FOUR

Grand Qans and Il-qans, 1265–1295

Hülegü's campaigns against the Ismā'īlīs and 'Abbāsids were the last joint military ventures of the unified Mongolian Empire. Thereafter, the Chinggisid princes increasingly turned their military energies inward in a confrontation that lasted, with fits and starts, into the fourteenth century. The accumulating tensions between rival lines which had temporarily surfaced at the accessions of Güyüg and Möngke became permanent divisions during the Toluid civil war. By the time Qubilai successfully claimed the qaghanate in 1264, the empire had fragmented into four regional and independent qanates.

To summarize, the new alignment saw the formation of one Jochid, one Chaghadaid, and two Toluid polities. In the East, Qubilai, who vanquished Ariq Böke by relying on the resources of China, moved the Mongolian capital from Qara Qorum to Peking. While his administrative authority was restricted to his own domains, he continued to assert his sovereignty as Grand Qan over the whole of the empire.[1] His territories, formally called the Yuan in 1271, ultimately embraced China, Manchuria, Mongolia, East Turkestan, Tibet, Korea, and parts of Southeast Asia. In central Asia, most of the Chaghadaids first supported Qubilai but in 1269 joined forces with the deposed Ögödeid line, under the leadership of Qaidu (d. 1301), in an attempt to drive the qaghan from his throne. The major battlegrounds between these rivals were the Uighur lands and western Mongolia. The Jochids, centered on the lower Volga, controlled western Siberia, Khwārazm, North Caucasia, the Qipchaq steppe, and the majority of the Rus principalities. Initially, they supported Ariq Böke, but following his submission they joined the coalition of princes fighting Qubilai. Finally, the Hülegüid realm, which included Iran, Afghanistan, Transcaucasia, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia, was the only Chinggisid state that initially and consistently supported Qubilai. They faced and fought the Chaghadai princes in Khurāsān and their Jochid rivals in Transcaucasia. In pursuing interests in West Asia, the Jochid ruler Berke (1257–66), a convert to Islam, forged an alliance with the Mamlūks who had defeated Hülegü's armies at 'Ain Jālūt. This marked the first time a Chinggisid

[1] See, for example, Marco Polo, p. 167.

prince had involved a sovereign, outside power in the Mongols' internal disputes.

The Il-qans, nearly surrounded by hostile states, made every effort to maintain close ties with the court in China: their political legitimacy and their physical survival depended to a large extent on the support of the Grand Qan in China. As self-proclaimed subordinate rulers, Hülegü and his heirs all sought patents to rule in the name of their acknowledged sovereign.

Before his death, Hülegü named his eldest son Abaqa (r. 1265–82) as his successor. While there is no unequivocal evidence that Abaqa was Qubilai's nominee in the first instance, there is every reason to conclude that the qaghan fully approved and endorsed his selection.[2] For his part, Abaqa, as was expected of a ruler-elect, made a great show of reticence. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, Abaqa, when notified of his father's demise, replied: "My elder brother [senior kinsman] is Qubilai Qaghan; without his patent [*farmān*] how can one sit [upon the throne]?" His supporters, of course, persuaded him to accept and on June 19, 1265 he ascended the throne in Azerbaijan. He then exercised a kind of provisional authority while, Rashīd al-Dīn continues, waiting for "the arrival of envoys from the court of Qubilai Qaghan and the dispatch of a decree [*jarligh*] in his name."[3]

For his formal investiture Abaqa had to wait five years. Finally in October of 1270 envoys arrived from Qubilai bringing a patent, crown, and robe of honor. In the following month he was enthroned yet again.[4] The delay was caused by communications problems – the great distances involved and the flareup of warfare in central Asia.[5] Yet, despite these difficulties, there was a steady stream of envoys between the two courts, some with intelligence on their mutual enemies, the Chaghadai Qans, some in connection with commercial ventures and yet others to receive imperial largesse, as when Qubilai granted the servitors of Abaqa (A-pa-ha) silk and paper money in 1280.[6] Unfortunately, we are given little guidance as to the specific diplomatic purposes of these and many other exchanges.[7]

