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CHARISMA, THE ORDER OF SUCCESSION, AND LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY IN THE NOMADIC EMPIRES OF EURASIA

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Drawing on Max Weber concepts of "depersonalization of charisma" and the "clan state", this article develops a theoretical explanation of the short lifespan of the nomad-dominated empires of the Inner Eurasia. For centuries, the Inner Eurasian nomads existed in the form of the disaggregated tribal communities. Only a charismatic leader could establish a centralized hierarchical authority, unify the steppe dwellers, and mobilize them for military campaigns in search for wealth and glory. However, due to the rulers' finitude of life, the personalized charismatic authority could not last beyond the ruler's death. One possible solution to this problem was institutionalization of the depersonalized charismatic authority in a clan state, in which members of the ruling lineage elected the new ruler. For such a tradition to become institutionalized, royal selection had to follow a consistentpattern. Yet, in most nomad-dominated empires that has not happened. The multitude of factors interfered into the orderly processes of succession turning them into prolonged interregnum periods full of uncertainty and violence. With each new generation, succession order inconsistency undermined the royal authority. In combination with the mounting geopolitical challenges, the diminished legitimacy of the rulers provoked violent internecine conflicts and contributed to the fall of the nomad-dominated empires. The detailed historical analysis of the dissolution of the Mongol Empire provides the empirical evidence supporting this argument. Durability of the postnomadic polities of the Outer Eurasia (e. g., the Arab Caliphate) is attributed to institutionalization of the different type of the charismatic community, a religious one. As a state-integrative force, a transcendental religion (i. e., Islam) practiced by the Arabswas more effective than coercionpracticed by the Mongols.

***Key words**: depersonalization of charisma, clan state, succession order ambiguity, nomadic empire, Eurasia, Mongol empire.*

ХАРИЗМА, ПОРЯДОК ФОРМУВАННЯ ТА ЛЕГІТИМНІСТЬ ВЛАДИ В КОЧОВИХ ІМПЕРІЯХ ЄВРАЗІЇ

П. І. Осинський

Спираючись на концепції Макса Вебера про "знеособлення харизми" та "кланову державу", стаття розробляє теоретичне пояснення короткого терміну життя кочових імперій

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Внутрішньої Євразії, в яких переважають кочівники. Століттями внутрішньо євразійські кочівники існували у формі дезагрегованих племінних спільнот. Тільки харизматичний лідер міг встановити централізовану ієрархічну владу, об'єднати степових жителів та мобілізувати їх для військових походів у пошуках багатства і слави. Однак через скрутність життя правителів персоніфікований харизматичний авторитет не міг тривати після його смерті. Одним із можливих рішень цієї проблеми була інституціоналізація знеособленого харизматичного авторитету в державі клану, в якій члени правлячої лінії обирали нового правителя. Щоб така традиція стала інституціолізованою, імперський двір повинен був дотримуватися усталеного зразка. Але у більшості імперій, де домінують кочівники, цього не сталося. Безлія факторів втручалися в упорядковані процеси спадкоємства, перетворюючи їх на тривали міжрелігійні періоди, повні невизначеності та насильства. З кожним новим поколінням непослідовність порядків правонаступництва підривала королівський авторитет. У поєднанні з наростаючими геополітичними викликами зменшена легітимність правителів провокувала жорсткі міжусобні конфлікти та сприяла падінню імперій, в яких домінували кочівники. Детальний історичний аналіз розпаду Монгольської імперії дає емпіричні докази, що підтверджують цей аргумент. Довговічність постномадських політик Зовнішньої Євразії (наприклад, Арабського халіфату) пояснюється інституціоналізацією різного типу харизматичної спільноти, зокрема релігійної. Як державна інтеграційна сила, трансцендентальна релігія (тобто іслам), що сповідується арабами, була більш ефективною, ніж примус, який практикують монголи.

