

ARTICLE

## An *ulus* within an *ulus*: the afterlife of Ariq Böke's appanage in the Mongol Empire (1252–1336)

Michael Hope 

Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea  
Email: [michael.hope@yonsei.ac.kr](mailto:michael.hope@yonsei.ac.kr)

### Abstract

In 1206 Chinggis Khan replaced the warring factions of Mongolia with a single polity, the Great Mongol Realm (*Yeke Mongqol Ulus*). The *ulus* was ruled by a khan, who allocated pastures, households and revenues to his relatives as shares (*qubi*). Chinggis granted the first allocation to his brothers and senior sons in 1207 but many more redistributions took place in the coming decades. Many of these appanages grew so large that their holders challenged the khan's dominance and even broke free of his control to form their own polities (*uluses*). This article will explore the fluidity of the Mongol appanage system by taking the *qubi* of Chinggis Khan's grandson Ariq Böke (d. 1266) as a case study. The Ariq Bökids established their own secondary *ulus* in Inner Asia, before fragmenting and lending their support to neighbouring khans in the fourteenth century.

**Keywords:** *ulus*; Mongol Empire; Ilkhanate; *qubi*; Ariq Böke

### Introduction

The crisis of the fourteenth century took a heavy toll on the Mongol Empire. Buffeted by disease, natural disasters and popular millenarian uprisings, the Mongols were plunged into civil war in the Qipchaq Steppe, Iran, China and Transoxiana. These internecine conflicts played havoc with the dynastic politics of the empire, almost eradicating some lineages, like the Hülegüids in Iran (1256–1356), and bringing other hitherto marginalized lineages, such as the Togha-Temürids (1379–1406) and Ögödeyids (1340–1402), back into view. The descendants of Chinggis Khan's grandson Ariq Böke (d. 1266) were one of the groups that briefly returned to historical focus during this tumultuous time. Ariq Böke was known chiefly for unsuccessfully challenging his more illustrious brother Qubilai (r. 1260–94) for the throne in 1260. His defeat excluded his family from the subsequent division of power in the Mongol Empire. Nevertheless, one of Ariq Böke's great-great-grandsons, Arpa Kö'ün, was enthroned in Iran in 1335 before another relative, Yesüder, claimed control of Mongolia in 1388.<sup>1</sup> While little is known of Yesüder, enough information is provided by the ostensibly Persian-language sources of the Ilkhanate (1258–1335) to reconstruct the history of his family from the death of Ariq Böke to Arpa's short rule in Iran (r. 1335–36). Their story not only illuminates how Arpa came to the Ilkhanate, it also

<sup>1</sup> David M. Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire: Ming China and Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2019), 81; Shagdaryn Bira, *Mongolian Historical Writing from 1200 to 1700*, (trans.) J. R. Krueger (Bellingham, WA, 2002), 119.

highlights the critical role that princes, or *kō'üns* (lit. royal sons), played in managing the camps, pastures and armies of the Mongol Empire.<sup>2</sup>

Recent scholarship has re-emphasized the importance of the wider *altan uruq* (royal family) to the administration of the Mongol Empire. Whereas earlier historians stressed the centrality of kinship to Inner Asian tribal polities, the latest research highlights how corporate family leadership complemented their transhumant lifeways.<sup>3</sup> The Mongols were organized into *uluses* (realms)—a population owing allegiance to a khan (ruler), who controlled the allocation of pastures (*yurts*) and revenues (*taghār*). In 1206, Chinggis Khan created a Great Mongol Ulus (*Yeke Mongqol Ulus*), which not only replaced the polities of his rivals in Mongolia but also the empires that bordered them in East Asia, the Middle East and Inner Asia.<sup>4</sup> The Great Ulus (i.e. empire) was overseen by the qa'an (great khan), who allocated shares (*qubi*) of people, pastures and revenues to his relatives as appanages. While Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene has distinguished between the authority the qa'an held over the *ulus* and the proprietary rights that a prince or princess exercised over their camps of people (*ordos*) and resources, the size and wealth of these appanages afforded their masters a springboard to bid for political power.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, these large princely appanages often became semi-autonomous *uluses* in their own right – what Kim Hodong has identified as secondary *uluses*.<sup>6</sup>

Fresh conquests, factional conflicts and economic pressures caused appanages to contract, expand or even transform into *uluses*. The most famous allocation of shares was made by Chinggis Khan, who granted armies and pastures to the sons of his primary wife, Börte (Jochi, Chaghadai, Ögödei and Tolui), and his brothers (Jochi Qasar, Belgütei, Qachi'un and Temüge Otchigin) shortly after he created the Great Mongol Ulus in 1206.<sup>7</sup> *The Secret History of the Mongols* states that the appanages belonging to Chinggis Khan's sons were transformed into *uluses* before he invaded the Khwārazmshāh Empire in 1219.<sup>8</sup> This dispensation was altered mid-way through the thirteenth century, when political turbulence contributed to the creation of several new *uluses*. The coup that brought Möngke Qa'an to power in 1251 was followed by the purge of his rivals and the virtual disappearance of the Ögödeyid and Chaghadayid *uluses*. Möngke further bolstered his position by allocating new appanages to his brothers Hülegü and Qubilai.<sup>9</sup> These appanages were converted into *uluses* by their holders following the death of

<sup>2</sup> For the term *kō'in* (also *ke'in*), see Kim Hodong, "Formation and changes of *uluses* in the Mongol Empire", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, 2019, 309; Qiu Yihao, "Rescuing legitimate narrative by re-imagining Qubilai Qa'an", in T. May and M. Hope (eds), *The Mongol World* (London, 2022), 966.

<sup>3</sup> Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, "Political order in pre-modern Eurasia: imperial incorporation and the hereditary division system", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26/4, 2016, 644; Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, "Where did the Mongol Empire come from? Medieval Mongol ideas of people, state and empire", *Inner Asia* 13/2, 2011, 212–15; Marie Favereau, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World* (Cambridge, MA, 2021), 11–12; Christopher P. Atwood (trans.), *The Secret History of the Mongols* (Milton Keynes, 2023), xciv.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher P. Atwood, "Titles, appanages, marriages and officials: a comparison of political forms in the Zünghar and thirteenth century Mongol empires", in D. Sneath (ed.), *Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth-Twentieth Centuries* (Bellingham, 2006), 219; Kim, "Formation and changes of *uluses*", 273.

<sup>5</sup> Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, "Mongol state formation and imperial transformation", in May and Hope (eds), *The Mongol World*, 356.

<sup>6</sup> Kim, "Formation and changes of *uluses*", 287; Atwood (trans.), *Secret History*, xciv.

<sup>7</sup> Kim, "Formation and changes of *uluses*", 282; Anonymous, *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* (*SHM*), (trans.) I. de Rachewiltz (Leiden, 2006), §242, 167.

<sup>8</sup> *SHM*, Vol. 1, §255, 187; Munkh-Erdene, "Mongol state formation", 358.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Jackson, "From *ulus* to khanate: the making of the Mongol states c. 1220–c. 1290", in R. Amitai-Preiss and D. O. Morgan (eds), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden, 1999), 14; Kim, "Formation and changes of *uluses*", 296.

Möngke in 1259. The rulers of these *ulus* spent the rest of the thirteenth century attempting to limit the power of rival princes through periodic purges and the reallocation of resources to non-royal commanders and administrators, which proved effective in limiting the challenge posed by princes. But they may have also robbed the empire of effective royal leadership, contributing to the collapse of Chinggisid rule in Iran and China mid-way through the fourteenth century.

The story of Ariq Böke's lineage reflects the often-violent competition for resources inherent in the appanage system. He was initially granted a share of soldiers, pastures and revenues, similar to those of his brothers Qubilai and Hülegü. These brothers converted their shares into *ulus* – the Great Khanate ruled by Qubilai's descendants (i.e. the Yuan dynasty, 1260–1388) and the Ilkhanate ruled by Hülegü's descendants (1258–1335) – and it seemed for a time that Ariq Böke's sons would do the same in Inner Asia, where they entered into alliances with Chaghadayid, Ögödeyid and Jochid princes against Qubilai. But the Ögödeyid prince Qaidu claimed leadership of this alliance in 1271, thereby creating a new *ulus* at the heart of the Mongol Empire – the Middle Empire (*Dumdadu Mongqol Ulus*, 1271–1346). The Ariq Bökids were given relatively free reign over their *yurts* (pastures) within this *ulus*, but circumstances changed following Qaidu's death in 1303. Another of Qaidu's allies, the Chaghadayid prince Du'a (r. 1304–07), made an agreement with the Yuan ruler Temür Qa'an (r. 1294–1307) to seize power from Qaidu's relatives, and the Ariq Bökids were significantly weakened by the subsequent reallocation of resources. Facing the loss of their pastures and revenues, the Ariq Bökids fractured, with some pledging allegiance to Temür Qa'an, while others moved to Iran where they joined the Ilkhan Öljeitü (r. 1304–16). Although significantly diminished, the descendants of Ariq Böke became players in the Ilkhanate and the Great Khanate where they were appointed khans in 1335 and 1388 respectively. By this time, however, the redistribution of resources from princes to non-royal commanders robbed the Ariq Bökids of their chance to reinstate their *ulus*. Lacking control over pastures, people and revenues, they were incapable of performing the function of a khan, and were soon replaced.

### Ariq Böke's appanage

The story of Ariq Böke and his lineage is followed most closely by Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 1318), who included a chapter on the family in his *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* (1306; *Collected Histories*). The chapter appears, rather oddly, in the third part of the history of Qubilai's reign, which concerns "His conduct and character, the pronouncements and orders he gave, the incidents that occurred during his reign that were not included in the previous two sections".<sup>10</sup> In fact, the chapter contains none of these details and instead provides a genealogy of Ariq Böke's descendants, information about his wives and their leading officers.

It is difficult to understand why Rashīd al-Dīn devoted so much space to Qubilai's brother in a chapter covering his reign. It was far more common for other Persian authors, like Waṣṣāf and Dā'ūd Banākātī, to characterize Ariq Böke as a rebel, which led them to jettison details about his family or his *ordo* that might imply he was a legitimate ruler.<sup>11</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn bucked this trend in both the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* and his genealogy of

<sup>10</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Hamadānī, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, (eds) M. Rawshan and M. Mūsawī (Tehran, 1994), Vol. 2, 939; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' u't-Tawārikh: Compendium of Chronicles*, (trans.) W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 460.

