

A Mongolian Legend of the Building of Peking

BACKGROUND OF THE LEGEND

Late Yüan (1271–1368) literary collections contain two references to the popular legend about Na-cha ch'eng 那吒城, the mythic name for the Mongols' capital city of Ta-tu 大都 (modern Peking), founded by Qubilai Qaghan (r. 1260–1298).¹ The first reference is found in a set of poems on Ta-tu entitled "Nien-hsia ch'ü" 鞏下曲, by the belletrist Chang Yü 張昱:

There are eleven gates around the walls of Ta-tu, thatched with hay and
paved with earth the Na-cha ch'eng was built;
The prophecy says if [the walls] were encased in brick and stone,
They will be as long as [the column of] armored soldiers of the Heavenly
King.²

Ch'ang-ku chen-i's 長谷眞逸 *Nung-t'ien yü-hua* 農田餘話 has the other:

The city of Yen 燕 was designed by Liu Tai-pao 劉太保. There were eleven gates in order to symbolize Na-cha's three heads, six arms, and two feet. Shih-tsu 世祖 (Qubilai) was enthroned in the year *keng-shen* 庚申 (1260), and the state perished between the *wu-shen* 戊申 (1368) and *ssu-yü* 巳酉 (1369) years. Altogether 111 years elapsed.³

This Liu Tai-pao was none other than Liu Ping-chung 劉秉忠 (1216–1274), known earlier by his Buddhist name Tzu-ts'ung 子聰, who was the

¹ This essay is written in memory of the Reverend Henry Serruys, C.I.C.M. For recent studies of the building of the capital Ta-tu (known as Cambulac, City of the Khan, in medieval Europe), see Hou Jen-chih 侯仁之 and Chin Tao 金滿, *Pei-ching shih-hua* 北京史話 (Shanghai: Shang-hai jen-min, 1980), chap. 5; Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, "Imperial Architecture under Mongolian Patronage: Khubilai's Imperial City of Daidu" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard U., 1981); Ch'en Kao-hua 陳高華, *Yüan Ta-tu* 元大都 (Peking: Pei-ching, 1982); and Dept. History, Peking U., comp., *Pei-ching shih* 北京史 (Peking: Pei-ching, 1985), chap. 5. For a popular account, see Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Forbidden City* (New York: Newsweek, 1972), chap. 3, and Yan Chong-nian, *Beijing: The Treasures of an Ancient Capital* (Peking: Morning Glory Press, 1987), chap. 5. There is a detailed sketch map of Ta-tu in the excellent atlas of the Peking region produced by Hou Jen-chih et al., eds., *Pei-ching li-shih ti-tu chi* 北京歷史地圖集 (Peking: Pei-ching, 1985), pp. 27–28.

² See Chang Yü, *Chang Kuang-pi shih-chi* 張光弼詩集 (SPTK hsü-pien edn., 1934) 3, "Nien-hsia ch'ü," p. 15b.

³ See Ch'ang-ku chen-i, *Nung-t'ien yü-hua*, in Ch'en Chi-ju 陳繼儒, ed., *Pao-yen t'ang pi-chi* 寶顏堂秘笈 (1922 edn.), *kuang-chi* 廣集, no. 4, *shang*, p. 3b.

closest Chinese adviser to Qubilai. A Buddho-Taoist with skills in astronomy, geomancy, and mathematics, Liu was the principal architect of Ta-tu, built between 1272 and 1283, but his manifold talents and contributions were distorted by intense mythologization.⁴ In subsequent centuries elements of the Na-cha ch'eng story inspired both Mongolian and Chinese legends about the building of Peking under the Ming Yung-lo 永樂 Emperor (Chu Ti 朱棣, r. 1402-1425). I propose to examine the origin and transformation of those legends, focusing on the Mongolian versions and their continuing popularity down to modern times.

Na-cha, later transcribed No-cha 哪吒 (Sanskrit: Nata), was a child deity—the third son of Vaiśravaṇa 毘沙門, the guardian of the north among the four “Heavenly Kings” of Buddhist tradition. Tantric Buddhist *sūtra* of the early T'ang (624-905) endowed Na-cha with an extraordinary physique and divine powers, capable at will of transforming himself miraculously.

In the Buddhist tales Na-cha helped his father defend An-hsi 安西, in western China, against non-Chinese attack. He used his powers to exorcise wicked demons and he subdued drought-bringing dragons. By the late T'ang and the early Sung (960-1279), however, Na-cha received a new identity: the third prince of the “Pagoda-wielding Heavenly King 托塔天王 (t'o-t'a t'ien-wang) Li Ching 李靖 (571-649).” Li Ching was a T'ang general who became mythologized as a Taoist guardian god with some shared features of King Vaiśravaṇa. Here Na-cha was sixty feet tall, had three heads, six arms (later eight), and two feet. One of the most dramatic Buddho-Taoist tales concerned Na-cha's struggle with the purported controller-genii of the waterways. Na-cha, in a river, trampled on the “crystal palace” and enraged the dragon king. The king's son was sent to fight Na-cha, who killed the prince in a fierce battle that unleashed much supernatural horror.⁵

⁴ On Liu Ping-chung's biographies, see Su T'ien-chüeh 蘇天爵, *Kuo-ch'ao ming-ch'ien shih-t'ieh* 國朝名臣事略 (Chi-fu ts'ung-shu 畿輔叢書 edn., 1879) 7, p. 12; Sung Lien 宋濂 et al., *Yüan-shih* 元史 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1976) 157, p. 3687. For details, see Hok-lam Chan, “Liu Ping-chung (1216-74): A Buddhist-Taoist Statesman at the Court of Khubilai Khan,” *TP* 53.1-3 (1967), pp. 98-146. Liu's design of the city of Ta-tu is mentioned in Hsiung Meng-hsiang 熊夢祥, comp., *Hsi-chin chih* 析津志, the gazetteer of the capital. See Textual Reconstruction Committee, ed., *Hsi-chin chih chi-i* 續佚 (Peking: Peiching ku-chi, 1982), pp. 8, 33, 213. See also Ch'en, *Yüan Ta-tu*, chap. 3, and Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, “The Plan of Khubilai Khan's Imperial City,” *Artibus Asiae* 44.2-3 (1982), pp. 137-58. My own study of the Na-cha ch'eng legend of Ta-tu was published as Ch'en Hsüeh-lin 陳學霖 [Hok-lam Chan], “Yüan Ta-tu ch'eng chien-tsoo ch'uan-shuo t'an-yüan” 元大都城建造傳說探源, *Han-hsüeh yen-chiu* 漢學研究 (Taipei) 5.1 (1987), pp. 95-127.

⁵ For King Vaiśravaṇa and Na-cha in Tantric Buddhism, see Mochizuki Shinko 望月信

Obviously, Liu Ping-chung needed a protector for the capital city that he was about to lay out. Ta-tu was crowded and beset with water shortages, not to mention its need for a tutelary deity to protect the capital. Na-cha was enormous, magical, and effective. He would aptly serve as a patron saint of the imperial city. Therefore, the prescient Liu Ping-chung summoned his presence.

In later centuries the legend became infused with the particulars concerning the building of Peking, the new capital of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Here the chief architect's name became Liu Po-wen 劉伯溫, a legend-encrusted adviser to the Ming founder Chu Yüan-chang 朱元璋 (T'ai-tsu 太祖; r. 1368-1398). In confirmable history Liu was Liu Chi 基 (1311-1375), a strategist and geomancer credited with having selected the sites of the new imperial capital and main palaces at Ying-t'ien 應天 (Chinling 金陵, later called Nan-ching 南京). But he had nothing actually to do with the planning of Peking (known as Pei-p'ing fu 北平府 in the early Ming), since he died in T'ai-tsu's reign, before Peking was established in 1403 as the main capital under the Yung-lo Emperor. The building of the new capital, which contained a replica of the “Forbidden City” of Nanking, was actually started in 1406 and completed in 1420.⁶ Liu Chi the mythic statesman and man of skills became identified, by a concocted genealogy, as Liu Ping-chung's grandson, and dramatized in *Ying-lieh chuan* 英烈傳, a late Ming romance about the dynastic founding. His skills grew to encompass those of astrologer and prognosticator—a larger-than-life figure in the Chinese consciousness, especially since Peking legends had him building an “Eight-armed No-cha city” 八臂哪吒城 (*pa-pi No-cha ch'eng*) so that the city would be saved from dragons and droughts by the child deity.⁷

亨, ed., *Bukkyō dai jiten* 佛教大辭典 (Kyoto: Seki seiten kankyō kyōkai 世界聖典刊行協會, 1957) 4, p. 3994; 5, p. 4304. On Na-cha in Sanskrit, see William Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1937), pp. 247-48. On Li Ching's and Na-cha's mythologization, see Liu Ts'un-yan, *Buddhist Influences on Chinese Novels*, vol. 1, *The Authorship of the Feng Shen Yen I* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1962), chap. 11, and idem 柳存仁, “Pi-sha-men t'ien-wang fu-tzu yü Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo chih kuan-hsi” 毘沙門天王父子與中國小說之關係, rpt. in idem, *Ho-feng-t'ang tu-shu chi* 和風堂讀書記 (Hong Kong: Lung-men shu-tien, 1977), 5'e 2, pp. 287-332.

⁶ On Peking's construction under Yung-lo, see Hou and Chin, *Pei-ching shih-hua*, chap. 6; *Pei-ching shih*, chap. 6. For additional details, see Edward L. Farmer, *Early Ming Government: The Evolution of Dual Capitals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1976), chaps. 4-5; James Geiss, “Peking under the Ming” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton U., 1979), chap. 2; and Hsieh Min-tsun 謝敏聰, *Ming Ch'ing Pei-ching ti ch'eng-yüan yü kung-tien chih yen-chiu* 明清北京的城垣與宮殿之研究 (Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng, 1980), chaps. 3-4. A popular account is in MacFarquhar, *Forbidden City*, chap. 4, and Yan, *Beijing*, chap. 6. A detailed late-Ming sketch map is in Hou, *Pei-ching li-shih ti-t'u chi*, pp. 31-32.

⁷ For Liu Chi's biographies, see Chang T'ing-yü 張廷玉 et al., *Ming-shih* 明史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1974) 128, p. 3777; Wang Hsin-i 王馨一, *Liu Po-wen nien-p'u* 劉伯溫年譜

The modern folklorist Chin Shou-shen's 金受申 *Pei-ching ti ch'uan-shuo* 北京的傳說 tells a later legend in the following way, using Liu Po-wen, an adviser to the Yung-lo Emperor named Yao Kuang-hsiao 姚廣孝 (the monk Tao-yen 道衍, 1335-1418), the miraculous No-cha, and the vicious dragons.

When the emperor decides to build a capital in Peking his Minister of Works panics and shrugs off the task, saying the site was the Bitter Sea Waste 苦海幽州 (*k'u-hai Yu-chou*) where the dragons are exceptionally vicious. The emperor then invites his two chief advisers, Liu and Yao, who know all about heaven and earth, the spirits, and devils, to take up the task, but they, unfortunately, despise each other. So they propose a contest whereby the winner would gain all the credit for the plans. Liu is to stay in the city's eastern sector, Yao in the west, and they would meet in ten days, and sit back to back, drawing their plans to see how they tally.