Ключові слова: *знеособлення харизми, кланова держава, неоднозначність порядку спадкоємності, кочова імперія, Євразія, Монгольська імперія.*

Introduction. For about two millennia, from 500 B.C. to 1500 A. D., the Inner Eurasia was dominated by the military-political confederations of the steppe horsemen (the Scythians, the Huns, the Avars, the Mongols) who spread awe and horror among the dwellers of the frontier agricultural civilizations. Once in a while, they emerged from the barren inner areas of the Eurasian landmass and descended upon the rural settlements of cultivators. Some of the frontier raids did not go beyond primitivelooting and plundering. Some other invasions aimed at establishing political supremacy over the agriculturalists and extracting regular tribute. Most ambitious expeditions resulted in movement of the nomadic elites to the conquered lands and creation of the nomad-dominated states set atop of the sedentary populations. Yet, all these diverse polities shared one feature in common. In few decades after expanding into the vast empires and subordinating thousands (sometimes millions) of people, the pastoralist empires descended into the internecine conflicts and fell into pieces until they becamesubjugated by the agricultural states or other nomads. As a rule, the polities established by the nomadic warlords, even the formidable empires, were short-lived (about 155 years on average) [1: 243]. As the centralized polities, the empire of the European Huns lasted for 20-35 years, the First Turkic Khaganate for 78 years, and the vast Mongol Empire for about 55 years.

How could one explain the limited lifespan of such polities? Historians identify a variety of factors: problems with succession, territorial disputes, religious divisions, environmental degradation, disease, and the failure of meritocracy system [2]. Yet, which of these variables were critical, and which were less important? Peter Turchin [3] highlights two groups of factors that affect historical dynamics of the premodern states. First, as stated earlier by Randall Collins, the geopolitical variables such as the size of the territory, the marchland advantage, and territorial overextension affect the longevity of the empires [4]. The states that have a larger

territory endowed with a greater number of resources, confront fewer hostile neighbors, and do not stretch far beyond the core area of habitation have advantages over other states and, therefore, may exist longer. Yet, geopolitical factors alone cannot explain durability of the empires. Using the notion of *asabiya* (group feeling) introduced by the fourteenth-century Arab thinker Ibn Khaldun, Turchin suggests that it is collective solidarity – particularly solidarity within the ruling elite – that provides strength and durability to the society. When a society is integrated by the strong sense of belonginess and willingness to sacrifice one's well-being for the sake of the group, such society will be strong and robust. When the members of the ruling aristocracy abandon the collective societal goals for the sake of egotistical pursuits such as conspicuous consumption, their competition for wealth leads to fracturing of the elite, acute intragroup competition, and, as a result, disintegration of the political community. In short, societies fall when the elites lose their internal solidarity [3: 36-49].

This is a promising argument. There is ample historical evidence that the fall of many nomadic societies was precipitated by the intraelite conflicts turning into the protracted civil wars. It is less obvious, however, if such conflicts arose due to competition for possession of the luxury goods, as Ibn Khaldun (and Turchin) claimed. In most nomadic societies, wealth was an important yet a secondary asset. It was an authority position within the nomadic community, which provided access to luxury goods, not the other way around. Thus, the intragroup conflict, I submit, most likely was driven by the power dynamic. But how did it work?

Virtually all historians who comment on fragility of the nomadic states point to the problems with succession of the supreme authority. The transfer of power from old ruler to the new one often turned problematic and bitterly contested. However, they do not explicate how these issues arose and why they led to the end of the nomadic polities.In this paper, drawing on Max Weber's notions of "charisma depersonalization" and the "clan state". I develop a new argument, which explains fragmentation of the nomadic empires and explores how it may shed light on the breakdown of the Mongol empire and, possibly, other nomadic polities. In the first part of the paper, I will lay out my theoretical framework. In the second part, I will examine the dissolution of the Mongol empire as onebut very important piece of evidence, which supports my argument. In the third part, I discuss applicability of this explanation to the breakdown of the nomadic polities beyond the Inner Eurasia.

From order to anarchy: a ruler's charisma and succession order ambiguity. Max Weber has identified three ideal types of domination: traditional, charismatic, and legal. Whereas traditional and legal domination draw on legitimacy of the century-old customs or the impersonal legal norms, charismatic domination derives its legitimacy from people's belief in extraordinary qualities of their leaders. Usually, the charismatic leaders rise to power in times of uncertainty and disorder when the traditional institutions fail to provide effective governance. Such leaders reject the established social norms and customs deriving their power from the divine revelations or their own heroic stature. Due to its radical break with the traditional norms, charismatic authority often works as a transformative, revolutionary force [5: 1114-1115].

