Mongols in Mamluk eyes

Representing ethnic others in the medieval Middle East

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2. Sunrays and a lion's den: Origin stories of the Mongols in Mamluk texts

Relatively little is known about the history of the Mongols before the rise of Chinggis Khan. The first signs of a Mongol people that we can connect to the 'Mongols' as we know them, can be found during the Khitan regime in China, which was founded in the tenth century and which extended farther into Mongolia than any of the various Chinese empires before that.[1] Sources for this early period are rare, and the only extant roughly contemporary Mongol source discussing this period is the thirteenth-century[2] *Secret History of the Mongols* (Mongqol-un niucha tobcha'an),[3] which relates the Mongol origins and the rise of Chinggis Khan according to Mongol tradition. According to the *Secret History*, it was on the mountain of Burqan Qaldun that the Mongols first originated, out of the union between a wolf and a doe. In time, Chinggis Khan would be born from this lineage and come to rule the steppes.

Such ancestry myths play an important role for ethnic communities: in his argument for an ethnosymbolic account for the formation of nations, Anthony D. Smith argued that ethnic communities are largely defined by their ancestry myths,[4] which in combination with shared memories binds the community together. 'The myth of being ancestrally related,' Smith states, 'even if it is purely fictive and ideological in character, endows the members of a community with a powerful sense of belonging.'[5] Other ethnic myths of particular potency are those that tell the tale of a divine election.[6] In the past, some scholars have attempted to use such texts to unveil the supposed actual origins of a specific people, or their presumed folk traditions. Over the years, this approach has given way to a new one, which studies origin myths in the context of their authors' notions of their own societies.[7] In this approach, questioning what narrative a society wants to tell

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[1] Morgan, *The Mongols*, 47.

[2] Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 34. Saunders (*Mongol Conquests*, 193–94) even refers to dates in the fourteenth century.

[3] An English translation is available in de Rachewiltz, *Secret History*.

[4] This is in contrast to nations, which 'are defined by the historic territory they occupy and by their mass, public cultures and common laws. A nation must possess a homeland; an *ethnie* need not (…).' Smith, *The Nation in History*, 65.

[5] Smith, 67. See also Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 59.

[6] Smith, *The Nation in History*, 67.

[7] Patrick J. Geary, *Women at the Beginning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 18–20. See also Walter Pohl, 'Narratives of Origin and Migration in Early Medieval Europe: Problems of Interpretation', *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018): 198–200.

at a certain moment in time, two key characteristics of these stories come to the fore: their dynamism and their flexibility. Not only can narratives change in response to altered circumstances,[8] they can be used in different ways as well. These qualities are distinctly visible in origin stories of the Mongols as told, and reflected upon, by Mamluk-era authors. This applies to the Mamluk references to the Mongols' own origin story as well as to the outsider origin story as recounted by Ibn al-Dawādārī, both of which I discuss in this chapter, in order to show how authors actively engaged with these stories in order to broadcast their own messages about the Mongols.

The literary genre of myths describing the origin and descent of peoples is commonly referred to as *origo gentis*. Such stories appear in a variety of sources, from world histories to administrative texts.[9] They usually begin in a mythical past. As Walter Pohl and Daniel Mahoney point out, these narratives often contain two 'divides': the first is the passage from the divine, supernatural, mythological to the humans of legend. The second is the move from 'legendary narratives set in elusive times and spaces, ordered by genealogy or single events, to history, which evolves in recognisable time frames and topographies, linked to other known events.'[10] In this manner, the people of the present are connected to their perceived origins in the past.

Analytical work on this genre in the premodern period has so far been conducted primarily by medievalists focusing on Europe,[11] with relatively little attention having been paid to the patterns and circulation of such stories elsewhere, including in the premodern Islamic world. The recent publication of a special issue of *The Medieval History Journal* entitled 'Narratives of Ethnic Origins: Eurasian Perspectives' (2018) is therefore a very welcome addition to the corpus of research into origin myths. Containing studies on traditions from vastly different parts of Eurasia (medieval Europe and the Mediterranean, South Arabia, Tibet and the Central Asian steppes), it allows for the discovery of parallels and recurring elements, as well as bringing differences and local characteristics to the fore.

For the medieval European *origo gentis*, Herwig Wolfram has described the typical structure of the narrative as one of a small band of people who have to leave their homeland, because it could not sustain them. Under heavenly auspices, they migrate in search of a new home. Then follows the primordial event or deed (*fait primordial*): crossing a sea or river, or victorious battles against almighty opponents, or a combination of those two. The primordial deed is followed

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[8] Some fascinating examples of such changes in oral cultures can be found in Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London: James Currey; Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1985), pass., e.g. 118-19, 176-77.

[9] Geary, *Women at the Beginning*, 18–19.

[10] Pohl, 'Narratives', 206.

[11] The works of, and debates between – to name but a few – Walter Pohl, Herwig Wolfram, Walter Goffart, Patrick Geary, Alheydis Plassmann, and Shami Ghosh come to mind.

by a change in religion or worship, and if the primordial deed is a battle against an enemy, this enemy remains the primary enemy of the group.[12] A descent myth of the ruling family, frequently as descendants of eponymous heroes or gods, is also a fundamental element of the medieval European *origo gentis* genre.[13] An analysis of this sort for the stories circulating in the premodern Islamic world remains a desideratum, but the relatively advanced research into European origin stories, when used critically and keeping local traditions and contexts in mind, does provide some helpful analytical tools for the study of other such narratives, including ones about the Mongols.

An important element of these myths that has received more attention in scholarship on Europe in recent years, is their political use of legitimising rulers or justifying territorial claims. They may, for instance, relate how a group of migrants, led by a king, conquered the land – normally defined as the contemporary political unit.[14] Their dynamism and flexibility allow these stories, even though they might well reflect older ideas and traditions, to reflect how people in a certain period wanted to see their past – or in the words of Patrick Geary: 'one can see their authors imagining the past in terms of the present'.[15] This is of course not the exclusive preserve of European origin stories. Quite the contrary: the first paragraph of the Mongol *Secret History*, for instance, shows this mechanism in full force. Although the beginning of the story relates the mythical origins of the Mongols from a wolf and a doe, containing older traditions, it actually opens with the line 'The origins of Činggis Qa'an',[16] thereby firmly placing it in a context of contemporary, thirteenth-century political concerns.

These *origines gentium*, however, are not only told by members of the group around whom the origin story revolves. They may also be related by outsiders reporting on another group, as people were also interested in the origin stories of others. This could be out out of simple curiosity about other peoples, but they could also serve to define and explain this other, and/or to establish

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[12] Herwig Wolfram, 'Le genre de l'Origo gentis', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 68, no. 4 (1990): 800–801. See also Herwig Wolfram, 'Origo et Religio. Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts', *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994): 35–36.

[13] Alan V. Murray, 'Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States: The Frankish Race and the Settlement of Outremer', in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 1995), 66.

[14] Reynolds, 'Medieval Origines Gentium', 378–90; Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 258–59; Murray, 'Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States', 66–67. For a non-European example of this mechanism, see Daniel Mahoney, 'Writing the Ethnic Origins of the Rasulids in Late Medieval South Arabia', *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018): 380–99.

[15] Geary, *Women at the Beginning*, 20. See also Alan V. Murray, 'William of Tyre and the Origin of the Turks: Observations on Possible Sources of the *Gesta orientalium principum*', in *Dei Gesta per Francos. Etudes Sur Les Croisades Dédiées à Jean Richard*, ed. Michel Balard, Benjamin Z. Kedar, and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 227.

[16] de Rachewiltz, *Secret History*, I:1.

their own identity. Often, these stories told about outsiders did not agree with the origin stories related by the people in question themselves.[17] A good example of this is William of Tyre's (*c*. 1130-84/86) origin story of the Turks. Writing in the Crusader states, where he was repeatedly confronted with Turkish military challenges, he related an origin story for them under the heading 'De ortu et prima origine gentis Turcorum' (Concerning the source and the first origin of the Turkish race). The account describes how the Turks initially lived in the north where they were pastoral nomads, but that a group of them moved into Persia.[18] There they paid tribute to the Persian king, but eventually – under pressure of the ruler – departed and crossed the river Cobar[19] on their way: the 'primordial deed'. They then also elected a king, 'like other peoples', after which they crossed the river again and conquered Persia.[20]

William of Tyre relates this story, saying

> [S]ince even to the present day they persist in ruthlessly attacking us, it does not seem inconsistent with the present work to insert some account of the rise and early history of this race and to tell of their progress toward that stage of excellence which, according to the accounts, they have for many years maintained.[21]

By his own testimony, William of Tyre's contemporary concerns prompted him to include this origin story, using it to explain their rise to power in the Middle East. He did so, as Alan V. Murray has pointed out, by using existing European traditions, resulting in a narrative that through biblical references opposes the Turks to the Franks in the Holy Land, who could be seen as the new Israelites.[22]

Thus, the presentation of such stories could be triggered by challenges posed by heretofore little-known peoples. Where William of Tyre was concerned about the Turks (who did indeed make

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[17] This was also the case in ancient Greece, see Elias J. Bickerman, 'Origines Gentium', *Classical Philology* 47, no. 2 (1952): 65–81.

[18] One of the surviving manuscripts contains an extra sentence, relating that the Turks arrived in the north after fleeing following the fall of Troy, when they were led by a certain Turcus, after whom they were named. See Murray, 'William of Tyre', 221–22. For more on Trojan descent in European *origines gentium*, see Reynolds, 'Medieval Origines Gentium'; N. Kıvılcım Yavuz, 'From Caesar to Charlemagne: The Tradition of Trojan Origins', *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018): 251–90.

