Susanne Reichert

A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Capitals

Carolingian Aachen and Mongol Period Karakorum

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the two case studies of the Carolingian and Mongol Empires with respect to the roles and functions their possible capitals, Aachen and Karakorum, performed during specific time periods (Carolingian Aachen from 770 to 840; Mongol Karakorum from 1220 to 1260). As an explicit cross-cultural comparison, this study provides a rationale for this endeavour and a methodological approach. Six functions of imperial capitals are identified through a literary survey of empire studies: residence, assembly and administration in the political field; the capital as a stage in the ideological field; and thesaurus/storage and mint in the economic field. These functions feed a novel, systemizing scheme, based on the observation that they are governed by the dimensions of geographic distribution and degrees of permanence. This approach elucidates similarities and differences in types of ruling method and is therefore suitable for cross-cultural comparisons.

KEYWORDS

Cross-cultural comparison / Carolingians / Mongol Empire / capital / itinerance

Contrary to the generally recognised assumption that the Carolingians functioned without a permanent, fixed capital, Aachen is still widely portrayed as the capital city of the Carolingian Empire in the popular press. This misconception not only occurs on random websites, but in weekly, well regarded news magazines, such as the German »Der Spiegel«[1]. Aachen, now a town of 260,000 inhabitants, and situated where western Germany borders the Netherlands and Belgium, traces its origins back to the Roman time period (**fig. 1**). Very limited late antique and early medieval finds gave rise to the moniker of a »dark age« during that time period, but recent and ongoing archaeological observations in the city have yielded new evidence that has cast doubt on this assumed hiatus in settlement activities and helped to refine the picture of Aachen (Schaub/Kohlberger-Schaub 2015; Schaub 2018; 2021). Pepin III, the Short, the first Carolingian king of the Franks (*714, r. 751–768) (**tab. 1**), spent the winter of 768/769 at Aachen, which gives reason to assume that Aachen was already part of the royal manor during that time. Under Pepin's son and successor, Charlemagne (*747, r. 768–814), Aachen rose to the status of eminent palace on the royal itinerary, expressed through a flourishing of building activities as well as the time spent at this palace by Charlemagne, especially during the latter days of his reign (Müller et al. 2013).

1 E. g., www.integer-net.de/agentur/aachen/ (19.05.2023); Bruhns 2012.

In: M. Gierszewska-Noszczyńska · L. Grunwald · O. Grimm (eds), Frankish Seats of Power and the North – Centres between Diplomacy and Confrontation, Transfer of Knowledge and Economy.
LEIZA Publications 7 (Mainz 2025). DOI: 10.11588/propylaeum.1681.c24482

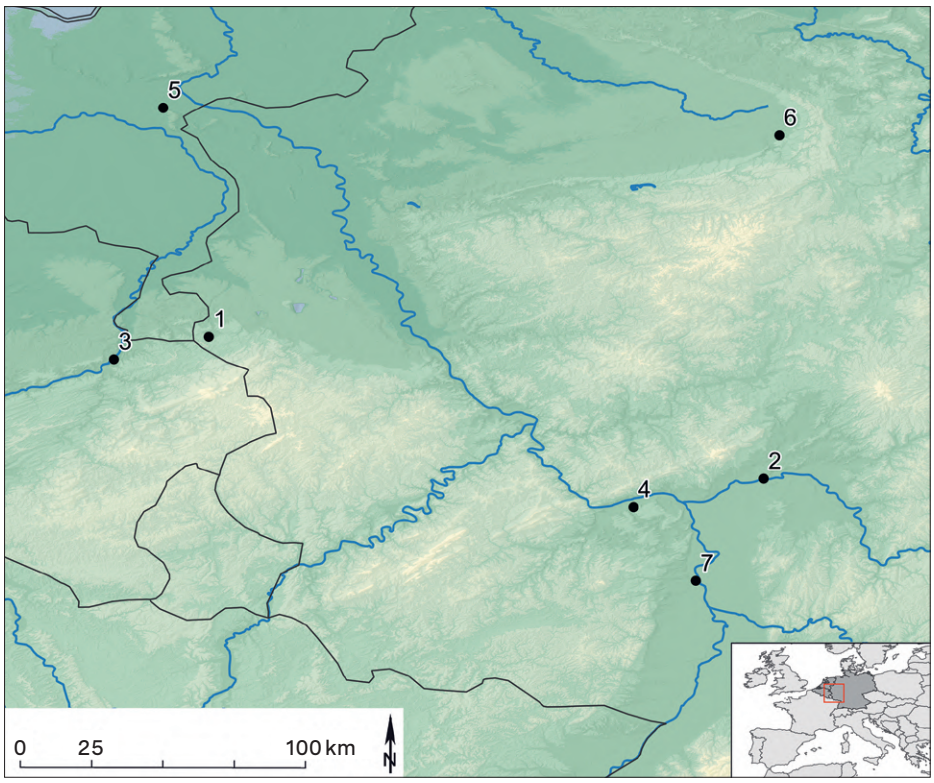

Fig. 1 Carolingian palatial sites mentioned in the text: **1** Aachen/DE. – **2** Frankfurt am Main/DE. – **3** Herstal/BE. – **4** Ingelheim/DE. – **5** Nijmegen/NL. – **6** Paderborn/DE. – **7** Worms/DE. – (Map S. Reichert; base map © EuroGeographics).

Name	Life dates	King of Francia (or parts thereof)	Emperor
Pepin the Short	c. 714 - 24 September 768	751-768	
Carloman I	28 June 751 - 4 December 771	768-771	
Charlemagne	2 April 748 - 28 January 814	768-814	800-814
Charles the Younger	c. 772 - 4 December 811		800-811
Louis I, the Pious	778 - 20 June 840		813/814-840
Lothar I	795 - 29 September 855	843-855 (Lotharingia)	840-855
Louis II, the German	c. 806 - 28 August 876	843-876 (East Francia)	
Louis III, the Younger	c. 835 - 20 January 882	876-882 (East Francia)	
Louis II of Italy	825 - 12 August 875		855-875
Charles II, the Bald	13 June 823 - 6 October 877	843-877 (West Francia)	875-877
Charles III, the Fat	839 - 13 January 888		881-887
Arnulf of Carinthia	c. 850 - 8 December 899	887-899 (East Francia)	896-899
Louis IV, the Child	893 - 20/24 September 911	900-911 (East Francia)	

Tab. 1 Compilation of Carolingian kings and emperors.

This digression from the traditional mode of highly mobile rule through royal itinerance led to the idea of Aachen as the capital of the Carolingian Empire[2]. Whether Aachen was even deserving of the label »city«, however, is contentious. While according to J. L. Nelson, »Aachen can be appraised as an urban site« (Nelson 2001, 224), the attribute of size (population- and area-wise), the evidence for which at this point looks meagre for Aachen if it can be assessed at all, is downplayed, even though recent ad-

2 E. g., Boockmann 1993; with a different argument but similar conclusion Brühl 1963; Ewig 1963.

vances in global urban studies deem it the possibly most crucial factor in the assessment of urbanity[3]. Going beyond the evaluation of the city, Aachen's status as a capital has been discussed much more critically[4]. In this view, Aachen needs to be seen as merely one node in the polycentric network of royal palaces and other stations in the king's itinerary. Some historians even limit the phenomenon of capital cities to the modern period (Kölzer 2011/2012, 68–71; Schieffer 1989). And yet, Nelson maintains that »[t]hereafter [794/795], Aachen's qualitative and quantitative growth transformed it into an effective capital« (Nelson 2001, 219).

This discussion not only requires the disentangling of the different concepts pertinent to the label of capital city, but the connection with mobile rule also calls into question the status of the »capitals« of other empire formations governed through a set of mobile institutions[5]. Steppe empires based on mobile pastoralism, among which the Mongol Empire is probably the best-known example, provide exactly this perspective. Karakorum is commonly portrayed as the first capital of the Mongol World Empire, the largest contiguous land empire in world history, which spanned the Eurasian continent from the Sea of Japan to eastern Europe and originated in the Mongolian steppes, founded by the infamous Chinggis Khan (r. 1206–1227) (**fig. 2; tab. 2;** Bemmann/Reichert 2021; Franke/Twitchett 1994; Morgan 2007). According to an inscription from the mid-14th century (see below), Chinggis Khan himself designated an area along the Orkhon river in central Mongolia as the place for his *ordu* (the imperial camp) and capital. This attribution might well have been an effort at retrospectively legitimizing the building of this city, since the first building activities were only attested under Chinggis Khan's son and successor Ögödei Khan (r. 1229–1241) in the 1230s, which aligns well with the archaeological evidence retrieved from Karakorum[6]. Karakorum held capital status until 1260, when Khubilai Khan (r. 1260–1294) shifted this function first to Shangdu, better known among westerners as Xanadu, and then later to Dadu or Khanbaliq, today's Beijing.

It may not be coincidental that Karakorum's precarious status fuelled a discussion similar to the one surrounding Aachen (Sagaster 1999). In a side remark, J. M. Smith stated that »[l]ike their Mongol subjects, the rulers were nomads; they only occupied their misnomered ›capitals‹ part of the year« (J. M. Smith 2000, 43). This evaluation clearly favours the criterion of the ruler's presence in one locality over other potential criteria for capital status. Considering the current state of the debate around Aachen, it is time to revisit the capital question in the case of Karakorum as well.

To arrive at a better understanding of the workings of both the Carolingian and Mongol courts and administration, it is worthwhile to reconsider their supposed capitals and take a closer look at their actual functions as well as the stability of these functions. This endeavour thus focuses on the nexus between the itinerant mode of rule and the functions of a capital in a cross-culturally comparative perspective. This cross-cultural juxtaposition invites a critical re-examination of concepts in a systematic approach. Both empires were shaped by charismatic founding fathers, who continue to exert an unbroken fascination to this day, and both are of immense importance for the national identity of their countries. Despite the differences – the two empires are set in two very dissimilar ecological zones, which imply varied economic foundations – there are still noticeable similarities between the two. The mobile mode of governance is just one of those similarities and will be more fully explored within this paper. This cross-cultural approach therefore simultaneously serves to set the mobile pastoralist empires, which are repeatedly portrayed as alien and barbaric, in an equal place in historiography (Gießauf 2009). Rather than reiterating dichotomous notions of nomadic versus sedentary societies, this combined study of an Inner Asian and a European regime seeks to uncover common principles of governance and strategies for maintaining social power, thereby overcoming this artificial dichotomy.

For this first foray into this subject, I shall focus the discussion on the time of the early Mongol World Empire from the 1230s to 1260, which witnessed major investments in spatially fixed buildings and settlements in the Orkhon valley. For the European aspect, I shall concentrate on Aachen's heyday under

3 Most recently M. E. Smith 2023; on the population size of Aachen see Ennen 1979/1980, 461.

4 Innes 2005, 75; McKitterick 2021, 475; with regard to the eastern Frankish and Ottonian realm; Ehlers 2007, 17; generally, Brühl 1965; but see Hartmann 2015, 16. 202.

5 Whether one wants to categorise the Carolingian and Mongol formations as empires highly depends on the definition of empire one employs, which in turn is dictated by the research question at hand. It is not in the remit of this paper to provide a full rationale for this issue; however, for the sake of clarity, I follow C. Sinopoli's simple explanation for empire, which includes both my case studies; Sinopoli 2001, 442 tab. 13, 1; 444.

6 While some authors emphasise the aspect of a later legitimization (see Hüttel 2016; Sagaster 2005), N. Di Cosmo makes a plausible argument that amends the actual dating of the foundation to 1219 and it is therefore more likely that Chinggis Khan did actually designate the area himself, see Di Cosmo 2014/2015, 70; on the archaeological evidence see Reichert 2019; 2020a.

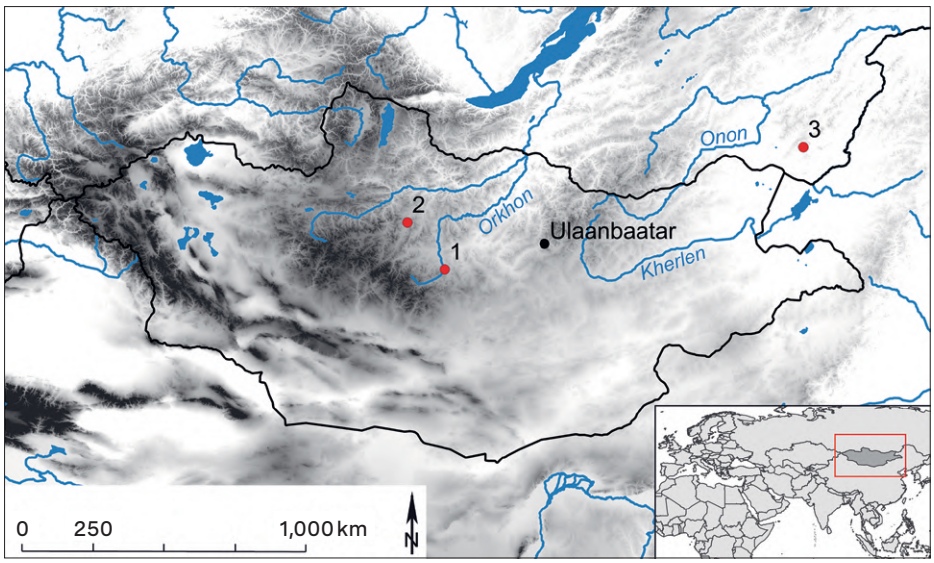

Fig. 2 Location of Mongol period sites mentioned in the text: **1** Karakorum. – **2** Khar Khul Khaany Balgas. – **3** Kondui. – (Map S. Reichert; base map public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0).