<sup>11</sup> Waṣṣāf al-Ḥaḍrat, al-Ḥaḍrat, *Tajziyat al-amṣār wa tazjiyat al-a'sār* (Bombay, 1853), 4; Dāvūd Banākātī, *Tārikh-i Banākātī: Rawḍat Ūlī al-Albāb fī Ma'rīfat al-Tawārikh wa al-Ansāb*, (ed.) J. Shi'ār (Tehran, 1969), 405.

the Chinggisids, the *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah*, in which Ariq Böke receives his own chapter.<sup>12</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn generally provided separate genealogies for khans, implying that he acknowledged Ariq Böke as co-ruler of the Mongol Empire between 1260 and 1264. Although this was technically true, it may have been politically expedient for him to relegate Ariq Böke's chapter to a sub-heading in the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*. The author made several modifications to the manuscript during his lifetime, giving greater emphasis to ruling lineages over collateral lineages, consistent with the centralizing reforms that took place in the Ilkhanate during the early fourteenth century when the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* was produced.<sup>13</sup> Whatever his reason for devoting additional space to Ariq Böke, his chapter gives us the most detailed information about the prince and his family during the reign of his brothers Möngke (1251–59) and Qubilai (1260–94).

Ariq Böke was the youngest son of Tolui (Chinggis Khan's fourth son) by his first wife, Sorqaqtani Beki. As a son of the senior wife, Ariq Böke was entitled to a share of his father's property, including his pastures, people, animals and equipment. His allotment included summer pastures around the Altai mountains and winter pastures in the "Uriangqat (i.e. Uriangqai) and Qirghiz" territory.<sup>14</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn claimed that the Qirghiz region was adjacent to the Yenisei River (Mong. Kem Kemchi'üt), while the Uriangqai resided in the Barquchin Lowlands (Barquchin Tögüm), where the Qori, Barqut and Tumat peoples dwelled, which he describes as "the farthest reaches of civilization" (Figure 1).<sup>15</sup> *The Secret History* states that the Selenge River flows into the Barquchin region, which would place it to the east of Lake Baikal.<sup>16</sup> At its greatest extent, the pastures (*yurt*) given to Ariq Böke may therefore have incorporated everything from modern Krasnoyarsk to Buryatia and western Mongolia. Ariq Böke inhabited these pastures with his mother, Sorqaqtani Beki, until her death in 1252 when he assumed sole control of the territory and its people.<sup>17</sup> Ariq Böke was also entrusted with the regency of the qa'an's central *ulus* (*qol-un ulus*), situated in the Orkhon Valley, when his brother Möngke left to lead the invasion of the Southern Song in 1258.<sup>18</sup> This appointment followed the tradition whereby the youngest son of the senior wife, the *otchigin*, was charged with protecting the hearth. Chinggis Khan gave his youngest brother Temüge Otchigin a similar responsibility during his invasion of the Khwārazmshāh Empire in 1219–24.<sup>19</sup> Ariq Böke was therefore in charge of an enormous expanse of territory when Möngke died of illness on campaign in 1259.

When news of Möngke's death reached Ariq Böke, he summoned his relatives to a council of notables (*quriltai*) in Mongolia to discuss the succession. What happened next is documented by authors with a heavy bias towards Qubilai, who were responsible for codifying and compiling many of the early court histories used by later texts, such as the *Yuan*

<sup>12</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Hamadāni, *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah*, MS. Istanbul Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, Ahmad III, Catalogue No. 2937, f. 168.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Brack, "Mediating sacred kingship: conversion and sovereignty in Mongol Iran", PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2016, 40–2.

<sup>14</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 939.

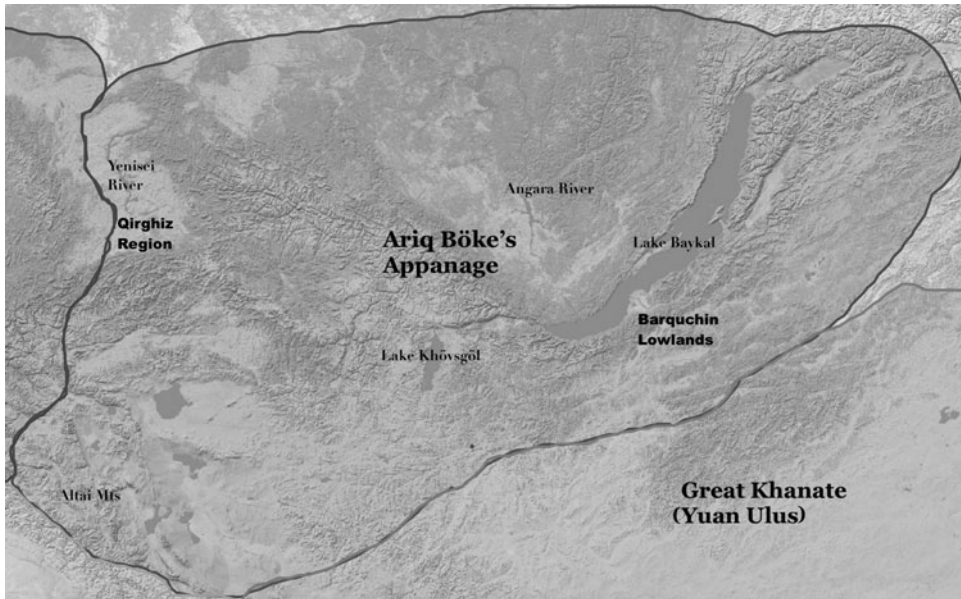
<sup>15</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 1, 103–04, 143; Vol. 2, 939.

<sup>16</sup> *SHM*, Vol. 1, §109, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 939; Thomas Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of Grand Khan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251–1259* (Berkeley, CA, 1987), 51.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Allsen, "The rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian rule in North China", in H. Franke and D. Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (New York, 1994), 410–11.

<sup>19</sup> *SHM*, Vol. 1, §257, 189; George Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire* (Westport, CT, 2006), 30; Jennifer Holmgren, "Observations on marriage and inheritance practices in early Mongol and Yüan society, with particular reference to the Levirate", *Journal of Asian History* 20, 1986, 146 and 152; Boris Y. Vladimirtsov, *Le Régime Social des Mongols: Le Féodalisme Nomade* (Paris, 1948), 60.



**Figure 1.** Ariq Böke's appanage. Source: Created by the author.

shi (1370; *Dynastic History of the Yuan*) and the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*.<sup>20</sup> They claim that while Qubilai delayed his return to Mongolia in order to capture the Song fortress of O-chou, Ariq Böke rushed to force through his own nomination.<sup>21</sup> In recent times, historians like Christopher Atwood, Morris Rossabi and Timothy May have challenged the view that Ariq Böke circumvented the popular will of the Mongol notables, pointing out that he garnered strong support from Möngke's wives, children, senior commanders and guardsmen. He was also favoured by some of his relatives based in the most distant parts of the empire, like Berke Khan (r. 1257–66) of the Jochid Ulus.<sup>22</sup> Even his other brother Hülegü (d. 1265) may have initially supported Ariq Böke's claims over those of Qubilai, as Hülegü's second son, Jumughur, and several of his wives paid court to Ariq Böke until 1262 when he set out to rejoin his father in Iran.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Qubilai drew support from the army which had been sent to China, where he had his appanage. Qubilai was still in China when his wife Chabui informed him that Ariq Böke had declared himself khan and was sending an army to assume control of Qubilai's newly built city of Shangdu, then known as Kaiping, in Inner Mongolia.<sup>24</sup> Qubilai's supporters insisted that

<sup>20</sup> Christopher P. Atwood, "The indictment of Ong Qa'an: the earliest reconstructable Mongolian source on the rise of Chinggis Khan", *Historical and Philological Studies of China's Western Regions*, Festschrift for Professor Futaki Hiroshi, 9, 2017, 269; Christopher P. Atwood, "Six pre-Chinggisid genealogies in the Mongol Empire", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 19, 2012, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley, CA, 1987), 51; Morris Rossabi, "The reign of Khubilai Khan", in Franke and Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 6, 422.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Atwood, "The empire of the Great Khan: the Yuan Ulus, 1260–1368", in M. Biran and H. Kim (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire* (Cambridge, 2023), Vol. 1, 110; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 48–50; Timothy May, "Race to the throne: thoughts on Ariq-Böke's and Khubilai's claims to the Mongol throne" (Miscellanea in Honorem Professoris Emeriti Victor Spinei Oblata), in G. Bilavski and D. Aparaschivei (eds), *Studia Mediaevalia Europaea et Orientalia* (Bucharest, 2018), 345.

<sup>23</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 60; May, "Race to the throne", 349.

<sup>24</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 876 and 1064.



he crown himself in 1260, thereby signalling his intention to violently challenge his brother for the throne.

