



HULĀGU KHAN

HULĀGU (Hülegü) **KHAN**, fifth son of Tolui (and thus grandson of Čengiz Khan) and Sorqoqtani Kā-tun, and founder of the Il-khanid dynasty (b. ca. 611/1215, d. 19 Rabi' II 663/8 February 1265). His name is derived from the Mongolian word for "surplus" (see Pelliot, II, pp. 866-67) and was written in the Muslim sources in various ways, reflecting both different pronunciations and the problems encountered in rendering Turco-Mongolian names into foreign languages: Hulāku, Hulāwu (cf. Marco Polo's Ulau, Alau, etc.), and even Hulā'un (e.g., Ebn al-'Amid, *passim*). Virtually nothing is known of his childhood and early adulthood; a solitary anecdote relates that, in 621/1224 at the age of nine, he and his eleven-year-old brother Qubilai met their grandfather, on his return from his campaign in Transoxania and Iran. Showing them freshly killed game, Čengiz Khan is said to have anointed the bowstring fingers of his grandsons with the fat of the slain animals (Smirnova, I/2, pp. 229-30).

In 1251 Hülegü's oldest brother, Möngke, was proclaimed Qā'an (< Qaghan), or Great Khan, and soon after-wards he held a *quriltai* (assembly), in which Hülegü and Qubilai were ordered to campaign in Muslim territories and China respectively. Literally, each prince was ordered to take with him "two out of every ten men" of the Mongol army (Jovayni, III, pp. 90; Boyle, II, p. 607; Rašid-al-Din, III, p. 21), an expression which should be understood as indicating both the large size of each expeditionary force and the fact that they were composed of contingents from various tribes and princely houses. After careful preparations both at home and along the projected route, Hülegü's



army, which would join up with the Mongol forces already stationed in the Middle East, departed in 1253 and reached Transoxania in 1255. The large size of the army, together with families and herds, necessitated a slow and deliberate march across Central Asia. The sources are not completely clear as to Hülegü's exact goals, and this lack of clarity has led to some disagreement among modern scholars on the matter. Rašid-al-Din speaks of Möngke Qā'ān's order to his brother to eliminate the Nizari Isma'ilis, conquer the rebellious Kurds and Lors, and subjugate the caliph, before enforcing the laws of Čengiz Khan in all territories from the river Oxus (Jayḥun) as far as the borders of Egypt (Rašid-al-Din, III, pp. 23-24). He adds that Möngke publicly ordered Hülegü to return to Mongolia upon completing his mission, while secretly informing him that he and his descendants were to remain in Persia. While there is no explicit mention of a mandate to establish a dynasty there, it has been suggested that Möngke planned for Hülegü to set up a sub-khanate, which would (together with Qubilai's parallel project in China) strengthen the Toluid branch of the royal family while limiting the influence of the Jochid Khans of the so-called Golden Horde (Allsen, pp. 48-49). On the other hand, one must remember Rašid-al-Din's obvious pro-Toluid and pro-Il-khanid bias, together with the lack of any confirmation from the contemporary (and no less biased) Jovayni, while Mamluk sources, primarily Ebn Faḏl-Allāh al-'Omari, raise the possibility that Hülegü was exceeding his original brief, in order to establish gradually a kingdom for himself and his progeny (Jackson, "Dissolution," pp. 220-22). Whatever his original mission, in the next few years Hülegü laid the groundwork for what was to become an all but independent Mongol state in Persia that was to last for some three-quarters of a century.

Even before crossing the Oxus at the end of 1255, Hülegü had called upon all the local rulers who had previously submitted to the Mongols to come and reaffirm their loyalty. The purpose behind this, beyond the consolidation of the previous Mongol conquests in the region, was to order these lords to contribute to the Mongol war effort against enemies such as the Isma'ilis. Although some kind of expression of submission had been previously made by al-Mosta'ṣem, the 'Abbasid caliph, he did not present himself in response to this summons, a decision he was later to rue. In the first few months of 1256, Hülegü and his generals systematically subdued the majority of the Isma'ili fortresses in Kuhestān and south of the Caspian Sea, culminating in the capture of Alamut (q.v.) on 29 Šawwāl 654/19 November 1256. The Isma'ili leader, Rokn-al-Din Ẓur-šāh, was sent to Möngke Qā'ān, but was executed together with his entourage en transit. A happier fate awaited many of the



scholars residing apparently against their will at Alamut, the most famous of whom was Naşir-al-Din ʿTusi; he became a trusted advisor to Hülegü in both religious and practical matters, and among other things he encouraged the khan to attack Baghdad.

