

Mobility, Empire and Cross-Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia (MONGOL)

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This essay reviews the ERC-funded project *Mobility, Empire and Cross-Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia* conducted at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1/2013-12/2017). The project has studied the impact of the Mongol Empire (1206-1368) on world history through the prism of mobility. It aimed to explain why, how, when, and to where people ideas and artifacts moved across Eurasia and what were the outcomes of these population movements. Guided by »the humanistic approach to world history«, namely combining a world history perspective with a close reading of multilingual primary sources, the project has created a sophisticated prosopographical database for studying these movements. The database records multilingual information about people who were active in Mongol Eurasia, currently indexing more than 13,500 persons. This unique resource enables the study of various groups of migrants (tribes, captives, experts, etc.); networks of economic and cultural transfer; and various imperial institutions (army, diplomacy, imperial sons-in-law), thereby illuminating the era's social and cultural history. Stressing the pivotal role of the nomadic Mongols in initiating population movements, it analyses how these movements created multiple cross-cultural contacts; triggered massive ethnic, religious and geopolitical transformations, and led to a closer integration of the old world. The enhanced connectivity created both a common imperial culture – material, political, administrative – across Eurasia, and relativism of knowledge and religions. These, in turn, left a considerable imperial legacy to later polities, and helped shape the transition from the medieval to the early modern world. Yielding more than 80 publications so far, while various books, volumes and dissertations are in the making; training and grooming a considerable portion of the next generation of Mongol Empire scholars; and contributing significantly to the globalization of Mongolian studies worldwide, the project's main legacy has been the study of the Mongol Empire on its own terms and within its full Eurasian context.

Keywords: Mongol Empire; Mobility; Migration; Cross-Cultural Contacts; Digital Humanities; World History; Networks; China and the Muslim World; Islamization; Nomadic Culture.

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The Mongol Empire (1206-1368) created a unique moment in world history: in the 13th and 14th centuries Chinggis Khan and his heirs founded and ruled the largest contiguous empire ever – an empire that at its height extended from Korea to Hungary, and from Iraq, Tibet, and Burma to Siberia. Moreover, ruling over roughly two thirds of the Old World and profoundly impacting regions beyond its reach, the Mongol Empire and its policies created remarkable mobility throughout Eurasia, with people, ideas, and artifacts traversing vast geographical and cultural expanses. This high degree of mobility constituted the first step towards robust cross-cultural exchanges in fields as varied as science, art, trade and religion, to name just a few. It triggered massive ethnic, religious and geopolitical transformations, led to a closer integration of the Old World, contributed to the discovery of the New World, left a considerable imperial legacy to later polities, and helped shape the transition from the medieval to the early modern world.

The study of this fascinating period and its impact on world history through the prism of mobility has been the crux of the ERC-funded project described below.¹ Mobility – the ability of people, ideas, and artifacts to move or be moved across both space and society – has become a key concept in the study of contemporary history and the social sciences,² yet it has been a forceful catalyst for major transformations in pre-modern periods as well, and the Mongol Empire is an outstanding example of its impact. Mobility saturated all levels of Mongolian life and history, from the Mongols' pastoral-nomadic economic adaptation, through their unprecedented military success, and up to the shaping of their imperial institutions. As a demographically marginal group, without experience in administrating sedentary territories, the Mongols were able to create and rule their vast empire only by fully mobilizing the resources – both human and material – that they extracted from the regions under their control. The rise of the empire, its continued expansion, and the establishment of its administration therefore involved a huge mobilization of people – followed by goods, techniques, institutions, texts and ideas – throughout the empire and further afield. This gigantic array of movements resulted in far reaching transformations, both intended and otherwise. As mentioned above, they created countless opportunities for cross-cultural transfer and enhanced identity changes such as the robust expansion of Islam and the considerable overhaul of the steppe people's ethnic makeup. Furthermore, the movements triggered significant demographic changes, swayed the politics, economy and culture of neighboring states, and expedited the spread of the Black Death across Eurasia. It blended imperial concepts of various origins (the Steppe, China, Islam), creating a set of functioning imperial institutions that bequeathed a different institutional legacy to each of the various civilizations that the Mongols encountered.

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2 On the »mobilities turn« in the social sciences see, e.g., Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*; Urry, *Mobilities*; Adey, *Mobility*; Cresswell, *Mobilities I: Catching Up*.

Unprecedented human mobility was apparent chiefly in the period in which the empire existed as a unified, ever-expanding entity ruled from Mongolia (1206-1260), but continued on a smaller – but still quite significant – scale when the empire was eventually dissolved into four khanates or *uluses*,³ each of them a regional empire headed by a Chinggisid branch. The state headed by the Great Khan or Qa'an (in Mongolian *Qa'an ulus*) was centered in China and also ruled in Mongolia, Korea and Tibet. It became known as the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) and enjoyed a nominal, though not uncontested, primacy over its counterparts. The Ilkhanate (1260-1335, in Mongolian *Ulus Hülegü*) was centered in modern Iran and Iraq, also ruling in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, parts of Anatolia and the Caucasus. The Golden Horde (1260-1502, *Ulus Jochi*) was centered in the Volga region, ruling from the eastern border of Hungary to Siberia, as well as in the Russian principalities. The Chaghadaid Khanate (1260-1678, *Ulus Chaghadaid*) held power in Central Asia, from eastern Xinjiang (China) to Uzbekistan, up to Tamerlane's rise to power in 1370, and continued to rule in eastern Central Asia up to the late 1600s.⁴ Despite the many, and often bloody, disputes between the four polities, they retained a strong sense of Chinggisid unity. In the mid-14th century, all four khanates became embroiled in political crises that led to the collapse of the Ilkhanate and Yuan China, and considerably weakened the two steppe khanates. The fall of the Qa'an state in 1368 is generally deemed to be the end of the »Mongol Moment« in world history.

