

The background of the entire page is a light yellow-green color. It is decorated with several stylized, dark green leaf motifs. Each motif consists of a small stem with two leaves, one pointing up and one pointing down, arranged in a symmetrical, V-shape. These motifs are scattered across the page, with some appearing near the top and others near the bottom.

DAILY LIFE IN

The Mongol Empire

George Lane

DAILY LIFE IN --- THE MONGOL EMPIRE



Blue wolf, creation myth creature. Courtesy of Xinjiang
Qinshan Culture Publishing

DAILY LIFE IN --- THE MONGOL EMPIRE

GEORGE LANE

The Greenwood Press "Daily Life Through History" Series



GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lane, George, 1952–

Daily life in the Mongol empire / by George Lane.

p. cm. — (Greenwood Press “Daily life through history” series, ISSN 1080–4749)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0–313–33226–6 (alk. paper)

1. Mongols—Social life and customs. I. Title. II. Series.

DS19.L345 2006

950'.2—dc22 2005026896

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 2006 by George Lane

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2005026896

ISBN: 0–313–33226–6

ISSN: 1080–4749

First published in 2006

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881

An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.

www.greenwood.com

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Every reasonable effort has been made to trace the owners of copyright materials in this book, but in some instances this has proven impossible. The author and publisher will be glad to receive information leading to more complete acknowledgments in subsequent printings of the book and in the meantime extend their apologies for any omissions.

CONTENTS

Epigraph	vii
Preface	xi
Chronology	xiii
1. Historical Overview: Genghis Khan and Mongol Rule	1
2. Steppe Life	13
3. Appearance	33
4. Dwellings	51
5. The Army	95
6. Health and Medicine	135
7. Drinking and the Mongols	149
8. Food	167
9. Religion and the Mongols	181
10. Law and Mongol Rule	205
11. Women and the Mongols	227
12. Folktales from Mongolia	257

Appendix: Personages	273
Glossary	279
Primary Sources and those Available in Translation	287
Secondary Sources: Annotated Bibliography	297
Index	309

EPIGRAPH

IBN AL-ATHIR "ON THE TATARS, 1220–1221 CE":¹

For some years I continued averse from mentioning this event, deeming it so horrible that I shrank from recording it and ever withdrawing one foot as I advanced the other. To whom, indeed, can it be easy to write the announcement of the deathblow of Islam and the Muslims, or who is he on whom the remembrance thereof can weigh lightly? O would that my mother had not born me or that I had died and become a forgotten thing ere this befell! Yet, withal a number of my friends urged me to set it down in writing, and I hesitated long, but at last came to the conclusion that to omit this matter could serve no useful purpose.

I say, therefore, that this thing involves the description of the greatest catastrophe and the most dire calamity (of the like of which days and nights are innocent) which befell all men generally, and the Muslims in particular; so that, should one say that the world, since God Almighty created Adam until now, has not been afflicted with the like thereof, he would but speak the truth. For indeed history does not contain anything which approaches or comes near unto it. For of the most grievous calamities recorded was what Nebuchadnezzar inflicted on the children of Israel by his slaughter of them and his destruction of Jerusalem; and what was Jerusalem in comparison to the countries which these accursed miscreants destroyed, each city of which was double the size of Jerusalem? Or what were the children of Israel compared to those whom these slew? For verily those whom they massacred in a single city exceeded all the children of Israel. Nay, it is unlikely that mankind will see the like of this calamity,

until the world comes to an end and perishes, except the final outbreak of Gog and Magog.

For even Antichrist will spare such as follow him, though he destroy those who oppose him, but these Tatars spared none, slaying women and men and children, ripping open pregnant women and killing unborn babes. Verily to God do we belong, and unto Him do we return, and there is no strength and no power save in God, the High, the Almighty, in face of this catastrophe, whereof the sparks flew far and wide, and the hurt was universal; and which passed over the lands like clouds driven by the wind. For these were a people who emerged from the confines of China, and attacked the cities of Turkistan, like Kashghar and Balasaghun, and thence advanced on the cities of Transoxiana, such as Samarqand, Bukhara and the like, taking possession of them, and treating their inhabitants in such wise as we shall mention; and of them one division then passed on into Khurasan, until they had made an end of taking possession, and destroying, and slaying, and plundering, and thence passing on to Ray, Hamadan and the Highlands, and the cities contained therein, even to the limits of Iraq, whence they marched on the towns of Azerbaijan and Arran, destroying them and slaying most of their inhabitants, of whom none escaped save a small remnant; and all this in less than a year; this is a thing whereof the like has not been heard. And when they had finished with Adharbayjan and Arraniyya, they passed on to Darband-i-Shirwan, and occupied its cities, none of which escaped save the fortress wherein was their King; wherefore they passed by it to the countries of the Lan and the Lakiz and the various nationalities which dwell in that region, and plundered, slew, and destroyed them to the full. And thence they made their way to the lands of Qipchaq, who are the most numerous of the Turks, and slew all such as withstood them, while the survivors fled to the fords and mountain-tops, and abandoned their country, which these Tatars overran. All this they did in the briefest space of time, remaining only for so long as their march required and no more.

Another division, distinct from that mentioned above, marched on Ghazna and its dependencies, and those parts of India, Sistan and Kirman which border thereon, and wrought therein deeds like unto the other, nay, yet more grievous. Now this is a thing the like of which ear has not heard; for Alexander, concerning whom historians agree that he conquered the world, did not do so with such swiftness, but only in the space of about ten years; neither did he slay, but was satisfied that men should be subject to him. But these Tatars conquered most of the habitable globe, and the best, the most flourishing and most populous part thereof, and that whereof the inhabitants were the most advanced in character and conduct, in about a year; nor did any country escape their devastations which did not fearfully expect them and dread their arrival.

Moreover they need no commissariat, nor the conveyance of supplies, for they have with them sheep, cows, horses, and the like quadrupeds, the

flesh of which they eat, naught else. As for their beasts which they ride, these dig into the earth with their hoofs and eat the roots of plants, knowing naught of barley. And so, when they alight anywhere, they have need of nothing from without. As for their religion, they worship the sun when it rises, and regard nothing as unlawful, for they eat all beasts, even dogs, pigs, and the like; nor do they recognise the marriage-tie, for several men are in marital relations with one woman, and if a child is born, it knows not who is its father.