Hülegü moved next to Azarbaijan, which was to become the center of Il-khanid rule in Iran. Bayju (q.v.), the erstwhile Mongol commander in this area, was ordered to Anatolia with his troops. At the end of 1257, Hülegü directed his generals to converge on Baghdad. Throughout the year there had been inconclusive negotiations between the khan and the caliph al-Mostaʿsem. The former's anger had already been piqued by the caliph's aforementioned refusal to present himself two years before. Early in 1258 the attack on the city commenced. Although the caliph's troops and the local civilians showed courage, treachery in the caliphal entourage, the lack of any decisive leadership, and the sheer weight of Mongol numbers made the outcome of the campaign a foregone conclusion. The city was taken on 13 February 1258 and subjected to a week of looting and massacre. The caliph was executed, together with most of his family.

From Baghdad Hülegü eventually returned to Azarbaijan, where he was to remain until the end of 1259, when he launched the campaign into Syria. It was around this time that we have contemporary sources which indicate that the title "Il-khan" (q.v.; Mongolian: *ilqan*) had been applied to Hülegü (Amitai-Preiss, "Evidence," pp. 353-62). While still in Azarbaijan, and with his sights set firmly on Syria, Hülegü ordered the subjugation of those cities of the Jazira (Upper Mesopotamia) which had yet to submit or had subsequently proved recalcitrant. These were systematically taken, although Mayyāfāreqin, under the Ayyubid prince al-Malek al-Kāmel Moḥammad, resisted Mongol attacks from the late fall of 656/1258 until the spring of 658/1260. It was during this stay in Azarbaijan that Hülegü received both the atabeg Abu Bakr of Fārs and the two aspirants to the throne of the Seljuq sultanate in Anatolia. Several letters were exchanged with the Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo and Damascus, al-Nāşer Yusof, calling on him to submit in person; but al-Nāşer temporized, thus sealing the fate on his regime and kingdom.

At the end of 1259, Hülegü launched the campaign into northern Syria. Aleppo was taken on 2 Şafar 658/18 January 1260 after a week-long siege and was subjected to looting and slaughter. Remaining in the north, the Il-khan dispatched a *tümen* (= 10,000 troops) size force to the south under Ket-buqa (Ketbuğā), his most prominent general. The Mongols took control of Damascus,



which had now been abandoned by the Ayyubid al-Nāṣer (soon to be captured by the Mongols and eventually executed at Hülegü's orders); and they raided Trans-Jordan and Palestine, including Jerusalem. Sometime during the spring, Hülegü withdrew from Syria to Azarbaijan. Possibly the news of Möngke Qā'ān's death (August 1259) had reached him, and he wished to take up position in what was soon to prove to be an area of contention with the khans of the Golden Horde. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the logistical limitations of Syria, that is, the lack of pastureland and water, compelled him to evacuate the country with the approach of summer (Morgan, 1985). Ket-buqa was left in control of Syria with the troops originally assigned to him. In the summer of this year, the Mamluks, under the command of Sultan Qoṭoz, invaded the country and defeated Ket-buqa at 'Ayn Jālūt in northern Palestine on 25 Ramaẓān 658/3 September 1260. The remnants of the Mongol army and their officials fled Syria, and the Mamluks occupied an area extending as far as the Euphrates. This was to remain the border between the Il-khanid state and the Mamluk sultanate during their sixty-year war as well as in the subsequent peace.

The Mongols did not accept this setback lying down. Almost immediately, a smaller raiding force, perhaps numbering 6,000 horsemen, was dispatched to northern Syria. On 5 Moḥarram 659/11 December 1260, these Mongols were defeated by a modest Mamluk army near Homs. Hülegü was prevented from further intervention on the Syrian front by his preoccupations elsewhere. Evidently as early as the winter of 660/1261-62, war erupted in the Caucasus region between the forces of the Golden Horde and the Il-khanate. Tensions had been building for years between Hülegü and his cousin Berke (the son of Joči), khan of the Golden Horde, the origins of which were the perceived infringement of Jochid rights in the Caucasus and Azarbaijan, as well as the failure to send revenues to the Golden Horde from the territory under Hülegü's control. The anger of Berke, a convert to Islam, was exacerbated by Hülegü's execution of the caliph in 1258, and the final straw was the execution of several Jochid princes who led contingents from the Golden Horde in Hülegü's army, as well as attacks against their soldiers themselves (some of whom eventually escaped to Mamluk Syria). Under the command of Hülegü, the Il-khanid army forced the Jochid forces, led by prince Nogai, back into the Qipchaq steppe. Hülegü then sent his son Abaqa (q.v.) with an army to pursue them. The Il-khanid force was defeated in mid-January 1263; while fleeing across the frozen Terek river in the Caucasus the ice broke beneath them, drowning much of Abaqa's army, although the prince himself survived. Berke



and his forces went as far as Darband in pursuit of the Il-khanid troops before returning home. This was only the first round of a war which was to continue for generations, and open conflict was to be resumed upon the death of Hülegü in 1265.