[19] On this biblically named river, see Murray, 'William of Tyre', 225–26.

[20] Murray, 'Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States', 69–70; Murray, 'William of Tyre', 220–21.

[21] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey, vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 71–72.

[22] Murray, 'William of Tyre', 225–29.

up the better part of the forces fighting the Latin Christians in the Crusader states),[23] a century later the people inhabiting the Near East were primarily worried about the Mongols, and wondered where this people came from. Consequently, as I have shown in chapter 1, many Muslim authors attempted to place the Mongols by tracing their descent to Noah's son Japheth and stressing their ethnic affiliation with the Turks. Origin stories could also serve as vehicles of explanation, accounting for characteristics, customs or historical events. This becomes evident in a Mongol origin story Ibn al-Dawādārī included in both of his surviving works, *Kanz al-Durar* and *Durar al-Tījān*. He employed this outsider's story of the Mongol origins and rise to power to explain contemporary aspects of the Mongol phenomenon, including the shared heritage and enmity between the Turks and Mongols.

Other authors, rather than relating an outsider's story about Mongol origins, responded instead to the Mongols' own ideas of their heritage. They incorporated the Mongols' own *origo gentis* – or, at least, a version thereof – into their works, essentially responding to part of the cultural stuff the Mongols held dear. In both approaches – the appropriation of the Mongol story and the presentation of an external one – the dynamism and flexibility with which these stories can be used are evident. This aspect is crucial to the way that Mongol origin stories were communicated and employed in the Mamluk sultanate, with authors using these stories for their own objectives. In this chapter, I will first discuss the use of the Mongols' own story in Mamluk-era texts in general and the ways authors adapted them to contemporary messages and concerns. Then I will turn to the second part of this chapter, which is a discussion and analysis of the story and the images of the Mongols in Ibn al-Dawādārī's work.

The Mongol *origo gentis* in Mamluk-era texts

The Mongols' own, surviving, version of their origin story is found in the *Secret History*. Another Mongol source, probably composed in the latter half of the thirteenth century during the reign of Qubilai, was the *Altan Debter* (The Golden Book). This text has not survived, but appears to have been used by the author of a Chinese text on Chinggis Khan and by the Persian author Rashīd al-Dīn, who was in the service of the Ilkhanids, in his *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*.[24] A very brief summary of the part of the story recorded in the *Secret History* relating what happened to the Mongols before the birth of Chinggis Khan is as follows:

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[23] Murray, 220. Chinese sources similarly show an interest in Ashina-Türk origin stories from the sixth century onward, when they were in regular and close contact with them, see Peter B. Golden, 'The Ethnogonic Tales of the Türks', *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018): 291–327.
[24] Jackson, *Mongols and the West*, 34–35.

On a mountain called Burqan Qaldun, a blue-grey wolf and a fallow doe settled and from them the first human ancestor of Chinggis Khan was born, Batachiqan. One of his descendants, Dobun Mergen, married a girl named Alan Qo'a – whose band of people had been spotted by his brother, the cyclops Du'a Soqor, who had superior sight. Dobun Mergen and Alan Qo'a had two sons when Dobun Mergen died, but after his death Alan Qo'a had three more sons. The two sons she had before widowhood criticised their mother behind her back, and suggested that their three brothers were the offspring of a male servant. Alan Qo'a was well aware of their talk, and one day she sat all five of her sons down, and handed them each an arrow. She ordered them to break them, which they did. 'Then she tied five arrow-shafts into a bundle and gave it to them saying, "Break it!" The five sons each took the five bound arrow-shafts in turn, but they were unable to break them.' She warned them that the arrow-shafts were like the boys: if they were to keep to themselves, they would all be easily broken, but '[i]f, like the bound arrow-shafts, you remain together and of one mind, how can anyone deal with you so easily?' She also explained the conception of the younger sons, following their criticism of their mothers' pregnancy out of wedlock, stating the three were the sons of Heaven: 'Every night, a resplendent yellow man entered by the light of the smoke-hole or the door top of the tent, he rubbed my belly and his radiance penetrated my womb. When he departed, he crept out on a moonbeam or a ray of sun in the guise of a yellow dog.' These five brothers became the ancestors of the various Mongol clans, and it was in the line of Bodonchar Mungqaq, one of the three younger sons, that Temüjin was born ten generations later.[25]

This story of Alan Qo'a takes up an important place in Mongol historical tradition,[26] making it a relevant part of their cultural stuff, and it continued to do so even after the Mongol conversion to Islam. Denise Aigle has shown how it was adapted to new political and religious realities in the Timurid empire and in Mughal India,[27] demonstrating again how adaptable such stories can be. This dynamism of the story and the flexibility of its use is also visible in the various Mamluk-era texts in which traces of this story of the Mongol's origin myth are present.

One author in whose work such an echo is present is al-'Umarī, who was born on 3 Shawwāl 700/11 June 1301 in Damascus into the Banū Faḍl Allāh, a well-known family of civil servants.[28] He worked in Cairo in the service of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, but was imprisoned following several

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[25] de Rachewiltz, I:1–12. The direct quotations derive from pp. 4–5.

[26] de Rachewiltz, I:244.

[27] Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 121–33. Her analysis is a great example of the desideratum expressed by Walter Pohl and Daniel Mahoney ('Editorial: Narratives of Ethnic Origins: Eurasian Perspectives', *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018): 187–91) in their introduction to the *TMHJ* special issue – research into the ways in which contemporary interest lead to rewriting and competing versions – as well as of the ways in which religious convictions influence narratives over time.

[28] Lech, *Das mongolische Weltreich*, 13.

altercations with the sultan. After a short stint, from 741/1340 to 743/1342, in the Damascus chancery he was again dismissed, and after that directed his energies towards his scholarly work, before dying of the plague in 749/1349. One of his two major works, the other being an chancery manual, is the encyclopaedic *Masālik al-Abṣār*, which not only addressed matters of administration and politics, but also discussed a topics from literature to history and from geography to law.[29] Consequently, in this work, he also covered various aspects of the Mongol phenomenon.[30] His discussion of the Mongol khanates combines geography (cities, rivers, countryside), ethnography (characteristics of the inhabitants, their occupations, etc.), practicalities (coinage), and the history of the ruling families. His information comes partially from eye witnesses, giving interesting insights in the ins and outs of Ilkhanid rule as perceived by traders and former inhabitants of the region.[31] For this section, al-ʿUmarī drew, among others, on ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭā Malik Juvaynī's (623-81/1226-83) history of Chinggis Khan, *Tarīkh-i Jahān'gushā* (History of the World Conqueror), which he wrote while in service to the Ilkhanid crown.[32] It is likely, as I will show below, that he was also familiar with Rashīd al-Dīn and made use of the latter's *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*, from where he derived the story of Alan Qo'a.

Al-ʿUmarī states that he will relate the lineage of the Mongols 'until we arrive at Chinggis Khan'. Chingghis' origins, he says, go back to 'Ālān Quwā', i.e. Alan Qo'a, who was married and had two sons. After her husband's death, Alan Qo'a did not remarry but she did get pregnant, for which she was chastised. Al-ʿUmarī relates:

> She was taken to the one who judged among them to look at her case, and he asked her who got her pregnant. She said: 'No one. I was just sitting with my vulva (*farjī*) uncovered and a light came down and entered my vulva three times. This pregnancy came from that and I am carrying three boys because the light went in with a boy each time. Grant me respite until I deliver and if I deliver three boys, you will know the truth of my words. If not, your opinion is on me [i.e. do with me what you will].'[33]

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[29] Lech, 13–14; Salibi, 'Ibn Faḍl Allāh Al-ʿUmarī'.

[30] See also Lech, *Das mongolische Weltreich*, 42–60.

[31] See Lech, 18–21, 29–41.

[32] For Juvaynī's writing on the Mongols, see for instance Morgan, 'Persian Perceptions', 204–6. For his career under the Ilkhanids, see for instance Gilli-Elewy, 'Baghdad between Cairo and Tabriz', 343–48.

[33] al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār*, III:100 (ed. Lech, *Das mongolische Weltreich*, ٢-٣/92). The word *farjī* could also mean an opening in her tent (see Aigle's translation, *The Mongol Empire*, 127), but in this context the reading 'vulva' appears more plausible. See also Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. I (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 2359–60. Cf. al-Ṣafadī below.

She indeed gave birth to three sons, one of which, Būdhunjar (Bodonchar), was the ancestor of Chinggis Khan, the text states.

