



## **The Khanates: The Khanates: Excerpts- The Tatar Invasions of Muslim Lands: From Islamic and secular perspectives**

**By Adan Makina  
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*This is an excerpt from Author Adan Makina's upcoming book: "The Tatar Invasions of Muslim Lands: from Islamic and secular perspectives."*

With the history of the Mongols or Tatars lopsided, twisted and written according to every historian's whim, one could see a lot of misconceptions and deficiencies in the era incidents happened and the periods the khanates carried out specific military actions or their time of rule. History is replete with erroneous calculations and time constraints. Even the names or the spelling names for the khanates cause alarms because of the linguistic differences and misspellings.

Below is the succession of the most famous khans whose historical remains are still available for further elucidation by the modern researcher having the will to continue expounding regardless of the trivialities and malevolence of their global encounters or the adoration and high circumventions of their encounters with societies, communities or nations on a global scale. Reading through several research books and papers loaded with literary criticisms, the author of this book feels not all historians have the same opinions.



## Genghis Khan

Under Genghis Khan, the Mongols conquered the largest land empire (oceans and seas excluded), notably from Eastern and Western Asia. From Korea to Hungary, Genghis Khan displayed the most strategic military operations never seen before in modern human history. Tough and resilient in their attempts to invade new lands, the Mongols fought with vigilance and valor. The Mongols not only restricted their incursions into other lands primarily to suppress their new subjects but instead benefited from commerce especially fabrics made from gold and silk.<sup>1</sup> Apart from being a barbaric, merciless killer and plunderer, Genghis Khan was, as “...one biographer put it, his was “a persistent cycle of pragmatic learning, experimental adaptation, and constant revision driven by his uniquely disciplined and focused will.” He was the greatest conqueror the world ever knew because he was more open to learning than any other conqueror has ever been...”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Komaroff, L. (Ed.). (2012). *Beyond the legacy of Genghis Khan* (Vol. 64). Brill.

<sup>2</sup> Holiday, R. (2019). *Ego is the Enemy*. Elex media komputindo.

Born in 1162 or 1167 along the Onon or Herlen rivers, his father was Yesukhei while his mother was called Hoelun.<sup>3</sup> After massively capturing his enemies and causing much destruction to their lands, Genghis Khan later created harmonious relationships with his new subjects. There are written records that state that he had a clot of blood on his right hand when he was conceived by his mother Hoelun—a sign that created much consternation among his people. Undoubtedly, he was perceived to become a great leader after growing up to adulthood—a sign that materialized in the end. “Genghis Khan by the help and leading of Mongol people captured the northwest of China in 1205 and Kin Empire in 1211, he later reached the coast of the yellow river and captured Beijing in 1215. Finally, he came through west in 1219 with a population of 700,000 people.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Chagatai Khan**

After the death of Genghis Khan, his sons inherited different lands and amalgamation of communities. For Chagatai Khan, he extended his dominion to as far as eastern and western Turkistan. Chagatai Khan who was an inspiring leader did not harm the communities he captured nor did he interfere with their religious beliefs. Transoxiana was mainly inhabited by Muslims while local nomadic communities in Mongolia continued with their practices of Shamanism.<sup>5</sup> It was in 1326 when Tarmashirin took over the leadership of the Chagatai Khanate, thus bringing a lot of changes to the areas that were under his control. Chagatai and Ogedei were brothers.

### **Ogedei Khan**

The son of Genghis Khan, Ogedei had two sons whose names were Cityük and Godan. The elder brother Cityük was born the year of the Cow and at the age of 28 took over the khanate throne, even though, six months later, in the year of the Kui-Serpent, he died. His younger brother Godan ascended the throne in the year of the Ke-Horse even though he died of leprosy in the year of the Ji-Sheep.<sup>6</sup> In 1231, Ogedei ordered his commander Chormaghan Korchi to invade Iran, Azerbaijan, Anatolia and Georgia.<sup>7</sup> With 30-40 thousand well-armed troops, the defeat of Jamaluddin’s forces ended systematically. Batu became the successor of Ogedei Khan. It was during Ogedei’s rule when religious freedom was accepted with Daoism and Buddhism and Islam and Christianity given credence even though the Mongols opposed *Halaal* slaughter of livestock.

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<sup>3</sup> Khan, G. (1971). Genghis Khan. *Birth*, 100, 1162.