Name (Personal name)	Temple name	Life dates	Regnal years
Chinggis Khan (Temüjin)	Taizu	c. 1162 - 25 August 1227	1206-1227
Tolui	Ruizong	c. 1191-1232	1227-1229 (regent)
Ögödei Khan	Taizong	c. 1186 - 11 December 1241	1229-1241
Güyük Khan	Dingzong	c. 19 March 1206 - 20 April 1248	1246-1248
Möngke Khan	Xianzong	11 January 1209 - 11 August 1259	1251-1259
Khubilai Khan	Shizu	23 September 1215 - 18 February 1294	1260-1294 (Yuan emperor since 1271)
Öljeitü Khan (Temür)	Chengzong	15 October 1265 - 10 February 1307	1294-1307
Külüg Khan (Khaishan)	Wuzong	4 August 1281 - 27 January 1311	1307-1311
Buyantu Khan (Ayurbarwada)	Renzong	9 April 1285 - 1 March 1320	1311-1320
Gegen Khan (Shidebala)	Yingzhong	22 February 1302 - 4 September 1323	1320-1323
Yesün Temür	None	1293 - 15 August 1328	1323-1328
Ragibagh Khan	None	1320 - 14 November 1328	1328
Jayaatu Khan (Toq-Temür)	Wenzong	16 February 1304 - 2 September 1332	1328-1329, 1329-1332
Khutughtu Khan (Khoshila)	Mingzong	22 December 1300 - 30 August 1329	1329
Rinchinbal Khan	Ningzong	1 May 1326 - 14 December 1332	1332
Toghon Temür	Huizong	25 May 1320 - 23 May 1370	1333-1368

Tab. 2 Compilation of the Mongol great khans (1206–1259) and emperors of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China (1271–1368).

Charlemagne and his successor Louis the Pious (* 778, r. 813–840). Both case studies can be structurally classified as early historical societies with emerging writing traditions. Thus, by necessity and to provide a comprehensive picture, the study makes use of both archaeological and written sources, which are not seen as contradictory but as complementary.

In the remaining paper, I shall first provide a rationale and a methodological approach for the undertaking of a cross-cultural comparison. Based on a literary survey on the nature of imperial capitals, I shall detail a set of attributes or criteria, which I shall then discuss with regard to the case studies of both Aachen and Karakorum. Finally, I shall propose a new model that provides a systematic approach to tease out similarities and differences in the role of capital functions within a ruling system.

Theoretical Background

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

The use of comparisons is a basic function of human thought. Indeed, practising archaeology without using comparisons seems impossible as »[a]rchaeology is inherently comparative« (Smith/Peregrine 2012, 4). It is thus unsurprising that comparison is seldom mentioned explicitly as a method. However, in this study, the comparison of two entities separated by time and space calls for a detailed rationale for this endeavour.

While comparisons are well-established as a method in cultural studies – in history since at least M. Bloch's call for a »Histoire Comparée« (1928/1963) – cross-cultural comparison is a path that is rarely taken. And yet, cross-cultural studies have witnessed a surge during the past 20 years, especially in historiography and empire studies[7], but they are less frequently practiced in archaeological disciplines, especially within European archaeology (e. g., Prien 2005; Trigger 2003; Yoffee 2005). P. Geary succinctly summarised the great potential of a cross-cultural approach, which lies in its use of dynamic discussion and investigations that go beyond cultural boundaries[8]. The fundamental question of the comparability of the phenomena, i. e., the famous question of whether one compares apples with oranges, can be countered with the challenge of a conscious dissolution of the boundaries of commensurability[9]. H. Lutz and her co-authors question the dominant view in cultural studies that only similar and thus congruent phenomena can be compared (Lutz et al. 2006). Instead, the ostentatious comparison between incomparable entities would lead to deeper insights. This study follows their idea of a »fehllesende Vergleich« [»mis-reading comparison«] (Lutz et al. 2006, 17). Even though sources and material expressions may widely differ between the two case studies, intensive systematic comparison potentially uncovers similarities in mechanisms and practices that will provide a deeper understanding and keener description of the two phenomena. The systematic approach draws heavily on M. E. Smith, who recently discussed comparison as a method from an archaeological perspective (2018; 2020).

In this vein, a comparison between the two empires as whole entities is less useful; rather, comparisons between individual attributes or processes are considered profitable (M. E. Smith 2020, 23). To apply a cross-cultural comparison between the Mongol World Empire and the Carolingian Empire, it is therefore necessary to focus thematically and then to identify feasible categories of comparison, the *tertia comparationis*, pertinent to the established theme (see also Sinopoli 1994). Following C. Ginzburg and M. Weber, C. Wickham coined these points of comparison »spyholes«, single elements that are similar but whose different expressions need explanation (Wickham 2009). Two more challenges need to be addressed: one is the selection of suitable spyholes (see next section), and the other is the unevenness of the source material and its state of publication. The latter point is an issue that concerns most synthetic studies. Especially in archaeology, due to taphonomic processes and different scholarly traditions, the ideal of equivalent sources for all points of comparisons cannot be achieved. It is, however, important to address any caveats resulting from that issue.

Approaching the Capital – Selecting Spyholes

Within comparative empire studies, imperial capitals are deemed crucial and an important point of comparison for cross-cultural studies (Sinopoli 1994; M. E. Smith 2001). M. E. Smith characterises the imperial city as »a large and complex urban centre […]. Nearly all known capital cities exhibit public proclamations of an imperial ideology […] two common themes [are] militarism and the glorification of the king or the polity« (2001, 130). Following on from this and similar descriptions, we can identify attributes of capital cities that might function as potential spyholes in this cross-cultural comparison. Following M. E. Smith, these would be size, urban quality, (social) complexity, and the

7 Comparative studies on ancient Rome and the Chinese Han Empire are probably the most famous among these works; Mutschler/Mittag 2009; Scheidel 2009; 2015.

8 Geary 2001, 38. This take on cross-cultural comparison needs to be separated from transcultural approaches, which describe entangled histories or histoires croisées and which look at the interactions of synchronous and spatially proximate societies, see Drews et al. 2015. For a similarly positive outlook on cross-cultural comparisons focused on archaeology, see Parker 2018.

9 Lutz et al. 2006, 18: »bewussten Entgrenzung des Vergleichbaren«. For a similar argument see Mauz/von Sass 2011, 14-15.

public exhibition of imperial ideology (military or glorification of ruler).

K. Fehn subsumed functions of European capitals under the three categories of politics, economy and culture and traced their spatial distribution through time from 1250 to contemporary times (1989, 474–475). Although his list is not exhaustive, he provides examples for each category: politics, which covers ruler's residence, central seat of administration, seat of government, parliament, highest governmental agencies, and politically relevant non-governmental organizations; economy, which includes special industries, long-distance trade, trade fairs, mint, port of supra-regional importance, central node in traffic, concentration of industries, seat of trade associations, banks, and stock market; culture, which covers an episcopal see, supra-regional pilgrimage, university, academy, leading theatre, operas, museums, central library, eminent centre of publication and communication, and a concentration of artists and scientific elites. As Fehn takes a broad view and extends his study into the modern period, not all attributes are equally pertinent for premodern times[10]. Especially the last category of »culture« certainly reflects changing attitudes regarding what are deemed important qualities of a capital city (except for the attribute of episcopal see). Nowadays, people expect high-level cultural activities to be part of the capital city experience (museums, theatres, opera and such) (Rapoport 1993, 56).

Based on a survey of premodern capitals, A. Rapoport characterises capitals as large in size, as being reinforced by fortifications, as having a heterogeneous population, as exerting control, as the centre of roads, communication, education and literacy, as centres of excellence in all cultural domains (arts, crafts, fashion and so on), and as centres of justice and law. Furthermore, capitals function as the crucial centre of communication with the provinces, understood as the periphery. Another important aspect is their role as a stage for rituals and ceremonies, which legitimise the ruler and enforce cohesion (Rapoport 1993, 33–36).

Based on these examples, there are certain overlaps with attributes commonly employed to describe cities within a settlement system (M. E. Smith 2016). From recent scholarship on comparative urbanism in a global perspective, two main points crystallise: Within a system of settlements, cities (and I use urban/urbanism interchangeably with city) are those with the largest and densest population and which at the same time perform economic, administrative and religious functions beyond their actual borders[11]. Since both cities and capitals thus organise and control territories, we can question along with Rapoport the qualitative difference between the two (Rapoport 1993, 32). To answer this question, I would argue to clearly differentiate characteristics that might be corollary from pivotal functions capitals had to perform. Size and social complexity are good examples of characteristics that are certainly corollary to the actual function of a site as capital. The same is true for the observation that capitals were often the central node in road systems and communication networks. While the former certainly helps with the control of the latter, it is by no means a function of the capital itself. Drawing from the stated examples, the function of the capital as a residence, as the seat of the main administration, as a place of assemblies (as a premodern equivalent to Fehn's rather modern parliament), as the stage of ideological display, as the place of the thesaurus/storage (a premodern translation of modern central bank systems), and the mint are deemed crucial when discussing capitals in premodern societies. These different attributes need not be concentrated within one site (Fehn 1989); there are systems with several capitals[12]. Furthermore, we expressly deal with mobile forms of government. These observations require a discussion of the spatial distribution of these functions. Additionally, it is helpful to think of these attributes as polythetic; »[t]hus, no single attribute is both sufficient and necessary for membership in the type«[13]. This means that if, for example, a mint cannot be proven for the site in question, this does not necessarily exclude a capital status for this site.

In the following section, I will discuss these attributes of political (residence, assembly, administration), ideological (stage of display), and economic (thesaurus/storage, mint) functions with respect

10 Furthermore, his focus lies on the Latin West, which characterises some of his attributes as profoundly Roman-Catholic and Eurocentric and which therefore cannot be simply transferred to other cultural complexes.

11 M. E. Smith 2016. The functional approach draws heavily on ideas from central place theory going back to the geographer W. Christaller 1933. This theory also had a large impact on German archaeology, see summarizing discussions by Ettel 2013; Nakoinz 2013. But see critical discussion of the theory and Christaller's involvement with the Third Reich by Kegler 2015; for archaeology Flückiger 2021. While capitals can surely be viewed as a special case of »central place«, the approach itself is geared towards the reconstruction of hierarchical settlement patterns and territorial penetration.

12 E. g., during certain Chinese dynasties, Pursey 2023, 74–75.

13 Rapoport 1993, 31; see also M. E. Smith 2001; the restriction to one salient feature to determine capital status remains unconvincing, as is the case in C. Brühl's study with the criterion of topography in the sense of the presence of dwellings of clerical as well as secular elites at the residences of Aachen, Pavia and Regensburg; Brühl 1963.

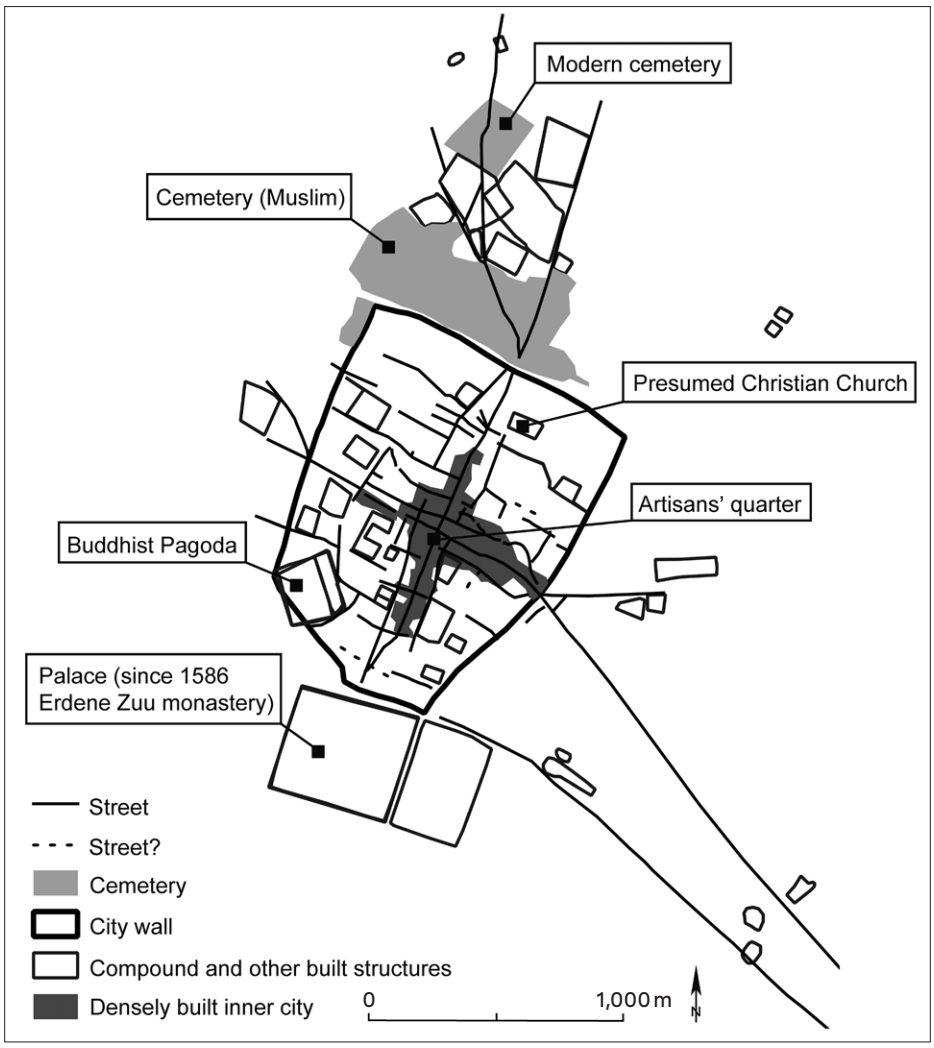

Fig. 3 Annotated schematic map of Mongol period Karakorum, Mongolia. – (Map S. Reichert).

to the two case studies of the Mongol Empire's Karakorum and Carolingian Aachen. I will introduce each discussion with a few preliminary observations on emic perspectives and perceptions of capitals in the two traditions to provide a rounded perspective.