Al-ʿUmarī's account echoes the Mongols' own *Secret History*, but has even clearer parallels to Alan Qoʾa's story as it was related in the *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*. This text similarly has Alan Qoʾa falling pregnant out of wedlock. In Rashīd al-Dīn's version, the suspicious sons from the *Secret History* asking about the father of their younger brothers are replaced by family members asking about the pregnancy. In *Masālik al-Abṣār* it is also clearly a broader group of family or clan members questioning Alan Qoʾa's pregnancy. Moreover, in her reply to the criticism and suspicions aimed at her, she alludes to a point in the future at which the accusers will be proven wrong (the boys becoming kings and the triplets being born as she predicts, respectively).[34] Another reason to infer al-ʿUmarī's reliance on Rashīd al-Dīn is the fact that he mentions, immediately after this story, that the three sons are called the *nūrāniyyūn*, after the light that impregnated their mother. The *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh* similarly continues by stating that the offspring of these boys are referred to as the 'Niruʾun', as 'a reference to Alan Qoʾa's pure womb'.[35] Rashīd al-Dīn, who was after all writing in the service of the Ilkhanate and using textual and oral sources provided by them, describes Alan Qoʾa as 'extremely chaste', although he also says that it is a very strange story, and that 'the responsibility is his who related it'.[36]

The dynamism of the Mongol *origo gentis* is apparent in the version given by Rashīd al-Dīn. For one, he presents the wolf and doe as humans, thereby ridding himself of the shamanistic background of the story.[37] Moreover, his version of the story – with an unwed pregnant woman defending herself against her family against charges of adultery – echoes Q 19:27-29, in which Maryam defends herself and her new-born against accusations made by her family.[38] Rashīd al-Dīn relates the story with little reservation, even repeatedly praising Alan Qoʾa's chastity, his only precaution being his statement that the ultimate responsibility lies with the person who told the story. Other than that, he gives a version of the story that is fairly close to the Mongol original,

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[34] See also Lech (*Das mongolische Weltreich*, 174–75), who includes several references to similar passages in Rashīd al-Dīn here, although he also states that al-ʿUmarī 'almost carelessly passes by' a number of earlier sources, including Rashīd al-Dīn's work. Lech wonders whether al-ʿUmarī deliberately set this material aside, or whether he did not have access to it (17). As I have argued here, it would appear that he did, in one way or another, have access to the *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh* and used it.

[35] Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, *Jamiʿuʾt-Tawarikh*, I:117.

[36] Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, I:115–17. See also Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 127.

[37] Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 126.

[38] Q 19:27: She went back to her people carrying the child, and they said, 'Mary! You have done something terrible! (28) Sister of Aaron! Your father was not an evil man; your mother was not unchaste!' (29) She pointed at him. They said, 'How can we converse with an infant?' Translation: Abdel Haleem.

although it is noteworthy that there are some clear parallels between his account of Alan Qo'a's immaculate pregnancy and that of Maryam in the Qur'an that not found in the *Secret History*. Possibly, these derive from his own religious background and/or from the wish to make the story relatable and palatable for a Muslim, non-Mongol audience. In Rashīd al-Dīn's approach, the first traces of the later Islamisation of the story, as detailed by Aigle, are already visible, more so than she appears to recognise.[39]

Although Aigle appears to group Rashīd al-Dīn and al-ʿUmarī together, stating that they 'leave room to some doubt concerning the legitimacy of Budhunjar's birth',[40] al-ʿUmarī has a vastly different view than Rashīd al-Dīn does, despite basing himself on the latter's text. He argues that while the lineage of Chinggis Khan is correct from Alan Qo'a onwards, this part of the story is 'a foul lie and an incorrect rumour'.[41] The woman, al-ʿUmarī says,

> maybe lied to save herself from death, and maybe she heard the story of the chaste Maryam, and had connected the similar pregnancy, so she misled people by something similar to that truth, and forged a lie similar to this truth.[42]

He then includes some poetry to stress his point that even though the stories are similar, that does not mean they are equally true: 'The thing is far from the thing that is similar to it / The sky equals the water in blueness.'[43] Al-ʿUmari thereby discredits the Mongols' own *origo gentis*, and also insinuates that Chinggis Khan's ancestor was born a bastard: a grave insult. While later Timurid and Mughal authors were happy to liken Alan Qo'a to Mary in order to serve their masters' political purposed in a Muslim context, as Aigle has shown, al-ʿUmarī cleverly employs the story against them in a way that his source Rashīd al-Dīn does not.

The story of Alan Qo'a and her dubious immaculate conception was apparently fairly well-known among Mamluk-era authors, although it is mostly reported as being the story of Chinggis Khan's own conception rather than his ancestor's and in some cases the story appears to become a bit muddied. In his *tarjama* of Chinggis Khan, al-Ṣafadī relates that 'the Turks claim (*yazʿumūna*) that he is the son of the sun because they have places in their steppes in which there are low

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[39] Cf. Aigle, *The Mongol Empire*, 127–29.

[40] Aigle, 129. Admittedly, they are closer to one another than they are to the later Timurid and Mughal chroniclers, as she argues, but nonetheless, their respective points of departure and interpretations are very different.

[41] al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār*, III:101 (ed. Lech, *Das mongolische Weltreich*, ٣/92).

[42] al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār*, III:101 (ed. Lech, *Das mongolische Weltreich*, ٣-٤/92). See also Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā fī Sināʿat al-Inshā*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn, vol. IV (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), 310, who quotes him.

[43] al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār*, III:101 (ed. Lech, *Das mongolische Weltreich*, ٤/92).

grounds, and whoever of their women wants to set free her vulva (*iʿtāq farjihā*) goes there'.[44] Among the women that did so was Chinggis Khan's mother, who returned with the new-born boy and said: 'This one is from the sun, because the sun went into my vulva on some days, and I bathed and conceived him.'[45] It is not clear whether al-Ṣafadī was just somewhat poorly informed on the story of Alan Qo'a; whether this version of the story was also circulating; or if he himself took liberties with the story and came up with these steppes where women could 'set free their vulvas'. In any case, this version depicts Chinggis' mother and other Mongol women as promiscuous and their society as acceptant of that – an evident clash with Islamic values. The Mongol origin story is thus used as an othering strategy.

But while al-Ṣafadī is apparently happy to accept the existence of these special steppes, he implicitly shows that he puts little stock into the claim that Chinggis Khan is the son of the sun by his use of the verb *zaʿama* – a root meaning 'to assert' or 'to claim', but which has a connotation of doubt or suspicion.[46] Ibn Kathīr similarly reports that 'his mother claimed (*kānat tazʿuma*) that she fell pregnant with him from sunrays'. Chinggis Khan therefore did not know his father, and is of unknown lineage, the historian states.[47] These two authors evidently do not believe the claim, whether made by the woman herself or the Mongols in general, and the implicit suggestion is that Chinggis Khan is of illegitimate birth, which is obviously demeaning. Like al-ʿUmarī, Ibn Taymiyya is explicit in his disparagement of the Mongol story. In one of his fatwas against the Mongols (see chapter 3) he wrote that anyone 'who has a religion' knows that the story of the sun-induced pregnancy is a lie. The story, he states, 'is evidence that he was a bastard (*walad zinā*), and that his mother committed adultery and concealed it'.[48]

The Mongols' own *origo gentis* was thus adopted and adapted in the Islamic world to serve changing needs in different situations. The story of Alan Qo'a formed an important part of the Mongol myth, explaining how they were ancestrally related – an important element of binding a community together, as Smith and others have argued. However, this narrative acquired new meaning in the Muslim world. While Rashīd al-Dīn, employed by the Ilkhanids, was carefully

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[44] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnāʾūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā, vol. XI (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000), 154. Al-Ṣafadī likely means to refer to the Mongols here when using the term 'Turks'.

[45] al-Ṣafadī, XI:154.

[46] Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, I:1238.

[47] Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, XIII:117. See also al-ʿAynī, *Al-Sayf al-Muhannad*, 180, who based himself on Ibn Kathīr in his discussion of the history of the Mongols here.

[48] Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ Fatāwā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān bin Muḥammad bin Qāsim, [Photomechanical reprint of 1961-1967 edition], vol. XXVIII (Riyadh: Wizārat al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya wa-l-Awqāf wa-l-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshād, 1995), 521.

supportive and took a small step towards placing it in an Islamic frame by his echoing of Q 19:27-29, the authors of the Mamluk sultanate elected to take a very different approach. Al-ʿUmarī also immediately recognised the analogy with the story of Maryam, but he saw the connection in a decidedly different light. Suggesting that Alan Qoʾa was inspired by what happened to Maryam and used that to save herself from being persecuted for fornication, he calls the claim a 'foul lie'. The same approach appears in the fatwa of Ibn Taymiyya, which was firmly anti-Mongol, although in his text it is Chinggis Khan himself rather than his ancestor who is born as 'the son of adultery'. The Mongols' great leader's lineage is thus muddied, especially by those versions of the story who present his mother as the adulteress.

      The story of Alan Qoʾa was important to the Mongols, and Mamluk-era authors cleverly used it in an othering strategy, by emphasising the way it contrasted their own, Islamic values. Where the later Timurid and Mughal authors would present the story in a thoroughly Islamic light and in some cases even adapt it to include more Islamic elements,[49] al-ʿUmarī, al-Ṣafadī, Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Taymiyya do the opposite. In this manner, they made use of the flexibility of origin stories by employing the Mongols' own *origo gentis* as ammunition to discredit them. The criticism of the Mongol ancestral myth reflects on them as a people – both their belief in the sun-induced pregnancy and because of the harlotry that is allegedly at the basis of their leader's ancestry. The strategy of othering the Mongols as a people, rather than just criticising Chinggis Khan, by means of this story reaches its apex in al-Ṣafadī's *tarjama*, in which it is adapted in a way that includes all Mongol women in un-Islamic, promiscuous behaviour.

