received and Kūkājīn (Kökejin), in conformity with Mongolian custom, was now betrothed to Ghazan, the son of the deceased. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, a contemporary, Ghazan also received various "Cathayan [Khitā'ī] wonders and Chinese [Chīnī] rarities."[34] From other sources we know that Kūkājī[n] was given the lands, properties, and camps (*ordos*) of Doquz Qatun (d. 1265), the principal wife of Hülegü, a very high honor.[35]

The Polos, it should also be noted, were well treated at the court of Geikhatu, who sent them on their way home with four tablets of authority in "the name of the great kaan."[36] From the data available it therefore appears that while Geikhatu distanced himself from the Yuan court, asserting a measure of independence, he still recognized, in a vague way, the Grand Qan as his sovereign, and he evinced no desire to precipitate a complete break. His reign, however, represents an important period of transition in the relationship between the Mongolian courts of China and Iran, a transformation that was accelerated and solidified under Ghazan and his successors.

[34] Rashīd/Jahn II, pp. 13 and 39. For further details on this embassy and the Polos' traveling companions, see Yang Chih-chiu and Ho Yung-chi, "Marco Polo Quits China," *HJAS* 9 (1945–47), 51, and Francis W. Cleaves, "A Chinese Source Bearing on Marco Polo's Departure from China and a Persian Source on his Arrival in Persia," *HJAS* 36 (1976), 181–203.
[35] Qāshānī/Hambly, p. 8. [36] Marco Polo, pp. 91–92.

FIVE

Continuity and change under Ghazan, 1295–1304

Gazan Han (070118)

In late 1294, Baidu, one of the unsuccessful claimants of the throne in 1291, launched a rebellion against Geikhatu which ended in the latter's death early the next year.[1] During Baidu's six months on the throne chaos reigned in Iran; the incessant plots and counterplots led to fragmentation and the near collapse of the Hülegüid state into civil war.[2] Like his deceased rival, Baidu struck his limited coin stock in the name of the Grand Qan but deleted the title il-qan.[3] Because of the extreme brevity of his reign, he hardly had time, whatever his inclination, to solicit, much less secure, a patent from the newly enthroned Grand Qan, Temür (r. 1294–1307), Qubilai's son and successor. Not surprisingly, the Yuan dynastic history does not mention Baidu among the Mongolian rulers of Iran.

Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) led the opposition to Baidu's faltering regime. Although the governor of Khurāsān and the designated heir apparent of his father, Arghun, Ghazan had stepped aside for Geikhatu in 1291.[4] Now he moved energetically to claim his delayed but rightful inheritance. In the course of the struggle against Baidu, Ghazan converted to Islam in mid-June 1295. He did so, according to a recent study, because a sizable and influential group among the Mongolian army and elite in Iran had already become Muslims.[5] Whatever his reason, once he had defeated his rival and ascended the throne in November 1295, he moved quickly to establish his credentials as a Muslim ruler.

This is clearly apparent in his coinage. The essential change, as the Arab encyclopedist al-'Umarī correctly recognized, was that Ghazan "inscribed his own name alone upon his coins and omitted the name of the Grand Qan [*al-qān ṣāhib al-takht*]."[6] The coins, for the most part, confirm this testimony. On

[1] Abū'l-Fidā, *The Memoirs of a Syrian Prince*, trans. by P. M. Holt (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983), pp. 24–25. [2] See the description in Budge, *Monks of Kūblāi Khān*, p. 209.
[3] Seifeddini, vol. I, pp. 223–24, and Weiers, "Münzaufschriften," 60–62.
[4] Rashīd/Jahn II, p. 15; Rashīd/Karīmī, vol. I, p. 850; Seifeddini, vol. I, p. 209; and Weiers, "Munzaufschriften," 56.
[5] Charles Melville, "Pādshāh-i Islām: The Conversion of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān," *Pembroke Papers* 1 (1990), 159–77.
[6] 'Umarī/Lech, p. 19, Arabic text and p. 103, German translation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Barbarians Civilized? Ghazan and his Successors (694–736/1295–1335)

Gazan Han (070118)
İlhanlılar (091460)

CONVERSION TO ISLAM

While he was in Khurāsān during the reigns of Geikhatu and Baidu, Prince Ghazan had come under the influence of Nawrūz, a turbulent Mongol *amīr* whose family held considerable local power there. He was the son of Arghun Aqa, an Oirat Mongol who had been one of the most important early Mongol administrators in Persia. Nawrūz had long since been converted to Islam, and did his best to persuade Ghazan of the merits of such a course of action.