<sup>4</sup> Soltani, G., & Rezaei, D. (2019). The Effects of Interactions Within Communal Conditions in Iran and Anatolia With Il Kh Nids Over 13th and 14th Centuries. *Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication*, 9(2), 159-177.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Yunus Emre TANSÜ & Baran GÜVENÇ (2019). “A Brief Overview of The Era of The Chagatai Khan Tarmashirin.” *International Social Sciences Journal*.

<sup>6</sup> Tsendina, A. (1999). Godan Khan in Mongolian and Tibetan historical works. *Studia Orientalia Electronica*, 85, 245-248.

<sup>7</sup> Nasirov, N. P. *Scientific Bulletin*, № 1, 2021, pages 79-90.

## **Mongke Khan**

Mongke took the mantle of leadership after the death of his cousin Guyuk in 1248.<sup>8</sup> Despite Batu being exempted from the succession of the Khanate, he was not in good terms with Guyuk, however, he had the chance to work with Mongke as his viceroy of the West while Mongke concentrated on the East.<sup>9</sup> By 1242 the Kingdom of Hungary was in total wreckage and had to be abandoned by Batu, but despite encamping at the Steppes of the Volga, Batu's focus was on the lower Volga Steppe where he built a capital he named Sarai. Batu was born to a concubine and that is why he was excluded by his father Jochai or Jochi who died early 1227 from the succession. The Mongols sent three envoys to Die Viet which is the current day Vietnam. By 1258, the Mongols defeated the Vietnamese.

## **Hulagu Khan**

Whether Hulagu or Hulegu, he rose to prominence during Caliph Mansur's reign. Hulagu was more inclined to Islam than Machiavellianism.<sup>10</sup> Baghdad, founded in A.D. 762 and destroyed in 1258, it was the most famous city during the succession of the Ayyubid Caliphs. A city that figured well during the reign of Harun Al-Rashid, Baghdad enjoyed historical place in the *Arabian Nights* and *Sinbad the Sailor* eras.<sup>11</sup> Since the Umayyad Caliphs of Damascus experienced unprecedented downfall due to their authoritarian leadership styles, Al-Mansur, the second Caliph of the Abbasids, embarked on the creation of Baghdad alongside the Tigris River with canal networks stretching 30 miles to the Euphrates.

It was ten thousand years before Al-Mansur laid the groundwork for the foundations of the new Baghdad in 762 that was preceded by the decayed Sumer cities of Ctesiphon, Babylon, Ur and Agade that were between the two major rivers of Tigris and Euphrates when agriculture began in the Crescent. Almost 100,000 workers comprising of masons, construction workers, architectural engineers, carpenters and smiths took to the strenuous work of rebuilding work of a new Baghdad. According to the accountants of that time, the general construction cost was a staggering 4, 883, 000 Dirhams. The Abbasid Caliphate under al-Mutawakkil (847-61) was experiencing the decline of Muslim philosophy and the persecution of Shia Muslims, Jews and Christians. Despite the Mongol army ravaging Bukhara and Samarkand, it was Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis Khan who totally destroyed Baghdad and its occupants of 700,000 including the Caliph and the Abbasid family, court officials, religious leaders and street goers when the gates of the city were opened February 10, 1258 A.D. They torched libraries, beautiful buildings and houses while those books

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<sup>8</sup> May, T. (2018), *The Mongol Empire*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press: 135.

<sup>9</sup> Dawson, C. *The Reign of Nogai Khan*. Academia.edu. Retrieved August 13, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Siddiq, S. A. (2016). *Caliph Al-Mansur and Hulagu Khan and analysis of their political strategies in the light of Machiavellianism* (Master's thesis, Gombak, Selangor: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Goodwin, J. (2003). The glory that was Baghdad. *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-), 27(2), 24-28.

that could not burn were disposed into the Tigris River whose waters turned blackish for days. The desecration of the city was so astounding that the stench from the dead forced the Mongol forces to retreat to a different place for two weeks. Upon their return when the stench subsided, the Mongols removed the dead and discarded them to a different destination outside the city.