During the first three days, as they go out to survey the terrain, each hears a child's voice that says "Just copy me and you will do well," but no child is seen. Then on the fourth day, they separately see a child wearing a red jacket and short pants, the silk fringes dangling from the shoulders and rustling in the wind like arms. They each realize that this must be No-cha, that it had been his voice instructing to draw a plan of the city like that of himself—the eight-armed No-cha.

As agreed, on the tenth day they draw, sitting back to back. They finish and compare, only to burst out laughing because the plans are identical—each an Eight-armed No-cha city! Liu Po-wen explains that the gate in the center is due south, Cheng-yang Gate 正陽門 is No-cha's head, and the two gates to the north, An-ting 安定門 and Te-sheng 德勝門, are his feet. The four eastern and western gates are his eight arms. No-cha is very much alive, otherwise he cannot keep vicious dragons subdued, Liu exclaims. The rectangular Imperial City is his viscera, T'ien-an Gate 天安門 at its entrance is

(Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1936); Liu Te-yü 劉德隅, ed., *Ming Liu Po-wen shih-chi shih-i 事蹟拾遺* (Taipei: priv. edn., 1976); and L. C. Goodrich and C. Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1976), pp. 932-38. On notions of Liu Chi's relation to Liu Ping-chung, see Tu Hao-ming 杜浩銘 and Chao Ching-shen 趙景深, eds., *Ying-tieh chuan 英烈傳* (Shanghai: Ssu-lien, 1955), p. 89. For Liu Chi's legends, see Chan Hok-lam, "Liu Chi (1311-75) in the *Ying-tieh chuan*: The Fictionalization of a Scholar-Hero," *The Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 5.1-2 (1967), pp. 26-42; idem, "Liu Chi (1311-75) and His Models: The Image-Building of a Chinese Imperial Adviser," *OE* 15.1 (1968), pp. 34-55; idem, "Tu Liu Po-wen Shao-ping ko" 讀劉伯溫燒餅歌, in *Festschrift Editorial Committee, ed., Shou Lo Hsiang-lin chiao-shou chi-nien lun-wen chi 壽羅香林教授紀念論文集* (Hong Kong, 1970), pp. 163-90; and idem, "Die Prophezeiung des Liu Chi (1311-1375): Ihre Entstehung und ihre Umwandlung im heutigen China," *Saeculum* 25.4 (1974), pp. 338-66.

the way into the viscera and leads in the other direction to Cheng-yang Gate—his brain. The long level road between them is No-cha's gullet!

The plans are exactly alike, and so neither can outbid the other for eventual credit and fame; thus Yao Kuang-hsiao, greatly discouraged, goes off to be a monk, waiting to see how his rival will build the city.

In modern times the above legend has become vividly and sensationally retold in all walks of life in Peking. In all the versions the general form of the story is the same.⁸ Not well known, however, is the fact that in the long period of transformation of the Na-cha ch'eng story from the late Yüan to modern times, the Mongolian legends about the building of Peking, as we see in the following sketches, played a significant role.

EVOLUTION OF THE LEGEND

An important part of the Mongolian legend of the building of Peking concerns the Yung-lo Emperor. Since the seventeenth century in north China a belief has existed that claims the emperor to have actually been the posthumous son of the last Yüan emperor—Toghon-temür (Shun-ti 順帝; r. 1333-1370) by his Qonggirud *qatun*, who was already pregnant when captured by T'ai-tsu in the fall of Ta-tu (September 1368). She became the latter's consort and disguised her newborn as the Chinese emperor's own son by miraculously prolonging the pregnancy. The future Yung-lo Emperor grew up to be a strong prince, but was sent away to Peking when the Hung-wu 洪武 Emperor (T'ai-tsu) became suspicious about the paternity. The prince built a city at the end of the Great Wall and settled there. When his purportedly adoptive father died some years later, the prince led an army and returned to court; he seized the emperor that had been installed there, his Chinese "brother" the Chien-wen 建文 Emperor (Chu Yün-wen 朱允炆 r. 1399-1402), and ascended the throne of the Ming dynasty.

Several accounts in the same vein can be dated to between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They include:

1. bLo-bzan bsTan-'jin's *Allan Tobchi*;
2. *Allan Tobchi* (brevior);

⁸ See Chin Shou-shen, *Pei-ching ti ch'uan-shuo*, rev. edn. (Peking: Pei-ching, 1981), pp. 3-8; cf. Gladys Yang, trans., *Beijing Legends* (Peking: Panda Books, 1982), pp. 10-17; Chang Tzu-ch'en 張紫農 and Li Yüeh-nan 李岳南, *Pei-ching ti ch'uan-shuo* (Shanghai: Shang-hai wen-i, 1982), pp. 1-5. For this legend, see also L. C. Arlington and William Lewisohn, *In Search of Old Peking* (Peking: H. Vetch, 1935), pp. 175-76, 338-39; Huang Hsien-teng 黃先登, *Pei-p'ing 北平 ti ch'uan-shuo* (Taipei: Ch'ang-ch'ün-t'eng, 1979), pp. 77-85; and literature cited in n. 44 below. My monograph on this subject is forthcoming.

3. Saghang-sechen's *Erdeni-yin Tobchi*;
4. Rasipungsugh's *Bolor Erike*;
5. *Allan kürdün mingghan kegesütü bichig*;
6. *Meng-ku shih-hsi p'u* 蒙古世系譜 (the Chinese rendition of the Mongols' genealogy).

Most claim that the Mongol princess was two or three (lunar) months pregnant when she met the Hung-wu Emperor and that her pregnancy was prolonged by about ten more.⁹

All of this, however, is sheer fabrication; there is no historical basis for any of the circumstances. According to the official sources, Chu Ti, the fourth son of the Hung-wu Emperor, was born in the twentieth year of the Chih-cheng 至正 era of Toghon-temür, that is, 1360. The prince was therefore eight years old when his father founded the new dynasty and the last Yüan emperor fled with the remnants of his court back to Mongolia. Although his natural mother Empress Ma 馬 (1332-1382) was evidently faked in the official records and although he was probably born to a Mongol consort, Chu Ti's mother could not possibly have been one of the late emperor's spouses captured by the Ming armies. No member of the Yüan court was seized by Chu Yüan-chang's forces until the fall of the capital in September 1368.¹⁰

In all likelihood the claim was conjured up as a psychological consol-

⁹ For details, see *Allan Tobchi, A Brief History of the Mongols*, Scripta Mongolica 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1952) 2, pp. 125-26; C. R. Bawden, *The Mongol Chronicle Allan Tobchi* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1955), pp. 67-68, 154-155; cf. Kobayashi Takashiro 小林高四郎, *Moko Ōgonshi 蒙古黄金史* (Tokyo: Seikatsu sha, 1941), pp. 89-90; Jagchid Sechin 札奇斯欽, *Meng-ku-Huang-chin shih i-chu 蒙古黄金史译註* (Taipei: Lien-ching, 1979), pp. 186-88; Chu Feng 朱風 and Chia Ching-yen 賈敬顏, trans., *Han-i Meng-ku Huang-chin shih-kang 漢譯蒙古黄金史綱* (Huhehot: Nei Meng-ku jen-min, 1985), pp. 46-48; *Erdeni-yin Tobchi: Mongolian Chronicle*, Scripta Mongolica 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1956) 2, p. 264; 3, p. 260; cf. Daoruntü 道潤梯步, trans., (*Hsin-i chiao-chu*) *Meng-ku yüan-liu* (新譯校注) 蒙古源流 (Huhehot: Nei Meng-ku jen-min, 1980) 8, p. 464; *Bolor Erike: Mongolian Chronicle*, Scripta Mongolica 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1950), pp. 118-19; Walter Heissig, ed., *Allan kürdün mingghan kegesütü bichig: Eine Mongolische Chronik von Stregeti Guasi Dharma* [1739 ms.] (Kopenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958), pp. 36-37; *Meng-ku shih-hsi p'u* (1939 edn.) 2, pp. 7b-8a, for which cf. Louis Hambis, trans., *Document sur l'Histoire des Mongols à l'époque des Ming* (Paris: P.U. de Paris, 1969), p. 180. In *Erdeni-yin Tobchi*, however, the Mongol princess was seven months pregnant when she met the Hung-wu Emperor and gave birth a normal three months later, thus raising doubts about the paternity of the child.

¹⁰ Chu Ti, the future Yung-lo Emperor, was born on the 17th day of the 4th month of the *keng-tzu* 庚子 year, i.e., May 2, 1360; see *Ming Tai-tsu shih-lu* 明太祖實錄 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1962) 1, p. 1; *Tai-tsung* 太宗 shih-lu (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1963) 2, p. 94; cf. *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 35. The claim of Yung-lo's maternity by Empress Ma was methodically faked in the official records to support his claim of legitimate succession to his father's throne. For details, see n. 15, below.

tion for the loss of Mongolian supremacy in China after a century of domination. The late Reverend Antoine Mostaert and other scholars have observed that the legend probably originated among the Mongol communities around the Peking region and later was disseminated back to Mongolia. From its inception as hearsay, it was retold and transmitted through various agents—most likely shamans and storytellers—and inspired embellishments and imaginative details before written in the chronicles. It must have been a great satisfaction to the Mongols, who could indulge a belief that despite the fall of the Yüan empire, the great *qans* in reality still ruled China for three more centuries. Mongolian ancestry of the Ming dynasty was still a popular subject in Mongolian folktales down to the early twentieth century.¹¹

Our investigation must take into account the vicissitudes of the Mongol tribesmen in north China after the conquest of Ta-tu by Chu Yüan-chang's forces and the flight of Toghon-temür to Mongolia. The last Yüan emperor took only a remnant of his court and army, leaving behind, according to *Erdeni-yin Tobchi* and *Allan Tobchi*, thirty-four of his forty *tümen* (divisions) of troops in China, which would have amounted to several hundreds of thousands of able bodies. Under Ming T'ai-tsu's conciliatory and pragmatic policies, the Mongols were allowed to live in their pastoral communities, and large groups were organized into military units under their own commanders to serve the Chinese rulers. Many Mongols were employed at the Ming court as imperial guards, eunuchs, as officers in the metropolitan police force, as envoys to foreign countries, and even as ranked officials in the civil bureaucracy.¹²

Shortly after Chu Ti was sent in 1380 to Peking (then known as Pei-p'ing) in charge of the fief of Yen—he had already been Prince of Yen for ten years—he consciously promoted relations with the Mongol commanders and their rank-and-file soldiers, and won their allegiance. It was with the

¹¹ Modern scholarship has commented on this. See the works of the Reverends Antoine Mostaert and Henry Serruys, cited in n. 17, below. In addition, see Yamamoto Mamoru 山本守, "Eiraku Tei to Kenbun Tei: Eiraku Tei no Moko denki" 永樂帝と建文帝永樂帝の蒙古伝記, in *Ryōto no tama* 遠東の珠 (Mukden: Manshu jidai sha, 1944), pp. 107-17, and Chou Ch'ing-shu 周清樹, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng-mu Hung-chi-la shih shuo so fan-yang ti t'ien-ming kuan" 明成祖生母弘吉刺氏說所反映的天命觀, *Nei Meng-ku ta-hsieh hsieh-pao* 內蒙古大學學報 3 (1987), pp. 1-18 (esp. pp. 1-4). Chou's study is insightful about the possible Chinese origin of this Mongolian legend. Owen Lattimore collected an oral version in Inner Mongolia in 1934, although it leaves out the story of how the city was built. See Lattimore, "A Mongol Legend of the Founding of Peking," *CAF* 23:3-4 (1979), pp. 237-39.