With all extraordinary, transformative qualities of charisma, it has, according to Weber, a protean,transient nature. Against all wishes of the charismatic masters, their disciples, and some of their subjects, charismatic leadership

does not last long. Oftentimes, a charismatic ruler suffers a loss of the heroic stature due to piecemeal absorption by the mundane daily routines described by Weber as routinization of charisma. Another obvious limitation of such personalized authority is finitude of life of a charismatic leader. Like other humans, charismatic leaders are mortal.

Yet, fortunately for the ruler's entourage, the latter limitation may be transcended if charisma becomes depersonalized and transferred to the descendants of the leader. Writing about some Oriental states, Weber claims: «Thus the desires of the disciples or followers and of charismatic subjects for the perpetuation of charisma are fulfilled in a most simple fashion. However, the notion of a truly individual inheritance was as alien here as it was originally to the household. Instead of individual inheritance we find the immortal household as property-holder via-a-vis the succeeding generations… As a type such a "clan state" (*Geschlechterstaat*) should be clearly distinguished from any type of feudal or patrimonial state or state with hereditary offices (*Amsstaat*), regardless of the fluid historical transitions» [5: 1136].

Three important points in this Weber's passage are worth to be recapitulated. First, an individual charisma may be depersonalized and transferred to the blood descendants of the ruler. Second, such charisma is not an individual inheritance but the property of the ruler's household or a lineage. Third, the political organization that emerges out of ruler's lineage represents a "clan state" which should be distinguished from any types of premodern states (patrimonial, feudal, etc.). As I will show below, politically the Mongol polity was precisely such a clan state.

How is the heir of the charismatic ruler identified? In dynastic states, transfer of authority usually follows a certain order of succession: elective (by election or acclamation), lineal (from a parent to a child), lateral (from an older sibling to a younger sibling), seniority (to the next senior person in the kin). Weber alludedto the stabilizing impact of primogeniture (lineal succession from a father to a first-born child) in the West but did not elaborate on that point. In this essay I would like to make a somewhat different argument. It is reasonable to suggestthat it was not such and such order of succession that mattered most but consistency in application of such pattern. For a new succession tradition – whether it is based on primogeniture, seniority, or an election - to take root, it had to be applied consistently and uniformly.I suggest that succession order consistency solidifies a new dynastic tradition and sustains legitimacy of the royal authority.

While succession order consistency tends to strengthen a dynastic authority, succession order ambiguity, conversely, undermines it. Such inconsistency, when rulers are elevated to kingship following some ad hoc considerations, particularly if combined with other adverse factors (such as elite polygamy) generates multiple contenders to the throne.In a context of succession order ambiguity, orderly transfer of power becomes problematic while coercive usurpation of a throne more likely. From time to time, the state descends into the "time of trouble" when matters of authority are decided by use of force. Because legitimacy of the aristocratic contesters, as compared to legitimacy of the charismatic founders of the dynasty,tends to be lower, such interregnum crises are likely to end up in disintegration of the nomadic state. A centralized empire breaks down into several successor states or devolves into the decentralized aristocratic orders that had dominated the steppe before the charismatic ruler's centralizing reforms.

The charismatic authority and dynastic succession in the Mongol

empire. Until the early thirteenth century, the Turco-Mongolic tribes existed in the form of decentralized aristocratic orders governed by chieftains and the tribal elders [6]. Although the nomads' activities were regulated by century-old customs, that did not preclude clan rivalries and intertribal conflicts. Typically, to ascend to power a would-be overlord had to go through the ruthless tanistry competition against numerous aristocratic rivals. The first prerequisite for participating in such contestation was having a strong military following. The power of the warlord was determined by his ability to fight enemies and bring about generous rewards to his followers. Most such warbands remained relatively small. Occasionally, when confronted with a challenge of settled civilizations, the nomads formed larger confederations. That did not happen often. It required a fortunate combination of circumstances and truly extraordinary efforts to unite the disaggregated clans into the politically centralized community. That could have been accomplished only by the charismatic leaders who were able to make a radical break with the traditional lifeways. Not a surprise, some historians view such transformations the genuine political revolutions [7].