The project has aimed to assay mobility patterns under Mongol rule and the substantial changes it wrought. It is guided by two main questions: First: Why, how, when and to where did people, ideas and artifacts move in Mongol Eurasia? And second: What were the outcomes of these huge population movements?

More specifically, the project has focused on three interrelated themes: modes of migrations, the cultural and economic transfer; and the creation of a new imperial elite and institutions. *Modes of migrations* suggests a typology of migrations, along the full continuum between the coerced and the voluntary, and studies migrant groups and diasporas of various ethnicities, origins, destinations, professions and situations.

The cultural and economic transfer has been examined through a series of studies devoted to different professional groups in the Mongol Empire, such as astronomers, musicians, military experts and merchants, and highlights the religious, scientific and commercial networks within and beyond the empire's frontiers on the local, regional and continental level. This part has sought to explore the social context of bearers of such highly-prized skills in the Mongol world, examining their background, training, career patterns, patronage, relations with the Mongols, connections with other professional and social groups in their local communities (city) and beyond (khanate), and ties with their counterparts in other polities.

The third theme, *Institutions and Elites*, highlighting social mobility, has traced the development of the key imperial institutions (notably the imperial sons-in-law, with reference e.g., to the ruler's guard, the postal system, the juridical institutions, the diplomatic corps) through their personnel, either through a comparative perspective across Eurasia, or in specific parts of the Empire, thereby reassessing Mongol administration.

3 *Ulus* in Mongolian originally meant the people subject to a certain lord, and later also became an equivalent of a nation and state (the meaning it still has in modern Mongolian today).

4 The Mongol names of the three *uluses* derive from the names of their founders, two sons and a grandson of Chinggis Khan.

Methodologically, the project has been grounded in »the humanistic approach to world history«,⁵ namely, it combines a world history perspective with rigorous philological tools and close acquaintance with multilingual sources and different historiographical traditions (notably Chinese, Muslim – both Arabic and Persian – and Old Slavonic [medieval Russian]), thereby transcending the boundaries between different area studies. Simultaneously, it has been informed by insights from the social and life sciences – migration theory, network analysis, comparative study of empires and movement ecology.⁶

The project has benefitted from – and contributed to – the great deal of scholarly attention that has been devoted to the Mongol Empire over the past few decades.⁷ Notably, it has been inspired by the seminal works of Thomas T. Allsen.⁸ Familiar with sources in Chinese, Persian and Russian and fully aware of other languages and genres, Allsen looks at the empire from a holistic perspective, putting the Mongols and their nomadic culture at the center of his inquiry and highlighting the cultural exchange that took place under their rule. He has convincingly demonstrated that the Mongol Empire was not merely a passive medium that, by virtue of its expansive size and the relative *Pax Mongolica*, provided a propitious setting for trade and cultural interaction. Instead, the Mongols were the principal agents that advanced, cultivated, and directed such contacts and served as a filter that determined which particular cultural elements would be disseminated across the steppe and beyond. Allsen has also highlighted the importance of mobilization of resources and population movements for the Mongol Empire's development. His work has been the point of departure for the present project.

Practically, the project has been firmly based on close readings of a wide assortment of primary sources in multifarious languages, genres and disciplines. The information was classified into a sophisticated prosopographical database, which the project has developed for studying the population movements. The database, one of the project's major achievements, aims at recording the surviving information about individuals who were active under Mongol rule in the 13th and 14th centuries. Currently we have indexed more than 13,500 persons and are still counting.

The unique multilingual fully-relational database (*JPP-SPRING*) was originally built over the infrastructure of the *Jerusalem Prosopographical Project (JPP)* initiated by Prof. Michael Lecker of the Hebrew University for studying early Islamic history. Throughout the project's years it has been updated, modified, and considerably extended according to the project's needs by our programmers, notably Alon Klein-Orbach and later Itay Zandbank. The resulting internet-based database is conducive to a highly-nuanced classification of people and reports, notably by its ability to assign keywords of various levels to each report and person.

5 Subrahmanyam, *Connected Histories*.

6 E.g., Nathan, *Movement Ecology*; Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact*; Lucassen and Lucassen, *Migration, Migration History, History*; Lucassen, Lucassen and Manning, *Migration History*; Harzig *et al.*, *What is Migration History*; Hollifield and Brettell, *Migration Theory*.