Qubilai's strategy was to cut off the supply lines leading into Mongolia in order to starve Ariq Böke's army of provisions. He began by pushing Ariq Böke's troops out of the Tangut region near the Gansu Corridor and Shangdu late in 1260.<sup>25</sup> Having lost these outposts, Ariq Böke withdrew from the imperial capital Qara Qorum to his patrimony on the Yenisei River. This region was capable of producing a supply of grain, but Ariq Böke needed more in order to maintain his resistance against Qubilai.<sup>26</sup> As qa'an, he had the right to assign pastures and resources as he deemed fit, so he dispatched a prince named Alghu, who had been raised in Ariq Böke's household, to seize control of Almaligh and impose control over the *ulus* of Chaghadai. According to the fourteenth-century Persian historian Waṣṣāf (d. 1328), Ariq Böke identified Almaligh, at the centre of a series of towns and pastures (*yurts*), as a location of strategic importance that could provide revenues and soldiers.<sup>27</sup> Yet his plans were dashed when Alghu turned on him soon after arriving in Almaligh. Alghu sent his agents to seize control of the major towns of the Zarafshan valley and installed his own general over the Qaraunas army based in modern Afghanistan. But when Ariq Böke's envoys came to claim their share of the revenues, Alghu detained them and kept the income in his own treasury.<sup>28</sup> Realizing he had been betrayed, Ariq Böke set out from the Yenisei and faced Alghu near Almaligh in 1262. Alghu's army were initially defeated, but he summoned support from the Qaraunas division to beat back Ariq Böke's advance, allowing the Chaghadayid prince to establish a foothold in Transoxiana.<sup>29</sup>

Alghu's betrayal left Ariq Böke in a precarious position. Sandwiched between two hostile armies, the winter of 1262 struck with particular ferocity and the subsequent famine killed off many of his animals.<sup>30</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn adds that Ariq Böke's tent was uprooted by a strong wind, which his companions took as an evil portent.<sup>31</sup> Cold, hungry and imperilled, Ariq Böke's forces began to desert him and he realized he could not remain in Almaligh. Unable to return to Mongolia and too weak to make another assault on Alghu, Ariq Böke decided to surrender to his brother Qubilai, which he did at Shangdu in 1263.<sup>32</sup>

Little is known of Ariq Böke's final years. Rashīd al-Dīn stated that Qubilai was magnanimous in victory. After initial signs of anger, he admitted his brother to an audience and shed tears over their estrangement. The pair embraced and Qubilai even chivalrously hinted that they had both been at fault in their conflict.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, he convened a group of royal princes to hold a *yarghu* (trial) for Ariq Böke and his commanders. The trial could not be attended by Hülegü, Alghu or Berke (the khan of the Jochid Ulu), who were reluctant to abandon their own *uluses* during such a volatile time. In their absence, the descendants of Chinggis Khan's brothers were summoned to decide what should be done with Ariq Böke and the other princes who aided him. Together they agreed, "For the qa'an's sake, let us spare their lives."<sup>34</sup> Ariq Böke's non-royal (*qarachu*)

<sup>25</sup> Atwood, "The Yuan Ulu", 111; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 57; May, "Race to the throne", 346.

<sup>26</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 57.

<sup>27</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 12; Michal Biran, "Mongol Central Asia: the Chaghadaids and the Ögödeids, 1260–1370", in Biran and Kim (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*, Vol. 1, 322.

<sup>29</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 883; Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 884.

<sup>31</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 884.

<sup>32</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 61–2; May, "Race to the throne", 347; Biran, "Mongol Central Asia", 323.

<sup>33</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 886.

<sup>34</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 890.

commanders were not so lucky and several of them were put to death.<sup>35</sup> News of this decision was broadcast across the empire and Ariq Böke was returned to his patrimony, where he died of an illness in 1266. Ariq Böke would have still been in his late forties, which has led to some speculation that he may have been murdered, but the lack of any hard evidence makes it just as likely that he did in fact succumb to sickness.<sup>36</sup> It should be borne in mind that his elder brother Hülegü had already predeceased him in 1265 and it was not uncommon for Mongol rulers to die even younger due to their often over-indulgent lifestyle.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Waṣṣāf notes that Ariq Böke drowned his shame in drink after Qubilai accepted his apology. He also noted that Qubilai “fixed summer and winter pastures, which in their tongue is expressed as *yaylaq* and *qishlaq* and sent him to that yurt with one lady and several attendants to oversee his basic needs”.<sup>38</sup> It is unclear where this yurt was, as Waṣṣāf simply notes that it was a “place of regret and loneliness”, far away from the imperial throne. But it is possible that this far-flung place of exile was the original yurt assigned to him during the reign of Möngke.

### Ariq Böke’s appanage in the reign of Qubilai (1260–94)

There are few indications that Ariq Böke’s so-called rebellion prevented his children from laying claim to his appanage. Rashīd al-Dīn states that his body was laid to rest in Buda Ündür, where Chinggis Khan and his successors were also buried, and in 1269 Qubilai invited his nephews to court to distribute their inheritance. This inheritance consisted primarily of the camps (*ordos*) of Ariq Böke, which were managed by his widows. Each of Ariq Böke’s four sons – Yobuqur (also Yomuqur), Malik Temür (also Melik Temür), Naira’u Buqa and Tammachi (Figure 2) – received a wife and an *ordo* before being sent back to their father’s yurt, namely his pasturelands between the Yenisei and the Altai mountains.<sup>39</sup> The peaceful transfer of Ariq Böke’s share to his sons ensured that they would continue to play an influential role in the politics of the Mongol Empire for the rest of the thirteenth century.

The yurts and the *ordos* of Ariq Böke gave his sons a strategically important position in the Mongol Empire. One of Qubilai’s most pressing concerns was the challenge posed by the Ögödeyid prince Qaidu, who was given the region of Qayaliq as his *qubi* in 1252.<sup>40</sup> Qaidu strengthened his position by moving against Alghu’s successor, Baraq Khan, after the latter launched a disastrous invasion of the Ilkhanate in 1269–70. Qaidu subsequently proclaimed himself khan of the Middle Empire, comprising both the Chaghadayid and Ögödeyid appanages, in 1271.<sup>41</sup> Qubilai summoned Qaidu to offer his submission after Ariq Böke’s surrender in 1263, but he refused to present himself and in 1266 the qa’an responded by appointing his son Nomuqan as the Prince of Pacification of the North.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 890.

<sup>36</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 62.

<sup>37</sup> Lane, *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, 162; Hodong Kim, “A reappraisal of Güyüg Khan”, in R. Amitai and M. Biran (eds), *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World* (Leiden, 2005), 310; ‘Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, *Tārīkh-i Muḡhūl* (Tehran, 2008), 263.

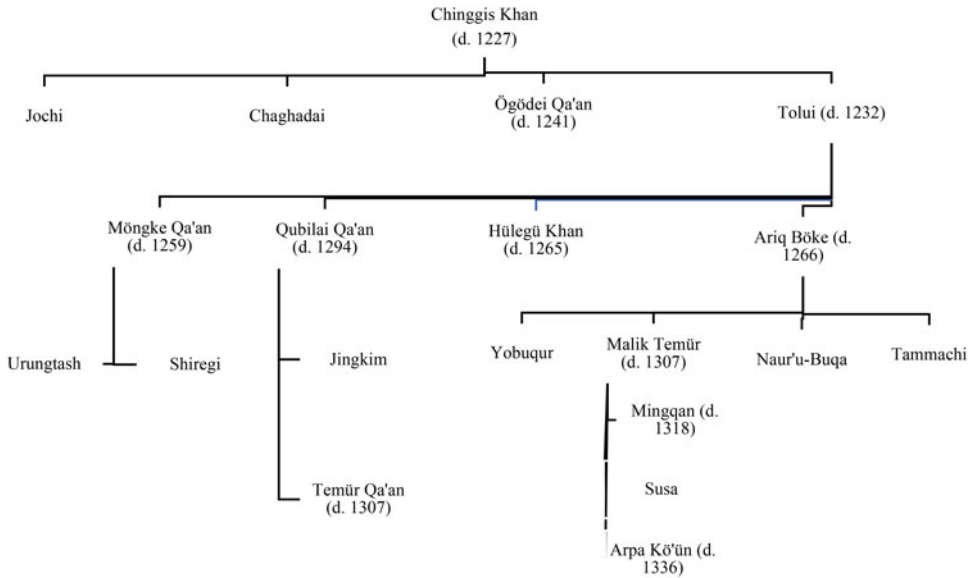
<sup>38</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 940. I have followed the transliteration provided in W. M. Thackston’s translation of Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jami’u’t-Tawarikh*, 460.

<sup>40</sup> Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (Richmond, Surrey, 1997), 19; Thomas Allsen, “Sharing out the empire: apportioned land under the Mongols” in A. M. Khazanov and A. Wink (eds), *Nomads in the Sedentary World* (Richmond, Surrey, 2001), 174; Kim, “Formation and changes of *ulus*es”, 305.

<sup>41</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 32; Michael Hope, “The middle empire”, in May and Hope (eds), *The Mongol World*, 304; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven, 2017), 150.

<sup>42</sup> Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 107; Atwood, “The Yuan *ulus*”, 128.



**Figure 2.** Ariq Böke's lineage. Source: Created by the author.

Nomuqan was initially posted to the Altai mountains, but in 1271 Qubilai sent him to Almalign with a group of princes, including the sons of Ariq Böke, to extend his control over the Tarim Basin and into Inner Asia. The proximity of these movements to the Ariq Bökid *yurts* made them useful allies in the politics of Inner Asia, where they remained influential players until 1307 (Figure 3).

We can only make rough estimates of the size of the Ariq Bökid army as we have detailed information for just one of his sons, Malik Temür. Rashid al-Dīn lists 21 commanders in his retinue, many of whom served in his personal *keshig* (bodyguard).<sup>43</sup> Indeed, four are mentioned commanding the shifts of the *keshig*, as was customary for a royal guard.<sup>44</sup> Another five are listed holding tasks associated with the *keshig* and the administration of the *ordo*, including stewards (*ba'urchi*), commanders of the camp (*amīr-i ūrdū*), equerries (*aqtachi*), treasurers (*khazīnahchī*) and keepers of the wardrobe (*sügürchis*).<sup>45</sup> Only two are mentioned commanding *hazārahs* (nominal units of 1,000 soldiers), which makes it very difficult to guess the total size of Malik Temür's army, but we may assume that it was at least somewhere approaching 2,000 strong.<sup>46</sup> Although one Naiman and one Oyirat are explicitly mentioned, the dominant group in Malik Temür's army were the Suldus, several of whom were descended from Sorqan Shira, a companion of Chinggis Khan, whose sons served in the troops allotted to Tolui, Malik Temür's grandfather.<sup>47</sup> These soldiers were probably very loyal to Malik Temür, having served his family for several generations. Indeed, he married his daughter to the commander of one of his

<sup>43</sup> Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 943–4; Christopher P. Atwood, "Ulus emirs, *keshig* elders, signatures, and marriage partners: the evolution of a classic Mongol institution", in Sneath (ed.), *Imperial Statecraft*, 156–7; Charles Melville, "The *keshig* in Iran: the survival of the royal Mongol household", in L. Komaroff (ed.), *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan* (Leiden, 2006), 135–64.

<sup>44</sup> Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 943.

<sup>45</sup> Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 943–4.

<sup>46</sup> Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 943–4.

