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Rivalry of the Descendants of Chinggis Khan and His Brother Khasar as a Factor in Mongolian History

Abstract

Relations between Chinggis Khan and his younger brother Khasar were somewhat strained at times. In accordance with Mongolian tradition Chinggis Khan's brothers and their descendants were allotted lands in the eastern part of the Mongolian Plateau. This fact became a crucial point in the early seventeenth century when descendants of Khasar turned rather to the resurging Manchu state than to the last Mongolian ruler Ligdan Khan. At that time another famous Khasar's descendant Gushi Khan crushed the remaining supporters of Ligdan Khan in the Qinghai area and established the paramountcy of the Gelugpa school in Tibet with his military forces. Owing to continuous intermarriages with Manchu Qing emperors Khasar's descendants became closely linked to the ruling dynasty during its entire reign.

Keywords: Mongolia, Chingis Khan, Khasar, Mongolian Empire, Manchus, history

Relations between the world conqueror Chinggis Khan and his brothers and other relatives were somewhat strained at times. This is also true about his relations with Khasar (also styled as Jochi Khasar, Khabutu Khasar; ca. 1164–1227), his younger brother. They both were sons of Yisugei Bagatur and Ogelun Uijung; they both killed their half-brother Bekter in their childhood. Khasar participated in many small and major military campaigns waged by his elder brother and became famous for his marksmanship. Cases of discord between the two brothers were vividly described in the “Secret History of the Mongols” (Mong. *Niyuča tobčiyān*; Chin. *Yuan chao mi shi* 元朝秘史).

The land, people and resources of Mongolia and later of the Mongolian Empire were regarded as being the common property of all the Chinggis Khan's family. This was

an unchangeable political principle of the Mongol state. Already at the early stages of his conquests Chinggis Khan allotted lands and people to his relatives and the highest military chieftains. His brothers and their descendants were allotted lands in the eastern part of the Mongolian Plateau along both sides of the Great Hinggan Range.¹ For the time being, his youngest son Tolui inherited the lands in central Mongolia while his elder sons had their appanages far to the west of the Altai Mountains.

The collapse of the Mongol rule in China in 1368 led to the Western Mongol Oirat hegemony in the first half of the fifteenth century. Under the Oirat pressure some of the Mongols who were under the rule of Khasar's descendants migrated even further to the East – the area of the River Nonni 嫩江. They became neighbours of the Jurched – the descendants of the Jin 金 dynasty, which was crushed by the Mongols in 1234. At the end of the sixteenth century the Jurched² tribes were unified by their able chieftain Nurhachi (b. 1558; r. 1616–1626). At the same time, the last Mongolian great Khan, Ligdan Hutugtu Khan (r. 1604–1634) made an attempt to unify a rather loose confederation of the Mongols and to establish a nomadic empire. This led to a conflict with the resurging power of the Jurched and with Mongolian local rulers as well. The eastern Mongol rulers soon turned to Nurhachi and not to Ligdan Khan. The Mongolian *aimags* which were ruled by hereditary rulers, descendants of Khasar were: Khorchin, Jalayid, Dorbed, Gorlos, Muumingan, Durben-Khukhed, Aru-Khorchin and Urad. The largest of them was Khorchin called the “state” (Mong. *ulus* or *tïmen*, Chin. *guo* 國). In 1624 Khorchin ruler Uuba swore an oath of allegiance to Nurhachi. This led to a punitive expedition by Ligdan Khan which was repelled with the assistance of the army sent by Nurhachi. Within a few years all Mongolian tribes which were ruled by the descendants of Khasar accepted the suzerainty of Jurched rulers.³ In 1632 Nurhachi's heir Hong Taiji (r. 1627–1643) launched a massive military campaign against Ligdan Khan. In this campaign he was assisted by his eastern Mongolian allies with their military units. Ligdan Khan retreated to Kukunor (Qinghai 青海) and died of smallpox in 1634.⁴

The Manchus regarded establishing dynastic marriages as being very instrumental for gaining loyalty of their Mongol allies and subjects. During the formative stage of the Manchu dynasty intermarriages between the eastern Mongol and Manchu ruling clans were widespread.

Genealogy of Khasar's Descendants (a fragment)
Khabutu Khasar

15 th generation	Buyandara	
16 th generation	Ceceg	Namsai
17 th generation	Ongodai	Mangus
18 th generation	Uuba (d. 1632)	Jayisang
19 th generation		Manjushiri

¹ Qurča 2001: 12–13.

² The ethnic name “Manchu” was introduced in 1635.

³ Yermachenko 1974: 23–45.

⁴ Heissig 1979: 23–40.