¹² For remarks in *Erdeni-yin Tobchi* and *Allan Tobchi* on the large number of Mongols left by Toghon-temür in China, see Henry Serruys, "The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu Period (1368-1398)," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 11 (1959), pp. 47-50. Serruys's work, drawing extensively on the *Ming shih-lu*, is the best study of Mongols in China under Ming Tai-tsu.

aid of the Mongolian cavalry from the Uriyangqad guards that the prince seized Ta-ning 大寧 on the Great Wall northeast of Peking during his "punitive" campaign against the Chien-wen court at the end of 1399. This campaign, known as *ching-nan* 靖難, "to clear away the disasters," succeeded in unseating his nephew the emperor in July 1402.¹³ Therefore, after he ascended the throne, he extended patronage to the Mongols settling in China; the Mongolian cavalry constituted a solid core of the imperial troops, whereas additional Mongol officers staffed his court and commanded various military guards in the northern frontiers. By this time, there must have been over half a million Mongols in China, and probably one third of them scattered around the Peking area. This was further bolstered by a steady influx of Mongolian tribesmen who traveled across the desert to surrender to the Chinese authorities because of the favorable treatment they received. The trend continued to the middle of the fifteenth century. The presence of such a large Mongolian population around Peking and the intimate role the Mongols played in Chinese court affairs are germane to an understanding of the evolution of the Na-cha ch'eng legend.¹⁴

The mythic claim of the Yung-lo Emperor's Mongolian ancestry is not, however, completely devoid of historical substance. Not that his mother was Toghon-temür's *qatun*, but she was probably an imperial consort from a Mongol clan. The fact is, although all such official records as the imperial genealogy *T'ien-huang yü-tieh* 天潢玉牒 and the reign chronicle *T'ai-tsung shih-lu* 太宗實錄 state that Yung-lo was the fourth son of T'ai-tsu born to Empress Ma, the claim has been exposed by historians as a politically motivated concoction. Support was needed for Yung-lo's pretensions to legitimate succession after the demise of Emperor Chien-wen, victim of the *coup d'état*. Invoking the first principle in the *Ancestral Injunctions* (*Huang-Ming tsu-hsün* 皇明祖訓)—that only the eldest surviving heir by the primary consort qualifies to be the imperial successor—certainly helped. Rudimentary records do, however, exist that attest to the contrary, that Yung-lo was most likely born to a Mongol woman from the Qonggirad clan.¹⁵

¹³ On the *ching-nan* campaign launched by Chu Ti, the Prince of Yen, against his nephew the Chien-wen Emperor (Chu Yün-wen) and related historiographical issues, see Wang Ch'ung-wu 王崇武, *Ming ching-nan shih-shih k'ao-cheng kao* 明靖難史事考證稿 (Li-chuang, Szechwan: Academia Sinica, 1945), and David B. Chan, *The Usurpation of the Prince of Yen* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Research Center, 1975). See also Hok-lam Chan, article forthcoming, cited in n. 15, below.

¹⁴ On Chu Ti's recruitment of Mongolian cavalry into the imperial forces and extensive patronage of the Mongols settling in China after his enthronement, see Henry Serruys, "Mongols Ennobled during the Early Ming," *HJAS* 22 (1959), pp. 209-60, and *idem*, "The Mongols in China, 1400-1450," *MS* 26 (1968), pp. 233-305.

¹⁵ The maternity of the Yung-lo Emperor and his legitimate claim were subjects of heated

A primary source of the purported Mongolian maternity of the Yung-lo Emperor was the record of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices at Nanking, entitled *Nan-ching t'ai-ch'ang ssu chih* 南京太常寺志 (1623), which preserved a roster of the spirit tablets of the forbears of the Ming emperors. This work is now lost, but according to such late Ming scholars as Ho Ch'iao-yüan 何喬遠 (1558-1632), Tan Ch'ien 談遷 (1594-1658), Li Ch'ing 李清 (1602-1683), and Chang Tai 張岱 (1597-1684) who had access to the record, Emperor Yung-lo's natural mother was a consort named Kung-fei 碩妃, whose surname Kung (variants: Weng 翁 [甕] and Wang 王), in the opinion of modern scholars, was the Chinese transcription of the first syllable of the Mongolian word Qonggirad or Khungirat. An early Ch'ing scholar, Liu Hsien-t'ing 劉獻廷 (1648-1695), goes even further in his *Kuang-yang tsu-chi* 廣陽雜記 by claiming that this lady Kung-fei was indeed Toghon-temür's concubine. It appears that given the large numbers of Mongols serving the Yung-lo Emperor, and with access to the inner court, imperial secrets like this may have leaked out into the Mongolian communities and fueled legends about the Chinese emperor's descent from Toghon-temür.¹⁶

debate among Chinese historians in the 1930s. Chu Hsi-tsu 朱希祖 accepted Yung-lo's official records' claim that he was born to Ming T'ai-tsu's spouse Empress Ma, for which see Hsieh Chin 解縉, ed., *T'ien-huang yü-tieh* 天潢玉牒 (Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng 叢書集成 edn.), p. 22, and *T'ai-tsu shih-lu* 1, p. 1. Fu Ssu-nien 傅斯年, however, disputed the records and suggested that the emperor's natural mother was an imperial consort known as Kung-fei 碩妃, probably a Korean woman. His sources for this were private accounts, such as those in n. 16, below. (See Chu Hsi-tsu, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng-mu chih-i pien" 明成祖生母質疑辨, [*Kuo-li*] *Chung-shan ta-hsüeh wen-shih hsüeh yen-chiu so yüeh-k'an* [國立] 中山大學文史學研究所月刊 2.1 [1939], pp. 1-13; Fu Ssu-nien, "Pa 跋 'Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng-mu wen-t'i hui-cheng' ping ta 問題集證并答 Chu Hsi-tsu hsien-sheng 先生," *CYY* 6 [1936], pp. 79-86.) See also Li Chin-hua 李晉華, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng-mu wen-t'i hui-cheng" 彙證, *CYY* 6 (1936), pp. 45-77, and Wu Han 吳晗, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng-mu k'ao" 考, *CHHP* 10 (1935), pp. 631-46, who concur with Fu but are uncertain about Kung-fei's ethnicity. Later, Shao Hsün-cheng 邵循正 concluded that she was a Mongol from the Qonggirad clan; see J. S. Shaw [Shao Hsün-cheng], "Historical Significance of the Curious Theory of the Mongol Blood in the Veins of the Ming Emperors," *Chinese Social and Political Sciences Review* 20.4 (1937), pp. 492-98. This is supported by Chou, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu sheng-mu," pp. 1-4, 12-14. For details of Emperor Yung-lo's attempt at legitimation, see Hok-lam Chan, "The Legitimation of Usurpation: Historical Revisions under Emperor Yung-lo (r. 1403-1425)," in Jack L. Dull, ed., *The Legitimation of China's Imperial Regimes: Case Studies* (Seattle: U. of Washington P., forthcoming).

¹⁶ On the private accounts of Kung-fei (Wang-fei) based on the *Nan-ching t'ai-ch'ang ssu chih*, see Ho Ch'iao-yüan 何喬遠, *Ming-shan ts'ang* 名山藏 (1640; Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1971), "Tien-mo chi" 典謨記 6, p. 355; Tan Ch'ien 談遷, *Tsao-lin tsu-tsu* 棗林雜俎 (Chang-shih Shih-yüan ts'ung-shu 張氏遺園叢書 edn., 1911), *i-chi* 藝乘, p. 12; Li Ch'ing 李清, *San-yüan sui-pi* (*pu-i fu-chih*) 三垣隨筆 (補遺附誌) (Peking: Chung-hua, 1982), p. 249; Chang Tai 張岱, *T'ao-an meng-i* 陶庵夢憶 (Taipei: Taiwan K'ai-meng, 1957) 1, p. 1; Chu I-tsun 朱彝尊, *Ming-shih tsung* 明詩綜 (1705; Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1962) 44, p. 254; Liu Hsien-t'ing 劉獻廷, *Kuang-yang tsu-chi* 廣陽雜記 (Changsha: Shang-wu, 1941), p. 76, and *Meng-tu yüan-liu* 8, p. 464. Ho and his three contemporaries stated that Yung-lo's mother was Kung-fei, without specifying if she was a Mongol; Chu I-tsun thought she was a Korean; and

An oral version of the legend about Peking's construction under the Yung-lo Emperor was recorded by the Reverend Mostaert in his *Textes oraux ordos*, a corpus of Mongolian folklore that he collected in the Ordos between 1905 and 1925. A parallel written version was transcribed twice in 1907 from even older manuscripts. Mostaert acquired both 1907 copies from the same region in the 1930s. Original authorship is not indicated, but the roots of this manuscript tradition probably go back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The late Reverend Henry Serruys examined one of the copies and published an English translation of it almost twenty years ago. The Mongolian title is *Dayiming yuwa lowa gaghan begejing qota-(n)i bayighulughsan üliger-ün debter. yuwa (n) tayise. jing tayise* (*Book of the Story of How Emperor Yung-lo of the Great Ming Built the City of Peking: The Yüan Prince, the True Prince*). The Yüan Prince (Yüan wang-tzu 元王子, Prince of the Mongols) refers to the future Yung-lo Emperor, thought to be the actual son of Toghon-temür, and the True Prince (Chen wang-tzu 眞王子) refers to the Hung-wu Emperor's other son born to a Chinese consort.¹⁷

THE FOLKLORIC LEGEND: NOTES ON SERRUYS' TRANSLATION

The following excerpts from the Reverend Serruys' translation highlight the legend beginning with the Yüan Prince's birth through his adulthood and exile to Nan-k'ou 南口 Pass, next the building of the city of Peking, and finally enthronement as the Great Ming Emperor. I provide brief introductions as well as discussions. In the light of the extant source

only Liu Hsien-t'ing (who wrote the name Weng-fei 璽妃) and *Erdeni-yin Tobchi* (*Meng-ku yüan-liu*) claimed she was a Mongol consort of Toghon-temür. See Li, "Ming Ch'eng-tsu," pp. 55-60, 71-76; and Chou, "Sheng-mu Hung-chi-la shih," who claims Kung/Weng-fei was a Qonggirad. None of the above explains the meaning of "Weng." However, the Mongolian genealogy *Meng-ku shih-hsi p'u* (cited in n. 7, above) claims she was so called because she hid herself in a *weng* 甕 (earthen jar) from the Ming army but was captured and presented to Chu Yüan-chang. This speculation was apparently influenced by *Allan Tobchi*, which regarding the Qonggirad queen of Uqaghatau Qaghan (i.e., Toghon-temür) states: "... the queen went into a barrel and was left behind. This barrel the Chinese call *qang* and the Mongols call *butung*." (Trans. Bawden, *Allan Tobchi*, p. 154.)

