Concept Törö as Supreme Law of the Universe
In The Political Culture of the Mingols in Xvii Century

Prof. Tatiana D. Skrynnikova
Head of the Department of Central and South Asia, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint-Petersburg, Russia
skryta999@mail.ru

Abstract

This article deals with the polysemanics of the term resulting from syncretic medieval minding. The manuscripts of the XVII century could not but reflect the process of conceptual development in the linguistic means of the Mongolian language in the field of political culture. On the one hand the former meanings of the terms were kept and on the other hand the old terms were given new sense. The texts of XVII centuries contain the data, which give evidence for concrete profane meanings of the term törö. Most often the term törö contains a desacralized sense and means “power” that is an object, which the rulers manipulate with. In this paper, I would like to pay attention to other meaning of törö – namely that, which implies the Supreme Law of the Universe in the political culture of medieval Mongols. The main function of törö – harmonizing of space and society (to live in peace, to enjoy happiness) allows interpreting it as Supreme sacral law or the Law of the Universe, which is conducted by a ruler.

Keywords: profane and sacral meanings of the term törö, Mongolia, the Supreme Law of the Universe, traditional political culture.

---

1 This research was supported by the Russian Foundation for Humanities via grant № 15-01-00170 “Evolution of the Notions of power in the Mongolian Society of the 13th-20th centuries”
Concept törö is one of the basic ideas in the political culture of the period under review. Despite of big interest on the side of researchers, they haven’t yet come to common terms how to interpret the concept törö in the early works written by Mongolian authors. Complexity in solving the problem consists in polysemanics of the term resulting from syncretic medieval minding. Moreover, this complexity is becoming ever more evident as for the present day researcher the term contains all the connotations that have been by now formed about the state as a regulative apparatus, which is separated from a ruler. For example C. Bawden while translating Altan tobeci understands the term törö as ‘rule’ [AT 1955: 142-145, etc.] or ‘government’ [ibid.: 113, 154, etc.].

I think that in XVII century the term had often the meanings that were different from those used in the present-day translations into European languages. The manuscripts of the XVII century could not but reflect the process of conceptual development in the linguistic means of the Mongolian language in the field of political culture. Thus on the one hand the former meanings of the terms were kept and on the other hand the old terms were given new sense.

That’s true that the texts of XVII centuries contain the data, which give evidence for concrete profane meanings of the term törö. Most often the term törö contains a desacralized sense and means “power” that is an object, which the rulers manipulate with. Power can be lost “qayan törö-ben aldaqu” [ET 1990: 91], “qas törö-ben aldayan ajuu” [ibid.: 97], “yeke törö-ben aldayab” [ibid.: 97]. As a rule, power is lost in a case when it is seized by another: “törö-yi inu abcu ..erke-dür-iyen oroyuluعاد” [ibid.: 68], “törö-yi abubai” [ibid.: 146], “Mongyol-un qayan-u törö-yi abuyad” [ibid.: 183], “tayisi-yin törü-yi abuyad” [ibid.: 182], “Kitad-un qayan-u törö-yi abubai” [ibid.: 185], “qayan-u törö-yi anu abubai” [ibid.: 188], “Mongyol-un törö-yi abuyasun” [ibid.: 116]). Having got power, the ruler holds it (rules): “ekilen törü-yi barju: …qayan-u törü-yi barin” [ibid.: 88]; as well as Kulug-khagan who “qayan-u törü-yi barin” [ibid.: 89]; “Mongyol-un arban tabun qad törü-yi barijuqu” [ibid.: 97]; “ulus-un törü-yi bariyad” [ibid.: 186]; “qayan-u törö-yi bariba/bariyad” [ibid.: 188, 190]. Existence of commonality directly depends on power (törö), which is in all cases attributed to the supreme ruler (his/own) and is called the great, i.e. connected with the whole community.

The term törö is often used together with the verbs that mean creation: “to establish, found, form, organize (bayiyuluq, tɔɔtyaqaq); “to do” (bolyaq): “yeke ulus-un törü-yi ci tɔɔtyayaluyai: edüge ci qayan sayu” [ibid.: 117], “narbai yeke ulus-un törü-yi esen tayibing bolyad” [ibid.: 133], “tübsin-e bayiyuluysan törü cinu: duralan jokiyaysan jasa cinu …ariyun toytayyan törü cinu” [ibid.: 81], “qas yeke törü-yi esen tayibing bolyabai” [ibid.: 189], “bɔɔyas-un törü-yi asuru tübsidken bayiyuluq” [ibid.: 189]. In the given examples two meanings of törö are not divided precisely: law and power, which are established and ordered. Törü could definitely mean law when it is adjoined with a synonym jasay: “jasay törü-yi qatangyaqdan yekeɗe qayıralabai” [ibid.: 171], “narmai ulus-un törü-yi jasaiqu” [ibid.: 73]. Sometimes a pair term comes across: “törö jasay-i yabuulqi-dur” [ibid.: 82], “qas yeke törü jasay” [ibid.: 60], “jasay törü” [ibid.: 171], “törö jasay” [ibid.: 82]. Sometimes the term törö is replaced with the term jasay – “qoyar jasay” [ibid.: 88], which corresponds to qoyar törü and allows to speak with full confidence that one of meanings of the term törü in the text is law. We can assume that in the given cases a word-combination törö jasay represents a pair word and not homogeneous sentence parts because there is no copulative conjunction and (qoyar). Yosun can also be a synonym of törö: “qoyar yosun …sazin törü” [ibid.: 90].