<sup>47</sup> Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 943.





**Figure 3.** Mongol Eurasia. Source: Created by the author.

*keshig* – Amīr Jā’ūtū of the Sulduš.<sup>48</sup> Another of their number Ketei (Pers. Kihatay) was described as the *kükeltash* (milk brother) of Malik Temūr, implying that his mother served as the prince’s wet nurse.<sup>49</sup> It is likely that Malik Temūr’s older brother Yobuqur commanded an army of similar size and composition, as he was also born to a senior wife. The allocations given to their siblings Naira’u Buqa and Tammachi may have been slightly less impressive, since they were born to concubines, but this is not explicitly stated by Rashīd al-Dīn.<sup>50</sup> The Ariq Bökid army may therefore be numbered conservatively at around 4,000–8,000 soldiers, although the total figure was probably several times greater, based on later figures given by Rashīd al-Dīn (see below).

Aside from their armies, the princes also had marriage ties to senior leaders in the Mongol Empire. Ariq Böke’s most senior wife was Elchiqmish Khatun, whose Oyirat people maintained a presence in the area around Lake Baikal well into the second half of the fourteenth century and were among the leading supporters of the Ariq Bökid prince Yesüder, who became qa’an in 1388.<sup>51</sup> It is unclear whether the Ariq Bökids continued to intermarry with the Oyirats in the intervening century, but their support would have been useful to Ariq Böke’s sons, whose *yurts* spanned most of their territory. His second wife, Qutuqtai Khatun, was from the Naiman ulus, which was situated around the Altai mountains prior to their defeat at the hands of Chinggis Khan in 1204.<sup>52</sup> The last wife to be named by Rashīd al-Dīn was Qutlu Khatun, who hailed from the Qonggirat, which was the most successful family at winning Chinggisid spouses.<sup>53</sup> The Qonggirats’ marriage ties and control of large armies caused them to be given an appanage and princely status in Inner Mongolia under the Yuan. These connections remained important as the Ariq Bökids sought to retain their position on the border between the Middle Empire and the Great Khanate.

The Ariq Bökids were not the only descendants of Tolui with an interest in Inner Asia. Möngke Qa’an allocated the Barin people of the Irtysh River to the *ordo* of his son

<sup>48</sup> Ishayahu Landa, *Marriage and Power in Mongol Eurasia: A History of the Chinggisid Sons-in-law* (Wiesbaden, 2023), 228; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 943.

<sup>49</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 943.

<sup>50</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 1, 940.

<sup>51</sup> Landa, *Marriage and Power*, 286; Veronika Veit, “The eastern steppe: Mongol regimes after the Yüan (1368–1636)”, in N. Di Cosmo, A. J. Frank and P. B. Golden (eds), *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge, 2009), 161; Robinson, *Shadow of the Mongol Empire*, 84.

<sup>52</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 940; Landa, *Marriage and Power*, 33.

<sup>53</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 940.

Ürüngtash.<sup>54</sup> The Barin submitted voluntarily to Chinggis Khan and contributed their own cohort to the Mongol army. Yet their loyalty to the Toluids was precarious as Qaidu's mother was also from the Barin, allowing him to woo them to his side after Möngke Qa'an's death.<sup>55</sup> This potential seizure of the Toluids' *qubi* may be one reason that another of Möngke's sons, Shiregi, was sent along with Ürüngtash to assist Nomuqan.<sup>56</sup> He was joined by yet another Toluid, Tuq Temür, the son of Sögedu. Sögedu was born to one of Tolui's concubines and was, it seems, somewhat neglected when troops were allotted. Rashid al-Din stated that when Sorqaqtani Beki allocated a division of her husband's soldiers to Sögedu, their commander complained loudly and requested an appointment to a more senior son.<sup>57</sup> It is unclear whether Tuq Temür joined the campaign with Nomuqan because he held a *yurt* in Inner Asia, like his relatives, or whether it was an opportunity for him to win his own share. The latter ambition appears to have been dashed by Nomuqan's failure to bring Qaidu to a decisive battle, which left the Toluids permanently garrisoning a frontier.<sup>58</sup> This situation bred frustration among the princes.

Some years after being dispatched to Almaligh, Tuq Temür began to complain that the Toluid princes were being neglected by Qubilai. He noted that "the qa'an has treated us and our brothers very regrettably (*hayf bisyār kardah*)" and encouraged Shiregi, the son of Möngke, to seize the throne for himself.<sup>59</sup> Conspiring together, they captured Nomuqan and his chief commander, Antung Noyan, whom they sent to the Jochid prince Möngke Temür (r. 1269–80) and Qaidu respectively in 1276.<sup>60</sup> Rashid al-Din claimed that Tuq Temür and Shiregi sent a message to Qaidu along with their captive, saying "We are much under obligation to you [...] and we haven't forgotten. We are sending you Qubilai Qa'an's sons and officers who were out to attack you. We must not harbour suspicions of each other but work together to repel the foe." Qaidu responded that "We are obliged to you, and we expect that you will remain in that area, where there is abundant water and grass."<sup>61</sup> The implication appears to have been that the Toluids would remain in the vicinity of Almaligh and the Irtysh River. Authors in the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517) also received word of Tuq Temür's uprising, albeit they claimed that Qubilai had become angry with Tuq Temür (Turdaghā) for unknown reasons, and that Tuq Temür had chosen to flee to Qaidu and incite him against the qa'an in order to retain his position.<sup>62</sup> Together they ambushed and defeated Nomuqan's army and looted his camps, taking his women and children captive. Indeed, al-Nuwayrī observed that there were so many captives that they were sold as far afield as Egypt.<sup>63</sup> Although this account differs slightly from the one provided by Rashid al-Din, it does confirm that Tuq Temür was the instigator of the coup.

In any case, it appears that the princes established their own patrimony under Qaidu's protection – an "ulus inside an ulus".<sup>64</sup> Tuq Temür initially proposed that Shiregi should

<sup>54</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 893.

<sup>55</sup> V. V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, (trans.) V. Minorsky (Leiden, 1956), Vol. 1, 125; Biran, *Qaidu*, 23.

<sup>56</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 893.

<sup>57</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 1, 86.

<sup>58</sup> Allsen, "The rise of the Mongolian Empire", 444; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 108.

<sup>59</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 893.

<sup>60</sup> Allsen, "The rise of the Mongolian Empire", 444; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 108; Atwood, "The Yuan Ulu", 129; Biran, "Mongol Central Asia", 335.

<sup>61</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 893; Rashid al-Din, *Compendium of Chronicles*, 436.

<sup>62</sup> Shihāb al-Din Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ārāb fī funūn al-ādab*, (eds) N. M. Fawāz and H. K. Fawāz (Beirut, 2004), Vol. 27, 241–2; Rukn al-Din Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubda al-Fikra fī Tārikh al-Hijra*, (ed.) D. S. Richards (Beirut, 1998), 262.

<sup>63</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-ārāb*, Vol. 27, 241–2.

<sup>64</sup> Atwood (trans.), *Secret History*, xciv.

challenge Qubilai for the throne and even tried to summon a *quriltai* of the Jochids and Ögödeyids to ratify his accession.<sup>65</sup> Yet he received little support and such a venture would have been well outside the capability of an army that could not even bring Qaidu to heel. The princes soon settled on the creation of a new *ulus* including the *yurts* and *ordos* they controlled in Inner Asia. Its main pastures were centred on the Irtysh River, where Tuq Temür was obliged to retreat after suffering a defeat at the hands of a Yuan relief army later in 1276, but it also included the *yurts* and *ordos* of Ariq Böke's sons.<sup>66</sup> The *ulus* was under the protection of Qaidu and the Jochids. Hence, when Tuq Temür proposed that Möngke's son, Sarban, should lead their alliance instead of Shiregi, Malik Temür agreed on condition that they inform the Jochids and Ögödeyids (lit. "Qaidu's sons") that "we have made Sarban our leader by our own choice".<sup>67</sup> Qaidu had, after all, already appointed a new Chaghadayid khan, Negübei, in 1271. He would do so again in 1282 when he appointed Baraq's son Du'a as the new Chaghadayid ruler.<sup>68</sup> The Chaghadayids were therefore a secondary *ulus* inside the Middle Empire of Qaidu Khan and the new Toluid *ulus* was most likely in a similar position, with the right to appoint their own khans who would allocate *yurts* and revenues, but still needing the affirmation and protection of the more powerful Ögödeyid and Jochid rulers.

The new *ulus* was severely hampered by infighting. Tuq Temür summoned Yobuqur to swear allegiance to Sarban and, when the latter asked for five days to prepare *tekishmishi* (ceremonial tribute, gifts), Tuq Temür mounted an attack on him. But Tuq Temür's forces abandoned him and he was captured and executed by Yobuqur.<sup>69</sup> Next, it was Shiregi's turn to betray Sarban, seizing him and sending him as a captive to Qonichi, the Jochid ruler of the Ulus Orda, between the Irtysh and the Syr-Darya. As Shiregi passed through Üzkand and then Jand, Sarban's supporters rescued him and mounted a counter-attack on Shiregi's people (*aghrūq*). Yobuqur then sprang an attack on Sarban and took control of both Shiregi and Sarban's *ordos*.<sup>70</sup> At this point, the beleaguered Shiregi and Sarban returned to Mongolia and threw themselves on the mercy of Qubilai, leaving Yobuqur and Malik Temür as the leading princes in the latent Toluid *ulus*. Yobuqur took his *ordos* and pledged himself to Qonichi, before he had a change of heart and joined his brother Malik Temür in submitting to Qaidu.<sup>71</sup> The constant infighting, combined with their smaller size in relation to the Jochids and Qaidu, appear to have left the Ariq Bökids in a subordinate position. Indeed, it is possible that Qaidu and Qonichi played a role in instigating some of these conflicts in order to increase their influence over the Toluids. Qaidu certainly interfered in the politics of the Chaghadayid *ulus* to make sure that it remained compliant, so it would not be surprising if he did the same to the Toluids.