¹⁷ See Antoine Mostaert's Latin transcription, *Textes oraux ordos*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 1 (Peiping: Catholic University, 1937), pp. 133-36, and the French translation of the verbatim text of the legend by the same author, *Folklore ordos*, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 11 (1947), pp. 189-95; and Henry Serruys, "A Manuscript Version of the Legend of the Mongol Ancestry of the Yung-lo Emperor," in John G. Hangin and U. Onon, eds., *Analecta Mongolica. Dedicated to the Seventieth Birthday of Professor Owen Lattimore*, Publications of the Mongol Society Occasional Papers 8 (Bloomington: Mongol Society, 1972), pp. 19-61. For bibliography, see idem, "A Catalogue of Mongol Manuscripts from Ordos," *JAOS* 95.2 (1975), p. 199 (mss. no. 63, 64). The contents of the oral (the definitive) and written (the more elaborate and refined) versions are much the same.

materials from both the Mongolian and Chinese traditions, it is possible to trace the origin of some of the episodes given in the manuscript and distinguish fact from fiction in order to evaluate the legend's historical and cultural significance.

The Ming Hung-wu Emperor took for himself a spouse (*qatun*) of the last Yüan emperor, Toghon-temür, unaware that she was already pregnant. The Mongol princess earnestly prayed to the "Three Jewels" deities and prolonged the pregnancy so that when she gave birth to a boy the paternal identity was not suspected. He was given the name Yüan Prince by a soothsayer, and before long a Chinese imperial consort bore another son called the True Prince.

1

Thereafter (at the time that the *qatun* was living with Toghon-temür *qaghan* she was pregnant with a child) she said, "If I give birth soon, they will certainly kill [the child]." So she prayed fervently in silence to the Three Jewels, and as a result she gave birth to a son twelve months after her marriage to Chu Hung-wu (that is, the Hung-wu Emperor). When [the emperor] had the boy examined by a soothsayer, [the latter] declared, "This boy's fortune is extremely auspicious; he will succeed to the government of his father and protect the people." And so he gave him the name Yüan Prince. But the ministers said [to the emperor], "If one considers the name Yüan Prince given by the soothsayer to this boy, it means 'Prince of the Mongols,' and because he is certainly a son of the Mongol *qaghan*, you are not allowed to raise him." The emperor became angry and said threateningly, "[The rule is that] a man is born when he has been nine months in his mother's womb; since this son of mine has only been born twelve months after I met with *qatun*, how would he be a descendant of the Mongol [*qaghan*]?" None of them found anything to answer [to this]. When another son was born the soothsayer was ordered to examine him and he said, "This boy's fortune will be worse than his elder brother's." Thus he named him True Prince. This means Prince of the Chinese. As the two boys gradually grew up there was no harmony between them and they quarreled and fought continuously. At that time the mother *qatun* became sick and at the moment of death she called the elder son, the Yüan Prince, and handed him two letters [in separate] envelopes, saying: "This is my last will. In time of success see one envelope; in time of suffering see the other envelope."¹⁸

¹⁸ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 31-32 (text), pp. 42-43 (translation). In the six extracts from Serruys' article, minor grammatical and punctuation changes have been made.

Plainly, the assertion that the Ming Yung-lo Emperor was the posthumous son of Toghon-temür was derived from the prevailing Mongol legend. Most of the older versions, noted above, state that the *qatun* was two or three months pregnant when she met Ming T'ai-tsu, and her pregnancy was prolonged by ten months. Although neither oral nor written versions indicates how long she had been pregnant, both state a twelve-month prolongation, thus giving a total of fourteen. This minor alteration buttresses the drama of the pregnancy and strengthens the impression that Ming T'ai-tsu believed he had fathered the newborn child.¹⁹

Here the statement that the Mongol princess prayed fervently to the Three Jewels and, as a result, gave birth to a son twelve months after her marriage to the Hung-wu Emperor, reflects a sacred Buddhist tradition. The Three Jewels (*ghurban erdeni*) refers to Triratna, or the "Three Precious Ones" (*san-pao* 三寶) — Buddha, Dharma (Law) and Sangha (the monastic Order). In the Mongolian context, despite unavoidable Sinitic influence, the worship of the Three Jewels apparently drew inspiration from Tibetan Lamaism, and would continue to do so in seventeenth-century Mongolian chronicles. In the present legend, the Mongol princess' prayer obviously refers to the Lamaist tradition because of the last part of the story, in which she is said to have exhorted the *qaghan's* son in her will that he should, when becoming great-*qaghan*, "revering the Three Jewels in the Sacred Ornament, make them an object of sacrifice." The "Sacred Ornament" (*oroi-yin chimeg*), according to the Reverend Serruys, was the title of the highest lama at the Yüan court, who was conceived as the embodiment of Buddha, Dharma, and the Sangha.²⁰

While the legendary source of the pregnancy story can be clearly identified, the supposed enmity between the Yüan Prince and the True Prince was

¹⁹ See Mostaert, *Textes oraux ordas*, pp. 133–36; idem, *Folklore Ordos*, pp. 189–95; Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 20–21.

²⁰ For primary sources, see, for example, *Kuo-ch'ü hsiên-tsai yin-kuo ching* 過去現在因果經, in *Taishō shinshū daijōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyo kankōkai, 1924–1932), no. 189, ch. 3, p. 645a; *Tseng-i a-han ching* 增一阿含經, in *Taishō*, no. 125, ch. 48, p. 806b. Cf. Mochizuki, *Bukkyō dai jiten* 2, p. 1648; Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, p. 63. "Three Treasures" is frequently mentioned in the Mongolian text *Čigula hereglečī tegis udqa-tu lastir* (*Pen-i pi-yung ching* 本義必用經) and the 17th-c. Mongolian chronicle *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orosiba*. The former is a Buddhist treatise composed by Manjusiri guosi Siregetü čorji, and the latter, subtitled *Cakravarti Altan Qaghan-tu tuguij*, authorship unknown, is a biography of Aitan Khan (1507–1583), the most powerful Mongol ruler during the Ming dynasty. See Walter Hellig's succinct "Ein Quellenbezug der Altan Khan Biographie," *Meng-ku shih yen-chiu* 蒙古史研究 (Mongolian History Studies) 1 (July 1985) pp. 185–92. A modern edition of this chronicle prepared by Jorunggha 珠榮嘎 (subtitled in Chinese *A-la fan han chuan* 阿拉坦汗傳) was published by the Nationalities Press, Peking, 1984.

an imaginative creation that used contemporary Chinese political history. In the legend discussed here, the Yüan Prince and the True Prince are presented as brothers by different mothers. The former was the son of the late Toghon-temür's spouse, and the latter, that of the Hung-wu Emperor's Han Chinese consort; the genetic differences account for their disparate characters. In actual history, however, it was very different. The future Yung-lo Emperor Chu Ti, known here as the Yüan Prince, was not the eldest of T'ai-tsu, but his fourth son, who was enfeoffed as the Prince of Yen in 1370. It is true that he had not been on cordial terms with his brothers (T'ai-tsu had twenty-six sons and the eldest was Chu Piao 朱標, the heir-apparent designate who died prematurely in 1392), and the prince against whom he was pitted in his struggle for the throne was not his sibling. The archrival was his nephew, Chu Piao's eldest son Chu Yün-wen, who was appointed the imperial successor by Ming T'ai-tsu shortly after Chu Piao's death and who later succeeded T'ai-tsu to become the Chien-wen Emperor.²¹

Thus, "True Prince" evidently alludes to the Chien-wen Emperor, who was the eldest surviving son of Prince Chu Piao by his primary consort. The discord and enmity between the two princes, which already took the form of frequent violent attacks and quarrels in their boyhood, hence set a stage for the open confrontation between Chu Ti and Chu Yün-wen that occurred upon T'ai-tsu's death. The *ching-nan* campaign that the Prince of Yen initiated in August 1399 against his nephew was intended to "clear away the disasters." After three years of bitter civil war the Prince of Yen succeeded in seizing the throne in July 1402. The legend thus made judicious use of the most dramatic and violent political feud of the early part of the Ming dynasty. The historical premise continued to develop the legend of Yung-lo's Mongolian ancestry and related it to the popular tradition about the building of Peking.²²

²¹ For the biographies of Chu Yün-wen and Chu Ti, see the annals of Kung-min ti 恭閔帝 and Ch'eng-tsu 成祖 in *Ming-shih* 4–7, and also the literature cited in *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 346–48. Two important studies of the Yung-lo Emperor are Terada Takanoba 寺田隆信, *Eiraku Tei* 永樂帝 (Tokyo: Jimbutsu yukikisha, 1966), and Chu Hung 朱鴻, *Ming Ch'eng-tsu yü Yung-lo cheng-chih* 明成祖與永樂政治 (Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University, 1988). For a political narrative of these two reigns, see F. W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)*, vol. 7 of *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1988), pp. 184–205, 205–75. Chu Piao was posthumously elevated to the imperial rank of Hsiao-k'ang huang-ti 孝康皇帝 (temple name Hsing-tung 興宗) by his son the Chien-wen Emperor in 1399. Biographies are in *Ming-shih* 115, p. 3545, and *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 346–48.

²² See Yamamoto, *Ryōtō no tama*, Chou, "Sheng-mu," Latimore, "Mongol Legend," and Chan, "Legitimation of Usurpation."

Further along in the tale, the Hung-wu Emperor has an ominous dream and learns that the Yüan Prince was in fact the son of the Mongol *qaghan*.

2

Thereafter, Emperor Chu Hung-wu one night [as he was] asleep, [saw] in a dream one black striped snake and one yellow striped snake violently attack each other and come to rest on the emperor's two knees. The black striped snake on the right side attacked the yellow snake on the left side, which fainted and was hardly [able to] rise and stagger back. Having had such a dream, he woke up and became suspicious. He called in the soothsayer to have him examine [the omen]. [The soothsayer] immediately thought, "The emperor will evidently know." [Then] both the Yüan Prince and the True Prince, quarreling and attacking each other, came before the emperor—the Yüan Prince, resting [on the emperor's] right knee, and the True Prince, resting on his left knee. The two pleaded the cause of their quarrel and walked out.

The emperor, very suspicious, called his many ministers together and when he told them the dream and the fact that the two sons had come to quarrel, the ministers declared, "If the elder and the younger brothers were certainly sons of one father, there would be no reason [for them] to be in discord; if one considers the name given by the soothsayer and the fact that he is not at peace now with the True Prince, one can be sure of the fact that the Yüan Prince is the son of the Mongol *qaghan*, and one must decide how to do away with him!" Thereupon the emperor said, "Ever since his childhood I have loved and cherished this boy as my own son; in addition to this [I want to consult with you] on the means to remove him without doing him any harm." As he was thus deliberating, the ministers said, "Tell him to occupy and hold the defile of Nan-k'ou, the pass through which come our enemy the Mongols. Give the Yüan Prince a thousand soldiers and send him [there]."²³

The episode of the ominous snakes is seen in earlier sources. In both versions of *Altan Tobchi*, for example, the emperor had a dream in which two dragons fought, the eastern dragon beating the western one. The soothsayer who was asked to interpret the omen declared that the loser was his son by the Chinese empress and the winner was his son by the Mongol princess. Most likely this is the source of the emperor's dream.