### **Berke Khan**

Berke Khan of the Great Horde was the grandson of Genghis Khan and the first of the khans to accept Islam despite Chinggis Khan and Ögedai showing no attachment to any other religion other than native animist-tengriism.<sup>12</sup> It is common for historians to narrate the congenial defining relationships between leaders and how they at times become avowed enemies due to differences of thoughts and ideas. Berke Khan was a formidable leader during the reign of the Muslim leader Mamluk Sultan Al-Zahir Baibars (ruled between 658 AH/ 1260 CE and 676 AH/ 1277 CE).<sup>13</sup>

Friendship between Al-Zahir Baibar and the Mongol Berke Khan flourished to the extent Berke reverted to Islam while Al-Zahir named his eldest son after Berke. With the Mamluks dynasty that ruled Egypt and Syria from 1250 until 1517 when the Ottoman occupation rose to prominence (1517-1798), did the Mamluks vanish from the scene. The term Mamluk was an amalgamation of slaves drawn from Turkmen, Arabs, Turkish and others from various regions. The two leaders enjoyed cordial relations with Berke hosting guests and clerics from Al-Zahir's domain especially from Hijaz. He has been noted to have built mosques after reverting to Islam and abandoning his shamanistic beliefs. It was Hulagu Khan's conquering of Baghdad in 656 AH (1258 CE) and his deliberate killing of Caliph Al Musta'sim that caused outcries in the Muslim world. Hulagu and Berke were cousins with Berke being the son of Chinggis Khan.<sup>14</sup> After the death of Berke Khan in 676 AH (1266 CE), his son Abgha Khan succeeded him.

### **Kublai Khan**

There were Christian monks of the Nestorian Church who paid a visit to Kublai Khan during his rein in Persia. Previously a large population of the followers of Nestorius who died July 28, 450, founder of Nestorianism, existed in the end of the fifth century up to the thirteenth century of the Christian Era (CE) especially in Asia. Quite different in religious tenets from the larger Catholicism and Protestantism, Nestorius' Nestorianism was mainly immersed in the long-standing divinity of Jesus and that was whether he had two divine characteristics and how the two co-existed.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, there was the monophyte belief that the nature of Jesus was partly divine, and partly subordinately human.

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<sup>12</sup> Wilson, J. The Conversion of Berke Khan.

<sup>13</sup> Al Asfour, S. (2019). The nature of the relation between Sultan Al-Zahir Baibars and Berke Khan. *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, 14(1), 117-128.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, J. The Conversion of Berke Khan.

<sup>15</sup> Adams, R. M. (2021). Nestorius and Nestorianism. *The Monist*, 104(3), 366-375.

The discovery of a stone tablet in 1623 (or 1625) in Xian in China broke barriers that the Nestorian tablet was a factual testament that the Assyrian Church foundations had reached China by the seventh century.

It is amazing that monotheistic Christology that had its roots in Assyria, Byzantium, Persia and Egypt, finally fragmented in to different sections and with the arrival of Islam and later the Mongol invasion, Islam became the major religious force. Genghis Khan's division of his empire was known as "Ulus." His eldest son Jochi died six months before his father though he was to have dominated between the Irtysh and Ural rivers to as far West as the Pontic-Caspian Steppe and to the Aral Sea and Amu Darya River in northern Khorezm.<sup>16</sup>

### **Ariq Borke**

Also known as Ariq Boke, he was the grandson of Chinggis Khan of the Golden Horde.<sup>17</sup> Rising at a time when the Mongols had captured one-fifth of the world's land area, the younger brother Kublai Khan was crowned Great Khan at the imperial capital that was Karakorum. While most of the descendants of Genghis Khan favored Ariq Borke to be crowned the Great Khan, his two brothers, Kublai and Hulegu remained opposed to his coronation.<sup>18</sup> No wonder, the struggle for superiority in leadership and governance, has been a common precedent among princes since time immemorial.

The story of Joseph, son of Jacob who was thrown into a water well by his brothers as a form of retaliation since they unanimously believed that he was adored by their father who was also called Israel—while saving his maternal brother Benjamin, is a testament to human jealousy.

### **Temür Khan**

Also known as Öljejtü Khan, he was the son of Crown Prince Zhenjin and the grandson of Kublai Khan. Considered the sixth great khan of the Mongol Empire, he was succeeded by Külüg Khan. His reign was mainly in China and was known as Emperor Chengzong of Yuan. He ruled from May 10, 1294 to February 10, 1307.

### **Mahmud Ghazan Khan**

His reversion to Islam in A.H. 694/A.D. 1295 was an era of delight and great achievement for his kingdom and as well for his Muslim subjects. Even though Ghazan's conversion to Islam was real, there was another objective: to win the hearts and minds of Mongols who had reverted earlier and to dedicate his strength and strategies to defeating Baiku, a man who was his rival. It was his viceroy or Na'ib Nawruz who was behind his reversion. His father, Arghun died a pagan. Though he left several wives behind, Ghazan got attracted to Bulughan Khatun who was a

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<sup>16</sup> Schütz, E. (1991). The Decisive Motives of Tatar Failure in the Ilkhanid—Mamluk Fights in the Holy land. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 45(1), 3-22.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, J. The Conversion of Berke Khan.

