformed', and, moreover, 'national' Churches, obviously to strengthen their hold over their subjects, starting with the powerful and wealthy clergy. In India, Akbar, confronted with unsettling cultural-religious heterogeneity and political adversaries, decided to arrogate a measure of religious power his predecessors had not dared claim; yet, to do so, he had to create his own religion. Last, but not least, in their various ways, both Pope Sixtus v and the fifth Dalai Lama reformed the Church they were leading and, in the process, (re-) built their states as well.

But wherever imperial power was established with an appeal to a more radical, idiosyncratic version of faith than provided by mainstream religion—not only in Safavid Iran and in Mughal India but also, e.g., in Ming China, in Henrician England, et cetera—, subsequent rulers usually tried to find a way back to religious traditions that could accommodate the largest number of their subjects, as well as prevent potential rivals from using heterodox ideologies themselves. To put it another way, sooner or later most rulers realized that allowing a powerful religious organization to nestle in the fabric of their state might endanger their position.

In China, the Tang emperors forcibly tried to reduce the influence of Buddhism, while in Heian Japan, Emperor Kammu did so, too, restricting the number of Buddhist temples in his capital to three. More importantly, rulers who succeeded an ancestor who had unleashed some sort of (new) religious-ideological potential to gain or increase his power, often came to realize they had to control it again; especially if the interpretation of religion newly introduced was seen as too heterodox by the political classes, they needed to change course and colours again. So did the first Ming-emperor. So did the later Safavids and Mughals. Whereas the former were Shia Muslims, the latter were Sunnis. What they had in common was their tendency to Sufism and its possibilities of (heterodox) religious fervour, which gave them a distinct view of their role, both in temporal and in spiritual affairs. However, the visionary, almost prophetic notions of supreme leadership upheld by Ismail I and Akbar that inextricably mixed millenarian religious and political elements into an unorthodox ideological brew do not seem to have been shared by their successors. At least publicly, they did not present themselves in such a way but, rather, reverted to a more traditional version of, in India, Sunnism, and, in Iran, of Shi'ism, albeit with definite Sunni accommodations. And in faraway

England, Elizabeth I, too, thought better of supporting heterodoxy: gladly accepting what advantages, economic and political, the reformist ecclesiastical policy endorsed by her father had brought the Crown, she soon moved back to a doctrinal middle of the road-position to avoid further alienating the majority of her subjects.

Yet, the picture is more complex. For many reasons, in Roman Catholic Christianity as well as in the worlds of Islam and Buddhism, doctrinal orthodoxy was an illusion. For example, precisely the existence of influential and powerful religious Orders nominally subordinate to but effectively acting and, often, thinking independently from the religious centre always threatened the power of the papacy and, in the other two worlds, that of the state-appointed religious authorities. At the same time, this situation enabled rulers or those aspiring to that position to choose from a variety of religious-political interpretations of, also, royal power. Thus, the popes sometimes did support Dominican orthodoxy to combat Jesuit notions. Akbar forged his ideas from a brand of Sufism later abhorred by Aurangzeb who, in his turn, used the stricter Naqshbandi forms to his own ends. In Japan, both the emperors and the shoguns engaged the various Buddhist sects for their political aims while, from the late eighteenth century onwards, the emperors participated in the re-invention of Shinto as a national religion.

## 2.6 *Missionary Fervour and Imperial Expansion*

Elaborating the points presented above, I would like to argue that institutionalized monotheistic religions tend to have a stronger urge to proselytize than polytheistic ones, though the latter do not entirely lack such drive. Obviously, the better, i.e. the more centrally, structured a monotheistic religion is, the more effective its missionary efforts will be. Since neither Buddhism nor Islam were thus organized, they never became strong missionary forces in their own right, nor could they be supported by and, indeed, used by the State to do so. Since, at least until the nineteenth century, the various Protestant Churches, deeply fragmented as they were, did not usually engage in institutional mission, either, on a global scale only Roman Catholicism developed a definite missionary identity, often seeking the assistance of, and allowing their ideologies to be used by, secular rule.

However, looking at the topic from a slightly different angle, we should realize that while there was no Buddhist Church nor an Islamic one, both religions did spawn religious Orders, or sects, that on their own initiative engaged in missionary activities. Individual Buddhist monasteries did send their monks to convert Korea and Japan, and wandering (Sufi) saints did travel far beyond their own worlds to spread Islam. Nor was the Church of Rome only

the papacy ruling over a centralized Church. Already from the sixth century onwards, a variety of Christian religious Orders transcended their world origin in southern, Romanized Europe, and, often operating beyond the control of the Curia proper, sent their missionaries first into the northern, Germanic, 'pagan' or, rather, polytheistic lands and, from the ninth and tenth centuries onwards, to the farthest reaches of Eurasia. Franciscan monks, urged partly by their own superiors, partly by the popes, set out to convert the worlds of the Mongols. Their aim also was to forge an alliance between the empire of the Church and the states of the khans of Central Asia, to combine forces against the world of Islam. In the end, although Tibetan Lamaism was influential outside Tibet proper, to wit amongst the Mongols and in China, the Church of Rome really became the world's only spiritual empire, if we define empire as a centrally led force whose power widely transcends its homeland.

Not only did the papacy undertake its own expansion, it also helped Europe's nascent polities to gain ideological and, hence, political cohesion. But has it been the only religious organization to do so? Maybe the question should be rephrased, and the perspective reversed as well as widened: did secular rulers choose 'Religion', a Church, in whatever form it presented itself in their state, for that role, including to expand their frontiers? Adopting this perspective of a state consciously using a religion to imperially enlarge its territory, one might argue that both the Yuan in the thirteenth and the Qing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries went a long way in their political use of the propagation of Buddhism in frontier Mongolia.

Yet, this form of State-Religion collaboration or, indeed, symbiosis seems to have been strongest in Christendom. Constantine chose Christianity hoping to stall the imminent decline of his empire, and Charlemagne allied himself with Rome to give cohesion to his Francia. Moreover, he also employed the Church to pacify his newly conquered territories, especially in the German lands. This pattern soon became set.

In Iberia, the *reconquista* of what they considered their frontier lands undertaken by the various kings of Castile against their Muslim neighbours was, to a large extent, faith- and, indeed, Church-driven. The *conquista* of Eastern Europe, which started in the ninth and tenth centuries as well, was the work of the Church or of its religious Orders, too. In the fifteenth century, the religious principality on Europe's eastern frontier long ruled by the Teutonic Knights was made into an independent, secular duchy by and for Albert of Prussia, the last grandmaster of that Order of knightly monks.

At approximately the same time, due to the Protestant reformations the power of the papacy all over Europe was greatly reduced. Wisely, it again allied itself with an empire, that of the Austrian-Habsburgs: the re-Catholicization

of Central and Eastern Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries benefitted both the Habsburg rulers and restored and even strengthened some of the power of the papacy.

Also from the late fifteenth century onwards, the Roman Curia supported the Portuguese and the Spanish conquests in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Consequently, these 'seaborne empires' became more coherent and, indeed, far easier to rule than they otherwise would have been. At the same time, the spiritual empire of the Church gained immeasurably from this policy: precisely because Rome claimed and played an integral role in the conquest of the non-European worlds, 'native' Christians from as far as Brazil, Mexico, Congo, India, and Japan came to Rome to honour the man they now considered their supreme pontiff.

### 2.7 *Marital and Non-Marital Policies and Their Consequences: Royal Women in the Mongol-Manchu-Chinese Empire, Japan, and 'the Rest'?*

Marriage choices that, sometimes, became patterns always have been an important indication of the view rulers hold of their family's unique position. They also, of course, are instruments to achieve either internal cohesion or external safety, or both. Last, but not least, the (public) ceremonies surrounding marriage can be used to mobilize the general public and, hence, impress it with princely power. Obviously, here the question is to what extent these factors showed the role and power of religion.

In China, after the first Qing emperors had cast their net more widely, Kangxi and his successors married within their own Manchu clan of the Aisin Gioro. When such unions did not produce the desired offspring, the imperial consorts were forced to adopt as their own sons by lesser women/concubines—who often stemmed from other Manchu 'tribes'. After the ruler's demise, the next emperor, in true Confucian spirit, would always have to publicly revere his 'step-mother' as the empress-dowager, the imperial matriarch. In Japan, the same 'rule' basically was followed: as their formal empress, the emperors married a daughter of one of the many lines of the—originally shogunal—Fujiwara family. If the marriage remained sterile, sons or, even, daughters by court ladies would be adopted by the *chugo* and succeed their imperial father as emperor or empress. Thus, the continuation of the 'mana' of the imperial line was guaranteed. In short, within the cultural-religious unified worlds of the Sinosphere marriages did not involve problems of public faith; since inter-state, inter-dynastic marriages were virtually non-existent, potential religious differences and the ensuing difficulties did not arise, either.



In the Christian and Islamic worlds, the situation was rather different. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Habsburg family, or rather the various Habsburg lines, of which the Austrian one always was associated with the imperial dignity, showed a marked tendency to inbreeding, resulting, it has been said, in the genetic problems inherent in such policy.<sup>269</sup> Yet, the 'Habsburg pattern' really was an exception. In Europe's other states, for domestic political reasons, the heirs of the throne only rarely married daughters of their own noble subjects, since this might endanger the ruling family's position; commoners were, of course, excluded as marriage material altogether, since they would contaminate the royal blood. Rather, for geopolitical reasons, members of royal and other princely families tended to intermarry across state borders, even though this policy, too, might in the long run create a sometimes high degree of consanguinity. The religious factor did complicate as well as limit their choices: after the Reformation, it was less usual for a Roman Catholic prince or princess to marry a Protestant.

Yet, simple power politics might override such considerations. Charles I of England, head of the Anglican Church, married Henrietta of France, a Roman Catholic. In the next generation, trade and colonial commerce dictated the marriage between the Protestant Charles II and the devout Roman Catholic Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza. In both cases, the women were allowed to profess their faith in their private chapels though their children were raised as Protestants.

In the German states, inter-confessional dynastic marriages occasionally occurred as well. Thus, while religion was an important, but not a predominant factor, considerations of power were paramount, even to the extent that 'unequal' unions were concluded as, e.g., when two 'sons of France' wedded two gold- and jewel-laden daughters of the rather upstart Florentine House of Medici: both the political role of the brides' family and their fabulous wealth made them desirable partners after all.

Though one might expect the power struggle between the Ottoman and the Safavid worlds to have resulted in politically motivated inter-dynastic marriages, e.g. to bring about peace between these often warring neighbours, as far as I know they did not happen. The Sunni-Shia rift may have been responsible for this situation. Nor do the Sunni sultans seem to have envisaged linking themselves with the formally Sunni emperors in Delhi though, given the

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269 F. Ceballos and G. Alvarez, 'Royal Dynasties as Human Inbreeding Laboratories: The Habsburgs', *Heredity* 111, no. 2 (2013) 114–121.

sometimes strained relations between the Safavids and the Mughals, this might have made political sense as well. Instead, in Istanbul, the imperial harem was filled with girls from within the Ottoman Empire itself, representing a variety of ethnic and, as indicated above, religious backgrounds; there seems to have been no distinct political and certainly no religious reasons behind their selection.

In Delhi, on the other hand, the first Mughals consciously sought to strengthen internal imperial cohesion by marrying ladies both from Hindu and Muslim princely families. However, Akbar's four successors all married Persian princesses as well—albeit not always daughters of the reigning shah-in-shah. Of course, the Mughals had lesser wives as well. Surprisingly, the Mughal court's policy does not seem to have been reciprocated in Isfahan: the Safavid shahs tended to marry girls from regionally powerful families—including, sometimes, of Christian-Georgian noble background. Arguably, this policy initially did serve to tie newly conquered territories to the old centre. However, over a few generations it also created new elites who, fighting for power with more established groups, destabilized the Safavid polity again.<sup>270</sup>

As to the visibility of imperial marriage, the situation in Europe markedly differed from what was practised elsewhere. To a large extent, the primarily religious ceremonies were public. Not, of course, as public as they have become since the nineteenth century, but yet the arrival of a, nearly always, foreign princess to wed the heir to the throne and, thus, the symbolic linking of two states—the most common form—were witnessed by a great many people in the streets, low and high—as seems to have been the case in the capitals of India's Hindu princes. However, though to a lesser degree, in Europe the liturgy that instituted the sacramental union was public, too, as throngs of people attended it in the capital's cathedral or the palace chapel.

Given the at least formal concepts of monogamy prescribed and of divorce forbidden by the Christian religion, such moments in the royal life cycle were relatively rare but not unique. The frequent death in childbirth of royal spouses often resulted in royal re-marriage, and thus in yet another major religious-dynastic feast.

In Europe, the ceremonies were the more festive too since, obviously, the future of the dynasty depended on the outcome. In China and Japan where, despite a harem system, the official function of empress-consort did exist, the public visibility of her union to the heir of the throne or, sometimes,

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270 Babaie, *Slaves of the Shah passim*.

the reigning emperor was very limited indeed. And since a woman in the Islamic harems became the (future) empress-mother, or *valide-sultan*, only after she had borne a son, her previous union with the reigning emperor was not celebrated, at least not publicly.

Last but not least we may ask what, if any, was the influence of the religious attitudes and preferences of royal wives? As indicated above, many of them engaged in the building of temples, mosques, and churches, and the founding and patronage of monasteries. Obviously, this helped to bind to the throne the many people engaged and employed in the upkeep and running of these institutions—individuals but, often, entire religious communities.<sup>271</sup> But did these women also influence their husband's policies—in the religious and, maybe, in the secular fields as well?

The question is difficult to answer. As far as I know, no systematic study has been made of this topic, not even within the confines of Eurasia's religious sub-worlds. Though I indicated my doubts as to the prominent role of the Ottoman *valide-sultans* in their husbands' and sons' military policies, their case does deserve further study. Two other, European cases, too, suggest the question is an important one. In Paris, in August 1572, queen-mother and regent, Catherine de' Medici definitely was one of the driving forces behind her son's decision to order the massacre, now known as 'the night of St. Bartholomew', of the men she deemed the Crown's most dangerous opponents, the leaders of the French Protestants.<sup>272</sup> It decisively altered the political situation in France for the next hundred years. A century later, Louis XIV revoked the edict of Nantes which, in 1585, at least had granted the Protestants a number of safe havens. It has long been argued that the King's second, secret wife—herself a convert from Protestantism and now a deeply devout Catholic—was partly responsible for the King's decision. Though that accusation is unproven, the Marquise de Maintenon certainly rejoiced in the conversions enforced by Louis's extremely harsh policy. She definitely was influential in yet another way, too. At St. Cyr, she founded a school for the daughters of the French nobility, to raise them as truly pious Roman Catholics, who in their turn would give birth to and educate a generation of truly pious noble sons and daughters.<sup>273</sup> Last, but not

271 E.g. recently: Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders*.

272 A. Jouanna, *La Saint-Barthélemy: les mystères d'un crime d'État, 24 août 1572* (Paris, 2007) offers a good survey of the continuing debates; she tries to exculpate Catherine, but not convincingly.

273 Actually, for over a century more than 3000 noble girls were educated there. Cfr. D. Picco, 'Les demoiselles de Saint-Cyr (1686–1793)' (PhD dissertation, University of Paris, 1999).

least, she also had an often decisive voice in the nomination of new bishops.<sup>274</sup> Thus, she arguably influenced the (religious) culture of the nation's elite in the early eighteenth century—though it is difficult to say to what extent—and, consequently, did contribute to France's cultural and political stability over the next decades.

As to the role(s) of non-married royal women in the exercise of power—whether of their male siblings or of themselves—we know, alas, precious little. I have already referred to the position of the 'saigu', Japan's imperial princesses who served as guardians of the imperial-national shrine at Ise. Nothing comparable ever existed in other parts of Eurasia, but one might point to sometimes royal and always royalty-related noble abbesses who ruled the great monasteries of Spain, or of the German states. Yet, it has to be admitted that in the end both in Europe and Japan a male priesthood did control the religious world.

In Islamic societies, too, unmarried females related to the ruling dynasty, while not taking on any religious function, still contributed to the position of religion in their societies through, e.g., financing the construction of mosques and other Islamic institutions which, obviously, served royal propagandistic aims as well.<sup>275</sup>

### 2.8 *Imperial (In-)Visibility in Eurasia: East vs. West?*

In modern scholarship, the topic of imperial (in-)visibility as an important element in the creation of power draws increasing attention, though mostly implicitly rather than explicitly. Moreover, researchers who do tackle the issues involved often seem to contradict one another. Moreover, most authors I have consulted fail to even marginally address what, surely, is a fundamental problem: how many people—and from which walks of socio-political life—did actually see the monarch, or other important members of the imperial house, and, also, on which occasions and how often did they do so: daily, weekly, annually, or, perhaps, almost never? Also, which elements in their material culture did they associate with the ruler? Surely, all these questions directly relate to the relationship between (in-)visibility and princely power. Given the unsatisfactory state of research, I, too, can address this important topic in general terms, only, concentrating, of course, on the role of religion in the manifold visualizations of power.

<sup>274</sup> J. Bergin, *Crown, Church, and Episcopate under Louis XIV* (New Haven, 2004).

<sup>275</sup> U. Bates, 'Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey', in: L. Beck and N. Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Harvard, 1978) 245–260.

Though we may and indeed must see government as a machine that powered a series of complex, interacting bureaucracies, it also was 'performed', as ritual. Obviously, the ruler's normal habitat was 'the palace'. If only in view of the high degree of interaction between secular rule and the religious world in most Eurasian states, arguably the 'imperial centre', irrespective of its actual location, functioned as a 'liturgical community'. A community is, in many ways, a cultural space. Undeniably, visibility is, also, a function of space, of space moreover in which the gaze is framed, both by the space itself and by the ceremonies in which all participants, ruler and ruled, engage: the gaze, indeed, is mutual, and thus enforces power relations. If we combine space with power, we are dealing with the power of space.

As to physical space, in Europe, the technical potential of the gothic arch and, later, of the Renaissance vault and the cupola allowed the creation of ceremonial spaces both religious and, later, secular on a scale not matched anywhere else in post-Roman and post-Sassanid Eurasia. For though cupolas were very popular in later Islamic architecture, and a few of the larger mosques of Cairo and Damascus as well as, of course, Sinan's Süleymaniye in Istanbul were actually huge, yet even in the Ottoman capital secular, princely public spaces were nothing compared to, e.g., the grand rooms of the Lateran and Vatican palaces, the Banqueting House in London, the many enormous galleries and halls of Fontainebleau, and, of course, Versailles' Gallery of Mirrors, et cetera. In the Islamic capitals, palaces, though the compounds might be large, mostly did not have big representational spaces, perhaps with the exception of the Isfahan complex;<sup>276</sup> though part of that is lost, we know it from seventeenth-century European descriptions such as those provided by, e.g., the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle. Nor did the palaces in Beijing and Kyoto or Edo have large gathering rooms except, perhaps, in the Forbidden City the Hall of Supreme Harmony, which measures 64 by 37 meters, compared with the 73 by 10 meters of the Mirror Gallery at Versailles. Indeed, it seems that most non-European Eurasian rulers simply did not seek to impress their court and its foreign visitors with grand interior space.

Does this indicate that these non-European monarchs wanted to limit their visibility? Does it mean the effectiveness of physical space as an instrument of power was not exploited? Yes, and no. To achieve leadership, degrees of separation and (visual) silence always are necessary as well. Some even may

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<sup>276</sup> W. Kleiss, *Die Entwicklung von Palästen und palastartigen Wohnbauten in Iran* (Vienna, 1989).

feel that precisely invisibility creates power, too.<sup>277</sup> And, of course, one can frame the gaze also within the confines of a small space, or, conversely, use a sequence of open spaces, both within a palace compound and in its wider, urbanistic context, to direct and manipulate that gaze. All over Eurasia, people acknowledged that grand building projects were, in themselves, necessary to show a ruler's might. Already in the fourteenth century, that famous critic of his own, Islamic world, Ibn Khaldun, stated that 'the monuments of a given dynasty are proportionate to its original power'<sup>278</sup>—though, of course, one might also argue that the weaker the real power, the more pressing the need to make it look strong. Yet, one sixteenth-century Ottoman observer, addressing this issue, conspicuously omitted palace buildings when he cynically noted that:

to build masjids [i.e. mosques], madrasas [and other public buildings] in the ... seat of government ... are not pious deeds performed to acquire merit in god's sight. Every wise and intelligent man knows that these are pious deeds performed in order to accomplish being a leader and to make a good reputation.<sup>279</sup>

This acute observation forces us to analyse a ruler's second 'stage'. For besides the palace, the church—or, for that matter, the mosque, the temple—was, always, the site for, precisely, acts of public piety, acts that would enhance his status and stature in his people's eyes. This topic brings me to what I feel may be a problem in the study of the Christian worlds and the rest of Eurasia.

In Christian Europe, many important, urban churches, especially cathedrals, were built by the Church, viz, by the (leaders of the) local or regional community of believers. Canterbury, Paris, and Uppsala are notable examples. Some were commissioned by kings and other princes, but always in close cooperation with the Church. Vienna and Toledo are cases in point. To be sure, all these sanctuaries were used for royal ceremonies that needed a sacred context, but one must assume that even if—as often was the case—the images of founder-princes, sculpted or painted, adorned the exterior and interior alongside the representations of God and his saints, believers must have felt these sites to be, indeed, sites of the Church rather than of the State if only because of the everyday presence of clergy rather than royalty.

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<sup>277</sup> K. Grint, 'The Sacred in Leadership: Separation, Sacrifice and Silence', *Organization Studies* 31, no. 1 (2010) 89–107.

<sup>278</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, 1, 356.

<sup>279</sup> Quoted by: G. Necipoglu, 'The Suleymaniye Complex', 99.

Now, recent scholarship has made much of the (political) significance of mosque-building in the Islamic world, stressing that, precisely in the capitals as well as in cities that held major shrines, it was monarchical power and monarchical money that willed their construction,<sup>280</sup> and determined their political, propagandistic use and impact. Indeed, the first argument is obviously true, if only because given the lack of a powerful, centralized Church like the Roman Catholic one, and the vast economic resources it commanded, these mosques could not have been constructed without large-scale princely support. To be sure, for their daily rituals most people, both in Christendom and in Islam, would attend their neighbourhood or 'parish' church. They might visit a cathedral or a Friday Mosque only for special religious-political occasions. But even though the great mosques of Istanbul, Isfahan, and Delhi, as well as of, e.g., Mamluk Cairo,<sup>281</sup> were adorned with large-scaled 'royal' epigraphy, the texts definitely could not be read by the common man. And while, unlike the mosques of the Safavids and the Mughals, the Ottoman imperial temples were 'visibly' linked to their builders by the sultanic tombs in their grounds, these were unassuming chapels compared to the grand funeral monuments that stamped European cathedrals and abbeys as royal sanctuaries as well. In short, we must ask ourselves if contemporaries actually experienced the great mosques of Istanbul, Isfahan, and Delhi as 'imperial', as representations of royal power, rather than as, simply, a grandiose house of public prayer?

It is difficult to answer the above question with regard to the imperial temples of Beijing and the successive capitals of Japan, but we do know that the rituals performed there were, mostly, not witnessed by the majority of the people. Hence, their role in proclaiming royal power would have been limited.

Though the imperial palace and the imperial temple might be separate structures, every palace had at least one chapel, church, mosque, or sanctuary immediately attached to it. Indeed, with its more than thirty chapels and churches, the 'Sacred Palace' in Byzantium exceeded them all. In some cases, these chapels or churches also were the state's most important sacred spaces. On account of its major relics, the Parisian Sainte-Chapelle, part of the medieval royal palace, arguably was France's holiest place,<sup>282</sup> superseding both the

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280 We are certainly looking forward to the (eventual?) publication of the 2013 Slade Lectures delivered by G. Necipoglu on the topic of: 'Architecture of Empire. The Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals in Comparative Perspective'.

281 See: W. Flinterman, 'The Cult of Qalāwūn: Waqf, Memoria, and Dynasty in the Early Mamluk Sultanate, ca. 1280–1340' (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2017).

282 Cfr. Rietbergen, 'Sacralizing the Palace'.

capital's Cathedral of Notre-Dame and the royal funeral basilica at St. Denis. In Poland, the palace and St. Stanislav's Cathedral sat side by side on Cracow's royal Wawel Hill, while in Bohemia the royal—and, in the times of Charles IV, imperial—palace and St. Vitus Cathedral crowned Prague's Hradcany Hill. Other parts of a palace might have a sacred function, too—the relic-filled rooms of the Topkapı Saray being a case in point.

However, since in Europe even these sanctuaries seem to have been far more public than elsewhere in Eurasia and, moreover, unlike in the Islamic world and in the Sinosphere, were decorated with often larger-than-life but very life-like, naturalistic representations of religious-political power, their impact must have been definitely bigger.

Last, but not least, since most palaces were situated in and, indeed, functioned as politically constituent elements of a (capital) city, urban space, too, often was inscribed with imperial connotations, many of which were closely linked to religion or, in a wider sense, the sacred as well: the 'mandala'-based layout of Beijing or, for that matter, imperial Kyoto,<sup>283</sup> shows this as much as the 'paradise'-concept that governed the construction of Isfahan,<sup>284</sup> the 'holy city', pilgrim-centred reconstruction of Renaissance and Baroque Rome, and the cosmological visions underlying the construction of the palace-cum-town that was Versailles.

Whatever the size of the audiences allowed entry to the theatre that was the palace—and the church—, I now propose to address what one may term the regimes of imperial (in)visibility in ceremony and ritual and their relationship to the religious world by concentrating on the various stages of the ruler's life cycle that, in many cultures, had religious connotations, and, consequently, had to be enacted in the theatre of religion.

Birth, especially the birth of a (male) heir was, of course, fundamental to dynastic continuity. In Byzantium, a special pavilion existed within the palace precinct, called the *porphyra* since its walls were clad in porphyry. There, the empress gave birth to her children who, hence, could be called *porphyrogenetos*, 'born in the purple', to denote they were the legitimate offspring of the emperor.<sup>285</sup> The term spread to Western Europe, but the custom of child-bearing in such a specific and, indeed, public place did not, though at least in

283 Fiévé, and Waley, *Japanese Capitals in Historical Perspective*.

284 H. Walcher, 'Between Paradise and Political Capital: The Semiotics of Safavid Isfahan', *Middle Eastern Natural Environments Journal* 103 (1997) 330–348.

285 Anna Comnena, *The Alexiad* (London, 2003) 196.



the palace of Fontainebleau—the favourite royal residence of the French kings before the construction of Versailles—an apartment seems to have been set aside for, precisely, this most fundamental function of the royal wife.

Immediately following birth, in Europe the christening ceremony was, of course, the major religious feast in a royal child's existence, usually enacted in the palace chapel. Given the fact that this ritual did not ensure survival during the first days, weeks, months, and, indeed, even the early years of a royal youngster, in the Islamic world—where baptism was not necessary for an after-life in heaven—a comparable ceremony took place at a much later and safer date; however, the circumcision ritual was restricted to boys, only, and does not seem to have taken place in a religiously-connoted space. However, the public festivities that, at least in Istanbul, were organized to celebrate this coming-of-age ceremony far outshone anything ever seen in Europe.<sup>286</sup> Actually, one such feast, staged in 1582 by Murad III over fifty consecutive days, definitely was meant to impress the entire known world: invitations were sent westward, to the rulers of Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, Poland, and Russia, as well as of the Papal States and Venice, while the Sultan also hoped to welcome dignitaries sent by the rulers of Morocco, Persia, Uzbekistan, and the Mughal Empire. From his own sphere of influence he expected envoys from Mecca, the Tatar khans, the king of Georgia, the *voivodes* of Moldavia, Transylvania, and Walachia and of the Republic of Ragusa. Usually, these festivities included the circumcision of sometimes as many as five thousand other boys, who were all gifted with gold, and the dispensing of huge amounts of food to the public.

As indicated above, royal marriages might be celebrated either in the palace chapel or in the capital's main church. But whereas at least in Europe this always involved a maximum of public exposure, it does not seem to have been the case in countries where a harem system prevailed and, moreover, the ruler did not formally select an empress though, of course, the harem system did not in itself exclude the appointment of an official consort, as shown by China and Japan. More importantly in this respect, in the Islamic world and in the Sinosphere, imperial marriages were not 'sanctioned' in a religious context.

Finally, given man's fear of death, a person's last moments, and the expectation of life in a world to come always have been surrounded by religious ritual. In the context of imperial power, the question is whether this ritual was used to enhance that power.

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286 E.g. D. Terzioglu, 'The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation', *Muqarnas* 12 (1995) 84–100.

Indeed, precisely in death all over Europe imperial visibility continued, often even more contextualized religiously than during the ruler's lifetime, with the public lying-in-state of the deceased sovereign, sometimes with a life-like effigy to make his continued presence felt, with a solemn burial mass and with a huge, public procession before the final entombment.<sup>287</sup> Religious considerations aside—such as the notion that the entire community of believers should accompany a person on his last journey to, hopefully, salvation in God's eternal kingdom—the idea behind this ritual obviously was that the visual link between the deceased monarch and his successor symbolized the continuity of the ruler's power, publicly strengthening the complex bond between ruler and ruled one more time.

In some states even the royal graves, always situated in major religious buildings such as cathedrals or abbey churches, were a public sight. Since the eleventh century, Westminster Abbey served as the mausoleum of the monarchs of England while, until its destruction during the French Revolution, the French could go and see the huge royal necropolis of their kings at St. Denis. In Riddarholmskyrkan in Stockholm, and in Roskilde Cathedral in Denmark—surely one of Europe's lesser known but most evocative monuments to dynastic continuity—the churchgoers attended mass surrounded by the grandiose monuments erected to glorify their deceased rulers, while from the fifteenth century onwards the Portuguese saw the tombs of their monarchs in the new Hieronymite church in Belém, proudly supported by elephants, as visible proofs of an overseas empire.<sup>288</sup>

Admittedly, the royal dead were not always this visible, exceptions being, e.g., the new dynastic mausoleums constructed in the Escorial by Philip II of Habsburg Spain and the *Kapuzinergruft* in Vienna by the rulers of Habsburg

287 Cfr. the collection of contributions in: J. Chroscicki, M. Hengerer, and G. Sabatier, eds., *Les funérailles princières en Europe, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècle: Le grand théâtre de la mort* (Versailles, 2012).

288 B. Johannsen, 'Ars moriendi more regio: Royal Death in Sixteenth-Century Denmark', *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, no. 1 (2014) 51–90; H. Johannsen, 'Dignity and Dynasty. On the History and Meaning of the Royal Funeral Monuments for Christian III, Frederik II and Christian IV in the Cathedral of Roskilde,' in: H. Johannsen, et al., *Masters, Meanings and Models. Studies in the Art and Architecture of the Renaissance in Denmark* (Copenhagen, 2010) 117–149; A. Kruse, *Roskilde domkirke* (Roskilde, 2006); J. Le Gall, 'La nécropole dynastique des Bourbons à Saint-Denis ou l'impossible simple corps du roi', *Revue Historique* 637, no. 1 (2006) 61–80; P. Gómez, *La casa perpetua del rey de España o las tumbas reales de El Escorial* (Madrid, 1987); M. Hawlik-van de Water, *Die Kapuzinergruft: Begräbnisstätte der Habsburger in Wien* (Vienna, 1987).

Austria. In those places where the general public could contemplate their royal dead, it often saw them sculpted in a kneeling, praying attitude or otherwise devoutly expecting an eternally peaceful afterlife: certainly in death, the high and mighty were humble before Heaven.

In the (Sunni) Islamic world, imperial death, at least as far as I know, did not occasion grand public spectacles. Nor did central, dynastic, and monumental burial grounds exist—there were hadith that explicitly quoted Muhammad as saying that grand tombs smacked of self-divinization. Consequently, a number of Ottoman sultans chose to be interred near Constantinople's venerable Aya Sofya, now turned into the capital's main mosque. However, most sultans built their own mosque—usually multi-functional complexes also containing schools, libraries, a hospital, and a public kitchen—and often, though not always, were buried alongside it, as, e.g., Süleyman and his family in their very modest *türbe* in the garden of the Süleymaniye complex.

However, neither the Safavids—perhaps because of their imamic preferences—nor the Mughals, with their Timurid background, seem to have heeded the Prophet's precept. Though there exists a building recently described as 'the Safavid dynastic shrine',<sup>289</sup> this is somewhat misleading because the Ardabil complex houses the tomb of only the dynasty's reputed founder, Shaykh Safi, and of the first shah, Ismail; subsequent Safavids were buried elsewhere. While the complex was an important sanctuary, it never became the empire's main political-religious pilgrim site. Meanwhile, the mausoleum of the alleged founder of the imamic line, Imam Reza, at Mashhad, was reconstructed and aggrandized by the Safavids—specifically by 'Abbas I and 'Abbas II—along more orderly, symmetrical, or, one might say, 'imperial'-authoritarian lines.

As to the mausoleums of the Mughal emperors, beginning with Humayun's—constructed in the late 1560s and modelled on the *Gur-i Amir*, Timur's tomb in Samarkand and itself a prototype for the famous Taj Mahal complex—they, rather than mosques, were amongst the dynasty's most splendid buildings.<sup>290</sup> Interestingly, Humayun's tomb, designed by a Persian architect, is replete with cosmic, and, according to some, Sufi symbolism, visible in its basic lay-out as a multitude of octagonal chambers and its ambulatory. However, the three most important Mughal tombs, Humayun's, Akbar's, and Shah Jahan's,

289 K. Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran* (London, 2011); cfr. S. Babaie, 'Building on the Past', in: J. Thompson and S. Canby, eds., *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501–1576* (New York, 2003) 28–29 for the Timurid origins of the shrine.

290 G. Lowry, 'Humayun's Tomb: Form, Function and Meaning in Early Mughal Architecture', *Muqarnas* 4 (1987) 133–148.

set in grandiose gardens that, in their four-square design, had their own ideological significance,<sup>291</sup> were scattered around Agra/Delhi, and, with the exception of Humayun's, certainly did not constitute a conscious political-dynastic ensemble or an imperial necropolis, though, as in the case of Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, they may well have had (a multitude of) other symbolic meanings.<sup>292</sup> Nor do I know to what extent each of these was venerated by the common people.

In China and Japan, the ruler's death and burial were not public events at all. This does not mean that they were not used to cement and legitimize imperial power. Indeed, in China the architecture—as majestic and magnificent as anything built in Europe—and decoration of, e.g., the tombs of the Tang, Ming, and Qing were meant to convey such messages, but only to the privileged, i.e. the imperial family and the court, who would be allowed and, indeed, obliged to attend the ceremonies conducted there.<sup>293</sup> In Japan, on the other hand, after a period in which the huge mausoleums favoured by the Han emperors in China were emulated, even the imperial tombs became, mostly, small-scale, almost private affairs, probably under the influence of Buddhism. The imperial bodies were cremated, the ashes often preserved in some 'Lotus Meditation Hall';<sup>294</sup> and the spirit tablets in the Koreiden shrine within the imperial palace in Kyoto.<sup>295</sup>

In short, there was an obvious difference in the way death was exploited to show dynastic continuity by publicly presenting many generations of the ruling family in one, central location. In Europe, the popes and other princes often availed themselves of this concentrated form of propaganda, while in the other worlds of Eurasia, with the exception of Lhasa, this happened less, or not at all.

Given the complexity of the power sharing and the power struggle between the imperial house and the shogunal dynasties in Japan, the Nikko Toshogu, the mausoleum built in 1617 for Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa shogun, is a

291 E. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India* (London, 1982).

292 U.E. Zver, 'King, Sufi and Messiah' (PhD dissertation, Universität Wien, Vienna, 2013) gives a very useful but not conclusive survey.

293 E.g. T. Eckfeld, *Imperial Tombs in Tang China* (London, 2004).

294 Some twelve emperors following Go-Fukakusa were 'interred' together in such a hall in Fushimi, near Kyoto. The line starting with the 108th emperor, Go-Mizuno-o, up to the 121st was buried in the imperial enclosure of the Sennyu-ji temple, also near Kyoto.

295 E. Gilday, 'Bodies of Evidence: Imperial Funeral Rites and the Meiji Restoration', *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27, no. 3–4 (2000) 273–296; in spite of what the title suggests, it is, mostly, about pre-Meiji rites. In 1888, a new Korei-den was built within the precinct of Tokyo's new imperial palace.

special case. A road, the Nikko Kaido, was constructed to link it to Edo, the shogunal capital, to enable the subsequent Tokugawa shoguns and their huge retinue of daimyo and samurai to make their annual pilgrimage to the shrine of their deified ancestor. Yet, the later Tokugawa themselves were not enshrined there. Nor am I certain that the rich pictorial and sculptural decoration of the complex succeeded in proclaiming a political message quite as obvious and 'readable' as, e.g., the one created in connection with European royal tombs.<sup>296</sup> Interestingly, all over Japan similar shrines to commemorate Ieyasu and foster sacrifice to his deified manifestation were erected, obviously to acquaint the entire country with Tokugawa power.

Between life and death, the ruler's daily routine evolved, often in religious contexts as well. In Roman Catholic Europe, morning mass was the first moment the entire court could actually see the prince, and, moreover, see him kneel before God. In Protestant states, this happened only on Sundays. Normally, the prince would not leave his palace for this ritual. In Istanbul, the weekly Friday Prayer was one of the few occasions the Ottoman sultan would enter their capital, travelling in an elaborate procession, through the streets to the main mosque. But scholars disagree whether this practice was continued after the reign of Süleyman. It seems that Mehmed I decreed that the sultan should appear in public only on the two major annual religious feasts and, if the occasion warranted it, in a great public cavalcade. Otherwise, he should remain hidden, observing, through a grill, whatever went on in the audience hall or dining room: he should see without being seen.<sup>297</sup> It seems debatable whether or not this practice carried any connotations of divine or sacred seclusion. Yet, even if the sultan went to the Friday Mosque, he showed himself, like his Christian colleagues, as the first amongst the believers, rather than as a unique representative of the Divine. For he would always remember the moment when, returning to the Topkapı Saray after his accession, he had first walked through the Gate of Felicity to hear a choir chanting the warning that from then on would be repeated whenever he left the palace: 'Don't be proud, my sultan, Allah is greater than thee.'

A specific form of (periodic) visibility manifested itself in the ruler's public dining where at least the court *largo sensu* would be present. Elsewhere I have

296 K. Gerhart, *The Eyes of Power: Art and Early Tokugawa Authority* (Honolulu, 1999).

297 G. Necipoglu, 'Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces', *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993) 304–306; she argues that the rules established by Mehmed remained in force until the late eighteenth century. Other authors suggest that it depended, simply, on the sultan who ruled.

argued that, in the Christian world, this may have originated in the ritual of the Eucharist. In the early seventeenth century, precisely the popes, the chief liturgists of Christendom, created a new form of representation: when they received important subjects or foreign envoys, they would dine with them, in public; but whereas the guest(s) remained reverentially standing, the pope would be seated, partaking of every dish first and then honouring their guest(s) with food and drink from their table. This custom then spread to other European courts. Of course, both the Eucharist and the ceremonies derived from it in themselves were manifest celebrations of a ruler's prime religious-secular function, viz. to 'create' food through his relationship with the Divine.<sup>298</sup> He was, so to say, both the provider and the upholder of his state's moral economy. Though less clearly linked to religious traditions, the Ottoman sultans, too, organized such banquets, e.g. the annual feast for the powerful Janissaries, when they symbolically received sustenance from their master's table. Thus, the sultan expressed his first obligation: by pleasing God, he had ensured food—at least for the elite military corps he relied upon to uphold his power. Here, too, it seems unclear whether the sultan always was present himself or let the grand vizier do the honours. In Beijing, the Chinese emperors did offer feasts to their most important guests as well—especially foreign representatives; while they would not usually preside over such banquets themselves, the food was understood to be the gift of the Son of Heaven.

Going beyond the imperial life cycle, the various forms of (in)visibility practised across Eurasia show interesting 'paradoxes'. In the Islamic and Christian worlds, the ruler, though he might claim divine right, did not sacrifice at all, indeed had no priestly function whatsoever—unless we count the annual, ritual washing of the feet on Maundy Thursday practised at the Bourbon and Habsburg courts, and in Anglican England, as well as, of course, the above-mentioned 'royal touch'; perhaps not surprisingly, precisely on these occasions the ruler left the privacy of his palace to appear in public. On the other hand, in China and Japan the emperor's major function clearly was that of chief sacrificer. Yet, the rituals he performed often were conducted in the presence of a—socio-politically—limited audience, only.

To broaden my argument: in Europe, from the thirteenth century onwards, rulers made a point of showing themselves to their subjects, first of all in

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298 Cfr. P. Rietbergen, *Bij de paus aan tafel. Culinaire cultuur in Rome en Europa tijdens de renaissance en de barok* (Amersfoort, 2009) and Idem: 'Prince Eckembergh Comes to Dinner', in: P. Rietbergen, *Power and Religion in Baroque Rome: Barberini Cultural Policies* (Leiden, 2006) 189–193.

coronation ceremonies but, subsequently, in periodical triumphant entries/visits when they would traverse cities from the gates to the main church, the town hall, or the palace. In late sixteenth-century England, Queen Elizabeth decided that cohesion definitely would be served by her visibility outside the capital and consequently staged her famous ‘royal progresses’ in the provinces; we even know how she and her subjects interacted on such occasions.<sup>299</sup> Always when princes performed their *joyeuses entrées*, the entire town was a stage where, often in more than life-sized allegorical or historical imagery, the message of their power was visualized—or even acted out—, mostly in a religious-mythological or religious-political context.<sup>300</sup> For those who might not immediately understand these messages, there would be men along the route to explain the details.<sup>301</sup> Always, too, the person of the ruler was ‘idolized’, as the Divine was idolized in churches but, also, in public processions, through paintings and statues. In short, visibility—both of the Divine and of kingship somehow related to it—was deemed necessary to create a bond between ruler and ruled.

This seems to have been the case in the Islamic worlds as well. When the people-loving ‘Abbas I ordered the lay-out of the new Isfahan *maydan*, he definitely wanted to create a stage for the meeting of both religious and secular power and the public: the piazza focuses on a mosque as well as on a palace. Moreover, he wanted it to be a *maydan e-naksh e-jehan*, ‘a piazza that represented the world’. Reading contemporary descriptions, I became aware that precisely this example was followed by one of Europe’s most powerful princes, the pontifex maximus in Rome. In the early seventeenth century, St. Peter’s, Catholic Christendom’s main church, finally neared completion. But it stood, together with the papal palace, somewhat awkwardly on a sandy slope in the middle of a densely built, rather unimpressive neighbourhood. This did not please the popes. They must have been even less pleased when they read the enthusiastic description given in the late 1620s by Pietro della Valle of the Isfahan square. He told his readers it was surrounded by ‘finely designed symmetrical buildings uninterrupted by streets or anything else and with large porticoes ... superior to anything wheresoever in Christendom’, and exalted it

299 See, e.g., R. Mulcaster, *The Passage of our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth Through the Citie of London to Westminster the Daye before Her Coronacion* (London, 1558).

300 For a detailed analysis of practices in ducal Burgundy see: K. Ragetli, ‘Duchess Between Prince and People. A Thematic Approach to the Lives, Influence and Actions of the Duchesses of Burgundy (1430–1530)’ (PhD dissertation).

301 Rietbergen, ‘Prince Eckembergh Comes to Dinner’, 182–185.

even above Rome's then major square, Piazza Navona.<sup>302</sup> Precisely from the late 1620s onwards, Pope Urban VIII, who made Della Valle a nobleman of the papal household, started planning Piazza San Pietro. Finally, in the 1650s it became what it still is: a stupendous open-air political theatre where, atop the colonnades, a host of stone-carved saints welcome the believers to this meeting place between heaven and earth, between religious power as represented in St. Peter's basilica and the 'sacred' Vatican palace, and the world at large. Its gigantic proportions ensured that the public's gaze was framed within this dual perspective as nowhere else in Eurasia.

Despite the opportunities for public display offered by Isfahan's *maydan*, after 'Abbas's death the Safavids—like the Ottomans—seem to have shown themselves with less frequency<sup>303</sup> and always with few references to the Divine, which, of course, in itself could not be visualized. Meanwhile, in Mughal India, and, specifically, in Delhi's 'Red Fort', the emperors introduced the ancient Hindu custom of the *jharokha-i darshan*, the daily 'auspicious viewing on the balcony', showing themselves from a palace window to the crowds assembled below, on the bank of the Yamuna—as did the popes in Rome. Usually, they would spend half an hour or more receiving petitions and requests. Indeed, wherever they went, they would continue this practice—until it was discontinued by Aurangzeb, who interestingly argued that it amounted to idol worship and, thus, was contrary to Islam. However, he may well have been motivated, too, by what surely was the other side of this custom: people could, and in his case indeed did use it to voice their protests as, e.g., when he re-introduced the Islamic religious taxation of his Hindu subjects.<sup>304</sup>

In Confucian China, where the essence of the Divine remained entirely unseen, the emperor never participated in any massively public ceremonies. When he left the Forbidden City, e.g. for one of the many annual ritual moments at the major altars and temples of Beijing, usually the streets were emptied. Nor could many people have seen the august person, for he travelled in a closed palanquin—whereas in Europe, if the ruler did not proceed on horseback, he yet would be visible in a partly open coach, to be gaped at, to be cheered, or—for that was the risk of such public visibility—to be jeered at. In Beijing, those who were privileged to be present at these sacrifices were supposed to prostrate themselves and avert their gaze. Nevertheless, occasionally people did see the emperor, at least Kangxi and, perhaps, also Qianlong: when they left Beijing

302 Pietro della Valle, *The Pilgrim*, G. Bull, ed. (London, 1989) 123.

303 S. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals* (Cambridge, 2010) 137.

304 A. Eraly, *The Mughal World* (London, 2007) 44.



on one of their ‘inspection tours’—which, really, were shows of Qing military force—, or on actual campaign, or on the annual journey to Chengde. Yet the measure and impact of their visibility during these trips are hard to gauge.

In Japan, too, the imperial year was dictated by and indeed largely made up of prescribed ritual and ceremony,<sup>305</sup> but all this was performed within the precinct of the palace, with only the people who ‘live above the clouds’ witnessing. One of Japan’s leading late-seventeenth-century intellectuals, Arai Hakuseki, argued that worshiping Heaven was the privilege of the emperor, only, and that the way of the Christians, acting as a community of worshippers, was wrong.<sup>306</sup> Public processions outside the palace were rare indeed. In 1626, one of the first Dutchmen ever to visit the country was, quite incidentally, present in Kyoto when Emperor Go-Mizuno-o left the Gosho to visit the ruling shogun, in Nijo Castle. Though the cortege was sumptuous, the divine person remained enshrined in his portable palace.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, not only was this the first time in decades that people at least saw some imperial splendour in the streets; it also was the last one before, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the ‘restored’ emperors adopted the Western regime of princely visibility. Meanwhile, since the 1630s and 1640s, the Tokugawa shoguns had used the Nikko Pilgrimage as an ideal opportunity to parade their own authority—enhanced through their descent from a deified ancestor—to the people along the routes, as, of course, they used the enforced pilgrimage to Edo by both the feudal lords of Japan and the foreign envoys from Korea and ‘Oranda’ to exhibit the truly imperial force of their power.<sup>308</sup>

Turning to material culture, other forms of (in-)visibility are interesting as well. In Europe, palaces were, in many ways, rather open structures. Though the really common people normally were not allowed to enter, many others could and did, and thus were able not only to see the prince, albeit from a distance, but, perhaps equally important, would experience the visual-narrative propaganda he used to impress his exalted position on his people through

305 A. Miller, ‘Ritsuryo Japan: The State as Liturgical Community’, *History of Religions* 11, no. 1 (1997) 98–124.

306 M. Anesaki, ‘Confucian Refutations of Christianity in Japan in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, *Proceedings of the Imperial Academy* 6, no. 1 (1930) 1–3.

307 Rietbergen, *Japan verwoord*, 65–73.

308 On the Tokugawa’s insistence on the continuation of the Dutch ambassadorial journey see: P. Rietbergen, ‘Ten hove gegaan, ten hove ontvangen. Het shogunale hof in Edo en de VOC’, in: E. Locher-Scholten and P. Rietbergen, eds., *Hof en handel. Aziatische vorsten en de VOC, 1620–1720* (Leiden, 2004) 277–303.

magnificent architecture, painting, and sculpture. Interestingly, however, from the sixteenth century onwards at least pictorially there seems to have been a tendency to move away from a religious-Christian contextualization of royals and of royal power towards more allegorical-mythological ones, especially in large-scale representations. Yet, in a culture wherein mythology and religion often were represented as each other's images, Louis XIV could dance as Apollo, the Sun—and, thus, as an *alter Christus*—, in the spectacular 'ballets' performed at court; more importantly for my argument, engravings of these forms of ephemeral visibility always were produced for a larger public. A few years later even the far less exuberant young prince of Orange, William III, would emulate his example in a *ballet de la paix* danced in one of his palaces at The Hague; this occasion, too, was represented in print to impress those who had not been privileged to watch it. However, by the early eighteenth century the use of mythology, too, by and large was abandoned,<sup>309</sup> leaving rulers and their families basically 'normal' mortals, though slightly larger than life. By the same token, their traditional religious contextualization was waning as well.

One should also ask what happened to the tradition of large- and even huge-scale princely statues so obviously cherished for their propagandistic potential by the rulers of pharaonic Egypt and the states of the ancient Near and Middle East as well as, of course, by the Roman emperors; indeed, a very visible and, assumedly, large one was erected to represent the first Christian emperor, Constantine, atop a huge porphyry column in his new capital; whether or not it represented him as Apollo, or as the Christ, whose iconography after all derived from the antique gods, is still debated. It seems that in the ages following the decline of the Roman Empire, the rulers of a politically divided Europe, all of them Christian now, did not choose to follow this custom, despite the political effect it might have had. Whether representing a mere and, moreover, still living mortal in such super-human dimensions was considered pagan or, at least, contravening the humility God's creatures should observe, I do not know. Fact is that nearly a thousand years later, besides the Renaissance popes, among the first rulers to again adopt this means of propaganda in the public space were the French kings Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. Whereas the former two chose the ancient Roman, equestrian-imperial mode that lacked an obvious religious connotation, the latter set himself upon a huge pedestal in the centre of the Place des Victoires in his coronation garb, which, of course, referred

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309 P. Burke, 'The Demise of Royal Mythologies', in: A. Ellenius, ed., *Iconography, Propaganda and Legitimation* (Oxford, 1998) 245–254.

to the God-given origin of his power. Nevertheless, few of his fellow princes followed him. However, as I indicated above, in death men, especially royal men, were publicly represented in sometimes larger than life-size statues. But those, rather than expressing the power and the glory of imperial rule, tended to express the humility that became them as they were awaiting redemption and salvation. But even that custom was far from universal.

Nowhere else in Eurasia were visual narratives used in quite the same way. I know of no large-scale and publicly presented ruler portraits or, even more visually powerful, statues. In China and Japan, the ruler simply was not part of this kind of 'two-sided', viewer-viewed and, moreover, personalized public representation. Admittedly, the Ming and Qing emperors had themselves portrayed, mostly on silk scrolls. Yet, these never were shown to larger audiences or, for that matter, reproduced in print, as had become customary in Europe. Especially from the Mongol Yuan dynasty onwards, these imperial representations were increasingly modelled on the formal, hieratic, frontal visage-type of Tibetan religious art;<sup>310</sup> actually, they seem to have been mostly shown in the seclusion of the imperial ancestral temples. Yet, the portraits did not present the ruler in a religious context. In the eighteenth century, more 'personal' portraits were painted, some, perhaps, under the influence of and indeed produced by European artists at court, such as Giuseppe Castiglione, a.k.a. Lang Shining; but these, too, were hung only in the most private of imperial chambers,<sup>311</sup> where, perhaps, only eunuchs and, maybe, a very few selected imperial advisers ever saw them.

Painted scrolls of another kind, such as the Nanxuntu, the twelve 'Pictures of the Southern Tour'—the second of six such inspection tours undertaken by Emperor Kangxi, in 1689—were both detailed and gigantic, but never intended to be publicly viewed, either; they depicted, amongst other moments of imperial glory, such scenes as, e.g., Kangxi's pilgrimage to pray to Heaven on Mount Tai. Other scrolls show Emperor Yongzheng offering at the altar of the god of agriculture and performing the annual tillage ritual. But all of these artefacts were seen by a small group, only—if at all. The same seems to hold for the paintings of imperial ceremonies produced by European artists at the Beijing court. Stored away in a special palace room, all of these visual representations of power primarily were kept as historical documents. It seems that only imperial

310 W. Fong, 'Imperial Portraiture in the Song, Yuan, and Ming Periods', *Ars Orientalis* 25 (1995) 47–60.

311 W. Hung, 'Emperor's Masquerade—'Costume Portraits' of Yongzheng and Qianlong', *Orientalis* 26, no. 7 (1995) 25–41.

calligraphy was used in or on public buildings or monuments,<sup>312</sup> but the impact on the larger, mostly illiterate public cannot but have been almost negligible. To conclude, there may have been more 'common' Europeans than Chinese who 'saw' such Chinese rulers as, e.g., Kangxi, since his life was the subject of a series of nine Beauvais tapestries made in the early eighteenth century,<sup>313</sup> of which at least a dozen sets were sold and, obviously, proudly exhibited in royal palaces and noble mansions.

In between these two extremes, in the Islamic world the issue of images was a complex one<sup>314</sup>—as it had been in the Byzantine Empire. Basically, the rule, or, rather, the prevailing practice, seems to have been that religious images, e.g. of the Prophet, were not allowed—though, indeed, they definitely did occur, certainly in Central Asia—whereas secular themes occasionally could be realistically represented. Generally speaking, however, only symbols were used to present the message of power, as in the calligraphy on public buildings like mosques and madrasas,<sup>315</sup> though this, as well as the sultanic 'monogram', or *tughra*, was not presented as the ruler's personal writing. Yet, even were such epigraphy understood by the larger public, it is to be doubted whether it would have had the same appeal as narrative, emotion-laden, and life-like representations involving either religious or secular persons would have had.<sup>316</sup> Perhaps the constant recitation of the Qur'an—especially in royal *awqaf*—as well as the Friday prayer, if combined with an invocation of the ruler's name, did make his presence if not visible at least audible. In the Sufi tradition of the Mevlevi Order, the faithful even were given a history lesson, for in

312 E.g. M. Kern, 'Announcements from the Mountains. The Stele Inscriptions of the first Qin Emperor', in: F. Mutschler, ed., *Conceiving the Empire. China and Rome Compared* (Oxford, 2008) 217–240, and also: J. Hay, 'The Kangxi Emperor's Brush-Traces: Calligraphy, Writing, and the Art of Imperial Authority', in: W. Hung and K. Tsiang, eds., *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005) 311–334.

313 E. Standen, 'The Story of the Emperor of China: A Beauvais Tapestry Series', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 11 (1976) 103–117.

314 M. Hodgson, 'Islam and Image', *History of Religion* 3 (1964) 220–260.

315 R. Ettinghausen, 'Arabic Epigraphy: Communication or Symbolic Affirmation?', in: D. Kouymjian, ed., *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History* (Beirut, 1974) 297–317; cfr. also: E. Dodd, 'The Image of the Word: Notes on the Religious Iconography of Islam', *Berytus* 18 (1969) 35–79.

316 I definitely do not agree with: O. Grabar, 'The Inscriptions of the Madrasah-Mausoleum of Qaytbay', in: *Near Eastern Numismatics*, 465–468, who argues that Qur'anic inscriptions were used in the manner of Biblical subjects in Christian iconography. Christian art—especially the *Biblia pauperum* and other genres—developed precisely because most Christians could not read. Moreover, they expressly did represent the Divine.

the prayer invocation almost the entire sequence of significant rulers since Muhammad was listed, ending with the reigning sultan's name. Obviously, the same occurred in Europe: from 1549 onwards, in England the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* prescribed prayers for the reigning monarch, particularly during the congregation's weekly communion service.

Insofar as Islamic rulers did allow themselves to be depicted at all—mostly the monarchs in the Indo-Persian world—this was in the very small-scale, hand-painted illustrations that accompanied the manuscript texts that, by their very nature, reached an extremely limited audience, only. There were, of course, the few, larger portraits painted by European artists of the early Ottoman sultans. They do not, however, show any religious element connoted with kingship. Indeed when, in 1619, Pietro della Valle saw the frescoes in the upper reception room of the 'Ali Qapu in Isfahan, the gate to the newly constructed Safavid palace, he saw men and women drinking, some even in European dress. Also, a few of the rooms seem to have been hung with figurative European oil paintings. This fashion apparently gained acceptance at the Safavid court, as shown when, in the 1640s, Shah 'Abbas II added a series of spectacular frescoes to his new 'forty column hall'. However, they mostly depict battles fought by previous Safavid rulers, such as those that reinforced their claim to the Chinggisid-Timurid inheritance through, e.g., the capture and possession of Kandahar. Only one episode seems to have an obvious religious background, viz. the mural representing the moment in Mughal-Safavid relations when Humayun gave in to Shah Tahmasp's wish that, to receive Persian support, he convert from Sunnism to Shi'ism.<sup>317</sup> However, references to 'supra-natural' intervention, as, e.g., in the war- and peace frescoes adorning the three central halls of Versailles, are definitely lacking. Nevertheless, in their scale and visibility as well as their content, these specific Isfahan sites seem the exceptions that prove the rule in the Islamic world.

Finally, in those parts of Mughal India where Hindu rather than Islamic traditions prevailed, e.g. such states as Udaipur and Bundi, at least inside the private quarters of their palaces the ruling family might present itself in mural paintings showing its members disguised as the gods and goddesses or the heroes and heroines of one of the myriad stories taken from ancient religious lore; but yet again, given the limitations of the audience, the political impact must have been limited.

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317 S. Babaie, 'Shah Abbas II, the conquest of Qandahar, the Chihil Sulun and Its Wall Paintings', *Muqarnas* 11 (1994) 125–141. For Tahmasp and Humayun: J. Richards, *The Mughal Empire*. The New Cambridge History of India, 1,5 (Cambridge, 1993) 11.

To elaborate an argument already touched upon above, we need to realize that in Europe the introduction of printing and the engraved reproduction of drawings as well as, moreover, their almost immediate adoption by both the religious and the secular authorities allowed them to effectively present every aspect of their rule that they felt to be of propagandistic use. Thus, images that in the Islamicate worlds and in the Sinosphere were produced as (coloured) manuscript drawings or otherwise 'unique' paintings, and, hence, remained basically 'private' representations, in Europe became public property; mass-reproduced, they could affect potentially huge audiences, even reaching the illiterate, e.g. through cheap, single-sheet, loose-leaf pictures.

Not only were portraits of princes in all the splendour of their royal garb printed and distributed on a large scale, so were the sometimes huge plates that, in often meticulous albeit idealized detail, showed the 'great works' of, e.g., the Roman popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries<sup>318</sup> and of Louis XIV at Versailles.<sup>319</sup> They also visualized various moments in a ruler's life: his birth and, indeed, his death,<sup>320</sup> but, also, his leadership in battle—only when the outcome had been victorious, of course—or the reception of foreign envoys.<sup>321</sup> Where but in Europe could people see their king kneeling down in prayer, as they might see said Louis, or touching the sick for scrofula, as Henry IV of France and Charles II of England were depicted? Indeed, even if the occasions thus publicized did not immediately link secular power to religion, 'the Church', in the persons of its leading representatives in their splendid attire, always would be manifestly present, as in the engravings showing royal entries, coronation ceremonies, and burial processions. Thus, the complexity of the religious-political order was impressed upon the viewers. Arguably, these often inexpensive prints definitely could influence the opinions of an—admittedly predominantly urban—public.<sup>322</sup>

318 E.g.: R.M. San Juan, *Rome: A City out of Print* (Minneapolis, 2001).

319 E.g. P. Fuhring, et al., eds., *A Kingdom of Images. French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles, 2015) esp. 1–44; 54–135; 206–231.

320 A. Bourke and R. Chartier, *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 2014). For a specific case: L. Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008).

321 In the case of foreign envoys, Japan is an interesting exception, as shown by the representations of the, admittedly very few, Korean embassies: R. Toby, 'Carnival of the Aliens. Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture', *Monumenta Nipponica* 41, no. 4 (1986) 415–456.

322 E.g.: E. Lincoln and E. Peters, *The Festive City* (Rhode Island, 2012).

Interestingly, from the sixteenth century onwards, the ‘processional order’ of society that in Europe was continuously imprinted on the public eye became a format also adopted by the men who illustrated the travelogues that informed Europeans about the other Eurasian worlds. However, in doing so, they—inadvertently—created an often inaccurate or even wholly false vision of the cultures thus depicted.

In short, certainly up to the end of the nineteenth century there is no comparison between non-European visual propaganda, or gaze-framing, and the large-scale urban projects and architecture, paintings, frescoes, and statues that provided the suggestive decor of the (semi-)public places created and used for the display of power by European rulers, the more so since only in Europe did print culture create an even wider audience for the messages involved.

Analysing the impact of large-scale public representations of rule and power, one also should mention—last, but certainly not least—the propagandistic role of coins, which, after all, were daily under public scrutiny, and, moreover, linked princely power to its first *raison d’être*, creating economic prosperity.<sup>323</sup> In the ancient Near and Middle East, rulers always had shown their idealized, stereotyped visage on major coins, often using the obverse for allegorical references to kingship that, also often, were linked to religion. The Achaemenid emperors set the example. It was followed by the Macedonian rulers, by Alexander, by his Hellenistic successors, as well as by the Romans in the West and the Parthians and the Sassanids in the East. However, when the Muslim caliphs took over, this form of propaganda disappeared entirely. Admittedly, in Mughal India golden *mohurs* were minted with the likeness of Akbar and, after him, Jahangir with, on the obverse, the sun—an eminently obvious link between the prince and the cosmic order. But these ‘personalized’ coins seem to have been exceptional indeed. As far as I have been able to ascertain, subsequent Mughal emperors discontinued this practice—perhaps because they felt it did not sit well with their Muslim subjects? Nor did I find any Ottoman imperial coins showing a sultan or any Safavid ones representing the shah. Religious symbols are lacking as well. As to the Sinosphere, before the late nineteenth century, Chinese and Japanese coins were non-representational altogether.

In Europe, the culture of coins was rather different. In the sixteenth-century Papal States Pope Julius II had coins minted that showed him wearing the three-tiered crown with, on the obverse, Saints Peter and Andrew steering the

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323 I have based this analysis on a (selective but representative) scrutiny of the many Eurasian coins presented on the Internet.

Ship of State. Often, the representational part would be a saint, only—mostly, again, St. Peter. On the coins used in the many other ecclesiastical principalities of the Catholic world, such as the archbishoprics of Salzburg, Mainz, Trier, and Cologne, the relationship between ruler and religion always was firmly stressed as well; they would show the ruling (arch-) bishop as well as, often, Christ or Mary enthroned on the obverse.

In France, the *Louis d'Or*, the 'Golden Louis', first minted during the reign of Louis XIII but also used by Louis XIV, made the ruler's image as the lord bountiful of his subjects almost omnipresent; sometimes, on the obverse the 'world' of France would be represented as a cross, its arms adorned with the Bourbon armorial lilies. In Europe's other princely states, comparable practices prevailed, though, coins would usually show the ruler only; religious imagery was rare indeed.

As to commemorative medals—admittedly a costly medium that only reached the political-economic elite—the 1685 coronation medal of James II of England, for example, showed a hand from heaven bringing the country a new crown; almost inevitably, the 1689 coronation medal of the king who realized the Glorious Revolution, William III, represents him as a force from heaven annihilating the power of the fallen James.

Thus, while enlisting support through public visibility had been an important element in European kingship from the sixteenth century onwards, only by the early nineteenth century did Ottoman rulers begin to build European-style palaces, where they, too, engaged in a policy of greater albeit still ritual visibility<sup>324</sup> and also showed themselves depicted full-length, with the paraphernalia of kingship peculiar to their cultural context.

They were joined in the adoption of this genre of royal self-representation by the Qajar shahs, the monarchs who in Iran had succeeded the Safavids, and by the Rajput and other Indian princes, who now were largely independent of their former Mughal overlords. It is obvious that in the Ottoman Empire as well as in India, rulers emulated European custom, in Istanbul because, by now, the sultans sent their ambassadors to the courts of Europe and in the palaces of India's princely states by the increasingly forceful example of the local representatives of the East India Company.

In China and Japan, large-scale imperial portraiture was introduced at an even later age but, again, to follow what people thought were European precepts; however, even then the coins minted in the emperor's name did not show

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324 Necipoglu, 'Framing the Gaze'.



the imperial face. Yet again, as long as a strong print culture—coupled to, by that time, photographic reproduction—to distribute these images amongst a wider public was lacking, the impact of these new-fangled, ‘foreign’ modes of royal representation remained limited.

Interestingly, by that time all over Eurasia religious connotations had gone out of fashion or, to put it another way, become superfluous because other forms of imperial legitimation were being introduced.

### 2.9 *The Reciprocal Gaze? Observing the Imperial Other*

A question rarely asked and even more seldom answered is, of course, whether and, if so, to what extent rulers in Eurasia were interested in, and by who(m) they were informed about, their imperial colleagues, either in neighbouring states or in far-away kingdoms. In the context of this essay, the question also is whether they were aware of the religious or ideological foundations of the power of their equals, who might be their competitors as well. Given the dearth of research on these topics, my contributions will be indicative, only.

Obviously, since few heads of state ever met other rulers in person—the (mutual) ‘state visit’ is a nineteenth-century phenomenon that originated in Europe—diplomatic relations, in the widest sense of the word, and specifically ambassadorial reports were a prime vector for the exchange of information also on this topic, which, assumedly, did tickle the curiosity of even the most self-assured monarch. Yet, interestingly and, perhaps, even tellingly, the source material is decidedly one-sided: the men in charge of European governments, religious Orders, and trading companies did send their agents to the courts of Eurasia, but, with a few rare exceptions, these did not reciprocate: the two embassies from Japan to Portugal, Spain, and the Papal court, and of Safavid Iran to Europe in the 1580s, 1590s, and 1610s,<sup>325</sup> as well as the two embassies sent by King Narai of Siam to the court of Louis XIV in the 1680s among them; they all had their background both in trade and global politics and, at least in the first and third case, in religion.<sup>326</sup> Generally, however, insofar as ‘oriental’ rulers did want to know what went on in the world of the Christians they contented themselves with questioning the Europeans who visited their capitals. Only by

325 Cfr. R. Matthee, ‘Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West’, *Iranian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998) 219–246. Also his: ‘Safavid Iran through the Eyes of European Travelers’, *Harvard Library Bulletin* 23, no. 1–2 (2012) 10–24, and his: ‘The Imaginary Realm: Europe’s Enlightenment Image of Early Modern Iran’, *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010) 449–462.

326 Cfr. M. Schenk, ‘Die Reise der siamesischen Botschafter an den Hof des Sonnenkönigs (1686–1687)’ (PhD dissertation, Zürich, 2013).

the early or, as in the case of China and Japan, the late nineteenth century did the non-European monarchs deign to establish permanent embassies at the courts of Europe.

In Europe, the in many ways systematic, not to say sometimes stereotyped and often detailed, reports about non-European polities produced by royal envoys and other informants in Constantinople, Isfahan, Delhi, Beijing, and Edo were avidly read by kings and their counsellors. Moreover, even nowadays historians gratefully use these documents. No in-depth study of the early Ottoman court, for example, is possible if one does not include the extensive *relazioni* of the Venetian representatives in the sultanic capital, nor would we know as much as we do about India's many rajahs and maharajahs without going through the often long letters written about their states, courts, and personal characteristics by the Portuguese and the Dutch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>327</sup> Indeed, it has been argued that, for example regarding Safavid Iran, we would not have any information on a variety of topics now studied by historians without, precisely, the (admittedly biased) reports of European travellers—diplomats but, also, missionaries and traders.<sup>328</sup> Actually, one may argue that by the end of the eighteenth century in Europe the accumulated information about Eurasia's other worlds was remarkable both in its extent, which by far surpassed what the rest of Eurasia had chosen to know about Europe, and, also, in its depth.

Yet one has to admit that the general public—Europe's *respublica litteraria*—often was offered this rich information in much reduced form, viz. through the image that, from the sixteenth century onwards, became almost a 'model' of Eurasia's non-European rulers and actually was codified as such in the twentieth century by Max Weber and Karl Wittfogel: the 'eastern potentates' were seen as 'oriental despots',<sup>329</sup> men whose power over their people and, moreover, their possessions was judged to be almost unlimited. The concept of 'oriental despotism' has been much discussed over the past decades and now is generally discarded. Nevertheless, the notion originated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a result of an awareness of but, also, the actual growth of differences between, on the one hand, the various realities that

327 See, e.g., L. Bes, 'Imperial Servants on Local Thrones. Dynastic Politics in the Vijayanagara Successor States' (PhD dissertation).

328 R. Matthee, 'The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century European Travelers in Iran', *Journal of Early Modern History* 13 (2009) 137–171.

329 D. Felice, ed., *Dispotismo: genesi e sviluppi di un concetto filosofico-politico* (Naples, 2001) vol. 1; cfr. also: J.-P. Rubiés, 'Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism', *Journal of Early Modern History* 9 (2005) 109–180.

characterized most European states and those that structured the empires of the Near, Middle, and Far East.

The comparison especially must have struck European monarchs of that time, who increasingly had to reckon with the—often formalized—political influence of the so-called ‘estates’: the Church, the aristocracy/nobility, the towns, and, sometimes, even the agricultural countryside. Indeed, they could not but compare, sometimes enviously, their own position to that supposedly held by their colleagues in ‘the East’, men ruling empires of vast dimensions and inhabited by millions of amenable, not to say slavish subjects—an image going back to, even, Aristotle and other Greeks writing about the Persian and the pharaonic empires. The comparison must have made many a European monarch secretly long for such ‘absolute’ power though, or perhaps because, on the other hand, they felt themselves forced to publicly declare their abhorrence of such a situation—if it curtailed their own power. Had not, already in 1324, Marsilius of Padua argued against the ‘absolute’ power claimed by the papacy precisely because he felt it to be as tyrannical as that wielded by many ‘Asian’ rulers? Certainly the then king of France as well as the then Holy Roman emperor fervently seconded this view—also because they hoped it would give them, as the representatives of a secular state, power over the Church rather than the other way round.<sup>330</sup>

Actually, from the late fifteenth century onwards, such political thinkers as Michel le Vassor, in his *Soupirs de la France esclave qui aspire après la liberté* (1689), did liken the power of the French kings—especially as perfected by Louis XIV—to that of the ‘Grand Seigneur’, i.e. the Ottoman sultan, and the ‘Great Moghul’, in part because of the French monarchs’ hold over the Church.<sup>331</sup> On the other hand, Le Vassor tried to argue that the absolute power ascribed to the sultan was, in fact, not absolute at all but mitigated by, precisely, the clergy. Admittedly, he then contradicts himself by arguing that the sultan holds absolute power over his subjects, putting himself in God’s place.<sup>332</sup>

Yet, given the threat still presented by the sultans, Europeans ever more liked to study the example set by the man they considered a potential ally, the ‘Grand Sophy’, the ruler of the Safavid Empire.<sup>333</sup> Between 1701 and 1708,

330 C. Nederman, *Community and Consent: The Secular Political Theory of Marsiglio of Padua’s “Defensor Pacis”* (Lanham, 1995).

331 E.g. M. le Vassor, *Les soupirs de la France esclave* (Paris, 1689) 44; 45; 45 double (a printing mistake).

332 Le Vassor, *Les soupirs*, 50.

333 E.g.: S. Schuster-Walser, *Das Safawidische Persien im Spiegel europäischer Reiseberichte, 1502–1722* (Baden-Baden, 1970).

Johann Dinglinger, court jeweller to the elector of Saxony and king of Poland, August 'the Strong', a great admirer of everything 'oriental', produced—at a cost equalling the building of a fair-sized castle—a stupendous tableau of gold, silver, and precious stones representing, in over a hundred incredibly miniature figurines, the birthday weighing ceremony of the Emperor Aurangzeb, whom, by that time, Europeans saw as the epitome of 'oriental despotism' and, indeed, of the kind of universal world-rule August himself aspired after. Using the accompanying book outlining the foundations of Aurangzeb's rule, the Polish king could move around these figurines and thus imagine himself in the oriental emperor's place.<sup>334</sup> However, when I examined the tableau, I did not see any overt references to the role of religion at Aurangzeb's court. Actually, reading the seventeenth-century travelogues about India on which Dinglinger had based his 'manual', it seems obvious they did not stress the religious factor in Mughal imperial rule. Or did the learned goldsmith realize that as he was crafting his masterpiece—at the beginning of the eighteenth century—European rulers themselves were less interested in representing their power as God-given?<sup>335</sup>

Meanwhile, from the sixteenth century onwards, a number of European observers who had tried to penetrate the actual and ideological basis of 'oriental' rule had asked themselves to what extent religion was a necessary part of it. Thus, Niccolò Machiavelli argued that the near-absolute power of the Ottoman sultans partly stemmed from their caliphal authority.<sup>336</sup> A few decades later, Jean Bodin (1530–1596) called this form of government a 'monarchie seigneuriale', contrasting it with a 'monarchie royale', like the French one that, also, was called 'légitime'; for though 'absolute', it still was restricted by both divine and natural law. To Bodin, the 'monarchie seigneuriale' was the most ancient and, in general terms, primitive form of monarchy and one, moreover, that often had created polities of great longevity.<sup>337</sup>

The more perspicacious observers of Eurasia's polities, while 'embedded' in this general vision, presented more nuanced views, though these would

334 J. Menzhausen, *Am Hofe des Grossmoguls: Der Hofstaat zu Delhi am Geburtstage des Grossmoguls Aureng-zeb. Kabinetstück von Johann Melchior Dinglinger, Hofjuwelier* (Munich, 1965).

335 Alas, this question is not dealt with in: A. Flüchter, 'Weighing the Mughal', in: A. Flüchter and S. Richter, eds., *Structures on the Move: Technologies of Governance in Transcultural Encounter* (Heidelberg, 2012) 147–166.

336 N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, book IV.

337 J. Bodin, *Les six livres de la République* (Paris 1576) Book I, 6.

not always alter the popular notions held by Europe's educated classes until well into the nineteenth century. Jean Chardin, a 'simple' traveller and not a 'philosopher', perceptively analysed the situation in the late Safavid Empire. While, as I indicated above, he was fully aware of the importance of the shah's power over the religious establishment, he yet did not feel that 'despotism' was inherent in Islam; indeed, he felt most Iranians were rather tolerant of religious differences. However, for Charles de Montesquieu, easily Europe's most influential political analyst in the mid-eighteenth century, Islam was a, or perhaps even the, major ally of oriental monarchs since it divinely sanctioned a rule that, consequently, everybody had to accept.<sup>338</sup> Nicholas Boulanger's *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental* (1761) did not explain despotism by referring to climate and other natural conditions such as the vast plains of Asia, as Montesquieu and so many before him had done. Rather, he explicitly linked religion to power, arguing that some form of theocracy was the essential basis of despotism. Partly in consequence of the Jesuits' enthusiasm for the Chinese 'model', gained through their presence at the court of Beijing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, oriental despotism also acquired a more positive connotation: the 'religion' of Confucius was deemed to be one of the major stabilizing and also otherwise beneficial elements in the Celestial Empire and greatly admired by the so-called Physiocrat School of economic and political thought in France and elsewhere in Europe.<sup>339</sup>

By the end of the eighteenth century, these—to a large extent non-judgmental—observations changed. Two positions crystallized. The one held that since Christianity was the only true creed, and, moreover, one under which all people—the term and concept of 'humankind' was now introduced—had been created equal, other, i.e. pagan, religions were used by rulers as instruments of subjugation, as systems wherein people were kept in a state of ignorance and superstition and, hence, were easier to dominate and more willing to accept supposedly supernatural forces as the basis of imperial power. The other position was the one held by many Enlightenment thinkers, who had simply substituted 'reason' for 'faith' and then concluded that both in Europe and in other parts of Eurasia religion was a negative force since it prevented man from using his mental faculties to improve his position and his world.

338 Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des Lois*, R. Derathé, ed. (Paris, 1973) book V, 14 and book VII, 29.

339 E.g. C. Théré, et al., eds., 'Fr. Quesnay, Despotisme de la Chine', in: Idem, *Oeuvres économiques complètes et autres textes* (Paris, 2005) vol. 2, 1005–1114.

Though many non-European rulers may not have had any profound knowledge of the power bases of their European colleagues—nor of the restrictions imposed thereon—, they still realized that, precisely, Christianity was a force to be reckoned with.

From the early seventeenth century onwards, the Japanese shoguns of the Tokugawa line did decide to forbid Roman Catholic missionaries from spreading their faith not only because they had allied themselves with the gun-bearing Portuguese traders and soldiers but also because they feared the disruptive force of this faith that had the potential to undermine Japan's social and political order. They definitely did not want any of their subjects to travel to the papal priest-king in Rome anymore as Japanese converts had done during the 1580s and, again, the 1610s, and most certainly did not want such converted daimyo as the powerful Date Masamune to address the pope as 'the Great, Universal, Most Holy Lord of The Entire World'.<sup>340</sup>

Nevertheless, after having eliminated the threat posed by Christianity in the 1620s and 1630s, some Tokugawa shoguns did show an interest in Europe, both from a cultural and from a political point of view; they would ask pertinent questions during the annual visit to Edo of the envoys of the Dutch East India Company. They also wanted to be informed about the power structure of Europe's monarchies.<sup>341</sup> Meanwhile, in Mughal India, Akbar had translations made of the Christian Gospels. Moreover, both he and his successor Shah Jahan for some time did adopt Christian imagery to emphasize their power in their visual representation, with the always creatively eclectic Akbar even showing himself as the equal of the Christ.<sup>342</sup>

While, both under the later Ming and the early Qing, Christianity was accepted in China, under the influence of the Jesuits at the imperial court, Emperor Qianlong reversed his ancestors' policy; he chose to severely restrict its influence partly because the eighteenth-century popes started tightening their reins over those missionary Orders whose willingness to adapt to Chinese or other non-European cultures they felt to be negatively impacting on Christianity as it was defined by Rome.

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340 J. López-Vera, 'La Embajada Keicho (1613–1620)', *Asiadémica: revista universitaria de estudios sobre Asia Oriental* 2 (2013) 85–103.

341 Rietbergen, *Japan verwoord*, *passim*.

342 E.g. E. Koch, 'The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors', in: C. Troll, ed., *Islam in India* (New Delhi, 1982) 14–29.

### 2.10 *The Islamic Empires: Sultan/Shah/Emperor, Caliph/Imam, and Sadr/Shaykh Ul-Islam/Grand Mufti*

Whereas the origin, in the early sixteenth century, of the Safavid state in the link between power-seeking men and the Safaviyya Sufi Order is clear, one might feel that, though perhaps less obvious, such a link existed between the Mughals and the Naqshbandiyya Order as well. This Sufi Order spread from Kabul to India in the late sixteenth century and became very influential there: Aurangzeb even was a member. In the Ottoman Empire, too, Sufist Orders were a power to reckon with though, perhaps, not as closely related to the imperial court.

Given the combination of a common background in Turco-Persian-Islamic culture and the influence of Sufism, the subsequent conjunction of religious and secular power in, specifically, Safavid Iran and Mughal India, resulting in a caliphal or even imamic position of the ruling emperor or shah-in-shah, is not, perhaps, surprising—certainly less so than its absence in the third Islamic empire, that of the Ottomans. Indeed, disregarding the debate over the question whether or not the Ottoman sultans formally used the caliphal title and, if so, what extra authority it brought them, it seems clear that they did not forcefully assert the religious power their Umayyad and Abbasid predecessors sometimes had claimed, nor that which was wielded by their Shia and/or Sufi-inspired contemporaries in Iran and India. Pretending to be the revelation or, even, embodiment of God's word was not normally the Ottoman way.

The question remains how the rulers of the Islamicate world actually controlled the religious culture of their state. Alas, there is no comparative study of the office of *sadr*, and/or of (grand) mufti, both with the title *shaykh ul-Islam*, which existed in all three empires, nor, indeed, of the exact functioning and power of this institution in each of them as subordinate to or, rather, vis-à-vis imperial rule. Yet, it has been suggested that at least in the Ottoman Empire the power of the grand mufti increased over time. Not only did he, by the end of the sixteenth century, appoint most of the empire's judges, he also could decree a *fatwa* that legalized the wish of the faithful to depose a sultan if the latter did not follow the rules of the shari'a.<sup>343</sup> One thing is obvious, though. The man who held this office was not chosen by his 'peers', the members of the '*ulama*'. He was not, therefore, to be compared to the pope, though Western observers, specifically the anti-Popish Protestant ones, sometimes suggested as much. Nor

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343 M. Greene, 'Goodbye to the Despot: Feldman on Islamic Law in the Ottoman Empire', *Law and Social Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2010) 219–241, discusses the various positions in this intricate field of State-shari'a relations.

was he an independent actor, who might voice God's word to each and sundry, the emperor included. Rather, from the sixteenth century onwards, he was a state official, honoured as long as he served his purpose, but deposed whenever and for whatever reasons the government in Istanbul or, for that matter, in Isfahan or Delhi might see fit. The interesting thing is, however, that nowhere in these Islamic empires did the rulers seem to have considered appointing members of their own family to this highest ecclesiastical office—perhaps, as I suggested above, because they wished to prevent the always dangerous combination of a dynastic claim to the throne and great religious prestige or, even, power?

2.11 *European Empires and the Mongol-Manchu-Chinese Empire: Pope and Emperor—Dalai Lama and Son of Heaven?*

The various Reformations of the sixteenth century constituted a watershed not only in the history of Europe in general, but also in the relationship between pope and emperor in particular. Between the sixth/seventh and early fifteenth centuries, there had been one Church, only, ruled by the pope—at least in the Latin West. This meant that the emperor, both within the multi-state Holy Roman Empire and in his dealings with other European princes, could and often did claim the unique papal-imperial bond as a sign of his special position. By the mid-sixteenth century, the situation was very different indeed. First of all, papal power was greatly diminished: a significant part of Christian Europe no longer acknowledged Rome's authority. Secondly, in the Holy Roman Empire itself, many of the sovereign rulers no longer were Roman Catholics, which, in subtle ways, altered their relationship with the Roman Catholic emperor who yet felt he was specifically called upon to maintain the empire's cohesion. Thirdly, in Europe at large, many princes now were Protestant as well. They not only used the Reformations to strengthen their own, intra-state power, but also branded their reforms as the new orthodoxy, and, consequently, as an ideological weapon in inter-state relations—in which the role of the emperor was increasingly reduced to that of one monarch among many. Indeed, in the great, Europe-wide struggle between the France of Louis XIV and its, or rather his, enemies, which lasted from 1672 until 1713, leadership of the coalition forces was taken not by the Holy Roman emperor but by the Protestant William of Orange.<sup>344</sup> He, however, was supported by the

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344 P. Rietbergen, *Willem III (1650–1702). Stadhouder en koning in Europese context* (Amersfoort, 2015) 63 sqq.



two symbolic representatives of Roman Catholic Europe, Emperor Leopold I and, at least as rumour had it, Pope Innocent XI.

Obviously, a confirmed Confucian emperor never would feel the need for a high priest at his side. But China's two foreign dynasties were not of that strict mould. While revering Heaven, the Mongol Yuan rulers had embraced Tibetan Buddhism from the thirteenth century onwards, and had forged a relationship with the Buddhist popes, the dalai lamas. So did, two centuries later, the Manchu Qing emperors. Though there were few followers of, specifically, Tibetan Buddhism amongst the Han Chinese, many did respect Tibet's religious leader. By honouring him, the Qing definitely strengthened imperial authority, both within China proper and in Tibet. More importantly, to control the mainly Lamaist Buddhist tribes of Mongolia on their western frontier, the Manchu felt that a strong alliance with the dalai lamas was imperative as well. Yet, unlike the Holy Roman emperors, who were willing to leave the popes their sovereignty *in temporalibus*, the successors of the Qing emperor Shunzhi were not. They wanted totally to control Tibet, mainly because they felt they could not really trust the priest-kings in Lhasa—or, rather, their advisors, headed by the regent *pro tempore*. These men, in their turn, felt that the only way to escape increasing Chinese pressure was, precisely, to support anti-Manchu leaders amongst the Mongols. When, in the 1750s, Emperor Qianlong succeeded in finally subduing the Dzungarian federation, the dalai lamas lost their military arm and Tibet became, indeed, a state largely under Chinese suzerainty. The non-priestly power of the religious leaders in the Potala decreased accordingly.

## 2.12 *European Empires and Japan: Pope/Priest/King and/vs. Emperor—Emperor and/vs. Shogun?*

Hesitating to over-extend the potential of comparison, in this section I still find it interesting to note that while the pope was not divine, he was addressed as 'His Holiness'; the Holy Roman emperor, on the other hand, was not in any way referred to as such. At least in pre-Meiji Japan, the emperor was not personally divine, either, though the imperial institution might be so seen.

As to the states these men ruled, in the *Kojiki*, the creation of the islands that form Japan is, quite obviously, a divine act; indeed, one might infer that, therefore, the country itself is 'sacred' as well—as sacred as the Holy Roman Empire or, indeed, as also was the realm of the czars in Europe.<sup>345</sup> Obviously,

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345 M. Cherniavsky, 'Holy Russia: A Study in the History of an Idea', *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 1 (1958) 617–637.

however, these notions of the sacrality of one's territory, one's fatherland, and of the collective of its inhabitants owed much to national or, even, nationalist ideologies that, though they really did originate in far earlier periods, became widely articulated only in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the concept of the sacred land, both in Europe and elsewhere, needs a more in-depth comparative study.

Also, it is debatable whether I am right in equating the pope, who was priest as well as king, with the—Shinto or Shinto-ized—emperor with his largely ritual, 'priestly' roles. And should one identify both of them with the shogun in Japan and the emperor in Europe, though from the sixteenth century onwards some European observers tended to do so? That is, Protestant European observers did so, for however scholarly detached, the Roman Catholic, mainly Jesuit, missionaries who knew most about Japan were unwilling to detract from the unique position of their own 'pontifex maximus' by comparing him to any other person on earth. As relatively 'objective' outsiders, the Protestants arguably were in a better position to analyse Japanese culture and society, or at least thought they were. They always referred to the shogun as emperor and to the emperor as pope, thus creating, in a sense, the basis for a comparison between what, to them, seemed a complex balance of powers, both in Japan and in Europe.

Since the fourth century—but certainly with the restoration of the imperial dignity in 800 CE—the Roman pontiffs always claimed they represented God's ultimate authority and power on earth, arguing that it was the Holy Roman Emperor's duty to serve them in enforcing that authority and power. Obviously, reality was more complex. In the Greek Christian world, the 'basileus', too, was very much his own man, governing with perhaps even greater independence from, or, rather, dominion over the patriarch than ever did the Western emperor over a pope. However, by the thirteenth century the Byzantine Empire was crumbling and the power of both leaders declining. In Western, Latin Christendom, the emperors, while needing the sacralization only the Church and, at least formally, the popes could give them, increasingly ruled very much in their own right. Of course, if they wanted to retain their legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it never was politically wise publicly to confront the Roman Curia. But at least they had some say in the election of the next successor of St. Peter: from the late fifteenth to the late eighteenth century, there always was a faction of cardinals in the 'Holy College' who followed the wishes of the emperor regarding who would be the next pontifex.

Consequently, in Europe, imperial dependency on the papacy slowly became a fiction, only: after the early sixteenth century, emperors no longer even

were crowned by the pope<sup>346</sup> and the role of the seven prince-electors became more prominent. On the other hand, over time, the Japanese imperial role was restricted to the sacral-ideological domain, only. Certainly from the fall of Osaka in 1615 onwards, the third *bakufu*, of the Tokugawa family, was the country's real power centre. While the shogunal position had been created on the battlefield—as had, actually, Roman-imperial rule—and formally could exist only with the ritual endorsement of the Son of Heaven—a construction reminiscent of medieval popes' attitudes vis-à-vis European emperors—the Tokugawa shoguns nevertheless became as independent from the *tenno* as the emperors from the pope. Indeed, as shown above, the last shogunal dynasty even decided upon the posthumous deification of their founder.<sup>347</sup> Admittedly, while this increased the legitimacy of the family, it did not make Ieyasu's successors in any way divine. Yet he did develop into a 'national' deity, the sole protector of the country—in several texts proclaiming his unique status, the reigning emperor was not even mentioned. To strengthen the first Tokugawa's posthumous status and, hence, the power of his descendants, he also was presented as of equal stature with Japan's own, oldest gods and, given the religious duality of most Japanese, the Buddha.<sup>348</sup> In short, the Tokugawa tried somehow to combine military and divine authority in their own family, rather than relying only on the emperor for their religious legitimacy.