The Mongols' origin in the work of Ibn al-Dawādārī

Origines gentium were used as legitimising ideology and for other political means by societal leaders in medieval Europe, and the origin story of the Mongols fulfilled a similar role in the Mongol successor khanates.[50] But, as I pointed out above, *origines gentium* were not only written about the own group, but were also frequently told about outsiders. Mamluk-era origin stories on the Mongols are, however, uncommon – apart from the ones reflecting on the Alan Qoʾa story from the *Secret History* discussed above, and those authors are primarily interested in its relation to Chinggis Khan and/or in what the Mongol belief in this story says about the latter. One story, however, does relate the story of the Mongols and the rise of Chinggis Khan, as well as the causes for their world

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[49] Aigle (*The Mongol Empire*, 122–23) describes the introduction of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in some versions in tomb inscriptions.

[50] de Rachewiltz, *Secret History*, I:lxix–lxx.

conquest in the form of an *origo gentis*. As is often the case, this outsiders' *origo gentis* is very different from the Mongols' own narrative.

This story can be found in the work of Ibn al-Dawādārī. He himself already noted that most of his fellow historians only began their descriptions of Mongol history with Chinggis Khan. As he wrote: 'I have not found any mention of their first origin. The rest of the historians begin with the recollection of Chingghis Khan Timurjī, and do not transcend that.'[51] Pioneering work on this origin story was done by Ulrich Haarmann, who first described its contents and placed it in a context of Turkish cultural influences on *adab* literature in the Mamluk sultanate.[52] There are, however, many more elements in this narrative that are worthy of analysis. Elsewhere, I have examined in detail the way in which this *origo gentis* reveals the contemporary concerns of its author and intended public by 'foretelling' later historical developments, as well as offering explanations for various aspects of Mongol history and customs. There I also discuss how the narrative incorporates elements from other accounts of the Mongols' history, again underlining the flexibility and adaptability of origin stories.[53] In this chapter, however, I will focus on how the story as rendered by Ibn al-Dawādārī depicts the Mongols themselves and why.

Ibn al-Dawādārī was quite a productive writer, although only two of his works survive: the extensive universal chronicle *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmiʿ al-Ghurar* and the smaller, one-volume chronicle *Durar al-Tījān wa-Ghurar Tawārīkh al-Azmān*.[54] In his introduction to *Durar al-Tījān*, Al-Dawādārī states that he began collecting information in 709 AH (1309-10 CE), that he began writing *Durar al-Tījān* in Ṣafar 731 (November/December 1330) and that he finished the work in Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 732 (January 1332).[55] *Kanz al-Durar* was finished later, as it contains reports until 735/1335. Much of the content of *Durar al-Tījān* corresponds to that of *Kanz al-Durar*, but it is not

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[51] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:224.
[52] Ulrich Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān und Čingiz Ḫān bei den ägyptischen Mamluken', *Der Islam; Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients* 51 (1974): 1–36; Ulrich Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt', in *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Visby 13-16 August, Stockholm 17-19 August, 1972*, ed. Frithiof Rundgren (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 97–107; Ulrich Haarmann, 'Quellen zur Geschichte des islamischen Ägyptens', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 38 (1982): 201–10; Haarmann, 'Arabic in Speech'; Ulrich Haarmann, '"Großer Vater Mond" und "Schwarzer Löwenjunge" - eine mongolisch-kiptschakische Ursprungssage in arabischer Überlieferung', in *Die Mongolen in Asien und Europa*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Jan Kusber (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997); Haarmann, 'Mongols and Mamluks'. The Mongol *origo gentis* is preceded by a Turkish origin story, which is equally fascinating, but which I will leave out of consideration here. An English translation of this Turkish section can be found in Frenkel, *The Turkic Peoples*, 60–66.
[53] Josephine van den Bent, "Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts: An *origo gentis* in Ibn al-Dawādārī's *Durar al-Tijān* and *Kanz al-Durar*," *Mamlūk Studies Review*, forthcoming.
[54] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 9–11; Graf, *Epitome*, 11.
[55] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٠.

simply an abridgement; it contains material not found in the longer chronicle.[56] As I show below, the, at times quite small, differences between the two texts shed light on Ibn al-Dawādārī's own input into the Mongol origin story and the message he intended to send by it.

Ibn al-Dawādārī was one of the *awlād al-nās*, descendants of the Mamluk ruling elite: both his parents were of Turkish descent, and his father ʿAbd Allāh had served the amir Sayf al-Dīn Balban al-Rūmī al-Dawādār and hence gained the *nisba* 'al-Dawādārī', which then passed on to his son.[57] Ibn al-Dawādārī thus was related to the military elite (including, by marriage, to sultan Lajin [r. 696-8/1296-8/9])[58] and intimately familiar with Turkish tradition, but was at the same time born and raised in an Arabic cultural environment. Haarmann has argued that this background influenced Ibn al-Dawādārī in the way he included Central Asian tradition in his works – traditions that are absent in the work of his Arab contemporaries.[59] Haarmann points to his transcriptions and translations of Turkish names and appellatives given by Ibn al-Dawādārī and sees him as a witness to the beginning use of Turkish themes, motifs and *topoi* in Arabic historical writing in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[60]

Ibn al-Dawādārī is also a good example of a historian who included more *adab* material in his work than was customary in the historiography of the time.[61] One of the topics on which he included such elements, and in which his Turkish background also comes into play, was his interest in other peoples and their origin stories. These include several of the Kurds,[62] and of course the Turkish-Mongol origin story, in the introduction to which he also briefly mentions a story about another group of Turks.[63] The Turkish-Mongol story consists of three parts, forming a triptych of sorts: first the mythological origin of the Turks is discussed, followed by that of the Mongols, with the third part connecting the two peoples and relating the rise of Chinggis Khan.[64] Although the

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[56] Graf, *Epitome*, 96; Haarmann, 'Quellen zur Geschichte des islamischen Ägyptens', 203–4. See Haarmann (204) for a list of the most significant passages that either add to or differ from the corresponding passages in *Kanz al-Durar*.

[57] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, 9; Hans Robert Roemer, 'Einleitung', in *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmiʿ al-Ghurar*, by Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aybak Ibn al-Dawādārī, vol. IX (Cairo: Sāmī al-Khānjī, 1960), 16–17; Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 7–9; Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 99; Haarmann, 'Arabic in Speech', 110–11.

[58] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 33; Haarmann, 'Quellen zur Geschichte des islamischen Ägyptens', 204.

[59] Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 99; Haarmann, 'Großer Vater Mond', 123.

[60] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 32–33; Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 99–100, 105.

[61] Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 105–6; Haarmann, 'Quellen zur Geschichte des islamischen Ägyptens', 206.

[62] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 12–13; Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 100–101.

[63] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥٥-٥٦. See also Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 14–16; Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 101–2.

[64] In *Kanz al-Durar*, the beginning of the third part of the story is indicated by a chapter heading that reads 'Recollection of the cause of the defeat by the Tatars of the king Alṭun Khān and what there was in war tricks' (VII:232). See also Haarmann, 'Großer Vater Mond', 131.

origo gentis is not found elsewhere, it is nonetheless relevant for the study of representations of the Mongols in the Mamluk sultanate. For one, it is the voice of one of the *awlād al-nās*, close to the Mamluk elite, who was at the same time well-acquainted with, and well-versed in, the Arabic scholarly culture. As these would have formed his imagined audience, the ideas he includes in his rendition of the story would have resonated with them. Moreover, the story is an excellent case study of how the basic stereotypes of the Mongols that were developed based on environmental theories, as discussed in chapter 1, could be employed in other texts, as well as of the agency authors, in this case Ibn al-Dawādārī, displayed in this pursuit.

Haarmann, in his writing on the subject, already gave an extensive summary of the story. Since it is not widely known, however, I will do the same here, since I wish to refer to various details in the story. I will then move on to an analysis of the images and ideas concerning the Mongols present in the text. The story is included in both *Durar al-Tījān* and in *Kanz al-Durar*, albeit under different years. In *Durar al-Tījān,* his entry for the year 615 (1218-9) gives a short summary of this story,[65] but the extended version is given under the events of the year 628 (1230-1), where Ibn al-Dawādārī reports on the conflict between the Mongols and the Khwārazmian sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnu and on the latter's eventual death.[66] In *Kanz al-Durar*, the story is told under the year 618 (1221-2).[67] Although the two versions tell the same story, they are not exact copies of one another. Not only does the wording vary, but there are elements of difference between them. These range from somewhat different genealogies, names and details, to some parts of the story that are not included in *Durar al-Tījān*. In this discussion I will present the two versions as one story, which I consider justified given the minimal difference in content. I will, however, indicate variations and discrepancies where relevant to my analysis.

The story Ibn al-Dawādāri relates has so far not been found elsewhere – something of which the author himself seems well-aware:

> Regarding this people and their beginning, and the first things of their circumstances: they belong to the wondrous events and strange things. Maybe none of the historians mention it, because they are not acquainted with it.[68]

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[65] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥١-٥٣.
[66] The entire story runs from ٥٤-٧٢.
[67] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:217–37.
[68] Ibn al-Dawādārī, VII:217. Cf. *Durar al-Tījān,* ٥١. See also *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:224, where Ibn al-Dawādārī says that they all begin with Chinggis Khan and do not transcend that.

