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Temüjin – Chinggis Khan – Chinggis-Ghen (Onomastics of the name Chinggis-Ghen: Problem Statement)

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Annotation: *The article is devoted to the problem of the origin of the name Chinggis Khan. The anthroponym Chinggis Khan is examined from the viewpoint of the Tatar ethnos.*

Legends and manuscripts tell us that Chinggis Khan was born on the bank of the Onon River in Mongolia approximately in 1155, his original name was Temüjin. This name was given to him by his father Yesugei Bahadur in honor of a brave Tatar warrior. Bearing this name he accepted the title of Chinggis Khan in 1206. The precise meaning of the latter has not been identified yet. Chinggis Khan was connected with the name Temüjin for over fifty years. At the same time, after his fiftieth birthday Temüjin “unofficially” had been bearing the name of Chinggis Khan for several years until he was proclaimed the head of clans and tribes at the quriltai. Only in the year of Snow Leopard (1206) Temüjin ordered to call the quriltai, the assembly of the best representatives of aristocracy in the upper reaches of the Onon River. However, there was no voting at the quriltai in 1206 and there was no election in the strict sense of this word as well. Chinggis Khan was not elected, but rather “proclaimed” the head of clans and tribes by the ruling elite.

This is how the Arabic chronicler Rashid al-Din described this event: “At the quriltai a powerful shaman named Kokochu (Teb-Tengri), the son of Mönglik, who was famous for his magic and enjoyed immense authority in Mongolia, said: «The Almighty God grants you the kingdom on Earth. Now that the kings of these lands, each of them called Gur Khan, have been defeated by your hand, and now you own their lands, let your nickname be Chinggis. You have become the king of kings, the Almighty God has enjoined you to take the name of Chinggis Khan, King of kings and Ruler of rulers». Everyone approved and voted for this name, and Chinggis Khan received the most perfect kind of power and strength. He belongs to the rulers of the Universe”. Temüjin was proclaimed the Divine Chinggis Khan or “Sutu-Bogdo Chinggis Khan” in Mongolian.

The meaning of the word “Chinggis” is very often associated with the Chinese title “Gur Khan”, which means “the great emperor of all people”. Thus, the khan of the Kereits had a Chinese title Wang Khan. But at the quriltai the growing and developing elite needed something else instead of the discredited Chinese titles. Here we can observe the tendency towards a deep sacral tradition, which is based on the notion that the name of a Tatar warrior, who showed a real vehement heroic bravery in the fight with the Mongols, can be associated

with the martial spirit of this ethnos. The name of the Tatars had managed to acquire a reverent veneration and to gain a crucial “martial” destination for the Tatars among the Mongols and other tribes of Central Asia, who were the descendants of the Hsiung-nu, Turks and other nomadic tribes. It is important to remind here that one of the most important political goals that was set by Temüjin was the unification of the Central Asian tribes in order to build a foundation for a completely new world order, the new Empire, so that his subjects could not only use the benefits of the material culture of civilized peoples, but also act as a unifying basis for the prosperity of all other peoples.

The choice of the name was extremely important for Temüjin. It should symbolize and unify various tribes. The name had to contain a hidden message, which would terrify enemies, and at the same time imply a positive interpretation for other tribes. This name initiated creation and unification. Every ethnos perceived this name differently in their own manner, to their own interests. But the most important goal was to understand how to lead the Tatars, who were the most combat-ready, organized tribes and had the immense experience in battle participation. Temüjin – Chinggis Khan was well-aware that large-scale goals could not be achieved without them. Was fear the only reason behind it? The most likely answer is no. He had to think of another stimulus, which he eventually found. Being a fluent speaker of the Turkic language, he used the name Chengiz (Chinggis), which could mean the following: “chen” (in Turkic, Old Tatar) and “ghizghen” applying to males (“dony’a ghizghyan ir’ ”), which literally means “the one who is overcoming space”. Since then he enjoyed the loyalty of the Tatars. The name Chinggis Khan – Chinggis-Ghen (-Ghyan) is of the Tatar origin and maintains its sacral continuity, the spirit of the furious, fearless Tatar warrior named Temüjin, overcoming the endless space. For the numerous Tatar tribes this name symbolized what we now call an active motivated action. It was not simply a symbol, but something instinctive, which every warrior had in his mind and realized his inextricable connection with a simple Tatar Temüjin and the Lord of the world Chinggis Khan. No matter what is being said, this problem deserves our closest attention, for it can uncover completely new perspectives. The anthroponym of the name Chinggis-Ghen is rather interesting and has a huge potential; no one has ever done any special research into this problem.

The position of the author in relation to this problem is of course subjective and reflects only one of the numerous viewpoints. However, history of this ethnos and its ethnogenesis provokes undeniable interest and promotes further investigation of this many-sided topic of the historical destiny of the Tatars.

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