In nineteenth-century Europe, the Habsburg emperor did try to continue to rule, though since Napoleon's conquests the Holy Roman Empire no longer existed. However, other, new emperors now vied with him for status and power: since 1870 the king-emperors of Prussia-and-Germany, since 1878 the king-emperors of Britain-and-India, and since 1936 even the king-emperors of Italy-and-Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, the pope-king reaffirmed his temporal rule over the Papal States but in the 1860s nevertheless lost his kingdom. Significantly, though, viewed from a global perspective his religious power waxed far greater than ever before, not only geographically. The millions of Roman Catholic faithful all over the world now were admonished always to think of their allegiance to Rome, first, despite the fact that they were citizens of a distinct, 'national' state as well.

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346 The question remains if any (arch-) bishop would have dared crown an emperor without at least tacit papal consent.

347 W. Boot, 'The Death of a Shogun: Deification in Early Modern Japan', in: Breen and Teeuwen, eds., *Shinto in History*, 144–166.

348 Boot, 'The Religious Background of the Deification of Tokugawa Ieyasu', 331–338; cfr. also Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, 177.

In short, it is precisely in the nineteenth century that the Roman Catholic Church really became a 'spiritual empire', maintaining cohesion through a very effective, centralized but global bureaucracy and an increasingly articulate veneration of the pope and his (infallible) authority.

In Japan, by the 1860s and 1870s, the shogun-emperor dichotomy finally was abandoned. At least formally, the emperor became the country's sole ruler again. Moreover, far more than in previous centuries, he now was made into the centre of an intricate, 'national' divinity-cult created on the basis of a partly invented 'national' past. Also, towards the end of the century, the political circle surrounding the emperor began using him as a symbol of an imperialism that, soon, spread beyond Japan proper: into Manchuria, Korea, China, and, even, South-East Asia. At last, both the Christian pope and the Japanese emperor had become as holy, or sacred, and, at least nominally, as powerful as they ever were to going to be.

### **Conclusion: Religion, Princely Power, and Imperial Cohesion— A Fundamental Connection**

Examining the relationship between religion, princely power, and imperial cohesion, obviously one should study the ideological factor and its impact first.

In all Eurasian cultures, divine sanction was the basis for, or at least did significantly strengthen, most princes' often already innate conviction of their incontestable right to rule. Such sanction, perhaps most necessary because of the belief of the majority of people that a ruler's virtue would somehow influence (the) god(s) to bring them safety and prosperity, was indeed a prime basis of authority and power. Nevertheless, in some states the men whose religious authority was strongest—the popes, the dalai lamas, the emperors of Japan—often also were those whose real political power was weakest, certainly in the centuries studied here, which is, of course, not to say that through the performance of their role(s) they did not contribute to the creation and continued existence of a coherent society and culture. Indeed, perhaps precisely because they were forced to—or allowed themselves to—accept a broadly speaking cultural rather than a strictly speaking political role they gave the institution they embodied the longevity and, hence, cohesive capacity it so obviously has achieved.

Even so, to effectively wield (some) power all rulers needed to create and capitalize on a relationship with the Divine—perhaps most so those whose rise to that power had been through 'illegitimate' means, i.e. through rebellion and conquest. Therefore, every monarch had to show those groups in society

who mattered politically that, indeed, he was thus sanctioned and, therefore, likely to continue upholding the established order, the preserve of these elites. Hence, some kind of 'consecration', 'communion with the Sacred', was an essential part of the princely (accession) ritual, though more so in the Christian and Islamic *oikoumenai* than in the Chinese-Mongol world. It was—and is—perhaps most fundamentally practised in Japan. Moreover, staging and participating (whether as chief sacrificer, as in China and Japan, or as chief *orans* in the other Eurasian polities) in periodic ceremonies related to the Divine always was necessary, too, in order continuously to impress one's subjects with one's legitimacy.

To make the most of religion's fundamental role in structuring and, preferably, unifying society, and, moreover, to inculcate the people with the norms and values that helped shape their acceptance of princely rule, monarchs always had to cooperate with the religious establishment(s)—a clergy, a priesthood—, while at the same time they had to curb the independent power—or tendency thereunto—these institutionalized groups had achieved; certainly if these were strongly hierarchical they were, at least potentially, the more politically effective in competing with and threatening the preponderance of secular leadership. Not surprisingly, to a greater or lesser extent leaders all over Eurasia were aware of the need to follow this dual strategy.

Also, they could and often did considerably increase their power by exploiting the enormous economic resources of organized religion(s) in their state. In Christendom, this was one of the factors which in the sixteenth century led to princely support for and active involvement in the various Reformations, which resulted in a huge re-distribution of riches and, often, through the support of (new) elites thus gained, in increased royal power. Yet, in the Islamic worlds and in the Sinosphere, too, many rulers took every opportunity to somehow control or even straightforwardly appropriate ecclesiastical wealth if circumstances allowed them to do so or financial necessity dictated it.

Given the (politically) disruptive potential of the deep-seated religious beliefs that characterized most Eurasian cultures well into the nineteenth century—and, in many societies, continue to do so even today—, to retain their power over an otherwise unruly society (secular) princes also needed to enforce religious homogeneity; they had to impose a form of orthodoxy. However, quite a few had gained the throne precisely by linking themselves to some sort of religious non-conformity; if that 'taking of power' had been successful, that heterodoxy tended to become the new religious norm. Obviously, there was some grave risk involved, for re-establishing religious order and, preferably, unity, always would take time and careful manipulation, especially if the

previous balance of power between the various power groups had been upset to accommodate a new one, viz. of the new monarch's supporters. Nevertheless, this use of the power of religion by secular leaders has been—and still is—manifest all over Eurasia as well.

Ensuring imperial (in-)visibility always has been a prime instrument of princely propaganda and, therefore, power politics. It expressed itself in the ideological, mostly cosmological lay-out and political use of palaces and even of the town(s) wherein these were located as much as in the intricacies of the ceremonies and the ritual performed there, which often mirrored those related to the religious sphere. Indeed, the entire 'imperial life cycle' might be visualized to enhance princely authority, though, perhaps, this was practised nowhere as structurally and, indeed, visibly as in Christian Europe, due to the 'sacramental' character Christianity gives to the decisive moments in man's life: birth and baptism, marriage, death. These religious occasions definitely gave the rulers of the European states a variety of possibilities to represent themselves to a politically significant public. Such a religiously connoted sharing of the royal person with (large groups of) his subjects certainly occurred far less in the Islamic world and in the Sinosphere. Admittedly, in Islam the annually recurring religious festivals were used by princes publicly to insert themselves in and reassert themselves through the realm of the Sacred; in China and Japan, however, princely participation therein could be witnessed by limited groups, only, though, of course, these were so privileged precisely because they were deemed to be the politically most important actors. Thus it seems that in Europe the relationship between royal authority and, at least, the urban groups it increasingly came to rely upon may have influenced changes in the traditional balance of power that, in the end, brought about more fundamental societal and political changes as well. In the process, emperors, kings, and other princes did not abandon all notions of power sanctioned by religion but, certainly during the nineteenth century, consciously sought to re-define them to be more inclusive than had been the case during the *ancien régime*.

In forging links with other states and their rulers—as well as in striving after the possibility of some future succession to power in another state—dynastic marriages always were a useful instrument. However, it seems that by and large they were practised consistently and successfully only in Europe—though, up to the eighteenth century, this policy mostly tended to unite dynasties either within the Roman Catholic part of Christendom or the Protestant one. In the Islamic world, inter-dynastic marriages between ruling houses were rare, and in the Sinosphere even non-existent. However, when they occurred religious

considerations do not seem to have been part of the process. Needless to say, the peace secured by inter-state marital ties mostly was short-lived.

On the other hand, religion often was, as it often still is, invoked precisely to supply a pretext for inter-state, inter-dynastic wars. These, of course, mostly served to distract the criticism wielded by various power groups from a ruler's—or his counsellors'—perceived inability to maintain the state's cohesion. Often at the same time, such wars were deemed necessary to increase a state's economic potential through territorial and, hence, fiscal expansion.<sup>349</sup>

Within a larger imperial or, rather, imperialistic context, using the missionary tendencies evident in many Eurasian religions—Christianity, Islam, but also, Buddhism—definitely did help those princes who wanted to extend their power beyond the frontiers of their original polity. From the late fifteenth century onwards, judging from a global perspective the former, especially the Portuguese and the Spanish kings, have been outstandingly successful in this respect. Thus, empires were created that decisively changed the history of Eurasia and, indeed, of Africa and the Americas, though we now know these changes were not lasting.<sup>350</sup> Indeed, they themselves have created a dynamic that, from the twentieth century onwards, again started to change not only the global balance of power but, also, the role of old and new empires therein.

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349 For Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see the analysis in: Rietbergen, *Willem III*, 75–102.

350 Cfr. also: P. Rietbergen, *Europa's India. Tussen fascinatie en cultureel imperialisme, 1750–2000* (Nijmegen, 2008).

# The Warband in the Making of Eurasian Empires\*

*Jos Gommans*

Ogni città riceve la sua forma dal deserto a cui si oppone

ITALO CALVINO<sup>1</sup>

Any royal authority must be built upon two foundations. The first is might and *group feeling*, which finds its expression in *soldiers*. The second is *money*, which supports the soldiers ...

IBN KHALDUN<sup>2</sup>



## Introduction

This volume is about the cohesion of Eurasian empires before the age of European hegemony. The latter is often conceived as being the result of a particular form of imperialism, driven by the demands of nationalism and the industrial revolution, and realized thanks to new gunpowder technology. The effective

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\* This essay profited enormously from the critical, encouraging, and at times quite devastating comments of my fellow travellers in the Eurasian Empires project. I also cherish the ongoing discussions on the topic with my Leiden colleagues Gabrielle van den Berg, Remco Breuker, Maurits van den Boogert, and Henk Kern. David Robinson, Tom Allsen, Walter Pohl, Eduard Alofs, and Peer Vries read the entire essay and made some very useful comments. Finally, I am also grateful to the organizers and participants of two conferences, one at the Centre for Global History at Oxford (January 2014) and one at Pembroke College at Cambridge (December 2014), which allowed me to share some of my still immature thoughts with a critical audience, among them in particular Ali Anooshahr. An earlier, abridged version of this essay will come out in India at Manohar Publishers together with some of my earlier work in *The Indian Frontier: Horse and Warband in the Making of Empires*.

- 1 'Each city receives its form from the desert it opposes', Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (Turin, 1972) 8.
- 2 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima. An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (London, 1978) 246.





FIGURE 4.1 *'Soldiers listening to music'* attributed to Payag, c. 1640, from Late Shah Jahan Album (Source: Chester Beatty Library). These warriors have left their horses behind and relax while listening to music amidst a lush landscape at the fringe of the open grasslands at their back. Among them sits a yogi (on the left) with a water pot, a rosary and a peacock fan. This lyrical scene recalls the intimate camaraderie of the Mughal warband as described by its first emperor Babur. It also illustrates the way the later Mughal court continued to idealize its past as a nomadic warband.

combination of these three elements produced a paradigm of what contemporary historians would consider to be a successful empire or the 'optimal imperial outcome'. According to Charles Maier, the latter occurs 'when subject nations and their leaders voluntarily emulate the metropole's values and tastes'.<sup>3</sup> This is exactly what we experience today, as both the last remaining empires and the more recent nation states all attempt, to a greater or lesser extent, to follow the European paradigm that encompasses national cohesion, economic growth, and military strength. This raises the critical question, though, of whether imperial success has always been built on these three pillars.

3 Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge Mass., 2006) 66.

In this Chapter I will address this problem by trying to detect different, pre-modern paradigms; i.e. paradigms that are closely related to the ideas and ideals of pre-modern historians. This more emic approach forces me to take seriously those elements that contemporary observers considered important for success. With only a few exceptions, all of them seem to agree that strong empires start with a strong group of warriors. For much of the second millennium of the Common Era there were two powerful imperial paradigms that dominated large parts of Eurasia. The first was the practical example provided by the astonishing success of the Mongolian 'world-conqueror' Chinggis Khan (c. 1162–1227); for centuries after, his was the example that other conquerors strove to emulate as it promised endless wealth and a glory that was truly imperial. It was clear to all that this Chinggisid model entailed, at the bare minimum: nomadic mobility based on a large number of well-bred warhorses mounted by well-trained horse-archers.

Yet even more crucial than this nomadic mobility was the cohesion of the conquering band of warriors and their loyalty to its leader. Here we come to the second paradigm for this study, the well-known cyclical theory provided by the North African historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406). Inspired by some imperial best practices both in West and Central Asia, Ibn Khaldun elaborated on what he considered the secret of imperial success: the cohesion (*ʿasabiyya*) of the conquering warband. At the very beginning, when the latter was still roaming in the desert, *ʿasabiyya* was at its strongest, and actually enabled the easy conquest of sedentary societies that lacked such cohesion. In due course, though, because of the debilitating conditions of settled life, the conquering elites lost their cohesion and could only wait for their unavoidable defeat at the hands of new nomadic conquerors from the desert, who had a much stronger *ʿasabiyya*. Obviously, Ibn Khaldun's cyclical ideas are far from unique in global history; for example, they may remind one of Polybius's theory of predictable constitutional cycles. Elaborating on the latter, as if preparing the way for Ibn Khaldun, Tacitus made a juxtaposition of the virtuous hardy barbarian against the decadent city-dweller. Similarly, Confucianist historians were deeply aware that dynasties rose and fell like man himself, obeying a cycle of life and death that governed all animate beings. Hence, it was assumed that an imperial regime like that of the Chinese Ming would follow a general pattern: after the political and military vigour of its youth (the fourteenth century), a mature middle age of peace and stability would ensue (the fifteenth century), to be succeeded by feebleness and, eventually, fatal decline (the sixteenth century). As such, various late-imperial rulers did not passively accept their perceived fate but anxiously attempted to freeze the process with various imperial rescue missions and restorations, even though they knew very well that their dynasty was

bound to end sooner or later.<sup>4</sup> Being a man of his own time and place, though, Ibn Khaldun gave the theory a nomadic dynamic and brilliantly systemized and theorized the pre-existing wisdom of the influential Islamo-Persian historical tradition to organize imperial time into three stages: (1) conquest based on tribal cohesion; (2) highpoint based on justice; and (3) decline based on moral regression. Most rulers were very much aware of this scheme and anxiously tried to situate themselves in either the first or the second stage. In such a paradigm, the mere suggestion of moral decline was to be avoided at all costs as this would automatically lead to their fall.

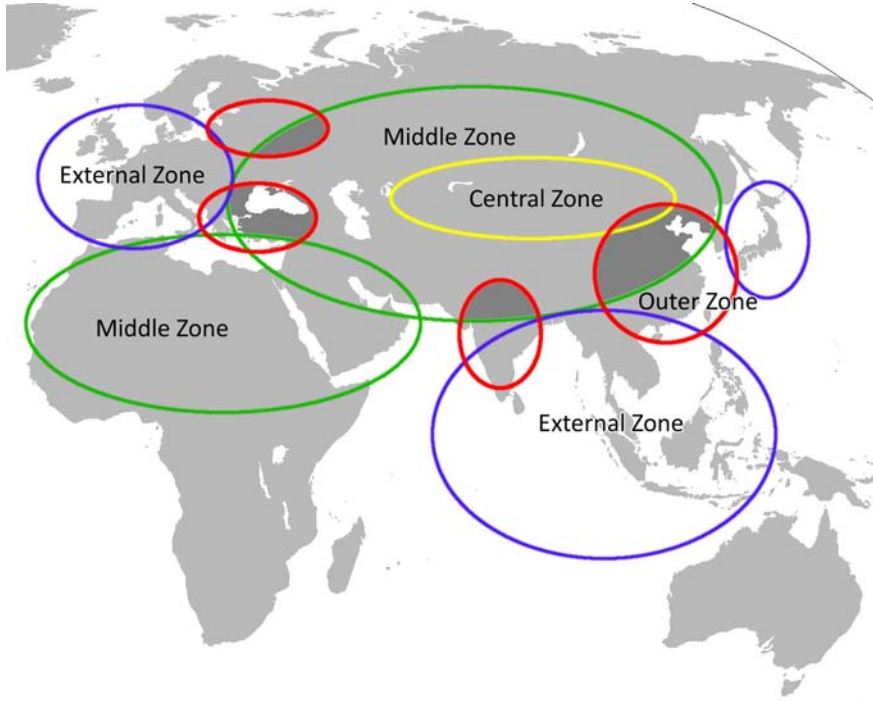
At the heart of the practical Chinggisid model and the theoretical model of Ibn Khaldun stands the nomadic warband: a group of loyal nomadic warriors that follow their leader in the construction of an empire. My two central aims in this Chapter are (a) to study the development of the nomadic warband's cohesion before and, in particular, immediately after a conquest, and (b) to study the role of the nomadic warband in creating imperial cohesion *beyond* the warband, particularly its institutional and financial incorporation into the organization of empires. This immediately raises the important question of the phenomenon's relevance across time and space. How relevant are the two models for Eurasia as a whole? Is not the idea of the warband too general, and do we really need the Chinggisid model and that of Ibn Khaldun to explain it? My main argument would be that both models provide some very important keys for understanding processes of Eurasian conquest and state-formation by nomadic warbands. Hence, in contrast to what seems to be the much more universal phenomenon of the warband as *comitatus* as analysed by Christopher Beckwith and many others, this contribution focuses more particularly on the specific features of the *nomadic* as well as the *post-nomadic* warband within the very specific spatial limits of the Central Asian Arid Zone.<sup>5</sup>

### *Space: Warzones and Frontiers*

It is my contention that the applicability of both models is determined by the *longue durée* geopolitical conditions of the Eurasian macro-region. Considering the importance of (semi-) nomadic groups and the central role of the

4 Cited from Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York, 1975) 55–71. See also Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862–1874* (Stanford, 1957) 43–68.

5 For the *comitatus*, see Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, 2009) 17–19. Cf. Peter B. Golden, 'Some Notes on the *Comitatus* in Medieval Eurasia with Special Reference to the Khazars', *Russian History / Histoire Russe* 28 (2001) 153–170.



Zones	Regions
Yellow: Central Zone	Nomadic: Central Eurasian Steppes
Green: Middle Zone	Semi-Nomadic: Middle East – Iran – Turkestan – Northeast Asia
Red: Outer Zone	Post-Nomadic: China – India – Eastern Europe – Anatolia
Blue: External Zone	Sedentary: Western and Central Europe – Southeast Asia – Japan

MAP 4.1 Four military zones

warhorse in our period, I will differentiate between four *military* zones, each with a different balance between nomadic and sedentary ways of life, each with a different logic and relevance regarding our two models.

These four zones will be employed as a spatial framework in which the making and cohesion of imperial warbands will be analysed. Although the main temporal framework will be Ibn Khaldun’s concept of cyclical time, I will attempt to detect some more general developments in linear time. At the base of this study, however, is my assertion that the warband became particularly

powerful and effective in areas with a nomadic frontier and, in particular, after the end of the first millennium CE. This was the time when nomadic warriors, in particular the Mongols, Turks, Afghans, and Jurchens, gained the advantage over the armies of the settled societies that surrounded them. As they were able to tap into the increasing resources of these settled societies through trade, plunder, and tax, horse-based nomadic warbands gained unprecedented power, particularly when they managed to take the best of both worlds by carving out their empires at the very transition of the desert and agricultural zones. Although this was, at its earliest and most relevant point, focussed particularly on the Central, Middle, and Outer Zones, this development of increasing horse-based militarization even affected, albeit indirectly, the External Zone, and as such it is often discussed under the label of a 'medieval' or 'feudal' mutation. One of the main objectives of this chapter is to detect both spatial and temporal patterns in the development of this specific nomadic warband and how its changing organization played a role in the making and unmaking of empires.

The issue of the impact of Eurasian nomads on the sedentary world has already generated a tremendous quantity of studies that focused mostly on one, sometimes on two or three, but rarely embraced all the sedentary areas surrounding the Arid Zone. This is partly due to the strong philological tradition of the field of Central Asian studies in which scholarly authority is rooted in language skills. Taken the huge variety of relevant languages in this particular field, it is not at all surprising that we lack a convincing overview and that most of our conclusions are still premature and incomplete. More recently, however, we can witness an exponential growth of both regional studies and connective studies focusing on the Mongol Empire and its legacies. This essay exploits the results of these pioneering works by area specialists. At the same time, it is inspired by one of those rare comparative works that came out during the last two decades, *Nomads and the Sedentary World*, edited by Anatoly Khazanov and André Wink. It takes for granted that book's main conclusion that the nomadic world generated almost no institutions that could be maintained in the sedentary world. According to Wink:

Nomads can enhance the mobility of people and trade goods, and they can galvanize other elements of sedentary society. They can also support it militarily. But they cannot give it anything that resembles a self-sustaining political-institutional infrastructure. And it is for this reason that the sedentary world in the long term always won out over the nomads.

Having stated this, though, Wink stressed the need to study the condition of so-called post-nomadism: all those cultural practices and traditions that are found among pastoral nomads who became part of the sedentary world and that are rightly or wrongly attributed to a nomadic past.<sup>6</sup> The present essay offers a very specific study of such post-nomadism by comparing the history of the nomadic warband in East, West and South Asia as well as Eastern Europe.

The starting hypothesis of this study is the idea that the nomadic warband is a critical tool to create and sustain those Eurasian empires that surrounded the Central Asian Arid Zone. During and after a conquest the nomadic warband both extends and reproduces itself in order to encompass allied and subjugated groups. Under the conditions usually found in a sedentary empire, the original open warband encompassing the society as a whole runs the risk of being overstretched, which, in due course, may reduce it to an isolated, much more closed, and purely military institution, one increasingly dominated by the imperial bureaucracy. Hence the warband should not be studied as a given, static phenomenon but as an institution of transition. As I will explain later on, it emerges and expands under conditions of nomadic or semi-nomadic raiding, called *qazaqliq* by contemporaries, before markedly changing under the settled conditions of a sedentary economy. Such a transition can actually be pinned down on the map. It often occurs when moving from the Central Zone of full nomadism into the mixed economy of the Middle Zone or, as in the rare case of Chinggis Khan, straight into the Outer Zone. More usually, though, the most crucial transition occurs on the very frontier of Middle and Outer Zones, and most clearly at those places where both were still within striking distance of the Central Zone; in other words, in those areas where the Middle Zone most sharply demarcates the interface between the desert and agricultural environment. Hence, this chapter will highlight the genesis of the Chinese, Indian, Russian, and Middle Eastern empires at the four main crossroads of the Central, Middle, and Outer Zones, in, respectively, Manchuria, Khorasan, Ukraine, and Anatolia. As I will briefly discuss below, lacking such an interstitial zone with Central Eurasia, North Africa in the southern Middle Zone deserves a separate analysis.

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6 Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink, eds., *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (Richmond, 2001) 295. The volume includes scholars (Peter Golden, Thomas Allsen) that produced some of the most comprehensive and inspiring comparative studies on the nomadic impact, often based on the connective momentum of the Mongol Empire. Khazanov, of course, is the historian who most thoroughly compared all the world's nomadic societies in his classic *Nomads and the Outside World* (Cambridge, 1984).

Although all these regions shared a highly dynamic nomadic frontier, the specific geopolitical conditions varied significantly, and this had different effects on the way a nomadic warband amalgamated with an empire. Comparing the various frontiers with each other, the late Owen Lattimore made the insightful observation that the Great Wall of China demarcates a relatively sharp transition from sedentary agriculture to pastoral nomadism.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, immediately north of the Wall and the Gobi Desert, the steppes of Central Mongolia provided the most favourable assembly ground for the great nomadic hordes that repeatedly changed the course of world history. As such, the Chinese frontier can be characterized as a relatively fixed *outer frontier* between the settled Han Chinese and the nomadic Mongols. It was only in the last two centuries that agriculture managed to expand, in fits and starts, into the northern steppes. Further east, though, in what is now Manchuria, there emerges a more interstitial region of river valleys and plains in the south, and forests and mountains in the north and east, which extends all the way to Siberia and Korea. Albeit in different ways, this mixed economy is quite common across the Middle Zone as a whole. For example, to the south-west, the Middle Zone continues into the oasis and desert landscapes of Turkistan between the Hindu Kush and Elburz Mountains, extending quite naturally through Khorasan and Iran towards the Middle East. Further south, the north-west frontier of India is not bordered by a steppe plateau but is instead encircled by mountains, while its irrigated and unirrigated lands are not set off from each other in large blocks but interconnect with one another. Moreover, the adjacent 'pastoral' economies of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sind, Punjab, and Rajasthan are more often semi-pastoral, and as such are distinct from the increasingly pervasive nomadism that can be observed when moving from the savannahs of the western Middle Zone towards the open steppes of the Central Zone. Although agreeing with Lattimore, I would add that in India the gradual nomadic transition created various *inner frontiers*, which did not support a purely nomadic society but still critically facilitated very powerful post-nomadic empires with a highly dynamic military labour market based on *qazaqliq*. As in the case of Manchuria's interaction with the extremely prosperous China, pre-modern Indian processes of empire building were energized by an extremely rich sedentary economy along India's fertile river valleys and coastal regions. Although slightly less so than with China's outer frontier, India's inner

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7 The following section builds on Owen Lattimore's insightful comments albeit, considerably adjusted for the purpose of my own research questions. See his *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (Hong Kong, 1988) but more particularly his *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers 1928–1958* (Paris, 1957) 148–154.

frontiers proved relatively stable until the nineteenth century, which makes both of them stand out from the constantly *retreating nomadic frontier* that we discover when examining Russia.

Compared to China and India, the Russian frontier finds itself somewhere midway between these two. Like China, it has a relatively sharp distinction between the northern forest zone, dominated by settled agriculture, and the vast Pontic-Caspian steppes and savannahs to the south, dominated by nomadic pastoralism. In between, though, there is a narrow but long latitudinal stretch of mixed landscape with oak woodlands, meadows, and grasslands. At some points, the grassland of this area extends deep into the north, providing the natural pathways used for nomadic incursions. The mixture of woodland, steppe, and savannah created a semi-nomadic livestock economy alongside rainfall agriculture. Although the nomadic way of life retreated more and more towards the southern savannahs, the society that it replaced remained extremely mobile; people may have lived in houses, but they were nevertheless ready to migrate from one place to another. Not unlike India's semi-arid frontier zones, this produced the warlike society of the Ukraine based on *qazaqliq*, in another, but related, Russian idiom, the vagabondage of the Cossacks.<sup>8</sup>

What differentiates the Russian frontier from the Chinese and Indian is its shifting character, which is described by the Russian writer Bogdanoff, as cited by Lattimore:

Russian extensive rainfall agriculture, capable of being combined both with the grazing of livestock and with the exploitation of the forest, rapidly, though superficially, conquered enormous territories—the Russian could carry on his general farming wherever he pleased.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, throughout our period, the Russian nomadic frontier pushed ever further towards the south and south-east. In addition to the southern flow of Russia's main river systems, this was stimulated by the fact that the temperature, soil, and moisture of the southern forest-steppe zone were more conducive to agriculture than those of the northern forests.<sup>10</sup> Overall, though, Russian

8 While finishing my text for this volume (early 2016), I came across Joo-Yup Lee, *Qazaqliq, or Ambitious Brigandage, and the Formation of the Qazaqs. State and Identity in Post-Mongol Central Eurasia* (Leiden, 2016). This is the first comprehensive study of the *qazaqliq* phenomenon and as such it confirms my choice to see the Qazaqs and the Cossacks as one phenomenon.

9 Cited by Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History*, 154.

10 For a survey of the ecological conditions in Russia and its southern frontier, see Richard



agriculture was very poor compared to that of China and India, a basic fact of life that was considerably aggravated by the devastating effects of ongoing plagues and other epidemics. For nomadic raiders, the trouble with Russia's sedentary economy was that it never produced the kind of economic surpluses that are so distinctive for its Chinese and Indian counterparts. As a result, Russians were relatively poor peasants, and so their Tatar neighbours could only be equally poor nomads. For them the north, lacking both grazing opportunities and material resources, offered no incentives whatsoever for a permanent conquest. From the nomadic point of view, the vast Russian forest zone lacked natural anchorage points. Whereas in the east, conquering Beijing or Delhi announced the beginning of an empire, in the west, the taking of Moscow never really paid off. The Mongols and Tatars knew perfectly well what later European conquerors would learn to their utter dismay: the capture of Moscow leads nowhere!

Moving to the western parts of the Middle Zone, this region also had a different frontier dynamic. As already noted, the ecological conditions in the Middle East are not all that different from those of Turkistan and Khorasan. In this entire region, the contrast between steppe and sown can be as sharp as in China, but the irrigated agriculture is centred on oases, or strung alongside rivers that have steppe or desert on both sides. Moving into Anatolia, agriculture becomes more widespread and expands over time, but, in our period at least, it also continued to support a semi-pastoral economy that linked the towns and villages to each other and to the more open grazing lands of the Caucasus and Iran. This Anatolian frontier is thus reminiscent of the inner frontiers of India and Russia; more Indian than Russian, though, since it shares the dispersed and recurrent characteristic of the first against the more contiguous, retreating features of the latter. Overall, the sedentary economy of Anatolia was not as rich as that of India, but also not as poor as that of Russia. Hence, sustaining an extensive empire in Anatolia was possible only if one could also exploit the agricultural and commercial resources of the eastern Mediterranean.

Coming to North Africa, despite the pervasive presence of a nomadic frontier and *pace* Ibn Khaldun, there is one important feature that makes this region

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Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London, 1974) 1–27; Denis J. Shaw, 'Southern Frontiers of Muscovy, 1550–1700', in: James H. Bater and R.A. French, eds., *Studies in Russian Historical Geography, Volume 1* (London, 1983) 117–142; John Ledonne, 'The Frontier in Modern Russian History', *Russian History* 19 (1992) 143–154; David Moon, 'Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia's Frontiers, 1550–1897', *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 4 (1997) 859–893.

as a whole very different from the Turko-Mongolian part of the Middle Zone: scale. The Middle East itself has never been able to support the sheer mass of horsepower that was produced in Central Eurasia. Of course, Arab and Bedouin nomads had a huge impact on Middle Eastern societies, in a manner very much in line with Ibn Khaldun's logic, but this primarily represents an internal dynamic, and so was not directly linked to the Chinggisid explosion that reverberated so deeply in the heartlands of China, India, Russia, and the northern Middle Zone. As in the case of Europe, Central Eurasian warbands could indeed threaten but never really conquer North Africa, partly because the latter was protected by Central Eurasian slave armies, but, more importantly, because it simply lacked the space and the resources to attract and accommodate them. Hence the North African warband comes closer to being one of the smaller and more isolated household troops of the External Zone than the huge and more open Chinggisid warband. As I will try to demonstrate, it is only at the arid fringes of China, India, Russia, and the Turkish Middle East that the Turko-Mongolian warband is an extremely potent category for analysing the creation of Eurasian empires. Beyond these regions, though, the nomadic warband either could not emerge at all, or it dissolved into other, much smaller scale and purely military units from imperial guards to regular armies.

*Time: The Warhorse Millennium and the Rise of the Centre*

What was the secret behind Mongol success? For most onlookers, the most obvious explanation was the quality and quantity of the Eurasian warhorse. Indeed, the Arid Zones of Eurasia were the natural breeding grounds for the world's best warhorses.<sup>11</sup> In the same way as the ascent of infantry warfare is linked to the wider story of the Rise of the West, the age of the horse warrior is embedded in the story of what we may call the Rise of the Centre. But this also raises the question to what extent this 'Rise' was really unique for the Chinggisid era.

Domesticated about 6000 years ago, the warhorse started its huge impact on world history about 2000 years later, drawing the war chariots of the (mostly)

11 The idea that the Arid Zone is an important historical category and that the organization of post-nomadic empires depended on their capacity to tap the horsepower that was produced there stems from my earlier work; see, in particular: 'The Silent Frontier of South Asia, c. A.D. 1100–1800', *Journal of World History* 9, no. 1 (1998) 1–25 and 'War-horse and Post-Nomadic Empire in Asia, c. 1000–1800', *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 1 (2007) 1–21 and more recently 'Continuity and Change in the Indian Ocean Basin', in: Jerry Bentley, et al., eds., *The Cambridge World History: Volume VI: The Construction of the Global World, 1400–1800 CE, Part 1: Foundations* (Cambridge, 2015) 182–210.

Indo-European conquerors who swept across the great sedentary civilizations of the Middle East, India, and China. A few centuries later, the chariots were replaced by the first riding nomads who, from their natural habitats in the Eurasian deserts and steppes, started to breed rather small but sturdy war-horses. At about the beginning of the Common Era, horse breeding penetrated the new Eurasian empires that started to stretch across the various frontier zones between the nomadic and sedentary worlds: from the Roman and Parthian Empires in the west, through the Kushana and Shaka Empires in the south, to the Xiongnu and Han Empires in the east. Kept and fed more and more in stalls, horses gradually became larger and stronger, specifically geared for the more heavily armoured cavalry that increasingly accompanied the lighter variety of mounted archers. Only in Western Europe and Japan, far beyond the Eurasian steppes, did the armoured knightly individual become the dominant military brand, heralding a 'feudal' age at the end of the first millennium CE.

Slightly earlier, from the sixth century onward, in regions in or immediately bordering on the Eurasian Arid Zone, the earlier development towards ever heavier cavalry was halted by the sudden emergence of two new incredibly powerful nomadic powers: the Arabs in the Middle East and the Turks in Central Eurasia. Due to the sheer number and quality of the Central Eurasian horse, it was in particular the Turks who were able to dominate military practice in a vast area that stretched from the Hungarian plain to the Great Wall of China in the northern steppes zone, and from Egypt to southern India in the southern desert zone. By far the most prominent ethnic group among them was the Qipchaq Turks who, in the thirteenth century, provided state-of-the-art horse warriors, and even rulers, to states as far-flung as the Kingdom of Hungary, the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt, and the Delhi Sultanate in India. Much later, the most powerful of the post-nomadic empires, the Ottomans and the Mughals, continued this already rich tradition of Turkish empire-building, and even the Iranian but heavily Turkified dynasty of the Safavids could only follow in the footsteps of their Seljuq (eleventh—twelfth century), Qara Quyunlu, and Aq Quyunlu (fourteenth—fifteenth century) predecessors and base their might on the Turkish man- and horsepower found in their northern territories. In all these cases, Turkification automatically implied militarization and a growing tendency towards Turkish or Turkified rulers across the whole Eurasian continent, who conspicuously demonstrated their outstanding martial qualities, be it in actual practice on the battlefield or imagined in sumptuous rituals, heroic poetry, or austere architecture. In Northeast Asia, the machismo of the Turks finds an almost perfect parallel in the military prowess of the Mongolian Khitans and Tungusic Jurchens who provided the horsepower and dynasties for, respectively, the Liao and the Qara Khitai, and the Jin and Qing Empires.

However, the absolute highpoint of Central Eurasian power was not a Turkish but a Mongol achievement: the unprecedented thirteenth-century expansion of the nomadic empire under the brilliant leadership of Temüjin, better known as Chinggis Khan. But was there really that much difference between Mongol and Turkish expansion? Our use of the contraction 'Turko-Mongol' is partly informed by the contemporary Arabic and Persian sources, which repeatedly convey the belief that Mongols and Turks belonged to one and the same race. For example, the historian Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), who was very close to the scene, explicitly stressed unity in diversity:

Although the Turks and the Mongols and their branches are similar and their language is of the same origin, the Mongols being a kind of Turks, there is yet much difference and dissimilarity between them ... These Mongols were just one people amongst the Turkish peoples.

Rashid al-Din also suggests that it was simply the strongest in the group who determined that group's ethnic identity, as he adds that when the Mongols rose to such power and eminence, 'most of the Turkish peoples were called Mongols'.<sup>12</sup> Moving further westwards, we find a similar ethnic amalgamation taking place with the emergence of the term Tatars, which did *not* refer to the more specific Mongol 'tribe' that fought Chinggis Khan, but was a more generic term indicating a broad mixture of primarily Turkish, but also other ethnic groups, all of them Muslims, beyond the southern frontiers of the sedentary and Christian states of Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania. Indeed, whether Mongols, Turks, or Tatars, all these groups built their power on the capacity to mobilize more horse warriors than ever before. Despite some advances in equipment, such as the stirrup, technology and tactics basically remained the same. The key weapon remained the composite bow, tactics continued to be based on a combination of heavy and light cavalry, the latter of which was extremely mobile, wheeling around the enemy while delivering continuous showers of deadly arrows against them. Hence, the reason this has been called a horse-warrior revolution derives not from any quality but their sheer quantity. So if there was a revolution, it really was a revolution of size: the Mongols merely provided the most spectacular example of a much older and wider Turko-Mongolian development that started as early as the seventh century but, for more than

12 David Ayalon, 'The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khan. A Reexamination (Part c1)', *Studia Islamica* 36 (1972) 126; David Ayalon, 'The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khan. A Reexamination (Part c2)', *Studia Islamica* 38 (1973) 149–150.

a millennium, continued to have a tremendous impact on patterns of state-formation in the entire Eurasian continent.

How can we explain the fact that Turko-Mongolian conquerors managed to operate the biggest cavalry armies that the world had ever seen? It is my contention that it was primarily because of their organizational skill that they were able to tap into the rich agrarian and commercial resources of the sedentary worlds that they first plundered and subsequently conquered. As such, it rather follows the first part of ‘the circle of justice’ as described in Iranian advice literature: ‘there is no kingship without an army, no army without revenues.’<sup>13</sup> Indeed, conquering an empire was one thing, ruling an empire quite another. The main challenge was how to link the already existing fiscal institutions of the sedentary world to the nomadic armies, which was extremely important, as the nomadic conquerors could not risk giving up their trump card: their horse-power.

Here we may speculate whether the earlier ‘frontier states’ of Turks, Khitans, and Jurchens, as well as other semi-nomadic, ‘cooked’ (*shou*) dynasties, paved the way for the Mongols, who could simply build on an already proven infrastructure to bridge the nomadic and sedentary constituents of their polities.<sup>14</sup> This is certainly suggested in the early Song accounts of the Mongols who are depicted as a ‘new kind of northerners’: true nomads (‘noble savages’), not yet spoilt by the corrupt pseudo-nomadic officials of the Jurchen Jin.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the case may be, these Jurchen and Turkish frontier states clearly showed the Mongols how to manage a complicated balancing act in which one had to keep one leg in the nomadic world in order to procure horsepower, while setting the other firmly in the sedentary to be able to collect sufficient revenues to pay for it. Obviously, this exercise required specialized administrators, sophisticated people of the pen, who were both outsiders and insiders, and who were able to read and write in the language of the conquerors *and* the conquered. Before turning to our four concrete cases of Turko-Mongolian empire-building in China, India, Russia, and the Middle East, let me first elaborate further on our two models in order to make the latter more operational and testable.

13 It continues as follows: ‘there is no revenue without subjects, no subjects without justice, no justice without a king’.

14 See the suggestive comments on the Qara Khitai Empire (‘The Qara Khitai established an empire in Central Asia that for the first time joined the worlds of China, the Inner Asian nomads and Islam’) by Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2005) 204–206.

15 Chad D. Garcia, ‘A New Kind of Northerner: Initial Song Perceptions of the Mongols’, *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 42 (2012) 326, 330.

## 1 Theory and Best Practice: Ibn Khaldun and Chinggis Khan

### 1.1 *Ibn Khaldun's Model: The Sword and the Pen*

For nomadic conquerors, becoming administrators themselves was never a serious option as there was always the apprehension that they would lose their martial prowess and, with that, their very identity as true Turks or Mongols. Examples abound that show the nomads' fear of devitalization, which they believed would inevitably accompany the sedentarization process. Take, for example, Bilge (r. 717–734), the ruler of the second Turkic khaganate, who advised his people to remain apart from the settled world, as recorded in the eight-century Orkhon inscription:

Because some ignorant people accepted this invitation and came near the plain in order to settle (in China), many of your people are dead. If you go into that country, O Turkish people, you will die. But if you dwell in the land of the Ötüken and send caravans and convoys, and if you stay in the forest of Ötüken, where there is neither wealth nor trouble, then you will continue to preserve an everlasting empire, O Turkish people, and you will always eat your fill.

In the unfortunate case that one could not avoid such an encounter with the sedentary world, it was better to stick to old customs, as was the approach of Xiéli or Illig Khagan (r. 620–630), the last ruler of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, who had to surrender to the Tang but still managed to:

Pitch his felt tent in the middle of the palace, (before he) fell into a state of profound sadness, and could endure his fate. Surrounded by the people of his household, he chanted plaintive airs and wept with them.<sup>16</sup>

This is repeated frequently in later sources, all of which boast of the martial qualities of the Turkish nation, and among which perhaps the most graphic depiction is that of the eleventh-century Arab historian Ibn Hassul:

The most amazing thing about them [the Turks] is that nobody has ever seen a pure Turk (*turkiyyan khālīṣan*) who had been afflicted by effeminateness (*takhnīth*), and this in spite of the fact that this disgrace is

16 Jean Cuisenier, 'Parenté et organisation sociale dans le domaine turc', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 27 (1972) 932. Translation by Elborg Forster.

general, and this affliction is common among all the peoples we saw, especially those of Gilan. If, however, one does find traces of effemination (*ta'nīth*) in any Turk in his speech, in his hints, in his dress or in his jewellery, he is proved to be one of the Turks of a mixed breed, who thoroughly mingled with the race of their neighbours, the local inhabitants of those lands.<sup>17</sup>

In the Islamic world, the threat of being assimilated into a settled society was often expressed in the dualism between Mongol law (*yasa*) and Islamic law (*shari'a*).<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the specific underlying principle of the so-called Chinggisid *yasa* was the maintenance of a nomadic military culture that was fundamentally opposed to the values of settled society.<sup>19</sup> Equally prominent, though, is the discourse that distinguishes between the civilized Tajik or Persian and the rustic Turk or Turani, as reflected most famously in Firdausi's *Shahnamah*, and as quintessentially formulated in a Turkish proverb provided by the eleventh-century Turkologist Mahmud al-Kashghari: 'Just as the effectiveness of a warrior is diminished when his sword begins to rust, so too does the flesh of a Turk begin to rot when he assumes the lifestyle of an Iranian.'<sup>20</sup>

Much later, Qara Usman (r. 1378–1435), the founder of the Aq Quyunlu Empire, could only agree, as he advised his sons: 'Do not become sedentary, for sovereignty resides in those who practice the nomadic Turkmen way of life.'<sup>21</sup>

As we have seen, the most sophisticated exponent of the idea of a process of effeminization was Ibn Khaldun. For him, the unavoidable decline of group feeling (*asabiyya*) among the conquering tribe was linked to the declining role of the people of the sword and their replacement by the people of the pen:

It should be known that both 'the sword' and 'the pen' are instruments for the ruler to use in his affairs. However, at the beginning of the dynasty, so long as its people are occupied in establishing power, the need for 'the sword' is greater than that for 'the pen'. The same is the case at the end

17 David Ayalon, 'The Mamlūks of the Seljuks: Islam's Military Might at the Crossroads', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1996) 314.

18 See for example the recent discussion in Guy Burak, 'The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Post-Mongol Context of the Ottoman Adoption of a School of Law', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 3 (2013) 579–602.

19 See also the comment by Ayalon, 'The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khan (Part C2)', 135.

20 Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden, 2007) 29.

21 John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City, 1999) 17.

of the dynasty when its group feeling weakens and its people decrease in number under the influence of senility. The dynasty then needs the support of the military. The dynasty's need of the military for the purpose of protection and defence is as strong then as it had been at the beginning of (the dynasty) when its purpose was to become established. In these two situations 'the sword' thus has the advantage over 'the pen'. At that time, the military have the higher rank. They enjoy more benefits and more splendid fiefs.

In the mid-term of the dynasty, the ruler can to some degree dispense with 'the sword'. His power is firmly established. His only remaining desire is to obtain the fruits of royal authority, such as collecting taxes, holding (property), excelling other dynasties, and enforcing the law. 'The pen' is helpful for (all) that. The swords stay unused in their scabbards, unless something happens and they are called upon to repair a breach. The men of the pen have more authority. They occupy a higher rank. They enjoy more benefits and greater wealth and have closer and more frequent and intimate contact with the ruler.<sup>22</sup>

In this long quote, Ibn Khaldun links the fortunes of the peoples of sword and pen to the natural cycle of empires. The group feeling among the warriors of the desert enables them to conquer the settled societies around them. After a conquest, though, more and more of the people of the sword will be replaced by people of the pen, which may optimize the management of the empire, but will also soften the group feeling of the conquering elites and thus make them vulnerable to renewed conquest from nomadic outsiders with a stronger group feeling.<sup>23</sup>

What is perfectly clear is that the elite groups living on the edge of the deserts and steppes of the Arid Zone were well aware that after a conquest warriors tended to lose their freshness and vigour. As indicated by Ibn Khaldun, the problem was often perceived as a power struggle between the warlike people of the sword, who were often direct descendants of the conquerors, and the civilized people of the pen, often recruited from the conquered. For example, the sword-pen dichotomy was a major theme in the Persianate political wisdom literature (*akhlaq*) that experienced a revival immediately after the Mongol conquest. The most influential of these traditions is that of the thirteenth-

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima*, 213.

<sup>23</sup> For a pen-based view on this important dichotomy, see chapter 5 in this volume by Maaïke van Berkel.



century writer Nasir al-Din al-Tusi who stresses that the king should always keep an equable mixture of the four classes of mankind—very much like the four humours of the human constitution. As well as the men of the pen and the men of the sword, these consisted of the men of negotiation and men of husbandry.<sup>24</sup> As a comment on Nasirean ethics, later mirrors for princes confirmed the symbiotic relationship between pen and sword, although they increasingly tended to prefer the pen over the sword, as, for example, was the case with the scholar-bureaucrat Kashifi (d. 1504–1505), who actually warns against the latter: ‘Men of the pen never aspire to take over a kingdom, whereas men of the sword often do; moreover, men of the sword empty a sultan’s treasury, while men of the pen fill it.’<sup>25</sup>

The sword-pen relationship is hardly exclusive to the Islamic world. In the case of China, a similar tension is expressed in the dichotomy between *wu* (the martial domain) and *wen* (the civil domain), which became particularly acute during the conquests of the Khitans (Liao), Jurchens (Jin), and Mongols (Yuan), and later under the Manchus (Qing). It is interesting to read the words of the Yuan historiographer who almost repeats Ibn Khaldun’s observation when he states:

Jin established the dynasty by use of *wu*. In this it did not differ from Liao. But it was able to establish institutions drawing on both Tang and Sung, achieving in some things what Liao had not attained. This was accomplished with *wen*, not with *wu*. [Confucius in the *Tso*] *Commentary* said: If one says it without *wen*, he will not be able to practice it extensively.<sup>26</sup>

The Yuan historiographers saw *wen* as a process by which the initial *wu* of the conquerors was civilized. So *wen* involved learning specific skills: the creation of a chain of command, the adoption of civil speech, the use of administrators, the extension of central authority, the creation of a bureaucracy, the accumulation of books, the welcoming of the learned, the recognition of cultural tradition, the spread of education, the rise of the literati to *de facto* leadership, and, finally, the creation of a cultural legacy. All this was seen as the achievement of the civil order, of benefit both to the state and people, and as such it

24 Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics by Naṣīr ad-Dīn Ṭūsī*, trans. G.M. Wickens (London, 1964) 230, 327.

25 Maria E. Subtelny, ‘A Late Medieval Persian Summa on Ethics: Kashifi’s Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī’, *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003) 605.

26 Peter K. Bol, ‘Seeking Common Ground: Han Literati under Jurchen Rule’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47 (1987) 487. Based on the *Jin shih*.

was sharply contrasted with military rule. Like Ibn Khaldun, the Jurchens themselves were very much aware of both the historical sequence and the natural complementarity of *wu* and *wen*. This is illustrated by one of the questions in the first Jurchen-language examination that they introduced: 'Our dynasty settled all under heaven with spirited *wu*; His Majesty is bringing comfort to all within the seas with *wen* virtue. *Wen* and *wu* are both employed.'<sup>27</sup>

At about the same time, another version of *wu* was influential in the creation of empires on the north-western side of the Eurasian steppes, and particularly along the fringes of the Russian forest belt. In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Muscovy, it gave rise to the introduction of a dual administrative system between, on the one hand, military tasks, which were in the hands of the so-called *basqaq*, and, on the other, civilian tasks that were in the hands of the *darughas*.<sup>28</sup> Although Russia's dual administration may have been built on Mongol antecedents, we may wonder about the nomadic nature of this duality. Was it really that different from the experience of the European Middle Ages where a similar distinction between pen and sword emerged between, on the one hand, the knights who held land by right of blood and, on the other hand, the clerics of profession and ordination?<sup>29</sup>

What made the European situation different is shown by the situation at its fringes, where the kings of Hungary, Georgia, and, indeed, Muscovy attempted to fight the growing power of the landed nobility by inviting nomadic Qipchaqs (Cumans) into their territories and making marriage alliances with them.<sup>30</sup> This suggests that it was much easier for the mounted warriors in Europe to become firmly rooted in their landholdings with no eagerness whatsoever to maintain nomadic purity against an imagined bureaucratic other. In most of Eurasia, bureaucrats fashioned themselves as preservers of an administrative order that was repeatedly demolished by foreign warriors. By contrast, much

27 Bol, 'Seeking Common Ground', 488.

28 Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (Cambridge, 1998) 36–63.

29 R.I. Moore, 'The Transformation of Europe as a Eurasian Phenomenon', *Medieval Encounters* 10 (2004) 89–90. See also the discussion in *Past & Present* following T.N. Bisson's 'The "Feudal Revolution"', *Past & Present* 142 (1994) 6–42, which demonstrates how European historiography is still captivated by national perspectives and traditions.

30 Nora Berend, 'Cuman Integration in Hungary', in: Khazanov and Wink, eds., *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, 110–111. King László IV (1272–1290) was half Cuman and during his reign Cumans gained unprecedented importance, as *neugerii* or members of his military bodyguard. See also Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300* (Cambridge, 2001) 145, 183.

of the bureaucracies in Europe were staffed by the disinherited relatives of the landed elites.<sup>31</sup> These circumstances may have contributed to Maaïke van Berkel's observation that compared to the Islamic and Chinese cases, European people of the pen had a relatively weak professional awareness.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, there is no European discourse that comes anywhere near the dichotomy between nomadic Turk or Mongol versus sedentary Tajik or Chinese. Indeed, as we will see below, the foremost purpose of the nomadic warband after a conquest was to forestall the process of gentrification in which the imperial aristocracy settles permanently and takes root in landed properties. High time to turn to the specific characteristics of the nomadic, Turko-Mongolian warband.

### 1.2 *The Chinggisid Model: Scale and Ethnic Engineering*

How did nomadic conquerors cope with this unavoidable dichotomy between the military and administrative organization in their newly won empires? The vehicle that had gained them their empires was the *keshik*. It was a conscript-based elite made up of the personal followers and guardsmen of the war leader who trained and paid them, often by distributing booty among them. The *keshik* consisted of non-tribal companions (*nökörs*) and constituted the leader's personal household. They were recruited not on the basis of family or a hereditary position but purely on their loyalty and talent. Indeed, intensely personal ties between leaders and followers were at the heart of the warband's cohesion. Actually, it was demonstrated in a re-enactment of family life manifested in every day social interaction involving eating, drinking, clothing, and in the frequent collective celebrations of shared experiences, adventures, hunting encounters, great feasts, and drinking bouts, hangovers included. All this was commemorated by material awards, rewards, and other forms of public redistribution. Despite the appearance, not kinship but common experiences, particularly dramatic and dangerous ones, generated solidarity. As in that well-known classical-Chinese verdict on the barbarians: 'these people despise the old and take joy in the strong', not descent but talent counted.<sup>33</sup>

31 Moore, 'Transformation of Europe', 88–89. However, in this case Moore sees parallels with China as a common 'need for an old aristocracy to transform itself in order to renew its access to power and wealth' (page 95). In China, though, there is always the threat of a devastating nomadic conquest that Europe lacks.

32 See chapter 5 by Maaïke van Berkel in this volume.

33 The information on the *keshik* is entirely based on the pioneering work of: Thomas T. Allsen, 'Guard and Government in the Reign of The Grand Qan Möngke, 1251–1259', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46 (1986) 495–521; S.M. Grupper, 'A Barulas Family Narrative in the *Yuan-shih*: Some Neglected Prosopographical and Institutional Sources on Timurid

As stressed already, the most important ingredient of ‘the strong’ was the warhorse. Its importance is indicated in some of the earliest titles given within the *keshik* of Chinggis Khan, which included grooms, herders of horses (*aġta-čġn*), and, more specifically, herders of geldings (*aduġučġn*).<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, it was in the course of retrieving horses stolen from his family that Chinggis Khan started his *keshik* in the early 1180s by recruiting Bo’orchu, the very first of his many *nökörs*.<sup>35</sup> But more important than its equine nature is the fact that all titles within the *keshik* express a physical closeness to the leader. This is shown in titles such as cooks, chamberlains, and other so-called *ichki*’s (insiders), which were most clearly manifested in the rotation of personal guard duties, which created another set of honourable titles: night-guards and day-guards.

Historians have interpreted *keshik* as the typical Indo-European *comitatus*, also *Männerbund* in German or *družhina* in Russian. Thus, the phenomenon seems not to be particular to Turko-Mongolian nomads.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, there is an overall scholarly consensus that the *keshik* has a much older history, and even could be quite universal in nature, as it can be traced far beyond Central Eurasia, and even beyond the Indo-European heartlands. Staying aloof from the controversies surrounding its origins, it is my contention that the *keshik* as an open, meritocratic institution fares best in the socio-political context of (semi-) nomadic vagabondage, in Turkish expressed as *qazaqlıq*.<sup>37</sup> Another term related to *qazaqlıq* is the Arabic word *ghaza*—not to be confused with its later theological rationalization of *jihād* as in the case of early Ottoman history. Both refer to the adventurous life of a charismatic hero in the wilderness who, through his success, is able to attract a following of retainers called *qazaq*, cosack, *ghazi*, or any other label that indicates free association. The *keshik* loses its strength, though, the moment it gains a foothold in sedentary society. This

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Origins’, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 8 (1992–1994) 11–99; Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*; P.B. Golden, “‘I will give the people unto thee’: The Činggisid Conquests and their Aftermath in the Turkic World’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 10, no. 1 (2000) 21–41; Charles Melville, ‘The *Keshig* in Iran: The Survival of the Royal Mongol Household’, in: Linda Komaroff, ed., *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden, 2006) 135–164; and Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*. Much of this goes back to much older literature inspired by B. Vladimirtsov, *Le régime social des Mogols; Le féodalisme nomade* (Paris, 1948). I very much profited from Allsen’s further comments on this phenomenon by email.

34 Grupper, ‘A Barulas Family Narrative’, 39.

35 Allsen, ‘Guard and Government’, 513.

36 Most forcefully in Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*.

37 Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 28–32.

also explains the well-known Tatar strategy of *kazak cikmak*: withdrawing to the steppes in order to regain your strength, a phenomenon that will immediately be familiar to those with a knowledge of Indian epics, where princes conquer kingdoms after the return from exile in the wilderness.<sup>38</sup> Although *qazaqliq* can be seen as universal, it is at its most effective and enduring in the specific geopolitical conditions of the Arid Zone, hence its ongoing association with its Central Eurasian past and the repeated fear of losing one's strength by being assimilated into the settled world. Obviously, this fear makes the necessary linking of sword and pen all the more challenging for nomadic conquerors, who not only want to conquer a sedentary empire, but also want to rule one without losing the original strength and cohesion of their *keshik*. This was quite a challenge since the *keshik* is so closely associated with *qazaqliq*, a way of life that could not be tolerated under the new sedentary order.

Hence, it is my contention that there was something unique about the empires that were carved out by nomadic or semi-nomadic conquerors. In cases where the imperial household was not able to repeatedly recruit fresh nomadic horsepower, it had to accept that its military power would be increasingly based on a hereditary and rooted military aristocracy. On the other hand, imperial households that were built on significant numbers of highly mobile mounted warriors had a much tougher hold on the society and could more easily disregard hereditary rights and privileges. Thus, for these so-called post-nomadic imperial households it was crucial to retain the 'spirit of the steppes', which involved (a) the meritocratic recruitment of mobile horse warriors, and (b) their (re)organization into artificially constructed groups that were as closely attached to the personal household of the ruler as possible. For the purpose of the present argument, both the *keshik* and these freshly fabricated, *subsidiary* military groups are perceived as nomadic warbands. Even after conquering or settling in sedentary surroundings, some of these 'conscriptive' groups, such as the Manchu Banners or the Russian Cossacks, retained their highly meritocratic and personalized (i.e. non-tribal) spirit, and as such can still be seen as post-nomadic avatars of the nomadic warband.

So the important question remains: how to govern after a nomadic conquest? The obvious answer would be to convert the *keshik* into an imperial army and administration while, at the same time, retaining its core ingredients that would ensure ongoing personal loyalty and counteract the assimilative pull of settled civilization that threatened to draw the nomadic elite into its snare. In

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38 Halil Inalcik, 'The Khan and the Tribal Aristocracy: The Crimean Khanate under Sahib Giray I', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979–1980) 452.

line with the pioneering work of Peter Golden, we suggest that it was indeed Chinggis Khan who perfected the institution of the *keshik*, and did so on an unprecedented scale,<sup>39</sup> by a thorough reshuffling of the ‘tribal’ components of his following.<sup>40</sup> The result of this was the creation of decimal military units as artificial tribal formations that consisted of a well-engineered mixture of original tribes and other, defeated, groups.<sup>41</sup> The leaders of these subsidiary warbands of 10,000, 1,000, and 100—here for mere convenience called *tümens* after its biggest contingent—had to send their brothers, sons, and the best of their own companions and mounts as, respectively, hostages and security to the chief Khan or Khaghan. The hostages were incorporated into the imperial *keshik*, sharing a tent and table with the Kaghan. At the same time, their sisters and daughters often married into the dynastic line, some of them serving as wet nurses, meaning their sons shared their mother’s milk with the sons of the Khaqan, thus being turned into foster brothers of the royal princes.<sup>42</sup> Others became concubines in a system where polygamy flourished among those able to afford it.<sup>43</sup> From the point of view of most sedentary societies, these Mongol women were conspicuously present at court and, using Rossabi’s apt characteristic, made an extraordinary ‘assertive, worldly and able impression’. Although some of them gained powerful positions for themselves and for their sons—even the sons of concubines were considered legitimate sons who received part of their father’s property—the privilege of legitimate succession remained

39 Golden, ‘I will give the People’, 21–41.

40 The term ‘tribe’ is highly problematic. The common term used in the early Mongol sources is *irgen*, which indicates ‘a community of common ‘shape, form, vocabulary, dialect, customs and manners’’. Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, ‘Where Did the Mongol Empire Come From? Medieval Mongol Ideas of People, State and Empire’, *Inner Asia* 13, no. 2 (2011) 211–237—partly cited from Thackston.

41 Of course, the decimal system as such was not a Chinggisid invention as it was used already by the Xiongnu.

42 Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 35.

43 ‘Pure’ descent was primarily determined by the father, although the maternal lineage also remained important (e.g. Babur’s maternal descent from Timur). Interestingly, this exogamous policy is still visible in the Y-chromosomal lineage that goes back to Chinggis Khan and can be traced in 8% of the male population of the Central Eurasian region. The existence of this Chinggisid genetic lineage is as telling for Chinggisid patrilineal descent rules as the non-existence of other such lineages is for the Chinggisid policy of ethnic engineering. T. Zerjal, Y. Xue, G. Bertorelle, et al., ‘The Genetic Legacy of the Mongols’, *American Journal of Human Genetics* 72, no. 3 (2003) 717–721; see also E. Heyer, P. Balaresque and M.A. Jobling, ‘Genetic Diversity and the Emergence of Ethnic Groups in Central Asia’, *BMC Genetics* 10 (2009) 49.

with the chief wife. Hence, despite the absence of monogamous marriage, only Chinggis Khan's sons by that wife were regarded as eligible for the succession.<sup>44</sup>

So Chinggis Khan's first innovation was one of scale. He expanded his *keshik* from a mere eighty night-guards and seventy day-guards in 1189 to a permanent administrative unit of 10,000 men in 1206, which amounted to about one-tenth of all active military forces. At the same time, beyond the Chinggisid line itself, the crucial meritocratic principle of the *keshik* was maintained or, as the *Secret History of the Mongols* has it, 'those shall be enlisted who are clever and attractive of appearance'. As big as the *keshik* grew, it remained a personal army, subordinate and loyal to Chinggis Khan alone. As vast as the empire grew, the old practice of organizing repeated physical contact was maintained; this was described by the thirteenth-century Walloon globetrotter William of Rubruck, who reported that all nobles stationed anywhere within a two-month journey of the capital Qara Qorum were obliged to assemble each summer at the court in order that Möngke, one of Chinggis Khan's successors, might drink and sup with them, bestow garments and presents upon them, and display his great glory.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, members of the extended *keshik* of 10,000 served as a pool of loyal managers, both for the military and for the civil administration. As Thomas Allsen so aptly observes, the *keshik* remained 'the training ground, proving ground and recruitment ground for central government personnel'.<sup>46</sup> As such, it served as a top-layer of various kinds of special, personal envoys (*wakils*) and controllers (*darughachis*) who supervised the existing hierarchy of both military and civil administration. Chinggis Khan was known to have expressed it as follows: 'My guardsmen are higher than the external commanders of thousands. The escorts of my guardsmen are higher than the external commanders of hundreds and of tens'.<sup>47</sup> Thus, a crucial part of the system was a structural doubling as well as the overlapping of functions; shadow officers from the *keshik*, who served as a check on the regular administrator, also had to keep an eye on their closest colleagues with similar functions. As is often observed by later analysts, Mongolian officials were generalists rather than specialists.

44 David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1990) 40; Morris Rossabi, 'Khubilai Khan and the Women in his Family', in: W. Bauer, ed., *Studia Sino-Mongolica: Festschrift für Herbert Franke* (Wiesbaden, 1979) 153–180. The same idea continued under the Mughals in India and, under more secluded circumstances, under the Ottomans. For the important consequences of different marriage patterns in Europe, see Duindam, chapter 2 in this volume.

45 Allsen, 'Guard and Government', 518.

46 Allsen, 'Guard and Government', 517.

47 Grupper, 'A Barulas Family Narrative', 44–45, 57.

Chinggis Khan's second major innovation was his widely implemented policy of ethnic engineering; the breaking up of old patterns of ethnic organization and reconstituting them into new subsidiary warbands such as the *tümens*. This is what Golden calls the 'nökörization of the tribal fighting force'; the imposition of the non-tribal, personal principle of the warband onto the existing tribal organization.<sup>48</sup> This is forcefully argued by Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, who demonstrates the existence of a category of people called felt-tent, or *ulus* in Mongolic, who became Mongol *ulus* only after being administratively organized into ninety-five units of a thousand. As a result, the term *ulus* itself has not an ethnic but a political meaning, that of a 'community of the realm'; that is, a political community formed by the state.<sup>49</sup>

As will be discussed below, there is growing doubt as to whether the pre-existing structure of society was really based on 'tribes', and so it must be wondered to what extent Chinggis Khan was really that innovative in this regard. However, the difference between the ideas of the original core warband of the ruler (*keshik*) and these new subsidiary warbands (*tümens*) was that the latter was not freely but forcibly associated with the Khaghan, a process engineered by the latter, who was assisted by the men and women of his own *tümen*, the *keshik*. In principle, though, the *tümen* signifies the successful repetition and trickling down of the *keshik* at the level of the ruler's followers, and as such will be studied here as an important and integral ingredient in the legacy of the Chinggisid and the Turko-Mongolian warband.

### 1.3 *Transition*

Central to the present argument is the view that many of the Eurasian Empires of the period 1200–1800 were not only inspired by long-standing Roman, Islamo-Persian, or Chinese traditions—a fact all too often stressed by our present-day area studies—but also by the nomadic legacy of the *keshik* as created by Chinggis Khan. Although the *keshik* was an ancient institution that was to flourish particularly in the socio-political context of Central Eurasian *qazaqliq*, Chinggis Khan expanded the institution to an imperial level and imposed it ruthlessly on both the old aristocracies and the new imperial administration. It should not be forgotten, however, that even Chinggis Khan soon made compromises with his own model. Although in principle the members of the *keshik* derived their honour and position from their talent and personal loyalty to Chinggis Khan, the latter made sure that his new world order was perpetuated:

48 Golden, "I will give the People", 23.

49 Munkh-Erdene, 'Where did the Mongol Empire come from?', 211–237.



As for my 10,000 personal guardsmen, who have come selected to become personal servants in my presence from the ninety-five thousands, the sons who will have sat on my throne henceforth—to the descendants of my descendants—shall consider these guardsmen as a legacy and give them no cause for dissatisfaction and take excellent care of them.<sup>50</sup>

Although this arrangement undermined the meritocratic principle of the nomadic warband, it also explains the endurance of the Chinggisid tradition; for example, S.M. Grupper has shown how Timur's legitimacy was based on ancestors who had served as *nökörs* in the Chinggisid *keshik* for five generations. But by far the most crucial substance of that Chinggisid tradition was the model of the warband, which was, often in hidden, submerged ways, implemented by most of the post-Chinggisid conquerors who carved out their own domains at the interface of the nomadic and sedentary worlds. Some of this enduring institutional legacy has been studied quite extensively—for the Timurids by Grupper and Maria Subtelny, for Iran by John Woods and Charles Melville.<sup>51</sup> The current work will gratefully build on these pioneering endeavours and make further comparisons and connections between the *keshik* phenomenon within the various post-nomadic empires at the sedentary fringe of the Eurasian Arid Zone, including Russia, Islamic India, and the Middle East. The European, Middle Eastern, and Indian experiences of the ruler's personal guards will serve as a constant reminder of the more universal, non-nomadic characteristics of the warband as discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Taking the *keshik* as a starting point, we will particularly focus on the way its martial spirit was extended from the inner circle of the warband towards the military organization and military culture of the post-nomadic empires as a whole. This will necessarily involve a discussion of the transition of the warband into the imperial army and its relationship with the imperial bureaucracy. One way or the other, all these cases will address the central questions of this book as a whole: what held these people together, and what made them willing to fit into the larger political structure of the empire?

This brings us back to Ibn Khaldun and what he observed as the three main ingredients of *'asabiyya*: pedigree (*ansab*), religious devotion (*din*), and military slavery (*mawali*; *mamalik*).<sup>52</sup> In all three cases, these elements should be understood in their widest connotations, whether it produces real or imagined

50 Grupper, 'A Barulas Family Narrative', 45–46.

51 See also the pertinent comments by Michal Biran, 'The Mongol Transformation: From the Steppe to Eurasian Empire', *Medieval Encounters* 10 (2004) 339–361.

52 Based on a less well-known part (i.e. beyond the *Muqaddima*) of his *Kitāb al-'Ibar* as

feelings of belonging, whether it takes an orthodox (e.g. *jihad*) or a heterodox (e.g. *ghulluw*) form, and whether it relates to the army or to the martial culture in the society as a whole. In addition to Ibn Khaldun's three components, a fourth ingredient, that of material rewards, from loot to cash salaries, should be added. As indicated in the quote opening this chapter, Ibn Khaldun was more than eager to recognize the importance of the 'money and taxation' that paid for the warband. Indeed, it once again demonstrates the fact that the pre-modern Chinese, Indian, Russian, and Ottoman empires surrounding Central Eurasia did not originate from either the nomadic or the sedentary world but were very much the result of the unescapable interaction and transition between the two.

Last but not least, we should take into account the possibility that Ibn Khaldun was altogether wrong about *'asabiyya*. This is suggested by the South Asian experience so eloquently expressed by the late Indologist Jan Heesterman, who stresses that it was *not* the desert but sedentary agriculture that enabled the construction of extensive networks of kin and marriage, often using genealogical formulas to express the repartitioning of rights in the soil and its produce. By contrast, the cohesion of nomadic groups depends on immediate, albeit momentary, success and easily breaks down in case of failure. Hence, the nomadic warband lacks, as a basic principle, primordial ties that persist over time. It is equally understandable that the nomadic warband is likely to look for patronage and leadership outside its own ranks, with a settled magnate, who has a better chance of leading them to success and supporting them in case of failure—in other words, of providing the continuity (read *'asabiyya*)—the warband lacks on its own.<sup>53</sup>

A similar conclusion is suggested by the recent work of Ali Anooshahr, who has demonstrated that Ibn Khaldun was just one—and the most systematic—of a series of historians—Baihaqi and Nizam al-Mulk to name two others—who endowed the history of Islamic dynasties with a universal, tripartite, cyclical quality, each embodied by an idealized monarch.<sup>54</sup> In the first stage, we find

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analysed and translated by David Ayalon, 'Mamlūkiyyāt', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980) 321–349.

53 J.C. Heesterman, 'Warrior, Peasant and Brahmin', *Modern Asian Studies* 29, no. 3 (1995) 644.

54 Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (London, 2009) 13, 44; Ali Anooshahr, 'Mughals, Mongols, and Mongrels: The Challenge of Aristocracy and the Rise of the Mughal State in the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*', *Journal of Early Modern History* 18, no. 6 (2014) 559–577; Ali Anooshahr, 'The Rise of the Safavids According to their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi's *Futuhat-e Shahi*', *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014) 249–267.

the simple and austere ghazi leading a life of vagabondage with his brothers in arms. The second stage involves the climax of the dynasty, represented by a righteous king who rules over a prosperous and orderly realm. In the third stage, decline sets in because of a debauched and ineffectual ruler, who, through mismanagement, loses his throne to a different warband of fierce ghazis who are endowed with a high level of group cohesion. All this suggests that the work of Ibn Khaldun and his colleagues should be read not only as historical analysis, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a literary model of a programmatic nature. Their chronicles are less about what happened in the past than prescriptive texts that provide a programme for the present and the future. In other words, they don't tell us how rulers actually behaved but how they *should* behave in order to avoid, as long as possible, the inevitable final stage, that of moral decline and foreign conquest. In this scenario, it should not be a surprise that every late-dynastic ruler was keen to demonstrate that he had not yet entered the third stage or that, by presenting himself as a *ghazi*, he had actually opened a new dynastic cycle.

From this perspective, Ibn Khaldun's notion of *'asabiyya* should be perceived as a rather romantic post-conquest rationalization of the early period of empire. In fact, looking at various important examples, it appears that group cohesion on the basis of pedigree, devotion, or slavery was rather weak and never unchallenged. It was only *after* a conquest that sedentary administrators made *'asabiyya* into a sophisticated tool to forge new bonds of loyalty between the ruler and his former warband. To turn the latter into an effective imperial army, the ranks of the warband had to be opened up to outsiders on the basis of a new ideological model. For someone like the sixteenth-century Ottoman historian Mustafa 'Ali it was no more and no less than divine favour that made for a successful ruler or *sahib-i zuhur*, i.e. 'the manifest one'. Indeed, unconsciously echoing Thomas Aquinas's famous words 'if justice is taken away, what are kingdoms but robberies', he considered the main difference between a bandit and a legitimate ruler purely a matter of chronology: once a *sahib-i zuhur* had established a legitimate dynasty, his successors ruled by right of heredity.<sup>55</sup> One can almost hear Chinggis Khan's affirmative 'yeah'.

With Mustafa 'Ali, also modern historians increasingly start to doubt the traditional narrative of the first imperial stage. As we have seen already, Chinggis Khan started to stress the kinship ingredient of his extended *keshik* only *after* his first conquests. In a recent monograph David Sneath convincingly

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55 Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa 'Ali (1541–1600)* (Princeton, 1986) 281, 290.

dismisses the idea of tribe and kinship as the most important ingredient of cohesion among Central Asian groups, even before Chinggis Khan.<sup>56</sup> Munkh-Erdene elaborates on this and cites Thomas Allsen, who had previously stressed that the use of kinship rhetoric was ‘designed to enhance political unity, not authentic descriptions of biological relationship’.<sup>57</sup> Before this, Colin Imber strongly argued against the so-called ghazi thesis to explain the early rise of the Ottomans. Others, like Lindner, had already questioned the ideological content of the ghazi narrative and instead stressed a much more pragmatic meaning, that of a phenomenon that was basically geared towards the making and redistribution of spoils.<sup>58</sup> After dealing with the Ottomans and Mughals, Anooshahr is now attempting to show that the earliest Safavid warband was forged less by the religious devotion of its members to an extraordinarily charismatic leader than the fact that it simply made the best of specific historical circumstances and good fortune.<sup>59</sup>

Where, then, does all this leave Ibn Khaldun’s *‘asabiyya* as an analytical framework? What does this imply for the idea of nomadic cycles? What if chronicles do not so much *describe* but *make* history? My provisional answer would be that nomadic cycles do still exist but that these cannot be explained by *‘asabiyya*, as this was an ex-post-facto rationalization of more random historical circumstances. Hence, rather than the various elements of group cohesion, it is horse-based military superiority that accounts for the recurrent nomadic conquests. At the same time, historians should read chronicles as instruments of fashioning and disciplining both the ruler himself and his following. As chronicles tend to represent the administrators’ points of view, their contents are less about the emergence of empire than about its continuation. In other words, most chronicles reflect Ibn Khaldun’s second imperial stage after the divergence between the people of the sword and the people of pen, and thus they increasingly represent the latter’s highly polished views on the former. As a consequence, bonds of kinship, devotion, and military slavery should be studied as post-conquest, sedentary *alternatives* to the nomadic warband. Although each of these would deserve at least a separate monograph, in this chapter they

56 David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia* (New York, 2007).

57 Munkh-Erdene, ‘Where did the Mongol Empire come from?’, 221.

58 Colin Imber, ‘The Ottoman Dynastic Myth’, *Turcica* 19 (1987) 7–28; R.P. Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington IN, 1983). For the Ottoman discussion on the ghazi thesis, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, 1994).

59 Ali Anooshahr, ‘The Rise of the Safavids’.

will only feature in the background of what should be considered its main topic: the specific case of the nomadic warband in the making of empires.

Finally, we may ask ourselves whether the present exercise does not repeat Ibn Khaldun's mistake of making too much of the nomadic warband as a specific case that dominates all other vectors of empire formation, even in the Arid Zone? Should we not distance ourselves from the emic, cultural point of view by looking at the day-to-day practice of imperial rule? Indeed, one may wonder, to what extent the practice of nomadic conquest really differs from that of sedentary conquest? Perhaps it is too early to answer these questions, but for the moment it is imperative to briefly recapitulate the nomadic warband's specific ingredients. First of all, following the late Marshall Hodgson, I would like to stress the fact that the sheer scale of their operations enabled the Mongols to conceive of their whole society as a single military force. Consequently, the civilian bureaucracy tended to be absorbed, as to rank and form of remuneration, into the military.<sup>60</sup> Even the religious sphere, mostly in eclectic shamanistic forms, was part and parcel of the nomadic warband and subordinate to its charismatic ruler.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, the society as a whole was reshuffled into movable and adjustable warbands that often acquired new ethnic labels. Here I would argue with Thomas Allsen that 'the Chinggisids seized Central and West Asia with the human resources of East Asia and then expanded and secured their holdings in the east with personnel transported from western Eurasia, many of whom later formed ethnic-based guard units'.<sup>62</sup> These large, highly flexible military units literally expanded on the idea of the much smaller *keshik* or *comitatus*. Not the warband as such, but its unique capacity to organize and incorporate very large segments of the society was bound to the particular circumstances of the Arid Zone, especially at its fringes where it could tap into the considerable resources of much more wealthy sedentary societies, like those of China and India. These were to be exploited in the usual nomadic way: through collective 'tribal' appanages. As we will see, after conquering an area, the proximity of the Arid Zone meant that nomadic warbands were able to continue their normal ways of existence in a tense *modus vivendi* with sedentary, standing armies that drew their revenues more directly from land allocations under

60 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Vol. 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago and London, 1974) 406–409.

61 This continued into post-nomadic situations, such as that of the Qing as discussed by Peter Rietbergen in this volume.

62 Thomas T. Allsen, 'Population Movements in Mongol Eurasia', in: Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, eds., *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change: The Mongols and their Eurasian Predecessors* (Honolulu, 2015) 124.

their control.<sup>63</sup> Keeping all these considerations in mind, let us now discuss our four case studies of nomadic imperial state-formation, beginning with the most successful and powerful by far.

## 2 China: From Jurchens to Qing

### 2.1 *Jurchens: Keshik and Mukun*

Travellers who journeyed eastwards along the Silk Road usually, at some point, turned southward and headed for the wonders and riches of China. If, however, that temptation was ignored and the eastern trail continued to be followed, one arrived in an area that is now called Manchuria, and which extends into Korea. The people of this area occupied themselves either with hunting and fishing in the forests or with raising cattle and agricultural work in the plains. Although oxen dominated their own mixed economy, they exported huge numbers of horses to China. Sitting on the edge of the exchange between the desert and agricultural lands, the Jurchen inhabitants of Manchuria proved ideal commercial and political intermediaries between the Mongols and Chinese.<sup>64</sup> In fact, this intermediate position gave them more political agency in Chinese history than any of the purely nomadic people of the steppes, including Chinggis Khan and his Mongols. In the last millennium, Manchuria gave birth to three imperial dynasties that ruled either northern China, as in the case of the Khitan-Liao (907–1125) and the Jurchen-Jin (1126–1234), or China as a whole, in the case of the Manchu-Qing (1644–1911).<sup>65</sup>

63 Reuven Amitai, 'Armies and their Economic Basis in Iran and the Surrounding Lands, c. 1000–1500', in: David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid, eds., *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Vol. 3: The Eastern Islamic World, Eleventh to Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2000) 539–560.

64 Here one could add Korea, which was heavily influenced by Mongol institutions; see David M. Robinson, *Empire's Twilight: Northeast Asia under the Mongols* (Cambridge Mass., 2009); Remco E. Breuker, 'And now, Your Highness, we'll discuss the Location of your Hidden Rebel Base: Guerillas, Rebels and Mongols in Medieval Korea', *Journal of Asian History* 46, no. 1 (2012) 59–95.

65 Ch'i-ch'ing Hsiao, *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge Mass., 1978); Herbert Franke, 'The Chin Dynasty', in: Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Empires and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge, 1994) 215–320; Igor De Rachewiltz, 'Personnel and Personalities in North China in the Early Mongol Period', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 9 (1966) 88–144; Thomas Allsen, 'The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in North China',

Returning to Chinggis Khan's Mongols, their expertise was in conquest. For sustaining their conquests, however, they turned to the example of the Jin dynasty, which gave them the institutional tools to establish a dynasty that ruled the whole of China under the name of Yuan (1271–1368). As we have stressed in the introduction, the key concept by which Chinggis Khan was able to bridge the gap between his Mongol past and Chinese future was his personal warband or *keshik*. Although we should acknowledge that the *keshik* as such was nothing extraordinary at the time, the main challenge was to stretch its size in such a way that it could incorporate new groups without undermining its overall cohesion, which was based on personal loyalty and intimacy. Since not all new manpower could be accommodated in the imperial warband, other subsidiary warbands were engineered from a wide variety of ethnic groups, of which only the leaders were represented in the imperial warband, while their sons became hostages and their daughters became spouses. Although Chinggis Khan and his successors exploited the warband's potential to its maximum and without precedent, they only succeeded because they could stand on the shoulders of their immediate, more 'cooked' predecessors: the Jurchen-Jin.

To expand on this point, we should first of all take account of the fact that Chinggis Khan's Mongol tribe had been tributary to the Jurchens. Chinggis himself had the Jin honorary title of 'chief of hundred'. Being very close to the imperial experience of the Jin, Chinggis Khan must have learned from the way the former had used the Jurchen institution of the *mukun*. Although dictionaries give definitions of this term that vary from clan to family, village, herd, and tribe, its political meaning at that time comes very close to that of household, but in the context of conquest and rule, even closer to that of the warband, and in many respects it was a precursor of the Manchu Banner (*niru*) system. In fact, the Jin had used the pre-existing idea of the *mukun* to set up a socio-military organization called *meng-an mou-ke*. Although the word *mou-ke* derives from *mukun*, it also had the politico-military meaning of 'the leader of one hundred men'. The word *meng-an* derives directly from Manchu *ming-gan* and means thousand. Hence we have something that seems very old and Central Asian and yet also very close to Chinggis Khan's famous decimal military system. Indeed, although the *meng-an mou-ke* system originally served as a comprehensive socio-political system that organized the entire Jurchen population under Emperor Aguda (r. 1115–1123), it soon was extended to become the most important military and political means of control over all subjugated

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in: Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Empires and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge, 1994) 321–414.

peoples. Although the term suggests kinship, fixed hierarchy, and numbers, the reality was much more flexible and in fact was fundamentally similar to Chinggis Khan's conscripted warband in its most extended, post-conquest form. For example, we know from the *Secret History* that Chinggis Khan created ninety-five *mingghan* (Mongolian for *minggan*) from the greatly enlarged manpower pool available to him in 1205–1206.<sup>66</sup>

Going into even greater detail, the *mukuns* consisted of a mixture of households and included their slaves and cattle. The numbers indicated neither exact amounts nor a fixed hierarchy beyond the fact that several *pu-li-yan* (unit of fifty) formed a *mou-ke*, several *mou-ke* formed a *meng-an*, and several *meng-an* formed a *wanhu*, literally a unit of 'ten thousand households'. It is crucial in order to understand the *meng-an mou-ke* system as a controlling institution to highlight that the Jin emperor had his own personal *mou-ke* recruited from the other units, which constituted his own imperial guard. This organizational system was retained under the Yuan dynasty, and each was considered a self-sufficient socio-economic community that either managed or worked their own territories as a kind of appanage, and which only later developed into a much less flexible, land-based system of hereditary military households.

Coming to the Yuan, we have already seen that under Chinggis Khan the *keshik* not only served as an imperial guard, but had a wide range of functions including being an imperial domestic service bureau, a hostage camp, and an academy for young leaders; in many ways it was thus a rudimentary imperial administration.<sup>67</sup> In due course, Chinggis Khan's *nökörs* obtained hereditary commands under the generic name of *noyan* (plural: *noyad*). Their titles were conferred by direct investiture or patent (*yarlik*), and they received a tablet as a token of authority, as well as expensive gowns in order to create and strengthen a sense of corporate identity. When a *nökör* who served in Chinggis Khan's *keshik* joined Chinggis with his household, he was actually bestowed with a household of his own. It was not uncommon for Chinggis to allow old tribal allies to keep their own ethnically homogenous group, with all their dependants, to confirm its chief as *noyan* after a summary census, and to turn it into a *mingghan*.<sup>68</sup> More generally, though, original households were regrouped and given a uniform, if rudimentary, military skeleton. As such, those qualified were either organized into new units with Mongols or northern Chinese as their officers, or were distributed among original Yuan contingents. At the very heart of

66 Allsen, 'The Rise of the Mongolian Empire', 345.

67 Hsiao, *The Military Establishment*, 34; this section builds thoroughly on idem, 9–50.

68 Allsen, 'The Rise of the Mongolian Empire', 347.



the organization, *nökör* were appointed as so-called *darughas*, or seal-bearers, to oversee other parts of the nascent imperial organization.

All this does not mean that the traditional consanguineous principle of 'tribal' organization was totally disregarded, but ethnic labels were of a more nominal character and, as later in the case of the Manchu Banners, stimulated the start of a new process of ethno-genesis. In this way, the chiliarchy became the basic political unit and the cradle of officialdom under the Jin, Mongol, and Yuan empires, with the *keshik* at its centre and as the most privileged group. In due course, though, when the empire expanded further south and had to incorporate more and more Chinese allies, the *keshik* was outnumbered by the imperial guards and other Chinese units originating from the south. Hence, several decades after the conquest, it became very apparent that the extended warband, so typical of and well suited to the Middle Zone, would reach its natural limits in the Outer Zone of sedentary China. Hence, soon after a conquest, there were increasing pressures to transform the Jurchen and Mongol warband organization into a Chinese administrative system along the lines of the proven Confucian ideas of *wen*.<sup>69</sup> For the conquering elites, this shifting from the Mongolian custom or *yasa* could be easily translated into traditional Sinic notions of losing martial strength (*wu*) and dynastic decline. Marco Polo, who stayed in China between 1275 and 1292, observed something similar:

Now they are much debased and have forsaken some of their customs, for those who frequent Catai keep themselves very greatly to the ways and to the manners and to the customs of idolaters of those regions and have very much left their law.<sup>70</sup>

Interestingly, though, the notion of a Chinggisid kind of *keshik* even continued under the non-nomadic Ming dynasty (1368–1644).<sup>71</sup> Like their near contemporary Safavid colleagues in Iran, the emergence of Zhu Yuanzhang was based on

69 For the Jin, see Jing-shen Tao, 'The Influence of Jurchen Rule on Chinese Political Institutions', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30 (1970) 121–130; for the Yuan, see John W. Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of Political Change in Late Yüan China* (New York and London, 1973) 7–31, and Gunther Mangold, 'Das Militärwesen in China unter der Mongolen-Herrschaft' (PhD dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich, 1971).

70 Hsiao, *The Military Establishment*, 31.

71 David M. Robinson, 'The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols', in: David M. Robinson, ed., *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368–1644)* (Cambridge Mass., 2008) 393–396.

millenarian religious fervour that gave the conquering group its initial cohesion.<sup>72</sup> Despite his celestial name of Hongwu, i.e. 'vastly martial', Zhu's early warband never attained the nomadic strength of its Jin and Yuan predecessors. From the very beginning, the early Ming rulers focused much of their efforts on limiting and controlling the power of military leaders and institutions.<sup>73</sup> Much sooner and to a greater extent than in the case of their nomadic predecessors, the Ming military became increasingly managed by civilian officers. Although Mongols and Jurchens continued to provide manpower to the various imperial guard units, the Ming *keshek* became more aloof from the outside world and as such could not play its earlier, post-nomadic role of incorporating new groups. Hence, its social status decreased and its function became focused purely on the military, and particularly the internal security of the empire. Instead of the *nökörs*, the important linkages between court, military, and bureaucracy, as well as between the centre and the provinces, including its military households, increasingly became the domain of a new elite corps of eunuchs who served both as military commanders and administrative supervisors.<sup>74</sup> According to the official Ming chronicle, the *Ming-shih*:

The eunuchs in the Ming period were sent out in charge of military expeditions, to supervise the army and the garrisons. They spied on the officials and the people, and secretly controlled all great authority. All this began in Yung-lo's reign [r. 1403–1424].<sup>75</sup>

By the end of the Ming dynasty, what existed of the central military arm was largely in the hands of eunuchs.<sup>76</sup> The remarkable military renaissance under the Wanli emperor (r. 1573–1620) was an attempt to give the empire a new lease on life without recourse to *wu*, seeking strength instead in the neo-Confucian wisdom of a new generation of military commanders like Wang Yangming and

72 John W. Dardess, 'The Transformations of Messianic Revolt and the Founding of the Ming Dynasty', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29 (1970) 539–558. I assume that the fact that both the Ming 'Red Turbans' and the Safavid Qizilbash wore red headgear is mere coincidence.

73 Kai Filipiak, 'The Effects of Civil Officials handling Military Affairs in Ming Times', *Ming Studies* 66 (2002) 1–15.

74 Frederic Mote, 'The Ch'eng-hua and Hung-chih Reigns, 1465–1505', in: Denis Twitchett and Frederic Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644: Part 1* (Cambridge, 1988) 370–377; Robert B. Crawford, 'Eunuch Power in the Ming Dynasty', *T'oung Pao* 49 (1961) 115–148.

75 Crawford, 'Eunuch Power', 126.

76 On the role of eunuchs more generally, see Duindam, chapter 2 in this volume.

Qi Jiguang, who could combine the ideals of *wen* and *wu* by increasing the personal discipline of their soldiers.<sup>77</sup>

## 2.2 *Manchu Banners*

After the Ming, both the later Jurchens (the Manchus) under the Later Jin (1616–1636), and the Qing dynasties (1636–1911) reintroduced the Jurchen *mukun* as their prime organizational unit and the fundamental criterion of Manchu identity.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, the idea of an imperial *keshik* lived on in the imperial clan of the so-called Aisin Gioro, which was, however—and much more than the earlier *mukun*—based on ‘real’ ancestry consisting primarily of the descendants of the *de facto* Qing founder Nurhaci (r. 1616–1626) through the main and collateral patrilineal lines, and which were traced back to his grandfather Giocangga. The only exceptions were the so-called Princes of the Iron Cap, non-kinsmen who had rendered extraordinary service to Nurhaci and his son and successor Hong Taiji (r. 1626–1643). There was also the Imperial Guard, which consisted primarily of Manchus taken from the Banners, but, as in the case of the Ming, its function was limited and did not extend beyond protecting the emperor.<sup>79</sup>

Although the situation of *keshik* and guard under the Manchus was closer to Ming than to Jurchen antecedents, the warband system was actually reinvigorated through the re-introduction of *mukuns* in the new form of Banners. Indeed, in principle, a Banner was not that different from the earlier *meng-an* under the Jin and Yuan. Indeed, like the *meng-an*, a Banner was much more than a military unit; it was a social formation and a political structure that encompassed peoples of many different backgrounds. Membership was based on patrilineal inheritance, marriage, or adoption. According to the main authority on the topic, Mark Elliott, we should not regard the Banners solely as an army, but rather as a sub-order of society that was defined primarily, but not exclusively, by an inherited duty to furnish professional soldiers of unimpeachable devotion to the dynasty, which in exchange supported the entire population registered in Banners (about two million in 1644), both materially and morally, through money, food, and housing, as well as privileged access to power, for their entire lives. Interestingly, the Manchu banners survived much longer than the Jin and Yuan *meng-ans*, partly because the Qing themselves

77 Filipiak, ‘The Effects’, 1–15. See also the forthcoming PhD thesis of Barend Noordam, Leiden University.

78 Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Oxford, 1997) 28–29.