According to Jagchid Sechin, however, the concept of the dragon as the

symbol of the *qaghan* (emperor) did not exist among the Mongols and such belief must have been the result of Sinitic influence. There is, in fact, a similar episode in Chinese sources. In an anonymous miscellany of the sixteenth century called *Sui-yen* 隨言 Ming T'ai-tsu is said to have once had a dream in which he saw two dragons crawling in front of the court; one was aroused and snarled around, and the other recoiled and lowered its head. When he awoke, he found his eldest son Chu Piao and his fourth son Chu Ti playing together. This would have implied that the Prince of Yen was strong and ambitious, unlike his brothers. Such a dream must have spurred popular imagination in the making of the legend.²⁴

In contrast, the story that Ming T'ai-tsu, after learning the prince's identity, followed the advice of his ministers and sent him to Nan-k'ou, was concocted from legendary materials that had a conspicuous historical background. Chi Ti was in fact sent to Pei-p'ing fu by his father and was enfeoffed there as the Prince of Yen in 1370 (but for ten years did not reside there). This, however, was to guard against possible Mongolian intrusions, not to act as exile for having offended the emperor. The notion of the prince's "exile" apparently came from Mongolian sources. In several Mongolian chronicles, the future Yung-lo Emperor is said to have founded Köke Qota, the "Blue City," "outside the Wall" after having been sent there by his father. The precedent of this was Toghon-temür's building Bars Qota, the "Tiger City," on the Kerülen River after fleeing from Ta-tu when Yüan fell. Later, Yung-lo returned with his Mongolian armies to conquer the empire back from his "younger brother"—a reference to the *ching-nan* campaign. In this portrayal the Yüan Prince's departure to the north has the character of an exile, and it probably inspired the legend presented here to make it a banishment to Nan-k'ou, the famous pass north of Peking.

One further point. Serruys suggested that the "Blue City" allegedly founded by the Yung-lo Emperor may also be a projection into the past of the Blue City built by Altan-qan of the Temüd, and named Kuei-hua ch'eng 歸化城 (literally, Return-to-Civilization City) in 1575. If true, then this element in the Mongolian chronicles is of a rather late date.²⁵

²⁴ See Bawden, *Mongol Chronicle*, pp. 154-55; Kobayashi, *Moko Ögönshi*, pp. 89-90; Jagchid Sechin, *Meng-ku Huang-chin shih*, pp. 186-88; Chu and Chia, *Huang-chin shih-kang*, pp. 46-67. The miscellany *Sui-yen*, probably compiled by the prefect of Sui-chou 隨州 Fan Ch'in 范欽 in 1532, is included in Chi Fo-t'o 姬佛陀, comp., *Kuang-t's'ang hsüeh-chiung ts'ung-shu* 廣倉學藝叢書 (1916 edn.). The story of the Hung-wu Emperor's dream appears in *chia-lei* 甲類, series 1, *shang*, p. 1b. This episode is also recorded in anonymous, *Ko-ch'u i-chi* 革除遺跡, quoted in Lang Ying 郎瑛, *Ch'i-hsiu lei-kao* 七修類稿 (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1963) 12, p. 185.

²⁵ See Altan Tobchi 2, pp. 125-26; Bawden, *Mongol Chronicle*, pp. 155 (p. 61 of Mongolian

²³ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 32-33 (text); pp. 43-44 (translation).

3

The decision was made, and immediately the emperor called in the Yüan Prince and told him, "Since it is likely that the armies of the Mongol enemy will come through the Nan-k'ou pass, you, my son, take a thousand soldiers and hold it." As [the emperor] said this, [the Yüan Prince] received the order with a bow and left; then he thought, "Now has come my time of suffering." Opening one of the envelopes given by his mother, he read, "When you are banished to guard the Nan-k'ou defile, make Liu Pai [Po]-wen minister, take him along, and follow his instructions." Thereafter the Yüan Prince, showing himself in his father's presence, bowed and said weepingly, "I, your son, upon the order of my father, the emperor, will immediately proceed to the border, but do me the favor [of allowing me] Liu Pai [Po]-wen." The emperor, because he had favored him greatly from the beginning, and thinking that he was his son, weakened and gave him Liu Pai-wen. When the ministers despatched the troops, they gave him 1,000 crippled and old soldiers, with 1,000 worn cuirasses and weapons, and 1,000 emaciated and exhausted horses. [They] made him set out from Nanking, but beforehand had ordered the boats of the Yellow River to be gathered up.²⁶

The source of this episode about the Yüan Prince's opening of his late mother's "sealed envelope" and the subsequent request for the service of Liu Po-wen is evidently derived from the Chinese popular tradition that mythologized this imperial adviser. In the written version of our story, the Mongolian word for "envelope" is *qabtar gh-a bichig*, literally meaning "container-letter." According to the Reverend Serruys, it is traced to the Turkic word *gap*, or *xap*, for the "pouch, bag" that Mongols hung on their belt for carrying articles or messages.²⁷ However, the episode of the hidden message in the "sealed envelopes," one to be opened in times of "suffering" and the other in times of "happiness," is clearly inspired by the Chinese popular lore about Liu Po-wen's "embroidered purse" (*chin-nang* 錦囊). It

text); *Bolor Erihe* 3, p. 118; cf. Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 22-24. For a brief history of Kuei-hua ch'eng, now the old city of Huhhot in Inner Mongolia, see Henry Serruys, "A Note on Two Place Names in Mongolia," in K. Sagaster and M. Weiers, eds., *Documenta Barbarorum: Festschrift für Walther Heissig zum 70. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), pp. 270-73. See also Tai Hsüeh-chi 戴學稷, *Hu-ho-hao-t'e chien-shih* 呼和浩特簡史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1981), pp. 42-47.

²⁶ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 33-34 (text); pp. 44-45 (translation).

²⁷ On the translation of *qabtar gh-a bichig* as "container-letter" in this text, see Serruys, "Manuscript Version," p. 53, n. 33. On the history of the Mongol word, see idem, "Ho-po, ho-pao 'pouch': Turkic gap, xap," *OE* 15 (1968), pp. 135-48.

was a familiar *topos* in Ming and Ch'ing popular stories: an enlightened elder leaves a cryptic message in a sealed packet (*chin-nang*) to the uninitiated with instructions for handling an unexpected situation but asking that it not be revealed prematurely.

In several late-Ming semihistorical miscellanies, Liu Po-wen, who had been mythologized as a clairvoyant prognosticator, is claimed to have left, at the injunction of Ming T'ai-tsu, a mysterious message in a sealed basket or container to the future Chien-wen Emperor. The message foretold the disastrous *ching-nan* campaign and gave instructions to escape in disguise upon the fall of the capital. There are also similar stories about his accurate prognostications of several catastrophic political events through the end of the Ming. Furthermore, we find among the surviving documents of the late-Ch'ing secret anti-Manchu Heaven and Earth Society (T'ien-ti hui 天地會), as well as in the prophecy book *Shao-ping ko* 燒餅歌 (*Baked Cake Ballad*) ascribed to Liu Po-wen, frequent references to Liu's bestowing a *chin-nang* with messages presaging the political upheavals of the dynasty and strategies for exterminating the Manchus. The "sealed envelopes" episode was therefore a skillful adaptation of contemporary Chinese popular tradition surrounding Liu.²⁸

Without question, the introduction of Liu Po-wen into the story provides the most important catalyst so far. From the historical standpoint, the presence of Liu Po-wen as minister of the Yüan Prince was anachronistic, since Liu Chi had already passed away in the early years of Ming T'ai-tsu's reign. This new plot was evidently inspired by the historical precedent in which the future Yung-lo Emperor was assigned the Buddhist monk Tao-yen by his father to be his adviser when he was the Prince of Yen. The monk, later known as Yao Kuang-hsiao, was a crafty adviser and brilliant tactician, who had made an important contribution to the prince's imperial pretension.²⁹

²⁸ For the sealed basket meant to help the future Chien-wen Emperor, see Liang I 梁億, *Ch'uan-Asin lu* 傳信錄, in Chu Tang-mien 朱當淵, ed., *Kuo-ch'ao mo-tieh chi-t* 國朝謨烈輯遺 (1553 edn.) 1, p. 15a; Wang Mi 王泌, *Tung-ch'ao chi* 東朝記, in Huang Ch'ang-ling 黃昌齡, ed., *Pai-ch'eng* 稗乘 (Wan-li edn.), vol. 3, p. 5b; and Ho Ch'iao-yüan, *Ming-shan ts'ang*, "Tien-mo chi" 6, p. 355. On the *chin-nang* purportedly left by Liu Po-wen that predicted the demise of Manchu rule in the documents of the Heaven and Earth Society and the prophecy book attributed to him, see Hsiao I-shan 蕭一山, *Chin-tai pi-mi she-hui shih-tiao* 近代秘密社會史料 (Peiping: Kuo-li Pei-p'ing yen-chiu yüan, 1935) 4, 11b; 5, 3b; *Shao-ping ko*, in Chu Hsiao-ch'in 朱肖琴, ed., *Chung-kuo yü-yen pa-chung* 中國預言八種 (Shanghai: Kuang-i, 1947), pp. 92-93.

²⁹ For biographies of Monk Tao-yen (Yao Kuang-hsiao), see *Ming-shih* 145, p. 4079; Makita Taiyō 牧田諦亮, "Doen den shōko" 道淵伝小稿, *TSK* 18 (October 1959), pp. 57-79; and *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 1561-65. On his political career, see Heinz

In this altered setting, the legend makers put Liu Po-wen in Yao Kuang-hsiao's place and relished additional fanciful details. The ingenious twist was not without good reasons. After all, Liu Po-wen, the most celebrated legendary figure of the early Ming, still enjoyed unsurpassed popularity in later times. He was also renowned for his role in planning the new capital at Ying-t'ien (Nanking), thus generating sensational stories about the building of the city. Yao Kuang-hsiao, though also laced with legends, was generally considered by historians to be inferior to Liu Po-wen in ability and status. Moreover, he was cast as an ignominious villain in popular notions about his role in the Yung-lo Emperor's usurpation. In the above episode, the legend makers skillfully put the suggestion to appoint Liu Po-wen in the mouth of the Yüan Prince's Mongol mother. Consequently, Liu Po-wen's stature in the Mongolian perception grew, and also, most importantly, it facilitated the incorporation of many bizarre stories about him into Mongolian contexts to substantiate this legend.