The Mongol warlord Temüjin (who was enthroned as Genghis Khan in 1206) was born in one of the senior lines of the ruling Borjigin dynasty. Despite his aristocratic origin, Temüjin's political career began inauspiciously. His father was poisoned by the Tatarswhen he was a child, and Temüjin's family, abandoned by the members of his tribe, spent several years in poverty. However, the young man's noble origin and his skill in building coalition alliances with the powerful patrons helped Temüjin to defeat his rivals and extend this authority to the neighboring steppe tribes. Fortunately for Temüjin and his influential allies, the Jin dynasty in Northern China became impatient with the bothersome Tatars, who exercise hegemony in the steppe at that time. The Kerait chieftain Toghrul and Temüjin took advantage of Jin support and routed the Tatars, who were almost completely exterminated. When Toghrul decided to get rid of the increasingly dangerous young associate, Temüjin struck the preemptive blow and defeated the elderly chieftain. After subordinating the rival tribes, Temüjin was enthroned as the Genghis Khan in 1206. The new khan has turned his personal guard into the core of the nascent state and instituted a regular army based on the decimal system. Once the new patrimonial state was thus established, Genghis Khan initiated a series of the military expeditions to Northern China and the Middle Asia. The long-range expeditions were continued by the Temüjin's sons and grandsons who created the largest contiguous empire in the history of the world stretching from Korea in the East to Hungary in the West.

Shall one consider Genghis Khan a charismatic leader? To address this question, we need to turn to the Mongols' representations of the world. Historically, the Mongols worshipped Tengri, the universal, impersonal deity of the Sky. Everything that happened in the world was due to the will of Tengri. One's power, strength, and energy (*kuchu*) was given by Tengri and represented an unambiguous sign of divine selection [8: 87-90]. Such person was said to possess (*sul'de*), or a sacred force [9: 245]. Once elevated to the position of supreme authority, the leader was deemed a universal monarch who ruled the ecumene due to universality of the Sky and who possessed a mandate - in fact, a duty – to conquer the whole world. The spread of his power over all places under the Sky was only a question of time. The locus of the charismatic power travelled wherever the nine-tailed banner of the ruler went. Charisma of the Khan grew by absorbing the charisma of the rulers

that he had subordinated [9: 185]. It was Genghis Khan's *sul'de*, bestowed by Tengri, that allowed him to make a break with the tradition, a drastic reorganization of the steppe society on the patrimonial principles, a nothing short, for some scholars, of the political revolution [7].

How was the power of the founder of the dynasty transferred to his descendants? The Mongols did not follow a consistent policy of power transfer [10]. The only strict rule of succession was that the new Great Khan must be a male descendant of Genghis Khan and his senior wife Borte. However, the choice of a new ruler after a death of his predecessor was affected by many intervening factors: a selection by his predecessor, a personal choice of a regent (usually a widow of the deceased Khan), a contender's control over the large military force, proximity of the contender's appanage to the imperial center, his personal reputation, and the balance of forces at the kurultai (a tribal assembly of the Mongol aristocracy that elected the Khan) [11:206–209]. Later on, ambiguity associated with the rank order of these factors have made succession transitions full of uncertainty, intrigue, and, eventually,violence.

Of course, few foresaw such problems in the beginning. Initially, a personal choice of Genghis Khan who designated his third son Ögedei his heir remained the decisive factor. Genghis Khan chose his successor in 1219, on the eve of his expedition against Khwarazm, which was expected to be arduous and dangerous. Due to mutual animosity between the elder sons, Jochi and Chagatai, Temüjin selected his third son Ögedei, asa compromise acceptabletoeveryone. The other sons of Genghis Khan – Jochi, Chagatai, and Tolui – swore to respect the will of their father [12: 366]. In 1227, Genghis Khan entered the world of spirits. Although the result of the kurultai, which convened after a two-year period of mourning, was by no means a foregone conclusion (some nobles expressed preference for Tolui, the youngest son of Genghis Khan and the regent), the consensus among the senior members (*aqa-nar*) of the Borjigin ruling clan (*altan urugh*) – the guardians and interpreters of the Mongol tradition - ensured the orderly transition of power. When the *aqa-nar* informed the kurultai of the Ögedei's candidacy, the nominee, as expected, declined the throne,and offered rulership to the elders. The *aqa-nur*, in their turn, referred to the will of his father, which must not be violated. After being "persuaded" to accept the offer, Ögedei was literally elevated to the throne by his brothers Chagatai and Tolui and uncle Temüge-otchigin [8: 50-51]. All guests took off their hats, loosed their belts, and threw them over the shoulders, allowing the spirit of Tengri entering their bodies. An election of a new Khan has recreated the spiritual Mongol universe, in which the new ruler became a sacred center providing universal harmony and stability [9: 205].