79 Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 2001) 79–81.

lasted longer, and partly because the Qing decided to segregate the Banners from their Chinese surroundings while, at the same time, upholding their connections with its recruiting grounds in the north.

Following the precedents of other Central Asian conquerors like Aguda and Chinggis Khan, the Banner system was introduced by the new Manchu leaders Nurhaci and Hong Taiji at the very start of their conquest. They also imposed the new ethnonym of Manchu on their Jurchen followers as it became organized into the first Eight Banners. Although the Banner system started as an exclusively Jurchen organization, it included Mongols as early as the rule of Nurhaci, who were at first still redistributed under the Manchu Banners. In 1635, when Mongol forces had grown to number around ten thousand, Hong Taiji decided to remove the Mongol companies from the Manchu Banners and establish eight separate Mongol Banners, containing a total of eighty companies. Some Mongol units, however, were still incorporated into the Manchu Banners. The new Mongol Banners remained subject to the Manchu colour Banner chiefs of which they were a part, and in the years 1637–1642 this procedure was repeated for the Chinese (Hanjun) troops, creating a triple system of Eight Banners:

Each banner is divided into three sections. The tribes that were originally Nurhaci's ... make up the Manchu [section]. The various bow-drawing peoples from the Northern Desert ... form the Mongol [section], while the descendants of the people of Liao[dong], former Ming commanders and emissaries, those from the other dynasty who defected with multitudes [of soldiers], and captives are separately attached to the Hanjun.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the labels, ethnicity was never crucial in determining loyalty. As one popular saying had it: 'Never mind who is Manchu and who is Han, but ask who is a Bannerman and who is a civilian'.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, after the Banners developed into hereditary institutions there was room for new processes of ethno-genesis based on exclusive Banner membership, and as such the gap between the Chinese within and outside the Banners actually increased.

As explained by Edward McCord, one significant feature of the Qing military system was its careful elaboration of checks and balances, aimed at preventing

80 Mark C. Elliott, 'Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners', in: Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu and Donald S. Sutton, eds., *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley, 2006) 45.

81 Elliott, 'Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners', 46.

the concentration of military power in a manner that might present a threat to dynastic rule. Firstly, in addition to the Eight Banners, there was the Green Standard Army, a predominantly Han Chinese force that was more than 200 per cent bigger, housed in small garrisons scattered throughout the country and largely modelled on the military organization of the preceding Ming, in which the purely military chain of command overlapped with the civil administration and the supervisory powers of provincial governors. In a slightly different way, a similar overlap occurred in the internal structure of the Eight Banners; while each Banner had its own separate command structure and bureaucratic administration, the much less scattered Banner garrisons in the main administrative centres were formed not by one Banner but by a combination of forces taken from a number of different Banners. In major military campaigns, special expeditionary forces were formed by combining a number of different units from both Eight Banner and Green Standard Armies. Even under the Qing, the commanders of such campaigns were often appointed not from the officers of any of its component forces, but from the ranks of the civil bureaucracy. This again diluted the military in such a way as to hinder the accumulation of military power in the hands of any one official or military power.<sup>82</sup>

This balancing act was employed by each and every Eurasian dynasty. What makes the Qing Banner system unique is that it represents the continued existence of the warband under fully sedentary conditions. At the very start of its existence it served to incorporate and reshuffle important allied and conquered groups. At the same time, for almost three centuries the Banners helped to preserve the identity and virility of the conquering elites as a whole and provided a segregated pool of loyal personal *nökörs* who could be employed in both military and civilian capacities. As before, under the Jin and Yuan dynasties, this gave rise to a dual administration in which the official hierarchy of military commanders and civilian officers was permanently supervised by Bannermen as the emperor's personal agents. As argued elsewhere, the dual system was a typical post-nomadic variety of *apartheid*, not instigated by some 'modern' urgency to distinguish between ever more professional armies and ever more rational bureaucracies, but by the need of post-nomadic rulers to keep the cavalry core of the army as loyal, fit, and ready as possible.<sup>83</sup> Since the Manchu military was as much as possible kept apart from the existing Chinese

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82 Edward McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley, 1993) 20–22; based on Wu Wei-ping, 'The Development and Decline of the Eight Banners' (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1969).

83 Jos J.L. Gommans, 'Warhorse and Post-Nomadic Empire in Asia, c. 1000–1800', *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007) 1–21.

bureaucracy, there was also no need to find complicated compromises that would actually undermine both sides of the system.

Nonetheless, even under the Qing rulers the system found its natural limit when administrative units based on different, often well-established, standards of recruitment began to take over while, at the same time, a centralized system of stipends on the basis of individual Banner service was introduced, which consequently moved away from a situation where garrison lands were collective appanages. Even the Qing could not avoid the increasing bureaucratization. As under the Ming, the Qing *keshik* became a more isolated and more exclusively military institution that was essentially geared towards internal security, once again giving rise to a now-familiar anxiety of imperial decline, which, according to the old elites, could be stopped only by reinvigorating the 'old ways' and cleaning up the ranks through purifying programmes of Manchuization, as was the case particularly during the long reign of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735–1796).<sup>84</sup> As we will see, the 'purifying' policies of this fourth official Qing emperor were quite similar in their bases to those of the fourth official Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1717); after one and a half centuries and three generations of dynastic rule, both emperors attempted to save their empires by stressing moral rearmament and a return to so-called fundamental values, Manchu ones for the former, Islamic for the latter.<sup>85</sup> This remarkable dynastic parallel immediately evokes Ibn Khaldun and demands a closer look at what seems to be another intriguing case of his dynastic cycle.

### 3 India: From Mongols to Mughals

#### 3.1 *Timurids: Keshik and Tümen*

Just like the Jurchens in Manchuria, the Afghans and Turks in Khorasan and Turkistan were ideally situated to serve as political and military brokers between the desert and cultivated lands. As in the case of Manchuria, control over these interstitial areas was the key to an Indian empire, as is demonstrated by the sequence of Indo-Turkish and Indo-Afghan sultanates in both Hindustan and the Deccan. Although it would certainly be worth comparing these Turkish and Afghan patterns of state-formation with those of the Jurchens, I will limit myself here to an investigation of the various Timurid states that were carved

84 Elliott, 'Ethnicity in the Qing Eight Banners', 27–58; Pamela Kyle Crossley, 'The Conquest Elite of the Ch'ing Empire', in: Willard J. Peterson, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 9.1: The Ch'ing Empire to 1800* (Cambridge, 2002) 313–360.

85 See my 'Warhorse and Post-Nomadic Empire', 18.

out along the various waystations connecting Turkestan and Khorasan in our Middle Zone to India in our Outer Zone. We will start with a discussion of Timur (r. 1370–1405) himself, and then move to his Bayqara and Mughal descendants, in Khorasan and Hindustan respectively.

Looking somewhat closer at the administrative practices in Timur's empire, we can observe a great deal of continuity with the Chinggisids. As far as the *keshik* is concerned, it seems that the institution continues, although the term itself disappears from the annals. If we look in greater detail, though, it seems that the so-called *tümen* comes quite close to exhibiting the classic features of the *keshik*, and very close to the Jurchen idea of the *meng-an mou-ke* system. As we have already seen in the introduction, under Chinggis Khan this was part of the decimal ranking system and referred to a military unit of 10,000. In principle, the *tümen* was not a tribal but a specifically engineered group with a mixed ethnic background whose leader was a trusted member of the Chinggisid *keshik*. In due course, many of these *tümen* leaders received appanages that were supposed to support the *tümen*.<sup>86</sup> From these, *tümen* leaders were often able to gain territorial rights and develop extensive households of their own. As a result, a *tümen* began to signify both a household and territory. For example, Timur himself started his career as the hereditary *amir-i tümen* of Kesh. When he started to create his own empire, the relatives and other followers of his original *tümen* (read *keshik*) supplied the imperial leadership. Very much in line with the Chinggisid tradition, Timur divided his realm into four sections, each governed by the households of one of his sons but commanded by members of his followers' families. Each of his sons had a guardian (*ateke*) appointed to him in order to keep an eye on him. In principle the sons and their households were treated in the same way as the other leaders and their *tümen*. Timur regularly interfered in the make-up of the *tümen* by removing troops from the control of the traditional leaders and placing them under the command of his own intimates and early comrades-in-arms. Other control mechanisms included the rotation of guard services at court, taking relatives of leaders as hostages, and replacing *tümen*-leaders with other members of the same family. Another factor that is a clear reminder of those of the original *keshik* is Timur's policy of building entirely new *tümen* that were intimately attached to his own person through the use of labels such as *khanabachagan-i khass* (personal children of the house) and *bandagan-i khass wa muqarraban-i*

86 To distribute large parts of conquered lands as appanages to large military households was a well-known practice under Mongol rule, although in principle all income from all districts had to be shared by all the participating groups.

*dargah* (personal slaves and intimates of the court) which even suggests bonds of adopted kinship and slavery, notions that persisted into Akbar's period but which, as we will see, received a rather mixed reception in India.

Another important consequence of the success of Timur's *tümen* was that, one way or another, it had to accommodate the growing financial administration of the conquered territories. As in the case of earlier Mongol rule in China, this entailed the emergence of a new civilian branch of government focusing on administrative and financial matters. These responsibilities could not be managed by the classic *keshik*, as this consisted primarily of military and more intimate household posts like chamberlain (*ichik-aqa*), chief taster (*bokaval-begi*) or chief arms-bearer (*qorchibashi*), to name but a few. The challenge was to incorporate expert civilian elements to govern the freshly conquered territories without compromising the effectiveness of the warband. Hence, the new Persian-dominated financial department, or *diwan-i a'la*, was kept detached from the administration of the primarily Turkish military department, which kept its own scribal organization, the *diwan-i tovachi*. In general, though, both divisions were still part of the ruler's warband and there were no rigid functional divisions; indeed, it was a conscious policy to maintain a certain vagueness of ranks and confusion of duties. Hence, as in the Mongol tradition, all officials remained generalists: scribes serving as commanders, commanders as scribes.<sup>87</sup>

Overall then, the imperial apparatus under Timur and his immediate successors differed little from that of the Chinggisids or that of the early Jin and Yuan. In fact, the basic idea of the *keshik* as a loyal military core consisting of relatives and personal followers continued to be manifested in the institution of the *tümen*, while the ruler's personal *tümen* was expanded to accommodate a new financial department. The leaders of the financial and military branches were also members of the ruler's household, and the ruler could control and manipulate his followers by awarding positions and honours such as *amir*, *bahadur*, *tovachi* (troop inspector) and *darogha*. These ranks indicate above all personal service to the ruler, often with no clear hierarchy and having a great deal of functional overlap. Indeed, the result of conquest was Ibn Khaldun's 'expected' divergence between pen and sword. However, the split was not allowed to be complete, and both branches continued to operate within the ruler's extended household (read *keshik* or *tümen*), which also incorporated the empire's other

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87 For Timur's imperial organization, see Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, 1989) and her *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge, 2007).



*tümen*-leaders. Some newly created *tümen* were able to achieve a more intimate, personal relationship with the ruler and may have provided him with an inner army of intimates (*khass*) within the extended household. The correct functioning of this system depended on whether the ruler could collect sufficient revenues and was able to keep his own people on the move. Both were conceivable only under the (semi-) nomadic conditions of the mixed sedentary-nomadic frontier zones of Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkistan.

When Timur was succeeded by his son Shahrukh in 1409, the transition from a Turko-Mongolian nomadic empire of conquest to a Perso-Islamic sedentary empire based on agriculture continued. This was reflected in Shahrukh's decision to move the capital from Samarqand to Herat. He also officially proclaimed the abolition of Turko-Mongolian customs in favour of Islamic law. As in other Turko-Mongolian states in the region, highly educated Persians, who hailed from old provincial families, played a key role in developing the bureaucratic administration of the Timurids and in promoting agricultural values. The Bayqara Timurids of Herat tried to bridge the two worlds by patronizing a Timurid artistic renaissance that involved the promotion of the Chaghatai language and *belles lettres*.

It is important to stress, though, that as long as the Timurids remained in Khorasan, they were not able to set up a stable civil administration with a solid fiscal base. Although they tried to limit the random distribution of revenue-free lands (*soyurghal*) to the Timurid military elite, the latter continued to dominate the administration and precluded the rise of a more autonomous state bureaucracy. In the end, the Timurids had no choice but to invest in their capital and its immediate environment, trying to maximize agricultural production on the basis of intensified irrigation. For the Timurids, though, even urban splendour and agrarian success had its downside as it would inevitably undermine their martial capacities. At least, this was what the young Babur wrote when he saw his Herat-based uncles indulging so excessively in the pleasures of settled life: 'They were good at conversation, arranging parties, and in social manners, but they were strangers to soldiering (*sipahiliq*), strategy, equipment, bold fight and military encounter.'<sup>88</sup>

The same was true for most polities in the Middle Zone. Whether slightly earlier under the Ilkhanids (1256–1335), during the reign of Ghazan (1295–1304), or under their contemporaries the Qara Qyunlu (1375–1468) or the Aq Qyunlu (1378–1501), all attempts at administrative centralization and reform towards more bureaucratization suffered the same fate against a coalition of

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88 Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition*, 39.

nomadic-military and religious elites. Of course, one way to make themselves less dependent on their nomadic following was to resort to military slaves as advocated by the Seljuq minister Nizam al-Mulk (1064–1095) and practised earlier not only by the Seljuqs, but also by the Samanids, Ghaznavids, and Ghurids in Afghanistan and the Mamluks in Egypt, all of whom mainly recruited Turkish slaves from Central Asia.<sup>89</sup> It appears, though, that following ongoing Mongol and Turkmen immigration, the Khorasan-Iran region as a whole experienced a nomadic resurgence, which may have made this a less viable option than before, or indeed afterwards, as demonstrated by the re-introduction of slaves (*ghulams*) under the Safavids (1501–1735).<sup>90</sup> As we will see later, the neighbouring Ottomans also turned to military slavery, but shifted the main recruiting grounds from Central Asia to Eastern Europe. Indeed, it seems that the increasing wealth of the sixteenth century created a new window of centralizing opportunities for Turko-Persian dynasties in general.<sup>91</sup>

Before turning to military slavery, the Safavids had successfully started to use religious devotion to instil loyalty in their primarily Turkish following, now restyled as Qizilbash or 'Redheads', a term derived from their distinctive crimson headgear. In fact, it was this Sufism that had accompanied the process of Turkish migration, settlement, and state-formation in Iran. Under Turkish and Iranian influence there was an increasing convergence in the terminology of Sufism and kingship. All of a sudden, Sufi dervishes began to preface their names with titles appropriate to rulers such as *mir* and *shah*, while their shrines became called royal courts (sing. *dargah*) and their headgear considered crowns (sing. *taj*).<sup>92</sup> Almost every fifteenth- and sixteenth-century polity

89 Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 14. On the hesitant implementation of Ilkhanate reforms, see Reuven Amitai, *The Mongols in the Islamic Lands: Studies in the History of the Ilkhanate* (London, 2007).

90 D.T. Potts, *Nomadism in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era* (Oxford, 2014) 213. On this question, see also Ann K.S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative Economic and Social History, 11th–14th Century* (London, 1988). Despite the current revisionism that stresses Mongol agency in what seems to be an Iranian literary renaissance, the economic picture of the Mongol impact is still rather bleak.

91 See e.g. Liesbeth Geevers, 'Safavid Cousins on the Verge of Extinction: Dynastic Centralization in Central Asia and the Bahrami Collateral Line (1517–1593)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 3 (2015) 293–326.

92 Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Oxford, 2012) 99; see also John R. Perry, 'Ethno-Linguistic Markers of the Turko-Mongol Military and Persian Bureaucratic Castes in Pre-modern Iran and India', in: Irene Schneider, ed., *Militär und Staatlichkeit. Beiträge des Kolloquiums am 29. und 30.04.2002 Halle 2003*. Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 12; Mitteilungen

in the Middle Zone between Anatolia and India became infused with Sufi ideas of love and devotion. Whether rulers looked for the spiritual support of dervishes or, as in the case of the Safavids, claimed spiritual leadership for themselves, Sufism offered a wonderful tool for transforming a nomadic warband into a religious one.

With this observation, we are back at the heart of Ibn Khaldun's theory and may, along with him, conclude that, at least throughout the Middle Zone, both military slavery and religious devotion were considered two very forceful sedentary alternatives to, or even antidotes against, the nomadic warband of the Chinggisid kind. As such, the Safavid model was eagerly embraced by the Mughal emperor Akbar in the idiosyncratic form of *Din-i Ilahi* and as a remedy against the autonomous and egalitarian tendencies of his original Timurid and Turkish followers.<sup>93</sup> This brings us back to the later Timurids, better known as the Mughals, and it will be interesting to see to what extent the warband of its founder Babur was built on that of Timur and how it was transformed under his successors in India.

### 3.2 *Babur's Warband*

Much as Nurhaci would do around a century later in Manchuria, Babur started his Indian empire in 1504 in Afghanistan: areas at the transition between our Middle and Outer Zones. His career is the romantic story of a young prince who, despite many mishaps, rises from Central Asian rags to Indian riches. Looking at his early years as a wandering vagabond in Central Asia, one is immediately struck by the similarities with the early careers of his celebrated forebears. Well-versed in the history of his own ancestors, Babur himself must have been very much aware that his history was one that repeated many earlier histories of empire builders. The tripartite division of his autobiography into Mawarannahr (i.e. Transoxania), Kabul (i.e. Afghanistan) and Hind (i.e. India) neatly follows the literary transition from the upbeat cheerful spirit of vagabondage or *qazaqliq*, when still in the steppes of Central Asia, to the more detached, melancholic mood of exercising *istiqbal* (sovereignty) after conquering India. There can be no doubt that Babur himself knew exactly how

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des SFB 586, 'Differenz und Integration' 5, 119. On the development of Sufism in relationship with royalty, see also the works of Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City, 1994) and Jürgen Paul, 'Scheiche und Herrscher im Khanat Čağatay', *Der Islam* 67, no. 2 (1990) 278–321.

93 Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and High Roads to Empire, 1500–1700* (London, 2002) 70–71.

to frame his story. Of course, there was also the old Mongol custom or *törä* that, far from offering a fixed set of norms indicating that charisma (*sölde*), could be bestowed on anyone who proved his mettle on the battlefield.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, people turned to *törä* in appreciation of military valour, often in compensation for kin or age that may have been lacking, as in the case of Babur, when it was said, that 'he is young in years, but he is great according to the *törä* because he has conquered Samarqand several times by dint of sword'.<sup>95</sup> For Babur, it was exactly this kind of military capacity that was missing among his settled and degenerate uncles in Herat, referred to above. Although he admired the carefree sociability of their court, he also despised the excessive *fesq u fujur* (immorality and debauchery),<sup>96</sup> and he and his successors knew very well that if they were to survive as a political power, such dynastic decay had to be avoided at all costs.

Whatever one may think of its Chinggisid origins, Babur's early warband did not constitute the tightly controlled, highly disciplined inner circle or *keshik* along the lines of the Chinggisid model.<sup>97</sup> In principle, though, its structure was quite similar. Like many Chinggisid khans or Timurid mirzas, Babur had a warband of his own consisting of both relatives (*biradaran-u-khweshan*; brothers and relations) and retainers (*mulazaman/naukaran*), who were linked to each other through marriage and companionship. The latter was sustained in recurrent social events ranging from hunts to drugs-and-drinking bouts. In the early days of Babur's wanderings, the warband came closest to its original meaning: a small band of freely recruited warriors without much functional differentiation within the group. Pace Ibn Khaldun's ideas about tribal *'asabiyya*, and despite its small size, the cohesion of this group was never particularly strong as it depended entirely on the success of its leader. Without success, there were no spoils to be shared, and hence no reasons to be loyal.

94 For *sölde* and *törö* in the Central Asian context, see the important Russian contributions by Tatyana D. Skrynnikova, partly translated in: 'Sülde—The Basic Idea of the Chinggis-Khan Cult', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Hungaricae* 46 (1992/3) 51–59; 'Power among Mongol Nomads of Chinggis Khan's Epoch', in: N.N. Kradin, D. Bondarenko, and T. Barfield, eds., *Nomadic Pathways in Social Evolution* (Moscow, 2003) 135–157; 'Die Bedeutung des Begriffes törö in der politischen Kultur der Mongolen im 17. Jahrhundert', *Asiatische Studien* 63 (2009) 435–476.

95 Gulbadan Begam, *Humāyun-nāma*, trans. W.M. Thackston (Costa Mesa, 2009) fol. 5a.

96 Stephen F. Dale, *The Garden of Eight Paradises: Bābur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India* (1483–1530) (Leiden, 2004) 81, 167.

97 Dale, *The Garden of Eight Paradises*, 90.

In due course, when moving to Kabul to carve out his own small kingdom, Babur's warband started to expand and we begin to detect a structure that comes fairly close to that of the early Timurids and also to that of the Jurchen idea of the *mukun*. First of all, Babur's warband incorporated the chiefs (*beglar*; Persian: *umara'*) of allied warbands with their own following (*jam'iyat*) of relatives and liegemen. Some of these begs were long-standing tribal leaders who had recently joined Babur as so-called Guest (*mihman*) Begs. Another pre-existing group of some standing was the so-called Andijani Begs, who apparently originated from Babur's homeland. Others had climbed the inner ranks by starting as young trainees or *ichkilar* (Persian: *jawanān*) before Babur was willing to turn them into full begs, called *ichki-beglar*. Like the so-called Baburi begs, these were Babur's own creatures and as such were probably part of his *naukari* (from *nökör*) following. In addition, Babur created a new inner army or *khaṣah tabin* (Persian: *tabin-i khasah*) consisting of so-called *yiqitlar*: individual warriors without pedigree who had no following of their own.<sup>98</sup> This guard corps comes very close to Timur's personal *tümen*, mentioned above. Moving from Samarqand to Kabul and Kabul to Delhi, the proportion of these trained servants would only increase. Not surprisingly, Babur's early Mongol allies, many of them of real or imagined Chinggisid descent, detested the growing importance of *tarbiyat* or 'training' against *nasab* or pedigree. Of course, they knew perfectly well that *tarbiyat* had always been a crucial ingredient of the Mongol warband, i.e. an important bond between a Mongol warlord and his retainers. What they deplored, though, was its further extension to actually replace Chinggisid lineage as the base of empire.<sup>99</sup> Overall, the structure of Babur's extended warband is similar to that of Timur. What seems missing, though, is a separate financial department. At this early stage of state-formation financial positions are still hidden behind the military façade of the warband.

### 3.3 *Mughal Mansab*

Turning to Babur's son, due to his ongoing campaigns Humayun (r. 1530–1556) was, like his father, hardly in a position to expand the warband into an imperial structure. What is new, however, is that he was quite able to design his God-given empire and construct its organization on the basis of some highly esoteric cosmological and alchemical reasoning as revealed in

98 A.R. Khan, 'Gradation of Nobility under Bābur', *Islamic Culture* 60 (1986) 79–88.

99 Ali Anooshahr, 'Mughals, Mongols, and Mongrels'.

his dreams.<sup>100</sup> In the *Qanun-i Humayuni* by Khwandamir, we find a whole range of original functional and hierarchical arrangements applied to the pre-existing warband organization of his father. For example, in introducing a new alchemical hierarchy of twelve golden arrows (*tir-i mutalla'*), there are echoes of the warband's ranks, including the mentioning of the term *ichkiyan*. The term 'beg' is not used; instead, the word *mansab* (position, rank), a rather loose term that would become much more prominent and more rigidly codified under his son Akbar, was applied.

Indeed, despite the conquests of Timur, Babur, and Humayun, it was only the latter's son Akbar who managed to establish a settled empire on the Indian subcontinent, one which lasted for more than two and a half centuries. In contrast to their Qing counterpart in China, the Mughal warband seems to have evaporated almost immediately upon its arrival on the plains of Hindustan. Of course, we can see some kind of continuity in Babur's personal unit of the *yikiltar* in Akbar's standing army of a few thousand *ahadis*, who were equipped with several horses and had a reputation for being excellent archers. These gentlemen-at-arms, as the late William Moreland calls them, were single men (from *ahad*, one) who had no following of mounted retainers themselves. Apart from the *ahadis*, other household troops of the Mughals were composed of large number of *ahsham*: all sorts of rag-tag foot-retainers (*piyadagan*) comprising clerks, runners, gate-keepers, palace guards, couriers, swordsmen, wrestlers, slaves, palanquin bearers etc. These included infantrymen consisting of a few thousand musketeers (*banduqchis*) commanded by 'captains of ten' (*mir-dahs*). In addition, there was the important elephant unit, as well as the imperial stables for warhorses and pack animals. The artillery was also part of the imperial household, as was also the case in the Ottoman and Safavid armies. Last but not least, probably inspired by the Safavid example, Akbar decided to start a kind of imperial Sufi order of his own. This *Din-i Ilahi* was meant for those amirs whose devotional service to Akbar required them to give up their life (*jan*), property (*mal*), religion (*din*), and honour (*namus*) for which in return they received Akbar's seal and portrait. Although only a few amirs became actually disciples of Akbar, the general way of expressing one's loyalty and service to the emperor became very much influenced by the Sufi idiom of love and devotion, even in the emperor's absence seeking his proximity in their dreams. Although slavery already evoked the notion of religious devotion, for Akbar this was not enough:

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100 A. Afzar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012).

His Majesty, from religious motives, dislikes the name *banda*, or slave; for he believes that mastership belongs to no one but God. He therefore calls this class of men *chelas*, which Hindi term signifies a faithful disciple.<sup>101</sup>

Despite these *chelas*, what is strikingly missing in the household segment of the Mughal army is a substantial number of military slaves. Military slavery had been an important element during the early Delhi Sultanate but began to disappear again during the fourteenth century. Hence, the Mughal *chelas* should not be confused with the mamluk phenomenon of Ottoman Janissaries or Safavid *ghulams*. The *chelas* were only few in number and held no regular military functions.<sup>102</sup>

In numbers and weight, Akbar's inner army was dwarfed by the new *mansabdari* establishment, which was ideally suited to exploit the huge military labour market that was India. Akbar had introduced this new scheme, where hierarchy was established by means of ranks or *mansabs*, and it had become necessary because rank and remuneration had to be linked to a pre-existing revenue system based on the so-called *iqta'* (later, under the Mughals, called *jagir*), in which every holder of an *iqta'* had the right to collect the revenue of an assigned piece of land in exchange for certain military or administrative services. In principle, the idea was not connected to the equal distribution of large tracts of conquests, as had been the case under the *tümen*, but involved, in theory at least, conditional and temporary rights to accurately assessed revenue proceeds (*jama'*). Thus, by individualizing the exploitation and redistribution of the agrarian resources as controlled by local imperial officials, the *iqta'*-system provided the ruler with a sophisticated system of top-down and bottom-up control. To make it work though, the army had to be accordingly organized to match the system. Hence, each military unit with a direct relationship to the ruler, from the great warlord to the individual horseman, received temporary rights to collect the revenues in a defined territory.

The *mansabdari* establishment was managed by a separate financial department that also administered the distribution of *jagirs*. Like the departments for the army and the revenue, the imperial household kept its own administration,

101 Abu l-Fazl, *The A-in-I Akbari*, trans. H. Blochmann and H.S. Jarrett, 2nd revised edition by D.C. Phillott and J. Sarkar (New Delhi reprint 1989; first published 1927–1949) Vol. 1, 263–264; Persian text, edited by H. Blochmann (Calcutta, 1872–1877) Vol. 1, 427–429. For an insightful recent study, see William R. Pinch, 'The Slave Guru: Masters, Commanders, and Disciples in Early Modern South Asia', in: Jacob Copeman and Aya Ikegame, eds., *The Guru in South Asia: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London and New York, 2012) 64–80.

102 Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 49, 61, 83.

which also managed the crown domain (*khalisa*). Although some functional overlap continued, a division of three separate elements had emerged: *manzil* (house), *sipah* (army), and *mulk* (land).

Tracing the location of our nomadic warband, it may still be seen in the ongoing role of the household to bring officers close to the emperor and to transform many of them into loyal sons of the house, or *khanazadas*. All major imperial officers were bestowed with a *mansab* by the emperor himself. *Mansab* had a dual capacity and represented both real military strength (i.e. the number of troops) and the emperor's personal favour. So on paper, one could still imagine *mansabdars* as 'begs' of their own subsidiary warbands. At court *mansabdars* rotated as guards, received all kinds of personal honours, and participated in elaborate rituals. All this symbolized their incorporation into the emperor's personal body politic. Although this may remind one of the inclusive characteristics of the erstwhile nomadic warband, its context, structure, and spirit had significantly changed. Much like the usual imperial guards in other sedentary empires such as that of the Ming and the Romanovs, the unit of the *ahadis* was a relatively isolated inner army that hardly interacted with the other imperial departments and did not serve as a training ground for the *mansabdars*. The latter increasingly operated as autonomous landlords (*zamindars*) and war-jobbers in an increasingly commercialized military labour market. The divergence between pen and sword was no longer contained within the warband but covered the entire empire and operated in accordance under its own sets of rules. With the further expansion of the empire the *manzil* increasingly lost its hold on both *sipah* and *mulk*.

The later emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), often considered the last of the 'Great Mughals', was rightly alarmed about this situation and consciously attempted to increase the crown domain at the cost of the *jagirdari* establishment. In the late seventeenth century, this triggered the so-called *jagirdari* crisis, giving rise to the failed incorporation of the Maratha gentry into the imperial system, which, for the first time, signalled that the empire had finally reached its limits. As previously mentioned, Aurangzeb's move towards the 'old ways' of Islam compares quite nicely with similar 'rescue missions' under the later Qing to counter an analogous 'bloating' of the ranks.<sup>103</sup> In both cases, this kind of imperial midlife crisis was typical for a (semi-) nomadic warband that had crossed over into a prosperous sedentary empire.

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103 Terms taken from Elliott, *Manchu Way*, 306, 351



## 4 Russia: From Tatars to Cossacks

### 4.1 Muscovy: Dvor and Boyars

Russian historiography was dominated for a very long time by Marxist historians for whom class was the most important analytical category. In the past two decades, however, the situation has radically changed, and there is now more room for other interpretations of Russian history. What remains, however, is the debate about whether it is part of European or Asian history. Another aspect of this debate is the question of continuity and change. Most contemporary historians of Russia stress the Byzantine legacy and see an internal continuity between Kievan and Muscovite institutions, which should be studied in connection and comparison with the West (e.g. Rüss). Within this debate there is ongoing discussion about Russia's famous autocracy: did it really result in Europe's weakest aristocracy or, as is the viewpoint of recent revisionism, was it merely a façade to cover up a general consensus among the elites (e.g. Kollmann)? A further, neglected part of this discussion is the work, both older and more recent, of historians that stresses a major historical break, and a consequent change, as a result of Russia's entanglements with the Mongols and Tatars (e.g. Ostrowski). Here, the debate focuses on whether or not certain Russian institutions such as the *duma* or the *zemskii sobor* are European, Mongolian, or more indigenous phenomena.<sup>104</sup> This rather essentialist discussion could indeed gain from the notion of 'façade', which has already proven its usefulness when dealing with Russia's autocracy. Here it may be useful to be reminded of Korea's submission to the Mongols, which was all about outward appearance when, to gain Mongol acceptance and forestall more onerous demands for material and manpower, King Ch'ungnyöl (r. 1298–1308) of Koryŏ donned Mongol garb, cut his hair in the Mongol fashion, and acquiesced to Mongol demands to rename the Koryŏ administrative bureaux to reflect their subordinate status within the empire.<sup>105</sup>

As a non-specialist and relative outsider to Russian historiography, I can but highlight some important contrasts with other regions. Firstly, in comparison

104 See Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols*. Ostrowski builds on the earlier work of George Vernadsky and Charles Halperin (going back to the founder of the Eurasian school, Prince E. Trubetskoi). The latter, though, raised doubts about Ostrowski's major conclusion; see Charles J. Halperin, 'Muscovite Political Institutions in the 14th Century' and Ostrowski's response in 'Muscovite Adaptation of Steppe Political Institutions: A Reply to Halperin's Objections', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (2000) 237–257; 267–304.

105 Robinson, *Empire's Twilight*, 59.

with China and India, the economic conditions of Muscovy before Peter the Great remained extremely poor. Even after Muscovy had 'gathered' the other Russian lands (Novgorod, Tver, and Ryazan) under its fold, funds, whether by taxing or plundering the population, were still insufficient to support a more substantial court (*dvor*), officially based in Moscow, but which for purely logistical reasons continued to lead a peripatetic existence. Due to the limited surpluses provided by Russia's poor forest land, it was not only the court that could hardly survive, but the aristocracy with hereditary estates (*votchina*) also found it hard to take root and build strong local power centres, the more so because of the practice of divisible inheritance, which led to the multiplication of title-holders and the ongoing division, and consequent reduction in size, of estates between siblings. The lack of hereditary titles associated with posts, or of hereditary posts of any kind, also considerably weakened the aristocracy and impeded its consolidation into an autonomous political group as was the case in Western Europe. Although in practice men became *boyars* because they were born into hereditary *boyar* families and lived to inherit that rank at court, in principle the title was not hereditary as only the family might inherit a claim to be promoted to that rank.<sup>106</sup> Seeking alternative sources of income, these *boyars* depended, more than any other contemporary aristocracy in Eurasia, on imperial service. But since the court itself lacked funding, it could not pay a standing cavalry army of *boyars* and so service was paid by service land or *pomest'ia*. As in the case of the Mughal *jagir*, *pomest'ia* was not regarded as the private property of the *pomishchik*, but it provided the fixed income for his maintenance and equipment, and he was not expected to concern himself with its exploitation. According to Isabel de Madariaga, 'he was not therefore a landowner in the Western sense of the word, but a land user entitled to a certain income from the land'.<sup>107</sup> Interestingly, as in the case of the Mughal *mansab*, *pomest'ia* was linked to an elaborate ranking system called *mestnichestvo*, a code of precedence that registered ranks of service. As a result, the service elites as a whole, originally of mixed social origins, were gradually sorted into those (a) who served the Grand Prince directly, as members of the *dvor*, received *pomest'ia*, and were merged into the *dvoriane*, or future servicemen, and (b) those who had served local princes and boyars and continued to carry out their service as *pomeshchiki* on a provincial basis. Despite the parallels with the Mughals, the socio-economic context of the two systems could not have been

106 Isabel de Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible: First Tsar of Russia* (New Haven, 2005) 15. Cf. Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Kinship and Politics: The Making of the Muscovite Political System, 1345–1547* (Stanford, 1987) 56.

107 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 86.

more different. Whereas in Mughal India ranking was meritocratic in principle and based on a sophisticated monetary economy, *mestnichestvo* was principally about family precedence. In other words, *pomest'ia* was nothing more or less than a convenient solution for the court's lack of monetary resources. As family was the main ingredient of *mestnichestvo*, it could not be as easily manipulated by the ruler as *mansab*, which also explains why it was abolished in 1682 to give the ruler more leeway to appoint in accordance with ability and experience.<sup>108</sup>

In sum, from its very beginning, the Grand Duchy of Muscovy had a splintered and factionalized nobility that depended on service to the state, which was funded by *pomest'ia*. There was no room whatsoever for extensive military households—only very few served in the retinue (*druzhina*) of the ruler at the *dvor*; most of the other military elites were local landholders who were summoned only at times of danger. Hence, the *boyars* were a landed group of elites whose position lay somewhere between the rooted European nobility and the more mobile Mughals *mansabdars*. Overall, there seems to be little doubt that, in comparison to their European and Asian counterparts, the aristocracy of Muscovy was seriously abased.<sup>109</sup>

#### 4.2 *The Crimean Warband*

Although its difficult ecological conditions made Muscovy's court and aristocracy relatively poor, they also saved it from permanent nomadic conquest.<sup>110</sup> As we have seen already, Muscovy simply lacked the resources and the open landscape of northern China or northern India which facilitated the esprit de corps and logistics of (semi-) nomadic cavalry armies. As far as the landscape

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108 Gustave Alef, *The Origins of Muscovite Autocracy. The Age of Ivan III* (Berlin, 1986) 222; Gustave Alef, 'The Crisis of the Muscovite Aristocracy: A Factor in the Growth of Monarchical Power', *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 15 (1970) 15–59; Gustave Alef, 'Reflections of the Boyar Duma in the Reign of Ivan III', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 45 (1967) 76–123; Hartmut Rüss, *Herren und Diener: Die soziale und politische Mentalität des Russischen Adels. 9.–17. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 1994). See also the works of Ann M. Kleimola: 'The Changing Face of the Muscovite Aristocracy. The 16th Century: Sources of Weakness', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 25 (1977) 481–493; 'Up through Servitude: The Changing Condition of the Muscovite Elite in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 6 (1979) 210–229; 'Military Service and Elite Status in Muscovy in the Second Quarter of the Sixteenth Century', *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 7 (1980) 47–64.

109 Richard Hellie, 'Thoughts on the Absence of Elite Resistance in Muscovy', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1 (2000) 5–20.

110 Which does not mean Moscow was not incidentally razed by nomadic armies: in 1237 by the Mongols, in 1382 by the Golden Horde, in 1571 by the Tatars of the Crimea.

is concerned, though, this was not the case for the extensive Pontic Steppes beyond Russia's southern frontier, in the area now known as Ukraine, from *ukraina*, literally meaning 'borderland' or 'march' in Russian. Hence, this region was part of the early Mongol conquests that destroyed Kiev, the city which for centuries had been the main cultural and political centre of Russia. Devastated by the nomadic invasion, it actually became the new heartland of one of the four Chinggisid successor empires, the so-called *ulus* of the Golden Horde, or Qipchaq Khanate. Although profiting from its commercial links with the Black and Mediterranean Seas, the area appears to have experienced a catastrophic decline as a result of both epidemics and the destruction of its economic bases at Azov, Astrakhan, and Urgench under Timur's campaigns in the 1390s.<sup>111</sup>

From the second quarter of the fifteenth century the Golden Horde fragmented into various successor states, which created a new balance of power among five political entities, each of medium economic and political might: (1) Muscovy itself; (2) the Crimean Khanate, nominally under the Ottomans after 1745; (3) the Great Horde, replaced by the Astrakhan Khanate in 1502; (4) the Kazan Khanate; and, finally, (5) the Tiumen' Khanate or Siber. In fact, the four Tatar Khanates should not be considered fully nomadic states but instead, like so many polities in the Middle Zone that have been discussed so far, as a mixture of nomadic and agricultural communities under the leadership of so-called 'begs'. The term Tatar itself did not necessarily refer to nomads but denoted almost all non-Christian inhabitants, mostly with a Turkish background and of Muslim faith. In any case, at the interstices of these enclaves of political centralization and mixed economies, there were truly pastoral groups such as the Nogais, Bashkirs, Kalmyks, and Kazakhs. Muscovy's military successes against Kazan and Astrakhan were in no small degree based on its alliance with these groups, and in particular the Nogais, who delivered crucial transport services and, above all, a large number of excellent warhorses. Coming from Kazakhstan, the Tibetan Buddhist Kalmyks arrived in the Volga plain only in the 1620s. Their migration instigated the building of the 800-km-long Belgorod Line, the first of a long series of south Russian lines of fortification that started to constrict the available grazing space of these pastoralists and actually forced the Kalmyks to move back eastward again in the 1770s, where they were incorporated into not the Russian but the Qing military system.<sup>112</sup>

111 Edward Louis Keenan Jr., 'Muscovy and Kazan: Some Introductory Remarks on the Patterns of Steppe Diplomacy', *Slavic Review* 26, no. 4 (1967) 553.

112 Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire 1500–1800* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2002) 132–133.

Focussing on the political organization of the Tatar khanates it is remarkable that they, like the other parts of the Middle Zone discussed above, more or less retained the structure of the Turko-Mongolian warband. Even in the details, the system of the Crimean Khanate under Mehmed Giray (r. 1514–1523) and Sahib Giray (r. 1532–1551) comes very close to that of the early Timurids, including Babur. In elite society, there was a hierarchy at the top of which was the khan himself, who was followed by his immediate family members: his eldest sons, other sons, and members of the royal family called *oghlands*. Many of them were sultans with positions of command. As well as kith and kin, there were the so-called begs, who were referred to as *qaraçu* or heads of the four principal ‘tribes’, their sons or *mürzas*, and other so-called *nökörs*, who were also known as *emeldesh* or *içki* (insider) begs, all of whom served the khan as intimate comrades in the court and elsewhere. Also very much along the lines of Turko-Mongol tradition, the four ‘tribes’ were not strict ethnological categories but rather consisted of mixed groups in the manner of those discussed earlier in the case of the Manchu *mukun* and Timurid *tümen*. In principle, as much as *nökör* overrode tribe, the position of client overrode kinship, with the latter becoming merely fictitious and/or used metaphorically.

Interestingly, in 1533 Sahib Giray attempted to end his dependence on his traditional ‘tribal’ following by introducing the Ottoman model of the Janissaries through the enlistment of a number of musketeers from outside these circles, from ‘among the rabble of the people’.<sup>113</sup> As shall be seen, the Muscovite rulers would do exactly the same, at first in the form of the *pishchal’niki* or harquebuzzers, and later, from 1550, by using the so-called *strel’tsy* who replaced them, and who were also musketeers in the model of Janissaries, operating on foot but, unlike the latter, consisting of free men instead of slaves.<sup>114</sup> These personal guards, recruited from the lower levels of society, provided an attractive new counterbalance either against the *nökörs* in the case of the Crimean Khan or against the *boyars* in the case of the Tsar. It should be stressed here that although their personal nature made these guards look like the warband’s *nökörs*, in principle they are different as they neither provided an imperial elite

113 Inalcik, ‘The Khan and the Tribal Aristocracy’, 445–466; see also Beatrice Forbes Manz, ‘The Clans of the Crimean Khanate, 1466–1532’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2 (1978) 282–309; U. Schamiloglu, ‘The *Qaraçi* Beys of the Later Golden Horde: Notes on the Organization of the Mongol World Empire’, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984) 283–297; Craig Kennedy, ‘Fathers, Sons, and Brothers: Ties of Metaphorical Kinship between the Muscovite Grand Princes and the Tatar Elite’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995) 292–301.

114 For a discussion of the Ottoman background of these new musketeer units, through the agency of Ivan Semonovich Peresvetov, see Madariaga, *Ivan de Terrible*, 87–91.

nor represented the empire's elite as a whole. As with other imperial guards in sedentary empires, they were a much more isolated and purely military force than the various forms of the nomadic warband that we came across in our northern Middle Zone.

### 4.3 *The White Tsar*

One of the Golden Horde's successor states was Muscovy itself. The Nogais called its ruler the *White Tsar*; the colour symbolizing good fortune and the western location within the Mongol realm.<sup>115</sup> There are many reasons to link Muscovy's rise to empire with the emergence of the Golden Horde. For example, economically speaking, it was only within the framework of the economic demands and opportunities created by the later Golden Horde that north-eastern Russia could recover from the earlier devastation created by the Mongols.<sup>116</sup> Likewise, in political terms, the Khan of the Golden Horde confirmed the Grand Princes of Muscovy as legitimate but subordinate rulers. In addition, Ivan I (r. 1325–1340) received a Mongol commission to gather the tribute for the Khan from other Russian princes.<sup>117</sup> We also know that from the fourteenth century onwards, the Grand Princes relied on Tatar manpower to expand their territory further west, towards Tver and Novgorod. Hence, their armies consisted primarily of mounted archers with composite bows. The leaders of these Tatar forces were often members of the Chinggisid dynasty, and as Chinggisid *tsarevichi* they not only gave power but also authority to the Great Prince of Muscovy. Two sons of Ulugh Muhammad, the Khan of the Golden Horde, became vassals of Grand Prince Vasily II (r. 1415–1462) and founded, under Russian protection, the Khanate of Kasimov, and its Chinggisid ruler helped Vasily II to regain his throne in the Russian civil wars of the mid-fifteenth century. Ivan IV, also known as *groznyi*, literally the 'awesome' but better known as the Terrible (r. 1547–1584), grew up among Chinggisid princes and even abdicated for a year in favour of one of them, who became known as the Grand Prince of Russia Symeon Bekbulatovich.<sup>118</sup>

115 Michael Khodarkovsky, 'The Non-Christian Peoples on the Muscovite Frontiers', in: Maureen Perrie, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 1: From Early Rus to 1689* (Cambridge, 2006) 323.

116 Janet Martin, 'North-eastern Russia and the Golden Horde (1246–1359)', and 'The Emergence of Moscow (1359–1462)', in: *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 1*, 127–187.

117 Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (Oxford, 1993) 97–101.

118 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 298–311; 437. One possible explanation for this act lies in the Indian story of Barlaam and Josaphat. Following that story, the physician and magus Bomelius had produced a horoscope for Ivan, showing that in the years 1575–1576 a Grand

Indeed, it seems that Ivan IV had a crucial decision to make: should he opt for the Polish-Lithuanian or the Tatar model, perhaps now in its latest, Ottoman version? At the beginning of his reign, he had made important strides against the Tatars by the incorporation of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556); Siber would soon follow in 1582. Even earlier, Muscovy had started to emancipate itself from the Tatar embrace after beating them at the Field of Kulikovo in 1380 under Dmitri Donskoi. A century later, after another confrontation on the River Ugra under Ivan III, Muscovy ceased to regard the Tatars as its overlord. But this did not mean their institutions immediately lost their attraction, particularly since the alternative models of the West were not yet considered good enough. Ivan IV once complained that he often felt like the Polish king: excluded from power and ordered about by his servants, a ruler in name but not in fact. In other words, the first option involved close cooperation with his increasingly powerful service *boyars*, which could itself only lead to the loss of his own position.

Whatever he decided, in late 1564 he suddenly abandoned Moscow for the small town of Aleksandrov. He abdicated, denouncing both the *boyars* and the clergy. Both begged him to return, which he did, but only on his own terms: the creation of a special subdivision in the state, known as *oprichnina*, consisting of about one third of the realm, to be managed entirely at his own discretion. At the same time he expected an endorsement of his right to punish evil-doers and traitors as he saw fit. For our present purpose it is crucial to note that the term *oprichnina* also came to designate a new corps of about 1000–6000 personal servants called *oprichniki*—all dressed in black and riding black horses. It is hard to understand Ivan's motivations for what seems to be a desperate move away from the court and its 200 or so *boyar* families.<sup>119</sup> In a way it is reminiscent of Emperor Ming Zhengde's move to the so-called Leopard Quarter about half a century earlier; like Ivan, the Zhengde emperor decided to establish a brand new palace outside the established court so that he could conduct business on his own terms without the interference of civil officials. Here he followed his plan to revive the Ming military without the obstruction and criticism of officialdom. He surrounded himself with a court

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Prince of Russia was to die. All this was confirmed by a comet and a planet conjunction. A similar temporary abdication happened in 1594 when the Safavid emperor Shah 'Abbas I abdicated for three days after his chief astrologer Jalal al-Din Munajjim Yazdi foretold the death of an Iranian ruler. Stephen P. Blake, *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires* (Cambridge, 2003) 153.

119 Riasanovsky, *History of Russia*, 150–155. See also Gunnar Opeide, 'Making Sense of Oprichnina', *Poljarmy Vestnik: Norwegian Journal of Slavic Studies* 3 (2000) 64–99.

of his own choosing, comprised in large measure of foreigners and military men who, under his direction, began to retrain the imperial armies.<sup>120</sup> Although very similar in motivation, in China the emperor's sudden exodus did not have serious consequences for the administration as a whole. While the emperor's behaviour may have been interpreted as unconventional or even outlandish, business generally went on as usual. This was not the case in Russia, where the *oprichnina* unleashed a veritable reign of terror, which actually increased the Tsar's hold on the princes and the service elites who had gradually turned into an obstreperous hereditary aristocracy.

So should the *oprichnina* be regarded as the Tatar option? Isabel de Madariaga makes a strong argument they may have been inspired by Ivan's Tatar wife Maria Temriukovna, a niece of the later, 'mock' Prince Symeon Bekbulatovic. Indeed, her brother, Prince Michael Cherkassky—another member of what seems to be an incredibly influential Qipchaq 'tribe'—became an important leader of the *oprichniki*.<sup>121</sup> Whatever its inspiration, the *oprichnina* represents a fascinating attempt to start an empire from scratch with a brand new personal warband. In Russia, though, it could never expand in the way it had done under Chinggis Khan, Babur, or Nurhaci.

After Ivan's death, the struggle between the old and new elites continued and opened the door to the regency of Boris Godunov, who even became Tsar in 1598. After defeating both the high-born princelings and the low-born *oprichnina* guard, he consolidated the *boyar* elite, not in their landed holding but by offering positions in the expanded chancellery secretariat. His policies opened the way for the emergence of the Romanov family, but only after they had survived the last attempt to impose a Tatar-like warband on Russia during the Time of Troubles.

#### 4.4 *A Retro Warband: The Cossacks*

In many ways the Time of Troubles (1603–1613) was part of the more global seventeenth-century crisis. Muscovy experienced the almost natural after-effects of a relatively stable sixteenth century, which had seen economic stability, a doubling of the population, and staggering territorial expansion. This was followed, though, by increasing demographic pressures that caused an economic crisis that had its beginnings in the long Livonian War (1558–1582) in the West and a series of natural disasters at the turn of the century. Very much like the economy, political troubles in the early seventeenth century naturally fol-

120 James Geiss, 'The Leopard Quarter during the Cheng-te Reign', *Ming Studies* 24 (1987) 1–38.

121 Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible*, 186–188.



lowed an earlier period of political expansion, in particular into the southern steppes, which brought millions of new inhabitants into the empire, many of whom were not yet settled as peasants and were still moving around in search of a living.

The incorporation of the southern steppes had been made possible by two policies. One was the building of fortified lines (*zaseki*) that warded off nomadic raids and also sealed off their nomadic trails. The other was the support of highly mobile Cossack warbands that could fight the Tatars on their own terms. It is difficult to make a clear difference between these Cossacks and Tatars. Both were often organized in open, conscriptive groups of wandering traders-*cum*-warriors. The origin and background of the Cossacks was, however, different, as they incorporated mainly Slavic immigrants from the north, many of whom had a peasant or serf background, and most of whom were Christians. As such, these were frontier guardsmen who combined raiding with trade, but increasingly also agriculture. Tatars, on the other hand, often had a pastoralist Turkic background and were primarily Muslims. Michael Khodarkovsky sees the Cossacks as the 'mirror image' of their nomadic adversaries who, like them, chose to live off booty and pillage.<sup>122</sup> On the southern frontier, both groups merged into the hybrid Cossack category, standing somewhere midway between such real pastoralists as the Nogai and the more 'urban' enclaves of the Tatar Khanates.<sup>123</sup> In terms of spirit and structure, the Cossacks had all the elements of the nomadic warband that have been noted for the Jurchens and Turks *before* their Chinese and Indian conquests. In Russia, however, it always remained a pre-conquest, frontier phenomenon but, as such, consciously stimulated, manipulated, and controlled by the court. Hence, as in the case of the Banners, we have a sedentary empire recreating and exploiting a subsidiary warband to implement imperial control. The Russian case is different, though, because the Cossack warbands were not used as an internal pool of loyal administrators but were projected outward to the frontier to fight other warbands and to expand agriculture. Russian rulers knew very well that in the end it was the plough, not the sword, that would win the steppe, as much as 'the chicken would prevail over the horse'.<sup>124</sup> Obviously, this would also be the natural end of the nomadic warband and, with that, the Cossack way of life.<sup>125</sup> We should not forget, though, that during the Time of Troubles this outcome

122 Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, 224.

123 Günter Stökl, *Die Entstehung des Kosakentums* (Munich, 1953).

124 Keenan Jr., 'Muscovy and Kazan', 557.

125 Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire-Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (Cambridge, 2009).

was far from foreseeable and it could all have been quite different if only the Cossacks had won the day.<sup>126</sup>

The opening of the southern frontier had caused an increasing influx of Tatar warriors into the empire. Some high-ranking Tatars became close satellites of the court, receiving various *pomest'ia* or even towns for their *kormlenie* (feeding).<sup>127</sup> More important than these Tatars, though, was the increasing Cossack element in the Russian army, mainly from the southern frontier. When economic conditions went from bad to worse at the end of the sixteenth century, these Tatar and Cossack warbands could no longer be paid. During this time their numbers even increased as peasants and serfs moved away from the forest heartlands to find refuge in the south, where they were incorporated by some very charismatic Cossack warband leaders or *atamans*; as Chester Dunning so aptly puts it, more and more Russians 'went cossack'.<sup>128</sup>

One of the Cossack leaders was a certain Ivan Isaevich Bolotnikov. He was captured by the Turks and served as a galley slave before escaping and returning to Russia through Poland. Another colourful figure was one Ivan Martynovich Zarutskii who, having been taken prisoner by the Crimean Tatars, escaped to the Don Cossacks, where he gained a reputation for exceptional bravery, and subsequently joined Bolotnikov's forces. Either of them could have been a Babur or a Nurhachi, carving out empires of their own, had they not lived in Russia. Instead of claiming the throne for themselves, they pushed the claims of an endless series of Tsarevich pretenders. And although they seriously threatened Moscow, they never managed to take it, and in the end were undone

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- 126 Maureen Perrie, 'The Time of Troubles (1603–1613)', in: *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 1*, 409–431; Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia: The False Tsars of the Time of Troubles* (Cambridge, 1995); Ruslan G. Skrynnikov, *Times of Troubles: Russia in Crisis* (Gulf Breeze FL, 1988); Chester S.L. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (Pennsylvania, 2001).
- 127 Donald Ostrowski, 'The Growth of Muscovy (1462–1533)', in: *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 1*, 213–239; Donald Ostrowski, 'Troop Mobilization by the Muscovite Grand Princes (1313–1533)', in: Eric Lohr and Marshall Poe, eds., *The Military and Society in Russia, 1450–1917* (Leiden, 2002) 19–40; Janet Martin, 'Tatars in the Muscovite Army during the Livonian War', in: Eric Lohr and Marshall Poe, eds., *The Military and Society in Russia, 1450–1917* (Leiden, 2002) 365–387; Bulat R. Rakhimzyanov, 'The Muslim Tatars of Muscovy and Lithuania: Some Introductory Remarks', in: Brian J. Boeck, Russell E. Martin and Daniel Rowland, eds., *Dubitando: Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski* (Bloomington, 2012) 117–128.
- 128 Chester S.L. Dunning, 'Cossacks and the Southern Frontier in the Time of Troubles', *Russian History* 19 (1992) 59.

by the 'national militias' who, in 1613, picked Michael Romanov as their new Tsar. After the repression of the Cossacks, the latter increasingly served as mercenaries under *boyar* command or were pushed further along the basins of the rivers Don, Volga, Terek, and Iaik towards the southern frontier. Here they began to set up their own organization which made them more answerable to the central authorities in Moscow until, in the eighteenth century, their leaders started to owe their authority not to their constituency but to the Tsar.<sup>129</sup> At the same time, however, they continued to stir social unrest and revolts. One of these revolts, under Bogdan Khel'nitskiy (1648–1657), was directed against Poland-Lithuania and enabled Muscovy to incorporate many of the Ukrainian Cossacks into its own army and large parts of the Ukraine into its territory. Much more of a threat to Muscovy itself were the revolts of Sten'ka Razin (1670–1671) and Emelian Pugachev (1773–1775), but now all the unrest was happening far from the capital and it was clear to all that the sedentary way of life had definitively come to stay in Russia, not only in the forest belt but also in the steppes.<sup>130</sup>

Why did Bolotnikov and Zarutskii fail where Babur and Nurhaci had succeeded? Why could their warbands not serve as the basis of conquering and sustaining an empire? The answer brings us back to Russia's ecological and economic conditions. Both Tatars and Cossacks simply lacked the resources to sustain the necessary initial expansion of the warband that was noted in the case of Babur and Nurhaci, who could take as much as they liked from the almost endless resources of the Chinese and Indian economies. Furthermore, their paths had been paved by their Jurchen and Afghan predecessors. The Cossack warband was never able to become large enough to beat the better organized and paid Russian army under *boyar* command; however, in the early seventeenth century the Russian victory was far from decisive and the outcome could still have been different.

What really contained the Cossacks in the following decades and centuries was, however, the gradual move towards a new, European-style infantry army supported by a growing administrative apparatus of various chancelleries or *prikazy*, the most important of which was the Military Service Chancellery (*Razriad*) established under Alexis (r. 1645–1676). Indeed, the increasing number of *prikazy* gave new opportunities to *boyars* whose main task remained primarily the provisioning and funding of the army. All this had become neces-

129 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 190.

130 Philip Longworth, *The Cossacks* (London, 1969). For a Ukrainian perspective, see Linda Gordon, *Cossack Rebellions: Social Turmoil in the Sixteenth-Century Ukraine* (Albany, 1983).

sary not because of threats from the Tatars and Cossacks, but in order to fight similar armies that served the Poles and Swedes on the western front. It was Peter the Great (r. 1682–1721) who tried to use this opportunity to make himself more autonomous from his *boyars*—a desire that had already been seen under Ivan IV when he started the *oprichnina*.

Many of the reforms were implemented by German and other foreign officers. At the same time, it is important to stress that the Russian army never became a mercenary army as was the case in other European countries. It actually became increasingly Russian, increasingly based on conscription. Even non-Russian recruits, like the Ukrainian Cossacks, became increasingly Russified. Although *pomest'ia* was turned into *votchina*, both became subjected to a military service requirement as regulated by new censuses. The huge increase in the size of both the army and *prikazy* was paid for by the levying of a poll tax on the increasingly fixed and defined population. The latter grew out of the famous 1649 *Ulozhenie*, which had codified serfdom as a compromise with the provincial middle service class cavalry who had become more and more concerned about the viability of their estates. Meanwhile, in the tradition of the *strel'tsy* but starting from scratch, Peter had created his own personal guard. In his adolescence Peter had gathered around him the sons of *boyars* and organized them into two regiments of boys who fought mock battles under his command. These so-called toy regiments (*poteshnye polki*) were named Peobrazhenskii polk and Semenovskii polk after the suburbs where they originated, and became the nucleus of his new army.<sup>131</sup> This practice was later repeated by Peter III's Holsteiners and Paul's Gatchina regiment. At the same time, following the example of the palace schools of the Ottomans as well as the so-called *Ritterakademien* in other European polities, Peter established elite military academies that were meant to train his officers in the latest gunpowder technology and to lead them to be even more closely attached to the Tsar. Access to these guards and academies increasingly defined one's status.<sup>132</sup>

131 Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014) 201–202. I am grateful to Hans Voeten for explaining the specific meaning of these terms to me.

132 For the developments of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century nobility and army, see R.F. Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago, 1971); Robert O. Crumme, *Aristocrats and Servitors: The Boyar Elite in Russia 1613–1689* (Princeton, 1983); John L.H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia 1462–1874* (Oxford, 1985); Marshall Poe, 'The Military Revolution, Administrative Development, and Cultural Change in Early Modern Russia', *Journal of Early Modern History* 2, no. 3 (1998) 247–273; Dominic Lieven, 'The Elites', in: Dominic Lieven, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 2:*

Indeed, after Peter, and in particular after Catherine II (r. 1762–96), officers of the Guard Regiments increasingly started to build loyalties with their fellow officers and created a new class of military intelligentsia. Even ordinary soldiers became more tied to their regiments, as their children were forced to enter garrison schools that were meant to instil some basic education, and, above all, discipline and exercise. This horizontal kind of corporatism leads one historian even to use the term Praetorianism, which, in the nineteenth century, even started to threaten the Tsar himself, as was the case during the 1825 Decembrist Revolt.<sup>133</sup>

The new corporatism, based on the Imperial Guards and Academies, once again raises questions over the warband and *ʿasabiyya*. Indeed, Peter's creation of his own personal guard, selected from the main *boyar* families and which instilled a new regimental identity, brings to mind Chinggis Khan's *keshik*. At the very moment that officer corporatism gains substance and spreads across the empire and different levels of society, we may superficially recognize something that comes quite close, if not to the Chinggisid prototype itself, to its post-nomadic derivatives under the Manchus and Timurids. Although the Cossacks clearly elaborated on the Turko-Mongolian model, Peter's new standing army seems to be something different and much closer to early modern European examples, which may have had similar functional objectives as the Chinggisid warband, but apparently had a completely different, sedentary rather than a nomadic origin. In the case of Peter's guards there seems to be nothing that compares to the flexible, all-inclusive nature of the Turko-Mongolian *keshik*, which encompassed both military and administrative functions and represented the elites of all the subsidiary warbands that exploited the sedentary populations through collective appanages. Indeed, the Petrine army seems to have grown naturally from the smaller and much more isolated and restricted imperial guard of the *strel'tsy*. It was only later, during the eighteenth century, when the economic basis of the empire increased and was managed ever more effectively by an enlarged bureaucracy that the disciplining powers of this new standing army grew at an unprecedented level and really started to make a difference against the nomadic warbands to its south and east.

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*Russia 1689–1917* (Cambridge, 2006) 225–244; William C. Fuller Jr, 'Chapter 25: The Imperial Army', in: Dominic Lieven, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 2*, 530–553.

133 Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 201–250.

## 5 The Ottoman Middle East: From Ghazis to Janissaries

### 5.1 *Osman's Men: Beylik and Sanjaq*

South of Russia our northern Middle Zone continues into Anatolia and to the west faces the heartland of the Byzantine Empire. At the beginning of our period, the Asian part of that empire was undergoing a process of increasing nomadization. Although starting in the eleventh century, its peak occurred two centuries later when, due to the Mongol campaigns into the Pontic Steppe and Iran, more and more Turkic pastoralists moved onto the semi-dry Anatolian plateau, penetrating deep into its still sedentary western valleys under the control of the Byzantines. Meanwhile, the Seljuq Empire, a product of the first nomadic movement, was more or less crushed by the Mongol 'hammer' battering against the Byzantine 'anvil'. After a short interlude under the Golden Horde, Anatolia was under the control of the Ilkhans from their remote summer and winter quarters, in Azerbaijan and the Mughan Plain respectively. Even more so than under the Seljuqs, the Ilkhanid period bound eastern Anatolia closely to the political fortunes of north-west Iran.<sup>134</sup>

Along the shifting frontier between the expanding Ilkhans and the retreating Byzantines emerged various Turkic marcher lords who made a living from raiding the countryside and lending their military services to the highest bidder, whether Christian or Muslim. Some of them carved out their own little polities or *beyliks*, a few even becoming truly cultural hubs for refugee Persian intellectuals searching for new jobs after the Mongol invasion. One of these *beyliks* was created by Osman and his band of *nökörs*—hence called the Ottomans—in the north-west of Anatolia. One of the hidden secrets behind the Ottoman success story was that, even before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, they were able to build a bridgehead across the Dardanelles which made it possible to channel the surplus of Turkish manpower from Anatolia to the Balkans and, in addition, to recruit new manpower from the latter. As a consequence, it was due to their hold on the Balkans that the Ottomans were able to retain their home base in Anatolia and even to withstand the devastating campaigns of Timur at the start of the fifteenth century.<sup>135</sup> As was plain to see, even for later generations who romanticized the events, the prime political instrument with which the Ottomans had achieved all this had been the Turko-Mongolian warband.

134 Charles Melville, 'Anatolia under the Mongols', in: Kate Fleet, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 1: Byzantium to Turkey 1071–1453* (Cambridge, 2009) 101.

135 Halil İnalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire. Volume 1: 1300–1600* (Cambridge, 1994) 11–13.

Whatever one may think of the notorious ghazi thesis as presented by the overly romantic Austrian historian Paul Wittek, there is no doubt whatsoever that the Ottomans were one of many warbands that were active in the Anatolian frontier zone.<sup>136</sup> What is also clear, though, is that all our sources date from a period much later than the life and times of the founder of the warband, Osman Ghazi (c. 1290–1324). Hence, it is not at all surprising that Ottoman historians, defending their patrons against the much better genealogical claims of the Timurids, have interpreted the early events in an excessively Islamic light, as a heroic fight against the infidel. Removing the anachronistic idea of a civilizational clash between Islam and Christendom, there is still much to appreciate in the concept of the ghazi warlord who in seasonal *razzias*—from *ghaziya* or raiding—creates his own band of mounted warriors and comrades (in Turkish *yoldash* but in the sources also called *nökör*) and brings them under his banner or flag (*sanjaq*). According to the doyen of Ottoman studies, Halil İnalcik, this process of creating the Ottoman warband entailed a dissolution of kinship ties with the exception of those of the leader's family. The Holy War ideology, as much as the success of the actual raids, reinforced ties within the band to produce a cohesive social group that centred around the leader.<sup>137</sup> With these two sentences we are back at the models of the Chinggisids and Ibn Khaldun with which we started this essay. Interestingly, İnalcik adds that it was not the shari'a-minded '*ulama*' but the mystical Sufi dervishes who embodied the *ghaziya* spirit and brought to the leader's authority the spiritual sanction of Islam. Here we come very close to the story of the Sufi Safavid warlords who emerged only slightly later in the same Turkic climate so typical of eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and northern Iran. Nevertheless, we should be on our guard by now as we simply do not know how much of the religious fervour at the very beginning of the Ottoman and Safavid movements was projected onto the events ex-post-facto by both Ottoman and Ottomanist historians, eager to give them some higher purpose.<sup>138</sup>

Whatever their ideological drive, looking at the various Turkish marcher lords in Anatolia in this period, we can recognize something of the Chinggisid warband. Apart from the idea of *nökörs*, it seems that at the beginning of the fourteenth century entire provinces were given to military commanders (*beys*)

136 For a recent discussion of Wittek's ideas, see Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire: Studies in the History of Turkey, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries* (London, 2012) as edited and introduced by Colin Heywood. See also Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

137 Halil İnalcik, 'The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (1981–1982) 71–79.

138 See, however, the comments by Peter Rietbergen regarding Ismail's poems in this volume.

as their banner or *sanjaq*, which comes close to the Timurid appanage. At this early stage, *sanjaq*, very much like the Timurid *tümen*, designated a military unit without the territorial connotation that it would receive later. *Sanjaq Beys* had both civil and military functions. Similarly, the word *timar*, which later became known as the individual prebend of a cavalry trooper, still indicated large grants of land to subsidiary warband leaders at full liberty to arrange matters as they saw fit. Both *sanjaq* and *timar* were meant to incorporate the regional elites into a subsidiary warband or curb them by creating new provincial commanders coming from the ruler's own warband.<sup>139</sup> Only later in the fifteenth century did the *sanjaq bey* become a provincial official in command of a specific group of *timar*-holders and their lands, still not neatly covering the borders of a province but, at least in theory, under the surveillance of the court.

Despite such similarities, Anatolia was not Mongolia. As cogently expressed by Rudi Paul Lindner, the *beyliks* built their power on the nomads but without having enough of them.<sup>140</sup> It was only by developing and exploiting the sedentary resources in Rumelia that one of them managed to become an empire. So the Ottomans were nomadic chiefs who made their fortune in areas of relative agrarian wealth. Like China in the case of the Mongols and Jurchens, the Rumelian and Anatolian resources were initially substantial enough for the Ottomans to support the persistence of the nomadic warband. As they were soon to find out, though, operating in Europe was an entirely different ballgame. European circumstances did not allow for nomadic movement on a grand scale as was still possible in the eastern Anatolian extensions of the Arid Zone. What became increasingly important in this area were the drilled operations of foot soldiers as explored by the first mercenary powers hired by the South and Central European powers. As they were increasingly equipped with the latest gunpowder weaponry, from the fifteenth century onward, infantry troops started to make real headway against cavalry, especially in the European logistical context where the size of the latter always remained limited. Although it would at least take another two centuries and another round of new

139 Pál Fodor, 'Ottoman Warfare, 1300–1453', in: *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 1*, 198; Linda Darling, 'The Development of Ottoman Governmental Institutions in the Fourteenth Century: A Reconstruction', in: Vera Costantini and Markus Koller, eds., *Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Community: Essays in Honour of Suraiya Faroqhi* (Leiden, 2008) 24. For later developments, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire* (Basingstoke, 2009) 164–203.

140 Rudi Paul Lindner, 'Anatolia, 1300–1451', in: *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 1*, 107, 121.



gunpowder innovations before infantry really won the day, for the Ottomans, having to operate in the European arena, it became necessary to recruit soldiers among the peasantry in the Balkans. All this gave rise to the introduction of *devshirme* or 'collection' whereby the sultans levied slaves from among their own Christian subjects, employing them, not as horsemen as in the case of the Turkic Mamluks in Egypt, but as highly disciplined new infantry units called Janissaries.

So although there are many reminders of some earlier developments in our Middle Zone, the Ottoman version of the Turko-Mongolian warband had a relatively short lifespan. Until the fifteenth century it worked well to mobilize and incorporate nomadic manpower and channel it towards the western frontiers in Anatolia and the Balkans. Soon the Ottomans found out, though, that in its original guise the warband could not operate in the sedentary surroundings of western Anatolia and south-eastern Europe. Neither was it big enough to really make an impression on their eastern Timurid, Mamluk, or Safavid neighbours. Under these circumstances, investing in a combination of infantry and gunpowder technology made perfect sense.

The idea of the warband held out longest along the shifting frontier (*uj*) of the Balkans. In the guise of the so-called *akinjis*, or frontier raiders, we recognize something of the Cossack phenomenon that we have analysed already for the Russian frontier and which represented a conscious policy of the court to stimulate both settlement and territorial raiding against the enemy. In the early stages, this frontier zone attracted not only the Ottomans and other Turkic ghazis but also European crusaders. Organized in the mercenary Company of the Catalans, the latter carved out their own fourteenth-century polity in Athens.<sup>141</sup> Although lacking a nomadic background and thus not accompanied by their families, the Christian Catalan Company was not all that different from the Turkish *beyliks*. Although very effective in their own ecological niche, both lacked the nomadic *and* sedentary resources to use the warband for conquering the extensive empire as achieved by the great world conquerors Chinggis Khan and Timur, or indeed by their Mughal and Manchu colleagues Babur and Nurhaci. The Ottomans had to develop an alternative strategy.

## 5.2 *Beyond the Warband: Devshirme*

The Ottomans who conquered large parts of northern Africa and south-eastern Europe in the sixteenth century were not leading a nomadic warband anymore

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141 Angeliki E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II: 1282–1328* (Cambridge Mass., 1972) 127–200.

but a salaried slave army assisted by *timar*-based cavalry troops or *sipahis*. As mentioned already, using military slaves was nothing new, certainly not in the Islamic world. In the Middle East it dates back to the ninth-century Abbasids but the Seljuqs were the first to possess a substantial army of military slaves. In the mid-thirteenth century, one of their successor states, the Ayyubids of Egypt and Syria, began to recruit large number of Turkish slaves from the Eurasian steppes. After successfully beating off both the Crusaders and the Mongols these slaves created their own Mamluk dynasty and continued to recruit slaves, primarily from the Qipchaq steppes controlled by the Golden Horde.<sup>142</sup> In the early sixteenth century, it was this slave army, dominated by Turkish cavalry, that was beaten by the Ottoman slave army dominated by 'European' infantry and artillery.

The one element in the sixteenth-century Ottoman army that may still vaguely remind one of a Turko-Mongolian warband was the standing army of six cavalry regiments of the household (*kapikulu sipahi*), recruited from graduates of the so-called palace schools that were specifically created to train freshly purchased slaves to accompany the sultan on campaign, as well as during ceremonial occasions. The most prestigious among them were the *sipahi ođlanları* (cavalry youths) and the *silahdar* (armbearers), followed by the *ulufeci* (salaried men) of the right and the left wings, and the *garib yiđitleri* (foreigners) of the right and left wings. From their inception sometime in the fifteenth century their numbers increased from about 2,000 to almost 20,000 by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Yet more important than these mounted troops was the fourteenth-century introduction of an infantry corps. Interestingly, this part of the slave corps did not consist of primarily Turkish recruits but of European Christians who formed a new-style infantry unit of the Janissaries, from *yeniçeri*, literally meaning 'new army'. Initially these were taken from amongst prisoners of war, most prominently through the various marcher lords, but soon they were primarily collected, whence *devshirme*, literally 'collection', as slaves from the Christian subjects in the Balkans. Once selected, the Janissary novices received an education and military training, partly at court and partly in the provinces. Before becoming a major building bloc of the imperial army, the Janissaries, like the *kapikulu sipahi* corps, served as the ruler's bodyguard and sometimes, as individuals, served as the ruler's representative in the provinces. In the sixteenth century, it was primarily this impressive standing army of about 10–20,000 well-trained infantry soldiers, equipped with the lat-

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142 Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, 1992) 348–349.

est gunpowder technology, that delivered the Ottomans their empire, defeating the Safavids at Chaldiran in 1514, the Mamluks at Ridaniyya in 1517, and the Hungarians at Mohács in 1526.

Until the fifteenth century, the Ottoman slave army served as a rather small and isolated imperial bodyguard in a manner similar to those we have seen before under fully sedentary conditions. But when the Janissary ranks swelled and started to serve as the infantry core of the Ottoman army at large, it seems to have been part of a general, European development to create salaried standing armies, as was the case of the so-called *bandes d'ordonnance* established in France and Burgundy around 1450. Of course, it is also reminiscent of the Russian *strel'tsy*. Indeed, looking closer at military developments, the Ottoman and Russian developments are strikingly similar. For example, the *sipahi* cavalry troopers, numbering around 80,000 in the middle of the sixteenth century, were increasingly paid by individual *timars* granted by the state. As we have seen, this was also the case with their Russian colleagues, who were paid by individual *pomest'ia*. Both *timar* and *pomest'ia* were, like the Byzantine *pronoia*, given to pay for the individual trooper and as such were different from the larger *iqta'* or *jagir* which were bestowed on commanders in Mughal India. In all these cases, it was crucial that prebend-holders were constantly transferred from one place to the other so they could not put down roots and carve out their own little kingdoms. From the sixteenth century onwards, more and more slaves penetrated the ranks of *timar*-holders.<sup>143</sup> In fact, if they did not take service at court, the *sipahis* became an impoverished lot. This process was aggravated by the Ottomans policy to replace *timars* with revenue farms or *çifliks*, which gave rise to the emergence of a new urban class of entrepreneurial elites called *a'yan*, often to the detriment of the *sipahis*.

Yet this situation was not so strange, as the Ottoman-Russian parallel derives mainly from the ecological similarities between the two regions. Both the Ottomans and the Romanovs ruled empires that faced a limited nomadic power that failed to strike at their sedentary cores. It was only at the very fringe of their emerging empires that something of the warband's spirit, in the subsidiary form of Akinjis and Cossacks, could continue, albeit on a small scale and under more settled conditions. In fact, the Romanovs were more successful in this regard as they could profit from an ever retreating nomadic frontier.

143 Fodor, 'Ottoman Warfare', 199–209; Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 116–130, 262–294. For an interesting Ottoman-Russian comparison, see Gábor Ágoston, 'Military Transformation in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, 1500–1800', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (2011) 281–319. Like the Russian *boyars*, the *timariots* could never develop into that rooted and notoriously obstreperous Polish or Hungarian aristocracy.

In contrast, due to strong Habsburg, Romanov, and Safavid resistance, the Ottoman frontier was 'closed' in the seventeenth century. As a consequence, the Ottomans could not, like the Romanovs, continue to recruit huge numbers of frontiersmen for the army. In order to keep pace with the ever increasing numbers and firepower of their European adversaries, the Ottomans had no choice but to expand recruitment to the Anatolian peasantry. The result was the creation of Cossack-like warbands of a sedentary nature, not at the fringe but at the heart of the imperial realm. These bands of *sekbans*, *sarica*, or *levends*, the latter quite significantly meaning 'bandit' or 'vagrant', consisted of peasants who had previously been carefully kept out of the military but were now lured by provincial officials to join their retinues or were directly enlisted into the sultan's army. The availability of firearms in the countryside facilitated this move away from land and towards military pursuits. As a result, the state became a significant client for mercenaries organized around units that were ready for hire.<sup>144</sup>

So, whereas the Russian Time of Troubles resulted in the projection of the Cossack warband to the frontier, the Ottoman Time of Troubles struck internally and by creating an armed peasantry—of a kind that had existed in India for many centuries—became an increasing problem. Hence, the so-called mercenary (Celali) rebellion in 1608 proved to be no brief episode but actually became rather endemic, while also undermining the already precarious agrarian balance in Anatolia. A lack of security in the countryside made peasants less willing to stay in the fertile Anatolian plains, which were increasingly left to *çiflik*-holders who concentrated on animal breeding. Flocks with a few herdsmen promised higher profits than grain or any other crop requiring more labour. It once again showed that Anatolia was part of an Arid Zone where productive sedentary agriculture could not be taken for granted.<sup>145</sup> By the eighteenth century, recruitment was primarily in the hands of the *çiflik*-holding *a'yan* who had replaced the dysfunctional old-style *timariot sipahis*; indeed, at a time when Russia turned towards general conscription, the irregular recruitment of these provincial militias even surpassed the Janissaries and became the standard procedure of Ottoman campaigning.<sup>146</sup>

144 Karen Barkey, 'In Different Times: Scheduling and Social Control in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 to 1650', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 3 (1996) 478; see also her *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY, 1994).

145 Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, 'Ecology of the Ottoman Lands', in: Suraiya N. Faroqhi, ed., *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 3: The Later Ottoman Empire 1603–1839* (Cambridge, 2006) 30.

146 Virginia H. Aksan, 'War and Peace', in: *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 3*, 81–

Looking at eighteenth-century developments, one gets the feeling that the historiographical evaluation of the Janissary phenomenon suffers from an exclusively military perspective. Although in a purely military sense the Janissaries lost their efficiency, we should keep in mind that the huge increase of their numbers, from about 20,000 at the mid-sixteenth century to about 400,000 (!) at the end of the eighteenth century, as well as their increasing geographical spread, must have played a crucial role in enhancing the social cohesion of the empire as a whole. The corps (*ocak*) as such had evolved from a more or less isolated imperial bodyguard into the core of the imperial army and then into an imperial network that pervaded society as a whole. All this had already begun in the sixteenth century with the granting to Janissaries permission to marry—only bachelors continued to live in relatively isolated barracks. Later, their ranks became more open to outsiders: (adopted) relatives, friends, and clients of Janissaries, many of whom were Turks and Muslims. Although the cohesion of the corps as a whole declined, what remained was a mighty pressure group within the empire that continued to share a culture of imperial service, combined with a specific branch (Bektashi) of Sufi devotion. In addition, after 1740, the demilitarized corps actually increased its financial hold on society and opened up its ranks even further as Janissary salary claims started to be marketed as certificates (*esâme*). Whatever the complaints about rising corruption and imperial decline, I would argue that the increasing integration of the Janissaries into society actually explains a great deal of the empire's astonishing endurance.<sup>147</sup> Because they were everywhere, it seems that the integrated 'degenerated' Janissaries, still very much the emperor's men, were even more effective than the segregated 'pure' Manchu banners in keeping the empire together.

### 5.3 *Coming Full Circle: Mustafa 'Ali and Ibn Khaldun*

During the sixteenth century, at the height of their imperial conquests, there was a broad, almost Eurasia-wide consensus, stretching from Niccolò Machiavelli in Italy to Iskandar Muda in Aceh, that the Ottoman standing army of Janissaries provided the model par excellence for building and sustaining

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117; Idem, 'Whatever Happened to the Janissaries? Mobilization for the 1768–1774 Russo-Ottoman War', *War in History* 5 (1998) 23–36. The Ottomans introduced conscription only in the nineteenth century.

147 Gilles Veinstein, 'On the Ottoman Janissaries (Fourteenth-Nineteenth Centuries)', in: Erik-Jan Zürcher, ed., *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative History of Military Labour 1500–2000* (Amsterdam, 2013) 115–134; and Virginia H. Aksan, 'Mobilization of Warrior Populations in the Ottoman Context', in: *Fighting for a Living*, 331–353.

empire. Apart from the sheer scale and the sophisticated logistics of this army, what made the 'Rumi' model particularly attractive was that emperors-to-be could achieve this without making unfavourable deals, either with the hereditary landed nobility or with stingy mercenary entrepreneurs. Indeed, even in the twenty-first century the military slave system makes an astonishingly modern impression, or as the late Ernest Gellner exclaimed, 'we are all mamluks now'. To go on borrowing his words, individuals were recruited into state service in an atomized manner and were torn out of their kin background by being technically slaves. Sustained religious and military training becomes a means of inducing an *esprit de corps*. Returning to our own topic, although the Janissary corps was certainly not a Chinggisid type of warband, it can be perceived as an artificial, educationally produced alternative to the warband.<sup>148</sup> In Ibn Khaldun's terms, it is the principle of military slavery that overrules kinship and religion as the most important ingredient of Ottoman *'asabiyya*.

Looking for other models further east, the sixteenth-century Ottoman historian Mustafa 'Ali knew perfectly well that of the dynasties of the four great Islamic empires, the Ottomans alone had neither a genealogical mandate for sovereignty like that of the Uzbeks and Mughals, nor a religious one like that of the Safavids. For Ali, though, it was not military slavery, Ibn Khaldun's third ingredient, but universal justice that the Ottomans had as their unique selling point. This was based on his analysis that the old regime of a religiously based universal caliphate broadly identified with the shari'a and Arab hegemony had been replaced by a new dispensation of universal nomad dominion under the legitimate sovereignty of Chinggis Khan and his successors, who had received divine sanction to conquer the world and to distribute it to family and followers. To avoid the decline of empire, due to excessive wealth and degeneration, the 'modern' ruler should take care to remain true to his mandate: the dynastic commitment to justice and order made manifest in *kanun*, which, more than the shari'a, embodies the grace of God. For Ali, history had demonstrated that the Chinggisids were more worthy and effectual sovereigns than the irresponsible, ignorant, and morally corrupt scions of the Abbasid house. Therefore he stressed the legitimating importance of the principle of universal and impersonal justice that the Mongols had implemented in the form of the Chinggisid

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148 Ernest Gellner, 'Tribalism and the State in the Middle East', in: Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (London, 1991) 115, 121. In my view Gellner makes too much of 'tribal' cohesion, which may be right for the North African context but much less so for the Eurasian one where not the ascriptive tribe but the conscriptive warband was the dominant model before military slavery.

dynastic law or *yasa*. For Ali, the Chinggisid *yasa* was the same as the Ottoman *kanun*. It was this dynastic commitment to universal justice in two forms—Islamic shari‘a and dynastic in *kanun*—coupled with a strong central authority, that constituted the primary legitimating principle of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>149</sup>

It is quite significant that a sixteenth-century Ottoman historian unconsciously paraphrases Ibn Khaldun by referring to the legacy of Chinggis Khan. Despite the introduction of various new sedentary forms of imperial rule, that legacy was still considered very much alive and kicking. Hence, coming full circle in our essay, it is time to reflect on the semantic and historical meaning of the warband as a category of global history by briefly comparing our Turko-Mongolian brand of the warband with other variations of what seems to be the same phenomenon in areas without a substantial nomadic Turko-Mongolian impact: North Africa, Western Europe, and South India.

### Conclusions

In an attempt to make sense of periodization in world history, the late Jerry Bentley pointed out that the first half of the second millennium should be called the age of transregional nomadic empires. Nomadic peoples established empires incorporating vast stretches of the Eurasian land mass and sponsored direct interactions between distant peoples. The migrations, conquests, and empire-building efforts of these nomadic peoples guaranteed that cross-cultural interactions would take place in a more intensive and systematic fashion than in earlier eras.<sup>150</sup> I have attempted to demonstrate that the key to this nomadic success story was the Chinggisid model of the Turko-Mongolian warband. It reverberated far beyond the steppes of Central Asia and was at its most effective not in the Central Zone but in the transitional areas between the northern Middle and Outer Zones. At the same time, I have also stressed that despite its undeniable success, this particular model of the warband could not be maintained in the sedentary world, which, in the long run, won out over the

149 Cornell Fleischer, 'Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldûnism' in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Letters', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18 (1983) 198–220.

150 Jerry H. Bentley, 'Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History', *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996) 766–767. See also his more elaborate *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (Oxford, 1993) 111–165.

nomads.<sup>151</sup> Here, as we can see in the chapter by Maaïke van Berkel, nomadic warriors became *Gefundenis Fressen* for the people of the pen, who, in numerous mirrors-for-princes, chronicles, and other sophisticated court stories were able to turn them from savage nobles into noble savages.<sup>152</sup>

Looking back at the main qualities of our nomadic warband, we should first of all highlight how it differed from a tribe. A warband was a highly disciplined, meritocratic group of military elites that remained open to talented outsiders. Thus, far from being an ascriptive kinship group like the tribe, it was consciously engineered to mould a new group of mixed ethnic origin. Indeed, as discussed by Marie Favereau in this volume, nomadic leaders took pride in their Chinggisid *nasab*. This could be particularly pronounced when Mongols faced slaves, as happened in the thirteenth century when the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan confronted the Mamluks of Egypt. According to the chronicler Rashid al-Din, the lack of lineage was proof that the Mamluk regime was merely a product of chance, devoid of any right to rule. The same condescending attitude on the part of the Mongols is confirmed by Ibn Taymiyya, who, serving as Mamluk representative at the Mongol court, reported that one of the Mongol leaders addressed him, saying: 'Our king is the son of a king, the son of seven generations of kings, while your king is the son of a client'.<sup>153</sup> However, we should bear in mind that, although such genealogical haughtiness may have been characteristic for the Chinggisid leadership, genealogical tables remained negotiable and in no way prevented the continued reshuffling of its subject people. It was only under conditions of settlement and state-formation in the sedentary world that *nasab* tended to lose much of its flexibility and become much more fixed.<sup>154</sup>

Not being a tribe, the nomadic warband was neither a royal bodyguard nor an army. The nomadic warband encompassed the 'state', if not the entire society as a whole, with little distinction between military and administrative functions. The nomadic nature and equine power of the Turko-Mongolian warband

151 See also the conclusions in Khazanov and Wink, eds., *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, 292–295.

152 See also Richard van Leeuwen, *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires, 1300–1800* (Leiden and Boston, 2017).

153 Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History* (Leiden, 2015) 294.

154 See e.g. Sholeh A. Quinn, 'The Uses of Genealogy and Genealogical Information in Select Persianate and Bábí/Bahá'í Sources. A Preliminary Survey', *Lights of Irfan* 4 (2003) 131–140. See also my own comments on Indo-Afghan *nasab* in my *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan, c. 1710–1780* (Leiden, 1995) 160–175.



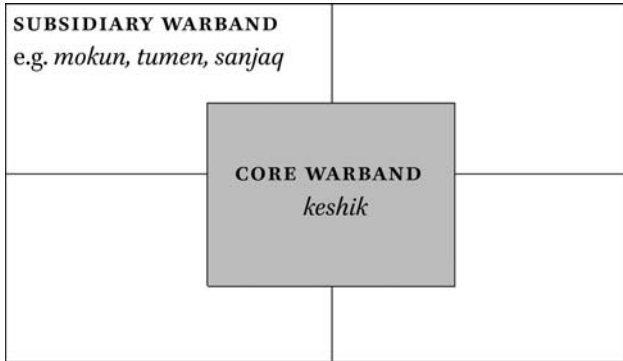


FIGURE 4.2 *Basic structure of the nomadic warband*

also differentiates it from the more universal and much smaller phenomenon of the *comitatus*, as described by Beckwith. As we have seen, it was only under the peculiar ecological conditions of the Arid Zone frontiers that the latter developed the capacity to incorporate large segments of society and reshuffled them in consciously created subsidiary warbands under new 'ethnic' labels. The nomadic warband reached its widest expanse and was at its zenith at the very fringe of the Arid Zone and at the very moment just after a conquest when it could exploit the rich sedentary societies without having to give up its one and only trump card: the warhorse.

What we have found is that this particular kind of warband—including its subsidiary replicas—was astonishingly consistent within the political organization of Jurchen, Mongolian, Turkic, Timurid, and Tatar empires. Contemporaries would recognize these empires under the label of *ulus*, each of which consisted of a core warband or *keshik* that supported various subsidiary warbands under various denominations, such as *mukun* under the Jurchen, *tümen* under the early Timurids, or *sanjaq* under the early Ottomans. In principle, the empire as a whole was allotted as the appanages of these various subsidiary warbands.