Abaqa was quite content to advertise his dependency on the Grand Qan and did so in many ways. In his exchange of letters with Clement IV in 1267–68 the Pope calls him "elchani Apacha" and he addresses the pontiff "by the power of the qaghan [chaam]."[8] Similarly, in his correspondence with the Mamlūk Sūlṭan Baybars in 1269, the opening formula invokes his sovereign, the qaghan, while in the text he refers to himself and his father, Hülegü, as

[2] There are, however, hints that Qubilai "pre-approved" Abaqa. See Rashīd/Karīmī, vol. I, p. 632; Rashīd/Boyle, p. 265; and Hayton [Het'um], *La flor des estoires de la terre d'Orient*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades, Documents arméniens*, vol. II (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1906), p. 175. [3] Rashīd/Jahn I, p. 7. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[5] Because of such disturbances it took the elder Polos three and a half years to travel from Lesser Armenia to North China in the mid-1260s. Marco Polo, pp. 80 and 84.

[6] Rashīd/Jahn I, p. 19; Bar Hebraeus, p. 456; and *YS*, ch. 11, pp. 222–23.

[7] Rashīd/Alizade, vol. I, pt. 1, pp. 220 and 443–44.

[8] Lupprian, *Beziehungen*, pp. 221 and 224.

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Atabeg (012140)
İlhanlılar (031460)

CHAPTER 11

The *Atābak*s in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanate of Iran (602–736/1206–1335)

Michael Hope

Inconsistencies of nomenclature pose a serious challenge to historians seeking to learn more about the hierarchy and internal structure of the Mongol court. Researchers are constantly challenged by the terminology appearing in the primary sources, which often varies depending on the language of the text in question. The office of *atābak* is one example of an institution which is reported widely in the Persian, Armenian, and Arabic-language sources of the Ilkhanate (654–736/1256–1335), but is virtually unknown in the Chinese, Russian, and Latin texts documenting the history of the broader Mongol Empire. The term was inherited from the Seljuq period (429–592/1037–1194), when it was used to identify senior commanders who served as guardians of young princes and oversaw the administration of their armies, revenues and fiefdoms until they reached maturity. Whilst an extensive literature exists documenting the Seljuq *atābak*s, there has been very little written about the function of the *atābak*s in the Ilkhanate or any of the other Mongol successor states. The present paper will address this lacuna by elucidating the role of these contested agents within the early Mongol Empire and the Ilkhan court.

It will be demonstrated that the *atābak*s were merely one component of a much larger network of relationships that bound the khan to his military establishment. Ties of marriage, shared experience, and oaths were the basis for political loyalty during the formative years of the Mongol Empire and remained important throughout the period of Mongol rule in Iran. The Chinggisids were obliged to renew these relationships with their senior military families on a continuous basis as control of revenues, armies, and people passed from one generation to another. By entrusting a young prince to the care of a senior commander, the khans hoped to sustain family alliances begun during the reign of Chinggis Khan, which underpinned Mongol domination of Iran.

The history of the *atābak*s may also be used as a gauge to assess the health of the relationship between the khans and their military establishment. During the early days of the Mongol Empire, the *atābak*s were known for their loyalty and devotion to the princes whom they served. *Atābak*s tended to share in the fate of their wards, whether good or bad. Yet the final three decades of the

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004438217_013

CHAPTER EIGHT

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

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

Introduction

Timothy May, Dashdondog Bayarsaikhan and Christopher P. Atwood

In the study of the Mongol Empire, after Chinggis Khan, the Yuan Empire (1260–1370) and the Ilkhanate (1260–1335), have long dominated the attention of scholars of the Mongol Empire. While interest in the Yuan Empire has remained steady and the Jochid and Chaghatayid *Uluse*s are gaining renewed and vibrant interest, in the twenty-first century, the Ilkhanate may be perhaps the most studied region/era of the domains of Mongol Empire. Much of this has to do with the shift from the study of the Ilkhanate as solely a Middle Eastern entity to connecting it to a larger world as well as the fact that several of the most prominent scholars of the Mongol Empire, began their careers with an emphasis on Middle Eastern and Islamic history.