Therefore Islam and the Muslims have been afflicted during this period with calamities wherewith no people hath been visited. These Tatars (may God confound them!) came from the East, and wrought deeds which horrify all who hear of them, and which you shall, please God, see set forth in full detail in their proper connection. And of these was the invasion of Syria by the Franks (may God curse them!) out of the West, and their attack on Egypt, and occupation of the port of Damietta therein, so that Egypt and Syria were like to be conquered by them, but for the grace of God and the help which He vouchsafed us against them, as we have mentioned under the year 614 (A.D. 1217–18). Of these, moreover, was that the sword was drawn between those who escaped from these two foes, and strife was rampant, as we have also mentioned: and verily unto God do we belong and unto Him do we return! We ask God to vouchsafe victory to Islam and the Muslims, for there is none other to aid, help, or defend the True Faith. But if God intends evil to any people, naught can avert it, nor have they any ruler save Him. As for these Tatars, their achievements were only rendered possible by the absence of any effective obstacle; and the cause of this absence was that Muhammad Khwarazmshah had overrun the lands, slaying and destroying their Kings, so that he remained alone ruling over all these countries; wherefore, when he was defeated by the Tatars, none was left in the lands to check those or protect these, that so God might accomplish a thing which was to be done.

It is now time for us to describe how they first burst forth into the lands. Stories have been related to me, which the hearer can scarcely credit, as to the terror of the Tatars, which God Almighty cast into men's hearts; so that it is said that a single one of them would enter a village or a quarter wherein were many people, and would continue to slay them one after another, none daring to stretch forth his hand against this horseman. And I have heard that one of them took a man captive, but had not with him any weapon wherewith to kill him; and he said to his prisoner, "Lay your head on the ground and do not move," and he did so, and the Tatar went and fetched his sword and slew him therewith. Another man related to me as follows: "I was going," said he, "with seventeen others along a road, and there met us a Tatar horseman, and bade us bind one another's arms. My companions began to do as he bade them, but I said to them, 'He is but one man; wherefore, then, should we not kill him and flee?' They replied, 'We are afraid.' I said, 'This man intends to kill you immediately; let us

therefore rather kill him, that perhaps God may deliver us.' But I swear by God that not one of them dared to do this, so I took a knife and slew him, and we fled and escaped." And such occurrences were many.

NOTE

1. From Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 2 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1915), 427–31. Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, California State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Professor Arkenberg. This text is part of the Internet Medieval Source Book, "Internet History Sourcebooks Project," ed. Paul Halsall, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1220al-Athir-mongols.html>. The sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts related to medieval and Byzantine history.

PREFACE

Because no standardized system of transliteration exists to render foreign scripts into English text, Arabic, Persian, and especially Chinese names, titles, and expressions can appear in a bewildering array of forms, fashions and spellings. Often these renderings are decorated with a profusion of confusing and varied diacritical marks. For example, the Persian Sufi poet of the thirteenth century, Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi, is referred to in scholarly works as Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Jalálu'ddīn Rúmí, or even Jalálu'l-Dīn Rúmī. In Turkey he is known as Mavlana, in popular works he is known simply as Rumi or Jalaluddin Rumi, and in Iran as Maulānā. The Persian historian 'Atā Malik 'Alā al-Dīn Juwaynī appears often as Juvaini, or Juvainī, or Ata-Malik Juvaini, or combinations of these. Chinese names are even more varied and confusing, and when consulting other books and maps these variations should be borne in mind. Chinggis Khan (Genghis Khan, Chingiz Khan) attacked the Xi-Xia early in his career. These early targets are also called the Xixia, the Hsi-hsia, or the Hsi-Hsia. Before it became the Mongol capital, Da-du, or Ta-tu, was referred to as Zhong-du, Chung-du, Chang-tu, or Chong-du. Until an internationally accepted system of transliteration is established this confusion will continue. However, an awareness of the problem and a flexible attitude to spelling and transliteration will greatly alleviate the difficulties in the meantime.

I would like to express my gratitude for the generosity of the *Committee for Central and Inner Asia* (CCIA), Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University whose funding contributed towards the costs of travel incurred

during the research for this book. My thanks also to Florence Hodous for her time and hard work in the final stages of getting the book into print. And a final word of thanks in recognition of the patience and endurance shown by Assumpta, Oscar and Ella over the long months that I have been engrossed by this project.