7 See Biran, *State of the Field*; Morgan, *Mongol Historiography*; and, e.g., Pederson *et al.*, *Pluvials, Droughts and the Mongol Empire*; Aigle, *Mongol Empire*; McCausland, *Mongol Century*; De Nicola and Melville, *Mongols' Middle East*; Jackson, *Mongols and Islamic World*; Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*; May, *Mongol Empire*; May and Jackson, *Mongol and Post-Mongol Asia*; Golden *et al.*, *Festschrift for Thomas T. Allsen*; Pfeiffer, *Tabriz*; Amitai and Biran, *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change*.

8 Esp. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*; Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*; Allsen, *Population Movements*.

It enables the researchers to index the connections among various people, places, tribes, periods and activities; to make complicated searches, and to reconstruct the networks that were active across the empire and beyond its frontiers. There is a certain possibility to visualize the search results on maps and SNA graphs, as well as to export the data to specific software packages (e.g. Gephi) that specialize in producing more sophisticated visualizations.

The key building blocks of the database have been the rich biographical literature of Yuan China, Ilkhanid Iran and Mamluk Egypt (in Chinese, Persian and Arabic), while the rest of this edifice is comprised of a panoply of genres, such as multilingual chronicles; geographical works, travelogues, and guides for pilgrims; local histories and gazetteers; hagiographies; genealogies, as well as religious, literary and scientific works. The literary sources have been supplemented by multilingual documents and tomb inscriptions, and while archaeological, numismatic and visual resources are not yet an integral part of our database, they have been widely used in the specific sub-projects.

Material was uploaded to the database in two ways: systematic uploading of works, and sub-project uploading. Systematic uploading was based on a list of texts which I defined, beginning with the biographical sections of *The official history of the Yuan dynasty*, and the parts dealing with Mongolian history in Rashid al-Din's *Compendium of Chronicles* (in Thackston's translation) and Juwayni's *History of World Conqueror* (in Boyle's translation), as well as *The Secret History of the Mongols* (in De Rachewiltz's translation). Relevant information has been culled out, translated into English, when necessary, and has become a report, which has been subsequently linked to relevant people, places, tribes, periods and keywords. Scholarly translations, indices, and searchable databases (e.g. the *Academia Sinica's 24 histories database* or *al-maktaba al-shamila*) were used whenever available. Whenever electronic text was available, the original text was pasted at the end of the translated or summarized report.

In addition to the systematic uploading, each team member can upload material specifically relevant for his/her own sub-project into his/her private drawer of the database. It is mostly at this stage that more specific sources, including scientific, religious and literary works, some of which are still in manuscript, were consulted.

Texts were chosen according to their relevance and their degree of readability, and while we started with translated texts, many sources have been translated for the first time in the database. Most importantly, we translated and indexed a significant portion of the biographies of the *Yuanshi*, the official history of the Yuan dynasty (in Chinese), including all the biographies of the non-Han people, most of which had never been translated before. Furthermore, we located and translated a considerable number of Arabic biographies related to the Mongols or Mongol-ruled territories. While some of the Arabic material originated in the Mongol realm (notably in Iraq but also in Central Asia), most of it was written under the Mamluk Sultanate, which governed Egypt and Syria (1250-1517) in tandem with the Mongols. This Arabic material is one of the largest untapped reservoirs of sources for the study of the Mongol Empire. It is especially relevant to the history of the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde, but also pertinent for the study of the other Mongol polities.⁹

9 Amitai and Biran, Arabic Sources.

The database therefore not only enables each researcher to index his/her information but also to use materials outside his/her linguistic proficiency (e.g. someone working on Muslim merchants can use the database for obtaining information on Chinese and European merchants, thereby enabling him to make comparisons or broaden his/her perspective; someone working on Persian materials can enrich his/her research by using the database's Arabic materials, etc.). It is also extremely helpful for identifying persons encountered in text from the 13th-14th centuries, mainly in the Muslim world, as well as serving as a good starting point for studying nearly any aspect of Mongol Eurasia: my study on captives in Mongol Eurasia,¹⁰ for example, began by searching for the keyword »captive« and checking the 259 relevant reports the database then held. While many of them contained merely generic statements (e.g. many captives were taken during the battle), others revealed the personal stories of those who were taken captive, took captives or redeemed captives, thereby suggesting an outline for the article. Currently the database is available for project members only, though limited guest access is available upon request. When the project's dissertations and books, which are based on the database, are completed, namely in about two years' time, we hope to make it open access.

The main novelty of this project has been its *scale*: it looks at the Mongol Empire from a holistic perspective, in its full Eurasian context. This perspective enables it to compare developments on an unprecedented scale and to stress the role of the Mongols and their indigenous culture in shaping the late medieval world.

The project is also unique due to its direct access to sources in Persian, Chinese, Arabic and Old Slavonic and its full awareness and use of sources in other languages, as well as by its use of advanced computer technology. This combination has allowed the project to move between micro, meso and macro history, moving from one individual or one family through the specific treatment of a certain professional group, city, tribe, diaspora, institution and up to continent-wide developments.

Achievements:

Apart from the database described above, in terms of publications, by its formal ending (December 2017) the project had yielded more than 80 publications – published, in press and accepted – while quite a few additional products (books, volumes, dissertations, articles) are in different stages of preparation. These publications indeed reflect the full spectrum of micro, meso and macro history.