Khan Ögedei, who ruled for twelve years until his death in 1241, presided over the spectacular success of the Mongol armies in the Middle East and Northern China. Ögodei has also built the first capital of the empire called Karakorum in central Mongolia. Although his authority was widely respected, his deathunleashed a series of events that made this succession less orderly than the previous one. First, the interregnum lasted much longer, almost five years. Although Ögodei wished to see his grandson Shiremun his successor, Ögodei's widow Töregene, who became aregent after his death, came up with a plan to enthrone their son Güyük, hoping to rule from behind his back. After removing the officials loyal to Ögedei, and spending wealth on lavish gifts to the aristocracy, she was able to gain support of a large part of the *aqa-nar*. Güyük was elected the Khan but not everything went smoothly this time. First, Batu, a son of Jochi and the senior

member of the Borjigin clan, declined to attend the gathering on the pretext of his poor health. In reality, his dislike of Güyük was well-known. Second, Genghis Khan's younger brother Temüge-otchigan attempted to organize a coup to seize power but his poorly executed conspiracy was promptly exposed and Temüge was murderedsoon thereafter. Most mysteriously, shortly after Güyük's enthronement Tögerene died. For most guests and foreign officials, invited to the ceremony, the ritual of succession proceeded in good order, but the ominous cracks and fractures in the ruling clan began to develop below the surface.

The sudden death of Güyük two years later opened the period of division and uncertainty. Khan's death happened when he marched at the head of the large army to the West, which prompted historians to speculate if Güyük wished to settle accounts with his nemesis Batu. In any case, the widow of Güyük, Oghul Qaimish promptly informed the members of the family about Güyük's death and was authorized to conduct the business of the state as a regent. In meanwhile, Batu, the senior member of the ruling clan, called the kurultai in the location Ala Qumaq (modern-day Kazakhstan) to select a new khan. The choice of the place was unusual because normally kurultais convened in Mongolia. Many clan members chose not to attend the meeting, including two sons and a nephew ofGüyük, whowere obvious candidates for the nomination. A disagreement about succession among the Ögodeids, who established three different courts, contributed to uncertainty. In meantime, Batu has gathered support for Möngke, a grandson of Genghis Khan and representative of the house of Tolui (the younger son of the ruler) who was elected the khan. Because this decision was not universally accepted,Batu and Tolui's widow Sorghaghtani convened the second kurultai in 1251, this time in Mongolia. Although Batu himself did not attend the meeting, he dispatchedthree *tumens* (about 30,000 strong) under command of his brother and a son to ensure the right outcome. The sidelined junior members of Güyük's family decided to seize power and attempted to bring weapons to kurultai, hiding them in carts used for transporting large yurts. Their plot was discovered by Möngke's falconer who was searching for a stray camel and ran into a suspicious caravan. Möngke sent troops and captured weapons. Güyük's sons, who denied involvement in the plot, were allowed to participate in the kurultai under the close watch of the royal guard but after the end of the meeting Möngke initiated a large-scale purge of his political rivals. Although sons of Güyük were sent to exile, dozens of Mongol nobles fell victims of executions. The house of Ögodei was almost completely decimated and forever lost its bid for power [7: 145-149].

For a time being, the Toluid revolution has brought about positive changes. Under Möngke, the Mongol empire has reached the apogee of its power. Möngke made every effort to revive the cult of his grandfather and raise the status of his father's lineage. Tolui was retroactively elevated to the rank of an emperor (whom he never was). Möngke renewed the Mongols' quest for the world supremacy mandated by Tengri. With this mission in mind, he sent his brothers Hulagu and Kublai, who received the titles of *ilkhans* (subordinate khans), to conquer the Middle East and Sung China. At home, Möngke has undertaken a series of reforms aimed at political and administrative centralization of the realm. The authority of the central secretariat, which now was staffed by Möngke's trusted people, was augmented while autonomy of the appanage princes was curtailed. The ruler has ordered to conduct a census of all subjects of the empire and imposed a uniform fiscal system. His reign was

short, however. Möngke died in 1259, while on a military campaign against Sung Empire in South China. The empire has entered a tumultuous succession crisis from which it has never reemerged [7].

