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0521522900 - Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281

Reuven Amitai-Preiss

Excerpt

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## Introduction

The Mongols conquered the land and there came to them  
 From Egypt a Turk, who sacrificed his life.  
 In Syria he destroyed and scattered them.  
 To everything there is a pest of its own kind.

Abū Shāma (d. 1267)<sup>1</sup>

For sixty years, commencing in AD 1260, the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria were involved in a more or less constant struggle with the Īlkhānid Mongols of Persia. During this period, the Mongols made several concerted efforts to invade Syria: in AD 1260, 1281, 1299, 1300, 1303 and 1312. With one exception, all the Mongol expeditions were failures. Even the one Mongol victory on the field, at Wādī al-Khaznadār in AD 1299, did not lead to the permanent Mongol occupation of Syria and the ultimate defeat of the Mamluks, as the Mongols evacuated Syria after an occupation lasting only a few months. Between these major campaigns, the war generally continued in a form which in modern parlance might be described as a “cold war”: raids over both sides of the border, diplomatic maneuvers, espionage and other types of subterfuge, propaganda and ideological posturing, psychological warfare, use of satellite states, and attempts to build large-scale alliances against the enemy. Here, as in the major battles, the Mamluks usually maintained the upper hand. Yet, in spite of a conspicuous lack of success on the part of the Mongols, they continued to pursue their goals of conquering Syria and subjecting the Mamluks, until their efforts began to peter out towards the end of the second decade of the fourteenth century. It was only then that the Mongols initiated negotiations which led to a formal conclusion of a peace agreement in AD 1323.

The study of this conflict is essential to understanding both the Mamluk and Īlkhānid states. The early history of the Mamluk Sultanate is inextricably bound up with the Mongols. As will be seen, the establishment of the Sultanate was indirectly influenced by the early Mongol invasions of the Islamic world

<sup>1</sup> *Dhayl ‘alā al-rawḍatayn* (Cairo, 1947), 208.

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and the steppe region north of the Black Sea. The Mongols were the Mamluks' greatest concern in the realm of foreign relations during the formative first decades of the Mamluk Sultanate. This was not only because the Īlkhānid Mongols were its greatest enemies, but also because the Mongols of the Golden Horde were its most important allies, not the least because it was from the territory of the latter that the vast majority of young mamluks were imported to the Sultanate.<sup>2</sup> It is thus impossible to understand the development of the Sultanate without first analyzing the nature of the relationship with the Mongols. The Īlkhānids, on the other hand, may have had more pressing matters on their minds than their conflict with the Mamluks, yet over the years it still remained a major concern, to which they repeatedly returned. If nothing else, an analysis of their failure to defeat the Mamluks should lead to a greater understanding of the Īlkhāns and their army.

Both the Mamluks and Mongols were military elites of Eurasian Steppe origin who ruled over large sedentary Muslim populations, and based their armies on disciplined masses of mounted archers. Yet fundamental differences existed between the two groups. First, the Mongols continued to maintain a tribal and pastoral nomadic way of life, whereas the Mamluks, born as pagans, had been plucked out of the nomadic environment, converted to Islam and functioned as an urban military caste. While the Mamluks were Muslims, the Mongols entered the Islamic world holding a mixture of Shamanistic, Buddhist and Eastern Christian beliefs. The Mamluk sultans saw themselves as defenders of Islam and the Muslims, and portrayed themselves as such, whereas the early Īlkhāns blithely killed the Caliph, destroyed mosques and sought alliances with local and Western Christians against the Muslims. Even with the eventual conversion of the Mongols to Islam, towards the end of the thirteenth century, the religious dimension of the conflict did not completely disappear.

The purpose of this study is to present a political and military history of the Mamluk–Īlkhānid war from the first clash, at the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt in AD 1260, until the second battle of Homs in 1281. The plethora of evidence and the lack of space precluded dealing in a single volume with the entire war to 1320 and its subsequent resolution. It is my hope that in the future I will be able to publish further studies which will deal with Mamluk–Īlkhānid relations from 1281 to the demise of the Īlkhānid state in the 1330s.