So how did Ibn al-Dawādārī come by it? According to him, the Mongol *origo gentis* can be found in a book 'called in their Mongol tongue (*bi-lisānihim al-mughulī*) "Ulūkhān bitikjī", which means "The Book of the Great Ruling Father"'.[69] This book, he says, is held in high regard by both the Mongols and the Kipchaks.[70] Ibn al-Dawādārī relates that he became acquainted with this book in Bilbays, where his father was governor of the eastern provinces, and where he frequently met with a group of fellow intellectuals, among whom was Ibn Dāniyāl, the famous ophthalmologist and author of shadow plays. Among them was also a certain Amīn al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī, formerly the secretary of Badr al-Dīn Baysarī (d. 697/1298), an important amir, who had held high positions in the sultanate.[71] One day in 709 (1309-10), he writes, the group was talking about history and the rise of the Mongols, when this Amīn al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī informed them that he possessed a precious, unparalleled book that had belonged to Badr al-Dīn Baysarī. He brought it to the gathering the next time he was in Bilbays, and Ibn al-Dawādārī had the chance to copy from it.[72] Ibn al-Dawādārī considered it unique, and indeed, no parallel tradition has been discovered as of yet.[73]

While the story may be unique, Ibn al-Dawādārī stresses that he possesses the necessary qualifications to reveal it to his public. He emphasises his knowledge on the peoples of the Eurasian steppes, 'so that the reader knows that I am informed about the wealth of the circumstances of these people'.[74] Ibn al-Dawādārī states that the text he uses was translated from Persian by the Baghdadi physician Jibrīl ibn Bukhtīshūʿ (d. 212/827) in 211 (826-7). The Persian version, in turn, was a translation from the Turkish original by Abū Muslim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 137/755), who is better known under the name Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī. Jibrīl ibn Bukhtīshūʿ, says Ibn al-Dawādārī, reports that Abū Muslim claimed that the book originally belonged to his ancestor Buzurgmihr-i Bukhtagān, a famous Sassanid vizier.[75] This portion of the text relates the origin story of the

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[69] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥١-٥٢. The title is rendered somewhat different elsewhere in *Durar al-Tījān*, as 'Ulū Khān Aṭā Bitikjī' (٥٥), which is also simply described as 'in their language', and in *Kanz al-Durar* (VII:218) it says that 'it is called in the Turkish language "Ulū Ay Aṭam Bitikī"', meaning 'the Book of the Great Father'.

[70] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥٥.

[71] Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 99.

[72] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥٦-٥٨; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:218. Among the others attending these gatherings were Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Zaytūn al-Balālīqī, Manṣūr al-Adīb al-ʿAbbāsī, and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Samlūṭī. Ibn al-Dawādārī notes that Ibn Dāniyāl was missing from the group when the reading of the Turkish book took place. This may have been because he died around this time, in 710/1310 (Faḍl Allāh ibn Abī al-Fakhr al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Tālī Kitāb Wafayāt Al-Aʿyān*, ed. Jacqueline Sublet [Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1974], 158; Safi Mahfouz and Marvin Carlson, trans., *Theatre from Medieval Cairo. The Ibn Dāniyāl Trilogy* [New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications, 2013], xx).

[73] Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 102.

[74] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, 56. See also Van den Bent, 'Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts'.

[75] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:219. The claim that Abū Muslim al-Khurasānī was a descendant of Buzurgmihr-i Bukhtagān is considered doubtful (Ḡ.Ḥ. Yūsofī, 'Abū Moslem Ḵorāsānī', in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 1983, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-moslem-abd-al-rahman-b). On Jibrīl ibn Bukhtīshūʿ see D. Sourdel,

Turks.[76] Although the Turkish story is fascinating as well, I will only discuss here those elements that are relevant to the Mongol origin legend following it and that are important for its interpretation.[77] This Mongol *origo gentis* was reportedly an appendix written by one Sulaymān ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn al-Bahlawān al-Adharbayjānī (who has not been identified yet).[78] I see no reason to doubt Ibn al-Dawādārī's claim that he came across the story in this book. For one, there is the recurring use of the Mongol calque '*min ʿaẓm*' ('of the bone of', i.e. of that person's lineage),[79] in addition to his criticism of part of the Turkish story.[80] Similarly, his occasional interpolations are not always the same in both texts.

The story of the lion boy and the wandering 'Tatars'

Ibn al-Dawādārī relates the story of Ulū Ay Aṭājī, 'Great Father Moon', who was created from the elements in a cave on the Qarāṭāgh Mountain (the Black Mountain). His descendants went on to rule as the Alṭun Khāns, the Golden Kings. The cave in which the Great Father Moon originated became a temple. The Alṭun Khān rules over his people in the great cities of Asharmāq[81] and Aydarmāq, located at a large lake at the foot of this mountain. They are magnificent cities, whose people live in joy, wealth and great health. They also do not have any enemies that frighten them. That little detail foreshadows that this utopia was not to last. As Ibn al-Dawādārī says: 'Fate made them servants after ruling, humiliating them after glory.'[82] This is where the story of the origin of the Turks is

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'Bu<u>kh</u>tī<u>sh</u>ūʿ', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill Online, 2012), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1514; and for Buzurgmihr-i Bukhtagān, see Djalal Khaleghi Motlagh, 'Bozorgmehr-e Bo<u>k</u>tagān', in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 1989, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bozorgmehr-e-boktagan.

[76] In *Kanz al-Durar* (VII:227), Ibn al-Dawādārī states that Jibrīl's text ends, and then moves on to the story of the Mongols as told by Sulaymān ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn al-Bahlawān al-Adharbayjānī. In *Durar al-Tījān*, Jibrīl's text supposedly continues well into the Mongol story, after which it is taken over by a (there unnamed) narrator of an appendix in 'the Turkish book' (٦٦). As in the case with the genealogies (see below), the version given in *Kanz al-Durar*, is probably the correct one, for reasons of chronology. See also Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 21 n. 97.

[77] An English translation of the first, Turkish part of the legend is given in Frenkel, 'The Turks', 60–66.

[78] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 21–22.

[79] See Van den Bent, 'Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts'. The term comes from Mongol *yasu*. Sneath, *Headless State*, 106.

[80] The version in *Durar al-Tījān* is somewhat short, according to Ibn al-Dawādārī because the story of a spontaneous generation from the elements conflicts with what revelation tells us about creation. In *Kanz al-Durar*, however, he apparently had no such qualms and does relate the entire story, although he still criticises its contents. Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥٩-٦٣; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:219–27. Accounts of *origines gentium* from Christian medieval Europe, going back in part to earlier traditions, show similar tensions. See Pohl, 'Narratives', 206–8.

[81] 'Kāsharmāq' in *Durar al-Tījān*.

[82] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٣; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:227.

connected to that of the origin of the Mongols – Ibn al-Dawādārī, like many of his colleagues, refers to them as *tatār*, including in the origin story, which even includes a folk etymology for the name.

According to Ibn al-Dawādārī, this Turkish origin story was followed by an appendix written by al-Adharbayjānī. He relates the following: On the Qarāṭāgh Mountain, many vicious and powerful wild animals lived, so no human could go there despite the riches of the land. One day, however, a Tibetan woman had wandered into the valleys of this land in order to gather firewood when she gave birth. When she went to find some grass to wrap her new-born son in, an eagle flew away with him and dropped him at the foot of the Qarāṭāgh Mountain. This was the ancestor of Chinggis Khan. He was dropped into the den of a lioness, 'as God the Exalted wanted him to', who then nursed and raised him with her own cubs, as God had filled her with compassion for him.[83]

> The boy grew up and became a youth with a face like the face of a lion and with magnificent power. He used to kill these lions with his hands and ate their meat with the rest of the wild animals, so that the lions went away. When they saw him they kept clear of him, startled, and fled, because he could kill them.[84]

One day, a group of people wandered into the area and was threatened by lions. When he saw them, he recognised himself in them and was suddenly flooded by feelings of *jinsiyya*[85] and human nature and rescued them. Initially frightened, they soon realised he does not wish to harm them.[86]

> They noticed that he was human like them, but that his savage foster mother had altered his good qualities. They talked to him but he did not understand them. Instead, he roared like a lion. He was friendly to them, and he went to hunt for them among the lions and beasts and brought [the prey] to them. They roasted it and ate it, and they fed him, and he became used to eating what they ate [i.e. cooked meat].[87]

Eventually, he learned their language and asked them who they are and where they have come from. This then turns into a folk etymology for the word *tatār*, as they answered:

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[83] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٣-١٤; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:227–29.
[84] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٥. See also *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:229.
[85] See the Introduction; here probably best translated as 'kinship' rather than as 'ethnic solidarity'.
[86] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٥; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:229.
[87] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:229. See also *Durar Al-Tījān*, ١٥, which reads: 'They stood up and struck fire [with a flint] from wood and roasted the meat and indicated that he should eat it. So he ate and he liked it.'

We are Tatars, which means we have fled from our land. A people of our ethnicity (*min jinsinā*) has conquered us and killed us, and driven us from our homes, so we left fleeing, and we do not know where we are headed. So we have come to this land as *tatār*, meaning refugees.[88]

'This', the text adds, 'is the origin of the word *al-tatār*.'[89]

These Tatars were three men, three women and one girl (or three men and four women), and this 'savage person' (*dhālik al-shakhṣ al-waḥshī*) became fond of her and they had a son together, whom they named Tatār Khān, 'meaning "the wandering/fleeing king" (*al-malik al-tāʾih*)', and the latter's father, too, received a name: Alb Qarā Arslān Biljikī, meaning 'son of the black lion' (*farkh al-asad al-aswad*).[90] Both *Durar al-Tījān* and *Kanz al-Durar* now continue with a genealogy – an element that frequently appears in *origines gentium*[91] – interspersed with some stories about its individual members. The genealogies diverge somewhat, as is shown in figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Genealogies of the early Tatars in Ibn al-Dawādārī's Mongol origin story

[88] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:229.
[89] Ibn al-Dawādārī, VII:229. See also *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٥-٦٦.
[90] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٦; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:230.
[91] Pohl and Mahoney, 'Editorial', 188, referring to the many examples found in the studies in the *TMHJ* special issue.