4

As they gradually progressed and supplies and silver came close to being exhausted, pigeons numerous beyond count, [which had followed them] since leaving the city of Nanking, covered the sun. [Every time] the Yüan Prince shot and killed one of them, it turned into a silver ingot. With those many pigeons flying and following, [the army] proceeded and when it came near the city of Jiu-jiu, the pigeons failed to appear. The Yüan Prince and his following arrived at the road to Nan-k'ou and temporarily halted. One day the Yüan Prince took his bow and rode out alone. As he was going [around] searching in the neighborhood of the city of Jiu-jiu, where the pigeons had stopped following, all of a sudden he met a man with an extraordinary bearing, with a swarthy face, dressed in black robes and riding a black horse. He said [to the Yüan Prince], "Son, give [me] your bow and arrows," and shot one arrow each into the four directions. He said, "There is an abundant treasure of gold, silver, and jewels in the spots hit by the arrows; also give this red spear of mine to Liu Pai [Po]-wen; should silver [come to be] wanting [then] if he sticks this spear into the earth, underneath at a depth of an elbow, a variety of jewels will come out. Make Liu Pai [Po]-wen head

minister and at this place found a great city with four corners, after the number of the four seasons; with nine gates in the exterior city [wall], after the number of the planets; with eight gates in the interior double city [wall], after the number of the "diagrams"; with twelve large streets, after the number of the year (a reference to the months?); with 360 lanes (*qutung*), after the number of the days; with twenty-seven (= twenty-eight?) great tribunals (*yeke yamu*), after the number of the (zodiacal) constellations. In a golden place in the middle of the city set up a throne of jade [adorned] with nine interlaced dragons, and sitting on it become emperor yourself!" With this order he gave him a red spear and departed, to be seen no more.³⁰

By all counts, the most sensational part of the legend about the building of Peking lay in the story of the Yüan Prince's encounter with the strange black rider in the barren regions of Yen. This episode contains yet another skillful adaptation of the popular lore concerning the prince's receiving supernatural assistance from the Dark God Chen-wu 眞武 at the start of his punitive campaign against the Chien-wen Emperor. The Dark God, originally known as Hsüan-wu 玄武, emerged as the guardian of the north in a Taoist tradition of Han times, but its name was changed to Chen-wu in the Sung (1012) to avoid the tabooed name of the dynastic founder's legendary ancestor Chao Hsüan-lang 趙玄朗. The deity was worshiped for its protection against external aggression; he was enshrined as a war god by the Mongolian rulers as well as by the Ming emperors. The Dark God supposedly helped the Yung-lo Emperor in August 1399 beat the imperial armies in the first battle of his campaign to seize the throne. Here, veracity is of course disputable, but not the story's durability: it was transformed into a popular legend in Peking about Yung-lo's supernatural power, the imperial residence, and the preposterous story of the Yüan Prince's encounter with the black rider.³¹

³⁰ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 34-35 (text); pp. 45-47 (translation). In the oral version the number of "lanes" (*qutung*) is 361 and that of the "great tribunals" (*yeke yamu*) is 27. See Mostaert, *Textes oraux ordos*, p. 135; *Folklore Ordos*, p. 194. *Qutung*, translated here as "lanes," is *hu-t'ung* 衚衕 (胡同) in Chinese (from Mongol.: *qudugh*, "well," i.e., place of residence).

³¹ The Yung-lo Emperor enumerated the Dark God's assistance in the *ching-nan* campaign in two personally composed epitaphs to the deity. The first, "Chen-wu miao pei" 眞武廟碑, was erected in Peking in 1415. The other, "T'ai-yüeh T'ai-ho shan tao-kung pei" 太嶽太和山道宮碑, was erected in Mt. T'ai-ho (i.e., Mt. Wu-tang 武當, Kiangsi) but the inscription was not composed until 1418. See Wang Chi 王鑾 et al., comps., *T'ai-yüeh T'ai-ho shan chi-t'ueh* 太嶽太和山紀略 (1744 edn.) 5, pp. 15a, 19a-21a. Several Ming references have the emperor receive assistance from the Dark God, but a private source also credits his principal

Friese, "Der Mönch Yao Kuang-hsiao (1335-1418) und Seine Zeit," *OE* 7 (1960), pp. 158-84; David B. Chan, "The Role of the Monk Tao-yen in the Usurpation of the Prince of Yen (1339-1402)," *Sinologica* 6.2 (1959), pp. 83-100; and Shang Ch'uan 商傳, "Ming-ch'u chu-ming cheng-chih chia Yao Kuang-hsiao" 明初著名政治家姚廣孝, *Chung-kuo shih yen-chiu* 中國史研究 3 (1984), pp. 119-30.

In the above episode, while the black rider is clearly an adaptation of stories about the Yung-lo Emperor's encounter with the Dark God, he is portrayed as a Mongolian spiritual man, and his instructions about the imperial capital derive from a specific Mongolian popular tradition with historical roots: the custom adopted by the great *qan* for allotting land to meritorious clansmen. There is a vivid account of this procedure in the *Yüan-shih* 元史 biography of Chingqai (Chen-hai 鎮海). When Chingqai (1167-1227) decided to grant the land around Yen-ching as reward to his favorite lieutenant, he asked Chingqai to stand in the center of the rectangular city and shoot an arrow toward each of the four corners, and all the fields, ponds, and houses within the perimeter of the fallen arrows would be awarded to him. According to a custom, arrows were used by the Mongols to signify ownership or occupation of property.³² Not just the strange black rider's building instructions, but also his instructions to dig where the arrow had fallen in order to unearth treasures attests to a Mongolian custom — that of burying booty in large underground pits, a practice shared by other northern tribal peoples.

A similar and important connection exists regarding the black rider's building plan. Not only does it reveal Mongolian cosmological concepts, but the way those concepts adapt Chinese cosmological tradition in relation to city planning. Mongols, like the Chinese, were ardent believers in the supreme authority of the cosmos, and the intimate relationship between the natural order and human affairs. Thus, their design of the layout of the imperial capital, the residence of the Son of Heaven and symbolic domain of Heaven's authority, conformed to the arrangements of the celestial order.³³

adviser the monk Tao-yen (Yao Kuang-hsiao). The latter's biography in Li Chih 李贊, *Hsiü Ts'ang-shu* 續藏書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959) 9, p. 148, claims he was instrumental in summoning the Dark God, his spiritual teacher, to guide the prince's course at the start of the punitive campaign in August 1399. See also Hsiü Tao-ling 許道齡, "Hsüan-wu chih ch'i-yüan chi ch'i t'ui-pien k'ao" 玄武之起源及其蛻變考, *Shih-hsüeh chi-k'an* 史學集刊 5 (December 1947), pp. 233-35, and Huang Chao-han 黃兆漢, "Hsüan-ti k'ao" 文帝考, rpt. in idem, *Tao-chiao yen-chiu lun-wen chi* 道教研究論文集 (Hong Kong: Chinese U. of Hong Kong P., 1988), pp. 139-44.

³² On this custom, see *Yüan-shih* 120, p. 2964. It is interesting to note that according to Nien-ch'ang 念常, *Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tai* 佛祖歷代通載, when Qubilai decided to build Ta sheng-shou wan-an ssu 大聖壽萬安寺 in Ta-tu, he shot an arrow towards each of the four directions from where he stood to determine the site of the monastery. See *Fo-tsu li-tai t'ung-tai* (Taisho edn.) 22, p. 723b. For details, see Yang I 楊毅, "She-chien hua ssu-chieh P'ao-ma kuan-shan men 射箭劃寺界跑馬關山門 Yüan Ta-tu Ta sheng-shou wan-an ssu kuei-mo so-t'an" 規模瑣談, *Yen-tu* 燕都 1 (August 1985), pp. 24-25. On the Mongolian use of arrows to signify ownership or occupation, see Henry Serruys, "A Note on Arrows and Oaths among the Mongols," *JAOS* 78.4 (1958), p. 287.

³³ We gain insight into Mongolian cosmological concepts and their applications to human

That is evidently why the stranger's plan called for the building of a great city "with four corners, after the number of the four seasons; with nine gates in the exterior city [wall], after the number of planets; with eight gates in the interior double city [wall], after the number of the "diagrams"; with twelve large streets, after the number of the months; with 360 lanes (*qutung*, that is, *hu-t'ung* 衢衢), after the number of days; with twenty-seven (twenty-eight?) great tribunals after the number of the (zodiacal) constellations . . ." This is a rare Mongolian document of idealized city planning, and it reveals distinctive Sinitic influence.

The city plan goes beyond the ideal; by and large it reflects the actual layout of Yung-lo's eventual city of Peking, this according to Chinese sources. The stated number of gates (nine and eight) in both the exterior city wall and the interior city double-wall (that is, the Forbidden City) matches exactly those built in Yung-lo's time. In our legend, however, such arrangements are couched in a mystical explanation. The reference to the number of the "diagrams" (that is, trigrams; known as *kua* 卦 in Chinese) is particularly interesting as evidence of Mongolian knowledge of the Chinese cosmological concepts expounded in the *Book of Changes* (*I-ching* 易經). The impact of the *I-ching* tradition on city planning had been quite profound in imperial times. In the Mongolian era, for instance, when Liu Ping-chung designed and built the city of Kai-p'ing fu 開平府 (Shang-tu 上都) in 1256-1259,³⁴ he placed two Buddhist monasteries respectively in the *ch'ien* 乾 (the northwestern trigram) and *ken* 艮 (northeastern) corners of the rectangular city according to one of the configurations of the eight trigrams of the *I-ching*. The number of streets and lanes in the plan, however, is apparently idealized, since there were far more than "twelve streets" and "300 *qutung*" in the Ming and Ch'ing expansions of Peking. The other proposal, that of designing twenty-seven (for twenty-eight) great tribunals (*yeke jamu*)

affairs from an extant astrological and divinatory ms., see Antoine Mostaert, ed. and annot., *Manual of Mongol Astrology and Divination*, Scripta Mongolica 4 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1969). For traditional Chinese cosmology in imperial city planning, see Arthur F. Wright, "The Cosmology of the Chinese City," in G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1977), pp. 33-73.

³⁴ On Liu Ping-chung's role in the building of Shang-tu and his design of the city, see *Yüan-shih* 4, p. 60; 58, p. 1350; 157, p. 3693. Cf. Hok-lam Chan, "Liu Ping-chung," p. 127, nn. 58, 59. Among several important studies of Shang-tu are Ishida Mikinosuke 石田幹之助, "Gen no Joto ni tsuite" 元の上都に就いて (revised), in *Nihon daigaku sōrisu shuchijūshū nen kinen rombunshū* 日本大學創立七十週年紀念論文集 1 (October 1960), pp. 271-319; Chia Chou-chieh 賈洲杰, "Yüan Shang-tu t'iao-ch'a pao-kao" 調查報告, *WW* 5 (1977), pp. 65-74; Yeh Hsin-min 葉新民, "Yüan Shang-tu kung-tien lou-ko k'ao" 宮殿樓閣考, *Nei Meng-hu ta-hsüeh hsüeh-pao* 3 (1987), pp. 33-40; and most recently, Ch'en Kao-hua and Shih Wei-min 史衛民, *Yüan Shang-tu* (Chi-lin: Chi-lin chiao-yü, 1988).

after the number of zodiacal constellations, however, is an incongruous piece of the puzzle, since it does not tally with the existing layout of the imperial city. In any event, the city plan in this legend not only reflects a conscious appeal to Mongolian ideas about the supernatural, but also contributes to an understanding of the cosmological principles behind the actual building of Peking.³⁵

5

Hearing this order, the Yüan Prince greatly rejoiced, and taking the spear he told the event to Liu Pai [Po]-wen. They all moved to the places where those arrows had been shot and found them. When they dug the ground underneath, they found and took countless great treasures of gold, silver, and jewels [that were] coming out [of there].

Recognizing among the thousand soldiers five men who were proficient in the principles of craftsmanship, he made them ministers. Through [the activities of] those jewelers, he assembled the many under his power; with Liu Pai [Po]-wen showing and instructing, [they started to] build [the city]. Before long they completed the construction of one great city having nine gates according to what the man on the black horse had said. Then [Liu] made the Yüan Prince Little Emperor and made him sit on the jade throne with the nine interlaced dragons in the golden place, and he called the city Peking.