Case Study: Karakorum

Emic Perspectives

The most important text from the decidedly Mongol standpoint is the »Secret History of the Mongols« (SHM) from the mid-13th century[14]. The text makes, however, only fleeting mention of Karakorum, which is in reference to the year 1232/1233, when Ögödei »pitched his camp at Qara-Qorum« (Atwood/SHM 2023, 150 [§273]). Interestingly, rather than talking about it being the capital, Karakorum is referred to as the site of the khan's camp. The other, most notable text in that regard is the bilingual inscription from 1346, which was set up in front of the Buddhist pagoda at Karakorum and which commemorates the different builders of the temple (**fig. 3**; Cleaves 1952; Reichert 2021). While the Chinese version refers to Karakorum as »du 都«, which according to K. Sagaster can signify both capital and residence, the Mongolian version labels Karakorum clearly as a residence (Sagaster 2005, 151). This observation

14 Atwood/SHM 2023. As the Uighur script for Mongolian was only introduced under Chinggis Khan, genuine Mongolian sources from the early Empire period are extremely rare.

Fig. 4 Residences of the Mongol period within the Orkhon valley, Mongolia: **1** Sao-lin-ch'eng (Sa'urin), – **2** Doityn Balgas. – **3** Karakorum. – **4** Tuzghu Baliq (Zhargalantyn Shiliïn Balgas). – (Map S. Reichert; base map Google Satellite).

suggests that, for the Mongols, the designation of this place as campsite and residence of the khan conveyed more meaning than the notion of »capital«, which goes hand in hand with another characteristic of cities in the Mongolian steppes: on the Mongolian plateau, cities were not part of everyday experience, but rose and declined alongside larger confederations, a phenomenon we might term »implanted cities« (Bemmann/Reichert 2021; Bemmann et al. 2022). The view that the capital was where the court was stationed is corroborated by two envoys from the Song (Chinese dynasty, 960–1279), who in 1237 reported that the rulers were accompanied by their officials and subordinates (Atwood/Struve 2021, 96; Barkmann 2002, 6).

Contemporary sources from Chinese and Persian perspectives sporadically label Karakorum as the capital (Abramowski 1979, 18; Boyle/Juvaini 1958, 236; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 328. 404. 511). The authors of these sources, however, draw from a very different cultural background with highly urbanised societies and a long history of capitals. In contrast, the two Franciscan monks, John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck, who both travelled to the Mongolian steppes in 1246 and 1253 respectively and wrote extensive reports of their experiences, simply refer to Karakorum as »city« (*villa*) or even use the diminutive *villula* (Dawson 1980, 5; Jackson/Rubruck 1990, 123). Arguably, their western European background did not yet include the notion of a capital, which is relevant to the Carolingian case at hand.

The Political Sphere

The political centre of Karakorum had surely been the Khan's palace[15]. According to the *Yuan Shi*, building started in 1235[16]. There is a strong hypothesis that places the palace underneath the Buddhist monastery of Erdene Zuu, which had been established in 1586, and thus to the south of the actual walled city area of Karakorum (**fig. 3**) (Bemmann/Reichert 2021; Barkmann 2010; Pohl et al. 2017). However, there is no material evidence of the palace itself[17]. Fortunately, travellers to the Khan's court left descriptions, which give us an idea of the grandeur and elaborate furnishings of the palace (Jackson/Rubruck 1990, 209–210; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 328; Boyle/Juvaini 1958, 236–237). During Rubruck's stay at Karakorum, Möngke Khan had the captured French goldsmith Guillaume Boucher build a silver fountain inside his palace that spouted four different alcoholic beverages. The palace is described as a hall-like construction that resembled a church with a cross-shaped floor plan[18]. According to Rubruck's description, the khan's seat was at the far side of the entrance, placed on an elevated dais.

However, Karakorum was not the khan's only residence. The wider surroundings of Karakorum in the Orkhon valley are dotted with further resi-

15 Known as *Qarshi* among the Mongols and as *wanangong* (Palace of Eternal Peace) in Chinese sources; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 328; Abramowski 1976.

16 Abramowski 1976, 130. The *Yuan Shi* is the official chronicle of the Yuan dynasty. As usual in Chinese historiography, the following dynasty took responsibility of compiling the official history of the preceding dynasty. In case of the Yuan, this task was carried out under the Ming within a short period from 1369 to 1370, see Cleaves 1993.

17 Since a vibrant community of monks still actively uses this monastery, only limited excavation areas along the outer walls were possible, which, however, yielded walls underneath the monastery walls that dated to the founding phase of Karakorum; Franken 2013.

18 The palace of Kondui, excavated by Russian archaeologists in the Transbaikal region of Russia, exhibits striking similarities to that description; Bemmann/Reichert 2021, 129-131; Kiselev 1965, fig. 171; Kradin/Baksheeva 2018, 311 fig. 9, 11.

dential complexes, the most famous among these being Doityn Balgas, Ögödei's spring palace (**fig. 4**) (Bemmann, under review; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 328–329). The physical remnants of these sites are still discernible on the surface as elevated earth mounds and wall features. They were part of a building program established by Ögödei Khan during the 1230s, who thus not only initiated the building of Karakorum, but also planned and built a surrounding infrastructure (Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 328–329). Further residential sites lie outside the Orkhon valley and were used during the winter months (Atwood 2015).

The khan's movements, however, cannot be simply equated with the seasonal movements dictated by climate and the herd management strategies of the pastoralists within the same region (Atwood 2015). Rather, following the Persian official and historian of the Ilkanid part of the Mongol Empire, Rashīd al-Dīn Fadlallāh (1247–1318), Ögödei Khan »moved merrily back and forth between summer pastures and winter quarters, and he constantly enjoyed all sorts of pleasures«[19]. Another incentive was hunting: nearby lakes provided water fowl at Doityn Balgas; the southern winter quarters were renowned for the *kulan*, Mongolian wild asses[20]. Ögödei's successors, Güyük and Möngke, at least partly followed similar patterns, but also extended their movements beyond this core region to the west (Atwood 2015, 310–312). Furthermore, the imperial camp was not dependent on any built infrastructure but functioned as a residence wherever a location for pitching camp was deemed suitable.

So, what then was Karakorum's status when the ruler was not present? Judging by the documented practice of sending embassies from *ordu* to *ordu*, rather than directly to Karakorum, the city did not function as a primary contact point[21]. Connected through the postal system (Mng. *Yam*), a network of post stations geared towards the supply of messengers and massively expanded under Ögödei Khan, communication in the vast steppes was organised, efficient and fast, so different groups could know about the khan's movements and whereabouts (Shagdar 2000; Shim 2014).

The *quriltai*, the Mongol assembly of the Chinggisids, the lineage founded by Chinggis, and uppermost ruling elite functioned as a legal institution as well as a forum for fundamental decisions, including military campaigns and the selection and raising of the new khan[22]. Even after the establishment of Karakorum, it seems that the majority of documented *quriltais* were still held in the Onon-Kherlen region of eastern Mongolia, »the Urheimat« of Chinggis Khan (Di Cosmo 2014/2015, 77; Barkmann 2002, 7–8) (**tab. 3**). A survey of the most important written sources on the Mongol period, chapters one to three of the *Yuan Shi*, the SHM, and histories by the Persians Rashīd al-Dīn and Ata-Malik Juvainī (1226–1283), governor of Baghdad from 1259 to 1283, yielded only one positive mention of Karakorum as the place of an assembly that took place in 1236 as a celebration of the completion of Ögödei's palace[23].

Closely related to the movements of the uppermost ruler is, in both case studies, the question of the main administration. How stationary was it, actually? The excavations in the middle of Karakorum yielded very few indications for scribal activities from the first half of the 13th century. Of five inkstones retrieved from the excavations, only two belong to this early period[24]. Based on written sources, one third of Karakorum was thought of as being reserved for administration and scribes (Allsen 1994, 397). Similarly, Rubruck describes the existence of »large palaces belonging to the court secretaries« at Karakorum (Jackson/Rubruck 1990, 221). None of these, however, have been positively identified through excavations so far.

In order to understand the administrative organization, it is necessary to provide an outline of the Mongol court, its composition and size. Chinggis Khan established the organization of his household when he was raised as great khan in 1206 (Allsen 1994, 343–345; Atwood/SHM 2023, 112–121). This included expanding his personal bodyguard, the *keshig*, from 1,150 to 10,000 men. Apart from guard duties and running the khan's household, the *keshig* additionally performed central administrative functions: »Thus the ›central government‹ of the early Mongolian state, in essence the imperial guard, was located

19 Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 328; see further Atwood 2015; Boyle 1974; Shiraishi 2004; on Persian historians during the Mongol Empire see Morgan 1982.

20 Atwood 2015, 306; on the role of hunting see generally Allsen 2006, esp. 186-193.

21 John de Plano Carpini never made it to Karakorum, since the Khan held camp half a day's journey away from the city; Dawson 1980, 5; see also Rubruck's odyssean voyage until he finally made it to Möngke Khan's *ordu*; Jackson/Rubruck 1990.

22 Hodous 2012/2013; Hope 2012; for a discussion of the iconographic rendering of coronation scenes, albeit of the Yuan dynasty and the Ilkhanids, seating arrangements and accompanying ceremonies see Matsuda 2021.

23 Abramowski 1976, 131; 1979; Atwood 2017/2018; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998; 1999; Boyle/Juvaini 1971; this first probatory survey should be seen as a starting point for a more thorough compilation of the timing and geographical distributions of these assemblies; for more information on Juvainī see Morgan 1982.

24 Find numbers 3363 and 4511; see Reichert 2020b and 2019.

Year	Occasion	Location	Reference
1224	Unspecified	Fanakat river [Syr Darya]	Boyle/Juvaini 1958, 140; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 258
1229 [1228**]	Enthronement of Ögödei Khan	Küte'u Isle of the Kherlen	Atwood/SHM 2023, 147 (§§269-270); Abramowski 1976, 124; Boyle/Juvaini 1958, 183-188
1233	Military decisions	Area of »T'ieh-lieh-tu« [Telegetü Amsar; Onon-Kerlen-region]	Abramowski 1976, 128; Atwood/SHM 2023, 240 note 21
1234	Rules concerning military discipline and societal rules	Onon river	Abramowski 1976, 129
1235	Rules and regulations	Talan Daban	Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 324
1236	Celebration for completion of palace	Karakorum	Abramowski 1976, 131
1246	Enthronement of Güyük Khan	Sira Orda/Ongin river (1/2 day from Karakorum)	Abramowski 1976, 151; Dawson 1980, 62-63; Boyle/Juvaini 1958, 248-255; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 392
Between 1248 and 1251	Discussion about the succession of Güyük Khan	Between Issyk kul and Ili river	Abramowski 1979, 17
1251	Enthronement of Möngke Khan	Onon-Kherlen river region	Abramowski 1979, 17-18; Boyle/Juvaini 1958, 566-571; Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 403-404
1252	Unspecified	Seven Hills of Köde'e Isle on the Kherlen	Atwood/SHM 2023, 161 (Colophon)
1253	Military decisions	Onon river	Abramowski 1979, 22
1254	Unspecified	Köke-nor [Qinghai lake, China]	Abramowski 1979, 23
1254	Unspecified	Onon river	Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 413
1256	Unspecified	Örmegetü [Rubruck's Sira Ordo, Ögödei's Summer Residence]	Abramowski 1979, 25; Boyle 1974, 146-147
1257	Unspecified	Kherlen river	Abramowski 1979, 26
1259	Discussion of whether to spend the summer or go back to the north	Jialing river [China]	Abramowski 1979, 32

Tab. 3 A non-exhaustive list of *quriltais*, the Mongol imperial assemblies, and their location 1220–1260*.
* The list includes gatherings and assemblies that can be deemed *quriltai* even though the precise term might not have been mentioned in the text.
** Wrong date provided in the SHM, Ögödei was raised to Qaghan in 1229; see SHM/Atwood 2023, 289 note 1.

wherever its sovereign chose to alight« (Allsen 1994, 344). With the title of great khan, Ögödei also inherited the 10,000 *keshig* and the administrative system from his father, which he reformed to adjust to the needs of the growing empire (Allsen 1994, 372–375; Atwood/SHM 2023, 147 [§§269–270]). The practice of the central administration accompanying the itinerant great khan continued into Möngke khan's days, who again inherited the *keshig* (Allsen 1994, 397).