According to *Durar al-Tījān*, it was Tatār Khan (the eldest) who was the first to make the Turkish flute called the *ṣibuṣghū*, according to *Kanz al-Durar* it was Tatār Khān Küchükerī.[92] This inventor would then play it in the exact way that birds would sing, so that the birds would come over to him and he could capture any and all birds he wanted.[93] Jikiz/Shikiz Khān (Chinggis Khan), Oghuz Khān,[94] and Aṭun/Alṭun Khān are the forefathers of all the Tatars, i.e. the Mongols. Tatār Khān Bayghū was especially strong and courageous, fighting lions with his bare hands. In his days, the Tatars entered into the obedience of the Alṭun Khān:[95] here the Turkish and Mongol origin stories truly converge. The Tatars would gift the Alṭun Khān with rare wild animals, and the Alṭun Khān would in turn bestow favours on them, giving them livestock and horses. The Tatars, however, were not particularly civilised: '[They] became the subjects of the ruler of the two cities, even though they were like wild animals, not seeking refuge in buildings, not surrounded by walls, and not covered by roofs.' And, as *Kanz al-Durar* phrases it: 'They were moulded by human morals a bit, but mostly, they were like lions.'[96]

The narrative now moves on to the story of Chinggis Khan 'the blacksmith',[97] i.e. the Chinggis Khan who would go on to conquer vast areas of Asia. He, the text relates, frequently visited one of the two cities of the Alṭun Khān, visiting a blacksmith there.[98] From him, he learned how to make arrowheads. He would take iron with him, make these arrowheads, and then sell those to provide for his family.[99] Chinggis Khan was 'handsome, very cunning, with a strong personality, very courageous, with sharp views and sound authority'.[100] He had a large number of sons, the

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[92] The Arabic spells K-Sh-K-R-ī, the rendition as *küchükerī* is taken from Haarmann, 'Großer Vater Mond', 129. Cf. modern Turkish *küçük*, meaning 'small, little'.

[93] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٦; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:230.

[94] Haarmann points out that the presence of the name 'Oghuz Khān' in this genealogy is striking, as it is a southwest Turkish name rather than Kipchak. Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 25; Haarmann, 'Großer Vater Mond', 130.

[95] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:230; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٦. The story of Tatār Khān Bayghū is missing from *Durar al-Tījān*. In that version, the Tatars only come to be ruled by the Alṭun Khān in the days of Chinggis Khan. However, given the fact that the Alṭun Khān overlordship appears well-established by the time of Chinggis Khan, the version given in *Kanz al-Durar* has a greater likelihood of being the original chronology.

[96] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:230.

[97] The name Temüjin, meaning 'blacksmith' (see for instance Claus Schönig, 'Historical Word-Formation in Turkish', in *Word-Formation. An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe. Volume 3*, ed. Peter O. Müller et al. [Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015], 2100), was taken from a Tatar prisoner of his father by that name (see de Rachewiltz, *Secret History*, I:13). Paul Pelliot (*Notes on Marco Polo*, vol. I [Paris: Paris Imprimerie Nationale ; Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1959], 289) has pointed out that this agrees with the Mongol habit of naming their children after events or observations that took place shortly after child's birth. By the middle of the seventh/thirteenth century, the name Temüjin had given rise to a widespread tradition that Chinggis Khan was originally a blacksmith before his rise to power. Sinor, 'Legendary Origin', 248–49.

[98] Asharmāq in *Durar al-Tījān*, Aydarmāq in *Kanz al-Durar.*

[99] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٦-١٧; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:231.

[100] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ١٧.

eldest of whom (named Tatār Khān in *Durar al-Tījān*; Bīshkhān in *Kanz al-Durar*) was exceptionally courageous and had a strong character. He was also good at hunting with birds; an activity that the son of the Alṭun Khān, called Kumush Khān, was also fond of. He would come to the lands of the Tatars every year, speak with their leaders, including Chinggis Khan, and go on bird hunts, before returning to the cities over which his father ruled.[101]

One year,[102] Kumush Khan was hunting with the eldest son of Chinggis Khan. Both their birds attacked the same prey, a swan, but rather than ceding the game to his superior, Chinggis Khan's son snatched Kumush Khan's bird off the swan, leaving it to his own hunting bird. Kumush Khan was furious and returned to the city, while the eldest son reported back to Chinggis Khan. He admonished his son, for they were supposed to be the Alṭun Khān's vassals and this would surely lead to trouble. But, Chinggis Khan added, they might well come out victorious, for he had had a dream. He described: 'it was as if I was at the top of the Qarāṭāgh, and I grabbed the sun by its horns, from East to West, and I gave it to you [pl., i.e. his sons]. But the western side slipped away from my hand.'[103]

Chinggis Khan then went to gather all the elders of the clan (*ʿashīra*), and they were 360 in total, the number of days in a year.[104] This gathering reflects the Mongol practice of assembling a *quriltai* – a large, consultatory gathering – in order to elect a leader.[105] Chinggis Khan then made 360 arrows into a bundle, asking the men to break it, to which they answered that they were unable to break them as a whole. He then gave them all a single arrow, which they easily broke: united they are invincible, divided they are effortlessly shattered. Chinggis Khan, the text adds, 'was the first one to apply this proverb'.[106] The number of potential leaders was narrowed down to three, and those three embarked upon a ritual, offering stew *(tharīd)* to a felt idol called Tunkā Khātūn,[107] who was served by a shaman called Bakhshī.

Here, a little further explanation-*cum*-summary by Ibn al-Dawādārī himself follows: this Bakhshī was descended from the refugee people who encountered 'this beastly person (*dhālika al-*

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[101] Ibn al-Dawādārī, ٦٨-٦٧; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:231.
[102] In *Durar al-Tījān*, Ibn al-Dawādārī says that the 'Turkish book' has the year as 609 (٦٨), in *Kanz al-Durar* he relates that Sulaymān ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn al-Bahlawān al-Adharbayjānī said it was in the 620s (VII:232).
[103] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:232.
[104] *Durar al-Tījān* has 300 (٦٩). The story order and the number of Tatars are a bit different in *Durar al-Tījān*, which first mentions the messenger and the following massacre, and only then the *quriltai*. The version in *Kanz al-Durar* generally appears to have a slightly stronger internal logic, with regard to the genealogy and the narrators, so I will stick with the order and number as they are presented there.
[105] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 28 n. 136.
[106] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:233.
[107] Haarmann ('Großer Vater Mond', 132) renders it as Tüngā Khātūn.

shakhṣ al-waḥshī) Alb Qarā Arslān Biljīkī'. The felt doll was their idol, and the Tatars were their progeny. 'They have', Ibn al-Dawādārī states, 'strange stories about it that boggle the mind, so I have turned away from all of this, for it is great unbelief (*fa-innahu kufr 'aẓīm*).'[108]

The bowls of stew were offered to the idol in the tent, and at night they heard a voice exclaim: 'Chinggis Khan is the lord of the age (*ṣāḥib al-zamān*), and the ruler of the time (*malik al-awān*), and the destroyer of lands (*mukhrib al-buldān*), and the killer of old men and children (*qātil al-shuyūkh wa-l-wildān*). So be his helpers and you will be secure.' His sacrificial bowl came out eaten, except for a small bit on the western side of it.[109]

The Tatars were 'like lions', but they were desperately short on gear, weapons and horses. Chinggis Khan then sent some spies to the city, to ask his old friend the blacksmith for information. He was the first one after Alexander the Great to send out spies, according to the text.[110] The spy reported that the Alṭun Khān was planning to send a messenger to summon him and his sons to court, but that it was a ruse. So when the messenger and his retinue arrived, the Tatars waited until nightfall and killed all the men, taking their gear and horses.[111] 'This', the text adds, 'was the first blood the Tatars spilled in the world.'[112] This episode clearly functions as Wolfram's *fait primordial*. The Alṭun Khān then sent fifty thousand troops, far outnumbering the Tatars. Chinggis Khan decided to trick them by fleeing into the wilderness at the first attack, and to wait for the Alṭun Khān's troops to settle down for the night and get drunk, only to return and kill them. After that, the Alṭun Khān sent another, even larger army consisting of the descendants of Ulū Ay Aṭājī, the Turkish forebear. This time they dressed up sticks in leftover gear from the last Turkish army to appear more numerous, and they attacked the army from four sides. Finally, the Tatars entered the Turkish city wearing the gear of the defeated armies, and Chinggis Khan killed the Alṭun Khān and took his throne. He sent out the Turkish subjects to work the land for him and pay taxes to him, and he partitioned the lands among his sons.[113] At this point, Ibn al-Dawādārī says, the story concludes, and he turns to Ibn Wāṣil and Ibn al-Athīr for his account of the appearance of the Mongols in the Islamic world.

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[108] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:233. The term *bakhshī* means a religious teacher or shaman, originally having Buddhist connotations (Reuven Amitai, 'Did Chinggis Khan Have a Jewish Teacher? An Examination of an Early Fourteenth-Century Arabic Text', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 4 (2004): 694–95).

[109] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:233–34. Cf. *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٩-٧٠.

[110] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٧٠.

[111] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:234–35. Cf. *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٨.

[112] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:235.