A daughter of Mangus, named Jere (1599–1649) was Hong Taiji's empress. She gave birth to three daughters – one of whom, Makata, was married to the elder son of Ligdan Khan. Another daughter of Mangus was married to Dorgon (1613–1650), the mighty regent during Shunzhi 順治 Emperor's infancy. A daughter of Jayisang named Bumbutai (1613–1688) was Hong Taiji's concubine and gave birth to his ninth son Fulin 福臨 who later became Shunzhi Emperor (r. 1644–1661). She was given the title of Xiao zhuang Wen huanghou 孝莊文皇后.⁵

Intermarriages between the ruling Manchu family and the Mongol nobility, especially the descendants of Khasar, continued until the very end of the dynasty.⁶ Qianlong 乾隆 Emperor (r. 1735–1795) while travelling through Khorchin ayimag composed verses which began with the following words:

Though this northern land is said to be a distant one
It has been linked to the Golden Clan since old days.⁷

Another faction of Khasar's descendants became hereditary rulers of the Oirat tribe of the Hoshot. They were captured and moved to the West in the middle of the fifteenth century – in the days of the Oirat domination. However, with the decline in power of the Choros tribe they became a dominating force among the Oirats. The rulers of the Hoshots were the only ones among the Oirat nobility who belonged to Borjigid clan.⁸ In the first part of the seventeenth century their able leader Gushi Khan (1582–1655) who was a seventeenth generation descendant of Khasar managed to subjugate the whole of Tibet and Kukunor.

Thus Gushi Khan was a relative of the Manchu rulers and descended from the same famous progenitor. The vital role of genealogical ties is basic in the polity of nomadic societies such as those of the Mongols and the early Manchus, and the importance of this fact should not be underestimated.

Also, Gushi Khan was an ally of the Manchus in their fight against the Mongol supporters of Ligdan Khan. The most powerful of them was Chogtu Khungtaiji (1581–1637), a mighty chieftain from Khalkha Mongolia who moved to the Kokonor area but failed to join Ligdan Khan because of the latter's death. Gushi Khan moved his armies to Kokonor and defeated Chogtu Khungtaiji in a decisive battle in 1637.⁹

In this way the Manchus with their eastern Mongol allies and the Hoshot Mongols led by Gushi Khan defeated the last Mongolian Great Khan Ligdan and his potential supporters. After this the Manchus turned their further conquests to China proper and

⁵ Hummel 1943, vol. 1: 300–301; Veit 1990, Teil I: 18–19.

⁶ Jagchid 1984.

⁷ Jang Mu 1988, vol. 1: 10–11. By the “Golden Clan” (Aisin Gioro in Manchu) here is meant the Manchu imperial clan.

⁸ Okada 1987: 203–207; Qurča 2001: 103–113.

⁹ Ho-Chin Yang 1969: 36–37.

Gushi Khan directed his attention to Central Tibet. Eastern Mongolian rulers were active in the military campaign in China in 1644 and afterwards.

It should not be regarded as an exaggeration that in the seventeenth century the descendants of Khasar reached their utmost might and glory. The most famous descendant of Khasar in the late Qing period was Senge Rinchin (1811–1865), a Khorchin prince. He was one of the powerful military commanders during the Taiping Rebellion and the Second Opium War. When he was killed in an ambush while suppressing rebels in the Shandong province, a tablet with his name was installed in the Imperial Ancestral Temple.¹⁰

Khasar was much glorified in the traditional Mongolian historiography, especially in the works written by the authors who originated from Mongolian *aimags* ruled by his descendants. “Altan tobči” by Mergen Gegen or “Bolor toli” by Jambaldorji may serve as examples of such works. Khasar “replaced” his elder brother Chinggis Khan in many glorious episodes of the ancient Mongolian history described in these chronicles.¹¹ The close relationship between the Manchu ruling house and the descendants of Khasar even found its indirect reflection in the imperially commissioned voluminous collection of biographies of the Mongol princes commonly known under its shortened Mongolian title “Iledkel šastir.” It begins with the genealogy of the Khorchin princes thus speaking about their distant progenitor Khasar prior to his elder brother.¹²

The territorial neighbourhood between the Manchus and the Eastern Mongols who were ruled by the descendants of Khasar turned out to be a crucial point in the emergence of the Qing empire. Also it was his descendants who almost simultaneously changed the history of Tibet. This affirms the fact that the genealogical factor is not to be neglected in the studies of Asian history.

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¹⁰ Hummel 1943, vol. 2: 632–634.

¹¹ Tsendina 2007: 57–67.

¹² Veit 1990: 92–93.

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