The Ideological Sphere

Emerging during the early Mongol Empire period was a state ideology that was rooted in the power bestowed by Eternal Heaven, *Möngke Tenggeri*. This universal claim to power was further boosted by ownership of the Orkhon River valley, the spiritual power centre of past nomadic empires and, as such, crucial for the legitimization of Chinggisid

rule (Allsen 1994, 347–348; 1996; but see Di Cosmo 2014/2015). In that vein, Karakorum had to function as the embodiment of this power claim. And indeed, in the case of Karakorum, the assumption that the supposed capital is the most complex, largest and most splendid city relative to other settlements is certainly true – at least compared with the settlements on the Mongolian plateau (Sinopoli 2001, 463; Rapoport 1993; Bemmann/Reichert 2021; Bemmann under review). The great khans certainly used the city as a stage of power display, expressed through monumental buildings, for example, the presumably 90-meter-tall Pavilion of the Rising Yuan, the pagoda built in the southwest part of Karakorum (Franken 2015), or the grand palace with its wondrous drinking fountain (see above). The building of Buddhist temples and other religious structures at Karakorum further underlines the might of the khans, who appropriated a multitude of religious persuasions for their advancement (Jackson/Rubruck 1990, 221; Atwood 2004).

Moreover, Karakorum was the only settlement on the Mongolian plateau fortified with a wall, which enclosed the main body of the city, although it had more of a demarcating than a defensive function. At all other sites, only certain building complexes were subdivided from the surrounding buildings with enclosing walls: the so-called compounds. These compounds can likewise be found at Karakorum and we regularly find glazed roof tiles and building ornaments strewn on the surface of these complexes, which marks them as elite residences or important religious structures. There is only one other settlement on the Mongolian plateau comparable in size and layout with Karakorum and that is Khar Khul Khaany Balgas in the Khanui River valley (Reichert et al. 2022). This city also shares certain aspects of monumentality with a prominent palace compound in the south of the actual city area and a presumed Buddhist temple complex in the city itself. Two large kiln sites in the surroundings along the Khanui River terrace edge were both likely geared towards the production of building materials and high-end ornaments for the city. While another arena of display, Khar Khul Khaany Balgas, was certainly never on a par with Karakorum[25].

The Economic Sphere

Written sources consistently tell us of the existence of storage facilities for the khan's riches in the precinct of the palace compound (Jackson/Rubruck 1990, 209). The *Yuan Shi* claims that Möngke installed new personnel for the supervision of his treasury at Karakorum (Abramowski 1979, 18). Ögödei Khan even showed disregard towards his riches; he gave them away rather than have people guard his treasury at Karakorum (Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998, 337–338). Although this portrayal is certainly exaggerated in order to emphasise his great bounty, the implication is that considerable amounts of the empire's wealth were stored at Karakorum. However, we do not have clear archaeological evidence for these facilities[26]. Especially during *quriltais*, on the occasion of a new khan's ascension (**tab. 3**), the texts regularly describe how the khan opened his treasury to provide gifts for the assembled greats of the empire. This practice also occurs at less auspicious great assemblies; as the *Yuan Shi* details for a *quriltai* in 1256, Möngke Khan feasted all members for 60 days and gifted them gold and precious textiles (Abramowski 1979, 25). It is noteworthy, however, that none of these examples took place at Karakorum, but in the Onon-Kherlen river region in eastern Mongolia. A considerable part of the treasury must have therefore accompanied the khan during his travels in order to be brought forth when these occasions demanded.

Another economic function performed by capitals was the minting of coins or the issuing of other kinds of money, such as paper money – known in China since the Tang. Prior to the cohesion of the pastoral groups of the Mongolian plateau under Chinggis Khan, there was no tradition of local coinage in the region. The Mongols appropriated not only the administrative functions in the newly conquered regions, but also co-opted the monetary institutions already in place (Kalra 2018, 98). A survey of known coinage from the Mongol era reveals a large number of simultaneous mints following different local traditions, thus a highly decentralised organization of minting (Buell/Kolbas 2016, 63; Nyamaa 2005; Heidemann 2005a; 2005b). Nonetheless, there

25 Karakorum stood out among all other settlements in additional respects: Karakorum is the only city surrounded by a network of satellite settlements that were established to supply the city's needs of buildings materials and food; it is the only settlement with a complex stratigraphy of more than 4 m in depth; most known inscriptions from the Mongol Empire period and all stone turtle statues that functioned as bases for inscription stones are either from Karakorum itself or from its direct surroundings; Bemmann/Reichert 2021.

26 Although recently revised magnetic and topographic mapping of Karakorum show large building structures in the northeast part of the main city body, until further excavation is carried out we can only speculate on their possible function as granaries or other storage facilities; Bemmann et al. 2022.

is evidence for a mint at Karakorum. A coin found in a workshop from the early second half of the 13th century in the middle of Karakorum dates to 1237/1238 and bears the earliest documented mention of the name Karakorum, here in Arabic (Heidemann et al. 2006). Further coins were found at Otrar with »QRM«, one of which specifically mentions »worked in the palace in the city of Qorum«, which indicates the existence of a mint in the palace compound (Heidemann et al. 2006, 95; Buell/Kolbas 2016, 60–62). According to P. Buell and J. Kolbas, the minting of coins by the Mongol authorities served foremost for tax purposes, since they were often minted to pay tribute to the Mongols, rather than as currency. In the case of the Islamic-style coin excavated at Karakorum, this might have been purposefully produced for the taxation of captive craftsmen or merchants from Central Asia (Buell/Kolbas 2016, 59–60). Later coins minted under Güyük Khan at Karakorum, however, emphasised the importance of the imperial *ordu*, possibly underlining again that the political centre was tied to the moving khan and not necessarily anchored to Karakorum (Buell/Kolbas 2016, 62–63).

Case Study: Aachen

Emic Perspectives

Did the people of the late 8th and the 9th century have a clear concept of the term »capital« in western Europe? How did they refer to Aachen? Following D. Flach, Aachen is first mentioned as *caput* only in 1166 (Flach 1976, 8). However, written sources of the time, be they charters or other texts, do not allow for the reconstruction of a contemporary perception of a capital in any meaningful sense. Rather, labels such as *caput*, *sedis regia*, *civitas* or *urbs* were used to generally denote places of note: royal residences for example (Brühl 1963, 45). So, even when Aachen is referred to as *sedes regni*, it might just mean »royal seat« in the meaning of an imperial residence[27].

The Political Sphere

Simply put, the palatial complex can be equated with the royal residence. Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni* and his *Translatio*, as well as the *Capitulare de disciplina palatii Aquisgranensis* from 820, provide information on the palatial buildings, the *vicus*, and the simple residential buildings, as well as the residences of the clerical and secular elites[28]. None of the sources, however, offer a detailed description of the royal hall or living quarters (Müller et al. 2013, 160). Furthermore, the identification of the structures mentioned in the written sources with actual architectural remains – either still standing or evident through archaeological excavations – can prove a challenge[29]. And yet, Aachen is one of the prime examples of a palatial complex with still-standing architecture from the Carolingian period (**fig. 5**). On the northern edge of the so-called Market Hill of Aachen lies the heart of the palatial buildings, the hall or *aula regia* with the Granus tower at its eastern side[30]. The hall was originally fitted with a front building that was linked to a connecting building construction, which provided a roofed walkway from the hall in the south to the northeast corner of the Atrium next to the Church of Mary[31] and through a small connecting hallway to the church itself (Müller et al. 2013, 138–139). Based on past archaeological endeavours combined with recent advances in dating, these buildings can all be associated with the building program under Charlemagne, which continued under his successor. Most recently, archaeologists were able to detect the remnants of a late antique polygonal fortification into which the royal hall had probably been integrated as its southwestern limit (Kyritz/Schaub 2015). Several indications suggest that this *castellum* had been razed to the ground as late as the 12th century (ibid.).

27 Kölzer 2011/2012, 68-71 with reference to Regino of Prüm, Chronicon, 98 ad annum 869. See further discussion of the use of *sedes regni* in Müller et al. 2013, 357-362.

28 Einhard (c. 775-840), a scholar and courtier during the times of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, was as such intimately familiar with Charlemagne, Aachen and the Carolingian court; for detailed information on Einhard see Patzold 2013. See for discussion of written sources Müller et al. 2013, 157-168; Einhard, Vita and Translatio; Capitulare de disciplina.

29 Flach 1976, 36-54; see also Müller et al. 2013, 161-162; who for exactly these reasons refrain from applying the terms *solarium* and *porticus* to the identified Carolingian building structures of the hall's front building and connecting corridor between hall and church respectively. For the latest and most comprehensive discussion of the palatial complex of Aachen, its history and further literature see Müller et al. 2013.

30 For preserved structures see Müller et al. 2013, esp. 117 fig. 27; 133-138; on the sequence of construction phases of the palatial complex see Müller et al. 2013, 139-143; Ristow 2013; on dating of individual building phases see Müller et al. 2013, 143-157. The hall had found a re-use as town hall in the 14th century and witnessed several remodelling phases and additions since then. However, its Carolingian essence remains until today.

31 I. e., today's Aachen Cathedral, for a discussion on why the label »Palatine Chapel« for the Carolingian church is incorrect, see Müller et al. 2013, 193-209.

The pre-Charlemagne palatial buildings also comprised a church building, the so-called north annex to the later Church of Mary as well as a building in the southwest part of Market Hill, whose function remains unknown (Müller et al. 2013, 133).

At a time when the majority of the population lived in wooden buildings, this palatial complex, built in stone and with materials partly brought from far away, and based on antique Mediterranean architectural models, was not only rare but awe-inspiring. Einhard rightfully applauded Charlemagne for this achievement (Turner 2010, 276; Einhard, Vita, 30–31 c. 26). And yet, Aachen was by far not the only place of residence for Charlemagne, as his was a moving court, with its mobility dictated by military campaigns, political demands, religious festivities and potential economic needs (Hartmann 2015, 116–117 map 1; Gauert 1965; McKitterick 2011, 168; 2021). Starting with a predilection for Herstal from 770 to 784, there was a noticeable shift of focus from northern Gaul to the northeast part of the realm, possibly first triggered by his military activities in Saxon lands (Barbier 2014, 173). It was only in his later years, from 806 onwards, that the then emperor became more or less stationary at Aachen and left this residence almost only for hunting trips into the Ardennes (Ennen 1979/1980, 459; Flach 1976, 19–21. 182; Nelson 2001, 218–219; Müller 2016, 22–24). Louis the Pious continued his father's practice and remained mostly at Aachen, at least until 822 when political circumstances forced him to return to mobile rule (Müller 2016, 24–25; Kölzer 2011/2012, 71–74). For these 16 years, from 806 to 822, Aachen had thus been the favoured winter residence, and place of reception of important embassies. And yet, discounting one exception, neither Charlemagne nor Louis the Pious spent complete years at Aachen[32].

