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On the Origin of the Fiefdom “*soyurqal*” under the Mongol Dynasty

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The Mongol term *soyurqal*, which meant a kind of fiefdom in Činggis Qan's Empire of the early thirteenth century, was obviously derived from the verb *soyurqa-qu*, 'to grant a favor'. This verb, along with its passive form *soyurqaγ-da-qu*, frequently occurs in the Mongolian text of the Secret History of Mongols where it is voiced reciprocally between the knight and the lord in the oath of allegiance, in a set pattern of expression. The noun *soyurqal* seems to have originally meant any kind of gracious deed or thing bestowed by the lord upon the knight in reward for the latter's lasting service or distinguished merits. Later it came to denote a wide range of inherited privileges conferred upon grand knights and princes, concerning their *emčü irgen* (subject-peoples), sometimes accompanied by the so-called *darqan* right, i. e. special right of tax exemption or impunity. In the early stage of the Mongol Empire, those subject-peoples, who were granted to knights or princes, mostly consisted of non-Mongolians, *qari-yin irgen*, or, to be more exact, natives of non-steppe areas who had been captured on the battle-field. As *soyurqal* was a special favor of the Qan, the recipient was excused from the duties such as taxes and corvées otherwise to be assessed upon it by the State. On the other hand, the majority of the people of the Mongol States and Empire, generally called *ulus irgen* or *qanliγ irgen*, were mainly peoples of steppe origin, who were placed under a direct control of the central government and were imposed upon with all sorts of nomadic taxes and corvées. In contrast to the *emčü irgen*, the *ulus irgen* were portions of heritage, *qubi kešig*, of the common property, i. e. the Empire's peoples, divided among Činggis Qan's family members in accordance with the traditional law of succession of Mongols. In Mongolia of this stage, a Qaγan or a king of a State had a double personality, public and private; as a private person, even he could possess his own private domain in the form of an *ordo* with all its paraphernalia, while a prince or a knight had *soyurqal* instead. This was why the *ulus irgen* of the Empire or the States were registered in census books under an entirely different category from that of the *emčü irgen* of the kings or knights.