[113] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:235–37; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٨-٧٢.

<u>Ibn al-Dawādārī's use of the myth</u>

This Turkish-Mongolian origin story contains a great many noteworthy aspects evidencing, again, the genre's dynamism and flexibility. First, two originally independent,[114] stories were purposely combined because their subject peoples are considered by a later audience to be connected. Moreover, the legend aims to offer an explanation for later concerns and developments with regard to the Mongols, as origin myths often do, whether told by the people it concerns or by outsiders. The *origo gentis* explains, for instance, the nomadic origins of the Mongols and their weaponry and war tactics, showcasing the explanatory function of *origines gentium*. Additionally, a close reading of various elements of the story – from Ibn al-Dawādārī's recurring use of the calque '*min ʿaẓm*' to the inclusion of a version of the bundled arrows' story – demonstrates that this narrative incorporated elements from stories about the origin of the Mongols that were apparently circulating in the Islamic world at this time. These features, however, I have discussed in detail elsewhere,[115] and in this analysis I will focus on the representation of the Mongols in this story.

One of the things that stands out most in this respect is the connection made between the Turks and the Mongols, which was also evident in Chapter 1. The close Mongol-Turkish relation as presented in the Mongol origin story becomes clear in many details. For instance, one of Chinggis Khan's forebears, Tātār Khān Küchükerī, was the first to make a type of Turkish flute. The mutual heritage of the Turks and Mongols is similarly illustrated by their shared ancestral grounds, the Qarāṭāgh Mountain. The importance both groups attach to this locality is reflected in Kümüsh Khān's oath on the Black Mountain,[116] as well as in Chinggis Khan's dream in which the summit of the Qarāṭāgh is the place where he grabs the sun by its horns, i.e. from where he rules the world. Haarmann has argued that the two stories thus reflect the 'obscure and complex historical relationship between Mongols and Turks in their Central Asian homelands'.[117] This is absolutely true, but it goes beyond that: the narrative as it is presented in Ibn al-Dawādārī's work also serves as an explanation for Turkish-Mongol enmity, which in his day was easily translated to Mamluk-Mongol enmity. Beyond referring to a shared history in the steppes, the story shows that the – literally autochthonous – Turks preceded the Mongols, who are depicted as coming in from the

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[114] Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 16; Haarmann, 'Großer Vater Mond', 128.

[115] Van den Bent, 'Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts'.

[116] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:236. This detail, which is in the section reputedly related by Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Adharbayjānī, cleverly refers back to part of the Turkish origin story as reported by Jibrīl ibn Bukhtīshūʿ. Here it is described that the cave in which Ulū Ay Aṭājī originated and later was buried was worshipped by the people of those areas, and that they would swear by it, saying: '"*Ayyāmā Qarāṭāgh*", which means "by the Black Mountain" (*wa-ḥaqq al-jabal al-aswad*)' (VII:222).

[117] Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 104.

outside and confiscating the Turkish throne. Possibly, this even reflects an ideology that the Mongols had no actual claim to the land, an idea echoed in the swan-incident, in which Chinggis Khān's son misappropriated his master's property.[118]

The message of a Turkish-Mongol connection, as broadcasted by the two stories, is endorsed by Ibn al-Dawādārī. It is not always entirely clear where the author himself speaks and where the voices of his two reported sources are heard. However, in the few places where it is certain that Ibn al-Dawādārī himself is speaking, what he says is noteworthy. He repeatedly emphasises the connection between the Turks and the Mongols. Not only does he quote the famous verses by Abū Shāma elsewhere in *Kanz al-Durar*,[119] his explanations and side notes to these origin stories show his ideas as well. For one, there is the 'confusion' about the language spoken by the Mongols: in *Durar al-Tījān*, the Mongols' homeland is described as being 'called in their Turkish tongue Qarāṭāgh, which means 'the black mountain',[120] but a few sentences later, mention is made of 'their Mongol tongue' (*lisānihim al-mughulī*).[121] Similarly, Ibn al-Dawādārī states that the book with these origin myths is greatly respected among the Mongols and the Kipchak Turks alike: to him, they share this origin story. The two *origines gentium*, one Turkish and one Mongol, thus were made to form a single narrative. The question, then, is by whom this was done. Given Ibn al-Dawādārī's own statement that the Turkish story was given an appendix by Sulaymān ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn al-Bahlawān al-Adharbayjānī, it seems likely that the initiative for this was not taken by the Mamluk author, but rather preceded him – after all, the idea that the Mongols and Turks were ethnically connected was widespread in the Islamic world. However, Ibn al-Dawādārī himself likewise purposely connects the two stories, endorsing the idea, when he says that 'fate made [the Turks] servants after they ruled, humiliating them after glory,' which was caused by what Sulaymān relates, i.e. the story of the Mongols.[122]

The initial Turkish 'humiliation' lies at the root of the Turkish-Mongol enmity, in which the position of the former was taken up by the mostly Turkish Mamluks after the Mongol exodus. This is not made explicit in the story itself, but apart from Ibn al-Dawādārī's quoting of Abū Shāma elsewhere, the Mamluk-Mongol conflict is also hinted at in the text of the origin myth itself, by means of a foreshadowing of the Mongol defeat at ʿAyn Jālūt. The prefiguration has already been discussed by Haarmann, who argued that this is how we should read the slipping of the western

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[118] Van den Bent, "Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts".
[119] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VIII:51.
[120] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥١. See also Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:207.
[121] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥١-٥٢.
[122] See Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 103.

horn of the sun out of Chinggis Khan's hand, as well as the little bit of stew remaining on the western side of the sacrificial bowl.[123] It is hard, if not impossible, however to tell whether this was an interpolation by Ibn al-Dawādārī or if it was part of al-Adharbayjānī's text.[124] In any case, the narrative, as *origines gentium* often do, clearly serves here to explain later events relevant to a contemporary public. The depiction of events in Central Asia in the first half of the thirteenth century offers the reader of this story a historical explanation for the hostility between the Turkish Mamluks and the ethnically closely related Mongols, as well as 'predicting' the eventual defeat of the latter.

A similar tension is present in the way the Mongols and the Turks are opposed. For despite their perceived close ethnic connection and the emphasis placed on that, the two peoples are at the same time contrasted, both in the myth itself and by its Mamluk conveyor. While the Turkish cities of Aydarmāq and Asharmāq are described as prosperous with a healthy, joyful population and have a powerful and gracious ruler in the Alṭun Khān, the Mongols are little more than savages. The savagery of the Mongol ancestor, Alb Qarā Arslān Biljikjī, is emphasised frequently: he does not speak the human tongue but roars like a lion instead, is unfamiliar with fire, and eats raw meat with the other wild animals – although he is friendly, helpful, and recognises himself in the wandering Tatars – and is called a 'beastly person' more than once in the narrative.[125] Ibn al-Dawādārī himself, when reflecting upon the story and summarising it, also calls him 'this beastly person'. It is not only their ancestor, however, who is something of a *noble savage*: the Mongols as a people are like wild animals, according to the story, only partially shaped by human morals, living under the naked sky. This savagery, however, appears to go with a certain kind of innocence, as the loss of this innocence is sharply emphasised when either the narrator or Ibn al-Dawādārī tells us that the blood of the messenger and his men is the first blood the Mongols ever spilled.[126]

But while the Mongols are compared to lions in the sense of being like savage, wild animals,[127] they are also likened to lions because they are extremely courageous and strong – similar to in Ibn al-Nafīs' ethnographic description of them. This, too, is a recurring theme in the story. Alb Qarā Arslān Biljikjī kills lions with his bare hands, to the extent that they flee from him. Similar mention is made of his descendant Tatār Khān Bayghū: he is exceptionally strong and

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[123] Haarmann, "Alṭun Ḫān," 27–29, 32; idem, "Arabic in Speech," 111; idem, "Großer Vater Mond," 137; idem, "Mongols and Mamluks," 171–72. See also Van den Bent, 'Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts'.

[124] See also Haarmann, "Alṭun Ḫān," 32.

[125] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:230.

[126] See also Haarmann, 'Großer Vater Mond', 133–34.

[127] Where *Kanz al-Durar* has 'like lions' (VII:230), *Durar al-Tījān* has 'like wild animals' in the corresponding passage (٦٧).

courageous, fighting lions barehanded. Chinggis Khan's eldest son is compared to his ancestor in courage and strength.[128] As in the ethnographic descriptions, the Mongols in this *origo gentis* are portrayed as brave and strong.

The Chinggis Khan of the myth is presented not only as courageous, but also as very cunning and clever – a description echoed by his leadership and battle tricks as depicted in the story. The story contains two intriguing remarks reflecting on the events. The first refers to the episode with the bundle of arrows, following which *Kanz al-Durar* includes the phrase: 'Chinggis Khan was the first to apply this proverb.'[129] The second remark refers to Chinggis Khan's dispatching of spies, about which is said in *Durar al-Tījān*: 'Chinggis Khan was the first after Alexander [the Great] to send spies.'[130] It is not immediately clear whose voice is audible here, but given the fact that both statements appear only in one of the versions and are lacking in the other, and vice versa, this appears to be an addition made by Ibn al-Dawādārī himself.[131] In any case, both remarks emphasise a certain creativity and cleverness in Chinggis Khan's character – there appears to be a touch of admiration here. At the same time, his destructive force is underlined as well.