With the treasures of various jewels that had come out of the ground where the red spear had been fixed, Liu Pai [Po]-wen filled the emperor's treasury. Because exceedingly great favors and rewards were being given to many poor people, all the people of the four quarters loyally followed [the Little Emperor].³⁶

In the light of the Mongolian-inspired fiction about the origin of Peking, it is not surprising that these details concerning the construction under Liu Po-wen's supervision are largely an imagination. Some of the fanciful descriptions conjured up by the legend makers were, nevertheless, either

³⁵ For the layout and architecture of Peking as built under the Yung-lo Emperor in the light of this Mongolian legend, see, in addition to references in n. 6, above, Chu Hsieh 朱悮, *Pei-ching kung-tien t'u ch'üeh* 北京宮殿圖闕 (Peiping: Shang-wu, 1938), and Hsü Ping-fang 徐萃芳, ed., *Ming-Ch'ing Pei-ching ch'eng t'u* 明清北京城圖 (Peking: Ti-t'u ch'u-pan she, 1986). The last gives a detailed modern identification of the location of the streets, *hu-t'ung*, and major official quarters in the inner city, as well as the palaces, parks, and sacrificial altars in the Forbidden City. On the evolution of the *hu-t'ung* in Peking, see also Erh-ssu 爾泗 (Ts'ao Erh-ssu 曹爾泗), "Pei-ching hu-t'ung ts'ung-t'an" 胡同叢談, in *Pei-ching shih yen-chiu t'ung-hsün tseng-k'an* 通訊增刊 (Peking: Pei-ching shih yen-chiu-hui, 1981), pp. 45-86.

³⁶ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 35-36 (text); p. 47 (translation).

allusions to historical events or reflections of verifiable situations. In these cases, since historically Liu Po-wen was not involved in the building of Peking, any valid historical references from which the legend could draw could concern only the building of the imperial capital at Nanking and later, that of Peking under the Yung-lo Emperor. Such references illustrate the synthesis of legendary and historical materials, and the following analysis might shed important light on the interplay of fact and fiction.

First of all, there are no records indicating the discovery of, or search for, hidden underground treasures used in building the capital during Yung-lo's reign. This element of the story may allude, however, to the historical fact that in the construction of Peking many wealthy families were either asked to make contributions of cash and provisions, or were forced to emigrate there to strengthen the new capital. We know, for instance, that in 1403 and 1404, when the decision was made to build the capital city, orders were given to transfer over 10,000 households of rich families from nine provinces including Chekiang, and ten prefectures including Soochow, to the Peking region. Their contribution of wealth and culture must have been very substantial.³⁷

In this context, popular stories about the building of Nanking under Ming T'ai-tsu that must have come northward with these households transferred from the southeast may have also provided inspiration to the development of the Peking legend. The most famous of these concerned Shen Fu 沈富, alias Shen Wan-san 沈萬三, an extraordinarily affluent merchant from Soochow who is enveloped in bizarre legend. He is said to have both accumulated a fortune in gold, silver, and jewels through magical and unscrupulous means and made various contributions to the emperor, including funds for building one-third of the city of Nanking. It is not surprising that several modern Peking folktales, enlivened by Soochow elements, feature Shen Wan-san as a wealthy man in a pauper's disguise who is harassed by government officials to reveal his hidden treasures for the construction of the capital.³⁸

³⁷ On the imperial orders to transfer wealthy households, see *T'ai-tung shih-lu* 12B, p. 217; 16, p. 292; 22, p. 415; 34, p. 604; *Ming-shih* 5, p. 76; 6, pp. 79-81. See also Farmer, *Early Ming Government*, pp. 148-52.

³⁸ For a brief biography of Shen Fu (Shen Wan-san), see *Ming-shih* 113, p. 3506 (which mentions a purported contribution toward building Nanking); *Chiang-ning fu chih* 江寧府志 (1668 edn.) 1, pp. 23b, 24b. There is a considerable volume of semihistorical and fictional accounts of Shen's extraordinary wealth in Ming and Ch'ing miscellanies. For a useful study, see, among others, Huang Chih-kang 黃芝岡, "Shen Wan-san ch'uan-shuo k'ao" 沈萬三傳說考, *Tung-fang ts'a-chih* 東方雜誌 32.1 (1935), pp. 91-97, and Suzuki Tadashi 鈴木正, "Chin Mansan setsuwa no bunseki" 沈萬三說話の分析, *Shikan* 史觀 72 (September

Second, although legend makers deliberately tried to exaggerate the role of Liu Po-wen and his work force, many of the claims in the story are not supported by evidence. There is no factual basis for the assertion that five men out of the 1,000 soldiers engaged in the construction were chosen by Liu Po-wen for their proficiency in craftsmanship and made ministers. It seems possible that it alludes to those officials and soldiers who were rewarded for their merits with promotion in ranks and gifts after the completion of the city.

Finally, the claim that after the completion of Peking Liu Po-wen made the Yüan Prince Little Emperor and put him on the jade throne decorated with interlaced dragons is pure fantasy. Serruys noted that the form of address accorded to Yung-lo—Little Emperor—was a logical title since, according to the story, his adoptive father, the Hung-wu Emperor still reigned in Nanking at that time. Nevertheless, it must be perceived as a slight to the Chinese imperial tradition since only the Son of Heaven could be addressed as emperor, and the dragon throne is reserved exclusively for the august monarch. But the implication is clearer once we see that in the original version of the story "Little Emperor" reads "*bagh-a qaghan*," which includes the title *qaghan*, a supreme ruler in the Mongolian tradition. In this context, therefore, the legend made the Yüan Prince, and by implication the future Yung-lo Emperor, a predestined Mongol *qaghan* whose claim went beyond China and the title of Emperor of the Ming dynasty. The building of Peking under Liu Po-wen's supervision thus presaged the restoration of Mongolian rule under Toghon-temür's own blood, albeit in Chinese disguise!³⁹

6

At that time, when the Hung-wu Emperor died in the city of Nanking, the Yüan Prince, in the company of his many ministers and the 1,000 soldiers, went to the city of Nanking to view and honor the remains of his father. But even before that, the younger brother, the True Prince, had mounted his father's throne. But [now] hearing that his elder brother, the Yüan Prince, was arriving with soldiers, [he did not] understand the situation; he remembered their former enmity and said, "For sure he has come to kill me and take away the government." Reduced to

1965), pp. 2-36. On modern folktales of Shen's giving away hidden treasure for building Peking, see the references in n. 44, below.

³⁹ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," p. 57, n. 61. On the meaning of the Mongolian epithet *qaghan*, see Igor de Rachewiltz, "Qan, Qa'an and the Seal of Guyug," in Sagaster and Weiers, eds., *Documenta Barbarorum*, pp. 272-81.

this extremity, he hung himself and died. When the Yüan Prince arrived at the city of Nanking, in great mourning he performed the ceremonies and offered sacrifices at the tomb of his father the emperor. Thereupon he intended to meet with his younger brother, the True Prince. He inquired [about him], and his ministers told him the circumstances of his death; he wept bitterly, and said, "Now that my younger brother has died, there is no more use!" . . . Thereafter he came back and entered the city by the south gate of the city of Peking. Selecting an auspicious day, he became Great Emperor, taking the name Emperor Yung-lo of the Great Ming . . .

Thereafter Emperor Yung-lo was ruling over the great government and in his absolute prosperity he opened one (that is, the other) letter left him by his mother and read it. Its contents were: "You, son, are really the offspring of Toghon-temür *qaghan* of the Mongols; as a result of my very devout prayer to the Three Jewels, you were born after being in my womb for twelve months, [and so] you were able to stay alive and become a man. Later when you become great *qaghan*, remember your ancestry, act with due concern for the Mongols, and revering the Three Jewels in the Supreme Ornament make them an object of sacrifice."⁴⁰

As a conclusion to the career of the Yüan Prince in exile in Nan-k'ou and the building of the city of Peking, the last episode of the legend relates the circumstances under which the Prince ascended the throne of the Great Ming dynasty. The narrative is set against the background of the *ching-nan* campaign initiated by the Prince of Yen against his nephew the Chien-wen Emperor, which led to the former's triumphant capture of Nanking. Here we have begun with the death of the Hung-wu Emperor and the accession of the Chien-wen Emperor, and concluded with the enthronement of the prince after the suicide of the emperor. Since the aim of the story is to enhance Yung-lo's Mongolian affinities and his legacy to the Mongolian communities, the bulk of the description is concocted in the best light possible. For this reason, historical events not favorable to the prince were discarded or significantly altered; the account is, in its own way, as lopsided as the official records on the *ching-nan* episode compiled by the court historians under the Yung-lo Emperor's directive.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Serruys, "Manuscript Version," pp. 36-37 (text); pp. 47-48 (translation).

⁴¹ The official record of the *ching-nan* campaign compiled on order of the Yung-lo Emperor after the successful coup d'état against the Chien-wen Emperor is known as *Feng-*

According to accepted modern reconstructions of T'ai-tsu's death at Nanking, the new emperor, Chu Yün-wen, faithfully executed the will of his grandfather by imploring the princes to observe mourning in their own fiefdoms and forbidding the officials to leave their garrison posts for the imperial capital. The Prince of Yen defied the injunction and arrived in Nanking from Pei-p'ing with a military contingent with the announced purpose of observing mourning. He was intercepted at the outskirts of the capital and was told he could enter with only a few of his attendants; the prince spurned the precondition and so departed against his wishes.

In our Mongolian manuscript version of the legend, however, the prince is said to have both entered the capital with an army without incident and proceeded immediately to view and honor the remains of his late father. The Chien-wen Emperor is disguised in the person of the True Prince, who had ascended the throne immediately after his father's death. When he heard of the Yüan Prince's coming, he was so apprehensive about former enmities that he hanged himself. This narrative merely reworks the historical material to dramatize the fortunes of the Yüan Prince. It omits any references to the subsequent "punitive campaign" launched by the Prince of Yen against the Chien-wen Emperor and instead harks back to the earlier story of the discord between the two princes to explain why the emperor was so worried about the Yüan Prince as to take his own life.⁴²

Interestingly enough, while the legend makers avoided any allusion to the Prince of Yen's violent campaign to unseat the Chien-wen Emperor, in order to give him a good name in history, the story concludes with a reference to the other "sealed envelope" from the prince's Mongol mother. Earlier, the prince had opened one envelope marked for the occasion of "suffering," through which he got the advice to employ Liu Po-wen as minister. And now, having ascended the throne, he unsealed the other envelope reserved for the occasion of "happiness." The message in it revealed that he was in fact the son of Toghon-temür and admonished him "to remember [his] ancestry, act with due concern for the Mongols, and [by] revering the Three Jewels in the Supreme Ornament make them an object of sacrifice" when he becomes the great *qaghan*. The worship of the Three Jewels in the Sacred Ornament, which attests to Mongolian veneration of

t'ien ching-nan chi 奉天靖難記. It was heavily doctored in favor of the Prince of Yen to lend justification to the campaign and legitimize his accession. See the critical study by Wang Ch'ung-wu, *Feng-t'ien ching-nan chi chu* 注 (Shanghai: Shang-wu, 1948); idem, *Ching-nan shih-shih*, chaps. 1-4; and Chan, "Legitimation of Usurpation."