As we have seen, under the sedentary conditions that followed a conquest, these institutions tended to lose their fluidity and either evaporated entirely or solidified under new ascriptive 'banners' that recall the three main ingredients of Ibn Khaldun's *asabiyya*: kinship, devotion, and slavery. Hence, the Turko-Mongolian nomadic warband and its post-nomadic offshoots described in this chapter so far are very much the products of the nomadic frontier.

### Epilogue: Counterpoints

The discussion of the nomadic warband immediately raises questions regarding other types of warbands in the other military zones. What determines the distinction of these warbands from the phenomenon discussed in this Chapter? To start with, to what extent were our Turko-Mongolian warbands really different from those other nomadic tribes and bands, such as the Almohads and Almoravids, who carved out their own states in the Maghreb, the 'wild west' of the Islamic world?<sup>155</sup>

#### *The Bedouin Warband: Tribe?*

Although Ibn Khaldun has served as our theoretical model for understanding the process of nomadic and post-nomadic state-formation around Central Asia, we should also be aware that he primarily wrote about developments in his own world, i.e. North Africa. Although both areas experienced similar Ibn Khaldunian cycles between 'desert' and 'city', the ecological conditions of North Africa, including the Iberian Peninsula and the most western parts of the Arab Middle East, were significantly different from those of Central Asia. First of all, on both sides of the nomadic frontier we encounter much smaller and less cohesive political configurations. In the Maghreb and the Middle East the armies were much smaller and used perhaps better but certainly far fewer warhorses. Secondly, the nomadic frontier itself was less sharp than in the eastern Middle Zone, and we actually witness a mosaic of relatively well-integrated and thus less articulated nomadic and sedentary communities.<sup>156</sup> The historiography on the Bedouins of the Middle East has traditionally stressed the importance of kinship relations (*nasab*) as a major cohesive force of their ruling elites.<sup>157</sup> At the same time, there has always been considerable ambivalence in the way historians have interpreted *nasab*. Most would agree that the term refers to both biological descent *and* social origin. Most question whether its importance is really a *fact* of Bedouin life or a mere *claim* that retrospectively

155 This term derives from Amira Bennison, 'Liminal States: Morocco and the Iberian Frontier between the Twelfth and Nineteenth Centuries', *The Journal of North African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001) 11–28.

156 For two excellent studies that take issue with Ibn Khaldun's analysis of North African developments, see A.C. Hess, 'Firearms and the Decline of Ibn Khaldun's Military Elite', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 4 (1972) 173–201 and Ronald Messier, 'Re-thinking the Almoravids, re-thinking Ibn Khaldun', *The Journal of North African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001) 59–80.

157 Stefan Leder, 'Nasab as Idiom and Discourse', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 58, no. 1–2 (2015) 56–74.

gave legitimacy to a ruling elite based primarily on non-kinship based social relations. Hence, as in the case of Central Asia, there is a growing tendency to question the idea of the tribe as a political category. Indeed, Ibn Khaldun himself insisted that *nasab* had no foundation in reality but argued for the social and political expediency of the loyalty that *nasab* helped to create.

Bedouins can acquire royal authority only by making use of some religious colouring, such as prophethood or sainthood, or some great religious event in general. The reason for this is that because of their savagery, the Bedouins are the least willing of nations to subordinate themselves to each other, as they are rude, proud, ambitious, and eager to be leaders. Their individual aspirations rarely coincide. But when there is religion (among them) through prophethood or sainthood, then they have some restraining influence upon themselves. The qualities of haughtiness and jealousy leave them. It is, then, easy for them to subordinate themselves and to unite.<sup>158</sup>

Hence, it seems that although Bedouin societies were informed by a theory of descent, the actual units of social organization were based on loyalty to successful warrior chieftains, and preferably to prophets or saints.

But as we have indicated in the Turko-Mongolian case, the potential of *nasab* to incorporate new people after a conquest was quite limited. Most successful large-scale organizations, therefore, depended on using non-tribal models of political organization. As they lacked the economic resources to create massive new warbands like those of Chinggis Khan, Timur, or Nurhaci, the nomadic conquerors of the western Islamic World had to resort to different and more modest policies that appealed to their more egalitarian followers and, at the same time, could sustain their conquests. Those few modern historians who made the comparison between the two cases assert that what really made the Bedouin process of state-formation different from the Turko-Mongolian one was the tendency of the former towards religious chieftainship under a charismatic religious leader. They stress that rulers in the Turkish tradition—with the major exception of the Safavids—saw themselves as patrons and protectors, perhaps even managers of religion, but not as personal repositories of religious knowledge or spiritual power as in the case of relatively weak Bedouin leaders who were mediating rather than ruling over relatively egalitarian segmentary lineages.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 120.

<sup>159</sup> Two of the very few collective studies that compare Middle Eastern with Central Asian

Whatever one may think of these qualitative differences, these cannot be dissociated from an even more important quantitative one: with access to the richest of the world's sedentary societies, Central Asian nomads were capable of far greater expansion than those of the Middle East. As Thomas Barfield states quite convincingly, whereas nomadic groups in the Middle East could muster political or military units only in the tens of thousands, and then only to effectively control their own territories, Turko-Mongolian warbands proved capable of combining hundreds of thousands of people living across vast areas and of employing them militarily for distant campaigns.<sup>160</sup>

Although probably very appealing, the Chinggisid model was never fully implemented by the Bedouin states because it required the mobilization of economic resources available only in the four major frontier zones that we have discussed earlier. Under conditions in which nomads are faced with limited economic resources, it is not the spoils of this world but rather those of the next that work best to create and maintain an empire. It was only thanks to the relatively rich resources of the Nile River valley that the Mamluks of Egypt were able to build a very efficient army of slaves, i.e., one other possible ingredient of Ibn Khaldun's *'asabiyya*. Equally telling, though, is the fact that the latter consisted of Turks from, once again, Central Asia! Indeed, as Barfield observes, after the year 1000, the great Middle Eastern empires would all have Central Asian roots.

### *The Germanic Warband: Comitatus*

Despite this spatial and temporal contingency, Chinggis Khan's warband also appealed to potentates living far beyond its actual radius of operation in the far corners of the External Zone, as well as to others centuries after its nomadic way of life had completely vanished. One of them was Adolf Hitler. In one of his speeches, he made the following comparative observation:

Our strength is in our quickness and our brutality. Genghis Khan had millions of women and children killed by his own will and with a gay heart. History sees only in him a great state builder ...

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nomadism are: one by a specialist of the Middle East: Ira M. Lapidus, 'Tribes and State Formation in Islamic History', in: Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (London, 1991) 25–48; the other by a specialist of Central Asia: Thomas J. Barfield, 'Tribe and State Relations: The Inner Asian Perspective', in: idem, 153–185. See also the telling differences with Central Asia as analyzed by Anatoly M. Khazanov, 'Muhammad and Jenghiz Khan Compared: The Religious Factor in World Empire Building', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 3 (1993) 461–479.

160 Barfield, 'Tribe and State Relations', 165.

Hitler himself was probably inspired by Himmler, who had developed a particular liking for Chinggis Khan after reading two works by the Russian émigré Michael Charrol: *Tschingis Chan, der Sturm aus Asien* (1934) and *Das Erbe Tschingis Chan* (1935), both written under the pen name of Michael Prawdin. In 1938 the SS Educational Office ordered a special revised and expanded one-volume edition of these books, which was distributed to Himmler's highest SS officers. Obviously, what attracted both Hitler and Himmler to Chinggis Khan was his splendid career as a world conqueror. Most of all, though, they were inspired by the sheer violence of his conquest and the way that bloodshed could cement the loyalty, or literally *Blutkitt*, of his followers. As in the case of the sacrifice of animals that accompanied Chinggis Khan's oath or *anda* with his blood-brother Jamukha, the Nazis thought that bloodstained hands were those most unlikely to desert their leader and his cause. What is more telling for our present purpose, though, is the fact that although the Nazis may have admired Chinggis, this did not keep them from trying to exterminate the Mongol race and from deeply deploring the racial mingling that he undeniably practiced.<sup>161</sup> The latter point shows how *dissimilar* the actual Chinggisid warband had grown from the expectations of people in the modern, sedentary societies of Europe where warfare had become the monopoly of national states drawing their manpower from their own national populations.

For historians of the West, the archetypical warband is that of the Celts and Germans as described by Caesar and Tacitus respectively. Of course, what these have in common with the Chinggisid warband is their focus on permanent movement and raiding. As elsewhere, warrior leaders formed hosts of companion warriors, both family members and friends, around them, making warfare their occupation and predatory existence their rationale. As we have seen with the Turko-Mongolian warbands, the so-called *convivium*, the feast held to foster and strengthen the sense of community, was of great significance in keeping the people committed to their leader.

Despite these and other similarities, for our present purpose the differences are more significant. First of all, the barbarians of the West were primarily foot sloggers. Whereas in the Arid Zone horses were available in large numbers to all members of society, creating mounted hordes that encompassed practically all of society, in Western and Central Europe the horse was confined to the elite and could be kept only as a luxury. In other words, the European warrior elites were able to monopolize horsepower. But even without a large number

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161 Richard Breitman, 'Hitler and Genghis Khan', *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (1990) 337–351.

of horses, during their gradual migration into the Roman Empire Germanic *comitatus* were able to create small kingdoms that were ruled in accordance with surviving Roman administrative traditions. Among the Franks, it was Clovis's *comitatus* of about 400–500 warriors that managed to incorporate the *comitatus* of defeated rulers. Hence, from the very beginning of the European Middle Ages, the core of kingly power was the *comitatus*. The latter remained small and could never develop into something that compares to the size and sheer encompassing capacity of the Turko-Mongolian warband.<sup>162</sup> Instead, after an initial period of migration and state-formation, the relatively open *comitatus* increasingly took root and transformed into a closed aristocratic household based on territorial control.<sup>163</sup> By directly linking warriors to landed sources of revenue, the state was able to shortcut and discard the need to circulate revenue through the whole complex, expensive, and cumbersome intermediate medium of administrative bureaucracy. At least from the ninth century onward, three important factors further strengthened the development of a territorially rooted European aristocracy. First, inheritance started to pass strictly down through the male line alone, with the most important property title passing undivided to the eldest son. Secondly, power became centred on a landed lordship embodied in a family castle or a house monastery. Thirdly, kinship ties became immensely important to the status and rank of this new landed nobility.<sup>164</sup>

As aristocratic households became more entrenched in the soil—certainly in comparison with those parts of Eurasia that were exposed to nomadic conquest—the power of the king suffered accordingly, creating the administrative cycles as recently analysed by Victor Lieberman and (in this volume) Jeroen Duindam on a global scale.<sup>165</sup> Although the idea is reminiscent of Ibn Khal-

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162 For a recent survey of the European developments, see Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford, 2006) 210–244.

163 For a similar development of the *druzhina* in Kievan Rus, see F. Feldbrugge, *Law in Medieval Russia* (Leiden, 2009) 129–145.

164 This is mainly based on German historiography, in particular the very insightful Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2004). *Pace* important exceptions such as Robert Bartlett and R.I. Moore, it is really striking to see how European medieval historiography on the topic is still splintered along national lines and hardly addresses the outer European scene.

165 Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2003–2009). See also Duindam's recent global survey: *Dynasty: A Global History of Power, 1300–1800* (Cambridge, 2015).

dun, the dynamic of the administrative cycle in a fully sedentary environment is significantly different. First of all, European kings were unable to mobilize a group of fresh foreign nomads in order to uproot their increasingly obstreperous nobility—the aforementioned case of the Hungarian king being the most western and latest example of the contrary. Due to a lack of resources it was also difficult, if not impossible, to keep the entire aristocracy on the move, as we have seen, for example, in the case of the Mughals. What was really out of the question was a thorough ethnic reshuffling of a European aristocracy that became increasingly proud of its genealogical lineage and territorial rootedness.

What European rulers could do was control their landed nobility with the help of men who, unlike their own vassals, were dependent bondsmen serving for pay instead of (feudal) obligation. Indeed, at the earliest stages of Germanic state-formation, this role was played by the *comitatus*; under the more settled conditions of the early Middle Ages, a royal bodyguard. It was only much later, during the fifteenth century, when they could effectively exploit the rapidly increasing resources of interregional trade, that European rulers were able to set up the first standing armies, the so-called *companies d'ordonnance*. Ideally speaking, the recruits for such armies were supposed to be foreigners who were as much as possible detached from society and loyal to their (pay)master. This is the main reason why the staunchly Catholic fifteenth-century kings of Castile felt no qualms whatsoever in recruiting a Moorish royal guard.<sup>166</sup> At the same time, we see a growing tendency to hire part-time mercenaries who offered their increasingly professional services in an increasingly monetized and relatively free military labour market. Here, one may wonder why European rulers never resorted to military slavery, as the Mamluks and Ottomans did. For someone like Niccolò Machiavelli, the highly meritocratic and thoroughly indoctrinated *mamluks* were clearly superior to the opportunistic, treacherous, and volatile mercenaries of Italy, whose suspect motivation was bound to turn them into unreliable supporters.<sup>167</sup> Still, for kings the proficiency and achievement of mercenaries had many advantages over the prowess and ascription of their knights. Furthermore, the professionalism of these mercenaries, in particular the so-called *Switzers* and *Landsknechte*, fully exploited the fruits of a mili-

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166 Ana Echevarria, *Knights on the Frontier: The Moorish Guard of the King of Castile (1410–1467)* (Leiden, 2009).

167 Gellner, 'Tribalism and the State', 121–126.

tary revolution that was primarily based on new tactics and weaponry for both infantry and artillery, all of which started to undermine the effectiveness of the aristocracy's military instrument *par excellence*: the warhorse.

With more and more money and credit available, regional European rulers gradually gained more control over the organization and command of their armies. The part-time armies of foreign mercenaries that still dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gradually gave way to highly disciplined and standardized standing armies based on national conscription at the end of our period.<sup>168</sup> Meanwhile, the aristocracy lost much of its landed autonomy and evolved into an obedient service caste acting as officers in the state's ever expanding permanent forces, which were now increasingly dominated by infantry and artillery.<sup>169</sup> Under the conditions of ongoing military competition between regional states, the latter two branches of the army reached unprecedented levels of drill and discipline. From the middle of the eighteenth century, it was this, in combination with new gunpowder technology, that delivered these armies their victories over their Asian adversaries. It seems that the process as a whole was at its most effective in the representative-inclusive state regimes of Western Europe—France, the Dutch Republic, and England—where taxation could be maximized and new liquid wealth was accumulated through a very effective combination of Church confiscations, public debt, and

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168 However, even during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, outsourcing remained an important element of this process; David Parrott, *The Business of War: Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2012).

169 The later European developments are primarily based on the recent surveys of John A. Lynn, 'The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West, 800–2000', *The International History Review* 18, no. 3 (1996) 505–545, and the edited volume that takes Lynn's periodization as a starting point: Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative History of Military Labour 1500–2000* (Amsterdam, 2013), in particular the contribution by Frank Tallett, 'Soldiers in Western Europe, c. 1500–1790', 135–169. For the continued role of the aristocracy in early modern armies, see Christopher Storrs and H.M. Scott, 'The Military Revolution and the European Aristocracy, c. 1600–1800', *War in History* 3, no. 1 (1996) 1–41; for France: Guy Rowlands, 'Louis XIV, Aristocratic Power and the Elite Units of the French Army', *French History* 13, no. 3 (1999) 303–331; and for England, Roger B. Manning, *Swordsmen: The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms* (Oxford, 2003). For the early role of mercenaries in the European Middle Ages, see the excellent studies collected in John France, ed., *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2008) and also for the later period: D.J.B. Trim, ed., *The Chivalric Ethos and the Development of Military Professionalism* (Leiden, 2003).



maritime trade.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, it was war itself that contributed significantly to the making of strong, cohesive European national states.<sup>171</sup>

We should not forget, however, that the rise of national armies was possible only because, from the tenth century onward, Europe had become immune to occupation by nomadic conquerors. Instead of a succession of big and powerful empires, Europe was characterized by a plurality of dominions. Lacking a *real* empire, what lingered on was the Roman imperial legacy. In fact, the discrepancy between the imperialist ideal of a single hegemonic power and the reality of many polities launched an intensive competition for political supremacy between would-be empires, and, as can be gleaned from Peter Rietbergen's contribution to this volume, between the Church of Rome and these 'empires'. Over time, their political competition developed its own dynamic. It expanded to a cultural and moral competition that eventually continued independently of its original imperialist impulse.

While having (too) briefly reviewed the European case, it is clear that Europe had to do without the nomadic and post-nomadic warbands as described and defined in this contribution. It simply lacked the ecological circumstances and the resources. Due to its unique capacity to exploit the wealth of the sedentary world, the Chinggisids and Timurids were able to continue and hugely expand the nomadic warband under its post-nomadic avatars of the *mukun* and the *tümen*. Similarly, the key to the success of the most powerful of the post-nomadic empires, that of the Qing, was its ability to limit the proliferation of the aristocracy and to neutralize centrifugal forces through the institutionalization of the aristocracy's role within the military and bureaucratic structure of the banners.<sup>172</sup> The size and political clout of these warbands, under a single leader, were unprecedented and dwarfed the much smaller, less mobile, and much more scattered aristocratic and mercenary armies of Europe. Although unable to create a true empire, relatively small dynasties, such as those of France or Prussia, could still build impressive regional states for themselves by employing ever more professional mercenary troops, which complemented

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170 See Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden, 'Towards an Economic Interpretation of Citizenship: The Dutch Republic between Medieval Communes and Modern Nation-States', *European Review of Economic History* 10 (2006) 111–146. For the importance of (formal and informal) ways of confiscating Church property, not only in England but across Europe, see the contribution of Peter Rietbergen in this volume.

171 The literature on this is huge, but perhaps the best starting point is still Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York, 1994).

172 Nicola di Cosmo, 'State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History', *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999) 37.

the relatively small royal guards that would gradually grow into larger standing armies, eventually arriving at the *levée en masse* under Napoleon. Interestingly, it is only at the very end of our period that the standing armies of France, England, the Dutch Republic, and other European states reached the Chinggisid level of the population's military participation. As in the case of the Turko-Mongolian warbands, these huge European armies thrived on their leaders' fiscal capacity to pay for them. There is even another striking similarity between Chinggis Khan and Napoleon: both armies were built on processes of ethnic engineering, the latter, though, *not* producing the still rather fluid *mukuns* or *tümens* of the Chinggisids and Timurids but the more fixed category of the European nations. By 1800 the national armies of Europe had definitively replaced the Turko-Mongolian warband as the prime model of military world power and imperial conquest.

In other words, if there is a European *Sonderweg* at all, it could be this transformation from chronically failing imperialism to slowly prevailing nationalism.<sup>173</sup> The example of India demonstrates how successive post-nomadic empires prevented similar developments from happening in what would otherwise seem to have been a fairly comparable sedentary environment.

### *The Indic Warband: Companions of Honour*

Very much like medieval Europe, the Indian subcontinent before the arrival of the Turks had seen the development of an agrarian aristocracy of an unmistakably noble character; in other words, a hereditary ruling elite with a regal status of its own that cultivated ideals of chivalry. As André Wink observes, prior to the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, without being greatly affected by nomadic upheavals or external invaders, aristocratic power in much of the subcontinent had become associated with land and with lordship over land. As was the case of their European counterparts, Indian aristocrats controlled castles and land that bound families to their localities. Although interregional trade was important, local connections permeated the political world in which they exercised their authority. With the family at the heart of their power, honour and heredity were to become the major preoccupation and determined aristocratic assumptions about rank and status. At the end of the first millennium, this new class of Kshatriya nobility had risen in the expanding agrarian economies of the time, representing a tiny segment of a vast peasant society in the making.<sup>174</sup>

173 Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2012).

174 This section heavily builds on André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*,

For our present purpose, it is important to stress that part of the chivalrous code of these new Kshatriyas or Rajputs was that kings were accompanied by so-called companions of honour: hundreds to thousands of dedicated warriors who were ready to follow their king in death, often by voluntary self-immolation. When reading early Muslim authors like Abu Zayd and al-'Umari, who wrote about these 'heroic companions' (*bala' al-jar*), one is immediately reminded of the astonishment of the Roman authors about the Germanic *comitatus*. Muslim onlookers regarded them as a typical Indian institution and one of the *'aja'ib al-hind*: the marvels of India. For the Turkish conquerors and their slave aristocracies, these fanatical Indian warbands must have been a truly strange phenomenon. In contrast, their *mamluks* were cut loose from their communities, exchanged on the basis of cash value, and recruited from far-away places. It was in fact their 'lack of honour' and their 'social death' that meant they were closely associated with the person of the king in positions of personal subservience. As with their European counterparts, it was unthinkable that the Indian aristocracy of nobles, with its own notions of what was virtuous and honourable, and which disdained personal subservience, would adopt such a servile attitude. Referring to the Ottoman case, Joseph Fletcher rightfully labelled *mamluks* 'surrogate nomads', but Wink, looking at the Indian situation, is equally astute in calling them 'surrogate aristocracies'.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, in early medieval India *mamluks* played the role that mercenaries played in medieval Europe, i.e. counterbalancing the agricultural nobility, or, as the late Ernest Gellner more succinctly put it: 'the *mamluks* were the Switzers of the Muslim courts!'<sup>176</sup>

After the Turkish conquerors had established the Delhi and Deccan Sultanates, and more especially later under the Mughals, military slavery never really took root. Instead, India developed a sophisticated military labour market into which the relatively few *mamluks* who served the early Muslim courts had to adjust.<sup>177</sup> At around the same time as in Europe, India gave birth to highly professional war-jobbers of its own, apart from other, more spurious,

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Vol. 2: *The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th–13th centuries* (Leiden, 1997) 170–182, and Norman F. Ziegler, 'Some Notes on Rajput Loyalties during the Mughal Period', in: J.F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1978) 215–252.

175 Joseph Fletcher, 'Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979–1980) 243; Wink, *Al-Hind II*, 179.

176 Gellner, 'Tribalism and the State', 124.

177 For a recent discussion of this process, see Sunil Kumar, 'Bandagi and Naukari: Studying Transitions in Political Culture and Service under the North Indian Sultanates, Thirteenth-

Rajputs and Turks, in particular Afghans, Marathas, and Nayakas. Some of them even managed to carve out their own states on the basis of their military service. As in early modern Europe, an increasingly vigorous and monetized military labour market began to undermine the position of the landed aristocracy. Under Mughal rule honour increasingly became a monetized commodity, a question of negotiable title deeds to *manṣab* and *jagir*, which no longer demanded great sacrifice. More generally speaking, imperial clientship and imperial service developed extensively, at the expense of kinship as the basis of political organization.

Although there are many parallels between the development of the warband and military labour market in Europe and India, there is one crucial distinction. Whereas in Europe the idea of a European empire remained a dream, the Turks managed to make empire an Indian reality. As we have stressed already, due to India's open and inner frontier with the Arid Zone this is hardly surprising. The late medieval resurgence of empire in India had major consequences for the process of state-formation on the subcontinent. Whereas Europe could develop relatively autonomous cities and relatively fixed and well-integrated regional states, from the eleventh century India became increasingly characterized by disposable cities and shifting regional capitals and borders. To a large extent, the Mughals could establish their military power on the basis of their control of the military labour market, dwarfing any independent military force that was available to contemporary European rulers.<sup>178</sup> In India, too, and particularly during the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, regional aristocracies tried to impose regional centralization, but in all three cases this was nipped in the bud by new imperial formations, be it under Turkish or, in the latter case, under British leadership.

Although keeping to a slightly different chronology, the same holds true for South India, where the kings of Vijayanagara were perceived as *hiṃduraya-suratraṇ* or 'sultans under the Hindu kings,' and as such were not that distinguishable from their Turkish neighbours of the Deccan.<sup>179</sup> Here again, regional developments under their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Nayaka successor states were superseded by imperial British conquest. It is only further to the south, in the rice-producing regions of Southeast Asia, that strong regional

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Sixteenth Centuries', in: Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh, eds., *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India* (Delhi, 2014) 60–111.

178 The comparison is Parrott's (*The Business of War*, 14).

179 Philip B. Wagoner, 'Harihara, Bukka, and the Sultan: The Delhi Sultanate in the Political Imagination of Vijayanagara', in: David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville, 2000) 316.



FIGURE 4.3 *This relief from the Panataran Temple (c. 1323–1347) shows how the archetypical Mongol horse-archer is inscribed into the Ramayana story of Hanuman's campaign in Lanka to rescue Rama's wife Sita, who had been abducted by the demon king Ravana. We can see Ravana's son Indrajit, riding a multi-snake-headed horse, drawing his bow and shooting a magic snake arrow at Hanuman.*<sup>180</sup>

PHOTOGRAPH: JOS GOMMANS, 2014

180 See Ann R. Kinney (with Marijke J. Klokke and Lydia Kieven), *Worshipping Siva and Buddha: The Temple Art of East Java* (Honolulu, 2003) 179–215. The procedure of inscribing

kingdoms could develop, allowing the perceptive historian Victor Lieberman to observe the strongest of his 'strange parallels' with Europe, as both were ecologically 'protected' from the repeated onslaught of the nomadic warband.<sup>181</sup> I was therefore stupefied when, travelling across Java in the summer of 2014, I found on one of the reliefs of the Panataran temple a depiction of the Turko-Mongolian mounted warrior. More than a thousand miles away from the steppes of Central Asia, this fascinating example of fourteenth-century globalization may illustrate that even at the most eastward and most sedentary limits of al-Hind,<sup>182</sup> the Turko-Mongolian nomadic warband was still recognized as a powerful political and cultural emblem of empire.<sup>183</sup>

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article by Sheldon Pollock: 'Ramayana and Political Imagination in India', *Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 2 (1993) 261–297.

- 181 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, 85; see also, more recently, the thought-provoking analysis by Ravi Palat, *The Making of an Indian Ocean World-Economy, 1250–1650. Princes, Paddy Fields and Bazaars* (London, 2015).
- 182 Wassaf calls Majapahit: *Mul chawa az bilad-i hind*, i.e. the core lands of Java in the country of India; André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Vol. 3: Indo-Islamic Society, 14th–15th Centuries* (Leiden, 2004) 223.
- 183 Of course, the Sino-Mongols invaded Java in 1293 but, considering its tropical environment, it is hard to imagine the horse archer to have had much military impact. It is possible, though, that the Majapahit state that emerged after the invasion was, like Vijayanagara, very much aware of the new political language of 'sultanic' Turko-Mongolian world-power.

# The People of the Pen: Self-Perceptions of Status and Role in the Administration of Empires and Polities

*Maaïke van Berkel*

## Introduction

May God protect you who practise the craft of writing, and may he guard you, help you, and give you guidance. God has divided mankind, after the prophets and messengers—may God bless them and keep them safe—and after the honoured kings, into ranks, even if they are in reality equal. God put at their disposal different kinds of crafts and various sorts of businesses, so that they might be able to make a living and earn their sustenance. He placed you, o scribes (*kuttab*), in the most honoured position of the men of good education and virtues, of knowledge and composure. By your efforts the good things of the caliphate become well organized and its affairs are set right. Through your advice, God puts a suitable government over the people and the land prospers. The ruler cannot dispense with you. You alone make him a competent ruler. Your position with regard to rulers is that you are the ears through which they hear, the eyes through which they see, the tongues through which they speak, and the hands through which they feel. May God give you, therefore, enjoyment of the excellent craft with which he has distinguished you, and may he not deprive you of the great favours that he has shown you.<sup>1</sup>

These words are the opening lines of a treatise (*Risala ila al-Kuttab*) written in the first half of the eighth century by an official of the central administration of the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus, ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya (d. 750).<sup>2</sup> In

1 ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya, ‘Risala ila l-kuttab’, in: Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali, ed., *Rasa’il al-bulagha* (Cairo, 1913, 2nd edition) 172.

2 Wadad al-Qadi, ‘Early Islamic State Letters. The Question of Authenticity’, in: Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* (Princeton, 1992) 1, 215–275. Idem, ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Katib’, in: Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa, eds., *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 311, *Arabic literary culture, 500–925* (Detroit, 2005) 3–11.

his epistle ‘Abd al-Hamid addresses his fellow scribes and prescribes their education and skills, their character of modesty, trustworthiness, and integrity, and the way in which they should relate to superiors, inferiors, and fellow scribes.

Grafted onto older, mainly Sassanian, traditions, ‘Abd al-Hamid’s *risala* set the standard for almost all later descriptions of the people of the pen in the Islamic world. It was copied in the works of famous authors of the Mamluk era, such as Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) and al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418), and the Ottoman era—even as late as the eighteenth century—, such as Ahmed Resmi Efendi (d. 1783).<sup>3</sup> In his *Sefinet* Ahmed Resmi acknowledged the continuing value of this epistle, a millennium after it was written, by declaring:

I have added here as a conclusion and appendix the work of ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Sa‘id<sup>4</sup> which is generally reckoned among the famous books of knowledge and worthy of attention and emulation.<sup>5</sup>

The *risala*’s fame even travelled beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman world; it also influenced the Safavid and the Mughal advice literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>6</sup>

This example demonstrates the long-term and entangled scribal traditions of the Islamic worlds of West and South Asia. This chapter will make an even broader comparison, between the various worlds represented in our project, the ‘Sinosphere’, Christian Europe, and the Islamic worlds of West and South Asia, and it will focus on the period 1300–1600, a period of striking bureaucratic developments in all three regions. State officials who staffed the central administrations of the pre-modern Eurasian polities will take centre stage. Together with the people of the sword, the people of the pen constituted important intermediaries between the ruler and his subjects. Each in their own way, pen and sword were instrumental in the keeping together of polities; they were the ruler’s two pillars. The people of the pen grew from the royal households to form a group of their own. They formed the elites of their polities, profiting

3 See, Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi* (Leiden, 1995) 4–5.

4 ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Sa‘id is the same as ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya whose full name is ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya b. Sa‘id [or Sa‘id] al-Katib.

5 Translation in Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman*, 5.

6 See, for example, a letter written by Chandrabhan ‘Brahman’ to his son Khvajah Tej Bhan. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘The Making of a Munshi’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004) 61–72.



from the distribution of the riches and political influence at the centre and, in their turn, protecting and propagating the dynasty among its subjects and disseminating writing and written culture in administration.

This important position as one of the main pillars of their polities makes the people of the pen a central group in our project. Their relevance becomes even more evident when we realize that many of the historical sources we use today to understand the functioning of Eurasian polities were written by these people. The officials of the Chinese, European, West and South Asian central administrations not only used their writing skills for the production of official charters, diplomatic letters, and financial accounts, they also brought forth an extensive corpus of miscellaneous texts, including chronicles, political advice literature, books on etiquette, poetry, and geographical surveys. It is often through their eyes that we get to know the politics, institutions, daily practices, intellectual debates, and moral codes of the societies in which they lived. Their perceptions, perspectives, and analyses define our general views on past empires and polities. The study of their literature entails an awareness of the ways in which we perceive the workings of these polities.

This chapter will make the perspective of the state officials the object of analysis by critically interpreting their self-perceptions on their role in the keeping together of empires. With its focus on self-identifications it links up with Gommans' analysis of the other pillar of power, the people of the sword. How did the officials envision the role of the pen in the integration of empires and polities? How did they see their task in the imperial project? How did they describe their relationships with others such as the people of the sword or the ruler? What aspects of the official's craft and ethos did they indicate as crucial for good governance? Variations within and between Eurasian traditions will be analysed in the context of the power constellations of the various polities in their various stages, thus elucidating the role of the people of the pen and their related self-perceptions during these developments. Due to the cultural embeddedness of these self-perceptions, the parallels and contingencies between the various regions will inform us about variety in mechanisms as well as more universal developments of officialdom within the diverse polities.

For the sake of comparison, I will use the term state official within this chapter. The term is alien to the traditions studied in this volume. As we argued in the general introduction of the book, the use of conceptual terminology in a comparative study comes with certain risks. When alien concepts are applied to a society, there is always the possibility of distorting the historical categories as used by contemporaries and therefore misinterpreting their experience. At the same time, the variety in conceptual terminology, used by the authors of

our sources, could stand in the way of comparisons between various traditions. The term state official refers here to all those people entrusted with the administrative tasks of their polity—whether epistolary, financial, or legal—and using the pen to fulfil these tasks. Throughout this section other terms such as people of the pen, scribes, magistrates, and administrators, or contemporary terminology such as the Chinese *shi*, the Arabic *katib*, or the Mughal *munshi* will be used. A precise demarcation of this group as a whole is impossible in this comparative approach.

All Eurasian polities that are part of our comparative project developed at some point an administrative structure with institutions that were complex enough to enable the emergence of a (more or less confident) professional class of state officials dealing with administrative—chancery, financial, and judicial—matters. However, these developments were far from linear, parallel, or uniform throughout Eurasia and throughout time. Many differences existed in the tasks, status, and functioning of state officials. Those at the top of the hierarchical ladder will be the focal point of my analysis. We are not only best informed about these top officials, but they are generally also the ones who produced and advertised the professional ethos of the group as a whole and determined the way we look at empires and polities.

Self-images of the group were formulated in a wide variety of sources from poetry to chronicles. In order to make a source-based comparative analysis possible and meaningful, I will rely on works that can be grouped under the generic term of advice (or mirror) literature. Advice literature, works of instruction for rulers and members of the political elite, was produced in all these areas throughout time. We should, however, keep in mind that advice literature is a multifaceted genre that is difficult to circumscribe. State officials formulated their views on good governance in texts that vary in style, content, and length. They appear in the form of short letters, but also in encyclopaedic administrative manuals of several volumes. Moreover, they are often difficult to discern from historical works as the latter also incorporate prescriptive elements, historical examples meant to elucidate good and bad governance. In this chapter I will focus on advice texts written by and for officials of the polities and empires of Eurasia in which the officials formulate their self-images and provide instructions for their fellow scribes.

Analysing the officials' self-presentations in a comparative study with a wide scope and including so many diverse traditions has a few advantages. Firstly, officials of all polities studied in this project brought forth works of advice on good governance, and they have specified their own role within the ideal models they laid down. In general, much of the information on the administrative practices we have for the earlier periods of our project is in fact normative.

Therefore, analysing the ideals, the norms, of the officials makes a comparative approach much more feasible than comparing practical outlines of the administrations on an equal basis. By working with a limited number of (advice) texts that contain a set of corresponding characteristics, comparisons can be made between the self-definitions of penmen between and within the different traditions. Having said that, we should, however, keep in mind that not only the (functional) characteristics of their self-presentations, but also the various styles (for example, epistolary excellence) and genres (historiographies, model books, works of rhetoric, lists of indispensable books) they used to express these characteristics define their views and proclaimed role and status in society. Throughout these comparisons, the political and social developments in which the self-images developed will be taken into account.

Secondly, analysing the voices from within, comparing the ideal self-representations and referring to the categories and concepts used in the advice texts themselves, might help to avoid the—frequently criticized, but unfortunately still often applied—use of ethnocentric (generally Eurocentric) categories of interpretation for societies and systems that fit uneasily into these models. Obviously, analysing self-perceptions and distinguishing contemporary and source-restricted categories will be useful only if we keep in mind that we are comparing ideal categories and specific perspectives, and not (necessarily) actual practices, although these ideals are embedded in and emerge from everyday practice.

The chronological focal point in this chapter will be the years between 1300 and 1600. These three centuries witnessed a series of profound, though different, administrative developments in all three worlds. In East Asia, the Mongol Yuan had introduced their own clientele and replaced some of the earlier Chinese scribal traditions, while at the same time building on the previous Tang and Song divisions of the administration. Under their successors, the Ming dynasty, the famous Chinese civil examinations became the decisive recruitment mechanism for officials on all levels. A dual administration similar to that practised under the Yuan in China became customary in parts of the Islamic world with the rise of the Mongols. Other parts of West Asia, the Mamluk sultanate for example, built on the previous Arabic scribal traditions. Centralization and bureaucratization characterized the rapidly growing Ottoman Empire, and in South Asia the Persian-writing scribe emerged. European polities were certainly not at the vanguard of administrative developments at the beginning of this period, but a group of new scribes did appear in many polities of late medieval Europe. The decision to focus on this specific period means that the expanding administrations in European polities and the emergence of influential and self-assured new groups of high state officials and ministers in Europe

from the late sixteenth century onwards will largely fall outside the scope of this study. Obviously, this demarcation is for practical reasons and not meant to deny that these later developments changed Europe from the relative late-comer in my analysis into a forerunner of bureaucratic practices and ideals in the centuries to come. Since similar developments of a scribal class, and certainly of professional awareness, are lacking in the Russian Empire before 1600, Russia will not be a part of this analysis.

Three regional clusters constitute the geographical framework of this analysis: the Chinese, Islamic, and European worlds. In each of these clusters internal developments and regional differentiations are discernible. Administrative procedures, but also normative descriptions of secretaries were appropriated, adjusted, developed, and intertwined with other traditions throughout time and from region to region according to local prerequisites and expectations. Comparisons between the three clusters will demonstrate different types of secretarial self-presentation in the imperial project. Connected traditions between the clusters—when apparent—will also be analysed.

The political and social processes that led to the emergence and development of professional officialdom within the three regions will be discussed in the first part of this chapter on the basis of studies which do not (yet) provide a comprehensive view. The historiography on pre-modern administrative systems is uneven. Compared to the Chinese and Islamic worlds, Europe's bureaucratic traditions have received a lot of attention, especially the regional and national developments of the administrations. On the other hand, the professional ethos of the literati has been explored in much more detail for the various periods in Chinese history and, to a lesser extent, for the Islamic world.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the sources and the officials' self-perceptions within them. It starts with a short overview of the genres in which self-perceptions of officials appeared. Subsequently, it analyses how these penmen defined their own expertise and contribution to the administration of their polities: their general cultural capital, their expert (judicial, financial, or epistolary) knowledge, and, finally, their professional ethos. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the ways in which officials saw their own position vis-à-vis other groups in society, more specifically, the rulers they served and the scribes' seemingly most important antagonists, the people of the sword.

## 1 The People of the Pen in Three Eurasian Traditions

Among the ‘four people’ it is the *shi* who bear the responsibility for Heaven, Earth, men and things. Even if they live in remote huts, their concern is always for the whole realm and for posterity.<sup>7</sup>

According to fourteenth-century Confucian thought—here in the words of Wei Su (d. 1372), one of the most prominent Southern Chinese literati under the Yuan—the *shi* (generally translated in English as literati or scholar-officials or gentlemen) constituted one of the four categories of people, each of which represented an occupational group within a normative social hierarchy. The place of each group within the hierarchy was based upon the value of this group for society’s well-being. The *shi* were at the top, followed by the farmers, the artisans, and the merchants. If all groups would properly perform their assigned duties, order and harmony would prevail. Wei Su’s statement, like many other references to these four (or sometimes six) categories of occupations, clearly demonstrates the professional awareness of this group within the Chinese territories.

At the beginning of the era under consideration in this book, around the year 1300, not all Eurasian polities had state officials who displayed a clear and distinct professional ethos. Self-awareness among officials can be linked to the size of the administrative apparatuses these polities employed, but also to the scribal and intellectual traditions of the region to which they belonged and the social structures within these polities. The three main regions of our project follow their own trajectories in this respect. The years 1300–1600 form a particular moment in a much longer history. Chinese men of the pen proclaim a strongly self-conscious identity in written texts from the period of the Warring States (453–221 BCE).<sup>8</sup> In the Islamic world communal awareness among the officials of the central administration was visible from the eighth century, when the first advice works by and for this professional class appear. In most European polities such a consciously proclaimed professional identity—distinguishable from other identities—came relatively late, in the later Middle Ages, and was during the whole of the period 1300–1600 less precisely defined and detailed than in East and West Asia.

7 Translation in John Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy. Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1983) 82.

8 See on *shi* thoughts during the Warring States, Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu, 2009).

The chronological discrepancies between the three main traditions of this analysis have resulted in an unequal representation of their scribal traditions and professional ethos for the pre-1300 era. There is more to say about group consciousness among the Chinese pre-1300 state officials than there is for their European counterparts. Since Europe and, to a lesser extent, West and South Asia, were politically more fragmented than China, less attention can be paid to developments in each and every polity within these fragmented areas. Nevertheless, all sections will pay attention to the factors causing the emergence of a self-aware group of officials, their recruitment, and the traditions on which they built.

### 1.1 *Imperial China*

For a period of almost two and a half millennia the people of the pen played a crucial role in Chinese cultural and political history. Obviously, neither the composition of this group nor its self-image remained constant throughout these centuries. Some of the earlier major developments will be discussed here before moving to the period 1300–1600, when the Mongol Yuan and the Ming dynasties ruled the Chinese territories.

The development of the position of the people of the pen in the Chinese territories from the Warring States (453–221 BCE) onwards is generally explained in conjunction with a long transition of the ruling elite from predominantly aristocratic to predominantly meritocratic.<sup>9</sup> An important step in this development was the establishment of an examination system for officials under Han emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE). During the Han era, this system was still very rudimentary, and it took another millennium, until the period of the Northern Song (960–1127) before it developed into a more mature system. However, the impact of the examination system on Chinese history is immense as it would influence recruitment of officials for centuries to come. It is also during the Han dynasty, in the first century BCE that Confucianism triumphed as official ideology and came to dominate court policy. One of the most conspicuously new elements of this ideology was that, according to Confucius, someone's status depended on his moral qualities and not his pedigree. A 'superior man' was in Confucianism no longer a high-ranking noble, but a self-made learned and morally upright man who was proud of his modest background.<sup>10</sup> Despite the de facto elitist background of many of people of the pen then and in later eras, this ideal of

9 See, for example, Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire. The Political Culture of Ancient China and its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton, 2012) 78; Pines, *Envisioning*, 115–186.

10 Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 78–79; Pines, *Envisioning*, 115–135.

educational and moral superiority as decisive for one's status remained predominant in their self-images throughout the centuries.<sup>11</sup>

From late Han times on officials were categorized with some variation according to the Nine Ranks system, which contained nine numbered ranks each divided into two classes, upper and lower. Also posts within the administration were numbered in that way. So when an 8a (upper class-8 rank) post became vacant, it was generally, but not consistently, filled by an official of that rank or someone who was ready for promotion to that rank. Salaries corresponded with ranks, although special allowances were often added to the official salary.

These Nine Ranks officials did not form the majority of the civil service. Large numbers of unranked, subordinate specialists performed the daily executive administrative tasks of the administration such as drafting and record keeping.<sup>12</sup> They were also categorized and paid according to a graded system, and some of them were promoted to the ranks of superior officials.<sup>13</sup> The self-representations discussed in this chapter emanate, however, mainly from the top layers of the administration, the officials or magistrates. The subordinate specialists—clerks and runners—were viewed with disdain by the ranked officials and belonged to a completely different social and cultural category. They receive much less attention in the sources. On the other hand, the culture and ideology of the high officials was shared by a group of people who did pass or sat the exams but were not employed as officials. These poets, painters, calligraphers, teachers, or former officials were part of the same networks as the literati officials.<sup>14</sup>

Also since Han times extensive rules, 'avoidances', were designed to prevent or minimize corruption among officials. Officials were not allowed to serve in their native districts, while lesser functionaries, the non-official specialists,

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11 Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany, 1999) 218, 351. See also Jacques Gernet, 'Le réforme confucéenne', in: Jacques Gernet, *L'intelligence de la Chine: Le social et le mental* (Paris, 1994) 8–87; Hartman, 'Sung Government', 32; Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 90–91.

12 For an estimation of the numbers of officials see, Jeroen Duindam, 'The Court as a Meeting Point', chapter 2 in this volume.

13 For an overview of the various administrative institutions and the detailed hierarchy of its personnel, see Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (reprint; Beijing, 2008); idem, 'Governmental Organization of the Ming Dynasty', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 21 (1958) 1–66; idem, 'Ming Government', in: Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty*, (Cambridge, 1998) 9–105.

14 See, for example, Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (New York, 2009).

generally were. This prevented officials from staffing their offices with their own clients and family members. Similarly, kinsmen were prohibited from serving in the same agency as their relatives.<sup>15</sup>

The examinations were potentially a mechanism for the emperor to impose a specific vision upon the (future) elites of his administration. However, in practice long-term modifications in the examinations proved generally impossible without the consent of the literati themselves; indeed, they often instigated changes in the curriculum.<sup>16</sup> The negotiations between various stakeholders can be followed in the developments of the curriculum and subject matter of the examination system under the Song dynasty.<sup>17</sup> This curriculum became eventually dominated by neo-Confucianism (The Learning of the True Way, *Daoxue*). This development was far from a top-down achievement, but as much a process of dissemination from below, particularly through private academies. After generations of literati who sympathized with the neo-Confucian curriculum, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries their interpretations of the canonical works triumphed and became incorporated into the examination system under the late-Yuan and early-Ming emperors.<sup>18</sup>

The Song dynasty is also the era during which the examination system expanded and became one of the main gateways to a career in the state administration. Although the system functioned earlier, it was under the Song that much larger percentages of officials actually went through the system and that families without a history of office-holding were recruited for government service through the examinations.<sup>19</sup> The examination system thus functioned as mechanism for social mobility.

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15 Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 5.

16 Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, 2000).

17 Hilde De Weerd, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127–1279)* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2007) 16.

18 Peter Bol, 'Examinations and Orthodoxies: 1070 and 1313 Compared', in: Theodore Hutters, R. Bin Wong and Pauline Yu, eds., *Culture and State in Chinese History* (Stanford, 1997) 29–57; Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, 2008); James T. Liu, 'How did a Neo-Confucian School Become the State-Orthodoxy?', *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 4 (1973) 483–505; De Weerd, *Competition over Content*. See also Hilde De Weerd, *Reinventing Chinese Political History* (Inaugural Lecture, Leiden, 2014).

19 Hartman, 'Sung Government', 34 and 54. See also Thomas H.C. Lee, *Government Education and Examinations in Sung China* (New York, 1985). Hilde De Weerd provides numbers for the early and late Song and sees an important increase in numbers between these two periods, De Weerd, *Reinventing*, 5.



At the same time, it is important to note that still a large proportion of the officials under the Song dynasty—but also under later dynasties—took different paths to officialdom. Statistics for the Song refer to probably fifty per cent that got lower positions through the *yin* or ‘protection’ privilege, which comprised granting to officials the right to directly appoint designated brothers, sons, and grandsons and sometimes even unrelated persons to office.<sup>20</sup> Others entered through other systems such as transfers from the army or purchasing office.<sup>21</sup>

Initially, the Mongol Yuan dynasty (r. 1264–1368) did not show specific interest in controlling education for official appointments and recruitment through examinations was abolished. Internal promotions based on regular evaluations remained, however, intact. The basic structure of the Yuan administration, which was already established under its founder Kublai Khan (r. 1260–1294), saw quite a few innovations in the system, while at the same time continuing a mixture of Jurchen Jin, Chinese Tang, and Song elements. The Yuan kept intact, for example, the traditional Chinese division into civil (the Secretariat), military (the Bureau of Military Affairs), and censorial offices (the Censorate), but, in line with their own traditions, in everyday administration, they gave a much larger role to the military.<sup>22</sup> They continued to use a centralized and well-organized formal administrative system of agencies similar to their predecessors, but real authority did not seem to be with the officeholders responsible for certain tasks within this system, but with Mongol overseers (*darughachi*) who often remained behind the scenes.<sup>23</sup>

The Mongols classified the population of Yuan China into four categories, indicating their relevance for governmental service: Mongols; miscellaneous aliens, mostly Central Asian Muslim allies; Northern Chinese residents; Southerners. The most important governmental posts were entrusted to Mongols and Central Asian allies.<sup>24</sup> The Southern Chinese served only in local offices in their

20 Hartman, ‘Sung Government’, 55. See also Peter Bol, ‘The Sung Examination System and the *Shih*’, *Asia Major*, Series 3, vol. 3, part 2 (1990) 149–171.

21 Hartman, ‘Sung Government’, 54 and 58.

22 Elizabeth Endicott-West, ‘The Yüan government and society’, in: Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 6. Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge, 1994) 587–615.

23 On the *darughachi*, see also Jos Gommans, chapter 4 in this volume.

24 John D. Langlois, Jr., ‘Introduction’, in: John D. Langlois, ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton, 1981) 11–13; Morris Rossabi, ‘The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty’, in: John D. Langlois, ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton, 1981) 257–295.

own areas.<sup>25</sup> After the initial years the Mongols continued to use the nine ranks from 1a to 9b. Within these official ranks officials were further classified through all kinds of prestige titles. The subordinate runners and clerks, specialists in certain administrative areas, took care of the daily routine.

While Mongols dominated the crucial positions, the Yuan recruited the personnel for their administration also from among their Central Asian trusted allies and the Chinese. These latter were often recruited on the basis of traditional Chinese procedures with the exception of the examination system. Officials and subordinate specialists were selected by recommendations from incumbent officeholders and through the 'protection privilege', the appointment of sons and other family members.<sup>26</sup> Schools were opened to train, first, sons and family members of officials, but subsequently also newcomers. The overseers, generally Mongols who belonged to the military elite, also often occupied hereditary positions.<sup>27</sup> Many of the officials under the Yuan lacked an examination degree and profound knowledge of the classical Chinese learning. They were known for their legal professionalism but not for their neo-Confucian knowledge.<sup>28</sup> In addition, also some of the Han literati, who enjoyed relative cultural autonomy in private academies and continued to cultivate a self-awareness as an elite group in this era, continued to staff the governmental offices under the early Yuan, but they were not dominant.<sup>29</sup> Many Han literati developed alternative careers, in, for example, medicine and art. A self-contained civil officialdom did continue to exist among these groups under the Yuan dynasty.

In search for legitimacy among the Han population and encouraged by their Han and Jurchen officials, the later Yuan rulers reintroduced the examination system in 1313.<sup>30</sup> Local officials examined candidates every third year, of which the best were sent to provincial examinations. A small number of provincial candidates were then admitted to the metropolitan examinations in which only one out of three was allowed to pass. The Mongol rulers kept an eye on the balance between Han, Mongol, and other non-Han candidates taking part

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25 Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 66–67.

26 Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 68.

27 Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 59.

28 Elizabeth Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China* (Harvard, 1989).

29 Elman, *Cultural History*, 29–30; John Dardess, 'The Cheng Communal Family: Social Organization and Neo-Confucianism in Yuan and Early Ming China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 34 (1974) 7–53; Langlois, 'Introduction'.

30 John Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians. Aspects of Political Change in Late Yuan China* (New York and London, 1973) 35–74.

in the exams, and the contents of the exams differed for the various ethnic groups.<sup>31</sup> With the reintroduction of the examination system under the later Yuan rulers, neo-Confucian thought regained prominence.

Finally, under the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the civil examinations with a neo-Confucian curriculum became the decisive recruitment mechanism and moulded the empire-wide ideas of officials. The first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–1398) ordered the establishment of schools for the education, examination, and recruitment of officials for governmental service on all levels. The grand competition took place every three years through provincial, metropolitan, and palace examinations.<sup>32</sup> Once employed, officials were rated every three years by their superiors in evaluation procedures generally resulting in reassignment.

Traditionally, the Chinese civil examination system has often been described as a predominantly meritocratic system allowing for substantial social mobility. More recent historians have qualified this principle by emphasizing the social and cultural reproduction mechanisms underlying the system.<sup>33</sup> Although candidates were tested on their knowledge of the classical texts biennially and triennially in local, prefectural, provincial, and palace examinations, the years of study needed to pass these exams, especially at the highest levels, and the necessary financial resources to do so buttressed existing social structures. This also explains why hardly any sons of peasants or artisans participated in exams, certainly not at the metropolitan level.<sup>34</sup> The examination system did, however, become the main process through which the Ming recruited their officials, and with it Chinese officialdom became less patrimonial and more meritocratic than in any of the earlier periods.

Despite some important developments in social status, political influence, and intellectual training, what is striking is that the literati kept throughout two millennia of Chinese imperial history a strong self-awareness with an

31 Elman, *Cultural History*, 33–34; Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 69.

32 Hucker, 'Governmental Organization', 81.

33 Elman, *Cultural History*, xxix–xxxi, xxxvii–xxxviii and 239–294. See also Benjamin Elman, 'Social, Political and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991) 7–28. See Elman, *Cultural History*, xxxvii–xxxviii, nt. 4, for his reply to the criticism of his argument.

34 Others have criticized Elman's analysis as giving too much emphasis to the enhancement of the status quo and the dynastic hegemony over the system. See, for example, Kai-wing Chow, 'Writing for Success. Printing, Examinations and Intellectual Change in Late Ming China', *Late Imperial China* 17, no. 1 (1996) 122. De Weerd, *Competition*, 15–16. See Elman's reaction to this criticism, Elman, *Cultural History*, xix and xxxviii.

elitist view on their role in society as moral guides not only of the common people, but also the rulers. Culturally and intellectually they remained certainly dominant throughout the Song-Yuan-Ming era. Politically they competed with the emperor himself, his relatives, the eunuchs, and the people of the sword.<sup>35</sup> While *wu* (the sword) could be more prominent in periods of regime change and crisis, most of the time the pen seems to have occupied the culturally dominant position.

## 1.2 *The Islamic World*

For West, Central, and South Asia this paragraph will analyse the connected, but also constantly changing, scribal traditions of the Islamic world stretching from the Abbasids to the Mamluks and Ottomans in the West, via the Ilkhanids, Timurids, and Safavids in Persia to the Mughals of South Asia. The non-Islamic regimes of this region will not be discussed here, although I realize that in some cases, especially in India, the non-Islamic scribal traditions influenced those of the Islamic polities. This does not mean that non-Muslim scribes will be outside the scope of this analysis. On the contrary, a conspicuous number of the officials of the Islamic regimes were non-Muslims.

As mentioned in the introduction, the treatise by ‘Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya is one of the first expressions of the professional and cultural ethos of this tradition that have come down to us. During the latter years of his life ‘Abd al-Hamid was head of the chancery of the Umayyad caliphate (661–750). However, it was not until the Abbasids (eighth–tenth centuries) that we find frequent and more elaborate self-expressions of this tradition in a wide variety of advisory texts. This increase was related to two more general developments in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries.

Firstly, the Abbasids expanded their administrative apparatus and with it the number of secretaries working in it. Unfortunately, we cannot reconstruct exact figures, but the number of special bureaus, their subdivisions, and assigned tasks as described in the administrative literature suggests the presence of substantial numbers of scribes in the central apparatus by the end of the ninth century. These scribes received monthly salaries that varied according to their rank. Generally, only the heads of the various bureaus are known to us by name. Many of them came from secretarial families whose members had staffed the administration for some time. With the expansion of the administrative apparatus in the course of the ninth century, the Abbasids started

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35 Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 77.

to recruit their secretarial staff from the land-holding elites in Iraq. Religious minorities, especially Shiites and Christians, were well represented among them.<sup>36</sup>

Secondly, this era saw some major steps in the extension and spread of literacy. Some recent studies have emphasized how the growth of book production and the development of a culture that valued writing highly were related to the introduction of paper in Iraq in the late eighth century.<sup>37</sup> Like so many other Arabic genres, advisory texts for and by scribes (in Arabic often but not consistently referred to as *adab al-katib*) also reached a peak in the course of the late ninth and early tenth centuries. The authors of these texts were inspired by Persian advice texts and scribal traditions. The Abbasid texts are the main sources for an analysis of the officials' expressions of self-awareness in this era, and they were an inspiration for officials in the eras to come.

The Abbasid caliphs recruited their financial and epistolary officials generally from specific families and their clients. Also the entry level and professional success of officials were highly dependent upon systems of patronage and family networks. These officials received on-the-job training. Judicial officials took a slightly different path. While in the Umayyad period the office of *qadi* was a kind of legal secretary, similar to his financial and epistolary colleagues, under the Abbasids the judiciary started to develop a certain independence from the ruler. Under influence of the increasing status of religious and legal scholars (*'ulama'*) and the rise of transregional law schools, *qadis* resisted political interference with the judiciary and developed discourses on judicial autonomy.<sup>38</sup>

The Abbasid administrative and scribal traditions would continue to set standards for many administrations in later centuries, despite sometimes far-

36 On the background, administrative specializations, and salaries, see Maaïke van Berkel, Nadia El Cheikh, Hugh Kennedy, and Letizia Osti, *Crisis and Continuity at the 'Abbāsīd Court. Formal and Informal Politics in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–932)* (Leiden, 2013) especially chapter 4; Maaïke van Berkel, 'Archives and Chanceries: pre-1500, in Arabic', in: K. Fleet, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three* (Leiden, 2013) 24–32; Paul L. Heck, *The Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization. Qudāma b. Ja'far and his Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā'at al-kitāba* (Leiden, 2002).

37 See, for example, Jonathan Bloom, *Paper before Print. The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven, CT, 2001); Shawkat Toorawa, *Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth Century Bookman in Baghdad* (London, 2005). See also Maaïke van Berkel, 'Communication and Contention. The Role of Literacy in Conflict with 'Abbāsīd Officials', *History Compass* 5, no. 5 (2007) 1661–1676.

38 Mathieu Tillier, 'Judicial Authority and Qādīs' Autonomy under the 'Abbāsīds', *Al-Masāq* 26, no. 2 (2014) 119–131; Idem, *Les cadis d'Iraq et l'État Abbasside (132/750–334/945)* (Damascus, 2009).

reaching changes in the political arena after the disintegration of the Abbasid caliphate in the middle of the tenth century. In the Eastern part of the former caliphate, for example, Daylamites from the Southern Caspian shores took over large parts of Iran and Iraq including the Abbasid capital Baghdad. They brought forth the next ruling dynasty of this era, the Shi'ite Buyids.<sup>39</sup> They broke up the old and elaborate system of direct tax collection and payment of salaries and used the land-grant system (*iqta'*) instead. As a consequence, the size of the central administrative apparatus shrank drastically. Also the background of the staff changed. While some of clerks low in the hierarchy were still from Baghdad's hinterland, the new viziers and high officials were generally of Persian background.<sup>40</sup> The Buyid period was an era of great economic distress, but, at the same time, courtly culture flourished, and for that reason the era has also been labelled the 'Renaissance of Islam'.<sup>41</sup> In their quest for legitimization the Buyid emirs became patrons of literature, learning, and the translation of Greek and Persian texts into Arabic. Scribes were among the principal bearers of this culture, not only producing books of political and administrative advice, but also philosophical texts, poetry, and chronicles.<sup>42</sup>

In 1055, a new political constellation emerged when the Turkish Seljuks led by Tughril Bey conquered Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia. Their (travelling) court consisted mostly of military commanders. Most officials frequented the court, but did not travel with it and remained in one of the administrative centres. The administrative divisions remained intact with a chancery, a financial bureau, and a bureau for the treasury, but—due to the continuity of the *iqta'* system and the independent activities of local Seljuk leaders who were unwilling to submit to central rule—these were rather rudimentary.<sup>43</sup> Viziers and secretaries continued to be mainly of non-Turkish, Persian, and Arab descent, and the Seljuks turned to them for advice on administrative practices and political thought. One of them, the vizier Nizam al-Mulk, wrote one of the best known

39 On the Buyids, also called Buwayhids, see John J. Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334H./945 to 403H./1012. Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden and Boston, 2003).

40 Donohue, *Buwayhid Dynasty*, 162.

41 See, for example, Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams* (Beirut, 1973; reprint 1922) and Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden, 1993, revised edition of 1986).

42 Kraemer, *Humanism*, 208–209.

43 Ann K.S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia* (Albany, 1988) 11 and 297–309; Ann K.S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (Oxford, 1953; 1991 Reprint of revised version of 1969) 53–76.

political advice books of the era.<sup>44</sup> In general, the Persian scribal traditions continued to flourish also in the Eastern dynasties of Iran, among the Samanids, Ghaznavids, and Ghurids. With the collapse of the Seljuk rule in the course of the twelfth century and the emergence of the regimes of their vassals, the Khwarazm dynasty in Samarqand, the Rum Seljuks in Anatolia, and the Ayyubids in the Levant and Egypt and the re-emergence of the Abbasids in Baghdad, similar administrative traditions continued to be used.<sup>45</sup>

In the middle of the thirteenth century the Mongols swept away the Khwarazm shahs, the Seljuks of Anatolia, and the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, while the Ayyubids in Egypt and Syria were succeeded by their former slave soldiers, *mamluks*, who came from the Turkic areas in Central Asia. The Mamluk sultans built on the long-standing traditions of Egyptian administrative practices, although they added a series of military officials in charge of the civil officials.<sup>46</sup> The Mongols, in their turn, introduced a composite administrative system, maintaining practices of the Steppe and adding Chinese and Persian elements.

Unlike the situation under the Seljuk Turks, who had been tribal but Muslim and who, also due to their smaller numbers, had adapted smoothly to the administrative and political order in Iran, the Mongol conquest led to fundamental transformations in the administrative structure. The Central Secretariat created by Möngke (r. 1251–1259), Chinggis Khan's third successor, had a regional branch in Iran, in Khorasan, headed by a Mongol governor, who was assisted by representatives of the Great Khan (*darughachi*) and members of the Chinggisid families, but with local administrators, who came from the traditional secretarial families who had often also served the Seljuks and the Khwarazm shahs.<sup>47</sup> Under Möngke's brother Hülegü, Iran became an *ulus*, a

44 Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings. The Siyar al-muluk or Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk*, trans. Hubert Drake (London and New York, 2002).

45 See, for example, Linda Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East. The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (London and New York, 2013) 85–102; A.C.S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yildiz, eds., *The Seljuqs of Anatolia. Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East* (London, 2013).

46 Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration dans l'état militaire Mamlük (1xe/xve siècle)* (Damascus, 1991) 35–76.

47 Denise Aigle, 'Iran under Mongol Domination: The Effectiveness and Failings of a Dual Administrative System', *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, Supplément 57 (2008) 65–78; Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism. The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia and the Islamic Lands* (Berkeley, 1987); Lambton, *Continuity and Change*, 297–309.

tributary state ruled by the Ilkhanids (1258–1336). The *darughachi*, generally Mongols or Asian Turks, controlled the local administrators, collected taxes and tributes, and were responsible for the population census. They had troops at their disposal. In other words, a kind of dual administration came into being, one Mongol or non-indigenous, the other Iranian. The Ilkhan's court, *ordo*, was where recruitment for important administrative positions took place. Here the great emirs lived with the ruler and here Persian elite families could plead their case by becoming clients of a Mongol emir.<sup>48</sup> The dual system of the Mongols continued to function under the Timurids with two *diwans* (administrative bureaus), one dealing with taxes and correspondence and staffed by Persians, the other dealing with military affairs and staffed by Turco-Mongolians.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike the Mongols, the Mamluks immediately adopted the extensive administrative apparatus that had functioned under their predecessors, the Ayyubids and the Fatimids, which in its turn, was largely based on Abbasid practices. This is visible in the organization of the various bureaus, the archival practices, and the epistolary style of the chancery documents.<sup>50</sup> Many scribes still came from specific secretarial families, among whom Christians and Jews were well represented, but also newcomers from Egyptian or Syrian local families who had gained an education at the *madrassa* were able to make a career in the administration.<sup>51</sup> A tripartite elite, consisting of bureaucrats, jurists-scholars, and religious functionaries, had become apparent. They shared common training and common values, but developed clear professional specialization at the same time. While bureaucrats and jurists were recruited from the major cities of the sultanate, religious functionaries in the capital came from the immediate

48 For more details on the actual functioning of this dual administrations, see, Aigle, 'Iran under Mongol Domination'.

49 Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge, 2007) 79–110; Hans Robert Roemer, *Staatsschreiben der Timuridenzeit. Das Šarafnāmā des 'Abdallāh Marwārid* (Steiner, 1952). On the people of the sword and pen under the Ak Koyunlu dynasty in Iran, see V. Minorsky, 'A Civil and Military Review in Fārs in 881/1476', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 1 (1939) 141–178. See for a similar analysis, but from the perspective of the sword, Jos Gommans, chapter 4 in this book.

50 See, for example, Walther Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten* (Hamburg, 1928); Adrian Gully, *The Culture of Letter-writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society* (Edinburgh, 2008) 131–196; Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration*; Van Berkel, 'Archives and Chanceries'.

51 Joseph H. Escovitz, 'Vocational Patterns of the Scribes of the Mamlūk Chancery', *Arabica* 23 (1976) 42–62 and Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981).



surroundings of Cairo.<sup>52</sup> However, the officials' position vis-à-vis the people of the sword underwent considerable change. In many administrative institutions the Mamluks introduced new officials from the military class, who oversaw the people of the pen. Thus a growing influence of the sword over the pen became visible.<sup>53</sup>

The successors of the Mamluks, the Ottomans had extended their empire from Anatolia over large parts of the Middle East. They built on the administrative traditions of the empires they conquered. The degree of centralization they reached by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries went hand in hand with the development of a centralized administrative apparatus and the recording of the rules underlying the administration in a law code, the *kanunname*. These developments started under Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446 and 1451–1481) and reached maturity under his successors. The scale of the Ottoman administration and the extensive use of written records led Rhoads Murphey to argue that it would better to describe this empire, especially after 1550, 'not as the "gunpowder empire" or as an empire founded on the strength and conviction of the sword, as many have, but to see it as a bureaucratic or paper empire'.<sup>54</sup> However, this does not mean that the sword lost its influence in the Ottoman Empire or that the people of the pen became the dominant group in society. In the highest state institution, the Divan or Imperial Council, the three major groups of the Ottoman Empire were always represented: the people of the sword ('*askeri*'), the people of religious sciences ('*ulama*'), and the people of the pen. The grand viziers, generally presiding over the Divan as the sultan's deputy, identified with sword and pen and were seen as the head of the bureaucracy and the army. Other crossovers between the three groups seem to have been uncommon. Those who started their careers in judicial positions, for example, generally remained in that field.<sup>55</sup> During the reigns of Mehmed II and his two successors, the viziers were no longer recruited from the Anatolian Turkish families, but most had a Christian background recruited either through *devshirme*, the child levy system, or from among the captive or voluntarily transferred former

52 On this tripartite elite, see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 312–325.

53 H.L. Gottschalk, 'Dīwān. Egypt', in: B. Lewis, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second edition* (Leiden, 1991) 11, 330; Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration*, 35–76.

54 Rhoads Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty. Tradition, Image and Practice in the Ottoman Imperial Household 1400–1800* (London, 2008) 253.

55 See, for example, the careers of following famous jurists, Abu al-Su'ud (d. 1574), Kemal Pasha-Zade (d. 1534), and the members of the Fenari-Zade family, who all worked as *qadi* and/or *shaykh al-Islam*. I would like to thank Maurits van den Boogert for these references.

Byzantine and Balkan elites.<sup>56</sup> The exact balance between pen and sword was constantly changing, depending on political realities, power struggles, factionalism, and individual capacities and rivalries.

In the Divan the people of the pen were represented by the finance ministers, the *defterdars*, whose numbers grew over time from one under Mehmed II to four by the end of the sixteenth century, and the head of the chancery, the *nişancı*.<sup>57</sup> The growing number of financial penmen in the Divan reflects the increasing influence of the financial administration in the course of the sixteenth century. A further indication of the influence of the pen vis-à-vis the sword is that the number of scribes in the central administration remained limited: in the 1530s there were perhaps some 110 in the Divan, who worked under the supervision of a head scribe, the *re'is ül-küttab*.<sup>58</sup> A list from 1609 mentions some 218 individual penmen with full and permanent positions who were employed as director of a bureau, senior official, or scribal apprentice (for one of these high positions) in the Divan, in one of the bureaus of the financial administration, or in the sultan's private, confidential, secretariat. They were responsible for accounting, auditing, or the official correspondence of the sultan. Not on the salary lists and therefore unknown to us are the lower-level scribes, copyists, and archivists.<sup>59</sup> The central administration communicated at the local, municipal level, through their local intermediaries, the *qadis*.<sup>60</sup>

The Ottoman scribes, particularly the higher ranking ones, seem to have been selected according to criteria including specialized knowledge of the scribal rules and regulations, technical competence, and proven trustworthiness through long service.<sup>61</sup> Both the *defterdars* and *nişancı* had received a general education in the *madrasa*, but then had specialized on-the-job instruction.<sup>62</sup> Although the growth of the administrative apparatus and the subsequent increasing need for specialists called for officials with specialized training, patrimonial elements such as family and client-patron relations remained

56 Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire* (New York, 2009) 10–11. See also Metin Kunt and Zeynep Nevin Yelçe, 'Divân-I Hümayûn: Le Conseil impérial ottoman et ses conseillers (1450–1580)', in: Cédric Michon, ed., *Conseils et Conseillers dans l'Europe de la Renaissance v. 1450–v. 1550* (Tours and Rennes, 2012) 301 and 309–313.

57 Ágoston and Masters, *Encyclopedia*, 11–12.

58 Ágoston and Masters, *Encyclopedia*, 12.

59 Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, 256–258.

60 Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, 264–265.

61 Murphey, *Exploring Ottoman Sovereignty*, 261–262.

62 Kunt and Nevin Yelçe, 'Divân-I Hümayûn', 302.

as dominant for one's career perspectives as they had been under the previous Arabic, Persian, and Turkish administrations of West Asia.<sup>63</sup>

The contemporaries of the Ottomans in the east, the Safavids (1501–1722)—although traditionally presented as the rulers who revitalized the truly Persian traditions—also clearly inherited from the Turkish, Arabic, and Mongol administrative practices of their predecessors.<sup>64</sup> Under the early Safavids military, religious, and civil administration often overlapped. The vizier, who headed the administration and was generally of Persian descent, was often overshadowed by officers of the mighty Qizilbash (red-headed) troops of predominantly Turkic-speaking Azerbaijani background, who had helped the Safavids attain power, and by the *sadr*, who was the centrally appointed head of the religious establishment.<sup>65</sup> Provincial administration was, for the better part the domain of the Qizilbash, who kept most of its revenues. In the course of the sixteenth century the influence of both the *sadr*, as head of the religious establishment, and the Qizilbash tribes decreased. Under Shah 'Abbas (r. 1588–1629), the vizier became the most powerful official in the administration and more lands came under direct control (and taxation) of the central administration.<sup>66</sup> The Safavid scribes were generally Persian-speaking and often from families who had served previous dynasties.<sup>67</sup> The chancery scribe was often referred to by the term *munshi*.<sup>68</sup>

The last part of this analysis of the administrators of the Islamic world concerns the South Asian experience. In the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Northern India saw the rise of several Islamic sultanates, the Delhi and Deccan Sultanates, which built their ideas on kingship and good governance on Persian traditions that had reached them through the eastern Persian courts of the Samanids, the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks, and the Ghurids. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, when some of the eastern Iranian centres suffered devastation, many literati and secretaries from this area had moved to Il-timish' (r. 1210–1236) court in Delhi. These people found high posi-

63 Ágoston and Masters, *Encyclopedia*, 12.

64 Colin Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran. Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London, 2009) 199.

65 S. Bakhash, 'Administration vi. Safavid, Zand, and Qajar periods', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Online Edition, 1982) available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/administration-vi-safavid>; Lambton, *Landlord*, 107.

66 Bakhash, 'Administration'; Lambton, *Landlord*, 105–109.

67 Jean Aubin, 'Etudes Safavides. I. Šāh Ismā'il et les notables de l'Iraq Persan', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2, no. 1 (1959) 37–81.

68 On the Safavid *munshi* and his letter writing, see Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics*.

tions in the bureaucracy of the sultanate and brought with them their Persian ideas on kingship, good governance, and scribal traditions. They cherished these traditions vis-à-vis large numbers of new comers, *naw-musalman*, new Muslims of 'base-born' descent including Afghans and Mongols, who entered the sultanate's politics from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards. It is through the eyes of these Persianate literati that we learn about the history of these sultanates.<sup>69</sup>

The successor of the Delhi sultanate, the Mughal Empire, saw new Persianate influxes. Emperor Akbar (r. 1542–1605) was the first to formally declare Persian as the administrative language of the Empire, and he reorganized the administration according to Iranian models. Persian became the language of administration, not only at court, but also at the level of town and village revenue administration. Moreover, Persian became an important language of culture. Persian-writing scribes, also generally referred to by the term *munshi* or *muharrir*, were no longer exclusively of Iranian descent. Scribes from the local Hindu communities—especially Khayastas and Khattris, and sometimes Brahmans—frequently staffed the administration. Most of them came from long-standing secretarial families. While they previously had written in Hindavi, they soon learned the Persian language. From the middle of seventeenth century Khayastas and Khattris even became the dominant groups among the *munshi* class.<sup>70</sup> The written self-descriptions of these Mughal secretaries have come down to us from the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605–1628). They reflect earlier scribal traditions and cultures, both Islamic, from the Delhi and Deccan Sultanates, and Indic, due to the continuities in recruitment of the Khayastas and Khattris and the translation of many Sanskrit texts such as the *Ramayana* into Persian.<sup>71</sup>

69 Sunil Kumar, 'Courts, Capitals and Kingship. Delhi and its Sultans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE', in: Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung, eds., *Court Cultures in the Muslim World. Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (London and New York, 2011) 123–143. See also Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, 'Impact of Iranian Traditions on the Administrative Institutions, Concepts and Practices of the Early Delhi Sultanate', in: Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *State and Culture in Medieval India* (Delhi, 1985) 142–157.

70 Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World. Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York, 2012) 311–315. See also Momin Mohiuddin, *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals: From Babur to Shahjahan, 1526–1658* (Calcutta, 1971).

71 Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing*, 317–318; M. Athar Ali, 'Translation of Sanskrit Works at Akbar's Court', in: Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., *Akbar and his Age* (New Delhi, 1999) 171–180.

### 1.3 *European Politics*

In post-Roman Europe, officials did not develop a distinct self-conscious identity and professional ethos until the later Middle Ages. In the early and high Middle Ages clerks seem to have identified primarily with other characteristics—regional, familial, clerical—and not with an official scribal position. In those centuries most people of the pen belonged to the clergy, the dominant literate group in society. In the period 1300–1600 clerics were still well represented among state officials. Therefore, the balance between book and pen (between religious and scribal elites) was quite different in Europe than in the Islamic and Chinese worlds. While in the Islamic and Chinese territories, the people of the pen kept a certain distance from the religious elites and developed separate self-images, in Europe the pen identified with the book.

The absence of a distinguishable professional image of European officials in the early and high Middle Ages does not mean that there were no ideas on good and bad governance. Advice texts on good rulership built on classical political theories. They referred to the Roman ideas of, for example, Cicero as well as to biblical models. The authors of these texts were the literate elite, the clergy. However, they do not claim a specific professional ethos for officialdom.

This situation slowly started to change in the century before the era under consideration here. In the course of the thirteenth century, following different trajectories throughout Europe, two related developments took place in the administration of European polities that caused the emergence of a new identity for the people of the pen. The first development involved a considerable expansion and intensification of governmental activities. With the increase in judicial, secretarial, and financial functions, the King's councils (*Curia Regis*) were split up into more specialized institutions such as chanceries, *Chambres des Comptes* or exchequers, and law courts or *Chambres des Conseils*. The new institutions moved out of court and obtained a more permanent character.<sup>72</sup> These developments started in the thirteenth century, and political institutions continued to evolve and expand over subsequent centuries.<sup>73</sup> By the end

72 Françoise Autrand, *Naissance d'un grand corps de l'État. Les gens du Parlement de Paris 1345–1454* (Paris, 1981); idem, *Prosopographie et genèse de l'état moderne* (Paris, 1986); Mario Damen, *De Staat van Dienst. De Gewestelijke ambtenaren van Holland en Zeeland in de Bourgondische periode (1425–1482)* (Hilversum, 2000) 33–35; Bernard Guenée, *L'Occident aux XIVe et XVe siècles. Les États* (Paris, 1971) 181–205; Robert Stein, *Powerbrokers in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2001); John Watts, *The Making of Politics. Europe, 1300–1500* (Cambridge, 2009) 205–263.

73 Despite claims by older historiographies that they did come to a halt in the crisis era of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries only to re-emerge in the late fifteenth and

of the fifteenth century regnal central administrations prevailed over other—regional, seigneurial, and urban—structures, although these latter contributed considerably to the shaping of the polities.<sup>74</sup> They had stronger centres and more complex administrations. These changes were structural and took place across the continent.<sup>75</sup> Growing diplomatic relations increased the exchange of information on administrative practices and ideals between polities throughout Europe.<sup>76</sup>

Obviously, these developments did not take place overnight or across Europe at the same time. In France and England, for example, a permanent council for judicial affairs had emerged by the second half of the thirteenth century. In England, the most centralized state of Europe, we see the development of the Chancery, the Exchequer, and the Privy Seal as permanent, complex, highly specialized professional institutions in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>77</sup> In the German lands and the Low Countries, on the other hand, overlapping and regionally divergent judicial, secretarial, and financial traditions existed until the fifteenth century. In the Burgundian duchy, for example, it was not until Philip the Good (r. 1419–1467) that these institutions and traditions were streamlined.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, we should keep in mind that larger, centralized polities were not the only ones at the end of the fifteenth century. In the early sixteenth century some 500 separate self-governing units existed in Europe.<sup>79</sup>

Developments started with new notions of jurisdiction and law and built on the dissemination of literacy and the increase of the production and keeping of documents.<sup>80</sup> In addition to the expansion of governmental activity and

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sixteenth centuries. See, for example, J.R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton, 1970). Charles Tilly focused in his *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975) on the period from the late fifteenth century onwards.

74 See, for example, the European projects by Jean-Philippe Genet and Wim Blockmans. See also Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 29–31.

75 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 9, 34–42, 420, 425.

76 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 393–419. See also Ralph Griffiths, 'Bureaucracy and the English State in the Later middle ages', in: Françoise Autrand, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l'État moderne* (Paris, 1986) 53–65.

77 T.F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England* (1920–1933).

78 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 394 and 422.

79 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 422.

80 On the enormous growth of the use of written records and the development of a literate mentality in England from the twelfth century onwards, see Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066–1307* (Oxford 1979, 2nd edition 1993).

its intrusion in society this period also saw a dramatic increase in the possibilities of communication. Discourses on good governance and political theory, including debates on the *bonum commune* (the well-being of the people), reached wider audiences.<sup>81</sup>

The second development that stands out in this era is the multiplication of officials and the subsequent emergence of a new type of official, the professionally trained clerk. In the later Middle Ages a group of *homines novi*, some of them from lay backgrounds and with lower social status than those who had previously been responsible for the writing of the official documents, started to enter the various bureaucracies. These newcomers were, for example, townspeople and lower gentry who had enjoyed a university education or gained secretarial or financial experience in local administrations.<sup>82</sup> They took care of the administrative tasks in their polities and developed a clear sense of their own role and place in the political whole and their responsibilities for the common good.<sup>83</sup>

These changes in personnel did not mean that clerics and officials of noble origin disappeared from the scene. Both groups were still represented among the high officials who staffed the new institutions. Also the high nobility sent their sons to university for legal training, and patrimonial patterns of recruitment and advancement through existing networks persisted, especially in the chanceries and councils.<sup>84</sup> A good example of the continuance of clerical officialdom can be seen in the 'state prelates' of England and France in the sixteenth century. The number of bishops, cardinals, and other high clerics in governmental service even increased under Francis I (r. 1515–1547) in France and Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) in England. Indeed, medieval administrations had been well acquainted with clerics at all levels. The early sixteenth cen-

81 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 135 and 421.

82 Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, 'Training and Professionalisation', in: W. Reinhard, ed., *Power Elites and State Building* (Oxford, 1996) 149–172.

83 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 8–9.

84 See, for example, Mario Damen, 'Serviteurs professionnels et profiteurs loyaux. Hommes d'Eglise au Conseil et à la Chancellerie de Hollande-Zélande (1425–1477)', *Publications du Centre Européen d'Etudes Bourguignonnes (XIV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> s.)* 38 (1998) 123–137; idem, 'The Nerve Centre of Political Networks? The Burgundian Court and the Integration of Holland and Zeeland into the Burgundian State, 1425–1477', in: Steven Gunn and Antheun Janse, eds., *Court as a Stage. England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006) 70–84; Bernard Guenée, *Entre l'Eglise et l'État Quatre vies de prélats français à la fin du Moyen âge* (Paris, 1987).

tury was, however, characterized by the specific deployment of high prelates as technocrats, specialists of canon and civil law. These prelates received their training most probably in the university, although for France this information is mostly lacking. They were dependent upon the monarchs for their recruitment and advancement, which made them loyal diplomats and administrators. In France the majority of these prelates were of noble origin, while in England this was true for only a small minority. Their background also determined to a large extent their status at court. While French prelates were also courtiers who shared the joys of a courtly life, their English counterparts were technocrats. In England they disappeared from the political scene in the middle of the sixteenth century, but in France it took another hundred years.<sup>85</sup>

Despite these continuities, especially in the higher echelons of the governmental institutions, at the same time a new professional elite emerged in the course of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries due to extending bureaucracies.<sup>86</sup> The professionalization of the administration first emerged in the judicial institutions, soon followed by the chanceries and the financial institutions. Numbers increased rapidly. The officials dealing with the judicial petitions to the French king, for example, increased from four in 1314 to twenty-nine in 1343, the counsellors of the *Parlement* tripled in the first half of the fourteenth century, and the notaries in the chancery doubled. The papal Curia, one of the larger bureaucracies in Europe, also doubled in the same period.<sup>87</sup> The scale of the bureaucracy was determined by the intensity of governmental activities. The bureaucracy of England, for example, was much larger in the fourteenth century than the personnel the emperor had at his disposal.<sup>88</sup> However, in general throughout Europe the number of administrative personnel grew both at the central and local levels.

The professional personnel needed for the bureaucracies often received training in law at the universities of Bologna, Paris, and Oxford, at the notarial and rhetorical schools, or, on the job in the chanceries and financial institutions of the Papacy and the kingdoms.<sup>89</sup> These experts entered the regnal admin-

85 Cédric Michon, *La crosse et le sceptre. Les prélats d'Etat sous François Ier et Henri VIII* (Paris, 2008). See also Andrew Allen Chibi, *Henry VIII's Bishops: Diplomats, Administrators, Scholars and Shepherds* (Cambridge, 2003).

86 De Ridder-Symoens, 'Training and Professionalisation'.

87 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 239.

88 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 240.

89 Watts, *The Making of Polities*, 41; Jan Dumolyn, *Staatsvorming en vorstelijke ambtenaren in het graafschap Vlaanderen (1419–1477)* (Antwerp and Apeldoorn, 2003) 218.



istrations throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages, but polities followed different trajectories. Legal specialists trained in Bologna and Orléans were, for example, employed in the central administration in France in the first half of the thirteenth century. In the German lands they were not found in the judicial councils until the second half of the fourteenth century.<sup>90</sup>

The officials with a bourgeois background who started to occupy judicial and administrative positions often sought acceptance among the ranks of the hereditary nobility, who had traditionally identified with the sword (*noblesse d'épée*) instead of the pen. Many of the newcomers, however, never fully integrated with the old military elite, but formed a new group of their own, referred to as *noblesse de robe*.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, this was not a linear development towards greater social mobility. While in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries students from a more modest background could gain a place in society through studies, often through the Church, the universities of the sixteenth century had become meeting places of the nobility and those from the highest layers of the urban elite.<sup>92</sup>

The question is whether these new developments, and especially the emergence of this socially (partly) new and overall growing class of professional officials, coincided with the emergence of a professional ethos and a clearly manifested professional consciousness. French scholars have emphasized how the rise of a new class of state servants in France went hand in hand with the development of strong self-awareness among this group. Françoise Autrand argues, for example, in her study on the men-of-law of the Parisian *Parlement* between 1345 and 1454, that these councillors and king's advocates consisted of a unified distinct corps with a clear *esprit de corps* whose main motivation was being loyal to the state.<sup>93</sup> Similar conclusions are drawn for the other

90 Guenée, *L'Occident*; Peter Moraw, 'Gelehrte Juristen im Dienst der deutschen Könige des späten Mittelalters (1273–1492)', in: Roman Schnur, ed., *Die Rolle der Juristen bei der Entstehung des modernen Staates* (Berlin, 1986) 77–147.

91 Bernard Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, trans. Juliet Vale (Oxford, 1985) 204.

92 Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1957); Hilde De Ridder-Symoens, 'Adel en Universiteiten. Humanistisch ideaal of bittere noodzaak?', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 93 (1980) 414–432.

93 Autrand, *Naissance*, 133–157. See also Guenée, *L'Occident*; Marcel Pinet, Pierre Riché, Eric Bournazel and Françoise Autrand, *Histoire de la fonction publique en France. Tome I. Des origines au XVe siècle* (Paris, 1993); Albert Rigaudière, *Pouvoirs et institutions dans la France médiévale. Tome II. Des temps féodaux aux temps de l'État* (Paris, 1998).

administrative institutions of the French kingdom and for, for example, the late medieval English bureaucrats who are said to have shared a professionalism and even mutual interests beyond the office.<sup>94</sup>

Others have argued that we should be careful in suggesting the existence of such long modernizing lines of state formation, including the question whether something like a Weberian bureaucratic class with a related ethos actually did emerge, if only because it introduces the dangers of teleology.<sup>95</sup> They argue for a cautious evaluation of the motivations of this group as straightforwardly loyal towards something as abstract as a state.<sup>96</sup> They further refer to continuing problems with the venality of offices, a practice that survived for centuries to come.

Despite the ongoing debates and changing perspectives on the processes of state formation and the role of state servants within it, what is not contested is the larger narrative: the period under consideration here witnessed an expansion and strengthening of state institutions and the subsequent growth of a class of specialized and professionalized civil servants. These developments were such that this period makes an excellent case for comparison with the older extensive administrative staffs of the Chinese and Islamic territories.

## 2 Self-Perceptions of the People of the Pen

Common learners perhaps read the Classics, but their aim is just to cull out quotations for us in their examination answers. They use the Classics simply to further their selfish desires for profit or success ... So naturally when they are put in charge of some unit of local government, they fail our expectations and depart from the Way, completely unashamed of their rapacity or pliancy. They give no thought to this matter because they have fallen in with common customs. No wonder the military men and

94 See, for example, Griffiths, 'Bureaucracy and the English State'.

95 For general discussions on state formation, see, for example, Wim Blockmans and Jean-Philippe Genet, eds., *The Origins of the Modern State in Europe, 13th to 18th Centuries*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1995–2000); Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England ca. 1550–1700* (Cambridge, 2000); Wolfgang Reinhard, ed., *Power Elites and State Building* (New York, 1996).

96 See, for example, Philippe Contamine, 'Le Moyen Âge occidental a-t-il connu des "serviteurs de l'État"', *Actes des congrès de la société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public 29e congrès, Pau, 1998. Les serviteurs de l'Etat au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1999) 9–20.

clerks deride these low *ru*<sup>97</sup> for their usefulness. Yet, surely this is not what the Way of the *ru* really consists in.<sup>98</sup>

In this quotation, the literatus Cheng Duanli (1271–1345), a teacher in local government schools under the Yuan rulers, characterizes the ideal official. His official is someone who did not learn Confucian thought to get a job, but who has internalized its morals. He advocates the idea that the Way is not just some sort of idle or cosmetic worldview, but that its principles should be applied directly by officials while dealing with their daily tasks.<sup>99</sup>

People of the pen within the Chinese, Islamic, and European territories produced texts that defined and made claims about the professional ethos of the group. These texts reflect upon the role of scribes within society; they lay down the rules and regulations of good writing and administrative ideals and express how they should contribute to the keeping together of empires and polities. This second part analyses the ways in which officials framed their expertise and their moral codes and how they positioned themselves towards other power groups and individuals in society. It will start with an overview of the types of texts in which these self-images appear.

## 2.1 *Literary Traditions*

Studies on specific texts in which self-images of officials appear or on a group of advice texts from a specific era<sup>100</sup> demonstrate the obvious need to analyse these texts within the contexts in which they were produced in order to fully comprehend their rhetoric and ideologies. These contexts are related not only to politics and society, but also to genre and style. Within the framework of this comparative study detailed exercises of specific texts, authors, and styles are evidently unattainable. What I will do is specify some general characteristics of the genres in which the self-perceptions of officials appeared. Although all sources are part of a generic group of advice literature, the literary traditions of which they form part differ from area to area and throughout the ages.

97 According to Dardess, *ru* is a term used for those *shi* 'whose endeavours featured some sort of intellectual work or "study". While it was understood that among the *shih* there existed a spatial hierarchy of local, regional, and central types, among the *shih-as-ru* there was a related but rather different scale of ranking that focused upon depth, motivation, and competence in study.' Dardess, *Confucianism*, 22.