Törü can be destroyed: “tayibing boluyan qas yeke törü-yi yakın ebdeemüi” [ibid.: 132], “qas erdeni meti törü cinu samayuram j-e” [ibid.: 81], “büttüsen törü-yi bürelgegesen” [ibid.: 118], this bringing to disintegration of the community. Therefore it is necessary to store and protect törö: “Dotoyadu qas yeke törü-yi minu qadaqyala” [ibid.: 75], “bürün törü-yi anu qasilecju” [ibid.: 73], “edüge qayan-u törü-yi qasicyi: …bi yeke törü-yi cinu qasisyai” [ibid.: 133]).
All these examples show a significant anthropomorphization of political power, when there is no precise border between a ruler and his possession: töörö is ascribed both to the ruler (qaγan, qad/qan, tayisi) and commonality (Mongol, ulus). As we could see, töörö in the texts is positioned as something (power, law) connected with the ruler and defining his power and stability of his rule. Törö does not term an object, which is independent from a ruler or commonality headed by him (törö of ulus).

In this paper, I would like to pay attention to other meaning of töörö – namely that, which implies the Supreme Law of the Universe in the political culture of medieval Mongols. This aspect has not yet become an object of researches on Mongolian history and culture.

**Törö in the Secret History of the Mongols**

In the available sources, the term was first used in *The Secret History of the Mongols* (further: SHM). In different contexts, researchers propose various interpretations of the term. As all the translations can not be given in the paper, I will refer to some interpretations only, which were given by those who researched the text of SHM. Hereon I quote all the cases when the term was used in SHM together with the Mongolian text as the translation needs commenting:

1) [Qorči said,] ‘What kind of happiness is it for me, the man who foretold so many great affairs, merely to become the leader of thousand?’ [Rachewiltz 2004: 48 § 121] (ele edü töörö-yi ji’aqsan gü’ün-ni nimayi tümen-ü noyan bolu’asu ya’un jirgalang bui [Rachewiltz 1972: 51]). I. de Rachewiltz’s descriptive translation of the term töörö as ‘many great affairs’ has unfortunately an obscurant meaning while the question is that Qorči predicted Temüjin’s eminence at the first enthronization of 1189 being among the first of those who joined him. “Then Qorči Old Üsün (Qorči Üsün–ebügen. – Author) and Kökö Čos of Ba’arin together with their Menen Ba’arin followers also came as one camp. When Qorči came he said: ‘…then a hornless and fallow ox lifted up the great shaft under the tent, harnessed it on to himself and pulled it after him. As he proceeded following Temüjin on the wide road, he kept bellowing, ‘Together Heaven and Earth have agreed: Temüjin shall be lord of the people (ulus-un ejen. – author!’) and ‘I am drawing near carrying the people and bringing it to him’. These heavenly signs appeared before my eyes (ja’arit nidün-ü je’ü[ll]ü nadur ji’amui [Rachewiltz 1972: 50]) [Rachewiltz 2004: 47-48 § 120-121].

Prediction (ja’arit) in this fragment is shown through the image of a bull – a heavenly animal that brought a message about supreme deities’ will – together Heaven and Earth. I think, this testifies to connection between töörö and Heaven: Qorči names himself a person “who indicated the Supreme law” (törö) to Chinggis-khan, i.e. handed the predestination of the Universe law or Supreme law. This is confirmed in the following passage of SHM.

2) F.W. Cleaves was probably closer to the Mongolian text when translated like this: “[Qorči] said, ‘Even if I, a man which hath [fore]told [unto thee] many principles, become a captain of ten thousand, what happiness will [that] be?’” [Cleaves 1982: 53]. E. Haenisch proposed the following meanings of the term töörö for the given context: “so viel wichtige Zusammenhänge (Mittel)” [Haenisch 1962: 151].