The alliance was, however, extremely beneficial to the Ariq Bökids, who were able to aggressively assert themselves against Qubilai's garrisons in Mongolia and Uyghuristan. Yobuqur and Malik Temür's pastures were on the frontline of the conflict with Qubilai's forces in the Orkhon river valley and the Altai mountains. Yobuqur therefore assisted Qaidu in border raids in 1289, before Yobuqur and Malik Temür launched a combined attack on the camp of Prince Yaqudu, who had been sent to Mongolia with Qubilai's grandson Kammala in 1290.<sup>72</sup> The raid was serious enough for Qubilai to recall his principal commander in Mongolia, Dorduka, who opted to join the Ariq Bökids to avoid

<sup>65</sup> Atwood, "The Yuan Ulus", 129.

<sup>66</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 893.

<sup>67</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 894.

<sup>68</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 33; Hope, "The middle empire", 304; Jackson, *Mongols and the Islamic World*, 150.

<sup>69</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 895.

<sup>70</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 895–6.

<sup>71</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 895.

<sup>72</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 47; Atwood, "The Yuan Ulus", 131.

inevitable punishment.<sup>73</sup> The *Yuan shi* records another raid by Qaidu and Malik Temür in 1292, at the instigation of the Ariq Bökid prince, but this time they suffered a defeat.<sup>74</sup> These campaigns have led Michal Biran to observe in her biography of Qaidu that “During this period Arigh Böke’s sons played a major role in Qaidu’s forces. These princes, whose original appanages were in Mongolia and the Yenisei region, were extremely active in inciting Qaidu to act in this area.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, the Ariq Bökids seem to have been more deeply integrated into Qaidu’s *ulus* after the departure of Shiregi and Sarban.

### Displacement and new alliances (1294–1318)

The union between Ariq Böke’s sons and Qaidu began to disintegrate shortly before the latter’s death. In 1292, Qubilai appointed Bayan the Barin to the northern border and he immediately advanced on the Qirghiz domains, driving Qaidu’s supporters from that region and depriving Yobuqur and Malik Temür of their father’s *yurts*.<sup>76</sup> Following Qubilai’s death in 1294, his heir Temür (r. 1294–1307) continued to strengthen his northern army and this, combined with an extreme famine, caused Yobuqur to desert Qaidu in 1296.<sup>77</sup> Yobuqur was welcomed by the new qa’an who viewed him as a useful ally in the fight for Inner Asia and deployed him to his family appanage to face his old allies. In 1297 Yobuqur was part of an army that pushed all the way to the Irtysh River.<sup>78</sup> There was a further engagement in 1300 between Temür’s nephew Qaishan and Qaidu before the latter died in 1303, robbing the Middle Empire of its central leadership.<sup>79</sup> Facing a rejuvenated Yuan army and civil war among the descendants of Qaidu, the remaining Ariq Bökids found themselves increasingly isolated in Inner Asia.

Yobuqur’s return to the Yuan empire appears to have been free of serious acrimony. His younger brothers Naira’u Buqa and Tammachi had remained loyal to Qubilai throughout their lives and had received appointments and marriages to reaffirm their status in the Great Khanate. Naira’u Buqa’s daughter Ashiq Tuqluq was, for example, given in marriage to the Önggüt Prince of Shou in 1308.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, Naira’u Buqa’s eldest son, Buyan Temür, was named Prince of Wei (in Hebei), while his second son, Bolod, was named Prince of Zhenning in 1305 before being promoted to Prince of Ji in 1317.<sup>81</sup> Their advancement was probably helped by the fact that their mother, Ashightai Khatun of the Qonggirat, was the niece of Chabui Khatun, Qubilai’s chief wife and Temür Qa’an’s grandmother.<sup>82</sup> Yobuqur’s brothers were therefore in a position to soothe any lingering angst over his return to the Great Khanate.

Yobuqur’s rehabilitation at the qa’an’s court was also accelerated by the support he provided in the fight against Qaidu. Rashīd al-Dīn claims that Yobuqur came to pledge his allegiance in the company of his nephew Ulus Buqa, the son of Shiregi, and an army of 12,000 soldiers.<sup>83</sup> Their march to the Great Khanate was not easy and Ulus

<sup>73</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 48.

<sup>74</sup> Francis Woodman Cleaves, “The biography of Bayan the Bārin in the *Yüan Shih*”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19/3, December 1956, 267; Biran, *Qaidu*, 48.

<sup>75</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Cleaves, “Bayan the Bārin”, 267; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 110. On Bayan’s earlier involvement in the conflict with Qaidu, see Atwood, “The Yuan Ulus”, 129–31.

<sup>77</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 50; Atwood, “The Yuan Ulus”, 140.

<sup>78</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 50.

<sup>79</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 52; Atwood, “The Yuan Ulus”, 141.

<sup>80</sup> Louis Hambis, *Le chapitre CVII du Yuan che: les généalogies impériales mongoles dans l’histoire chinoise officielle de la dynastie mongole* (Leiden, 1945), 10.

<sup>81</sup> Hambis, *Le chapitre CVII*, 17, 42, 113.

<sup>82</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 942.

<sup>83</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 955.

Buqa plundered Qara Qorum on their passage through Mongolia, presumably to supply his soldiers. Upon his arrival at Temür's *ordo*, the qa'an imprisoned Ulus Buqa for violating the shrine (*marqad*) of Chinggis Khan.<sup>84</sup> By contrast, "He [Temür] treated Yobuqur well and said, 'He committed no crime.'"<sup>85</sup> His troops were immediately sent to the frontline where they dealt a series of heavy blows to the armies of Qaidu, Du'a, and, presumably, his brother Malik Temür.<sup>86</sup> By way of reward, Yobuqur was successively appointed as the Prince of Dingyuan in 1299 (including Sichuan and Yunnan), Prince of Weiding in 1305 and finally Prince of Ding (probably in Hubei) in 1308, following the enthronement of Qaishan.<sup>87</sup> The benefits that Yobuqur brought to the qa'an were worth overlooking his prior transgressions and he was quickly reintegrated into the hierarchy of the Great Khanate.

His brother Malik Temür remained in the Middle Empire for another decade before encroachments on his *yurts* also forced him to move to the Great Khanate. Qaidu had supposedly named his son Orus as his heir, but his ally, the Chaghadayid prince Du'a, decided to back his other son Chapar to sow division among the Ögödeyids.<sup>88</sup> Having secured the appointment of Chapar, the *Yuan shi* reports that Du'a, Chapar and Malik Temür sent a joint delegation to Temür Qa'an proposing peace in 1303.<sup>89</sup> Du'a's purpose in seeking peace, which was concluded in 1304, was in fact to bring the Chaghadayids and the Yuan into a partnership to eradicate the hapless Chapar. The peace resulted in the Yuan assuming control of the region around the Irtysh and the Altai, which robbed Qaidu's former supporters of their pastures and forced a competition for resources.<sup>90</sup> In 1305–06 skirmishes erupted between the Chaghadayids and the supporters of Chapar, who was eventually forced to submit to the new Yuan emperor Qaishan in 1310, as many of his troops had already begun to defect two years earlier.<sup>91</sup> The role of Malik Temür in these conflicts is not always clear. He appears to have sided with Du'a in 1306 when Chapar led an army to fight back against the Chaghadayids. Rather than guard Chapar's rear, Malik Temür plundered the Ögödeyids' herds and camps.<sup>92</sup> This flanking movement may have been coordinated with the Chaghadayids, since one of Malik Temür's daughters had married a commander in Du'a's army, suggesting that the pair had a good relationship.<sup>93</sup> Yet it is uncertain when this marriage took place and it is probable that he was just as badly affected as Chapar by the new Chaghadayid-Yuan alliance, making his raid on the Ögödeyids purely opportunistic.

The loss of pastures around the Irtysh River and the Altai mountains surely reduced Malik Temür's ability to maintain his *ordos*, which was most likely the reason he decided to defect to the Yuan some time in 1306–07. Once again, marriage ties played a role in mediating Malik Temür's move to the Great Khanate. Waṣṣāf noted that Malik Temür was related by marriage to Temür Qa'an's Qonggirat widow, Bulughan Khatun. Hence, when Temür Qa'an died in 1307, she summoned Malik Temür to the capital Daidu to

<sup>84</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 955. *Marqad* may also be translated as "tomb", but Chinggis Khan was certainly not buried at Qara Qorum.

<sup>85</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 956.

<sup>86</sup> Biran, *Qaidu*, 50–1.

<sup>87</sup> Hambis, *Le chapitre CVII*, 114, 153.

<sup>88</sup> Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, "Mid-Yüan politics", in Franke and Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 6, 503.

<sup>89</sup> Hsiao, "Mid-Yüan politics", 503; Biran, *Qaidu*, 71; Hope, "The middle empire", 307.

<sup>90</sup> Hsiao, "Mid-Yüan politics", 503; Biran, *Qaidu*, 53.

<sup>91</sup> Hsiao, "Mid-Yüan politics", 510; Biran, *Qaidu*, 78; Liu Yingsheng, "War and peace between the Yuan Dynasty and the Chaghadaid Khanate (1312–1323)", in Amitai and Biran (eds), *Mongols, Turks and Others*, 340.

<sup>92</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 498.

<sup>93</sup> Landa, *Marriage and Power*, 228.



support the claims of Temür's cousin Ananda to the throne.<sup>94</sup> Ananda commanded a detachment of the Yuan army based in the Tangut region, guarding the passage to Uyghuristan, but also Ariq Böke's *yurt* in the Altai mountains. Despite their close proximity, Malik Temür is not mentioned as having any connections to Ananda prior to 1307, so it seems that Bulughan Khatun initiated the alliance. The princes marched eastwards and, although they managed to briefly occupy Qubilai's southern capital, Dadu (modern Beijing), they were soon forced to concede their position to a rival faction supporting Temür's nephew Qaishan (r. 1307–11).<sup>95</sup> The princes were apprehended and despite Malik Temür's protestations that he had previously assisted Qaishan in his fight against Chapar, these excuses were not accepted and he was "given to the Angel of Perdition".<sup>96</sup> The death of Malik Temür caused the remaining descendants of Ariq Böke to leave the Middle Empire, which had become the preserve of Du'a and the Chaghadayids.