On the micro level, I would like to point out two biographical collections, one already published and the other in an advanced stage of preparation. The first, titled: *In the Service of the Khans: Elites in Transition in Mongol Eurasia*, a special section of *Asiatische Studien* 71/4 (December 2017), 1051-1245, includes eleven articles – an introduction and ten annotated biographies, each prepared by a project member. The Mongol Empire generated massive transformations in the composition and functioning of elites across Eurasia as the new rulers adapted to ruling an enormous empire with a considerable sedentary realm, while employing huge numbers of their subjects in the imperial armies, courts and administrations, often in places far away from the latter's original homes. The articles included in this volume portray

10 Biran, *Encounters among Enemies*.

a multifaceted picture of the empire's new and multi-ethnic elite – from princes through generals, administrators, and vassal kings, to scientists and artists; including Mongols, Koreans, Chinese and Muslims. Moreover, it highlights the criteria for social mobility, such as early surrender to Chinggis Khan; noble birth (i.e. being related to the families of Chinggis Khan, contemporary or pre-Mongol ruling houses, or the Prophet Muhammad); membership in the Mongol guard (*keshig*); and, especially, merits, such as excellence in warfare, administration, literacy in Mongolian script or astronomy, to name just a few. The articles also illuminate bigger issues such as acculturation (of both the Mongols and their subjects), Islamization, family relations, ethnicity, imperial administration, and scientific exchange, as well as historiographical questions. The volume's title refers to *In the Service of the Khan*, published by Igor de Rachewiltz *et al.*,¹¹ but while the original book dealt with some of the main actors of the Mongol imperial enterprise, our volume focuses on second or third-tier elites, most of them hitherto not widely discussed (if at all) in the research literature. These assembled annotated biographies not only add new primary sources – translated from Chinese, Persian and Arabic – to the study of the Mongol Empire, but also provide us with important insights into the social history of a period unique in its rapid transformations.

The second biographical collection, which I edited together with two former project members Dr. Jonathan Brack and Dr. Francesca Fiaschetti, and which has just been submitted to California University Press, is titled *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia: Generals, Merchants, Intellectuals*. Addressed to both scholars and students but catering specifically for classroom needs, the volume illustrates life along the Silk Roads by focusing on the individual stories of members of three, sometimes overlapping, elite groups – military commanders, merchants, and intellectuals – both male and female – from across Eurasia. The individuals featured in the volume again came from diverse backgrounds and ethnic compositions. They include Mongols, Chinese, Muslims, Qipchaqs and Europeans. Their personal experiences elucidate aspects of Eurasian cross-cultural contacts and physical and social mobility, from the formative years of Chinggis Khan (r. 1206-27) until the empire's collapse during the second half of the 14th century. It evinces some of the types of migrations characteristic of Mongol Eurasia (e.g., temporary and permanent relocation; coerced, impelled and voluntary migration; individual and collective mobility; as well as refugees, labour and student migrations); illustrates the scale, diversity, and creativity of the cultural and economic exchange along the Mongol Silk Roads, and offers a compelling starting point for any discussion of the Mongol Empire's impact on China, the Muslim world, and the West.

Most of the project's publications can be classified as dealing with meso-history, namely located between the micro and the macro, while tackling issues relevant to the project's themes, such as migrations – of tribes,¹² ethnicities,¹³ merchants,¹⁴ astronomers,¹⁵ musicians,¹⁶ and captives¹⁷ in various contexts; imperial institutions, such as Mongol diplomacy,¹⁸

11 Rachewiltz *et al.*, *In the Service*

12 Landa, *Eurasian Migrations*; Landa, *From Mongolia to Khwarazm*; Landa, *Oirats in the Ilkhanate*.

13 Biran, *Mongols and Nomadic Identity*.

14 Gill, *Commerce in the Ilkhanid State*; Qiu, *Mission of Fakhr al-Dīn*; Qiu, *Background and Aftermath*.

15 Yang, *Like Stars in the Sky*; Yang, *Reading the Yuan Sky*; Yang, *Networks of Astronomers*.

16 Biran, *Music in the Conquest of Baghdad*.

17 Biran, *Encounters among Enemies*.

18 Fiaschetti, *Six Duties*, Fiaschetti, *Tradition, Innovation and Construction*; Fiaschetti, *Borders of Rebellion*; Fiaschetti, *Konzept des Auslandes*; Grinberg, *Foreign Policies of Janibeg*.

law,¹⁹ tax exemptions²⁰ and imperial sons-in-law;²¹ as well as migration of knowledge – both scientific and religious, with a special focus on astronomy²² on the one hand, and Islamization²³ on the other, but with reference also to »comparative religions«, namely presenting various religious traditions to different audiences – Mongols, Muslims or Chinese –²⁴ as well as to mutual perceptions of Islam and Muslims in China and of China in Iran.²⁵

My own work, apart from the items mentioned above and the macro-projects described below, has focused on several inter-related topics, namely Mongol and pre-Mongol Central Asia, in which emigration was a major phenomenon;²⁶ historiography;²⁷ and the cultural history of Ilkhanid Baghdad.²⁸ This last theme is also the subject of a future book, in which the city will serve as a microcosmos for analyzing the project's themes of migrations, cross-cultural contacts and imperial institutions. Baghdad's alleged destruction and revival will also be tackled, and its fate under Mongol rule will be compared to that of Hangzhou, the capital of Song China, under the Yuan government.

