

Japan Academy Prize to:

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for “A Study into the History of Mongol Empire”



Outline of the work:

Mongol tribes were unified for the first time by Chinggis (Genghis) Khan in 1206 on the Mongolian plateau. Their cavalry, led by Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, his three sons, and a grandson, promptly conquered the central grassland and oasis area of Central Asia and overran most of the known Eurasian world.

Although the imperial domain was divided among Chinggis (Genghis)'s four descendants, it lasted for over one and a half centuries. The source of the Mongols' power is therefore a very interesting question. According to general speculation, the Mongolian political structure relied on the family principle, in which families formed clans that, in turn, organized into tribes and so on. Two members of different clans may become sworn brothers. Meanwhile, polygamy heightened the demand for wives to be acquired from outside the clan. This fostered feuds and petty warfare. For fighting out such warfare, clan groups became vassals of other clans, resulting in whole tribe depending on other tribes, thereby enhancing their power. Therefore, hierarchical feudal-type relations involving fealty and protection among lords, aristocrats, commoners, and serfs developed among the Mongols.

However, difficulties emerge when attempting a reconstruction of the Mongolian social structure on a strictly empirical basis. At that time, the Mongols did not develop their own script, except for the rarely used *'Phags-pa* script but adapted the Uighur alphabet to transcribe Mongolian speech. Consequently, the elucidation of the intricate organization of this empire rests on other contemporary written sources, such as Persian and Chinese records.

Dr. Hirotoshi Shimo's lifelong research into the socio-political framework of the Mongol empire crystallized into his twin books entitled “*The Study into the History of the Mongol Empire, the Introductory Part* (1995)” and “*The Study into the History of the Mongol Empire, the Principal Part* (2013).” These books made a landmark contribution to research advances in this field.

First, Dr. Shimo found two Persian sources of prime importance for the question at stake. Compiled by imperial order of Ghāzān Khan (1295–1304 reign period), the 7th ruler of the Khanate of Persia, and written by the great historian Rashīd al-Din, “*The Chronicle of the Mongols*” provides a genealogical account of major tribal units contributing to the consolidation of the empire. Compiled by imperial order of Oljaitū Khan (1304–1316 reign period), the 8th ruler of the same Khanate, “*A Universal History*” was also written by Rashīd al-Din. Based on a large body of Mongolian primary sources preserved in the court archives, these Persian sources provide rich historical information on each tribal unit that flourished during the imperial heyday. While reading these sources, Dr. Shimo came to notice that the Persian term “amīr-i buzurg” meaning “great commander, general, and member of royalty” in English, was the transcription of the Mongolian term “nökör.” He also found that this term was invariably used to denote special persons who directly descended from Chinggis (Genghis) Khan and were involved in the elite corps, such as the heads of military units comprising tens, hundreds, and thousands soldiers, imperial mausoleum, and imperial horde. In other words,

these Persian documents provide valuable accounts on the overall history of the Mongolian empire and new opportunities to further understand the social bases of the Mongolian power.

Second, through identifying the official positions occupied by influential individuals in the elite corps and their blood relations with the line of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, Dr. Shimo clearly demonstrated that the power of the Mongols founded on feudal-type organization that bound together units of family, clan and tribe by blood relationship.

He also suggested that the Mongols inherited such organization from preceding nomadic states of mixed Turkish–Mongolian stock in northeast Eurasia, and their warrior retainer system was analogous in many ways to the “*gokenin*” (honorable house-men) organization in medieval and early modern Japan.

List of major publications

1. H. Shimo, “The Qaraunas in the Historical Materials of Il Khanate” in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, no. 35. pp.131-51. 1977.
2. H. Shimo, “The Qaraunas tribe in the sources of Il Khanate, of the Mongol Empire” in Ryūsa-Kaisei Scholarship Association ed. *Ajia Bunka-shi Ronsō* (A Collection of Treatises), no.3. pp.1-62. 1979. (in Japanese).
3. H. Shimo, “The Core groups of the Regime of Ghazan Khan: the meaning of the formation of the regime of Ghazan Khan in the Il Khanate, in Persia”, *Journal of Asian and African Studies, Research Institute for Languages and Culture of Asia and Africa*, no.18. pp.56-150. 1979. (in Japanese).
4. H. Shimo, “The Armies derived from the Military Office in Adherbaijan district after the establishment of the Il Khanate: ups and downs of the power of Mongols in the Il Khanate around the ascendance of Ghazan Khan to the Throne”, in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no.19. pp.56-150. 1979. (in Japanese).
5. H. Shimo, “Ups and Downs of the Forces of the Mongols after the Death of Ghazan Khan in the Il Khanate”, in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, no.21. pp.15-48. 1980. (in Japanese).
6. H. Shimo, “The influential Corps who had Matrimonial relation to the House of Hülägū in the Il Khanate”, in *Society and Culture in Inner and West Asia*, (Yamakawa Shuppansha), pp.667-695. 1981. (in Japanese).
7. H. Shimo, “The Mongols in the Il Khanate”, in *The Tōyōshi Kenkyū* (The Journal of Oriental Research) vol. 42, no.4. pp.130-166. 1984. (in Japanese).
8. H. Shimo, “The Jārāil Tribe in the Il Khanate: The Kernel of the Political Powers in the Il Khanate” in *The Festschrift dedicated to Professor Kazuo Enoki at the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of his birth*, pp.233-276. 1988. (in Japanese).
9. H. Shimo, *The Study into the History of the Mongol Empire, the Introductory Part*, (The University of Tokyo Press), 532ps. 1995. (in Japanese).
10. H. Shimo, “The Historical Records in Persian Language relating with the Mongols: The Historical Study of Nomadic States Reconsidered” in *Iwanami Series of Lectures: The World History*, vol. 11, “*The Integration of Central Asia.*” pp.249-273. 1997. (in Japanese).
11. H. Shimo, “Two Important Persian Sources of the Mongol Empire” in *Etudes Mongoles et Siberienes*, Paris, pp.221-224. 1997.
12. H. Shimo, “The Control of Central Eurasia by the Mongol Empire and the Contact between the East and the West”, in *The History and the Culture*, vol. 9. (Dōhōsha, Kyoto). 2000. (in Japanese).
13. H. Shimo, The Alliance of Nomadic Tribes in the Mongol Empire dictated orally by Ghazan Khan of the

- Il Khanate”, in *The Journal of Oriental Research*, vol.60, no.2. pp.405-456. 2001. (in Japanese).
14. H. Shimo, *The Study into the History of the Mongol Empire, the Principal Part*, (The University of Tokyo Press), 1128ps. 2013. (in Japanese).