### Previous scholarship

For all the interest and importance of the Īlkhānid–Mamluk war, it has until now only been partially studied. The general works on Mamluk history in European languages – most noteworthy being those by G. Weil,<sup>3</sup> P.M. Holt<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These comments are based on the remarks in D. Ayalon, "The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān. A Re-examination," Pt. CI, *SI* 36 (1972):117. See n. 13 below.

<sup>3</sup> G. Weil, *Geschichte des Abbasidenchalifats in Egypten* (Stuttgart, 1860–2), vol. 1.

<sup>4</sup> P.M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986).

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and R. Irwin<sup>5</sup> – usually mention the war only in passing, perhaps discussing at length one of the battles or certain other aspects. The same can be said of the surveys of Īlkhānid history, such as those works by A.C.M. D’Ohsson,<sup>6</sup> J.A. Boyle,<sup>7</sup> B. Spuler<sup>8</sup> and D.O. Morgan.<sup>9</sup> The standard narrative histories of the Crusades – by R. Grousset,<sup>10</sup> S. Runciman<sup>11</sup> and J. Prawer<sup>12</sup> – discuss the Mongols only in as far as they are relevant to their central subject. This does not mean that these works are without value. They provide a historical framework in which to view the Mamluk–Īlkhānid war, and offer much information and many insights into the conflict itself. They do not, however, fill the need for a detailed study on the subject.

There are several specialized studies which have proved invaluable for this work. D. Ayalon, in a series of articles on the *yasa*, or Mongol law code,<sup>13</sup> discussed some of the salient features of the conflict, while analyzing possible Mongol influence, including the *yasa*, on the Mamluks. Many of Ayalon’s other studies supplied important relevant information. P. Jackson has given us two lengthy studies,<sup>14</sup> which provide a clearer understanding of some of the important aspects of the early stages of the war. J.M. Smith, Jr.’s article on ‘Ayn Jālūt<sup>15</sup> is actually a wide-ranging study of the tactical and strategic sides of the war, among which he discusses Mongol logistical problems. D.O. Morgan<sup>16</sup> has also written on this latter topic. A.P. Martinez<sup>17</sup> has published a long and detailed study of the Īlkhānid army and the transformations it may have undergone. Finally, P. Thorau’s recent biography of Baybars<sup>18</sup> has been extremely helpful, both in providing much useful background information and discussing Mongol–Mamluk relations. A preliminary study of the Īlkhānid–Mamluk war is F.Ĥ. ‘Āshūr’s *al-‘Alāqāt al-siyāsiyya bayna al-mamālik wa’l-mughūl fī al-dawla al-mamlūkiyya al-ūlā* (“The Political Relations between the Mamluks and the Mongols during the First Mamluk Dynasty”).<sup>19</sup> Other studies will be mentioned in the course of this work.

<sup>5</sup> R. Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (London, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> A.C.M. D’Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols* (rpt., Tientsin, China, 1940, of The Hague, 1834), vol. 3.

<sup>7</sup> J.A. Boyle, “Dynastic and Political History of the Īl-Khāns,” in *CHIr*, 5:303–421.

<sup>8</sup> B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran* (4th ed., Leiden, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> D.O. Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1986), 145–74.

<sup>10</sup> R. Grousset, *Histoire des croisades* (Paris, 1934–6), vol. 3.

<sup>11</sup> S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (rpt., Harmondsworth, 1971), vol. 3.

<sup>12</sup> J. Prawer, *Histoire du royaume latin de Jérusalem*, tr. J. Nahon (Paris, 1970), vol. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Besides the part mentioned in n. 2 above, see *SI* 33 (1971):97–140; 34 (1971):151–80; 38 (1973):107–56.

<sup>14</sup> P. Jackson, “The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire,” *CAJ* 32 (1978):186–244; *idem*, “The Crisis in the Holy Land in 1260,” *English Historical Review* 95 (1980):481–513.

<sup>15</sup> J.M. Smith Jr., “‘Ayn Jālūt: Mamlūk Success or Mongol Failure?,” *HJAS* 44 (1984):307–45.