Similar to the *quriltais* initiated by the Mongol khans, at least yearly assemblies constituted a key institution in the Carolingian ruling method (Airlie 2003; Reuter 2002; Seyfarth 1910; Eichler 2007). The assemblies convened the secular and clerical magnates of the realm, offering the king the means »to be informed about the affairs of the kingdom, but they were also occasions to hear and decide upon legal disputes, receive ambassadors, to determine new economic and administrative arrangements, and to decide how ecclesiastical concerns were to be addressed« (McKitterick 2021, 475). These assemblies took place wherever the king decided, often at places that proved convenient gateways for the military action of the pertaining year. In the early years of

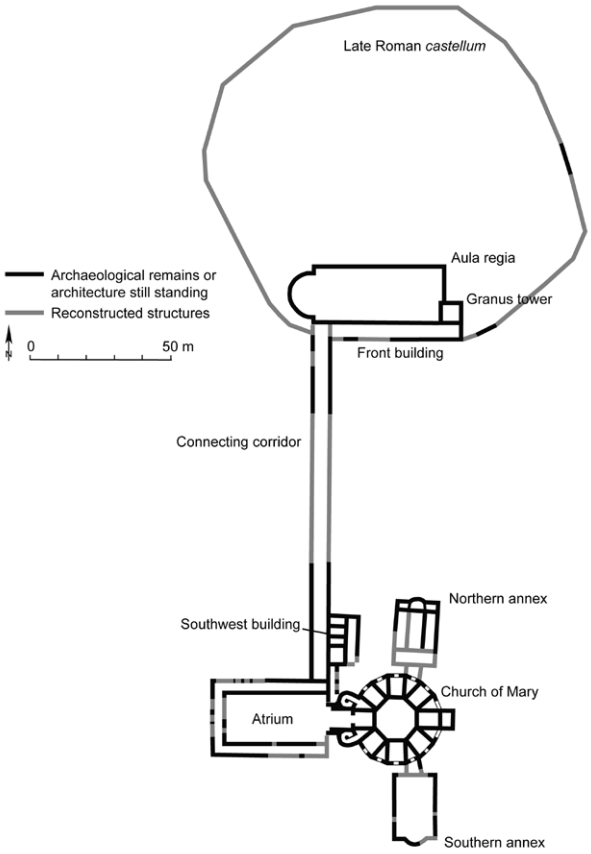

Fig. 5 Schematic map of palatial buildings under Charlemagne (r. 768–814) and Louis the Pious (r. 813–840). – (Based on Müller et al. 2013, 120 fig. 25; Kyritz/Schaub 2015, 156 fig. 3).

Charlemagne's rule, they convened most often in Worms or Ingelheim; later, Aachen became the preferred place for the assembly (**fig. 1**)[33]. For the year 811, the *Annales regni Francorum* even mention that the summer assembly was held as a *consuetudo* at Aachen (Nelson 2001, 219; Annales regni Francorum, 134). Of the 61 assemblies that are known from the reign of Louis the Pious, about one third took place in Aachen, which makes this *palatium* the most prominent place by far, but nonetheless not the only one (Eichler 2007, 54–55 tab. 1).

Archbishop Hincmar of Reims (c. 800/810–882) in his *De ordine palatii* from 882 provides us with the first description of the court's composition and the tasks of individual court officials. According to him, he based his account on a text from the 820s, so we can refer his notes – at least to some extent – to earlier times (Hincmarus, De ordine palatii; Hartmann 2015, 120; Fleckenstein 1976). The Aachen court was renowned as a European-wide gathering place for scholars, poets and artists, and while court clerics

32 See Müller 2016, 23 fig. 11; Müller et al. 2013, 274 fig. 76; 402; e. g., visits at Nijmegen see den Braven 2021, 151.

33 Hartmann 2015, 121; see compilation of assemblies in Seyfarth 1910, 127-129.

of the Church of Mary functioned as important administrative personnel and the offices and number of scribes in Aachen were expanded after 800, the administration was by no means stationary[34]: notaries accompanied the king wherever he went to execute administrative demands, and it seems there was not a central administrative archive at Aachen (Hartmann 2015, 141). However, R. McKitterick's thesis that notaries worked independently for Charlemagne has been contested and cannot be applied to Louis the Pious (McKitterick 2008; 2011; but see Hartmann 2015, 115; Kölzer 2011/2012, 93). Another means of administration were the *missi dominici*, intermediaries between the king and local authorities, who were used profusely by Charlemagne (Innes 2005, 82–85; Hartmann 2015, 127. 132–133. 143). However, there was no development of a »free-standing administrative apparatus«, and the system of *missi dominici* was a rather short-lived phenomenon that ceased working after 843 (Innes 2005, 85; Kölzer 2011/2012, 93–95).

The Ideological Sphere

Following C. Sinopoli, »[t]he capital also serves as a setting for public proclamations of an imperial ideology through architecture, iconography, sacred spaces, and other segregated spaces« (Sinopoli 2001, 463). And indeed, Aachen stands as a prime example for such an endeavour. Aachen has been widely referred to as *Nova Roma* or *Roma secunda*, which – apart from textual references – rests heavily on the architectural styles of the Church of Mary and the imperial accoutrements Charlemagne ordered to be brought from Italy, such as Theodoric the Great's equestrian monument (Hammer 1944, 56; Moreland 2001; McKitterick 2021). The church, whose construction period has been narrowed to 793–803, based on recent dendrochronological results, and the adjacent atrium were thus built under Charlemagne (Schaub/Kohlberger-Schaub 2015; Schaub 2018, 213). It incorporated an older church building to its north (the northern annex), which was mirrored by a southern annex, together with the new construction (Müller et al. 2013, 133). The rapid completion of this ensemble marks a very high investment and furthered Charlemagne's image as a powerful leader (Schaub/Kohlberger-Schaub 2015, 491). Together with descriptions by Einhard, who details how Charlemagne ordered columns and marble plates to be brought from Rome and Ravenna to Aachen, the still-existing fine accoutrements of the church, such as the bronze railings and portals, corroborate the high status of this building (Turner 2010, 276; Einhard, Vita, 30–31 c. 26). Its octagonal layout is said to have referenced the model of San Vitale in Ravenna, which in turn goes back to Roman precursors[35]. In this sense, Aachen's architectural program was supposed to convey a message of imperial unity and served to legitimise the rise to imperial status, especially referring to Christian emperors (Moreland 2001, 396–398. 403–406). The likely incorporation of a late antique polygonal Roman fort at Aachen underlines this finding (Kyritz/Schaub 2015). Accordingly, Aachen was purposefully used by Charlemagne as a stage on which to exhibit power as, for example, when he conferred the imperial status onto his son Louis in his favourite palace in September 813 (Nelson 2001, 233).

However, Aachen was not the only place of imperial aggrandisement through building activities during this period. Especially the palace at Ingelheim, where construction began at the latest under Charlemagne, displayed a sophisticated architectural program as well as a water management system (**fig. 1**) (Grewe 2016). Nijmegen and Paderborn can be likewise mentioned, as can Frankfurt, whose major construction started under Louis the Pious (Binding 1996; Flach 1976, 78; Innes 2005, 75; den Braven 2021). Furthermore, Charlemagne was renowned for his investment in church buildings all over the empire (Turner 2010, 273; Einhard, Vita, 20–21 c. 17). All these places served the kings to broker relations with local elites through the yearly assemblies, feasting, praying, and hunting (Innes 2005, 87).

The Economic Sphere

There is very little tangible knowledge about storage facilities at Aachen. As part of the royal manor that had to at least partially feed the court, however, the existence of considerable storage can be expected. As to the royal thesaurus, the annals of the Monastery at Moissac in southern France report for 796 that Charlemagne ordered his treasures to be collected and brought to Aachen, which might point to a possible concentration of the royal wealth at this palace (Müller et al. 2013, 59–60; Müller 2016, 23; Chronicon Moissiacense, 252). Also, spoils of war were regularly sent to Charlemagne and Aachen

34 Fleckenstein 1976; Ennen 1979/1980, 460; Nelson 2001, 225. To the knowledge of the author, there are no archaeological remains in Aachen that would help to further characterise this subject.

35 Schaub/Kohlberger-Schaub 2015, 491-492; Müller et al. 2013, 209-252; but see Binding 2009, where the imitation of antique models is seen more cautiously.

(Reuter 1985, 78–79). Booty was redistributed among the magnates of the realm, but also lavishly given to the poor and the church. Furthermore, assemblies were said to have been arenas for gift-giving – obviously thus occurring in a geographically dispersed way (ibid., 81).

In the first decades of Charlemagne's rule, mints proliferated across the realm, about 80 to 100 locations can be identified, with the mints at Dorestad and Melle being the most important (Coupland 2005, 213). Charlemagne's monetary reform from 793/794 targeted this proliferation and imposed standardization and a rigorous control of the minting, which went hand in hand with a reduction of mints to around 40 (Coupland 2005, 212. 221; Grierson/Blackburn 1986, 196–197; Screen 2019). Yet, all these administrative reforms did not necessarily imply a monetary economy, although this view has been recently forcefully questioned by S. Coupland[36]. Charlemagne's latest reform of coinage, the portrait coinage, saw only a few issues from 812 to 814. This phase is characterised by further centralization of the minting process with indications that only a few centres produced the dies for all royal mints. One of these centres is thought to have been at Aachen (Coupland 2005, 223–226). Aachen did not house a mint during Charlemagne's time, an actual mint there is evidenced only under Louis the Pious (Flach 1976, 231; Grierson/Blackburn 1986, 197. 329 no. 750). The mint was, however, discontinued around 870, possibly in connection with the Treaty of Meerssen, which regulated the partition of the realm of Lothar II among his uncles Louis the German and Charles the Bald (Flach 1976, 231).

The Two Dimensions of Capital Functions

What can we learn from the comparison of these two cases? As a first step in that direction, I propose a systemizing two-dimensional approach to capital functions that draws inspiration from Fehn's observations on the dispersion of capital attributes across different localities (1989). Even in today's states, capital attributes are seldom – if ever – concentrated in one nominal capital. If we take for example modern day Germany, the »capital« of the banking sector is in Frankfurt/Main and the uppermost judiciary is situated in Karlsruhe, and so forth. At the other end of the spectrum there is Paris, wherein most of the central institutions of modern government are indeed located. It therefore makes sense to think of the attributes presented in this paper along the two scales of the spatial distribution of the localities (the geographic criterion) and permanence, which includes the time factor (temporal criterion).

The different functions and institutions can be thought of as graduals on a continuum governed by the two dimensions of geographic distribution, ranging from concentrated on one extreme of the scale, to dispersed on the other extreme of the scale, and permanence with mobility at one end, to stable at the other (**fig. 6**).

Considering the residence, in both cases the rulers relied on a network of permanent, locally fixed residences. In both cases, different rulers also showed certain varying preferences for regions within the larger realm. In the case of the Mongols, the mobile aspect of the residence is even more pronounced than in the Carolingian case, since the *ordu*, the mobile camp, is thought of as the usual residence of the Mongol khan. Whereas it can be argued that, in the Carolingian context, the mobile camp or tent camps en route were likely seen rather as a necessary evil. Assemblies were in both cases again dispersed. Relatively speaking, Aachen, however, was chosen much more regularly as the place for assemblies than Karakorum in the Mongolian case. There, the ancestral homeland of the Chinggisids in eastern Mongolia on the Onon and Kherlen rivers emerges as the favourite region for important *quriltais*, their imperial assemblies. In both empires, central administrative personnel travelled with the uppermost rulers, notwithstanding McKitterick's hypothesis of a budding trend of independently working notaries (2008; 2011). It is more in the Mongolian case that we see the appropriation of a »free-standing administrative apparatus« in the conquered regions of Central Asia and China (Allsen 1994). All of these functions are inextricably tied to the person of the king or khan, and in the Carolingian case arguably even more so (Ehlers 2007, 12; Kölzer 2011/2012, 71).

Both, Karakorum and Aachen functioned as stages of display and communicated ideological messages through their architectural programs and the ceremonies performed in these localities. However, neither place was unique in these efforts, even though Karakorum can be certainly deemed the foremost on the Mongolian plateau. It is of course in the best interest of the rulers to spread

36 Moreland 2001, 400-401; but see Coupland 2022.

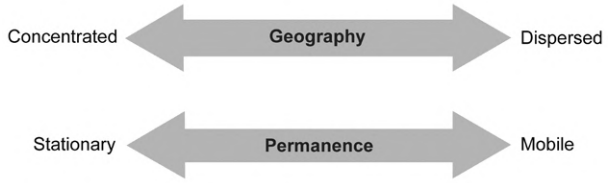

Fig. 6 The two dimensions of capital attributes: Geography and permanence. – (Graphics S. Reichert).

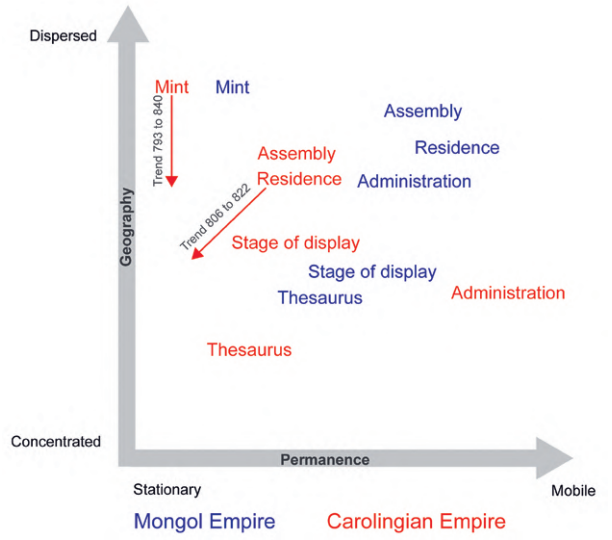

Fig. 7 Capital attributes during the reigns of Charlemagne (r. 768–814) and Louis the Pious (r. 813–840) and the early Mongol Empire period (1230s–1260) plotted against the two dimensions of geography and permanence. – (Graphics S. Reichert).

their ideological message as widely as possible and therefore disperse their architectural aggrandisement[37].