Similarly relevant is the variation in the supernatural prediction of Chinggis Khan's domination. *Durar al-Tījān* states that he is 'the ruler of the ages', but he is also 'the killer of the Alṭun Khān and the master of the kings of the fires'.[132] In *Kanz al-Durar*, on the other hand, he is said to be the 'destroyer of lands (*mukhrib al-buldān*), and the killer of old men and children'.[133] Especially the latter quote is a decidedly negative portrayal of the Mongol conqueror. It is noteworthy that where *Durar al-Tījān* appears to refer primarily to events within the story itself, *Kanz al-Durar* instead hints at later developments: the narrative refers to only one land, and by no means makes mention of its destruction, nor of the slaughter of the notably young or old.[134] Given

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[128] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:231.

[129] Ibn al-Dawādārī, VII:233. The saying itself was apparently known and used in the Mamluk sultanate, as evidenced by Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī's report that an amir used it while discussing military tactics against the Mongols (*Al-Faḍl al-Maʾthūr*, 267).

[130] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, 70.

[131] Haarmann ('Großer Vater Mond', 132–33) also reads these two sentences as being insertions by Ibn al-Dawādārī.

[132] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥٠. It is not entirely clear to who or what 'the kings of the fires' refers, possible Zoroastrians are meant, with the connotation of paganism and unbelief.

[133] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:234.

[134] The only reference to the killing of non-military people is the murder of the relatives of the Alṭun Khān, which is but briefly mentioned and unlikely to be the event this phrase refers to. Interestingly, in *Durar al-Tījān* (which lacks this remark) the year 628 (1230-1), under which the story is told, begins with a a description of the Mongol campaigns in the area around the Euphrates, about which Ibn al-Dawādārī says that what they did there cannot be endured to hear, and that they were butchering young and old (٥٤-٥٥). For the 'foretelling' function of this story, see Van den Bent, 'Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts'.

the significant difference between the two versions, this is likely, again, an insertion by the pen of Ibn al-Dawādārī himself in *Kanz al-Durar*, who thereby connects the story to historical events taking place beyond the temporal scope of the narrative itself.

The last important element of the way the Mongols are represented is their *kufr*, their unbelief. This part of the representation is found mostly in Ibn al-Dawādārī's own comments on the story. It is relevant here to differentiate between two strands of criticism voiced by the author. Both the Turkish and Mongol parts of the story contain elements that conflict with Islamic belief, and in both *Durar al-Tījān* and *Kanz al-Durar*, Ibn al-Dawādārī introduces the story by warning that parts of it contradict revelation – a disclaimer, so to speak. These warnings, however, appear to pertain primarily to the Turkish story of the spontaneous generation of Ulū Ay Aṭājī, as the disapproval is repeated on various occasions, but always in the context of this specific story.[135] In *Kanz al-Durar*, Ibn al-Dawādārī defends his inclusion of this episode, saying that he would rather exclude it (which he does in *Durar al-Tījān*), but that he has to include it because of the story about the Mongols that follows it. For, he says, he has not found any information about their first origin elsewhere, and 'in this book I found the beginning of their affair, and I should like to inform [readers] about it'.[136] And, he is also quick to point out, the Arabs have such fables of their own![137]

So while he vigorously disparaged the story of the spontaneous generation of the Turkish ancestor, he does not seem to doubt other aspects of the legends, as can be deduced from his connecting sentence between the Turkish and the Mongol stories. Moreover, there are various references within the stories to God's will and His decree, including in the part of the tale where the Tibetan boy is found and raised by the lioness – to the extent that this part of the story quotes a Qur'an verse to this effect in *Kanz al-Durar*.[138] It is not immediately evident whether these phrases derive from the original 'Turkish book' or were added by Ibn al-Dawādārī himself, but in any case he does not call them into question.[139] Equally, he does not appear to doubt that the proceedings at the *quriltai* took place as described, including that the Mongols made offerings to the felt doll. (Whether he believes in the supernatural decision is another matter.) At this point in *Kanz al-Durar*, one can observe one of Ibn al-Dawādārī's interventions in the story, in which he condemns this

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[135] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥١, ٥٣, ٥٥; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:218–19; 221; 222; 223.

[136] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:223–24.

[137] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٥٣. On this issue, of Ibn al-Dawādārī both presenting and condemning these shamanist-pagan traditions, see also Haarmann, 'Alṭun Ḫān', 31–32; Haarmann, 'Turkish Legends', 105.

[138] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:226, 228. The Qur'an verse, found on p. 228, is 21:23: 'He cannot be called to account for anything He does, whereas they will be called to account.' Translation: Abdel Haleem. Cf. Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٣, ٦٤.

[139] Haarmann ('Großer Vater Mond', 129) appears to ascribe these remarks to Ibn al-Dawādārī himself, as he states that he 'does not forget the Islamic God eulogy in any miraculous event, also in this pagan context'.

Mongol practice. He describes the felt doll as an idol about whom 'they have strange stories (…) that boggle the mind. I have turned away from all of this, for it is great *kufr*'.[140] So the Mongols are not only portrayed as infidels, but they are even called out on it by the author.

Within the origin story as presented by Ibn al-Dawādārī, the Mongols are thus portrayed as being closely related to the Turks; as savages; as courageous and strong; and as infidels. Additionally, Chinggis Khan is depicted as courageous, cunning, and clever. Barring, perhaps, the element of courage and strength, all these elements can also be detected in Ibn al-Dawādārī's interventions in, and comments on, the story itself. Additionally, they emphasise the more infamous sides of Chinggis Khan and portray him as a murderous and destructive conqueror. The story itself may be unique to Ibn al-Dawādārī, but the way the Mongols are represented is not.

Conclusion

An *origo gentis* could play an important role for medieval communities in the formation of an ethnic identity, and be used to legitimise rule, justify territorial claims, or serve other political objectives. The dynamism and flexibility of these stories are key here: they can be adapted to changed or changing circumstances, and they can be used for a variety of purposes. However, the (presumed) origins of a people are not only relevant to the people in question itself, but also to outsiders coming into contact with that community. This may be out of plain curiosity and interest, but frequently it also serves as a way in which one community can relate itself to the other, which means contemporary concerns play a significant role in the way a story is presented. In this chapter, I have analysed how Mamluk-era authors appropriated the Mongols' own idea of their mythic origins and used it to communicate their own messages on the Mongols, as well as how Ibn al-Dawādārī uses a non-Mongol *origo gentis* for the Mongols to do the same.

The use of the Mongols' own legend about Alan Qo'a in the various Islamic sources demonstrates the dynamism and flexibility of these texts and underlines the importance of individual authors' agency. Rashīd al-Dīn's version of the Mongol *origo gentis* introduced some Islamising elements, adapting it to the Islamic world in which it was to circulate. This version was then taken up by al-ʿUmarī, whose employment of it again testifies to the flexibility of these stories: taking a different approach from his source, he used it to muddy Chinggis Khan's lineage by accusing his ancestress of adultery. For his contemporaries in the Mamluk sultanate, who used a version of the tale, it is not as clear where their information originated from – in any case, the tale

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[140] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, VII:233. See also Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Durar al-Tījān*, ٦٩, in which he describes the stories about the doll as 'senseless jabber' (*hadhayān*).

appears to have circulated in one form or another.[141] Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathīr and al-Ṣafadī all relate that the fake immaculate pregnancy was actually Chinggis Khan's mother's, and that the Mongol conqueror himself was born a bastard. They, too, use the Mongols' own *origo gentis* in order to slander them and their great leader, contrasting it to Islamic values. In this manner, they contrast Mongol cultural stuff with their own, using it to other them while underlining their own, Islamic identity.

This flexibility and dynamism that allow these origin myths to be used in response to contemporary concerns are likewise apparent in the non-indigenous Mongol *origo gentis* related by Ibn al-Dawādārī. He uses his knowledge of this and other such stories to underline his own expertise on the topic of the Mongols and their history, lending extra weight to the points about the Mongols that he wishes to make. He is very much, in the words of Geary, an author 'imagining the past in terms of the present'.[142] His narrative not only offers explanations for various characteristics of the Mongols, the enmity between Turks and the Mongols – all elements that were of contemporary concern – he also uses the story as a means of othering. Ibn al-Dawādārī, both in his rendition of the story and in his own interpolations, emphasises the same basic ethnic stereotypes of the Mongols shown in chapter 1. In the narrative, the Mongols may be courageous and strong, but they are also savage and uncultured, and they are infidels. Chinggis Khan himself is shown as courageous, cunning, and clever. Barring, perhaps, the element of courage and strength, all these elements are not simply present in the story, but are actively endorsed by Ibn al-Dawādārī through his interventions in, and comments on, the story itself.

Although these *origines gentium* are part of existing traditions, Mamluk-era authors used them for their own purposes. To this intent, they actively employ images and stereotypes that are at their disposal, testifying to Nirenbergs assertion that while stereotypes may be very old, it is the way that people employ them that matters. The authors' agency is decisive in the way a story is presented – see the contrast between Rashīd al-Dīn and al-ʿUmarī's respective renditions – and these authors all elected to use Mongol origin stories, their own of Alan Qo'a as well as the outsider one, to present them as Other. A similar use of Mongol cultural stuff as ammunition for othering, by contrasting it to higly valued elements of Islamic culture, is visible in the Mamluk-era treatment of the Mongol Yasa, as I explore in the next chapter.

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[141] For tales on the Mongols circulating in the Islamic world, see also Van den Bent, 'Mongol Origins in Mamluk Texts'.
[142] Geary, *Women at the Beginning*, 20.