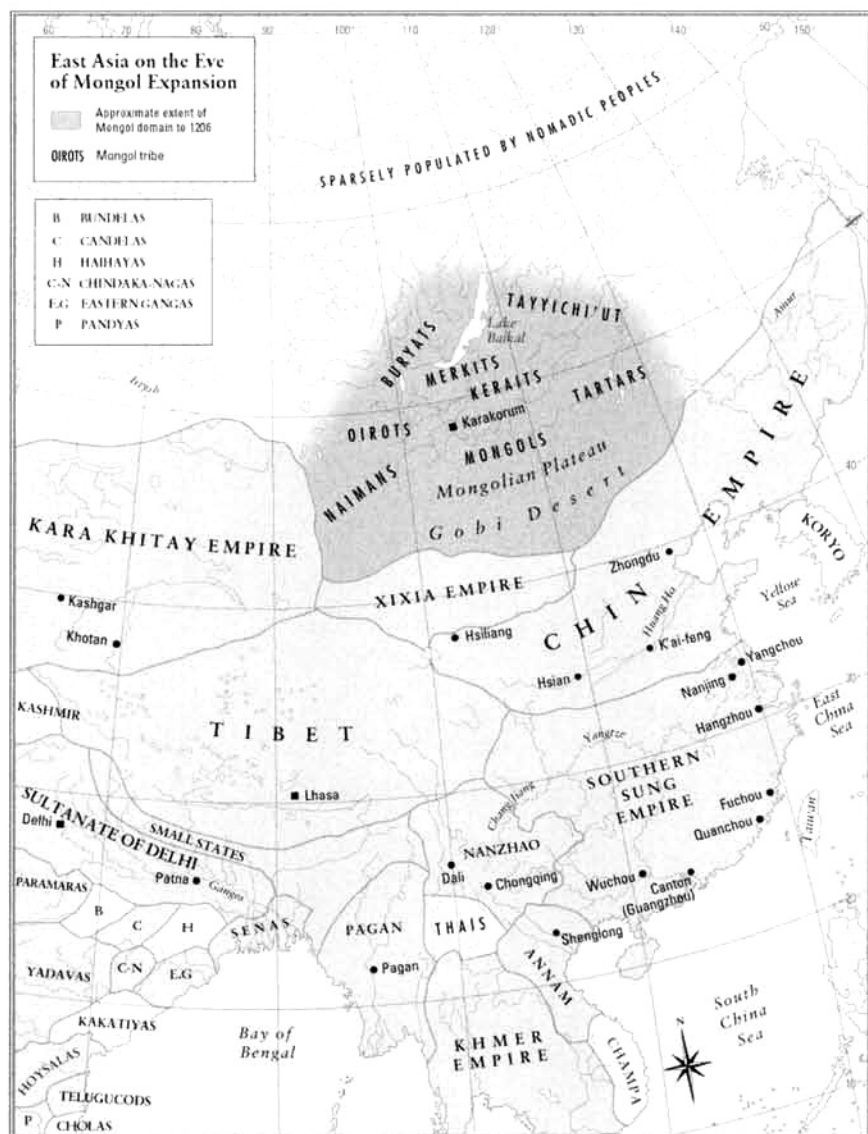
CHRONOLOGY

- 1125 Liao dynasty (Khitans) driven out of north China by Jurchens, who become the Chin dynasty. The seminomadic Khitans flee westward and eventually found the Qara Khitai empire in Central Asia.
- 1141 The Saljuq sultan Sanjar defeated by Qara Khitai at Qatwan steppe near Samarqand. It is the advance of the Qara Khitai (Black Cathays) that gives rise to the legend of Prester John.
- 1167 Temüjin (Chinggis Khan) is born. The years between 1155 and 1167 are also claimed as his date of birth.
- 1174 Temüjin engaged to Börte, daughter of Dei-sechen of the Onggirat. Yesügei (father) poisoned by Tatars.
- 1180 Temüjin murders half-brother Bekhter. Later held in Tayichi'ut captivity.
- 1183–84 Börte abducted by Merkits. Toghril and Jamuka assist in rescue. First-born child, Jochi, is born shortly after Börte's release.
- 1187 Temüjin is defeated at the battle of Dalan Balzhut. Gap in Temüjin's life history; possibly in exile in China.
- 1200 'Alā' al-Dīn Moḥammed II, Khwārazmshāh, accedes.
- 1206 Chinggis Khan proclaimed supreme ruler of the tribes, at a *quriltai* in Mongolia. Reign of the Delhi sultans in northern India/Pakistan until 1555.

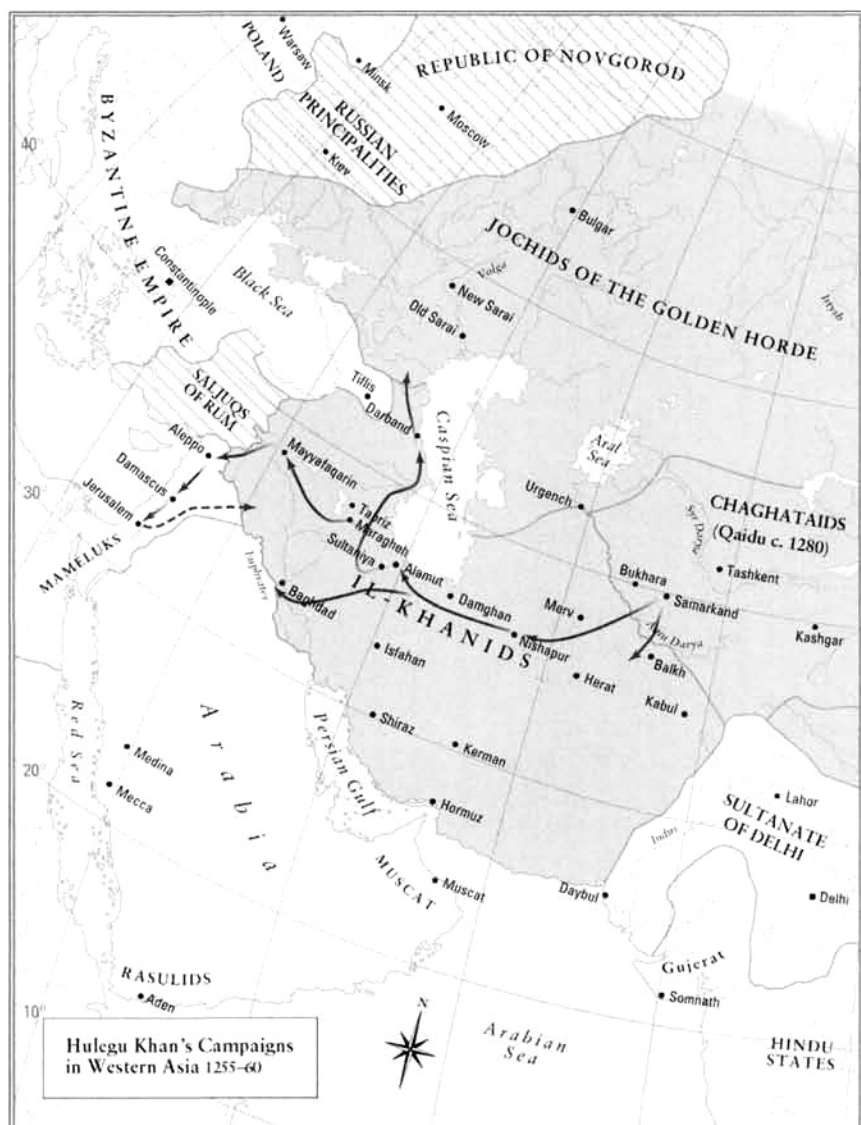
- 1209 Mongols invade Hsi-Hsia (Xixia, Xi-Xia).
- 1211 Mongols invade Chin (Jurchen) empire of north China.
- 1215 Chin capital, Chong-du (Zhongdu, Chung-tu), falls to Mongols. Zhongdu later rebuilt and renamed Da-du, Ta-tu, Khan Baliq.
- 1218 Mongol troops under Jebe occupy Qara Khitai empire.
- 1219 Chinggis Khan invades empire of the Khwārazmshāh.
- 1221–23 Ch'ang Ch'un journeys from China to Hindu Kush.
- 1223 Chinggis Khan returns to Mongolia.
- 1227 Chinggis Khan dies. Final conquest of Hsi-Hsia.
- 1229 Ögödei elected as Great Khan.
- 1234 Chin resistance to Mongols ends.
- 1235 Ögödei builds walls of Qaraqorum, Mongol imperial capital.
- 1237–42 Mongol campaigns, conducted under Batu in Russia and Eastern Europe.
- 1241 Ögödei dies; battles of Liegnitz and River Sajo. Regency of Töregene until 1246.
- 1245–47 John of Plano Carpini (Giovanni Diplano Carpini) journeys to Mongolia.
- 1246 Güyük elected as Great Khan.
- 1248 Güyük dies. Regency of Oghul Ghaymish lasts until 1251.
- 1250 Mamluks seize effective power in Egypt, 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf al-Mūsā nominally on throne.
- 1251 Möngke elected as Great Khan.
- 1252–79 Mongols conquer Sung empire of south China.
- 1253–55 William of Rubruck journeys to Mongolia.
- 1253 Hülegü's forces set off for Persia.
- 1254 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak assumes full powers in Egypt. The Bahri line of Mamluks of Egypt and Syria, 1250–1390 (Ethnic Qipchaq Turks originating from Russian steppes).
- 1255 Batu, first khan of Golden Horde dies. Sartak briefly khan of Golden Horde, succeeded by his brother, Ulaghchi.
- 1256 Hülegü takes Assassin castles in north Persia.
- 1257 Berke accedes as khan of Golden Horde. His accession follows mysterious death of both Sartak and Ulaghchi.