3) We know that in the Uigur religious texts the term töörö conveys the idea of dharma as a universal law. It seems necessary to say in brief about this archetype of traditional consciousness. Notions about the universal law in the Indian Buddhism resulted from the previous development of this idea. At first in the Vedic Brahmanism a special role was given to Varuna as “an embodiment of the world order (rta) or truth… He is the keeper of supreme law and a guarantee of law-conformity in the world” [Toporov 1980a: 217]. This was because rta is a universal principle, which defines the status of Vedic Universe and is equally applicable to gods and people, physical and spiritual matters. The doctrine about rta anticipated later concepts of Karma and Dharma” [Toporov 1980b: 223]. Subsequently “the place of Varuna – The Almighty of the world order – was occupied by Brahma who...
2) “In the Mongol tradition it is customary for a senior ranking personage to become a beki” [Rachewiltz 2004: 148, § 216]. (mongqol-un törö noyan mör beki bolqui yosun aju’ui) [Rachewiltz 1972: 125]. At the first sight, törö and yosun are the synonyms; this (tradition it custom) found its place in the I. de Rachewiltz’s translation also. In Mongolian political culture, ‘beki’ is not only the head of a certain community but also, alike in the given case, the performer of ritual functions. And I propose the following translation of the fragment: “There is a law/custom (yosun): according to the Mongols’ Universal Law (törö), the way of a noyon is to become a ‘beki’. Further the text explicitly points at the sacral function of Qorči-Usun in the Mongol Ulus: The “You are descendant of Elderst Brother the Ba’arin. As to the rank of a beki, you Old Usun, who are from among us and senior to Us, shall become a beki. When one has been raised to the rank of beki, / He shall wear a white dress / And ride a white gelding; / He shall sit on a high seat (sa’uri) / And be waited upon. Furthemore, early and monthly I shall hold discussions with you to seek your advice” [Rachewiltz 2004: 148, § 216].

I. de Rachewiltz proposes to translate the verb sata- as “to discuss; to consult (with), deliberate” [Rachewiltz 2004: 777]. According to his interpretation, the expression hon sara sataju means lit. “Yearly and monthly discussing” [Rachewiltz 2004: 808]. But simultaneously he writes about interchangeability of t ~ d and recognizes that the proposed by other researches interpretation of the verb as sada is also possible. - “to bestow alms, present offerings” [Rachewiltz 2004: 777], which I regard to be semantically more adequate to the common context of the fragment. Thus the expression “hon sara sataju (sadaju) / hon-tur sara-tur sataju (sadaju)” should be translated as “to bestow alms, present offerings [in the certain days] of a year and month”, which points at Qorči Üsün-ebügen’s ritual function. The question can be about calendar rites performed on certain days of month or year by the heads of clans. This text shows the high sacral status of the senior of a conic clan because, first, his position is defined by the supreme law of Universe, secondly, white clothes and a white horse absolutely definitely points at his ritual function, and thirdly, he is seated on a honorable high place. And what finally confirms the actuality of the conic clan is its designation as ebügen – an old man, i.e. an ancestor. Sacral function – a performance of socially significant rituals of the community – was assigned to him as a senior in the clan of sacred ancestor Bodonchar.

established the Dharma - the sacred law, religious rituals and traditions and estate division – … and became the personification of the supreme objective origin – the Brahman” [Erman 1980: 535]. Despite indisputable authority of brahmans, even in the Vedic period “though superiority of priests was commonly emphasized, still there were mentions that kshatriyas are higher then brahmans…. raja could be named as “ the best among the equal”, “the best among the own people” [Bongard-Levin, II’ in 1985: 168]. Such words are accribed to the Buddha: “And as the kshatriya varna is now the highest, I will be born again as a representative of this varna” [ibid.: 217]. The ideas existed that the king was also drawn to Dharma: “The king headed management personnel; god Varuna made him “the lord of Dharma” (dharmaraja – T.S.), the defender of justice and order” [ibid.: 156]. The Ashoka’s edicts, which contain mainly not the Buddhist principles but principles of Dharma and ways of its spreading, allow to understand the meaning of the term: “This is a rule – managing by means of Dharma, bringing of happiness by means of Dharma, and protection [of the empire] by means of Dharma” – the first big column edict says [ibid.: 242].

4 F.W. Cleaves supports the meaning of the term törö that he proposed earlier – the principles: “[After] the principles of the Mongol, [as to] the way of chief, there is a custom whereby one may become a beki” [Cleaves 1965: 157].

5 I. de Rachewiltz translates the same expression in § 204: “‘Yearly and monthly I shall consult with you’ (hon-tur sara-tur sataju), i.e. ‘I shall consult with you (or seek advice from you) at all times’ [Rachewiltz 2004: 777].
3) “I present to Jürčedei in deference to the great principle whereby services are duty rewarded… He united the people who had scattered. I have given you (one of Chinggis-khan’s wife named Ibaqa. – Author) to him being mindful of the principle of rewarding these services of his. In future, when my descendants sit on Our throne, mindful of the principle regarding services that have thus been rendered, they should not disobey my words”6 [Rachewiltz 2004: 141 § 208] «cimayi jürčedei-ye soyürqarun yeke törô setkijü... qaqacaqsan ulus qamtutqaqsan-u butaraqsan ulus bügültgelüksen tudas-u inu törô setkijü cimayi ökba mono qoyina minu uruq bidan-u oro sa’uju ene metü tusa kiksen törô setkijü minu üge busi ülli bolqan» [Rachewiltz 1972: 119–120].