Malik Temür's eldest son Minqan (also Mingqan) left the Middle Empire around the same time as his father. Little is known of his early life, but he appeared near the Amu-Darya shortly before Du'a's death in 1307. He was most likely posted there during the reign of Qaidu, whose son Sarban was sent to the same area with five *tümen* (a nominal unit of 10,000 soldiers): three princely armies (*khwass*) led by Küresbe Oghul, Temür Oghul and Sarban himself, and two divisions of the *lashkar* (the general army) held by Du'a and his sons.<sup>97</sup> In 705/1305–06, when relations between Du'a and Chapar began to deteriorate, Du'a sent his son Esen Buqa to assume control of his *lashkar* units. He also sent a message to Taraghai, one of the *lashkar* commanders, to move against Sarban in his summer pastures. Sarban was caught unawares and managed to extricate himself, but Taraghai plundered his people (lit. "family", *ayil*).<sup>98</sup> Sarban retreated to winter quarters to the south of the Amu-Darya and Esen Buqa pursued him. After initial skirmishes, Sarban was joined by Temür Oghul and Minqan Oghul, the son of Malik Temür. Together they repelled a 4,000-strong Chaghadayid army, but by this point it had become clear that Sarban did not have the capacity to resist the Chaghadayids and he sought sanctuary with the Ilkhan Öljeitü at the end of 1306.<sup>99</sup>

Öljeitü welcomed the newly arrived princes with open arms. Yasa'ul, his governor in Khurasan, was charged with allocating them temporary quarters (*makānī*) and fodder for their animals (*ʿaliq*).<sup>100</sup> The princes were also invited to Öljeitü's court and, although Sarban and Temür Oghul died before they could meet the Ilkhan, the other members of his party came to the royal *ordo* with their *hazārahs*, Minqan among them.<sup>101</sup> Öljeitü allocated permanent pastures to the newly arrived princes during this in-person meeting, sending Sarban's son to reinforce the army of Georgia under the command of Sutay Noyan, while some of the Qaraunas troops were placed under the stewardship of the vizier, Rashīd al-Dīn.<sup>102</sup> No separate appointment is listed for Minqan, but it is clear that he was returned to Khurasan in the company of Yasa'ul to defend it against the Chaghadayids. He is next mentioned by the court historian ʿAbd Allāh Qāshānī in

<sup>94</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 498; Atwood, "The Yuan Ulus", 147.

<sup>95</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 500.

<sup>96</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 501.

<sup>97</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 510.

<sup>98</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 510.

<sup>99</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 511; Leonard James Ward, "The *Ẓafar-nāmah* of Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī and the *Il-Khān* of Iran", Vol. 3, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1983, 588; Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, *Ẓafar-nāmah: Facsimile of Manuscript, Facsimile of the manuscript contained in the British Library Or. 2833* (Tehran, 1999), Vol. 2, 1435.

<sup>100</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 513.

<sup>101</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 513.

<sup>102</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 513.

712/1312–13 as part of an army sent against Esen Buqa's son Dā'ūd Khwāja in Afghanistan. The army pushed Dā'ūd Khwāja across the Amu-Darya and caused a group of 20,000 Qaraunas soldiers to submit to the Ilkhan.<sup>103</sup> Minqan was mentioned again in 713/1313 when he joined Yasa'ul in welcoming another refugee prince, Yasa'ur, to the Ilkhanate. Minqan joined a larger army that helped protect Yasa'ur's flank from an assault by Esen Buqa as he withdrew from Transoxiana.<sup>104</sup> There is no record of how many soldiers Minqan had under his command, but it was likely to have been at least a couple of thousand for him to be mentioned so frequently in relation to the army of Khurasan.

Minqan's swift integration into the Ilkhanate may seem surprising, but there may have been factors that made his arrival smoother. Waṣṣāf claimed that one of the party who accompanied Minqan and Sarban to the Ilkhanate was Oyiratai Ghazan.<sup>105</sup> His family had served previous Ilkhans in Khurasan before joining Qaidu's Middle Empire. The Khurasani secretary, Ghiyṯh al-Dīn Faryumadi, recorded that Öljeitü appointed Oyiratai Ghazan to lead a new *hazārah*, known as the Jā'ūn-i Qurbān, to protect the eastern border.<sup>106</sup> The name "Jā'ūn-i Qurbān" (lit. 3 per cent) suggests that the army was formed through a levy from other cohorts, most likely taken when he returned to Iran.<sup>107</sup> It is unclear whether Minqan's armies were supplemented by a similar levy, but clearly not all of Minqan's party were strangers to the Ilkhanate.

It is also probable that other members of Öljeitü's court were aware of Minqan and his family prior to his arrival in 1306. The historian Rashīd al-Dīn displays a strong knowledge of the prince's genealogy and those of his father's commanders, most likely provided by the Yuan courtier Bolad Chingsang, who came to Iran in 1286, while Malik Temür was still at the height of his powers.<sup>108</sup> He also identified connections between Malik Temür's followers and some of the Ilkhanid commanders. For instance, Rashīd al-Dīn noted that one of Malik Temür's commanders of 1,000 was Alaqa, the "son of the Chīlīgah Bahādur who came here".<sup>109</sup> No explicit family connection is made with other Ilkhanid commanders, but it is apparent that several of them shared common ancestors with Malik Temür's followers, notably his chief commander Jā'ūtū, who was descended from the same Suldus lineage as Öljeitü's chief commander Choban Noyan.<sup>110</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn also mentioned that the royal *ordos* of two of Tolui's wives, which had passed to Malik Temür had close connections to the Hülegüid dynasty. The *ordo* of Lingqūn Khatun, whom Malik Temür took in a levirate marriage from his father, "had gone in the division to Hülegü Khan, but because of the distance and the absence of members of his family, Malik Temür took charge of it".<sup>111</sup> Likewise,

<sup>103</sup> Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd Allāh Qāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Pādshāh Sa'īd Ghiyāth al-Dunyā wa al-Dīn Ūljāytū Sultan Muḥammad Tayyib Allāh Marqada*, (ed.) M. Hamblī (Tehran, 1969), 201.

<sup>104</sup> Qāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Ūljāytū*, 214.

<sup>105</sup> Waṣṣāf, *Tajziyat al-amṣār*, 513.

<sup>106</sup> Ghiyāth al-Dīn Faryūmadi's account is added in his copy of Muḥammad Shabānkāra'i, *Majma' al-Anṣāb*, (ed.) M. H. Muḥaddith (Tehran, 1984), 323.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Jackson, *From Genghis Khan to Tamerlane: The Reawakening of Mongol Asia* (New Haven, 2023), 184; Jürgen Paul, "Zerfall und Bestehen. Die Čaun-i qurban im 14. Jahrhundert", *Asiatische Studien* 65, 2011, 705.

<sup>108</sup> John A. Boyle, "Juvayni and Rashīd al-Dīn as sources on the history of the Mongols", in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 132; Thomas Allsen, "Biography of a cultural broker, Bolad Ch'eng-Hsiang in China and Iran", in J. Raby and T. Fitzherbert (eds), *The Court of the Il-khans, 1290-1340* (Oxford, 1996), 13; Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001), 91; David Morgan, "Rašīd al-Dīn and Gazan Khan", in D. Aigle (ed.), *L'Iran Face à la Domination Mongole*, Bibliothèque Iranienne 45 (Tehran, 1997), 184; Karl Jahn, "Rashīd al-Dīn as World Historian", *Yádnáme-ye Jan Rypka: Collected Articles on Persian and Tajik Literature* (Prague, 1967), 82.

<sup>109</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 943.

<sup>110</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 943.

<sup>111</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, Vol. 2, 941.

the *ordo* of Bayan Khatun, another of Tolui's widows, had been inhabited by two of Hülegü's sons, Jumughur and Taraqai.<sup>112</sup> It is unclear whether these *ordos* were transported to Iran with Minqan, but they at least gave Rashīd al-Dīn and the Ilkhanid court a degree of familiarity with the new arrival. Indeed, the historian appears to have followed the career of Minqan, since he mentions the birth of his son Susu in his genealogy, the *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah*, despite omitting it from the earlier copies of his *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*.<sup>113</sup> Even though some of the later Persian historians may not have been aware of Minqan or his lineage, it is likely that the Ilkhanid rulers and their Mongol commanders were.

Though not in control of an *ulus*, Minqan was a commander of great importance in Khurasan until his death in 1318, shortly after Öljeitü's son Abū Sa'īd (r. 1318–35) took the throne. Abū Sa'īd had previously served as Öljeitü's viceroy in Khurasan, but he left for Azerbaijan when his father died in 1316. His departure left a power vacuum in Khurasan, which the Chaghadayid prince Yasa'ur attempted to fill. He began by having his chief ally, the commander Bektut, murder Yasa'ul and assume the governorship of the province.<sup>114</sup> The other magnates of Khurasan were subsequently unable to act without the permission of Bektut, who obliged them to pledge oaths of allegiance to Yasa'ur.<sup>115</sup> Minqan and another commander, Bayrāmshāh, resented Yasa'ur's new-found power and plotted to murder Bektut. They sent word of their plot to the Kartid ruler of Herat, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad (r. 1307–29), who provided them with a small detachment of soldiers. Together they launched a surprise attack on Bektut's camp, but the commander managed to escape with his family to Yasa'ur.<sup>116</sup> The Chaghadayid prince sent an army of 7,000 soldiers under the leadership of his son Juki, which defeated Minqan and Bayrāmshāh at Sarakhs.<sup>117</sup> Although not explicitly stated, it seems that Minqan was killed in this engagement, as his name is not mentioned again in the chronicles.

Minqan's defeat at the hands of Yasa'ur's troops robbed the Ariq Bökids of their share of the empire in Iran. The near contemporary *Tārikh-nāmah-yi Harāt* reports that Juki took Minqan's wives and people into his own camp as plunder after his victory at Sarakhs.<sup>118</sup> They were never reassigned to Minqan's successors. Rather, the minister who Abū Sa'īd sent to investigate the conflict confirmed the status quo and even ordered Bayrāmshāh to apologize to Bektut in person.<sup>119</sup> It is therefore probable that Minqan's people remained with Juki when he returned to Transoxiana following the death of Yasa'ur in 1319. Left without an *ordo*, Minqan's son Susu and his grandson Arpa are unlikely to have been given an allotment of pastures. Hence, Arpa Kō'ūn is said to have relied on a daily allowance for his subsistence at the court of Abū Sa'īd.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Vol. 2, 941.