98 From Cheng Duanli. Translation by Dardess, *Confucianism*, 31.

99 For other instances in which Cheng Duanli advocates this thought, see Dardess, *Confucianism*, 64.

100 See, for example, Heck, *Construction of Knowledge*, and Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics*.

### 2.1.1 Imperial China

Self-images of Chinese literati are advertised in a wide variety of sources. Anthologies, referred to in Chinese as *zongji* and the related genre of the encyclopaedias referred to in Chinese as *leishu*, classified writings, were important manuals for literati. These texts are compendia consisting of longer and shorter quotations from earlier, 'classical', prose and verse works as well as from the official dynastic histories.<sup>101</sup> Encyclopaedias and anthologies first appeared as books of advice (mirrors) for the emperor and his administrators covering literary, historical, philosophical, and administrative themes. Since they describe the ideal moral, social, and educational standards of the literati, they also functioned as textbooks for examination candidates. Some of these texts focus on a specific field such as the literary and lexicographical aspects of the secretarial craft, and served as model books for writing official letters and documents or examination essays. Others provide the beginning student with basic general knowledge or more in particular, the Learning of the Way.<sup>102</sup> Again others, especially from the Ming onwards, are comprehensive compilations containing 'all that is known' at a certain time.<sup>103</sup>

In addition, poetry, letters, diaries, autobiographical texts and collected writings served as prominent vehicles for articulating a self-image. For the analysis of self-presentations of the Yuan period, I will rely on John Dardess's study *Confucianism and Autocracy-Professional Elites* and his analysis of 128 collected writings.<sup>104</sup> The collections Dardess used, mostly written by Southern Chinese Confucian literati, contain a 'nearly full listing of all extant works by writers who flourished between the years 1340 and 1400'. They generally aim at representing a comprehensive overview of all the writings of one individual put together after his death by students or heirs. The length of the papers and the quality varies, but the collections are organized according to categories of

101 Harriet T. Zurndorfer, 'The Passion to Collect, Select and Protect. Fifteen Hundred Years of the Chinese Encyclopaedia', in: Jason König and Greg Woolf, eds., *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2013) 505–528. See also Endymion Porter Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Harvard, 2000) 593–611; De Weerd, *Competition over Content*, 11–12.

102 For the Southern Song Hilde De Weerd categorized the examination-preparation manuals she used in her study into two categories: encyclopaedias (*leishu*) and anthologies, the latter being subdivided into numerous types: general ancient prose, general ancient prose notes, anthologies by specific authors, examination essays, learning of the Way manuals, and so on. De Weerd, *Competition over Content*, appendix B.

103 Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 601–602; Zurndorfer, 'Passion to Collect', 519–522.

104 Dardess, *Confucianism*.

accepted literary genres, including *xu* ('prefaces' to the works of others; 'messages' to students or acquaintances about to undertake some journey or official mission); *ji* ('inscriptions' for temples, official establishments, schools, city walls, or the homes, pavilions, and studios of private individuals); *lun* ('discussions' on various themes, with many related genres); together with colophons to books or paintings; poems; letters; biographical sketches; and epitaphs and other commemorative pieces for the dead.<sup>105</sup>

For self-representations under the Ming regime (1368–1644), I made extensive use of Benjamin Elman's studies *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* and *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*. The sources Elman used for his analysis are both private and commercial collections of examination essays of individual literati or groups of literati. More specifically he looks at reports of the civil examinations by examiners, which included the best papers on quotations or questions.<sup>106</sup> In addition to Elman's analysis of literature by Ming literati, I will use the political treatise *Ming yi dai fang lu* ('Waiting for the Dawn. A Plan for the Prince') by Huang Zongxi (1610–1695). Huang, a son of a high official of the Ming dynasty, was himself unsuccessful in the civil service examination, but nevertheless became involved in politics, especially as a political critic towards the end of the Ming regime. He remained, however, loyal to the Ming, and from the takeover of the Manchus he refused any official position and concentrated on scholarship instead. Huang wrote many works in the fields of history, philosophy, and literature and compiled many anthologies. *Ming yi dai fang lu* is his most famous work. Although completed in 1663, Huang collected in it the classical values of literati culture of the past as he perceived it, and he refers mostly to the Ming experiences.<sup>107</sup>

### 2.1.2 The Islamic World

Self-perceptions of the people of the pen in the Islamic world appeared in miscellaneous literary genres. Advice literature for officials appeared beginning in the eighth century in Arabic, and since then a very rich literature developed in the major languages of the Islamic world, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. Notably, many authors were multilingual. Turkish authors wrote manuals in Persian or Arabic, and authors who wrote in Turkish or Persian quoted Arabic authors, especially their poetry. The example of 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya's

105 Dardess, *Confucianism*, 2–5, 80–81 and 334–346.

106 Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy*, 64–66.

107 *Waiting for the Dawn. A Plan for the Prince. Huang Tsung-his's Ming-i tai-fang lu*, trans. Theodore de Bary (New York, 1993) 4–8.

treatise mentioned in the introduction shows the interconnectedness of ideas on writing throughout the centuries in the Islamic world.<sup>108</sup>

The most frequently used terms for the genres in which self-definitions of penmen were advertised are *adab*, *akhlaq*, and *wasiyya*. *Adab* refers to the sum of knowledge that makes a person cultured and thus refers to encyclopaedic or more specialized works on disciplines such as poetry, history, geography, rhetoric, and grammar. It also denotes refinement and urbanity as opposed to uncouthness, and in that context it is used for works on the etiquette of eating, dressing, and conversation.<sup>109</sup> From these meanings evolved a kind of advice texts for specific professions, containing the rules of conduct and the social and cultural manners of a certain profession, for example: *adab al-katib* (for the scribe) or *adab al-qadi* (for the judge).

A work on *akhlaq* (ethics) emphasizes the personal virtue and good character of the ruler or his servants.<sup>110</sup> Generally written by important penmen, these texts also voice the self-definitions of the group. The Islamic advice literature built on pre-Islamic Persian and Greek models. Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274), for example, referred in his *Akhlaq-i Nasiri* (Nasirean Ethics) to Platonic, Neoplatonic, Aristotelian, Achaemenid, and Sassanian political theories.<sup>111</sup>

A *wasiyya* has the connotation of a testamentary advice of a father to his son or an administrator to his heir. A well-known *wasiyya* is, for example, the treatise Tahir b. al-Husayn (r. 775–822) wrote on the accession of his son as provincial governor in eastern Iran. Other self-images can be found in a much broader corpus of texts, including chronicles, poetry, and collections of allegorical fables such as *Kalila wa-Dimna*.<sup>112</sup>

The eighth-century treatise by ‘Abd al-Hamid set the standard for a series of more elaborate *adab al-katib* manuals of the Abbasid era such as the famous *Adab al-Katib* (‘The Education of the Scribe’) by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) who elab-

108 Louise Marlow, ‘Advice and Advice Literature’, in: Kate Fleet, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE (2015) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_0026](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0026).

109 F. Gabrieli, ‘Adab’, in: P. Bearman, et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second edition* (2012) [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_0293](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0293).

110 F. Rahman, ‘Aklaq’, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aklaq-ethics-plural-form-of-koloq-inborn-character-moral-character-moral-virtue>.

111 Linda T. Darling, ‘Mirrors for Princes in Europe and the Middle East: A Case of Historiographical Incommensurability’, in: Albrecht Classen, ed., *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World* (Berlin and Boston, 2013) 235–236.

112 Marlow, ‘Advice’. See also Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers. Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times* (Wiesbaden, 2004).

orated on lexicography and grammar, and Qudama b. Ja'far's (d. 948) *Kitab al-Kharaj* ('The Book of Land Tax') which also dealt with the financial administration of the realm.<sup>113</sup> The authors of these texts laid down the standards of the administrative practice, the moral codes, and the general cultural capital of the professional group, thus creating and enhancing a group ethos.

After the demise of the political power of the Abbasid caliphs a wide range of later advice works appeared in various successor states. These texts display striking continuities and often quote large parts from the earlier, Abbasid, manuals, but at the same time display clear developments and differentiations. These changes mainly concern the technical aspects of the secretarial work: developments in taxation and judicial practices and, for example, different uses of titles in official correspondence.

In the Mamluk era the genre culminated in voluminous works of an encyclopaedic character such as al-Qalqashandi's (d. 1418) *Subh al-A'sha* ('Daybreak for the Sufferer of Nightblindness'). It is a massive work comprising, in the standard edition in modern print, more than 6500 pages. It discusses a wide variety of topics including biology, geography, metrics, and history, all of which are considered to be part of the scribe's general cultural training. The largest part is, however, devoted to the writing of the various types of documents emanating from the Mamluk chancery. This part is illustrated with model letters from various eras and areas and interspersed with poetry and quotations from other manuals.

Noticeable are the autobiographical, although often stereotypical, elements in these texts. Al-Qalqashandi, for example, incorporates a treatise, entitled *al-Kawa'ib al-Duriyya* ('The Shining Stars'), in the *Subh al-A'sha* in which he outlines his personal doubts and worries about the profession of scribe. Similar descriptions are also found in Ottoman manuals and in the Persian autobiographical texts of the Mughal *munshi* that focus on the cultural capital and moral universe of these scribes. A good example of the latter is found in the seventeenth-century *Tazkirat al-Safar wa Tuhfat al-Zafar* ('Accounts of Travels and the Gift of Success') by Nek Rai.<sup>114</sup>

The officials of the Ottoman and Mughal empires produced similar administrative manuals with detailed technical and more general advice for their colleagues. As in the earlier Arabic tradition, some of these texts focus on the epistolary aspects of the penmen's profession such as the anonymous seventeenth-

113 For a more complete overview of *adab al-katib* manuals from the ninth to the fifteenth century, see Heck, *Construction of Knowledge*, and Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte*.

114 Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing*, 319–336.

century *Nigarnama-i Munshi*, which deals with the drafting of various types of documents. It contains several model letters by the author and by prominent predecessors. Others concentrate on fiscal administration, such as the *Khulasat al-Siyaq* by Indar Sen from the early eighteenth century.<sup>115</sup> The testamentary letter appears in later centuries as well. An example is the letter by the Mughal *munshi* Chandrabhan 'Brahman' (d. 1662/3) to his son Khwaja Tej Bhan, which deals both with the codes of conduct and the more general cultural capital of the scribe's profession, including a list the books an aspiring *munshi* should read.<sup>116</sup> An Ottoman advice text that will be referred to in the following analysis is the *Nasihatu s-Selatin* ('Counsel for Sultans') by the bureaucrat Mustafa 'Ali (d. 1600).<sup>117</sup>

### 2.1.3 Europe

Compared to the other traditions, self-definitions of bureaucrats are remarkably less prominent in the European sources of the period 1300–1600. However, with the increasing professionalization of the bureaucracy and increase in numbers of bureaucrats in the late Middle Ages, self-images as well as professional instructions started to appear on a modest scale. Self-images were most confidently produced by the judicial administrators of the emerging European states, but manuals for financial and chancery officials also contain elements of professional self-awareness.

Due to the limited number of institutions of higher education, the European scholarly network in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was relatively small. Moreover, these scholars worked with the same set of key texts, including, in addition to the Scripture and patristics, the collections of Roman and canon law and a limited set of classical texts. This resulted in the circulation of instructions and ideas on good governance throughout Europe. In the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this network became larger and officials started writing political and administrative advice texts for a wider audience, not only in Latin, but also in the vernacular. The texts in which the self-images of officials appear most prominently can roughly be classified into two interrelated broader categories: those mainly meant for instruction, containing technical, specialized, knowledge for specific functions within the administration; and, secondly, those providing more general political advice for rulers or high officials.

115 Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing*, 318–319.

116 Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing*, 315–317

117 Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali, 1541–1600* (Princeton, 1987).



The first category—instruction texts—consists of manuals for the three specializations of state administration: epistolary and rhetorical instructions for chancery scribes, manuals on law practices for judicial officials, and, more sporadically, financial instructions for the officials of the *Chambres de Comptes*. Sometimes these categories overlap. Manuals for style, grammar, and rhetoric, were, for example, meant for both the chancery scribes and judicial officials. These works are sometimes, but certainly not consistently, labelled under the generic term *ars dictandi*, books of texts for the discipline of *ars dictaminis*, the composing of letters and other prose documents.<sup>118</sup> They consist of either short formularies containing, for example, lists of standard addresses or more extensive textbooks teaching the rules and styles for composing letters, by including extensive collections of model letters and practical information on the use of scripts, seals, and signatures. Other texts were simply anthologies of model letters.<sup>119</sup> The emergence of treatises discussing the theory of letter writing is linked to the increasing demand for written documents in both church and state administrations. The manuals were first developed in Italy in the late eleventh century and spread to France by the mid-twelfth century and by the end of the twelfth century to Germany and England, each area developing slightly different traditions and adapting the rules to its own demands. A good example of a model book for England is the *Formulary* by the scribe of the Privy Seal Thomas Hoccleve (d. 1426).<sup>120</sup> These instruction manuals for composing letters continued to be written until the sixteenth century.<sup>121</sup>

For jurists a whole series of manuals, glosses, and commentaries on both Roman and canon law circulated in late medieval Europe. Jurists further made use of regulations or ordinances discussing procedures, rules of conduct, and division of tasks in the councils.<sup>122</sup> These ordinances were updated on a regular basis.<sup>123</sup> In the late fifteenth century jurists of the councils also started to write more comprehensive texts, explaining judicial procedures to a wider audience,

118 Martin Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis. Ars Dictandi*. Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental, fasc. 60 (Turnhout, 1991) 20.

119 Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis*, 20–28; James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. A History of the Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Tempe, 2001) 194–268.

120 See also John H. Fisher, *The Emergence of Standard English* (Lexington, 1996).

121 Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis*, 29 and 35; Murphy, *Rhetoric*, 202–203 and 267.

122 Watts, *The Making of Politics*, 254–259, 381–384, 396.

123 On the Burgundian regulations, see Robert Stein, *De Hertog en zijn staten. De eenwording van de Bourgondische Nederlanden. Ca. 1380 – ca. 1480* (Hilversum, 2014) 177–179. On the ordinances of the Parisian Parlement on which they are based, see, for example, Autrand, *Naissance*.

not only councillors.<sup>124</sup> These manuals and treatises seem to have functioned as guidelines for, for example, junior jurists. Examples are the *Briève instruction* and the *Practijke civile* by the Burgundian councillor Filips Wielant (d. 1520).<sup>125</sup>

Financial officials made use of short checklists and oral instructions.<sup>126</sup> Some of the *Chambres des Comptes* seem to have worked with more comprehensive manuals. An example of the latter is the *Handboek van de Rekenkamer* ('Manual of the *Chambre des Comptes*') of Rijsel, which has notes from the fifteenth until the seventeenth century. It contains descriptions of the months and seasons, of the earth, planets, and stars. It has lists of exchange rates and contains historiographical descriptions. Penmen's self-perceptions are incorporated in a number of 'memoires' discussing the ethical conduct and general cultural capital of the *gens des comptes*.<sup>127</sup>

The various instruction texts contain specific guidelines for the various types of officials, and in this way they project an occupational ethos. However, they are very concise when it comes to the definition of a broader self-image of the group and its role in society. This is also true for the second category of texts that will be discussed here, the mirror for princes. Many of the mirrors of this era were written by high officials, often members of the ruler's council. Many others were written by the clergy and not all of them occupied positions in state service. These mirrors were meant for a broader audience than the specialized chancery, financial, or judicial instruction manuals and lists. Although often addressing the ruler or his heir and approaching good governance from his point of view, they advise also on the characteristics of the ruler's ideal servant and as such some of them contain relevant self-perceptions of the penmen.

Mirror for princes is a modern term for a political advice text, which was sometimes referred to as *Speculum* (mirror) by contemporaries, but more often with titles such as *De Regimine*, *De Eruditione*, and *De Institutione* for texts in Latin and similar titles in vernacular. A special type of mirror text is the advice literature for city magistrates, for example the Italian podestà, which

124 Watts, *The Making of Politics*, 381.

125 See also Willem van der Tanerijen (d. 1499), *Boec van de loopender practijken van der Raidtcameren van Brabant*, Willem van den Berge and the *Scaecspel*, and Jan van den Berghe and his *Kaetspel*. I thank Robert Stein for these references.

126 I thank Robert Stein for his explanations of the practices of the accountants in the Burgundian *Chambre de Comptes*.

127 Jan Dumolyn, 'Organische intellectuelen in het politieke lichaam. De staatsideologie van de laatmiddeleeuwse Bourgondische ambtenaar', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 83, no. 4 (2005) 1095–1096.

contains also instructions on the recruitment of good and loyal officials. Examples include the *Tresor* by Brunetto Latini (d. 1294) and *Liber de Regimine Civitatum* by Giovanni da Viterbo (thirteenth century).<sup>128</sup> The second half of the thirteenth century saw an increase in political advice texts, many of which were written by members of the mendicant orders, such as *De Regno* by Thomas Aquinas (d. 1244) and *De Regimine Principum* from 1287 by Thomas Aquinas's disciple, the Augustinian friar Egidius Colonna (Giles of Rome, d. 1316). As in the Islamic world, advice could also be formulated in the form of a letter. An example is John Gower's (d. 1408) *Vox Clamantis*, written to Richard II, King of England.

More than 250 mirrors are said to have been written between the thirteenth and the seventeenth century, most of them during the later Middle Ages.<sup>129</sup> Here a selection has been made of a few mirrors written by officials themselves and containing at least some information on the role and position of the ruler's civil servants. Examples will be drawn from the works of, for the fourteenth century, Philip of Leyden (d. 1382)<sup>130</sup> and Lucas de Penna (d. ca. 1390),<sup>131</sup> for the fifteenth century, Guillebert de Lannoy (d. 1462),<sup>132</sup> Guillaume Fillastre (the

128 On mirrors for magistrates see Heike Bierschwale and Jacqueline van Leeuwen, *Wie man eine Stadt regieren soll: Deutsche und niederländische Stadtrechtslehren des Mittelalters* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005); Eberhard Isenmann, 'Ratsliteratur und städtische Ratsordnungen des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit', in: Pierre Monnet and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Stadt und Recht im Mittelalter: La ville et le droit au Moyen Âge* (Göttingen, 2003) 215–479. On the podestà mirrors see David Napolitano, 'The Profile and Code of Conduct of the Professional City Magistrate in Thirteenth-Century Italy' (PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2014) 224–227 and 243–245.

129 For an overview, see W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1938); Eric de Bom, 'Political Advice', in: Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin* (Oxford, 2015); Cristian Bratu, 'Mirrors for Princes (Western)', in: Albrecht Classen, ed., *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms—Methods—Trends* (Berlin, 2010) 1921–1949; Cary J. Nederman, *Lineages of European Political Thought: Explorations along the Medieval/Modern Divide from John of Salisbury to Hegel* (Washington, DC, 2009). For later mirrors see also Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978).

130 On Philip of Leyden and his *De Cura Reipublicae et Sorte Principantes*, see Piet Leupen, *Philip of Leyden: A Fourteenth Century Jurist* (The Hague, 1981).

131 On Lucas de Penna, see Walter Ullmann, *The Medieval Idea of Law as Represented by Lucas de Penna* (Routledge, 2010).

132 On Guillebert de Lannoy, see C.G. van Leeuwen, *Denkbeelden van een Vliesridder. De 'Instruction d'un jeune prince' van Guillebert van Lannoy* (Amsterdam, 1975).

Younger, d. 1473),<sup>133</sup> and Guillaume Hugonet (d. 1477),<sup>134</sup> and, for the sixteenth century, Niccolò Macchiavelli.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, as in the Chinese and Islamic worlds, in Europe too self-images of scribes are sometimes found in miscellaneous sources such as poetry and historiographic texts. A good example of the latter is the journal kept by Nicolas de Baye, scribe (*graphier*) of the Parisian *Parlement* from 1400 to 1417.<sup>136</sup> For the former we can consult the autobiographical poetry of the previously mentioned English poet and clerk of the Privy Seal, Thomas Hoccleve (d. 1426). In his poetry he ponders the role of a scribe, his own role, in the unstable administrative apparatus under the Lancastrians.<sup>137</sup>

## 2.2 Expertise

Ideally, the training of a state official was built on three pillars: a general cultural education in, for example, philosophy and history; a more specialized training in scribal, financial, or judicial skills; and a moral upbringing in just behaviour. These three elements of an official's training were interwoven in the advice literature of all three major regions of our research. However, the precise details of the ideal training and expertise differed between regions, authors, and throughout the ages.

### 2.2.1 General Cultural Capital

Throughout Eurasia, state officials claimed a position as scholars. Obviously, the intellectual traditions they referred to differed, but the gist of their message—a state official needs general intellectual and cultural capital—is shared

133 On his *Le traittié de conseil*, see M. Priezel, *Guillaume Fillastre der Jüngere (1400/07–1473): Kirchenfürst und herzoglich-burgundischer Rat* (Stuttgart, 2001).

134 On Guillaume Hugonet, see Anke and Werner Paravicini, 'L'arsenal intellectuel d'un homme de pouvoir. Les livres de Guillaume Hugonet, chancelier de Bourgogne', in: D. Boutet and J. Verger, eds., *Penser le pouvoir au Moyen Age VIIIe–XVe siècle. Etudes offertes à Françoise Autrand* (Paris, 2000) 261–325.

135 For the Burgundian advice literature, see Dumolyn, 'Organische intellectuelen'; Dumolyn, *Staatsvorming en vorstelijke ambtenaren*. For the sixteenth century literature, see also Michael Stolleis, *Staat und Staatsräson in der frühen Neuzeit. Studien zur Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts* (Frankfurt, 1990).

136 *Journal de Nicolas de Baye. Greffier du Parlement de Paris 1400–1417*, Alexandre Tuetey, ed., 2 vols (Paris, 1885–1888). De Baye is also one of the main sources for Autrand's *Naissance d'un grand corps de l'État*. I would like to thank Frans Camphuijsen for referring me to this journal.

137 Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, 2001).

by all traditions. It goes without saying that the actual education of scribes, especially those lower on the hierarchical ladder, was often far removed from the ideal standards formulated in advice literature. Yet, I will look into their ideal qualifications and analyse how and why officials constantly insist on and emphasize the need for a general education on top of more technical and specialized training. In other words, the ideal image is epitomized by the high-ranking men of letters, and the majority of the clerks probably did not live up to this image.<sup>138</sup>

Guillaume Fillastre (the Younger), the fifteenth-century Burgundian bishop and chancellor, had a revealing explanation for the importance of the official's intellectual knowhow. Since the ruler himself is often lacking such knowledge, his officials have to make up for him, he argued.<sup>139</sup> However, most authors emphasize the necessity for general cultural literacy in the official's fulfilment of his responsibilities: for example, the Mamluk scribe al-Qalqashandī (1355–1418), who worked in the central chancery in Cairo, mentions in his administrative manual *Subh al-A'sha* training in knowledge of the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions (*hadith*), political theory, history of past polities, but also falconry and astrology as indispensable for a scribe.<sup>140</sup> His argument is that a chancery scribe should be familiar with the technical terms of all disciplines and be able to define miscellaneous phenomena in order to be able to write letters to representatives of each social group and discipline using the correct terminology.<sup>141</sup> In his *Subh al-A'sha*, al-Qalqashandī therefore not only includes

138 See, for example, on increasing differentiation between the two groups in Song China, James Liu, 'The Sung Views on the Control of Government Clerks', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 10, no. 2 (1967) 317–344 and for the Ming clerks, see Elman, *Civil Examinations*, 53. On the differentiation between theory and practice in the seventeenth century, see Étienne Balazs, *Political Theory and Administrative Reality in Traditional China* (London, 1965).

139 H. Häyrynen, *Guillaume Fillastre. Le traité de conseil* (Jyväskylä, 1984) 25. For a similar view by Chinese literati on their emperor's lack of intellectual qualities, see Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 94.

140 For a more detailed analysis of the organization of this text, see Maaïke van Berkel, 'The Attitude towards Knowledge in Mamluk Egypt: Organisation and Structure of the *Subh al-a'shā* by al-Qalqashandī (1355–1418)', in: Peter Binkley, ed., *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen 1–4 July 1996* (Leiden, 1997) 159–168; Maaïke van Berkel, 'Opening up a World of Knowledge. Mamluk Encyclopaedias and their Readers', in: Jason König and Greg Woolf, eds., *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2013) 357–375.

141 Ahmad b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Subh al-a'sha fi sina'at al-insha'*, Muhammad Husayn Shams al-Dīn, ed. (Beirut, 1987) I, 181–182.

elaborate information from miscellaneous disciplines, but also adds a long list of authors and books prospective scribes should read.<sup>142</sup> The list is divided into seven main categories, each containing a number of disciplines. The first category, *adab*, deals with disciplines such as lexicography, metrics, grammar, morphology, and calligraphy. The second, the *shari'a* disciplines, has, for example, reading of the Qur'an, exegesis, transmission of *hadith* texts, and *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Other main categories include natural sciences (with, for example, medicine, physiognomy, and astrology), geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and 'practical sciences' (such as political sciences, ethics [*al-akhlaq*], and domestic administration). History and geography are left out because those disciplines are already incorporated in the *Subh al-A'sha* itself. For each discipline in this list al-Qalqashandi mentions several authors and titles.

Two centuries later in a very similar vein, the Mughal *munshi* Chandrabhan 'Brahman' enumerates in a letter of instruction to his son Khwaj Tej Bhan—but clearly meant for a larger readership—the books his son should read, also explaining why these are essential for his education:

Although the science of Persian is vast, and almost beyond human grasp, in order to open the gates of language one should read the *Gulistan*, *Bustan*, and the letters of Mulla Jami, to start with. When one has advanced somewhat one should read key books on norms and ethics, as well as history books such as the *Habib al-Siyar*, *Rauzat al-Safa'*, *Rauzat al-Salatin*, *Tarikh-i Guzida*, *Tarikh-i Tabari*, *Zafar-nama*, *Akhbar-nama*, and some books like these that are absolutely necessary. The benefits of these will be to render your language elegant, also to provide you with knowledge of the world and its inhabitants. These will be of use when you are in the assemblies of the learned. Of the master-poets, here are some whose collections I read in my youth, and the names of which I am writing down. When you have some leisure, read them, and they will give you both pleasure and relief, increase your abilities, and improve your language ...<sup>143</sup>

142 Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha*, I, 538–566. The list is based on Muhammad b. al-Akfani's (d. 1348) *Irshad al-qasid* and has been translated into French by Gaston Wiet, who identified most of the titles and authors: Gaston Wiet, 'Les classiques du scribe égyptien au xve siècle', *Studia Islamica* 18 (1963) 41–80.

143 Translation by Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'The Making of the Munshi', 316. See also the education of Nek Rai, the seventeenth-century member of a family of *munshis* whose *Tazkirat al-Safar wa Thufat al-Zafar* ('Accounts of the Travels and the Gifts of Success') Alam and Subrahmanyam discuss in the remainder of the article.

The disciplines and titles mentioned by Chandrabhan 'Brahman' partly overlap with al-Qalqashandi's list. Both mention texts on statecraft and ethics, and they describe history as a discipline that needs to be mastered by all officials. Poetry, the most prominent genre on the list by Chandrabhan 'Brahman', also figures noticeably in al-Qalqashandi's manual, although less so on his list of books. One of the history books on the list of Chandrabhan 'Brahman' for his son Khwaj Tej Bhan, the *Tarikh-i Tabari* ('The History of Tabari', also known as 'The History of Prophets and Kings') by the Persian polymath al-Tabari (839–923) is also used by al-Qalqashandi in his historical section. References to books on natural sciences, geometry, law, astronomy, and arithmetic do not figure on the list Chandrabhan 'Brahman' put together, but some of these disciplines are mentioned elsewhere in his letter.

Notwithstanding the presence of others with cultural prestige such as Buddhist and Daoist monks,<sup>144</sup> in imperial China the *shi* were dominant in the cultural sphere. They self-confidently claimed a position as intellectuals.<sup>145</sup> Their self-definition included a strong emphasis on abstract, theoretical knowledge. It is especially in their criticisms on the education of their own age that we learn about their ideal expertise. In the fourteenth century under the Yuan dynasty many literati complained about the official (local) schools, which, according to them, only prepared for the civil service examinations. From 1315 onwards, when Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan (or Emperor Renzong of Yuan), the fourth emperor of the dynasty, reinstated the examination system, training, in the eyes of critical literati, had become artificial and formalized. Students gained superficial knowledge only and lacked any real understanding of the classics. Song Lian (d. 1381), a late-Yuan-early-Ming scholar, who was appointed supervisor of the *ruxue* or Confucian schools under the first Ming emperor, formulated it as follows:

When the classics are not clearly understood, the mind is not straight, and consequently good customs cannot prevail in the villages nor good order in the state. The good student will lay aside the commentaries and subcommentaries, embrace the bare classics, and internalize them. He makes each word and each phrase soak into his mind. At first it is terribly hard to make headway, but gradually it sinks in and he gets some results.

144 See, for example, Susan Naquin, *Peking. Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000).

145 Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 77.

Finally, classics and mind become one, and he no longer knows whether his mind is the classics or the classics is his mind.<sup>146</sup>

What were these ‘bare classics’? Knowledge of ‘a body of abstract, general principles governing human nature and the social system’, one of the definitions of neo-Confucianism or ‘The Learning of the Way’, was considered to be based on the Four Books and Five (or Six) Classics.<sup>147</sup> Acquiring this knowledge could be achieved through continuous study of these sources and their interrelationship until, as Song Lian pointed out in the quotation above, ‘classics and mind become one’. The first combined edition of the Four Books appeared in 1182 edited by Zhu Xi (d. 1200), one of the most prominent literati in the twelfth-century Learning of the Way movement. The Four Books consisted of *The Great Learning*, *The Analects*, *Mencius*, and *The Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>148</sup> The Five Classics were pre-Qin texts including *Classic of Poetry*, a collection of poems; *Books of Documents*, a collection of documents and speeches; *Books of Rites*, describing ancient rites and ceremonies; *Yijing (Book of Changes)*, a divination text; and *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the official chronicle of the State of Lu, the home of Confucius. Sometimes the (lost) *Classic of Music* is added as a Sixth Classic.<sup>149</sup> Often students also had to study the voluminous *Standard Histories (zhengshi)*, the official history of subsequent dynasties.<sup>150</sup>

This body of knowledge contained not only an intellectual, but also a strong ethical content. Mastery of this knowledge, according to literati, was attainable only through ethical self-development. Wang Xing (d. 1395), a late-Yuan-early-Ming literatus phrased it as follows:

Today’s learners read the Classics and yet how many there are who flout the Way in what they write and say. And those *shi* who don’t flout the Way, who ought to be able to approach those of antiquity, don’t even do as well as those of the Han. Why is that? What the Song Neo-Confucian fathers spoke of was the mind of the sage, and what they acted upon was the Way of the sage. But [today’s *shi*] repeat the words but don’t make that mind their mind; they talk about the Way, but don’t make that action

146 Translation by Dardess, *Confucianism*, 161.

147 Dardess, *Confucianism*, 25–26.

148 De Weerd, *Competition*, 34.

149 See Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven and London, 2001).

150 Endymion Wilkinson, ‘Standard Histories’, in: *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Cambridge MA, 2012) 501–515. See also Benjamin A. Elman and Martin Kern, *Statecraft and Classical Learnings. The Rituals of Zhou in East Asian History* (Leiden and Boston, 2010).



their action. Thus of course they fail to match the ancients. The Way of the sages is not outside the classical texts, yet it cannot be attained by reading and memorization alone.<sup>151</sup>

To the more general knowledge discussed above Benjamin Elman adds the issue of language. After the institutionalization of the Mandarin dialect in Beijing after 1415–1421, officials needed to master this new spoken dialect (northern and southern Mandarin) on top of a written language (classical Chinese) whose symbols and forms required years and years of training, but which had to be mastered to read the classical texts and compose essays.<sup>152</sup> The details of training in the specific prose style of the ‘8-legged essay’ will be discussed below.

Unlike the numerous references to general knowledge made by officials from the Islamic world and the Chinese territories, European bureaucrats in the period 1300–1600 do not explicitly articulate a self-image of general cultural literacy. However, also in Europe the political theory of the age was based on a series of classical texts, most notably Cicero, and some key texts on canon and Roman law.<sup>153</sup>

Some scholars have tried to reconstruct the general cultural capital of high officials by analysing their libraries. For example, the Flemish jurist Filips Wielant (d. 1520), member of the Great Council of Mechelen, possessed civil and canon law texts and commentaries, philosophical and theological classical texts by Aristotle, Cicero, and Boethius, and, classical and contemporary belles-lettres and histories.<sup>154</sup> Among the books owned by other members of the Council we also find the Church fathers, romances, and moralistic literature.<sup>155</sup>

Others have analysed treatises and speeches by high officials to reconstruct their sources and knowledge of classical texts. Arjo Vanderjagt, for example, reconstructed the speeches of Guillaume Hugonet (d. 1477), chancellor to Charles the Bold of Burgundy, and detected references to and interpretations of Aristotle, pseudo-Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, pseudo-Seneca, Augustine, Oro-

151 Translation by Dardess, *Confucianism*, 30.

152 Elman, *Civil Examinations*, 48–50.

153 On editions of Cicero's *De oratore* and *De officiis* in the Renaissance, see, for example, David Marsh, ‘Cicero in the Renaissance’, in: Catherine Steel, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero* (Cambridge, 2013) 306–317.

154 D. van den Auweele, Gilbert Tournoy and Jos Monballyu, ‘De bibliotheek van Mr. Filips Wielant (1483)’, *Lias: Sources and Documents Relating to the Early Modern History of Ideas* 8 (1981) 146–187.

155 Dumolyn, ‘Organische intellectuelen’, 1098.

sius, Caesar, and Lactanius, and, more recent authors, such as the Italian jurists Bartolus de Saxoferrato (d. 1357) and Baldus de Ubaldis (1400).<sup>156</sup> This does not mean, however, that Hugonet actually read all of these texts; he may also have used some of the florilegia that circulated in his milieu. In his allegorical work on judicial practices, *Kaetspel*, Jan van den Berghe refers to the poetry of Petrarch on top of a long list of classical and medieval authors.<sup>157</sup>

### 2.2.2 Specialized Training

The proper balance between general knowledge and specialized expertise was debated by officials throughout Eurasia. In his *Waiting for the Dawn*, the seventeenth-century Chinese author Huang Zongxi frequently emphasizes the importance of practical ability and of the proper actual conduct of affairs in addition to the so broadly appreciated general scholarly knowledge.<sup>158</sup> The Ottoman official Mustafa 'Ali of Gallipoli (d. 1600), on the other hand, complained a century earlier about the new generations of officials trained in specialized bureaucratic procedures, but lacking any broader cultural knowledge.<sup>159</sup> Yet most officials seem to have agreed on the value of some sort of combination of general and specific knowledge. This paragraph will deal with the officials' views on specialized training.

In their self-descriptions both the literati of the Chinese territories and most officials of the Islamic world emphasize expertise in writing as one of the main features of their training. Al-Qalqashandi's *Subh al-A'sha*, for example, like most of the manuals of his predecessors, contains sections in praise of writing in general and bureaucratic writing in particular, on correct language (lexicology, orthography, morphology, and grammar), and on endless technical aspects of writing and penmanship, including descriptions of different kinds of pens and how one should use them, ink and the way it has to be preserved and used, different types of forms and sizes of paper, and the various scripts and styles used in the chancery.

In his *maqama*, entitled *al-Kawakib al-Duriyya*,<sup>160</sup> al-Qalqashandi sets forth the musings of a fictional scholar, named al-Nathir ibn Nazzam (literally mean-

156 Arjo Vanderjagt, 'Frans-Bourgondisch geleerde politici in de vijftiende eeuw', *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 16 (1989) 406–408. See also Dumolyn, 'Organische intellectuelen', 1097.

157 Dumolyn, 'Organische intellectuelen', 1097. See also Dumolyn's description of high officials as intellectuals, Dumolyn, 'Organische intellectuelen', 1099–1102.

158 De Bary, 'Introduction' to *Waiting for the Dawn*, 36.

159 Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*, 9.

160 Known to us through its inclusion in *Subh al-a'sha*, XIV, 127–145.

ing: prose-writer son of a poet), who has to make a choice between the pursuit of knowledge and the need to earn his daily bread:

I became distressed, incapable of anything. And I remained perplexed, not knowing which of the two trajectories in life [seeking knowledge or making a living] would be more suitable. For if I should make the pursuit of knowledge my living, I would act reprehensibly in my recourse to knowledge, and if I should spurn earning my living in favour of study, I should perish of need and die of hunger.<sup>161</sup>

Then al-Nathir ibn Nazzam hears a voice reciting verses on the excellence of the position of *katib* (literally writer, meaning state official) and even quoting the Qur'an: 'Recite, for thy lord is the most generous, who taught the use of the pen, who taught men what he did not know' and 'By the pen and what they write, Thou, by the bounty of thy Lord, art not mad' and 'But over you are guardians, noble ones, writing down'.<sup>162</sup> Now al-Nathir ibn Nazzam realizes that the only profession beneficial to the mind of the scholar is that of *katib*, more specifically, the only acceptable formal activity for a scholar is that of *insha'*, the writing of state documents.

The seventeenth-century Mughal *munshi* Nek Rai also begins his autobiographical text *Tazkirat al-Safar wa Tuhfat al-Zafar* ('Accounts of Travels and the Gift of Success') by praising the pen. However, not all officials seem to have ignored the financial skills needed for the job. Nek Rai's contemporary Chandrabhan 'Brahman', describing the ideal *munshi* to his son, mentions accountancy (*siyaq*) and scribal skill (*nawisindagi*) in the same sentence, arguing that 'a man who knows how to write good prose as well as accountancy is a bright light even among lights'.<sup>163</sup> He adds that scribes who know accountancy on top of good writing are, unfortunately, rare.

Also the Chinese literati emphasized throughout the centuries a preference for language and writing skills. The learning of classical Chinese required great discipline. Mastering this language was a prerequisite for each official. Prospective officials were expected to be trained in the art of calligraphy, a prominent

161 Translation by C.E. Bosworth in 'A *Maqāma* on Secretaryship: Al-Qalqashandī's *al-kawākib al-duriyya fī'l-manāqib al-badriyya*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27, no. 2 (1964) 295.

162 From subsequently Quran, *surat al-'alaq* 3–5, *surat al-qalam* 1–2, and *surat al-infitar*, 10–11. See also Bosworth, 'A *Maqāma*', 296.

163 Translation by Alam and Subrahmanyam, 'The Making of the Munshi', 316.



FIGURE 5.1 *Document-holder and pen-box of brass, incised and inlaid with gold and silver. Syria, first half of the 14th century. The David Collection, Copenhagen, 4/1976 and 26/1970.*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PERNILLE KLEMP

skill also in the European and West Asian education of scribes. The 'four treasures' of the literatus were his brush, ink, inkstone, and paper.<sup>164</sup>

The focus of the Chinese examination curriculum in this period was prose writing, in particular the famous essay on the Four Books and Five Classics. After having completely disappeared in the first Ming provincial and metropolitan examinations of 1370 and 1371, poetry came back on the exam programmes in the eighteenth century.<sup>165</sup> However, it always had remained popular outside the exams, specifically as a marker of a man of culture. The literary style that became dominant under the Ming and was tested in the examinations was the essay, which had its roots in the classical essay of the eleventh-century reformer Wang Anshi (d. 1086). This type of essay, the so-called 8-legged essay due to its division in eight sections, remained in use in subsequent centuries.<sup>166</sup>

For the Chinese imperial examinations, fiscal, legal, and other technical and practical skills were only of secondary importance. In early Ming examinations judicial terms (*panyu*) had been introduced in response to a complaint by Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang on the candidates' lack of practical training. From

164 See also Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu, 1991).

165 Elman, *Civil Examinations*, 3.

166 Elman, *Civil Examinations*, 53–54, for more details on the style of these essays, see also the rest of Elman's chapter.

1381 onwards, all official students had had to study the Ming Code. The technicalities of legal, medical, and fiscal skills were not examined. Training in these fields became the prerequisite of the non-*shi* scribes: commoner clerks, *yamen* (administrative office) secretaries, official aides, and Muslims: officials, in short who did not define the characteristic of the self-images of the literati.<sup>167</sup>

Through the overwhelming emphasis by officials of both the Islamic and Chinese territories on good writing instead of, for example, skilful accounting—another obvious field of bureaucratic expertise—the epistolary men, the men of letters, epitomized the ideal image of the group as a whole at the expense of their, in daily life probably much more useful and sometimes better paid, financial counterparts. In the Arabic literary tradition, the antithesis between financial and epistolary officials was a topic of debate from the late Umayyad until the Mamluk period. As all of these polemics were written by officials of the chancery, the winner of the literary debate was always this epistolary *katib*. He is presented as the most prestigious, influential, and erudite of the two.<sup>168</sup> An example is al-Hariri's (d. 1122) twenty-second *maqama* ('assembly'):

Know that the art of *insha'* (the composition of state documents and letters) is the loftier, although the art of accountancy (*hisab*) may be more useful. The pen of correspondence is pure eloquence, but the pen of accountancy picks up phrases indiscriminately. The artistic creations of rhetoric are copied down for further study, but the registers of accounts are soon closed up and then destroyed.<sup>169</sup>

The Ottoman official Mustafa 'Ali (d. 1600) also clearly favours the chancery scribe over his financial colleague. In his opinion it is the chancellor who symbolizes the ideal official, the learned and cultured man of letters. Mustafa 'Ali witnessed the expansion of the Ottoman bureaucracy and with it the emergence of a new type of official, one who had not necessarily received his training in the *madrassa*, but had climbed the ladder through training on

167 Elman, *Civil Examinations*, 53.

168 The best known text in this genre is al-Tawhidi's (d. 1023) *Al-imta' wa-l-mu'anasa* which is translated by Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Man of Letters v. Man of Figures. The Seventh Night from al-Tawhidi's *al-Imtā' qa-l-mu'ānasa*', in: H.L.J. Vanstiphout, et al., eds., *Scripta signa vocis: Studies about Scripts, Scriptures, Scribes and Languages in the Near East, Presented to J.H. Hospers by his Pupils, Colleagues and Friends* (Groningen, 1986) 53–63.

169 This *maqama* is quoted by al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha*, I, 34 and XIV, 125–126. Translation by Bosworth, 'A *Maqāma*', 293–294.

the job. While previously both the financial and epistolary officials had been recruited from one and the same pool, the elite educated in the *madrasa*, the newcomers of the second half of the sixteenth century who were educated outside the *madrasa* found their way to the top of the bureaucracy, especially in the financial services. Moreover, from the mid-sixteenth century onwards a financial career provided more opportunities.<sup>170</sup> ‘Ali comments on these developments:

The Chancellors of the Council are the jurisconsults of the imperial law. Therefore, they are to be given more respect and shown more kindness than other high officials. It is particularly necessary to give them honour and precedence over the directors of the financial services. The latter are in the service of money and property, the vain foolishness of this world, while the chancellors are those who guard the secrets of the varieties of imperial edicts which concern justice and equity, and matters of public jurisdiction.<sup>171</sup>

The dichotomy between chancery scribes and their financial counterparts is a topos in many Islamic literary traditions. However, we should keep in mind that most of the administrative manuals were written by chancery scribes, and it is through their eyes that we learn about the relationship between the two types of officials. Some financial officials of the Islamic world also produced manuals. These texts do provide information on the practical technicalities of their tasks—for example dealing with arithmetic formulae, fiscal jurisprudence, or practical tax regulations—but lack broader self-definitions of the group as a whole.<sup>172</sup>

The dichotomy between the chancery scribe and his financial colleague is less evident in the self-perceptions of Europe’s officials. Nevertheless, a strikingly similar example is the journal kept by Nicolas de Baye, the scribe (*graphier*) of the Parisian *Parlement*. Nicolas de Baye notoriously complains about his financial colleagues in the *Chambre des Comptes*.<sup>173</sup>

As we have seen, specialized instruction texts for epistolary and financial officials also existed in the European literary traditions. Manuals for chancery

170 Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*, 215–224.

171 Translation by Fleischer, *Bureaucrat*, 228.

172 See, for example, Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 546–741 / A.D. 1169–1341* (Oxford, 1972). For an earlier period, see also, for example, Qudama b. Ja’far (d. 948), *Kitab al-Kharaj*.

173 See on his complaints Graeme Small, *Late Medieval France* (Houndmills, 2009) 32–33.

clerks discuss the rules and styles for composing letters, standard addresses, and information on scripts. Sometimes they include a number of model letters.<sup>174</sup> It can be argued in this way that they present an image of expertise in writing. However, they seem to do so for the purpose of instruction without arrogating a certain status and position, and they refrain from presenting a characterization of the professional group as a whole as experts in writing.

More explicit expressions of identity are to be found among the judicial officials, the legal experts of the ruler's council who often had received their education at one of Europe's universities. Their self-images are mostly found in the advice texts they wrote for their rulers, the mirrors for princes. Examples are Lucas de Penna (d. ca. 1390) and Guillebert de Lannoy (d. 1462) and, much earlier in the thirteenth century, the Tuscan Giovanni da Viterbo. Giovanni da Viterbo mentions expertise in dictation and proficiency in writing as indispensable skills for the Italian notary.<sup>175</sup> Françoise Autrand, for the members of the Parisian *Parlement*, and Jan Dumolyn, for the Burgundian high officials, argue that this new class of professionally trained jurists became the main advertisers of a professional ethos and consciousness. However, in comparison to the self-images of East and West Asian officials, the European officials have less interest in internal specializations and training. They focus on general political theory instead.

### 2.2.3 Just and Ethical Behaviour

According to the late-fifteenth-early-sixteenth-century Florentine official Niccolò Machiavelli (d. 1527), the qualities of a ruler can be judged by looking at his entourage. When his officials are 'capable and loyal', the ruler must be wise, since he apparently knew how to 'recognize their capacities and keep them loyal'. However, if they are not, judgement on the ruler must be negative, because 'the first error he makes is made in this selection'.<sup>176</sup>

No wonder that almost all mirrors for princes, both from the European and the Islamic worlds, advise the ruler on the selection of just and loyal officials. When written by officials themselves these advices contain ideal self-images of ethically correct behaviour. How can a prince recognize a just official? What are his characteristics? According to Machiavelli, it is simple. A good official is the one who does not think about himself and does not seek self-interest:

174 Camargo, *Ars Dictaminis*, 20–28; Murphy, *Rhetoric*, 194–268.

175 See Napolitano, 'The Profile', 225.

176 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford, 2005) 79.

For a man who holds the state of another in his hands must never think about himself, but always about his prince, and he must never be concerned about anything that does not concern his prince.<sup>177</sup>

Machiavelli was not the first official from Florence to phrase the moral obligations of his profession in a mirror text. Two centuries earlier, a judge from the same city, Giovanni da Viterbo, pictured the ideal character and attitude of the members of the entourage of the podestà, the city magistrate, in even much more detail than his famous successor. In his *Liber de Regimine Civitatum* in which the judge takes centre stage, he argues that this official should be morally discerning, God-fearing, sober, and chaste. Another Florentine city magistrate, Brunetto Latini, who underlines the importance of the notary in city administration, argues that the latter should similarly be prudent and incorruptible.<sup>178</sup>

The ideal qualities these mirror texts emphasize differ, but their main message is always the importance of loyalty and trustworthiness. The Burgundian high official Guillebert de Lannoy laid most emphasis on non-corrupt behaviour.<sup>179</sup> Others use the cardinal virtues, *justitia*, *prudentia*, *temperantia*, and *fortitudo*, which had been rephrased as political virtues in mirror texts by Thomas Aquinas and Christine de Pisan (d. 1430), in their own political and bureaucratic discourses.<sup>180</sup> The public guidelines on judicial procedure for junior jurists outside the council such as the manuals by Filips Wielant (d. 1520), *Briève instruction* and *Practijke civile*, further emphasize the need for professional solidarity and harmony among officials.<sup>181</sup>

Group consciousness and loyalty towards the other members of the occupation also belong to the scribe's moral codes described in the manuals of the Mamluk and Ottoman officials. In the famous Umayyad treatise by 'Abd al-Hamid that was copied and referred to in many later manuals, solidarity within the group is phrased as follows:

177 Translation by Bondanella in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 80.

178 Napolitano, 'The Profile', 224–227 and 270.

179 See van Leeuwen, *Denkbeelden*, 83, 91 and 99. On accountability, see also John Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170–1300* (New York, 2014).

180 Dumolyn, 'Organische Intellectuelen', 1094. For adjustments in this discourse, see van Leeuwen, *Denkbeelden*, 58. On the role of late medieval jurists in the formulation of political thought, see Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought 300–1450* (London and New York, 1996) 161–167.

181 See also Willem van der Tanerijen (d. 1499), *Boec van de loopender practijken van der Raidtcameren van Brabant*, Willem van den Berge and *Scaecspel*, and Jan van den Berghe and his *Kaetspel*.



If times go hard for someone among you, be kind to him and console him, until everything is well with him again. Should old age make one of you unable to get around and pursue his livelihood and meet his friends, visit him and honour him and consult him, and profit from his outstanding experience and mature knowledge. Each of you should be more concerned for those who treated you well and helped you in your days of need, than for your own children or brothers.<sup>182</sup>

However, for others these high expectations on solidarity triggered mockery. The satirical treatise *Fi Dhamm Akhlaq al-Kuttab* ('On Criticising the Morals of Scribes'), ascribed to al-Jahiz (d. 868/869), for example, mocks the scribes' internal loyalty by calling them the least inclined to mutual sympathy, saying: 'in your mutual hostility and anger you resemble children of concubines and of mothers who are rival wives'.<sup>183</sup>

Besides mutual loyalty, the Mamluk scribe al-Qalqashandi includes in his *Subh al-A'sha* a broad range of more general ethical qualities an official should aspire to. He should be of firm will (*'azm*), of high-aiming ambition (*himma*), and competence (*kifaya*). Further instructions concern the good manners he should display in his contact with others, superiors, inferiors, and equals and on the discretion he needs to fulfil his job.<sup>184</sup> Discretion and the keeping of the ruler's secrets is a recurring topic in mirror literature throughout the Islamic world. It will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The self-perceptions of Chinese literati are first and foremost a reflection on morally upright behaviour. The status of the *shi* was defined by behavioural patterns achieved through self-cultivation and learning.<sup>185</sup> Public-mindedness and commitment to the universal good figured prominently in their self-definitions, as did dutifulness and righteousness.<sup>186</sup> *Shi* would seek a career as official for his moral self-realization instead of for its material benefits.<sup>187</sup>

The strong ethical principles that were supposed to guide the acquisition of knowledge for the 'The Learning of the Way' literati under the Yuan and Ming rulers have already been discussed in the section on the general cultural capital

182 'Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya, 'Risala ila l-kuttab', 174. Trans. Franz Rosenthal in Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, abridged by N.J. Dawood (Princeton, 1989) 204, with some modifications.

183 A *darra* is a fellow or rival wife in a plural marriage. Al-Jahiz, 'Dhamm akhlaq al-kuttab', in: J. Finkel, ed., *Three Essays* (Cairo, 1926) 46–47.

184 Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha*, I, 93–122.

185 Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 78–79.

186 Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 79–80.

187 Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, 82.

of officials. Here some of their views on and continuous concerns about corrupt behaviour and the subversion of the moral good will be given. While many of them accepted a certain differentiation in the distribution of talent among its members, uniformity was, however, indispensable in their ethical behaviour. Zhu Tong (d. ca. 1383), a literatus from a family of officials from Xiuning, argued:

We should none of us engage in luxurious habits or corrupt behaviour, or propose what is unorthodox, for the sake of fame, or pervert the Way (*Dao*) for the sake of agreement, or calculate private profit. This is what we adhere to.<sup>188</sup>

Accusations of corruption and lack of morally upright behaviour were a powerful instrument to discredit one's political enemies. According to many Han Chinese literati, the later Yuan leaders and their military were utterly corrupt and this behaviour negatively influenced local officials. Chen Gao (d. 1367) from Pingyang phrased it as follows:

The military personnel are addicted to violence and tyranny and have no concerns for the people's sufferings. At every moment they put demands on the local officials, and humiliate and maltreat them if they fail to respond with alacrity. Consequently, even those local officials who are known for resolution and fearlessness have no way to resist, and have no choice but to alleviate their own problems by placing ruinous demands upon the people. Daily they apply lashes to wounded skins and bodies and see to it that the exactions are made. On top of this, the corrupt connive in evil and the people are put in further straits.<sup>189</sup>

In short, according to Chen Gao and many of his contemporaries, the harsh late-Yuan rulers and their violent military forces influenced the behaviour of officials. The latter seem to have adopted the corrupt behaviour of the former in their own dealings with the people. According to the Han Chinese literati, this led to the decline of the barbarian empire of the Yuan.

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188 Translation by Dardess, *Confucianism*, 23.

189 Dardess, *Confucianism*, 71.

### 2.3 *Social Awareness*

The ruler resembles the head, the senate [council] takes up the position of the heart, from which good and bad initiatives flow, the provincial juridical and political authorities lay claim to the functions of eyes, ears, and tongue. Officials and military, ever supporting the ruler, can be equated with the arms.<sup>190</sup>

The well-known body metaphor articulated here by the fourteenth-century Italian official and jurist Lucas de Penna<sup>191</sup> not only outlines the interdependence of centre and provinces of the polity but also of the three powerful institutions that will be discussed in this chapter: the ruler, the military, and the officials. The relations between the three will be portrayed from the perspective of the officials. Officials not only formed one of the prominent power groups in imperial politics throughout Eurasia; they were also among the leading authors chronicling the vicissitudes of their polities. Therefore, they constitute our main point of reference on other individuals and groups in society. In other words, our view of these others is greatly coloured by what the people of the pen said about them, by the prejudices they had, the advices and views they wanted to advertise, and, not least, by the way they saw their own position in relation to those others. In their self-definitions, officials frequently refer to the ruler and the military. This chapter will analyse how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis these two other powerholders at court.

#### 2.3.1 The Official and the Ruler

In both the European and Islamic traditions the metaphor of the state as the human body is ubiquitous. While the ruler is the head, the officials are presented as the eyes, ears, or tongues, but often also as the limbs of the human body. In his fourteenth-century *maqama*, the Mamluk scribe al-Qalqashandi sees scribes as ‘the far-seeing eyes of kings, their all-hearing ears, their eloquent tongues and their all-embracing intelligences’.<sup>192</sup> The Umayyad scribe ‘Abd al-

190 Princeps obtinet instar capitis, cordis locum senatus habet, a quo bonorum et malorum procedunt initia. Occulorum, aurium et linguae officia sibi vendicant iudices provinciarum et praesides. Officiales et milites, qui semper assistunt principis lateribus, brachii assimilantur. c.12. For the translation I would like to thank the input of Peter van der Eerden. See also Ullmann, *The Medieval Idea*, 165.

191 See, for example, Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1997 [1957]).

192 Translation by Bosworth, ‘A *Maqāma*’, 296.

Hamid b. Yahya, to whose work al-Qalqashandi refers and whose text is copied by, amongst others, the famous fourteenth-century historian and official Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) added the metaphor of the limbs as well:

Your position with regard to rulers is that you are the ears through which they hear, the eyes through which they see, the tongues through which they speak and the hands through which they touch.<sup>193</sup>

In the Chinese tradition we find different, but analogous metaphors. The ruler, the officials, and the common people are compared to streams of water. The Yuan literatus Liu Ji (d. 1375), who retired from service in 1357 to concentrate on his scholarship, describes it in his *Yu li zi* as follows:

The Son of Heaven is the ocean, the grandees and high officials are rivers and streams, the local officials are creeks, and the common people are springs and rivulets. There is an enormous distance between the rivulets and the ocean, and yet they always flow towards it.<sup>194</sup>

In their collected writings many literati specifically stress their direct access to the court by including answers to the emperor's questions on the classics, letters to the throne, or poems describing certain events at the court.<sup>195</sup> Access to the emperor obviously stood for influence and prestige.

Loyalty and harmony constituted a two-way process and had to be maintained in some way or another. Many advice texts emphasize the ruler's task to make sure his officials are protected and uphold their integrity. Niccolò Machiavelli described this interdependence as follows:

On the other hand, the prince should be mindful of the minister so as to keep him acting well, honouring him, making him rich, putting him in his debt, giving him a share of the honours and responsibilities; so that the minister recognizes that he cannot exist without the prince, so that the many honours he has, prevent him desiring more, so that the abundance

193 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton and New York, 1967) II, 29–30.

194 Translation by Dardess, *Confucianism*, 138.

195 David Robinson, 'The Ming Court', in: David Robinson, ed., *Culture, Courtiers and Competition. The Ming Court (1368–1644)* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 2008) 29.

of his wealth will stop him desiring more riches, and so that his many offices will make him fearful of change.<sup>196</sup>

In these examples the relationship between rulers and officials is portrayed as one of loyalty and harmony. The ruler is the head or the ocean, the officials are the intermediaries through which the ruler observes the world and communicates to his people. The (implicit or explicit) claim of all these descriptions seems to be that as long as the officials and the ruler relate to one another in a harmonious way, the polity will thrive.

However, not all texts about the relationship between rulers and officials are as positive as the previous examples. Loyalty is still present in Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's description, but in his case not based on harmony and respect but motivated by fear, political pragmatism, and survival strategies. In his *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, Tusi advises the official to avoid criticizing a ruler or speaking about his flaws. If an official does so inadvertently, however, 'let him not confess, even though a report may have reached the master—for there is a great discrepancy between a report and an admission'.<sup>197</sup> Disdain towards the ruler and political pragmatism are also apparent in the extract Tusi copied from the treatise *al-Adab al-Kabir* by the famous Arabic-writing Persian scribe and literator Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. ca. 756) who served under the late Umayyads and early Abbasids:

The conditions attached to the service of kings are as follows: the training of the soul to what is distasteful; agreeing with them even in despite of one's own opinion and determining affairs in accordance with their fancies.<sup>198</sup>

And while Tusi still emphasizes the necessity of loyalty despite disagreement, others take a step further and stress the obligation of an official to criticize the ruler. Criticism is most conspicuous in the self-definitions of the Chinese literati. In *The Everlasting Empire* Yuri Pines sketches an image of the *shi* on the eve of the imperial unification (by the end of the Warring States period) as an extremely proud and self-confident group of people who position themselves in a haughty way vis-à-vis the ruler. According to Pines, the tensions between, on the one hand, the *shi*'s arrogance and the disdain they felt for the rulers, and, on the other hand, their political dependence upon him, 'was to inform the

196 Translation by Bondanella in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 80.

197 Translation by Wickens, *Nasirean Ethics*, 239.

198 Translation by Wickens, *Nasirean Ethics*, 241.

lives of Chinese intellectuals for millennia to come'.<sup>199</sup> Pines even cites the view of the prominent Chinese intellectual and political historian Liu Zehua, who claimed that the tensions that the imperial literati felt when serving the throne while keeping an independent critical attitude triggered a kind of psychosis.<sup>200</sup> Whether these tensions actually informed the lives of literati throughout the centuries is difficult to determine. What we do see, however, is that the tensions became in some way or other a literary topic in their self-definitions.

One of the ideals formulated to relieve this tension was the withdrawal from public service either not to return at all or as a temporary measure to protest against corruption at the court and demonstrate one's own integrity. The ideal of withdrawal from society was used as an effective form of political protest, which was formulated during the first millennium but kept its attractions in the centuries to come and became a recurring theme in the literati's self-representations. Yet, not everyone was positive about this ideal of seclusion. The Yuan literatus Liang Yin (d. 1390) condemned withdrawal from service in an essay on how to act as a good Confucian in times of civil crisis such as the late Yuan period:

Now, some argue that it is definitely a good thing when the *shi* as recluse disdains both renown and turmoil and abides in carefree non-involvement, because in that way he can regulate his seven emotions and preserve his Heaven-given nature. When he comes forth to serve a ruler and regulate the people, it will be because his loyalty and his desire for success and fame have been aroused. He will find himself in turmoil rather than in ease. He may exhaust his energy and his spirit. How can he prolong his life this way?

I would simply say that 'prolonging life' demands doing what must be done. It certainly does not mean disobeying Heaven in one's own selfish interest.<sup>201</sup>

Another way of dealing with the tension between self-confidence and subservience and between the obligation to serve and the willingness to criticize the actual political reality was to confront the emperor and formulate criticism. There are numerous examples in Chinese imperial history of literati who criticized the emperor, in veiled language or openly. Famous for its open

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199 Pines, *Everlasting*, 81.

200 Pines, *Everlasting*, 95.

201 Translation by Dardess, *Confucianism*, 95.

and comprehensive criticism is the case of the Ming official Hai Rui (d. 1587) from Hainan. Known for his uncompromising attitudes and integrity, in 1565 he wrote a memorandum for Emperor Shizong (r. 1521–1567) in which he criticized him for forsaking his duties. Shizong felt that this critic went far beyond acceptable behaviour with sentences such as ‘It has already been some time since the people under Heaven started to regard Your Majesty as unworthy.’<sup>202</sup> Hai Rui was sentenced to death, but released after the emperor died a year later. Another famous example is Huang Zongxi (d. 1695). To counterbalance the politics of the ruler and to encourage new generations of critical literati, he pleaded in his *Ming yi dai fang lu* for universal public education with a curriculum not dictated by the court.<sup>203</sup>

While the Chinese literati seem to have been the most outspoken in their criticism of the ruler, similar forms of dissent are found in the advice texts of other literary traditions. Especially the mirror-for-princes texts in both the European and the Islamic worlds often functioned as a vehicle for (veiled) criticism of the ruling monarchs.<sup>204</sup> This was done, for example, by criticizing the ruler’s advisors or courtiers instead of the ruler himself, by praising the good habits of his predecessors instead of the present ruler, or by comparing the ruler to classical and biblical examples.<sup>205</sup>

### 2.3.2 Pen and Sword

The people of the pen reflected in a wide variety of ways upon their relationship with the people of the sword. In the Arabic literary traditions, the penman’s main antagonist is generally the man of the sword. The contrasting images of both groups in the Arabic tradition have come down to us in numerous texts from different genres, from chronicles to poetry. The various arguments are most clearly formulated in so-called literary debates, treatises in which rep-

202 Translation by Ray Huang, *1587: A Year of No Significance* (New Haven, 1981) 130–155. See also Pines, *Everlasting*, 97–100. On Shizong’s relationship with his grand secretaries, see John W. Dardess, *Four Seasons. A Ming Emperor and His Grand Secretaries in Sixteenth-Century China* (Lanham and London, 2016).

203 Wm Theodore de Bary, ‘Introduction’, in: *Waiting for the Dawn. A Plan for the Prince* (New York, 1993) 30–35.

204 See, for example, Frank Tang, ‘Royal Misdemeanour: Princely Virtues and Criticism of the Ruler in Medieval Castile (Juan Gil de Zamora and Alvaro Pelayo)’, in: Istvan P. Bejczy and Cary J. Nederman, eds., *Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages: 1200–1500* (Turnhout, 2007) 99–121; Patricia Crone, *God’s Rule: Government and Islam* (New York, 2004) 315–331.

205 Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice. The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1996).

representatives of pen (*qalam*) and sword (*sayf*) state the various advantages of their position and status, indulge in self-glorification, exhibit their knowledge, and proclaim their superiority over the other. Some of these debates are incorporated in larger collections of advice texts of various kinds.<sup>206</sup> In accordance with their proclaimed, distinct tasks and roles in society, the people of the pen and the people of the sword are presented with contrasting characters. The people of the pen were, for example, supposed to be eloquent and civilized, while courageous behaviour belonged to the domain of the military.<sup>207</sup> Generally, these debates end to the disadvantage of the sword. This should not surprise us since the texts were written by the people of the pen.<sup>208</sup>

What is striking, however, is that some fourteenth-century and later debates no longer present an outright winner.<sup>209</sup> The poet and chancery-secretary Ibn Nubata (d. 1366), for example, refers in his *Risala fi-l-Sayf wa-l-Qalam* ('Treatise on the Sword and the Pen') to Qur'anic verses that praise pen and sword equally. After mentioning verses from the *Surat al-Qalam* (Pen) which have been quoted above,<sup>210</sup> the sword responds with a quotation from the *Surat al-Hadid* (Iron) saying 'and we sent down iron in which is material for mighty war, as well as many benefits for mankind'.<sup>211</sup> A few decades later al-Qalqashandi, who also wrote a debate about pen and sword and included it in his *Subh*

206 See, Adrian Gully, 'The Sword and the Pen in the Pre-Modern Arabic Heritage: A Literary Representation of an Important Historical Relationship', in: Sebastian Günther, ed., *Ideas, Images and Methods of Portrayal. Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam* (Leiden, 2005) 404.

207 Possibly, another promising analytical tool in this regard might be looking at the penmen's self-definition vis-à-vis the swordsmen from a gender perspective and thus analysing (self-) definitions of manliness. In some of the Arabic narratives people of the pen present themselves as cowards juxtaposing the heroic behaviour of soldiers to clearly demarcate both fields of government. Even if other societies show no such persistent distinction between pen and sword, definitions of manliness still might engender new views.

208 For an outline of the antithesis between pen and sword and a general introduction into the genre of the literary debate, see Geert Jan van Gelder, 'The Conceit of Pen and Sword: On an Arabic Literary Debate', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32, no. 2 (1987) 329–360; Gully, 'The Sword and the Pen', 403–430; Ewald Wagner, 'Die arabische Rangstreitdichtung und ihre Einordnung in die allgemeine Literaturgeschichte', *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse*, Jhrg. 1962, nr. 8, 435–476 (1962).

209 The authors of these texts knew one another. Gully, 'The Sword and the Pen', 403–407.

210 See 'Specialized Training' p. 427 above.

211 Verse 25.



*al-A'sha*, concluded his debate with a conciliation of peace between the two antagonists.<sup>212</sup>

Another variation on the relationship between pen and sword is given by the fourteenth-century North African historian and official Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406). In his *Muqaddima*, the first book of his Universal History (*Kitab al-'Ibar*), in which he clearly builds on earlier normative presentations of the ideal official,<sup>213</sup> he does not give general prominence to either pen or sword, but instead argues for a varied picture in which pen and sword take leading roles in turn in specific phases of dynastic history:

It should be known that both the sword and the pen are instruments for the ruler to use in his affairs. However, at the beginning of the dynasty, so long as its people are occupied in establishing power, the need for the sword is greater than that for the pen. In that situation, the pen is merely a servant and agent of the ruler's authority, whereas the sword contributes active assistance.

The same is the case at the end of the dynasty when its group feeling weakens, as we have mentioned, and its people decrease in number under the influence of senility, as we have stated before. The dynasty then needs the support of the military ...

In mid-term of the dynasty, the ruler can to some degree dispense with the sword. His power is firmly established. His only remaining desire is to obtain the fruits of royal authority, such as collecting taxes, holding (property), excelling other dynasties, and enforcing the law. The pen is helpful for (all) that. Therefore, the need for using it increases. The swords stay unused in their scabbards ...<sup>214</sup>

In short, the antagonism between pen and sword was not static, and it is perhaps not surprising that under the military regime of the Mamluks there is room for a more positive view of the sword. The Mamluk administration saw an increasing influence of people of the sword in administrative positions, such as the *ustadar*, one of the senior Mamluk emirs, who was responsible for the court's expenses, and the *dawadar*, the bearer and keeper of the royal

<sup>212</sup> Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha*, XIV. See also Gully, 'The Sword and the Pen', 410.

<sup>213</sup> Maaïke van Berkel, 'Ibn Khaldūn, A Critical Historian at Work. The *Muqaddima* on Secretaries and Secretarial Writing', in: Arnoud Vrolijk and Jan Hogendijk, eds., *O ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture. In Honour of Remke Kruk* (Leiden and Boston, 2007) 247–261.

<sup>214</sup> Translation by Rosenthal, *Muqaddimah*, II, 46–47.

inkwell, who became one of the most important offices in the realm in the late fourteenth-early fifteenth century.<sup>215</sup>

In Mughal India the *munshi* Chandar Bhan 'Brahman' also explicitly refers to the pen and sword as two pillars of the empire in his *Chahar Chaman* ('The Four Gardens'), a text that functioned as a kind of mirror for *munshis*.<sup>216</sup> Unlike many of the earlier Arabic authors and more in line with some of the Mamluk writers, Chandar Bhan does not seem to promote one over the other.<sup>217</sup> On the contrary, he calls for expertise in both fields. While looking back, for example, at the great officials of Akbar's reign (r. 1556–1605) he praises the illustrious minister (*wazir*) Raja Todar Mal, who had received the title of 'Master of the Sword and the Pen' (*sahib al-saif wa al-qalam*).<sup>218</sup>

Chinese history also has a long tradition in referring to the two pillars of government, *wen* (civil) and *wu* (military). The dichotomy was already formulated during the Warring States' period or earlier. Also in China generally, but not exclusively, the literati, the *wen* people, produced the texts discussing these concepts. The literary presentation of the relationship between the two concepts varied throughout the ages and between authors within the same period. So do the actual social relations between the two groups in society. The general tendency since the late Tang period was, however, towards a greater divide between pen and sword. Although some elite families still produced candidates for both *wu* and *wen* positions, separate career paths became the norm. The institutional innovations in the shape of hereditary, registered occupational households during the Yuan period further ensured a separation of civil and military elites.<sup>219</sup> Nevertheless, the early-Ming emperors still seem to have valued martial capacities and scribal qualities alike. The first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–1398) was said to have valued both *wu* and *wen* in a way very similar to Ibn Khaldun's position. By referring to antiquity Zhu Yuanzhang saw clear roles for both groups in society, avoiding giving prominence to either one of them:

215 See also Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration*.

216 Rajeev Kumar Kinra, 'Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of the Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhan Brahman' (PhD dissertation, Chicago, 2008) 203.

217 See Kinra, 'Secretary-Poets', 259–260, 468, 476.

218 Translation by Kinra, 'Secretary-Poets', 187; see also 203 and 259. See also Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare. Indian Frontiers and Highroads to Empire, 1500–1700* (London and New York, 2002) 94.

219 I would like to thank Barend Noordam for this information.

I have heard that in high antiquity when they established their rule the [three] emperors and [five] kings used the military to pacify the world. When it came to preserve their accomplishments, they spoke of the military to spread awe throughout the world. Putting into effect government principles and policies, however, depends on civilian officials. Of these two one must not favour one over the other ... Accordingly, I wish to emulate the institutions of antiquity by establishing two systems of selection for military and civilian affairs and thereby broadly search for worthies in the world [to serve me].<sup>220</sup>

Indeed, during the early-Ming period the sword seems to have been dominant, while the mid-Ming period (1450–1550) saw a decline in the status of the people of the sword, an increasing influence of the literati at the court, and the culmination of the divide between pen and sword.<sup>221</sup> The literati of this period often downplayed the role of the military in their texts and as such were responsible for the biased picture of the Ming military and the relationship between *wu* and *wen* in modern studies.<sup>222</sup>

Under the late-Ming emperors, especially during the reign of Wanli (1572–1620), the people of the sword were able to recover their prestige thanks to the emperors' interest in the martial and their endeavours to counterbalance the power of the civil officials.<sup>223</sup> More important for our analysis of the self-perceptions of officials is, however, the cultural intermingling between people of the pen and the military that we can observe in this period. This resulted in self-definitions that used each other's cultural vocabulary.<sup>224</sup> Military men participated in the culture associated with the literati, such as poetry, writing, painting, and calligraphy.<sup>225</sup> Moreover, men such as the famous general Qi

220 Translation by Elman, *Cultural History*, 72.

221 See John W. Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644. A Concise History of a Resilient Empire* (Lanham, 2011); David Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Harvard, 2013).

222 Robinson, 'The Ming Court', 44–45. See also Nicola Di Cosmo, 'Introduction', in: Nicola Di Cosmo, ed., *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 2009) 2, who refers to recent developments in the historiography as an 'antimilitarist turn'.

223 Kenneth M. Swope, 'Bestowing the Double-edged Sword: Wanli as Supreme Military Commander', in: David Robinson, ed., *Culture, Courtiers and Competition. The Ming Court (1368–1644)* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 2008) 61–115.

224 I would like to thank Barend Noordam for his information on the changing relationships between pen and sword in this period. See also Kathleen Ryor, 'Wen and Wu in Elite Cultural Practices during the Late Ming', in: David Robinson, *Culture, Courtiers and Competition. The Ming Court (1368–1644)* (Cambridge Mass. and London, 2008) 219–242.

225 Ryor, 'Wen and Wu', 220.

Jiguang (d. 1588) became inspired by Neo-Confucianism in general, and by the influential Ming official and philosopher Wang Yangming (d. 1529) in particular, and started to produce texts in which he expressed typical neo-Confucian thoughts, such as the yearning for the suppression of desires and the obedience to the mind-heart.<sup>226</sup> His son characterized his father in the preface to his biography as follows:

In order to cut the too high costs, which were uncongenial at the time, he returned to the Guards unit that had existed for a long time. His filial piety [to his family] became his loyalty [to the dynasty]; he did not manage his family members and their livelihoods and he happily engaged himself in the Classics. He was especially good at poetry and writing classical Chinese prose; he was an indirect follower of Yangming,<sup>227</sup> he greatly expounded innate knowing of the good and in his heart he was transparently clear to the point of being pure and chaste. He took command of the refined and the vulgar having a Confucian's spirit and appearance.<sup>228</sup>

Similarly, literati, especially from areas that suffered frequent raids such as the Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian coasts and the northern frontiers, started to emphasize the importance of both pen and sword. Moreover, in their texts they indicated the problems that had arisen due to the preference of the pen and the downgrading of the sword. The official Xu Xuemo (second half of the sixteenth century), for example, phrased it as follows:

When I was a vice commissioner for military affairs in Xiangyang, some officials of the prefectural administration were not willing to be in the company of the guard commander to pay their respects to the higher provincial authorities ... I said, 'As in the way of Heaven, there is a *yang* and a *yin*, so in the court there are civilian and military officials. Why should one insult the other?'<sup>229</sup>

In the European tradition, the relationship between pen and sword was rather different. Both groups were often less clearly distinguishable in the sources. In

226 On the concept of the 'heart-mind' see Rodney L. Taylor and Howard Y.F. Choy, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Confucianism*, 2 volumes (New York, 2005) 236–237.

227 Which means that he did not learn directly from the Master himself.

228 Zuoguo Qi, *Qi Shaobao nianpu*, Yangwen Gao and Qi Tao, eds. (Beijing, 2003) 1–2. For the translation and reference to this quote I would like to thank Barend Noordam.

229 Translation by Ryor, 'Wen and Wu', 221.

the beginning of our period the people of the pen, often clerics, did not clearly identify as state officials and neither did they position themselves vis-à-vis the other pillar of state administration, those handling the sword.<sup>230</sup> However, in the course of the sixteenth century a more evident and distinguishable self-image arose among the people of the pen and clearer traces of the divide between robe and sword became apparent.<sup>231</sup> The quote from a text by Robert Dallington, Norfolk schoolmaster in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, shows interesting parallels with the polemics written in the Chinese and the Islamic territories:

And sure if there be difference in Nobilitie, as there must needes bee, because the causes bee different; for some are ennobled by their valour and Martiall knowledge, and others by their Offices and prudence in the manage of matters of Estate: I see no reason, but that these last should be holden the more noble Nobilitie, if I may so say: alwayes giving the first to them that are of Noble houses by Race.<sup>232</sup>

This growing self-awareness of the pen vis-à-vis the sword can be linked to the growing influence of 'robe' officials in the social reality of European polities. However, the nobility continued to identify with the traditional values of the sword, despite the incorporation of penmen among their ranks.

### Conclusion

Self-conscious groups of state officials propagating an occupational ethos and defining the group's role in the political arena can be found in all three regions of this analysis in the period 1300–1600. The Chinese late-Yuan and early-Ming literatus Wei Su (d. 1372), the Mamluk chancery scribe al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418), and the Neapolitan jurist and high official Lucas de Penna (d. 1390) all wrote

230 See also Hamish Scott, *Forming Aristocracy: The Reconfiguration of Europe's Nobilities c. 1300–1750* (forth coming).

231 For épée-robe clashes in different situations and phases in France, see J.H.M. Salmon, 'Storm over the Noblesse', *Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 2 (1981) 242–257. For earlier examples perhaps: Autrand, who argues that the members of the *Parlement* claimed a self-confident robe-ideal. Autrand, *Naissance*, 245–261 and 263–267.

232 Robert Dallington, *The View of France*, W.P. Barrett, ed. (London, 1936 [1604]). Quoted from Salmon, 'Storm', 242.

about the role of the pen in their polities and the indispensable expertise needed for this job.

While the position and status of the people of the pen were debated throughout Eurasia in the period 1300–1600, the detailed comparisons within this chapter have demonstrated that the emergence and growth of self-awareness among these groups followed different paths. The various forms of bureaucratic self-identification have been determined, firstly, by the rhythms of administrative institutionalization, which sparked the emergence of extensive administrative apparatuses. Secondly, the use of written records and the presence of older scribal traditions have been pivotal in the crystallization of bureaucratic identities. And lastly, the interaction of the various power groups at court, and the ways in which the people of the pen identified with each of them, have shaped their self-images.

Chinese literati cultivated a scribal curriculum and self-confident ethos from the Warring States (453–221 BCE) onwards, which reached maturity under the Han dynasty going hand in hand with growing centralization, the introduction of state examinations for officials, and the incorporation of Confucian teaching into their education. Curriculum and ethos were not static—they kept on changing throughout the centuries—but nevertheless the Chinese literati of the Yuan and Ming dynasties could and mostly did refer to these long-standing practices and ideals. Under the Ming, the civil examinations became the decisive recruitment mechanism. Neo-Confucianism was elevated to an empire-wide ideology for officials.

The counterparts of the Chinese literati in the Islamic world started to formulate their codes of conduct in Arabic treatises in the course of the eighth century. An important stepping stone for state formation was the development of a set of relatively uniform and centralized bureaucratic practices under the Umayyads. However, the codes of conduct reached maturity under the Abbasids with the expansion of the administration, the introduction and growing use of paper, and the development of a culture that valued writing highly and put trust in written documentation. The Umayyad and Abbasid scribes did not need to develop bureaucratic practices and ideals from scratch, but could build on previous Persian and Byzantine scribal cultures. Many of the early scribes of the Arabic-Islamic caliphate came from scribal families who also had served the Byzantines or Sassanian rulers. In their turn, later officials whether employed by the Mamluks, the Ottomans, or the Mughals referred to their Arabic predecessors and drew from these bureaucratic traditions.

In most polities of post-Roman Europe a substantial and self-aware group of state officials propagating a scribal culture in manuals and treatises did not emerge until the later Middle Ages, with differences in timespan between

England—among the pioneers—and the German Empire—among the late-comers. A clearly defined group ethos started to develop in the later Middle Ages in Europe with growing state formation, which went hand in hand with the rise of a new, specialized elite staffing the institutions of these polities and the increase of written records in these institutions. Moreover, in Europe social constellations differed from those in the Chinese and Islamic worlds. In early and high medieval Europe scribes had been mostly clerics whose religious, political, or familial, rather than their occupational, identity and affiliations had prevailed. In the course of the period 1300–1600, laymen entered the administrations, but even then religious or noble identities remained dominant, and newcomers aspired to become part of the socially superior nobility instead of defining a separate occupational ideology. However, from then onwards, European officials did start to refer to their own classical, often Roman, legal, epistolary, and rhetorical traditions in instruction texts.<sup>233</sup>

Throughout Eurasia the gradual development from a patrimonial to a more meritocratic officialdom seems to have been pivotal in the ideal presentation of a self-conscious identity among officials. Some of the most detailed and recurring themes in the self-presentations of the people of the pen are those describing the training, expertise, and erudition of the group. It was not their pedigree, but their learnedness—achieved through superior education and specialized training—that, in their self-perceptions, distinguished them from the other groups in society and which they advertised in their self-representations to legitimize their position.

Yet, while self-presentations emphasize the meritocratic prerequisites of the job, social reality was more nuanced. The investment in the years of study needed to pass the civil examinations in the Chinese territories often were out of reach for members of artisan and farmer families. For their selection, entry level, and professional success, officials of the Islamic administrations remained highly dependent upon informal and personal networks. Similarly,

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233 For similar conclusions on the diverging trajectories of the various Eurasian worlds, see Patrick J. Geary, Daud Ali, Paul S. Atkins, Michael Cooperson, Rita Costa Gomes, Paul Dutton, Gert Melville, Claudia Rapp, Karl-Heinz Spieß, Stephen West and Pauline Yu, 'Courtly Cultures: Western Europe, Byzantium, the Islamic World, India, China, and Japan', in: Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *The Cambridge World History, Volume 5: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500 CE–1500 CE* (Cambridge, 2015) 179–205. Unfortunately, I was unable to check the following, relevant publication, which appeared after I finished this chapter: Peter Crooks, *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History. From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2016).

the highest positions in the European administrations could only be reached with the right connections.

In all three regions officials produced self-images in texts that can be classified under the generic term of advice (or mirror) literature. Numerous variations exist, stylistically and thematically, not only between the three regions of this analysis, but also within each of the regions, from author to author and genre to genre. Advice texts by and for state officials proved to be more numerous in the Islamic and Chinese traditions in the period 1300–1600, but were also present in Europe.

Through the comparative approach of this chapter conspicuous differences between the three regions in the position of the authors of these texts and their place within the administration have become apparent. In Europe, most self-images were produced by the top judicial administrators of the emerging polities, some of them clerics. Instruction texts for financial and chancery officials are more pragmatic and contain fewer obvious identity markers. In the Chinese territories officials of various ranks wrote on the identity of the group and collected important texts by famous predecessors. Their culture and ideology were directly related to a broader group of people who had passed the civil examinations, but did not work as state officials. In the Islamic world, the officials propagating a group ethos mostly belonged to the group of the epistolary scribes staffing the chanceries.

The detailed comparative analysis of the self-perceptions of officials enabled me to demonstrate a few remarkable parallels in the themes discussed in advice texts by officials throughout the three main worlds of our book. The emphasis on education and expertise has already been mentioned. More in particular, a threefold division into general cultural literacy; specialized training in, for example, calligraphy, law, accounting, or epistolary traditions; and moral upbringing is apparent. Notable variations exist in the presentation of the capacities of various specialized groups of officials. The Chinese literati disdainfully cast aside lesser functionaries, clerks, runners, and notaries, while Arabic chancery scribes do the same with their financial colleagues. Obviously, what is presented in the advice literature is an ideal self-image, a norm. In everyday life, these ideals were often far from being achieved. Embezzlement, nepotism, neglect, ignorance, lack of collegiality, malice, and sloppiness were common in all administrations. What these texts do show, however, is that officials developed clear ideas on what good and bad governance should be and how as a group they should contribute to it.

While self-representations on training and ethics show obvious parallels throughout Eurasia, the portrayal of social relations has, at first sight, more variations. All three traditions emphasize a kind of natural hierarchy and con-



nectedness between ruler and official, using metaphors such as the head and arms of a human body or the various rivers and streams flowing to the ocean. However, Chinese literati seem much more explicit and self-confident in their criticism of the ruler than their counterparts in the Islamic and European worlds. Although in everyday life many Chinese literati also complied, afraid of jeopardizing their hard-won position, it remained part of their Confucian ideals to keep a critical attitude towards the ruler and act as his guide. Dissidence and criticism are not absent in European and Islamic mirrors, but presented in codes and through veiled arguments by, for example, praising 'good' predecessors or criticizing the 'bad' advisors of the ruler.

Variations across Eurasia are also discernible in the way in which officials portray the relationship between pen and sword. The Islamic and Chinese worlds have a long tradition of contrasting pen and sword in their literary culture. Such a dichotomy is less prominent in the self-presentations of European officials, although from the sixteenth century onwards the competition between robe and *épée* became a recurring theme in polemical texts. In analysing the relationship between pen and sword, ideal presentations and literary polemics are again often quite far removed from social realities. In everyday life many forms of cooperation and overlap between the worlds of pen and sword existed. Ibn Khaldun argued that pen and sword often alternated in their positions: the sword was prominent during regime changes and the pen in times of consolidation. In sixteenth-century Ming China the military elite identified with the pen culture of the literati. A few striking variations in pen-sword relations between our three major regions have become apparent. In Europe the dominant upper echelon of nobles still cultivated its traditional connections with battlefield glory, although in the course of the centuries it had incorporated many men risen in government office. For the Chinese territories in the Song-Yuan-Ming era *wen* seems to have been on top despite shorter periods of *wu* dominance.<sup>234</sup> In the Islamic world the picture is more diffuse. The pen was the culturally dominant group and often epitomized the ideal, but in social reality the sword generally took the lead and dominated politics.

By positioning themselves vis-à-vis other groups in society and by defining their own qualities and expertise, officials claimed an indispensable role in the imperial enterprise. They legitimized their position by emphasizing time and again that only those who were well-trained and refined could access official-

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234 Recent authors such as David Robinson have emphasized the necessity to qualify and revise the biased and harmonized image of court politics produced by literati, but they do not question the social and cultural prominence of *wen* culture.

dom. Their role was one of intermediary between ruler and subject, eloquently communicating the ruler's decrees to his subjects, morally defending good governance and correcting individuals whenever necessary. Officials saw themselves as the ears through which the ruler heard, the eyes through which he saw, and the tongue through which he spoke.

Obviously, social reality was less one-dimensional and smooth. The exalted ideals on expertise, erudition, and just rule were hard to meet, in the first place for officials themselves, but also for the rulers they served. Many were tempted to feather their own nest. And even highly erudite, well-trained, and just officials who had passed every possible examination remained dependent on the whims of the ruler and the competition for access to him with, for example, eunuchs, court women, and the people of the sword. However able they may have been, they were never sure of their position. Generally, they had to gain or secure their status by compromising their high ideals and complying with their superiors' wishes. Through their pen they had reached a good position and through their pen they earned a living and could secure their reputation for the future. As the Mamluk scribe al-Qalqashandi explained while deliberating on his own position: it might not be ideal, but working as an official was the best possible option for someone like him, someone with the mind of a scholar. Al-Qalqashandi sketches a compelling picture of the people of the pen: not only have they been successful in directing our visions of officialdom, but on an even wider scale, as scholars and writers, they channelled, and continue to determine, our views on the history of their polities and are thus, posthumously, also holding the historians' pens.

# The Golden Horde, the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy, and the Construction of Ruling Dynasties

*Marie Favereau Doumenjou and Liesbeth Geevers*

## Introduction: What is Dynastic Rule?

When reading historical works one gets the impression that ‘dynasty’ is an obvious and ubiquitous notion.<sup>1</sup> Historians make use of the term to identify ruling lineages (the Jagiellonians, the Shibanids) and to structure time (Tudor England, Safavid Iran, Ming China). However, even in a Western context, the term dynasty was rarely used before the sixteenth century, and many of our dynastic labels were unknown to the people who are now identified by them.<sup>2</sup> In a sense, historical dynasties are thus in part the historian’s invention.

Yet, dynastic rule, understood as a political regime, remains a key tool to study empires. Even if they were all intrinsically different, empires had in common the fact that they were not nation states, nor republics, but they were usually headed by hereditary rulers (or conquerors who wanted to establish hereditary rule). What is more, the fate of the dynasty was closely connected to the fate of the empire. A lack or an abundance of heirs might lead to the collapse of the empire and the dispersion of its territories. These factors caused dynasties to be perhaps the main agent of cohesion within empires, so the question how dynasties maintained their position of power—by passing on their territories to their heirs, by constructing a loyalty-inspiring idea of their identity and mission, and by functioning as a ruling group—should be a central one in the study of empires. Dynastic rule was deeply intermingled with

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1 As Jeroen Duindam’s recent study pointed out, dynasty is almost a universal and yet an ongoing process that needs to be contextualized and conceptualized: Duindam, *Dynasties: A Global History of Power, 1300–1800* (Cambridge, 2015).

2 The Jagiellonians, for example, never referred to themselves as such before the sixteenth century. See ‘The Jagiellonians’, a ERC-funded project led by Natalia Nowakowska. Consulted online on 23 November 2016: <http://www.jagiellonians.com/>.

kinship in most Eurasian empires.<sup>3</sup> Emperors, shahs, khans, and kings, whatever title(s) they used, often inherited their position because of their familial affiliations (including kinship through marriage or adoption). But even in elective systems, in which family connections supposedly were less important, the rulers had to be part, to some extent, of the ruling lineage.<sup>4</sup>

One more point needs to be stressed: the hereditary or elective ruler did not always rule as a monarch, that is, on his own. Collective forms of government were, in fact, standard. As Jeroen Duindam has pointed out, many discrepancies could exist between the ideal of a virile, warrior ruler and reality—which might see weak or underage individuals on the throne, who were much more dependent on their entourage.<sup>5</sup> Also, Theresa Earenfight has argued recently that ‘kingship’ is too often narrowly defined as the rule of one (usually male) individual, while in practice rulers were always aided by others in their immediate vicinity—their spouses, advisers, generals, or relatives. She suggests using the term ‘rulership’, conceptualized as a ‘flexible sack’ that allows space for the ruler and any of his immediate ‘co-workers’ who were his partners in rule.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, whenever the actual ruler did not fit the model of the strong leader, or in fact, in any situation, we must take into account others who were indispensable for the rule of the empire.

Since succession was at times elective, and dynastic rule was more collegial than is commonly assumed—basically it was an oligarchic regime—we should think of dynasties as groups rather than as sequences of individual rulers. Accepting this as our point of departure, we choose to analyse in depth the construction of such ‘dynastic groups’ at the centre of the Golden Horde and the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy, adopting a more concentrated comparative approach than our colleagues. Rather than placing our dynasties in the context of the court (which has been discussed at length in chapter 1) we will focus on the dynastic groups themselves and trace their evolution and internal structure.

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3 This was a widespread phenomenon, but not universal (the Mamluks and the Holy Roman Empire are cases in point).