Great Khan Möngke was survived by his eight-year-old son Űrüng-Tash and three brothers, Kublai, Hulagu, and Ariq Böke. Möngke has never publicly identified his future successor. Yet, before his and Kublai's departure for a campaign in China, he left his youngest brother Ariq Böke to manage the daily operations of the state. Mongol troops advanced in a four-prong offensive and Möngke and Kublai operated autonomously from each other. When a report of Möngke's death reached the capital, Ariq Böke forwarded the grievous news to the members of the ruling clan. Still in China, Kublai decided against an immediate return to Karokorum. It was suggested that he wished to win a major victory first and return home with a triumph. In meantime, Ariq Böke obtained support of his nomination from somekeyclan members, including Berke of the Golden Horde and Alghu of Ilkhanate,and reportedly began gathering troops for a showdown with his brother. After learning about this turn of events, Kublai decided that it was the time to act. In 1260, at the kurultai in Kaifeng (North China) he was elected the Great Khan and, in addition to that, adopted the title of the Chinese emperor. Strategically Kublai's position was better. He controlled the vast resources of China. His supporters have cut supplies of food to Karokorum. Ariq Böke had to retreat to the only available resource base in the upper Yenisei valley where his troops suffered several defeats by Kublai's forces. Hestill counted on support of Chagatai Khan Alghu, who initially pledged his allegiance to the steppe ruler. However, after learning about Kublai's successes, Alghu has turned to the side of the more fortunate Toluid. Left with few allies, troops, and supplies, Ariq Böke has surrendered to Kublai.

Despite the defeat of Ariq Böke, Kublai's victory did not bring him power over the Mongol ulus. The split among the Toluids provided opportunities for the disgruntled members of collateral lines to reassert their power in their respective domains [12: 411-413]. When the conflict erupted, Anghu, a grandson of Chagatai, has deposed a Toluid appointee Mubarak Khan and pursued independent policy thereafter. Kaidu, one of the few Ögodeids who had survived the Möngke's purge,has returned to the fray with vengeance. He hasorganized an alliance of the Genghisid princes in Central Asia, which engaged in fighting against Kublai for years. A new ruler of the Jochi ulus, Berke, began a long war against Kublai's only steadfast ally, Hulagu. Few of the princes openly defied Kublai but hardly any of them followed his edicts. When Kublai invited his Western co-rulers to come to the kurultai to confirm him asa Great Khan, all of them declined to attend. Apparently, they preferred to keep authority over their domains undivided. As a centralized polity, the Mongol empire has ceased to exist [13].

Let's recapitulate the findings of the historical analysis. According to the Mongol representations, Tengri had endowed Temüjin with charismatic power (*sul'de*) which enabled him to unify steppe pastoralists and defeat his powerful opponents. That does not mean, however, that his authority was absolute. It was legitimate insofar as it rested on a powerful synergy of charismatic and traditional principles. Because of that, Ögedei's enthronement enacted by the senior members of the ruling Borjigin clan passed undisputed, even though it did not follow any conventional order of royal succession. In the second succession episode, the will of the deceased ruler, Ögedei was neglected, because khan's widow, Tögorene, has decided to place their son,

Güyük, on the throne. Although some senior members of the *aqa nar*had reservations about this choice, Tögorene has managed to secure support of the large part of the Borjigin's clan and make Güyük the ruler. Güyük's sudden death left the Ögedeids unprepared to the rise to the occasion. Möngke, the member of the Toluid line, supported by the senior member of the royal house, was elected the khan. Möngke was an effective ruler, who managed to purge the dissenters, recentralize the empire, and expand its frontiers to Korea in the East and Rus in the West. Yet, when Möngke died without leaving an official heir, the succession struggle between his brothers Ariq Böke and Kublai turned into the full-scale civil war, which resulted in fracturing and fragmentation of the clan state.