<sup>16</sup> D.O. Morgan, “The Mongols in Syria, 1260–1300,” in P.W. Edbury (ed.), *Crusade and Settlement* (Cardiff, 1985), 231–5.

<sup>17</sup> “Some Notes on the Īl-Xānid Army,” *AEMA* 6 (1986 [1988]):129–242.

<sup>18</sup> P. Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I. von Ägypten* (Wiesbaden, 1987); trans. by P.M. Holt as *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1992). In the present work I have referred to the English translation.

<sup>19</sup> Cairo, 1976. This work, although useful, is basically a compilation of Arabic sources.

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Although I have at times disagreed with some of the points raised by several of these scholars, they are responsible for shedding much light on the conflict and helping to clarify my own thinking.

**Sources**<sup>20</sup>

This study is based primarily on contemporary or near-contemporary sources composed in the Mamluk (in Arabic) and Īlkhānid realms (in Persian, Armenian and – to a much smaller extent – Syriac and Arabic). Both Mamluk and Īlkhānid sources have been analyzed elsewhere,<sup>21</sup> and therefore a lengthy discussion here would be superfluous. The following survey will be limited to remarks outlining the way in which the present study was conducted.

First and foremost, there are three contemporary biographies of the Sultan Baybars, by Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir (d. 692/1292), his nephew Shāfiʿ b. ʿAlī (d. 730/1330), and Ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī (d. 684/1285). These works are rich in information relating to the conflict with the Mongols, but they are not without their problems. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, a high government official, was essentially an official biographer of his employer. Shāfiʿ’s work is more independent, but much of the time it is merely a compendium of his uncle’s work. Ibn Shaddād, also a high official, is much less explicitly panegyric than Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, and his work contains much unique information. Unfortunately, only the later part of his work is extant. This is partially compensated for by the extracts from his work found in later chronicles. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir and Shāfiʿ both wrote biographies of Qalawun, which were also of some use.

Mamluk chroniclers can be divided into several groups. First there are those writers who could be described essentially as late Ayyūbid historians who continued to write into the Mamluk period: Ibn al-ʿAmīd (d. 672/1273), Abū Shāma (d. 665/1267), and Ibn Wāṣil (d. 697/1298). The work of the last mentioned writer, who concluded his chronicle in AH 660 (1261–2), was continued by his kinsman, Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm up to AH 695 (1295–6). Next, there are two Mamluk writers who in their youths lived through the period dealt with in this study, but who wrote their works only at a later date: Baybars al-Manṣūrī (d. 725/1325) and al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1326). These two authors relate information from earlier writers (those mentioned above), eye-witness reports, and their own youthful experiences of the conflict with the Mongols. Al-Yūnīnī was one of the earliest of what could be called the Syrian school of

<sup>20</sup> Full bibliographic references to sources mentioned below are found in the Bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> For the Mamluk sources, see C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord* (Paris, 1940), 68–93; D.P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography* (Wiesbaden, 1970); U. Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1970); P.M. Holt, “Three Biographies of al-Zāhir Baybars,” in D.O. Morgan (ed.), *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), 19–29. For the pro-Mongol sources, see Spuler, *Iran*, 3–15; D.O. Morgan, “Persian Historians and the Mongols,” in Morgan, *Medieval Historical Writing*, 109–24; *idem*, *Mongols*, 5–27; M. Weiers (ed.), *Die Mongolen: Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur* (Darmstadt, 1986), 3–28; T.S.R. Boase (ed.), *The Cilician Kingdom of Armenia* (Edinburgh, 1978), 187–8.

fourteenth-century historians, a group which includes al-Jazarī (d. 739/1338), al-Birzālī (d. 739/1339), al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), al-Kutubī (d. 764/1363), and Ibn Kathīr (d. 775/1373). I used extensively only the last three of these works. While repeating much of the evidence found in al-Yūnīnī's work, all three add interesting information. Most of the relevant parts of al-Jazarī's work have been lost,<sup>22</sup> while the one manuscript of al-Birzālī<sup>23</sup> remained inaccessible to me. This is unfortunate, since these are both seminal works and had a direct influence on the rest of the Syrian historians, including al-Yūnīnī. The inaccessibility of these two manuscripts was partially mitigated by the extensive citation of these works, often by name, by both Syrian and other writers.<sup>24</sup>