4 Armin Wolf, ‘The Family of Dynasties in Medieval Europe: Dynasties, Kingdoms and *Tochterstämme*’, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 12 (1991) 183–260 argues that although the Holy Roman imperial title was elective, the chosen one was usually a close relative of his predecessor at least in the female line.

5 Duindam, *Dynasties*, chapter 1.

6 Theresa Earenfight, ‘Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe’, *Gender & History* 19, no. 1 (2007) 1–21.

How will we do this? Historians have not pondered the concept of dynasty or dynastic groups at length, but the few definitions that are available provide useful building blocks for our approach. Wolfgang Weber, writing about early modern Europe, points out that the formation of a dynasty entailed more than simply mechanisms to safeguard family assets for future generations. Cultural issues were also involved, for instance the 'historicizing' of kinship ties by replacing the unclear and recent family roots with the 'discovery'—that is to say, in many cases the creation—of a more extended line of descent. The purpose of the dynasty was not only to transmit the family's material and immaterial assets, but also to embody the sense of obligation to keep on doing this.<sup>7</sup> In this way, being part of a dynasty meant a lack of freedom to act in one's own best interest and an obligation to act in the best interest of the wider collective. To impose such discipline, successful dynasties depended on socializing the offspring into the dynasty.<sup>8</sup>

Comparable concepts from the steppe world exist. The Mongols called the lineage of Chinggis Khan the 'golden lineage', which we shall discuss at length in this chapter. Sergei Nekliudov emphasizes the meaning of the 'gold' quality of the Chinggisid lineage, by stating:

At its base lay first of all, two mythological ideas: eternity (indestructibility, agelessness) and value (initiating principle, essence), which form four semantic categories (or fields): the golden source, golden principles, golden center, and golden essence (the very highest degree of quality).<sup>9</sup>

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7 Wolfgang E.J. Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung und Staatsbildung. Die Entfaltung des frühmodernen Fürstenstaates', in: Wolfgang E.J. Weber, ed., *Der Fürst. Ideen und Wirklichkeiten in der europäischen Geschichte* (Cologne, 1998) 91–136, 95: 'eine optimierte Erscheinungsform der Familie, die sich durch erhöhte Identität (und damit verstärkte Abgrenzung nach Außen), ausdrücklich gemeinsam genutzten (individueller Verfügung durch Familienmitglieder entzogenen) Besitz (Güter, Ränge, Rechte, Ämter), im Interesse ungeschmälerter Besitzweitergabe bzw. maximaler Besitzerweiterung bewußt gesteuerte Heirat und Vererbung sowie daher in der Regel gesteigerte historische Kontinuität auszeichnet. Sowohl die Entstehung einer Dynastie als auch deren Verfestigung sind deshalb wesentlich als Ergebnis bewußten Handelns aufzufassen, welchem entsprechend typische Elemente und Muster zugeschrieben werden können.'

8 Weber, 'Dynastiesicherung', 98–99.

9 Sergei Iu. Nekliudov, 'Zametki o mifologicheskoi i fol'klorno-epicheskoi simvolike y mongol'shikh narodov: simvolike zolota', *Etnografija Polska* 24, no. 1 (1980) 65–94, 86. Quoted in Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge, 1987) 61.

When we apply these ideas to the Chinggisid lineage, we have an image of an indestructible and ageless lineage whose members possessed the very highest degree of quality. More recently, Tatyana Skrynnikova has shown how Chinggis Khan successfully established the supremacy of his own lineage over all others, including the old ruling lineages of the Kereit and the Naiman.<sup>10</sup>

Chinggis Khan was not only successful on the battlefield; he was a seasoned politician. He created a new hierarchy among the steppe peoples in which prestige was associated with his person, ancestors, next of kin, and close friends. After his death in 1227, the Chinggisid patrilineality remained the backbone of the Mongol imperial power, but the succession process passed into the hands of the Mongol elites. The Chinggisid extended family and the non-Chinggisid groups that belonged to the maternal lines of the throne contenders took part in the succession process. Thus the choice of the new khan was always the result of elite consensus, and the Chinggisid dynasty, with its golden lineage, was the end product of complex political negotiations.

Both European and Asian examples point to the existence of a collective identity among members of dynasties, since they display a shared awareness of belonging to a group and their actions were shaped by this awareness. We will therefore approach dynastic groups as collectives, focusing on the construction of their identities and the workings of their internal relationships. To this general approach, we need to add an analysis of succession practices. After all, the defining element of any dynasty is that there was something—lordships or other positions of power, status, moveable assets, and claims to them, but also, in our own times, companies, etc.—to be passed on to the next generation.

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10 Tatyana Skrynnikova, 'Relations of Domination and Submission: Political Practice in the Mongol Empire of Chinggis Khan', in: David Sneath, ed., *Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth-Twentieth Centuries* (Bellingham, WA., 2007) Chapter 3, 85–115. On the socio-political organizations of the east-Asian steppe world in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the formation of the Mongol empire, see Christopher Atwood, 'Borjigid' and 'Mongol Tribe', in: Christopher Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York, 2004) 44–45; 389–391; Christopher Atwood, 'How the Mongols Got a Word for Tribe—and What It Means', *Studia Historica Mongolica* 10 (2010) 63–89; Isenbike Togan, *Flexibility & Limitation in Steppe Formations. The Kerait Khanate & Chinggis Khan* (Leiden, 1998); Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, 'Where Did the Mongol Empire Come From? Medieval Mongol Ideas of People, State and Empire', *Inner Asia* 13 (2011) 211–237; Paul Buell and Judith Kolbas, 'The Ethos of State and Society in the Early Mongol Empire: Chinggis Khan to Güyük', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2016) 43–56.

The process of distributing such assets is closely connected both to the identity of the group (relating to a certain area, or to a certain mythical ancestor) and its internal dynamics (defining the hierarchy among the main inheritors, minor inheritors and those who lost out altogether).<sup>11</sup> Focusing on the evolving practices surrounding the succession, the construction of identities, and social relations among family members will bring us closer to understanding how dynastic ruling groups shaped and maintained their empires.

In this chapter, we look at these three key components of the dynasty: the generational transfer of dynastic assets, its conceptual underpinning, and the social reality of rule in two historical contexts. We will deal first with the Golden Horde, and then we turn to the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy. The two parts of this chapter share the same tripartite layout. In the first section we discuss how the lineage developed its succession practices through written and oral laws and non-codified traditions, and we discuss the conditions of access to the throne. Such practices were invariably developed through negotiations with powerful leaders and elites. In the second section we unravel the dynastic concept to show a) how the lineage connected itself to its possessions, justifying its position at the apex of society; b) how individuals claimed membership in the lineage and thus access to its assets, and/or c) how members of the lineage conceived of themselves as a group, being 'glued' together by common descent, common traditions, and common characteristics.<sup>12</sup> The third section will concern the social reality of dynastic rule. As we have noted above, dynastic rule was often more collegial or oligarchic than historians have presented, so we will analyse the roles different members of the dynastic family played in ruling the empire and how this social reality relates to the concepts that were developed.

Why did we choose the Jochids, Chinggisid rulers of the Golden Horde, and the House of Austria, whose Spanish branch ruled the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy as our case studies? They appear to represent extremely different cases that are often accepted as models for contrasting European and Asian imperial traditions. Both fit in a wider dynastic tradition: respectively

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11 O.J. Hekster, *Emperors and Ancestors: Roman Rulers and the Constraints of Tradition* (Oxford, 2015) follows a similar approach in his seminal work, discussing in his Introduction first succession, family structure, and representation (as well as notions of kingship) to define dynastic rule.

12 Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, "Every Inch a King." Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds', in: Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, eds., *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leiden and Boston, 2013) 1–23, 3.

the Chinggisids and the longer-lasting Austrian Habsburgs. The Habsburgs are frequently depicted as the typical, stable European dynasty, ruling its various domains for many centuries and, on the whole, following a steady pattern of succession. The Chinggisids, conversely, are seen as the epitome of the dynamic and violent steppe tradition, with ever-contested successions known mostly for their meteoric rise to power and limited capacity for consolidation. Spanish Habsburgs ruled over European populations organized into different political entities (like the kingdom of Castile and the duchy of Milan), for the most part Christian and sedentary; the Golden Horde stretched over Russia and Central Asia and was predominantly Muslim and controlled by nomads. However, both in the Golden Horde and the Spanish-Habsburg composite state, the royal lineage was a key institution, which held people together in the absence of other institutions that could perform this function (such as the Parliament in England). Both, as we have seen, were connected to a meta-empire, the medieval Habsburgs and the Chinggisids respectively, but established their rule in new areas; in fact they were almost equally successful and enduring, ruling from 1504 to 1700 and the 1220s to the 1550s respectively. Within their own geographical and chronological contexts, the Chinggisids and their offshoots were among the most influential Asian dynasts, whose 'governing practices' and legitimizing charisma would dominate later Central Asian and Crimean khanates, while the Habsburgs count among the most successful dynasties in Europe, presiding over an impressive conglomerate of states, of the type that is nowadays held as typical for early modern Europe. These two cases will allow us to make an in-depth comparison of dynastic rule, based on our knowledge of relevant primary sources for each case. By working together, each of us building on and expanding her previous regional expertise, we intend to avoid a lopsided comparison which favours one case over the other and thus reinforces clichés. We take neither of the two cases as the model with which the other is contrasted, but rather wish to approach each case on the basis of the open questions and criteria we have sketched above. This empirical and open-minded approach should allow us to gain insights into the phenomenon of dynastic rule, which may be applicable more generally—to other periods and other empires.

The aim of our comparative research is not to give a list of differences and similarities, but to re-think our use of the terms 'dynasty' and 'dynastic rule' in general. How should historians break down these terms in order to make sense of the political structure at the centre of empires? We aim to show that 'dynasty' had various meanings—the often haphazard sequence of rulers that were related to each other; the stories they developed to justify their rule, that could change as the circumstances of rule changed; but also the



'mixed bag' of others who were essential for rule but were not necessarily part of the dynastic discourse. In expanding our understanding of what 'dynasty' is, we intend to undermine detrimental clichés about European and Asian historical developments that stand in the way of source-based comparisons, and thus we aim to provide a research agenda for future global historians of empires.

## 1 The Golden Horde

### 1.1 *How to Become Khan*

#### 1.1.1 The Mongol Empire's Achilles Heel

The formation of the Mongol empire was a revolution that turned the Old World upside down. Under the banner of Chinggis Khan (c. 1165–1227), the nomads of the Eurasian steppes unified and expanded on an unprecedented scale. From their core area, the Onon valley in northern Mongolia, they conquered and integrated China, Central Asia, Anatolia, Eastern Europe, Russia and the Siberian plains, Afghanistan, and Iran. At its height, in 1279, the Great Mongol Empire embraced the two thirds of Eurasia.

The *Yeke Mongghol Ulus*, Great Mongol Empire, was the largest nomadic empire of Eurasia as the Mongols reached the ecological limits of the continental steppes. Its formation occurred in the vein of a successful series of political regimes that flourished in the Eurasian steppes over a millennium. The Mongols were aware of this historical continuity and claimed the legacy of the former polities that had created huge superstructures, especially the Türk (c. 552–743), the Uyghurs (744–840), and the Khitan (907–1125). They captured their political prestige, copied their administration, and claimed the same agenda: unifying 'the people of the felt-walled tents', the nomads of the steppes.<sup>13</sup> They built their imperial city of Qara Qorum in the sacred land of the Türk, the Orkhon Valley, and chose the Uyghur script as their imperial script. They also consciously created a new regime. *The Secret History of the Mongols*,

13 On the legacies of the previous steppe empires and the rich repertoire of political symbols and practices that were available to the Mongols, see Nicola Di Cosmo, 'Ancient Inner Asian Nomads: Their Economic Basis and Its Significance in Chinese History', *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1994) 1092–1126; 'State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History', *Journal of World History* 10 (1999) 1–40; *Ancient China and its Enemies: the Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge, 2002). On the critical notion of repertoire of power, see Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 2010).

like all the official histories of the Mongols, emphasize Chinggis Khan's role of founder. His title of 'universal ruler' captured his intention to be a ground-breaking ruler, more powerful than his predecessors.<sup>14</sup>

In accordance and agreement with his own mind he [Chinggis Khan] established a rule for every occasion and a regulation for every circumstance; while for every crime he fixed a penalty. And since the Tartar peoples had no script of their own, he gave orders that Mongol children should learn writing from the Uighur; and that these yasas and ordinances should be written down on rolls. These rolls are called the Great Book of Yasas and are kept in the treasury of the chief princes. Wherever a khan ascends the throne, or a great army is mobilized, or the princes assemble and begin [to consult together] concerning affairs of state and the administration thereof, they produce these rolls and model their actions thereon.<sup>15</sup>

From eastern to western Asia, the Mongol empire swallowed the biggest empires of their time: the Tangut, the Jin, the Song, the Qara-khitan, the Khwarazmshah, the Abbasids, and the Seljuks of Rum. As 'the only super-power' of the thirteenth century, the Mongols dictated a new world order and created alternative nexuses of exchanges. Under their rule, the leading political centres of the continent were moved closer to the steppes hinterland: Kaifeng, Hangzhou, Balasaghun, Kiev, and Baghdad were replaced by Qara Qorum, Almaliq, Beijing, Saray on the lower Volga, Maragha, and Tabriz.<sup>16</sup> The great khans became potential allies for the Latin world and received embassies from the kings of France, England, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Papacy. After two centuries of clashes between Christians and Muslims, the Mongols appeared as the third force that might break the status quo and tilt the balance in favour of Christendom. In fact, the attitude of the Mongols towards religion was very different from European and Islamic practices as they accumulated

14 On the possible meaning of this title, see Igor de Rachewiltz, 'The Title Činggis Qan/Qayan Reconsidered', in: Walther Heissig and Klaus Sagaster, eds., *Gedanke und Wirkung. Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag von Nikolaus Poppe* (Wiesbaden, 1989) 281–298.

15 'Ala-ad-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvayni, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, trans. J.A. Boyle (Manchester, 1958) vol. 1, 25. Juvayni was a Persian secretary working for the Mongols, who wrote this text in the early 1250s.

16 Michal Biran, 'The Mongol Empire and Inter-Civilizational Exchange', in: Benjamin Z. Kedar and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, eds., *The Cambridge World History. Volume 5: Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500CE–1500CE* (Cambridge, 2015) 534; 554.

religious beliefs rather than focusing on one single confession. Even after some Mongol rulers converted to Christianity and others to Islam and Buddhism, they never forced their subjects to follow their choice.<sup>17</sup>

After Chinggis Khan died in August 1227, it took the Mongols two years to agree on his successor: Ögödei (r. 1229–1241). The right to rule was held exclusively by Chinggis Khan's family, but the final decision remained in the hands of a much larger group. Instead of following the steppe herders' inheritance laws, which might have inspired Chinggis Khan when he apportioned his subject peoples and their lands among his next of kin, the supreme office was not passed on to Tolui, his youngest son.<sup>18</sup> The official version has opportunely established that, a few years before he died, Chinggis Khan designated his third son Ögödei as his heir. But he was not Chinggis Khan's first choice.

Jochi, the eldest son of Chinggis Khan and his chief wife Börte, was the heir apparent until the Central-Asian campaign of 1219–1221.<sup>19</sup> Indeed Chinggis Khan gave him not only the biggest lot of peoples and territories, he granted him a leading position in the western and north-western campaigns:

When during the reign of Chingiz-Khan the kingdom became of vast extent he assigned to everyone his place of abode, which they call yurt ... To his eldest son, Tushi [Jochi], he gave the territory stretching from the regions of Qayaligh and Khorazm to the remotest part of Saqsin and Bulghar and as far in that direction as the hoof of Tartar horse had penetrated.<sup>20</sup>

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17 On the Mongol religious tolerance (as a distinctive political tool) see: Christopher Atwood, 'Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty: Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century', *The International History Review* 26, no. 2 (2004) 237–256; Peter Jackson, 'The Mongols and the Faith of the Others', in: Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, eds., *Mongols, Turks and Others* (Leiden, 2005) 245–290.

18 On pre-mortem inheritance laws and traditions in the East-Asian steppe and on how they might have inspired Chinggis Khan's apportionment system, see Jennifer Holmgren, 'Observations on Marriage and Inheritance Practices in Early Mongol and Yuan Society, With Particular Reference to the Levirate', *Journal of Asian History* 20, no. 2 (1986) 148–149; Christopher Atwood, 'Family', in: Christopher Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York, 2004) 173–174.

19 Christopher Atwood, 'Jochi and the Early Western Campaigns', in: Morris Rossabi, ed., *How Mongolia Matters: War, Law, and Society* (Leiden and Boston, 2017) 35–56.

20 Juvayni, *The History of the World-Conqueror*, 42.

But Jochi died in February 1227, a few months before his father.<sup>21</sup> His son Batu, who succeeded him, could not compete with his uncles to claim the throne of Chinggis Khan as he was a junior.<sup>22</sup> After Jochi's death, his descendants—though they were able to keep a prominent place in the empire—were evicted from the imperial succession by the other branches of the Chinggisid family. The Ögödeids, who ruled until the death of Great Khan Güyük (r. 1246–1248), and the Toluids who managed to hold power from the reign of Great Khan Möngke onwards (r. 1251–1259), were the most successful lineages. In less than a generation, the descendants of Chagatay, like the descendants of Jochi, were displaced from the central power. But they still had some say in the succession process and could interfere with the choice of the candidates.

After the death of Möngke, two candidates competed for the throne: Kublai and Arigh Böke. The Jochids supported Arigh Böke and refused to recognize Kublai as the new great khan. The political disagreement turned into an inter-Mongol war. In 1264, Kublai finally eliminated Arigh Böke but could not prevent the empire from splitting. The four *ulus*, sub-empires, that emerged were all headed by grandsons and great-grandsons of Chinggis Khan; yet, they sanctioned the domination of the lineages coming from only three of his sons: the Toluids (later known as the Yuan) ruled over China, Tibet, and Mongolia, as well as Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Eastern Anatolia (later known as the Ilkhanate); the Chagatayids ruled over parts of Central Asia (later known as the Chagatay Khanate); and the Jochids over western Kazakhstan, Southern Siberia, Russia, and Eastern Europe (later known as the Golden Horde).<sup>23</sup> The Ögödeids were

21 Later sources stated that in reaction to Chinggis naming his third son Ögödei as his successor, Jochi rebelled against his father. His brothers Chagatai and Ögödei were ready to fight him. However, he died before the succession struggle took a military turn. On the strong anti-Jochid bias of the Toluid sources, see Atwood, 'Jochi and the Early Western Campaigns', 35–38.

22 On the crucial distinction between senior and junior statuses, called *aga*, elder brothers, and *ini* or *otchigin*, younger brothers, see Skrynnkova, 'Relations of Domination and Submission', 87.

23 On the expression 'Golden Horde' and the Turko-Mongol use of the term horde (*ordu*, *orda*) see István Vásáry, 'The Jochid Realm, the Western Steppes, and Eastern Europe', in: Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen Frank, and Peter Golden, eds., *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age*, (Cambridge, 2009) 68; and Takushi Kawaguchi and Hiroyuki Nagamine, 'Rethinking the Political System of the Jöchid', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* 69, no. 2 (2016) 165–181. The term horde itself can be traced back to the time of Early Han (207 B.C.–9 A.D.): Karl Wittfogel and Fêng Chia-shêng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907–1125)* (Philadelphia, 1949) 19; 508–509 and section xv, 505–570.

the biggest losers of the Mongol succession war of the 1260s. In the new political arrangement they had no *ulus* of their own.<sup>24</sup>

After the collapse of the old empire began the long century of 'the Mongol commonwealth' centred on Pax Mongolica, a set of commercial agreements. The four sub-empires maintained the dynamics of expansion. They remained connected, but their exchanges did not prevent the growth of local strategies; several military conflicts saw the Yuan opposed to the Chagatayids while the Ilkhanate battled the Golden Horde. In 1304, imperial unity was reasserted and peace was declared between the four sub-empires. The Yuan kept the overarching title of 'great khan' and enjoyed a nominal primacy over the three other parts. In fact, the hierarchy among them was not pyramidal, even though their *ulus* were not equal in size.<sup>25</sup>

The Chagatayids had obviously the smallest lot. The Toluids ruled over the largest territories, but they were divided between the Ilkhanids and the Yuan; besides their lands were not contiguous, and the Toluids had to deal with the Chagatayids and the Jochids who controlled the buffer regions in Central Asia. The Jochids had not only the biggest contiguous area, but it was also an unclosed territory open on its western border to Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, the Mediterranean world, and northern Africa.

In 1335, the descendants of Hülegü lost the throne of the Ilkhanate and their dominions passed into non-Chinggisid hands. In 1368 the Mongol Yuan were defeated and the Ming took over China, but the Chagatayid Khanate and the Golden Horde remained powerful. The former, led by Timur (c. 1370–1405), developed into a new empire and was still a significant power in the seventeenth century, while the latter kept the upper hand on the north-western steppes, dominating Russia until 1480s. In the sixteenth century, the growing powers of the area, Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire, subdued the Jochids of the Ural-Volga and of the Dnieper basin.

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24 The eviction of the Ögödeids started under Great Khan Möngke who purged the empire of his rivals. Peter Jackson, 'From *ulus* to khanate: The Making of the Mongol States, c. 1220–1290', in: Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan, eds., *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden and Boston, 1999) 12–38; on the notion of dynasty applied to the Yuan, see Hodong Kim, 'Was 'Da Yuan' a Chinese Dynasty?', *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 45 (2015) 279–305.

25 On the concept and phenomenon of Pax Mongolica, see Hodong Kim, 'The Unity of the Mongol Empire and Continental Exchanges over Eurasia', *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 1 (2009) 15–42; Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London, 2012) 109–256.

Several Chinggisid khanates survived nevertheless until the nineteenth century. The lineage of Chinggis Khan kept its prestige and continued to produce rulers—though they often ruled nominally. The Manchu Qing emperors (1644–1911) were still considered as incarnations of Chinggis Khan and his grandson Kublai; and in eighteenth-century Crimea, only a Jochid was eligible for ‘khan-ship’.<sup>26</sup>

The Achilles heel of the empire was the succession process for the supreme office of khan as it generated internecine wars, but the Chinggisid lineage remained the backbone of the Mongol regime and kept its distinctive status several centuries after the collapse of the empire.

### 1.1.2 Mechanisms of Succession in the Old Mongol Empire

The official sources described the Mongol empire as a ‘family-owned empire’. They emphasized the unity and solidarity of the Chinggisid kin.<sup>27</sup> The khan’s idealized extended family, living in peace, became a metaphor for the empire:

Although authority and empire are apparently vested in one man, namely him who is nominated Khan, yet in reality all the children, grandchildren and uncles have their share of power and property; a proof whereof is that the World-emperor Mengü Qa’an (1251–1259) in the second quriltai apportioned and divided all his kingdoms among his kinsfolk, sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, to define ‘the Chinggisids’ is not a simple task. The name did not carry the same social and political implications at the end of the fourteenth century when their primacy in Asia was challenged as it had in the thirteenth century when they were at the peak of their power. Thus, how to circumscribe this moving group? And what was exactly the connection between the imperial offices the elite members held, especially the highest offices of khan and great khan, and their position within the kin group?

26 On the persistence of the Chinggisid prestige, see Robert McChesney, ‘The Chinggisid Restoration in Central Asia: 1500–1785’, in: Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen Frank, and Peter Golden, eds., *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge, 2009) 277–302.

27 Recent scholarship has shown that the idealized family, the importance of the patrilineal filiation, and the role of the khan’s wives in politics appeared as well in the illustrations of the imperial sources: Anna Caiozzo, ‘La conception de la famille d’après la copie illustrée du Ğami’ al-tawārīḥ de Paris (BnF, supplément persan 1113)’, *Annales Islamologiques* 47 (2013) 83–112.

28 Juvayni, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 42.

In theory, ‘the sons’, which meant the princes of the blood, descendants of Chinggis Khan through the male line, could all claim the position of great khan.<sup>29</sup> They belonged to the old Mongol lineages of the Qiyat-Borjigid and shaped a new branch called ‘the golden lineage’ (*altan urugh*). The Mongol rulers chose their successor during their lifetime from among their sons and grandsons. Yet, these nominations were usually not successful. Great Khan Ögödei nominated his grandson Shiremün to succeed him, but Shiremün never ruled. Güyük, the eldest son of Ögödei, was chosen instead. After him, Möngke, son of Tolui, was elected even if he was obviously not the choice of Güyük—as this meant that Güyük’s own direct descendants were set aside from the throne.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the election of a new great khan was the conclusion of a lengthy negotiation process, which ended after a *quriltai*, a great assembly, had taken place. A *quriltai* lasted for months as it required ‘the full attendance by the political elite’ to give decisions legal force.<sup>31</sup> Only, then, when all the Mongol leaders, including relatives by marriage, influential people from outside the golden lineage, and senior widows, gathered together, was the khan legally elevated to the throne.<sup>32</sup>

During the interregnum periods the most influential wife of the deceased khan was often designated as regent—in fact co-regent with other male members of the family—, like the khatuns Töregene (the second wife of Ögödei) and Oghul Qaimish (Güyük’s first wife).<sup>33</sup>

When we look at the elections from Ögödei to Kublai, we see patterns behind the practices of succession: being a male descendant of Chinggis Khan; having strong support among other important members of the elite; being able to take mature decisions and to fight, if necessary, on the battlefield. Normally, only princes who had lost their father were eligible. And there was an additional important restriction that historians often overlook:

29 Mongols kept the official titles simple and straightforward, ‘the sons’ appeared in a wide range of sources: in Persian *pisar*, in Turkic *oghul*, *oghan*, and in Mongolian *köbe’ün*.

30 Timothy May, ‘Commercial Queens: Mongolian Khatuns and the Silk Road’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2015) 89–106; Anne F. Broadbridge, ‘Marriage, Family and Politics: The Ilkhanid-Oirat Connection’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2015) 121–135.

31 According to Hodous’s recent study, ‘The principle function of a *quriltai* seems to have been in formally granting legitimacy to a new person or to new decisions’. Florence Hodous, ‘The *Quriltai* as a Legal Institution in the Mongol Empire’, *Central Asiatic Journal* 56 (2012/13) 87–102, 91.

32 They were also elevated on a felt rug, see Ron Sela, *Ritual and Authority in Central Asia: The Khan’s Inauguration Ceremony* (Bloomington, 2003).

33 May, ‘Commercial Queens: Mongolian Khatuns and the Silk Road’, 89–106.

According to the custom of the Mongols the rank of the children of one father is in proportion to that of their mothers, so that the child of an elder wife is accorded greater preference and precedence.<sup>34</sup>

What Juvayni meant by 'elder wife' needs to be clarified as the question of the rank of the khatuns, queens, was crucial. The Mongols considered marriage as a political partnership and put no legal restriction on the number of wives a man could have. Men of high status had usually between two and four chief or elder wives; likewise, Mongol rulers had many spouses, but few of them were actually chief wives. The old genealogies listed only the most important khatuns and concubines who often had their own courts.<sup>35</sup> Secondary wives and concubines did not have their own courts but were under the control of the chief wives.<sup>36</sup>

The criteria for recognition as chief wife were manifold: seniority in marriage (the first wife); seniority in age (the eldest wife);<sup>37</sup> the pedigree of the khatun (the Qiyat-Borjigid had preferential in-laws groups, the Qonggirat, the Kereit, and the Oirat, that were considered as the best lineages for Mongol women); her personal network (her sisters', brothers', and in-laws' positions); and finally, her personal affinities and choices.<sup>38</sup> The status of a khatun resulted from all these ingredients. Setting an order of precedence for wives did not reduce the number of throne pretenders, but it gave them a ranking. Yet the ranking did not prevent all conflicts.

34 Juvayni, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, 40.

35 *Mu'izz al-ansāb. Proslavl'jajuščee genealogii*, A.K. Muminov, ed., trans. Sh. Kh. Vokhidov (Almaty, 2006) 38. The author indicates that Jochi's concubines, like his wives, were too many to be remembered and listed.

36 Bruno De Nicola, 'The Queen of the Chaghatayids: Orghina Khātūn and the Rule of Central Asia', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2016) 107–120.

37 It is important to note that a second marriage usually gave a khatun higher socio-political responsibilities than her co-wives. Besides, levirate was a common practice under the Mongols, see Holmgren's classic study, 'Observations on Marriage and Inheritance Practices in Early Mongol and Yuan Society'; and Broadbridge's recent contribution, 'Marriage, Family and Politics: The Ilkhanid-Oirat Connection', 121–135.

38 On the domestic circles of the Mongol rulers and the key role played by mothers, wives, concubines, and nurses, see Bruno De Nicola, 'The Role of the Domestic Sphere in the Islamisation of the Mongols', in: Andrew C.S. Peacock, ed., *Islamisation. Comparative Perspectives of History* (Edinburgh, 2017).



### 1.1.3 Mechanisms of Succession in the Golden Horde until the *Bulqaq*-Crisis

Jochi's *ulus*—in the sense of his extended family and dependent people—established itself in the western territories of the empire, originally the basin regions of the Irtysh, the Syr-Daria, the Ural, and the Volga. Jochi had more than eight wives; three of them were considered as chief wives. If we add the numerous concubines and the children, Jochi's family was already quite a huge group of more than fifty people.<sup>39</sup> Depending on the sources, he had between fourteen and forty sons. Eleven of them would eventually become founders of lineages, and only four of these lineages became ruling lineages in the long run.<sup>40</sup>

When Jochi died, two of his sons were in a position to rule: Orda (d. 1251) and Batu (d. 1255). Batu succeeded his father by order of Chinggis Khan, but Jochi's territories and army were divided between them. Orda's descendants ruled the eastern lands and Batu's descendants the western lands. Until the *bulqaq*—as the contemporaries called the dynastic crisis of the 1360s–1370s—eleven khans succeeded each other on Batu's throne while about eight khans ruled successively after Orda—perhaps a sign of a slightly longer life span.

Orda had inherited the core of the original part allotted to Jochi. His horde was called the left wing, and his descendants 'the princes of the left hand'. Their territory stretched from Lake Balkhash to the lower Volga and created a buffer zone between the Golden Horde and the Chagatayid khanate. The princes of the left hand played a role within the political life of both khanates. Yet the supremacy of Batu's offspring over Orda's remained uncontested until the extinction of Batu's lineage at the end of the fourteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

Batu was one of the most influential characters of the Mongol Empire, second only to the great khan. He controlled the Qipchaq steppes, the Bulgar kingdom, and the Russian principalities; most of all, he was in a position to achieve the conquest of Anatolia. Since their defeat at Köse-dağ in 1243, the Seljuqs of Rum had submitted to the Mongols. Batu's leading role in the western campaigns, after the death of both Jochi and Chinggis Khan, may explain his dominant position in the Golden Horde. His offspring kept control of northern Caucasus, eastern Anatolia, and the region north of the Black Sea including Crimea: all territories lying 'as far in that direction [North-West] as the hoof of

39 *Mu'izz al-ansāb. Proslavl'jajuščee genealogii*, 38.

40 István Vásáry, 'The Jochid realm, the western steppes, and eastern Europe', 67.

41 On the rule of Orda and his descendants, see Thomas Allsen, 'The Princes of the Left Hand: An Introduction to the History of the *ulus* of Orda in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries', *AEMA* 5 (1985 [1987]) 5–40.

Tartar horse had penetrated'. The formation of the Golden Horde was deeply connected with the Mongol's push towards the North-West.

When Batu died, Great Khan Möngke chose the eldest son of Batu, Sartaq, to succeed his father. It was apparently also Batu's wish to have his son on the throne instead of his brother Berke. To be officially recognized as Batu's successor, Sartaq had to go to the great khan's court in Mongolia. He died on his way back. Consequently, Möngke ordered that Sartaq's son, Ulaqchi, would become khan. Only after Ulaqchi died, in 1257–1258, could Berke ascend the throne. He was Batu's half-brother. The fact that the great khan originally ruled Berke out as successor to the throne has a twofold explanation. Berke's mother was a princess of the Muslim royal family of the Khwarezmshah, while the mothers of Orda and Batu were Qonggirat princesses. In the Mongol world, the Qonggirat women enjoyed higher status than the Central Asian princesses; so Berke had a lower position within the family. Besides, the succession plan was clearly to favour Batu's offspring from his chief wives and to keep away his brothers' lineages. The great khan was keen to control the number of pretenders and to limit the lateral options. This explains why, when Berke passed away, after ten years of rule, Möngke-Temür, who was Batu's grandson, was elected khan in lieu of one of Berke's descendants. Being a direct descendant of Batu remained the rule.<sup>42</sup>

During the period of the unified Mongol empire (c. 1206–1260) the great khan nominated the khans—while the great khan himself was elected by the nomadic elite gathered in *quriltai*. When the Golden Horde became independent, it inherited its succession patterns from the old empire. Khan Möngke-Temür (r. 1267–1280) was elected during an internal assembly, within the Golden Horde, while his predecessors used to be selected by the great khan. After him, the practice of the *quriltai* was maintained, and if the khan's decision for his own succession was valued, it was not necessarily followed. The Jochid elite was strong enough (financially and in legitimacy) to select their own can-

42 On Berke's rule and conversion to Islam, see Jean Richard, Jean, 'La conversion de Berke et les débuts de l'islamisation de la Horde d'Or', *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 35 (1967) 173–184; István Vásáry, "History and legend" in Berke Khan's conversion to Islam', in: Denis Sinor, ed., *Aspects of Altaic Civilization III* (1990) 230–252; Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, PA, 1994) 83–86; Marie Favereau, 'Comment le sultan mamlouk s'adressait au khan de la Horde d'Or. Formulaire des lettres et règles d'usage d'après trois manuels de chancellerie (1262–v. 1430)', *Annales Islamologiques* 41 (2007) 62–64. Ulaqchi was a son of Batu or Sartaq's son. Only very few sources mention him.

didate. Möngke-Temür, for instance, was supported by the *beglerbeg* Nogay, the chief emir of the *ulus*. This could also lead to situations where the khans were not *de facto* rulers; on many occasions, the *ulus* begs ruled in actuality. Yet the begs did not bear the title 'khan'. They were able to use the title 'güregen', Chinggisid son-in-law or bride-groom, only when they had married a Chinggisid princess.<sup>43</sup> Jochid independence was further asserted by Khan Möngke-Temür when he started to mint coins under his name; previously they had been minted under the name of the great khan or in association with him.

In the 1360s, the system temporarily collapsed. Batu was the founder of the most prestigious lineage in the Golden Horde. Birdi-Bek (r. 1357–1359) was considered as the last ruler descending from Batu: 'After him [Birdi-Bek] the lineage of Saïn khan [Batu] stopped. The Uzbeks have a proverb which says: "the neck of the camel was cut in the person of Birdi-Bèk".'<sup>44</sup>

A range of reasons can explain the end of the lineage: political assassination and blood feud; female regency; the end of the Mongol commonwealth; mass deaths due to the plague, to alcoholism, and perhaps to consanguinity. The crisis lasted more than ten years. Political assassination, which occasionally occurred in the Golden Horde, reached its peak at this time; yet it cannot be taken as the cause of the dynastic crisis. It was more a sign of it. The dysfunction of the institution of khanship was already visible during Birdi-Bek's rule: in 1358–1359, four khans were ruling at the same time as their coins, minted in various cities of the Golden Horde, show.<sup>45</sup> Obviously, being a direct descendant of Batu was not enough to rule as a legitimate khan. The consensus of the begs and the support of the *beglerbeg* were crucial for a candidate to be successful and to stay on the throne.

Actually, Birdi-Bek, eventually replaced by his brother Qulpa, was not the last Batuid. Yet, he was the first khan who could not impose himself as a unifying ruler and prevent co-rulers from claiming their rights to Batu's throne.

43 On the title and status of *güregen* 'son-in-law' during the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, see Ishayahu Landa, 'Imperial Sons-in-law on the Move: Oyirad and Qonggirad Dispersion in Mongol Eurasia', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 22 (2016) 161–197.

44 Abu l-Ghazi Bahadur Khan, *Histoire des Mongols et des Tatares*, trans. P. Desmaisons, ed. (Amsterdam, 1970 [1825]) 186. The author was a Jochid Khan ruling in Khiva in the mid-seventeenth century.

45 On the *bulqaq*, see Yu. E. Varvarovskij, *Ulus Dzhuchi v 60–70-e gody XIV veka* (Kazan, 2008); and István Vásáry, 'The Beginnings of Coinage in the Blue Horde', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* 62, no. 4 (2009) 371–385.

The major consequence of the *bulqaq* was not merely the extinction of the main lineage of khans, but a profound change in the geopolitical landscape. Descendants of Jochi from secondary matrimonial lines were accepted as candidates for the throne. In the 1370s, for instance, Urus Khan became head of the left wing. His lineage went back to an obscure son of Jochi, Toqa-Timur, whose mother was a concubine of Merkit origin. The western lands passed under the control of the *beglerbeg* Mamaq the Qiyat (c. 1361–1380), a ‘son-in-law’ married to Birdi-Bek’s daughter. Both Urus and Mamaq remained at the head of this dual Horde until their military defeats at the hands of Toqtamish Khan, another descendant of Toqa-Timur, supported by Timur. This resolution demonstrates the strength of the Golden Horde’s dynastic system based on multigeniture. It fuelled conflicts at times, but it insured that there was no shortage of throne contenders should a lineage become extinct.

If we look at the succession process in the Golden Horde until the end of the fourteenth century, we can see that there were rules to restrict access to the throne. To be eligible, the candidate had to be a descendant of Jochi, through the male line. Most of the time, the sons of the preceding khan were favoured over his brothers and nephews, and there was no clear principle of seniority. In any case, the candidate had to be mature enough to rule, and we know no case of an ‘infant khan’.

The marriage patterns were the same as in the old Mongol empire: the most high-ranking khatuns were of Oirat, Qonggirat, and Kereit origins, and the ranking of the sons was established according to their mother’s status. Khan Berke, as we saw, is a case in point. The Jochid khans, be they Muslim or Buddhist, had at least four wives and a certain number of concubines. Yet the status of the chief wife was very high, and she dominated the other wives. Accordingly, the khan’s mother was highly respected and had significant financial power. The khatun Taytoğlı—Taidula, in Russian—is a good example. Chief wife of Özbek (r. 1313–1341), mother of the khans Tini-Beg (r. 1341–1342) and Jani-Beg (r. 1342–1357), grandmother of Berdi-Beg (r. 1357–1359) and Qulpa (r. 1359–1360), she dominated the Golden Horde for twenty years. She had her own revenue—based on the commercial taxes paid by the Italian merchants—and issued several diplomas of tax exemption especially to the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan.<sup>46</sup> She played a seminal role in supporting her favourite son Jani-Beg and other pretenders before she was murdered. The Muslim begs were strongly against the option of having a woman on the throne, and the

46 See Marie Favereau, ‘Istochniki po istorii Zolotoj Ordy: novye perspektivy izuchenija’, *Golden Horde Review/Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie* 1 (2016) 45.

possible election of a female khan generated struggles between the begs during the time of the *bulqaq*. Taytoğlu was the last female regent of the Golden Horde.

In the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the collapse of the three other imperial formations and the end of the Mongol commonwealth had serious consequences for the Golden Horde. The pretenders' pedigree became key to their throne strategy leading to increasing genealogical speculations. The khatuns' ranking was still linked to the hierarchy of their sons, but their agency had become reduced. Up until then, the khans had married Qonggirat and Kerait princesses who had close connections in Mongolia, China, and Iran. In the second half of the fourteenth century, the khatuns' personal networks contracted, as did their political and economic agency. One of the political responses to the crisis was the evolution of the khanship institution.

### 1.2 *From Genealogy to Dynasty: Dynastic Concepts*

In the fifteenth century, the rise of three competing Jochid lineages, the Ordaids, the Shibaniids, and the Toqa-Timurids, implied territorial redistributions and migrations of nomads. The rise of these secondary lineages caused also an inflation of pretenders. Because the hierarchy between them was no longer regulated and the competition was harsher than before, the candidates' genealogical claims became key to their throne strategy. The 'internal competition' among the descendants of Toqa-Timur and Shiban, as well as the 'external competition' with the Timurids, triggered the genealogical speculations. It was already common practice to use genealogy as a form of legitimization. More peculiar is its systematic use among Islamic rulers in Eurasia after the Mongol conquests. Tables and genealogies combined with historical writing appeared frequently at that time, not only in the Islamic lands but in Western Europe as well. Genealogical trees and portraits in miniature developed markedly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as an answer to socio-political disruptions and in response to the tastes of the new ruling elite.<sup>47</sup>

47 Ilker Evrim Binbas, 'Structure and Function of the Genealogical Tree in Islamic Historiography (1200–1500)', in: Ilker Evrim Binbas and Nurten Kilic-Schubel, eds., *Horizons of the World: Festschrift für Isenbike Togan* (Istanbul, 2011) 465–544, has pointed out that the systematic use of genealogical trees in the Islamic world began in the Mongol period in Iran. We should add that this occurred in Central Asia and Egypt as well (it was not by chance that the Mamluks sent a genealogy of the Abbasids as a gift to Khan Berke). For a broader picture on texts composed in graphic form, combining narrative, genealogies, and tables, in the Islamic historiographical tradition, see Denise Aigle, 'The Historical taqwim in Muslim East', in: Denise Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality. Studies in*

For the Muslim historians of the post-conquest world, genealogy was also a powerful intellectual tool to rethink the place and the role of the *dar al-islam*, the abode of Islam, in world history. Representations of kin relationships offered new graphic opportunities and were used as a sort of framework for complex narratives: a backbone that helps not only to ramify separated histories but also to visualize them. From a 'reminder' added to a larger work, it became a genre in itself.<sup>48</sup> The connection between genealogy and political legitimacy, the combination of interest in lineages and historical context, and the superposition of family and ruling issues led these historians to develop what we can call dynastic concepts.

To the great intellectuals of the time, such as Rashid al-Din (1247–1318) and Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), who both intended to include genealogical trees in their monumental works, genealogical succession had an organizational function in the way they conceptualized history.<sup>49</sup> In their works, the distinction between dynastic construction and family genealogy appeared clearly: they created dynasties by cutting up the genealogies along the course of the human leadership, which was the historical course they have laid out.

If we consider the period when the Jochids were in power, from the mid-thirteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, our main source of information on their dynastic concepts comes from books patronized by Ilkhanid and Timurid rulers who were in competition with the khans and claimed the same origin and the same rights to rule the post-Mongol empire. The boom in royal genealogies and the development of genealogical representations in this period are not due to chance. Mongols were obsessed with keeping alive the memory of their lineages, especially 'the golden lineage'. Rashid al-Din noticed that the science of genealogy (*'ilm al-nasab*) assumed great importance under the descendants of Chinggis Khan:<sup>50</sup>

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*Anthropological History* (Leiden, 2014) 89–104, 96–97. On the appearance of miniatures in Islamic manuscripts as a Mongol fashion, see Charles Melville, 'The Royal Image in Mongol Iran', in: L. Mitchell and Ch. Melville, eds., *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leiden, 2013) 343–369. On the European context, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore and London, 1999).

48 Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 487.

49 Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 486.

50 According to Ibn al-Tiqtaqa, the science of genealogy is specific to the Arabs, who keep their genealogical records. The Iranians (al-Furs) don't keep them and don't conduct any research on genealogy: Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 483.

The many clans and tribes descended from Alan Qo'a [the ancestress of the Chinggisids] are so numerous that if the individuals were to be counted they would exceed a million, yet each of them has a clear and unambiguous family tree, for it is a Mongolian custom to preserve one's relationship to one's fathers and forefathers, and every child born is taught and inculcated with his genealogy like all others in that nation. There is not one among them who does not know his tribe and lineage. Nations other than the Mongols do not have such custom—except for the Arabs, who also keep their genealogy.<sup>51</sup>

Rashid al-Din had an immense influence on later historians, and his work had a strong impact on the court chronicles the successors of the Golden Horde's khans patronized.<sup>52</sup> His first volume of the *Jami' al-Tavarikh* included genealogical trees, the largest one being the one devoted to the descendants of Jochi. The author intended to add miniature portraits of the khans depicted in squares, of their wives depicted in circles, and of their children. The concubines and commanders (emirs) of each khan were listed under his name.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Rashid al-Din conceived the third volume of the *Jami' al-Tavarikh*, the *Shu'ab-i panjgana*, as a unique genealogical tree combining the lineages that outlined his world history. He claims to have invented a new and easier format to illustrate the complexity of the genealogical ramifications.<sup>54</sup> He expressed the continuum of human history through a single line—a kind of tree trunk—that goes from Adam to the ruler to whom the book was dedicated.<sup>55</sup> The section

51 Rashid al-Din, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's-Jami'u't-tawarikh. Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, trans. W.M. Thackston (Cambridge, 1998) 116. He asserts again further in his book, on p. 124: 'Now each of those clans numbers twenty to thirty thousand households and the number of men and women may reach a hundred thousand individuals. This must not be attributed to exaggeration, for it has been the Mongols' custom from ancient times on to keep their origin and genealogy, and since they have no religious community or religion in which to instruct as others do, fathers and mothers inculcate into every child that is born their tribes and genealogy. They have maintained this as a constant rule, and even now the rule is of great importance for them. The Arabs also do this.'

52 For instance, the chronicle of Abu l-Ghazi Bahadur Khan, quoted earlier in this chapter: half of it relies on Rashid al-Din's work.

53 Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 488–489. Miniatures are unfortunately missing in most copies.

54 On this claim, see Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 485–487.

55 Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 494: 'The sense of historical continuity is achieved by a single line from Adam to Ghazan khan—this line the author names "pillar of the lineage"

on the genealogies of the Mongols (*Shu'ab-i Mughul*) goes from Alan Qoa, the ancestress of the Chinggisids, to Ghazan (r. 1295–1304).<sup>56</sup>

A century later, under the Timurids, Rashid al-Din's work remained a major source of inspiration and knowledge for Central Asian court historians. Around the years 1417–1427, several chronicles were written in Herat at the court of Shahrukh (r. 1405–1447), son and successor of Timur. This creative impulse was obviously triggered by the competition between Shahrukh's sons. Yet the dynastic claims of Jochi's descendants were also at stake. The earliest Timurid genealogical tree, probably written between 1405 and 1409 by Husayn b. 'Ali Shah's, emphasized Jochi's line down to Khan Jani-Beg, while the descendants of Chagatay and Ögödei were not even mentioned in the Chinggisid lineage. Indeed, the author's patron, Khalil Sultan, was a grandson of Janibek's daughter. The descendants of Toqa-Timur were excluded as well. They were at that time the fiercest enemies of the Timurids.<sup>57</sup>

The most famous genealogical work produced in this context is the *Mu'izz al-ansab*. Completed in 1426/27, it was dedicated to Shahrukh, and its original author was most likely Hafiz-i Abru.<sup>58</sup> Instead of adopting Rashid al-Din's graphic codes, he represented female figures with squares and male figures with circles—if they were in power, their circles were bigger; each son who ruled in his own name and had children was depicted with a parallel line. Under the name of each khan, the list of his commanders (emirs) was written on the right side, while the wives and concubines of the same ruler appeared on the left side. The author gave also basic information on the family origins of the

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(the '*amud al-nasab*'). I notice that Ibn Khaldun used the same terminology. See also Aigle, 'The Historical taqwīm in Muslim East', 94.

56 In the Persian version of the *Jami' al-Tavarikh*, the Turkic term *urugh* (lineage) is used to refer to the descendants of Chinggis Khan; *kutub-i ansab* and *shu'ab*, *shu'ba* (lit. branches) can be translated as genealogies; *aqvam* as people; *mushajjar* as genealogical tree.

57 Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 509–514.

58 According to A. Zeki Velidi Togan, 'The Composition of the History of the Mongols by Rashid al-Din', *Central Asiatic Journal* 7, no. 1 (1962) 68–69, followed by Binbas, it was probably intended to be the last part of Hafiz-i Abru's book, the *Majma' al-Tavarikh*. In the text, it is said that the information about the Mongols was taken from a work called *Tarikh-i salatin-i mughul*, which was most probably Rashid al-Din's *Shu'ab-i panjgana*. The work is nevertheless different: the *Shu'ab-i panjgana* was intended to be 'a genealogical representation of the mythical past of humankind', while there is no such intention in the *Mu'izz al-ansab*. Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 517–521. The academic literature on the *Mu'izz* is too extensive to be listed here. A thorough introduction to the work can be found in Muminov's edition: *Mu'izz al-ansab. Proslavl'jajuš'čee genealogii*, 5–16, where Muminov shows that the text, even if initially composed by Hafiz-i Abru, was a collective work.



women, as well as the major events of the khans' lives and sometimes even the dates of the khans' reigns.

The work was divided into two main sections: the first one was devoted to the Jochids, the second one to the Timurids. According to the author, Jochi had eighteen sons. Although they were still the enemies of Timur's descendants, the branch of the Toqa-Timurids was included and found its place among the other Jochid lineages. What was the political goal in this case? Two points can be made. First, the fact that there was no selection between the Jochid lineages meant that there was no primacy among them. They appeared all at the same level: eleven lineages as eleven dynastic tracks. The Toqa-Timurids who were claiming the first place are not emphasized. Second, the book was supposed to conclude with the four sons of Shahrukh, glorified as the direct and rightful successors of the Chinggisids and of the Timurids.<sup>59</sup> Shahrukh's sons appeared as the genealogical completion of all the lines, including Jochi's. They were to be the future of the Jochids.

From the end of the fourteenth century onwards, Toqa-Timur's line became dominant in the Golden Horde and in its successor khanates. The Great Horde<sup>60</sup> and the khanates of Kazan and Qasimov were all 'founded' by Toqa-Timurids. Qasim—first khan of Qasimov—was the brother of the khan of Kazan. The Giray khans of Crimea had the same ancestors. They had close ties with the most powerful nomadic confederation of the time, the Manghits.<sup>61</sup> It was therefore not by chance that after marrying the khan of Kazan the daughter of the Manghit beg married Mengli-Giray (c. 1445–1515). But, in the same period, Abu al-Khayr (r. 1429–1468), a descendant of Shiban, succeeded in establishing his khanate in the northern lands of the Golden Horde. The Shibanids, another secondary line that became very strong in the fifteenth century, became the Toqa-Timurids' major competitors.<sup>62</sup>

59 The end of the genealogical tree differs according to the date of the manuscript and to the identity of the copyist's patron. The oldest copy we have seems to date back to the sixteenth century. Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 517. The primacy of Shahrukh's four sons is expressed in the poem at the end of the introduction. Binbas, 'Structure and Function', 519.

60 The Great Horde was in fact the core area of the Golden Horde, the region of Saray. In the 1430s, it covered the lower Volga valley and the western steppes up to the Dnieper.

61 On the Manghits, also known as the Nogays, see the seminal work of Vadim V. Trepavlov, *Istoriia Nogaiskoj Ordj* (Moscow, 2002).

62 Shiban or Shayban, a son of Jochi who played a significant role during Batu's lifetime.

Abu al-Khayr controlled the south of the Ural mountains and the Siberian region of the Tobol valley, including the important cities of Sibir-Isker on the Irtych river, near Tobolsk, and Tiumen'. In 1430–1431, he conquered the Khorezm and the Jochid capital cities of Signak and Urgench. He married the daughter of Ulugh-Bek, the grandson of Timur. Under the leadership of Muhammad Shibani Khan (c. 1451–1510) his descendants were to be the greatest rivals of the Timurids in Central Asia.

In comparison with the Toqa-Timurids, the Shibaniids were 'genealogically isolated'. In the fifteenth century the huge majority of the khans, from the Crimea to the Volga Valley, were descendants of Toqa-Timur. To enhance the reputation of their lineage, the Shibaniids (later called Uzbeks) were most active in patronizing works that praised their origins like the *Shaybani name*. They developed what we can call *the theory of the four hordes*: the Blue, Grey, White, and Golden Hordes. In this historical-epic conception of the past, only four sons of Jochi were recognized as founders of khans' lineages: Orda, Batu, Toqa-Timur, and Shibani. Each of them had a horde—the Shibaniids having the Grey one. The names were given to the hordes according to the steppe colour system for the cardinal directions in which grey or black means north, blue means east, red means south, and white means west, while yellow or gold was used for the centre (which was also the attribute of the imperial tent). The division into hordes was another form of dynastic representation, more directly connected to the Turk and Mongol nomadic world than the Indo-Persian miniatures. In any case, the epic format had the advantage of being more spacious than the tree format. Not only did it give the genealogical speculations more room, but the lineages were developed as vignette stories and claims on territories could be combined with claims on ancestry.<sup>63</sup>

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On the Shibaniids, see Robert McChesney, 'Shībānī Khān' and 'Shībānīds', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* IX, New Edition (1997) 426–431.

63 The most striking example is the *Chinggis name* by Ötemish Hajji, which dated back to the mid-sixteenth century. See its partial edition: Utemish Khadzhi, *Chingiz-name*, trans. V.P. Iudin, Iu. G. Baranova, and M. Kh. Abuseitova, eds. (Almaty, 1992) 22–48. On the Blue and White Hordes, another most interesting source, composed in 1413–1414, is: Jean Aubin, *Extraits du Muntakhab al-tavarikh-i Mu'ini (Anonyme d'Iskandar)* (Tehran, 1957); On the steppe colour system for cardinal directions, see A.N. Kononov, 'Terminology of the Definition of Cardinal Points at the Turkic Peoples', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 31, no. 1 (1977) 61–76. On the genealogical competition between the Toqa-Timurids and the Shibaniids, and on the late Golden Horde and the rise of its successor states, see Marie Favereau, *La Horde d'Or. Les héritiers de Gengis Khan* (Lascelle, 2014) 210–229.

When modern historians emphasize the progeny of the four sons of Jochi—Orda, Batu, Toqa-Timur, Shiban—they should not forget that this is a vision *post hoc*. There were not four ruling hordes in the thirteenth century, but only two – Batu and Orda's. As members of secondary lineages, the Shibanids and the Toqa-Timurids were very active in supporting the production of a hagiographical literature dedicated to their genealogical credentials.<sup>64</sup> This literature has influenced the historical writing about the Golden Horde and its successors in Russia, Central Asia, and Europe. Geographical and genealogical divisions that are believed to date back to the thirteenth century reflect in fact the dynastic concept of the fifteenth century.

These forms of dynastic elaboration, produced in a court context, were intellectually speculative. They were historical and political—they addressed inside and outside audiences<sup>65</sup>—but not juridical; they had no legal basis and, apparently, no legal effects. So in what ways did they reflect the practices of power? One of the main purposes of the dynastic construction was to validate current situations and hide dynastic problems such as political divergences, family divisions, state murders, and the real origins of rulers. Most significantly, such intellectual speculations had no influence at all on the practices of succession. Indeed, these books came *a posteriori*, to justify existing situations. They did not introduce new rules or new laws. They were meant to play an important role in the competition between rulers, and, even if their real impact on the notion of sovereignty is hard to evaluate, they worked as a legitimizing principle for succeeding generations. More than anything, they had an effect on the way a ruler was remembered by later generations.

As pointed out by scholars, in the section devoted to the Timurids, the *Mu'izz al-ansāb* mirrored the formal organization of their imperial administration.<sup>66</sup>

64 Interestingly the descendants of Orda, who obviously enjoyed more legitimacy, were less involved in the (re)-writing of their historical genealogy.

65 Under the Jochids, the Ilkhanids, and the Timurids, the authors presented their manuscripts to their patrons at the royal court. Their written contents and miniatures were seen by members of the local elites and, perhaps, guests invited to court. The scholarship on this topic is extensive, see, for example, Caiozzo, 'La conception de la famille d'après la copie illustrée du Ğāmi' al-tawārīḡ de Paris', 84–87; Eleanor Sims, 'The Illustrated Manuscripts of Firdausi's Shahnama Commissioned by Princes of the House of Timur', *Ars Orientalis* 22 (1993) 48–54; Sheila Blair, 'Timurid Signs of Sovereignty', *Oriente Moderno* 15, no. 2 (1996) 551–576; Michele Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande à l'époque timouride* (Paris, 2008); Anna Caiozzo, 'Propagande dynastique et célébrations princières: mythes et images à la cour timouride', *Bulletin d'études orientales* 1X (2011) 177–201; Gabrielle van den Berg and Charles Melville, eds., *Shahnama Studies 11: The Reception of Firdausi's Shahnama* (Leiden and Boston, 2012).

66 Beatrice Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge, 2003) 79, quoted

The part on the Jochids, though less detailed, expressed a similar vision of the socio-political division at the core of the Horde. The way this genealogy is displayed shows how the khans were part of a regime that included khatuns, concubines, and *ulus* begs or emirs. Our hypothesis is that all together they created 'the dynasty'.

### 1.3 *Steppes Politics: The Role of the Begs*

The begs played a crucial role in the government of the Golden Horde. In 1263, Khan Berke wrote to the Mamluk Sultan Baybars 'we have all converted to Islam'.<sup>67</sup> He added a list of several begs, military commanders, who had allied with him. Indeed, the political body of the Golden Horde was made up of the princes of the golden lineage and the military commanders who were the chiefs of *tümen*.<sup>68</sup> Some of them created new lineages, and their descendants were privileged and treated as new elite members. In the introductory protocol of the *yarliks*, imperial orders issued by the khan's chancellery, the begs appeared right after the princes.<sup>69</sup> In the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, they became the heads of the 'ruling tribes' with their own lineages.

The ruling tribes were a range of well-identified social groups that had names as well as taboos, mottos, and probably their own histories that circulated orally.<sup>70</sup> They were the Qonggirat, Qiyat, Qatay, Manghit, Saljut, Shirin, Barin, Arghin, and Qipchaq. The heads of these groups were part of the governing council, an institution that came from the Chinggisid *keshik*, and bore

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in Aigle, 'The Historical taqwīm in Muslim East', 96: 'the two sides of government are separately listed; first come the emirs, almost all of whom were Turco-Mongolian, then other offices, and near the end of the list we have sections for Persian and Turkic scribes'.

67 Baybars al-Dawadar, *Zubdat al-fikra fi ta'riḥ al-ḥiğra*, Donald Richards, ed. (Beyrouth and Berlin, 1998) 82.

68 Originally a *tümen* was a military unit of 10,000 men. After the conquest it became a military-administrative unit that coincided with a defined territory. On the term itself and its evolution in a Jochid context, see: G.A. Fedorov-Davydov, *Obščestvennyj stroj Zolotoj Ordy* (Moscow, 1973) 122–124.

69 For instance in Khan Timur Qutluq's *yarlik* (1398), the introductory protocol says: 'To the princes of the right wing and the left wing, to Edigü who stands at the head of the *tümen*; to the begs of Thousand, Hundred and Ten' (Marie Favereau's translation). The original text is available in: Vasilij Radlov, 'Jarlyki Toktamyša i Temir-kutluga', *Zapiski Vostočnago Otdelenija Imperatorskago Russkago Arxeologičeskago Obščestva* 3 (1888) 1–40.

70 On the ruling tribes and their role in the administrative and political organization of the Golden Horde, see Uli Schamiloglu, 'The Qaraçi Beys of the Later Golden Horde: Notes on the Organization of the Mongol World Empire', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984) 283–297.

the titles of beg, emir, and *noyan*.<sup>71</sup> Together with the *beglerbeg*, they not only decided on war and diplomacy, but also elected the khan. The *ulus* begs acknowledged the khan's primacy because he was a descendant of Chinggis Khan's eldest son. Yet, to rule effectively a pretender had to associate himself with powerful begs. They supported him and, in case of failure, deposed him.

In the official documents of the Golden Horde the people as a social entity was called *ulugh ulus* 'the big people'. As we have seen previously, *ulus* is a Mongolian term meaning people, community, and nation. It was used to name the Mongol empire: *Yeke Mongghol Ulus*. The title *ulus* beg or *ulus* emir given to the nomadic chiefs implied that they ruled a unified people called *ulus* and that they fully associated themselves with the imperial project. These elite groups were shaped by a vertical principle of common descent, but also by a horizontal principle of alliances through marriage, adoption, trade partnership, and various forms of social clientelism. The most powerful begs were all *güregen*, 'sons-in-law'. It was a common practice that begs married Chinggisid princesses and Chinggisid princes married begs' daughters. The Qiyat, for instance, was Chinggis Khan's extended group, but also was Mamaq's group—Mamaq was the *beglerbeg* who took over the regency in the Golden Horde at the end of the fourteenth century. Because he was not a descendant of Chinggis Khan, he could not claim the title of khan, only that of 'son-in-law'; yet it allowed him to connect to the golden lineage.

Surprisingly, we know of no dynastic chronicles or official histories written for the khans. It seems that the Jochid leaders never patronized this kind of apologetic literature for themselves. This is a significant departure from other Chinggisid courts, such as the great khans and the Ilkhanids, where Juzjani, Juvayni, and Rashid al-Din, to name only the most famous writer-secretaries, produced major histories on the Mongol empire and its successors. The fact that the figure and position of vizir, or high-ranking secretary, was not as important in the Golden Horde as it was in these two other khanates might

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71 In this context the Mongol word *noyan*, the Turkic word *beg*, and the Arabic word *amir* were synonymous. On the *keshik*, the khan's bodyguard, there is an extensive literature; classical references include: Christopher Atwood, 'Keshig', in: Christopher Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York, 2004) 297–298; Peter Andrews, *Felt Tents and Pavilions: The Nomadic Tradition and its Interaction with Princely Tentage* (London, 1999) vol. 1, 281, 312, 324–325; Thomas Allsen, 'Guard and Government in the Reign of the Grand Qan Möngke, 1251–1259', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 2 (1986) 495–521; Charles Melville, 'The *Keshig* in Iran: The Survival of the Royal Mongol Household', in: Linda Komaroff, ed., *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden, 2006) 135–164.

explain this discrepancy. In the second half of the fourteenth century, Ibn Nazir al-Jayš, a Mamluk secretary in charge of diplomatic correspondence, noted ‘when the vizir is not ruling, as in the *ulus* of Jochi, we give him the title *al-waziri* (ministerial) but never *al-sahibi* (rial) because this title is only given to the khan.’<sup>72</sup> Indeed, under the Jochids, the vizir was not ruling; the begs were the rulers.<sup>73</sup>

The lack of official written narratives sponsored by the khans or high-ranking members of the Golden Horde does not mean that histories about rulers and begs did not circulate orally. Epics and sagas written down in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included older material about the begs, khans, and princes of the house of Jochi. The *qari söz*, ‘the old word’, as the nomads called their own historiography, gave a new perspective in which the khans’ power was balanced by that of other political institutions.<sup>74</sup> Even if they were written down after the Golden Horde collapsed, these texts are rich sources as they include older narratives. They gave a perspective from the begs’ point of view: the power of the khan was balanced by the power of the begs, who were also ruling the Golden Horde.

According to one of these narratives, analysed by Mária Ivanics, when Chinggis Khan was a child, he had to escape his elder brothers. Ten begs decided to leave the elder brothers to find Chinggis and to invite him to be their ruler. Once they had found him, they made a cart, put Chinggis on it, then tied themselves to the cart and pulled it as if they were the horses. One of the begs was lame so he sat on the cart next to Chinggis and drove the begs-horses. In this metaphor of ‘Good Government’, the lame beg was the *beglerbeg*. It is said that he possessed the signet ring of Alan Qoa, the mythical ancestress of the Mongols, and that all the begs were of the lineage of Chinggis Khan’s mother.<sup>75</sup>

72 Ibn Nazir al-Jaysh, *Kitāb taṭkīf al-ta’rīf bi-l-muṣṭalah al-šarīf*, Rudolf Vesely, ed., Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale du Caire, Textes arabes et études islamiques 27 (Cairo, 1987) 12–13.

73 It seems that the title vizir (*wazīr*) was not used under the Jochids; in their official documents they used *bitikçi*, high secretary, instead of *wazīr*.

74 ‘The oral historiography of the steppes’ as Iudin coined it, see Iudin, *Chingiz-name*; also Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde. Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, 1994); Mária Ivanics and A. Mirkasym Usmanov, eds., *Das Buch der Dschingis-Legende. Däftär-i Čingiz-nāmü* (Szeged, 2002).

75 Mária Ivanics, ‘Memories of Statehood in the Defter-i Genghis-name’, *Golden Horde Review* 4, no. 3 (2016) 570–579.

In this chapter, by revealing some of the mechanisms of the political regime that developed under the Mongols and the Habsburgs, we intend to challenge the notion of dynasty understood as ‘a family in power’. In the case of the Mongols, the opposition between ‘tribes’ and ‘khanate, state’ needs to be questioned, as well as the assumed dichotomy between the Chinggisids, the imperial family, and the begs, the heads of the dominant social groups. The term tribe can be used to translate words such as *qabila* and *ta'ifa*; it becomes a problem only when it implicitly or explicitly means that such groups were outside the state and opposed to the concentration of power that the khan supposedly embodied. As we saw, tensions among the steppe elites and the khans were healthy tensions between key political institutions and constituted the basis of the Golden Horde's political regime.

## 2 The Spanish Habsburg Monarchy

The section on the Jochids has shown how succession practices, dynastic concepts, and the social realities of dynastic rule interacted. It has also shown that our common view of Eurasian dynasties as mainly patrilineal lineages is too narrow. Sons-in-law (and their royal brides) and the collateral lines they engendered were excluded from the succession, but not from actual rule, and they were even integrated into the dynastic concept as presented, for instance, by the *Mu'izz al-ansāb*. Are these exclusively Mongol elements or do the European Habsburgs show similar features? The following section will discuss the development of the Habsburgs' succession practices, dynastic concepts, and ruling practices with an emphasis on the various actors and their mutual relationships.

### 2.1 *The Habsburgs: Origins and Successions*

The Habsburg dynasty originated in the Aargau region, on the border of modern Switzerland and South-west Germany, where they held a castle—the Habsburg—after which they were called counts of Habsburg from ca. 1100 CE onwards. The county was part of the Holy Roman Empire. The thirteenth-century Count Rudolph of Habsburg (1218–1291) was elected King of the Romans in 1273 and became the dynasty's first Holy Roman Emperor. During his reign as king he expanded the patrimony by granting vacant crown lands to his sons, namely the duchies of Austria and Styria.<sup>76</sup> The family would take its most common name—the House of Austria—from these areas.

<sup>76</sup> Benjamin Curtis, *The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2013) 18.

Around 1500 CE, the Habsburgs became one of the most powerful dynasties in Europe. Many European patrimonies ended up in Habsburg hands through marriage and dynastic contingencies. In 1477, Maximilian (1459–1519), sole heir to the Austrian patrimonies, married Mary the Rich of Burgundy (1457–1482), heiress of the Low Countries. Their two children Margaret (1480–1530) and Philip (1478–1506) married the children of the Catholic Monarchs of Spain—Ferdinand of Aragon (1452–1516) and Isabella of Castile (1451–1504), from two distinct branches of the House of Trastámara—whose marriage had already joined Castile with Aragon and its Mediterranean empire. Although these marriages should have seen Margaret, who had married the crown prince, on the Spanish throne, Philip and his wife Joanna (1479–1555) unexpectedly became heirs to her parents after the deaths of Joanna's older siblings Juan (1497) and Isabella (1498), and nephew Miguel (1500). As a consequence, Philip and Joanna's sons Charles (1500–1558) and Ferdinand (1503–1564) stood to inherit extensive patrimonies from all four of their grandparents, consisting of the Low Countries, the Austrian archduchies, Castile and its growing overseas empire, and Aragon with its dependencies in Italy. The fruits of Habsburg marriage policies did not end there because in 1515 Philip and Joanna's children Mary (1505–1558) and Ferdinand married the king of Bohemia and Hungary and his sister respectively.<sup>77</sup> When the king of Bohemia and Hungary died in 1526, Ferdinand—as his brother-in-law and husband of his only sibling Anne (1503–1547)—managed to be elected as the new king. By the sixteenth century, therefore, the Habsburg dynasty had acquired a huge empire and had in the process been divided into two branches descended from the brothers Charles and Ferdinand, usually known as the 'Spanish' and the 'Austrian' Habsburgs.

The Habsburgs were heirs to various dynastic traditions: the Babenberg dukes of Austria, the Valois dukes of Burgundy, the several Trastámara branches of the Iberian Peninsula, and others. Since dynastic practices in Europe were invariably influenced by bottom-up pressures exerted by subjects—elites and representative organs, who guarded local customary laws and held some power of negotiation in cases of contested successions—Habsburg succession practices were strongly embedded in their local contexts, and therefore varied from territory to territory. As we shall see, succession practices in Castile were quite different from those in the Austrian duchies. In the Low Countries and on the Iberian Peninsula, a pragmatic shift towards primogeniture emerged in

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77 Enikő Spekner, 'Die Geschichte der habsburgisch-jagiellonischen Heiratsverträge im Spiegel der Quellen', in: Martina Fuchs and Orsolya Réthelyi, eds., *Maria von Ungarn (1505–1558). Eine Renaissancefürstin* (Münster, 2007) 25–46.



the fifteenth century, while the Austrian duchies adhered strongly to partible inheritance. How did these various traditions come about and how could such different traditions be combined into a clear succession law among the Habsburgs?

The Habsburg dynastic conglomerate in the Holy Roman Empire was assembled during the period 1282/3–1363, starting when the first Habsburg Emperor invested his own sons with vacant imperial crown lands.<sup>78</sup> The dynasty's custom was to award its patrimony jointly to all adult males;<sup>79</sup> females and their descendants were generally excluded.<sup>80</sup> But in practice the patrimony was divided among them because joint rule was 'programmed to be problematic'.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, until the early seventeenth century, the Habsburg territories—such as Inner Austria, Further Austria, Tyrol, Styria, Carinthia, and others—were routinely partitioned among several male members of the dynasty, in spite of regular efforts to institute primogeniture. Exceptionally, the dynasty produced only one male heir at the end of the fifteenth century (Maximilian I) who united all Habsburg territories in his own hands—creating a rather fleeting and illusory sense of unity. During Maximilian's reign, he tried to foster institutional unification, for instance by promulgating identical laws in his various territories and standardizing the procedures of the representative organs.<sup>82</sup> Also, there were several attempts to create a kingdom out of the various territories, which would have implied their permanent union, but nothing came of this. In practice, the partitioning of the patrimony among male heirs was the guiding principle of Habsburg successions.

78 Christian Lackner, 'Das Haus Österreich und seine Länder im Spätmittelalter. Dynastische Integration und regionale Identitäten', in: Werner Maleczek, ed., *Fragen der politischen Integration im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Ostfildern, 2005) 273–301, 275.

79 Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburgs: Dynasty, Culture and Politics* (London, 2014) 45, 49.

80 The pre-Habsburg rulers of Austria, the Babenbergs, had been granted the right to observe female inheritance, the so-called *privilegium minus* of 1156 CE, but this was limited to one duke without sons. Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273–1700*, trans. C.A. Simpson (London, 2013) 35. The question was normally moot because of the existence of male heirs. The eighteenth-century emperor Charles VI was survived only by daughters and securing the succession of the eldest required drastic changes to house laws and much diplomatic activity, but still resulted in a succession war (1740–1748).

81 Karl Vocelka, *Die Familien Habsburg und Habsburg-Lothringen. Politik—Kultur—Mentalität* (Vienna, 2010) 20: 'Der Konflikt war vorprogrammiert.'

82 Lackner, 'Das Haus Österreich', 275 mentions that Maximilian did achieve greater unity than before also in an institutional sense, but throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Austrian territories usually remained divided among various Habsburg princes.

The Iberian kingdom of Castile was much more unified, and its succession was laid down in a number of decrees and laws.<sup>83</sup> Foremost among these were the *Siete Partidas*, drafted by the Castilian King Alfonso X the Wise (1221–1284), which stipulated male-preference primogeniture and the indivisibility of the Castilian crown.<sup>84</sup> Possibly inspired by Roman law,<sup>85</sup> the law also stipulated that the rights of a deceased heir might be ‘represented’ by *his* heirs. This law was immediately disputed. Alfonso’s eldest son died in 1275, leaving two toddler sons. According to the new law, Alfonso’s eldest grandson now became his heir, but instead, his second (and now eldest surviving) son Sancho ‘el Bravo’ (1258–1295), who had already proved himself in battle against the Muslim princes of the Peninsula, had himself accepted as heir.<sup>86</sup> In practice, the suitability of a pretender (a seasoned general versus a child) determined the succession more than the letter of the law. Various other successions were also challenged: Peter I ‘the Cruel’ (1334–1369) was murdered by his illegitimate half-brother Henry II (1334–1379, founder of the House of Trastámara) in 1369, while Henry IV (1425–1474) was briefly deposed in 1465, and his only child and heiress Joanna (1462–1530) could not secure her succession. Instead, after a civil war, Henry’s half-sister Isabella ‘the Catholic’ managed to claim the throne.<sup>87</sup> Isabella’s heir was again female, her daughter Joanna, and she was also excluded from ruling her lands—although not officially from the succession itself—by her father, husband, and son on grounds of insanity (she is known to historians as ‘Johanna the Mad’).<sup>88</sup>

83 Horst Pietschmann, ‘Reichseinheit und Erbfolge in den Spanischen Königreichen’, in: Johannes Kunisch and Helmut Neuhaus, eds., *Der dynastische Fürstenstaat* (Berlin, 1980) 199–246.

84 *Las Siete Partidas*, Vol. 2. *Medieval Government: The World of Kings and Warriors*, Robert I. Burns, ed., trans. Samuel Parsons Scott (Philadelphia, 2001) 366–367: Partida II, Title xv, law II.

85 Alfonso had been elected Holy Roman Emperor, although the election was disputed, and thus wanted to connect Castilian history and law to the Roman Empire.

86 *Las Siete Partidas*, 370–373: Partida II, Title xv, law II. Jerry R. Craddock, ‘Dynasty in Dispute: Alfonso X el Sabio and the Succession to the Throne of Castile and Leon in History and Legend’, *Viator* 17 (1986) 197–219, 199; Fernando Arias Guillén, ‘El linaje maldito de Alfonso X. Conflictos en torno a la legitimidad regia en Castilla (c. 1275–1390)’, *Vínculos de Historia* 1 (2012) 147–163, 156.

87 Luis Suárez Fernández, *Nobleza y monarquía. Entendimiento y rivalidad. El proceso de construcción de la Corona española* (Madrid, 2003 [1959]) 9, 301–366.

88 Bethany Aram, *Juana the Mad: Sovereignty and Dynasty in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore, 2005); Salvatore Poeta, ‘From Mad Queen to Martyred Saint: The Case of Juana la Loca

There are also instances of 'legitimism', as when Fernando (1380–1416), the brother of the mortally ill Henry III (1379–1406), refused to take the throne, but instead allowed his underage nephew to take it—even though the Castilian aristocracy would have accepted his rule.<sup>89</sup> However, at the same time, Fernando acquired the Aragonese throne over other candidates who perhaps had better rights, but were only minors at the time.<sup>90</sup> Such adult challengers were usually successful only if they could count on the support of elites and representative assemblies, who could furnish money and military power to support supposed rights. In any case, Iberian history shows that in spite of the existence of codified succession law, minor or female heirs could not be certain that their rights would be respected by adult male kinsmen.

The Aragonese succession was (officially) less fixed than the Castilian succession. It depended greatly on the testament of the last ruler, while the position of women in the succession was limited—they could only pass their rights on to their sons and act as regents.<sup>91</sup> However, in both crowns the influence of revived Roman law led to an emphasis on one universal heir, which in turn promoted primogeniture over partible inheritance.<sup>92</sup> In practice, after the Aragonese and Castilian crowns had been united by the marriage of the Catholic Monarchs (1467), the Aragonese *cortes* would agree to uphold Castilian succession law and thus maintain the union.<sup>93</sup> In any case, even when succession law was codified, actors had some room for manoeuvre to prefer a more desirable (male, adult) heir over a legitimate but not convenient (female, minor) heir.

From the fourteenth century onwards, the Valois dukes of Burgundy had brought an ever increasing number of principalities in the Low Countries under their control by a combination of legitimate succession, marriage, pur-

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Revisited in History and Art on the Occasion of the 450th Anniversary of her Death', *Hispania* 90, no. 1 (2007) 165–172.

89 Suárez Fernández, *Nobleza y monarquía*, 157, n. 5; Juan Torres Fontes, 'La regencia de Don Fernando de Antequera', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 1 (1964) 357–429, 378.

90 José Luis Martín, 'Fernando de Antequera y el Compromiso de Caspe. ¿Una incorporación a España?', *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie III, Historia Medieval* 13 (2000) 161–176, 168–169.

91 Adela Mora Cañada, 'La sucesión al trono en la Corona de Aragón', in: Josep Serrano Daura, ed., *El territori i les seves institucions historiquies. Actes de les Jornades d'Estudi* (Ascó, 1997) 547–566; Alfonso García-Gallo, 'El derecho de sucesión al trono en la Corona de Aragón', *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español* 36 (1966) 5–187.

92 Pietschmann, 'Reichseinheit und Erbfolge', 224.

93 Pietschmann, 'Reichseinheit und Erbfolge', 230–231.

chase, conquest, and negotiation.<sup>94</sup> The duchy of Burgundy proper fell under French Salic law and was therefore destined for the eldest son. But other territories could be distributed more freely. Multiple heirs in the ducal house thus brought about a three-way partition in 1405 among the sons of Duke Philip the Bold (1342–1404). Throughout the fifteenth century, Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy (1396–1367) would strive to bring ever more territories under his control—including those that had been inherited by his uncles. He was helped by his family connections to most Netherlandish ruling houses, but virtually every succession was contested and other pretenders needed to be bought off.<sup>95</sup> In short, the various principalities of the Low Countries had been quite flexible with regard to the succession of rulers, especially when other candidates were women or minors. The arrival of the Valois rulers was not accompanied by the evolution of a joint law of succession to regulate future successions. After the acquisitions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (interrupted by the partition of the early fifteenth century), cohesion was in fact mainly stimulated by a scarcity of heirs. Both John the Fearless (1371–1419) and Philip the Good had only one son, while the latter's heir Charles the Bold (1433–1477) had only one child—a daughter, Mary the Rich. She, again, only had one son (and a daughter). Apart from the matter of Mary's marriage, succession was thus quite straightforward, but for demographic reasons rather than political ones.

A joint succession law was agreed with the States General only in 1549. It was intended to unify the succession laws in the different provinces, especially regarding the right of representation, which was not accepted everywhere. This meant that if Charles v's heir Philip (1527–1598) should predecease his father, some provinces might accept Philip's son as heir, while others could prefer Philip's eldest sister.<sup>96</sup> The Pragmatic Sanction stipulated that all seventeen Low Countries should accept the same heir by instituting the right of representation, although no mention was made of primogeniture, allowing for the succession of a younger child—as happened after the death of Philip II in 1598 but had been contemplated on many occasions.<sup>97</sup>

94 Robert Stein, *De hertog en zijn staten. De eenwording van de Bourgondische Nederlanden ca. 1380 – ca. 1480* (Hilversum, 2014) 55–59.

95 Stein, *De hertog en zijn staten*, 30–55.

96 The text mentions that in Flanders, Henault, Artois, and several others the right of representation was not valid. A.S. de Blécourt and N. Japikse, eds., *Klein plakkaatboek van Nederland. Verzameling van ordonnantiën en plakaten betreffende regeeringsvorm, kerk en rechtspraak (14e eeuw tot 1749)* (Groningen and The Hague, 1919) vol. x, 77–79.

97 Martha K. Hoffman, *Raised to Rule. Educating Royalty at the Court of the Spanish Habsburgs, 1601–1634* (Baton Rouge, 2011) 149; Luc Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety. Archduke Albert*

By the end of the fifteenth century, existing succession laws and practices thus stressed the unified nature of (certain clusters of) the Habsburg territories: Castile-Aragon and the Low Countries. No such succession law came into existence for the Austrian territories, which continued to be partitioned among male heirs. When the two Habsburg brothers Charles and Ferdinand came to power between 1515 and 1520, they acquired a great number of territories and patrimonies, and their composite monarchy clearly transcended such clusters. No succession law for the whole of the Habsburg monarchy was ever codified, which meant that royal testaments and negotiations were instrumental in arranging the succession of (or rather, the distribution of) the entire Habsburg patrimony. This offered them the possibility of partition, which was sensible given the size of the family's holdings, the presence of several male family members, and, of course, existing traditions in Austria. Accordingly, Charles and Ferdinand were encouraged by the testaments of their grandfathers to share their patrimony—they duly worked out a division through various treaties in the 1520s. Between them, they had four legitimate sons, whom they intended to provide for around the 1550s.<sup>98</sup>

The partition of the patrimony between Charles and Ferdinand around 1520, and its further consolidation in the 1550s, created a lasting division within the Habsburg House. Charles held the Low Countries, Spain (with its overseas empire) and parts of Italy, while Ferdinand received Austria and anything he acquired through marriage. From this moment we can speak of a Spanish line (descended from Charles) and an Austrian line (descended from Ferdinand). In the remainder of this section, we will mainly discuss the Spanish Habsburgs. They represented the senior branch of the dynasty, and their conglomerate monarchy was the most powerful European state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—engendering fears of universal rule, just as the Mongols had

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(1598–1621) and *Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars* (Farnham, 2012) 65–66. José Pellicer de Ossau y Tovar, *La fama austriaca, o Historia panegirica de la exemplar vida, y hechos gloriosos de Ferdinando segundo* (Barcelona, 1641) 132 notes that Charles v had intended to leave the Low Countries as a separate kingdom for his younger son Fernando (who died young). The Emperor later stipulated in his testament that the Low Countries would be inherited by a possible son born to Philip II of his (second) marriage to the queen of England, whereas the rest of the patrimony was to be inherited by Philip's son from his first marriage. *Testamento de Carlos v*, Manuel Fernández Álvarez, ed. (Madrid, 1982) 29.

98 M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, *The Changing Face of Empire: Charles v, Philip II, and Habsburg Authority, 1551–1559* (Cambridge, 1988) 34. Charles had only one legitimate son, but Ferdinand had three, each of whom received part of his share of the monarchy.

claimed. The Austrian branch would soon monopolize the imperial title and thus ranked higher than their Spanish cousins, but they would not obtain true 'great power' status until the eighteenth century.<sup>99</sup>

Within the Spanish branch, the opportunities on offer to continue the family tradition of partible inheritance were increasingly discarded. For one, Charles V had only one son, which secured dynastic unity throughout the sixteenth century. Philip II divided his inheritance between his daughter (the Low Countries) and son Philip III (the rest), mainly because he hoped this would end the revolt of the Low Countries.<sup>100</sup> Philip III (1578–1621) had three sons, but stipulated in his testament that the inheritance should be passed whole to the eldest, which happened during the remainder of Habsburg rule in Spain. The patrimony was conceptualized in the royal testaments as a *mayorazgo*, which was a legal construction that created the obligation for aristocratic patrimonies to be passed on to one single heir. The two brothers of Philip IV (1605–1665) were thus the first disinherited (legitimate) adult males of the dynasty.

The kings of Spain were also increasingly focused on following *male* primogeniture—even if the succession laws of their territories did not exclude females from the succession.<sup>101</sup> Most of Philip IV's thirteen legitimate children died in childhood. For a long time, it seemed that he might be survived only by a daughter. This caused the king considerable anxiety—he begged his pen pal, the nun Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda, numerous times to pray for a male successor, as if he did not have any heirs.<sup>102</sup> We must note that such ideas were not always shared by the political elites of the country, who were happy to accept a brother or daughter as heir in the absence of a son.<sup>103</sup> Apparently, the court of Madrid celebrated the birth of royal children with equal joy regardless of their gender, since daughters could inherit and thus represented dynastic continuity just as much as their brothers.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, the non-

99 Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence 1683–1797* (London, 2003).

100 *Testamento de Felipe II*, Manuel Fernández Álvarez, ed. (Madrid, 1982) 73–75.

101 In practically all Habsburg territories women had recently inherited the crown: Mary the Rich in the Burgundian conglomerate; Isabella the Catholic in Castile and her daughter Joanna both in Castile and the Aragonese crown. Only Milan—which was an imperial fief—did not have any experience with female rule.

102 Liesbeth GeEVERS, 'The Miracles of Spain: Dynastic Attitudes to the Habsburg Succession and the Spanish Succession Crisis (1580–1700)', *Sixteenth Century Journal* 46, no. 2 (2015) 291–311, 306–307.

103 GeEVERS, 'Miracles of Spain', 307.

104 The Tuscan ambassador Riccardi reported after the birth of the Infanta María Teresa in

codified preference for male successions fit neatly in the Iberian tradition, which had seen the disinheriting of several female heiresses.

Looking back, we can detect a number of factors that influenced successions within the Habsburg dynasty and in the territories that they inherited. Most important was perhaps the number of heirs. Single heirs heralded periods of unity both in the Austrian duchies, the Low Countries, and within the Spanish branch at large, while plural heirs led to partitions and negotiations. Only in the seventeenth century were legitimate adult males excluded from any part of the inheritance. Although intra-dynastic relations were at times tense and negotiations protracted, partitions rarely led to violence—only fifteenth-century Castile knew a real succession war and the medieval Habsburgs had occasionally come to blows.

Furthermore, we can conclude that Habsburg succession practices were greatly influenced by local constitutional agreements. This is particularly true within the 'clusters' (e.g. the Low Countries or the Iberian Peninsula). Whenever successions were contested, local estates generally tilted the balance towards one pretender or another, while they also agreed to codify succession laws. However, the power of the estates—guardians of tradition—also meant that codified law could be discarded as long as they agreed to it. We have seen examples of various Castilian usurpers who quite easily maintained their position. Furthermore, the estates might be enlisted to change codified law, as happened in the Low Countries. The existence of codified succession law therefore did not automatically determine successions. The individual attitudes of rulers also played a role. Philip IV's example shows how this king fretted over the absence of a son. Apparently, he had little faith in a successful succession of his daughter—even if local codified law would allow her succession practically everywhere and the estates were ready to swear fealty to her.

The power of estates was not as great at the level of the entire monarchy in its sixteenth-century guise—which, as a whole, did not have a representative assembly. The discussions of the 1550s were therefore conducted with the preferences of the local elites in mind (for instance, the degree to which German princes would be willing to accept the Castilian Prince Philip as the new emperor), but without including them as partners in the talks. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a primogeniture regime would be increasingly applied to *all* Spanish Habsburg territories—turning the entire

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1638, that 'since girls inherit, they are almost as important as boys.' Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, Filza 4964, nr. 97: 'heredando qua le femine importan quasi l'istesso'.

monarchy into an entail. Since no succession laws existed that covered the entire monarchy, this was essentially a matter of dynastic policy informed by concerns for the prestige of the dynasty and worries about the separate viability of its constituent parts. Succession was clearly not simply a matter of law, but equally of tradition.

## 2.2 *Multiple Dynastic Concepts*

In terms of succession practices, the Habsburgs transitioned towards a primogeniture regime in their entire patrimony between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Successions were closely related to dynastic concepts—that is, the articulation of the dynasty's core values and characteristics, its destination and its rights to rule, as well as the representation of the dynasty as a (hierarchically ordered) group in text and image that embodies these values. Prominent examples include Castile, where—as we shall see below—usurpers could sit quite comfortably on the throne as long as they embodied the core value of Castilian kingship: Reconquista success. In this section, we will discuss several aspects of the Habsburg dynastic concept. First, we will consider how local legitimizing narratives were adopted by the Habsburgs; and second, we will analyse how the dynasty as a family group was represented in genealogies and funerary architecture.

Lineages generally need a 'story' to connect them to their possessions: a story that placed the lineage in metanarratives about world history, justified their tenure of their territories, and identified those individuals who could be considered stakeholders of the dynasty. As with succession practices, the Spanish Habsburg dynastic concept was heir to various traditions. Although these traditions usually emphasized the universal aspirations of the incumbent prince—the medieval Habsburg claim of descent from Aeneas, Augustus, and Charlemagne; the imperial tradition of the Holy Roman Empire and intermittently of Castile; the Carolingian descent and Golden Fleece of the Burgundians—all these traditions functioned in a specific territorial context. This meant that along with territorial expansion, the Spanish Habsburgs had to bring their legitimizing narratives in line with various local expectations. Here we can also detect a dynamic between dynastic and territorial traditions, which led to a blending of concepts linking the Habsburgs to the Iberian Peninsula, the Low Countries, the imperial tradition, and 'universal monarchy'.