Concerning the last category of economic functions, there are in both cases indications that point towards a concentration of the imperial wealth in Karakorum and Aachen. At the same time, certain practices of gifting and redistribution demanded that considerable amounts travelled with the court. Mints were in both cases – as is needed for the wide geographic distribution of coins as a heavy commodity – organised in a decentralised dispersed manner. What is interesting, however, are the efforts by Charlemagne to standardise and concentrate the minting activities into considerably fewer localities. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that there is only scant evidence for a mint at Aachen itself. In contrast, Karakorum surely housed a mint.

Plotting out these functions for the two cases at hand along the two dimensions, we graphically display the similarities and dissimilarities among the cases (**fig. 7**). While the relative placing of individual functions along the two scales is surely open to debate, this first attempt nonetheless provides an approximation of where and how the capital functions relate to one another in the two cases. For both the Carolingians and the Mongols we can thus establish a dispersed mobile system of capital functions, with the Carolingians under the later years of Charlemagne's reign and Louis the Pious' early reign more inclined toward a less mobile system and concentration. The Mongol case leans on the whole into the more mobile and dispersed continuum, comparatively speaking.

Finally, I return to the initial question of whether Aachen and Karakorum were capitals. Both certainly performed capital functions during specific periods of time and are very similar in their actual practices, their spatial distribution and stability over time. Taking into account the contemporary perceptions of the two locales[38], Aachen was perceived as *prima inter pares* at best, but there was no notion of a capital. In the case of Karakorum, the labelling of Karakorum as the capital was seen as a facade that only emerged in foreigners' descriptions[39]. Following this logic, Karakorum would have been the capital in name only to appease foreign perceptions, but practises of governance followed political conventions of the steppe that were invested in and combined mobility, personal presence, military pursuits, and hunting trips, quite similar to the Carolingians. However, the continued political importance of Karakorum after its official loss of capital status during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), the dynasty established by Khubilai Khan in China, points to its important place in the legitimization of the Mongols' rule. It may be that providing a definite answer is not the point. By breaking this issue down into its components and by looking at the individual functions in their spatial and temporal configurations, we can arrive at a deeper understanding of the actual workings of the two empires.

The proposed model is open to incorporate further cases from widely different settings to ascertain the critical differences or surprising resem-

37 On coins as a means of ideological meaning with a wide distribution see for the Carolingians Coupland 2005, 227; for the Mongols Buell/Kolbas 2016.

38 Admittedly, the discussion of the contemporary perception of »capital« in the Mongol and Carolingian worlds needs to be safely grounded within a philological and critical historical analysis, something the author of this contribution would not assume to have the needed expertise for.

39 Such portrayals would probably have fuelled J. M. Smith's side remark about »misnomered capitals«; J. M. Smith 2000, 43.

blances, for which we are asked to find explanations in a second step. Another advantage of thinking of these attributes in two (or possibly even more) dimensions along gradual scales is that it supersedes assumptions of dichotomies, which more often than not tend to cover more than they reveal. Thinking of similarities along gradual scales in contrast uncovers grey areas, which would otherwise be brushed over.

The scheme that I propose looks only at a specific time frame (Carolingian Aachen under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious from 770 to 840; Mongol Karakorum from 1220 to 1260). This limits the picture of dynamic processes and provides a rather static glimpse. A further step in this study would be to look at diachronic changes through the comparison of different time slices to counteract this limitation. Added perspectives would reveal dynamic changes and varying strategies with regard to the mobile aspects of rule. However, with regard to the archaeological underpinnings of some of the attributes, it is of course a truism that dynamic changes that underlie generational change are less likely to be discernible in the archaeological record.

Furthermore, the discussion focused on six functions that were deemed most crucial. For a comprehensive look at the question of the characteristics and roles of capital functions, further aspects should be added. These include – to name but a few worthwhile topics – the judiciary, attached craft production systems, the military, and the temporal development of the individual localities, especially when the analysis identifies a strong concentration of functions within one stable locale[40].

Conclusion

This paper introduced a new framework to systematically interrogate capital functions in their geographical distribution and permanence. The polythetic approach followed in this study, which looks at a set of six of attributes, is especially geared towards cross-cultural comparisons on a global scale. In this way, Carolingian Aachen under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, as well as early Mongol period Karakorum, proved suitable first case studies. Both Aachen and Karakorum emerge as places that performed crucial, indeed capital, functions for their rulers. However, they were part of a wider system of localities, some of which covered similar sets of functions. This wider network was in large part due to the mobility of the two courts in question. Only for the very specific time period of 1235 to 1260 in the case of Karakorum and of 806 to 822 in the case of Aachen, can we identify a culmination and a more pronounced concentration of the functions in the two localities. The newly proposed systematic approach along the two dimensions of geographic dispersal and permanence of the capital functions helped to accentuate differences between the two case studies, but even more so uncovered structural similarities, which transcend the dichotomous divide between sedentary and nomadic empires. As such, this cross-cultural comparison forms part of the ongoing effort of decentring narratives that are hinged on European history and de-exoticizing pastoral societies.

The two-dimensional approach of capital functions will exert its fullest potential when more case studies are incorporated from a wider spectrum, e. g., Paris in the 14th century. Starker differences will highlight the individual cases even more, underlining the point that especially the comparison between apples and oranges, the purposefully »mis-reading comparison«, is indeed a fruitful endeavour.

Acknowledgements

I wrote this paper during my time as Feodor von Lynen-fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This paper profoundly profited from the lively discussions during the Aachen conference. I want to especially thank all participants who provided comments on my presentation. There was much food for thought, although I have not been able to do justice to them all. I further thank B. K. Miller, University of Michigan, and J. Bemmann, Bonn University, for many fruitful discussions.

40 For the judiciary see e. g., Davis 2008. The discussion of the temporal development of a locality comprises its origin, e. g., coopting an existing important centre that developed out of economic or religious impetus, the possible political legacies of the locale in the sense of prior importance, or a newly founded city *de novo* as an expression of power politics, see for example Joffe 1998; regarding possible shifts from one locale to another and potential explanations as well as accompanying changing dynamics in centre-periphery relations.

Bibliography

Sources

Abramowski 1976: W. Abramowski, Die chinesischen Annalen von Ögödei und Güyük. Übersetzung des 2. Kapitels des Yüan-shih. Zentralasiat. Stud. 10, 1976, 117–167.

1979: W. Abramowski, Die chinesischen Annalen des Möngke. Übersetzung des 3. Kapitels des Yüan-shih. Zentralasiat. Stud. 13, 1979, 7–71.

Annales regni Francorum: Annales regni Francorum inde ab a. 741 usque ad a. 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi, ed. F. Kurze. MGH SS rer. Germ. 6 (Hannoverae 1895) 1–178.

Atwood 2017/2018: C. P. Atwood (ed. and trans.), The History of the Yuan, Chapter 1. Mongolian Stud. 39, 2017/2018, 2–80.

Atwood/SHM 2023: C. P. Atwood (trans.), The Secret History of the Mongols (Dublin 2023).

Atwood/Struve 2021: C. P. Atwood / L. A. Struve (eds and trans.), The Rise of the Mongols. Five Chinese Sources (Indianapolis, Cambridge 2021).

Boyle/Juvaini 1958: J. A. Boyle, The History of the World-Conqueror by ʻAla-ad-Din ʻAta-Malik Juvaini. Translated from the text of Mirza Muhammad Qazvini 1 (Cambridge MA 1958).

Capitulare de disciplina: Capitulare de disciplina palatii Aquisgranensis. In: Capitularia regum Francorum 1, ed. A. Boretius. MGH Capit. 1 (Hannoverae 1883) 297–298 no. 146.

Chronicon Moissiacense: Chronicon Moissiacense a saeculo quarto usque ad a. 818 et 840. In: MGH SS 1, ed. G. H. Pertz (Hannoverae 1826) 280–313; Ex chronico Moissiacensi a. 787–789, 804–813, 816. In: MGH SS 2, ed. G. H. Pertz (Hannoverae 1829) 257–259 [Emendationes].

Eichler 2007: D. Eichler, Fränkische Reichsversammlungen unter Ludwig dem Frommen. MGH Stud. u. Texte 45 (Hannover 2007).

Einhard, Translatio: Translatio et Miracula Sanctorum Marcellini et Petri Auctore Einhardo. In: MGH SS 15.1, ed. G. Waitz (Hannoverae 1887) 238–264.

Vita: Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni, ed. G. Waitz / O. Holder-Egger. MGH SS rer. Germ. 25 (Hannoverae, Lipsiae ^{6}1911).

Hincmarus, De ordine palatii: T. Gross / R. Schieffer (eds and trans.), Hinkmar von Reims. De ordine palatii. MGH Fontes iuris 3 (Hannover 1980).

Jackson/Rubruck 1990: P. Jackson (trans.), The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck. His journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke 1253–1255. Works issued by the Hakluyt Soc. 2, 173 (London 1990).

Regino of Prüm, Chronicon: Reginonis abbatis Prumiensis Chronicon cum continuation Treverensi, ed. F. Kurze. MGH SS rer. Germ. 50 (Hannoverae 1890) 1–179.

Thackston/Rashīd al-Dīn 1998: W. M. Thackston, Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh. Compendium of Chronicles. A History of the Mongols. 1: Sources of Oriental Languages and Lit. 45, 1 = Sources of Oriental Languages and Lit., Central Asian Sources 4, 1 (Cambridge MA 1998).

1999: W. M. Thackston, Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh. Compendium of Chronicles. A History of the Mongols. 3: Sources of Oriental Languages and Lit. 45, 3 = Sources of Oriental Languages and Lit., Central Asian Sources 4, 3 (Cambridge MA 1999).

Turner 2010: S. E. Turner (trans.), Einhard, Life of Charles the Great. In: P. J. Geary (ed.), Readings in Medieval History (Toronto ^{4}2010) 266–279.

References

Airlie 2003: S. Airlie, Talking Heads: Assemblies in Early Medieval Germany. In: P. S. Barnwell / M. Mostert (eds), Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages. Stud. Early Middle Ages 7 (Turnhout 2003) 29–46.

Allsen 1994: T. Allsen, The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in North China. In: Franke/Twitchett 1994, 321–413.

1996: T. T. Allsen, Spiritual geography and political legitimacy in the eastern steppe. In: H. J. M. Claessen / J. G. Oosten (eds), Ideology and the Formation of Early States. Stud. Hum. Soc. 11 (Leiden, London 1996) 116–135.

2006: T. T. Allsen, The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History (Philadelphia 2006).

Atwood 2004: C. P. Atwood, Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty. Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century. Internat. Hist. Rev. 26, 2004, 237–256. DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2004.9641030.

2015: C. P. Atwood, Imperial Itinerance and Mobile Pastoralism. The State and Mobility in Medieval Inner Asia. Inner Asia 17, 2015, 293–349. DOI: 10.1163/22105018-12340046.

Barbier 2014: J. Barbier, Machtzentren des fränkischen Königtums im »alten« Frankenreich In: F. Pohle (ed.), Karl

der Große – Charlemagne. Orte der Macht. 1: Essays [exhibition cat.] (Dresden 2014) 170–179.

Barkmann 2002: U. Barkmann, Qara Qorum (Karakorum) – Fragmente zur Geschichte einer vergessenen Reichshauptstadt. In: H. R. Roth / U. Erdenebat (eds), Qara Qorum-City (Mongolia). I: Preliminary Report of the excavations 2000–2001. Bonn Contributions to Asian Arch. 1 (Bonn ²2002) 5–22.

2010: U. Barkmann, Die Geschichte des Klosters Erdeni Joo oder das Prinzip der Verflechtung von Staat und Religion. In: J. Bemmann / U. Erdenebat / E. Pohl (eds), Mongolian-German Karakorum Expedition. 1: Excavations in the Craftsmen Quarter at the Main Road. Forsch. Arch. Außereurop. Kulturen 8 (Wiesbaden 2010) 321–337.

Baumunk/Brunn 1989: B.-M. Baumunk / G. Brunn (eds), Hauptstadt. Zentren, Residenzen, Metropolen in der deutschen Geschichte [exhibition cat. Bonn] (Köln 1989).

Bemmann under review: J. Bemmann, From Campsite to Capital. Diversity in the Functions and Spatial organizations of Permanent Settlements in the Mongol Empire. Journal Arch. Research (under review).

Bemmann/Reichert 2021: J. Bemmann / S. Reichert, Karakorum, the first capital of the Mongol world empire – an imperial city in a non-urban society. Asian Arch. 4, 2021, 121–143. DOI: 10.1007/s41826-020-00039-x.

Bemmann et al. 2022: J. Bemmann / S. Linzen / S. Reichert / L. Munkhbayar, Mapping Karakorum, the capital of the Mongol Empire. Antiquity 96(385), 2022, 159–178. DOI: 10.15184/aqy.2021.153.

Binding 1996: G. Binding, Deutsche Königspfalzen von Karl dem Großen bis Friedrich II. (765–1240) (Darmstadt 1996).