One could think, alike the researchers do, that the question is about necessity to remember what contribution Jürčedei made to uniting of peoples under aegis of Chinggis-khan and what reward he deserves. Here S.A. Kozin translates the term törô as “law of duty”, “great duty of gratitude” [Kozin 1941:161]. But let us pay attention to description of Jürčedei’s actions as possessing cosmogonic sense/direction: “You (Jürčedei. – author) shot an učumaq arrow into one of Senggüm’a bright red cheeks. Because of this, the door was opened and the reins were loosened’ for me by Eternal Heaven. …That was indeed Jürčedei’s greatest and most important service” [Rachewiltz 2004: 139-140, § 208].

In my opinion, this paragraph confirms my interpretation of the term törô as Supreme or universal law (Supreme Law of the Universe). First, törô it is mentioned as yeke törô, second, its civilization function is marked (thanks to it all the dissipated peoples were united) that is peculiar to the sacral centre. Jürčedei always remember the universal law of the Universe, and this helps him in his activity on uniting the dissipated peoples. Törô is positioned as “what brings (literally: makes) the help” (tusa kiksen törô). Connection between yeke törô with Heaven is marked7 “Jürčedei being mindful of törô shot an arrow into one of Senggüm’a bright red cheeks. Because of this, the door was opened to Eternal Heaven (mönkge tenggeri) for Chinggis-khan”. The Mongolian text does not mention “the reins were loosened [I. de Rachewiltz] or “the reins were opened”. S.A. Kozin’s translation seems to be the most exact: “That is why the Eternal Heaven opened the doors and way to us” [Kozin 1941: 161] (“mönkge tenggeri-de e’üden jilo’a negeldeba-je’o”). Thus yeke törô setkijü should be translated as “I think of the Supreme law”.

4) The plot that deals with Naya’a seems to be an indicative one. He said: “We laid hands on our rightful lord (tus qan) Tarqutai Kiriltuq and were coming here, but we could not make away with him. We set him free and sent him off, and came to offer our service to Činggis Qa’an” [Rachewiltz 2004: 151, § 220]. Chinggis-khan answered: “Then, because the reason why he could not make away with his rightful lord was the fact that he had been mindful of the great principle. …Now, Naya’a will be on charge of the ten thousand of the centre” [Rachewiltz 2004: 151, § 220]8 (tende tus qan-iyan tebcin yadaqsan yosu yeke törô-yi setkijü’üi [Rachewiltz 1972: 127]).

6 F.W. Cleaves: “I present unto Jürčedei …being mindful of the great principle… I have given thee [unto him], being mindful of the principle [of recompence] of his services whereby [46v] Jürčedei …united [for Us] the people which had separated themselves [from Us]; gathered the people which had dispersed themselves. Long [here]after, when my seed shall sit on Our [47r] throne, being mindful of the principle [of recompense unto him who] did service like this, not violating my words” [Cleaves 1965: 149-150]. E. Haenisch translated the expression “tusas-u inu törô setkijü” as “der Norm der Wohltaten (der Dankespflicht) eingedenken sein” [Haenisch 1962: 151].

7 Explicitly this is expressed in the ritual texts – see below.

8 F.W. Cleaves: “[As to] the reason for which he hath not be able to forsake his proper qan, [it is that] he hath been mindful of the great principle” [Cleaves 1965: 161]. E. Haenisch выражение yeke törô интерпретировал как “höchstes Recht, höchste Tugend” [Haenisch 1962: 151].
This phrase in the Mongolian text expresses the basic idea of the Mongolian political culture, according to which the khan is a conductor of Supreme Law of the Universe (yeke törö); Supreme Law is been realized through him. Any negative actions against the khan destroy harmony in the nature and socium: in the given case, capture of khan Tarqutai Kiriltuq does not correspond to Supreme Sacral Law. Thus the Mongolian expression should be translated as “The custom, which does not permit to destroy the khan [assumes that a person] thinks about Supreme Law”.

5) My interpretation of the term törö is proved correct with Van-khan’s words also: “kö’ün-ecé’en qaqaqaq-yu törö-dece qaqaacaba” [Rachewiltz 1972: 90], which I. de Rachewiltz translated as “To abandon my son? So I did, and thereby I abandoned the norm” [Rachewiltz 2004: 643, § 178]. Though SHM doesn’t express an idea about Chinggis-khan’s function as an executor of törö explicitly, the above sentence gives the fullest idea that the ruler realizes Supreme Sacral Law. According to norms of traditional political culture, the relations of Van-khan and Chinggis-khan were marked by consanguinity terms ‘father – son’, which underlined the lower status of the latter in social hierarchy in 1202 during the conflict between Chinggis-khan and Van-khan with Jamuha. Simultaneously, recognition of his being chosen by Heaven and, accordingly, his connection with Heaven and Supreme Sacral Law defined the character of attitude to Chinggis-khan. When the estimation is ascribed to Van-khan that his separation from Chinggis-khan was a non-observance of törö, this retrospectively points at Chinggis-khan’s functions of the world-wide monarch – executor of Supreme Sacral Law.