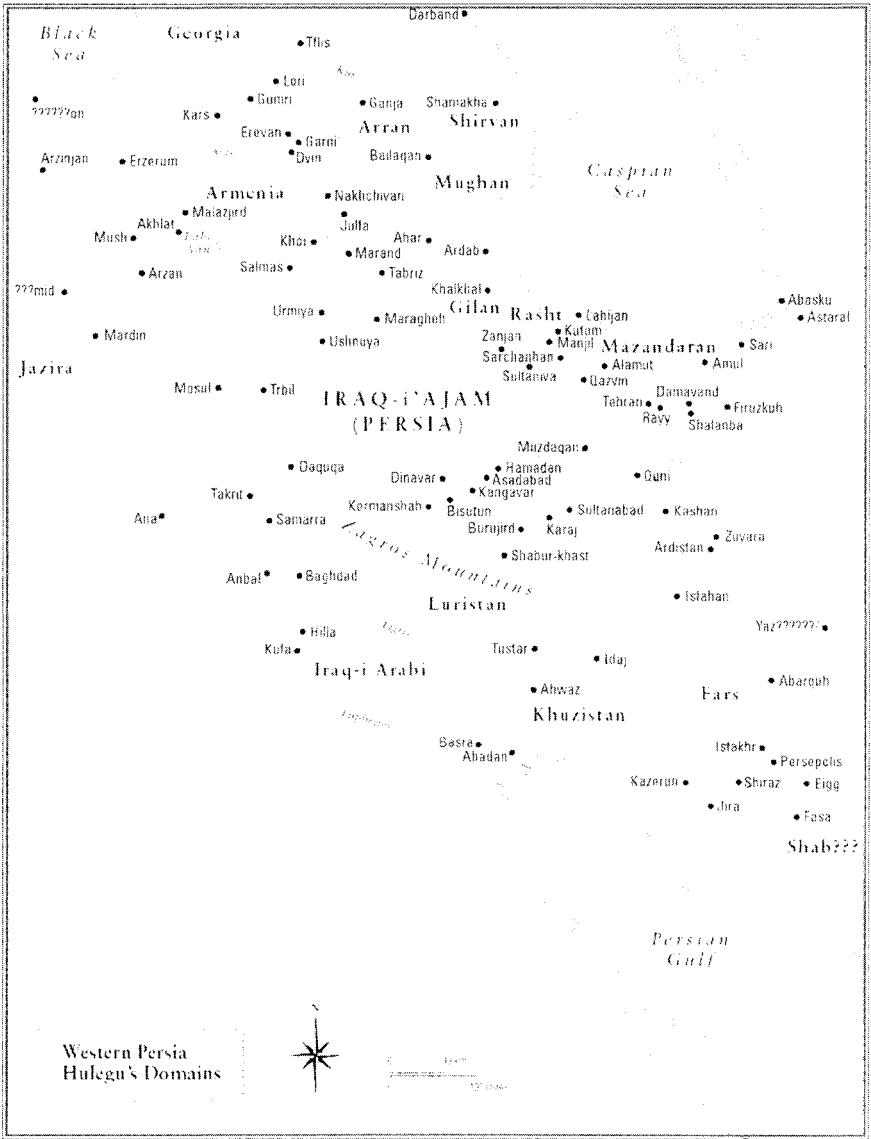
- 1258** Baghdad falls to Hülegü. Last 'Abbasid caliph dies.
- 1259** Möngke dies. Hülegü travels east.
- 1259** The Mamluk Qutuz assumes power in Egypt.
- 1260** Ket-Buqa invades Syria with a small force, then withdraws. Battle of 'Ain Jālūt takes place. Rival *quriltais* elect Qubilai and Ariq-Buqa as Great Khan; civil war ensues. Ket-Buqa, a Christian Mongol, is captured and killed.
- 1260** al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars I al-Bunduqdārī assumes Mamluk throne (Baybars 1260–77).
- 1261–62** Warfare breaks out between Hülegü and Berke.
- 1264** Qubilai is victorious over Ariq Buqa.
- 1265** Hülegü, first Il-Khan, dies. Abaqa succeeds.
- 1266** Building begins at new Mongol capital of China, Ta-tu (Da-du, Beijing).
- 1267** Berke, khan of Golden Horde, dies.
- 1271** Marco Polo, with his father and uncle, sets off for China (arrives 1275).
- 1272** Qubilai adopts Chinese dynastic title, Yuan.
- 1273** Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī dies.
- 1274** First Mongol expedition against Japan takes place.
- 1276** Hangzhou, capital of Sung empire, falls to Mongols.
- 1279** Sung resistance to Mongols ends.
- 1281** Second Mongol expedition launched against Japan.
- 1282** Abaqa Khan dies through alcohol abuse and succeeded by Ahmad Tegüdar. Ottomans begin to form a statelet and reign until 1924.
- 1284** Ahmad Tegüdar dies and Arghun succeeds.
- 1287** Rabban Sauma sent to Europe by Il-Khan Arghun.
- 1292** Persian poet from Shiraz, Sa'dī, dies.
- 1294** Qubilai dies. John of Monte Corvino arrives in China. Ch'ao is introduced disastrously into Iran.
- 1295** Ghazan accedes as Il-Khan. Mongols in Persia become Muslim.
- 1299–1300** Major Mongol invasion of Syria takes place. Syria is briefly occupied by Il-Khanid forces.
- 1304** Il-Khan Ghazan dies. Öljeitü succeeds.