2009: G. Binding, Karolingische Pfalzen. Vorbild und Imitation. In: U. von Freeden (ed.), Glaube, Kult und Herrschaft. Phänomene des Religiösen im 1. Jahrtausend nach Christus in Mittel- und Nordeuropa. Akten des 59. Internationalen Sachsensymposions und der Grundprobleme der Frühgeschichtlichen Entwicklung im Mitteldonauraum. Koll. Vor- u. Frühgesch. 12 (Bonn 2009) 319–328.

Bloch 1928/1963: M. Bloch, Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes. First published in Revue de Synthèse Historique, Dec. 1928. In: M. Bloch (ed.), Mélanges Historiques (Paris 1963) 16–40.

Boockmann 1993: H. Boockmann, Aachen. Residenz Karls des Großen und Krönungsort der Könige. In: U. Schultz (ed.), Die Hauptstädte der Deutschen. Von der Kaiserpfalz in Aachen zum Regierungssitz Berlin (München 1993) 11–21.

Boyle 1974: J. A. Boyle, The Seasonal Residences of the Great Khan Ögedei. In: G. Hazai / P. Zieme (eds), Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der altaischen Völker. Protokollband der 12. Tagung der Permanent International Altaistic Conference 1969 in Berlin. Schr. Gesch. u. Kultur Alter Orient 5 (Berlin 1974) 145–151.

den Braven 2021: A. den Braven, Charlemagne's palace at Nijmegen. Some thoughts on the economic implications of itinerant kingship. In: A. Willemsen / H. Kik (eds), Dorestad and its Networks. Communities, Contact and Conflict in Early Medieval Europe. Proceedings of the Third »Dorestad Congress« held at the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, the Netherlands, 12–15 June, 2019. Papers Arch. Leiden Mus. Antiqu. – PALMA 25 (Leiden 2021) 149–157.

Brühl 1963: C. Brühl, Zum Hauptstadtproblem im frühen Mittelalter. In: H. M. von Erffa / E. Herget (eds), Festschrift für Harald Keller. Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern (Darmstadt 1963) 45–70.

1965: C. Brühl, Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Pfalzen für die Versorgung des Hofes von der fränkischen bis zur Stauferzeit. Gesch. Wiss. u. Unterricht 16, 1965, 505–515.

Bruhns 2012: A. Bruhns, Karl der Große. Ein Ochse für den Hof. Der Spiegel Online, 27 November 2012. www.spiegel.de/spiegelgeschichte/wie-karl-der-grosse-aachen-zur-kaiserlichen-metropole-ausbaute-a-872076.html (19.05.2023).

Buell/Kolbas 2016: P. D. Buell / J. Kolbas, The Ethos of State and Society in the Early Mongol Empire. Chinggis Khan to Güyük. Journal Royal Asiatic Soc. 26, 2016, 43–64. DOI: 10.1017/S1356186315000735.

Christaller 1933: W. Christaller, Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland. Eine ökonomisch-geographische Untersuchung über die Gesetzmäßigkeit der Verbreitung und Entwicklung der Siedlungen mit städtischen Funktionen (Jena 1933).

Cleaves 1952: F. W. Cleaves, The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1346. Harvard Journal Asiatic Stud. 15, 1952, 1–123. DOI: 10.2307/2718274.

1993: F. W. Cleaves, The »Postcript to the Table of Contents of the Yuan shih«. Journal Song-Yuan Stud. 23, 1993, 1–18.

Coupland 2005: S. Coupland, Charlemagne's Coinage. Ideology and Economy. In: Story 2005, 211–229.

2022: S. Coupland, The importance of coinage in the Carolingian world. Early Medieval Europe 30, 2022, 384–407. DOI: 10.1111/emed.12556.

Davis 2008: J. R. Davis, A Pattern for Power. Charlemagne's Delegation of Judicial Responsibilities. In: J. R. Davis / M. McCormick (eds), The Long Morning of Medieval Europe. New Directions in Early Medieval Studies (Aldershot 2008) 235–246.

Dawson 1980: C. Dawson, Mission to Asia. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 8 (Toronto 1980).

Di Cosmo 2014/2015: N. Di Cosmo, Why Qara Qorum? Climate and Geography in the Early Mongol Empire. In: Festschrift for Thomas T. Allsen in Celebration of His 75th Birthday = Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi 21, 2014/2015, 67–78.

Drews et al. 2015: W. Drews / A. Flüchter / C. Dartmann / J. Gengnagel / A. Höfert / S. Kolditz / J. R. Oesterle / R. Schilling / G. Schwedler (eds), Monarchische Herrschaftsformen der Vormoderne in transkultureller Perspektive. Europa im Mittelalter 26 (Berlin, Boston 2015).

Ehlers 2007: C. Ehlers, Einführung: Zentren der Macht. Fragen an die Erforschung der sächsischen Aufenthaltsorte der mittelalterlichen Könige. In: C. Ehlers / J. Jarnut / M. Wemhoff (eds), Zentren herrschaftlicher Repräsentation im Hochmittelalter. Geschichte, Architektur und Zeremoniell. Deutsche Königspfalzen. Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung. Veröff. Max-Planck-Inst. Gesch. 11, 7 (Göttingen 2007) 9–23.

Ennen 1979/1980: E. Ennen, Aachen im Mittelalter. Sitz des Reiches – Ziel der Wallfahrt – Werk der Bürger. Zeitschr. Aachener Geschver. 86/87, 1979/1980, 457–487.

Ettel 2013: P. Ettel, Zentralorte und Zentralräume des Frühmittelalters in Süddeutschland. Ein Forschungsüberblick. In: P. Ettel / L. Werther (eds), Zentrale Orte und zentrale Räume des Frühmittelalters in Süddeutschland. RGZM – Tagungen 18 (Mainz 2013) 1–46.

Ewig 1963: E. Ewig, Résidence et capitale pendant le haut Moyen Age. Rev. Hist. 230, 1963, 25–72.

Fehn 1989: K. Fehn, Hauptstadtfunktionen in der Mitte Europas – Politische, kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Standortveränderungen zwischen 1250 und der Gegenwart. In: Baumunk/Brunn 1989, 474–491.

Flach 1976: D. Flach, Untersuchungen zur Verfassung und Verwaltung des Aachener Reichsgutes von der Karolingerzeit bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts. Veröff. Max-Planck-Inst. Gesch. 46 (Göttingen 1976).

Fleckenstein 1976: J. Fleckenstein, Die Struktur des Hofes Karls des Großen im Spiegel von Hinkmars *De ordine palatii*. Zeitschr. Aachener Geschver. 83, 1976, 5–22.

Flückiger 2021: A. Flückiger, Kritische Gedanken zu Zentrum und Peripherie in der (Vor- und) Frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie. In: J. Bemmann / D. Dahlmann / D. Taranczewski (eds), Core, Periphery, Frontier – Spatial Patterns of Power. Macht u. Herrschaft 14 (Göttingen 2021) 77–99.

Franke/Twitchett 1994: H. Franke/D. Twitchett (ed.), Alien regimes and border states, 907–1368. Cambridge Hist. China 6 (Cambridge 1994).

Franken 2013: C. Franken, Ausgrabungen der Mongolisch-Deutschen Karakorum-Expedition und der Mongolisch-Deutschen Orchon Expedition in Karakorum und Karabalgasun im Jahr 2012. Zeitschr. Arch. Außereurop. Kulturen 5, 2013, 359–368. DOI: 10.34780/el02-f4k0.

2015: C. Franken, Die »Große Halle« von Karakorum. Zur archäologischen Untersuchung des ersten buddhistischen Tempels der alten mongolischen Hauptstadt. Forsch. Arch. Außereurop. Kulturen 12 (Wiesbaden 2015). DOI: 10.34780/coic-cbqc.

Frings 2005: J. Frings (ed.), Dschingis Khan und seine Erben. Das Weltreich der Mongolen [exhibition cat. Bonn] (München 2005).

Gauert 1965: A. Gauert, Das Itinerar Karls des Großen. In: W. Braunfels (ed.), Karl der Große. Werk und Wirkung [exhibition cat.] (Aachen 1965) 14–18.

Geary 2001: P. J. Geary, Vergleichende Geschichte und sozialwissenschaftliche Theorie. In: M. Borgolte (ed.), Das europäische Mittelalter im Spannungsbogen des Vergleichs. Zwanzig internationale Beiträge zu Praxis, Problemen und Perspektiven der historischen Komparatistik. Europa im Mittelalter 1 (Berlin 2001) 29–38.

Gießauf 2009: J. Gießauf, Lichtgestalt oder Gottesgeißel? Europäische Wahrnehmungen Tschinggis Khans. In: J. Gießauf / J. Steiner (eds), »Gebieter über die Völker in den Filzwandzelten«. Steppenimperien von Attila bis Tschinggis Khan. Erträge des Internationalen Symposiums an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (28./29. September 2006). Grazer Morgenländ. Stud. 7 (Graz 2009) 47–63.

Grewe 2016: H. Grewe, Die Pfalz Karls des Großen in Ingelheim und ihre Entwicklung aus merowingerzeitlichen Anfängen. In: E. Wamers (ed.), 814 Karl der Große 2014. Archäologische und historische Beiträge zu Pfalzen, Herrschaft und Recht um 800. Schr. Arch. Mus. Frankfurt 27 (Regensburg 2016) 47–67.

Grierson/Blackburn 1986: P. Grierson / M. A. S. Blackburn, Medieval European Coinage. 1: The Early Middle Ages (5th–10th centuries). With a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Cambridge 1986).

Hammer 1944: W. Hammer, The Concept of the New or Second Rome in the Middle Ages. Speculum 19, 1944, 50–62. DOI: 10.2307/2856854.

Hartmann 2015: W. Hartmann, Karl der Große (Stuttgart 2015).

Heidemann 2005a: S. Heidemann, Münzen – Dokumente zur Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur des Mongolenreichs. In: Frings 2005, 203–204.

2005b: S. Heidemann, Katalognummern 225–243. In: Frings 2005, 205–208.

Heidemann et al. 2006: S. Heidemann / H. Kelzenberg / U. Erdenebat / E. Pohl, The First Documentary

Evidence for Qara Qorum from the Year 635/1237–8. Zeitschr. Arch. Außereurop. Kulturen 1, 2006, 93–102. DOI: 10.34780/7f7c-g9d0.

Hodous 2012/2013: F. Hodous, The *Quriltai* as a Legal Institution in the Mongol Empire. Central Asiatic Journal 56, 2012/2013, 87–102. www.jstor.org/stable/10.13173/centasiaj.56.2013.0087.

Hope 2012: M. Hope, The Transmission of Authority through the Quriltais of the Early Mongol Empire and the Īlkhānate of Iran (1227–1335). Mongolian Stud. 34, 2012, 87–115. www.jstor.org/stable/90015513.

Hüttel 2016: H.-G. Hüttel, Die Stadt als Herrschaftssymbol. Beispiel Karakorum. In: C. C. Müller / H. Walravens (eds), Status und Symbol. Insignien und Herrschaftstraditionen asiatischer Steppenvölker und ihrer Nachbarn. Vorträge auf dem Mongolen-Symposium in München 2006 (Berlin 2016) 63–82.

Innes 2005: M. Innes, Charlemagne's government. In: Story 2005, 71–89.

Joffe 1998: A. H. Joffe, Disembedded Capitals in Western Asian Perspective. Comparative Stud. Soc. Hist. 40, 1998, 549–580. www.jstor.org/stable/179275.

Kalra 2018: P. Kalra, The Silk Road and the Political Economy of the Mongol Empire. Routledge Stud. Chinese Economy 68 (London, New York 2018).

Kegler 2015: K. R. Kegler, Deutsche Raumplanung. Das Modell der »zentralen Orte« zwischen NS-Staat und Bundesrepublik (Paderborn 2015).

Kiselev 1965: S. V. Kiselev (ed.), Drevnemongol'skie goroda (Moscow 1965) / С. В. Киселев (ed.), Древнемонгольские Города (Москва 1965).

Kölzer 2011/2012: T. Kölzer, Ludwig der Fromme und Aachen. Zeitschr. Aachener Geschver. 113/114, 2011/2012, 61–95.

Kradin/Baksheeva 2018: N. N. Kradin / S. E. Baksheeva, Goroda Mongol'skoĭ imperii. In: N. N. Kradin (ed.), Goroda Srednevekovykh Imperiĭ Dal'nego Vostoka (Moskva 2018) 281–314 / Н. Н. Крадин / С. Е. Бакшеева, Города Монгольской империи. In: Н. Н. Крадин (ed.), Города Средневековых Империй Дальнего Востока (Москва 2018) 281–314.

Kraus 2013: T. R. Kraus (ed.), Aachen von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. 2: Karolinger – Ottonen – Salier 765–1137. Veröff. Stadtarchiv Aachen 14 = Zeitschr. Aachener Geschver. Beih. 8 (Aachen 2013).

Kyritz/Schaub 2015: D. Kyritz / A. Schaub, Neues vom Aachener Markt: das spätrömische Kastell und sein Nachleben. Arch. Rheinland 2015, 154–157. DOI: 10.11588/AIR.2015.0.66823.