6) [Ugedei said:] «Because to secretly injure Doqolqu who strove fiercely in the service of his rightful lord, my father the Qan, was a fault and mistake. Who will now strive so fiercely in my service? Therefore, I have myself acknowledged the fault of having secretly harmed without discernment, a person who diligently observed the principle of loyalty in the service of my father and of all [Mongols] and of failing to appreciate him” [Humphrey, Hürelbaatar 2005: 31]

9 “Shall I separate myself from my son? …I have separated myself from the principle” [Cleaves 1965: 106]. “I have not only separated from my son [Chinggis], I have separated myself from the principle (törü)” [Humphrey, Hürelbaatar 2005: 35].

10 E. Haenisch proposes the following meaning of “dörö kiciyegü” – “sich um d. Recht bemühen, s. Pflicht tun” [Haenisch 1965: 37]. “Another of my wrongs was secretly to harm Doqolqu. Why was it wrong? Because he had striven fiercely in the service of his rightful ruler, my father the qan, and to harm him was a fault. Who will now strive so fiercely in my service? Who will now strive so fiercely in my service? Therefore, I acknowledge the fault in having secretly injured a person who diligently adhered to principle (törü) in the service of my father and of all [Mongols] and of failing to appreciate him” [Humphrey, Hürelbaatar 2005: 31]

11 This spelling is conformable to spelling of sacral spear (dōro jida), Chinggis-khan’s attribute (= analogue of arbor mundi) that is preserved together with other sacral attributes. “The nightguards shall take care of the standards and drums, and of the spears, bowls and vessels arranged beneath them” [Rachewiltz 2004: 210] (“kebte’ül tuq ke’ürge dōro jida ayaqa saba asaratuqai” [Rachewiltz 1972: 168]). The personal possession of this attribute is evidence that charisma enables one person to fulfill simultaneously both sacral (priest) and profane (ruler) functions. Besides fortune-telling, the performance of religious rites was the duty of the chiefs – from the khan down to the head of the family – who were thought capable of making contact with the other world by means of the charisma of an ancestor embodied in spear/flag.
protected a ruler – its conductor. On the one hand, indissoluble communication of the Supreme law as universal principle with the Supreme governor, in the given case with Chinggis-khan, is marked, on the other hand the ruler who followed törü brought blessing to all. Therefore punishment of Doqolqu was accordingly considered as breaking of Supreme law, which guaranteed harmony in the nature and society.

7) “From among the Sartaq people, Yalawaci and Masqut were adept in laws and customs of cities [Rachewiltz 2004: 194] (Balaqasun-u yosu dörö [Rachewiltz 1972: 157]. Certainly, here a pair word is laws as “city laws” of Yalawaci and Masqut are meant, and dörö (töörü) makes pare with yosu.

We could say in general that when translating, F.W. Cleaves always understood the term töörü as “the principles”. E. Haenisch, just as I. de Rachewiltz in English, situationally used different German terms, having generalized them in the beginning of the paper about toro – Regel, Norm, Sitte, Umstände [Haenisch 1962: 151].

Except for the reference to city laws, we can see that the term töörü conveys a certain concept of rather general character. This allows me to propose its interpretation as a term designating Supreme law. To compare, we could recall the terms jasaγ and jarliγ that were used in concrete cases to designate decree, order, instructions, and administration (management, control) [Skrynnikova 1997: 43-44]. Summarizing the data of the Mongolian source, we can say that töörü is that what can be known, felt, perceived, and possessed in oneself – setkikü (§ 208, 220); it can be shown for others, i.e. to manifest Supreme law (Will) – jiqaqu (§ 121) and to try to execute Supreme law – kiciyegü (§ 281). But in his activity one can depart from the Law – qaqacaqu (§ 178), i.e. töörü is what a person can follow in his activity but what exists beyond man’s will and is created not by a man but is given to him from above; a man only becomes aware of it. Even the khan doesn’t create töörü but only follows it that allows to designate this phenomenon as “Supreme law”. In my opinion, this allows us to assume that in the Chingis-khan’s times this term designated the universal law established by the Heaven12. In this connection we can’t but remember that during the ancient-Turkic period the term töörü conveyed the idea of “Dharma” in the ancient Turkic language [DTS 1969: 581].

The above mentioned function of töörü – harmonizing of space and society (to live in peace, to enjoy happiness) allows interpreting it as Supreme sacral law or the Law of the Universe, which is conducted by a ruler. Namely this meaning of töörü I would like to mark specially. When analyzing the XVII century chronicles I have found the additional data that gave evidence for my interpretation of töörü as Supreme Law, i.e. as the universal principle in the world order. First of all, let’s refer to the text of Altan tobci (AT), which shows that as late as in the XVII century, töörü as Supreme sacral Law was still topical in the Mongolian political culture.

“When his golden life was about to go out” [AT 1955: 141], (“altan amin-ıyan ğarqučağ tur” [ibid.: 58]).