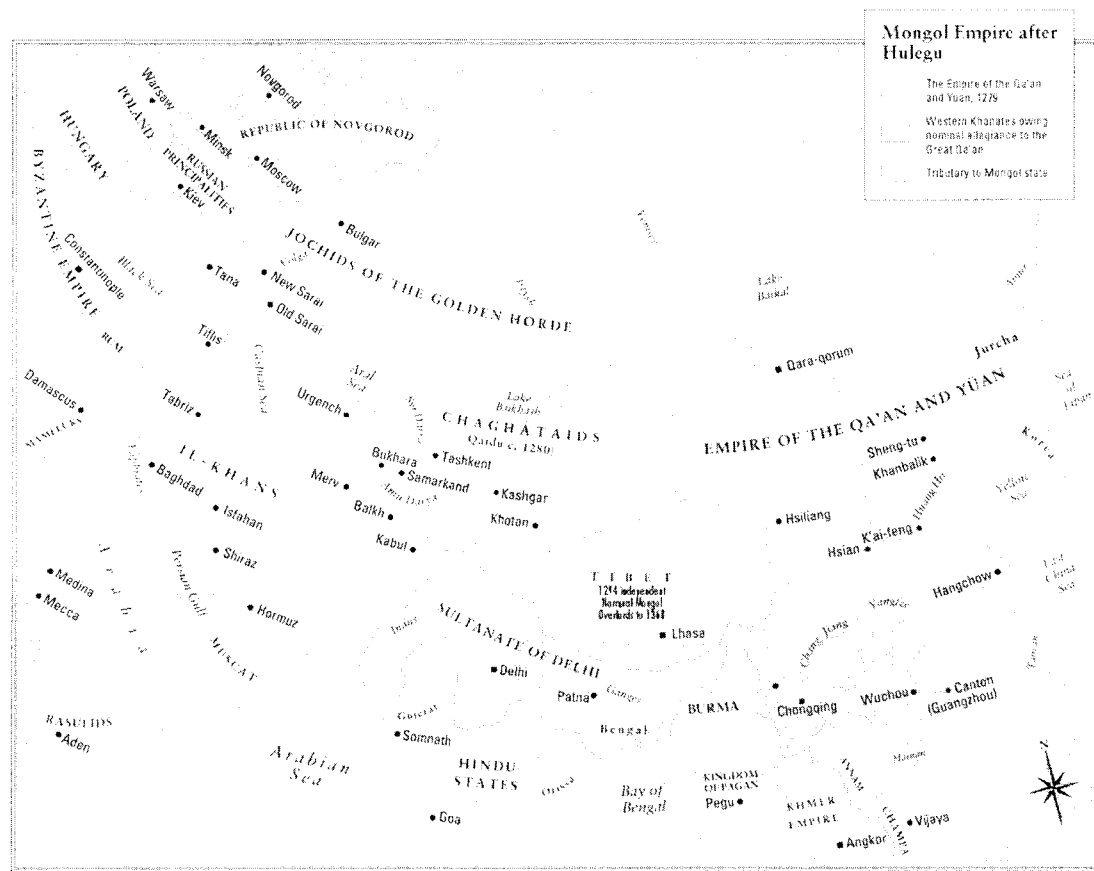
- 1313** Özbek, under whose rule the Golden Horde becomes Muslim, accedes. Öljeitü Khan builds his capital, Sultaniya.
- 1316** Öljeitü dies.
- 1318** Rashīd al-Dīn, a vizier of tremendous talents, is executed, and his son remains in power.
- 1335** Abū Saʿīd, last Il-Khan of line of Hülegü, dies. Jalayrids (Baghdad), Karts (Herat), Sarbadārs (Sabzevar), and Muzaffarids (Shiraz) form successor states.
- 1346** Black Death breaks out among Mongol force besieging Kaffa in the Crimea and from there spreads to Europe.
- 1353–54** Major outbreak of disease takes place in China. The Moroccan traveler-writer Ibn Battuta dictates his journals.
- 1368** Mongols driven from China by Ming forces.
- 1370** Toghon Temür, last Yuan emperor, dies in Qaraqorum. The renowned North African historian Ibn Khaldun writes *Muqaddima* in 1375.