<sup>113</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn, *Shu'ab-i Panjgānah*, f. 84.

<sup>114</sup> Sayf al-Dīn Muḥammad Harāwī, *Tārikh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, (ed.) Gh. R. Ṭabāṭāba'ī Majd (Tehran, 2016), 673; Kato Kazuhide, "Kebek and Yasawr – The establishment of the Chaghatai Khanate", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 49, 1991, 108; Shivan Mahendrarajah, *A History of Herat, From Chingiz Khan to Tamerlane* (Edinburgh, 2022), 108. Harāwī's account is repeated by Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl-i Jām'i al-Tawārikh Rashidi*, (ed.) Kh. Bayānī (Tehran, 1971), 126–37.

<sup>115</sup> Harāwī, *Tārikh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, 673; Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 126.

<sup>116</sup> Harāwī, *Tārikh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, 674.

<sup>117</sup> Harāwī, *Tārikh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, 675.

<sup>118</sup> Harāwī, *Tārikh-nāmah-yi Harāt*, 675.

<sup>119</sup> Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 137.

<sup>120</sup> Patrick Wing, *The Jalayirids: Dynastic State Formation in the Mongol Middle East* (Edinburgh, 2016), 75; Jackson, *From Genghis Khan to Tamerlane*, 130.

## Arpa Kö'ün's enthronement

The loss of their *ordo* did not end the involvement of Minqan's successors in the political history of the Ilkhanate, which underwent further division following the death of Abū Sa'īd in 1335. This new redistribution was overseen by the commoner commanders (*qarachu*), not the royal princes. The Ilkhanate always had a smaller number of royal princes in their territory than in other *uluses*, obliging its rulers to rely more heavily on Persians and Mongols of common descent to rule their empire. These *qarachu* had deep roots in the Ilkhanate, connecting them to urban religious leaders, trade guilds and merchants, who were as important as nomadic populations in determining where power resided in fourteenth-century Iran. Indeed, it is notable that the princes who came to Iran with Minqan were assigned *yurts* in territories controlled by *qarachu*, as were later princes who sought asylum in Iran. These commanders nominated their khans to the throne with a view to assuming authority over the Ilkhanate after 1335, but both they and their princes lacked the control of pastures and revenues necessary to rule all of Abū Sa'īd's former realm. It was under these circumstances that Minqan's grandson Arpa was appointed as Abū Sa'īd's successor.

Virtually no contemporaneous authors suggest that Arpa had a strong claim to the throne. Abū Sa'īd died unexpectedly at Qarabagh while marching to meet an invading army led by Özbek Khan (r. 1313–41) of the Jochid Ulus.<sup>121</sup> To make matters worse, he left no sons, brothers or uncles to take his place, so the line of succession was uncertain. The situation was volatile and the first author to record Arpa's enthronement, Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, claims that the vizier Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad nominated Arpa so that the emirs of state would “become of one mind, close the doors on their discord and quarrels, and go the way of friendship and harmony”.<sup>122</sup> In other words, Ghiyāth al-Dīn wanted to appoint a new khan as soon as possible to rally the army against Özbek. Muḥammad Shabānkāra'ī, who initially dedicated his history to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, claimed that the vizier consulted with the chief commander Sharaf al-Dīn Maḥmūdshāh Īnjū, and together they agreed to nominate Arpa to the throne based on his descent from Chinggis Khan's son Tolui.<sup>123</sup> This lineage, which neither Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī nor Shabānkāra'ī were able to trace accurately, gave Arpa a rather tenuous connection to the ruling line of Hülegü.<sup>124</sup> Aḥmad Tabrizī, who wrote in 1337 during the chaos following Abū Sa'īd's death, alleged that Abū Sa'īd had adopted Arpa as his heir, but even he made a point of noting that Arpa's immediate ancestors had not been rulers.<sup>125</sup> Abū Sa'īd's designation of Arpa is not repeated by Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī or Shabānkāra'ī and may have been introduced to exonerate Ghiyāth al-Dīn for not consulting with other powerbrokers.<sup>126</sup> It seems that the chief quality that recommended Arpa for the throne was simply that he was on hand at the time of Abū Sa'īd's death.

Arpa does not appear to have commanded much authority prior to coming to power. He is not mentioned in any of the histories of the period prior to 1335, suggesting that neither he nor his father Susu achieved anything of note. Shabānkāra'ī reported that

<sup>121</sup> George Lane, *A Short History of the Mongols* (London, 2018), 92.

<sup>122</sup> Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī, *Dhayl-i Tārīkh-i Guzīdah*, (ed.) V. Z. Piriiev (Baku, 1978), 436; (trans) M. D. Kazimov and V. Z. Piriiev (Baku, 1986), 92.

<sup>123</sup> Shabānkāra'ī, *Majma' al-Anṣāb*, 294.

<sup>124</sup> Shabānkāra'ī, *Majma' al-Anṣāb*, 294; Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Dhayl*, (ed.) Piriiev, 435; (trans) Kazimov and Piriiev, 92.

<sup>125</sup> Aḥmad Tabrizī, *Shāhanshāhnāmah: Tārīkh-i Manẓūm-i Mughūlān wa ilkhānān az Qarn-i Hashtum-i Hijrī*, (eds) M. G. Kākhī and J. Rāshkī (Tehran, 2018), 820.

<sup>126</sup> Ḥāfiz Abrū, *Dhayl*, 190; Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndāmīr, *Ḥabīb al-Siyar*, (ed.) M. Dabīr Sayāqī (Tehran, 2001), Vol. 3, 221.

Arpa's finances were in a bad state and when Maḥmūdshāh Īnjū came to his tent to summon him to the throne, the prince's initial reaction was one of surprise and fear. He asked Maḥmūdshāh what he wanted before agreeing to accompany him to Ghiyāth al-Dīn.<sup>127</sup> Arpa's apprehension may have been due to the heightened tension at the Ilkhanid court, which had suffered a series of uprisings and invasions from neighbouring khans. The threat posed by these ostensibly Jochid and Chaghadayid princes may have caused Arpa's loyalties to be called into question. The Mamluk author, al-ʿUmarī, claimed that the Ilkhanids had a tendency to kill royal princes to prevent them from rebelling and this practice caused many royals to seek safety in obscurity.<sup>128</sup> Yet there are no such purges mentioned for the reign of Abū Saʿīd, who was still willing to appoint a prince descended from the line of Chinggis Khan's brother, Jochi Qasar, to the *yurt* of Sarakhs in Khurasan after his arrival from the Middle Empire in 733/1332–33.<sup>129</sup> It therefore seems more likely that the apprehension mentioned by Shabānkāraʿī was due to shock at Arpa's appointment, which even the author shared. Later histories accentuated the unlikelihood of his nomination by stating that he wore a fur cap in place of a crown and a leather cord in place of a golden belt because he was unaccustomed to the pomp and finery of kingship.<sup>130</sup> Arpa's family had certainly fallen on hard times, but it is questionable whether his life was so hard at Abū Saʿīd's court. Rather, Shabānkāraʿī suggests that Arpa was “a Mongol who kept the customs and traditions of Chinggis Khan [...]. He did not look like a Tajik”, implying that he had failed to assimilate to the more syncretic Persian-Islamic culture of the Ilkhanid court.<sup>131</sup> His unconventional appearance and behaviour (though perhaps not so unconventional for the Mongols) made it hard for the Ilkhanid secretarial class to accept Arpa's candidacy for the throne.

If Arpa lacked support among the Persian literary class, he also struggled to win approval from some of Abū Saʿīd's commanders. His primary backers were Ghiyāth al-Dīn Muḥammad and Maḥmūdshāh Īnjū, who supposedly had a long-standing friendship with Arpa.<sup>132</sup> Yet Ghiyāth al-Dīn may have also been a divisive figure in Ilkhanid politics, which became increasingly centralized towards the end of Abū Saʿīd's rule.<sup>133</sup> Indeed, his failure to build wider support for Arpa's appointment weakened his position with other powerbrokers. Whether the dowager empress, Ḥajjī Khatun, or the Ilkhan's pregnant widow, Dilshād Khatun, were consulted, as suggested by later sources, is uncertain. Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī reports that Dilshād left the *ordo* before Abū Saʿīd's death and Ḥajjī Khatun was reportedly unhappy with the decision, which she may at first have reluctantly affirmed before swiftly withdrawing her support.<sup>134</sup> The provincial governors and commanders were not invited to give their opinions and there is therefore unanimous agreement across the chronicles that Arpa owed his appointment to Ghiyāth al-Dīn, rather than any qualification or special quality that he possessed.

<sup>127</sup> Shabānkāraʿī, *Majmaʿ al-Anṣāb*, 294.

<sup>128</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-ʿUmarī, *Das Mongolische Weltreich: Al-ʿUmarī's Darstellung der Mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, (ed.) K. Leich (Wiesbaden, 1968), 104.

<sup>129</sup> Shabānkāraʿī, *Majmaʿ al-Anṣāb*, 306.

<sup>130</sup> Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 190; Khwāndāmīr, *Ḥabīb al-Siyar*, Vol. 3, 222.

<sup>131</sup> Shabānkāraʿī, *Majmaʿ al-Anṣāb*, 294.

<sup>132</sup> Shabānkāraʿī, *Majmaʿ al-Anṣāb*, 293.

<sup>133</sup> Charles Melville, “The end of the Ilkhanate and after: observations on the collapse of the Mongol world empire”, in B. De Nicola and C. Melville (eds), *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran* (Leiden, 2016), 323; Āshtiyānī, *Tārīkh-i Muḡhūl*, 360; Denise Aigle, *Le Fārs Sous la Domination Mongole (XIII-XIVe s): Politique et Fiscalité*. Studia Iranica, Cahier 31 (Paris, 2005), 167.

<sup>134</sup> Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Dhayl*, (ed.) Piriiev, 436; (trans) Kazimov and Piriiev, 91; Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 190; Charles Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan and the Decline of the Ilkhanate, 1327–37: A Decade of Discord in Mongol Iran* (Bloomington, IN, 1999), 45.