44. “Your jade rule (töörü) will be abased (qas boluγsan töörü čin-u boγonidum-ja [ibid.]); Your beloved queen Börte-keljine sečen will die;
Your Qasar and Belgetei will dispute with each other;
Your many people, brought together and collected together, will be scattered in all directions.
Your lofty rule (töörü) will be abased (ündür boluγsan töörü čin-u boγonidum-ja [ibid.: 59]);
Your queen Börte-keljine sečen whom you met, firmly, long ago, will die;
Your Ögedei and Tülüi will become orphans;
Your many peoples, gathered together by your heirs, will be scattered and belong to other men;

12 The texts show that in the later times the term töörü could refer to a quite secular concept of law synonymic to the Mongolian term yosun. But this topic is beyond my research in this paper.
Your rule (törö) which has become a mountain, will be abased (ayula bolurşan törü čin-u boyundum-ja [ibid.: 59]);
Your queen Börte-keljin sečen, whom you met and honoured, will die;
Your Ööquo and Qaçaqu will dispute with each other;
Your many peoples, much established, will all be dispersed over all the mountains and forests;
They will live a nomad life on the sides of Mount Qangγai Qaγan;
…water in the desert places, and a road in the mountain defiles” [ibid.: 142-143].

It is hardly possible to agree with translation of the term törö as rule as it was proposed by C. Bawden. In my opinion, the given words addressed by Kilüketei Baatur to Chinggis-Khan the question is about törö that by that moment still had meaning of sacral quality which was connected with the Supreme ruler and provided harmony in the society and nature. First of all, attention is to be paid to the relationship of cause and effect, which is implicitly positioned in the text: Chinggis-khan was left by his ‘altan amin’, which was translated by C. Bauden as ‘his golden life’ [AT 1955: 141].

I think that the Mongolian term ‘altan amin’ can be interpreted as the sacral quality (charisma) inherent in the supreme ruler. The attribute ‘altan’ being used before a word ‘amin’ (soul, breath) re-codes the meaning of the latter: the term which corresponds to vitality (breath, life) is becoming a designation for the sacral substance connected with the sun, and this is proved by the marker of color – gold.

My assumption is acknowledged by the facts mentioned in Erdeni-yin tobci (ET). Exactly in this way we are to understand the Boorchi’s words who connects törö with the sacral substance of solar nature (charisma), of which Chinggis-khan’s törö depends directly: “Let the gold cord of my lord be strong and precious jasper great törö be peace/serene” (“ejen-i minu altan oγosar batu boltuyai: erdeni qas yeke törö inu tübsin-e abasu” [ET 1990: 74]). This is proved in the phrase referring to times of Togon-Temur: “The khagan’s gold cord is safe – the jasper törö is peace” (“qayγan-u altan oγosar esen. qas törö anu taibing büküi-e” [ibid.: 95]). Sagan-Setsen’s idea gives proof to possibility of understanding törö as internal quality of a person: “The Supreme own törö will get weaker – you will become a slave to the old person” (“degedüs öber-ün törö-ecce bauran: ötele kümün-ü boyol bolun jarurydaqui” [ibid.: 195]). Probably this non-desacralized meaning of törö as Supreme law is partially kept when a question of a new ruler’s coming to power arises. It is possible to say that in XVII century the sacral meaning of törö as a designation of the supreme law had been still kept. Exactly this by then not desacralized meaning of the Law (a principle of universal equivalence in micro- and a macrocosmos, which provides observance of regulations on order, law, rules, and norms that are to be fulfilled for harmony in Space, Nature, and Society [Freidank 1978 : 110]) is characteristic for the medieval Mongolian society

Törö was connected directly with the ruler who received (or accepted) it, and this allowed him to become the world monarch as törö as Axis mundi effected the whole world. The ritual texts mention Chinggis-khan exactly in this meaning: “Born by the Heaven Chinggis-khan who has received törö of the peoples of the world” [Rinchen 1959: 63]. The whole world can be modeled also through the numerical model when Chingis-khan says: “By the will of Heaven-father I have subdued twelve strong

13 Charisma is the quality inherent in magician, prophets, military leaders, and rulers. To my mind the ideas of charisma is fundamental to the authority’s conception in the mongolian political culture. I wrote about the existence of various terms for charisma such as sülde, suu jali, gegegen sünesün in my previous works (Skrynnikova 1992/1993,1997). Possessor of the charisma was the chief of clan/tribe. Besides practical activities aimed at biological and social survival, the chief’s function was to perform magical actions establishing contact with the other world thanks to charisma.
khans, and made all happy thanks to peaceful törö” (“bi tenggri ecige-yügen jarlıy-iyar: eris-ün arban qoyar qad-i dorayitayulun engke törö-ber narmai-yi jirayuluyai büülüge” [ET 1990: 72]).

Certainly, this reconstruction of ideas about törö as a supreme law is based in a big degree on the materials connected with Chinggis-khan (“like diamond törö of constantly virtuous bogdo” “Erdeni almas metti: ülemji buyan-tan boydas-un törö büülügei” [ET 1990: 196]), who in the consciousness of medieval Mongols grew to the ideal of sacral ruler, and consequently on the one hand can be designated as an ideal model. But on the other hand, the example of connection between Togon-Temur’s charisma (a gold cord) and törö confirms the universality of this model.