Two other later chroniclers deserve mention: al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332) and Ibn al-Furāt (d.807/1405). For his annals relating to Baybars's reign, al-Nuwayrī relies heavily on Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's biography. In a separate volume of his work, *Nihāyat al-arab*, he also provides a treatise on the Mongols, which contains important information. Ibn al-Furāt was one of the main sources of this study. Although he is a relatively late writer, he cites extensively, often naming his sources, both earlier writers and eyewitnesses. One of his most important sources was Shāfi' b. 'Alī's no longer extant *Naẓm al-sulūk*, which appears to have been a vast repository of information on the events during the early Mamluk Sultanate. Ibn al-Furāt also cited at length lost portions of *Nuzhat al-anām*, written by his younger contemporary Ibn Duqmaq (d. 809/1406).

The importance of Ibn al-Furāt's work is clearly seen when compared to *Kitāb al-sulūk* of al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442). The latter work has long been a mainstay of modern research in Mamluk and Crusader history, due to a large extent to both M.E. Quatremère's pioneering translation and M.M. Ziyāda's excellent edition. However, a systematic comparison between the two works for twenty-two years of annals (AH 658–80), shows that, for this period at least, al-Maqrīzī's work is virtually a precis of Ibn al-Furāt's vast chronicle.<sup>25</sup> This in itself would not be a bad thing, but al-Maqrīzī often did his work in a haphazard manner, distorting the meaning of his source. This phenomenon will be seen to occur several times in this study.

Among the other Mamluk authors repeatedly cited are the early fourteenth-century writers, Ibn al-Dawādārī and Qirtay al-Khaznadārī, and the mid-fifteenth-century al-'Aynī (d. 855/1451) and Ibn Taghrī Birdī (d. 874/1470).

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to Prof. U. Haarmann, who kindly sent me a microfilm of those extant folios of Jazarī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, MS. Gotha 1560, which are relevant to this study.

<sup>23</sup> *Al-Muqtafā li'l-tārīkh al-shaykh shihāb al-dīn abī shāma*, MS. Topkapı Sarayı, Ahmet III 2951.

<sup>24</sup> Little, *Introduction*, 46–64; Haarmann, *Quellenstudien*, 94–116.

<sup>25</sup> The possibility of a common source cannot be discounted, although none has come to light. Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-arab*, MS. Leiden Univ. Or. 2m, is not the common source, because the material therein is arranged somewhat differently in both works and is less detailed than in Ibn al-Furāt's chronicle. See the comments in R. Amitai-Preiss, "In the Aftermath of 'Ayn Jālūt: The Beginnings of the Mamlūk–Īlkhānid Cold War," *al-Masāq* 3 (1990):12–13; *idem*, "'Ayn Jālūt Revisited," *Tārīḥ* 2 (1991):129–30.

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The former two writers were useful sources, but both (especially Qirtay), suffer from a credibility gap, as will be seen below. Professor Little,<sup>26</sup> basing his study on research conducted on annals from a later period, has drawn attention to the importance of al-ʿAynī’s work. Without detracting from this view, in the period covered in this study al-ʿAynī generally cited known sources, especially Baybars al-Manṣūrī’s *Zubdat al-fikra*. This, however, is at times an advantage, for it helps us to reconstruct lost passages of this latter work. Ibn Taghrī Birdī is important for his citation of passages from the lost parts of Ibn Shaddād’s biography and the unavailable work of al-Jazarī.

This is not an exhaustive survey of all the Mamluk chronicles which have been used, but only of the most significant ones. Additional annalistic works are cited on occasion, and provide important details. Besides the biographies and annalistic sources, extremely useful works include Ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī’s historical geography *al-ʿlāq al-khaṭīra*, the relevant sections of the encyclopedias by al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349) and al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), and the biographical dictionaries of Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī (d. 726/1326) and al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363).