He was successful. Ghazan declared his conversion at the outset of his campaign against Baidu. Hence he became Īlkhān in 694/1295 as a Muslim. His *amīrs* followed his example in a body, and the Mongols of Persia as a whole duly conformed, at least in name. Ghazan ordered that Buddhists, if they did not wish to become Muslims, should leave the Ilkhanate and that their temples should be destroyed; though he later relaxed this severity slightly. Christians and Jews lost the status of equality which they had enjoyed under the tolerance of the pagan or Buddhist Īlkhāns. They reverted to their previous position, that of protected but second-class citizens. In due course their distinctive poll-tax, the *jizya*, was imposed on them once again.

Ghazan's motives for becoming a Muslim have been often, though inconclusively, discussed. Was he a sincere convert, as Rashīd al-Dīn predictably insists? Did he believe that Tabrīz was worth a *shahāda* (the Muslim profession of faith)? In the nature of the case we can never know. What is certain is that many of Ghazan's other actions were calculated to erode the alienation that existed between the Mongols and their Persian subjects. Conversion of the Mongols to the majority faith of Persia can only have helped in this process. The fact that the Mongols were infidels was by no means the only point of difference between

them and the Persians; but it may well have been seen as the most conspicuous and unacceptable.

So far as the bulk of the Mongols of the Ilkhanate were concerned, their conversion was no doubt a fairly superficial affair, at least initially. As in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to Christianity, it was the decision of the king that counted. If he held his kingdom with a sufficiently strong hand, it could be assumed that his subjects would conform to their monarch's faith. With the passage of time the new religion would establish itself genuinely as well as nominally.

But this did not happen overnight. During the reign of Öljeitü, according to his historian Qāshānī, the Mongol commander-in-chief Qutlugh-shāh, losing patience with a dispute at court between the adherents of two of the schools of Sunnī Islamic law, the Ḥanafīs and the Shāfi'īs, expressed the view that Islam should be abandoned and that the Mongols should return to the good old ways of Chingiz Khān. Indeed, Qāshānī tells us that Öljeitü did in fact so revert, for a brief time. It is clear from Qutlugh-shāh's remarks, as reported, that he had an exceedingly weird conception of the actual tenets of the Muslim faith. This was after a number of years of "official" Islam; and Qutlugh-shāh was one of the most eminent Mongols in the Ilkhanate. We do not know whether he was typical, but his case should at least give us pause for thought.

Like other peoples of steppe origin, the Mongols as Muslims showed a marked preference for Islam in its mystical, *ṣūfī*, form. *Ṣūfī* masters like Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī, founder of the Ṣafawid order and ancestor of the Ṣafawid dynasty (died 735/1334) were often treated with respect and favour by the Īlkhāns. The usual explanation for this, which may have an element of truth in it, is that a charismatic, perhaps wonder-working religious figure would most appeal to a nomad whose principal previous contact with men of religion had been with the shamans.

Ghazan's conversion to Islam did not by any means imply, as it had in the case of Tegüder Aḥmad, that attempts would be made to put relations with the Mamlūks on to a more friendly footing. Nor did Ghazan cease from trying to organize an anti-Mamlūk alliance with the Christian powers of Europe. Hostilities in Syria continued much after the customary pattern, and with a variable degree of success. On one occasion, however, Ghazan achieved a remarkable if ephemeral triumph. In 699/1300 he invaded Syria and drove all the Mamlūk forces back into Egypt. For a moment, more of Syria was in Mongol hands even than at the height of Hülegü's invasion forty years earlier.

The news, or garbled reports based on it, caused a sensation in