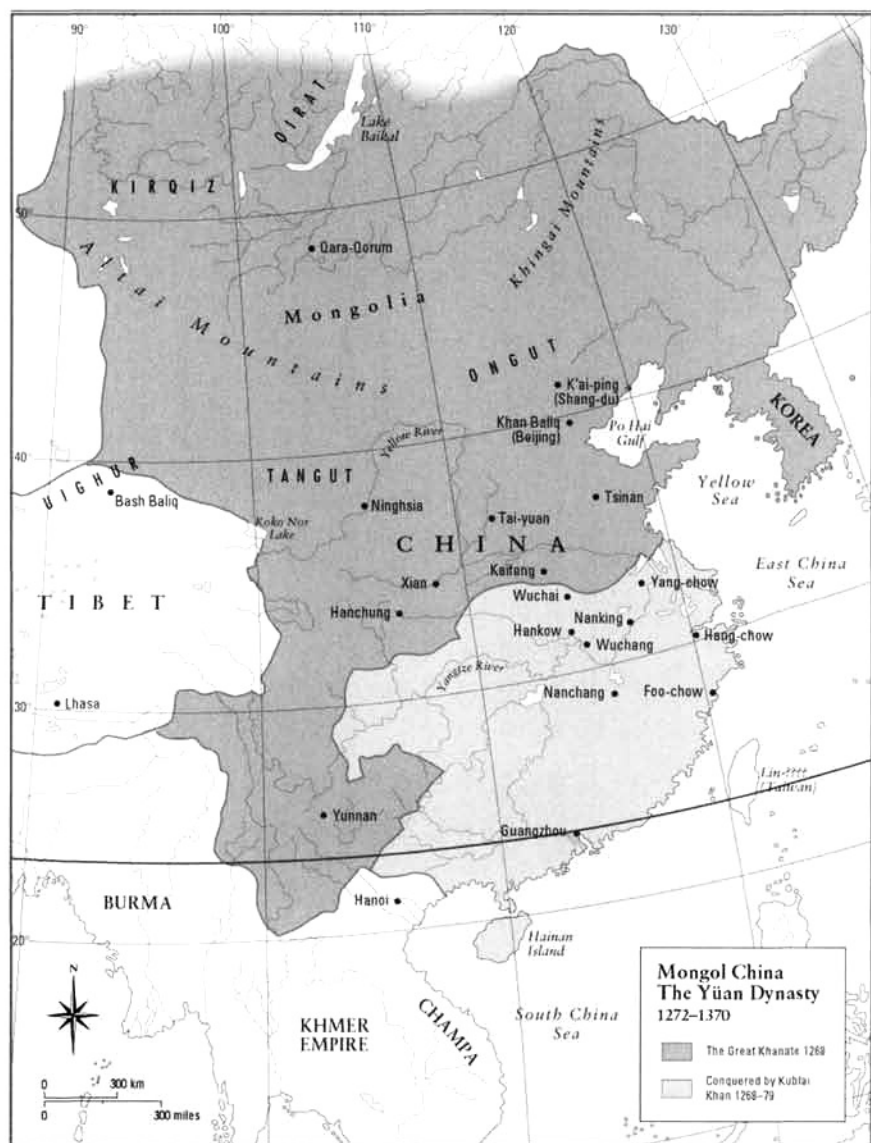














1

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: GENGHIS KHAN AND MONGOL RULE

The present century and much of the last century are commonly viewed as a time of unprecedented change and of events with global rather than local ramifications. It is widely believed that the world had never undergone such a shared traumatic transformation on such a scale anytime before. The sweeping changes that overtook much of Asia and Eastern Europe in the thirteenth century had as profound an effect on that century's political, cultural, economic, mercantile, and spiritual environment as the forces of globalization are having on the world today. Whereas the causes and reasons for the pervasiveness of globalization today are complex, the spread of the globalization that swept the medieval world can be traced to one man. That man was Genghis Khan (Chinggis Khan),¹ born Temüjin, son of Yisugei, and it was he who united the Turco-Mongol tribes of Eurasia behind him and swept out of the steppe with devastating and radical effect. Initially Chinggis Khan had sought wealth through plunder in order for him to consolidate his power base and keep the tribes happy. Eventually, this zeal for booty transformed into a taste for power and grew into a conviction of spiritual righteousness, and suddenly the Mongol armies were carrying with them the banner of Tengri, the god of the sky, and their continued success was proof of their god's omnipotence and support.

Temüjin's harsh rise to power was the catalyst that resulted in the formation of the largest contiguous land empire. He emerged first as the young son who desperately fought for his fatherless family, then as tribal leader surrounded by a core of staunchly loyal supporters, and thereafter as

supratribal leader unifying the peoples of the Asian steppes with promises of untold wealth and prestige, and finally as Chinggis Khan, world conqueror whose issue initiated actions, concluded agreements, and accomplished feats the impact of which resounds to this day. The treaty between Tibet and China was first drafted by a Mongol ruler and remains the basis for their union today; the Sufi songs of Rūmī that resound around the world from California to Tokyo were nurtured and first heard under Mongol rule; Beijing was built by the Mongols as their capital of a united China, a status it enjoys to this day; the cultural and spiritual links between western Asia and the East were cemented under Mongol auspices. From Temüjin, whose name once evoked derision, to Genghis Khan, who cowed and roused the princes of Russia and Eastern Europe and who would awe emissaries from a fearful outside world, this Mongol emperor is more deserving of fame than of infamy. He was not only a world conqueror but also a world unifier.



Chinggis Khan, Hohhut Museum. Courtesy of Xinjiang Qinsan Culture Publishing

THE LEGACY

The legacy of Genghis Khan and the Mongol hordes has been shrouded and obscured by the myth makers of history and indeed by the propaganda of the Mongols themselves. Those who suffered humiliation and defeat needed to justify and explain their shame through hyperbole, whereas the Mongols, eager to deter any who would challenge their rise, were content that the terror inspired by these tales provoked inaction rather than reaction. The result is that today for many the name of Genghis Khan is synonymous with evil and the Mongols with barbarian rule and destruction. Their defenders are few and, until recently, their apologists rare. In Europe the echo of their horses' hooves resonated with dread on the pages of the chronicles of Matthew Paris, whereas in Japan it was believed that only the divine intervention of the kamikaze winds prevented the collapse of that island empire into a sea of barbarism. In Russia the *Chronicle of Novgorod* still inspires horror at the memory of the events of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the Islamic world continues to quote less than objective sources such as the doom-laden words of Ibn al-Athir rather than those historians who wrote from firsthand knowledge.

Such sentiments are not universal, however, and among not only Mongolian people but also among the Turkish people both in Turkey and



Early copy of the Secret History in Hohhut Museum. Courtesy of Xinjiang Qinshan Culture Publishing

Turkish Central Asia, the appellations Genghis, Hülegü, Möngke, Arghun, and other such names from the Mongol golden age can still be found and are worn with honor. In the Turkish-speaking world and within the countries straddling the Eurasian steppes, Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes are becoming a source of pride, and the tales told of his deeds and progeny are a source of inspiration.

Recent academic thinking has also begun to look again at the legacy of the Mongols and at the period of Mongol rule itself. Beneath the rhetoric and propaganda, behind the battles and massacres, hidden by the often self-generated myths and legends, the reality of the two centuries of Mongol ascendancy was often one of regeneration, creativity, and growth. Two recent exhibitions, one in the United States and the other in London have celebrated the glorious legacy of the peoples from the Eurasian steppe. In New York and Los Angeles in 2002 an exhibition entitled *The Legacy of Genghis Khan* paid tribute to the cultural achievements of the Mongols who ruled in Iran and quieted the myth that the period of Il-Khanid rule in Iran (1256–1335) was barbaric. Likewise in London in 2005, a major exhibition celebrated the Turks' more than 1,000 years of glorious history, covering their rule and influence in a swath of countries from China to Europe. The aim of this book is to explore this more objective portrait of Genghis Khan and the period of Mongol rule following his death in 1227 c.e. and seek a more dispassionate view of life under Mongol rule.