It is not uncommon for a piece of information which appears in one Mamluk source to be copied more or less exactly in several others. If every appearance of a particular detail or story were to be faithfully recorded, the result might be an unwieldy list of authorities. Thus, in the notes I have usually given what seems to me to be the original source for a story and two or three additional sources which transmit it. These are generally arranged in rough chronological order; to emphasize the dependence of a particular writer on another, I use the word “whence.” In the case of Ibn al-Furāt’s chronicle, most of which – at least for the part relevant to this study – is still only in manuscript form, I have always given the parallel (and generally shorter) passage in al-Maqrīzī’s *Sulūk*. This is because of the wide availability of the edition of the latter, and the extensive use which it hitherto has enjoyed.

The pro-Mongol sources are divided into three groups. First are the Persian sources, the most important being Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318). This writer served as a wazir to the Īlkhāns, and it is clear that his work is not unaffected by his desire to please his employers. A second source is Waṣṣāf (fl. 698–723/1299–1323), also employed by the Mongols, albeit in a more modest capacity. Waṣṣāf provides some information on the war with the Mamluks, but it generally seems of a somewhat exaggerated or even fictional nature. This author’s convoluted style makes the use of this work difficult at best. Other Persian sources of importance are Ibn Bībī (fl. 681/1283), for events in Seljuq Rūm (Anatolia), and Juwaynī (d. 681/1283), for background.

The second group of pro-Mongol sources comprises the Armenian authors. These works have been consulted either in English and French translations from Armenian, or in the Old French originals of certain works. The sources

<sup>26</sup> Little, *Introduction*, 80–7.

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are especially important for the discussion of the role of Lesser Armenia. On occasion, however, they provide information on wider matters. The third group consists of two non-Persian sources from inside the Īlkhānid Empire: Bar Hebraeus (d. AD 1286) and the Arabic work questionably attributed to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 723/1323).<sup>27</sup> The former, a Jacobite prelate, originally wrote his chronicle in Syriac (which was read here in translation), and later prepared a condensed version in Arabic. Finally, additional details have been provided from Frankish (i.e. European Christian) sources.

As a final note, I should mention that most of the information at our disposal on the Mamluk–Īlkhānid conflict is derived from the pro-Mamluk Arabic sources. It is true that the corpus of Mamluk historical works is much larger than its pro-Mongol counterpart, and this might be one reason for this phenomenon, but I would suggest that other explanations are involved. I will return to this point in chapters 5 and 10.

<sup>27</sup> See F. Rosenthal, "Ibn al-Fuwaṭī," *EJ*<sup>2</sup> 3:769.

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## CHAPTER 1

## The historical background

Another decree is that [the Mongols] are to bring the whole world into subjection to them, nor are they to make peace with any nation unless they first submit to them . . .

John of Plano Carpini (ca. 1247)<sup>1</sup>

**The Mongols and their conquest of southwest Asia**

The Mongol Empire was founded in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries by Temüchin, later known as Chinggis Khan (died AD 1227), who united the Mongolian and Turkish-speaking tribes of the eastern Eurasian steppe and forged an empire which within the span of two generations was to stretch across Asia. Having put the Inner Asian steppe under his sway and obtained the submission of the Tanguts of the Hsi-Hsia state in northwest China, Tibet and Chinese Turkestan (1209), Chinggis Khan commenced his campaign against the north Chinese state of the Chin in 1211. While this conquest was not yet completed by the end of the decade, it was well enough along for Chinggis Khan to turn his attention to the west. One of his generals had already defeated the ruler of the Qara-Khitai in western Turkestan, obliterated this state and integrated its territory into the Mongol Empire.<sup>2</sup>

In 1219, Chinggis Khan launched a massive offensive against the Khwārazm-shāh, who controlled most of the eastern Islamic world. The campaign had been sparked off by the Khwārazm-shāh's truculent attitude towards the Mongols and by his governor's murder of several hundred Muslim merchants under Mongol protection. This, however, was only a pretext, and it would seem – as Barthold has suggested – that once the Mongols had definitely established themselves on the steppes bordering the Khwārazm-shāh's kingdom, “they could not but become aware of its internal weakness and under such circumstances a nomad invasion of the much richer lands of the civilized

<sup>1</sup> “History of the Mongols,” in C. Dawson (ed.), *The Mission to Asia* (London, 1980), 25; original text in A. Van den Wyngaert, *Sinica Franciscana*, vol. 1 (Quaracchi-Firenze, 1929), 64.