⁴² For a critical account of the events beginning from the purported death of the Chien-wen Emperor to the enthronement of the Prince of Yen, see Wang, *Feng-t'ien Ching-nan chi chu*, pp. 206-26. See also Chan, *The Usurpation*, chap. 8.

Tibetan Lamaism, here underscores a special relationship between two ethnically close peoples. The story thus has a dramatic and happy ending, one which was obviously intended to strengthen the stature of the Mongols, if not also to exhort the rulers of China to be generous to their antagonists. Ironically, however, the historical Yung-lo Emperor became known for his ruthless campaigns against the Mongolian tribes on the northern frontiers during his reign.⁴³

All in all, the Mongolian legend about the building of the city of Peking under the Yung-lo Emperor presents a strong case for the existence of deep interaction between Mongolian and Han Chinese folkloristic traditions that had significant political and cultural implications. It is futile to establish any dates for the legend's formation, but it could not have taken shape earlier than the seventeenth-century legend of Yung-lo's Mongolian father Toghon-temür. Most probably oral communications played a great role in transmitting the story through various popular agents at different stages, with both embellishments and substance added during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The dates of the first written versions of the legend are also not accountable, but it is certain that a long period of evolution preceded the appearance of the manuscript texts in the late nineteenth century.

Leaving the dating aside, the legend is a conspicuous ethnocentric expression of Mongolian supremacy in political as well as cultural contributions. To be sure, the outstanding folk hero was a Chinese, the eminent imperial adviser Liu Po-wen, not a Mongol. However, the story is clearly Mongol-centered, because it was Toghon-temür's spouse, the purported mother of the future Yung-lo Emperor, who left in her will instructions to the prince to employ Liu Po-wen as minister. Moreover, though the strange black rider who gave a plan to the prince for building Peking under Liu Po-wen's supervision was adapted from the legend of the Dark God, his type was also that of a spiritual elder with extraordinary wisdom and supernatural powers in the Mongolian folk tradition. In this way, Chinese legendary materials were judiciously exploited to buttress the superior role of the Mongolian people in the building of a majestic city that was generally assumed to have been exclusively a Chinese achievement.

⁴³ On the Yung-lo Emperor's punitive campaigns against the Mongol tribesmen during his reign, see briefly *Ming-shih* 6, pp. 86-88, 91; 7, pp. 93-94, 98, 100-14; 327, pp. 8467-69. For details, see D. Pokotilov, *History of the Eastern Mongols during the Ming Dynasty from 1368 to 1634*, trans. R. Loewenthal, *Studia Serica Monographs, Series A, 1* (Chengtu: West Union University of China, 1947), part 1, pp. 23-35, and also Terada Takanoba, *Eiraku Tei*, pp. 128-55.

LIU PO-WEN AND A LATER CHINESE VERSION

The legend presented here not only vividly captured the fantasy of the Mongolian communities in north China, it also left a significant impact on the Chinese popular tradition about the building of Peking. We have already noted that in modern times the legend of Liu Ping-chung's invoking the No-cha deity in the building of Ta-tu has been recast into Liu Po-wen's designing the No-cha city of Peking. The source is in the late Yüan, but it appears that many of the miraculous details attributed to Liu Po-wen (namely, his contest with Yao Kuang-hsiao) were later accretions, occurring perhaps as late as the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ In order to understand how the legend was transformed from Liu Ping-chung to Liu Po-wen in association with No-cha and Peking, we should explore the linkage between these two popular traditions.

There is no need to recapitulate the enduring popularity of No-cha in Peking: his stature as a guardian god of imperial capitals and exorciser of the dragon genii was great. Something is needed, however, to explain Liu Po-wen's emergence as the new hero. In the first place, with the decline of Ta-tu after the fall of the Mongolian regime, the legendary Liu Ping-chung as a Yüan-dynasty hero became less attractive to the Chinese, who were now ruled by their own native dynasty. However, as the imperial city Peking was being built, many of the old legends about the region, especially stories of No-cha's exorcising the dragon genii to relieve the inhabitants from water shortages, were revitalized. In this case, a new hero was needed.

In many ways the choice of Liu Po-wen was most appropriate. First, Liu had been an outstanding imperial adviser and versatile scholar under Ming T'ai-tsu, and began to be mythologized as a Chinese national hero with supernatural capabilities ever since the late Ming. Second, historically Liu Po-wen was the principal planner of the imperial capital in Nanking and the Forbidden City was later replicated in Peking, thus making him conceptually easy to relate to the building of Peking under the Yung-lo Emperor. Third, in the course of mythologization he became confused with Liu Ping-chung's grandson, and this mistaken identity greatly facilitated the commingling of their legends. In a nutshell, Liu Po-wen possessed unique qualifications for

⁴⁴ There are variations in modern folklore concerning Liu Po-wen's building Peking. See Arlington and Lewisohn, *Old Peking*, pp. 175-76, 338-39; Chin, *Pei-ching ti ch'uan-shuo*, pp. 3-8; Chang and Li, *Pei-ching ti ch'uan-shuo*, pp. 1-5; Wang Wen-pao 王文寶, ed., *Pei-ching feng-wu ch'uan-shuo ku-shih hsian* 北京風物傳說故事選 (Fu-chou: Fu-chien jen-min, 1983), pp. 1-6; and Chinese Folk Literature Studies Soc., ed., *Pei-ching feng-wu ch'uan-shuo* (Peking: Chung-kuo wen-chien wen-i, 1983), pp. 1-7.

replacing Liu Ping-chung as the new hero in the transformation of the legend. However, what cemented that connection, it seems, is the Mongolian legend that we have examined. Though making no mention of No-cha, the Chinese version reestablishes the concrete relationship between Liu Po-wen and the Yung-lo Emperor, which is the nexus of the legend of the building of Peking.⁴⁵

This connection is clearly revealed in a crude version of the contemporary Chinese legend of Liu Po-wen's building the No-cha City in Peking, as recorded by E. T. C. Werner, in his *Myths and Legends of China*.⁴⁶ It adapts many of the Mongolian folkloristic elements of the tradition by supplying new twists and plots. Yet there are important differences. No mention is made of the Mongolian ethnicity of the Prince of Yen's mother. All we hear is that "One of the consorts of Hung Wu, the Lady Weng, had a son named Chu-ti." Nor is there mention of her fear of a threat from T'ai-tsu's other son, by his Chinese empress. Yung-lo's mother is given merely as "Lady Weng," as if she were a Chinese woman. (This name evidently derived from late-Ming accounts that her surname was Kung, Weng, or Wang.)

In this Chinese version, the cause of the empress' jealousy was merely the favor that T'ai-tsu showered upon Lady Weng's son, the future Yung-lo. The empress then schemed to have him sent to Yen province. The Mongolian version, examined above, claimed that the dying mother gave her son two "sealed envelopes," one for consulting in times of "suffering." The present version here reads: "Ere he departed, however, a Taoist priest, called Liu Po-wen, who had a great affection for the Prince, put a sealed packet into his hand, and told him to open it when he found himself in difficulty, distress, or danger." Thus Liu Po-wen receives a pivotal role in advising the future Yung-lo, and here actually is the one to hand over the instructions. The focus has fallen squarely within the Chinese popular tradition.⁴⁷

Moreover, we get details of the city plans that are quite different from those of the Mongolian version. The Chinese legend says: "The name of the

⁴⁵ These points have been covered in Ch'en, "Yüan Ta-tu," pp. 120-22.

⁴⁶ E. T. C. Werner, *Myths and Legends of China* (London: George G. Harrap, 1924), pp. 227-30. See also Verne Dyson, *Forgotten Tales of Ancient China* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927), pp. 202-3. The source is not identified; presumably it was either derived from an oral account told to the author, or based on a written version collected by the author in Peking during the early Republican era. However, if the latter is the case, I have not been able to identify the text. Cited phrases in the following three paragraphs refer to these pages of Werner's text.

⁴⁷ In this new version of the legend, the episode of Liu Po-wen's handing two sealed envelopes to the Prince of Yen was clearly a reworking of popular stories in the late Ming and early Ch'ing that had Liu leave instructions to the Chien-wen Emperor in a sealed basket to help him escape the Prince of Yen in disguise. See the references cited in n. 28, above.

country in which this place was situated was Yen. It was a mere barren wilderness, with very few inhabitants; these lived in huts and scattered hamlets . . . Having found the packet (that the old Taoist priest had given him), he hastily broke it open to see what instructions it contained; taking out the first paper which came to hand, he read the following: 'When you reach Pei-p'ing Fu you must build a city there and name it No-cha Ch'eng, the City of No-cha . . . At the back of this paper is a plan of the city.'" Money was raised from wealthy supporters and we are informed about foundations made "of layers of stone," walls "forty-eight *li* in circumference, fifty cubits in height, and fifty in breadth," a "stone-paved moat, in which the lotus and other flowers bloomed," and a geomantic layout that was "similar to that of Chin-ling [Nanking]." Neither the principles of arrangement (geomantic and metaphysical), nor the relative positioning of architectural elements, is given. But the legend at least gives credit to Liu Po-wen's plans, whatever they may have been.

To conclude, the Mongolian legend clearly provided much inspiration, as well as new sources, toward the development and transformation of the Liu Po-wen/No-cha city legend. It inspired the blending of Liu Ping-chung's Ta-tu and Yung-lo's and Liu Po-wen's Peking—a blend of Mongolian and Chinese elements that persists in today's legends. What is striking in the modern version of the legend of Liu Po-wen's part in building No-cha city, however, is that we find no trace of the Mongolian popular tradition, let alone its linkage with Liu Ping-chung's Ta-tu.⁴⁶ This shows a thorough "sinification" process through incorporation of the powerful legend of Liu Po-wen, a great scholar-hero in the modern Chinese consciousness. It is only through the survival of the Mongolian texts of the legend in various forms that remnants have been preserved that bear witness to the interplay of Han Chinese and Mongolian traditions in the evolutionary process.

In retrospect, the Mongolian legend about the Yung-lo Emperor sheds significant light on both the Mongols' perception of their political stature vis-à-vis the Han Chinese and their fancied role in the building of a majestic capital city. The latter was conceived as an integral part of their heritage, and this is expressed forcefully by the propagation of the Yung-lo legend among Mongolian communities around Peking. While indulging in self-

⁴⁶ It is probably for this reason that modern scholars who have examined this popular Peking legend failed to apprehend a possible linkage between Liu Po-wen and the building of Peking. Hou Jen-chih, for example, simply dismissed the story as pure fantasy on the ground that historically Liu Chi had no connection with Peking. See Hou, "Pei-ching ch'eng ho Liu Po-wen ti kuan-hsi" 北京城和劉伯溫的關係, *Pei-ching jih-pao* 北京日報, July 31, 1962, p. 3, upper col.

serving mythology about Mongolian blood in the Ming emperors, the indigenous legend drew heavily on Chinese ingredients and skillfully synthesized them to create a Mongol-centered folklore. This was an impressive accomplishment and as a result, the legend enjoyed extensive popularity. Furthermore, it developed a singular mythology concerning Liu Po-wen's building No-cha city that is still retained among Peking residents today. The Mongolian importance in all of this must be placed in a broader Han-Mongol historical and cultural perspective for a judicious appraisal.