The fact that in the XVII century texts törö could still mean supreme law, which was conducted thanks to charisma by a ruler or connected with him attributes of power, is proved by designations of törö in the above quoted fragment from AT: ‘ündür bolusan törü’ and ‘aula bolusan törü’. The words adjoining to törö – (both Your lofty törö and Your törö which has become a mountain) – absolutely definitely point at the image of mountain as Axis mundi, that is on meditative function of törö as the center of the world, which is harmonizing the space. In this context the verb ‘booniduqu’ (‘to be/become low’) is indicative when in the above quoted text it is used in relation to törö. Because “jasper/high/ mountain similar törö is becoming low” (qas/ündür/aula bolusan törü in-u boonidum-ja), not only negative events take place in the social space, but also natural harmony is broken (‘water in the desert places, and a road in the mountain defiles’). The materials of the Mongolian chronicles and ritual texts show that according to traditional ideas, exercising of regulative function by the ruler in the Nature and society is provided with his special connection with törö – the universal law of the Universe or the Supreme Law which the Sky manifests through the ruler. The structural-semantic analysis of the term törö in the context with the words adjoining to it, in my opinion, allowed to interpret the term törö as the universal law connected with the figure of a ruler.

Certainly, my assumptions about meaning of törö as Supreme law are based on the implicit data and have been already criticized. ‘It is in this long historical context that Skrynnikova ventured to suggest that “Perhaps in Chinggis’s time, törü meant – the Law established by Heaven” [1997: 47], and some contemporary Mongolian scholars assert the same idea with no ‘perhaps’ about it [Erdemt 2002]. However, the text of the SH itself does not clearly establish this idea. Not only is ‘Heaven’ is a dubious translation of tenggri [Beffa and Hamayon 1995: 187], but törü does not occur directly with tenggri. We have references to Chinggis being destined by tenggri to rule, and it is true that Qorchi asks for a reward for making such a revelation, saying - ele edu törü jigagsan [SHM §121]. But the meaning of törü here is unclear. It has been translated as principle [Cleaves 1982: 53; Ardajab 1986: 324] and good fortune [Onon 2002: 99]. Skrynnikova herself suggests that the correct translation should be “(I, who) revealed the High Law (to you)” [1997: 46], though törü here could refer to the sovereignty that Chinggis is about to acquire, and it is not stated that the High Law was established by Heaven. In general, it is not clear that törü in this period was regarded as ‘one thing’ at all. The references in the SH indicate rather a plurality, a collection of diverse principles, such as loyalty and obedience to one’s appointed commander, fidelity to an agreed compact, honesty and openness, or the carrying out of one’s designated political role. The Qorchi episode is the only one where we have an indication that törü may possibly also have meant something like the right to rule’ [Humphrey, Hürelbaatar 2004: 465].

I think that törö in this context means something more concrete then “something like the right to rule”, namely Supreme Law of the Universe. This is confirmed by the ritual texts.

Törö in ritual texts
In the above examples from SHM, two different meanings are marked: the first one shown in § 121, 178, 208, 216, 220, and 281 is connected with center markers; and the second one where törö was
synonymous to *yosun* and meant a custom or common law. It is worthy to pay attention at one of the cases when *törö* is written in a different way in § 281 of SHM – as *dörö*, which is conformable to writing of a sacral spear, Chinggis-khan’s attribute (= analog of arbor mundi), which I characterized earlier. Studying of ritual texts confirms my assumption about a special place of *törö* in the Mongols’ representations about socium functioning.

First of all, *törö* corresponds to the center-marking attributes: “four-footed black banner having become an iron nail (stake) – a support of *törö* (törö-yin tüsiiy-e temür-ün qadaγasun boluγsan... dörben költü qar-a tury [Rinchen 1959: 70]); “Having become a pillar *törö* (mediator as Axis mundi. – T.S.)... having become a support to the body... four-footed great banner (sülde. – Author); great sülde (charisma. – Author.) of the most august the lord (Chinggis-khan. – Author.), the having become a support *törö*, embodied in the nine-footed white banner” (törö-yin qadaγasun boluγsan... bey-e-yin tüsii boluγsan... dörben költü yeke qar-a sülde / törü-yin tüsii boluγsan... yesün költü çaγan tury-iyen bosqaju... boγda ejen-ü yeke sülde [ibid.: 74]); «most august khan’s wife... support of *törö* (törö-yin tüsii-e... boγdo qatun [ibid.: 98]). Thus a connection between *törö* and charisma comes to light in the ritual texts related to the cult of Chinggis-khan, in which his charisma (sülde) is embodied in the four-tailed black banner and nine-tailed white banner. Ideas about unity of ruler’s sacrality (sülde) and *törö* are the archetype of traditional consciousness, which is expressed for example in the Chinese tradition through the unity of emperor’s Tae and Tao.