<sup>2</sup> For Chinggis Khan and his early conquests, see P. Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan*, tr. and ed. T.N. Haining (Oxford, 1991); Morgan, *Mongols*, 55–73; J.J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (rpt., London, 1977), 44–70.



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peoples was inevitable.”<sup>3</sup> By 1223, the Khwārazm-shāh was dead, the lands and cities of this empire were in ruins and Chinggis Khan was on his way back to Mongolia, having left behind a small part of his army in the conquered territory.

Mongol administration of the newly conquered area was of a limited nature, its primary goals being the prevention of rebellion and the extraction of maximum taxes and tribute. In spite of its relatively small size, this Mongol force – first under Chormaghun and then Baiju (with a brief interruption in which Eljigidei was in command) – slowly but steadily expanded the realm of Mongol control, reaching as far as Seljuq Rūm (Anatolia), which was subjugated in the aftermath of the battle of Kōse Dagh in 641/1243.

Areas independent of Mongol control, however, continued to exist, such as the Ismā‘īlī strongholds in Iran and the local dynasties in southern Iran. In addition, the Jazīra (the region divided today among northern Iraq, north-eastern Syria and southeastern Turkey) and the Caliph’s state in Iraq had yet to be conquered, although the Mongols had raided the former area several times. Even before Hülegü’s arrival in the mid-1250s in Iran, potentates large and small in the as yet unconquered parts of southwest Asia had begun to realize that some type of accommodation had to be made with this strange but very real menace from the East, and many rulers had already dispatched missions to ascertain its nature and to request its mercy.<sup>4</sup>

A recurring theme in early Mongol history is the idea of Mongol imperial destiny. According to this belief, which may be called the Mongol imperial ideology, Chinggis Khan had been given a divinely inspired mission to conquer the world and place it under Mongol domination. Thus the Mongols were not only pursuing a campaign of self-aggrandizement, but were also carrying out a heaven-ordained task to bring order to the world by placing it under the aegis of Chinggis Khan and his family. Those who totally submitted were *el* (written *il* in Persian and Arabic texts), which literally meant “to be at peace or in harmony,” but really connoted the state of unconditional loyalty to the Mongols. On the other hand, all those who resisted the Mongols and refused to submit were *bulgha* (literally “to be in a confused or disordered state”) or *yaghi* (“enemy”); both terms expressed the state of being “unsubmitted” or “rebellious” and thus being at war with the Mongols. There was no intermediate state and those who resisted were to be annihilated accordingly.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion* (4th ed., London, 1977), 400.

<sup>4</sup> For Chinggis Khan’s campaign against the Khwārazm-shāh and the subsequent period up to Hülegü’s dispatch by Mōngke, see Barthold, *Turkestan*, 381–483; Spuler, *Iran*, 16–44; Morgan, *Mongols*, 145–7; Boyle, “Īl-Khāns,” 303–40; R.S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols* (Albany, 1977), 220–1, 227, 310, 334–41.

<sup>5</sup> J.F. Fletcher, “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspective,” *HJAS* 46 (1986):19, 30–5; I. de Rachewiltz, “Some Remarks on the Ideological Foundations of Chingis Khan’s Empire,” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 7 (1973):21–36; K. Sagaster, “Herrschaftsideologie und Friedensgedanke bei den Mongolen,” *CAJ* 17 (1973):223–6; E. Voegelin, “The Mongol Orders of Submission to European Powers, 1245–1255,” *Byzantion* 15 (1940–41):378–413; Spuler, *Iran*, 20; T.T. Ailsen, *Mongol Imperialism* (Berkeley, 1987), 42; P. Jackson and D.