The modern study of the Ilkhanate's broader connections began with, and has continued to be shaped by, research on the great historians of the Ilkhans ʿAṭā Malik ʿAlā al-Dīn Juwaynī and Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh Hamadānī. John Andrew Boyle's seminal translations, published as the *History of the World Conqueror* (1958) and *Successors of Genghis Khan* (1971) solved a plethora of practical problems in the interrelation of Persian and East Asian sources. Gerhard Doerfer's magisterial *Türkische und mongolische Elemente in Neupersischen* (1963–67), particularly its first volume on the Mongolian elements, laid a foundation for understanding how not just Mongolian and Turkic, but even Chinese and Tangut elements entered into Persian. Karl Jahn's studies (1951 to 1980) of the non-Islamic, non-Mongolian histories in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles* opened up the range of Buddhist, Chinese, and Indian cultural influences at work in shaping the culture of the Ilkhans, whether Muslim or not. While numerous translations of Rashīd al-Dīn can be found, Wheeler M. Thackston's translation (1998–1999, and revised 2012) truly opened the source to others. Other sources, discussed throughout this volume, also provided indication of a much wider Ilkhanid world, but often received less attention.

For decades, the foundational work on the study of the Ilkhanate was volume 5 *The Saljuq and Mongol Periods* (1968), edited by J. A. Boyle, of *The Cambridge History of Iran.* Considering Boyle's involvement and role in translating sources, he could be considered the godfather of Ilkhanid studies in the western world. While certain aspects of the *Cambridge History of Iran* volume have become outdated, it remains the basic primer for the study of the Ilkhanate. A decade after its publication, the students of the authors found in

fashion. No doubt they felt that they were punishing the misdeeds of the Khwārazm-shāh, though the punishment can hardly be said to have fitted the crime. Probably more important, they were removing permanently any possibility there might have been of a centre of power existing in Persia that could have rivalled Chingiz Khān himself. Lastly it may well be that, in the Mongols' steppe-oriented minds, the destruction of cities and agriculture was still a matter of little or no real consequence.

Chingiz Khān left the Dār al-Islām in 620/1223 to return to Mongolia. His last military campaign was against Hsi-Hsia, whose ruler had failed to contribute his due quota of troops for the expedition to the west. In 1227, probably aged about sixty, he died after a career of conquest which has few parallels in recorded history. But Chingiz was no mere military conqueror. He thought too in terms of organization and imperial structure. He left to his successors more than piles of plunder and corpses, though of both there was certainly a plentiful supply. He had laid the institutional foundations for an empire which could and did survive the death of its founder and indeed continued to expand.

Persia was not at this stage high on the Mongols' list of priorities. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad's son and successor, Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārazm-shāh, headed the resistance to the Mongols and was at first able, in the absence of the main Mongol army, to acquit himself fairly creditably. Unfortunately he chose to dissipate his energies in fighting a variety of other enemies as well, and ultimately his efforts had no effect on Mongol supremacy. For the three decades after Chingiz Khān's withdrawal, parts of Persia, especially the steppe-like grasslands in the north of the country, were under the rule of Mongol viceroys. Some major campaigns were mounted, notably the invasion of Anatolia by Baiju Noyon which culminated in the battle of Köse Dagh in 641/1243 and the submission of the Seljük sultanate of Rūm to the Mongols. But no sustained attempt was made to incorporate Persia fully into the Mongol Empire. With Hülegü's invasion in the 1250s a new situation was created.

İlhanlılar (031460)
Hülagu (081409)

HÜLEGÜ AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE ILKHANATE

The conception of political sovereignty as a family rather than a personal possession was found among the Mongols as it had been among

the Turks. Hence on the death of Chingiz Khān his sons all received their due share. One son, the third, Ögedei, was recognized as Great Khān, as Chingiz had wished. But in other respects steppe precedent was followed. The youngest son, Tolui, received the original homeland in Mongolia; the eldest, Jochi, was given the most remote pastures, the lands that were later to form the Golden Horde in Russia and eastern Europe. As Jochi died shortly before his father, his share fell to his son Batu. The two middle sons of Chingiz Khān, Chaghatai and Ögedei, shared Central Asia between them.