In the meso category, I would also like to highlight another soon-to-be published special issue, as well as several research projects (three PhD theses and two book volumes) prepared by project members.

Mobility and Transformation: Cultural Exchange in Mongol Eurasia, will appear in the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* issue 62/2-3 (2019). The volume consists of an introduction and seven studies (by Michal Biran, Sheila Blair, Peter Jackson, Kim Hodong, David Robinson, Qiao Yang and Yokkaichi Yashuhiru), most of which were first presented at the project's first big conference in 2014 (A Joint Research Conference of the Institute for Advanced Studies and the Israel Science Foundation, titled *Mobility and Transformations: New Directions in the Study of the Mongol Empire*). Whether they encompass most of the continent in a comparative perspective (Kim, Blair, Jackson, Yang) or focus on its eastern (Robinson) or western (Biran, Yokkaichi) corners, they all share a holistic outlook of the empire, and highlight the impact of the Mongols' indigenous norms on the proto-global world of the 13th and 14th centuries.

19 Hodous, *Clash or Compromise*; Hodous, *Faith and the Law*.

20 Cho, *Negotiated Privilege*.

21 Landa, *From Mongolia to Khwarazm*; Landa, *Oirats in the Ilkhanate*; Landa, *Eurasian Migration*.

22 Isahaya, *Tārīkh-i Qitā*; Yang, *Like Stars in the Sky*; Isahaya and Yang, *Islamicate Astral Studies*.

23 Biran, *Islamization of Hülegü*; Landa, *New Light*; Shurany, *Islam in Northwest China*; Amir, *Sufis and Mamluks*.

24 Brack, *Mediating Sacred Kingship*; Brack, *Theologies of Auspicious Kingship*; Brack, *Mongol Mahdi*.

25 Isahaya, *Sino-Iranica*; Isahaya and Mitsuaki, *Persian Transcription*; Qiu, *The Mongol Empire in Sa'di's Poems*; Qiu, *Independent Ruler, Indefinable Role*; Qiu, *A Coup d'état*.

26 Biran, *Mental Maps*; Biran, *Mamluks and Mongol Central Asia*; Biran, *Scholarship and Science*; Biran, *Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World*; Biran, *Qarakhanid Eastern Trade*.

27 Amitai and Biran, *Arabic Sources*; Biran, *Non-Han Dynasties*.

28 Biran, *Music in the Conquest of Baghdad*; Biran, *Violence and non-Violent*; Biran, *The Fall and Rise*; Biran, *Baghdad under Ilkhanid Rule*; Biran, *Libraries, Books and Transmission of Knowledge*.

As for the dissertations that the project members are currently working on, all of them (namely the three presented here and the two in the macro section) began with prosopographic studies but developed into bigger questions. Vered Shurany tackles the Yuan army, trying to answer a simple but highly significant question: How did the Mongol army manage to unite China in the 1270s, a task that earlier nomads had never accomplished, and why, less than a century later, was this once formidable army unable to deal with Chinese rebellions and escaped back to Mongolia? Despite the obvious importance of the army to Yuan history, the issue has not been widely studied in either western or Chinese scholarship, partly due to the complex and piecemeal composition of this army. Shurany's project begins by analyzing the biographies of Yuan generals in the Yuan official history (and other sources) and then moves on to identify various components (e.g. princes, guards, navy) and institutions of the Yuan military machine, as well as their transformation throughout Yuan rule.

Matanya Gill's dissertation deals with Ilkhanid trade, highlighting the role of the *ortaqs* – merchants operating with the capital of a Mongol prince or courtier – in the complex commercial system that centered in Iran. Based on analysis of more than 250 biographies of merchants as well as the use of theories of pre-modern economic history, his work illuminates the global trade networks that the Mongols created, which covered the whole old world.

Or Amir's work belongs to the project's »Mamluk wing«,²⁹ which focuses on the study of the Mamluk Sultanate. Studying the relations between the Mamluks and their Sufi sheikhs, Amir analyses narrative, epigraphic and material sources, combining them with social sciences perspectives on holy men and cultural capital, to shed new light on social life in areas which hitherto received little attention in scholarship. He stresses the vast patronage Mamluk officers gave to Sufi shaykhs, which facilitated the further expansion and popularization of Sufism, and greatly affected the formation of vernacular Islam in the Mamluk peripheries such as Greater Syria.

As for the project's core post-doctoral fellows, Francesca Fiaschetti, who finished her PhD during the project³⁰ and is now turning it into an English book, explores aspects of Yuan diplomacy, military policy and ethnicity, with a special focus on the Yuan activity in south-east Asia. An important part of her work includes annotated translations of Chinese works, mainly the *Yuanshi* chapters on foreign countries (chapters 208-210), and the section on punitive expeditions in the *Jingshi dadian* (»Compendium for Ruling the World«), a 1330s mirror for princes (*Yuanwenlei* chapter 41). The research of Dr. Jonathan Brack, currently a Buber fellow in Jerusalem, examines cross-cultural contacts and exchanges across Asia and Iran, with a focus on the transmission of discourses on authority, sacral kingship and the afterlife during the period of Mongol rule and the early modern era. He is currently working on his first book manuscript titled *An Afterlife for the Khan: Chinggis Khan's Heaven and the Eurasian Cultures of Disputation*, which explores the lively inter-faith debates and intellectual inquiries at the Mongol courts in late medieval Iran within the broader narrative of inter-cultural

29 See e.g. Amir, *Religious Lives*; Amir, *Local Elite*; Mazor, *Rise and Fall*; Mazor, *Early Experience*; Mazor, *Topos of Predicting the Future*.