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## 10 The historical background

This concept of divinely inspired mission played an important role in the Mongol conquests. The seemingly endless Mongol victories and resulting wealth evidently proved the validity of the ideology. This in turn strengthened the resolve of the soldiers and officers to fight and led to more victories, thereby consolidating further the belief in the ideology. It is difficult to judge how far this belief permeated the Mongol ranks, that is, did every soldier of Turco-Mongol origin know or really believe it? This ideal must certainly have been held by members of the Mongol ruling strata, thus welding them to Chinggisids and helping to propel the Mongols towards conquest.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there is some evidence in a Chinese source from the 1230s that this ideology was known and internalized by the rank and file of the Mongol army.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that the belief in the ideal of Mongol “manifest destiny” was the only or even primary reason for the ongoing Mongol expansion under Chinggis Khan and his successors.<sup>8</sup> Other factors favoring Chinggis Khan’s rise to power were the particular relations within the steppe at his time, especially China’s relative inability to interfere with steppe politics, as well as plain luck.<sup>9</sup> On a more fundamental level, territorial expansion into neighboring areas was a *sine qua non* of nomadic states in the Eurasian steppes, motivated as they were by the desire to control the manufactured and agricultural goods which could only be found there.<sup>10</sup> Expansion was also the justification for the existence of the nomadic ruler, and one who did not succeed in this endeavor was soon abandoned by his followers.<sup>11</sup> The flexible nature of Turco-Mongolian tribal society made possible both the rapid construction of larger tribal entities and the absorption of foreign nomadic groups,<sup>12</sup> thus giving the tribal leader the power to launch his campaigns of

Morgan (tr. and ed.), *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck* (London, 1990), 25–6. For a discussion of the terms *el/il*, *bulgha* and *yaghi*, see M. Erdal, “Die Türkisch-mongolischen Titel *elxan* und *elçi*,” *Proceedings of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (Berlin, 1991)*, forthcoming; *TMEN*, 2:197, 317–19; 4:99–102.

<sup>6</sup> Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 79, and B. Spuler, *The Muslim World*, vol. 2: *The Mongol Period* (Leiden, 1960), 4–5, emphasize the impact of this belief on the Mongol elite.

<sup>7</sup> Peng Da-ya and Xu Ting, *Hei-da shi-lue*, in Wang Guo-wei (ed.), *Meng-gu shi-liao si-zhong* (Taipei, 1975), 488, as cited in T. Allsen, “Changing Forms of Legitimation in Mongol Iran,” in G. Seaman and D. Mark (eds.), *Rulers from the Steppe* (Los Angeles, 1991), 223.

<sup>8</sup> This point is made by Fletcher, “Mongols,” 32.

<sup>9</sup> O. Lattimore, “The Geography of Chinggis Khan,” *The Geographical Journal* 129/1 (1963):1–7; *idem*, Review of F. Grenard, *Genghis-Khan* (Paris, 1935), in *Pacific Affairs* 10/4 (Dec. 1937):466–8.

<sup>10</sup> See A.M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, tr. J. Crookenden (Cambridge, 1984), 228–30; cf. D. Sinor, “Horse and Pasture in Inner Asian History,” *Oriens Extremus* 19 (1972):180.

<sup>11</sup> Khazanov, *Nomads*, 161, 229; J.M. Smith, Jr., “Turanian Nomadism and Iranian Politics,” *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978):63–4; Morgan, *Mongols*, 38–9; Fletcher, “Mongols,” 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> A.M. Khazanov, “Characteristic Features of Nomadic Communities in the Eurasian Steppes,” in W. Weissleder (ed.), *The Nomadic Alternative* (The Hague, 1978), 123; R.P. Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24 (1982):693–711; Morgan, *Mongols*, 37. On the similarities and differences between Turks and Mongols, see Fletcher, “Mongols,” 39; L. Krader, “The Cultural and Historical Position of the Mongols,” *Asia Major*, NS 3 (1952–3):175–6.