Ghiyāth al-Dīn gave his own account of his role in the enthronement of Arpa in a letter to his brother, Majd al-Dīn. The letter is preserved in the secretarial compilation by Abū al-Majd Muḥammad Tabrīzī, known as the *Safīnah-yi Tabrīz*. It states that Ghiyāth al-Dīn kept Arpa in his home towards the end of Abū Saʿīd's illness and only agreed to enthrone him after he promised to comply with four conditions: namely, that he would rule with virtue, treat his Mongol and Persian subjects equally, observe the *sharīʿa* and allow the vizier to retire once he had come to power.<sup>135</sup> The list of demands was unprecedented in the Mongol Empire and highlights the disproportionate influence that the vizier wielded over Arpa prior to his coronation. There is, however, some reason to doubt the veracity of the letter, since it was transcribed by Abū al-Majd on 19 Ramadan 736/9 May 1336, two months after the original letter was completed and two days after Arpa and Ghiyāth al-Dīn suffered a decisive defeat at the hands of ʿAlī Pādīshāh, the governor of Iraq. Indeed, the letter concludes with a request for “aid” from those “friends who study it”.<sup>136</sup> It seems likely, as Sayyid ʿAlī Āl-i Dāʿūd has suggested, that Ghiyāth al-Dīn published the letter to his brother to ameliorate some of the controversy surrounding his role in Arpa's rise to power.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, the letter does confirm the account of Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī that Ghiyāth al-Dīn played the lead role in Arpa's enthronement, whether or not his actions were as pious or self-effacing as he would have us believe.

Irrespective of how he came to the throne, Arpa was not a mere puppet in the hands of Ghiyāth al-Dīn. The claim that he continued to observe the customs and laws of the Mongols is accompanied by descriptions of his military prowess, and his first act upon taking the throne was to successfully push the Jochid armies back behind the Kura River.<sup>138</sup> He then moved to consolidate his position by violently purging possible rivals. The first person to fall under suspicion was Abū Saʿīd's widow, Baghdād Khatun, who exercised extensive power during her husband's rule, but had lost favour with the Ilkhan after he married her niece, Dilshād Khatun, in 1333.<sup>139</sup> Baghdād refused to pledge her allegiance to Arpa and was further accused of poisoning Abū Saʿīd and siding with the Jochids, for which she was murdered in the baths.<sup>140</sup> Maḥmūdshāh was next among the old guard to suffer the consequences of Arpa's insecurity. He was accused of hiding three princes descended from Hülegü's son, Qongqurtai. Maḥmūdshāh was executed and the boys were suffocated in ritualistic fashion to prevent their blood from touching the ground.<sup>141</sup> Arpa was also reported to have murdered an Ögödeyid prince, Tawakkül Qutlugh, and his sons, when they sought sanctuary from the Middle Empire.<sup>142</sup> These vicious slayings support the claim of the contemporary physician Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Amūlī (1335–42), that Arpa “gave the blade of fearlessness to the hands of several impure ones and they slaughtered several innocent people”.<sup>143</sup> Ghiyāth al-Dīn supposedly voiced opposition to the killing of Maḥmūdshāh, but his words were not heeded. Indeed, Ghiyāth al-Dīn

<sup>135</sup> Lane, *A Short History*, 140; Abū al-Majd Muḥammad Tabrīzī, *Safīnah-yi Tabrīz* (Tehran, 2003), 734.

<sup>136</sup> Abū al-Majd, *Safīnah-yi Tabrīz*, 734.

<sup>137</sup> Sayyid ʿAlī Āl-i Dāʿūd, “Barrasī Sanadī Nū-yafṭah az *Safīnah-yi Tabrīz*”, *Nāmah Bahāristān* 9–10, 2004, 122.

<sup>138</sup> Lane, *A Short History*, 140.

<sup>139</sup> Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Dhayl*, (ed.) Piriiev, 436; (trans) Kazimov and Piriiev, 92; Shabānkāraʿī, *Majmaʿ al-Anṣāb*, 296; Bruno De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran: The Khātūns, 1206–1335* (Edinburgh, 2017), 102; Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 45.

<sup>140</sup> Hend Gilli-Elewy, “On women, power, and politics during the last phase of the Ilkhanate”, *Arabica* 59/6, 2012, 716; Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 45.

<sup>141</sup> Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Dhayl*, (ed.) Piriiev, 437; (trans) Kazimov and Piriiev, 93; Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 192.

<sup>142</sup> Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Dhayl*, (ed.) Piriiev, 438; (trans) Kazimov and Piriiev, 93; Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 192.

<sup>143</sup> Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Amūlī, *Nafāʿis al-funūn fī ʿarāʾis al-ʿuyūn*, (ed.) S. I. Miyānājī (Tehran, 1377–79/1958–60), Vol. 2, 263.

would go on to lament that Arpa scarcely listened to his advice.<sup>144</sup> We should, perhaps, treat this protestation with some scepticism, given that many historians of the late Ilkhanid court, including Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī and Muḥammad Shabānkāra'ī, wrote under the patronage of the vizier and were therefore looking to distance him from these scandals. In any case, the impression they give is that Arpa was not a puppet in the hands of others.

Whether Arpa was beholden to Ghiyāth al-Dīn or not, he certainly did not achieve the support of Abū Sa'īd's former commanders. The murder of Maḥmūdshāh Īnjū pushed his sons to seek revenge and Dilshād Khatun's unborn child was the most likely vehicle to achieve this aim. She fled to Iraq, where she sought an alliance with Abū Sa'īd's maternal uncle, 'Alī Pādishāh.<sup>145</sup> Later Timurid sources suggest that the Ariq Bökids bore a grudge against the Oyirat lineage of 'Alī Pādishāh, whose ancestor Tānggiz Güregen had played a role in Ariq Böke's defeat.<sup>146</sup> Yet the Oyirats were among the Ariq Bökids' marriage partners, so any feud would have had to be confined to the lineage of 'Alī Pādishāh, if indeed such a grudge ever did exist. Another possible instigator for conflict was 'Alī Pādishāh's sister Ḥajjī Khatun who earlier was mentioned as having expressed reservations at Arpa's appointment.<sup>147</sup> These pretexts aside, the decision to appoint Arpa was made without consulting 'Alī Pādishāh and he was unwilling to accept the appointment of a ruler without the customary deliberation at a council of notables (*quriltai*), a point he stressed on the battlefield.<sup>148</sup> These factors made 'Alī Pādishāh a magnet for Arpa's opponents and he assembled his army to support the claims of Dilshād Khatun's unborn child.

Despite this opposition, Arpa and Ghiyāth al-Dīn were still able to muster a strong army. Indeed, Arpa was positively bullish about his prospects of victory against 'Alī Pādishāh. The governor of Baghdad had an ongoing feud with the commander of Diyarbakr, Ḥajjī Ṭaghāy, who eagerly supported his opponents.<sup>149</sup> Arpa had also married Abū Sa'īd's sister Sati Beg Khatun and released a number of commanders imprisoned during the reign of Abū Sa'īd. It is unclear whether their release was at the initiative of Ghiyāth al-Dīn or Arpa, as contemporary observers were divided on the topic.<sup>150</sup> The commanders, who had been imprisoned for treason, were not to be trusted and Arpa allegedly proposed killing them all before going to war with 'Alī Pādishāh. He was restrained by Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who suggested that they would need the extra troops, which Arpa rebutted by noting that they also controlled the imperial city of Tabriz.<sup>151</sup> The city had been the administrative capital of the Ilkhanate and provided both spatial continuity with the former court of Abū Sa'īd, in addition to the economic benefits associated with being the largest city in Iran. Tabriz was a hub of international trade as well as the cultural centre of the former Ilkhan court. The value attributed by Arpa to the control of Tabriz again highlights the fact that urban populations were prized as highly as nomadic populations in the competition for power following Abū Sa'īd's death.

Yet the decisive battle between Arpa and 'Alī Pādishāh near Marāghah on 17 Ramadan 736 (7 May 1336) did not go the way that the prince had planned. Despite Arpa fielding a vastly larger army, 'Alī Pādishāh had communicated with a number of Abū Sa'īd's former

<sup>144</sup> Abū Bakr al-Quṭbī Ahrī, *Ta'rikh-i Shaikh Uwais (A History of Shaikh Uwais): An Important Source for the History of Ādharbajjān in the Fourteenth Century*, (trans.) J. B. Van Loon (The Hague, 1954), 61.

<sup>145</sup> Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 46.

<sup>146</sup> Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 193.

<sup>147</sup> Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 190.

<sup>148</sup> Ahrī, *Ta'rikh-i Shaikh Uwais*, 61.

<sup>149</sup> Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 197; Wing, *The Jalayirids*, 143; Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, 51.

<sup>150</sup> Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Dhayl*, 192.

<sup>151</sup> Shabānkāra'ī, *Majma' al-Anṣāb*, 299.

commanders who agreed to change sides mid-way through the battle.<sup>152</sup> The defection of these commanders cost Arpa nearly half of his army and his throne. With the battle lost, Arpa took flight and was arrested in Gilan, presumably trying to make his way to Khurasan. The Ariq Bökids would not be permitted to relocate again and Arpa was put to death only six months after his enthronement in June of 1336.

Arpa's death was only the beginning of a new competition between the commanders and governors of Iraq, Azerbaijan, Shiraz and Khurasan. Each of these factions supported the claims of rival princes, most even more obscure than Arpa. While some were able to stay in power longer than Arpa, and in some cases even longer than the commanders who supported them, they lacked the *ordos* and the control of resources to rule properly. The absence of royal leadership caused the Ilkhanate to dissolve into a patchwork of amirates under the leadership of Mongol, Turkic and Iranian commanders whose power was buttressed by the control of cities and steppe-land. This new type of *ulus* was exemplified by the Timurids in the second half of the fifteenth century.

---

<sup>152</sup> Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, *Dhayl*, (ed.) Piriiev, 439; (trans) Kazimov and Piriiev, 95; Shabānkāra'ī, *Majma' al-Anṣāb*, 301; Ahrī, *Ta'riḥ-i Shaikh Uwais*, 60.

**Cite this article:** Hope, Michael. 2025. "An *ulus* within an *ulus*: the afterlife of Ariq Böke's appanage in the Mongol Empire (1252–1336)", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X24000612>