Throughout the course of their existence, the Habsburg lineage acquired many territories where they were (at first) perceived as strangers. The fact that historians sometimes present their empire-building as one long triumphant marriage feast does not do justice to the trouble they had at being accepted by their new subjects. Their connection to new patrimonies was not always



clear and concepts linking the lineage to them needed to be elaborated—blood ties to the previous incumbent were never enough. Local elites played a significant role in the shaping of these concepts and in connecting the ruler to the land—often quite literally by forcing him to reside there, or by demanding he leave a close relative as his governor. In the Middle Ages, the elites of the newly acquired territories of Austria and Styria continued to see their rulers for several generations as ‘landesfremd’, until they settled more permanently in Vienna.<sup>105</sup> After the early death of his wife Duchess Mary of Burgundy, Maximilian faced considerable opposition from towns and the estates to his attempts to secure the regency for his young son Philip in the Low Countries.<sup>106</sup> Philip himself, born in the Low Countries, never had problems being accepted in the Netherlands. But when he had grown up and become co-ruler of Castile with his wife Joanna in 1504, he faced fierce opposition there from, among others, his own father-in-law Ferdinand of Aragon.<sup>107</sup> Philip’s early death in 1506 and Joanna’s declared insanity meant that their son Charles became their heir. But Charles’s transition from a Burgundian prince—he was born in Ghent and raised in Malines<sup>108</sup>—to a Spanish ruler was by no means easy either. His arrival in Spain in 1517 (after the death of Ferdinand of Aragon), accompanied by a large Burgundian retinue, which soon laid claim to all major political and religious positions, aroused serious opposition. In 1520 and 1521 Charles faced widespread revolts in Castile and Valencia.<sup>109</sup> After he had established peace and had reorganized his administration, the Cortes—representing eighteen Castilian towns—more or less forced the new ruler to contract an Iberian marriage and to thoroughly Hispanicize his court.<sup>110</sup>

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105 Lackner, ‘Das Haus Österreich’, 276.

106 Jelle Haemers, ‘Factionalism and State Power in the Flemish Revolt (1482–1492)’, *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 4 (2009) 1009–1039.

107 Raymond Fagel, ‘De Spaanse zomerkoning. Filips de Schone als koning van Castilië’, in: Raymond Fagel, Jac Geurts and Michael Limberger, eds., *Filips de Schone, een vergeten vorst (1478–1506)* (Maastricht, 2008) 101–136, 105–111.

108 Wim Blockmans, *Karel v* (Utrecht, 2012).

109 John H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469–1716* (London, 1963) 130–163.

110 José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, ‘Felipe II, *princeps hispaniarum*: la castellanización de un príncipe Habsburgo (1527–1547)’, *Manuscripts* 16 (1998) 65–85, 71. The prospective bride, Isabella of Portugal, was half-Spanish on her mother’s side (she was a granddaughter of the Catholic Monarchs), which made her ‘muy amiga’ to the Spanish nation. Aurelio Espinosa, ‘The Formation of Habsburg Rule in Spain, 1517–1528’, (PhD dissertation, University of Arizona, 2003) 267–277.

Although Charles never settled in Castile permanently as this would have countered the wishes of his other subjects,<sup>111</sup> he did manage to adapt to the Castilians; he learned Castilian, and after the death of a number of early favourites—such as the Burgundians William of Croÿ-Chièvres (1521) and Henry of Nassau (1538), the Savoyard Mercurino di Gattinara (1530), and Charles's aunt and governess Margaret of Austria (1530)—he became less 'Burgundian', spending ever more time outside of his natal lands and relying more and more on Castilian advisors.<sup>112</sup> Charles's son and heir Philip was consequently born in Castile (Valladolid, 1527) and was therefore considered a 'natural prince' in Spain.<sup>113</sup> The young prince underwent a conscious and strategic process of 'castilianisation',<sup>114</sup> and his household was modelled after that of his great-uncle Prince Juan, the last Spanish-born crown prince, as the representatives of the Cortes had insisted.<sup>115</sup> However, although the future Philip II of Spain was seen by his subjects in Spain as their natural prince and he would develop into a Castilian monarch, this would make it more difficult for non-Iberian subjects to identify with him. In 1548, he would travel extensively through

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- 111 René Vermeir, 'How Spanish Were the Spanish Netherlands?', *Dutch Crossing* 36, no. 1 (2012) 3–18, 6: 'A calculation based upon the emperor's itinerarium, published by Vicente de Cadenas y Vicent, reveals that between his election and his abdication, he devoted 29% of his time to Castile and 9.9% to Aragon, and 26.3% to the Low Countries, 23.7% to the Holy Roman Empire, and 2.1% to his Italian possessions. The emperor spent around 9% of his time—during his travels and battles—on foreign soil.'
- 112 The turning point is often situated around 1530. See for instance, Wim Blockmans and Walter Prevenier, *The Promised Lands: The Low Countries under Burgundian Rule, 1369–1530* (Philadelphia, 1999) xii, 233, and also José Martínez Millán, 'Evolución de la Monarquía hispana: de la Monarchia universalis a la 'Monarquía católica' (siglos xvi–xvii)', in: Leonardo Funes, ed., *Hispanismos del mundo: diálogos y debates en (y desde) el Sur* (Buenos Aires, 2016) 107–130, 109.
- 113 Gonzalo, 'Felipe II, *princeps hispaniarum*', 73–75.
- 114 This process appeared to have suffered a blow at the prince's baptism, when the Duke of Alba audibly lobbied for him to be named 'Fernando', but the child was baptized 'Philip' for his Burgundian grandfather. Gonzalo, 'Felipe II, *princeps hispaniarum*', 65–85; see also his *El aprendizaje cortesano de Felipe II, 1527–1546: La formación de un príncipe del Renacimiento* (Madrid, 1999), and 'El príncipe Juan de Trastámara, un "exemplum vitae" para Felipe II en su infancia y juventud', *Hispania. Revista española de historia* 59, no. 203 (1999) 871–896.
- 115 Gonzalo, 'Felipe II, *princeps hispaniarum*', 80. In 1548, when Philip was already twenty-one years old, Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, an old courtier of Prince Juan, was ordered to put his memories of the prince's household to paper: Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, *Libro de la cámara real del príncipe don Juan*, J.M. Escudero de la Peña, ed. (Madrid, 1870) and Santiago Fábregat Barrios, ed. (Valencia, 2006).

Europe—passing through Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries—in order to get acquainted with his future subjects and to facilitate his succession.<sup>116</sup> Part of this new acquaintance between the prince and his subjects was the introduction of yet another court organization. This time, Burgundian court ceremonial was revived to create a more recognizable entourage for Philip's Netherlandish subjects.<sup>117</sup> However, Philip decided to settle in Castile more or less permanently in 1559; in 1561 he fixed the capital in Madrid.<sup>118</sup>

Subjects clearly wanted their rulers to be 'natural princes'—that is, born locally—or at least sensitive to local court traditions. Since this was practically impossible to achieve in a wide-spread conglomerate like the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy, the Spanish Habsburgs developed an ideology that blended legacies connected to the Iberian Reconquista past and the Burgundian Golden Fleece, and was also connected to the idea of a world empire. In this way, a legitimizing narrative took shape that was connected to all the major clusters of the Habsburg monarchy. The Reconquista past had a strong resonance on the Iberian Peninsula. Richard Kagan argued that the Spanish view of history was based on two pillars; the first was a 'nostalgic vision of Hispania—united, prosperous, and above all, Christian—that awaited recovery and restoration through heroic royal action.' The second was 'a record of Gothic accomplishments and success that rested, as Isidore had written, more on "force rather than prayers."<sup>119</sup> These strands combined to teach Castilian kings (and their subjects) that the legitimacy of their rule was determined by their success in restoring the Visigothic kingdom that had been lost to Muslim invaders in 711 CE. At the end of the fifteenth century, the conquest of Granada—the last Muslim principality on the Iberian Peninsula—marked the successful conclusion of the Reconquista and gave a giant boost to the legitimacy of the Catholic Monarchs and their successors—who could with some justification be said to have stolen the throne from Henry IV's daughter Joanna.<sup>120</sup> The success of such

116 The trip is known as the 'felicísimo viaje'—the most fortunate journey—and was meticulously documented by the Spanish courtier Juan Cristóbal Calvete de Estrella in his *El felicísimo viaje del muy alto y muy poderoso príncipe Don Felipe* (Antwerp, 1552).

117 Helen Nader, 'Habsburg Ceremony in Spain: The Reality of the Myth', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 15, no. 1 (1988) 293–309, 294, cites Calvete de Estrella, *El felicísimo viaje*, Miguel Artigas, ed. (Madrid, 1930) 4.

118 Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro, *Felipe II, la corte y Madrid en 1561* (Madrid, 1985) 3–9, 31–34.

119 Richard Kagan, *Clio and the Crown. The Politics of History in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore, 2009) 20.

120 Andrew Devereux, 'The Other Side of Empire: The Mediterranean and the Origins of a Spanish Imperial Ideology, 1479–1516', (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2011).

'usurpers' as Sancho IV (another Reconquista-hero who took the throne from his nephew) and Isabella the Catholic in consolidating their rule shows that living up to the Reconquista ideal could really make or break a Castilian king.<sup>121</sup>

The most important non-Iberian legacy was the Burgundian one—represented by the title 'Duke of Burgundy' which the Habsburgs continued to use long after the loss of the duchy—of which the most important element was the Order of the Golden Fleece. The Order of the Golden Fleece had been established by the Burgundian Duke Philip the Good in 1430, on the occasion of his marriage to Isabella of Portugal. And although he was a 'mere' duke, in his foreign policy, courtly splendour, and wealth he could match the monarchs of his day.<sup>122</sup> The foundation of this order of chivalry was intended to emulate the English Order of the Garter. The order was also founded in an atmosphere of eschatological expectation: the Ottomans were closing in on Constantinople, and various European monarchs stated their desire to renew the Crusades. In 1473, the Order's chancellor Guillaume de Fillastre delivered a number of sermons to the Order's chapter—later developed into books—in which he elaborated the Greek myth of Jason (who had been tasked to retrieve a golden fleece of a ram that was guarded by a dragon) as an analogy of the redemption of mankind. Jason's quest to retrieve the fleece was equated with mankind's quest to gain redemption; the fleece itself represented Christ's human body, while Jason represented Christ the Saviour.<sup>123</sup> As sovereigns of the Order, the Burgundian dukes and their Habsburg successors presented themselves therefore as the ultimate *miles christi*, as successors of Jason/Christ—which of course dovetailed nicely with the Iberian wish for a crusader king.

After the death of the last Duke of Burgundy, Maximilian of Austria happily took over the role as (acting) sovereign of the Order. He organized a chapter in 1478, only months after his marriage to the heiress Mary of Burgundy and his arrival in the Low Countries. The importance of the order in the establishment of a new ruler was also demonstrated twice by Charles V, who orga-

121 See also T.F. Ruiz, *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Castilian Society, 1150–1350* (Princeton, 2004) 134–135. Another example is Ferdinand III of Castile (r. 1230–1252), who also took the throne of León even though his older half-sister (from his father's first marriage) had been designated the heir. He made up for this usurpation by conquering Córdoba and Seville, which led to his beatification in 1671.

122 Blockmans and Prevenier, *Promised Lands*, 133–134.

123 Marie Tanner, *The Last Descendant of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven, 1993) 57–58; Barbara Haggh, 'The Mystic Lamb and the Golden Fleece: Impressions of the Ghent Altarpiece on Burgundian Music and Culture', *Revue belge de musicologie* 61 (2007) 5–59, 31.

nized a chapter in Brussels in 1516, soon after obtaining his majority and just before leaving for Castile to take the throne there; and again, after his arrival in Spain, in Barcelona (1519). Philip II did the same after his accession in 1555 and before he left the Low Countries, in 1559. At the same time, membership of the order could be easily broadened to accommodate new Castilian, Aragonese, and Italian elites and thus became one of the unifying elements in the far-flung and diverse Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>124</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, Netherlandish aristocratic lineages like the Croÿ and the Nassau had become practically hereditary members of the Order, while the same went for the Castilian houses of Alva and Feria, and the Italian houses of Farnese, Doria, and Aragona.

The Golden Fleece and the Reconquista legacies were joined by the eschatological 'fourth empire' legacy, traditionally associated with the Roman Empire and later with its perceived successor, the Holy Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was the fourth of the 'four world empires' prophesized by Daniel and preceded by the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires.<sup>125</sup> This provided the Empire with a sacred purpose. As the last empire on earth before the return of Christ, it was meant to unite the world under its rule. This sacred purpose was transferred to all empires that claimed to be continuations of the Roman Empire.<sup>126</sup>

The ancient Roman emperors were connected to their fifteenth-century successors in the Holy Roman Empire via the person of Charlemagne. Charlemagne, who restored the empire in Europe when he was crowned emperor in 800 CE, was claimed to be a descendant of Julius Caesar, while practically all ruling houses claimed him as their ancestor. Thus, authors of chronicles and genealogies forged genealogical ties between ancient Rome and contemporary polities. The Renaissance further stimulated the 'awakening' of the imperial tradition, causing many princes to envisage themselves as new Juliuses and Augustuses.<sup>127</sup> Maximilian was instrumental in co-opting this trend for the Habsburgs. His French contemporaries Charles VIII (r. 1483–1498) and Louis XII

124 H. Kervyn de Lettenhove, *La Toison d'Or: notes sur l'institution et l'histoire de l'Ordre (depuis l'année 1429 jusqu'à l'année 1559)* (Brussels, 1907); F.A.F.Th. baron de Reiffenberg, *Histoire de l'ordre de la Toison d'or depuis son institution jusqu'à la cessation des chapitres généraux* (Brussels, 1830).

125 Tanner, *Last Descendant*, 24.

126 In Western Europe, this was primarily the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation; outside Western Europe the Byzantines and in their wake the Ottomans and Russians claimed this status.

127 Thomas J. Dandeleit, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2014); Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1975).

(r. 1498–1515) were presented by their own chroniclers, poets, and painters as the heirs of Charlemagne and Augustus, and therefore as world emperors.<sup>128</sup> These French claims fuelled Maximilian's efforts to prove his own status as true leader of the Christian world. This competition was dangerous, because although Maximilian had been elected King of the Romans,<sup>129</sup> he would never actually be crowned Emperor and thus had to resort to other means to claim imperial status.<sup>130</sup> As a result, Maximilian made a huge effort to boost the prestige of his dynasty and the imperial office as the foremost dignity of Europe.

Charles v, Maximilian's grandson, was the beneficiary of Maximilian's efforts, and his exalted ancestry, in combination with his huge inheritance (joining Aragon, Castile, the Americas, Naples, and Sicily with the Low Countries and the Austrian archduchies)—along with, of course, suitable bribes, landed him the imperial election.<sup>131</sup> Amid the 'twin eschatological signs provided by the discovery of America and the Antichristic presence of the Turk,'<sup>132</sup> Charles was the object of great propagandistic efforts connecting him to the Roman emperors and universal monarchy<sup>133</sup> and at the same time presenting him

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- 128 R.W. Scheller, 'Imperial Themes in Art and Literature of the Early French Renaissance: The Period of Charles VIII', *Simiolus* 12 (1981–1982) 5–69; and idem, 'Ensigns of Authority: French Royal Symbolism in the Age of Louis XI', *Simiolus* 13 (1982) 75–141; idem, 'Gallia Cisalpina: Louis XI and Italy 1499–1508', *Simiolus* 15 (1985) 5–50. For later periods, see Alexandre Y. Haran, *Le lys et le globe: Messianisme dynastique et rêve impérial en France aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Seysssel, 2000) and Michael Rohrscheider, 'Das französische Präzedenzstreben im Zeitalter Ludwigs XIV. Diplomatische Praxis—zeitgenössische französische Publizistik—Rezeption in der frühen deutschen Zeremonialwissenschaft', *Francia* 36 (2009) 135–179.
- 129 The King of the Romans was the elected chief of the Holy Roman Empire before his imperial coronation, after which he was emperor. During the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'King of the Romans' would come to indicate the elected successor of the reigning emperor or his lieutenant (in the case of Charles v's brother Ferdinand). Maximilian I had been elected King of the Romans (successor to his father Emperor Frederick III) in 1486, but had since his father's death not been crowned. He was therefore in a way still King of the Romans. In 1508, he would assume the title 'Elected Emperor.'
- 130 Larry Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008).
- 131 Rebecca Ard Boone, *Mercurino Di Gattinara and the Creation of the Spanish Empire* (London, 2014) 16.
- 132 John M. Headley, *Tommaso Campanella and the Transformation of the World* (Princeton, 1997) 199.
- 133 Boone, *Mercurino Di Gattinara*; John M. Headley, *The Emperor and his Chancellor: A Study of the Imperial Chancellery under Gattinara* (New York, 1983).

as the ultimate *miles christi*.<sup>134</sup> After Charles's abdication the imperial throne passed to his brother Ferdinand. But his son Philip—a mere king of Castile—still claimed the imperial tradition because of his descent from Charles v, the impressive expansion of the Spanish Habsburg Empire in the Americas, Asia, and Europe, and the acquisition of Portugal and its dependencies in 1580–1583. Although the French king would continue to dispute Spain's imperial aspirations,<sup>135</sup> many contemporary commentators considered Spain, rather than the Holy Roman Empire, the new 'world empire'—among them, for instance, Tommaso Campanella, who described in *The Monarchy of Spain* how the Spanish king could obtain universal monarchy.<sup>136</sup> The Roman Legacy was now incarnated in a kind of super-kingdom of Spain, instead of in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>137</sup>

The blending of different legacies was made visible in the king of Spain's titles, starting particularly with Philip II. Whereas Charles v was known mostly by his most exalted title of Emperor—hence Charles v and not Charles I as he was in Castile—his heirs would be known as the king of Spain, or *Rex Hispaniarum*. This was a fictional title, since 'Spain' or the 'Spains' did not exist as a kingdom, but only as a geographical term (rather like Scandinavia). Philip II was well aware of this, and he notably omitted the title from his testament.<sup>138</sup> The title *Rex Hispaniarum* had been used before by the Castilian king Alfonso x,

134 The best-known artworks that put forward this message are Titian's *Emperor Charles v at the battle Mühlberg* (commissioned by his sister Mary of Hungary) and Leone Leoni's *Emperor Charles v as Virtue subduing Fury*, which he himself commissioned. Jennifer Liston, 'The Performance of Empire: Leone Leoni's Charles v as Virtus Subduing Fury', *Visual Resources: An International Journal of Documentation* 28, no. 1 (2012) 24–42.

135 See Liesbeth Geevers, 'The Conquistador and the Phoenix. The Franco-Spanish Precedence dispute (1564–1610) as a Battle of Kingship', *International History Review* 35 (2013) 23–41; Cornel Zwierlein, 'Normativität und Empirie. Denkraum der Präzedenz zwischen Königen auf dem Basler Konzil, am päpstlichen Hof (1564) und in der entstehenden Politikwissenschaft (bis 1648)', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 125 (2005) 101–132.

136 Headley, *Tommaso Campanella*, 199–201.

137 Nevertheless, the Austrian emperors also cultivated the imperial legacy. See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Variations on the Imperial Theme in the Age of Maximilian II and Rudolf II* (New York, 1978); Maria Goloubeva, *The Glorification of Emperor Leopold I in Image, Spectacle and Text* (Mainz, 2000).

138 *Testamento de Felipe II*, 1. His titles listed are: 'Rey de Castilla, de León, de Aragón, de las dos Sicilias, de Hierusalem, de Portugal, de Navarra, de Granada, de Toledo, de Valencia, de Galicia, de Mallorca, de Sevilla, de Cerdeña, de Córdoba, de Córçega, de Murcia, de Jaén, de los Algarves, de Algeciras, de Gibraltar, de las Islas de Canaria, de las Indias Orientales y Occidentales, islas y Tierra Firma del Mar Océano, Archduque de Austria, Duque

who had had imperial aspirations and had been elected King of the Romans by a minority of the electoral body in 1257. In the context of Philip's reign it obviously referred to his joint Iberian kingdoms, but it also served to provide the Habsburg ruler with a title that evoked something more than the sum of his territories. 'Spain' would become the *pars pro toto* of all Philip's possessions. The 'Monarquía hispana' therefore had universal connotations, and the Rex Hispaniarum at its head could aspire to be lord of the world. The influence of the various local contexts in which the Habsburgs forged their dynastic concept led to a transnational dynastic 'brand'—the Habsburgs as rulers of the world. Through different aspects of this global myth—the Burgundian Golden Fleece, the Iberian *Reconquista*-king, the German imperial myth—the dynasty could claim to be the rightful rulers of all their territories.

In many of the territories that the Habsburgs acquired in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they were at first considered to be 'foreigners', which led to resistance everywhere. As noted above, kinship and blood ties alone were nowhere near enough to persuade local elites that the new arrivals were their natural princes. Residence and marriages in line with certain local interests could put such unease to rest, but it was, of course, impossible for rulers to reside in all their territories simultaneously. Some kind of universal legitimizing narrative was therefore necessary. On a conceptual level, the traditional legitimizing narratives first developed by the Habsburgs' predecessors in the Low Countries, Iberian kingdoms, and the Holy Roman Empire had many things in common, such as a focus on Julian descent and a missionary zeal to lead the Catholic world. These narratives could be combined into a narrative about 'Spain' as a universal monarchy—which built on Iberian thoughts about *Reconquista*, continued the imperial tradition in a 'royal' guise, and adopted the Golden Fleece as its visual motto. The acquisition of an empire that spanned all the known continents, thus led to the elaboration of a suitably universal dynastic concept.

### 2.2.1 Genealogies and the Escorial

The genealogical aspects of the Habsburg dynastic myth were, of course, elaborated in genealogies. These sources also give us an impression of how the ruling family was depicted as a group. The Spanish genealogies generally refer to the lineage as the 'Casa de Austria', the *Domus Austriae*. Many genealogies reflect

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de Borgoña, de Bravante, y Milán, Conde de Habsbourg, de Flandes, de Tirol y de Barcelona, Señor de Vizcaya y de Molina.'



the mythical Trojan origins of the dynasty and trace a common origin from mythical or biblical figures such as Adam or Hector, which invariably lead to the French king Clovis, and then, descending in the male line from Merovech, on to the medieval count Ottobert/Othoperto, who was the first to be styled count of Habsburg. Then the line is traced to Emperor Maximilian I, after whom the two lines of Charles V and his brother Ferdinand I are discussed.<sup>139</sup>

But over time, differences emerged in the way more contemporary Habsburgs were discussed. When we analyse genealogies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we observe some notable differences. For instance, the Milanese friar Paolo Morigi, writing in 1592, presented a decidedly hotch-potch version of the Habsburg dynasty, barely distinguishing between the two lines. He dedicated his work to Empress Maria (1528–1603). As a daughter of Charles V, sister of Philip II, spouse of the Austrian Habsburg Emperor Maximilian II (1527–1576), and mother of numerous Austrian Habsburgs, she virtually embodied the connection between the two branches, which is perhaps why Morigi felt he did not need to present a strictly patrilineal account of the dynasty. Furthermore, Morigi intended to present the history of the House of Habsburg and laud the Catholicism of its members.<sup>140</sup> Although such religious narratives were obviously connected to the Habsburgs' legitimacy as rulers, his primary focus was not on the succession to the thrones of Spain or the Holy Roman Empire. Rather, he expressly wished to include the family's pious women, whether they had married or not, extoll their virtue, and thus legitimize the position of the entire dynasty at the apex of the European Catholic society.

In line with his focus on piety and women, he pays a lot of attention to the daughters of Ferdinand I in his discussion of the descendants of Maximilian I. The piety of the Habsburg daughters is elaborately extolled, and Morigi even devotes two small chapters to the house of Bavaria (into which Ferdinand's daughter Anna married) and Lorraine (into which Anna's son William married). Since piety takes pride of place, instead of, for instance, succession, no specific order can be found in the description of sixteenth-century Habsburgs. Morigi jumps from Charles V, his youngest daughter Joanna (1535–1573), and illegitimate children, to his brother Ferdinand, Ferdinand's married daughters and then the houses of Bavaria and Lorraine, back to Ferdinand's daughters who became nuns; then he discusses Ferdinand's sons, including

139 Paolo Morigi, *Historia brieve dell' augustissima casa d' Austria* (Bergamo, 1593) jumps from Clovis straight to Maximilian and then discusses members of both lines.

140 Morigi, *Historia brieve*, dedication, no pagination.

Emperor Maximilian II, his wife Maria, and two of their daughters, their son Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612) and then finally Charles V's son Philip II. Even if we account for his focus on piety rather than succession, it is still quite striking that Morigi did not try to present the two branches as separated sharply or ordered hierarchically.

A rather different approach was taken by Lázaro Díaz del Valle y de la Puerta, whose work *Mapa de la muy alta católica y esclarecida sangre austriaca y genealogia de su Magestad católica y del cesareo Emperador Ferdinando III por la Augustísima cassa de Austria* was finished in 1653.<sup>141</sup> Starting with Adam, he presents a direct line running from him to the seventeenth-century Habsburg rulers of Spain and the Empire. Each lineal ancestor is placed in a circle with a short biography, leaving aside other descendants, while each generation is numbered. After generation 119 (Philip the Fair), the genealogy splits into two lines, one descended from Charles and the other from Ferdinand (both gen. 120). From then on, the pages in the manuscript are split horizontally: the upper half is dedicated to the Spanish line, while the lower half discusses the Austrians. Generation 121 is represented by Philip II (Charles V's eldest son) and Charles of Styria (1540–1590), who was Ferdinand's third son, but was the only one to produce legitimate heirs. In generation 123 we find Philip IV and Ferdinand III (1608–1657), while generation 124, which should present their successors, is given as empty and merely expresses the hope of succession.<sup>142</sup> The text mentions that Ferdinand III had married the infanta Maria of Spain (1606–1646) and had two sons<sup>143</sup> and a daughter, who was 'now' queen of Spain. On the one hand, Díaz del Valle presents the two branches as strictly separated—much more so than Morigi—but, on the other, he seems to present a sort of unification of the branches around 1650.<sup>144</sup>

141 Lázaro Díaz del Valle y de la Puerta, *Mapa de la muy alta católica y esclarecida sangre austriaca y genealogia de su Magestad católica y del cesareo Emperador Ferdinando III por la Augustísima cassa de Austria desde el santo patriarca Adam por línea de varones* (Manuscript 1653; Biblioteca Nacional de España Mss/1073). The author (ca. 1606–1669) had been a courtier, serving in the royal chapel since the early 1620s, and was known from ca. 1655 as a royal chronicler as well. He is best known as Spain's Giorgio Vasari because of his collection of biographies of artists, *Origen y yllustración del nobilissimo y real arte de la pintura y dibuxo* (1656). See for biographical details: José María Riello Velasco, 'Lázaro Díaz del Valle y de la Puerta. Datos documentales para su biografía', *De Arte. Revista de Historia del Arte* 3 (2004) 105–132.

142 Díaz del Valle, *Mapa*, 52<sup>v</sup>: a later hand had added the birth of Felipe Próspero, a short-lived son of Philip IV who was born in 1657.

143 Díaz del Valle, *Mapa*, 50<sup>r</sup>: a later hand added that the eldest of these sons had since died.

144 José Pellicer de Ossau y Tovar, *La fama austriaca, o Historia panegírica de la exemplar*

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the representation of the Spanish Habsburg branch also took shape in the Escorial, which served as their burial place. When we trace the history of the dynasty's representation in the funerary architecture of the Escorial, we come across a similar development that we saw in the genealogies—from inclusive to exclusive. The Escorial, built between 1563 and 1584, was intended to serve as a burial place for Philip II, his father, and their relatives.<sup>145</sup> At first, the king constructed a quite modest crypt below the basilica's choir, twinned by cenotaphs above ground, also in the choir area. Although the Escorial and its basilica were built on a monumental scale, the crypt was small—as was common for royal burial sites of the sixteenth century.<sup>146</sup> This small vault was situated directly below the main altar, since Charles V had stated in his testament that he wanted to be buried 'under the feet of the priest.'<sup>147</sup> A number of Philip II's relatives were (re)buried there—they included his parents, two aunts, three wives, three brothers, five children, and a nephew. The group was arranged hierarchically around the coffin of Charles V, who was flanked on his left by his wife and sisters, and on his right a place was reserved for his son.<sup>148</sup> Charles was thus the central individual in the vault, and Philip was positioned as his heir.

The coffins in the crypt remained out of view, but they were matched above ground by two groups of statues depicting the buried royals—minus the children—at prayer.<sup>149</sup> Charles was depicted with his wife, two sisters, and daugh-

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*vida, y hechos gloriosos de Ferdinando segundo* (Barcelona, 1641) gives a written genealogy that much resembles Lázaro Días del Valle's work in that it presents the two branches as distinct lineages. The work was apparently intended to show that the Habsburgs were also patrilineal descendants of Merovech and as such in line for the French throne should the Bourbons fail to produce male heirs.

- 145 Juan Martínez Cuesta, *Guide to the Monastery of San Lorenzo el Escorial, also called El Escorial* (Madrid, 1992) 12; Henry Kamen, *The Escorial: Art and Power in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 2010) 67–69; Juan Rafael de la Cuadra Blanco, 'La idea original de los enterramientos reales en El Escorial', *Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* 85 (1997) 375–413.
- 146 Thomas Lersch, *Die Grabkapelle der Valois in Saint Denis* (Munich, 1995); Brigitta Lauro, *Die Grabstätten der Habsburger. Kunstdenkmäler einer europäischen Dynastie* (Vienna, 2007) 131–138; María José Redondo Cantera, 'Los sepulcros de la Capilla Real de Granada', in: Miguel Angel Zalama Rodríguez, ed., *Juana I en Tordesillas: su mundo, su entorno* (Valladolid, 2010) 185–214.
- 147 *Testamento de Carlos V*, 101 (codicil of 9 September 1558).
- 148 Fray José de Sigüenza, *Historia primitiva y exacta del monasterio del Escorial*, Miguel Sánchez y Pinillos, ed. (Madrid, 1881) 114–116.
- 149 De la Cuadra Blanco, 'La idea original', 375, 397.

ter Maria (who died in 1603 and was thus still alive when the statues were commissioned but chose to be buried elsewhere); Philip with three of his four wives, and his adult son Carlos (1545–1568). The cenotaphs represent two family units focused on rulers—much like the contemporary monument to Francis I (1494–1547) at St. Denis.<sup>150</sup> The two groups of statues took up most of the spaces around the altar, leaving no room for future additions.

Philip's son and grandson altered these arrangements. Around the altar, nothing changed, but below ground they started housing the royal coffins in a far grander vault, called the Panteón de Reyes. Here, the rulers of Spain and their wives—particularly those who were mothers of kings—were buried while all other relatives were moved to the less grand Panteón de Infantes. Whereas the older crypt had been inaccessible, the new pantheon was larger, grander, and seemingly more accessible to a (slightly) wider public; we have a number of travel journals describing the Panteones, mostly from foreign diplomats.<sup>151</sup> The new set-up, with greater visibility of the deceased kings, was undoubtedly seen as necessary since there was no space around the altar to depict the generations of rulers that succeeded Philip II. In the new Panteón de Reyes the deceased kings of Spain were placed on top of each other, with Charles V at the top and Philip II and Philip III below him (Philip IV would later be interred in the coffin below his father's), almost like a genealogical tree. Rather than in family groups—as in the statue groups around the altar—the kings were represented as a sequence of rulers, mimicking the changes between the genealogies of Morigi and Díaz del Valle.

Apart from connecting itself to its territories—each of them separately and the whole—the Habsburgs developed concepts aimed at connecting members of the lineage to each other. The family tree stretching back to the medieval Austrian Habsburgs looked like an hour glass: the tree was wide with many branches throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, then contracted to only one person, Maximilian (and his only son Philip the Fair), and then widened again in the two main branches engendered by his grandsons Charles and Ferdinand. The early modern Habsburgs were most often portrayed as the descendants of the two brothers in joint genealogies. As the tree grew

150 The Valois monument of Francis I also depicts the king and queen and some of their deceased adult children.

151 A Dutch ambassador reported a visit to the Escorial during their mission in 1661. Van Amerongen to Willem Frederik van Nassau, Madrid 20 January 1661, Koninklijk Huisarchief, SA VII C170, cited in: Maurits Ebben, ed., *Lodewijck Huygens' Spaans journaal. Reis naar het hof van de koning van Spanje, 1660–1661* (Zutphen, 2005) 279–281, n. 44. Some years later, the Duke of Saint Simon visited as well. De la Cuadra Blanco, 'La idea original', 393.

larger during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we can also detect a stronger focus on the patrilineage—apparently, the whole group of Habsburgs could be dealt with in the sixteenth century, but this had become perhaps too complicated in the seventeenth century. Possibly in connection to succession practices that reverted to the primogeniture type, the Spanish branch was increasingly thought of as a sequence of kings, rather than an extended family.

### 2.3 *The Social Reality of the ‘Casa De Austria’*

Clearly, in the development of Habsburg dynastic concepts, the existence of the two branches played a pivotal role. This reflected the perceived unity within the one ‘House of Austria’, the ‘Gesamthaus.’<sup>152</sup> The Gesamthaus thesis originates in the Habsburgs’ own concept of the ‘Domus Austriae’. Until the fourteenth century, the Habsburg patrimony had often been referred to as the ‘Herrschaft zu Österreich’, or dominion of Austria. This concept implied unified rule of the house over their domains. But the fourteenth century saw a number of partitions, which fragmented rule and rendered this concept problematic. As a counterbalance, the dynasty developed a concept of the ‘Domus’, or House.<sup>153</sup> This concept gave an ‘ideal manifestation of the union of the ruling haus’ amid administrative fragmentation.<sup>154</sup> The ‘Domus Austriae’ concept gained wider use during the reign of Emperor Frederick III (1415–1493)<sup>155</sup> who considered himself to be the head of the entire house, including a branch represented by his cousin. According to this ideal, the House need not be unified or represented by a single individual in order to still be able to direct all the Habsburgs’ energies towards a common dynastic goal. By developing this concept and strategy, the Habsburg dynasty could hope to avoid the wars and conflicts between the branches that characterized the interactions among other multi-branched German dynasties.<sup>156</sup> The family tradition would therefore advocate the continued use of partible inheritance

152 Heinz-Dieter Heimann, *Die Habsburger. Dynastie und Kaiserreiche* (Vienna, 2004) 62.

153 Lackner, ‘Das Haus Österreich’, 286.

154 Lackner, ‘Das Haus Österreich’, 287.

155 Lackner, ‘Das Haus Österreich’, 287. Although it remained unclear whether the concept covered the ruling house, or also the territories it ruled.

156 See, for instance, works on the early modern Wittelsbach: Franz Fuchs, ‘Das “Haus Bayern” im 15. Jahrhundert. Formen und Strategien einer dynastischen “Integration”’, in: Werner Maleczek, ed., *Fragen der politischen Integration im mittelalterlichen Europa* (Ostfildern, 2005) 303–324 and Andrew L. Thomas, *A House Divided. Wittelsbach Confessional Court Cultures in the Holy Roman Empire, c. 1550–1650* (Leiden, 2010). Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Protestantism and Primogeniture in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven, 1989) for many examples of conflicts among the branches of German dynasties.

to provide for all its male members, while maintaining a sense of cultural unity, shared purpose, and solidarity through its 'Domus' ideology.<sup>157</sup>

How the 'Domus' ideology translated to social reality in the early modern period is a matter of debate. Some historians have argued that a silent agreement between the two branches stipulated that the eldest Spanish princess would always marry the future emperor.<sup>158</sup> Others also suspect that an agreement was in place, stipulating that one branch should succeed if the other became extinct.<sup>159</sup> The two strategies would reinforce each other, since by frequent marriage between the senior male Austrian and the senior female Spaniard, the Austrians would always be the closest heirs in absence of Spanish male heirs. These arguments have often been made in the context of the War of the Spanish Succession and are probably intended to explain why the Austrians felt they were entitled to the Spanish inheritance even though the French House of Bourbon was more closely related. However, when we take a look at both marriage policies and succession arrangements throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we can see that such assertions are not supported by the evidence.

The notion that all the eldest daughters of the Spanish king married (future) emperors proves to be false. Charles V's eldest daughter did, but no others. Philip II intended for his eldest daughter to marry the emperor—Philip's nephew Rudolf II—but the emperor did not intend to marry at all. This left her unmarried quite some time until she married a Habsburg who was unlikely to become emperor. Philip III and Philip IV married their *second* daughters to the emperor but their eldest to the French king—giving the latter ultimately a better claim to the Spanish patrimony. Therefore, inter-dynastic ties were—genealogically, at least—equally tight with the Bourbons in the seventeenth century.

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157 Gustav Turba, *Geschichte des Thronfolgerechtes in allen habsburgische Ländern bis zur pragmatischen Sanktion Kaiser Karls VI. 1156 bis 1732* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1903); on partible inheritance, see Sutter Fichtner, *Protestantism and Primogeniture*; J.P. Cooper, 'Patterns of Inheritance and Settlement by Great Landowners from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries', in: Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk and E.P. Thompson, eds., *Family and inheritance. Rural society in Western Europe, 1200–1800* (Cambridge, 1976) 192–327.

158 Frederik Dhondt, 'From Contract to Treaty: The Legal Transformation of the Spanish Succession (1659–1713)', *Journal of the History of International Law* 13 (2011) 347–375.

159 Linda and Marsha Frey, *A Question of Empire: Leopold I and the War of Spanish Succession, 1701–1705* (Boulder, 1983) 13. See also Jean Bérenger, 'Une tentative de rapprochement entre la France et l'Empereur: le traité de partage secret de la succession d'Espagne du 19 janvier 1668', *Revue d'Histoire diplomatique* 79 (1965) 291–314, 294–295.

If we examine succession arrangements, we get a similar picture. Austrian Habsburgs do figure in the succession scenarios that were elaborated in the testaments of the kings of Spain. But only Austrians who were children of Spanish princesses ranked high in the order of succession. For instance, Maximilian II's children were directly behind Philip II's own children in the line of succession due to his marriage to Philip's sister. But Austrians who were not—for instance, the Styrian branch, which had no female Spanish ancestor—were omitted entirely.<sup>160</sup> However, when the branch descended from Philip II's sister became extinct, their privileged place in the succession as secondary heirs was taken by the House of Savoy, descended from Philip II's daughter Catalina (1567–1597), rather than by any other Austrian branch. This indicates that inter-Habsburg solidarity could never trump the genealogically based rights of other houses who were more closely related to the Spanish Habsburgs.

Genealogical proximity between the Austrians and the Spanish played a part in the participation of Austrian Habsburgs in the Spanish patrimony. Of Maximilian's six sons, four were educated in Spain, and three of these were considered as possible husbands for Philip's daughters, and three were provided for by the Spanish, through offices or inheritance.<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, one son who was not educated in Spain served briefly as a rebel governor in the Low Countries. However, such close co-operation was not a result only of good family relations. In fact, Philip II intended to raise his nephews because he was suspicious of Maximilian's religious stance. In this sense, a court education under their uncle's eye was in fact an indication of mistrust between the branches. Furthermore, when we review the treatment of such nephews, it is clear that their value derived from the fact that they were a sister's children, rather than from their membership in the overarching Habsburg dynasty. There is hardly any difference in the way Savoyard and Austrian nephews were treated at the Spanish court. Three Savoyard nephews were also educated at the Spanish court (again because their Spanish uncle did not trust their father very much), one of whom—as well as two further sons—served the Spanish monarchy in some capacity.<sup>162</sup> Children of Spanish women who were not Austrians were thus favoured equally with court educations and livelihoods, and could represent the Spanish king as a governor just as well as agnatic Habsburgs.

160 Geevers, 'Miracles of Spain', 296.

161 Liesbeth Geevers, 'Dynasty and State Building in the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy: The Career of Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy (1588–1624)', *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (2016) 267–292, 271.

162 Geevers, 'Dynasty and State building', *passim*. Emanuele Filiberto served as prior of Castile and León in the Order of St. Juan, admiral of the Habsburg Mediterranean fleet and viceroy

Overall, the Austrian branch of the family was closely related to the Spanish branch, and war between the two never broke out. However, the memory of common descent from Philip the Fair—the father of Charles V and Ferdinand I—does not appear to have been a great unifying force. This force was provided by the frequent marriages of Spanish princesses into the Austrian branch. Such standard genealogical connections were not unique to the Austrians, as the example of the Savoyards shows. Inter-Habsburg solidarity probably prevented wars from breaking out—it did not in the case of Savoy or France—but in terms of marriages or the succession, the ties between the two branches were regulated according to the generally accepted norms of dynasticism—nothing more. The Spanish Succession crisis—precipitated by the childless death of Charles II (1660–1700) in 1700 but anticipated long before that date—ended Habsburg rule in Spain and in fact illustrates the ‘kinship-over-dynasty’ principle remarkably well. Charles II, aware that he was about to die without direct heirs, was adamant that his entire inheritance should pass to one heir without being divided. The heir he chose was not, however, a Habsburg, but a Bourbon. Not only were the Bourbons not part of the Habsburg ‘Gesamthaus’, but neither had any of them ever served in any capacity within the Habsburg Monarchy (unlike scions of the houses of Farnese, Savoy, and Medici). However, at the moment when Charles identified his heir, none of this mattered, but only the kinship ties connecting the king and his heir: Charles’s eldest sister had married Louis XIV of France. Skipping over direct heirs to the French throne (Charles’s nephew, the Dauphin, and grandnephew), Charles chose his sister’s second grandson—aptly named Philippe.

On the whole, we conclude that marriages, successions, and participation of relatives in rule would be influenced more by kinship and blood ties rather than by the concept of the *Domus Austriae*—with closely related Savoyards or Bourbons preceding slightly ‘adrift’ Austrian Habsburgs. The power of the dynastic concept as social glue among its members was thus particularly strong when kinship ties were close.

## Conclusion

In order to overcome the main problem of comparatists—how to make sure one had equal knowledge of the different cases one is comparing—this chapter

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of Sicily; his brother Cardinal Maurizio was protector of Spain at the Vatican, while his other brother Tommaso Francesco served as general of the Netherlandish army during the Thirty Years’ War.



was written by two authors who extensively discussed the possible questions to be asked of our two fields of expertise, the Jochids of the Golden Horde and the Spanish Habsburgs. Instead of formulating questions deriving from our own specific historiographies, we chose to devise a definition of dynastic rule based on elements of our two cases. Keeping in mind the three elements of dynastic rule that we identified—the passing on of assets, i.e. succession; the constructing of a dynastic concept; and the social realities of joint dynastic rule—we returned to our own source material.

### *Successions*

Perhaps succession is where one would expect to find the greatest differences between the nomads' bloody 'free-for-all' and European strict and orderly primogeniture. Such ideas are clearly exaggerated stereotypes, because in both of our cases the importance of 'the right heir', who was acceptable to elites and thus could uniquely foster cohesion in the empire or monarchy, was paramount.

Combining our analyses of the Jochids and the Habsburgs, we can note several differences in the way these lineages passed on their assets to future generations, and how these practices came about. Habsburg successions were influenced above all by local dynastic traditions, some of which were translated to the level of the wide-ranging monarchy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Particularly Castile's male-preference primogeniture became a guiding principal for the succession, while Austria's tradition of partition became obsolete in the seventeenth century. The Jochids, on the other hand, showed less a process of blending influences, since the Mongol tradition did not compete with others, but we notice nevertheless a process of 'emancipation' from the great khans. The election procedure of the great khan—election by assembled begs and other members of the nomadic elite—was replicated at the local level in the Golden Horde, a translation in the opposite direction, from the overarching dynasty to its local offshoots. Contrary to what is commonly asserted, the Mongols favoured primogeniture. The old rules of post-mortem inheritance practiced by East-Asian herders were not the ones the Chinggisids had decided to follow—they might have been inspired by previous imperial practices, especially by the Khitans (Liao) who had also established the rank of the sons in accordance with their mother's and primogeniture. As we have seen through various examples including Khans Batu, Berke, and Möngke-Temür, the Jochids always preferred primogeniture, even if they did not see it as mandatory.<sup>163</sup>

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163 See Holmgren, who believed that the Mongols followed traditional steppe inheritance

In both empires the number of heirs and claimants was instrumental in shaping the 'atmosphere' of the succession. Plural heirs led to conflicts everywhere, and uncles and nephews might be at odds in both empires. The Jochid succession was limited to only two branches until the fourteenth century; a number not unlike the number of Habsburg collateral lines. In any case, across the board adult males were considered to be entitled to part of the dynastic assets. If they did not receive their due, they might threaten the ruler. As a general rule, adult males posed a problem that needed to be solved. Interestingly the Jochids did not concentrate power and assets on the heir-designate and never deprived uncles, brothers, and nephews of political and military power—a significant departure from other systems including the Han, the Ottomans, and the Mughals after Akbar.<sup>164</sup>

In terms of succession law, both empires showed flexibility although Habsburg laws (where they existed) were slightly clearer in designating a specific individual than the Chinggisid *yasa*—an evolving body of laws—which identified many claimants. In both empires, codified law played a limited role in the end. In the Mongol case, as recent scholarship shows, the *yasa* was less important than the procedural laws implemented during the *quriltai*, great consultative assemblies. Questions concerning imperial marriages and inheritance patterns, divorces, and remarriages were discussed during these collective meetings where elite women, too, had a say.<sup>165</sup>

The Golden Horde did not codify any succession laws, but their stable practices show they had firm rules. Yet under dramatic circumstances, like the brutal death of a ruler or the lack of direct heirs, practices might diverge, as in the case of Khan Berke, who did not have a solid claim to rule because of the relatively low status of his mother. He managed to gain and consolidate power, but after his death, the rules established under Chinggis Khan and his first successors—preferential primogeniture and precedence of the candidates according to their mother's rank—prevailed again.

The Spanish Habsburg Monarchy as a whole did not have a codified succession law either. And even where it existed—that is, in the separate clusters

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procedure in which 'the chief heir was in most cases the youngest son of the first wife', but noted that in the Mongol empire 'the youngest son did not necessarily inherit the position of supreme ruler'. She attributed this discrepancy to the democratic force of the *quriltai* ('Observations on Marriage and Inheritance Practices in Early Mongol and Yuan Society' 146–151).

164 Munis Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719* (Cambridge, 2012).

165 Hodous, 'The *Quriltai* as a Legal Institution in the Mongol Empire', 87–102; Broadbridge, 'Marriage, Family and Politics: The Ilkhanid-Oirat Connection', 121–135.

that formed the Monarchy—practices might still deviate from the law. In the end, the various ‘illegitimate’ successions in medieval Castile show that traditional ideas about ideal rulers (adult males with Reconquista credentials) were stronger than codified laws that identified women or children. This experience still resonated in the seventeenth century, when Philip IV displayed sincere anxiety about his succession, even though he had a sturdy daughter, who was perfectly eligible and acceptable. Philip’s desire for a son and the phasing out of partitions of the patrimony do show that male-preference primogeniture and the exclusion of women and younger brothers had taken firm root in the seventeenth century. But we might argue that the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy conformed to this typically ‘European’ succession pattern rather late. Rather than being some engrained and essentially European tradition, primogeniture was slowly introduced to the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy as a whole—not by law, but by testamentary provisions.

Common views about primogeniture as a typically European and sedentary feature versus multigeniture supposedly dominant in the nomadic societies need to be revised. Primogeniture imposed by the ruling group created stability and had the huge advantage of neutralizing a number of conflicts (as nature or God had decided). But primogeniture could work only when a ruler had sons. This raises an important question: how flexible could an empire be when the circumstances prevented the elites from following the rules? How far could they go in changing or adapting the laws? The Jochids temporarily allowed changes, but they also developed rituals to make these changes acceptable to their world order and to reassure the spirits of the ancestors and the living. Among these rituals, one of the most important was that involving losing contenders, who ‘gave up the throne’ as a token gesture.<sup>166</sup> But there was one rule about which the Jochids remained inflexible: the Chinggisid patrilineality of the throne contenders. To belong to the golden lineage was always an absolute precondition for being elected Khan. Thus, the Jochids would include in their pool of pretenders the offshoot of a secondary lineage or the sons of a concubine over the sons of the Chinggisid princesses.

### *Dynastic Concepts*

Looking back at both the Jochid and Habsburg dynastic concepts, it appears that genealogy and descent were more important for the Jochids than they were in the Habsburg case. Certainly in the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-

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166 See, for example, the scene of the *quriltai* before Ögödeis’ enthronement described in: Rashid al-Din *Compendium of Chronicles*, vol. 2, 312.

turies, all Habsburgs descended from Maximilian and his only son Philip the Fair, which simplified matters greatly. Although almost all sixteenth-century genealogies mention all the different medieval branches of the Habsburgs, some seventeenth-century texts start only with Philip the Fair (last common ancestor of the two early-modern branches).<sup>167</sup> The Jochids, however, had to deal with eleven lineages, some of which rose to prominence only after many generations of obscurity and therefore reinvented their genealogies to bolster their prestige. Perhaps as a result of the genealogical simplicity of the Habsburgs, their dynastic concepts were much more focused on the 'mission' of the dynasty—to conquer all the world in order to defend the Catholic faith. The Jochids mixed the Chinggisid ideology of world-dominion that dated back to the times of Great Khan Ögödei with elements coming from the Islamic Sunni tradition. As early as the second half of the thirteenth century, Khan Berke's letters to the Mamluk Sultan Baybars show that new elaborations were taking place in the Muslim circles of the Golden Horde in which Islamization would strengthen the khan's legitimacy. But the religion of the Jochid ruler remained a 'plus' or a 'minus'; it would not be a *sine qua non* before the second half of the fourteenth century when the Ilkhans and the Mongol Yuan collapsed—marking the real end of the Mongol Empire.

However, in both cases we note how malleable dynastic concepts were and the extent to which they depended on the contemporary context in which they were formed. Clearly, historians must always consider dynastic concepts in their specific contexts instead of mistaking them for historical facts. This means dynasties were constantly re-inventing themselves and re-connecting themselves to their subjects. Dynastic concepts were therefore inherently unstable and changeable. A central core usually served as the foundation of the dynastic myth (for instance, the mythical ancestor, the claims to world power), but the individuals who were connected to these central elements could change. This was, for instance, the case when the hierarchy among the Jochid branches changed or when the Habsburg House split into two branches. Dynastic concepts were the ultimate example of the flexibility of ideals and traditions, which were remodelled to paper over dynastic discontinuities or to find support for the ruling house among newly acquired territories and their elites. Their importance for fostering cohesion within empires cannot, therefore, be overstated.

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167 See, for example, Philip Kilian, *Genealogia serenissimae domus Austriacae: a Philippo Primo, Rege Hispaniarum, altero Austriacae magnitudinis fundatore, ad Augustissimos Caesares Leopoldum et Margaretham deducta* (Graz, 1666).

### *Social Realities*

When we turn from concepts and theories to practices, we can see that in both the Jochid and Habsburg cases, dynastic rule was not a matter for single monarchs: a wider group of people was involved, as contenders, electors, or helpers. Our dynastic case studies clearly show the ‘composite character’ of kingship, or rulership, as a ‘mixed bag’ involving others beyond the nominal ruler—even if he or she was a forceful and competent character. In the Jochid case, these additional powerbrokers are actually incorporated into genealogies of the ruling clan as ‘sons-in-law’. The Jochids practiced preferential marriage with the Qonggirat, but there was not ‘simultaneous exchange’ between them. The Jochid princes maintained their marital strategies open and pragmatic. Polygyny, as we have seen, had almost no impact on internal succession, as the Mongols used it for political relations and diplomacy. For outsiders, the impassable barrier to entering the golden lineage was compensated for by the possibility of joining the ever-growing group of the ‘sons-in-law’—a group that could never reach the supreme office but could rule nevertheless. The Jochid princesses were married to important vassals, like the Armenian and Russian princes, and to begs or heads of the local nomadic elites. They sometimes married influential neighbours, such as the Ilkhanids and the Timurids, but they never married complete foreigners.<sup>168</sup> In any case, Chinggisid matrilineality could never lead to khanship.

We also come across some ‘son-in-law’-families in the earlier Habsburgs genealogies (most notably the houses of Bavaria and Lorraine in Morigi’s genealogy), but in the strongly patrilineal seventeenth-century genealogies we lose sight of them. Spanish princesses had rights of inheritance, and so did their offspring. But since Habsburg in-laws were always foreign princes (who were occasionally at war with their fathers- and brothers-in-law) their role in the Habsburg power structure differed fundamentally from the role of Jochid in-laws. Normally, only junior members of in-law-lineages—the king’s nephews and nieces—were allowed to participate in Habsburg rule. Nevertheless, both cases demonstrate how important collateral kinsmen really were and thus also the connections established between different lineages through marriages.

As we have seen, the Jochid system fell in between monogamy and polygyny. Indeed even in the cases when the khans converted to Islam—which already

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168 The marriage of the khan’s niece Tulunbay Khatun with the Mamluk sultan al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qalawun, in 1320, was considered exceptional by the Jochids themselves. See Marie Favereau, ‘The Golden Horde and the Mamluks’, in Rafael Khakimov, Vadim Trepavlov, and Marie Favereau, eds., *The Golden Horde in World History* (Kazan, 2017) 338–339.

reduced the number of legal wives to four—only the sons from chief wives were eligible for the succession. This meant that the number of Jochid heirs was less than the total number of sons, and that the contrast with monogamous Europe was not as huge as might be expected.

When discussing dynastic rule, historians—whether they were fourteenth-century Castilian chroniclers, Rashid al-Din, Ibn Khaldun, or modern-day scholars, have often tended to present us with a sequence of rulers.<sup>169</sup> Although rulers actually strove to present a picture of flawless and inevitable successions from ruler to ruler, in practice, such images could not be further from the truth. Genealogies—certainly those of older lineages about whom we have little other source material—tend to construct history rather than reflect it, by smoothing over ambiguous kinship connections and contentious successions. Furthermore, European genealogies tend to obscure the role of collateral kinsmen—descended from the lineage's women—even though they were very much part of the dynastic project. Jochid genealogies actually do include such 'sons-in-law', but historians have rarely taken them into account when analysing dynastic narratives. Genealogies are a wonderful source for reconstructing dynastic narratives and dissecting strategies to create cohesion between rulers and elites, but they tell us next to nothing about how dynastic rule actually worked in practice. Co-operation of relatives was in fact instrumental in maintaining dynastic rule.

Even though numerous differences exist between the Jochids and the Habsburgs, some conclusions can be drawn from this comparative research. First of all, we must draw attention to the role demography played in dynastic successions. Traditions, codified laws etc. guided successions in principle, but in reality the number of available heirs was much more important for determining outcomes. Second, rulers and their ideologues sketched certain images of their lineage—its descent, its branches etc.—but these images were quite changeable and are therefore to be considered only in their immediate context. They are indications of change and discontinuity rather than reflections of order—although this is exactly the impression they strive to convey. Third, image and practice could be miles apart. Dynasties were often represented in a

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169 Robert Folger, *Generaciones y semblanzas. Memory and Genealogy in Medieval Iberian Historiography* (Tübingen, 2003) 12–14 sketches the development of medieval Iberian historiography from mere kings' lists to a collection of profiles of succeeding monarchs to chronicles based on chapters that concern their succeeding reigns; for a modern-day equivalent, see for instance J.H. Shennan, *The Bourbons. The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2008) which contains the following chapters: 1. Beginnings 2. Henry IV 3. Louis XIII 4. Louis XIV 5. Louis XV 6. Louis XVI 7. Aftermath.

very patrilineal way, but dynastic rule was a collective effort and everywhere we can notice the role of in-law lineages. Historiography that focuses on individual rulers rather misses the point. Kingship and dynasty are not just concepts, but also social practices involving far more people than conceptual texts about kingship and dynasty would lead us to believe.

Where does this leave those historians who wish to study dynastic rule? How can we re-think this concept? It is clear that when analysing a 'dynasty' we must realize that any 'dynasty' existed both as an idea (a dynastic concept as elaborated in genealogies and funerary architecture) and as a set of social practices, such as successions, elections, and participation in rule. Both these aspects of 'dynasty' were quite changeable over time, but one constant is that dynastic rule never consisted solely of a ruler's solitary actions, but rather was a group effort. In that sense, deconstructing the notion of dynasty and giving up on the traditional list of rulers is a way for historians to re-think the chronology of empires and to reflect on the diversity of their political regimes.

## Narratives of Kingship in Fictional Literature\*

*Richard van Leeuwen*

In the previous chapters several significant aspects of kingship and courtly structures in the Eurasian empires were discussed, focusing on court politics and court culture, religion, military organization, manuals of statecraft, and dynastic reproduction. In this final chapter we will direct our attention to more abstract and volatile issues, which were nevertheless essential for the functioning of royal authority and the institution of kingship: the embedding of kingship, as a historical, cultural, and political phenomenon, in discourses of power. Evidently, claims to kingship had to be legitimized first of all in the political and legal discourses that reflected, and constructed, power configurations that became institutionalized within specific political systems and contexts. These ideological underpinnings were crucial for the functioning of the state and the preservation and stabilization of dynastic rule. Authority was formally anchored in the institution of kingship and acknowledged by the groups in power.

Although these formal aspects of ideological discourse are required for establishing structures of authority, they reveal only its 'official' component. Apart from formal, political elements, discourses of power often contain what may be called an 'aesthetic' or cultural component as well. This consists of all manifestations of kingship in the realm of culture and its social embedding, such as celebrations and ritual, architectural and artistic styles, court ceremony, representations and images, etc. All these phenomena not only tended to strengthen the presence of the king within his court and in society; they also provided a medium for converging claims to kingship and the domain of the imagination. Through the cultivation of the aesthetic components of discourses of kingship, royal power was displayed and transformed, to facilitate its incorporation into social life in a specific way and, more structurally, into the collective imagination.

The aesthetic elements of discourses of power thus seem intended to bridge the gap between the king and the populace, between groups in power and the

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\* This chapter contains a brief summary of the monograph: Richard van Leeuwen, *Narratives of Kingship in Eurasian Empires 1300–1800* (Leiden, 2017).



common people, between a closed political segment and society as a whole. This is not to say, that they reflect a 'popular' form of discourse as opposed to formal, courtly discourses. The aesthetic components were certainly shaped to a large extent by the tastes and interests of ruling elites. Still, they allowed those in power to connect with cultural traditions and legacies that strengthened their roots in society and that incorporated notions of cultural identification, historical continuity, and values and images stored in popular culture. They were aimed at mutual acknowledgement, strengthening ties that could be expressed not only by the mere exertion of power or by formal claims. They reflected the connection between the king and his subjects, and transformed his formal power into a more widely accepted form of authority. Kings could use their power to structure and foster visions of their kingship by linking it to specific components already present in the collective imagination and the cultural tradition.

In this chapter we will concentrate on a specific domain of the aesthetic component of discourses of kingship, that is the corpus of fictional narratives. The aim is to investigate how these narratives reflect the ways in which discourses of kingship were incorporated, explicated, preserved, and transmitted through the medium of literature, as a container of both popular imaginings of kingship and political and ethical claims to royal power. This rather ambitious intention immediately raises a number of questions that are partly related to the historical context, which is both geographically and temporally enormous, and partly to the corpus of texts, which is not only vast but also notoriously fluid and volatile. Moreover, it is evidently not even remotely possible to present a more or less complete survey, and it is inevitable to formulate a number of important caveats. In the limited space of this chapter we will be able to discuss only a relatively small number of examples, which, moreover, are available in English, German, or French translations.<sup>1</sup>

Among the problems involved in this kind of research is the question of how to demarcate and justify the corpus. To what extent do the selected texts represent the interface between elite and popular discourses? To what extent can they be considered as 'fictional' texts, taking the contemporary context into account with its potentially different views of fictionality? To what extent can the chosen texts be linked to specific cultural and political realms, and to what extent were they shaped by these historical contexts? To what extent can similarities and commonalities be attributed to direct mutual influence,

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1 For a more elaborated discussion of the limitations, criteria, and theoretical aspects of the research project see the Introduction in Van Leeuwen, *Narratives of Kingship*.

trajectories of migration and translation, common sources, common narrative conventions? There is no space here to elaborate on these questions. May it suffice to say that, in general, literary and cultural trajectories were not always congruent with the rise and fragmentation of political structures and had their own, dynamic realm. Partly because of their fluidity, it is difficult, often even impossible, to securely link cultural and literary tendencies to historical contexts and to determine clear patterns of influence and transmission. This part of the research must therefore necessarily remain speculative.

The texts that have been selected are marked, first of all, by forms of hybridity in various respects. They are mostly situated in the area between 'official' and 'popular' discourses, reflecting popular traditions of storytelling, but also emphasizing the significance of authority, hierarchies, social order, and stability. Since they were preserved mainly or partly in the layer of popular tradition, they have often survived in various versions and adaptations, covering large stretches of time, and reflecting not only influences of historical change, but also of historical continuity, conveying cultural trends and motifs from the past to the future. Moreover, they often straddle the area of fiction and non-fiction, either combining the two modes within single narratives, or fictionalizing history or instructive, explanatory treatises. Finally, they are often part of different linguistic domains and as such reveal traces of local contexts and circumstances, but also contain more universal notions, relating to issues of power, kingship, and morality. The hybridity of the texts emphasizes their essential fluidity and their function as media meant to integrate discourses of power into the more persistent heritage of the collective imagination.

The narratives selected for this chapter belong to the genres of, roughly, the mirror for princes, the romance of chivalry, the (historical) novel, and the love romance. In each of the following sections two main texts have been chosen from the various domains (Chinese, Indian, Persian/Arabic, European) exemplifying either the relevant characteristics of their genre and/or the argument we want to make here, that is, their function in the construction of narratives of kingship. Each section focuses on one of the main themes, which are the 'composite' nature of the figure of the king, reflected in his relationship with his minister or his wife; the role of, particularly religious, initiation; the legitimizing role of history with its inherent moral values; and the role of women as a major factor in the disruption and continuation of dynasties. We will concentrate not only on portrayals of kingship and its paraphernalia and connotations, but also on textual and narrative strategies. Needless to say, in the space of this chapter these aspects can be referred to only in summary fashion.

## 1 The King and His Minister

In the Islamic traditions mirrors for princes belonged to the oldest generic forms, probably inherited from more ancient prototypes in Persian and Sanskrit literature. In several respects, the brief text called the ‘Seven viziers’ can serve as a prototype here, not only exemplifying the genre of the mirror for princes, but also displaying several features of the discourse of statecraft as it evolved within Islamic literature. The narrative is preserved in Arabic and Persian versions from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries and was translated into several European languages, under various titles. The form of the narrative follows the model of the Persian mirror for princes, such as *Kalila wa-Dimna*, consisting of a framing story, which contains the narrative intrigue, but which also determines the level of narrative reality, and a series of embedded tales, which serve as exemplary tales to support and interact with the intrigue in the frame.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the frame is briefly as follows: in response to a prophecy, a prince who has just reached majority is not allowed to speak for seven days, or else harm will befall him. To protect him, he is lodged in the women’s compound, but one of the king’s concubines conceives an evil scheme: she tries to seduce him into murdering his father, usurping the throne, and marrying her. When the prince refuses to concede, she accuses him of having assaulted her. The king, infuriated, commands the execution of his son, but now the viziers intervene. To avert, or at least postpone, the execution, they start telling exemplary stories, alternating with the stories told by the concubine to support her case. After seven days have passed, the prince is allowed to speak and give his version of the events. Now the truth is revealed; the concubine is punished and the prince is educated in preparation for his accession to the throne. The prince and the empire are saved, due to the resourceful intervention of the viziers.

The rather concise narrative intrigue of the ‘Seven viziers’ cycle hides a complex and interesting vision of power and authority. Some of the aspects associated with kingship, such as the education of the prince and the role of women will be discussed in later sections below. What interests us here is particularly the nature of the relationship between the king and his viziers. It is noteworthy that it is not the all-powerful king who solves the problem

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2 Zahiri de Samarkand, *Le livre des sept vizirs*, trans. Dejan Bogdanovic (Paris, 1975); see also: Killis Campbell, *The Seven Sages of Rome, Edited from the Manuscripts, with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary* (Forgotten Books, 2012 [Boston etc., 1907]); and: Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, eds., *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, 2003).

of the rebellious concubine and by doing so saves the dynasty, but rather the viziers, who succeed in preventing his rash decision and in restoring the sway of moderation and careful consideration by referring to the wisdom conveyed in tales and the crucial significance of rationality. The vicious concubine attempts to intervene in the process of dynastic succession not only by reconceiving the procedures, but also by an appeal to the senses and emotions, first of the prince, and subsequently of the king. After failing to seduce the prince, she appears before the king as the victim of injustice, weeping and wailing, with dishevelled hair and torn clothes.

At first the king seems to fall into her trap and to abandon proper procedures and give in to his emotional impulses. This response seems to contradict his solemn position as a sovereign, but in fact it is consistent with the complexity of his role. The king is primarily a man and the head of his household. If a conflict emerges within his household, he is bound to react fiercely and with authority because it touches upon his personal and emotional welfare. But as a king, too, a violent response is justified. His power, as a mighty monarch, is based on his ability and privilege to use violence in an arbitrary way or at least to threaten with it. His indignation is not only justified, but also required because it supports his power as a king. Still, as a king, he is also the personification of an institution that is sanctioned by dynastic privileges, legal and historical legitimacy, and the heritage of the tradition of wisdom and statecraft. Therefore, the king incorporates several layers of power, which he in one way or another has to mutually reconcile.

The intrigue thus lays bare the various personae of the king and thereby reveals the complex, composite nature of kingship. Kingship is not monolithic nor merely a confluence of all-encompassing powers; it rather consists of a balance between various different, and sometimes contradictory, roles. It is the viziers who are responsible for preserving the balance between these roles and for taking care that the personal and emotional aspects do not prevail and are neutralized by an appeal to wisdom, tradition, and sound judgement. It is the privilege, even the duty, of the king to respond impulsively in certain situations and thereby show his might; it is the task of the viziers to mitigate the disruptive effects of this emotionality and turn it into a source of stability and continuity. It is their task to transform the sheer power of the king into authority and thereby secure the continuity of kingship as an institution.

It is no coincidence that the narrative intrigue revolves around the approaching transfer of royal authority to the next generation. It is at this point that the dynasty is at its most vulnerable and the empire is threatened by its greatest danger, disruption and chaos. The narrative intrigue reveals the hidden nature of kingship, its essential compositeness, and necessitates the unravel-

ling of its basic principles. These principles are recapitulated within a process of storytelling by the viziers, installing a situation of dialogue not only between the concubine and the viziers, but more importantly between the viziers and the king. This situation illustrates the essentially dialogic nature of kingship as an institution, between the protagonist of power and the protagonists of tradition and wisdom. Moreover, the dialogic exchange results in a systematic explication of the principles of governance, which not only serves to educate the prince, but also, ultimately, to instruct the reader, in order to instil in him the acceptance of rational, institutionalized rule.

The tension between the different personae of the king and the prominent role of the viziers can be found in several narratives related to the 'Seven viziers'. A notable variation on the same theme is the Persian/Arabic story of 'King Jali'ad of Hind, and his son Wirdkhan', in which the young king Wirdkhan indulges in his carnal lusts and rules according to the advice of his women, even to the extent of killing his brilliant vizier Shimas. Here, too, the narrative intrigue contains a compendium of the rules of statecraft, which in the end averts disaster and ensures the harmonization of the different components of kingship.<sup>3</sup> But in other traditions, too, we find similar motifs. The tension between the various components of kingship seems especially relevant for the Chinese tradition, where the emperor is part of a huge constellation of cosmic forces. In the Chinese tradition, generally speaking, the situation of the empire is dependent on the balance of the forces of Yang and Yin, which reflects the unfolding of destiny through a continuing struggle of forces both on earth and in the celestial realms. The institutionalization of kingship is therefore vested not only in earthly traditions, but also in the celestial 'institutions', which have their own dynamics but are in constant interaction with actors on earth.

The Chinese notion of kingship is therefore a curious dualism of earthly and celestial forces, and of destiny and personal intervention. On the one hand, the emperor is only the cornerstone of the configuration of cosmic forces as it is shaped by destiny; on the other hand, he personally embodies this configuration in his character and actions. The government, as an institutionalized system, is also determined by these forces, but as a system it is objectified as much as possible, that is, it should be autonomous in its functioning according to rules, hierarchies, and procedures. The emperor should guard the functioning of the state apparatus, but the mechanism should be based exclusively on

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3 The story of 'King Jali'ad and his son, Wirdkhan': *The Arabian Nights: Tales of 1001 Nights*, trans. Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons, 3 vols. (London etc., 2008) vol. 3; see also Marzolph and van Leeuwen, *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*.

formalized procedures, circumscribed tasks, and written evaluations. It is the objectification of the system of government that should ensure the stability and preservation of the empire, but, inevitably, the failure of either the king or his officials to fulfil their duties according to the prescriptions will herald a major catastrophe. This is, of course, rich material for storytelling.

An interesting text whose intrigue revolves around the tensions caused by a lascivious emperor and a disloyal minister is *Proclaiming harmony*, a vernacular novel written probably in the fourteenth century. The story refers to the historical events leading to the fall of the Northern Song dynasty and the invasion of the Mongolian Jurchen tribes in the years 1069–1124.<sup>4</sup> The novel opens with some general statements about the forces of Yin and Yang, which determine the course of history. If Yang is dominant, China will be peaceful, the ruler will be enlightened, and the empire will be fertile; if Yin is in the ascendant, the tribes will invade, selfish men will be appointed, and starvation and discord will reign. This alternation of Yin and Yang depends on the conduct of one man, the emperor. After this introduction, ominously, the devious Wang Anshi is appointed as Grand Counsellor. He immediately starts conspiring and scheming, undermining the proper functioning of the state.

The young emperor Huizong is talented, but inclined to trifling amusements and sensual pleasures, neglecting state affairs. One day, on the instigation of his evil ministers, the emperor is persuaded to undertake a licentious escapade in the less reputable quarters of the city. He promptly falls in love with a beautiful courtesan, whom he has moved to the palace. He even lets her sit on the throne next to him. This is the beginning of a series of events that eventually lead to the invasion of the Jurchen, the fall of the capital, and the end of the dynasty. It was the spurned empress who predicted the fatal outcome: 'The three bonds of family and the five constant virtues are being dragged to the ground. When men have a sense of decorum they are strong; having it not, they are destroyed.'<sup>5</sup> When personal misbehaviour disturbs the mechanisms of government, the system collapses. The ministers are ambitious and corrupt, the capital is conquered, and the dynastic documents are stolen. The imperial family is abducted ignominiously to the north by the 'barbarians'.

The fall of the dynasty was here caused by the fatal coincidence of a negligent emperor and a vicious minister, corrupting an essentially ideal system

4 See for the historical context of these events F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800* (Cambridge and London, 2003).

5 *Proclaiming Harmony*, trans. William O'Hennesy (Ann Arbor, 1991) 79.

of government. The story indicates the dialogic nature of kingship by staging several loyal and righteous viziers, who attempt to ward off the catastrophe. Quoted verbatim in the text are several memorials of ministers, protesting against the destructive policy of the prime minister and summoning the emperor to mend his ways. They point out that it is the task of the ministers to admonish the emperor: 'Mencius has said: "One whose responsibility it is to give advice should resign if he is unable to give it, even if it meant discourtenancing the emperor."<sup>6</sup> Here, as in the 'Seven viziers', it is the ministers who have to remind the emperor of the wisdom of the ancient tradition, which contains the principles of just and virtuous rule. They represent the 'conscience' of the emperor, protecting him from his baser instincts and summoning him to heed the principles of the institution of kingship.

In several respects the cycle of the 'Seven viziers' and the novel *Proclaiming harmony* exemplify themes, motifs, and narrative strategies that will recur in our discussion of discourses of kingship in other genres. First, and most importantly, they indicate that kingship is not monolithic, consisting of arbitrary power concentrated in a single person. On the contrary, kingship consists of various components, which combine personal, human inclinations with the requirements of the institutionalized order. The balance between these components is secured through a process of dialogue, primarily between the king and his ministers, the king alternating between his different roles, while the ministers attempt to accommodate his actions to the principles of traditional wisdom and proper rule. The king, as a person, has to conform ultimately to the institution of kingship, and it is the responsibility of the ministers to remind him of this.

Second, the king is the personification of the moral integrity of his kingdom. If he is morally corrupt, the balance of forces is tilted, and society, too, will lose its virtues. The moral integrity of the king is presented as the ability to reconcile his emotions with rational judgement; the ability to resist the attractions (and concomitant ruses) of women; and the adherence to the established traditions that secure the stability and continuation of the dynasty.

Third, the stories are set in motion by intrigues that seem to cause the discontinuation of the dynasty. It is the threat of the end of regular kingship that instigates the recapitulation of the principles of sound government. It causes a crisis in which the various roles are reconfirmed.

Finally, the complexity of kingship and the discourse supporting it are reflected in the complexity of the texts. The dialogic nature of kingship is mir-

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6 *Proclaiming Harmony*, 73.

rored in the dialogic structure of the text, which contains various elements contributing to its dialectic mechanism. The alternation between frame and stories, fictional and historical levels, quoted texts and narration produces an interaction between narrative levels, which enables the juxtaposition of a narrative reality with evocations of the imagination; specific cases with universal principles; the roles of various persons; and the practice of kingship with its underlying assumptions. It is the dialogic mechanism built in the text that indicates its main function, the setting in motion of a process of interpretation that will not only instruct the prince and the reader, but also convince them of the basic ideological principles involved in the institutionalization of authority.

## 2 Kingship and Religion

Perhaps the main theme of the cycle of the 'Seven viziers' discussed above is the notion of 'initiation'. In the beginning, the prince is inexperienced and ignorant, even reluctant to learn anything. After his tribulations, he is instructed according to a new method—by imagined representations of knowledge—and is taught everything he needs to know to fulfil his future tasks. This reflects the procedures of the text itself, which also aims to instruct through representations, in the form of exemplary tales, indicating that, ultimately, the narrative is aimed at the reader, who is instructed in the traditional wisdom concerning statecraft. It follows that kingship is not merely connected to specific situations or specific persons; it is part of a much broader framework that stretches into history and into the realms of culture, the imagination, and religion. This is made even clearer in the case of the emperor in *Proclaiming harmony*, whose fate is linked to the universal configuration of the celestial forces, and the functioning of the systems of government in the divine spheres. In most cases, government is related not only to the framework of tradition, but also to that of religion.

The notion of 'initiation' has the connotation that kingship is a privilege not available to just anyone but is granted only to the chosen ones. This is especially true when there is a strong link between kingship and religion or, more generally, supernatural forces. A nice example of this is the corpus of Indian tales known under the title *The twenty-five tales of the genie* and *The thirty-two steps of the throne*. Both narratives, in their various versions, probably have ancient sources but were written down around 1300 and remained popular even until modern times. The cycles revolve around the figure of Vikramaditya, the legendary king who became the centre of a vast array of narrative material. In



the course of time, he became the prototype of the ideal king and a model for proper kingship sanctioned by God.<sup>7</sup>

The *Twenty-five tales of the genie* is a framestory in which the legendary beginnings of the kingship of Vikramaditya are related. The story starts with a king who is eager to gain access to the wisdom of a yogi who is meditating in some isolated place. The sage refuses to break his solemn silence, and the king, annoyed, sends a prostitute to seduce him to speak. The ruse is successful, but the sage's disruption of his sacred state sets in motion a sequence of events resulting in one of his sons aspiring to world domination. Another sage asks Prince Vikramaditya to intervene; he should go to a cemetery and carry a corpse hanging from a tree to a yogi who requests his help. But he is not allowed to speak. Vikramaditya obeys, but the corpse appears to be possessed by a genie, who, as soon as Vikramaditya hurls the corpse over his shoulder, begins to tell a story, asking a question in the end. Vikramaditya cannot help but answer the question, whereupon the genie returns to the tree and the cycle starts again. After twenty-five efforts (and twenty-five stories) the genie explains to Vikramaditya that the yogi has evil intentions and instructs him to kill him in a ritual way. After doing so, Vikramaditya receives knowledge of the principles of kingship, which, of course, were already conveyed by the twenty-five tales.

The story in the frame seems to be an allegorical representation of the origins of kingship according to divinely inspired principles. At first a king has power but is refused access to wisdom; then a yogi who possesses knowledge strives for worldly power but is prevented by God. In the end, Vikramaditya succeeds in defeating the anomalous forces by acquiring both worldly power and wisdom, and the blessing of the divine powers. The whole process is imbued with taboos, which are neutralized by ritual acts involving storytelling, death, and revelation. Vikramaditya is initiated into the divine knowledge of the principles and powers of world hegemony during the ritual performance and can assume his role as a king, a warrior, a scholar, a patron of the arts, and, most of all, a man of compassion and self-effacement. He is the ideal king who combines innate capacities with divinely inspired knowledge. The genie, freed from his imprisonment, is appointed as his vizier.

The story of Vikramaditya is picked up in the related cycle of *The thirty-two steps to the throne*, which is preserved in several versions from the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries. In the framing story, we learn that on a farmland there has

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7 Sivadasa, *The Five-and-Twenty Tales of the Genie*, trans. Chandra Rajan (London etc., 2006); *Les trente-deux marches du trône ou comment mériter le pouvoir*, trans. Daniel Lescallier (Paris, 2014); *Les trente-deux récits du trône (Batris-sinhasan) ou les merveilleux exploits de Vikramaditya*, trans. Léon Feer (Paris, 1883).

been found a throne that could be taken to the royal court only after a solemn ceremony. When the king wants to mount the throne, he is halted by a genie, who tells him that the throne belonged to Vikramaditya, who ascended it after killing a vicious genie. The king, called Bhodja, or Béhoudje, attempts to climb the steps of the throne, but he is prevented from doing so by the genie of the statue on the first step, who tells him an exemplary story about the virtues of kings, especially Vikramaditya. This is repeated thirty-two times, until Bhodja finally succeeds in settling himself on the throne. Here, again, we see a ritual process aimed at instruction and the transformation of a specific person into a king, through the acquisition of knowledge that ultimately derives from divine revelations through the elevated figure of Vikramaditya.

The exemplary tales in the frame of *The thirty-two steps of the throne* convey the basic virtues of kings. Typically, they relate how Vikramaditya has defeated all kinds of demons and spirits, which harass innocent subjects by putting a spell on them. This conjuring of evil spirits is mostly achieved by some form of self-sacrifice, the king offering to take the place of the victim and thereby releasing him from the curse. In this way, the many virtues required for just and compassionate rule are displayed, turning Vikramaditya into a model for proper kingship to be emulated by future kings. Of course, the ability to subdue supernatural forces of evil is an important source of legitimacy and power. It not only shows that the king is sufficiently powerful to protect his subjects against this kind of threat; it also proves that he has the endorsement of the gods, who reward his righteousness and conformity to the faith with extraordinary powers to eliminate these intruders.

As a rule, in this type of literature, it is the king who enjoys the favours of the divine forces and who is chosen to be initiated into the secrets of kingship. However, in accordance with the composite nature of authority, as explained above, it is often not the king but the vizier who is selected for a special task and initiated into forms of supernatural knowledge and abilities. After all, the vizier has a specific task that transcends the here and now and requires insight into transmitted and revealed forms of knowledge and wisdom. He needs this knowledge in order to confront potential impulsive reactions of the king and relocate situations of crisis into the proper embedment of rationality and wisdom. This is nicely illustrated by the story of 'King Jali'ad of Hind, and his son Wirdkhan', mentioned above, where the stupidities of King Wirdkhan are remedied by the brilliant, even supernatural, talents of the young son of vizier Shimas. The boy may not possess any power, but his insight is superior to the king's because he inherited the miraculous gifts of his father.

In the Chinese tradition this pivotal role of the vizier is elaborated in the novel *Creation of the gods* (sixteenth century), based on historical events and

popular lore.<sup>8</sup> Here, the interrelationship of earthly and celestial events is vividly portrayed in an elaborate story based on, again, disastrous events, in this case the collapse of the Shang dynasty in the eleventh century. The story begins when Emperor Zhou, who is in principle talented but leads a lascivious life and conducts the business of state during orgies. One day the king transgresses a sacred boundary by falling in love with the statue of a beautiful divinity. When he subsequently orders an audition of young maidens to be held at the court, to still his awakened desires, one of the girls is invaded by a malicious fox-spirit. The stunningly gorgeous fox-girl is selected as the emperor's favourite concubine and soon starts to interfere with state affairs. She persuades the emperor to have loyal ministers executed, to have the empress thrown from a tower, and to have sumptuous palaces built for mere pleasure.

The sudden turn of events and the deterioration of the functioning of the state cause a split in the ranks of officials and notables. The corrupt ministers exploit the situation, while the loyal ministers who are not killed stage a revolt led by a prominent earl. This earl, being able to foresee the future, hands himself in to the emperor and is imprisoned. After seven years he is released and returns to his province to start a revolt against the emperor, which is supported by other provincial lords. The revolt enters a new phase when the sage Jiang Ziya joins the cause of the rebels. Jiang Ziya used to be a good-for-nothing unsuited for any trade, until his prognostic gifts are discovered. He is invited to the court of the emperor, but when he receives the assignment to construct a costly palace on impossibly short notice, he flees the capital and settles in the province as a humble fisherman. One day he is discovered as the man who is destined to lead the rebellious troops against the evil emperor.

What follows is an extended account of the expedition of the armies of King Wu, the son of the earl who initiated the revolt, against the imperial army. During the battles the help is invoked of all kinds of sorcerers and knights with miraculous powers, supported by factions in the realms of the gods, demons, and immortals. The war shows how the effectuation of fate is the outcome of a complex struggle in which celestial and earthly forces intermingle and amplify or obstruct each other. In this clash the pivotal figure is Minister Jiang Ziya, who is capable of mobilizing and directing the forces within the various levels of the struggle and who, unlike anyone else, understands its many dimensions. He is not only in touch with the celestial forces through his geomantic talents; he is also able to deploy the divine and cosmic powers to achieve his aims on earth because he is familiar with the networks, rivalries, and alliances in the

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8 *Creation of the Gods*, trans. Gu Zhizhong, 2 vols. (Beijing, 1992).

realm of the immortals. And, to be sure, he is selected beforehand to realize the inevitable outcome of fate.

In spite of his tremendous power, Jiang Ziya is still bound by his obedience to the king, and the king is formally subservient to the emperor. This is nicely shown in the story after the defeat of Emperor Zhou, when King Wu is invited to take possession of the imperial throne. Even after the chaotic and bloody battles, King Wu prefers to preserve traditional procedures, and to the consternation of all present he declines the honour. Only after repeated requests of all the notables and common subjects is he persuaded to become the new emperor. This reluctance is not merely imposed by modesty or by the historical examples of virtuous emperors; King Wu is portrayed as a mild, even diffident and weak, leader, who is not aware of the significance of events and of his own role. He earns legitimacy through his support for the just cause, his descent, his moderate and compassionate disposition, and through the configuration of the forces of destiny. Jiang Ziya, who holds actual power, derived from his insight and supernatural 'connections', becomes the new prime minister.

The many intrigues and thematic lines in *Creation of the gods* illustrate the multiform nature of kingship within the Chinese tradition. Kingship can survive only as long as harmony is maintained between the emperor and his ministers. This harmony is secured only by a correct adherence to the procedures and the prescriptions of all parties involved, but it is also inseparable from their moral integrity. The emperor's relapse into immoral and unheeded behaviour fosters disloyalty and corruption among the officials and, subsequently, the disintegration of the empire. Since the king personifies the moral values imposed by the gods, his failure to heed them irreversibly leads to disaster. As in other examples, it is the minister who represents the embedding of the events and the emperor's personal mishaps in the broader frameworks of history, religion, and fate.

One of the interesting aspects of *Creation of the gods* is the way in which it displays how the dialectic between the emperor and his ministers interacts with kingship as an institution sanctioned by the gods and governed by fate. The outcome of the historic struggle is determined by fate, but it still has to be enacted by all the persons involved. Most of these are not cognizant of the course of fate and have to deal with their own personal destinies and their earthly and, possibly, celestial responsibilities. The emperor is caught in the mechanisms of the fate of his dynasty, but, through his behaviour, he is also the catalyst causing, or at least enabling, fate to impose itself. The example of his downfall can thus serve as a warning for later emperors to preserve their moral impeccability. This tension between fate and moral responsibility is nicely illustrated by the fox-spirit, who, when captured in the end, argues: 'We've done

our best to ruin the Shang Dynasty. How can you be ungrateful?' The immortal who will punish her answers: 'I sent you to help King Zhou lose his kingdom; it was just as fate had destined. But you were too cruel and ruthless. You murdered so many loyal ministers and innocent people. Your crimes are too great and you must be dealt with according to the law.'<sup>9</sup> Apparently, the fox-spirit had been an overly efficient instrument of fate, abusing her limited freedom to act by indulging in her evil inclinations.

The two examples analysed in this section show how the institution of kingship derives part of its legitimacy from religious and cosmic frameworks that impart it with the powers to neutralize evil forces on earth by often miraculous means. The heavenly connection is not only beneficial for practical and ideological reasons; it also emphasizes the ethical component of the institution of kingship, which is reflected in the character and moral attitude of the king. The king personifies a morality to which he himself is bound, but which also radiates from him over the community as a whole: When the king's morality falters, the situation of the empire as a whole is affected. This significant link between the king and the religious-moral framework implies that not everyone is suited for the task. Kings, and often viziers too, are chosen as privileged intermediaries between the earthly and divine realms. The key to this privilege is insight into the secrets of divine wisdom and the revelatory power to shape events on earth according to the divine will.

### 3 Kings and Knights

It has been remarked above that it is among the king's privileges, and sometimes duties, to use violence to impose his authority. This is not restricted to cases of betrayal or disloyalty, but extends to more significant incidences of battle and war. As in other cases of imminent violence, actual bloodshed is preferably avoided, mostly through the intervention of a wise vizier. When it is unavoidable, however, it should be pursued with vigour and determination, to deter real and potential enemies. Still, the conduct of war is not just an outburst of random violence, but rather an undertaking regulated by discipline, hierarchies, rules, customs, and codes, which are necessarily related to the person of the king and the institution of kingship. The enormous impact of war on societies is thus mitigated by structuring mechanisms. On the ideological level, the historic significance of warfare, its connections with kingship, its codes, and

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9 *Creation of the Gods*, vol. 2, 432.

its implications for societal and communal identification are conveyed mainly within a generic corpus that remained popular in the whole of Eurasia throughout the centuries: the romance of chivalry.

Of course, romances of chivalry, in their epic and more novelistic forms, occur in various types, but in the period and area under study, Eurasia, 1300–1800, a remarkable resemblance can be perceived between the various cultural domains. The structure, themes, motifs, narrative strategies, and ideological implications of works such as the Catalan *Tirant lo Blanc*, the Persian *Hamzanama*, and the Chinese *Yue Fei* are surprisingly similar. Although, as in other cases, it is difficult or even impossible to prove historical connections and direct influences, it is not unlikely that they were conceived according to similar patterns and derived from similar cultural and literary visions. In this section we will briefly discuss two examples of chivalric narratives that illustrate attitudes towards kingship and that have remained influential within the literary traditions for a long time: the Catalan romance *Tirant lo Blanc* and the biographical ‘novel’ *Sirat Baybars*, the epic story of the Egyptian Mamluk Sultan al-Zahir Baybars.

The chivalric romance *Tirant lo Blanc*, written by Joanot Martorell and Joan de Galba and printed for the first time in 1490, marks, on the one hand, the culmination of the chivalric tradition in Europe in a sophisticated and ambitious book and, on the other hand, the end of the cultivation of chivalry and the emergence of new generic types. Although it thus closed off an era, it also remained a model especially for popular romances in the sixteenth century. Its popularity is not unrelated to the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453, which utterly shocked European Christendom and led to a new preoccupation with the Orient. The old forms of orientalism were gradually transformed into new narrative elements within the genres of the romance and, later, the novel. Still, the ancient models of knighthood and chivalric codes, as an institution pervading society, declined into idealized representations of adventure and romance.<sup>10</sup>

The story of *Tirant lo Blanc* opens with an episode about the adventures of the famous English knight William of Warwick, who, after a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, retires for contemplation in an isolated shed, although he is temporarily called back to the battlefield to repel a Moorish invasion. He is—by coincidence—visited by a Breton nobleman, whom he teaches the basic

10 Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba, *Tirant lo Blanc*, trans. David H. Rosenthal (London, 1984); see also Joseph Anthony Vaeth, *Tirant lo Blanch: A Study of its Authorship, Principal Sources and Historical Setting* (Memphis, 2010); and Henry Thomas, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry* (Cambridge etc., 1920).

doctrines, codes, and customs of knighthood. Thus instructed, the nobleman, who is Tirant lo Blanc, continues his journey to the English court where all the valiant knights of Europe have gathered for a tournament. Tirant beats all his opponents and is incorporated into the knightly Order of the Garter, founded by the English king. After some preparatory peregrinations, to Rhodes, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Sicily, Tirant responds to the request from the Byzantine emperor for support against the encroaching Turkish troops. He prepares a ship and departs for Constantinople, where he is immediately appointed as admiral of the Christian army. After a protracted struggle Tirant succeeds in pushing back the Turks and imposing an advantageous peace treaty.

The story of Tirant is partly the personal story of the hero's initiation into the exclusive status of knighthood, which is among the basic institutions structuring society, and his subsequent rise to fame. It is also an evocation of the vicissitudes of a society, even a civilization, confronted with an intimidating foe. It is not only an adventure; it is also an effort to redefine, reinforce, and mobilize communal sensitivities and solidarity, and a mental boost to neutralize the fear of the Ottoman advance. The first point of identification to achieve these goals is the hero's faith. All Tirant's actions, decisions, and thoughts are imbued with loyalty to the Holy Catholic Church, to which he has sworn unflinching support when obtaining the status of knighthood. The decision to undertake the mission to Constantinople was triggered by the news that the Turks were refurbishing the main cathedral in Constantinople as a stable for horses. Religiosity motivates his actions, energizes his efforts, and serves him as a moral guide.