30 Fiaschetti, *Konzept des Auslandes*.

polemical encounters and exchanges across Mongol Eurasia. Through the rich polemical works of the Jewish convert to Islam and Persian vizier, physician and historian, Rashid al-Din (d. 1318), Brack examines how the inter-confessional encounters at the Mongol court, especially between representatives of the Sunnī and Shīī Muslim, Buddhist and Inner Asian religious traditions, led to experimenting with a new synthesis of sacral Muslim-Mongol kingship, extending his inquiry into the multi-confessional Mughal India (1526-1857).

Lastly, in the macro apart, I would like to introduce two other dissertations by project members, as well as my own forthcoming work. Ishayahu Landa's PhD project, submitted in early November 2018, deals with *Imperial Sons-in-Law (güregen) in Mongol Eurasia*, namely it tackles the highly selective and prestigious group of men who married into the Chinggisid family. They belonged to two groups: (a) military leaders who retained a certain segment of their tribal army and (b) vassal rulers (and in a few later cases also neighboring rulers). The tribal leaders were by far the more important group, and some lineages cemented multi-generational matrimonial alliances with the Golden Lineage from the days of Chinggis Khan up to the mid-late 14th century. Painstakingly following this unique group throughout the 13th and 14th centuries and in *all* the Mongol successor states, and based on sources in mainly Chinese, Persian, Arabic and Russian, Landa's work illuminates a unique segment of the Mongol elite, which in many cases eventually succeeded the Chinggisids. The study transforms our understanding of the organization of the Mongol army and highlights the uneasy balance between the commitment to Chinggis Khan's original policies and the practical needs of various rulers and *uluses* throughout the imperial span, as well as the shifts in nomadic identities under Mongol rules.

Yang Qiao's dissertation *Patronage, Politics and Astral Sciences in Mongol Eurasia* examines the interplay between the Mongol Empire and the astral sciences. The two questions leading the research are: How did the experts in astral sciences interact with each other and with the rulers in the Mongol Empire? How did the interaction shape the development of the astral sciences in the Mongol era? To answer them, she examines these interactions within the framework of the Mongol imperial mechanism of expert recruitment, the patronage networks, and bureaucratic, religious and educational institutions of the astral sciences, as well as critically reviewing the cross-cultural encounter of astral knowledge in a comparative approach, focusing primarily but not exclusively on Yuan China and Ilkhanid Iran. Shedding light on the interplay between empires and knowledge, and embedding the transmitted and received astral knowledge in its full social and cultural context, this work will significantly enhance our understanding of cross-cultural mechanisms in the different edges of Mongol Eurasia.

My own macro work includes, in addition to several general reviews of the empire's various aspects,³¹ one future book and two international enterprises. The book, under contract with Bloomsbury, titled *The Mongol Empire: Mobility and Transformation in the Pre-Modern World*, summarizes the project's insights. The core of the volumes analyzes specific aspects of mobility – of peoples (migrations), artifacts (economic globalization) and ideas (in the fields of science, art and cuisine; religions; collective identities; and political culture).

31 Biran, *Mongol Empire and Inter-Civilizational Exchange*; Biran, *State of the Field*, Biran, *Mongol Imperial Space*.

It highlights the multi-faceted character of cross-cultural contacts in Mongol Eurasia: not only were more elements involved in these contacts but often the interaction among them (e.g. between European and Chinese, Muslims and Chinese or even Christians and Jews) was mediated through Mongol concepts, thereby creating a multi-cultural negotiation. These cross-cultural contacts generated a quantum leap forward in knowledge – geographical, linguistic, commercial, scientific, artistic and otherwise – as well as greater Eurasian connectivity, caused first by the empire's expansion but continued and intensified by the extensive commercial, religious and scholarly networks that the Mongols promoted or facilitated. This connectivity, and the huge population movements that set the stage for it, resulted in two complementary phenomena. First, the creation of a common culture – material, political, administrative – across Eurasia, though with obvious regional variants, from which future empires later adopted various elements; and second, relativism of knowledge and religion, promoted by the Mongols' multi-cultural outlook, which favored the amalgamation of legitimization concepts, celestial insurance and second opinions. Such connectivity and relativism can result in various forms of exchange, including diffusion, syncretism, conversion, crosspollination, acculturation, competition, conflict, or none of the above. Yet they certainly broadened the intellectual horizons of the Mongols, their subjects and neighbors, and modified the existing modes of thinking across Eurasia. Moreover, such relativism and commonalities, combined with the long-distance commercial and financial exchanges including the growing role of maritime trade; the formation of new collectivities due to ethnic and religious changes; as well as the notion of universal empire headed by sacred kingship, were all instrumental in ushering in the transition from the medieval to the early modern world. Based on close readings in a wide variety of primary sources from both the East and the West, and a sophisticated synthesis of the burgeoning secondary literature on the Mongols, the volume offers a fresh, analytical perspective on this transformative period in world history.