CHINGGIS KHAN AND MONGOL RULE

The next chapter will examine the lands into which Temüjin was born. It will give an overview of the Eurasian steppes and the society that thrived there in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Genghis Khan, or Chinggis Khan as his name is more correctly written, drastically reshaped the relationship between the pastoral, nomadic societies of the northern Eurasian steppes and their southern urban, agriculturist, and sedentary neighbors. This first chapter will consider why this occurred and the political and social pressures that built up to cause this major upheaval.

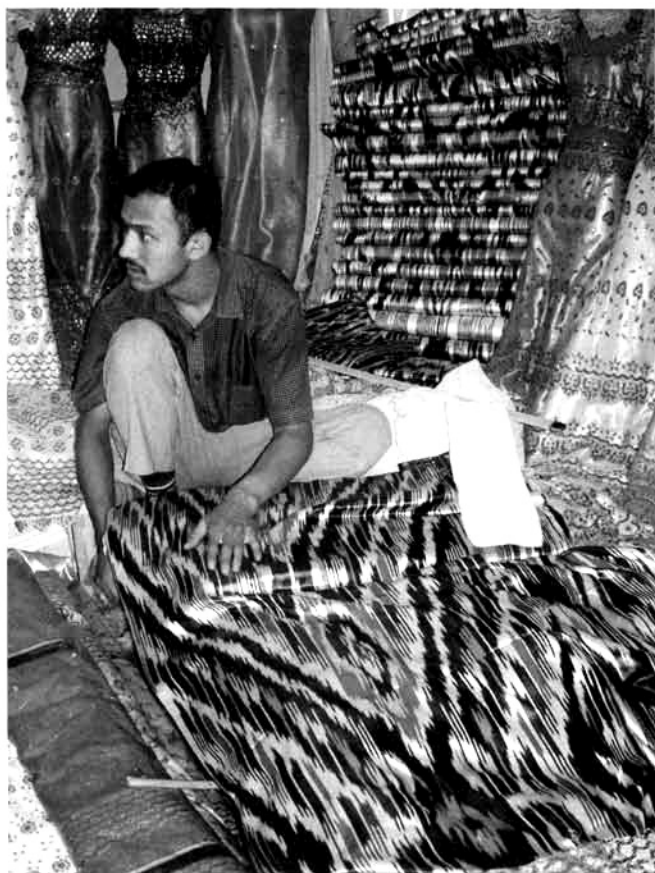
The Mongol Empire comprising the Eurasian steppes officially came into being in spring 1206, the year of the Tiger, with the symbolic rising of the white standard of the protective spirit of the nation and the enthronement of Temüjin as emperor of the nation of archers, supreme leader of the "people of the felt-walled tents." The white standard had nine points, each representing one of the Turco-Mongol tribes. Temüjin was awarded the title Chinggis, which is thought, not conclusively, to mean "Oceanic Ruler," a term with Uyghur roots, though it has been pointed out that *ching* in Mongolian means "firm, strong." Temüjin's greatest achievement had been to unite the tribes and subdue forcibly and very ruthlessly all dissent. The tribes united behind Chinggis for one reason only, however, and if this reason were not to remain a reality, neither would the tribal unity.

The tribes believed that unity under Chinggis would bring them power and wealth. As long as Chinggis delivered, the tribes would remain loyal. As long as loyalty was in their interest, the tribes would remain loyal, and it was Chinggis Khan's dilemma to ensure that he could continue to deliver booty, power, and prestige, without which his empire would unravel and his position would be challenged. Chinggis Khan succeeded where so many before had failed, and he was able to lead a steppe empire out of the steppe and transform it into a world empire ruling both steppe and sown.

Once unleashed, the Mongol led forces spread quickly in all directions. Numbering two million, the Mongols represented a confusion of tribes rather than a single ethnic race. War was a way of life. In 1207 they struck out from the steppe and defeated the Tangut kingdom of Xixia (northwest China), and then turning eastward and braving the burning sands of the Gobi they hit hard at the seminomadic Chin of northern China. The prize they sought was the fabulous wealth of the Chin capital of Chong-du. Though unbeatable in open battle on the plain or in the mountains, the Mongols had no experience of siege warfare, but they were quick learners. From their experiences with the fortresses in Xixia and their smashing of the Great Wall, using captured Chinese engineers in 1215 they finally broke down the walls of the imperial Chin capital and laid the city to total ruin and a "glorious slaughter." The carnage cemented their awesome and horrifying reputation. It was to be another 17 years before the rest of Chin northern China was subdued, but Chinggis Khan was not to enter the country ever again. He now turned his attention westward.

After the Qara khitai had fallen to the forces of the Mongol general Jebe in 1217, the Mongols found themselves neighbors to the lands of Islam. Chinggis Khan held the Khwārazmshāh, Sultan Moḥammad, the emperor of central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran in awe. He is quoted as having declared, "I am the sovereign of the Sun-rise, and thou the sovereign of the Sun-set."² Rather than risk confrontation, Chinggis Khan sought alliance. But when the arrogant Sultan Moḥammad allowed a trade delegation and envoys from the Mongols to be ignominiously slaughtered, the fate of the Khwārazmian empire was sealed. In 1219 an army of 200,000 men, including 10,000 siege engineers, moved westward under the command of Chinggis Khan. The cities of the Khwārazmshāh crumbled before the mighty advance, and the Khwārazmshāh fled for his life. In Bokhara, Chinggis Khan admonished the terrified citizens, "I am the punishment of God. If you had not sinned he would not have sent me."

Within a few years, Iran, the Caucasus, Ukraine, the Crimea, Russia, Siberia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir had all fallen to the Mongol forces. Meanwhile, news reached the Great Khan that back east the Tangut had arisen in revolt in Xixia. Not only had they refused his call to arms and had failed to send soldiers for his campaign against the



Silk merchant in Kashgar bazaar. Courtesy of Xinjiang Qinshan Culture Publishing

Khwārazmshāh, but now they were in open defiance. The Mongol emperor personally led his armies eastward to punish the wayward king, but in 1227, after a series of victories as he sat waiting to receive the homage of the humbled Tangut monarch, Chinggis Khan developed a fever and died. In only 20 years Chinggis Khan had not only led the nomadic tribes out from the Eurasian steppes to conquer the mighty Chin empire of northern China but had also overrun the Islamic kingdom of the Khwārazmshāh who had ruled the west.