This arrangement took account only of the steppelands. Chingiz Khān seems to have made no allocation of the sedentary territories he had conquered in Persia and China. But in any case his division of the empire was not long to endure. Ögedei died in 1241, his death precipitating a political crisis which among other things helped bring to an end Batu's great invasion of Europe (1237–42). Not until 1246 did Ögedei's son Güyük achieve recognition as Great Khān. This was in the teeth of Batu's disapproval, and only Güyük's death in 1248 averted the outbreak of open conflict between them. An alliance was then made between Batu and the sons of the now dead Tolui. In 1251 a *coup d'état* took place against the families of Ögedei and Chaghatai. With the support of Batu (whose virtual independence in his own territories was the price of his help), Tolui's eldest son Möngke became Great Khān.

Möngke had three brothers: Qubilai, Arigh-böke, and Hülegü. Qubilai was entrusted with the conquest of the Sung Empire in south China, while Arigh-böke remained in Mongolia. Hülegü was despatched to the west, to deal principally with two enemies: the Assassins and the ʿAbbasid caliphate.

So much, at least, we can state with reasonable certainty. It seems unlikely that at the beginning of their career of conquest the Mongols had seen themselves as having a divine commission to conquer the world. But they certainly came to hold that view when they found that they were in fact establishing a world empire. In this context Alamūt and Baghdad were alternative centres of power and loyalty which could not indefinitely be permitted to survive. What is not as clear is the exact nature of Hülegü's commission beyond the reduction of these two enemies. In particular, a question arises over whether or not Möngke intended that – as in fact happened – Hülegü should establish a kingdom in Persia for himself and his descendants.

There is some indication in the sources that the establishment of the Ilkhanate did indeed involve some irregularity, and that Möngke's original intention had been that Hülegü should return to Mongolia after he had completed his task in the Middle East. But as affairs turned out,

THREE

Formation of the Il-qans, 1251–1265

In 1206, after decades of struggle with rival tribes of the eastern steppe, Chinggis Qan proclaimed the formation of the Great Mongolian State (*Yeke Mongghol Ulus*), a polity which in the course of three generations became the largest land empire in world history.[1] The empire began its expansion southward, launching a series of campaigns against the Tanguts and the Jürchen Chin dynasty which culminated in the capture of Chung-tu (Peking) in 1215. The commercial overtures of the Khwārazmshāh Muḥammad in 1218 turned Mongolian attention westward. The incident at Utrār, where a Mongolian caravan was despoiled by Khwārazmian officials, led to an invasion of Transoxania in 1219. Between 1220 and 1221 the armies of the Khwārazmshāh were overwhelmed and West Turkestan and Khurāsān ravaged and subdued.

Chinggis Qan returned to Mongolia in 1224 to organize further campaigns against the Tanguts and died three years later in the midst of these operations. This necessitated a temporary halt in military expansion while the Chinggisid princes and their advisers assembled in Mongolia to confirm Ögödei, Chinggis Qan's third son and designated heir, as the new qaghan (r. 1229–41). Operations were restarted in 1229 to complete the conquest of West Asia. Progress was substantial: Mongolian armies forced the capitulation of the Armenians and Georgians in 1236 and the Seljuqs of Rūm in 1243. Under Güyüg (r. 1246–48), Ögödei's son and successor, expansion was, however, slowed in the face of increased tension among the imperial princes.

At Güyüg's death these divisions became quite visible and, in a much disputed succession, Möngke (r. 1251–59), the son of Tolui, Chinggis Qan's youngest son, became qaghan. In part to stifle the opposition and to direct Mongolian energies outward, Möngke initiated a series of large-scale campaigns against Korea, the Southern Sung and the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate. The latter operation was entrusted to Hülegü, Möngke's younger brother who

[1] In Chinese the Chinggisid state was called *ta Meng-ku kuo*, "Great Mongolian State," in internal documents. The name *Yuan ch'ao*, adopted in 1271, also meant "Great Dynasty." See the detailed discussion of Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, "Shuo Ta-ch'ao: Yuan-ch'ao chien-hao ch'ien Meng-ku te Han-wen kuo-hao," *Han-hsüeh yen-chiu* 3/1 (1985), 23–40.