Closely connected to the ERC project are two other »macro« enterprises, *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire* and *Comparative Study of Empires*. *The Cambridge History*, which I edit together with Kim Hodong of Seoul National University, again departs from the same rationale that guided the project, namely looking at the empire from a holistic perspective and in its full Eurasian context, as well as in its own terms, not only as a chapter in the history of China, Iran, Russia or Central Asia. This gigantic international enterprise includes two volumes, one thematic and the other devoted to sources. The first one includes the political history of the empire and its main successor states; thematic histories, which tackle issues such as institutions, the economy, religions, art, science, gender, ethnicity and the environment; regional histories of specific realms inside the empire (Mongolia, Rus, Siberia, the Caucasus); as well as external histories which discuss the empire's impact beyond its realm, on Europe, South Asia, Maritime Asia and the Arab Middle East. The second volume is devoted to sources for the study of the empire. The lion's share deals with literary sources, divided according to (17!) languages, while special chapters are dedicated to archaeological and visual sources. Both volumes have been prepared by an international team of scholars from Europe, North America and Asia, and certain chapters paired two (or more) authors to combine expertise in different edges of the empire. This challenging enterprise is due to be submitted to Cambridge University Press in early 2019.

The second macro project, funded by the Humboldt Foundation via my Anneliese Maier Research Award, deals with the comparative study of empires. Pursued together with Prof. Yuri Pines (HUJI), Prof. Dr. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum (Freie Universität Berlin), and Prof. Dr. Jörg Rüpke (Erfurt University), experts on the Chinese, the Assyrian and the Roman empires

respectively, and dedicated to the memory of the eminent sociologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (1923–2010), the project aims to offer a more systematic approach to empires than has been available to date. We have tried to single out common problems faced by imperial political structures worldwide and investigate how different empires in various parts of the world and in distinct periods of imperial formation tackled those problems. We cover intensively the five major civilization centers of the Old World (Near East, India, China, Inner Asia and Europe), the imperial formations in which developed through a certain degree of interaction and mutual fertilization. Whenever possible we add comparisons with imperial or quasi-imperial polities elsewhere (the Americas, Sub-Saharan Africa, and, of course, maritime empires), treating Eurasian empires roughly from the first millennium BCE to 1900 CE. The Mongol Empire, which brought together elements of various imperial traditions (Steppe, Chinese, Muslim) while its resulting complex imperial culture affected future empires across Eurasia – from Muscovy, the Ottomans, and Mamluks via the Safavids, Moghuls, and Uzbeks and up to Ming and Qing China – calls for such a *longue durée* comparative perspective that in itself highlights its diachronic uniqueness. The project is based on a series of topical workshops in which scholars working on different types of empires interact and explore a common set of questions. The first meeting, which took place in Erfurt on July 2015, was titled *All under Heaven? The Empire's Spatial Dimensions*. It analyzed both practical and ideological factors that prompted or limited the empires' expansion as well as the various forms of administration and representations of the imperial space. The second workshop, dealing with *Empires and Religions*, took place at the Freie Universität, Berlin on March 1–3, 2018, and discussed concrete examples for the ways in which empires and religions interact, how they inter-depend, and to what extent religions historically form an integral part of imperial enterprises. A volume based on the first meeting is currently under review at Cambridge University Press,³² and a few more are planned.

Apart from the database and the publications – completed and in progress – another important facet of the project has been the training of students. The project was implemented by an international team of emerging scholars. I established a young team, consisting at the beginning of the project of Israeli MA students together with international PhDs and post-docs. Although some of the students were very inexperienced at the beginning of our work, this allowed the core team to stay more or less throughout the duration of the project and work as a cohesive group that could learn together, share our experiences and provide feedback to one another. I placed a lot of emphasis on the linguistic skills – the team has been capable of working on sources in Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Russian, Mongolian, Latin, Japanese, Korean, Chaghatay Turkish and Tibetan in addition to the common European languages (French, German, Italian); and its members came not only from Israel, but also from China, Japan, Korea, the UK, the US, Germany and Italy.³³ While some of the international

32 Pines, Biran *et al.*, *Universality and Its Limits*.

33 The project's core members, whose dissertations were described above are Or Amir, Matanya Gill, Ishayah Landa, Vered Shurany, and Qiao Yang. In addition, the members also included Na'ama Arom, Jonathan Brack, Wonhee Cho, Soyoung Choi, Francesca Fiaschetti, John Giebfried, Ofir Haim; Florence Hodous, Rachel Hoffman, Kaiqi Hua, Geoff Humble, Yoichi Isahaya, Amir Mazor, Undinne Ott, Qiu Yihao, Wuhaanch (Wh Hanqi), Nicholas Welmsley, Yu Yusen, Daniel Zakrzewski.

students were rather challenging, others became key members of the project. Moreover, the international team enables us not only to work with multiple languages but also to combine a wide range of perspectives, skills, and sensitivities, and to study the Mongol Empire in a truly global way – as indeed it deserves to be studied.