Lutz et al. 2006: H. Lutz / J.-F. Missfelder / T. Renz, Einleitung: Illegitimes Vergleichen in den Kulturwissenschaften. In: H. Lutz / J.-F. Missfelder / T. Renz (eds), Äpfel und Birnen. Illegitimes Vergleichen in den Kulturwissenschaften (Bielefeld 2006) 7–20.

Matsuda 2021: K. Matsuda, Comparing the Depictions of the Mongol Courts Created in the Yuan and the Ilkhanate. In: T. May / D. Bayarsaikhan / C. P. Atwood (eds), New Approaches to Ilkhanid History (Leiden, Boston 2021) 176–197.

Mauz/von Sass 2011: A. Mauz / H. von Sass, Vergleiche verstehen. Einleitende Vorwegnahmen. In: A. Mauz / H. von Sass (eds), Hermeneutik des Vergleichs. Strukturen, Anwendungen und Grenzen komparativer Verfahren. Interpretation Interdisziplinär 8 (Würzburg 2011) 1–21.

McKitterick 2008: R. McKitterick, Charlemagne. Formation of a European Identity (Cambridge 2008).

2011: R. McKitterick, A King on the Move: The Place of an Itinerant Court in Charlemagne's Government. In: J. F. J. Duindam / T. Artan / I. M. Kunt (eds), Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires. A Global Perspective. Rulers & Elites Comparative Stud. Governance 1 (Leiden, Boston 2011) 145–169. DOI: 10.1163/EJ.9789004206229.I-444.37.

2021: R. McKitterick, Charlemagne, the Carolingian Empire, and its Successors. In: P. F. Bang / C. A. Bayly / W. Scheidel (eds), The History of Empires. The Oxford World History of Empire 2 (Oxford 2021) 468–498. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197532768.003.0017.

Moreland 2001: J. Moreland, The Carolingian empire: Rome reborn? In: S. E. Alcock / T. N. D'Altroy / K. D. Morrison / C. M. Sinopoli (eds), Empires. Perspectives from Archaeology and History (Cambridge 2001) 392–418.

Morgan 1982: D. O. Morgan, Persian Historians and the Mongols. In: D. O. Morgan (ed.), Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds (London 1982) 109–124.

2007: D. O. Morgan, The Mongols (Malden MA ^{2}2007).

Müller 2016: H. Müller, Die Aachener Pfalz. Von fränkischen Anfängen zum Symbolort des Römisch-Deutschen Reichs. In: M. Krücken (ed.), Offensichtlich Verborgen. Die Aachener Pfalz im Fokus der Forschung. Scriptorium Carolinum 3 (Aachen 2016) 18–30.

Müller et al. 2013: H. Müller / J. Ley / F. Pohle / A. Schaub, Pfalz und *vicus* Aachen in karolingischer Zeit. In: Kraus 2013, 1–408.

Mutschler/Mittag 2009: F.-H. Mutschler / A. Mittag (eds), Conceiving the Empire. China and Rome Compared (Oxford 2009).

Nakoinz 2013: O. Nakoinz, Zentralorte in parallelen Raumstrukturen. In: S. Hansen / M. Meyer (eds), Parallele Raumkonzepte. Workshop des Exzellenzclusters Topoi vom 15.–17. März 2010. Topoi – Berlin Stud. An-

cient World 16 (Berlin, Boston 2013) 83–103. DOI: 10.1515/9783110291216.83.

Nelson 2001: J. L. Nelson, Aachen as a place of power. In: M. de Jong / F. Theuws / C. van Rhijn (eds), Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages. The Transformation of the Roman World 6 (Leiden 2001) 217–241.

Nyamaa 2005: B. Nyamaa, The Coins of Mongol Empire and Clan Tamgha of Khans (XIII–XIV) (Ulaanbaatar 2005).

Parker 2018: B. J. Parker, What's the Big Picture? Comparative Perspectives on the Archaeology of Empire. In: B. S. Düring / T. D. Stek (eds), The Archaeology of Imperial Landscapes. A Comparative Study of Empires in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World (Cambridge 2018) 324–350.

Patzold 2013: S. Patzold, Ich und Karl der Große. Das Leben des Höflings Einhard (Stuttgart 2013).

Pohl et al. 2017: E. Pohl / S. Reichert / J. Block / K.-U. Heußner / U. Treter, Dendrochronological data from Karakorum and Erdene Zuu, Mongolia. In: J. Lechterbeck / E. Fischer (eds), Kontrapunkte. Festschrift für Manfred Rösch. Univforsch. Prähist. Arch. 300 (Bonn 2017) 231–249.

Prien 2005: R. Prien, Archäologie und Migration. Vergleichende Studien zur archäologischen Nachweisbarkeit von Wanderungsbewegungen. Univforsch. Prähist. Arch. 120 (Bonn 2005).

Pursey 2023: L. Pursey, Courting Capitals: Imperial Itinerance and Urban Ambivalence in the Kitan Liao Dynasty (916–1125). British Journal Chinese Stud. 13, 2023, 63–83. DOI: 10.51661/bjocs.v13i1.152.

Rapoport 1993: A. Rapoport, On the Nature of Capitals and Their Physical Expression. In: J. Taylor / J. G. Lengellé / C. Andrew (eds), Capital Cities: International Perspectives. Les Capitales: Perspectives Internationales (Montreal 1993) 31–67. DOI: 10.1515/9780773584969-004.

Reichert 2019: S. Reichert, A Layered History of Karakorum. Stratigraphy and Periodization in the City Center. Bonn Contributions Asian Arch. 8 = Mongolian-German Karakorum-Expedition 2 (Bonn 2019).

2020a: S. Reichert, Craft Production in the Mongol Empire. Karakorum and its Artisans. Bonn Contributions Asian Arch. 9 = Mongolian-German Karakorum-Expedition 3 (Bonn 2020).

2020b: S. Reichert, Karakorum, Mongolia, Finds, Samples, and Iron per m-grid Dataset (KAR-2). RADAR (Published online 21 December 2020). DOI: 10.22000/336.

2021: S. Reichert, Auf dem Rücken der Schildkröte: eine Inschrift im Spannungsfeld von Konflikt und Konsens im mongolischen Weltreich. In: E. Brüggen (ed.), Macht und Herrschaft als transkulturelle Phänomene. Texte – Bilder – Artefakte. Macht und Herrschaft 13 (Göttingen 2021) 33–51.

Reichert et al. 2022: S. Reichert / N.-O. Erdene-Ochir / S. P. Linzen / L. Munkhbayar / J. Bemmann, Overlooked – Enigmatic – Underrated: The City Khar Khul Khaany Balgas in the Heartland of the Mongol World Empire. Journal Field Arch. 47(6), 2022, 397–420. DOI: 10.1080/00934690.2022.2085916.

Reuter 1985: T. Reuter, Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire. Transact. Royal Hist. Soc. 35, 1985, 75–94. DOI: 10.2307/3679177.

2002: T. Reuter, Assembly Politics in Western Europe from the Eighth Century to the Twelfth. In: P. Linehan / J. L. Nelson (eds), The Medieval World (London, New York 2002). DOI: 10.4324/9781315016207.

Ristow 2013: S. Ristow, Bauphasen der Kernpfalz nach den archäologischen Befunden. In: Kraus 2013, 119–122.

Sagaster 1999: K. Sagaster, Die mongolische Hauptstadt Karakorum. Beitr. Allg. u. Vgl. Arch. 19, 1999, 113–128.

2005: K. Sagaster, Die chinesisch-mongolische Inschrift von 1346 aus Erdeni Joo. In: Frings 2005, 150–152.

Schaub 2018: A. Schaub, Von der Römerstadt zur Pfalz – 10 Jahre neue Stadtarchäologie Aachen. In: A. Schaub (ed.), Gläserne Grabungen. 10 Jahre neue Stadtarchäologie Aachen 2006–2016. Aachener Beitr. Baugesch. u. Heimatkunst 9 (Neustadt an der Aisch 2018) 211–223.

2021: A. Schaub, Zum Stand des römischen und frühmittelalterlichen Aachen aus archäologischer Sicht – Forschungen und Perspektiven. In: M. Gierszewska-Noszczyńska / L. Grunwald (eds), Zwischen Machtzentren und Produktionsorten: Wirtschaftsaspekte von der römischen Epoche bis in das Hochmittelalter am Rhein und in seinen Nachbarregionen. RGZM – Tagungen 45 (Mainz 2021) 153–172. DOI: 10.11588/propylaeum.996.c13283.

Schaub/Kohlberger-Schaub 2015: A. Schaub / T. Kohlberger-Schaub, On the Origins of the Great Carolingian Place of Power: Recent Excavations at Aachen Cathedral. In: J. C. Sánchez-Pardo / M. G. Shapland (eds), Churches and Social Power in Early Medieval Europe. Integrating Archaeological and Historical Approaches. Stud. Early Medieval Ages 42 (Turnhout 2015) 473–494.

Scheidel 2009: W. Scheidel (ed.), Rome and China. Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires (Oxford 2009).

2015: W. Scheidel (ed.), State Power in Ancient China and Rome (Oxford, New York 2015).

Schieffer 1989: R. Schieffer, Regieren ohne Hauptstadt. Ambulanz von Herrschaftsformen in der frühen deutschen Geschichte. In: Baumunk/Brunn 1989, 25–38.

Screen 2019: E. Screen, Coining it? Carolingian rulers and the Frankish coinage, ca. 750–900. Hist. Compass 17, 2019, e12591. DOI: 10.1111/hic3.12591.

Seyfarth 1910: E. Seyfarth, Fränkische Reichsversammlungen unter Karl dem Großen und Ludwig dem Frommen (Borna, Leipzig 1910).

Shagdar 2000: B. Shagdar, The Mongol Empire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries. East-West Relations. In: V. Elisseeff (ed.), The Silk Roads. Highways of Culture and Commerce (New York, Paris 2000) 127–144.

Shim 2014: H. Shim, The Postal Roads of the Great Khans in Central Asia under the Mongol-Yuan Empire. Journal Song-Yuan Stud. 44, 2014, 405–469. www.jstor.org/stable/44511248.

Shiraishi 2004: N. Shiraishi, Seasonal Migrations of the Mongol Emperors and the Peri-Urban Area of Kharakhorum. Internat. Journal Asian Stud. 1, 2004, 105–119. DOI: 10.1017/S1479591404000075.

Sinopoli 1994: C. M. Sinopoli, The Archaeology of Empires. Annu. Rev. Anthr. 23, 1994, 159–180. www.jstor.org/stable/2156010.

2001: C. M. Sinopoli, Empires. In: G. M. Feinman / T. D. Price (eds), Archaeology at the Millennium. A Sourcebook (New York 2001) 439–471.

J. M. Smith 2000: J. M. Smith, Dietary Decadence and Dynastic Decline in the Mongol Empire. Journal Asian Hist. 34, 2000, 35–52.

M. E. Smith 2001: M. E. Smith, The Aztec empire and the Mesoamerican world system. In: S. E. Alcock / T. N. D'Altroy / K. D. Morrison / C. M. Sinopoli (eds), Empires. Perspectives from Archaeology and History (Cambridge 2001) 128–154.

2016: M. E. Smith, How can archaeologists identify early cities? Definition, types, and attributes. In: M. Fernández-Götz / D. Krausse (eds), Eurasia at the Dawn of History. Urbanization and Social Change (New York 2016) 153–168.

2018: M. E. Smith, The Importance of a Comparative Perspective in the Study of Ancient Economies. Beitr. Wirtschaftsarch. 3 (Bonn 2018).

2020: M. E. Smith, Definitions and Comparisons in Urban Archaeology. Journal Urban Arch. 1, 2020, 15–30. DOI: 10.1484/J.JUA.5.120907.

2023: M. E. Smith, Urban Life in the Distant Past. The Prehistory of Energized Crowding (Cambridge 2023). DOI: 10.1017/9781009249027.

Smith/Peregrine 2012: M. E. Smith / P. Peregrine, Approaches to Comparative Analysis in Archaeology. In: M. E. Smith (ed.), The Comparative Archaeology of Complex Societies (Cambridge 2012) 4–20. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139022712.004.

Story 2005: J. Story (ed.), Charlemagne. Empire and Society (Manchester, New York 2005).

Trigger 2003: B. G. Trigger, Understanding Early Civilizations. A Comparative Study (Cambridge 2003). DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511840630.

Wickham 2009: C. Wickham, Problems in Doing Comparative History. In: P. Skinner (ed.), Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History. The Legacy of Timothy Reuter. Stud. Early Middle Ages 22 (Turnhout 2009) 5–28. DOI: 10.1484/M.SEM-EB.3.1918.

Yoffee 2005: N. Yoffee, Myths of the archaic state. Evolution of the earliest cities, states and civilizations (Cambridge 2005).

Susanne Reichert
University of Michigan LSA
History of Art Department
Tappan Hall
855 South University Avenue
USA - Ann Arbor MI 48109-1357
rsusanne@umich.edu
ORCID: 0000-0002-1694-0481

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn
Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie
Brühler Straße 7
DE - 53119 Bonn
susanne.reichert@uni-bonn.de