Understanding early on that his preoccupations with the Golden Horde would prevent him from devoting himself to avenging the defeat at 'Ayn Jālūt, in 1262 Hülegü sent out a mission to Europe to seek assistance in the war against the Mamluks. An extant letter in Latin shows that at least one of its intended recipients was King Louis IX of France. While calling on the Franks to take up positions on the coasts of Egypt and Syria as part of a concerted campaign against the common Muslim enemy, it still addresses the French king in a haughty manner; and "[b]ehind the request for military help one discerns the threat that if this help is not forthcoming, the French king will one day also experience the fate meted out to the disobedient" (Meyvaert, p. 249). It would have been interesting to learn of King Louis IX's response to this message, but it appears that the mission never reached its goal; it was seemingly turned back in Sicily by the ruler, Manfred, who was at odds with Pope Urban IV. The latter, however, seems to have learnt of the gist of this missive; and in 1263 he sent the short letter *Exultavit cor nostrum*, in which he expresses his joy at Hülegü's inclination towards Christianity and desire for instruction in baptism (or so the pope understood); after the verification of the Il-khan's conversion to Christianity, the pope would gladly send help in the struggle against the Saracens (Lupprian, pp. 216-19).

It is doubtful whether Hülegü really harbored aspirations to become a Christian, but his sympathies for some Christians, at least, is clear. This may have been a result of the influence of his beloved wife Doqūz Kātun (q.v.), a Nestorian Kereit princess; but traditional Mongol tolerance, or perhaps ambivalence and even apathy on religious matters, may have also played a role. In any event, Muslim authors, seeing the disestablishment of Islam as the state religion, accused him and the Mongols of anti-Muslim sentiments. Certainly, Eastern Christians (as well as the smaller Jewish communities) were spared during the massacres in Baghdad and Aleppo. While it is possible that the Mongols perceived the Eastern Christians as allies in the war against the Muslim rulers, this is never explicitly stated. There is also no evidence that this relatively benign attitude towards the Oriental Christians was extended to the Franks in Syria, and it certainly did not influence the aggressive mien of Hülegü and his commanders towards the Frankish "states" in the Levant in



1260. Whatever his pro-Christian leanings, it is noteworthy that, upon his death in 1265, in accordance with Mongol tradition he was interred together with several beautiful young women. Boyle has noted that “this is the last occasion on which human victims are recorded as having been buried with a Chingizid prince” (*Camb. Hist. Iran* V, p. 354). Besides the deference to traditional Mongol belief, the erection of a Buddhist temple at Koy testifies to an interest in that religion.

Hülegü paid a certain amount of attention to intellectual matters. His patronage of Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi, for whom he built an observatory in Marāḡa, is well known. He also surrounded himself with numerous “wise men” (*ḥokamā*) devoted to the sciences of the ancients (*‘olum-e awā’el*), including alchemists and others about whom Rašid-al-Din (III, p. 91) has made some critical comments. Some Mamluk authors mention his intellectual proclivities but make disparaging remarks about what he really understood about these matters (e.g., Ṣafadi, fol. 235b). From 661 /1262-63, Šams-al-Din Moḥammad Jovayni served as his *šāḥeb-divān* and provided a modicum of administrative stability in the realm. His brother, the historian ‘Alā’-al-Din ‘Aṭā’ Malek Jovayni, had been appointed governor of Baghdad and the surrounding area as early as 1259, and he had some success in repairing the extensive damage of the Mongol conquest.

The Mamluk sources provide some interesting details for the biography of the first Il-khan. Qerṭāy Qaznadāri records the testimony of a young Ayyubid prince, al-‘Aziz ‘Oṭmān of Karak, who in the summer of 1260 traveled to Hülegü’s camp and met the Il-khan and Doquz Kātun. The transcript of the interview, perhaps fleshed out by the imagination, depicts a taciturn Hülegü and a more gregarious Doquz Kātun. Other sources relate the story of Hülegü’s supposed infatuation with the daughter of the king of Georgia and his desire to wed her. She is said to have refused unless he converted to Islam, to which he acquiesced. The story is highly dubious; it is not confirmed in any of the Persian, Armenian, and Georgian sources, and it seems most unlikely that a Georgian princess would demand that the Il-khan should convert to Islam. This seems, therefore, to be a story current in the Mamluk sultanate, which tells us more about Mamluk tastes and perceptions than reality in the Il-khanate.

At one point, Rašid-al-Din (III, p. 8) writes that Hülegü had 14 sons and 7 daughters, but his own genealogical chart (*ibid.*, pp. 18-9) names 15 sons. The fourteenth-century Mamluk writer al-Ṣafadi (fol. 236a) accords him 17 sons



plus an unspecified number of daughters; this author, however, only names eleven of the male progeny, and two of these do not match Rašid-al-Din's list. Hülegü had no children from his chief wife Doquz Kātun (Qerṭāy, fol. 65b); upon his death he was succeeded by his eldest son Abaqa (r. 1265-82), who in turn was followed by another son Aḥmad Tegüder (r. 1282-84).

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