<sup>18</sup> Khan, P. (1988). The Secret History of the Mongols. Boston: Cheng & Tsui.

widow of his father. Even though it is forbidden for a male Muslim to marry a father's widowed wife, in Mongol Yasa, it was permissible. "However, one of the 'ulama' offered a legal opinion which provided a solution to this impasse: since Arghun had been a pagan, his marriage to Bulughan Khatun was not legal, and therefore Ghazan could now wed her with impunity. The Khan was happy with this suggestion, married Bulughan Khatun (in a Muslim manner), and 'he adhered to Islam. Without this [solution], he would have apostatized."<sup>19</sup>

### **Tamer lane**

The name Tamer Lane that has been westernized is a Turkic version, but to Persians, his real name is Timur-i-lang, meaning Timur the lame.<sup>20</sup> Some researchers refer to him as the most strategic



The Mausoleum of Tamerlane

fighter who moved with speed like a whirlwind to capture new lands and free Muslims and others who were subjugated by more powerful forces. An entire chapter will capture his history as you continue reading through the lines of the following chapters.

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<sup>19</sup> Amitai-Preiss, R. (1996). Ghazan, Islam and Mongol tradition: a view from the Mamlūk sultanate1. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 59(1), 1-10.

<sup>20</sup> Manz, B. F. (1999). *The rise and rule of Tamerlane*. Cambridge University Press.

## Summary

Even though each khan displayed different characteristics in terms of waging wars and dealing with subjects in captured lands, they had opposing indistinguishable objectives in their pursuit of territorial expansions. Some fought with valor and vigor by rending the world asunder while others were more reconciliatory and humanistic in approach. To the Muslim theologian or religious scholar, the most wretched of all was the one who died outside Islamic domain, because, dying out of the pale of Islam, is the gateway to hell on the Day of Judgment, though, the impending punishment is preceded by intolerable punishment in the grave—a punishment whose duration and nature of pain and desolation in terrible darkness is only known to Allaah Almighty. The Qur'an clearly states regarding the punishment for the disbelievers in the grave and the Hereafter:

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكْذِبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ \* فَنُزِّلَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ

**And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones. He shall have an entertainment of boiling water... (56:92-93)**

That is, in the grave he would be greeted by boiling water,

وَتَصْلِيَةٌ جَحِيمٍ

**And burning in hell. (56:94)**

That is, in the hereafter, he would be consigned to Hell.”

Regarding the doom in the grave, Allaah expounds repeatedly in the Qur'an: **While a dreadful doom encompassed Pharaoh's folk. The Fire; they are exposed to it morning and evening; and on the day when the Hour upriseth (it is said): Cause Pharaoh's folk to enter the most awful doom** (Ghafir 40:45-46). For every dead human being, after the Angel of Death takes away the soul, inside the grave, two angels whose names are Munkar and Nakir, are responsible for questioning. For the disbeliever, despite his or her requests get rejected by the angels, will suffer tremendously unbearable squeezing that will last until the Day of Judgment.

For the Angel of Death whose name is Malakul Mawt, his work of retrieving the souls of the believers and disbelievers is a daily, hourly occurrence and the speed he travels, is beyond human comprehension even though some commentators assume it to be the speed of light. **“Thou could see, when the wrong doers reach the pangs of death and the angels stretch their hands out, saying: Deliver up your souls. This day ye are awarded doom of degradation for that ye spoke concerning Allah other than the truth, and scorned, His portents (Al-An'am 6:93).”**

**“And verily, for those who do wrong, there is a punishment beyond that. But most of them know not (At-Tur 51:47).”**

In the next chapter, we'll focus on the Golden Horde whose meaning will be explained in detail before going down the lines of the Mongol destructions.

NB: This is an excerpt from Author Adan Makina's upcoming book: "*The Tatar Invasions of Muslim Lands: from Islamic and secular perspectives.*" His first book, "*The Northern Frontier District: the struggles of Sultan Deghow Maalim Sambul*", a 523-page hardcover book with colored photos and appealing fonts is currently available to buyers.

Further reading: [Muslim Advances in Civilization Before and After the Mongol Invasions](#)

Adan Makina

Email: [adan.makina@gmail.com](mailto:adan.makina@gmail.com)

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