The project conducted bi-weekly seminars in which members and guests presented their research, as well as various reading groups, led either by project members or the project's friends – and this is a good opportunity to thank Prof. Michael Lecker (Arabic sources); Prof. Yuri Pines (Chinese sources), as well as Daniel Zakrzewski (Persian sources), Dr. Wonhee Cho (*Yuandianzhang*), Dr. Yoichi Yisahaya (*Ta'rikh-i Wassaf*), Dr. Nick Walmsley (Chaghatay language) and Dr. Florence Houdos (Digital Humanities). The project enabled me to train and groom a group of talented students and post-docs, providing them with highly favorable conditions for pursuing their research including not only funding but also a supportive peer group, opportunities for presenting their research in local and international workshops and conferences, experience in organizing panels and workshops, and a chance to publish their own articles. I believe that quite a few of them will dominate the next generation of the scholars of the Mongol Empire.

Another major achievement of the project has been the globalization of the study of the Mongol Empire. The project convened two major international conferences, in June-July 2014 (*Mobility and Transformations in Mongol Eurasia*) and December 2017 (*Migrations in Mongol Eurasia*), as well as six smaller workshops, two together with the Humboldt Foundation (in addition to the comparative empires workshops described above): *New Perspectives in Inner Asian Archaeology: Between Nomad and Sedentary Cultures* (June 2013); *Science and Technology Transfer in Pre-Modern Asia*. (June 2014); *Diplomacy in the Age of Mongol Globalisation* (May 2016); *Towards a Digital Eurasia* (June 2016); *Animals in Mongol Eurasia* (February 2017) and *Networks, Regions and Institutions: Meso-Historical Analysis* (May 2017).³⁴ All these gatherings included scholars from both East and West, both established scholars and emerging ones. The 2014 conference, already mentioned, also included a summer school »New Directions in the Study of the Mongol Empire«, in which 10 leading scholars of the history of the Mongol Empire, all of them contributors to *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire* presented – in a session of 90-120 minutes each – the new and provocative aspects of his/her respective chapters, in front of their colleagues and a group of 25 carefully-chosen international students. Through these events – as well as through participation by the project's members in various other international gatherings – the project has created an international community of scholars of the Mongol Empire centered in Jerusalem. It fostered strong scholarly links between western (European, North American, Israeli) and eastern (from China, Korea, Japan and Mongolia) scholars of the Empire, encouraging East Asian researchers to present their scholarship in English. Simultaneously, members of the projects published not only in English but also in Chinese, Mongolian, Russian, Korean and Hebrew,³⁵ thereby significantly contributing to the creation of international dialogue in the study of the Empire. This community and dialogue has continued even beyond the project's

34 For details, abstracts and organizers see mongol.huji.ac.il. The proceedings of some of these workshops are also in process.

35 See bibliography.

formal ending: notably, the diplomacy workshop – a modest and focused event initiated by Francesca Fiaschetti and Marie Faveroux (Oxford), which enabled young scholars to introduce their research – encouraged its participants to convene follow-up workshops: I was the keynote speaker in the first such workshop, convened on May 2017 in Sofia, Bulgaria by Dr. Konstantin Golev, who participated in our diplomacy workshop, and devoted to Mongol Military history. Four project members and one former member also took part in this workshop that brought together mainly scholars from Eastern Europe. The May 2018 workshop on *The Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia* was organized in Seged, Hungary by Dr. Marton Ver, another participant of the diplomacy workshop and a frequent visitor to Jerusalem. There were fewer project members in Seged, due to the proximity of the workshop to the *Biennial Conference of Asian Studies in Israel* which took place in Jerusalem in the same month, also featuring quite a few Mongol panels manned by international guests.³⁶ However, another workshop is scheduled for spring 2019 in Vienna. These workshops are also one facet of the project's legacy.

In conclusion, the main impact of the project is that the study of the Mongol Empire now looks at the Mongols in their full Eurasian context and on their own terms, not only as a chapter in the annals of China, Iran, Russia or Inner Asia, but as a multi-faceted phenomenon in its own right – one that combined elements from various imperial traditions and made them its own – and which has had a broad and enduring impact on world history. In practical terms, this means that even scholars who work with only one corner (or language) of the empire now have to take into account the developments that took place in the other corners, while more students who are currently starting to explore the Mongols choose to study several languages (mainly Chinese and Persian) in order to pursue a holistic perspective.

Yielding publications that will be of interest to scholars dealing with multiple disciplines from regional studies (Chinese studies, Iranian studies; Middle Eastern studies; Inner Asian studies; European history and of course Mongolian studies) to world history, the study of migrations, cross-cultural contacts, comparative studies of empires, nomadism, conversion, transmission of knowledge; military history, the history of science, social history, cultural history, religious studies, as well as the digital humanities; training and grooming a considerable portion of the next generation of Mongol Empire scholars; and contributing significantly to the globalization of Mongolian studies worldwide, the project has left its mark on Mongolian studies and further afield. That said, however, despite its official ending on December 2017, the project is very much a work in progress. Its fully-fledged impact will become even clearer in the next few years when the several enterprises described above will be completed. Furthermore, the project's *database* will continue to yield fruits for years to come.

36 For details see asi18-huji.co.il/en.

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