Imperial Sons-in-law in Mongol Eurasia (13th-14th centuries)

Prepared for *The Leiden Summer School in Digital Humanities*

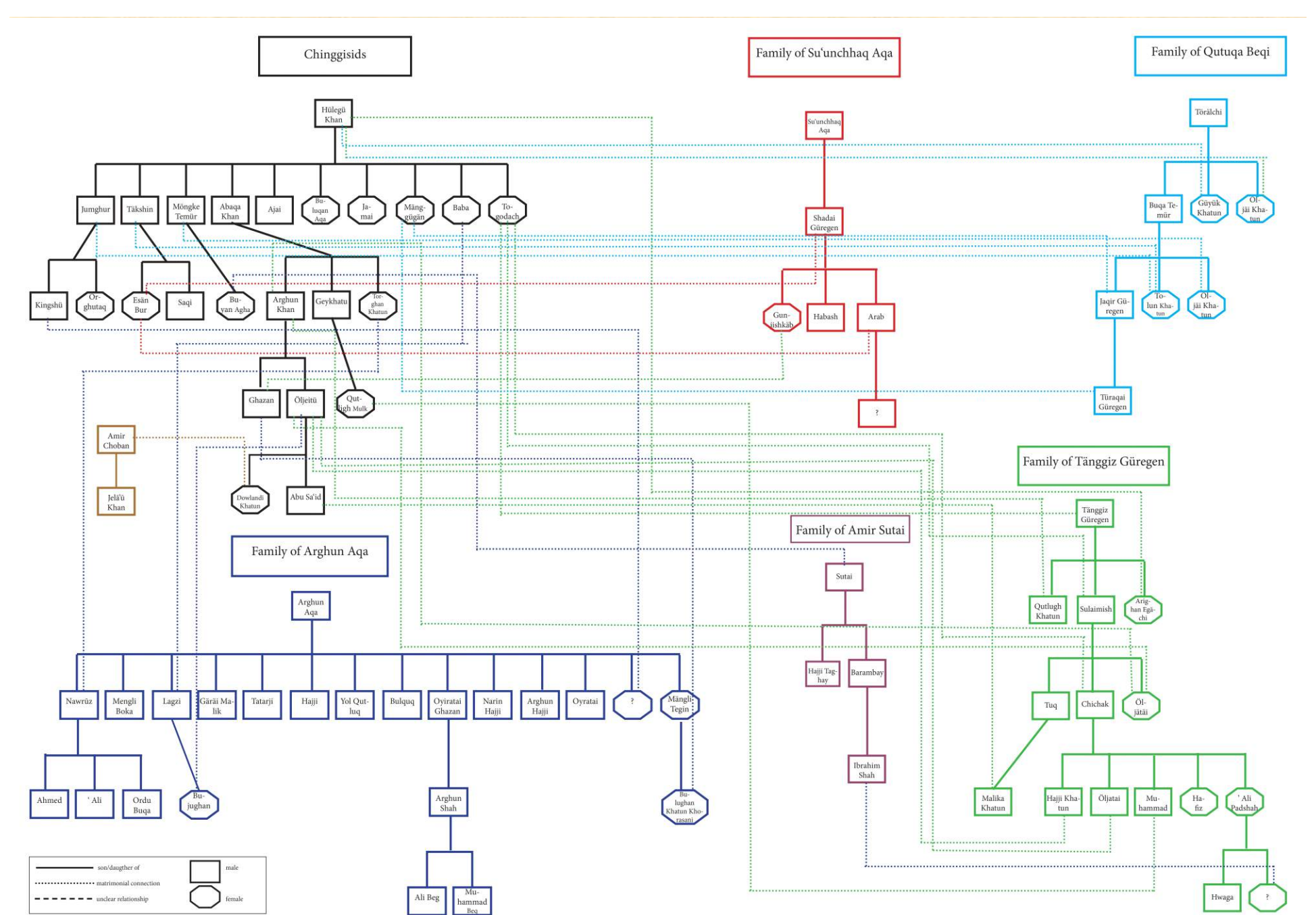**Ishayahu Landa, (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)**

ishayahu.landa@mail.huji.ac.il

William R. Shepherd, *The Historical Atlas* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1923), p. 92

Example of the matrimonial network: matrimonial relations of the Oyirad tribe with the Ilkhanid rulers (13th-14th cc.), from the MA thesis of the author

Research Questions of the Dissertation

This dissertation analyses the phenomenon of the *güregens (Mon.)*, the imperial sons-in-law, i.e. those married into the Chinggisid clan across Mongol Eurasia from Chinggis Khan's rise to power in the early 13th century until the second half of the 14th century, the time of the collapse of most of the Mongol states.

The main research issues under discussion include:

- *güregens* as a kind of self-sustained political institution in the Chinggisid political architecture,
- the positions of the *güregens* aside the other Mongol-originated mechanisms of power relations, as well as "local" political institutions of the conquered peoples and civilizations, such as the Islamic "diw?n" and the highly structured Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy, partly adopted by the Mongols for their needs in the various states and parts of Mongol Eurasia,
- the role of the *güregens* in the so-called "crisis of the mid-14th century", the period during which some of the Mongol states collapsed completely (Ilkhanate 1335, the Yuan dynasty 1368), and some went through a series of painful political transformations (Golden Horde, Chaghadaid *ulus*).

Methodology and Sources of the Dissertation

The core analysis deals with the genealogical networks of the Chinggisid ruling houses in Eurasia, based on the information contained in the

- historical chronicles, written or transmitted in Chinese, Persian, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, Old Russian, Latin, different variations of Turkic and Mongolian languages,
- biographical compendia (e.g. the *liezhuan* section of *Yuan shi* in Chinese; biographical dictionaries, such as the works of Khal?l ibn Aybak al-?afad?, Mu?izz al-Ans?b fi Shajarat al-Ans?b)
- travelogues (Marco Polo, William of Rubruck, Ibn Battuta)
- tomb inscriptions, foundational inscriptions on the temples and other constructions, other epigraphical remains (e.g. colophons).

Research Issue for the Summer School

How to implement the digital technologies in the analysis and structuring of the matrimonial networks of the Chinggisids dynasties, more precisely the latters' relations with the "in-laws'" families, known in the Chinese political realm as fuma ( )?

The problem: The existing models for representing matrimonial relations graphically provide a classical "tree-like"-organized (and non-polygamy-oriented) scheme, in which the succession of the marriages and of the generations is being shown in a hierarchical way (see above). This type of representation (and the relevant existing software) does not answer the needs of the genealogical software from other cultural traditions, and also does not give an option of expanding the information depth of the chart (i.e. who was the chief wife and when).

The question is especially relevant for the Yuan ( ) dynasty. Different from what had been accepted as a family and social "norm" in the pre-Yuan periods, the Mongols brought with them rather new family structures, which were characterised by polygamy, levirate and sororate marriages. The simultaneous existence of these marriage patterns led to the formation of rather complex matrimonial structures, which can also be seen in the case of the Chinggisid-güregen relations in the Chinese realm.

Levirate: the obligatory transmission of the wife of the deceased man to his (younger) brother(s).
Sororate: the case in which a man marries his (usually already deceased) wife's (younger) sister(s).

Possible solutions?

- Methodological: breaking of the classical "tree"-graph and development of something new or modifying of the already existing models?
- Technical: 3D representation of the graphs?