Thus, four power transitions, examined in this article, demonstrate that charismatic authority of Genghis Khan has not initiated institutionalization of an effective intergenerational mechanism of power transfer. In absence of a consistent pattern of transition, the outcome of each successive interregnum became affected by the multitude of contingencies, a sum of which consistently eroded legitimacy of the rulers. Each Genghisid appealed to the sacred tradition, but the tradition itself was twisted and turned the way it benefitted the pretenders. The representative institution (*kurulai*) became the instrument in the hands of the rivals and the outcome of the internecine conflict was decided by means of violence and coercion. Using Michael Mann's terminology, the impact of the ideological power - either incarnated in an incumbent's charisma or institutionalized as a custom - has declined whereas the role of the military power was enhanced [14]. Describing that last stage of the Mongol empire, Morris Rossabi observed: "Raw military power, not any particular principle of succession, provided the strongest challengers for the khanate" [13: 47].

Conclusion. For centuries, the Inner Eurasian nomads existed in the form of the disaggregated tribal communities. Intertribal rivalries and conflicts were ubiquitous in the steppe. Obviously, political disorder was detrimental for the nomads. However, only an exceptionally resourceful and fortunate warlord could occasionally establish a centralized hierarchical authority, unify the steppe dwellers, and mobilize them for the military campaigns in search of wealth and glory. The success in such endeavors was interpreted as the sign of divine selection and provided such warlord with respect and admiration of his followers. However, charismatic authority was unstable. Leaders were mortal. One possible solution was institutionalization of the depersonalized charismatic authority in aclan state, in which members of the ruling clan elected the new ruler. For such a tradition to become institutionalized, royal selection had to follow a consistent and uniform pattern. Yet, in most nomad-dominated empires that has not happened. The multitude of factors interfered into the orderly processes of succession turning them into prolonged interregnum periods full of uncertainty and bloodshed. With each new generation, succession order inconsistency undermined the royal authority. In combination with the mounting geopolitical challenges, diminished legitimacy of the rulers generated violent internecine conflicts and contributed to the fall of the nomad-dominated empires.

Why did transitions of authority fail to follow the consistent order? The nomadic communities operated in a politically volatile environment. As stated above, conflicts and intertribal rivalries were ubiquitous. In absence of bureaucratic officialdom and due to highly personalized nature of authority,

the well-being and sometimes the very existence of the tribal community hinged upon the organizational, military, and diplomatic skills of the ruler. Multiple contingencies demanded immediate attention and resolute action. The costs of having too young or an inept leader could have been very high. That's why the senior members of the ruling clan preferred to elect the most able prince, not the one who was entitled to the throne by the right of primogeniture or based on some other formal principle. In other words, political legitimacy rested on one's ability and actual performance as a leader.

In this article I discussed the political legitimization in the Mongol Empire of the *Inner Eurasia*. May this argument help to explicate the experiences of the nomadic and post-nomadic societies of the *Outer Eurasia*, in the Middle East and North Africa, for instance? One obvious case for consideration is the Arab Caliphate. In contrast to the Inner Asian polities, the Caliphate existed for unusually long time, about 636 years. What were the factors that prolonged its existence? Two factors, I believe. First, the Caliphate was less of a nomadic community than the Mongol state. From the very beginning this post-tribal polity included substantial portion of urban population; indeed, the very beginning of the Arab power originated in Muhammad's prophetic mobilization in Mecca and Medina. Later, Damascus and Baghdad served the capitals for the state. In some ways, the Caliphate was not very far from the settled agricultural civilizations. Second and even more importantly, political mobilization initiated by Muhammed resulted in creating an altogether different charismatic community. Whereas Genghis Khan's charisma has become institutionalized in a clan state, which by default excluded outsiders from exercise of power, Muhammad's charismatic authority created a transcendental religious community, driven by Islam, a far more effective integrative and regulating force than Mongols' brutal coercion. Using Hamid Dabashi's terminology, the Mongols represented the brotherhood-in-blood, whereas the Arabs created the brotherhood-in-faith [15: 49].

Finally, I have to make two stipulations. First, in this essay I have factored out exogenous factors of the fall of nomadic states, such as, for example, the conquests by other states, the deadly epidemics, or environmental deterioration. Obviously, in some cases, such exogenous factors played a critical role. The fall of the Western Avar Khaganate, for instance, was mainly a result of its defeat by the Franks. Second, I do not claim that succession order ambiguity was the only endogenous factor causing a decline. Typically, it contributed to weakening of the nomadic polities in conjunction with other endogenous variables. Historical evidence suggests that it was a necessary factor, but not a sufficient factor of the fall of the steppe empires. Still, its effect, as I have shown above, was essential.

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