The faith, or more particularly the Catholic Church, is to a large extent identified with Europe, as a socio-political entity. Although the name 'Europe' is not mentioned, it is clear that the defence of Constantinople is seen as a common cause that should unite all the European kingdoms and polities. This is indicated by the description of the various crowns worn by the rulers of Europe: dukes wear a silver crown; counts wear a leather crown; marquises have a steel crown; kings have a golden crown; and the emperor possesses seven golden crowns. The symbolism is clear: all the European rulers are ranked in a hierarchical system, rooted in the institution of knighthood and united under the supreme authority of the Byzantine emperor. As if in a last upsurge of the Crusader spirit, Christianity, with the Byzantine emperor as its historical, symbolic head, should be mobilized to confront the Muslim Turks. This vision is strengthened by a remarkable inserted passage in which King Arthur is staged as the legendary patriarch of Christian chivalry.

In the dualistic configuration of authority centred around the emperor and the knight, the components of power are evenly distributed. The emperor

possesses various forms of legitimacy derived from his dynastic descent, his position as head of the Church, and the symbolic prestige accumulated in his person through history. Nevertheless, his actual power has diminished, the vitality of the empire has dissipated, and new, strong enemies have emerged. The weakness of the emperor requires a reinvigoration in the form of an energetic force, represented by the hero, Tirant. However, the hero does not merely add the elements of power and vitality to the fragile imperial structure; he also embodies its moral values and its cultural identification as a paragon of piety, justice, courage, ingenuity, and stamina. He is therefore the character with whom the audience can and should identify and who fills symbolic power with real power, without, however, relinquishing his loyalty to his ruler. He has no inclination to bring the emperor down and usurp the throne, but rather faultlessly fulfils his role within the hierarchy. Ideally, the hero would marry the princess and their son would inherit the throne, ushering in a new era of imperial rule. In the case of Tirant, this outcome is nearly achieved.

The pattern of Tirant is both thematically and structurally mirrored in the famous epic of Amir Hamza, the *Hamzanama*, which has remained popular in Persian, Urdu, and Arabic versions from at least the sixteenth century until the present day.<sup>11</sup> Here the weakened emperor is the Sassanid ruler Anushervan II, whose throne is shaking as a result of external enemies and internal discord. The dynasty is saved by the intrepid warrior Hamza, the son of 'Abd al-Muttalib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Even before Muhammad is born, Hamza starts spreading the new faith. He defeats the enemies of Anushervan and offers him his services, subduing refractory rulers throughout the empire, and all the while courting the emperor's daughter. Although he is soon the most powerful man in the empire, he remains loyal to the emperor and refrains from appropriating the throne. He is satisfied with urging Anushervan to convert to Islam, adding the historical legitimacy of his dynasty to the vitality and vigour of the new faith.

This pattern of the construction of authority, of course, rests on a specific vision of kingship as being rooted in history and filled with sufficient moral symbolism as to retain its legitimacy. The pattern changes when the figures of the hero and the king converge into one character and the ruler cannot boast historical credentials and rather has to acquire legitimacy through his deeds and disposition. This is illustrated by the figure of the Mamluk Sultan al-Zahir Baybars (1223?–77), the hero of the *Sirat Baybars*, which probably originated in

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11 Ghalib Lakhnavi and Abdullah Bilgrami, *The Adventures of Amir Hamza*, trans. Musharraf Ali Farooqi (New York, 2007).



the sixteenth century as a compilation of narrative material from the popular literary tradition.<sup>12</sup> The backbone of the story is the rise to power of the lad Mahmud, who is bought as a slave by the Ayyubid Sultan al-Salih Ayyub and who steadily increases his power in the ranks of the Mamluk amirs to become the founder of the Mamluk sultanate in Egypt and Syria. His heroic exploits were especially directed against the invasions of the Crusaders from the West and of the Mongols from the east.

The main difficulty underlying the thematic intrigues of the narrative is that Baybars was a stranger in the empire he was destined to rule. Although of noble descent, he was torn from his family in Central Asia and arrived as an 'orphan' in Damascus. In this rather desperate situation, he received the first signs of his illustrious future in the form of the prophecy that someday he will be king of Egypt, Syria, and the 'Islamic land'. This prophecy is confirmed by his acquisition of a huge mace that, according to an old book, came from Samarkand and was predestined to be bought by a future king. After he has settled in Cairo, as one of the Mamluks of Sultan al-Salih Ayyub, he gradually rises within the ranks of the Mamluk amirs, taking up administrative posts and distinguishing himself on the battlefield. Moreover, he shows compassion towards the common people, especially women, and even behaves correctly towards the hostile, treacherous Franks and the idolatrous Mongols.

Throughout this account, the ambiguity of Baybars's identity is upheld. During an expedition against the Mongol-Persian Khan Halawoun (the historical Hülegü), he is tempted to go over to the enemy, reflecting: 'I want to go to the Persians; I was born a Persian.'<sup>13</sup> It is repeatedly hinted that Baybars's Arabic is deficient, and it is significant that he marries a Mongol princess, promising to

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12 *Roman de Baïbars*, vol. 1: *Les enfances de Baïbars*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1985); vol. 2: *Fleur des Truands*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1986); vol. 3: *Les bas-fonds du Caire*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1986); vol. 4: *Le chevauchée des fils d'Ismail*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1987); vol. 5: *La trahison des émirs*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1989); vol. 6: *Meurtre au hammam*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1990); vol. 7: *Rempart des Pucelles*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1992); vol. 8: *La revanche du maître des ruses*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1996); vol. 9: *Échec au roi de Rome*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1997); vol. 10: *Le procès du moine maudit*, trans. Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume (Paris, 1998); see also: Jean-Claude Garcin, ed., *Lectures du Roman de Baybars* (Marseille, 2003); Thomas Herzog, *Geschichte und Imaginaire: Entstehung, Überlieferung und Bedeutung der Sirat Baibars in ihrem sozio-politischen Kontext*. Diskurse der Arabistik, vol. 8 (Wiesbaden, 2006).

13 *Roman de Baïbars*, vol. 5, 115.

remain monogamous. The link with the subjects of the empire is established, apart from his compassionate image, by the figure of Uthman, who becomes his loyal lieutenant and cherished friend. Uthman is a notorious rogue of outstanding good looks, who is rough, uneducated, and impulsive, but extremely loyal and ingenious in all his uncouthness. Baybars teaches him discipline and obedience, and the basics of the faith, promising him some personal privileges. Throughout the story, Uthman is presented as a man of the people, speaking in Egyptian dialect and figuring in many farcical episodes taken from popular lore. He is Baybars's *alter ego*, embedding him in the imagination of the community.

A second set of episodes fostering Baybars's affinity with his subjects concerns religion. It is stressed that even as a child, Baybars was proficient in the religious sciences, and he is consistently presented as a champion of the Muslim faith. This religiosity is supplemented by an evident moral attitude, in contrast to the religious scholars in Cairo, who are always scheming against him and pursuing their material desires. This straightforward 'official' and practical piety is extended to encompass several elements of what is usually called 'popular' belief. Baybars is an admirer of Sayyida Zaynab, the patron saint of Cairo; he has a meeting with the mysterious saint al-Khadir (al-Khidr) who teaches him the art and codes of war; and he is summoned before the prominent popular saint Ahmad al-Badawi, whose tomb is the centre of pilgrimage in Tanta and who provides Baybars with new prophecies and a magic ring. All these events seem to serve as compensation for Baybars's lack of ethnic affiliation and to present him as a hero of the people who has earned the right to become their ruler.

Although events seem to conspire to facilitate Baybars's ascendancy, it also requires his personal assets, such as his political acumen, his courage, and his compassionate nature. Here we see the tensions similar to those inherent in the Chinese kingship mentioned above, a predestined kingship that obtains its legitimacy from the religious framework but is also realized by the personal character and endeavours of the hero. Baybars's kingship is not inherited but established; it is not an institution continued within a sacred, dynastic tradition, but built by a combination of personal effort, skill, and divine will. This set of factors is especially relevant for the Central Asian and Turkish and Persian rulers who came to power in the late Middle Ages and early modernity, such as Timur Lang, the Persian Ilkhans, the Safavids, the Mughals, and the Ottomans, who had to construct states themselves and had to find legitimations for their claims in the Islamic tradition, in popular religiosity, and in the tradition of Central Asian statecraft.<sup>14</sup>

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14 A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York,

The main constituent framework of the narratives discussed in this section is history, and it is safe to surmise that they have served as part of a discourse about the historical embedding of concepts of kingship. They contain explicit historical references, which are mostly used to prove the historical roots of the dynasty, the cultural and ethnic coherence of the community as it emerged in history, and sometimes the myth of origin of a community or an empire. As such they certainly reflect official discourses of power, especially since they usually endorse historical and political stability and provide legitimacy to dynastic claims. However, the stories all contain important elements taken from popular literature and combine historical references with clear extravagances and indulgence in the imagination. They can therefore be seen as a medium between the various layers of the discourse of power, incorporating structures of power into the collective imagination.

Apart from this direct ideological function, the romances can also be perceived as reservoirs of the cultural tradition, in which not only social and cultural identifications were preserved and transmitted, but also a coherent corpus of moral values, exemplary behaviour, and just rule. Through these narratives cultural and moral self-images were stored in socio-cultural domains that were not directly dependent on political systems and structures. Here we encounter an intriguing complexity in this kind of narrative material: history was their natural 'milieu', and they bear the traces of historical change, whereas they also have a tendency to transcend historical phases and were perhaps even intended as a repository of the moral and symbolic capital accumulated within historical trajectories. For kings and dynasties, the concepts conveyed by this literature were of tremendous value for transforming their power into a durable form of authority.

#### 4 Kings and Women

Even a superficial glance at the narratives analysed so far creates the impression that one of the main characteristics of literature about kingship was its persistent misogyny. Women do not rule; they rather disrupt the survival of dynasties by their unruly interference and unleash forces that lead to the ruin or imminent collapse of empires. This destructive influence is systematically related to capacities considered as typically female, such as irrationality, sensuality, per-

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2014); Ron Sela, *The Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane: Islam and Heroic Apocrypha in Central Asia* (Cambridge etc., 2011).

fidy, and emotionality. It would seem that the general discourse proclaims the essential incompatibility of femininity and statecraft. Proper governance and the stability of the state require the marginalization of women and their exclusion from state affairs. However, a close look reveals that the situation is more complex. Women are perhaps a threat to the very survival of the empire; their contribution is also indispensable for the survival of the dynasty. This is the dilemma inherent in dynastic politics and discourses expressed in our narratives of kingship, which may be called the feminine paradox: women are both a curse and a blessing, a necessity for and a threat to the preservation of kingship.

Although misogyny is a ubiquitous phenomenon, not all narratives discussed above have only negative roles for women. In the romances of chivalry, women are often objects of desire for the hero, to be served, revered, protected, and loved. In *Tirant lo Blanc*, the story of the struggle against the Turks is interwoven with the hero's courtship of the gorgeous Byzantine princess Carmesina, and the couple often take the time to dispute about all aspects of love. In the end, probably for narrative reasons, the union of the two lovers is precluded by Tirant's untimely death. Likewise, Hamza for the duration of the story tries to conquer the princess Mehr-nigar, like Carmesina the sole child of the emperor. These women represent the positive aspects of femininity; they are beautiful, they personify dynastic legitimacy, they respond to the energetic preoccupations of the hero, and they provide a parallel storyline to the recurrent battles, as an alternative prize for the hero's perseverance. War and love are the quintessential elements of adventure and of the survival of dynasties.

This positive view of women is more prominent in another type of kingship narrative, the love romance, which was popular in all Eurasian traditions alongside the romance of chivalry and (historical) novels. In Europe, a genre of romantic novels emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which contained traces and strategies of the medieval and early modern romances, including their exotic excursions, while in China the theme of love remained crucial in the portrayals of kingship and social critique. In the Islamic realm, we find a large corpus of romances that appear to be somehow related to each other, stretching from late medieval Persia to sixteenth-seventeenth-century India, Mamluk Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire. In this section we will discuss a cluster of these love romances that transcend linguistic, political, and, to some extent, cultural boundaries to reveal a rich spectrum of literary and ideological concepts. Although we lack sufficient information to establish philological relationships between the various narratives, their connectedness is evident. Perhaps the stories originated in Persia and spread from there to the

East and, later, to the Arabic/Ottoman realm and, to be sure, from there to Europe in the translations of the *Thousand and one nights* and similar Oriental sources.<sup>15</sup>

The cluster of stories that we will discuss here consists of the various versions of the romances of 'Sayf al-Muluk and Badi al-Jamal' and 'Janshah', all incorporated into the later versions of the *Thousand and one nights*, and the love/Sufi romances 'Mirigavati' by the Hindavi poet Qutban Suhrawardi (1503). Of course, there is not enough space here to elaborately analyse these texts. We will concentrate on aspects related to the connection between women, kingship, and love.<sup>16</sup>

As in several narratives analysed above, the story of 'Mirigavati' begins with a prophecy, saying that a new-born prince, Raj Kunvar, will suffer grief because of a woman. When he has reached his adolescence and sets out for a hunting excursion, he perceives a fleeing doe. He follows her, but she disappears into a lake. He builds a palace on the bank and sometime later sees a group of gorgeous nymphs playing in the water. He falls in love with one of them and captures her by stealing her sari, but soon she escapes and flies away, summoning him to follow her to the City of Gold. Then Ray Kunvar's adventure begins: he dresses as a yogi and sets out to find his beloved. After long and dangerous peregrinations, he is washed ashore on an island where a lovely princess is held captive by a demon. He kills the demon and continues his journey, reaching the City of Gold after many miraculous mishaps and escapes. The two lovers finally consummate their union and seal their marriage. On the way home, Raj Kunvar picks up his earlier spouse, and they settle in his palace. One day he goes out hunting and is killed by a tiger; his two wives follow him into death according to custom.

The various episodes and motifs in 'Mirigavati' closely resemble the stories of 'Janshah' and 'Sayf al-Muluk'. A peculiar complication at the end of the story of both 'Mirigavati' and 'Sayf al-Muluk' is that the result of the prince's search is not the realization of a true, romantic love, but his possession of two wives. In 'Sayf al-Muluk' this is adroitly, but somewhat artificially, solved by the sud-

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15 Thomas, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry*; for the reception of the *Thousand and one nights* in Europe and orientalism, see: Pierre Martino, *L'Orient dans la littérature Française au XVIIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1906); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago and London, 2012); Martha Pike Conant, *The Oriental Tale in England* (New York, 1966); Marzolph and van Leeuwen, *Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*.

16 *The Arabian Nights*, vol. 2, vol. 3; Qutban Suhrawardi, *The Magic Doe: Qutban Suhrawardi's Mirigavati*, trans. Aditya Behl (Oxford, 2012).

den appearance of the prince's foster-brother, who can marry the superfluous princess. In 'Mirigavati' the problem is not very satisfactorily solved by the death of all protagonists. According to Aditya Behl, who translated and analysed the romance, the two wives should be interpreted as symbolizing two different levels of reality. The first princess represents earthly desires and pre-occupations, easily fulfilled but not the ultimate aim of the quest, whereas Mirigavati, in contrast, personifies the divine and spiritual realm, which requires a higher level of consciousness and achievement. Only after realizing the amalgamation with this second, more elevated, realm, has the prince accomplished his search and can he be established as a king.

The notion of the spiritual dimension embodied by Mirigavati is connected with the concept of *rasa*, which, in the Indian tradition, refers to the aesthetic harmony when perfect (poetic and physical) beauty, sophistication, sensuality, and emotional satisfaction converge. It is only when the sense of *rasa* is achieved, with the union and lovemaking of the beloveds, that their love is accepted as true and that the perfection of the prince as a lover and as a ruler is proven. The concept of *rasa* is also mentioned by the princess as the reason for her escape: Since Raj Kunvar had captured her by using violence, the required harmony was lacking in their relationship, and the prince still had to prove his merits and suitability. It is here that the constitutional elements of kingship are evinced, Raj Kunvar proving his courage and perseverance, apart from his outstanding abilities as a man and a lover. This perfection, making him the ideal king, can be attained only through the union with an equally elevated, even semi-divine, spouse.

The idea of *rasa* is the cornerstone for an understanding of the story of 'Mirigavati'. It is therefore remarkable that it is absent in the Arabic story of 'Janshah', which also contains the episode of the captured *jinn*-princess fleeing to faraway lands. Here the escape of the princess is not explained, and the connotation of harmony is lacking. This is perhaps the reason why the *jinn*-princess is tragically killed by a shark after her reunion with Janshah, apparently arguing that a harmonious union between a human prince and a *jinniyya* is improbable and perhaps even inappropriate. This omission, possibly due to an 'Islamization' of the story, not only makes the story less consistent; it also deprives it of its spiritual purport. In 'Janshah' and 'Sayf al-Muluk' the journey to the beloveds is not a trajectory of spiritual elevation, but rather a journey through the realm governed by Sulayman (Solomon) and his helpers, a kind of underworld where the forces of nature are visible and where all kinds of monsters and demons have their abode. It is thus rather a quest for knowledge than a quest for insight, rather a journey of exploration than a journey of spiritual perfection.

The three romances of 'Mirigavati', 'Janshah', and 'Sayf al-Muluk' nicely demonstrate several aspects of kingship as conceived in the Indian-Islamic realm. The stories commence with a rupture, or the threat of the end of the dynasty. The prince, before he can succeed his father, has to be initiated into the secrets of life, and, more concretely, into the obstacles on his way to fulfilment, into knowledge of the hidden layers of reality, and, of course, into the experience of true love. He enters a phase of liminality in which he is cast back into the state of an individual striving for survival and the conquest of the object of his desire, temporarily suspending the tight framework of social conventions and dynastic constraints. The aim of his quest is a queen who will not only secure the continuation of the dynasty, but also complement him as a human being and as the centre of the institution of kingship. Through her the young king has proven his capability, his legitimacy, and the aesthetic perfection of his authority. Although the love for a woman endangered the very survival of the dynasty, her recuperation has made kingship, as an institution, stronger and more vigorous than before.

Interpreted in this way, the romances present a positive turn to the dilemmas posed by the more misogynist narratives discussed above. They show how narratives of kingship are perhaps patriarchal and tend to marginalize women, but also acknowledge the necessity of involving women in the reproduction of power and authority. Paradoxically, the discourse of power excluding women, being designed to exclude them, presupposes their presence and makes sense only if it incorporates their presence in its construction. This paradox perpetually implies the possibility, the probability, and even inevitability of their intervention. The complications of this seemingly contradictory situation are ingeniously elaborated in the epistolary novel *Lettres persanes* by the French philosopher and writer Montesquieu (published in 1721). Although it is not a novel about kingship strictly speaking, the work does comment on discourses of power and the implications of gender roles for the exertion of authority. It is simultaneously a critique of French society and an evaluation of what is usually called 'Oriental despotism'.<sup>17</sup>

Montesquieu's novel *Lettres persanes* fits into several trends that converged in French literature at the beginning of the eighteenth century. First, it illustrates the tendency, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to experiment with more complex narrative forms, marking the transition from the relatively straightforward genre of the romance to more layered novelistic literary strategies. Two trends were particularly influential in this development: the popu-

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17 Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, Gonzague Truc, ed. (Paris, 1946).

larity of the epistolary novel, showing a more fragmented narrative technique; and the appearance of the French translation of the *Thousand and one nights* made by Antoine Galland and published from 1704 to 1717, with its composite structure. Second, it continues the interest in the Orient as a narrative element, after the example of the romances, but it has now been enriched by the increasing direct interaction with Oriental societies, resulting in more 'realistic' knowledge; the Oriental motifs are used not as a romantic, exotic excursion, but rather as a mirror for French and European society, spawning self-reflexivity and social critique. Moreover, after Galland's translation, forms of orientalism were not only derived from imagined or experienced Orients, but also from the literary characteristics of the *Thousand and one nights*.<sup>18</sup>

These characteristics of *Lettres persanes* not only marked a new phase in European literature, leading to the 'invention' of the modern novel; they also indicate a differentiation within the Eurasian literary traditions. Whereas in the previous sections we discussed works from different traditions, which nevertheless showed remarkable similarities, we now perceive a clear divergence between the European and Asian traditions. While in the Asian traditions, perhaps with the exception of China, the traditional genres remained popular and were further developed, in Europe new genres emerged inspired by new visions of the world. Perhaps paradoxically, the new trends were to a large extent shaped by the incorporation and emulation of Oriental literary models, such as the *Thousand and one nights* and similar works. It was especially the Ottoman Empire that provided the link in this trajectory of transmission, connecting its Central Asian heritage and its incorporation of the Arabic tradition with its new European counterparts.

The novel *Lettres persanes* is built around the intrigue triggered by the juxtaposition of an all-powerful Oriental nobleman with his harem wives, who are subjected to his authority but in the end revolt against it. The main character is Usbek, who leaves his mansion in Persia to travel to Europe to familiarize himself with European culture. He is in touch with his home through letters to his wives and concubines, and to the chief eunuch Ibben. A third correspondent is Rida, who is also on a journey through Europe. The main storylines are, on the one hand, Usbek and Rida's observations about Europe and their travel experiences and, on the other hand, Usbek's relationship with his women at home, especially his most recent wife Roxane. The novel is thus both a critique of 'Oriental despotism' and of 'Occidental despotism', in the appearance of the French king.

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18 Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*.



At first Usbek stresses his strong relationship with his wives through the dual bond of love and authority. He praises his wives as the most beautiful women in the world, but also emphasizes their obligation to obey him. This structure of authority appears to be difficult to uphold when the master of the household is absent; the chief eunuch, Ibben, who has the assignment to replace his master's authority, is unable to preserve discipline in the harem, in part because of his emasculated and mentally impotent condition: the women refuse to accept his authority by proxy. Because of his crippled condition, his response to the unruly behaviour of the women is excessively harsh, and before long the dissatisfaction turns into open revolt. The women complain to Usbek about the measures of the eunuch, while Ibben accuses the women of adultery. In the end, it is Roxane, Usbek's favourite wife, who seals the revolt with a letter in which she confesses her infidelity and concedes that she has turned his 'horrible' palace into a place of pleasure and desire. She asks him how he could have thought that she could exist only for his whims and subdue her own desires. She was unable to live in servitude and reformed his laws to conform to the laws of nature. It was only in appearance that she subjected herself to his fantasy, and she has always kept an independent spirit. Now, to show her independence, she has taken poison and is dying, while writing the letter with her last remaining strength.

In the two storylines of the novel we can perceive some familiar motifs. First, we have a 'prince' who sets out on a trajectory to enrich his knowledge of the world, to be initiated in the secrets of Europe, and to complete a trajectory of personal fulfilment; second, we find the composite nature of authority, unveiled by the master's absence and articulated by the figure of the chief eunuch; third, the dilemmas of authority are negotiated through dialogue, here in the form of an exchange of letters; and fourth, there is tension between the institutional and personal aspects of authority, between the prince's male prerogatives as master of the household, between love and power, violence and seduction; and finally, of course, we encounter the motif of the female voice interfering in the structure and enforcement of power, as a marginalized but still powerful influence.

Montesquieu's conceptualization of Usbek's authority seems to indicate that it is a system based on religion and tradition only, an 'unnatural' system since it systematically suppresses women and their desires. This is not problematic as long as Usbek is present and able to combine his personal and institutional roles, but after his departure the emotional component is removed and a cruel, formalized regime remains. Being handicapped, Ibben is unable to substitute his authority for Usbek's, and the women use their typically feminine assets to undermine the over-rationalized system of power: they commit adultery and

fail to obey the rules of their submission. In a wider context, the destabilization of the structure of authority is caused at least partly by external forces, particularly the growing differentiation between a stagnant Orient and Europe, which is involved in a process of transformation. It is ultimately Usbek's urge to go out on a quest that disturbs the balance of forces of his authority at home.

In the narratives analysed in this section, we find the two aspects of femininity and love in narratives of kingship, as a disruptive force and as a source of continuity and equilibrium. And in both texts we re-encounter many of the literary strategies discussed in the previous sections. The love romances from the Islamic realm start from an imminent disruption of the dynasty because the prince is at a marriageable age and has to overcome many difficulties to conquer his beloved and secure the continuity of the dynastic line. This was also observed in the romances of chivalry discussed above. In Montesquieu's novel *Lettres persanes*, the role of women is reminiscent of the ancient misogynist cycle of the 'Seven viziers': women are marginalized from the discourse of power, even excluded from power and reduced to objects of desire. Their intervention or rebellion results in an imminent collapse of the system of authority and the relapse into naked violence.

The two narratives also exemplify the ways in which women are part of discourses of authority. As remarked above, these discourses are essentially patriarchal and tend to exclude women. However, by being excluded, women become an integral part of these discourses, and their intervention immediately touches upon their internal logic. In both types of narrative the necessity to include women in the process of dynastic reproduction leads to a critical situation seemingly threatening the very survival of the empire. To counter this crisis, the basic elements of the discourse of kingship are unravelled, re-examined, recapitulated, and, hopefully, restored. This is achieved either by a process of transition of the prince, going through a phase of liminality and education, before he can ascend the throne or by the investigation of the conflict and the disciplining of women, also connected with the education of the prince. In all cases, feminine stereotypes such as infidelity, sensuality, and irrationality are evoked, but they have different meanings: in the romances they are disruptive values but ones required to endow kingship with an indispensable aesthetic component in the form of love; in the conflictual cycles they are overruled by a regime based on rationality, male dominance, and traditional principles. Only in the case of *Lettres persanes* order is not restored: the implosion of the power system is complete when Usbek's favourite wife commits suicide, destroying all legitimacy of the discourse of authority.

### Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have examined discourses of kingship from the perspective of literary, fictional texts. A selected number of texts from the different Eurasian traditions have been analysed that together exemplify the main elements of these discourses and their narratological embeddedness. The texts were selected on the criteria of their generic hybridity and location in between courtly and popular levels, so as to give a picture of the mechanism of linking discourses of power to broader segments of society, anchoring ideological premises in the collective imagination. Significantly, all texts illustrate the fluidity of narratives of this kind, since they can in some cases be seen as confluences of narrative material over long stretches of time, serving as a kind of repository of self-images and shared values of societies. In other cases they clearly show their thematic relationships to texts from other domains. In both cases, they defy cultural and political boundaries and seem to belong to zones of cultural exchange and transmission.

The themes investigated here were, first, the composite nature of kingship, presented as the dialogic relationship between the king and other participants in the structure of authority, such as viziers, warriors, and women. This dialogism seems to be an omnipresent feature: There is no notion of a monolithic form of kingship totally amalgamating the personal and institutional elements of the king's role. Second, kingship is commonly related to processes of initiation, either through the education of the prince/vizier or through some divine revelation or epiphany, linking the institution of kingship to the higher framework of religion and supernatural forces through the figure of the king or the vizier. This is often realized through phases of liminality and ritual processes, through trajectories of travel, or the conjuring of anomalous situations. Third, narratives of kingship are embedded in perceptions of history, both as a source of legitimacy and as a representation of cultural and ethnic identity or collective values. Finally, women play a crucial role in the construction and deconstruction of narratives of kingship, albeit often in the role of the excluded 'other'. Their presence is often a catalyst for the narrative intrigue introducing the explication of the discursive premises underlying discourses of kingship and thereby reconfirming their principles and their position within them. Their role is either disruptive or stabilizing, in both cases intimately connected with the liminal phase in the education of the prince.

These thematic aspects are in most cases woven into the narrative form and strategy of the text, staging women as the breakers of silence, necessitating the explanation of discourses of authority, or constructing forms of postponement through the difficult pursuit of love, taboos and temporal frames, dialogic struc-

tures, generic hybridity, etc. It is this convergence of thematic contents and narrative strategy that makes these texts so effective: they are about the instilling of discourses of power in fictional characters, simultaneously instilling them in the reader as well. It is also this convergence that suggests relationships between the various cultural and political realms in which these narratives emerge, as if the resemblances can be explained only by processes of influencing and cross-cultural transmission. However, in most cases we lack the historical frameworks to prove processes of interaction and any conclusion on questions such as these would be highly speculative. And it is the intention of this chapter to look for patterns inside an admittedly varied corpus of texts, rather than situate discourses in their historical contexts.

To conclude, the narratives discussed here show that there is a difference between power and authority, the first being based on the immediate threat of the use of violence, within a regime of naked intimidation, and the second incorporated in ideological and aesthetic narratives that emphasize the embedding of power in frameworks of tradition, wisdom, rationality, and human dialogue. Whereas in the previous chapters the historical contexts for the formation of authority have been summarized, this chapter has attempted to fill the gap between the mechanisms described there and the collective imagination, which had to find links with the configurations of power. Of course, the fictional texts discussed here were to a large extent shaped by courtly perspectives, but they also reveal a sense of justice, proper governance, and historical legitimacy that transcends specific political manifestations of power and reflects the moral values connected to visions of proper rule.

# Prince, Pen, and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives

*Jeroen Duindam*

## 1 Global History

This book on the relationship between rulers and elites in Eurasian polities started out as an attempt to bridge the gap between two contradictory but equally valid impulses. All history is regional history: scholars need languages and contexts to make sense of the past. At the same time, regional compartmentalization turns history into a dead-end street: only more comprehensive views can show the specificity of regions as well as their multiple connections. The authors were trained as regional specialists, and have worked with primary sources in the languages and scripts connected to their areas of expertise. Yet at the same time, they noticed the limitations of the area perspective, and subscribe, in one way or another, to the current challenge to move towards a more global understanding of history.

We share these conflicting loyalties with many other scholars, and over the last four decades several paradigms took shape to deal with the challenge of combining specialized research with the global horizon. The introduction considered some of these paradigms and outlined our preliminary choices. Comparison, whether regional or global, defines themes and questions that are equally relevant in different settings and examines the variety in outcomes with the intention to make sense of divergences. It takes diversity for granted but looks for patterns in human behaviour. One of the main challenges facing comparative historians is to define questions that do not accept as standard the specific experiences of one region or period; this problem is relevant for all historians, but it becomes painfully explicit in the case of comparatists. Secondly, it is particularly difficult for comparative historians to acquire an equal basis of knowledge and materials for all areas they include: extension of scope will necessarily reduce depth of the comparison. There is a third complication: the availability and the nature of source materials vary greatly from region to region. The problem, therefore, is more fundamental than the researchers' ability to master languages or find enough time to read materials. With a specific theme and carefully crafted set of questions, however, global comparison can be a powerful intellectual tool and a necessary safeguard against cultural parochialism.

We deal in different ways with these challenges. Jeroen Duindam's chapter on the court explicitly combines Eurasian and global levels of comparison. The critical assessment of some more widely accepted Eurasian divergences and the subsequent elaboration of several globally shared functions move his comparison beyond the level of describing 'differences and similarities'. Peter Rietbergen, Maaïke van Berkel, and Richard van Leeuwen stay within the bounds of Eurasia, considering each of the three macro-regions with equal attention. Jos Gommans's interpretation of the Central Eurasian warband moves closer to connected history: he concentrates on the Inner Asian core lands and traces the emulations of the Chinggisid warband in contiguous post-nomadic empires. Liesbeth Geevers and Marie Favereau deal with the Habsburgs and Jochids respectively in their jointly written comparative chapter. All chapters approach political questions with a cultural perspective akin to the priorities of connected history and zoom in on the perceptions of contemporaries. Two contributors, in particular, focus on literary sources that can be found in all regions discussed: Richard van Leeuwen on fiction and Maaïke van Berkel on advice literature. Their comparison raises a question relevant for all chapters—and to some extent for all historical scholarship: the ambiguous relationship between the representations written by contemporaries and the social realities of the worlds they lived in, as far as we can hope to reconstruct these on the basis of various sources. Comparison, we argue, needs to take into account both levels as well as their at times puzzling interaction.

The connected perspective has corrected narrow views of European expansion as a one-way process; it has also counteracted the tendency to compartmentalise the globe in rigid cultural zones. Within each of the macro-regions defined as the basis of our project, a *lingua franca* and a shared moral-religious background facilitated understanding. Between contiguous regions long traditions of contact eased communication. West Asia and Europe shared legacies and examples, and the same can be said to some extent about the contiguous zones of Central and East Asia. The repeated movement of Central Asian peoples in all directions, too, created a basis for further contact. Europeans moving to East Asia, however, relied on a relatively thin stream of previous information, and contacts here left even more room for protracted misunderstandings as well as for manipulation by intermediaries than the contact between Europe and West Asia.<sup>1</sup> The overarching view of the comparatist or the generalist needs

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1 This was one of the conclusions of a conference organized by Christian Windler and Henrietta Harrison at the University of Bern (2–4 June 2016): 'Transformations of Intercultural Diplomacies: Comparative Views on Asia and Europe (1700 to 1850)'. The presence of drago-

to build on the careful analysis of contacts and contact zones as well as the interpretation of sources generated by people moving around the globe. Comparatists may be able to outline broad and fundamental cultural differences—yet they should by now have accepted the notion that no sharp boundaries exist between cultures and that reciprocal contacts create all sorts of intermediate forms.

For the authors, the experience of writing this book made clear that global history remains unfinished business. Global history can subsist neither on the accumulated detailed description of encounters and travellers, nor on the energetic generalist emphasis on Big Data and Big Questions. Specialists dealing with the political heart of any empire will acknowledge the remarkable impact of personalities, political contingency, and cultural contexts; generalists examining the connections between rulers and elites will recognise patterns that recur in many places. In the gradually emerging mosaic of global history we have sought a middle ground, integrating a huge great variety of specialised literature and, wherever possible, primary sources—mostly published, partly in translation. A more lasting and balanced form of global history can arise only if the middle ground proposed here can take shape at the institutional level, bringing together on a daily basis students and staff studying many parts of the globe.

## 2 Compliance, Breakdown, Reinvention

The partnership between prince, pen and sword was a precondition for political stability; conversely, elite discord could lead to rebellion. Traditional political thought viewed history in terms of cycles, and its observations contain more than a grain of truth. No empire or kingdom escaped from political breakdown; no single line of rulers persisted indefinitely, and elites were frequently reshuffled.

Notwithstanding the turmoil, however, lasting images of continuity developed. Imperial China was repeatedly torn apart by rebellion and conquest, yet the notion of a single coherent Chinese polity, based on a number of cultural-political axioms, persisted.<sup>2</sup> Nomadic polities on the Central Asian Steppe

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mans and other groups of intermediaries was an important theme here. Henrietta Harrison pointed to the remarkable freedoms taken in the negotiations by the Chinese Christian interpreter Jacob Ly, member of the 1793 Macartney mission to Qianlong.

2 See Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton, 2012).

were known for their multiple breakups as well as for repeated waves of conquest, yet the example of great leaders and their warbands stretched far beyond these heartlands and retained a powerful appeal centuries after their demise. The Ottomans, a remarkably long-lasting dynasty surviving several profound crises, propped up their supreme authority by integrating earlier Islamic and Byzantine traditions into their outlook. Amidst endless rebellions and wars, European kingdoms obtained a flexible set of traditions pertaining to religion, the ruling house, and the people. Regimes and dynasties changed: times of troubles can be found in the annals of every single polity. Yet all polities cultivated persisting images and traditions that were invariably revived once order was re-established, often under a new dynasty.<sup>3</sup>

The rise to power of new leaders entailed the reconfiguration of elites as well as a process of cultural re-invention of the dynasty. Conquerors and usurpers glorified the rise of their own house, but needed to appropriate moral-religious authority and the dynastic prestige of their predecessors. The chapters of this book, and the dissertations of researchers involved in our project, all focus on elements of this repeating process.<sup>4</sup> The mixed and contingent character of dynastic appropriations strikes the eye, as does the manifest relevance of shared worldviews

### 3 Shared Worldviews

The grandest and most lasting of the traditions underpinning rule were tied to a higher moral order, which provided a divine sanction as well as a sense of continuity with ancestors and future generations. We find no examples of pre-modern rulers who failed to seek the endorsement of celestial powers. They did

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3 Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London, 2012), rightly points out that many polities were absorbed by their more successful neighbours—these vanished kingdoms tend to be left aside by historians, concentrating on success more often than on failure.

4 Willem Flinterman, 'The Cult of Qalāwūn: Waqf, Memoria, and Dynasty in the Early Mamluk Sultanate, ca. 1280–1340'; Lennart Bes, 'Imperial Servants on Local Thrones. Dynastic Politics in the Vijayanagara Successor States'; Hans Voeten, 'The Kolyvan-Voskresensk Plants and the Russian Integration of Southern Siberia, 1725–1783' deal with different elements of this process; the same can be said for Cumhuriyet's discussion of the rise of the Köprülü viziers. Kim Ragetli focuses on Burgundian duchesses as intermediaries between the duke and cities; Barend Noordam on the convergence of martial and literati ideals in the work of the late Ming general Qi Jiguang.



not stand alone in their reflex. Rietbergen states that ‘the belief of the majority of people that a ruler’s virtue would somehow influence (the) god(s) to bring them safety and prosperity was indeed a prime basis of authority and power’.<sup>5</sup> A magical-religious worldview permeated the lives of rulers and subjects alike. Harmony, hierarchy, and order were understood as the terrestrial expression of celestial values. This was no mere pragmatic alliance of throne and altar: the moral dictate engendered major responsibilities for all. Subjects were required to obey and conform to moral requirements; yet princes were expected to safeguard harmonies and protect the weaker among their subjects. While such expectations did not usually work out in practice, the standard was always there, for kings and advisors, as well as for the people at large. Introspective kings may have been more impressed than men of action, yet all rulers expected a day of reckoning: they knew they would be judged by divine powers and by posterity.

The powerful ideal of the righteous king could be held up by advisors as a mirror to rulers, especially to those who failed to meet even modest standards. The intermittent appearance of archetypally bad kings, in stories as well as in political reality, served as a warning for all that the system was hardly foolproof. Contestants for the throne were always available, yet only rarely was there a visible and viable alternative for the principle of dynastic rule. Richard van Leeuwen’s chapter in this book underlines the ubiquity of kings in fiction, as well as the ‘composite’ nature of kingship, as a discourse with advisors, women, and to some extent the populace. Compliance was first and foremost the consequence of a worldview shared by all social groups, a classic case of Weber’s definition of *Herrschaft*: obeying out of overall support for the constellation of ideas.<sup>6</sup>

Secular and religious powers were rarely united harmoniously in a single hand. The balance between these two powers varied regionally and over time. Remarkably, the most enduring lines of rulers appear to have been those whose status was defined primarily in religious and moral terms. Exemplars with little or no political power did not need to sully their hands and could subsist aloof but untarnished in the minds of their peoples. The Japanese imperial line may be the strongest example of this tendency: retired emperors, regents, or shoguns dealt with government matters, while the emperors developed into a distant, untouchable, but powerful symbol. In East Asia, rulers more often

5 See Rietbergen, chapter 3 in this volume, 293.

6 Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen, 1972) 28–29, expressed as ‘ideal normative agreement’ in David Held, ‘Power and Legitimacy’, *Political Theory and the Modern State* (Cambridge 1989) 99–157, note at 101–102.

appear as distant moral exemplars; elsewhere visibility, active government, and martial prowess ranked higher among the requirements of kingship. These ideals, and the need to be just and accessible, were often stressed in European and West and South Asian advice literature. However, no easy geographical typology of power can be suggested: tendencies were often contradicted by the personal inclinations of individuals on the throne. Nor is it plausible to picture royalty across Eurasia as gradually withdrawing from the public over time. Striking examples of easy camaraderie, or, conversely, of stifling decorum and isolation, can be found in many places and times.

It is clear, however, that the rites of rulership were more commonly performed in relative isolation in East Asia, whereas in other parts of Asia as well as in Europe, variable audiences would be admitted to these events. This divergence can be explained by the categorical status of Chinese as well as Japanese emperors as moral exemplars and as guardians of cosmic harmonies. They could not risk being blemished by day-to-day political wrangling; neither was a role as active leader and commander of armies best suited to safeguard their realm. The nature of the Chinese grand sacrifices, the secluded setting of the emperor in the palace, and the rules against depicting the emperor or using certain characters or items related to his name bring to mind some of the taboos surrounding African ritual kings. They, too, stood at the pinnacle of the world, as the intermediary between the dead and the living, the celestial and the terrestrial. For African ritual kings and Chinese emperors alike, the ritual attached to their elevated position severely circumscribed the freedom of the incumbent. This general characteristic was undoubtedly stronger in Africa and East Asia than in West-South Asia and Europe.

Rites of royalty immediately bring to mind another aspect of religious performance: its capacity to dazzle and inspire multitudes. Whether they were performed in public or in secluded settings, in palaces, temples, market squares, or in an open field, few royal rituals were wholly void of religious artefacts, practices, and associations. Surely rulers instrumentally used this potential to inspire and impress: they were well aware of the impact a good show could have. Yet there is no reason to take this as evidence of a distanced and 'merely' instrumental approach to their exalted station. Instrumental use of ritual appurtenances did not necessarily clash with devout adherence to the key moral-religious principles of rulership. The choreography of royal ceremonies was a matter of grave concern for most princes, whether or not such events were to be witnessed by cheering crowds. Distinguishing the secluded setting of Japanese or Chinese imperial sacrifices from the more accessible ceremonies of West and South Asia or Europe should not lead us to assume that the absence or presence of spectators wholly defined the motives of the prince. Concealment

did not exclude instrumental attitudes; neither does the presence of audiences tell us much about the mindset of the main ritual performers.<sup>7</sup>

Rulers sought to harness religious leadership and at times aspired to combine secular and religious supremacy. In addition, they were eager to obtain the numerous advantages generated by religious institutions. Indubitably, there was also a strong instrumental impulse at work here. Rulers sought to control religious establishments by acquiring rights of patronage and by reaping the economic benefits generated by religion. The religious mandate could be used to impose orthodoxy, stifle heterodoxy, and throttle rebellion. Conversely, however, social and political rebellions were often inspired by religion. The moral programme of religion worked both ways: it underlined order and obedience, but also presented a catalogue of virtues that could be held up to the king. Elites of the pen and the book would constantly remind the prince of these virtues, and they were usually responsible for educating dynastic scions. The righteous and just treatment of the people ranked high among royal virtues: blatant disregard of this prime requirement could take away the Mandate of Heaven and thus open the gates to popular rebellion. This principle was perceived not only by learned elites: popular fiction would depict the inescapable fate of evil rulers. Overall, the moral-religious code permeating all aspects of life underlined hierarchy and obedience: the punishment of evil princes was the responsibility of divine powers. Yet religious movements were a prime vehicle for social and political rebellion: equity and justice were stipulated universally, and both Christianity and Islam would stress the humility of all before God. The shared worldview protected kingship, but could also turn into its nemesis. Surely other connections were necessary to consolidate the edifice of royal power.

#### 4      **Redistribution: The Court**

Rites were performed in seclusion or in full popular view, in many different locations: palaces, religious edifices, tombs, on squares, and in the open field. Palatial designs reflected religious worldviews; façades, moreover, conveyed a sense of power and dignity. The court was a fixed institution as well as a meeting point. It brought together elites and stakeholders for various occasions:

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7 On strategies of concealment see Anne Walthall, 'Hiding the Shoguns: Secrecy and the Nature of Political Authority in Tokugawa Japan', in: Bernhard Scheid and Mark Teeuwen, eds., *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (London, 2013) 332–356.

attending solemnities and feasts in the ritual calendar, partaking in the ruler's bounty, and engaging in political trafficking. Typically, these occasions overlapped. In modern political culture, representation is a major component of legitimacy. Today, power is accepted because we create our own leadership through elections and thus can influence its agenda. A variant of representation worked in courtly settings, particularly in smaller domains. Here, the extended households of princes could integrate major social groups. Lineages, crafts, and regions were 'represented' by their fellows serving at court, permanently enjoying its lavish hospitality, or sojourning there for special occasions. As long as their expectations were not disappointed these groups could identify themselves as stakeholders of the dynastic venture.

Scale was a major limitation. Enlightened *philosophes* had argued that republics could function effectively only in smaller territories.<sup>8</sup> In large-scale dynastic polities, likewise, direct forms of representing and partaking were far more difficult. Only the upper crust of regional elites could be drawn to the court: a thin line of intermediaries maintained the links between centre and periphery. In most of the polities examined in this book, intermediary elites stood between the dynastic centre and the provinces. Only rarely could ordinary subjects share in the court's largesse. The inhabitants of the capital and those living along the trajectories of royal excursions stood a fair chance of profiting from princely benefactions, catching coins thrown to the public, benefiting from charity, royal pardon, tax remits, or provisions distributed to assuage acute crisis. Eager crowds could be involved in royal rituals: a recent study estimates that in Restoration England (1660–1688) around 100,000 persons suffering from scrofula made their way to the court to receive the 'royal touch'.<sup>9</sup> 'Ombudsman' systems, in addition, in theory were available to all. These mechanisms helped rulers to identify and punish wrongdoers among their agents and at the same time underpinned their reputation as just princes. It is difficult to gauge how frequently subjects actually used these means: petitioning in various forms was accepted in all domains, but complaining directly to the prince in person might demand long travel and was not without risks. Surely the populace as a whole was not as a rule involved in the distribution of the greater court benefits: these were reserved for higher echelons.

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8 Most outspokenly perhaps by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Vice Radical', *Oeuvres Politiques de J.J. Rousseau*, IV, *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne* (Paris, 1821) 47–50.

9 Stephen Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England. Politics, Medicine and Sin* (Woodbridge, 2015); see a similar stress on 'bottom up' demand in Neil Murphy, *Ceremonial Entries, Municipal Liberties and the Negotiation of Power in Valois France, 1328–1589* (Leiden and Boston, 2016).

Redistribution took many forms: eating at the king's table, holding office at court, receiving a robe of honour, proudly bearing a court rank, dignity, or office in the provinces, obtaining justice, acquiring wealth. A continuum of forms of exchange and redistribution connects the African village chief entitled to hospitality at the court of his king to the magistrate undergoing highly elaborate forms of evaluation in Late Imperial China. Kings across the globe sensed that they could rule effectively only if they personally controlled the distribution of benefits. This attracted to the court officeholders eager for promotion as well as novices keen to enter the *cursus honorum*. The presence of contending candidates made it possible to snub the unduly ambitious and elevate loyal servants. At larger courts, no single person could hope to control the machinery of appointments; lesser offices and ranks were distributed without ever reaching the king's desk. For the greatest rewards, however, the ruler would decide—and this put a premium on access.<sup>10</sup> The ability to frequently and easily communicate with the prince was a key asset: it allowed domestics, advisors, and spouses or concubines to become major forces at court. The perception that these proximates were close to the king's ear persuaded others to ask for their intervention. Brokerage extended the impact of redistribution to regions distant from the court.

Appointments in the elite hierarchies attached to government were the core only of a machinery that involved other spheres of exchange. The presence of numerous women at polygynous courts can be understood in this way. Often, the girls brought together in the harem represented a connection to certain social groups or families; at the same time, rulers could pass on concubines or wives to their followers. The Mughal Padishahs included Rajput princesses in their harem and gave away their concubines or spouses to loyal friends.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere, too, harem women could be used to cement alliances with elites; moreover, dynastic princesses were often wedded to trusted allies. Women were essential for many types of alliances. Ottoman sultans wedded their daughters to leading viziers and pashas. In Europe the process of creating cohesion through the exchange of women could not take shape in the same way. The inflating numbers of male honorary officers at most early modern European courts can be understood as a substitute for the huge numbers of women creating ties with local elites in polygynous settings. Monogamous dynastic marriage created external alliances among a closely knit network of

10 See recently Dries Raeymaekers, Sebastiaan Derks, ed., *The Key to Power? The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400–1750* (Leiden and Boston, 2016).

11 See an earlier statement on this by Buckler, M.N. Pearson, ed., *Legitimacy and Symbols: The South Asian Writings of F.W. Buckler* (Ann Arbor, 1985).

European ruling houses. The ruler's protection over unmarried young ladies at court, in addition, commonly led to the marriage of these girls with males likewise educated at court. Shifting our view of dynastic power from the male to the female line, a dense network of alliances becomes visible.<sup>12</sup> Charting these connections helps to make visible the stakeholders of the regime.

Nowhere in Eurasia were women the preferred candidates for paramount power. In Europe queens-regnant can be found with some regularity, particularly in Iberia, Britain, Central Europe, and Russia. Dowagers more often served as regents for their minor sons—even in kingdoms where they could not rule in their own right, such as France. Chinese dowagers served as regents too—although under the last two imperial dynasties, they reached this elevated stature only infrequently.<sup>13</sup> In the early modern age, ruling women can be found in Muslim South-East Asia as well as in Japan; but they remained the exception.<sup>14</sup> In the greater West and South Asian empires women did not hold supreme power—but they were very present as mothers behind the throne and as sisters or daughters forming alliances. In narratives of kingship Richard van Leeuwen encountered what he calls the 'feminine paradox': women are obviously necessary for the consolidation of dynastic power, yet they are often seen in negative terms, as a threat. Kings and heroes need to survive the challenges of coping with female seduction. A misogynist perspective can be found in many literary traditions around royalty, yet surely there was another, more positive, stereotype: the pious, chaste, loyal, and devoted spouse, who counselled mercy and moderation, stepping in to plead for her subjects. In many cases women at court cultivated the positive stereotype, while moving substantially beyond it in their political activity.<sup>15</sup> Yet there were clear limitations, and open transgressions were likely to be condemned.

Reigning and ruling, we have seen, cannot always be equated. This holds true not only for the Japanese emperor under Tokugawa tutelage. Often viziers,

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12 Michaela Hohkamp, 'Transdynasticism at the Dawn of the Modern Era. Kinship Dynamics among Ruling Families', in: Christopher H. Johnson, et al., eds., *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond. Experiences since the Middle Ages* (New York and Oxford, 2011) 93–106.

13 Keith McMahon, *Celestial Women: Imperial Wives and Concubines in China from Song to Qing* (Lanham, 2016) outlines changes per dynasty.

14 See an extended discussion in Jeroen Duindam, *Dynasties. A Global History of Power 1300–1800* (Cambridge, 2015) 89–127.

15 This appears as one of the conclusions in Kim Ragetli's dissertation: 'Duchess between prince and people. A thematic approach to the lives, influence and actions of the Duchesses of Burgundy (1430–1530)'.

secretaries, and ministers did the work and took the blame, while sultans, emperors, and kings stayed in the background. Maaïke van Berkel shows how the literary legacies created by court scribes, probably the most frequently used sources for the history of rulership, helped to define and defend the prestige of this group. Van Leeuwen stresses the triangular relationship between princes, viziers, and concubines in fictional literature, and the 'composite' character of kingship: this was a joint effort rather than the single-handed performance of one player only.<sup>16</sup> It is important to separate the omnipotence rhetorically attributed to rulers from the usually more modest powers they exerted in practice. Moreover, we should keep in mind the recurring phenomenon of insecure princes who left matters in the hands of confidants. Kings could wield enormous power at times: founding emperors fighting their way to the throne are an obvious case. However, many other examples can be cited where advisors, at least for a decade or two, were able to dominate their kings and push through decisions. On the whole, the powers of kings were more limited than we tend to imagine. A prime factor in this balance simply was distance. Measures decreed at the centre did not always reach the periphery, and if they did, it proved difficult to enforce and verify implementation. This explains the quintessential role of intermediary elites, which will be discussed at some length below. Even at the centre control was never a given. The groups pressing around their nominal leader were eager to obtain benefits for themselves and for their followers. The most ambitious among them, moreover, wanted to wield power themselves, either as the puppeteer moving the king or as the usurper taking his place. How could kings deal with this persistent challenge?

## 5 Elites: Functions, Recruitment, Competition

Kings ruled most effectively when supported by a strong, loyal, and collegial group of advisors, a situation that could never be taken for granted. Many kings found out to their dismay that their rule was possible for quite different reasons: because leading advisors and their followers tended towards competition rather than towards cooperation. They understood that this competition was furthered by the rewards in their hands. Competition generated leeway and choice, as long as the distribution of key benefits and positions did not antago-

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16 See also Cumhuriyet Bekar's work on the balance of power emerging between Sultan Mehmed IV and the Köprülü viziers, 'The Rise of the Köprülü family. The Reconfiguration of the Vizierial Power in the Seventeenth Century'.

nize elites *en bloc*. This idea, which has been stated implicitly and explicitly by rulers worldwide, could be extended from the even-handed distribution of graces to active manipulation. Rather than rewarding their most able and loyal servants, kings could use this instrument to foment competition. Rule by dividing has traditionally been understood as the preferred weapon in the royal arsenal.<sup>17</sup> Numerous examples can be culled from advice literature and autobiographical writing by kings, but also from historical practice worldwide. Such cases can be separated into two categories: kings often counterbalanced the power of pushy individuals by promoting their rivals; more ambitiously, they could attempt to do this at the level of 'social engineering' for entire elite groups. Offsetting the power of the overly ambitious must have been common practice. Moving against entire groups and redefining the upper layers of society could be carried out only during severe disturbances. It was usually triggered by a key problem of ruling: the tendency of all loyal servants to turn into vested elites.

Elites serving dynastic rulers can be described in many ways. There is the occupational background: domestics, administrators, soldiers, priests. Domestics did not on the whole rise to formal social prominence. In most polygynous settings eunuchs served in the inner court. They could rise to great wealth and power yet their status remained tainted—more strongly so in East Asia than in West Asia. In Europe leading nobles headed domestic staffs as a token of their hierarchical proximity to the ruler—yet their offices in the army and in government defined their identity as much as their honorary domestic service. Warrior elites were prominent in Europe, West and South Asia, yet in the Sinosphere, they rarely matched the prestige of literati in imperial service. Typically, religious elites served their divine overlord and formed part of a separate religious hierarchy: they were rarely integrated wholly and unconditionally into the secular ruler's service.

Pen and sword appear as the two most widespread categories of state servants, yet people of the pen often remained closely tied to people of the book. In the European case clerics, long holding a near-monopoly in literate skills, dominated high administrative office into the sixteenth century. Until the French Revolution, however, Catholic priests were never only or even primarily servants of the state. In the Islamic setting, the '*ulama*' as a group remained apart from the state, yet they held many judicial and administrative offices under the authority of the prince. While Confucian literati magistrates in China did not have a fixed religious orientation or status, they were involved in the per-

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17 See the classic form of this view in Elias, *Court Society*.



formance of local variants of the great imperial rites. Moreover, they certainly occupied high moral ground and at times hazarded to admonish the emperor in person. Maaïke van Berkel shows that people of the pen across Eurasia cultivated a powerful identity, stressing their specific literary capabilities and their role as moral leaders. They viewed the activities of paymasters and accountants as below their station and maintained a certain distance from military elites. Compared to the long-established traditions of highly literate administrators in the Islamicate world and the Sinosphere, European state servants arrived late.

The form of the military varied from small bodies of guards and retainers to huge field armies, up to the Chinggisid version of the ‘people-in-arms’ as described by Jos Gommans. Among nomadic peoples military elites would also perform executive administrative tasks; the emergence of specialized administrative agents can be seen as a step in the development towards sedentary consolidated polities. People of the sword cherished an identity based on valour and loyalty. It never wholly overlapped with the outspoken literary-cultural style of the pen, but intermediate forms can be found in many places. Paradoxically, as van Berkel and Gommans point out, the identity of men of the sword was captured in writing by men of the pen. A rapprochement in the ideals of literary refinement (*wen*) and military prowess (*wu*) recurs in Chinese dynastic history.<sup>18</sup> Similar combinations of valour and refinement can be seen among other elites orbiting the dynastic court: Ottoman pashas and viziers, European nobles, and Mughal *mansabdars*.

This mixing of ideals raises the question of priority: which groups can be seen as predominant? No simple lasting regional typology can be given here. Nevertheless, it is clear that literary accomplishment and high civil office together served as the acme in Late Imperial China. This priority was repeatedly challenged during phases of dynastic turmoil, and it was altered when the Qing conquest elite introduced a martial hereditary structure at the heart of the state and in the government of the newly conquered peripheries. Even under the Qing, however, literary skills retained immense importance and supreme prestige: a fact underlined by the representation of emperors as men of learning. This outspoken dominance of literary elites cannot be found elsewhere. Notwithstanding the stress on Holy Law and the age-old literary traditions of government of the Islamicate world, sultans, shahs, and padishahs granted a prestigious place to leading warriors. Ottoman viziers combined military prowess, literary accomplishments, and patronage of the arts—yet arguably

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18 Barend Noordam, ‘Military Identity, Empire and Frontier in the Late Ming Dynasty: Qi Jiguang (1528–1588) and His Service on Two Frontiers’.

their first task was organizing military success. This may have been the common priority throughout West and South Asia: officials defined their identity as experts in writing and emphasized the importance of the pen for the ruler, yet in everyday practice the people of the sword predominated. However, the balance between pen and sword shifted frequently and was never quite resolved. In Europe the clergy ranked as the first estate, but the second estate of the *bellatores* absorbed many leading positions in the church and predominated in government. Nobles dominated in church and state and they consistently cultivated their connection with the battlefield. The noble estate enjoyed fiscal exemption because they paid taxes in blood: the *impôt du sang*. Battlefield heroism was the quickest road to noble status, although from the sixteenth century onwards numerous *roturiers* were ennobled through loyal service and through the purchase of office. European nobility was exceptional because of its marked presence in the church, in the army, and in government.

These elite groups were recruited in various ways. Everywhere the relative importance of descent versus education and talent was hotly debated; everywhere, we can surmise, these categories were present to some extent in the recruitment and selection of military and administrative intermediaries. Still, there are remarkable contrasts here. Europe relied on heredity to a greater extent than did any of the other areas. Old and new nobles produced impressive genealogies to underscore their status: the 'age' of a house was accepted as an important status marker. In many realms, only nobles of 'ancient race' could hope to be admitted to the honours of the court, and they formed an elite pool of recruitment for army command. Conversely, the leading elite of the classic Ottoman age cultivated its 'slave' background; many among them had in fact been recruited through *devshirme*. Slave-soldiers had a long pedigree in Islamic history, but the Ottomans were remarkable in using the mechanism to fill all major government posts except those traditionally held by '*ulama*'. Since the Song, examinations had been an important tool to recruit civil magistrates in China. From the reintroduction of the exams in late Yuan to their final abolition in the early twentieth century the exams would be the main channel of advancement into officialdom. There were exams for the military, but they never achieved either the near-monopoly or the social prestige of the civil exams, and hereditary status remained important here.

Devotion offered another way to elite status. Partly as a result of the increasing impact of Turkic migrants and settlers, Islamic courts could develop a strong mystical tradition, which invigorated already existing notions of royal leadership and charisma deriving primarily from the pre-Islamic Persian tradi-

tion.<sup>19</sup> Re-enacting the life of an increasingly romanticized nomadic warband, post-nomadic Turko-Islamic dynasties across West and South Asia built new forms of cohesion through the rhetoric and ritual of personal love and devotion, often to the utter dismay of the wardens of orthodoxy. This Sufi ingredient of *ʿasabiyya*—exemplified most of all by the Safavid model—gave Islamic rulers magical leverage over their followers that went beyond European and East Asian notions of royal charisma. This Islamic *Sonderweg* of Sufism and service through devotion could not survive the age of religious reform that started at the very end of our period.

Beyond the regionally differentiated interplay of function, priority status, and forms of recruitment another process emerges: the powerful tendency of all elites to pass on wealth and status to their kin and create lasting family networks with their clients. Maaïke van Berkel points to the relevance of family relations and clientage even among ‘bureaucratic’ families professing the priority of education and meritocracy. Patrimonial tendencies complicated all delegation of power: distance and time inevitably turned agents of central power into self-serving powerholders. An endless series of means can be listed through which rulers tried to prevent or delay this process. Chinese ‘laws of avoidance’ prohibited the assignment of magistrates to their regions of origin as well as the nomination of family members in their retinue or in contiguous areas. Intricate systems of evaluation and reassignment stood at the basis of a carousel of leading magistrates in Mughal, Ottoman, and Chinese administration—not so different from the introduction of the French intendants in France under Richelieu, often seen as the harbinger of the modern state. Special travelling agents were instituted to check on local officeholders in many places—a listing would include Carolingian *missi dominici*, Abbasid travelling officials and their successors in later West Asian polities, as well as Chinese censors.

Processes of centralization and devolution can be found in most empires. The classic age of Ottoman power coexisted with the rise to power of *devshirme* recruits in government and the reduction of former semi-tribal Ghazi frontier lords. Yet military challenges around 1600 and again towards the end of the seventeenth century made it necessary to enlist the support of locals to raise funds and troops. These measures, intended to solve acute fiscal-military crises, created new regional elites and in the long run furthered a process of decentralization. Similar processes can be seen in Central and South Asia. Akbar

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19 See in particular Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign. Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012).

had harnessed the powers of his multiple and diverse followers through the *mansabdar* system; yet from the late seventeenth century onwards, Aurangzeb and his successors saw their central powers wane and witnessed the rise of provincial grandees. The Safavids rose to power through Shah Ismail's messianic leadership and the devout support of the new Qizilbash elites. These semi-tribal leaders soon became restive; under 'Abbas I they were reduced in power and counterbalanced by an Ottoman-style slave elite. Nevertheless, the Safavid realm underwent a rapid decentralizing process in the late seventeenth century. Qing China proved remarkably resilient, but in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the combined pressure of internal dissension and the external threat of Western hegemonic powers strained it to the utmost. One of the explanations of Qing success, the steadfast loyalty of the hereditary military banners, a small minority among the numerous Han Chinese, can at the same time be ranked among the causes of the rebellions proliferating from the late eighteenth century onwards. The privileged status of the small conquest elite angered the Han Chinese population. Anti-Manchu sentiments formed a combustible concoction with Ming loyalism, social discontent, and religious sectarianism. The Qing banners, consequently, lacked an opportunity that was present in most other cases: it was more difficult for them to 'turn local', using local ties to improve their position and loosen their ties with the central establishment.

Jos Gommans lists the need to prevent 'gentrification' as the primary purpose of the artificial tribal structure of the Chinggisid warband; and he views the Qing banners as a conscious revival of this practice. Regionalization and patrimonialism were present everywhere, but in different measure. Following Victor Lieberman, Gommans suggests that the waves of conquest originating in the Central Asian steppe created an 'exposed zone' where populations were frequently uprooted and realigned in the warband structure: this prevented the development of a hereditary landed elite. In the 'protected zone' hereditary landed elites survived more easily and hence held a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis central authorities. Europe and South-East Asia would be the prime examples here. Contrary to traditional views of European state formation, the strengthening of the state coincided with the consolidation of noble privilege and power.<sup>20</sup>

This returns us to the question opening this section: *divide et impera*. Function, status, and forms of recruitment gave rise to structural tensions among

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20 See e.g. Hillay Zmora, *Monarchy, Aristocracy and the State in Europe 1300–1800* (London, 2000).

groups around the ruler. Inner and outer, to some extent overlapping with domestic and administrative functions, but with an added gender difference, can be added to the list. Jeroen Duindam subsumes forms of conflict at court under three hierarchies of respectively rank, decision-making, and access. No single group dominated in all hierarchies, and sharp status dissonance existed, primarily between 'lowly' inner court confidants and respected outer court dignitaries. The functional divides between pen and sword and the partly overlapping divide in palace topography and social status caused lasting tensions that would repeatedly give rise to collective clashes. More often, however, competitors in each of the hierarchies sought alliances in the other hierarchies. Leading literati vied for the same rewards and could benefit from inner-court support. Confidants in the inner court would have difficulty sharing the ruler's trust with their peers and likewise were enticed to align with outer-court administrators or soldiers. Perhaps the most common form of competition was based on family networks, bringing together relatives, affines, and clients of various kinds. Where we have detailed information, these networks appear as remarkably lasting.

Rulers could and would step in actively to support loyal friends and snub the haughty. Openly choosing sides in a conflict, however, represented a grave risk. Favouring one side through unbalanced distribution of honours would antagonize the other, forcing them to seek alternatives. The disenfranchised could, for example, turn to the heir apparent or to other dynastic rivals, betting on future rewards while souring the atmosphere between father and son or between the ruler and his leading relatives. Kings were hesitant to stir up conflict: their task was maintaining order. Conflict was rife without the intervention of kings, and more often than not it persisted against their will and best interests. Moreover, once kings crossed the critical line and actively encouraged antagonism, they often found out to their dismay that it could no longer be controlled. Sometimes they shifted this burden onto their successors. In eighteenth-century Korea, the tragic conflict between King Yongjo and his heir-apparent Sado was in part the legacy of their predecessors' manipulation of faction at court.

The setup around the ruler has been likened to a circulation system, with the ruler pushing his confidants upward and outward, using them as trusted agents.<sup>21</sup> Once they moved to higher rank and into the periphery, they gradually lost their proximity but found themselves rewarded by higher and more

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21 See the short and lucid introduction by Werner Paravicini, 'Der Fall des Günstlings. Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert', in: Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini, eds., *Der Fall des Günstlings: Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert:*

independent status. Rulers in all regions employed groups they considered as particularly dependent and dependable against overbearing elites. Celibacy, in addition to literacy, turned European clergymen into preferred agents of royalty: patrimonial goals were not out of reach for them, but more complicated to achieve. The same can be said with greater force about eunuchs. In both cases family networks and adoption made possible long-term patrimonial strategies; and in the case of clergymen illegitimate offspring could play a role. More generally outsiders were chosen as confidants: foreigners, exiles, social climbers. Mamluks employed numerous Christians in their administration; the Yuan dynasty cultivated Central Asians at court and in office—a pattern repeated in a more systematic form by the Qing. Outsiders could not fall back easily on local networks of high status friends and loyal clients: for the ruler, this absence of local affiliations was an advantage. *En masse* recruitment of slaves for leading office, as was practised by the Ottomans, extends the individual process to a collective level. Only the Chinese examinations, however, effectively prevented heredity at the level of individuals in office and made it possible—in theory but to some extent also in practice—for talented outsiders to reach high rank. The formation of wealthy literate gentry lineages, able to maintain themselves through repeated exam success, did not reduce the potential of the examinations to render legitimate the power of the emperor and his magistrates. At the other end of the spectrum, European elites unabashedly pointed to their pedigree and claimed heredity in office more often than did their Eurasian compeers elsewhere. They, in fact, behaved like miniature dynasties, mirroring at a lesser level the strategies and legitimations of European rulers. The wider social resonance of noble dynastic ideology was peculiar to Europe and Japan.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, slaves, examination graduates, disciples, and dependents were repeatedly successful in obtaining semi-hereditary status, yet the representation of these powerholders was rarely as outspokenly dynastic as among European noble houses.

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8. *Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Sigmaringen, 2004) 13–21.

22 See an early statement in this direction by Fernand Braudel, 'A propos des origines sociales du capitalisme', in: *La dynamique du capitalisme* (Paris, 1985) 75–79; I thank Peer Vries for pointing out this passage.

## 6 Cultural Divergence and Breakthrough

The preceding paragraphs may seem to confirm a common perception of pre-modern history in general and the ‘Orient’ in particular: a maelstrom of events that in the end left everything unchanged. Dynasties came and went, yet the common pattern of rule subsisted in roughly the same form. Incumbents changed, battling courtiers were replaced, yet throne, altar, and elites persisted. There is some truth in this: a repetition of patterns is unmistakably present, which makes it easy to understand the ubiquity of cyclical models among pre-modern political thinkers.

However, radically different views are possible. Karl Jaspers suggested an ‘Achszeit’, a breakthrough-age profoundly changing philosophy on the Eurasian continent between the eighth and third centuries BCE.<sup>23</sup> Victor Lieberman postulated a shared tendency towards centralization and integration in major polities across the Eurasian continent neatly coinciding with the time span of this book.<sup>24</sup> This convergence can be extended to include the ‘crisis of the seventeenth century’ recently redefined in global terms by Geoffrey Parker.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, the preceding chapters fit well Lieberman’s thesis. The major polities emerging from the later Middle Ages onwards in each of the regions studied could, with some justification, see themselves as perfecting the achievements of their predecessors. Chinese dynasties considered the reasons behind their predecessors’ downfall. Each dynasty came with a programme intended to prevent certain conspicuous shortcomings, and these intentions could make a difference. The sequence of the Ming and Qing dynasties can be seen as a gradual build-up of administrative capability and political acumen.<sup>26</sup> The Tokugawa shoguns had reason to look upon their government as an enhanced version of previous models of rule in Japan. Likewise, the great empires of West and South Asia could with some justice view their achieve-

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23 Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Munich, 1983 [1949]).

24 Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830* (Cambridge, 2003, 2010).

25 Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, 2013).

26 See, for instance, McMahon, *Celestial Women*, on the adaptations consciously introduced by the Ming and Qing; Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley and London, 1998) with a perhaps slightly overstated image of the lessons learnt and put in practice by the Qing; and R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle, 2010) with a careful rendering of changes in the structures of government.

ments as surpassing the efforts of their dynastic predecessors, in terms of cultural brilliance as well as political centralization. Europe, too, fits the pattern: changes here were particularly rapid because they started at lower levels and were fostered by permanent competition—with the Ottomans as well as among European contestants. However, profound change everywhere mixed easily with veneration for an idealized past golden age. Arguably, moreover, it left untouched the basic outlines of society. Perhaps this can be stated only with hindsight, on the basis of the turbulent and ongoing process of transformation in the centuries following 1750.

This comparative research effort consciously left aside the questions raised by the rise of Europe. Yet does it tell us anything about Europe's specificity? First of all, our focus on prince, pen and sword points to divergences in all parts of Eurasia that are not usually integrated into the story of European ascendancy. In the preceding pages, the regional variants of elite recruitment have been discussed. Surely the Chinese civil service examinations can be seen as a *Sonderweg*: they appear as the single premodern formula structurally reducing the inbuilt erosion of elite loyalty, while at the same time underpinning imperial legitimacy and the social pre-eminence of the literati elite.<sup>27</sup> The formula was geared to produce stability and order rather than economic innovation or global hegemony—but it did not hinder the remarkable military, demographic, and economic expansion of Qing China. Qing military success, however, may in part be explained by the adoption of the semi-tribal banner elites. The banners direct us to Jos Gommans, who points to a *Sonderweg* at the other extreme of the spectrum: the Chinggisid warband. This powerful model allowed rapid conquest and mobility, but by definition lost its character during consolidation and sedentarisation. Gommans adds that, particularly in the empires proximate to the Mongol example, elite loyalty was temporarily reinvigorated by the Sufi rhetoric of personal devotion to the ruler as spiritual leader.

How does Europe fit within these regionally diverging examples of ruler-elite relations? Undoubtedly the most conspicuous divergence here is the norm of monogamous marriage: it cannot be found in other dynastic settings. Monogamy had a series of consequences for palace organization and layout, for the format of royal families and succession strife, and for the nature of dynastic alliances. West, South and East Asia, all subscribing to polygynous reproduction, show great variety in each of these respects, yet Europe stands apart with its web of dynastic alliances and succession rights. However, this cannot be

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27 See the eloquent statement by Benjamin Elman, 'Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991) 7–28 and other works by the same author cited by Maaïke van Berkel.



read as a sign of consolidation or stability. A critic of intrigue and ambition, Erasmus expressly warned against the tendency of princes to marry prestigious brides from rivalling sovereign houses. He argued this would exacerbate warfare:

For while kingdom is linked with kingdom by marriage contracts, whenever one party takes offence, he appeals to his rights of relationship to draw others in, and so on the slightest offence Christendom moves to arms, and the displeasure of a single man is assuaged with a deluge of Christian blood.<sup>28</sup>

Erasmus urged princes to marry among the nobles in their realm, but his injunctions were not taken seriously. Succession conflict, mostly internal though at times with wider regional repercussions in Asian empires, took the form of warfare between kingdoms in Europe. Warfare among the smaller-scale European contestants was endemic: protracted periods of peace were exceptional. Succession could serve to legitimize straightforward conquest, yet it did imply a certain respect for the customs and expectations of the lands obtained, particularly for locals who had supported the conqueror's claim. While these ongoing wars were destructive and expensive, succession conflict tended to leave intact corporate rights and exemptions: privileged groups in society retained their positions. This contrasts with the devastating waves of expansion moving outward from the nomadic heartlands of Eurasia to the 'exposed zones' where major sedentary empires arose. Jos Gommans outlines the flux and social mobility characterizing the Chinggisid warband and the emulations of the Steppe model of military mobilization. The Habsburg-Jochid comparison proposed by Liesbeth Geervers and Marie Favereau highlights the fact that Habsburgs, moving from place to place as a consequence of dynastic marriage and succession, conformed to the 'laws of the land', a notion that cannot be found in the Jochid context.

Monogamous marriage, presented by Georges Duby as the victory of *prêtres* over *guerriers*, points to the relative strength of clergy and church in Europe.<sup>29</sup> This, indeed, was unmatched: the position of religious intermediary elites appears as one of the main differences between Europe, West-South Asia, and

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28 Desiderius Erasmus, 'On the Marriage Alliances of Princes', Percy Society Corbett, ed., *Erasmus' Institutio Principis Christiani* (London, 1921) 50–52.

29 See Georges Duby, *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre. Le mariage dans la France féodale* (Paris 1981), particularly 27–59 on the clashing views of priests and warriors, and 201–219 on the implications for the royal house.

East Asia. This theme requires more study. Can it be related to the norm of succession through monogamous reproduction, and to that other outspoken characteristic of Europe, heredity and the persistence of noble power? Indeed, in Europe, the strength, resilience, and vociferous defence of hereditary privileges strike the eye. The language of local and corporate rights, a traditional elite response to encroaching state power, was rephrased in the eighteenth century by Montesquieu and his adherents. Montesquieu explicitly presented the accumulation of freedoms as a prime safeguard against the rise of despotism: the privilege of elites, for him, stood at the heart of the ideal of political liberty. Yet how can we match this view of forces counterbalancing royal power with the undeniable strengthening of European states, another key element of the narrative of European modernization? It is difficult to see monogamous marriage, a strong clergy and church, and a powerful stress on heredity as harbingers of modernity and breakthrough.

Military and commercial competition and innovation have been cited among the causes of the European breakthrough because they forced as well as enabled the contestants to improve their fiscal and administrative techniques. Maaikje van Berkel shows that specialized administrators emerged late in Europe; yet the latecomer rapidly made up arrears and soon overtook the others. Arguably, the leading states of Europe surpassed the administrative capacities of older Eurasian traditions in the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The limited scale of European kingdoms made increased state control more feasible. Moreover, credit systems based on mercantile wealth were added quickly to the relatively static revenue generated by taxation.<sup>30</sup> Generating income from society could work in the short term through forced loans and confiscations or by negotiated loans penniless princes often failed to repay, a common experience for banking houses in Europe. In the end tapping private wealth successfully and lastingly demanded a trustworthy state that honoured its obligations. Most great empires relied first and foremost on land taxes and labour services, their political elites cultivated a more distanced attitude vis-à-vis traders, and income generated through mercantile wealth remained limited.

The 'European sea nomads' found their way to distant shores and continued their battles there—with their Old World rivals as well as with locals.<sup>31</sup> The

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30 David Stasavage, *States of Credit: Size, Power, and the Development of European Polities* (Princeton, 2011) focuses on the small scale of states, the presence of merchant elites and the connections between political representation and credit.

31 Victor Lieberman, 'Protected Rimlands and Exposed Zones: Reconfiguring Premodern Eurasia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 3 (2008) 692–723, 721.

unrelenting pressures of war continuously changed the rules of the game—with successive rounds of military, financial, and administrative change in the later Middle Ages, the early seventeenth century, around the turn of that century, and again from the 1740s onwards.<sup>32</sup> Every round of military-fiscal escalation tested the compact between rulers and their elites, and in the 1780s a critical threshold was passed.<sup>33</sup> In the following decades of revolution and war, Britain resisted the Napoleonic challenge and fortified its global dominance. Conversely, in 1711, after consolidating the gains of Qing China, the Kangxi Emperor decided to freeze the head tax. Kangxi's decision can be explained by his zeal to be seen as a sage ruler, preventing the exploitation of the people through unnecessary expenditure for magnificence or warfare—princely penchants that were seen as causes for a downturn in the dynastic cycle. His reticence did not weaken China. Only in the late Qianlong years, after a century of stunning growth in all respects, did Qing leadership start to show signs of administrative fatigue, with corruption rampant and rebellions proliferating. By the mid-nineteenth century the increasingly bullying presence of Europeans along the East Asian seaboard mercilessly exposed China's unexpected vulnerability.<sup>34</sup> Whether or not Kangxi's choice put 'all under heaven' at risk, the more important observation is that it would have been unthinkable for any of the major players in Europe. While individual states could reach a level of satisfaction and might prefer reticent policies, assertive contenders would force them back into the game—or push them out altogether.

The overt global hegemony of Europe occurred late and suddenly, as the consequence of two profoundly different breakthroughs and a devastating war. This was the consequence of innumerable long-term factors and contingencies.

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32 See a careful recent view focusing on the period of breakthrough, Peer Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s* (London and New York, 2015); Philip T. Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* (Princeton, 2015) postulates a longer-term 'tournament model' of competing European small-scale territories in the absence of any hegemonic power. The novelty cannot be found in the formula itself, but in the systemic, and finally mathematical form given to it. See Martin Van Creveld, *The Rise and Decline of the State* (Cambridge, 1999) summarizing similar factors (multipolarity, the failure of 'empire', permanent military competition).

33 See Lars Behrisch, *Die Berechnung der Glückseligkeit. Statistik und Politik in Deutschland und Frankreich im späten ancien régime* (Ostfildern, 2016) for a careful assessment and explanation for the rising force of statistical fact-finding and planning, a development that took shape mostly after the Seven Years' War.

34 On the gradual reorientation of Qing policies during this critical phase, see Matthew Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy. The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford, 2013).

Others have enumerated and evaluated reasons why the situation in Europe turned out to be more conducive to this multifaceted and epochal transformation than conditions elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> A single country spearheaded the process. Britain's global hegemony was a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, the military success against Napoleon, and the impulses of the French Revolution. Restoration governments throughout Europe were eager to extinguish the revolutionary flame, yet they happily adopted instruments created by the Revolution to enhance state powers. In the same decades, industrial production revolutionized the economy and gradually changed the basis of warfare.

The availability of military forces and seaborne power, supported by an advanced political and financial capacity, and animated by a mentality that embraced violence as the necessary continuation of policy together formed the basis of European hegemony. Saying that the will and capacity to use organized violence on a large scale was a precondition for establishing European hegemony is stating a tautology. The willingness to use violence, moreover, surely did not set European powers apart from their Asian competitors. Yet the fact that Europe achieved its position through military superiority and a belligerent attitude does not easily fit the view of the West as the harbinger of universal rights and freedoms, as the continent where a more balanced relationship between the state and its stakeholders created public credit as well as political modernity. The rise of European hegemony should be separated analytically from the rise of the European socio-political model. Modernity and liberalism came in the baggage train of armies and navies.

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35 See Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence*, and other titles mentioned in the introduction to this volume (note 26, pages 10–11).



# Glossary

- adab (Arabic) The sum of knowledge that makes a person cultured as well as refinement and urbanity as opposed to uncouthness; also referring to the literature covering such topics.
- ahadis Small, standing, personal army of the Mughal emperors.
- Aisin Gioro Chinese imperial clan of the Qing dynasty.
- akhlaq (Arabic) 'Disposition', ethics, emphasizing personal virtue and good character; also referring to literature covering such topics.
- arbitrista (Spanish) 'Projectors', a group of 17th century Spanish reformers concerned about the Spanish economy.
- 'asabiyya Sense of community or group feeling; an important concept in Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*.
- 'askeri 'Military', ruling class of imperial administrators in the Ottoman empire (as opposed to *re'aya*, taxpaying commoners).
- awqaf (Arabic) Plural for *waqf*. Islamic term for pious foundations.
- a'yan 'Notables', local or provincial elites in the Ottoman empire.
- bakufu, also shogunate Literally 'tent government', the military government of Japan under the rule of the shogun.
- bargah (Persian) Audience tent or audience hall, inner court.
- basileus Greek for king or emperor, later used for the Byzantine emperor.
- bayt (Arabic) Retinue of the ruler; see also *hashiya*, *khassakiya*.
- beglerbeg 'Bey of the beys', a provincial governor of the Ottoman empire, the head of the ruling tribes in the Golden Horde.
- beylik Small principalities governed by *beys*.
- birun 'Outside', the outer departments of the Ottoman imperial household, as opposed to *enderun*.
- bodhisattva Sanskrit term for a person who has attained buddhahood in his own lifetime, but delays reaching nirvana to save others.
- bulqaq (Turkic) anarchy, chaos - by extension the Jochid dynastic crisis during the 1360s–1370s.
- chao (Chinese) Court, morning audience.
- comitatus (Latin) Germanic warband; see also *keshtik*.
- daijosai Great Thanksgiving festival, a Japanese Shinto inauguration ritual.
- daimyo Territorial lord in Japan; upper layer of the warrior class.
- damad A Persian word meaning son-in-law, used as a title for officials married to princesses of the Ottoman dynasty.
- dar or darbar (Persian and Arabic) Door, gate, or dwelling, also used to refer to the ruler's court or a government bureau.
- dargah (Persian) Forecourt, outer court.
- darshan See *jharokha-i darshan*.

- darughachi Mongol officials overseeing taxes and administration, sometimes serving as governors.
- dauphin Title given to the heir-apparent to the throne of France.
- defterdar 'Keeper of the Registers', an Ottoman term for the chief financial officer.
- devshirme Ottoman term for the periodical levy of Christian children to be employed at court and in military-administrative functions.
- din (Arabic) Religious devotion, creed, religion.
- Din-i Ilahi (Persian) 'Religion of God', a syncretic religion promulgated by the Mughal emperor Akbar the Great.
- divan, Divan-ı Hümayun Imperial council of the Ottoman empire.
- dvor (Russian) Palace or retinue of a ruler.
- enderun (Turkish) 'Inside' service, the inner court of the imperial household of the Ottoman sultan, as opposed to *birun* or 'outside' service.
- farr or farr-i Izadi (Persian) Essential quality of rulers, divine radiance, divine effulgence.
- ghazi Arabic term to refer to warriors participating in raids, later used specifically for religious warfare.
- ghulam (Arabic) Boy, servant, slave, commonly used for slave-soldiers.
- hadith (Arabic) 'Prophetic tradition', reports of the words or actions of the prophet Muhammad.
- hashiya (Arabic) Entourage of a ruler; see *bayt*, *khassakiya*.
- huangdi Chinese title for the sovereign of Imperial China.
- imperator (Latin) Originally a commander in the Roman Republic, later used as an imperial title for Roman, Carolingian, Holy Roman and many other emperors.
- intisab Personal connections, patron-client relationships in the Ottoman empire.
- iqta' Payment for military service in the form of land granted to officials in the Islamic Caliphate.
- jagir 'Holding land', the usufruct of landholdings in the Mughal empire. See also *iqta'*.
- Janissaries, yeniçeri 'New army', standing infantry army forming the Ottoman Sultan's household troops.
- Jebsundamba Khutuktu Title for the line of spiritual leaders in Tibetan Buddhism.
- jetons (French) Coins or tokens distributed during ceremonial occasions in Europe.
- jharokha-i darshan Regular public appearance or 'viewing' by the Mughal emperor.
- kanun Dynastic law, the body of law established by Muslim sovereigns, contrast with *shari'a*, the body of law established by Muslim legal scholars.
- katib (Arabic) Secretary, writer, scribe; referring to state officials.
- keshik Mongolian for favoured or blessed. A conscript-based elite made up of the personal followers and guardsmen of the war leader who trained and paid them.
- khassakiya Arabic term for retinue; see also *bayt*, *hashiya*.

- kotei Japanese title commonly used to refer to foreign emperors. See also *tenno*.
- madrasa (Arabic) Islamic school of higher learning.
- mansab Office, dignity, rank in the Mughal empire.
- mansabdar An official of the Mughal empire, holder of a *mansab*.
- maqama 'Assembly' or 'place of meeting'. An Arabic literary genre.
- maydan (Arabic) In the camps of the Seljuq dynasty, an open space for polo, other contests, and troop exercises. An urban square (Istanbul, Isfahan).
- mazalim (Arabic) Grievances. Rulers listened to their subjects' grievances in *mazalim* courts.
- meng-an mou-ke *Meng-an* from the Manchu *minggan*, 'thousand'; *mou-ke*, 'leader of one hundred men', from *mukun*. Unit of socio-military organization under the Jin.
- mestnichestvo 'Code of precedence', a hierarchical system in early modern Russia.
- mihrab (Arabic) Semicircular niche in a mosque that indicates the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca.
- mukun (Manchu) Jurchen clan, household, but also as a military organization, warband. See also *meng-an mou-ke*.
- munshi (Mughal) Scribe or secretary, state officials.
- murid 'He who seeks', a novice or seeker of enlightenment on the Sufi path.
- Naqshbandi A major Sunni spiritual order of Sufism.
- nasab (Arabic) Connection, pedigree, kinship relations.
- nei (Chinese) Inner.
- nişancı 'Keeper of the Seal', the chancellor in the Ottoman empire.
- nökörs Non-tribal loyal companions to the Mongolian war leader, making up the *keshik*.
- pasha Highest official title in the Ottoman empire, given to provincial governors and viziers.
- pomest'ia (Russian) Land grant in return for service to the state.
- pomishchik (Russian) Holder of a *pomest'ia*.
- pontifex maximus (Latin) 'Greatest pontiff', the high priest of the College of Pontiffs in ancient Rome, later used for the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.
- qal'a (Arabic) Physical abode of the prince; see *dar*, *qasr*.
- qalam A pen made from dried reed, used symbolically for wisdom, education, as well as state officials and the civil branch of government.
- qasr Islamic castle, fortress, large house, or palace.
- qazaqliq (Turkic) Brigandage, vagabondage, nomadic raiding.
- Qizilbash (Turkish) 'Red headed', militant Shia groups in Azerbaijan, Anatolia and Kurdistan, fighting as mercenaries and supporters of the Safavid shahs.
- quriltai Assembly of Mongol chieftains gathered to decide on key political matters including war, diplomacy, succession, justice, and trade.



- ra'aya (Arabic) or re'aya (Turkish) 'Flock', taxpaying commoners in the Ottoman empire, differentiated from the leading group of *'askeri*.
- rasa (Sanskrit) Literally 'juice, essence, taste'. Aesthetic harmony in art evoking emotion in its audience.
- sadr (Arabic) 'Chest', 'foremost', personal title and used to refer to outstanding persons. Later for the head of the government-appointed religious establishment.
- sanjaq Banner, flag. A military unit in the Mongol Empire, later also referring to land given in appanage.
- sankin kotai 'Alternate attendance', referring to the regulated residence of *daimyo* in Tokugawa Edo.
- saraparda (Persian) 'Palace made of cloth', cloth enclosure, curtain, palace.
- saray (Persian) House, palace, inn, also name given by the Jochid khans to their capitals.
- sayf (Arabic) Sword, also referring to the military side of government.
- shari'a (Arabic) Islamic holy law.
- shaykh al-Islam (Arabic) or shaykh ul-Islam (Turkish) Originally a honorific title for excellent Islamic scholars, later used in the Ottoman Empire as a title for the Grand Mufti, the most important religious scholar.
- shi Chinese scholar-official, literati appointed by the emperor.
- shogun Military commander or general; title of leading governors of Japan since 1192, most notably the Tokugawa dynasty.
- sipahi (Persian) Horseman; Ottoman household cavalry corps.
- strel'tsy (Russian) 'Shooters', Russian standing army of infantry armed with firearms.
- telhis Written reports summarising important matters for the Ottoman sultan, a form of written communication between grand vizier and sultan.
- tenno 'Heavenly sovereign', title for the emperor of Japan. See also *kotei*.
- tianzi Son of heaven, the Chinese imperial title.
- timar 'Care, attention', a land grant meant to sustain an Ottoman cavalry army.
- tümen or tumen (Turkic, Mongolian) 'Unit of ten-thousand', army unit of 10,000 soldiers, also used to refer to an administrative region.
- 'ulama' (Arabic) Muslim legal scholars.
- ulus (Mongol) 'Felt tent', community of the realm, a political community formed by the state. Also used for the four Chinggisid successor empires.
- valide sultan 'Mother sultan', the queen mother of a ruling sultan in the Ottoman empire.
- votchina (Russian) Hereditary estates.
- wai (Chinese) Outer.
- waqf (Arabic) Islamic term for pious foundations.
- wazir (Arabic) Vizier or chief minister.
- wen (Chinese) Civil realm of government, see also *wu*.
- wu (Chinese) Military realm of government, see also *wen*.

yamen The office or residence of a Chinese magistrate.

yarlik Decrees of the khan in the Mongol Empire; edicts, title and land deeds.

yasa Mongolian body of laws initiated by Chinggis Khan.

zamindar Local hereditary elite in the Mughal empire.

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