Already changes had begun to transform the nature of the Mongol expansion. The Mongols were becoming a minority in the multiethnic makeup of the army. Foreign bureaucrats, Uyghurs in particular, were filling the burgeoning administration. The leaders were assuming the trappings of power and prestige, and their *ordus* had been transformed by the luxury



Mongol dagoba or stupa, the White Tower in Hohhot.
Courtesy of Lan Tien Lang Publications

and sumptuousness they now were able to affect. Perhaps most significant was the growing belief in Tenggerism, the belief that their success and continuing triumph was divinely ordained and that they were following the will of their God, Tengri. Their subjects accepted that the Mongols were divine visitations, though their view was that they had come from hell, and there was a growing conviction among the Mongols themselves that destiny had cast them in the role of world conquerors and that all must therefore submit unquestioning to their divinely inspired rule. Their ultimatums to those they would conquer were given in the name of God.

POST-CHINGGIS

Two years after the Great Khan's death, his son Ögödei had been confirmed in office and the conquests were resumed. The hold on the Chin

lands was consolidated and Korea was taken; military rule was tightened in Persia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Azerbaijan; and the Sung empire of southern China was given notice that they would be next in line for conquest. In Iran various military governors meant that the country remained unstable and chaotic and the *Ismā'īlīs*, *Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārazmshāh*, and other local warlords disrupted life and security for the mass of the people. The poet *Sa'dī* left his beloved Shiraz to escape the chaos, returning only when he heard of the advent of *Hülegü Khan* and a central government in the 1250s. In the 1230s, *Batu Khan* and his Golden Horde were extending their territory deep into Eastern Europe, and terrifying tales of the Mongols began to enter the nightmares of Europeans. In 1240 Kiev was captured and destroyed. In 1241 the Polish army was defeated at *Liegnitz*, and the victorious Mongols then continued to devastate Moravia and Silesia before capturing Hungary itself.

In December 1241 all campaigning was abruptly stopped, however. The *Qa'an*, the Great Khan *Ögödei*, had died, and all Mongol leaders, princes, and nobles of the Golden family, as the *Chinggisids* were known, were summoned to the capital at *Qaraqorum* for a *quriltai* to elect a new leader. It was from this point that the cracks that had been faintly discernable from the beginning of *Ögödei's* reign began to become more pronounced. After a long regency when *Ögödei's* widow presided over the vast empire, his son *Güyük* ruled for a short and tense time until his death in 1248. *Batu* and his Golden Horde had been opposed to *Güyük's* election, and after his death, *Batu* was determined not to allow the crown to fall to the house of *Ögödei*.

Batu himself and, by extension, his progeny were barred from the top position because of rarely expressed but pervasive doubts about his paternity. His mother *Börte* had been kidnapped by the *Merkit* tribe early in her marriage to *Temüjin*. Approximately nine months after her rescue she gave birth to *Jochi*, *Batu's* father. *Chinggis* had insisted that *Jochi* should be awarded all the respect due to an eldest son and would allow no allusions to the circumstances of his birth. Rarely spoken doubts persisted, however, and it seemed an unwritten law that *Batu* remain kingmaker rather than king and that he be treated with the same deference and respect as that given the actual *Qa'an*.

RISE OF THE TOLUIDS

With *Batu's* backing, *Möngke*, son of *Tolui Khan*, the youngest son of *Chinggis Khan*, successfully seized the throne in 1251 after a bitter and very bloody civil war in which his cousin's support was crucial. His rise to power cost the houses of *Ögödei* and *Chaghedai* dearly, and his supporters decimated their ranks ruthlessly. *Möngke Khan* was to be the last Great Khan to rule over a united Mongol Empire, though the unity was tenuous by this stage.

Möngke Khan moved to consolidate his and his family's, the Toluids', grip on power. He dispatched one brother, Qubilai, eastward to subdue the Sung of southern China, and another brother, Hülegü, to consolidate Toluid control of Persia, Anatolia, and the lands of Islam. Hülegü destroyed the mountain strongholds of the so-called fanatical, suicidal terrorists of the day, the Assassins (or more correctly, the *Ismā'īlīs*), and then marched on Baghdad to oust the caliph from his position of power. He accomplished this in 1258 with the help of local Kurdish warlords and the disgruntled Shiites of the region. Möngke left his youngest brother, Ariq Buqa, to guard the Mongol homelands as he went southward to help Qubilai in the conquest of the Sung. Möngke died of dysentery while on campaign in China, and once again the worldwide campaigns of the Mongols came to a sudden halt and a *quriltai* was called to which the increasingly disunited Golden family were summoned.

DIVISION

The death of Möngke in 1259 marked the end of the Mongol Empire as a united whole. Civil war flared between the brothers Qubilai and Ariq Buqa over the succession; the disputed accession of Berke Khan, a Muslim, in place of Batu Khan marked the beginning of open hostilities between the Persian Il-Khanate and the Golden Horde, and in 1260 the Mamluks of Egypt defeated a Mongol army at 'Ain Jālūt, proving Mongol fallibility.

Qubilai Khan elected himself Qa'an (Great Khan) not at a *quriltai* in Qaraqorum, the Mongol capital, but in his summer capital, Shang-du (Xanadu), while Ariq Buqa proclaimed himself true ruler of the Mongols. This dispute between the brothers has been downplayed in the Persian sources, which remain the main source of information on Mongol history. They portray Ariq Buqa as a usurper and front man for the estranged and alienated tribes who had suffered in the purges following Möngke's assumption of power. Because these chroniclers were supporters of the house of Tolui, however, they were not unbiased observers, and their words must be treated carefully. In fact, Ariq Buqa represented a sizable part of the Mongol Empire, especially those who disapproved of the direction toward which their leadership was moving. The supporters of Ariq Buqa represented the more traditional-minded Mongols who remained attached to the steppe and the nomadic way of life. They saw the Toluids as having become too close to the people over whom they ruled, namely the Chinese and Persians. The civil war of the early 1260s was a battle for the soul of the Mongols, but the outcome was not decisive. When Ariq Buqa was proclaimed Qa'an, Qubilai was able to move against him with the power and wealth of China behind him. His younger brother could not match such a challenge. The year 1264 saw Qubilai Khan victorious, but he was recognized only by his brother, Hülegü, in Iran. The Golden Horde and the Chaghedaids did not recognize his sovereignty.