Being in the sacral center of socium, *törö* tends to increase, growth, and expansion. It is defined as “plentiful happy *törö*” (arbin sayin törü [ibid.: 87, 102, 106]); “growing *törö*” (örgejiki törü [ibid.: 87, 99, 101, 103, 106]). *törö* was directly connected with a ruler who received (or accepted) it. The ritual texts mention Chinggis-khan: “Born by the Heaven Chinggis-khan who has received *törö* of the peoples of the world ” (Delekei-yin ulus-un törü-yi abuγsan tnglir törüγsen Činggis-qayan [ibid.: 63]); “[Chinggis-khan] who received Van-khan’s *törö*” (Ong qaγan-u törü-yi abuγsan [ibid.: 63, 67]); “[Chinggis-khan] who received Naiman Dayan-khan’s *törö*” (Naiman Dayan qaγan-u törü-yi abuγsan [ibid.: 67]). Receiving of *törö* by a ruler-winner (Chinggis-khan) brought to seizing the people that had been headed by the defeated ruler: “Chinggis-khan ... having received Van-khan’s *törö*, began to own the numerous Kereits and manage them” (Ong qaγan-u törü-yi abuγsan, Olan kereyид-i ejen medegsen Činggis qaγan [ibid]). This resulted from the fact that ruler’s *törö* was socium’s *törö* also: “Chinggis-khan ... having received Naiman Dayan-khan’s *törö*, received *törö* of the whole great ulus” (Naiman Dayan qaγan-u törü-yi abuγsan Narmai yeke ulus-un törü-yi abuγsan... Činggis qaγan [ibid.]).

The ruler who received *törö* and became its conductor, is designated as follows: “the Khan and Khan’s wife of the expanding great *törö*” (örgejiki yeke törü-yin qan qatun [ibid.: 77]); «qaγan and qatun of the plentiful and happy *törö* (arbin sayin törü-yin qaγan qatun» [ibid.: 87]). A number of definitions can be continued [ibid.: 87, 88, 106], but it should be marked that this is *törö* or strictly following the ritual texts “qaγan and qatun [who are] in the center of extending happy *törö*” (örgejiküi sayin törü-yin dumda qaγan qaγan [ibid.: 99]) provide happiness, peace and good fate for their people; they are addressed exactly like this: “Let they give peace, happiness, and [good fate] to the people (qamûr ulus-a engkesün jirγal jayaγan örtügei [ibid.]).

Materials of the ritual texts show that, according to traditional representations, special connection with *törö* – Supreme law, which the Heaven manifests through the ruler, provides ruler’s performance of regulating function in the socium.

---

14 “For favorable results of impact to the world “Tao and Tae must be united” – tao tae i” [Martynov 1978: 30].
Törö was directly connected with the ruler, who received (or accepted) it; this allowed to become the world monarch as törö as Axis mundi effected the whole world. exactly in this sense Chinggis-khan is mentioned in the ritual texts exactly in this meaning: “Heavenly born Chinggis-khan who has received törö of the peoples of the world» (Delekei-yin ulus-un törü-yi abuysan tngrlig törügsen Činggis-qan [Rintchen 1959: 63]). The whole world can be also modeled through numerical model when Chinggis-khan says: “At Heaven-father will, I have subdued twelve strong khans, and made all people happy thanks to peaceful törö” (Mong. «bi tengri ecige-yügen jarljır-iyar : eris-ün arban qoyar qad-i doreyitayiłun engke törü-ber narmai-yi jirγulysuyai bülgüe» [ET 1990: 72]). Even after his death, Chinggis-khan is in the center of this model: “Having made his Ordoss tumen the center, Chinggis-khan became the lord of numerous uluses” (Ordus tümen-yen töblen sayγan, Olan ulus-un ejen boluyasан Činggis-qan [Rintchen 1959: 67]).

The representations about connection of the ruler with Heaven and his functions as a conductor of the Supreme law of the Universe are kept in 17th century. This characteristic of the true ruler’s status reveals both a number of certain duties, which he should fulfill and also all necessary attributes of his high-ranking position and sacral status including a throne. As one of necessary qualities, which the governor should possess, stability (with no stumbling and leaning) is marked that has connotations of something worthy or established. Thanks to this stability, the ruler can act as the Supreme law support (törö-yin sitügen) or “to hold Supreme law exactly” (yeke törü-yi tübsin-e bariju), then the ruler, his throne, and Supreme law provide harmony of the world, this being continually emphasized in the Mongolian sources of 17th century. And törö keeps the meaning that was formed in the framework of traditional political culture i.e. as the law of Universe (yirtincü-yin törü), which defines the status of qagan as an universal monarch.

---

15 This is a question of Mongols’ sacral center Erzhen-Horo where Chinggis-khan’s relics are preserved in eight white yurtas.
References


Kozin S.A. *Sokrovennoe skazanie: Mongol’skaya chronika 1240 g.* (The Secret History: Mongolian Chronicle of 1240). M.-L.

Martynov A.S. 1978 *Status Tibeta v XV—XVIII vv. v traditsionnoi kitaiskoi sisteme politicheskikh predstavleniy*. M.


